

GENDER DISPARITIES – ISSUE OF THE CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY?

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Abstract: : The purpose of this paper is to illustrate the situation of gender disparities in Romania, an important subject of our days, based both on literature review and official data analysis. Since the status of the woman in contemporary society cannot be treated independently from what is largely debated nowadays in relation to the presence of women in different fields on the labor market, we have firstly proceeded to review the main theoretical and empirical literature in this respect. The paper starts with a short introduction in the field, followed by a brief analysis of important data regarding education, wage and hierarchical positions. The second part represents a correlation between the main determinants of the overall progress of society, trying to highlight the main conclusions of this delicate issue.

JEL classification: J16

Key words: gender, disparities, education, wage, contemporary society, hierarchical position

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

”The most important determinant of a country’s competitiveness is its human talent—the skills and productivity of its workforce. Similarly, an organization’s performance is determined by the human capital that it possesses and its ability to use this resource efficiently” (WEF, 2015).

Literature considers the human capital and its efficient use as foundations of economic reforms implementation, providing also a ”special importance to human resources, as primary element for economic growth, for the competitiveness increase, and consequently for economic development” (Tănase, Tănase, 2014).

Women, who represent more than half of the world's population, "deserve equal access to health, education, economic participation and earning potential, Decision-making and political power". Still there are barriers for female participation to the economical activity (Moldovan, 2015). Therefore, equal opportunities and the reduction

of differences between representatives of the two genres is essential, although it is known that "in comparison with men, women tend to be more flexible, balanced and tolerant, more realistic (...) prudent, more confident, less aggressive and more easily persuaded, with more reduced abilities of leadership and problem-solving, when decision making implies certain risks "(Tanase Tanase, 2010).

The issue of gender disparities was thus transposed into a most discussed debate nowadays, patriarchy being challenged by feminist movements with broad experience in various fields. Although discrimination as a phenomenon has arisen from ancient times, women's empowerment and recognition of equal rights marked a major concern to specific organizations, especially during the transition period. At present, although there are prejudices regarding the role and rights of women in the labour market, they are less and at the same time gain a smaller intensity than in the past. However - gender disparities are still a problem of contemporary society?

Women now represent more than half of the total population worldwide. "The access to education is widely open even in less-developed countries, consequently increasing the number of female workers, still there are several issues regarding occupational segregation and gender inequality, that need to be solved" (Manciu, Demyen, 2015), the gender equality being considered a multidimensional criterion (Lofstrom, 2012), referring to the economic, cultural, and social dimensions.

Literature considers gender inequality as "the last inequality" (Pasti, Ilinca, 2003), after "racism, chauvinism or religious intolerance", women being a disadvantaged category, the group that is subject to the act of discrimination because of the gender to which they belong. Although the intensity of this discrimination was more subdued in comparison to the years 1800 - 1900, the idea of gender equality being strongly promoted both in literature and in the media, research in this area still considers this phenomena as being only diminished and not entirely eradicated, since we may speak about a "movement of the frontier of inequality" (Pasti, Ilinca, 2003) and not about a radical "abolition". The issue mentioned is referred to in terms of equal opportunities and wage differences between men and women (Lofstrom, 2012), being drawn up annually analysis reports on how it is remunerated the work performed by persons of different gender. Conclusions state that on numerous occasions' women are weaker remunerated than men, for performing a similar work, although the criterion of equality is promoted at the level of the European Union, not just in theory, but also in practice (Manciu, Demyen, 2015).

There have been thus established such ideas that the independence at work is a basic principle of the progress of modern society, but only through the alignment to the applicability of a fair system of remuneration of women and men, parity in decision-making process and equality in all aspects of gender, integrity or preserving individual dignity, eliminating the limitations of rights and discrimination based on gender (Sănduleasa, 2010).

Patriarchy, the depiction of a "masculin system of oppression and domination of women by men" (Pasti, Ilinca, 2003) has traced over the years: relationships, systems, laws and regulations, establishing the very idea of a right of control for the representatives of the male gender upon women (Bergman, 1974), translating whilst into a system of oppression, often denying the ability of women to engage in positions which traditionally are regarded as suitable for men, also male employees conspiring "not to allow women to occupy positions well paid, reserving the gains for other men" case in which we may notice a sharp discrimination on grounds of gender, being

avored meanwhile the masculine type of management. All this despite the fact that studies prepared by prestigious economic publications prestigious note that women represent "half of the workforce, which although so far have been concentrated in areas less paid, practicing professions as commercial workers, waiters, administrative assistants". The fact that most women devote a part of life motherhood implies the idea of a smaller devotion to careers in general (Akerloff, Kranton, 2010) and also of a lower level of training or professional development.

These trends have also penetrated into enterprise management, through organizational culture, Geert Hofstede mentioning the cultural dimensions (Hofstede 1993) stating a division of social gender roles, masculinity and femininity as adapting types of societies, where the first one emphasize subordination between hierarchical levels, while the femininity type primarily involves collaboration and focusing attention on the essentials aspects. All this developed on the background of clear differences between male and female employees, which gave rise to the notion of occupational segregation (Akerloff, Kranton, 2010). The system of essential determinant factors, which contribute to the building of this notion, comprises on the one hand a number of stereotypes found in contemporary society, and on the other hand the mentality, subjective preferences or labor market segmentation.

In the past, the access to education was achieved much harder than today, which increases the chances of women in getting a better paid job. But the question arises whether this aspect of the liberalization of access to higher education is sufficient to ensure the removal of disparities based on gender.

2. THE COUNTRY PROFILE OF ROMANIA, FROM THE GENDER GAP INDEX PERSPECTIVE

Statistical data published in several reports by the World Economic Forum in 2015 revealed the major differences between countries worldwide, regarding the role assigned to women in various fields of activity.

By tradition, the image of women continues to dominate fields like humanities, arts, social area, health and education, while sciences, agriculture or engineering continues to be regarded as poignant areas which are suitable for representatives of the male gender, the number of women employed in these areas continuing to be much lower.

Although the access of women to political life was also more limited in the past, the situation has changed over the last century, on the basis of a remarkable increasingly involvement in the process of governance, especially since women gained the right to vote in the vast majority of world states. The percentage of representation, however, is different from a country to another, depending on the level of traditionalism and level of development. According to the World Economic Forum, in European countries such as Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Spain and Norway, women hold a large representation in the Parliament; over 40% of the members of this institution are women. At the opposite pole we find Hungary, where only 10% of the members of the Parliament are of female gender, Ukraine (12%), Cyprus, Malta (13%), Russia, Romania (14%), Ireland (16%), Montenegro (17 %), Latvia (18%) and Slovakia (19%).

Worldwide, Rwanda (64%) and Bolivia (53%) are the countries with the highest female representation in Parliament, while Qatar and Yemen registered a null result from this point of view.

According to the Global Gender Gap Report (WEF, 2015), in Finland, 63% of the ministerial positions are held by women, while in Sweden this percent decreases to

52% and in France to 50%. Among the European countries, deficient in this respect are Hungary and Slovakia, with a rate of 0%, while in the case of Romania, 14% of ministerial positions belong to female representatives.

Regarding the Gender Gap Index, Romania ranks 77 out of 145 countries, with a score of 0.693 units (from an interval where a value of 0 is similar to inequality and the value 1 represents the opposite). This index shows firstly an improvement in the outlook for equal opportunities, although it is a score that cannot be considered entirely satisfactory because, even if it is above average, the distance to the best score is still significant.

The report of male / female individuals in the total population of the country is 0.94, which indicates women as dominant as number countrywide, registering an overall 0.36% reduction in the total population. Regarding equity in payment in terms of rendered equal work, our country ranks 59 out of 145, with a score of 0.66, according to the following table (the “wage equity for similar work” Item).

Table no. 1 – Ranking, according to several items – case of Romania

Criterion	Rank	Score
Economic participation and opportunity	50	0,708
Wage equity for similar work	59	0,66
Enrolment in primary education	94	0,99
Enrolment in secondary education	1	1,00
Enrolment in tertiary education	1	1,00
Women in Parliament	103	0,16
Women in ministerial positions	88	0,17

source: The Global Gender Gap Report, WEF, 2015

Studies conducted worldwide on gender disparities reveal that in Romania, in 2015, unemployment among women was lower than among men (6.6% compared with 7.9%), data reflecting a better integration in the labour market, thanks to a wider range of specializations. However, 57% of women have at least an account in a financial institution, as opposed to 65% of men. Of the total existing businesses, 20% are headed by women - manager, the average percentage of women on boards being 14%.

The role of female employees increased over the years also in the field of research – development, where we find a smaller difference in terms of percentage of contribution of female employees. Thus, 54% of the individuals employed in this sector are male, while women represent 46%.

The emphasis on careers determines the time delay of starting a family, statistical data indicating an average age of 26 years for the birth of the first child.

Although there is a law against discrimination on grounds of gender, they are still present in certain fields of activity, although women enjoy broadly the same rights as men.

3. PERCEPTION REGARDING THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY. STATISTICAL DATA ANALYSIS

3.1. EDUCATION IN TERMS OF STATISTICAL DATA

Access to education is guaranteed equally to both women and men. In the European Union member states, the percentage of female students in the total exceeds 50%, except Cyprus and Luxembourg. This is reflected in the system of tertiary education - ISCED 5 and ISCED 6, but although research - development has progressed in recent decades, thus making it less restrictive for women, we can observe however that the percentage of female students is smaller in the field of advanced research (Manciu et al, 2014).

Romanian higher education system has undergone a complex process of transformation during the last two decades, given that the period before 1989 was dominated by an acute state control, with a small number of higher education institutions. According to the National Council for the Financing of Higher Education, "in 1989 there were 46 institutions of higher education in Romania, with a total of 164.507 students enrolled and the technology specialized institutions were predominant (mining, oil exploitation, mechanics), clearly surpassing universities with a more complex structure: engineering, economics, law, agriculture, medicine, and so on" (The National Council for the Financing of Higher Education, 2007 in Manciu et al, 2014).

Society has faced many changes in the late twentieth century, the educational system being the target of reforms which aimed also the higher education, with the purpose of adapting to the requirements imposed by the need to adapt to the market economy. One of the key issues considered was the possibility of international recognition of qualifications and specializations in higher education, being concerned mainly the "harmonization of higher education architecture in Europe", by signing the Bologna Declaration.

The total number of graduates, by level of education, according to data acquired from the National Statistics Institute, is presented in the following table:

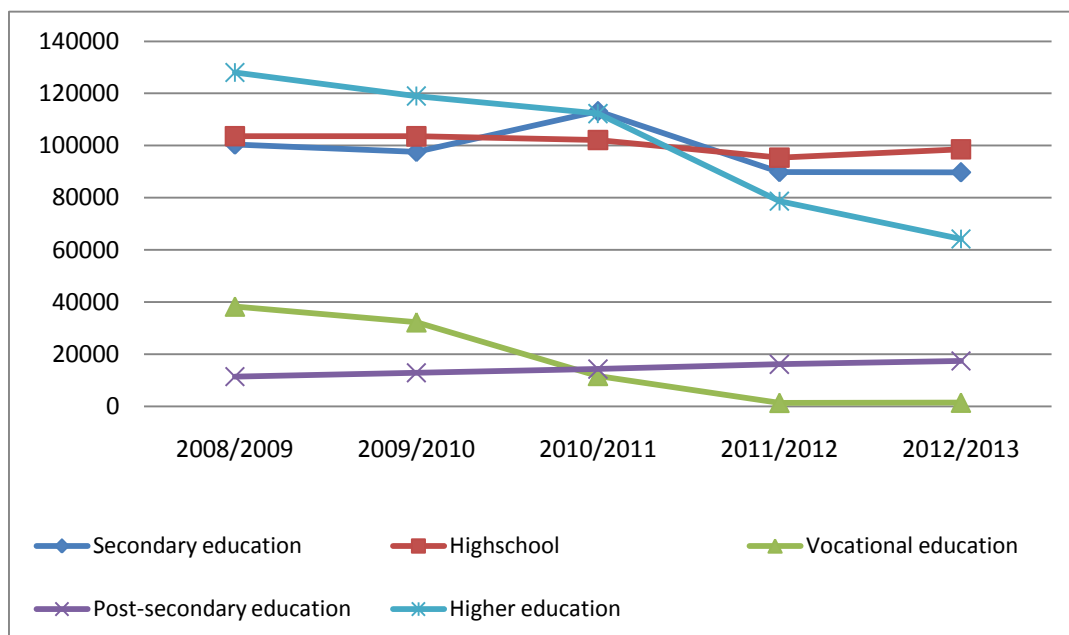
Table no. 2 - Graduates, by level of education

YEAR	2008 / 2009	2009 / 2010	2010 / 2011	2011 / 2012	2012 / 2013
Primary and secondary education	204.018	198.981	229.609	184.599	182.750
Of which women	100.346	97.538	113.148	89.797	89.698
Highschool	202113	204863	202160	187521	200004
Of which women	103574	103544	102136	95330	98519
Vocational education	100901	89805	34733	4570	5643
Of which women	38303	32259	11679	1342	1417
Post-secondary education	17574	19232	21311	23386	26891
Of which women	11406	12845	14279	16113	17376
Higher education	214826	191291	186900	136671	111028
Of which women	128010	118992	112260	78691	64143

Source: The Romanian Statistical Yearbook, 2014

From the information given, we see that the total number of graduates has declined in the period of 2008 - 2013, irrespective of education. The only case in which we can notice an increase refers to post-secondary education, where the total number of graduates increased from 17.574 in 2008/2009 school year to 26.891 in 2012/2013.

The distribution of female graduates can be illustrated in the following graph:



source: computation made by authors, according to the data available in the Romanian Statistical Yearbook, 2014

Figure no. 1 – Distribution of female graduates

We therefore observe a downward trend of the overall number of female graduates in all cases, except for post-secondary education. The decline is most dramatic in the case of vocational or higher education, where the number of graduates in the year 2012/2013 is two times lower than the one recorded at the beginning of the analysed period. The share of female graduates in total graduates at country level is represented as follows:

Table no.3 – The share of women in total graduates

Year	2008 / 2009	2009 / 2010	2010 / 2011	2011 / 2012	2012 / 2013
Secondary education	49%	49%	49%	49%	49%
Highschool	51,25%	50,54%	50,52%	50,84%	49,26%
Vocational education	37,96%	35,92%	33,63%	29,37%	25,11%
Post-secondary education	64,90%	66,79%	67%	68,90%	64,62%
Higher education	59,59%	62,20%	60,06%	57,58%	57,77%

Source: computation made by authors, according to data available on www.insse.ro

The share of women in the total number of graduates remains thus a high one, even if the overall number of graduates is decreasing.

3.2. WAGE IN TERMS OF STATISTICAL DATA

The average gross and net nominal monthly earnings, for the period 2008 - 2013, can be illustrated according to the following chart.



Source: computation made by authors, according to data available on www.insse.ro

Figure no. 2 - The average gross and net monthly earnings in terms of wage

According to data in the chart above, we therefore notice, in case of women, an increase in the gross wage from 1,700 lei in 2008 to 2070 lei in 2013, hovering however, below the average salary recorded by male employees, where the corresponding average gross wage in 2008 was 1814 lei, increasing in 2013 to an amount of 2246 lei.

On the other hand, the analysis of average wage levels on fields of activity, indicates the following situation as a whole and also divided by gender:

Table no. 4 Average gross salaries, by field of activity

	Total	Agriculture, forestry, fishing	Industry	Constructions	Retail trade, repairation of motor vehicles	Transportation and storage	Hotels and restaurants	Information and communication	Financial and insurance	Real estate transactions	Professional, scientific and technical activities	Activities of administrative services and support services	Public administration and social insurance	Education	Health and social assistance	Cultural and entertainment activities	Other activities
2010	1721	1302	1751	1517	1490	1973	1044	3541	3887	1676	2602	1175	1512	1625	1571	1402	1166
Male	1830	1311	1981	1482	1583	1972	1127	3808	4529	1743	2627	1103	1568	1784	1768	1454	1313
Female	1600	1274	1439	1739	1390	1974	992	3142	3600	1579	2573	1339	1473	1555	1515	1364	1032
2011	1922	1492	1881	1721	1621	1744	1167	2187	3981	1912	4330	3048	1224	1697	1744	1536	1254
Male	2033	1510	2120	1709	1575	1888	1262	2140	4219	1970	5402	3078	1131	1841	1934	1618	1414
Female	1794	1437	1551	1755	1957	1584	1111	2378	3627	1838	3847	3010	1440	1634	1693	1473	1104
2012	2063	1493	2110	1629	1779	2235	1148	4031	4911	1710	3057	1392	2898	1895	1797	1569	1265
Male	2163	1508	2365	1592	1978	2210	1233	4193	5893	1723	3122	1273	2763	2071	1970	1655	1457
Female	1948	1443	1771	1872	1599	2310	1093	3785	4483	1694	2981	1662	2999	1817	1753	1505	1108
2013	2163	1614	2199	1629	1765	2249	1214	4098	5016	1847	3241	1533	3344	2123	2002	1662	1347
Male	2246	1629	2453	1582	1912	2218	1301	4296	6161	1852	3349	1407	3186	2344	2230	1762	1580
Female	2070	1564	1867	1920	1625	2347	1159	3797	4489	1841	3115	1811	3461	2028	1946	1592	1165

Source: Romanian Statistical Yearbook, 2010-2012

From the recorded data in the table above, we conclude the following aspects:

- Between 2010 - 2013, the average gross wage in the economy increased from 1721 lei to 2163 lei, a closer look, however, indicating a number of discrepancies in terms of gender structure, also depending on the fields of activity. Thus, throughout the period under review, gross wages of female workers are below the salaries of male employees, although the trend is of increasing in both cases, from an average of 1830 lei in 2010 to 2246 lei in 2013 for men, and from 1600 lei to 2070 lei for women;

- the fields of activity where we identify the highest wage levels are Information and communications, finance and insurance, while the lowest-paid fields are represented by tourism, hotels and restaurants, agriculture, namely the cultural and administrative activities;

- a careful analysis of data for the years 2012 and 2013 indicate construction, transport, administrative and support services activities, ie the government, as areas where wage levels of female employees exceed the level of remuneration for men. Wage differences are however very small in the field of transport (100 lei), the remaining cases showing significant values, with differences of up to 400 lei.

4. CORRELATION BETWEEN THE GGI SCORE, THE NUMBER OF HIGHER EDUCATION GRADUATES (WOMEN) AND THE AVERAGE GROSS WAGE (RECORDED FOR FEMALE EMPLOYEES). THE CASE OF ROMANIA

We further achieved a correlation between the score registered by Romania regarding the Gender Gap Index (according to the WEF 2015 Report), the number of higher education graduates (women) and the average gross wages. Determining the type of bond may be accomplished by the regression analysis of the variables, in order to examine the existence and the intensity of the relationship between them.

The data were processed by Eviews 7 software, the linkage analysis being carried out on the basis of the regression equation for a total of 16 observations entered in the database. The analysed model is linear, under the following shape:

$$GGI = C(1) + C(2) * NR_GRADUATES + C(3) * WAGE$$

Where GGI is the outcome variable, while the number of graduates and the variable regarding wages are factorial variables. C(1), C(2) and C(3) are the parameters of the equation.

Dependent Variable: SCORE

Method: Least Squares

Date: 09/19/16 Time: 01:09

Sample: 1 16

Included observations: 16

$$SCOR=C(1)+C(2)*NR_GRADUATES+C(3)*WAGE$$

	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C(1)	0.581950	0.030918	18.82252	0.0003
C(2)	7.44E-08	6.38E-08	1.166991	0.3275
C(3)	5.07E-05	1.37E-05	3.713941	0.0339
R-squared	0.935449	Mean dependent var		0.683000
Adjusted R-squared	0.892415	S.D. dependent var		0.005099
S.E. of regression	0.001672	Akaike info criterion		-9.642154
Sum squared resid	8.39E-06	Schwarz criterion		-9.746275
Log likelihood	31.92646	Hannan-Quinn criter.		-10.05896
F-statistic	21.73735	Durbin-Watson stat		1.990633
Prob(F-statistic)	0.016400			

Through the replacement of data for the three parameters, in Eviews7, we obtained the following regression equation:

$$GGI = 0.581950 + 7.44E-08 * NR_GRADUATES + 5.07E-05 * WAGE$$

The standard error corresponding to the C(1) coefficient is 0.03, which is the free term of the equation, and doesn't have an economic interpretation. The C(2) coefficient is positive and its associated standard error indicates a direct link between variables, while being also a direct one. The growth of one variable determines the growth of the other leading indicators.

The correlation coefficient R-squared measures the intensity of the relationship between the variables analyzed. Its value, identified in the table above, is 0.935449, which indicates a very strong and direct linkage, tending to the maximum limit of the range. Given that this coefficient can range between [-1, 1], it is very close to the value 1, the link between variables is very intense.

The statistical verification of the model is based on statistical tests, using the equation for the variables mentioned above.

The STUDENT test.

According to data obtained in Eviews7, the value of the STUDENT test (t-statistics) for C(1) is 18.82, for C(2) is 1.16 and for C(3) is 3.71. The tabular value of the standardized variable (t_{critic}) is determined from the table of the Student distribution, according to $\alpha = n-1$ degrees of freedom and a probability of $\alpha/2$. In our case, $v=16-1=15$ degrees of freedom and the probability $\alpha / 2 = 0.05 / 2 = 0.025$. The tabular value for t_{critic} is $2.131 < t_c(1)$ and $t_c(3)$, but higher than $t_c(2)$, therefore the estimated parameters are significant and the model is statistically correct, but only for the variable regarding the average level of wages. The bond between the overall number of female higher education graduates and the score registered at country level is less relevant and strong.

The Durbin – Watson test

According to the data listed in the table, the Durbin Watson test value is 1.99. From the related statistical tables, we must determine two tabular values, namely a lower and an upper one, dV and dL , depending on the level of significance of the test α (0.05), the number of observations (16) and the number of factorial variables, k (in this case two).

Thus, the tabular values will be $dL=0.95$ and $dV=1.54$. We notice that the Durbin Watson test is 1.99 in our case, thus higher than dV , therefore the hypothesis of autocorrelation is rejected, the values of the random variable are independent and the model is statistically correct, without requiring subsequent corrections.

5. CONCLUSIONS

"Gender differences in access to economic opportunities are frequently debated in relation to gender differences in labor market participation".

The barriers that occur are various: social, cultural, educational, skill development. Although the intensity is not as high as in the past, the gender disparities are still present worldwide and Romania is not an exception from this point of view, if we refer to the aspect of wages, but also to education.

Whether we speak from social or managerial point of view, there are several issues that need to be understood and argued. Mostly, the reduction of disparities depends also on the education of individuals, but it strongly relies on the prejudices and mentality that are rooted for centuries.

Equality is hard to achieve, both in families/society or on the labor market, which should offer the possibility of flexibility when speaking about job conversion or achievements. A higher inclusion of women in the labor market is still a delicate issue, considering that the employment rate could achieve higher levels. However, the terms of employment, wages and possibilities of promotion may be limiting the reduction of economical gender disparities, especially in the context of a traditional society.

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