MODERN MASS MEDIA: FROM STIGMATISATION TO DISCRIMINATION

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Abstract. The article is devoted to analysis of the connection between the phenomena of stigmatisation and discrimination and the role of the modern Ukrainian mass media in forming and spreading them. In this paper we concentrate our attention on the newspaper articles, full of stigma and discrimination that are manifesting in the numerous words, such as "alcoholic", "con", "disabled", "drug addict", "psycho", "refugee", "negro"., "the Muscovites", "the Jews", etc. So modern mass media play an important role in the processes of stigmatisation and discrimination of an individual or group of people that manifest themselves indirectly through the spread of negative attitudes in society.

Keywords: stigma, stigmatisation, discrimination, labeling theory, stigmatised individual, the mass media.

The problem of stigmatisation – the assignment of negative perceptions to an individual because of perceived difference from the population at large – was studied by many scientists in the past: E. Hoffman ("Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity"), R. Haghighat (unitary theory of stigmatisation), H. Becker, K. Erikson and E. Lemert (labeling theory), A. Finzen (types of stigma) and others. Modern definition of stigma was studied by such scientists as O.O. Aleksandrov, Ya.A. Agaiev, N.A. Bielonosova, S.Ya. Bronin, P. Byrne, A. Crisp, I.Ya. Gurovych, M.M. Kabanov, A.P. Kotsiubynskiy, G.M. Kravchenkova, T.P. Lipai, V.F. Morgun, L.P. Tushyntseva, O.O. Vlasova and others.

Stigma is a human characteristic feature that significantly discredits it in the eyes of those who surround her (Gryga, Semygina, Zubets, 2005, p. 77).

The Greeks originated the term "stigma" to refer to bodily signs designed to expose something unusual and bad about the moral status of the signifier. In Christian times this term was used to mark bodily signs of holy grace or bodily signs of physical disorder.

Since the second half the XIX century this word has begun to be used figuratively as a "label", "brand of shame", and in medicine as "a sign of disease."

The first study, devoted to the problem of stigma, was the book of the American sociologist Erving Goffman "Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity" (1963). He defined stigma as: "The phenomenon whereby an individual with an attribute which is deeply discredited by his/her society is rejected as a result of the attribute. Stigma is a process by which the reaction of others spoils normal identity". Goffman mentioned three different types of stigma may be: 1) abominations of the body (various physical deformities); 2) blemishes of individual character perceived as weak will (mental disorder, imprisonment, addiction, alcoholism, homosexuality, unemployment, suicidal attempts, and radical political behavior); 3) the tribal stigma of race, nation, and religion (1963).

Swiss psychiatrist Asmus Finzen distinguishes the following types of stigma:

1) congenital stigma (harelip and cleft palate, deafness and blindness, mental underdevelopment or ginger hair);
2) stigma because of disease (deformation of head, loss of eye or nose, primary skin diseases and burns);
3) stigma of belonging to religious, national or racial minorities (2000, pp. 34-37).

In the 1960-70-s "labeling theory" became a dominant sociological theory of crime. Its supporters Howard Becker, Edwin Lemert and Kay Erikson said that deviance is socially constructed through reaction instead of action and behaviors are deviant only when society labels them as deviant. The labeling theory emphasis upon society's reactions to the deviant rather than on the deviant as an individual. According to
Howard Becker "...social groups create deviance by making rules whose infraction creates deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by other of rules and sanctions to an 'offender.' The deviant is one to whom that label has been successfully applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label" (Plummer, 2001, p. 191).

According to Rahman Haghighat's "unitary theory of stigmatisation" that points out four factors of stigma origins, the stigmatiser, on each occasion of avoiding the stigmatised, draws primary gain from reducing his or her anxiety and is thus powerfully reinforced. The stigmatiser also draws secondary benefits from stigmatisation by avoiding possible loss, danger and victimisation and by increasing his or her chances of economic survival (2001).

Stigmatisation is the process or act of "marking", "sticking" stigma. However, this concept has another meaning – a state of being stigmatised. Thus, stigmatisation expresses both the process, its result, the cause and consequence of this process (Byrne, 2000).

The stigmatisation in the action is called discrimination. In its most literal sense, discrimination (Latin discriminātiōn – distinguishing) is the ability to see the difference between two things or people. In the legal sense, discrimination means treating a person or particular group of people differently, especially in a worse way from the way in which you treat other people, because of their skin colour, sex, sexuality, etc. (Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary & Thesaurus).

The consequences of stigmatisation and discrimination may be the following: negative impact on people's minds that causes depression, low self-esteem and despair.

The aim of this investigation is to analyze the connection between the phenomena of stigmatisation and discrimination and the role of the modern Ukrainian mass media in forming and spreading them. The objectives of the investigation are: 1) to define the definition of the terms "stigmatisation" and "discrimination" and to ascertain the connection between them; 2) to describe the consequences of these phenomena for stigmatised individuals; 3) to classify the most important forms and types of discrimination; 4) to analyze the peculiarities of usage of stigma and discrimination in modern newspaper articles; 5) to determine the role of the modern mass media in the processes of stigmatisation and discrimination.

The topicality of this research lies in the fact that the problems of particular types of stigmatisation or discrimination are mostly investigated by scientists. The problem of the role of the mass media in these processes is not studied enough.

Results

Stigma reveals in the fact that on the basis of a single criterion of belonging to the group is formed a negative attitude, prejudice and discrimination of the person (Galetska, 2001, p. 159).

Stigmatisation can also occur on another level. Stigmatised people may internalize themselves the negative responses and reactions of others – a process that can result in self- or ‘internalized’ stigmatisation. Self-stigmatisation has links to what some writers have described as ‘felt’, as opposed to ‘enacted’, stigma, in that it primarily affects an individual’s or affected community’s sense of pride and worth (Aggleton, P., Wood, K., Malcolm, A. and Parker R., 2005, p. 9).

Stigmatised people are those who do not have full social acceptance and are constantly striving to adjust their social identities. Stigma is a marker for adverse experiences. The consequences of stigmatisation vary from shame, blame, secrecy, the “black sheep of the family” role, isolation, social exclusion, to stereotypes and discrimination (Byrne 2000). The other consequences of stigma are consider to be self-hatred, a feeling of worthlessness, helplessness, lack of control over the situation, attempting to prove his/her advantage over the other members of stigmatised group, inability to build relationships with people outside or within their own group, etc. (Gryga, Semygina, Zubets, 2005, p. 77). Agaiev (2015) adds to the list the following negative consequences of stigmatisation: increasing of the risk of infection because of fear to be tested; refusal of treatment because of the fear of condemnation; ignoring the person's real or potential HIV status or mental disorder; violation of the rights and freedoms of people in health care, labour, education, etc.; depreciation of certain groups of people; securing of social inequalities (including gender inequality, inequality related to sexuality, etc.).

As it was said earlier, when stigma is acted upon, the result is discrimination. Discrimination consists of actions or omissions that are derived from stigma and directed towards those individuals who are stigmatised.

In the international practice, the most comprehensive definition of the term "discrimination" was produced in 1992 by the Swiss Institute of Comparative Law (ISDC): discrimination is a social event or situation, characterized by difference, exclusion, restriction or preference, grounded on an arbitrary classification of individuals, groups or categories of individuals, based, in particular, on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other beliefs, national or social origin, economic status, birth or other circumstances, either natural or social characteristics, not related to personal abilities and merits, or to a specific human behavior, and when a particular person, group or category of persons is covered by the negative attitude (is perceived as a negative) caused by any form of behavior (including omissions) of government bodies or individuals and has the ultimate goal of the violation or destruction of recognition, usage or realization on an equal footing of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life (Kis, Sheremet, 2007, p. 7).

We can distinguish discrimination on the basis of: age (ageism, adultism); disability (ableism or disablism) and health status; sex and gender identity (sexism); sexual orientation; race(racism), including colour (colorism), nationality, ethnicity and ethnic origin; religion belief or activity; political belief or activity; language; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; employment activity and property status, etc.

There are two main forms of discrimination: direct and indirect. Direct discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic (age, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, disability, sex, etc.). Indirect discrimination occurs when there is a rule or policy that applies to everyone but disadvantages a person with a particular protected characteristic.

Direct discrimination can be also divided into associative and perceptive. Discrimination by association is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic. Discrimination by perception occurs when someone is directly discriminated against because others think that they possess a particular protected characteristic. They do not necessarily have to possess the characteristic, just be perceived to have the characteristic (The Equality Act, 2010).

Stigma and discrimination are interrelated, reinforcing and legitimizing each other. Stigma lies at the root of discriminatory actions, leading people to engage in actions or omissions that harm or deny services or entitlements to others. Discrimination can be described as the enactment of stigma. In turn, discrimination encourages and reinforces stigma (Aggleton, P., Wood, K., Malcolm, A. and Parker R., 2005, p. 11).

A number of factors can cause stigma and discrimination of a person or group of people, such as the extension of social fears, public censure, related to sexuality, disease and death, drug use; poor understanding of diseases; irresponsible reports in the mass media, etc. (Agaiev, 2015).

The mass media have an influence on people's attitudes as well as our common knowledge, but not always in the expected and desired ways. The active democratic role of the mass media in society can be influenced by a number of factors. The way the mass media represent, focus and give voice to different actors and incidents in society could have the unintentional result of strengthening a racist discourse instead of fighting against it. Mass media reporting is especially sensitive when it comes to ethnic, cultural and religious relations in our society (Wal, 2002, p. 3).

Stigma is always degrading, because it destroys people's individuality and emphasizes only on the negative qualities. People who are larger than average have to live with stereotypes in everyday life, but the effect is compounded when television reinforces this. Fat people on sitcoms are usually shown eating constantly, and are portrayed as lazy and stupid (the Council on Size & Weight Discrimination website).

Another example is that the images of people living with HIV in the print and visual media may reinforce blame by using language that suggests that HIV is an ‘African disease’, a ‘junkie's disease’, a ‘woman’s disease’, or even a ‘gay plague’ (Aggleton, P., Wood, K., Malcolm, A. and Parker R., 2005, p. 7).

Article 24 of the Constitution of Ukraine states: "Citizens have equal constitutional rights and freedoms and are equal before the law. There can be no privileges or restrictions based on race, colour, political, religious and other beliefs, sex, ethnic or social origin, property, residence, language or other characteristics" (Constitution of Ukraine, 1996). Nevertheless, modern Ukrainian newspaper articles themselves and
especially their headlines, that offer a short preview and must grab all the attention in a matter of seconds, contain many examples of stigma and discrimination, built on social stereotypes that take place in our society:

"Near "Ornava" poured "black" blood [чорна кров]... Arabs [араби] with Negroes [неграми] fought for our whores [курвів] " (New Ternopil newspaper, January 25, 2012);

Psycho [псих] from Ternopil killed a 46-year resident of Ivano-Frankivsk region (20 hvylyn, March 29, 2012);

Disabled [інваліди] are dandled and really made crippled (20 hvylyn, November 24, 2013);

Alcoholics [алкоголіки] begin the day with a glass of whiskey. Alcoholics [алкоголіки] get into fights. Alcoholics [алкоголіки] are always drunk. Alcoholics [алкоголіки] can not get one job for long period of time (BBC Ukraine, January 8, 2014);

Scientists have developed a smartphone application for ex-alcoholics [екс-алкоголіки] (Korrespondent.net, March 27, 2014);

I believe that I said nothing bad, just call a spade a spade: the Muscovites are the Muscovites [москалів – москалями], the Jews are the Jews [жидів – жидами] (Korrespondent.net, May 5, 2014);

In Ternopil former con [зек] was selling drugs (20 hvylyn, May 8, 2014);

Refugees [біженці] from Donbass and the Crimea came to Parliament to request refugee [біженців] status (Express, June 6, 2014);

The terrorists who blew up the recruitment office in Odessa, was a drug addict [наркоман] (Express, July 4, 2014);

He answered me in Russian: "You are negro [негр], and I know you carry drugs in our country. So where are drugs? (Korrespondent.net, January 5, 2015);

In the basement in Debaltseve the cons [зеки] from the fired colony are sitting and asking for help (Korrespondent.net, February 12, 2015);

A local alcoholic [алкоголік] has thrown a grenade Into the Plotnytskyi's car (Express, April 5, 2015);

The wave of protests swept the USA because of the killing of a teenager Negro [негра] for his sweater with a hood (Express, July 16, 2015).

After the events in Ukraine in 2013-2014, problem of ill-treatment of internally displaced persons (IDPs or settlers) among Ukrainian media has become more widespread. It is correct to call the people who had to move from one part of Ukraine to another, settlers, not refugees. Refugees are people who are forced to flee to other countries. That is, if a journalist calls Ukrainian citizens who have moved from the Crimea or Donbass, refugees, thus he admits that Crimea, Lugansk and Donetsk are not the territory of Ukraine. All internally displaced persons are citizens of Ukraine and have the same rights as others do. Nevertheless, nowadays we can see that they are perceived as "others". In the mass media, settler is often dirty, impudent, lazy, and is dependent on others. This has negative consequences – problems with employment and housing.

e.g.: Refugees-separatists from Slioviansk [біженці-сепаратисти зі Слов'янська] have robbed the ethnographer's house (Express, August 3, 2014);

In Lviv refugees from East [біженці зі Сходу] photographed showing middle finger to Maidan Heroes (Express, August 11, 2014);

In Ternopil region refugees [біженці] do not affect on the labour market (20 hvylyn, September 27, 2014);

There are refugees [біженці] from war-torn areas, which are still getting some help (Lvivska gazeta, July 28, 2015).

Discussion

Stigma can lead to discrimination and other violations of human rights which affect the well-being of people. Stigmatisation and discrimination are interrelated, reinforcing and legitimizing each other. These phenomena manifest themselves indirectly through the spread of negative attitudes in society, and modern media play an important role here.

Modern media are full of stigma and discrimination. The words "con", "alcoholic", "psycho", "disabled", "refugee", "drug addict", "negro", "the Muscovites", "the Jews", etc. are broadly used in the newspaper articles, on television and on the Internet. As for Ukraine, modern mass media also should be active in joining the information campaign in order to create a positive image of internally displaced persons among local people.
Compared with other factors that influence on the people's stigmatisation, the mass media are the most dynamic and the system that is quite easy to regulate. The media can influence not only directly on the individual, but also on his closest social environment, making efforts to change the public opinion towards a more tolerant attitude to stigmatised people as more effective.

Ultimately, stigma, discrimination and human rights provide three key entry points for successful work:
• preventing stigma;
• challenging discrimination when it occurs; and
• promoting and protecting human rights, including monitoring and redressing human rights violations.

References


