Social Exclusion of Disadvantaged Groups in the Modern Russian Society

Evelina Ravilevna Galieva[1], Maria Yurievna Eflova[2]

Abstract

Social exclusion is both a scientific theory and a socio-political discourse. This paper deals with the study of social exclusion of deprived groups such as drug users, which is based on an analysis of complex issues arising from the spread and use of psychoactive substances. The spread of drug abuse as a phenomenon is the cause of the stigmatization of communities and the exclusion of drug users from societies. The problem carriers are not only patients with drug addiction, but also those who have experience of one-time, episodic experiments with drugs and psychotropic substances. This paper is based on the results of empirical studies, which the subject was the study of drug use practices in modern society. The combination of a quantitative and qualitative strategy for data collection and analysis represented a dynamic accumulation of information at different levels about the object under study – social exclusion of drug users: methods of document analysis were applied such as regulatory legal acts, interviews with drug users and experts in the field of drug use and questionnaire survey, as well as secondary analysis of data from all-Russian sociological research. The social exclusion of deprived groups and ways to overcome it directly depend on the nature of the scenarios for social exclusion, which is the result of the stigmatization of deprived groups.

Keywords: Social exclusion, Drug addiction, Drug abuse, Rehabilitation, Deprivation, Social inclusion, Barrier-free environment, Anti-drug policy.

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[1] Kazan Federal University, Chair of General and Ethnic Sociology, M.A. E-mail: evelinanalim@mail.ru
[2] Kazan Federal University, Chair of General and Ethnic Sociology, assistant professor, Doctor of Philosophy. E-mail: meflova@gmail.com

Introduction

A. Giddens's theory of structuration notes the continuous interaction of social actors and institutions that form a social structure. The routineization of the activities of individuals plays a key role in the formation of stable elements of the social structure. Sharing the opinion of American sociologists S. Barley and P. Tolbert (1997), we shall admit that the theory of structure largely ignores the processes of institutionalization, which makes it difficult to interpret a number of processes. However, the study of the processes of institutionalization makes it possible to reveal the complexity of the formation of the mechanisms of the social structure and social system.

Sharing the beliefs of scientists about the possibility of studying discriminated social groups separated from the general social stream through the prism of the concept of social exclusion and the theory of structure, the authors in this work implements their own approach, synthesizing the concepts of social exclusion (Lenoir, 1989; Rodgers, 1995; de Haan, 1997), A. Giddens's theory of structure (1984) and the concept of institutionalization (Barley & Tolbert, 1997). The polyparadigmatic context of social exclusion allowed us to expand the epistemological possibilities of the theory of social exclusion and elaborate the mechanisms and procedures of social exclusion/inclusion.

The complexity of the formation of social structure mechanisms is revealed through the application of the institutional analysis. Analyzing this phenomenon in the context of the theory of institutionalization, social exclusion can be considered as a process resulting in a multilevel social exclusion. There are different levels of exclusion, and the social actor can "move" from one level to another in different periods of time. The process of social exclusion, being a private process of institutionalization, is logically explained from the standpoint of institutional theory. Social actions and institutions are linked through scenarios implemented in legislative acts, program documents, documentary sources of public organizations (for example, re-socialization programs, etc.) and "performed" in the sphere of social action.

Analysis of practices of social exclusion served as the basis for the works by M. Weber (concepts of cultural change), L. Wittgenstein and M. Heidegger (concepts of practices). Domestic sociologists F. Borodkin, M. Astoiants, E. Iarskaia-Smirnova made an important contribution to the interpretation of social exclusion. The theory itself began to form in Europe in response to the crisis of the welfare state and the fear of the disintegration of society caused by socio-economic crises. The theory of social exclusion is based on the division of society into "insiders" and "outsiders" and takes into account not only the "vertical" structuring of society, but also "horizontal" differences. It describes various categories of people excluded from society. A bit later, this theory included a broader range of

issues – it was used to explain and analyze various types of social ill-being associated with social problems, primarily due to economic crises, long unemployment, growing instability of social relations, including relations between family members. Social exclusion is a multi-dimensional concept related to exclusion (deprivation) in the economic, social and political spheres. For the analysis of social exclusion, it is important to identify the features of power relations in society, the direction of social policy, and the level of development of civil society. The subject of analysis is often the processes, mechanisms of social exclusion and the work of organizations on the resocialization of individuals and communities. The theory of social exclusion has wide practical application: international organizations and states develop mechanisms of social inclusion, which certainly affects the external and internal social policies.

If we analyze socially excluded groups, we will be able to note a different degree of tolerance of the mainstream to these groups. The society is most open to groups of children who have fallen into difficult life situations, single mothers with many children, children with disabilities. However, the level of tolerance is very low in relation to socially excluded deprived groups, such as ex-prisoners, drug users. Addiction is a very popular social problem, often discussed by federal and regional media. The peculiarities of discourse have also influenced the perception of this social problem by society. Social isolation is not always a consequence of material insufficiency (poverty). Despite this, socially excluded groups are unable to maintain living standards for consumption, which as a result leads to the infringement of human rights and freedom of choice. The result of social exclusion is social isolation, that is the inability of people to participate in society, which has several dimensions: economic, political, and social. It can be assumed that the lack of tolerance in Russia is one of the most important factors of social exclusion. Participating in conferences, seminars, roundtables on the problems of drug addiction, one can hear even among experts sharp, intolerant statements about their charges. If doctors and law enforcement representatives use discriminatory models and practices in their rhetoric and professional activity, then the main part of society treats the words "drug addiction" peremptorily, humiliating human dignity.

An important factor for deprived communities is the self-exclusion factor. The existence of exclusion scenarios in the society does not always lead individuals to a zone of deep exclusion, if there is a potential for reforming the scenarios, expressed in resources and active activities. Self-exclusion based on deprivation has socio-psychological indicators and is a state that gives the social actor a feeling of deprivation and insecurity in comparison with other individuals; individual deprivation is accompanied by social deprivation, where society plays a key role in its formation. The society, through labels and stigmas, underestimating the

abilities and opportunities of individuals and communities, unevenly distributes resources and social rewards such as prestige, power, statuses and the corresponding opportunities for participation in social life.

Methods

The design of the empirical study was based on the "well-founded theory" (B. Glezer, A. Strauss, J. Corbin, 2001), which assumes an "ascent" from practice to theory, a constant appeal to practice, a combination of induction and deduction, synthesis and comparison of information and results obtained from the collection of empirical data. The logic of the empirical research was built from the private to the general, from systematic empirical research to the construction of a theory. The results of the empirical study served as the basis for the emergence of conceptual categories. Following a "well-grounded theory", the research involved a separate case study with the drug users included in long-term follow-up programs on the basis of the Public Organization for the Republic of Tatarstan, "Pokrov - Support for Women's Initiatives" (N=5) (research period 2006-2014); in-depth interviews with drug users (N= 24) (research period 2013-2014); in-depth interviews with experts in the field of counteracting drug addiction, drug prevention and treatment (N=33) (research period 2013); a questionnaire survey of the population of the Republic of Tatarstan (Russia) aged 14 years and older (N=3,105 respondents), the statistical deviation at 2σ - double standard deviation was - 2.1%. To understand in addition, the mechanisms of pre-institutionalization, we analyzed the documents: regulatory legal acts with respect to drug users.

Results

In general, it can be noted that the state policy of the Russian Federation on drug users is conducted in three directions: first, the identification and recording of persons who use drugs; secondly, treatment of drug users; thirdly, punishment. A complex situation has developed with the assessment of the number of drug users. The manipulation of civil servants, doctors, scientists, law enforcement officials with statistics lead to the opposite conclusions about the severity of the problem of drug addiction, the effectiveness of measures of treatment and prevention. According to the results of the author's research in 2012-2013, the total level of drug addiction of the population of Tatarstan aged 14 years and older was 8.6%.

Numerous Russian studies show that the first experience of drug use of Russians falls on the age of 13-15 years. Expansion of drug use is carried out at the expense of the youngest age groups, where the share of those having at least once tried the drug is close to 50%. The first

practices of drug use have an impact on the entire period of socialization of the adolescent in the future. It should be noted that attitude toward drug users has been changing in the mass consciousness, becoming more tolerant. According to the results of sociological surveys conducted by the All-Russian Center for the Study of Public Opinion, conducted in 2013, 29% of Russians believed that drug users should, in one way or another, be isolated. Ten years later, less Russians insisted on this – 21%. On the contrary, the proportion of those who believe that drug users should get help has grown significantly, from 24% to 47%. As we can see, drug users are increasingly seen as people who need understanding, sympathy, and sometimes protection. Accordingly, the views on the reasons for the appearance of such people in society change. Public opinion often removes their guilt from them for their behavior, tends to exculpation of their way of life.

The results of sociological studies show that there is an inverse correlation between the degree of involvement in the drug environment and the degree of concern about the problem of drug use. It can be assumed that such concern or tension of public opinion about this problem is a kind of barrier that can to a certain extent deter the spread of drugs. The attitude of society to any of social groups predetermines not only the present and future situation of these groups, but also their very existence.

The processes of social exclusion occur both at the stage of identification, counting, and at the stage of identifying and recording persons who use drugs. In the Russian legislation, this procedure is currently not clearly defined. Identification of people who use drugs is selective. However, the introduction of compulsory testing of schoolchildren puzzles in the issues of observing the rights of citizens, of unreasonable financial expenses for revealing the facts of drug use with insufficient funding of medical centers involved in the treatment and rehabilitation of already identified drug users.

The sociological analysis of a number of regulatory legal acts and interviews with drug users allowed drawing the following conclusions. The state over the past two decades has not taken any active, productive steps in reducing the number of drug users, limiting itself to only administrative responsibility for consumption and the declared opportunity to undergo treatment and rehabilitation. However, the system of treatment and rehabilitation has not developed. Unfortunately, scientific achievements in the field of treatment and prevention have not reached the mass consumer. Of course, there are successful models of treatment and rehabilitation of drug users, but they are represented in separate centers. Against the backdrop of this depressing picture, in 2010, the "Strategy of the state anti-drug policy of the Russian Federation until 2020" was approved, which not only shows the contradictory state of the system of treatment and rehabilitation of drug users, but also outlines the main steps that the

state must take to provide real help to drug users. Based on the questionnaire survey, interviews with experts and drug users, it can be argued that the problem of drug use is present in society, drug users need help from both the health authorities and civil society.

At the present stage, conflicting scenarios are being implemented in the field of drug policy and social policy regarding drug users: if the state recognizes drug users as sick people in need of treatment and rehabilitation, they should be put out to the Ministry of Health and Social Development with the support of public and religious organizations. If the state recognizes drug users as criminals who need to be identified through the general testing of schoolchildren (the methods of identifying drug users do not affect all strata of the population) and their prosecution or referral to compulsory treatment, then they should be dealt with by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Federal Penitentiary Service. On the one hand, drug use is an administrative offense, and on the other – a drug-addicted person has the right to free and high-quality medical care. The first part of the state policy towards drug addicts is performed fairly qualitatively. The main problems lie in the area of providing assistance to drug users, first of all it concerns medical support, as well as assistance in rehabilitation and subsequent social adaptation of this category of citizens.

Thus, there is a direct dependence of the processes of social exclusion of deprived groups on legal institutionalization: discriminatory models are laid both in the content of regulatory legal acts and in the process of their implementation. The mechanism of institutionalization of social exclusion is formed in the legal field and fixed in regulatory legal acts, which are the basis for constructing barriers, discrimination of deviant deprived groups and violation of human rights. The influence of legal specifics, which fixes discrimination, is noticeable at various stages and in various forms of excluding drug users. The strategy of social exclusion of drug users is determined by the essential institutionalized scenarios of drug policy and the specifics of its reproduction in Russia. Contradictions in the institutionalization of the strategy of elements of drug policy, which result in the processes of social exclusion of drug users and HIV-positive people, are caused by: inconsistency in the formation of legal content; heterogeneity of subjects, their opposite interests; contradictory socio-cultural values of the actors involved in the production, distribution, use of psychoactive substances, and counteraction to these processes.

The empirical study revealed the situation of drug users in an exclusive field: they are in "full exclusion". In addition to institutionalized discriminatory scenarios, the practices of self-exclusion are formed, which is the basis for the formation of deprivation scenarios.

Social inclusion in turn includes the implementation of practices to restore the full range of rights and opportunities, tolerant treatment of these groups by society and the de-

institutionalization of discriminatory scenarios by the state. Active actors and institutions of the process of inclusion are: a representative of the social excluded group, whose activity manifests itself in social adaptation; the activities of medical institutions that include treatment and provision of rehabilitation services; the institutions of civil society taking part in social adaptation and initiating the formation of a barrier-free environment; society as a whole, integrating the data of the group and state authorities, deinstitutionalizing discriminatory legislative and executive practices. The framework of social inclusion involves the processes of social adaptation, re-socialization, integration, and the formation of a barrier-free environment. In the process of inclusion, an important place is given to restoring the positive self-identification of the excluded and his/her tolerant perception by society. Social inclusion is difficult for groups and individuals having served a sentence in prison, because of the additional stigmatization of this group. It is worth noting the importance of the institution of the family and close environment and the institutions of civil society in the implementation of inclusive scenarios.

Studies of the social structure of modern Russian society conducted in recent years make it possible to draw a conclusion about the emergence and growth of a significant stratum of people, related on many grounds to socially excluded from the active participation in society. This contradicts the declared role of Russia as a social state and requires the implementation of comprehensive measures to neutralize social exclusion in all its manifestations, as well as making serious adjustments to the government's economic and social policies in order to overcome social stratification in society, improve the level and quality of life of individuals and groups in Russian society.

We should note that the state over the past two decades has not taken any active, productive steps in addressing the problem of an increasing number of drug users and reduction in the age of those taking drugs, limiting itself to only administrative responsibility for consumption and the declared opportunity to undergo treatment and rehabilitation. However, the system of treatment and rehabilitation did not develop, but collapsed like the entire state and municipal health system. We do not downplay the scientific achievements, however, they unfortunately have not reached the mass consumer. Of course, there are successful models of treatment and rehabilitation of drug users, but they are represented in separate centers. Against the backdrop of this depressing picture, in 2010, the "Strategy of the state anti-drug policy of the Russian Federation until 2020" was approved, which not only shows the deplorable state of the system of treatment and rehabilitation of drug users, but also outlines the main steps that the state must take to provide real help to drug users.

Conclusion

Summarizing the main results of the theoretical and empirical parts of the study, we can draw the following conclusions. Given the temporal and historical continuum – the socio-economic space of Russia – it can be noted that the terminology of social exclusion/inclusion has not spread in Russian society, unlike the western one, where there was a radical change in socio-political discourse and a turn from poverty to social exclusion. The Russian legislation treats social exclusion as a difficult life situation that violates the life of an individual. The law defines groups that need care and assistance because of especially difficult life situations, however, it does not specify deviant deprived groups. The lack of adequate rhetoric significantly complicates inclusive processes in the Russian space.

Acknowledgements

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