

Parental Concerns in 100th Year Anniversary of Sociology Education in Turkey

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Abstract Although sociology education is celebrating its 100th year anniversary in Turkish higher education, the field itself is not known quite well by the society. Familial worries in the context of emotional sociology are very important because families may have when they think of their child's future especially after graduation from university. Primary aim of this paper is to find out the essence and main sources of parental worries. In this paper it is assumed that status of sociology in society and its education are inseparable parts and there are mutual relationships among them. Using phenomenological approach data gathered from 25 parents are analysed. Findings revealed that insufficient employment opportunities as well as little information about sociology are the essence or main reasons of parental concerns.

Keywords Sociology, Parents, Emotions, Phenomenology, Turkey

1. Introduction

Sociology as discipline introduced to Turkey during Ottoman period by Ziya Gokalp who is actually politician but latter on accepted as the founder of sociology because of his sociology lectures given by him at Istanbul University in 1914. Although as a discipline it's establishment days go back a century ago it is not a well-known field in Turkey. What sociology is and what sociologists make are the frequently asked questions. Contrary to the intellectuals, status of sociology has never been high in the eye of average people. According to Kasapoglu [1,2] and Odabas [3] sociology in Turkey is still underdeveloped and insufficient because of influence of state politics and ideology, quality of education, sociological studies and organizational problems that are also under lined by Berkes [4] in the early years. The sociology as a discipline have always been the subject of criticism and faced discrimination by the state, because the state has always been feared from sociology by assuming it as a threat for existing statues.

While hegemony (transfer of Western knowledge without

critics) is very high, indigenization (meeting national targets) and internationalization (meeting international targets) are very low in Turkish sociology [5]. Actually sociology education also has structural problems rather than conjuncture based because they didn't changed in last two decades [1,6,7] According to the recent nationwide study carried out with 684 sociology students from 26 university showed that gap between theory and practice because of transferring western theories without any critics, lack of dialog among sociologists and unrecognition of sociology in the society are still continuing problems. When sociology students taken in consideration majority of them reported that they are under the threat of unemployment and they study such a field they are not also able to define and explain easily to the others [7].

Research problem

According to Cresswell [8], all qualitative research traditions, including the phenomenological approach, begin with a definition of the research problem. Therefore, the research problem of this study is the following: "From the perspective of the parents what is the 'essential structure' of worries?"

The purpose of this study is to research the phenomenon of parental worries by obtaining verbal descriptions and extract the essential structure from these descriptions.

Justification of the research problem

Choosing a career is a multidimensional and continuous process which includes several steps. Knowing yourself, making decisions and finally taking action are the main steps of career planning process [9]. But in the case of sociology it is not easy to follow these steps. First of all there is a big gap between the number of students applying for the university education and the number can be enrolled by the universities. Therefore students continue their university education not in the department they chose but in the department they have been accepted. Secondly there is another big gap between number of graduates and employment opportunities in Turkey. Actually, this is the case for almost all professions. According to Kara [10] currently 19.000 students have

studied sociology, however, only 969 of them have been employed by the state since 2003 [1,2]. It should also be noted that students' first preference is to be an officer in state with job security.

As a matter of fact as declared by American Sociological Association [11] there are three basic alternatives for sociologist in the job market namely teaching, research and sociological practice. Up to the year of 2000 majority of sociology graduates were used to be employed as teachers in secondary schools of Turkey. But this implementation is changed and secondary school teachers recruitment are limited with graduates of Faculty of Educations' rather than Faculty of Letters which used to supply 90% of sociology teachers needed. Remained two alternatives are also not realistic because there is limited number of company to employ research staff as well as practitioner of sociology.

Addition to above mentioned problems there are also another aspects worthy to discuss. For example in Turkey sociology is mostly considered as a science rather than a profession. Because of this consideration sociology curriculums are full of theoretical courses adopted from international literature without connected societies real needs. Due to the lack of links between theory and practice sociology students are not well equipped or prepared for their future professional life.

Importance of research

Because family is the most important institution parents attitudes and perceptions toward sociology is worthy to study as well as students to warn related organizations to take necessary actions.

Empirical field studies of the sociologists are very limited in Turkey [7] and none of them employed specific qualitative methodologies, such as the phenomenological approach with parents. Therefore, this is the first study to understand the emotions of sociology students' parents from their perspective using a bottom-up approach.

2. Method

The phenomenological approach refers to an attempt to understand empirical issues from the perspective of those being studied. Contrary to narratives that report the life of single individuals, a phenomenological study tries to give the meaning of several individuals by describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon [12]. "Phenomenology serves as a rationale behind efforts to understand individuals by entering into their field of perception to see life as these individuals see it" [13]. In this qualitative study, the phenomenological approach of Moustakas' [14], which is a modification of Stevick-Colaizzi's method [15], was employed via the following steps:

- a. All descriptions provided by the subjects were first

taped and transcribed and later read carefully to identify aspects of empathy.

- b. Several quotations were selected that indicate worries to facilitate the readers' understanding.
- c. "Significant statements" (horizontalization of the data) were formulated by treating each statement as equally worthy. Similar statements were eliminated.
- d. These statements were grouped into "meaning units" regarding the positive and negative experiences of parents.
- e. Overall, the descriptions of the meanings were formulated to reveal the "essence" of the experiences.

In this study "snow ball sampling" is applied based on principles of theoretical sampling to reach study purpose [8]. Findings are based on interviews carried out with 25 parents. After obtaining their oral consent for interviewing and recording face-to face interviews are conducted by researcher and her assistants. Most of the interviews lasted approximately an hour. Recorded interviews are deciphered as soon as possible to guaranty that no important data were lost. By reading literature and bracketing former knowledge as pointed out by Husserl [16], as "epoche", validity of research tried to be ensured. Taking field notes and interviewing until reaching saturation point are also important points and taken into consideration.

It should also be noted that in this study "empirical phenomenology" of Moustakas[14] instead "hermeneutic phenomenology" of Mannen[12] is applied. It is also assumed that this version of phenomenology is more appropriate for the study purposes. Because Moustakas focuses on experiences of participants and neglects interpretations of researcher in order to facilitate detachment instead involvement by bracketing them in terms of Husserl's concept of epoche.

Limitations

Finally, among the many limitations, one of the most important is the characteristics of the sample. The results are limited to those who are interviewed. Due to the length of the paper, positive and negative significant quotations are only given and many similar statements are also dismissed.

3. Findings

In this section, first positive and negative extracted significant statements of parents about sociology are listed to create a phenomenological analysis of the collected data. It would not be wrong to say that there are an equal number of positive and negative statements. Positive statements are mostly refer that sociology is an important discipline while negative statements are related to their children's future in general and employment specifically (Table 1 and Table2)

Table 1. Significant positive statements of parents with regard to sociology.

“We believe that sociology is an important science because it facilitates better understanding of social changes.”
 “I assume that sociology is a big umbrella covers whole colours of life regardless of their religion, language and race
 “When I was young I also wanted to study sociology
 “I believe that if the status of sociology improves the welfare of the society and minds of people will be improved.”
 “I am such a mother who gives credit both the university and the subject she studied. I believe that I motivate her properly.”
 “Sociologists have great responsibility to develop country. Thus sociology education must become more spread out.”
 “I assume that sociology deserves more credits because of the existing conditions of the society.”
 “I believe that sociology will be one of the important and respected profession of the future.”
 “We assume that as a profession sociology has quite large scope to work.”
 “I think sociology is good department to study. But I believe that students should develop their selves to contribute other people.”
 “I reckon that sociology is a good profession. Because to reach and help people is very important.”
 “I advised her to add sociology to the selection sheet during University Entrance Examination.”
 “Although I am a little bit worried I suppose sociology with its increasing popularity it will be a perfect profession for my son.”
 “We live such a country full of social problems and therefore we need more sociologists in Turkey.”
 “Sociology is the most important discipline both economic development and education of future generations.”

Table 2. Significant negative statements of parents with regard to sociology

“Unfortunately sociology is not recognized and not see the deserved respect in Turkey.”
 “We only know that sociology is the science of society, nothing else..”
 “She only told that she obtained the right to study in sociology department. We hardly know anything about it.”
 “Most of the parents like me do not know anything what will they do after graduation.”
 “Certainly I would prefer other professions which earn money, but we didn’t show any reaction about his choice.”
 “We heard that sociology is not a real profession to get money.”
 “We have worries about his employment.”
 “Same employment problems are valid for many professions, but it is more difficult for sociologists.”
 “My only concern is where she will find a job and what she will do there. I really worry about her future.”
 “Sadly, in our country sociology does not see the respect.”
 “We only know about the definition of sociology before he has started to study.”
 “We faced many questions like what she will do after graduation?”
 “Obviously sociology education is insufficient and must be completed by doing minor in psychology.”
 “I assume that there is no sociology in Turkey.
 “Although we are trying to be hopeful, our worry is more and we always feel insecure about her future.”
 “I wanted her to study psychology or low but her score was not sufficient for them.”
 “There are many people who told us that we made a mistake by sending her to this department.”
 “There are constraints applications of sociology profession in Turkey.”
 “I have many questions in my mind. I am bracketing them in to the parenthesis. Certainly my questions are not limited with sociology. Other fields also have many problems including employment.”
 “My worries are general and not related to sociology.”
 “I do not have any information regarding employment opportunities of sociologists.”
 “Honestly, it is not a well-known department. There have been always students’ strikes in the faculty.”

Following what sociology is, impacts of sociology education on their children are also questioned to understand parental experiences more comprehensively and these statements are given in Table 3 and Table 4. Findings show that parents’ positive statements are higher than negatives.

Table 3. Parents’ significant positive statements about impacts of sociology education

“Sociology provided her to understand social events better and to criticise them.”
 “She started to adopt herself to the status of sociologists in society while developing self-confidence.”
 “He gradually started to share his ideas and the knowledge he has learned in the department.”
 “I observe that now she is less shy and trusts herself more.”
 “She started to see everything more detailed and open minded.”
 “She gives an impression that she is happy with the sociology department. Therefore I also feel very happy.”
 “She started to be more aware about social events.”
 “She has changed. She is now more social and her social environment extended. We are happy with her performance.”
 “Now she is more interested in politics and social demonstrations which she didn’t before.”
 “She has also started to broaden my views by evaluating events from more comprehensive angle.”
 “The major contribution of sociology to her is to gain critical thinking and analytical perspective.”
 “Her self-confidence is improved and started to express herself more efficiently.”
 “We are here because of her curiosities and she is doing well.”
 “After education she has started to attend meetings about women rights organized in the university which she didn’t used to before.”
 “I guess the future will be more better and easy for her.”
 “She didn’t used to make interpretations but later on her sensitivity is increased. Her interest towards social and political events is increased.”

Table 4. Significant negative statements about impacts of sociology education.

“I am not satisfied with her performance. She does only compulsory requirements.”
 “When I asked her about internship she told me that it is not compulsory in their faculty.”
 “She is trying to find out alternative ways to get rid of.”

Formulated meanings of significant statements are presented in Table 5a and Table 5b that show comparative summary of findings.

Table 5a. Formulated meanings of positive significant statements.

The meaning of sociology :
 “Sociology is an important science to understand and solve problems in the society.”
 Impacts of sociology:
 “His/her interest toward social events is increased”
 “His/her self-esteem is increased”
 Future considerations:
 “ Future of sociology will be good.”

Table 5b. Formulated meanings of negative significant statements.

The meaning of sociology :
 “Sociology is not well recognized in Turkey.”
 “ We didn’t know much about what sociology is.”
 Future considerations:
 “ We worry about their future especially where they will work.”

4. Discussion

Sociology of emotions is not a well-known field until Jonathan H. Turner [17] has edited a hand book with Jan E. Stets that covers many types of emotions starting from economy, work, class, health, gender, crime, sports, and extending to technology, social movements and family. According to the experts who study emotions in the family argued that “the emotional capital connects the emotions that people experience in families and experiences in other institutional arenas.” [18]. When the findings of the present study are discussed by following Erickson and Cottingham [18] it will not be wrong to state that parental negative perceptions in the family are under the pressure of economy as an institution. In other words family as a core institution of the society is effected by economy or at least in close relationships with economic concerns, because majority of parents are worried about their children’s future in terms of employment. On the other hand they are in dilemma because while they get reactions from their social environment and unemployment risks of their children which is 22% per year among young workers in Turkey [19] make them unhappy, they still claim that sociology is a very important field and society needs more sociologist. They also underline that impacts of sociology education on their children is positive and they are happy with these changes. If we describe their positions with a metaphor it would not be wrong to propose that parent’s position is very similar to “involuntary marriage.” Their emotions are in between and can be interpreted in the light of unity of opposites of dialectic logic.

Studies show that [6,7] sociology students are also complain about the sociology education which is not connected to real life. In other words sociology education Turkey is mostly devoted or limited with academic sociology regardless of professional concerns. There is hardly no relationship between theoretical lessons and their application in the field. According to students, sociology curriculums should be revised and updated according to needs of job markets. They also wish a sociology without identity problem in society. Certainly there is much to do for recognition of sociology as a profession as well as academic discipline [7].

It is obvious that sociology professors and sociological associations should take necessary measures to revise their curriculums to meet demands of both discipline and graduates. Otherwise as it is revealed in this research parents will continue to be disappointed and disturbed severely. As a part of society senior sociologists or professors should be sensitive to the results of sociology education because it also effects employment of sociology graduates. As a matter of fact, studies on carrier counselling in higher education [9] should be carried in Turkey in close cooperation with career counselors and sociologist in order to find out new trends such as coaching, advising and guidance to reduce disappointments of both parents and students.

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