

THE ECONOMIC RECESSION IN THE OPINION OF THE RETIRED PEOPLE IN JIU VALLEY

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Abstract: *Any economic recession affects all of life's dimensions and all its social categories, some being more or less exposed to long term effects of the cause phenomenon. Retired people are one category which is more than obviously disadvantaged by this kind of situation, to which, together with the insufficiency of incomes there also appear problems related to age (health, loneliness, the feeling of uselessness, the incapacity to do without any help) to which, lately the lack of hope and confidence, the feeling of dissatisfaction that after a life full of work, period which, should offer them relaxation and rest, offers them a lot of humiliation and makes them struggle for subsistence. It may also be believed that the problems of retired people are almost the same independent of the geographic area or the economic specific of the area, but our study also revealed specific problems in the case of retired people in Jiu Valley. The paper shall therefore deal with the perception of these people on the economic recession period, compared to the opinions related to the pre-crisis period, trying to catch the actual mentality and their expectations for the near future.*

Keywords: retired people, quality of life, social problems, economic recession.

Introduction

The condition of a “successful old age” with all its aspects is maintaining the social arrangement (Fontaine, 2008, p. 176) by practicing a series of socially useful activities and by maintaining the social relationships. The retreat from the active and professional life supposes an effort to adapt to the new status, which is not the equivalent to giving up to social relations or activities, even if the process of leaving employment signals a sort of narrowing down of the social circle, the

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retired person giving up to certain social roles while society retreats, as well, its implication from the life of that person. "One of the most pressing needs for the elderly is the absolute need for communication and interaction with others. In its absence the feeling of loneliness installs itself having devastating effects upon mental and physical health of the elderly" (Pleșa, 2012, pp. 75-76). Even if the sphere of social life continuously narrows down, retirement should bring to the person who has recently been deactivated from the labour field, not only rest and relaxation, but also an increased desire for social contacts as long as there is more time allocated now in this regard. Nevertheless, the desire to stay active mentally and socially manifests itself only when the basic needs (the needs of subsistence) are ensured. A state of economic insecurity, to which age related problems are added (especially health) determine the person in cause to retreat from other type of activities, to isolate, negatively affecting therefore their life. The reactions of the community are as well very important, "ageism (the discrimination of people according to their age) being more and more often met both on an individual level as well as on an institutional one [...] The elderly tend to become *invisible* because the society we live in considers youth, vitality and physical activity to be more important" (Pleșa, 2012, p. 75). Added together, the lack of activity on the labour field, the feeling of uselessness, the indifference of the society and material-financial problems may irremediably affect the quality of life of the retired person while their reason to communicate, to have social relations shall be limited to what is strictly necessary, namely to communication with the closest ones. Even if each person represents an entity specifically defined, the departing premise of the survey is that the deterioration of the material quality of life has as direct consequence the gradual retreat from the social sphere and the appearance of the isolation and frustration phenomena with the retired people, namely the appearance of social disengagement (Bowling, 2005, p. 3). If from material considerations the life of most Romanian retired people has never been too good, the economic crisis did not do anything but enhance the problems, add the feeling of insecurity of tomorrow and the one of almost full disconsideration of the society. Statements such as "I am retired now, I am ready to die", which have been heard more often during the past three years, only synthesise the state of failure, frustration, and justified indignation of those who, until lately, were involved in the development of the community. The problems of the elderly are a lot in number as well as delicate, exceeding the material aspects of their lives, bringing forward the entire range of feelings and experiences due to the disengaging process, by the effort of adapting to the new condition, by the continuous deterioration of health (although inherent), by the relative loss of contact with the problems of the active society or those of the new generation, reasons for which special attention is implied both from the State (legislatively) and from the civil society (material and psychological support activities, social assistance, integration in groups and collectives with similar problems, etc.).

Research area and methodology

The present research was carried out during January – March 2012 in the entire Jiu Valley which from social considerations it represents a mono-industrial area, its main activity being coal mining around which the other economic preoccupations have developed. On a 2011 year level, the area had 118.294 inhabitants (NSI, Preliminary results of the census at the 31st of October 2011, www.inse.ro/recensamant) while the statistics of Hunedoara County were mentioning a number of 123.463 retired people in the county in the third trimester of 2012 (www.insse.ro/buletinstatjud) out of which Jiu Valley had approximately 26.123 people, 53% of them being registered in the League of Retired Miners of Jiu Valley, therefore retired miners.

The number of retired people comprised in the research was 568, the number of self administered questionnaires was 600, while the recovery rate was only 94.67%. the characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1, the largest proportion being occupied by women, while over a quarter of the total being represented by relatively young retired people, which is mainly due to the fact that those over 40 years old with over 20 years of underground work, are legally fit for retirement, the number of those with a medium level professional training and unmarried (especially widowers or divorced) being predominant.

Table 1. *The characteristics of the lot of retired people (%)*

variable		Total
sex	male	44.72
	female	55.28
age	40 - 60 years old	26.23
	over 60 years old	73.77
Studies	without + elementary	6.87
	gymnasium	15.32
	Professional schools	27.82
	high-school	34.86
	Superior	15.13
Civil status	Married	46.83
	Unmarried	53.17

Considering the type of received pension, half of the people are retired at the age limit or anticipated from the mining sector, and just 7% are retired from medical reasons (invalidity retirement), the rest being retired at the age limit from different fields of activity (Figure 1).

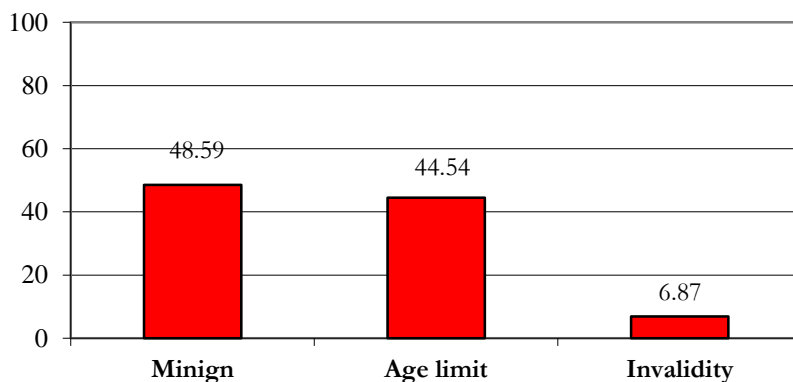


Figure 1. Retirement categories (%)

Data analysis and interpretation

Before enquiring for more delicate aspects of life, it was desired to find out which were their greatest problems, considering the economic crisis of the past years, which has obviously affected their life quality. Therefore, although it was expected for the material problems to be placed on the first three places, they seem to be exceeded by other problems (Figure 2), health deterioration being on top of the misfortunes. If the degradation of the physical state may be caused by economical aspects as well as by biological factors, the functioning of the organism at old age, it is more than obvious that the other two aspects, namely narrowing down the friends' circle and demoralisation due to lack of activity, strongly affect the psychic side of life. Material deficiencies, the feeling of incertitude considering the receipt of money (pension), marginalization by the community and the feeling of alienation even by their own family amends the sad picture of an existence unable to find an echo in society. The number of those having expressed this feeling is not small, filling in on the questionnaire statements such as: "I have worked all my life for others and now I am considered as cheap as dirt", "It is painful to see you are good for others as long as you are able to help them", "A country having mocked us is not worthy of our labour", "As long as you retire nobody even cares about you", "We are regarded as beggars, as if we hadn't worked a lifetime for this country" etc. If the freshly retired person needs to make efforts to adapt to the new status, to continue to remain mentally and socially active, to avoid isolation and marginalisation, it is also true that society does not take the minimum effort to make this transition from active to passive retired life any easier. On the contrary, several of our respondents share the feeling that at the end of the period of activity is the equivalent of the end of relations and social contacts: "I don't mention here young people, we too avoid each other ... our talks are resumed to comments on the pension, politics and that's it ... you won't see two or more retired people talking of something else", "if it hadn't been for this crisis I would have found some other employment, anywhere, because otherwise nobody cares about you, you are as much as buried for the rest"...

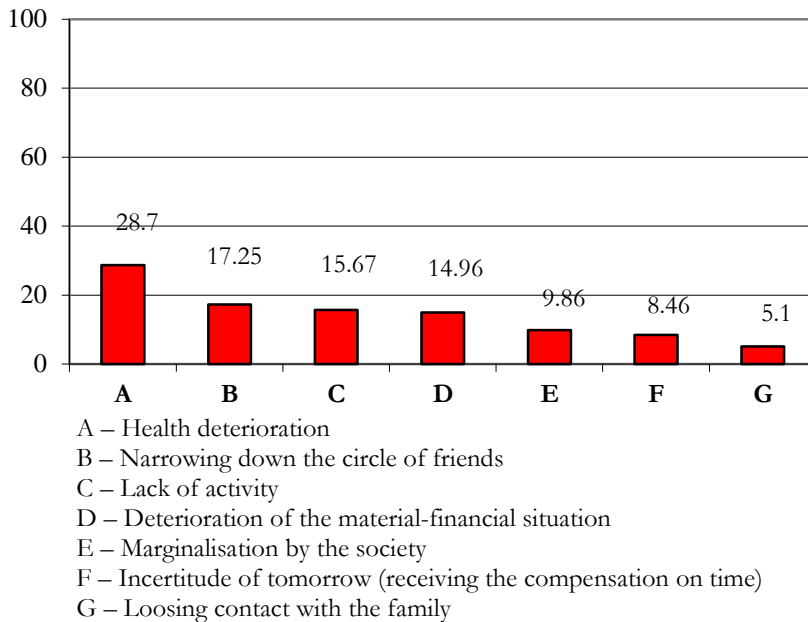


Figure 2. *The most important problem the retired people are presently dealing with (%)*

Compared to the situation before 2009, the subjects consider that the quality of their life has significantly gone for worse (Figure 3), there is still a small number who consider that the situation is most likely the same or even better than it used to be. Among their motivation, the amelioration of health can be noticed, therefore less problems caused by the need of treatments, hospitalisations or travelling in order to follow treatment for their sickness.

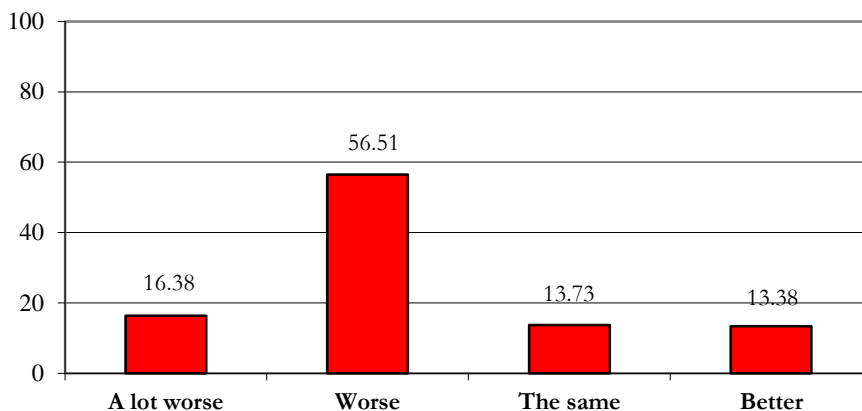


Figure 3. *The opinion on the situation of life nowadays with the period before 2009 (%)*

73% of the respondents are visibly affected by the economic recession, their justifications being extremely variable (Table 2), and as their motivations were offered as free answers, their hierarchy needed post-coding and including all of them in within the established categories. Out of 414 persons to have declared that

the situation of their life has gone worse, only 393 have managed to motivate their choice.

Table 2 (%): Causes leading to life going worse (393 answers)

Choices	subjects
income decrease, prices and taxes increase, the decrease of the standard of living	39.95
continuous degradation of interpersonal relations, disinterest of the society for the problems of its members	23.16
corruption, state incompetence in managing crises, the incompetence of the political class	22.65
others*	14.24
Total	393=100

*= the deterioration of health, lack of family understanding, lack of hope that things will be all right, lack of respect for the elderly, the feeling of uselessness, lack of activity, loss of the partner or a member of the family, care for children and grandchildren.

If the main problem for a lot of subjects is the degradation of health, it may be appreciated as a consequence of the decrease of the standard of living, decrease due to the increase of taxes, fees, contribution to the health fund, increase in the price of utilities, necessity and subsistence products, and not the least the cost of medical assistance which is more and more precarious and becomes being paid from the beneficiaries' personal income. On the other hand its once again noticed the preoccupation of the respondents for the social side of life, making them feel the deterioration of relationships, both personal as well as of the entire relation system of the community: "people are becoming more remote, savage, each fights for his own well being", "One cannot trust anybody nowadays, nobody helps you, each and every one is self centred", "People fight for no reason, they are angry, they have lost their patience and don't care about anything or anyone" ... almost the same number of retired people state that the reduction of the standard of living is directly correlated to the incompetence and disinterest of those who should manage the situation (the State and the politics): "We are to blame for believing them every time", "They promise to solve the situation and when they reach the power they solve their own", "It's a pity for this country, they all mock it", most of the subjects mention to have lived difficult times in the hope of a most peaceful old age, but it seems that their problems seem far to have ended. We are aware of the fact that on the level of common sense, each one considers to have worked harder or to have lived more difficult than the generations to follow, but this does not legitimate the idea according to which retirement, as the final period of life, should be touched the same by the deficiencies or by the problems of the previous period. Therefore, the correct attitude supposes for these people to enjoy resting and the fruits of their labour without any additional problems besides the natural ones, of mental or physical health, which, in Romania does not really happen. Several respondents declared that they cannot cope anymore with the problems

but they constantly worry about their offspring, children and grandchildren: “We have lived our life but what about the young, they learn and learn and don’t have anywhere to work”, “I cannot ask the children to help us, they need more help than us nowadays”, “Luckily that at a young age everything is easier, I can’t sleep at night at the thought of how will my daughter handle life, she has two diplomas but no job, it is good she can still sleep”.

Summarising, the first premise of the deterioration of the standard of living is represented by the reduction of incomes to which the important aspects of social life are added. The continuous preoccupation regarding the subsistence leads loneliness, to withdrawal from group activities, to the feeling of frustration and incapacity, all these aspects significantly affect the psychic already vulnerable of an old person, which needs to fight with the illnesses inherent to the age, and with the feeling of uselessness towards the community. This is the same explanation for the entire range of negative feelings which people feel during this period (Figure 4), most of them admitting to be revolted by this type of surviving and that they don’t expect anything good for them to happen until the end of their days.

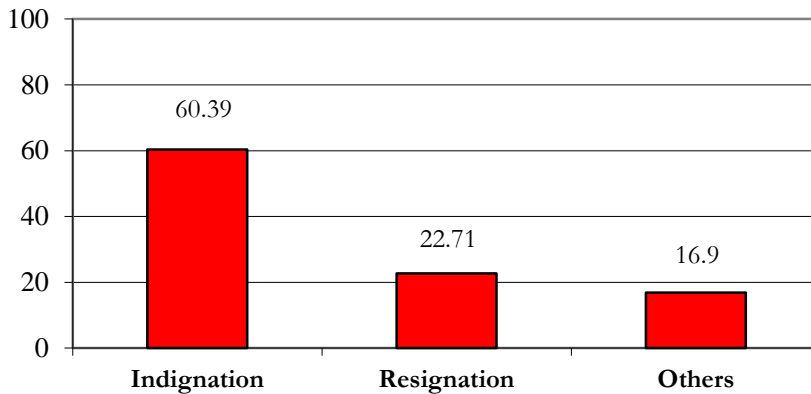


Figure 4. *The more acute feelings during this period (%)*

The “Indignation” category codifies all the references to the states of frustration, incapacity, anger, worry, desire to do something for this situation to be resolved, desire to help the young ones cope with the problems of life. It could also be stated that this is the first research where there have been so many opinions from the people, most of the subjects offering explanations and mental states for the answers which did not require a motivation.

Therefore, almost 23% of those found in the feeling of “indignation” expressed their desire and capacity to activate for the use of the community, not asking for retribution but considering the general idea “all we want is to be heard, young people no longer listen to anybody, we may still have good advice or ideas”. The others have manifested freely their indignation and frustration towards a society which has made use of them and now throws them aside: “besides the laws it is

compelled to pass, the State doesn't care about the retired people, and most of the times it doesn't even abide to its own laws", "If I were younger again I wouldn't work for a world who doesn't appreciate it", "It is painful to see how quick we have to die in order for the State to get rid of burdens", etc. At the opposite pole, those who are already resigned included those who consider that things will return on the normal track, those who assume a certain blame for the lack of education and respect of the Romanian contemporary society, those who admit being defeated and totally incapable when facing these phenomena. Here is an example of a subject who has graduated from secondary education, retired from mining, statement which seemed probative in this regard: "I feel I have lived in vain, I am aware that the word is changing, but there is too much trash and lack of respect regarding value and man ... I almost believe that there are no normal, educated and, the most important, educated people left in this country". Fortunately all these sad thoughts come from a social category which should fully rejoice with its lifelong realisations, of some people who should relax keeping their mind and spare time busy with activities giving them satisfaction and a pleasant state of mind. The main responsible for such a state, in the opinion of the retired people, is the political factor and its lack of dignity in front of external obligations during this period. People are more and more often comparing this period to the pre-revolution one and even if they are accused of some sort of nostalgia over much blamed times, it is to be admitted that their reference are not based on the idea that "it was better back then" but "we were more dignified": "it was harder for the Romanian, but it seems we did not bow like this to all the foreigners", "a handful of people has sold this entire country to others, something nobody has ever done in the entire history of Romania" and so on and so forth. It is advisable to mention them here because, independent on the level of education of training, on how informed or how much the respondents know regarding the economy, this accusation seems to appear more and more often, resulting in a focus of all their discontent towards the total disinterest of the authorities.

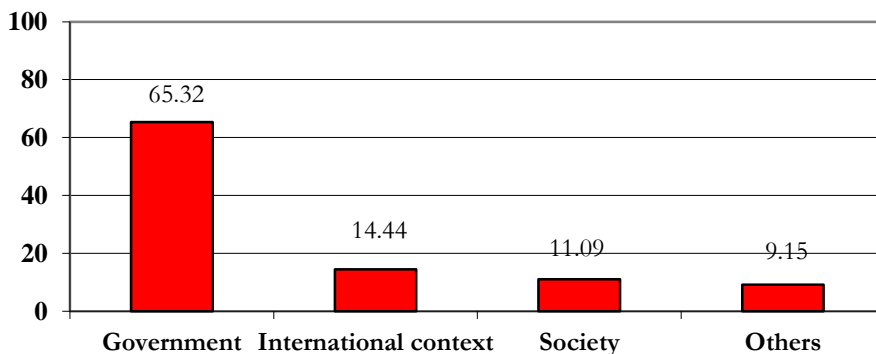


Figure 5. *The main responsible for the present situation of Romanian society (%)*

In the category of “others” all the answers which regarded strictly the government and the politics in general were included, which is compulsory to be considered, even if they are not comprised by our codification; therefore, the accusations are being thrown in different directions, from the International Monetary Fund to the local authorities, from the lack of education and the weak quality of our educational system to the private economic system, from the young population who would rather emigrate to the mass-media which, some say, does not do any good for the Romanian society. Although these opinions should have been included in the category “the entire Romanian society” they were included separately, in order to reveal the different opinions of the subjects.

The same diversity in opinions is observable in the case of possible solutions which should be applied for the rehabilitation of the Romanian society from the economic and social crisis of the past years (Table 3).

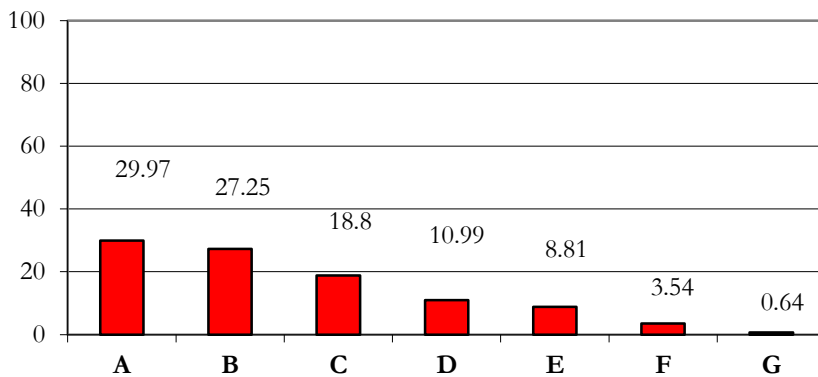
Table 3. *Solutions for the economic and social rehabilitation of Romanian society (%)*

Choices →	first choice	second choice	total choices
Solutions ↓			
a more competent political class, and more focused on solving the problems	46.3	23.56	35.05
economic reform based on efficiency criteria	16.73	25.72	21.17
the increase of the level of education and civilisation	18.31	14.75	16.56
calling the specialists for all sort of problems the society may have	8.63	17.63	13.08
choosing to use the national natural resources in stead of imports	2.46	7.72	5.07
Others	7.57	10.62	9.07
total	568=100	556=100	1124=100

Except for the now known accusations brought to the political class (incompetence, lack of interest for the well being of the nation), the reformation of the economy on criteria of efficiency and not applying the “bring to insolvency and sell” has reached a sensitive spot in the case of our subjects which were eager to comment the case of the former National Coal Company of Petroșani (CNH) even before asking for their opinion on the problems of Jiu Valley. It also seems that the more obvious lack of education attracts the attention of most of the subjects, to which the need, proven for so many times, for the specialists to handle the specific problems of the society (economists, analysts, sociologists, demographer, etc) is also added. Here are some of the possible solutions revealed by the retired people, even if their register varies from radicalism to non-realism: limiting or putting an end to foreign investments in the country, a more efficient control of the State in the private sector of the economy, banning the specialists from emigrating independent on their field of expertise, military dictatorship, immediate dismissal

of those who cannot make proof of their professional skills, the non-vassalage of the country to eastern economic interests, punishing the guilty ones and applying the law in all the cases, and so on and so forth. Besides the hilarious aspects and clear proof disavowal, in some cases, of the legislation and of human rights, it can still be appreciated that none of these so called solutions are not in the disadvantage of the nation, on the contrary, they are the proof for the desire to reinstate normality and the existence of patriotism even if it not really acknowledged.

In what the means for the rehabilitation of the economic situation in Jiu Valley are concerned, and the alternatives offered in the paper as potential solutions and those added by the subjects, they were more emphasised (Figure 6).



- A – Keeping active the exploitation capacities of the existent mines, rehabilitation of the technology and mining investments
 B – Creating working places in other sectors
 C – More interest and involvement from the local and central authorities
 D – Tourism oriented area
 E – Elimination of corruption and incompetency on all levels
 F – The integration of the National Coal Company in a viable energetic joint venture
 G – Others (putting an end to the emigration of young, developing the zooculture, developing agro-tourism, removing the mining employment interdiction, etc., creating a new community centre where the representatives of all categories in the area may take part in rehabilitation projects and programmes)

Figure 6. *Solutions for economic rehabilitation in Jiu Valley (total choices) (%)*

The much discussed integration of the National Company of Coal in the Hunedoara Energetic Joint Venture (CEH) doesn't seem to be pleasing the retired people, because it supposes the elimination from production of four mines, namely to close them. At the time when these results were synthesised, the National Company for the Closing of Mines has already been appointed and, from the moment when the documents for attaching the rest of the mines viable to the CEH, the problem of insolvency is brought forward as there a still no investors,

leading to the words of so many people “it is a clear direction in putting an end to mining in Jiu Valley, it has to be shredded as it was done with all of the great industrial platforms of the country”. There are again, with a cumulated proportion of 28%, the opinions according to which the situation could be remedied by eliminating corruption, incompetence and by making the local authorities care about the problems of the community. In what the eternally stated solution is concerned, namely tourism, it seems not to have an overwhelming effect on the retired people, because they have been invariably hearing the same theme and things are far from offering escape valves from the local economic chaos. It is quite clear for every inhabitant of the area that only mining is able to economically support the region and the investments and that the attention of all the decisional factors needs to be therefore focused in this regard. Even with all the energetic programmes of the European Union and Romania which foresee the shutdown of the activity of mines proposed for being closed and preserved by 2018, the respondents are extremely sceptical concerning the period of time in which the area could become economically viable considering the lack of mining (Figure 7).

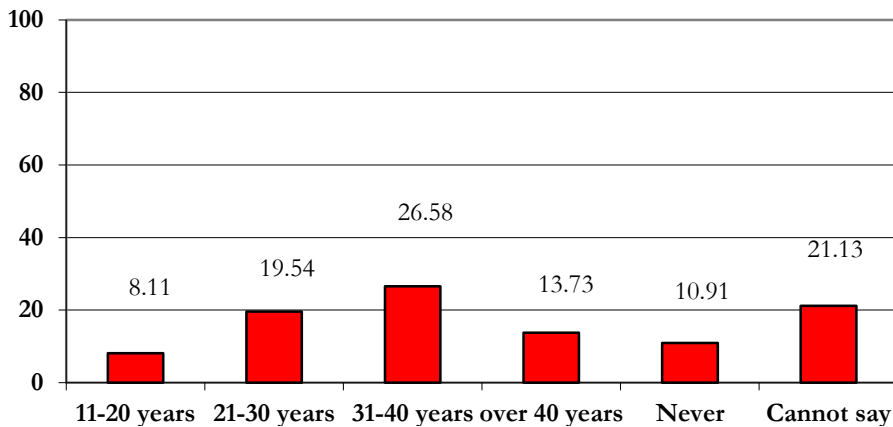


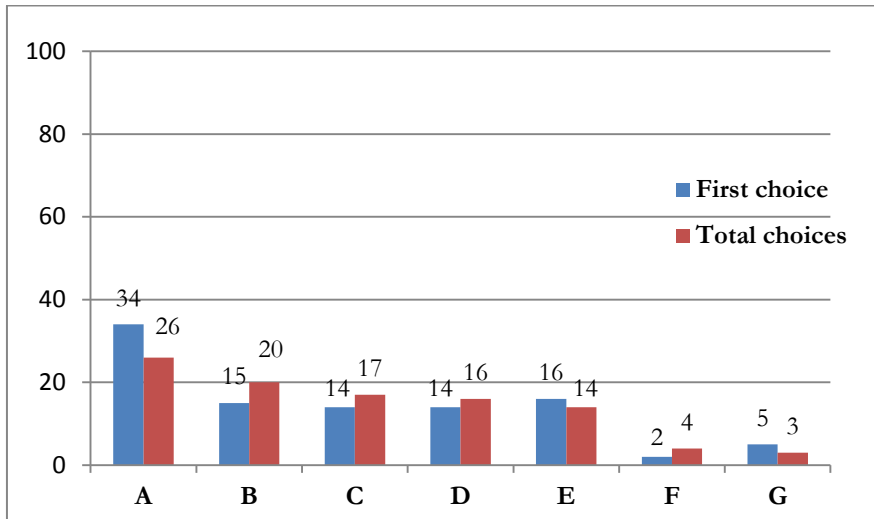
Figure 7. *Appreciating the period in which Jiu Valley may become economically efficient considering the lack of mining (%)*

None of the respondents did not consider that there would be this opportunity in less than 10 years, while most of those who still hope in its existence, place it in a future over 20 years even more, which brings us back to the problem of dependence on mining and searching for solutions to maintain it active if not to develop it.

The opinion of the retired people concerning the effects of the period of the economic crisis not only on the individual standard of living but also on the region, and on the community they are a part of, was questioned. Therefore, Table 4 makes a hierarchy (depending on the proportion of the two choices to which each one had the right) of the main aspects which people consider to be affected directly by the economic situation:

Table 4. *The main effects the economic recession had on Jiu Valley (%)*

Subjects→	First choice	Second choice	Total
Effects↓			
Continuous decrease of the standard of living	33.63	17.51	25.84
The deterioration of family relationship, at the work place, in society	15.14	26.18	20.47
Amplification of corruption in all the fields	14.26	19.21	16.66
Depopulation of the area	13.2	18.46	15.74
Social accentuated polarisation, pauperisation, marginalisation of the under-privileged categories	16.37	10.55	13.56
Loss of economic tradition of the area	2.46	5.84	4.09
Others	4.94	2.25	3.64
Total	568	531	1099



A – Continuous decrease of the standard of living

B – The deterioration of interpersonal relations at the work place, within the family and the community

C – Amplification of corruption in all of the fields

D – Depopulation of the area, emigration of the young people

E – Accentuated social polarisation, pauperisation of the inhabitants and marginalisation of the under-privileged categories

F – Loss of economic tradition of the area through the mine closing strategy

G – Others (the deterioration of the health of the population, the increase of the number of deviant and antisocial acts, the lack of long term professional perspectives, the increase of unemployment, the loss of interest for social, cultural or past time activities)

Figure 8. *The effects of the economic recession in Jiu Valley (resulted for the first choice as well as for total choices) (%)*

When general appreciations are considered and if it had been asked for a single choice in this regard, the deterioration of the standard of living of all the inhabitants of the area is followed closely by the social polarisation, pauperisation and marginalisation of the under-privileged social groups, where the retired people feel included, totalising half of the opinions of the subjects. Considering that the respondents had the possibility to make two choices, in order of the importance given, the final results place second the phenomenon of interpersonal relations dissolution in society, both on the level of the entire community as well as on the level of the community and that of the family. It is possible that the retired people understand this process more acutely considering that they deal with the lack of social contacts, with the deterioration of relations in the extended family or they realise the fact from the stories of young people (children and grandchildren) that things at work are no longer what they used to be or what they had lived: “the world has gotten worse, you don’t see colleagues or people in the street helping each other anymore ... you are even afraid to step into an altercation, you can never know what may happen and nobody will defend you”, “Help one friend or one neighbour and the next day you may find your windows broken”, “each and every one is interested in his own wining or how to maintain his work place, even if he doesn’t deserve it, this is the reason for the corruption and tag tailing in Romania”. In what family relations are concerned, the motivations of the subjects have taken into consideration, most likely, their unhappy personal experience: “as you get old you are left without money, the children don’t look for you anymore”, “nowadays there is no longer the respect for the parents, help them no more and they forget about you”, “can’t you see the number of children hitting or murdering their parents? Where’s the education and the respect?”, “unfortunately it is the parents’ fault, they have worked as hard as they could for their children to live a better life ... for what, what have they ended up with? They are thrown out of their homes, they are persecuted, starved, beaten, put into asylums ... no parent wanted his child to suffer, each one did as best as they could ... and then?”... Sad statements of those found at an age where children should return them the care and love with which they had been raised. Obviously, we are conscious that there are unhappy cases where the blame for this type of behaviour is that of the parents, but these are relatively small in number considering the cases we see and hear of every day. It is although convened, and hoped, that all the subjects which did not consider to place this effect of the recession on the first place, do not face such misfortunes, especially that the premises of such a behaviour (although conjugal violence and the derangement of family relations have, evidently, material causes) do not reside only in the deterioration of the economic situation. The intention of our survey was not to study these aspects thoroughly, but the reactions of the people may become interesting hypotheses for future researches.

And although this research was started from the hypothesis that the deterioration of the material quality of life inevitably affects the interpersonal relations and the desire to be more active socially, the study has brought forward information of the kind as well. Therefore, the question which dealt with this problem has received

the answers presented in Figure 9 as well as the motivations to be presented as follows:

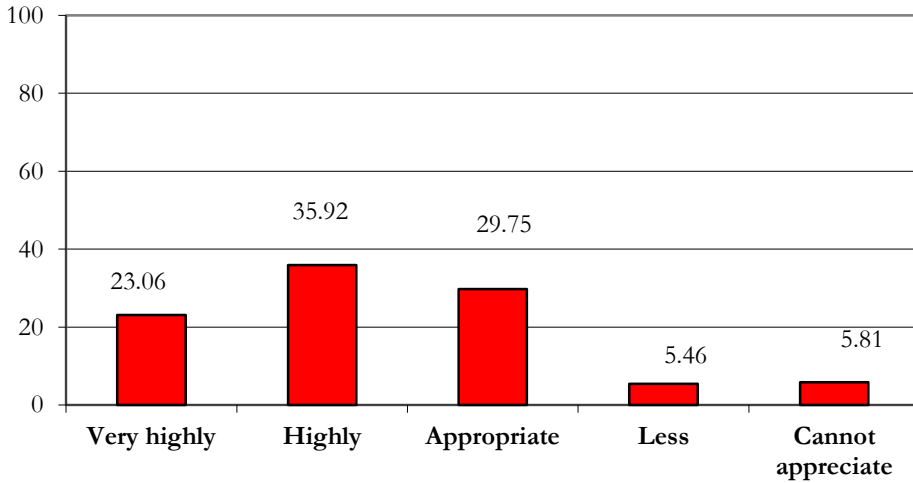


Figure 9. *The measure in which retired people appreciate how the material – financial deficiencies influenced their giving up the social contacts (%)*

Each answer required a motivation of choice, and some of these motivations shall be presented for each answer: those who (approximately 60%) appreciate that the deterioration of the material quality was a consequence for the gradual retreat from the entourage give the following explanations: “I had a group which I used to see often, a rummy or a chess game, every week, at a friend’s house ... I can no longer afford the snack i used to give them, so I quit”, “going out with friends require money, this is the thing retired people do not have” “to go to the club, (retired peoples’ club) or the park (retired peoples’ park) one needs money for one beer or two at least ... where from?”, “when there are some money everyone is your friend, when it runs out, everybody hides in their homes, they either wait for death or for the pension to come” and so on and so forth. Those who consider themselves somehow unaffected by the degradation of the material state in relation to others state the following: “if I give this up too what else will be left?” or “I have good friends, they understand me when there are days without any money for a treat”, “if I had given up friends due to the lack of money, I wouldn’t have had any friend. I cannot live alone just because I cannot drink champagne every day” ... It can be observed from the realised correlations that those who do not feel the repercussions of the economic crisis in the relations with others are, especially, retired miners (who benefit from a better compensation than others), those having graduated from superior studies, those who are married, especially men and those with a relatively young retirement age (40-60 years), confirming mine retirement, where once can retire at the age of 40 if one has 20 years of underground activity (1st labour group). On the opposite pole (those affected by the decrease of income) are women, retired at the limit age having graduated from high school.

Because the question makes reference to the relation between the decrease of the standard of living as a premise for social seclusion after retirement, a follow-up question was then asked to verify the consistency of the subjects' appreciations (Figure 10)

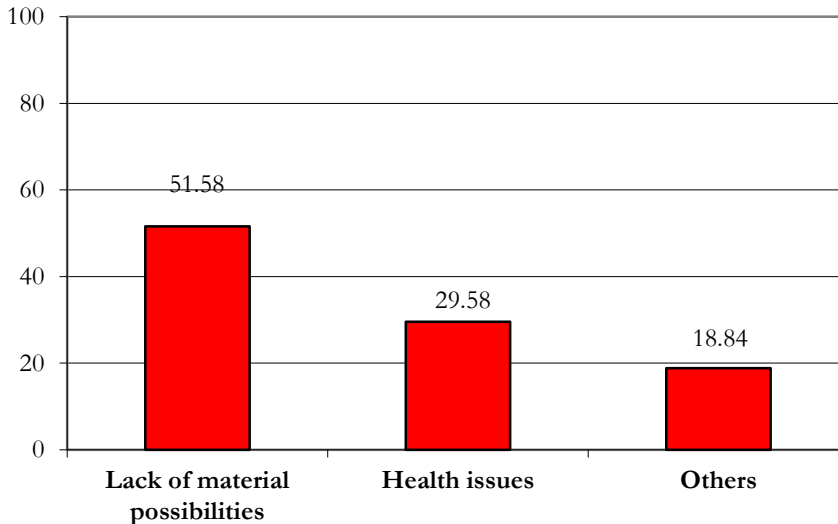


Figure 10. *The main aspect which may determine the social seclusion and solitude of retired people (%)*

Out of the 60% who declared that the lack of financial possibilities may determine isolation and giving up social contacts only 52% remain faithful to the idea, the rest of the motivations oscillating between the deterioration of the state of health (appreciated by 29% as being the main problem to deal with) and the alternatives such as: the lack of necessary time (time occupied by grandchildren and extended family), the lack of subjects and common interests, tense family relations which do not allow the contact with other people, the lack of interest for such relations, etc. It is certain that the degradation of the material state determines an obvious retreat from the social sphere, people being more often put in the situation of being unable to handle financially the maintenance of social relations with the contact group: “we meet, discuss the money, the people with power who mock us and that’s it ... and this happens either at the market or in the building of flats”. Even if a classical assessment has not been done of the quality of life of retired people (goods possession of long term use, situation of income), it was tempting to verify their answers regarding a more concrete aspect, namely that of connecting with the occasion of holidays or occasional retreats (legal holidays, relaxation). The results obtained confirmed the sad picture until now, namely:

Table 5. *How often they have taken part in the past 5 years with friends in: (%)*

Alternative→	spa vacation (very often=yearly)	vacation (very often=yearly)	occasions with friends (very often=monthly)
Subjects↓			
very often	2.11	1.23	11.97
often	3.7	5.63	30.11
moderate	1.94	3.35	21.65
rarely	34.68	37.32	16.2
quite rarely	14.79	16.37	2.11
never in the past 5 years	42.78	35.21	17.96
NR	-	0.89	-
Total	568=100	568=100	568=100

This situation has excluded the extended family, the interest being that of finding the frequency of their social contacts with other people outside the family. As it was expected, the meetings and getting together with people outside the family happens more often on the occasion of trips (camping, trips, and barbecues) and less often on the occasion of holidays, or spa vacations. The proportion of those who do not tolerate this kind of relaxation opportunities (holidays) together with acquaintances or friends is quite large if we proceed to summing up the following codes “rarely” + “very rarely” + “never”, and dropping significantly in the case of short meetings during legal holidays or with the desire to escape within nature.

Conclusions

This assessment started from the hypothesis according to which the degradation of the material state of the life of retired people has as a direct consequence their retreat from the sphere of social relations and seclusion due to, specially, the lack of material resources and social obligations. The following conclusions of the research are therefore reiterated:

- The deterioration of the state of health, the narrowing down of the circle of friends and the lack of activity seem to be the greatest problems of retired people;
- Almost three quarters of the subjects appreciate that the situation of their life has gone for worse compared to the period before 2009, while the main causes of this process are the decrease of income, continuous degradation of the interpersonal relations and the community disinterest for the problems of its members;

- Over 60% of the retired people declare their indignation towards their entire life system, towards the indifference of society at their problems considering that they had a share in its development;
- The political class which holds the power (the government) and the international economical, political and social context are the main “culprits” for the degradation of the standard of living;
- The chances that the Romanian society to straighten economically and socially depends on the existence of a competent political class, and especially interested in solving the problems;
- In what Jiu Valley is concerned, the solutions for an economical-social straightening imply to keep the mines active, this being still the only solution for the survival of the area, alternated with the development of other economic sectors;
- The hope that Jiu Valley resist economically in the absence of mining is quite far, even retired from the labour field people realise that tourism or other economic alternatives are still utopias for the region;
- The decrease of the standard of living, polarisation of society, deterioration of interpersonal relations (either inside the family or at the work place, or the community) are appreciated as being direct effects of the economic recession in Jiu valley;
- Almost 60% of the respondents agree that the decrease of the standard of living and the financial limitations have affected the desire and possibility to maintain social contacts with the circle of friends, acknowledging that besides occasional, sporadic and short period partners, they do not keep in touch with their friends.

The hypothesis of the research re-emerges, hypothesis according to which, when the survival needs are not satisfied, it is difficult or even impossible to deal with the social side of life ... the statements of the subjects making reference to the fear of getting out of the house because financial restraints and the fact that socialisation implies a minimum material status, and it is therefore eloquent, as the examples to harden the results of the research. A famous statement recently met says that “moral junk comes from material junk” and the phenomenon of reducing the interest towards the community, isolation is not characteristic to the retired people, only they also add the aspects related to the degradation of the state of health, the feeling of uselessness towards the community and their own family, to the shock felt once passing to the stage of retirement, to the sad ascertainment that once one has left the activity he is no longer important for the society with all these trials and unavoidable processes through which the generation we are due to respect goes through, it is happy to see that they are still connected to the problems of society, even if it has long taken its hands off them considering the legislation and the remittance of the pension. Although we are on the territory of a scientific

intercession, we would like to end it with an ascertainment found in the questionnaires filled in by the retired people: “this is how it is after a lifetime of work, when the money arrives, this is for the gas, this is for the electricity, this is for the condominium, this is for a chicken and what do you see, I wanted to give something to a poor doggie or to buy my wife a scarf ... maybe next month”.

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