

The Meaning Structures of Political Participation of Young Women: Preliminary Findings in a Practical Phenomenology Study

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Abstract : This communication presents the preliminary emerging themes in a research on political participation of young women. The study follows a qualitative methodology; in particular, the applied hermeneutic phenomenological method, and the general objective of the research is to give an account of the experience of political participation as young women. The study participants are women aged 18 to 35 who have experience in political participation. The techniques of data collection are the descriptive story and the phenomenological interview. With respect to the first methodological steps, these have been: 1) collect and select stories of lived experience in political participation, 2) select descriptions of lived experience (DLEs) in political participation of the chosen stories, 3) to prepare phenomenological interviews from the selected DLEs, 4) to conduct phenomenological thematic analysis (PTA) of the DLEs. We have so far initiated the PTA on 5 vignettes. Hermeneutic phenomenology as a research approach is based on phenomenological philosophy and applied hermeneutics. Phenomenology is a descriptive philosophy of pure experience and essences, through which we seek to capture an experience at its origins without categorizing, interpreting or theorizing it. Hermeneutics, on the other hand, may be defined as a philosophical current that can be applied to data analysis. Max Van Manen wrote that hermeneutic phenomenology is a method of abstemious reflection on the basic structures of the lived experience of human existence. In hermeneutic phenomenology we focus, then, on the way we experience "things" in the first person, seeking to capture the world exactly as we experience it, not as we categorize or conceptualize it. In this study, the empirical methods used were: Lived experience description (written) and conversational interview. For these short stories, participants were asked: "What was your lived experience of participation in politics as a young woman? Can you tell me any stories or anecdotes that you think exemplify or typify your experience?". The questions were accompanied by a list of guidelines for writing descriptive vignettes. And the analytical method was PTA. Among the provisional results, we found preliminary emerging themes, which could in the advance of the investigation result in meaning structures of political participation of young women. They are the following: - Complicity may be inherent/essential in political participation as a young woman; - Feelings may be essential/inherent in political participation as a young woman; - Hope may be essential in authentic political participation as a young woman; - Frustration may be essential in authentic political participation as a young woman; - Satisfaction may be essential in authentic political participation as a young woman; - There may be tension between individual/collective inherent/essential in political participation as a young woman; - Political participation as a young woman may include moments of public demonstration.

Keywords : applied hermeneutic phenomenology, hermeneutics, phenomenology, political participation

Conference Title : ICCPP 2023 : International Conference on Continental Philosophy and Phenomenology

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : December 11-12, 2023