

Social Aspects Regarding the Single-Parent Families Vulnerability

The Case Of Arad County

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Abstract

Based on empiric investigations and the study of documents from specialized public institutions, the authors analyse in this article the extent, manifestations, causes and consequences of single-parent families in Arad County. As social entities with a high risk of social exclusion, the authors identify practical measures for intervention by public authorities in the sense of optimizing socialization, social work and balancing these families, especially their children, by taking into account both Romanian and European legislation in this field. Preventing the reproduction/increase in the number of single-parent families must rely on the complete knowledge of this social phenomenon, with the need to establish databases and map the dispersion of single-parent families within administrative-territorial units. The decrease in the number of families with a high social risk over time is the result of correlated and harmonized public policies, aimed at fighting poverty, discrimination, unemployment, lack of access to education, while ensuring the general background for economic development and prosperity.

The study is determined by the fact that many times the parents and the children of single parent families find themselves in the situation of not being able to make ends meet, the lack of finances, education and proper housing making it impossible for them to live a decent life. By identifying, through specific scientific methods such as document analysis, interviews, case studies, the particular types of problems facing single parent families, we consider we will succeed in offering a strong basis to motivate decision makers to establish additional social protection measures that will contribute to the reduction of the causes that maintain this social category among vulnerable groups.

Keywords: single-parent family; social marginalization; education; socio-professional integration; Arad County

Introduction

The family, as main socialising factor, as the social group with the highest influence with regard to the reproduction of the social values and norms, the natural environment

for child's growth and education, regardless of its type, always represented the main concern of any political system and regime. Nowadays, we live in a world that no longer can express only under the incidence of the old patterns, and therefore creating for itself new actionable, thinking, individual expression and social ones. Something is changing every day, something new is discovered. In this race, the family, the most stable social landmark, the most lasting inter-human relation, was overwhelmed by the modernisation wave. More and more, the phenomena of women's involvement in the economic, but also in the political environment, in the management activities, in the culture, in all social spheres, caused vast changings related to the women's social status, to the repartition of the roles in the society, they have changed the way the society itself reported to the woman's condition. The woman stops being just wife and mother, she becomes economically independent. She is active in all society spheres. All of these, besides other factors, led to mutations in the family structure and functions, in the family educational styles, influenced forever the relations between parents, between parents and children. Essential changes occurred related to the family types so that, gradually, the family formed by marriage no longer represents the only form of generally accepted family. Consequently, the consensual union, the cohabiting or the mono-parenthood are just few alternative forms of family that have all rights and functions to any families of classical type.

However, beyond the formal acceptance of the multitude of familial forms, one must underline also the consequences, the effects, both positive, but, especially the negative ones that can show up more or less at the level of some family types. The single-parent families, considered asymmetric, regardless on the way how the mono-parenthood installed, presume the existence of a single parent who has in care one or several children, consequently who has lower incomes, fact to which series of social, emotional-affective, behavioural implications add.

The reasoning to perform the study on the mono-parenthood is determined rightly by the specific characteristics of the single-parent family, by the vulnerability of this social group, with high risk of marginalisation, and the research purpose consists in identifying the main forms of issues this social category is facing, based on the analyse of the existing documents in the profile institutions from the county, on the interviews, on the case study, as well as on the information resulting from the largely created database at the level of Arad County. Consequently, we believe that we are going to be able to provide solid arguments to support the drafting of some measures for single-parent families and reducing the negative phenomena specific for this vulnerable group.

Besides the summary and the introductory part where the reasoning for the subject is emphasised, the article comprises some relevant theoretical approaches in the area, a presentation of the research focusing particularly on the defining aspects of the single-parent families in Arad County, as well as on drawing some conclusions and

presenting some possible ways of action, in order to reduce the social marginality characteristics of such families.

Some Theoretical Insights on the Single-parent Family

The family may be defined as the “social unit formed of adults and children among whom there are natural filiation relations (blood relations) or social relations, regardless on any other considerations” (Stănciulescu, 1997, 26). However, the contemporary times bring along mutation with regard also to the family, to the types of family, more frequently alternative family patterns are expressed, like the one of the single-parent family. Conceptually, the single-parent family represents “a type of family formed of parent and his/ her child or children, a group of related persons, relation resulted either by direct filiation or by adoption” (Ștefan, 2001, 6).

Either we talk about the family, its structure and functions, or we consider the increase of the divorce rate, of the families with one parent, the mutations occurred in the current society constitute a reality of interest for the decision-making bodies of the State, because depending on the family environment, on the families’ economic, social and cultural conditions, the essence of the society type itself relies on, and also the promoted human type and the quality of life rely on them. Starting from these considerations, it is compulsory that the family benefits of all economic, social, cultural and educational levers in order to be able to fulfil its functions (Iluț, 2009). During the last decades, the lack of employment, and the high level of unemployment do not represent indicators for a decent level of living for a great part of the population. If we add also the difficulties in the educational, health and social protection systems, the image is complete. Under these terms, the family risks to go deeper in the poverty, in deprivations, not to exercise its essential social role. Much more is that at the single-parent families’ level, where one parent provides the income, regardless on the cause that determined the mono-parenthood phenomenon.

Outlook delimitations of the mono-parenthood, of the phenomenon causes and conditions for its reduction/ extension, of its consequences and on the public governments’ ways to support for these families were clearly outlined in the specialty literature during the last decades (Mitrofan, 1992; Ciupercă, 1999; Cojocaru, 2004; Iluț, 2009 etc.). In addition, at international level, the mono-parenthood issues were approached from multidisciplinary perspective: historically (Bourguin, 1986), sociologically (Sorokin, 1934; Giddens, 2000; Segalen, 1996 etc.), psychologically (Mitrofan, I. and Mitrofan, N., 1994; Voinea, 1996; Druță, 1998), of the education sociology (Stănciulescu, 2002), of the social care (Scutaru, 2006; Buzducea, 2010), of the religion sociology (Bădescu, 2005). For the single-parent family, there are sociologically significant the “lack of grown-up role models for both genders, the demands potential the resident parent is exposed to, and the tendency to poverty, especially when the woman is the family head” (Johnson, 1995, 159).

Nowadays, the single-parent family is considered as a whole which, “despite the absence of an element, does not cease to function as a system where the whole is much more than the addition of the parts” (Ștefan, 2001, p. 5, quot. Scutaru, 2006, p. 14). These new concept integrates in the continuity of some transformations and modifications, the single-parent family becoming currently a normal family whilst it becomes a familiar conduct for the current society members and while it records an increase in the frequency rate (Scutaru, 2006). Related to the single-parent families, Stănciulescu stated that “the group child (children) – parent (and not parents) called family is considered as an alternative to (and not as a deviation from) the “classical” family” (Stănciulescu, 1997, p. 137).

The single-parent family may result due to some various experiences: birth of a child after a sexual juvenile experience which does not conclude by a “reparatory” marriage, some women’s decision to have children out of a legal marriage or of a free union, the divorce of some couples with un-married children, one of the partner’s deaths (Stănciulescu, 2002).

In 1991, in Great Britain, there were 1.3 million single-parent families compared to 0.5 million in 1971, with approximately 2.2 million children depending on a parent, compared to 1 million in 1971, which means that one out of five families with children is single-parent (www.statistici.ro) (Haskey). Toffler (quot. Voinea, 1996) mentions that the number of single-parent families in USA is very large, one of the 7 American children is grown by one parent, while, in the urban areas, the ratio is of one to four, including the illegitimate children, the children adopted by single women or even by single men. In USA, in the years 60’s of the last century, about 9% of the total families was with one parent, and in the 80’s, it reaches to 24%. Between 1974 and 1984, the number of children born by unmarried women grew with 500%, and the annual births of fatherless children are still numerous (Bryjak and Soroka, 2001).

Basically, the favouring factors in changing the family patterns (Mihăilescu, 1999) are the reduction of the family functions as the society took some over, the increase of the women’s occupancy rate and the women’s wish to socially promote, the youth’s economic independence increase, the incomes growth which gave some persons the possibility to live alone and reduced a lot the frequency of the marriages based on economic constraints, the increase of the political, cultural and spiritual diversity, changes in habits and increase of the social permission to new behavioural ways, the contagion, borrow effects of some behavioural patterns from one group to another, or even from one society to another.

There can be considered among the consequences of the proliferation of the new family alternatives (Ciupercă, 2000):

- redefinition of the male and female roles, both partners wish the roles to be built and not took over, to be adjusted to the modern society requirements
- the lack of communication between partners: there are differences of communication between men and women, most of the times the partners just speak without communicating, these are aspects that may lead to the accumulation of frustrations, to conflicts or breaking up
- the motivational divergences may be generated by the misunderstanding of the fact that, in the functional couple, each of the partners contribute to satisfying both own needs and the other's; the discrepancy between wishes and expectations: it may influence the spouses' degree of satisfaction in the family life, it increases the probability of conflicts and marital tensions occurrence
- the sexual dissatisfaction: may cause feelings of discontent with acute manifestation
- the tensioned relations with the family of origin: different patterns of conjugal role may cause favouring conditions for a deficient conjugal inter-accommodation, favouring dysfunctional phenomena.

Depending on parents' presence or absence from within the family, psychologically and interactional, we can speak of (Preda, 1999, p. 319, quot. Scutaru, 2006, p. 27) the single-parent family types:

- the type presence (psychological)- presence (interactional): both parents, though separated or divorced, keep intense relations with the children and are involved in their lives both psychological and interactional;
- The type presence-absence: one of the parents ceases to interact with the family but psychologically remains attached to it;
- The type absence - presence: refers to a parent separated from the family, normally, psychologically absent but who still has contacts and interacts with the family members;
- The type absence-absence: the classical single-parent family type, that family where only one of the parents takes care of the children and is involved psychologically and interactional in their lives.

Spânu (1998, p. 10) identified 4 factors differentiation the family with difficulties from the functional family: the family members' level of self-confidence; the communications structures; the types of family rules; the structure of the relations with the society.

The single-parent family type is considered as a deviation from the nuclear family, formed of husband, wife, and their minor children. The single-parent family meets difficulties of finance order, being one of the family with high risk of poverty (given that there is one income and the needs for consume are increased by

the presence of several persons, including the growing-up children), biological dis-functionalities (issues related to sexuality and restriction of the parentage), affective deficiencies (implied by the absence of the grown-up partner, of the marital love, and the occurrence of some frustrations related to the extended roles which are not in accordance with the resources, including the soul ones).

The children from single-parent families run by single mothers knew an early grow-up as they are charged from early years with domestic tasks, seldom they are given the partner's role whom the burdens of daily life are shared with, conflicts like the marital pattern develop. "The child fulfils the role of emotional support, of the absent husband's substitute. Single mothers are frequently discontent on their lives, declare themselves overcharged, stressed by the worries, become more authoritarian" (Mitrofan, Ciupercă, 1997, p. 162). The men, as single parents, involve less the children in the house works but they call from help from outside. The parental role is better articulated if the father was with his child all the time, and if there was an early interaction with the child. Another factor widely contributing to the optimisation of the parent-child relations refers to willing commitment of the paternity, unlike the one set through court decisions. The fathers declare themselves satisfied with their lives, become less authoritarian, more careful and protective; the children feel them warm and affectionate, comparing to the way the children from bi-parental families sense their fathers. A reduction of the interest for professional performance is noticed at the single fathers, the emphasis moving on the family (Mitrofan, Mitrofan, 1994).

The single-parent families adjust harder to the current consume cultural pattern, being victims of the "new poverty; they have the tendency to self-reproduction (the children from such families have higher "chances" to repeat the experience as adults), consequently reproducing and extending a whole chain of social issues. "The mono-parenthood, especially the one resulted from divorce, is correlated with the diminishment of the educational activity: the maternal role is characterised by (material, emotional, relational) overstrain, by relative lack of interest or by a role conflict (dominated by the issues created by separation and by their own affective stances, the mothers are less available for the child right when this one would need more attention and efforts), while the paternal role is analysed in terms of "paternal absences", "paternal deprivation", "paternal de-responsibility" (Miron, 1987, p. 45).

A large number of researchers (Bawin-Legros, 1988; Pitrou, 1994) criticise the fact of regarding the parents' separation as equivalent to an educational sentence for the children. The researches highlight that the mono-parenthood effects are relative and exert themselves by what the sociologist call a "composition effect" of several intermediate variables (Stănculescu, 1997, p. 144).

One can talk about the profile of the mothers as single parents. (Mitrofan, Ciupercă, 1997, p. 42):

- most single-parent families run by mothers are made of the mother and her child; the mother provides more the daughters' custody, than the sons' one (as result of the divorce);
- mother's age – some decrease in the age for the young women giving birth to illegitimate children is noticed, as well as an increase of the divorce rate at the young women early married
- the social status – divorced or unmarried.

The symbol image of the single and poor mother was acknowledged as quintessence of the "welfare" dependency type (Shanley Mary Lyndon, Narayan Uma, 2001, quot. Stănciulescu, 2002). The dependence on public care (especially by the allowance for the children in care) has frequently a negative connotation, and the beneficiaries of such support from the state wear a social stigma. The family dependence on a man, income supplier, is desirable social possibility preferred to the dependence on the State (Gordon Linda, 1992, quot. Stănciulescu, 2002). Most of the times, the mother dedicates exclusively to the children's care and education, but, when she is single parent, she has (due to the absence of substantial support from the family of origin) to develop an activity which bring income.

One can list among the principles that can rationalise the single-parent policies of protection (Ștefan, 2001, p. 64): the individual and social responsibility to each child, the communitarian solidarity with the parent raising the child, the punctual aid, the social integration, the promotion of the family values, of the labour and of the social equity, the respect for the individual decision and for the family life, the prevention of the deviant phenomena, of the child's neglect, abuse, exploitation, the prevent from institutionalising the children.

Therefore, there is a solid methodological and theoretical framework which may guide the empirical studies in the field.

We noticed in our study on the mono-parenthood in Arad County that the poverty rate is much higher at this type of family, with serious consequences on the child's situation first of all. Usually, the mothers are the single parent; consequently, their income is much lower than the income men can provide for. On the other hand, the low level of education does not favour their access on the labour market and getting well-paid jobs. In the rural environment, there were situations where no mother had been education or, the best cases; they had primary school graduation, total insufficient training to get employment, especially one better financially compensated.

From economical perspective, the mono-parenthood is accompanied by the lack of steady housing, most single-parent families do not own a house, being tolerated in the place, living at relatives or paying rent, which means supplementary funds to be paid from an income which is low anyhow. The access to own housing becomes just an ideal, hard to achieve with almost inexistent income, in a large number, the single-parent families depending on the social protection system, on the allowance for family support, the state allowance for child-raising or from the allowance for disability. The single-parent families weight out of the total number of families benefiting from the allowance for family support is significant (18.4% at national level, and over 20% in Arad County), so the issues caused by these families should become of wider interest for the state institutions which are responsible with funds allowances or with deliverance of services on social support for the disfavoured categories with high social risk like the single-parent families could be considered. The measures of social protection might have implications with compensatory character for the emotionally-affective difficulties or those of social status for the single parent (Șerban, 2005).

The Methodology of Research

Firstly, the purpose of the research activity of the vulnerable social groups, respectively of the sociological parameters for the single-parent families in Arad County was to perform a diagnosis of the phenomenon, starting from the setting-up of a database on the extent and quality scope of the mono-parenthood. In the same time, it is necessary to establish some preventive measures against the occurrence of new situations of single-parent families, as well as to render the responsible institutions in the area sensible on the issue, correlated with stimulating the inter-institutional partnership.

Among the main research goals we proposed ourselves to deliver the decisional factors relevant information on the issues the existence of such family type implies at local community but also at national levels, to highlight some phenomena with favouring role on installing the mono-parenthood, in order to identify, on this grounds, appropriate ways of public specialised local authorities' intervention to stop/ diminish this phenomenon.

We considered the following as work hypotheses:

- a) Due to the single-parent families' parents' low level of education, it becomes difficult to find a workplace that brings income, which generate poverty, it is a type of vulnerable family;
- b) The mono-parenthood may lead to reproducing the parental pattern, with all negative consequences it implies.

The employed research methods and techniques are: qualitative research – semi-structured interview; analysis of the documents in some profile institutes; the observation; the comparative analysis; visit at place. The interview was performed on 30 single parents in Arad County. The so-obtained data served for the qualitative and quantitative analyses, integrated in a monographic perspective on the mono-parenthood phenomenon.

The data base was made with the local institutions representatives by the end of year 2013.

The Single-parent Family from Arad County

If we perform a brief analysis of the educational level of the population from Arad County, it stresses that, according to the statistical data of 2013, most of it frames in the primary level of education (13.95%), the weight of those with secondary studies registered a significant increase compared to previous years, representing 66.87%, a large part of the population having the high school level. The percentage of those who did not graduate any form of education is relatively low, 2.19%, compared to 5.26 % in year 2008, while the higher education graduates continued to increase, especially during the last years, as result of the development of the university education in Arad County. Consequently, the higher level graduates' number increased from 24,953 persons to 53,019 (13.69%) in a decade, aspect expressing a high level of education for the county population. (www.statistici.ro).

Total Population	Total higher education	Out of which university bachelor studies	Post-high school	Total secondary studies	Out of which high school studies	Technical and apprentice studies	Secondary school studies	Primary school studies	Without education Total	Out of which illiterate
387074	53019	44910	12652	258874	90593	52437	115844	54017	8512	3920

Table 1: Arad County Population, by level of education 2012

Source: www.statistici.ro, 2012

At Arad county level, the institutions responsible to insure the social protection act accordingly to the legal specific provisions in order to ensure the social protection for the categories considered to bear high social risk, particularly for the families with children.

State allowance for children 54,644,405 RON	Total beneficiaries 80,895 children	Urban 37,541	Rural 43,354
Indemnity for child raising 41,955,152 RON Total services 4,700 Men beneficiaries	4,700 119	2,760	1,971
Allowance for family support 2,222,133 RON Allowance for support of the families with two parents	2,252	275	1977
Allowance to support the single-parent family	678	119	559
Monthly placement allowance 135,249 lei	752	424	328
Requests for social aid Average monthly number of persons benefitting of social aid	3,620 7,639		
Social aids for ensuring the Minimal Guaranteed Income 7,310,388 RON	3,520		

*Table 2: Social services delivered in 2011 at the level of the Arad County
Source: Ministry for Labour, Family and Social Protection, 2012*

The allowance for supporting the single-parent families is imposed mostly due to the fact that many of them are considered as poor, in such cases, the sources of income coming from one parent, who is the mother in most of the cases, and their income, as it is well-known, is much lower than the men's one.

Household type	Poverty rate
Single persons	27.9%
Single-parent families	31.0%
Families with 3 or more children	40.0%
Single persons, over 65 years old	33.4%

*Table 3: Poverty rate depending on the household type
Source: Ministry of Labour, Family and on Equal Opportunities 2008*

The more accentuated direction towards preventing and fighting against the social marginalisation determined the implementation of some diversified social protection measures, according to the provisions of the Act no 116/ 2002.

By the end of 2013, there had been identified, based on the data supplied by the Service for Management of the Public De-concentrated Institutions and International Relations from the Local Councils of the Arad municipality, of the county towns and communes, a number of 674 families benefiting of social protection services designed for single-parent families (23.57%), out of which 112 in urban area, and 562 in rural one. The total number of families benefiting of the allowance for family support was of 2,859 at Arad County level in 2012 (Term statistic Bulletin, 2012).

The mono-parenthood phenomenon in Arad County goes into a dynamics likely to the national one or to the one from the European and North-American countries. The number of divorces, the birth rate for unmarried women, and the percentage of the family run by one parent are increasing. In developed countries such as USA, Denmark, Sweden, they doubled in just three decades, going over 20% of the total families. However, the social care services from these states took care only that the single-parent families do not reach poverty, their quality of life evolving within the limits of normality (Giddens, 1997, 168–172).

During February 2011 – June 2013, 351 applications for granting the allowance for family support were submitted at the County Directorate for Development and Communitarian Assistance, at the Service for Social Services within the County Council of Arad, which develop its activity of social care according the provisions of the Law no 277/ 2010, amended in 2012. Out of the 351 applications 127 remaining in payment were approved, and 52 of the latest were meant for single-parent families from the municipality of Arad.

According to the applicable law, the social aid for single-parent families is granted depending on the parents' income (under 200 RON or over 200, but no more than 370 RON), as well as depending on the number of children in care. It is hard to imagine the way where, in a family, the basic need may be satisfied with an income of about 80 RON/ month per family member. There are situations of single-parent families where the income for family member/ month is of 20 RON. Consequently, this type of family may be regarded as having a high level of poverty, with the risk for social marginalisation, a vulnerable social group.

In order to have a more precise situation of cases of single-parent families in Arad County, and in order to be able to identify the issues they are facing, we have performed a thorough analyse of the documents, of the files where the social aid was asked for. The image provided from the documents analyse speaks for itself: there are persons, mothers and children, entire families, putting their whole hope in the social aid granted by the state institutions. In the few cases where mothers are employed, the income is low and very low, being between 200-850 RON, under the terms where there are one or more children in the family, where the house is rented or the family is just tolerated, where generally the father is unknown, and the house is owned by relatives.

During the study on the documents, we have also monitored the type of the family of origin for the mothers in the single-parent families, acknowledging at least two aspects: a lot of cases with unknown father and the fact that, in many cases, the mothers from single-parent families reproduced a similar parental pattern, including the situations with unknown father. Such elements may be grounds to consider that, in most of the cases, the children resulted in single-parent families will reproduce also the family pattern, respectively the single-parent family. We observe in such families an economic situation which sometimes is alarming, the quality of life reaching extremely low levels, both considering the income, and the housing type, to which we can add the low level of education, the acute lack of employment, so that the social aid, respectively the allowance for family support seems almost as unique salvation.

On the other hand, it is emphasised the relative low number of single-parent families demanding for social aid, respectively which were considered to fulfil all legal requirements for the granting the allowance for family support, although, at the level of a such large community like the municipality of Arad, it is at least doubtful that only 52 families are within the law requirements. We highlight this observation considering that our study was extended to all localities from Arad County, and we compared this figure with the number of single-parent families from various smaller localities, towns or communes from the county where their number is at least comparable to the one from the municipality of Arad, if not higher. Consequently, in the commune of Buteni, there is a number of 36 single-parent families receiving social aid, 20 single-parent families are in the commune of Sinte Mare, 19 ones in the commune of Şepreuş, 23 in the commune of Târnova, 20 cases in the commune of Vladimirescu and, on the other hand, in the towns from the county, their number is very small: 8 cases in the town of Chişineu Criş, 2 in the town of Curtici, one case in the town of Ineu, 5 in the town of Lipova, 9 in Nădlac, 6 in Pecica, and only the town of Pâncota registers a more significant number, 21 cases of single-parent families.

We may consider that, in the other single-parent families, not comprised in the current database, made at the level of year 2013, the socio-economic situation is corresponding; the provision for additional financial support from State institutions does not impose. A more detailed analyse of all cases of single-parent families, of their situation at county level may stress the real aspects of the phenomenon, it may lead to a global image on the single-parent families, and, consequently, to the identification of the measure to be taken for improving their life conditions. By creating the database and presenting those cases of families, largely dependent on the social protection services, to the responsible on social protection institutions, and by initiating some measures to prevent and reduce the phenomenon, we believe it is an important support for the single-parent families who, this way, enter maybe more intense in the scope of concern of the profile authorities, moreover as there have been required data on a part of the main indicators of quality of life for the respective families.

With regard with the single parent's social status in the municipality of Arad, out of the 50 mothers, one grandmother and one father, 9 mothers are widows (18%), 23 not married (46%) and 18 divorced (36%). As it can be noticed, the biggest percentage is represented by single mothers who had not been married. After analysing it, we observed that, most of the times, the children are result of occasional, short-term relations that could not conclude by making a family, through marriage. These issues are emphasised by the extremely large number of unmarried mothers whose children figure with unknown father, or in case of several children, each time the father is different though is unknown. There are also situations where the respective women chose willingly to have a child, regardless on the person whom they chose to accomplish it, being without income, with a low level of education, many of them having secondary school studies in the best case. An explanation that might suggest mother's lack of responsibility related to the child cannot be verisimilar, the lack of responsibility concerning the need to provide the child a decent living, life conditions to favour a better development, and as well a certain family stability. Most serious is that, most of the times, when there are more children in the single-parent family, they do not have the same father; more than that, in most situations where mothers are unmarried, the fathers do not recognise the children. There is the risk to perpetuate such family pattern as, in most of the situations, even the mothers come from a passing by relationship between their parents, not being acknowledged by their fathers at their turn.

A large number of mothers from single-parent families had their parents living in cohabitation. Consequently, the parental pattern, the absence of a thorough education, the socio-economic terms are just few of the responsible factors for the existence of the single-parent families, found in the situation for stringent need of financial support, from the state institutions. Therefore, in such a context, the plead for an integrating education system arises, so structured that it assures the access to education for all children, school involvement in the socialising and formation process of child's personality, children who reaching adulthood would be able to decide responsibly about creating a family.

Regarding the educational level of the mothers in single-parent families in the municipality of Arad, with one exception where the mother has higher education, most of them have secondary school education.

Level of education	Without studies	Secondary school	High school	Higher education
Total 52	8	31	12	1

Table 4: The level of education for the mothers in single-parent families in the municipality of Arad
Source: DJAC, Arad, 2012

If we consider that, out of the 52 situations, 8 are without studies (15.38%) and 31 have secondary school (59.62%), 12 have high school studies (23.08%), a person (1.92%) is with higher education, the single-parent family image seems not to be framed to some desirable patterns from the contemporary period where even the high school studies tend to be insufficient in order to ensure the flexible adjustment in the current society. Consequently, the lack of education seems to be a cause for the situation when the single-parent families asking for social aid reached this impasse, as it is almost impossible to find employment in the absence of any professional training. Nevertheless, even the mother with higher education is also in the position to no longer have a position, which emphasise that providing for a decent living implies substantial efforts in a society marked by poverty, unemployment and the acute lack of working places, even when the condition for good professional training is accomplished. Part of the applicants for the allowance for single-parent support are disabled persons, both the beneficiary, and one or more of the children which amplifies the family difficulties, being able to lead to big issues for ensuring the subsistence, in the absence of some additional measures for social protection.

Concerning the school situation of the children from single-parent families asking for the allowance for family support, there are both cases for not going to classes or low marks on conduct, and children who are not skipping school and have a natural school activity. The influence for the latest comes from the family environment, mother's care for minors' school activity, the way how the educational style corresponds to the society needs and to child's expectations, the level of motivation which the family succeeds to create for the children and, not the last, the school role where the child develops the activity. However, in few situations, the absences from classes, the indiscipline and the deviant behaviour tend to characterise this children's conduct, and it even occurs the phenomenon of school abandon. It is imperious to involve the school counsellors and the social assistants who, together with the school and the family, contribute to child's motivation for normal frequency of the school classes, the only viable alternative for acquiring skills and knowledge necessary in the process of professional training, especially as there are awarded social and merit scholarships.

The educational level correlates directly to the access to a workplace and, consequently, to obtaining some income necessary for the family or, as such level is low, the chances for a workplace or, especially, for a well-paid employment are minimal.

Related to the income chapter, only 30.73 cases have another income source besides the social aid and this is: the salary – 11.53%; retirement fee, heritor's fee or invalidity fee: 5.76%; allowance for support: 5.76%; indemnity for child-raising or indemnity for disabled person: 5.76%; income from occasional labour: 1.92%. Consequently, in 69.27% of the cases, the mother is not working, has no permanent source of income, which expresses the low level of living for this category of families, the dominant poverty, the conditions of life below decency and below family fundamental needs.

Out of the analyse of the existing documents at the Directorate for Development and Communitarian Assistance, the Service for social care, Arad, we found out that, in a great majority, the families have between 21 RON/ family member until 100 RON/ family member, except for almost singular situations, depending also on children's number, as well as certain occasional labours the parents performed, such aspects being relevant for these family level of life, for the degree of poverty their life goes on. Obviously, it show the following question: what can be provided with 21 RON/ month to a person? How can such a family integrate socially, keep the children's health state, provide for the necessary things for the living, especially as, in most cases, the expenses with the housing are far higher than the income. Then, very seriously and concerned, there is the issue of providing the necessary for school, from clothes to stationery, respectively, the possibility for such families to provide the access to education for their children. There are few elements underlining the vulnerability of such a family type, with only one source of income, the one gained by the single parent, and, in its absence, it is only the social aid, which, obviously is totally insufficient.

We can associate to these issues the type of housing, in the way where, in most of the cases, the house is either property of the parents of the single-parent mothers, either they live on rent, implying some additional expenses; only 32.70% have their own house. In many cases, the family does not have legal papers, and consequently, the ownership title is not in place, 9 of them pay rent (17.30 %), and the others, either live in their parent's house, or to other relatives, being tolerated in the house (50%). We have found out from the files analyse that most of them, regardless on the children's number live in just one room, which, especially there where there are 3 or 4 children seems even impossible. Despite all this, some of us learn to live and to take charge of their lives in such conditions. For these families, the chances for a decent living remain just a beautiful dream for now. Usually, when they live together with their parents or relatives, there are more persons, even 9 members of the extended family.

We have presented few insights on the single-parent families' situation, particularly on those families which receive the support allowance from the municipality of Arad, all information and database being set up according to the databases the responsible institutions in the area have, and based on the study of the documents for all the 52 files. We have considered that the monitored issues underline the social image of the single-parent family, family that is in difficult situation, facing the risk of poverty and social marginalisation and that, considering these situations, the entitled institutions can make adequate propositions for improving their social conditions.

In this regard, we might observe that, for the admission to bachelor studies in universities, at the File for registration, besides the data pointing out candidate's general situation, there is a chapter: Special social status and Candidate in the category of persons with disabilities, and there are comprised in the special social

situations: provenance from orphanages, from single-parent families and orphan child, issues which might also influence the universities policies for granting some social scholarships. It is to be noticed that the candidates' situation from single-parent families is considered separately, which express the conviction that such family type is vulnerable and imposes the granting for social support.

We have extended the research to Arad County level, too, aiming the 78 localities (including the municipality of Arad as well), pursuing same social and economic aspects specific for the single-parent families. There are no substantial differences with regard to the general characteristics of the single-parent families between those living in Arad and those living in other localities, that is, the social and economic condition for all the other cases is characterised by low level of income, high risk for social marginalisation and poverty, precarious education, therefore the vulnerable character of this type of family.

By the end of 2013 at Arad county level, according to the existing data in the specialised services of the town halls, 674 cases of single-parent families were registered, families asking for the support allowance. Out of the single-parent families' total, 389 families were with one child (57.12%), 199 ones with two children (29.53%), 59 with 3 children (8.75%), and 31 families with 4 or more children (4.60%).

No	Families with 1 child	Families with 2 children	Families with 3 children	Families with 4 or more than 4 children
1.	385	199	59	31

Table 5: Number of children in care at single-parent families from Arad County

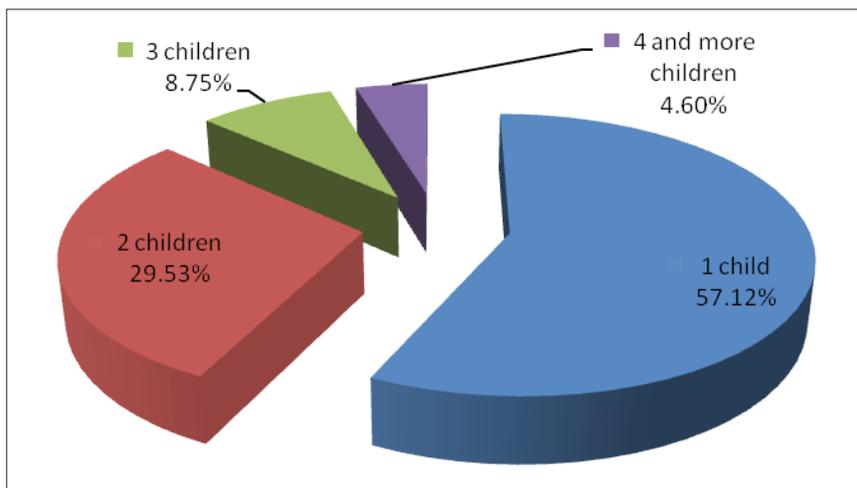


Figure 1: Number of children in care in the single-parent families

According to the database made at the end of 2013 on the situation of the single-parent families, out of the 674 cases of single-parent families remaining to receive state aid and existing in the evidence of the specialised services in the 78 town halls, 112 (16.61%) are from urban area and 562 (83.39%) in the rural one. There are few localities that reported no mono-parenthood situations asking for the allowance for support such type of families: the commune of Dezna, the commune of Felnac, the commune of Secusigiu, the commune of Şistarovăţ. If we consider the residency area, it is clear that the single-parent families, majority in the rural environment, are more exposed to poverty, to precarious living conditions, and to provide the daily needs for the children is questionable.

Out of the total of the cases of single-parent families existing by the end of 2013 in Arad County, respectively 674 cases, in most of them, the mother is the one supporting the family, taking care of the children: 610 mothers (90.52%), in 58 cases (8.60%) the father is doing this, just isolated it is the grandmother (5 cases, 0.74%) or an aunt (one situation, 0.14%). These aspects correspond to the current situation at national level, with all consequences resulting from the fact that, usually, the mother is the single parent.

As all specialised studies stress, even in case of divorce, usually, the instances grant the mother the role to take care of the child, judging that the mother is the most important person for the children, especially for the young ones, the person able to grant not only material care, but also the entire affective availability, so necessary and important during the child's first years of life, during the primary socialisation. The maternal pattern is the one providing the child security, emotional support, stability and safety, indispensable conditions during the process of personality formation. The negative implications of this asymmetric type of family may show up in time, especially during the teenage period, when the future grown-up needs also the father pattern. In case of a divorce, the way how parents succeed to ensure the permanent communication with the child is essential so that the future grown-up benefits of both paternal patterns. The situation gets more problematic when, in most of the time for the single-parent families, the father is not only absent, but inexistent, and in many of such cases, the children are not recognised by their fathers from several reasons. It is here where, a lot of times, the negative aspects in the socialisation process do not delay in showing up, and the society facing pupils with risk of school abandon, deviant or even delinquent behaviour. Therefore, the inter-institutional cooperation is imperative so that such children have an existential trajectory as close to the normality characteristic for the young people, and the school, as main socialising factor, along with the family, is particularly important

For the Arad County, the educational level of the single parent, which is the mother in most of cases, does not vary significantly compared to one from the municipality of Arad. It presents as follows:

- No education - 64 cases (9.50%);
- Primary school studies - 60 cases (8.90%);
- Secondary school studies - 411 cases (60.98%);
- Technical school studies - 11 cases (1.63%);
- High school studies - 112 cases (16.62%);
- Higher education studies - 16 cases (2.37%).

No.	No studies	Primary school studies	Secondary school studies	High school studies	Higher education studies	Technical school
1.	64	60	411	112	16	11

*Table 6: Level of education in single-parent families from Arad County
Source: The Prefecture of Arad, 2013*

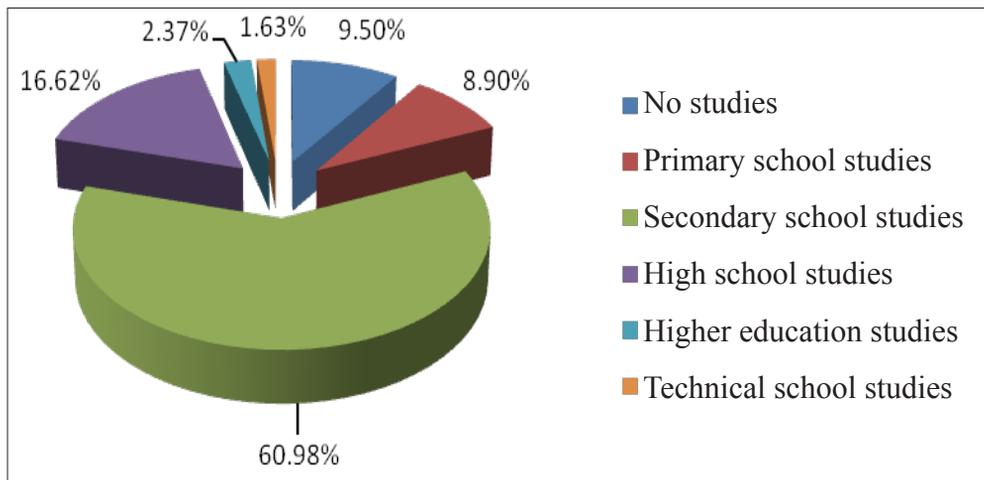


Figure 2: Level of education in single-parent families

There are localities in Arad County, where, almost entirely, the mothers (or the fathers) from single-parent families are either without studies, either prevail primary school studies. Therefore, in the town of Lipova, out of the 5 single-parent families reported by the town hall, the mother in 4 of them has primary school studies; in the town of Pâncota, out of the total of 21 single-parent families, in 10 cases there are primary school studies registered; in the town of Sântana, the parent with no education exists in 6 families out of 15 ones. The urban area was aimed in the prior examples. Even in the municipality of Arad, there are 5 cases of single parent without studies. In the commune of Covăsânț, 7 parents are without studies; out of the 3 single-parent families in the commune of Hășmaș, we cannot talk about studies in 2 of them; in the

commune of Mișca, school abandon was registered in 6 single-parent families (out of the 13 of them); in Sinteia Mare, out of the 20 single-parent families, in 13 of them, the parent is either with no studies or with primary school education; the 2 cases of single-parent families in the commune of Șagu have only primary school education; in the commune of Șeitin, out of the 6 single-parent families, 4 have no studies.

The fact that there are still in 2013, parents of some minor children, so relatively young persons without school or, at least, with two – three primary classes, expresses the very low level of education, especially in the rural area, which can nothing but to worry us regarding the children's future, the type of education the parents may provide for their children, their possibilities to access the educational institutions, in order to ensure themselves, in time, employment. However, in the rural area, the rate of school abandon is much higher than in the urban one, part of these children who do not go to school coming from the categories with high level of social risk, among which there are the single-parent families.

The level of education correlates directly to finding employment, permanent or, just the opposite, the lack of a profession and of an employment providing income. At the level of Arad County, in town and communes, out of the 674 single-parent families, only 123 persons receive wages and have employment (18.24%). 15 persons (2.22%) benefit of retirement fee, if the person taking care of the children is their grandmother or inheritance or disability fees. Most of the parents from the single-parent families, respectively 536 cases (79.54%) belong to other cases, that is: social aid, minimum guaranteed income, indemnity for child-raising, occasional labours, and there is only one situation where the mother is freelancer.

Considering the level of education, the employment and the income acquired, we consider relevant to identify the type of housing, the conditions where this represents an indicator for the quality of life, from the perspective of its ownership, as well as on the area meant for the persons living in the respective house. There are the following situations: personal property, rent, parents' or relatives' property, tolerated, social housing. Consequently, 332 persons own the house as personal property (49.26%), 94 persons rented, even in the rural area (13.94%), and 248 families do not own the house as property (36.80%).

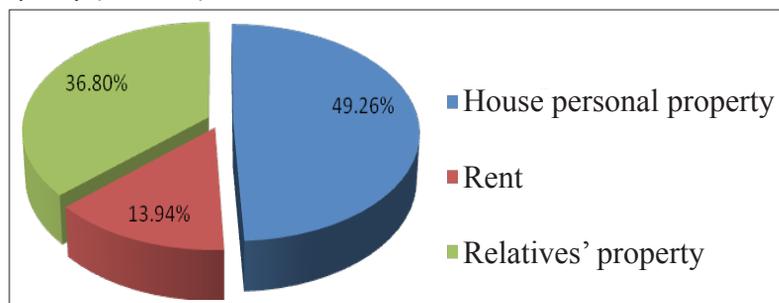


Figure 3: Type of housing for the single-parent families at Arad County level

Especially there where the house is rented or the single-parent family is tolerated in the house or lives together with the parents or the relatives, the area meant for such family type is usually of one room, the housing is with more persons, which means that the area meant for each family member is extremely limited. Consequently, we can notice the absence of any decent living conditions for such families.

We also have made some visits to some addresses where single-parent families lived, who had property rights on the house, and the image the respective building provided was not of a decent life, as, in many cases, there we could see 2-3 generations, being the situation of 9-10 persons living in just one room. The housing conditions raise serious doubts on the family's health, on providing proper conditions for hygiene. These issues were observed especially in the houses belonging to Roma ethnic persons.

Instead of Conclusions

During the current times, in Romania, the causes or the terms causing the social marginalisation phenomenon had not been removed. Far from being reduced or from being a temporary phenomenon, the poverty accentuates itself for some social categories, and we can notify segments of population in extreme poverty. It has to be understood not only considering the lack of financial and material resources, but as a complex of factors that become chronic in time, the situation of the affected persons, leading to social, economic or cultural exclusion. The quality of life is aimed, respectively the lack or the modesty of the housing, the lack of employment, determined by the concrete economic conditions or the absence of a proper professional qualification, the lack of income, the lack of access to healthcare, education services, to the social life of the community. The social exclusion also reflect the typical isolation from political and civic networks, which helps people to have a better life in a modern society and contributes to the development of its activities. All these confirm the strong correlation between the out of marriage births rate, which is constantly increasing, and the indicators of poverty, of social lacks (Giddens, 2000, 169).

The single-parent families, the families with many children, the families from urban or surroundings areas, the families with children with disabilities or with HIV/ AIDS are among the categories of disfavoured vulnerable families, and the minor mothers also get into the category of disadvantaged and vulnerable families. Consequently, the data from the population census reveal that the percentage of children born by adolescent unmarried mothers is much higher among the Roma ethnics than in the majority population. Considering the social status, though there are mothers with honourable status, the overwhelming majority of the minor mother comes from dysfunctional families or even from institutions for child protection. In the same time,

there are as characteristics, the existence of some dysfunctions in the affective life, in communication, and, especially, they have a low level of education. With such sizes, the single-parent families are “an alternative to the classical nuclear family, under the terms where an increase of the frequency is recorded, and it becomes a common conduct in the nowadays societies” (Voinea, 2005, 5). One issue Romania has is the record registered in the European Union for teenagers getting birth before the age of 15. Related to this, in 2014, the UNO Committee for economic, social and cultural rights asked Romania to review the legislation for providing the access to sexual healthcare, to adopt a national strategy in the area.

Starting from these considerations, we appreciate that both institutional and informal steps are useful for accomplishing the social reinsertion of the single-parent families, of the teenager mothers or of the single ones. The reinsertion aims to increase the capacity for communication and circulation in the society, correlated with the activity for assistance and counselling and may target finding employment, training, mediation, etc. Under these circumstances, the measures for improvement the family’s socio-economic balance are important, acting mainly by ensuring family allowances, state allowances for the children, the supplementary allowance, and the allowance for supporting the single-parent family, the allowance for new born, the placement monthly allowance, the program to grand the first kit of cloths and medication for newborn, the limited warranted income. It results from this perspective the importance of implementing some measures such as:

- Setting up a database to comprise the entire children’s population at risk, including the children arising from disorganised families or the children with behaviour issues and tendency to skip classes, and this should be updated at least once a year. This database should be available at Arad County level, respectively at the School Inspectorate for the Arad County, and the General Directorate for Social Care and Child’s Protection Arad, at the specialised services at town halls levels, at the Directorate for Public Health, the County Agency for Labour and Social Protection, at the other specialised institutions.;
- The school units to monitor permanently all minors’ cases of vulnerability, the permanent connection school – family, informing the teenagers on the risks of early motherhood;
- Counselling the single-parent families, especially the adolescent mothers raising alone the children or being at risk;
- The local government may contribute to diminishing the lack of employment, to extinct as quickly as possible the lack of housing, or the habitats with inadequate conditions of life and, through the specialised services to perform the permanent monitoring of the families presenting risk of poverty, lack of housing or unemployed;

- It would be of interest to involve all local community responsible factors in increasing the school personal and social significance by drawing the children with school age to go to classes and by preventing the school abandon or failure;
- The specialised institutions for child's protection must militate to drawing in the NGOs, and other private or public institutions in developing support programs for the families with children belonging to the categories of high risk for social marginalisation;
- At the level of the responsible institutions, it is compulsory to develop a more coherent system for prevention, intimation and intervention in situations of child abuse, neglect or exploitation, in respecting child's right to protection, by multidisciplinary and inter-institutional intervention against any form of abuse or neglect;
- Generally, at localities level, we must insist on increasing the civil society level of involvement in addressing the issues of the vulnerable groups and in developing campaigns for raising public opinion awareness on preventing the child's separation from the family and on fund raising for the families at risk, as well as on local community responsibility in preventing the child's separation from the parents and in supporting the families to raise, care and educate their own children;
- Not last, a modern, comprehensive legal framework imposes itself, a framework in harmonisation with the European standards in the area of child's social protection, in considering the minor mothers as a vulnerable group requiring support by the implementation of a set of specific measures, so that the social protection of the single-parent family, and particularly of the teenager mothers to be correlated with the prevention of this phenomenon.

The beneficial effects of the public policies to implement such measures will finally lead to the reduction of the criminality, of the school abandon, of the illiteracy rate, to the diminishment of single-parent families, of adolescent mothers, of the voluntary unemployment, of various anomic actions within the human communities, and the traditional nuclear families would continue to accomplish more coherently and consistently their social, educational and spiritual functions.

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