Abstract

We are living in an era of turbulent social changes that affect our everyday life. The contemporary societal order has been put to pressures and exposed to challenges like never before in the history of human society. Many scholars believe that what we are witnessing nowadays is an era of value ambivalence and norm relativization that is intricately related to societal deviance. Many theories, classical, modern, and postmodern elaborate these phenomena. Such are the Emile Durkheim’s theory of anomie, Robert Merton’s theory of strain and Zygmunt Bauman’s theory of interregnum. In this paper, we are trying to elaborate those theories through the lenses of the distorted morals and values and the nexus with societal deviance in comparative European and Macedonian societal context. As far as methodology is concerned, we mainly use secondary data of available scientific literature and studies in the values and norms changes and its relatedness to societal deviance. We shall try to prove and elucidate the importance of the structural changes in values and norms and how they produce or are a product of societal deviance. Although mainly comparatively theoretical, the paper will try to overcome the possible limitations with its thorough comparative analyses of the most relevant scientific literature and research on this matter, mostly from sociological, socio-pathological, philosophical and securitological point of view. The paper will also try to summarize some relevant suggestions, proposals and recommendations on how to overcome these problems in European and Macedonian comparative perspective.

Keywords: Societal Deviance, Values, Norms, Europe, Macedonia

INTRODUCTION

The notion of societal deviance is considered as one of the most contested notions in societal sciences. It is especially difficult to determine and
explain it when societal values and norms are considered as standards for defining societal deviance or normality. In actual fact, the so-called societal pathology as opposed to societal normality is becoming really difficult to define when it is analysed through the theory of relativity of societal deviance and in macro-sociological terms in general. What is more important, knowing the relativity of societal standard against which the societal defiance is defined, makes understanding of societal deviance more ambiguous, especially in times of increased societal dynamics and changes.

Disparity between societal values and societal norms is a significant, if not crucial factor of societal deviance, and it was observed more than a century ago within the so called structural-functionalist sociological and sociopathological theories, such as in the theory of societal anomie and the strain theory, elaborated in the works of Emile Durkheim and Robert Merton, respectively (Durkheim, 1982; Merton, 1938; Clinard & Meier, 2011: 75-77). In the newest sociological thought, these ideas can be seen in the work of the renowned sociologist Zygmunt Bauman in liquid modernity theory and the idea of interregnum (Bauman, 2012: 49-56). Central argument of these theoretical approaches is that the societal deviance stems from the mismatch of social values (goals) and social norms (means), as a kind of structural and functional explanation of societal deviance. According to this understanding, all societal deviance is a product of distorted value-normative order on macro sociological, structural level. Opposite of that, when there is a balance and absence of mismatch or distortion between the social values and social norms in the value-normative order, then the societal normality is present.

Nevertheless, in spite of these scientifically confirmed arguments, theoretically and empirically, nowadays we are more intrigued and challenged to analyse and study the relation between societal deviance and distortion of societal values and norms in terms of what could be defined as value ambivalence and moral relativization as part of the norms relativization. In other words, we assume and see these conditions as a cause and in some cases consequence of societal deviance and a kind of attachment to the theory of societal anomie, with more profound elaboration of the value-normative distortion. Surely, in trying to explain this nexus, we will attempt to define both the notions of value ambivalence and moral relativization and relate them to the actual state of societal deviance in comparative European and Macedonian perspective.
SOCIETAL DEVIANCE AS A CAUSE OR CONSEQUENCE OF VALUE AMBIGUITY AND MORAL RELATIVIZATION

The history of human communities and societies can be hardly conceived without the notion of value-normative order, or, shortly, societal order. The social values and norms are actually the societal glue that holds people together, creates societies and communities and does not allow their disintegration. Speaking in a more trivial way, value-normative order represents the security aspect of human communities and societies. The value-normative order is in fact equal to the security function of the society and the state in a more formal sense. When a sane value-normative order has been established, it serves as a guarantee of the societal order, security and normality. On the opposite, when there is a lack or total absence of the value-normative order, then the society is deemed chaotic, insecure, and deviant. It is a kind of sociological determinism and normative definition of societal order that explains the societal normality as opposed to the concept of societal deviance.

According to the structural-functionalist theory, the societal order exists only when social norms and social values are compatible and related in a kind of cause-consequence relation, where societal norms are a sort of precondition for achieving the societal goals. So, as long as there is not incompatibility, mismatch or conflict between social values and social norms, we can speak about societal order and societal normality. If there is incompatibility, mismatch, or conflict between social values and social norms, then a state of anomie occurs, which is usually accompanied with societal deviance or societal pathology (Zembroski, 2011: 241-241, 245-246; Желева, 1999: 264-265). That is because social norms and social values are set in a means goals relation, so any distortion of this relation could lead to some type of societal deviance and pathology, as Robert Merton argumentatively claimed in his famous strain theory (Merton, 1938: 672-682; Shoemaker, 2010: 123; Арнаудовски и Велкова, 2017: 138). Thus, societal deviance, according to the structural-functionalist theory is a result of normative and axiological disintegration of the society (Salakhova, Bulgakov, Sokolovskaya, Khammatova & Mikhaylovsky, 2016: 10614).

But, in spite of this classical sociological explanation of the societal order (normality) and societal deviance (pathology), it seems that nowadays we are witnessing a kind of a very unique situation of defining the societal deviance that relates with this explanation, but also deepens and widens it. It is marked
with a situation of so-called moral relativization on the part of social moral norms and value ambivalence on the part of social values. We will try to define and elaborate both terms in order to sustain our definition of the contemporary concept of societal deviance.

We all know that moral norms fall amongst the most important social norms. They are the most important and the most frequent informal social norms that regulate everyday behaviour of the people (Герасимоски, Бачановиќ, Аслимоски, 2019: 43-44; Љукић, 1976: 103). These rules on which everyday life of the people is based must be supported and agreed between most of the people in a society in order to form a valid moral order, which is usually associated with valid societal order in the broadest sense of the meaning. That means that the majority of the people in a society must accept, respect and follow the moral. The valid societal moral is a standard of behaviour of people against which all human behaviour is considered acceptable (moral), or not acceptable (immoral). Shortly, there can be only one moral in a society, or one way of socially acceptable behaviour to be considered right from moral point of view, while all other behaviour is considered immoral. It means that the morals in society functions in binary terms. There can be only one moral at a time, everything else is considered immoral.

But what happens in a situation when society does not accept, observe and follow one moral? Or what happens when present and actual moral has not been followed by the majority in one society, but there is a division of the moral? This is a situation that we call moral relativization. Moral relativization is a societal condition and phenomenon where there is no a dominant moral that has been accepted, shared and observed by the people in a society, but rather a division of a moral in two or more morals that compete among each other for supremacy and establishing as a dominant moral. It is a moral division in a society that is considered as societal deviance by itself or serious precondition for societal deviance. Usually, a situation of moral relativization is matched by, or it is followed by the serious distortion of social values, usually in a form of the so-called value ambivalence. Precisely, moral relativization necessarily leads to value ambivalence, sooner or later.

Let us now see what value ambivalence means. In a sane, normal society, social and moral norms must fit social values and vice versa. As long as the moral is clearly defined and shared by convincing majority of the people, the social values are clear, stable and widely shared amongst majority of the people in a society. Social norms fit social values and that is the classical structural-
functionalist way of explaining the societal normality and societal order. But what happens when social and moral norms are in a state of moral relativization? Then, social values become unclear, baffling, contradictory, ambiguous, and not easy to follow. This is what we define as a value ambivalence. A value ambivalence is a societal situation and phenomenon where social norms are unclear, ambiguous, ill-defined, contradictory, not understood and shared between the people and usually are associated with moral relativization. Value ambivalence is also one crucial precondition of the state of societal deviance (pathology).

It is evident that moral relativization and value ambivalence go hand in hand and that there is a clear cause-consequence nexus between them. The real question to be answered is which one is cause and which one is consequence?

The logic says that moral relativization should be the cause and the value ambivalence the consequence, since ill moral behaviour would most probably lead to value ambivalence. But we must not neglect the fact that a reverse situation is possible also, when value ambivalence could affect moral relativization and even could be the cause of moral relativization. It all depends on the very dynamics of social relations and the very rate (speed) of societal changes in a period of time. So, usually and mostly, moral relativization causes value ambivalence speaking inductively. Here, we must not omit that social norms and moral norms specifically are less stable and more susceptible and vulnerable to changes in comparison to social values, which are considered to be more stable and less susceptible and vulnerable to societal changes as well. While, in some cases, speaking deductively, usually during the periods of sudden, rapid, serious, and abrupt social changes and disorganizations, such as societal anomie, societal alienation or societal transition, the value ambivalence could be even cause of moral relativization. However, these two phenomena are dependent to such an extent that it is almost impossible that moral relativization does not lead to value ambivalence or vice versa. Their interdependence cannot be disputed, only the direction of influence between them is a matter of question, although, mostly this direction follows the inductive logic of influence, as previously mentioned.
Although it is difficult to find enough direct and concrete scientific arguments that could convincingly support the thesis that moral relativization and value ambivalence lead to societal deviance in all the countries in Europe and Macedonia in specific, we will try to analyse some scientific studies done within the past three decades that could support our claim. Namely, a lot of European and Macedonian scientific studies and research conducted, especially those related to research on values, norms and morals, in some way speak about significant shift towards supporting our claim. Indeed, we cannot speak about the same terminology being used in such studies and research, but, the overall context of them speaks about clear moral relativization and value ambivalence, their mutual relatedness and their clear connection with the increase in societal deviance. It seems quite obvious, even for lay people, that our social norms and moral norms in specific, have become more loose, unclear, ambiguous and not so firm, while at the same time, people are more aware of the fact that our values have also went through a process of change, where they have become less solid, known, shared, morally supported, contradictory and mostly important, ambivalent. As we previously said, moral relativization and value ambivalence occur in a situation where people have not a single and clear moral norm or value for a certain situation, phenomenon or object, which has to be followed or which is set and known in advance. A lot of scholars have determined the societal condition of moral relativization and value ambivalence as a society overflowed with deviance, risk and uncertainty, and the typical labelling of this society is ill, precarious or risk society, as From, Bauman and Beck alluded (From, 1980, Barr, 2016; Бауман, 2016; Bek, 2001). In these terms, the explanation of the societal deviance is to be found in the very societal structure, the very societal fabric that is unsuitable, and consequently, produces societal deviance and pathology. In the lines that follow we will try to support these claims with several scientific studies and research done in the European and Macedonian context.

At the beginning, we shall focus on the findings from several European studies related with the topic of our paper. Most of the studies and researches are related with researching the European values and their changes, often not correlated with changes in moral. So, we can say that majority of the studies do
not correlate the changes in the social values with the changes in social norms and moral norms especially, while studies and researches that correlate them with societal deviance are deficient and really difficult to find. But, nevertheless, indirectly, there are clear conclusions from this studies that spot and establish such kind of correlations which support our thesis and claims.

There are several seminal European studies and much research on the value and moral changes in the last three decades. Most of them shed light on the relation between value ambivalence, moral relativization, and societal deviance.

Probably, the most known and prominent study on the European values is the European Value Survey. It is a longitudinal research of the European values and norms which has been conducting for almost four decades by University of Tilburg, the Netherlands, from 1981 onwards, and which encompasses 47 European states, according to its latest report from 2017. The survey is especially worthy since it could help clarify the nexus between the value and the moral changes and its relation to societal deviance. The study has revealed a correlation between processes of individualization and value heterogenization on one side and societal deviance on other side. As a matter of fact, the process of individualization can be regarded as a process of growing autonomy by which human choices have gradually become liberated from structural constraints and personally more independent (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). It is the individual who has become the main point of reference in the shaping of values, attitudes, and beliefs. Norms and values have become functional, rational, and, above all, autonomous. The individualization of moral and heterogeneity of values are recognizable icons of postmodernist ideology of ‘anything goes’ or ethos of ‘everything is possible’, which influenced the spheres of deviant and indecent behavior, or, what we name as societal deviance in general. It is increasingly assumed that such behavior is accepted because, in an individualized society, people have to decide for themselves, which implies that they have to allow others to behave differently and in ways that are even deviant from the norms (Halman, 2009: 38–41). Here, we can spot different understanding and effects of the weakening of firm structural norms and moral relativization as well as the pluralization and heterogeneity of values in the Western European societies and Eastern European societies, when it comes to the relation with societal deviance. Namely, in Western European societies, the study did not reveal the correlation between moral relativization and value ambivalence with societal deviance. In general,
they remained pretty stable for almost four decades and did not increase significantly the deviant behavior in Western European societies. On the contrary, in most of the countries of Eastern Europe and Macedonia in specific, the pluralization of values, moral relativization and value ambivalence was understood quite differently and as a consequence, it produced increase in societal deviation. In other words, individualization of moral and pluralization and heterogenization of values led to moral relativization and value ambivalence, which later led to increase in societal deviance. This surely means that Eastern European societies did not understand the real meaning of these processes of value and normative change, and, consequently, they saw it as an opportunity for unrestricted freedom in behavior and understanding of freedom, which resulted in growing societal deviance.

Another study examined the relation of the Europeans towards one of the crucial values of the present times, the value of globalization. Interestingly enough, the study showed almost equally divided moral and value attitudes, based on the division of value attitudes, or the so-called value ambivalence. Namely, overall, and even within the analysed countries, the division is almost 50/50 on the part of those who favour globalisation and see it as an opportunity as well as on the part of those who see it as a threat and fear it. In this respect it also means moral relativization, since the respondents must believe that globalisation is either bad (seen as something not valuable and not to be followed), or good (seen as a value to be followed). The study also relates values and moral with societal deviance. Namely, when the respondents were asked to tell whether globalisation contributed towards societal deviation (crime in this case) or does not contribute, the answers remained equally divided (45%). Therefore, the authors concluded that there is a positive correlation between moral relativization and value ambivalence on one side and societal deviance (crime) on the other side (De Vries & Hoffmann, 2016: 26-27).

In their inspiring study and research, two Icelandic scholars (Thorlindsson and Bernburg) analyze the Durkheim’s theory of anomie on a multi-level sociological range and prove the importance of social norms and social values nexus for defining societal normality or deviance on lesser societal level (mezzo and micro). They argue that societal deviance can be a consequence of societal anomie not only on macro-sociological (structural) level, but also on organizational and individual level. In other words, they indirectly support the thesis that the bigger the moral relativization and value ambivalence is present, seen through societal anomie, the greater probability of

When narrowing the focus on the Macedonian neighbourhood (former Yugoslavia, Serbia and Croatia in specific), we can observe the key period of the end of the 80’s and beginning of the 90’s of the previous century, when dramatic changes in value and normative order occurred. The studies reflect the questions of what we analyse as moral relativization and value ambivalence. Usually, the studies and researches done speak about value and normative confusion, dissonance, conflict, relativization etc., but nonetheless, what is crucial is that they find the structural mismatch of social values and social norms (morals specially), as a major factor of distortion of value-normative order and further on, logically, as an essential factor for societal deviance (Pešić, 2016: 644-645; Kalanj, 2016: 20).

Considering Macedonian experience on this matter, we shall present the results from several studies and researches done in the previous period. Thus, in a study that we conducted with young population (students), the distortion of the system of societal values proved to be placed pretty high amongst the risk factors of deviant behaviour (it occupied the third place by its significance). The very high placement of distorted system of societal values on the scale of risk factors also tells us more on the existence of value ambivalence and moral relativization that stand behind this risk factor and determine its appearance (Gerasimoski, 2015: 49, 52).

Similar results confirming the situation of moral relativization were found in another study conducted by a group of researchers from the Faculty of Security in Skopje. In a set of questions where students from high schools in Skopje were asked about their security from socio-psychological aspect, one question convincingly underpins the relativization of moral norms. The authors conclude that the moral relativization is closely related to what they call ‘crisis of the value system’, which is a broad meaning for serious distortion of the value system, where value ambivalence could also be recognized (Батић Драгана, Акимовска-Малетиќ, Малиш-Саздовска, Николовска, Шурбановска, Мојсоска, Мојаноски, Гогов, Иванов, 2011: 39).

In a recent interesting study, which elaborates the nexus between moral norms and deviance amongst the juvenile population in Macedonia, the author Zafirovski concludes that there is a positive correlation between the moral norms and the refraining from deviant behavior and vice versa. The author speaks about the moral crises and its relation to the value confusion. He
recognizes the narrow relation between the changes in social norms, moral and social values and their relation to deviant behavior of juveniles. But, moreover, he implicitly recognizes what we call moral relativization and value ambivalence, by saying that normative values and moral to which the younger generations are taught in the socialization settings is confronted by what they face in the real society and that is different and in most cases completely opposite to the normative values and norms (Zafirovski, 2019: 34). Thus, it is easy to understand that by this, the author in fact recognizes the moral relativization and value ambivalence.

**CONCLUSION**

Having summed up all that we previously discussed, now we can single out the following conclusions:

- Although classical and macro-sociological in its scope, the structural-functionalist theoretical approach in sociology and societal pathology still remains relevant in explaining the relation between the distortion of value-normative societal order and societal deviance;
- There is clear scientific relatedness between moral relativization and value ambivalence on one side and increased societal deviance on the other side, which can be proved and sustained both empirically and theoretically;
- Usually and mostly, the relation between moral relativization and value ambivalence is inductive, while deductive relation is considered rare and related with dramatic, rare and sudden societal disorganizations;
- The studies and research done on this matter so far, in European and Macedonian context, reveal some interesting similarities and differences as well;
- The main similarity of the European and Macedonian experiences is to be found in confirming the correlation between moral relativization and value ambivalence on distortion of the societal order in general;
- The differences between European and Macedonian experiences are to be found in the very understanding, extent and manifestation of the nexus between moral relativization and value
ambivalence on one side, and societal deviance on the other side (moral relativization and value ambivalence in European context do not necessarily mean increase in societal deviance, while in Macedonian and regional ‘Balkan’ context, moral relativization and value ambivalence almost necessarily imply increase in societal deviance).

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