

**BABES-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY**

**CLUJ-NAPOCA**

**FACULTY OF POLITICAL, ADMINISTRATIVE AND COMMUNICATION**

**SCIENCES**

**DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF ADMINISTRATION AND PUBLIC POLICIES**

**THESIS**

**Analysis of the impact of wages on informal payments in the Romanian health system**

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**CLUJ-NAPOCA**

**2022**



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**Keywords: medical system, medical staff, patient, informal payments, corruption, gratitude, law, comparative study, payroll, reduction measures.**

This paper addresses the impact of wages on informal payments in the Romanian healthcare system, and the underlying causes of this corruption phenomena, from the perspective of medical staff. The main purpose of this thesis was to evaluate the impact of wages on informal payments in the Romanian health system. Their perception of informal payments before and after salary increases in 2018 was also investigated, studying the impact of salaries on these practices. Furthermore, during the research, we investigated the causes that determine the request or acceptance of informal payments by medical staff in Romania. Both financial and socio-cultural causes, as well as causes arising from job dissatisfaction, were investigated.

The reasons that were the basis for choosing the topic of the doctoral thesis are multiple. First, the vast majority of research in the field focuses on the perception of those who give "attention", and not on those who receive or request this type of "payment". Secondly, the very high interstate variability of this practice determines the need to study this phenomenon at the level of each country, sometimes even at the level of various regions of

the same state. In Romania, at present, there are no studies to investigate the causes of informal payments from the perspective of medical staff, nor research to investigate the impact that the 2018 salary increases had on this corrupt practice. Finally, the magnitude of this phenomenon at the level of the Romanian health system was an important factor in choosing this topic.

This thesis is structured in 7 chapters, the first 2 representing an extensive study of the literature. In these first two chapters, we provided an overview of the meaning of the structure of health systems, the prevalence and impact of informal payments on them, and we tried to illustrate the underlying causes of these corrupt practices.

In Chapter 1, an inventory of the definitions of informal payments was made. The structures of the health systems at the level of the European Union, Central and Eastern European states, as well as the Romanian one was analyzed. The prevalence of informal payments, their level, and the impact that envelope payments have on the functionality of health systems was also studied. Thus, following the analysis of the literature, we identified research conducted by Cherecheș and collaborators (Cherecheș et al., 2013) who found no less than 61 definitions of informal payments.

The aim was to study the phenomenon of informal payments in other countries, such as the European ones and in the European Union. It was shown that these countries also face this problem, with the share of the phenomenon being higher in Eastern European countries. Also in the first chapter, we considered necessary to study the organization of the healthcare system in Romania and the social health insurance system. Finally, we analyzed corruption and informal payments in the Romanian health system.

In the second chapter we performed an analysis of the underlying causes of informal payments. The type and level of financing of health systems, insufficient remuneration as a

cause of acceptance of OOPs, the cultural heritage that explains informal payments as a sign of satisfaction or as a right were investigated. Causes such as facilitating access to medical services and the failure of preventive measures and combating the phenomenon of informal payments, were also analyzed. Thus, five main causes have been identified that facilitate the phenomenon of informal payments: the low level of financing of the health system, insufficient remuneration of medical staff, cultural heritage, informal payments are perceived as a right and difficult access to health services.

The third and the fourth chapters comprise the results of our two original studies. The first research, entitled “INFORMAL PAYMENTS IN ROMANIA: THE MEDICAL PERSONNEL POINT OF VIEW. A PRELIMINARY STUDY” investigates the causes of informal payments from the perspective of health workers before the salary changes implemented in 2018.

This preliminary research was based on a questionnaire containing twelve questions. The findings suggest that insufficient payment for medical staff has been a major factor in generating and perpetuating the phenomenon of informal payments. In parallel with the financial factor, the habit of "taking" and the perception that the patient "satisfies" by offering informal payments also participated in the maintenance of this corrupt practice. It was not clear from this research whether a salary increase would reduce the level of informal payments, even though most respondents saw the need to implement this financial measure as a necessity.

The second original study, entitled " COMPARATIVE STUDY OF INFORMAL PAYMENTS IN THE ROMANIAN HEALTHCARE SECTOR BEFORE AND AFTER WAGES INCREASE. THE MEDICAL PERSONNEL POINT OF VIEW," investigates the impact of the 2018 wages increases had on this corrupt practice. This comparative study was

based on two relatively similar questionnaires, applied before and after the 2018 salary increases. Our results suggest that the 2018 salary increase had a beneficial effect on the perception of medical staff about informal payments. Moreover, the data obtained suggest that the insufficient remuneration of health care workers was probably the most important factor in accepting informal payments. However, socio-cultural factors should not be neglected.

Chapter 5 contains is comprised of five interviews conducted with the medical staff. They aimed to complete the complex picture of the causes of informal payments from the perspective of healthcare workers. Through these interviews, the interviewees had the opportunity to broadly support and argue their views on the phenomenon of informal payments.

The sixth chapter summarizes the results obtained, integrates them in the literature and makes concrete proposals for measures that could reduce the level of informal payments. In this chapter it was concluded that there is practically no single and successful strategy in combating informal payments, so that the choice of the optimal option depends on a multitude of factors, including the financial structure of the health system, plus local characteristics.

Chapter 7 is reserved for the general conclusions of this doctoral thesis.

The novelty of this thesis is represented by the approach of the topic of informal payments in the Romanian health system, from the perspective of the medical staff, other research conducted on this topic, being carried out from the patient's perspective. We argue that in order to really have a correct picture of the phenomenon of informal payments, such research is needed. Another aspect of originality is represented by the fact that this research



studied the phenomenon of informal payments, before and after the implementation of a public policy, namely the increase of salaries in 2018.