

Mapping employment gender inequality in the media sector in Romania

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At the European level, women continue to be underrepresented as employees in the media sector, and they are discriminated in comparison to their male peers in terms of wages, access to senior positions, job opportunities, and family-work balance (Council of Europe, 2019; EU, 2018; UNESCO, 2014).

This paper addresses the topic of gender employment inequality in the media sector in Romania using a quantitative approach, based on national statistics. Romania represents an interesting case study given that it has benefited from a long-established equal access to jobs for women and men, a legacy of the former communist system, in which the social standard was full time employment irrespective of gender. Currently, the national gender pay gap is one of the smallest in Europe (3.3), second only after Luxemburg (Eurostat, 2019). However, this comes at the cost of national low wages. There are also major disparities between Romania and other European countries when it comes to the level of income, employment rates and educational attainment (Precupetu, 2013). This paper analyzes the representation of women in the Romanian media sector and explores whether the historical advantage of equal access to jobs has produced differences in the media sector.

Keywords: gender, media sector, inequality, employment rates, pay levels, Romania

Introduction

Employment gender inequality is widespread and mainly affects women in various economic sectors, and it has consequences related to women's access to resources and status (Daly, 2020; England, 2010). In the media sector, recent reports show that women are still underrepresented as employees, and they are discriminated against, despite existing emancipatory social policies and other empowering measures (Council of Europe, 2019; EU, 2018; UNESCO, 2014). The focus on media sector is important from two perspectives: media is related with opinion forming in society and the media industry is of growing significance for employment in many advanced economies.

At the European level, one of the most extensive research on women in the media sector was conducted between 2012 and 2013 for the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) by a team conducted by Karen Ross and Claudia Padovani. The research explored the employment patterns in the media industry across Europe, and it concluded that inequalities continue to persist (Padovani, Ross, & Gallagher, 2017, p. 245).

In Romania, gender equality in the media sector is still challenged by differences in access to employment, and in regard to the levels of monthly wages. However, these issues have emerged mostly through qualitative studies, and in order to crosscheck the patterns and to fill the research gap, the paper addresses the topic of employment gender inequality in the media sector using a quantitative approach, based on national statistics. The paper's aim is to answer the following questions:

- Is the media sector a feminised one?
- How does gender inequality reflect in data regarding the employment and pay in the media sector from Romania, between 2008 and 2019?

Since Romania is part of Eastern Europe, and it was under the influence of the USSR between 1945 and 1989, scholars are tempted to analyse its societal trends solely in relation to similar countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). When it comes to the media sector taking the European Union (UE) as a point of reference is important due to the fact that EU regulates the audio-visual sector which constitutes an important component (Byerly & Padovani 2017, p. 19), and because the media business has become a global one. Even emerging economies, such as Romania, are affected by the global organisation of the media sector (see, for example, Fuchs, 2012; Media Fact Book, 2018; Media Fact Book, 2019). Therefore, I argue that the EU patterns are important, as well as a CEE context is necessary for our discussion.

The first part of the paper is dedicated to the literature review, where the concept of feminisation of work will be unpacked and previous research papers related to women's participation in the labour market in Romania and in CEE will be analysed. Then, the

research proposition is stated, followed by a part that describes the methodological approach. The findings will be analysed in the second part of the paper.

The working hypothesis is that in Romania there is a lower rate of female participation compared to male participation in the media labour market, and that there is a gender pay gap, that leads to significant gender inequalities in the sector, but not necessarily to the feminisation of the field. The paper draws on descriptive statistics and uses the official data from the National Statistics Institute (INSSE), more precisely the Tempo Online statistical data sets.

The feminisation of work

The feminisation of work can be defined as “the historical process by which certain occupations, in which women have penetrated in large numbers, come to be considered typically female jobs - with lower status and remuneration than those dominated by men” (Grünberg, 2002, p. 149). The educational sector and social work are considered to be among the feminised fields, taking into consideration that, from a traditional point of view, they rely on feminine attributes, such as: empathy, caring for others, communication skills (idem).

The possible consequences of the feminization of occupations (understood as the numerical predominance of women) are the decrease of jobs prestige and lower payment rates, which results in the feminization of poverty (Peterson and Runyan, 1993).

A panel analysis of Britain, Germany and Switzerland, using longitudinal data from the 1990s to 2000s concluded that “employment in a completely female occupation is associated with a substantially lower wage than employment in a completely male occupation” (Murphy and Oesch, 2015, p. 24). The authors calculated a wage gap of 10 to 15 percent between “female” and “male” occupations, irrespective of differences in job complexity, job-specific skills, overtime work, childcare policies, and other factors, such as union membership.

One interesting observation is that in female dominated occupations, including men earn less than their counterparts in male dominated jobs (Murphy and Oesch, 2015, p. 24). According to the cited authors, wage disparities could be rooted in the gender devaluation on that specific labour market.

The “cultural devaluation” of work takes into consideration the possibility that wages are not based solely on economic factors (such as productivity, complexity of tasks, competences or skills necessary to perform the job), but on perception differences regarding the status of women and men in society (Sørensen 1994; England *et al.* 2007 quoted in Murphy and Oesch, 2015, p. 5).

Women's participation in the labour market

Romania has a history of high female participation in the labour market, due to the politics of the communist period (1947-1989). For many years, women were paid equally to men for the same type of jobs, and they were part of a dual income system, in which women and men had full time employment. At the same time, even during the communist period when gender egalitarianism was part of the official ideology, as well as during post-communism, women tended to occupy jobs with low social prestige, that provided low incomes, such as the textile industry or educational sector (Pasti, Miroiu & Codita, 1997; Miroiu, 1999).

As Mary Daly (2020, p. 164) explains, former communist countries in Baltic and Central Eastern European countries continue to have high levels of full-time female employment (nowadays a “equality mainly through the market” model), without labour markets segregated in terms of pay. Nonetheless, there are major disparities in the allocation of unpaid work between women and men, and higher levels of poverty than other countries. A paradox is noted by Mojca Pajnik (2012, p. 93), showing that in 2000-2010 Central and Eastern European countries had a less-segregated labour market than the EU levels, and there was a superior percentage of women occupying high job positions and a larger number of women employed in technical occupations, which is a legacy of the communist policies.

Women in the media sector in CEE represent a relatively new topic of academic research. During the 1990s, information was scarce, as van Zoonen (1994, p. 50) underlines: “we know next to nothing about the position and possibilities of women working in media industries in the developing and former communist countries”. The same situation applied in the 70s and 80s in the Western Europe, but, as van Zoonen (1994, pp. 49-50) explains data became gradually available due to research initiated by the media industry itself and statistics collected through projects initiated by the European Community (see also Byerly & Padovani, 2017, p. 16-19).

More recently, reports of the Council of Europe, EU or UNESCO offer a detailed image of women employed in the media sector, across the world, not only in Europe (Council of Europe, 2019; EU, 2018; UNESCO, 2014). Overall they converge in emphasising the difficulties faced by women employees, namely inequalities in terms of access to profession, decreased pay levels, and work-life balance pressures.

In Acker's terms (2006), we can speak of gender inequality regimes that prevail in the media sector across Europe. These inequalities persist although media and cultural industries are presented as “cool, creative and egalitarian” (Gill, 2013).

The Gender Equality in the Media Sector Report (2018) commissioned by the European Parliament's Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs at the request of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality shows that women working in media in EU experience “widespread gender based discrimination and inequality of opportunity within their industries, including in pay, hiring, allocation of work, and promotion” (Gender Equality in the Media Sector, 2018, p. 9). The women interviewed for the above-

mentioned report describe the existence of generally accepted work structures, norms and practices than disfavour women by comparison to men, such as the lack of childcare provision for parents, the presence of sexual harassment and bullying (Gender Equality in the Media Sector, 2018, p. 9).

The extensive research conducted by Karen Ross and Claudia Padovani between 2012 and 2013 focused on 28 EU Member States, and revealed that in UE women occupy only 25% of strategic positions within the media industry, and they are struggling with the “glass ceiling” effect, journalism is still a “male” sector (with differences in some countries), media branches in which women are becoming visible tend to pay less and have less social prestige (such as: magazine journalism), and there are insignificant differences between the public and the private sector (because of the prevailing “male” newsroom culture). Overall, women are likely to be discriminated against in terms of recruitment and job promotion in the media industry (Ross and Padovani, 2017, p. 34-38).

In Eastern and Central European countries, women in the media sector are facing challenges that resemble the ones from Western European countries, with the difference that the EE and CEE countries confront also with poverty, sometimes there are unstable political regimes and other less favourable aspects related to emerging economies. According to the indicators in the report “My Region, My Europe, Our Future”, 2017, EE and CEE countries have a poorer quality of government, less economic productivity, modest innovation performance, display high risk linked to globalization and technological change, and have low GDPs.

Ibroscheva (2009) adds aspects related to the post-communist media system in Eastern Europe: the rejection of state control over content and distribution, the promotion of sensationalism in the media content, which includes the extensive usage of gender-biased language and images. Newsrooms are sexist in how they portray women in the news, and in their practices related to promoting female journalists (see also the findings of the global report GMMP 2015).

In Romania, the image of women in the media is strongly biased, and sexualised (Frumușani *et al.* 2017; Grunberg, 2005; Bulai and Stănciugelu, 2004) despite the communist legacy regarding the equality between men and women. Similarly to the Western counterpart, media organisations are profoundly gendered in the sense that they produce stereotypical content on women and men, and also in the sense of employing women as journalists and media professionals. According to a recent report, the gap between men and women “seems to have widened and, during the last decade, to have brought about a series of transformations that affected and continue to influence the dynamics and functioning of the media” (Frumușani *et al.*, 2017, p. 181).

Based on observations from interviews, the report assessed that the media sector is becoming feminized, although the proportion of female and male employees differs greatly depending on the type of media organisations (e.g. radios and televisions). Also, the report notes that women’s wages in the media sector are lower than that of their male peers (Frumușani *et al.*, 2017, p. 171), but no statistics were provided to support that.

Another research that focused on gender and work in journalism mentioned the feminization tendency of newsrooms in Romanian context, as there was a preference for women employees at the base of recruitment, while men were privileged in executive and strategic positions (Apostol, 2018). The research, based on semi-structured interviews, observed that women are more present in television work, where competence and physical aspect of women journalists are emphasised for hire (Apostol, 2018). As such, it can be extrapolated that there is an imbalance between women and men in the media sector.

This paper uses quantitative research that offers the possibility to crosscheck the qualitative insights, by using a systematic approach based on statistical methods and computation techniques (Babbie, 2007). The research on gender topics had for many years the disadvantage of statistical data unavailability on women. The limits of the public data on men and women working in different industrial sectors in Romania must be admitted (i.e. data do not differentiate men and women based on their professional rank and seniority level), nonetheless a quantitative analysis has the power to provide figures which are required for public policies. Moreover, the mapping of employment in the Romanian media sector is a topic of research that has not been covered yet.

The research

Romania, as a case study, has the advantage of having a history of equal access to jobs for men and women, guaranteed by law and encouraged by the social organization of the country during 1947 and 1989. In regards to the media sector, the qualitative research conducted until now does not clarify if the field is feminized (women outnumbering men as employees and having lower wages).

I also note that the national gender pay gap (3.3) is the smallest in Europe - second after Luxemburg in 2019. This “equality” between men and women is possible in a context in which one in three works for the minimum wage in Romania (Cornea, 2021). Romania is also a country in which inequality is prevalent at the level of income, employment and education, one of the most unequal in the EU (Precupetu, 2013). I observe that there are many paradoxes in regards to the gender aspects in the media sector which should be investigated more closely and more precisely.

Therefore, in order to analyse gender employment inequality in the media sector in Romania, I will use the official statistics based on the NACE Rev2 codes (statistical classification of economic activities by Eurostat from 2008 on). Two NACE Rev2 codes (NACE J58, and NACE J59-60) that aggregate data from the media sector will be analysed taking into two coordinates: the number of women and men employed in media sector in Romania, between 2008 and 2019, and the average gross monthly earnings for women and men for the same sector, in the same period of time.

I will use the term “gender” in Daly’s (2020, p. 8-9) understanding, as an element of social relations and social structure that leads to differences and inequalities between men and

women in access to resources and status. Therefore, gender inequality in the labour market refers to two aspects: inequality of access (understood as “entry” and “participation”), and inequality of outcome (understood as “distribution of economic and other resources and benefits”) (Daly, 2020, pp. 10-11).

The “media sector” entails a range of occupations that deal with the production, publication and distribution of content across communication channels (film, print, radio, and television, Internet) (Dominick, 2002). The media sector usually has two components: publishing activities and audio-visual production that correspond to the Eurostat NACEs as follows: NACE J58 publishing activities and NACE J59-60 audio-visual production.

The “number of employees” refers to the number of employees (including seasonal workers, the manager or the administrator) with labour contract/agreement on a definite or indefinite period of time, full-time or part-time (including those with suspended labour contract/ agreement), existing in the enterprise records at the end of the reference period. The employees who work from home or via tele-work are registered in the same way as the employees who carry out their activity at the workplace” (TEMPO Online 2021). According to TEMPO Online (2021), the number of employees does not include employees sent to work abroad nor employers who carry out their activity within their own enterprises and for whom the income source is solely represented by unit dividends and profits (i.e. self-employed persons and company owners).

The term “average gross monthly earnings” is defined as the monthly wage and various money rights or benefits associated with it (such as overtime pay, holidays bonuses, value tickets etc.) (TEMPO Online, 2021).

“Gender pay gap” represents the average difference between the wages/salaries for men and women. At Eurostat level, the gender pay gap indicator is calculated as “the difference between average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees and of female paid employees as a percentage of average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees”. The indicator has been defined as “unadjusted, because it gives an overall picture of gender inequalities in terms of pay and measures, a concept which is broader than the concept of equal pay for equal work. All employees working in firms with ten or more employees, without restrictions for age and hours worked, are included” (Eurostat, 2021a).

The paper will explain participation in the labour market (expressed by the number of men and women working in the media sector) and the level of earnings in media (expressed in earnings of men and women in the media sector) as dependent variables in relation to gender.

Research Design

The paper uses secondary data analysis based on calculation of data from official statistics, made available for the public by the Romania’s National Institute of Statistics through TEMPO, an online database (<http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo->

[online/#/pages/tables/insse-table](#)), and it presents the data in a longitudinal perspective, covering the period between 2008 and 2019. The period was selected based on data availability. Before 2007 Romania's EU accession, the data were incomplete. The research also relies on NACE Rev 2 which became available in 2008 (Eurostat, 2021).

TEMPO online gathers data on the population in regards to the number of persons employed in a NACE sector. The medium earnings of employees are expressed as the mean of all the data collected by the Romanian National Institute of Statistics. There is no data available related to the median values of earnings. Therefore, descriptive statistics is the most suitable way of analysing the data.

I worked with TEMPO online including data available for NACE J - Information and communication. From the NACE J – Information and communication, I selected two codes that covered the media sector economic activity: NACE J58 – Publishing activities and NACE J59-J60 – Motion picture, video and television programme production, sound recording and music publishing activities, programming and broadcasting activities. It is important to note that TEMPO online offered consolidated data for NACE J59 and J60 without the possibility to separate the two codes.

The data on NACE Rev 2 were available starting from 2008, after the 2006 NACE reform (Eurostat, 2021).

I used two datasets:

FOM105E - Number of employees at the end of the month in the economy section and division level, NACE Rev.2.

FOM107E - Average monthly nominal gross earnings by economic activities at level of NACE Rev.2 (section and division), sex, macro regions, development regions and counties.

The data on the number of employees take into consideration only the persons that have a temporary or permanent labour contract with a full-time or a part time working program.

In order to compare the wages of men and women, I used the economic indicator "average monthly nominal gross earnings" that comprises wages and other sums that are in conjunction with wages. The data refer only to the employees in companies that are included in the economic activity under the NACE J 58, 59 and 60. All earnings are expressed in Romanian national currency (RON), but this fact has no influence on the results.

The interpretation of data will refer only to the average male and female workers in the media sector.

Findings

Participation in the labour market in the media sector. According to the statistical data, issued by the Romanian National Institute of Statistics (Figure 1), the media sector in Romania had an average of 43,289 employees between 2008 and 2019. The lowest number of employees is observed between 2010 and 2013, as a result of the economic crisis that

affected all sectors of Romania's economy. The total number of employees grew back to the level of 46,000 (2017), and then to 48,000 employees in 2019.

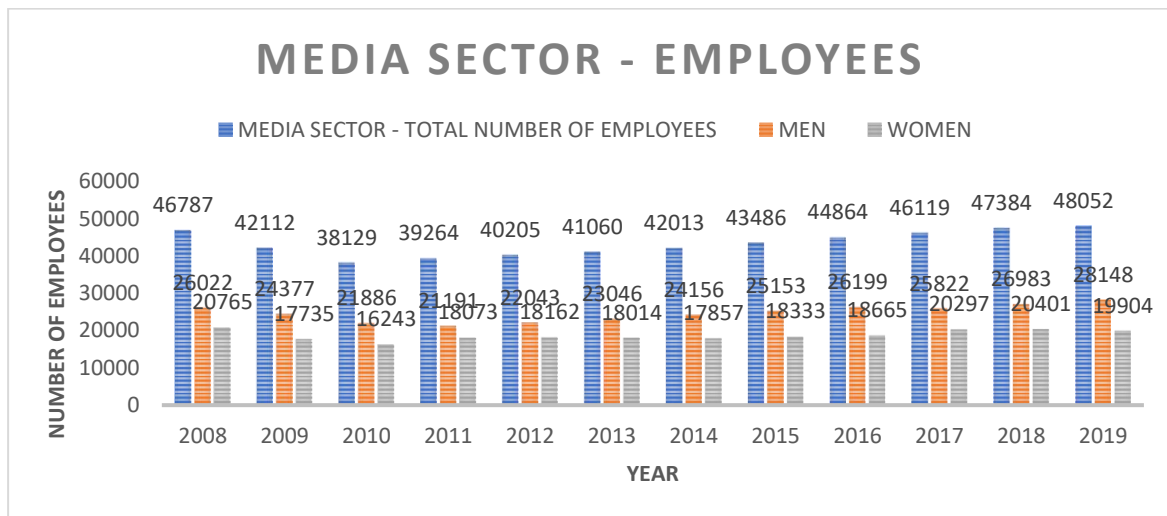


Figure 1: Total number of employees, men and women at sectoral level – media (audio-visual and publishing) – authors' calculation. Source data: TEMPO online. National Statistics Institute - Romania/ FOM105E - Number of employees at the end of the month in the economy section and division level, NACE Rev.2.

Out of all employees, men outnumber women by an average of 5,881, that represents 14% of total employees. The ratio of men/women is stable in the observed time period, except for the years of economic crisis, when the average difference was slightly lower (4,418). The stable gender ratio suggests a possible structural imbalance of the media sector in favour of men. This imbalance puts under question the possibility of a feminized media sector, a situation that would have combined two aspects (higher rates of participation of women and lower wages or declining wages for all employees).

The comparison of the men/women ratio in media sector to the ratio in the national economy shows that the labour participation in national economy is characterised by a reduced gender imbalance of 4.6% (average 2008-2019: 52.4% men to 47.8% women), but in the media sector the gender imbalance is 12% (average 2008-2019: 56.75% men to 44.25% women).

The two sector (publishing and audio-visual) show similar data (NACE J 58 – publishing: 56.24% men to 44.76% women, and NACE J59-60 – audio-visual: 57.39% men to 43.61% women) – see Figures 2 and 3.

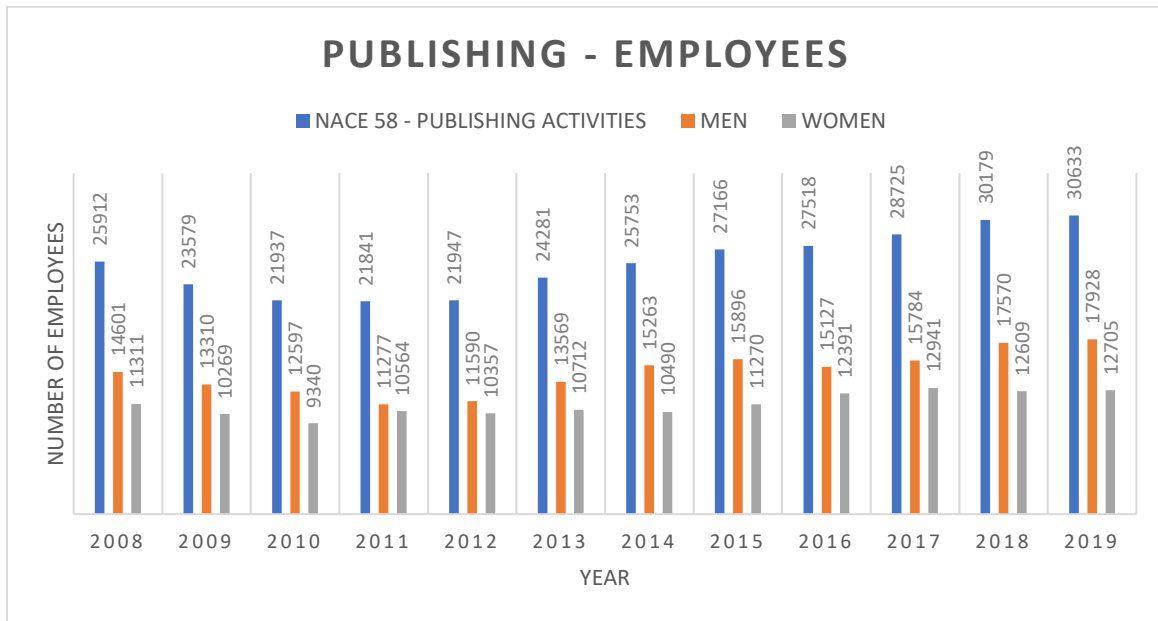


Figure 2: Total number of employees, men and women in publishing activities. Source data: TEMPO online. National Institute of Statistics - Romania/ FOM105E - Number of employees at the end of the month in the economy section and division level, NACE Rev.2.

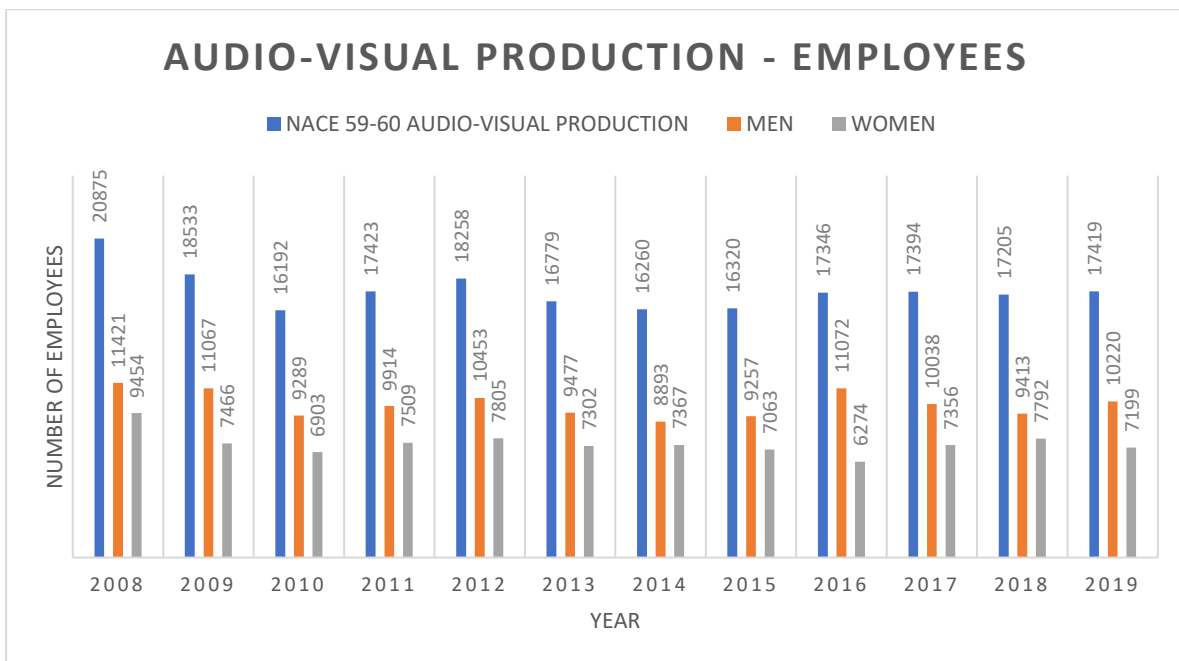


Figure 3: Total number of employees, men and women in audio-visual production. Source data: TEMPO online. National Institute of Statistics - Romania/ FOM105E - Number of employees at the end of the month in the economy section and division level, NACE Rev.2.

The data related to the employment participation in the media sector were compared to data from other sectors traditionally considered to be feminized. The Human Health and Social Work sector displays a large disparity between the participation of men and women (Figure 4). Women participation in the above mentioned domain is 79.51%, while men's participation

is at 20.48% (average data, 2008-2009). The total number of employees in health and social work sector is lower between 2011 and 2014 (average of 344.203), compared to 2008 (377.053) and 2019 (418.143), suggesting that the economic crisis from 2008-2011 hit this sector one or two years later than the media sector.

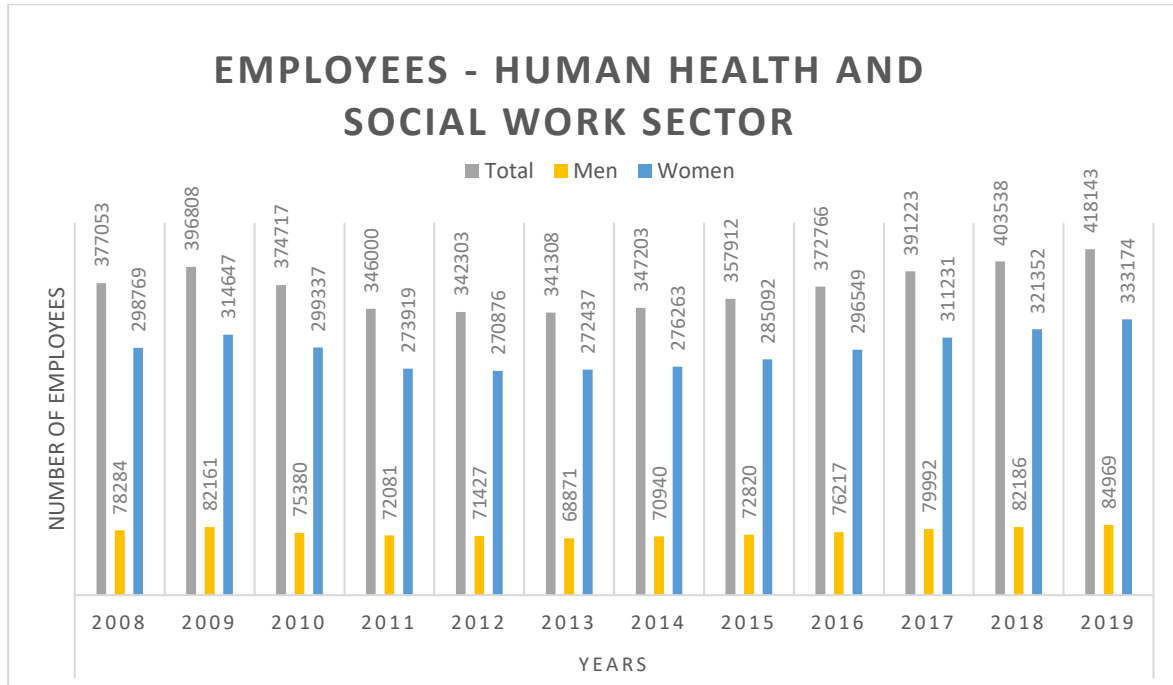


Figure 4: Total number of employees, men and women at sectoral level – NACE Q Human Health and Social Work. Source data: TEMPO online. National Institute of Statistics - Romania/ FOM105F - Number of employees at December 31 by economic activities at the level of NACE Rev.2.

The e-Education sector also displays a large disparity between the employment participation of men and women (Figure 5). On average, between 2008-2019, 374,583 persons worked in education between 2008-2019, 110,901 men (29,60%) and 263,681 women (70.40%).

In Human Health and Social work and in the Education sector, the participation of women exceeds 2-3 times the participation of men, suggesting that these sectors are strongly feminised.

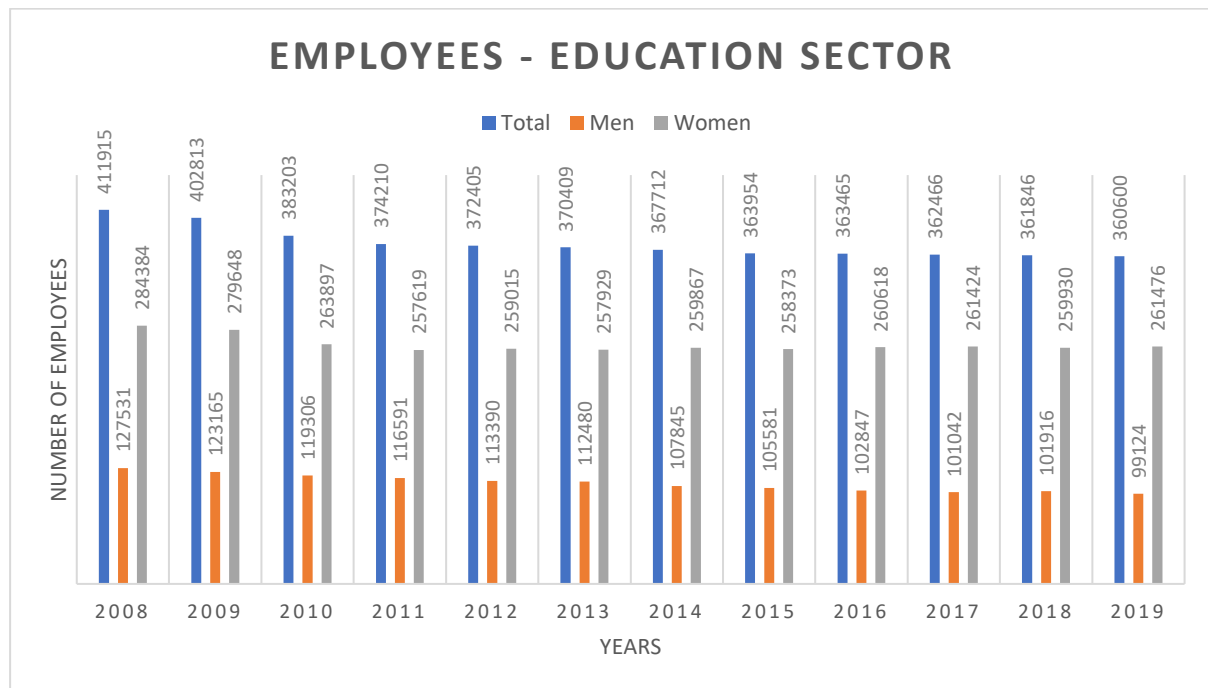


Figure 5: Total number of employees, men and women at sectoral level – NACE P Education. Source data: TEMPO online. National Institute of Statistics - Romania/ FOM105F - Number of employees at December 31 by economic activities at the level of NACE Rev.2.

Level of earnings in media sector

The data of average monthly earnings (Figure 6) show that the media sector is above the national economy by an average of 54% in the observed time period. Average men's earnings are higher than average women's earnings by 11.82% in the observed time period. The percentage varies between 2% (2009 and 2012) and 22% (2008), and stabilised at 11%.

The data suggest that during the 12 years (2008-2019), the media sector provided earnings consistently higher than the average earnings in the national economy, and men's earnings were higher than women's at a stable rate.

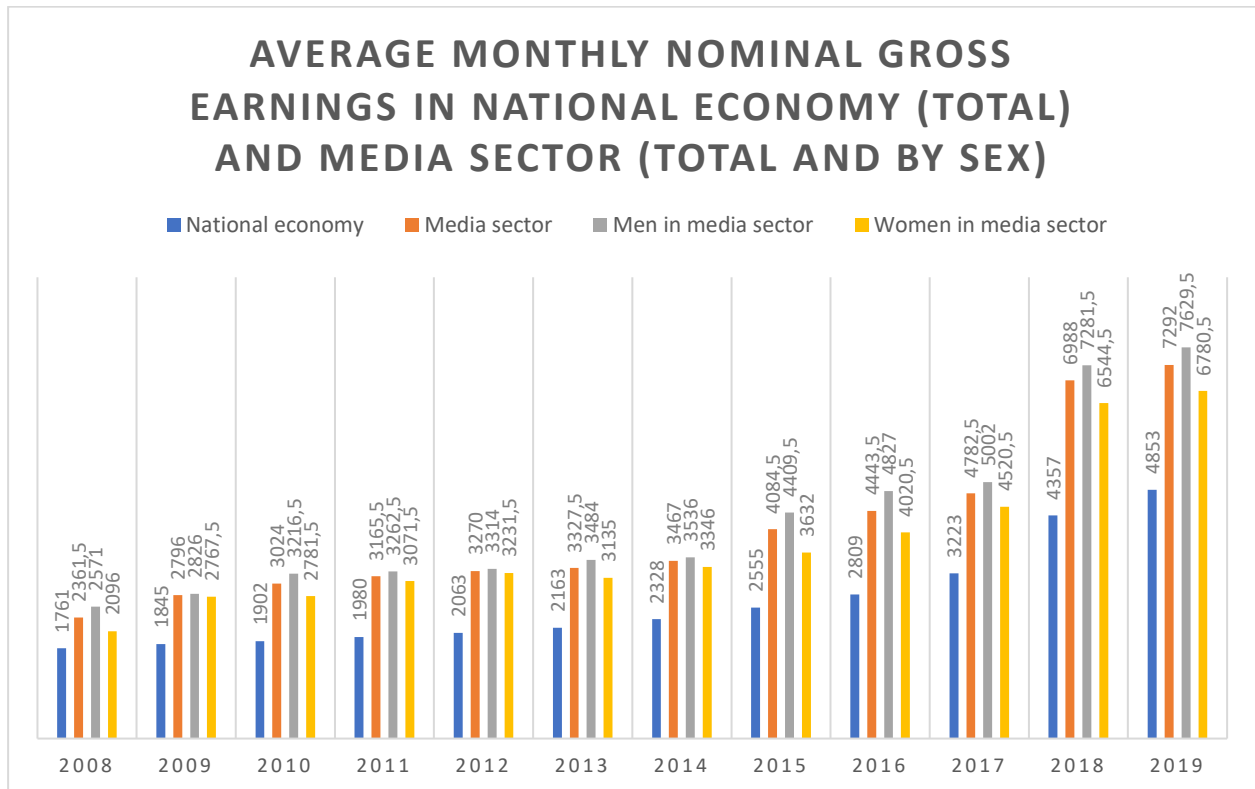


Figure 6: Comparison between the average monthly nominal gross earnings – national economy and by sectoral level – media (NACE J 58 publishing activities + NACE J59-60 audio-visual) – authors’ calculation. Source data: TEMPO online. National Institute of Statistics - Romania /FOM107E - Average monthly nominal gross earnings by economic activities at level of NACE Rev.2 (section and division), sex, macro regions, development regions and counties.

If the datasets are divided between the two NACEs of the media sector, then it can be easily observed that there are interesting differences between publishing activities employees and audio-visual production employees.

The average earnings in publishing activities (Figure 7) are more gendered than in audio-visual production (Figure 8). In publishing activities, men earn more than women by an average of 31.92%. In audio-visual production, the situation is reversed: women earn more than men by an average of 7.8%. The ratio of earnings of men/women earnings has been stable over the last 11 years, with a standard deviation of 0.4 (if the year 2008 is excluded) and 0.67 (if the year 2008 is included).

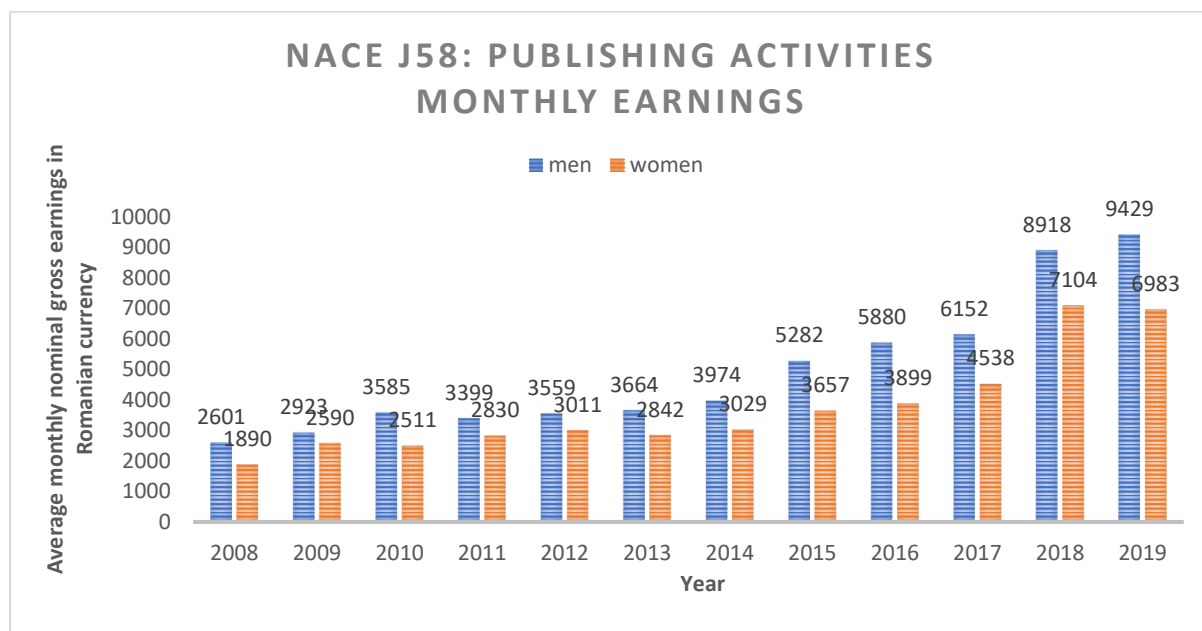


Figure 7: Level of average monthly nominal gross earnings by sectoral level – media (NACE J 58 – publishing activities) – authors’ calculation. Source data: TEMPO online. National Institute of Statistics - Romania /FOM107E - Average monthly nominal gross earnings by economic activities at level of NACE Rev.2 (section and division), sex, macro regions, development regions and counties.

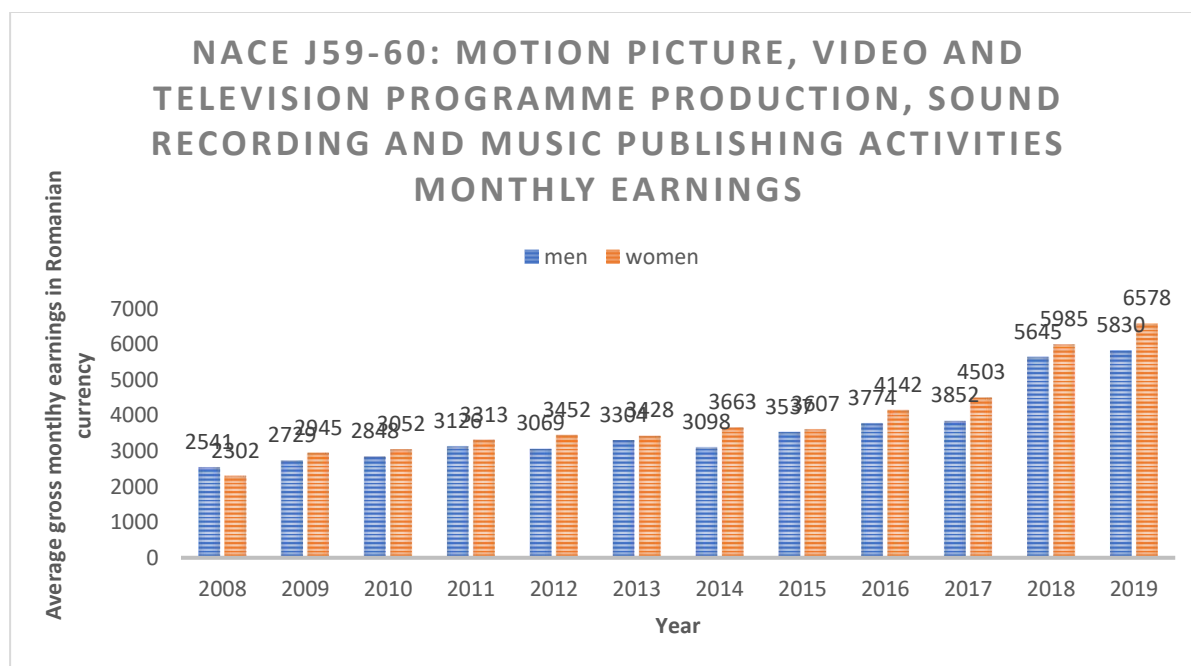


Figure 8: Level of average monthly nominal gross earnings by sectoral level – media (NACE J 59-60 – audio-visual activities) – authors’ calculation. Source data: TEMPO online. National Institute of Statistics - Romania /FOM107E - Average monthly nominal gross earnings by economic activities at level of NACE Rev.2 (section and division), sex, macro regions, development regions and counties

In the Health and Social Work sector, the gender pay gap is present, even if women outnumber men. As Figure 9 shows, men’s earnings are higher than women’s. The pay gap

varies between 14.59% (in 2013) to 8.27% (in 2018), the mean variation being 11.41%, which is above the national gender pay gap.

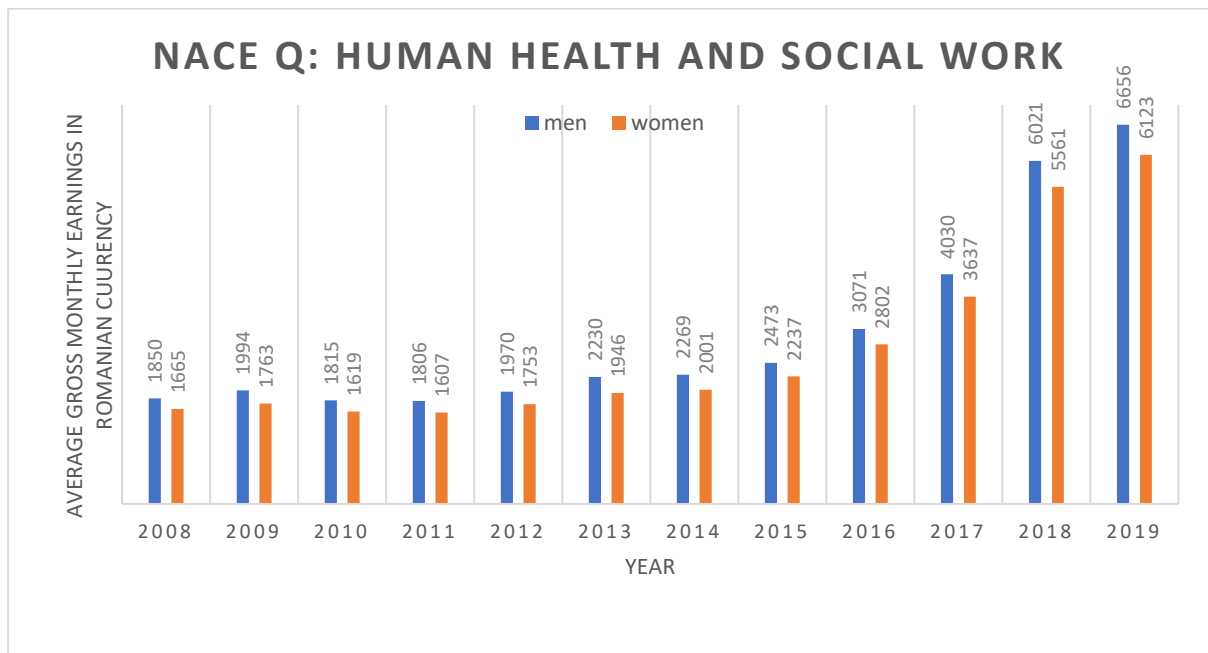


Figure 9: Level of average monthly nominal gross earnings by sectoral level – human health and social work (NACE Q). Source data: TEMPO online. National Institute of Statistics - Romania /FOM107E - Average monthly nominal gross earnings by economic activities at level of NACE Rev.2 (section and division), sex, macro regions, development regions and counties

The same situation is present in the Education sector (see Figure 10), where monthly earnings of men surpass women’s earnings by an average of 12.49% in the observed period of time. The higher pay gap is in 2011 (15.26%), and the lowest is in 2011 (6.99%). The average percentage is above the national pay gap, and at a similar value with the Human Health and Social Work sector percentage.

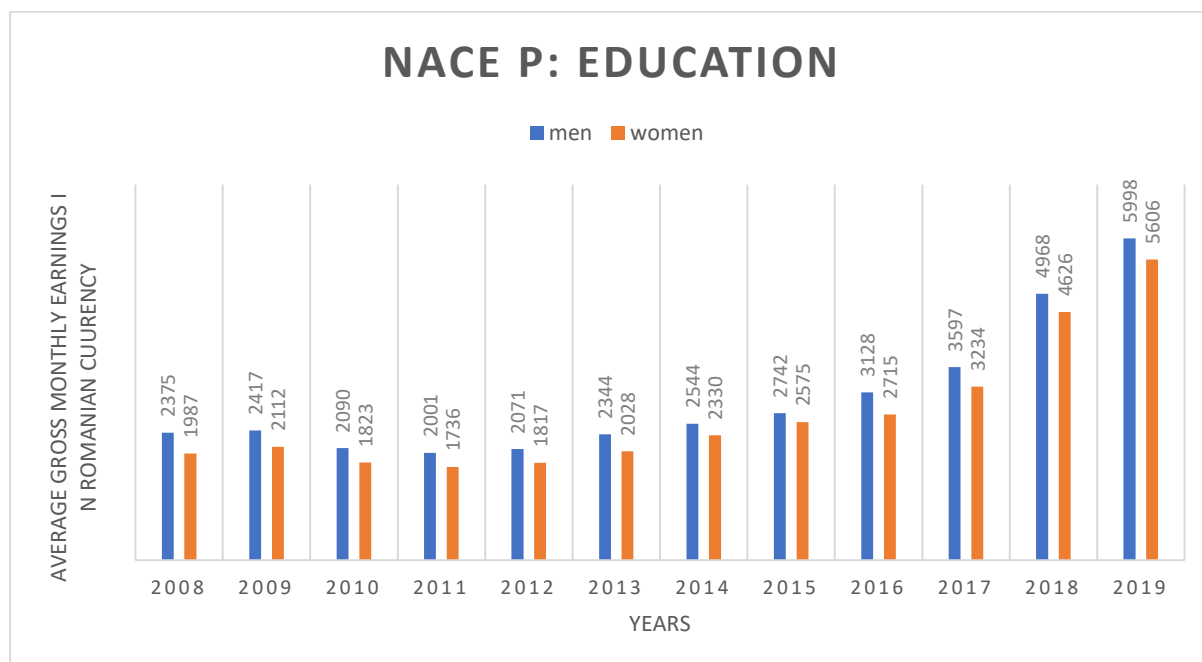


Figure 10: Level of average monthly nominal gross earnings by sectoral level – education (NACE P). Source data: TEMPO online. National Institute of Statistics - Romania /FOM107E - Average monthly nominal gross earnings by economic activities at level of NACE Rev.2 (section and division), sex, macro regions, development regions and counties

To have a clear view on the relation between the gross monthly earnings in the three sectors (Media, Health & Social Work, and Education), I compared the average earnings during the observed period of time. In Figure 11, one can observe that the earnings in the media sector are above the national economy, while the earnings in the Health & Social Work and Education are closer to those in the national economy. The evidence supports the idea that Education and Health & Social are feminised sectors, while the media sector does not display similar patterns.

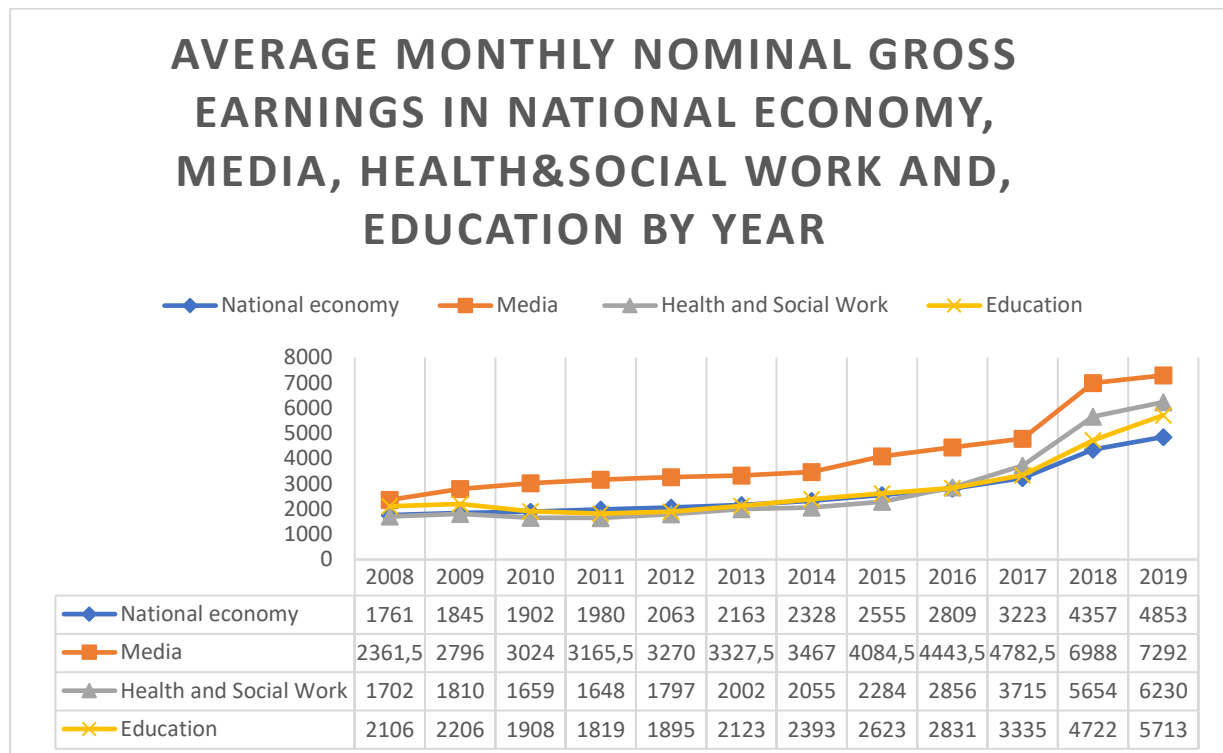


Figure 11: Comparison between the average monthly nominal gross earnings – national economy and by sectoral level – media (NACE J 58 publishing activities + NACE J59-60 audio-visual), health and social work (NACE Q) and education (NACE P). Source data: TEMPO online. National Institute of Statistics - Romania /FOM107E - Average monthly nominal gross earnings by economic activities at level of NACE Rev.2 (section and division), sex, macro regions, development regions and counties.

Discussion

The Romanian media sector has been described by previous research as being a potentially feminised one (Frumușani *et al*, 2017, Apostol, 2018). The main traits of a “feminised” economic sector are: 1) a high participation of women in the labour force and 2) a decrease in wages, compared to other sectors where men outnumber women. As Murphy and Oesch (2015) explained, in a feminized sector, there is a “wage penalty” for women and men that cannot be attributed to objective conditions such as a difference in skills or productivity.

The descriptive analysis of data provided by TEMPO Online revealed that in terms of participation in the media sector, on average, men outnumber women in both economic activities that were included in the present study: publishing activities and audio-visual production.

In other economic sectors, presented by the academic literature as “feminised”, such as health&social work and the education sector, the situation is reversed. Women outnumber men 2 or 3 times, and there is little variation in a period of 11 years, suggesting that the situation is stable.

By comparing the data for the media sector with the ones corresponding to health&social work, and to the education sector, we can observe that the rate of women’s participation to

media sector does not suggest that the media sector is feminised, although we cannot exclude this possibility for the future, especially when it comes to audio-visual production.

The data shows that the media sector is rather uniform in terms of participation, and displays a small variation depending on the nature of activities. When it comes to earnings, the average men employees from the media sector are paid slightly higher than women (by 11.82%). The average earnings in the media sector are approx. 50% above the national average earnings from the observed period (2008 and 2019).

In publishing activities, men earn more than women by an average of 31.92%, while in audio-visual production, women earn more than men by an average of 7.8%. The ratio of earnings of men/women has been constant over the last 11 years. The publishing activities still display gender disparities for women in terms of access and pay levels, while the audio-visual production seems to be more equal for women in regards to the monthly payment. The average earnings in publishing activities are more gendered than in audio-visual production, suggesting that men are more present in decision-making and in execution positions. Unfortunately, this conclusion cannot be substantiated solely by using the aggregated data from TEMPO Online, because the available data refer only to average earnings (without median and quartile information). The level of qualification and seniority of employees cannot also be estimated based on the available data.

Nevertheless, the hypothesis of media as a feminised sector is also challenged by the comparison between the mentioned sector and other two sectors: Human Health and Social Work, and Education. These two sectors are traditionally included under the umbrella of “feminised”. In Romania, during the observed period of time, Human Health and Social Work, and Education display a high number of female employees (approx. 80% in Human Health and Social Work and 70% in Education). However, while male participation is low, the earnings of men are approx. 10% higher than women’s. This situation could be explained by the possibility that men in both sectors occupy higher occupational roles (medical doctors, teachers, or university professors) while women occupy all types of job positions from the highly qualified ones to the non-qualified ones. In line with the observations of Murphy and Oesch (2015, p. 24) related to the wages of men working in feminised sectors, I notice that the average man working in the health sector or in the education sector is paid less than his counterpart from the media sector. This observation also challenges the hypothesis of the media being a feminised sector.

I note that the datasets used in the research refer only to employees, and reflect what it is commonly called “standard employment”: stable working contracts and positions, with 40 hours per week (standard work time in Romania). One observation made by previous studies (e.g. Avadani, 2017) relates to the fact that in the media sector there are various informal work arrangements, marked by precariousness. More precisely, many journalists work as freelancers (project-based or pay-per-piece arrangements), and they do not have standard employment contracts, and thus they are not included in the studied database. One example is the self-employed journalist, whose work participation and earnings are not accounted for in the TEMPO Online data sets.

Therefore, the results of the present analysis are limited given the above-mentioned situation. However, the research gives an account on the situation of “standard” jobs in the media sector. These jobs are occupied by more men than women. Men earn more on average than women, mainly in the publishing industry, which is traditionally the domain of “hard news”, “male” journalism.

I argue that, despite the emancipatory measures and discourse, men still dominate the media field, occupying the moral authority position facilitated by the security offered via full-time work contracts with higher pay benefits.

Conclusions

The present paper aimed at mapping the gender employment inequality in the media sector in one Eastern European country, namely, Romania.

Most of the previous research on women in the media sector in Romania was based on qualitative data (mainly collected through interviews). Therefore, the present research used a quantitative perspective, which had the advantage of using public data that became available in the last years.

The data suggest that the media sector is not a feminised one. The mean earnings in the media sector are 50% higher than the average of earnings in the national economy. I argue that the sector might not lose its social prestige, at the level anticipated by other studies (Avadani, 2017). On the average, men outnumber women as employees in the media sector. However, the data suggest that there are parts of the media sector where women outnumber men and earn more than men. The audio-visual sector which includes television and radio channels display a certain balance between men and women in terms of access and pay. These findings are congruent with previous studies in Romania (Apostol, 2018). However, the presence of women in television is attributed to the rising importance of physical appearance in this area of work, while, in many cases, men occupy technical positions in the audio-visual industry that are paid less than the content production positions (journalists, editors, anchors).

An interesting finding is the clear gap between men and women in the publishing sector. The publishing sector includes the legacy media (newspapers) that has been presented as a “male” domain. “Hard” journalism is still dominated by men, while women tend to occupy “soft” journalism positions (Padovani, Ross, and Gallagher, 2017).

It is naïve to think, in Piketty’s terms (2014), that only by using statistics on women participation in the media sector and by calculating the gender pay gap, one may have a clear picture of the gender inequality within the above-mentioned sector. However, the effort of mapping gender inequality in the media sector, related to work participation and pay gap, can set the basis for social policies meant to reduce social and economic inequality. The “big numbers” approach is particularly appealing for politicians, and it could be used strategically for policies aimed at improving women’s participation in the media sector.

In the case of the present research, the conclusions are formulated based solely on data related to “standard” work contracts in the media sector. The lack of statistical data related to other types of work arrangements (flexible, casual, self-employed) leads to the impossibility to design evidence-based social policies that could encourage equal participation in the labour market. This situation becomes more problematic nowadays when “standard” employment is in decline, and “atypical” jobs are increasingly present in many economic sectors (Clasen and Clegg, 2022, p. 189).

A limitation of the research is set by the lack of publicly available data for deciles comparison (which according to Piketty, 2014, offers the possibility of a more accurate analysis of inequality), and of the gender aspects related to the number of managers vs. workers.

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