SOCIAL RESEARCH REPORTS

ISSN: 2066-6861 (print), ISSN: 2067-5941 (electronic)

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WELFARE IN PROVIDING INDIVIDUAL SECURITY

Tiberiu ILIE

Social Research Reports, 2019, Vol. 11, Issue 1, pp. 117-137

The online version of this article can be found at:

[www. researchreports.ro](http://www.researchreports.ro)

<https://doi.org/10.33788/srr11.1.9>

Published by:

Expert Projects Publishing House

Covered by Index Copernicus International

www.indexcopernicus.com

Directory of Open Access Journals

www.doaj.org

On behalf of:

Center for Program and Social Development

Additional services and information about Social Research Reports
can be found at:

www.researchreports.ro

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WELFARE IN PROVIDING INDIVIDUAL SECURITY

Tiberiu ILIE¹

Abstract

This paper aims at analysing social welfare as a dimension of individual security. In specialty literature and official documents of international institutions, social welfare is often associated with social welfare and it generally refers to providing support to the categories of people that for the time being, cannot ensure a decent living by their own means. Social welfare contains mechanisms by which the state institutions contribute to a state of individual and collective welfare in situations which require expert intervention. In this context, we shall analyse the importance of the individual, his welfare and that of those around him in order to build social welfare. This study is a qualitative one. The results emphasise the fact that the social welfare of citizens may represent a factor of instability and social risk, if it does not reach its aim, namely, ensuring the best standard of living for personal development and security, but it may also represent a factor of stability, which results in welfare and development. The conclusions highlight, among other things, the fact that the social welfare system is not perfect, since the realities are diverse and they often do not match the theory and official policy, while people concerned with their own security try to find alternative solutions in order to preserve the standards of living.

Keywords: individual security, social welfare, social construct.

Introduction

There are various researches, analyses and definitions in specialty literature which are focused on security, but most of them refer to international, national, social or community security, tackled from a national or international perspective. The social welfare paradigm concerning the individual is a recent one and most of the time, the theoretical aspects were not analysed and supported with practical researches. The papers on the security of the individual have yet to accurately define the concept. Notions such as human security, individual security or personal

¹ Alexandru Ioan Cuza University from Iasi, Department of Sociology and Social Work, Iasi, ROMANIA. E-mail: ilie_tib@yahoo.com

security are used, replaced by some similar forms, where security means safety. These notions are social representations integrated in “social and ideological contexts and they can only be conceived within a social dynamic” (Fedor, 2015, 45). To throw some light on this aspect, we shall use the concept of individual security in this paper, in order to distinguish it from that of human security (which usually refers to the perspective of the state on the individual) and personal security (which refers strictly to the personal manner of analysing the issue of security, without involving the social component).

The individual security dimension which shall be analysed in this paper is the social welfare of the individual. In specialty literature and official documents of international institutions, social welfare is mostly associated with social security and it generally refers to providing support to those categories of people that cannot ensure a decent living by their own means. The national social welfare systems differ from country to country, from continent to continent. Basically, social welfare is associated with social well-being and it is based on a simple principle: persons in distress are supported by benevolent contributions of the other members of the society, with the purpose of ensuring each person security, the right to a decent living, but also collective security by eliminating the social risks.

From national security to individual security

Hlihor (2008, 33) believes that despite its undisputable importance, critical study on security “appeared relatively late, after the second great world conflagration and became part of the theory on international relations in the coming decades”. “The basic moment is considered to be the signing of the National Security Act in 1947 by the American president Harry S. Truman”, according to Busuioc, Dogaru, Peta, Stanciu, Lupescu (2010, 15), “whose objective was to enable the coordination of armed force, to articulate external politics with internal politics and to integrate civil economy with military imperatives”. We can thus notice (Mata, 2016, 7) “a first shift of paradigm in national security and although the military element remains predominant, other political, economic or social aspects are obvious”. Other authors, such as Parant (2003, 316), consider that “the American liberal approach attempts at redefining security in what concerns all of the threats to the standards of living of the inhabitants of a state”.

Initially, the concept of security was approached from a double perspective, according to Funieru (2011, 171). They consisted in “the theory of realism, for which the international relations can be understood by deciphering the way in which the power is distributed between the states and the theory of idealism, which sees war as a major threat derived from the issue of national security, while the dismantling of war and peace restoration lead to the abolition of the issue from the international agenda”. Ștefanachi (2012, 98) argues that the traditional view proposed by realism and neo-realism, “of understanding the international space, stakes on the state as the sole explicative variable and as a consequence, protecting the individual security becomes the responsibility of the state”. According to Kolodziej (2007, 41-42), “the focus on the state in the issue of security is justified by at least two viewpoints: on one side, the state became the most important political organisa-

tional form and, on the other side, the state-nation acts as the monopoly holder of legitimate violence and means to apply it. Based on this realist view, the main actors are the states, not the individuals, while power and anarchy are characteristics of this world". Another approach, positivism, "promotes strategic studies and security studies, described by the critics of this school of thinking as objective approaches, which do not address issues related to the ontology and epistemology of security". The experts make possible the distinction between the traditionalist approach in the studies of security, with a state-centred and military-centred vision and the broad approach of security, which aims at enlarging the security agenda by analysing the military and non-military issues" (Sarcinschi, 2005, 9).

During the 90s, years marked by important international events, particularly those concerning the military field and human rights and freedoms (the end of the "cold war", the fall of communism, the reunification of Germany, the dismantling of the Soviet Union, the declaration of the European Union, but also the appearance of some war-torn regions, like Irak), a global shift of perception takes place. According to Ștefanachi (2015, 13), "contemporary security extends its conceptual meaning with a shift from ensuring state security (national security) to ensuring the security of the individual or the communities he is part of (human security)". Under these conditions, the concept of human security arises and gets to be defined by the UN (United Nations) in the Human Development Report, as it follows: "human security means that people can freely exert their choices, in safety conditions and they can be relatively confident that the opportunities they have today shall not be completely lost tomorrow" (UNDP, 1994, 23). The report shall generate a first model in analysing the individual-centred human security, which develops seven components: economic security (the need to provide a basic income – usually as a result of productive or remunerated work or as a last resort, by means of public safety funding), food security (access to basic food), health security (ensuring protection against medical conditions), environment security (protection against natural factors of environment), personal security (physical protection of people), community security (preserving traditions) and political security (respect for the basic human rights and freedoms).

An important moment in the history of these schools of thinking for the concept of security is represented by the Copenhagen School, whose representatives (Buzan, 1991; de Wilde, 1991; Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde, 1998) – believe in enlarging the area of defining security. This school is associated with the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute, where studies on security and peace/peace-oriented studies were carried out. The Institute gathered many analysts with different conceptions and approaches, who eventually reached valuable theories.

In the sense intended by Axworthy (1999, 334), human security means "protecting people against threats, either violence-accompanied or not; it involves preventive measures of diminishing vulnerability or reducing to minimum the risks and, in case the preventive measures are not sufficient, other measures shall be taken in order to remedy the situation". Subsequently, Van Ginkel (2000) elaborated a different approach of human security, based on the necessity to respect human dignity above all. Nevertheless, the threats against human security identified by the two researchers (fear, ignorance, poverty, famine, social and educational degradation), do not fully reveal the whole spectre of dangers and insecurity sources,

which needs to be completed with environment or political-community dangers. The concept of human security “developed in close relation with the fundamental human rights, freedoms, abilities or needs which make up the vital nucleus of humans”, referring to three dimensions: survival-related, living means-related and minimal dignity-related” (Alkire, 2003, 17). In addition, another analysis perspective “places human security in a relation of complementarity with human developments and human rights” (Sen, 2003, 2), and when talking about rights, we cannot miss out the corresponding obligations, which lead to another characteristic of human security, namely, responsibility.

The most recent studies on human security attempts at balancing the individual-centred research. Cudworth and Hobden (2017, 2) argue that the “post-human turn in philosophy, ethics and social theory redefines the way in which we understand security. Through radical de-centring of humans as the only «basis» of security and ethics, it denies the anthropological fundamentals of traditional and critical security studies.” Even if from a post-modern perspective, the “affiliation of an individual to a community is a constant developing social construct” (Fedor, 2014, 71), the individual and group security are intertwined.

In the sense intended by Pigui, personal security (2004, 3) involves strictly individual indicators, such as “physical violence, domestic violence, child abuse, sex-related issues, human dignity, drugs etc”.

Pirnea (2005, 24) claims that “individual security refers to life, health, status, material situation or freedom of individuals, while the threat of reference can take the shape of danger, doubt or of other potential threats against the objects of reference”. As Moise (2006, 2) said, “when talking about individual security, we must take into consideration the fact that most of the threats against individuals originate in the environment they live and get to be materialised in peer, economic or political pressure”. For example, even if manifested in a variety of forms, social threats can be classified in four types: physical threat, expressed by pain or wounding, economic threats, which can materialise by limiting the access to work and resources or rights threat, which involves violating the basic human rights and freedoms and threats against the social position or human status, which means altering his dignity and honour by public humiliation, disregard or discrediting”.

The concept of social welfare that shall be used in this paper is situated at the border of human security (seen as individual security assured by the state and institutions) and personal security (seen strictly from the point of view of the person). Hence, in the sense intended by us, individual security represents the social actions that the individual carries out in order to ensure his own safety and a decent standard of living, provided that his rights and freedoms are respected by the members of the community and state institutions, in the context of his social responsibility, which involves ensuring the safety of the other members of the society. Basically, it is the safety that the individual ensures to himself by his own means, supported by the society and community members.

These theoretical presentations clearly do not exhaust the general topics on security and particular topics on individual security. Moreover, we identified a series of characteristics that are not related to this concept: human development, freedoms, rights (human rights), obligations, responsibility, dangers, risks, insecurity, and needs. The bibliography is generous in regards to this topic, at a theoretical level.

Individual security and social welfare

The connection between individual security and social welfare that the persons at risk benefit from, is generated by the concept of vulnerability, seen as a source of risks which may lead to issues and dysfunctions with negative effects at a macro level, while for the individual, it represents an obstacle in achieving an optimum standard of living, a threat against exerting his rights, freedoms or duties and, in extreme cases, even against his survival. Apart from these grounds, which are mostly related to concrete, material aspects of life, vulnerability may also give birth to a cognitive, ontological, moral issue which may emerge even when the other dysfunctions are corrected: the individual is left with a trauma which may become vulnerability in itself.

In the field of indigenous social welfare, our practical experience led us into identifying two implementation methods: there are situations of social assistance (people become dependent of help) and situations of social support (support is offered temporarily, in order for those in need to overcome the hardships) provided to the disadvantaged people. Most of the time, these situations are focused on the type of support that the beneficiary needs: unemployment, abandoned minor, disabled person, elders, etc. People who find themselves in such situations often represent a risk, not only as individuals, but also as part of a society or group, since their precarious achievement or even impossibility to ensure a minimum standard of living could determine them to take actions against the others or their co-optation by other persons who act contrary to the collective interest.

From an institutional perspective, the risks and vulnerabilities represented by the manifestation or perpetuation of a low standard of living or the impossibility to ensure a decent living, were acknowledged and put into practice by means of an important tool specific to social welfare, namely, the social welfare system which puts together to a large extent the risks of people in distress with their personal security, in a social context. In collaboration with private forms of organisation, the social welfare system is currently referred to in relation with the concept of “social welfare network, seen as a basic component of social welfare precisely because it brings together the actions conducted at the general level of society, through state institutions (fundraising, redistribution of funds to disadvantaged people or, more accurately, to groups in distress) and similar actions oriented towards the individual, through organisations or private groups, which act, most of the time, either specifically and/or according to a limited temporal scope”.

In order to diminish or eliminate the risks for the welfare of others, it is necessary to act on many levels on behalf of the community: ensuring a decent living through institutional or voluntary social services, by drawing a clear agreement between the beneficiary and service provider, which should prevent a situation of addiction; engaging the community in the adjustment to regulations of people at risk and involvement in the efforts of ensuring personal security by own means; correlating personal interests in such a way that they should act cohesively in ensuring general interest. To achieve this goal, the members of the community and (or especially) people at risk are required to get involved at the level of the society, in order to prevent the social group from becoming vulnerable by enhancing individual vulnerabilities, as stated by Cojocaru (2005, 14), “the construction of

social reality is done by social negotiation of individual interpretation referring to different situations, since social action is understood differently by individuals, who turn themselves from *actors* into *social constructors*". The common action of the players (social actors) can be carried out only if the interests are common and they are aware of the common benefits: ensuring a decent living, an individual and group security and the mitigation of risks and vulnerabilities which may endanger the previous two benefits. When building the map of common interests, one must consider the negotiation of vision and individual map construction, where the maps represent the forthcoming action perspectives which shall lead to the achievement of the objectives.

Research methods

Our research is a qualitative study. For this purpose, we used the individual comprehensive interview. We believe that our paper is mostly exploratory, because such an approach takes place when a researcher tackles a new subject. Also, there is a descriptive side of our study which seeks to answer to questions like «what?», «where?», «when?» and «how?» (Babbie, 2010, 140), as a goal of the qualitative component of the endeavour to contextualise and delimitate the model of individual security.

The field research was carried out between March and November 2017. The target group of the study was made up of adults aged between 30 and 71 years old, with experience in the researched field (one of the dimensions of security), without limiting ourselves to the strict analysis of the concerned field (the questions addressed the fields of interest for all the respondents). We conducted 24 interviews.

The questions were adapted to the level of understanding of the investigated subjects, in a language appropriate to their level of comprehension and additional explanations were provided in case the requests were sometimes more difficult to understand. The interviewed persons gave their consent in conducting and recording the interview (the exact records and transcriptions are enclosed in the addenda). The confidential nature of the information provided in the interview was brought to the attention of the subjects by us, as well as the fact that the data shall only be used in a sociological research without mentioning their personal data. The interviews were carried out in a familiar setting, agreed upon by the respondents and they lasted for about 50 minutes. In order to maintain the anonymity of the interview participants, their names were not used in the discussion and the resulting processed data were individualised by codification – each of the respondent received a serial number according to the succession in which the interview was conducted.

The body of data collected by individual interview and analysis of media materials was subjected to coding operations, according to importance and recurrence, in order to work out the categories and themes. We intend to reveal the hidden meanings of the analysed messages, based on the *Grounded Theory* method (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), a methodological approach with focus on the way in which the data and their analysis became products of symbolic interactionism. Then, concepts

and themes were organised in a narrative scheme which sums up the knowledge acquired on the subjects of interest for the research, grouped in thematic axis. We started from the premise that inferences set out in the conclusions are credible only if “there is a correspondence between the way the respondents actually perceive social constructs and the way the researcher describes their point of view” (Mertens, 2005, 254) and that is why we resorted to an accurate rendering of the discussions and their framing into objectively grounded thematic axis.

The targeted thematic axis consisted in: the way the individuals relate to ensuring the security of their social welfare, the way they build individual security based on ensuring the security of their social welfare, the way the individuals perceive the security of their social welfare in a societal context and the risks associated with ensuring the security of social welfare. The number of the interview appears in brackets.

Results and discussion

How do individuals relate to their social welfare security?

Individual security by means of social welfare is personally experienced, yet not exerted by a great part of the respondents, because they do not find or have ever found themselves in one of the situations corresponding to this social dimension. The way in which they relate to social welfare is mostly done by means of experiences lived by the close ones or presented publicly, which determines them to have a critical or disapproving attitude after noticing many of the irregularities of the social welfare system. Social welfare is regarded as necessary, though it is often wrongly understood and applied («wrong» as the critical point of view of each of us), with a contrary result: the insecurity of most of the individuals and society as a whole. The negative situation identified by individuals even lead to an almost total denial of the efficiency of social welfare, although its aspects and dimensions are much more complex and less known and analysed.

The reality lived through other people, but experienced in its consequences makes of the social welfare an obstacle in the way of development and security of the individuals, but also of the beneficiaries of social welfare.

“I do not see it (social welfare) as a solving-source, but quite as the contrary, since it determines the development of a certain addiction to that situation: I am grateful for what I get, namely, the money that the state provides me with, then why should I work for more? And hence, I remain in a risk area.” (I8)

Social welfare and its securing role are internalised, made aware of and accepted with all its pluses and minuses (situational, punctual).

“The social welfare system is fundamental, since it existed and shall continue to exist; it is obvious that there is a state politics and for now, we live in what is known as the supporting state, where we help people, and it is clearly a European-inspired

model and not an American-inspired one, and like everything else, it has advantages and disadvantages. Obviously, there are some who will always know how to use certain advantages and other who will not do so, and this is a totally different thing, yet you cannot change laws to the advantage of a single person, if one managed to notice a weakness. Even so, the supporting state and support for people in need must exist, because in the end, by helping people who need it, you are in fact helping yourself, as a state, as a society, because those people will live in a society and if they do not know how to behave, not only they will commit antisocial acts, but those acts might affect you or others, and then they will have to know how to salute, to know that one must walk in a certain way on the streets, to know what to do, how to behave and so on and so forth, basic elements of cohabitation.” (I9)

In ensuring security of the individual, group and society, social welfare is regarded next to the other systems as necessary, yet the necessity of cooperation between states and individuals becomes obvious on these dimensions in order to cover the financial shortcomings.

“Does social welfare influence the protection of the individual, group, community, and nation? Yes, because individual security gets reflected on group security then to national security, so you cannot separate them, yet the most visible effect can be found in the state budget, which is encumbered by such systems, which drain it no matter if we talk about the social welfare system, the health system – which is a bottomless pit, since a lot of the funds are stolen and it impacts the individual. It is totally wrong to wait for the state to ensure us social welfare, because it shall not be able to teach each of the individuals what to do, so apart the state, there should be non-governmental, volunteering organisations to do so, even if the volunteering system does not do very much in Romania...” (I10)

The balance between contribution and expectations is considered to be the key of accepting social welfare as a security factor.

“So people who worked benefit from social welfare, right? They get a pension when they reach the age of retirement, in a national social security system, like in Europe, where the social states take care of the citizens long after they stop being fit for work. Then, there is social security for when you lose your job, or at least, let us say it exists... I think we cannot live up to the level of other states which allot huge amount of money, yet we always compare with those who have more, but we fail to take notice of their conditions and obligations; we are only interested in the rights they have: wow, he earns so much!, yes, he does, but compared to your monthly wage of 400 or 300 euro, he earns 3000 euro, so it is normal for you to receive less, you cannot be paid an unemployment benefit the amount of your wage. In addition, the benefit is provided for a limited period of time and it is logical for it to be so in order to determine you to get a job...” (I11)

The individual security assured by the social welfare system is regarded as necessary, especially due to its individualisation in order for the intervention to become more efficient and human.

“What are the reasons for which we are not interested in them (those who are in need)? Indifference, lack of interest from the state, and if each city hall took proper care of these people, the situation would be totally different. City halls collect funds from our money, so a mayor cannot manage at his own will, since he is in charge both of rich and poor people, and he must show interest in each social group. If it happened so, frozen people would not be found in their homes anymore are there would not be people starving. It is so painful to say this!” (I12)

The difference between the society constructed by the individual and that offered by the social welfare system are so big, that they create deadlocks and the sensation that the security role is reversed.

“I believe that we are the ones creating addicts, social addicts, because from my point of view, our laws are not very clear, in the sense that they are modified each year, like, for example, the law for those assisted with heating support. I think that there are experts not only locally, but also nationally and this is great, but this is the point where I always get stuck and I cannot stop noticing how we create system addicts.” (I14)

Inequalities and lack of transparency of the social welfare system emphasize the risks and not the benefits that individuals could have making them feel like they lost something, that their rights are being violated, that they will stop being so spoiled by the system.

“In Romania, social welfare is excessive, there are types of social welfare which address all kind of issues and I think it is not fair for a man who has not worked a day of his life to receive a pension the same amount as one who worked for 40 years. This is what is being induced to people. I, for example, have worked in the last 32 years and I have friends who also worked, but they worked under the table and earned more than me; now, they have houses and cars without having paid their contributions to the state and they shall benefit from the social welfare system and shall receive a social pension when they reach the retirement age, yet they practiced tax avoidance; not every job was good for them, because it was more convenient to work under the table and receive cash and not be paid on a payroll. The next generations are going to complain about not receiving pensions, but paradoxically enough, all those who whine about having a small pension, do have a house, a car and were also able to keep their children in school. How come? Where did they get all these things from?” (I15)

We almost fail to see the real issues, because of those who apply an imperfect legislation and of those who benefit from it and ruin the idea, the concept of social welfare, which should address those in need.

“If an individual has indeed some problems that stop him from carrying out an activity, it is humane and normal to be helped, but some of them are very healthy and still receive this money and do nothing in return. Alright, if the concerned person has a problem or he is impaired, let us help him, let him benefit from the support of the society, but let us stop offering help to people who literally do not want to work.” (I16)

An aspect encountered in the case of other dimensions of individual securi-

ty: the individual believes he does not receive as much security as he transmits around him, especially to the state institutions, which obviously creates a sense of insecurity.

"I inspire trust to the ones around me, including to the institutions, yet I do not receive the same amount of security and stability. Thus, I am not very content with the social welfare system, which is often unbalanced and unfair. Maybe the social welfare system should take better care of the children and mothers with children and who work or are willing to work and are not socially protected, they lack the safety to develop." (I18)

For some people, this social welfare system is not useful and they resort to private methods to ensure security in risk situations.

"When considering my very own case, I believe I am doing my bit in the society, who provides added value, yet for me, the social welfare system is non-existent. As for the pension, I think that as a person working in the private system, I can only benefit from a private pension." (I19)

Social welfare and the security it implies should represent for some respondents, a support during their hardships.

"I did not benefit from the social welfare system, but I believe it is relatively stable in Romania, meaning we can consider the thought that in the near future we shall receive a pension and we shall benefit from certain services." (I20)

The desirable conditions for security would be a state of balance between contribution and security, but there are situations when people receive help without contributing or vice-versa. Sometimes, between the two situations, unfair actions coming from unfair people occur.

"Social welfare is not a help you receive unconditionally, although it should be so. I can say now I am not happy with what I received in return from the society given the tough situation I find myself in. Still, I do not find society guilty for it, which is just it! Indeed, I am not ok with what happened to me, that it was not normal, but considering the diagnostic I have, one cannot receive a disability allowance by official means. If I had declared a diagnostic which meets the requirements of a disability allowance, I would have received one. Nevertheless, I consider it a totally unethical thing to do." (I21)

Although they are asked about their social welfare and security, the respondents get to the point where they stop talking about themselves, about their very own social welfare and start showing how outraged they are about the social welfare system, which offers money without asking for anything in return and thus create addicts!

"Honestly, I am really appalled at the social aspect, even if I, myself, have been employed in this system. All due respect to the people in need, but at the same time, a lot of money is being thrown around for people who are not willing to work, who are

not willing to do anything and unfortunately, our social welfare system encourages this kind of people, who are only looking to rob from the state.” (I22)

For those from the social welfare system, there are situations when security works from the whole to the individual, along with assuming the issues and positive aspects.

“As a man who put his heart and soul in the social assistance system, I could call it my second home or family. I also had a lot of disappointments related to the evolution of the system, the same issues which can be found in the education and health systems, we must admit, but I think that in the social welfare system, coherence was assured by people who believed in social assistance and so things are a little different. It is a field where people evolved a lot due to the bottom, not top specialists.” (I23)

Regarded from the outside by someone who does not benefit from social welfare, the social welfare system might seem useful and balanced.

“To me, social welfare is normal, neither under a certain level or too exaggerated. Speaking only theoretically and lacking experience, I think this is balanced and useful at a national level.” (I24)

Building individual security based on social welfare security

In what concerns the security generated by social welfare, the individual construct is affected by the same aspects mentioned above: dysfunctions generate fears concerning the present and future, insecurity and even complaints. The financial aspect of social welfare, the most visible and quantifiable one, stops the individual from designing a projection of future in relation to his safety.

“I have the feeling that somewhere things are being lost, it is like a broken pipe that stops funds and resources from going where they are needed and this does not happen to a visible extent, and here I am referring to social allowances. Providing this money with no condition, only for the sake of doing it...there are a lot of people, even troubled parents with children and although they know they have a lot of issues, they continue to have children only to benefit from the allowance, which by the way, is not used to the benefit of the child, how it should, right?” (I8)

Again, we come across the difference between the construed reality, which generates utility, understanding and security, and that existing in the society, which does not inspire trust to the individual in its entirety.

“Social welfare is one difficult issue. When talking about the money involved in this, namely, for staying at home and doing nothing, in Romania, social welfare is misunderstood. If referring to a help offered to the person in need – either it is a financial. Or a physical, medical, psychical need – I totally agree with it, so that he can feel useful in the society, and enable him to have a decent living and I believe this is what social welfare means.” (I10)

In the context of the near future, where the indicators are not changed, the lack of efficiency of social welfare is seen as a factor which influences the development of the community and affects all the individuals.

“The most visible phenomenon in the field of Romanian social welfare can be noticed in the rural environment, where there are socially assisted individuals who are not physically or mentally impaired, but who benefit from money and who cannot be engaged into working. Hence, there are a lot of households which lack workforce and supporting people, even if paid. This negatively influences everyone and gets reflected in the standard of living, since the one who although have lands and machinery, lack workforce and cannot evolve and so, the socially assisted individual is happy with the little he gets and maintains the household as he can, yet he cannot move forward.” (I10)

The active role of social welfare, identified in rare situations, is that of integrating the individual in the social mechanism, where he is seen as the main actor: beneficiary of the support, but also a promoter of further actions, provided that it is supported at an institutional, organisational level, promotion on value criteria.

“This is where the state comes in, organises training courses etc., and stimulates you through its active measures of employment to the extent that these measures are effective, but after the concerned person received the necessary information, did all the necessary courses, and if he makes no effort in getting by, then it is not sufficient, the state cannot provide support to people who are able to obtain what they by themselves. Of course, he might say: Look, an investor comes and provides 500 jobs, the states contributes but you, as an individual, must run around, be in competition with the ones who want to get those 500 jobs, because there will be nobody to tell you come, I want you, you must prove that you deserve that job, or at least, this is my opinion, there must exist a real competitive system that we do not have, we only have 30% and there is probably more in the private system, where another problem emerges, since the wages are very little and people are looking to get away from there, so very few managers and national companies follow the occidental principle of competitiveness, of stimulating the employee, its career and that is where people eager to earn go, which is normal, because it is a chance to enhance their lives, yet, in my opinion, most of the fields promote non-value.” (I11)

“In my opinion and I am telling you with a heavy heart that I am extremely outraged at the way in which we manage the fate of the elders in this country... they asked themselves what they should do with them and then I wondered who is asking this question, because it is the responsibility that the Romanian state should assume for people who worked, parents, people who lived in our country. I do not care about someone who receives unemployment benefit and does not want to work because he has back pain. It is different from being bedridden and I honestly do not know when we shall become aware of these things and realise that there is an imbalance, inequality, something I cannot even imagine. There are children who have elders and they do not care about them, but we can hold them responsible for them and tell them «Look, they raised you and built you a future».” (I12)

Most of the time, individuals personalise the state and its institutions in the theoretical endeavour to identify a potential future for their security in terms of social welfare and they substitute the system in trying to determine some decisions favourable to their security.

“The social assistance system blocks them and they cannot evolve anymore and suddenly become addicts. I am going to tell you one more thing – the Roma people who benefit from social allowance, like those from the village where my mother lives, would refuse to chop wood or mow the grass and they agree to offer you help when they find themselves in desperate situations and this happens because they receive money from the city hall and so they say it is not worth it... so they have other two-three children who receive allowance amounting to 200 lei up to the age of 6... Therefore, find a way to determine them to look for a job, stop supporting them, do you get it? There certainly are jobs, maybe not for everyone, but stop supporting those who do not actually need support and start offering it to those who really need it.” (I14)

Security provided by social welfare is considered harmful if it becomes a substitute for the security achieved by the individual through work, through obtaining resources on his own.

“The social welfare system does not offer an individual security, but makes him weaker and more unprepared, and in time, when he shall get older and he shall not be able to work anymore, he lacks medical assurance, money for a decent living, he and people like him will get to places for homeless people or they will be taken care by their families. In either case, the state cannot continue offering support to people who refuse to work. If you look around you, you will see plenty of advertisements like “I am looking for a bartender”, “I am looking for a selling assistant”, and these are only those exposed in the front windows. Go to the workforce and you shall see how many unemployed people there are. I have a friend who closed off his neighbourhood bar because he could not find a bartender. There are stores where behind the counter, there are the owners, because they lack selling assistants, who indeed, where poorly paid, but for a foreign student, a wage amounting to 1700 lei for days worked every once in a while, this is money, you have to start from somewhere. The same happens with the factories – they do not have employees and this will cause a great problem to you, because due to the big number of socially assisted people, people are not willing to work anymore. Let them cut out the allowance and then people will definitely start working. That is why in our country, social welfare is excessive.” (I15)

“Honestly, the social welfare system in Romania has no real basis. Social welfare must not be mistaken for not working. As long as you give a sum of money to an individual in order for him to survive, this must not be done as a chance to not working. Social welfare must be very well anchored in doing something for the money you receive instead of staying at home and doing nothing. A balance, a reciprocity between him and the state must be found, so that the individual must know that he must do something for the money. After all, money is exchanged for an activity, no matter if you are doing community service or you are engaged in specific activities.” (I16)

Individuals discern between the utility of social welfare for people in need and risks generated by ensuring this protection to people who are able to do it by themselves.

“I believe it should be useful, but unfortunately, at the state level, I do not think it is, because the help offered to certain people makes them hold the line on and stop fighting for a decent living, in the sense that they get used to that sum, be it as little and even impossible to provide for a living. I am not talking about all the beneficiaries, but of those who receive different allowances. I do not think that all those benefiting from social welfare are in need. Also, I believe an eye should be kept on those people, in order to see whether the received allowance proved useful or not.” (I17)

“I believe the social welfare system is not really great, to say so. Social welfare is provided to people who do not deserve it...a legal framework should be set out in order to determine people to work instead of waiting for social allowance. In addition, the social system is not well-thought-out at all...” (I18)

Even if considering social welfare as an outside or future-placed thing, individuals build it according to their need of security: by changing the amount of contribution, balancing the *loisir* activities and carefully monitoring the involved amounts.

“I would bring some changes to the contribution system, namely, I would impose a variable percentage: if you want a bigger pension, contribute with 8%, if not, contribute less. In return, this money should be very well controlled and invested, so that they provide a certain safety. If I work more and contribute more, without taking leaves or time to relax, I am going to want to take the leaves after retirement.” (I20)

Individuals build social welfare and the security it implies by starting from some positive actions, by comparing them to other dimensions of security and projecting what needs to be changed in order to achieve a collective security of which they shall be part of.

“Social assistance started to be more specialised, since the interdisciplinary approach started to be used, either we speak about psychology, sociology, they understood that a sociologist can add value to the social assistance system. There is a saying: if you are unhappy with yourself, become a psychologist and if you are unhappy with the society, become a sociologist in social welfare, this is very important. There are still big issues, but because there are still dreamers and people who support very much this field and who keep taking further the process of radical reform in what concerns the percentage of service providing, by exchanging qualitative services for quantitative services, the approach of individual in the society, the way of relating to the needs of the individual, aspects which are very beautiful as theory, yet when it comes to applying them, we are unable to do it most of the time. And for this, one needs resources.” (I23)

The respondent feels protected if those around him are provided social welfare and security.

“When I look at the pension of my parents or at the social allowance my neighbours receive, I think to myself that it is alright, I do not know what else I could add here, since these are normal services. Those around me are happy with these social services, parents have a decent pension, which satisfies them, while those who receive a social or disability allowance are also alright, or at least I, myself, have not met people who are unhappy with it.” (I24)

The perception of individuals on their social welfare security in a societal context

The main purpose of social welfare is to provide support to people in need and it does not necessarily mean a financial support, regarded as a temptation by those who are not looking to financially secure themselves by their own means. Social welfare is meant to determine the individual to overcome the hardships and appreciate the support he receives, by giving in return actions of individual and societal security. Social welfare by financial means is seen as less useful and efficient than that of service providing.

“Instead of offering a child with learning difficulties a sum of money that the parent gets, but which does not really help him to learn better, maybe it should be better to offer him some vouchers, subscriptions to the psychologist, psychiatrist, to a therapy he needs. I think it would be more beneficial to him and the parent would somehow be obliged to make the child benefit from that service. Now we are only offering money whose use is not monitored and we fail to know whether it helps in any way or not.” (I8)

Also, people benefiting from social welfare could be offered moral support in order to overcome difficult moments.

“Do not offer financial support to people who do not deserve it, because it only manages to determine people to stop looking for a job, and to start considering ways of benefiting from financial support to the greatest extent possible, since they are motivated to do nothing as long as law encourages them to do so. In a different scenario, the support which takes the shape of counselling, guidance or training would be much more useful, yet this is not done.” (I10)

Social welfare can secure individuals and send a safety message if carried out in a balanced way, without affecting the functional area of the society.

“Yes, social welfare is good as long as people are aware of the fact that it is only temporary and they must go back on the labour market, but some indulge themselves in this situation and afterwards go and work under the table and do not enter on the labour market right away and then another problem arises...that share of social allowance is also addressed to people who really need it. Hence, that social allowance should go strictly to a person who cannot work or provide for his day-to-day living and indeed, he needs that support. Just like this, as in the field of pensions, where there are disability pensions, pensions for pain in the... heel, things that cannot be proven and so many people say that the state has money to pay these pensions, which is true, but in

this case, the state also uses your contribution and then, when it runs out of resources, it either stops paying me, as an active person or stops paying a pensioner.” (I11)

The image of social welfare and its securing role is clear in what the individuals are concerned and also ideally, at a theoretical level, yet modified by some aspects which lead to the outburst of the individual.

“Therefore, social welfare is excessive, though it should be transparent and it should foresee that those who do not contribute shall not receive anything from the state. Alright, you may receive support, but provide some services for those money, do some community service. The number of socially assisted people would decrease in a context where in Romania, out of the 5 million pensions that are being paid, 2 go to the assisted people, represented by those who lack seniority, who did not want to work because it seemed a disgrace to them to work in places where their training was above the level required, but this only happened because their training was under-evaluated in all kinds of exotic faculties.” (I15)

Including those around us in the construct of security generated by social welfare is quite difficult and this is done especially by starting with those who believe that they affect the social welfare system and the security of others. We notice that there is a fear of putting things plainly, of upsetting someone by saying the truth and this containment does not seem to come from a social responsibility, but rather from its opposite.

“I do not intend to be mean or say too much, but I do not think it is normal to retire at the age of 40 from the Ministry of Interior with a very big pension. If we report life to a whole, then we have 70 years, of which 25 we spend studying, until 40 we worked and from 40 to 70 we are pensioners, hence our work shall be summarized to 15 out of 70 years, maybe less than 25% of our lives, which is not alright. Issues that we all personally experience emerge in this case... But what about the 2-300 lei representing the support provided by the city hall or the minimum pension of 350 lei? What are these? Can someone do something with this money? We should calculate better, because what should an old man of 75 years old, who worked in the co-operative, do with 300 lei? Why are we not taking care of these people too? Still, we take care of those over 40 years who receive a pension amounting to 6-7000 lei. This is not alright. We could give them less with 1000 lei, which could be given to a poor man. It would be better for both of them.” (I20)

Social welfare security is a solidarity action of the individuals, who react and perceive as real only the negative aspects, yet the whole gets faded and even becomes grey.

“The system is unfair. I know people who, despite not having someone to take care of them, do not receive support, while those in their prime, who are able to work and run for the documents they need in order to prove that they are ill, do receive support. Undoubtedly, the social welfare system is unfair. The investigations should be more objective and support should be offered to those who really need it. I agree with the fact that social assistance is needed, but not by those who are fit for work. I do not think I

exaggerate when saying that at least 50% of those receiving social allowance or disability allowances are able to work, since they can as well do it under the table.” (I21)

The individual construct of the security of social welfare involves receiving services and support at odds with a part of the observed reality, based on amounts of money and lack of contribution and solidarity, after all.

“It seems offensive to me for somebody to refuse to work for the amounts received. I would not offer any help without a social investigation, only where there is a handicap, but here I would not give any cent, because money do not help them and are not given directly to the person who needs them and instead, I would provide the services that they need. The support should be also customized, there is something like that, but let us be serious, usually thinks are superficially evaluated and no actual measures are really taken. It is impossible to make 50 personalized plans within one day, as required, you cannot be right under this pressure.” (I22)

We also notice projections of reality where complex connections between systems, securities - health, education, social welfare - are seen. The insecurities identified in other security systems are transmitted in the social environment, affect the individual, distort his or her reality, and change their perception on their security.

“We have to understand that these areas – health, social welfare, education – must be interconnected so that they can go forward. You cannot carry out social assistance work without quality education and a quality health system because social welfare cannot work out the health prevention aspect or the dropout rate, which are very serious issues, probably the worst ones of the two systems. So there is a need for involvement, as it was in the case of social welfare, where everything happened quickly, maybe too quickly, because certain stages were jumped over, such as professionalising of employees.” (I23)

The positive individual sees the aspect of the social welfare system that is not affected by issues, shortcomings or inequities, but lies under the sign of solidarity.

“The current social welfare system is well-designed and generalised and so it must be, because there are all kinds of people who require solidarity, so it is not necessary to offer support according to training or other criteria.” (I24)

Risks associated with the assurance of social welfare security

The benefits and security provided by social welfare are clear, obvious, natural, and mandatory in what the society is concerned, therefore the risks arising from the misapplication of social welfare rules are noticed or personally experienced. Risks are quantified, even if the individual does not experience them directly. However, they affect his or her security by increasing socially determined neuroses.

“Wrongly understood or poorly applied social welfare can have consequences for individuals? Yes, it can create frustrations, dissatisfaction for those who do not benefit from social welfare - Where does that individual get that money from while doing

nothing? Does he get so much money that he can afford to do nothing? - and it can have an impact on the one who receives that amount of money and the effect seen on the labour market is: why should I go to work if I have enough money?" (I10)

The feeling of personal and social injustice is so profound and strong that the individual substitutes himself or herself and reacts as a social system.

"You must not give it to the person who does not deserve it, and yet there are people taking advantage of the social welfare system ... It means that those freeloaders do not understand that the state is not a machinery, but it is a whole made of us ... If the state pays for trimmings, it does it from our taxes, and many people practice tax evasion, but in fact, because of evasion, you look and see that they only paid the tax on housing, for example, but have high claims. Yes, it is true that there are many issues, but you need to have common sense for that, to know how much you can offer and how much you can ask, we ask more than we offer. There is a saying specific to the Romanian people: it'll do..." (I11)

If social welfare is assured through unclear rules, the rupture between imagination and reality can no longer generate a map of the social fact for the individual, because he or she does not find themselves in that reality.

"There are social welfare laws that I cannot understand." (I12)

The dysfunctional area of social welfare is even seen as genetically transmissible to those who benefit from legal loopholes.

"It also generates insecurity in some communities, and I give you an example, you told me to make reference to my experience, for example, my mother usually calls 2-3 Roma people to help her, they see what my mother has in the household, they know that my mother is alone throughout the week, and because of this situation, she had to have surveillance cameras installed around her house because they come and steal as they have this behaviour in their genes." (I14)

In order to increase the level of social welfare security, we could assess and clarify the social reality of this vital system.

"I think that the social welfare system should be completely changed. Firstly, a more accurate and objective analysis should be made, but not within 2-3 months, but for one year. We must know exactly the place(s) where the low-income people are found, their number, the cause, as well as the measures we can take for them. You draw conclusions at the end and decide what needs to be changed. But we do not have time for that. Their lives would certainly improve. Now they are fighting for survival, or maybe their situation is much worse. We are issuing laws, we are changing them, but they do not bring anything new, nothing good." (I20)

The risks of insecurity induced by social welfare are seen as at a macro-social level.

"The situation comes about when we, those who have accomplished our duty

towards the society cannot receive anything when we need. The risk lies in creating social imbalances. We must know that in order to receive something, we must also give something back.” (I21)

Not the idea but the way to implement social solidarity and the persistence of the question “why?” creates dissatisfaction.

“It does not seem fair to me that I, who work for so many hours a day, pay one such high amount of tax that goes to people who do nothing for society. Why? Nobody helps me with anything, but on the contrary, I am deprived. It can be noticed that you work, strive, earn a surplus firstly for yourself, then you can also create other jobs and support another person, but on the contrary, the state seems to pull you down so that you cannot carry it through at all.” (I22)

Individuals are sensitive in terms of their amounts of money and their spending for social purposes, perhaps this is why the theme of money is resumed by each individual. Social security can be achieved by providing services, not money, even if services also involve amounts of money.

“The social welfare system is perceived as a system that produces nothing but consumes money. Unemployment produces nothing but eats money up, so it must be reformed, that spending money must be identified and a pro-active system must be created on the basis of employment, the social assistance system integrates socially-assisted people that would not deserve social assistance, and I refer to benefits, so it must be reformed in this respect as well. So they are seen as systems that consume money and produce nothing, which is very wrong and something must be done to change this perception.” (I23)

Conclusion

The interviews led to the idea that social welfare implies the importance of solving each person’s difficulties in the context of ensuring individual, inter-personal, group and, by extension, national security, and the role of increasing or achieving a personal security of those in the immediate environment in order for them to have a part of personal security appropriate to the requirements and the possibility of full exercise of rights and liberties, has become very clearly visible.

It also resulted that individual security is directly proportional to the degree of adaptation, integration, socialization or empathy with the restricted group (family, friends, work colleagues) or the extended one (ethnic group, occasional knowledge).

Individual security is internalized as a personal construct, which depends, is realized and manifests itself at the level of each individual awareness arising only when the risks resulting from the actions of the vulnerable people are evoked, in which context the necessity of social welfare, even if it is seen differently by the respondents, it becomes visible. The subsequent, conscious picture is that of a

constant, imminent interaction of security and personal security with the security or the need for security of people encountering difficulties, the majority opinion being that the difficulties and, implicitly, the responsibility of the action to solve them are incumbent to the “others”.

The mental construction of individual security has been extended by some respondents to “everybody else” as the primary duty of each of them, but there are also opinions according to which an externalized, institutionalized co-ordination is required.

However, the social welfare system also has shortcomings, the realities are various and do not match the theory, the official policy, the institutional action, the people interested in their own security trying to also find solutions, a moment when they assume the decision-making role of an institution. The risks include unclear and flawed legislation, law enforcement creates both discrimination and the dependence of some people on the social welfare system, low efficiency caused by the excess of financial aid provided to the detriment of social services.

For some respondents, the social welfare system is fundamental in an assisted state, but for others it is non-existent in terms of efficiency.

References

- Alkire, S. (2003). *A conceptual framework for human security*. Oxford: Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity - CRISE.
- Axworthy, L. (1999). La sécurité humaine: la sécurité des individus dans un monde en mutation. *Politique étrangère*, 64(2), 333-342.
- Babbie, E. (2010). *Practica cercetării sociale*. Iasi: Polirom.
- Busuioc, I., Dogaru, Ș., Peța, C., Stanciu, D., Lupescu, G. (2010). *Securitatea națională. Prezent și perspective*. Craiova: SITECH.
- Buzan, B. (1991). *People, States and Fear*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Buzan, B., Wæver, O., & De Wilde, J. (1998). *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. London: Lynne Rienner.
- Cojocaru, S. (2005). *Metode apreciative în asistența socială: ancheta, supervizarea și managementul de caz*. Iasi: Polirom.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (1990). Grounded Theory Research: Procedures, Cannons, and Evaluative Criteria. *Qualitative Sociology*, 13(1), 3-21.
- Cudworth, E., & Hobden, S. (2017). *Post-human Security*. In A. Burke, R. Parker (eds), *Global Insecurity* (pp. 65-82). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- De Wilde, J. (1991). *Saved from Oblivion: Interdependence Theory in the First Half of the Twentieth Century. A Study on the Causality between War and Complex Interdependence*. Aldershot: Dartmouth.
- Fedor, C. (2014). Towards a Postmodern Approach of Ethnic Community. *Postmodern Openings*, 5(2), 71-80.
- Fedor, C. (2015). Current Issues on Social Representations. *Analele Științifice ale Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași. Sociologie și Asistență Socială*, 8(1), 35-46.
- Funieru, F. (2011). Societate și securitate. *Revista română de sociologie*, 1-2, 170-184.
- Hlihor, C. (2008). *Politica de securitate în mediul internațional*. Iasi: Institutul European.

- Kolodziej, E.A. (2007). *Securitatea și relațiile internaționale*. Iasi: Polirom.
- Măță, D.C. (2016). *Securitatea națională - concept, reglementare, mijloc de ocrotire*. București: Hamangiu.
- Mertens, D. M. (2005). *Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology. Integrating Diversity with Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Moise, S. (2006). Fațete ale conceptului de securitate. *Revista Colocviu Strategic*, 5, 1-6.
- Parant, M. (2003). La sécurité humaine. Une nouvelle conception des relations internationales. *Études internationales*, 34(2), 315-318.
- Pigui, T. (2004). Securitatea economică și securitatea umană globală. *Revista Colocviu Strategic*, 8, 1-8.
- Pirnea, V. (2005). *Dimensiunea de securitate și apărare a Uniunii Europene*. București: Editura Centrului Tehnic-Editorial al Armatei.
- Sarcinschi, A. (2005). *Elemente noi în studiul securității naționale și internaționale*. București: Editura Universității Naționale de Apărare.
- Sen, A. (2003). *Human security now*. Soka Gakkai International Quarterly.
- United Nations Development Programm (1994). *Human Development Report*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Van Ginkel, H., Newman E. (2000). In *Quest of Human Security*. Japan Review of International Affairs, nr. 14 (1), p. 59-82.
- Wæver, O. (1995). Securitization and Desecuritization. In R. D. Lipschutz (Ed.), *On Security* (pp. 46-87). New York: Columbia University Press.