

Prediction and Reduction of Prejudice, a New Standard for the Profession of Psychologist

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Abstract: *The standard of the profession of psychologist is moving towards a clear objective: the role of psychologists should be put in the function of upgrading the quality of people's life in individual and social context. To upgrade the quality of life psychologists have to give directions how to reduce prejudices which have been formed during the new urban and sub urban developments. (Dovidio, 1994). This article will explain why the psychologists are investing big efforts in the methodology related with the identification of the causes of prejudice. However result of the recent studies underline the fact that psychological instruments often do not always reach to predict human behavior. On the other hand before accepting that intergroup prejudices is an integral part of human psyche created by the norms and cultural values, should carefully examine the effectiveness of institutional norms and values nurtured by psychological services. This psychological "anti-virus" will serve to control the intergroup prejudice. Also, the article emphasizes the role of psychological techniques in the reduction of intergroup prejudices.*

Key words: *intergroup prejudice, norms, values, reduction of prejudices etc .*

1. Introduction

The standard of the profession of psychologist is moving toward a clear objective: the role of the psychologist should intend to improve the quality of life for all the people, not only in individual but even in the social level.

The improvement of the quality of life is closely related with the reduction of prejudices that are formed under the specter of new developments and internal migration in urban areas.

During 1990, after the collapse of the communist system in Albania, it started a process of uncontrolled internal migration in the country. According to Instat¹ (2004) in Albania there were developed two periods of internal migration:

a) the first phase of internal migration started from 1992 to 1996. During this phase moved from rural to urban areas about 182,600 people.

b) The second phase of internal migration was developed from 1996-2001.

Approximately 91% of migrants from regional centers moved toward the capital and cities near sea side, about 60% of migrants were from the north of Albania, 32% came from the south and 8% from center Albania cities.

Tirana is the city which supported mostly the migrant from all over Albania. About 136.600 migrants come from other prefectures from across the country to Tirana. Durrresi is the second most attractive area and has more than 18% of migrants, around 44,900 people.

In this context the relationship between the citizens of the capital and new migrants after 1991 started to be created in a prejudiced way, as a result of social problems that have accompanied the process of internal migration.

In a study about the prejudices among the natives and internal migrants in Albania, as part of my doctoral work, some interesting data drew my attention. These facts came from focus group interviews that were conducted with citizens originally in Tirana and new migrants that arrived in Tirana after the year 1992, 1996 or 2000.

Twelve focus group interviews were conducted in total. Six of them were conducted with the group of people originally from Tirana and six from the community of migrants. The total sample selected was composed by 120 people, 10 people for each focus group. The probability sample was selected randomly and was balanced in terms of migration age, gender, social class, religious, educational level, etc.

It is worth mentioning that the first criteria of selection was living and being originally from Tirana and the other sample composed by new migrants. The findings from the focus groups showed that the Albanian state couldn't predict the migration flows. In 1996 it was recorded the first collision between the state perceived as a majority group from the new migrants settled in Bathore a suburb area in Tirana city and the new arrivals in this area.

¹ Albanian institute of statistics

The police attempted to destroy the first house of the migrants built in state land occupied by them, but the situation was aggravated as a result of clashes between the police and the community of the migrants. There were several wounded on both sides. This situation amplified the prejudice tendencies. The local people began to perceive the newcomers as occupiers of the property, while newcomers felt discriminated against by the majority.

Another problem is the low social and education level of internal migrants. For example about 49% of migrants or 124.000 people are unqualified and low skilled. Instat (2004)

These figures show clearly that the cultural level of migrants is limited due to the low level of education which brings difficulties in the integration of the city life. Also another argument why the new migrants were not integrated was the lack of access in public and social services like pre school education, colleges, ambulatory services etc.

Due to the low level of education migrants had not been competitive in the professional market by providing a few economic incomes. Migrants are much more competitive in the labour market in jobs that needs more physical force compared with the majority group.

A square in Tirana named "the unknown partisan" that served as a place for the migrants to search for any job was perceived by the majority group as a square of the people that belong to a low level social layer.

For many families part of the migrant group, Tirana was a city that offered an opportunity for more incomes, a better infrastructure in roads, social services etc. These expectations were fulfilled until the year 2005 through national projects finances by the World Bank in informal composed by the migrants.

From 1992 until 2005 migrants used to perceive themselves as discriminated and not treated fairly by the Albanian state, which was focused more in investing in the center of the cities than in suburb areas. To close the wide range of social problems that has caused the migration process it can be mentioned the process of legalization of informal properties built in the land of state or to the private owners. Since 1992 until today this fact is mentioned as "a political card" in the campaigns of right and left parties, a promise not kept yet, that causes frustration to the informal community of the migrants. Considering all these social problems discussed before the relationship between the migrants and the majority of population is based in different perceptions supported by misunderstandings and group prejudices. The stereotyping process of immediate social problems and social categorization of different cases has created opportunities for the birth of a cycle of direct and implicit prejudices between new migrants and local people in Tirana.

2. Prejudices and creation of good relations between groups. An overview about prejudice.

The prejudice needs to be viewed as a process within a set of relationships, rather than a state or characteristic of particular people (Abrams & Houston, 2006).

It should be clearly understood when prejudice can take different forms, when it can be expressed and which are the factors that promote or inhibit its expression.

Some of the best standards of psychologist today are the exploration of specific conditions that facilitate the appearance of prejudice and ways how to measure it.

Prejudices can be directed to different groups during the migration process and can be expressed in modern forms. Today, the psychological standard is moving towards the establishing criteria's for measuring the prejudice and techniques of reducing it.

Another challenge for the psychology today is to predict moments when prejudice can go further in group discrimination and inequality. Within psychology there have been numerous attempts to define prejudice. Crandall and Eshelman (2003) noted that prejudice cannot always be described as irrational or unjustified and it is therefore better to define it as 'a negative evaluation of a social group or an individual that is significantly based on the individual's group membership' (p. 414).

According to this approach the prejudice invalidates the values of people based on their membership in a social group. This process allows prejudices to form various negative or positive stereotypes. On the other hand, prejudices arise as a consequence of the denial of social values of a group through the process of the individual generalization, when stereotypes, attitudes and emotions toward the group are directed to a member of this group. (Maitner, Mackie and Smith, 2007). Human groups are different. There are groups of poor people, less educated, with lower occupational status, poor health or engaged in crime more than others. While, some groups are more powerful than others. It is not a prejudicing thought to be conscious about the existence of such differences. On the other hand the knowledge of people for each other are often limited and are based on generalization and stereotypes. (Mackie and Smith, 2002)

For example, it not said that all migrants in Tirana have been included in crimes. On the other hand, the knowledge that people have for each other are incomplete or incorrect and provide a generalization of their prejudices.

3. The concept of good relationship

According to this point of view good relationships between groups are indicators for a qualitative relationship without prejudice. The prejudice and good relations are not opposites. They should be seen as two independent aspects of a social relationship. In terms of good relations people may be more or less cohesive, considering themselves to be and acting as a cooperative, mutually supportive and coherent group. In terms of prejudice people may be unconcerned about other groups and their differences or they may be highly used to potential differences, comparisons, threats and so on posed by external groups. Often to avoid being involved in intergroup prejudice people try to be part of a cohesive group and to keep harmonious relations, positive opinions for other members. This situation of good relations with low prejudice can be seen as a **harmonious cohesion**. Prejudice can be seen as an antipathy between the groups and people who have no strong commitment to improve the relationship with other social groups. This situation can be seen as a malign antipathy.

Finally, there can be an absence of both good relations and prejudice. A group of people who hold no particular prejudices may be atomised and disconnected from one another with no strong ties even though they occupy the same geographical location. For example, often residents in Tirana do not show prejudice against the newcomers after 1992 but on the other hand they declare that they have no information about how these people live and what culture they have. This is an element of social indifference. At the end it is noticed that it is very important to keep in mind the correlation between prejudice and good relation. An effort to promote good relations between groups can reduce prejudices indirectly; at the same time an attempt to reduce prejudice could indirectly promote good relations.

Reducing prejudice through building good relationships is an important objective of the role of psychologists today in the field called social psychology of neighborliness (Abrams, 2006).

4. Bases of prejudice

Prejudice can have a variety of bases. This section considers the values people apply to intergroup relationships, the way they make use and apply categories to define those relationships, and the importance of these categories for people's sense of identity. Another basis for prejudice lies in people's personality, but as it is arguable whether this is amenable to change it is not discussed in detail in this section. It is covered briefly in the section on engagement.

5. Values

Some of the community values that are important for people's life promote equality, social justice, social power, and respect for tradition. (Schwartz and Bardi, 2001).

Values are related to attitudes and a wide range of behaviors such as cooperation and intergroup competition, social contact, the selection of individuals at work (Schwartz and Bardi, 2001).

Schwartz (1992, 2007) has developed and validated a theory of fundamental values. Also he has developed an instrument to measure the values. This questionnaire for measuring the respective values for certain issues was part of a European Social Survey. The survey data allow researchers to understand differences in social value priorities at two levels – differences between the importance attached to particular values by different social groups, and also differences among values priorities of individuals within groups. For some groups, special values are close to those seen on their morals, in accordance with accepted principles within certain groups. For example, for the migrant in Tirana the respect for old tradition has a great importance comparing with the citizens of Tirana which has a new style of life based in new traditions.

Prejudice, measured in terms of disrespect or perhaps hatred, is often furnished by a perception that an out-group (a group that one's own is compared with) holds values that are contemptible or even disgusting. In this context an analysis of prejudice that ignores the clash of values and focus only on specific attitudes or behaviors, is a poor psychological analysis. Measuring and comparing the priority given to particular values by different groups can provide important insight into why they may be the targets or sources of hostility and prejudice. It can, therefore, help to identify where interventions can usefully be targeted.

6. The contrast of values and social equality

Katz and Haas (1988) proposed an explanation system of modern ambivalent intergroup prejudice based on the process of social equality and the contrast of values. The view of social equality proposes a pro attitude to minority groups and a

strong legislation against prejudice, discrimination and intergroup racism. According to this point of view when a group does not support a significant value to the other group is likely that this process be seen as a legitimate step towards intergroup bias.

There are cases when groups "may share some values". Prejudice against them is described as "reasonable process" due to the failure to fully accept a set of values of another group.

There are moments when prejudice and discrimination can occur despite the presence of values or attitudes. Latest ideas about reducing prejudice take in consideration the fact that that social equality can serve as an "anti virus prejudice" by encouraging positive response to minority or disadvantaged groups (Dasgupta and Rivera, 2006).

Authoritarianism and the people who do not respect the values of social equality seems to be the primary causes in the rise of prejudice (Oyamot, Borgida and Fisher, 2006).

It is generally understood that the prejudice against a particular group happens when we give priority to the values of the group where we take part and minimize the values of the other group (Haddock and Zanna, 1998).

7. Reduction of prejudices through psycho-social techniques. Intergroup similarity and the process of de-categorization

There are several theories about how categorization can serve to reduce prejudice. If groups are seen as very different, there is a maximum potential for bias between them, especially if there is some degree of interdependence, for example, when the welfare of a group depends on the stability of the other group.

How can people overcome the problem of categorization?

One solution is the process of 'de-categorization' or simply the perception of people as individuals and not as members of the group.

It is not said that without categorization there can no be prejudice but the question is how this process can contribute to the reduction of the intergroup prejudice. However, the process of de-categorization can not ignore the physical differences, in linguistic, geographic, and socio-cultural environment that can restore categorization (Brewer and Miller, 1984). To cope with this restoration process other models have been developed to reduce intergroup prejudice.

The model of common identity proposes that prejudice can be reduced to "re categorization" noting that people share the perception of the group based on the human category (Gaertner and Dovidio, 2000).

According to Crisp and Hewstone, (2007) it is possible to use multiple categories of descriptions to change the direction of prejudice. Some axes of categorization can paralyze the possibility of applying stereotypes. For example the group of newcomers is divided into several categories, young men, old, girls, women and children. By creating the possibility of several groups some of the stereotypes may become irrelevant, and some groups escape from prejudice. But also there is a risk of prejudice focusing in each sub categories becoming more focused. For example, eldest people in Albania are more patriarchal, than young people who can adapt easily with a new style life in capital.

8. Optimal distinctiveness

Besides the categorization, the emergence of intergroup prejudice depends on other factors. People create their group identities under the umbrella of national identity. For example the group of migrants in Tirana, located in Bathore and the group of autochthon citizens in Tirana both groups have a common Albanian identity.

One of the challenges is how to maintain a common identity without denying the importance of group identity. Brewer (1991) has shown that people prefer to feel that they are part of a group which is large enough or inclusive, but not so large that everyone can be a member. Attempts to assimilate people into a greater dominant group may provoke a counter-reaction by creating dangers to make them even more resistant individuals and their groups more specific and distinctive. (Brewer, 1991, Hewstone and Brown, 1986; Hornsey and Hogg, 2002).

Taking in consideration the fact that people want to provide identities with an optimal level of characteristics, the strategy for building cohesion for all communities should be based in the protection of identities and cohesion within communities.

Focusing the attention on group norms: A further strategy is to focus people's attention on the group norms that promote tolerance and social equality (Abrams and Hogg, 1988, Jetten, Spears and Manstead, 1997). Instead of changing stereotypes about certain groups would be more efficient to change what people believe about what group members do.

This is because when people identify with a social category they also embrace the norms of that category as standards and reference points for their own views and actions. This offers the intriguing scenario of finding ways that

groups can enhance their members' identity by demonstrating that they are, for instance, more open, kind and tolerant than contrasting groups.

Studies on the way groups legalize the actions of their members shows that when attitudes based on core values of equality are framed as in-group norms, individuals who challenge such norms are likely to be put under pressure to come into line and to be disliked.

This phenomenon is stronger for in group persons than out group persons (Abrams, Marques, Bown and Henson, 2000).

Strategies to reduce prejudice against certain groups may be open to influence from people who emphasis on joint membership of a tolerant group norms.

9. Reducing prejudice through contact theories

9.1 Intergroup contact

According to Allport (1954) intergroup contact is a mechanism that helps in reducing prejudice, between people because it promotes positive intergroup attitudes, the similarity of norms, setting of a common goals and the tendency of equality in social status.

According to psychologists some conditions has to be fulfilled on purpose to realize such a process: firstly, it's noted that the optimal conditions for intergroup contact rarely exist, secondly, its necessary to determine if is it better to have a high frequency of contact or less contacts but with high quality. An obligatory contact between groups does not reduce prejudice among people.

9.2 Direct Contact:

Psychological researches shows that the tendency to look the other groups in a friendly way can reduce intergroup prejudice. Psychologists support the opinion that structuring social friendly situations in social environments such as schools, institutions, media, etc. can provide friendship intergroup. A possible intergroup friendship promotes the building of mutual trust, reduces the anxiety for interaction, facilitates the exchanging of information and increases the empathy between groups. All these mechanism serve to reduce negative attitudes between groups (Brown and Hewstone, 2005).

9.3 Extended Contact.

Which is the probability for a teenager borne in Tirana to have a friend from Bathore (an informal and suburb area in Tirana)? How common is for a woman who lives in informal areas to consume a coffee with a guy from Tirana? To eliminate these barriers psychologist suggest to use the technique of extended or indirect contact (Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe and Roppa, 1997). The mechanism for extended contact is through awareness that another in-group member (ideally an in-group friend) is the friend of an out-group member; this reduces one's own psychological distance from the out-group member and can promote positive attitudes. There are more concrete consequences of extended contact too, such as the in-group member passing on relevant information about the out-group, perhaps dispelling inaccurate stereotypes.

10. Conclusions

The improvement of the quality of life is closely connected with the reduction of intergroup prejudices that are created under the specter of new developments in urban and suburban areas during the process of internal migration.

The cycle of intergroup prejudices may arise due to many factors, but psychologists are interested to understand how the intergroup prejudices can be formed as a result of contrast in the values, relationships and cultural identity of groups. (Schwartz and Bardi, 2001).

According to this point of view when a group does not support a significant value of the other group it is possible that this process can be considered as a legitimate step towards intergroup prejudices.

In different cases prejudice and discrimination can be present despite the presence of values or attitudes. The latest ideas about reducing the prejudice take in consideration the fact that social equality can serve as an "anti virus prejudice" because it encourages positive response to minority or disadvantaged groups (Dasgupta and Rivera, 2006).

There are several techniques to reduce prejudices. One of these techniques is the process of building good relations between groups which is perceived as an important objective of the psychologist's role nowadays in the field called the social psychology of community. (Abrams, 2006).

Another technique is de categorization and intergroup similarity that imply that people should be perceived as individuals and not as simply members of the group.

It can not be declared that without categorization we will not have prejudices, but at least psychology should find solutions that can contribute to the reduction of the premises of arising of the intergroup prejudices. (Brewer and Miller, 1984).

A further strategy is to focus people's attention to the group norms that promote tolerance and social equality (Abrams and Hogg, 1988, Jetten, Spears and Manstead, 1997). Instead of changing stereotypes about certain groups would be more efficient to modify what people believe that group members do. Also, a process that helps to reduce prejudice is the intergroup contact technique, which promotes a positive intergroup attitude, putting similar norms, setting common goals and a tendency toward the equality in social status.

Finally, psychologists can directly stimulate intergroup contact to social environments such as schools, institutions, media, etc. which can provide the friendship between groups (Allport, 1954). All these are psychological mechanisms that people can use to reduce negative attitudes toward each other (Brown and Hewstone, 2005).

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