

## Summary

The habilitation thesis titled "Proactive Education and Evidence-Based Social Intervention as Factors in Optimizing Family and Professional Relationships" synthesizes scientific, academic, and professional achievements during the postdoctoral period since obtaining my doctoral degree in Sociology in 2011 at the University of Bucharest, under the supervision of Professor Poliana Ștefănescu and the professional, scientific and academic career development plan.

The structure of the thesis comprises two main parts:

- **Part I** includes postdoctoral scientific and teaching achievements, and also outlines the ability to coordinate research teams and organize educational activities based on research conducted between 2011-2025.
- **Part II** covers my educational and professional journey, along with a career development plan for professional, scientific, and academic growth.

The first part of the thesis, titled "Scientific, Academic, and Professional Achievements," aggregates the research activity organized according to thematic interests found in scientific publications, in two subchapters: 1) Parental Challenges in the Context of Vulnerable Families: An Integrative Approach to Parental Education and 2) Professional Practice and the Educational Role of Social Workers as Agents of Change.

### **1. Parental Challenges in the Context of Vulnerable Families: An Integrative Approach to Parental Education**

The major challenges facing the social system generate visible effects on the stability and unity of the family system, accentuating the vulnerabilities and cracks within it. This context marked by uncertainty often affects the parents' capacities to adapt to increasingly high and diverse individual and social demands. Classic approaches prove ineffective in managing complex situations such as cross-border families, substance use, families in dissolution, etc. Providing a predictable and secure environment for the child, maintaining the homeostasis of the family system, approaching with maturity and competence the emotional, psychological, physical, social, cultural, intellectual needs of the child or adolescent are the main responsibilities of the parental cup. Evidence shows that in this process of providing child care, the parent requires support, accompaniment and special intervention.

A significant share of the studies we have conducted to date refers to the issue of families in situations of vulnerability. In social work, the foster family is a topic of utmost importance. Virginia Satir stated: The family is a factory where people are made; if I know how to heal the family, I know how to heal the world. Starting from this premise, family-centered practice is based on the idea that the most effective way to support the development and well-being of families is to involve and empower

them. Parents, as architects of families, may find themselves unable to provide children with the optimal framework for development, and the family can form a vulnerable space, at risk for the child. Social realities in my country of origin, such as parental migration or high divorce rates that involve serious social costs, have led me to study more closely a variety of family configurations considered vulnerable from a psychosocial perspective.

A common theme of my studies is the concern for optimizing the parent-child relationship, as a source of well-being for the child and the family. Very frequently in these works we identified difficulties in the parent-child relationship, limits in understanding and managing challenges, inadequate parenting practices, coalitions and wrong treatments, not adapted to the child's personality. The idea emerged that proactive education, which involves effective participation, involvement in learning functional behaviors, practices, and parenting strategies, is the answer to these situations that generate vulnerability. Evidence-based social intervention, through the use of proactive education to optimize relationships within families, is the answer to the challenges within them.

The most important discoveries in this direction include:

a) Parental relationships, especially the single parent-adolescent relationship, or the challenges of single-parent families:

- Costin, A. (2014). Difficulties of exercising educative roles in single-parent families. *Educația Plus*, 10(1), 268-274;
- Costin, A. (2023). Patterns in children raised by single parents: A teacher view. *Educația Plus*, 32(1), 92-102.
- Costin, A. (2022). Findings about the Effects of Divorce on Children: A Review of the Literature. *Revista de Asistență Socială*, 21(4), 155-162. b) Parental practices in the context of adolescence and substance abuse prevention:
- Costin, A. (2022). Parental disciplinary practices seen through children's eyes. *Educația Plus*, 31(2), 35-45;
- Costin, A., & Roman, A. F. (2020). Discussing with the Parents of High School Students: what do They Know about Drugs?. *Postmodern Openings/Deschideri Postmoderne*, 11(1);
- Costin, A. (2024). Parents' approach on drug prevention on teenagers. In social assistance); c) The situation of children left behind due to parental migration:
- Costin, A. T. (2021). A literature review on left-behind children. *Educația Plus*, 28(1), 89-98;
- Costin, A. (2023). Exploring beyond social services addressed to Romanian children left behind. *International Journal of Social and Educational Innovation (IJSEIro)*, 31-41.

d) Dysfunctions at the family system level, difficulties in managing situations (anxiety, aggression in adolescents, dysfunctional families, sexual education, parental alliances, etc.)

- Costin, A. (2021). Parents and children about sexual education. *Technium Soc. Sci. J.*, 26, 359.
- Costin, A. (2023). Helping Families Cope with the Mental Illness of a Relative. Implications for Social Practices. *Revista de Asistență Socială*, 22(3), 47-55.
- Costin, A. (2024). Traits of coparental alliances. Implications on parental education programs. *Educația Plus*, 36(2), 414-424.
- Costin, A. (2020). Social and educational implications regarding the raising of children in narcissistic families. Theoretical Approach. *Educația Plus*, 27(2), 50-62.
- Costin, A. (2025). SOURCES OF STRESS AND ANXIETY IN TEENAGE YEARS. *International Journal of Social and Educational Innovation (IJSEIro)*, 12(23), 99-108.
- Costin, A. (2024). Perceived Parental Support and Aggression in Teenagers. *Social Work Review/Revista de Asistență Socială*, 23(4).
- Costin, A. (2024). Rewriting relationship narratives: an experiential approach to overcoming dysfunctional patterns in romantic relationship. *International Journal of Social and Educational Innovation (IJSEIro)*, 65-74.

## **2. Professional Practice and the Educational Role of Social Workers as Agents of Change**

Another thematic component of my research is related to the profession of social work. My interests have shifted towards the educational role of the social worker, who can successfully use proactive education and evidence-based intervention to optimize professional relationships, increase the visibility of the profession, and its recognition in the community. In the profession of social work, there are specific contexts that are extremely difficult to manage, generating stress, ambiguity, suffering, dissonance caused by the dual role one may occupy in the relationship with the beneficiary (as both parent and foster carer). In these conditions, representations about help, resilience, responsibility, profession take unique forms, as I have discovered through group discussions with social workers. The state of being an agent of change that the social worker occupies requires dedication, enthusiasm, determination, resilience, vocation. All these findings, largely the result of qualitative research, can be found in scientific articles but also in the book titled *Vocation and perspectives in the social worker profession*:

Costin, A., (2021). Being a parent or a professional? The foster carers describing the child's care experience. *Educația Plus*, 29(2), 141-152.

- Costin, A. (2023). Exploring beyond social services addressed to Romanian children left behind. *International Journal of Social and Educational Innovation (IJSEIro)*, 31-41.

- Costin, A. (2024). Personality and professional traits: how interpersonal characteristics define social workers. *International Journal of Social and Educational Innovation (IJSEIro)*, 214-223.
- Costin, A., Roman, A.F., Balica, R.S., (2023), Remote work burnout, professional job stress, and employee emotional exhaustion during the COVID-19 pandemic, *Frontiers in Psychology*, Vol 14.
- Redeş, A., Rad, D., Roman, A., Bocoş, M., Chiş, O., Langa, C., Roman, D., Mara, D., Mara, E.-L., Costin, A., Coşarbă, E., & Baci, C. (2023). The Effect of the Organizational Climate on the Integrative–Qualitative Intentional Behavior in Romanian Preschool Education—A Top-Down Perspective. *Behavioral Sciences*, 13(4), 342.
- Balas-Timar, D., Balas, V. E., & Costin, A. (2014). Fuzzy Expert System Applied in Hiring Ratings and Long Term Job Performance Prediction. *Journal of Human Resource and Sustainability Studies*, 2(3), 157-172.  
<https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation?paperid=49356>
- Alina Costin (2025). Vocation and perspectives in the social worker profession. Cluj University Press, Cluj-Napoca. ISBN 978-606-37-2550-0

The two main research directions are reflected in ISI/BDI articles, scientific communications, coordinated volumes, and the projects I have led. The entire activity designed in the form of these articles involved planning, organizing, data analysis, etc., and demonstrates the ability to conduct complex studies. The research I have carried out has allowed the understanding of certain social realities, followed by the development of social intervention plans. The diagnoses made, which confirmed certain deficiencies and dysfunctions at the family or community level, served as starting points for organizing specific interventions (psychoeducational activities aimed at parents of adolescents on consumption issues, aimed at teachers on the symptoms of children from disorganized families, etc.)

The entire scientific activity reflects my vision of the purpose of research, namely, knowledge and understanding of social phenomena/processes, amelioration of systemic dysfunctions, substantiation of interventions, generation of social change.