Journal of Community Positive Practices

Year XXII
No. 1/2022

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EDITURA Expert

JOURNAL OF COMMUNITY POSITIVE PRACTICES

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

Editted by:

EDITURA Expert

Bucharest, Romania
CNCSIS: cod 045/2006
Editor-in-Chief: Valeriu IOAN-FRANC
Editor: Paula NEACŞU
Cover design: Nicolae LOGIN
Design and layout: Luminița LOGIN
Phone: 0040-21 318 24 38; Fax: 0040-21 318 24 32;
e-mail: edexpert@zappmobile.ro
License to the Ministry of Culture no. 1442/1992

ASSOCIATION FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION CATALACTICA
Str. Simetriei 18 A, Sector 2, Bucureşti, România
Tel/ Fax: 0040 31 4381006
Email: office@jppc.ro;
www.catalactica.org.ro;
cacesorin@gmail.com

ISSN 1582-9344 (printed version); ISSN 2247-6571 (electronic version), *indexed in*
Scopus; Google Scholar; Ideas RePeC; Econpapers; CEEOL; ProQuest; Scipio; Questia; WorldCat

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Journal of Community Positive Practices, XXII(1) **2022**, *3-19*
ISSN Print: 1582-8344; Electronic: 2247-6571

SOCIAL POLICIES AROUND THE MINIMUM WAGE IN ROMANIA DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS

Georgiana-Virginia BONEA[1]
Vlad I. ROSCA[2]

DOI: https://doi.org/10.35782/JCPP.2022.1.01

Abstract: *Given the current circumstances regarding the economic difficulties and uncertainties caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the study of the evolution of the minimum wage is important in order to perform a radiography on the main trends, opportunities and problems in related social policies. The first and second part of the study bring upfront the importance of public policies on the minimum wage for ensuring a decent living and motivation of employees, for creating equal opportunities or access to the necessary resources for the poor. Through secondary data analysis, the third part of the study focuses on the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on the changes in the minimum wages in Romania compared to other countries in the Balkans, as well as the recent evolution and correlation between the minimum wage and the present situation of employment from the labor market in Romania. The last part offers conclusions in order to clarify several problems aiming at the minimum wage policy under the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. One of the main limitations of the study was the multitude and complexity of the uncertainties related to the current pandemic context regarding the effects of the progress of the minimum wage at national and international level.*

Keywords: *minimum wage, Covid-19 crisis, employment, public policy, social economy*

1. Introduction

The research of minimum wage policies is important in order to understand the impact that the increases or decreases of minimum wages have on employment (Clemens, 2021). The Covid-19 pandemic has generated unprecedented socio-economic changes both domestically and internationally, while also revealing vulnerabilities of individuals

[1] Scientific Researcher III (CS III), Ph.D., Research Institute for Quality of Life, the Romanian Academy, e-mail: georgiana.bonea@gmail.com
[2] Assistant Professor, Ph.D., UNESCO Department for Business Administration, The Faculty of Business Administration, in foreign languages (FABIZ), The Bucharest University of Economic Studies, e-mail: vlad.rosca@fabiz.ase.ro

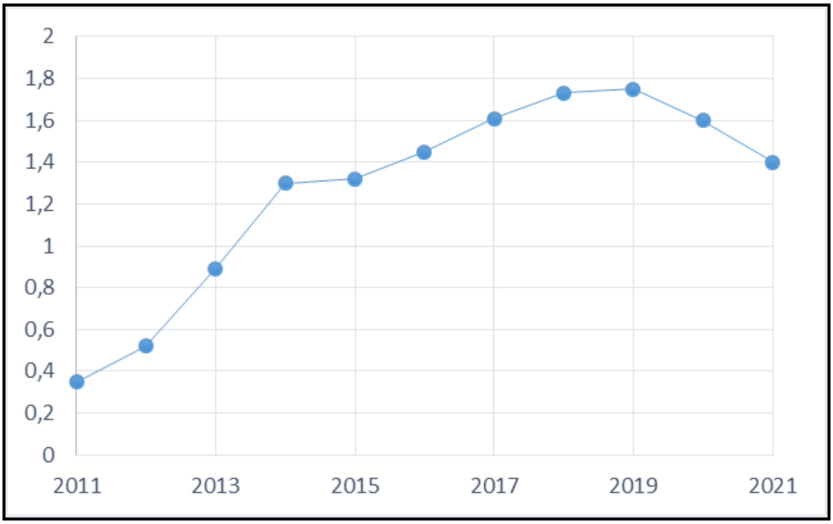
and societies (Medrano et al., 2021; Pascaru, 2021; Rosca, 2021a, 2021b; Tomescu, 2021). Specifically, the needs to protect employees and to help reduce social inequalities were outlined by establishing a minimum monthly income considered as decent. In this note, in November 2021, the European Parliament addressed a negotiating mandate for the establishment of a minimum wage of 60 percent of the average gross salary, that would allow for a decent living, designed to cover the expenses and necessities of daily life (Council of EU, 2021). At the European level (EU-28), approximately 10 percent of full-time employees are exposed to the risk of poverty (Almeida and Santos, 2020; Stanciu, 2018), while in Romania approximately 20 percent, especially those who are employed part-time (Ilie, 2017; Neagu, 2015). Romania has witnessed a staggering 400 percent increase of labor contracts on minimum wage in only eight years, from 0.35 million minimum wage contracts (7.7 percent of all labor contracts) in 2011 to 1.75 million in 2019 (31.5 percent of all labor contracts) (Guga, 2021: 6). It is claimed that the increases of the minimum wage versus the social welfare assistance have encouraged people to seek a job and get employed: the minimum gross salary was 2,300 Lei in December 2021 (Bălan, 2021), an increase of 243 percent compared to the 670 Lei exactly one decade ago (Cornea, 2021). Under such circumstances, it should be no wonder that the supply for labor in exchange of even minimum wages has increased. At the same time, a growing number of employers (including foreign direct investors) create job opportunities paid by the minimum wage (ibid).

Through the revised European Social Charter, Romania is committed to ensure a decent level of the minimum wage which, in theory, should support an increase in the quality of life of employees, as well as their motivation to stay in work (European Parliament, 2021). Furthermore, according to the Social Progress Index 2021 Study, conducted by the nonprofit organization Social Progress Imperative with the support of Deloitte, Romania ranks 44th of 168 countries, in terms of peoples' quality of life (78.41/100 points) (Deloitte, 2021). The Covid-19 pandemic had a major impact on the labor market and, implicitly, on the income of the population, radically changing the opportunities and activities of employees (Bădoi, 2021). At the same time, the pandemic context has accelerated the growth of the inflation rate (as it also happened in other CEE countries, see Alekseycheva et al., 2021; Strilchuk et al., 2021), creating multiple financial difficulties for employers and employees. According to Eurostat, in 2021, against the uncertain and unpredictable background of the COVID-19 pandemic, inflation in the euro area has reached its highest level in 13 years (Eurostat, 2021). Soaring price increases for energy, gas and fuel have contributed to the inflation. The inflation rate in Romania was 5.3% in August, 6.3% in September and 7.9% in October 2021 (INSSE, 2021). In this situation, the minimum gross salary in Romania experienced a moderate increase of 3.1% y-o-y (2021 vs. 2020). According to the Romanian Labor Ministry, approximately 1.4 million of 5.3 million employees worked on minimum wage in 2021 (Ministerul Muncii, 2021)[1]. Many of those contracts occur

[1] Future data and future research should be used to test these figures against those of 2019 provided by Guga (2021). Studies show that the number of minimum wage labor contracts decreased in 2020, yet the exact number differs from 1.6 million with Guga (2021) to 1.21 million with Cornea (2021). Guga's estimation might be more

due to illegal or undeclared labor, whereby employees are contractually paid with the minimum wage so that the taxes and contributions of the employer towards the state remain minimal, but then the employer surreptitiously pays the rest up to the level considered to be the fair one (Cornea, 2021). Figure 1 shows an evolution of the number of minimum wage contracts registered in Romania between 2011 and 2021, based on data from Cornea (2021) for 2011-2018 and Guga (2021) for 2019-2021. After a plateau tendency in 2018-2019, the number of contracts drops in 2021 and 2021 amid the Covid-19 crisis.

Figure 1: The Evolution of the Number of Minimum Wage Contracts in Romania, 2011-2021 (in million units)



Source: own representation, based on data from Cornea (2021) and Guga (2021)

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appropriate if correlated to the data provided by the Romanian Labor Ministry, which indicates 1.4 million contracts on minimum wage in 2021. Guga's (2021) estimations might indicate a linear decline as an effect of the crisis (from 1.75 million in 2019 to 1.6 million in 2020 and 1.4 million in 2021), while Cornea's (2021) estimations might indicate a decline caused by the first year of the Covid-19 crisis, followed by a slight recovery in the second year as an effect of social and economic policies (from 1.75 million in 2019 to 1.21 million in 2020 and 1.4 million in 2021). Also, a look at page 9 will show that the sectors in the Romanian economy with the highest numbers of labor contracts on minimum wage were those severely impacted by the Covid-19 crisis (retail, transportation, automotive, restaurants and food industry etc.). As large parts of these sectors had to shut down or restructure, many minimum wage employees had to be fired, so a decrease in the number of yearly minimum wage labor contracts on the background of the Covid-19 crisis is more than plausible.

Given that the high inflation cancels out the effects of the minimum wage increases, the standard of living, as well as the quality of life of employees on minimum wage might be reduced. In an attempt to counteract this negative effect, the Romanian Government decided to increase the value of the minimum gross wage to 2,550 Lei as of January 2022, through Government Decision H.G. no. 1.071/2021 (Monitorul Oficial, 950/5.10.2021). The cautious increase in the minimum wage can be interpreted as a reflection of the difficulties and challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic in the economic context.

Another important decision with major implications for the labor market was made through Government Decision H.G. no. 130/17.12.2021, which stipulates that, as of January 1st, 2022, an employee can receive the minimum wage for a maximum of two years after the signing of his employment contract; at the end of the two years, the employer is obliged to raise the pay. There are many question marks left open around this decision. At first sight, it is a decision with implications for entrepreneurs and business owners who will need to deal with higher labor costs as of January 1st, 2024, when effects of the decision will come into force. However, the Government Decision only mentions that the employee will have to be paid a higher salary, but not how high the increase should be – which might lead to symbolic increases, but without real effects –, nor what duration the employment contract should have. Theoretically, the decision ought to bring the employer and the employee to negotiations for a higher payment towards the end of the two-year period, but at the same time, it might generate a tide of minimum wage labor contracts of less than two years followed by the discharge of the current employee and the employment of a new minimum wage laborer for another period of less than two years and so on, so that the employer avoids salary increases. As per basic managerial wisdom, if the employee receives a wage increase after the two years, then he or she will have to raise his or her productivity and prove a worth that justifies the wage increase (Harris, Holmstrom, 1982), which would be beneficial for the business. Another benefit would be if Irving Fisher's (1928) "*money illusion*" cognitive bias kicked in: the employee will be motivated to give his best and raise his productivity during the contractual period of two years, knowing that, at the expiration of this period, the amount of his wage increase (or his dispatch) will depend on how productive he has been. Nonetheless, if employees will actually raise their productivity as a consequence of the wage increase is questionable (Westley and Schmidt, 2006). A hidden effect of labor contracts capped at less than two years might be a decline in productivity and, subsequently, higher business costs on the long run (Yellen, 1984): assuming that their payment will not be increased after the contractual period, but, instead, that their contract will be terminated, the employees will not be as motivated as possible to give their best. A minimum wage labor contract capped in duration might lead to the *'set-up-to-fail' syndrome*, according to which employees who are perceived as mediocre will live down to this low expectation and produce nothing else than mediocrity (Manzoni and Barsoux, 1998; 2002). If the employer only regards the employee as a factor of production that will be replaced with another factor in maximum two years so that labor costs do not rise, then the employee who will sense this will suffer motivational losses that will translate into weak performances and low productivity.

2. Theoretical Approach

Minimum wage legislation is considered to be a public policy intended to help the poor (Blais et al., 1989; Page et al., 2005). The concept of a statutory minimum wage – or a living wage, as it is also called – has been on the agenda of governments ever since the end of the 19th century, when the idea of a minimum pay emerged in order to protect employees in the manufacturing industries (Gooberman et al., 2019; Katselidis, 2019), to guarantee them a decent standard of living (and, subsequently, a positive quality of life), as well as to keep them motivated to work (especially there where the employer could not or refused to do so). The technological advances brought along by the Industrial Revolution opened opportunities for mass production, which business owners tried to exploit so as to pay their employees by substandard wages (Neumark et al., 2008: 1). The introduction or the raise of a minimum wage is generally a demarche supported by workers or labor unions, as it is meant to protect the employees (Rani et al., 2013). Governments are concerned with establishing equitable minimum wages for the employees, yet a debate still persists whether a minimum wage cap is helpful as well for the entrepreneur or not? On the one hand, businesses reject the idea of a minimum wage, as it forces them to pay employees more than they might have done, hence inducing higher costs (Lemos, 2008). In order to cover cost increases associated with the minimum wage, businesses are often forced to take decisions that can negatively impact upon their competitivity, such as cutting employment or raising prices. On the other hand, some believe that a minimum wage actually protects entrepreneurs from unjust competition that uses substandard wages (Kau, Kau, 1973).

As a social policy, the use of a minimum wage is regarded as a way to help individuals or households to become (financially) independent and, thus, as a possibility to climb the social ladder (Loeb, Corcoran, 2001). Yet the neoclassical economy critiques this assumption as, in order to raise the wages of some, others might be paid less or find themselves unemployed (Levin-Waldman, 2000). Thus, the neoclassical stance is that the minimum wage legislations have a negative impact on employment (Kaufman, 2009). For neoclassicists, markets are not flawless: the imposition of a minimum wage might have positive effects for some, but will have negative consequences for others (Syed, 2020). Within the neoclassical stance, wages should be regulated by the markets, which is against the very principle of social economics or of the social (welfare) state, where the minimum wage legislation is an instrument to intervene and guarantee fair and proper treatment for those less fortunate (Figart et al., 2005). Yet neoclassicism is skeptical about the ability of the minimum wage legislation to achieve this goal and is against state intervention in determining pay.

The idea of the minimum wage is mostly associated with social economics and with Marxism, as it is intended to create equal and fair opportunities for the poor (see Wilkinson, 2004). In social economics, minimum wages are normative issues, as governments use law enforcements to create the necessary minimal conditions for the workers. Yet these conditions and how wealth is distributed among the workers who receive them are not the only factors to be considered when setting minimum wages.

As equally as important is to choose minimum wages based on criteria of economic efficiency, for the worker, for the entrepreneur, and for the state (Waltman, 2000).

In many countries, especially in those with weaker economies such as Romania, the use of a minimum wage is also an attempt to restore the middle class (Levin-Waldman, 2018; Mora and Diorio, 2018), by paying more to those less fortunate. Yet this can lead to social disputes and class divides, especially since increases of the minimum wage are not backed up by productivity increases. Within the normative economics, the increase of the minimum wage intends to bring workers from the lower class towards the middle class. While the class gap in payments is reduced, not the same can be said about the labor productivity, where the government does not intervene, but leaves it at the discretion of the entrepreneur.

The entrepreneur often finds himself in the impossibility to develop his employees above a certain limit which has already been attained, so the raise in wages is not backed up by a raise in productivity, yet the lower class is paid similarly to a better educated middle class, which will then feel entitled to protest against a raise of the minimum wage. (Zamfir, Voicu, Stanescu, 2020)ˇ

3. The Minimum Wage and the Covid-19 Crisis in Romania

The recent Covid-19 crisis has revealed flaws in the liberal, neoclassical economics (Pandey et al., 2020; Wilson, 2021). While businesses had to fire employees, to shut down, or simply went bankrupt as consequence of the effects of the crisis (Dan et al., 2022; Grigorescu and Mocanu, 2020), governments seized the opportunities to intervene in the economy and make promises about minimum wage increases. These can also be considered populist measures, as it is relatively easy to gain the support of workers who are on the brink of being dismissed or of those looking for a new job (especially so when the wider social context is destabilized). For employees, however, such measures prove unsustainable. Within most of the EU member states, the minimum wages have slightly increased from 2020 to 2021; the only countries with no increase of the minimum wage were Belgium, Spain, Greece and Estonia, while in Hungary the minimum wage was reduced by 4.1 percent (Bechir, 2021).

The minimum wage policy can also show its limits during times of economic crisis, such as the ones created by the recent Covid-19 pandemic. If faced with the challenge to cut costs in order to survive the crisis, businesses will give up on employing new people, especially if the budget needed for the minimum wages exceeds their possibilities.

According to Guga (2021), at the end of 2020, only a couple of months before the first Covid-19 infection cases in Romania, approximately 1.6 million labor contracts in the country were paid by the minimum wage. The importance of the minimum wage is, however, different depending on the sector of activity. Table 1 shows the sectors of activity with most labor contracts in Romania in 2020. As can be seen, among the sectors that employed the most by minimum wage were retail (804,000 contracts, en-detail and en-gros cummulated), education (366,000), health (307,000), or restaurants, food industry and alimentation (289,000 cummulated), namely those sectors that have been directly and severly impacted by the Covid-19 crisis due to business closures, and also sectors that are generally characterized as being low wage sectors.

Table 1: Number of labor contracts (in thousands) in Romania at the end of 2020

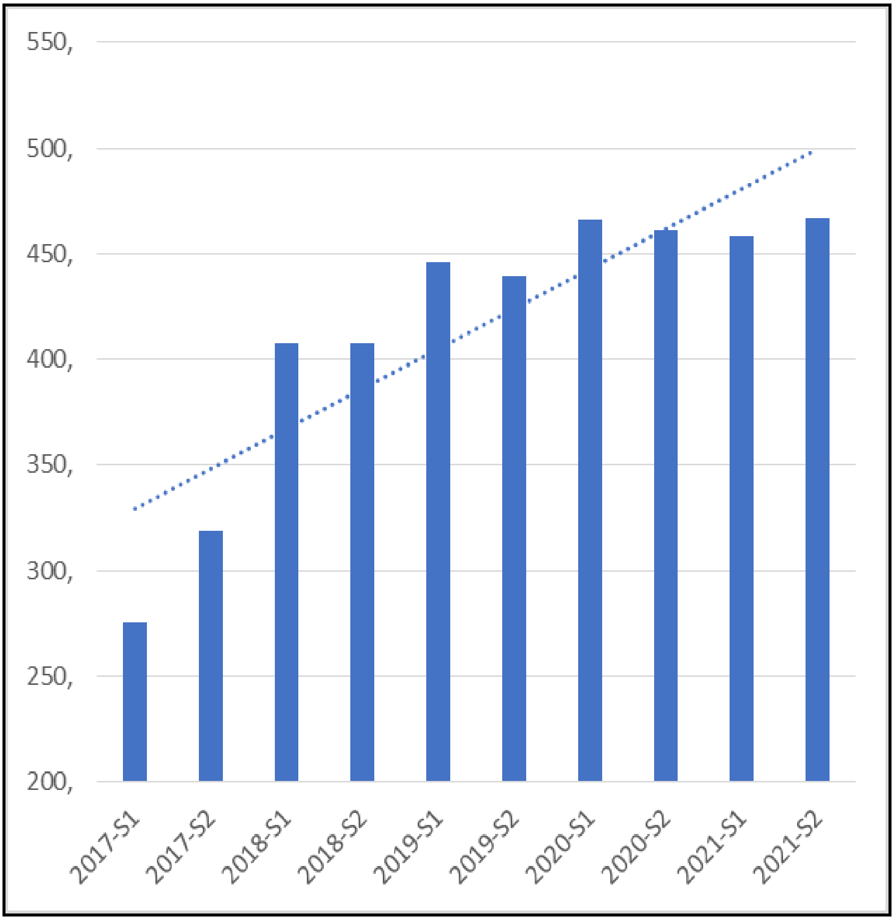
Sector of activity	Number of labor contracts (,000)
Retail (En-Detail)	489
Education	366
Retail (En-Gros)	315
Health	307
Transportation	269
Public Administration and Social Insurances	175
Automotive	169
Alimentation	164
Restaurants and Food Industry	125
IT Services	117

Source: Data collected from Guga (2021: 46-47)

The Covid-19 crisis is not only a health crisis, but also a labor market crisis, impacting upon the supply and the demand of labor (Amuedo-Dorantes et al., 2020; Brinca et al., 2021; Forsythe et al., 2020). As it often happens in many parts of the world, the discussions around the minimum wage often transform into controversies that make it onto the political agendas of governments (Chistruga, 2009; Oudot, 2020). Discussions around low wages and/or the welfare state often feed the populist discourse (Edwards, 2019). The worst paid jobs in Romania between January 1st, 2020 and January 1st, 2021, hence in full Covid-19 crisis, were situated under 4000 Lei gross (about 800 Euros), being found in industries such as woodworking, HoReCa, secretarial activities, textile industry etc. Better paid jobs can be found in service-based sectors such as IT, human resources, banking etc. The payments per industries do not though differ very much from the situation ten years ago (see Leovaridis, 2012).

Figure 2 shows the evolution of the minimum wage in Romania between 2017 and 2021, included. As the trendline in the figure indicates, an increase of the minimum wage can be witnessed accross the five years being analized, in spite of some minor decreases in S2 2018, S2 2019 and S2 2020 compared to the previous semester.

Figure 2: The Evolution of the Minimum Wage in Romania, 2017-2021



Source: own representation, based on Eurostat data: Monthly minimum wages - bi-annual data [EARN_MW_CUR$DEFAULTVIEW], Data extracted on 08/11/2021 11:22:17

S2 2021 saw a minimum wage increase by 69.5% compared to S1 2017. Table 2 presents the detailed, semester-over-semester (S-o-S) percentual changes in the monthly minimum wages in Romania between 2017 and 2021. As can be seen, high increases have alternated with lower, but repetitve decreases.

Two of these decreases have occured in the second semester of 2020 and the first semester of 2021, hence during the Covid-19 crisis, while the most recent data available (S2/2021 vs S1/2021) indicates a 2% S-o-S increase, which might be speculated as a sign of recovery after the severe effects that the lockdowns and similar Covid-19 restrictive decisions had on the economy.

Table 2: Semester-over-semester (S-o-S) percentual changes in the monthly minimum wages in Romania between 2017 and 2021

Semester	Monthly minimum wage	Percentual change vs. previous semester	Legislative act	Employment (% of total population)
2017-S1	275,39		H.G. 1/2017	
2017-S2	318,52	16%		68,8%
2018-S1	407,86	28%	H.G. 846/2017	
2018-S2	407,45	0%		69,9%
2019-S1	446,02	9%	H.G. 937/2018	
2019-S2	439,35	-1%		70,9%
2020-S1	466,23	6%	H.G. 935/2019	
2020-S2	460,77	-1%		70,8%
2021-S1	458,07	-1%	H.G. 4/2021	
2021-S2	466,72	2%		

Sources: own representation, based on data from Eurostat, Monthly minimum wages - bi-annual data [EARN_MW_CUR$DEFAULTVIEW], Data extracted on 08/11/2021 11:22:17; Employment and activity by sex and age - annual data [LFSI_EMP_A$DEFAULTVIEW], Data extracted on 30/11/2021 10:33:56

The two percent increase of S2 2021 is an effect of the Government Decision H.G. no. 4/2021, in January 2021 (included in Monitorul Oficial, 40/13.01.2021). In September 2021, discussions were already carried out at governmental level to have a second increase by the end of the year of 8 to 12 percent (Digi24.ro, 2021), which should have lead the minimum wage to about 2500 Lei net (approximately 505 euros). At the same time, according to the Romanian Labor Inspectorate, subordinated to the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (MMPS), in February 2021, 236,787 employment contracts were registered with a gross monthly salary of approximately 10,000 Lei (Inspecţia Muncii, 2021).

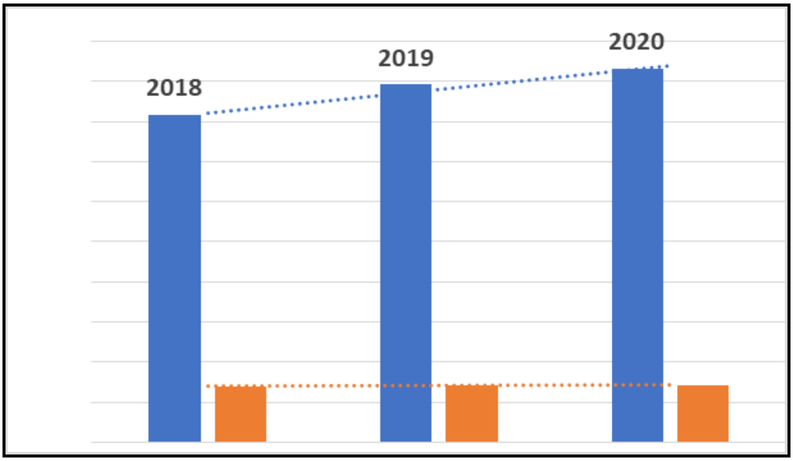
Increases of minimum wages during the current Covid-19 crisis are considered as not sustainable by specialists and many countries in Central and Eastern Europe reached bottlenecks when it came to raise the minimum pay (Kahancova, Kirov, 2021). An increase of the minimum wage is presented by many governments as a solution to reduce unemployment / boost employability during times of crisis and to reduce poverty. In spite of this, studies show that the real effects of a minimum wage increase are rather small, since only a minority of poor people are helped by higher minimum wage, while accross other sectors the increase might even have downturn effects (Gindling, 2018).

Yet increases of the minimal wage during periods of crisis can be regarded as a way to improve social protection, especially in a country like Romania where many low-skilled workers used to find employment overseas prior to the crisis (Zamfir, Cace, 2020). If these people are kept in the country due to the Covid-19 pandemic and are unable (or unwilling) to find a proper job, they would represent a higher burden on the public budget due to the unemployment benefits they ought to receive. Hence, higher minimal wages should reduce unemployment and strengthen the labor market so as to enable it to cope with the crisis. It is questionable, though, to what extent this really happens.

When looking at Table 2, it can also be seen that at the end of 2020, 70.8 percent of the Romanian resident population aged between 20 and 64 was employed, an increase of two percentage points comparted to 2017. If correlating the minimum wage levels at the beginning of the year with the situation of employment (percent of total population aged 20-64), the coefficient indicates a strong and positive correlation of 0.9.

Minimum wage increases should at least theoretically lead to an increase in people's desire to work, so that people are more inclined to get a job (Cornea, 2021; Martin 2018; O'Neill et al., 2006). However, if looking at the trendlines in Figure 3, it can be seen that between 2018 and 2020, the minimum wage increased faster than the employment did. This indicates that, even if higher minimum wages can be more attractive for job-seekers, there are other dimensions to be taken into account as well when it comes to employment opportunities, which will counter-balance the rapid growth of the minimum wage. Although advantageous for the employee, a higher minimum wage can represent a disadvantage for the employer, for example, who will face higher costs.

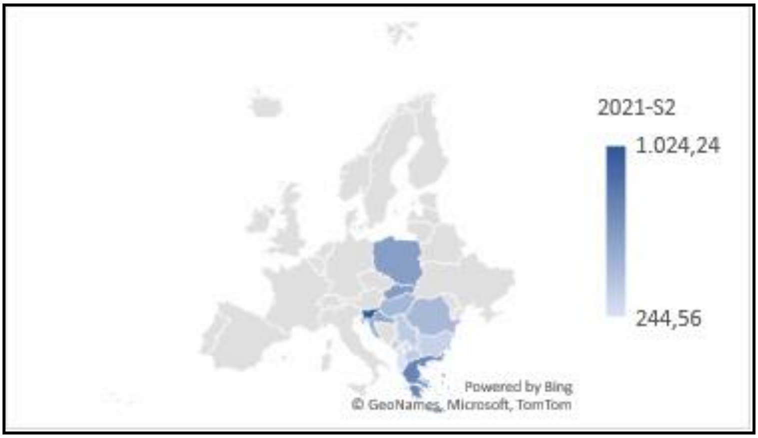
Figure 3: Correlation between the evolution of the minimum wage (blue) and the evolution of the situation of employment (orange)



Sources: own representation based on Eurostat data, Monthly minimum wages - bi-annual data [EARN_MW_CUR$DEFAULTVIEW], Data extracted on 08/11/2021 11:22:17; Employment and activity by sex and age - annual data [LFSI_EMP_A$DEFAULTVIEW], Data extracted on 30/11/2021 10:33:56

The COVID-19 pandemic had a rapid negative impact on the Romanian labor market, causing a series of changes (Bonea, 111, 2021). This is also due to the fact that, when the Covid-19 crisis hit Romania, in March 2020, of the nearly 5.5 million employed people in the country, 63 percent (about 3,47 million) were working in services and 34 percent (about 1,88 million) in industry and constructions, two sectors profoundly impacted by the crisis. The constructions and industries were put to a hold by the crisis, while much of the services sector had a similar fate, mainly due to the fact that the hospitality industry was shut down by restrictions. On the other hand, some sectors of the economy continued their activities, yet only by adapting to the changes forced by the Covid-19 pandemic, such as, for example, remote work (work from home, regardless of where the employee was based), or hybrid work (part remote work, part at the employer's premises). These adaptations have also contributed to keeping the Romanian labor market at a fairly decent level, in spite of the effects of the crisis. Figure 4 shows a comparison of the minimum wages in the Balkan region for S2 2021, the most recent data available from Eurostat. As can be seen, Romania, is situated at about mid-level, slightly above Bulgaria and Serbia, at par with Hungary, yet below Poland, Greece or Slovenia.

Figure 4: Geographical comparison of the minimum wage situation in S2 2021 in the Balkans



Source: own representation, based on Eurostat data, Monthly minimum wages - bi-annual data [EARN_MW_CUR$DEFAULTVIEW], Data extracted on 08/11/2021 11:22:17

4. Conclusions

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, multiple imbalances have been created in the economy (Fetiniuc and Luchian, 2020; Martin and Péres, 2021) (i.e., wage increases outpaced by high inflation; decrease in production; increased unemployment; insolvency of SME's etc.), which have led to a diminishment of standards of living and quality of life. The shy increases in the minimum wage will not be able to cover the rapid inflation. Thus, the increase of the minimum wage (e.g., the case in January 2022) will remain mostly ineffective for employees, but it will make it even more difficult for employers, who will have to cope with higher labor expenses. Hence, the most recent increase of the minimum wage might not do anything else than destabilize SME's and raise unemployment, as evidenced by past researches (Belman and Paul 2014; Brown 1982; Card and Crueger 1993). As a matter of fact, studies have shown that the minimum wage increases in Romania between 2013 and 2016 only had small effects (Heemskerk, et.al., 2018). In conclusion, an increase in the minimum wage can have, theoretically speaking, several advantages (i.e.: increased quality of life and standard of living; reduced unemployment and increased purchasing power; labor motivation; increased competitiveness among employees etc.). However, due to the Covid-19 crisis, the small increase of the minimum wage in Romania will most likely not have a considerable positive impact on the quality of life of employees, nor on the wider economy as a whole.

Authorship

Georgiana-Virgina Bonea (GVB) had the idea of this article and took the role of the leading author. Vlad Rosca (VR) did the literature review for the theoretical approach (chapter 2), as well as the analyses in chapter 3 (The Minimum Wage and the Covid-19 Crisis in Romania). VR collected the Eurostat data for the analyses in chapter 3 and contributed with the managerial/economic perspectives in the first and the third section. Thanks to her formation, GVB contributed with the sociological perspective and public policy information to the aforementioned two sections. GVB and VR wrote the Introduction and the Conclusions to the study. VR has edited, proofread and formatted the work. The research was carried out between September 2021 and January 2022.

Acknowledgements

N/A

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The authors declare no conflicting interests.

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Journal of Community Positive Practices, XXII(1) **2022**, *20-33*
ISSN Print: 1582-8344; Electronic: 2247-6571

THE INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO SUFFICIENCY ECONOMY IN THAILAND'S NORTHEASTERN REGION PROVINCES

Phusit PHUKAMCHANOAD[1]

DOI: https://doi.org/10.35782/JCPP.2022.1.02

Abstract: *The goal of this study is to explore the innovative approach to Sufficiency Economy at a household level. The data was collected by the use of questionnaires with 2,000 respondents as well as the interviews with community leaders from 54 Sufficiency Economy model villages in 5 provinces (Udon Thani Province, Nong Bua Lam Phu Province, Nong Khai Province, Bueng Kan Province, and Loei Province). The research findings revealed that the local people had faith in the leaders who devoted their time, money, and intelligence to the development of local communities. In other words, the community leaders should be the role-models of success for their people. With regards to the application of the Sufficiency Economy philosophy, saving money was the most applicable method at the household level, while working part-time was the least applicable method. Self-sufficient living was mentally learned and practiced the most, but it was economically learned and practiced the least. Moreover, it was suggested that "E-San (Northeastern)" family structure should integrate the older people's way of life with the younger generations' lifestyle in order to promote a sufficient and sustainable way of living. Accordingly, the model of "Great Leaders, Six Directions of Sufficient Way of Living" was formulated. The directions included 1) having a good mindset, 2) understanding the nature and the environment, 3) reducing expenses, 4) supporting each other, 5) having empathy, and 6) saving money.*

Keywords: *sufficient economy philosophy; Esan's way of life; Upper Northeastern Region; sufficiency economy*

1. Introduction

Since 1974, the teachings of King Rama IX have been given to Thai citizens on various occasions. The impacts of natural disasters and poverty are usually escalated by

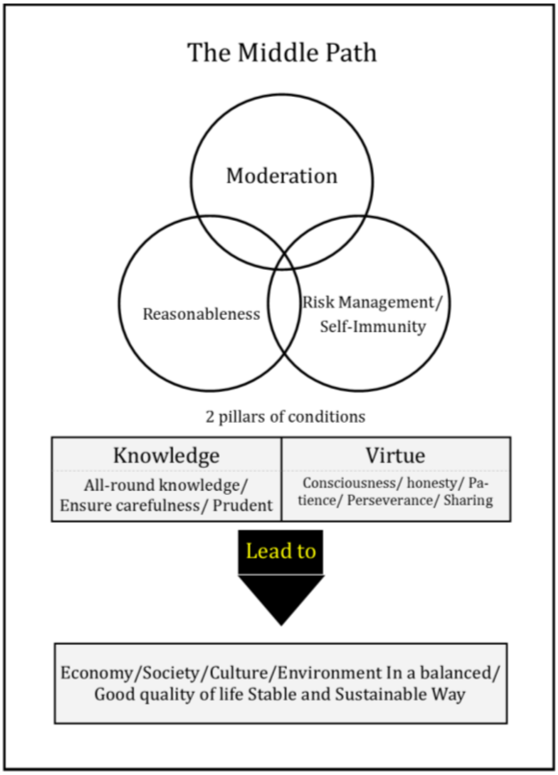
[1] Department of Social and Cultural Development Management, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand, email: phusit.ph@ssru.ac.th

economic factors, geographical factors, socio-cultural factors, and population structure. Poverty, in particular, is intensified by the lack of opportunities in life. It leads to the inability to have a long, healthy life or a good quality of life. Hence, it is a serious challenge to development because, if the citizens still live in poverty, they are unlikely to participate in local and national development (Siriprachai, Wisawesuan, and Srisuchart, 2004; Jitsuchon, 2013; Phukamchanoad, 2018). This issue inevitably needs to be solved timely and properly. Apart from natural hazards such as drought, political competitions also negatively affect the wellbeing of the citizens. They bring about social inequalities, macro and micro economic problems, and a poor quality of life. The researcher thus believes that excellent leaders can lead their people and the society in a good direction. King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX) has always been concerned about the wellbeing of his people. His speech officially given on July 18th, 1974 focused on the standard of living of the Thai citizens. The speech was delivered at the graduation ceremony of Kasetsart University as follows:

> "*The development of this country must be progressed in the right order. The first thing to do is to provide sufficient basic needs for the citizens*" (Bhumibol Adulyadej, His Majesty King, 2009).

"*Sufficiency Economy*" refers to a philosophy for living of all kinds of people. It can be applied to all levels ranging from the household level, the community level, to the national level. The philosophy is a guideline for developing the country in the Middle Way, especially in terms of economic development in the globalized era. The term '*sufficiency*' means '*being sufficient and reasonable*'. It also includes the ability to protect one's self from both internal and external changes. To achieve sufficiency, individuals are required to use their knowledge, discretion, and attention to apply different disciplines to their life planning and living. In the meantime, it is important to strengthen the mentality of all citizens, particularly state officials, theorists, and businessmen. These groups of people must be ethical, honest, knowledgeable, patient, hard-working, intelligent, and cautious because they need to respond to the sudden, broad changes in culture, society, and environment in the materialistic world all the time (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2007, 2017; The Chaipattana Foundation, 2014; Phukamchanoad,2019) (see Figure 1). That is to say, the development of this country should rely on the principles of Sufficiency Economy and the socio-cultural capitals in Thai society. It requires the collaboration from different sectors, including the public sector, the private sector, and the general public. His Majesty the King once said that "*sufficiency economy is the foundation of life and this country. It is a pillar supporting our home. A house is stable because of its pillar, but people do not really see it or even forget about it*" (Bhumibol Adulyadej, His Majesty King, 2009).

Figure 1: Conceptual of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy



Source: Sufficiency Economy Driving Subcommittee Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board. (2007); The Chaipattana Foundation, (2014)

Two years after the economic crisis in 1997, His Majesty the King delivered a new speech on "Sufficiency Economy" on 29 November 1999. Over the past 25 years, from 1974 to 1999, the majority of Thai people had become economically self-dependent. The king suggested "Sufficiency Economy" as a philosophy for all kinds of people to live and survive. Families, communities, and the state were recommended to improve the country altogether in the "Middle Way" based on the teachings of the Buddha (Bhumibol Adulyadej, His Majesty King, 2009; Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB), 2017, The Chaipattana Foundation, 2014). This philosophy is believed to create balance in life by which it should be adopted to solve national problems and promote prosperity of the people and the country (Phukamchanoad, 2018). According to the doctrine, sufficient individuals are those who reduce their extravagance, have ethical and honest careers or professions, avoid competitions, avoid temptations, and adhere to religious teachings. Buasai (2006) and the Chaipattana Foundation (2014) have summarized the Sufficiency Economy philosophy into five aspects, including the conceptual framework, characteristics, definitions, conditions, and codes of conduct/expected outcomes. Generally, only four aspects are significantly considered. The first aspect is its conceptual framework which integrates sufficient lifestyle with Thai traditional culture and Buddhism's "Middle Path". Second, there are three characteristics of Sufficiency Economy, which include modesty, rationality, and self-protection. Third, there are two conditions for achieving Sufficiency Economy: knowledge and ethics. Finally, the great outcomes are expected to be accomplished when the three characteristics and the two conditions are combined together. This "*3 Pillars, 2 Conditions*" framework can help the citizens to develop their economy, society, culture, and natural resources management in a balanced, stable, sustainable manner (Sufficiency Economy Driving Subcommittee, Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2007). Even though Sufficiency Economy is a useful philosophy, many people are confused about it. For instance, many people believe that Sufficiency Economy can be applied to poor people or farmers only. They assume that sufficient individuals must deny wealth and prosperity, leading to the lack of development and urbanization, as they only need to live sufficiently (Wachiramedhi, 2007; Phukamchanoad, 2015). As reported by the Chaipattana Foundation (2014), to resolve this confusion, His Majesty King Bhumibol clearly summarized his thoughts about the sufficient way of living into five propositions as follows:

1) Save money, reduce expenses in all aspects, and reduce extravagant spending;

2) Have an honest and ethical career or occupation;

3) Avoid extreme competitions for wealth and interests;

4) Never stop finding a way to end one's suffering by acquiring knowledge and more incomes to reach the point of self-sufficiency;

5) Be well-behaved, avoid committing a sin, and adhere to the religious teachings.

E-San's way of living is a common lifestyle of the local people in the Upper Northeastern Region of Thailand. In the past, the Northeastern Region (E-San) used to be perceived as a primitive land where poor, underdeveloped people lived. However, the area at the present time has transformed into a strategic center for socio-economic development in the Greater Mekong, a trans-national region of the Mekong River basin in Southeast Asia. It is a major source of food in the world which is full of economic, political, and socio-cultural dynamics. Younger generations are genuinely proud of and confident in their locality for its contributions to not only their own country but also the entire world (Kitiasa, 2014). Settling in this region, the local people prefer to choose productive locations consisting of the following features. First, sources of water are the most essential feature. They could be a big pond, a stream, or a canal divided from a major river. In the rainy season, only some villages located on few low lands could perform farming and animal raising; these villages' titles often start with "Lerng", "Wang", "Huai", "Kud", "Nong", and "Ta" (i.e. Lerng Nokta, Wang Sammor, Huai Yang, Kud Nakam, and Nong Bua Daeng). Second, there would be hills or high lands where floods cannot get it. Third, there would be a forest. Fourth, there would be some plains where water is stored all year round (for example, Boong Pah Tam Forest).

Finally, there would be a grove wood which must be preserved as "*Grandfather's Highland*" according to the traditional belief of Tai-Lao civilization. It should be noted, in this region, the "*Twelve Heet, Fourteen Kong (12 Traditions, 14 Paths)*" have been strictly practiced since the ancient time (Phukamchanoad, 2020). The "Upper E-San" or the Upper Northeastern Region 1 consists of five "*Sabaidee*" provinces, including Udon Thani, Nong Bua Lam Phu, Nong Khai, Bueng Kan, Loei. Bueng Kan (recently established in 2011), and Udon Thani is the center of this regional cluster. The five provinces cover 34,346.40 km^2 of land, accounting for 20% of the Northeastern Region's total land. There are 54 districts in total (Office of Strategic Management of the Upper Northeastern Provinces 1, 2016). There is an example of Sufficiency Economy activities in the Upper Northeastern Region (1 and 2 combined), which is "*Ban Huai Yang's Seed and Plant Breeding Group*". The group is located in Lao Phon Kho Subdistrict, Khok Si Suphan District, Sakon Nakhon Province. The local people have applied the philosophy to their group vision, which is to "*create jobs, increase revenues, distribute knowledge, develop, and harmonize in order to live peacefully and sufficiently*". They have been successful in breeding more than 62 types of plants such as mlientha suavis, apinau, lime, kaffir lime, papaya, and aquilaria malaccensis. Each group member saves 40 baht per month in the savings group. The merchants would come to pick the vegetables from their farms. Each pack of vegetables costs 2 baht (except mlientha suavis which could be 5-15 baht). Some group members may sell the vegetables on their own or open a vegetable booth in order to earn higher. The average incomes of the members are between 150,000-200,000/person/year (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2020).

Based on the aforementioned principles given by King Rama IX, Father of Sufficiency Economy of Thailand, the researcher developed research instruments to measure the level of public opinion towards Sufficiency Economy activities and the level of application of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy. The research instruments were also used for investigating the innovative approach applied by the local people in the remote areas of Thailand. In this study, the research settings included 54 Sufficiency Economy model villages in the Upper Northeastern Region of Thailand. A subdistrict was selected as a research location from each district. There were 2,000 samples in total. The innovative approach to Sufficiency Economy was explored to discover the sustainable way of living and end poverty according to the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) of the United Nations.

2. Method

This research aims to investigate the innovative approach to Sufficiency Economy and how to apply it in 54 Sufficiency Economy model villages in 5 Upper Northeastern Region provinces (Udon Thani Province, Nong Bua Lam Phu Province, Nong Khai Province, Bueng Kan Province, and Loei Province).

A mixed methods study was selected as the design for this research. The research process consists of the following stages.

(1) Selection of the unit of analysis: The population and samples in this research included the local people and village chiefs from Sufficiency Economy model

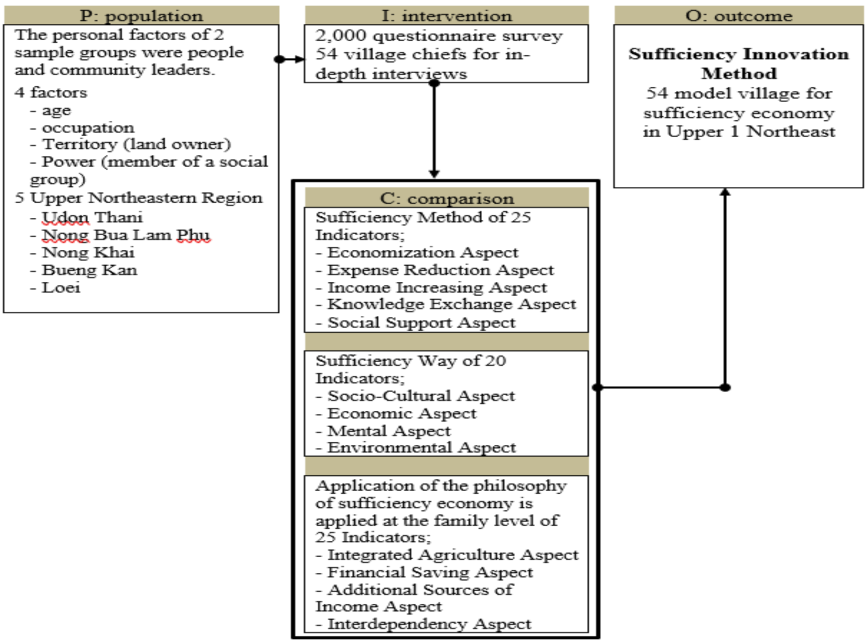
villages in 54 subdistricts in 5 Upper Northeastern Region 1 provinces (Udon Thani, Nong Bua Lam Phu, Nong Khai, Bueng Kan, and Loei). 2,000 local people were selected as the respondents of a questionnaire survey, while 54 village chiefs and/or village committee members were chosen as the key informants for in-depth interviews.

(2) Research instrument development: In this study, questionnaires and interview questions were developed and used as research tools.

(3) Data collection: The data was collected from questionnaires with 2,000 respondents, in-depth interviews with 54 community leaders. The local researchers conducted a study visit to collect the data from the selected villages in the 5 provinces.

(4) Data Analysis: The collected questionnaires were reviewed and selected if they had complete responses. Then, a code number was written on each completed questionnaire in order to enter the data into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The descriptive statistics, such as arithmetic mean and standard deviation, were used for analyzing and interpreting the general demographic data (the average score range: 1.00-1.80 = lowest; 1.81-2.60 = low; 2.61-3.40 = moderate; 3.41-4.20 = high; 4.21-5.00 = highest) (Silcharu, 2017). For the qualitative data gained from the in-depth interviews, the content analysis approach was applied to analyze the data in accordance with the following conceptual framework.

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework of the Study



Source: author's own representation

3. Results

The findings of this research were divided into three parts: 1) the sufficient way of living and the application of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy at a household level, 2) the community leaders' attitudes towards Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, and 3) the innovative approach to Sufficiency Economy for the model villages. The details are narrated below.

(1) The Sufficient Way of Living and the Application of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy at a Household Level

(1.1) The "self-sufficient living methods" were measured in 5 aspects, including 1) saving, 2) reducing expenses, 3) increasing incomes, 4) knowledge exchange, and 5) interdependency. The collected data indicated that, overall, the acknowledgement of self-sufficient living methods was rated at the high level ($\bar{x}$ = 4.97). Considering each aspect, reducing expenses was acknowledged at the highest level ($\bar{x}$ = 5.39), followed by interdependency which was also acknowledged at the highest level ($\bar{x}$ = 5.23). Even though increasing incomes was the least acknowledged method, it was still acknowledged at a high level ($\bar{x}$ = 4.49).

Table 1: Shown overall of self-sufficient living methods level

Self-sufficient living methods	Mean	S.D.	Level
saving	4.84	0.74	high
reducing expenses	5.39	0.68	highest
increasing incomes	4.49	1.39	high
knowledge exchange	4.92	0.84	high
interdependency	5.23	0.62	highest
total	4.97	0.60	high

Source: author's own representation

(1.2) The "learning process of self-sufficient living" was measured in 4 aspects, including socio-cultural aspect, economic aspect, mental aspect, and environmental aspect. The research results showed that, overall, self-sufficient living was learned and practiced at a high level ($\bar{x}$ = 5.05). Considering each aspect, self-sufficient living was mentally learned and practiced at a high level ($\bar{x}$ = 5.12). Followingly, self-sufficient living was learned and practiced in relation to environmental and natural resources management at a high level ($\bar{x}$ = 5.11). It was also socially and culturally learned and practiced at a high level ($\bar{x}$ = 5.10). Although the local people economically learned and practiced self-sufficient living at a high level, it gained the lowest average score ($\bar{x}$ = 4.88).

Table 2: Shown overall of learning process of self-sufficient living level

Learning process of self-sufficient living	Mean	S.D.	Level
Socio-cultural aspect	5.10	0.64	high
Economic aspect	4.88	0.75	high
Mental aspect	5.12	0.63	high
Environmental aspect	5.11	0.62	high
total	5.05	0.51	high

Source: author's own representation

(1.3) The "application of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy at a household level" was measured in 5 aspects: 1) mixed farming, 2) saving money, 3) working part-time to generate more household incomes, 4) interdependency, and 5) commitment to local wisdom. The research findings demonstrated that, overall, the Sufficiency Economy philosophy was applied and practiced at a high level ($\bar{x}$ = 4.94). For every aspect, the majority of the local people applied and practiced Sufficiency Economy at a high level. Particularly, saving money was the most practiced Sufficiency Economy activity and it was practiced at the highest level ($\bar{x}$ = 5.17). Working part-time was the least practiced Sufficiency Economy activity ($\bar{x}$ = 4.29).

Table 3: Shown overall of application of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy at a household level

Application of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy at a household level	Mean	S.D.	Level
mixed farming	5.08	0.64	high
saving money	5.17	0.68	high
working part-time to generate more household incomes	4.29	1.44	high
interdependency	5.13	0.68	high
commitment to local wisdom	5.03	0.62	high
Total	4.94	0.61	high

Source: author's own representation

(1.4) The comparison between the differences in the Way of the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in 5 Upper Northeastern Region Provinces or E-san, classified by the demographic characteristics, included 1) age, 2) professions (Occupation), 3) territory (the ownership of the land), and 4) power (being a member of a social group) as follows:

Table 4: Comparison between the Differences in the Way of the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in 5 Upper Northeastern Region Provinces by Classified 3 factors; age, professions (Occupation), and territory (the ownership of the land)

Comparison between the Differences in Demographic Factors	Source of Variance	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Age	Between Groups	1.353	3	0.451	1.754	0.154
	Within Groups	513.170	1996	0.257		
	Total	514.523	1999			
professions (Occupation)	Between Groups	5.892	4	1.473	5.754	0.000*
	Within Groups	470.002	1836	0.256		
	Total	475.893	1840			
territory (the ownership of the land)	Between Groups	8.615	3	2.872	11.450	0.000*
	Within Groups	445.925	1778	0.251		
	Total	454.540	1781			

*Level of Statistical Significance = .05

Source: author's own representation

The results showed that after testing the data with one-way ANOVA method (when the level of statistical significance was 0.01), the differences between the arithmetic means of more than three groups of the populations, it was found out that 1) the local people had occupations (community trading, housewives, private businesses) more sufficiency way than those who had occupations (general employment and Farmers) and who had occupations (students and government officer) more sufficiency way than those who had farmers, with the level of statistical significance at 0.001; 2) the local people had the ownership of the land less than 5 rai (1.98 acre) more sufficiency way than those who had the ownership of the land from 6 rai (2.37 acre) or more the lands, with the level of statistical significance at 0.001

In addition, the comparisons between the differences in the Way of the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in 5 Upper Northeastern Region Provinces or E-san, by t-test method (when the level of statistical significance was 0.05, and there were only two groups of population to test the different arithmetic means and there were only two groups of population to test the different arithmetic means) showed that the local people who were members of a social group had way of sufficiency in power (being a member of a social group) more than those who were not members of a social group as follows:

Table 5: Comparison between the Differences in the Way of the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in 5 Upper Northeastern Region Provinces by Classified 1 factors; power (being a member of a social group)

power (being a member of a social group)	Members of a social group		Not members of a social group		t	Sig.
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
	5.03	0.47	4.93	0.62	2.807	0.005*

*Level of Statistical Significance = .05

Source: author's own representation

(2) The Community Leaders' Attitudes towards Sufficiency Economy Philosophy

The qualitative data was obtained from the interviews with 54 village chiefs from Sufficiency Economy model villages in the 5 provinces (Udon Thani, Nong Bua Lam Phu, Nong Khai, Bueng Kan, and Loei). Demographically, most of the key informants were male (72.22%), aged between 51 and 60 years old (53.7%). The majority of the village chiefs knew their neighbors and had intimate neighbors in their neighborhoods (94.44%). Every village chief engaged in a social group (100%); 83.33% of the key informants were members of community and urban community saving groups, followed by village savings groups (66.67%). According to the in-depth interviews, the village chiefs tended to perform duties within their scope of work and the contexts of their neighborhoods. It was found that the local people were likely to follow successful leaders who taught them about Sufficiency Economy and improved their attitude towards the philosophy. It could be summarized into the following motto: "Leaders must do first. If they succeed, we will follow." This reflects that the village chiefs shared similar attitudes towards Sufficiency Economy in the following aspects:

1) Impression: The village chiefs were impressed in Sufficiency Economy Philosophy as a guide to job creating and extra revenue generation.

2) Appreciation: The village chiefs appreciated the value of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy and its practical benefits in daily life. They believed that both individuals and the community as a whole could benefit from the philosophy, especially the Soil Aggravation Project.

3) Compliment: The village chiefs praised the application of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in every household. They also complimented the king's perspectives towards the sufficient way of living, which promoted money-saving, expense reduction, reasonable spending, and living sufficiently.

4) Satisfaction: The village chiefs were satisfied with the set of knowledge they used for life planning and problem solving. They could use the philosophy to generate community revenues and support disadvantaged people to help them live in the Middle Way.

5) Agreement: The village chiefs commonly agreed with Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in social, economic, environmental, and educational aspects.

6) Acknowledgement: The village chiefs acknowledged the benefits of practicing Sufficiency Economy in terms of poverty reduction and job creation.

7) Pride: The village chiefs were proud of their king who taught them about Sufficiency Economy and its application, for instance, the Royal Rain Project.

8) The village chiefs believed that Thai people were lucky to have an intelligent king who taught them about Sufficiency Economy. They were proud of being Thai citizens who practiced Sufficiency Economy, for example, establishing occupation guilds and savings group

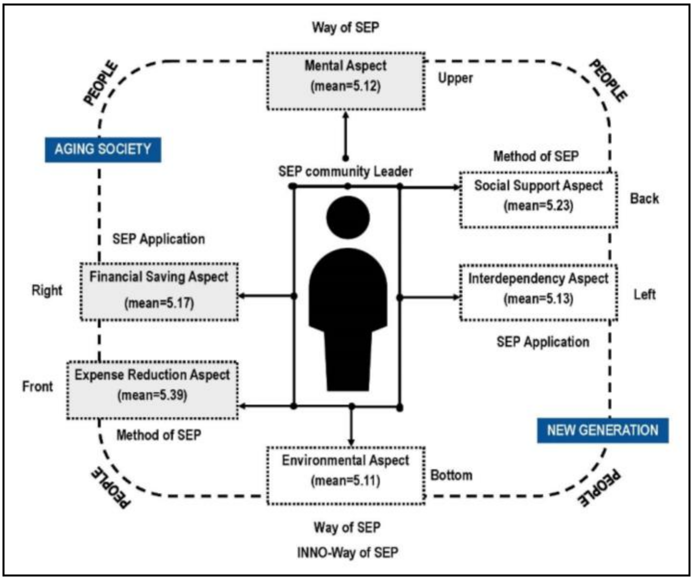
(3) The Innovative Approach to Sufficiency Economy for the Model Villages

The way of living in E-San allowed the community leaders to lead their people without difficulty because of the following reasons:

1. E-San people were generous. They woke up early to give food offerings to the monks every morning. They lived generously and sufficiently because they were farmers who needed to use their own physical abilities to support themselves and their families, so they understood poverty and recognized the importance of interdependency. Even though they had been frequently insulted or exploited, they were patient and modest. They believed they were not well-educated, so they always stayed modest and respected others.
2. E-San people learned to live with the nature and worked harder than people from other regions because their land was not fertile or productive. They could harvest their farmlands only in the rainy season (6 months) of a year. The other six months were dry months which could not support them. Therefore, they understood life difficulties and worked harder than people from other regions.
3. E-San people loved peaceful living. They did not think about the faraway future but their current peaceful and celebrative way of life. They often believed in superstitions which were inherited from their ancestors. They reckoned that they could live happily and have a better life by winning lotteries and making a wish. Thus, they could be easily convinced.

The innovative approach to Sufficiency Economy for E-San people could be summarized into the "six directions of sufficient way of living" demonstrated by their community leaders: 1) having a good mindset, 2) understanding the nature and the environment, 3) reducing expenses, 4) supporting each other, 5) having empathy, and 6) saving money (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: The Six Directions of Sufficient Way of Living Model



Source: author's work

4. Discussion

It is crucial to clarify why the samples were unlikely to have part-time jobs to increase their household incomes ($\bar{x}$ = 4.29), even though they were mostly poor. According to the field visit, it was found that most of the samples in the Sufficiency Economy model villages were farmers who spent their entire weeks and days on farming. When the farming season ended, the working-age population would move to the capital city (Bangkok) or other major cities all over the country to sell their labor power. Furthermore, the local communities were settled far away from the city markets, making it more expensive and more time-consuming to have a part-time job in downtown. In order to avoid the increase of capital costs and traveling expenses, the local people would gather to establish an occupational guild instead of working part-time somewhere else. However, they still received little support from the public sector in this aspect. More importantly, the majority of the Sufficiency Economy model village chiefs were male. The spatial contexts and the dry climate of this region affected the productivity of the land, so it required more physical endurance and force to develop the areas. The male leaders had these strong points, but they still needed cooperation from their people as well as 'time'. The village chiefs needed to work hard to introduce policies, projects, and development activities. They also worked with the external agencies to receive advice to develop their villages based on the Sufficiency Economy philosophy. They were obliged to show successful results to their people as soon as possible in the most visible and inclusive manner. Although they were poor, helping each other could relieve them from merciless competitions and the ongoing COVID-19 situation. Some village chiefs in the 54 Sufficiency Economy model villages were female, but they usually performed the duties of household leaders in the micro-level social structure. In other words, they were family leaders who needed to have great attitudes and regularly participate in social activities with their family members (Phukamchanoad, Pungnirund, and Paisan, 2019). Nonetheless, E-San's way of living still gave more importance to men whose role was 'leaders' in terms of social and community development. Meanwhile, women were 'leaders at home' who were responsible for chores, making clothes, and taking care of children. It should be noted that genders played a significant role in social development. Women's power was also portrayed in some vital socio-structural dimensions. For example, they were the leaders of handweavers guilds, savings groups, or community enterprises in the Sufficiency Economy model villages.

5. Conclusion

The local people from the Sufficiency Economy model villages in 54 districts in 5 Upper Northern Region provinces (Udon Thani, Nong Bua Lam Phu, Nong Khai, Bueng Kan, and Loei) lived sufficiently. The most used self-sufficient method for living was expense reduction, followed by helping each other and saving money in village funds, "Saccha" savings groups, and commercial banks. They mentally learned and practiced Sufficiency Economy, which means they already learned Sufficiency Economy by heart and routinely lived their life based on the philosophy. They practiced and understood the nature as well as the concept of sufficiency by themselves. This led to their active engagement in social and cultural development even before the government gave them a hand. Their way of living also gave importance to the success of leaders. They believed in their leaders and the motto "*Leaders must do first. If they succeed, we will follow*". E-San people respected others because they viewed themselves as uneducated individuals, so they were always modest and never criticized others. They had a high reputation for virtue.

Acknowledgements

The author is grateful for the Institute for Research and Development, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, which supported and gave an opportunity in this research.

Funding

The author did not receive any form of funding towards authorship, research, and publication of this article.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author declares no conflicting interests.

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Journal of Community Positive Practices, XXII(1) **2022**, *34-59*
ISSN Print: 1582-8344; Electronic: 2247-6571

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE BEFORE AND DURING THE FIRST YEAR OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A RAPID REVIEW OF THE CONTEXT IN ROMANIA

Georgiana-Virginia BONEA[1]
Bianca BULIGESCU[2]
Simona MIHAIU[3]

DOI: https://doi.org/10.35782/JCPP.2022.1.03

Abstract: *The COVID-19 pandemic has led to an upward trend in domestic violence cases at the international and, of course, national level. In fact, over time it has been shown that there are links between various natural disasters or pandemics and the increase in these cases. The first part of the study provides a brief theoretical analysis of domestic violence, as well as the main forms of manifestation and consequences for the victim. The second part focuses on the interrelationship between the sanitary measures imposed in the pandemic context and the impact on the evolution of this problem, as well as the identification of general factors that contributed to the emergence and maintenance of domestic violence, before and especially in the first year of the pandemic. Through the secondary data analysis, the third part of the study highlights the trends of domestic violence in Romania in the period between 2016-2020, focusing on the first year of the pandemic (2020), by looking at the statistics provided by the Agenția Națională Pentru Egalitate de Şanse pentru Femei și Bărbați (ANES). The last part of our paper offers a series of discussions and conclusions on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the evolution of domestic violence cases. The main limitation of the study was a time deficit in the supply of specific statistics for 2021, as well as the general unpredictability of the pandemic in terms of future trends in domestic violence and case reporting.*

Keywords: *Domestic violence; COVID-19 pandemic; victim; aggressor; family.*

[1] Scientific Researcher III (C.S. III), and Ph.D. Lecturer in Sociology, Research Institute for Quality of Life, the Romanian Academy, e-mail: georgiana.bonea@gmail.com
[2] Scientific Researcher III (C.S. III), Research Institute for Quality of Life, the Romanian Academy, e-mail: bianca.buligescu@iccv.ro
[3] Scientific Researcher III (C.S. III), and Ph.D. Research Institute for Quality of Life, the Romanian Academy, e-mail: simona.mihaiu@iccv.ro

1. Introduction

On December 1st, 2019, the first case of COVID-19 virus infection appeared in Wuhan, China, and on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) declared COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-1) pandemic. As of February 7th, 2022, a number of 395,805,935 confirmed cases of SARS-CoV-2 infection have been reported globally, of which 5,758,394 deaths from this cause, according to the National Institute of Public Health Romania (INSPR, 2022). In the context of COVID-19, as there is a high risk of contagion, the imposition of specific restrictions was absolutely necessary. In Romania, during the state of emergency between March 16th and May 15th, 2020, taking into account the obtrusion of strict sanitary measures to limit the spread of the virus at community level (Mediafax, 2021), a considerable increase in cases of domestic violence can be observed (Mihaiu, 2020, p. 39), being registered a number of 251 calls to the special telephone line *0800 500 333*, dedicated to the victims, compared to the similar period of 2019, when 111 cases were registered (ANES, 2020).

Analyzing the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, research into domestic violence is needed to track and understand trends, but especially to identify current issues regarding the emergence and maintenance of abusive and violent behavior within the family. Against the background of the multiple uncertainties and fears generated by the pandemic, a series of unprecedented changes took place, including at the couple and respectively, at the family level. This has led to a gradual evolution of cases of domestic violence around the world, mobilizing the scientific community to carefully analyze the impact of the pandemic on this worrying phenomenon (Bradbury-Jones and Isham, 2020; Forbes et al., 2020; Peterman et al., 2020; Sharma and Borah, 2020). While the daily routine of many has changed radically in response to new challenges, strict quarantine and social isolation have meant that the victim has limited access to sources of help. Thus, a dangerous environment was created in which the aggressor acquires unlimited powers, increasing the risk of occurrence and maintenance of abuse for a long period of time (Kaukinen, 2020; Roesch et al., 2020).

The main objective of the study is to perform an x-ray on the impact of the evolution of domestic violence in the first year of the pandemic, in the context of restrictions on free movement in Romania, in order to provide an image of the addressed problem. More precisely, through secondary data research, the data provided by the Agenţia Naţională Pentru Egalitate de Şanse pentru Femei şi Bărbaţi (ANES) in the period 2016-2020 is analyzed, in order to follow the influence of the pandemic evolution in Romania on the phenomenon of domestic violence, with emphasis on the year 2020.

The study starts from the general theoretical analysis of the problem of domestic violence, emphasizing later, the connection between the influence of the restrictions imposed in the pandemic context on the aggressive and violent behaviors inside the small circle of the family. The main cardinal points of the characteristics of this social problem in Romania are followed, as it appears from the statistics provided by ANES. In conclusion, a retrospective is proposed to provide further clarification on the identified issues, as well as a number of recommendations.

One of the main limitations of the present study is a temporal shortage of official national and international statistics on the evolution of domestic violence in 2021, in the context of the multiple uncertainties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, the diversity of statistical data is extremely limited, making it difficult to estimate the unreported number of these cases. Another major limitation is the challenges posed by the unpredictability of the COVID-19 pandemic and the anticipation of the impact on the evolution of the risks of abuse and domestic violence. In terms of knowing the violent manifestations, the intimate family space remains isolated, hidden.

2. Brief theoretical approach

Domestic violence is a widespread term that refers to a number of forms of aggression, abuse, and violence that occur in the intimate family space between family members of any age, respectively between the couple's partners (Aihie, 2009). A very relevant aspect that needs to be mentioned is that most of the victims are female (Office of National Statistics, 2020), but it is not excluded that there are cases of abused men in the couple's relationship. In particular, violence against women is defined as any act of gender-based violence, in order to provoke suffering of any kind, and to punish or exercise control over the victim (WHO, 2021). Regardless of the form of aggression, the aggressor's goal is to gain control and dominate the victim while causing her a series of sufferings, creating an abusive relationship of subordination (Bonea, 2012; Johnson, 2006). In its worst forms, domestic violence can escalate to the point of threatening the victim's life (Ver Steegh, 2004) (see Table 1).

Table 1: The main types of domestic violence: definition, forms of manifestation, consequences on the victim

Type of domestic violence	Definition	Forms of manifestation	Consequences on the victim
Physical violence	– The use of physical force by the aggressor in order to injure and cause pain to the victim.	– Hitting with fists and feet, or other blunt objects; – Throwing various objects in the direction of the victim; – Sharpening; – Combustion; – Pushing; – Dragging the victim; – Strangulation; – Scratching; – Slamming.	– Development of Stockholm Syndrome; – Physical pain that can become chronic; – Various wounds, bodily injuries; – Scars; – Development of sleep and eating disorders.
Psychological abuse	– Through various deviant behaviors, including by manipulation and blackmail, the aggressor will aim to gain control over the victim.	– Humiliation; – Threats; – Mockery; – Constraint; – Reclassification; – Insults; – Embarrassing the victim in public; – Offenses.	– Occurrence of Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome; – Decreased self-esteem; – Fear of the aggressor; – Use of various medicinal substances with a calming effect.

Type of domestic violence	Definition	Forms of manifestation	Consequences on the victim
Sexual abuse	– Any act of sexual intercourse without the victim's consent, committed by coercion or physical force perpetrated against her.	– Unwanted touches; – Forcing the victim to maintain unwanted and unprotected intimate relationships; – Subjugation.	– Causing physical injuries; – Mental suffering; – The appearance of an unwanted pregnancy; – The appearance of the desire for suicide; – Depression.
Social abuse	– Exercising excessive and strict control over the social and family life of the victim.	– Prohibition of the victim from having friendly relations with other persons of the opposite gender; – Locks the victim in the house; – Prohibition of exits in which the victim is not accompanied by the aggressor; – Controlling the victim's social networks; – Removal of the victim's friends; – Preventing the victim from having relations with her extended family.	– Insulation; – Development of depressive states; – Lack of communication outside the abusive relationship; – Creating a victim-aggressor dependency relationship; – Fear of socializing; – Installing the victim's distrust in those close to her.
Economic abuse	– Preventing the victim from having a job, from having her own money, or prohibiting her from having any kind of economic activity meant to bring money.	– Prohibition imposed on the victim to have a job; – Control of the victim's money; – Saving the victim to work; – Accumulation of debts on behalf of the victim, without her knowledge or consent; – Stopping the victim's monthly income; – Using the financial resources of the victim without her consent or knowledge; – Selling or destroying the property belonging to the victim.	– Bankruptcy; – Loss of the job; – Loss of personal property; – Appearance of unwanted debts; – Creating financial dependence on the aggressor; – Lack of decision-making power of the victim over her own financial resources; – Limiting the possibility of self-defense of the victim against the abusive relationship.
Neglect	– It is one of the most common forms of abuse, especially for minors and other people who are considered vulnerable.	– Ignoring the basic needs of the victim; – Creating various damages to the victim; – Creating contexts in which the victim can be injured; – Lack of emotional support of the victim and cognitive stimulation; – Creating an unstable living and development environment; – Exposure of the victim to various dangers or domestic aggression.	– The appearance of various psychological problems; – Recourse to various deviant acts; – Deterioration of the victim's physical health; – Physical and mental underdevelopment in accordance with the chronological age; – Creating the relationship of deficient attachment; – Behavior problems; – Anxiety; – Distrust of others.

Source: Ali et. al., 2021; Bonea, 2020; Dubowitz et. al., 2005; WHO, 2021.

Thus, domestic violence includes several forms of manifestation such as: physical violence, sexual abuse, social abuse, psychological abuse, economic abuse, neglect (Bonea, 2020; Muntean, 2011).

3. Highlighting the main links between COVID-19 pandemic and domestic violence

Over time, international research has drawn attention to cases of domestic violence in the general context of natural disasters, humanitarian crises, armed conflicts, or pandemics (Boserup et. al., 2020; Forbes et. al., 2020; Parkinson, 2019; Buttell and Carney, 2009).

In the last two years, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected all aspects of life, including family life, and is characterized by unpredictability, with effects that are difficult to predict for long periods of time. Under these conditions, isolation and quarantine at national and international level were the main health protection measures, leading to an adverse effect, initially unsuspected by the authorities. In the first year of the pandemic, 2020, according to the specialized literature, several factors favoring the appearance and manifestation of domestic violence could be observed, starting from the increase of the individuals' anxiety; accentuation of depressive states; not adapting to the new challenges of the environment; the appearance of the post-traumatic stress syndrome; reduced response capacity of public systems to prevent and combat violence; as well as the escalation of existing conflicts in the family (Brooks et. al., 2020; Peterman et. al., 2020; NZFVC, 2020). Undoubtedly, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health at the individual level has been felt since the first part of the imposition of traffic restrictions, having close links with the occurrence and/or intensification of domestic violence (Ali et al., 2021; Campbell, 2020; Merenda et al., 2021). At the same time, other consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic were job loss and financial instability; changing the work environment characterized by teleworking and affecting the quality of individual and family life; closing schools and moving teaching activity online; disruption or termination of any social relations; radical change of individual and couple daily routine; changing the roles of family members; abrupt limitation of access to various services and resources etc. (Arpinte et al., 2020; Mihaiu, 2020; Talevi et al., 2020; Voicu, 2020). We are therefore talking about an unprecedented situation, full of social and economic uncertainties that has led to a series of radical changes, forcing the individual's ability to adapt and respond. Thus, the clear link between the restrictions in the pandemic context and the increase in cases of domestic violence around the world is highlighted (Bradbury-Jones and Isham, 2020; Boserup et al., 2020; Sharma and Borah, 2020).

The victim was forced by the health circumstances to remain isolated with the aggressor in a dangerous, insecure and stressful environment. International reports of domestic violence show upward trends, in the context of restricting freedom of movement, as the main form of prevention of SARS-CoV-2 virus infection (Roseboom, 2020; Kaukinen, 2020; Piquero, et al., 2020). Specifically, the social isolation caused by the pandemic, associated with the economic recession and widespread uncertainty on all fronts of life, has led to an increase of up to 50% in domestic violence cases internationally, in 2020, in countries such as Germany, Brazil, Spain, England, Cyprus, Italy, China, Greece, as reported in an article from The Guardian (Graham-Harrison et al., 2020). Also, in another article published in The New York Times (Taub, 2020), the hypothesis is underlined that: *The more time family members spend together isolated in quarantine, the greater the risk of abuse and domestic violence will be manifested in more frequent and severe forms.*

Isolation is one of the main factors favoring the occurrence and maintenance of violence in the family intimate space, implying the limitation of access to everything that means asking for help and resources of any kind that the victim could use to defend herself from the aggressor (Bright et al., 2020; Morton, 2020). On the other hand, the unreported number of cases is difficult to estimate, this being another consequence of social isolation, and at the same time, ensuring a *cyclicality of domestic violence* (Bonea, 2016; Walker, 1999). In the case of long-term abusive relationships, restrictive health measures have created an extremely favorable context for the aggressor (Selvaratnam, 2020).

Beyond the pandemic context, there are a number of main risk factors for the occurrence and maintenance of domestic violence, which refer to the excessive consumption of alcohol; the existence of neuropsychological diseases; the precarious material situation in which the victim depends on the income of the aggressor; the victim's shame to seek qualified help; isolation from family and friends; the onset of Stockholm Syndrome; lack of information on ways to defend against the abuse; experiencing by one or both partners various abuses during childhood; the victim's fear of the aggressor; the existence of a criminal record etc. (Bonea, 2015; Davis, 2008; De Fabrique et al., 2007; Tower, 2006).

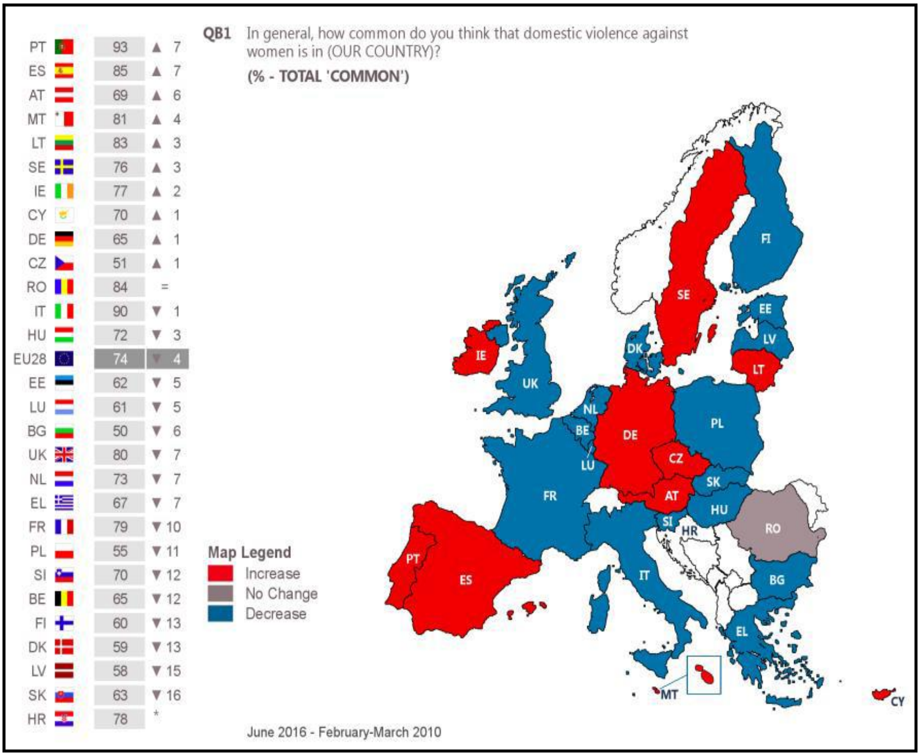
4. Brief literature review of existing legislation

The Istanbul Convention which recognizes violence against women as a human rights violation was ratified in 2011 and entered into force in 2014 (Caragnano, 2018, p. 51). According to Caragnano, (2018, p. 56) the Istanbul Convention represents "the first legally binding instrument creating a comprehensive legal framework not only to protect women against all forms of violence, but also to prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence against women and domestic violence". Domestic violence is defined as "all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit, irrespective of biological or legal family ties, or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence as the victim" (Council of Europe, 2011). According to Romanian Law 217/2003 article 3 domestic violence is defined as "any inaction or action intended of physical violence, sexual, psychological, economic, or social or spiritual which is produced within the family or domestic area, between spouses or ex-spouses as well as between actual or former partners regardless of whether the aggressor lives or has lived with the victim".

In Europe there are two surveys on domestic violence one collected in 2016 Special Eurobarometer 449: Gender-based violence and one collected in 2010, Special Eurobarometer 344: Domestic violence against women. There will be another survey scheduled by EIGE in 2023 on domestic violence.

Almost all respondents of the survey from 2016 consider that domestic violence is unacceptable while domestic violence is perceived to be more prevalent against women (see Graph 1).

Graph 1. Map of Europe showing Violence against Women and the change in Opinion since the Last Survey in 2010



Source: Special Eurobarometer 449: Gender-based violence (TNS opinion, 2016, p. 11).
Notes: Base: All respondents (n=27.818).
**Croatia was not covered in 2010.*

The graph shows that "across the EU there has been a four-percentage point decrease in the proportion who say domestic violence against women is common in their country, but much larger decreases in this view are observed amongst respondents in Slovakia (-16 pp), Latvia (-15 pp), Denmark and Finland (both -13 pp). On the other hand, in 10 Member States respondents are now more likely to say domestic violence against women is common, with the largest increases observed amongst those in Portugal, Spain (both +7 pp) and Austria (+6 pp)." (TNS Opinion, 2016, 11) Romania shows no change in the perception that domestic violence is common, it is above the EU average perception of 74 by 10 percentage points.

5. Trends of domestic violence in Romania before and during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic

In the following section we will analyse the data from National Agency for Equality of Chances between women and men (ANES/NAEC) on victims helped by the agency.

In 2019 there was a spike in the number of victims taken care of by the National Agency for Equality of Chances between women and men (ANES). The number of cases of victims of domestic violence decreased in 2020 to 11607 cases compared to 2019 when they were 14074 cases reported, and even compared to 2018 when they were 13182 cases. In 2019 according to General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police there were 44090 cases of criminal complaints and 43712 complaints in 2020 so although there were fewer cases of overall criminal complaint if we look at a disaggregated level we see there were more cases of harassment, blackmail, threat, pimping, rape, sexual aggression, failure to comply with the measures regarding custody of the minor: the detention of the minor child by a parent, without the consent of the other parent, or the impediment of the minor's relations with the parents in accordance with the law, offenses specified in Law 217/2003 on breach of a protection order or a provisional protection order by the person against whom it was issued (Ilie, 2022). This we will argue shows an inability of the victims to reach out because of fear due to the pandemics with an under-reported number of cases because the economy contracted with 3,7% (Source: Eurostat, Series TEC00115), there was job loss especially in the HORECA sector and tourism due to measures of lockdown. 51% of cases of victims were from the rural areas and 49% of the victims helped by ANES were from urban areas.

According to a news press release by UNICEF (2020), "due to the conditions of isolation at home, limitation of contacts with other members of the social network, closing of schools, lack of facilities to spend free time, and financial insecurity, it was observed that family relations tend to become more and more tensed, increasing the vulnerability of children and women and the risk to be exposed to domestic violence". The UNICEF statements are based also on the situations created as a result of Ebola and Zika, during which domestic violence increased as well as the physical abuse against women, traffic of human beings and marriage of children as well as sexual exploatation. Moreover, research dealing with the impact of natural disasters show that these contributes to the more frequent manifestation of various abuses and aggressions (Weitzman et al., 2010; Parkinson, 2019). More specifically, the the data registered at international level, confirmed the hypothesis that COVID 19 pandemics has negative effects on the couple relationship and favours the occurence of episodes of domestic violence (Finlay and Gilmore, 2020). World Health Organization (2020) reports the increase of domestic violence in China, Great Britain, and the United States of America. Other studies state that there is an increase of domestic violence in France with 30%, and in Brazil with 40-50% (Campbell, 2020).

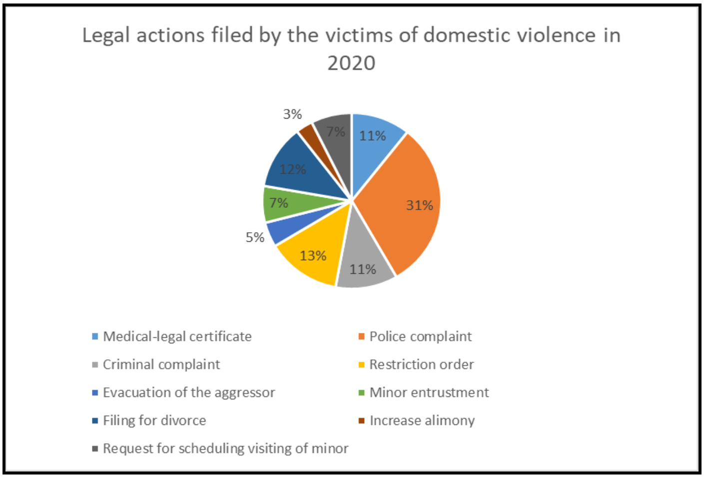
Stanciu, Mihăilescu and Ştefănescu (2021, p. 31) also argue that the domestic violence has increased based on a study carried out by University of Medicine and Pharmacy Carol Davila in 4 hospitals from Bucharest which showed an increase of four times in traumas caused by physical aggression compared to the last three years and on data of protection orders from the The Law Court of Bucharest where the protection orders doubled compared to the same period of 2019. The Law Court of Bucharest where the protection orders doubled compared to the same period of 2019.

Tabel 2. Legal actions that were filed by the victims of domestic

Legal actions filed by the victims	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**
Medical-legal certificate	408	349	459	535	408
Police complaint	941	1009	1226	1499	1184
Criminal complaint	464	366	507	609	429
Restriction order	224	248	329	746	515
Evacuation of the aggressor	66	19	89	363	175
Minor entrustment	229	186	192	363	258
Filing for divorce	310	285	345	681	450
Increase of alimony	53	20	159	65	118
Request for scheduling a visit of the minor	119	130	74	164	282
Total	2814	2612	3380	5025	3819

Source: own calculations based on ANES data

Graph 2. Legal actions that were filed by the victims of domestic violence

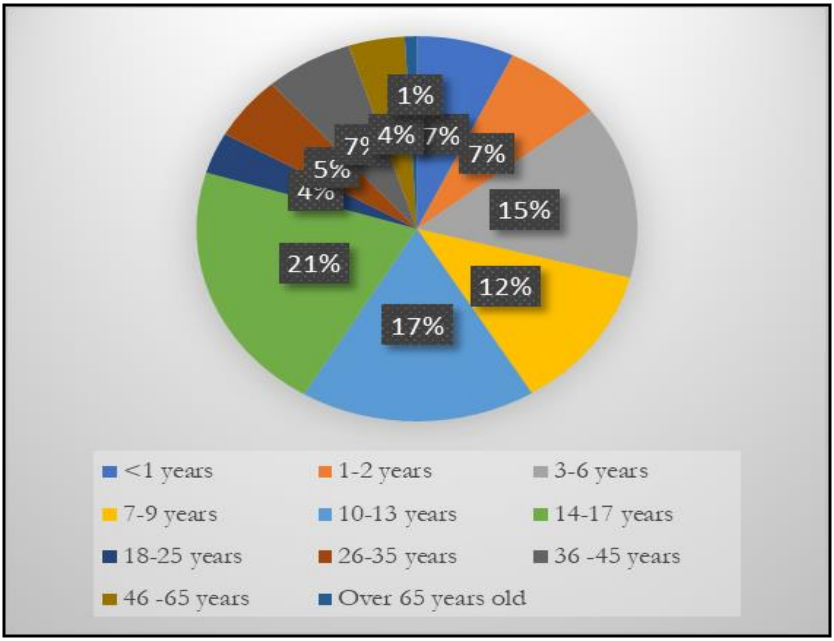


Source: own calculations based on ANES data

Only 8-10% of the victims request a protection order according to experts from ANES cited in Stanciu, Mihăilescu and Ştefănescu (2021, 32). In 2020 out of the data from the ANES of the victims helped, 13% of the victims filed for protection order, most victims filed for a police complaint 31%, 12% filed for divorce, 11% obtained a medical-legal certificate, 11% filed for a criminal law complaint, 7% filed for minor entrustment, 7% requested scheduling a visit of the minor, 5% requested evacuation of the aggressor, 3% requested an increase in alimony (see Table 2). According to Stanciu, Mihăilescu and Ştefănescu (2021, 31) the increase of violence during the pandemics has led to a change in legislation by which aggressors who violate protection orders are sentenced to 1-5 years of prison (Law 183/2020).

In 2018 most of the cases were between 14-17 years old, second in place there were the cases between 10-13 years old, third in place there were the 3-6 years old (see Table 3). In 2020 there were 21% of the cases with the age between 14-17 years old, second in place there were the victims aged 10-13 years old with 17%, third in place with 15% of the cases there were 3-6 years old. By far children were the largest group of victims supported by ANES with 14% of the cases between 0-2 years and 65% between 3-17 years old. These data can be corroborated with those collected by the National Authority for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Children and Adoptions (NARPDCA) according to which in 2020, 14170 cases of child abuse and neglect were reported by social services. Over 90% of cases of abuse and neglect occur in the family and the most common forms of victimization are neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. Unfortunately, more studies realized around the world, point out that children are in general very vulnerable and exposed to domestic violence (Edleson, 2009; Díez et al., 2018; Gao et al., 2021). There is a second spike in cases with victims aged 18-65 that represent 19% of the cases of victims. Only 1% in 2020 were cases of victims over 65 (See Graph 3).

Graph 3. Distribution of victims by age



Source: own calculations based on ANES data

Table 3. Distribution of victims by age 2016 – 2020

	<1 years	1-2 years	3-6 years	7-9 years	10-13 years	14-17 years	18-25 years	26-35 years	36 -45 years	46 -65 years	Over 65 years old	Total
2016	795	1012	2291	1643	2046	1990	302	610	572	272	121	11654
2017	1010	1097	2272	1799	2443	2351	296	620	573	392	103	12956
2018	1064	1169	2219	1834	2254	2321	400	760	645	412	104	13182
2019	1116	1316	2168	1763	2252	2547	419	850	914	594	135	14074
2020	831	850	1698	1412	2007	2455	403	622	746	479	104	11607

Source: own calculations based on ANES data

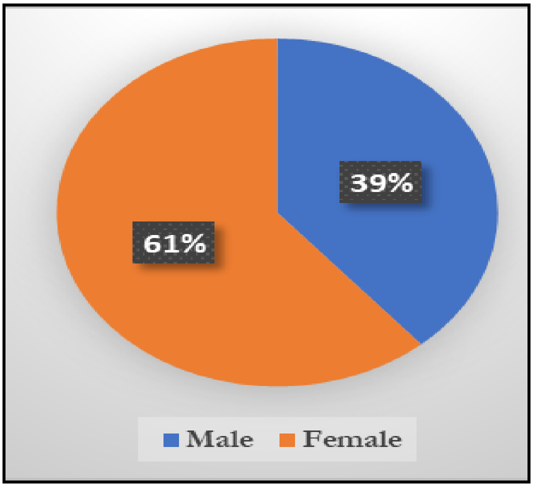
Most victims were female with an increase in their number especially in 2019, when there were 8747 women followed by a decrease in 2020, to 7117 (see Table 4). There were 61% female victims in 2020 and 39% male victims (see Graph 4). In general, the violence against women is more prevalent compared to violence against men within the family (Leight, 2022; Sardinha, 2022). According to WHO (World Health Organization) 1 out of 3 women experienced some form of physical violence or sexual during their life (WHO, 2017). Notable differences are often found between attitudes towards gender roles in public (e.g. labour market insertion) and in private (e.g. relationship with partner) (Voicu, 2006; Voicu and Constantin, 2016). Unsurprinsingly at home remains the most dangerous place for women who continue to be victims of violence, as a result of inequalities and gender stereotypes (UNODC, 2019). In fact, the status of women in the couple is often disadvantaged, especially in terms of power relations, which shows that domestic violence is asocial phenomenon with deep ramifications in the collective mentality and in history (Miroiu, 2004; Rujoiu and Rujoiu, 2014). In particular, with regard to the COVID19 pandemics, there has been an increase in the number of women victims of domestic violence in several countries (Mittal and Singh, 2020; Roesch et al., 2020; Fawole et al., 2021).

Table 4. Distribution of victims by gender 2016 – 2020

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Male	4929	5435	5297	5327	4490
Female	6725	7521	7885	8747	7117
Total	11654	12956	13182	14074	11607

Source: own calculations based on ANES data

Graph 4. Distribution of victims by gender, 2020



Source: own calculations based on ANES data

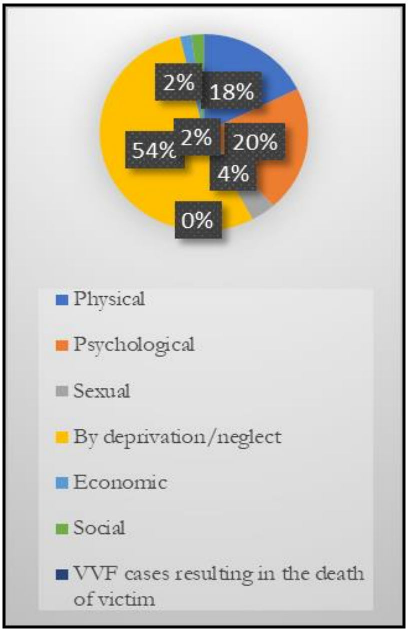
By far the most prevalent form of violence according to ANES data is that by neglect and deprivation, second in place is psychological, and third in place is physical (see Table 5). In 2020 54% of the victims helped by ANES were in some form of deprivation or neglect, 20% were abused psychologically and 18% were abused physically, 4% were abused sexually, 2% were abused socially and 2% were economic victims, and very few were victims of violence causing death (see Graph 5).

Table 5. Distribution of victims by type/forms of violence 2016-2020

	Physical	Psychological	Sexual	By deprivation/neglect	Economic	Social	VVF cases resulting in the death of victim	Total
2016	2085	2123	324	6818	372	175	0	11897
2017	2043	2030	372	6807	259	178	1	11690
2018	2121	2500	330	6313	336	689	3	12292
2019	3056	2956	601	6900	286	213	3	14015
2020	1875	2186	410	5719	189	200	1	10580

Source: own calculations based on ANES data

Graph 5. Distribution of victims by type/forms of violence 2020



Source: own calculations based on ANES data

The risk associated with the occurrence and maintenance of violence (see Table 6) is by far poor living conditions this is in line with previous research that found that poor living conditions such as chronic poverty especially in rural areas are the main drivers of violence together with low incomes and unemployment, and a culture of dominance of masculinity (Stanciu, Mihăilescu and Ştefănescu, 2021). Second in place was excessive alcohol consumption that increased the risk with occurrence and maintenance of domestic violence, third in place was a history of home childhood domestic violence that predispose the victims to be in abusive relationships. These two are in a relationship of interdependence, in the sense that excessive alcohol consumption by parents is associated with physical or sexual abuse of children and other family members (Gadd et al., 2019; Mayshak et al., 2020). At the same time, the experience of being abused as a child may increase a person's risk of having alcohol problems as an adult and of engaging in violent behaviour towards family members (Gil-González et al., 2008; Mihaiu, 2015; Meyer et al., 2021).

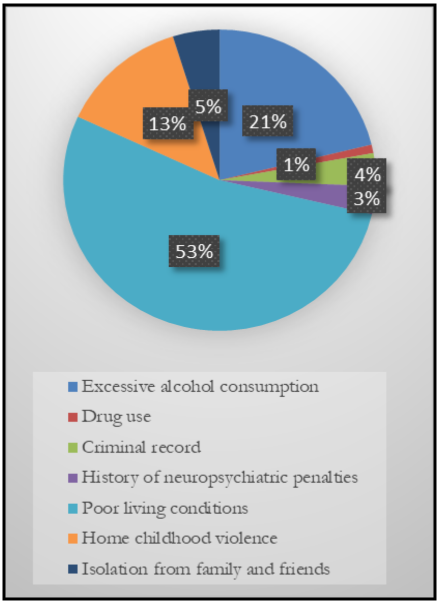
In 2020 (see Graph 6), 53% of the risks associated with the occurrence and maintenance of domestic violence came from poor living conditions, 21% from excessive alcohol consumption and 13% from a history of home childhood domestic violence, 5% from isolation from family and friends, 4% from criminal record, 3% neuropsychiatric illnesses, 1% drugs consumption. When we look at the risks broken down by aggressor or victim (see Table 7), we see that alcohol consumption of the aggressor is a risk factor (18% of the aggressors) and only 3% of the victims consume alcohol, whereas 31% of the victims live in poor living conditions and 22% of the aggressors live in poor living conditions, 7% of the aggressors have a history of childhood domestic violence and 6% of the victims, showing that they tend to perpetuate the cycle of aggression or abuse. In 4% of the cases isolation from family and friends of the victim places the victim in a relationship of dependence with her/his abuser making it impossible for the victim to break the cycle of abuse. Drugs consumption, criminal record and neuropsychiatric illnesses of the aggressor all increase the risk of domestic violence occurrence.

Table 6. The risk associated with the occurrence and maintenance of violence 2016 – 2020

Risk factors	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Excessive alcohol consumption	3066	3107	3207	3235	2511
Drug use	69	86	99	155	108
Criminal record	387	373	855	526	416
Neuropsyhiatric illnesses	458	379	482	463	356
Poor living conditions	8300	8853	8120	6846	6306
Home childhood violence	1573	1721	2296	2037	1568
Isolation from family and friends	959	699	801	836	572
Total	14812	15218	15860	14098	11837

Source: own calculations based on ANES data

Graph 6. Risk associated to the case of domestic violence in 2020



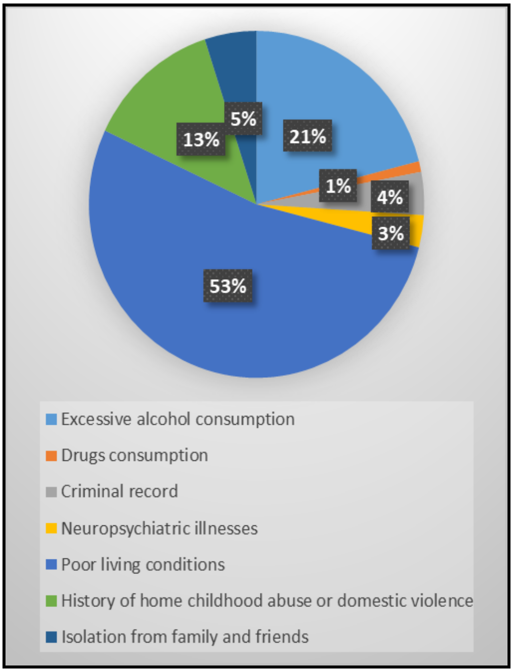
Source: own calculations based on ANES data

Table 7. Risk associated to the case of domestic violence in 2020

Risc factors	victims	aggressor	Total
Excessive alcohol consumption	3%	18%	21%
Drugs consumption	0%	1%	1%
Criminal record	1%	3%	4%
Neuropsychiatric illnesses	1%	2%	3%
Poor living conditions	31%	22%	53%
History of home childhood abuse or domestic violence	6%	7%	13%
Isolation from family and friends	4%	1%	5%

Source: own calculations based on ANES data

Graph 7. Risk associated to the case of domestic violence in 2020



Source: own calculations based on ANES data

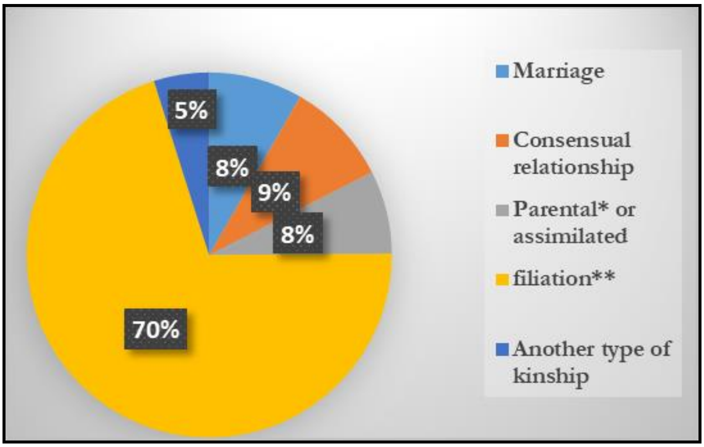
When we look at the type of relationship between the victims and aggressor in ANES data, by far most of the victims were in a filiation relationship (see Table 8), being the daughter or son of the aggressor, children seem more exposed to domestic violence this is in accordance with the data from ANES on the age of the victim. The second largest is living in a consensual relationship, and the third largest is being married to the aggressor, both assume an existing relationship of love between the victim and her/ his aggressor. Parental or assimilated relationship is on the fourth place followed by another type of kinship. In 2020 (see Graph 8), over 70% of the victims helped by ANES were in a filiation type of relationship, 9% were in a consensual relationship, and 8% were in a marriage type of relationship, which implies 17% were in a partnership situation, 8% were in a parental or assimilated relationship and 5% were in another type of kinship.

Table 8. Distribution of victims according to the victim`s relationship with the aggressor 2016 – 2020

	Marriage	Consensual relationship	Parental* or assimilated	Filiation**	Another type of kinship	Total
2016	870	706	418	8888	619	11501
2017	900	698	638	7755	736	10727
2018	912	1246	615	8092	541	11406
2019	1227	1464	1333	7760	861	12645
2020	791	876	703	6684	466	9520

Source: own calculations based on ANES data

Graph 8. Distribution of victims according to the victim`s relationship with the aggressor 2020



Source: own calculations based on ANES data

In 2020, there were less services provided by ANES compared to 2018 and 2019 (see Table 9). This is to be expected as there were less victims helped. In 2020, a quarter of all the services provided were in primary counselling, 21% were social counselling, 19%

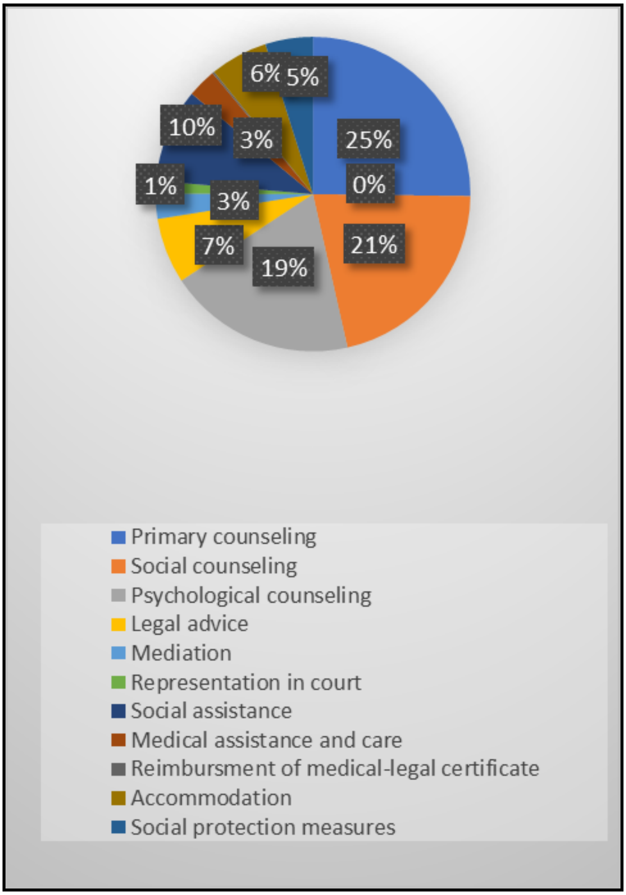
were psychological counselling, only 10% was social assistance given that most victims live in poor living conditions and the most prevalent form of domestic violence is by deprivation and neglect, so for most of the cases was not a pre-emptive type of action but rather reaction. Only 7% were given legal advice, 6% accommodation, 5% social protection measures, 3% medical assistance and care (see Graph 9).

Table 9. Distribution of victims according to the services they received 2016 – 2020

The type of domestic violence*	Services of which the victims of domestic violence have benefited in 2016-2020											Total/ cases
	Primary counseling	Social counseling	Psychological counseling	Legal advice	Mediation	Representation in court	Social assistance	Medical assistance and care	Reimbursment of medical-legal certificate	Accommodation	Social protection measures	
2016	8016	6917	5375	3069	914	293	4477	1937	96	2328	2175	11654
2017	9482	7895	6334	3710	1255	452	4576	1705	87	2493	2456	12956
2018	10495	8216	6763	3989	1129	1067	3990	1971	125	2600	2852	13182
2019	10553	8669	7216	2189	766	572	4727	1381	117	2448	2197	14074
2020	7864	6636	6011	2100	811	400	3017	928	60	1851	1524	11607

Source: own calculations based on ANES data

Graph 9. Services provided



Source: own calculations based on ANES data

When we look at the type of abuse and the type of services provided in 2020, we see that for victims of physical abuse only 8% were measures of accommodation and almost 60% were measures of counselling (psychological, social or primary), 13% were social assistance measures, and 5% measures of social protection, 9% received legal counselling. For sexual violence only 2% were measures of medical care and assistance, the majority received primary counselling (27%), psychological counselling (26%), social counselling (22%). Regarding violence by deprivation and neglect, which is the most common type of violence according to ANES data, 28% received primary counselling, 24% received social counselling, 20% received psychological counselling, only 8% received social assistance tackling the root cause of the domestic violence, 5% measures of social protection, 5% measures of legal counselling (see Table 10).

Table 10. Services of which the victims of domestic violence have benefited in 2020

Type of domestic violence *	Services of which the victims of domestic violence have benefited in 2020										
	Primary counselling	Social counselling	Psychological counselling	Legal counselling	Mediation	Representation in court	Social assistance	Medical care and assistance	Reimbursement of medical-legal certificate	Accommodation	Social protection measures
Physical abuse	23%	18%	15%	9%	4%	1%	13%	4%	1%	8%	5%
Psychological abuse	22%	19%	22%	7%	3%	1%	9%	4%	0%	7%	4%
Sexual abuse	27%	22%	26%	8%	2%	0%	8%	2%	0%	2%	2%
By deprivation/ neglect	28%	24%	20%	5%	2%	2%	8%	2%	0%	5%	5%
Economical violence	32%	14%	16%	10%	0%	1%	12%	2%	0%	8%	5%
Social violence	18%	19%	17%	12%	0%	1%	11%	4%	0%	11%	7%
Total / services	25%	21%	19%	7%	3%	1%	9%	3%	0%	6%	5%

Source: own calculations based on ANES data

6. Conclusions and recommendations

We argue that though there is a decrease in the data collected about domestic violence, the phenomenon is underestimated due to the pandemic; our argument comes from an extensive literature review that shows that because of isolation and fear of the disease the victims fail to reach out. In conjunction with this, international and national statistic data confirm the hypothesis that the COVID 19 pandemic has negative effects on couple relationships and increases the number of acts of domestic violence. We provide a snapshot of the years before the pandemic while focusing on 2020, and show that most prevalent is domestic violence against women, against children, by deprivation and neglect, the victim is in a filiation or partner relationship, living in poor living conditions, the aggressor often consumes excesive alcohol leading to domestic violence. It should be emphasized that, as the statistics show, the global trend of victimization at the level of the family, especially women and children, has been maintained. As for our country, family environment has proved to be a dangerous one, during the pandemic period also, for those women who continue to be victims of violence, as a result of gender inequalities and stereotypes, of power relations, still persistent in Romanian society. In addition to all that, isolation, financial instability, a change in daily routine, limited access to many services and resources are just some of the factors that have contributed to the intensification of domestic violence in the context of the pandemic. Regarding social services available at national level, they have focused mostly on counseling and little on social protection or social assistance measures. Most of the victims in 2020 filed a police complaint (31%) but few complaints lead to protection orders (13%) or other legal actions such as minor entrustment (7%).

Both in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and independently of it, it is desirable that the risk factors for domestic violence be understood and counteracted in a timely manner, as much as possible. In the first instance, it is recommended that the principle of immediate intervention be respected, as well as that of promptness in situations of domestic violence, especially by social control bodies and social service specialists. Equally, it is necessary for all structures with responsibilities in the field to take into account the fact that many of the people vulnerable to domestic violence face a lack of a safe and concrete perspective on the difficulties they may face with their removal from the abuser, such as moving house, if necessary, accessing a job, providing the necessities for subsistence. As far as possible, these people should be identified in a timely manner, through the collaboration of several bodies (police, non-governmental organizations, social assistance services, community members) and informed about the services they can access according to their most pressing needs (security, medical, social or economic). Social policies in the field must be based mainly on the real life situation, both at the level of society as a whole and aimed at the groups most vulnerable to domestic violence (people in rural areas, children, people from the social assistance system or who have various health issues, etc.).

The main limitation of the study was a time deficit in the supply of specific statistics for 2021, as well as the general unpredictability of the pandemic in terms of future trends in domestic violence and case reporting.

Authorship

Georgiana-Virginia Bonea (GVB) did the Introductions, indicating the direction of the study, the main objectives and limits, as well as the literature review for the theoretical approach (chapter 2). GVB also identified the links between the restrictions imposed in the pandemic context and the upward evolution of cases of domestic violence at international level in chapter 3. Bianca Buligescu (BB) collected the ANES data for the statistical analyses and performed the statistical calculations, essential for performing secondary data analysis and wrote chapter 4. Subsequently, Simona Mihaiu (SM) joined the team and did the selection of tables and formatting of graphs from chapter 5, thus providing a clear picture of the studied issues. SM and BB did the commenting on tags and graphics, as well as the Conclusions of the study, in chapter 6. SM has edited, and formatted the work. GVB, SM and BB did the proofread of the work. The research was carried out between January 2022 and March 2022.

Acknowledgements

The study was accomplished inside the Research Institute for Quality of Life, Romanian Academy.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for this article.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The authors declare no conflicting interests.

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Journal of Community Positive Practices, XXII(1) **2022**, *60-76*
ISSN Print: 1582-8344; Electronic: 2247-6571

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A CONCEPTUAL TAXONOMY

Gabriel-Alexandru TOMA[1]

DOI: https://doi.org/10.35782/JCPP.2022.1.04

Abstract: *Social entrepreneurship is a pivotal theme that generates debates both in academia and industry. Even though the concept of social entrepreneurship has gained traction and become influential in a wide spectrum of areas, such as sociology, social work, the economy, and politics, an ambiguity persists with regard to its models and meanings. In this context, the paper aims to clarify the definition of social entrepreneurship by considering how the concept has informed a variety of theoretical approaches used to explore socioeconomic reality. This paper distinguishes between three perspectives: social entrepreneurship as a cultural orientation, social entrepreneurship as a management strategy, and social entrepreneurship as a political philosophy. Such a clarification could help entrepreneurial studies reach a new level of understanding by providing an analytical framework to navigate the intricate landscape of what constitutes the double and triple bottom lines.*

Keywords: *Social entrepreneurship; Social innovation; Management; Non-profit sector*

1. Introduction

No consensus has emerged on the meaning of the term “social entrepreneurship”. This concept is ambiguous in social theory while, at the same time, it has been given different meanings in empirical studies. Therefore, a universally accepted definition that can be used to substantiate future research does not exist. The only consensus that can be found in specialized studies is that social entrepreneurship is seen as a multidimensional construct that can be studied and theorized through an integrative approach. This is why it is essential to outline the definitions associated with the term in order to offer a conceptual systematization that might inform future practice and research.

[1] Gabriel-Alexandru Toma is a PhD Candidate in Political Sciences (National University of Political Studies and Public Administration) and is co-founder of the Association for Social Entrepreneurship “Plus One” (Social+1). He coordinated the project “The social impact of fake news in the context of audio and video manipulation tools”. His research interests include social entrepreneurship, social innovation, cultural innovation, and digital technologies, e-mail: tomagabriel2003@gmail.com

The term social entrepreneurship was first used in a specific way by William Drayton, the founder of the international association “Ashoka: Innovators of the Public”. From his point of view, the social entrepreneur represents an agent of change, and social entrepreneurship is understood as an activity performed by individuals with the purpose of improving aspects of society (Okpara and Halkias, 2011). Therefore, an individual-oriented perspective is assumed more than a process-oriented perspective in its theorization and conceptualization. Initially, social entrepreneurship meant creating social enterprises, but the term has evolved to define an increasingly large variety of activities (Defourny, 2010).

What is “social” in social entrepreneurship?

Social entrepreneurship is broadly understood as entrepreneurship with a social component, but this approach cannot clarify its meaning, and social entrepreneurship remains a controversial topic.

On the one hand, every entrepreneurial initiative can be considered social by default. Entrepreneurship is social in the sense that it creates new markets, new industries, new technologies, new institutions, and new jobs, all of which involve an increase in productivity as the vehicle for economic development (Mair and Martí, 2006). Each type of entrepreneurial activity is social in nature as long as economic development has societal impact. Therefore, entrepreneurship is inherently social because creating more job opportunities and producing economic capital contribute to a rise in general welfare.

Similarly, the fact that entrepreneurial activities involve a set of interactions and mechanisms that have a social component can be noted as another social dimension of entrepreneurship (Ulhøi, 2005). An entrepreneurial activity involves building relations based on trust, strengthening the sense of belonging, taking into consideration social realities in the process of decision making, settling the dynamics of cooperation, etc. As such, the entire entrepreneurial activity is based on a logic that requires not only an understanding of the market, but also an awareness of the social environment and the needs of a group. Understanding the social nature of an entrepreneurial activity requires an understanding of the social exchange processes that take place during different phases of the activity. This contributes to community formation, including cooperation ties and collaborative learning activities.

On the other hand, not all types of entrepreneurial activities are social, even if they all involve society in one way or another (Tan, Williams and Tan, 2005). In this regard, Certo and Miller (2008) believe that social entrepreneurship differs from commercial entrepreneurship based on multiple characteristics: (1) the organization’s mission, its strategic direction, and the role economic capital plays in the process; (2) the way in which performance indicators are defined (social entrepreneurship requires new metrics to quantify value in the social sector); and (3) the mobilization of resources (entrepreneurship involves a circuit through which symbolic capital gets converted into economic capital, while social entrepreneurship requires a *double process of conversion*: transforming different symbolic forms of capital — social, educational, human, cultural — into economic capital and economic capital into symbolic capital). Following the same line of inquiry, Mair and Martí (2006) point out other elements that distinguish social entrepreneurship from commercial entrepreneurship. Among these are the nature of the social changes involved, the type and quantity of resources required to maintain sustainability, the purpose of capital increases, and the ability to take advantage of economic value.

In line with previous perspectives, Tan, Williams and Tan (2005) consider the social component of entrepreneurship as a bond established between entrepreneurship and society. According to them, social entrepreneurship represents a type of entrepreneurship made within society, by society, and for society (Tan, Williams and Tan, 2005).

These interpretations seem to imply a consensus that social entrepreneurship has a social impact, and yet, opinions differ about the actors, contexts, and mechanisms involved and with regard to theories about the creation of social impact (Mair, 2010). Short et al. (2009) mention multiple disagreements that emerge even if social impact is placed as the defining element of social entrepreneurship. These disagreements target the following issues: standards and indicators for measuring performance in terms of generating social impact; the relationship between the cultural context and social entrepreneurship; the relationship between social entrepreneurship and economic development; the opportunities and financial mechanisms that ensure sustainability in financing social entrepreneurship initiatives; market practices in social entrepreneurship; operations management in social entrepreneurship activities; the influence of legislative elements and public policies on social entrepreneurship initiatives; the relationship between social entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial thinking, attitudes, and entrepreneurial values; and the impact of social entrepreneurship initiatives on society by taking into account the social structure, norms, and values (Short, Moss and Lumpkin, 2009).

What can be classified as social entrepreneurship?

Social entrepreneurship is defined on a continuous axis between social missions and commercial benefits. It is not clearly understood how much social entrepreneurship is for profit and how much is for the collective good. Consequently, a large spectrum of organizations can be included in the social entrepreneurship category, ranging from non-governmental organizations that are not involved in economic activities to corporations that try to maximize their profits through cause branding (Peredo and McLean, 2006).

Mair (2010) created a typology of social entrepreneurship as follows: community entrepreneurship (initiatives in which the community is the entrepreneurial actor, but also the main beneficiary), social change agents (people who change public perceptions about certain topics on the social agenda), institutional entrepreneurs (people or organizations that change social arrangements and institutional structures, leading to economic and social development), social ventures (businesses that offer products and services that create social or environmental benefits), entrepreneurial non-profit organizations (non-profit organizations that get involved in commercial activities in order to create profit and ensure their financial sustainability), social enterprises (organizations that follow the principles of cooperation to achieve both business goals and social impact), and social innovation (processes and technologies for social welfare) (Mair, 2010, p. 17).

Another classification belonging to Neck, Brush, and Allen (2009) takes into consideration the mission and the results as differentiation criteria. As such, it distinguishes between various types of organizations: social purpose ventures (enterprises that aim to solve a social problem but are focused on obtaining profits), traditional ventures (enterprises with an economic mission, which have an economic impact, and whose success is judged in financial terms), social consequence ventures (enterprises focused on profit but that create social impact as an emerging result), and non-profit ventures (enterprises that use commercial activities to fund philanthropic actions) (Neck, Brush and Allen, 2009).

Tan et al. (2005) made a list of actors that could be included in the social entrepreneurship category: (1) community-based enterprises, (2) socially responsible enterprises, (3) social service industry professionals, and (4) socioeconomic or dualistic enterprises (Tan, Williams and Tan, 2005). The first category brings together organizations that offer free or really cheap services to vulnerable people who could not otherwise afford them. These organizations perform philanthropic behavior, and their profits get reinvested into society. The second category includes corporations that address social problems in small communities by changing their activities according to local needs and cultures. The third category includes businesses that gain profit from offering certain specialty consulting services to actors in the governmental sector, supporting them in attracting grants and in organizing effective communication and promotion campaigns. In the last category, the authors include businesses that have a social mission and that require the direct and active participation of community members.

Based on these methods of classification, it can be concluded that the distinction between for-profit initiatives and non-profit ones is not enough to provide a conceptual definition of social entrepreneurship, as it is impossible to distinguish entrepreneurial initiatives and social initiatives from social-entrepreneurial initiatives and entrepreneurial-social initiatives. Moreover, it seems that the entrepreneurial actor or agent can just as easily be an individual, an organization, or, according to Mair (2010), a social movement. Moreover, technologies can also be included among such entrepreneurial actors and agents.

2. Theoretical models for social entrepreneurship

Mair and Martí (2006) interpret social entrepreneurship in relation to structuration theory, institutional theory, social capital theory, and social movement theory. According to structuration theory, social entrepreneurship initiatives affect the social structure. Specifically, social entrepreneurship appears as a response to social norms, but it also participates in the creation of new ones. As such, it is discussed how a context can produce social entrepreneurship and how social entrepreneurship can create a new context. According to institutional theory, social entrepreneurship actors are capable of creating new social institutions or of transforming the already existing ones, which contributes to redefining the norms around which society is organized.

According to social capital theory, social entrepreneurship initiatives contribute to increasing connections and ties between individuals in order to generate solidarity and social cohesion as a basis for collective action. Consolidating social networks is considered an important element in entrepreneurship, with strong bonds being identified as necessary for solving the problems and weak bonds associated with generating ideas (Ulhøi, 2005). According to social movement theory, social entrepreneurship creates mobilization ability and increases the capacity of participative work.

In addition, Cajaiba-Santana (2010) analyzed social entrepreneurship in relation to structuration theory in order to highlight the social component of opportunity. According to this point of view, opportunity is not an objective fact that exists independently from entrepreneurs' observations, but rather, it is a reality that appears in the relations established by entrepreneurs within their social, cultural, and economic environments. In this way, a distinction between discovering and creating opportunity does not exist, but the two phenomena appear at the same time and are mutually constitutive (Cajaiba-Santana, 2010).

Therefore, structuration theory, developed by Anthony Giddens, comes across as an important feature in conceptualizing and studying social entrepreneurship by developing a perspective on social change that reconciliates the debate between structure and agency (Cajaiba-Santana, 2010). According to this theory, individuals are capable, through their own actions, of changing the society in which they live, but the resulting change will modify the horizon of their actions. This is why social entrepreneurship is seen as a mobilizer of social change within a philosophy in which there is not only an awareness of the restraining effects social structure has on individual action but also a realization of individuals' involvement capabilities with regard to their structural environments, which are not only reproduced by them but also transformed. In this way, structuration theory can be used to explain the relations between current (entrepreneurial) practices and social systems.

Praszkier and Nowak (2012) discuss social entrepreneurship in relation to the theory of social change (Praszkier and Nowak, 2012). As such, according to evolutionary theories, it is believed that societies evolve toward progress and that social entrepreneurship represents an instrument that helps societies develop to more advanced stages. From the perspective of conflictualist theories, social entrepreneurship is closely connected to forms of social conflict. Therefore, at this level, conflict is considered a mobilizer of social change and represents not only a destructive force but also a constructive one. At the same time, structural functionalist theories have been discussed in order to tackle the problem of social entrepreneurship: social entrepreneurship is understood as a way to make use of the structural components of a system and the relations between them in order to achieve sustainability. Society is therefore understood as a holistic entity at the level at which causal mechanisms operate and whose understanding might improve society as a whole. Last but not least, social entrepreneurship has been analyzed using psychosocial theories. In this case, the cultural dimension plays an important role, and social entrepreneurship is defined as a system of attitudes, beliefs, and values. Praszkier and Nowak (2012) show that these theories try to understand how much change is endogenous (comes from within a community) or exogenous (is imposed on the community from outside), to what degree change is inevitable or contingent, what the prime vehicles of change (individuals or societies) are, and how power is accomplished and legitimated through belief systems and materiality structures.

Praszkier and Nowak (2012) propose their own theory ("emergence theory") in order to show the way in which a micro-social initiative can cause structural changes at the macro-social level. Their theory is inspired by Sawyer (2007) and focuses on the way in which changes can be made by showing that the changes caused by social entrepreneurship are made through multiple steps and at multiple levels as follows: (1) the individual level (the values, attitudes, and the ways of thinking with regard to a familiar aspect change); (2) the interaction level (the change of attitude is reflected in the fact that individuals adopt behaviors that involve new social actions—attitudinal changes are reflected in behavioral patterns); (3) ephemeral-emergent level (new ideas and initiatives are unstable, temporary, and subject to change, and the impact is on a small scale); (4) stable-emergent level (the new ideas and initiatives work well or are adopted on a larger scale, causing a social or cultural phenomenon); and (5) social-structure level (eventually some formal rules and systems are consolidated, which triggers mechanisms that help solve some social problems).

2.1. Social entrepreneurship as a cultural orientation

Jiao (2011) shows that social entrepreneurship as a cultural phenomenon appeared due to growing social inequalities at the global level in the context of an evolving culture of corporate responsibility and the accountability of big corporations to governments and their own clients. Other perspectives see social entrepreneurship as not just an answer to the pressure to adopt and engage in socially responsible behaviors in the private sector, but also as a response to the pressure felt by the non-profit sector to raise its efficiency and productivity in the context of the state's inability to ensure welfare on a large scale and to manage certain social problems effectively (Perrini and Vurro, 2006). The challenges of the welfare state and the growing competitive pressure in the non-profit sector represent the contextual aspects that have made it necessary to rethink the supply system and the creation of social services. Last but not least, it is believed that social entrepreneurship represents an effect of technological advancement and of the pressure to manage the unintended consequences of technology (Jiao, 2011).

These social aspects have created the need for institutions to adapt to socio-environmental conditions and the requirement of developing new institutions that have to take action in accordance with the sustainable social mission, whose positive effects will remain visible in the long term. Social entrepreneurship appeared as an answer to these needs, generating a cultural orientation that values behavior based on innovation, a proactive attitude, and risk management in terms of solving social problems (Weerawardena and Sullivan Mort, 2006).

Social entrepreneurship can be seen as a cultural phenomenon, which implies certain values, attitudes, and mindsets. This type of orientation positions innovation and risk-taking as defining elements of entrepreneurship in general, and of social entrepreneurship in particular. As such, Praszkier and Nowak (2012) note the following characteristics of social entrepreneurship seen as a cultural orientation: a social mission (the explicit adoption of a social goal that translates into concrete actions), social innovation (interest in applying new solutions to manage undesirable situations), social change (commitment to institutional transformation), and an entrepreneurial spirit (personality traits that impose a vision of development and an ability to solve problems).

Social entrepreneurship is seen as an activity performed within society by certain change agents who are involved in a constant process of innovation, adaptation, and learning (Dees 1998 apud Certo and Miller 2008). Aside from this, social entrepreneurship as a cultural orientation requires a specific type of leadership focused on social change, which is often attributed to those individuals who have the capacity to motivate others to believe in a social cause and to act in accordance with the respective system of beliefs (Sullivan Mort, Weerawardena and Carnegie, 2003). Social entrepreneurship is also associated with a sense of active citizenship and a tendency to seek social support and includes a large variety of activities that have an altruistic nature and are guided by ethical motives or moral responsibility.

2.2. Social entrepreneurship as a management system

As previously mentioned, social entrepreneurship represents a set of initiatives that can be attributed both to juridical persons (corporations, associations, foundations, federations) and to informal organizations. Taken this way, social entrepreneurship represents an entrepreneurial mindset that is applied to social activities, and social entrepreneurs are promoters of change and pioneers of innovation in the non-profit sector (Jiao, 2011). In this way, social entrepreneurship can be defined as a model that "encompasses the activities and processes undertaken to discover, define and exploit opportunities in order to enhance social wealth by creating new ventures or managing existing organizations in an innovative manner" (Zahra et al. 2009 apud Fayolle and Matlay 2010, 4).

The rise in competitiveness in terms of the creation of social programs led to the need for the non-profit sector to reinvent itself using managerial techniques taken from the private sector. Therefore, social entrepreneurship represents for the non-profit sector what "new public management" signifies for the public administration sector. Therefore, social entrepreneurship appeared as a solution to the problem of raising the efficiency and productivity of the non-profit sector (Perrini and Vurro, 2006). It requires adopting a new model of organizational planning based on innovation, resilience, and continuous learning, not just at the implementation level but also at the strategic management level. As such, social entrepreneurship is seen as a new method to be implemented in the non-profit sector by adopting organizational cultures, competence frameworks, values, practices, and attitudes that are much closer to those that ensure the functionality of the private sector. All these aspects are included in organizational strategies, visions, and actions in the non-profit sector. Therefore, social entrepreneurship offers the perspective of a more rational non-profit sector, which is more oriented toward results and adopts strategic behavior as a response to social problems.

Based on this perspective, multiple characteristics can be attributed to social entrepreneurship: strategies taken from the private sector in order to achieve a social mission, a coherent unity of purpose and action in the face of uncertainty and moral complexity, the ability to recognize opportunities that generate value, assuming innovation to be an important rationale in the decision-making process, proactiveness, and risk-taking (Sullivan Mort, Weerawardena and Carnegie, 2003, p. 76). To these, the following can be added: a creative way to handle situations and solve problems by taking advantage of opportunities, providing organizational functionality through adaptability and a specific way to define a vision and align practices, and introducing social rationales into management practices (Perrini and Vurro, 2006).

This approach requires a redefining of what the non-profit sector represents, which is understood not only through its role in influencing the government's actions but also through its role in producing goods and services. This requires creating "social enterprises" as autonomous organizational forms, which are characterized by a significant level of economic risk, a minimum amount of paid work, the explicit aim of benefitting the community, initiatives launched by groups of citizens, decision-making power not based on capital ownership, a participatory nature, and limited profit distribution (Defourny, 2010, pp. 68–69). As such, social enterprises depend on a distinct decision-making process, which follows a different profit distribution logic in which the main purpose is to bring social value but not necessarily to accumulate economic capital.

In the social entrepreneurial sphere, organizations whose economic value is less important than their social value are included, requiring a new hierarchy of interests and, naturally, a new decision-making process: social entrepreneurship represents an organization "whose primary objective is the creation of social welfare through the adoption of an innovative mix of profitable practices and social outcomes" (Perrini and Vurro, 2006, p. 62).

Therefore social entrepreneurship represents a management system that appears in the context of non-profit organizations and is oriented toward initiatives to deliver social value by exploiting perceived opportunities (Weerawardena and Sullivan Mort, 2006). This is done by addressing the interest of multiple stakeholders while keeping in mind the social mission and being careful of the moral dimension of their actions (Peredo and McLean, 2006). The following definition can be used:

> "*[social entrepreneurs] play the role of change agents in the social sector, by adopting a mission to create and sustain social value (not just private value), recognizing and relentlessly pursuing new opportunities to serve that mission, engaging in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation, and learning, acting boldly without being limited by resources currently in hand, and exhibiting heightened accountability to the constituencies served and for the outcomes created.*" (Dee apud Jiao 2011, 132)

From this point of view, social entrepreneurship requires a way of making profits from social innovation, which involves a considerable risk for those involved (Tan, Williams and Tan, 2005), and represents an activity in which "opportunities to create future goods and services are discovered, evaluated, and exploited" (Shane and Venkataraman 2000 apud Tan et al. 2005, 357). Unlike commercial entrepreneurship, in which innovation involves the introduction of new goods, production methods, processes, and materials, social entrepreneurship is a business activity that passes benefits on to society at large (Tan, Williams and Tan, 2005). The result of a social entrepreneurial activity is not defined in terms of economic capital but takes into consideration whether the respective activity is capable of generating a process that produces social benefits for all the persons involved.

Social entrepreneurship implies a change management system that results from dissatisfaction with the current social state at local, regional, national, and global levels. The process implies an ability to decode political, economic, legal, social, and cultural contexts in which various social problems arise (Fayolle and Matlay, 2010). In this case, responsibility targets society rather than a group of shareholders or investors (Perrini and Vurro, 2006).

The change management system involves, among other things, the creation of a social services market. It refers to the identification of opportunities to create value and to the capacity of using creative practices to solve social problems (Certo and Miller, 2008). Social entrepreneurship is based on a type of social innovation that uses a business model focused on addressing a need identified in the market, on cooperation and partnership, on flexible and transparent organizational structures, on adaptability and resilience, on balancing the local dimension with the global dimension, and on a participatory management philosophy, with all these being used to achieve social outcomes and social welfare impact (Perrini and Vurro, 2006). Social entrepreneurship requires not just the introduction of new innovative market strategies for delivering social services but also practices that lead to the creation of social institutions or to the transformation of the existing ones (Sullivan Mort, Weerawardena and Carnegie, 2003).

2.3. Social entrepreneurship as a political philosophy

The perspectives that define social entrepreneurship as a political philosophy refer mainly to the way in which social entrepreneurship is integrated into society, debating its role in socioeconomic development in relation to the relevant theories in economy and political sciences (Short, Moss and Lumpkin, 2009, p. 161). In this case, social entrepreneurship is understood as part of the social, economic, political, institutional, and cultural systems, thus requiring a contextualization of the phenomenon of producing value within society. According to this point of view, social entrepreneurship is defined as a way to accomplish political objectives and reinvent the forms of government (Hyunbae Cho, 2006). As a political philosophy, social entrepreneurship is discussed regarding its role in generating goods and services that contribute to the redistribution of capital and to social justice. It implies an innovative vision concerning a way through which resources can be managed and configured in order to produce social value.

Based on the theories of socioeconomic development, the concept of social entrepreneurship has its roots in the term "community development". Social entrepreneurship describes a process through which social capital is used to produce economic development: "social capital is understood as a feature of social organization such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (Putnam 1996 apud Tan et al. 2005, 354). Social entrepreneurship proposes a rethinking of the relationship between the three sectors (the private sector, the public sector, and the non-profit sector) and of the roles played by each of them in society.

Firstly, social entrepreneurship was designed as a way of answering some social needs that were not being addressed either by the state apparatus or by commercial actors (Fayolle and Matlay, 2010). As part of a social economy or of an economy based on solidarity, social entrepreneurship appeared in order to compensate for some of the failures of the state or private organizations. According to this point of view, social entrepreneurial initiatives were adopted in order to fill a hole between the private sector (oriented toward profit) and the social sector (non-profit). Obtaining a profit and assuming a social mission were perceived as incompatible drivers. However, social entrepreneurship represents an element that reunites these two perspectives, proving that the presence of profit does not annihilate the existence of a social mission, and vice versa. Additionally, it is not just about the link between social entrepreneurship and the private sector but also about that between social entrepreneurship and the public sector. Social entrepreneurship involves the creation of a market for social services, which is the responsibility of governmental authorities (Defourny, 2010).

Secondly, Bornstein and Daivis (2010) consider that social entrepreneurship represents a distinct sector from the other three activity sectors. Unlike the private sector, the social entrepreneurship sector requires the maximization of the social impact and not an increase in profit. Unlike in the governmental sector, the social entrepreneurship sector has neither control nor ownership over communal resources, nor decision-making power over them. Still, it implies innovative ways of gathering resources that are the property of other agents. Unlike the civic sector, the social entrepreneurship sector does not aim to influence decisions in order to solve social problems, but rather, it aims to build institutions to solve problems, and it does this within participatory frameworks and with citizens' active involvement. As long as social entrepreneurship differs from civic actions and other activities to safeguard governmental actions and decisions, it is considered to be contributing to a reinvention of the non-profit sector and its practices. (Chivu, 2019)

Thirdly, social entrepreneurship is seen as a product that results from an erosion of the boundaries between the society, the state, and the market (Hyunbae Cho, 2006). Social entrepreneurship is not just an innovative way of producing social values that happens in all the three sectors of activity (public, private, and non-governmental), but it is also a hybrid product that defines an activity that is at the crossroads between business, government, and philanthropy (Certo and Miller, 2008). As such, social entrepreneurship blurs the well-defined boundaries between the public, private, and non-profit sectors, which involves a blending at the discursive and behavioral levels through the alignment and exchange of discourses, practices, and professional standards (Mair, 2010, p. 16). Social entrepreneurship is also defined in relation to the nature of property: social entrepreneurship is based on those types of organizations that belong neither to the state nor to private entities, but rather to society as a whole, and that are freely available to citizens (Hyunbae Cho, 2006).

Social entrepreneurship represents a way of addressing the opportunities created by the failures of some institutions to answer some social needs. In other words, social entrepreneurship is understood as a "process of catering to locally existing basic needs that are not addressed by traditional organizations" (Mair, 2010, p. 19). Even so, social entrepreneurship operates with a dynamic structure of needs, which appear as externalizations of satisfying already existing ones: satisfying some needs creates new needs, which therefore define the opportunity space addressed in entrepreneurial initiatives.

Understanding social entrepreneurship as a political philosophy requires a definition of its instrumental nature. As such, social entrepreneurship is seen as an instrument for addressing complex social problems, appearing as an innovative solution for managing such issues (Perrini and Vurro, 2006). Illustrative for this way of seeing things are two definitions. The first one understands social entrepreneurship as a "method that helps us rethink, reformulate and resolve human problems on the path to social progress" (Fayolle and Matlay, 2010, p. 3), and the second one understands social entrepreneurship as "a process involving the innovative use and combination of resources to pursue opportunities to catalyze social change and/or address social needs" (Mair and Martí, 2006, p. 37). Lastly, social entrepreneurship is seen as "a process by which citizens build or transform institutions to advance solutions to social problems" (Bornstein and Daivis, 2010, p. 1). This means combining resources in new ways, producing social value by offering services, and developing new products that create new economic relations or new forms of social organization (Mair and Martí, 2006).

Social entrepreneurship represents a process through which the efforts to solve social problems are organized. Social entrepreneurship involves the social ability to capitalize on potential that exists at the level of social systems. The term social entrepreneurship is seen as an "altruistic form of capitalism that does not evaluate all human activities in business terms" (Tan, Williams and Tan, 2005, p. 353), thus offering the possibility to create a link between business environments and social practices. Through sensitivity toward environmental dynamics, social entrepreneurship contributes to the development of a social problem-solving market, which can function both locally and globally. Therefore, social entrepreneurship means an increase in the society's ability to solve its own social problems by creating sustainable mechanisms that will ensure the resources necessary for the collective economic being and social justice.

Social entrepreneurship appears to be an initiative that will question the economic status quo and then act on it in ways that involve not only the production of new goods and services but also the creation of new institutions and the adjustment of already existing ones. The process involves developing methods to attract financial capital in order to support social change efforts. From this point of view, social entrepreneurship is "a process that catalyzes social change and addresses important social needs in a way that is not dominated by direct financial benefits for the entrepreneurs" (Mair and Martí, 2006, p. 36).

As a political philosophy, social entrepreneurship takes a role in improving social, cultural, and economic conditions and has the mission of transforming society in innovative ways. All these are realized by building innovative solutions to social problems, using profit as an instrumental resource for producing social changes. Social entrepreneurship is associated with small interventions that have a large impact and that can lead to social transformation. Social entrepreneurship takes all the elements of innovation associated with commercial entrepreneurship—new products or product qualities, new methods of organization and production, new factors of production, new market relations, and new forms of enterprises—and adds new mindsets, new behaviors, new social relations, new institutions, and new social structures, resulting in the following definition:

"Social entrepreneurship is a dynamic process created and managed by an individual or team (the innovative social entrepreneur), which strives to exploit social innovation with an entrepreneurial mindset and a strong need for achievement in order to create new social value in the market and community at large." (Perrini and Vurro, 2006, p. 78)

The sphere of social entrepreneurship contains associative groups and collectivities, whose activities tend toward a social mission and whose efforts to attract funds, finances, and economic capital are less important than social development (Perrini and Vurro, 2006). Entrepreneurship brings additional value to society, defined not just in terms of material profits for society (which can be translated into financial terms), but especially in terms of intangible winnings that can affect the quality of life, educational capital, and social relations. Therefore, social value is not judged just in terms of job creation but also in terms of access to information, solidarity, the equality of opportunities, and attitudinal changes. Since financial benefits under the guise of profit are used to serve society and not a single individual, the economic component of social entrepreneurship is seen as a condition but not as a purpose. From this point of view, at least three directions can be identified depending on what definitions were used: (1) commercial enterprises with social impact, (2) innovation for social impact, and (3) catalyzing social transformations (Tan, Williams and Tan, 2005, p. 354). Social entrepreneurship is therefore understood as a set of initiatives that requires "institutional practices combining the pursuit of financial objectives with the pursuit and promotion of substantive and terminal values" (Hyunbae Cho, 2006, p. 35). In this case, social impact is considered to be more important than market impact, with the main beneficiaries of the added value being members of the community, but not stakeholders or capital holders.

Since the social entrepreneurship dynamic depends on governmental support, on public policies in education, and on already existing financial sources, there is a problem with identifying the optimal way to encourage social entrepreneurship initiatives (Jiao, 2011). These types of methods should focus on developing public policies that require the involvement of the private sector in solving social problems, as well as on developing a formal institutional framework that will support entrepreneurial dynamics toward a social mission that can be approached from a market basis.

As a constitutive part of social development, social entrepreneurship needs a normative approach as much as a political one. The latter can be achieved by focusing on political objectives and the way they can be achieved in a social entrepreneurial framework. The "social" in "social entrepreneurship" requires identifying some elements that are important for society so that they can be addressed through concrete initiatives. Still, defining and selecting the issues that are important for society is a political process, which makes social entrepreneurship a political phenomenon too (Hyunbae Cho, 2006). Social entrepreneurship needs a definition of collective welfare that cannot be reduced to fulfilling individual interests. Social entrepreneurship implies a sense of belonging and a collective identity, as well as an association of multiple individuals in a discourse community developed around a definition of "collective welfare" (Hyunbae Cho, 2006). Despite this, reality proves that in this public sphere there are interests that go against this.

Social entrepreneurship takes different shapes depending on the context in which it appears: (1) if social entrepreneurship manifests itself in liberal economies in which market mechanisms are believed to be the essential factor in terms of maintaining the economic and social balance, then the initiatives of social entrepreneurship will be based on the mechanisms of the market in order to tackle social needs, (2) if social entrepreneurship appears in socialist economies in which the state apparatus plays a role in redistributing resources and the market is regulated, then it will constitute a market offering social services; and (3) if social entrepreneurship is implemented in an informal economy in which neither the market nor the state can create welfare and maintain social justice, then it will be focused on social innovation (Mair, 2010, p. 21). In this context, the problem lies in how much power the market has versus that of the government. From this point of view, social entrepreneurship is more likely to appear in liberal economies than in socialist ones. Moreover, social entrepreneurship is a democratic institution that needs democratic institutions to function. (Popa, Cace, 2020)

From another point of view, Sud, Vansandt, and Baugous (2009) criticize social entrepreneurship as a solution to social problems. They consider that social entrepreneurship alone cannot be the solution to socioeconomic development and that it works only when it is introduced as part of a larger ecosystem. Therefore, social entrepreneurship institutions cannot solve social needs alone and will only work in conjunction with other types of institutions.

This happens mainly because social entrepreneurship institutions have a problem with organizational legitimacy; these types of institutions need to be acknowledged and accepted, but currently, it is not clear what they represent, what their purpose is, and how they are defined as actors (Sud, Vansandt and Baugous, 2009) Currently, social entrepreneurship institutions represent nothing but a hybrid product that exists at the border between public organizations and private ones, while experiencing the risks and challenges of both sides (Ibid.). In addition to this, social entrepreneurship institutions are predisposed, like any type of organization, to institutional isomorphism, meaning that in order to gain institutional legitimacy there needs to be a consensus on the organizational structures, procedures, and resources needed to achieve the purpose of social impact, all of which will mainly suppress innovation (Ibid.). Therefore, social entrepreneurship institutions must resist this institutional isomorphism in order to function and achieve their social mission.

According to the previously cited authors, the legitimacy of social entrepreneurship only occurs when considering the moral dimension of economic activities. However, morality is a construct in a constant process of definition and redefinition. Social entrepreneurship cannot be detached from ideological considerations because it involves political decisions about what will bring benefits to society. Last but not least, it is believed that capitalistic structures go against the idea of social entrepreneurship, which creates new challenges in the process of socioeconomic development (Ibid.). As a response to these problems, an integrated approach is proposed in which social entrepreneurship strengthens multiple other types of organization and is in turn strengthened by them (Ibid.).

3. Conclusion

Social entrepreneurship is a groundbreaking concept that has multiple connotations depending on the paradigm applied to interpret the relationship between business practices and initiatives for public good. Accordingly, social entrepreneurship has been differently conceptualized in structural-functionalist, conflictualist, and psychosocial theories. Moreover, social entrepreneurship is introduced with differential meanings in structuration theory, institutional theory, social capital theory, social movement theory, evolutionary theory, and emergence theory. This variability in the denotations has created a conceptual ambiguity that might have negative consequences for the interpretation of the role played by social entrepreneurship in the contemporary context.

Due to all this ambiguity and the absence of conceptual clarity, social entrepreneurship suffers from a lack of conceptual legitimacy, which inhibits the meaningful, constructive, and effective inclusion of the topic of social entrepreneurship in public policy and development strategies. (Cace, Stanescu, 2013) Therefore, in order to answer analytic challenges, this paper proposes a differentiation between social entrepreneurship as a cultural orientation, social entrepreneurship as a management strategy, and social entrepreneurship as a political philosophy.

Social entrepreneurship as a cultural orientation refers to a system of values and beliefs that are internalized in collective consciousness. In this case, social entrepreneurship is used to designate a set of attitudinal factors at the intersection of a communitarian mindset (based on social responsibility, collectivism, altruism, and morality) with an entrepreneurial mindset (based on risk-taking, efficiency, innovation, proactivity, and diligence).

The perspective of social entrepreneurship as a management strategy takes into consideration methods of strategic and sustainable planning applied in non-governmental organizations. Accordingly, social entrepreneurship refers to a set of practices whose aim is to extract revenues from social innovation in a way that generates social value by exploiting perceived opportunities found within economic or symbolic markets. In this case, social entrepreneurship functions according to a new model of organizational planning that reinvents the modus operandi in the non-governmental sector.

The perspective of social entrepreneurship as a political philosophy focuses on ways through which resources can be distributed to achieve social justice. Social entrepreneurship is therefore discussed in relation to the possibility of creating a market to address social problems on a competitive basis (Cace, Cace, Cojocaru, Sfetcu, 2013), as well as with regard to the possibility of producing social change under the same rationales. Therefore, social entrepreneurship reinvents the process of government by challenging the boundaries between public and private institutions and their societal roles. It is a philosophy that rejects the incompatibility between profit-driven initiatives and initiatives for the social good. In this sense, social innovation is understood as a driver of added value, which can be accomplished by using methods to attract financial capital and capitalize on sustainable potential in order to support social change efforts and wellbeing. (Cace, Arpinte, Cace, Cojocaru, 2012)

Therefore, far from being just an apparatus of left-wing politics, social entrepreneurship represents a viable path for reconciliation between the ideologies that divide the political landscape. When understood as a political philosophy, social entrepreneurship is capable of responding to contemporary social challenges by shaping a type of "altruistic capitalism", which envisions strategies for using the mechanism of the free market to support social justice.

Acknowledgements

None.

Funding

None.

Declaration of conflicting interests

There are no conflicting interests.

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Journal of Community Positive Practices, XXII(1) **2022**, *77-85*
ISSN Print: 1582-8344; Electronic: 2247-6571

THE ROLES OF GOVERNMENTS IN IMPLEMENTING LARGE-SCALE SOCIAL RESTRICTIONS TO ACCELERATE COVID-19 HANDLING

Atik WINANTI[1]
SULASTRI[2]
SATINO[2]
Handar Subhandi BAKHTIAR[1]

DOI: https://doi.org/10.35782/JCPP.2022.1.05

***Abstract**: Based on the data obtained from wordometers per April 2021, coronavirus infection cases throughout the world reached 141,982,642 cases. 3,032,005 people died and 120,513,253 people recovered. In handling Covid-19, Indonesia has implemented Social Distancing and Rapid Test. The government has issued some regulations related to the Large-Scale Social Restrictions (known as PSBB/Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar). At the end of January 2020, China has immediately and assertively locked down Wuhan, a city with a total population of 11 million people. It was the biggest lockdown made throughout history. The problem in this research is how the governments Indonesia and China dealt with Covid-19 in its incipient phase. This research used a qualitative method based on the randomly-selected mapped news in accordance with the research focus and social distancing regulations enforced in Indonesia and China. Furthermore, those materials were systematically classified to prove that social distancing regulations can well reduce the spread of Covid-19 both in Indonesia and China. The research results show that the COVID-19 handling in each country is different.*

***Keywords:** public administration, government, large-scale social restrictions, Covid-19*

1. Introduction

Covid-19 is a new type of coronavirus possibly transmitted to humans (Ji et al., 2020). This virus can attack anyone, including babies, children, adults, elderly, pregnant

[1,4] Dr. (Law), Faculty of Law, Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Jakarta, Indonesia; e-mail: handar_subhandi@yahoo.com
[2, 3] Master (Law), Faculty of Law, Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Jakarta, Indonesia

women, and breastfeeding mothers (Rollins et al., 2021). COVID-19 was first discovered in Wuhan, China, at the end of December 2019. This virus spread rapidly throughout China and several countries, including Indonesia. The Indonesian President, Joko Widodo, first reported that there were two cases of COVID-19 infection in Indonesia on March 2, 2020. The patients got infected at an event in Jakarta where they got in contact with foreigners from Japan living in Malaysia. After the event, the patients experienced fever, coughing, and shortness of breath. The Indonesian Government issued Regulation No. 21/2020 regarding Large-Scale Social Restrictions to Accelerate the Handling of Covid-19, which states what regions in the country have to implement the restrictions, depending on the number of infections. The concerned regions are at least asked to close all schools and workplaces. In addition, the regions must also limit their religious and other activities in public places or facilities. However, the government has also asserted that the restrictions must still pay attention to the fulfillment of people's basic needs, especially related to health services and food for their daily lives. Each country has different national conditions and capabilities, while each outbreak has its own characteristics. Therefore, not all countries can implement similar policies in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic (Balmford et al., 2020). As the epicenter country of the virus, China has tried to deal with the spread of Covid-19 before worsening the country's condition (Mishra et al., 2020). After four months in which the virus has spread throughout the world – raising challenges for people (Rosca, 2021a, 2021b) – China begun showing a slowdown in the spread of the virus. After stopping the lockdown of several regions in early April 2020, the number of new cases reported daily has decreased. What should be highlighted are the Chinese government's fast and responsive movements proven with an official statement made by the Chinese President, Xi Jinping, who immediately declared the Covid-19 pandemic as a national threat accompanied with the intensive handling in various sectors (CNN Indonesia, 2020). From the explanations in this research background, the research problems formulated by the authors are related to what strategies the governments implemented dealing with Covid-19 in Indonesia and China.

2. Analysis and Discussion

From the point of view of various policies made by some countries affected by Covid-19, Indonesia has recently focused on finding the best solution to overcome the pandemic. If, on 2 March 2020, only two patients were Covid positive, the number of cases has dramatically increased to 686 patients by 24 March 2020. 30 people were declared cured while 55 people died (CNN Indonesia, 2020). Covid-19 impacted not only the health sector, but also society and economy, forcing the government to take anticipatory measures (Auriemma and Iannaccone, 2020), such as the implementation of physical distancing, social distancing, and finally the large-scale social restrictions (known as PSBB/Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar). The measures included:

1. Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia, Regulation Number 23/Pmk.03/2020 on Tax Incentives for Taxpayers Affected by the Outbreak of Corona Virus;

2. Financial Services Authority of the Republic of Indonesia Regulation Number 11/Pojk.03/2020 on National Economic Stimulus as a Countercyclical Policy to the Impacts of the Spread of Corona Virus Disease 2019;

3. Presidential Instruction of the Republic of Indonesia No. 4/2020 on Refocusing Activities, Budget Reallocation, and Procurement of Goods and Services to Accelerate the Handling of Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19);

4. The implementation of credit relaxation/restructuring for sectors affected by Covid-19, regulated in Financial Services Authority of the Republic of Indonesia Regulation Number 11/Pojk.03/2020 on National Economic Stimulus as a Countercyclical Policy.

In addition to these strategies, the government has actually made its efforts to minimize the economic impacts, by not implementing a regional quarantine (Carli et al., 2020). Chaotic money circulation was experienced by entrepreneurs due to their great economic losses (Drăgoi, 2020; Obrenovic et al., 2020). However, some commodities have gained huge profits, especially those providing medical equipment or anything related to the eradication or prevention of Covid-19. In addition, the government has also issued some policies in the forms of assistances to the public as follows:

1. Electricity cost reduction. The government has freed the electricity costs for PLN customers using the electricity power of 450 VA for three consecutive months (April, May, and June 2020). Meanwhile, those using the electricity power of 900 kwh received 50 percent discount or paid only half of their electricity costs for the same periods (April, May, and June);

2. Credit dispensation of 1 year starting from April 1, 2020 for motorcycle drivers, fishermen and taxi drivers. The interest payments or installments were also given dispensation for 1 year. The government also provided dispensation for the small and medium sector entrepreneurs who had loans under 10 billion Rupiahs;

3. A National budget of 405.1 trillion rupiahs was provided through the State Budget (APBN) to fulfill the people's needs in the middle of the Covid-19 outbreak. The budget for the health sector was prioritized to protect the health workers, especially to purchase the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), medical equipment (test kits, reagents, ventilators etc.); to upgrade the referral hospitals including the Wisma Atlet apartment complex, incentives for doctors, nurses and hospital staff, compensation for the death of medical personnel and the handling of other health problems. At least 75 trillion rupiahs were directed to spend in health sector; 70.1 trillion rupiahs for tax incentives and business credit stimulus; 110 trillion rupiahs were allocated for social protection. The rest was used to finance the national economic recovery programs and reserves.

The Chinese Government immediately responded to the initial presence of Covid-19. Coronavirus is sensitive to ultraviolet light and heat as well as effectively inactivated with the ambient temperature of 56°C lasting for 30 minutes and lipid solvents such as ether, ethanol 75 percent, chlorine-containing disinfectants, peroxyacetic acid and chloroform, except chlorhexidine. Based on the recent epidemiological investigations, the Covid-19 incubation period is 1 to 14 days (Lauer et al. 2020; Böhmer et al. 2020; Lei et al. 2020; Wen & Li. 2020). Nowadays, the main infection sources are patients positive with Covid-19, and asymptomatic carriers (Ye et al. 2020; Cai et al. 2020). The main transmission routes are through respiratory droplets and direct contacts, while the aerosol and fecal-oral transmission routes should be further verified. In general, humans of all ages are susceptible to this virus (Xu et al. 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic started from Wuhan, Hubei province, China, in December 2019. Within a month, all Chinese public activities were suspended to stop the spread of the virus. As a result, the Chinese economy did not run as usual. The virus is similar to MERS and SARS, which previously caused epidemics by similarly infecting lungs (Ali and Alharbi. 2020; Dhama et al., 2020). The initial presence of Covid-19 was predicted to come from the Hunan Market, a market that traded wild animals for consumption. As reported from thediplomat.com, a director at Wuhan Central Hospital, Ai Fen, has uploaded information related to the new virus on December 30, 2019. However, after spreading the information, he was reported disappeared. In the following days, China reported several unusual cases of pneumonia in Wuhan to WHO. The government immediately closed the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market on January 1, 2020. However, the Chinese officials did not really pay attention to the possibly that SARS viruses which have killed more than 770 people throughout the world in 2002-2003 might return (Aljazeera, 2020). On January 7, 2020, Chinese authorities confirmed that they had identified the virus as a new coronavirus, known as 2019-nCoV. The Chinese President, Xi Jinping, started responding to the news related to the virus. Between the 13th and the 19th of January 2020, Covid-19 cases were confirmed in several countries such as Thailand, the United States, Nepal, France, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Vietnam, and Taiwan (Aljazeera, 2020). On 21 January 2020, the Chinese President, Xi Jinping, gave a speech in the form of important instructions to prioritize the people's health and safety through the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) newspapers. With a number of reported cases reaching 4,500, the officials in Wuhan and other regions began openly accepting their guilt and immediately responded to the increasing crisis scale (Washington Post, 2020). Through speeches in which the virus was framed as a health security threat, many nations and states tried to protect the safety of their citizens and institutions. The increasing number of cases indicated that Covid-19 was a threat to the referent objects consisting of Chinese citizens. Therefore, it was necessary for China to make various strategies in dealing with the rapid transmission of Covid-19 by implementing lockdown policies in Wuhan and three other cities around Wuhan. The speech performed by the Chinese President Xi Jinping has succeeded justifying an extraordinary measure by issuing a three-stage virus handling policy as China's containment strategy. The containment policy performed by China made the people firmly believe that Covid-19 was a real existential threat and eventually they fully accepted and supported the country by implementing the policies. As reported by WHO-China Joint Mission on Covid-19, three main measures were taken to stop the spread of Covid-19 in China.

First, Covid-19 was categorized as a communicable disease class B, and then it was treated as an Infectious Disease Class A on 20 January 2020. It indicated that there was a change starting from an initial approach in the form of partial control to a comprehensive control in accordance with the Law of the Chinese People's Republic (PRC) on Prevention and Action against the Infectious Diseases (Liang et al., 2020). Second, a statement given by the State Council indicating that the national epidemic handling efforts had completely entered the epidemic prevention and controlling phase followed with the restoration of social operations and normal economics on 8 February 2020 (WHO, 2020). WHO has, in fact, explained the three response stages made by the Chinese government in dealing with Covid-19. The first stage was self-isolation aiming to control the infection sources, block the transmission and prevent further outbreak. The protocols to identify the diagnosis and medication, epidemiological investigations, and laboratory examinations have been formulated in this stage. Diagnostic testing kits have also been developed, and animals in the poultry markets were placed under strict government control. At the end of January 2020, China immediately and assertively ordered to lock down Wuhan, a city with of 11 million people. It was the biggest lockdown throughout history. Two days later, the Hubei province (45 million people), was also entirely closed for three months to stop the virus from spreading. The government locked down the areas meaning that each resident had to stay indoors 24/7 for three months. Lockdown was the first part of the handling plan (BBC Indonesia, 2020).

The second-phase strategy in response to the outbreak was mass mobilization aiming to reduce the epidemic intensity and slow down the increasing number of cases in Wuhan and other priority areas in the Hubei province. The main focus was actively curing the patients, reducing mortality rate, and preventing the spread of the virus. Within several hours of lockdown, 42,000 medical personnel volunteers from all countries arrived and helped the infected people in Wuhan and Hubei. 35,000 medical personnel volunteers arrived between January and April 2020 in Wuhan. Within 10 days, 12,000 workers came to build two emergency infectious-disease hospitals, named Huoshenshan and Leishenshan, which are now able to treat thousands of Covid-19 patients (WHO, 2020). The central government immediately mobilized thousands of medical teams to Wuhan and other infected areas. The Chinese military, better known as the People's Liberation Army (PLA), sent 340 military medical teams with thousands of military medical personnel, as well as logistics teams to the entire Hubei province. In addition, during the lockdown in Wuhan, 580,000 community volunteers were mobilized to help the residents. They actively enrolled themselves as front-line officers. Those applying as volunteers were members who loved performing military-like missions and chose to stay away from their homes and families for weeks, even months. Chinese people called them "retrogressers", heroes who chose rushing to the disaster zones and save lives (Hernández, 2020). In China, there is a custom that government officials and members of the Communist Party are the first actors mobilized to the front line. During the lockdown in the Hubei province, the CPC young members were actively involved in the medical front lines. Half of hospital staff, frontline workers, port workers, customs officials and volunteers throughout the country were Party members under the age of 30. China understood that one important part to win the war against this virus and gain public trust was by involving the civil servants responsible for the country. According to nytimes.com, on 13 April 2020, there were 29.77 million party members and officials working in the front lines throughout the country. Of those volunteers, 2,337 people were infected by the virus and 396 died (Hernández. 2020). Most deaths though were not caused by the virus, but by car or labor accidents in the front lines. In addition, communication on the public crisis and on health education was performed in one direction without creating fake news. The Chinese government also strived to maintain a stable supply of commodities by coordinating all stakeholders and suppliers of basic needs for the affected communities. In addition, logistical support was important in winning the war against the virus. Several international media revealed that at the beginning of the epidemic, China immediately ran out of their Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Wuhan needed 60,000 protective suits, 125,000 medical masks and 25,000 medical goggles daily. In comparison, China typically produced only 30,000 protective suits per day. China has rapidly mobilized the national efforts including the state enterprises throughout the country to increase the PPE production and build new PPE production lines. Within several weeks, in the middle of February, the PPE crisis in China was over. Each medical staff was completely protected with the disposable PPE. In addition to increasing the testing capacity, the Chinese government immediately mobilized, coordinated, and completed the public and private testing facilities with the testing equipment, such as BGI, a genetics and screening company. Within several days, they succeeded building the Huo-Yan Laboratory, a Covid-19 testing center (Global Times, 2020).

The third stage was the use of technology. This stage focused on reducing groups with Covid-19 cases, completely controlling the epidemic, and achieving the balance between epidemic prevention and control as well as sustainable economic and social development followed by the implementation of scientific evidence-based policies. Relevant measures strengthened the epidemiological investigation, case management, and epidemic prevention in the high-risk public places. At this stage, the government has applied new technologies, such as the use of big data and artificial intelligence (AI) to strengthen the contact tracing and management of priority populations. Normal social operations were gradually restored, knowledge on disease prevention was improved, and the comprehensive program of emergency scientific research was conducted to develop the diagnostics, therapies and vaccines. The use of technology was considered effective and had an important role in handling the spread of Covid-19. According to several sources, the Chinese government has used advanced technology to provide one-way information and monitor the history of activities and health of its residents. To prevent the second outbreak of Covid-19 in Wuhan, the Chinese government has decided to test the entire population. Based on workers.org, 11 million people were tested in May 2020. The purpose of this testing was to check whether there were clusters still suffering from or infected with Covid-19. 74,000 residents were exposed to the virus. About 300 people infected by the virus were sent to hospitals for medication. Meanwhile, the other exposed residents were ordered to self-quarantine for 21 days. To successfully mobilize the rapid tests in the entire city, the Chinese government had to utilize its possible sources and recruit thousands of health care workers and support staff into the campaign. In addition, the Chinese government has openly, transparently, and responsibly released accurate data. Thus, the public had dynamic, obvious, and important information to completely understand the government policies, strategies and actions.

3. Conclusions

Both the Indonesian and the Chinese governments took important steps in dealing with the Covid-19 crisis. Large-Scale Social Restrictions were implemented in both countries, with China even deciding on mass quarantines that limited mobility. These were meant to reduce the intensity of the epidemics and slow down the spread of the virus.

Authorship

All authors contributed equally to the study. H.S.B. led the manuscript preparation and manuscript drafting.

Acknowledgements

This study was supported in part by Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Jakarta.

Funding

This work was supported by the Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Jakarta.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The authors declare no conflicting interests.

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Journal of Community Positive Practices, XXII(1) **2022**, *86-101*
ISSN Print: 1582-8344; Electronic: 2247-6571

THE PROFILE OF A RURAL COMMUNITY: VITOMIRESTI, OLT COUNTY[1]

Corina DRĂGAN[2]
Horia MIHAI[3]
Cristina TOMESCU[4]

DOI: https://doi.org/10.35782/JCPP.2022.1.06

Abstract: *The article is based on a data collection from the project Marginal Rural, a grant of Romanian Academy, carried out between 2019 and 2022. The aim of the project was to collect data from several rural and small urban communities and analyze socio-demographic data, but also look at indicators regarding infrastructure, health and education services, sources of income, local employers, or the phenomenon of migration for working. The analysis included different perspectives, respectively an institutional one (through the opinions of representatives of public institutions), an entrepreneurial one (through the opinion reflected in interviews with local entrepreneurs) and the vulnerable groups' one (through the opinions reflected from the focus group organized with disadvantaged people). We looked at the phenomenon of rural development/underdevelopment and potential marginalized rural areas. Marginalization represents a social phenomenon, fuelled by the socio-economic context that followed the 1989 revolution. The completion of the transition from the socialist regime towards free-market economy implied high social costs for a part of the population, including poverty and social exclusion.*

Key words: *rural community, social inclusion, education, employment, migration.*

[1] This study was financed by research grant no. GAR-UM-2019-XI-5.6-7 / 15.10.2019, entitled Typologies of underdevelopment and marginalization in rural areas and small towns in Romania (MARGINALRURAL), a grant with financial support from the Recurrent Donor Fund, available to the Academy Romanian and managed by the "PATRIMONIU" Foundation GAR-UM-2019.
[2] Researcher at Research Institute for Quality of Life and Ph.D student, Doctoral School of Advanced Studies, Romanian Academy, Bucharest, Romania, email: corina.dragan@iccv.ro
[3] Researcher at Research Institute for Quality of Life and Ph.D student, Doctoral School of Advanced Studies, Romanian Academy, Bucharest, Romania, email: mihaihoria96@gmail.com
[4] Senior Researcher at Research Institute for Quality of Life, email: crisdobos@yahoo.com

Context

Marginalization of the communities represents a social phenomenon, fuelled by the socio-economic context that followed the 1989 revolution. The completion of the transition from the socialist regime towards free-market economy implied high social costs for a part of the country`s population. A consistent part of active population has chosen to emigrate in search of a decent living standard.

The Atlas of Marginalized Rural Areas and Local Human Development in Romania (World Bank, 2016), based on the results from the 2011 census analysis, shows that at the national level, 6.2% of the rural population lives in marginalized rural areas. The main features of marginalized rural areas from Romania are a significant part of the population with low education stock (Cace, 2018a), a population that earns living in the informal sector, in low skilled jobs or in subsistence agriculture, or even without a workplace, people that lives in precarious conditions (Cace, 2019) even compared to the low standards applied to rural areas (overcrowded housing and / or without access to running water or electricity).

The people in these communities have low level of education and skills to access labor market and have low access to formal jobs. The lack of employers in rural areas is an important factor that triggered migration for working abroad. Even more, these communities have weak infrastructure: the roads are unpaved, the housing is precarious, most of the time not connected to running water or sewage, exposed to environmental risks (such as floods or landslides), and public services (education, health services, social assistance services) are of poor quality or non-existent. Also, the same report shows that 42% of marginalized rural sectors have large percentages of Roma population (World Bank, 2016: 26), Roma is a vulnerable group major exposed in some rural areas.

The most relevant variables, as different studies show (Sandu, 1999, Zamfir, 2002, Preotesi, 2014) through which the concept of marginalization is operationalized are human capital, employment and housing quality. Human capital, in the context of marginalization, refers to "the proportion of the population aged 15-64 who have graduated at most 8 classes", "the proportion of people with disabilities, chronic diseases or other medical conditions that hinder their daily activities" and "the proportion of children (0-17) years of the total population"(World Bank, 2016). Employment is measured by the share of people aged 15-64 who are not employed in the formal labor market and do not follow any form of education. Housing is one of the most relevant variables in determining and measuring the degree of marginalization. Proportion of households without electricity, overcrowding and housing insecurity are the most important indicators of the housing variable in the context of marginalization. Infrastructural isolation also is one of the factors of marginalization: roads of poor quality, lack of paved roads or ones that become very hard to travel during winter or raining time. The long-term effects of poor infrastructure on a community resides in the reduction of access to jobs outside community (Cace, 2018b) and public services. Such public services can be educational, medical ones, but also in the field of social assistance. As a result, most marginalized communities, where the need for social services is the greatest, cannot actively benefit from these services and "geographical isolation comes with an institutional marginalization" (World Bank, 2016).

In the case of Vitomiresti commune, indicators such as the distance from the nearest town, the number of active population in the commune, the number of local employers and employees and the number of people commuting lead us to the hypothesis that the locality should have a rather low potential for development, with marginalized areas, but the collected data during the study showed that a couple of factors influenced local development context.

The main factor that seems to enhance the living standard in the commune is migration for work abroad. The respondents showed that half of the families in the commune has relatives working abroad. Part of the work is seasonal and implies low skilled jobs, nevertheless, they are an important element because of the remittances sent by migrant workers to their families. That can also explain the low number of people that accessed Minimum Guaranteed Income (MGI) in the community (only 6 requests, as official data show).

As Skeldon R. (2012) and other authors show (Serban M, 2014, Constant, Nottmeyer & Zimmermann, 2013), circular migration extends the resource base of the households, minimize social risks and support subsistence. Long-term, rather than shorter-term circulatory movements has the potential to improve the welfare of the families, but there are certain risk related to the fact that these people are low skilled, they access low position jobs abroad, many times have only seasonal jobs and limited in time earnings, live in precarious conditions abroad, lack access to social and medical insurance and therefore are at the risk to become trapped in marginal positions in destination countries, as they were in the country of origin.

From the perspective of poor migrant households, remittances are a way to reduce poverty levels and they are spent on improving nutrition, financing children's schooling, basic health care, or house building (Julca, 2013). While remittances serve to improve the livelihoods of receiving households, they also serve to reproduce inequalities in the community on several dimensions, but inequality in the short term seems a likely effect for migrant-sending communities.

Shera & Meyer (2013: 15) conclude that remittances flows can be analyzed pointing at different references. One motivation of the emigrants to remit can be explained as a combination of economic, but also social motivations: self-interest, altruism, investment, loan repayment. These determine the transfer of resources between the emigrants and the household members at home and they can serve for meeting the basic needs of the family at home, but also investments in human capital; or investment in inheritable assets (housing) (…) Therefore, the effect of remittances in the economic growth depends on the way which they are spent. If remittances are spent only for consumption, not invested in human capital, the welfare impact is limited, therefore, spending the remittances on traded or non-traded goods is important.

Another author, Ratha argues (Ratha, 2013) that remittances sent by migrant workers to their families are an important, but they cannot sustain local development and migration cannot be a substitute for domestic development and implies that remittances, typically a fraction of a migrant worker's income, are not a boost on the host economy.

Another factor that influenced local developing context in Vitomiresti was involvement of local leaders. The vitality of a rural community is dependent not only on infrastructure, access to education and health services and creating opportunities to access jobs, as Cavaye shows (Cavaye, 2001), but also on activating the active population and local leaders. This can help people gain better access to information and public services and increase access to health and education in the community.

As we shall see in the analysis of data from Vitomiresti community, there are still problem of accessing services, although infrastructure improved significantly in the last years. The leaders' involvement plays a major role, but the decreasing of active population and aging of rural communities because of the migration of young, fertile population to urban areas in the country or working abroad is a major problem for these communities. An aging population will not be able to secure resources for local development.

A third factor that might enhance the local development is the existence of a high school in the locality. That has increased the number of pupils that follow the high school at the end of eight classes form of education to almost 100%, a much higher percent that other communities studied in the project, but the quality of education at the local high school is rather low, and the percent of students that finish with baccalaureate diploma is only of 20%.

Methododology

The project GAR-UM-2019-XI-5.6-7/15.10.2019, entitled Typologies of underdevelopment and marginalization in rural areas and small towns in Romania (MARGINALRURAL), proposed a qualitative methodology and looked at several dimensions regarding local development as socio-demographic indicators, local infrastructure, level of employment and sources of income, access to public services as health and education, local projects of development and authorities' implication in the effort of local development.

Other indicators there were analyzed were distance to the nearest city and distance to the county capital; the share of Roma in the total population, at local and county level; types of vulnerable groups, share of employees, in total population; navetas or migration for work abroad, the share of persons employed in subsistence and semi-subsistence agriculture / agriculture; infrastructure and the share of households connected to basic utilities: running water, electricity, gas, children enrolled in different forms of school and rate of school dropout rate; the share of qualified / unqualified educational staff, number of schools / high schools at local and county level; the share of MGI (minimum guaranteed income) beneficiaries in the population.

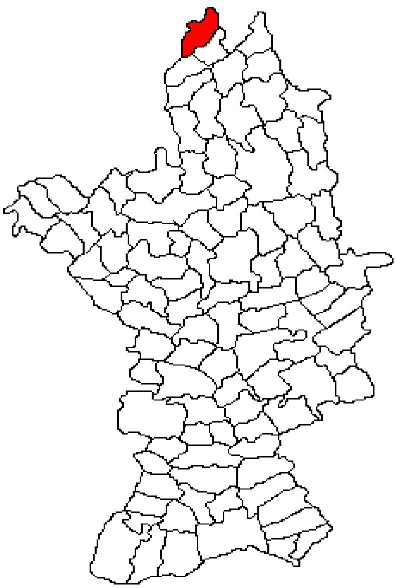
The methodology of the project included as instruments a file of the locality completed by the local institutional actors (town hall, school, dispensary, social services department etc.), with socio-demographic data, but also collecting data on infrastructure, health and education services, local sources of income (Arpinte, 2015), local employers, commuting. We also looked at the phenomenon of working abroad. The second stage tackled all the issues through interviews with local leaders representing the community (mayor, doctor, school principal, social worker, community worker, priest, local entrepreneurs, and other significative actors for the community). Also, individual or group interviews were conducted with vulnerable people in the community. In the following we present one of the communities studied in the project.

The case of Vitomiresti commune

The identification of the geographical position of Vitomiresti commune can be done using a landmark known by many Romanians, it is about 15 km away from Cuca Commune – village Măcăi, the locality from which started the well-known Romanian expression "de la Cuca Măcăii"[1] which describes a distant place, which is difficult to reach. That seems to be a potential indicator of isolation. The geographical position of the commune is in the northern extremity of Olt County, at about 70 km from Slatina (residence of the county) and about 35 km from Drăgăsani (nearest urban locality).

The commune consists of 6 villages (Vitomiresti, Bulimanu, Dejesti, Donesti, Stănuleasa, Trepteni), with a relief composed of sharp valleys and quite high hills. The total area of the locality is 4569,5853 ha, of which 1832,2 ha of declared agricultural land. From a geomorphological point of view, the territory of the commune falls within the Cotmeana Platform, a subunit of the Getic plateau.

Figure 1. Location of Vitomiresti Commune in Olt County (identified in red in the figure)



Vitomireşti commune
Geographical position in Romania
Coordonate: 44°50'45"N 24°22'36"E
Country: România
County: Olt
SIRUTA: 129914
Residence: Vitomireşti
Villages in the composition:
Vitomireşti
Bulimanu
Dejeşti
Doneşti
Stănuleasa
Trepteni

Source of information and image: *https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comuna_Vitomire%C8%99ti,_Olt*

[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuca,_Arge%C8%99

The population in 2011 was 2282, but after 10 years, in 2021 it decreased to 1700 inhabitants, and 35% of them are over 65 years old. The population has an aging trend. Annually, the number of deaths exceeds the number of births: in the period 2019-2021, there were 38 babies born, as the number of persons who died was of 105. Also in the period 2019-2021, we notice that the number of marriages decreased (in 2019 there were 8, in 2020 there were 3, and in 2021 there were 4), a situation that could have been determined by the restrictive measures imposed to limit the spread covid-19 pandemic, which banned weddings and other gatherings with large numbers of people. In Vitomiresti commune there are 990 households, the only ethnicity declared being the Romanian one. W*e have no other ethnic groups in the locality*" (representative of local public authorities, Vitomiresti commune).

The infrastructure of the commune

The distance between the commune and the nearest city and the existence of proper transport facilities cand be an indicator of the development of that community. Vitomiresti commune is crossed by 2 county roads, respectively DJ 678 B and DJ 648, which connect urban centers such as Râmnicu Vâlcea (located about 50 km away), Pitesti (located about 65 km away) and Slatina (located approximately 65 km away). The distance to these cities is a medium one, making harder for the inhabitants of the communes to access work in the urban area or other types of services.

In the last 5 years, the commune has developed from the perspective of infrastructure. Although Vitomirest is fairly isolated from certain areas considered as development poles, it still has a local network of asphalt roads that reach the corners of the commune: "*95% asphalt …things have improved in the last 3 years*" (representative of local public authorities, Vitomiresti commune). The disadvantages identified by the interviewees, referred to the fact that there are few public transports that facilitate travel between localities of the commune: "*a problem is transport if I wanted to work somewhere, I have to go 5-6 km to get to the main road, to be able to get to the transport to go to another locality* ",“ *there are not many minibusses… that came and go at several hours* "(vulnerable person, Vitomiresti commune). The transport seems a real problem in the community.

Vitomiresti commune has a water network that ensures the provision of this service in all villages, even if there are houses positioned at appreciable distances from the main road. "*100% of the water network is extended throughout the commune, and in terms of sewerage, the network has a coverage of about 75%*" (representative of local public authorities, Vitomiresti commune). The role of local authorities that managed to improve the local infrastructure is commendable.

Despite these local improvements, the commune still has no connection to gas. "*Investments were made in infrastructure, sewerage, water, the authorities took care of it*" (entrepreneur, Vitomiresti commune). However, the sewerage network is not extended in all villages, the local authority making constant efforts to ensure this service to all households, “*We have water, but the sewerage is not in the whole commune. There is also a garbage collection service in the whole commune. The gas has not yet reached the commune*. " (vulnerable person, Vitomiresti commune). The houses are mostly heated with solid fuel, using firewood, because the gas is not accessible to the commune.

Waste collection is done through a specialized company, a service that should solve the problem of pollution generated by random garbage, but unfortunately, there are still residents of the commune who are not interested in protecting the environment and the quality of life of the community members,"it *changed a lot… garbage cans were brought to every house* ", "*enough pollution because there are still people throwing garbage everywhere…. Better a poor horse than no horse at all.* " (vulnerable person, Vitomiresti commune), "*waste is collected throughout the commune, and the sanitation system we work with is from Slatina*" (representative of local public authorities, Vitomiresti commune). Educating the population in terms of environmental protection and not throwing garbage out of the local garbage collection system is a topic that still need to be solved in the community. The involvement of local high school can be a solution to this issue.

Sources of population income

Agricultural activity

Usually, Romanian rural environment is having a large share of employment in agriculture and a set of local values oriented towards tradition (Mihalache, 2020). In case of Vitomiresti, a consistent percentage of the inhabitants (32%- 620 people).) are self-employed in agriculture in their household, on their own land That is a subsistence agriculture that characterize in work poverty specific to this type of agriculture. Even if this type of activity equals a non-quantified income, it offers only the possibility of a decent living. The period of the post-socialist transition was marked, especially in the first decade, by the exponential increase in the number of people who turned to agricultural work, in a non-mechanized and subsistence-oriented manner. There is a correlation between in-work poverty and the large number of people working in small-scale agriculture. (Mihalache, 2020).

Underdevelopment is, among other things, an effect of the agrarianization of the economy. The orientation of a segment of the population towards agricultural activities within one's own household has led to the preservation of a large number of people at risk of poverty. The 1990-2000 period has been the peak of this phenomenon. Due to the lack of decently paid jobs, many people have turned to non-mechanized farming. Unfortunately, this option has led to a delay in the development of the Romanian society and an increase in the share of marginalized people. (Mihalache, 2020).

In Vitomiresti, data show that out of the total land area related to the commune, 1832,2 ha are registered in the town hall records as agricultural land "*70% fruit growing, the rest subsistence agriculture*" (representative of local public authorities, Vitomiresti commune) "*is a hilly area, where fruit growing*" (entrepreneur, Vitomiresti commune). The inhabitants of Vitomiresti carry out the main agricultural activity, but not for commercial interest, but more to ensure their necessary agricultural products.

The interest for sending vegetables by couriers increased during pandemic and the profits also for some local entrepreneurs in agriculture that had known how to access information and technology: "*in the pandemic hundreds of envelopes of vegetables were sold, it was fantastic what increased interest they had people for agriculture*". (Entrepreneur, Vitomiresti commune).

Although in previous years many local farmers were engaged in animal husbandry, now the interest in this type of activity has greatly diminished, as the population is aging, and the new generation is not interested in this type of activity: "*the number of animals has decreased every year. There are still animal breeders, but there are fewer of them, they have got older*", "*people don't raise pigs anymore, most of them buy, only to grow*" (vulnerable person, Vitomiresti commune). To have a correct vision on the decrease of livestock, we made a comparison using the information described in the Development Strategy[1] of Vitomiresti commune for the period 2014-2020 (see table no. 1).

Table 1. The situation of the existing livestock in Vitomiresti 2014-2022

Animal species	Livestock in 2014	Livestock in 2022	Percentage differen
Bovine	505	150	-70,3 %
Cabaline	158	51	-67.73%
Swine	780	714	-9%
Ovine	810	826	+2%
Goats			
Birds	9.900	7784	-21.38%
Bee families	1235	250	-79.76 %

Not even the fiscal facilities offered by the state through subsidies are no longer a motivation, "*less and less interest in raising animals, although subsidies are taken for animals and land*" (representative of local public authorities, Vitomiresti commune). One solution to the problems described above was proposed by local entrepreneurs, who believes that smart farming is practiced by accessing new technologies, "*someone from the town hall should call from the Agricultural Directorate to analyze the soil, to determine the pH to see which crops are going, which trees are going… There is no more agriculture made at random.*" (Entrepreneur, Vitomiresti commune).

The major problem identified by the interviewees is related to local jobs. The living standard of the members of the community is average or above, the people being housewives and managing to procure what they need for their daily food/food needs through what they produce in their household, "*there are no jobs in the locality*" (vulnerable person, Vitomiresti commune).

The commune has only 5 people who are registered as paid unemployed and 12 people registered as beneficiaries of the guaranteed minimum income in 2021. The number is very small compared to the number of inhabitants can be explained by the number of people that benefit from remittances from relatives working abroad or work on informal market. The main factor that seems to enhance the living standard in the commune is migration for work abroad. The respondents showed that half of the family has relatives working abroad. Part of the work is seasonal and implies low skilled jobs, nevertheless, they are an important element because of the remittances sent by migrant workers to their families.

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1 http://www.primariavitomiresti.ro/portal-administratie-publica/vitomiresti/primaria-vitomiresti/primaria/programe-si-strategii

In spite of this, a part of the people has no support from outside and are part of the vulnerable groups, in difficulty of having a suitable home or resources for a decent living. They were supported by the local authority by providing social housing in the patrimony of the mayor's office, "*we have 12 social apartments, social housing… 100% occupied at the moment*" (representative of local public authorities, Vitomiresti commune).

Labour migration

The phenomenon of labor migration had a consistent effect in the community. There are many people who have chosen to go to work abroad to ensure financial comfort for their families, especially since there are very few employers in Vitomiresti. Because households in the commune are multi-generational, the effort to raise the children of those who choose the path abroad is distributed to extended family members. In addition, the income sent to the country covers current expenses and even enough to make investments in rehabilitating homes or buying better cars. "*About half of the households have people who go to work abroad*" (vulnerable person, Vitomiresti commune). "*My husband and I would go abroad, but only seasonally, I would not settle abroad*", "*more than half are who go to work abroad Germany, Spain…"* (vulnerable person, Vitomiresti commune).

There are a few private employers in the commune, but their number has decreased from year to year, also, it is hard to find qualified workforce in the community "*I have 19 employees, they have all become more expensive, we work with wood… it is very difficult*", "*my oldest employee is 23 years old since he works in the company, but we also had employees who stayed for a month*" (entrepreneur, Vitomiresti commune).

There are, of course, public institutions employers, in the category of which we can list the town hall, the local council, the educational units, the police station, but the number of employees is relatively small, "*1% of those who finish high school have the chance to work in Vitomiresti*" (vulnerable person, Vitomiresti commune).

The inhabitants of Vitomiresti have the desire to work and for that, they are really willing to commute to the neighboring localities, "*Here the women also want go to work, they even commute. Women don't just stay home to raise their children.* "(entrepreneur, Vitomiresti commune). Sometimes, however, he gives up this option, because from the cost-benefit analysis people conclude that it is not efficient to commute, "*if I commute it would not be convenient, because the commute is expensive, and to rent in another locality is also too expensive*" (vulnerable person, Vitomiresti commune). A solution for jobs at the local level, would be to attract potential investors, who "*create jobs, to ensure the development of the community*" (vulnerable person, Vitomiresti commune).

In Vitomiresti there are 65 people with physical disabilities and 6 people with mental disabilities. Regarding the elderly, in the records of the local authority there are 600 people over the age of 65, of which 22 are immobile and 150 are single. These people are covered by social assistance benefits, but social services would be needed, especially for lonely old people that have difficulties in mobility. If we refer to children with parents who went to work abroad, "there are children with parents who went to work abroad, but not so many" (representative of local public authorities, Vitomiresti commune).

Access to health services

The inhabitants of the commune have general health problems, mostly related to their age. They rely on family doctor from the community and avoid self-medication: "*people follow my instructions, any problem they have, call us… signal us that they have problems*" (representative of the medical system, Vitomiresti commune).

In Vitomiresti commune there is only one family medicine office, where a percent of 70% of the total population of the locality are registered, "*insured and uninsured we have about 1300 approximately, it is different from month to month*" (representative of the medical system, Vitomiresti commune). The percent of insured inhabitants is low in comparison with other communities that we studied within the same project, (90% of local population in Moroeni, Dambovita are registered to local family doctors).

The family doctor knows his patients very well and this is also an advantage of the family doctor in rural communities, where everyone knows everyone. The doctor shows flexibility in the relationship with the patients, and this aspect emerges from the interviews with the community members, "*the doctor is from Sâmburesti, but he comes to the locality and when we need, he answers any question.*" (Vulnerable person, Vitomiresti commune).

The interviewees reported that only some of the people follow the doctor's recommendations during the Covid-19 pandemic and got vaccinated, but the rate of vaccinated children with compulsory scheme is high: "*at first people were detained, then as they received more information, people understood that the vaccine is good, we made 40 doses, it is not a large number, but we are satisfied* "," *I do not have an unvaccinated child with the obligatory vaccines, there are some exceptions that have contraindications*" (representative of the medical system, Vitomiresti commune).

The effort of the medical staff to cover even preventive services is a commendable one, especially in the context in which this office is the only one in the locality, "*it is a huge volume of work, but we all go through it", after each holiday, without having a contract with the mayor's office"* (representative of the medical system, Vitomiresti commune) and their try to develop medical services by accessing funds to support this approach, "*we are involved ... it is a program ~ Everything for your heart ~ and we try to sign up. The program is funded by European funds, just like in 2007, a very good screening program* "," *all people over the age of 45 are eligible and in the program, they can take a blood pressure, put on a holter, it's a program very good".* (representative of the medical system, Vitomiresti commune).

The local pharmacy has a reduced schedule of only twice a week, and this is a barrier in accessing medication, "we have only one pharmacy in the locality, with a schedule only on Tuesdays and Thursdays, I think it would be necessary to have a daily schedule" (vulnerable person, Vitomiresti commune).

Other identified problem is that of poor information regarding family planning/sex education, which led to situations in which several minors became mothers, "*I also had several minor mothers*" (representative of the medical system, commune Vitomiresti). Sexual education and education for health are needed in the community.

Access to education

A factor that might enhance the local development is the existence of a high school in the locality. This has increased the number of pupils that follow the high school at the end of eight classes form of education to almost 100%, a much higher percent that other communities studied in the project, that have access to education only outside communities, most of the time in the closest urban area near the commune. The quality of the education in this local school is questionable, and the motivation of students to receive a formal high school education, as only a percent of 20% finish their education with baccalaureate, as representative of the authorities declare.

In terms of access to education, the rural environment is deeply deficient, different reports show. For the population aged 15-64, the share of those who graduated only eight classes is 47% and in marginalized rural areas this percentage increases considerably, reaching 80% out of the total. This situation has direct implications for employment in the formal economy. The share of people who are not in any form of education or do not hold a job in the formal economy, for the age range 15-64, is 54% in rural areas. For marginalized rural areas the percentage reaches 83% (Preotesi, Tomescu, 2019).

The number of children in Vitomiresti (between 0-18 years old) is 342, of which 41 are enrolled in kindergarten, 148 are enrolled in primary and secondary school and 125 are enrolled in high school. As the number of children decreased in the last 10 years, a number of 3 kindergartens and one primary school (that from Dejesti), were closed between 2014 and 2022. This is reducing access from the inhabitants from far away to center of commune villages (See table no. 2).

Table no. 2. The comparative situation of the educational units. 2014 -2022

Type of school unit	The situation in 2014	The situation in 2022
High school	Vitomiresti Vitomiresti Technological High School - high school education	Vitomiresti -Vitomiresti Technological High School high school, middle school, primary education. -Vitomiresti Kindergarten
Primary school	Dejesti, Dejesti Primary School-primary education	Dejesti kindergarten that works with a group of preschoolers
Kindergarten	Donesti Kindergarten with normal program Donesti-preschool education	-
Kindergarten	Bulimanu Kindergarten with normal program Bulimanu-preschool education	-
Kindergarten	Trepteni Kindergarten with normal program Trepteni-preschool education	-

Residents are disappointed that schools have been dismantled in the villages, because traveling to the village of Vitomiresti with young children is quite difficult, as they have to walk a considerable distance to the place where they are picked up by the school minibus, which it takes over at very early hours.

"*except for the village of Vitomiresti, only in Dejesti there is another kindergarten*", "*it would be good if there were kindergartens and primary schools in every village… there are churches in every village*", "*it would be good if it would reopen the middle schools …as it used to be*", "*there is only one minibus to transport the children to school and we have to take them to the main street at 7 o'clock in the morning.* " (vulnerable person, Vitomiresti commune), "*the minibus should transport a lot of students and it must make a lot of trips, sometimes it doesn't fit in time. The first transport leaves at 7 and some children arrive too early…*" (representative of the education system, Vitomiresti commune).

The number of children who manage to graduate from high school with a baccalaureate degree is small, and it kept reducing over the last years. This directly influences the possibility that they can continue their educational path in a higher education unit, "*children who now finish high school no longer go at college* "(vulnerable person, Vitomiresti commune)," *last year there was a percentage of up to 20% promotion to baccalaureate from those participants* "(representative of the education system, Vitomiresti commune)," *the number of those who graduate high school with a diploma baccalaureate is much lower than in previous years*"(representative of the education system, Vitomiresti commune).

The efforts of the representatives of the educational units to increase the quality of the offered services exist, and this was also reflected in the diversification of teaching methods, but also through the acquisition of higher teaching materials. "*I learned on the go. We would attend classes, we would get a free platform that we still use* ", "*I say we had to learn a lot. We don't do so many papers anymore, we can give tests online… it would be bad to give them up*", "*we have three classes equipped with intelligent equipment*" (representative of the education system, Vitomiresti commune).

Vitomiresti City Hall representatives were also actively involved, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, when teaching was transferred in online environment, and many of the students did not have the necessary gadgets (smartphones, computers, tablets). The authorities distributed tablets so that the children could access online courses. "*2 years ago, The City Hall gave us tablets with internet for all children in primary and secondary school, we have 170 tablets. The children have them at home. high school students received 65 laptops through a Rose program. The classes that finish the 8th grade hand over the tablets to those from the 1st grade.*" (representative of the education system, Vitomiresti commune).

The budgetary effort to maintain a reasonable standard of the school is influenced by costs for heating and transportation, "*we have wood heating, but the costs was ok because we have about 700 students. The problem is that we can't buy certain things out of the amount allocated for each student. Sometimes the mayor's office supplements our income. Now I have submitted a project for the prevention of school dropout*", "for *the minibus the high school pays the fuel*" (representative of the education system, Vitomiresti commune).

However, there are still necessary investments, and these exceed the financial potential of the school, "*we need a program for the rehabilitation of high school buildings, but also specialists* *to support us in writing and implementing the project*", "*there is a sports field, but it should be rehabilitated, and we cannot use the gym because it does not have a permit and it cannot be entered* "(representative of the education system, Vitomiresti commune).

These equipments were still used during our data collection (spring 2022), although the courses returned to the physical presence, especially for children who could not return to school because of health risk, "*we have a period with sick children, and the children had to stay at home and the teachers taught them online… somehow in hybrid format.*" (Representative of the education system, Vitomiresti commune).

The school has a psycho-pedagogical counselor, who lives in Vitomiresti, this aspect being an advantage in the relationship with students, in this context knowing quite well the individual situation of those with whom he interacts professionally, "*we have a psycho-pedagogical counselor, who lives in Vitomiresti*" (representative of the education system, Vitomiresti commune).

There was a school camp in the village, which was a point of interest for leisure. According to the Local Development Strategy of Vitomireşti commune, it consisted of 34 houses, a central pavilion, a kitchen and a swimming pool, but no longer obtained an operating license and was transformed into a social center for institutionalized children. Unfortunately, over time, the buildings have deteriorated, and the space is unusable now because part of the main building caught fire in 2020.

The phenomenon of school abandon is almost existence in the locality: "*we do not have school dropout until the 10th grade, it is only one 8th grade child in this situation*" (representative of the education system, Vitomiresti commune).

Conclusions

The study conducted in Vitomiresti commune revealed some local factors that are contributing to local development: the mentality of the people in terms of pro-work and pro-education, the desire to increase their standard of living through their own resources, one strategy being that of working abroad and sending resources to the family at home, but also the active involvement of representatives of the local authority. The income earned by the inhabitants who went to work abroad has an important influence on the community development, even if their work is often seasonal.

The community of Vitomiresti is homogeneous, having access to public services, even if the access is much harder for the inhabitants from some of the villages, that are not leaving in the village residence of the commune (Vitomiresti village), but in the most remote village.

Children are educated from an early age in the family co-opted in specific activities for household maintenance or in agriculture. After graduating from high school, the young people's options are rather to leave community towards urban areas. That has implication upon the trend of population aging and it is a common phenomenon in rural areas in Romania. The lack of local opportunities is stimulating this migration trend.

Although connections with urban areas are difficult, residents are willing to commute to provide financial comfort to family members. There is a growing interest in connection with others and there are available cable and internet services in the commune, that are frequently used.

The main factor that seems to enhance the living standard in the commune is migration for work abroad. The respondents showed that half of the families in the commune has relatives working abroad. Part of the work is seasonal and implies low skilled jobs, nevertheless, they are an important element because of the resources sent by migrant workers to their families.

Another factor that influenced local developing context in Vitomiresti was involvement of local leaders. The representatives of the local authority are actively involved in accessing the projects financed by European or budgetary funds, to increase the living standard of the inhabitants of the commune. This is demonstrated by the investments made in recent years, an aspect mentioned by all respondents of the study. The leaders' involvement plays a major role in local development, but the decreasing of active population and aging of rural communities because of the migration of young, fertile population to urban areas in the country or working abroad is a major problem.

A third factor that might enhanced the local development is the existence of a high school in the locality. That has increased the number of pupils that follow the high school at the end of eight classes form of education to almost 100%, a much higher percent that other communities studied in the project, but the interest to finish high school with a diploma decreased over time and the quality of education. These are local problems that have to be considered by local authorities.

The study concluded that there were no marginalized areas in Vitomiresti, although harder access to health and education was present in some villages. Also, the short program of the local pharmacy and lower percent of people insured for health represent a risk for local population and had to be solved by authorities.

Also, environmental problems should be tackled. Educating the population in terms of environmental protection and not throwing garbage out of the local garbage collection system is a topic that still need to be solved in the community. The involvement of local high school can be a solution in this issue.

Local leaders identified several future development opportunities in the localities of the commune:

– Further development of fruit cultivation. Agricultural areas which are conducive to the development of fruit-growing activities and animal husbandry.

– Rehabilitation of the camp that can bring profit to the owner of the spaces, but also to the community.

– The development of ecumenical tourism, since in the locality there is a wooden church dedicated to "*Saint Paraschieva*" listed as a historical monument, dating from 1795. However, the locality lacks the potential of development is the field of tourism,

"*tourism does not have much chance of development in the locality*" (vulnerable person, Vitomiresti commune).

Acknowledgements

The study was accomplished inside the Research Institute for Quality of Life, Romanian Academy. The data for Vitomiresti commune were collected by Drăgan Corina.

Funding

The case study related to Vitomiresti commune from Olt County was financed by research grant no. GAR-UM-2019-XI-5.6-7 / 15.10.2019, entitled Typologies of underdevelopment and marginalization in rural areas and small towns in Romania (MARGINALRURAL), a grant made with financial support from the Recurrent Donor Fund, available to the Academy Romanian and managed by the "PATRIMONIU" Foundation GAR-UM-2019.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Journal of Community Positive Practices, XXII(1) **2022**, *102-111*
ISSN Print: 1582-8344; Electronic: 2247-6571

REFORMING HIGHER EDUCATION FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH: CHINA'S ROADMAP

Anh Ngoc MAI[1]

DOI: https://doi.org/10.35782/JCPP.2022.1.07

Abstract: *This paper explores the reforming of the higher education system for economic growth since China opened up to the outside world. The result indicates that, although the decentralization of higher education was the platform for China's higher education, curricula adjustment was critical for qualification improvement to be recognized worldwide; Establishing key disciplines and universities at global standards was the priority of the Chinese government, attaining the mass higher education came after that. Lessons would be a valuable paper for researchers and policymakers in developing countries.*

Keywords: *higher education, world-class universities, mass education, economic growth*

1. Rationale

All higher education institutions (HEIs) were public HEIs and under the jurisdictions of both the central and local authorities since the foundation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) up to 1982. Although China's Ministry of Education (MOE) was granted authority in the planning and administration of higher education across the country, the MOE found it difficult to lead and coordinate higher education development and reforms (Du, 1992). The MOE only directly administered 38 out of 1014 HEIs. 285 and 691 HEIs were under the jurisdiction of other central commissions and ministries and provincial governments, respectively (see table 1). Accordingly, the structure prevented vertical communication and cooperation among central commissions and ministries and horizontal connection between the central ministries and provincial governments. As a result, the Chinese higher education system was fragmented into many self-contained mini-systems (Ding, 2001), preventing China's socio-economic development.

The Decision 1985, "Decisions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Education System Reform", was the foundation for higher education development. China became the world's No second economy in 2010 and is planning

[1] National Economics University, Hanoi, Vietnam, e-mail: maingocanh@neu.edu.vn

on being the first world's economy. Although a number of papers related to reforming China's higher education system have been published (Peters and Besley, 2018; Gu et al., 2018; Mok, 2018; Bie and Yi, 2014; Dongping, 2011; Zhu and Lou, 2011), they are fragmented or not up to date. This paper, therefore, provides a whole picture of reforming China's higher education system for economic growth. The reasons and motivations to push reforming China's higher education system would be investigated. The outputs, outcomes from each reforming stage would be pointed out.

2. Research Framework

For individuals, higher education is seen as a status symbol professionally and a practical means for upward mobility in the job market (Gandhi, 2018). As a result, more and more people from the middle and lower echelons seek higher education. An elite higher education system shifts to a massified system if the percentage of students, the age cohort from 17 to 22 years old, ranges between 15 and 49%; a system with more than 50% students in this cohort age is a universal higher education system (Trow, 2000). Trow (2000) argues that the policies, structures, and practices need to change according to the needs and development of higher education, shifting from the elite to the mass era. The shift can be divided into 2 models: the active mode and the passive and catch-up mode. While the active way is supported by government funding, the passive and catch-up mode relies heavily on social funding (Gao, 2018). Both public and non-public HEIs play vital roles in the mass higher education process. Consequently, mass higher education provides more teachers, doctors, engineers, philosophers, lawyers, artists, and activities supporting economic growth and societies' development (Chankseliani, Qoraboyev, and Gimranova, 2020).

Although HEIs have played an essential role in social development by educating the elite and producing pioneering achievements in science and humanities, the contributions vary across HEIs. While the universities are charged with academic research and education based on it (Pinheiro and Pillay 2016), colleges, polytechnics, or universities of applied science positively influence local GDP growth per capita (Agasisti and Bertoletti, 2019).

The governance of HEIs can be divided into 2 models: The state control model and the state supervising model. Although traditional university governance models have shifted towards the state supervising model among countries followed the Soviet model of university, the government interference in university governance is very high at both institutional and national level (Mai et al., 2020).

In light of the previous works, this paper explores higher education reform under China's economic growth requirements since this country opened up to the outside world. Three stages would be investigated. The priorities and their consequences from each stage would be pointed out. Finally, policy implications from lessons would be a valuable paper for researchers and policymakers in developing countries.

3. The Roadmap of China's Higher Education

3.1. Reconstructing the Higher Education System

Since1978, the *Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the People's Republic of China* asserted the central task of economic development. The Chinese government, therefore, adjusted the national higher education system to accelerate economic growth (Mok, 2001).

HEIs under the jurisdiction of central commissions and other ministries were handed over to the MOE or provincial governments, excluding particularly or essential institutions for the industry development (Bie and Yi, 2014). Provincial governments have vested the responsibilities not only for financing HEIs under their jurisdictions but also financial assistance to students instead of receiving subsidies directly from the Ministry of Finance. The provincial governments were provided powers to establish, adjust, and close short-cycle academic programs and make annual and long-term admission plans for HEIs (with the approval of MOE). They are also in charge of accelerating the link between higher education institutions and regional economic development (Ji, 1998). The private sector was allowed to participate in the higher education sector, providing more opportunities for learners to access advanced education. The establishment of China's Social University in 1982 presented a radical change in reforming China's higher education system, as a private university coexists with public HEIs in this country (HEEC, 2017).

Higher education was at the state's expense and the state was also responsible for the employment of graduates. The employment system featuring "assignment by the state" and "graduates becoming cadres" were being implemented until the early (Gu, Li and Wang, 2018).

Too many single disciplines and too few comprehensive universities were China's higher education structure characteristics in this period as China's HEIs followed the former Soviet Union's school system (Wang, 2001). Moreover, the separation between theory and practice and the elite higher education era were other China's higher education issues 1990s in this period (Hui-min and Mei, 2007).

3.2. Increasing Qualification, Entering into Mass Education

Backward programs and curricula, the separation between theory and practice etc., spread over China's HEIs, preventing the education of high-level specialized talents in the early 1990s (Xu, 1995). Unless reforming the plan of teaching content and curriculum system, it could educate and nurture innovative talents.

As soon as the promulgation of *Outlines of Educational Reform and Development* in 1993, the MOE has no longer interfered universities' curricula as autonomous right in academics has been vested in HEIs, excluding principles of Marxism, general theories of Mao Zedong's thoughts, Deng Xiaoping's thoughts and 'Three representatives' (HEEC, 2017a). Morality and law, English, and computer science are also compulsory courses in undergraduate programs (Gu, Li and Wang, 2018). Hence, "The task of China's higher education is to cultivate high-level specialized personnel with social responsibility, innovative spirit and practical ability, develop scientific and technological culture and promote the construction of socialist modernization (HEEC, 2017, p.7). In the true sense of the Western nation's prominent programs and curricula, China undergraduate programs were adapted towards practice-orientation, stressing graduates' practical capability and employability. In the true sense of the Western type of university, China started to initiate a reform toward comprehensive development within most HEIs. Through the merger of institutions, the collaboration between institutions and other operating forms, universities and disciplines were strengthened at the end (Morgan and Wu, 2011).

To welcome the challenge of global new technology reform, key universities have to educate their talented students at an international standard of qualification. Unless funding huge money for upgrading infrastructures, attracting qualified scholars, universities' responsibilities in educating talented students could never come true in China. Consequently, Project 211 formally started in 1995, and its selection principle was "*one ministry, one university and one province, one university, except high-level, key universities directly attached to the Ministry of Education*" (Dongping, 2011, p.356). Three years later, Project 985 was launched, aiming at establishing several world-class universities as China's universities were required to "play a critical role in implementing the strategy of invigorating the country through science, technology and education (Wang, 2011, p.35). The Chinese Government acknowledged thoughtfully that it would be economic inefficiency if selected universities were allocated the same budget for world-class status. 2 prestigious universities were selected to be invested for the world-class status; others were funded to be the world-known universities (Wang et al 2011).

The Action plan for vitalizing for the 21st century in 1998 pointed out that at least 15% of the population, in the cohort age groups from 18-25, to be enrolled for higher education by 2010 (Mai et al., 2019b; Yu and Ertl, 2010). Shifting from the era of elite higher education to the massification of higher education requires more HEIs. Unless accessibility of students, mass education would never come true in China.

On the one hand, Action Plan in 1998, China's Non-government Education promotion Law in 2002, Regulation of the PRC on Chinese foreign cooperation in school running in 2003, provied strong legal support for the development of non-government HEIs. Non-public HEIs were facilitated to be boned, and they received government subsidies in the form of cheap land and tax benefits. The subsidies and other incentives from the government would be reduced if they are for-profit institutions. In addition, the establishment of new colleges was encouraged throughout the country. However, some independent colleges began to be transformed into regular private HEIs within a 5 years schedule (Zhu and Lou, 2011).

On the other, students in all public institutions began to be charged tuition fees in 1997 (Houxiong, 2011). The central government has established subsidizing funds for disadvantaged groups to access higher education (Mok, 2002). In 1999, the Student Loan Scheme was piloted in several cities, and it has officially been deployed 3 years later. In 2000, General Commercial Student Loans Scheme was introduced. Unless accessing Student Loan Scheme, students have to pay at the market rate without any subsidy from the government (Shen and Li, 2003). The Chinese government subsidies up to 50% of the interest rate, and the repayment period was 4 years after graduation in accordance with the first scheme. The employment system, in which the state assigns jobs to a minority of graduates and most graduates find jobs by themselves, replaces the previous design in setting employment since students in public institutions must be self-financed (Liu, 2017).

As a result, the gross enrollment rate of higher education reached 15% in 2002. China entered the early stage of massification, with several universities ranked in the global table league (Zha, 2011). However, the coin has two sides. To meet the requirements of enlargement in dormitories and other logistics for enrollment expansion, the Chinese government required commercial banks to provide more credit (Li, 2008). Although the MOE established the loan approval system for HEIs under its direct administration, excessive bank loans led many HEIs, namely colleges, into debt (Peng and Fang, 2007). In addition, the growth of comprehensive universities prevents the normal development of higher vocational education and impacts directly to rural education as the secondary teacher education for nurturing rural primary school teachers has been neglected (Zha, 2011; Mok and Wu, 2015). In addition, selecting key universities has encountered many conflicts in different interests because of criteria (Dongping, 2011).

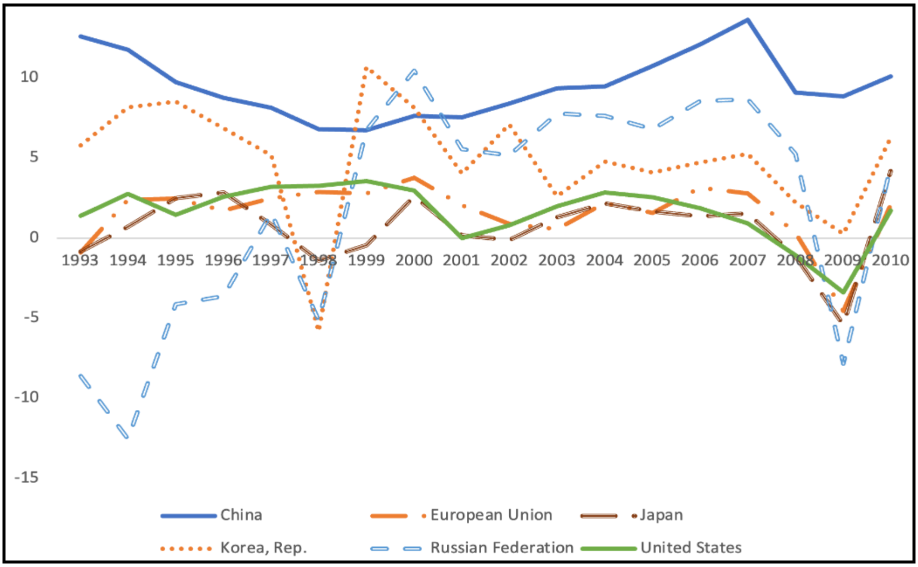
3.3. Strengthening Elite Higher Education and Reaching the Tail-End of the Massification Phase

China overtook Japan as the world's second-largest economy since 2010. The annual percentage of GDP per capita growth of China was higher than the US, European Union, Japan, and Korea from 2001 to 2010 (See Figure 1). The contributions of China's higher education to economic growth were so impressive. Therefore, the Outline of China's National Plan for medium and long-term education reform and development 2010-2020 asserted that by 2020 China's higher education would have vastly sharpened its global competitiveness. Strengthening elite universities, disciplines and reaching mass education at the tail-end phase were the priorities of the Chinese government at that time.

Project 211 and Project 985 were expanded to the second phase with increased participants and funding (Lou, Guo, and Shi, 2018). Tsinghua University, Peking University was oriented to be ranked highly in the top 50 international university rankings; several prestigious universities were targeted to be ranked in the top 200. The rest would be world-known universities.

Chinese scientific and technical journal articles nearly caught up with the US, and were 4/5 lower than European Union in 2015 (Worldbank, 2021b). The contributions of China's elite universities on economic growth were impressive. Therefore, the Central Party Committee and the State Council in China announced plans for the coordination and promotion of world-class universities and first-class subject building (Song, 2017). 42 universities have been designated as part of a 'world-class' project, and another 95 institutions are included to develop 'world-class' courses. The double First-Class Project was released in 2017 with the expectation of becoming a global higher education power by 2050 (Peters and Besley, 2018).

Figure 1: GDP per capita growth (annual %) - China, United States, Japan, European Union, Russian Federation



Source: Worldbank, 2021a

The 2010 Outline also set 40% of people in the cohort age groups from 18-25, successfully accessing higher education by 2020 (Lou, Guo, and Shi, 2018). Newly-built undergraduate universities have been promoted to be launch. Being a public institution, Newly-built undergraduate universities not only (i) promote the massification of higher education but also (ii) are geared toward the world of work and regional development. These universities are in charge of providing a highly educated workforce for the needs of regional development. 630 Newly-built undergraduate universities were in 29 out of 31 provinces and autonomous regions in China up to 2016 (HEEC, 2017). As a result, China's massification of higher education reached the tail-end phase as 46% of people from 18-25 years old successfully accessed higher education in 2016 (Mai, 2019).

Table 1: The development of Higher education institution in China

	1978	1985	2005	2015
Total	598	1012	1792	2529
MOE		38	73	73
Other commission and central ministries		285	38	40
Provincial governments		691	1681	2416
Private		*2*	*250*	*729*
Newly-built undergraduate universities		-	-	*403*

Sources: Zhu and Lou, 2011; Gu, Li and Wang 2018, p. 35

Stratifications in higher education among elite HEIs and the rest intensified the equity in graduates' qualifications and their career opportunities. However, newly-built undergraduate universities could not compete with the old universities on academic research. Moreover, they had no competitive advantage compared to higher vocational colleges in training vocational talents (HEEC, 2017). Therefore, the massified system has recruited these sub-stand students to both colleges and Newly-built undergraduate universities, so it is not surprising to see the deteriorating quality of these graduates and lower productivity in the labor market. Hence, troubling graduates from these HEis regarding job searching and career prospects (Mok, 2018).

4. Concluding Remarks and Policy Implications

Higher education plays an essential role in economic growth, and governments try their best to enhance the development of the higher education system, qualification, and accessibility aspects. However, the development of higher education differentiates across countries, depending on the intervention of each government.

The socio-economic development of China since 1978 pushed higher education reforming underwent intervention from the government. Private and public HEIs have been in charge of providing higher education to potential students. The MOE and the provincial governments have gained increasing authority in planning and administering. A new two-tier administrative system of higher education, "from central and provincial government and centered with provincial governmental management" (Dongping, 2011, p 322), has been established. Decentralization of higher education after 1985 was the platform for the development of China's higher education today.

Although the massification of higher education is an inevitable trend in the knowledge-based society, talented human resources could not be the outputs of the massified system. Talented students must be nurtured in elite programs. Therefore, establishing key disciplines and universities at global standards was the priority of the Chinese government. Shifting to the early stage of mass higher education came after that. Therefore, Project 211 and Project 985 were launched before the promulgation of the Action plan in China. The Chinese government ratified the second phase for these projects as some key disciplines and universities listed by global higher education rankings. The government also announced to obtain mass higher education at the tail-end phased. The Chinese government introduced Double First-class Project as soon as they expire Project 211 and Project 985. The Double First-class Project aims to turn China become a global host of higher education by 2050.

Although there were at least nine prestigious and other famous universities in China, China's strategy on establishing world-class universities focused on Tsinghua and Peking universities to invest in world-class universities' status. Chinese government targeted others at a lower position in global rankings, as world-known universities with several disciplines ranked on top 200 worldwide. The selected programs were not only globally attractive but also essential for regional development in China. The more high-ranking programs a university obtains, the higher a university's ranking would be. 36,8 and 33,1 billion Yuan were invested in Project 211 and Project 985, irrespectively by

China's central and provincial governments. The Chinese government intends to fund more than 40 billion Yuan on The Double First-class Project.

Although the decentralization of higher education was the platform for China's higher education, curricula adjustment was critical for qualification improvement to be recognized worldwide. Programs focused on enhancing specialized knowledge and skills to meet the requirements of a knowledge-based economy and strengthening students' political ideology for building up socialism with Chinese characteristics. The link between theory and practice has been required. In addition, transformative and adaptive majors/minors have been emphasized in China's higher education programs.

The Chinese government also deploys cost-sharing and other loan schemes to support students' access to higher education. Provincial governments determine tuition and fees for all HEIs located in their areas, including HEIs under the jurisdiction of central ministries. As a result, tuition fees at 211 and 985 universities would be lower than others are required. In addition, provincial governments have the responsibility not only for government allocation but also for distributing national subsidies to HEIs and government financial assistance to students.

Although the Chinese government decided to transform the Newly-built undergraduate university model into an application-oriented university model, stratifications in qualification and career opportunities exist among China's HEIs.

The role of government in helping to establish world-class university status and dealing with unintended outcomes from mass higher education have not been discussed in this paper, thus presenting a direction for future research.

Acknowledgements

None.

Funding

None.

Declaration of conflicting interests

There are no conflicting interests.

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Journal of Community Positive Practices, XXII(1) **2022**, *112-113*
ISSN Print: 1582-8344; Electronic: 2247-6571

A MERITORIOUS RESEARCH IN A PANDEMIC CONTEXT

Adrian RACHIERU

DOI: https://doi.org/10.35782/JCPP.2022.1.08

Cristina Otovescu's new work about Social Realities and Public Policies in Romania (Romanian Academy Publishing House, 2021, in original: *Realitati sociale si politici publice in Romania*), is the result of a thorough systemic analysis, entering into dialogue with similar concerns, both in Romania and abroad, responding to the effort of awareness and optimization of social realities, "providers of problems or dysfunctions", as the author warns us. By interdisciplinarily exploring the relations between social life and public policies (Zamfir, Cace, 2020), such investigations highlight both the way in which state institutions do their job and the degree of appreciation they enjoy from the population. It should be noted from the outset that the seven chapters of the volume are a comparative examination, with the national diagnosis being linked to the situation in other countries. In addition, the author reminds us that in order to produce 'innovative social effects', political will is needed; only if they are turned into law can public policy projects be implemented (Tomescu, 2021). And she notes (by way of example) that, unfortunately, full compliance with them is lagging behind (in the case of education policies, pension laws, the doubling of allowances etc.).

While the first chapter presents a synthetic-descriptive presentation, using official statistical data and "relevant indicators", of the general state of Romanian society, establishing, through identity benchmarks, a country profile, the proposed diagnosis (historical, economic, social and legislative development) is analyzed in a global context, identifying, through reference standards, Romania's place in possible European and world rankings. In the following chapters (II-VII), Cristina Otovescu describes in detail the situation of public policies in Romania, identifying developments and vulnerabilities: standard of living, health, life expectancy, demographic decline, pandemic context. Naturally, the author's approach then targets public policies in emergency and crisis situations, highlighting the dynamics of the regulatory framework, risks and uncertainties, etc. caused by pandemic waves. On the basis of this rich documentary material, in an accessible language, using and corroborating various sources, the author looks at the pandemic phenomenon on a global scale, comparing the reactions of public authorities (Asian world, Western Europe, USA), trying to give us, beyond the media spectacle, "objective knowledge". This would certainly be the main merit of the work, combining various methods in the comparative frame:

historical, statistical, legal, opinion polls, etc., with the data collected and the interpretation of the information projected against a sociological background.

Analysing the challenges of the pandemic and the resurgence of infections on a global scale, the author of the book highlights, in an optimistic tone, the mobilisation of the international community, speaking triumphantly about "the saving vaccine" and "the sovereign triumph of science", reviewing various vaccination strategies, including the Romanian experience. It should be noted that the population's "immunisation intentions" and confidence in the quality of the vaccine (or reluctance) benefit from numerous opinion polls, revealing interesting conclusions, probingly developed by the author, discussing, with statistical armor, the vaccination process, implicitly the pace and the syncopations that have occurred.

With an impressive bibliography, presenting at the end of the work, differentiated by ministries, a series of public policies within the framework of development strategies / programs validated by the ministries, the volume signed by Cristina Otovescu is a meritorious contribution to the collective effort to study the socio-economic and educational consequences of the pandemic phenomenon (Zamfir, Cace, 2020). It rightly stresses that the effectiveness of public or social policies depends on a multitude of factors (Zamfir, Voicu, Stanescu, 2020), mixing the level of development, financial resources, political will and organisational capacity. As the literature devoted to the investigation of public policies has gone beyond the pioneering phase in our country, Cristina Otovescu honestly mentions the fundamental works that have appeared, but also the institutional support; either by providing conceptual clarifications or by examining the typology and actors of public policies, engaged in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policies, according to EU standards. This methodologically accurate and informative volume is aimed at a wide audience and can be consulted not only by specialists in the field.

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JCPP

Year XXII • No. 1/2022

EDITURA Expert

ISSN 1582-8344