The concept of “culture of poverty” first emerged in the anthropological studies of Oscar Lewis in the 1960s. The author explores and describes a specific set of values, attitudes, and behavioral patterns that emerge among the poor sections in Mexican society which lead to reproduction of poverty. According to this study, the focus is not only on poverty and its consequences but also on the nature of the poor itself. However, if a group of people has been in poverty for generations, it adapts to certain living and understanding about the larger society. Lewis reports more than 70 characteristics of culture such as instability, lack of order and organization, sparsity, nonproductivity, ignoring, feeling of hopelessness, chronic unemployment, change in presentment, orientation, lack of the future, difficulties to adapt etc. Moreover, Lewis argues that once the style of life is established, it passes through families for generations and continues even if the circumstances change. The feeling of hopelessness, the lack of initiative, and the dependency on someone else’s help hinder most of the social policies for empowering the poor community – even if the financial aspects improve, the insolvency still impedes the social inclusion.

The concept of “culture of poverty” is controversial since many researchers claim it “names the victim” and intensifies structural inequalities. However, postmodern researchers prove that thinking of the poor as victims may increase their passiveness. Furthermore, in nowadays statistics (national and national) one can find strong evidences for practices which remind characteristics of the “culture of poverty”. For example, children from poor strata have more drop outs, lower educational achievement, and are more likely to join illegal activities. The youth in Bulgaria, for example, has one of the highest rates in European Union for young people without employment, not in education or in training (18.9% in 20-34 years old in 2022 according to Eurostat). On national level, we can notice the so-called phenomena of “hereditary youth unemployment”. Suggestions for specific model among the poor strata in nowadays statistics (worldwide and national) are currently discussed in various social backgrounds. As part of the socialization of the youth all dimensions of “culture of poverty” are created and used as the general for success in different aspect and create new form of social vulnerability.

The research aims to explore and describe the cultural models and behavioral patterns which limit the successful social inclusion and establish a new form of social vulnerability among the youth between 20 and 34 years old and living in different social background.

Methodology

The scientific survey is focused on different understandings, attitudes, frameworks and values among young ages (ages 30-35) that characterize new culture of poverty. Another objective of the research is also to explore common characteristics and differences of beliefs and behavior of youth regarding their social status, background, education, place of residence, gender and age.

From a methodological point of view this study is designed as a case study. The individual methods at the stage of the project are as follows:

1. Theoretical research on various perspectives and definitions of “culture of poverty”
2. Semi-structured interview with young people between 20 and 34 old
3. Focus group with teachers
4. Observation of young people between 20 and 34 old in their everyday life
5. Single-case analysis

Target group

The study focuses on young people from various social background. However, all participants in the study are chosen based on several common characteristics: background, education, place of residence, gender and age.

Introduction

NOWADAYS CULTURE OF POVERTY – DIMENSIONS AND SPREAD AMONG YOUTH

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