

## EDUCATION OF THE ROMA IN RELATION TO EMPLOYMENT IN CONTEXT OF SOCIAL WORK

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### Abstract

The goal of the article consists in describing the relation between selected risk behaviours and education and employment rate of the Roma. The research design was conceived using a quantitative research strategy. The data collection was implemented with the help of questionnaire research using an own questionnaire. The research set consisted of Roma persons of the South Bohemian Region, based on self-identification (N=300). The obtained data were statistically processed in the IBM SPSS Statistics Program and the Pearson Chi Quadrant Test was used to determine the relationship between the variables. A statistically important link was discovered between the education and employment of the respondents. The data also showed that people with high school or college education are more likely to have a full-time employment, while the respondents with lower education are mostly unemployed. There is no statistical relation between the level of education and the ability to pay one's bills. The research also tested the link between the level of education and the monthly income of a household, which showed that there is a statistical link between the two. Another part of the study aimed at statistical relation between the educational level of respondents and their subjectively viewed health condition, which showed no statistically important connection. The most interesting result of the research is that there is no connection between employment or level of education of respondents and their ability to pay bills.

### Keywords

Roma Minority, Labour Market, Education, Risk Behaviour

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### I. Introduction

The Roma minority is a theme of various discussions and research projects. The Roma minority faces a high unemployment level, closely related to indebtedness, low education level and high proportion of risk behaviours. At present, the most relevant social problem of the Roma minority is social exclusion that leads to an accumulation of the above stated problems. The goal of the article consists in describing the relation between selected risk behaviours and education and employment rate of the Roma. The study was focused on selected risk behaviours of the Roma population in relation to their education and employment rate. The main contribution consists in pointing out the opportunities and limits of setting of the current social system. That means, in other words, in considering whether the social policy of the government, related to the Roma minority, is motivating and whether restrictive measures are meaningful for the said minority.

### II. Theoretical foundation

#### Roma minority in the Czech Republic

The Roma people represent the largest ethnic – national group in the Czech Republic (Vláda České republiky, 2017). According to the qualified guesses, in 2016 there were about 245 000 Roma people living in the Czech Republic territory (Úřad vlády České republiky, 2017), but it is only a qualified estimate. It is caused by the impossibility to take a census of members of the Roma minority based on their ethnicity, as they can claim allegiance to Roma nationality within SLDB. However, only a

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small part of the Roma makes use of that option (Hlaváček, 2014). The majority society takes three basic attitudes towards the Roma, as well as to other minorities. It is integration, assimilation and segregation. According to the Zpráva o stavu romské menšiny v České republice za rok 2016 report, the Roma population in the Czech Republic can be divided into two imaginary groups, where the first group is the Roma people who are fully integrated into society and the second group is the ones who are in jeopardy to be socially excluded and those who already are (Úřad vlády České republiky, 2017). However, it is actually not integration but rather assimilation. It is therefore important not to automatically connect the Roma people with being socially excluded. According to the current analysis, the number of socially excluded location has increased, compared to the number from 2016 (Čada et al., 2015). The number of people living in such locations is estimated at 115 000, where most of the inhabitants are still of Roma nationality (about 80 %). However, there are also locations which are exclusively inhabited by non-Roma people (Čada et al., 2015). It is also important to note that there was a change in the method of determining what is a socially excluded location, which may have influenced the results.

Social exclusion is a process, which results in the marginalization of an individual, who is consequently unable to access resources, institutions, and services, which are today considered a common part of life (Mareš, 2006). The problems connected to social exclusion affect all parts of one's life, such as health condition, employment, education, or living conditions (Švec, 2009).

### The Roma and the area of education

The Roma are generally linked to worse approach to education and employment, based on social exclusion. There are several motives for it. The Roma society holds a general opinion that education does not have any value for the Roma population, as an educated Roma person will not find a relevant job. Children are therefore often discouraged by their own families from higher education degrees and directed to alternative sources of subsistence (Davidová et al., 2010). But we can find also different results of studies, e.g. Kaleja (2010) sets an example of his research (N=183), which shows that Roma parents strongly disagree with this point of view. In 2016, an amendment to the Education Act took effect, which abandoned the distinction between regular students and students with social disadvantages or disabilities and introduced a new category, namely pupil with special educational needs (Zákon č. 82/2015, Sb.), which now includes most of the Roma pupils. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights states that in 2011 26% of Roma children attended nursery schools (Agentura EU pro základní práva, 2014). However, since 2017, the statutory pre-school year that every child has to undergo was introduced (Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy, 2017).

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights analysis suggest that 5-7% of Roma children living in the Czech Republic do not fulfil the compulsory school attendance. Similar numbers occur in other European countries, such as Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain (The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014). A lot of professionals agree that the basic education of Roma children often includes discrimination and segregation (Nekorjak, Souralová, & Vomastková, 2011) and commonly happens in a specialised institute, not in the place meant for the general public (O'Nions, 2010). In the school year 2016/2017, approximately 34,000 Roma pupils attended elementary schools (Úřad vlády České republiky, 2017). The subsequent education (high school and university) are not statistically described, but the estimate is that the number of Roma students is quite low. Another problem with low statistical data and only qualified guesses about education and employment of Roma people presents the current debate on the ethical correctness of data collection from ethnic minorities. The main reason why Roma children fail in education may be that the teachers are not familiar with the way of life inside their community. The low success rate is also caused by an inability of parents to prepare their children for the challenging educational level, including insufficient knowledge of the Czech language (ethnolect, a mixture of Czech, Roma and Slovak, is spoken at home) (Vacková et al., 2011). Roma children also often do not follow the mandatory school attendance, which is caused by both a different way of life and the lack of interest in the preschool education (Horáčková, 2008). The situation could be positively changed by introduction of compulsory last year of preschool education. However, as the said legislation is relatively new, there

are no relevant research data available to support such assumption. A low-stimulating home environment is the last area alleged by expert literature as a cause of low education level of the Roma minority. Overcrowded flats in socially excluded localities do not provide children with sufficient space for preparation for school, and parents are minimally motivated to encourage them to prepare for school (Davidová et al., 2010).

The area of education of Roma children and youth is dealt with by a number of non-profit organizations offering remedial classes, extra-curricular education, leisure time activities, as well as evening classes for distance learning. The state provides Support of the Ministry of Education for socially handicapped Roma students attending secondary schools, advanced vocational schools and conservatories (Kajanová, 2017).

#### The Roma and the area of employment

Similarly, to other ethnic groups, Roma people have a significantly lower status on the labour market (Sirovátka, 2003). The general assumption is that, in the Czech Republic, the employment of Roma people is very low. There are several reasons for that, as described by Mareš, Sirovátka and Vyhlídal (2003). Firstly, the countries of the former Eastern Block generally discriminate certain groups of possible employees, such as mothers with children, or Roma people. Most employers consider Roma people to be the least qualified workforce and do not have jobs for them. The newest studies show that most problems and conflicts between the majority population and Roma people result from the general assumption that Roma people do not want to work and abuse social benefits (Gabal, Čada, Snopek, 2008). Discrimination and prejudice often push the Roma people to seek jobs at the illegal market, where they get fast and tax-free money. Besides discrimination and similar problems, there is the matter of low motivation to seek employment, caused by the structure of Roma families, and high marginal taxes, as described by Hirt and Jakoubek (2006).

Another reason may consist in low education or qualification (O'Higgins, and Ivanov, 2006), with the related fact that since the transformation in 1989, the number of unqualified jobs which were traditionally performed by the Roma minority has been decreasing. Studies state that the Roma unemployment is about 46 %, and in socially excluded localities up to 80-100 %. Their unemployment has the most risk-loaded forms, specifically long lasting and repeated unemployment (GAC, 2006). Long lasting unemployment leads to loss of working habits, which may lead to low return rate to labour market (Buchtová, 2002).

Because of the scarcity of jobs, they are often forced to take on challenging jobs, such as cleaning or seasonal jobs, or physically difficult work in the construction industry, forestry or agriculture (Kašparová, Ripka and Janků, 2008). The issues of unemployment are primarily addressed by the tools of active and passive employment policy; the options which have proved successful include public service, NNO consulting aimed at increasing the working competences, as well as some Roma companies which create jobs (Sirovátka, 2003). Discrimination by employers is difficult to prove. A beneficial tool would consist in transforming the social system towards higher motivation and possibly in giving grants to employers who employ Roma persons.

#### The Roma and risk behaviours

Čada et al., 2015 point out that risk behaviours occurs more frequently in excluded localities. Higher incidence of risk behaviours can be seen in all socially weak persons; that situation is caused by higher level of stress and frustration, but also by boredom (Walach, 2013). Greenberg (2010) states that the Roma population abuses drugs more frequently, but smoking is the greatest problem of the Roma. About 44 % of the Roma population smoke every day. As Davidová et al. (2010) states, smoking is obviously widespread among the Roma and there are more regular smokers in the Roma minority than in the majority society. This population group starts smoking at an early age. Roma smokers have certain particularities, e.g. lower age of starting smoking, which may be supported by examples in the family and in the environment, as well as by low level of commitments of the Roma family towards children (Nesvatbová et al., 2009). According to the above stated author, smoking is frequent

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among pregnant Roma women as well. The consumption of cigarettes by Roma smokers is relatively high; 2 cigarette packs are the most frequent. Kajanová (2009) states that the Roma children get their first cigarette from their family members, unlike the majority children who usually get the first cigarette from their peers (Šťastná, Šucha, 2010).

Roma men experience alcoholism, while women rather consume alcohol only at family parties (Úřad vlády České republiky, 2015). Nesvatbová et al. (2009) mentions that a great part of the Roma starts drinking between 15 – 16 years of age. Uban, Kajanová (2011) found in their studies that alcohol is consumed regularly, i.e. at least 4x a week, by about a fourth of the Roma. It was interesting to find that the Roma respondents kept consuming alcohol even in case of serious health problems, in spite of the doctor's recommendation to completely abstain from alcohol.

Kajanová (2017) states the following options to solve the risk behaviours of the Roma: goal-directed interventions, specific primary prevention programs, and last but not least field social work.

### III. Methodology

This article presents the partial results of the RVO ZSF JU Health Literacy Project for Selected Population Groups of the South Bohemian Region (SDZ2016), which takes place during the years 2016 to 2019. The design of the research was conceived using a quantitative research strategy that preceded qualitative research. The data collection was implemented with the help of an anonymous questionnaire of own construction, containing questions focused on the area of education, socio-economic status and selected risk behaviours.

The research group consisted of Roma people living in the South Bohemian Region, based on their self-identification. We specifically focused persons with different socio-economic statuses, in order to include respondents living in socially excluded localities, as well as respondents assimilated in the society. The data collection was carried out in the form of field research in respondents' households. An interviewing group was formed by the students of the Faculty of Health and Social Studies of the University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice and the data collection itself took place between January and March 2017. A total of 300 respondents were included in the quantitative survey, with a ratio of 150 men and 150 women. The respondents were provided with a nominal reward for participating in the study.

### IV. Results

The obtained data were statistically processed in the IBM SPSS Statistics program, and Pearson's Chi square test was used to test the statistical relationship between the variables. The level of significance applied was 95%, which is common to social scientific studies.

As shown below, Table 1 shows the tested variables in relation to education and the materiality level reached. The first variable was the employment of respondents, with a statistically significant correlation between education and employment of the respondents, where the level of significance reached  $p = <0.001$  and the result of Pearson's Chi square test  $\chi^2 = 35.308$ . At the same time, it was shown that full-time employment is performed significantly more often by respondents with secondary education and a higher level of education; respondents with an incomplete primary or primary education ( $p = <0.001$  and the result of Pearson's Chi square  $\chi^2 = 44.899$ ) are significantly more likely to be unemployed.

The second tested variable in relation to education was the problem of paying bills. Statistical analysis did not show a statistically significant correlation between education and the ability to pay bills ( $p = 0.080$ ,  $\chi^2 = 11.293$ ). Therefore, we can conclude that the correlation between educational level and the ability to pay bill is not statistically significant. In connection with the education, the monthly household income was also tested, where the level of significance reached  $p = <0.001$  and the result of the test  $\chi^2 = 30.791$ , it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant relationship between the education of the respondents and the monthly income of the household. Respondents with unfinished primary education are more likely to report a higher monthly household income (30.001

CZK or more), the respondents and respondents with secondary education without maturity significantly more often report a monthly income ranging from CZK 20,001 to CZK 30,000 ( $p = <0,002$  and the result of Pearson's Chi square test  $\chi^2 = 36,328$ ).

In addition, the education and health status of the respondents was statistically tested. The level of significance reached for this variable was  $p = 0.180$  and the result of the  $\chi^2 = 16.253$  test, therefore, there was no statistically significant correlation between education and subjectively perceived health status. The analysis also showed that there is a statistically significant correlation between education and consumption of alcohol ( $p = <0.001$ ,  $\chi^2 = 39.796$ ). It is true that respondents with the lowest level of education (incomplete primary education) report, significantly more often, that they consume alcohol daily ( $p = <0.000$  and Pearson's Chi square test  $\chi^2 = 39.796$ ). A statistically significant link was also found between education and whether the respondents smoke ( $p = <0.05$ ,  $\chi^2 = 12.786$ ).

**Table 1 The correlation between employment, ability to pay bills, monthly household income, health condition, smoking and alcohol consumption**

Education and...	<i>N</i>	Value $\chi^2$	<i>Df</i>	<i>P</i>
Employment	230	35,308	12	<0,001
Ability to pay bills	220	11,293	6	0,080
Monthly household income	195	30,791	9	<0,001
Health condition	248	16,253	12	0,180
Smoking	242	12,786	6	<0,05
Alcohol consumption	229	39,796	15	<0,001

Source: RVO ZSF JU SDZ2016

The research also tested the correlation between employment and the ability to pay bills, which showed no statistical importance ( $p=0,066$ ,  $\chi^2=14,635$ ), see Table 2 below. The analysis showed that paying bills is the most difficult for unemployed respondents, however, this was not tested as statistically relevant.

**Table 2 The correlation between employment and the ability to pay bills**

EMPLOYMENT AND...	<i>N</i>	VALUE $\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
ABILITY TO PAY BILLS	242	14,635	8	0,066

Source: RVO ZSF JU SDZ2016

## V. Discussion

This article refers to the correlation between the education of Roma people and their subsequent employment, which affect their monthly income and the ability to pay bills. The Roma people often face so-called social exclusion (Gabal, I., Čada, K., and Snopek, J., 2008). The basic prevention of social exclusion is a regular income, ideally from employment. Discrimination and xenophobia are often an overwhelming limit on the labour market for the Roma minority. Also, racism seems to be on the rise among the Czech society (Rada vlády České republiky pro lidská práva, 2012). These points of view are also transparent among the professional public (e. g. Člověk v tísni, o.p.s.).

Our research has confirmed the importance of education because people with high school or higher education tend to have and keep a full-time job, while people with primary or unfinished education are often unemployed. The research also showed that people with primary or unfinished education

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have a higher monthly household income than the ones with higher education, which may be caused by social benefits. The fact that people with lower education have a higher monthly income may be largely demotivating in the educational process. These findings completely exclude the belief of the Roma that the level of education and the employment rate have nothing in common (compare e.g. Davidová, 2010).

Langhamrová and Fiala (2008) deduct that Roma people rely on the social support from the state – in the past, they were not forced to take care of themselves and be regular members of society with obligations such as paying their own social and health insurance, rent, or having their personal articles in order, which they often cannot do until this day. The life of Roma people is generally the same as of others with low incomes, however, there is no other social group that would have such a high percentage of Roma people.

An interesting result of the survey is that the education of respondent does not affect their ability to pay bills. We also include the correlation between education and subjectively felt health condition. As explained by Van Cleemputa et al. (2007), it is important to provide understandable information to the Roma people if we wish to improve their living conditions. There are several barriers in communication between medical personnel and the Roma community, which include a different way of communication (Roma people use more nonverbal communication), usage of terminology, impatience and unwillingness of the medical personnel to explain terms and the low education of some Roma people.

Subjectively viewed health condition does not differ across the groups with different levels of education. Also, no statistically relevant correlation was shown between employment and the ability to pay bills.

### VI. Conclusion

This article presents the analysis of the effect of education on several aspects. The incidence of risk behaviour was an important characteristic followed in the article (compare e.g.: Goldin., Katz, 2018). It was confirmed that higher education is directly linked with employment, which is supported by a number of studies. It is crucial to motivate the Roma people to get an education and support the ones who are in the higher educational process. A proper motivation can be reached for example through field social workers. Education also influences the degree of risk behaviour of the Roma; the more educated Roma person, the lower frequency of risk behaviours. Consumption of alcohol and cigarettes decreases. That leads, among other things, to a reduction of costs spent on subsequent health and social care. Therefore education must be perceived as one of the important factors influencing the primary prevention of risk behaviours of the Roma minority.

The findings result in the following suggestions: Focus on basic forms of prevention including timely intervention. The primary prevention should reflect the particularities of the target group, i.e. it should be implemented earlier than in case of the majority population. And social policy should be interconnected with the area of prevention of risk behaviour. The strategy of prevention of risk behaviour of children and youth and the Regional plan of prevention of risk behaviour of the South Bohemian Region for the period of 2015 – 2017 continues the National strategy of primary prevention of risk behaviour of children and youth for the period of 2013 – 2018.

On the other hand, an interesting finding of the survey is that neither the education nor the employment of the respondents affects their ability to pay bills. This finding may be related to the low financial literacy and inability to create financial reserves. Even the respondents who have acquired education and have a job need not necessarily have the right financial habits. Potential preventive programs of financial literacy could possibly saturate the above stated issue. However, we see a problem in our finding that the individuals who are educated and work actually have lower income than individuals who are not educated and do not (legally) work.

A similar situation was found in case of the relation between health and education. A potential connection can be seen in the influence of the unsuitable environment in which the Roma live and which cannot be influenced by them, as they live in a culture of poverty.

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