

SUPPORTIVE SOCIAL NETWORK AND SOCIAL ACCOMPANIMENT OF FAMILIES AFTER DIVORCE

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ABSTRACT

Aim. The main objective of the paper is to provide a rescue support network during divorce for families with children through social workers in state institutions. The authors identify the practical empirical experiences of social workers in individual procedures and statements in the empirical part.

Methods. The authors use a literary-descriptive method, which they use for the analytical-synthetic collection of professional and scientific knowledge. They overlap them with the practical empirical experiences of the authors, but also with statements of social workers from practice in state institutions.

Results. Social workers working with families in divorce and post-divorce proceedings are the most important experts who are in contact with families in connection with other state institutions. Social workers are ready to help bridge the divorce period and look for possible solutions in the form of social counselling, recommendations for the use of counselling and experts from other accredited entities, using programmes in centers for children and families or mediation.

Conclusion. The life of a single parent is saturated with a number of problems that need to be solved in cooperation with a social worker. The latter is competent to solve, but also to prevent new problematic situations arising after divorce. Social workers are important not only for parents, but also for children who go through each divorce procedure.

Keywords: child, parent, divorce, social worker, prevention, empirical research, qualitative research

TRANSITION FROM A FUNCTIONAL FAMILY TO A DYSFUNCTIONAL ONE

A person is faced with various life challenges, but to successfully fulfil them, the support of loved ones is necessary. Many families find themselves in situations where those closest to them become alienated because of them, individual family functions gradually begin to fail, and the worst-case scenario comes true – family breakdown (Magdadiová et al., 2023; Minarovičová, 2018).

If the functionality of a family is to be assessed, it is important to determine whether its primary tasks are being fulfilled. Experts therefore focus their attention on the competencies of parents in four important areas:

- relationships: “spouses among themselves” “children among themselves” “with close/distant relatives” “with friends”.
- ensuring protection and care: “stable employment/income” “reasonable management” “proper nutrition”.
- stable security: “communication” “resolving mutual disagreements” “overall environment”

- satisfying developmental needs: “it is important to take into account the age of individual members” or “during the period of overcoming illnesses and the like (Pavlíková et al., 2023a).

Every family has problems, whether they are smaller or larger. However, it is important to be able to assess the fulfilment of individual functions. If we want to determine whether a family is a functional or dysfunctional family, it is necessary to determine the existing interpersonal relationships, what mutual communication is like, how they try to solve problems, and how childcare is provided (Bočková, et al., 2021; Pavlíková, 2023). A family that can be considered functional has only a minimum of problems that its members have not been able to solve on their own, but at the same time is able to face others that life brings. Such a family is receptive and flexible to the individual needs of its members (Ludvigh Cintulová & Budayová, 2024). It is in families that we call dysfunctional that we can observe the serious problems that individual members have to fight with (Kondrla, et al, 2023). The consequence of the termination of several functions is the violation of generally accepted norms of society and the increase in pathological phenomena. A family whose life is not going in the right direction negatively affects children in particular, which is reflected in their complex upbringing, behaviour and psyche (Hudecová & Brozmanová Gregorová, 2008; Pavlíková & Tavilla, 2023).

RESCUE SOCIAL NETWORK

Social relationships between people form the basis of the concept of a social network. They are constantly changing interpersonal ties from which everyone can draw information and receive support during different phases of life (Tkáčová et al., 2023a, b; Tkáčová et al., 2024). A supportive social network is thus composed of a complex web of such relationships (Shyshak, 2024). After divorce, a period often accompanied by a series of challenges, it becomes possible to utilise social resources. It is crucial for families to maintain social ties with informal networks (friends), formal networks such as schools and Christian associations (Lesková & Lenghart, 2023; Zenelaga, et al., 2024), as well as supportive social services (e.g., family counselling centres, mediation services, psychological counselling centres). These connections help families navigate this stressful period. Based on our experience, we can confirm the importance of informal networks and their impact on both parents and children (Binetti et al., 2021). Research shows that men are supported by friends more frequently and for a longer time compared to women/mothers. However, due to time constraints, men tend to rely on this support for only two years after the divorce. By focusing on their own problems, families can engage with their surroundings more effectively, facilitated by the informal network (Maturkanič et al., 2022).

During social accompaniment, the subject of accompaniment is prepared to help identify the problem, look for opportunities for help and support, but first with the client's relatives. It is best for the client if he or she can find sources of help on his or her own in his or her natural social relationships. The opposite of this is his or her incompetence, meaning that the social worker solves the situation for him or her and the client begins to depend on him or her (Bursová et al., 2024; Vávrová, 2012). Support for independence is the goal of professional social support, so that the client can make independent decisions and be prepared to take full responsibility for their actions (Ludvig Cintulová, et al., 2024).

State social support is oriented toward life events that are a natural part of individual or family life (birth of a child, child care within the family, education and vocational preparation, death of a family member, substitute care, or severe disability within the family). The fundamental principle of state social support is the distribution of state resources based on the principle of solidarity (Dudová et al., 2018; Vaľko et al., 2024). An objective and economically sustainable system of social support is overseen by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family of the Slovak Republic. Its activities focus on individuals, families, and groups, primarily aiming to prevent poverty, reduce unemployment, and decrease the number of people dependent on social benefits. As part of its family and social policies, it fulfils tasks in combating social exclusion, offers assistance in material need, provides social department services, monetary contributions to compensate for severe disabilities, along with assessment activities (Ministère du Travail, des Affaires sociales et de la Famille, 2024).

Act No. 448/2008 Coll. on Social Services establishes the possibilities of support for families with children in the form of social services, which are: 1. assistance with personal care for a child, 2. assistance with personal care for a child in a temporary childcare facility, 3. service to support the reconciliation of family and work life, 4. service to support the reconciliation of family and work life in a childcare facility for children up to three years of age, 5. early intervention service (Act No. 448/2008 Coll.).

FAMILY AFTER DIVORCE AS A RECIPIENT OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Social assistance, which is aimed at helping those who find themselves in an unfavorable situation, operates as a system of national solidarity with the goal of preventing social exclusion. It consists of a set of state-guaranteed legislative, organisational, and financial measures (Budayová et al., 2024).

It is the state's responsibility to provide assistance to families through: a) direct financial aid – state social benefits, sickness insurance benefits, benefits replacing unpaid child support, etc., b) indirect financial aid – tax bonuses, housing support, etc., c) the provision of services – childcare facilities (Leškova & Bachyncova Giertliova, 2024).

After a divorce, incomplete families, consisting of single mothers with children, face a major problem of unemployment, which negatively impacts every household member. The reason for the increased number of unemployed mothers is their unattractiveness in the labour market. Childcare without a partner or minimal experience after completing maternity or parental leave are factors that employers refuse to overlook. For this reason, it is necessary to provide mothers with not only financial assistance but also support in the form of services that will help them manage family responsibilities and balance the role of a parent with that of an employee (Rudenskyi et al., 2024; Stan & Pavlíková, 2024; Vancáková, 2014).

Unemployment is closely associated with a lack of financial resources, and in such a family, a state of material need can quickly arise. This is a situation “where the income of household members does not reach the amount of the subsistence minimum established by a special regulation, and the household members cannot or do not know how to ensure or increase their income through work, exercising ownership rights, or other rights to property and by asserting claims. If the household is in material need, it does not necessarily mean that it is always entitled to material assistance, because such assistance is only provided up to the amount of the entitlements specified in the law on assistance in material need, not up to the amount of the subsistence minimum. The legal relationships concerning the provision of material assistance, special allowances, and one-time benefits are regulated by Act No. 417/2013 Coll. on Assistance in Material Need and on Amendments and Supplements to Certain Laws, as amended (Buzalová et al., 2024; Stránky úradov práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny, 2024).

An individual and household members are not considered to be in material need, even if the income of household members does not reach the amount of the subsistence minimum established by a special regulation, if they can secure basic living conditions and address their material need through property or by asserting claims (Act No. 417/2013 Coll., 2024).

If one of the spouses finds themselves in an unfavourable situation after a divorce, they can request financial support from the former spouse through legal means. The court will decide based on the law, which stipulates that if “a divorced spouse who is unable to support themselves may request the former spouse to contribute to their reasonable maintenance according to their abilities, possibilities, and financial circumstances” (Act No. 36/2005 Coll., 2024).

In the event that after a divorce one parent fails to fulfil their alimony obligation as ordered by the court based on a final decision, a court-approved agreement, or if a dependent child is not entitled to an orphan’s pension, or if the amount is lower than the minimum alimony, the parent to whom the children are entrusted for personal care after the divorce may request the payment of substitute alimony (Stránky úradov práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny, 2024).

EMPIRICAL PART

The primary objective of this research was to examine the perceptions of social workers regarding the family dynamics during and after the divorce process. This includes an exploration of the emotional states of individual family members involved in the situation. Furthermore, the study aimed to assess the influence of social counselling on these families, identifying potential benefits and challenges. Another key goal was to propose actionable recommendations to alleviate the negative consequences that families experience during such transitions. In order to achieve these goals, we developed several preliminary hypotheses. These hypotheses are grounded in the current understanding of divorce-related family stress and the role of social workers in providing support. Through analytical induction, the study will test these hypotheses, drawing conclusions from the data collected to generate a deeper understanding of the phenomena under investigation. By adopting this methodology, the research seeks not only to contribute to the academic body of knowledge but also to offer practical suggestions that can enhance the quality of social support services provided to families navigating the complexities of divorce.

According to Peter Gavora:

in analytical induction, the researcher moves from the research sample to empirical data, and from there to hypotheses, then from those hypotheses to a new sample and reformulated hypotheses. This cycle is repeated until the hypotheses are sufficiently verified, thus turning them into theory. (2007, p. 35)

Preliminary Hypothesis 1: We assume that social workers, based on their previous experience working with divorcing clients, will indicate that the reason significantly influencing the decision of partners to end the marriage by divorce is marital infidelity rather than aggression and abuse. *Preliminary Hypothesis 2:* We assume that social workers will state that based on their recommendations for the use of couples counselling to restore marital cohabitation, women will respond more positively than men. *Preliminary Hypothesis 3:* We assume that social workers will state that after the divorce, the partner to whom the children were entrusted for personal care will face financial problems and an unfavourable social situation more than the partner who was granted only alimony and scheduled contact with the children. *Preliminary Hypothesis 4:* We assume that social workers will, based on clients' statements and their involvement in resolving family issues, indicate that partners perceive the period after the divorce as more difficult to handle than the period during the divorce proceedings.

In conducting the research and gradually gathering all the information needed to achieve the desired objectives, we used the interview method, which Peter Gavora (2007) describes as a specially guided conversation between the researcher and the subject(s) being studied. It is characterised by direct contact between both actors, meaning face-to-face communication.

The interview and its transcription of the participants' responses is not only focused on gathering information, but also on the social relationship between two people in a specific time and environment. The purpose and main goal of the interview is to understand the facts, opinions and attitudes of people on topics that are emotionally charged. Transcription serves to present the emotional side of the participants' responses.

The research sample consisted of 8 participants, individual social workers, in our case, conflict guardians, who varied in age and length of professional experience in the social field. Their education meets the requirements for performing this function, i.e., higher education, with 6 workers holding a second degree in social work (Mgr.), 1 worker holding a first degree in social work (Bc.), and 1 worker holding a second degree in law (JUDr.).

When evaluating the research results, we used grounded theory with expressed coding and note-taking. In the individual categories, we present the expressions of the participants in a selective manner.

Category 1 Causes of Divorce

Open coding: infidelity, stress, family, consumption, things, reckless, finances, internet, young people, alienation, finances, alcohol, child. Selective Transcription:

- A + B: Infidelity, the partners' decision when one goes to work abroad, earns, comes back, builds a house, it's a tough time and a tough life, knowing how to live with little, above-standard, men go abroad for work, the father-child relationship is missing, alcohol, crises, infidelity, and finances.
- C: Finances, conflicts, finding a new partner, meaning infidelity, alcohol, or infidelity with alcohol together.
- D: Unfortunate social media, leading to infidelity and suspicion, sexuality, cooling down of the relationship, the internet, violence, physical violence, and nowadays, violence has many forms, from economic to psychological, but I specifically mean "broken down" economic blackmail or manipulation. Men really like it when women are dependent on them.
- E: Infidelity, differences in character, spouses unable to agree on a unified approach to raising children, lately, addiction to social networks, unwillingness to address marital problems and prefer to end the marriage immediately.
- F: Infidelity, we stopped understanding each other.
- G: Emotional alienation, differing views on managing the household, raising children, infidelity, alcohol, financial problems, violence.
- H: Infidelity, alcohol of one of the partners, and in younger families, this issue is now more common, unsolvable situation regarding their own housing, inability to live in multi-generational families, lack of adaptability, different values, and they are not ready to solve various family conflicts, arguments.

Category 2 Couples Counselling

Open coding: refusal, try, arguments, psychology, fear, doesn't want, strangers, reason, children. Selective Transcription: Research question: Which of the spouses reacts positively to counselling, and what are the arguments of the partner who strictly rejects the counselling?

- A: The client who strictly rejects counselling is typically in opposition, and there are other factors at play, mainly hidden issues (such as property, status, or personal prestige). Property is the source of a combative attitude, not necessarily that the partners are dealing with a breakup.
- B: It is usually the one who does not want the divorce. Their reaction is positive because they still want to give it a try.
- C: Women clearly react positively; there is a mistrust of institutions; individually, long-term conflicts.
- D: The one who filed the petition, addressing the situation, wants it legally settled so that alimony is clearly defined, and they are willing to cooperate at that point. Generally, the partner who does not agree with the divorce reacts positively. They do not want psychologists involved and see it as something closed off, believing they have already moved on with their lives.
- E: Women generally accept this form of counselling positively, while men tend to strictly reject it, not wanting a third party to intervene in their relationship.
- F: The man resists by saying it's pointless, that he simply doesn't want it, and he is already firmly decided. They agreed together that they will part ways or that one of them already has another partner, which is why they are no longer living in the same household.
- G: Women are generally more interested. They want to give it one last chance to avoid regrets and to have peace of mind, so they can say they did everything they could. Men generally are not interested.
- H: Usually, it is the woman trying to save the relationship. If one partner rejects it, there is certainly something they do not want to discuss with the other.

Category 3 Financial Problems

Open coding: mothers, children, school, sick leave, alimony, incapacity, stupidity, health, family, female power. Selective Transcription: Research question: Which of the parents faces financial difficulties more frequently after the divorce, which leads them to an unfavourable social situation and dependence on social assistance?

- A: Definitely the woman, to whom the children are entrusted for care, because she is left with the entire burden of the household, while the man's responsibility is only to contribute to child support. However, he is not relieved of his parental rights and obligations, and it's

not said that just because he has to pay child support, he should not be involved with the children or offer additional support.

- B: Mostly mothers, especially because when the children are small and the mother does not have close family nearby to help her, she has trouble finding a job. Few employers consider this.
- C: Definitely women. Men are generally better financially compensated. The man pays the alimony and that's it. On the other hand, the mother has other expenses as well. Therefore, the larger costs are significantly on the woman, and if she cannot manage, she certainly needs help from her family or social assistance from the state.
- D: It is usually the woman. Women are still paid lower wages, and they feel this very strongly. The children are usually entrusted to them for personal care, and they receive a lower income. Fathers often do not fully fulfil their alimony obligations. In some cases, this puts mothers close to the edge, sometimes living on as little as 30% of the minimum subsistence.
- E: Mothers are more frequently in a difficult financial situation. It is generally known that they have these problems.
- F: It is mostly the mother, as women have lower wages. They face issues with their former partner, the non-paying parent, who is obligated to pay but does not.
- H: The parent who retains the children in their care, so I believe it's mostly mothers.

Category 4 Difficult life period

Open coding: specific, individual, women, children, grandparents, problems, finances, school, household, demands, compromise, freedom. Selective Transcription: Research question: During which period, i.e., during the divorce or after the divorce, based on clients' testimonies, do you, as a social worker, find the situations in the family to be more difficult to manage?

- A: It depends on the case. No divorce, even though it might seem like a common event today, is the same—each one is really unique. Every case is individual.
- B: From my perspective, the more difficult situations in the family seem to arise after the divorce. That's when life is filled with so many problems that many people didn't even expect. Over time, they realise how complicated it is. One partner leaves the shared home, needs to find a rental, which is, of course, expensive, while the other partner remains alone with the children. It's also more challenging when it comes to collecting alimony.
- C: Each case is individual. I think more problems arise after the divorce. When people start thinking about divorce and file for it, they don't realise at all what it means.
- D: It certainly depends on the specific divorce. Yes, there are also positive divorces where the parents come to an agreement. However, if the partners don't agree in any way and don't reach a specific agreement by a certain date, then everything that happens

afterwards tends to escalate negatively, and they start causing trouble. After this period, it becomes less likely that they will reach an agreement, and the problems begin.

- E: Each family handles the situation around the divorce differently. In some cases, it's more difficult during the divorce, while in others, it's after. In my opinion, it depends on how long the problems have been present in the family and how the spouses try to handle the situation regarding the divorce.
- F: It depends on how long the divorce lasts. If they can agree, then both parents are usually cooperative. But if they can't agree, it doesn't matter whether it's before or after the divorce—the situation will last until the children are adults.
- G: Definitely, both before and during the divorce, it's critical. The tension between the partners is probably at its highest point at that time. Once things start to settle, both partners usually return to a standard state and typically reach an agreement.
- H: Probably during the ongoing divorce proceedings. In certain situations, even shortly after.

ANALYTICAL INDUCTION

Preliminary Hypothesis 1: We hypothesise that social workers, based on their experience working with divorcing clients, will report that the cause most significantly influencing the decision of partners to end their marriage through divorce is more likely to be marital infidelity rather than aggression or abuse.

In formulating this preliminary hypothesis, we drew on an analysis of divorce rates in Slovakia between 1990 and 2018, as presented in the monograph by Branislav Šproch and colleagues (2019). According to this source, “throughout the observed period, infidelity was a fairly frequent reason for divorce for both genders. Due to infidelity by men, on average, around 11% of marriages ended in divorce, and due to infidelity by women, around 7%.”

From the responses of the participants, we found that women are generally more active in making the decision to end their marriage through divorce. The thoughts focused on divorce and filing for it in court may not always stem from impulsive actions on their part; often, these thoughts follow a much longer period during which they tolerate their husband's transgressions, trying to fix the relationship and maintain the marriage for the sake of the children.

The participants agreed that the most frequent reason for divorce among their clients is clearly infidelity, which may be caused by emotional distancing and exhaustion of the relationship, separation due to work abroad, poor communication, suspicion, or the negative aspect of modern times—virtuality—where one of the partners enters into a new relationship through social media. Less prominent factors include alcohol, financial problems, disagreements over childrearing, and issues with the partner's parents or ill-considered marriages of young people.

During the interview, violence in its various forms—physical, psychological, or economic—was not discussed as a significant factor, indicating it does not occur to the same extent. From the results of the research, we can conclude that Preliminary Hypothesis 1, which assumed that the cause of divorce would more likely be marital infidelity than aggression and abuse, was confirmed. Based on this, we formulated it as Final Hypothesis 1. *Final Hypothesis 1*: We hypothesise that social workers, based on their experience working with divorcing clients, will report that the cause most significantly influencing the decision of partners to end their marriage through divorce is more likely to be marital infidelity rather than aggression or abuse.

Preliminary Hypothesis 2: We hypothesise that social workers will report that based on their recommendations for couples counselling aimed at restoring marital cohabitation through counselling services, women will respond more positively than men. Our assumption that men will be more reluctant to the idea of reversing the divorce process was the basis for formulating this hypothesis. Participants reported that couples tend to view attending counselling, which social workers recommend during their sessions, more as an obligation rather than something they must attend, even if they have already firmly decided to end the marriage. However, in most cases the social workers encountered during their professional practice, women were generally more open to the idea of reversing the divorce and restoring the relationship. In relationships, women are typically more emotional and show a greater willingness to utilise this type of service, often due to feelings of guilt that might bother them later (Ludvigh Cintulová et al., 2024). They may feel that they haven't done enough to save the marriage and keep the family together as a whole.

Men, on the other hand, are usually more pessimistic, strictly rejecting third-party intervention in their decision, which they believe both partners have already agreed upon. They may also fear the revelation of the true reasons behind their decision to agree to a divorce or why they are the ones initiating the petition. Often, this is linked to a hidden extramarital affair—a new relationship they may want to pursue after the divorce, possibly aiming to eventually remarry, or other circumstances they believe could harm them during the proceedings. Given the information obtained, we can conclude that infidelity, as the most frequent cause of divorce, confirmed in Final Hypothesis 1, leads many men to adopt a negative stance toward using couples counselling provided by psychologists. As a result, Preliminary Hypothesis 2 is confirmed, and we have formulated it as Final Hypothesis 2. *Final Hypothesis 2*: We hypothesise that social workers will report that based on their recommendations for couples counselling aimed at restoring marital cohabitation through counselling services, women will respond more positively than men.

Preliminary Hypothesis 3: We assume that social workers will report that after a divorce, the partner who is granted custody of the children will face more financial problems and a more unfavourable social situation than the partner who left the household. It is clear that a divorce does not resolve all family issues. Participants

in the responses indicated that women tend to deal with these problems, as children are more often granted into their sole custody. Additionally, women are financially disadvantaged compared to men, as they typically earn lower incomes, and men often fail to meet their court-mandated child support obligations, with the inability to trace and penalise non-paying parents being a significant issue. Another factor is childcare. Younger children are more often ill, requiring increased care, and if women do not have close relatives or friends to assist them, they are frequently absent from work, which employers tolerate only on rare occasions. When spouses decide to divorce due to marital infidelity, and the woman tries to save the relationship with professional help, but fails because the man is determined to leave the family for a new partner, the children are most often left in her care. The woman, in this case, is exposed to an unfavourable social situation, as she is alone in taking care of the children while also under pressure to secure the household's operation and balance family life with work (Ludvigh Cintulová, Budayová & Oláh, 2024). In conclusion, we state that our hypothesis 3 has been confirmed, though it has been slightly modified and reformulated into the final hypothesis 3. *Final Hypothesis 3*: We assume that social workers will report that after a divorce, women who are granted custody of the children are more likely to face financial problems and an unfavourable social situation than men, who are only required to pay child support and have scheduled contact with the children.

Preliminary Hypothesis 4: We assume that social workers, based on the testimonies of clients and their involvement in resolving family issues, will report that partners find the period after divorce more difficult to manage than the period during the ongoing divorce. The preliminary hypothesis was formed based on the assumption that the period after divorce is not only filled with the usual problems the family must deal with, but also with unexpected challenges that partners did not anticipate before the divorce. Therefore, we assumed that the post-divorce period would be more challenging. Participants stated that the period after divorce is more difficult for both adults and children. One significant issue is the departure of one of the partners from the shared household. Typically, it is the man who leaves to form a new partnership and no longer has the interest to fight for the family. He is forced to find new housing, which is usually financially difficult. The responsibility for managing the daily household and taking care of the children typically falls on the other partner, who, according to our findings, is usually the woman. Another issue is the inability of the partners to reach an agreement on child-rearing, which leads to problems in determining parental rights and responsibilities, including the adjustment of child support, which changes over time depending on the children's needs. There are also financial problems, mainly for women, and the challenge of balancing family life with work, something the partners previously shared. Coping with these problems is an individual experience for each. Women are disappointed when their husband leaves after years of what seemed to be a well-functioning marriage for another woman. Men, on the other hand, feel wronged when their ex-wife prevents him from seeing the children simply because she does

not want him to meet them in the presence of his new partner. Based on the results of the research, we can conclude that the preliminary hypothesis 4 has been confirmed and it has been formulated as the final hypothesis 4. *Final Hypothesis 4*: We assume that social workers, based on the testimonies of clients and their involvement in resolving family issues, will report that partners find the period after divorce more difficult to manage than the period during the ongoing divorce.

CONCLUSION

We have come to the realisation that problematic situations in families usually arise due to insufficient communication between spouses, with the most common reason for their decision to divorce being infidelity. The well-known phrase “for better or for worse” no longer holds as much weight as it once did, and spouses do not realise that marriage is a gift from one person to another, where it is necessary not only to give and receive but also to be able to forgive each other. Social workers strive to help couples reverse their decision to divorce by recommending couples counselling, but it is typically the men who reject this option. If there is no interest, any further efforts by the social worker to preserve the marriage become irrelevant.

Additionally, when couples file for divorce, they do not realise the challenges they will face in the future. The idea of separation and the belief that divorce is the right solution blinds them and distorts their vision of the future. A common issue is the unfavourable financial situation, and it is most often the woman with children who faces this. In any cases of escalated and difficult-to-manage life situations within the family, social workers are ready to help bridge this period and seek solutions through social counselling, referrals to counsellors and specialists from other accredited institutions, programs in child and family centres, or mediation.

Through responses and their subsequent comparison, all our hypotheses were confirmed. We concluded that infidelity is the main reason for divorce, that men are the ones who reject the option of reversing the divorce by undergoing couples counselling, and finally, that after the divorce process, it is the woman who ends up in an unfavourable social situation, as the children are in most cases entrusted to her personal care. However, despite the fact that divorce is the triggering mechanism for various problems, the research results confirm that even after a divorce, there is always an opportunity to find solutions, either independently or with the help of social workers and other specialists in psychology, law, mediation, etc. The life of a single parent is saturated with many problems that might not have existed if the partners communicated more and shared in everything life brought them. Moreover, every child has the right to experience a beautiful childhood thanks to a complete family and loving parents, something they can later look back on with joy and a sense of nostalgia. Therefore, it is important, in today’s fast-paced world, to slow down, realise

the strength and irreplaceable value of family, and reflect on what it meant to us when we were children, when our parents metaphorically spread their protective wings over us, and what it now means to us, not only in the original family but perhaps even in our own (Kondrla et al, 2024; Máhrik & Králik, 2024a,b; Maturkanič et al., 2024).

In connection with the increasing number of families undergoing divorce or post-divorce processes, and based on the findings we reached through the presented qualitative research, we can state that:

- Prevention of the growing trend of divorce proceedings should be sought in improving communication between partners, especially with the influence of social workers and their efforts to encourage clients to have more consultations with psychologists, not only through but also through other accredited entities of their choice, or by visiting support groups where partners, in the presence of experts, can gradually find the ability to listen to each other, accept each other's opinions, express their feelings, present them correctly, and resolve misunderstandings or serious conflicts.
- Legislative measures need to be implemented to provide more assistance to the parent caring for the children, so they do not find themselves in an unfavorable social situation due to the other parent not fulfilling their child support obligations. This could involve stricter sanctions against the non-paying parent or increasing the amount of state-guaranteed substitute child support.
- It is necessary to eliminate unnecessary years of delays in divorce proceedings that negatively affect every family member, and to resolve ongoing divorces to the satisfaction of the divorcing spouses, while considering the future well-being of the children.
- Social workers, in cooperation with child psychologists, should carry out repeated visits to schools, where lectures would raise awareness among adolescents about the increasing trend of divorces. This would provide an opportunity to clarify the importance of marriage for maintaining family unity, which should have a significant impact on their understanding of life when starting their own families in the future.
- It is necessary to provide social workers with opportunities for more frequent participation in social-psychological training and professional courses that would maintain their communication skills, self-reflection, and ability to provide feedback to clients and their families at the same quality as they do now, or address any shortcomings and prevent burnout.

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