

The Psychosocial Effects of Democracy on Citizens

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Abstract: Interfering psychology with sociology, social psychology studies human being in a social context, in the specific situation and interaction. The two areas, sociology and psychology intertwine and influence each other. The implications of democracy in social life are the subject of study of social psychology, given that the factor that changes and generates change, is the human being. An important concept of psychosocialism is the social influence, which affects on long and intense term people's beliefs, thoughts, concepts and feelings. At its core are certain mechanisms, such as: suggestion, imitation, psychological contamination. We can say that human behaviors are the result of social influence. Democracy is a way to live, think, and act. The ideals for which people have fought over time - freedom, justice and equality, are also the values of democracy. To be democratic means to believe that all people are equal and have the right to live in dignity, respect and tolerance.

Keywords: effects; democracy; citizen

1. Introduction

The word “democracy” was first used about 2,500 years ago and comes from the Greek language where “demos” means nation/people, and “kratos” means power. Democracy means the power of the people, the rule of the people by the people. Democracy emerged in Athens in the sixth century B.C. and experienced a special development in the next century, during Pericle.

Despite the fact that politicians have different views on certain details in defining and assessing democracy, the eight criteria proposed by Robert Dalh enjoy broad acceptance: the right to vote, the right to be elected, the right of political leaders to compete for support and voting, free and fair elections. The freedom of association, freedom of expression, alternative sources of information, institutions responsible

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for public policies depend on voting and other expressions of preference. (Grugel, 2008)

Democracy can be understood as an ideology, concept or theory. It is an ideology as it “embodies a set of political ideas detailing the best possible form of social organization”. It can therefore be understood as an ideal. Being a democrat means trusting people. Believing that they have the inalienable right to make decisions for themselves and to be devoted to the idea that all men are equal in a fundamental sense Essential. (Lijphart, 2006)

One of the fundamental and intrinsic values of modern democracy at the constitutional principle is pluralism, understood on the one hand that a diversity of interests, forces, ideologies, cultures, social groups, socio-professional categories, political, ideological, philosophical, aesthetic, ethical, each of which has a certain configuration and content and, on the other hand, as a diversity of political bodies and social bodies that carry certain specific axiological interests and fields.

Accepting the idea of diversity of the factors of the configuration of human, material and spiritual existence, does not mean that diversity is a fetish, a mystique of social existence that can not be controlled or influenced in the sense desired by the community. It is true that diversity in its sense more generally, it differs from the subjectivity of each individual and has an overriding position on it. If not, human civilization would have not progressed a step from the most rudimentary primitive stage when the freedom and interests of the individual were contradictory, the arbitrator generates irreconcilable social conflicts. (Ionescu, 1997)

Diversity is and must remain as a natural state of human society, the lack of diversity accepted and valorized by the governors equating to the return of the human community to its primitive social state. In modern society, diversity is expressed in a broad spectrum that includes social classes and groups, socio-professional categories, political conceptions and ideologies, behavioral patterns, models of cultures and cults. In modern society, however, diversity excludes the serious conflict between its components, but not their competition manifested by peaceful, democratic methods and instruments, by social peace.

A fundamental field of study of political sciences is represented by the relations between the individual and the state institutions. To describe these relations, conceptual congruence is used between citizens and state institutions, a concept that defines the degree of correspondence between the needs of individuals and the political actions of the institutions.

Representativeness implies that “the power to make political decisions and to impose them is concentrated in the hands of a group of community representatives, the only ones authorized to legislate and execute such decisions”. (Maricutoiu, 2006)

A democracy is more than a form of government, it is primarily a way of living in association, a shared experience. (Dewey, 1972) The spread of space in the groups of individuals involved in the pursuit of an interest so that each one of his own to act upon others gives weight and sense to his own action is equivalent to the removal of class, race and national barriers, barriers that are not leaves the people to understand the full meaning of their work. The best example in this respect is the discrimination of certain Roma people, these being considered as being elementally negative in our society, although there may be citizens who have done important things have represented the country in various fields of activity, whether artistic, political.

Because democracy understood in its moral depths that characterize a people by tradition and will bring a structure that does not need the appropriation of foreign models. It complements the moral democratic beliefs of the person, letting assert those human models who become opinion leaders and thus multiplying the human model of its own origin establishes the social structure in which democracy develops, the strength of which depends on its moral imposition. (Barbu, 2004)

The problem faced by the citizen in a democracy is: “how to be an active citizen?” According to this rationalist-activist conception, a successful democracy implies citizens’ involvement and activity in politics, that they be informed about politics, and influential. In addition, when they make their own decisions, the important decision on their vote, they must take them after a cautious assessment of the evidence and a careful weighing of the alternatives.

The passive citizen, the non-veto, the poorly informed citizen and the apathetic, all of them indicate a weak democracy. This conception of democratic citizenship emphasizes activity, involvement and rationality. To use the terminology I have proposed, she emphasizes the role of participant and tells a little about the role of subject or parochial. (Almond & Verba, 1996)

As with any fundamental change, the difficulties are inevitable, but the population expects them to be quickly overcome at low cost. Optimism was based on a number of favorable premises. First of all, enthusiasm, political will and collective mobilization were an important source of rapid and successful changes. Secondly, the process of change in which Romania had engaged had a credible strategic orientation, strongly supported internationally and based on a high internal

consensus. Thirdly, the inherited technical and economic structures, although irrationally developed and obsolete in some respects, were highly modernized and associated with a highly skilled labor force, although with some discipline deficits. Finally, it expected the West to be highly interested in supporting the former socialist countries, not necessarily material but mostly political and technical Western economic, and political support for a loan to enable economic recovery. (Zamfir, 2004)

Very soon, however, the Romanian society faced a series of unexpected shocks in all spheres of social life, the results were far from expectations: the explosion of political conflicts, the fall of the economy, an increase in collective insecurity doubled by the chronic inability of the public administration to solve the problems to prevent corruption and crime, and finally the explosion of impoverishment, demoralization and alienation of the population.

2. Objectives

The objective I wanted to achieve through this case study was to highlight the real involvement of citizens in political life and especially the level at which they understood what a democratic regime presupposes, citizens with a medium and high level of education.

3. Research Instruments

In order to achieve the proposed objectives, a questionnaire was used in the research, consisting of 15 closed questions that could be answered by “yes, no, positive, negative, advantages, disadvantages”.

4. Students Participants

The questionnaire was applied on a sample of 80 people aged between 18 and 65 years. The questionnaire was administered to adolescents and young people to find out their opinion and especially to verify the truthfulness of the information they received from their ascendants and was also administered to older people because they lived both the reality of the communist regime with the necessary discernment to answer certain questions.

5. Analysis and Processing of Results

On the first question, namely: “Do you think that the Romanian citizens understands corectly what democracy means?”, 30% of the participants in the questionnaire responded with “Yes”, while 70% believed that in Romania the democratic regime was not perceived correctly. Among the 30% who appreciated that Romanian citizens understood the democracy correctly, 21% were females between the ages of 18 and 46 and the remaining 9% were male subjects aged between 33 and 45 years. Those who responded negatively to the first question were 34% of women and 36% of men between the ages of 18 and 65.

So Romanian citizens are aware of their misinformation of politics and of their erroneous opinion about the political regime installed after the fall of the communist or “caustic” as it was called by many of those who completed the questionnaire.

It is not enough just to express our opinion and to express our dissatisfaction with the political regime or the political life, the decisions taken by the representatives elected by us on our behalf and for the welfare of the state and of the Romanian population, it is necessary more more than that, we need a complete awareness and attitude, information about our rights and the duties that we have as citizens of this people.

In the following graph we represented both the number of those who responded positively and negatively to the first question in percent, we differentiated them both after the answer to the first question and according to sex.

If the first question has made a profound negative answers, the second question this difference is deepened, those who answered positively the question “*Do citizens get enough involved in the political life?*” was only 25%, whereas those who answered the question were 75% of the 80 who formed the sample.

When it comes to informing citizens about the rights and duties of those on whom the questionnaire was applied were of the opinion that citizens are not sufficiently informed about their rights and duties and therefore if they are not sufficiently informed nor do they fulfill all their civil duties.

In the following graph (Fig. 1), in the first line, the first column presents the persons who consider that the Romanian citizens are sufficiently informed about their rights and duties, they represent 32% while in the second column of the first line 68% of people consider that Romanian citizens are not sufficiently informed about their rights and duties and in the second line the first column is represented by those who

consider that the citizens fulfill all their duties and the second column representing 87% of the sample of 80 people believe that once citizens are not informed, they can not fulfill their duties and even the informants do not fulfill their citizenship duties.

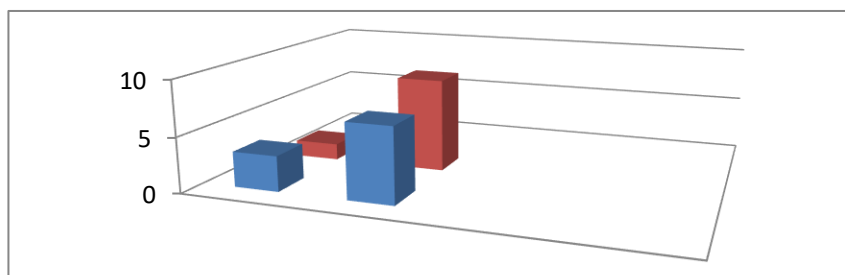


Figure 1. The chart for the item “How informed citizens are about their rights and duties”

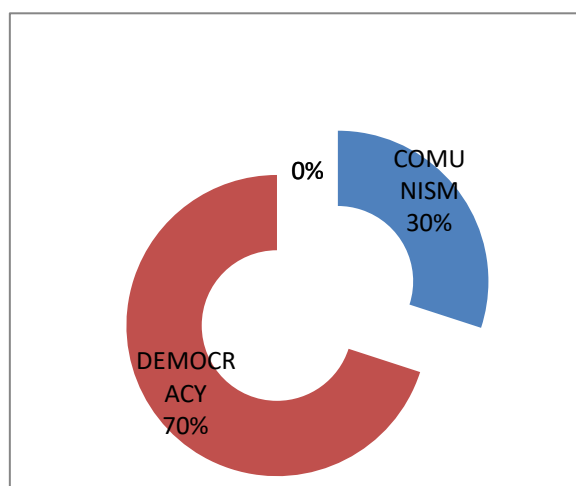


Figure 2. Diagram for item: “If you could choose, would you prefer communism or democracy?”

When asked whether it was advantageous to change the political regime most of the 45-65 year olds responded negatively when those between the ages of 18 and 40 responded that there really was a need to change the political regime that, was advantageous.

Of the 80 people who applied the 30% questionnaire, if they could choose, they would prefer the communist regime, while 70% prefer the democratic regime, considering it to be more advantageous. (Figure 2)

Considering the fact that citizens have incorrectly perceived democracy and the answers to the first questions, whether they relate to correct or incorrect perception of democracy, information or misinformation of citizens, or the fulfillment of citizens' debts, the following question in the questionnaire is: Do you think that freedom affects young people positively or negatively? “A question from which the answers we could not draw clear conclusions because the percentage was very tight, 54% believing that the democratic regime is auspicious and that it positively influences young people on when 46% considered that this democratic regime was not the most appropriate in terms of educating young people and initiating them in real life, so they considered that the democratic regime had a negative impact on young people, at least on young people living in Romania.

Also, by applying this questionnaire, we also found out why the democratic regime is mistaken for what democracy actually means for Romanian citizens, 34% of them answered that democracy means total freedom while 66% answered the opposite, considering that the democratic regime imposes legal, moral, educational, and so on limits, and that no one and nothing is above the law, so democracy does not mean total freedom (Fig. 3)

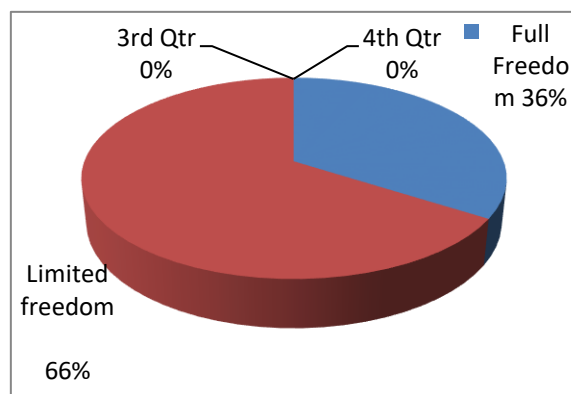


Figure 3. Diagram for the item “Democracy means total freedom or not?”

For many citizens, political participation only means the vote regularly offered and the support of the preferred political candidates, but in reality political involvement means much more than that, this political involvement implies both the right and the moral obligation that citizens have to vote for and their unconventional participation that can be achieved, for example, by taking part in a protest or political activity among the ballots, but how many of us have ever participated in any protest

demonstration? from indifference or lack of courage, or perhaps because we are not a rebellious one.

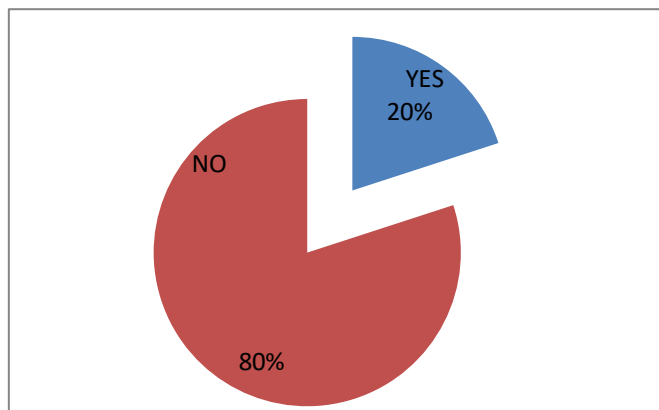


Figure 4. Diagram for the item. *“How many citizens ever participated in any protest demonstration”*

Of the 80 people who participated in the sample of my questionnaire, 80% never participated in any protest event during their lifetime, and 39% consider that these protest manifestations are neither necessary nor beneficial. (Fig. 4)

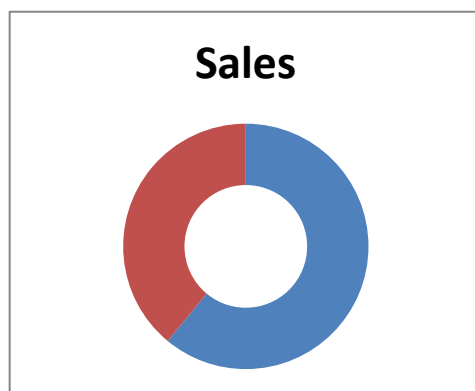


Figure 5. Diagram for the item. *“The advantages and disadvantages of the political regime”*.

38% of those who answered the questionnaire believe that the current political regime offers more disadvantages than advantages and still responded to the fact that they are not yet satisfied with their political involvement. Therefore, the final conclusion would be that although it does not involve politically or conventionally or unconventionally, the Romanian citizens are not satisfied with the current political regime, as it is applied to us in the country and how it is perceived compared to other European countries.

6. Conclusions

So the answers given by the 80 people in the sample that I have set up reflected our democratic reality, our conceptions and opinions, our knowledge and our education as a people governed by a democratic regime. If, theoretically, we are a democratic country and we claim the rights that the current regime gives to us in terms of duties and attributions, we have at least reluctant behavior.

Most citizens are convinced that we as a people have not correctly understood what really means the democratic regime and which is actually the real purpose, too, each of us is aware that we are not sufficiently involved in political life and we are not satisfied with our degree involvement but very many, if not all of them remain passive and take no action to remedy the situation.

In my opinion, the main people responsible for this lack of involvement, information and passivity are citizens themselves, being too passive and even careless, being accustomed to always finding a negative person to make him responsible for all the evil and all his problems as a citizen, this person is often a politician or even the system itself, but the citizens neglect only one aspect, namely that the system functions also through us, through those who form the people, through those who make possible the existence of a state, existing politics.

Very few people if they choose would prefer communism as a political regime but when asked if it was advantageous to change the political regime the answers were almost in balance, so neither communism as a political regime was satisfactory to Romanian citizens, very few of them they considered that the communist regime had more advantages than the restrictions, the differences and the discrimination they were subjected to during the political regime, but the most nostalgic are those who have lived a good period of their life under the regime's rule communist, considering that they were much more advantaged in many ways, the family was much more

supportive, the young people were much more educated and more respectful, the family was even the basic cell of society, the jobs were much more accessible and even compulsory, wages were good despite the products from food and from the food, to electrical and household appliances, it was much harder to obtain and obtain.

As far as young people are concerned, in the opinion of some, they are negatively influenced and in the opinion of others the fact that they can freely express their opinions and can express their feelings, the personality influences them positively, but the balance does not incline visibly into any of the opinions, it is certain that the level of juvenile crime has increased creepily, and even the level of moral offenses that can not be punished by law, but which can be “morally condemned”. But citizens have argued that the democratic regime is not responsible for this negative change, but for their people and their mentalities, their wrong perception.

But as there are nostalgists of communism, there are also people who enjoy the change of the political regime and the transition to a democratic regime. As a result of the applied questionnaire, the conclusions reached are that those who enjoy and consider the change of the democratic regime to be advantageous are the young people, who are accustomed to the freedom of movement and expression, those who were born during the democratic regime, being the only regime on which I know it and accept it, considering that it would be disastrous to adapt to a regime other than the current one.

In conclusion, the Romanian citizens are aware and convinced that they did not understand democracy correctly, that they do not get involved sufficiently in the political life, which does not dissatisfy them, but do nothing to remedy this, participate neither conventionally nor unconventionally any protest by a rally, but they do not want to change the democratic regime, demonstrating once again that the mentality impregnated in the time of the previous regime in which the citizens were listening, obedient but not acting, making decisions and did not have the right to reply.

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