Sociological Imagination And University Student

The sociological imagination basically refers to how we as human beings view the social world around us, not from our own perspective and experiences; but from the view or perspective of others. According to C. Wright Mills (1959) (Mills, 1959, p. 5), sociological imagination “enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for an inner life and an external career of a variety of individuals”. So as described it’s an ability to understand the convergence of history and biography or interplay of self and our world. Sociological imagination allows us to look at situations in a sociology point and this culminates with us being able to know the contrast between personal troubles and social issues.

The line between a personal issue and a social/ public issue can be subjective and very much depends on how different groups are defined. Personal problems are those types of issues that one deals with by themselves. The term used “personal issue” implies or gives the idea that it is mostly a more troublesome (probably even psychological and emotional) matter to face and deal with. Personal troubles or issues basically refer to problems that affect an individual: the individual’s own personal and moral-ethical experiences. (Stewart, 2018).

While on the other hand, social issues (which are also known as public problems) simply refer to the issues that are suffered by many individuals of the public society. Mills felt that many problems ordinarily considered private troubles are the best understood as public issues (H.J, 1972). There are many various causes of personal and social issues and most of the times, social issues arise due to the inequalities in our world. Both personal troubles and social issues are intertwined as C. Wrights Mills stated, “Man is a social and an historical actor who must be understood, if at all, in close and intricate interplay with social and historical structures” (Mills, 1959). Familiar examples I can think of; related to the contrast between these two problems or issues is 1) A divorce: where it is a personal issue as it affects the married couple alone but once it affects other members of the society then it becomes more of a social issue. The second example I would give is alcohol consumption where it will be seen as a personal problem if an individual becomes addicted to alcohol due to his/her problems. Once there is an increase in the number of society members that become alcohol addicts due to societal factors, then it will be viewed as a social/ public issue.

There are plenty of various problems that students in different universities face daily in South Africa and other African countries. The main problem I have chosen to focus on is alcohol addiction. The reason behind why I chose this main focal factor is because a few of my friends experienced it; one of them being my sibling. I would like to believe that the problem of alcohol addiction ranges from being a unique one to being a problem that is shaped by external societal factors. Obviously, the problem of an individual being an alcohol addict is definitely shaped by larger societal structures, definitely belongs to society.

Alcohol addiction is increasingly becoming a big problem in society worldwide. Most people or rather, most individuals would describe alcoholism as the lack of control over alcohol consumption or the inability to control alcohol intake due to dependency on alcohol. Most articles highlight the idea of a large population of youth (focusing on university students) and unemployed people (again focusing on qualified university graduates) being vulnerable to

becoming alcohol addicts. I firmly believe that the sole reason for this problem that my friends encountered is due to the fast-paced life of a varsity student; the stress and anxiety, the increasing tension of modules, educational failure, funding, depression; and the whole process of re-socialisation as an individual enters this total institution (in this case university), sometimes proves to be too overwhelming and difficult to adapt to. This eventually culminates with individuals turning to alcohol as sort of a comforting item or rather, a stress reliever.

Sociological factors also influence the whole life of a student to a large extent. Individuals obviously are introduced to a new way of living (which is different from their preferred way of living). Factors like peer pressure (for example: my friend wanted to fit in so badly to his newfound friends upon entering university and he ended up developing alcoholism), depression, academic failure and sexual harassment (ranging from a minor to a large extent/degree); all collaborate to exposing university individuals to alcohol, hence the reason why I believe that most problems that we face as varsity students are shaped in a way by larger societal structures. I have read up that there are various treatment options that are available to help get your life back on track if you had been identified as an addict too. University students that have become addicted to alcohol need to consult with general practitioners or psychiatrists. Moreover, individuals are urged to apply for residential treatment or go straight to a rehabilitation centre to get help.

References

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