

TRENDY V SOCIÁLNÍ PSYCHOLOGII

UDC 177.4

DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO THE PROBLEM OF SOCIAL INEQUALITIES

E. Sielicka

*PhD candidate,
e-mail: emilia.sielicka@ue.wroc.pl,*

A. Choma

*PhD candidate,
e-mail: alicja.choma@ue.wroc.pl,*

D. Kowalczyk

*PhD candidate,
e-mail: damian.kowalczyk@ue.wroc.pl,
Wrocław University of Economics and Business,
Wrocław, Poland*

Abstract. Nowadays, many positive phenomena are observed in the world, such as an increase in global production, which contributes to an increase in income, improvement in the quality of life and medical care as well as the level of education. Despite this, not everyone can equally benefit from the positive aspects brought about by the development of civilization, because the distribution of prosperity in the world is not even [4]. At the same time, science does not find appropriate solutions to stop this process. The aim of the article is to analyze the different approaches to social inequalities.

Keywords: social inequalities, economy, social problems

Social inequalities constitute a significant problem in the modern world. It is essential to realize that people suffering from social inequalities are in a weak and challenging social position and face many problems at all levels [3]. To understand this problem, essential is to know the basis of various approaches addressing this problem. Analysis of different approaches to social inequalities is the purpose of this paper.

When addressing the issue of social inequalities, it is necessary to find an answer to the question of what precisely this concept means [2]. Social inequality always means blocking specific individuals from accessing something [6]. P. Sztompka gives the following definition: "social inequalities refer to situations where people are unequal not because of any physical or mental characteristics, but because of their belonging to different groups or taking different social positions. To be able to speak of inequality in a social sense, there must be more than just individual difference. Membership in a particular group or taking a specific position must be associated with unequal – more com-

fortable or more difficult access or at least unequal – smaller or greater – chances of access to certain socially valued goods" [5]. The concept of inequality can also be presented as the existence of individual relationships between parties where one party has an advantage [1].

Therefore, the essence of social inequalities is the unequal access of entities to resources in the economy, both material and non-material. This disproportion is inevitable, but exceeding a specific level may lead to a situation in which society becomes dysfunctional. The concept of social inequality is directly related to the scale of poverty and may also cause many other social problems. There are three dimensions of inequality in the social sciences. The first dimension is the economic dimension, including income, housing, employment status, and property. Another is the social dimension, relating to education, prestige, lifestyle, and participation in culture. On the other hand, the third dimension is the political aspect concerning disproportions in the division of power and civic involvement [8]. In the literature on the

subject, income stratification is assumed to be the most critical measure of social inequality and a factor that shapes an individual's chances in practically all spheres of life [10].

What we perceive largely depends on the glasses through which we look at the world [6]. Social inequalities are not always considered a negative phenomenon. There are several ways to understand the concept of social inequality. Supporters of the existence of social inequalities believe that they enable people to fully use their potential. In addition, inequalities emphasize freedom, which is considered the most important social value. In addition, the existence of social inequalities, according to proponents of this approach, is a stimulus for development, as people become more motivated to improve the situation in which they find themselves. At the same time, they argue that the difference between the social status of the poor and the rich is not a problem as long as the situation of the poorer does not worsen. It should be emphasized that inequalities concerning individuals must be clearly distinguished from those concerning social groups. The differences between the units can be explained by many factors, and some of them can be fully acceptable. However, in the case of activities causing a systematic increase in inequalities between social groups, one should speak of a negative and unfair phenomenon, which requires discussion on the economic situation and changes in political decisions [3]. From the Railway, the overwhelming majority of opponents of social inequalities believe that they limit the opportunities for individuals to participate in social activity in the political, economic and social aspects. This has negative consequences not only for the individual, but also for the society as a whole, and therefore social inequalities should be eliminated in all dimensions [9]. On the other hand, research on the perception of income inequality by society conducted by the Polish Academy of Sciences in 2008 showed that 91% of Polish citizens assess the level of stratification in the country as too high, while recognizing that the existence of income inequality to a limited extent

is justified and fair [4]. It should be added that the welfare state is obliged to compensate for social inequalities in the scope and scope defined by legal acts. In Poland it results from the text of the Constitution and statutes.

Despite the many positive effects of economic development, social inequalities persist and are significant in some regions. Summarizing these considerations, understanding the essence of social inequality in today's world is crucial. Social welfare should be a priority in economies that strive for continuous development. Understanding the different approaches to social inequalities may allow for the development of appropriate policies to counter this problem.

Bibliography

1. Kot, S. M., Malawski, A., Węgrzycki, A. (red.), 2004, *Dobrobyt społeczny, nierówności i sprawiedliwość dystrybucyjna*, Wydawnictwo Akademii Ekonomicznej, Kraków, s. 15 – 16.
2. Michalczyk, T., 2001, *Nierówności społeczne a kryzys społeczno – moralny* [online], SGGW, Warszawa, [dostęp: 07.08.2020]. Dostępny w World Wide Web: http://www.ur.edu.pl/pliki/Zeszyt4/01_michalczyk.pdf
3. Melin, H., 2013, *Social inequalities w: Grotowska – Leder, J., Rokicka, E. (red.), New order? Dynamics of social structures in contemporary societies*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź, s. 51 – 62.
4. PAN, 2008, *Badania panelowe POLPAN, realizowane od 1988 r. przez Instytut Filozofii i Socjologii PAN*.
5. Sztompka, P., 2002, *Socjologia*, Kraków, s. 332.
6. Therborn, G., 2015, *Nierówność, która zabija. Jak globalny wzrost nierówności niszy życie milionów i jak z tym walczyć*, PWN, Warszawa.
7. Wosińska, W., 2008, *Oblicza globalizacji*, Smak słowa, Sopot.
8. Wójcik – Żołądek, M., 2013, *Nierówności społeczne w Polsce*, Infos nr 20/ 2013, Wydawnictwo Sejmowe dla Biura Analiz Sejmowych.
9. Zachorowska – Mazurkiewicz, A., 2011, *Istota nierówności w procesie rozwoju – podejście instytucjonalne w: Okoń – Horodyńska, E., Zachorowska – Mazurkiewicz, A. (red.), Współczesne wymiary nierówności w procesie globalizacji*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, s. 11 – 29.
10. Podemski, K., 2009, *Nierówności ekonomiczne w europejskich krajach postkomunistycznych z globalnej perspektywy – wybrane zagadnienia w:*



Podemski, K. (red.), Spór o społeczne znaczenie
społecznych nierówności, Wydawnictwo
Naukowe UAM, Poznań.

© *Sielicka E., Choma A.,
Kowalczyk D., 2020.*