

A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIPS AND INTERACTION OF SOCIETY AND ROUGH-SLEEPERS

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ABSTRACT

As one of the social harms, despite its wide and various dimensions, Rough sleeping (RS) is the result of mutual conflicts and social and economic events, each one of which can expand and increase the degree of this process. Because of these social relationships between people and rough sleepers, as well as their intra-group relationships, different outcomes occur, presented in this paper. This study was conducted on rough sleeping people in Tehran, capital of Iran in 2016 with the main hangouts of the city as Darvazeh Gaar, Sushi, Khavaran, Azadeghan, Farahzad, Saadat Abad, Imam Khomeini Shrine, Kuli Sangi, and Khavaran Poorhouse. The incidents of violent reactions, tendency towards false occupations, public and street drug abuse, more evident street life, illicit abortion, or the sale of infants and prostitution in women and men were obtained as the consequences of improper social reaction towards rough sleepers by the community or their own intra-group interactions. In the study, while using qualitative research methods including observation and interviews, information and research results were presented with the systematic method of grounded theory as a model. According to the model information, one can consider more precise planning and policy making to prevent the conversion of this social harm to other types of it.

Keywords: RS, Street Sleeping, Social Exclusion, Addiction, Grounded Theory.

INTRODUCTION

In everyday terms, homeless people are called rough sleepers. The reason behind this naming attribute can be seen in the surface of their lives. These people usually use cardboard cartons to cover their bodies when sleeping on asphalt or pavements, so they are called rough sleepers or “cardboard sleepers.” Different definitions and categories have been proposed for introducing them.

Homeless people have settled in different geographic areas, including towns, villages, deserts around the villages, cemeteries and so on. “Urban homeless people are those who are in urban areas with no fix, proper, and sufficient place for their overnight stay or stay in a dormitory and shelters provided by the private sector or the state temporarily” (Dagageleh, Kalhor, 2010: 42). According to this definition, one can present a tripartite division for better understanding and segregation of the urban homeless according to their place of residence:

1. A general or special shelter, or under supervision designed to provide basic and temporary facilities for life, such as well-being hotels, public and mobile homes for mental patients.
2. An institution providing temporary accommodation for those who wish to stay there

3. A general or specific place that is not designed to provide the necessary facilities for the comfortable sleeping of humans, or at least not used for this purpose” (Hombs, 2001: 4). There are other definitions for RS and homelessness, the base of all of which is people's housing status. For example, Wallace defined a homeless as anyone who wants to live in a tavern, grocery store, nightclubs, theaters, stations, out of the house, market, stables, barns, warehouses, dilapidated buildings or outside in open air, and the ones with no responsibilities towards themselves” (Aliverdinia, 2010: 18). However, Beher sees this phenomenon differently and in a sense mentions the concept of social exclusion. Beher considers homelessness as disconnection from society and separation from it. This becomes clear by lack of links that connect people to a network of socially connected structures” (Wright, 1996. Quoted by Aliverdinia, 2010: 18).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social exclusion

One of the key points is the emergence of RS is social exclusion and the disruption of community support structures by other members of their social and family network. This group of people is usually first discarded by family members for various reasons, and after starting street life, other people get away from them, and consider their presence in their environment as causing insecurity and instability.

In fact, “exclusion is not a new word. In ancient societies, there were similar words like exile, such as the ancient style of Athens, expulsion from homeland in Rome and other communities. “Geto” in the medieval times meant withdrawn and “Paria” in India, all of which had a common sense: separating a person or group from the ordinary society, which in some cases, such as Paria, the person was completely deprived of all social, religious, and communicative rights” (Zibra, 2006: 1).

The social exclusion trace, from the viewpoint of the scholars, is visible from the views of Aristotle to Adam Smith. These two have stated concepts close to it, which have seen it due to lack of individual choices or lack of freedom of choice (Sen, 2006). One of the important roots in the emergence of social exclusion can be found in the Middle Ages when leprosy was prevalent in Europe and people suffering from it used to be isolated from society and confined. Over 2,000 leprosy houses were built in France around 1266 (Foucault, 2015: 7-10).

After the eradication of the leprosy and the reduction of those suffering from it, the leprosy houses of Europe were emptied when the mad people were put there or those people were left out of towns and left the plains. In the course of history, this was the way the poor and the beggars lived. In 1532, the Royal Court of Justice in Paris ruled that the beggars be arrested and placed in the sewers of the city while they were chained two by two. The crisis aggravated very soon because on March 23, 1534, a decree was issued in order for the poor students and poor people to leave the city” (ibid: 59).

The concept of social exclusion spread over time and found different definitions, and included other groups, such as dropouts, unemployed youths, immigrants, disabled people, single parents, unemployed people without insurance, and isolated individuals (Flotten, 2006: 55) (Burchardt and others, 2002: 2). We will provide some definitions of it.



“Social exclusion is a long-term deprivation that leads to separation from the mainstream of society (Room, 1994: 25). It can also be considered a process where certain individuals and groups of society are rejected and marginalized by the main group (Blake Moore, 2006: 435).

Social exclusion is a multifaceted phenomenon that can be defined according to the components of participation, citizenship rights, access to opportunities, power and weak social network (Firoozabadi, Sadeghi, 2013: 27-29). The component of participation in social exclusion refers to the factors and processes that deprive individuals of their participation in society, social life, social, economic, and political activities, as well as the utilization of community resources (Pierson, 2002: 5- 7; Narayan, 1999; Millar, 2007: 2-5).

Not having citizenship rights is itself another form of social exclusion, so those deprived of citizenship rights will not have access to all or part of their civil, political or social rights, like illegal immigrants who, without citizenship right are deprived of many community facilities.

Those excluded from society are less likely to have access to opportunities, facilities, choices, and opportunities compared to other members of the community, and have much less chance to improve their conditions (Giddens, 2007: 466; Blake Moore, 2006: 136; Poggi, 2004: 2). People who have gotten rid of addiction due to the tag they have received from society do not have the opportunity to equalize their past as they are often seen with the previous look. Immigrants and even needy people will be deprived of access to community facilities and opportunities to improve their conditions, such as education.

Power is another component of social exclusion, so according to Pernet and Lewis, “In other words, exclusion is not a result of bad luck and incompetence, but due to the unequal distribution of power in society” (Pernet, Lewis, 2003, quoted by Firoozabadi, Sadeghi, 2013: 28). The monopoly of power in the hands of one group in society deters others from accessing equal opportunities and community resources, and, on the other hand, the powerlessness of the deprived section of the community prevents the ability to oppose its right to receive.

The final component of social exclusion is the social network. In this definition, social exclusion is a process in which individuals or groups are completely or partly segregated from their social, economic, and cultural networks. People who have been excluded by the community are reluctant to continue their relationship and social network based on the previous process forced to accept the limitation and cut in this part of their lives.

Emile Durkheim

Durkheim presented his solidarity theory to explain the inequities that weakened the ethical foundations of society. According to him, the crisis of the new society is the social disintegration and weakening of the links that connect the individual to the group, and new societies face some problems due to the lack of transition from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity, with the most important deficiency being the absorption and integration of the individual in the community (Aron, 2002: 385).

Therefore, Durkheim states that “since the community is the source of moral order, it can be assumed that people who are not well integrated into social groups find themselves in an abnormal state” (Giddens, 1984: 41), and “when a person is dismissed from his community and given up to his personal desires, and the links that previously had him attached to his companions are loose, he/she is prepared for selfish or individualistic suicide, and whenever collective conscience and normative norms of loyalty are discouraged and cannot harness and guide people's desires, they are prepared for abusive suicide.” (Coser, 2000: 193).



Pierre Bourdieu

Bourdieu's attempt in his critical sociology is to show how social structures and institutions create differences between the upper and lower groups of society; and social relations lead social privileges to higher groups and exacerbate the exclusion of the disadvantaged preventing them from achieving better opportunities and facilities.

Bourdieu has used three crucial and related concepts - capital, field, and habitus - to explain his views. He agrees with the view of Marx, capital is a social relation, so he considers capital as a form of wealth that produces power. However, he does not reduce capital to its economic sense, but by extending it to other forms of capital (social, cultural, political, and symbolic) nurtures the idea of a multidimensional social space.

According to him, "social space is a multidimensional social structure in which various forms of capital are distributed in an uneven way. Agents and social groups take on an objective but unequal position in the social space based on the total volume of capital and a certain combination of capital that they possess, as well as the change of the two over time "(Bourdieu, 2010: 48). Moreover, Bourdieu introduced two forces related to each other in the social space, namely, the structure (field) and agency (habitus) to show how the activists are moving in the social space in ways up and down or attracted and rejected. The field position in the space of the community makes it possible for the individual to progress in society and objectify his progress, and on the other hand, the custom of the individual, the system of tendencies and attitudes, beliefs and behaviors that are the product of the person's position and traditions in the past describe how he faces and how he reacts to these alternatives in the field (Grenfel, 2010: 105-108; Bon Vetz, 2011: 73-76).

Thus, in a simpler form, the inherent capital and assets of individuals and adaptability to the acquired features of individuals and other forces and the field of power specify their value. People take part in or participate in the field and activities and are attracted to them to feel safe and peaceful and to have the greatest harmony and adaptation to their habits. Moreover, contrary to what has been said, they avoid fields incompatible with them and feel alienated from it.

Accordingly, people in society given their personality traits and their previous teachings, in facing social events are guided towards one of two forms of absorption or exclusion in it. When social events are in conflict with their mental structures, they see themselves isolated and alienated from it, and they move towards isolation. With this interpretation, social exclusion can be considered against the ascension and advancement of other people in the community, which has made the most of their conditions and context.

Anthony Giddens

Giddens considers two forms for the concept of exclusion in contemporary societies. The first type of exclusion has to do with the lower classes of society, deprived of the mainstream of the opportunities offered by the community, and the other is the exclusion that is for the upper classes of society which is voluntary. Thus, rich people and groups live apart from the rest of the society by withdrawing from public institutions or as an elite rebellion. He argues that exclusion is related to the mechanisms that separate the deprived groups from the mainstream of society and will not be related to degree of inequality (Giddens, 2007).



THEORIES OF SOCIAL DEVIATION

Emile Durkheim

Durkheim is one of the sociologists who have explored the behavior of the society. The term “Anomie” was first used by Durkheim in 1893 in the book “Dividing Social Work”, and later in another book, “Suicide.” The term “Anomie” in terminology means lack of norms (rule and law) (Mohseni, 2007: 51).

This concept of Durkheim had several similar meanings: the failure to internalize the norms of society, the inability to adapt to changing norms, or even the tension caused by conflict within norms themselves. According to Durkheim, the social process governing the new urban-industrial societies leads to the change of norms, confusion and weakness of social supervision over the person. Individualism increases, new life styles emerge and maybe more freedom is created, but these conditions will create more possibilities for deviant behavior.” (ibid: 53).

He believes that in a solid and stable social state, human desires and dreams are restrained by norms and by breaking down the norms and, subsequently, controlling wishes, it creates a limitless state for aspirations. It creates social discontent, along with negative social measures such as suicide, criminality, divorce, and so on, which statistically can be measured.

Robert Merton's structural pressure theory

This theory considers deviant behavior due to the pressures of society, which forces some people to go the wrong way. For example, perhaps poverty may be the cause of many social deviations that force him to carry out this type of action as a result of the pressure imposed on the family or the individual.

After Durkheim, Robert Merton generalized his anomie theory. From his point of view, anomie is a burden on individuals when the accepted norms conflict with social reality, and deviations are the result of structural pressures that put people under pressure.

“Merton concludes that the feelings of pressure, perplexity and hopelessness of a person are not the result of the above factors alone, but are rather due to the relationship between these factors. Cultural construction of the community places individuals against single goals. It also determines some rules for achieving these goals as legitimate rules, but because the legitimate means are not equally accessible to all, this leads to frustration and a sense of frustration among individuals and the occurrence of deviant behavior (Mohseni, 2007: 58-59).

Imitation theory

Gabriel Tard, among the scholar of imitation theory, dismisses biologic theories that connect deviant behavior to the physical features of the individual and states that the people are not born offenders but they become so. Tard argues that the process of obtaining criminal behavior is carried out by imitation based on observational learning experiences.

Tard set three laws for his theory that humans imitate each other in proportion to the degree of close contact that they bring together subconsciously mimic the ambiguities; and that when two modes with qualities unique ones appear in opposition to each other, one can be a substitute for another. When this happens, newer methods and tools increase (Ahmadi, 2013).

Tagging theory

In some sociological theories formed since the 1960s and are still go, deviation from the three pivotal points of the deviant person's social environment, deviance and deviation as a process.



“Perhaps, it can be stated that the best description in social environment can be seen in the writings of Howard Becker and his theoretical system of tagging. Tagging does not go to the first person at first sight or the action to what extent is he far from the norm, it focuses on how a social group considers other individuals or groups as deviant” (Mohseni, 2007: 65).

Based on this theory, deviant behavior, such as addiction is explained as a process by which some people succeed in introducing others as addicts. Indeed, based on the followers of this theory, addict is a person who is tagged from other groups of society and addicted to the behavior that others tag it.

A review of literature

Akbar Aliverdinia, in the book “Sociology of RS,” considers it a multifaceted problem that addiction is one of its aspects, and the increase in poverty and unemployment, theft, kidnapping, rape, murder, economic bankruptcy, RS, begging, physical and mental illness, and other dementias, are of its consequences.

In his study, the role of social cohesion, social protection and self-control in reduction and drug abuse and victimization were confirmed (Aliverdinia, 2010).

In another book entitled “Homeless Sociology and Poorhouse” written by Mehran Sohrabzadeh, the inability in providing a permanent house, poverty, and unemployment are seen as the most significant reasons for homelessness. However, these are stated for single people, drug addicts, inability to buy home and mental illness. In his book, Sohrabzadeh explores the poorhouses.

According to him, the phenomenon of homelessness was the subject of various factors as he considered RS the result of numerous economic, social, cultural, individual and psychological factors. Here, unemployment, low-income levels, addiction, disability, and physical, mental and physical disability play a significant role. Lack of social support for different classes, especially low-income people, has led to an increase in the number of people across the world financially and economically (Sohrabzadeh, 2013).

In a paper entitled “Addiction, social exclusion and RS in Tehran,” Rahmatollah Sedigh Sarvestani and Arash Nasr Esfahani examined this issue. This paper examined the phenomenon of addiction and RS, which has become one of the social problems in Tehran. The problem of RS in Tehran since 2003, with the death of several of them in the cold winter in the streets of Tehran, was raised as a serious social problem in the public domain. Addiction is also tied to RS according to many people, and this research tries to look for the causes of RS in Tehran.

At the end of this paper, it has been pointed out that three major issues - drug addiction, physical and mental disability, and non-compliance with the environment after migration - are factors facilitating the entry of people into homelessness (Sedigh Sarvestani, Nasr Esfahani, 2010).

METHODS

To conduct this study - whose purpose was to discover the consequences of the interaction of people and street people with rough sleepers, the result of their intra-group reaction, as well as the underlying factors in this phenomenon - using qualitative data collection methods including observation and interviewing, we collected the data and after the categorization of the results using grounded systematic theory, we took steps to offer a detailed model of these results.

To increase the accuracy of observation and gain accurate and precise information, in this research, the observation technique was performed in three different ways. One of the methods used was the collaborative view of the researcher among the members of rough sleepers as a



member of them. In this method, the researcher, wearing worn-out clothes, as a rough sleeper was present among them to collect information and hear and see their conversations. In doing so, at night, first, the researcher slowly approached the more dispersed people of the group getting closer to them and to their fire under the pretext of cold weather in winter, then stopped near the larger groups and if the conditions were alright, he recorded them by the recorder on note them down.

Considering the high risk of such an action, prior to being present as a rough sleeper, he conducted a series of observations in two hangouts in a general and free manner, and introduced himself as a student, so that in addition to obtaining macro information of their interactions and the conditions of the hangout administration have an opportunity for dialogue, asking questions in the form of interviews to clarify the form of the problem. In fact, this step provided the researcher with the most important information needed to be a rough sleeper among them to enable the researcher is present among them with a predefined plan and appropriate action and reactions.

The third kind of observation was also participatory and as a member of the NGO's (the population of Tulu Bineshanha and the Institute of End of RS) - designed to protect rough sleeping and to take relief measures such as distribution of food, blankets and warm clothes, as well as having addiction camps and returning them to life – the researcher went among the target population. This was as if the researcher had been an addict and rough sleeper himself and now has returned to help them.

In this study, interviews were conducted at various places where rough sleepers were present. Khavaran Poorhouse, the hangouts mentioned, addiction treatment centers of the population of Tulu Bineshanha and in some cases by letting homeless people into cars to take them to their destination or the area they wanted so as to collect some information during the ride by asking questions and starting conversations in this regard.

Population and samples

The population of the study was rough sleepers residing in the main hangouts of Tehran, including as Darvazeh Gaar, Sush, Khavaran, Azadeghan, Farahzad, Saadat Abad, Imam Khomeini Shrine, Kuh Sangi, and Khavaran Poorhouse. However, due to their biological characteristics and their conditions, the exact number of this group of people is not known, and all the statistics provided by organizations and institutions are estimates and not accurate enough. Thus, a definite number cannot be specified, but with the estimation of people living in social service centers, such as poor houses and addiction treatment centers and public places such as parks, terminals, religious centers, etc., along with well-known hangouts in Tehran, one can estimate that this number will be more than fifteen thousand.

In the case of the sample size, given the data collection tools in observation method in all hangouts of homeless people, 86 observations were done with a minimum of 2 hours. Concerning the interviews, they continued until 89 interviews, until reaching theoretical saturation and finding no new data among individuals so that it reached 89 interviews. In order to select a person as an example to conduct an in-depth interview, initially, those who were willing to speak were invited, and gradually, after the data found and reached a level of consistency among rough sleepers introduced themselves or by choosing with the help of observations, new people who have a different narrative of the standard of living were selected,



and until the new findings were not found, the process continued. However, for women this assurance did not exist.

Reliability and validity

According to the evidence on the reliability and validity of this method, one can state that the existing field studies, especially, observation is probably the most valid type of social studies because research is practically done on the field, and the observer seeks to observe the social environment and understand its nature.

“The importance of a qualitative research is in describing and certain subjects are formed in the specific context of the study. Specificity and not generalizability is the characteristic of qualitative research. Nonetheless, in the literature of qualitative research, there are some discussions on generalizability, especially in the case studies, when the researcher studies several cases. For example, Yen argues that the results of a qualitative case study can be generalized to a broad theory. The generalization happens when qualitative researchers study additional cases and generalize the findings to new ones. This state is similar to the logic of repetition in experimental studies” (Kreswell, 2011: 328).

At the end and by obtaining the results of the observations and interviews, the results were recited to a number of rough sleepers and they were asked for their opinion on the accuracy of these materials and their experience of the lives of others, and in case of discrepancy, they were compared with reviewing, modifying and re-collecting information.

RESULTS

In the first step, after analyzing each line of interviews, the first level categories were extracted by the open coding method and then, by combining closely related cases, the second encoding level was reached, and at third level with axial coding and reaching cluster categories, steps were taken to present a model.

As addiction is considered as one of the most important factors in RS of women and men - noting that not all rough sleepers are addicted and not necessarily all drug addicts are rough sleepers – and it should be considered separately as one of the causes of this phenomenon.

Accordingly, those excluded by the family and society usually face the disintegration of the family structure. Moreover, the tags, slander and humiliation of the people of the community, sometimes accompanied by violent acts - carried out by the people themselves or by law enforcement forces and by municipality agents, and in some cases by paramilitary forces - make them more likely to make their own hangouts and trespass moral norms and social laws. Considering life useless in these circumstances is also one of the major factors behind suicide, although religious beliefs from childhood will make it a little difficult for them. These approaches and the tendency to live together in the streets make them not care about the use of narcotics and their sales considered a crime, and to cope with their financial problems, they move towards false occupations such as garbage search. Against the sharp reactions of people, they slowly try to respond.

It should also be mentioned that the efforts made by a group of people and civil institutions for culturalization and assisting fellowmen reduce social and family pressure of the layers. On the other hand, it paves the ground for reducing the pressure imposed on them from social exclusion



and improving interaction, which will result in their desire to change the conditions and return to society.

According to the results, addiction and family exclusion pave the ground for the emergence of this phenomenon, but the disagreement here suggests that women's rejection rate by the community is lower and this is mostly done by the family. In addition, the pressure placed on women from the family - mostly feared to preserve the dignity of the family - prompts them to increase their distance from the living environment, and this distancing leads to frustration of women, along with the fear of rape and witnessing the acts taking place around them, increase their solidarity, learning from experience and helping each other.

Drug abuse in the family and in front of the members from childhood and not being afraid of it also make them have no fear of doing this. On the other hand, given the traditional family structure and women's being more enclosed, the attractiveness of drug abuse, and a freer life in an outdoors environment, as well as the variety of conditions all have led some of them to a tendency towards RS. As the sale of narcotics is also a criminal offense and police patrol threatens the safety of drug sellers, women are a good option for this because in their patrols, in most cases, police are men and given the religious and moral constraints on the contact of men with women, they are incapable of inspecting women and they are considered a good option for carrying narcotics.

Hence, these strategies and helplessness in the sustenance of their own lives, they are forced to practice prostitution, and to prevent it, there are no more suitable options except for garbage search, selling narcotics, vending and dealership. Meanwhile, multiple sexual abuses of them cause unwanted pregnancy, leaving them with two option of unhealthy abortions and illicit abortion or childbirth. On the other hand, keeping a child in hangout conditions is very dangerous to its health, and people trade them for financial gain.

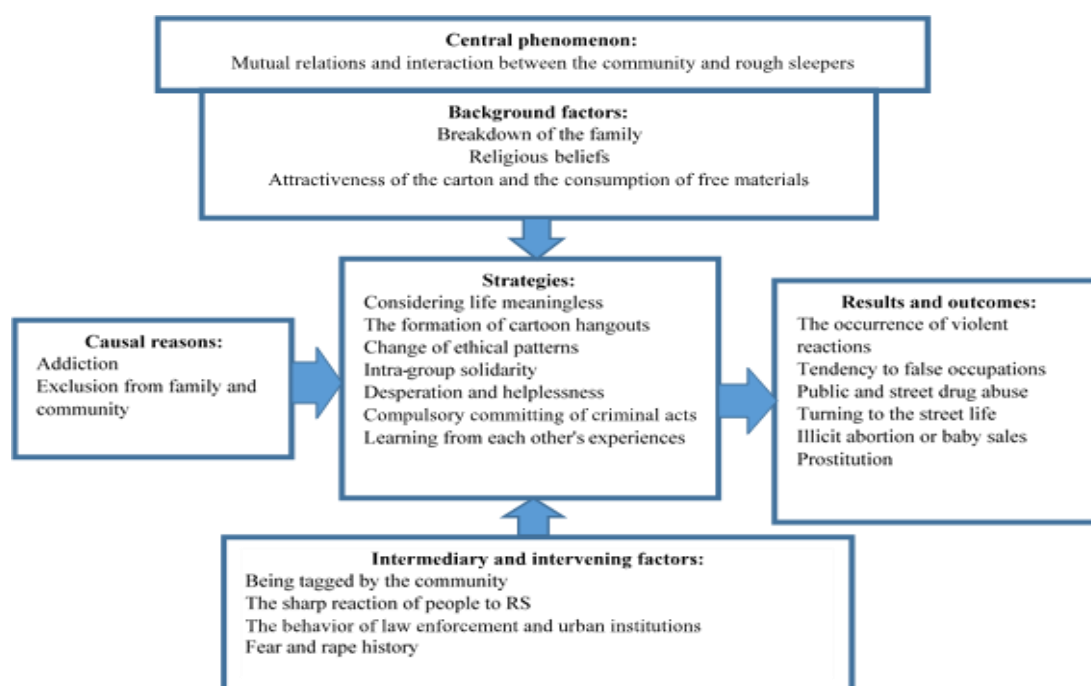


Figure 1: The model of the theory based on the mutual relations and interaction of the society and the rough sleepers

According to the results and the studies conducted against the inaccurate reactions of people, as well as public and urban institutions, and the reflection of intra-group behaviors of rough sleepers, RS is more likely to result in severe, violent reactions as well as the spread of social harm. Social exclusion and tagging on the one hand, and inability and helplessness in life will result in irreparable harm and consequences, to prevent which the formation of causative, causal, and intervening factors should be reduced and modified with proper methods to prevent this group from reaching a more severe level of social harm.

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