

**INTEGRATION OF THE ROMANIAN FAMILY IN THE DINAMICS OF SOCIETY**

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**Abstract**

**Objectives.** The objectives were to identify the causes that determine the happiness of family members, to establish the main factors that generate harmony in the couple, to highlight the main grievances of partners in married life, and to find the necessary means to involve both partners in the proper functioning of the family.

**Material and methods.** The research technique chosen was the questionnaire applied to a sample of 61 people from Constanta City, Romania and the research method was the social survey.

**Results.** The study reveals that 57.4% of the subjects spend more hours with their families, 59% consider that divorce should only be taken into consideration until all reconciliation options are exhausted, 75.4% attach importance to respect, which is a determining factor in couple's harmony, 56.7% of the respondents consider that, in the contemporary family, the authority over children is shared equally between father and mother, 42.6% believe that women's financial independence is not a trigger for destabilization in the family, 52.5% are satisfied with the involvement of the partner in the household chores. Among the values promoted to children, the respondents mentioned: respect, sincerity, common sense, forgiveness, honesty, love, faith, kindness.

**Conclusions.** Theoretical analysis reveals that family is integrated into the society's dynamics, and is increasingly conditioned by economic and social changes, thus influencing the general evolution. For a family to have an union, it would be necessary for the couple to have empathy and assertiveness, for both partners to participate in the family's economic well-being, as well as in the education of children, cultivating value, moral-ethical aspects through spending free time in the family, precious way. Family values have a special contribution in the stability of the Romanian family; they are transmitted trans-generationally and adapted according to the development of modern society.

**Keywords:** family, satisfaction, fidelity, traditional.

**Introduction**

The study is based on the personal belief that family must prevail in the choices that people make at an individual level, even though the modern society has shifted the emphasis from the traditional union between spouses, which is designed to provide a balanced framework for children's development, to the selfish experience of the pleasures of daily life. Subsequently, the relationships between men and women tend to take different, non-nuclear forms, the classic concept of family structure being severely affected. Thus, a plurality of family configurations proliferates, adapted to the new relationships imposed by society's evolution in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The dangers are multiple, the emphasis being placed on the following functions: economic, in case

of celibacy, sexual, in the case of an open marriage, or social, in the case of couples without children, etc. Thus, as opposed to the traditional, nuclear family, several types of restructured families can be distinguished in the contemporary period: celibacy, cohabitation, couple without descendants, the single-parent family, open marriage, reconstituted family and reorganized family.

From ancient times, family has been the fundamental institution for the survival of the individual and society's reproduction, the keeper of traditions and national values, and a landmark of stability. Sandu, Huidu and Frunză (2020) highlight the existence of a conflict between the ethical values that the individual adheres to in his personal life, and those to which he adheres while participating in the public sphere. The Romanian society is in a developmental phase, characterized by a rejection of the individualistic, modern values and the respect for social, communitary and family values, of (post)traditional lineage. Unfortunately, the high pace with which the contemporary society changes has left its mark on the family, which has generated a number of important changes. It has diversified its forms, structure and functions, thus evolving into a plurality of models. Among the most important processes that affected the family life are: deinstitutionalization, individualization and democratization. More alarming predictions about this transition, expressed a few decades ago, have not been confirmed through a concrete evolution. Data show that individuals' choices and behaviours were less radical before.

According to Romanians, attachment to the family remains very high, occupying the first place in the hierarchy of values and continuing to represent a field of interest for young people, despite the fact that, worldwide, family has lost popularity. Romania has one of the highest rates of marriage in Europe, increasing in recent years, even at a young age, followed by the birth of children. Rada and Pănescu (2016) stated that Romanians have enough emotional intelligence to build a couple, but this is insufficient to maintain the relationship for a long time (p. 38). According to their observations, the main reasons for the breakup of Romanian couples are violence, alcoholism and infidelity. Overall, the Romanian woman was one of the most emancipated in Europe, even during the communist regime, when due to the political intrusion of Elena Ceaușescu, women were promoted in the work field, occupying 50% of the places, and even in leadership positions, according to the law (Bonea, 2018, p. 85).

This contrasts with the social reality of the period between the two world wars, when the central profession of women was that of a mother (Rada & Pănescu, 2016, p. 41).

According to DEX, the family is the basic social form, founded through marriage and which consists of husband, wife and their descendants (Dicționarul Explicativ al Limbii Române [Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language], 2003, p. 366). Etymologically, the word comes from the Latin word for family, which refers to all the inhabitants of the house, everyone who lives under the same roof. From a social perspective, family can both mean individuals and relationships, which includes the conjugal cell (husband and wife), to which are added the children, parents, grandparents, cousins, etc.

According to European Commission (2021), changes sustained in households, family and fertility have become key factors in the dynamics of the population. Discovering and explaining the rapidity these changes entailed become essential aspects in understanding the current situation, providing scientific evidence on the future of the demographics.

In Romania, Bradatan and Firebaugh (2007) shows that the decline in fertility over the 1990s represents the continuation of a longstanding trend that was only interrupted by the extremely efficient pro-natalist policies inaugurated in the 1960s.

In recent decades, family life has gone through lots of transformations, mainly around most OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries having high divorce rates, low fertility and children witnessing family disintegration.

According to Zaidi and Morgan (2017) the primary driver of unilinear change toward very low fertility and of a diversity of union and family types is a powerful and irreversible shift in attitudes and norms in the direction of greater individual freedom and self-actualization.

One challenge brought by contemporary family partnership models, relates to the rejection of traditional family by gay couples, bachelors and childless couples (Rada, 2013, p.53). Although average incomes have increased, OECD (2021) claims that they don't seem to be enough for those families which must invest a large portion of their financial resources into their children's education, be it private or governmentally run.

As the education of children plays a key role in the family, adapting to the technological functioning of society brings with it various problems related to the lack of physical socialization of children to the detriment of excessive use of digital technology. That is why the role of parenting style used in education is important. Brito, Francesco, Dias and Chaudron (2017) explored the parental mediation of portable digital devices in families with young children. Parental perceptions and attitudes about the technologies played a heavier weight on the parental mediation style adopted, and consequently influenced the relationship of the children with digital media.

### **Material and methods**

The research instrument was the questionnaire, and the research method was the social survey. The sample of 61 people from Constanța City of Romania was divided by age categories, background, gender, marital status and job. The research method was the social survey.

The main research instrument was the questionnaire, applied to subjects with an age range between 18 and 65 years. The surveyed population was divided into different age categories, in order to emphasize similar mentalities, specific to certain generations. Thus, a first sample of respondents was represented by males and females, aged between 18 and 24, 25 and 34, 35 and 44, 45 and 54, 55 and 64, and the last category, over 65 years old.

The sample used for the survey is quite diverse, the respondents originating from both rural and urban areas, with various educational backgrounds, such as: high school, post-high school, university, masters and Phd. This difference in the educational level is reflected, to a greater or lesser extent, in the way in which each respondent created their own vision of the family. Other important factors in choosing the answers, with a strong imprint on the personal image of the family institution are the marital status, and the failed marriage experiences. The six options used to score the marital status are the following: married with children, married, childless, unmarried, divorced, widowed and consensual union.

For this research, a relevant aspect is the duration of the marriage, measured considering the following time periods: less than 5 years, between 6 and 10 years, between 11 and 15 years, between 16 and 20 years, between 21 and 30 years and more than 31 years. The study was conducted over an area of about 50 kilometres around Constanța City, including rural and urban areas.

Among the difficulties considered in applying this questionnaire to a number of 61 people, the following have been determined: differences in mentality between the elderly and the young, up to 30 years old, the reluctance of the elderly to answer such questions, the lack of time for very busy people, the fear that the respondents' identity would not be kept anonymous or that

they would be judged by the provided answers, as well as the lack of interest in any research work, in general, due to ignorance.

The present study is set to investigate several changes that contemporary families are going through under the rules of economic function, which tend to predominate, along with an emphasis on the sexual function.

Family is an integrated part of the society, depending on its role both inside it and in children's development, which are considered to represent its future. In order to highlight the objectives, a qualitative research was conducted, thus aiming to provide explanations regarding the causes that create a gap between the traditional and the modern family values, which affected the family balance.

Based on the above-mentioned assumptions, the following objectives have been proposed for this research:

1. Identify the causes that determine the happiness of family members.
2. Identify the main factors that generate harmony in the couple.
3. Highlight the main reasons for partners' dissatisfaction in the couple's life.
4. Single out ways to involve partners in the proper functioning of the family.

The following hypotheses were proposed:

- a. There had been multiple changes in the family structures, that were generated by women's entry in the work field, the development of the careerist woman, the urbanization that distances individuals from the idea of a traditional family, the acquisition of equal rights between men and women, at social level.
- b. The changes in the family structure could result in an increase in the number of divorces, that is directly proportional to the number of working mothers and inversely proportional to the birth rate.
- c. The family has been based, over time, on a series of values, which have changed today. Thus, if the traditional family was based on the need to live together, the modern family has other options, the preference for independent living being much higher. In this age, individualism prevails, the traditional family emphasizing living inside it and for the collective. At present, narcissism gains ground, which has a negative impact on the interpersonal relationships.

In this research it is noted that the population was of different ages and the same tool was applied, which makes it possible for the results to be influenced by the predominant generation. The research hypotheses contains references to intrafamilial value aspects that underlie the formation of future families through adapted coping mechanisms.

## Results

The questionnaire used in this research consists of 32 questions based on the following criteria: demographic data necessary for the survey, family and good mood, self-esteem in the couple, family stability and involvement in the proper functioning of the family. The analysis of the variable was performed using the total of 61 valid cases ( $n = 61$ ), with no missing scores.

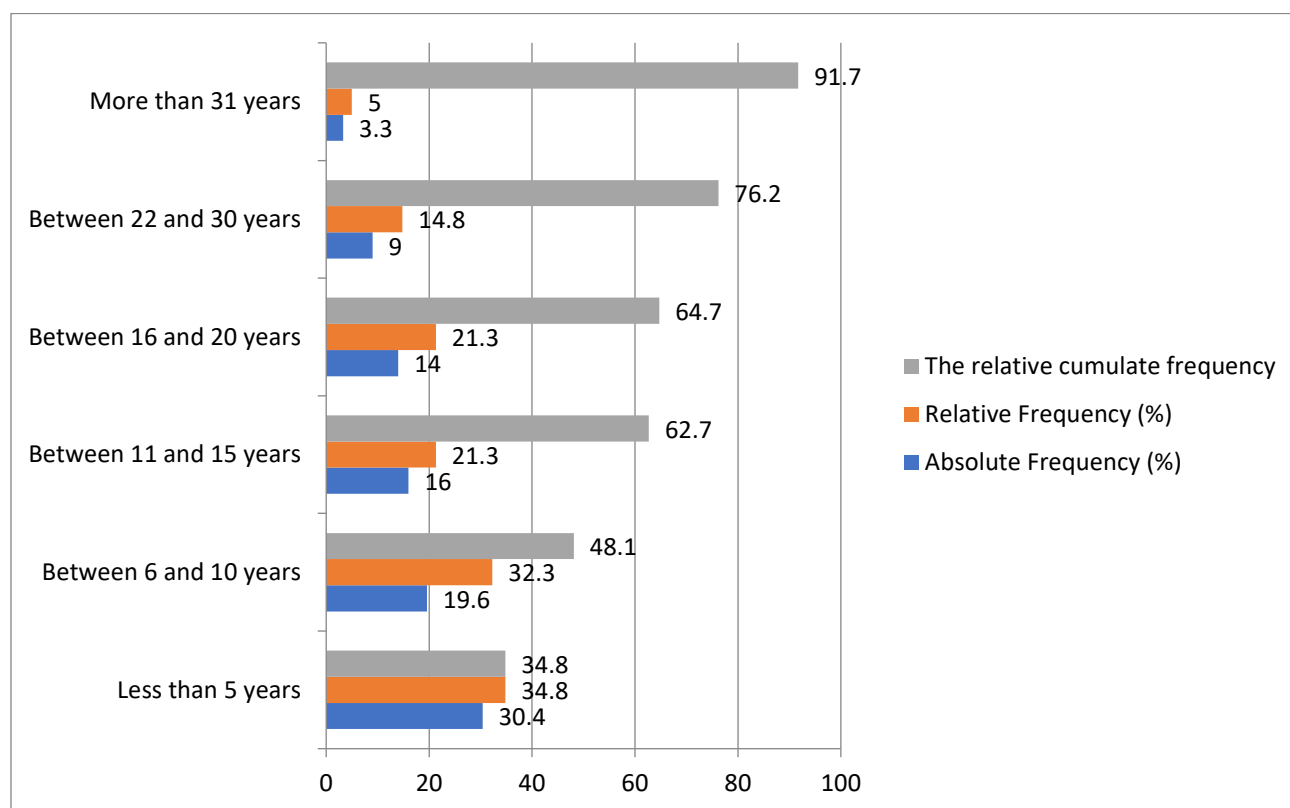
Women represented the majoritarian gender, which meant 65.6% of the participants who chose to answer the questions, their attitude being reflected in the answers to the questions. The level of education is also eloquent, 41% of the respondents having higher education, with a bachelor's degree, 27.9% with a master's degree, 19.7% graduated high school, and 9.8% graduated school. The activity fields are various, varying from educators 6.6%, accountants 3%, commercial worker 3.3%, church painters 4.9%, dentists 1.1%, local police officers 1.1% or teachers 1.1%. Regarding the marital status, 68.9% of the majority are married, with children, 8.2% divorced and as many married, without children, 13.1% unmarried. As far as the marriage duration is concerned,

most of them are between 6 and 10 years old, a percentage of 24.6%, followed by those between 11 and 15 years old, 21.3%, the same percentage is summed up by those between 16 and 20 years old, and those between 21 and 30 years old, in an equal percentage, of 14.8%, with those who are less than 5 years old.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the variable ‘duration of a couple’ according to its designated categories: 1<sup>st</sup> category – ‘less than 5 yrs’, 2<sup>nd</sup> category – ‘between 6 and 10 yrs’, 3<sup>rd</sup> category – ‘between 11 and 15 yrs’, 4<sup>th</sup> category – ‘between 16 and 20 yrs’, 5<sup>th</sup> category – ‘between 22 and 30 yrs’ and ending with 6<sup>th</sup> category – ‘more than 31 yrs’.

**Figure 1**

*The distribution of the subjects according to the duration of the couple*



The variable "marital status" is a nominal variable with 5 categories, that was analysed using a number of 61 valid cases (n = 61), without missing cases, the modal category being no. 4 - "Married with children" (n = 42 cases, with fewer people falling into the second category, no.1 - "Consensual Union". The other categories highlighted in this study are: unmarried (n = 9), married without children (n = 5) and divorced (n = 5). Out of the 61 respondents, 82% live in urban areas, 18% in rural areas, which is of some importance in terms of the conservative attitude towards the family as a traditional institution, as can be seen below.

Out of 61 participants, 59% believe that marriage is necessary in the couple’s life, 18% believe that people who want to have children should get married, 14.8% believe that a couple can live together without the intention of getting married, while for 8.2% marriage is no longer a priority.

When asked about the agreement between the spouses, 59% considered that the step of divorce should not be done until all the reconciliation options are exhausted, 31% opted for the solution of couple's therapy. Almost 41% of those who answered the questions in the questionnaire believe that almost always the financial side is a condition for a family to be happy, while 36.1% believe that this can rarely happen, and those who believe that money can never bring happiness to the family, have percentage of 22.9%.

Among the factors that determine the couple's harmony, 75.4% consider that mutual respect is the most important, 23% see fidelity as a factor of utmost importance. 32.8% believe that things go well almost always in the relationship with the partner, 21.3% are convinced that this always happens, and 14.8% only sometimes.

Regarding the involvement of the partner in household chores, 52.5% are satisfied, 44.3%, very satisfied. Relationship problems occur, most often, due to the fact that the partner gets slightly angry - 44.3%, due to jealousy - 62.2%, and 47.9% due to communication problems. For 57.4% never regret that they got married, 14.8% rarely regret it, just as many occasionally, and 9.8% often have these regrets, which could be a sign that they have an unhappy marriage. And 65.6% of respondents believe that the departure of a parent abroad affects the balance of the family, which takes its toll on the emotional development of children, 24.6% believe that these situations occur almost all the time and 9.8% occasionally. Among the participants 24.6% consider that the family suffers when a woman holds a high position in society, the same percentage consider that this happens only occasionally, while 21.3% consider that this never happens, probably based on women's responsibility inside the family, 14.8% believe that this can happen quite often and 11.5% almost all the time. Table 1 indicates the percentage of the beliefs that different factors can potentially be responsible for marital dissolution.

**Table 1**

*Marital dissolution factors*

Marital dissolution factors	Always	Almost	Occasional
The impact of parent's work abroad on children's emotional development	65.6	24.6	9.8
Communication problems	47.9	37.3	14.8
Jealousy	62.2	23	14.8
Nervousness of the partner	44.3	27.8	27.9
Lack of harmony in marriage	58	42	-

Marital dissolution factors	Always	Almost	Occasional
Misunderstanding between spouses	63.7	21.5	14.8
Poor financial situation	41	36.1	22.9
Total	61 respondents		

Women’s financial independence is not a trigger for destabilization in the family for 42.6% of respondents, rarely for 29.5% and occasionally for 13.1% of them. For 39.3% of those who answered the questions in the questionnaire consider that a working mother can be as caring for her children as a housewife, almost all the time, 34.4%, always and 25.7% occasional. This study highlights that 78.7% believe that either parents can take care of their children just as well, 21.3% believe that their mother takes better care of them. For 93.4%, an overwhelming percentage, believe that children can solve their problems only together with the family members, and 82% consider that they are the greatest joy of life. Among respondents, 56.1% consider that the physical changes that occur during the child's upbringing are often discussed in the family, 33.3% very often, and 10.6%, rarely.

The authority over the children in the contemporary family is equally divided between father and mother, for 56.7% of the respondents, the mother is the supreme authority for 23% and for 20.3% it is the father. Interactive games represent the dominant common activity within the family, for 37.7%, followed by prayers 16.4%, reading 11.5% and 34.4% for other activities. For 45.9%, the good mood in the family predominates almost all the time, 29.5% - always, and for 24.6% - occasional. Regarding grandparents’ involvement in raising children, for 29.5% they are occasionally involved, for 23%, often for 16.4% and never for 11.5%.

Table 2 shows the answers regarding family stability variable, especially aspects of intra-family parenting.

**Table 2**  
*Factors of family stability regarding children*

Family Stability	Always	Almost	Occasional
The care of the working women towards the children	34.4	39.3	25.7
Childcare by both parents	78.7	-	21.3

Family Stability	Always	Almost	Occasional
Children solve their problems only with family members	93.4	-	6.6
The statement by which children are the joy of life	82	9.8	8.2
Parental authority over children	56.7	23	20.3
Good mood in the family	29.5	45.9	24.6
Family discussions about the physical changes that occur during the upbringing of children	56.1	33.3	10.6
Daily time spent in the family	57.4	21.3	21.3
Total	61 respondents		

Among the values cultivated for children, the respondents mentioned: respect, sincerity, common sense, forgiveness, honesty, love, faith, kindness. For 57.4% of them devote more hours to spending time with the family, 21.3% - 6 hours, 21.3% - 4 hours, respectively. Compatibility with family members is appreciated as good by 63.9% and very good by 36.1%. The need to be with the loved ones during difficult times was felt by 57.4% of respondents, 23%, often, 9.8%, only sometimes and 8.2% rarely.

### Discussions

In the present study it was identified that an emancipation and equal distribution of roles regarding the responsibility of children's education, authority over children, involvement in household chores, which is similar to the one found in recent social studies undertaken by Apostu (2013), has led to the conclusion that 40% declare themselves traditional families, thus integrating the social inequality and the distribution of gender-based roles in their structure. However, Rada and Olson (2016) surprised, based on the analysis of the results obtained in a study conducted on 1215 participants from Bucharest, Satu Mare, Craiova, Dolj, and Arges, a transition from traditional to modern of the Romanian families.

The present study confirms the fact that women's financial independence is not a trigger for destabilizing the family, the same result being found by Dan and Vasilache's study (2009)



focused on social roles, wherein job proved to be more important (as it increases the family income) than spending time with children, to their social detriment. Currently, men seek satisfaction at work rather than within the family (Rada & Pănescu, 2016, p. 38).

In the present research, the main marital dissolution factor identified was the impact of parent's work abroad on children's emotional development which is similar to what was found by Muresan (2007): he states that in the European context, the demographic transition is oriented towards a society that highly values marriage and fertility, despite evidence of changes in family behaviour that accompanied the political and socio-economic changes after the fall of the communist regime. The most important cause of marital problems is material deprivation or lack of money, followed by household chores and children's behaviour. However, according to Popescu (2009), financial difficulties are considered to be the main cause of couples' problems, to a greater extent by men, in the context in which, in many families, the responsibility for providing economic resources in the household lies largely with them.

Other aspects identified in this study are similar to the results found by Niță and Grădinaru (2016) wherein values such as: respect, sincerity, common sense, forgiveness, honesty, love, faith, kindness, are among the ones promoted to children by their families.

## **Conclusions**

Given the mentioned aspects, it could be concluded that family is integrated in the society's, being increasingly conditioned by the economic and social change and, in turn, influencing the overall development.

Although a variety of family types coexist, some with an increasing frequency, the classical family remains the most widespread and most valued model. In general, the family is the aspect of life that offers Romanians the greatest satisfaction, followed by work and religion. Attachment to the family remains very high, occupying the first place in the hierarchy of values and being the field that continues to offer individuals the greatest satisfaction. The model of couple relationships and happy marriage is the romantic one, in which love remains the most important. Love must be doubled by solidarity between partners, mutual trust and support, mutual respect and understanding. The norm of fidelity remains particularly important in the Romanian family.

The present study concludes that aspects such as family harmony which is primarily represented by mutual respect, followed by fidelity between spouses. From the point of view of appreciating the couple's relationship, the partners consider that most of the time they understand each other well, and problems in the relationship appear on the background of nervousness, followed by criticism, jealousy and lack of communication. The partners are satisfied with the degree of involvement in household chores and do not regret the experience of marriage. As already noted, Kovács (2015) also agree that Romanians have long preferred an egalitarian marriage, but share household labour in a deeply unequal fashion, with the vast majority of women responsible for most domestic work and care responsibilities most of the time.

The conservative orientation from a family point of view, characteristic to Romanians, is also visible through the attitude towards divorce. Although the most important thing in a marriage is love, its absence is not as important a reason for the two to separate. The present survey indicates the majority belief that partners won't be ready to divorce unless they have exhausted all options for reconciliation.

Children are also a priority, the greatest wealth of the family, which outlines a balanced, conservative, traditional image of the Romanian family. Society's tendency towards conservatism and implicit traditionalism does not necessarily lead to new social challenges, but rather to a

behavioural, attitudinal review of couple and family relationships, an adaptation to digitalization and a deep involvement in economic ascension through the judicious use of Earth's resources.

As an EU country, Romania is socio-economically integrated through the approached policies and the involvement of the forums in developing a good approach of prosperity. Spending precious time with the family and paying for tasks appropriate to social roles are paramount in the socio-family context. The development of children's personality in socially well-established families that are able to provide all the resources for integration into the future Romanian society aims to be perceived as a quality living standard. The involvement of state institutions in helping disadvantaged families to increase the standard of living and education is one of the most important social policies. At the same time, the development of the IT industry through advanced technology facilitates society's adaptation to new social programs, with the ease with which state institutions can solve inherent problems.

Attachment to the family remains very high, occupying the first place in the hierarchy of values and being the field that continues to offer individuals the greatest satisfaction. The model of couple relationships and happy marriage is the romantic one, in which love remains the most important. Love must be doubled by solidarity between partners, trust and mutual support, mutual respect and understanding. The norm of fidelity remains particularly important in the Romanian family.

Childhood is a very important period in the life of any person, being emotionally charged by family ties, which are considered the most important aspect in terms of the good development of the child. In the first part of life, the child is influenced by the environment in which he lives, the emotional experience having a significant importance in his physical and mental development. This survey can be a wake-up call in showing that raising children by one parent only, the partner being abroad at work, can lead to impairments in children's emotional development.

More couples are being separated by work. Spouses left at home have to deal with decisions to make, the child rearing and discipline and spouses not at home feel out of touch with family (Tessina, 2008, p. 6).

Regardless of the mother's social status, she takes care of the children almost all the time, but the study shows that both parents can take care of them just as well and together they can solve problems related to the children. Even authority over children is equally supported by parents according to contemporary family in the present study. During their time together, parents cultivate values in their children, the basis of psycho-social development.

Therefore, the quality of life of the child refers to the social welfare of the family to which he belongs. The concept of "quality of life" being a multidimensional one, includes a series of areas, respectively: material living conditions, health, housing, family life, relationships with the community in which he lives.

In the current highly modern society, lifestyle is more often mentioned as something the people need to change in order to achieve a sustainable development. The main interest of persons is then how to create and change a lifestyle. According to Jensen (2007), people may have a foundation for a mechanism underlying the creation and change of lifestyle in relation to terms like beliefs, desires, intentions, habits and artefacts.

Due to the progress made by family, there is now a better understanding of family functions, couple formation, marital roles and gender differences, the mediating role of the parental network, the relationships and transmissions between generations (Matei & Enache, 2021, p. 97).

For each social class, quality has a different definition in relation to the way of life with which it is accustomed. Regardless of the social condition in which each child lives, it would be

ideal for him/her to be happy, because the feeling of happiness comes from the peace, fulfilment and, in children's particular situation, from the safety offered by the parents' care.

From an economic point of view, families have learned to live together while preserving nature, they have a different perspective on the development of society, even if there are many regrets and memories. The transition led to the formation of well-cohesive families, respecting the individual values and using the resources of each individual, but common to the family aiming to increasing the standard of living and complementary education. Using only a sample of population limited to the city of Constanta, the present survey did not consider the multicultural aspect of families residing in Romania, thus future studies could focus on researching traditional families amidst multicultural backgrounds existing in the country.

For a family to have an union, it would be necessary for the couple to have empathy and assertiveness, for both partners to participate in the family's economic well-being, as well as in the education of children, cultivating value, moral-ethical aspects through spending free time in the family, precious way. Family values have a special contribution in the stability of the Romanian family; they are transmitted trans-generationally and adapted according to the development of modern society.

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