

## Regression in Education: a Consequence of Romani's Way of Living

YZEDIN HAJDARAJ

Ph.D. Candidate

European University of Tirana

Part Time Lecturer

Albanian University, Berat-Albania

### Abstract:

*Even though the government, society and other international organizations have shared their responsibility and care for Romani community in Albania, education, during the long post communism transition, still leaves to desire. The factors are complex, but the underlying one of this situation is their life organization in search of economic sources in order to survive, which actually exists in their psychological thinking. Seen from this point of view, people of this ethnicity tend to inherit those jobs or professions which help them start working at a very early age to earn much in a low-cost "investment". This opportunity is a result of "the art" of trading clothes, artistic crafts and mostly from living things (animals). Parents orient their children towards such professions. In our study we will focus on the behavior and communication of Romani who, in fact, neglect their children's education, not considering it a way of life improvement. The paper will be based on the data gathered from the survey conducted with 250 residents of Romani community (also known as Romani people) who live on the outskirts of Berat as well as in a village, not far away from the city, called Morava. Both data gathered from the city and from the countryside will be compared. There are two Romani communities that have settled down in these urban areas; one dates back to 1934 and the other to 1994. These are the questions that will be raised in our study: How much do they know about their origin or background? How do they preserve their family tree? When did they settle down in this area? Why do they do these jobs? What are the*

*obstacles to their education? What and how much do they know about their rights? How and how much has the government helped them? What is their level of education? After studying social, economic and cultural factors of both communities we will conclude that unequal possibilities have influenced the education of these ethnicities and the largest social community.*

**Key words:** Roma people, education, living, regression, communication

## **Introduction**

When I was a child, if I had done something wrong, or hadn't done my chores, my mother used to scare me by saying "The gipsy is coming and I will ask her to take you away!" (Po vjenarixheshkadhe doti them asajtëmarrin me vete). The simple question that arises at this point is, why did my mother use this kind of threat? The answer appears simpler than the question. The female Romani has another appearance from that of common people, different from rural community in which I grew up, but also different from the ones where they reside on the outskirts of the city today. Other differences are present in language, voice tonality, behavior, habits, and occupation in which they make their living, for which they are distinct from other communities.

Being migrants without any permanent residence and having no property, which would actually serve in a long-term project related to life, they can not build a stable, social relationship. They have their song in the form of an anthem entitled "*Galem, Galem*", which in English means "Migration, Migrations" (KajoAbedin, 2008). The absence of a permanent settlement keeps them erratic and it favors the cultivation of a cunning, deceitful and often insidious behavior, with short-term personal gain. Behavior of such nature is associated with high levels of frustration and conflict within ethnicity, but mostly

with other communities. This common behavior towards other ethnic majorities is considered as a need of protection and survival of the Roma community. It may be an interesting fact that a Roma female or male can only move from their residence towards the city center. Exceptions are Roma, who have been living in stabilized settlements for more than 50 years.

## **PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES**

Spurred by the knowledge that I have of these two communities, also favored by my nearby residence, I chose to conduct this work. The main purpose of the study is to provide some guidance for the local and central government, NGOs, NPOs, or international institutions in order for them to act quickly and easily to help disadvantaged Roma people. Recognizing the social, economic, ethnic and cultural identity of the community, we have the appropriate clarity and accuracy to their needs towards integration with similar communities, but because of earlier settlement they have advanced in terms of education and mentality. The experience of Morava Roma community serves as a good guide for an easy integration of the newest Roma community of Berat. The geographical position of Roma community settlement in Berat facilitates their integration because in the suburbs they are surrounded by locals. Their efforts to make a better living are necessarily made with indigenous people as they are being strictly observed through their communication and action.

The objectives of this study tend to coordinate the factors and actors for a faster integration of Roma people into society. Knowing their history, culture, tradition, heritage and other demographic data, it is necessary to orient towards their needs and conditions. It is not easy to gather data from them if you do not live with them. A great help to my study has been a two-year work at "Hope Center" Foundation, in which it was invested for education and culturing of Roma girls of Berat. I

was an elementary teacher of Albanian language and Maths, combined with interdisciplinary academic program.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS, HYPOTHESIS AND METHODOLOGY**

The first question that arises when analyzing a social phenomenon is that of origin. After that there are other questions related to features. Those to be answered in this research are listed below according to their importance. What is their origin? Why did they decide to live forever in the outskirts of the city? Why do they do these jobs and why do not they lose this tradition? How much do they know about their rights? What is the obstacle of not being educated? How much do the state and society help them? The hypothesis formulated in the paper applies to the purpose and beyond. "Regression in Education of Roma community of Berat in Albania till 2014 is the product of their lifestyle". The methodology of the paper is based on comparative data, surveys and interviews conducted with the most active members of this community. Our deep observation of their lives examining their lifestyle served and fulfilled our expectations.

## **LOCATION, AUTHENTICITY AND HERITAGE**

Tired of migration from one river valley to another, they managed to settle on the eastern edge of town in the early 90s. There are 108 Roma settlements in Albania and the housing area is 2 square meters per capita (Alexander Plan, 2013). Their quarter is still on the bank of the river, without which they could not live for a moment. After the change of socio-economic system they changed their jobs. During communism their main occupation was handicrafts production of baskets, boxes and canisters, willow material that grow naturally in the river valleys. The second occupation was that of trading

livestock, mainly animal transport, in which they showed superior workmanship on sale even though they did not have knowledge in writing and mathematics, with a high profit, which even today the most successful entrepreneurs envy it. As the economy and the market advanced, Roma traders and artisans were skillfully oriented to the market needs. They understood that there was a need for clothing and home appliances. They rapidly seized this market as firsthand traders. During transition they gained high profits from their sales and they built convenient houses as other citizens of our nation. This is when their settlement showed up, which can be called permanent, because up to this time they had not lived so long in the same residence. Roma people of the village of Morava, settled on the bank of Osumi River, have come for the first time in this permanent residence during the 30s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Integration with the native community came in the one-party system state (communism), forcibly while working in agricultural cooperatives. Roma people of the village of Morava are nicknamed "Arixhinjtëshartuar" (Grafted gypsies), while those of Berat "Arixhinjtëgërose me cërka" (Wild gypsies or freckled gypsies). This popular epithet "grafted" (teshartuar) has a deep logical basis because during these 80 years they have improved in all areas of physical, psychological, moral and ethical indicators. Culturally and socially speaking, while working in the same place with different people, especially with the natives during communism, they "gave and took". There are some of them who can not be distinguished from the natives.

Psychologically speaking, being for a long time at the same place and at the same work has made it possible for genetic combination. A clear indicator of this fact is that their pigment has become white. The minority of a group changes when it is stable, compact and forced (Terry Pettijohn, 1996). 13 relationships ended up in marriage followed by serious social conflicts, two of which resulted in the loss of life of native girls.

Socially speaking, there has been a great progress; different communities under one roof. They have celebrated different occasions based on understanding and mutual respect. The cemetery of "Grafted" Roma people of the village of Morava is located in a good geological and cultural place. Protection and maintenance of the cemetery is an indicator of their civilization

Roma people of Berat still do not have such a place. When we asked them about this problem they hid the true answer, but instead they said they would arrange a place to the yard of Sami. They do not tell where their ancestors are buried. When asked about their origin, they refuse to answer. Some of them say that they do not know anything about that. While Roma people of Morava say their grandfathers have come from India. If you ask for proofs, they do not have any. The distinction between the two Roma communities seems to be crucial; they come from different places.

Firstly, communities do not understand each other linguistically. Secondly, they are distinct from each other; from their pigment, appearance, the way they walk and dress themselves. Thirdly, they do not marry each other. This means that they are far away from each other even though we think they have too many things in common. Roma men of the city of Berat have got mustache, while those of Morava do not. Members of Roma community of Morava, through education, have been pointed in several important positions in ex agricultural cooperatives. For example, Mr. Qerim Avdiu, today this person is elected member of the Council of Commune Otllak (KajaAbedin, 2010). We are giving a list of synthetic data of some basic indicators of life in both communities gathered from our research.

No.	Basic Indicators	Roma people from Morava	Roma people from Berat	Margin
1	Population	742	256	486
2	Years of residence	80	20	60
3	Origin	Pakistan	Cigan(taxhik)	
4	Religion	Islam	Islam	

5	Spoken language	Unwritten dialect	Unwritten dialect	
6	Pigment	Brunette	Dusky	
7	Temperamenti	Soft	Impulsive	
8	Education	70%	12%	58%
9	Job	Farmer + cattleman	Trader + Artisan	
10	Behaviour	Integrated	Isolated	

**Table 1. General data of both communities of our research**

## THE LIFESTYLE OF TWO ROMA COMMUNITIES

While walking through their neighborhood accompanied and afraid that any dog might attack you (In fact, there is great number of dogs there), you easily realize how their life is organized. The following table gives some basic information about the lifestyle of both Roma communities.

No.	Indicators	Roma people from Morava	Roma people from Berat	Difference/Margin
1	Home	100%	80%	20%
2	Kitchen	100%	70%	30%
3	Bed	90%	60%	30%
4	TV	100%	100%	0
5	Wardrobe	90%	40%	50%
6	Bathroom	80%	40%	40%
7	Land+ trees	100%	30%	70%
8	Shack +livestock	70%	20%	50%
9	Fenced yard	70%	10%	60%
10	Flowers	30%	10%	20%

**Table 2. Data of the lifestyle of two Roma communities.**

Given the indicators analyzed in the above table, it is easy to understand the difference in lifestyle between the two Roma communities. Qualitative indicators of lifestyle have quite a difference, while key indicators of lifestyle have a small difference or no difference at all. Why do indicators of cleanliness have a higher difference/margin? This indicator is obvious in our everyday life, especially when you look at children; they smell. When paying a visit or attending a wedding reception, Roma people of Morava pay attention to their look. Men wear white shirts while women wear floral dresses. They adapt to the environment of their work. Roma

people of Berat do not do that. They wear the same clothes wherever they go. Adults seldom have showers, but they do not wear white shirts.

Untidy yard is another indicator of their difference/margin, which seems insignificant but actually it plays a great role in the economic and aesthetic aspect. The lack of a garbage bin means a poor culture. Roma people of Berat throw their rubbish on the edge of the canal, while Roma people of Morava use the same bins the natives do. Another crucial indicator of their lifestyle is culinary. Both communities consume food which comes from animals, mainly meat and sweets. They do not use vegetables in their kitchens. Only 4 Roma girls of Berat brushed their teeth. They were 10 years old. This information was provided from Hope Center Foundation. While in Morava, 30% of Roma pupils brushed their teeth (pupils educated by the foundation and the minischool).

## **FOUNDATION EFFORTS FOR EDUCATION, FORMATION AND ENTERTAINMENT**

“Hope Center” Foundation for two consecutive years, 2006-2008, helped Roma girls aged 6-10 years old in the city of Berat. The educational and eating center was established inside the neighbourhood of Roma people. Roma girls were brought to this center from their homes by vans. This activity was conducted three times a week and each session lasted about four hours. Mr.Y. Hajdaraj was pointed the teacher of education and mental training. The center was completed with objects, food items, medical and educational items for each of the girls. The training system was similar to that of a minischool where all subjects or courses were oriented to entertainment, which highlight the talent of the girls. Attention was paid to promoting positive behavior and desire for higher mental training through material incentives, which were handed out in



almost every day by the end of the class. The closest standard for measuring the performance of education and formation of Roma girls of the city would be that of Roma girls of Morava.

For a higher efficiency, the foundation organized excursions within and outside the city, with good educational, training and entertaining value. Seeing that the weakest point of Roma girls was personal hygiene, foundation executives took measures that girls could have a shower at the end of each day. Standarti closest to measure the performance of the training and education of Roma girls city course that would be one imposed by girls, Roma counterpart Morave village. These indicators and comparative data are presented in the table below.

No.	Qualitative Indicators	Girls of Morava	Girls of Berat	Difference/Margin
1	Attendance at school	Good	Very good	1 level
2	Intelligence	Medium	High	2 levels
3	Respect	Maximum	Medium	2 levels
4	Harmony	High	Sufficient	2 levels
5	Aggressiveness	Low	High	2 levels
6	Communication	Well-cultured	Noncultured	2 levels
7	Personal Hygiene	Good	Sufficient	1 level
8	Eating Manners	Good	Sufficient	1 level
9	Scientific Formation	Good	Weak	2 levels
10	Practical Formation	Good	Very good	1 level

**Table 3. Comparative data of the same-aged Roma girls in both communities, June, 2008**

Why do Roma girls of Berat have a more positive indicator of attendance than those of the village of Morava? The answer is simple. Associating learning with food and other material stimulus, mainly toys, motivates the girls the girls to attend school and to be active as well, while the girls of the other community lacked such a stimulus. We know that by nature man is born and grows up as a pragmatic being (John Djuj, 1948). Speaking about intelligence, it is interesting the fact that the difference/margin +2 favors girls of the city. A child who is

“sharpened”, well educated and brought up by his own parents is able to grow up earlier and pass to the other stage of personality development. That is why these girls seem to be more intelligent. Why is the level of respect a difference/margin of 2?

It is known that the more educated a person is, the more respect he gains from people surrounding him. He behaves the same way people behave to him. Here there is room from a proverb: Behave with others as you would want others to behave with you. What happens within the harmony of Roma girls of the city? It is that level of harmony that exists to their parents, which is reflected directly in these children. Roma people are quite unitary with other ethnicities and not at all within themselves. We notice the difference/margin of 2 levels in communication. The answer is simple: girls of Morava are more socialized because of their social integration of their families and their educational tradition. Aggressiveness is a form of a learned, social behavior (Albert Bandura, 1977). Ethnic boundaries between them are almost nonexistent.

Roma people of the city still continue to maintain these boundaries because they fear the subjugation and abuse of the natives. What about the scientific and practical, do they have opposite difference/margins? The first one comes from education; one possesses it while the other does not. The second comes from the need to compensate for the lack of the first as the need to exercise at a high level to catch the rhythm of life. We were impressed by table manners of the Roma girls of the city. Was overlooked in the rush to eat. We noticed that they ate fast. The answer might be that they might have been hungry or frustrated, or maybe both of them. The third one might be true.

To what extent do the members of the Roma community in the city answer the call of the state bodies for their children's education? They react quite negatively to this request, even though many girls are eager to go for it. Boys do not approve of

this call with distrust. They believe they are not mentally able to go to school. This distrust is fueled by adults rather than by their own judgment.

Why are there differences/margins in intelligence and when does it go in favor of Roma girls of the city? This is a difficult answer. The first may be a product of the genetic code. The second may be the product of the strong practical exercise in search of fulfilling the needs. Economic factors can affect intelligence more times than the size of family factors (Terry Pettijohn, 1996). It can also be the fact of not having problems at a very early age or passing these responsibilities. Usually, in other communities this action is conducted later on as a personality development stage of the children.

## **ROMA CHILDREN'S ENGAGEMENT AT WORK**

As you are looking for something at the Roma market, often you see children aged 8-12 years, mostly girls, who tell you the price of the object you want to buy. You can also notice this phenomenon when they move the goods loaded in wheelchair from one place to the other. If our children were to do this type of job, it would be impossible, not only to them but also to us, parents. But Roma girls can perform this type of job perfectly. They are brought up with difficulties and they are used to doing such jobs. People who are brought up with difficulties are less likely to get tired. These children are overstrained by their parents. According to a research conducted by Soros Foundation, 50% of the active force of Roma community is unemployed (Author Alexander plan).

We are surprised with their skills at this age, concluding that they are extremely intelligent. Why do all the Roma children speak loudly and shout during their communication at the flea market? This type of communication is justified psychologically. Through their high voice they keep in control the situation telling the client they can see everything and they

are strong, so that they must be careful. In fact, this relentless abuse of children of this age, comes from psychology from a highly exploitative and abusive psychology that exists in the weak logic of disadvantaged societies. Roma community is also a product of these societies. Violation of their right starts in the morning by waking them up, spoiling their regime, food and entertainment and working overtime. Tiring work at a very early age, nutrition-free rate food, the lack of a daily regime without fun, creates chronic diseases that take the lives of these communities prematurely.

## **RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH**

### *A-Positive results*

- 1- When placed in the same settlement, the Roma people form a stable community and over the years they express their cultural elements of their ethnicity.
- 2- There are intelligent and, even though being illiterate, they know how to become successful in their economic relationships they form.
- 3- They do not do basic jobs in farming and livestock; instead they do jobs which have high profit rate. They do not do jobs which belong to the sphere of production.
- 4- Their integration in the community is achieved fast, so is the evacuation. This happens because their credibility is low to the natives.
- 5-They behave as one group towards other communities. They do not behave in the same level within their ethnicity.

### *B-Negative results*

- 1-Their personal and environmental hygiene is weak, but also their housing conditions are weak.
- 2-Their lack of education and illiteracy hinder their integrity towards other communities and ethnicities.

3-High frustration and aggressive behavior during their communication are result of the complex of inferiority and behavioral tactic to defend themselves from other groups.

4-Their stable attitude within their moral boundaries keeps them off assimilation isolating themselves from the native community.

5-Marriages within their ethnicity; preservation of ethnicity, consolidation of social relation, but they create genetic deformities in their descendants.

6-Forcing children to work at a very early age shortens their lifespan. The average age of Roma community is 25.6. ( Author. Ilir Gëdeshi and Juni Miluka ).

## **RECOMMENDATION**

From our research it was concluded that the Roma community originated from Pakistan. They belong to a group of people who are vagrants or migrants that is why they are called "*akinxhi*" which in English means migrant. Concerning their religion, they are Muslims of the Sunni sect. Their cemeteries do not exist because they do not have permanent residence. In marriage relationships heritage they have some genetic limits till the second cousin. They can not expand these marriage limits because it is difficult as they are minority. We notice a considerable number of newborns with serious flaws. They do jobs which are easy and quick for the market. Handicrafts and animals trade are not difficult and the profit rate is higher than other social services. Engaging children at work, at a very early age, makes it difficult for them to have the possibility of obtaining a minimum education for their life. This lack of minimum education prevents them from knowing their rights guaranteed from international institutions and their state, which abuses them.

## REFERENCES

1. LekaPlani. *Author*. 2013. Tirana, Albania
2. DjuiXhon. *Human Problems*. 1948. Chigago, USA.
3. Bandura A. 1977. *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs.
4. Terry Pettijohn. 1996. *Psychology, a racional introduction*. Pg 303. Soros Foundation. Tirana, Albania.
5. Moscovici S. 1985. *Social influence and conformity*. New York. Vol 2.
6. KajaAbedin. 12.08.2010. *GazetaShqiptare*. Tirana, Albania
7. Ilir Gëdeshi, Juni Miluka. *Tiranë* 2012. *Studies for the consideration of the needs for gypsies community*.