

Psycho-Socio-Professional Aspects of Foster Care in Romania

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Abstract

Introduction: This paper represents a part of a research that is intended to support the family from the child protection system. We wanted to bring benefits through the implementation of standardized methods and techniques, by using uniform work practices: the validation of assessment, selection and personal optimization of foster parents who take care in their family substitutes of children deprived of parental care.

Objectives: The need for research lies in the socio-economic needs and functional context of the foster care system that lead to de-professionalization, stiffness, routine and lack of performance, efficiency and quality, so necessary in the context of a job involving the deepest part of a human. The nature of the research is holistic and aims in all stages of the foster parent the evaluation and selection, training and development of the people involved in children care. Thus, the need to develop a profile of the efficient foster parent instruments used in the research were highlighted in order to perform a psychodiagnostic evaluation, the subsequent selection and training which empower these families to successfully integrate the children in placement.

Method: In order to build the efficient foster parent profile, we considered that four psychosocial factors may complete the picture of professional efficiency for the optimal integration of the children within the foster family. These factors are: **personality traits, couple relationship, parenting skills and the professional efficiency of the foster parents**. We used four diagnosis/evaluation tools in order to achieve this optimal profile: NEO PI-R Personality Inventory; DAS - Dyadic Adjustment Scale; CCP Inventory - Questionnaire for investigating parental competence; Professional self-sheet for the standard occupational foster parent.

Results: The results allowed us to analyze the classification level in the psycho-socio-professional profile of the evaluated foster parents. The relevant aspects of the deviation from this profile are the facets of the neuroticism factor. A significant percentage of foster parents showed high average scores for one or more facets such as anxiety, anger/hostility, depression, shyness, impulsiveness or vulnerability to stress. At the same time, self-esteem and assertiveness were low rated, while the conscientiousness was high rated.

Conclusions: These professional foster parents need emotional support; they need to express themselves, to know themselves, to become more open, assertive and self-confident. They need time to connect with themselves, to understand the professional and family context, to understand themselves in this context, to identify their own resources and capabilities in order to successfully adapt to the role of efficient foster parents. They need personal optimization.

Keywords: foster parent, assessment, psycho-socio-professional profile, efficiency, personal optimization

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I. Introduction

Every person, child or adult, belongs to someone, to a family. Of course we want to grow up in a secure environment, with unconditional love from both parents. However, each of us is unique. We have our own destiny and live in less “ideal” families. Maybe we just brought over an old grandmother, maybe our parents are violent, maybe we only live with our mother or we never met our biological parents. But each of us has the right to grow up, learn or live in families that care about us, help us and love us. Family, the child's first environment, exerts a considerable influence on his future development throughout life. The environment supports every child's birthplace. Environment also means the place in which he grows up. The separation from his family is traumatic for a child, for various reasons. Certainly, each family's history and specific needs offer uniqueness to each person and a note of its own to each family, thus helping to shape the child's and the future adult's personality profile. How beautiful is the role that a parent has: to unconditionally love his biological child, adopted child or the child who is there in that family, in that moment to get the love he needs.

Parenting, seen as the capacity of each adult to care, love and educate his natural, adopted or foster care children, is the capacity of the human being who is born and develops naturally and normally, within each of us. As children, we received this blessing of love and protection from those we call family members and as adults we pay it forward to our children. I wonder if the innate nature is enough to exercise the parental role in a changing society, in which children have permanent access to information, the media influence translates into promoting actual values and norms that forces them to adopt. Significant changes in the social environment, deprivation of family environment and family conflicts are more acute and the parents are more often heard wondering “I do not know how to behave with my baby or children.”

Studies show that parents have a key role in all aspects of the child's development and the parental role has a major impact on the child's chances to reach his full development potential. The child's development depends on the quality of the relationship between him and the parent. Affectionate relationships enhance appreciation, which leads to an increased self-esteem level and to the optimal development of the child. Each child is unique and has his own rhythm of development. Parents are unique too. Couple relationships and parenting are unique and different, so every adult needs to know the child's personality very well in order to meet his individualized needs.

There are situations when the biological parents

are unable or unwilling to assume the responsibility of caring for their children. Therefore, children from these families face the risk of abandonment and the separation trauma has profound repercussions on the child's personality, the more so if the child remains institutionalized. Separation from parents, whether it is a long-term or short one, together with the lack of a secure family environment, represent a major emotional trauma and imbalance for the child in this situation. Abandonment is an extreme form of separation. The child can then be integrated in a foster family (relatives up to the fourth degree, neighbors, foster parent) as a temporary form of protection or in an adoptive family as a permanent form. The optimal environment for the child, other than the one of the biological family, is his closest biological core, in terms of ethnicity, traditions and cultural patterns, but also an environment that offers emotional stability and long-term attachment. In turn, substitute families, with the role to care, raise and educate a child, are “mediators” between the child, community and society.

In order for a child, who is temporarily in a foster family, to be able to adapt to the family when the situation is optimal for him, it is important for his relationships with his biological and foster family, the relationships between the family and the biological parents, siblings, grandparents etc. to be positive. Moreover, it is equally important to maintain those parts of the child, such as the “biological family, biological parents and foster family, substitute parents”. The tendency to replace the term “substitute parent” with “foster parent” is preferable for a child to understand the roles and the temporary placement relationships he has with the adults in his life at some point. The focus should be on maintaining the relationships with the biological family. In legal terms, this is considered to be a major goal for the substitute family and here comes the collaboration between these two family structures. The foster family is complementary and cannot replace the relationships with the biological parents.

Theoretical framework

About foster parenting in Romania

Seen as alternatives to institutionalization, child protection and special assistance services are temporarily or permanently deprived of the family environment and adopted as mandatory by Romania, a signatory of the UN Convention on the Child's Rights.

In its content, the act states it can ensure the children protection in a substitute family or an adoptive family at the expense of care in a residential center. The principle of primacy of the family, expressed as a fundamental right of the child, had significant effects on alternative protection policies.

Therefore, foster care as a modern form of child protection, of family type, appeared for the first time in

the Romanian legislation in the Government Emergency Ordinance no. 26/1997 on the protection of children in difficulty, amended and supplemented. Currently, the Ordinance is repealed by developing a much improved and strictly worded legislation on foster care issues: Law no. 272/2004 on the protection and promotion of the child's rights and Order no. 35/2003 regarding the mandatory minimum standards for the child's protection that a professional foster parent must comply with.

Foster care is a form of optimal protection for the child in difficulty, a preferred alternative to residential care, given the importance of the family environment for the child's physical, emotional and intellectual development because it enables the sense of security and belonging. Alternative family institutions were a step forward in the attempt to replace the traditional state institutions because they satisfy more individual needs specific to each child.

The negative effects of institutionalization on the children's psychomotor development and socio-affective relationships are no longer a novelty. Child care institutions proved to be not only ineffective in respect of the children's individual rights and needs, but also extremely expensive, as the care costs of a child in an institution exceed, in most cases, 3-4 times the care costs of a child raised in an ordinary family.

The temporary family care as a mean of social policy action, the best alternative to institutionalization, offers care in a family environment for the children separated from their own family, in order to meet their physical, psychological and social needs. There is a wide variety of situations in which children and families cannot live together due to structural factors such as poverty, natural disasters or personal factors, disease, abuse or abandonment.

The rejected and abandoned child has potential for a good future, if there is a professional foster parent to make a conscious choice to provide affectionate care. Affectionate care cannot be mandated by the job. It must come from the heart and a very deep emotional commitment to care for and educate the children entrusted and this is why foster care is a special and complex job.

Foster parent is a professional, certified person, who takes care of one or more children in his home. He operates under a certificate issued by the Commission for the Child's Protection and valid for three years. Based on this certificate, a trained foster parent receives foster children and offers them individual and personalized attention.

Identifying the needs in the foster care system

Although in the early 2000s when very big

care institutions still existed, with hundreds of children growing up in inhumane conditions, foster care emerged as one of the most positive and best alternative to institutionalization. Foster care was initially implemented by NGOs to achieve a qualitative social activity and provide emotional support to children by placing them both in families and to women who could take care of them, who were adequately paid for their services.

The protection alternative to foster care in Romania has expanded: there are now about 250 county foster parents and people who take care of one or more children. Thus, a series of failures began: the large number of foster parents compared with social workers or psychologists from protection institutions; obligation to take into care two or three children, some of them with special needs, lowering wages by 25% for each child, even if there are two or three of them in care, constant lack of support specialists etc.

Taking into account that over the last years, more and more people have left the country to get a decent income, foster parents learned the way to earn their living and began to give up their jobs and the children taken in care, who ultimately ended up in institutions. Because of legislative changes and given the fact that most foster parents are women aged over forty, some of them retired, they had to either give up remuneration after retirement, or being a foster parent, which included the child/children in their care. Therefore, a large number of children went back into foster care.

Therefore, the lack of motivation, the worries and family problems of the foster parents and the stress of the crisis in the alternative childcare system lead to the negligence of the culminating event of illness or death. At this point, the foster parent is no longer regarded as a professional, but rather as a person who must be monitored and controlled in order not to harm the children in their charge state.

Under these conditions, this alternative to the institutionalization of the child that is known to provide an optimal environment for the physical, emotional and intellectual development of the children in care has come to have a negative impact on all those involved. Foster parents are not emotionally supported and helped to overcome all the problems with confidence. They are monitored and supervised with the purpose of control and not with support and collaboration, which affects the children's optimal development.

Given the complexity of the "professional parent" occupation, permanent foster parents are people involved in this activity, trying to establish a balance between the professionalism required by industry standards and their own feelings and behavioral patterns, while determining the authorities

to hire and be aware of the implications of the other members of the natural family, the “professional-parent” foster parent - foster child relationship.

Following a project launched in 2006 by the National Authority for the Child’s Protection and the Institute for Care and Welfare of the Netherlands - Netherlands Institute of Care and Welfare, and the International Organization of substitute care - International Foster Care Organization which has performed an evaluation of the foster care in our country, some of the needs identified in the national foster care system were:

- The required professional training of the foster parents, especially those who take in care children with special needs. The training must be tailored to the child’s age and cultural and social identity;
- The selection criteria of the foster care professionals need to be modified and adapted to the children’s development needs;
- The support offered by psychologists is low and difficult to achieve, given that the number of specialists employed by social assistance and child protection services is insufficient, especially those dealing with the children’s assessment and individual counseling. In the context of change and diversification of the system, more professionals are needed in order to increase the number of children with special needs placed in foster care;
- The need for respite was unanimously accepted, especially for the foster parents who took in care children with special needs.

Elements of the assessment and initial training of the foster parents

The evaluation and initial training of the foster parents is very important, depending on the type of the children’s optimal integration within the family. The initial curricula include only items/information such as child’s protection and child’s rights, child’s growth and development and the role and place of the professional foster parent services system.

Meanwhile, regarding their psychological evaluation, as we all know, a serious assessment and diagnosis are necessary, before they can be certified as future foster care family. Malpractice cases of children entrusted to families were properly covered and evaluated because the legislation leaves room for interpretation by assigning a secondary contributing psychologist in the initial assessment of the foster parent and family.

Empirical issues based solely on observation, advice and visit are not enough to observe the material. It takes an interdisciplinary team’s and a psychologist’s intervention to assess the aspects of the foster parent’s personality and his family, his couple relationship,

parental role, motivational and behavioral issues etc. by using standardized tools.

Therefore, the child temporarily deprived of parental care or home use a placement as a foster parent, enters its family environment and any novelty and change in a family environment brings a malfunctioning family dynamic networking.

In practical evaluation, foster parents know that psychologists are involved in the assessment process. A survey conducted in several institutions employing foster parents has shown that there are different procedures and tools for diagnosis and assessment at the discretion, experience and ability of the psychologist or psychologists. In some institutions, the assessment is done externally, as the foster parents are being sent to various psychological practices.

There are many variables when it comes to assessing foster parents, but a psycho-diagnosis and an effective foster parent profile can be achieved as a result of the standardized assessments, so that we do not encounter cases of child abuse and maltreatment in these families.

As an overview of the norms and standards of the foster care work, in terms of assessing foster parents, there are issues that need improvement:

- The mandatory psychological evaluation is not clearly stipulated;
- There isn’t a standardized framework of methods, techniques and tools for the evaluation and selection of the prospective foster parents;
- There isn’t a clear and unified procedure throughout the country, regarding the psychological assessment and continuous professional evaluation of the foster parent and his family.

If the curriculum of the training courses for foster families includes the number of training hours for foster parents to be certified and chapters on the general knowledge structure that foster parents must have, the occupational standard appeared in 2004 brought s to the fore, as in any profession, the skills the foster parent needs to acquire by completing the training; once acquired they will have to apply them in their daily work. Foster parent skills are limited to the growth, care, education and integration of the child into the foster parent’s family, maintaining the relationship with the child’s birth family, foster family, and of course appropriate employer. Some units of competency include developing knowledge and skills, competence unit whose elements are: identifying training needs, participation in training courses and also to properly apply the acquired knowledge.

As with any occupation, the foster parent’s duties, tasks and responsibilities, which meet both

standard and legal acts on foster parent status and mandatory minimum standards to protect the child in foster care. Continuous training regards only the aspects of improving their professional knowledge and not the elements of personal development as psycho-emotional and behavioral optimization professional foster parent.

On the one hand, we satisfied this need for knowledge and personal development strongly expressed by all the participants in the study on foster care. On the other hand, we dealt with the lack of time available for such an activity, which is considered necessary, but it is not required by the professional standards.

Therefore, we can see that the occupational standard of the job consists in a professional foster parent who must have knowledge and skills about raising and educating children. This job, however, is special, because these people do not leave their work duties at 4 o'clock PM at the front door of their houses and cannot only be perfect professionals from whom you ask only occupational standard rules because they "work" with souls, emotions, feelings, deep feelings of abandonment and separation. They are the ones who "foment the wounds" of the soul for the children who go through traumas that many of us find it difficult to understand.

Practice foster parents can say that the people called foster professional who work in their own family environment, have many roles: they are couple partners, parents, natural parents for the children in care and women with feelings, emotions, needs and desires, so they no longer have time to care, "to think about them."

Regarding the foster care practice, the dynamic stay of a child in family issues and socio-economic context, we can identify certain needs that the foster parent has and we call them *generic optimization needs of professional behavior*.

Thus, based on occupational standards, which clearly state the proper training for foster parents, we aim to bring the missing piece of the broader puzzle of the foster parents' continuous professional training, namely the focus on the psycho-emotional needs of the foster parent which is understood by default as the more efficient and harmonious integration of the children within substitute families.

Therefore, the foster parent has to turn to the ongoing need for training self-expression, self-analysis and understanding himself and the others, and the optimization of the professional behavior is simply optimizing what it is, by joining the parental role harmoniously and effectively with the professional requirements for the degree of satisfaction, with a

family life to grow in and thus all family members feel fully integrated.

II. Objectives

Main objective: Building a psycho-socio-professional profile of the efficient foster parent for the optimal integration of the child/children within the foster care.

Specific objectives:

1. To study the psycho-socio-professional factors involved in the efficient functioning of the foster parent;
2. To study the correlations between the psycho-socio-professional specific factors of the efficient foster parent.

Research hypotheses

The general hypothesis: The psycho-socio-professional aspects, such as the foster parents' personality traits, couple relationship, parenting skills and professional efficiency and the correlations established in these studied variables, determine the optimal efficient foster parent profile.

Derived hypotheses:

1. The foster parent has a specific personality picture that determines the character of his efficiency;
2. The features of the couple relationship influence the foster parent's functional efficiency;
3. The parental competence influences the character of the foster parent's efficiency;
4. The professional efficiency influences the foster parent's efficient character;
5. There is a significant correlation between the foster parent's personality factors and his couple relationship;
6. There is a significant correlation between the foster parent's personality factors and his parental competence;
7. There is a significant correlation between the foster parent's personality factors and his professional efficiency.

Participants: The research sample consisted of 56 foster parents. We selected foster parents who were part of legally constituted couples, because we believe that every child needs to grow up in a family where both parents can be role models for the children through assumed and exercised parental roles.

The foster parents were selected according to the following criteria: nuclear family, children's age, number of children in placement, children with special needs (disabled or HIV infected), rural and urban area.

III. Methods

Following the desire to achieve a profile of efficient foster parent, we considered four psychosocial factors might complete this picture of efficiency for optimal integration of children in the foster family.

These factors are: **personality traits, couple relationship, parenting skills and professional efficiency of the foster parents.**

In order to achieve the objectives, verify the hypotheses and to achieve the optimal psycho-socio-professional profile of the foster parent, we used four diagnosis/evaluation tools: the NEO PI-R

Personality Inventory, DAS - Dyadic Adjustment Scale, CCP Inventory - Questionnaire for investigating parental competence, professional self-sheet standard occupational for the professional foster parent.

Table 1 - Psycho-socio-professional factors and psycho-diagnostic instruments related

Psycho-socio-professional factors	Psycho-socio-psycho-diagnostic tool
Personality Traits	NEO PI-R. Personality Inventory
Couple relationship	Dyadic Adjustment Scale DAS
Parenting skills	C.C.P. Inventory - Questionnaire investigation of the parenting skills
Professional efficiency	Professional self-assessment sheet

Here are the four factors that make up the psycho-socio-professional profile of the efficient foster parent. They show the optimal limits needed to fit these factors for the efficient psycho-socio-professional foster parent.

A. Personality Traits

The specific personality picture of the efficient foster parent is presented by taking into consideration the five personality traits : Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E), Openness (D), Agreeableness (A), Conscientiousness (C) , as follows:

Table 2 - Requirements for the standard factor personality traits in the efficient foster parent's profile

PERSONALITY TRAIT	Facets for each dimension	REQUIREMENTS - Efficient foster parents
Neuroticism (N)	1. ANXIETY	The efficient foster parent is a calm, relaxed, confident and optimistic person.
	2. ANGER/HOSTILITY	The efficient foster parent is a nice, kind and gentle person.
	3. DEPRESSION	The efficient foster parent is a reliant, self-confident person, satisfied with his life.
	4. SHYNESS (SELF-CONFIDENCE)	The efficient foster parent is a self-assured and confident person.
	5. IMPULSIVITY	The efficient foster parent is a controlled person who tolerates frustration and delay better. He has the ability to offer more easily gratuities, to master his desires and impulses.
	6. VULNERABILITY TO STRES	In times of crisis, the efficient foster parent is lucid, self-assured, confident, operative and vigilant.
Extraversion (E)	1. AFFECTIONATE	The efficient foster parent is an affectionate, friendly, cordial, sociable, cheerful and open person.
	2. GREGARIOUS SPIRIT	The efficient social worker is a sociable, open, spontaneous person, who appreciates the company of other people.
	3. ASSERTIVENESS	The efficient foster parent is an assertive person, who knows how to communicate assertively, expressing feelings without offending any party.
	4. POSITIVE EMOTIONS	The efficient foster parent is an optimistic and spontaneous person, who feels the joy of life.
Openness (D)	1. FANTASY	The efficient foster parent is an imaginative and creative person, but at the same time rooted in reality.
	2. FEELINGS	The efficient foster parent is a person receptive to his own and others' emotions and feelings.
	3. VALUES	In terms of social, political and religious values, an efficient foster parent is a person who combines a conservative vision with openness to new values.

Agreeableness (O)	1. TRUST	The efficient foster parent is a person who generally believes that those around him are honest and well-intentioned; he is forgiving and believes in others.
	2. HONESTY	The efficient foster parent is an open, frank/honest and consistent person.
	3. ALTRUISM	The foster parent is a cordial, compassionate, gentle, generous, gentle and tolerant person.
	4. COMPLIANCE	The efficient foster parent is a patient, tolerant and non-aggressive person.
	5. MODESTY	The efficient foster parent is a self-confident but at the same time a modest person.
	6. MEEKNESS AND EMPATHY	The efficient foster parent is friendly, cordial, empathetic, compassionate and gentle.
Conscientiousness (C)	1. COMPETENCE	The efficient foster parent is a, self-confident, resourceful, and confident person.
	2. ORGANIZED	The efficient foster parent is a well-organized, ordered and efficient person.
	3. SENCE OF DEBT	The efficient foster parent is a person who adheres to his ethical principles and has a balanced a sense of debt.
	4. SELF-DISCIPLINE	The efficient foster parent is an energetic, serious and hardworking person, with an enhanced capacity to motivate others to carry out what they have started.
	5. DESIRE OF ACHIVEMENT	The efficient foster parent is a conscious, ambitious, hardworking, enterprising, determined, confident and persevering person.
	6. DELIBERATION	The efficient foster parent is a person who meditates; he is cautious, aware of the consequences of his actions, but on the other hand, he is able to make quick and spontaneous decisions when necessary.

B. Relationship in couple

The influence of the couple relationship feature on the efficiency of the foster parent’s family functioning was measured with the Dyadic Adjustment Scale – DAS and the quality assessment of the couple relationship was measured depending on the following

four aspects of the relationship: dyadic satisfaction (DS), dyadic cohesion (Dcoh), dyadic Consensus (DCON) and affective expression (AE). Thus, for the efficient foster parent, the for the 4 dimensions of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale must range between the average and maximum limits .

Table 3 - Standard Requirements factor for the couple relationship in the efficient professional foster parent’s profile

Couple relationship aspects	ITEMS	STANDARD REQUIREMENTS FOR EFFICIENT FOSTER PARENTS
Dyadic satisfaction (DS)	Tension, frustration in the couple relationship, the current state of relationship satisfaction and commitment to its continuation	For the efficient foster parent, the dyadic satisfaction factor value (DS) is medium to maximum, which indicates that frustration and tension torque is low or nonexistent.
Dyadic cohesion (DCoh)	Common interests, activities shared by the couple members.	For the efficient foster parent, the dyadic cohesion factor value (Dcoh) is medium to maximum, which indicates that the couple share interests and activities.
Dyadic consensus (DCON)	Understandings between partners regarding money, friendships, household chores, time spent together etc.	For the efficient foster parent, the dyadic consensus factor (DCON) value is medium to maximum, which shows that in the couple relationship there is an optimal degree of agreement between partners on important factors.
Emotional expression (AE)	Expressing affection and sexuality.	For the efficient foster parent, the affective expression factor (AE) that measures the satisfaction of the person to express affection and sexuality in the couple relationship has a medium to high value.

C. Parenting skills

Considering that the effective functioning of the foster families is influenced by the parental competence factor, the 5 dimensions of this factor can be considered as abilities of the trained foster parent,

that contribute to the effective networking and optimal integration of the children in placement. The following tables show the standard level of parental competence, with each value as follows:

Table 4. Standard CCP dimensions (Glăveanu, S., 2012, p. 162)

DIMENSIONS	Manifestation level		
	Low	Medium	Increased
Knowledge	17-39	40-62	63-85
Emotional support and stress management	17-39	40-62	63-85
Disciplinary	19-44	45-70	71-95
Time management	14-32	33-51	52-70
Crisis Management	14-32	33-51	52-70

The table below shows the five dimensions of the parenting skills factor: knowledge, emotional support and stress management, time management,

crisis management, discipline. At the same time, it shows their optimal level as required by the psycho-socio-professional profile of the efficient foster parent.

Table 5 - Standard requirements factor in parental competence profile of the efficient foster parent

PARENTING Dimensions	ITEMS	STANDARD REQUIREMENTS FOR THE EFFICIENT foster parent
1. Knowledge	The acknowledgement of the child's development stages depending on his age, understanding the child's needs.	The efficient foster parent knows the child's development, according to his age and his level of development. He can explain the child's reactions, understand his needs and may formulate appropriate responses.
2. Emotional support and stress management	Prevention and management of family stress, providing an emotional support.	The efficient foster parent has the ability to know and use efficient ways to prevent and cope with family stress He knows how to handle tense situations and provides emotional support to help the child manage negative emotions.
3. Time Management	Determining the quality and quantity of the time spent with the child, coordinating/directing the child.	The efficient foster parent has the ability to determine the quality and quantity of the time spent with the child and the ability to coordinate/manage the spare time of the child.
4. Crisis Management	Finding solutions to the child's problems.	The efficient foster parent has the ability to be a good leader, to find solutions to problems with this child and to overcome critical, educational or personal situations.
5. Discipline	Assertive communication, proper management of the reward -punishment system.	The efficient parent's ability to communicate efficiently and assertively, to adequately manage the reward-punishment system, allowing the development of all the potentiality of a harmonious personality.

D. Professional efficiency

Taking into account that the professional efficiency of the foster parent is one of the important factors that create a complete profile of psycho-socio-

professional occupational standard, we identified certain items specified according to basic, general and specific skills.

Table 6 - Standard requirements of the professional efficiency factor in the professional foster parent profile – EFFICIENT

A. SELF-ASSESSMENT ELEMENT OF THE PROFESSIONAL FOSTER PARENT'S EFFICIENCY ACCORDING TO THE PROFESSIONAL OCCUPATIONAL STANDARDS		
PROFESSIONAL SELF-EVALUATION DIMENSIONS	ITEMS	THE STANDARD of the efficient foster parent
FUNDAMENTAL COMPETENCES	Planning one's own work	Daily activities with the child/children in placement are planned Activities are designed to provide the child care and stimulation Prioritization can be done by taking into account the child's abilities and needs The daily schedule is adjusted according to needs and new situations
	Develop one's own knowledge and skills	Knows how to identify personal training needs Participates in training courses Applies the knowledge acquired during the training The knowledge acquired is used to increase the efficiency and quality of the services offered to the children Permanent documentation on new methods and techniques

		of child care and education
	Teamwork	Collaborates with other specialists of the multidisciplinary team Establishes goals in the professional activity with other team members according to the child's characteristics Informs the team about any changes in the child's situation Communication is carried out in a clear and accessible manner
GENERAL COMPETENCES	Life skills of the children	Provides the child with a customized, secure, functional and aesthetic space Ensures that the living space is clean and adequate to the child's particularities Develops the child's personal hygiene habits Identifies the child's capabilities and stimulates verbalization in order to acquire the language correctly Knows the principles, norms and values of the society Ensures that the child acquires the principles, norms and values of the society Identifies the child's aptitudes and skills Stimulates the child's formation of skills and abilities, assisting him in their use
	Observance of the children's rights	Identifies the aspects of the children's health Monitors the child's health Knows and applies critical intervention procedures
	Observance of the children's rights	Knows the rights of the children in foster care Respects the rights of the children in foster care Intervenes if the child's rights are violated
SPECIFIC COMPETENCES	1. Integration of the child into the foster parent's family	Knows ways to integrate the children from foster cares in their own family Identifies ways to integrate the children depending on their particularities Chats with other team members about how to integrate the children Provides a non-discriminatory treatment in relation to other members of the family Identifies situations/cases that may affect the optimal integration of the child within his family Finds solutions to the crisis Completes integration of immigrants crises arising in the optimal child in the family
	2. Child's integration into the social life	Has knowledge about the social integration of the children in foster care Identifies ways of social integration according to the particularities of the child The multidisciplinary team of social integration arrangements Ensures the active participation of the children in society, respecting the decisions of leisure Supports the child in liaising with friends and stimulates the development of new relationships Requests assistance from the multidisciplinary team in solving the child's maladjustment in society

	<p>3. Assisting the child in his education</p>	<p>Identifies the educational needs of the child according to the particularity Discusses the child's educational needs with the multidisciplinary team Has knowledge of the child's competence and performance in education Provides adequate, hygiene compliant spaces for conducting lessons. Participates in homework supervision, meetings with parents and other school activities, carried out in accordance with the child's needs</p>
	<p>4. Communicating with the child in placement</p>	<p>Has knowledge of age-appropriate communication arrangements of children in foster Has knowledge of the assessment of the child's development stage, in terms of communication skills Uses language in accordance with the child's identified communication skills Has knowledge of how to identify a child's communication deficiencies Collaborates with the multidisciplinary team in order to identify deficiencies in the child's communication Has knowledge and communication skills to address the deficiencies identified in the child in placement Asks a specialist's support to overcome identified communication deficiencies</p>
	<p>5. Managing documents and documentation on the child</p>	<p>Participates in the preparation of papers and documents related to the child Prepares documents and reports about the child Keeps and files the documents related to the child</p>
	<p>6. Ensuring the child's integrity</p>	<p>Participates in the preparation of papers and documents related to the child Prepares documents and reports about the child Keeps and files the documents related to the child</p>
	<p>7. Ensuring a harmonious relationship with the natural or potential adoptive family.</p>	<p>Has knowledge of data analysis on the natural family or, where appropriate, on another family/person Participates in identifying the necessary actions to maintain the relationships with the natural family or, where appropriate, with another family/person Monitors and supports the maintenance of harmonious relationships with the child's natural family or, where appropriate, with another family/person Monitors and supports the maintenance of harmonious relationships with the child's natural family or, where appropriate, with another family/person</p>

III. Results

After applying the research instruments on 56 foster parents and after processing the data obtained from SPSS applied to the four psycho-socio-professional factors, the results are:

A. Results of the specific personality picture of the efficient foster parent, according to hypothesis no. 1

Regarding the specific personality picture of

the efficient professional foster parent, five personality factors were evaluated: neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, openness and conscientiousness.

- Results of the Neuroticism personality factor
 Regarding the neuroticism personality factor, which has 6 facets – anxiety, anger/hostility, depression, shyness, impulsiveness and vulnerability to stress – our results show that 75% of the foster parents comply to the psycho-social-professional profile of the

efficient foster parent, with variations from one facet to another and 25% do not fit in the profile, because their average values are high.

Each facet meets different variations of this factor and the results show that:

- About half of the foster parents have a medium to high level of anxiety;
- A quarter of the participants in the study show a medium to high level of anger;
- Less than half of the foster parents have a medium to high level of depression;
- More than half of the foster parents have a medium to high level of shyness, which is correlated with a large number of people who have achieved a high-level anxiety factor.
- Half of the foster parents have a medium to high level of impulsivity;
- More than half of the foster parents have a low level of vulnerability to stress.

▪ Results of the Extraversion personality factor

Regarding the extraversion personality factor, with its four facets – warmth, gregarious spirit, assertiveness and positive emotions – the results show that 35% of the foster parents comply to the psycho-social-professional profile of the efficient foster parent, with variations from one facet to another and 65% do not fit the profile.

Each facet meets different variations of this factor and the results show that:

- More than half of the foster parents have an average level of expressing the warmth facet;
- More than half of the foster parents have an average level of expressing the gregarious spirit facet, which leads to sociability and openness to others;
- For the Assertiveness facet, which considers self-confidence and the ability to express efficiency, only 20% of the AMP fit the high-level limit corresponding to the optimum profile, the rest of them obtaining average, low and very low values.
- For the positive emotions facet, only 25% fit the high level limit, corresponding to the optimal profile, the rest of them obtaining average, low and very low values.

▪ Results of the Agreeableness personality factor

Regarding the agreeableness personality factor, with its six facets – trust, honesty, altruism, compliance, modesty and gentleness – the results show that 75% of the foster parents comply with the psycho-socio-professional profile of the efficient foster parent, with variations from one facet to another.

Each facet meets different variations of this factor and the results show that:

- About three quarters of the foster parents have a high level of confidence and very high limits;
- More than half of the foster parents have an average level of honesty;
- Half of the foster parents have a high level of altruism;
- Three-quarters of the foster parents have evaluated the compliance level very high, which shows that there are people who obey the will of others;
- Three-quarters of the foster parents have a medium to high level of modesty, which demonstrates that they have a positive self-image;
- More than half of the evaluated foster parents show a high level of gentleness, which demonstrates that they are empathetic and gentle persons.

▪ Results of the Openness personality factor

Regarding the opening personality factor with its three facets – fantasy, feelings and values – the results show that 63% of the evaluated foster parents fit the psycho-socio-professional profile of the efficient foster parent, with variations from one facet to another and 37% do not fit in the profile.

Each facet meets different variations of this factor and the results show that:

- Although fantasy is the best facet that requires a balance between Reality and Imagination, the highest percentage obtained low scores, there is a low level of fantasy, creativity and a very clear anchor in reality;
- Three quarters of the evaluated foster care parents do not fit in the optimal profile in terms of feelings, which demonstrates that they are people who do not pay attention to others' personal emotional states;
- Shows an attitude of acceptance towards authority, the low-level values of the facet correlating with high levels of the compliance facet. Social workers tend to be more conservative and more cautious, being open to new values.

- Results of the Conscientiousness personality factor

Regarding the conscientiousness personality factor with its 6 facets – competence, order, sense of duty, desire to achieve, self-discipline and deliberation – the overall results and the results for each facet show that 50% of the foster parents comply with the psycho-socio-professional profile of the efficient foster parent, with variations from one facet to another.

Each facet meets different variations of this factor and the results show that:

- 73% of the foster care parents show a very high level of competence, which demonstrates that they are confident, perfectionist and professional people;
- More than half of the evaluated foster parents show a medium to high level of order, which demonstrates that they are organized, orderly and neat people;
- 78% of the evaluated foster parents show higher limits of the sense of duty level, which demonstrates that they are people who perform duties conscientiously ethically and morally;
- 71% of the evaluated foster parents show a medium to high level of the desire to achieve, which demonstrates that they aspire to achieve their goals.
- 87% of the evaluated foster parents show a medium to high level of self-discipline range, which demonstrates that people are motivated to carry out all the undertaken tasks; they are effective, hardworking and serious.
- 73% of the evaluated foster parents show a medium to high level of deliberation, which demonstrates that they are meditative, cautious and calculated people.

B. Results of the particularities of the couple relationship that lead to the foster parent's efficiency, according to hypothesis no. 2

Regarding the couple relationship of the foster parent, it is necessary for the four aspects of the relationship – dyadic satisfaction (DS), dyadic cohesion (Dcoh), dyadic Consensus (DCON) and affective expression (AE) – to be assigned medium to maximum limits in order to match the psycho-socio-professional profile of the efficient foster parent.

The overall results for the couple relationship variable and its four factors show that 87% of the foster care parents comply with the psycho-socio-professional profile of the efficient foster parent, 75% showing a high level and an average 12% and 13% of foster care did not fit in the optimal profile. This demonstrates that almost all foster parents have a good couple relationship.

C. Results of the parental competence factor influencing the functional efficiency of an efficient foster parent, according to hypothesis no. 3

Regarding the foster parent's parental competence factor, it is assumed that it sums up the results of its five dimensions: knowledge, emotional support and stress management, time management, crisis management and discipline, in order to have a high level. Given the overall parenting skills, we can say that 82% of the evaluated foster parents presented a high level of parenting skills and 18% only presented an average level.

D. Results of the professional efficiency of the foster parents, according to hypothesis no. 4

Regarding the professional self-standards in the field, the three types of skills – basic, general and specific – the results show that, for all the tested items of the self-assessment, the results obtained by the professional foster parents fall into the psycho-social profile – of an efficient professional foster parent. They have specific skills for the children's care, education and integration in the social life and in the family. They continuously improve their professional knowledge when they are required and implement the standard occupational responsibilities imposed on them.

E. Results of the correlation between the foster parent's personality factors and his couple relationship, according to hypothesis no. 5

There are results which show us that certain factors or facets/dimensions correlate with each other positively or negatively, which really demonstrates that there is a significant correlation between them. For example, like in the tables below:

Correlations

		Neuroticism	Dyadic satisfaction
Neuroticism	Pearson Correlation	1	-,417**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,001
	N	56	56
Dyadic satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	-,417**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,001	
	N	56	56

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

F. Results of the correlation between the foster parent's personality factors of and his parental competence, according to hypothesis no. 6

Regarding the correlation between the personality factors and parenting skills of the efficient

Correlations

		Neuroticism	Discipline
Neuroticism	Pearson Correlation	1	-,292*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,029
	N	56	56
Discipline	Pearson Correlation	-,292*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,029	
	N	56	56

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

G. Results of the correlation between the foster parent's personality factors and his professional efficiency, according to hypothesis no. 7

Regarding the correlation between the personality factors and professional efficiency of the foster parents, after analyzing them, we can say that there are certain factors or facets/dimensions that

Correlations

		Agreeableness	Dyadic satisfaction
Agreeableness	Pearson Correlation	1	,424**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,001
	N	56	56
Dyadic satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	,424**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,001	
	N	56	56

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

foster parent, after examining the factors, we can say that there are certain factors or facets/dimensions that correlate with each other positively or negatively, showing that there is significant correlation between them. For example, in the tables below, there is a negative correlation between the foster parent's neuroticism and the child's discipline or a positive correlation between agreeableness and emotional support and stress management:

Correlations

		Agreeableness	Emotional support and stress management
Agreeableness	Pearson Correlation	1	,335*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,012
	N	56	56
Emotional support and stress management	Pearson Correlation	,335*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,012	
	N	56	56

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). correlate with each other positively or negatively, which really demonstrates that there is significant correlation between them. For example, in the tables below, we see a positive correlation between the foster parent's confidence and the capacity to integrate optimally the child in his family:

Correlations

		Confidence	Child's integration the in family
Confidence	Pearson Correlation	1	,329*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,013
	N	56	56
Child's integration the in family	Pearson Correlation	,329*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,013	
	N	56	56

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Correlations

		Deliberation	Activities Planning
Deliberation	Pearson Correlation		,367**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,005
	N	56	56
Activities Planning	Pearson Correlation	,367**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,005	
	N	56	56

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

IV. Conclusions

Starting from all the needs identified in the protection system alternative to the residential one, we found a standard's concentration on what education and child care require, in compliance with the professional requirements; the adaption of the existing conditions in which the foster parents are required to make the minimum investment in children was highlighted. They have special needs and reward for their work remains at the same level as if they cared for one child. In these conditions, more and more parents are leaving the foster care system of child protection, even if they keep the child in their families in a simple foster, and the system cannot find another solution than the residential one.

To this end, this paper aims to emphasize the need for a standardized program for foster parents' evaluation and selection because in the absence of a natural family they receive the child in their family.

The four factors identified in order to build an efficient foster parent's profile that can ensure the children's optimal integration in the foster family-couple relationship, parenting skills, professional foster parent efficiency and personality traits were measured using standardized tools.

Thus, we hypothesized that the efficient foster parent presents certain specific personality traits that ensure the optimal integration of the child in the family and in the social life. The results show that after applying the test on the neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness personality features, quite a few foster parents have a high level of anxiety, depression or anger.

Moreover, self-esteem and assertiveness are low rated, but conscientiousness is high rated. Therefore, these professionals need emotional support; they need to express themselves, to know themselves, to become more assertive and self-confident.

Even if the self-assessment questionnaire for professional standards shows that the foster parents perform their job professionally, as required by standards and receive the support of the family, having a good overall couple relationship, the pressure of the professional requirements combined with family demands are felt in the psycho-emotional status of these special persons.

They need respite, unanimously mentioned by the authorities; we can see that the time spent just for them to connect with themselves, to understand the professional and family context, to understand themselves in this context, to identify their own resources and capabilities in order to successfully adapt to the role of efficient foster parents.

In line with the parental care and the professional requirements, we want to support the process of continuous training in the future and hence the acute need for supporting the foster parents through an innovative experiential program called *the personal optimization experiential module for foster parents*. This is about the need for personal development as part of educational programs for all foster parents based on the initial assessment results.

For an objective validation of the research, we will continue with another step, namely the re-evaluation of the target group, measured by psychodiagnostic tests and through a qualitative process, in which they would share their experiences and would assess the usefulness of the experiential personal optimization program.

These professional foster parents need emotional support; they need to express themselves, to know themselves, to become more open, assertive and self-confident. They need time to connect with themselves, to understand the professional and family context, to understand themselves in this context, to identify their own resources and capabilities in order to successfully adapt to the role of efficient foster parents.

They need personal optimization.

We would like this program to become a model of best practices and its usefulness to be recognized in the entire Romanian child protection system.

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