Digital Media Literacy of Children with Parents Working Abroad

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* "media literacy
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* qualitative methods"

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## Sample

"“The research method consisted of in-depth interviews with 30 children in the
time frame January-April 2018. The interviews were conducted face to face at the
children’s homes or at school with the consent of their tutors. The children and teen-
agers were aged between 10 and 18 years old; we spoke to 16 girls and 14 boys. Our sample consisted of 14 children aged between 10 and 15, 16 children aged between 15 and 18. 5 children had both of their parents working abroad. Out of the remaining 25, 15 children had their father working in another country and 10 children their mother.” (Huțuleac Balaban, 2019, p. 42)"

## Implications For Parents About

Parenting guidance / support

# Abstract

Romania is one of the countries in the European Union that has been confronted with a large intra-EU migration of population towards countries such as Italy, Spain, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom in the last two decades. Thus, one or both parents work abroad for several months or sometimes for years and their children are left in the care of their grandparents or other close relatives. This phenomenon has large implications for the Romanian society and certain regions, such as the Northeastern, are dealing with the consequences. The paper addresses the question of media literacy of the children whose parents are working abroad and adds to the current discussions, in particular to a discourse that does not position children of migrant workers as automatically disadvantaged. As a foundation for our study we used a skills-based model of media literacy (Riesmeyer, Pfaff-Rüdiger, and Kümpel 2012; Dewe and Sander 1996; Groeben 2002; Livingstone 2004). We conducted thirty in-depth interviews with children and adolescents from the Northeastern region of Romania between January and April 2018. Romanian children and adolescents with parents working abroad live in a favourable economic context and have better access to communication technology than their peers. The migration situation influences the motivational dimension of media skills but probably has little influence on legal media skills. Social media offers them technical support in order to see their parents, to share their problems and worries. It is often used for educational purposes in this particular situation.

# Outcome

"“Facebook and WhatsApp are the top applications used by children and adolescents in order to communicate with their parents who work abroad. Technical knowledge is the dimension of media literacy that is usually transferred from children and adolescents to their parents and grandparents. Due to this particular situation, even
grandparents are motivated to be active online and young people are supportive of
this. Technical knowledge is much more developed than knowledge about the legal
or economic context when it comes to media literacy of both children and adolescents on the one hand and parents or caregivers on the other hand. The migration situation influences the motivation dimension of media skills but probably has little influence on the legal media skills of young people.
Having one or both parents working abroad plays an important role with respect
to the media literacy of their children at least when it comes to the acquisition of
communication technology, but also for the motivation behind using it. The parents
are trying to substitute the lack of physical presence in their children’s lives by buying them expensive gifts. Smartphones and other gadgets are among their favorite presents. They are also seen as status symbols. As previous research on intra-EU children of migrants underlined (Sandu 2010), the majority of the boys and girls we interviewed have a superior material status compared to many of their colleagues.
In our case, children of migrant parents are not disadvantaged. They have additional
motivation to use media in order to communicate with their parents. Social media
offers them technical support in order to see their parents, to share their problems
and worries with them. In this particular situation, social media communication is
used for educational purposes as well. Children of migrants prove not to be disadvantaged, their life situation contributing to the development of their media skills. Children and adolescents play a very important role in the communication process between their parents and their grandparents at home. The first group mainly facilitates the use of technology (that is purchased for them by their parents working abroad), but parents or caregivers are not able to provide substantial support when it comes to legal, educational or moral skills. Our research has once again proved that media literacy of children and adolescents is developed even in the absence of explicit attempts to encourage and promote it (Buckingham 2005).
Coming back to the media skills model (Riesmeyer, Pfaff-Rüdiger, and Kümpel
2012), all the fields that define media competencies are influenced to a certain extent by the particular situation of having one or both parents working abroad. Children and adolescents tend to have high expertise in the use of digital media and especially of several social media apps, as they are strongly motivated to use them. This particular situation has a positive effect on developing digital media skills for their grandparents and other caregivers who are motivated to communicate with their relatives abroad, while also being encouraged and supported by the children and adolescents that they are taking care of.” (Huțuleac Baraban, 2019, p.51)"