

CREATING IMAGES OF PEOPLE WITH VISUAL DISABILITIES IN MASS MEDIA: PROBLEMS AND SHORTCOMINGS

Azod Kurbanov

Doctoral student of the University of Journalism and Mass Communications of Uzbekistan.

E-mail: ozodqurbonov1987@gmail.com

Abstract: In this article, the contents of the mass media on the issues of persons with disabilities, especially the blind, are analyzed. The author proposed to develop a program of recommendations for journalists preparing material in the same direction in order to regulate the situation of interpretation in this type of content in forming the media image of blind people. This program of recommendations talks about the journalist's authorial position, the words and phrases used by the authors in the materials, and the requirements for the selected subject areas.

Keywords: Mass media. A person with a disability. Blind. Medical model. Social model. Author position. Integration. Society. A stereotype. Media image.

INTRODUCTION. Today, the number of people with disabilities in Uzbekistan is about 800 thousand, which is more than 2% of the country's population. The rights of this category of people in various aspects are protected by law in a number of normative documents adopted by the state. At the same time, the rights of persons with disabilities have been strengthened in the newly revised Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

However, despite this, the process of their social integration into society remains complicated. These complications are reflected in the processes of people with disabilities starting with daily communication with others, getting an education, getting a job, and using various state services. Social integration means "mutual cooperation of social strata and groups in society". Stereotypes in society are the main factors that have a negative impact on integration processes. Taking into account the high role of the press in shaping public opinion and managing public consciousness, it can be said that unprofessional content prepared in this direction also has an effect on the spread of negative stereotypes related to disability in society.

Regardless of the type of mass media, if the life of people with disabilities and issues of disability are not approached with a healthy perspective, the stereotypes existing in this regard will be preserved and will continue to spread in new forms. In this sense, it can be said that the issues of content preparation in journalism need reform. As the first step of these reforms, it is necessary to develop a program of recommendations for journalists in the preparation of material on disabled persons and disability issues.

This recommendation program defines the requirements that must be followed in order for the content to be attractive. It is appropriate to focus on factors such as the main concepts of the requirements, the purpose of the content, the expressions in the author's speech, the perceptions created by the information consumers as a result of the content. However, this type of program of recommendations and the requirements specified in them should not be understood as censorship of journalists preparing material on the subject. On the contrary, these requirements serve to regulate the interpretation of the same type of content.

Disability content creation and approach issues can be explored in several spheres. They are classified based on the above-mentioned requirements. In order not to deviate from the topic of the research, these problems are analyzed within the content related to people with visual disabilities.

In this place, 85 contents prepared in the mass media in 2019-2024 regarding blind people and issues related to them were analyzed. 35 of these materials are TV content, 28 are radio broadcasts, 9 are articles published in printed publications, and 13 are articles published on Internet sites.

The journalist's authorial position is the first of the important requirements to be determined when preparing material on the issues of the blind for any type of media. It's no secret that the Uzbek media's materials on the issues of disability, in particular, the issues of the blind, are not included in the list of contents that are interesting for information consumers in general. This can be explained in two ways.

The first is that inclusive communication between representatives of the general public and persons with visual disabilities is not properly established. As a result, the ideas and concepts of the representatives of both societies about each other's way of life are developing far from reality in many cases. This serves to form various negative stereotypes mentioned above.

The second is that the position of journalists in approaching the issues of people with visual disabilities in the mass media appears unprofessional. This factor also causes the negative stereotypes mentioned above to increase.

LITERATURE ANALYSIS.

After all, materials on the subject of the blind are often based on a pessimistic approach. This is especially evident in content about individuals. In this regard, the main position chosen by journalists is to present a person with a visual disability as a medical model, that is, to focus the main emphasis in the image on his disability. In the medical model, treating a person with a disability as a patient, associating problems with medical causes, is the primary priority. Most journalists try to portray blind people as free-willed people against the backdrop of a painful lifestyle.

Unfortunately, it naturally leads its information consumer to the same conclusion. As a result, content consumers feel sorry for the blind, and at the same time feel grateful that they do not belong to this category. Such an approach leads to increased segregation rather than integration. In the second case, people with visual impairment who have achieved something in life are depicted as superheroes, and the journalist tries to express his position more openly with the phrase "despite being blind". Here Russian researcher A.Ryabrova's opinion that "It is wrong for a journalist to create the image of a victim from persons with disabilities, and to create a superhero out of them."

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS.

When it comes to the question of the journalist's authorial position in the preparation of content on the topic of disability, an interesting situation was observed in two telecontents on the subject of research. That is, in 2021, two different positions are reflected in the informational programs "Zamon" of the "Sevimli" TV channel and "Hudud" of the "Mening Yurtim" TV channel, prepared from the events dedicated to the World Day of the Blind on November 13, 2021, by the Yunusabad District Division of the Society of the Blind of Uzbekistan. reached The main emphasis of the video transmitted through the "Zamon" information program is to express the charitable assistance provided by the Eriell Group company to the blind on the occasion of this date.

The pictures on the board show blind people receiving products donated by sponsors. Also, only the words of gratitude expressed by blind people to the sponsors from the small communication process held with them were broadcasted. At the same time, in the speeches of the reporters, there are attempts to represent this date only as a day of charity. For example, the poster begins with the following sentence: "November 13 is the International Day of the Blind. In connection with the date, the company Eriell Group started a charity campaign on the eve of the holiday".¹

In fact, this date is not a holiday, but a day to draw society's attention to the problems of the blind. Its designation as November 13 is related to the birthday of the French pedagogue Valentin Gayou, who was one of the first to pay attention to the issue of literacy for the blind. It is clear from the prepared content that the reporters of the show are completely unaware of the true nature of the day. This situation is also known from the discriminatory expressions they used against the blind. The film ends with sentences of this nature: "The company continues to share love with poor souls by holding such charity events every holiday".²

In the "Hudud" informational program on the "Mening Yurtim" TV channel, it can be observed that an attempt was made to cover the processes of this event from a different perspective.³

Although this plaque also mentions the charitable support of the sponsoring organization, the main emphasis is on why November 13 is called the Day of the Blind. The plaque describes the history of this day in a short form, with historical facts.

Also, a small interview was organized with blind people about their current activities and interests in life. This means that the authors of the film approached the topic correctly. However, despite this, discriminatory expressions such as "visually impaired", "despite having limited opportunities" are used in this poster. It is clear from this that the problem of the correct use of expressions in content related to disability issues is also of urgent importance. In this sense, it is appropriate that the next requirement should be set in relation to expressions.

Decree No. PF-5270 of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, adopted on December 1, 2017, "On measures to radically improve the system of state support for persons with disabilities", emphasizes the issue of using the term "person with disabilities" instead of the word "disabled".⁴

In fact, the lexicon of disabled is in most cases a word that carries a negative meaning and is more derogatory in nature. In this sense, it is recommended to use the term "person with disabilities" in international legal documents in order to prevent the denigration of people with disabilities. It follows from this that in the language of official communication, including in the mass media, depending on the type of disability in people, it is appropriate to use expressions such as: a person with a visual disability, a person with a hearing disability, a person with a disability in the musculoskeletal system. Unfortunately, it is common for journalists to use various expressions that contradict the rules of ethics in the sentences in the content about the blind. From the content analyzed, it became clear that such expressions are actively used in the press.

For example, the phrase "disabled" is the most common in telecontents on the subject. If you look at the numbers, 17 of the 32 telecontents available for the study, broadcast between 2019 and 2024,

¹ "Zamon" informational program. "Sevimli" TV channel, 11/13/2021.

² "Zamon" informational program. "Sevimli" TV channel, 11/13/2021.

³ Hudud information program. "My Country" TV channel, 11/13/2021.

⁴ <https://lex.uz/acts/3436192>

used the phrase “disabled” 22 times. For example, in the episode of “People Among Us”, a project of the “Culture and Enlightenment” channel, dedicated to the blind geographer Dilshod Musaev, the journalist introduces his hero to the audience, using the following description: “limited opportunities do not hinder him”⁵.

In another issue of the show, the activity of Jamoliddin Yaqubov, a literature teacher of Andijan State University, is covered, and the author concludes his conclusions in the following way: “Even if his opportunities are limited, Jamoliddin proves that a person who strives for knowledge and enlightenment can achieve it.”⁶.

It should be noted that the position chosen by this show in the way of forming the media image of people with disabilities, especially the blind, is extremely appropriate. Because the show highlights the lives and activities of blind people who are active in social life and have various professions. In this sense, it can be said that the dogma spread in the general society about people with visual disabilities serves to soften the stereotypes. However, the above-mentioned expressions in the journalist’s speech, some topics in conversations with the hero of the show and his relatives, as well as some sentences used as descriptions, leave the impression that they undermine the positive characteristics of the TV project.

In the course of the research, there were cases where the term “disabled” was reflected not only in the descriptions, but also in the questions in the conversations with them, in the telecontents within the scope of the topic of people with visual disabilities. For example, in the interview with the linguist Munavara Kurbanova on the TV channel “History of Uzbekistan” in the program “For Everyone”, journalists asked: “To what extent is this speech synthesizer working now for people with disabilities, for students?”, “After this, not only students with disabilities or do you have any plans to create such audiobooks for readers, or for all readers?” addressed such questions.

In recent years, the situation of radio broadcasts can be positively evaluated in terms of the use of words and phrases that cause the spread of negative stereotypes in the contents dedicated to the blind. Only 4 of the 28 radio broadcasts studied in the study used the term disabled. In the remaining cases, the terms visually impaired or blind are used.

Unlike other types of mass media, the main part of radio broadcasts on the issues of the blind is short form of official information. These types of messages are mainly dedicated to the activities of the blind society of Uzbekistan, they reflect the work being carried out in the system, official and cultural events of the society, as well as information on sports competitions. In particular, 23 of the 28 broadcasts studied within the framework of the research, aired in 2019-2024, are content of the same form.

Although there are relatively few publications dealing with the issues of the blind, there are still enough expressions that are used incorrectly. In particular, the article of the author Arofat Ibragimova, published in the “Infolib” newspaper, which is available for research, can be said to be completely discriminatory. This article is entitled “Users with disabilities are always on the lookout” on the topic of amenities created for visually impaired readers in the National Library of Uzbekistan named after Alisher Navoi. Notice that discrimination is allowed from the title of the material.

⁵ “People among us”, “Culture and Enlightenment TV channel”, 04/20/2022.

⁶ “People among us”, “Culture and Enlightenment TV channel”, 04/20/2022.

The author gave information about the unique facilities in the library: “Our national library also provides specialized information library services for users with physical disabilities”, “Taking into account their limited capabilities, it is equipped with special computer parts and voice programs that allow them to work in various programs”, “uses sentences like”, “Today more than 300 disabled users use the national library”.⁷.

In this 2-page article, the phrase disabled is thus used 11 times. In addition, the author uses the word “defect” to refer to readers with visual impairments: “In order to increase the scientific potential and literacy level of users with visual impairments, 500 copies of audio resources in MP3 format protected on the basis of a special tifloformat are provided under the contract with the Palace of Culture “San’at Gulshan”. This word is also used in two places in the article: “Visual users can distinguish the information they need by hearing and feeling.” When it comes to printed materials related to issues of blind people, in two other studied materials, the phrase “Disabled” can be seen 5 times in total.

The same situation is evident in Internet materials on the subject. In 5 out of 12 materials published over the last 5 years, devoted to the life of visually impaired persons and the activities of the UZKOJ system, the phrase “disabled” was used 15 times, the word “defect” 2 times, and the word “disabled” 1 time. It should be noted that all these words and phrases are included in sentences aimed at blind people.

On March 7, 2023, the Public Fund for Support and Development of National Mass Media and the World Bank Office in Uzbekistan held a seminar on the topic “Development of Communication Skills for Inclusion”.

The seminar-training was organized in order to develop the necessary skills for journalists, bloggers, journalism students to cover the stories of persons with disabilities in the mass media, to prepare inclusive reports and articles. In the seminar-training, a small practical exercise was conducted using the contents learned in the framework of the research. According to him, the participants were given materials covering the life of blind people and were asked to react to the expressions used by the journalist.

CONCLUSIONS.

In the final conclusion, it was found that most journalists believe that it is appropriate to use the phrase “disabled” instead of the term “disabled person”. They stated that they use this phrase because they believe that it does not burden the same category of people from the point of view of being heard, but they did not think that this phrase acquires a discriminatory meaning.

The conclusion is that there is a great need to hold various roundtables, seminars and trainings among the young journalists working in the field, as well as those who are coming up, on the issues of communication skills on inclusion, correct formation of the media image of persons with disabilities in the mass media.

In such events, it is necessary to give the understanding to journalists that when preparing material on disability issues in the mass media, they should be approached as a social model rather than a medical model for the same category of people, and to prevent violations of interview ethics standards in interviews with them.

⁷ “Infolib”, 2019, issue 4.

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