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## Reasons for the decline in the effectiveness of social stigma and its impact on the increase in drug use: An analytical study in the sociology of deviance

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### Abstract

This analytical study explores the decline in the effectiveness of social stigma and its impact on the increase in drug use. Utilizing qualitative social research methods, the study delves into the evolving relationship between societal norms, stigma, and deviant behaviors. Various social, economic, political, and cultural factors are examined to understand how shifts in social evaluation criteria, urban expansion, economic deprivation, and globalization have contributed to the weakening of social stigma. The research highlights the role of social media and changing social relationships in diminishing the traditional mechanisms of social control, leading to an increase in drug use. By investigating these factors, the study underscores the complexities of deviant behavior in modern society and the need for a multifaceted approach to address these challenges.

**Keywords:** Social stigma, drug use, deviance, urban expansion

### Introduction

The debate between society and the individual forms an eternal relationship that cannot be separated, and many social phenomena are the result of this interaction. We will focus on an important social and ethical issue: social judgment (either negative or positive) towards individuals, known as social stigma. This often carries a negative perception and its relation to deviance, specifically drug use, through academically defined topics, including the research problem and methodology. The study will explore the reasons behind the decline in the effectiveness of social stigma and its impact on the increase in drug use through three subtopics: first, what is meant by social stigma; second, individuals and social stigma; third, reasons for the decline in the effectiveness of social stigma, followed by a conclusion.

### Research Problem

No society is free from manifestations of deviant or criminal behavior, as society is a human group that can exhibit both virtue and vice. These manifestations vary between being overtly visible and subtle. Generally, such phenomena increase and become more active in urban societies, while they decrease in traditional societies due to factors such as population density, widespread poverty, the rapid pace of life, the state's inability to provide job opportunities, and other related issues. However, there is a noticeable increase in these phenomena in traditional societies, and there are undoubtedly many reasons behind this trend. One such reason is the social perception of those engaging in deviant or criminal behavior.

### Research Methodology

The qualitative method (social interpretation) was adopted, characterized by its dialectical authenticity-authenticity in approaching the subject and authenticity in relation to reality. Authenticity means that the researcher understands the topic in its own structures and specifics. This involves constructing a framework to understand the event or field from a theoretical, general, and comparative perspective. The main features are:

1. **Openness:** This is guided by the researcher's mindset and includes both theoretical and methodological aspects.

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2. **Key results include:** (1) emphasizing the exploratory function of qualitative social research, (2) abandoning the formation of hypotheses in advance, (3) discovering and describing the study field at the expense of theoretical study of the topic, which is a criticism of the qualitative method.
3. **Research as Interactive:** The research process in the qualitative method should be an interactive process between the researcher and individuals belonging to a specific culture.
4. **Dynamic Nature between Research and Subject:** Understanding research involves interaction and communication between the researcher and the subject. This means that the relationship between research and the subject is dynamic. The qualitative method primarily concerns itself with models of interpretation and action that have specific social obligations. However, these collective models of action and interpretation are not fixed but are reproduced and changed according to qualitative sociology hypotheses through the actions and interpretations of active community members.
5. **Critical Reflection on the Subject and Analysis:** Qualitative social research is characterized by critical thinking about the subject or reflecting on both the research topic and the research process.
6. **Interpretation:** The principle of interpretation requires that the social researcher detail the various steps of the research process as much as possible. It also determines the rules for interpreting field data. The qualitative researcher should interpret their data more thoroughly and avoid the pitfalls of quantification and coding, as seen in quantitative research. Qualitative research is intellectual, cognitive, and field-based, addressing empirical reality as an intellectual problem.

### Reasons for the Decline in the Effectiveness of Social Stigma and Its Impact on the Increase in Drug Use

It is scientifically unacceptable to narrow the causes of any social phenomenon to specific points because there are dozens of reasons, each structurally and functionally related to many other reasons, along with many unseen causes. However, presenting some of these causes as representative of the general reasons for the phenomenon is acceptable, especially in qualitative studies. This requires an introductory presentation of the topic, which here involves clarifying the concept of social stigma, then explaining the relationship between individuals and social stigma. Thirdly, the reasons for the decline in the effectiveness of social stigma will be discussed.

#### Firstly: What is Social Stigma?

The origins of stigma theory trace back to Emile Durkheim's book "Suicide," where the French sociologist found that crime is not merely a violation of criminal law but an assault on society. Durkheim was the first to propose that stigma related to deviance serves the function of satisfying society's need to control behavior, and this concept was further developed by sociologists in the 1960s. Howard S. Becker's book "Outsiders" significantly influenced the development and popularity of this theory by advancing the concept of stigma. Becker contributed to shifting discussions of deviance from focusing on the individual to examining the impact of classifications and social interactions on our identities and behaviors. Thanks to this innovative approach and its drive to think deeply about social contexts, Becker has become a

pivotal force in shaping our understanding of deviance and its societal effects. According to this theory, people receive stigmatizing labels through others' perceptions of their traits and behaviors. Each individual is aware of how others judge them because they have experienced various roles and functions in social interactions and can gauge social reactions to them.

Irving Goffman's book *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, published in 1963, has incredibly inspired various forms of judgments, conceptual refinements, and repeated demonstrations of the negative impact stigma has on the lives of those who are stigmatized.

Since Goffman and beyond, alternative or refined definitions of stigma have varied significantly. For example, Stafford and Scott suggest that stigma "is a trait of people who stand in contrast to a standard of social unity," where "standard" is defined as "a shared conviction that a person should act in a certain way at a given time." Crocker, Major, and Steele indicate that "stigmatized individuals possess (or are believed to possess) a trait or characteristic that represents a socially devalued identity in a specific social context." Among the particularly influential definitions is that of Jones and others, who use Goffman's observation that stigma can be viewed as a relationship between "attribute and stereotype" to define stigma as a "mark" (attribute) that links a person to undesirable characteristics (stereotypes). We have added the element of discrimination to Jones *et al.*'s definition in our reviews of stigma and mental illness.

Among the many reasons for the diversity in definitions of stigma, two stand out prominently: first, the concept of stigma has been applied to a wide range of conditions, each with its own uniqueness, which may lead researchers to conceptualize stigma in slightly different ways. Second, stigma research is clearly interdisciplinary, involving contributions from psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, and social geographers. Although there is considerable overlap in interests across these disciplines, there are some differences in focus. Even within a single discipline, approaches to the concept of stigma arise from different theoretical perspectives and produce varying views on what should be included in the concept. Thus, different reference frameworks can lead to different conceptualizations.

#### Second: Individuals and Social Stigma

Individuals in traditional societies often strive to engage in socially acceptable behavior as endorsed by the community in order to gain social approval. Many of them seek to reinforce this perception by adhering to social norms. Conversely, society tends to be stringent in its value judgments toward individuals who deviate from these ethical and social rules. One of the most prominent strict rules is social stigma; deviants and criminals often carry a negative stigma and are subjected to criticism and possibly ostracism, particularly in matters such as marriage, to name just one example. This makes the social behavior of individuals in traditional societies align closely with these rules.

However, it has been observed that the effectiveness of social stigma has begun to wane in traditional societies. For instance, society may now handle deviants differently than it did in the past, or at least no longer finds dealing with them particularly problematic, perhaps at an economic level, for example. This change might contribute to the rise of deviant behaviors, including drug use (the subject of our research).

Returning to George Herbert Mead's theory, one of the key figures in symbolic interactionism at the University of

Chicago, we can find an explanation for the diminishing effectiveness of stigma, at least concerning drug addicts, in their disregard for the negative social perception of them. Mead posits that the self refers to personal feelings and attitudes that an individual derives from the views, judgments, positions, attitudes, evaluations, and perceptions of those around them and interacting with them. This means that an individual is aware of their self-image based on the feelings and attitudes of those around them.

This feedback image defines the features of one's personality. In other words, an individual does not create an image of themselves independently; rather, it is shaped with the help of those around them and interacting with them. Subsequently, this image is accepted by their perception and mind as a reliable and accepted image by others, and they interact with it as the true representation of themselves, according to the following socio-psychological equation:

- Individual Perception.
- Opinions of Others about Them.
- The Characteristics of the Referential Image about Themselves.
- The Formation of Their Attitudes, Judgments, and Thinking about Themselves.
- Perceptions of Others about Them.

It can be noted that self-awareness does not occur rapidly or arbitrarily. Instead, it happens gradually, at different times, and in various situations with differing levels of ease and difficulty. It occurs during interactions with their social groups, such as family, playgroups, workgroups, or neighbors. The Social Reaction Theory emerged in alignment with the Chicago School's interactionist interpretation and as a reaction to traditional criminal theories, such as positivist and classical schools, which primarily focused on identifying the causes of criminal behavior. Instead of studying why some individuals engage in deviant acts, Social Reaction Theory explores how societal reactions, especially those involving labeling and stigmatization, can influence individual behavior and shape their self-identity.

### **The main aspects of Social Reaction Theory include the following**

- 1. Labeling and Stigmatization:** The fundamental principle of Social Reaction Theory is the idea that when individuals are labeled as deviant or criminal, they may internalize these labels, leading to further deviance. Stigmatization can result in a self-fulfilling prophecy, where individuals conform to the expectations associated with their labels.
- 2. Primary and Secondary Deviance:** Social Reaction Theory differentiates between primary deviance, which involves initial deviant acts, and secondary deviance, which occurs when individuals engage in further deviant behavior in response to the labels imposed upon them. Secondary deviance is often a reaction to societal responses.
- 3. Agents of Social Control:** Agents such as law enforcement, the criminal justice system, and official figures play significant roles in labeling and stigmatizing individuals. Their actions can exacerbate deviance.
- 4. Deviant Career:** Social Reaction Theory explores the concept of a deviant career, where individuals may become involved in subcultures and deviant lifestyles as a result of the labeling process.

The exchange between an individual's social behavior and society represents the form of social interaction between the parties, which can take on a negative character in its dimensions. This interaction can be categorized into two social realms: one is natural, where social processes follow the normal conditions of social life, including both legal and illegal, moral or criminal activities. The other is exceptional, where social processes are shaped by non-normal conditions such as wars, crises, social upheavals, or structural changes that impact the social structure or cause value disruptions outside developmental plans.

Within the natural scope, this exchange between society and the deviant individual takes the form of negativity in social interaction. The deviant or criminal individual is subjected to a context of negative perception through processes of labeling, isolation, description, and reinforcement, which create self-awareness and awareness of the self. This process becomes a way of highlighting, suggesting, confirming, and stimulating the characteristics under accusation until the individual becomes a reflection of the label applied to them. Whether the one applying the description is involved in punishment or reform, the reinforcement in both cases focuses on behavior deemed objectionable. Additionally, excessive enthusiasm shown by authorities (such as parents, police officers, courts, and probation officers) against deviant acts can undermine their goal. The more effort they put into reforming the behavior, the more they inadvertently foster the growth of wrongdoing. This is because continuous suggestion leads to counterproductive outcomes, regardless of the intentions behind it, as it highlights the behavior that needs to be suppressed. Therefore, minimizing the discussion of this wrongdoing is preferable.

Tannenbaum's perspective emphasizes that actions themselves are not inherently good or bad; rather, what matters is the labeling or stigma that society attaches to an individual as a result of their deviant behavior. In this view, the stigma is defined by labeling the person (e.g., "thief" or "murderer"), thus marking them as deviant and criminal. This label changes how the individual perceives themselves and how others view them. Others interact with the meaning of the label (e.g., "thief" or "murderer") rather than with the individual themselves. Consequently, they engage in social isolation of the stigmatized person, such that any behavioral pattern the individual exhibits or attempts to exhibit is always associated with the label. The stigmatized individual then begins to seek a social outlet for this isolation, which involves trying to form a new self-awareness to adapt to and integrate with this new image, making it align with their self-concept. Therefore, these processes of labeling individuals as deviants and criminals contribute to the creation of crime and deviance.

In exceptional circumstances, the effectiveness of social norms diminishes as survival and securing life become the primary goals. When conditions change drastically, behavior becomes centered on individual needs, and there is less social criticism of individuals, shifting priorities toward formal work and legal controls, and focusing on the concept of self-interest. This, in turn, leads to value changes that may justify various behavioral patterns and weaken the negative stigma associated with many behaviors created by exceptional circumstances.

The exchange of perceptions between society, which creates an ideal image according to its value perspective, and the deviant, who tries to adapt to the social reality that operates according to the norms and strives to endure amidst exceptional circumstances, provides a clear explanation of the

phenomenon of social stigma. This explanation stands out among functional and conflict theories. The interactionist or mutual social influence approach in labeling theory suggests that what leads to the creation of a criminal is how others interact with the deviant person. In labeling theory, deviance is defined by focusing on the social definition of deviance.

#### **This approach is based on two main assumptions**

1. Deviance is a relative phenomenon that is not fixed within societies. Therefore, deviance is not determined by the nature of the individual's actions but by the consequences of these actions or the label others assign to the actor, which is known as "stigma."
2. Deviance is a social process involving two key parties: the deviant act committed by the individual and the reaction of others to this act, which includes labeling the act as deviant.

Thus, the central question becomes how the group defines the deviant rather than who the deviant is. From this perspective, deviance and criminal behavior are merely social definitions and may provide a social justification for deviant behavior. Proponents of this approach argue that social reform institutions such as prisons, mental hospitals, and psychiatric facilities play a significant role in labeling individuals with the stigma of deviance and crime. According to this view, these institutions do not offer true reform but rather reinforce the stigma of deviance as soon as an individual enters them.

American sociologist Edwin Lemert is a prominent representative of this approach and has effectively elucidated its hypotheses and concepts. He argues that deviant behavior, in general, is the result of cultural conflict, which manifests in the social organization within a society. Lemert also identifies three levels at which such deviance can occur:

#### **1. Individual Deviance**

This arises from internal psychological pressures that directly impact the individual, driving them towards deviant behavior.

#### **2. Social Deviance**

This occurs due to social organization, such as a gang that views deviant behavior as normal, or a group of outcasts.

#### **3. Situational Deviance**

This results from exposure to environmental pressures or situational factors that leave the individual with limited opportunity to deliberate and choose between normative and deviant behavior.

It may be worthwhile to note that Edwin Lemert's classification touches upon the categorization of social reality into the natural and exceptional domains. Individual and social deviance fall within the natural domain, where labeling is highly effective. In such cases, individuals often try to avoid any behavior that might provoke societal disapproval for fear of judgment. Conversely, the community may lessen its normative strictness in the context of situational deviance, providing justifications for the pressures and factors faced by the individual. The community might even extend its normative justifications to the point of adopting Bauman's concept of value liquidity.

#### **Third: Reasons for the Diminished Effectiveness of Social Stigma**

It is challenging to pinpoint the reasons for the reduced impact of social stigma in society with numerous specific

factors, due to the interweaving of social variables with many economic, political, and cultural variables, each of which has its own internal and external factors. However, we will attempt to present some of these factors:

#### **1. Sudden Changes and Shifts in Social Evaluation Metrics**

Unplanned changes often lead to new and possibly unfamiliar realities in society. One such example is social mobility, where certain social classes or individuals rise to higher social strata while others fall. These social mobility fluctuations are often accompanied by changes in social evaluation indicators. This situation may enable some individuals in society to attempt to build a socially fabricated identity, believing that they can achieve a certain status through economic means, such as engaging in trade. Alternatively, others might turn to drug addiction under the mistaken belief that it provides a solution to the effects of social mobility and sudden changes.

The Chicago School, from 1892 until the 1940s, paid significant attention to this factor by studying the living conditions of poor immigrants from European, African, and Asian countries who settled in rapidly growing urban areas characterized by vertical social mobility. They focused on studying underdeveloped areas known as slums, which were rife with various phenomena such as poverty, crime, delinquency, divorce, broken families, and racial conflict, labeling these issues as social ills. Additionally, they were concerned with studying social disintegration, asserting that social disintegration arises when society undergoes rapid and severe social changes, leading to the collapse of the value system within the community. Park and his colleagues observed the spread of social disintegration symptoms, such as poverty and crime, in certain parts of the city, noting that these issues were more prevalent in the city center and less so in the outskirts.

The Chicago School theorists attributed the source of social problems to the individual, arguing that individuals failed to assimilate the standards and values of their society. They criticized individuals for their inability to adapt to the new life. Studies from this school related to the evaluation of social standards pointed to two fundamental truths:

- In the last few years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, local communities experienced rapid and continuous social changes, which led to various outcomes, including modifications in the demographic characteristics of these communities, the ecological system, the economic structure, and organizational patterns.
- Most modern local communities have suffered from numerous social, economic, demographic, and ecological problems, such as administrative corruption, poverty, and migration, among others.

Social problems arise when changes in one aspect of non-material culture do not synchronize with changes in material culture due to the differing rates of cultural change in both aspects.

#### **2. Openness to the Other**

This openness has led to the introduction of many social and cultural phenomena that do not align with our value systems. Some members of society, suffering from social maladies, perceive these phenomena as indicators of modernity and believe that keeping up with them may be necessary for economic or medical reasons, such as cosmetic surgeries. The inability of some of these individuals to achieve these



standards may lead to deviant behavior. The influences that disrupt the cohesion of values and the catastrophic consequences that follow for society originate from two sources. The first is external, represented by the invasion of new values that are highly inconsistent and incompatible with the prevailing values of society. These values enter society alongside rushed processes of social change, causing discord that leads to conflict between the two directions. The second source is internal, involving the clash of subcultures, which results in the multiplicity and duality of values and standards, spreading chaos that leads to the disintegration of society. This disintegration occurs when social relationships fail to provide the necessary factors and conditions for achieving human happiness, well-being, and security. These are achieved through human behavior that aligns with the standards established and followed by society, forming an integrated system free from conflicts and contradictions as a result of cohesive values and norms.

### 3. Urban Expansion

Place can play a significant role in promoting deviant behavior. In direct interactions, individuals often consider the social perception of their behavior. Therefore, the expansion of urban areas and the reduction of direct interaction can diminish individuals' awareness of broader societal evaluations due to weakened or even absent social interaction. The demographic-technological growth has led to profound changes in the morphological structure of non-modern societies. The old social structure relied on a controlled demographic size and technological development, which allowed for cultural homogeneity through centralized social control. The pre-demographic and technological boom era was characterized by a monotony that enabled the socio-political system to impose strict control over individuals and their thinking, either through voluntary compliance or coercion. Thus, the change in the morphological structure of society indicates the disintegration of cultural homogeneity in non-modern societies, a process reinforced by policies promoting universal access to education and media for all members of society.

Education, in particular, contributes to the dismantling of ancient cultural patterns by teaching rules of arithmetic, grammar, and so forth, leading to individualism in choice and taste. Meanwhile, the media dismantles traditional authoritarian models by creating multiple directive alternatives, resulting in a variety of practical and behavioral choices. Moreover, factors such as globalization, freedoms, and the internet, among others, have weakened the cultural boundaries between societies, unprecedentedly facilitating the flow of people, information, and ideas across cultural borders. The overall result is that the change in the physical form of urban areas (social morphology), marked by significant and unregulated geographic expansion beyond the traditional urban form, is the main indicator of social change in both its cultural and social aspects.

### 4. Poverty and Economic Deprivation

Poverty and economic deprivation can play a role in reducing social stigma, as society may justify some deviant behaviors in social discourse as a result of need, even if these behaviors are condemned in official discourse. Marginality theory is one of many theories that explain the relationship between poverty and deviance, opening the door to studies that seek the real causes of poverty, urban poverty, and the related social problems.

Therefore, an organized understanding of social reality requires considering historical, economic, social, and political aspects, as well as the impact of emergent variables, most of which revolve around the misery and deprivation experienced by the lower classes in society. Consequently, some scholars and researchers classify and describe residents of underdeveloped areas as marginalized (the marginalized), noting that geographically, they live on the outskirts of the city, and functionally, they are deprived of urban services. Socially, economically, and psychologically, they are generally distant from urban life.

From Park's perspective, marginality means that the marginal individual is a cultural hybrid because they live on the fringes of two cultures and societies but are not fully integrated into either. This has led to the emergence of marginal culture, a subculture that deviates from the surrounding culture. Marginalized groups are those that have accepted the dominant culture's values but lack the means to achieve them or are prevented from doing so. It is noteworthy that many of these studies and research view the marginalized as deviant groups, such as beggars and thieves, who undoubtedly deserve the label of marginalization.

Given the pressing needs, the government's weakened role in implementing growth and investment projects, alongside factors such as political instability, the emergence of armed groups, and changes in social mobility, it is somewhat natural for the community's influence on the individual to diminish. As a result, the individual's response to fulfilling personal needs may outweigh their adherence to social judgment or opinion.

### 5. Expansion of Social Relationships

With the development of urban life and the growing demands it brings, along with the increasing affiliations of individuals to various institutions and the prevalence of secondary relationships in the city, the influence of social opinion may be diminished. This view is supported by Torsten Sellin, whose socio-theoretical interpretation is based on a comparison between different types of societies and the individual's life within society. He explained that rural or traditional societies are characterized by harmony and solidarity in their circumstances and the needs of individuals, so the individual does not feel isolated or out of place, nor do they feel the need to adopt behavior that opposes that of another individual or a group goal. This is due to the solidarity, cooperation, and noble human sentiments that prevail within these societies. This does not mean that these societies are ideal and free of crime, as some crimes do occur, but they are few and typically involve individuals from outside these communities.

In contrast, urban societies lack integration and stability due to their vastness and the diversity of groups within them, leading to conflicting and competing interests. The most prominent manifestations of these conflicts include the struggle between the poor and the rich, the ignorant and the educated, and the liberal and the conservative, among others. This has drawn the attention of sociologists, who, in their studies and research, have concluded that criminal behavior is a social phenomenon that reflects social discord and alienation, which are more prevalent in complex societies where the role of informal institutions in overseeing necessary social control is weakened. As a result, social control becomes the responsibility of formal authorities, which impose mandatory official values, with deviations from these values being considered crimes punishable by law.

Regarding individual life and upbringing, Sellin and other researchers found that a child is born into a social environment imposed upon them from the start-beginning with the family, continuing through school and friends, and extending to the workplace and social clubs. Within this environment, the child encounters various behaviors across these different groups, resulting from conflicts and contradictions. The individual may adopt the prevailing behavior in one of these groups to align with its members, thus responding to the influence of one group over another. If this group condones criminal behavior while others reject it, the individual might engage in criminal conduct. According to this view, criminal behavior arises from the individual's sense of disharmony with their society or the loss of collective identity, manifested as a conflict of values within different groups, leading them to respond to the group that condones criminal behavior.

## **6. Expansion of the Open Society and the Power of Social Media**

Social media has transformed the moral and social value of public perception into a digital metric, often taking the form of a weekly or more frequent "trend," in contrast to the lasting social stigma that can stick with a person for life, potentially even extending to their children. A notable example of the temporary influence of social media was observed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Digital content creators excelled in weaving stories and reports that aligned with people's curiosity about the virus, its spread, prevention, symptoms, and treatment. These topics dominated social media platforms for an extended period, overwhelming people.

Excessive exposure to information about COVID-19 led to an overwhelming flow of false and misleading information circulating on social media, causing confusion and anxiety. In this context, the concept of "information overload" emerged—where some information is accurate and reliable, while other information is incorrect, making it difficult for people to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance when needed. Various initiatives were launched to combat this phenomenon, such as the World Health Organization's official websites and pages designed to counter rumors and false news. Media teams were formed to inform the public about the technical and social dangers posed by rumors, with their mission being to refute these rumors with evidence-based and factual information, sharing accurate details on their social media platforms and issuing regular updates from trusted sources. This approach prevents the spread of misinformation through updates from official channels.

While a single channel with substantial financial and media resources can provide accurate information amidst a sea of falsehoods, the general public and individuals lack such capabilities. As a result, both individuals and society have reduced their social regard for social media and subsequently minimized the importance of any stigma that may arise from it, treating it more as a digital metric rather than a moral consideration. Additionally, the "deviant" individual might use the same platform to justify their behavior and gain support in line with social perception. Given the absence of truth, they may even find support from some individuals.

## **7. Globalization and Breaking Traditional Boundaries**

Globalization has allowed many individuals from traditional societies to detach from their roots and engage with the culture of globalization, which has provided alternatives to traditional society. As a result, the "deviant" individual is no longer bound to the remnants of traditional society, given that

globalization offers alternatives—some of which may be illusory. The nation-state once derived its status within the social system and gained legitimacy against pre-national organizations, contributing to relative harmony among individuals and succeeding in creating a strong identification between the community and the state, which formed the essence of nationalism and the national society.

However, globalization, as it is commonly understood, or rather the necessities of active participation in it, requires the gradual abandonment of this social contract. This is due either to the need to adapt to global policies imposed under the principles of free competition, transparency, and minimizing state intervention in public affairs, or to the significant reduction of the state's role due to its lack of resources to play such a role. Consequently, as the economic, social, cultural, and educational role of the state diminishes, societies come under the direct influence of the external logic of globalization and the ability of different social groups to cope with it. Naturally, the strongest and most privileged groups are the ones who benefit from globalization, while the widespread openness condemns all other groups that once relied on national state programs and its positive interventions to ensure a minimum level of equality and social justice.

Beyond these challenges, which threaten the entirety of the economic, social, political, and cultural programs that have so far formed the basis of the nation-state's legitimacy, globalization at the strategic level creates a new situation. This situation turns the entire world into a single geostrategic field, thereby submerging all active international forces within it and reevaluating their strategic weight based on their ability to maintain a position or role in regional and global decision-making. In this context, small states lose their influence and are deprived of the ability to exert any impact on international life. Therefore, globalization also triggers its own conflicts related to the redistribution of power relations within the three interwoven and interacting systems: the global system, regional systems, and national systems. The concept of "civilizational war," which has gained increased usage in recent years, is an example of the new concepts that have emerged in the field of international relations to describe the types of tensions, disputes, and numerous confrontations associated with the technological boom.

No matter the case, current globalization tends to transform all old systems of relations—international, national, political, economic, cultural, and moral—into weak systems incapable of absorbing the dynamics of ongoing changes, leading them to obsolescence and decay. However, as globalization dismantles these systems, it also leaves societies in a state of chaos, characterized by fluidity, disorder, anxiety, and doubt. This particularly affects those regions of the world that have no means to influence their own fate or that are unaware of what is happening to them. Since globalization is based on the premise that the market alone—if left unregulated by political forces—can reveal harmony in social and international relations, it rejects subjecting the market to any standards other than those related to its organization and the consistency of commercial operations. Societies may have to wait a very long time before they regain some balance, once global public opinion successfully organizes itself and pushes for the regulation of economic processes and markets by standards that allow for the rebuilding of the global system on foundations that go beyond market logic and ensure coherence and harmony among all parties.

Undoubtedly, awareness of the global impact of globalization and its reflections on the local environment has led

individuals to transcend the concept of traditional society. Consequently, some of them may believe in it, aspire to it, and dream of it. Naturally, under the influence of this mindset, the impact of social stigma diminishes.

### 8. Political fluctuations, factions, and conflicting interests

Some individuals in society might find justification in not giving much importance to social stigma regarding certain deviant behaviors, especially in light of the chaotic and complex situation that emerged in Iraq after 2003. During this period, as old opposing forces came to dominate the political scene, a large number of political entities were established as a natural reflection of the long deprivation of political life in Iraq. The first administrative body set up by the United States to manage Iraq's political affairs after 2003 was the Iraqi Governing Council, which was primarily composed of opposition party forces, although it also included some unaffiliated opposition figures. The council's selection of members along ethnic, religious, and sectarian lines foreshadowed the nature of future political competition, which would be marked by sectarian and ethnic conflicts, despite the use of democratic mechanisms.

This prediction proved accurate, as the parties that governed Iraq failed to present a developmental project to advance the country or propose a development plan to bring it to safety. This led to widespread discontent with government failures at all levels, increased corruption among many members of the major parties, stagnation in the private sector, and the state's inability to expand employment in the public sector. The violence that accompanied the government's and political forces' response to the October protests further exacerbated these challenges, posing a significant obstacle to the effectiveness of political parties.

Additionally, the weak organizational structure of many political forces—whether those that officially organized themselves into parties in compliance with Iraqi party law or those that continue to function as political blocs in parliament without becoming actual parties—cannot be overlooked.

Undoubtedly, this chaos affects the social fabric and individuals. In the absence of national awareness and weakened religious motivation, these factors can contribute to deviance and threaten social peace, thus reducing the effectiveness of traditional society in maintaining social control, particularly in relation to the power of social stigma.

### 9. Social Defamation via Social Media

One of the significant reasons for the decline in social stigma might be the prevalence of defamation conducted by some individuals through social media platforms. These platforms were originally designed to help people connect, engage in social activities, communicate with friends and family, discover local and global events, and find groups to join. However, they have become arenas for illegal activities such as defamation, where individuals use online platforms to disparage and harm others. This includes the publication of harmful content aimed at damaging reputations through the internet.

Some individuals may see defamation as a way to discredit or blackmail others, using such information to damage reputations for personal gain, whether for professional competition, political rivalry, electoral disputes, commercial interests, or personal grudges. This has created a social problem where it becomes challenging for the community to distinguish between legitimate judgments and defamation. Consequently, individuals might become less concerned with

societal judgments, adopting a more indifferent attitude towards social norms due to the pervasive nature of defamation.

### Conclusion

The research provided a clarification of the concept of social stigma and an exploration of the interactive relationship between individuals and society. It examined the reasons for the diminishing impact of social stigma as a means of social control. The research concluded that social conditions play a significant role in altering some of the fundamental values of social life, especially under exceptional circumstances and the introduction of new values, such as those associated with globalization. Some individuals have found justifications for their deviant behaviors in these changing conditions.

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