

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS AND RESOURCE CONSERVATION IN CAREGIVERS OF MINORS IN ROMANIA WITH PARENTS WORKING ABROAD

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Abstract

This study was conducted in Călărași County, Romania and it investigated psychological distress among 210 caregivers (of which 84.3% are women) of children with migrant parents using the ABC-X model of family stress and the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory. Analysis with DASS 21-R indicated a high level of clinical distress, with a rate of 31.4% of the study participants reporting extremely severe anxiety. Socio-demographic variables did not generate statistically significant differences, confirming that separation is a universal stressor. The primary factor associated with heightened distress is financial satisfaction: dissatisfaction with remittances sent by the migrant correlates with depression ($Z = -2.74; p = .006$) and anxiety ($Z = -2.33; p = .020$). Distress reaches psychopathological thresholds when material resources are insufficient, thus validating the COR theory. Financial security is a methodological priority in counseling and assisting transnational families, as economic stability is an important protective factor against the vulnerabilities of migration.

Keywords: transnational families, psychological distress, DASS 21-R, ABC-X model, Conservation of Resources (COR) theory.

1. INTRODUCTION

The structural reconfiguration of global economic markets and the transition of Eastern European countries to capitalism have turned labor migration into an ample demographic phenomenon in the region. Romania is one of the countries deeply affected by this phenomenon, which has generated a systemic reconfiguration of the traditional family nucleus (Udrea, Guiu, 2025).

According to data provided by the National Authority for the Protection of Child Rights and Adoption, over 55,000 minors were reported in the public protection system or under the care of relatives in 2024 as a consequence of their

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parents working abroad (ANPDCA, 2025). Although these statistics are significant, they include only children who are officially registered in the system.

Independent sociological monitoring reports suggest that this phenomenon is even more significant than the official reports. According to estimates by Save the Children, during the period July 25 – September 15, 2022, data collected at the national and regional levels revealed that approximately a quarter of Romania's minor population (about 954,000 children) experienced separation from at least one parent for economic reasons.

The specialized literature in the field of social and human sciences includes studies mainly focused on the psychosocial, educational, and developmental vulnerabilities of left behind children (LBC) (Botezat, Pfeiffer, 2019; Constantinescu *et al.*, 2025). The impact of parental separation on anxiety disorders and childhood depression has been of interest to researchers. Researchers' concerns, mainly focused on the effects of migration on children, have overshadowed adults who have taken on the role of caregivers for these minors, being those who have consistently assumed this responsibility (Matei, Bobârnat, 2021).

International research on the left-behind phenomenon has shown that although migration is motivated by the desire for economic security, financial success does not eliminate the complex psychological burdens borne by the caregivers. Caregiver burden is defined as a multidimensional response to stressors associated with the caregiving role, encompassing emotional, physical, and financial dimensions (Zarit *et al.*, 1980). This perspective is essential because the caregiver's mental health is the central pillar supporting the stability of the entire family system affected by migration.

A landmark study by Graham and Jordan (2011) utilizing data from the CHAMPSEA (Child Health and Migrant Parents in South-East Asia) project examined the impact of international migration on those left behind, comparing statistical results from four states: Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore, and Vietnam. Although the research focuses on children's well-being, this study offers essential insights into the role and reality of caregivers in Southeast Asia. The study emphasizes that the caregiver (often the other parent or grandparents) mediates the entire migration experience for the child and that it is not only the absence of the migrant parent that is a source of stress but also the quality of the care environment provided by the person remaining at home.

If previous studies have focused primarily on the well-being of minors (Graham & Jordan, 2011), subsequent research has begun to include the direct assessment of caregivers in Southeast Asia. Expanding the research conducted within the CHAMPSEA project, Graham *et al.* (2015) directly investigated the mental health of caregivers who remained in the country of origin, highlighting the significant psychosocial costs of family separation. The study demonstrates that inadequate transnational practices, such as infrequent contact with the partner and not receiving remittances, significantly increase the risk of psychological distress among adults taking on caregiving roles.

In Latin America, Dreby (2010) observed in her research that although remittances reduce stress related to daily survival, they create a new form of burden for caregivers: the pressure to justify spending the money and the fear that financial support might stop. Caregivers experience a mixture of gratitude and resentment because material resources cannot compensate for the physical absence of parents during domestic crises.

In the Romanian context, the psychological stability of the caregiver cannot be analysed separately from the dynamics of intergenerational support (extended family). As Rada (2014) emphasizes, intergenerational solidarity acts as a protective factor in transnational families, reducing the likelihood that psychological distress will reach the clinical thresholds of anxiety or depression. This support should not be viewed as unidirectional; it is a bidirectional process of exchanging resources and affection between generations that strengthens the family's resilience in the face of migration-induced challenges (Rada, 2018). This intergenerational reciprocity acts as a resource conservation mechanism, providing the caregiver with the necessary balance to manage the psychological pressure of separation, thus preventing the escalation of distress into severe psychopathological states.

In the presence of challenges represented by the absence of a spouse or adult child (in the case of grandparents), some caregivers demonstrate remarkable resilience, while others experience severe psychological decompensation and develop emotional disorders. To study this dynamic of caregiver vulnerability, the present study adopts a multi-theoretical perspective, basing its analysis on two reference conceptual frameworks in health psychology: the ABC-X Model of family stress (Hill, 1958; McCubbin *et al.*, 1980) and the Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989).

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

2.1. THE ABC-X MODEL OF FAMILY STRESS

The ABC-X model of family stress was initially formulated by Reuben Hill (1958) following studies on families separated by war, and was later further developed by McCubbin and his collaborators (1980). The theory postulates that clinical distress is not a deterministic result of a traumatic event but rather the product of the complex interaction between three components:

- *Factor A* (The Stressor): The objective event that disrupts the equilibrium of the system (in this case, migration or the physical absence of the parent).
- *Factor B* (Family Resources): The material, psychological, and community capital that the family can mobilize to cope with stressors.
- *Factor C* (Perception/Appraisal): The subjective meaning attributed to an event (e.g., viewing migration as an opportunity for prosperity or as an abandonment).

2.2. THE CONSERVATION OF RESOURCES (COR) THEORY

To further elaborate on the theory of Factor B, the conservation of resources theory developed by Stevan Hobfoll (1989) was integrated. The conservation of resources theory argues that human stress arises when an individual's resources are threatened with loss, are actually lost, or when one invests resources without obtaining the expected compensatory gain.

Resources are defined as things that an individual values and are divided into four categories: *objects* (house, car), *conditions* (marital status, secure employment, health), *personal characteristics* (self-esteem, optimism), and *energies* (money, time, knowledge).

The model is based on several central principles:

- *Primacy of Loss*: The loss of resources is disproportionately more powerful and psychologically painful than the gain of equivalent resources.
- *Resource investment*: People must invest resources (time, effort, money) to protect themselves from future losses, to replenish lost resources, or to acquire new ones.
- *Loss spirals*: Because resource loss generates stress, it reduces the individual's capacity to cope with future problems, leading to even faster losses.
- *Gain spirals*: Individuals who already possess a rich package of resources are more capable of acquiring new resources and are better protected in the face of stress.

Transnational labor migration is, by definition, a family resource investment decision. The family accepts a fundamental social and emotional loss (the breakup of cohabitation) to obtain a compensatory resource (financial capital).

According to COR principles, the highest level of psychopathological stress occurs when a loss spiral sets in - a situation where the sacrifice of loss has been made, but the material gain is not achieved or is perceived as insufficient. In such a situation, the individual has lost both relational and emotional resources, as well as material ones, thus exhausting their capacity to adapt to the new situation.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to analyse the incidence of psychological distress among caregivers of minors whose parents have migrated abroad from Romania using the DASS 21-R.

3.1. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

The general objective of this study was to assess the clinical dimensions of depression, anxiety, and stress (DASS 21-R) in adults caring for children from transnational families and to identify the factors associated with the chronicization of distress. In contrast to studies that seek differences based on age or environment,

we aim to demonstrate the universal character of Factor A and the mediating power of Factor B (financial capital).

The following two hypotheses are proposed:

- **Hypothesis 1:** It is hypothesized that psychological distress associated with separation acts as a universal stressor and is not significantly influenced by socio-demographic data such as age, gender, environment of origin, education level, marital status, number of children in care, or frequency of visits from the migrant parent.
- **Hypothesis 2:** It is hypothesized that the level of satisfaction generated by income (considered a material resource within the COR theory) is associated with distress, in that caregivers who report financial dissatisfaction (lack of gain following sacrifice) will record clinically higher scores of psychological distress compared to those who have satisfactory incomes.

3.2. SAMPLE

This study used a cross-sectional, non-experimental design. The sample consisted of $N = 210$ participants, adults from Călărași County, Romania, and came from a larger database created for the purpose of preparing the doctoral thesis. This sample has also been the subject of previous analyses (Buture, 2024), where other research directions, different from those proposed in this study, were explored.

The sole selection criterion was the assumption of an active caregiving role for at least one minor with one or both parents working abroad. The sample was equally divided in terms of residential environment: 50% urban and 50% rural. In terms of gender, the feminization of the act of caregiving was confirmed, with the group being composed of 84.3% women ($n = 177$) and 15.9% men ($n = 33$). The participants' ages ranged between 26 and 65 years, with a higher concentration among young and middle-aged adults: 29% within the 31-35 age range, 20.5% within 36-40, and 12.4% within both 26-30 and 41-45 ranges. The educational level was predominantly secondary education (36.2% high school graduates, 16.7% vocational school, and 18.6% lower secondary education), while higher education represented 11.4% of the sample. Regarding the relationship with the child, the group is mainly composed of left-behind parents (79%), who raise their children alone while their partner works abroad, grandparents (19%), and other relatives (1.9%). The majority of participants were legally married or in a common-law relationship (74.8%). Regarding caregiving responsibilities, adults were caring for two children (45.2%), one child (41.4%), and three or more children (13.3%) in this study. An important aspect of the systemic vulnerability of this sample is the lack of integration into the formal labor market: 54.3% declared themselves as housewives / stay-at-home husbands, 73.3% declared themselves satisfied with their family income, and 26.7% emphasized their dissatisfaction (Buture, 2024).

3.3. MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENTS

To determine the clinical profile, the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scales (DASS 21-R) (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995) were used. This screening tool is a short version consisting of 21 items (seven items for each construct), evaluated on a four-point Likert scale from 0 (did not apply to me at all) to 3 (applied to me very much or most of the time). For the present research, the translated, validated, and normed version for the general population in Romania by Perțe and Albu (2011) was used. The DASS 21-R is characterized by its focus on minimizing somatic overlaps and evaluating negative states experienced over the past few weeks.

For analysis, the DASS 21-R was accompanied by a socio-demographic questionnaire that collected information regarding static attributes (age, gender, background, level of education, marital status, number of children, frequency of the migrant's visits, and perception of family income). The depression, anxiety, and stress scales (DASS 21-R) used in the present study are part of the tests employed for a larger doctoral project. This study utilizes the same participant sample and baseline dataset as previously reported by Buture (2024), though the hypotheses investigated herein are entirely distinct.

The use of the DASS 21-R scale provides high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .869 to .884 across subscales, as detailed in Table 1. However, because the questionnaire is self-administered (self-report), it introduces potential sources of social desirability or subjective reporting errors, which must be considered when interpreting the results.

3.4. DATA ANALYSIS

According to the best practice standards in data analysis, statistical hypothesis testing was performed using non-parametric methods. This decision was motivated by the unequal sizes of demographic groups and the failure to meet the assumption of normality in score distributions, as indicated by the analysis of descriptive indicators (i.e., skewness and kurtosis).

The violation of the normality assumption was observed, particularly in clinical variables, where a pronounced skewness in the depression scores was noted. Consequently, inferential analyses included Spearman correlations, the Mann-Whitney U test for variables with two categories, and the Kruskal-Wallis test for variables with three or more categories.

3.4.1. Presentation of DASS 21-R Dimensions

Descriptive analysis of the DASS-21R dimensions highlighted that the study participants experienced notable levels of clinical distress across all three domains. As detailed below in Table 1, the highest mean score was observed for the anxiety subscale ($M = 13.30$, $SD = 10.71$), closely followed by stress ($M = 12.95$, $SD = 10.14$), whereas depression scores exhibited a lower mean but a more pronounced positive skewness ($Sk = 1.18$).

Table 1

Indicators of the score distributions obtained for the DASS 21-R dimensions and Cronbach's alpha coefficients

	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>Sk</i>	<i>K</i>	<i>Cronbach's alpha coefficient</i>
Depression	0	42	10.72	9.62	8.00	1.18	0.96	0.869
Anxiety	0	42	13.30	10.71	12.00	0.73	-0.12	0.884
Stress	0	42	12.95	10.14	12.00	0.67	-0.13	0.884

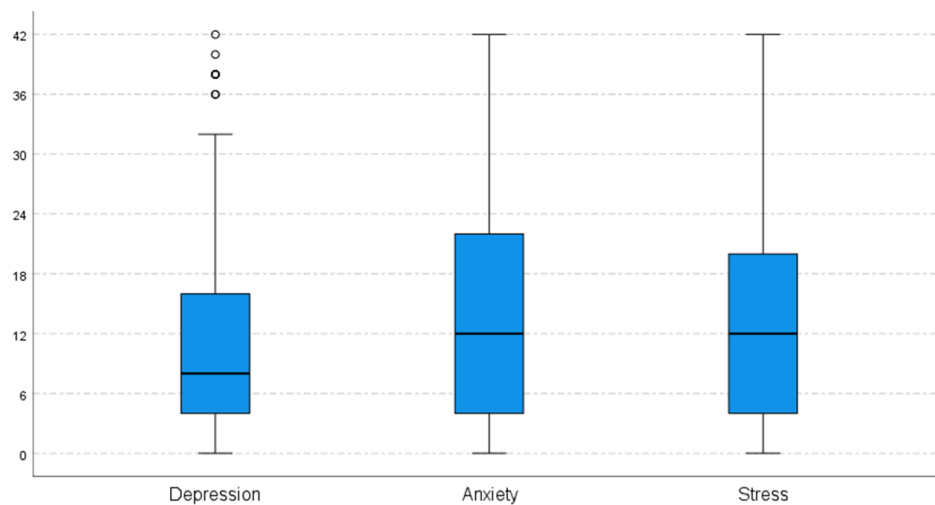


Figure 1. Boxplot with the distribution of scores for the DASS 21-R dimensions.

The values of the three subscales fluctuated within the scale's range, displaying both normal and extremely severe levels. The analysis of absolute frequencies revealed an atypical pathological architecture.

Table 2

Frequency distribution of the levels corresponding to the DASS 21-R subscales

<i>DASS 21-R</i>		<i>Normal</i>	<i>Mild</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Severe</i>	<i>Extremely severe</i>
Depression	N	108	37	31	20	14
	%	51.4	17.6	14.8	9.5	6.7
Anxiety	N	69	21	41	13	66
	%	32.9	10.0	19.5	6.2	31.4
Stress	N	127	21	38	14	10
	%	60.5	10.0	18.1	6.7	4.8

The distribution of scores for Depression showed a strong positive skew ($Sk = 1.18$, $K = 0.96$). Clinically, 51.4% reported normal levels and 16.2% had severe and extremely severe levels.

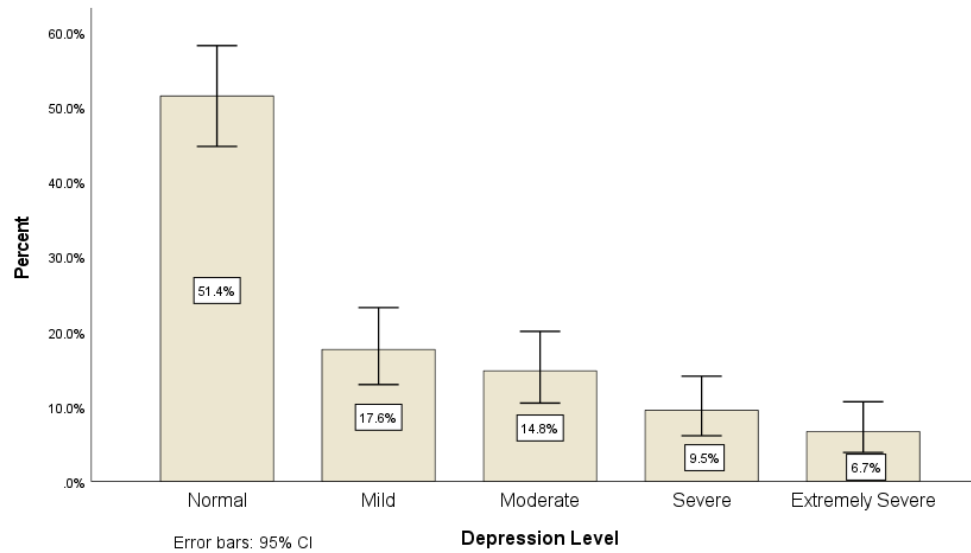


Figure 2. The distribution of scores for Depression scale.

The strongest factor identified was Anxiety, which showed a bimodal distribution. The distribution of anxiety indicates that only 32.9% of respondents remained within the normal parameters of concern, while 31.4% of the sample reported an extremely severe degree of anxiety.

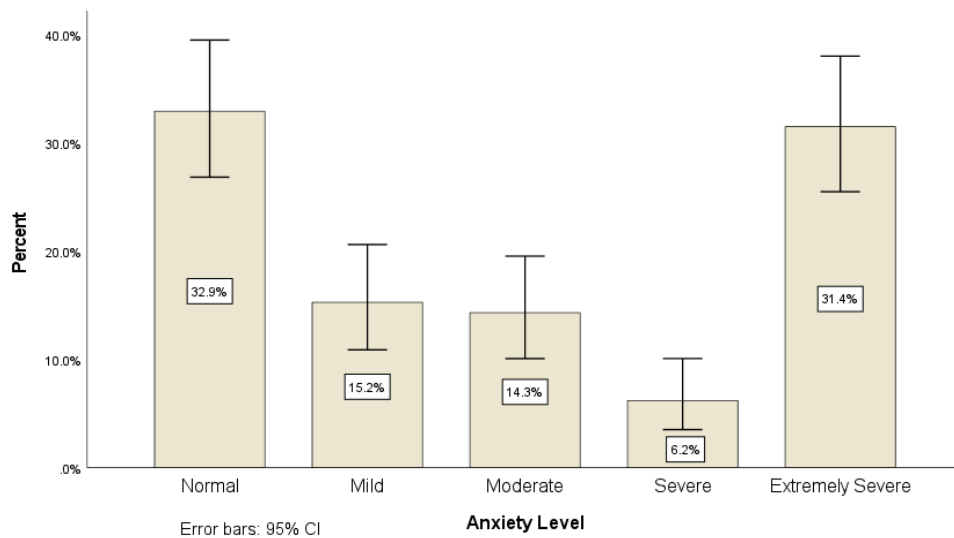


Figure 3. The distribution of scores for Anxiety scale.

The level of Stress was normal, with a distribution mean ($M = 12.95$; $SD = 10.14$), with approximately 61% (60.5%) of participants exhibiting this level. High levels had lower proportions (6.7% severe and 4.8% extremely severe). Moderate levels were observed in 18% of cases.

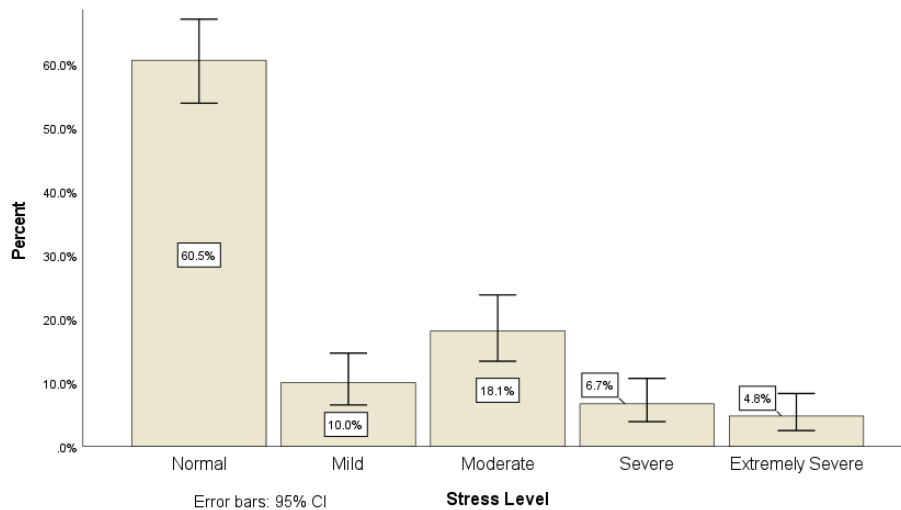


Figure 4. The distribution of scores for Stress scale.

Bivariate Spearman correlation analyses were conducted to examine the internal associations among the DASS 21-R dimensions. As presented in Table 4, highly significant and strong positive inter-correlations were found among all factors ($p < .01$). The most robust linear association was identified between the anxiety and stress subscales ($\rho = 0.806$), reflecting the dense psychological overlap of these constructs within the sample.

Table 3

Spearman correlation coefficient values obtained for the relationships between the DASS 21-R subscales

DASS 21-R ($N=210$)	Depression	Anxiety	Stress
Depression	--	--	--
Anxiety	0.773**	--	--
Stress	0.765**	0.806**	--

Note: ** – significance level $p < .01$

3.4.2. Hypothesis Analysis

To validate **Hypothesis 1** concerning the generality of *Factor A (the Stressor)* from the ABC-X model of family stress, comparative analyses were conducted for all demographic variables. The results demonstrate that personal attributes do not mitigate the effects of separation.

- *Gender*: Although a higher median tendency for anxiety was noted among women ($Mdn = 12.00$) than men ($Mdn = 10.00$), the Mann-Whitney U test confirmed that the differences did not reach the threshold of significance (Depression: $Z = -0.85, p = .394$; Anxiety: $Z = -1.58, p = .114$; Stress: $Z = -0.72, p = .471$).
- *Age and education*: Spearman correlations indicated a total absence of any significant linear association between the respondents' age (ρ values ranging from $-.011$ to $.028$) or level of education and the dimensions of distress (ρ values $< .024$).
- *System ecology*: The environment of origin (urban vs. rural) did not result in any statistical deviation ($p > .189$). A similar pattern was observed in the number of children. Although managing more than two children slightly increased the mean levels of distress, the Kruskal-Wallis test did not identify a statistically significant difference (Stress: $H = 1.61, p = .448$).
- *Family relationship*: The relationship to the migrant (spouse, former partner, child/grandchild for grandparents) was completely irrelevant in the DASS 21-R model ($p > .285$). The frequency of visits (once a month, every 6 months, or over 6 months) did not significantly influence psychological well-being ($p > .279$).

These analyses fully support the validity of Hypothesis 1, confirming that *migration-related anxiety affects the mental health of minor caregivers in transnational families, regardless of socio-demographic characteristics*.

To validate **Hypothesis 2**, the focus shifted to testing the role of material resources (Factor B) as a critical psychological buffer, in accordance with the postulates of the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory. The application of the Mann-Whitney U test confirmed statistically significant differences in distress levels based on income satisfaction. Caregivers who reported financial dissatisfaction ($N = 56$) exhibited significantly higher scores across all three DASS-21R dimensions compared to those satisfied with the received remittances ($N = 154$). The complete parameters of the score distributions and comparative test values are detailed in Table 4.

Table 4

Parameters of DASS 21-R score distributions determined by satisfaction with family income and Mann-Whitney comparative test values satisfaction with income

DASS21-R	Income satisfaction	<i>N</i> (210)	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>MR</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>P</i>
Depression	No	56	13.57	10.10	12.00	124.46	-2.74	0.006
	Yes	154	9.69	9.25	8.00	98.61		
Anxiety	No	56	16.00	10.75	14.00	121.64	-2.33	0.020
	Yes	154	12.32	10.56	10.00	99.63		
Stress	No	56	15.07	10.31	16.00	118.83	-1.92	0.054
	Yes	154	12.18	10.00	10.00	100.65		

These values empirically demonstrate a statistically significant difference in psychological distress dimensions based on income satisfaction, thereby providing empirical support for Hypothesis 2.

4. DISCUSSION

The fundamental aim of this study is to highlight the level of psychological distress experienced by adults who have taken on the role of caregivers for children whose parents have left to work abroad. While the exploratory nature and geographical boundaries of the sample are detailed later among the study's limitations, the data analysis provides two essential scientific conclusions that strengthen the applicability of the ABC-X family stress model theory (Hill, 1958) and the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989) in migration psychology.

The first conclusion is the universality of suffering and the validation of Factor A (the Stressor) from Hill's theorem. The physical absence of a partner (for the parent) or an adult child (for the grandparents) acts as a generalized separation trauma. The physical absence of a family member affects the balance of the entire family left in the country, regardless of socio-demographic structures.

Specialized research confirms the universal nature of separation trauma, noting that, regardless of cultural context, caregivers experience heightened levels of anxiety and depression. This psychological vulnerability is continuously fuelled by the responsibility of managing minors and uncertainty regarding the amount and regularity of external remittances.

The fact that a third of the total estimated sample (31.4%) experienced anxiety at an extremely severe level signals a significant psychological vulnerability among transnational families. This dynamic can be explained by the ongoing experience of uncertainty, with the adult caregiver living in a state of constant vigilance, creating a level of physiological and cognitive alertness that education, urbanization, and other sociodemographic factors cannot diminish. Interestingly, the frequency of the migrant's return home does not lessen the caregiver's stress. Visits by the absent parent cannot replace the stability of a daily co-parenting routine.

The second conclusion, according to the Conservation of Resources theory, indicates that the evaluation of remittances (specifically financial dissatisfaction) is the factor that activates and accentuates psychological distress. According to Hobfoll, exhaustion occurs when the investment of socio-affective resources fails to produce new fundamental resources or to generate anticipated benefits.

In the transnational context, the family voluntarily consents to sacrificing the physical presence of at least one member, a valuable relational resource, in the hope of gaining material advantages. When the financial resources sent home improve the quality of life (73.3% are financially satisfied), caregivers display a positive perception of financial stability, which keeps anxiety at manageable functional levels and fosters good adaptation to life's inherent challenges.

However, when the sacrifice of leaving has been made but poverty and deprivation continue to exert an economic strain on the household at home (26.7% representing the financially dissatisfied group), the Loss Spiral (COR theory) is activated. Caregivers experience a double loss: they find themselves deprived of both their life partners and their subsistence resources, which fractures their resilience and makes them vulnerable to depression and anxiety. Material deprivation undermines individuals' psychological flexibility, throwing them into a pathological state. These results indicate that financial dissatisfaction operates as a critical vulnerability factor within the COR framework, where the depletion or inadequacy of material resources is closely associated with the escalation and potential chronification of caregiver distress.

In this study, the fundamental constructs of the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, resource loss and resource gain, were assessed indirectly through satisfaction with remittances received from the migrant. This variable was used as an indicator of the subjective perception of material resources essential for maintaining psychosocial balance in transnational families.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The results indicate that although separation is a cross-cutting stress factor, its impact on caregivers' mental health is significantly modulated by their perception of economic security. Thus, financial satisfaction emerges not only as a material benefit but also as an essential psychological resource that prevents the escalation of stress to the clinical thresholds of anxiety.

The conclusions also highlight the importance of intergenerational support networks. As suggested by the literature (Rada, 2014, 2018), solidarity within the extended family in Romania facilitates the conservation of emotional resources, providing a bidirectional protective framework in which both child and adult caregivers can recalibrate their psychological balance despite distance.

From a practical perspective, this study advocates a holistic approach to supporting transnational families. The conclusions of this study suggest that psychological interventions may have limited efficacy as long as the family ecosystem experiences severe material deprivation, as economic stability serves as a fundamental protective factor against migration-induced distress. Classical psychological interventions should be complemented by support mechanisms targeting material security and financial counselling for caregivers. Prioritizing economic stability does not exclude the need for therapy but rather creates a foundation for effective psychological intervention.

6. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Although the present research offers valuable insights into the psychological distress of caregivers in transnational families, it presents a series of

methodological and conceptual limitations that must be considered when interpreting the results.

First, the sample used was geographically limited to Călărași County, Romania. This limitation restricts the generalizability of the conclusions to the entire Romanian caregiver population.

Second, the use of a cross-sectional design represents a barrier to establishing causal relationships between financial satisfaction and distress levels, as the data only allow for the identification of statistical associations.

The nonexperimental design limits the researcher's ability to establish a definitive temporal or causal relationship (Spector, 2019). The possibility of a bidirectional analysis must be considered: poverty causes depression and/or anxiety, but it must also be noted that the clinical state of depression can distort an individual's perception of income satisfaction, leading caregivers to perceive their resources as perpetually insufficient.

The fundamental constructs of the Conservation of Resources theory (COR), such as loss processes or gain spirals, were not directly measured through specific resource assessment instruments but were evaluated via perceptions of financial satisfaction. Moreover, the exclusive use of self-report data and the collection of data solely through self-administered instruments may introduce the possibility of distortions caused by participant subjectivity or by social desirability bias (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2012).

Given the cross-sectional design, which does not allow for definitive causal attributions, the next steps in research require the assessment of complex intrapsychic mechanisms (such as coping styles and emotional intelligence) to obtain more relevant information about how these individuals process migration-related losses.

Future research should target the adoption of longitudinal designs capable of capturing the evolution of resource dynamics and well-being throughout different stages of the migratory cycle. Expanding the sample to a national level and including control groups (non-migrant families) would allow for more robust validation of distress specificity in the transnational context.

A priority area for exploration is the bidirectional nature of family support. Future studies should investigate not only the flow of resources from caregivers to children but also how emotional support provided by children to adults' functions as a protective factor against psychological burnout. Ultimately, the use of mixed-methods methodologies, including qualitative interviews, could offer an understanding of how intergenerational resources are valued in the absence of parents' physical presence.

Another subsequent research direction, of particular importance for clinical practice, would involve investigating the specific correlation between high levels of anxiety and depression (severe and extremely severe categories) and the degree of involvement of the intergenerational support network in their lives. It would be useful to explore whether caregivers with clinical symptomatology experience

diminished family support or whether, on the contrary, the presence of intergenerational support – both from the extended family and bidirectional, from child to adult – functions as a resilience factor that prevents the chronification of distress despite financial instability. Such an approach would enable the identification of the threshold beyond which family resources can no longer compensate for migration-induced stress, providing critical data for the development of early intervention programs focused on strengthening intergenerational bonds.

In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of protecting the mental health of adults who remain in the country as a significant psychosocial priority. Acknowledging the importance of material resources and the protective role of intergenerational relationships is an essential step in developing social policies adapted to the realities of transnational families in Romania.

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