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## Nannies' abilities to relate with the child as predictors for professional performance

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### Abstract

Starting from the increase of families hiring nannies, studies revealing the influence of the nanny's conduct on the child's development and the absence in Romania of standardized and valid tests for evaluating nannies' performance, the objective of this exploratory study was the evaluation of nannies' abilities to relate with the child, in relation to parental competence dimensions and professional performance criteria. The results of the research (conducted on 65 live-in nannies) proved that the adapted Parental Competence Questionnaire could be used for evaluating nannies' abilities to relate with the child and that these abilities were predictors for performance.

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### 1. Introduction

The challenges of the contemporary society (long working hours, the need for an extension and diversification of training programs in order to adjust to the professional requests, the need to permanently develop oneself and gather multiple specializations, the increase of the number of women occupying executive positions) hallmark the particularities of the modern family. In the specialized literature, there are numerous studies and researches proving the essential role of the family and especially of the mother in the cognitive (Durning & Pourtois, 1994), social

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(Briers, 2008; Salome, 1989), moral (Law Nolte & Harris, 2001) and cultural-value development of the child (Spock, 1998; Zimbardo, 1985). At the same time, a profile of the parental competence in relation to the satisfaction of the child's main needs has been revealed. The parental competence was defined by Glăveanu & Creangă (2009) as a system of knowledge, skills, capabilities, abilities and habits that allow the parent to successfully fulfill the parental responsibilities and also to prevent/deal with crisis situations in a manner that contributes to the child's development. Although the above studies stressed the importance of the parents' presence and also of their competence in accomplishing the parental roles, many families – in the situation in which the profession deeply absorbs both parents – often resort to the services of a nanny. According to the Romanian Occupational Standard (National Authority for Qualifications, 2011), a nanny is a qualified person that provides services like child caretaking, development and education at the child's home and that is responsible for implementing/applying the decisions planned together with the child's parents. The professional activity of a nanny is regulated by documents issued by the Ministry of Labor, Family and Social Protection and the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports. A live-in nanny (who permanently lives with the family of the child and who takes on tasks almost completely delegated by the parents) plays an important part in the child's life and development and can have both a positive (Bassett, 1998) influence and an extremely negative one. There are authors who draw the attention on the risks of the total delegation of the parental roles to a live-in nanny. Friedman (2010) correlates this situation to the appearance of subsequent disturbances of the child's personality. The boys can become libertine adults, trying to achieve immediate satisfactions in the relations with women, as they grow up with the impression that there is always "another woman" who will fulfill their needs (the live-in nanny embodies this concept, suggesting that the mother, and later the wife, is not sufficient). On the other hand, the girls raised in this system will feel an unfulfilled need of affection that they may satisfy in adult life by alcohol, drugs, sex. One way to prevent such dysfunctional outcomes is to ensure a solid professional evaluation and also a standardized professional training/formation of the live-in nannies according to the general and specific competences described in the Occupational Standard; this would favor the building of a caretaking and educational environment favorable to the development of a harmonious personality of the future adult.

## **2. Research Methodology**

### *2.1. Purpose*

Starting from a series of studies showing the influence of the live-in nanny on the child (LaRowe, 2006) and from the fact that in Romania there were no tailored and standardized tests with the necessary psychometric qualities for being scientifically valid and generally applicable, the objective of this exploratory study was the evaluation of the live-in nannies' abilities to establish a good relation with the child, in reference to the main dimensions of the parental competence and the professional performance criteria.

The investigative process was guided by two hypotheses:

- The dimensions that characterized a live-in nanny's abilities to relate with the child corresponded to those of the parental competence and thus the Parental Competence Questionnaire (PCQ) could be adjusted (by eliminating, reformulating and particularizing some of the items) and used in this new context.
- If the aforementioned abilities (evaluated by the adapted PCQ) were predictors of the professional performance of live-in nannies, then the research responded to a practical necessity

### *2.2. Subjects*

The research was conducted on 65 live-in nannies (age  $M = 39.1$ ,  $SD = 17.45$ ) with high-school and/or university education, evaluated at a preliminary level by an agency in Bucharest providing specialized services.

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