

**Sociological approach about the role of associations interested in upgrading
childhood rights: their reality, tasks, and achievements.**

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Abstract:

Despite the international conventions and efforts made for promoting and protecting children's rights by different social actors: organisations, international and local agencies, governments, experts and various associations concerned with children issues, we still notice at different degrees children and families suffering in different societies from pathological phenomenon threatening children's integrity, safety and stability such as kidnapping, violence, sexual assault, homicide...causing dangerous psychological and social effects requiring full attention.

Using a sociological analysis, this paper aims at recognizing the track of some social associations interested in children such as Nada Network (the biggest Network including 130 local and national associations) and assess the achieved results to upgrade child's rights. It also aims at identifying shortcomings which prevent the realization of some tasks complementarily with community concerns and government's ones.

Key Words: association- Tasks- upgrading childhood- rights

**Approche sociologique sur le rôle des associations concernées par la
promotion des droits de l'enfant : leur réalité, les tâches et réalisation.**

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Résumé :

Malgré les conventions internationales et les efforts déployés pour promouvoir et protéger les droits des enfants par les différents acteurs sociaux : organisations, agences internationales et locales, gouvernements, experts et diverses associations concernées par les questions des enfants ; nous constatons encore à différents degrés des enfants et familles qui souffrent dans différentes sociétés de phénomènes pathologiques menaçant

l'intégrité, la sécurité et la stabilité des enfants comme l'enlèvement, la violence, les agressions sexuelles, les homicides...causant des effets psychologiques et sociaux nécessitant pleine attention.

En ayant recours à une analyse sociologique, cette communication vise à reconnaître

Le parcours de certaines associations sociales concernées par la situation des enfants tel que le réseau le plus important, Nada (qui comprend 130 associations locales et nationales) et d'évaluer les résultats obtenus pour améliorer les droits de l'enfant. Il vise également à identifier les lacunes qui empêchent la réalisation de certaines tâches en complémentarité avec les préoccupations de la société et de celles du gouvernement.

Mots-clés : association- tâches-Promotion -Enfant –droits

مقاربة سوسيولوجية لدور الجمعيات المهتمة بترقية حقوق الطفل: واقعها، مهامها ، مكتسباتها

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ملخص:

على الرغم من الاتفاقيات والجهود الدولية المبذولة لتعزيز وحماية حقوق الطفل من قبل مختلف الفاعلين الاجتماعيين: المنظمات والوكالات الدولية والمحلية والحكومات والخبراء ومختلف الجمعيات المعنية بقضايا الأطفال، إلا أننا ما زلنا نلاحظ بدرجات مختلفة من الأطفال والأسر التي تعاني في مختلف المجتمعات من ظواهر المرضية التي تهدد سلامة الأطفال والأمان والاستقرار مثل الخطف والعنف، والاعتداء الجنسي والقتل ... التسبب في آثار نفسية واجتماعية خطيرة تتطلب العناية الكامل.

باستخدام التحليل السوسيولوجي، تهدف هذه الورقة إلى التعرف على مسار بعض الجمعيات الاجتماعية المهتمة في الأطفال مثل شبكة ندى (أكبر شبكة بما في ذلك 130 الجمعيات المحلية والوطنية) وتقييم النتائج التي تحققت لترقية حقوق الطفل، كما يهدف إلى تحديد أوجه القصور التي تحول دون تحقيق بعض المهام في التكامل مع اهتمامات المجتمع ومنها الحكومة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الجمعية- مهام- ترقية- طفل – حقوق .

Introduction

We still notice at different degrees children and families suffering in different societies from pathological phenomenon threatening children's integrity, safety and stability, causing dangerous psychological and social effects requiring full and constant care to cure the victims and their families. Those fears forced the parents to escort their children to school and prevent them from playing outside home on the grounds that most abduction cases occurred in the surroundings of schools and homes; the Algerian Security services reported the abduction of about 200 children during 2012 and 1608 cases of sexual assault

(<http://magmj.com/index.jsp?inc=5&id=12331&pid=3465>).

As sociologists it is our duty to sound the alarm especially after the dramatic events that occurred during the last months, give priority to the study of those phenomena and to foster the role of associations representing civil society in Algeria such as –“The Benevolent Algerian Association for Childhood and hosting Families” established in 1985– The Wassila network for reflexion and action in favour of women and children victims of violence.

In 2008 there existed 78928 local associations agreed by the mayors and 948 national associations agreed by the Ministry of Interior activating in the humanitarian and social affairs (National Profile Algeria in 2011, P32), they receive supports from the sectors in charge with social welfare and national solidarity. Considered to be privileged partners in the implementation of several programs for childhood and youth, those associations are represented in different advisory bodies: national and local solidarity boards, commissions and working groups, specialised counselling agencies (social development agencies, micro-credits agencies...).

Using a sociological analysis, this paper aims at recognizing the track of some social associations interested in children such as Nada Network (the biggest Network including 130 local and national associations) and assess the achieved results to upgrade child's rights. It also aims at identifying shortcomings which prevent the realization of some tasks complementarily with community concerns and government's ones.

The Algerian associations contribute to target the beneficiaries of state's aid, carrying out assistance program and home care for disabled persons. They also take part into different actions for promoting, protecting and advocating children's rights such as : SOS children villages– Draria, Wassila network, national mediators Rima network, Algerian Association for Family Planning, The benevolent Algerian Association for Childhood and hosting Families', The Algerian Muslims' Scouts Movement, The Information and Documentation on Children and Woman's rights, the National Foundation for Health Promotion and Research Development (FOREM), the association for Psychological Research and Training (SARP), the Akbou's Star association from Béjaia, NADA Network.

There is a lack of sociological studies about Algerian associations by Algerians or Arab authors dealing with different aspects in relation with the associations roles, their issues and the degree of their taking advantage from the academic discipline and field researches conducted by some centres, laboratories on family and childhood issues in order to find out practical preventive mechanisms; among these few studies we mention:(Rabab,Husseini-2010), she took a sample of 41 civil associations from 10 Arab countries: Egypt – Qatar – Lebanon – Libya – Algeria – Saudi Arabia – Yemen – Jordan – Sudan – Tunisia; its outcome shows that there is almost an agreement on the areas in which Associations operate, namely health, education, protection, early childhood, children's culture and participation, as well as in the field of water and environmental remediation. However, activities and practical mechanisms differ from one association to another: for example concerning literacy, there are activities to fight illiteracy, special programs and scholarships to integrate disabled children, providing material and psychological support, and specialists in phonetics, support for the schoolbag project...

The other study by M.A, Zoughib“ on civil society organizations concerned with childhood in the Middle East and North Africa" (Swedish Organization for Child Welfare September 2005)addressed its inception, laws, difficulties encountered, perceptions, future perspectives but it did not mention the childhood issues within the framework of association activity.

The other study is an Algerian study conducted by (the research centre CRASC – Oran-) shows that 75% of the associations have activated between 1990–2004 after legal facilities were given by the government to create associations after being hampered to get approval by obstacles and bureaucratic measures. Among those associations 43% activate in the social field 8.27% deal with cultural affairs, 7.13% with sport..., while contests associations that aim at protecting human, woman and consumers rights, prevent corruption, they only represent a few proportion .

We were stimulated to carry out this research by the bibliographical quest that showed the lack of studies on the assessment of the Associations activities. This research aimed at contributing to fill these gaps.

Theoretical and conceptual framework

We applied the theory of symbolic interactionism (George H. Mead and H. Blumer) that analyses the social patterns and social action in terms of meanings and symbols focusing on the smaller units –Micro–(individuals' behavior and roles) in order to reach and understand the bigger units –Macro– (Mead, George Herbert ,1963).

It is a prominent theory in social psychology, focusing on ways by which meanings are generated during the interaction process. Mead considers the Self as the basis of interaction by which the individual is changed into a social actor who sets up links with others. Social interaction is a face-to-face process consisting of actions, reactions, and mutual adaptation between two or more individuals.

Herbert Blumer agrees with Mead in considering the symbolic interaction to be the hallmark of human interrelations consisting of symbols, individual life's events and mutual actions, meanings are the product of social interaction.

In our research we addressed the content of phenomena associated with violating children's rights, the ways to protect them, the activities undertaken by the association, and what they carry as meanings and symbols related to the nature of the interaction that starts with the child and his family, then extends to the relationship with "Nada" network and finally with the larger society by trying to understand the main components of this social interaction: child – family – Nada –society on the one hand, and "Nada", the academic disciplines, research laboratories and centers on the other hand.

The three principles of Blumer's theory " meaning, language, and thought" lead to conclusions about the creation of a person's self and socialization into a larger community (Griffin, 1997).

From the self, the act, social interaction, objects, and joint action we can sketch a picture of human society. The picture is composed in terms of action. A society is seen as people meeting the varieties of situations that are thrust on them by their condition of life. (Herbert Blumer; 1966)

Paradigm, methodology and methods:

In our problematic we dealt with the most important independent variables through two key interrogations and sub-questions, in order to understand the associative activity of the Network in Algerian society:

1 – What is The role of "Nada" in the community as the largest network in Algeria for the Defense of the Rights of the Child?

2 – What is the nature of its interaction with families and other institutions?

The sub-questions are as follows:

– What are the most important concrete actions carried out to help and protect children from certain social diseases?

– The extent to which families will respond to "Nada" to help them in solving the problems of their children?

– The extent to which Nada relies upon the scientific academic skills (related with sociology of family and childhood)and the scientific field research conducted by laboratories and research centers?

As for the first sample, it is random, composed, of 100 households having with one or more children living in the capital, representative of the overall population in its social and cultural characteristics: educated families /uneducated, living in popular neighborhoods/up market ones, standards of living fluctuate among them – different sub-cultures according to geographic affiliation and language.

The second sample is represented in the study by some active managers of the network

Concerning the main techniques we have used:

1 – The directed interview to assess the extent of their knowledge of “Nada” – their opinions and attitudes about network activities – how they interact with it and the degree of support they obtain in solving their children’s problems.

2 – The semi-directed interview conducted with representatives of “Nada” to know the nature of its activities, achievements, obstacles, contributions to social policies and relations with international organizations.

3 – The content analysis technique to analyze respondent’s answers, and the content of some local and international reports about childhood in Algeria.

4 – The non-participant observation technique to investigate the existing structures and the nature of media messages directed to children and parents.

As for the method we used the interactionism approach which focuses on the qualitative analytic description of the phenomenon under study.

Interactionism methodology aims at understanding each individual’s motivations, and assess his actions within society, each individual has different attitudes, values, culture and beliefs(whatever be his class status),therefore sociologist should gather qualitative data .

Ethical Considerations

–Carrying out an objective study with academic and practical benefits to all institutions.

–Highlighting the necessity for the associations and different influential actors in the country to address the most important security issues and leisure needs that allow children to enjoy a normal happy childhood with promising educational and behavioral prospects free from negative psychosocial complex.

–Underlining the importance of some associations that interact with children issues, identifying their positive actions and correcting their shortcomings in order to promote children's rights.

–Main findings or discussion

Middle East and North African17 countries (MENA) have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child since its adoption 1989,they have adopted (or proposed) laws in their legislation including protection of children. Some counties, like Algeria have even set up practical mechanisms to prevent violations of children's rights, taking into account social change as assessed by scientific research, reports and associations activities in line with the Algerian culture and values. Efforts are made to provide structures to facilitate children access to health and education...and struggle against children recruitment for criminal activities.

However, despite these initiatives, there still remain challenges in relation with the rights of children facing each country and its civil organizations.In this context associations play a key role: to ensure compliance with international human rights

instruments, to sensitize to the children's rights, monitor and report rights violations, protecting victims from abuse, violence, exploitation, ignorance and humiliation .

Considering that the Algerian population (35 631325 in 2011) is characterized by a high category of young people:

Youth (under 15 years) 9 983895, Youth (under 18 years) 2009 11,667,000 , Children (under 5 years) 2011 3887969 . (ONS 2011) , it is necessary to take preventive measures before the exacerbation of certain diseases among youth.

Our research showed the following results:

– Unanimously sample of “Nada” members and from families stated that the Algerian children do not enjoy their childhood naturally

– Families suffer from deep anxiety, children move from the age of 5 years to adolescence directly, but the majority has no leisure places to play. Parents feel a sentiment of lack of security; they have jumped from fear, psychological instability and grief during the terrorism period in the nineties to frightening phenomena such as child abduction, sexual assaults by persons (addicted to sex with children and drugs) and homicide.

– “Nada” has played several roles for the promotion and protection of children's rights in the field, both in terms of media messages, sensitization or participation in the preparation of reports and social policies, its members displayed a strong will despite the limited material resources and some obstacles.

– There is a positive interaction between children, “Nada” and families due to the availability of some key factors such as language(use of sub-culture codes, several dialects and languages: Arabic, Berber, French). symbols, meanings and ways of thinking take different forms, but foster interaction in order to defend children's rights and protect them.

– “Nada” has now become the national mechanism for the fight against child abuse in all its forms. (Child abuse, Sexual violence against children, Children in conflict with the law ...)

– As for the extent of interviewed families' knowledge about “Nada” we found that:
– A majority of 66% of the sample households interviewed are not informed about “Nada” although they need help for their children. This is due to the lack of information

– 30% of the sample expressed a loss of confidence in all associations, because of their field ineffectiveness, stating that they do appear only on special occasions (political elections, national and religious holidays).

– only 4% of the sample knew about the network “Nada” and showed their interaction with it through the assessment of their activities and take advantage of positive help in the treatment of some problems encountered by their children

– there still remain taboos : families from different sub-cultures have difficulties to disclose problems or abuse suffered by their children because they consider them to be private family matters .

– With regard to the phenomenon of child abduction, «Nada» merely condemned it just like the rest of civil society actors but did not disclose to us the mechanisms for the protection of children, and psycho-social care required by children returning to their parents after the kidnapping or the kind of support needed by families after the trauma of their son or daughter's abduction and murder.

Assessment of the means used to help children and their families through our non-participant observation:

–The tangible activities of the associations show some shortcomings in their approaches and practices with regard to childhood issues and problems.

–Lack of local reports raised to the network by local associations negatively affects the success of the coordination between associations.

– No recourse to experts in sociology of childhood and family to conduct researches of interest to its activities develops strategies, deepen their vision and treat some phenomena.

– The lack of integration between the academic side and associative activity due to the ignorance of the “Nada” members, the whereabouts of some of the specialized laboratories in the family and childhood in Algiers.

– Informational messages to the child and the family through pictures, drawings, writings and symbols reflect some problems facing the child with providing some solutions but lack the artistic technical touch; association members have insufficient skills to convey those messages.

– Education is not a sufficient factor to bring about positive changes in families' behaviors in order to preserve children's health and protect them from social ills but there are several factors that affect individuals' behavior:

1–causing factors (knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes, confidence)–

2–Supportive factors (family, friends, teachers, associations, graduates, experts, community leaders)–

3–Helping factors (skilled human resources, material resources – government legislation).(El Bahlani. S and Ayachi Sabah-.UNICEF 2013)

–Stand at some obstacles that hamper the achievement of Nada's objectives. some obstacles found in our data are similar with those in foreign associations(Tchernonog, V and Vercamer ,J.P, 2012)–Difficulty finding or keeping volunteers with skills useful in some regions–Mismatch between the periodicity of resources and time to complete projects.–Difficulty to contact some experts and some analysis and acquisition of scientific and statistical data from official institutions. –budget's restrictions.

–Implications, practice or policy

Assessing the kind of obstacles faced by associations, contributing to enhance the cooperation with government institutions.–Since launching in 2004, more than a hundred local and national associations (Nada)representing forty regions try to apply the slogan "Protection, Promotion and Advocacy" in order to convey child concerns.–Since the program's inception and launching its free phone number (30 33) in 2008, more than

8,000 phone calls denouncing violence against children were received, particularly concerning the abuse and different types of violence.(Committee on the Rights of the Child, Concluding Observations: Algeria, 2005/10/12CRC/C/15/Add.269, p 21, § 85)

–“Nada” is partner of several institutions and national and international organizations in the elaboration of alternative reports on the situation of children in Algeria

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