

EFFECTS OF MIGRATION ON FAMILY HOMES - FAMILIES LEFT IN RURAL HOMES (VRANCEA COUNTY)

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Abstract

The purpose of the ethnological interview is to listen to and gather as much edifying information as possible in order to obtain an overview of a phenomenon or subject analysed.

Qualitative research is a way to understand better, how people feel or what they think about a particular problem.¹

The desire to desire to accumulate a considerable income abroad and to transfer a part of the accumulated capital (remittances) to the country of origin of the emigrant explains the migration phenomenon. Remittances sent by Romanian emigrants have a number of destinations: personal expenses, real estate investments, and the education of children left at home and the avoidance of dropping out of school.

Migration involves some risks, as is well known, being a very complex phenomenon, we can even add that it is a particularly sensitive one, especially for the children of emigrants left at home, the psychological costs borne by them may remain even after many years of family reunification.

Keywords: *Romanian emigrants, psychological and social costs of migration, risks, ethnological interview, rural environment*

JEL Classification: F22, F66, J11, J60.

1. Introduction:

The theoretical approach of migration in recent years, which is common to sociology and psychology, considers that the main macroeconomic imbalances can decisively influence the choice and finding of a job for a person who intends to immigrate to another country. All these imbalances on the labour market in the emigrant's country of origin end up influencing the emigrant's ability to re-employment and his labour productivity.

The concept of labour factor mobility and frequent job changes for a person are more common in the United States than on the European continent. These changes highlight the parallel existence of two identities of migration or movement of persons,

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¹ Budacia, Andreea, Elisabeta, (2009), *Management și Marketing în audiovizual*, Editura Universitară, București, p. 123.

as well as different approaches to the states involved in the process. In most European countries, regardless of the period of economic prosperity or recession, migrant workers have become accustomed to long-term employment, building social and community networks (true diaspora), foreign immigrants contributing to the development of their own identity.

This article wants to analyse from a social and psychological point of view the effects of migration on children and family members left at home, especially in rural Romania, taking into account the current pandemic context. In order to identify the psychological effects felt by children left at home while their parents are working abroad, we used qualitative research (ethnological interview) based on a small sample, namely four different families living in two communes (Vizantea Livezi și Câmpuri) from Vrancea county.

2. Methodology of the ethnological interview conducted in the Communes of Vizantea Livezi and Câmpuri (Vrancea County)

Among the advantages of using qualitative research is the ability to track the direct reactions of participants, as well as the relatively low costs. The disadvantages of this research include the following:²

- the results are not fully representative for all immigrants;
- it is not possible to make certain concrete statistical and econometric estimates based solely on these testimonies;
- using a limited number of questions out of the total allocated questions;
- the existence of people who answered all or part of the questions in full (in case of online interviews);
- the existence of small groups of respondents who dominated the discussion throughout the interview, affecting the balance of the discussions or avoiding answers to questions;
- the answers given by each Romanian immigrant have a purely subjective character, and should be treated as such;
- from a psychological point of view the subjects interviewed in this research are analysed individually and not collectively.

The ethnological group interview is based on a qualitative method, which focuses on gathering real-time data or information on a relatively homogeneous group of interviewees.

The ethnological interview of the group also known as the natural interview, characterized by the following steps in our interview, conducted in August 2021:

- an unstructured form of interview (making an analogy with the title of our article we started from an analysis of the effects of migration from Romania in the current pandemic context);
- the ethnological interview conducted in Vizantea Livezi and Campuri communes was conducted as casual conversation/spontaneous, and there were no questions prepared in advance;

² Budacia, Andreea, Elisabeta, (2009), *Management și Marketing în audiovizual*, Editura Universitară, București, p. 128.

- the interview started as open discussions about the pandemic context;
- the interview took place between 15th and 23rd of August 2021;
- the discussions were no longer than 4 to 5 hours;
- the discussion focused on 5 main general (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4 and Q5);
- the interview was conducted in a single session; the subjects don't know each other because they are from different families (Vizantea Livezi și Câmpuri);
- the group interviewed was formed by 18 people (underage kids of Romanian immigrants, and also some of the immigrants that have returned home for the summer holidays);
- throughout the period devoted to the ethnological interview, the emphasis was on the personal situation of the interviewee, starting from the hypothesis of using in marketing research "what the other person says is judged to be sincere or insincere";
- the participants from the two communes (Vizantea Livezi and Câmpuri) do not know each other beforehand, they belong to totally different families, there is no degree of kinship between them;
- throughout the ethnological interview we tried to focus the discussion on the effects felt by the children of emigrants left at home;
- another peculiarity of this ethnological group interview is that the group did not know that it was part of the object of the research, the discussions with them being conducted in a relaxed manner.;
- firstly, the data obtained will be stored and noted at the end of the session;
- the subjects were 18 people from Vizantea Livezi and Campuri communes, Vrancea County;
- the group is relatively homogeneous, consisting mainly of family members left at home, especially older children who are in middle school or high school, in the State pre-university system;
- the discussion focused on the effects of parental migration and the effects that were felt by the minors left at home in the current pandemic context.

In our interview, the group used was mainly composed of villagers living in the communes of Vizantea Livezi and Câmpuri in Vrancea County. The subjects of the interview are mainly family members left at home, but also a small part of the Romanian emigrants who have their domicile in the communes (Vizantea Livezi and Câmpuri) and they returned home after a period of almost two years.

The interview was planned for the entire research period (August 15-23, 2021) based on compliance with the table below.

Table 1: Structuring the interviews according to the migrants' domicile and the country / destination town

Place of origin	Subject of research	Method used in the qualitative research	Interviewees (nationality)
Câmpuri (Vrancea County)	identifying social and psychological effects for the families left at home as well as for the emigrant	open interviews - ethnological interview	Romanian emigrant temporarily in Italy (Rome and Perugia) - Romanian nationality
Vizantea Livezi (Vrancea County)	Identifying social and psychological effects for the families left at home as well as for the emigrant	open interviews - ethnological interview	Romanian emigrant temporarily in Italy (Bergamo and Bologna)– Romanian nationality

Source: Processed by the authors

3. Steps followed in the ethnological interview

In the ethnological interview, we went through a series of steps in order to be able to identify as objectively as possible the effects of migration on children left at home, namely:

- a. The methodology used in the research is the on-site survey conducted in the communes of Vizantea Livezi and Câmpuri (Vrancea County)
- b. The tool used in the research is the ethnological interview conducted for the 18 people
- c. The overall aim of the research is to identify the psychological effects for family members left at home, especially on minor children.
- d. setting the questions that were the basis for the ethnological interview (Q1- Q6):
 - Q1:** What made you move to another country??
 - Q2:** How has the social situation of your family been affected during all this period during the Covid pandemic19?
 - Q3:** *How often have you communicated with your children during this time? And what means of communication have you used during this period?*
 - Q4:** *How long has it been since you came home last? How long has it been since you have seen your family?*
 - Q5:** Did you feel some uncertainty in the host country about job stability due to the COVID pandemic19?
 - Q6:** *What are your plans for the future? Are you going to return to Romania for good?*
- e. The objectives of the research:
 - Ob1:** Identifying the effects felt by family members left at home of Romanian immigrants (especially children).
 - Ob2:** If and how the Romanian immigrants spend time with their children.
 - Ob3:** Establishing the importance of the decision to emigrate for migrants and their families.

Ob4. Identifying the main migration countries preferred by the interviewed respondents.

Ob5: what are the psychological effects on the children left at home?

f. The results of the research.

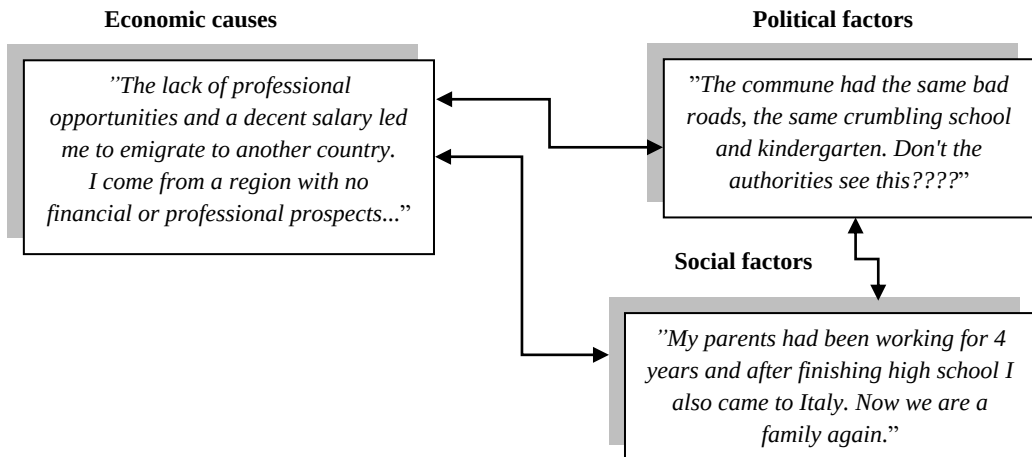
4. The report and elaboration of the results of the ethnological interview

Anghel, Remus and Gabriel; Horváth, Istvan (2009) consider that the factors that cause emigrants to emigrate are considered Push & Pull factors, which remain valid for both the emigrant's country of origin and the country of destination. The authors consider that economic, political and social factors are the most representative. The most important factors in the decisions to emigrate are better living conditions, better paid wages and a considerable increase in income, the experience of other people who emigrated, high unemployment in certain areas or regions, the poverty of the population and the lack of investments in the regions, the premises for obtaining a better job and real professional opportunities.³

In figure 1, based on the model (Push & Pull) we took the case of a Romanian emigrant residing in Vizantea Livezi, who went to work in Italy for about 8 years.

In the diagram below (Fig. 1), we see that the subject (Romanian emigrant) chose to emigrate mainly due to economic reasons and for the reunification of her family. "I also came to Italy after I finished high school; my parents were already there..." and less due to political, religious or bureaucratic factors.

Figure 1: The intertwined relationship between the rejection – attraction factors of the interviewed emigrant



Source: Own processing after interviews conducted by a group of Romanian immigrants from Vizantea Livezi (Vrancea County)

We classified the answers of the 18 subjects based on place of origin or the residing domicile (Vizantea Livezi and Campuri), the country in which they migrated, mainly Italy, and the cities they chose to live in. Rome, Perugia, Bergamo and Bologna.

³ Anghel, Remus, Gabriel; Horváth, Istvan, (2009), *Sociologia migrației. Teorii și studii de caz românești*, Editura Polirom, Iași, p. 34.

The group is a homogeneous one, made up of women and men, ages between 35-68 years, with secondary, high school education. Out of respect for their families, in our research, we will respect the right to privacy and we will not mention their names or those of their children, who are still minors.

Two families of Romanian immigrants from Campuri, and three families from Vizantea Livezi (Vrancea County) form the group.

The results of the research are presented in the following tables below, based on:

- an evaluation of the gathered opinions for each group, according to their domicile;
- secondly, the testimonies of the interviewees were presented for each individual interview.

Regarding the answers of the respondents, the opinions expressed by them referred to the following aspects:

- ☞ Safe financial earnings;
- ☞ The opportunity for social and professional life.

The psychological and social effects of migration were analysed both for the extended family of the Romanian emigrant (minors left at home) and for them. We classified their answers in to two columns, depending on the place of origin of the emigrant. (Vizantea Livezi and Câmpuri).

We selected the most representative answers from the ethnological interview.

Table 2: Opinions gathered from immigrants from Campuri- Vrancea County

Psychological effects on Romanian immigrants	Psychological effects for children left at home or for the members of immigrant families
"I left home to ensure a decent living for the ones that remained in Romania. The time spent abroad was difficult and ugly in every way. I live in Bergamo, and it was the most affected city, in Italy by the Pandemic... I didn't tell my family that I got sick with Covid for 4 weeks..." (female A.M. - 46 years, Rome)	"It took almost 2 years to see my mother, we talked on the phone almost every day, but it's not the same. After a few months, she told me that, she got sick with Covid; so, the family she worked for (illegally) let her go, because they were scared to, they would get sick also. She worked as a nanny." (Boy L.M.17 years)
"Before 2020, I made 1500 Euro now only half of that. I could not send the same amount as before. Now I send my family money once every 3 or 4 months. In one year, I changed 3 jobs." (Male N.C.- 59 years, Bonate di Sopra- Lombardia)	"We didn't spend as much as before because we didn't have the money. We only went church-store-home. I didn't go to the doctor because I was afraid to get sick... We managed..." (M.C. female 64 years)
"The hardest thing was the fact that I was away from my 2 little girls. Initially I wanted to take the eldest one (21years) to Perugia, but with the Pandemic I gave up. They stayed with the grandparents...hard, very hard... talking only on Facebook, WhatsApp, I was home sick." (Female G.B. – 53 years- Bologna)	"It was a very hard year, my grandad got sick from Covid and died at the County Hospital in Focsani. My sister gave up school. Initially, she was supposed to go to my mother, but she stayed at home, she gave up College. There is no money...I study at the Economic High school in Focsani, I had the final exam this year, I studied online, it was hard. My grandmother was alone...I do not know what I am going to do. I don't want my mother to leave anymore; I want her to stay at home..." (L.B. girl 17 years)

Source: Own processing based on respondents' responses

Table 3: Opinions gathered from respondents from Vizantea Livezi -Vrancea County

Psychological effects on Romanian immigrants	Psychological effects for children left at home or for the members of immigrant families
"If until 2 years ago I said that Italy gave me a second chance, now I cannot say that anymore...We can feel the pandemic situation everywhere: at the store, on the street; Italian people are scared, they don't receive you to do the cleaning anymore...as I used to do it. When it was the emergency state in Italy, I did not work at all. We took each day at a time..." (Female D.B – 40 years- Bergamo)	"I spent from my allowance and my grandparents' pension...My Mother didn't send any money that was the situation, we managed. I studied online, I had a laptop, but other colleagues received a tablet from the Mair of the commune Vizantea (Mr. Ciubotaru)... I missed my mother, we leaved in fear, we took care of our grandparents that are old and sick...." (R.B. girl 14 years)
"The 90-year-old I was taking care of died, luckily I had documents... Ana (my wife) and I didn't have a job for about 4 months. I lived on the money raised from savings.... We intend to finish the house this year; we cannot finish it, maybe next year, in two years... when God wants it! We see what the situation is, we stay 2-3 more years, as much as possible and we return home, in Vizantea" (male V.M- years-Perugia)	"I also had to go home to Italy... I didn't leave because of the pandemic.... I went to the post-secondary health school in Focșani, but I gave up.... I did not like it, I was learning online a lot, rent, tax, food.... My family did not send much, I do not have the school allowance anymore... so I got a temporary job at Kaufland.... I miss them Every day. I left Vizantea for Focsani, I have no one in the village but an aunt, and my grandparents died...I can manage from the cashier salary and if my family sends me money, but this happens rarely..." (girl M.M-19 years)
"My husband and I live in Bergamo, and last year we both fell ill with Covid. Much serious was my husband who was admitted to the Pope John XXIII Hospital in Bergamo. I went through the disease much easily, but it was a nightmare, I thought I or F.(husband) would die. I thought I would not live to see my child, my parents, my mother-in-law, my relatives. I told my husband I 'm not leaving, I'm staying with the girl's. I will work as a sales clerk at the store in Vizantea, but I am not leaving anymore, I am not leaving my kid anymore.... I thought we were dying and she will be orphaned by both parents. My husband leaves in a week, I will stay with the girl, my mother-in-law has health problems.... I'll stay home and help my girl finish high school..." (Female L.Z. 44 years – Bergamo)	"I haven't seen my parents in three years; they both went to work in Bergamo. My father first settled in Milan in 2010 and then settled in Bergamo. They both got sick of Covid... I was crying at night in pain, in fear, for them.... I felt abandoned, sad, I felt angry.... Dad has to go to Bergamo because he has a contract, my mother instead stays at home, and she doesn't have a job for about 1 year now... I missed them... I won't let my mother leave anymore; I want her to stay at home with my grandmother and my uncles..." (girl A.Z – 16 years)

Source: Own processing based on respondents' responses

Following the ethnological interview, we were able to identify the profile of the Romanian immigrant, and we were able to highlight some common features:

- People with ages between 35- 68 years old;
- People with high school degree obtained abroad or in Romania;
- People with family or friends in the destination country;
- the main reasons for leaving Romania were professional and economic reasons;
- people without any means of leaving;
- people with highly motivated purposes on the employment;
- someone responsible, able and wanting to adapt to the new requirements of the employment market;

- eager to secure a stable income in the host country and to invest when they return home (to build a house, to start their own business) or to invest in the education of their children.

5. Conclusions:

Following the ethnological interview, we found that each of the family members came to Italy brought by another family member, hence the model used: 'treaded path model'.

From the perspective of the minor children left at home, we can identify a series of psychological feelings they felt during this period: fear of abandonment, fear of tomorrow, fear of illness, lack of affection of a parent, longing for the one who left home, worries and age-specific issues.

Following the ethnological interview, we observed that individuals are influenced by emotions regardless of the situation in which they find themselves. Any decision we have to make in the first place is influenced by our emotions. In general, four images of risk appear in the perception of people / decision makers⁴:

- The sword of Damocles or imminent danger refers to a threat that can strike at any time, the source of risk being artificial.
- Slow-killers or the invisible risk, it refers to an invisible threat to the health or well-being of the decision-maker. The effects are delayed and do not pose a major risk. The public does not have direct access to information it depends on external sources. The credibility of the source of information is crucial. The risk is minor, but the tendency to blame those involved is strong.
- The Scales of Athens, or cost-benefit ratio, refers to the difference between gains and losses; in particular financial gains or losses.
- The myth of Hercules, or risk for the sake of risk, refers to voluntary exposure to risk; the risk is desirable. The decision maker has the perception that he can control the risk with the help of skills or experience in a certain professional field.

The limits I have drawn from this ethnological interview are as follows:

- ✓ this is a study based on qualitative research conducted using a relatively small / limited group of 18 people;
- ✓ a group in such a small number is not considered representative in marketing research, in issuing judgments of opinion;
- ✓ the image of the risks identified in the questionnaire are the Scales of Athens and the Myth of Hercules;
- ✓ we observed that decision makers are influenced by economic, political and social factors when taking decisions;
- ✓ the psychological effects or possible "psychological traumas" left by the "experience of migrating to another country" cannot be assessed at this time;

⁴ Druica E., *Economia riscului - Teorie și aplicații*, Publishing House Cartea Studențească, 2008.

- ✓ the research could be extended to a representative group of people (1100 people), on several communes in Vrancea County, in order to be able to objectively identify the psychological effects for the minors left at home;
- ✓ the study could be greatly improved and transformed into a representative sample of interviewees in advanced quantitative research using an econometric model in SPSS or Eviews.

Romanians have a different mentality than the rest of European countries, they are more conservative or extremists when it comes to risk, either they totally avoid it or totally embrace it. Just like gambling, they gamble with their own lives in hopes of having a better one. As we have seen so far in this article, risk is based on the need to survive even though the hardship imposed on their families is great.

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