ABOUT DISCRIMINATION AMONG PUPILS FROM TIMISOARA

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Abstract
Considering the growth and the potential gravity of the phenomenon of discrimination, on one hand, and its presence in the sphere of public social services, on the other hand, this paper is focused on the analysis of the discrimination perceived in the scholar field. The target group was represented by the college students from Timisoara that had to answer to the following open question: “Please illustrate by an example the main form of discrimination that you know” We investigated a group of 347 participants coming from theoretical colleges, aged between 14/15 and 18/19 years old, both sexes. The centralization of the registered answers have generated the following categories: physical appearance, teachers’ preferential treatment, marks, responsibility-consciousness, interpersonal relationships in group, social status, management roles, sport activities, ethnic discrimination, traffic discrimination, professional integration, which constitute an illustrative picture of the modalities of generating and maintenance of gender inequalities.

Keywords: prejudice, discrimination.

1. Introduction

The discrimination phenomenon is a reference element of the interpersonal dynamics, and it is included into the central thematic nucleus of the knowing and interpreting of the social reality. On the process of self-development, our report to the other builds and “demolishes” realities, in a permanent reconstruction of significances and values. When we are looking for consistent landmarks for our adaptation to the world and to life, very frequently introjections of prejudices – defined by Gavriliuc (2006: 85) as “a generally negative attitude to the members of a group, built on the simple belonging of the <target-subjects> to that group” – or the marked relationship of discrimination – “a negative behavior to the members of an out-group about whom one has prejudices” (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986, apud. Burhis and Leyens, 1997: 126) – seems to facilitate the interaction and affirmation possibilities. Although prejudice and discriminatory behaviour prove their efficiency from the point of view of the economy of the psycho-social adaptation, they frequently imply a distortion or an amputation of the inter-human reality through the limitations and rigidities that they insert in the process of getting to know each other. Discrimination can be defined as a behaviour aspect or as an implementation of the depreciative or hostile attitude toward a category or social group. This process have several stages (different from the point of view of the gravity of the impact on the one targeted) identified by Allport (1954, apud. Chelcea, 2008: 349): 1) verbal offence; 2) avoidance; 3) discrimination – the other group is deliberately differently treated compared to other groups, concerning the rights, responsibilities, opportunities, etc.; 4) extermination – deliberate attempts to kill members of the other group.
The social impact of the differentiated treatment by causing prejudice, directly or indirectly to a group or to a member of a group in comparison with other member or group, upon ethnic, racial, economical, confessional or gender criteria has led to a more profound observation and analysis of its connection with different socializing agents. The examples that college students gave us concerning discrimination indicated the presence of several types of discrimination, both in the formal educational field and in other social fields.

The analysis of the answers has found the following categories:

**The physical aspect**

The discrimination that comes from the physical appearance was identified by 29 subjects. The majority of the answers (62%) at this category that refer to the advantages and disadvantages of a certain physical appearance contained examples of positive discrimination for the feminine gender. The feminine gender is the most favoured by men, because they are mostly interested in the physical aspect (203), the feminine gender is frequently favoured by the persons of the opposite sex, because of their neat aspect and their beauty (106). References to the scholar-educational domain, that were, as expected, the most numerous, pointed either the advantages of girls over boys positive discrimination of the feminine gender “Let the boys go, because girls are too delicate.” (292), or the fact that only girls who look fine are favoured. An ex-teacher of our class gave better marks to the girls who looked good and worse to those did not look so fine. He also punished boys more frequently (212). We can also put into evidence here the positive discrimination of girls when the teacher is a man. Girls are favoured quite much in the case of disciplines where the teacher is a man. (202)

The positive discrimination of boys after the physical appearance is seen in a much smaller percent in the examples (7%) and it refers to a certain sexual orientation of the teacher: either more softly At school, during classes of a certain teacher (man) boys are always favoured (207), either directly. A clear example would be that when teachers have a certain sexual orientation, homosexual preferring to favour the boys (81).

Even though the positive discrimination of girls from a physical point of view is highlighted, the other sense is not omitted also: this is the case when the physical appearance is not in favour for them. There are two aspects taken into consideration when considering this subject, the first one is when the person does not correspond to the beauty standards. The main form of discrimination that I met: girls that are plump are more discriminated than the boys that are plump. (201) and the other one is when the clothes are “different”. Women are frequently considered frivols by the way they are dressed (341). Boys are not treated differently when considering these categories, or, if it happens to make some remarks about them, they are lenient.

It seems that even the advantage that girls may have in front of a teacher of a masculine gender, may transform in a form of negative discrimination The negative discrimination of the feminine gender. Sometimes teachers having a masculine gender tend to see the students in a different way than as students. (132)

**The teachers’ discrimination**

There have been more examples grouped when speaking about students being favoured by teachers (44 subjects). A lot of answers were oriented to a type of discrimination by favouring independent of the student’s gender (boy or girl). A teacher discriminated us. She favoured one of us, and disfavoured others: by facts, by her way of speaking and behaving. (215). Here we can also distinguish some discrimination criteria, such as poor scholar performance. At schools, some teachers teach a lesson only for the smart students, who have great marks, they are only interested in them and only they are praised, and the others are not
taken into consideration and teachers are not interested in them. (224) or they have extra-scholar relation with the teachers. Maybe their parents are acquaintances with the teachers and of course their children have better marks and are forgiven when they do not learn or when they do not do their homework. (37).

For this category also the belief of the students in the positive discrimination of the girls is highlighted. 38.6% of the total answers stating this idea. Girls are more easily forgiven when they are not prepared for a discipline, because their “excuse” seems to be more real than that of the boys. (109). There are also some special moments when girls have advantages, absolving them unilaterally from the scholar norm. A special form of positive discrimination of girls is that in March they are free from oral examinations or from too high expectancies at school. (318).

When the favouring problem was treated comparatively between girls and boys, the balance inclined to the favouring of girls, so that 43, 4% of the girls were positively discriminated. Girls are given easier tasks, and boys the most difficult ones. Boys are spoken to more roughly, and when they answer, at the blackboard, they receive more rapidly a worse mark. (186).

The negative discrimination at this category is not so well put into evidence. Summing the negative discrimination of girls and that of boys, along with the general negative discrimination, we obtained only 13, 5%. The form that it takes in examples, besides that of direct discrimination of the feminine gender Some teachers discriminate girls because they are misogynist (320) or the masculine one A teacher makes jokes more often about boys (214) and the highlight of different forms of persecution. Giving a worse mark than the one deserved because of a personal problem the teacher has with the student. (262).

**The marks**

The discrimination made strictly by the criteria «marks» was not identified by a large number of subjects, even if it is an aspect that refers directly to the scholar domain. The ones that mention this category have two particularities: they are boys and girls in almost equal proportion and they are neither beginners as students, nor in the last years, all of them being 16 or 17 years old.

As expected, the discrimination by mark is seen in the comparative register (29,4%). The examples are concrete situations, for the positive discrimination of girls, comparatively to boys (the most frequent situation) For example it happened that a boy (colleague) was given a worse mark than a girl (colleague) for the same notebook. The boy received 7 and the girl 9, for the same homework! , but it happens also the vice-versa. One day, at the class, me and a colleague have answered. I don't want to brag, but I said more information of the lesson than him, but I was given a 7, and he was given 9 and he merely spoke. (230).

Most frequently (47,1%) discrimination by mark is seen by students as a form of injustice, no matter who it advantages. I was evaluated during a class, and I didn't get a good mark, and after me a colleague of mine was evaluated and she didn't know more than I did and she received a better mark. (136). Nevertheless, summing at this category the positive discrimination of girls strictly with the one resulting from the comparison in which girls are positively discriminated and boys are negatively discriminated, the result we have obtained (41,1%) shows that in the investigated students’ vision, the girls are again favoured when talking about marks. In school, girls are favoured when they are given a mark. (147).

**Responsibility – Consciousness**

The discrimination having as criteria responsibility-consciousness highlights again the positive discrimination of the girls. The positive discrimination of the feminine gender, because girls have some priorities usually, being implied in more activities than boys are, because teacher consider they are more conscious. (209). Sometimes attributing them such
characteristics may turn against them, aspect observed by girls themselves. At certain
classes girls are evaluated more frequently because they are considered, by their genre, to be always
prepared. (286), but also by the boys. Some teachers have much more expectations for girls than
for boy, considering the factor called consciousness. (148)

To this category boys were not included in any positive discrimination, on
contrary, their negative discrimination is high lightened for this component. Boys are
disfavoured because they are not conscious, because they continue to repeat the same mistakes and
have a certain reputation among teachers. (328). It is to remark that those who put into
evidence this problem of consciousness and who connected it to the scholar-
institutional context are middle aged students for the college level (16/17 years old).

**Interpersonal relationships in group**

The category “Interpersonal relationships in group” highlights the fact that the
discrimination problem does not appear only in the scholar and educational context,
but also in the extra-scholar relationships, referring even to the familial context. In
some families, the father pays much more attention to the girls, and vice-versa in what concerns the
mother. (62).

Thus, the positive discrimination of girls can be found in the scholar group.
*Girls are absolved from doing certain things: cleaning the blackboard, empty the recycle bin (195) but
also in the group of friends. The positive discrimination of the feminine gender: women have
certain advantages compared to men, they are invited to be the first to enter, they are first treated
and they are usually carefully treated (115). Into a comparative approach, at school, the balance
of favour inclines on the girls’ side again: During a break, two boys had a fight and a teacher
(woman) came and scolded them, but she didn’t say anything to the girls that altercated in the other
corner of the class. (233), while in the family context, the situation looks different In a
family with two children, a girl and a boy, the boy is more frequently favored when talking about his
personal life. The girl has more interdictions and her parents have more expectations from her. (82).

In a global view, the positive discrimination of the girls (60, 7%) is
highlighted, but this time the negative discrimination of boys is present distinctly
(21,4%) in the scholar context, concerning different activities. An example of
discrimination comes from a happening during the math class: if the blackboard is not clean and a girl
touches it or not, all boys are given a test. (258), Girls are considered the weak sex. Quite freque ntly,
the boys are treated by teachers more roughly, lacking indulgence, considering them less sincere.
(322).

**The social status**

Although there were not as many answer to identify the form of discrimination
by difference of social status, those who gave examples in this sense consider that this
is the main, even the unique form of discrimination among college students. The
financial status for college students is the only method of discrimination. Very many of them consider
that it is important and interesting to go in the clubs with persons older than you, to have mature
preferences and to spend parents' money. (91)

This form of discrimination generally appears undifferentiated between girls
and boys, making reference to the low social status. *Discrimination of the persons having a
lower social status. They are seen as being inferiors (64), as well as directly to the financial
status. Discrimination because of the financial status, a rich man is better seen than a poor one (67).
But even in the case of social status, it’s still the girls who are more targeted; in this
case it is highlighted the negative discrimination of the feminine gender. *Discrimination
concerning social status. A group of rich girls are mocking on a girl who does not come from the same
social medium. (53)*
Management functions

Also with a small percent in the totality of examples that draw the discrimination directions identified at students is the criteria «gender discrimination concerning the access to management functions».

The answers highlighted the positive discrimination of the masculine gender In limit-situations men take control (284) and the negative discrimination of the feminine gender. Women do not receive posts that legally they can occupy. (187).

This type of discrimination appears in school In school girls are discriminated because we suppose that they do not know to lead, and this is why a great part of boys are chosen as leaders of the class or as presidents of the students council. (114) and is continued in the world of adults, propelling men in the top of the hierarchy. The domains students gave example were the political field In politics it is a usual practice, a frequent one, that a man receive some benefits or honorary that a woman does not receive. (68) and the affairs field. It is better to be of masculine gender in order to obtain a job in the affairs field, because in this way you are considered capable of mastering the emotions. (298)

The physical education activities

The most prevalent form of discrimination to be found in schools, the gender discrimination, is associated with attitudes encountered during the physical education class. Physical education is a subject where the gender differences are clear, differences formalized through the sport norm different for girls and for boys. The common framework where the physical education class in high school takes place leads to comparisons where sometimes girls seem favoured Positive female discrimination: girls do not have to do certain things that imply force, lifting weights, can be exempted from the physical education class (135), and sometimes boys seem favoured. A good example is that at the end of the class, the boys are allowed to play football and the girls are not.

Out of the total answers that made up this group, the majority indicates a positive discrimination (56.5%), in almost equal proportions for girls (26.1%) and for boys (30.4%). If, to this percentage of the boys positively discriminated, we also add the percentage that came out of the comparative register, still favouring the male category (13%), we could draw the conclusion that this category is in favour of the boys. Boys have an advantage in sport because teachers consider boys very athlete and girls lazy (204).

Conversely, what we generally notice in the female cases emerges now in the male as well, i.e. the transformation of a characteristic that seemed favorably disadvantaged. During the physical education class the girls have to perform fewer tasks, while the boys have to do numerous tasks that are more difficult as well, because being male they are disadvantaged.

Ethnical discrimination

This type of discrimination is indicated as a majority without direct framing either positively or negatively (73.9%), through examples such as The people of different ethnicity are sometimes discriminated, because there are certain prejudices (59), but also through displays of particular cases that the subject has experienced Discrimination against a Romani man: in a public place a gentleman with a higher position threatens the man with not providing him with a second form given he had made a mistake with the first one, accusing him of being Romani. (85)

There is both a manifestation of negative discrimination of ethnic minorities The discrimination against a Hungarian in secondary school: my schoolmates would discriminate, would curse him because of this, knowing that he did not have a great power over them (211), and a positive discrimination. The positive discrimination of the Romani people: They are admitted in any high school regardless of their average mark. (21)
As a general input to this category, no gender discrimination on ethnic accounts has been registered, and the weight of the examples that have shaped up this category is relatively small among the total amount of answers.

**Discrimination in traffic**

We can openly say that in this category the founded discrimination is exclusively negative and it is against women, in 70% of the cases being directly indicated. The negative discrimination against women is to be found when dealing with driving skills: Women are considered less resourceful and are considered to have more accidents (266), and 30% being implied. The main discrimination between men and women behind the steering wheel.

It is the most obvious projection of gender discrimination in the adult world that the students have noticed. It is an issue that does not have a direct connection to formal education or school achievements, but rather to a cultural environment. The girls that have signalled this type of discrimination also have a militant attitude feeling that in this field they can directly intercede for a change in mentality. Women are said to be incapable of driving, though it is not true. For example, a couple was sitting a driving examination, believing the woman would fail, she eventually was the only one who passed. (131)

**The professional integration**

The discrimination at work is still a projection of the students in the adult world. A majority of negative discrimination against women (70%) has been founded here as well. All the answers that have generated this category were provided by girls. Some answers have been generalized. When searching for a job, a woman is almost always discriminated (338), other imply the discriminatory differences in work remuneration. The woman cannot always fill a position designated for a man and thus the woman is not paid the same as the man. (294)

If the above mentioned examples belonged especially to the professional performance, there is also the identification of a form of discrimination sub layered into cultural role-model and mentality. In my opinion, the main form of discrimination is the fact that a lot of women are not allowed by their husbands to look for a job. (297) Girls feel it is their duty to take a stand here as well. The main form of discrimination identified: “You are a woman; you are supposed to stay at home, clean the house and prepare food!” “Wrong! Women can work as well!” (303).

### 2. Personal remarks

Generally, the approximately 40 answers in this category do not allude only to the formal educational environment.

Under “personal remarks” I have grouped different types of statements aimed to structure the view upon discrimination of the interviewed students:

- the lack of discrimination: Personally, I haven’t felt discriminated, because I haven’t really noticed it (65);
- signalling the positive/negative discrimination of the male/female without further details;
- historical input: Beginning with the 18th century, women have been subjected to men, having a lot of interdictions and obligations but no rights. Up to the present this rule of female inferiority has prevailed in many families (267). In traditional families, women are subjected to men, the latter being the ones who make the decisions. Nowadays, such type of families still exists but in smaller numbers. Ex: In traffic women are more harshly penalized or in the case of adultery, women are quickly condemned (268). The example inherited from the antiquity says that the woman is inferior to the man (206). The negative discrimination against women are outlined in the present statements.
the cultural example as a source of discrimination: professionally. Ever since they are born the children are guided towards a certain lifestyle. When being asked about what I want to do with my life and having for an answer the fact that I want to focus on my career, people tell me there are other things more important in life. When a boy is asked and answers the same thing, he is encouraged to assert himself. (319), morally. A man who has multiple sexual partners is considered appealing, while a woman is cast aside (335). In most cases women are characterized unjustly as being frivolous (308), attitudinally. Women should be tougher and they should have a higher self-esteem for them to be treated decently by men (307).

Also signalled is the fact that the two poles of the gender concept seem to contain 10 out of the 11 categories of discrimination indicated; their presence as a consistent landmark in identifying the discriminatory accounts further underline the fact that “the stereotypes and the gender differences are fully active in real life, in the daily emergence, in the deeds of the institutions.” (Iluț, 2009, p.312)

References: