

THE ROLE OF SELF-MARKETING IN CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ROMA EMPLOYMENT

Rita ZAKOR-BRODA¹, Anita R. FEDOR¹

University of Debrecen Faculty of Health Sciences, Institute of Social Sciences, Department
of Social Sciences and Social Work, Nyíregyháza, Hungary

broda.rita@etk.unideb.hu

fedor.anita@etk.unideb.hu

Abstract: *The role of different groups in society in the labour market is of vital importance for the functioning of a nation's economy. Equal access to employment is a fundamental condition for tackling social exclusion and is closely linked to reducing and combating poverty. Research on discrimination in the labour market goes back several decades and is primarily based on perceptions of discrimination. The Roma population is one of the most disadvantaged groups in Hungary, with the most severe labour market tensions and the largest number of underprivileged groups. Roma are considered a social group with below average labour market opportunities. The unfavourable social and economic situation of the Roma population in Hungary and their resulting marginalisation has become a platitude in public discourse and academic work. The importance of the issue is undoubtful, as it is estimated that the Roma population, which constitutes a significant proportion of the population, is the poorest, most excluded and, overall, the most vulnerable group in society. The gap between the Roma population and the majority society has been steadily increasing for decades, mainly due to the residential segregation and economic decline of the Roma. Negative discrimination in the labour market plays a crucial role in shaping the employment prospects of Roma people. On the one hand, this is due to the negative discrimination they face, and on the other hand, to the low level of knowledge acquired by these people compared to the average in society. In our study, we examine the factors determining self-marketing and the labour market chances of Roma in the context of the background factors, economic and social effects of unemployment, which particularly affect this precariat group. We make an attempt to prove that self-marketing has a right to exist among the Roma working population. In researching this topic, it is essential to address the issue of the conscious career management competences of members of the emerging generation and the crucial role of inclusive workplaces.*

Keywords: *Roma; lifestyle; equal opportunities; discrimination; labour market; self-marketing*

JEL Classification: R23; O15

Introduction

The Roma population in Hungary is an ethnic group that can be most characterised by disadvantage and, among other things, as a result of this, their chances and opportunities in the labour market are negligible compared to the majority society, or can be described as highly hectic. The health, social and economic situation of the Roma population in Hungary can be typified by a significant degree of underdevelopment and backwardness (Törő et al., 2017; Sárváry et al., 2019). They are a vulnerable and exposed group who face various forms of exclusion in many areas of daily life. Their economic disadvantages, weakness and low presence are also the cause of their segregation, which affects several areas. The Roma can also be described as a precariat group, as their volatile, fluctuating and precarious labour

market situation means that their employment prospects and income are characterised by imbalances. Their quality of life is the major determinant of their employment potential (R. Fedor, 2021). The Roma population is weak and inefficient in terms of parameters of their educational and labour market status, which results in a temporary inability to escape from poverty, immobility, and even the risk of further decline as an outcome. The disadvantaged situation of the Roma is further exacerbated by factors that are a projection of discrimination, rejection and prejudice shown by the majority society.

Discrimination in the precariat group of Roma

A number of international conventions and documents of international scope and legal force include a prohibition of discrimination. The prohibition of discrimination can be seen as a variable concept the message and meaning of which has been permanently enriched and expanded over the years and decades. Regarding fundamental human rights, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union has a binding legal force in the Union, since it guarantees and ensures the recognition of and respect for the different nationalities, cultures and traditions of the Member States as well. Article 21 of the Charter summarises all the characteristics, descriptive features, traits and criteria based on which discrimination is prohibited. The adoption and acknowledgement of EU Community law has played a decisive role in the development and modernisation of protection, security and guarantees against discrimination, as it has made the Member States subject to an obligation to transpose it. Of particular importance are Directive 2000/43/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin and Directive 2000/78/EC establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation (Pap, 2021). Hungary's fundamental law (constitution) also contains a prohibition of discrimination, and our Equal Opportunities Act and certain sectoral laws also cover and affect this area. The modern mentality and way of thinking have made it essential that the dilemma of equal opportunities and discrimination become a significant phenomenon. However, there is a difference in the conceptual framework and definition of equality and equal treatment. Equality of opportunity is one of the fundamental human rights that creates and establishes equivalent, equal opportunities for all people, so that everyone can enjoy the rights granted to all in the same way and in the same proportion as others. Equal treatment, on the other hand, is defined as the right of all to equal treatment, which means that no one can be discriminated against on the basis of their membership of a particular group or their characteristics (Dajnoki & Balázs-Földi, 2016). Discrimination is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that plays a prominent role in the reproduction of inequalities among disadvantaged social groups (Tardos, 2015).

Discrimination at work

Discrimination at work is a recurrent form of discrimination. Discrimination at work occurs when, for example, a job advertisement mentions certain characteristics that are expected of employees as a kind of necessary criteria or excludes them because of a particular characteristic. It also includes denying employees certain rights at work, perhaps not recognising their achievements, or prohibiting the use of certain equipment or premises. Employers have a duty, responsibility and obligation to respect the requirements of equal treatment. However, it is the employer's actions that make it most difficult to recognise and identify discrimination at work, as it has a wide discretionary right. However, in employer decision-making, it is essential to exclude factors and components that would result in an adverse impact or consequence related to a protected characteristic (Halmos, 2018; Bene & Salamon, 2016).

Babusik distinguishes between two forms of formal discrimination: actual and statistical discrimination. Formal discrimination occurs, for example, when an employer refuses to

employ a Roma worker or applies reduced wages. In the case of statistical discrimination, the employer's decision to hire is based on a lack of information. Roma often face a phenomenon of rejection, which plays a decisive role in the development of their employment indicators. Technocratic management styles and attitudes play a role in the emergence and presence of discriminatory businesses. These managers are characterised by their distancing and avoidance of workers whom they despise, since for them the excellence and impeccability of the workforce are paramount. The results of the studies and research on willingness to employ suggest that the employers surveyed employ Roma to a negligible extent and would not employ them even if they were qualified for the job. When examining the employment of Roma, it is also worth looking at the types of jobs that employers contract them to do. Most companies do not employ even highly qualified Roma with higher education in managerial positions. This may also be evidence that for the Roma population, even a good level of education is not a guarantee for a white-collar job or even a blue-collar job. This is due to discrimination in the open labour market, which is a phenomenon of prejudice and racism against Roma (Babusik, 2008).

Discrimination in the labour market

The employment indicators in Hungary are affected by the labour market situation of the Roma population, therefore a thorough knowledge of the Roma labour market participation is essential to achieve equal opportunities and improve economic indicators (Varga, 2020). There is a cumulative discrimination in the labour market for Roma workers. In their case, discrimination may be present in selection, classification, promotion or even dismissal. When examining the equal opportunities of Roma, it is of particular importance to look at the chances of Roma workers to successfully fill certain positions and jobs (Suhajda, 2018). The labour market failure of this socially precarious group is fuelled by a number of factors (e.g. under-education, inherited disadvantages, discrimination, early school leaving, segregated living conditions, etc.) that hinder their integration into employment (R.Fedor & Balla, 2019). The Roma population in Hungary is faced with a rejection that is now widespread, rooted in stereotypes, and these negative prejudices create unfavourable and hostile conditions that do not contribute in the slightest to the development and regeneration of the role of the Roma in society and economy, and to a positive shift in the general perception of them (Olasz, 2020).

Protection against discrimination can be given by an inclusive, welcoming society where the workplace environment is not a breeding ground for prejudice. Reducing disadvantage for Roma workers in the labour market is a complex task requiring support from a complex background, closely linked to ensuring equal access and cooperation between support services. At present, the disadvantaged, often cumulatively disadvantaged situation of the Roma population has a negative impact and acts as a risk factor for the development of their talents (Visztenvelt et al., 2014).

The role of self-marketing in enhancing labour market opportunities

Today, self-marketing is becoming increasingly important in terms of increasing labour market opportunities. For most people, the concept of marketing is a corporate activity that includes product development, pricing, distribution and communication. These activities have been developed for companies in order to maximise their effectiveness and profits. However, these activities should not be applied only in a corporate context, but nowadays they are much more than that, as they can also be applied to individuals (Kotler-Levy, 1969). There are books and websites on the subject, and even consultancy firms can help you in the world of employment. There is no doubt that there is a consensus among professionals in the field that in order to fill certain positions, it is necessary to have a well-designed

personal brand. In general, self-marketing is useful for career building (Kitchen, 1989), but we believe that it can also be used as a tool for the reintegration of Roma into the labour market.

The experience of employers, companies and enterprises shows that the chances of Roma workers to find a job are further weakened by the fact that they often do not appear at the interview. This can be due to delays caused by financial constraints, but also to a lack of self-confidence. Their lack of motivation to enter the labour market may also stem from discrimination, which further contributes to their lack of self-confidence. Roma workers with lower educational attainment tend to have confused CVs (if any), with major gaps, uncovered or passive periods. In the absence of accurate background information, these factors may make employers suspicious, although it is possible that a very honest, dedicated and hard-working worker may have had previously undeclared work that he or she is afraid to mention on his or her CV.

Studies show that the Roma are dominated by unemployed people with low educational qualifications and economic disadvantages. Of course, there are also smaller groups in Roma society who already have a secondary or higher education. But they also face difficulties in reducing their disadvantages. Even if they have excellent professional skills, they may lack in professional contacts. For those Roma workers who are more educated than their peers, we believe that a certain degree of self-marketing could greatly improve their chances in the labour market. The justification of self-marketing among the Roma working population is underlined by the problem of mismatch between labour market supply and demand. The reason for this can also be found in the attitudes of young Roma people, who 'typically' take the easy way out, often opting for the simplest solution, lacking a vision of the future, not sufficiently goal-oriented and not sufficiently informed about their job opportunities in good time. The vast majority of the Roma population is under-educated, with primary education, although the number of young people with secondary education is slightly on the rise. However, this is the 21st century, where jobs requiring secondary education are often filled by college graduates. Young people in Roma society, like young college graduates starting their careers, have too high expectations of the world of work and low work motivation and morale. Most young Roma people are completely uncertain about the field of work in which they see their future (Dávid, 2009).

Members of the emerging generation need conscious career planning if they want to increase their chances in the labour market. Short- and long-term thinking are essential. This awareness should start during the period of study, choosing a profession or school that matches the demand of the labour market. Unfortunately, this kind of awareness is often completely absent in Roma society. Students need to plan ahead, assess their labour market opportunities and qualifications and set realistic expectations of themselves. Regrettably, we sometimes feel that society no longer has any expectations of young Roma people, and that they have no expectations of themselves. We believe that the first level, the first step in self-marketing is to develop this kind of awareness. There is little or no awareness of the labour market among prospective and current Roma workers. An increasingly fast-paced labour marketplaces demands on its workers (e.g. language skills, work experience) that a disadvantaged Roma worker with low educational qualifications is unable to meet. Roma workers almost completely lack the self-awareness that would make them stand out from the crowd. Personal branding is also important, as prospective employers often "check" the applicant in the online space and the information they gather there influences the selection process.

A Roma student who consciously plans and decides what field he/she would like to work in in the future, and collects information on labour market opportunities, accordingly, develops himself/herself accordingly, and increases his/her chances in the labour market. The essence of the self-marketing process is that the individual is constantly marketing him/herself. The object of this marketing is the individual. Self-marketing is the process of creating a professional self-image of oneself in order to get a lucrative job. This activity must

continue once a job is obtained, as successful career development also depends on self-marketing. This is where Roma workers are currently performing very poorly. Given their disadvantaged situation, it is a real success if their efforts to find a job are positively assessed. Roma workers who lack self-marketing have very poor job retention skills. Retention characteristics are less present in their work ethic and in their work socialisation toolbox. With adequate self-marketing, they would have the possibility to fill a job for a long period of time, in contrast to the current general picture, which shows that Roma workers are employed by an employer for a short period of time. Shuker (2010) defines self-marketing as an exchange of resources. Individuals market themselves in order to obtain a job and thus receive a salary in return for their work, and later continue this activity in order to possibly be promoted and thus receive an even higher salary for a more responsible job. In self-marketing, the product is the individual who "sells" his/her qualities to the labour market. The employee should also think about what skills, qualities and characteristics are important when looking for a job. The individual should focus on the needs of the labour market. The main motivation for Roma participation in the labour market is to earn an income. The working age Roma working population is not yet able to focus on labour demands due to a lack of self-marketing and multiple social disadvantages. There is also a growing recognition among workers today that we are no longer living in an era of lifelong jobs, and it is rare for someone to spend decades with an employer and still manage to retire. With career changes becoming more common throughout our lives, workers are increasingly taking personal responsibility for shaping their careers. Personal branding can also help to increase employability. Competition in the labour market, the changing economic environment and periods of crisis have led to a downward trend in employment opportunities, especially if the individual is a Roma worker. In order to increase the opportunities for prosperity and employment, workers need to pay more and more attention to their personal brand. Everyone has a personal brand (Wee, 2010). A personal brand is the image that we project of ourselves to the outside world and which includes our behaviour, our appearance, our manifestations. In personal branding, the individual, the employee, seeks to emphasise his or her uniqueness. In this case, the focus is not on making the individual, the employee, better than the competition, but on highlighting his or her true difference and authentic competencies.

The role of inclusive workplaces as a marketing tool

Increasing the number of diverse and inclusive jobs also increases the chances of Roma workers to find a job. This approach, which is mostly typical of larger multinationals, possibly global players, but is also increasingly common in medium-sized enterprises, is not only beneficial for the social responsibility of companies but is also increasingly required by business interests. Creating inclusive workplaces is a marketing tool to enable companies to organise diverse teams of employees who can respond to complex tasks. In a competitive business environment, employers have a responsibility to create a safe working environment for their employees. More and more companies are making efforts to make their employment practices inclusive and are using marketing tools to communicate their successful performance and progress to the public (Bene, 2016). Inclusive workplaces help to combat social exclusion, which is also responsible for discrimination in employment. This kind of change in approach and employment practices and ideas contributes to improving equal opportunities in the workplace by managing diversity effectively. Diversity employment programmes value the diverse backgrounds of workers and seek to develop employment policies that, through their human resource management, retain the best people from all cultures and backgrounds. Inclusive workplaces are also a marketing and management tool to help companies increase their productivity and efficiency. As for inclusive workplaces, vulnerable groups often appear in the communication campaigns of large companies, but it is observed that advocacy for more "unpopular" social groups (such as Roma) is less

frequent. There are companies that support NGOs working with Roma communities, but these are rarely given a central role in company communications. We believe that an increase in inclusive jobs could have a positive impact on the employment prospects of skilled Roma workers. The employment of Roma workers does not impose any particular infrastructural burden on companies, e.g. no need to initiate adaptations for wheelchair access, etc. The majority of Roma workers come to the company from disadvantaged economic and social backgrounds. The majority of these companies already have tools (e.g. housing support, commuting support, clothing support, mentoring) to facilitate the integration of Roma workers.

The majority of Roma workers often face discrimination because of their origin. With inclusive workplaces, it is possible to ensure that companies really only consider what is relevant to them in the selection process, e.g. personality, skills, hidden potential (Kelemen et al., 2018).

Summary

In terms of labour market opportunities, the Roma society can be seen as disadvantaged in several ways. Concerted efforts are needed to overcome this disadvantage, increase job opportunities and reduce poverty and deprivation. Economic crises always hit the most vulnerable groups first, jeopardising the modest progress made in implementing national Roma inclusion strategies. Genuine Roma inclusion means that Roma have equal opportunities with non-Roma, not vice versa. In addition to income poverty, they are characterised by a multifaceted deprivation that is present in their education, employment and many other dimensions that determine their quality of life. Roma society is disadvantaged in multiple ways in terms of labour market opportunities. The problems faced by Roma are complex and require an integrated approach and coordinated, mutually reinforcing measures. The evidence of the past decades shows that progress can only be made if active labour market incentives are combined with an active and inclusive Roma society. The biggest problem in the labour market is that jobseekers do not have the right skills to fill vacancies. Identifying the education and labour market challenges and defining development pathways is essential to achieve a balanced labour market. There is a strong demand from employers for skilled labour. However, for change to take place, there is a need for cooperation between the relevant labour market players, such as the representative bodies of the disadvantaged target group concerned, minority nationality self-governments, municipal and county self-governments, vocational training and adult education institutions, and labour market organisations. Self-marketing, personal branding and an increase in the number of inclusive jobs can have a positive impact on increasing the employment opportunities of the Roma population. Increasing employment, reducing unemployment and labour shortages, improving the employment of disadvantaged people and reducing regional disparities can only be achieved through cooperation.

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