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INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF POVERTY IN SLOVAKIA: EVIDENCE FROM EU-SILC DATA

ABSTRACT: *This paper investigates the intergenerational transmission of poverty in Slovakia using microdata from the 2019 ad hoc module of the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC). The analysis explores how parental education, economic activity, household composition, and material deprivation shape the risk of poverty in adulthood. Descriptive results indicate strong associations between higher parental education and adult income levels, as well as between maternal labour market participation and household well-being. Logistic regression reveals that the absence of a mother during adolescence, larger household size, lack of access to school supplies, and inability to afford annual vacations significantly increase the likelihood of poverty in adulthood. In contrast, parental employment and a higher number of working household members act as protective factors. Overall, the results point to a persistent influence of early-life disadvantage on adult economic outcomes in Slovakia, in line with international empirical evidence. From a public policy perspective, the findings highlight the critical role of early interventions, particularly those aimed at improving educational opportunities and material living conditions during childhood.*

KEYWORDS: *Intergenerational poverty; EU-SILC; Slovakia; income inequality; logistic regression; parental education; childhood conditions.*

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INTRODUCTION

Economic and social inequalities have increasingly attracted the attention of researchers and policymakers, not only because they shape current living standards, but also because they determine opportunities across generations. One of the most persistent forms of inequality is the intergenerational transmission of poverty, where children born into disadvantaged households are more likely to face similar hardships as adults. This phenomenon raises fundamental

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questions about fairness, equality of opportunity, and the long-term effectiveness of social policies.

International research has shown that family background influences adult outcomes through multiple channels, such as education, health, and access to material resources (Solon, 1999; Black and Devereux, 2011). A key insight is captured by the so-called Great Gatsby Curve, which illustrates how countries with higher income inequality also tend to have lower social mobility (Corak, 2013; OECD, 2018). While these patterns are well documented in Western Europe and North America, evidence from Central and Eastern Europe remains relatively scarce (Nolan et al., 2021; Dewilde, 2024).

Understanding the mechanisms behind the persistence of poverty is key to evaluating the fairness and inclusiveness of a society. In recent years, the concept of intergenerational transmission of poverty has received growing attention from policymakers and researchers, particularly in the context of assessing equality of opportunity (Corak, 2013; OECD, 2018). This concept refers to the tendency for individuals raised in low-income households to experience similar economic hardship as adults, thereby perpetuating cycles of deprivation (Bird, 2007; Save the Children, 2020).

The intergenerational transfer of poverty and wealth is a complex and difficult to measure process. Intergenerational transmission of poverty refers to the phenomenon where poverty persists across generations and creates a cycle of long-term poverty. Lasts entire generations, which represents not only decades, but also centuries. Chronic poverty is characterized by prolonged duration and is the most extreme form of chronic poverty. Being a poor child increases the chance of being the poor in adulthood, but this is not always the case, because the well-being of a person can last throughout his life independently influence other factors. (Bird, 2013)

Despite a growing literature on intergenerational mobility, empirical evidence combining retrospective childhood conditions with adult poverty outcomes remains limited for Central and Eastern European countries, particularly in a comparative EU context. In Slovakia, the role of social origin has received limited attention, even though existing studies suggest that family background strongly shapes educational attainment, occupational outcomes, and income (Želinský et al., 2016). OECD reports (2018) also warn that upward mobility in Slovakia is relatively

constrained, despite lower overall income inequality compared to some Western countries. This raises concerns about whether current policies are sufficient to break cycles of disadvantage.

This paper aims to fill this research gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of intergenerational poverty in Slovakia, using microdata from the 2019 EU-SILC ad hoc module. The dataset uniquely includes retrospective information on parental education, employment, and material living conditions during adolescence, which allows us to identify the childhood factors that most strongly predict poverty risk in adulthood. By focusing on Slovakia, we make two main contributions: (1) we provide country-specific evidence from a region where mobility remains understudied, and (2) we highlight the importance of material deprivation and maternal factors, dimensions often overlooked in international studies. The paper addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: To what extent is adult poverty risk in Slovakia associated with parental socioeconomic background, particularly parental education and economic activity?

RQ2: How do childhood material conditions and household characteristics at age 14 influence the likelihood of poverty in adulthood?

The paper is structured as follows. Section 1 reviews the relevant literature and situates our contribution within the broader debate on inequality and mobility. Section 2 describes the methodology and section 3 presents the empirical results. Section 4 discusses the findings in the Slovak and international context. Final section concludes with policy implications and suggestions for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The intergenerational transmission of poverty has attracted increasing attention in recent decades, as scholars and policymakers seek to understand why disadvantage persists across generations. Research consistently shows that children raised in low-income families are more likely to face educational, health, and labour market disadvantages as adults, which contributes to the endless cycle of poverty.

A widely discussed framework is the so-called Great Gatsby Curve, which demonstrates a strong correlation between income inequality and lower intergenerational mobility (Corak, 2013;

Krueger, 2012; OECD, 2018). In societies with higher inequality, such as the United States or Italy, the chances of escaping one's social origin are significantly lower compared to more equal societies like the Nordic countries.

Numerous studies have examined both the theoretical background and empirical evidence related to the intergenerational transmission of socioeconomic status, emphasizing the roles of income, education, and health as key channels through which advantage or disadvantage is passed from parents to children (Solon, 1999; Black and Devereux, 2011; Currie and Moretti, 2007; Corak, 2013). These factors often affect each other, as parental income affects access to quality education and healthcare, which in turn shape children's long-term economic outcomes. Research has consistently shown that children raised in low-income households face lower educational attainment, poorer health, and reduced earnings potential, contributing to the persistence of inequality across generations (OECD, 2018; Lochner, 2008).

Other studies have highlighted income as a key determinant in the intergenerational transmission of poverty (Halvorsen et al., 2022; Sánchez Martín and García-Pérez, 2022), while identifying education as one of the most effective tools to disrupt this cycle (Corak, 2013; OECD, 2018; Lochner, 2008). Being born into a low-income household significantly influences an individual's economic trajectory later in life, affecting earnings, employment stability, and the likelihood of escaping poverty. The role of childhood poverty in shaping adult outcomes has been explored in several empirical studies, including the cross-country analysis by Bellani and Bia (2013), which used EU-SILC data to assess the influence of parental and child human capital. Their findings demonstrate that exposure to poverty during childhood is associated with an average income loss of approximately €3,000 in adulthood, a 3 percentage point increase in the likelihood of remaining in poverty, and a significant decrease in the probability of attaining higher education. These results provide compelling evidence that the negative effects of growing up in poverty are persistent and measurable, regardless of the individual's later socioeconomic circumstances. Similar patterns have been observed in other European studies, confirming that early-life disadvantage is a strong predictor of later economic hardship (Whelan, Nolan and Maître, 2013; Save the Children, 2020; Parolin et al., 2025). These findings support the notion that investments

in early childhood, equal access to education, and targeted social interventions are crucial in reducing long-term inequality and enhancing social mobility.

According to Eurostat (2021), the risk of poverty among adults who grew up in financially "bad" households at around age 14 was 23.0%, which is 9.6 percentage points higher than the poverty risk for those who grew up in households with a "good" financial situation. This pattern of persistent disadvantage highlights how early-life socioeconomic conditions can have long-term effects on income security and social mobility (Whelan, Nolan, and Maître, 2013; Bellani and Bia, 2013). Substantial cross-country variation was also observed. The poverty risk among adults with a poor childhood financial background ranged from 10.2% in the Czech Republic to 40.1% in Bulgaria, whereas the risk among those from more affluent households ranged from 5.9% in the Czech Republic to 16.6% in Spain. In nearly all EU member states, individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds experienced significantly higher poverty rates in adulthood, with the largest disparities observed in Bulgaria, Romania, and Italy. These findings support prior research showing that poverty is more persistent in countries with weaker welfare regimes and limited public investment in education and social support (Esping-Andersen, 2005; Save the Children, 2020). Interestingly, Denmark stood out as an exception, where the poverty risk was slightly higher among those from better-off childhood households, potentially reflecting reverse causality, statistical outliers, or specific welfare targeting policies. Poverty that is lived in childhood can seriously undermine an individual’s well-being and socioeconomic status. Poor children are less likely to have good health, fare well in school, find a decent job, and achieve their full potential later in life, while they are more likely to become boxed in a poverty trap lasting many years or even throughout their life course (Duncan and Brooks-Gunn, 1997; Corcoran, 2001).

Because income data for parents is often unavailable in large-scale surveys, researchers frequently rely on proxies such as parental education, occupation, or social class to approximate socioeconomic background (Whelan et al., 2013; Andreoli and Fusco, 2019). These indicators have proven to be strong predictors of children’s income and poverty risk. For example, Whelan, Nolan, and Maître (2013), using the 2005 EU-SILC ad hoc module, found that low parental education significantly increases the likelihood of income poverty in adulthood. Andreoli and

Fusco (2019), using the 2011 module, applied gap curves and Recentered Influence Function (RIF) regressions to show that inequality of opportunity remains substantial across Europe, particularly in Southern and Eastern countries.

Empirical evidence suggests that Slovakia faces substantial challenges in intergenerational income mobility, particularly among individuals from low-income households. Based on the 2019 EU-SILC ad hoc module, Slovakia ranks among the European countries with the strongest persistence of poverty across generations. This means that individuals born into financially disadvantaged households have a significantly higher likelihood of experiencing poverty in adulthood. These findings are in line with the broader international pattern illustrated by the "Great Gatsby Curve", which shows a positive relationship between income inequality and low intergenerational mobility. A recent study by Bavaro, Carranza, and Nolan (2024) confirms that Slovakia is part of a cluster of countries with high intergenerational poverty persistence, suggesting limited chances for upward mobility and a strong influence of family background on future socioeconomic outcomes. Further research by Želinský, Mysíková, and Večerník (2016) confirms that educational and occupational mobility in Slovakia is relatively low, with family background playing a decisive role in shaping life outcomes. Sociological studies using class-based frameworks (e.g., Džambazovič, Gerbery and Sopóci, 2018) reveal that absolute and relative mobility remains constrained, especially at the top and bottom of the social hierarchy. These findings align with broader EU-SILC–based analyses, which show that social stratification and inequality of opportunity in Slovakia have remained stable over time (Fialová and Želinský, 2019). Together, these studies point to the structural persistence of disadvantage, calling for targeted social policies to improve mobility prospects for future generations.

Overall, the literature highlights three consistent patterns: (1) parental education and employment are crucial in shaping children's life chances; (2) early-life material deprivation has persistent negative effects; and (3) societies with weaker welfare systems struggle more to counteract intergenerational disadvantage. These findings provide the basis for our empirical analysis of Slovakia, which aims to bring a country-specific perspective to this broader debate

METHODOLOGY

The analysis in this study is based on data from the 2019 ad hoc module of the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), which focuses on the intergenerational transmission of disadvantages. This special module was designed to provide harmonized cross-national data on respondents' parental background, including variables related to father's and mother's education, occupation, and perceived childhood living conditions. It enables researchers to investigate the extent to which social origin influences adult outcomes such as income, employment, or risk of poverty. The EU-SILC 2019 ad hoc module includes a unique retrospective component that provides valuable insights into the respondents' living conditions when they were approximately 14 years old, e.g. *"Did you live with your mother when you were around 14 years old?"*

Our study uses both individual-level and household-level indicators. The dependent variable is whether the respondent currently lives below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold (defined as 60% of the national median equalised disposable income). Independent variables include parental presence, parental education and employment, number of adults and children in the household, degree of urbanisation, housing tenure, subjective household financial situation, and measures of material deprivation (school supplies, meals, annual vacation). A detailed overview of the variables and their expected relationships is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: List of all variables from EU SILC used in the logistic regression

Variable	Variable Description	Expected Relationship
BPT	Below poverty threshold (1 = yes, 0 = no)	**Dependent variable**
Pr_M	Presence of mother at age 14 (1 = yes, 2 = no)	**Positive**
Pr_F	Presence of father at age 14 (1 = yes, 2 = no)	**Positive**
AD	Number of adults in the household	**Positive**

CH	Number of children in the household	**Positive**
WP	Number of working persons in the household	**Negative**
URB	Degree of urbanization (1 = large city, 2 = town/suburb, 3 = rural/small town)	**Positive**
TEN	Housing tenure (1 = owner, 2 = tenant, 3 = free housing)	**Positive**
EDU_F	Father's highest education level (1 = low, 2 = medium, 3 = high)	**Negative**
EDU_M	Mother's highest education level (1 = low, 2 = medium, 3 = high)	**Negative**
EA_F	Economic activity of father (1 = yes, 2 = no)	**Positive**
EA_M	Economic activity of mother (1 = yes, 2 = no)	**Positive**
HFS	Household financial situation at age 14 (1 = very bad to 6 = very good)	**Negative**
SS	Access to school supplies at age 14 (1 = yes, 2 = no - financial, 3 = no - other)	**Positive**
DM	Daily meal with meat/fish/vegetarian equivalent (1 = yes, 2 = no - financial, 3 = no - other)	**Positive**
VAC	Annual 1-week vacation outside the home (1 = yes, 2 = no - financial, 3 = no - other)	**Positive**

Source: *own calculations based on EU SILC 2019*

The analysis combines descriptive statistics with a logistic regression model. Descriptive statistics are used to map basic associations between parental characteristics and adult income levels across income deciles. Logistic regression is then applied to identify which childhood factors significantly predict the likelihood of poverty in adulthood, controlling for multiple dimensions simultaneously. Results are presented as odds ratios with corresponding levels of statistical significance.

The EU-SILC 2019 module provides a unique opportunity to study intergenerational poverty in Slovakia. However, the dataset also has some limitations. Most importantly, it does not include direct information on parental income, requiring researchers to rely on proxies such as education, occupation, or material conditions. In addition, retrospective data may be affected by recall bias,

as respondents report on circumstances from their adolescence. Despite these limitations, the dataset represents one of the most reliable sources for analysing the persistence of poverty across generations in the Slovak context.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics

This section presents descriptive statistics based on data from the EU-SILC 2019 ad hoc module, which focuses on the intergenerational transmission of disadvantages. Key variables include parental education, economic activity, household financial situation, and basic material conditions such as access to school supplies, daily meals, and annual vacations. By examining these indicators across income quantiles, we identify patterns and disparities that reflect how early-life conditions are distributed among individuals with different income levels.

Table 2: Parental presence by Income decile

Income decile	**1st**	**2nd**	**3rd**	**4th**	**5th**	**6th**	**7th**	**8th**	**9th**
Mother`s presence	99.45%	99.45	99.45%	99.59%	99.67%	99.66%	99.66%	99.68%	99.61%
Father`s pressence	98.34%	98.43%	98.28%	98.34%	98.23%	98.22%	98.21%	98.22%	98.32%

Source: *own calculations based on EU SILC 2019*

The percentage of maternal presence remains high and stable across all income quintiles, ranging from 99.45% in the lowest to 99.6% in the highest (see Table2). Parental presence is slightly lower but similarly stable, fluctuating between 98.21% and 98.34%. Differences across income levels are minimal, not exceeding 0.2 percentage points. However, further analysis reveals that father absence in childhood is modestly associated with a higher risk of poverty in adulthood, especially among individuals with lower educational attainment. The pattern is more pronounced among men and those whose fathers had only primary education, suggesting a link between family structure and broader socioeconomic disadvantage. Additionally, individuals reporting a poor financial situation in childhood were more likely to have experienced the

absence of a parent, supporting the idea that family instability may reinforce the intergenerational transmission of poverty (Corak, 2013; Whelan et al., 2013).

Table 3: Parent education by Income decile

Income Decile	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th
Father - Low	72.19%	68.94%	70.44%	71.32%	70.12%	68.46%	66.75%	64.86%	58.49%
Father - Medium	20.44%	23.5%	23.32%	22.87%	23.87%	25.06%	26.98%	26.65%	33.47%
Father - High	7.37%	7.56%	6.23%	5.81%	6.01%	6.48%	6.27%	8.49%	8.03%
Mother - Low	70.72%	67.93%	68.89%	68.79%	69.96%	65.88%	64.06%	61.91%	61.94%
Mother - Medium	21.92%	25.44%	25.38%	27.15%	28.15%	30.77%	31.69%	31.63%	32.45%
Mother - High	7.37%	6.64%	5.86%	5.36%	5.46%	5.59%	5.77%	6.46%	5.61%

Source: *own calculations based on EU SILC 2019*

Analysis of the intergenerational link between parental education and adult income shows consistent trends across the income distribution. Among individuals in the lowest income decile, 72.2% report that their fathers had low levels of education. This share steadily declines across deciles, reaching 58.5% in the ninth. At the same time, the proportion of individuals whose fathers had medium education rises from 20.4% to 33.5%, while the share of highly educated fathers increases modestly from 7.4% to 8.0%.

A similar pattern is evident for maternal education. The share of respondents with mothers who had low education decreases from 70.7% in the first decile to 61.9% in the ninth. Medium maternal education increases from 21.9% to 32.5%, while the share of mothers with high education remains relatively low throughout the income distribution—fluctuating slightly around 6–7%.

These patterns demonstrate a positive association between parental education and adult income level. The proportion of respondents with better-educated parents rises with income,

while those with less-educated parents are more concentrated in the lower income deciles. This confirms the important role of educational background in shaping economic outcomes and supports the broader literature on intergenerational transmission of advantage.

Table 4: Parental Economic Activity by Income Decile

Income Decile	**1st**	**2nd**	**3rd**	**4th**	**5th**	**6th**	**7th**	**8th**	**9th**
Father - Active	97.79	97.97	98.09	98.02	98.34	98.25	98.23	98.36	98.4
Father - Not Active	2.21	2.03	1.91	1.98	1.66	1.75	1.77	1.64	1.6
Mother - Active	77.72	81.47	84.57	85.71	86.87	87.95	88.87	89.1	89.55
Mother - Not Active	22.28	18.53	15.43	14.29	13.13	12.05	11.33	10.9	10.45

Source: *own calculations based on EU SILC 2019*

The proportion of respondents reporting that their father was economically active during their childhood remains consistently high across all income deciles, starting at 97.79% in the lowest decile and ranging between 98.02% and 98.40% in the higher deciles. This indicates minimal variation in parental economic activity across income groups. Conversely, the share of individuals whose father was not economically active shows a slight decline with increasing income—from 2.21% in the lowest decile to around 1.60% in the highest decile.

In contrast, maternal economic activity displays a notable upward trend with rising income. The percentage of respondents whose mothers were economically active increases from 77.72% in the lowest decile to 89.55% in the highest. Correspondingly, the share of respondents whose mothers were not active declines steadily from 22.28% to 10.45%. These patterns suggest that higher household income is associated with a greater likelihood of maternal labour market participation, whereas paternal economic activity appears nearly universal and unaffected by income level.

Table 5: Social Indicators by Income Decile

Income Decile	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th
Good Financial Situation	68.69 %	74.47%	78.77%	78.75%	79.60%	80.63%	81.50%	84.21%	82.89%
Bad Financial Situation	31.31 %	25.53%	21.23%	21.25%	20.40%	19.37%	18.50%	15.79%	17.11%
School Supplies - Yes	84.18 %	88.98%	91.27%	91.48%	93.41%	94.55%	94.50%	95.61%	95.18%
School Supplies - Not	15.29 %	10.06%	8.18%	8.09%	6.35%	5.04%	5.13%	4.02%	4.51%
Daily Meal - Yes	73.70 %	79.26%	82.11%	83.93%	84.38%	84.78%	85.30%	88.00%	86.68%
Daily Meal - Not	18.99 %	16.27%	13.43%	12.88%	13.91%	13.73%	12.56%	9.47%	10.92%
Annual Vacation - Yes	35.48 %	39.03%	42.16%	45.44%	47.94%	51.59%	54.88%	58.94%	55.67%
Annual Vacation - Not	28.74 %	30.41%	29.48%	27.05%	24.99%	22.64%	20.55%	18.42%	21.89%

Source: *own calculations based on EU SILC 2019*

The percentage of respondents who stated that their household's financial situation was good, as expected, increases with the rising income quantile. It starts at 68.69% in the lowest quantile and increases to 83.64% in the highest quantile. Logically, for a poor household financial situation, the share decreases with a rising income quantile. The highest value was 31.31% in the lowest quantile, and conversely, it was 16.36% in the highest quantile.

The proportion of individuals who had basic school supplies available again increases with the rising income quantile, with this variable generally reaching high percentages, from the lowest value of 84.16% in the lowest quantile to 95.50% in the highest quantile. It is clearly visible that the proportion of individuals who did not have basic school supplies available in childhood due to financial reasons decreases with a rising income quantile. It starts at 15.29% in the lowest quantile

and decreases to 4.21% in the highest quantile. For individuals who lacked school supplies for other reasons, the proportion is relatively stable and low, ranging from about 0.30% to 0.61% across all income quantiles.

The percentage of individuals who had daily meals with meat or fish increases with rising income. The upward trend begins at 73.30% in the lowest quantile, gradually increasing to 87.35% in the highest quantile. The proportion of respondents who did not have daily meals with meat or fish due to financial reasons decreases with a rising income quantile. It starts at 22.10% in the lowest quantile and decreases to 9.00% in the highest quantile. The proportion of individuals who did not have daily meals with meat or fish for other reasons also decreases with a rising income quantile, but only by about 1%.

We see that the proportion of respondents who had a week-long holiday away from home once a year increases with the rising income quantile. While only 37.75% could afford a holiday in the lowest quantile, this figure rose to 57.48% in the highest quantile. The percentage of respondents who did not have an annual holiday due to financial reasons decreases with a rising income quantile. It starts at 36.46% in the first quantile and decreases to 21.32% in the last quantile. A decreasing trend is also observed for the inability to have an annual holiday away from home for other reasons, with this decrease being approximately 4%.

If we summarize the development of material deprivation variables across the individual quantiles, we can say that a positive trend is visible with a rising income quantile. Higher income is associated with better living conditions concerning household financial situation, availability of school supplies, eating habits, and the possibility of having a holiday.

In essence, the findings underscore that income is a powerful determinant of an individual's and household's quality of life, influencing everything from necessities and educational opportunities to leisure activities and the broader intergenerational transmission of economic status.

Logistic Regression: Poverty Threshold

To examine the relationship between childhood circumstances and the risk of poverty in adulthood, we conducted a logistic regression analysis using data from the EU-SILC 2019 ad hoc module. The dependent variable in the model is BPT, indicating whether an individual currently lives below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold (defined as 60% of the national median equalised disposable income). The model includes a wide range of explanatory variables capturing the respondent's family background around age 14, including parental presence and economic activity, household composition, housing conditions, urbanization level, etc. The list of all variables used in the model is in the Table 1.

The logistic regression analysis identifies several key factors that significantly predict the likelihood of experiencing poverty in adulthood.

Table 6: Logistic regression - poverty threshold and socioeconomic situation in childhood

Variable	Estimate	Odds Ratio	Std. Error	P-value	Significance
Pr_M	1.44028	4.22	0.61018	0.018254	*
Pr_O	-0.05506	0.95	0.36506	0.880117	ns
AD	0.20952	1.23	0.05468	0.000127	***
CH	0.22909	1.26	0.03699	0.000000000592	***
WP	-0.39158	0.68	0.0936	0.0000287	***
URB_2	0.3977	1.49	0.27663	0.150526	ns
URB_3	0.76301	2.14	0.27014	0.004735	**
TEN_2	0.61415	1.85	0.15229	0.0000551	***
TEN_3	0.04135	1.4	0.43832	0.924836	ns
EDU_F_2	-0.34143	0.71	0.15594	0.028558	*
EDU_F_3	-0.20413	0.82	0.28559	0.47475	ns
EDU_M_2	-0.17078	0.84	0.14824	0.249322	ns
EDU_M_3	-0.06422	0.94	0.31033	0.836053	ns
EA_F	0.15839	1.17	0.05765	0.006011	**
EA_M	0.05382	1.6	0.02367	0.02301	*
HFS_2	-0.49	0.61	0.42231	0.245933	ns
HFS_3	-0.43893	0.64	0.39087	0.261456	ns
HFS_4	-0.36018	0.7	0.39196	0.358143	ns
HFS_5	-0.50292	0.6	0.39848	0.206914	ns
HFS_6	-0.5486	0.58	0.47847	0.251551	ns
SS_2	1.06943	2.91	0.21279	0.000000501	***
SS_3	0.50303	1.65	0.63326	0.426992	ns

DM_2	0.03757	1.4	0.18645	0.840305	ns
DM_3	-0.31899	0.73	0.2642	0.227278	ns
VAC_2	0.53474	1.71	0.15647	0.000632	***
VAC_3	0.67367	1.96	0.13441	0.000000538	***

Significance signs: ** P ≤ 0.05, **P ≤ 0.01, ***P ≤ 0.001, ns –not significant*

Source: *own calculations based on EU SILC 2019*

A strong positive association was found between the absence of a mother at age 14 and the risk of poverty later in life ($\beta = 1.44$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that respondents without a maternal presence were significantly more likely to be below the poverty threshold. Conversely, the presence or absence of the father was not statistically significant. The number of adults ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < 0.001$) and children ($\beta = 0.23$, $p < 0.001$) in the household were both positively associated with poverty risk, suggesting that larger households may face greater financial strain. In contrast, the number of working household members had a strong negative effect ($\beta = –0.39$, $p < 0.001$), implying that higher household work participation significantly reduces poverty risk.

Living in rural areas (URB_3) was associated with a higher probability of poverty compared to large cities ($\beta = 0.76$, $p < 0.01$), while living in towns (URB_2) showed no significant effect. Regarding housing tenure, being a tenant ($\beta = 0.61$, $p < 0.001$) significantly increased poverty risk, while residing in free housing did not show a meaningful association. Father's medium education level ($\beta = –0.34$, $p < 0.05$) was significantly associated with a reduced risk of poverty, whereas higher paternal education, as well as maternal education levels, did not yield statistically significant effects.

Parental economic activity also played an important role: both father's ($\beta = 0.16$, $p < 0.01$) and mother's ($\beta = 0.05$, $p < 0.05$) economic engagement during the respondent's adolescence were significantly and positively associated with reduced poverty risk. On the other hand, the subjective evaluation of household financial situation (HFS) did not yield significant associations. Material deprivation indicators such as the lack of access to school supplies due to financial reasons ($\beta = 1.07$, $p < 0.001$) and the inability to take a one-week annual vacation due to financial constraints ($\beta = 0.53$, $p < 0.001$) significantly increased the risk of poverty. Interestingly, the inability to take vacations for non-financial reasons ($\beta = 0.67$, $p < 0.001$) was also associated with higher poverty risk. These findings underscore the importance of family composition, parental

resources, and material conditions during adolescence as crucial determinants of intergenerational poverty persistence.

DISCUSSION

Consistent with broader international evidence, the findings confirm that early-life conditions are a major determinant of poverty in Slovakia, demonstrating the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage (Corak, 2013; OECD, 2018). In particular, the absence of a mother during adolescence, larger household size, and indicators of material deprivation (such as lack of school supplies and inability to afford annual vacations) significantly increase the risk of poverty in adulthood. These findings are consistent with previous European studies showing that children from disadvantaged households face a higher probability of long-term poverty and reduced social mobility (Whelan, Nolan and Maître, 2013; Bellani and Bia, 2013).

The descriptive results provide initial evidence of intergenerational gradients, showing that individuals in higher income deciles are more likely to have parents with medium or high education and better material conditions during adolescence.

Parental employment emerges as an important protective factor. Our results show that households with more working members, and especially those where the mother was economically active, exhibited a significantly lower risk of poverty. This aligns with international evidence emphasizing the role of parental labour market participation in improving children's economic prospects (Shareef, Khawaja and Azid, 2017; Halvorsen, Ozkan and Salgado, 2022). The specific importance of maternal employment in the Slovak context highlights the need for policies supporting women's participation in the labour market, consistent with OECD recommendations on promoting gender equality and social mobility (OECD, 2018).

Interestingly, paternal education was found to matter only at the medium level, while higher education of either parent was not a significant predictor. This contrasts with findings from other European countries, where parental education strongly influences children's adult outcomes (Sirniö, Martikainen and Kauppinen, 2013; Andreoli & Fusco, 2019). One possible explanation is that in Slovakia, structural barriers in the labour market limit the extent to which

educational attainment translates into upward mobility, as also noted by Želinský, Mysíková and Večerník (2016).

Another important contribution of this study is the confirmation that material deprivation during childhood has long-lasting consequences. The lack of school supplies or vacations significantly increased poverty risk, which is consistent with evidence that deprivation in early life undermines human capital accumulation and long-term wellbeing (Duncan and Brooks-Gunn, 1997; Save the Children, 2020). Compared to Western Europe, where education plays a stronger role, these results suggest that in post-socialist societies like Slovakia, ensuring adequate material resources during childhood may be equally or more important in breaking the cycle of poverty.

The regression results provide strong support for RQ2, showing that childhood material deprivation, particularly the inability to afford school supplies and annual holidays, significantly increases the probability of experiencing poverty in adulthood. Finally, our findings resonate with the broader pattern captured by the Great Gatsby Curve (Krueger, 2012; Corak, 2013; Bavaro, Carranza and Nolan, 2024), which links inequality to reduced mobility. Slovakia appears to fall into the cluster of countries with high persistence of poverty across generations, despite relatively moderate levels of income inequality. This underlines the importance of designing integrated social policies that not only redistribute income but also invest in education, early-childhood development, and family support (Esping-Andersen, 2005; World Bank, 2018).

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence on the persistence of intergenerational poverty in Slovakia based on retrospective data from the 2019 EU SILC. The findings demonstrate that disadvantages experienced in early life, such as parental absence, lower parental educational attainment, material deprivation, and limited access to basic resources including school supplies and annual holidays, substantially increase the likelihood of experiencing poverty in adulthood. In contrast, parental labour market participation and a higher number of working household members function as important protective factors that mitigate the risk of long-term economic disadvantage.

Overall, the analysis confirms that adult poverty risk in Slovakia is closely linked to parental socioeconomic background, particularly parental education and economic activity. Moreover, childhood material conditions and household characteristics at around age 14 emerge as key determinants of later-life poverty outcomes, underscoring the long-lasting impact of early-life circumstances on economic well-being.

Building on previous research (e.g., Bowles and Gintis, 2002), we hypothesized that individuals born to parents with lower socioeconomic status, in terms of income, education, and occupational class, are at significantly higher risk of falling into the lowest income quintile in adulthood. This is grounded in the understanding that economic, social, and cultural resources are unevenly distributed across families, and that disadvantaged households often lack the capital, networks, and strategic knowledge necessary to support upward mobility (Solon, 1999). Empirical studies from both Europe and the United States consistently show that parental background is one of the strongest predictors of children's later-life earnings, with low-income origins associated with constrained educational opportunities, reduced labour market outcomes, and higher poverty risks (Corak, 2013; Whelan, Nolan and Maître, 2013). In this context, intergenerational inequality is not only transmitted economically, but also institutionally, through unequal access to opportunity structures.

The background and financial status of a family can impact the future income and wealth of their children through different channels of intergenerational transmission (Dewilde, 2024). While parental presence remains very high across all income levels, father absence in childhood is modestly linked to a higher risk of adult poverty, especially for those with less education. This suggests that family stability plays a role in breaking the cycle of poverty. There's a clear positive association between parental education levels and adult income. Individuals with parents who achieved medium or high education tend to have higher incomes, underscoring the role of education in intergenerational economic mobility. Maternal economic activity increases with household income, indicating a link between a mother's labour force participation and the family's financial standing. Paternal economic activity, however, remains consistently high regardless of income.

The findings of this study confirm the strong persistence of intergenerational poverty in Slovakia, consistent with earlier European evidence (Bellani and Bia, 2013; Eurostat, 2021) showing that childhood disadvantage significantly increases the likelihood of poverty in adulthood. Using EU-SILC 2019 retrospective data, we identified key factors that increase the probability of being below the poverty threshold later in life: absence of the mother during adolescence, larger household size, low paternal education, lack of access to school supplies, and inability to afford annual vacations. Conversely, parental economic activity—particularly maternal—and a higher number of working household members serve as protective factors, reducing poverty risk.

Our results are in line with Bowles and Gintis (2002) and Bratsberg et al. (2006), who emphasize the role of parental socioeconomic status in shaping offspring's economic outcomes, and with Sirniö et al. (2017), who found that higher parental education is positively associated with upward mobility. The observed association between material deprivation indicators (e.g., school supplies, vacations) and adult poverty risk resonates with findings from Save the Children (2020) and OECD (2018), which highlight the long-term impact of early-life material deprivation on human capital development.

Overall, the Slovak evidence supports the broader pattern described by the "Great Gatsby Curve" (Corak, 2013), where countries with higher income inequality also exhibit lower intergenerational mobility. The persistence of disadvantage across generations in Slovakia suggests that tackling poverty requires integrated measures, combining income support with policies aimed at improving early-life conditions, access to education, and family stability to break the cycle of intergenerational transmission of poverty.

While the analysis is limited by the absence of direct parental income data and the reliance on retrospective reporting, it provides a valuable contribution to the debate on social mobility in Central and Eastern Europe. Future research should expand on these results by linking longitudinal data with cross-country comparisons. Breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty will require sustained efforts to create equal opportunities for children, regardless of their family background.

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