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Effect of COVID-19 locked down on gender pay gap in Slovakia in the education sector

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Abstract. Presented paper deals with the gender pay gap in the public and private education sector as an indicator of gender inequality in the labor market and seeks its determinants in close connection with the declaration of a state locked down during the COVID 19 pandemic in Slovakia. In Slovakia, this pay gap has been, in the long term, one of the highest in the European union. Slovak women earn about 22 % less than men in average, which results in them being more threatened by poverty as well as achieving lower pensions. Sectors of labor market, where women predominate, are considered to be less prestigious and are associated with lower wages, the education sector is undoubtedly one of them. Career progress of women is made even more difficult by gender stereotypes and career breaks due to maternity and they are also more burdened with household care and childcare. Using the secondary analysis of data from the sample survey this paper analyzes the position of women in the labor market and the factors influencing the gender pay gap are examined by regression analysis. The decisive period of the analysis is considered to be the period March - May 2020, when a state locked down was declared in Slovakia in connection with the COVID 19 pandemic, which undoubtedly manifested itself in all sectors of the Slovak economy. The results show, that the gender pay gap is affected by the number of hours worked and education. However, it has also been shown, that the difference in education does not explain the gender pay gap since the gap is bigger between men and women with higher education than it is between men and women with secondary education.

Keywords. gender inequality, gender pay gap, labour market, secondary data analysis, COVID 19 pandemic, Slovakia, education sector

1. Introduction

At a time, when a social change is taking place faster than ever before in the western world, and when the old traditions and orders are becoming uncertain, the gender pay gap is a rigid

impression. This is related to a phenomenon aptly described by Beck (2011) as changes in consciousness and on the paper, which he put in opposition to the constant nature of the behaviour and situation of men and women. Women have legally guaranteed equality with men, the female population is slowly becoming more educated than the male population, and women's employment is constantly growing, but inequalities in the labour market remain (Beck, 2011).

The gender pay gap is the main indicator of the gender inequalities in the labour market, as stated by Křížková, Penner &, Petersen (2008), Křížková & Sloboda (2009), Hedija & Musil (2010) or Jurajda & Münich (2006). The latest Eurostat data show that, on average, women in the European Union earn 16.2% less than men, and in Slovakia up to 21.8%. The difference in the remuneration between women and men in Slovakia is among the highest in the European Union, and the topic thus resonates in Slovak society as well. According to Štěpánková (2018), women most often feel disadvantaged in the area of wage evaluation and in the advancing to a higher position.

The topic of the presented paper is the issue of different remuneration of men and women working as teachers, trainers, lecturers, educators in the educational institutions of the public and private sector in Slovakia, with emphasis on identifying the gender pay gap during the state locked down caused by the COVID 19 pandemic.

2. Literature Review

In the 20th century, significant changes took place in the field of equality between men and women in areas such as sexuality, rights and education. These changes "on paper" are opposed by the real situation of men and women, which has the seemingly paradoxical consequence that greater equality makes more visible the lasting and deepening inequalities (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995, Beck, 2011). Society is thus in a phase of a new consciousness and old conditions, which includes gender inequalities in the labour market.

There are particular gender inequalities in the labour market, which negatively affect women and in some cases men. Some problems are partly due to the gender discrimination against women on the basis of the characteristics attributed to them due to their gender, as Renzetti & Curran (2005) states. Thus, women can face problems already during the selection process, when the employer does not have to choose them precisely because of their gender. "*Actual or potential motherhood as an expected characteristic of the female workforce often leads employers to assume that a woman is a riskier employee than a man in terms of continuity of work, which results to the disadvantage of women in the labour market,*" says Bartáková (2006, p. 133). Further difficulties may arise in career advancement, linked to the concept of a so called "glass ceiling", which refers to the existence of an invisible barrier preventing women from advancing to higher positions, states Meulders et al. (2010). Other problems are the harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace, which women are more likely to encounter, according to Křížková et al. (2005) and the gender pay gap to the detriment of women.

Inequalities in the labour market were first explained by women's low qualifications and low education, but with the expansion of education, this explanation can no longer be justified. The new justification was the woman's role as a mother. From the fact that women are able to have children, it is inferred that they have responsibility for children and the household (Beck, 2011). In this context, there is talk of "nature", which predisposes women to do so. Such claims contradict the cases of families with children, where only the father is present, or where the man is taken care of the family and also by the social nature of the concept of maternal love, Badinter (1998) contributes. "*The woman is thus obliged to be primarily a mother, and a myth*

is formed that persists for two more centuries: the myth of maternal instinct or of every mother's spontaneous love for her child" (Badinter, 1998, p.107).

Another reason for the unequal position of men and women in the labour market is that men are more ambitious than women, but research in the Czech environment has shown that this is not true (Vohlídalová, 2006). For a large group of women, work is the main source of personal self-realization (as it is for a large group of men) and they want to build their careers. However, Vohlídalová's research (2006) also showed that men are more oriented to the material side of work. In education, it was found that women have even higher study aspirations than men, which may be the result of men with the same or lower education than women having a better position in the labour market (Šmídová, Janoušková & Katrňák, 2008).

By determining the gender pay gap, inequalities between women and men in the labour market can be quantified. At the same time, by monitoring the development of GPG over the years, it is possible to monitor the development of gender inequalities in the labour market. However, the figure for the gender pay gap does not sufficiently explain the situation of the inequalities in the labour market, nor does it tell us anything about direct discrimination against women in the labour market.

The causes of the gender pay gap are complex and interconnected, individual authors dealing with the issue of gender equality in the labour market focus on various causes in connection with, for example, their interest. In this work we use the distribution of causes from the study of Křížková et al. (2017), which we consider very clear, and supplement it with studies or theoretical concepts from other authors, namely Renzetti & Curran (2005), Pavlík & Smetáčková (2006), Křížková & Sloboda (2009), Meulders et al. (2010), Mysíková (2007), Valentová (2006), Budig, Misra & Boeckmann (2016), Formánková, Dudová & Vohlídalová (2011), Hamplová (2015). Blau & Kahn (2017), Vohlídalová (2012), Chaloupková (2005), Kimmel, 2015, Auspurg, Hinz & Sauer (2017). These causes are:

- **Cultural causes:** culture, public opinion, norms, values, gender stereotypes.
- **Structural causes:** labour market structure.
- **System causes:** reward systems, processes and actors in their setting.
- **Institutional conditions of a combination of paid work and care.**
- **Education system and socialization.**
- **Individual and family factors.**

The consequence of the gender pay gap is a lower standard of living and a higher risk of poverty for women and their households, including children (Křížková et al., 2017). Another consequence is a lower pension for women. The pension system is less egalitarian and women are penalized for their worse position in the labour market. Aizer's analysis (2010) then showed that the more money a woman brings to the partnership, the lower the chance that her partner will experience domestic violence. Along with a higher income, a woman has a better chance of becoming independent of her partner. At the same time, however, domestic violence is related to the income in general (households with lower incomes are more at risk) and there are theories according to which the cause of domestic violence by a partner is a woman's higher income or education (Pikálková, 2004).

Another set of consequences is the negative consequence for the state and the economy, when, for example, human resources are not sufficiently used, because some women do not work due to the vision of lower earnings (Mysíková, 2007).

3. Material and Methods

The primary goal of the presented paper is to identify the gender pay gap, which is influenced by many determinants. Our intention is to analyse these determinants in the context of Slovak state and private educational institutions, especially in the period March - May 2020, when Slovakia was in a state locked down due to the COVID 19 pandemic.

The research question of this work is: **What influenced the value of the gender pay gap?**

For the purposes of the presented work, we consider the following to be the defining definition of the gender pay gap: **the difference between the average hourly wage of men and women, expressed as a percentage, including economically active men and women aged 18 to 60.**

Based on the theory and the constraints of the selected data, we determined the variables that can affect the value of the difference as follows:

- characteristics according to the theory of human capital, in order to verify to what extent they are still valid in explaining the gender pay gap,
- number of hours worked,
- size of the municipal,
- workload with the housework.

Research assumptions

- **A1 Women earn less than men:** According to the current Eurostat and Slovak Statistical Office data, women earn less than men on average. Therefore, we assume that this difference will be reflected in the data of our research as well.
- **A2 Higher age means higher wages regardless of gender:** According to human capital theory, older people earn more, as stated by Mincer (1974). So we assume the validity of this relationship between experience and the wage regardless of gender.
- **A3 More educated people earn more than younger people, regardless of gender:** According to human capital theory, people with higher education earn more (Mincer, 1974). We assume that it pays off for women to invest in education in the same way as for men.
- **A4 On average, women work fewer hours per month than men:** According to Jurajda & Münich (2006), the GPG result is also influenced by the fact that women work fewer hours than men, and therefore the number of hours worked should be taken into account when calculating the gender pay gap.
- **A5 Higher workload with the housework and number of children will reduce wages:** Studies in the Czech Republic and Slovakia have shown that women are taking care of households and children more than men (Vohlídalová, 2012), which may result in lower wages.
- **A6 People in larger cities earn more regardless of gender:** When calculating the gender pay gap, the variable region is often used (e.g. Mysíková, 2007, Křížková et al., 2017). However, it takes on too many values and in the calculations by Mysíková (2007) the influence of this variable was demonstrated only when she formed a new variable, which took only two values Prague and outside Prague. In this paper, we are inspired by her approach and we assume that the size of the city may play a role in the difference in remuneration.

To confirm the assumptions and to answer the research question, we will use the secondary data analysis in the sense of a quantitative method. Data from the Labour Offices of the Slovak Republic, from the Slovak Statistical Office and data published in the relevant Slovak media providing information on the development of wages in the education sector in the state locked down period, i.e. March - May 2020, will be analysed.

First, the position of men and women in the labour market in this period will be analysed using contingency tables and graphs, then through linear regression we will verify the effect of selected independent variables on the dependent variable gross hourly income.

Due to the limited scope of the presented paper, we will not present partial contingency tables and graphs here, we will focus only on the presentation of the resulting data obtained by regression analysis.

The sample is formed by employees of Slovak state and private educational institutions from 18 to 64 years. Thanks to the weighting, the sample proportionally corresponds to the distribution of the population of Slovakia and also works only with individual respondents, i.e. not, for example, with children or with entire households. The number of units (N) in this sample is 4,835 units and the unit of analysis is an adult, an educator, from 18 to 64 years of age. The main characteristics of the sample are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of the sample (N=4835)

Variable	Absolute frequency (N)	Relative frequency (percent)
Gender		
Man	2 354	48,70 %
Woman	2 481	51,30 %
Categorized age		
18 - 29	957	19,79 %
30 - 39	1 201	24,84 %
40 - 49	1 248	25,82 %
50 - 60	1 429	29,54 %
Education		
Basic education	439	9,08 %
Trained	1 585	32,78 %
High school education	1 897	39,24 %
University degree	914	18,90 %
Size of the municipal		
To 999	782	16,17 %
1 000 - 4 999	974	20,15 %
5 000 - 19 999	951	19,67 %
20 000 - 99 999	1 046	21,64 %
100 000 and more	1 082	22,37 %
Total	4 835	100,00 %

Source: own

Below is a list of variables that were used in the analysis:

- **Demographic variables:** gender, age, categorized age and size of the municipality. From the age variable, a new variable **categorized age** was formed by recoding the categories of which are 18 to 29, 30 to 39, 40 to 49 and 50 to 60 years.
- **The education variable takes on four values.** The highest achieved education of the respondent is thus divided into the categories of basic education, trained, high school education, university degree.
- **Employment and income variables:** The data set contains six variables referring to the wage, three of which deal with gross income from employment and three with net income. In this paper, only the variables related to gross income will be analysed, because they are more suitable for comparison. It would be obvious to use a variable for the analysis, which divides the wage into several categories according to the monthly

income. However, the number of respondents who fell into this category, is insufficient for the analysis, so the variables gross income and the variable annual / monthly income were chosen. The first of them shows the gross income from employment and the second of them then determines whether the respondent stated a monthly or annual income. To make it easier to work with this data, a new **monthly gross income variable** was formed by copying data from the gross income variable, provided that the income of all respondents who reported annual income is divided by twelve, i.e. the number of months in the year. Zero and very low income cases were excluded. The values of the variable thus start at an income higher than 145 Euro, which can be real income if the respondent worked a quarter-time job for the minimum wage, which was set by the state in 2020 at 580 Euro. The number of observations in this new variable is 3,300.

The new variable **gross monthly income** includes everyone regardless of how they defined their place in the employment structure, i.e. whether they are employed, retired, etc. It only depends on whether they stated their income from employment. Filtering of different cases will then be possible with the help of a variable economic position. The **economic status variable** acquires values such as full-time or part-time employee, private individual, student, pensioner, parental leave and others.

Another variable related to income is the number of hours worked per week, values over 70 hours per week (which can be considered as 1.75 full-time equivalents) and values below 10, which correspond to quarterly working hours, were excluded from this variable. Values below and above the set limit were biased for further calculation. From the variable gross monthly income, the hourly wage can be further calculated by dividing the variable by the number of hours worked per week and multiplying by a coefficient of 4.3, i.e. the average number of weeks in the month, thus forming a variable **hourly wage**. The number of monitored cases, in which both the income and the number of hours worked are filled in, is lower, exactly 2,560.

Another newly formed variable is **the number of hours worked per month**, where the variable number of hours worked per week was again multiplied by a factor of 4.3, the average number of weeks per month.

- **Constructed variables and ESeC class scheme:** The ESeC class scheme is an explanatory tool designed to distinguish the social classes of modern society by determining the individual's position in the labour market (Katrňák & Fučík, 2010, Katrňák 2012). The division into classes is used to explain the differences in the life outcomes, such as attitudes and opinions, lifestyle, economic differences, political preferences, family life and much more. People in the same social classes face the same limitations, so it can be assumed that their life outcomes will be similar (Katrňák & Fučík, 2010). The original scheme has ten categories and can be collapsed to a version with six, five and three classes. The job position in the ESeC is not primarily determined by economic income or education, but above all by the relationship of other positions to it, the comparison of social classes thus provides another interesting insight into the position of women in the labour market. The constructed variables ESeC08 and ESeC08_6 are formed from the values of these variables: economic status, self-employed / employee, management of other employees, employment of other persons, number of employees and generated variable employment code (Röschová, 2017).
- **Variables related to children and household care:** The variable children living in the respondent's household takes values from zero to eight, to facilitate calculations of the values of the variable have been transcoded into two options: "no child" or "one or more children".

Homework deals with five variables, each of which focuses on who does a certain type of work in the household. These are: laundry, minor household repairs, shopping, cleaning and food preparation. All these variables take on four values. For the use in the regression model, an index of homework was formed from all variables related to household care, which took values from one to ten, with one being the lowest workload and ten the highest workload with the homework.

4. Determinants of the gender pay gap

When estimating the influence of variables, we work with the modified Mincer regression equation, which determines as the explanatory variables the education and the experience to the explained variable income (Mincer, 1974). The Mincer's equation calculates the logarithm of income, where the logarithm of income improves the normality of distribution and the linearity of the relationship, according to Doležal & Katrňák (2017), the linear regression – the dependent variable and the independent variables – can be used (Psacharopoulos, 1995). This equation is given below (1), where W is the hourly income, S denotes the years of education and E is the years worked:

$$\ln W = b_1S + b_2E + b_2E^2 \quad (1)$$

In the selected data, there are not the variables **years worked** or **years in education**, so we will work with the modified Mincer equation, where we replace the years in education with the variable education (V) and years worked by the age of the respondent (R). Analyses of the pay gap often work with the Mincer equation, in most cases supplemented by other variables (Hedija & Musil 2010). As mentioned above, we added other variables, gender (P), municipality size (M), hours worked per week (H), number of children in the common household (D) and workload with homework (U). Our regression equation then looks like this (2):

$$\ln W = b_1V + b_2R + b_2R^2 + b_3P + b_4M + b_5H + b_6D + b_7U \quad (2)$$

Forming a regression model estimating the influence of individual determinants is shown in Table 2, where the resulting model, we interpret, is the highlighted M4 model, because we consider it to be the best (explains the reality of 27%) and at the same time the simplest. In other models (M5, M6, M7) the level of R^2 remains approximately the same, but they contain more variables, and their effect proves to be insignificant. For the variable **children in the household** (M5), no effect was demonstrated - the gender pay gap is the same as in the model (M4) without this variable. With the addition of the variable workload with homework (M6), this difference increased, but the effect turned out to be insignificant. Therefore, the assumption **A5 Higher workload with the housework and number of children will reduce wages**, we **reject**. Assumption **A6 People in larger cities earn more regardless of gender** we also **reject**, because the results are insignificant and they are not consecutive and it is not true that the bigger the city, the higher the income.

For the M4 model, the interactions between gender and education were insignificant, but we left them in the model as a control and also because, based on the influence of gender and education variables, we assume that the return on education will vary by gender. As a control variable, we also left in the model the variable **number of hours per week**, which is significant, but its results are questionable and can be attributed to the selected data.

We do **not reject** the assumption **A1 Women earn less than men** from the M4 model, the results show, that women really earn less. However, the exact numbers are difficult to present from the regression model, because the influence of other variables must be taken into account, so we show the predicted values in Table 3. From the initial regression model M4, the predicted average values of the dependent variable **gross hourly income** are calculated, provided that the independent variable **education** always changes by one unit and the values of all other independent variables remain unchanged.

Table 2: Predicted average values of gross hourly income

	Man	Woman	GPG
Basic education	91	74	19 %
Trained	115	85	26 %
High school education	147	114	22 %
University degree	190	139	27 %
Total	2560		

Source: own

According to the M4 model, we **do not reject** assumption **A2 Higher age means higher wages** regardless of gender. With each year, the wage increases by approximately 0,23 Euro. Assumption **A3 More educated people earn more than younger people, regardless of gender** we also do **not reject**. But at the same time, it is claimed that education has a lower return for women than for men, because as can be estimated from the M4 model (including interactions) and more accurately seen in Table 2, a university-educated woman has a 27% lower income while a high school graduate only 22%. Table 3 further shows that the lowest GPG is at the level of basic education. This really confirms that **education pays off less for women than for men**.

Table 3: Regression model for estimating the effect of the independent variables on dependent gross hourly income

		M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7
Age		0,472 ***	0,052 ***	0,052 ***	0,062 ***	0,057 ***	0,058 ***	0,062 ***
Age*Age		- ***	- ***	- ***	- ***	- ***	- ***	- ***
Education	Basic	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
	Trained	0,180 ***	0,135 **	0,166 ***	0,173 **	0,174 **	0,109	0,177 *
	High school	0,436 ***	0,413 ***	0,421 ***	0,431 ***	0,434 ***	0,392 ***	0,429 ***
	University	0,646 ***	0,637 ***	0,664 ***	0,668 ***	0,668 ***	0,620 ***	0,660 ***
Gender	Man		Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
	Woman		- ***	- ***	- ***	- ***	- ***	- ***
			0,295	0,257	0,297	0,297	0,375	0,294
Interactions	Man*Woman			Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
	Woman*trained			-	-	-	0,009	-
	Woman*High school education			0,066	0,071	0,071		0,075
	Woman*university degree			-	-	-	0,040	-
				0,012	0,012	0,014	0,000	0,016
				-	-	-		-
				0,053	0,056	0,055		0,058
Hours per week					- ***	- ***	- ***	- ***
					0,010	0,010	0,010	0,001
Children in household	none					Ref.		
	1 and more					0,028		
Homework							-	
							0,004	
Municipality size	To 999							Ref.
	1 000 - 4 999							0,018
	5 000 - 19 999							0,032
	20 000 - 99 999							0,019
	100 000 and more							0,063
Constant		3,469 ***	3,295 ***	3,486 ***	3,703 ***	3,775 ***	3,826 ***	3,676 ***

N	2560	2560	2560	2560	2560	2560	2560
R ²	0,165	0,248	0,248	0,273	0,277	0,278	0,274

Source: own

Numbers are rounded to three decimal places.

Statistical significance: *** $p < 0,001$ ** $p < 0,01$ * $p < 0,05$

5. Conclusion

In the last decades, there has been a significant equality between women and men in the education sector in Slovakia, but part of this equality has remained only "on paper" (it is guaranteed by law and, for example, in access to education) and some inequalities (such as the gender pay gap) persist. The authors of the presented paper came to the same conclusions and the resulting data of their research are summarized below.

From the secondary data and regression analysis of data obtained during the state locked down period due to the COVID 19 pandemic, it is evident that women actually earn less than men. The gender pay gap in the selected period was 23% from the selected data, which is very close to 22.5%, which was the GPG according to Eurostat (2020a) in Slovakia in 2019. On the other hand, the regression analysis did not reject the assumption of **A2 Higher age means higher wages regardless of gender.**

Furthermore, the assumption **A3 More educated people earn more than younger people, regardless of gender, was confirmed**, and we consider the results regarding the impact of education to be the most interesting in this analysis. It turned out that the return on education for women is much lower than for men. In this respect, it can be argued that the difference in human capital (only in education) does not sufficiently explain the gender pay gap.

We also **confirmed** the assumption **A4 On average, women work fewer hours per month than men**, when women actually work 19 hours less per month than men on average. From this result we can estimate that it will affect their income. But we also took this into account when calculating GPG, so we worked with an hourly wage, not a monthly one. The question remains whether this can also affect their hourly evaluation, i.e. whether the employers value with higher wages by those who work more hours. We tried to verify the effect of hours worked on hourly wages in a regression analysis, but it turned out to be **inverse**, compared to what we expected (the more hours worked, the lower the hourly wage).

The analysis **does not confirm** the assumption **A5 Higher workload with the housework and number of children will reduce wages**. According to our results, **the workload with homework has no direct effect on the value of the pay gap**. We note that this does not mean that it is not one of the causes of gender inequalities in the labour market.

The last assumption **A6 People in larger cities earn more regardless of gender**, has also **not been confirmed** and again it can be said that the size of the city does not have a direct effect on the pay gap.

So what affects the value of the gender pay gap? The value of the difference is affected by the age; older people earn more money regardless of the gender. It is also affected by another variable related to human capital, namely the education, but it is not true that the higher the education, the lower the pay gap. The number of hours worked varies between men and women, so **the number of hours worked can affect the value of the pay gap.**

The education and the age affect the gender pay gap even according to the study by Křížková et al. (2017), Mysíková (2007) and Blauová & Kahn (2017), and Štěpánková (2018) also confirms that the gender pay gap is affected by the education, but these studies suggest that this effect is low and does not explain the gender pay gap, which was also reflected in our analysis on the example of the mentioned education. Mysíková (2007, p. 18) further found that *"if currently non-participating individuals were working, the potential gender pay gap would be higher than the observed gap, which is captured only by workers"*. According to her, this also means that reducing the pay gap over the years in one country does not necessarily mean reducing the gender inequalities in the labour market (Mysíková, 2007). While Mysíková focused on the non-participating individuals, Blau and Kahn also focused on explaining GPG.

Their analytical findings directly state that human capital factors are now insignificant in explaining the gender pay gap (Blau & Kahn, 2017). They also point out that, according to current research, career breaks and fewer hours worked have an important effect, as our results have also shown. Equally important are differences in gender roles and the division of homework. **The effect of the division of household care on the wages was not confirmed in our analysis.**

In this question we see one of the limitations of our research. Examining the effect of the unequally distributed homework on the difference in remuneration by the quantitative method on selected data is probably insufficient and the direct effect cannot be determined. However, the workload of women caring for the household and children and the effort to combine it with paid work can affect, for example, their mental well-being, as stated by Hamplová (2015). We consider it a good idea to study household and child care in the study itself, both qualitative and quantitative, and to focus, among other things, on the subjective value of stress, which is examined by Sláviková & Žeravíková (2014) or Hrazdilová Bočková et al. (2015).

In the context of the formulated goal of the paper, we state that during the COVID 19 pandemic there are no significant deviations in the GPG for employees of private or state educational institutions in Slovakia.

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