

THE IMAGE OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN MACEDONIAN MEDIA

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Abstract

The paper explores the social exclusion within the media. The subject of the research is to identify the image of social exclusion within the Macedonian media. The main goal is to explore the social exclusion in terms of number, genre, source, and dimensions through which it is present in the selected media. In addition, it explores individuals and groups who are socially excluded, as well as entities that participate in their public articulation. The method of data collection is content analysis. In general, the results from the research show that media do not provide sufficient coverage of this topic, or in some cases, it is even misrepresented. Different media have different attitude towards the social exclusion. Selective approach and information with insufficient quality within the contents has been observed. The general conclusion is that the Macedonian media must urgently innovate ways and approaches for informing the public about social exclusion and at the same time, promote public debate on the problems of individuals and groups that are socially excluded. In this respect, we suggest a new, analytical and open approach to social exclusion in order to create appropriate public policies on this issue.

Keywords: *social exclusion, media, public, individuals, groups, entities*

Introduction

Social exclusion is a dominant topic in many social sciences. It is connected to the sociology in terms of social integration, stratification and social mobility, as a functional part of the periphery of the social core. The issue with the social exclusion has long had peripheral meaning in comparison to the other social topics, but in a relatively short time got central status. The reasons behind such interest result from the changes in the recent decades that took place in the societies and the social experience arising from them, and the need to expand the theoretical and empirical interests of sociologists.

In this regard, the issue of social exclusion is associated and analyzed from different scientific positions. Under social exclusion we mean permanent, multi-dimensional

deprivation of individuals. **First of all**, the excluded individuals do not participate in the allocation of social goods determined as *institutional* opportunities for education, access to health and social services, *cultural* opportunities in terms of shaping the identity, consumption of cultural products, socio-economic (employment, purchasing power) and interpersonal relationships (exchange of information and emotions). **Secondly**, such non-participation is not temporary, but it is a permanent condition (the way out from a particular unfavorable condition is not readily available). **Thirdly**, the non-participation in the allocation of social goods is not necessarily a result of personal faults of the excluded individuals, their personality, incapability or other difficulties. The social exclusion is primarily a result of institutional inequality. For example, due to the unequal educational opportunities. The multi-dimensional characteristics of social exclusion is emphasized by Matt Barnes (Barnes, 2002). He describes the social exclusion as persons affected by multiple “life accidents”. For example, the individual who has lost his job, at the same time lost their networks of friends, emotional support and the informal sources of informing about the opportunities for employment, while at the same time, the financial restrictions limit the possibilities of getting out of such condition, more than the job loss itself. Therefore, the social exclusion is a topic of public interest, which should be a central target of the media and source of their relevance to the society. They must be engaged in creating an image of social exclusion of individuals and groups within a society. In addition, the media must deal with greater responsibility and make a thorough analysis of the causes and consequences related to this issue. Of course, the media are not able to address unemployment, poverty, discrimination and marginalization of those who lack power in society, but can open public dialogue. Especially, media can provide universally accessible products, perform an essential service to society. They contribute to the public perception of current events and create social opinions, i.e. their acceptance or rejection.

2. Research goals

The main goal of the research is to identify and analyze the ways in which Macedonian media represent social exclusion. In particular, how the media define social exclusion, which dimensions of social exclusion are highlighted in the texts and contents of the media (poverty, education, health), which individuals and groups are represented as marginalized, who are the main actors in media contents and how they have presented their relationships.

3. Methodological aspects of research

The first knowledge acquired by the researcher during the research of the issue of social exclusion in the Macedonian society, especially in terms of social exclusion in the Macedonian media leads to the conclusion that, unfortunately, this issue is not specifically studied. Therefore, there is a motivation to explore the image of social exclusion. The subject of research is analyzed on theoretical and empirical level. On theoretical level, the subject matter is being explored via the theoretical approaches related to the social exclusion and theorization of the media and social exclusion. On empirical level, the subject matter is being explored via the following research questions: to what extent and how the social exclusion is demonstrated in the social media and is there a difference among various media. For this purpose, we used the content analysis method (Bryman, 2012: 288- 309). In the attempt to identify the social exclusion in the traditional media in our context, we followed the normative perspective that indicates how the mass media should inform regarding the developments, processes, events, in this particular case, the social exclusion. The units of analysis include

texts published in the analyzed media. In addition, we used the critical discourse analysis (Van Dijk, 2008), which focuses on the critical study of the social issues and procedures for processing of the movement between parts and the whole text, as well as between the text and the context.

3.1 Sample Design The sample used for collecting data through content analysis is target-oriented. Traditional media at national level have been selected, including: newspapers (Nova Makedonija and Sloboden pechat), radios (Makedonsko Radio 1 and Radio kanal 77) and televisions (Makedonska televizija 1 and 24 Vesti). Subject of analysis are the texts in the indicated media analyzed in their original and authentic form. The data collection took place from 01-31, March, 2019, whereby all days of the week have been covered.

4. Results

The obtained knowledge from the research is presented in terms of the following aspects: published texts and contents for social exclusion, based on genre, dimensions and areas, individuals and social groups, and entities through which the problems of excluded individuals and groups are articulated.

4.1 Published texts in the traditional media in terms of social exclusion.

During the research period, a total of 935 texts and contents regarding the topic of social exclusion have been published. The highest percentage of texts on this topic published daily, belongs to the informative newspapers, while the other media published almost identical percentage of texts and contents (Table 1).

Table 1: Social exclusion in the media

Social Exclusion	Informative newspapers	Radio	TV	Total
1. Main Focus	20.9 (179)	32.5 (12)	37.5 (15)	22 (206)
2. In a secondary focus	26.1 (224)	10.8 (4)	27.5 (11)	25.6 (239)
3. One in many topics	53 (455)	56.7 (21)	35 (14)	52.4 (490)
Total	100 (858)	100 (37)	100 (40)	100 (935)

Source: *Research, 2019*

Also, for the topic of social exclusion, the media inform about 52 percent in one in more topics. It shows that the media does not focus on this topic.

4.2 Published texts in the media on the social exclusion in terms of the genre

In terms of the genre, the data shows that the topic about social exclusion is represented mainly in the informative genres. The analyzed newspapers write about social exclusion in the form of factographic journalist genres – in the form of news 53 percent and report 23 percent. As we can see from table 2, the journalist genres ‘contribution’ and ‘commentary’ are rarely present, which is expected given the general representation of these genres in the media. This leads to the conclusion that the social exclusion has analytical and problem-oriented approach, thus reducing the space for public discussion on the matter.

In terms of radio stations in the analyzed period, it is clear that they are more oriented to the complex forms of informing. This is supported by the data that 40 percent of the talks

about social exclusion is shaped in the form of radio package (Table 2). This data suggests that the radio journalists used their professional capacities and through this genre they increased the social meaning and encouraged the public interest for social exclusion.

Table 2: Published articles on social exclusion regarding the genre

Genre	Informative newspapers	Radio	TV	Total
1. News	53 (452)	18 (7)	30 (12)	50.3 (471)
2. Raport	23 (193)	40 (15)	23 (9)	23.2 (217)
3. Interview	/	/	5 (2)	0.2 (2)
4. Appendix	12 (106)	/	2 (1)	11.4 (107)
5. Comment	11 (98)	/	/	10.4 (98)
6. Radio TVpackage	/ /	40 (14)	40 (16)	3.2 (30)
7. Reportage	1 (9)	2 (1)	/	1.0 (10)
Total	100 (858)	100 (37)	100 (40)	100 (935)

Source: *Research, 2019*

The data in Table 2 show that TV stations have chosen more complex genres - TV packages that are present in 40 percent of all published television texts. In this context, one should point out that the context of the medium affects the choice of the genre. The topic of social exclusion is suitable for TV which points to the conclusion that the selection of TV package as a genre is a response to the understanding of the media performance.

4.3 Published texts in the media on social exclusion in terms of the source

The question with the source of media texts is also part of the analysis because it serves as an indicator about the journalists' professionalism and the commitment of the media to this topic. In that direction, there is dilemma whether media invest in their own human resources (journalists), or they rely on the production of news agencies and other media. It can be concluded from the data in Table 3 that the sample contains texts prepared from journalist, rather than news agencies, as well as texts and contents obtained from the investigative journalism.

Table 3: Published articles on social exclusion regarding the source

Source	Informative newspapers	Radio	TV	Total
1. No source	29.4 (253)	46 (17)	30 (12)	30.1 (282)
2. Journalist	70.6 (605)	51.3 (19)	70 (28)	69.8 (652)
3. News agencies	/	2.7 (1)	/	0.1 (1)
Total	100 (858)	100 (37)	100 (40)	100 (935)

Source: *Research, 2019*

In fact, this refers to the knowledge that the selected Macedonian media are interested to elaborate topics on social exclusion by themselves, i.e. that they have capacity to monitor the internal political happenings and topics (69 percent editorial staff). Interested in total 30 percent have information about social exclusion for which the source is not listed.

4.4 Dimensions of the social exclusion in the selected media

As we pointed out, the social exclusion is a multidimensional phenomenon which encompasses various forms of deprivation of insufficiency of funds to meet the basic existential needs, unemployment, lack of access to health and education services, lack of financial funds, means to have a quality life, inability to participate in cultural, political and social life. As we can see from Table 4 the economic exclusion 27 percent is informed about the most frequently in the media.

Table 4: Dimensions of the social exclusion

Dimensions of the social exclusion	%/n
1. Deprivation of basic existential needs	16.1 (151)
2. More forms of exclusion	14 (131)
3. Unemployment	21.2 (199)
4. Economic exclusion	27.3 (254)
5. Education	16.9 (158)
6. Health	4.5 (42)
Total	100 (935)

Source: *Research, 2019*

The unemployment is the following 21 percent dimension which emerges. Furthermore, in 16 percent of the media texts, the education and deprivation of basic needs (food, clothing, and housing) emerges. These findings show that the social exclusion represents one dimensioned phenomenon and not a phenomenon which encompasses multiple dimensions. Even in 14 percent of the texts, the social exclusion is presented as mutual activity of several forms of exclusion.

4.5 Which socially excluded groups, the media report on?

From the carried out analysis of the content, it is evident that the most visible group in the media which is socially excluded are the workers 23 percent in the public services, as well as the employed in the private sector. Then the students 19 percent, the unemployed 10 percent, the children 7 percent, the women 6 percent. In every tenth text referred to all citizens of Macedonian society identify as excluded. This is primarily a result of the strategy of symbolic normalization which blurs the main actor/entity, and thus the essence of the subject is relativized. A numerous group which is excluded appear in 35 percent of the published texts. This group includes the young and the old, the homeless, the displaced persons, the people with disabilities and the Romani people.

Table 5: Socially excluded groups

Socially excluded groups	%/n
1. Workers	23 (218)
2. The students	14 (129)
3. The unemployed	10 (97)
4. All citizens	9 (85)
5. The children	7 (67)
6. The women	6 (57)
7. A numerous group	31(282)
Total:	100 (935)

Source: *Research, 2019*

4.6 Who speaks on the behalf of the socially excluded individuals and groups?

The findings obtained in reference to the entities who participated in the public articulation of the excluded individuals and groups through media are the political institutions (the state, the government) (table.6). The local authorities make those individuals and groups visible in 23.4 percent of the articles. Followed by the educational institutions 6 percent, the health care institutions 3 percent, the employment agency 2 percent. In addition, in the analysis of the media, the unions 8 percent, the non-governmental sector 7.7 percent), the company managers 4.4 percent and international actors 5.4 percent also play the role of entities. It is also interesting that as subject of discussion appear to be only the socially excluded persons.

Table 6: Subjects in the media texts on social exclusion

Subjects	%/n
1. Political institutions (the state, the government)	40 (374)
2. Local authorities	23.4 (219)
3. Educational institutions	6 (57)
4. Health care institutions	3.1 (29)
5. The employment agency	2 (19)
6. The unions	8 (75)
7. The non-governmental sector	7.7 (72)
8. The company managers	4.4 (41)
9. International actors	5.4 (51)
Total	100 (935)

Source: *Research, 2019*

For example, in 14 percent of the texts which refer to the students, they themselves write about their problems in 8 percent of the texts. The situation is unfavourable in terms of other groups (the unemployed, the women) who are holders of the media texts in 1 percent of the media texts. The analysis of the entities in the media texts should be complemented with the fact that political elites do not appear at all as actors who articulate the problems of the socially excluded citizens.

Conclusion

In this paper we have seen that the media have power in the public sphere. Expressed between discourse and dominance in general, especially with regard to the image of social exclusion. We have also sketched theoretical and empirical framework needed to analyze social exclusion and media, and to provide insight in many ways in which power and domination are reproduced by text and conversation.

With a brief overview of the theory of the social constructionism and the contemporary media system in Macedonia, a quantitative analysis of the content in terms of social exclusion was carried out. In this sense, from the data we can conclude that it is necessary the media to actualize this issue more thoroughly and autonomously in order to create an open media system, free from stigmatization and stereotyping (Stangor, Schaller, 1996), which can offer a new approach to inclusion. The search for that approach must begin with the equal treatment through diversity, and thus a new model of interaction and integration of social life shall be actualized.

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