

The Perception of Poverty in Roma Communities by Field Social Workers and the Staff of Municipal Offices in Spišská Nová Ves District¹

Abstract: The Roma family is a family of its own culture, with its own concept, and differs from families of the majority population in many aspects. This minority understands the scale of values, social norms and individual way of life and overall lifestyle. In the present study, the authors deal with the aspect of poverty in Roma communities, its causes and consequences for society. Following in the conducted research, they provide a picture of the perception of Roma's poverty from the viewpoint of the employees of municipal offices and field social workers in the district of Spišská Nová Ves and then they compare the data gained by the Roma participants' subjective perception of poverty in qualitative research.

Key words: poverty, causes of poverty, Roma, perception, responsibility

Introduction

There are many dimensions of poverty, and its definition cannot be simply based only on the lack of income. It is connected with a lot of aspects, including psychological stress, feelings of vulnerability by external events, and feelings of helplessness. However, these and other abstract poverty dimensions can hardly be measured.² Poverty cannot be understood only as material (financial) insecurity. A person can also feel poor; we talk about individual feelings – a feeling of lack, a feeling of frustration.

Addressing the social poverty of the Roma minority and the relations between the majority society and Roma currently constitute the main, but particularly current topic. Almost every day, there are topics and articles in the media pointing to "discrimination" attacks, but also to socio-pathological phenomena found in many settlements. Maybe for that reason, all parts of society should be mobilized to achieve a better spatial integration of Roma into the social life of the majority. The first and simplest way is to pursue understanding and tolerance, prepare for living with this ethnic group in a common state. Of course, this phase should involve everyone according to their ability.

A large part of the majority population creates their attitude towards Roma under the influence of prejudices and stereotypes. High rate of rejection and widespread prejudices consequently directly affect the actual behavior of Roma, who often fulfill the image of Roma in majority population. Conflict atmosphere between Roma and the majority population increases, and it can be a real threat in the further addressing the past, present and future problems.³ Although these are rather psychological prejudices, or at least of socio-psychological character, they have a significant impact on the behavior of the majority toward minorities. Strong stereotypes and the hidden emotional message tend to be related to this attitude and it cannot be changed easily under the influence of the opposite information. Discrimination is then the practical culmination of prejudices and relates to behavior, in particular, to unequal treatment of people based on their membership in a particular group.⁴ The media keep bringing news on violent clashes of Roma with the majority and Roma's criminal activities, resulting from the deterioration of their social situation.

¹ Príspevok vznikol v rámci riešenia vedeckovýskumnej úlohy Katedry správneho práva a Katedry spoločenských vied Akadémie Policajného zboru v Bratislave s názvom Aktuálne problémy vo verejnej správe členských štátov Európskej únie, ev.č. Výsk. 206.

² ROCHOVSKÁ, A., HORŇÁK, M. *Chudoba a jej percepcia v marginálnych regiónoch Slovenska*. [online]. [2014-05-02]. Available at : http://www.humannageografia.sk/projekt1/download/Rochovska_Hornak.pdf

³ Porov. VAŠEČKA, M. Vzťah majority k Rómom. In VAŠEČKA, M. *Čačipen pal o Roma: Súhrnná správa o Rómoch na Slovensku*. Bratislava : IVO, 2002. s. 336.

⁴ Porov. VAŠEČKA, M. *Vzťah majority k Rómom*. 2002. s. 337.

“Evaluation of mutual relations and coexistence is due to several factors: socioeconomic status, level of integration and sub-ethnic differentiation.”⁵ Current attitudes, interactions and conflicts affect how the Roma and the majority see their future coexistence. Unsolved problems and relations could lead to escalation of social tensions and deterioration of majority – minority relations.⁶

It is yet not unusual in families of the Slovak majority population to fight with the lack of money through various types of self-helping and supporting work, such as small reconstructions around the house, preserving food and fruit for winter, making clothes. It is a traditional feature of the Slovak population. However, segregated Rom community has never realized self-sufficiency and they will never do. So called “self-supplying” with the products of the majority population – stealing potatoes in eastern Slovakia, cutting trees and collecting wood in forests in the winter, taking clothes from clothes collection containers – are just some of the specific features of the Roma community. The poorest Roma often fight with the lack of money by borrowing the money they need. In some segregated Rom settlements, there exists a system of loans called “a bee system”. It is based on the mutual agreement between all members of the system that the money that is collected goes to someone else every month. This family solidarity can reduce or relieve poverty, but it cannot eliminate it totally. It just prevents an individual to go stony broke.⁷

Roma are the second largest ethnic minority in Slovakia. According to local authorities’ summary, in 1989, 253,943 Roma (4.8%) lived in Slovakia; only socially dependent citizens were included in the statistics. It can be assumed that the number of Roma in Slovakia is higher at present. The estimates vary between 420 to 500 thousand inhabitants and due to their high birth rate, this number is still increasing.⁸ In the census of the population census of the Slovak Republic which was carried out in 2001, Roma constituted 1.7% of the population (89,920 inhabitants). In 2011, they constituted 2% of the population (105,738 inhabitants).⁹ According to the census performed in 2011, the majority of the resident population in Prešov (7%), in Košice (5.9%) and Banská Bystrica (1.2%) identified the Rom language as their mother tongue.¹⁰

Nationality in the SR has been monitored in the census carried out in 10-year intervals, by marking the nationality according to one’s own beliefs. Demographic statistics update this data through the balancing the migration of population. There are currently no Slovak official statistics on the structure of the population. This data is available from different sources which cover the period to the year 1989 only. The collecting of this data is against human rights and therefore it has not been collected, as the collection of data based on the ethnicity is in conflict with the principles of privacy and anti-discrimination legislation in Slovakia. However, for the collection of such data showing the ethnic or racial origin, the law may provide exceptions for reasons of the substantial public interest.¹¹ The Council of Europe¹² acknowledges the

⁵JURÁSKOVÁ, M. *Vzťah Rómov k majorite*. 2002. s. 401.

⁶BUDAYOVÁ, Z. *The social problem of poverty of the Roma minority*. Warszawa: Szkoła Wyższa im. Bogdana Janskiego. 2015. p. 28.

⁷Pozri ANDOROVÁ, P., ŠIMONOVÁ, J. Zaistenie bezpečnosti pri aplikácii oprávnenia policajta zaistiť osobu v zmysle zákona o PZ. In *Security the key Requirement of the present: Selected issues of security science (elektronický zdroj): zborník z medzinárodnej virtuálnej vedeckej konferencie*. Bratislava: Akadémia Policajného zboru v Bratislave, 2016. s. 62.

⁸Porov. VAŠEČKA, M. Rómovia. In *Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti. Slovensko 1998 – 1999*. Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky. 1999. s. 758.

⁹ŠTATISTICKÝ ÚRAD SR. *Obyvateľstvo podľa národnosti - sčítanie 2011, 2001, 1991*. [online]. [2016-10-04]. Available at: <http://portal.statistics.sk/files/tab.11.pdf>

¹⁰ŠTATISTICKÝ ÚRAD SR. *Veková štruktúra obyvateľstva SR 2001,2011*. [online]. [2016-10-04]. Available at: <http://portal.statistics.sk/files/prezentacia-vybranych-vysledkov-sodb-2011.pdf>

¹¹Porov. LAJČÁKOVÁ, J., HOJSÍK, M. Rómovia. In *Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti Slovensko 2007*. Bratislava: IVO, 2008. s. 197.

processing of this data in the important public interest, such as supporting and development of social groups in difficulty, or the fight against corruption. Although the members of some ethnic groups in Slovakia admit their nationality, the majority of Roma population do not admit their nationality and they choose some different nationality. The number of Roma is different from that of the Slovak population of Roma nationality. Therefore, the data on the Roma population does not give a true picture of the Roma population.¹³ Ability to compare this data is affected by the possibility to choose a particular nationality. Nationality of the new-born children is inferred from the nationality of the mother.

According to Lehoczka, reasons of majority of the Roma living in Slovakia for official confirmation of their Slovak nationality (in the census), can have these objective and subjective causes:

- It can result from the long-term attitudes of the state in the past – so called curator syndrome, therapeutic approach of the attitude towards Roma until 1989, called paternalism. They were considered to be undeveloped population of Roma origin. They gained the ethnic minority status only after 1989, the approaches of the majority environment showed the assimilative character, causing the breakage, respectively. insufficient formation of cultural patterns of life of the Roma and the break in their identity,
- Some Roma have been influenced by experiencing the various discriminatory practices in the majority environment or other negative attitudes in terms of inter-ethnic communication (ethnocentrism, xenophobia, discrimination, racism, various forms of extremism),
- Negative social situation of the Roma living in settlements and in concentrated and segregated communities and their way of life,
- Some Roma are unable to cope with the loss of positive characteristics of Roma origin, as nowadays more and more negative, especially social problems are raising,
- Many others simply cannot accept the fact that they are part of a low status minority, so-called lower "caste" and it is accompanied by a number of social and psychological demonstrations (prejudices).¹⁴

Roma population is characterized by a high number of children. Natural Roma population growth has long been higher than the non-Roma population growth. It is the result of different reproductive behavior of Roma, who have higher birth rate.

Roma are a very specific group, and therefore the resolution of their problem situations requires multicomplex access. Poor social situation of the most Roma, however, raises the question of whether they are more social or ethnic minority. Increasingly begin to discuss the concept of the "underclass". This group is characterized by an essential characteristic: long-term unemployment, fragmented work career, dependence of social system, relying on the support system, low social control.¹⁵

The Roma community is internally highly differentiated. Roma differs in languages and dialects used and from which it takes the words in Roma language. It differentiates them

¹² Dohovor o ochrane jednotlivca pri automatizovanom spracovaní osobných údajov (Rada Európy), Odporúčanie č. R(97) 18 Rady ministrov členským štátom o ochrane osobných údajov zhromažďovaných a spracovávaných pre štatistické účely a vysvetľujúce memorandum k Odporúčaniu č. R (97) 18. In *Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti Slovensko 2007*. Bratislava: IVO, 2008. s. 197.

¹³ Porov. VAŇO, B., HAVIAROVÁ, E. Demografické trendy rómskej populácie. In VAŠEČKA, M. *Čačipen pal o Roma: Súhrnná správa o Rómoch na Slovensku*. Bratislava: IVO, 2002. s. 475.

¹⁴ Porov. LEHOCZKA, L. *Kultúrna identita Rómov*. Nitra: UKF, FSVZ, 2006. s. 42-49.

¹⁵ Porov. VAŠEČKA, M. Rómovia. In *Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti. Slovensko 1998 – 1999*. Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky. 1999. s. 759.

and their origin and affiliation to their region, whether they come from rural or urban environment. Slovak legislation sees Roma as a national minority and legislation Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe (CoE) to treat Roma as an ethnic group.¹⁶

Social tensions between the majority society and the Roma is currently the main, but particularly topical issue. Almost daily in the media emerging topics and posts that point to "discrimination" attacks, but also on socio-pathological phenomena, which are found in many settlements. Poláková states that "at a time, but quite recently in fact all the states of Europe against Roma implement some, harder and softer, more open or covert forms of discrimination which was signed on the present state of life of the Roma."¹⁷ Maybe that's why should mobilize all parts of society to achieve better spatial integration of Roma into the social life of the majority. The first, simplest way is the pursuit of understanding and tolerance, preparation for living with this ethnic group in a common state. Of course in this phase should involve everyone, according to his ability.

A large part of the majority population creates its attitude towards Roma under the influence of prejudices and stereotypes. The high rate of rejection and widespread prejudices consequently directly affect the actual behavior of the Roma, who often fulfill the image of Roma in majority population. Conflict atmosphere between Roma and the majority population increases and it can be a real threat in the further addressing the past, present and future problems.¹⁸ Although they are rather psychological prejudices, or at least socio - psychological categories, have a decisive impact on the behavior of the majority to the minorities. Strong stereotypes and the hidden emotional message tend to be related to this attitude and it cannot be changed easily under the influence of the opposite information. Discrimination is then practical culmination of prejudices and relates to behavior, in particular the unequal treatment of people based on their membership of a particular group.¹⁹ The media keep bringing news on violent clashes of Roma with the majority and on Roma's criminal activities, resulting from the deterioration of their social situation.

However, the main finding of all realized surveys is that the Roma has more favorable attitude towards the majority, than is the majority's relation to Roma. Roma people perceive the majority as part of their social life, respectively; they want to be seen as part of the majority. That reflects the crisis of the Roma identity, their tendency to identify more with the majority population.²⁰ "Evaluation of mutual relations and coexistence is due to several factors: socioeconomic status, level of integration and sub-ethnic differentiation."²¹ Current attitudes, interactions and conflicts affect how they see Roma and the majority of its future coexistence. Unsolved problems and relations could lead to unnecessary future scale of this phenomenon relations and rising social tensions.

¹⁶ VAŠEČKA, M. Rómovia. In *Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti. Slovensko 1998 – 1999*. Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky. 1999. s. 759.

¹⁷ POLÁKOVÁ, E. *Štúdie na tému etika a rómska problematika*. Trnava: Pro Socio, 2006. s.4.

¹⁸ Porov. VAŠEČKA, M. Vzťah majority k Rómom. In VAŠEČKA, M. *Čačipen pal o Roma: Súhrnná správa o Rómoch na Slovensku*. Bratislava: IVO, 2002. s.336.

¹⁹ Porov. VAŠEČKA, M. *Vzťah majority k Rómom*. 2002. s.337.

²⁰ Porov. JURÁSKOVÁ, M. *Vzťah Rómov k majorite*. In VAŠEČKA, M. *Čačipen pal o Roma: Súhrnná správa o Rómoch na Slovensku*. Bratislava: IVO, 2002. s. 396.

²¹ JURÁSKOVÁ, M. *Vzťah Rómov k majorite*. 2002. s. 401.

Subjective indicators of the Roma minority poverty

“Every investigation and measurement of poverty sets out so-called poverty thresholds (poverty lines); it means that it is focused only on a certain dimension or concept of poverty.”²²

Subjective poverty is based on the opinions and feeling of those who are directly affected by it. Subjective understanding of poverty reflects the perception of the situation by the ones who consider themselves as poor. Subjective concepts of poverty are based on feelings of people indicated as the poor – it means on evaluation of their own life experience. Valentová (in D. Gerbery), based on her own analysis and observations of other authors, suggested classification of negatives and positives which she labeled as objective and subjective indications. According to the author positive aspects of subjective analyses is that it reports the feelings, attitudes and values of respondents. Negative aspects include low reliability and validity of subjective indicators. Veenhoven (In D. Gerbery) mentions that subjective indicators can be supportive in two respects:

- they can help to assess the success of a certain policy,
- They can be useful in the process of choosing the aims of social policy, as they allow gaining information about the wants and needs of people.²³

There exist many approaches for investigation people’s feelings and opinions on poverty; we agree with D. Gerbery (2009) and think that neither of them can be regarded as the only one correct and universal. Monitoring and measuring of objective poverty is based on observation from outside, regardless on views of examined individuals. Determination of subjective poverty is, however, based only on views and feelings of the asked persons and therefore it can happen that while measuring subjective poverty the group of the poor would include a higher number of individuals (because of subjective perception of poverty), who from the objective point of view are not poor.

The Roma issue in all its complexity is one of the most serious socio-economic and social problems. In order to define “Roma issue” many authors mention difficulties with housing, education, problems related to the health conditions and high rate of unemployment of Roma population and others. Subjective determination of poverty reflects personal surviving of poverty, while the poverty line set by the state bodies is not decisive. An individual who perceive themselves as poor does not necessarily meet the criteria for objective determination of poverty. A. Žilová introduces this type of poverty as a condition when a person cannot satisfy their needs according to their wishes, however, the concept of basic needs can vary significantly.²⁴

A. Kramár distinguishes two perspectives of subjective approach for poverty detection:

- **Situational** – poverty perception based on assessment of one’s own living conditions by a person or household. It is linked to feeling of a person whether they consider themselves as poor or not. Perception of poverty by a person depends on numerous factors, such as comparison of their current belongings with what they want to achieve and believe they deserve. The value of this concept is only additional; it is not tend to determine the official poverty lines.

²² DŽAMBAZOVIČ, R. Posun od merania chudoby k meraniu sociálneho vyčlenenia. In *Zborník Merania chudoby*. Bratislava: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2004. s. 11.

²³ Cf. GERBERY, D. *Subjektívne prístupy k identifikácii chudoby, deprivácie a sociálneho vylúčenia na základe údajov z EÚ SILC*. [online]. Bratislava: Inštitút pre výskum práce a rodiny. 2009. p. 8-12. [2014-05-07]. Available at : <http://www.sspr.gov.sk/IVPR/images/IVPR/vyskum/2008/Gerbery/Gerbery-VU.pdf>

²⁴ Cf. ŽILOVÁ, A. 2001. p. 62

- **Factorial** – limits the poverty on factors which do not depend on the opinions of the poor, but are based on analysis of socio-economical data about the set of households.²⁵

Statistical tools for examining poverty based on subjective concepts in Slovakia include:

- Survey of living conditions based on rather extensive questionnaire that is realized in relatively small group of households. Its aim is to combine all main dimensions on living conditions, especially in poor households, in one survey: consumption patterns, household budget, anthropometric indicators, income, non-financial donations, and transfers.²⁶ (The survey of this kind was realized in the Slovak Republic with the support of the World Bank in Roma households in separated Roma settlements in 2005),

- Estimation of subjective poverty line based on asking discrete question. Discretion of the asked question is in fact that respondents do not have to determine absolute sum of their income they desire to have, but they are asked to indicate whether considering their current income and status they feel poor or not.²⁷

Individual problematic situations, their description and suggested solutions can be complicated – from the point of view of state (municipalities concerned this issue), from the point of view of majority inhabitants of villages or towns, but also from the position of Roma population. Problematic situations in Roma families are usually interlinked and often overlapped. If adult members of the family are unemployed (not just for subjective reasons), it is very difficult to ensure proper functioning of the household, extracurricular activities for school children. On the other site, proper education is a basic prerequisite for finding an employment. If the education absents, or is incomplete, it is hard issue to find an adequate job.

This creates social exclusion and its associated social marginalization. Poverty, social exclusion and marginalization go hand in hand with interethnic as well as with inter-ethnic tension. Social exclusion expresses the risk of marginalization and exclusion of individuals, groups or communities in all areas of life.²⁸ It is thus a broader concept than the very concept of poverty. Roma communities can be classified into groups that are most at risk of social exclusion, its marginalization as a result of a sustained adverse social, economic, social situation.²⁹

The most vulnerable rural settlements are often small villages with old population and segregated settlements characterized by a concentration of the Roma population (Roma settlements). D. daisy, however, thought it was necessary to draw attention to a specific degree of problems of socio-demographic structure of marginalized communities. Some are in

²⁵ Cf. KRAMÁR, A. *Analýza subjektívnej chudoby na Slovensku*. [online]. [2012-05-06]. Available at : <http://www.humannageografia.sk/projekt1/download/Kramar.pdf>

²⁶ ŽILOVÁ, A., BROZMANOVÁ GREGOROVÁ, A. *Závěrečná správa z výskumného projektu SOCIÁLNE SÚVISLOSTI SPÔSOBU ŽIVOTA CHUDOBNEJ MLÁDEŽE (REFLEXIA OČAMI CIEĽOVEJ SKUPINY)*. In BODNÁROVÁ, B., GERBERY, D., FILADELFIOVÁ, J. BERNHAUSEROVÁ, E. *Medzigeneračný prieskum podmienok života rodín*. Bratislava: Inštitút pre výskum práce a rodiny, 2006. 84 p.

²⁷ ŽILOVÁ, A., BROZMANOVÁ GREGOROVÁ, A. *Závěrečná správa z výskumného projektu SOCIÁLNE SÚVISLOSTI SPÔSOBU ŽIVOTA CHUDOBNEJ MLÁDEŽE (REFLEXIA OČAMI CIEĽOVEJ SKUPINY)*. Centrum dobrovoľníctva a Katedry sociálnej práce, Pedagogická fakulta Univerzita Mateja Bela v Banskej Bystrici a Pedagogická fakulta Katolíckej univerzity v Ružomberku [online]. [2015-01-20]. Available at:

<http://www.iuventa.sk/files/documents/zaverecna%20sprava%20socialne%20suvvislosti%20-%20solcova.pdf>

²⁸ SABAYOVÁ, M. *Kvalita života v EÚ na ceste k udržateľnému rozvoju*. In PÁNA, L. a kol. *Integrovaná Evropa súčasnosti a budúcnosti – reflexe tridsať rokov od podpisu Schengenskej úmluvy*. České Budějovice : 2015. ISBN 978-80-87472-83-5.

²⁹ BUDAYOVÁ, Z. *Selected aspects of the Roma minority poverty and social work*. Warszawa: Szkoła Wyższa im. Bogdana Janskiego. 2015. p. 31.

fact starting a process of gradual demographic "aging" of the village, but in others the process of "rejuvenation" due to its gradual "porómštenia". There are created. urban ghettos or slums. An interesting case is currently Slovakia, as well as nowadays the inner parts of the premises occupied by older people and low-income families. As a result of the conversion of city centers, which are accompanied by and "planned eviction" of defaulters is being played out in this way the practical elimination of the weakest income groups from exclusive commercial space. D. daisy indicates that many times these eviction happening on the ethnic principle. It regards the planned segregation and efforts to isolate one group of people. This strategy offers the public and the public and it is accepted as the only way to solve. Sometimes the effort masks as "an effort to improve the standard of living of those residents who does not ultimately not deserve."³⁰ In this way there is a concentration of people in a given territory, mostly in suburban areas and neighborhoods. This solution, however, appears to be a disadvantage, because they talk about data on the state unemployment allowance.³¹

Millennium Development Goals National Report for Slovakia from the year 2004 states that: "in Slovakia there still exist significant regional differences in poverty, unemployment, average wages rates, as well as in indicators showing educational and health conditions ... and ... it is possible to talk about the islands of extreme poverty in the middle of relatively wealthy society. Conditions in isolated Roma settlements show that these islands of poverty mainly overlap the Roma population."³²

Results and conclusion of the research

The aim of the research which was realized in six villages of the Spišská Nová Ves district was to describe current social state in chosen Roma communities which had given account of poverty. We gain the information by interviewing field 20 social workers and employees of the municipalities in Spišská Nová Ves district. In accordance to this aim we examined and tried to identify causes of subjective poverty of Roma. We used a method of questionnaire. In every village of the district we identified the parameters that were necessary for identification of objectives.

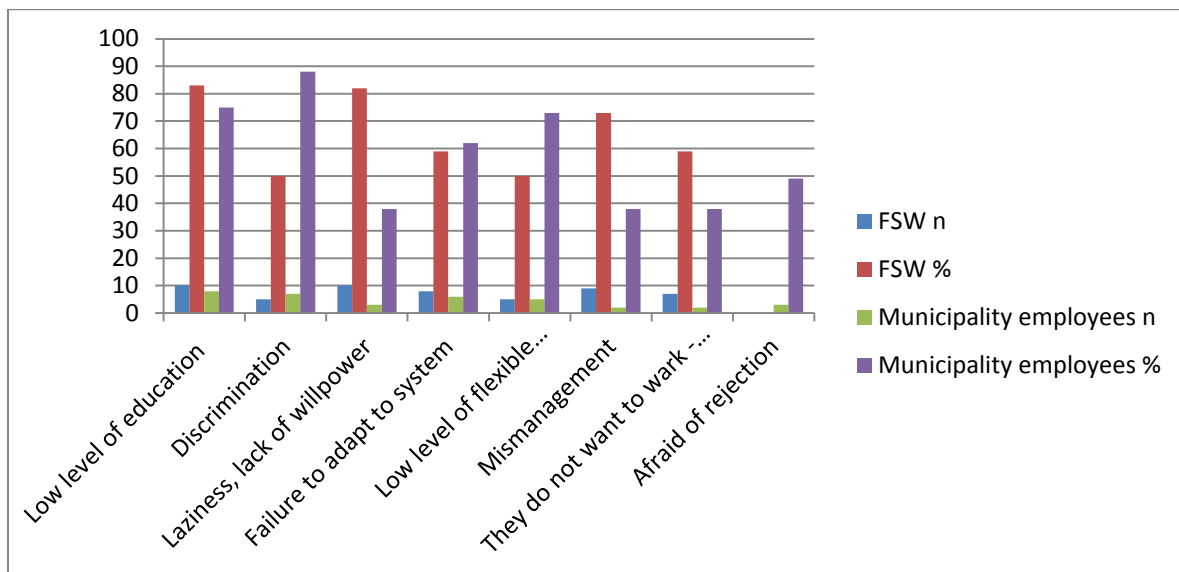
One of the questions concerned the causes of poverty of Roma minority. In answering the question: "*What do you think are the most common causes of poverty of Roma minority?*" respondents reported low level of education of Roma minority; 83 % of field social workers (FSW) and 75 % of municipality employees (ME) agree that this problem is also connected with other difficulties such inability to apply in life. Discrimination in labour market was placed as the second; it was stated by 50 % of FSW and 87.5 % of ME. Laziness and lack of willpower was marked as the third most often cause by our respondents (83 % of FSW and 37.5 % of ME). Failure to adapt of majority system, low level of flexible responding to their poor social situation and mismanagement were stated next. We were surprised by the answer "they do not want to work – because they would lose benefits" which was marked by 58 % of FSW and 37.5 % of ME. During the interview with our respondents that was realized shortly afterward we learned that entry into employment causes that "Roma from their villages loose state benefits and contributions which are currently paid to them by ÚPSVaR (Úrad práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny - Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family)".

³⁰ Porov. GERBERY, D., LESAY, I., ŠKOBLA, D. *Kniha o chudobe. Spoločenské súvislosti a verejné politiky.* s. 50.

³¹ BUDAYOVÁ, Z. *Selected aspects of the Roma minority poverty and social work.* Warszawa: Szkoła Wyższa im. Bogdana Janskiego. 2015. p. 140.

³² FILADELFOVÁ, J., GERBERY, D., ŠKOBLA, D. *Správa o životných podmienkach rómskych domácností na Slovensku.* [online]. [2015-01-20]. Available at: <http://www.euractiv.sk/rovnost-sanci/analiza/sprava-o-zivotnych-podmienkach-romskych-domacnosti-na-slovensku#sthash.UiTPBXCM.sT6FosDB.dpuf>

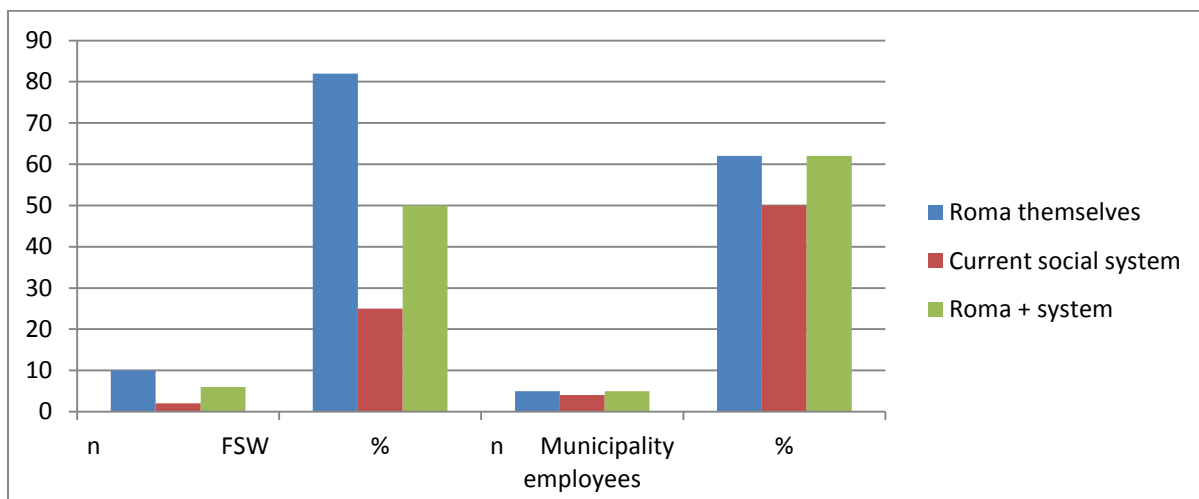
Graph 1 Causes of poverty of Roma minority



Our respondents answered the next question “What manifestation can impact of poverty have on majority population?” as following: “majority population keep distance from Roma” which was indicated by 83.3 % of FSW and 87.5% of ME. Open discrimination (75 % of FSW, 50 % of ME) and prejudice (58.3 % FSW, 7 % ME) were the options mentioned on second place. Bad coexistence (50 % FSW and 37.5 % ME) and reducing the prestige of the village (58.3 % FSW, 25 % ME) were answers reported penultimate by our respondents. 25 % of FSW and 50 % of ME believe that Roma poverty has no impact on majority population of the village.

Another question: “Who is responsible for the current Roma poverty?” our respondents answered as follows: 83.3 % of FSW and 62.5 % of ME think that “only Roma themselves” are the main reasons of their unfavourable situation.

Graph 2 Responsibility for the situation



We set the hypothesis 1: We assume that more than 80 % of asked FSW and ME consider the situation of Roma as very bad, however, this situation is a result of reluctance of

Roma to tackle the poverty. We calculated the statistical significance of rate of difference between actual results (frequency) of the expected results based on randomness.

Chi 2 degrees of freedom P-value

1.17 0.55718665

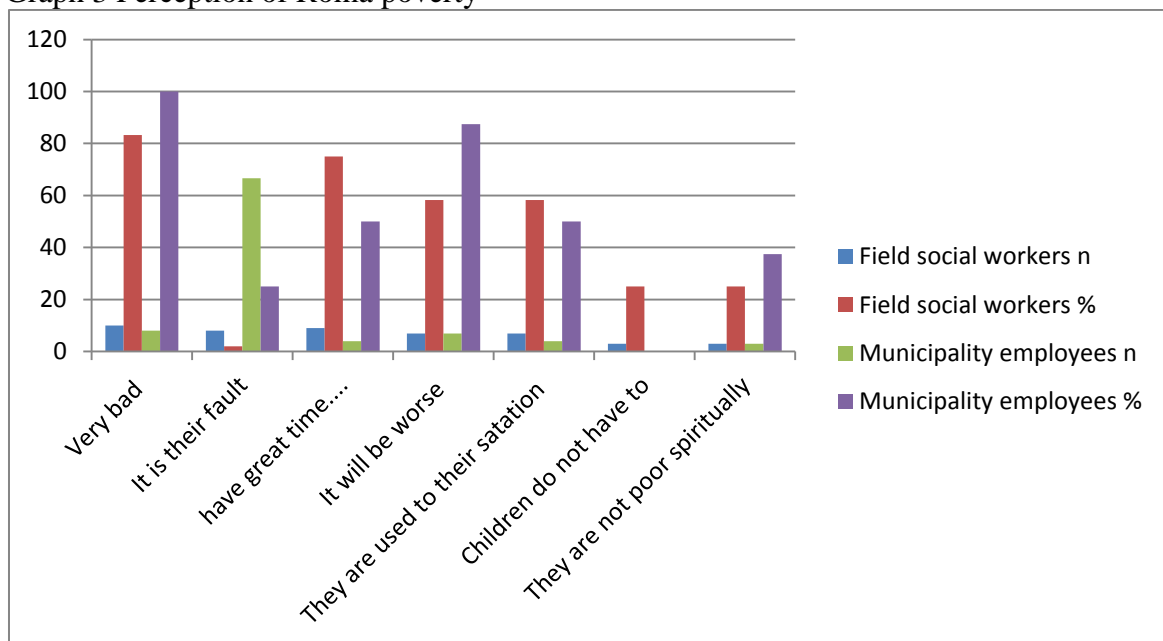
Based on the P-value we found out that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. Two compared averages are not statistically significant. Therefore we cannot accept the dependence with 95 % probability. It means that difference between the multiplicity found in the sample and expected multiplicity can be just a result of random sampling, and it is not statistically significant. This hypotheses was confirmed as respondents believe that the situation of Roma is very poor and it the result of their reluctance to tackle their poverty.

We set also another hypothesis:

H2: We assume that more than 80 % of asked inhabitants of Spišská Nová Ves district think that the situation of Roma is very bad, and that their situation is the result of their reluctance to tackle the poverty.

Answering question: *“How do you personally see the Roma poverty?”* brought following answers: According to 83.3 % of FSW and all of asked ME, poverty of Roma community is perceived as very poor. However, this fact seems to be in contrary to the answers such as: *“It is their fault”* which was reported by 66.6 % of FSW and 25 % of ME. 75 % of FSW and 50% of ME respondents stated that Roma *“have great time when they are paid social benefits and contributions”*. 58.3 % of FSW and 87.5 % chose a prognosis that the situation of Roma will be even worse in the future. We were surprised when 25 % FSW and 37.5 % of ME indicated that *“spiritually they are not poor at all”*.

Graph 3 Perception of Roma poverty



Chi 6 degrees of freedom P-value

5.08 0.53411490

Based on the P-value we found out that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. Two compared averages are not statistically significant. Therefore we cannot accept the dependence with 95 % probability. It means that difference between the multiplicity found in the sample and expected multiplicity can be just a result of random sampling, and it is not statistically significant.

Question: „What are the reasons of inadaptability of Roma” respondents answered as follows: All respondents of FSW (100 %) and 87.5 % of ME chose the option that Roma do not want to adapt. The answers “they would lose money” and “they would lose benefits” were chosen by the same number of respondents, 83.3 % of FSW and 37.5 % of ME. We were also abashed by the possibility “they are rather happy and satisfied with this situation” which was indicated by 100 % of FSW and 73 % of ME. Our respondents admit that work experiences and many interviews with Roma population bring them to the conclusion that even the Roma themselves are not sure what to do to include them and adapt into the major society.

Graph 4 Reasons of Roma failure



Chi 6 degrees of freedom P-value
5.60 0.46905104

Based on the P-value we found out that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. Two compared averages are not statistically significant. Therefore we cannot accept the dependence with 95 % probability. It means that difference between the multiplicity found in the sample and expected multiplicity can be just a result of random sampling, and it is not statistically significant.

The hypothesis which we set at the beginning was **confirmed**, as more than 80 respondents talked about very bad situation of Roma, all of FSW and 87.5 % of ME expressed that Roma do not want to adapt and have no interest to address their unfavourable situation.

We realized qualitative research in selected villages, where we choose as the main method of the qualitative research the method “focus group interview” which P. Gavora translates as an interview with focus group, or a thematic group interview. This type of interview allows us to bring more new opinions, knowledge and ideas than in individual

interview.³³ Kleiberová In P. Gavora points out that the aim is not to get a group consensus but to find out the variety of different views on the issue. Interview is thematically open, it means any topic can be chosen and discussed and we can capture varied and rich knowledge of the examined problem.³⁴

Using the method focus group interview we chose purposive sampling of participants – Roma. We could use this method with respect to communication and mental level of participants. This method is suitable for both, subjective expression of feelings, as well as for examining closer the unfavourable situation of our participants. Open questions were cluster together under axial coding into the categories – **employment** and **housing**. We used inductive research with gradual generation of hypotheses and theory formation. Procedure of analytical induction was used as a strategy. P. Gavora defines it as a sequence of individual steps:

- initial hypothesis is formulated on the base of primary cases,
- new additional cases are examined, hypothesis is reworked,
- if a diverging case/cases is/are found, it is examined whether they fit to established hypothesis,
- if the case does not meet the set hypothesis, the hypothesis is reformulated in a way that all cases can fit it (even diverging cases); or the hypothesis is cancelled and a new one is created, all cases are inquired again so we can have confidence that the hypothesis can become a good theory.³⁵

We interviewed purposely selected participants through group interview and in the end we generated hypotheses that had been already identified as primary, but according to our participants' testimonies we reformulated them into the following form:

The initial hypothesis 1 in employment area: We assume that interviewed participants would identify the unavailability of job opportunities in the region as the main obstacle for finding an employment.

The final hypothesis 1 in employment area: We assume that more than 70 % of participants would identify the disadvantage of work because of low wages as the main obstacle for finding a job.

The initial hypothesis 2 in housing area: We assume that participants are satisfied with the type of housing they live in and would not wish to change their housing conditions.

The final hypothesis 2 housing area: We assume that as much as 90% of interviewed participants would address their housing problem by extensive state support.

Conclusion

The most vulnerable groups of Roma are the inhabitants of marginalized Roma communities who face so called “double marginalisation.” On the one hand they live in marginalised regions with minimal possibility to find a job, and at the same time, for various reasons, they are unplaceable in the labour market, or their entry to the labour market is difficult, for example in consequence of a labour disadvantage or social exclusion, uncompleted education or others. This is mentioned in the National Action Plan on Social Inclusion.

Respondents of our research based on their experiences and working with Roma stated that **Roma blame social system for their unfavourable situation**. Discrimination on labour market, laziness and lack of willpower were also marked by our respondents. As we found out

³³ Cf. GAVORA, P. *Sprievodca metodológiu kvalitatívneho výskumu*. Bratislava: UK. 2007. pp.93-94.

³⁴ Cf. GAVORA, P. *Sprievodca metodológiu kvalitatívneho výskumu*. Bratislava : UK. 2007. pp. 93-97.

³⁵ Cf. GAVORA, P. *Sprievodca metodológiu kvalitatívneho výskumu*. Bratislava : UK, 2007. p. 49.

from the interviews “Roma are sometimes not able to hold a shovel longer than an hour”, they have no working habits. We also spotted that respondents chose the opinions that “Roma do not want a change”, “it’s their fault”, “at the time of social benefits and contribution they have a great time”. Nowadays social system is inappropriately set up and literally **forces the poor not to work**. They are not motivated to look for a job, because in case they begin to work legally for minimal wage, they drastically lose social benefits and contributions. It is therefore better and easier not to work anywhere and just receive social benefits and contributions, or to have an undeclared job and receive social benefits. Our current welfare system **provides social benefits without consideration (passive eligibility)**. It means that it is not required for a citizen, recipient of social benefits, to work for few hours a day in favour of municipality, town or state. However we think that it could be conducive not only for the village and town, but also for building positive relations with majority.

Level of dependence on benefits in material need according to our respondents is so high that it **determines** the life **dynamic** of colonies in villages. At the time when social benefits and contributions are paid, colonies are vivid, Roma do big shopping, travel by taxi, there is music and joy till late night hours, and there is sometimes even bigger fight. It is also the time for paying back their debts (most often to moneylenders). Employees of municipality and field social workers are sometimes the only **link** between majority and Roma population in segregated settlements. They are in daily contact with Roma and spend most of the day with them. Therefore they often feel as a kind of “bumper” of negative emotions of the citizens – the Roma. Professional training and lots of energy is essential to work in this profession and mission.

Employment and financial inclusion was the topic of greatest importance. There was a dynamic debate that was linked to the high unemployment rate of the Roma ethnic and the fact that benefits in material need could not be satisfaction on sufficient level. Roma are not motivated to look for a job because of the low wages and **disadvantages of working**. According to the testimony of Roma “if they stay at home and receive benefits and contributions, they will get more money as if they would go to work”; it means that in case that they find a job (after revoking benefits in material need), they will have less money than if they would stay registered as receivers of state contributions at Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. In these cases (according to the testimonies) we see a kind of “discrimination” of those who work. Migration working potential in municipalities was very low, Roma do not try to find an employment through the created contacts. They are activated for work only as labourers in constructions for local non-Roma or in woods.

Subjective perception of poverty in the area of housing considered the conditions of living of Roma. In our research we met Roma who live in brick houses and therefore their statements were not as indignant as the reports of those Roma who live in huts. They would welcome any change, eventually they would contribute to change the way of living by work. However, since the change is directly proportional to the money spent on this effort, it would not be realistic for them to participate by financial contribution. The effort to participate was seen only in the Roma who had economically higher standard of living. In some cases we have also met the idea to move among the majority population. This effort, however, has no positive response in majority of the village.

Following arguments and questions would be adequate and should be considered in further research undertaken in this field:

Is it appropriate to continue in marginalization and deepening the segregation of Roma communities in case when we want to address their current poverty?

Is the existing social system (system of benefits in material need) set for quality or just quantity of provided social assistance

Based on these experiences, we can say that the unfavourable social situation of Roma communities cannot be solved without participation and cooperation of individuals and communities who are personally affected by poverty. It is essential to ensure cooperation between the Roma and majority populations, because poverty which is most visible among the Roma is also manifested in the majority population of certain region.

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Kľúčové slová: chudoba, príčiny chudoby, Róm, vnímanie, zodpovednosť

Súhrn

Rómska rodina predstavuje rodinu s vlastnou kultúrou, s vlastným poňatím, odlišujúcou sa od majority v mnohých aspektoch. Táto minorita osobitne chápe hodnotový rebríček, spoločenské a individuálne normy, spôsob života a celkový životný štýl. V predkladanej vedeckej štúdií poukazujeme na aspekt chudoby v rómskych komunitách s ich príčinami a dôsledkami pre spoločnosť, pričom v realizovanom výskume podávame obraz o vnímaní rómskej chudoby z pohľadu zamestnancov obecných úradov a terénnych sociálnych pracovníkov v okrese Spišská Nová Ves, ktorí v súvislosti s výkonom svojej práce čelia priamo tomuto problému a následne ich komparujeme s vnímaním subjektívnej chudoby rómskych participantov v kvalitatívnom výskume. Vďaka skúsenostiam týchto ľudí, ktorí sa venujú prácam s komunitami môžeme konštatovať, že nepriaznivá sociálna situácia rómskych komunít sa nedá vyriešiť bez účasti a spolupráce jednotlivcov a rómskych komunít, ktorých sa to predovšetkým týka.

V podobných vedeckých výskumoch bude potrebné pokračovať a zodpovedať na ďalšie vyplývajúce otázky, napríklad: „Je vhodné problém chudoby v rómskych komunitách marginalizovať a tým prehľbovať segregáciu rómskych komunít, ak chceme vyriešiť problém chudoby v rómskych komunitách?“ alebo „Je súčasný sociálny systém, resp. systém dávok v hmotnej núdzi nastavený na kvalitu alebo len na kvantitu poskytovaných sociálnych služieb pre rómske komunity?“ V ďalších dôležitých otázkach by sa dalo pokračovať. Podstatné však je hľadať a nachádzať odpovede, ktoré sa budú môcť zosúladiť s praxou.

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