





### **Research: Roma children - school segregation by negative social representation**

The main purpose of this paper is to identify and analyse the social perceptions and representations that function at the level of the children majority regarding the Roma ethnicity children, as social determinant of school adaptation and maladjustment.

The main objectives underlined by this research are:

- ) The identification of relations established in the classroom, by following behaviours and reciprocal attitudes of Roma and the majority of children.
- ) The underlining and the measurement of the adaptation and integration degree of Roma children in the classroom collective and of the group cohesion.
- ) The verification of reduced acceptance possibility of Roma children in a classroom formed by a pupils' majority.
- ) The establishment of a correlation between negative social representations and a significantly reduced acceptance degree of Roma children by a collective majority.

In order to identify the acceptance degree of Roma pupils in the collective and to establish the psycho-social preferential value for each Roma ethnicity pupil, two classrooms from the primary level were observed and researched, respectively a preparatory level classroom and a 4th grade classroom, in order to cover age differences and the level of acceptance and tolerance gained during school years.

From the two classrooms a number of 41 subjects participated in this research, 7 of them being Roma children. The preparatory grade contains 22 pupils aged 5 to 7 years, 12 are males and 10 females, 1 girl being Roma. The study also contained 19 pupils from the 4th grade, 9 being males and 10 females, with ages between 9 and 11 years and 5 of them being Roma children, respectively 1 boy and 4 girls.

In order to attain the objective proposed the following working hypothesis had been formulated: The psycho-social preferential "popular" or "accepted" value is scarce among Roma ethnicity children. In order to verify this hypothesis the sociometric technique was used, this being realized by applying a sociometric test to the two primary school classrooms.



The sociometric test contains 2 items. For the first item each pupil is free to express the desire to spend their holiday in the company of three colleagues from his classroom, by naming them in the order to his or her preference. Item 1: If you were to go on a trip with your parents and you were allowed to choose three colleagues from your classroom to accompany you whom would you chose? Name the three colleagues in the ordered by preference.

Item 2 aims the identifying of the pupils rejected. Item 2: You go on a trip with your classroom colleagues and three colleagues don't have places in the bus. Whom would you prefer to leave at home?

When applying the test the following psycho-social preferential values were identified: "popular", "accepted", and "indifferent", "rejected".

The sociometric test was filled in after obtaining the approval from the classroom teacher at the end of a lesson. The pupils were supervised during the process of test completing, but not before offering verbal instructions and necessary explanations. The test was realized in 5-8 minutes. This procedure was applied for the 4th grade pupils. For the preparatory grade the application of the test was more difficult. Due to their small ages, the test was applied as a game. Keeping in mind the pupils' ages and the low level of instruction, the pupils' were first read the two questions then they were asked to fill in the names of the their colleagues, but individually. The children were told that the information given would remain a secret. The process was applied during 20 minutes.

For the data analysis and interpretation a sociometric matrix was used. The sociometric matrix was realized for each classroom investigated. The subjects (the pupils' initials) were written on the vertical and on the horizontal lines and for each pupil, his choices and his rejections were filled on the horizontal line and on the vertical line the total of choices and rejections received by each pupils from all pupils, calculating at the same time sociometric indexes and preferential status index. In order for this calculi to be possible points were offered according to the order of preferences or rejections, thus the first pupil in the top preference received (+3), the second (+2) and the third (+1) and for the rejection case the same system was used but with negative values thus: the first pupil rejected received (-3), the second (-2) and the third (-1). In order to calculate sociometric indexes (SSI) and the preferential status index (PSI) the specific formulas were used [1].



## Data Interpretation

### Preparatory class

In the sociometric matrix the Roma pupils from the preparatory grade can be followed according to the name initials: G.F (the initials of the Roma girl) and T.D (the initials of the Roma boy). The results obtained by Roma pupils, after the application of the sociometric test, had negative values. Thus, the Roma pupil G.D received 2 choices with a rate of 4 points and 5 rejections with a rate of -10 points. The two choices came from two girls from the majority group V. An, and P.R, both positioning the Roma girl on the second spot in their preference top. Based on the two choices the index of sociometric status was calculated thus obtain a value of 0,19. And according to her choices and rejections, to the rate points received (+2 and -10) she obtained the index of preference status of -0,28. With this preference status the Roma girl was. The Roma ethnicity boy T.D. was rejected by all the children in the classroom, because no one selected him to go in the trip. He received 21 rejections thus obtaining a rate of -46 points. Thus from the 21 pupils, 11 positioned him on the first spot of rejections and the other pupils (5-5) positioned him on the other two spots. The Roma ethnicity girl mentioned him on the third spot in the rejections top. Not being chosen by anyone, the index of sociometric status was 0 and the index of preferential status was - 2,19. By receiving two rejections he was completely excluded from the classroom collective. And in the table with psycho-social preferential values he occupied the first spot in the marginalized category, having the highest negative values. The points obtained by each pupil and the relations between them, their reciprocal choices and rejections can be observed in the sociometric matrix presented in table 1.1. The number of pupils from each preferential category can be observed in the following table.

### The 4th grade classroom

The five Roma ethnicity pupils were included in the sociometric matrix with the following initials: C. D; C. De; G. F; O. S and P. A. After the application of the sociometric test on five Roma ethnicity children obtained the following preferential values:

- ) Accepted – the psycho-social values obtained by the pupils C.D and C. D
- ) Indifferent - the psycho-social values obtained by the Roma boy O.
- ) Excluded – preferential type obtained by the two Roma pupils G.F and P.A



The presentation of results and points obtained by Roma ethnicity pupils is necessary to be made in this paper.

The pupil C. D receives two choices and no rejection. But both choices were offered by the two other Roma pupils C. De and G. F, and the rate obtained was of 5 points. The pupil C. De named C. D first in her preference list and the pupil G.F on the second place. As a result of these two choices she obtained the sociometric status of 0,11 and the index of preferential status of 0,27. The pupil C. De was chosen 2 times with a rate of 6 points and received only one rejection graded with one points. She was named first preference by the other two Roma ethnicity girls C. D and G. F and was rejected by one majority girl. Even if the two girls are included in the accepted category due to their two choices, the fact that they belong to a combined group and the majority didn't manifest any preference that included them, these girls are considered to also belong to the indifferent category. This situation results from the fact that the Roma girls preferred each other's company. The Roma boy was included in the indifferent category. He received 4 choices and 3 rejections with a rate of -5 points. He was on the list of the majority and on that of its Roma colleagues. According to the calculi realized he obtained a sociometric status index of 0,22 and a preferential status index due to rejections and no choices. The girls G. F. and P. A. obtained negative values, being excluded from the classroom collective. The pupil G. F received 2 choices with a rate of 3 points and 3 rejections with a rate of -5 points. The two choices were made by Roma girls, while rejections came from the majority group. If the two choices for the Roma girls were missing, the negative value obtained would have been higher as a result of the other 3 rejections and with a rate of -5 and due to the lack of preference from the majority group. The sociometric status index was of 0,11 and the preferential status index had a value of -0,11. The same negative value of the preferential index was also counted for pupil P. A who received one choice with a rate of 3 points and two rejections with a rate of -5 points. The 3 points were offered by her bench colleague, who is a part of the majority group, the other Roma colleagues didn't manifest any preference for her and not did she manifest for her other Roma colleagues, as a consequence of the fact that she was adopted by Romanian nationality persons and she denies her Roma belonging. The sociometric status index was of 0,05. The two rejections were offered by two of the majority girls and the others didn't manifest any preference. The Roma ethnicity boy obtained the sociometric status index with the highest value of 0.22 as a result of the 4 choices received. He was the only Roma pupil in the collective who had the most preferences, choices and rejections, received from the majority group. But the data obtained positioned him in the indifferent category. While the girls C. D and C. De were included



in the accepted category only for the two choices received from Roma pupils, while the pupils from the majority group didn't mention them (Table 1.2)

This research demonstrated a low level of acceptance of Roma pupils in a classroom of another majority of pupils and the establishment of a correlation between the negative social representations with a significantly reduced degree of acceptance of Roma pupils in a majority collective, regardless the level of the children classroom.

### **Conclusions**

The research summarized the numerous problems faced by the Roma ethnicity population, by identifying the problems from the educational environment [2]. The Roma ethnicity population is presently the most numerous ethnicity in Romania and the most controversial due to social prejudice and ethnical stereotypes largely shared by the entire population. And as a result of their manifestation, the Roma population is marginalized, stigmatized or victimized through discriminatory actions.

Educational problems faced by Roma ethnicity pupils are significantly serious. After a theoretical study it has been identified that a great part of the Roma population is illiterate or semi-illiterate in comparison to the majority of Romanian population. The greatest number of pupils that drop out of school are Roma and repentance and absenteeism is just as often met among Roma ethnicity pupils. Among the reasons that determine the apparition of these phenomena the following are referred to: reduced financial possibilities, family problems (work around the house for Roma children, the caring for younger siblings), deficient relations with the other pupils from the classroom [3], a defective affective climate form by the classroom as a result of the existence of social representation from the majority of pupils and a low level of acceptance and integration.

This research aims to identify the latter of the aspects presented, the identification and analysis of social perceptions and representations that function at the level of the majority regarding the Roma ethnicity pupils and as social determinants of school adaptation and maladjustment. After all data was processed the following conclusions were set:



- The existence of stereotypes in the classroom collective, the rejection or Roma pupils and the manifest of reciprocal hostile behaviours between the two nationalities.
- According to the sociometric test the Roma pupils were included in the excluded or in the indifferent category, and the acceptance degree is manifested only in the interior of the ethnical group.

A strong manifestation of social representations from the majority regarding the Roma children and a reduced acceptance degree in the classroom collective is observed. Regarding the Roma ethnicity, children perceive from small ages the inferior social and cultural level of this population expresses in the Romanian society. Thus, the majority of pupils' indifference for the knowledge of Roma customs and traditions was observed.

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