



GENDER ANALYSIS AND COVID-19: A CASE STUDY OF ECONOMIC (IN)EQUALITY

Original scientific paper

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides an overview and critical review of the question of whether and to what extent has the coronavirus pandemic affected the economic situation of women. The case study in Bosnia and Herzegovina identified the key concepts that will guide our analysis and interpretation. Based on our experiences, we examine and investigate the economic and social status of women in general, and then monitor economic and social parameters during the coronavirus pandemic, to answer the key question- whether the pandemic caused more damage to men or women in economic terms, did it emphasize and deepen the existing gender gap in economic and social terms, or did it improve the position of women, which we consider less likely. This is a predominantly quantitative approach, given that we collected, compared, and analyzed various statistical data from the census, statistics from labor and employment agencies on the labor market, and similar. Using the compilation method we collected all relevant statistical data for research, and then relied on content analysis and comparison to draw key conclusions. Also, using the compilation method we collected various media reports related to the topic. Where there was a need for additional sources we used the interview as a qualitative method, where we relied on the experience of employment agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations dealing with gender equality issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Even though numerous studies have shown that the Covid-19 pandemic had a disproportionate impact on women, our research confirms that official statistics in Bosnia and Herzegovina do not reveal that women are significantly more economically affected than men. The expressiveness of women affected by the coronavirus pandemic and the impact on their economic status was also given through regression analysis and its results. Taking into account only R Square and its indicator of 48%, which is not negligible, it shows the economic position of women before the coronavirus, but certainly during the pandemic. However, given that the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic risk improving existing gender inequalities, we also seek to remind the relevant institutions of their commitment to addressing gender inequalities in all aspects of society and achieving these goals more quickly through a gender-sensitive approach. This, therefore, further opens up opportunities for gender equality, the effectiveness of sustainable development goals, and the empowerment of women in all aspects of social, political, cultural, and economic life.

Keywords: *Pandemic, Covid-19, gender equality, economic status, Bosnia and Herzegovina*

INTRODUCTION

Since the very first cases of infection in the Chinese province of Hubei in December 2019, the new coronavirus has spread around the world at an alarming rate. In March 2020, The World Health Organization has declared a pandemic. At that time, there were more than 118 000 cases of infection in 114 countries around the world (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020).

On the first anniversary of the pandemic, there were more than 118 million people around the world infected with the coronavirus (Worldometers, 2020). From the very beginning, governments around the world have sought to balance protecting lives and economics. Borrowed from the English language - the (un)popular *lockdown*, has taken root in all languages around the world.

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Lockdown-partial or total, has become a way to prevent and limit interpersonal contact, and simultaneously the spread of the disease. However, all this hit economic activity the hardest. According to the World Bank, this is the “worst economic shock” since World War II, with a global GDP decline of 5.2% (World Bank, 2020). The World Bank also states that some world economies have experienced the greatest decline since the 1870s. The decline in economic activity was also felt in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to the World Bank, the economy fell by 4% in 2020 (Hadzimusic, 2021). This country has encountered its first lockdown in March 2020, which affected various sectors- most notably tourism, hospitality, and trade, and indirectly several other activities. All this has led to tectonic disturbances in the labor market - already in April 2020. The Labor and Employment Agency recorded a significant increase in registered unemployment. The number of unemployed rose by more than 21 000, whereas employers were looking for four times fewer workers than in previous months (Labor and Employment Agency, 2020). Our research aims to examine how much the mentioned economic disturbances have affected women in comparison to men. Regardless of the coronavirus pandemic, it can be said that the position of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina is worse than that of men. Many descriptive indicators taken from various sources, at the very end of this paper will be processed in the SPSS and through regression analysis to further examine the impact of the corona pandemic on the economic situation of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In its Gender Equality Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNICEF states: „General examples of gender inequality are most noticeable when it comes to women’s participation in public and political life, which reflects their position in society, and then their position in the labor market, which is characterized by multiple burdens on women in the market economy and care economy, there is also increased violence against women, including domestic violence. Gender equality has not yet been treated as a priority of development and other strategies, in general, and in some specific areas, and is still seen as an issue for women“ (UNICEF, 2009, p. 6).

Although the publication was made twelve years before the writing of this paper, the precisely worded passage has not lost its relevance to this day. Analyses presented later in this paper will show that women are socially, politically, and economically disadvantaged compared to men. Therefore, it is to be assumed that the coronavirus pandemic has just emphasized the existing situation. All the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic - human and material, will be seen from a historical perspective when it will be possible to tell a meta-narrative about the crisis we are living in. This paper is being written on the second anniversary of the pandemic, therefore we decided to focus on the first few months, starting from March 2020, when the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina introduced the first lockdown. We start our research by analyzing statistical data on demography, social, and economic characteristics of women from the 2013 census, with our analysis of legislative and executive authorities, we examine the position and representation of women in politics, and we compare economic and trade indicators before and during the coronavirus pandemic - which will lead us to the desired conclusion as to whether the pandemic has had a greater economic and social impact on women or men in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

STATISTICS ON WOMEN IN B&H: FROM THE POPULATION CENSUS

According to the last census in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2013, there are 3.531.159 inhabitants in this country. Slightly more than half are women - 1.798.889. There are 1.732.270 men (Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2013a, p. 25). The average age of the population is 39.5 years. Among men, the average age is 38.24, while among women it is 40.73 (Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2013a, p. 28).

Marital status

There is a total of 2.987.440 people over the age of fifteen in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The table below shows the marital status of this population group.

Table 1. Population aged 15 and over by marital status and sex

BH	Sex	Never been married	Married	Divorced	Widowed
Total	2.987.440	810.941	1.759.134	100.880	316.485
Male	1.453.294	471.519	878.604	43.733	59.438
Female	1.534.146	339.422	880.530	57.147	257.047

Source: Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2013b, p. 1115

The data show that most of both sexes are married and that there is little difference in the number of married men and women. There are significantly more widows than widowers. This number is approximately 4.3 times bigger for women in Bosnia

and Herzegovina compared to widowed men.¹ Statistics, when it comes to women, indicate that the highest percentage of women is of those (over 15 years of age) who have not given birth at all or those who have two children.

¹ It is obvious that the data are different and that the statistics do not provide insight into the reasons, but the authors conclude that it should be borne in mind that Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country where the effects of war are still being felt.

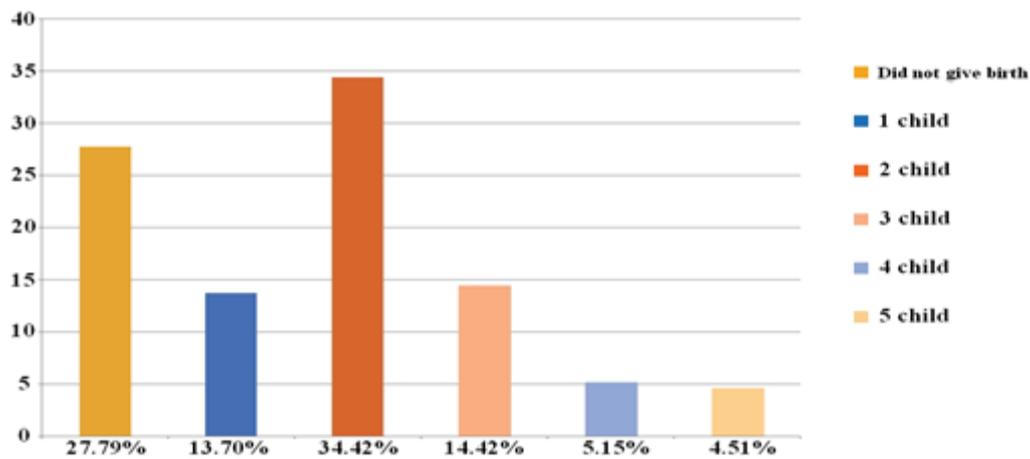


Chart 1: Female population aged 15 and over by the number of live births

Source: Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2013b, p. 1445

The chart shows that approximately 35% of women give birth to two children and that close to 28% over the age of 15 have never given birth. The lowest is the percentage of women who gave birth to five or more

children which are close to 5%. More than 5% make women with four children. More than 14% are those who have given birth to three children.

Education

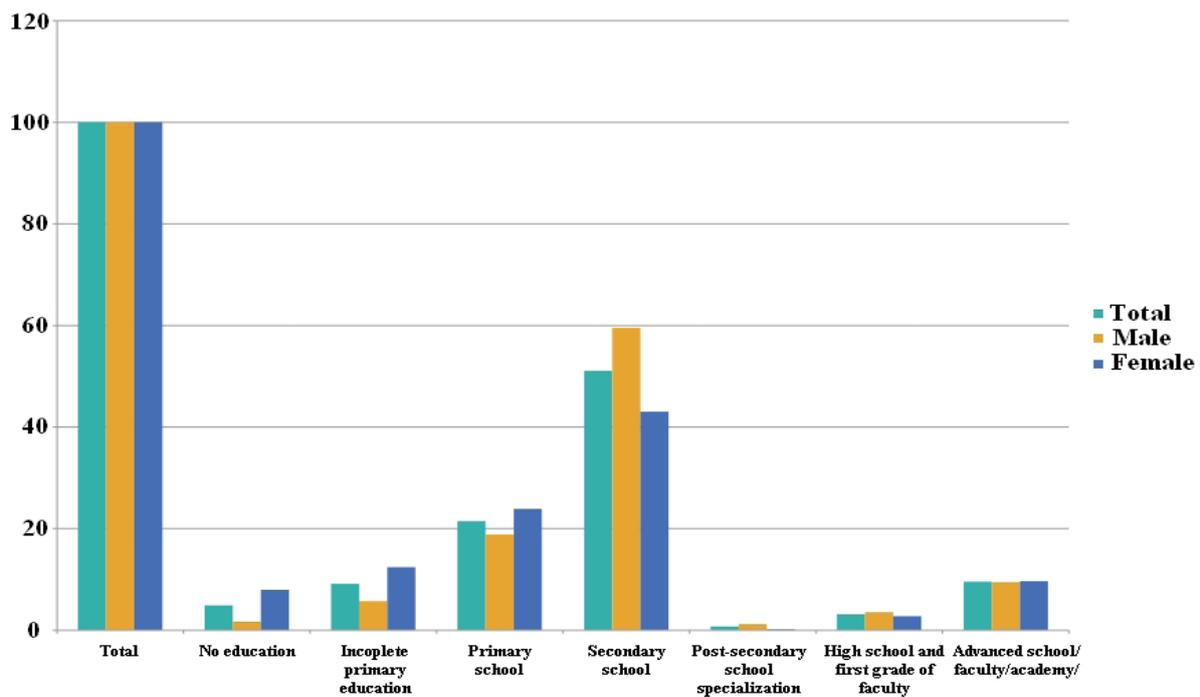


Chart 2: Population aged 15 and over by completed education and sex (5), B&H level

Source: Agency for statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2013c, p. 24

When it comes to education, statistics indicate that the level of education is higher among men than women.

The chart above clearly indicates the following negative trends for women:

- There are significantly more women than men with no education.
- The number of women with incomplete primary education is almost twice as high as the number of men.
- Significantly more men have completed secondary school.

- The number of women who complete their specialization after secondary school is almost insignificant compared to men.

- There is a larger number of men who have completed higher education, although the difference compared to women is not big.

The chart indicates two positive trends for women when it comes to education, and they are:

- More women than men finish primary school.
- There are slightly more women who finished college/ university than men.

Here is how the above data looks in numbers:

Table 2. Population aged 15 and over by completed education, age, and sex

	No education	Incomplete	Primary school	Secondary school	Post-secondary school specialization	High school and first-grade faculty	Advanced schools
Total	146.078	274.036	640.726	1.525.161	21.613	94.204	285.622
Male	24.021	83.216	274.258	864.823	17.877	51.556	137.543
Female	122.057	190.820	366.468	660.338	3.736	42.648	148.079

Source: Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2013c, p.25

When it comes to illiteracy, statistics are devastating for women compared to men. According to the 2013 census, the share of the illiterate population of the total population is 2.82%. However, the share of men is .79%. The share of women is 4.76%. Out of the total number of inhabitants over the age of 10 (3.180.115), 89.794 are illiterate. Out of the total number of men over the age of 10 (1.551.947), 12.237 are illiterate, whereas out of the total number of women over the age of 10 (1.628.168), 77.557 are illiterate (Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2013c, p. 138).

Economic characteristics

Below is a chart that shows the working-age population by economic activity and gender in percentages. We take this chart from the census in Bosnia and Herzegovina as an example to have a clear picture of the economic position of women before the pandemic compared to the period during it.

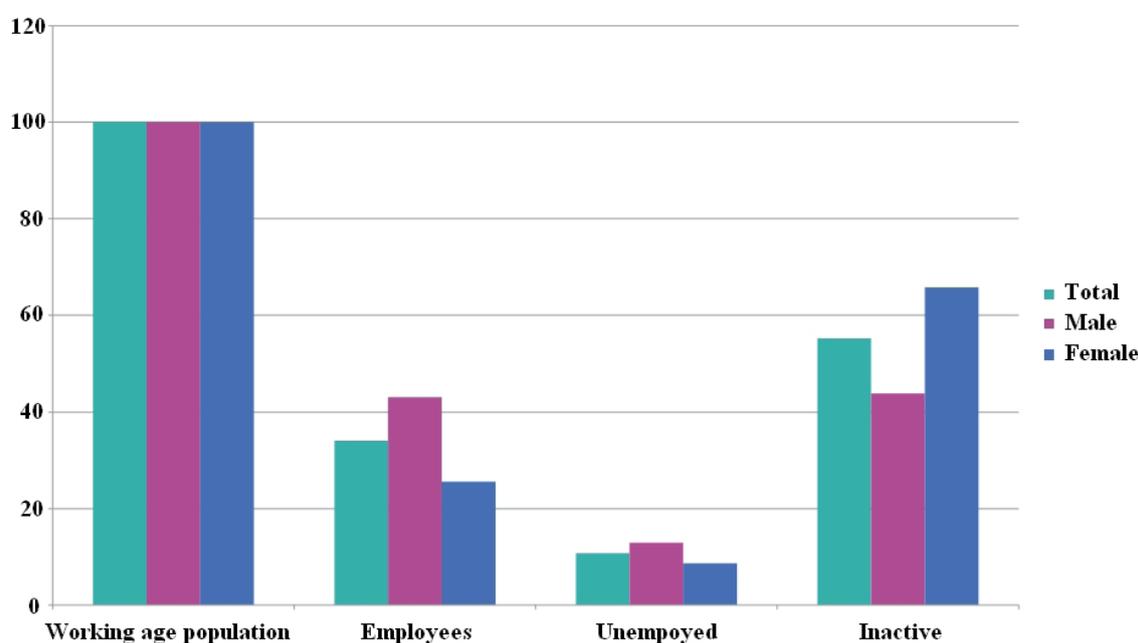


Chart 3: Working-age population by economic activity and sex (5), BH level

Source: Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2013d, p. 326

This chart shows that in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in 2013, there were significantly more employed men compared to women. Numerically, there are more men among the unemployed, but the difference is small. There are more inactive women than men. All these differences significantly affect the economy of

the country. The report of the Gender Center of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina on gender equality during the pandemic states the following: „According to the World Bank estimates, about 16% of gross national income is lost due to gender-based differences in labor force participation.

According to the global index of the World Economic Forum for 2018, only a third of the working-age population (and only a quarter of working-age women) in B&H is employed, while the employment rate of the EU-28 for 2017 was above 72%. Therefore, B&H ranks 115th out of 149 countries. With a score of .64, B&H lags behind the region, including Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro, and Northern Macedonia. Labor force surveys conducted in B&H show that despite active employment measures in 2018, there were 236.000 more men than women in the labor force, 208.000 more men than women in the employed population, and 294.000 more women were inactive compared to men. The situation in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is no different. In the structure of employees in March 2020, women made up only 42%, and more of them were in the structure of the unemployed (58%)“ (Gender Center of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2020).

WOMEN IN POLITICS

Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina are unequally represented in politics compared to men. For instance, a woman has never been a member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, nor has a woman ever chaired the State-level Council of Ministers. In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina entity, no woman has held the post of Prime Minister. In the Republika Srpska, Zeljka Cvijanovic from the SNSD party of Milorad Dodik was elected to the position of entity president in 2018, and at the time of writing this paper, her term is ongoing. In the previous election cycle 2014-2018, Cvijanovic was the Prime Minister of that Bosnian entity. The “50% Initiative” (Inicijativa 50%)² has pointed out the inequality when it comes to ambassadorial positions. The Facebook page of that organization states that there are 51 ambassadors of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the world. Out of that number, 12 ambassadorial positions belong to women, and significantly more - 29, belong to male diplomats. In that sense, women make up 23.53 percent (50% Initiative, 2021).

There are two women and eight men in the current composition of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Women, therefore, make up 20% of the composition (Council of Ministers, 2021).

There are sixteen ministries in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina entity, three of which are run by women and fourteen by men. The representation of women in the Federal Government is, therefore, 18 percent (Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2021).

There are six female ministers and eleven male ministers in Republika Srpska, and the percentage of women in the Bosnian entity is 35% (Government of Republika Srpska, 2021).

Bosnia and Herzegovina is an administratively complex country with legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government at the state, entity, and cantonal levels. Therefore, we will analyze data on the representation of women in the legislature, to draw certain conclusions about the gender balance in parliaments and assemblies:

State-level

The Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of the House of Representatives and the House of the People. The House of Representatives consists of 42 representatives. In the 2018-2022 convocation there are 11 women and 31 men. Women make up 26%, whereas men have 74%.

The House of the People of the State Parliament consists of 15 delegates. Three of them are women and twelve are men. Women make up 20%, and men 80% (Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2021).

Entity level

Table 3. Overview of women's representation in politics at the entity level

House of Representatives of the Parliament of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Total number of deputies: 98	
	Men: 70 (72%)	Woman: 28 (28%)
House of Peoples of the Parliament of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Total number of delegates: 58	
	Men: 45 (78%)	Woman: 13 (22%)
National Assembly of the Republika Srpska	Total number of deputies: 83	
	Men: 65 (79%)	Woman: 18 (21%)
Council of Peoples of Republika Srpska	Total number of delegates: 28	
	Men: 23 (82%)	Woman: 5 (18%)

² The “50% Initiative” gathers candidates and political activists of “Nasa stranka”, as part of achieving one of the NS goals, to have 50% of elected women in the elections. For equal representation! “Nasa stranka” is an opposition political party at the state and federal levels. Republika Srpska is not represented in the entity. In the Sarajevo Canto, the government is part of the “Cetvorka” (Four) coalition, and the Cantonal Prime Minister Edin Forto is a member of that party. It is a social-liberal political organization that was formed in 2008.

Cantonal level

Table 4. Overview of women's representation in politics at the cantonal level

Sarajevo Canton	Total number of representatives: 98
	Women: 13 (37%)
Zenica-Doboj Canton	Total number of representatives: 35
	Women: 14 (40%)
Central Bosnia Canton	Total number of representatives: 30
	Women: 13 (43%)
Una-Sana Canton	Total number of representatives: 30
	Women: 11 (36%)
Tuzla Canton	Total number of representatives: 35
	Women: 13 (37%)
Herzegovina-Neretva Canton	Total number of representatives: 30
	Women: 15 (50%)
West Herzegovina Canton	Total number of representatives: 23
	Women: 7 (30%)
Canton 10	Total number of representatives: 25
	Women: 2 (8%)
Bosnian-Podrinje Canton	Total number of representatives: 25
	Women: 6 (24%)
Posavina Canton	Total number of representatives: 21
	Women: 5 (23%)

The above-mentioned quantitative analysis indicates the dominance of males in the legislature at all levels of government in Bosnia and Herzegovina. At no level from cantons to state, women are more represented. The best situation is in the Herzegovina-Neretva canton where there is an equal number of men and women. The lowest number of women is in Canton 10, where they make up 8%, which leads to the conclusion that in Bosnia and Herzegovina there is no equal gender representation determined by law. Namely, the Law on Gender Equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina stipulates that the participation of the underrepresented gender in political processes should be at least 40%.

The non-governmental organization "Girls Foundation", which deals with gender equality issues, states: „The Law on Gender Equality and the provision of 40 percent representation is respected for a certain period during the year, and after that period it ceases to be respected, since after each election when the government is formed, women are not represented in government positions by legal provisions of 40% representation. Experiences from previous years show that women are most often represented in government with about 20 percent“ (Mujic, 2019, p. 43). The author of the publication on women's political participation in Bosnia and Herzegovina also states that women were represented in the media with only 15% during the campaign (Mujic, 2019, p. 51). Furthermore, Mujic states that the representatives of political parties should be the ones who should work on gender awareness of their members, not using women only as decor within a political party.

Mujic also emphasizes the importance of adequate sanctions for non-compliance with legal provisions, to ensure their actual implementation. During electoral campaigns, women are underrepresented in media coverage and often perceived as bystanders to male political party leaders, often treated as a cheap labor force for collecting votes for their parties (Bashevka, 2020, p. 2). The State Agency for Gender Equality also has certain recommendations when it comes to women's participation in politics. Following the round table held in December 2020, organized by the Agency for Gender Equality and the Regional Coordination Committee for Gender Equality, the following conclusions and recommendations were made:

- The key role of parties is to achieve greater participation of women in politics.
- The empowerment of women in political parties is necessary.
- It is necessary to create a climate for improving the position of women in all social-economic and political processes.
- Legislation needs to be improved (Proposal that political bodies without 40% of women be declared illegitimate).
- State support is needed to make it easier for women in their private lives to be able to act in public (Agency for Gender Equality, 2020).

SOCIO-ECONOMIC POSITION OF WOMEN IN B&H

The fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina, as stated earlier, is giving up 16% of its GDP due to gender inequality is not only striking but also has other consequences. Publication of the impact of gender division of family and household chores on the professional life of employed women in Bosnia and Herzegovina by Snjezana Hasanagic and Maja Papovic, clearly indicates that women in B&H spend much more time on household chores, unlike men who are dedicated to paid and leisure activities (Hasanagic & Papovic, 2020). According to a USAID survey (USAID Measure B&H, 2019), half of the respondents agree that most household chores naturally suits women more, almost 40% think that men have the last word in marriage, 40% think that fathers are not as suitable for caring for children as mothers.

The survey was conducted in 2020, using the method "face to face", and 500 female respondents who live with their partners participated. These are women between the ages of 18 and 65. The most significant findings are stated below:

- 43.6% of women are employed indefinitely
- 23.6% of women are working under a fixed-term contract,
- 9.6% of women are working in agriculture, fishing, or family farming,
- 7.8% of women work illegally,
- 7.4% of women work under a part-time employment contract or temporary services contract,

- 4.6% of women are private entrepreneurs,
- 31.4% of women are engaged in service and trade activities (waitress, cook, hairdresser, etc.),
- 20.5% of women are scientists, engineers, professors, etc.
- 18,2% of women are technical and professional associates,
- 8% of women perform less represented occupations - agriculture, forestry, fishing,
- 7.4% of women work in craft occupations and individual production,
- 6% of women are administrative officers,
- 4.4% of women are engaged in simple occupations - cleaner, production line worker, etc.,
- 1.2% of women are legislators, officials, and directors,
- 2.6% of women are in other occupations, which could not be classified into existing categories,
- There were no women in the sample who are machine operators, industrial manufacturers, and women who are engaged in military occupations,
- 69.4% of women are employed in companies that are privately or predominantly privately owned,

- 22.4% work in state or public institutions,
- 3.4% work in some other form of ownership (Hasanagic & Papovic, 2020, p. 11).

When it comes to monthly income, Hasanagic and Papovic survey shows the following:

- 24.2% of women have a monthly income of 501 to 750 KM,
- 21.2% of women have a monthly income of 751 to 1000 KM,
- 2.2% of women have a monthly income of 1001 to 2000 KM,
- There were no women in the sample with a monthly income of over 3000 KM (Hasanagic & Papovic, 2021, p. 14).

However, the research has also shown that in all categories (except the first one which includes salaries from 501 to 750 KM), there are more men than women. On the other hand, women are more represented in categories that imply lower incomes. Thus, for example, almost a fifth of women make less than 500 KM per month, while this is the case with only 6.4% of men, as shown by the chart published in the publication of the B&H Agency for Gender Equality:

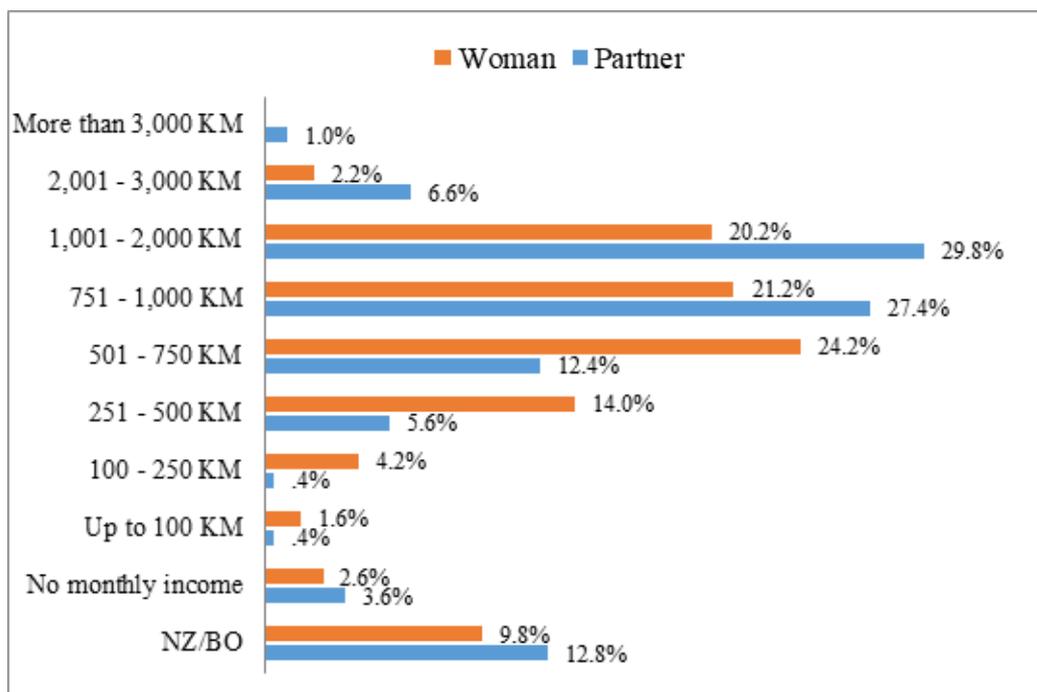


Chart 4: The amount of monthly income of women and their partners

Source: Hasanagic & Papovic, 2020, p. 14.

In addition, the results of the survey have shown that most of the household chores are done by women. According to the study, employed women spend five times more time on routine household chores than men. However, the key is how that affects private and professional life. Thus 16.8% of women, due to household and other family obligations had to give up: professional training, 16.25% business travel, 11.2% experienced conflict with colleagues

at work, 10.6% have received lower salaries due to inability performance of work duties, while 8.25% of respondents had to reject promotion. The key finding is that women in B&H take over most of the time in the household, and that they spend much more time on those obligations than men, but that they have lower average incomes, and that they have numerous negative consequences for career, well-being, and health (Hasanovic & Papovic, 2020, p. 35)

THE INFLUENCE OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC ON THE ECONOMIC POSITION OF WOMEN IN B&H

In terms of economics, the coronavirus pandemic has changed the world. At this moment, for the second year in a row, European countries are introducing restrictive measures which include a ban on gatherings, the closure of hospitality facilities, and daily changes in the way of life we knew before the pandemic. Numerous lockdowns have affected all world economies and fall in GDP. Below is a table showing the decline of the economy in 2020, compared to 2019, published by Al Jazeera Balkans, citing data from the World Bank:

Table 5: GDP growth and decline in the countries of the region in 2019 and 2020

	2019.	2020.
MONTENEGRO	+4.1%	-14.9%
KOSOVO	+4.2%	-8.8%
CROATIA	+2.9%	-8.6%
SLOVENIA	+3.2%	-6.2%
NORTHERN MACEDONIA	+3.6%	-5.1%
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	+2.7%	-4.0%
SERBIA	+4.2%	-2.0%

Source: Hadzimusic, 2021

We can see that Bosnia and Herzegovina is not on the top when it comes to the economic downturn that Montenegro has suffered. The reason lies in the fact that the economy of Montenegro mostly depends on tourism, which is the branch of the economy most affected during the coronavirus pandemic due to various restrictions, travel bans, and flight suspensions. Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the other hand, doesn't have a "dominant" branch of the economy on which it depends. According to the World Bank estimates, the country's economy has experienced a fall of four percent in 2020.

We should mention that Bosnia and Herzegovina is a politically and administratively complex country in which the decisions are made on different levels of government - state, entity, and cantonal levels. Therefore, often during the coronavirus pandemic, when one measure was in place in one area or territory, there were other measures in another. In the Bosnia and Herzegovina entity, the Government decided to declare a state of natural disaster on March 16th, 2020, which enabled the adoption of measures and decisions at the entity level. The Government, among other things, decided that the prices of products remain the same as on March 5th, especially food products, medical equipment, and products. It was decided that one of the parents of children up to the age of ten can be absent from work and stay home with the child (Hadzic, 2020).

Shopping malls and restaurants in the entity were closed for 70 days, after the Federal Civil Protection Headquarters decided on March 18th (KLIX, 2020).

All the measures that were adopted affected the economy, i.e., the labor market. The analysis below will also show how. Here we will consider the registered unemployment, i.e., the number of people registered in Employment offices and services. The analysis will take into account the period immediately before the coronavirus pandemic, as well as the months with strict restrictions and lockdowns. Therefore, in our quantitative analysis, we will pay special attention to February, March, April, and May of 2020. According to the data from the B&H Labor and Employment Agency, unemployment rose the most in April and May, as we will see below.

February 2020

In February 2020, 402 888 unemployed people were registered in B&H. Compared to the previous month, the number of unemployed people decreased by 3,279 or .81%. However, out of the total number of unemployed people, 228 912, or 56.82% were women. In that month, 17,303 people were deleted from the records of employment services, out of which 8,565 were women. 8 981 people were employed, out of which 4 462 were women. During this period, employers reported the need to employ 4,249 people. In January 2020, the number of employed people was 833,909, of which 361,352 were women. Compared to December 2019, the number of employed people increased by .4%, and the number of employed women increased by .5%.

March 2020

In March 2020, there were 398,504 people on the records of employment offices and services. Compared to the previous month, the number of unemployed decreased by 4,384 or 1.09%. Out of the total number of jobseekers, 227,106 or 56.99% are women. Compared to the same period last year, unemployment is lower by 24,915 people or 5.88%. A total of 15,996 persons were deleted from the records of employment services, of which 7,494 were women. A total of 0,299 people are employed, of which 4,760 are women. Employers reported the need to hire 2,873 people. The number of employed people was 832,200, of which 360,918 were women. Compared to January 2020, the number of employed people decreased by .2%, and the number of employed women decreased by .1%. Employers reported the need to hire 4,249 new workers during this period.

April 2020

In April, 419,582 unemployed people were registered in B&H. Compared to the previous month, the number of unemployed people increased by 21,312 people, i.e., 5.35%. Out of the total number of job seekers, 240,079 or 57.22% are women.

Unemployment increased by 1.39% compared to the same period last year, or 5,756 people. A total of 5,837 people were deleted from the records of employment services, of which 2,434 were women. 3,588 people were employed, of which 1,459 were women. At the same time, employment was terminated for 21 649 people, out of which 12,227 were women. Employers have expressed the need to hire 715 new workers. In March 2020, the number of employed people was 830,421, of which 359,846 were women. Compared to February 2020, the number of employed people decreased by .2%, and the number of employed women decreased by .3%.

May 2020

In May, 421,474 unemployed people were registered. Unemployment increased by .45% compared to the previous month, i.e., 1,892 people. Out of the total number of job seekers, 240,615 or 57.09% are women.

Unemployment increased by 14,789 people or 3.64% compared to the same period last year. Unemployment growth was caused by reduced economic activity due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and unemployment has increased by 18,586 people since the beginning of the pandemic, or 4.61%. A total of 12,476 people were deleted from the records of employment services, of which 6,880 were women. 9,441 people were employed, of which 5,300 are women. Employment was terminated for 11 585 people, out of which 5 905 are women. During this period, employers reported the need to employ 2,506 workers. The number of employed persons in April was 808,894, of which 347,876 were women. Compared to March 2020, the number of employed people decreased by 2.6%, and the number of employed women decreased by 3.3% (Agency for Labor and Employment of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2020).

Table 6. Changes in the labor market during the pandemic

2020	UNEMPLOYED	DIFFERENCE (PREVIOUS MONTH)	WOMEN	(%)	EMPLOYED	WOMEN	MARKET NEEDS
FEBRUARY	402 888	-3 279 (.81%)	228 912	56.82	8 981	4 462	4 249
MARCH	398 504	-4 384 (1.09%)	227 106	56.99	10 299	4 760	2 873
APRIL	419 582	+21 312 (5.35%)	240 079	57.22	3 588	1 459	715
MAY	421 474	+1 892 (.45%)	240 615	57.09	9 441	5 300	2 506

The table leads us to the following conclusions: The coronavirus pandemic had the greatest impact on the labor market in April, when registered unemployment increased by 5.35% compared to March 2020. The percentage of unemployed women increased slightly. While in the months not so affected by lockdown it was below 57%, in April and May it was above 57%, but this is not a significant difference. Figures also indicate that there are more men than women in the total number of employed persons in March and April, but this is not a significant difference. More women than men were employed in May. The extent to which the coronavirus virus pandemic has affected the labor market is best shown by the figure on the demand of employers in April 2020, when slightly more than 715 workers were in demand. Official statistics, therefore, do not reveal that women were significantly more affected by the coronavirus pandemic in economic terms than men.

DATA OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

However, the situation on the ground does not always maintain statistical reality. The CURE Foundation,

as the coordinating organization within the B&H Women’s Network³, conducted a study that showed that women were economically significantly affected during the pandemic. The Cure Foundation’s research was conducted in 11 places - 5 cantons in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Republika Srpska. The coronavirus pandemic is used as a reason to deprive women of economic resources. [The pandemic] Was used as an excuse by partners and other members of the household to deny them one of their basic rights, the right to work. On the other hand, there is a high risk of labor exploitation and fraud, because the labor market is reduced, so employers can manipulate conditions, blackmail their employees, and take advantage of the poor living conditions of their workers. The pandemic particularly affected women entrepreneurs, tourism workers, hospitality workers, as well as women who made a living from informal work, such as cleaning. The space for work in given areas is significantly narrowed and requires adjustment to market needs. Some of the women managed to adapt, but most did not (The CURE, Personal Communication, March 23rd, 2021).

³ The Women’s Network is an informal group of civil society organizations working on women’s human rights and promoting gender equality.

We received useful information in written correspondence from the company Mojposao.ba, which is an employment intermediary in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The results of their research will be presented in the table below:

Table 7. The survey conducted by mojposao.ba

Sex	Lost their jobs due to the pandemic	Kept their job	Were unemployed before the pandemic
Women	36%	25%	39%
Men	41%	38%	21%

Source: Mojposao.ba agency, 2020

According to the results of the second survey of the Mojposao.ba agency, which was conducted at the end of 2020 (the survey was related to the public call for the unemployed, and only the unemployed responded):

- 41% of the total number of women who participated in the research lost their jobs due to the pandemic,
- 51% of the total number of men who participated in the research lost their jobs due to the pandemic.

The conclusion is that, when it comes to numbers, women are not affected more than men. However, it should be borne in mind that even before the pandemic, the employment rate was higher before the pandemic. Furthermore, according to the Mojposao.ba agency, these are the sectors most affected by the pandemic:

Tourism and hospitality 27%⁴,

Retail: 12%,

Production: 11% (Mojposao.ba Agency, Personal communication, March 29th, 2021).

Mojposao.ba in their response submitted for the needs of this research states: „Although we do not have data on which sectors in B&H are predominantly male or female, we can be guided by ILO statistics which say that service activities employ the most women, and therefore we see that service activities are most affected by the pandemic crisis, however when we ask men and women individually, and if we take into consideration that the male employment rate was higher before the pandemic, we see that there is no big difference“ (Personal communication, March 29, 2021).

Response of the authorities

The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted the Information on Gender Equality during the recovery process from the crisis caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) prepared by the Entity Gender Center. The above-mentioned document proposes several measures, which are viewed from the angle of gender equality, and are related to the efficient and rational use of public funds for economic recovery and development.

Measures related to the labor market:

The Gender Center concluded that the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has not yet developed flexible work arrangements that would give workers greater freedom of work and that they would meet personal or family needs and achieve a better work-life balance. They also state that the support system for employed parents was mostly inaccessible due to home isolation measures. In addition, sectors such as education and health care (particularly important during the pandemic) were seen as places of predominant employment for women, especially at lower levels of the hierarchy. For example, according to official statistics, 98.3% of women are employed in pre-school education, 69.8% in primary education, 57.1% in secondary education, and 39.8% in higher education. In 2011, three-quarters of the total number of public sector health workers were women. The largest difference in the gender distribution of health professionals was observed among pharmacists, 90% of whom were women, and more than 80% of medical technicians were women. In all other branches of the economy, there are significantly more males (Gender Center of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2020). The Gender Center of the Federation of B&H proposes measures that take into account the current situation of gender inequality:

- Economic recovery measures should take into account the resource represented by the inactive workforce; programs that will promote entrepreneurship could have a great effect - through formal and non-formal education, promotion of lifelong flexible learning, and other forms of direct support to women entrepreneurs.
- Ensure that all economic support measures are gender-neutral or reduce women's unemployment, especially in hard-to-employ categories.
- Invest in increasing the capacity of preschool education for employed and unemployed parents.
- Amend the Labor Law of the Federation of B&H and other labor legislation to eliminate existing forms of discrimination based on sex, and to adapt the Law to the concept of flexibility in the manner defined by Council Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and the Council of 20 May 2019 on the work-life balance of parents and guardians and repealing Council Directive 2010/18 / EU.
- Improve labor legislation to establish a clear obligation for prevention and protection against all forms of discrimination in the workplace, etc.
- Continuous analysis and monitoring of the impact of economic recovery measures from the angle of impact on gender equality, to ensure that socio-economic measures prevent the deterioration of existing poor starting positions of women in the labor market.

⁴ That is, 27% of people who lost their jobs come from this sector.

- Improve socially responsible tourism as a special form of economic activity, expand capacities for the development of domestic tourism,
- Improve social protection programs,
- Consider all forms of social protection from the point of view of the impact on gender equality,
- Expand the coverage of children with preschool education and nurseries, and extracurricular activities including a public-private partnership to support working parents and the like (Gender Center of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2020).

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

By observing and analyzing the descriptive indicators from the previous lines of this paper (excluding GDP), relevant data from February 2020 to May 2020 can be seen. To confirm and show this through a regression analysis test, which examines the impact, the results are interpreted in Tables 5 to 8. The sample or variables, which took the form of summarized or derived variables, are only descriptive indicators: months - February, March, April, May; the number of unemployed in that period; the number of unemployed women; number of unemployed men; the needs of employers. Thus, one hypothesis emerged: *It is assumed that the coronavirus pandemic affected the economic position of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, which will be shown in the following lines.

Table 8. Correlation-Pearson Correlation

Correlation			
		p_k_v	ekon_polozej_zena
p_k_v	Pearson Correlation	1	.361**
	Sig (2-tailed)		.000
ekon_polozej_zena	Pearson Correlation	.361**	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000	

** . Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

After processing the data conducted in SPSS based on descriptive indicators, we originally obtained Table 8 in which two variables were analyzed by correlation analysis. The first of these is p_k_v, which is a coronavirus pandemic, while ekon_polozej_zena signifies the economic position of women.

Table 11. Beta coefficient

Model		Coefficients ^a			t	Sig.
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	99.312	9.001		9.115	.000
	ekon_polozej_zena	11.242	1.198	.381	1.248	.000

The above table represents the direction and strength of the connection. The correlation amount of .361 significant at the .01 level is the mean value according to Cohen because according to his classification the values in the range of .30 to .49 are mean values, which means that in this case there is a significant correlation between these two variables. Therefore, we conclude that there is a link between the coronavirus pandemic and the economic position of women.

Table 9. Model Summary

Model Summary ^b				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. he error of the Estimate
1	.361 ^a	.484	.240	7.2291

In Table 9, the results R (correlation coefficient) and R2 (determination coefficient) are very important. This table shows that R = .361. The value of R2 (R square) is R2 = .484. Thus, in the observed period, the economic position of women with 48 percent could be better explained by the coronavirus pandemic. It is important that this result did not occur in full only at the time of the coronavirus pandemic, but statistical indicators still show gender inequality even before the coronavirus. This is confirmed by the figure of Adjusted R Square, but also by the error, which is 7.2291.

Table 10. ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	11901.27	3077.10	13.02	.000 ^b
	Residual	14401.13	334.42		
	Total	26302.40			

Table 10. ANOVA shows what the F coefficient is and its significance Sig. Its value is F = 13.022, and it is statistically significant at the level of inference p < .01 because of the value of Sig. = .000. He also says the overall regression is significant. The Sum of Squares together with the Mean Square represents results that ultimately do not affect the very conclusion of whether the regression itself is significant or not. Mentioned data in Table 7. F and Sig. represent the basis and confirmation of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the economic situation of women.

The variable *ekon_polozaj_zena* is the tested variable or predictor variable in this test and confirms whether the regression has its meaning during the test. Table 11 *Coefficients* gives the variable Beta (Beta coefficient), which by its size shows what the predictor variable is. The value of the Beta coefficient is .381 and the t value for these coefficients shows statistical significance (at the level of $p < .001$). The value of Std. Error in its amount of 1,198 is statistically insignificant in this case, together with the value of B which is 11.242. The essence is to confirm the impact, which is not particularly pronounced in this period of the coronavirus pandemic, as shown by descriptive indicators. Differences between men and women are noticeable even before the coronavirus pandemic, only, in this case, the difference is more pronounced through the descriptive indicators themselves, and it was confirmed by regression analysis.

CONCLUSION

The coronavirus pandemic has affected all the world's economies, and Bosnia and Herzegovina are no exception. The data we analyzed in this paper indicate a significant decline in economic activity during the first months of lockdown since March 2020 and „tectonic“ disturbances in the labor market. The increase in the number of unemployed in the first months of the pandemic in Bosnia and Herzegovina was measured in tens of thousands. Statistically, women are not significantly more affected than men. However, statistics in this sense offer us only partial truth. It is true that the number of unemployed women during the pandemic did not increase significantly compared to the number of employed men and that it is directly proportional to the statistics even before the pandemic, with slight percentage deviations. However, to analyze the real socio-economic position of women during the pandemic, one should keep in mind the position of women in Bosnian society in general. Our presentations so far have shown that women are less represented in politics, have lower wages, have a higher illiteracy rate among women, that women spend significantly more time on household and family responsibilities and unpaid activities than men, and that they spend significantly more time in the upbringing of children and other day-to-day responsibilities of parenthood. All this leads to the conclusion that the pandemic only highlighted the current situation, which can be confirmed through the results obtained by Pearson's correlation of .361 as well as regression analysis, but it is very important to mention the value of R square which is $R^2 = .484$, which is by no means negligible. This can be partially justified in some way by the fact that the closures imposed an additional stay at home and additional obligations around the children - care for online classes and the like. Statistics have revealed to us that the economic position of women has not improved, and our qualitative and ultimately quantitative research methods have clearly shown that it has somewhat deteriorated due to the existing gender gap in economic and social terms.

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