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The Unpaid Work Activities Performed in the Specific Groups of the Single-Person Households in Slovakia

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Abstract

Households represent one of the basic units in every economy. Not all households, however, are the same. We can divide them according to the number of household's members, type of living, income group or structure of the members. In the last few years, the increasing amount of the single-person households has become a significant issue in Slovakia. In 2011, ratio of single-person households was more than 25 % in Slovakia. It is an interesting phenomenon influencing not only labour market (paid work), but also unpaid work activities performed in the free time. Unpaid work includes many activities that individuals perform every day in their households and for the society for free. In Slovakia, there has not been, however, any official statistical research conducted concerning unpaid work activities till now. Starting from 2012, interdisciplinary team of researchers from the Faculty of Economics, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia, has conducted several original primary researches on the unpaid work in Slovakia. Researches already confirmed that unpaid work in Slovakia covers approximately 30 % of Gross Domestic Product (which is comparable with other countries of the European Union and rest of world). Researches also showed that individuals spent in average 25.8 hours per week by unpaid work (it is approximately 222 minutes per day). However, extent of the performed unpaid work activities vary according to the gender, place of living and structure of the households' members. The aim of this paper is to present results of our unique research from 2013, focusing on the unpaid work activities performed in households in Slovakia. Within the research, we questioned 1892 households from which almost 25 % were single-person households. In this article we present results concerning particularly single-person households. Besides other particularities, we stress importance of the gender and place of living of the single-member households. To test our hypothesis, we have used non-parametric tests, mostly Mann-Whitney Test. We test hypothesis on the probability level $\alpha = 0.05$. This paper is an output of scientific project of Grant Agency VEGA no. 1/0935/13 "Unpaid work as a potential source of socio-economic development of society and the determinant of individual well-being"

Key words: Unpaid Work, Single-Person Households, Gender, Place of Living

JEL Classification: D10, O12, O18

1 Introduction

The economic theory focuses regularly on the households, because they are, besides government and private enterprises, important market actors. Households represent both demand side as well as offer side of the market. On the offer side, they offer production factors and also their ability to work. On the demand side, households are represented by consumers of various goods and services. The most comprehensive attention economists pay to households as consumer units; much less importance is being paid to households as bearers of the production factors.

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Households are able to produce goods and service. These goods and services are either traded at the market, or they are independent from the market (in this case, they are not statistically registered as a real production of goods and services). This fact also influences measurement of the macroeconomic aggregates, such as gross domestic product.

There are, however, many activities of the households that are so far unnoticed by economists and statistical records. These activities do not serve for satisfying needs of other subject, but for satisfying needs of households' members. Most probably this is also the reason, why there is no adequate importance dedicated to them (even more, they are usually beyond any interest). It is, however, interesting to know and analyses what are the motives of these activities and what the extent of them is.

Statistically, households are researched either as economic units (they manage the common budget) or as census households. To analyze extent of the activities that are performed regardless the market in the households, we consider households as economic units. Activities, which households' members perform for themselves and which do not enter the market represent unpaid work in the households.

Households are very dynamic. Not only number of households and structure of households according to the number of members, but also households' economy, division of the time a spending of the time are changing quite often. Not only relationship inside the household, but also outside relationships and connections with the friends, wider family and neighbors are influenced by many factors. Many changes in households' behavior correspond with the general changes in the society. In Slovakia and also some other countries, important all-society changes that have influenced also households, were mostly transformation of the whole society in the nineties of the previous century. An important change in the structure of households, as is also declared by several articles and researches (for example *Prognóza vývoja rodín a domácností na Slovensku do roku 2030*, 2014), is an increase of the single-person households (both, increased total number as well as their ratio of the total amount of households). Single-member households have many specific features comparing to the multi-persons households – household's budget utilization as well as spending the free time (or outside the job time). The same as other households, single-person households must perform standard activities in the time not spending at work – food preparation, housekeeping, pet care and others. However, extent and structure of these activities seems to be different than in multi-persons households. There are many factors that influence extent and structure of the unpaid work. Most important are gender, age, place of living, income, health conditions, education (Hronec, 2007), time spent in a paid job and others. In this article, we will focus on two factor that influence unpaid work in single-person households – gender and place of living (village and town).

Knowing extent and structure of the unpaid work activities in particular households (including single-person households) as well as factors that influence it, we can estimate demand for specific market services that households could request and utilize (such as food delivery, household cleaning and others).

2 Methodology

In 2013, our multidisciplinary research team performed a preliminary field research, which focused on identifying motives for demanding (eventually not demanding) market services substituting unpaid work activities in the households. This preliminary research was performed as a part of scientific project of Grant Agency VEGA no. 1/0935/13 "Unpaid work as a potential source of socio-economic development of society and the determinant of individual well-being". In the preliminary field research we also tried to find out the extent of the time that individuals spend by the unpaid work activities.

In this article we focus on the particular group of the respondents from the preliminary field research – persons who live alone, it means single-person households. In the preliminary field research, we requested 1892 respondents. From them, 473 (almost 25%) were persons living in single-person households.

To find out the extent of the unpaid work, we focus on different kind of unpaid work activities. We distinguished between activities that are included in the System of National Accounts (SNA) and activities that are not part of the System of National Accounts. Unpaid work activities not included in SNA are food preparation, housekeeping, preparation and maintenance of cloths, growing ornamental plants, pet care, preparation and maintenance of furniture and cars, shopping and services (total value up to 1000 euro), children care, adults' care, volunteer work. Unpaid work activities included in SNA are growing of useful plants, breeding of farm animals, constructions and building work. These are the activities, for which households or individuals can get financial reward for them.

In the article, we present results of testing two hypothesis concerning single-person households and unpaid work:

1. There are statistically significant differences between single-person households according to the gender (we assume, that women perform more unpaid work than men).
2. There are statistically significant differences between single-person households according to the place of living (we assume, that in villages single-person households perform more unpaid work than single-person households in towns)

To test the hypothesis, we have used non-parametric tests, mostly Mann-Whitney Test. We test hypothesis on the probability level $\alpha = 0.05$.

3 Single-person households in Slovakia

According to "The 2011 Population and Housing Census in Slovakia" (www.slovak.statistics.sk), the single-person households represent 25.7 % of all Slovak households (it is similar ratio, as we noticed in our preliminary field research). Even more, ration of single-person households has grown significantly in last thirty years. In the Table 1, there are data from the Slovak censuses showing the structure of Slovak households according to the number of members.

Table 1 Structure of Slovak households according to the number of household's members

Data/year	1961	1970	1980	1991	2001	2011
Households (in thousands)		1267	1585	1778	1900	1852
according to the number of members(%):	1		18.1	20.9	26.3	25.7
	2		21.7	22.9	21.5	21.7
	3		18.8	18.1	17.9	19.4
	4		23.3	23.4	20.8	18.8
	5		11.2	9.9	8.3	7.8
	6+		6.9	4.8	5.2	6.6

Source: Own elaboration according to Statistic yearbook 2003 and <http://portal.statistics.sk/>

According to data from the table 1, there is an increasing trend of the ratio of single-member households on the total number of households. Within the last thirty years, ratio of single-member households increased by more than 7.5 percentage points.

It is not easy to predict further trends of the single-person households in Slovakia. Slovakia is being considered as a country with traditional family structure. However, it seems that single-person households are becoming more and more spread also in Slovakia. The most common reasons for the single-person households existence in Slovakia are dissolution of the standard family, death of one partner (this is more common in a higher age and another partner is living without children) and divorce (it occurs mostly in the second part of the production age; again, divorced partner is living alone without children). Another important group of single-person households represent single persons in a young age (source: Prognóza vývoja rodín a domácností na Slovensku do roku 2030). This is a specific group, because they live single, they are economically independent and there is a significantly high probability, that within few years they will establish a standard family.

We can assume that different reasons for single-person households' existence will lead also to many different ways of living of these households. Divorced man will probably not have the same way of living that single young woman. Also their attitude towards passing time at home, performing unpaid work activities or demanding market substitutes of unpaid work will be different. That is why we consider necessary to focus on various types of single-person households in more details.

4 Unpaid work in single-person households according to gender

According to our researches, individuals (in this case there is no difference whether they live in single-person or multi-persons households) spend in average 25.8 hours per week by unpaid work (it is approximately 3.7 hours or 222 minutes per day). This extent is comparable with the Time Use Surveys results from other European countries (for example 223 minutes in Portugal, 230 min. in Poland, 217 min. in Denmark, 212 min. in Germany, 213 min. in Ireland, 231 min. in Slovenia, 217 min. in Spain (source: www.oecd.org). Other interesting results refer to the gender structure of the respondents. In average, men spend 21.41 hours per week by unpaid work activities, while women spend about 35.58 hours per week by these activities. These results are general, regardless the type of household in which individual lives. However, we consider interesting to verify extent of unpaid work according to the gender also in single-person households. We assumed that there are statistically significant differences between single-person households according to the gender and that women perform more unpaid work than men).

In the Table 2, there are information about the time that men and women in single-person households spend by particular unpaid work activities.

We tested, by the mean of Mann-Whitney non-parametric test, whether there are statistically significant differences in the extent of unpaid work performed by the single-person households by men and by women. In general, women spend more time (more than 281 minutes per week) by unpaid work activities than man (only 184 minutes per week). We found out, that there are statistically significant differences in all activities, except of pet care, shopping and services and farm animals breeding. It seems to be logic, because pets as well as farm animals require the same care regardless the gender of person who owns them, and shopping and services are inevitable for any kind of households.

Table 2 Unpaid work in single-person households according to gender

activity	gender	N	Mean Rank	activity	gender	N	Mean Rank
food preparation	man	216	171,03	children care/week	man	192	193,71
	woman	257	292,44		woman	237	232,25
	Total	473			Total	429	
housekeeping	man	216	198,99	adults care/week	man	192	198,24
	woman	257	268,95		woman	233	225,16
	Total	473			Total	425	
textiles	man	209	155,03	volunteer activities/week	man	192	221,38
	woman	257	297,32		woman	232	205,15
	Total	466			Total	424	
ornamental plants	man	204	174,93	useful plants/week	man	199	206,32
	woman	251	271,13		woman	247	237,34
	Total	455			Total	446	
pet care	man	204	214,74	farm animals/week	man	192	213,49
	woman	240	229,09		woman	236	215,32
	Total	444			Total	428	
maintenance and preparation	man	204	240,43	building and reconstruction/week	man	192	223,06
	woman	237	204,27		woman	232	203,76
	Total	441			Total	424	
shopping and services	man	216	231,99	unpaid work total	man	216	184,17
	woman	257	241,21		woman	257	281,40
	Total	473			Total	473	

Source: Own elaboration

In case of activities with statistically significant differences, women usually spend more time by unpaid work than man (there are also exceptions – building and reconstruction, volunteer activities and maintenance and preparation). This result is also not surprising. Building and reconstruction, as well as maintenance and preparation are traditionally activities that are performed more by men than by women. Men often perform them as a hobby, not as a necessity. On the other side, women living alone perform them usually only if they must. It will be, however, interesting to find out whether women utilise more market services for building, reconstruction, maintenance and preparation than men, or not.

5 Unpaid work in single-person households according to place of living

We found out, that there are differences in the extent of the unpaid work performed in households also with regard the place of living of the household. WE distinguish between the rural and urban environment (however, we did not distinguish between the regional and other towns and we also did not distinguish whether households lives in block of flats or in the private house). Regional disparities, however, can have important influence also on the single-person households and their life style (Uramová and Kožíak, 2008). In general (considering all types of households), households living in rural areas spent in average 75.8 hours per week by unpaid work activities, while households living in urban areas spent by these activities only 61.79 hours per week in average.

By the mean of Mann-Whitney non-parametric test, we tested our hypothesis that there are statistically significant differences in the extent of unpaid work performed by the single-person households living in towns and villages (we supposed that single-person households living in the villages perform more unpaid work activities than single-person households living in towns).

Table 3 Unpaid work in single-person households according to place of living

	type of living	N	Mean Rank		type of living	N	Mean Rank
food preparation	town	315	225,95	children care/week	town	290	212,30
	village	158	259,03		village	139	220,64
	Total	473			Total	429	
housekeeping	town	315	223,63	adults care/week	town	288	211,97
	village	158	263,65		village	137	215,17
	Total	473			Total	425	
textiles	town	308	219,28	volunteer activities/week	town	288	219,34
	village	158	261,22		village	136	198,01
	Total	466			Total	424	
ornamental plants	town	298	191,65	useful plants/week	town	296	184,43
	village	157	296,99		village	150	300,60
	Total	455			Total	446	
pet care	town	296	201,72	farm animals/week	town	288	190,50
	village	148	264,06		village	140	263,87
	Total	444			Total	428	
maintenance and preparation	town	294	217,48	building and reconstruction/week	town	288	215,90
	village	147	228,04		village	136	205,29
	Total	441			Total	424	
shopping and services	town	315	256,03	unpaid work total	town	315	216,63
	village	158	199,05		village	158	277,60
	Total	473			Total	473	

Source: Own elaboration

In the Table 3, there are information about the time that single-person households living in villages or towns spend by particular unpaid work activities.

Single-person households living in villages spend significantly more time (277.60 minutes per week) by unpaid work activities than single-person households in towns (only 216.63 minutes per week). Considering each particular activity, there are statistically significant differences in all of them, excepting maintenance and reparations, children and adults care. It is interesting because we expected that time spent by children and adults care will be statistically different in towns and villages (much more in villages). In this case, however, persons from single-person households live alone, so we can assume that adults and children care refer only to distant relatives. That is why there could not be differences between the households in towns and villages.

In all other activities, there are statistically significant differences between the single-person households in towns and villages. Households in towns spend more time by shopping and services and volunteering. It seems to be clear, because volunteering could be a part of the life style in the towns. Towns also offer much more possibilities for shopping and utilising services than villages. In all other activities, households in villages spend more time by performing them than households in towns.

6 Conclusion

Single-person households are very specific phenomena, not only regarding their status in society and family life, but also regarding their economic activities. Actually, more than 25% of all households in Slovakia are single-person households and this ratio has increasing trend. In our field research, in which we focused on the extent and activities of the unpaid work, about 25% of all respondents were single-person households (what correspond with the situation in the whole Slovakia). We found out that single-person households have lot of particularities comparing to multi-persons households also in the area of unpaid work. By the means of Mann-Whitney non-parametric test, on the probability level $\alpha = 0.05$, we confirmed two hypothesis concerning single-person households. We confirmed, that there are statistically significant differences between single-person households according to the gender. We found out that women perform more unpaid work than men almost in all unpaid work activities. We also confirmed that there are statistically significant differences between single-person households according to the place of living. We found out, that in villages single-person households perform more unpaid work than single-person households in towns. This is the true in almost all unpaid work activities.

Extent of the unpaid work, as well as the life style of single-person households predestined them to be a serious subject matter of our research interest also in the future. We consider necessary to focus more deeply on them, also regarding their interest to substitute unpaid work by services offered by the market.

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