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SOCIAL INEQUALITY AND ITS IMPACT ON SOCIAL STABILITY

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Annotation: The article analyzes the essence of social inequality and its impact on social stability from a sociological perspective. The increase in inequality in income, education, opportunities, and social status is considered a factor contributing to social conflicts, distrust, and threats to societal stability. The importance of social policies and reforms aimed at reducing inequality is also emphasized.

Keywords: social inequality, social stability, social justice, stratification, social policy, equality of opportunity.

СОЦИАЛЬНОЕ НЕРАВЕНСТВО И ЕГО ВЛИЯНИЕ НА СТАБИЛЬНОСТЬ ОБЩЕСТВА

Аннотация: В статье с социологической точки зрения анализируется сущность социального неравенства и его влияние на стабильность общества. Усиление неравенства в доходах, образовании, возможностях и социальном статусе рассматривается как фактор, способствующий возникновению социальных конфликтов, недоверия и угроз общественной стабильности. Также подчеркивается значение социальной политики и реформ, направленных на снижение неравенства.

Ключевые слова: социальное неравенство, стабильность общества, социальная справедливость, стратификация, социальная политика, равенство возможностей.

IJTIMOIY TENGSIZLIK VA UNING JAMIYAT BARQARORLIGIGA TA’SIRI

Annotatsiya: Maqolada ijtimoiy tengsizlikning mohiyati va uning jamiyat barqarorligiga ko‘rsatadigan ta’siri sotsiologik nuqtai nazardan tahlil qilinadi. Daromad, ta’lim, imkoniyatlar va ijtimoiy mavqe bo‘yicha tengsizlikning kuchayishi jamiyatda ijtimoiy ziddiyatlar, ishonchsizlik va barqarorlikka tahdid soluvchi omillar sifatida ko‘rib chiqiladi. Shuningdek, tengsizlikni kamaytirishga qaratilgan ijtimoiy siyosat va islohotlarning ahamiyati yoritiladi.

Kalit so‘zlar: ijtimoiy tengsizlik, jamiyat barqarorligi, ijtimoiy adolat, tabaqalanish, ijtimoiy siyosat, imkoniyatlar tengligi.

In the modern world characterized by rapid globalization, technological advancement, and socio-economic transformation, the issue of social inequality has become one of the most critical challenges facing contemporary societies. Despite significant progress in economic development and institutional reforms, inequalities in income distribution, access to quality education, healthcare services, employment opportunities, and social mobility continue to persist and, in many cases, deepen.

From a sociological standpoint, social inequality is not simply a reflection of economic differences, but a complex structural phenomenon embedded within social institutions and cultural systems. It shapes individuals’ life chances, determines access to resources, and influences patterns

of social interaction. As a result, inequality plays a crucial role in forming social hierarchies and stratification systems that define the structure of any society.

The growing gap between different social groups often leads to the emergence of social tensions, weakening of trust in public institutions, and increased risks of social fragmentation. When large segments of the population perceive inequality as unjust or systemic, it may result in dissatisfaction, reduced civic participation, and in extreme cases, social instability and conflict. Therefore, social inequality is directly linked to the overall stability and sustainability of society.

At the same time, sociological research emphasizes that inequality is not inevitable and can be influenced by effective social policies, inclusive governance, and equitable distribution of resources. Governments and institutions play a vital role in reducing disparities through reforms in education, labor markets, healthcare systems, and social protection mechanisms. These efforts contribute to strengthening social cohesion and ensuring equal opportunities for all members of society.

This study focuses on the relationship between social inequality and social stability, analyzing how different dimensions of inequality affect the functioning of society. It also highlights the importance of policy interventions aimed at reducing inequality and promoting a more balanced and stable social order.

The concept of social inequality has long been a central focus of sociological theory, as it explains the structured differences in access to resources, opportunities, and social privileges among individuals and groups within a society. Classical and contemporary sociological perspectives provide different yet complementary explanations of how and why inequality emerges, persists, and influences social stability.

From the perspective of classical sociological theory, social inequality has been widely examined by foundational thinkers such as Karl Marx and Max Weber, whose ideas continue to shape contemporary sociological analysis. Marx's interpretation of inequality is grounded in historical materialism and class relations. He argued that every historical stage of society is defined by the struggle between dominant and subordinate classes. In capitalist society, this conflict is primarily expressed through the opposition between the bourgeoisie, who control the means of production, and the proletariat, who sell their labor power in order to survive. According to Marx, this structural imbalance in ownership and economic power inevitably generates exploitation, alienation, and systemic inequality. He further emphasized that such inequalities are not accidental but are built into the very logic of the capitalist system. As a result, economic inequality becomes the driving force of social conflict, which may eventually lead to social change or even revolutionary transformation.

In contrast, Max Weber provided a more complex and multidimensional understanding of social stratification. While he acknowledged the importance of economic factors, Weber argued that inequality cannot be fully explained through class relations alone. He introduced three distinct but interrelated dimensions of stratification: class, status, and party. Class refers to an individual's economic position in the market, including income, wealth, and occupational opportunities. Status refers to social honor, prestige, and lifestyle, which may not always correspond directly to economic wealth. Party refers to political power and the ability to influence decision-making processes within society. Weber's approach demonstrates that social inequality is a layered phenomenon shaped by multiple sources of advantage and disadvantage. This perspective is particularly relevant in modern societies, where individuals may experience high economic status but low social prestige, or vice versa, highlighting the complexity and fluidity of social hierarchies.

Together, the theories of Marx and Weber provide a comprehensive foundation for understanding social inequality from classical sociology. While Marx focuses on structural

economic conflict and the unequal distribution of resources, Weber broadens the analysis to include cultural and political dimensions of stratification. Both perspectives, however, agree that inequality plays a crucial role in shaping social relations and can generate tension within society if left unaddressed.

In addition to classical theory, functionalist theorists such as Talcott Parsons and Kingsley Davis offer a different interpretation of social inequality. From the functionalist perspective, society is viewed as a complex system composed of interdependent parts that work together to maintain stability and order. Within this framework, social inequality is considered not only inevitable but also functionally necessary. Davis and Moore's famous hypothesis suggests that inequality serves a positive role by ensuring that the most important and demanding positions in society are filled by the most qualified individuals. In this sense, higher rewards such as income, prestige, and power are used as incentives to motivate individuals to acquire the skills and education required for complex roles.

However, functionalist theory also recognizes that inequality must remain within certain limits. When inequality becomes too extreme, it can disrupt social cohesion, reduce motivation among disadvantaged groups, and weaken trust in social institutions. Excessive inequality may lead to feelings of injustice, social dissatisfaction, and ultimately threaten the stability and integration of society. Therefore, while functionalism accepts inequality as a necessary feature of social organization, it also emphasizes the importance of balance and moderation to maintain long-term social stability.

Conflict theory, rooted in Marxist thought, provides a critical explanation of social inequality by emphasizing that it is fundamentally the result of unequal power relations between dominant and subordinate groups within society. According to this perspective, social structures and institutions-such as education, law, economy, and political systems-are not neutral, but rather reflect and serve the interests of powerful elites. These institutions function in ways that preserve existing privileges and reinforce structural inequality over time. As a result, inequality is continuously reproduced across generations through mechanisms such as unequal access to quality education, limited economic opportunities for disadvantaged groups, and unequal representation in political decision-making processes. From this viewpoint, social stability is often temporary and fragile, as underlying tensions remain unresolved. Social instability, therefore, emerges when marginalized groups become aware of their structural disadvantages and begin to challenge existing systems of authority, demanding greater equality, justice, and redistribution of resources. Such processes may lead to social movements, collective protests, or broader demands for systemic change.

In contrast, symbolic interactionism offers a micro-level analysis of social inequality by focusing on everyday interactions and the meanings individuals attach to social reality. This perspective argues that inequality is not only produced through large-scale structural forces but is also constructed and maintained through day-to-day social interactions. Social labels, stereotypes, and cultural meanings play a significant role in shaping how individuals perceive themselves and others. For example, labels associated with poverty, ethnicity, gender, or educational background can influence a person's self-identity, confidence, and social expectations. Over time, these micro-level interactions contribute to the reproduction of inequality by reinforcing social hierarchies and limiting opportunities for certain groups. In this sense, inequality becomes embedded not only in institutions but also in social consciousness and interpersonal behavior.

Modern sociological approaches further expand the understanding of inequality by emphasizing the impact of globalization, digital transformation, and rapid technological change. In today's interconnected world, new forms of inequality have emerged alongside traditional ones.

The digital divide, for instance, highlights unequal access to modern information and communication technologies, which significantly affects education, employment opportunities, and social participation. Individuals and communities with limited access to digital resources are increasingly disadvantaged in comparison to those who are fully integrated into the digital environment. Moreover, global economic disparities between developed and developing countries continue to widen, contributing to uneven development and reinforcing global stratification systems. Technological advancement, while creating new opportunities for innovation and growth, also intensifies competition and may deepen social inequalities if access to technology and skills is unevenly distributed. These modern dynamics demonstrate that social inequality is a constantly evolving phenomenon shaped by both local and global processes, directly influencing the stability, cohesion, and sustainability of societies.

Overall, the theoretical analysis of social inequality demonstrates that it is a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by economic, political, cultural, and technological factors. Understanding these theoretical perspectives is essential for explaining how inequality impacts social cohesion and stability, and for developing effective strategies to reduce its negative consequences.

In conclusion, social inequality remains one of the most significant and complex issues affecting the stability and development of modern societies. The analysis of this phenomenon demonstrates that inequality is not limited to economic disparities alone; rather, it encompasses a wide range of dimensions, including access to education, healthcare, employment opportunities, political participation, and social recognition. These inequalities collectively shape individuals' life chances and influence the overall structure and cohesion of society.

The theoretical perspectives discussed in this study clearly show that social inequality can be interpreted from multiple angles. While functionalist theory suggests that a certain level of inequality is necessary for social organization and role distribution, conflict theory emphasizes that inequality is deeply rooted in power imbalances and often leads to social tension and instability. Meanwhile, symbolic interactionism highlights the role of everyday social interactions in reproducing inequality, and modern sociological approaches draw attention to new forms of inequality emerging in the context of globalization and digital transformation.

The findings of this study indicate that excessive and unjustified inequality can have serious negative consequences for social stability. It can weaken trust in social institutions, increase social dissatisfaction, deepen divisions between social groups, and in some cases, lead to social unrest. Therefore, maintaining social balance requires continuous attention to reducing structural inequalities and promoting fairness within society.

At the same time, the study highlights that social inequality is not an unchangeable condition. Through effective public policies, inclusive governance, equitable distribution of resources, and investment in education and social welfare systems, governments and institutions can significantly reduce inequality and promote greater social cohesion. Ensuring equal opportunities for all members of society is a key factor in achieving long-term stability and sustainable development.

Ultimately, the relationship between social inequality and social stability is both direct and dynamic. A stable society is one in which opportunities are fairly distributed, social justice is upheld, and individuals feel included and valued. Addressing social inequality is therefore not only a matter of economic reform but also a fundamental requirement for building a just, cohesive, and stable social order.

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