

# **The Long-term Effects of Educational Segregation: The Experiences of Roma Women in Hungary**

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Submitted to

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*Budapest, Hungary*

2024

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Báder József', written in a cursive style.

# Abstract

The aim of the research was to explore the long-term effects of segregated education among Roma women, with particular attention to the psychological, health and employment aspects. The research highlights that negative experiences gained in segregated education affect the lives of Roma women in the long term, especially in the labor market and health care. Interviewees often mentioned stress and trauma caused by the segregated school environment, which later affected their lives. They are disadvantaged in the labor market not only because of their Roma origin, but also because of their female status. The results highlight the complexity of the situation of Roma women and the long-term effects of segregated education. Based on our results, it would be important for the Roma communities to introduce programs and measures that promote equal opportunities and improve the quality of life. The research makes recommendations for future interventions, with a particular focus on improving the workplace and educational environment, as well as increasing social and psychological support. The study emphasizes the need for government interventions to reduce the effects of educational and employment segregation and to ensure adequate mental health support.

# Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Simona Torotcoi, who was my supervisor, who supported and motivated me throughout the preparation of my thesis. Special thanks go to Brigitta Dóczi, who helped as a language reviewer and gave a lot of support and encouragement. I am grateful to them both for their tireless work and dedication. Furthermore, I would like to thank all RGPP instructors and workers who have always tried to pass on most of their knowledge to me. I especially appreciate their efforts to improve my language skills. I could not have done my assignment so successfully without their help. I am grateful for all the support I received during my studies.

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# Introduction

In the current Hungary one can recognize that child protection and early education seem to be important topics for society, and I could assume that the Hungarian population has finally recognized the source and relevance of the issue. The aim of this paper is to investigate the long-term effects of the educational segregation of Roma children, as well as collecting important policy recommendations for the decision makers to address this issue.

Educational segregation, as shown in various studies, refers to the systematic segregation of students in the educational environment based on their socio-economic (Hermann & Kisfaludi, 2023) or ethnic background (Kertesi and Kézdi, 2020). This segregation manifests itself in the disproportionate concentration of disadvantaged students in specific schools or classrooms, leading to an unequal distribution of resources and opportunities. Educational segregation, a widespread problem in Hungary and other European countries, particularly affects marginalized groups, such as Roma children.

The specific problem is the educational segregation of Romani children in a fairly significant number of educational institutions at primary level in the context of present Hungary. Based on the Fundamental Rights Agency's Roma survey from 2021, in Hungary in 2016, 60% of the children aged 6–15 attend schools where all or most pupils were Roma, and in 2021, the percent decreased by 16%. Compared to the other 12 countries surveyed, Hungary is placed among the top 8 on the topic of school segregation.

Factors that contribute to segregation include socioeconomic status, ethnic background, language barriers, and discriminatory practices within educational systems. The key causes might be that the Roma are not educated about their rights, thus if they encounter an unequal situation when their rights are violated none of them will be able to do anything about it because of lack of education. This lack of education starts in the kindergarten, where usually the Roma

children are the majority, and in these places the service for children is not as high quality as for non-Roma children. This could be the basis that the Roma are less educated about their rights as well.

Furthermore, there is the phenomenon of white flight, which refers to when non-Roma leave an area or take their children out of a school “to avoid integrated schooling”. In the Hungarian context, white flight is especially typical in the schools in small villages, where the Catholic Church operates the primary schools and they are afraid of losing their non-Roma pupils from the middle class, therefore, even if they help Roma children, they end up in a worse situation, i.e. they participate in segregated education.

Several factors contribute to the persistence of educational segregation. First, the socio-economic status plays a significant role, disadvantaged students are often concentrated in schools with fewer resources and opportunities (Kertesi & Kézdi, 2020). Hermann & Kisfaludi (2023) argue that there is a strong relationship between poverty and school segregation. Discriminatory practices further aggravate segregation, and Roma children face systemic obstacles in accessing quality education due to their ethnicity (Hermann and Kisfaludi, 2023).

Educational policies, such as school choice programs, may inadvertently worsen segregation by allowing more privileged families to choose schools with better resources, thus concentrating disadvantaged students in underfunded schools (Bálint and Kertesi, 2019). Institutional factors within the education system, including tracking and streaming practices, also contribute to segregation by classifying students based on perceived academic ability or socioeconomic status (Balogh, 2018). Furthermore, historical marginalization and discrimination against Roma communities has entrenched their disproportionate segregation in education, reflecting broader social inequalities (Zamfir and Zamfir, 2019).



In recent years, various researchers have approached the topic of segregation among Roma children across Europe. Several researchers have delved into the issue of segregation among Roma children across Europe, offering diverse insights into the complexities of the phenomenon. In recent years, the issue of educational segregation among Roma children in Hungary has garnered increasing attention from researchers. These studies have delved into various aspects of segregation and its ramifications, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of this pervasive issue.

For example, Kiss (2018) analyzed the segregation of Roma in Hungary's education system and meticulously examined the segregation of Roma within Hungary's education system, offering critical insights into the mechanisms perpetuating this segregation. Scholars like Balogh (2018), have conducted research to uncover the systemic biases and structural inequalities that perpetuate segregation, highlighting the urgent need for interventions to address these underlying issues. Bálint and Kertesi (2019) focused their attention on Hungarian towns, examining school segregation, school choice, and the overarching educational policies influencing Roma children's access to education. Szesztay and Timár (2020) delved into the Roma experience of political injustice, highlighting instances of school segregation within Hungary.

Through this research, scholars have highlighted the systemic barriers faced by Roma children within the educational system, amplifying the need for interventions to address these inequalities. The collective findings of these studies have deepened our understanding of the complex phenomenon of educational segregation in Hungary and underscored the critical importance of implementing comprehensive strategies to improve the educational and social outcomes of Roma children. Furthermore, these studies highlight the need for comprehensive policy measures to address the root causes of educational segregation and promote greater inclusivity within the Hungarian educational system. What remains unanswered and still under-

researched is the issue of the long-term consequences and effects of school segregation on Roma children. As such the research question this paper aims to answer is: *What are the long-term effects of educational segregation on Roma children?*

The structure of the paper is as follows: First, I will define educational segregation, then through the existing literature, I aim to review the causes and effects of school segregation with a special focus on Hungary. The paper continues with an overview of the employed methodology, interview guidelines and limitations. The results section presents the educational outcomes of the previously segregated students, the psychological aspects, as well as the employment prospects and challenges, social and health related aspects. The paper finishes with future research options.

# Recent studies on the effects of school segregation in Hungary

The consequences of ethnic segregation within the school system extend beyond the immediate academic environment and can have a lasting impact on students' psychological well-being. According to Messing (2017), the presence of racist attitudes in the school administration and in the community contributes to the formation of a hostile, exclusionary atmosphere for Roma students in segregated classes, hurts their sense of identity, self-esteem and motivation. This indicates that students exposed to segregation may suffer long-term psychological distress, feeling marginalized and excluded from their peers.

Additionally, the level of school segregation significantly affects educational outcomes and future opportunities for students. As Hermann and Kisfaludy (2023) state, there is a close correlation between the degree of segregation and the inequalities in educational outcomes. When students face segregation, their future educational and employment prospects are diminished. Lower educational attainment and perceptions of reduced abilities and talents may limit their future choices and opportunities. Lack of access to quality education and exposure to segregated learning environments can hinder their academic and professional development, perpetuating cycles of inequality and socioeconomic disadvantage (Hermann & Kisfaludi, 2023).

Zamfir and Zamfir (2019) extended this inquiry beyond Hungary, exploring the consequences of school segregation for Roma populations across multiple European countries. Through their comparative analysis, they underscored the pervasive nature of this issue and the imperative for cross-national strategies to combat educational segregation among Roma children.

Hermann and Kisfalusi (2023) furthered this discussion by exploring the tangible impacts of school segregation on student achievement and educational attainment in Hungary, providing empirical evidence to underscore the urgency of addressing this issue. Büki et al. (2020) have explored how segregation shapes the educational experiences and opportunities available to Roma children, as well as its implications for their long-term employability. By elucidating the links between educational segregation and future employment prospects, these studies have underscored the importance of promoting inclusive educational practices to foster greater social mobility and economic opportunities for Roma youth.

Scholars like Sárközi (2021) have highlighted the need for targeted policy interventions and institutional reforms to address the systemic inequalities that hinder the employment prospects of Roma youth from segregated backgrounds. By advocating for measures to promote employment equality and address structural barriers, these studies aim to empower Roma youth and enhance their socio-economic opportunities.

As mentioned before, what remains unanswered and still under-researched is the issue of the long-term consequences and effects of school segregation on Roma children. The main goal of this research is to pay more attention to the fact that segregated education is actively and strongly present in Hungary and Budapest, and to start a discourse on the possibilities of solving this problem. In my thesis, I examine the long-term effects of school segregation on Roma students in Budapest. I have found many studies on this topic, but none of them separately discusses the school segregation found in big cities and capitals and its long-term effects.

# Methodology

For the purpose of this research, I have used the snowball method of interviewing, i.e. I asked my interviewee for help in finding the following subjects. Due to the sensitivity of the topic, I expected that it would not be an easy task to find interviewees, because several of the recommended ones indicated that they did not want to sit down and talk, which I fully respected. Given the time frame of the current research and the willingness of former Roma students who have studied in segregated schools, I have conducted three in-person interviews. Since my thesis focuses locally on Budapest, all three of my interviewees graduated from segregated schools in Budapest. It was an important aspect to find adult subjects who self-identified as Roma, who graduated from a segregated school. All the interviewees are adult women between the ages of 23 and 34, who work in different fields. The identity of the interviewees is kept strictly confidential. I anonymize the collected data so that the identity of the interviewees cannot be traced in any way. I store the data in a secure, password-protected location and use it exclusively for research purposes.

For the purpose of this research, I chose to use the following acronyms, as presented in Table 1 below.

*Table 1. List of interviewees*

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Interview duration</b>
LB	clothing shop assistant	27	26 min
FF	office worker	24	70 min
AB	cultural assistant, representative candidate	30	73 min

The interviews were conducted in Hungarian, which was preceded by several consultations with my supervisors, aiming to put together the best possible questions and make sure that I did not ask hurtful or disrespectful questions. A list of the interview questions (semi-structured), as the interview guideline is attached in Annex 1. For the data analysis, I have used the Alrite online site to transcribe the interviews, and then I used the Atlas TI software for data analysis.

During the research, special attention has been paid to ethical issues, especially considering that it deals with sensitive topics and vulnerable groups. Adherence to the following ethical guidelines and principles was essential. I give all interviewees full information about the purpose, methods and expected results of the research. Before starting the interviews, I obtained verbal consent from them, ensuring that they were willing to participate in the research and that they were aware that they could withdraw their consent at any time. Special attention has been paid to ensure that the research does not cause psychological, emotional or social damage to the interviewees. During the interviews, I approach the participants with empathy and respect, avoiding reliving traumatic experiences. If the conversation caused discomfort or stress to the interviewees, I stopped the interview immediately. I informed the interviewees that I will share the results of the research with them upon request. This can help interviewees see the meaning and usefulness of the research and contribute to the validity and credibility of the findings.

During the research, I have shown respect towards the culture, customs and traditions of the Roma community. I use culturally sensitive and appropriate language during interviews, avoiding stigmatizing or discriminatory terms and approaches. As a researcher, I am responsible for compliance with ethical standards and transparency at all stages of the research. When publishing the results, I also keep ethical principles in mind, making sure that the information provided is accurate and authentic and does not offend the Roma community.

## Instrument, Procedure and Data Analysis

I conducted semi-structured interviews, but all of this was preceded by the compilation of interview questions. I compiled a total of thirty questions, covering five separate areas, reflecting the potential consequences of educational segregation: education, employment, health, social and psychological effects. In general, I compiled 5 to 7 questions for each area. The questions were originally formulated in English, but I also made a Hungarian translation of them, because the language of the was Hungarian. The reason for this is that my interviewees do not speak English at all or only less so, and I did not want the interview to be unsuccessful due to a language barrier (see Appendix 1 for the full list of questions).

First, I asked my interviewees to introduce themselves, to tell me the information about themselves that they consider important. I asked them about education and their own experiences related to it, referring to their educational qualifications, their relationship with their teachers, their positive and negative memories, as well as their experiences related to their Roma status, which they acquired in institutional conditions. Later, we talked about the issue of segregation and its effects on job hunting. After discussing the topic of employment, it was the turn of social and health issues, where they could share with me their experiences in Hungarian nursing homes, some of their experiences and memories related to their friendships. In conclusion, I asked them the question that if the Hungarian government decided that it wanted to compensate young Roma adults who suffered from educational segregation, what would they recommend.

# Results and Discussion

My questions focused on five areas, reflecting the potential consequences of educational segregation i.e. I was curious about how school segregation affected the lives of Roma adult women previously studying in a segregated context, in terms of education, employment, health, social and psychological effects. In the following, I will address each of these individually, and I will compare the opinions shared by my interviewees in each area. The framework for the analysis revolves around well-being.

Ladányi defines well-being as not only the existence of material goods, but also many dimensions of the quality of life, such as social security, a healthy environment, access to education and social integration (2015). Ha also claims that segregation reduces well-being because it hinders social mobility and the chances of disadvantaged groups to achieve better living conditions. This definition emphasizes that well-being is a complex and multidimensional concept that goes beyond all material aspects and also includes social and cultural factors. Therefore, it was expected that the current research subjects would not discuss this topic separately but would shed light on well-being as an area while sharing their opinions and experiences from other areas.

## Education

Under the Hungarian Act CXC of 2011 on the National Public Education kindergartens and primary schools have designated catchment areas or ‘district schools’ (körzetes iskola). Primary schools cannot deny the enrolment of those children who reside in their catchment areas (mandatory admission). They can only enroll children residing outside of their catchment area once they were able to enroll all children who reside in their catchment area and have



chosen their district school.<sup>1</sup> In this section, I will present the educational journeys of my interviewees, including their experience of school segregation. As mentioned above, the level of school segregation significantly impacts educational outcomes and future opportunities for students. Segregated students often experience diminished future educational and employment prospects.

**FF** was born and raised in Budapest, in the VIIIth district, in one of the most segregated parts of the city center. This neighborhood faced numerous issues, such as lack of public safety, lack of cleanliness, and the prevalence of addictions. For this reason, her mother decided not to enroll her in the district school but in a primary school in the IXth district, which was only a ten-minute walk from their home.

She started primary school in 2006, at the age of six, and the institution was relatively integrated. Among her classmates were those with various learning difficulties, and children of other nationalities. On the other hand, the teachers were all middle-class whites, and she did not encounter any Roma or other nationality teachers. This would have been important for her because there were no examples at home that showed the concrete benefits of education, and that a Roma person could be a teacher or principal, for example: "It would have been particularly important for me to see that Roma people can also be teachers or principals because there were no examples at home that showed the concrete benefits of education" (FF).

In elementary school, her headmistress was strict, and according to FF, she (her teacher) didn't really understand the teaching profession, which caused difficulties for her. However, the school's equipment was excellent, and they even used an interactive whiteboard: "They also taught us responsible internet use, we had swimming and ice-skating lessons, which were great, but I didn't like going to school because of the home environment" (FF).

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<sup>1</sup> See more: [Amicus\\_Szolcsan\\_RPA\\_final.doc \(live.com\)](https://live.com/Amicus_Szolcsan_RPA_final.doc)

She then went to a foundation school in Kispest, which was a second-chance school. The foundation school, however, brought a positive turn in her life: "Here, I met the best teachers of my life, who were very socially sensitive. The principal and my English teacher were very good mentors, and the principal allowed me to complete two grades in one year." Thus, she completed the tenth and eleventh grades in one year, and overall, she had good experiences at this school.

**AB** grew up in the VIIIth district, on Kálvária Street, and for her it was already evident then that one's environment determines where one's belonged. Originally, she would have attended Losonczy Square School in the VIIIth district, but even then, there was a reputation for it being a severely segregated school with many problems, not the best choice. Her mother noticed this early on and decided it wasn't the right path for her daughter. After some difficulty, she managed to transfer to Telepi Károly School in the IX. district, which was a sports school at the time. This was interesting because it was only a few blocks away from Losonczy Square, and it was like Losonczy Square School. As a Roma student, it was unusual because there weren't many Roma students at Telepi, but she was admitted because she was smart from a young age, wrote excellent papers, and spent all eight years of elementary school there.

She started in 2000 and finished in 2008. Looking back on the school environment, she said it was average but well maintained compared to the neighboring school. There were regular chalkboards and green boards, and everything was clean. The problems started when they closed the nearby school, and the municipality moved into its building, redistributing the students to other schools in the district, including hers. This increased the number of Roma students, and there was a change in the school leadership, leading to quality and student care issues.

Her class was particularly famous in the school for their less-than-good behavior. Contrary to stereotypes, it was not the Roma students causing trouble; it was other students

who were causing problems. Their class had a reputation for making teachers often leave classes in tears, and cameras were installed in the classroom.

Her relationships with teachers were mixed. Personally, she generally had good experiences due to her excellent academic performance and behavior, but she still faced challenges because of her Roma background. For example, when a family member passed away, and she participated in the traditional Roma mourning ritual, a teacher reacted dismissively and insensitively when she explained her tiredness and lateness: "So, it's not that she laughed, but this sarcastic smile appeared on her face... I told her yes, because we were keeping vigil. Well, she doesn't understand how that works, what am I doing at a vigil, and what is vigil, and so on. We're talking about a really nice teacher otherwise, but once this came out, you know, from then on, it was like... I approached the whole thing differently..." (AD). Even though I was a fourth-grader, a ten-year-old kid, I could tell the difference between what Roma was and what wasn't.

After elementary school, she faced a dilemma of where to continue her studies. With the help of her eighth-grade supportive teacher, she enrolled in the Pogány Frigyes Bilingual Technical School in the XVIIIth district, showing interest in the architecture track: "...I had outstanding, 4.78-grade point averages. What was difficult there, however, was the finances. You must know that for those going into high-level architecture, a ruler starts at 8-10,000 forints" (AB).

LB attended a bilingual school in the VIII. district, which became bilingual while she was a student there. Initially, only English classes were offered, but later on, other students, including her cousin, studied various subjects in English: "We actually lived 3 minutes away from the school, so it was easy, but back then, it was a good school. With good teachers, and a few Roma students" (LB). As time passed, however, the school environment changed when it merged with Losonczy, resulting in an increase in the number of Roma students in the school.

Her experiences with teachers were mostly positive:" They didn't look at who was Roma and who was Hungarian, but rather what kind of person, how diligent, respectful someone was, and I was all that. The teachers loved me" (LB). The positive interactions with teachers had a long-term impact on her, so much so that she still maintains contact with some of her old teachers. She participated in the choir and briefly in other activities such as folk dancing and Spanish classes.

After completing elementary school in 2010, she attended a commercial high school on Vas Street, where she graduated in 2016. Later on, she completed vocational courses, first in commerce, then as a teaching assistant: "I realized that it wasn't my profession" (LB). She felt it wasn't her field and experienced some discrimination. Despite these challenges, she still has fond memories of her school years.

## **Psychological aspects**

Examining the psychological impact, each respondent used the word stress at least twice, expressing the pressure and frustration experienced in their life. They also talked about trauma and its branches with similar frequency, for example: inherited trauma. The Roma Holocaust as a source of transgenerational trauma was also published. The interviewees also spoke about educational experience, health status, grief processing, and trauma processing. Hermann and Kisfalusi (2023) claim that discriminatory practices further aggravate segregation and that Roma children encounter systemic obstacles in accessing quality education due to their ethnicity.

In 2014, FF started high school in the same school because it was convenient, close, and she was familiar with the institution. However, she already felt discrimination there. Several of her Roma classmates were expelled, and she also had problems with teachers: "A math teacher insulted my Roma classmates, and a German teacher, who was initially nice to

me, changed after meeting my mother" (FF). These negative experiences led to depression, she became a private student, and eventually, she was expelled from school.

AB recalls how teachers' attitudes affected her stigma: "And when something Roma-related happened at home, and I suffered disadvantages because of it at school, I didn't tell the truth, I lied because I felt it was embarrassing" (AB). This means that while the teacher remained at the same level of knowledge regarding Roma culture, AB developed a negative image of her own Roma identity, which she began to feel ashamed of.

There was a similar obstacle in the case of LB, because she also studied in a segregated school, where she mostly had negative experiences in certain areas, which had a stressful effect on her, which not only strongly affected her when she was a student, but also affected her adult life: "Well, actually, in my junior year – I was born prematurely, and because of that – I couldn't do math, and my reading went horribly, and my junior class teacher always pushed me, and because of that, I was under stress, and it's still with me to this day: if I have to read aloud, I know that I will mess up, even though I can read" (LB). Which shows that the acquired childhood trauma, which in this case is the behavior of the teacher towards the student, had such an impact on my interviewee that to this day she has problems when she has to speak or read aloud in front of others.

Mental health help at the workplace proved to be important for all three subjects, however, only AB reported that she had the opportunity to receive mental health help through her previous workplace.: "My previous workplace absolutely paid attention to me getting mental health help if something like this happened. So, for example, when my partner died, it was offered, you know, there is this grief processing, and what do I know, so that, for example, they paid attention to this at my workplace, but in the period before that I had absolutely no such help" (AB). On the other hand, although FF wanted to take advantage of the opportunity for help, she was only able to get help related to mental health and trauma processing through

an NGO. "...once I was at a workshop organized by the staff of Phiren Amenca ... And we talked a lot about our own experiences, and there were questions like this, and for example, the goal was specifically to process such trauma and such" (FF).

## Employment

Inadequate access to quality education and segregated learning environments can hinder academic and professional development, perpetuating cycles of inequality and socioeconomic disadvantage. Poor quality education affects employment. For my interviewees, it was difficult to find a job not only because being a Roma but also a woman.

According to the participants, it is not easy for Roma adults, especially those who graduated from segregated schools, to get a job, but not only because of the lack of appropriate competences, but also because of racist expressions: "I think that institutional racism is present very strongly. So, if you go in as a Roma and, God forbid, you're also a woman, you start at a double disadvantage because you look different. You absolutely do not look professional. Hard. Hard. As a Roma, it's very difficult" (AB). This shows that Roma women in the labor market face disadvantages not only because of their ethnicity but also because of their gender, which further complicates job hunting.

Scholars such as Sárközi (2021) have highlighted the need for targeted political interventions and institutional reforms to address systemic inequalities that hinder the employment prospects of Roma youth from segregated backgrounds. By supporting measures to promote employment equality and overcome structural barriers, these studies aim to strengthen the position of Roma youth and improve their socio-economic opportunities. In other words, there would be a need for various internship programs and scholarships as soon as possible in order to start some change in a positive direction regarding the employment situation of the Roma system. However, FF claims that "the VIIIth district municipality created

a Roma internship program, which specifically targets Roma intellectuals, and the goal is to have as many Roma employees as possible in the municipality after the internship. I say that this is such luck, because it has never existed before, and there is not much like it in the country now." She started university with a specialization in economics, and she realized she had to learn a lot and catch up, yet she did not find the courses relevant to her interest. She realized that it was not a good fit for her since she was interested in working for the municipality, as a community organizer. She acknowledges that without the university degree and without the internship she was part of, she would not have got a job. She was always able to find Roma related jobs only.

## **Social aspects**

During the research, it was revealed that it doesn't matter to them who is a non-Roma and who is a Roma, when they choose their friends "the values, what value they represent" (AB) and that their relationship should be characterized by mutual care and importance furthermore, what LB emphasized is that they "don't look down", i.e. the non-Roma friend does not have a superior feeling towards their self-proclaimed Roma friend.

They all mention that they have a very diverse network of friends, i.e. they have friends from the big city, from the countryside, people with a degree and entrepreneurs, as well as friends from abroad. However, AB highlights the importance of mutual respect and openness. So, the non-Roma should open up to the Roma and the Roma to the members of the majority society.

However, FF said that she realized the importance of the network of contacts in terms of finding good opportunities, so for a few years now, she has been consciously trying to establish strong relationships at various events and conferences, using the snowball method, so

that if they need each other in the future, they can easily reach the problem that has arisen in order to solve it.

## Healthcare

I have already had several conversations with other Roma people who emphasized that they had experienced more discriminatory and segregating cases because of their Roma status and their low level of education. However, the current participants did not share any negative experiences that were due to their Roma status or their schooling, on the other hand, they shared several negative experiences that can be called, unfortunately, already common in Hungary, which not only Roma, but also non-Roma could have experienced.

I also expected that negative experiences would be reported related to low education, because there is a general stereotype in the minds of healthcare workers, which is perhaps only true for healthcare workers working in areas inhabited by Roma in the majority: anyone who is Roma must be poorly educated, from which in many cases it follows that doctors, nurses and hospital cleaners deal with Roma patients in a hospital, for example, in an inappropriate, condescending, and humiliating manner.

One of the participants, contrary to my initial expectation, brought up a new aspect, namely the connection between employment and healthcare: "I have to add that I think Roma people are very ill. Everyone's health condition is very poor, precisely because of this. In the past, Roma people didn't have registered jobs, but this could have improved by now because the current generation has more opportunities. But in the end, everything is still the same today, there are no registered workplaces, so there is no social security (TB), therefore no medical examinations. The system is not supervised. If something is diagnosed with a Roma patient, either they have money for treatment or they don't, so their health condition is likely to deteriorate regularly," said AB. Several aspects are interconnected like a chain reaction. Lack



of education affects individual employment opportunities, which in turn affects the individual's health situation. In the mentioned case, due to the lack of registered, unofficial work, the Roma person has no social insurance, thus is not entitled to proper healthcare unless they have enough money to pay for it.

AB pointed out the significant financial burden of getting the necessary special equipment for her family. Despite starting strong, a health crisis in the eleventh grade, resulting in almost deadly appendicitis, a month-long hospital stay, and significant absences, occurred. This affected her grades and forced her to take makeup exams, which she passed successfully but with much lower averages than before. This health situation, along with academic challenges, was a difficult time for her, but she persevered and eventually overcame it.

All three subjects independently, but with almost the same tone of voice and use of words, answered my question about their experience with a general practitioner, which sounded like this: "What should I say now? He heals on the phone" (LB). After that, of course, they explained their opinion in more detail, which was negative in every case, as was the answer to my question about hospital care, in which FF said that "I have interesting experiences with hospital care, which I also understood much later than they happened." However, during the conversation, it was felt that in addition to the negative experiences, they also tried to highlight something positive, which, according to AB and LB, were the experiences in private hospitals: "I have a private gynecologist, and he is the chief physician in Dél-Pesti, and if I have any problems, I call him right away, he answers, and in the past I called him for something, and it was still a public holiday in the morning, the first of May, and he woke me up at 8 in the morning to ask how I was. So, I think it's also very positive that there are doctors like this who do it from the heart, and not because mom and dad wanted him to be a doctor and that he hates it" (LB). AB also added, emphasizing the importance of a private doctor, that "I had to allow myself my health. I could decide whether to live, extend my life by 10-20 years, or die sooner."

The interview was a semi-structured interview, one important characteristic of which is that the interviewer not only receives answers to their questions but ideally can also bring in other aspects and thought processes from the participant. In my case, I focused on the five areas elaborated above. However, the participants highlighted an additional aspect that was particularly important to them. This was the topic of culture. "Even for work or when going out with friends, for example, to the movies, I dress appropriately. But when there's a family event, I automatically reach for a dress or a skirt, I wouldn't put on trousers," said AB. AB indicates that culture and identity play an important role in her life and everyday decisions. For example, when she goes to work or meets friends, she easily adapts and dresses appropriately. However, when she needs to attend a family event, such as a festive occasion or gathering, she automatically chooses traditional clothing, like a skirt or dress. This shows that respecting traditions and adhering to her identity is important to her on such occasions. The fact that "I wouldn't put on trousers" (AB) on certain occasions indicates that traditional, feminine clothing is a more important and natural choice for her, in line with her culture and identity. This quote highlights how identity and culture influence dressing habits and individual behavior in different social situations.

# Conclusion

The purpose of the research was to reveal the effects of the school segregation of Roma women in Budapest. During the research, I interviewed three former Roma students who graduated from segregated schools and are currently working in different fields. I conducted the interviews in a semi-structured manner and focused on five main topics: education, employment, health, social and psychological effects.

Participants reported negative effects of school segregation, including learning difficulties, discrimination from teachers, and disadvantages from low-quality education. All three participants emphasized that it is particularly difficult for Roma women to find a job on the labor market, as they also face gender and ethnic discrimination. In terms of health care, participants did not report discrimination based on ethnicity, but they emphasized general dissatisfaction with public health services. Several people indicated that they only experienced appropriate treatment in private health care. Among the psychological effects, stress and trauma emerged as recurring themes that the participants had already experienced in their childhood and that continue to affect their lives to this day. During the interviews, I paid special attention to ethical aspects, ensuring that the participants felt comfortable and safe.

The results highlight the profound impact that segregation has on the lives of Roma women, particularly in terms of education, employment and health care. The research makes it clear that targeted political measures and institutional reforms are needed for the Roma community members to start with equal opportunities in all areas of life.

Among the limitations of the present study, it can be mentioned that in order to achieve more representative results, it would have been necessary to involve more participants. Only three female participants took part in the research, which limits the generalizability of the results. Due to the withdrawal of the fourth candidate, it was not possible to complete the planned four interviews, which further limits the depth of the research. It would have been

more effective if I had included men in the research, as well as paid attention to age and education distributions. In this way, we could better understand the long-term effects of segregated school experiences on Roma adults in general. The experiences of the current three female participants are important and valuable, but the results of the research do not necessarily reflect the situation of the Roma community.

Another limitation is that the wording of the questions could have been improved so that the participants could express themselves more deeply and explain their experiences in more detail. For example, the effects of segregated educational experiences should have been extended to education and employment and to other life situations such as social relationships and self-confidence. With better questions, deeper personal stories of the participants could have surfaced.

Finally, it would have been good to ask more questions about several aspects of the participants to get a more comprehensive picture of how segregated education affected their lives. For example, how it affected family relationships, community integration and self-esteem. These additional questions could have contributed to an even more accurate picture of the long-term effects of segregated education on the lives of Roma adults.

## Policy recommendations

Addressing the underlying causes of segregation and implementing policies and practices that promote inclusivity, diversity, and equity in educational institutions are essential. By supporting an environment that values diversity and provides equal opportunities for all students, we can work to create a fairer and more equitable society.

By addressing systemic inequalities, challenging discriminatory practices, and promoting inclusive policies, policymakers and stakeholders can work towards creating a more

equitable and inclusive educational system for all students. By fostering environments that celebrate diversity, combat discrimination, and provide equitable access to resources and opportunities, policymakers can create a more supportive and empowering educational experience for Roma children. Additionally, targeted interventions aimed at improving access to quality education, enhancing teacher training, and fostering community engagement can help break down barriers and create pathways to success for Roma students. Ultimately, by prioritizing equity and inclusion in education, Hungary can work towards creating a more just and equitable society for all its citizens.

*My first book.*

*Erika's Journal*

*The Nonexistent Periodical*

## Annex

About experiences:

Q1 - In which district did you go to primary school?

Q2 - When did you start primary school?

Q3 - When did you finish primary school?

Q4 - You have friends?

Q5 - Did you only know them from school or did they live in your community? Were there mixed Roma and non-Roma students at the school?

- Q6 - What were the learning conditions like? (heating, banks, books, blackboard, etc.)  
 Q7 - What activities did you have at school, what memories do you have?  
 Q8 - How did your teachers/colleagues treat you?  
 Q9 - Do you think your Roma identity affected the way you were treated?

The effect of segregation and further education:

- Q10 - When did you finish your studies?  
 Q11 - What did you do after you finished your studies?  
 Q12 - Did you continue to go to school?  
 Q13 - Do you have any training or additional qualifications?  
 Q14 - What are you doing now?

Employment:

- Q15 - Was it easy to find a job? Why?  
 Q16 - Do you think your degree helped or did not help you in finding a job?  
 Q17 - Can you control your everyday life?  
 Q18 - You have a family?

Social aspect and well-being and health:

- Q19 - Where do you live?  
 Q20 - Are you satisfied with where you currently live?  
 Q21 - Do you have everything you need? (apartment, equipment, car, pets, etc.)  
 Q22 - Do you have non-Roma friends?  
 Q23 - How do you feel about your identity?  
 Q24 - Can you afford to buy an extra thing you want, whenever you want, without thinking twice about buying it?  
 Q25 - Can you get health insurance or any insurance for you or your family?  
 Q26 - What is your experience with your family doctor? (both positive and negative)  
 Q27 - What are your experiences with hospital visits? (positive negative)  
 Q28 - If necessary, how much can you afford to buy all your medications?  
 Q29 - What vitamins and supplements do you take?  
 Q29 - Do you think your school experience has caused you to encounter any stress-related health problems?  
 Q30 - What could the government do to compensate adults who graduated from segregated schools?



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