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The existence of bullying is certain at the level of country or populations who have old traditions and a large percentage of the communities who chooses living in rural areas, on principles related to the traditional way of life. This traditional style also involves autonomy in terms of infrastructure: the toilet outside the house, in the yard, the households having their own source of water, septic tanks instead of sewerage and even transport with animals and traditional wooden vehicles. The purpose of our study is to measure the perception of those people regarding the reflection of their image in mass-media and social media. The toilet in the yard (outdoor) had become subject for bullying and public shaming, not only as an indicator for economy. The research uses both empirical and theoretical methods, qualitative and quantitative: Analysis of statistical data and case studies, as well as the Sociological Survey. The main hypothesis from which the research have started in this research is that people who still have a toilet outdoor perceive this as a necessity for autonomy and they also perceive the news about this subject in mass-media and social media as bullying and public shaming.

Keywords: *autonomy, toilet, public shaming, bullying, blackout*

INTRODUCTION

This research have tried to measure the perception of people from the rural communities who still have a toilet outdoor, in the yard, to understand if their choice is a good indicator for the degree of poverty and lack of civilization from their point of view. What in today's "civilized world" seems like a "barbarism" of the Middle Ages can be not only a tourist attraction for those who want to live like this for at least a few days, on a vacation, but can also be the rescue in case of blackout in winter. Although cultural anthropology has eliminated the segregation of "civilized" and "barbarian" communities since the 1970's, this type of segregation is occurring more than ever, and this is the basis for bullying and public shaming for the entire the country. It often have been found in mass-media and social media formulations that mark the equality between shame, poverty, lack of civilization and the toilet in the yard. However, in countries like Romania, Bulgaria or other countries in Southeast Europe, not only the poverty or lack of development of sewerage and water supply infrastructure have maintained the toilet in the yard, but also the tradition.

In the traditional rural communities, in Romania, it can be observed a degree of reluctance towards the transition to the sewerage and running water supply system, because of the lack of autonomy that such a connection to networks implies. It can be even noticed a predilection for choosing the traditional toilet, placed outside the house, for reasons of hygiene, saving resources, neighboring the principles of the green economy to which the world is heading today, through Green Deal.

On the other hand, in 2021, the experts in electricity discussed about the imminence of a blackout in Europe, this winter. Austria is the first country to announce this problem and launch warnings. An analysis made for Goldman Sachs Group Inc also warned in September 2021 that a blackout is possible in winter. „Europe’s soaring energy markets are exposing the risk of power blackouts this winter, especially if freezing weather worsens the region’s already exceptionally low natural gas inventories, according to Goldman Sachs Group Inc.” (Bloomberg, September 15th). These forecasts were made starting from the critical situation of energy reserves at the beginning of September, which aggravated the situation already created by the rapid recovery after the first part of the pandemic, which greatly increased the demand for energy (both electricity, as well as gas), which led to higher prices, but also lower reserves. In early September 2021, a fire destroyed a very important submarine electricity cable between Britain and France, exacerbating the UK's energy crisis. Even though the gas problem has been almost resolved in the last two weeks, and Russia has given assurances about gas deliveries to Europe, the other problems remain valid and seem to be getting worse. That is why the Austrian Minister of Defense, Klaudia Tanner, has warned that a huge breakdown in the interconnected European energy system could follow in a very short time. Thus, Europe could run out of electricity for a day to a week. Austrian army and the Austrian Ministry of the Interior have been simulating the management of such a major crisis situation, in connection with the maintenance of essential services and, of course, in order to save as many lives as possible. A blackout already happened on January 8th, affecting also the north-western part of Romania. In this situation, those who have autonomy of their households will be less affected by the possible blackout and the outdoor toilets are part of this autonomy. But exactly those who have this kind of autonomy are the victims of bullying and public shaming for their outdoor toilets. Most people who keep the toilet outdoor, even after connecting to the water supply and sewerage networks or after building toilets inside the house, motivate the choice by the fact that it is cleaner, more hygienic, more economical and safer, in case something can happen to the toilet inside the house or to the sewer system. Thus, pushing, bullying and public shaming do not affect those who keep their toilet outside to assure the household's autonomy, not because they would not have other hygiene solutions. The sign of equality between the outdoor toilet and shame is placed in all Romanian mass-media articles presenting the Eurostat annual reports. It is already a general perceived equality by public opinion, without other comments or attempts to explain the situation. Everything that is written about the evolution of the number of toilets in the yard, from 2010 to the Eurostat report published in November 2020, includes this sign of equality between shame, lack of civilization, poverty and the outdoor toilet. Here is an excerpt from such an article that completes a TV report with the same topic: „Romania is once again the shame of Europe, with a quarter of homes without toilets inside. Basically, in one of the four houses, people go to the back of the yard, in the year when the authorities are talking about hygiene measures to fight the pandemic. Romania is thus in last place in Europe when it comes to minimum hygiene conditions. The share of homes in Romania that do not have a toilet inside is ten times higher than the European Union average. Romania is once again at the tail end of Europe in terms of civilization. On International Toilet Day, a quarter of Romanians go out in the yard to celebrate the moment - it's a joke, unfortunately bitter. In 2019 Eurostat shows that 24.2% of the over 8 million homes did not have a bathroom with toilet in the house” (<https://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/social/romania-pe-ultimul-loc-in-ue-la-locuintele-cu-toaleta-in-interior-un-sfert-dintre-romani-au-wc-ul-in-curte.html>). This quotation is relevant for all the mass-media and social media approach of this subject. The only comment about this problem of the outdoor toilet is about the poverty, shame and lack of civilization.

None of these analyzes includes a research on the perception of those who prefer to keep the toilet outdoor, in the yard, in rural areas, in Romania. This research started with a traditional community in Dobrogea (Romania), which has many elements in common with the region of northern Bulgaria. Being a country specific situation and a regional tradition, which includes several countries from the former communist bloc, the field research can be extended to other countries in Southeast Europe, where it is observed to maintain a large number of outdoor toilets, with the purpose to understand this phenomenon also from the point of view of tradition or of a different perception from that of the citizens of Western Europe and of the states considered civilized, according to this indicator: the elimination of the outdoor toilet.

There is a difference between what it is considered to be an indicator of poverty and lack of civilisation and what is, in fact, perceived as a necessity and a part of tradition, by many people. The outdoor toilet is an indicator for poverty, but not all the people who have such a toilet perceive it as a sign of poverty or as something that could be associated with a low quality of their life or with unhappiness. As Ruut Veenhoven demonstrates: „The terms 'quality-of-life', 'wellbeing' and 'happiness' denote different meanings; sometimes they are used as an umbrella term for all of value, and the other times to denote special merits” (Veenhoven 2000). But not only the terminology defines different situations. There is also a difference between the indicators and the perception of the people. Also the american psychologist, professor, and author Ed (Edward Francis) Diener describes the difference between the subjective and the objective well-being, showing how important is the perception of the reality for each person and for a community (Diener 2000). „Subjective well-being is an attitude” write Andrews and Robinson in the chapter on the phenomenon in the well-known „Measure of Personality and Social Psychological Attitudes” collection, „and it is widely accepted that attitudes include at least two fundamental components: cognition and affection”. (Andrews, F. M., Robinson, J. P., 1991).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research uses both empirical and theoretical, qualitative and quantitative methods: Analysis, Field research and Survey. The main research hypothesis were that the bullying is sustained by the image of poverty connected with the outdoor toilet. The repetitivity of some demonic description of the subject in mass-media and social media have as result the distortion of the image of each country, independently of the particular situations. The research started with the qualitative methods (Analysis), continuing with the Field research and the quantitative methods (Survey).

RESULTS

The analysis of the content of articles in the mass-media and social media shows that the perception induced for the public is negative, especially through the keyword „shameful”. One of the titles announced in November 2019: „Romania leads in the top Eurostat (Eurostat 2021) of the countries with the most toilets in the backyard” (https://adevarul.ro/news/eveniment/romania-conduce-detasaat-topul-eurostat-tarilor-cele-mai-multe-wc-uri-fundul-curtii-1_5bf2e7c3df52022f759ccfb/index.html). In 2019, almost a third of homes in Romania had a toilet outside the house - „which puts us on a shameful last place in Europe in terms of modern toilets”, commented the same article in Adevărul. The second place was occupied by Bulgaria, and the third place by Lithuania. The countries in Southeast Europe are always compared with the Western Europe countries, even if it is not only a matter of poverty, but also a matter of culture. Luxembourg, Spain and Germany, by 0.1 percent. The European average for people who do not have a toilet in the house is only 2.4%, according to Eurostat. Romania was leading, from 2010 to 2020, followed by Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Hungary (Figure 1, Source: Eurostat 2021).

Total population not having indoor flushing toilet for the sole use of their household - EU-SILC

Last update: 19-05-2021

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Romania	32.6	29.7	27.7	24.2	22.8
Bulgaria	18.5 ^(b)	16.7	15.3	13.7	13.2
Lithuania	13.7	12.2	10.6	10.0	:
Latvia	12.9	10.9	9.9	8.7	:
Estonia	6.9	6.1	5.3	4.7	:
Hungary	4.3	3.9	3.9	3.1	1.6
Poland	2.4	2.5	2.1	1.7	:
European Union - 28 countries	2.3	2.3 ^(e)	2.0 ^(e)	1.8 ^(e)	:
Croatia	1.7	1.6	1.3	1.1	:
Slovakia	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.8	:
Belgium	1.7	1.1	0.9	0.7 ^(d)	:
Portugal	1.1	1.0	0.8	0.7	:
France	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.5	:
Italy	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.8	:

Among the reasons identified for the high percentage of rural households with toilets in the yard or without bath and shower are the poor development of the public water supply system and the sewerage and wastewater treatment system in rural areas. But there are other reasons that have been discovered in the Field research: economy of water and money; ecological matters; hygienical matters and tradition. Also in the field research it has been discovered tow villages from Dobrogea region, 2 Mai and Vama Veche, that most of the households have both inside and outdoor toilets and showers, because of the local traditions and economical matters. People in those communities also do not consider the outdoor toilet being a matter of poverty and they feel offended by the comments in the mass-media and social media, mostly because the analyst do not understand the real situation. They also feel they are victims of bullying and public shaming because of this misunderstanding.

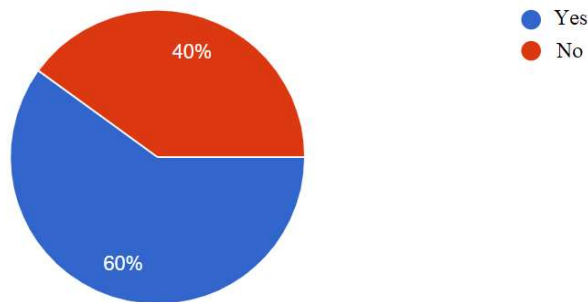
The fact that the outdoor toilet was eliminated by legislation and the idea is that the presence of this toilet is equivalent to lack of civilization and poverty does not match the reality on the ground, in many rural communities in Romania, where the perception of the population is totally different from what is the basis of Eurostat's annual research, but also of other studies that measure the quality of life. There has been conducted a survey of 300 people from the villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche (Limanu, Constanța County, Romania), between May 31 and July 2, 2021. These two villages located on the Black Sea coast, on the border with Bulgaria, have as a tradition receiving tourists in the summer season - a special category of tourists who want to spend their holidays in the rural community, in people's homes, where they live according to the rules of this community, with local traditions and customs, including the outdoor toilet and shower, where water it is heated in the sun at no cost. Most of the inhabitants of the villages 2 Mai and Vama Veche (77.3%) consider that the outdoor toilet is not a sign of poverty, and the vast majority (98.3%) consider that it is not a sign of lack of civilization. Although 28.3% of those who answered the questionnaire say that they have not used the outdoor toilet at all in the last five years, 21% have used it very rarely and 47.3% rarely, 74% have an outdoor toilet, even if they have at least one inside the house, and 73.7% are convinced that the one in the yard is necessary, even if they also have a toilet inside the house. All respondents have their home connected to the water supply, and 60% have their home connected to the sewer, but this does not conflict with the existence of the toilet in the yard or the shower in the yard. 99% of the respondents consider that it is an advantage to connect to the sewerage, and 99.3% consider that it is an advantage to connect to the water supply network, but 95% consider that the toilet in the house can exist without connection to the water and sewerage networks, and 41% have a toilet in the yard and inside the house, without having their home connected to the sewerage network.

According to RAJA Constanța, the village of 2 Mai has 1,066 buildings connected to the water supply network, of which 439 have sewerage, and in Vama Vache there are 375 buildings connected to the water supply network, of which 219 also have sewerage connexion. The villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche have, in total, about 3,350 inhabitants and other 250 building owners, and also 2,557 households, according to the data from Limanu Hall.

60% of the respondents consider that the toilet in the yard is rather a necessity, in order to save water and money, and 93.7% consider that the toilet in the yard is rather a tradition of the community (Figure 2-3).

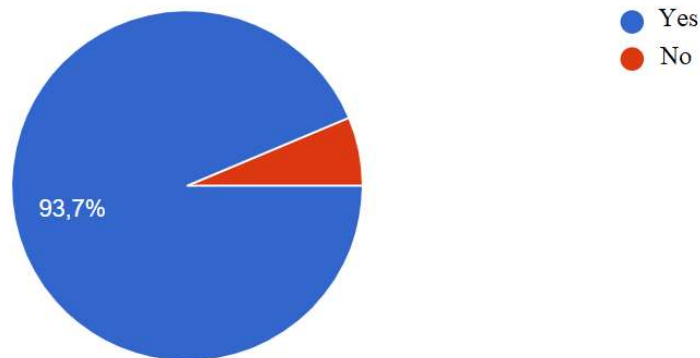
Do you think that the outdoor toilet is rather a necessity to save water and money?

300 answers



Do you consider that the outdoor toilet is rather a community tradition?

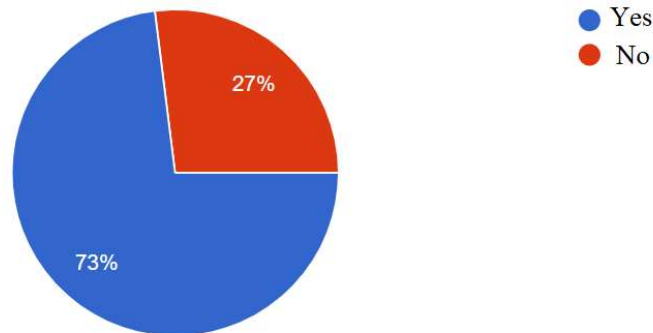
300 answers



This research shows that in the villages of 2 Mai and Vama Veche consider the toilet in the yard and a shower in the yard a matter of autonomy and lower costs (Figure 4).

Do you consider that you maintain the autonomy of the household, keeping the toilet in the yard, not connected to water and sewage?

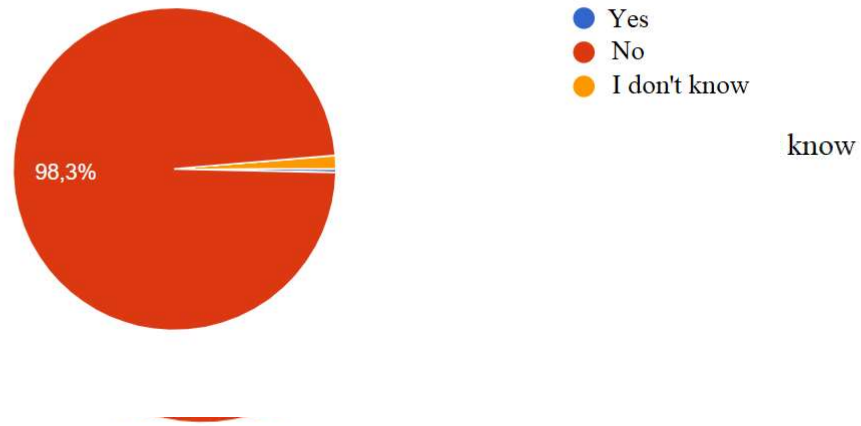
300 answers



34.3% consider that the toilet in the yard is more hygienic than the one inside the house, because it does not emit odors near the rooms and the kitchen - an idea that can be found in several rural communities in Romania, according to the results of a preliminary study, which this research is going to deepen in order to measure the perception at national level. 61% of respondents say they are offended by studies showing that Romania is a poorly developed country because it has the largest number of toilets in the yard, 99% do not believe that the toilet in the yard should be removed for Romania to become a civilized country, 73% considering themselves wronged by a law by which toilets must be removed from the yard, where there are water supply and sewerage networks. 75% believe that the legislators do not understand the usefulness of toilets in the yard and their traditional side. Only 39.7% consider that the toilet in the yard, not connected to the sewerage network, is more ecological than those connected to water and sewerage, but 63.7% consider that the problem of the toilet in the yard is an exaggeration meant to demoralize the rural population. 73% consider that they maintain their autonomy of the household, maintaining the toilet in the yard, not connected to water and sewerage, and 61.7% consider that they will spend / already spend more money after connecting to water and sewerage networks. 90.3% do not know if the toilet in the yard is specific only to Romania, but 61% believe that traditions and customs such as the toilet in the yard and the autonomy of households, in terms of water sources should be respected and maintained, rather than eliminated. 74.3% have a summer shower in the yard - improvised and heated with the help of the sun, 75.3% consider that the shower in the yard is more economical than the one inside the house, and 95.7% consider it more ecological. No respondent considers the shower in the yard a sign of lack of civilization and only 3.7% consider it a sign of poverty (Figures 5 and 6).

Do you think that the toilet in the yard is a sign of lack of civilization?

300 answers



73% consider that the shower in the yard is a local tradition, and 75.7% consider that they would be wronged of the elimination, by legislative means, the summer shower in the yard, together with the toilet in the yard. Also, people feel rather offended and victims of a national or regional bullying and public shaming by the use of this indicator in the studies about poverty. Also 74% of the respondents have rooms for rent in 2 Mai or Vama Veche. Only 6% of the respondents have other homes besides those in the tourist villages 2 Mai and Vama Veche. Most of the respondents (40.3%) were from the age group 41-55 years, 37.7% from the age group 31-40 years, 18.7% people over 55 years, 2% from age group 20-30 years, and 1.3% in the age group 15-19 years, 51% of respondents being men and 49% women, 95% with high school and vocational school graduated and only 4% with higher education.

DISCUSSION

The reality that has been discovered in the rural communities and also the discussions with researchers from other european countries shows that this indicator was wrongly interpreted as a sign of lack of civilisation, poverty, insatisfaction and a low quality of life. Presenting this situation at „The 8th International Scientific Conference on SOCIAL Sciences, ARTS & HUMANITIES SWS2021” we were asked by the participants from other european countries why do people from Romania accept this kind of bullying and public shaming and why the journalists from Romania are not accused of providing fake news when they present the problem of the outdoor toilets this way. This research is the first one made in this field of perception of the victims of country bullying and public shaming made by the reflection of the Eurostat datas about the outdoor toilets in the Romanian mass-media and social media. The strengths of this reasearch is that it opens a series of discussions and the possibility of making newstudies on this field. But it has limitations, being only the begining of a bigger and deeper research. The conclusion of the research is that the phenomenon si present only in Romania, but the victims of bullying and public shaming have no reaction in front of these permanent attacks, even if they perceive the phenomenon as something negative for the society and for themselves. The practical significance of this study is the possibility of presenting the situation of the outdoor toilets also from the point of view of the people who still have such a toilet in the yard, but they consider it rather a necessity, not a sign of poverty and lack of civilisation, presenting their reasons.

CONCLUSION

The outdoor toilet seems to be more a regional tradition in Romania. People perceive it as a necessity for the households autonomy, even if they are connected to the water supply and sewerage networks and even if they have at least one indoor toilet. The results of our research shows that those who still have an outdoor toilet and at least an indoor one perceive the outdoor toilet rather as a necessity for spending less money and for autonomy and they consider themselves victims of a national bullying and public shaming, assaulted by the scientific studies and the comments in mass-media and social media, every year. The reflection of the autonomy represented by the outdoor toilets in mass-media and social media, as being an indicator of poverty and lack of civilisation in Romania, based of the number of toilets in the yard is a false clue, especially if we already talk about a possible blackout, but it still remains a matter of bullying.

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