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EGYETEM**

# KÜLÖNLEGES BÁNÁSMÓD

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*Note:* The title of the journal comes from a Hungarian Act CXC of 2011. on National Public Education in which they use the term 'Különleges Bánásmód', and this translates as Special Treatment, but this encompasses the areas of Special Educational Needs, Talented Children and Children with Behaviour and Learning Difficulties. The adoption of Special Treatment is therefore in accordance with Hungarian law, but it is recognised that the translation may not be perfect in expressing the full meaning of what is encapsulated in this term.

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**EMPIRIKUS TANULMÁNYOK / EMPIRICAL STUDIES**



## ROMA COLLEGES FOR ADVANCED STUDIES NETWORK IN HUNGARY

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### Abstract

Roma colleges for advanced studies network in Hungary is a unique chain of institutions for helping those students' integration into the system of higher education whose sociocultural background might be characterized by deprivation. Recent study analyses the history as well as the networking process of Roma colleges and the paper endeavours to interpret the features of collegiate students' dwelling-places. In the second part, the author deals with the significance of Roma collegiate students' fields of study related to the debate coursing on the integration policy of marginalized and peripheral local ethnic communities in Hungary.

**Keywords:** Roma students in higher education, ethnicity, social inclusion, integration, acculturation

**Disciplines:** social anthropology, anthropology of institutions

### Absztrakt

#### MAGYARORSZÁGI ROMA SZAKKOLLÉGIUMI HÁLÓZAT

A magyarországi roma szakkollégiumi hálózat egy különleges láncolata azoknak az intézményeknek, amelyek célja, hogy a felsőoktatásba bekerülő deprivált szociokulturális háttérrel jellemezhető hallgatók egyetemi integrációját segítse. Jelen tanulmány röviden elemzi a roma szakkollégiumok létrejöttének történeti és hálózatosodási folyamatát, valamint vizsgálja a szakkollégisták lakóhelyi-környezeti jellemvonásait. A szöveg második részében a roma szakkollégisták szakos képzési területeinek jelentőségét a szerző abból a szempontból tanulmányozza, hogy a fiatal értelmiségiek szakmai tudása miként kapcsolódik ahhoz a vitához, ami a marginalizált és perifériális lokális etnikai közösségek integrációjával kapcsolatban zajlik Magyarországon.

**Kulcsszavak:** roma hallgatók a felsőoktatásban, etnikum, társadalmi befogadás, integráció, akkulturáció

**Tudományterületek:** szociálintropológia, intézmények antropológiája

### Introduction

*“The girls from Hodász told about the Roma College quite a lot. They told me how many help they got, there is the scholarship too, and there are programs for community building. [...] You can meet amazing people there, and I got closer to the teachers, that is a point too. There were teachers at the tutorial weekends and on exams towards whom in the beginning I had negative sentiments, because I told to myself, God bless me, they are tough. After he came in the college, and that was something else, I talked to him and he knows now who I am. That is absolutely great about this college, and if it wouldn't be, then supposedly, I wouldn't be a student at University of Debrecen.”* (Biczó–Szabó 2018)

This confession was told by a young Roma student who lives with his parents in a local Vlachos-Roma community located in North East part of Hungary, where abiding by the traditions they speak a special dialect of Romani language (cerhari). Stepping out from their local environment the students who have gypsy lineage, have difficulties concerning the proper orientation in the strange world of higher education. Recently the systematic support of Roma students in order to avoid their dropping out of the education is an exceptional challenge.

In the last decade, the Roma colleges for advanced studies network have yielded significant results so much as more than four hundred graduations. This group of young intellectuals can help efficiently to induce a turn in the prejudiced way of thinking that is so typical in Hungary as well as all over Europe concerning Roma minorities. In other words, the discrimination that is affected generally the Roma people can be lessened by the social activity of this genuine intelligentsia.

### Research methods and tools

This study is based on long-term research that has been conducted in 2020 and involved all the

Roma collegiate students in Hungary. In terms of completeness, all the present 326 students from 11 Roma Colleges have been investigated through thematic questionnaires. The so-called Human Register 2020 database contains pretty near 14 thousand items that is the result of the most extensive research in this topic. In addition, concerning the conclusions of the study, the author can rely on the interviews and observations those have recorded in 32 different local multi-ethnic communities in the peripheral regions. Actually, these research spots are located in the areas from where the Roma collegiate students arrived at the universities. If anybody would like to understand the significance of this unexampled chain of institutions for helping Roma students, first should gain insight into the general ethno-demographic processes of contemporary Hungary.

### Ethno-demographic processes and collegiate students' geographical and sociocultural background

One of the most crucial discoveries was in the field of applied social sciences in Hungary after the political turn in 1990, that the tendencies of population are divergent comparing the minority Roma and majority Hungarian communities. There lies behind this difference the fertility rate of Roma and Hungarian women. In 90s Roma women's fertility rate was 3,12 meanwhile that decreased up to the millennium 2,9 and the recent figure is estimated 2,7. (Polónyi 2011) The current (2018) average fertility rate for Hungary is 1,55 that includes also the Roma women. As it is well-known fact, for stabilizing a country population the minimum required fertility rate cannot be lower than 2,1. In many respect, the demographic tendencies mirror unfavorable social processes related to the spatial/geographical location of Roma minority groups, because it becomes gradually more concentrated in certain parts of the

country. Many in the literature on ethno-demographic processes in Hungary forecast a dark future concerning the peripheral regions.

The mostly undereducated, partly unemployed Roma people are not going to be able to integrate into the society except for getting more efficiently supported. The contemporary ethno-demographic tendencies can be observed excellently by comparing the two maps below. The available data from the mid-'80s show the geographical regions where the proportion of Roma population is higher than the average country rate (Figure 1.). There is northern and north-eastern rim alongside the borderline that covers the poorest and most underdeveloped regions in the country.

The ethno-geographical relations and the concerning proportions for the townships are quite a similar in the south-western part of Hungary. A new research was conducted by the University of Debrecen in 2018 which reveals similar geographical location of Roma population in Hungary as it was in 1984, but the new statistical

figures of average regional population growth of ethnic minority groups are surprisingly intensive in the last four decades. Moreover, it can be also observed on the map that how many townships have reached and stepped over the number of Roma population the line of 25% (Figure.2.)

Due to the contemporary ethno-demographic tendencies in the strongly touched townships, there can be detected a lot of smaller villages where only Roma people live. As far as the shortly detailed processes show, Hungary has to face an unavoidable challenge concerning the social integration and inclusion of ethnic Roma citizens of the country. Recently all over the spheres of social policy, experts are talking about the necessity of immediate intervention. In addition, the age distribution of the Roma community significantly diverged comparing to the majority. In other words, more than 50% of Roma people are younger than 19 years, and that fact shows the important role of education system in the social integration.

Figure 1. *Proportions of Roma people in townships based on statistical survey conducted by CIKOBÍ in 1984-1985* (Source: Kertesi – Kézdi 1998)

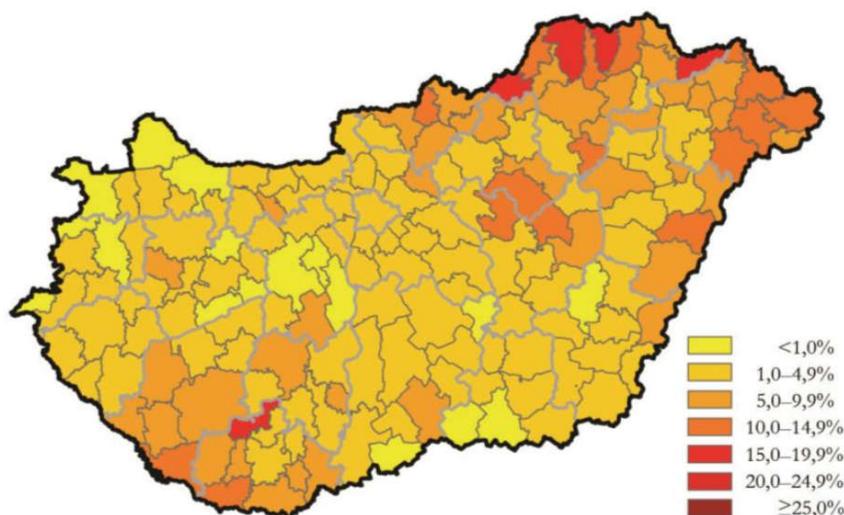
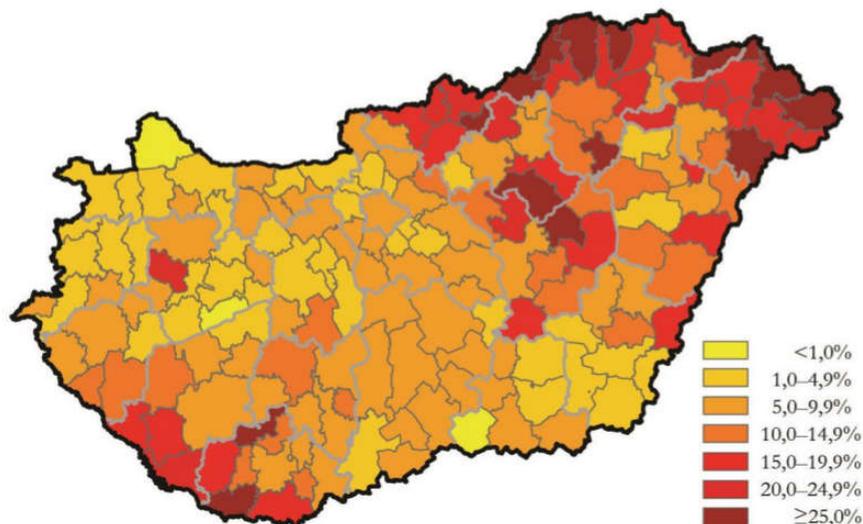


Figure 2. *Proportions of Roma people in townships based on statistical survey conducted by University of Debrecen in 2010-2013.* (Source: Péntzes et al. 2018)



Moreover, the age composition of the majority generates less favourable tendencies also in the schooling, i.e. from the infantries to the secondary schools, at every level of education system gradually decreases the proportion of Hungarian pupils. There are many settlements where the kindergartens and primary schools have become spontaneously segregated as a consequence of ethno-demographic trends. Behind the phenomena there lies a logical explanation, Hungarian parents do not allow their kids to attend kindergartens and schools where Roma children's proportion is higher. According to the available results, there are many counties in Hungary where the proportion of Roma pupils in the primary schools is about one-third of the schoolchildren. The figures were in Nógrád county 34,3%, in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county 32,8%, in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county 28,7% in 2011 (Papp Z. 2011) The remarkable statistics draws our attention to another context, namely the danger of uneducation in the schools mostly attended by Roma children. As it is well-

known fact, the early dropping out extremely threatening in those schools where the school community includes mostly disadvantaged children with uncertain socio-cultural background.

A crucial consideration in the integration issue of disadvantaged Roma children in the marginalized and pauperized regions of Hungary is the willingness for partaking of the new generation of intellectuals who are involved in Roma colleges for advanced studies network.

#### **The short history of Roma colleges for advanced studies network in Hungary**

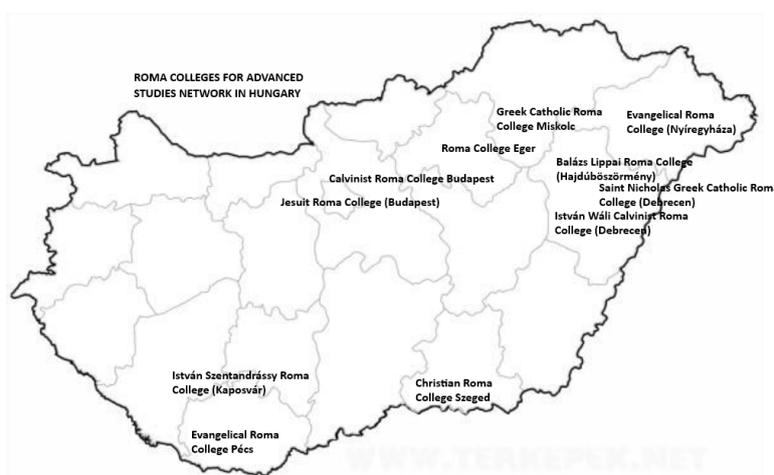
The history of the Roma college network goes back to the last century. The first wave of colleges at Hungarian universities had been organized for the talented youth of peasantry in the 1930s. According to the original idea, from countryside into the boarding school gathered young adults could get financial support for their studies and dwellings ensured by the state. In this way, their

disadvantageous situation hoped to be compensated, and after graduation, lots of them were employed in their residential district. (Kiss-Papp 2008) This early form of college system influenced the implementation of a talent support network at the Hungarian universities after the political turn in 1990. The first Roma colleges have been organized in the 1990s, and these early institutions tried to support disadvantaged students both financially and spiritually. The recent network of Roma colleges in Hungary includes 11 institutions (Figure 3.). According to their history, all Roma colleges have a very own institutional traditions, which means their particular features are quite different. The earliest founded college of recent network was established at the University of Pécs in 2001, and it was operated under the professional control of the Department of Romology. (In 2018, the Lutheran Church has founded a new Roma College in Pécs) This stronghold of contemporary romology researches in Hungary organized the Henrik Wlislocki Roma

College, and all the professional staff, scientists, teachers, and activists that came together around the institution had a priceless pioneer role concerning the acceptance of conception. Initiating by the traditional churches a second wave of the foundation started in 2011. The Calvinist, Catholic, Evangelical, and Greek Catholic churches founded four new Roma colleges in order to foster the social integration of disadvantaged Roma students. Moreover, the founders emphasized their mutual commitment to make effort to networking. According to the rules, all the churches founded colleges entered in a contract with a university to ensure recruiting their membership. In this second wave of foundation, the church leaders' crucial role was inevitable and their efforts produced the first – Christian – form of Roma College network.

In the frame of the third wave, further four colleges have been established, but three of them were founded by universities – Debrecen, Eger, Kaposvár – and only one by the Catholic Church (Szeged) in 2012.

Figure 3. Location of Roma Colleges. (Source: Author)



Last but not least, the second Greek Catholic Roma College has been established in Debrecen in 2015, and the evolution of contemporary network of Roma colleges has ended.

On the map above, two striking features can be observed concerning the geographical location of Roma colleges. First, comparing the formerly analysed ethno-demographic maps with the location of Roma colleges one might detect how accurately overlap the regions where the proportion of Roma people is much higher. In contrast, there is a significant phenomenon that is the lack of Roma colleges in those regions – especially in Transdanubia – where the number of Roma ethnic minority people is lower than the average country rate.

Nevertheless, the establishment of a Roma college requires to fulfill strictly regulated preliminary demands. The most important precondition concerns the prescription of ethnic proportion at the membership. According to the rules that is generally expected threshold criteria for the colleges to reach at least 60% Roma collegiate students and 20% disadvantaged students in their membership. This regulation shed a light on the policy makers' intention in order to ensure an integrated community environment in the Roma colleges. As the recent figures show, the Roma students proportion is close to 80% in most colleges.

That is also a crucial requirement for the Roma colleges to implement their own operational program. These programs planned for three years period including those activities, which can help the students to avoid dropping out of higher education. Moreover, in the number of the operational program of required elements help the students to preserve their culture as well as ethnic identity.

With this end in view, the concept of Roma colleges, the operational programs serve the promotion of structural integration. In other

words, these special institutions follow the principles of cultural pluralism, and their core idea to be supportive cannot be perceived as assimilative pressure. On the contrary, the operational programs emphasize the importance of relearning the elements of Roma cultural heritage, as the study of Romani language and Roma folklore marks the purpose: be integrated but not assimilated.

### **Collegiate students' fields of study**

Studying the recent membership of Roma colleges that is striking to observe how diversified are the fields of learning. Due to our research applied overall questionnaire method, the collected data make reveal the collegiate students' specialties. In order to comprehend the significance of Roma college network concerning its efficacy for sociocultural integration, let have a look at the collegiate students' fields of learning.

According to the data, the investigated 326 collegiate students are studying on 122 major branches, but the field of teacher and pedagogical studies – including nurse, kindergarten teacher, schoolteacher – are more salient comparing to other fields. The ratio at 30,5% is three times higher than any other fields of learning. Another remarkable feature of membership is the level of university studies, and from this viewpoint, the BA is overrepresented by the ratio at 63,5%. At the time of our research, the MA students proportion was hardly more than 10%, and this statistical figure is surprisingly low due to the intensive fluctuation of collegiate students. The background of rapid fluctuation can be explained by the students' decision not to continue further education after graduation.

Another significant factor represents the Roma collegiate students' place of study, that is the universities where they study. The ratio at 46,5% of collegiate students have come from three

universities located in the North and North East part of Hungary: University of Debrecen 28%, University of Nyíregyháza 10%, University of Miskolc 8,5%. These statistical figures raise our attention to the fact how important is the attainability of universities for disadvantaged population, since the universities where the Roma collegiate students are concentrated might be identified close to the regions of a high proportion of Roma communities. That means an increasing number of Roma population is getting better educated in those regions. Moreover, according to their professions, many fresh Roma intellectuals are becoming competent to take an active role in promoting socio-cultural integration. In other words, the teachers, nurses, kindergarten teachers are the most wanted qualifications in those disadvantaged regions from there most of the college students have arrived into higher education. In the Roma colleges for advanced studies network graduated students are able to become active promoters for integration in their neighbourhood. They can be activists not only by their professions but the collegiate students' sociocultural competence concerning the closer residence particular features. In international literature, especially in applied anthropology these types of "experts" used to call *halfies*. The term refers in our context to the student's complex ability: they are educated in key sectors of social integration and simultaneously they have factual knowledge about his/her own community where the development or crisis management appears as a challenge.

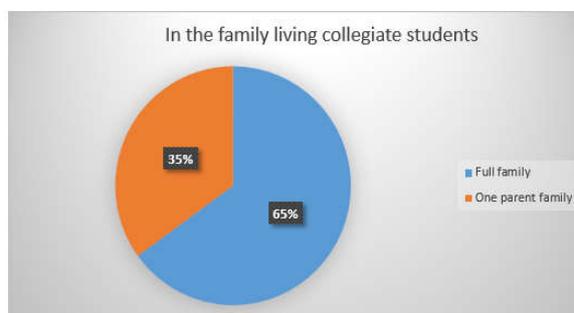
### Family background

Our research, which was carried out in 2020, also targeted the investigation of the collegiate students' family background that is a determinative key aspect concerning their carriers in higher education. According to the available data, the ratio of students who live at home with their own family

is 76%, which means a quite high proportion comparing to the statistics concerning the full population of Hungary. Apart from the fact, these families dwell mostly in deprived settlements, however, the collegiate students' family background can be characterized mostly steady.

From the Figure 4 it is discernible that almost two-thirds of the students live in full families. This favourable socio-cultural characteristic contributes to reaching success in the higher education. There is another highly influential aspect of the collegiate students' learning abilities as well as their motivation, namely how educated are their parents. If we compare the available data concerning the fathers' and mothers' qualifications, then the students' learning efficiency and their studies in higher education can be thrown new light upon it.

Figure 4. Family background. (Source: Author)



From the data (Figure 5) we can conclude, as well as from researches were conducted in local Roma communities we could detect that concerning the collegiate students' parents, they are undereducated or they are low educated people. In this relation, the parents' labour market status is more crucial. This aspect can shed a light on how regular the monthly income is in the households and how this factor contributes to fulfilling the financing requirements of studies in higher education (Figure 5.).

Figure 5. Parents' school qualification. (Source: Author)

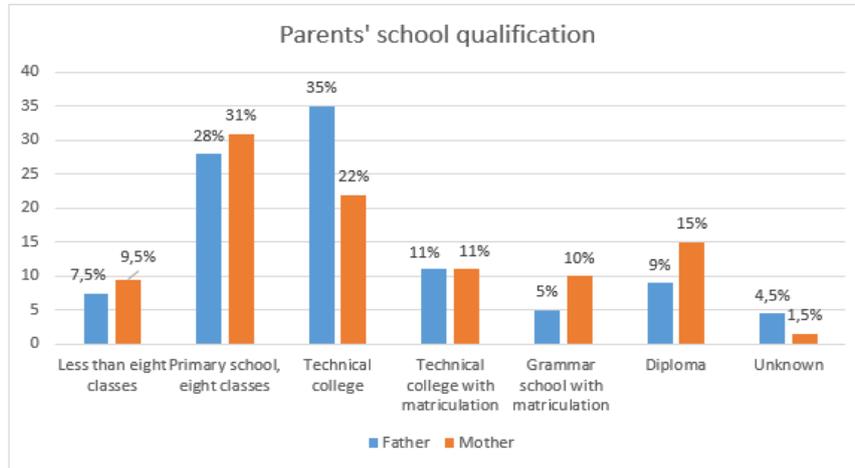
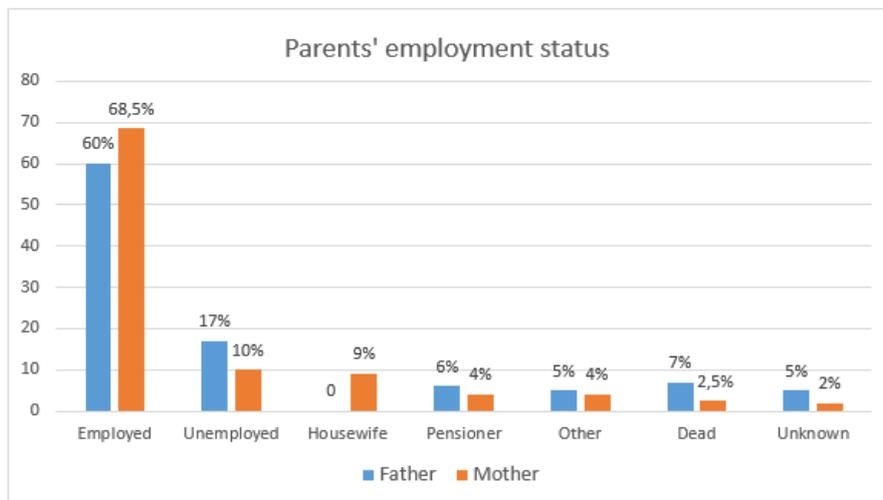


Figure 6. Parents' employment status. (Source: Author)



According to the Figure 6, we might come aware of the situation that the ratio in the case of employed parents is quite high. In these families, the regular monthly income is ensured but we have to face the fact that one-third of collegiate students live in families where the economic background of households is quite weak.

### Conclusions

In this short analysis, we treated to interpret a special chain of institutions in Hungarian higher education. Roma colleges of advanced studies network helps for students who arrive from a disadvantaged environment to the higher education. According to the research conducted in 2020, most of the students in the network are ethnic Roma people who live in a peripheral

settlement where the proportion of the Roma population is higher than the average country ratio. As we have seen, the collegiate students' learning fields can be useful concerning the integration issue. That means they can help both by his/her profession as well as on the basis of their sociocultural knowledge to deepen the process of social integration of Roma population in Hungary.

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**CAN THE PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE OF THE PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS REMOVE THE SOCIAL PREJUDICE TOWARDS THE PUPILS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS? A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS ON THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS BEHAVIORAL MANAGEMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOL**

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**Abstract**

The aim of the study is to highlight the attitude of the students (N=72) from Pedagogy of Primary and Preschool Education Program (pre-service teacher), from first and third years of study, related to how they want, as future teachers, to develop pupils' learning skills in the inclusive classroom by adopting certain behavioral management of pupils with special needs. The working tool used is the Behavior and Instructional Management Scale, developed by Martin and Sass (2010). The comparative analysis of the results obtained according to the year of study captures the existence of statistically significant differences in the aspect of the management of the behavior in the classroom, both in traditional and inclusive classes, during the lessons, with higher averages for the pre-service teachers of 3rd year. Also, pre-service teachers from the 3rd year of study have a higher level of expectations for implementing the rules in school activities with pupils with special needs, compared to the pre-service teachers of the 1st year, which draws attention to the importance of pedagogical practical stage in primary school.

**Keywords:** behavioral management, pre-service teachers, pupils with special needs, primary school, inclusive classroom

**Discipline:** pedagogy

**Absztrakt*****A TANÁRKÉPZÉS PEDAGÓGIAI GYAKORLATA MEGSZÜNTETHETI-E A SZOCIÁLIS ELŐÍTÉLETEKET A SAJÁTOS NEVELÉSI IGÉNYŰ TANULÓKKAL SZEMBEN? AZ ÁLTALÁNOS ISKOLAI VISELKEDÉS MENEDZSMENTTEL KAPCSOLATOS ATTITŰDÖK ÖSSZEHASONLÍTÓ ELEMZÉSE***

A tanulmány célja, hogy bemutassa az első és harmadéves tanító és óvodapedagógia szakos hallgatók (N=72) attitűdjét azzal kapcsolatban, hogy hogyan képzelik fejleszteni jövőbeni pedagógusként a tanulók tanulási képességeit inkluzív osztálytermi környezetben, az SNI-s diákok bizonyos viselkedésirányítási módszereinek alkalmazásával. Mérőeszközként Martin és Sass (2010) *Behaviour and Instructional Management* skáláját használtuk. Az évfolyamoknak megfelelően kapott eredmények összehasonlító elemzése statisztikailag szignifikáns különbségeket mutat a tanítási órák során az osztálytermi viselkedés irányításában, mind a hagyományos, mind az osztálytermi környezetben, ahol a harmadéves hallgatók értékei magasabbak. A harmadéves hallgatók összehasonlítva az első évfolyamos hallgatókkal magasabb elvárásokat fogalmazznak meg az SNI-s diákok iskolai tevékenységéhez kapcsolódó szabályok alkalmazásában, ami felhívja a figyelmet az általános iskolában a pedagógiai szakmai gyakorlat fontosságára.

**Kulcsszavak:** viselkedésmenedzsment, tanárjelöltek, sajátos nevelési igényű tanulók, általános iskola, befogadó tanterem

**Diszciplína:** pedagógia

**Introduction**

Education systems have changed drastically in the last few decades as educating children with disabilities in regular schools has become an important goal in many countries (De Boer et al., 2011). The present study brings to the centre of the issues related to the attitude towards the integration of pupils with special needs (SEN) in inclusive classes in Romania. The study takes into account that the attitude towards others, in general, can be based on either social prejudices or previous experience with them. De Boer et al. (2011) state that teachers with experience in inclusive education hold more positive attitudes than those with less experience. One of the best known and most often used definitions for the attitude was published by Allport in 1935. "The attitude is a mental and neutral state of readiness, organized through

experience, exerting a-directive or dynamic influence upon an individual's response to all objects and situations with which it's related." (Allport, 1935 cited in Balázs-Földi, E, Gortkár-Rákó, E, and Szabó, G., 2019). There is also found that the majority of teachers hold neutral or negative attitudes towards the inclusion of pupils with special needs in regular primary education (De Boer et al., 2011). Soodak, Podell and Lehman (1998), reported that teachers hold the most negative attitudes towards the inclusion of pupils with mild or moderate learning disabilities and emotional disturbances. Teachers' attitudes also seem to be related to other variables, such as experience with inclusive education (Moberg, 2003), and class size (Rose 2001; Smith and Smith 2000).

Several variables are found related to teachers' attitudes, such as training, experience with inclusive education and pupils' type of disability (De Boer et al., 2011).

In order to integrate and include pupils with the SEN, there have been a number of clarifications in the literature on the factors that facilitate the two processes we enumerate: adaptation of the methods, techniques, means of teaching (Dariu, 2017); development and adaptation of learning materials (Dariu, 2017), positive teachers attitudes (De Boer et al., 2011), elements of the educational workplace for teachers (Smith and Smith, 2000), individualized curriculum and so on.

Specifically, the research aims to investigate aspects that have been taken into account in previous studies, on issues that have more to do with managing the behavior of pupils with SEN in inclusive classes, according to the attitudes that pre-service teachers have about this aspect. The management of the behavior of the students in the lessons is an important aspect for the school success, and our interest is to highlight the extent to which this approach is achieved differently in the classroom, according to the year of study of the respondents, but also according to the category of pupils subjected investigation, namely pupils with SEN from inclusive classes and pupils with normal development, from traditional classes.

Classroom management is an extremely studied and researched issue. A meta-analysis of 50 years of research concluded that classroom management is a powerful component of the overall classroom climate as it impacts the level of student engagement, the frequency of inappropriate behavior, and, by extension, the quality of student learning (Wang, Haertel, Walberg, 1994).

The premise from which we start is that the attitude of the pre-service teachers regarding the achievement of the management of the pupils with SEN in the classroom will be influenced by the experience gained through the specialized

pedagogical practice of the pre-service teachers of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year, compared with the attitude that the pre-service teachers from the 1<sup>st</sup> year could have, most probably based on social prejudice. In order to describe the concept of social prejudice, the authors of some publications, especially in the field of psychology, used terms such as: discrimination, ethnocentrism, in-group favoritism, group bias, auto-group derogation, social antagonism, stereotyping and social distance (Augoustinos and Reynolds, 2001). But in order to ensure positive school climates and eliminate discriminatory practices the adults in schools must become aware of their own biases and negative actions and we must also search for and eliminate discrimination in the actions of our students (Popa et al., 2012).

The premise from which we start is that the attitude of the pre-service teachers regarding the management of the behavior of the pupils with special needs in the classroom will be influenced by the experience gained through the specialized pedagogical practice of the pre-service teachers of 3<sup>rd</sup> year, compared with the attitude that the pre-service teachers from 1<sup>st</sup> year could have, most probably based on social prejudice. In order to describe the concept of social prejudice, the authors of some publications, especially in the field of psychology, used terms such as: discrimination, ethnocentrism, in group favoritism, in-group bias, auto-group derogation, social antagonism, stereotyping and social distance (Augoustinos and Reynolds, 2001). Many classic and contemporary theorists have suggested that prejudice is an inevitable consequence of ordinary categorization (stereotyping) processes (Allport, 1954, Billig, 1985, Ehrlich, 1973, Hamilton, 1981, Tajfel, 1981 all cited in Devine, 1989). The development of the internship of pedagogical practice of the students from the Faculty of Humanistic and Social Sciences during the training period at the level of the bachelor's degree studies, is carried out semi-annually, four hours a week, in pre-school and

primary education institutions, respectively, and we hope that can contribute to the change of prejudices related to the integration of pupils with SEN in inclusive classes, through a management of the behavior of the pupils in lessons, adapted to the development needs.

### Database and method of the research

#### The purpose of the research

The study aims to highlight, through comparative analyzes, the attitude of the pre-service teachers of the first and third year, regarding the behavioral management of pupils with SEN in inclusive classes, respectively the management of the behavior of pre-service teachers in traditional classes.

#### Hypothesis of the research

*Specific hypothesis 1:* If there are differences of opinions of pre-service teachers from the 1<sup>st</sup> year, regarding the behavioral management of the pupils with SEN from inclusive classes, compared with the behavioral management of pupils from traditional classes, this fact is due to some social prejudices.

*Specific hypothesis 2:* If there are differences of opinions of the pre-service teachers from 3<sup>rd</sup> year regarding the management of the pupils' behavior with SEN in inclusive classes, compared with the management of the behavior of the pupils in the traditional classes. This fact can be largely due to the pedagogical practice carried out in primary schools.

*Specific hypothesis 3:* If between the attitude of the pre-service teachers of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year, respectively, regarding the behavior management, there are differences, this is largely due to the experience gained during the pedagogical practice, carried out in primary schools.

#### Participants

The study was attended by 72 students, from the Primary and Preschool Education Program at the University of Oradea, Social and Human Sciences Faculty, Romania, in the first year (n=30) and third year (n=42). The average age is about 21 years (minimum age 18 years and maximum 42 years). Depending on gender, the group is made up of female gender only.

#### Method and working tool

The method used in data collection is the survey based on a questionnaire. The working tool used is the *Behavior and Instructional Management Scale*, developed by Martin and Sass in 2010, translated and adapted by us in the research purpose.

The *Behavior and Instructional Management Scale* is structured in two parts. The first part aims to capture issues related to behavior management (12 items) and the second part aims to capture issues related to instructional management (12 items) during the school program.

In this study we used only the scale related to the behavior management, which was adapted to be completed for two different educational environments: students from the traditional classes (Crombach alpha coefficient is 0.707, satisfactory level) and for pupils with special needs from inclusive classes (Crombach alpha coefficient is 0.737, satisfactory level).

Completing the answers involves ticking a response variant of those offered on a Likert scale in 6-point from strongly agree to strongly disagree. High scores indicate a more controlling or interventionist approach while lower scores are indicative of a less controlling used by pre-service teacher in behavioral management of pupils in the classroom. Some example of items are: „I nearly always intervene when students talk at inappropriate times during class”, „I strongly limit student chatter in the classroom”, or „I firmly

redirect students back to the topic when they get off task”.

### Results

The results of the research will be illustrated by analyzing data obtained from pre-service teachers, in comparative studies on paired and independent samples. The results analysis was performed using the SPSS for Windows statistical package, version 18. Processing the results with Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, it was verified the shape of the data distribution and we obtained results which indicated normal distributions.

*Study 1: The attitude of the pre-service teacher from the first year of study regarding the management of the pupils' behavior with special needs from inclusive classes versus the management of the pupils' behavior from the traditional classes.*

To verify the study hypothesis 1: If there exists different opinions of the pre-service teacher in the 1<sup>st</sup> year of study regarding the behavioral management of the pupils with special needs (from inclusive classroom) compared with the behavioral management of the pupils of the traditional classes, this fact is due to social prejudice, we present the results obtained at t paired test in Table 1.

From the data observed in Table 1, we conclude that there are statistically significant differences regarding the way in which the management of the pupils' behavior is performed in the traditional class, compared with the management of the pupils with SEN in the inclusive class ( $t=3,424$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Higher averages were obtained in the traditional

classes. The effect size is  $d=0,635$ , the value being above average, which means that the study hypothesis is supported and the study has some practical implications.

According to the research hypothesis, the management of the pupils' behavior at the lessons by the pre-service teachers from the 1<sup>st</sup> year will be performed differently for the pupils with special needs compared to the pupils of the traditional classes due to a large extent of social prejudice. The data obtained reflect that the pre-service teachers of the 1<sup>st</sup> year considered that is necessary a lower control of behavioral management of the pupils with special needs from the inclusive class compared to behavioral management of the pupils from traditional classes. We supposed that this differences could be explained by a social prejudice about the inclusion of pupils with SEN in inclusive classes.

*Study 2: The attitude of the pre-service teacher from the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of study regarding the behavioral management of the pupils with special needs from inclusive classes versus the management of the student' behavior from the traditional classes*

To verify the study hypothesis 2: If there exist different opinions of the pre-service teacher in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of study regarding the behavioral management of the pupils with special needs (from inclusive classes) compared with the behavioral management of the pupils of the traditional classes, this fact is due to pedagogical practice stage, we present the results obtained at t paired test in Table 2.

*Table 1. Results obtained in the t test on paired samples in the working instrument, in the group of pre-service teachers from the 1<sup>st</sup> year of study. (Source: Authors)*

Variables	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Behavioral management of the pupils with special needs in inclusive classes - Behavioral management of the pupils from traditional classroom	3,424	29	0,002	3,32	0,504
				3,78	0,581

From the data observed in table 2, we concluded that there are statistically significant differences regarding the way in which the management of the pupils' behavior is performed in the traditional class compared with the management of the pupils with SEN in the inclusive class ( $t=7,124$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), with higher averages to the traditional class.

The effect size is  $d=1,381$ , the value being a very high one, which means that the study hypothesis is supported and the study has practical implication. According to the research hypothesis, the management of pupils' behavior in the lessons, by the pre-service teachers from the 3<sup>rd</sup> year, will be performed differently in the pupils with SEN, compared to the pupils in the traditional class, due in large part to pedagogical practice. The data obtained reflect that the pre-service teachers of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year consider that a lower control in the management of the behavior in the pupils with SEN of the inclusive class is necessary.

*Study 3. The attitude of the pre-service teacher from 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year of study regarding the behavioral management of pupils*

To verify the study hypothesis 3: If there are differences between the attitude of the pre-service teacher from 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year of study regarding the behavioral management of pupils in the classroom, this is largely due to the experience gained during the pedagogical practice carried out in primary school, we present the results obtained at t independent test in Table 3.

From the data observed in table 3, we conclude that there are statistically significant differences, regarding the attitude of the pre-service teachers according to the year of the study, on the way in which the management of the behavior of pupils with SEN, from inclusive classes is obtained ( $t=-2,207$ ,  $p < 0,05$ ), with higher averages in 3<sup>rd</sup> year pre-service teachers and average effect size, according to Cohen ( $d=0,523$ ).

*Table 2. Results obtained in the t test on paired samples in the working instrument, in the group of pre-service teachers from the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of study. (Source: Authors)*

Variables	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Behavioral management of the pupils with special needs in inclusive classes	7,124	41	0,000	4,01	0,437
Behavioral management of the pupils from traditional classes				3,56	0,455

*Table 3. Results obtained in the t test on independent samples in the working instrument, in the group of pre-service teachers from first and third year of study. (Source: Authors)*

Variables	F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Behavior management of the pupils with special needs in inclusive classroom	2,324	0,132	-2,207	71	,030	3,3210	,50498
						3,5660	,45507
Behavior management of the pupils in traditional classroom	1,871	0,175	-1,956	71	,054	3,7847	,58148
						4,0123	,43743

At the same time, there is a tendency to achieve a management of the behavior of the pupils in the class, different from the pre-service teachers from 3<sup>rd</sup> year, compared with those from 1<sup>st</sup> year, with slightly higher average in 3<sup>rd</sup> year ( $t=-1,956$ ,  $p \geq 0,05$ ) and effect size around the mean  $d=0,464$ .

### Conclusions

From the data obtained we can conclude that the attitude of the pre-service teachers regarding the behavioral management of the pupils in classes differs depending on the category of pupils: with SEN or with normal development, but also according to the year of study of the pre-service teacher. According to the obtained results, the behavioral management of the pupils with SEN in classes is based on a lower control, compared to that achieved in the pupils from the traditional classes. The highest levels were obtained for the pre-service teachers of 3<sup>rd</sup> year, who consider that a more rigorous control of the behavior of the pupils is needed during the lessons, as compared to those of 1<sup>st</sup> year. This fact is due to the experience accumulated in the specialized pedagogical practice, from the primary education, attended by the pre-service teachers from the third year, knowing more than their colleagues from the first year, about the necessity of a classroom climate based on the respect of certain rules of discipline in the classroom, both for pupils from traditional classes and for pupils with SEN integrated into inclusive classes. However, both group, the pre-service teachers of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year and the pre-service teachers of 1<sup>st</sup> year, consider that the behavioral management of the pupils in the classroom, must also take into consideration certain particularities in the development of the pupils, especially those with SEN.

The attitude of the pre-service teachers regarding the lower control, in the aspect of the behavior of the pupils with SEN in lessons, can be due not

only to social prejudices, but they can be reinforced by the educational practices used in inclusive classes. An explanation for this could be related to the fact that, in schools in Romania, the emphasis in the education process is placed on pupils with typical development and less on the activity with the integrated pupil with SEN. Another explanation is that the behavioral management of the pupils with SEN, during the didactic activity, can be carried out by means other than those that the working tool allows to be analyzed, depending on the type and degree of disability of the pupils with SEN, of which pre-service teachers can be aware that it is necessary to be implemented in class.

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**COOPERATION VS. COMPETITION.  
APPROACHES ON THE INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH SEN**

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**Abstract**

Solving learning tasks, among students, is usually done in the context of an interaction based on competition or cooperation. Either of the two types of interaction - cooperation and competition - has different effects in terms of the students' mutual attitudes, the degree of involvement and the degree of participation in the performance of school tasks and individual school performance. The success of the school inclusion of students with the SEN implies the cooperation between all the factors involved in this process. Special education is a part of the Romanian education system and should support educational programs for pupils with SEN suitable for their harmonious development. We started in our research from the application of a questionnaire to which teachers from Bihor County responded. If, in the preceding article, this working instrument was applied to a number of 163 teachers from mass education, to mixed classes that had in their composition and children with special educational requirements, in this article we extract the data that we have collected from to a number of 63 teachers in special education. The questionnaire comprises a total of 46 items referring to the atmosphere of cooperation and competition, and comprises two parts. The first part includes questions regarding seniority in work, educational grade, age, number of the group of students they work with, etc.

**Keywords:** cooperation, competition, special education, school performance, cooperation

**Discipline:** pedagogy

### **Absztrakt**

*EGYÜTTMŰKÖDÉS VS. VERSENY.*

*A SAJÁTOS NEVELÉSI IGÉNYŰ GYERMEKEK INKLÚZIÓJÁNAK MEGKÖZELÍTÉSEI*

A diákok között a tanulási feladat megoldása általában verseny vagy együttműködés alapú interakcióban történik. Mindkét típusú interakciónak, a versenynek és az együttműködésnek egyaránt, különböző hatása van a diákok közös attitűdjére, a bevonódás mélységére és iskolai feladata bemutatásában való részvétel mértékére, valamint az egyéni iskolai teljesítményre. A sajátos nevelési igényű gyermekek iskolai inklúziójának sikere magába foglalja a folyamatban részt vevő összes faktor közötti együttműködést. A gyógypedagógia része a román oktatási rendszernek és támogatja a sajátos nevelési igényű tanulók nevelési programjait, melyek a tanulók harmonikus fejlődéséhez illeszkednek. Kutatásunkat kérdőív alkalmazásával kezdtük, melyet Bihar megyei pedagógusok töltöttek ki. Egy korábbi tanulmányunkban ezt a módszert 163 normál tantervű iskolákban, vegyes összetételű, sajátos nevelési igényű gyermeket is befogadó osztályokban tanító pedagógus bevonásával végeztük. Jelenlegi tanulmányunkban a 63 gyógypedagógustól származó adatainkat mutatjuk be. A kétrészes kérdőív összesen 46 itemet tartalmaz, melyek a verseny és az együttműködés légkörére irányulnak. Az első rész a következő információkat tartalmazza pl. munkában töltött idő, iskolai végzettség, életkor, gyermekek száma a tanulócsoportban stb.

**Kulcsszavak:** együttműködés, verseny, gyógypedagógia, iskolai teljesítmény, kooperáció

**Diszciplína:** pedagógia

### **Introduction**

Solving learning tasks among students is used to occur in the context of an interaction based on competition or cooperation relationships. Either of the two types of interaction - cooperation and competition - has different effects in terms of the students' mutual attitudes, the degree of involvement and participation in the accomplishment of the school tasks and the individual school performances.

The researches carried out in this direction (Mead, 1937, Deutsch, 1949) highlight the advantages and disadvantages of these types of learning, the extent and the way in which they should be used in one school situation or another. Competition represents mutual rivalry or a "fight" between two or more persons to achieve an indivisible goal (Golu, 1974, p. 158). Competition is a motivational form of self-assertion, in which

the individual competes with others for the attainment of a social situation or superiority, and cooperation is a socially oriented activity, in which the individual collaborates with others to achieve a common goal (Ausubel, 1981, p. 491).

Define the two opposite ways of relating learning in special education, born at least two questions that we have addressed with the start of this scientific approach.

1. What approach do we use in the class we teach: Competition learning or cooperative learning?
2. Which of these two concepts represents the ideal form in the learning activities?

Creating a balanced environment for the learning process, which helps students to learn effectively, involves in addition to the attention and support from the teachers and a psychological basis for

developing critical thinking of students and developing relationship and development skills (Pascariu, 2018, p. 60).

We consider that there is no "perfect cooperation", but no "abolished competition" (idea proposed for the whole society, by the American scientist A. Kohn, 1992) in a human community.

### Cooperation vs. Competition

The most common models of competition are competitions, the Olympics, sports competitions, national assessments, exams. The rewards for winning such a competition include diplomas, prizes, averages and high marks, a self-image in crescendo and not least in popularity.

There are a myriad of other factors that influence the competitive processes within schools, including: teacher expectations, size of school and class, school transitions, school efficiency, ethnicity, child's cultural experience, restrictive or elaborate language codes, emotional intelligence, etc. (R. Harwood, S. A. Miller, R. Vasta, 2010, p. 408). Cooperative learning develops social skills, conflict resolution skills, leadership skills and teamwork skills, and as a result of cooperative learning, students learn to understand and work with others who are different from themselves. The reverse of the medal, on the other hand, is that students become dependent on their teammates and lose the ability to work alone, and group projects can create resentment among its members. On the axis presented below, we can see that a

state of cooperation can become a state of competition between student teams, which in turn can generate an imminent conflict state. Therefore, the thin thread that links cooperation to a conflictual state is a very thin one (Fig. 1).

Competition stimulates the individual's effort and productivity and prepares students for life, which is very competitive but can generate aggressive conflicts and behaviors, lack of communication among colleagues, unfair marginalization of some of them, amplify anxiety and fear of failure, cultivate selfishness. The characteristics mentioned above show that both learning through cooperation and learning through competition have advantages and disadvantages in the exclusive and individual application in the classroom. For this reason, the term "COOPETITION" appeared.

*The cooperation* is an American neologism, but also an ideology obtained from the theory of games (Fig. 2). Competition games are the ways in which synergy can be created through partnership with competitors. Drawing a parallel between the competing games and the didactic approach, we can summarize the fact that the combination of these two types of learning is the key to success in the modern pedagogical approach.

This new form of organization of the learning process tends to be one of the most used outside the borders of the country. When we talk about the education in Bihor County, we can say that the atmosphere is one of cooperation, which tends towards one of co-competition, using all the levers needed to implement this type of organization.

Figure 1. Representation of the situation of possible conflict within a group activity (through cooperation). (Source: Authors)

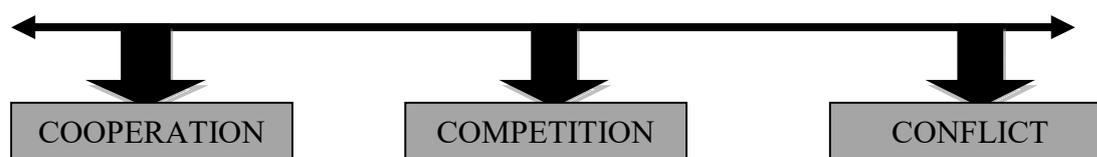
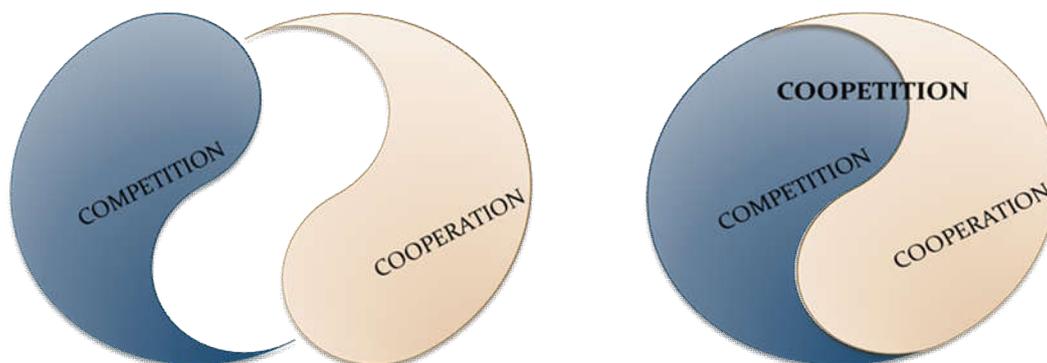


Figure 2. Representation of the term of coopetition. (Source: Authors)



### Inclusion and cooperation

For the success of the school inclusion, there is a need for cooperation between all the factors involved in this process. Special education is a component part of the Romanian education system and must support educational programs suitable for students with SEN for their harmonious development (Barth, Florescu, Ciobanu, 2019, p. 12). Children with special educational needs need support for adaptation, integration and socialization. From the point of view of Vygotsky (1978), a child with special needs who is integrated into an ordinary class could, through cooperation and interaction with his classmates, develop his knowledge, language and thinking, creativity and, no, last but not least, self-esteem.

To achieve this, it is necessary to adapt the contents, both quantitatively and qualitatively, to select objectives focused on their needs, to carry out school remediation programs, to adapt the teaching methods (learning methods through cooperation, active-participative methods, the didactic game), the didactic material (intuitive), of adapting the evaluation process, following the

development of individual capacities, be they written, oral, visual, or kinesthetic.

Adherence to inclusive education highlights the need for school development, to properly meet the participation of children with disabilities (as well as other marginalized groups) in mainstream school environments, as component elements of human diversity - with its specific difference (Barth, Florescu, Ciobanu, *The benefits of "coopetition" in the process teaching-learning assessment*, in process of publication).

In the Figure 3, we represent the four types of education regarding the terms used to describe an educational program depending on child intellectual, social, cultural, personal and emotional development.

- *Traditional education* may be defined as a set of norms established by the traditional society. Many parents and teachers are concerned with maintaining the objective educational standards. In traditional education, the competition between pupils is cultivated with a view to their hierarchy and individual activity.

- *Special education* is intended for all children with disabilities who fail to achieve a level of knowledge and social behaviour corresponding to their age in the ordinary education.
- *Integrated education* - involves relationships between individuals based on a recognition of their integrity, shared values and rights that they possess and aims to educate those children with special needs in ordinary schools alongside other normal children
- *Inclusive education* means that all children have access to quality education in an inclusive environment (Ciobanu, 2017, p. 36).

It is noteworthy that integrated education has produced a paradigm shift in the evaluation and intervention of the disabled child, with the emphasis being placed on psycho-pedagogical and sociological skills in school and social integration, thus overcoming the medical model. Any way the inclusion suits better to the need of children, because means more than comprehension, involves

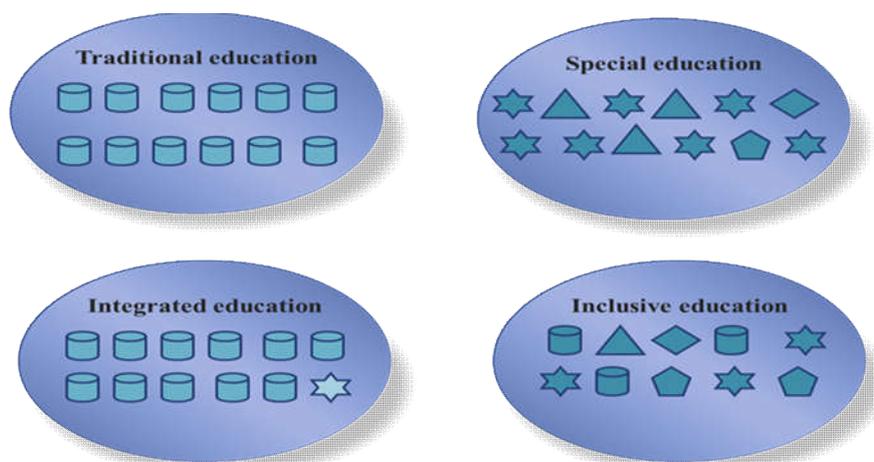
the elimination of discrimination and segregation, being a complex process involving all educational actors. (Ciobanu, 2017, p. 37)

### Methodology

The research method used in this study is the survey method based on the questionnaire, having as working tools the questionnaire addressed to the teachers from Bihor County. It has been applied to a number of 63 teachers working in the special education system. The questionnaire comprises a total of 46 items referring to the atmosphere of cooperation and competition in the classes of special education, and the working instrument comprises two parts.

The first part includes questions related to seniority in work, educational grade, age, number of the group of students they work with, etc. The second part contains items that refer to the two types of educational approach (cooperation and competition). These items are in accordance with the present research and also with the way in which the teachers work in the special education institutions in Bihor County, Romania.

Figure 3. Comparison of types of education. (Source: Authors)



The research objectives were the following:

- Highlighting a possible correlation between the predominant atmosphere in the classroom and the success of a school success among children with SEN.
- The influence of the way of organizing the didactic activities and the school success of the students with special educational requirements.

The hypotheses\_from which we started in this scientific endeavor were:

- the possibility of the success of the students with SEN if the classroom atmosphere is a cooperative one.
- the didactic approach through cooperation, favors the positive attitudes of the students with special educational requirements, as compared to the learning act.
- Most of the respondents of our scientific approach are teachers with more than 10 years

experience in the chair. Of these teachers, most use cooperative learning for more than 6 years, although the number of courses they attended varies on average between 1 and 4 courses / teacher. From the attached diagrams (Figure 4.) it can be observed that in the classes to which the questioned teachers are teaching, the existing atmosphere is both competition and cooperation. This aspect reveals that the fusion between these manifestations, or their balanced weight, is natural in the special education in Bihor County.

From the below attached diagrams (Figure 5.) it can be observed that in the classes to which the questioned teachers are teaching, the existing atmosphere is both competition and cooperation. This aspect reveals that the fusion between these manifestations, or their balanced weight, is natural in the special education in Bihor County.

Figure 4. Distribution of respondents based on experience in years. (Source:Authors)

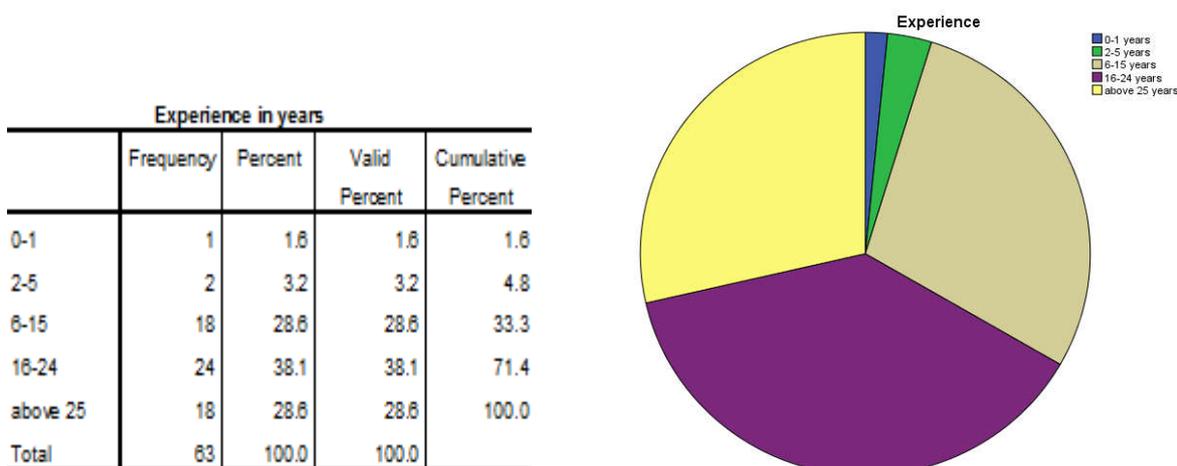


Figure 5. Competition end cooperation environment. (Source:Authors)

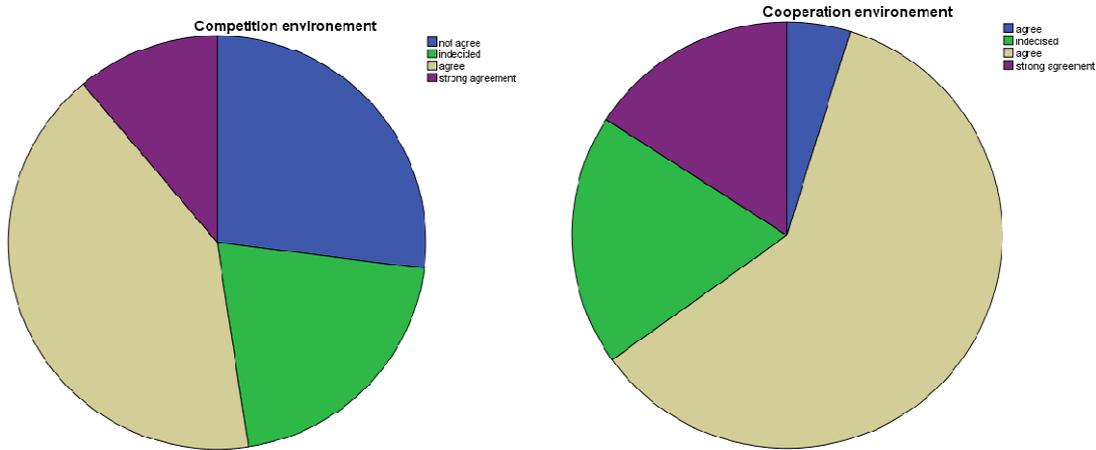
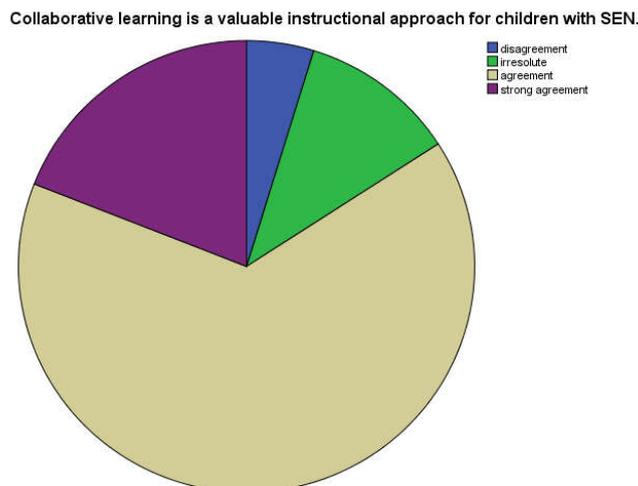


Figure 6. Collaborative learning is a valuable instruactional approach for children with SEN. (Source:Authors)



From the Figure 6, we find that more than half of those surveyed consider that the instructional approach through cooperation is beneficial to children with special educational requirements.

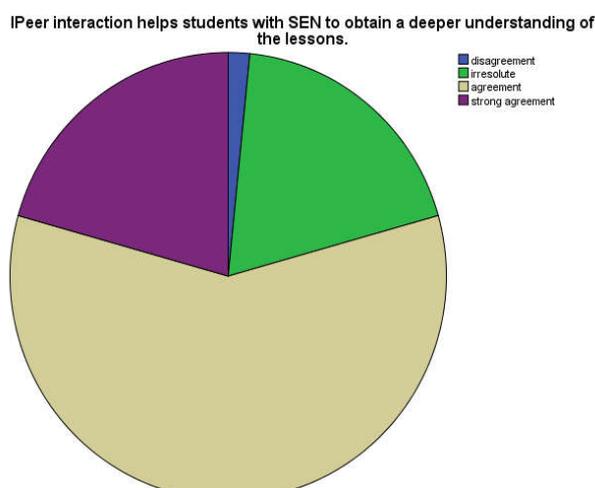
From the analyzed data it can be seen that learning through co-operation helps and stimulates children with SEN at the same time, and will also more easily accumulate the information taught in the classroom.

The importance of the cooperative environment in the classes with children with special

requirements is very high, and the benefits of creating such a climate are essential in developing self-esteem.

The help offered to other colleagues and the response of others with the same measure ensures a conducive environment for effective learning. Carrying out the activities of learning, teaching and evaluation in the form of cooperation, not only facilitates the path to a cognitive development of children with learning difficulties, but also facilitates the path to communication with others.

Figure 7. Peer interaction helps students with SEN to obtain a deeper understanding of the lessons. (Source: Authors)



From the latest chart (Figure 7.) presented so far, we can argue that the implementation of learning through cooperation is not considered an obligation by the respondents; they prefer to use new teaching approaches, to the detriment of the traditional ones.

### Conclusions

After analyzing the data, the two hypotheses from which we started in this approach, are confirmed. Therefore, we found that there is the possibility of easy inclusion of students with SEN if the classroom atmosphere is a cooperative one, and also that learning through cooperation is a valuable tool that favours the positive attitudes of the students towards the learning act. The data obtained by us highlight directions for the implementation of activities to raise awareness of the teaching staff regarding the importance of adopting a teaching style in accordance with the educational requirements imposed by the consistency of the class in which they teach.

In accordance with the data obtained and presented in this article, we consider it important to resize the didactic actions from the point of view of interdependence, and not of duality, between competition and cooperation, in order to streamline the educational-educational process and to optimize efficiency in different educational contexts. As a conclusion of the two instruments applied both in mainstream schools (Barth, Florescu, Ciobanu, *The benefits of "cooperation" in the process teaching-learning assessment*, in process of publication) and in inclusive education schools, we can say that the impact of cooperation is higher in children with special educational needs, but cooperation is more prevalent.

This type of approach helps children with special educational needs to manifest freely and unrestrained everything they know, to express certain feelings, to open themselves to effective communication, to develop their organizational skills. Also the cognitive, affective and creative development is an essential point in the use of cooperation, and this creates the lever for easy insertion in the society.

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**SPORTING MOTIVATIONS OF STUDENTS WHO LIVE WITH DISABILITIES,  
IN THE LIGHT OF A REGIONAL RESEARCH**

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**Abstract**

Among the sports motivations of children, victory occupies a very special place, success, achievement, the need to recognize performance, which predominantly expresses extrinsic orientation (Duda et al., 1992). Studies examining sports motivational factors for people with disabilities do not provide such a comprehensive system as research on intact sports. Thus, the survey of exercise habits and sports motivation factors that determine the quality of life of people with disabilities can be said to be a deficit area both domestically and internationally.

The research examines the sports motivation factors of the 8-18 age group (n = 1158) and reports the results of primary research. I present the adaptation of the questionnaire conducted among the Hungarian disabled population to a child sample and its results. No such survey has yet been conducted in Hungary among children with disabilities. In the questionnaire research, the sports habits of young people with disabilities and the emergence of the role of health awareness in sports motivation. I process the data with the help of SPSS software, in addition to the basic statistics, I use the Chi2 test to examine the correlations.

**Keywords:** students with disabilities, sports motivation, sports

**Disciplines:** economics, sociology, special education

**Absztrakt**

*FOGYATÉKOS TANULÓK SPORTMOTIVÁCIÓI EGY REGIONÁLIS KUTATÁS TÜKRÉBEN*

A gyerekek sportolási motivációi között igen kitüntetett helyet foglal el a győzelem a siker, elérése, a teljesítmény elismerésének igénye, amelyek dominánsan külső (extrinsic) orientációt fejeznek ki (Duda et al., 1992). A fogyatékossággal élő személyek sportmotivációs tényezők vizsgáló tanulmányok nem

képeznek olyan teljességre törő rendszert, mint az épek sportolásával foglalkozó kutatások. Így a fogyatékossgal élők életminőségét meghatározó testedzési szokások, sportmotivációs tényezők felmérése hazai és nemzetközi viszonylatban is egy hiányterületnek mondható. A felmérés a 8-18 éves korosztály (n=1158) sportmotivációs tényezőit vizsgálja és egy primer kutatás eredményeiről számol be. A hazai fogyatékossgal élő lakosság körében végzett kérdőív gyerek mintára történő adaptálását és annak eredményeit mutatom be. A fogyatékossgal élő gyerekek körében még nem végeztek hazánkban ilyen felmérést. A kérdőíves kutatásban a fogyatékossgal élő fiatalok sportolási szokásait és a sportmotivációban az egészségtudatosság szerepének megjelenését. Az adatokat SPSS szoftver segítségével dolgozom fel, az alapstatisztikán túl az összefüggések vizsgálatára Chi2 próbát alkalmazok.

**Kulcsszavak:** fogyatékos tanulók, sportmotiváció, sportolás

**Diszciplina:** gazdaságtudomány, szociológia, gyógypedagógia

### Literature Review

The Eurobarometer survey of 2014 revealed the most important sports motivations of European citizens, and highlighted the diverse characteristics of various countries. The most important aspect for the citizens of the EU is health, which is particularly considered as important by Swedish, Slovenian, Danish, and Spanish people, however, for Bulgarians or Hungarians it is of lesser importance. The improvement of fitness conditions is typical to Scandinavian countries while resting and recreation is a dominant characteristic of Slovenian people. Besides entertainment and pleasure, some other important factors are more attractive outwards and physical appearance, weight control, and also friendly encounters. The same aspects dominate in Hungary too, however, an interesting fact is that entertainment and fun (9%), as well as weight control (8%), is less accentuated amongst motivations (Sports and Physical Activity Report 2014). The Hungarian Youth Survey (2016) investigated the motivations of physical activity (Székely–Szabó 2017). They identified factors such as creating and maintaining fitness and health, joy,

achieving wellness and good physical appearance. Besides, losing weight, social events and parental suggestions also provide an incentive for youth. The outcomes of the previous Youth Survey in 2012 established that there are many differences between young men, and women concerning physical activities. Young men mentioned fitness, and related performance as well as the social elements of sport; while young women referred to health, wellness, physical appearance and weight control in a significantly larger frequency (Székely, 2013).

The role of spare time activities in health is indisputable (Müller-Bácsné, 2018, Balogh-Bácsné, 2020). Several branches of Hungarian psychology deal with the expedient use of spare time and its impacts upon mental health (Molnár, 2015, 2014). The majority of research in the subject mostly concentrates on the recreational activities of healthy people, with a special focus on their sporting habits (Herpainé et. al. 2017), and although some recent domestic and foreign research investigate the recreation of disabled people, (Laoues et. al. 2019), and others deal with the operational elements that support recreation

within certain operational forms (Molnár, 2012a, b), by no means can they constitute such a near-complete system as recreational or sports consumption literature that focuses on healthy people.

Among recreational programs, regular sports activities, whose significance is confirmed by several research, have an outstanding role (Osváth-Ramocsa 2006, Sáringerné 2014, Gombás 2017, Laoues et. al. 2019, Borkovics 2019, Müller-Bácsné 2019), as they help disabled people to improve their individual conditions or life qualities (Sörös et al., 2012, Devita -Müller 2020), as well as to achieve social experiences and to integrate into society.

Thus, by any means, sport greatly contributes to the improvement of life qualities. That is because we can only reach personal fulfillment and live a full life if we are healthy. However, as the research of (Sörös-Pető, 2015) already confirmed, there is a strong correlation between sporting habits, health, and satisfying life. In Hungary, the sporting habits of the handicapped adult population became the focus of the research (Sáringerné 2014, Gombás 2017), however, there is still a great gap concerning the research that investigates the habits and needs of children.

### Method

I have conducted my research in the region of the Northern Great Plains and Northern Hungary, among students who participate in integrated and special education (N=1158) in primary or secondary educational institutions. The completion of the questionnaire in the school years of 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 was implemented with the help of FODISZ (Student-, Competitive- and Recreational Sports Association of Handicapped People). The questionnaires were completed anonymously, the participation in the data collection was voluntary. Following the

achievement of the data, I analysed the received outcomes with the SPSS statistic program, and to investigate the correlations beyond basic statistics, I used the chi-squared test.

In the course of the research, I aimed to investigate the sporting habits of 8-18-year-old students who live with disabilities and the emergence of the role of health awareness in sports motivations.

In the course of my research I looked for answers to the following questions:

- How does health appear among the sport motivations of students living with disabilities?
- Are there any differences in terms of gender concerning sporting activities?
- What are the most popular sports in the recreational activities of disabled children?

### Sample

We have conducted our research among disabled students who participated in public education in the regions of Northern Hungary (Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Heves, Nógrád counties) (23.9%) and in the Northern part of the Great Plains (Hajdú-Bihar, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties) (76.1%).

The gender ratio of the participants is 54.5% (631 people) male, 45.5% (527 people) female. The majority (46.1%, 534 people) of the students live in cities, 28.3% (328 people) resides in county seats, and 25.6% (296 people) abides in villages. 14% (163 people) of the respondent children study in lower grades. The rate of the respondents studying in the upper grades of primary school is 39% (450 people), while 47% (545 people) of the participants is in secondary school education. The outcomes are presented in table 1.

Upon summarizing the above numbers, we can establish that in terms of age, the majority of the respondents are in the age group of 14 to 18 years. In the course of the survey of demographic data,

we found that the largest ratio (68.3%) of the participants had learning disabilities. An almost equal ratio of students with hearing disabilities (6.3%) and mental disabilities (6.4%) participated in the survey. The ratio of students in other fields of disabilities was 8.4% speaking disabilities, 7.9% physical disabilities, and 2.7% visually impaired (Figure 1).

### Tools

The data collection was conducted in the school years of 2018/2019 and 2019/2020. The questionnaires were completed anonymously, the participation in the data collection was voluntary. Following the achievement of the data we analyzed the received outcomes with the SPSS statistic program, and to investigate the correlations beyond basic statistics, I used the chi-squared test. The

respondents studied in primary- and secondary educational institutions.

### Outcomes

#### *Characterization of the respondents' health status*

For the investigation of this subject – how disabled students characterize their health conditions we used Likert-scale (1 means “it’s bad, I have several problems”, 2 means “I have problems but they are not serious”, 3 is “average”, 4 is “very good”, and 5 is “excellent”). The survey revealed that the majority of the respondents, namely 37.9% of them considers their health status as very good. Thus, the largest ratio of the respondents choose value 4 on the Likert-scale; there was no significant divergence in terms of genders (Figure 2).

Figure 1. : Demographic composition of the sample (Source: Author)

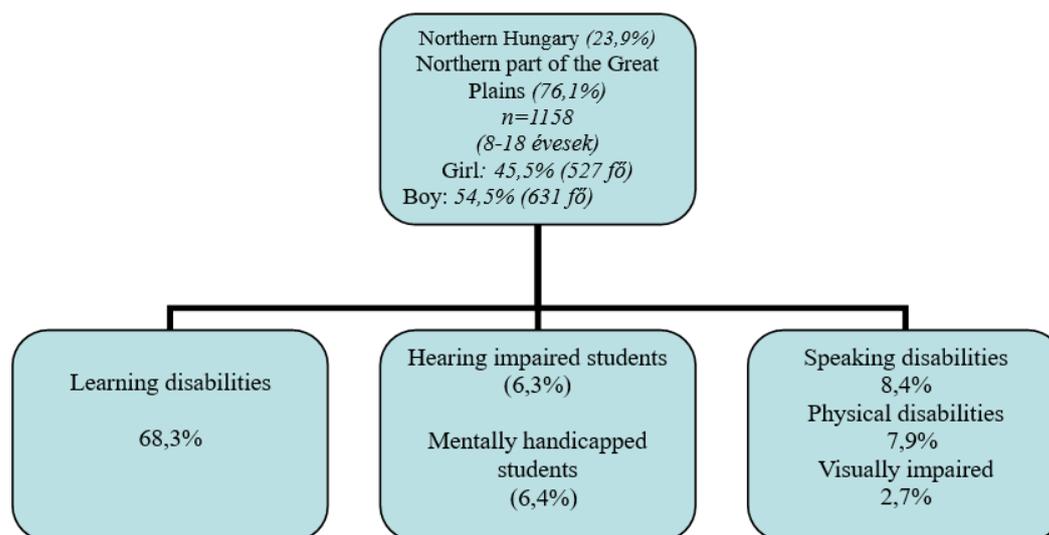
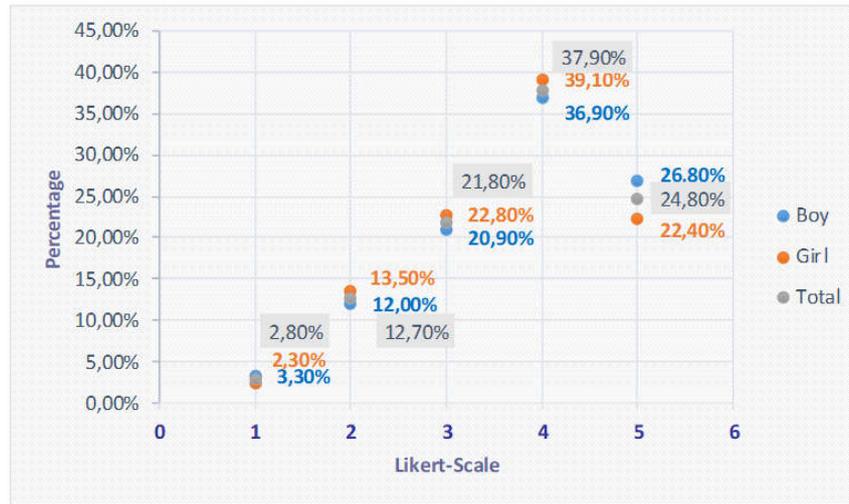


Figure 2. : Characterization of respondents' health status by gender (Source: Author)



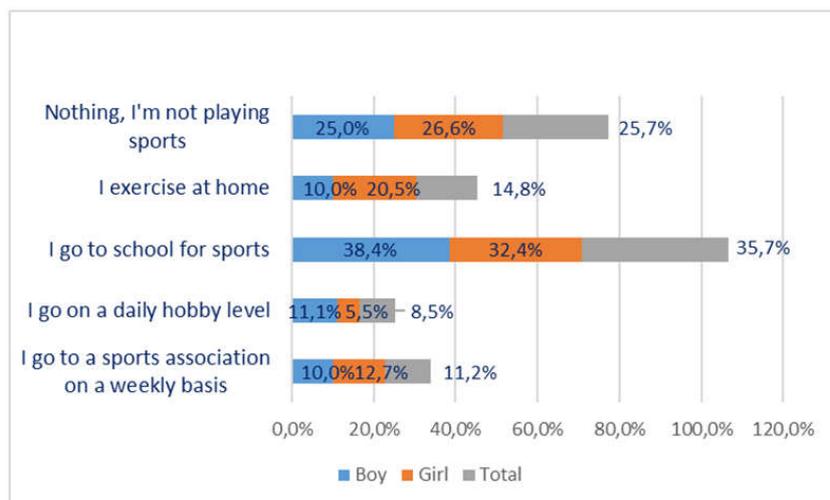
*Sporting Characteristics*

According to the responses of the participants, we could observe that the majority (35.7%) of them is involved in sports at school; the outcomes are similar in terms of gender: the majority of boys (38.4%) does sporting activities at school, and this rate is only a little bit lower in case of girls, where it is 32.4%. Another part of the respondents is involved in sporting activities at home; boys have a lower rate of home sports activities, while 20.5% of

girls practice sports at home. However, 8.5% of them do sports as a hobby on a daily basis (Figure 3.).

I did not investigate the reasons for being absent from sporting activities, in this research I aimed to find out whether there are any differences concerning sporting activities in terms of gender; and also examined, what kind of sports would disabled children be involved in as a recreational activity.

Figure 3. : Respondents' sporting habits by gender (Source: Author)



*The students' opinions about sports*

I was curious to find out, how the students conceive the difficulties concerning the sports possibilities of disabled people. My question was: "Does being a disabled person make it harder to be involved in sports?" 74.4% (862 people) of the responding students think that it is hard for disabled people to be involved in sports activities, while 25.6% (296 people) said that it is not.

The outcomes are presented in Figure 4. The respondents' opinion about the difficulties concerning the sports possibilities of disabled people was similar, regardless of gender. The rate of positive replies by boys was 73.2% (462 people), and the rate of negative replies was 26.8% (169 people); by girls, the rate of "yes" was 75.9% (400 people) and the rate of "no" replies was 24.1% (127 people).

*Characteristics of the students' sporting motivations*

We can establish that sporting motivations were similar, regardless of gender. The most typical motivational factors according to the replies of both boys and girls are health (73.4%), recreation, fun (51.2%), fitness (45.2%), but according to the outcomes, there is also an emphasis on the incentive of friends and acquaintances (44.7%) and outward characteristics like losing weight (31.4%). International research report similar outcomes, establishing that besides recreation and having fun, a more attractive appearance and weight control are also important factors in sports (Sports and Physical Activity Report 2014). The least influential incentive factors are victory/competition (24%), skills, learning/development (22.7%), challenge (20.8%) as well as spending time with the family (19.3% – Figure 5).

Figure 4. : Proportion of respondents' opinions about the sports difficulties of people with disabilities (Source: Author)

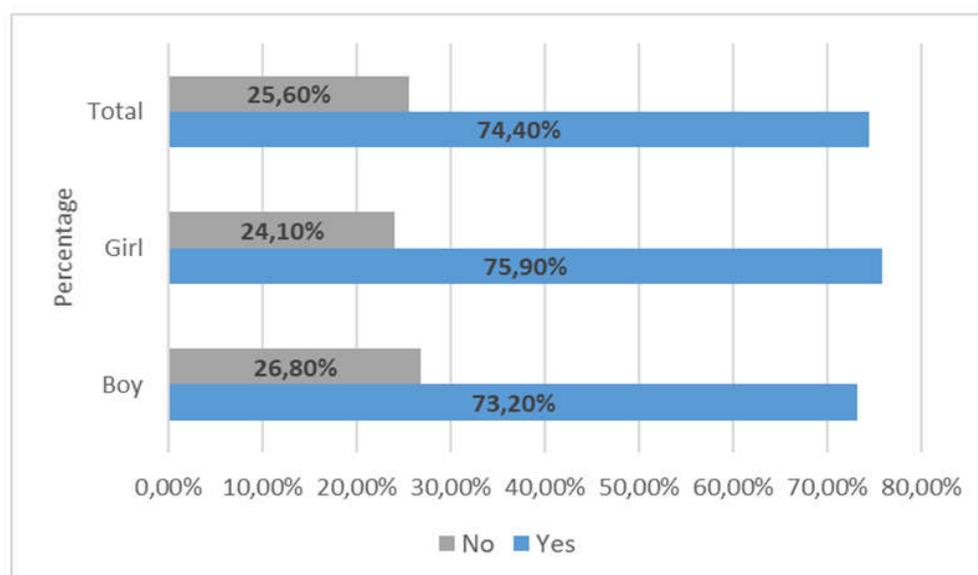
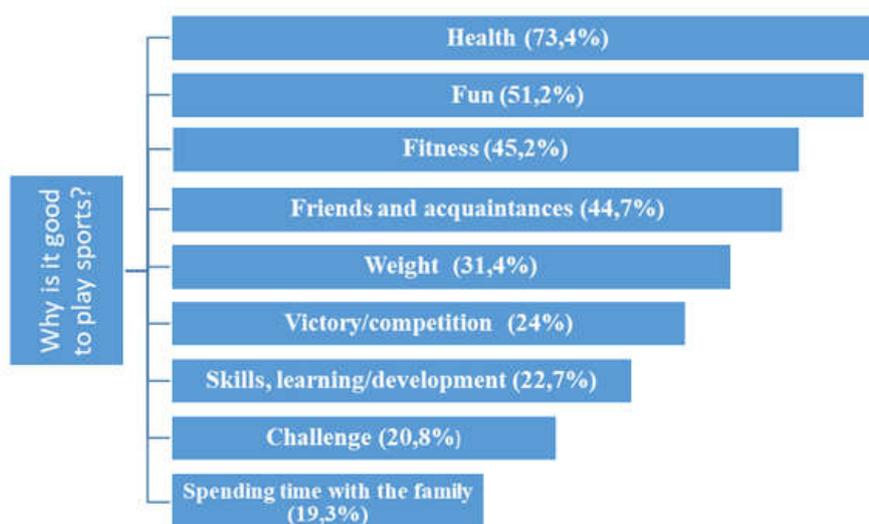


Figure 5.: Respondents' sports motivations (source: author)



#### Most popular sports

Among our participants, the most popular sporting activities were ball games (40.3%), since these can effectively implement entertaining functions and community experiences (Vácz 2015). The second most popular sport was swimming (36.6%), which can support the health status of the participants (Czeglédi et. al. 2020).

The third ones were gymnastics and aerobics (22.9%), which follow the new types of fitness trends, just as in the case of healthy people (Müller et. al. 2019, Gödény et. al. 2018), followed by martial arts (17.8%), athletics (16.7%), table tennis (15.3%), the least popular sports among our students were boccia (1.7%) and goal-ball (2.9%) (Table 1).

Table 1. : Most popular sports among students (Source: Author)

Most popular sports among students	%
Ball games	40,3%
Swimming	36,6%
Gymnastics and aerobics	22,9%
Followed by martial arts	17,8%
Athletics	16,7%
Table tennis	15,3%
Goal-ball	2,9%
Boccia	1,7%
Other	10,1%

### Discussion

In the life of disabled children, sporting activities are of special importance, since these support skill development, improve health status, and facilitate the process of socialisation as well as integration. These factors also appear amongst their sporting motivations, thus supporting the positive role and significance of sports. The acquired knowledge and the skills developed in the course of active recreational activities not only contribute to physical and mental health protection and improved life qualities, but they can also provide help in the course of learning (Orosz & Mező, 2015; Mező & Mező 2018), which later can strengthen the labour market positions of disabled people (Dajnoki 2014). In my survey, I observed that most disabled children are involved in some kind of sports, thus they have a positive attitude towards sports, and they understand the positive effects of sporting activities. Health, fitness, communal experiences are dominantly present amongst their sporting motivations, thus these are the keywords that could be effectively used in the marketing communications of the recreational sporting events especially designed for them.

### Limitations

Children with mental disabilities also participated in our survey, but in their case, the completion of the questionnaire was aided by pedagogues, which had an impact on the understanding of the questions as well as on the given responses. We evaluated the acquired outcomes with respect to that.

### Conclusions

The students who live with disabilities expressed their need for being involved in sporting activities, just as their healthy peers. The vast majority of students living with disabilities are active in some

kind of sports, which are mostly practiced at school or at home. Our research confirmed that disabled children choose to do sports in order to improve their health conditions (73.4%), but also because of their recreational functions (51.2%), their role in improving fitness conditions (45.2%), their communal functions, and their positive role in socialization (44.7%). The most popular recreational sports activities were ball games, swimming, and gymnastics, which are inherent with the popular trends (Müller et. al. 2017). The platform of recreational sports provides opportunities to meet peer groups, acquaintances, and friends in a casual manner, and at the same time to the beneficial expenditure of spare time. A quite high rate of children living with disabilities reported their needs for being involved in sports, however, the lack of information and the need for transport causes certain problems, whose solution could be a provision of sporting opportunities in schools. The observations of our research concerning motivations could help us to find the appropriate keywords that should be incorporated in the promotion of in-school sporting opportunities.

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**CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL PROCESSES OF NAGYECSED, WITH SPECIAL REGARD TO  
THE SITUATION OF THE ROMA POPULATION**

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**Abstract**

Our research carried out in Nagyecsed is part of a longer series of research consisting of ten items, in which we primarily seek to map the main social characteristics and current social processes of settlements with lower population in the less-favoured regions of the country. In the course of the research, our goal is basically to get to know and present the perspectives of the local residents. A crucial consideration in the selection of the research sites was that smaller settlements in these peripheral regions are experiencing rather unfavourable socio-demographic trends, including in particular the declining population, aging and the growing proportion of disadvantaged populations, including disadvantaged Roma. These processes - if no significant changes take place - project an even more unfavourable vision than at present. The unfavourable socio-demographic tendencies can be clearly seen in Nagyecsed. In connection with this, the main goal of the research is to explore the situation of the Roma, as well as the local community relations, especially the coexistence characteristics of the Roma and non-Roma population.

**Keywords:** Roma communities, non-Roma population, living conditions, coexistence

**Disciplines:** Sociology

**Absztrakt**

*NAGYECSED KORTÁRS TÁRSADALMI FOLYAMATAI, KÜLÖNÖS TEKINETTEL A ROMÁK HELYZETÉRE*

A Nagyecsedben lefolytatott kutatásunk egy hosszabb, tíz elemből álló kutatássorozat része, amelyben elsősorban az ország kedvezőtlenebb helyzetű régióiban fekvő, kisebb lakosságszámú települések főbb társadalmi jellemzőinek, aktuális társadalmi folyamatainak a feltérképezésére törekszünk. A kutatás során

alapvetően a helyi lakosok nézőpontjainak a megismerése és megjelenítése a célunk. A kutatási helyszínek megválasztásában döntő szempont volt, hogy e perifériális régiók kisebb településein meglehetősen kedvezőtlen szocio-demográfiai folyamatok zajlanak, ideértve különösen a települési lakosság szám csökkenését, az idősödést és a hátrányos helyzetű lakosság, köztük a hátrányos helyzetű romák számarányának a növekedését. E folyamatok - amennyiben nem történnek jelentősebb változások - még a jelenleginél is kedvezőtlenebb jövőképet vetítenek előre. E kedvezőtlen szocio-demográfiai tendenciák egyértelműen tetten érhetőek Nagyecsedben. Ehhez kapcsolódóan a kutatás kiemelt célja a romák helyzetének, továbbá a helyi közösségi kapcsolatoknak, ezen belül elsősorban a romák és a nem romák együttélési jellemzőinek a feltárása.

**Kulcsszavak:** roma közösségek, nem romák, életkörülmények, együttélés

**Diszciplina:** szociológia

#### **Research methods and tools**

Several methods were used in the research, on the one hand we prepared the analytical summary of the social statistical data on the settlement (e.g. population change, etc.) and on the other hand we reviewed the most important documents about the region and the settlement. The main method of the research - in line with its approach, i.e. in order to present the point of view of the locals - we chose the oral interview, including the partially structured individual interview (Falus, n.d.). Using preliminary mapping and then the snowball method (Babbie, 1996), we recorded 22 individual interviews and conducted focus group interviews with students in the graduating class of the local grammar school. We intended to make the respondents socio-demographically diverse, and thus to channel opinions from as many groups of the settlement as possible. Consequently, the respondents included young people, the elderly, family people, single people, people belonging to the Roma and non-Roma ethnic groups, and in terms of occupation we interviewed teachers, public education and social professionals, an economist, a community organizer, a wood carving artist, a self-employed skilled worker, a tradesman, an unskilled worker in

public works, a disability pension beneficiary, a pensioner, unemployed people, etc.

#### **Nagyecsed**

The small town with a population of 6467 (KSH, 2019) is located near the Romanian border, at the confluence of the Szatmár plain and the Nyírség region. The Trianon treaty fundamentally affected the situation of the settlement. Before 1920, Nagyecsed belonged to the catchment area of the bustling city of the region, Szatmárnémeti (Satu Mare). Today this city has about 102,000 inhabitants, but already back in 1920 had 38,000 residents (RPL, 2011), and on the one hand, it provided a market for the agricultural products of the population living here, and on the other hand provided all kind of city centre functions (from cultural and educational opportunities to higher quality employment chances) for the inhabitants of Nagyecsed. (Dankó, 1994) This role could only be partially taken over by Mátészalka (KSH, 2019) with a population of 17,036, today's district centre. As a result of this border change, Nagyecsed became an inaccessible, peripheral settlement in one of the most disadvantaged areas of the

country, due to the ceased transit traffic it turned into – as the locals put it – “a real sack town”.

Due to this isolated situation, and perhaps partly due to the peculiarities of historical development, the municipality tries to organize and provide as many public services as possible for the population on the spot. The city also has a public primary school, a parochial primary school and grammar school, a kindergarten with three member institutions, a day-nursery, a unified social institution, a house of culture, a community house, a Roma community house, and a “civil house” maintained with the help of the municipality.

The same applies to the demographic processes of Nagyecsed, what can be observed in the vast majority of peripheral small settlements in Hungary (Bálint and Obádovics, 2018; Gödri, 2018), and even in other developed countries of Europe (EBRD, 2019), i.e. the outmigration of young people and partly middle-aged people is typical. The population has been declining almost continuously since 1960, when 8348 people lived in Nagyecsed. At the same time, the number and proportion of the Roma population in the city is constantly growing, at the time of the 2001 census, only 7.4% of the 6,797 local residents declared themselves to belong to the Roma minority. (KSH, 2002). However, there is a significant difference between the numbers based on self-classification and external classification (i.e. the Roma are those, who are considered to be Roma by Roma and non-Roma). Based on the external classification, a smaller proportion of people classified as Roma declare themselves to be Roma. “Ahmed et al. (2007) estimate this ratio at 38% in their study, while Ladányi and Szelényi (2004) estimate it at 33%.” (In: Péntes, Tátrai, Pásztor, 2018:6) Based on the above, the proportion of Roma may have ranged between 19.5% and 22.5% in 2001. At the time of our research, in 2019, both the local government and the locals we interviewed estimated the proportion of Roma to be over 30%.

It is also important to highlight that the vast majority of local Roma, especially Romungró Roma people, are disadvantaged or multiple disadvantaged. Consequently, in addition to aging, the deterioration of the general social situation is also characteristic of Nagyecsed.

### **The history of Nagyecsed in headlines**

In addition to the geographical features of the settlement, the historical traditions, customs and attitudes spanning generations also determine the way of thinking of today's inhabitants to a certain extent. In the past in the Ecsedi marshes fishing and a special form of it, called “pákászat” had a significant role, but these activities have disappeared by now. (Szabó, 2019) This wetland environment, on the other hand, has resulted that the arable land, as well as land-based animal husbandry, especially horse breeding had enormous value. All this led to the development of a significant agricultural and equestrian cult (Szállási, 2008), which strengthened again in the settlement after the democratic transformation. In connection with the agricultural cult, village traditions such as folk dance, folk music, and even the association that kept the “bog outlaw cult” alive in Nagyecsed have been re-strengthened, too. In addition, gypsy music and gypsy dance also have a significant tradition that has been preserved in the settlement through generation. An important element of the local identity is that the folk dance of the Hungarian and Oláh Gypsy communities became part of the world heritage at the same time. (The common language refers to the group as “Oláh” gypsies, which is a Hungarian version of the Vlach.) However, no such cultural heritage remained in the Romungro community.

The other significant factor that affects somewhat even the mindset of the current population is that Nagyecsed was once a type of market town that held significant privileges. The

favourable location, the attachment to the Transylvanian Principality and the privileges attracted the settlers, and these favourable conditions - coupled with the diligence of the locals - resulted in continuous development until the fall of the Rákóczi War of Independence (1711), as well as strong self-awareness. (Dankó, 1994) After that, however, all the previous privileges of the settlement "accused" because of its role in the War of Independence were revoked, and the landlords following Rákóczi treated the locals as serfs. However the "Ecsedians" with strong self-awareness did not accept this step back, especially the curtailment of their freedom, and on 19 January 1776, they filed a lawsuit against Count Antal Károlyi at the Szatmár County Court against the abolition of their privileges and against their demotion into serfs. However, the verdict confirmed the demotion of the people of Nagyecsed and their obligations to the landlord, so they appealed against it. With this, the infamous „100-year-long copyholder lawsuit" continued, which ended only in the 19th century, during which the pride and self-awareness of the locals was not broken even by the fact that they were impoverished in this lawsuit. (Éble, 1912) Self-esteem was even more important than making a living. This form of strong self-esteem and attitude also characterized our interviewees. As one of our interviewees (36-year-old woman, public education professional) put it: „*They are characterized by a special locale folklore, a kind of attitude and pride. They had many privileges as long as there was a castle in Ecsed, they did not pay tax, hence the pridefulness*".

However, the tribulations of the inhabitants of Nagyecsed did not end with the lawsuit, as had been discussed earlier, the peace treaty of Trianon adversely affected the settlement related to Nagybánya. The population strongly attached to the land could not enjoy the beneficial effects of the land distribution after the Second World War for a long time, collectivization - according to our

interviewees - was acknowledged by many locals brokenly. (Nevertheless there are those who think positively about the last decades of the socialist era, in part because local and surrounding land holdings are now concentrated in the hands of a few people, while in the 70s and 80s the land - handled by the cooperative - provided subsistence for a significant proportion of locals.)

This historical legacy is still somewhat perceptible in the settlement today, pride and self-esteem, as well as distrust of strangers - and consequently some distrust of local ethnic groups - characterize a significant part of the people living here.

#### **Coexistence of ethnic sub-communities in Nagyecsed**

Henriett Szabó (2019) published a study on the coexistence of local Roma and non-Roma communities today, basically with an ethnographic approach. The information in that study on the traditions, socio-demographic and socio-cultural characteristics of the locals, their system of values and norms, and their relationship to each other was basically confirmed by our research.

„The local society of Nagyecsed consists of three ethnic sub-communities - Hungarian, Romungró and Oláh Gypsy. The relations between the sub-communities determine the internal relations and operational characteristics of the local society." (Szabó, 2019:165) The residences of the local ethnic sub-communities have been completely separated in the past and to a significant extent they are even today, which is a fact that in itself has a significance in terms of local conditions. The non-Roma population lived in and near the city centre, while the Romungrós and the Oláh Gypsies used to live in segregates at two opposite ends of the settlement (as the locals say, „*From Kraszna here and beyond*." or „*On the bridge from here and beyond the bridge*."). In this respect, the situation of the

Romungrós has not changed to this day, they live in the segregates of the part of the city close to Mátészalka, practically without exception. Their living conditions, in line with their socio-demographic characteristics, are still very unfavourable today. A significant part of the population living here has at most a primary education, or even a lower level of education, and consequently a significant proportion of them are unemployed or living on low-paid public works (Szabó, 2019). Most of the houses are in poor condition, sometimes with very low comfort level, and for many families living here, various utilities (mostly the electricity) have also been switched off due to the accumulated debts. Many families carry water from the public well to everyday life, and many also use the laundry service in the community house. („*The washing machine spins all day.*” 42-year-old man, head of institution) It follows from this situation - based on Maslow’s theory of needs hierarchy (1970), i.e. as long as our basic needs (food, adequate shelter, security) are not met on a lasting and acceptable basis, the need to meet higher level needs (e.g., the need for beauty, aesthetics) cannot appear - so the courtyards are also neglected. Marital cohabitation is not typical in this community today either, but early cohabitation and childbearing (typically from the age of 15-16) and a larger number of children are still common today. The proportion of large families in Szabó’s study sample (2019: 178) is as follows: “More than 60% have three or more children. This proportion is barely 18% for Hungarians and 11% for Oláh Gypsies.”

In contrast, the situation of a significant part of the Oláh Gypsy community has changed to the present day. An increasing group of the Oláh Gypsy population is getting more educated, with a significant proportion of them having professional training or high school diploma, in some cases even a degree. Some of these Oláh Gypsies, who partly through some of these qualifications - have

an adequate level of regular income, nowadays they live in or around the city centre, in conditions that can be said to be average or even better than average at the local level. In other words, some non-Roma and Oláh Gypsies now live in the same neighbourhood, and the members of these two ethnic sub-communities are more open to each other than to the disadvantaged and multiple disadvantaged Romungrós. In Szabó’s words (2019: 180): „[...] it is the more accepting and open attitude towards each other’s community between Hungarians and Oláh Gypsies, which determines the development of relations.” Proximity itself, and thus getting to know each other, strengthens this process of mutual acceptance, as prejudices are largely based on negative generalizations resulting from a lack of knowledge. (Forgas, 2007).

At the same time, the greater mutual acceptance of Oláh Gypsy and non-Roma local communities, which is confirmed by the existence of this type of mixed marriage (although their number is not significant today), is not a new phenomenon. As one of our 59-year-old Oláh Gypsy women interviewee, who works as a public worker, put it: „*The old people told us that girls, you have no place beyond the Kraszna, but you have places everywhere on this side of the Kraszna River.*” In other words, they can marry other Oláh Gypsy or even non-Roma boys, but there is “no place” for Romungrós on the other side of the Kraszna River.

In addition to the unfavourable wealth and income status of the local Romungró people, the significantly different socio-cultural traditions of the two ethnic sub-communities, and thus their different attitudes and lifestyles play a significant role in this mutual separation and rejection. The Oláh Gypsy families, like the non-Roma community, lived and live under stricter rules and norms, while the Romungrós „[...] live more freely, more casually.” (42-year-old Romungró woman, head of institution) Several of our

interviewees pointed out that the love of children is especially characteristic of both Roma ethnic communities, as our kindergarten teacher interviewee (a 30-year-old Oláh Gypsy woman) put it: *„Roma parents are very attached to their young children, it is much more difficult for them to leave their children here in the kindergarten than Hungarians [...] Sometimes they cry outside on the street.”*

At the same time, there is a big difference in terms of conscious upbringing, value transmission, and thus preparation for school, and for a future “more successful life”, and even in terms of conscious childbearing. However, the limited nature of conscious education and the transmission of values is not only a matter of “tradition”. Many in the literature on social work and social pedagogy have pointed out that cumulatively disadvantaged, low-educated, often very young parents do not have the necessary knowledge and skills themselves, and due to their current situation and lack of their own experiential knowledge, they consider those social values (e.g. school-based knowledge) less important, that could help to create a more successful life. (Major-Mészáros-Tatárné Kapus, 2011; Soós, 2018; Thirsch in Sárkány, 2011) As the documentary by Biczó and Szabó (2020) points out, in the local public primary school, which is mainly attended by children from cumulatively disadvantaged Roma families, the first, priority task of educators is to facilitate the acquisition of those skills that are not mastered at home, but essential for school progress and future success (e.g. basic standards of conduct, rules, including learning acceptable ways of conflict management, etc.).

In this respect, as Rákó's (2017) research points out, the role of public educational institutions is (also) outstanding nowadays. In the Oláh Gypsy families, the conscious transmission of the stricter and more detailed system of rules was especially important in the past, and the families and the community as a whole have placed significant

emphasis on it, and continue to do so today. This is well exemplified by the previous activity of our 59-year-old, Oláh Gypsy woman interviewee, who, as a granddaughter of the former local voivode considered and still considers the religious and moral education of Roma children important. *„ At home, the kids gathered with me in the evenings. There were many of them, back and forth even on the ground. [...] They loved to go there, and not only because they always got some fatty bread with onions, I always did it so that the kids wouldn't go home hungry. [...] As much as they asked for, they got to eat and drink, just to make them learn [...] We studied the Bible, we learned the morality, just to learn what is right.”*

From the interviews we conducted, as well as from the research of Szabó (2019), it can be seen that a kind of partial acculturation process has taken place in the last decades among the Oláh Roma population in Nagyecsed. In doing so, they abandoned or relegated certain traditions (e.g., early cohabitation and childbearing), values (e.g., language use), and instead, they adopted, at least in part, the customs, attitudes, and language of the majority.

However language use in the families has not completely disappeared, but has become more context-related. As an example, it can be observed in several families that the grandparents talk to their grandchildren in Romani, who already answer in Hungarian. All this contributed to the further strengthening of the local integration of the Oláh Roma community. Szabó (2019: 187) evaluates this process as follows: *„In Nagyecsed, the Oláh Gypsy community treats the acculturation process with a reflexive awareness, which can be defined as an event that promotes adaptation to the majority. According to this, the abandonment of certain customs, the desertion of certain elements of material culture, the changes in the order of values are part of the acculturation process, which is not a loss for them, but a condition for the social integration of the Oláh Gypsy community.”*

In this respect, as a result of the recent period, our interviewees highlighted the more conscious childbearing planned for the mother's twenties, i.e. after graduating from school, the priority given to children's schooling and the more conscious allocation of money.

*„It is a traditional rule, to have a maximum of two children. It's a shame if you can't support your child [...] Earlier it was typical among the Oláh gypsies that the girl was eloped when she was in the 7th-8th grade, I also had my first suitor at the age of 13 [...] But they realized that it must be done later, they had to have a job, they had to work so they could keep the kids properly [...] nowadays, many of them get a profession, a high school diploma, and even a degree.”* (30-year-old Oláh Gypsy woman, kindergarten teacher)

*„Today, it is the minimum, the basic requirement to have 8 classes for girls as well. But not only that, but to have some kind of profession, to work [...] It wasn't like that with us yet, the women weren't so independent, but it's good that they achieved that. We were completely dependent on our husband.”*(61-year-old Oláh Gypsy woman, housewife)

*„The Roma had to learn to allocate money, and it is going better than before. In the old days, when you went in to a Hungarian, you asked for 100 forints, he took it out of the closet. You couldn't do that to a Roma. Today they know better, at least the Oláh Gypsies have learned that they have to economize on money.”* (59-year-old Oláh Gypsy woman, public worker)

Based on the lessons learned from the interviews, in addition to a greater degree of mutual acceptance between the Oláh Roma and non-Roma communities, the relationship between the Romungros and the other two ethnic sub-communities has improved somewhat and social distances have decreased, although these distances are still rather big. This process was primarily aided

by conscious local decisions and developments. At the same time, the change in the primary school system, with two primary schools, one (ecclesiastical) „elite school” in the wording of the locals and one (state) „ghetto school” operating in the settlement, hinders the reduction of social distances.

#### **Local interventions to support the situation of the local Roma and the and coexistence of Roma and non-Roma people**

The management of the settlement has taken a number of targeted measures to improve the situation of the local Roma and the Roma – non-Roma coexistence. In addition, the local leaders and the mayor in particular, his personality, his attitude towards others – especially the fact that he treats all people equally and helpfully, regardless of ethnicity and social status – was mentioned by several as a factor that has had and continues to have a positive impact on all locals.

*„The mayor also gives educated Roma an opportunity [...] the work of Gypsies is recognized in the same way as of the Hungarians. [...] The mayor also considers public workers to be human, treats them humanely, and this has a good effect on the Roma as well.”* (59-year-old Oláh Gypsy woman, public worker)

*„Here, public workers are seen as humans the same way.”* (24-year-old non-Gypsy woman, public worker)

Among the specific measures with a positive impact, a significant number of interviewees highlighted the following:

1. Employment of the Roma in the intellectual jobs of public institutions, in full-time or as public workers.
2. Targeted use of the development resources provided by the European Union, by establishing and maintaining institutions that

improve the situation of the Roma and the relations between the Roma and non-Roma.

3. The (life-centred) educational and pedagogical activities of the teachers of public educational institutions, adapted to the students, their family circumstances and their disadvantages brought from the family.

1. Several of our interviewees highlighted that the local mayor considered and still considers it important that the local Roma should also be given opportunities in “intellectual” jobs. This type of employment has sometimes been forced by unfavourable local conditions:

*„I've tried sewing, but it's not for me because I love the hustle and bustle [...] I worked as a cleaner, I didn't like it, and I experienced atrocities [...] I worked in the cannery, but I didn't like that either [...] After the birth of my second child, I wanted to go back to work, but by then I realized that I wanted to be engaged with dance, to work in a helping profession. I contacted the mayor who placed me in the family care centre, back then still without a qualification, so that I had to complete my training in social care and nursing. [...] After learning social work, I got an office in the local community centre, but I was there alone, which I didn't like. I asked the mayor to hire someone else to work with me [...] he hired an educated, high-school graduate woman, and then the Roma came to us many times to ask for help [...] Later, when I had my qualifications, I wanted to run a Roma community centre [...] back then it was not easy to accept a Roma being in charge. But the mayor also took on this conflict, he was fighting for me like a wolf [...] Its his main goal and he does a lot to get as many Roma people into public institutions as possible, [...] as many Gypsy employees as possible, the greater part they work in public works, but those who have a degree are employed full-time. This is an important goal for me too, I have managed to achieve a lot in this.” (42-year-old Romungró woman, head of institution)*

*Well, there were a lot of problems at school, especially with children from the Western Segregate [...] they were also dirty, unkempt. I thought the solution for this would be to help wash the children before school and keep a change of clothes at the school. After all, it is in vain to tell the family to change if they cannot do it because they do not have the opportunity, there is no water, and there is a lack of electricity. [...] And this was embraced by the mayor, which is why a community centre was built in the segregation, where it is possible to wash the clothes and bathe. [...] Nevertheless there were a lot of problems and conflicts left in the school. Thus came the idea that Roma women could help in school, an idea that was also supported by the mayor. This is how Roma women got into public institutions. That was about seven years ago. I was admitted to upper secondary school as a mentor, but at first it was very difficult for teachers to accept me, as there were those whose graduate daughters were unemployed. I also heard her saying »My daughter is unemployed with a degree, Timi with a primary school certification is working with the children«. True, only in public works [...] At first, the teachers didn't want me to go into the classroom, I could only talk to the children during the breaks. Once, however, I was allowed to go into the worst class and from just sitting there, the Oláh Gypsy children were ashamed of themselves and did not behave badly. Then they started to trust me, and when there was a shortage of teachers, they dared to send me to class alone.” (43-year-old Oláh Gypsy woman, social pedagogue)*

This type of employment has proved effective in several respects, has had a positive effect on the educational and employment advancement of those employed, has had a positive effect on Roma children and young people and also acted as a model for them. Many of them continued their education in secondary school as a result of this, and the joint work also helped to reduce prejudice between Roma and non-Roma.

*„Public works, the fact that this is also done here in public institutions, the positive result of this is that the Roma and non-Roma work in the same place and they get to know each other [...] a lot of stereotypes have become obsolete. [...] Working together helped a lot, there are also Roma ladies in the school, if they weren't here, we couldn't have known them. I had the chance to meet a lot of great Roma people”. (47-year-old non-Roma man, teacher)*

2. As can be seen in the first part of the study, there are a number of public institutions in the small town, the establishment and maintenance of which is not a mandatory task of local governments, however they are aimed at meeting local needs and demands by channeling available financial resources, mainly from the European Union. One such institution is the above mentioned Community centre in the segregate, which has been set up and is being operated as part of a complex field program to eradicate segregation. In addition to the washing and bathing opportunities the institution also had a school support program (tanoda), which is planned to be restarted. Besides, there are a number of developmental sessions for Roma children, as well as a mentoring program and a program to strengthen the relationship between school, children and parents. In addition, they are in close contact with 48 families and provide them help by the tools of social work. And when we were there, they had just built greenhouses for growing vegetables.

There is also a community centre in this part of the village, for Roma people specifically, led by an interviewee of Roma origin (a 42-year-old Roma woman). In this centre the local Roma are provided with training opportunities or with assistance in managing their affairs.

In addition to the community centre, there is a smaller community institution that has an outdoor training ground. On average, the institution holds

smaller cultural sessions twice a month, as well as - almost continuously - competence development and vocational courses.

There is also a “civil house” there, aiming to preserve local traditions, which was created partly by the cooperation and work of the locals. This institution provides space for the programs of various associations, and even for local private events for a price significantly lower than the market price - for HUF 10,000 / day in 2019 (e.g. wedding, graduation, birthday celebration, etc.).

The common feature of these institutions is that they provide services and programs for the locals based on real and significant needs and requirements, and in the case of larger cultural events these programs are available for a much wider audience. At the same time, based on the narration of our interviewees and the research of Szabó (2019: 199), their other common feature is the transmission of a value system that focuses on mutual acceptance and the strengthening of a sense of belonging across different ethnic sub-communities. In this regard Henriett Szabó (2019: 179) stated the following: “In the interviews conducted during the research, almost all of the community leaders interviewed made references to the demonstrative nature of the activity. Demonstrating and undertaking the work of their groups to the local society was emphasized as an overall essential element of their activities. Several of them used the term »stand out« when describing what it means to demonstrate a system of values and norms represented in their work at programs, lectures. On the one hand, the »stand out« is a public opportunity to experience the sense of belonging of their own small community. In the dance ensemble the production of Oláh and Romungró performers, the distribution of food packages by Hungarian and Romungró association members or the joint cooking event of Oláh Gypsies and Hungarians are all forms of activities that function as a regular practice of crossing

ethnic boundaries. It follows that the »stand out« demonstrating the work of local cultural organizations in Nagyecséd conveys to the whole society of the settlement the emerging transethnic ethos, which at the same time encourages to exceed the historically formed inter-group opposition.” In other words, the established institutional system, and the active community life realized by it significantly contributes to the reduction of social distances between different ethnic sub-communities and to the strengthening of mutual acceptance. However Szabó (2019) also notes that this effect is (currently?) still strong only within the communities connected to these institutions.

Finally, it is to be noted that this diversified institutional system provides employment for many locals and public works opportunities for even more people.

3. Both domestic and international experiences show (MMSZ, 2020) that desegregation and catch-up programs aimed at improving the living conditions of disadvantaged groups, including disadvantaged Roma, can only be truly effective if the various actors in the public sector, health care workers, social professionals and educators also work together. A further condition of effectiveness is that during the interventions - in accordance with the principles of life-centered social pedagogical counselling (Thirsch in Sárkány, 2011) - the professionals also help the members of these families to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for successful school and work advancement and the organization of successful family life, which are usually mastered during family socialization, transferring them from generation to generation. In other words, these professionals do not ”only” implement professional-type interventions, but are “present” in the lives of the clients, and also try to take part in dealing with the problems arising from the shortcomings of previous family socialization.

Based on the experience and information gained locally and partly described earlier, significant changes have taken place in this regard in local public educational institutions. The first and predominant task of teachers, even before the start of their education activities is to transfer the knowledge and skills necessary for a successful school progress of the pupils and a more successful life in the future. (MMM, 2020)

### **Characteristics and effects of public employment**

The significant local public employment can be included among the measures to improve the situation of disadvantaged local groups, including a significant proportion of local Roma, and besides, as mentioned earlier, the conditions of Roma - non-Roma coexistence.

At the same time, the assessment of this rather extensive level of public employment, in which 413 people were employed in 2019 (for comparison: In Hajdúböszörmény, which has a population five times larger than Nagyecséd, and where also Romungros and an acculturated Oláh community, about 3,000 Roma people live together in a segregated environment, the number of public employees in 2019 barely exceeded 300). (data release of the local governments, 2019), is controversial at the local level, and from a scientific and analytical point of view as well (e.g. Pirisi, 2018). Of the fundamentally social-based public employment programs already in place between the two world wars, those were beneficial for the participants, in which they were able to do useful, productive work that served their self-esteem and often made them possible to enter the world of market work. (For example, the creation of needless "hills of dearth" was not included in this circle). (Ferge, 1986) In addition to providing a minimum level of livelihood, public employment still aim to strengthen the ability of those involved

to work, to strengthen their self-esteem and, ultimately, to serve only as a temporary, kind of emergency solution that is available for everyone and in the longer term it should guide the participants into the world of labour market. The practice applied in Nagyecsed partially meets these requirements. On the one hand, there are really meaningful and productive jobs, in addition to the jobs in the public institutions presented earlier, these include local crop production, the products of which are mainly used in local public catering, as well as paving stone production. At the same time, due to the disproportionately large number of public employees, in some smaller public institutions, for example at the community centre or the civil house, 10-15 public employees carry out the work of one or two people in cleaning or gardening. At this local level, the “in-door” unemployment of the former socialist societies (Andorka, 2006) is practically realized – at least in part – in a much more extreme form. However, this way of employment, in which there is quite a little of work for the employees, and where the rules of employment, e.g. the rules of attendance are very flexible, in the vast majority, except in a few cases, does not prepare and thus does not lead the participants to the labour market. *„Thus, this type of public work does not integrate them back into the labour market. Here they are permanently trapped in this situation.”* (42-year-old man non-Roma man, social worker)

The question rightly arises whether at least a part of the disadvantaged or cumulatively disadvantaged population, who often suffer from low self-confidence and are more afraid of the new circumstances than average, are deterred by the public works from the labour market employment and thus from reaching a much more favourable income situation and more favourable living conditions. As one of the social workers interviewed put it: *“It is questionable whether the community centre in the segregate is not a form of*

*„segregation” itself, because the Roma do not even go to the town centre, they ask for help in managing their affairs here, local children come here for the programmes, they apply here for public works, if they can.”* (42-year-old man non-Roma man, social worker)

At the same time, the majority of public workers surveyed - while emphasizing that the salary is very low - still consider this option favourable, moreover, many of them see it as the only realistic way of employment in addition to raising children. This may be due, at least in part, to the fact that in a significant proportion of Roma families, even in the case of the parents of the respondents, women had the sole responsibility of raising children and doing housework, and doing so is still considered difficult to reconcile with “working in a full (labour market) position”.

*„Here, for a family woman, only public works can come into play, because children have to be taken to kindergarten, if they are sick, she has to stay at home with them, and these are not problems in public works, they are allowed to do so. That's a good thing in public works.”* (26-year-old Romungró woman)

*„Then I worked in a shop here in Ecsed, but I had to work every day outside of Sunday, even if the child was sick, they didn't let me go and they only paid 70,000 [...] So after the second child, after GYES (child care benefit), I became a public worker. Parents with a small child, if they don't have help, can't manage to go to a factory to work. [...] All is left for me was public works.”* (24-year-old Oláh Gipsy woman)

### **Factors hindering the strengthening of social integration**

In addition to the spatial segregation of the different ethnic sub-communities, especially the Romungró, a significant part of the locals surveyed consider that the biggest obstacle to local integration is the fact that the formerly unified

primary school system has now been divided into two parts, „elite” and „ghetto” schools - and this view is supported by the relevant research results and the corresponding legal provisions prohibiting educational segregation (Act CXXV of 2003). The previously mentioned pedagogical work can only partially compensate for the fact that pupils with better and worse social background (in the latter case mostly of Roma origin), are no longer socialized in a common institution, so there is little chance to know and accept each other and also to learn from each other. As a result of segregation, children, who come from less affluent family backgrounds and are usually less motivated to attend school according to local teachers (as their parents often think of school as an unpleasant memory, and thus they have somewhat negative, sometimes dismissive feelings) so they are less likely to see a positive attitude towards school learning. It is important to emphasize, however, that the segregation of students is not based on ethnicity in the local church school, where children can be admitted after successful enrolment and in the case of following certain ecclesiastical rules. Students of Roma origin also attend the school, for example, five out of 12 people in the secondary school class interviewed in the focus group interview were of Roma origin. At the same time, the admission system and the prescription of certain religious rules - which is somewhat self-evident in the case of a church institution - still result that non-Roma and Oláh Gypsy children with a more favourable background are attending the church school in a higher proportion, which families are also more likely to follow church rules than Romungró families. Meanwhile, the vast majority of public school pupils, according to data provided by the headmaster of the institution, 90% of their 243 students are raised in multiple disadvantaged, predominantly Romungró families. In other words, as a result of these processes, at least in part, a kind of ethnic segregation develops,

which obviously hinders the improvement of relations between ethnic sub-communities, especially between the Romungrós and the other two groups, and the strengthening of mutual acceptance.

*“When I was a child, there was only one school, we went there, everyone could get to know everyone, everyone could make friends with everyone [...] It was only later that the Calvinist school was established, where there is admission. This became the elite school. The public school to which Roma go in the majority is the ghetto school. In the old days, the kids went over to talk and play more together, but now it's largely over [...] Nowadays people rather only keep in touch with friends and relatives” (36-year-old non-Roma woman, public education professional)*

*„There is a need for the relationship building program in which the task is to strengthen the relationship between parents, school, teacher and the kids [...] It is important as because of the two schools, the pull factor has been eliminated in the public school by transferring those with better skills to the other school.” (42-year-old man non-Roma man, social worker)*

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## INVESTIGATION OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND EMPATHY IN THE SIBLINGS OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

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### Abstract

In recent years, more and more researchers have focused on studies of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), however, studying their siblings has gained less scientific interest. The present study focuses on siblings of children with ASD and assesses their characteristics in terms of emotional intelligence and empathy. Our sample consisted of  $n = 61$  children in two age groups studied: 6-8 and 10-15 years old. Our experimental group consisted of  $n = 30$  siblings of children with ASD, while our control group also consisted of  $n = 31$  children with sibling relationships. Subjects completed two paper-and-pencil tests: the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test (Children's Version), and depending on the age group, the Emotional Intelligence Test (EIT 6-8 / EIT 10-15). We identified higher emotional intelligence and empathy in higher age groups. Among 6-8 years old siblings of children with ASD, higher scores were found to be. At the level of gender differences, girls performed more outstandingly in the tests examined. In our study, the 6-8 years old siblings of children with ASD can be characterized by a higher degree of emotional intelligence and empathy, however, we cannot draw conclusions in a representative way for the entire population.

**Keywords:** emotional intelligence; empathy; siblings; autism

**Disciplines:** psychology

### Absztrakt

ÉRZELMI INTELLIGENCIA ÉS EMPÁTIA VIZSGÁLATA AUTIZMUSSEL ÉLŐK TESTVÉREI KÖRÉBEN

Az utóbbi évek kutatásaiban az autizmussal élő gyermekek vizsgálata egyre nagyobb hangsúlyt kapott, azonban a velük sorsközösségben élő testvéreik vizsgálata kevésbé szerzett tudományos érdeklődést. Jelen tanulmány az autizmussal élő gyermekek testvéreire fókuszál, és az érzelmi intelligencia és empátia

vonatkozásában méri fel jellegzetességeiket. Mintánkat összesen n=61 gyermek alkotta két vizsgált korosztályban: 6-8 és 10-15 éves életkorban. Vizsgálati csoportunkat n=30 autizmussal élő gyermek testvére képezte, míg kontrollcsoportunkat szintén testvérkapcsolattal rendelkező gyermekek n=31 alkották. A vizsgálatban résztvevő gyermekek két tesztet töltek ki, a „Szemből olvasás tesztet”, valamint korcsoporttól függően a „Képes érzelmi intelligenciatesztet (EIT 6-8/EIT 10-15)”. Magasabb életkori csoportokban magasabb érzelmi intelligenciát és empátiás készséget azonosítottunk. Az autizmussal élők 6-8 éves testvérei körében magasabb pontszámokat tapasztaltunk mindkét teszt vonatkozásában. A nemi különbségek szintjén a lányok kiemelkedőbben teljesítettek a vizsgált feladatokban. Jelen vizsgálat keretein belül, az autizmussal élő gyermekek 6-8 éves testvérei az érzelmi intelligencia és empátiás készség magasabb fokával jellemezhetőek, eredményeinkből azonban nem következtethetünk reprezentatív módon a teljes populációra.

**Kulcsszavak:** érzelmi intelligencia, empátia, autizmus, testvérek

**Diszciplína:** pszichológia

Since the first description of autism (Kanner, 1943), science has been developing dynamically: a number of articles, books, and journals have been published about autism spectrum disorder. However, scientific research pays more attention to children with autism than to their parents and siblings. In our study, we tried to investigate whether in the emotional life of siblings, the autism is considered as a disadvantage, or vice versa, it helps the siblings to a higher degree of emotional intelligence, to understand other people's emotions more easily. The aim of our study was to examine the emotional intelligence and empathy among siblings of children with ASD. Reviewing both the international and Hungarian literature, it can be said that this is an underinvestigated research area.

This paper presents the results of our previous study. In the sections presenting the theoretical background, we describe the psychological definitions and models of emotional intelligence and empathy. Then we describe our main results of the research conducted. Our aim is providing a comprehensive picture of the possible negative or positive emotional and developmental characteristics of siblings of children with ASD.

The analysis follows three research questions, the description of results, and the discussion synthesizes the study.

### **Emotional intelligence and empathy**

Emotional intelligence is a set of abilities that elevates the level of the contribution of emotions to adaptation to the highest level (Oláh, 2005). This concept began to develop when two scientific journals published articles on the subject; however, for a long time, the research of intelligence and emotion were two separate areas (Mayer, Di Paolo and Salovey, 1990; Salovey and Mayer, 1990; Oláh, 2005). John D. Mayer and Peter Salovey developed a formal theory and method of measuring emotional intelligence (Mayer, 2003).

The concept is usually applied by professionals in three different ways (contexts) (Oláh, 2005):

Cultural trend (as an intellectual or emotional current) that characterizes a given age.

A group of personality traits that is important for a successful life, such as perseverance, self-discipline, social skills, and performance motivation.

The set of abilities that are used in the processing of emotional information.

Several definitions can be found in the literature to describe emotional intelligence, which, despite their differences, can be divided into two broad groups. According to the *ability model*, emotional intelligence includes the ability to perceive, express, understand and manage emotions, the ability to control them and use them to our personal development (Kádár, 2012), while the *mixed emotional intelligence models* define the construct as a combination of personality traits, mental abilities, social competencies, and motivational factors (Nagy, 2012).

Empathy has recently become the subject of scientific interest again. It has been a neglected area for years because it has not been considered an important aspect of human nature (Zahn-Waxler and Radke-Yarrow, 1990). According to the definition of Baron-Cohen, empathy is a power to identify the emotions and thoughts of others and to respond to their emotional responses with the appropriate emotion (Baron-Cohen, 2006). With its help, we are able to understand other people better and we can more easily predict their behaviour. It involves recognizing the feelings and emotional states of others and responding to them (Baron-Cohen, 2006).

Many different ideas have emerged about both its concept and its development (e.g., Freud, 1958; MacLean, 1985). Martin Hoffmann believed that no matter how old a child is, he/she can feel empathy for peers, and as he/she gets older, it can be more sophisticated and differentiated. Hoffmann identified four different stages in the development of empathy (Hoffmann, 1991).

Differences in the ability of empathy by gender can be detected already in the very early ages of life (Baron-Cohen, 2006). According to the literature, the empathic ability of men is lower than that of women, the development of the ability itself is

slower, and further development stops earlier (Buda, 2006). Women are able to more accurately identify facial expressions and interpret nonverbal communication – even the slightest change in tone and facial expressions are discovered and used in mind reading (Baron-Cohen, 2006).

### **The special situation of siblings of children with ASD**

Siblings play a special role in the lives of children with autism. They live in a 'community of shared destiny' with the affected person. They inspire them to take important developmental steps, helping them to acquire basic skills. In many cases, they are not in the same age, but the bond between them is biologically unbroken (Volkmar and Wiesner, 2013).

However, the behaviour of children with autism can often be frightening or violent, which may strongly influence the sibling relationships. Physical violence is a frightful experience at home, and it may suggest to the sibling that it is not safe. He/she may feel defenceless himself/herself (Benderix and Sivberg, 2007). The age of the child with autism, as well as the amount of the required help and care and whether they receive it in their home or a separate specialized institution, can also affect the relationship. If parents spend most of their time caring for a child with autism, the sibling may feel neglected (Volkmar and Wiesner, 2013).

Some studies suggest that siblings of children with ASD are more likely to have emotional, adjustment problems, and imbalances (Baron-Cohen and Bolton, 2000), social, communication disabilities, language problems such as delayed language development may occur (Bailey et al., 1998). Although these characteristics do not reach the diagnostic level, they may affect early development and learning (Stone et al., 2007). Meta-analytical study of Garrido et al. (2017) identified lower language and motor development,

while Stone, McMahon, Yoder and Walden's (2007) study identified significantly lower social-communication and cognitive abilities. They showed poorer performance in nonverbal problem solving, focusing attention, understanding words and sentences, using gestures, and social-communicative interactions with their parents. Lovell and Wetherell (2017) identified several emotional problems and depressive symptoms among them.

However, autism does not necessarily have a negative impact on siblings in all cases. Some research suggests that the siblings develop greater sensitivity toward disabilities and their fellow-creatures, they are more empathetic and value their health better than their peers (Baron-Cohen and Bolton, 2000). Research by Roeyers and Mycke (1995) found siblings of children with ASD to be much more accepting and blushing, while others reported less conflict (Kaminsky and Dewey, 2001; Fisman et al., 1996) and greater warmth in the sibling relationships (Fisman et al., 1996). In many cases, these children view their sibling relationships positively (Bägenholm and Gillberg, 1991; Kaminsky and Dewey, 2001; McHale, Sloan and Simeonsson, 1986; Roeyers and Mycke, 1995), they are proud to be able to teach their siblings with autism (Bristol and Schopler, 1984). The research of Benderix and Sivberg (2007) highlights that, depending on the age and the family, siblings have different experiences of responsibility and empathy for their siblings with autism. Some feel obligated to protect their siblings with autism and, in part, take responsibility from their parents. In many cases, they empathise with their siblings with autism, especially when they notice that the sibling is afraid, sad or frustrated by something.

As noted above, there is no clear consensus in the literature regarding siblings of children with ASD. This is why we considered it an interesting issue to examine siblings' emotional intelligence and empathy.

## Method

Our study aims to describe the characteristics of emotional intelligence and empathy among siblings of children with ASD. During the investigation, we sought to answer the following questions:

1. Are there significant differences in emotional intelligence and empathy between each age groups (6-8 and 10-15)?
2. What emotional intelligence and empathy can be characterized among the siblings of children with ASD compared to the control groups?
3. Concerning gender differences, can we identify significant differences between boys and girls?

## Sample

Our sample consists of 61 children – the main inclusion criteria was the age between 6-8 and 10-15 years, as well as the experience of a sibling relationship. The tests were completed by 30 children in the group of siblings of children with ASD, while in the control group 31 siblings of children with typical development were assessed. The gender distribution of the experimental and control groups was nearly balanced: in the experimental group there were seven boys and eight girls in the 6-8 years old age group ( $n = 15$ ) and nine boys and six girls in the 10-15 years old age group ( $n = 15$ ). For the control groups, eight boys and eight girls in the 6-8 years old age group ( $n = 16$ ) and seven boys and eight girls in the 10-15 years old age group ( $n = 15$ ) completed the tests. Data collection took place in 2015 and was part of a previous workshop (Szele, 2015). The study sample consisted of students living in Békés, Csongrád, Hajdú-Bihar, Heves, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok, Komárom-Esztergom, Pest and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties of Hungary.

### Procedure

Two paper-and-pencil tests were used for data collection. Participation in the research was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from the parents of subjects. For statistical analysis, we used the RStudio statistical program.

### Methods

The test completion took approximately 30 to 45 minutes, which also required the help of an adult in each case. Every participant received an answer sheet for the solutions.

1. *Emotional Intelligence Test for 6-8 years old (EIT 6-8)*. The development of the series of Emotional Intelligence Test in Hungary is related to Henriett Nagy. It is based on the sets of tasks measuring social competence and emotional intelligence developed jointly with Attila Oláh and Kinga Tóth (2005/a; 2005/b). The version for 6-8 years old has 19 items with a maximum of 19 points. The test consists of three types of tasks. In *the first type*, the child sees an emotional target image and five emotional portraits, and his/her task is to choose the only one that expresses their own feelings properly (see Figure 1).

The *second type* consists of an emotional target image and emotional portraits of five different children: the subject has to select the image of the child who is likely to be present in the scene described by the target image. In the *third type of tasks*, children see five portraits of adults and children expressing different emotions. Their task is to link adult and child portraits expressing similar emotions (Nagy, 2010).

2. *Emotional Intelligence Test for 10-15 years old (EIT 10-15)*. For the 10-15 years old age group, the test contains 29 items, and a total of 29 points can be obtained. The set of tasks is structured in a similar way to the version of 6-8 year olds – it includes the first two types of tasks mentioned above but is also supplemented by more complex tasks. The subjects have to select one of the possible images that expresses the same emotion and state as the target photos, based on the photos expressing different non-verbal signs. Furthermore, the test was extended with tasks in which they have to imagine certain situations and emotional states based on the photos (Nagy, 2010).

Figure 1. Example from the first type of tasks of EIT 6-8 (source: Nagy, 2010, p. 60.)



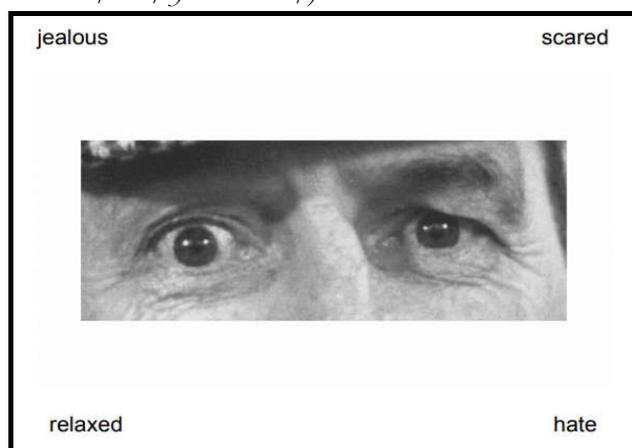
### 3. Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test (Children's Version), RMET-C

Baron-Cohen, along with Sally Wheelwright, developed the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test (Children's Version) to measure empathy (Baron-Cohen et al., 2001). During the completion of the test, the participant is presented with a series of photographs of only the eye regions of different faces to make the solution more challenging and gender differences more visible.

For each item, a photograph is framed with four words that describe the possible feeling of the person (see Figure 2). The subject has to choose one word that describes the feelings or thoughts of the person in the most appropriate way. The child version of the test consists of 28 items (Baron-Cohen, 2006), the instructions of the original English version were translated into Hungarian.

Due to the two versions of EIT (6-8 / 10-15), we used a between-subject arrangement in our study. Our two dependent variables were the 'emotional intelligence' and the 'empathy', our independent variables were the 'age' (6-8 / 10-15) and the 'gender' (boy / girl).

Figure 2. Example from the Children's Version of the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test (source: <https://www.autismresearchcentre.com/tests/eyes-test-child/>)



## RESULTS

Before the main statistical analysis, the normality of the sample was calculated by the Shapiro-Wilk test. Most of our data did not follow a normal distribution, so non-parametric tests were carried out. Mann-Whitney tests were used for group and gender comparisons, while Spearman's rank correlation method was used to examine the correlation between the two dependent variables.

### Comparison of the examined age groups based on the results of RMET-C

In our analyses, we compared the empathic skills of the 6-8 and 10-15 age groups. The Mann-Whitney test ( $W = 48.5$ ;  $p = .0073$ ) identified a significant difference between the two age groups, which was also shown at the level of medians, the 10-15 years old group of siblings of children with ASD (median of  $19 \pm$  a standard deviation of 1.84) performed better than 6-8 years old ( $17 \pm 3.36$ ). We also examined the significance of the age differences in the control groups, and found a significant difference ( $W = 30.5$ ;  $p = .0003$ ) between the older and younger age groups, too.

The median values confirmed that the higher age group of the control group ( $19 \pm 3.27$ ) also performed better in the RMET-C than 6-8 years old ( $12 \pm 3.59$ ), examining the empathy

### Comparison of the results of experimental and control groups (emotional intelligence and empathy)

In our study, we sought to answer whether siblings of children with ASD performed better in terms of emotional intelligence and empathy, or there was no outstanding difference in their performance to the control group. In the 6-8 years old age groups, the results of the *Mann-Whitney test* for EIT ( $W = 154.5$ ;  $p = .1667$ ) showed no significant difference between the experimental and control groups. However, regarding the RMET-C significant difference was identified ( $W = 188$ ;  $p = .0068$ ) between the two groups. Examining the median values (see Figure 3), it can be observed that siblings of children with ASD achieved higher scores in both tasks. However, in the 10-15 age group, the result of the Mann-Whitney test showed no significant differences between the two groups neither for the EIT variable ( $W = 121$ ;  $p = .7209$ ) nor for the RMET-C variable ( $W = 128.5$ ;  $p = .5014$ ).

Since both the 6-8 and 10-15 years old age groups completed the same children version of the RMET-C, we considered it to be appropriate to integrate these results. Based on the results of the *Mann-Whitney test* ( $W = 615$ ;  $p = .0296$ ), there was a significant difference between the experimental and control groups, which is also shown at the level of medians in favour of siblings of children with ASD ( $Med_{exp} = 18$ ;  $Med_{contr} = 16$ ).

We also examined the correlation between emotional intelligence and empathic skill in the two age groups. However, Spearman's rank correlation method showed no significant correlations between the two variables (6-8 years old:  $r = .2636$ ,  $p = .3424$ ; 10-15 years old:  $r = -.0455$ ,  $p = .8719$ ).

### Gender differences in emotional intelligence (EIT) and empathy (RMET-C)

Using Mann-Whitney tests, we examined the gender differences in emotional intelligence and empathy scores, respectively. Based on the statistical results, we cannot conclude a significant difference between boys and girls in either group. However, examining the medians, there is a tendency for girls to perform better compared to boys of the same age group (see Table 1).

Figure 3. Comparison of the results of the emotional intelligence test (EIT 6-8) and empathy test (RMET-C) of 6-8 age groups (source: the Authors)

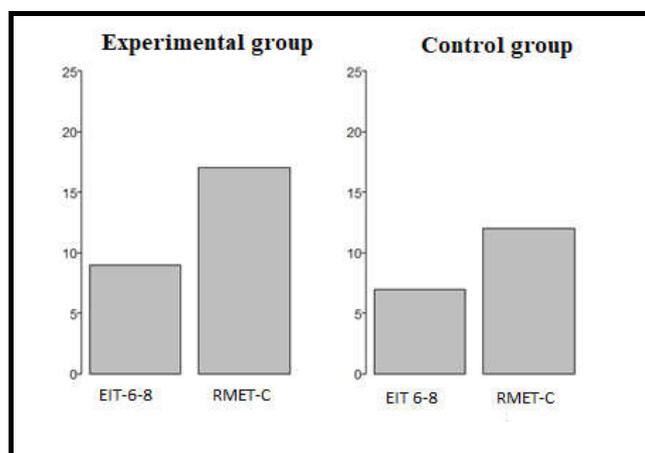


Table 1. Gender differences, Med (SD) (source: the Authors)

Ages	Experimental group				Control group			
	EIT		RMET-C		EIT		RMET-C	
	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl
<b>6-8 years old</b>	7 (1.70)	10 (2.47)	16 (2.62)	18 (3.87)	7 (1.51)	8(2.03)	10.5 (3.33)	13 (4.06)
<b>10-15 years old</b>	17 (2.20)	17,5(2.52)	19 (2.06)	19 (1.64)	12 (4.19)	18(1.06)	19 (3.62)	19,5(2.87)

### Discussion

In the statistical analysis of our study, we examined the effect of age differences in the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test (RMET-C), a tool for measuring empathic skill. Based on its results, it can be said, both in the experimental and both in the control group, that the 10-15 years old children performed better than their smaller counterparts. Age advantage was associated with higher emotional intelligence and empathic skills.

Subsequently, we compared the results of the experimental and control groups. Based on the literature, we hypothesized that siblings of children with ASD are characterized by higher emotional intelligence and empathic skills. In the 6-8 age groups, we did not find a significant difference concerning emotional intelligence between the experimental and control groups, but a significant difference was identified in empathy. Examining the medians, it became unambiguous that siblings of children with ASD performed better than the control group. Our results are consistent with literature findings according to which siblings of children with ASD being more compassionate and accepting (e.g., Baron Cohen and Bolton, 2000; Roeyers and Mycke, 1995; Ward et al., 2016). However, in case of the 10-15 years old age group, there was no difference between the experimental and control groups concerning either emotional intelligence or empathic skills. At the level of medians, we identified similar performances.

We assessed the performance not only at the level of groups/age groups, but we also combined

an integrated group from the age groups. We hoped that the partial result detected would be more prominent in a larger sample. As the RMET-C was the same for all age groups, these data were used for comparison. Based on the results of the Mann-Whitney test and the medians, we can conclude that the combined group of siblings of children with autism performed better in the empathy measurement task compared to the control group.

We also examined the correlation between emotional intelligence and empathy. However, we did not find a significant correlation in this regard. Finally, we examined gender differences in emotional intelligence and empathy. Although there were no significant differences, at the level of medians (see Table 1), a positive trend could have been detected in favour of girls.

### Limitations

The potential limitations of our study were the small sample size and the lack of the assessment of the severity of autism. Due to the broad spectrum of autism, it is extremely individual-specific what causes problems and difficulties in everyday life; as a result, families and siblings also face different situations. Our research did not assess the age, the number of siblings and the quality of the relationship between them (e.g. amount of time spent together). We would recommend a more detailed examination of these variables for the design and implementation of further research.

### Conclusions

With our statistical analysis we cannot unequivocally conclude that siblings of children with ASD performed better in all the examined indicators – however, the opposite has not been proved either. Consequently, we cannot conclude that siblings of children with ASD have any disadvantages in the measured variables. At the level of medians, however, the difference between age groups is remarkable as in the 6-8 years old group, siblings of children with ASD achieved higher scores than members of the control group. Considering these data and the increasing trend observed in the case of gender differences, we would conclude that by increasing the number of the sample, our results would be more significant. Our results cannot be considered representative due to the characteristics of the sample, so we recommend the reader to keep in mind the main limitations of the study when interpreting the results. In the further research, it would be worthwhile to examine the emotional intelligence and empathy in the siblings of other types of children with disabilities to investigate the main differences and similarities among them. Furthermore, our results can be informative to professionals who work with siblings of children with disabilities and develop them individually.

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**EXPERIENCES AND SUPPORT NEEDS OF CHILDREN  
WITH BROTHER OR SISTER WITH DISABILITY**

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**Abstrakt**

There are many children with special needs whose siblings play an important role in their lives for a longer time than other family members. Longer life expectancy and the deepening of disabilities bring along a higher need of being taken care of. When the parents grow older it is often the siblings who become the caretakers. Meyer & Vadasy (2007) found that if siblings of children with SEN get proper support and information while growing up, the well-being of sibling with special needs also increases. Relationship with sibling with special needs influences development of adaptability and self-esteem, this influence can be positive or negative (Burke, 2008). The parents of the children with SEN have many ways to receive information or help for the family – doctors, therapists, consultants, teachers, books etc. The siblings in their turn usually get their information from the parents. (Conway & Meyer, 2008) Family members in different ages need different information. Therefore, there should be a research on what kind of experiences do the siblings of the disabled child need, how their needs and well-being is guaranteed and what kind of support they need. The aim of this study is to describe the experiences of brothers and sisters with sibling with special needs, try to understand their need for support and find out the need for support groups and camps.

**Keywords:** siblings, special need, family, supporting, experiences

**Discipline:** pedagogy

**Absztrakt****FOGYATÉKOS GYEREKEK TESTVÉREINEK TAPASZTALATAI ÉS TÁMOGATÁSI SZÜKSÉGLETEI**

Nagyon sok olyan különleges bánásmódot igénylő gyermek van, akinek a testvérei hosszabb ideig játszanak fontos szerepet az életükben, mint más családtagok. A meghosszabbodó születéskor várható élettartam és a mélyülő fogyatékoság magával hozza a magasabb gondozási igényt. Amikor a szülők megöregszenek, gyakran a testvérek lesznek a gondviselők. Meyer és Vadasy (2007) úgy találta, hogy ha a sajátos nevelési igényű gyermekek testvérei megfelelő támogatást és tájékoztatást kapnak felnevelésük/felnövekedésük során, akkor a sajátos nevelési igényű testvér jól-léte is növekedést mutat. A sajátos nevelési igényű gyermekkel való kapcsolat növeli az önbecsülést és az alkalmazkodóképességet; a befolyás lehet pozitív és negatív is (Burke, 2008). A sajátos nevelési igényű gyermek szüleinek számos lehetőségük van, hogy tájékoztatást vagy segítséget kapjanak a család számára pl. orvosok, terapeuták, szakértők, tanárok, könyvek stb. A testvérek az információkat többnyire a szüleiktől kapják. Szükség van olyan kutatásokra, melyek feltárják, milyen élményekre van szükségük a fogyatékkal élő gyerekek testvéreinek, hogyan lehet a szükségleteiket és a jól-létüket biztosítani és milyen támogatást igényelnek. Jelen tanulmány célja, hogy bemutassa a sajátos nevelési igényű gyerekek testvéreinek élményeit, megpróbálja értelmezni, hogy milyen támogatásra van szükségek, valamint a támogató csoportokra és táborokra való igényüket.

**Kulcsszavak:** testvérek, speciális szükséglet, család, támogatás, élmények

**Diszciplína:** pedagógia

**Family****as the Child's Environment of Growth**

In the early process of socializing it is the family that shapes and guides the behavior and identity of the child. Networks of families are essential in protecting and looking after the future generations (Underdown, 2006). Barker & Chang (2013) brought out the different functions of a family: satisfying the basic needs of its members, nurturing the children and socialising them, ensuring the wellbeing and support. What is important is how the material and emotional needs of the members of a family are granted.

The ecological environment can be described as a whole made of structures within each other. The internal part of the model is a diaad – a dual

relationship. If one member of the diaad develops then so does the other. Therefore, it can be concluded that the developmental changes of a child also affect its caretakers – parents, grandparents, teachers. The mutual interaction also takes place in the diaad with the siblings. (Bronfenbrenner, 2009) If a person is not capable of regulating one's behavior and development (like children and people with special needs) then their behavior and decisions are guided by their parents or the specialists working with them (Heckhausen, 2008)

A social system is a whole that works due to the mutual dependability of its different parts. An individual is analyzed by being observed in an environment – the social network he belongs to.

The base of an analysis that takes into consideration all the steps from micro to macro level is the learning of children and youngsters and their development in accordance with the environment (Klefbeck & Ogden, 2001). The development goes both ways which means that the children influence their parents the exact way as the opposite. This supports the theory that all development is influenced by the environment where it occurs (Wodarski & Dziegielewski, 2002, 85).

Minuchin (1974) claims that a family has 2 kinds of functions. The internal - psychosocial protection of the members, and external – adaptation and transmission of the culture. Culture is a part of the macro system that is related to the overall coping of a family. In a family with a child with special needs culture can influence the way they seek for assistance, the attitude towards professional help and intervention as well as the coping strategies that are accepted.

The coping of children on micro and macro level depends on the mental health of the parents, the quality of their relationship and the relationship between siblings and the style of upbringing. (Kovshoff, Cebula, Tsai & Hastings, 2017). Siblings have a specific socialising influence on each other's behavior. Age difference between the siblings allows the family to use modelled learning – social skills are acquired faster, younger children learn from the older ones and the overall coping within the age group improves. (Keltikandas-Järvinen, 2013; Mangs & Martell, 2000).

### **The Diagram of Relationships Between Siblings**

Kovshoff, Cebula, Tsai and Hastings (2017) have created a diagram (Fig 1) that helps to understand the relationships between the child with special

needs and the siblings. The diagram is based on the elements of family system theory, the model of stress (Double ABCX), the model of stress and predisposition to disease and the ecological system theory. The micro system is directly related to the experiences of the siblings of the child with SEN, the meso and micro system affect each other mutually, the exo system affects the siblings indirectly and the macro system includes wider social and cultural factors.

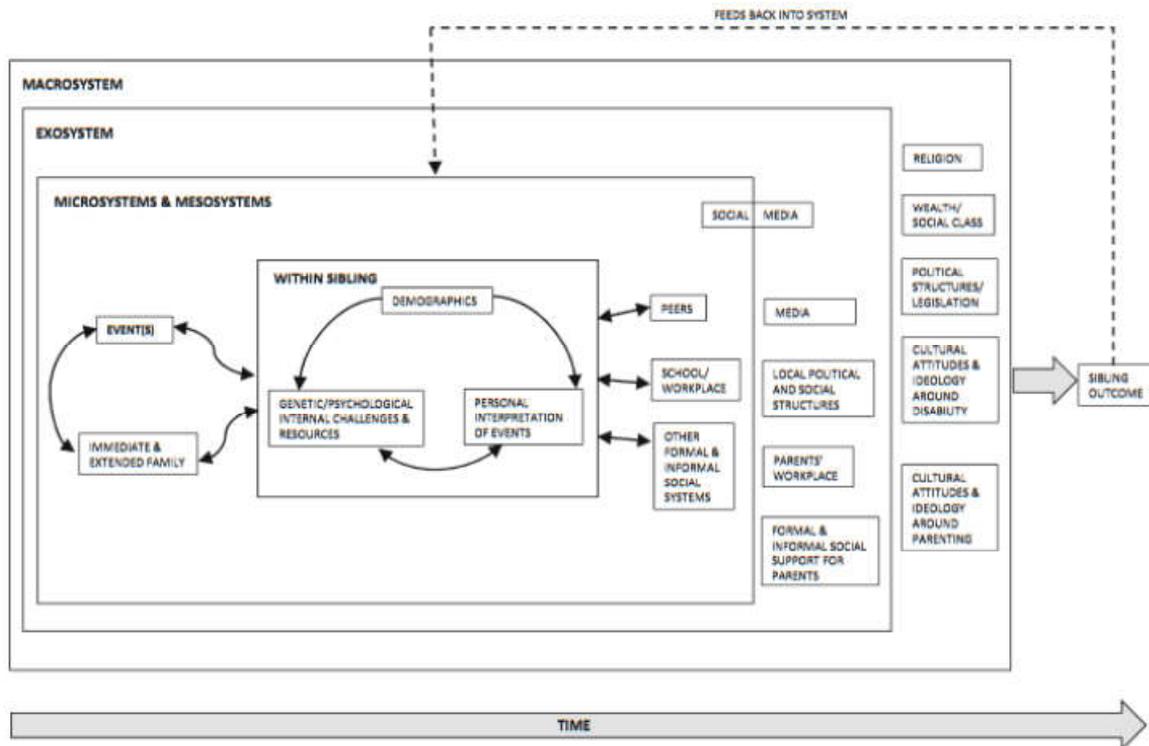
The child in the diagram is described as an active practitioner who shapes his environment. One of the key factors on micro and macro level is „an event“ that could mark a sibling with special needs, behavioral issue or communication skills of the child with SEN, a sibling with age-appropriate development etc.

The impact depends on demographic variables (the sex and age of the children), internal challenges of the child and coping mechanisms (preventive coping strategies, positive self-esteem, endurance) as well as how the child himself interprets the event.

The siblings' coping on micro and macro level is affected in addition to „the event“ by variables connected to the family, such as the mental health of the parents, the quality of their relationship, the support from the grandparents, friends, school or workplace and support mechanisms. The exo and macro system involves factors like local political structures, media, religion and legislation. An important element is coping that might be psycho-social adaptation, the quality of relationship between siblings, academic accomplishments or overall satisfaction with life.

There is a hypothesis that the coping of the siblings of a child with SEN in its turn shapes the micro and meso systems. Time is an important factor because some of the factors in the diagram are constant throughout the life while earlier experiences shape the later coping.

Figure 1. Sibling Embedded Systems Framework. (Source: Kovshoff, Cebula, Tsai & Hastings, 2017)



### The Influence of Children with Sen to the Development of their Siblings

Children with SEN are often characterized as ignorant to behavioral norms and lacking social-emotional skills. The siblings in their turn are affected by these behavior patterns and react to them. The child with SEN and the siblings affects mutually each other's social-emotional competence which creates a relationship that might maintain or undermine the achieved competencies. Not only they affect each other as a person through mutual communication but the communication creates a certain dynamic in the relationship that also affects future interaction (Bedford & Volling, 2013)

Hogan (2012) claims that when growing up in a family with a child with SEN the siblings while growing up have a chance to understand the

challenges that people with special needs need to cope with. Also, they are most likely more helpful towards others. At the same time the siblings have a higher risk to become miserable, feel sad and even experience depression compared to the children who do not have a sibling with SEN. Older siblings often help the siblings with SEN more. They develop certain skills for taking care of someone and these skills will be beneficial in the future when it comes to their children or their elderly parents. They adapt better, are more understanding and helpful compared to the ones who do not have that kind of experiences when growing up.

Therefore, a family has a very important role in shaping the child to become a coping individual and a family can be considered a whole social

system that works by mutual dependence. This means that the parents, the child and a parent as well as the siblings are depending on each other and also affecting one another. The exact effect that a sibling with SEN creates depends on multiple aspects like the individual factors, growing environment and culture. The effect can be both positive and negative.

### **Family Dynamics in a Family where one Child has SEN**

Often the family dynamics are different in families where a child with SEN is growing up compared to other families. The siblings of the child with SEN also often have different goals and behavior patterns compared to other children and youngsters who do not have a sibling with SEN (Hogan, 2012)

Considering a family as a micro system and the dyads within, Mitchell (1983, reference by Veisson, 2000, 7) brings out problematic areas that affect families where a child with SEN is growing up:

- Parents 'coping individually and as a couple, acceptance of the child with SEN
- Mother's depression, guilt and occupation with special needs
- The amount of attention that the mother shares to the siblings; the excessive exploitation of siblings by the mother to take care of the child with SEN.
- The amount of attention that the father shares to other siblings; the excessive exploitation of siblings by the father to take care of the child with SEN.
- The withdrawal of the father when it comes to looking after the child with SEN, the psychological and physical presence
- The attitude of other children in the family towards the one with SEN: guilt, shame, fears, adversative feelings.

The family relationship has a significant impact to a child's coping. The unfavourable changes come with decrease of mood and anxiety. Therefore, it is of extreme importance to share any information with the child when it comes to changes in the family's life. The parents have various feelings when they find out about the SEN of their child. The information that is shared with other siblings and the way it is shared might affect the way the whole family functions.

Occasionally the siblings of the child with SEN have tasks that normally should be covered by grownups. Aldridge and Becker (1993, reference by Underdown, 2006) have referred to such siblings as „young caretakers“ and brought out that their life is limited due to them taking care of their family member. Such responsibility in a young age to take care of someone might damage the child's mental and physical health. The youngsters themselves have described how such way of life affects them and what they feel

- The feeling of being different, detached from companions; relationship problems
- Lack of time for homework, play and leisure time
- Conflict between the needs of oneself and the one being taken care of that might lead to anger and feeling of guilt
- Too few accomplishments in school that will lead to difficulties in the older age

Ronald Wiman (1990; Reference by Kiis, 1999) brings out the preconditions of social coping:

- abilities – the necessary physical and mental resources;
- motivation – the person's own wish to cope in a certain situation;
- knowledge – information and knowledge that help to cope in a certain situation;
- skills – the skills to act according to the situation;

- opportunities – suitable environmental conditions that make it possible to cope.

The first 4 resources form the overall actual competency for coping and the fifth one covers the environmental factors. If a person cannot cope socially the coping problem might be due to one or more coping conditions are not met at all or met partially. The ones who have the option to receive mental social support cope better with stress and traumatic situations. Social support can be practical, material or emotional (Baumeister, Faber & Wallace, 1999). By researching the everyday coping of the siblings of the child with SEN the methods can be divided into 4 categories: aimed at solving the problem or acting on it, aimed at emotions or thinking, aimed at the support from a third party or denial and ignoring.

It can be said that the needs of the family members in a family with a child with SEN – (parents, siblings) can be often different from other families. Both the parents and other children of the family face various problems and need to manage difficult emotions and situations. The birth of a child with SEN could change a couple's relationship, the ability of the parents to divide the attention between the children, create adversative feelings for the siblings and cause a lot more duties for them.

### **Empirical Research of the Experiences of the Siblings of the Child with SEN**

#### **Methodology of Research**

The aim of an empirical research is to describe the experiences of the siblings of a child with SEN, try to understand their support needs and find out about the need for support groups and camps. Due to the purpose of the thesis the following research questions have been raised:

- What kind of experiences do the other children of the family have in connection with the child with SEN?
- What kind of support do the siblings of the child with SEN need?
- Is there a need for camps and support groups for the siblings of the child with SEN?

A qualitative research method is used in the research that values the importance of opinion and the detailed approach even with only few participants. A half-structured interview is used for data collection. Different sources show that an interview can be considered an effective way to collect data as it allows in addition to factual knowledge to get familiar with the person's perspective, opinions, feelings and experiences while maintaining the specificity of one's linguistic performance and giving a detailed overview (Saldana, 2011; Laherand, 2008). Open-ended questions help the interviewee to better explain their points of view and feelings. An oral interview is also suitable to research children and youngsters as it allows first to make acquaintance and also it might be difficult for children to express themselves in writing. After conducting the interviews the recordings were transcribed. The data was analysed following the principles of a qualitative inductive content analysis.

#### **The Sample**

The sample of the research is made up of 7 children who have a sibling in a special needs group in the kindergarten or at school, all aged 9-20 years, 4 boys and 3 girls. The age and type of the special need is illustrated in the chart (Chart 1). The research was conducted under a written permission from the parents and to ensure anonymity all participants were marked with a personal code that consists of a letter (L) and a number (1-7).

Table 1. Age of children and type of special needs (Source: authors)

Symbol	Age of the interviewee	Age of sister or brother with special needs	Type of special need
L1	11	8	intellectual disability
L2	16	11	intellectual disability autism spectrum disorder
L3	14	7	multiple disability
L4	20	24	multiple disability
L5	10	8	intellectual disability autism spectrum disorder
L6	13	5	compound disability
L7	9	13	autism spectrum disorder and ADHD

### The Procedure of research

The interviews to collect data were conducted in Tallinn between September 2018 and April 2019. The interviewees were introduced the objectives and structure of the interview before the start. It was emphasised that no name or data will be used in the research that might endanger their anonymity. The children had the choice to stop the interview or not to answer the question at any point. The children were asked if the interview can be recorded and all of them agreed.

### Results of Research

#### *The experiences of the siblings of the child with SEN*

The children in the sample were all aware of the special needs of their sibling. The children usually described their sibling with mainly positive words: funny, cool, sweet, special, caring, active, nice, kind, smart. At the same time, it was mentioned that the sibling can occasionally be: annoying, loud, disturbing and spiteful. It was pointed out that the actual age of their sibling is not in accordance with their appearance and behavior.

From the interviews it was found out that the children enjoy spending time with their families both at home and outside. They travel with the family, spend time taking walks, eating out, playing together. The sibling with SEN does not usually disturb the common activities of the family. At the same time however it was brought out that there are rather few common activities and it is difficult to get everyone involved. Due to the specificity of the behavior of the child with SEN the number of places they can visit is also limited. Children had noticed that doings of their parents were limited due to the child with SEN. It allows more different common activities and possibilities when there was an option to take the child with SEN to stay with the grandparents. One respondent for example mentioned: *L5 My sister goes to stay with the grandparents for a week and then we have a lot of time to spend together /.../*

Children prefer to spend their leisure time actively with mates, in practice, hobby group or at home dealing with their own things. They read books, play, study, spend time in their computer or

smartphone. From active past-time activities horse-riding, scootering and football were mentioned. Children have many hobby groups that help to pass time and to get away from the sibling with SN for a bit.

Most of the respondents said they enjoy spending time with their sibling and play games. For example, they play with toy cars, assemble puzzles, watch TV, play ball or go to the playground or for walks. The children in the sample care a lot about their sibling, one of the interviewees wants to go to sleep with her brother and *to hold hands*. The child with SEN can also be an idol for the sibling: *L4 /.../ my sister was like my idol /.../ you cannot even tell that something is different when you're little. You don't pay attention to it as a child. The will to play grows if the children have common interests. Through games a child can teach the sibling with SEN new skills. It is considered great that one can play a role model for the sibling and teach them: L1 /.../ it is pretty cool that I have the kind of a brother who does not know too many things and then I can teach him everything. Often the skills and game preferences of the children with SEN are limited and it might be difficult for them to find things to do together. The sibling in that case needs often to act as per the will of the child with SEN. They do wish that they could engage with the sibling as per their own interests: L2 /.../ I think it would be nice if I could have played with him like football or something or gone to the movies with him. To watch some other cartoons with him because he only watches the kind that he likes. He does not watch any others.*

It was also pointed out that time is spent together however it is difficult to find mutual activities to do with the sibling with SEN. Multiple interviewees mentioned that playing ball is the only activity they can do together: *L5 We have played ball with her but it's like when she wants to play she can play for a while but when she doesn't then she gets bored and does not play anymore. Ant that is the only game I know that I can play with her. We roll the ball to each other.*

The amount of duties for the siblings vary in families. Most of the interviewees said that they need to look after their brother or sister and do that even when the sibling is in their teen years already. This brings along the need to change plans. If the child with the SEN is not capable of servicing himself it might even mean changing diapers. One of the interviewees said: *L2 /.../ It has happened more than once /.../ that I'm at my friend's house and want to spend the night there but the parents want to go to the movies and so I need to go home to look after my brother even though he is no longer small.* Multiple children described how they need to help to put their sibling to bed before they can go to sleep themselves. One of the children pointed out that she does not only put the sibling to bed but also needs to bring him home from the kindergarten. At the same time the child did not express any unwillingness towards the tasks by saying she does not mind at all.

The siblings described many occasions that made them feel that it is hard to be a family member to a child with special needs. For example, strangers staring at a relatively grown up sister in a stroller and therefore made her feel uncomfortable. The constant attention made her feel like she did not want to be with her sister due to the attention.

Many children with special needs have a hard time to understand behaviour patterns and they tend to do what they want. In a situation like these siblings try to support their parents and follow the wishes of the brother or sister. Multiple children acknowledged that it is difficult to understand what the brother or sister actually wants when they are unable to express themselves verbally. Often, they show their feelings by crying. It is also difficult to take care of a child with special needs as they do not understand the instructions given to them: *L3 /.../ he starts to cry if he wants something but I do not understand what he wants... if only he could talk then I would understand.* It was also mentioned that siblings with special needs can act unexpectedly and

inappropriately in certain situations when reserved behaviour is expected. For example: *L1 /.../ One time I have really felt embarrassed. My grandfather died and everyone were holding back the tears and my sister was just screaming at the funeral... But I understand, she cannot control her feelings.*

It affects the siblings' security when a parent spends a lot of time in the hospital with the brother or sister with special needs. The constant absence of the parents caused one girl to feel ambivalent emotions towards the sister with special needs: *L1 /.../ When my sister had that heart attack then she spent half a year in the hospital. Afterwards it was kind of a love-hate relationship with her. It literally meant that mom was missing, dad spent long days at the office, I was just left behind at my grandparents or somewhere else. I was thrown here and there like a bag. This is why I really cannot remember my childhood.*

Depending on the specific special need the family members need to take into account different matters. For a child in a wheelchair they need to constantly check that the place is accessible. One of the interviewees expressed her distress that people often do not think about accessibility and there are still many establishments where it is difficult to visit with a wheelchair. Multiple children also mentioned behavioural specialities of the sibling with SEN that mean constant looking after them or make it hard to be with them. A child with the Asperger syndrome might be controlling and expect the whole family to act as per his logic. The coping of the family is also made more complicated by the fact that the child with special needs grows, gets stronger and faster which in turn means he might need different kind of support: *L2 /.../ one person can keep on eye on him but still you turn away for a moment and he is already doing something. So sometimes it takes more people to look after him. /.../ grandmother and grandfather cannot handle my brother just because they can't keep up with him anymore.*

Many worries were shared by the siblings of children with SEN. One of them pointed out that

his brother does not really have any friends outside of the family circle. For the brother to be able to talk and communicate better to make friends is the biggest dream for this child. It turned out that future is also a worry-point for the siblings. It was also brought out on multiple occasions that they would really like to know if their sibling is able to look after himself in the future and if the activities for development serve any good whatsoever. Families try and test frequently different therapies and ways how to develop the child with special needs. Therapies however are expensive, and they do affect financially: *L2: „/.../ I would like someone to confirm that he can get well. Because right now it is really expensive with all the therapies and dolphin therapies and stuff and I don't know if they really help.“*

The interviewees named many reasons how their siblings have affected themselves. It was pointed out that when growing up with a brother or sister with special needs it makes one sensitive for any negative comments regarding the sibling. Personal experience makes these children more aware of the difficulties that may arise in a family raising a child with special needs. Monitoring your own health and rising the awareness of the friends was also mentioned. One child finds it important to take good care of yourself already when young to ensure healthy babies in the future. The child is also aware of what exactly comes with raising a child who needs more taking care of and this makes them avoid dangerous situations: *whatever you can do to ensure nothing bad happens – do it. This is what I tell other people as well. /.../ I will not go jump down from high spots or jump in the water in an unknown place because I know that life might become more difficult. I try to share the awareness among my friends as well.*

Growing up in a family with a child with special needs makes his siblings to make an effort to make the parents' life easier. One interviewee is motivated to be better and try harder when seeing the parents struggling with the brother or sister with special needs. They try to make their parents

happy by not partying, not smoking or drinking alcohol – instead they study hard: /.../ *I feel like I don't know exactly how but my brother has made me a better person. /.../ I try to be the best child one can be and I study hard.*

#### *Supporting the siblings of a child with special needs*

To cope with the problems, issues and difficult emotions children often need support. The siblings of a child with special needs get most of the support from their friends and parents. There were children among the sample who tell their friends about the brother or sister with special needs: L1 *“My support in that sense is the fact that I tell my friends about it. My friends have visited us, and they already know what he is like and understand that he has a syndrome.”* It was considered important that friends are understanding in regards to the brother or sister. It was also brought out that usually it is the mother who is more open and therefore easier to talk to about any worries. There were also children who prefer to share their concerns only among the family circle as the topic is delicate and private. They admitted that often no-one outside of the family knows about the existence of the family member with special needs as it is not a subject to be shared.

#### *Camps and support groups as a way to support*

All of the interviewees answered that they would happily take part of any support groups or camps that is organised for the siblings of a child with special needs. Some already had such experience. They thought it would be nice to be in camp with their brother or sister and meet other children with special needs: ... *I would like to see other children so I would know what they are like and if they are anything like my brother.* They hope that in addition to the experience their sibling with special needs might find new friends to play with. A camp that is for

the whole family could be a way to get out of the everyday routine: L4 /.../ *These camps during the summer is a way to get out of the everyday struggle which is really long... But there is too few of these camps as there are not enough places accessible with a wheelchair.*

A support group could be the place to meet and communicate. The children find it motivating to take part of such group or camp if they have a chance to get more information about how to help their brother or sister, to communicate and talk about experiences with other children and to really help their sibling: L7 /.../ *I could tell my things to the others, the ones who have similar siblings as I do and they understand and then we could share.*

It was interesting to hear the thoughts of one interviewee who brought out as the reason of participating the wish to help other children in similar situation. She thought that talking about her own feelings could be a burden for other children and she did not really want that: L4 /.../ *I think I would have taken part of the support group more for others than for myself. I like to help more. /.../ Because I don't want anyone to worry about these things. They were not born to the family I was born in and I can manage.*

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The aim of this research was to describe the experiences of siblings of a child with special needs, try to understand their support needs and to find out the need for support groups and camps. The first question of the research was to find out what kind of experiences the siblings of a child with SEN have. It appeared that all siblings were well aware of the special needs and peculiarities. Theoretical sources also confirm that it is important to share the information about changes in the family life with the child as every change might come with anxiety and decrease of mood (Lindgren & Suter, 1994, 92)

All the children in the sample of this research enjoy spending time with their family however think that there should be more activities they could do together. Most popular past time activities with the family are travelling, taking walks, going out to eat, playing board games and other games. The child with special needs does not usually disturb the family activities.

The behaviour of the child with SEN might set certain limitation and they can not be taken with to some places - this sets limits for the whole family. If the child with special needs is in a wheelchair then the family needs to constantly check that the place, they are planning to visit is accessible. Steel, Vandeveld, Poppe & Moyson (2010, 235-237) also admit that the actual impact that the child with SEN has on the family is seen during holidays and leisure time. Whatever the activity is the place needs to be accessible and adapted to the child with SEN. The parents really need to plan ahead to avoid any possible errors.

The children in the sample prefer to spend their leisure time with friends or at home doing their own things. They go to practice or to their hobby group that help to get away from the home environment where the sibling with special needs is present.

Earlier researches also confirm that it is important for the siblings to have their space and the possibility to spend some time separately from the family member with special needs (Steel, Vandeveld, Poppe & Moyson, 2010, 235-237). At the same time the siblings enjoy spending some time with the brother or sister with special needs and play different games with them.

Through common activities they teach their siblings new skills. The lack of skills and preferred activities set a certain limit and when choosing the activities the choice is narrowed as it is found that usually the wish of the child with special needs is favourable. The age gap between the siblings allows the model learning in a family meaning that

the children are learning from each other (Keltikangas-Järvinen 2013, 47-50)

It appeared that the siblings have various tasks when it comes to the brother or sister with special needs, like taking them home from the kindergarten, looking after them and putting them to bed. Looking after them often comes with a large burden and tension as the sibling needs constant watch - the behaviour can be unpredictable. In a case of multiple disability, the taking care also means hygiene processes like changing diapers. Hogan (2012, 76-77m 95) notes that the siblings who help their brother or sister with special needs develop certain caretaker skills that might be useful for them in the future. Also, such children are more understanding and helpful compared to the ones who do not have such experience. The siblings might have also been turned to parenting and they might have regular tasks that a child their age should not have. These siblings have a higher risk to feel miserable as they do not have enough time for activities fit for their age or time to just spend with their friends. The children whose life is somewhat limited as they need to constantly take care of their brother or sister are called "young caretakers" by Aldridge & Becker (1993). Their psychological coping may be damaged as caretaking often comes with difficult feelings and various issues like lack of time, relationship problems - feeling isolated, poor progress at school, conflicts between the needs of oneself and the one taken care of. (reference by Underdown, 2006, 100-101). The children in the sample did not bring out the aforementioned problems however certain parallels can be drawn when describing complex situations and difficulties.

It appeared that there are parents who do not burden their other children with duties related to the sibling with special needs as they themselves have made the decision to keep that child in the family and they try to manage. The parents have

their thoughts on the future as it is most likely that one of the other siblings will become the main caretaker of the child with special needs. One of the main places of concern is the future of the sibling with special needs - to what extent will the other children in the family be able to manage and if the development activities in the childhood benefit anyone.

The siblings are aware of the difficulties that come with raising a child with special needs. They are empathic and sensitive to negative comments regarding people with special needs. They look after their health and try to raise awareness among their mates. Hogan (2012, 76-77) also claims that these children who grow up with a sibling with special needs understand the challenges that people with special needs need to cope with.

The second question in the research was to find out about the thoughts on support needs for the siblings of the brother or sister with SEN. The siblings turn mostly to their parents or friends to talk about their concerns. There are children who do not discuss anything related to the sibling with special needs outside of the family as they find it to be an extremely private matter. In some cases, they turned to someone impartial like a psychologist. From the parents it is usually the mother who is more open and to who they can turn to for support. When it comes to friends it is important that they are understanding towards the child with special needs. It was mentioned in the interviews that it would really help if there was an option to discuss matters with other children in a similar situation. Conway & Meyer (2008) claim the parents to be the primary source of information for their children. Meyer & Vadasy (2007, reference by Conway & Meyer, 2008) admit that the wellbeing of the child with special needs will improve if their siblings receive relevant information and necessary support when they grow up. The culture dictates the way people seek for help, the attitude towards professional help and intervening as well as which

strategies for coping are accepted (Kovshoff, Cebula, Tsai & Hestings, 2017, 41-42).

The third question in the research was to find out the will and readiness to take part of any support groups or camps meant for the siblings of a child with special needs. It turned out that the children in the sample were interested in such gatherings. There were some who would only take part of the camp but not the support group. Some of the interviewees had already participated in such camps and had had positive experiences. The reasons for wanting to participate were as follows: sharing experience, gathering information, wish to help the brother or sister, wish to help other children, the opportunity to talk and communicate. The interviewees found that if a camp is meant for the whole family it would help to rest and get away from their everyday problems. Roberts (2015) has noted that participating in a support group helps to decrease the feeling of isolation and allows to share experiences. SibworkS support program that was conducted in Australia showed that the children who participated in the program had less emotional and behavioural disorders than the children in the control group. In addition, the participants' self-esteem, relationship with their sibling and the skill to cope with problems all improved.

This was a qualitative research where the sample was made up of 7 children and youngsters who had a sibling with special needs growing up in their family. When interpreting the results, one has to take into consideration the limitations of the research and no large generalisations can be made. To get a better overview of the subject the size of the sample needs to be increased and the situation with the siblings of a child with special need has to be studied all over Estonia as well as in other countries. It would be beneficial to compare the experiences of siblings of a child with special needs to the children who do not have siblings with special needs. This would help to understand if the

experiences actually differ. We should also compare the vision of needed support between the parents and the siblings of a child with special needs. A support program and a long-term research should be conducted by comparing the situation before and after the program in order to get a better overview if support groups and camps would be beneficial.

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**MÓDSZERTANI TANULMÁNYOK / METHODOLOGICAL STUDIES**



## TIME FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS TO TAKE MORE CONTROL OF LEARNING

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### Abstract

The article focuses on the idea that it is time that teachers and students take control of their own learning, that education must be transformed and aligned the realities of 21st century. One way to take ownership of our own learning is student-centered teaching and learning. In this process several elements are important: constructivist activities, metacognitive reflections, student and professor partnerships, collaborative/cooperative efforts, authentic assessments, active and on-going student engagement in the work to learn, explicit teaching of important skills, student control of at least some of their learning, peer and professor/teacher feedback, and learning based, to a large extent, on student effort.

**Keywords:** student-centered teaching and learning, education reform, successful learning

**Discipline:** pedagogy

### Absztrakt

*IDEJE, HOGY A TANÁROK ÉS A DIÁKOK JOBBAN KONTROLLÁLJÁK A TANULÁST*

A tanulmány fókuszában az áll, hogy itt az ideje, hogy a tanárok és a diákok irányítsák a saját tanulási folyamatukat, valamint az oktatást át kell alakítani és összehangolni a 21. század valóságával. Az egyik lehetőség a saját tanulási folyamatunk ellenőrzésére a diákközpontú tanulás és tanítás. A folyamatban számos összetevő játszik szerepet: konstruktivista tevékenységek, metakognitív reflexiók, diák-tanár partneri viszony, együttműködési erőfeszítések, hiteles értékelés, a diákok aktív és folyamatos bevonása a tanulási folyamatba, a fontos készségek explicit tanítása, a diákok legalább a tanulási folyamatuk egy részének irányítói, kortárs és professzori/tanári/oktatói visszajelzés, valamint nagymértékben tanuláson alapuló tanulói erőfeszítés.

**Kulcsszavak:** tanulóközpontú tanítás és tanulás, oktatási reform, sikeres tanulás

**Diszciplína:** pedagógia

### Introduction

For at least 25 years people have been trying to reform education. By many accounts, in spite of great efforts by well-intentioned politicians, business people, educational leaders, reformers, and teachers, the reform movement has not worked. Wagner (2014) believes that even our best schools are doing an inadequate job of preparing students for their future lives. Sir Ken Robinson (2017) not only agrees with Wagner, but also believes that education can no longer be reformed. He and others believe that education must be transformed. Sousa (2017) relates how teaching and learning must be more aligned with how the brain learns, and that the accountability mentality of the past 25 years is not aligned with students' brains. Geraghty (2020) relates that his students are tired of the mentality of accountability and conformity that exists in so many schools today. His students say they want more meaningful work in their classes. Students are not afraid of hard work, but they are sick and tired of regurgitating back to teachers what they believe teachers want. Instead these students want to work toward their goals in life in their classes today.

Caine (2018) explains how students should be taught to move from dependent learners to independent learners. Laurian-Fitzgerald and Fitzgerald (2019) describe how students have reacted to the techniques used to help the teaching and learning process to be more student-centered. Students should not be forced to comply to school; they should not be asked to regurgitate information that can much more easily be found on the internet in five to ten seconds; they should not be asked to do mundane work; students should not be doing work that cannot be related to the real world in significant ways. Caine et al. (2016) explain how students should be taught to take more and more control of their learning, while teachers should be learning how to move from professors of

knowledge to mentors of students who are working on their own life goals.

These ideas, of course, mean that students and teachers must learn new roles in the process of teaching and learning. If the teaching and learning process is going to become more collegial, then adults and students must learn new roles. Many students are not going to want to play this new game of schooling, because they have learned to be comfortable in the old game of schooling. That is, many students have become very comfortable getting good grades while putting forth a minimal effort. These students will not be happy, at first, when they are being asked to work harder, to be more responsible for their learning, and to be more responsible for other students around them. As one student put it, "Just give me the work and then the test and leave me alone." As Davison (2017) relates, these students have no idea how unprepared they are for what they will face upon graduation. And he tells us that parents and teachers do not understand what we are not doing for and with our students.

In what Caine (2018) calls the tier three pedagogy, students must learn to be advocates for their learning and teachers must learn to be advisors, guides, and mentors for their students. Too many teachers, too, have become very comfortable playing the old game of schooling. Their lessons and units have been set for years, and even though they know that a percentage of their students are failing or under achieving, they continue to teach the same things in the same ways, getting the same results. We can no longer afford to allow so many students to be uneducated or undereducated. Robinson (2017) explains that our world can no longer afford to lose the skills, talents, and passions of so many young people.

Teachers must be willing to learn new pedagogical philosophies and techniques to help their students find their talents and passions, and, to develop them to their fullest extent. We must

learn to help students find and develop their voices. Teacher must learn how to inspire students instead of forcing students to comply. When teachers inspire students they will want to work hard, not to get good grades, but for their love of learning. Csikszentmihalyi (1990; 2008) writes about flow, the state of being totally engaged in what one is doing. When someone is in flow, two hours seems like ten minutes. Teachers can learn to develop experiences in which students are engaged in activities about which they are passionate. Then, students will not ask about the time, they will ask for more time to work. The goal is not to get all of the students to learn the material for the test, the goal will be to help students inspire themselves to learn more and more.

This must begin by making sure teachers know and understand our students. How do we do that—ask our students. Ask students what they are interested in doing in school, outside of school, in their future lives, in their hobbies, etc. Use whatever techniques help a teacher gain that information: interviews, surveys, journals, cooperative activities, student-generated projects, field trips, investigations, etc. There are so many ways for teachers to learn about students and their talents, dreams and goals. The first step is to decide that student-centered teaching and learning is more important than testing. Ravitch (2016) believes that educators have been brainwashed into believing that all students should learn the same things, in the same way, and be assessed with single-time standard assessments. She states that despite the lack of evidence, those in charge still maintain that standardized testing leads to higher achievement. She too was brainwashed into believing the fantasy of testing, but now has changed her ideas. She advocates that the rest of us should look at the reality of life, and understand that learning should be centered on students and their interests, skills, passions, and dreams.

Laurian-Fitzgerald, Popa, and Fitzgerald (2015)

also discuss the idea that educators are rushing into getting students to pass tests instead of helping students become the people they should become. Helping students become the great people they can and should be is much more important than passing a standardized test. Instead of trying to make students learn about the game of schooling, teachers should be helping students to learn about the game of life. As Dewey (1910) has told the world of education, everything students learn should help them in the real world in some important way. The social and emotional sides of our students are important for learning. According to the Berkley Unified School District (*Toolbox: Social Emotional*, 2020):

Years of research in the field of childhood resiliency and social-emotional learning have taught us that emotional and behavioral regulation skills can be explicitly taught in schools and that the benefits are huge!

Significant data from 213 studies indicates that SEL programs are associated with positive results:

- Improved attitudes about self and others,
- Increased pro-social behavior,
- Lower levels of problem behaviors and emotional distress, and
- Improved academic performance (Catalano et al., 2002; Greenberg et al., 2003; Zins et al., 2004).

Instead of rushing headlong into the flame of testing and accountability, educators should be working with students to become the best they can be.

### **Student-Centered Teaching and Learning**

In order to move toward this idea of student-centered teaching and learning there are some basic assumptions that teachers should consider:

- All students have great potential.
- All students can learn well.

- Diversity is the natural state of life, and that diversity should be embraced.
- Each student is a unique learner and person.
- School should be about helping all students reach their potentials.

Teaching and learning should be centered on students, not on politicians, not on tests, not on helping the powerful remain powerful and the weak remain weak. Education should be about human freedom, the ability to make one's own choices and reach one's own goals and dreams in life.

So, how do we begin this process of being student-centered? Laurian-Fitzgerald and Fitzgerald (2019) have developed 10 elements for beginning the process of student-centered teaching and learning. In their work they have found that students are very willing to work hard, to push themselves and their instructors, and to help their colleagues do the same. The following ideas are not an exhaustive list, rather they are beginning thoughts for teachers to ponder. In our classes we have become convinced that we can develop programs and experiences with and for students that include:

1. constructivist activities,
2. metacognitive reflections,
3. student and professor partnerships,
4. collaborative/cooperative efforts,
5. authentic assessments,
6. active and on-going student engagement in the work to learn,
7. explicit teaching of important skills,
8. student control of at least some of their learning,
9. peer and professor/teacher feedback, and
10. learning based, to a large extent, on student effort.

This is a dynamic process, and it can be messy, but the rewards of watching students grow as we

all struggle to make it work is so inspiring to us. As one student said, "You teach with your heart, and that makes all of the effort worth it."

The goal of becoming student-centered begins with a commitment on the part of teachers to change how and what we teach. It begins with a first tiny step. Anything worthwhile, takes a great deal of time and effort, and it goes one step at a time. A good place to begin might be in the setting of the classroom environment (for example, Maslow (1970; 1971) and Glasser (1998) have both developed ideas about the basic needs of human beings. Fitzgerald and Laurian (2013) have added to those ideas to help set a classroom that is safe emotionally and physically, caring, joyful, and empowering, that embraces all people, and where students do meaningful work with their peers and individually. Maslow (1971) and Duckworth (2016) also discuss how students who do for others grow in their passions and in their personhood—they become more positive and cooperative people.

Laurian-Fitzgerald, Popa, and Fitzgerald (2015) also have developed a philosophical overview for student-centered teaching and learning. If we are becoming more successful in our attempts to be student-centered, we will see more students who:

1. become successful learners.
2. are actively engaged in their learning.
3. make as many choices as possible in their learning.
4. work positively and regularly with other students in a variety of ways.
5. are encouraged to be curious.
6. do meaningful work most of the time they are in school.
7. work on complex projects both individually and in teams.
8. become independent workers, as well as good teammates.
9. integrate the arts as an important part of their learning experiences.
10. set goals for their own learning.

11. are supported to take intelligent risks in their learning.
12. understand that learning depends on great strategic efforts.
13. understand their place in the world.
14. develop fair-mindedness, empathy, and understanding in their work with and about other people.
15. are supported in their efforts socially and academically by their peers and by their teacher.
16. work in a positive and supportive ways with their colleagues.

This is the beginning of the process. It will take plenty of work. There will be missteps and frustrations, but there will also be huge successes. Many teachers have already begun this process, so we are not alone. Together one classroom at a time, we will make a huge difference for our students. It is time for students and teachers to take back education for all of those people who think they know better than we do. We are educators, that is who we are, and we need together to make schooling what it should be—a place where all students find success and create a path for successful lives after graduation.

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**INVISIBLE LINES, INVISIBLE LIVES; EDUCATION OF AFGHAN MIGRANT CHILDREN AND THEIR FUTURE WITHIN IRAN'S BORDER**

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**Abstract**

During the Soviet Union occupation of Afghanistan, the Taliban insurgency within this country's borders, and a subsequent war with the USA, people inhabiting this land were forced to leave their country to cross the neighbouring borders with Islamic Republic of Iran. Exploring their right place in Iran's society resulted in residency of approximately 3.000.000 of them, which has yielded both constructive and at the same time disturbing economic and educational experiences for both nations. Cultural similarities and deviations, in some cases mutual language, and common religion have been presented as the underlying reasons for integration opportunities and also challenges. This study explains how the trends for delivering education to Afghans in Iran have fluctuated so far, yet been remarkably more efficient than their departure point. The educational future of the second, third, and even fourth generation of Afghans in Iran has become a big question with regard to economic status and political relations of the two countries. What this study manifests is the need to recognize and fill the gaps in the education of Afghans. This goal will be achieved through a review of human rights opposing geographical determinism, illiteracy, and mistaking prejudice and excessive behaviours in the host country.

**Keywords:** Afghans in Iran, ethnic refugees, identity conflict, future generations, school integration

**Discipline:** sociology

**Absztrakt**

*LÁTHATATLAN VONALAK, LÁTHATATLAN ÉLETEK; AZ AFGÁN MIGRÁNS GYEREKEK OKTATÁSA ÉS JÖVŐJE AZ IRÁNI HATÁROKON BELÜL*

A Szovjetunió Afganisztán-megszállása, az ország határain belüli tálib felkelés és az azt követő USA-val folytatott háború eredményeként az e földön lakó emberek kénytelenek voltak elhagyni országukat, átlépve az Iráni Iszlám Köztársasággal szomszédos határokat. Mindez az iráni társadalomban körülbelül 3.000.000

ember tartózkodását eredményezte ami konstruktív, ugyanakkor zavaró gazdasági és oktatási tapasztalatokat hozott mindkét nemzet számára. A kulturális hasonlóságok és eltérések, egyes esetekben a kölcsönös nyelv és a közös vallás az integrációs lehetőségek és kihívások mögöttes okaként lettek prezentálva. Jelen tanulmány elmagyarázza, hogy hogyan ingadoztak eddig az iráni afgánok oktatási tendenciái, mégis kiemelkedően hatékonyabbak voltak a kiindulási pontjuknál. Az iráni afgánok második, harmadik sőt negyedik generációjának oktatási jövője nagy kérdéssé vált a két ország gazdasági helyzete és politikai kapcsolatai tekintetében. A tanulmány célja annak bemutatása, hogy fel kell ismerni és ki kell egészíteni az afgán oktatás hiányosságait. A cél elérése a földrajzi determinizmussal szemben álló emberi jogok, az írástudatlanság, az előítéletek és a túlzó viselkedések a fogadó országon belüli áttekintésének összetévesztésén keresztül fog megtörténni.

**Kulcsszavak:** afgánok Iránban, etnikai menekültek, identitáskonfliktusok, jövő generációk, iskolai integráció

**Diszciplína:** szociológia

### Historical background

The choice of living space has not always seemed available, partly due to administrative regulations and partly due to lack of insight on behalf of the individual. The latter case had been one of the very first aspects of the primary human decision-making faculty. It means that the right to property ownership at times had blocked the view toward the choice of examining other available places. Nonetheless, the nature of the sense of safety justifies permanent settlement with an exclusive full right of access.

This study portrays how the younger generation of people labeled as Afghan immigrants/refugees receive their share of basic human needs, specifically education and scientific progress in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and what the obstacles are on their journey of life, crossing geographical borders.

A large number of Afghans were forced to cross the borders surrounding their country (see Graph 1) as a result of England and the Soviet Union's geopolitical interest in the territory labeled as Afghanistan, mostly in 1979. As expected from all

types of power plays, interests of the ordinary people and children are ignored, education specifically, in favour of ethnic, racial, cultural, and ideological frameworks (Mossalanejad, 2009, p. 170). The generally poor literacy status of the Afghans inside their country not only experienced no positive growth as a result of the Soviet Union's occupancy, but it also exacerbated. The reason was a following domestic rise of the extremist Taliban force in 1996 and the U.S. attack in 2001. The territory had enjoyed only a not so long independent history from after the Second World War (Yasna, 2019, p. 183). What is obvious is that during all these conflicts overruling power, no resources were left for the management of the basic needs of the people. Negligence towards education started along with the new system and governance. As Pashtun became the official language, school textbooks became Pashtun without considering the high rate of dropouts because of the replacement with a language that the majority didn't know and couldn't understand and even there weren't enough teachers to teach it (Yasna, 2019, p. 201). After the 1990s, with the

doors open at Iranian borders, the opportunity for seeking security across the borders blocked any policy consideration for handling the issue within that nation. The international human right supports required the need for health and education of these people to be answered in the host country which again created the motivation for immigration rather than a constructive solution inside Afghanistan, let alone the development of literacy. Consequently, as time passed, generations came after generation without any long-term solution possibilities for recovering the roots of a group of people with a distinctive branch of culture and tradition. Most attention has been focused on facilitating integration by not placing the newcomers in sanction or shelter, but by permitting them to choose their place of residence, on behalf of various sources such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Efforts are made in form of organizing bilateral and tripartite correspondence with close and far away states remarkably Australia and Germany, along with several NGOs and civil society organizations (Marchand, 2014, p. 245).

Cultural, religious, and historical closeness, as well as a common language among the Iranian and the majority of Afghan migrants, have been the basis for humanitarian approaches toward the betterment of a group of people stuck in an unintentional unpleasant situation. Case studies in major Afghan settlements located in larger cities of Iran show that Afghans prefer Iran despite all integration issues and generally do not intend to join repatriation programs of any kind (Net5, Net3). Statistics will be presented regarding the voluntary repatriation percentage as well as the tendency not to return to Afghanistan. Despite this fact, the future anticipated for Afghans in Iran, even the documented individuals, is not permanent by any means, let alone granting Iranian citizenship

even after more than 20 years of stay or being born in Iran (Squire, 2000, p. 7).

Better access to education is a major pull factor in Iran, so integration and repatriation strategies have been put forth with different intentions targeting the reservation of the Afghan traditional cultural authenticity to encourage these peoples' voluntary return (as Afghanistan has been declared safe in this regard). For example among the first steps taken to accelerate Afghan return to their country, is included a ban on the education of Afghan children after several years of equal right of accessing schools as the Iranian kids; such moves have been taken along with more serious measures like forced deportation of undocumented Afghans, which in itself denotes the potency of educational motivations on migrant groups. Many parallel programs through UNHCR and organizations with similar intentions assisted 918,263 Afghans involuntarily return home (Azizi, Hosseini, and Basavaraju, 2017, p. 78) or helped their smoother integration if decided upon permanent stay. In this study, the goal is to present a discussion advocating Afghans' right to either stay in Iran or return to Afghanistan as humans, regardless of either choice, with the help of schooling.

In this study, the author tries to use mostly the findings and understandings of researchers who are Afghan or Muslim, Middle Eastern, or those who speak the same languages as Afghans to examine their culture, customs, and socio-cultural codes. The foreigner view may leave some hard-to-reach concealed aspects out of the consideration zone, while those might (and most probably will) seriously contribute to tactful decision making.

The other part of this paper's aim will be practical by again keeping in mind that the steps taken so far have mainly focused on recurrent issues such as facilitating integration in both social and educational settings. These include giving Afghan children equal chances and quality of education as the Iranian kids, providing decent

documents and proper identity recognition facilities, and exploring the best approaches to healthier repatriation whether in a voluntary or forced manner. Nonetheless, it is intended in this article to manifest the need for recognition of the significance of humanity on the individual scale on an *international level* and the necessity of including lessons in this regard while designing school books and regulating policies for offering opportunities for education to the younger generation that is going to be the future inhabitants of society. In the case of migrants, specifically, Afghan people in Iran where they share similar cultural, historical, social traditions and the ground is suitable for a level of integration that is constructive for both nations, schooling must orbit around the fact that human being is originally free and supposed to help fellows. Based on Milton Gordon's categorization, it can be said that the extent of assimilation practiced and experienced by Afghans in Iran falls in various categories, given the fact that Gordon's examination of Western communities will not necessarily match the path Eastern ones go through during their assimilation process (1964). A more detailed introduction on Afghan ethnicities in Iran will be given in the *Ethnicities* section of this paper.

Also, generally, it can be expected that Afghan ethnicities respond differently to the Iranian environment; based on being *Hazara*, *Pashtun*, *Tajik*, *Baluch*, ... (where on the spectrum of background closeness to the Iranian society), each group will be absorbed differently and to a different extent. For example, since the *Pashtun* share similar facial complexion, if their second and third generation can acquire language skills and articulate Persian accent, their level of *Behaviour receptional assimilation* in educational settings and chances for *Civic assimilation* are higher, followed by a more positive outlook toward their future in Iranian society, while a *Hazara* cannot be hopeful in that respect because, despite even the closest

articulation of the language, their facial features will be distinguishing. It should be noted that such a hypothesis can take place in real life if laws in effect for the occupation of Afghans, and the *Pashtun* prejudice against acculturation, in general, were in favour of the potential.

With the retrospective view toward the shared history of the two nations, the assimilation state of newer generations of Afghans in Iran's society by Gordonian words may be expressed in this way: *Acculturation* and identity formation can be seen at play with the slightest effort while the first generation preserves more of its communication codes which keeps them inside the circle of compatriots. Moreover, due to a similar religion in the host society, the first and later generations show similar religious tendencies, which along with the previous statement, causes smoother *Structural assimilation* for the second and the later generations. Because of schooling of second and later generation of Afghans as a means of socialization of migrants with the Iranians, these people are less attached to their origin in comparison with the first generation arriving to the country as adults with the experience of living in Afghanistan's society.

#### **Afghan cultural background and lifestyle**

Ancient Persia consisted of present Iran, present Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and several other countries that now form the complex neighbourhood including present Iran and Afghanistan. In the realm of human sciences, the region is known for the Culture of Persia which consisted of various elements such as language, religion, culture, mythology, and holidays or events that are common among all the involved countries mentioned above (Yasna, 2019, p. 182). *Harat* city of the present day in Afghanistan has formerly been a province of Iran up to more than 150 years ago (1856) and at those times called *Kborasan*. The present bordering province in the North East of

Iran adjacent to present Afghanistan has the same name (Yasna, 2019, p. 195). Even before the time of separation, the leaders were from among *Pashtun* people who are one of the ethnicities constructing the Afghan community along with the *Tajik*, *Hazara*, *Baluch*, and a few others.

As the results of a series of questioners show, the conflict between the two most intensely rival Afghanistan ethnicities, Pashtun and Hazara, is so broad that a suffering migrant youth from the latter group would feel happy if it is known that the Pashtun are equally suffering the migration challenges, because the experience counts as the reprisal for all the torture the Hazara ethnicity had gone through back in their common country; as the researcher reports, “the voice coming out of the 25 years old Hazara youth’s throat, trembles with a sense of revenge against the oppression resulting from ethnocentrism” (Yahyaie and Kia, p. 155). Even literature-wise, “the ideal personality type in Afghanistan is the warrior-poet: brave in battle, eloquent at the village council” (Hatch, 2002, p. 979).

Science and knowledge had nothing to do with the formation of this hierarchy as the Pashtun have not been any more literate than the Hazara; Afghanistan is known for illiteracy, the origin of terrorism and its expansion, and the source of tobacco production (Mossalanejad, 2009, p. 171). By 2020, a forty five-fold increase in the production of narcotic products has been reported. In the traditional social sphere, hardly can anything equal the passion for poetry; even women literary figures have at times established a name for themselves through literary practices with intentions other than mere prosing (Hatch, 2002, p. 979). On the other hand, in 1998, the illiteracy rate in this country was estimated as high as 90 per cent (Yahyaie, Kia, p. 142).

Regarding the scope of this paper, purposeful displacement of household and settlements is not a novel trend to be introduced to Afghan history in

the last few decades; it has been a habitual strategy due to reasons such as natural disasters for which from centuries ago the Islamic Republic of Iran have been a decent alternative (Marchand, 2014, p. 29). Combined with the profound significance of family institution among the Afghans, group migration has become a common feature observed among the members of Afghan settlements. The high number of kids is a consequent of customs and cultural codes that can save parents’ dignity and will not be abandoned for almost any particular reason. This factor leads to another main feature of the Afghan community, which is the prevalence of kids participating in the labour market (Net5). This outcome is representative of a certain fact regarding the Afghan lifestyle; engagement in low paid manual work complies with the environmental and social aspects of lifestyle in Afghanistan. A technologically underdeveloped state with people mainly working on fields on mountainous lands, where having the equipment to bring cooking fire in a separate interior space called the kitchen, and at times access to drinking water and latrine is a privilege.

### **Ethnicities**

Despite Afghanistan’s poor economy, its people have a “profound belief in the humanitarian, egalitarian teachings of Islam” and at the same time rarely boast about their purity of deeds, as correspondingly find downright fault with fanaticism (Hatch, 2002, p. 980). Obviously, the existence of an ethic doctrine in a society’s code does not guarantee the practice, and Afghans are a bold example of representing the foible; ethnic rivalry especially between Pashtun and Tajik versus Hazara people, and the rebellion of a fanatic group such as Taliban against one’s own nation is a realization of the unfortunate truth.

Ethnically, Afghans fall into several categories based on oriental studies. The majority of the

population are the Pashtun who speak the language also called Pashtun. In Iran, the second most number of Afghans are Hazara (although not more than the Persian speaking Tajik in Afghanistan) who speak *Dari*, a slightly different version of the modern Persian and a very important reason for the cultural ties between these people and the Iranian as former citizens of the same country (Yahyaie, Kia 141).

A very bold point of divergence between the two main Afghan ethnicities lies within their religious, traditional, and geographical background among all. Other ethnicities are more or less either recognized with the Pashtun or the Hazara since the more geographically a settlement close to Iran, that ethnicity accords with the Hazara and the Iranian culture, like the Baluch, as in the most Eastern provinces of Iran, people are the Iranian Baluch. The opposite is true about the ethnicities residing in the centre or East of Afghanistan, further away from Iran, where the people feel less attached to the Persian culture or even to the other Afghan ethnicities. Such a physical and traditional remoteness is exacerbated by the fact that the majority of Pashtun and Tajik are *Sunni* Muslims but the Hazara are *Shi'eb*. Another contributing factor can be the stronger sense of nationalism among the Pashtuns as a self-identification source rather than their religion (Jawad, 1992). These have been (among others probably) the sources of conflict inside this country's borders, since the former groups have always exhibited prejudice and superiority over the latter, as it has been the case in their ruling history as well (most Afghan leaders are from among the Pashtun and the Tajik).

### **Education tradition**

Parallel to the traditional and elementary customs prevailing in Afghanistan especially during the turbulences of the last forty years, evolution of the education in its modern form has experienced

major ups and downs, still not maturing even as developing countries with medium level education. Back in the history of education in Afghanistan, despite the public interest in literacy, the strongly religious customs had limited education to small classes taught by religious preachers focusing on primary literacy and Islamic knowledge. Obviously, the dominant patriarchy weaved into all levels of social institutions would not allow for girls to participate. Historically even some Afghan leaders were dethroned for such *Takfir* (acts harshly against Islamic doctrines). Many regarded these changes with disapproval and finally, in 1929, expressed their displeasure by expelling King Amanullah (1919–29) (Hatch, 2002, p. 981).

Closer to the more modern governmental system prior to the Soviet occupation and the consequent wars, the development of the educational system was experiencing a flourishing trend in a way that both boys and girls were engaged in not only primary but secondary and tertiary education, building on foreign models of ruling and authorizing the nation. In the case of this improvement also the lack of comprehensive policies in a way to benefit the whole country was present since as Hatch writes, all achievement was limited to the capital regions where the elite were settled, leaving all other regions and their people's share "untouched" (2002, p. 981). The evolution had been moving in such a positive direction that even some Afghan candidates were funded to study in Italian, French, and German universities. But similar to previous and also later practices, the achievements were not persisting, for with the start of the occupation and consequent conflicts, specifically with the dominance of conservative Taliban ruling, the whole education system retreated to its most primitive state, depriving girls of leaving the domestic sphere and limiting taught subjects to restricted religious ones.

During all mentioned periods the quality and distribution of the chances offered to pursuers of

literacy and science were focally concentrated in the few main cities; the vast remaining expanse of the country did not enjoy even the basic requirements of living. Access to permanent shelter, food, drinking water, or latrine as the minimum household prerequisite was and still in settlements not so far away from towns is minimal, let alone acquiring literacy.

Moreover, literacy and education have rarely been a priority in the history of policymaking in this culture. When the more naturally warrior Pashtun reached over the throne and attempted to establish their state with Pashtun as the official language and obviously Pashtun schooling textbooks, did not prosper to manage the affairs due to a lack of decent Pashtun knowledge among the officials and an insufficient number of teachers, leaving the dream to the reality that Dari is still the official language of the nation. This very fact once more proves that how politics of power in Afghanistan has generally neglected education and schooling, and how the literacy of the people would come as a low priority. Figures reveal that an estimated 75 percent of the Afghans still in 2018 follow the general governmental strategy on the smaller scale of their families by providing the household with minimum living requirements to the cost of taking kids out of school to join the workforce; only if kids work along with the parents, the family can gain enough for one meal a day (Naseh. Potocky, Stuart, and Pezeshk, 2018, p. 9)

### **History in Iran: Receiving**

The overall rule for allowing Afghan refugees residency in Iran can be categorized under two phases of *open borders* prior to 1995 and *closed border* after that year's tripartite along with the Afghanistan government and the United Nation's High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Generally, the most important reasons for the

migration of refugees and regular migrants to Iran instead of other countries in the last decades has been stated as "war and insecurity in Afghanistan", "family's decision to move to Iran", and "religious, cultural, and linguistic similarities" (Jauhiainen, Eyvazlu, and Salavati, 2020, p. 38).

Upon the 1979 invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union, nearly one year before the outbreak of the war with Iraq in Iran, Afghans crossed the Iran-Afghanistan borders. They arrived mainly from Eastern provinces in Afghanistan to Khorasan Province and from its South to Sistan and Baluchestan province in Iran. This first wave of the involuntary migraters successfully crossed the borders of their host country for the mere reason of holding an Afghan identity at the borders based on sharing the same religion and was labeled as religious "refugees" or "mohajereen" in Persian, receiving "blue card" documents (Naseh et al. 2018, p. 1, Marchand, 2014, p. 30).

This policy was called *prima facie* which allowed Afghans as Muslim brothers to seek security within the territory of the newly established Islamic Republic of Iran. Obviously enough, many Afghans joined the front line of the holy defence against Iraq at that time. There is evidence that even a number of Afghan youth had left their country not as a result of the Soviet occupation, but with the intention of fighting for Iran as the land to which they considered themselves both culturally and religiously belonging (Net2).

This first generation of the contemporary Afghan residing in Iran, at that time enjoyed equal rights of education, healthcare, birth registration, access to court, and other social services as the Iranian citizens based on the "blue card" type document issued for them which would allow for unlimited residence. Technically a refugee status means receiving political security until the country of origin is back to safety. A common history, language, and most importantly religion was the reason that Afghans were not housed in shelters

but resided in the center of cities and many inhibited the margins (Khairi, Rahimi, 2018, p. 148). Larger and more developed towns became the host to the majority of Afghan villagers due to the availability of more construction job vacancies as a result of a higher population. Moreover, those immigrants who did not hold any legal work permit, would secretly and unanimously participate in low paid activities easier among the crowd (Jamshidiha, Anbari, 2004, p. 50).

The second wave of mass migration from Afghanistan to Iran happened 16 years after the Soviet entanglement, in 1995 and after the victory of the *mujahedeen* in 1992, contrary to the expectations for peace; Afghanistan became the target of Taliban uprising from inside the nation for a dominant power (Marchand, 2014, p. 31). These people crossed the Iranian borderlines through the same provinces as before, joining the second generation of Afghans who were now born in Iran. By the next year, in 1996 Afghans in their country could hardly bear the rocketing influence of Strict Taliban ruling. However, the policies in Iran had deteriorated the extent of services offered to the Afghans; no more education or healthcare facility. This was partly due to the reason that from 1993, the Islamic Republic of Iran, along with the Afghanistan government and UNHCR agreed upon policies to facilitate Afghan repatriation with a focus on monitoring their living status in Afghanistan; the migrants arriving after 1993 were no more considered as refugees, but literally, asylum seekers since the documents they were handed, retitled them as “panahandegan” and not “mohajereen” anymore (ibid). These documents were officially temporary and remained the same regarding the permitted length of stay even after the 1998 occupation of Mazarsharif by the Taliban, if at all granted (Squire, 2000, p. 7). The number of those Afghans forcefully returned on the basis of holding no registered identity document in the years 1998-99 reached 190.000 (Hugo, Abbasi-

Shavazi, and Sadeghi, 2012, p. 268, Marchand, 2014, p. 32).

Although strategies moved toward less harsh decisions regarding the education of migrant Afghan kids, restrictions on issuing documents especially with the purpose of long-term residence continued. By early 2000, more developed digital facilities were installed at borders for gathering identification information for the aim of processing the residence permit applications which if successful (in half of the cases) would result in temporary documents in need of extension every 6 months (Squire, 2000, p. 7). Until the end of the same year, respectively 130.000 Afghans had repatriated and 80.000 were issued with temporary refugee status to stay in Iran (Azizi et al., 2017, p. 74). Following the general free choice of residence location granted to Afghans in Iran, by this time, as Squire reported, 95 percent of them had lived in urban and rural parts of the country under unsatisfactory occupation circumstances as they were not allowed to be employed in their host country, limiting their income resource alternatives to an illegal, secret, low paid jobs (2000, p. 5).

The third wave of Afghan mass migration occurred upon the 2001 USA attack on their country. With regard to the previously in practice closed borders policy on the side of Iran, migrants following this phase were either illegal, or along with all the previously residences already in Iran, granted short residence permits that had to be renewed every three months up to four times (Abbasi-Shavazi, Glazebrook, Jamshidiha, Mahmoudian, and Sadeghi, 2008, p. 6). Despite the fact that this country was struggling with another ongoing war, the next year, another program was launched mainly left to UNHCR for implementation, to aid the voluntary return of Afghans not only from Iran, also from Pakistan (Lumpp, Shimosawa, and Stromberg, 2004, p. 149).

The number of arriving population during each phase must be obtained considering the number of

repatriated from among the migrants of the previous phase which is not a straightforward calculation. The reason is that waves of migration from Afghanistan to Iran did not happen at once; Afghans would and still do cross the Iranian borders on a daily basis, with regard to the fact that some also return every day. For instance, regarding the second wave, according to UNHCR based on the report by the US Committee for Refugees, at that time some 1.4 million Afghans “lived” in Iran (Net8). The terminology used in the case of Afghan migrants to a country with shared borders is explanatory. It means that the figures are subject to constant yearly, monthly, and even daily changes. Also, the only resource for publishing the consensus is the government of Iran which is released every five years. It is obvious that with the maximum yearly change of identification document policies and types (in some cases every three months), many will remain unreached both in terms of their arrival or departure and in terms of the overall fluctuating number.

With an account of the fact that Afghanistan was not announced safe until after 2014, it is obvious that a great number lost their legal status, and many did not bother applying for it due to troublesome and costly practices. The ineffectuality of that decision for legalizing migrants’ state or facilitating monitoring the foreigner population is in part a result of the mere fact that even at present, after 7 more years, except for four main capital cities, the rest of this country is still not inhabitable neither in terms of security nor basic living infrastructure. The fact is notable since the bulk of the Afghans have to reside in the improper regions upon return.

Iran is the first host country in the world to embrace the highest number of refugees in its urban parts; 951,142 documented Afghan refugees live in this country, and around 97% of them live in urban and semi-urban areas (European Commission, 2021, Naseh et al., 2018, p. 3). They are occupied with non-governmental hard manual

labour, receive low wages, and consequently enjoy low social status because better jobs are initially for the Iranian identity, and even if they own the capital to run their own business, they are not allowed to (Abbasi-Shavazi et al. 2008. p. 27). As Jauhiainen et al. report, in the last five years prior to 2020, almost no Afghan refugees came to Iran compared to the fourth generation who are all born in this country (2020, p. 35).

Among the present Afghan residents in Iran, there is the second generation a great number of whom were born there. The third generation born to the second generation are all born in Iran and the fourth generation already lives in this country (Jauhiainen et al., 2020, p. 37). Issuing Iranian citizenship is not possible for any generation of Afghans except for those who are born to Iranian mothers, and those who hold specific talents (Jauhiainen et al., 2020, p. 32). However, the obvious matter of fact is that overall Iran has put the best possible on the tray, considering her own state as just developing, and the number of refugees is disproportionate compared to any other country in the world.

### **Education in Iran**

Ministry of Education and Training (MET) is the authoritative body for schooling at primary, guidance, and secondary levels. All these levels are to be passed prior to university education. All schooling is announced to be free but in practice, parents are asked and required to pay amounts for registering their children or to be able to obtain their end of the year reports. According to Squire in 2000, only five years of primary school are mandatory and there is a serious need for parental assistance in more than two hours long daily homework (2000, p. 10). Regarding the education of Afghan refugee children, Iran is a signatory to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (in 1975). The 1951 Convention, Article 22, states that “...States -shall accord to refugees

the same treatment as is accorded to- nationals with respect to elementary education” (Squire, 2000, p. 7). Based on a study in 1992, BAFIA (the bureau for aliens and foreign immigrant affairs) reported that nearly 654,000 of the Afghan refugees in Iran had access to educational services at all levels, and according to MET-UNICEF report in 1999, more than ninety thousand (4%) students were participating in primary school classes (Squire, 2000, p. 10). Although, “of those who returned from Iran with UNHCR’s help during the year 2002, 70 percent said they had no education” (Net4). Previously in 2000 Squire had identified that many families need children to work in order to contribute to the family income, in view of increasing restrictions on Afghan's employment, so they have to take children out of school (2000, p. 25).

As early as 1983, with the first wave of mass migration of Afghans to bordering provinces of Iran specifically Mashhad, the very first self-regulated Afghan schools with tacit notice of MET and BAFIA in the main settlements such as *Golshahr* to serve the group of students who had been kept out of school as a result of a ban on enrolling undocumented Afghan children in state-run schools (Hugo et al., 2012, p. 268). Although there is evidence that even until a decade later and up to 1996, Afghan undocumented children were at the mercy of school principals, so able to attend government-run schools (Squire, 2000, p. 8). Implications of Iranians’ hospitality toward Afghans which contributed to their easier integration are multitudinous. Still, the fact prevails that the self-regulated schools are run with minimum facilities and materials. They hardly try to keep up with the Iranian schedule and education system with no content available for Afghan students relevant to neither Pashtun language nor history and geography of Afghanistan; all Afghan kids are offered to share with their Iranian peers as members of the same society, is some basic

information in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade on the four main cities (Kabul the capital, Herat, Kandahar, and Mazarsharif), agriculture as the main occupation, names of some lakes, mountains, and rivers, and their economy orbiting around sheep rearing and textile production (Squire, 2000, p. 10).

Restrictions put on school registration policies grew tighter in 1998-9 and limited allowance for enrolment of Afghan migrant children in schools out of their identity registration region. Moreover, in larger cities with larger populations of Afghans, they were restricted only to schools located in settlements designated for Afghans (Squire, 2000, p. 8). However, the figures for Afghan children attending upper levels of guidance and secondary school saw an increase of 500 more students between 1994 and 1999, creating a total of 35.000 in a constant manner of increase, with a higher dropout rate for boys which demonstrates that perhaps the rise in numbers was mostly due to more engagement of girls. Obviously, these numbers do not count for all Afghan kids in Iran (estimated by that time to be 500.000 aged 6-15), but the percentage in total was as low as 6% and 11% for graduates from high (Secondary) school and receivers of vocational qualification; figures for kids enrolled in governmental primary schools were the highest, representing more than 100.000 (Squire, 2020, p. 5 and 12).

Children who were not in formal schools, either attend the schools run by Iran’s government with Iranian staff and the help of UNHCR in the refugee camps located at Eastern provinces, or LMO classes offered at five primary levels of primary school (respectively 3000 and 18000 students by 2000) (Squire, 2000, p. 13). The year 2000 was a turning point for Afghan schools because prior to the beginning of the school year, they received a letter ordering not to open for the coming year; Once again state strategies took over the priority of schooling and accelerating repatriation targeted the education of children.

With the unfortunate policy, during the next years, the informal system of Afghan schools witnessed a growth in the number of unofficial, unregistered schools in form of old buildings and houses serving Afghan kids covertly that if discovered, would be shut down (Net6).

In 2015, the current supreme leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran officially announced an order emphasizing the obligation of enrolment of all Afghan kids, be legally or illegally resident in the country in public state-run-schools. The next year, 48.000 students holding status quo experienced school registration and the numbers reached 400.000 by 2018 (Net8). With this major modification, however, the tradition of informal schooling did not vanish, and along with exacerbating the financial status of Afghans in Iran's suffering economy, Civil activists together with child rights experts in 2012 estimated the number of out of school Afghan children in Iran at 400,000 or 500,000 as of the German broadcasting organization Deutsche Welle in 2017 published. This news agency focusing on the migrant Afghans in Iran also adds that during recent years, figures for out-of-school Afghan kids rose to almost 1 million, but those that welcome the chance of attending public schools can receive their certificates from Afghan consulates or embassy (Net6).

Overall, narratives convey the truth that in terms of migrant education in Iran, neither numbers nor promises are to be trusted. As results of studies conducted in the 2000s revealed, the results drawn out of studies orbiting the education of Afghan kids in Iran have been paradoxical, as the most recent ones still come to similar ends. Decisions to terminate studies are mainly based on financial difficulties and lack of prerequisite ID and residential documents. Comparably, the good attitudes of Iranian teachers and classmates are stated as pull factors and motivations for acquiring

higher qualifications in an attempt to gain a more recognized social status (Abbasi-Shavazi et al., 2008, p. 20). As UNHCR statistics for 2019 demonstrate, 480.000 Afghan children are receiving education through various policies in Iran, 130.000 of whom are undocumented and 60.000 newly enrolled in that school year (Net1).

Immigrant children in Iran are offered education by programs offered through governmental, international, private, charity-based, and many other different means. Apart from UNESCO, UNHCR, BAFIA, MET, and the two Islamic republics of Iran and Afghanistan (the assistance of which is required more than its present extent, the center for providing cultural and educational support for refugee Afghan children in Iran, *Khaneye Koodakane Afghanistan* or *Afghanistan Children's Home* and KCIS are actively participating in activities to advocate and implement a more qualified schooling experience for Afghan children, side by side of many national and international NGOs. *Khaneye Koodakane Afghanistan* has started its activity in the Fall of 2004 by designing and publishing extracurricular material such as holiday workbooks, magazines, cultural orientation and art workshops for students and trainings for teachers, etc. and has also published and distributed the social sciences school subject textbook "Bazgasht" ("Return") among non-state independent Afghan school in Iran. This organization's ultimate goal is to help raise a future generation of citizens who can be anti-racism advocates of peaceful humanitarian policies. *Keep Children In School*, an organization based in CA, United States, and its operational arm, AYDM (Anjoman e Yaran e Danesh va Mehr) in Iran, carefully identifies and selects children in need, including Afghans, who show academic promise. KCIS is then responsible for matching these children with sponsors, who become their guardian angels supporting them through their educational journey.

**Argument**

There is a contradiction concerning the integration of Afghans in Iran; the conflict that the second and third generations want to be considered as rightful immigrants but the environment does not let them deny that they are refugees in Iran. Despite the frequency of opportunities offered to these guests for providing them with the requirements of a decent life such as education, health care, etc., a lack of attention paid to their socio-psychological state has always prevailed. In this manner, these people have never been able to envision a future in Iran which has left a sense of uncertainty present in their everyday lives. A weak attendance on behalf of the suffering Afghan authority regarding their own people has been a major factor. Also, the deteriorating economy in Iran as a country engaged in international disputes has added to the limitation of the immigrant labour force absorbance capacity; since Afghan immigrants mostly arrive from a non-official employment background, they had the chance to be occupied in the majority of vacancies on the job market.

Inside their country, too, those Afghans willing to fight, such as the prejudiced Pashtun would engage in defending, and anyone not interested would move to Iran into a more convenient culture. Now what remains as the technical void is the mission of the Afghan who is dragged out of its original place to somewhere they did not have a say in choosing, but humanitarian-wise speaking, the same trend should be available, at least through schooling possibilities; this means that education about both Afghan and Persian culture should be offered, only with no bias and through fully optional results, so that a knowledge of individual will as the most important driving factor in social conduct is internalized.

The paradox is mostly present in the situation of the students (the second and third generation): complying with the requirements of being an

immigrant but undeniable refugee identity as a result of incapability for picturing the possibilities for return to the homeland. The contents that Afghan children receive in Iranian schools are scientifically decent to convey the general knowledge a student shall receive in the common fields of biology, mathematics, literature, geography, and even ethnic history (only with the intention of facilitating integration). But the gap to be addressed rests on the body of social education targeting an afflicted group. The permits with rights equal to Iranian citizens resulted in the resumption of the customary Afghan life style in a host country with a modernized lifestyle despite the traditional cultural similarities. Hatch perfectly observes that how potential Afghan culture is to preserve values, and how its people strongly play the roles indoctrinated in them, although challenged in a diverse environment in Iran (2002, p. 985). Outcomes are outbursts in the form of experiencing racism, integration difficulty in school, society, and workplace, a problematic system of household management in a larger incompatible economy, and finally an unreachable prosperous future. All these factors then enter an unending cycle where each becomes the cause to the other, creating an entanglement that could be prevented by well-timed education. Now after four decades past the co-habitation of Afghans and the Iranian society, the second generation of Afghans, who arrived as children or were born in Iran, could be the most valuable resource for implementation of a positive integration knowledge. If in a consideration of long-term residence of these immigrants had penetrated school material design for at last the second generation of Afghans in Iran, their status and also their issue of integration would have been handled with much less difficulty and much more tolerance.

With the current laws in practice in Iran as the agreement among all responsive partners, even they can be considered asylum seekers who have to

struggle to prove themselves as immigrants. The reality is that they are no more refugees and their status has changed to asylum seekers whose sense of being a human with rights does not let them see themselves other than immigrants at the lowest. In some cases, they would prefer Iranian citizenship based on the sense of otherness many of them have experienced while on trips back to Afghanistan. Obviously one of the quintessential means for transmission of socio-cultural doctrines is schooling which could be the tool for the implementation of logical decision making and human rights crisis management.

To the second generation Afghan migrants in Iran, it may seem too late to initiate long term strategies, now that they are in need of a source of income in Iran, are in intense competition with the Iranian workforce, and see no way back to Afghanistan due to war or lack of any background to return to. This is why the gap is widening due to a lack of consideration regarding international, comprehensive solutions that target the whole human (i.e. all generations) arena case of involuntarily displaced people. Moreover, any step taken in this regard needs to be up to date since as previous studies show, each generation exhibits different capacities and expectations, as the first generation of Afghans who had gone through more physical and mental hardship from multiple wars and vagrancy, faces integration barriers with a higher tolerance but the next generation that are born in Iran, have socialized with the Iranian culture of expectations (Khairi, Rahimi, 2018, p. 148). Consequently, these newer generations may not be able to comprehend the downsides of being a migrant from another land, let alone to a destination in which they find a common language, religion, and countless customs. Representation of environmental determinism questions in their own lives may outpour their tolerance; the significance of their worldview lies in their existence as humans

and any activity directed toward supporting human rights must be capable of handling this truth.

Humanitarian activity means helping humans live a peaceful life in safety and confidence. Some third parties have opened the war on Afghans without their own will, they had to escape, and now who has the right to send or direct them where they do not want? There is also the question of the state of a country that is not capable of running a life suitable for humans within its borders; preconditions for a piece of land to be labeled as a country do not necessarily mention the quality of life experienced and propagandised in it. The reason that ties humans to a certain point on land within a defined border is the main question occupying the mind of every Afghan refugee (even the labels that are attached to their identity documents from time to time change so frequently, downgrading them to subjects rather than humans more than before).

During the first phase of mass migration to Iran, as registered Afghans holding “blue cards”, they were all able to attend Iranian state schools to receive the scientific education available to every other student in any school anywhere in the world. After several decades, still, the gap referred to is that of receiving schooling in the first place, with no space opened for social education tailored for forcefully displaced humans. Training programs executed by UNHCR look forward to another displacement by preparing Afghan youth for potentially available vacancies in the Afghanistan job market. However, these are still hypotheses to be put into practice which is pending for the field not ready and the political security not provided enough for these programs to be initiated. Students are examined as an asset but provisions have not been enough to prepare the infrastructure in Afghanistan to utilize this potential. Forcing teachers and students back over the border is useless when there is no school, textbook, stationaries, and a domain that calls for educated

people to take part in the reconstruction of, let alone creating hope of a life in a body of humans who will not have a share of equal human life experience.

The role of individual will and logic cannot be neglected either. An individual entering a different phase of life in which even the very basic prerequisites are unstably distributed is expected to ensure that the ground is proper enough for other peers or mates to join (if she/he was supposed to recommend). Bringing another individual to life through reproduction counts as recommending life on Earth as one has experienced to someone else. In the midst of two wars (with The Soviet Union and war with Iraq), Afghan refugees in Iran were transferred from turbulence to promised stability. Massive fertility rate based on traditional family structure with generally five kids along with insufficient education infrastructure and the provision to send kids to school, resulted in the formation of a large body of labour force for which there hardly were vacancies. Iran's population growth policies exacerbated the way Iranians and refugees were supposed to benefit from available resources; the government of Iran has been responsible for its own people, so Afghans were to take control of their circumstances in the first place. As even general education was not accessible for Afghan migrants before they came to Iran, there cannot be any expectation of crisis management or social science knowledge offered to them as school kids. Obviously enough, the second generation Afghan migrants were born to the same situation as their parents, but with global consensus over handing out help to these humans, the missing self-aid integration strategies concentrated on constructing a fruitful future could be juxtaposed to the existing curricula offered to migrant students in Iran to rescue the third and fourth generations, to increase chances of well-received migrant status, to create a better future for the previous generation in the host country, and to

be of help to the host country by boosting economy and science.

Some Iranian advocates of child rights twittered "Mehr Hashtag" almost a month before the 2017 school year with the aim of propagating the need for education of young Afghan migrants. "The move made the education minister promise on his Twitter page that this year, no Afghan child would be deprived of an education" (Net6). The support from the host country comes in various forms; that sense of sympathy arisen from among Iranians whose family members experienced migration and asylum in other countries, or those who find themselves in the same situation. Afghan migration could be seen as an opportunity to expand the horizons of Iranian / Persian logic on an international level, by becoming the pioneer in the science of migrant integration and migrant future progression. Receiving massive numbers of culturally close migrants could be the arena for security, economy, and international relations progression, as well as bestowing a huge number of free humans the chance to dwell lands vaster than only one country.

### **Humanitarian gaps**

To the post-modern scientific critic, it is no more a secret that the motivation behind limiting individual access to lifestyle choice is for the sake of development and it is not the case in a paradoxical manner. The explanation would be that as technological achievement could bring states superiority over other powers, the commonwealth had to be utilized to make the goals happen; there has to be a border with which the authority would be recognized, as a prerequisite for entering the competition for more power, therefore the common people's individuality has to be sacrificed for the individuality of state. Not to be excluded the fact that none of these steps are taken with the intention of the common people themselves. The

cycle of development starts where the state seeks superiority, then it requires the citizens to gain it, then the citizens reach out for it inside and outside the borders but the state limits their access, so the state's development has to remain pending, and the cycle goes on. Consequently, amenities are offered to keep the mouths closed.

What Afghans feel about Iran is important because if a suggestion is supposed to be made for them to stay or to leave, it is their own opinion that matters. Otherwise, making them stay or leave by force is a repetition of the original starting point. This is why a logical exercise of the individual will is vital. If they were asked from the beginning about what they wanted, even now they could be wherever they wanted. If their kids are not educated, they will grow up as an undecided and scattered flock who would regenerate more similar people which results in worse circumstances both for them and for Iran, leading to more hostility. Education in this context means knowledge of life, the role of the individual in society and in one's own and peers' future. Otherwise, teaching mathematics and biology does not necessarily satisfy all the problems in the community of humans.

Speaking in the broad sense is not called humanitarian. If it is supposed to benefit the human, the entity, the creature as it is worthy of a life and health and peace on an individual scale (i.e. life of each and every single human member matters), then a general attitude looking for solutions that benefit society (either the host, the origin, or the moving flock) does not count as useful. What it means is that each and every step must be in line with the individual needs of the human member of this homeless group, not what is presumed to be of good to all three parties involved. A decent illustration of the notion goes like if a decision is agreed upon because it generally is of good to the origin, the host, and the stateless people at once, it is not correct; every decision

under the name of humanitarian support must be targeted at the human individual, not its origin or host country.

Moreover, immigration (depletion of the country) results in more immigration and more alienation. It means that when a country is becoming empty of people because of bad conditions, more and more people want to escape the space temporarily and wait for the circumstances to get better to return. It's not only Afghanistan; every country's people as the majority who have no authority to make change to their own life or their country (because the power is on the top deciding for everyone and it is true about the whole world), decide to leave and hope for the others to correct the life there but as many decide the same and the remaining cannot do anything, the troubled countries become less and less crowded by hopeful people capable of making contributions, and that nation will not develop again. Children are the generation who did not choose at all and suffer the most. A *Double involuntary state* explains their situation well, meaning that first of all they did not choose the war, and also they did not choose to be in this world during a war or refugee life. The double involuntary state challenges also consist of the identity impediment, leading to a challenge within a challenge. This exacerbation of the problem must be taken into consideration especially in the case of those of the newer generation who were suffering a lack of identity in Iran and are now back to Afghanistan as kids and even do not belong here, and are constantly on the move as IDPs in Afghanistan too.

#### **Conclusion: educational requirements**

Everywhere in the world, war destroys and hard work and tolerance are required for a rebirth of potentials. Iran became the host for a war-fearing flock shortly before it experienced a war. The

culture of immigration in its modern sense is expected to evolve no longer than a human's average life span. With nearly 40 years past the Iran-Iraq war and the first wave of Afghan immigration to Iran, issues of development after the establishment of a new regime made the integration of Afghan immigrants no easier. While it is expected that Iran as a nation suffering from war be able to put its experiences into practice to help the Afghans, issues (mostly economic) brought about by them have not helped the progress of their integration. Occupying the market and replacing the native work labour has been one of the main causes of the slow progress of Iranian localities, which in return has not been able to offer proper educational/hygiene/administrative services to Afghans and the natives. No intention of long-term support provision is also problematic.

There is an urgent need for action on behalf of the Afghans themselves; they are the body they need for the betterment of their life situation in Iran. Contrary to the passive traditional role they have been playing to manage their integration in Iran, the solution to their challenge of being cast away was a more harmonized participation in the modernized life in Iran. Considering the downward movement of economic growth in Iran which led to less and less job opportunities for the Iranian youth, the multiplication of an excess community could be nothing other than more trouble. Also, the traditional outlook toward occupation which held the Afghan workforce in low-paid manual professions has contributed to a more difficult and less probable welcome on behalf of the host society. Therefore, intentions of seeking higher qualification and education by the first wave of Afghans along with more modern knowledge of the family institution could help avoid inhospitable policies regulated against this community. Perhaps the overlapping of the two cultures and language has made integration easier and voluntary return

more difficult. Easier integration although a positive phenomenon has become troublesome by creating the gap for some of these people on the verge of returning to their original identity, leading to an unsolvable identity crisis. This study has tried to bring about the significance of more individually focused attention along with policymaking in terms of refugee/asylum seeker people through insistence upon local authorization over decision making for each nation/culture.

### **Recommendation**

My overall suggestion is that the funding continues again in Iran or any other country that these people reside to raise knowledgeable people who can both work in the host and their country of origin upon return. Also, budgets should be spent on creating real permanent safety in the origin country to guarantee safe life for those interested in repatriation as well as creating an incentive for return in others. Forcing people back to insecure life is non-humanistic and a source of escape, lying, homelessness, abuse of subsidies, etc. If capital investment in the first place is simultaneously allocated to security and local/abroad training/education, after some time, the educated force from abroad willingly returns to a prepared bed for reconstruction. There will be no need for early forceful repatriation that leads to illegal scattering of asylum seekers which consequently requires more capital in form of handling the identification schemes, foreign organization help, and most importantly a host country economy sacrifice.

Most importantly, expert AR is needed by pedagogic anthropologists for coming to a guaranteed framework for designing preparatory school textbooks concentrated on migration wisdom and integration skills based on respecting individual will.

Graph 1 (Source: Google Maps (<https://www.google.com/maps/@32.839153,55.1046807,5.17z>) and author)



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**OPPORTUNITIES AND GOOD PRACTICES FOR STRENGTHENING  
THE INTERGENERATIONAL LINK IN CENTRAL EUROPE  
- A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

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**Abstract**

We conducted a research entitled “*Learning and exchanging good practices strengthening the social role of the family*” under project identification number EFOP-5.2.2.-17-2017-00048 “Research on good practices strengthening the social role of the family in the Carpathian Basin in the Hajdúsámson Reformed Parish and Family Pedagogy Association ”in connection with the project. With online questionnaires we try to explore answers and solutions in research that can help professionals pass them on to families as good practice. The questions are about the family programs for different generations organized by the institution and municipality as well as the functioning of reverse socialization mechanisms in the intergenerational relationship. The aim of the paper is to show some examples of good practices in multigenerational programs, which were examined in the research.

**Keywords:** generations, strengthening the intergenerational link

**Discipline:** sociology

**Absztrakt**

*GENERÁCIÓK KÖZÖTTI KAPCSOLAT MEGERŐSÍTÉSÉNEK LEHETŐSÉGEI ÉS JÓ GYAKORLATAI KÖZÉP-EURÓPÁBAN – ÖSSZEHASONLÍTÓ ELEMZÉS*

“*A család társadalmi szerepét erősítő jó gyakorlatok megismerése és cseréje*” címmel végeztünk kutatást az EFOP-5.2.2.-17-2017-00048 projekt azonosító számú „A család társadalmi szerepét erősítő jó gyakorlatok Kárpát-medencei kutatása a Hajdúsámsoni Református Egyházközség és a Családpedagógiai Egyesület együttműködésében” pályázati projekthez kapcsolódóan. Online kérdőívet készítettünk a humánszolgáltatásban dolgozó szakemberek számára. A kérdőív elsősorban generációk közti kapcsolatok

erősítését példázó jó gyakorlatok feltárását szolgálta, a családi közösségek összetartásának és erősítésének, valamint a mai családokat megismerő különféle lehetőségeknek a középpontba állításával. Célunk volt a több generációt megmozgató programokkal kapcsolatos jó gyakorlatok összegyűjtésének a felvállalása a generációkat érintő motivációk feltárásával. Jelen tanulmányunkban az ezekkel kapcsolatos eredményeinket foglaljuk össze.

**Kulcsszavak:** generációk, a generációk közötti kapcsolat erősítése

**Diszciplína:** szociológia

### Theoretical background

Over the past years, there have been several studies examining the relationship and its effectiveness between families and institution and these provide some theoretical framing for working with families in Hungary. Studies in school contexts are numerous, however, there is a paucity of research on exploring good practices that exemplify the strengthening of intergenerational relationships, focusing on the cohesion and strengthening of family communities and the various opportunities for getting to know today's families. Our goal was to undertake the collection of good practices related to multi-generational programs by exploring motivations that affect generations. Some discussion papers are available to provide examples of what might be considered as 'good practice' (Varga Nagy, 2017; 2018; 2019; 2020)

The parent's role in the child's early period of life is less of a central topic of educational policy in Hungary. It is partly because in Europe 'upbringing/care' and 'education' are considered as general social (sociological) phenomena and the less psychological. (Török, 2005) Taking the families' needs into consideration has become stronger lately. The families' inclusion into the kindergarten education materialises/happens more and more. (Korintus, 2004)

A family-friendly approach is becoming more dominant and familiar in the practice after the democratic transformation. Relationships with

families have developed in their content. The family-centred view means that behind the children there is the family, and the educational plans match not only to the children but also the families' needs and their situations. (Bakonyi, 2016)

After the democratic transformation a new kind of cooperation with parents have been realized in Hungary says Korintus (Korintus, 2004). There are excellent possibilities to spend time together and to encourage relationship between families-institution, families-families and integrate children with special needs: parents' meeting before starting the kindergarten, visiting parents at their home before starting the kindergarten to raise cooperation and partnership, adopting children at the kindergarten with the help of their parents to help their transition, meeting for parents talking about children's needs of education and care to transmit the right approach for them, parents afternoon: an activity together with parents and children's siblings. Health educational programs to raise the awareness: lectures, advisement, meal exhibition. Programs, trips together with the families, garden parties in the kindergarten (baking in outside ovens etc.)

Rákó thinks, whatever the reason may be, it is the pedagogues' responsibility to find the right tone to communicate and engage with these parents and to tap into their existing skills (Rákó, 2014). ). Pedagogues' inclusive approach must ensure that they accept and value difference (unlike the socialist approach that expected everyone to be the

same) and enable local traditions to flourish and a strong sense of belonging to develop (Varga Nagy & Molnár, 2019). Empathy plays an important role in the relationship with the parents. The individual needs of families are gradually gaining more attention and institutions have adopted a more family-friendly approach, where not only the parents but also the whole family are invited to get involved.

Parents and pedagogues together are involved in the care and education of children and the institutions' holistic approach considers the child, first and foremost, in the context of a family. Support offered to parents is more aligned with the preferences and wishes of families and parents are no longer viewed as 'outsiders' looking in, but 'insiders' taking part in the life of a kindergarten.

### **Research method**

The 30-question questionnaire was completed anonymously, where the person interviewed could not be identified under any circumstances. The data obtained were handled in accordance with data security regulations and processed for scientific conclusions in accordance with scientific ethical considerations.

### **How was the questionnaire made?**

The questionnaires were distributed online to human resource professionals. In the case of online questionnaires, the efficiency of self-completion is high, and the response efficiency was increased by sending it in a targeted way to the professionals we came in contact with during the project programs. The professionals filled in the questionnaire with a high level of responsibility. The social unit examined in the projects is the family. We try to explore answers and solutions in research that can help professionals pass them on to families as good practice. By better understanding, the mapping of

problems affecting the family and generations will also become more widespread.

### **The following topics were the focus of the questionnaire**

The questionnaire consisted of three parts. After some general information, we asked a few questions about the respondents' common family programs, and then found questions about family programs organized by their institution and municipality, as well as programs organized for generations.

- How attractive are you to the way your family members have lived, live now? We wondered if respondents would be happy to live their lives the way their parents or grandparents did, or the way their children would live.
- What of the following did you learn from your parents or grandparents? The focus on this issue is the transmission of family roles:
  - baking, cooking
  - household knowledge (cleaning, washing, ironing)
  - love of reading
  - garden care
  - sewing, embroidery
  - raising children
  - political knowledge
  - historical knowledge

For the following questions, we were interested in the functioning of reverse socialization mechanisms in the intergenerational relationship.

- What have you learned from your children?
  - mobile phone usage
  - appearance on a social site (eg Facebook)
  - email usage

- electronic administration (bank, mobile charging, etc.)
- getting to know interesting / useful websites
- dressing
- modern vocabulary
- political knowledge
- From the list below, what do you think you were the teacher to your parents, maybe your grandparents?
  - mobile phone usage
  - appearance on a social site (e.g. Facebook)
  - email usage
  - electronic administration (bank, mobile charging, etc.)
  - getting to know interesting / useful websites
  - dressing
  - modern vocabulary
  - political knowledge

*Examples of good practices in multigenerational programs* were also examined in the research.

- What joint programs does your institution organize in which several generations (eg parent-child, grandparent-child-grandchild, etc.) can participate?
- What do you experience, what are the biggest challenges in organizing multi-generational programs? Please also write about how they are trying to overcome these difficulties.
- What advice would you give to what joint programs your institution could organize for different generations?
- In addition to joint programs, what other ways and opportunities would

your institution offer to reduce generational differences?

- What advice would you give on what other programs should be organized in your municipality (eg at the municipality level or even in schools) to strengthen the relationship between children-parents and grandparents?

About two-thirds of respondents reported multi-generational workplace programs, either for employees (278 people; 63.6%) or for clients (e.g., programs involving parents and grandparents of children in educational institutions) (291 people; 66.6%). Of the 437 respondents, 365 (83.52%) shared their experiences and thoughts. For the remaining 72 textual responses, the respondent did not experience any difficulty or could not provide a definite answer to the question, or the response did not contain evaluable information.

The length of employment had a positive effect on whether the respondent wrote good practice, suggesting that those who have worked for an institution for a longer period of time have a better view of the program offerings.

In the textual answers, the respondents named several (typical) relatively well-known, frequently used methods and programs that bring together generations. In about 10 percent of the responses, we encountered elements in programs organized for clients that, in whole or in part, seemed less known, novel, and more unusual, which we named “atypical” programs. Reviewing the responses for typical and atypical intergenerational programs, we were able to identify 18 categories into which intergenerational programs can be classified. We believe that each category has a number of specific opportunities.

### **During the project, how the content of the research was formed / How good practices shaped the questions**

During the project, we had the opportunity to meet a number of expert colleagues. With human service professionals who interact with families in their everyday activities. During the cooperation with them, in workshops, trainings, study trips, the main topic of the project was continuously formed. In line with the objectives of the project, we reviewed a wide range of the social role of the family with professionals and how experts who deal directly or indirectly with families can contribute to the social inclusion of families.

During the project, a comprehensive review of the Hungarian scientific literature on family-related topics was carried out. Cross-border partners were also involved in exploring the relevant literature. We also developed current and interesting questions in line with the topics in the literature.

During the workshops, the topics of conceptualization and operationalization of the Finalization of the Research Plan were also touched upon. Within the framework of the topic, we agreed on the necessary conditions for the successful and efficient conduct of the research:

- the practice of domestic and international application of the method
- characteristics of the methodology used
- background literature on the topic
- reach the target audience
- creation of an online interface for the research questionnaire
- the technique of preparing the questionnaire
- matching the type of questions in terms of efficiency and respondents

During the project, we learned a number of good practices, and not only on a theoretical basis, but also in practice. The content elements of these good practices appear in the questions: family

roles, learning family patterns, reverse socialization, family leisure activities, family functions. In compiling the questionnaire, the opinions of several experts were taken into account. The questionnaire was subjected to a preliminary examination, a trial was completed, during which the questions were further shaped. Nearly half of the respondents (211 people; 48.3%) indicated Hungary as their place of residence, followed by 103-103 people (23.6% - 23.6%) Romania and Slovakia. 20 people (4.6%) from Serbia completed the questionnaire. Respondents ranged in age from 21 to 70 years, with a mean age of 42.7 years ( $s = 9.68$ ) and a median of 42 years.

The majority of respondents came from smaller settlements: the village or non-major (probably smaller) city is the place of residence. we can state that with regard to educational qualifications, according to the main target group of the research (human service sector, professional field), high educational qualifications are typical. Of the 437 respondents, 370 (84.7%) had at least a degree in higher education (3 of them had a doctorate) and only 7 had not completed their secondary school diploma. Due to the peculiarities of the field of human services, higher education degrees dominated.

### **The Research**

Between 14 April and 8 July 2020, 437 people completed the 30-question survey created by the Google Forms application, which was distributed in Hungarian in four countries (Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia), targeting mainly those working in the human services sector. . Due to the peculiarities of the online questionnaire, employees from other spheres could also express their opinions and experiences, but the vast majority of respondents could be classified in this professional field, for example, working in the social, pedagogical or health fields.

The questionnaire was primarily designed to explore good practices that exemplify the strengthening of intergenerational relationships, focusing on the cohesion and strengthening of family communities and the various opportunities for getting to know today's families. Our goal was to create a collection of good practices related to multi-generational programs by exploring motivations that affect generations. In the present study, we summarize our findings in relation to these. The social unit examined in the project is the family. Families have been affected greatly by the social and economic changes of the 21st century, yet there has never been a greater need for family unity. In our research, we try to explore answers and solutions that can help professionals pass them on to families as good practice. In the course of the research, our goal was to find good practices that help to expand the complex possibilities of getting to know the family for family professionals. Through better knowledge, the mapping of problems affecting the family and generations will also become more widespread, so, as well as by sharing the good practices identified in the research, we might have more tools to deal with problems affecting families.

Our long-term goal is to enable professional organizations to work more effectively by sharing the experiences from the research through the sharing of experiences that we gained. We try to equip the professionals with the skills we have experienced during the research, and the knowledge thus accumulated can be a starting point for family professionals to adapt the model they think is feasible for them.

We recommend research to all institutions in which social community building is considered important, they strengthen human relations by organizing joint programs, preparing together, taking joint action, paying attention to each other, and experiencing the community experience

together, thus consolidating the cooperation between the family and the specific institutions.

It is recommended for all families, as well as for family professionals who share the results with families. In addition to the role of the family, the tasks and responsibilities of the institutions are also decisive, so the knowledge gained should be passed on to professionals who have direct contact with families.

### **Sociodemographic characteristics of respondents**

Nearly half of the respondents (211 people; 48.3%) indicated Hungary as their place of residence (Table 1), followed by 103-103 people (23.6% - 23.6%) Romania and Slovakia. 20 people (4.6%) from Serbia completed the questionnaire. Due to the small size of the Serbian subsample, it is not analyzed in more detail in our study, but we also take them into account when establishing global characteristics, and we also use their "good practices" to enrich and compile our best practice collection.

*Table 1: Distribution of respondents (N = 463) by country*

	<b>people</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Hungary</b>	211	48,3
<b>Romania</b>	103	23,6
<b>Slovakia</b>	103	23,6
<b>Serbia</b>	20	4,6
<b>All:</b>	437	100

Respondents ranged in age from 21 to 70 years, with a mean age of 42.7 years ( $s = 9.68$ ) and a median of 42 years.

The majority of respondents came from smaller settlements: village or non-major (probably smaller) city is the place of residence.

Due to the peculiarities of the field of human services, higher education degrees dominated. In the case of men, only 2 people (without high school diploma) have a profession (8%), in the case of women there are 3 people (0.73%). Only one man (4%) has a high school diploma as the highest level of education, but there are 56 (13.6%) women. 88% of men (22 people) and 83.74% (345 people) have a college or university degree. Due to the small number of men surveyed (25), it is not possible to draw a valid conclusion, but a slight trend, which is common in other statistics, seems to be observed: , as if it were observable: men’s educational attainment tends to focus on the “edges” (either they finish high school during graduation or go beyond high school diploma), while women more often “stop” at high school diploma.

In summary, we can state that in terms of educational qualifications, according to the main target group of the research (human service sector, professional field), high educational qualifications are typical. 370 (84.7%) of the 437 respondents had at least a degree in higher education (3 of them had a doctorate) and only 7 had not completed their high school studies.

In terms of occupation, the largest subgroup belonged to teachers and trainers: pedagogical assistant (eg nurse, pedagogical assistant), early childhood educator, kindergarten teacher, teacher, university lecturer, head of some pedagogical institution, and we included those who wrote only about themselves. that a “teacher” or other special pedagogical activity has been designated (e.g., dance teacher, dormitory educator). There were also those working in the mixed field of health care and pedagogy among the respondents, e.g. special needs educators, physiotherapists.

In addition to the above 10 categories, we have classified health workers (eg doctors) and those working in the social sphere (eg family helpers) into a separate occupational group. In addition, we

created 3 “other” categories, the “other leader” (eg did not indicate in which institution he / she is leading), the “other, non-PHS career” category (P: pedagogical, H: health, S: social ). This includes respondents who cannot be classified into the above groups, e.g. cleaners, chefs, administrators, among whom there may be some respondents working in human services, but the majority may not be listed here. The third group included respondents whose work could not be identified (i.e., they could work in education, health, or the social sphere — or elsewhere) but not as a leader (e.g., “employee,” “Maternity leave,” “intellectual work,” or similar answers). Based on the above, the respondents were classified into 15 job groups, from which 12 can be clearly classified as human services:

#### Family background of respondents

From the point of view of our study, the extent to which respondents experience intergenerational communication in their own family is not incidental.

12.81% of the respondents (56 people) live alone or in a relationship, so they cannot currently experience intergenerational communication and coexistence within their household. The vast majority experience a two-generation (typically parents and children) family, in some cases a single-parent family (345 people; 78.95%), while 8.24% (36 people) live in a three-generation large family (Table 2).

*Table 2: Number of generations in the household of respondents*

	people	%
<b>1 generation</b>	56	12,81
<b>2 generations</b>	345	78,95
<b>3 generations</b>	36	8,24
<b>All:</b>	437	100

In terms of proportions, we found the most “one-generation families” in Hungary (16.1%; compared to 10.7% in Slovakia and 9.7% in Romania), while most three-generation large families were among the respondents in Romania (11.6%). ), while it was 9.7% for respondents in Slovakia and 6.2% for Hungarians.

A total of 40 families had a grandparent among the respondents (for 4 families this was not associated with a three-generation sample as they do not raise a child). Almost ten times as many families raise children: 369 out of 437 respondents (84.4%). The number of children ranges from 1 to 6 among the respondents, with an average of 1.59 children, which roughly shows the trends in childbearing typical of the area.

### Roles and values

Respondents overwhelmingly say that raising children is predominantly a joint task of mother and father (412 people; 94.3%), while the traditional pattern (“more of a mother’s job”) is shared by only a few (25 people; 5.7%). There was no respondent who thought that raising a child was fundamentally the responsibility of the father, or considered any institution more important in raising a child than the family, or perhaps thought that the child did not even need a meaningful upbringing.

Of those who the primary role of mother, 12 are educators (including leaders) and 2 are family support professionals, presumably based on the concept of primary attachment, which emphasizes the crucial importance of the mother-child relationship. The remaining 11 main areas of work are unidentifiable or not related to human services. So it seems that whether we are a human services professional or not, the majority is now in favor of a balanced role.

Examined by country, the proportions of Slovak respondents were in this position (10 people; 9.71% of Slovak respondents), in Hungary 11

people (5.21%) agreed with this statement, while in Romania only 4 people (3.88 %). The group of those who agree is too small to make a well-founded statement, but the differences between countries are large enough that this difference of opinion deserves further research on such a fundamental family pedagogical issue.

Question 13 examined respondents’ value preferences along five dimensions (family, workplace, friends, entertainment, sports). On a five-point scale, respondents in all categories scored between 1 and 5 in the importance of the values given in their lives (even in the family category, there were two 1 values), but the means and standard deviations show well that each category does not have the same specific gravity. in the lives of respondents.

First came the family ( $m = 4.94$ ,  $s = 0.378$ ), followed by the workplace ( $m = 4.3$ ,  $s = 0.571$ ), friends ( $m = 4.16$ ,  $s = 0.694$ ) and the category of leisure and entertainment ( $m = 4.07$ ,  $s = 0.694$ ) followed (Table 3). Respondents consider sports activities to be the least important in their lives ( $m = 3.68$ ,  $s = 0.826$ ), here only 48 people marked a value of 5 (eg 419 people in the family, while 100-149 people ranged those who gave a value of 5 in the work-friend-leisure triple).

Table 3: Respondents’ value preferences on a five-point scale

	family	work	friends	leisure	sport
Mean	4,94	4,3	4,16	4,07	3,68
Median	5	4	4	4	4
Mode	5	4	4	4	4
Deviation	0,378	0,571	0,694	0,694	0,826

Each value dimension is significantly related to each other, so whoever characterized himself with higher values in one category tended to denote

higher scale values elsewhere, or vice versa. At the same time, the impact strength typically ranged from weak to medium categories, suggesting that respondents were still happy to differentiate between each value dimension.

However, if we approach the microstructure of families, we may come across an interesting phenomenon. Respondents' values are not affected (!) When raising a child, however, the presence of grandparents is already an influencing factor. There is a correlation with the presence of grandparents in two groups of values, one with friends ( $m_{\text{with\_grandparent}} = 3.95$ ;  $m_{\text{without\_grandparent}} = 4.18$ ) and the other with sport ( $m_{\text{with\_grandparent}} = 3.40$ ;  $m_{\text{without\_grandparent}} = 3.71$ ). The correlation is very small but clearly significant for both friends ( $p = 0.047$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.009$ ) and sports ( $p = 0.024$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.012$ ). The presence of the grandparent (s) in a family can therefore restrain the importance of friendly relationships and the desire to play sports. Of course, the phenomenon may not necessarily be due to the identity of the grandparents, but also to other, unexamined factors, e.g. the presence of grandparents indicates a more difficult financial situation, which can affect the pursuit of "more money-needed" activities, and thus their importance in a person's life.

### Common family activities

Common activities bring together human groups, including families. What and how often do families do together?

The most common (everyday) activities are shared conversations (366 people; 83.8%), shared meals (302 people; 69.1%) and electronic communication (289 people; 66.1%) according to the modern age. More than a quarter of families also have everyday shared television (188 people, 43%) and shared learning (128 people; 29.3%). Of course, the latter is typical of families raising children (126 out of 128 families raising children),

but even in the case of families with children (377 families) it is still only 33.4%.

Several times a week, co-cooking (145 people, 33.2%) appears in his category as a "list leader", and many families remain characterized by shared television (129 people; 29.5%) and electronic communication (100 people; 22.9%).

If we look at activities that are at least weekly (almost every day, several times a week, every week), we can state that the vast majority of families have a common conversation (423 people, 96.8%), electronic contact (411 people, 94%) and shared meals (406 people; 92.9%). Shared television can also be a common cohesion activity (361 people, 82.6%), and in addition to shared cooking, cleaning, shopping and learning, the frequent presence of play is really welcome (271 people; 62%).

The smaller importance of sport among the respondents can also be seen in the relatively lower number of joint sports activities (168 people; 38.5%), and a Central European characteristic, compared to the Western lifestyle, is also the insignificant importance of visiting restaurants (the least joint activity on a weekly basis!) (41 people; 9.4%).

The list of non-regular joint activities ("non-typical", "occasional") also provides important lessons. The least common joint activity is attending sporting events (316 people; 72.3%), and it is not just that sporting events take place 'occasionally', because the narrowly defined 'non-typical' category is also far from being led by this activity (146 people; 33.4%). Visiting restaurants (257 people; 58.8%) and participating in cultural programs (256 people; 58.6%) are still not regular activities at all - although these are sometimes more common in family life than before. attendance at the aforementioned sporting events. Joint sports are also rare in 200 families (45.8%), and here the absolutely "non-typical" category also affects 100 families (22.9%).

In the case of 6 respondents, the joint conversations are also omitted. None of these have a grandparent present, but four of them raise children (2 or 3 children). In two of the four families, the respondent was a teacher (a kindergarten teacher, a teacher). A suspected deteriorating relationship may be behind the responses. The lack of regular joint meals also affects only a small number of families (20 people; 4.6%), 19 of the 20 families do not have grandparents, but 14 of them raise children. Thus, in the most important, “classic” family cohesion activities, the presence of grandparents seems to be a protective factor, but the presence of children is not.

Relatively few families are left behind by electronic contact (21 people; 4.8%) and shared television (47 people; 10.7%), but these can be easily replaced by other, sometimes more valuable programs, personal communication.

### Transgenerational patterns

Four of our questions were about socialization processes, two were about what respondents learned from previous generations, and two were about reverse socialization mechanisms, what respondents passed on to their own parents, and what they themselves learned from their children.

We asked about four areas of activities learned from grandparents, parents that are closely related to the household, things to do around the house: baking, cooking; household knowledge (cleaning, washing, ironing); sewing, embroidery; gardening (Table 4).

The responses show that the main source of baking, cooking, and household knowledge in general is the generation of parents rather than grandparents. At least 8 out of 10 respondents in both categories took over the “basics” from their parents, while the effects of grandparents are typical of no more than 4 (household knowledge) –

Table 4: Taking over household knowledge from previous generations

		people	%	difference (percentage point)
Baking, cooking	grandparents	259	59,3	21,2
	parents	352	80,5	
Household knowledge	grandparents	185	42,3	44,4
	parents	379	86,7	
Sewing, embroidery	grandparents	196	44,9	-6,2
	parents	169	38,7	
Gardening	grandparents	263	60,2	-2,8
	parents	251	57,4	

6 (in the case of baking, cooking) people. The more intense effects of parental effects can be seen clearly in household knowledge, with a difference of more than 44 percentage points. Presumably, this may be due to the rapid development of household technologies, with which grandparents are less able to keep up.

The effects of grandparents, only to a small extent, are stronger than the effects of parents on two activities, namely sewing, embroidery, which is a declining home activity in the modern age, and gardening.

Respondents were also able to identify four activities and knowledge materials that go beyond the household and the things around the house: love of reading, raising children, political and historical knowledge. In all areas, parental influences are stronger, although almost identical response rates have already been obtained in the transfer of historical knowledge.

Similarly to the previously mentioned household knowledge, the child rearing role of grandparents collapses to a large extent, the difference is 38.2 percentage points. This may be due in part to the fact that grandparents socialized at a very different age than the parental generation, so that “then and there” parenting methods are now less applicable. Another causal factor may be that the respondents

themselves may have experienced less of the parenting methods in their own childhood than the family upbringing impact system provided by their parents.

Two questions in the questionnaire concerned reverse socialization mechanisms. One question was about what the respondent learned from his own children, while the other was about what he taught his own parents.

Among the knowledge learned from children, there were five predefined answers to modern technical tools (using a mobile phone; appearing on a social site (eg Facebook); using email; electronic administration (banking, mobile uploading, etc.); learning about interesting / useful websites); symbolic forms of self-expression (dressing, modern vocabulary) and political knowledge.

The above options were also included in the knowledge transfer and socialization processes manifested towards the parents of the respondents, which - due to the age characteristics - we supplemented with two more items, “baking, cooking” and “household knowledge (cleaning, washing, ironing)”. In both questions for samples taken from children and for samples passed on to parents, it was possible for respondents to use the “other” category, where they could also provide other areas in text. A lot of respondents used this option.

In the case of patterns learned from children (excluding those who do not raise at least one child in their family, thus  $N = 369$ ), the respondents marked an average of 2.28 ( $s = 1,520$ ) answers, most ( $N = 168$ ) marked only one answer. , but the median was already at 2. Moreover, there were those who bravely marked areas (the fact that 5 options applied to IT skills also played a role in this) and 35 people (9.49%) gave a response number between 5 and 8 (of which 3 or 4 marked IT areas). A significant proportion of respondents thus acknowledged that they could even be the “host” in reverse socialization mechanisms. The

higher the age of the respondent, the more he feels this ( $p = 0.00$ ;  $r = 0.552$ ).

However, these values still lag behind the transfer of knowledge to parents, i.e., when the respondent acts as a “teacher”.

The mean number of samples submitted was 2.86 ( $s = 1.463$ ), the most common response rate was 2, and the median was 3. However, the maximum number of nominations here was only 7, but the number of those who submitted at least 5 nominations had already risen to 60 (13.73%). However, the result seems more concise when we consider that two more options were already given for the role of teacher (11), although this, as we shall see, has no practical significance.

The role of “teacher” towards parents is also related to the respondent's age, however, the relationship is reversed ( $p = 0.00$ ;  $r = -0.340$ ), as age increases, fewer and fewer respondents feel that they are transferring knowledge to their parents. There may be a number of factors in the background, ranging from progressively eroding memories of deceased parents to a more critical approach to the younger age group to age-specific features of IT knowledge.

In any case, the above results show that respondents in reverse socialization situations feel more like “teachers” than “learners”. However, the differences are not necessarily strong, and many are willing to admit that they also take over elements of knowledge and behaviors from their children. It is immediately apparent from the data sets that, with one exception, there is no area that would be relevant to more than half of the families. A spectacular exception is the use of mobile phones (358 people; 81.9%), where respondents are teachers of their own parents rather than students.

It is clear that there are “taboo areas” in which reverse socialization is not present or that respondents do not admit this for some reason. One was the use of email, for which there was no respondent who indicated that he had learned to

use it from his children, but not even that he had been the “teacher” of his parents.

Regarding the effects on parents, the special emphasis on cooking and household was also not indicated by anyone. An obvious answer to this is that the influence of the parental generation is too strong towards “young people” and therefore reverse socialization is irrelevant. At the same time, we suspect two, mutually reinforcing factors in the background: on the one hand, the generation of (grand) parents is resistant to the effects, it is difficult to learn new dishes in the kitchen, for example, a reform kitchen solution may be too strange, unknown to them. The other is that this area is actually “taboo” for respondents: the household is an area of life in which being a “teacher” would be disrespectful to parents.

### Typical best practices for multigenerational programs

In the textual answers, the respondents filled in a number of relatively well-known, frequently used (hereinafter: typical) generations. There was a number of overlaps in the programs for employees and clients (it is usually possible to organize the same program separately for employees and clients, and some of the programs can be open to both target groups at the same time), so we present the textual answers together below. The following programs, which can be called “typical”, were encountered in the text responses:

*Excursion* somewhere and similar answers (eg “bus excursion”, “employee excursion”, “zoo program”, “visit to the botanical garden”, “hiking”, “common parent-child excursions”, “swimming”, “family picnic” etc.).

*Participation in cultural programs* taking place in various *external* venues, in which the trinity of theater (especially children's theater performances), cinema and concerts appears. Interestingly,

however, respondents do not really go to sporting events, museums, or exhibitions together, although to organize (see later), they organize such programs at their institution.

The institutions themselves *organize “internal” cultural and sports programs* in which several generations participate. If we do not take e.g. for the holidays (see later), there is also a very wide range of programs. On the one hand, “home versions” of the above “external” cultural programs also appear: a concert is held at the institution (or even a lighter “stage show”), a film screening (“cinema screening in the gym”) appears, but dramatic activities are also present (e.g. „teachers (as amateur actors) performance”). However, the palette is already more colorful here, with sporting events (eg ‘sports’, ‘sports competitions’, ‘sports events’, ‘sports afternoons’, ‘sports days’, ‘kindergarten olympics’, ‘aerobics days’, ‘football tournaments’), exhibitions (‘exhibition’, ‘Christmas exhibition’). Several respondents also included the more general terms “cultural gala” (possibly “Gala show”, “Advent gala”), “cultural events”.

A very serious slice of the answers is the holding of *various holidays and celebrations* within the institution, sometimes combined with participation in external programs. Most of the named festive activities are related to church holidays. Programs around Christmas (typically “Advent candle lighting”, concert, “Advent evening”, “Advent playhouse”, fair) and programs related to egg painting at Easter are especially popular. But Pentecost (“Easter, Pentecostal life images”) or the Orthodox Djurdjevdan also appeared.

Respondents also listed a number of holidays that, although of church origin or related to the ecclesiastical celebration, have become highly secularized to this day. Santa Claus is also very popular, also referred to as Santa in the former socialist countries (several have written it as “Santa’s Waiting”). A special program related to

this was “Santa Claus Train” in the responses. As with Santa, carnival was common in the responses, which was sometimes referred to by respondents by other names at times, because we could come across terms like “mask ball” or “masquerade ball”. The Michael's Day Fair, Martin's Day, are also popular, and Andrew Day's Fair was also included in one answer. These answers already lead us to the famous days found in folk tradition, detached from church holidays. Here, the activities of the spring festival, May programmes (there were those who also wrote the May Tree creation), and the June programs are the most popular. Some of the responses included both fall and winter: “November Goose Days with Wine Baptism,” Luca's Day, and the most popular in this category were harvest entertainments. Several referred to similar programs without giving specifics: “traditional programs”, “People's Cavalcade”, “autumn cavalcade”. Only Halloween appeared in the answers of the Anglo-Saxon traditions, and one of its elements, pumpkin carving, was mentioned several times in the answers as an now independent, glocalized, popular activity (eg “pumpkin carving party”, “Pumpkin day”, “pumpkin lantern making”, “Pumpkin Carving”, “Pumpkin Festival”, “Pumpkin Party”, “Campfire with Pumpkin Carving”, “Autumn Pumpkin Carver Gathering”).

Non-secular international holidays, world days and famous days also appeared in the answers. The most significant were Mother's Day, Women's Day and Children's Day, and one of the answers included Earth Day (a Slovak kindergarten teacher highlighted this separately) and Poetry Day (written by a lady working in a senior position in Hungary). One of the easier options in response to a Slovak rapporteur was the New Year's Eve (“New Year's Eve”) as a workplace program that brought generations together.

While local holidays (village day, city day) appeared several times, national holidays were

almost completely absent from the responses. Each time we could only read a remote reference to them, for example “Anniversaries”, “historical commemorations” and once “March 15”.

From the responses, it appears that celebrations linked to church and deeper-rooted (folk) traditions are the ones where most opportunities are discovered to organize intergenerational programs in the workplaces, which can be linked to classic, family roles. (Mother's Day, Children's day, Women's Day). At national holidays, however, they do not see the possibility of “familyization” in the workplace.

However, in addition to opportunities for celebration at the societal level, institutions also find a number of internal, *locally-based, celebratory-type opportunities* to organize intergenerational programs (local celebrations). Some of these are actually called “days”: “Senior Day”, “Retirement Day”, “Grandma's Day”, “Craft Day”, “Elves Days”, “Apple Day”, “Company Day”, “Kindergarten Day”, “Crop Day”. “Children's Festival” and “local fairs” were also present in the responses. It is clear from the responses that not only two (parents, children) but also several generations are considered in some of the workplaces, which is also supported by responses such as “retirement evening”, “inviting the retired” or “Greeting grandparents”. But the farewells and anniversaries also focus on the older, even grandparent generation. In many cases, the institutions also organize more universal “family days” as running, jogging programs.

There are also personal festive occasions in the line of holidays, which in each case can become programs that bring together several generations: “common birthday”, “name days”, but we may even come across the answer “weddings”. Celebrating birthdays, name days at work, and related greetings are well-known festive activities, but in formal venues they rarely expand into a multi-generational program.

The two central elements of lighter, intergenerational programs are *eating / cooking and dancing*. Among these, the following programs are typically popular: “cooking” / “family cooking” / “cooking together”, “bacon frying”, “goulash competition” / “goulash cooking”, but there are “venison cooking competitions”, or in two cases making gingerbread and honey cookies, and the common “ice cream eating” also appeared. In connection with eating / cooking, it was stated in several responses that this program is also interpreted as a kind of gastronomic competition, organized by the institutions. Among the dance entertainments, the various balls (charity; parents; carnival; even brigade ball) were the most frequently mentioned in the answers, but the dance house and the “retro-disco” are not unknown either (indeed, the disco era belongs to the experience world of parents or younger grandparents today). A Wreath Program for children’s dance performances was also included in the responses. And perhaps the answer “School party” can be classified as “eater-dancer”, maybe also “PJ party” (written by a Romanian kindergarten teacher). Interestingly, folk dance appeared in only one response specifically, with the title “Folk Dance Festival” (of course, the former “dance house” can also mean folk dance content). Perhaps this would suggest that the “rise of folk dances” of recent decades might be declining, or that age group breakdowns are more strongly present in these programs?

We have seen that gastronomic programs sometimes go through competition. *Competitions and quizzes* have appeared in many answers, so it can be a popular form of various intergenerational content. Among the competition programs, sports competitions dominate (in some more special cases we return to atypical forms), from the quizzes, “Who knows what?”, “Talent shows” were named and storytelling. Storytelling as content was already included in several responses, e.g. also in the form

of a storyteller hut. It seems that “tale” as an ancient genre has still not disappeared from the toolbox of community building.

In the answers, we could find several programs that are more closely related to one type of institution or maintainer. In church-maintained institutions, common (multi-generational) *sacral activities* are more common (but not only there): worship (even in ecumenical form: “graduation in kindergarten, graduation in school, combined with closing and opening school ecumenical worship in the Reformed and Catholic alternately in church”), in the form of Bible lessons, spiritual practice, or a blessing (e.g., blessing of a crop, blessing of an Advent wreath). The answers show that the *programs typically related to educational institutions (nursery, kindergarten, school)* are also excellent for moving several generations: year openers and year-ends, open days, school information days (eg “school tasting”), school visits, enrollment programs, “professions night” and other learning-related programs. Among the easier, more playful options appeared: camps, summer daytime programs, play afternoons, nursery tasting, baby-mum club. Craft afternoons and classes, creative workshops, “creative, DIY afternoon” and playhouse programs can often be found in the answers, but these can also be more independent opportunities from educational institutions.

*Professional, educational programs* for adults can also address several generations. Based on the answers, these can be divided into three main types: lectures (eg “Lectures on health”, “Lectures on family visits”), workshops (eg “Workshops, Seminars - on the subject of family education”, discussions (with teachers, psychologists) about the family, children”), further trainings, including trainings (“Team Building Day”). It is likely that the answer “Parents’ School”, which is not explained in more detail, can also be placed in the three categories listed above. The institutions organize professional

programs in the main field of health, in which children can be well involved: “health afternoon”, “health day”, “health week”, “Movement and health education.”. Of course, it is possible to plan “days” or “weeks” on other topics, but we did not get too much support for these from the answers, they were referred to as thematic days or projects, project closing events by the respondents.

*Volunteering* is not typical of our region, this was also reflected in the responses. Two referred to such activities, but they were also limited to outdoor activities: “Common yard care,” “Common yard arrangement, flower planting”. Also, two respondents appeared to have common conversations, which - presumably - are not formally organized by the institutions, but may be suitable for building intergenerational relationships.

#### **Atypical best practices in multigenerational programs**

In about 10% of the responses (27 respondents [9.71%] organized programs for employees, 33 respondents [11.34%] organized programs for clients), we encountered elements that were less known or novel in their entirety or in some details, they seemed more unusual (hereinafter referred to as “atypical” programs). Of course, the typical - atypical classification in many cases means a subjective, intuitive classification, but it can support the daily program organizing practice well, so we use it in our present study as well.

There were ten respondents who gave atypical answers in both categories (programs organized for employees - clients). 6 of them were respondents from Hungary and 4 from Slovakia, none from Romania or Serbia. 2 of the 10 respondents, were kindergarten teachers and 2 were teachers working in schools and 1 could not be identified as a “teacher”; 5 respondents came from other areas (eg nurse, family helper). Among the 10 institutions we find state, local government and non-governmental

organization maintained institutions as well, but there was no church maintained among them.

In the following, in part following the categories identified for typical responses, we review the lessons learned elements of atypical responses.

Among the *excursions*, as well as the programs taking place in *external locations*, we could find some exciting, - now - seemingly unusual possibilities: a factory visit, a “visit to a sister village”, a “visit to agricultural lands”. In addition, the responses included a recommendation for city programs for families and a further reflection on a traditional type of program: “We usually organize a zoo trip for families in need, with the help of a sponsor.” Product demonstrations, as intergenerational programs, can take place in external as well as internal venues, so there are even opportunities to fall into this category (“external venues programs”).

The issue of “family” also appears directly in many institutions (as we have seen in typical responses, eg in the form of family afternoons), and can even encourage staff to take more innovative solutions. *Programs specifically targeted at families* include “Grandma’s Afternoons”, “Mom-Dad Come Play with Us”, “Family Saturday”, but the company day has also appeared as a family program (“Family Company Day”). “Sleeping in the workplace” can also be a great intergenerational program, as stated by a Hungarian Customer Support Administrator. Among the *services targeted at families*, we also found a well-known but less exploited opportunity in our area for workplace childcare workers (“Previously, during summer holidays, children could come into the workplace so their supervision was resolved while the parent worked while the children played.”).

Many *local cultural programs* also provide opportunities to bring generations together. These include book presentations, a fairy tale festival, a “grandma’s story” program, and other “shared storytelling” occasions (“fairy tale” has appeared

more than once in typical forms as content that brings generations together!). The various programs and presentations can also be explicitly interactive ("Interactive programs, presentations").

The *various festive occasions* also appear strongly in the atypical responses. Some of these have appeared in our region in recent decades and have not yet become a well-known, widely followed tradition. The best known (also appeared in 9 responses) is Father's Day, which seems to be becoming an increasingly popular event; this day was probably also thought of by the respondent who wrote about "men's day," although this could also mean an employee program corresponding to some kind of women's day. The responses also included World Breastfeeding Day and Europe Day. Several also wrote about "Roma Day", which may be related to the International Roma Day, but respondents may have thought of some other day showcasing Roma culture. Among the local festive occasions, the "Shepherd's Meeting" and the "Youday" programs of the University of Debrecen can be classified as less common "fiesta-like" intergenerational programs, although it would be relatively easy to invent and implement new, breakthrough solutions in this area.

We could not encounter dance programs in the atypical responses, however, "*occasions related to shared meals*" were eagerly thought of further in the workplaces of the respondents. Nowadays, pig slaughtering is no longer typical for a staff, but examining the answers is not unknown either. At the same time, not only traditional food can bring people of different ages together, but even a "reform cooking competition". In addition, both "Baking at the Retirement Club" or "Catering the Retired" are good options.

In addition to the traditional *sports programs* discussed earlier (sports day, football tournament, etc.), the events that move the physique include "Running together" and "walks", as well as the "walks in nature" programs( in sport programmes "

coach driving " appeared, but its form was not clear from the answer [eg. as a spectator at an external program]). Health preservation programs include *health screening* at the workplace not only for employees but also for clients. The "relaxation plan" (written by the deputy director of a Slovak pedagogical institution) serves to *preserve mental health*, and there are places where psychological or educational counseling awaits the representatives of different generations.

We were also able to find more innovative solutions among *professional, educational programs*, such as "ECO Day", "Talent Day", "Learning Festival", and "Researchers' Night ". *Crafts* were discovered in an atypical response, the "Flower Arrangement Days, Flower Arrangement Competition".

*Institutional presentation* can also be a great field for intergenerational programs, which can be implemented in new forms. A simple open day can cover a longer period of time ("open days", "job tasting camp for primary school students with the help of parents"), but it can also be expanded in content to make the traditional open day richer or more specific "Open Day" or open program (e.g. "open pre-school programs "), even organized around a thematic program (" Insurance open days "). The work in the institution can be well demonstrated with the help of exam presentations ("End of year exam presentations"), which can be included not only in the traditional "arsenal" of music schools, but also in other institutions and fields (eg a folk dance teacher wrote the answer to the quoted exam presentations ).

There are also multi-generational *groups, communities or trainings* organized around a specific theme that cannot be said to be typical. Such groups include the alumni community, the circle of amateur actors, the poetry circle, or the cooking club. Among the trainings, language learning in the form of online can bring several generations

together (even if only in the online space), and the answers included ski course as well.

In some responses, in addition to the aforementioned ECO Day, an *ecological approach* emerged, either in combination *with volunteering*: “gardening”, “garbage collection in a forest or meadow”, and various “working afternoons” (even in connection with other events such as Advent), which also hold the potential for social work for the institution. A Romanian office worker also wrote “nature conservation movements” that appear in his workplace.

At times, *direct assistance to others* appeared as a program that brought generations together. This is mostly in the form of some kind of donation, package distribution, and is typically related to Christmas, such as a “Christmas charity action”. One answer also included, without further explanation, “Women’s Protection” (the respondent was a Hungarian nurse).

### Summary

Reviewing typical and atypical intergenerational programs, we were able to identify 18 categories into which intergenerational programs can be classified (each category has a number of specific possibilities). These are summarized in the following overview Table 5.

On the one hand, the collection and dissemination of good intergenerational practices can be useful for any institution or organization that organizes programs. Even this overview, which can be considered sketchy due to its size, contains a lot of ideas and practical solutions from which you can take ideas.

On the other hand, the collection also highlights the shortcomings of the four countries examined in related areas: one third of the institutions do not pay attention to the organization of multi-generational programs or in several areas (eg

volunteering, modern special days, supporting regular club occasions) the institutional supply palette can be further enriched and modernized.

Table 5: Main categories of intergenerational programs organized for clients and employees

Trip
Participation in cultural programs at external locations
Cultural programs within the institution
Sports programs within the institution
Holidays, celebrations
Institutional celebrations
Programs related to eating and cooking
Dance programs
Competitions, quizzes
Common sacred activities
Special programs and services of educational institutions (eg open days, camps)
Creative occasions (eg craft afternoons)
Professional lectures, educational programs
Consulting
Trainings (also online)
Clubs, "circles"
Health screenings
Volunteering

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