



Commentary on the Inclusion of Females from the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian Communities Through the Education System (A Comparative Study Between Three Communities in Kosovo)

Review paper

Dritero Arifi and Ngadhnjim Brovina

Faculty of Political Science, University for Business and Technology, Prishtina, Kosovo

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Abstract

This study focuses on the difficulties women in Kosovo's Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian populations have in their educational pursuits. The study tries to comprehend why women in these communities experience higher educational challenges than males by utilising a comparative and quantitative technique and historical and descriptive methodologies. The article discusses measures to improve the situation while eradicating discrimination against women in these communities. It analyses the major causes of the lack of education in the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian villages. The study emphasises the value of education for all communities, especially minority groups, to promote social cohesion and economic growth. Despite flaws in the integration system and societal mentality, the findings of this study on the educational problems faced by the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian populations in Kosovo indicate progress. In particular, there has been a minor increase in emancipation for women from the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities between 2015 and 2021, notwithstanding challenges.

Keywords: *Communities, Education, Females, Kosovo, RAE*

Kosovo is a small country located in the Balkans region of Europe. It declared independence in 2008. Kosovo's diverse population includes Albanians, Serbs, Bosniaks, and other ethnic groups. Among these groups, Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptians (RAE) communities are considered one of the most marginalised and socially excluded groups in Kosovo. They are often subject to discrimination and poverty and have

limited access to essential services such as healthcare, education, and housing. In Kosovo, the term 'minorities' is not legally recognised. Instead, the term 'communities' is used. According to the Republic of Kosovo Constitution, Article 3, paragraph 1 (2008), "The Republic of Kosovo is a multiethnic society composed of Albanians and other communities."

Correspondence to: Ngadhnjim Brovina, University for Business and Technology, Kosovo
Email: ngadhnjim.brovina@ubt-uni.net
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9895-2397>

This research is essential because it focuses on the experiences of three minority groups in Kosovo: Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptians (RAE). Understanding these groups' challenges can help develop strategies to improve their situation and ensure they receive the same opportunities as other members of society.

Education in RAE communities in Kosovo, with a particular emphasis on females, is an important and complex topic that requires a thorough examination of the cultural, economic, and social factors that affect these communities. A comparative case study of education in these three communities would likely involve a detailed analysis of the educational opportunities and challenges faced by females in each community, as well as an examination of the social and cultural factors that influence the educational experiences of these groups. This may include examining the role of family, community, and government in shaping educational opportunities and analysing these communities' economic and social status and the impact this has on academic outcomes. The study would likely examine the effectiveness of current education policies and programs in addressing the needs of these communities and recommendations for future policy and program development.

Studying education in RAE communities in Kosovo is crucial because it could shed light on the educational disparities marginalised communities face and the factors contributing to them. The findings can inform the development of policies and programs that aim to improve the educational outcomes for RAE communities and other marginalised groups, which can positively impact the individual and society. Furthermore, studying education in RAE communities in Kosovo can also provide insights and lessons that can be applied to other contexts where marginalised communities face similar educational challenges.

Finding separate data on RAE communities is almost impossible because they are often treated as one category. However, standard data are available (e.g., for schools) and will be considered later. The fact that the data are often classified under the initialism RAE means that we also have very little on women alone, and when they do exist, they are similarly classified. This

makes it difficult to carry out comparative research.

In developing countries such as Kosovo, minority communities are a concern. Education is the subject of particular attention. Unfortunately, gender discrimination still exists in the sector, favouring males over females (UNFPA, 2016).

The research will focus on the question:

- What is the effectiveness of current education policies and programs in addressing the needs of RAE communities, and how can they be improved for future policy and program development?
- The central question of the present study is why women from RAE communities find it more challenging to receive an education than their male counterparts.

Also, the study will be focused on two main hypotheses:

- H1. By analysing the challenges faced by the RAE communities regarding education, it is possible to design and implement strategies that improve access to education and equal opportunities for these groups.
- H2. Women from RAE communities face more barriers to education than men, resulting in a higher dropout rate among female students from these communities.

Using official data from the Kosovo Agency of Statistics, the present study will compare levels of education among communities for 2015–2021 (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2022). According to the 2011 Kosovo census, the RAE communities represent a small group relative to the general population; the Ashkali community is the largest of the three. Each community has an almost equal male-to-female ratio. The RAE communities in Kosovo are a minority group that faces significant social and economic challenges. Despite making up a small portion of the overall population, their situation is essential to understand because it highlights broader issues of discrimination and marginalisation that affect minority groups worldwide. These communities often experience high levels of poverty and lack of access to education and essential services and are disproportionately affected by unemployment and poor health outcomes. It needs to be aware of these issues to understand the broader context of minority

rights and the importance of addressing discrimination and marginalisation in all its forms.

To further justify the importance of understanding the education situation among the RAE communities in Kosovo, it is important to note that education is a fundamental human right and essential for individuals to participate fully in society. It is also a key driver of economic development and can help break the poverty and marginalisation cycle. However, the RAE communities in Kosovo face significant barriers to accessing education, including discrimination, lack of resources, and language barriers. This can lead to high rates of dropouts and low levels of literacy among these communities, exacerbating their socioeconomic struggles. Additionally, a lack of education can perpetuate the marginalisation of RAE communities by limiting their employment and political participation opportunities.

Furthermore, understanding the education situation among the RAE communities in Kosovo will also provide insight into the challenges faced by minority communities in post-conflict societies and the education system's effectiveness in addressing these issues. Therefore, understanding the education challenges faced by the RAE communities in Kosovo is crucial for addressing the broader issues of discrimination and marginalisation faced by minority groups worldwide.

Literature Review

Protecting and promoting the rights of the RAE communities in Kosovo has been

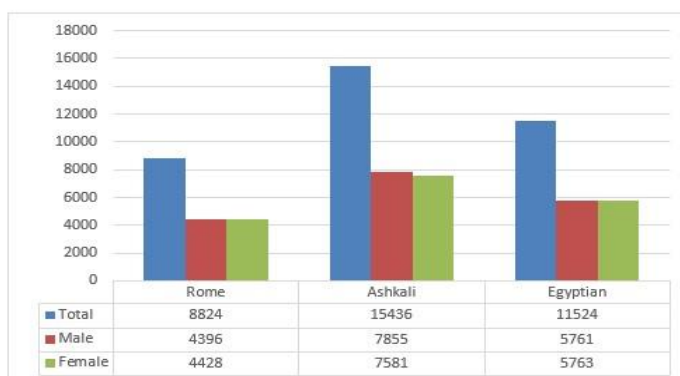
(and remains) a constitutional responsibility. The RAE community has rights protected by the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo. Article 3 defines Kosovo as a multiethnic society, and Articles 22, 59, 60, 61, and 62 guarantee RAE representation at the local, state, and national levels (Bexulli et al., 2018).

The integration of minority communities can take several forms. The first is political inclusion, based on society's emancipation, empowerment, and democratisation (Tholen & de Vries, 2004). In the case of Kosovo, even non-majority citizens (such as RAE communities) can choose candidates to represent them locally and nationally. The second illustrates that political inclusion or representation alone is insufficient, so minorities often have group-specific rights (Tholen & de Vries, 2004). These include the right to primary and secondary education (and textbooks) in the mother tongue and university scholarships. Jobs in public administration may also be ringfenced. According to Schuelka et al. (2020), scholarships in education are more beneficial when oriented toward systems that incorporate the socio-cultural aspect. According to the Kosovo Agency of Statistics, the 2011 population census recorded the following number of people in RAE communities:

- Roma: 4,428 females and 4,396 males, a total of 8,824.
- Ashkali: 7,581 females and 7,855 males, a total of 15,436.
- Egyptian: 5,763 females and 5,761 males, a total of 11,524.

Figure 1.

Population from the 2011 census in RAE communities and breakdown by gender



Source: (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2011)

The RAE communities in Kosovo face many social, economic, and, occasionally, security-related challenges (Tmava & Beha, 2009). Family pressures, traditions, and cultural imperatives also encourage early marriage, negatively impacting young people's education, particularly women's. Unfortunately, a lack of statistical data means that the relative sizes of the RAE communities in Kosovo still need to be determined. It is known that the Roma community is not educated in its mother tongue. However, the law states that "the language of the community will have the status of the official language in the municipality and will be in equal use with the official languages" if a group comprises 5% or above of the population of the said municipality (Tmava & Beha, 2009).

The African proverb says: "If you educate a man, you educate an individual. But if you educate a woman, you educate a nation" (Lahiri, 2023). Women's lives in RAE communities are complicated in every sphere, including education and employment (Lamaxhema, 2019).

Another issue that impacts education amongst the RAE communities is the division between school personnel and the students, who, as has been noted, need to be educated in their mother tongue. However, they can attend Albanian, Turkish, or Serbian language schools (Kasai, 2004). Most, therefore, integrate with students from the general population or the Serb and Turk communities.

For some students, realising the disconnect between their education and the outside world leads to a lack of engagement with school, which can sometimes result in physical or psychological withdrawal (Reimers, 2006). Access to education for the RAE communities continues to be a significant problem. With low attendance, high dropout rates (especially girls), and a lack of study materials, children from this community are discriminated against based on cultural stereotypes and prejudices (Minority Rights Group International, 2018).

The issue of female education in RAE communities in Kosovo merits further study. For the above reasons, minimal improvements must be made to the situation. However, there is no prospect of holding seminars on gender equality amongst the respective groups.

Organisations such as UN Women (2021) are continuing to develop awareness campaigns for women of the RAE communities regarding early and forced marriages and the consequences these marriages carry. Among the most severe consequences is dealing with socioeconomic problems.

The Education System in Kosovo

Primary and lower secondary education in Kosovo is compulsory (15-16 years old) (Arifi & Brovina, 2023). The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, in Article 47 (Right to Education), states that: "1. Every person enjoys the right to primary education free of charge. Compulsory education is regulated by law, and public funds provide funding; 2. Public institutions provide equal opportunities for everyone to be educated according to their unique abilities and needs" (Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, Right to Education, 2008).

In addition to this article in the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, there is also Article 59 (Rights of Communities and Their Members), paragraph 2, which states that: "Members of communities have the right to receive public education individually or as a community in all levels of education, in one of the official languages of the Republic of Kosovo, according to their choice" (Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, Rights of Communities and their Members, 2008).

Article 59 also contains paragraph 4, which states that Members of communities have the right to establish individual or as a community, but also to manage private education and training institutions, for which public financial assistance can be provided, always by international law and standards (Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, Rights of Communities and their Members, 2008).

The educational system in Kosovo, referring to the pre-university Law No.04/L-032 (2011) and Law No.04/L-037 on Higher Education (2011), is structured as follows:

- Preschool education is optional and begins at the age of 4.
- Compulsory primary education begins at six and lasts for nine years.
- Secondary education is divided into lower secondary education (4 years) and upper secondary (2-3 years).

- Universities and other institutions of higher education provide higher education.

However, the Republic of Kosovo's constitution appoints laws on primary and secondary education, which imply that the purpose of obtaining Primary and Secondary education, among other things, exists to prepare pupils to lead a responsible life in a free society. The community's perspective on a more inclusive education dates back 40 years (García & García, 2023). Inclusivity is a globally addressed element and entirely depends on the framework teachers build at specific times based on their established beliefs (Kadrijaj & Zabeli, 2024). Intercultural education is critical as it is a valuable model for fostering significant social and human sustainability. It contributes to the development and sustainability of cultural diversity while combating racism and breaking down ethno-social barriers (including gender and racial equality) (Orellana et al., 2019). Promoting understanding and tolerance between all ethnic and religious groups without prejudice about their origin or background is the core of all democratic institutions aiming to sustain stability and harmony within a country. Multicultural education emphasises that every student, irrespective of their gender, sexual orientation, social status, or ethnic, racial, and cultural background, deserves an equal chance to succeed in school (Banks & Banks, 2019). Even in Kosovo, the concept of schooling should be interpreted as a foundation that provides knowledge or skills for the younger generations and a way of promoting peace and awareness of equality between sexes—building new friendships among people of all ethnic and religious groups without discriminating against any person of their Indigenous origin.

The misinterpreted role of women among RAE communities is negatively distinguished, causing a tremendous setback that triggers the stagnation of this minority community's full integration within Kosovar society. In improving education among females in this community, our society must build a foundation that helps enhance their educational development. Recognising the role of academic institutions in sustaining injustice and oppression is a crucial first step in fostering development (Hart, 2019).

Also, in support of the RAE community, Learning Centers have been established and exist in Kosovo, which is of great importance in helping the development and advancement of education. These centres aim to improve school performance and help integrate them into society. Learning Centers operate in the community and at school. There are currently 50 Learning Centers operating in 20 municipalities in Kosovo (KOSINT 2020, 2019). It should be noted that learning centres are managed by several NGOs, funded by international donors, and intended to function based on the needs of communities (UBO Consulting, 2015). According to UBO Consulting (2015), the Learning Centers are: "A place where out-of-school services are provided for children and a bridge between the community and schools. A place where community children can build and develop their capacities and thus integrate into the society in which they live. **Bethany Christian Services** manages only one Learning Center. The work in this Learning Center is based on the Ministry of Education, Science Technology curriculum for the preschool program and compulsory education. This centre deals with improving the lives of individuals and communities. It also organises social and educational activities and health care services. In this Learning Center, it should be emphasised that RAE communities are involved in the research, and as such, we will present the data of the students engaged in the centre. From 2011 to 2015, there were 320 students every year; over the years, there were 1600 students (UBO Consulting, 2015).

Caritas Kosovo manages two Learning Centers. One centre focuses on teaching the Albanian language, mathematics, and other subjects. No student from the Roma community was reported to have participated in this centre (UBO Consulting, 2015).

Terre Des Hommes manages seven Learning Centers. These centres offer homework help and literacy. Of the total number of students in these centres (225 students), no participants from any Roma community were reported (UBO Consulting, 2015).

The Ideas Partnership manages several Learning Centers. This centre assists mothers with the mother's program (microfinance projects). Youth activities, health services, a girls' club, and many other weekly activities are organised. In the centres managed by

this NGO, the number of RAE students engaged in these centres is: in 2011, a total of 10 students; in 2012, a total of 70 students; in 2013, a total of 45 students; in 2014, a total of 45 students; In total over the years there have been 170 Roma students in these Learning Centers (UBO Consulting, 2015). **Voice of Rome, Ashkali and Egyptians** manage fifteen Learning Centers. These centres aim to improve the lives of communities, their integration into society, poverty reduction, non-discrimination, reliance on infrastructure, settlements, health services, human rights and education. Of all the Learning Centers managed by Voice of Rome, Ashkali and Egyptians, the number of RAE students engaged in these centres is: in 2011/2012, a total of 133 students; in 2012/2013, a total of 128 students; in 2013/2014 a total of 159 students; in 2014/2015 a total of 159 students. Over the years, there have been 579 RAE students in these Learning Centers (UBO Consulting, 2015).

Now we also have the 2022-2026 Education Strategy issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, where the main elements of this strategy are:

- Improving the quality and importance of education and training; Development of a more efficient and effective education and training system;
- Promoting access to education and training for all, including marginalised and vulnerable groups;
- Promoting lifelong learning and adult education;
- Encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship in education and training;
- Developing a more efficient and effective system of scientific research and technological development growth;
- Promoting international cooperation in education, science, and technology (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2022).

As can be seen, promotion and access to education for marginalised groups, including RAE communities and specific girls from these communities, are included among the main elements. Also, the Action Plan for this strategy has been compiled, specifying how the 2022-2026 Strategy will be implemented (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2022).

Women's Role in Family and Society

Many males and females in the RAE communities think women must stay at home and that family is more important than education and careers. Unfortunately, women's role in these communities has not changed much in the past few decades, as their functions are gender-biased and institutionalised. The number of RAE women who are prominent either in industry, government, sports or the media is non-existent; it can be emphasised here that it is a difficult task for women in these communities to further advance in education and their careers because so far, there is no example of an RAE woman for other women to take as an example of success (Huibregtse, 2018). The persistent idea that early marriage is a healthier tradition for building and maintaining a family and that giving birth at an early age is more beneficial for both the mother and the newborn greatly influences the idea of women's role in these communities. The strict patriarchal rules define how families should function and place the power of decision-making in the hands of the oldest male in the family. In the early stages of their childhood, females are raised with the idea that men in the family should make all the decisions, and the restricted roles of females are reflected throughout their lives. It would say that family systems that dictate levels of female autonomy are likely to influence gender inequality in education (Baten et al., 2021).

Women in all communities in a democratic society should be entrusted with more prominent roles compatible with their male counterparts, including more responsibility than childcare and housework. Education is the key to preventing the females of these communities from remaining detached from the outside world and leading them toward providing income for themselves and their families. The literacy rate amongst females in these communities has not sufficiently increased with our country's industrial and technological advancement. With modernisation, women of all ages and ethnic groups can think more independently and participate more equally alongside their male counterparts (Lakshmi, 2011).

Although gender and ethnic discrimination are still present in our society, this negative tendency has started to diminish

in many developed fields and improve living standards. Although society’s view of female education has begun to change drastically, the illiteracy problem of females in RAE communities remains a primary concern. They improve the community's view and understanding of education and increase awareness of female social integration. Many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and government support have been exploited. They have delivered various programs to significantly develop the RAE communities because they are considered Kosovo's less prosperous minority group (OSCE, 2020).

Early Marriages

Early marriage is a marriage or partnership that occurs when one or both individuals are under 18 (Wodon et al., 2017). Early marriages, specially arranged ones, are abundant among the young females in Kosovo's RAE communities. This widespread phenomenon is usually justified by being deeply rooted in tradition and patriarchal dominance. Early marriage is considered essential for the well-being of these young girls in terms of their social and financial security and their purpose in domestic and maternal activities given to them from early childhood

(MICS, 2019-2020; Qenaj 2022; The Ideas Partnership, 2020).

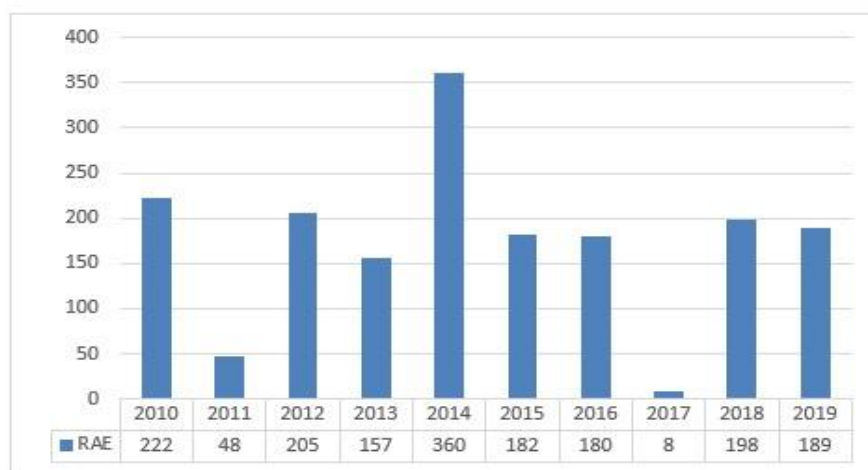
The laws of the Republic of Kosovo highly prohibit child marriage activities; these marriages are not prohibited or punished by the Kosovo authorities because they usually remain unreported. Unfortunately, it is seen as acceptable by the community. It, therefore, remains an internal problem, leaving the young girls as victims (Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo, Law No. 06/L-084, 2019; Provisional Institution of Self-Government Kosovo, 2006).

The early marriage tradition carries various consequences. It is the preliminary cause of the dispersion of schooling, unemployment due to lack of education, and health threats due to the high birth rates. The birth of the couple’s first child usually happens soon after their marriage, and several more follow in the following years of marriage. RAE young females are expected to mature rapidly and take on the obligations of their youngsters at a very early age (Qenaj, 2022).

The chart below shows marriages in the RAE community from 2010 to 2019. 2014 had the most marriages, while 2017 had the fewest.

Figure 2.

Marriages by Ethnicity – Community RAE



Source: (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2018)

Methods

The secondary data for this paper were obtained mainly from KAS (KAS Metadata¹) for different periods (2011, 2018, 2022). However, KAS was one of many sources of secondary data. This data was collected to analyse the educational situation of the RAE communities, specifically of the female gender.

This research was done in the Republic of Kosovo, specifically the females in the RAE communities, to investigate the evolution of their education at all levels in Kosovo. This research is based on various information (mainly from the Kosovo Agency of Statistics) from quantitative sources. These data primarily included intensive online research and were influenced by previously written reports on gender equality in Non-Governmental Organizations in Kosovo. The collected data are secondary and contain the necessary content to convey the current education situation among the RAE communities. Therefore, our unit of analysis is Country (Kosovo), community/minority (Roma Ashkali and Egyptian), gender, education and year.

The data in Fig. 3 was obtained from KAS for RAE education from 2015-2021. The variables of age, ethnicity, and all levels of education were selected as mandatory, and the data shows the education trend over the years for ages 4 to 30. The authors have redesigned the figure/graph.

The data for the study was collected from different sources, such as the Kosovo Agency of Statistics, the University of Pristina, and reports from the Kosovo Center for Gender Studies. The data was based on registration and attendance estimates of RAE students, including their enrollment at the University of Pristina and completion rates. The data also showed the literacy rates among RAE women and men, with a higher percentage of illiteracy among RAE females (25%) compared to males (8%). The study also reported on the education levels of RAE women and men, with most of them not receiving a secondary education (78% of RAE women and 62% of men) and a small minority attending and completing university.

The data also revealed that patriarchal ideology and the belief that women's role is to marry rather than receive an education were some reasons for the low education levels among RAE women and girls. The data on school dropouts for the years 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 were collected by KOSINT (2020, 2019). The data suggest that the Ashkali community had the highest number of students dropping out of school, followed by the Roma and the Egyptian community. The data indicate that the number of male and female students who dropped out of school was almost equal in all three communities, with a slight difference between the two genders. The data were collected by counting the number of students who dropped out of school in the three communities in the specified years.

The data on the education status of RAE communities were collected through surveys and statistical analysis. The primary data sources include research conducted by Gundara & Peffers (2005) and the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2018). These sources provide information on the literacy rates, enrollment and attendance of RAE communities in primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of education. The data also includes information on the number of students who dropped out of school in 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 in the RAE communities. The data were analysed to compare the literacy rates between male and female RAE and to understand the differences in educational attainment between the RAE communities. Another source of data on the education status of RAE communities is the Kosovo Center for Gender Studies report (Vuniqui & Demolli, 2008), which provides information on the level of education completed by RAE women and girls and the barriers they face in accessing education. The data was collected through surveys and analysed to understand the impact of gender on the education of RAE communities. The data shows that a significant proportion of RAE women and girls are illiterate and that fewer RAE women attend and complete higher education than RAE men.

Information on the employment status of

¹Reference metadata or quality reports describe the concepts and methodologies for collecting and generating data. They also provide information on the quality of the data. In this way, they help users to interpret the data correctly. Currently, the KAS uses two standard forms for documenting reference metadata: ESMS (Structure of Euro Methods SDMX) and ESQRS (ESS Quality Reporting Structure), which are standards used in the European Statistical System. The purpose of ESMS format reports is to document methodologies, quality aspects, and statistical production processes in general, while ESQRS format reports provide more information to assess data quality.

RAE women was collected through surveys, as reported in the Kosovo Center for Gender Studies report (Vuniqi & Demolli, 2008). This data provides insights into RAE women's occupation and employment status and how it relates to their education level.

Data integrity is reliable because KAS is a public institution. The Kosovo Statistics Agency is a professional, independent institution that collects and publishes official statistical data in Kosovo. The Kosovo Statistics Agency is committed to guaranteeing coherent, reliable and accurate statistical information in Kosovo (Ministry of Labor, Finance and Transfers, 2023).

The secondary data were analysed by selecting the variables specified in the KAS. The extracted data were processed using the SPSS program, while the graphs were used in the Excel program.

Findings

Kosovo's Standpoint

The education system in Kosovo suffers from stereotypes and gender inequalities in both the majority and the minority populations. However, the education problem seems insufficient for women in Kosovo, especially RAE ethnic communities, because of our system's flaws regarding gender representation. However, according to the Strategy for Inclusion of Roma and Ashkali Communities in the Kosovo Society 2017-2021, the government of Kosovo has set particular objectives and activities that would lead to improving education within RAE communities in Kosovo.

The Government Strategy states that: *"Implementing school policies and practices aimed at comprehensive processes is a precondition that enables increased inclusion and prevents dropouts. Increased inclusion and prevention of dropouts cannot evolve without fully implementing the legal framework. Also, this is a complex issue and requires the mobilisation of schools, including the local and central levels of authorities. The critical element of this objective is providing opportunities to realise the potential of members of the two targeted communities. All citizens have the right to quality education, and the state must provide*

such instruction. It is even more crucial for marginalised groups because it creates new personal development and employment opportunities" (Government of the Republic of Kosovo, 2017).

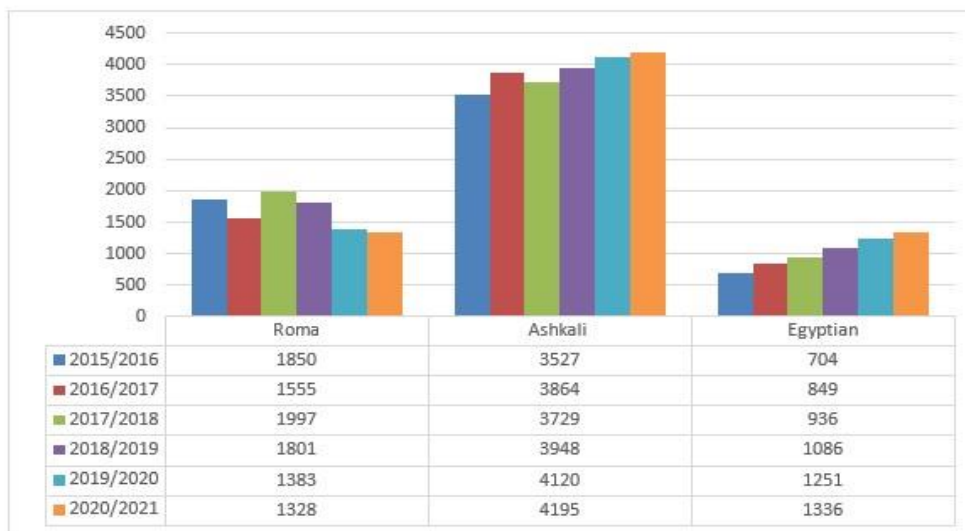
In addition, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has drafted the Strategy for the Integration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in Kosovo (Education Component 2007-2017) (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2007). However, the Office of the Prime Minister has also issued the Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma and Ashkali Communities in Kosovo Society 2017-2021 (Office of the Prime Minister, 2017).

Thus, referring to laws, strategies, and the constitution, a very suitable social and legal environment has been created for marginalised communities to have the opportunity and free access to education because it would improve their lives and society. As a result of such strategies, there has been a slight improvement in the education of the RAE set.

Education in the RAE communities has never been satisfactory for women. Many factors, such as early marriages and lack of employment after school, have influenced this.

The data presented below show the actual situation of these communities at all levels of education from 2015 to 2021.

Referring to Fig. 3 regarding the numbers, it can be easily identified that the Ashkali community has generally had the most success in terms of education over the years analysed, followed by the Egyptian community and then the Roma community. This trend is consistent from 2015/2016 to 2020/2021. However, it is worth noting that the Roma community's educational statistics fluctuated over the years, showing a decline since 2018/2019. The Ashkali community, on the other hand, has shown an overall increase in the level of education over the years, except for a slight decrease in 2017/2018. The Egyptian community has also seen a rise in the level of education over the years, with a 100% increase from 2015/2016 to 2020/2021.

Figure 3.*Education in Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities from 2015 to 2021**Source: (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2022)*

Let us analyse and compare this data in the vertical form over the years in these three communities in a particular form. We can see that: From this point of view, the results show that the Roma community fluctuated in education statistics, but since 2018/2019, there has been a decline, and the years 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 have had a more drastic reduction in education; The Ashkali community has been more successful, showing an increase in the level of data in education, year after year, except for 2017/2018, where there was a slight decrease; The Egyptian community, although with statistics weaker than the other two communities, still as a community in itself has had an increase year after year, and if we compare the period 2015/2016 with the period 2020/2021, then we see that the number of people educated has risen to a 100 % increase.

Because of the perceived role of women within the RAE communities, many females are directly or indirectly forced to leave school at an early age. As a result, the RAE communities are the least educated in Kosovo. More than 16% of them are unable to read or write. Illiteracy is said to be higher amongst RAE females (25%) than males (8%) (Gundara & Peffers, 2005). Overall, 25% of RAE children do not receive primary education.

Meanwhile, approximately 78% of RAE women and 62% of men do not receive secondary education, and of those who do, only 1.4% complete it (Gundara & Peffers, 2005). A tiny minority attend and complete university. More information regarding registration and attendance estimates for RAE students who pursue higher education is available at the Kosovo Agency of Statistics. The data show that although there are university (and tertiary-level) quotas for RAE students, reports from the University of Pristina suggest that they have been abused. Only 62 RAE students (just 0.18% of the student population, 34,324) were enrolled at the University of Pristina between 2017 and 2018 (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2018). Women from the RAE communities are encouraged by their parents to believe that their goal in life should be to marry (not least for economic reasons). Meanwhile, the patriarchal ideology of the RAE communities has afforded men—considered the heads of their families—more tremendous educational advantages.

Cases of RAE females who register for secondary schools are rare; they are non-existent for further education colleges or universities. A Kosovo Center for Gender Studies report (Vuniqi & Demolli, 2008) has revealed that 38.3% of RAE women and girls are illiterate; 38% have eight years of uncompleted school education, and 3%

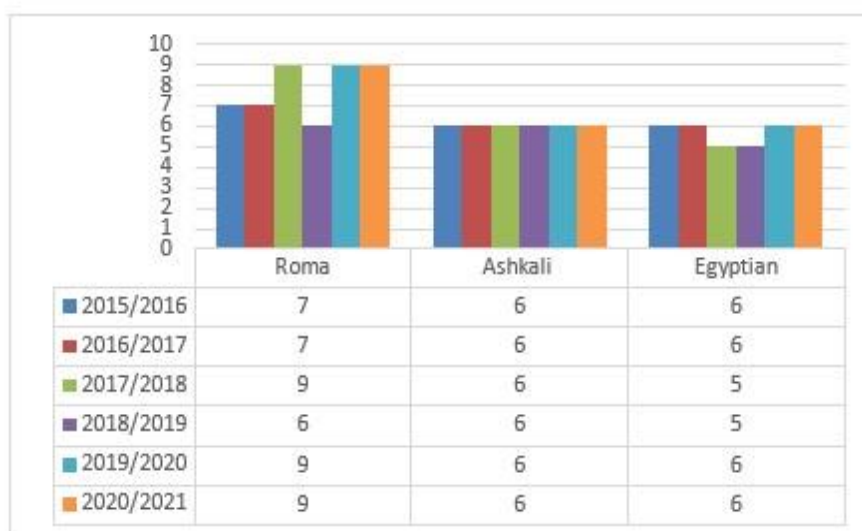
have an uncompleted high school education. High schools accept less than 1% of women and girls, and colleges/faculties less than 1%. Regarding school dropouts, there are only data for 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 (KOSINT 2020, 2019). Regarding school dropouts, the data available for 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 suggest that the Ashkali community had the highest number of students dropping out of school, followed by the Roma and the Egyptian community. The number of male and female students who dropped out of school was almost equal in all three communities. In 2016/2017, a total of 26 students dropped out of school in the Roma community, 12 of them male and 14 female; in the Ashkali community, a total of 61 students dropped out of school, of which 40 were male and 21 female; in the Egyptian community, a total of 32 students

dropped out of school, of which 19 were male, and 13 were female. In 2017/2018, 17 students dropped out of school in the Roma community, of which 14 were male and three were female; in the Ashkali community, 54 students dropped out of school, of whom 26 were male and 28 were female. In the Egyptian community, 17 students dropped out of school, of which 14 were male and three were female.

Also, referring to the data in KAS about the teachers of this community, we have a small number in this aspect. As for the number of teachers according to these three communities, from 2015 to 2021, we had a total of: in the Roma community, there were around 6-9 teachers; in the Ashkali community, there were six teachers; and in the Egyptian community, there were 5-6 teachers.

Figure 4.

Teachers in Three Communities from 2015 to 2021



Source: (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2022)

Unemployment due to lack of Education

Illiteracy, lack of training and professional education, and gender and ethnic discrimination have created significant barriers to females' roles and integration in the RAE communities. These factors result in lower employment rates and living conditions than most people and other minorities living in Kosovo. Due to the circumstances of high unemployment, female RAE communities are often obliged to seek work and formally or informally end

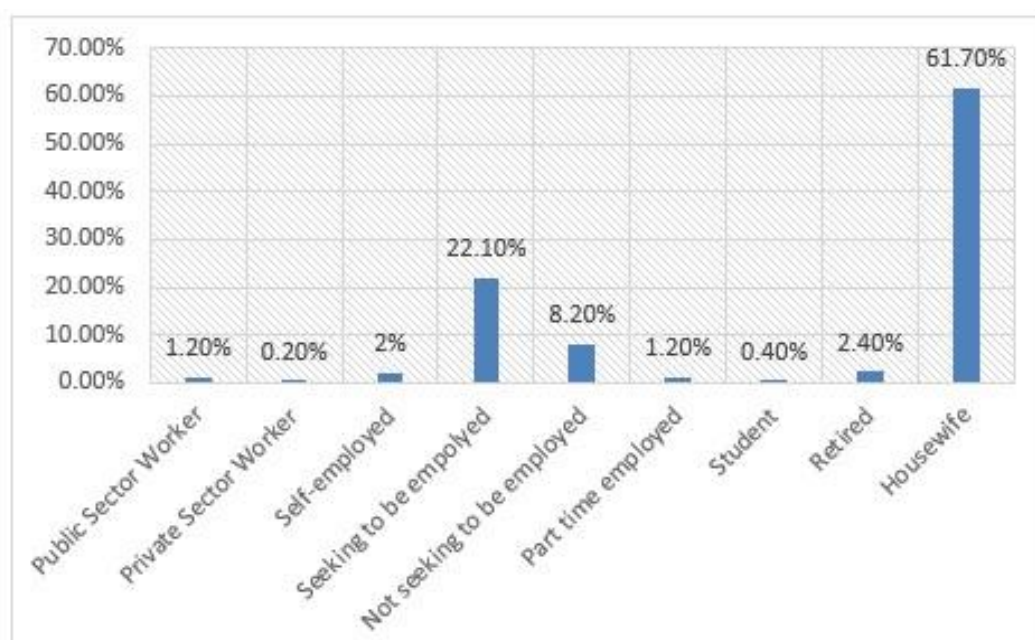
their contribution to the economic sector in Kosovo. RAE communities attend school for a shorter time. This is reflected in lower attainment than in other communities, and as such, it is implied that they are more disadvantaged, especially the female gender, in RAE communities (Vuniqi & Demolli, 2008).

Statistics show that RAE communities need to be more educated. Over 16% of RAE communities can not read or write. Within the female gender, illiteracy goes up to 25%, in contrast to the

male gender, which goes to 8%. 25% of the children of the RAE communities do not attend primary schooling, while in secondary schooling, approximately 78% of women are outside this level of education, in contrast to men who remain outside this level of education with 62%. Only 1.4% of both sexes managed to finish high school. Few RAE have completed or attended university (Gundara & Peffers, 2005).

Figure 5.

Social status of RAE women



In the graph above, 61.7% of respondents declare themselves homemakers, 2.4% are retired, 0.4% attend school, 1.2% are employed part-time, and 8.2% do not seek employment. 22.1% of them are looking for a job. Only 2% are self-employed, 0.2% work in the private sector and 1.2% of women work in the public sector in Kosovo (Vuniqi & Demolli, 2008).

There is also a mainstream idea that females of RAE communities do not see employment as necessary because they believe their family's aid is enough to survive. We could see a high dependency on child welfare and unemployment benefits that evolve with time. However, it could be confirmed that the employment of females in the RAE communities could increase the household budget and improve their living conditions and families more than any combination of social welfare they potentially get. Although social welfare payments do not meet the basic needs of some people, they remain the primary element of survival for their existence. Therefore, the primary step that should improve the employment rate amongst females in these communities starts with advancing the participation of the females in

schooling and training programs that would enable them to have enough knowledge and competencies to acquire and sustain jobs in Kosovo (International Labour Organization, 2017; Huibregtse, 2018).

Discussion

The research results on the education challenges faced by the RAE communities in Kosovo have shown progress despite the weaknesses in the integration system and societal mentality. Specifically, between 2015 and 2021, despite difficulties, there has been a slight increase in emancipation for women of the RAE community. This research provides unique insights as it addresses the changes in the legal framework related to education and includes examining the state of education for RAE communities,

particularly for women. This topic has yet to be thoroughly studied.

Regarding the debate on the results shown, the challenges of the RAE community are very diverse. Therefore, verifying the first hypothesis has shown us that some implemented strategies have given some results regarding education at all levels. However, we cannot say that it is at very satisfactory levels. There is a need to invest more in the direction of offers for families to be encouraged in different ways to pursue education on a larger scale. Also, referring to the results of the second hypothesis that has been verified, to a large extent, women of these communities do not follow education, especially for reasons of early marriages. The findings of this research are essential for filling the gaps in knowledge on RAE communities and their education and providing a comprehensive picture. Ensuring proper education and opportunities for RAE communities, particularly for women, is crucial for promoting social integration, economic development, gender equality, and sustainable growth. This study's results are relevant to ongoing debates on education, community rights, and gender equality in Kosovo and beyond.

Conclusion

This paper emphasises the importance of education amongst females within the RAE communities. The interpretation of the data in this research is of particular importance for the emancipation of the role of women in minority communities in transition states. The selection of methods has been the only possible option due to the restrictions of the pandemic. However, these methods have given excellent interpretable results, but future research would suggest that they be done with quantitative methods, and their processing should be done with the R program.

In general, the population data of these three communities show that the Ashkali community was followed first by the Egyptians and then by the Roma. In education, we see that the Ashkali community is again in first place for the period we analysed compared to the other two communities. However, it should be noted that the Roma community was the third largest in population. Education in the Roma

community has taken second place in almost all the years analysed.

From 2016/2017 to 2017/2018, school dropouts decreased in these three communities, highlighting an increase in female dropouts in the Ashkali community. Otherwise, there is a drastic decrease in school dropouts among females in the other two communities, indicating improvement.

The above data showed us that the RAE communities are on the right track to increasing participation in education. Still, increasing the number of teachers in these three communities is recommended because it could be higher than the number of educated (2015-2021) and teachers (2015-2021). Some suggestions for the future development of this issue might include increasing the efficiency of schooling, especially for the minorities in Kosovo; forming different organisations that specialise in this particular problem; and creating awareness seminars and workshops encouraging parent and student participation.

The further empowerment of law implementation, as well as a higher engagement of the different levels of both governmental and non-governmental institutions, can establish new and safer grounds for progress and a more functional education system and execution of gender equality not just amongst the minority groups but within the entire population of this country.

Institutions and decision-makers who create policies and civil society should help advocate the reduction of the phenomenon of early marriages and the negligence of the educational attainment of females in these communities. The absence of education, economic conditions, incorporation into society, and raising awareness consequently results in the lack of development of this minority group. By not having a sufficient level of education, females in these communities cannot sustain an adequate quality of awareness of their rights.

Nonetheless, the programs that deal with gender equality should further address strategies that come from issues like the lack of education among women and the economic empowerment of women of community groups in Kosovo. Although Kosovo inhibits excellent and well-prepared laws, the lack of accurate and practical life implementation has led every community to

live according to their traditions and cultures. In most cases, these traditions include not allowing females to attend schooling. Still, instead, it leads them to marriage and pregnancy in the very early stages of their lives.

A further recommendation can be to promote employment and entrepreneurship participation amongst the women of community groups in Kosovo, which would eventually lower their dependency on their spouses, lower the pressure around early marriages, lower the overall unemployment rate within these communities, and improve the widespread unemployment of the poverty rate. A multiethnic and more integrated education system should be attainable if, as rational citizens of this country, we all equally see and believe that better and higher education, especially for the younger generations, is the key to nourishing a better future for all.

The limitations we had during this research were the nature of finding data. It was impossible to conduct empirical research (questionnaires, interviews) and obtain primary data from the RAE communities due to COVID-19 restrictions.

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