

**Moldova's Left Behind Children: Weighing the Impact of
Parental Emigration**

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Dissertation submitted as a partial requirement for the conferral of
Master in International Studies

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September, 2019

Acknowledgements

This study originated from the desire to make known the struggles of the Left Behind Children (LBCH) in Moldova and the damage that parental absence brings upon them. My wish is to see new policies implemented that can protect these children and improve their life. I also hope that my homeland can recover from its socio-economic crisis and wounds – creating a better future and giving the hope back to its population – sooner, rather than later.

Having said that, now comes the moment to thank all of those who were a part of this work and made this study possible.

First and foremost, I would like to start this page of appreciation by thanking my dear Creator – God has been my help and support every single step of the way during the journey of this Master Dissertation. The road has been long, with ups and downs – as with everything in life – however, You guided me through it all, and for that I am filled with gratefulness and joy.

I am also thankful for my supervisor, who has provided me always with great feedback and has supported me throughout all this work – your encouragement and assistance have helped me immensely. Thank you.

To my dear parents, who have made so many sacrifices for us, so that we would have equal opportunities and life quality in a new country – a place that we can call home today. I cannot imagine how hard this journey of migration was for you and the challenges that you had to face in order to gift us a better life. You chose to take us with you to wherever you went – I am blessed and fortunate that you did not leave our side and we could always enjoy your presence. Your love, patience, guidance, perseverance, support and kindness have shined throughout my life – and for that I am forever grateful to you.

To my family and friends, thank you for your support and reassurance to just keep going – even when it was hard. You encouraged me immensely and for that I am grateful for you and for the motivation you gave me. A big thank you to every single one of you.

RESUMO

Presas entre o seu passado soviético, enquanto ainda navega a sua relativa independência, a Moldávia ainda hoje luta – permanece sob o peso de uma crise socioeconómica e desenvolvimento débil. A emigração tornou-se normalizada na cultura e muitos nomearam a actual situação do país como uma “tragédia social”. A emigração em massa da Moldávia tem aumentado o número de Crianças Deixadas Para Trás. Com este estudo, propomos analisar o impacto que a emigração dos pais tem sobre as Crianças Deixadas para Trás na Moldávia. Consideramos que tanto a literatura quanto os cenários clínicos têm negligenciado o dano que a emigração dos pais causa na família e nas Crianças Deixadas Para Trás. Geralmente, a maioria dos estudos foca-se nos benefícios que a emigração traz às famílias, principalmente através das remessas enviadas para casa pelos emigrantes. Todavia, considerando as consequências, as crianças pagam um preço muito maior. Para encontrar uma resposta fixa para a equação da emigração no país, mais estudos serão necessários. No entanto, sabemos que a emigração continua a ser uma jornada incerta, tanto para a instituição da família, como para o próprio país.

Palavras-chave: Emigração; Crianças Deixadas Para trás; Ausência Parental; Impacto Psicossocial; Resultados na Educação; Desenvolvimento; Família; Separação; Moldávia

ABSTRACT

Stuck between its Soviet past, while still navigating its relative independence, Moldova is still struggling today – it remains under the burden of a weak development and socio-economic crisis. Emigration has become normalized in the culture and many have labelled the country's present situation as a “social tragedy”. This mass emigration has increased the number of the Left Behind Children (LBCH). With this study, we propose to analyze the impact that parental emigration has on the LBCH in Moldova. We consider that both the literature and the clinical settings have been overlooking the damage that parental emigration causes on the family and on the LBCH. Generally, most studies focus on the benefits that emigration brings to the families, mainly through the remittances that are sent home by the emigrants. However, considering everything, the LBCH pay a much higher price for it. Further research is needed in order to find a fixed answer for the emigration equation. Nonetheless, we know that emigration remains an uncertain journey, both for the families, as well as for the country itself.

Keywords: Emigration; Left Behind Children; Parental Absence; Psycho-Social Impact; Education Outcomes; Development; Family; Separation; Moldova

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List of Abbreviations

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

IOM – International Organization for Migration

LBCH – Left Behind Child/Left Behind Children

MFA – Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MiDL – Project Migration and Local Development

NBS – National Bureau of Statistics

NGO/NGO's – Non-governmental Organization/Non-governmental Organizations

SDC – Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

UN – United Nations

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

UNICEF – United Nations Children's Fund

USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

CHAPTER 1 – Introduction

1.1 – Background of the Study

Landlocked between Romania and Ukraine, is the country where I was born – Moldova. I was born in *Crocmaș* – a small village in the south of Moldova. Around that time, the Soviet Union had collapsed and left behind an independent country that now needed to stand on its own, which was translated at the same time, to a devastated country by a civil war that had killed hundreds and left the country in misery. What was once called “the barn” of the Soviet Union - due to the abundance of production and factories in the country - was now a destroyed economy. During the 1990s, factories closed down, agricultural camps were abandoned, production halted, and people lost their jobs. Countless employment opportunities were shut down for the Moldovans. Moldova and its people were struggling to make ends meet.

What could families do if there was not enough to keep going day by day and the living was getting harder? The solution that they found for them was through migration. They packed their bags and left their families behind for the time being, with promises that they would come back and be able to improve their families’ lives. I cannot remember the exact moment when, but my father was also one of the many that had left abroad for work in the hopes of giving us a better life. We stayed with our mother, who vowed to never leave us – the children – behind, even if things were hard. After a few years and in between visits, my father decided to get us all to live together once again as a reunited family. My parents sorted out the papers and everything needed for us to migrate to our new home. So, we packed our bags and went to another country – which became a new home for us – for all the family was once again reunited. At that time, I was still young and did not know that hundreds of other children were not as fortunate as we were – to migrate with their parents instead of being left behind to grow up without their presence in their lives.

After some years, we would come to know that extended family members of ours also started leaving the country in search of a better life – my aunt, some of my uncles and cousins alike left the country. Some of them left their children behind for a period of time, also in search of a better life for them and their children. My personal experience is one of the reasons that sparked my interest for the topic of migration and led me to decide on this topic for my Master’s degree research.

We could have been amongst the hundreds of left behind children in the country, which is a distressing trend. The story of these children could have been our story. Despite some

improvement, this problem persists in my home country. I want to shed some light on this issue, as well as show the impact that emigration is having on the origin country.

1.2. – Importance of Studies on Family Left Behind

Moldova is considered to be the poorest country in Europe (World Bank, 2019), and although the country has seen some progress when it comes to its economy, at this time, is mainly a country of origin of migration, and to a much lower extent a country of destination for migrants (IOM Moldova, 2015a). The present situation indicates that the Moldovans continue to migrate abroad in search for better living conditions, which in turn continues to affect the country and its people. At this point, those most affected are the children left behind.

Even today, thousands of children in Moldova are still being left behind by their parents, and taken care of by their extended family members, friends or even neighbors. Emigration and leaving the children behind for one to work in another country has become so normalized in the Moldovan culture, that the majority of Moldovans take this as being the “norm” in today’s society. One could think that an issue that has been normalized in a country is already under control and in the process of being solved, yet the reality is far from the truth. It is estimated that at least 41,000 children in Moldova are left at home without at least one of their parents, due to labor migration (IOM Moldova, 2015a) – being this number only an estimate, since as studies show, the real figures might be higher than what is reported. This issue is especially relevant, mainly because it affects the most vulnerable part of the population – Moldova’s children.

With this study, I hope to shed some light on the matters that afflict Moldova’s children, as well as raising some awareness on these relevant subjects – that hopefully will bring about new changes in the Moldovan policies and regulations that ought to protect the left behind children. Furthermore, by drawing the attention to this problem, I also hope that the Moldovan mentality can change when it comes to the normalized view of the emigration culture that prevails in the country. This issue should not be viewed as the “norm” by the population, but instead looked upon seriously and in a balanced manner with the objective of minimizing the consequences and solving the issues raised by the emigration of the Moldovan citizens.

1.3. – Research Questions

Since the first massive wave of migration around the year 2000, Moldova has been struggling with the consequences of migration, and despite its steady development in actuality, it still lacks proper solutions to be found and put in practice. The main research question here is:

What is the impact of emigration in Moldova and its Left Behind Children?

Related to the main subject, other sub-research questions can be formulated:

- How does emigration affect the family structure in Moldova?
- Is the emigration's impact on family relations mainly a positive or a negative one?
- What are the strategies used by the children to cope with the impact of parents' emigration?

1.4. – Methodology

The present study's main methodology will be largely based on relevant document analysis and studies that were carried out before by well-known NGO's and authorities on the field, such as the United Nations and UNICEF. Furthermore, research done from local NGO's in Moldova will also be a part of this analysis, including interviews that were conducted by these organizations and experts on the field in order to get to know the life of these left behind children more in depth. Moldova's Government based websites also provide some data on the subject and the information can be found online.

Additionally, news from the Moldovan Media – and from the foreign Media alike – will also be used with the purpose of analyzing the subject through the eyes of local and international newspapers and Media, which can bring valuable input to the research from a variety of different perspectives. Another useful source of information would be the relevant documentaries and films that are found on this subject.

Generally speaking, the present research contains a qualitative character, based on literature review and the empirical work conducted by experts on the field. Moreover, due to time and resource constraints, this fieldwork research could not be carried out in Moldova. Therefore, this research relied on existing interviews, data and research studies conducted by reliable authors and organizations working on the field to attain the proposed research objectives. Therefore, the present study is based on various types of sources and data in the hopes of displaying a more impartial perspective on the topic at hand.

We also need to mention that the chapters 3 and 4 of the present study - regarding Moldova's left behind children (LBCH) – will be largely based on the empirical research conducted in Moldova by Cheianu-Andrei *et al.* (2011): “Specific needs of children and elderly

left behind as a consequence of migration”. Specifically, we will be concentrating our attention on the consequences and needs of the LBCH, hence taking into consideration only the part of the literature that refers to this group. Given that it represents the reality of the LBCH in Moldova in a more accurate way, and since the survey counts with interviews done on the field by experts, professionals, as well as Government personnel – this source is appropriate and can be rightfully applied to the present study, in order to contribute to the developing of an analysis of the left behind children in Moldova on a deeper level. Furthermore, this research encompasses the contribution of competent and legitimate authorities and organizations on the field, which gives added value to the present work.

Possible limitations might include, for instance, the fact that others have done the research before, so the present study is building upon what was done previously. Besides, the local Media can be subjective on this topic, since a country may worry about how their image is portrayed across the public and whether or not it is a negative representation of the country. Moreover, the information from the Government and its agencies might be biased and even incomplete, since data related to migration can go easily unreported.

1.5. – Impact of Emigration in the Origin Countries

In the current era of Globalization, international migration has become easier than ever in the past (Castles *et al.*, 2013). According to data from the United Nations (UN) and other authorities on the subject, the number of people who were living outside their country of origin in 2017 reached 258 million – which constitutes 3.4% of the world migration (Global Migration Data Portal, 2017, as cited in UN). The causes behind international migration are various, among them being poverty, unemployment, wars and political instability, just to name a few. The analysis of existing literature on Migration Studies highlights that most of the explored themes involve the impact of migrants in the host countries (Castles *et al.*, 2013). By contrast, there are fewer studies on the impact caused by migration in the sending or origin countries. Furthermore, the existing studies regarding the origin countries tend to focus on topics such as remittances, brain drain, and other themes connected to the impact on the migrants’ homeland.

Within this context, this study will focus on a neglected theme in the migration literature – the impact of emigration in the countries of origin as opposed to the host countries. We will study how emigration affects the family structure in the sending countries and whether that impact is a positive or a negative one. The impact on the left behind children (LBCH) in Moldova will be evaluated according to two specific dimensions: the psychological health of

the children and their education. Therefore, the relevance of this study in today's context of migration can contribute to the already existent literature on this topic.

1.5.1. – Remittances Overview

Most of the literature about the impact of remittances focuses only on the positive effects, generally overlooking its negative side. Indeed, we can agree that remittances represent a positive help for the migrants' household in the sending countries, contributing largely to the income and the improvement of the living conditions of those left behind (Atamanov *et al.*, 2009; Cebotari *et al.*, 2016; Gao *et al.*, 2010).

It is also well-known that the benefit of the remittances sent by the emigrants is also extended unto their sending countries, by contributing substantially to the economy and development of their homeland (Mullan & Doña-Reveco, 2013). On the other hand, when studies tend to focus solely on the benefits of remittances, they might overlook the negative side associated with it. Clearly, those that find the positive effects of remittances connected to the increase of income within the household, tend to stress its importance more; while those who find its negative effects due to the damage of the parental absence from a child's life, tend to agree that the consequences left by it on the family left behind – especially when it comes to the children – far outweigh any of the improvements that the household could obtain from the additional income (Antman, 2012).

Furthermore, emigrating for one's benefit does not include only economical motives. Instead, more often than not, people emigrate because they care for their family's future and they wish to improve their life. Thus, emigrants also emigrate out of emotional reasons. As Castellanos (2007b) states, "The act of migrating involves sentiments. Fear, love, anger, pain, and isolation are evoked throughout the processes of departure, settlement, and return" (as cited in Castañeda & Buck, 2011: 96). Hence, many forget that material abundance – while positive in the right amount and circumstances – cannot replace or compensate for the parental absence and the support that parents can give when they are next to their children. Moreover, some studies have already recognized that, indeed, the psycho-social well-being of the LBCH, depends more on the relationship and bonds that they have within their family, as well as the accessibility of support and care, rather than a good economic condition (Antman, 2012; Castañeda & Buck, 2011; Zhao *et al.*, 2017).

Moreover, it can also help fight against the school dropout of the LBCH, while increasing the school enrolment. Besides, it can help facilitate the access to healthcare and decrease the child labour, due to the increased amount of resources that remittances can provide

(Antman, 2012; Cebotari *et al.*, 2016). Emigrants can also see remittances as a commitment that they have to keep toward their family left at home. As Castañeda & Buck (2011) affirm, “For migrants to remit is to be a good family member” (p.97). Remittances can represent the expression of love and caring for the family members back home. It transmits to the family left behind, that even though they are physically distanced – they still care about them and their heart is with them. The concern and affection for the family remains in the same place, despite them having left their side.

1.5.2. – Brain Drain Overview

The impact of emigration on the country of origin is one of the consequences most studied by scholars in this area. The brain drain is a usual manifestation in the sending countries – causing the loss of human capital and development (Mullan & Doña-Reveco, 2013). While the sending country is affected negatively, the receiving country benefits from the increase of its qualified workforce – provided that the emigrant’s abilities and knowledge will be utilized to meet the social demands of the corresponding community, as it can occur that the formalities and bureaucracies of the host country might hinder the process of the qualification recognition that it is needed in order to start practicing the matching profession. In this case, neither the country of origin, nor the host country can utilize the human capital for the common good of their respective societies.

To summarize, the emotional consequences on the family separated by emigration can be long-lasting and affect specially the most vulnerable ones – the LBCH. These children should not be forgotten by their governments, policy makers and other competent authorities in the sending countries. Instead, regulations and policies should be directed to the challenges that they face, in order to form yet another net of support during the time of parental absence.

Furthermore, this field of study is relatively recent in the migration literature, hence, studies are divided on the results of the impact on family left behind and on their sending countries linked to emigration - further research is needed in order to fill gaps and find possible solutions. Meanwhile, despite having discussed topics related to the transnational families, one should not generalize about the effects of the consequences on different countries, cultures, families, and, ultimately, individuals, since a case does not mean all the cases and a left behind child does not mean all of the left behind children.

Remittances have its importance and place in the emigrant family household, as well as on the country of origin. Nonetheless, its positive effect cannot compensate for the separation

of the family institution and the pain that it inflicts upon the LBCH – even if temporarily. Moreover, parental emigration should not be seen as a normalized occurrence, but rather as a traumatic experience for the developing child, which urges to be taken seriously and not neglected by the literature, as well as the competent authorities in the sending countries.

1.5.3. – The Impact on the Family

Regarding the literature on the impact of emigration on the family institution in general, this is a vulnerable group, still in the process of developing as individuals and with the particularity of having the risk of negative effects perpetuating into adulthood, affecting their well-being as a present child and as a future adult (Castañeda & Buck, 2011; Gao *et al.*, 2010; Valtolina & Colombo, 2012; Zhao *et al.*, 2017). A negative impact on the LBCH includes several consequences that are interconnected in their life sphere. Children might be affected at a health level – be it psychologically, or physically (Démurger, 2015). Psychologically (especially when the mother is the one to emigrate) – by developing emotional or mental issues, expressed by emotions such as depression, insecurity, helplessness or even desperation that could lead to the danger of suicide (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011; Valtolina & Colombo, 2012). Physically – materialized through their habits and risk behaviors, such as unhealthy eating, smoking, drinking, being physically inactive and so on (Gao *et al.*, 2010). Even though girls and boys alike can be affected similarly, some studies also suggest that the impact depends on their gender. For instance, girls were found to be more susceptible to develop emotional problems than boys; while the boys were more prone to deviant behaviors (Gao *et al.*, 2010; Valtolina & Colombo, 2012; Vanore *et al.*, 2015).

Therefore, as it usually happens in many fields of study, generalization is not welcomed here, being that each family and each child is different, reacting to adverse situations and circumstances in different ways.

Another strong impact that emigration can have is bringing negative outcomes for the family structure. Any separation might bring distance and relationship damage between individuals – with migration, the premises are not different. In China, the divorce rate has doubled during the past decade, and as Zhao *et al.* (2017), have revealed – this fact was largely connected to migration and the separation of families. Consequently, this trend contains negative effects not only for the parents separating, but also for the LBCH. This event can hinder a child's well-being and proper development, as children need a place of security, care and protection – all which is normally provided by the institution of family. First, the parental

absence (due to emigration) followed by the parental separation can create distress for the child and hinder its development (Zhao *et al.*, 2017).

In addition, emigration also leaves parents and children alike confused with the potential “new” family roles, while, at the same time, presenting a threat to the family unity (Castañeda & Buck, 2011). Taking into account that they are also still children, just as their siblings, nonetheless, now they need to act as the mother/father figure, as well as fulfill the duties that this role calls for. However, while taking care of others, who will be taking care of them? Hence, it is a difficult situation for the older LBCH – who still deserve their parents’ care and presence, while, at the same time, being also difficult for the younger ones – who merit the same. Many times, especially for the girls LBCH, taking the “job” of a parent also means taking in addition the other responsibilities that are associated with it – taking care of the household, managing the finances and bills, cooking, etc. (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011). Sometimes, this can affect negatively the school outcomes, as these LBCH will not have as much time as before to dedicate to school, as well as to the simplicity of just being a carefree child – at that young age, having the “job” of a child might simply mean that. Having the added responsibilities will bring a burden to the LBCH, thus, this role reversal between a parent and a child might affect the child negatively, by creating repercussions later on in life. Therefore, policy makers and authorities on the field, who have the possibility of protecting and caring for these children should remember that – today’s child will be tomorrow’s adult.

In conclusion, in this part were discussed the general effects of emigration in the emitting countries, regarding an overview of topics such as remittances, brain drain, impact on the LBCH, the family structure, as well as on the country itself. The next section will provide a contextualization of the Moldovan history and background that led up to a mass emigration in the country. We will be addressing the issues that characterized Moldova’s past circumstances that managed to make their way into the country’s present struggles and possibly even into the future.

CHAPTER 2 – Moldova: An Emigration Country

In Moldova, unfortunately, emigration has become severely normalized within the society and accepted by many as a part of daily life. Despite some minor changes and attempts of solving the challenges that are presented to the country and its people, the competent authorities have yet to change the reality and circumstances of Moldova into a brighter one. In this chapter, we

will explore the history of Moldova and its emigration experience since the 1990s. The general impact of emigration on the country will also be discussed. This chapter provides a contextualization for the following analysis on the impact of emigration on the LBCH, in particular on their psychological development and education (see chapters 3 and 4).

2.1. – Soviet Era Context

Moldova's History is perceived by many as being complicated. From the outset, many different people and ethnicities have passed through its lands. However, even today there is a nation that is more closely connected to Moldova's History than others – a link that has stayed for generations and has permeated the country's culture on a massive scale, influencing the country's direction in the international panorama. That nation is the Russian Federation.

Along with fifteen other republics, Moldova was a part of the Soviet Union – from 1940 until 1991 – when it declared its independence. Despite gaining the much wished independence and liberty that many fought for, the country still reminisces of the time when its people were under the wing of the USSR. According to an opinion survey conducted by the Institute for Public Policy (IPP), 49% of the citizens in Moldova confirmed that they regret the dissolution of the Soviet Union and 40% of the population would vote to join the USSR once again, if there would be a referendum on this subject (Botnarenco, 2018). In order to understand the reason behind the high percentage within this survey, one needs to understand the context of the country, as well as its socio-economic situation.

Some of the reasons are connected to its present demographic crisis and the intergenerational divergences on perspective that are seen between the older and the younger generation – with the former being more nostalgic about the times when they were a part of something bigger and seemed to have more stability. For the most part, the older generation remembers that time as being a prosperous, abundant and flourishing time for the country and themselves. According to their memories, the time during the Soviet Era is recalled as having been a positive one – when they had a stable job, a thriving life and were not assaulted by the nowadays poverty. Since people were employed and satisfied with their livelihood, they did not even think of emigrating abroad in search for better life conditions.

On the other hand, many affirm today that this stability and prosperity was only apparent. On the surface, everything seemed to be going well and they had “everything that they wanted to”, except that this reality was in fact deceptive (Ursu *et al.*, 2011). In reality, there was not freedom, and people were imposed many things by the controlling Soviet Government.

Beginning from 1944, the Soviet Union wanted to denationalize the Moldovan population – using for that purpose and to their advantage the Moldovan culture, the language and the literature. Destroying churches was also a part of that (ibid.).

Tired of the oppression of the Soviet Union and after many protests and public manifestations by the Moldovans – finally, on the 27th August 1991, the citizens declared their independence and embarked on a new journey towards democracy and freedom (Deutsche Welle, 2017). And lastly, at the end of the year 1991, the presidents of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus came together to sign the agreements from Belavejsk – which marked the end of the USSR. At last, Moldova gained its independence as well as access to democracy and freedom. The country could return to its roots once again – restoring its customs, its language and its alphabet. On the other hand, this newly found independence managed to propel the country into a profound crisis.

2.2. – Civil War and the Aftermath

Many think that the war between Moldova and Russia only started in 1992, however the conflict started long before this – already in 1990 – when the citizens wanted to choose their alphabet instead of the Cyrillic script and when the return to their origins was undesired by the Russians. This type of conflict - slow and dormant – can be named as hybrid (Ciochină & Ion Costaş, 2016). Perceived as a danger to their ideology, the opponents tried to disrupt this process that would, eventually, lead the country to freedom. After the declaration of independence by the people, the military movements and revolts began – with civilians being killed and mistreated. The biggest problem at that time was that Moldova was not prepared and did not possess sufficient power, armament and people in order to successfully fight against its enemies. Moreover, the country's political class at the time was weak – they gave in fast and they did not want to deal with a conflict (ibid.), hence, Moldova lost the civil war.

The civil war made the task of development and economy transformation even more difficult to attain, since citizens were passing through deep poverty, misery and death caused by the military conflict. The economy was producing poverty and the State was collapsing (Deutsche Welle, 2017). During the years when the newly independent states in Eastern and Central Europe (formerly a part of the USSR) introduced new reforms to promote their national economies and development, Moldova spent its energy on the internal conflict (Negură, 2015a).

After the fall of the USSR, a major economic crisis emerged, which represented a calamity for a country that was used to having prosperity and steady employment. Moldova had an economy that was, for the most part, agricultural – which meant that the survival of the

country depended greatly on that element. Yet now the camps were being destroyed, production halted and the factories were closed down – which meant unemployment for a big part of the population. Hospitals were also shut down – especially in the rural areas - and development in the country was now harder than before. Now that the country was not under the rule of the Soviet Union anymore, suddenly, the Government saw the reality of the economy – which had been centralized until then – meaning that Moscow used to take all the decisions regarding the country and its people. However, now the Government needed to take steps into advancing the country's economy and development once again – by itself.

Nowadays, the Government still needs to find solutions to the country's socio-economic and political dissimilarities - especially regarding the Transnistrian conflict (the Russian army remains stationed in that region), a reason why Moldova is still strongly associated with the Russian influence. This situation has also a negative impact over the economy, since foreign investments are hindered by the internal instability (Deutsche Welle, 2017; Negură, 2015a). Moreover, as stated by Vasile Bumacov, the minister of Agriculture in Moldova – Moldova has always been condemned to export agricultural goods (Digi24, 2013), - since the country lacks natural resources that could support its economy. Another massive issue that permeates the country on a national level, it is the high level of corruption (on 117th place out of 180, according to Transparency International). Moldova is controlled by groups of oligarchs – which has in turn enhanced poverty, massive emigration and the lack of a future for the younger generation (Deutsche Welle, 2017).

Moldova lost the war – in the past and even today – since the Russian presence continues in the region and there is no future prediction of this conflict ever being solved, at least in a near future. The Russians always sought to hold back Moldova and its wish of true independence from Moscow. They have always wanted to secure a territory of their own in Moldova, to maintain their presence highly visible, even though the country obtained its liberation. After 28 years of independence, Moldova could be compared to a boat that has no helm, tossed by the waves and crushed by endless political struggles, while at the same time, having to deal with the constant corruption that invades the country and delays its growth and prosperity (Deutsche Welle, 2017).

2.3. – Waves of Emigration and its Impact on the Country

Not long after the independence, massive waves of emigration hit Moldova. The aftermath of the war had aggravated the country's already weakened economy and feeble state. The situation

was highly precarious – grave unemployment, miserable living conditions and low salaries that made many citizens fear for their future and that of their families.

In the early 1990's, Moldova had a population of about 4.5 million. Today, this number has fallen significantly, thus, even the authorities are not able to provide an exact figure concerning the remaining citizens in the country (Ciochină, 2015). Moreover, according to a poll conducted by Magenta Consulting, one in three Moldovans would like to leave the country – which shows that the level of emigration might not be coming to a halt soon (ibid.). Meanwhile, the UN predicted that the population of Moldova will reach below two million by 2050 (ibid.). These predictions are alarming for the small territory.

The waves of emigration started in 1998, and around the year 2000, the country saw an even higher outburst of external migration from its people, and since then the emigrant population has been gradually growing significantly and on an annual basis – in comparison to the resident population in Moldova. This situation persists today, and according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), currently, the migration context in Moldova is largely characterized by the emigration of Moldovan citizens, while the immigration of non-citizens can be listed as irrelevant from a statistical point of view, given the low number of people that want to immigrate to the country. Therefore, one can say that “Moldova is a source country of migrants” (IOM Moldova, 2015a).

When it comes to the official data regarding the emigrants that left and the citizens staying in the country, data coming from sources such as the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in Moldova estimate the number of emigrants working abroad to be around 805 thousand people as of 2015 (Ziarul National, 2018). Nonetheless, an analysis carried out by Mold-Street showed that there is no exact official data regarding the numbers of citizens who left to work abroad and those that are still living in the country (Allmoldova, 2018).

Paradoxically, the Government only started making some economic progress in the country from the year 2000 when a great amount of its citizens were working abroad. However, the exodus helped the country's economy, as the emigrants were sending money home to their families – the remittances grew exponentially during the 2000s, reaching 30-35% of the GDP (Negură, 2015b). Clearly, without these major contributions from the emigrants' remittances, the Moldovan economy would have experienced even more difficulties than what already has been observed at the moment (ibid.). Without a doubt, emigrants' remittances made all the difference.

Nevertheless, today the emigration persists at an alarming pace in Moldova, and the poor economic conditions are not the only reason behind this social phenomenon. Moldova is among the countries where the degree of corruption that permeates the country is at the highest level at worldwide level. People lost the trust in their Government and they became frustrated by the political developments in the country. Combining the economy with corruption produces devastating effects for the country's development (Negură, 2015b). Hence, in the 1990's, people emigrated because of high unemployment, yet the level of corruption kept increasing, so nowadays people emigrate – especially the youngsters – because of the country's corruption and unstable economic and political situation (Semenova, 2018). According to the World Bank, the country ranks 125th out of 175 countries in terms of GDP per capita, alongside states like Nicaragua, Congo or Honduras (Deutsche Welle, 2017).

The incapacity of the Government in solving these issues has made the economy even more fragile, and the country keeps “surviving” mainly on the remittances sent by the emigrants, but also from the help of external financing.

Even though remittances can be beneficial for a country – to some extent – one cannot deny the reality that the massive emigration of the citizens creates an enormous negative impact on the country – at various levels. Given that the majority of emigrants are the most active segments of the population of Moldova (Negură, 2015b), – this leaves the country under a burden, since this part of the population is responsible for the future of their country. Young people leaving the country means Moldova is suffering a severe demographic crisis that hinders the renewal of generations, and creates social problems related with the children and the elderly left behind in the country. Moreover, brain drain is affecting the country on a deep level – there is a loss of professionals at all levels, from doctors, teachers, to engineers and so on – these specialists were effectively eliminated from the Moldovan labour market within the context of emigration (ibid.). Depopulation of villages and small cities has also been an adverse effect of labour emigration, especially in rural areas (ibid.).

There are villages in the country that were absolutely abandoned – no one lives there anymore – so the deserted houses are left to the whims of the elements and weeds fill the yards. In other neighboring villages, the scenario repeats itself – only some elderly left there without anyone to help care for them. Sadly, such villages have become typical in Moldova (ibid.). The ageing population represents a high amount out of the people presently living in the country. According to the same UN estimates, by the year 2050 more than a third of the population will be older than 30 years (Barbăroșie, Canțîr, & Gâlcă, 2012). This generates an enormous

economic pressure on the state's social security budget, which will have to pay pensions and other allowances to over 30 percent of the population that will no longer be active (ibid.).

In parallel, the differences between mortality and birth rate increase year by year, and these processes can no longer be halted (Ciochină, 2015). Also, according to the Center for Demographic Research in Chişinău (capital city), the life expectancy of the Moldovans is the lowest in Europe - they live 10 years less than in other countries (ibid.). These trends are related with the decreasing birth rates in the country – since 1990, Moldova has been in a demographic decline caused by the negative growth of the population (Barbăroşie, Canţîr, & Gâlcă, 2012). This problem has been difficult to solve, since the young people who could contribute to the birth rates leave the country and many others are abroad, possibly deprived of prospects of a short-term return due to the lack of improvement of Moldova's socio-economic condition. Also, emigrants may choose to continue abroad in order to provide better living conditions and a better education for the children who were born abroad Moldova.

Another problem affecting the country's development is the brain drain provoked by mass emigration. This trend diminishes the availability and quality of professionals across the Moldovan labour market, which influences the quality of life in the country. For instance, there is a mass departure of medical experts, education professionals, and so on. Moreover, the ones that stay behind many times are not that capable professionally in the given field either, and more often than not, lack the personal motivation and dedication to help and aid - that comes with this profession (this applies to other fields as well). Hence, this also means that the competent experts that emigrate – usually will not see their qualification approved briefly once they arrive in the destination country, since the formalities of the process might take a long time and many end up giving up and start working as soon as they find any job, not taking into consideration if the work matches their original qualification or not. Thus, in the majority of cases, this represents a loss of human capital not only for their homeland but also for their host country.

However, professionals are not the only group to leave the country – a considerable number of young students also emigrate to study abroad. Officially, 30,000 young people are studying abroad – this means every fourth registered student (Ciochină, 2015). Most likely, they will not return because of the low wages (ibid.).

In short, the demographic trends in Moldova at the moment are very pessimistic (Semenova, 2018). Moreover, the citizens are tired of the national corruption and its effects upon the development and the economy. The difficulties that the country is going through show that new regulations and policies are needed, as well as a transformation that can bring about a

positive change. The Government needs to establish an official institution that can manage and regulate the phenomenon of emigration in the country. Regrettably, until now the programs that were implemented for such purpose, did not assist in declining or stopping the emigration flow. On the other hand, there might still be hope, and as Olga Gagauz has noted: “it is not the quantity of the population that determines the economic development, but the quality” (Ciochină, 2015). Therefore, if the Government takes this resolution seriously, and makes decisions according to it – it will not be a lost cause.

CHAPTER 3 – The Impact of Parental Emigration on the Psycho-Social Development of the LBCH

In Moldova, the problems associated with parental emigration were verified to be similar to other countries where emigration takes place, apart from a few differences that can be linked to the struggles and socio-economic context of each country, as well as to the singularity fact – one should not generalize the problems that a family has or compare them to other reality. Each context and circumstances are different and deserve to be treated like so. Children are children everywhere, however, it is also true that each child is a different child. Even though different contexts might mean different outcomes, as we have already seen previously, researchers tend to agree that there are patterns and consequences resulting from emigration that we can find in various settings, be it in China, Mexico or Moldova (Valtolina & Colombo, 2012).

Due to the large scale emigration in Moldova, the most vulnerable ones were left behind – the younger population was left in the country to be taken care of by the grandparents, extended family, friends or even neighbours of the family. There are about 40,000 children with one or both parents who emigrated abroad and remain outside of the country for more than three months per year (UNICEF, 2016d). However, as we have seen before, the real figure might be higher than what is officially communicated. In Moldova, oftentimes the health, nutrition and education outcomes of the LBCH are not worse than that of the other children that have their parents at home. Usually, they are also not living in the poorest households, since remittances play a big part in contributing to the income positively and can even help to reduce poverty.

Emigration is common for all districts of the country and all population groups, but rural children are more affected by emigration than urban children, since deprivations and poverty are more common in the rural areas – it is estimated that rural poverty would be doubled without the remittances sent by the emigrants (ibid.). Coincidentally, most LBCH come from the rural regions, where the rate of poverty and emigration is higher than in the urban areas. This poverty

forces the parents out of the country, while their children are forced to live a life deprived of parental care. This deprivation can bring about consequences that will affect their social and emotional development. In the majority of cases, emigrants do not visit their children more than once or twice per year and for about 20% of the emigrants, the visits can amount to even less than once a year (*ibid.*). Additionally, if both parents are abroad, usually the grandparents will be taking care of the child – this holds true for 90% of the cases (*ibid.*; Vanore *et al.*, 2015).

According to Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, (2011), the results of the interviews that were conducted in the study, showed that the LBCH are perceived by their peers as being different from the children who have both of their parents in Moldova. They were seen as being different not only according to the perceptions of others, but also different when it came to the way they expressed their emotions, their attitudes, their social skills and emotional state overall. In this part, we will be focusing our attention on Moldova's LBCH – the impact that the emigration of their parents has upon their psycho-social development and the lasting consequences associated with it; the impact on the education outcomes for the LBCH will also be analyzed. Lastly, the impact on the family institution will also be discussed.

According to the UN's children rights, article 10: "If you live in a different country than your parents do, you have the right to be together in the same place." (UNICEF – "UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Child Friendly Language", 2019f). This affirmation clearly states that a child has the right to live together with his/her parents in the same place where they are living at that moment. Indeed, parents are to live together with their children – watching them grow and developing into a balanced and agreeable human being. To deny that right from a child, is to cut off their emotional and psychological support, affecting their crucial development and hindering them from moving forward.

The years of development are of vital importance for this vulnerable group, being that the consequences suffered in their years of growth can damage their future life even as an adult. They are the next generation – this fact should not be overlooked.

On the other side, some studies show that if the LBCH have in place a solid system of support and care – for instance, through caregivers, community support, social environments, among others – the damage on their psychosocial well-being and development might be diminished, since these elements play an essential role in supporting the LBCH (Givaudan & Pick, 2013; Vanore *et al.*, 2015). Even though this type of assistance cannot fully compensate for the absent parent, the role of the caregivers, along with other positive support, can be one of the key solutions when trying to solve the issues and impact that emigration leaves on the family left behind. Moreover, the continuous communication with the parent while he or she is

away will also make a positive difference on the welfare of the LBCH, while the contrary can cause a negative impact, for instance nutritional and educational problems (Nguyen, 2016).

Still regarding to the parent – child communication, children might have different perspectives on what it means to be supported by their parent. For example, while for some parents giving more economic support to their children equals to giving more emotional support – since some parents have a more materialistic world view, and even though they mean well – their children view the same situation through a contrasting viewpoint, meaning that they tend to dismiss the sacrifices and struggles that an emigrant parent will go through in order to give them a more comfortable life (Castañeda & Buck, 2011).

Therefore, some parents think that they are taking the best decision while leaving, and that giving economical support matches to giving emotional support. Meanwhile, for the LBCH, their parents are the best parents when they provide the emotional support and care that they need. For them, nothing can replace a parent's love and support. Not even a life of abundance. Material goods fade away with time, however, the emotional support given to the children, leaves a lasting impression of comfort and security – important emotions that have the ability to impact an individual on a deeper level, which can contribute to the harmonious development of a person. Thus, the impact of the negative or positive emotions on the well-being and optimal development of a child, should not be taken lightly.

When a child is developing and growing into being a future adult, many pieces need to come together – much like a well-made puzzle – so that he/she can develop all the aspects needed into becoming a healthy and well developed adult. As the child is transformed by the process of growing up – they will need to develop the aspects that will help them arrive there – the physical, intellectual, emotional and social aspects – all important pieces of this puzzle.

However, if some of these characteristics are not developed well during this process, some damage might occur – and it can even be irreversible. When parents emigrate and leave their children behind, their young ones can be affected in many ways, especially when the emigration occurs at a stage in their children's lives when they are still developing, thus, during that phase, they are in need of a stable environment with their parents right by their side to guide and help them (Givaudan & Pick, 2013).

3.1. – Emotional Impact and Self-Image

Generally, the time that parents choose to emigrate coincides with the period when the child's personality is still being developed, thus, the direct participation of the parents in their child's life at this crucial time is of utmost importance in the process of their development. A Study

conducted by UNICEF in Moldova in 2006, revealed that children of less than 5 years old were discovered to have a high risk of psychological trauma, especially if the mother was the one to leave the country (Valtolina & Colombo, 2012). Hence, the fact that parents leave at a crucial time when their presence is most needed in their child's life can be more detrimental than the departure itself.

Some researchers argue that when we are born we have innate instincts to solicit for care and protection from others, as well as a desire to be loved and taken care of, all while being in a secure and safe environment. Authors like Ainsworth and Bowlby define this as the attachment theory – according to them, this attachment is a deep and lasting emotional bond that connects a person to another across time and space (McLeod, 2017). This theory advocates that this is a biological need and part of our genetics. It is something intrinsic in us. This attachment is meant to help us survive. The biological mother represents the “primary reference person” and our “primary matrix” (including the parents and the siblings if there are any), being that we all need this “security niche” (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011) in order to thrive positively.

This theory can help explain some behaviors that characterize the human nature and can be linked to our emotional well-being, when the conditions for care and protection are met. Moreover, at the time of our birth, the people who are the closest to us and with whom we create a deep emotional bond are usually our parents, hence the importance of the emotional part when it comes to developing as a balanced individual, especially as a growing child.

Being a left behind child can impact negatively the development that every child goes through, which will, in turn, affect its future life even as an adult. Let us take a look at how the parental absence can impact a LBCH emotionally and how it can affect the traits of his/her character, the interaction with others and the behaviour and attitude that the child will have going forward.

Firstly, many LBCH interviewed in the study of Cheianu-Andrei *et al.* (2011), were seen to have noticeable “psychological scars” (Castañeda & Buck, 2011), and when asked about their parent's departure, the children associated this event with painful memories and an array of negative emotions, namely: with the feelings of loneliness, insecurity, longing, isolation, hopelessness, fear, anxiety, lack of protection, deep sadness, the lack of support and the feeling of just being lost and abandoned, among others (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011). Truly, what we *feel* is important. Feelings can be compared to the symptoms that alert us to a possible problem that is happening inside of us – it can show us that something might be wrong – and can point us to think of possible solutions in order to solve the problem. The feelings that the LBCH go through when their emigrated parents are not near them, are not to be ignored, instead, they are

to be acknowledged and addressed. In order to demonstrate better the complexity and extent of the feelings that the left behind children experience due to the absence of their parents, let us focus on some of the previously mentioned emotions that can strongly characterize the emotional state and life of the LBCH during the time that their parents are missing from their side.

From the children's answers in the study conducted by Cheianu *et al.* (2011), it was observed that the *longing* emotion was one of the most talked about in the context of parental emigration. In the Romanian language, longing is translated as "*dor*", which can be translated in Portuguese as "*saudade*". This word refers to a melancholic yearning that evokes a sense of loneliness and incompleteness. It is a constant desire for something or someone that we do not have right now, but find ourselves always yearning for. This word translates the depth of this complex feeling that is a constant in a LBCH's life and shows the longing of the children for their parents' presence.

Another strong emotion that is felt by the LBCH is the *insecurity*. Insecurity is like a disease that attacks its owner as it can discourage someone like nothing else can. Whatever we do, it can always make us feel like we are not enough. Insecurity is one of the most talked topics of our twenty first century's problems', and yet so little of it has been solved. For the LBCH, insecurity can be the difference between having a good day or a bad day; between believing that he/she can push through and keep going or not; between having the courage to face their own challenges or just crumble apart and not seeing the hope when they are in constant emotional distress. For some of these children, insecurity can be felt when their parents announce that they are leaving them behind, and they wonder if they are the ones at fault for having done something wrong or whether they are loved enough by their parents. They start wondering why they feel abandoned and alone even though their parents come to visit once in a while. This insecurity will have repercussions not only at the present, but also later on in life, as some studies and life stories of former LBCH show (Castañeda & Buck, 2011; Valtolina & Colombo, 2012). Thus, the insecurity that parental emigration leaves these children living in, is not to be underestimated, since this can affect their future considerably.

This insecurity can also impact their personalities in a negative way, affecting their self-confidence and self-esteem and the way they relate to other people. Indeed, emotions play an important role in a child's life and development and being insecure about oneself can transform the child's personality into a more reserved one. The results from the study by Cheianu-Andrei *et al.* (2011), revealed that after their parent's departure, the children's emotional displays changed, for some even drastically, with some of the children transforming their social

behaviors – for instance, they were not as talkative as before, they were shyer and had a visible lack of confidence in themselves. The study also confirmed that these drastic changes in character and behavior are strongly connected to their parent’s emigration – which is reflected upon their social behaviors patterns, as well as how they feel about themselves. Consequently, many children became introverts after the separation from their parents. They close themselves to possible interactions with others due to the fear of being rejected and tend to suffer by themselves, feeling the emptiness and the anxiety on their own, without looking for external help. This can be detrimental to the LBCH’s relationships even after growing up and maturing into an adult.

The emigration trauma can still render its effects even after a considerable amount of years have passed. A former LBCH confessed that after having her own children, the feelings of abandonment, emptiness and depression only worsened and reminded her of the “psychological trauma” that she went through when she was still a child and her mother had to leave to find work abroad (Castañeda & Buck, 2011). Therefore, the emotional impact and burden on the LBCH can be carried on even into their adult lives – which demonstrates the importance of the parental presence to their child’s development and emotional security.

Another pressing issue that was encountered by the LBCH was by far the suffering from *loneliness* that came with their parent’s departure. *Loneliness* was found to be the most used term by the LBCH when they were asked to describe their disposition and how they felt on a daily basis. Undeniably, loneliness has been found to be, at times, much harder to bear than other physical problems that may arise in someone’s life. Depression and loneliness are difficult to solve – even while being around people (caregiver, friends, etc.), since one can still feel alone and hopeless. These feelings also cannot be solved with material possessions. One needs to find an appropriate psychological support when facing these issues.

Therefore, even in the cases of children who had a proper caregiver, their friends and other family members near them, it seems that the closeness to their parents could not be replaced. Parents are indeed irreplaceable for these children. Regardless of what others might say, parents are still parents everywhere, and the universal fact is that any child needs their parents. No matter what race, colour or country, through time and space, this truth has been found to resonate universally – a child needs his/her parents in their life in order to thrive and become an emotionally stable and balanced individual. Especially when it comes to the mother, since when asked about it nearly 80% of the children confirmed that the love, affection and closeness of their mother were not replaceable even by the best of caregivers (Valtolina & Colombo, 2012). Moreover, children whose parents left were found to present more

psychological consequences than their peers who had their parents at home – the stress, tension and anxiety of not having their parents there to help them along the way, ultimately leads to the sentiment of loneliness and, in some cases, can even reach depression (ibid.).

Now let us discuss how the LBCH see themselves through their own lens and self-judgment. They tend to compare themselves to other people, which, in turn, determines their self-perception and, consequently, also sets the value of their own life, their individual traits of character and the meaning of social behavior. The study by Cheianu-Andrei *et al.* (2011), revealed that regarding the LBCH' self-image, the results presented two opposite ways, which showed how children felt about themselves – one being positive and the other negative. Yet, according to the authors, generally, the children that were interviewed in this study, had a healthy self-perception, seeing themselves as being confident, patient, sincere, beautiful, smart, talented, kind-hearted, intelligent, etc., thus having a healthy self-image. Some of the children even perceived themselves as being privileged in comparison to the other children whose parents were not abroad. The participants from the focus-group discussions affirmed that their parents' departure helped them in some ways, for instance, made them more independent when making decisions, improved their financial status due to the benefits of remittances and gave them a broader experience in life (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011; Cebotari *et al.*, 2016).

In the case of these children, their self-confidence and positive self-image came mostly from their gratitude of the newly found financial benefits in their life. Regarding this some of the interviewed children stated: "I feel that this is it, I have everything, I don't miss anything (...) we live more decently (...) we get to know more than our colleagues with parents do" (ibid., p. 59). Also concerning their parents' departure, children revealed that they understood their reasons and were grateful for their parents' effort in gifting them a better life and better conditions for their future, by choosing to emigrate, as we can see from what they affirmed: "(...) because they left for our sake and I don't think they went there just for fun, but to give us a better future, to be well-educated (...)" (ibid., p. 59). Hence, according to the study, it was revealed that, overall, with regard to the children that had a positive self-image and self-confidence, it was mostly due to their improved financial situation, when comparing to their peers.

On the other hand, we have the negative side of the self-image perception, and the study also disclosed this side of the matter, by revealing the opinions of many other children that consider their parents' emigration as being a disadvantage. In one of the interviews a child stated:

I don't think I'm advantaged by the fact that my parents are abroad for work, on the contrary I am experiencing great difficulties (...). There is no one to talk to about it. It is hard for me, because I have been living in a strange house for a very long time and I do not feel comfortable at all. It is not my house; I do not have a place of my own there (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011: 60).

Another child affirmed regarding the parent's absence: "I grew up prematurely, my childhood was stolen..." Yet another child admitted: "In fact I think that I do not have a family" (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011: 60). Through these affirmations, one can clearly see the sadness and loneliness that these children feel due to not having their parents by their side. Thus, according to the children's opinions, the main losses that they had as a result of their parents' emigration were on their childhood and education – a topic which will be addressed later in detail.

At the same time, some children had another opinion altogether, namely, that the emigration caused more disadvantages to their parents than to themselves. Hence, some children declared: "I think that our parents are losing more than we are. They are losing our childhood, as they do not see us growing up, I mean when they leave we are little and when they return they see us all grown up and they lose a lot of our life." (*ibid.*, p. 60).

Additionally, self-image can depend not only on the way we perceive ourselves, but also on the way that others perceive us. In general, children deprived of parental care are seen by other children as being less protected and vulnerable, since the LBCH do not have their parents' presence and care as often as the other children do. A problem that is greatly felt by the children and can contribute to the development of their self-image, is the lacking participation of the parents when it comes to being involved in their child's day to day life, as well as the lack of support that they feel when they go through negative experiences or are in need of parental advice in matters that are important to them – parents are not there to support them, not only when they go through negative experiences but also when they want to share their successes or achievements with them, or even watching them acting in a play at school. For the majority of children, these might be simple things, however, for the LBCH specifically – not having their parents present to witness these moments in a life together with them, brings them "psychological stress" and can be detrimental to their psychosocial development (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011).

As a conclusion, regarding the self-image of the LBCH, the children's self-perception is not based on only their self-analysis, but on a dual nature of it: the first, through the way the child discerns his/her own thoughts, emotions and feelings, and the second, through the way

the child is seen by others, while at the same time, the child interacts with other people and observes how they are living and interacting with one another – and it is through this viewpoint – that he/she will get to know him/herself better.

3.2. – Vulnerability, Risk Behavior and the Illusion of Freedom

One term that is frequently mentioned when talking about the LBCH, is their vulnerability, and one cannot overlook the fact that these children are more regularly exposed to various risks when comparing to other children. Several studies carried out in various migratory countries agree that when the parents emigrate, the LBCH are more at risk than their fellow peers and they suffer more from emotional and moral distress, as well as from violence and abuse, being that there is a lack of parental love and supervision (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011; Gao *et al.*, 2010; UNICEF, 2008b, 2016d; Valtolina & Colombo, 2012). Their parent’s absence also puts them in a greater danger of using negative coping mechanisms and even being institutionalized (UNICEF, 2016d). In the focus-group discussions from the study by Cheianu-Andrei *et al.* (2011), some participants referred to the LBCH as being someone that has “(...) no protection and no support” (p. 63). They can be more vulnerable to dangerous behaviors and more easily influenced and pushed into harmful circumstances, such as drug abuse, teen pregnancy, violence, unhealthy lifestyles, trafficking, sexual abuse, physical and emotional abuse, etc.

Another study found that children with emigrated mothers were more vulnerable than those with emigrated fathers (Gao *et al.*, 2010). They also discovered that usually, when the mother left, several problems arose and the children would be more prone to risk and deviant behaviors, namely, being involved in school fights, being part of gangs and rebel groups (bad company), as well as adopting unhealthy and harmful behavior. Another concern was that the access to drugs tends to become easier, mostly because of the remittances. Thus, petty crimes, episodes of delinquency, violent behavior, as well as unplanned pregnancy may all be interpreted as symptoms of the psychological and emotional effects that the parents’ emigration caused on these children (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011).

These behaviors were specially observed during the adolescence – a transitional phase in the life of a child known for being critical for their development, growth and self-discovery. It is also during this time that the characteristic “rebellion” appears and the teens were found to be more likely to take part in illegal and criminal activities when comparing to their peers who had their parents at home. Unfortunately, when this rapid maturation takes place, there are cases of children who are left behind and consider that this is the right time to try various new paths,

namely, deviant behaviors that they did not have before their parents' departure. Moreover, parental emigration can strongly influence the LBCH to adopt these types of harmful and negative behaviors in their lives. We can observe from this that when there is no care and no attention given to these children, along with a lack of guidance, they will walk on their own way for their lives and make choices according to what they wish, many times without paying attention to the consequences that will one day affect their lives. Hence, we could affirm that one parent's empty seat can strongly impact one child's tomorrow.

At the same time, there are children who – despite missing their parents at the beginning stages of separation – will eventually start to enjoy being by themselves and not having their parents “controlling” them. For some of these children, freedom means not having their parents around and buying whatever they want, since they have more financial possibilities due to the remittances sent by their parents. Therefore, for the children who think this way, they have already become used to their parents' absence and even if they do come home for a short visit, their children no longer want them to stay like they used to. Instead of their parent's closeness, they now prefer the distance and freedom that, in their opinion, comes with it, since they have learned already how to live a life without their parents beside them and – as far as they are concerned – they can manage their lives relatively well. Some children even expressed their discomfort around their parent who had returned to visit them: “I want her to leave because I am so tired of her” (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011: 47). Hence, parents should be attentive to the danger of estrangement from their children, since their relationship with their child may be altered dramatically – for the worse – and sadly, the distance tends to become greater as children grow up.

However, the “freedom” that they think they have, is in reality a false perception of it – the negative consequences that this will bring to their lives will also be felt within the family and the new conflicts that can arise from there (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011). In reality, the LBCH tend to feel deprived of any help and guidance and want to enjoy the aid and care of their parents for many situations in their life, especially for their emotional support and advice. A life with parents is considered to be a fortunate life and many times these children are just subconsciously trying to fill the void that their parents left by using deviant behavior and material resources. However, at the end of the day, children are still children and need their parents by their side – nothing and no one can replace them nor the void that they leave in their children's lives' when they leave them behind.

3.3. – Coping Mechanisms

In this part, we will address some of the coping mechanisms that the LBCH use in order to cope with the pain of separation and loneliness. Children who were left behind by their parents tend to have a shock at the first stages of separation, however, over time, they learn to cope with their feelings and start using mechanisms to manage their emotional distress while their parents are away. The study by Cheianu-Andrei *et al.* (2011), describes the children's reaction to the separation from their parents: it begins by a protest, then once they have realized what is happening around them come the feelings of despair. In time, that will be followed by a detachment from their parents, and finally, by indifference towards them. Eventually, if they come back, the hostility and anger towards them for being left behind and alone will take its place, since many times, even if the child was left with a reliable caregiver – as far as they are concerned – they still felt alone and insecure without their parents beside them, which, for the most of them, equals to being alone nonetheless.

Despite that, children still feel the pain deeply due to the trauma derived from their parent's departure. As a way of coping with the pain of separation, some children write essays and poems to express how they feel and to help free themselves from some of the emotional burden. In the same study, children were asked to write essays and poems on the topic of family and they used these creative works as a way of revealing their emotions through the paper: "A rock full of darkness and a candle that is about to fade is my family now. (...) My family is like an altar with no chancel (...)" (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011: 49).

An excerpt from a poem called "A poem for Parents" by one of the children reads as follows:

I look through the window
And I wait for them to come
So that our house will be filled again
With happiness, smiles and bread for the table.
(...)
I want to see them smiling
I want to see them happy,
I want to be with them to know we are smiling
I want them here, I want them near.
I want them to come home
To see their children who have grown,
(...)

I am waiting for the moment
When they will soon be here
I want them to cross the border
So that we would be all near (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011: 49-50).

Another passage from the essay “My family” of a fourteen year old girl goes like this:

I can almost see them waiting for me at the door with their eyes full of tears and reaching for us to hold us and kiss us with longing and love and I can see them being happy that they have us and I can see them praying to the icon every single night and us eating home-made bread. What a wonderful word the family is (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011: 51).

These are only some of the creative works made by these children, but through these heartfelt words one can already identify the deep longing and sadness that they are experiencing, while, at the same time, providing us with a glimpse into the lives of these children. This is one of the coping mechanisms that is used in order to ease their emotional distress, however, as helpful as it can be, the physical distance between them and their parents is still there and certainly, their warm presence will always be the most welcomed option for these children.

The same study revealed that the LBCH do not have the necessary emotional experiences for a harmonious development of their personalities, being that “A child’s mind has a continuous necessity of emotional fulfillment” (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011: 45), which shows the importance of having a healthy emotional state and a secure environment for these children. The intense negative emotions that they experience when their parents leave, have the power to influence their mental health significantly, reduce their positive growth and limit the development of relations based on trust and affection when it comes to interacting with other people (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011).

Nonetheless, finding appropriate and helpful coping mechanisms can still be helpful for the LBCH and can help them to navigate through the irregular emotions of the process of separation, which can bring some comfort to their day-to-day lives. Having a good support network, a friend to confide in the times of need or just someone to talk to – might make the difference between having a good or a bad day for these children.

3.4. – Devastating Consequences: Abuse, Abortion, Depression and Suicide

Among the LBCH, the most prevalent emotional problems were found to be connected to unhappiness, fantasies of running away from home, sadness and suicidal ideas (Valtolina & Colombo, 2012). Thus, when discussing the negative consequences that parental absence generates on the lives and emotional health of the LBCH, one cannot overlook that some consequences are more serious and devastating than others, and these will have an even stronger impact on these children's lives.

Some of the respondents in the study by Cheianu-Andrei *et al.* (2011), were proof of this fact, as there were unfortunately cases of minors that suffered through difficult situations and experiences that will affect and have a tremendous long-term impact on the moral, physical and psychological health of these children, as well as on their future lives altogether, with the consequences often being transferred into their adulthood.

These difficult situations are devastating happenings regarding, for instance, cases of abortions from unplanned and unexpected pregnancies, suicide attempts and frequent child abuse cases – be it in the form of sexual abuse, physical abuse or psychological abuse. In the case of abortion and teen pregnancy, the need for emotional and maternal support is evident, since a girl that suffers alone, desperately needs her mother's embrace and counsel, as well as someone to talk to and advise the minor with wise decisions accordingly.

According to Lucia Caciuc, – the director of the Municipal Direction for the Protection of Children's Rights in Chişinău – when we are talking about these cases it is regarding a child having another child and who has not fully lived their own childhood yet, which makes these young ones even more vulnerable and susceptible to emotional instability, being that oftentimes these young girls resort to suicide attempts or abandon their children (Stiri.md, 2018).

Connected to the emotional instability are the disorders of depression and the negative feelings related to it. According to the studies that have been mentioned in this research, when analysing adolescents who were left behind by their parents when they were still young children, these presented more feelings of anxiety and depression when compared to their peers. The ailment of depression – that is characterized by a deep feeling of being helpless and experiencing only sorrow – goes hand in hand with the feelings of loneliness and insecurity, which can take a toll on the child's psychological health and produce serious emotional danger that can lead to irreversible consequences. Furthermore, studies have found that the feelings of abandonment and symptoms of depression, persisted well after the initial period of parental absence (Valtolina & Colombo, 2012).

Additionally, depression is often linked with suicide, since this mental ailment frequently takes these children to unsafe terrains – studies show that there has been suicide cases among the LBCH (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011). The negative consequences that the LBCH go through due to the parental absence, influence significantly their mental health. Thus, feelings of loneliness, helplessness, extreme sadness, low self-confidence and the feeling of being unwanted, among other emotions, are a constant in these children's lives, which eventually leads them into a blind alley, as they feel overwhelmed and crumble under the weight of these destructive emotions. Still according to the same author, research also showed that one third of the children displayed serious symptoms of depression and difficulty in interpersonal relationships, which in some cases led the children to having suicidal thoughts (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011).

Moreover, Media around the country has shown the reality of the LBCH through various news, that show the ordeals that they go through while their parents are absent from their lives, among them being the upsetting cases of suicide (Olaru, 2009; Natalia Costaş, 2016). These cases have been associated with the lack of parental care and the added responsibilities that these children face while their parents are away, while at the same time feeling lonely and that no one is there for them – which aggravates their emotional state.

On the other hand, there are children who have the help of their caregivers and extended family beside them, yet despite the encouragement and support, these children still feel extremely lonely and feel as though they cannot take it anymore. It is upsetting to know that even when trying to give the child a net of support, he/she still cannot go on, because as much as someone can be by their side and do their best to fill in the void left by the parents, children still need their parents – and for them they are irreplaceable. Truly, no person or amount of positive encouragement and care has the ability to replace a child's parents, and no one else has the ability to mend the heart's longing if the one that these young ones really need is not there by their side. Hence, for some children, having that encouragement and support makes all the difference between falling apart and between getting up and keep going, while for others, this support might not be enough when comparing to the presence of their parents beside them. For some, that is just enough at the moment, while for others – they need a bit more of care. People are different and children are different from one another as well, so one situation is not the same, thus, all need to be handled with care and support.

Concerning the child abuse cases, the results of the study carried out by Cheianu-Andrei *et al.* (2011), have showed that there were frequent cases of child abuse amongst the LBCH, and even if the neglect and emotional abuse endured by these children cause severe damage to

the mental and personality development of a child, somehow these types of abuse are being tolerated or even justified by the children's poor situation, the absence of their parents, situational behaviours, etc.

These children suffer a deep trauma that will greatly impact them and can even compromise their future. Regarding the cases of sexual abuse, the (unjust) shame that they feel is also apparent through the results of the study, since for instance, one of the respondents had hidden this experience, but nonetheless, noted that her dream was to "escape Moldova" (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011: 56). According to the same author, this can be explained by the transfer of the negative emotions towards the aggressor. The tendency to move away from the aggressor was also observed during one of the discussions with a friend of this child. Another respondent had revealed that she was sexually abused – which allowed to expose the mental traumas that this child had suffered.

Besides the cases of sexual abuse, there were also cases of physical and psychological abuse, for example, the case of a child that was left with her father to be taken care of while the mother went abroad for work. The father kept exploiting her, she had to work a lot and she was frequently beaten. This context of hardship and suffering made her commit two suicide attempts, since the girl was constantly scared of her father and the situation was overwhelming her. Here is one of the girl's messages that she would frequently send to one of her friends: "I would not wish for anybody else to have a life like mine. I cannot stand the pain and I cannot live with a fool like him. I am going crazy. I don't want to live, nobody cares about me, and I'm all alone" (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011: 57). The despair and helplessness conveyed by this message are evident and it is not difficult to understand that the experiences suffered by this child were too much to bear for her and this eventually led her to suicide attempts. Unfortunately, cases like these among the LBCH are frequent and desperate situations can lead them to act upon it with desperate measures, since they are overwhelmed by the negative emotions and experiences that tend to be consistent in their day to day life. Consequently, cases of abuse can conduct children to mental breakdowns and, ultimately, to suicide attempts.

Psychology shows that painful experiences that take place in the family create the basis of a particular character in these children, called the "basis of anxiety" (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011). This means that in this case, the child develops feelings of helplessness and abandonment and is also prone to the fear of being among other people, while having feelings of deception, anger, betrayal, envy and is also more open to committing offences. The child loses confidence in their own capabilities, can also become aggressive and is unable to defend themselves (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011).

The research also shows that children who grow up without love and spiritual closeness from their family are generally passive, indifferent and they are more likely to spend their emotional energy in search of emotional security. Moreover, the results of the same study prove that the emotional life of the children who are deprived of their parent's care in their lives is characterized by disappointment, the feeling of being lied to, and the feeling of betrayal – as some of these children have expressed: “When she left she actually lied to us (...)”; “I felt abandoned (...)” (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011: 44).

When observing all the negative and emotionally exhausting experiences that these vulnerable children go through, one can associate a LBCH's life to an emotional “roller coaster”, which in time, will reap the results that no parent would want for their children. According to the authors, this array of numerous emotions can cause a process called “emotional disadvantage”, that happens when a child is exposed to stressful and negative experiences – which can, in turn, worsen the process of mental development in a child, hinder the creation of positive relationships based on mutual trust with other people, affect taking on new social roles and impede the development of emotional communication (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011: 58).

Moreover, another particularity disclosed by the research alludes to the length of the emotional experiences felt by the LBCH. Most of the children that were interviewed in this study (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011), strongly express the longing that they feel for their parents, while at the same time, the happiness they feel when they meet again, and finally, the consequent sadness when they leave again. This irregular range of feelings translate the emotional instability that can be found in the life of the LBCH, and since they need a stable environment to grow and develop their emotional intelligence appropriately, this instability does not serve that purpose. Besides, according to what was observed, these types of emotions persist in time, regardless if the people who caused them are present or not (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011).

On the other hand, one can argue that all of the damage done to the LBCH while the parents are missing can be restored once they come back to visit their children, or when they take them along to live together in the receiving country. Although it may seem that the negative impact can disappear once the parents are home, sadly, the reality is much different. The study revealed that even if the parents leave and the children join them afterwards in the host country – the ones who were left behind right at the beginning still had more signs of depression, when compared to the children who emigrated together with their parents at the time of their emigration (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011).

Therefore, the parent's presence is of utmost importance in these children's lives, so that the probability of these devastating situations taking place can become lower or non-existent at all, thus protecting the LBCH who are at risk and minimizing the negative impact that it can be left on them.

3.5. – Are the Left Behind Children Different?

Regarding the stereotypes about the LBCH, these tend to go in different directions, with some viewing the children as being vulnerable, having only troubles in their lives and emotional instability, while others view them as being fortunate, due to their access to financial stability. Others even envy them, since the popular opinion is that they can buy what they want and not be worried about material goods, when comparing to their peers, who might be in a worse situation – financially speaking. Still for others, they see the LBCH as being arrogant and ungrateful, even angry with their parents for having left them, while at the same time still enjoying the benefits of a prosperous life built by their parents. Whatever the truth behind these stereotypes may be – in the light of what we have been addressing in this paper – the reality is that each child is different and should be seen that way, regardless of what the stereotypes and misconceptions about the LBCH tend to argue.

According to the studies that we have been analyzing thus far, the results tend to confirm an array of different attitudes that the LBCH display while being left alone. According to Cheianu-Andrei *et al.* (2011), during focus-group discussions, children whose parents did not leave expressed their regret regarding some of the LBCH – affirming that they tend to adopt an abnormal behavior when without their parents, such as skipping school, smoking, drinking, and lying, among other behaviors. However, other peers whose parents also did not leave, had another opinion, since they justified the LBCH's actions as a way of finding consolation in order to cope with their parent's departure – thus, on the surface they make bad choices and are viewed as “bad children”, but in reality, they are hurting on their own and want their parents to come back just as any other child would want.

The interviewed went further and enumerated some of the differences that, in their opinion, were found between them and the LBCH: in the way they showed their emotions – they might use words that hurt in order to show their feelings and they also frequently mentioned to others that they would like their parents to be near them; having an improved financial situation – they had more money than the children whose parents were at home, they dressed differently and when they went to a store they could afford buying everything that they wanted. Plus, at school, they also had money to buy all the food that they wished, while the

children whose parents were not abroad did not have the liberty of affording to buy everything that they craved. Moreover, they had an aggressive and deviant behavior – since, according to them, children whose parents are at home usually behave properly and are obedient, whereas the LBCH behave rudely, smoke and drink. Also, according to the experts that were interviewed, usually, the LBCH whose behavior was poor – did not want to get involved in daily activities at school, as they expected everything to be done for them. It was also mentioned that “(...) they don’t know what “work” or “I did it myself” means, they always wait for their parents to give them everything (...)” (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011: 63).

Additionally, the study also revealed that some LBCH see themselves as incapable of spending their money in a rational way, which might be related to trying to fill the void of separation by using material goods. All attempts to fill the emptiness were proven to be superficial and ended up being fruitless. For instance, sometimes they bought things that were unnecessary and even useless for them, proving that the void left by their parent’s absence could not be filled with something else other than their presence.

On the other hand, and still on the topic of finances, the financial dependence on their parents is a constant for some LBCH and the experts point out the damage that this will cause in the near future for these children and their parents likewise, since they were accustomed to receiving everything that they wanted without the need of having to work for it themselves. Therefore, when these parents who are abroad will not be able to send them money anymore, what will happen to these children and what kind of attitude and behavior will they have towards their parents, who by that time will already be old? This is a particular concern that cannot be taken lightly when mentioning the negative impact and consequences that parental emigration has on these left behind children and even on their approach to life and attitude while having a whole life that is still ahead of them.

Despite the different perceptions connected to the image of the LBCH, one thing is certain – in the end, children are children everywhere around the world and the meaning of it is directly linked with the fact that they need their parents’ presence, love and support constantly around and in their lives.

As a conclusion to this part, we have addressed the impact of parental emigration on the psycho-social development of the LBCH in Moldova. In effect, we have seen that a range of specific needs of the LBCH are not met when their parents leave them behind, such as security, affection and safety – which explains the negative emotions that they feel during the time of parental absence in their lives.

This absence triggers emotional weaknesses in the children – the more time they live with lacking affection, the more negative effects there will be in their lives. These effects can grow to be irreversible and more serious in time. The background for this emotional baggage is not a secure environment for these children to live their lives. In addition, the intense negative emotions felt by the LBCH significantly influence their mental health, reduce their life potential and limit the development of relationships with other people based on trust and affection. They also hinder the child's normal psychological development and raise difficulties when facing new situations in life. It also impacts negatively other aspects, such as the development of social competences and the perception of self-image of the children. Due to these negative experiences, a stressful character is developed within the child.

The results of the studies presented revealed the fact that children do not like unexpected changes in their life, since this throws off their balance and emotional stability.

Others might argue that if a child has an improved financial situation, then the emotional damage might be lightened, however, studies show that even after the economic situation of the family had improved, the LBCH were still twice as likely to have psychological and emotional problems when comparing to their peers (Valtolina & Colombo, 2012). The damage was also noticeably greater if the mother was the one to emigrate.

Moreover, the interactions with the LBCH through various studies, prove that children who are deprived of parental care perceive their lives through a set of emotional words: longing, pain, sadness, loneliness, anger, helplessness, worries, orphan, etc. This set of negative emotions brings about a strong impact on the children's self-image, thus affecting them deeply even further into their adult lives. The results go on to reveal that there are differences between the life of children who live with their parents and the life of the LBCH. Children who are deprived of parental care see themselves as children who have more worries, as someone who has to be more responsible and without control from their parents. They are also subject to different stereotypes and perceptions from others, with some of these holding some truth to them – to some extent – while for other children the reality might be different.

Furthermore, there are also a number of different factors that can influence the child's capability to cope with the separation, namely, the frequency and content of the communication between the emigrant parents and their children, their relationship closeness, the age and gender of the child at the time of separation and whether or not the child has a strong system of support that provides care when needed (Vanore *et al.*, 2015).

On the other side, the results from the studies regarding the follow-up of former LBCH that are now adults, are not very encouraging, since out of all the LBCH that go through the

hardships of separation, only a small number of these children grow up and manage to adjust themselves to their new living circumstances in a balanced manner, whereas the majority of them are not able to find adequate strategies to cope with their new reality even as adults.

What is more, many of the children were found to try filling the void of their parents with material goods, but that yielded no result. In reality, we can collect many material goods throughout a lifetime but we only have two parents. If we do not spend that limited time enjoying their presence while they are still here, what will we do when they leave? Time with parents is to be cherished – and these children deserve it – no one or nothing should take that gift away from them, not even financial difficulties, since one can have money and financial ease, but is the money really everything? For these children, the answer has been a clear negative.

Still on the topic of economic improvement, in the study by Cheianu-Andrei *et al.* (2011), a significant number of children who were asked to make a choice between “having their mother home” or “a better life, with more money and things” (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011: 64), still chose the option of having the presence of their mother beside them, thus confirming the fact that even when financial abundance was at stake, the children still chose having their parents near them, which, at first glance, might be the unpopular option for many. However, for these children the route that they have chosen makes much more sense to them than the other seemingly abundant life.

There are many different studies and methods used to research the subject of emigration and the impact that it causes on the children’s psycho-social development, nonetheless, it has been revealed that it is a difficult task to come up with predefined solutions for everyone. As Vanore *et al.* (2015) states, the connection between parental migration and the psycho-social outcomes for the children is not linear and uniform – many factors influence these outcomes and further research is needed. Also, we must remember that no child is equal, and that one child does not embody all of the LBCH.

In the next part, we will be addressing the impact on the education when it comes to the LBCH and how that can affect them as students and future educated adults.

CHAPTER 4 – The Impact on the LBCH’s Education

We have already addressed the matter of the impact on the psycho-social development on the LBCH, hence, as a logical continuation of the analysis that has been developed so far in the

present research, let us now address the matter on education, namely, the impact of the parental emigration on the education outcomes for the LBCH. The parental absence can have great influence on the educational journey of these children and the struggles of the LBCH can be later reflected in their learning process.

Parents, teachers, caregivers, the school that the child is attending, the Government and even the society where the child is included – all are interrelated between each other and play their specific role in the educational sphere where the child is encompassed. These institutions can influence the child's motivation while attending school and even their school results. One cannot forget that the child is in a process of ongoing development – and that involves the educational scope as well. A child can be easily influenced by every single one of these entities. Besides, children can even be influenced by themselves, through their own attitudes, perceptions and emotional state towards school, for example, and what meaning that space holds for them.

Education is a major concern for the emigrant parents, and one of the main reasons that they leave their home country – since education implies having available resources at hand, these parents emigrate in order to be able to support the educational expenses of their children, as well as to improve their lives and their future. Hence, this improvement is done through providing their children with an appropriate education. When it comes to the prospects of education opportunities, emigrating can help to solve the issue of lack of resources and help finance the educational expenses, which in time, will be even greater for the parents, since as the children grow up and further their education level, their needs also increase alongside with them. Hence, the parents' income will be insufficient when comparing to the associated costs that they will have to cover.

This also creates the dilemma of parental emigration, especially when it is about the educational context of their children. Parents feel the need of constantly having to emigrate or stay for longer periods of time in the host country, so that they can finance their children's education by sending remittances home. Moreover, parents are divided between the options of going back home – because their child needs them – or staying in the host country and keep working so that they can send money back home – which, in their point of view, is also needed.

Another part of this dilemma rests in the choice of what to use the money for: either to improve the family's living conditions, or rather use it to take their children's education forward. Usually, parents want their children to continue their education, and they will not accept other professions other than the “popular” ones, such as being a doctor, a lawyer or an economist

(Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011). Thus, parents feel the need to continue working abroad in order to make the education dream come true for their children.

Moreover, it is a rather well-known fact in today's society that education opens doors to new opportunities and to a better future. Failing the education part in a child's life is to hinder their potential and to bring them closer to the brink of poverty and to struggle to cope with basic necessities. The access to appropriate education services also leads to challenges in the social inclusion of the child, since it can reduce the child's prospects of getting a basic education, a well-paid job and a profession that they might love (UNICEF, 2016d). Thus, parents decide in favour of emigration, since they are aware of these struggles and want to avoid the despair and the ultimate poverty that might come into their households. At the same time, they also want to gift their child with a proper education that will empower their future.

4.1. – The Value of Remittances to Education

We cannot deny that despite all of the negative consequences that parental emigration brings, one positive fact is that it also allows remittances to be sent home, which gives the LBCH the opportunity to attend better schools and have access to quality education. Especially for the children whose dream is to one day attend University, the value of remittances is of particular importance. In Moldova, providing a child with quality education means that the family should be expecting to spend a great amount of money – probably more than in other countries. Firstly, paying for all the necessary school supplies can amount to a hefty price, especially if the family has more than one child. Remittances are helpful in this matter, since when it comes to the preparation of yet another school year – each new year comes with various requirements and material resources that many times families do not have the money for. Books, backpacks, pencils, etc. – all are expensive for the families. Also, with each passing year, the school tends to require of the students even more supplies and materials than what was asked before.

Another common expense in Moldova – that is also connected to the country's culture, it is regarding the students' apparel. Students are required and expected (by the school and society mainly) to present themselves in formal clothing (or school uniform, if applicable) and not just in any available clothes that they may have, being this considered a cultural matter as well. In other countries, usually the clothes that students present themselves with at school do not have that much interference in the way others will treat and view them. However, in Moldova, students are expected to come with formal wear and be the version of their most presentable selves while attending school. It is also true that a student could go to school in more "simpler" clothing, however, the society and the school's expectations mainly – are for

the children to be very well dressed and groomed while attending school, and failing to present themselves in that manner can bring the uncomfortable feeling of “not fitting in” or just looked at as being “different” both by their peers, the society and their educational community overall. People can be harsh when voicing out their opinions while judging others, which can make some children feel as though they are “less than...” and they may not be able to avoid the negative comparison, while feeling uncomfortable and unhappy around others.

The problem with this, is that formal wear costs more money and it adds up to the bills of the family when preparing the child for school. In the study by Cheianu-Andrei *et al.* (2011), some children affirmed regarding this: “In August we bought clothing and footwear. I spent over 600 lei” (“lei” is the currency from Moldova). Also, adding to this is the money that needs to be spent on books and other school supplies: “We spend money on clothing, we need to buy books at school”; “Sometimes I ask for more money as I need to buy textbooks for school” (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011: 109). On top of that, parents also need to give some spending money to their children, for a meal or for any other additional expenses that may arise.

Another cultural related expense, which can also be connected to the fine line of corruption in the country and can even portray the inequality in the educational sphere – is the practice of gift giving to teachers. In Moldova, it is a custom to offer gifts to the teachers to show the parents’ appreciation for them – especially on the teacher’s day and other related festivities – or simply when it is “required” of the parents to do so. However, there are families who cannot afford to offer gifts to the teachers when they are struggling to make ends meet. Regrettably, some teachers may not view this favorably and expect the gifts to be offered even in the cases of financial difficulties. They tend to be unkind and even unfair to the children whose families cannot afford this.

In the same study, some children revealed that they felt their teacher treating them differently than their peers who gave the “expected” gifts. Here is the case of a grandmother (62 years old), who is the caregiver for her two grandsons while their parents are away. They did send remittances, but these were scarce, hence, the grandmother did not have the money to always buy gifts when it was required by the teachers of her grandchildren: “The boys are already going to the high school, and I have to pay for it. I wrote a Demand to the high school saying that I cannot pay for their education. Sometimes I also need to give money for presents for teachers and when I have it I give it, when I don’t...I don’t” (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011: 110). The grandmother also affirmed that students who have a poor financial situation are treated differently by their teacher: “If you are not like everybody they notice that. They needed 30 lei each for making New Year presents for their teacher. I had to find some money, it’s only

once a year but I don't give it every time, because I don't have so much" (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011: 110).

Treating every child equally should be an attainable goal in the educational context. This should also be a part of the goals and objectives of a school that is reliable and honest to what its message is spreading among its children. Thus, equally perceived children and equal education is one of the greatest goals that comes attached with a serious impact in the lives of these children – an example which they will take with them even on their future years.

Remittances are also helpful in the context of higher education. The interviewed considered the possibility to continue their education by attending the University – given that their parents would have the resources needed to meet that expectation. Many of the students were revealed to study abroad or to have aspirations for it in their future: "My sister is studying at a Romanian university" (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011: 109). Thus, since the need for the remittances sent home is increasing constantly, parents feel they must continue their emigration journey, in order to pay for the demands of their children's education and to help pay other additional expenses. Truly, the higher one goes, the greater is the cost, financially but also physically, since the parent cannot return home that soon, given that the costs with the education are considered more important than the possibility of returning home to their children. The authors also showed that, usually, the children recognize their parent's effort and are aware of the great help of the remittances in financing their education: "I want to become a doctor, to help sick people. I talked to my parents about that. My mother said that she is happy that I want to be a doctor, but I have to study a lot. I have to do my best. I know I will need a lot of money for studying medicine. That is what my parents work for" (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011: 109).

Besides, the experts also affirmed that in this case, when it comes to the educational purpose, the parents' emigration is positive due to the remittances that will contribute to their children's education, especially for the families that have a lower income: "The positive aspect is the financial situation" (p. 109). The children also agree: "To have decent clothing so that we would not feel ashamed to go to school" (p. 110), since the formal wear is seen as a positive thing, and without it, a student might not "fit in" and can even be made fun of by their peers (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011). However, if the remittances are not enough to cover all the living and educational expenses for the children back home – the situation becomes difficult. Also, one has to take into consideration that the salary that the parents work for abroad, far away from their children, is to be used for two different realities, what we could call a "double life" – since one part needs to be sent back home to their children under the form of remittances, while, at the same time, the other part needs to be used for the parent's own expenses and survival in the

receiving country. Thus, the emigrant parents are constantly financing the needs and demands of two “different worlds” – theirs and that of their own children back home.

Ultimately, remittances are – for the most part – valuable for the educational opportunities that these might offer to the LBCH. Besides, Education is extremely important for these children, mainly because it has the ability to provide a future of financial security and improved living conditions for the LBCH. However, even though remittances aid the educational opportunities, these can also be used as an instrument of discrimination upon those who do not have enough material resources and do not correspond to the culture’s view of value. Therefore, the remittances’ value can bring (mainly) positive outcomes in the context of education (Cebotari *et al.*, 2016). However, it can also be used for the negative results that are associated with not having a wealthy lifestyle, as well as not corresponding to the societies’ views on what it means to have an abundant and fulfilling life. This might bring judgement and even unreasonable treatment upon the LBCH who do not fit into that pattern.

4.2. – The Role of Parents and the Outcomes of Parental Absence

Throughout the present study, we have been revealing the impact of parental absence on the LBCH in Moldova. For the most part, we have seen that the effects were negative and provoked damage in the various life spheres of these children. When it comes to the educational context, the results were observed to be similar. Particularly when the mother was the one to emigrate, it was observed that the children were more affected not only psychologically, but also when it came to their school results and overall school performance. Moreover, there is a close connection between the psychological damage and the educational domain on the LBCH, which is translated unto their school results. Hence, if the emotional part is unstable, how can children concentrate at school and use their efforts in order to attain the best school results possible, when their thoughts and emotions are somewhere else? Taking this into account, we can observe better that the various spheres are interrelated, as well as further analyse the impact that it leaves on the LBCH.

Furthermore, another study showed that even when the children understood the need of their parents to emigrate (especially the mother) and improve the family’s living conditions, even so, their school performance still worsened, despite knowing and “approving” their parents’ decision to leave (Battistella & Conaco, 1996, as cited in Valtolina & Colombo, 2012).

According to a study by UNICEF Moldova (2006), school performance can go in two different directions: the first one and the most common – usually, there is a decline in the school results due to the lack of parental encouragement and support, thus, after their parent’s departure,

school results tend to decline. The second one is the opposite, being that in some cases, children affirmed to have felt more responsible towards school after their parents' departure and they were even more committed to have good school results, as a way of "repaying" their parent's efforts and the hardships they went through when they emigrated abroad and left their homeland in order to gift them a better life and more opportunities (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011).

Regarding the outcomes of parental absence for the children's education we can note, for instance: school dropout, less concentration, negative school results, conflicts with teachers and peers, deviant behavior, loss of interest, lack of motivation, among others (Antman, 2012). In order to analyze these consequences, let us take a closer look at these effects upon the school performance of the LBCH and how their parents can make a great difference into their school life and overall educational experience.

The first thing that we can notice concerning the parental absence is the failure to fulfill the parental duties that each parent is responsible for. Children whose parents are abroad often cannot do the same things that their peers do with their parents, for instance, spending time together, going to their children's school meetings, checking their homework or simply talking about how was school today for their child (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011). This can discourage the children and demotivate them when it comes to their school commitment, as well as the effort they are willing to make regarding their school results.

Some may say that children will not be affected by their parents' departure, since they left a carefully selected caregiver to take care of their children, in order to support them and encourage them. However, in most cases, the caregivers could not replace adequately the parents, thus, they were also not able to support the children and their school commitment, failing to motivate them when it came to give their best in their education. Not only that, but sometimes, the caregivers themselves have their own family and life, making it harder for them to give the right amount of attention and care to the children left to be taken care of by them. Therefore, even though "someone" seems to be there for them, they might still not have anyone to converse about school or to attend the school's needed activities with them, since the caregivers might not have the time for that (especially if they are working) nor available to perform all the parental duties that a child needs fulfilled in their life (Mullan & Doña-Reveco, 2013).

Still regarding the role of the caregivers when the parents are far away from their children, we must note that in Moldova, the majority of the LBCH's caregivers' are the grandparents. This can raise some difficulties, namely, they may not always be good advisors regarding school matters. Many of them lack the competence and experience to face the modern

curriculum from the school program – usually, they are not updated in the requirements of the school program nowadays and this can frustrate and discourage the children when it comes to doing well in school, since their caregiver cannot help them that much, even if unintentionally. Sadly, the grandparents themselves might also need someone to take care of them, since in some cases they can be physically helpless and already have their daily tasks and struggles themselves.

Furthermore, school is not a priority for many households (especially in the rural area), since children are required to help with the domestic duties and sometimes are left entirely responsible for it by themselves. This is clearly not appropriate for their age yet, which provokes them to grow up ahead of their time. Therefore, with so much to take care of by themselves, the added workload makes them too tired for school and its tasks, such as school projects and homework. During these years, this is supposed to be their “home work” as the expression implies. However, they are doing an adult’s job, while on top of that having to study and concentrate to have the best results at school – sometimes it can become unbearable for them and they just skip school altogether and take upfront the responsibilities that their parents assigned to them.

Moreover, these “new roles” hinder the children’s development, especially when it comes to the educational context – the children can feel too tired to attend school and unmotivated to study, since the new tasks take much of their time and energy that they would otherwise utilize for school. This can lead to school dropout and a loss of interest in the school environment and what education can do for them and its meaning for their future. The increased workload means less energy and time that they have at their disposal to dedicate to school or to play and socialize with their peers and friends – which is connected to the benefit of having the emotional support from their peers when they spend the needed time with them, since they need the emotional support and help from their friends as well (UNICEF, 2015c).

Also, experts revealed that all these new responsibilities have an impact on the way children view and attend school and on their arriving in time for the school classes (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011). In the same study by Cheianu (2011), a teacher noticed during focus group discussions that children ask permission to skip classes because they have additional tasks – the parental ones. In this context, children cannot manage their homework in the evening or at night, and they simply ignore it, or they might be physically tired from the responsibilities and added tasks that they had to perform during the day. Thus, we can say that the household tasks are the number one time and energy stealer for these children. With time, they lose interest in school and are demotivated to continue with their educational efforts. Their concentration also

diminishes considerably, and they start to view school as an added burden rather than a great opportunity.

Another particularity linked to the added responsibilities is the fact that girls are usually more affected than boys. School dropout was found to be bigger for girls than boys, mainly because they do a substantial amount of work when compared to the boys. In Moldova, the traditional mentality of the household roles prevails in the society, which is linked to the traditional roles and expectations that being born as a girl carries with it, making it normal to have traditional and outdated sex roles and views of the family members and their roles in the family and society.

This makes the girls a target for the workload that has to do with the household. Many still believe in the traditional views that a girl should do most of the work when it comes to the household work, such as cleaning, washing, taking care of the siblings, cooking, and so on. Some girls were found to even abandon school so that they could take on this role that is expected of them, by the family and the society alike (NBS, 2010). Moreover, in Moldova, researchers found out that girls are more prone to show lower performance and lower school attendance, since, most likely, the new household responsibilities and also taking care of their younger siblings will be entrusted to them, thus the girls tend to leave school on the side and take on the role that was of their mother – the housemaker and caregiver of the family – hence, cooking, cleaning, and so on become a part of their daily life instead of worrying about their education (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011).

Usually, dropout rates from school are higher for girls than boys – the girls have a bigger workload at home and at the fields (if in the rural area) and generally more responsibilities than the boys. This affects their school performance more than that of the boys. In most countries the traditional gender roles persist – so the situation is similar even though when talking about different countries, cultures and different backgrounds (Valtolina & Colombo, 2012).

Also, girls are usually the ones to take care of the younger siblings, which becomes the new acquired "job" of the elder daughters. They take the role of the mother and the young ones will start viewing the eldest as their parental figure. Such occurrence is titled as "parentification" (D'Emilio, *et al.*, 2007, as cited in Valtolina & Colombo, 2012). Inevitably, they are forced to mature sooner than expected. However, in the end, there is no one left to take care of these daughters – not having support for their student life, as well as help with their additional responsibilities, can also present itself as a burden and discourage them from not making a big effort to excel at their education prospects.

Another great issue that appears when the parents are abroad is the lack of accountability in the lives of the LBCH. Many times, they have no one to monitor them and to keep them accountable for their school responsibilities. Usually, the lack of attention and accountability means less motivation and interest in school. The possibility of school dropout is also very present, as well as leading up to the development of a deviant behavior. Children left alone might be left to their own devices and are more prone to associate themselves with bad company that can influence their behavior negatively. Indeed, bad company corrupts the good behavior. Their friends can influence them to go on wrong and dangerous paths for their life. In the same study by Cheianu-Andrei *et al.* (2011), we have the case of a child who offered to another child the possibility to make “easy money” by providing sexual services – since that minor was already involved and offered the same “opportunity” to one of the friends (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011). This shows the serious danger and repercussions that can arise when these children involve themselves with bad company.

Moreover, usually the labour migrant parents provide reduced control and support to their children in their educational path, which can generate low and occasional attendance or even the LBCH’s dropout from school. Some of the responses during the interviews done in the study by Cheianu (2011), demonstrate this: “A lot of children whose parents are abroad refuse to study, skip school”; “Well, the mother is not home, the father is also absent, who’s checking them?” and “(...) there is no one to check their notebooks” (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011: 119). Yet another study (Valtolina & Colombo, 2012), suggests that family factors are important to get good school results, since the family has an orientating and monitoring role, being of utmost importance when it comes to guiding the children who are still developing into being a well-rounded individual. Thus, the lack of an authoritative and protective parental presence is of vital importance when it comes to the children’s school results and their overall positive educational route.

What is more, we can say that the topic of accountability in someone’s life is important even for adults, since if grownups already need it, what can we say about a child? A child needs it even more and needs the guidance and accountability in order to progress in life and in school. Therefore, a child needs to have accountability, to be accompanied by someone who sees how he/she is doing and help them on their way to a positive improvement, especially when it comes to their school path. For example, in the study of Cebotari *et al.* (2016), 97% of Moldovan children talked about school at least once a week with their migrant parents (given that they maintained their contact), which shows the importance of sharing this topic and taking decisions

along with their parents – the accountability and guidance are important for a positive educational path.

Another way parents can demonstrate accountability to their children is by being present in their child's life even when far away – by calling their child's teacher for example, or when going back for a visit at home, parents should go to school to be informed of how their child is doing overall and also regarding their education. The child needs to know that they are being “checked up”. Children are not always sure that their parents who are abroad know about their school situation or how well they are doing with their school results. One interviewee commented on this: “The parent goes abroad for a better life for his child but the child is not proud of them, he/she is not motivated, and is not doing as well as before” (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011: 113).

If the child does not feel the parental authority and their protective presence – this can discourage them and make them lose interest in school. A part of the natural process of the parent-child communication is when the child shares the school life experiences and the daily happenings with his/her parents. If the child does not have access to that, the interest for the school and the effort to do well might be lost and weakened. A child can lose their confidence and interest for studying. Parents should not abandon their children. They not only need their parents' presence for their emotional stability and development, but also for their educational experience – they feel the need to share their conquests and achievements at school with their parents. It is like the school world loses its “enchantment” when not shared with their beloved parents. Indeed, school can lose its charm in the child's eyes when their parents are not a part of it. What is a child's life without the characteristic part of coming home after school and narrating the day's events or exciting news to their parents and see them joining in their excitement and joy for the typical school atmosphere?

Some might argue that children do not like to be controlled nor told what to do, however, we have observed the opposite (for the most part) in the interviews done in the study by Cheianu-Andrei *et al.* (2011). A child affirmed: “There is no one to tell me: come on, study!” – Children value their parents' intervention and encouragement to get to work and study. How many times a child encouraged by his /her parent's gains “new strength” in their studying efforts and is encouraged to keep going and striving to do the best that they can when it comes to their education? This might happen probably more times than we think.

The lack of control and accountability raises another issue – this favours the liberty to do things outside of their responsibilities, as well as behave in an improper manner, without particularly thinking about the consequences that might follow. Also, for a parent that is abroad,

it is more difficult to see how their child is really doing and to see how they are coping with school. At times, taking advantage of the lack of monitoring and their parents' absence in their lives, children might stop doing their homework, for instance, whereas if the parent is at home they usually ask to check their homework, showing to their child that they do care about them and their education. Certainly, accountability is key for children, especially when it comes to their school efforts. They need a "little push" to keep going and not get behind. Adults are usually also like this, so how can we not help children even more than we already do for the adults?

An interviewed child demonstrated their need for accountability from their parents through these words: "(...) whereas when they are gone they call you in the evening to ask you if you did your homework you cannot be truthful, but say "yes, mom, I did my homework" and she is not there to see it" (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011: 113), which clearly shows the behaviour described previously when it comes to their homework and school attitude.

Additionally, as we have already mentioned previously, the development of deviant behaviour in the school context was also observed among the LBCH: "There are children who are causing troubles whenever they are with friends, in the class, to their teachers; they are not attentive at lessons, they talk badly even to their teachers, which also affects the class" (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011: 113).

On the other side, some might argue that a child whose parents are at home can also behave in this way, and it can be true, however, we cannot deny that the "distance factor" plays an important role in this, since the closer the parents are, generally, it will be easier to solve the issue, monitor the child and communicate with him/her. Conversely, once again taking the distance factor into account, distance is still distance nonetheless and this might hinder the good intentions of the parents in solving these issues, while at the same time it creates obstacles for having an open dialogue with the child.

We cannot oversee that due to emigration, the decrease in relations between children and parents tends to be emphasised with each passing day that parents are separated from their children. Even though many parents take advantage of the available technological resources in order to stay in touch with their children, still the wall of distance continues to be present and palpable. This might bring many misunderstandings and the lack of an adequate communication between the vital parent-child relationship. An interviewee noted: "They see each other on the Internet but there's always this distance between them" (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011: 118). Hence, these issues presented in the light of the educational context, can influence negatively the children when it comes to their educational aspirations.

On the other hand, some parents show a reversed role in their behaviour towards their children, when they try to fulfil their emotional needs through them – they think that by offering them material goods and an easy life, children will “reward” them by having good school results and making them proud. Thus, some parents give money instead of their presence to their children. This is setting these children up for failure and for the lack of a good role model in their lives. It is a recipe for disaster, and more so when it comes to their education path. Some experts revealed regarding these parents: “They offer money to buy back their love through things” and also “The lack of love and spiritual warmth is compensated by phones, expensive clothing, jewels, equipment and I want to say that those parents who compensate for their absence, they often transform their children into the victims of crime” (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011: 118).

We cannot forget to mention the fact that children are still developing and learning their self-control capacities – they need their parent’s guidance for that. Parents need to be present, and even if far away, they need to show an interest in their child, by visiting them more often, among other actions of care. However, when there is no one there to monitor them and if they see their parents’ lack of interest, children can also stop caring – they see that there are better places to be than at school and start seeing it as a loss of their time when they attend it. Hence, a present parent, even though far away, can still help motivate their own children and can make a great difference in the way the child views school and applies the efforts into getting good school results (HelpAge International, 2010). An invested parent can influence an invested child into his/her own education. However, the opposite is also true – a parent who rarely shows interest for his/her child and lacks proper communication and affection for their children, harms the child not only emotionally, but also might bring negative results to their educational prospects and attitude towards the school environment. A good parent-child relationship can protect against many negative consequences that might arrive in the LBCH’s lives.

Moreover, it is important to state that the demonstration of interest and affection from the parents, comes even before the departure (Farahotare.md, 2016), – showing that they care might simply begin with a visit to their child’s school to let the school know that they are about to leave and to ask how they can prepare the child better for it. Still, the study has showed that only a few parents come to school to talk with the teacher about their child and how he/she is doing and to let them know that they are leaving to work abroad (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011). Also, only a minority keep calling the teacher to ask about how their child is doing in school – these parents preserve their interest on their children and are more involved in their life, which

is vital for a beneficial parent-child relationship, as well as for the motivation of the children regarding their education.

Children may also be discouraged to study due to their parent's emigration – watching their parents emigrate, these children might be more prone to emigration themselves one day (Démurger, 2015). Also, if they think about emigrating in the future, their motivation to attend school at the present may decline. Thus, they might think that they do not need school anymore and that their future is guaranteed because when they grow up they can just emigrate like their parents did, in order to find a better life and better conditions outside of their home country. Misperception that emigration solves any problem, and that they after all do not need school and studying to achieve a good paying job and decent living conditions in their home country, can make studying seen as useless by them. Hence, the perception of the world changes for these children, who think it is preferable to emigrate, rather than studying and getting an education. Therefore, the “waiting to migrate attitude”, as talked before, leads them “to lose sight of their commitment to school activities” and the fact that education really matters for their future, being that emigration does not mean that all of the problems will be solved easily, as some of these children might think when they watch their parents emigrating for better living conditions (Démurger, 2015; Mullan & Doña-Reveco, 2013).

In order to conclude this part, let us note a fact that makes all the difference when it comes to the role of the parents in their children's education: one cannot forget that – ultimately – the real education starts at home, not at school, and this order cannot be switched, in order to obtain the benefit of education both for children and for the school environment. With this in mind, the opinion of the representatives of the Moldovan Ministry of Education in this context is extremely relevant when it comes to the subject of education in the lives of these children: it is the parent's responsibility to educate the child and also to ensure their right to education: “It is important not to forget that the first educator of the child is their own family (...)” (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011: 119). Indeed, the first educator of the child is their own family, which makes us affirm that the family role here is very important and plays a big part in the success of the child's educational reality. Hence, family has the most important role to play in this equation – in the lives and futures of these children.

We can also affirm that the school's role is also very vital in the life of a developing child and represents much more than “just” education, academically speaking – it has the capacity of forming individuals with a collection of skills that might be irreplaceable in their lives (Antman, 2012). Hence, family is the one to educate the child at home first, yet, having access to education can be the missing piece of a much bigger puzzle that contributes to the

development of a complete individual that needs to be prepared for life – both for their present and for their future. Certainly, school can do much more for a child than just fulfilling its academic role – it can form and rightfully prepare an individual for the life ahead of them.

4.3. – The Role of Teachers

Let us now focus our attention on the role of the teachers, since when it comes to the LBCH's education, teachers play a very important role in this context. When the parents are absent, the ones who will be their “eyes and ears” and the closest to the children – are usually the teachers. We can compare the children's teachers to a bridge that fills the gap between the parents, children and school. This connection makes the communication between these parties much easier, and when they work together, its benefit reaches the children.

The teachers' intervention was proved to be mostly positive in the school dynamics and related to the parent-child relationship (Antman, 2012). Usually, they were found to be receptive and supportive when it comes to the struggles that the LBCH experience and to offer them support and understanding whenever they needed.

The negative side was only in the cases where they would treat children differently based on their social status – as we have already discussed – or when they could not be trusted by the children, especially when they needed their teacher's attention and guidance when going through a problem in their lives and they needed a close, helping hand. Often, if the child loses the trust in the teacher, they will try to solve the problems on their own, since they are already lacking the support of their migrant parents, and they sometimes feel as if their teachers cannot be trusted.

Having said that, teachers usually work for the benefit of the children, and they can be a role model for them, especially when the parents are absent from their lives. Indeed, teachers have the privileged position when it comes to knowing how the child is doing and can offer the specific support and help for what the child needs. If the child attends school frequently, usually the teacher is the one that gets to spend the most hours per day with the child, which makes them have an almost immediate access and glimpse into their lives. This “teacher power” can be used for their benefit and support.

Teachers usually keep in touch with the parents, consulting them and sharing information about their children's behaviour and also providing the family with advice on how to solve certain problems. They can be the parents' “eyes and ears at school” – which can be positive, given the need of the children to be guided but having their parents far away. A few parents come to school before emigrating, so that they can talk with their child's teacher and

communicate their decision of leaving. This is the case of parents who care about their children still and are interested in their school life, who seek to maintain close contact with them. However, according to Cheianu, (2011), the number of emigrant parents who frequently and effectively communicate with the teachers and try to find solutions for their child's problems is small.

Teachers have the opportunity to become more personally involved when a certain situation calls for it, by providing support and guidance to the child who is going through seasons of pain and lacks self-encouragement. Teachers can be a source of guide and support to the LBCH, a trustworthy counsellor that they can confide in and run to when in need of help. Teachers are closer to the children and are able to detect problems that may arise usually earlier, mainly because of the proximity factor. The study found that usually teachers are supportive and understanding towards the LBCH and their struggles, since they were found to be receptive to the children's challenges while alone and they would help them navigate through the difficult seasons (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011). Thus, the confidence in the teachers in a friendly school environment helps the children to integrate well in the school group and to continue their education with success.

Moreover, the role of the class teacher cannot be limited only to the class education – in the academic sense of the term – but also implies working to provide a connection between school, children and the family. The interaction among all these parties is important. Teachers are also responsible for behavioural and educational interventions in the life of the LBCH.

For the benefit of the children, the school and the teachers need to work closely together with the parents – teachers can contact the parents about their children and parents can do the same. In the educational context, an open dialogue between all of those involved is positive and can be of great help when resolving possible issues that may arise while the parents are abroad. In the case of a parent who might have lost the interest into his/her own child's life, the caregiver or guardian of the child will usually be the one to take on that role.

On the other side, we know that a teacher can even apply their best efforts to help a child, but if a parent fails to contact them about how their child is doing, the communication gap will make it harder for the teachers and children alike when it comes to a positive educational experience. A parent who is abroad needs to keep having a healthy amount of communication with their children and their children's teacher. Contacting their child's teacher in order to be updated about their child's school results can provide the accountability needed for the children to present good results in school, as well as improving their interest in their studies.

Furthermore, teachers can also “make or break” the school experience for the children. They can make an impact in how the children view school and their attitude for their education. That is why it is important to leave a positive impression on the children and treat them with all the fairness and equality that a teacher’s job entitles to it. Treating all children as equals is a must and is not an option that the school authorities can cross off the list. A positive school environment can make the difference between a child wanting to attend school or simply abandoning it because he/she does not enjoy its environment and the message that comes with it. Having people to help them in a place that they are supposed to attend almost daily – might make their challenges easier and the school environment more pleasant rather than another worry or added responsibility that they feel they need to juggle in their lives.

Having said that, we need to highlight that teachers themselves also need motivation, so that they can apply all of their potential while giving their best to their students. Motivating teachers is so important, since, as we have already mentioned, teachers are possibly the ones that are the closest to these children and they can help greatly and impact the LBCH positively, when making use of the correct sources and motivation. They have the ability and power to be a role model for these children, while at the same time being their support and care while their parents are absent. As Cheianu (2011), notes: “The class teacher has to be more motivated (...) because I think that the class teacher is the main helper as he sees the child every day and gets involved in the child’s activities. The class teacher knows everything, even the results of the medical tests” (Cheianu-Andrei *et al.*, 2011: 125).

Another part of the motivation given to the teachers and linked to their role as an educator providing the best support for the LBCH in order to help them positively – is the fact that teachers should receive continuous training. Rather than stagnating their potential as great tutors they should always try to improve and to be able to face the challenges posed by communicating with the LBCH and also supporting and guiding them along the path correctly and in an efficient way. Being a teacher is also having the responsibility of being a role model for the children. Education at school implies not only the educational and knowledge purposes, but also the civics part, as we have already discussed above. Especially for the LBCH, they might look up more to their teachers if they do not have anyone else to guide them and if their parents are not there. The teacher figure is very important for the children and represents a role model to them. The teacher’s professional competences are extremely necessary in psychology and social pedagogy – continuous training leads to exceling in education realms and benefits the children greatly.

To conclude this part, we must acknowledge that the role of the teacher is a very important one when it comes to the educational context and vital to helping and guiding the children. Teachers are usually the closest people to the children during this phase in their lives, hence the vital importance of their role. When this role is taken seriously, they are able to help, counsel and guide the children throughout their time in school, as well as influence their view and attitude towards it and also regarding their education and as future trained adults.

Teachers can also be compared to a bridge that connects the children, school and family for the benefit of all parties involved. They can help promote an open dialogue and communication between them and help the children with their challenges as they navigate this time of their lives when their parents are absent and far away from them. Parents can contact the teacher about how their child is doing in school and help to motivate them when it comes to their education.

On the other hand, the teachers also need to be motivated in order to give their best to the children that they are responsible for. Although there are still many improvements and work to be done, starting from the changes produced at school, such as having teachers that treat all the children equally and fairly – regardless of their socio-economic status – a good teacher can make the difference in a child's life, act as a positive role model and change their view of the school environment and their education into an optimistic and beneficial one. Hence, a teacher can do much more than “only” convey academical knowledge to the students that they are directly responsible for. It is also true that the true education starts at home with the family, however, a good teacher can train and form an individual at so many more levels in life – that this role is irreplaceable in the life of an individual, and specially, in the lives of the LBCH.

CHAPTER 5 – Accomplishments and Future Considerations

We have been analyzing thus far the impact of emigration and the consequences suffered by the LBCH in Moldova. Since we are now approaching the end of the present research, let us discuss some of the accomplishments that were attained.

We will talk about the importance of diaspora in the present context and its role in the emigration context in Moldova.

5.1. – The Role of Diaspora

The Moldovans that have left the country in search of better conditions for them and their families have also an important role when it comes to helping their community back home and supporting their country. Many of them have been abroad for several years already (including their children), and they have established themselves well in the host countries where they moved to. Some of them had the possibility to attain an improved and rather abundant life for their families in the new country, therefore, they are now giving back to their communities back home.

Indeed, the situation regarding the emigration reality in Moldova has even been called a “social tragedy” (Timpul.md, 2009) by the ones who remain in the country and by the competent authorities. However, now the diaspora is starting to give back to their communities, investing the resources that they gained with emigration for their people, since the ones in the country lack the needed resources to do that.

For instance, some have been rebuilding the parks from their neighbourhood, in order to gift the families back home with a good park where their children can play safely and spend time relaxing while enjoying nature (UNDP, 2018e). Others have sent money back home to contribute to the road building and restoration (since many road and infrastructures in Moldova are still lacking in improvement) (UNDP, 2018f), to the child centres or kindergartens, to the schools, creating community centres, financing scholarships, organizing cultural events to bring more recognition and tourists in the country in order to invigorate its economy and so on (UN Moldova, n.d., UNDP Moldova, 2016b, UN Moldova, 2018a).

Some of the emigrants that have become successful abroad while starting their own business, have even taken the decision to come back home and continue their success there, while, at the same time, creating new job opportunities for their communities (UN Moldova, 2018a). Granted, it might be more difficult at the beginning, but for some the initial effort has paid off in the long run (UNDP, 2018e). Especially because not only they can continue to work in their home country, but also because they are closer to their families, who they were separated from for a while – for some the separation has been going on for years.

Moreover, they can also invest in projects back home, help NGO’s with their resources or even volunteer in the projects that their communities need help with (UNDP, 2017d, UNDP, 2016a). Many times, a good idea can be put into practice, however, the resources are also necessary to make that happen. Hence, projects that create new economic developmental strategies that can help boost the economy of the country or working together with the emigrants in order to set the priorities, while implementing new projects for the country’s development

have been the focus of the diaspora who returned home not only for themselves, but also to support their local communities (UNDP, 2017d).

We can say that even though many have left the country and are not thinking of coming back since they still think the country has a long way to go when it comes to its socio-economic condition and improvement in policies – they even gave the example of some countries that succeeded in these measures (Timpul.md, 2017a). For these emigrants, their country has let them down (Timpul.md, 2017a, Timpul.md, 2009) and they do not think that the problems in the country will be resolved that soon. This is certainly affecting Moldova and it deducts from its human capital – specially qualified professionals, being this the negative side (UNDP, 2018f).

Nonetheless, those that do come back and have the ability to give back to their communities, are also representing a new hope for their own country, and the work and support that they have been offering to their homeland has proven to be effective and beneficial. Not to mention that it helps to fight against one of the biggest consequences that emigration has brought – the separation of families and the increase in the number of LBCH. That itself is already a big plus regarding this initiative – the diaspora coming back home and the rapprochement of these citizens to their own roots, as well as their families, means this is yet another positive point when it comes to struggling against the tides of emigration.

Furthermore, even though limited in number, the return of highly skilled emigrants to their country can have extraordinary impact on the development opportunities of the country of origin (UNDP, 2018e), as we have seen through the examples already enunciated regarding the diaspora.

On the other hand, the diaspora represents a positive economic factor for the state, since the remittances that they send home accounts for one-fifth of the GDP. According to Semenova (2018), there are only nine countries in the world where this share is higher. Hence, even though a part of the outcome is positive for the country, still, Moldova is losing many of its qualified workers as a result of the massive emigration (Semenova, 2018).

Moreover, as Stefan Liller – the Deputy Resident Representative from UNDP Moldova puts it: “Why would a country that is not at war lose its every fifth citizen in 10 years?” This puts the matters into perspective and makes us see the bigger picture of emigration – the country is losing its people because of a “pressing development challenge” (UNDP, 2018f). He continues, by affirming the success that the diaspora’s initiatives have brought to the country and its people – according to the figures, “close to 9,000 migrants have contributed financially, through a crowdfunding platform, to 36 local projects, bringing better services to more than 300,000 people” (UNDP, 2018f).

When replying to the question of whether this help is “enough” to make a big difference in Moldova or not, the UNDP’s representative comments that in the short term, “probably not”, however with joint policies and reforms by the government as well as the diaspora and other organizations, in the long term – yes – it will make a difference, as is already making. He adds: “What we can say with certainty is that this initiative has mobilized tens of thousands of migrants for the benefit of hundreds of thousands of Moldovans back home – and that is a good start” (UNDP, 2018f).

Thus, it is a breath of fresh air to see the emigrants that return home and start to make significant changes in their home country. Step by step and joined efforts within the communities is a welcomed attitude from the ones who start making a difference for them and their families back home.

We can also note that despite having the joint efforts by the government, organizations and the Moldovan diaspora, the country still needs help from external sources, thus, the country has been helped and supported by organizations outside of the Moldovan territory – for instance, one of the projects – the UNDP Project Migration and Local Development (MiDL) is implemented by the Moldovan Government but also funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) – from the Swiss Confederation. Therefore, even though policies are being implemented, the country’s difficult situation is also to be taken into account, since without the proper resources being used, all these good intentions and new policies can still fall flat.

To sum up, we have briefly talked about the role of the diaspora both to the country, and to its people – the positive difference that is making back at home and the help of their resources that are helping the communities (UNDP Moldova, 2019g). Particularly, because the state is in a difficult socio-economic position at the moment and is facing many challenges, including the impact of emigration on the country as well, since the qualified work force left the country in search of better living conditions, while for the ones that are staying the authorities present weak policies regarding the soon improvement of the afore mentioned problems. Besides, many Moldovans are not willing to wait 12 years for the Moldova 2030 development vision to take place: what they want is a better future now, if not they will choose to keep emigrating (UNDP, 2018f). This complicates the country’s situation further ahead.

The remittances that the emigrants send are helping the country immensely, as we have already mentioned, however, the returning diaspora that is giving back to their communities back home by helping with projects of infrastructure improvement and by reuniting with their families back home is making an even bigger and welcomed impact in their homeland.

Diaspora who has returned home more established and with more resources than before leaving their own country almost empty handed, has the opportunity of now giving back to their communities, which they have been doing with success. They have been making a difference back home, especially in the lives of the emigrant communities and the families with LBCH. Thus, their role is not to be underestimated, since they have brought positive outcomes in their own home country – doing what they can to help the struggles of their people has been something remarkable to see and worthy of a good example for other emigrants that have the ability to help and support their country in the future.

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, we proposed to study the impact of emigration on the LBCH in Moldova. Moldova's mass emigration has been a reality for quite some years. The country has a background of civil wars and social struggles even from the time of its enrollment in the USSR that has left its people and the country's development behind on many levels. Even after gaining its independence, Moldova has not yet fully recovered and has been wrapped in diverse challenges. The first problem concerns the strong influence of its Soviet past, with the social struggles that have led many to emigrate and look for better living conditions outside their home country, or against the waves of emigration that have added their repercussions on the country and its people – the phenomenon of emigration has separated entire families, especially the families with children, which has increased the number of children left behind day by day exponentially.

Therefore, we have been concentrating our attention on the LBCH from Moldova and how the parental emigration impacts them. We have analyzed the impact on their psycho-social development and mental health, as well as on the outcomes to their education. When it comes to the psycho-social consequences on the children, we have seen that, for the most part, the impact was negative, and it affected them on a deep emotional and even physical level. It influenced their emotional health and their perception of themselves and of others, while, at the same time, making it harder for them to communicate and relate to other people. Some fall into depression, become introverted, are abused or even place the tragedy of suicide as an option for their life, all while struggling with feelings of extreme loneliness and the emptiness that parental

absence brings with it. Their condition of vulnerability and of children at risk often lead them to dangerous behaviors, such as violence, unhealthy tendencies, unwanted pregnancy and abortion. They are also seen by their peers and society as being “different” and not equal to the “other children”. The societal expectations put them under pressure, and many have negative misconceptions about them.

Concerning the LBCH’s outcomes on education, we have seen that the researchers could not reach a fixed conclusion on whether the effects of parental absence on the children’s school results were entirely positive or entirely negative. Since children are all different and react to different situations in various ways, the outcome was found to be different for each one of them. Thus, for some, the education results were significantly affected by the parental absence on the negative side – for instance, they would lose their interest in school and take advantage of their parent’s absence to do whatever they wanted to, manifesting deviant behaviors, while not paying attention to the consequences that could arrive from there. Besides, they had the erroneous thought that emigration solves it all and they did not need school, since they would – one day – emigrate just as their parents did and all would work out well.

However, for others, their school results improved even while the parents were not beside them – they understood the efforts and sacrifices that their parents made in order to gift them with a better life, hence they would be well-behaved, while making a bigger effort in order to achieve their best results at school. For these children, even though the pain of the absence still remained, when it came to school, their focus was in making their parents proud by attaining excellent results with their education. Therefore, overall, the researchers agreed that further research is needed in order to analyze the education outcomes on the LBCH and to decide whether the final impact is positive or negative.

Moreover, we have also talked about the role of the government and the diaspora within the context of mass emigration in Moldova. The government has been struggling to raise the country’s development and socio-economic condition to healthy, stable levels. While it has been implementing new policies that have been helping the population positively, still, for the most part, the Moldovan citizens are not satisfied and are disappointed in their own country – which makes them to leave their homeland even today. Moreover, they want the promised change now, and most are not willing to wait several years for the development of their country to happen. Hence, the vicious cycle of emigration continues in Moldova.

Even though much has yet to be done, we can also agree that some government policies, organizations and even the diaspora have been of great help and support to the country and the emigrants’ communities. When looking at it through the lens of short term, the difference might

not be significant, however, in the long run, small differences keep adding up to make the bigger difference that the emigration scenario desperately needs.

Ideally, the country would be in well-developed conditions and supporting its population through it. Emigration would not happen, and families and children would not need to be separated. However, since it came to this, one of the solutions has been to name the problem for what it is, accepting the negative outcomes that emigration has brought in Moldova thus far, instead of denying the problems that it created, and work with the real, rough situation that the country is in at the moment.

Taking this into account, both national and international NGO's have been helping the country to deal with the aftermath of emigration. For instance, they have been producing guides for the professionals, the parents and the educational community alike, in order to let them know how they can help the LBCH and the emigrant families, while also organizing public events and various activities in order to inform the society about the negative impacts of emigration and how they can also help.

Due to these positive initiatives, communities have also been stepping in, and the diaspora has been giving back to their communities, either through their resources, through coming back home and opening new businesses that create new post jobs for the population, or by volunteering in projects alongside the community. The diaspora has been making a substantial difference back home – which gives hope to many emigrant families, while also serving as a role model for more emigrants that can eventually help in the future.

Though we chose not to go into much detail on the role of remittances in this context, since this topic has already been widely studied by many, we did, however, make a brief analysis of its role to the emigrant families and LBCH, as well as to the prospects of education.

We have concluded that remittances play a big part in the spectrum of emigration – this additional help has helped the households of many emigrant families that could not cope with their numerous expenses. The extra resources also helped many families to finance their children's education (Cebotari *et al.*, 2016), especially for the ones that hope to further their studies and attend University one day. These are just some of the benefits of remittances, though many others can be counted.

Nevertheless, even though remittances do help and make a positive impact in the emigrants' lives and living conditions, we still need to insist that when taking all of the previously mentioned consequences into account – negatively affecting the emigrant families and specially the LBCH – this added help ends up being immensely minimized when compared to the challenges, struggles and deep pain and psycho-social damage that was inflicted upon

these vulnerable children when their parents decided to leave them behind. Though having good intentions at its core, these decisions have caused much damage to the families and children that needed to face the outcomes of emigration upon them daily.

We can conclude from this study, that even though the material benefits and the improving of living conditions is a good goal to have in mind, when looking at the price that the LBCH are paying in order to see their lives improve – we can be firm and sustain that the negative outcomes on the LBCH due to the parental emigration and absence are simply not worth the price. Besides, one can even have material riches, but one day, when these still developing children will reach their adulthood – what will they remember the most – the extra money that their parents sent them from far away, or the closer daily reality that it was not having their parents beside them? Hence, overlooking the social and emotional costs that this decision will have upon the LBCH is not something to be taken lightly (Castañeda & Buck, 2011).

Children are developing day by day, and they do need their parents near them during this process. That way, they can grow up in a healthy and balanced way, all while having their parents support them in a secure and loving environment. Moreover, as Castañeda & Buck (2011), noted: “Parental migration needs to be understood as a crisis in the lives of children. The separation following migration is likely to forever alter the nature of the child-parent relationship”. This shows us the importance of paying attention to the negative impact of the parental absence in these children’s lives.

Lastly, we need to remember that the process of emigration means the emigrant family will be embarking on an emotional journey with an unknown date of return (Castañeda & Buck, 2011). While walking along this journey many feelings can be found: feelings of insecurity – not knowing when the family will come back; feelings of sadness and loneliness – observing their absence with each passing day; feelings of despair and deep longing – when one would trade anything just to have their family by their side in that moment. The same author continues by comparing the path of emigration to that of a “soldier at war”, since the family must adjust to the instability of having one of their own away, while, at the same time, not knowing when or even if, that person will return – this is a curious comparison that serves its purpose to explain the damage of emigration on the families and the LBCH (Castañeda & Buck, 2011), especially since this association is a vivid and weighty one – this shows the disaster of war, as well as the disaster of the effects of emigration.

In addition, another argument is that much of the already existing literature focuses mainly on the benefits of remittances and the improving of the living conditions for the emigrant

families. As previously mentioned, this in itself it is not a negative endeavor, however, it ends up weakening the message that parental emigration during childhood is a traumatic happening that can damage the child's development opportunities during this crucial time of their lives. Improving one's living conditions it is positive and something to be desired, still, this matter keeps being overlooked both in the literature and in the clinical context that address these problems.

What is clear, is that emigration is an uncertain endeavor, and even though further research needs to be done on the topic in order to find better solutions, we now have come to know the consequences that it causes on the family institution and on the harmonious development of children. And though we still cannot grasp the full landscape and connections of the journey of emigration – we do know that it can affect and change a family's and country's reality severely.

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