

ADULT EDUCATION IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS:
THE CASE OF THE GÜLEN MOVEMENT

SALİH CINGİLLİOĞLU

BOĞAZIÇI UNIVERSITY

2015

ADULT EDUCATION IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS:
THE CASE OF THE GÜLEN MOVEMENT

Thesis submitted to the
Institute for Graduate Studies in Social Sciences
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Educational Sciences

by

Salih Cingillođlu

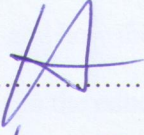
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ABSTRACT

Adult Education in Social Movements: The Case of the Gülen Movement

This research explored the *sohbets* (spiritual conversations) of the Gülen Movement from two perspectives, with regard to adult education: the educational aspects of *sohbets* and the personal and social transformations experienced by the participants of *sohbets*. The research employed qualitative research methodology, in which participants were businessmen attending to the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement in two different cities of Turkey. The data was collected through face-to-face in-depth interviews with an interview protocol developed after the pilot study. Grounded theory approach was used to analyze the findings obtained via interviews. The findings revealed how interviewees met the Gülen Movement, the reasons why they participated, the significance they attributed to the movement, and how they positioned themselves within it. The findings also provided information as to the educational aspects of *sohbets*, namely their aims, organization, syllabus, educators and the teaching and learning. Data analysis also revealed findings about the effects of *sohbets* on the personal daily lives of businessmen, their families and friends, and their business lives. The findings were discussed through the perspective of adult education and its implementation in social movements. It was concluded that the Gülen Movement constituted an example of a social movement in which adult education is extensively implemented to educate its participants and that the adult education in the Gülen Movement carried a formal aspect in contrast to the non-formal aspect of adult education in social movements, as described in the literature.

ÖZET

Toplumsal Hareketlerde Yetişkin Eğitimi

Gülen Hareketi Örneği

Bu araştırma, Gülen Hareketi'nin sohbetlerini yetişkin eğitimi açısından iki yönüyle incelemiştir: sohbetlerin eğitsel yönleri ve sohbet katılımcılarının kişisel ve sosyal yaşamlarında geçirdikleri dönüşümler. Nitel araştırma yöntemlerini kullanmıştır. Araştırmanın katılımcıları Türkiye'nin 2 farklı kentinde Gülen Hareketi sohbetlerine devam eden işadamlarıdır. Veriler yüz yüze yapılan derinlemesine görüşme yoluyla toplanmıştır ve pilot çalışma sonrasında geliştirilen görüşme protokolü kullanılmıştır. Görüşmelerde elde edilen veriler gömülü teori (temellendirilmiş kuram) yaklaşımı ile çözümlenmiştir. Bulgular görüşme yapılan bireylerin Gülen Hareketi ile nasıl tanıştığını, neden katıldıklarını, harekete atfettikleri önemi ve kendilerini hareket içinde nasıl konumlandıklarını göstermiştir. Bulgular ayrıca, sohbetlerin amaçları, düzenlenmesi, müfredatı, eğiticileri, öğretme ve öğrenme etkinlikleri gibi eğitimsel yönleri ile ilgili bilgileri de açığa çıkarmıştır. Son olarak, bulgular sohbetlerin işadamlarının günlük kişisel yaşamları, aile ve arkadaş çevreleri ve iş yaşamları üzerindeki etkilerini de ortaya çıkarmıştır. Bulgular yetişkin eğitiminin toplumsal hareketlerdeki uygulamaları açılarından tartışılmıştır. Sonuç olarak, Gülen Hareketi, katılımcılarını eğitmek için yoğun şekilde yetişkin eğitimi uygulayan bir toplumsal hareket örneği sergilemektedir. Ayrıca, Gülen Hareketi tarafından uygulanan yetişkin eğitimi taşıdığı formal yön ile yazında anlatıldığı şekliyle toplumsal hareketlerde söz konusu olan esnek ve belirgin şekli olmayan yetişkin eğitiminden farklılık göstermektedir.

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME: Salih Cingillođlu

DEGREES AWARDED

PhD in Educational Sciences, 2015, Bođaziđi University

M.A. in Educational Sciences, 2005, Bođaziđi University

B.A. in Foreign Language Education, 1995, Bođaziđi University

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

Foreign language teaching, adult education, social movements, educational policy

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Founder & General Manager, Accept International Education, 2007 – present

Director of Studies, Discover Education Center, 2002 – 2007

English Language Instructor, Various schools and universities, 1995 - 2002

PUBLICATIONS

Master's Thesis

Cingillođlu, S. (2005). *Reasons behind dropouts in adult education: A survey with students of private language courses in İstanbul* (Unpublished master's thesis). Bođaziđi University.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to start by thanking all my teachers in my educational life so far. I fully appreciate their holy efforts and am aware that I would not be where I am now if it were not for them.

With all my heart, I express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to Professor Fatma Nevra Seggie, my thesis advisor. This research would never be culminated without her guidance and persistence help. I bow in front of you with respect professor, hoping to become a social scientist, the role model of whom you have displayed in the most wonderful way.

I will never be able to put into words what Professor Zeynep Kızıltepe means to me in my academic life. Whenever I fell into darkness, she was always there to help me out. She has been the perfect mentor not only to me but to hundreds of students in her classes, which I know of through the echoes of her name in the corridors of Faculty of Education.

This research definitely owes its existence to Professor İhsan Yılmaz, who was a perfect trailblazer in my scholarly journey. Within his prolific academic life, he never hesitated to communicate with me solving the most complicated issues at once with his experience.

Professor Ayşe Caner was always there with invaluable contributions that significantly shaped this dissertation. Every time I saw her, she put the touch of a master guiding my research. I am very proud that Faculty of Education has such a distinguished professor.

I would also like to thank Professor Önder Çetin for the utmost care he gave on my dissertation shaping it with valuable comments. I was very lucky to shape my dissertation with the final touch of such a well-versed sociologist.

My longtime old friend, Mr. Gökhan Cansız, took a critical role in collecting, analyzing and presenting the data of this research. If it were not for his professional help and timely initiative, this dissertation would never be completed. No word of thankfulness in any language of the world would suffice to express my gratitude to Gökhan.

There was one person who, at times I supposed, believed in me and the significance of my research more than I did. My special thanks go to Professor Mehmet Uzunoğlu, who gave in his valuable time to motivate me continuously.

I would like to thank Miss Eminenur Saritosun on behalf of all my students who took their chips in helping with this research. I know all your names by heart and appreciate your assistance.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their unending support to keep me motivated and strong to complete my dissertation. I hope you will forgive me for all the time I have stolen from you during my research.

To the precious memory of my beloved late brother Mustafa...

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The sequential, or non-sequential, and formally or non-formally organized activities of persons who no longer attend school on a regular and fulltime basis but still intend to bring about changes in their information, knowledge, understanding, skills, appreciation, and attitudes are defined as adult education (Knowles, 1980). According to Darkenwald and Merriam (1982), adult education is a process in which participants whose main social roles are characteristics of adult status receive systematic and continued learning activities for the purpose of developmental change in knowledge, attitudes, values, or skills. Emphasizing the social dimension of adult education, Jarvis (2004) recognizes it as the liberal education undertaken by people who are regarded as adults.

One significant goal of adult education is social transformation. A radical social change is advocated through adult education, which is considered an important means to carry values that are to be acquired by the learners. At this point some radical theorists place great importance on the role of adult education in bringing about social change (Darkenwald and Merriam, 1982).

Explaining how adult education may lead to a social change, Mezirow (2000) refers to transformative learning which involves a transformation in the taken-for-granted frames of reference of adult learners, such as meaning perspectives, habits of mind, and mind-sets, so that they become “more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective”, which then enables them to “generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action” (p. 8). Taylor

(2008) emphasizes the social change function of adult education, from the perspective of transformative learning, and refers to Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, who considers transformation at both the individual and social levels inseparable.

According to Merriam and Bierema (2014), community offers a conducive site for transformative learning to take place. They point out that community activists and social activists, especially, undergo perspective transformations with the collective intention of effecting a change in the larger socio-political context. English and Mayo (2012), by providing examples from various social movements, state that participants to social movements learn through the process by viewing films, listening to lectures, surfing on the Internet, participating in teamwork, protesting, organizing and educating others. In explaining the nature of education in social movements, Holst (2002) mentions that there is considerable educational activity internal to social movements and through these activities “organizational skills, ideology, and lifestyle choices” are transmitted from one participant to another informally by “mentoring and modeling” or formally by “workshops, seminars, and lectures” (p. 81).

To explore the implications of adult education in social movements, this study focuses on the Gülen Movement, which is the largest and most influential Islamic group in Turkey and the most widely recognized one internationally (Turam, 2007). According to Esposito & Yılmaz (2010), it is the largest civil movement in the country and “...the actual number of *Hizmet*’s millions of followers and sympathizers is not exactly known” (p. 92). Arat (2010) mentions that the group (the Gülen Movement) provides education and boarding services to around 25000 students in about 200 high schools, about 400 exam preparation courses and dormitories, as well as “generous scholarships to needy students” (p. 877). Pointing to its global extension, El-Benna (2014) emphasizes that the

movement has now become “a worldwide network of community service organizations, businesses, and educational, publishing and media institutions functioning in more than one hundred countries” (p. 2). Çetin (2012) also describes the Gülen Movement as a “transnational educational, inter-cultural and interfaith movement, with participants numbering in the millions, as well as securely established, respected institutions on every continent” (p. xv).

Ebaugh (2010) mentions the recent media attention to the Gülen Movement, referring to several articles in *Forbes’ Oxford Analytica*, the *New York Times*, *Le Monde*, the *International Herald Tribune*, the *Forbes*, and the *Economist*, which wrote about the ability of movement to mobilize considerable resources, its moderate and flexible vision of Islam, the achievements of schools opened by various countries in the world, its philanthropic efforts in the poor regions, and its attempt to further dialog among cultures. In 2008, Fethullah Gülen won the online poll of *Prospect* and *Foreign Policy* magazines for the world’s most influential public intellectual, although Ebaugh (2010) relates the landslide victory to the votes cast by his supporters to whom news about the poll was distributed through the media affiliated with the Gülen Movement.

The rise of the Gülen Movement hinges upon the global and national developments of the last century. It has been stated by Norris and Inglehart (2004) in the opening part of the secularization debate in their book *Sacred and Secular*, which carries out a comparative research on religion and politics worldwide, that the seminal social thinkers of the nineteenth century, namely, Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud, all believed that religion would gradually fade in importance and cease to be significant with the advent of industrial society. Posing the question whether the world is becoming more secular or not, Fox

(2008) further adds to this statement that even though there might be some disagreement among the aforementioned thinkers as to the specifics of this reduced role of religion, they all concurred that processes within modernity would cause the religion to fade. Put differently, this secularization theory considered religion a traditional phenomenon, which would eventually be marginalized by the modernization process through industrialization, urbanization, and mass education (Bruce, 2002).

However, during the last decade this secularization thesis has experienced the most sustained challenge in its long history, witnessing that religion has not disappeared and is not likely to do so. Norris and Inglehart (2004) point to multiple indicators of religious vitality; namely, the continued popularity of churchgoing in the United States, the emergence of New Age spirituality in Western Europe, the growth in fundamentalist movements and religious parties in the Muslim world. Stark and Finke (2000) take an even fiercer and sustained critique and suggest that it is time to bury the secularization thesis. Accepting that the traditional secularization thesis needs updating, Norris and Inglehart (2004) develop a revised version of secularization theory that emphasizes the extent to which people have a sense of existential security and claim that feelings of vulnerability to physical, societal, and personal risks are key factors driving religiosity. Based on survey evidence from 80 societies worldwide in testing their theory, Norris and Inglehart (2004) conclude that the peoples of virtually all advanced industrial societies have been moving toward more secular orientations whereas the world as a whole now has more people with traditional religious views than ever before, constituting a growing proportion of the world's population.

The situation in today's Turkey clearly does not pose an exception to the worldwide revival of religion in state policies as put forth by the abovementioned

studies. Contrary to expectations of modernization theory, in the Turkish case, secularization also recast and inadvertently revitalized the very religious and cultural idioms and identities it was supposed to have eliminated (Tuğal, 2009; Yavuz, 2003). Although the state policy of Turkish state toward religion was based on the legacy of Mustafa Kemal's radical secularizing reforms of the 1920s and 1930s, such as the amendment to the constitution of 1924 excluding the statement that the religion of the Turkish Republic is Islam in 1928, which eventually led to the addition of the principle of secularism to the constitution in 1937, later developments have progressively increased the engagements between Islam and Turkish state. Yavuz (2003) at this point draws attention to the failure of the secularizing, state-centric elite in penetrating and transforming the traditional society. Indeed, they were unsuccessful in developing an alternative value system and associational life for the rural population of the country. These failures inevitably raised previously muted social questions of identity, justice and participation. Eventually, and not surprisingly, in the post-1982 era of burgeoning economic and political liberalism, the socioeconomic policies of the Republican elite contributed to the political participation of hitherto excluded social groups (Yavuz, 2003). Equally important, the state's increasing tolerance of Islam in the 1980s, which was indeed largely encouraged by the Prime Minister of that time, Turgut Özal, also set a conducive platform for Islamic actors to step forward and seek legitimacy for their existence and actions. Turam (2007) states in her book *Between Islam and State* that Islamic actors, who were mostly educated, socially conscious, and faithful Muslims, found economic, social, and political conditions favorable for the articulation of their needs and interests in a fast-growing free market economy and civil society. They formed their own associations, media outlets, including television stations, radio stations

and newspapers, as well as corporations and hospitals. Most importantly, they even dedicated themselves to raising faithful and morally superior future generations, who would also be internationally competitive in science business and technology. The Gülen Movement, for example, opened schools and universities inside and outside of Turkey, whereas other Islamic actors persisted in forming and joining successive Islamic parties even each time their existing parties were banned by the Turkish state. Still many others started prayer groups, religious organizations and foundations. In brief, during this period Turkey has seen Islamic networks and activities mushroom (Turam, 2007).

1.2 Statement of the research problem

Yavuz (2013) emphasizes that one of the most significant characteristics of the Gülen Movement is its “deep involvement in the economic development of Turkey” (p. 117). A significant call to Anatolian Muslims by Gülen is that they should “bring their wealth to establish powerful firms so that they could compete in the world market” (p. 119).

Responding to the call, the young Islamic entrepreneurs of the Turkey’s 1990s utilized the Özal’s neoliberal economic policies, as mentioned earlier, which triggered their social mobility and enabled them to establish their own medium and small-size firms.

Ebaugh (2010) mentions that the majority of these businessmen were influenced by Gülen’s perspectives on “entrepreneurialism and wealth accumulation,” and assumed “a social and religious responsibility” to sponsor the Gülen Movement affiliated projects such as opening educational institutions that offer quality education (p. 36). Yavuz (2013) maintains that this new bourgeoisie supported “the pietistic activism of Gülen” and became the main supporters of the Gülen Movement (p. 120). They are inspired by

Gülen to work and earn money so that they can participate in religiously oriented communal activities of the Gülen Movement with “selfless diligence” (p. 121).

Placing these businessmen within the structure of the Gülen Movement, Yavuz (2013) mentions that the Gülen Movement consists of three concentric circles, in the core of which are a group of believers who leads the activities in a spirit of full and unconditional loyalty to the movement. The second circle of people is comprised of small and medium-size merchants, and businesspeople who support the Gülen Movement’s religio-national goals by assuming responsibility in the board of trustees of the movement's numerous foundations, by directly and indirectly participating in the production of good deeds and work through charity gatherings. They also generate financial income for the activities of the Gülen Movement in their region via fundraisings attended by local volunteers.

Ebaugh (2010), in her study that focused on people’s commitment to the goals and projects of the Gülen Movement and the factors that motivate people to donate money, as well as the source of the money, attributes the credit of successful Gülen-inspired projects of the Gülen Movement to the numerous local circles of businessmen. According to Ebaugh (2010), these local circles, known as *sohbet*¹ groups, have “no formal membership, no initiation rites, no public insignia, or no recognition of membership” and do not require “any building to convene the group” (p. 47). The attendees of these *sohbets* read Qur’anic commentaries and literature on prophetic tradition by Muslim scholars, share ideas and needs of the people in the group, and discuss the Gülen Movement projects that the group intends to sponsor financially.

¹ The Turkish word *sohbet* literally means conversation among people. Nevertheless, it has another connotation in the Islamic jargon, which means religious, or spiritual, conversation. For a detailed explanation of *sohbet* as a discourse of Gülen Movement, please see p. 48 of this dissertation.

Given that the merchants and businessmen are introduced to the goals of the Gülen Movement through local circles, or *sohbets*, they attend and develop a sense of commitment to the ideals of the Gülen Movement to create a better humane society, and given that the Gülen Movement focuses on “the spiritual and intellectual consciousness of the individual, seeking to form an inner self that will empower the person to effect change in society,” it can be argued that these local circles serve as the settings where merchants and businessmen undergo a transformation in their world views (Ebaugh, 2010, p. 45). Indeed, transformation in the perspective of the individual which in turn leads to a societal transformation falls under the scope of adult education, in the above mentioned case of businessmen. Moreover, it is well established by research that social movements are conducive contexts where adult education takes place.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to explore the implications of adult education in social movements. It takes the Gülen Movement as its case. The study has examined the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement from two perspectives, namely the educational aspects of the *sohbets* and the transformation that the businessmen go through as a result of attending to the *sohbets*, with regard to adult education. The study has also aimed to contextualize *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement as a practice of adult education within a social movement.

1.4 Research questions

The two research questions of this research are:

1. What are the educational aspects of *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement attended by businessmen, with regard to adult education?
2. What are the contributions of the Gülen Movement *sohbets* to personal and social lives of businessmen, with regard to adult education?

The sub questions of Research Question 1 are:

- a. How are *sohbets* organized in terms of
 - i. their schedule?
 - ii. their location?
 - iii. their announcement?
 - iv. participant recruitment?
- b. Who are the *sohbet hocaları* in terms of
 - i. their personalities?
 - ii. their proficiency / expertise?
 - iii. teaching style?
- c. What is the curriculum and/or syllabus of the *sohbets*, if any?
- d. What are the aims and objectives of *sohbets*?
- e. What activities are done in a typical *sohbet*?
- f. What is the content of the *sohbets*?
- g. What are the educational materials used in the *sohbets*?
- h. What are the instructional strategies employed by the *sohbet hocaları*?
- i. How is the interaction between *sohbet hocaları* and businessmen during the *sohbet*?

- j. What are the preparations done by businessmen before coming to the *sohbets*?
- k. What are the preparations done by *sohbet hocaları* before coming to the *sohbets*?
- l. What are the assignments given to businessmen after the *sohbets*?
- m. What are the participants' attitudes to *sohbets* in terms of
 - i. finding what they expect?
 - ii. attendance?
- n. How is a *sohbet* group managed in terms of
 - i. placing/reorganizing participants into groups?
 - ii. assigning *sohbet hocaları* to groups?
 - iii. dropouts?
 - iv. complaints and responses by participants?

The sub questions of Research Question 2 are:

- a. What are the effects *sohbets* on the daily lives of businessmen?
- b. What are the effects *sohbets* on the families of businessmen?
- c. What are the effects *sohbets* on the friends and relatives of businessmen?
- d. What are the effects *sohbets* on the business lives of businessmen?

1.5 Significance of the study

The major significance of this study is that it explores the implementation of adult education in social movements, which in this case is an Islamic social movement, the Gülen Movement. The study not only delves into social movements as a subject matter of sociology but also examines the role of adult education in the individual and social

transformation that takes place through a social movement. In this sense, the study becomes an interdisciplinary one.

Moreover, the Gülen Movement has been under the focus of the researchers for more than 20 years since its first public visibility through the establishment of Journalists and Writers Foundation (JWF) in 1992. Among the studies that have been conducted so far, excluding those that are still in progress and those that may not have been accessed by the researcher, none of them has examined the Gülen Movement and its *sohbets* from the perspective of adult education; rather, they have been the studies done in the field of sociology, political science, and theology. Although there have been some studies conducted in the education departments of various universities, they all focused on the educational institutions affiliated with the Gülen Movement and examined the educational policy of the Gülen Movement regarding formal education. Taken all these into consideration, this study is the first and unique one that examines the Gülen Movement from the perspective of adult education and considers its function to create a social change in turn.

Furthermore, many books and studies on the Gülen Movement point to the commitment and loyalty of the participants of the Gülen Movement through the sacrifices and initiatives they have made and take. To illustrate those of businessmen, Ebaugh (2010) states that businessmen in the various *sohbet* groups donate from 5% to 20% of their yearly income, let alone few others who donate more than 20%. The total amount of the sponsorship for the worldwide projects of the Gülen Movement is estimated to reach tens of millions of dollars (Çetin, 2012; Ergil, 2011; Ebaugh, 2010). What makes then these businessmen donate a certain amount of their income after joining the local circles, or *sohbets*, of the Gülen Movement? This study seeks an answer

to this and similar questions by exploring the educational and transformational aspects of *sohbets* for the businessmen attending, with regard to adult education.

1.6 Structure of the dissertation

The structure of the dissertation is as follows: The second chapter focuses on the review of literature by (1) presenting the aims, objectives and principles of adult education and discussing the significance of transformative adult education to social movements, (2) discussing what a social movement is and why and how people participate in social movements, (3) presenting the global and national context in which Islamic social movements emerge and the chronology of Turkish Islamic social movements by providing details about the prominent ones, (4) exploring the Gülen Movement in terms of its leader Fethullah Gülen, its ideology, its perspectives on education, its discourse and criticisms over it, (5) making a conceptual synthesis of adult education, social movements, and the Gülen Movement. The chapter concludes with the conceptual framework used in the study. The third chapter discusses the methods and procedures undertaken during the research. It explains the research approach, poses the research questions, explores the design of the study, and documents the challenges conducting the research. The fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters present the findings of the study, based on all twenty-six participants, using a thematic and analytical approach. Specifically, Chapter 4 analyzes the findings concerning how the participants were recruited to the Gülen Movement, the reasons why they participated in it, what the significance of the Gülen Movement is to them, and how they position themselves in the Gülen Movement. Chapter 5 presents the findings pertaining to the educational aspects of the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement. Chapter 6 presents the findings related to the contributions of *sohbets*

to the participants, their families and friends, and their business lives. The dissertation concludes with a final chapter, which discusses and interprets the findings, makes criticisms over them, reflects on the global and scientific implications of the findings, and makes recommendations for adult educators, social movements and researchers.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter of the study contains a review of literature on adult education and social movements. The review starts with a general overview of adult education, which includes various definitions, aims and objectives, principles and transformative aspect of adult education in social movements. Then, it turns to social movements with a specific focus on Islamic social movements in Turkey. Next, the Gülen Movement is discussed in detail including the socio-political background that lays the ground for its emergence, the biography of its leader, Fethullah Gülen, and educational perspectives of the Gülen Movement. Moreover, definitions of certain concepts incorporated in the literature on the Gülen Movement are provided. The discussion ends with the presentation of criticisms against the Gülen Movement. Having summarized the literature reviewed in this chapter, I present the conceptual framework used in the research.

2.1 Adult education

This section of the literature review provides the definitions of adult education followed by an analysis of its aims, objectives, and principles. The section closes with a discussion on transformative aspect of adult education and its relation to social movements.

2.1.1 Definition of adult education

Education, in its broadest terms, can be defined as a process that transfers culture, value, ideology, knowledge, skills, and abilities (Kirazoğlu, 2003) Adult education, on the

other hand, has come out with more specific and more detailed definitions. The first widely accepted definition of adult education was made by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (1976).

According to this definition, adult education refers to the whole body of organized educational processes with any content, level, and method. These processes can either be formal or non-formal, and either extend or replace the initial education at schools, colleges, universities, and in apprenticeship. Through these processes, the participants, regarded as adult by the society, improve their abilities, enrich their knowledge, and develop their technical or professional qualifications. Moreover, they can utilize their current qualifications in a new direction and cause changes in their attitudes or behaviors in terms of personal development and of participation in social, economic, and cultural development.

Knowles (1980) defines adult education as a process "...whereby persons who no longer attend school on a regular and fulltime basis (unless fulltime programs are especially designed for adults) undertake sequential and organized activities with the conscious intention of bringing about changes in information, knowledge, understanding, skills, appreciation, and attitudes" (p. 21)

Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) define adult education as a process in which participants whose main social roles are characteristics of adult status receive systematic and continued learning activities for the purpose of developmental change in knowledge, attitudes, values, or skills. Hamiloğlu (2002) mentions the difficulty of defining adult education due to the vagueness of the term considering the conditions and circumstances in which adult education takes place. Besides the term "adult education", "lifelong learning/education", "non-formal education", "continuing education" are used in

attempts to define adult education activities, not only in our country but in the world as well (Okçabol, 1996).

On defining adult education based on these various terms, Okçabol (1996) points to the fact that teaching-learning process is called “formal education” when it takes place in a “school”, whereas it is called “non-formal education” when it takes place outside “the school environment.” Considering the physical, psychological, and societal functional characteristics of the participants as adults, this process is called adult education (Okçabol, 1996).

2.1.2 Aims and objectives of adult education

UNESCO (1976) states the aims of adult education as follows. These aims should contribute to

- a. promoting work for peace, international understanding and, cooperation;
- b. developing a critical understanding of major contemporary problems and social changes and the ability to play an active part in the progress of society with a view to achieving social justice;
- c. promoting increased awareness of the relationship between people and their physical and cultural environment and to respect and protect nature, the common heritage and public property;
- d. creating an understanding of and respect for the diversity of customs and cultures, on both the national and the international planes;
- e. promoting increased awareness of, and giving effect to various forms of communication and solidarity at the family, local, national, regional and international levels;

- f. developing the aptitude for acquiring new knowledge, qualifications, attitudes or forms of behavior conducive to the full maturity of the personality, either individually, in groups or in the context of organized study in educational establishments specially set up for this purpose;
- g. ensuring the individuals' conscious and effective incorporation into working life by providing men and women with an advanced technical and vocational education and developing the ability to create, either individually or in groups, new material goods and new spiritual or aesthetic values;
- h. developing the ability to grasp adequately the problems involved in the upbringing of children;
- i. developing the attitude for making creative use of leisure and for acquiring any necessary or desired knowledge;
- j. developing the necessary discernment in using mass communication media, in particular radio, television, cinema and the press, and interpreting the various messages addressed to modern men and women by society;
- k. developing the aptitude for learning to learn;

Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) come up with five different emphases to the aims and objectives of adult education. The first of these is the cultivation of the intellect. The realization of this aim, which is also viewed as the development of rationality by a curriculum emphasizing liberal studies and a teacher-centered instructional methodology, is through the transmission of educationally worthwhile knowledge (Darkenwald and Merriam, 1982).

The second aim of adult education is individual self-actualization. Here, the focus is on the individual rather than the content and on the affective rather than the

cognitive aspects of education. The function of adult education is to help develop all the skills of the individual. Although those who favor individual growth and development as the aim of adult education are often aware of the hardships in transforming this ideal into practice, they highlight process over content, consider adult as the center of the experience, teacher as the facilitator, and group interaction as the primary vehicle for learning (Darkenwald and Merriam, 1982; Okçabol, 1996).

The third aim of adult education is personal and social improvement. In other words, the function of adult education is to raise creative individuals and not only to improve the individuality of persons and social consciousness but also to protect social balance. It is also maintained that adult education is important to protect and improve a democratic life. Moreover, adult education creates a better citizen and society as it provides a more satisfying individual life (Okçabol, 1996).

The fourth aim of adult education is social transformation. A radical social change is advocated through adult education. Education is considered to be responsible to carry values that are to be acquired by the learners. At this point some radical theorists place great importance on the role of education in bringing about social change (Darkenwald and Merriam, 1982; Okçabol, 1996).

The last emphasis on the aims and objectives of adult education is organizational effectiveness. In order to become more efficient deliverers of goods and services, public and private sector organizations engage their employees in training, education, or development activities (Darkenwald and Merriam, 1982).

2.1.3 Principles in adult education

The basic principles in adult education are as follows (Brookfield 1986; Draves 1997; Grissom 1992; Knowles 1992):

The first principle is to involve learners in planning and implementing learning activities. Including learners in the planning and implementing of their learning activities is considered to be a hallmark of adult education. Their participation can begin with the needs assessment process where members of the target population help establish the program goals and objectives and continue throughout the learning activity to the evaluation phase.

The second principle is to draw upon learners' experiences as a resource. Another often-cited principle of adult education revolves around the idea of using the experiences of participants as a learning resource. Not only do adult learners have experiences that can be used as a foundation for learning new things but also, in adulthood, readiness to learn frequently stems from life tasks and problems. The particular life situations and perspectives that adults bring to the classroom can provide a rich reservoir for learning.

The third principle is to cultivate self-direction in learners. Self-direction is considered by some to be a characteristic of adulthood but not all adults possess this attribute in equal measure. In addition, if adults have been accustomed to teacher-directed learning environments, they may not display self-directedness in adult learning settings. Adult learning should be structured to nurture the development of self-directed, empowered adults. When adults are encouraged to become self-directed, they begin "...to see themselves as proactive, initiating individuals engaged in a continuous re-creation of their personal relationships, work worlds, and social circumstances rather

than as reactive individuals, buffeted by uncontrollable forces of circumstance”
(Brookfield, 1986, p. 19).

The fourth principle is to create a climate that encourages and supports learning. The classroom environment should be characterized by trust and mutual respect among teachers and learners. It should enhance learner self-esteem. Supporting and encouraging learning does not mean that the environment is free of conflict. It does mean that when conflict occurs, it is handled in a way that challenges learners to acquire new perspectives and supports them in their efforts to do so.

The fifth principle is to foster a spirit of collaboration in the learning setting. Collaboration in the adult classroom is frequently founded on the idea that the roles of teachers and learners can be interchangeable. Although teachers have the overall responsibility for leading a learning activity, in adult learning settings “...each person has something to teach and to learn from the other” (Draper 1992, p. 75). Adult learning is a cooperative enterprise that respects and draws upon the knowledge that each person brings to the learning setting.

The sixth principle is to use small groups. The use of groups has deep historical roots in adult education, and adults learning in groups have become embedded in adult education practice. Groups promote teamwork and encourage cooperation and collaboration among learners. Structured appropriately, they emphasize the importance of learning from peers, and they allow all participants to be involved in discussions and to assume a variety of roles.

2.1.4 The transformative aspect of adult education and social movements

Perspective transformation explains how learning leads to change and is considered as an integral part of adult development. Discussing the process of perspective transformation, Mezirow (1991) highlights the significance of educational intervention in increasing the individuals' ability and experiences as a result of their movement toward reflectivity as a function of intentionality. He further delineates:

Transformative learning involves enhanced level of awareness of the context of one's beliefs and feelings, a critique of their assumptions and particularly premises, an assessment of alternative perspectives, a decision to negate an old perspective in favor of a new one or to make a synthesis of old and new, an ability to take action based upon the new perspective into the broader context of one's life. Perspective transformation involves (a) an empowered sense of self, (b) more critical understanding of how one's social relationships and culture have shaped one's beliefs and feelings, and (c) more functional strategies and resources for taking action. Taking an action is an integral dimension of transformative learning. (p. 161)

An important aspect of perspective transformations is collective transformations, which occur in people who are involved in groups and social movements. Particularly, in the case of new social movements, the primary goal of education is shifted towards personal transformation rather than achieving social goals because it is expected that personal transformation will lead to changes in the social, cultural, and political life. Mezirow (1991) states that "Social and cultural transformations happen only to individuals. Transformation in the way one lives and thinks, therefore, becomes the ultimate criterion for evaluating adult education" (p. 189).

Mayo (1999) states that, regarding the role of adult education in the transformation of the society, Antonio Gramsci, an eminent scholar who sought to formulate a revolutionary strategy for social transformation, places primary importance on education and cultural formation of the adults. Nevertheless, Gramsci considers such

societal transformation essential to create a counter-hegemonic action to challenge the bourgeois state and transform it into one that represents broader interests.

Mayo (1999) also refers to another eminent researcher on social transformation, Paulo Freire, for whom social movements constitute “the larger context within which transformational educational initiatives can be effectively carried out” (p. 70). Freire further advocates that social movements incorporate greater mobility provide that the educators who strive for change put in greater dynamism. Both Freire and Gramsci argue that transformative action cannot succeed unless it is related to strong social movements; that is to say, adult education cannot transform society by itself (p. 92).

Discussing how new social movements provide a conducive context for personal transformations and how social transformation is linked to personal transformation, Mezirow (1991) states,

People involved in these [new social] movements believe that the motive for transformation comes from deeply moral, even religious, motives; transformations are not simply cognitive in nature. ‘Adult transformation is...mainly informal, local and communitarian, based on concern, commitment and experience, rooted in and contributing to the development of a local culture,’ Finger says (p. 18). The purpose of the new movements is to reestablish in a new mode the link between the person and society. According to Finger, the new movements feature *experiential learning*, *learning through consternation* (learning experiences that arouse one’s emotions), *holistic learning* (learning a new way of life), and *identity learning* (learning that personal identity cannot be separated from the way one lives and one’s social commitments)(p. 21). (p. 189)

Hall (2011) defines what social movement learning from two aspects, which are “learning by persons who are part of any social movement” and “learning by persons outside of a social movement as a result of the actions taken or simply by the existence of social movements” (p. 348). He further states:

What we all know as facilitators of learning is that nothing is as powerful a stimulus to learning as the necessity to teach or inform others. The organizational or communicative mandate of all social movements is a necessarily educational

concern. And, while much of the learning within social movements is informal or incidental in nature, organized or intentional learning also takes place as a direct result of educational activities organized within the movement itself. (p. 349)

2.2 Social movements

This section provides definitions of social movements made by various researchers.

Then, literature on the reasons why and the conditions when social movements occur is presented. The section closes with a literature review on the participants in social movements.

2.2.1 What is a social movement?

Zald and McCarthy (1979) define a social movement as a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society. According to Snow et al., (2004) social movements can be defined on at least three or more of the following aspects, which are

- a. collective or joint action,
- b. change-oriented goals or claims,
- c. some extra- or non-institutional collective action,
- d. some degree of organization, and
- e. some degree of temporal continuity.

Melucci (1999) analyzes the concept of a social movement in three separate but interrelated dimensions that are formed around the mobilization of a collective actor,

- a. which is based on a specific solidarity
- b. which is engaged in a conflict with an opponent for the appropriation and control of resources valued by both of the actor and the opponent

- c. whose action necessitates a contravention of the limits of compatibility of the system within which the action itself takes place.

Cohen (1985) defines the comparatively “new social movements” as an effort towards self-understanding that departs from revolutionary dreams in favor of the idea of structural reform, as well as a defense of civil society that does not seek to abandon the autonomous functioning of political and economic systems. That is to say, new social movements serve to limit radical approaches such as overthrowing the government or rebel.

According to Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993), a social movement is a sustained and self-conscious challenge to authorities or cultural codes by a field of actors – organizations and advocacy networks – some of which employ extra-institutional means of influence. Tarrow (1996) puts a similar definition stating that social movements are sustained challenges to power-holders in the name of a disadvantaged population living under the jurisdiction or influence of those power-holders.

Goodwin and Jasper (2003) define a social movement as “collective, organized, sustained, and non-institutional challenge to authorities, power holders, or cultural beliefs and practices” (p. 3). Discussing the concept of a social movement, Porta and Diani (2006) define social movements as a distinct social process whose participants are engaged in collective action through three aspects, which are conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents, dense informal networks, and a distinct collective identity.

From the perspective of conflictual collective action, Porta and Diani (2006) state:

Accordingly, addressing collective problems, producing public goods, or expressing support for some moral values or principles does not automatically correspond to social movement action; the latter requires the identification of targets for collective efforts, specifically articulated in social and political terms. (p. 21)

That is to say, the existence of clearly stated goals that are to be achieved through the efforts of social movements is unquestionably a sine-qua-non for social movements.

Secondly, as to dense informal networks, Porta and Diani (2006) maintain that “A social movement process is in place to the extent that both individual and organized actors, while keeping their autonomy and independence, engage in sustained exchanges of resources in pursuit of common goals” (p. 21). Those who participate in social movements indeed bring with themselves the assets they have accumulated such as their education and skills and pour them into the common pool of the social movement so that each and every individual or group actors benefit from these assets in their desire to realize the common goal of the social movement. The interdependence of the participants of social movements is highlighted by Porta and Diani (2006) as “No single organized actor, no matter how powerful, can claim to represent a movement as a whole” (p. 21).

Thirdly, social movements are more than just some protest events on certain issues or some campaigns of social concern. According to Porta and Diani (2006), the existence of a social movement hinges on the development of collective identities, which indeed go beyond specific events and initiatives. Citing Pizzorno (1996), they maintain that collective identity is strongly related to recognition and the formation of connectedness. With collective identity, a sense of common purpose and shared commitment to a cause develop and in turn make it possible for single activists and organizations to regard themselves inextricably linked to other actors.

Putting all into a nutshell, Goodwin and Jasper (2003) summarize the main features of social movements:

Social movements are conscious, concerted, and sustained efforts by ordinary people to change some aspect of their society by using extra-institutional means. They are more conscious and organized than fads and fashions. They last longer than a single protest or riot. There is more to them than formal organizations, although such organizations usually play a part. They are composed mainly of ordinary people as opposed to army officers, politicians, or economic elites. They need not to be explicitly political, but many are. (3)

Therefore, based on the above discussion, I argue that the distinguishing features of social movements are as follows:

- i. Having conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents
- ii. Framed upon dense informal networks
- iii. Developing a distinct collective identity
- iv. Conscious , concerted, and sustained efforts
- v. Being primarily composed of ordinary people
- vi. Operating through extra-institutional means
- vii. Not needing to carry a political aspect

2.2.2 When and why do social movements occur?

The “mass society” theorists of the 1950s and 60s argued that social movements appeared when a society had been deprived of other “intermediary” organizations that would allow those discontented individuals could join (Kornhauser, 1959 cited in Goodwin and Jasper, 2003, p.11). Other theorists of the period who considered social movements as oppositions to the supposedly normal formal organizations of the society linked the emergence of social movements to the need for accumulation of enough number of people to be alienated from the society in which they live in and to the participants’ search for satisfaction to their infantile psychological needs in a social movement (Hoffer, 1951 cited in Goodwin and Jasper, 2003).

In the 1960s and 1970s the sociological researchers from the school of “resource mobilization” considered social movements as formal organizations and pointed to the importance of a certain level of resources, namely money, to maintain their existence. They emphasized that without resources available to nourish it, a social movement will not emerge no matter how many discounted people in the society exist (Goodwin and Jasper, 2003). The perspective of these researchers shifts the attention of sociological research on the emergence of social movements from existence of some individuals who would join the movement to the infrastructure that is essential to sustain a movement.

The reasons behind the emergence of a social movement have been mostly studied by the “political process” approach (Tarrow, 1998). This point of view focused on the opportunities that are provided by the economic and political transformations that opened of spaces for the social movements to thrive rather than the efforts of the citizens. From this perspective, social movements are political initiatives in terms of their demands from the state and asking for changes in laws and administrative policies.

The process and mobilization perspectives place importance on the availability of resources, the organization, the emotions of raised expectations, and a sense of new opportunities as factors that would throttle a social movement, and the process and mobilization perspectives provide the Civil Rights Movement by African-Americans as an example that fed these aforementioned factors (Blumberg, n.d. cited in Goodwin and Jasper, 2003).

Social networks are also taken into consideration in the study of social movements. According to Goodwin and Jasper (2003), people are mobilized into social movements through social networks due to the fact that the existence of social ties among the potential participants lays the ground for the emergence of a social

movement. They further explain the perspective of network theorists of social movements:

If most process theorists emphasize conditions in the external world (especially the state) that allow a movement to emerge, network theorists look at the structural conditions within the community or population of those who might be recruited. Those with “dense ties”, or preexisting formal organizations, will find it easier to mobilize supporters, and build a movement. (p. 12)

Besides the structural reasons behind the emergence of social movements, cultural factors have also been articulated in the sociological literature. In the cultural approach that has arisen in recent years, not all movements are seen as structurally similar. Rather, social movements are seen as efforts to control the direction of social change largely by controlling a society’s symbols and self-understandings. Such a control is realized through shaping or creating their own collective identities as social movements (Melucci, 1999). In other words, perceptions, rhetoric, symbols and emotions matter much or more than structural factors to shape social movements.

2.2.3 How do people participate in social movements?

Goodwin and Jasper (2003) state that “Once initial activists in a social movement form groups and begin to think of themselves as a movement, their next step is usually to try to expand their movement by recruiting others to their cause” (p. 51). Recruitment can be conducted by using different kinds of social networks, not necessarily political in its content or inspiration. Networks developed for earlier activities can also aid recruitment into a new movement, and this could be a reason why someone with a history of previous activism is more likely to be recruited. (McAdam, 1988).

Another factor that is effective in attracting people to join a movement is framing and framing alignment. Goodwin and Jasper (2003) point to the importance of direct

personal contacts which allow organizers and potential participants to align their frames to achieve a common definition of a social problem and a common prescription for solving it (p. 52). The concept of framing and frame alignment and their relation to the expanse of social movements is explained by Goodwin and Jasper (2003):

In order to attract people to join and remain committed to a movement, its issues must be presented or “framed” so that they fit or resonate with the beliefs, feelings, and desires of potential recruits. Like a picture-frame that highlights what is in the frame but excludes everything outside it, frames are simplifying devices that help us understand and organize the complexities of the world; they are the filtering lenses, so to speak, through which we make sense of this world. Frames may take the form of appealing stories, powerful clusters of symbols, slogans and catch words, or attributions of blame for social problems. Social movement leaders and recruiters work hard to find the right frames, ones “aligned” with the understanding of potential recruits. Framing is thus one of the principal activities in which movement activists participate, and activists are often involved in framing contests or “framing wars” with their opponents in an attempt to win the “hearts and minds” of the public. (p. 52)

In delineating the relationship between frames and social movements, Snow and Benford (1988) define three consecutive types of framing that are essential for successful recruitment to social movements. The first one is *diagnostic* framing, which involves convincing potential converts that a problem needs to be addressed; the second one is *prognostic* framing, which involves convincing participants about appropriate strategies, tactics and targets; the third one is *motivational* framing, which includes exhorting participants to get involved in these activities by arousing their emotions.

According to Snow and Benford (1988), the acceptance likelihood of the frames increases provided that they strongly comply with the existing beliefs of potential recruits, that they include empirically credible claims, that they are congruent with the life experiences of the audiences, and that they match with the stories or narratives the audiences report about their lives. As put by Goodwin and Jasper, “Frames, in other words, must resonate with the salient beliefs of potential recruits” (p. 52).

Collective identity is a concept which considers the importance of the mental worlds of participants in explaining participation. According to Melucci (1996), to expect participants to devote time and effort to protest involves their feeling of part of a larger group they think they can help.

2.3 Islamic social movements

This section starts with a general discussion on the global context in which Islamic social movements thrive, which is followed by the discussion of the issue in the Turkish context. Then, a general typology of Turkish Islamic social movements is provided. Accordingly, in the second part of this section some of the prominent Islamic social movements in Turkey are discussed. The Nurcu movement is specifically analyzed in detail in order to provide a clear understanding of the foundation on which the Gülen Movement flourished, which is the main topic of the next section.

2.3.1 The global context

Before the discussion goes into Islamic social movements and their functions in leading to a social change, a brief survey of the relationship among religion, state and society in the global context would enable a better understanding of the global context on which Islamic movements rise.

Before the start of the twentieth century, the seminal social thinkers like Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud, all concurred that religion would lose its importance in time and be eventually eradicated with the advent of industrial society (Norris and Inglehart,2004). In his research on the significance of religion to various peoples in the world and on whether the world is

becoming more secular or not, Fox (2008) mentions that there may be some disagreement among these abovementioned scholars about how the role of religion will be minimized in the modern society, but they all foresee that processes within modernity would cause the importance of religion to societies to wither. That is to say, the secularization theory, discussed in the opening part of the secularization debate in the book *Sacred and Secular* by Norris and Inglehart (2004), which carries out a comparative research on religion and politics worldwide, considers religion a traditional phenomenon, which would eventually be marginalized by the modernization process through industrialization, urbanization, and mass education (Bruce, 2002).

However, this secularization thesis has experienced the most sustained challenge in its long history in the last decade, witnessing that religion has not disappeared and is not likely to do so. Norris and Inglehart (2004) point to multiple indicators of religious vitality; namely, the continued popularity of churchgoing in the United States, the emergence of New Age spirituality in Western Europe, the growth in fundamentalist movements and religious parties in the Muslim world. Stark and Finke (2000) take an even fiercer and sustained critique and suggest that it is time to bury the secularization thesis. Accepting that the traditional secularization thesis needs updating, Norris and Inglehart (2004) develop a revised version of secularization theory that emphasizes the extent to which people have a sense of existential security and claim that feelings of vulnerability to physical, societal, and personal risks are key factors driving religiosity. Based on survey evidence from 80 societies worldwide in testing their theory, Norris and Inglehart (2004) conclude that the public of virtually all advanced industrial societies have been moving toward more secular orientations whereas the world as a

whole now has more people with traditional religious views than ever before, constituting a growing proportion of the world's population.

Furthermore, Norris and Inglehart (2004) explain the revival of religion in public life through social capital theory as well. Based on the American example, they emphasize the role of religious institutions in the accumulation of social capital by “encouraging face-to-face contact, social ties, and organizational networks that, in turn, generate interpersonal trust and collaboration over public affairs” (p. 194). They further mention the evidence obtained in their study that there is a positive link between religious participation, as measured by attending worship services, and membership in related religious organizations. The researchers conclude that complex societal developments that have transformed the nature of political activism not only hindered the decline of social congregations around religion but also encouraged “alternative forms of political mobilization and expression, best exemplified by the rise of new social movements” (p. 194). They further conclude that “there is no evidence of a worldwide decline of religiosity, or of the role of religion in politics; this is a phenomenon of industrial and postindustrial society” (p. 212).

Before delving into the factors that influenced the rise of Islamic social movements in Turkey, Yavuz (2003) discusses what a social movement is based on the definitions of a social movement by Tarrow that “it is a collective challenge by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities” and new social movement theories of Melucci (1985) and Touraine (2001) which point to a set of beliefs, symbols, and values that are intended to structure everyday life practices. According to Yavuz (2003), new social movement literature, establishing a relation between identity and ethics and the processes of cultural

transformation, explains the basic concepts essential to the understanding of how Islamic political identity is constructed in Turkey.

On such perspectives, Yavuz (2003) states Islamic movements intend to reestablish identities, institutional structures, ways of life, and the moral code of society through participating, influencing, or controlling cultural, educational and economic spheres. Citing Melucci (1988), he adds that “New social movements create new collective identities – that is- “a shared definition of the field of opportunities and constraints offered to collective action” – enabling participant actors to “calculate their cost and benefits of their actions” by using cognitive maps of identity (p. 24). Yavuz (2003) maintains that these Islamic movements create new spaces where there is minimal state control and in this way form a counter public sphere. They extend their influence beyond rigid class lines by portraying the everyday issues of women, children, youth, and minorities in popular religious terms.

2.3.2 The national context

The situation in today’s Turkey clearly does not pose an exception to the worldwide revival of religion in state policies as put forth by the abovementioned studies. Contrary to expectations of modernization theory, in the Turkish case, secularization also recast and inadvertently revitalized the very religious and cultural idioms and identities it was supposed to have eliminated (Tuğal, 2009; Yavuz, 2003). Although the state policy of Turkish state toward religion was based on the legacy of Mustafa Kemal’s radical secularizing reforms of the 1920s and 1930s, such as the amendment to the constitution of 1924 excluding the statement that the religion of the Turkish Republic is Islam in 1928, which eventually led to the addition of the principle of secularism to the

constitution in 1937, later developments have progressively increased the engagements between Islam and Turkish state. Yavuz (2003) at this point draws attention to the failure of the secularizing, state-centric elite in penetrating and transforming the traditional society. Indeed, they were unsuccessful in developing an alternative value system and associational life for the rural population of the country. These failures inevitably raised previously muted social questions of identity, justice and participation. Eventually, and not surprisingly, in the post-1982 era of burgeoning economic and political liberalism, the socioeconomic policies of the Republican elite contributed to the political participation of hitherto excluded social groups (Yavuz, 2003). Equally important, the state's increasing tolerance of Islam in the 1980s, which was indeed largely encouraged by the Prime Minister of that time, Turgut Özal, also set a conducive platform for Islamic actors to step forward and seek legitimacy for their existence and actions, by weakening the monopoly of state on economic and socio-cultural life (Kuru, 2009). Turam (2007) states in her book *Between Islam and State* that Islamic actors, who were mostly educated, socially conscious, and faithful Muslims, found economic, social, and political conditions favorable for the articulation of their needs and interests in a fast-growing free market economy and civil society. They formed their own associations, media outlets, including television stations, radio stations and newspapers, as well as corporations and hospitals. Most importantly, they even dedicated themselves to raising faithful and morally superior future generations, who would also be internationally competitive in science business and technology. The Gülen Movement, for example, opened schools and universities inside and outside of Turkey, whereas other Islamic actors persisted in forming and joining successive Islamic parties even each time their existing parties were banned by the Turkish state. Still many others

started prayer groups, religious organizations and foundations. In brief, during this period Turkey has seen Islamic networks and activities mushroom (Turam, 2007).

In the Turkish context, the rampant evolution of the Islamic social movements took place between the years 1950 and 1980. Until then, the Turkish State had never allowed the free expression of religion and religious practices. Yavuz and Esposito (2003) state that “By not allowing society to regulate its own religious affairs, the [Turkish] Republic prevented the emergence of an alternative vision of Islam and banned all civil-society-based religious networks” (p. xxiii). According to Yavuz (2003), the transformation of society allowed new political, economic, and cultural “opportunity spaces” to emerge (p. 24). Yavuz and Esposito (2003) further state:

These new spaces for political parties, actions groups, associations, reading circles, newspapers, and market and fashion shows became sites of contestation and negotiation between Islam and modern lifeworlds...In short, the structural transformation (urbanization, industrialization, and education) actually empowered the marginalized sector of Turkish society and facilitated its return to politics, economy, and education . (p. xxiii)

With the military intervention of 1980 in Turkey, the course of development of Islamic social movements came to a significant turning point, especially after the elections of 1983 that came after the coup. Yavuz and Esposito (2003) state:

Turkey’s excluded groups were mobilized during the 1983 elections when the state identified the leftist forces as the threat to national security. These historically excluded groups benefited from this new political opening and activated their indigenous religious networks, such as the *Nakşibendi* and the *Nurcus*, to seize material and cultural rewards. Between 1983 and 1990, religious networks were mobilized to offer welfare services, communal solidarity, and mobility to those newly educated classes and businesses...As a result of these factors, Islamic movements constructed an activist ‘consciousness’ to shape the sociopolitical landscape of Turkey. (p. xxv)

According to Kasaba (1998), the first factor that explains the increasing impact of Islamic discourses in the late 80s is the production of a new vision of identity comprised

of national and religious symbols. The second factor is that Islamic discourse succeeded in disseminating its ideas by making an efficient use of almost all channels of communications networks, particularly media. Finally, the third factor is that Islamic discourse established close and working ties with the Anatolian bourgeoisie.

Yavuz (2003) summarizes the impact of the economic expanse and its dependence on exports on the opportunity spaces for Islamic social movements to thrive.

He states that:

Economic growth fueled by the export-driven market has led to the dynamism and proliferation of opportunity spaces, as seen in the explosion of magazines, newspapers, television channels, the Internet, cultural foundations, and a private education system. These new opportunity spaces opened up new possibilities for Muslim actors to have their own distinct voice and institutional networks in public discussions... These opportunity spaces [also] helped to form a new sociopolitical consciousness, and this, in turn become a source for social change. (p. 25)

According to Çetin (2012), Özal, the Turkish prime minister of the time, encouraged a role for Islam to appear more in public life via his liberalization policies. He added, “Özal understood that Islam was the source of the belief system and values of most Turkish citizens, and that it was excluded from the public sphere only with increasing awkwardness and artificiality” (p. 42).

Nevertheless, the rise of Islamic movements in the post military coup of Turkey did not mean for all Islamic movements to conquer the political space and fill the governing positions in the state. Yavuz (2003) provides the example of the Nurcus and the *Nakşibendis* and highlights that they have never envisioned to seize the control of state but search for ways to reconstitute everyday life “by transforming personal identity and consciousness by means of societal micro interactions that take place through contact with Sufi orders, the media, printed texts, and local communities” (p. 25). Yavuz

(2003) also mentions that “But Islamic social movements are less about the resurgence of religion and mostly about ‘communal / empowerment,’ the introduction of a new moral language and the reconstitution of a repertoire of action (p. 25).

Regarding the Islamic movements as “actors of social change”, Yavuz (2003) discusses about two “intertwined” processes that cause Islamic movements to change shift their goals and tactics (p. 27). He explains these two processes:

First are the new structural conditions that either shrink or expand opportunity spaces, which in turn shape the goals and strategies of Islamic movement as ‘withdrawal’, ‘confrontation’, or ‘participation’ in politics and the market. Second are the abilities of intellectuals or communal leaders to use opportunity spaces to frame everyday issues in terms of the share cultural idiom of their community. (p. 27)

Table 1 classifies the Islamic social movements in terms of their orientation, state vs. society, and of their repertoire of action, particularly the strategies and means they employ to their aim.

Table 1. A Typology of Turkish Islamic Social Movements

Goal	Repertoire of action (strategies and means)	
	Legitimate	Illegitimate
<i>Vertical</i> State-oriented; elite vanguard; social change from above	<i>Reformist</i> : Participation in the hope of controlling the state or shaping policies through forming their own Islamic party or in alliance with other parties <i>Target</i> : Education, legal system, social welfare <i>Outcome</i> : Accommodation	<i>Revolutionary</i> : Rejects the system and uses violence <i>Target</i> : The state <i>Outcome</i> : Confrontation
<i>Horizontal</i> Society-oriented; associational; identity-oriented; social change from below	<i>Societal (everyday life-based movements)</i> : Groups using the media and communications networks to develop discursive spaces for the construction of Islamic identity; seeking to use the market to create heaven on earth; viewing Islam as a cultural capital; use of associational networks to empower community <i>Target</i> : Media, economy (private) education <i>Outcome</i> : Integration	<i>Spiritual/Inward</i> : Withdraws from political life to promote self-purification and self-consciousness <i>Target</i> : Religious consciousness <i>Outcome</i> : Withdrawal

(Yavuz, 2003, p. 28)

As mentioned in Table 1, state-oriented vertical Islamic movements have authoritarian and elitist tendencies regarding their decision-making and hold the opinion that the best remedy to the ailments of society is “enforcement of a uniform and homogenizing religious ideology” (Yavuz, 2003, p. 28). On the other hand, society-oriented Islamic movements strive to transform society by “utilizing new opportunity spaces in the market and media to change individual habits and social relations” (Yavuz, 2003, p. 28). In the horizontal category of Islamic social movements, societal (everyday life-based movements) tend to influence society and individuals by employing modern and

traditional networks “to develop new arguments for the construction of newly imagined identities and worldviews” (Yavuz, 2003, p. 28). Yavuz (2003) further delineates that:

Everyday life-based movements indicate that Islamic identity is about defining and living ‘the good life.’ One’s political engagement is informed by one’s moral commitment. Religious faith, or religiously informed moral character, propels one into action. Islamic practices and ideas are utilized to legitimize alternative practices and lifestyles. Questions like these – What is the good life and how does one realize it? – are very much at the center of the contemporary religious revival. One of the structural outcomes of new opportunity spaces is the emergence of new Muslim actors and more conscious and assertive Islamic social movements as agents of social change. (p. 31)

Regarding the horizontal everyday-based movements whose outcome is integration with the society for social change from below, the new urban Islamic discourse in modern Turkey was mainly established on the *Nakşibendi* tradition as a result of its intellectual and historical foundations. The most prominent social movements rested upon *Nakşibendi* tradition were *Mehmet Zahit Kotku* and the *Gümüşhanevi-Nakşibendi* order, the *Süleyman Efendi Cemaati*, and the *Nurcu* movement.

2.3.3 The *Gümüşhanevi-Nakşibendi* order in Turkey

The *Gümüşhanevi-Nakşibendi* order, led by Mehmet Zahit Kotku in the late 1900s, rather preferred to concentrate their efforts on improving “the moral and cultural reorientation of Turkish society” than to envision the establishment of an Islamic state in Turkey (Yavuz, 2003, p. 141). Yavuz (2003) mentions that Kotku initiated a transformation within the mosque-based community, where elders would go to the mosque and just sit and pray, and turned it into “a center for shaping young people” (Yavuz, 2003, p. 141). Kotku also envisioned that Muslim people should work hard to succeed in trade and rise in class, which in turn would allow them to “reshape their state

and society,” and emphasized “the centrality of education and individual development for his followers” (Yavuz, 2003, p. 141).

Alam (2009) mentions that, “Kotku pursued a multifaceted strategy that combined elements of religious activism with a nationalist identity. He established circles across the country, set up publications, and even invested in manufacturing. Subsequent analysis of his writings revealed that he sought a more direct and active role for religion in the political sphere” (p. 10).

Following the death of Kotku, M. Esad Coşan assumed the leadership of *Gümüştanevi* order until his death in 2001 and his son has become the leader since then. Now publicly known as *İskenderpaşa*, this *Nakşibendi* order has then concentrated even more on cultivating Islamic intellectuals. Yavuz (2003) describes this commitment as follows:

The *İskenderpaşa* promoted the circulation of ideas and the development of new intellectuals in society by publishing them in its magazines and broadcasting them on its radio stations and, by doing so, marketed its own intellectuals and representatives. Coşan calls on his disciples to study foreign languages, use computers, establish connections with the outside world and visit foreign countries. Coşan views engaging in trade and commerce as a way of shaping society and the collective consciousness. (Yavuz, 2003, p. 143)

While evaluating the general response of Islamic movements to the global forces of change through the filter of *İskenderpaşa*, Yavuz (2003) concludes that:

The case of *İskenderpaşa* illustrates that Islamic social movements are not always a reaction to social change or massive deprivation, an effort by the poor to undermine modernism, but rather can be an attempt to capitalize on new opportunity spaces, an effort by the middle class to benefit from modernism; by opening private high schools, hospitals, radio stations, local television stations, commercial companies, printing houses, and summer camps and forming a reliable network among *Nakşibendi* businessmen, the order satisfies many needs of its followers. It also provides jobs in its own companies. Modern Islamic movements, therefore, respond to local as well as global aspects of social change. (Yavuz, 2003, p. 143)

2.3.4 The Süleyman Efendi Cemaati

The principal goal of this movement, which takes its name from its leader the late Süleyman Hilmi Tunahan, is to train preachers in order to control and discipline Muslims against the deviation from *Sunni* and *Hanefi* version of Islam. According to Yavuz (2003), “No one did more for religious training in Turkey during the Kemalist period than Tunahan. He endured constant police harassment for his religious activities but constantly reacted to the social, cultural, and political transformation of Turkey” (p. 145).

According to Yavuz (2003), the movement of Tunahan can be identified by four major characteristics:

- i. The movement has centered on traditional religious training, which was institutionalized after his death. In reaction to the Kemalist policies of training religious scholars, the movement created an alternative informal education to preserve and perpetuate traditional religious education. The movement stressed certain classical Islamic texts as essential and helped to transform this religious education into a social movement.
- ii. By identifying religious training as its primary goal, the movement stresses communal discipline.
- iii. The movement creates a distinct sense of identity and community as a result of its radical traditionalism. Its informal training networks are the most powerful and disciplined. These networks helped to create an impenetrable social capital, as it were, of trust in social relations but with very little room for free thought.
- iv. They prefer autonomous community-run religious education and criticize state religious education as state-centric. (p. 147-149)

2.3.5 The Nurcu movement

The movement takes its name from the Islamic scholar Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, who lived in the latest period of Ottoman State and the first period of newly founded Turkish republic. The writings of Said Nursi provide the ideological, textual foundation of this faith movement. First emerged as a movement of resistance against the Kemalist

modernization of new Turkish republic which was towards becoming a secular national society, Said Nursi, through his writings, offered a conceptual framework, which constituted “a map of meaning” and outlined strategies for coping with challenges of modernity, which he believed would erode the essentials of Islamic faith, by “redefining Islamic folk concepts and practices to establish new solidarity networks and everyday-life strategies for coping with new conditions” (Yavuz, 2003, p. 151-152).

As a counter action against the treatment of religion by Kemalists of the early Turkey as a barrier in front of national development, in his magnum opus, *Risale-i Nur Külliyyatı*, Said Nursi emphasized the detailed study of Quran, the holy book of Islam, to be able to adapt to modern conditions and expected that such a study would be possible by educated Muslims. Yavuz (2003) summarizes the three main objectives of Said Nursi’s writings:

- i. To raise the consciousness of Muslims
- ii. To refute the dominant intellectual discourses of materialism and positivism
- iii. To recover collective memory by revising the shared grammar of society, Islam. (p. 157)

Since Said Nursi considers religion innate to human nature and its absence as the cause of social conflicts, his goal is to achieve the reappearance of God in public space of Turkey then. Yavuz (2003) explains the strategy of Said Nursi towards such an aim:

This required a response to the dominant positivist epistemology. Connecting to God, for Nursi, meant introducing new conceptual resource tools, to shape and lead human conduct. Nursi’s project offered a new ‘map of meaning’ for Muslims to guide their conduct. He did not offer an ‘Islamic state’ or ‘Islamic constitution’ but rather a mode of thinking about reconnecting with God and forming one’s personality...A Muslim must inquire why he or she is created and how one comes to exist. After becoming conscious of these questions, Muslims can construct a community with this consciousness. (p. 157-158)

In challenging the arguments of positivism, which holds the view that valid knowledge can only be verified through science, which led to significant transformations in Turkish educational system to exclude Islam and Islamic education, the efforts of Said Nursi focused on demonstrating the compatibility of science and religion. Yavuz (2003) outlines Said Nursi's efforts to challenge positivism and offer a new methodology of teaching science and religion simultaneously:

Nursi argued that rigid imitation and rigid learning may have sufficed in an earlier age but were no longer applicable in the modern age. He recognized that in an age of skepticism, there was a need for a new methodology to get people believe in the existence of God...He stressed the importance of 'evidence' or natural theology, to get educated people to believe in God without ignoring the role of revelation (vahiy)...The Nur movement cultivated a new form of consciousness that demonstrated that science and technology were not incompatible with faith in God...Nursi's goal was to protect secular education from unbelief and religious education from fanaticism by reconciling faith and science. (p. 159)

Regarding the relationship between religion and politics, Said Nursi firmly advocated that these two should be separated because the latter poses a barrier against the free interpretation of Islam. According to Yavuz (2003) "By allowing each person to interpret Islam according to his or her own conditions, Nursi tried to socialize religion" (p. 159).

Said Nursi considered ignorance, friction, and poverty as the major enemies of Islam and offered education, hard work, and consensus as solutions to these problems. To this aim, the interpretation of Islam by Said Nursi involved securing religious consciousness of the Muslims and therefore setting the foundations of individual morality. Yavuz (2003) states that:

[Nursi's] writings constantly try to build a pious and modern Muslim personality, one that is tolerant but firm about core virtues of Islam...Nursi tried to protect the Muslim personality from the destructive impact of the state's nationalism and positivism by carving an inner space of self-development and direction to cope

with external events and pressures. The development of this inner space was the major aim and challenge of his writings. (p. 160)

The social transformation that was envisioned by Said Nursi required a step-by-step fashion comprised of three stages. Yavuz (2003) explains this process:

Nursi imagined a gradual transformation, beginning with the process of (1) raising individual Muslim consciousness, continuing to (2) the implementation of faith in everyday life, and then to (3) the restoration of sharia. He sought to equip individual Muslims with the necessary tools to guide their lives in accordance with Islamic precepts. By a sharia-governed society, Nursi meant a law-governed, just society. In addition to his stress on the concepts of justice, identity, community, and the connection between science and religion, Nursi's extremely cautious attitude toward politics and the ideological state helped the movement to become more active in social and cultural spheres. (p. 161)

Following the death of Said Nursi in 1960, his immediate followers spread all over Turkey and established reading groups in order to gather and interpret the writings of Said Nursi. The places where the followers of Said Nursi met were known as *dershanes*. Yavuz (2003) defines *dershanes* as an apartment or small house where followers of the Nurcu movement congregate to read aloud and discuss Said Nursi's writings. According to Yavuz (2003), "...the spread of the work [Said Nursi's writings] through its reading within the structure of *dershanes* has contributed to the formation of a communal Islamic-social-political consciousness (p. 163).

Tittensor (2014) states that a major outcome of this project was people's transition from a pre-dominantly oral culture to a written one, without losing at the same time the personalistic style of interaction that was the foundation of Ottoman society. He further mentions "This was done through his [Said Nursi's] reading networks, in which a learned individual would read and explain the *Risale-i Nur* in a similar way that an Imam, or a Sufi Şeyh, would educate their students and disciples respectively, in times gone by" (p. 41).

For a better understanding of the role of reading in the dissemination of Said Nursi's ideas and the community building function of his writings, Yavuz (2003) mentions certain points emphasizing the social and educational functions of *dershanes*:

- i. Through collective readings, Nurcus learn a new normative charter of action that shapes their understanding of the world and serves as a basis for action (p. 163).
- ii. As a result of this institutionalized reading, readers develop a certain cognitive and ethical attitude toward themselves, each other, and the whole community (p. 163).
- iii. Moreover, new participants in these reading circles are encouraged to internalize a certain disposition in their approach to the RNK [*Risale-i Nur Külliyyatı* – the name given to the entire anthology of Said Nursi]. The RNK empowers its reader by offering a worldview and a moral system for action (p. 163).
- iv. In a way, reading becomes a way of understanding and discovering (not creating) the self and developing a moral position to cope with social issues and diversity. An act of reading becomes an act of self discovery (p. 163).
- v. Reading creates a community and collective reading becomes a ritual activity to affirm this communal gathering. Readers not only are trained to think about the meaning of Qur'anic verses but also the world around them (p. 163).
- vi. The main function of these textual-communities is to listen to and reflect on the texts and disseminate their meaning to society (p. 164).
- vii. The *dershanes* became socioeconomic and, indirectly, political networks with which upwardly mobile segments of the religious middle class established trust and connections and competed in the capitalist market economy (p. 166).
- viii. The Nur *dershanes* have become the institutions that integrate the individual to society (p. 168).
- ix. The Nur movements utilized the informal network of reading circles as a stepping-stone in the construction of new counter-publics (p. 168).
- x. *Dershanes* are spaces for socialization, in community-oriented virtues through conversational readings, discussions, and prayers (p. 169).
- xi. *Dershanes*, as new religious public spheres, have played an important role in the circulation and cross-fertilization of ideas and civil skills of activism. These are the places where public opinion either is formed or critiqued through the utilization of religious ideas (p. 169).
- xii. In these *dershanes*, Islam becomes a source of solidarity and a chart of social responsibility in the constitution of Muslim self and community. In these *dershanes*, it becomes clear that being Muslim is never an exclusive identity but rather a moral foundation. (p. 169)

To sum up, Yavuz (2003) concludes that “Nursi’s message did not seek the abrupt transformation of the sociopolitical system; rather, it sought to create a newly conscious religious society” (p. 169). He further adds:

Nursi’s project indicates that ethical thought is necessary in order for a society to discover what it is and what it wants to be...The Nur movement has made it clear that ideas matter in planting the seeds of a social transformation...He did not think the state could address effectively the many problems confronting Muslim countries at the time; rather, the focus should be at the level of the individual and the society. (p. 178)

2.4 The Gülen Movement

In this section of literature review, first, a brief account of Fethullah Gülen’s life will be provided so that the background that shapes his ideology is revealed to the reader. Then, how the Gülen Movement defines the individual and the society in its idealized conception and what actions they undertake in order to cultivate the envisioned human beings and community are the main concerns. Following a brief discussion on the financial sources and organizational structure of the Gülen Movement, the final part of this section will focus on the educational aspects of the Gülen Movement.

The Gülen Movement is the largest and most influential Islamic group in Turkey and the most widely recognized one internationally (Turam, 2007). According to Esposito & Yilmaz (2010) it is the largest civil movement in the country and “...the actual of Gülen’s millions of followers and sympathizers is not exactly known” (p. 92). The movement, inspired by the ideas of Gülen, has been opening schools, courses and intercultural dialogue centers all over the world for more than thirty years. Currently, the movement is linked to more than 2000 schools and cultural centers in approximately 160 countries. Ebaugh (2010) states, “it is in these schools that Mr. Gülen’s philosophy of education is most clearly expressed and where results of his educational ideas are most

evident” (p. 97). The leader of the movement, Fethullah Gülen, sees the economic and moral poverty in the Muslim world as a result of spiritual and intellectual decline and has utilized a number of strategies, in private and public education, in order to make possible the renewal of the Muslim tradition (Yavuz and Esposito, 2003).

2.4.1 The biography of Fethullah Gülen

The Gülen Movement is referred to as such pointing to the surname of its founder not only in the popular arena but also in almost all the academic studies on the movement. Such a reference, both explicitly and implicitly, points to the influence of Fethullah Gülen on the movement itself. Therefore, it becomes crucial to trace the development of the Gülen Movement through the life account of the movement leader Fethullah Gülen, who was born in 1941 in the village of Korucuk, near Erzurum in the northeastern part of Turkey. His father, Ramiz Gülen, was an imam in the region and his mother, Emine Hanim, was the primary caregiver of the family and a major influence on Gülen’s spiritual and religious upbringing. His elementary education in a public school had to be interrupted after three years when his father was appointed to a village where there was no public school. In the later stages of his life, he was able to acquire his elementary school diploma by self-studying and passing a comprehensive examination. During his early childhood, he also had a religious education consisting of studies in classical Islamic sciences such as Qur’anic recitation and memorization, exegesis, Arabic language, and Prophetic Tradition in addition to the spiritual tradition of Islam under the supervision of scholars and spiritual masters around his hometown (Cetin, 2010; Mercan, 2008; Can, 1996).

In the 1950s Fethullah Gülen was deeply engaged in religious education and training offered by the prominent scholars and Sufi masters of his time in order to obtain the traditional Islamic title, or license to teach. However, at that time, this kind of education was provided almost entirely through an informal system, which was tacitly ignored and unsupported by the state although it was parallel to the educational system of the state. Therefore, at the same time, Fethullah Gülen had to pursue and complete his secondary level secular education through external exams given by the Ministry of National Education. The most important turning point in Gülen's life occurred in the late fifties when he came across compilations of the scholarly work *Risale-i Nur* (which may be translated into English as Epistles of Light) by Said Nursi, but Gülen never met him (Cetin, 2010; Mercan, 2008; Can, 1996).

Having passed an exam administered by Directorate of Religious Affairs of Republic of Turkey in 1958, Gülen was granted a state preacher license and began to preach and teach in Edirne, which is the westernmost city in Turkey. In this period, when he was still young, he had the chance not only to expand his knowledge in the Islamic tradition but also to develop an awareness on social and natural sciences. He also examined the classics of both Eastern and Western philosophy and literature. Gülen says that the Islamic scholars who had the most impact on his intellectual life were Abu Hanifa, Ghazali, Imam Rabbani, Rumi, Yunus Emre, and Bediüzzaman Said Nursi (Cetin, 2010; Mercan, 2008; Can, 1996).

In 1963, having completed his compulsory military service, Fethullah Gülen started to give a series of lectures in Erzurum on Rumi. In the meantime, he co-founded an anti-communist association, where he held evening talks on moral issues. In 1964, he was appointed back to Edirne, where he became very influential among the educated

youth and ordinary people of the local community. However, the assertively secular authorities of that time were displeased by a preacher having such power on people and demanded that he be dismissed. In order to put an end to these criticisms, Gülen had himself assigned to Kirklareli, a neighboring city, in 1965 where he continued his evening lectures and talks. In these years of his career, he was neutral in party politics, as before, and taught only about moral values in personal and collective affairs (Cetin, 2010; Mercan, 2008; Can, 1996).

Some points need to be highlighted about Gülen's career and his personal characteristics. In these early years of his career, Gülen maintains a personal life style of devout asceticism while interacting with other members of community and communicating on good terms with the civic and military authorities he is confronted in the course of his service. He states that his preaching intended to draw away the youth from being attracted into extremist, radical ideologies. For this sake, he would purchase and dispense published materials with his own money to build a counterattack against what he considers an aggressively militant atheism and communism. He believes that the erosion of traditional moral values among the younger generations and the educated individuals of Turkish society would inevitably result in criminality, political and societal conflict. It is these considerations that had formative influences on his intellectual and community leadership and reinforced his assurance in the meaning and value of human beings and life (Cetin, 2010; Mercan, 2008; Can, 1996).

In 1966, Gülen was assigned to the Izmir region, another western city in Turkey, where he held administrative duty for a mosque, a student study and boarding-hall, and for preaching in the Aegean region. He did not give up his ascetic lifestyle in Izmir, and for almost five years, he stayed in a small hut and received no salary for his services. At

various occasions, Gülen mentions that it was during these years that his ideas on education and service to the community began to formalize and mature. Starting in 1969, he held meetings in coffee-houses, organized preaching excursions to the provinces and villages of the region. He also organized summer camps for middle and high school students where he offered his religious and moral teachings (Cetin, 2010; Mercan, 2008; Can, 1996).

In Izmir, Gülen's discourse began to crystallize and his audience began to expand as he traveled to various cities to give sermons in mosques and to speak at gatherings in theatres and coffee houses. His essential subjects ranged from peace and social justice to philosophical naturalism. His primary aim always remained to urge the younger generation to harmonize intellectual enlightenment with spirituality anchored in the faith tradition, and to serve fellow humans altruistically. Gülen's discourse drew the attention of the educated citizens, including academic community and college students as well as common people around the country who recorded his ideas on tapes (Cetin, 2010; Mercan, 2008; Can, 1996).

In 1971, on leaving his post by the state, Gülen began to found student study and boarding-halls in the Aegean region, the funding of which was obtained by the donations from local people. It was at this time that a particular group of people began to be visible as a service group and gathered around Fethullah Gülen's understanding of service to the community and to take positive action. From 1972 to 1975, Gülen continued to preach and to spread his ideas about education and the service ethic. He continued to set up hostels for high school and university students. To support these educational efforts, people who shared Fethullah Gülen's service-ethic set up a system of bursaries for students. The funding for the hostels and bursaries came entirely from local communities

among whom Fethullah Gülen's service-ethic idea (service to community) was spreading steadily. Students in the hostels also began to play a part in spreading the discourse of service and positive action. Periodically, they returned to their home towns and visited surrounding towns and villages, and, talking of their experiences and the ideas they had encountered, consciously diffused the service-ethic idea in the region. Thus, through already existing networks of primary relations, this new type of community action, the students' activities, and the recorded cassettes, the service-ethic discourse started to become known nation-wide (Cetin, 2010; Mercan, 2008; Can, 1996).

In 1974, Gülen and his friends established their first university preparatory courses in Manisa to provide better opportunities for children from poor families so that they could have access to university education. They believed that, if properly supported, the children of non-wealthy families could take up and succeed in higher education. As word spread of these achievements, the service idea became widely recognized and firmly rooted in various cities and regions of the country. Starting in these years, the country-wide mobilization of people who were motivated to support education and non-political altruistic services became called the Gülen Movement (Cetin, 2010; Mercan, 2008; Can, 1996).

In 1976, while he was preaching in Bornova, Izmir, Gülen challenged the students of left and right political views to come to the mosque and discuss their ideas with him and offered to answer any of their questions, whether secular or religious, which they directed at him. A majority of students accepted this offer. As a result, besides his daily duties giving traditional religious instruction and preaching, Gülen allocated Sunday evenings to these discussion meetings (Cetin, 2010; Mercan, 2008; Can, 1996).

In 1977, during his travels to northern Europe, Gülen preached among Turkish communities to elevate their consciousness about values and education and to encourage them in the same service ethic of positive action and altruistic service. He advised them both to preserve their cultural and religious values and to integrate into their host societies. In 1979, the *Teacher's Foundation*, established by Gülen and his followers, issued its own monthly journal, *Sizinti*, becoming the highest selling periodical in Turkey at that time. This was a magazine of sciences, humanities, faith, and literature. Its mission was to show that science and religion should not be considered incompatible and that knowledge of both was necessary to be successful in life (Cetin, 2010; Mercan, 2008; Can, 1996).

After the military coup of 1982, the Gülen Movement continued with their activities without drawing any extra attention to itself. They avoided large public gatherings but continued to promote the service-ethic through publishing and small meetings. They made use of the technology in an efficient way by recording and distributing Gülen's talks on videotape. Thus, they continued to spread and grow. Finally, the participants of the Gülen Movement founded a private high school in Izmir, known as Yamanlar Koleji, in 1982. In the next ten years, the movement continued to open schools and university preparation course all around the country.

In 1990, the Gülen Movement participants started to open schools and universities in Central Asia. In 1992, Gülen traveled to the United States and met Turkish academics and community leaders, as well as the leaders of other American faith communities. Starting in 1994, The Foundation of Journalists and Writers, of which Gülen was the honorary president, held a series of meetings inviting leaders of religious minorities in Turkey such as the Greek Orthodox Patriarch, Armenian Orthodox

Patriarch, Chief Rabbi of Turkey, Vatican's Representative to Turkey and others.

Moreover, the "Abant" platform, named after the location of the first meeting in Bolu, Turkey, opened its doors to intellectuals from all corners of the political spectrum, the leftists, the atheists, the nationalists, the religious conservatives, and the liberals so that they could debate about the common concerns of all citizens and pressing social problems. In 1999, Gülen visited the U.S. to receive medical care for his cardiovascular condition. However, Gülen states that, upon recommendation of his doctors, he still stays in the U.S. to continue to receive medical care (Cetin, 2010; Mercan, 2008; Can, 1996).

2.4.2 The ideology of the Gülen Movement

The analysis of the ideology of the Gülen Movement surely requires a comprehensive study not only on the Gülen Movement but also on the concept of ideology itself. Nevertheless, in the following lines, the Gülen Movement's ideas on state, community, and individual will provide a general picture of the Gülen Movement's ideological stance.

Gülen and his followers differentiate themselves from other Islamic groups by stressing Turkish nationalism, the free market, and modern education. They are more predisposed to tolerance, electoral politics, moderation, and a market economy than are other Islamic groups in Turkey. However, according to Yavuz (2003), Gülen guides his followers to their abovementioned stance for two paradoxical reasons. Although Gülen has always stressed that the communal religious consciousness is the *sine qua non* for the realization of a just society, he also maintains the idea that the state is absolutely necessary for the survival of Turkish Muslim society. The members of Gülen

community, therefore, consider religion primarily as a personal or communal matter as opposed to a political or state matter.

Rather than negating or challenging the modernization processes, Gülen seeks to demonstrate the way in which a properly conceived Muslim project affirm and further the most crucial ends of modernity, such as the formation of conscious actors who are armed with both religious and secular knowledge (Gülen, 1997). Moreover, Gülen looks for ways to contribute to modernity by reformulating it not as Westernization, but rather as a collection of new economic, technological, and legal opportunities for authentic societal transformation (Yavuz 2003). According to Ozdalga (2000), modernity is an efficient means for Gülen to establish a renewed Islamic consciousness and a Muslim presence in the new public sphere. In other words, Gülen's ideas and actions revitalize the possibility of being both modern and Muslim at the same time (Yavuz, 2003).

On defining the term "nation", Gülen calls on people to rediscover their cultural past which was embodied within Islam and the Ottoman past (Gülen, 1997). Gülen states that the re-imagination of the cultural content of Turkish nation will lead Islamic groups to construct the political nation as Muslim, Ottoman, and Turkish. Based on the revival of the cultural past of the Turkish Muslim community, Gülen formulates his own version of national identity as Muslim, Ottoman and Turkish (Ünal, 2002). Nevertheless, this definition creates some fears among Kemalists (those who advocate the secular Turkish state founded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk) that reviving the past would lead to religious republicanism (Yavuz, 2003).

Gülen intends to mingle the religious community and national community. He makes a distinction between community as a solidarity-based group and society as a interest-based association and treats Islam as the essential ingredient for community

(Can, 1996). Gülen views community as a union of believers who commonly have the same interpretation of religion and who have come together freely in order to realize the collective task of serving both God and nation (Yavuz, 2003). In many of his preaches and writings Gülen states that self-sacrifice is essential for the survival of the Muslim community. In Gülen's conception, individuals are expected to sacrifice for the sake of the collective and in the service of religion. In this way, the community defined by Gülen surpasses the Turkish nation, for the reason that, according to Gülen, the Turks are destined to serve Islam and to lead their religion (Mercan, 2008; Yavuz, 2003).

According to Acar (2014), the Gülen Movement is “a socio-cultural movement around the world primarily driven by activism in the field of education” and assigns the credit to Gülen's civic initiative with the support of social elite, community leaders, and businessmen including small business owners. He also states that “Gülen encouraged people to open schools, first, within his native country Turkey, then, in other parts of the world” (p. 18).

Gülen defines a Muslim person as an individual who has morality and identity. He argues that without morality there is no identity and that morality is impossible without religion. Gülen believes that free and democratic society calls for public morality, which, indeed, cannot be achieved without religion. The goal of religion and its rituals is to infuse the Islamic concept of morality, which is to live in the presence of God. The model Gülen takes for the development of morality in individuals is Prophet Muhammad, who plays a shaping role in building self-identity, or personality (Yavuz, 2003). According to Gülen, the Prophet Muhammad's life story is the greatest narrative for Muslims who search for morality and identity. At this point, Gülen highlights the role of education for the cultivation of the self and bases his educational practice on

three objectives, which are cultivation of ethics, teaching of science, and self-discipline (Mercan, 2008; Yavuz, 2003; Ünal, 2002). Gülen's educational system intends to promote Muslim consciousness, resistance against the negative consequences of positivism, and recover collective memory (Yavuz, 2003; Ünal, 2002).

As mentioned earlier, Gülen avoids any form of confrontation with the state. Being well aware of the influence of state-centric culture on people's understanding of Islamic movements, Gülen intends to develop close relations with the state so as to expand the social base of his movement (Yavuz, 2003). His meetings with politicians and establishing links with the Turkish state authorities contribute to the legitimacy of the movement. Yavuz (2003) mentions that Gülen's main purpose is not to reorient the state towards an Islamic look but to support a state ideology that does not clash with Islamic ethics. Although Gülen has maintained his distance with political parties for a long time, for the first time he has had explicit relations with the current ruling party in Turkey, AKP (Justice and Development Party). Turam (2007) points out that both the Gülen movement and AKP government, which has been ruling since 2002, have had a strong ideal of service, not only to the community but also to the country and nation. She maintains that these two groups are strong advocates of economic liberalism and prosperity. In terms of mutual support, while AKP has stabilized a previously fluctuating economy and has rapidly passed reform bills, the Gülen movement has taken full advantage of a growing economy and expanded its investments through corporations, private schools and media outlets (Turam, 2007).

Gülen (2001) differentiates democracy and religion arguing that Islam does not propose a certain unchangeable form of government or attempt to define it, but rather it puts forth certain principles that orient a government's general character and leaves it to

people to decide the type of government taking time and circumstances into account. He further adds that Islam recommends a government based on social contract.

2.4.3 Educational perspectives of the Gülen Movement

The Islamic dictum, which is very often unfoundedly considered to originate from the words of the Prophet, that one should go to even China if the knowledge is known to be there is behind most of the educational endeavors by Muslim people. From this point of view, Ünal and Williams (2000) point to the following statements of Gülen on education:

The main duty and purpose of human life is to seek understanding. The effort of doing so, is known as education, it is a process of perfection through which we earn, in the spiritual, intellectual, and physical dimensions of our beings, the rank appointed for us as the perfect exemplar of creation. (p. 305)

Yavuz (2013) states that Gülen considers ignorance and illiteracy as the major causes of social and economic underdevelopment in Muslim communities and offers as a powerful remedy to eliminate this underdevelopment. Gülen further claims that Muslim people can overcome this problem by “seeking a developmental path and reform” (p. 94). Agai (2002) emphasizes that Gülen regards the invigoration of society strictly dependent on the provision of a proper education.

Gülen’s product is personal and social transformation, in its simplest terms. Gülen also refers to his product as “Golden Generation” which is the conceived ideal world established by individuals who have merged positive sciences with religion in their lifestyles. Nevertheless, the extent to which these transformational processes can be realized is inherent in the evolving content of Gülen’s writings and speeches. Gülen is exactly a strategic actor who can easily reorient his thoughts and methodology in order

to better attain his goals. However, this does not mean that Gülen easily changes his goals, but rather Gülen exploits the contemporary context to keep his progress towards his specific aims. In other words, he never changes the main pillars of his product, but manages to make it conform to the specific conditions of the day.

In the comparison he makes between Said Nursi and Fethullah Gülen, Yavuz (2013) emphasizes that while the former focuses on the individual piety of a Muslim as the start point, the latter points to the importance of society in achieving the desired individual piety. He mentions that:

Gülen assumes that the inner transformation of individuals can only take place by impacting and shaping contemporary society and mastering the exigencies of modernity. Indeed, Gülen's method of moving from the inner to the outer may be a reaction to the failure of previous Turkish Islamic movements to move from the inner individual/spiritual to the outer public/temporal levels. (p. 31)

Through this perspective, Gülen's conception of Islam is not only to educate people and realize their salvation but also "to externalize their Islamic consciousness for the moral and intellectual uplifting of human society" (Yavuz, 2013, p. 46).

Regarding the businessmen who would participate in the Gülen Movement and configure their lifestyles with more care and in conformity to Islamic principles, Gülen expects his followers to work hard and lead an ascetic life in the end of which a testament is left behind to God's please and sees economic development as a requisite to the spiritual well being of society. Yavuz (2013) states "Islam, according to Gülen, is more about behaving than believing. Indeed, Islam, as a message, seeks to create a new community and identity, and therefore it stresses 'action', what one actually does, more than passive contemplation" (p. 121). Based on such view of Islam Gülen, Yavuz (2013) maintains that:

Gülen brings Islam into daily life by highlighting active living, and arguing that serving the community and humanity is a sacred duty. Gülen strives to bring the spheres of economy and religion together in order to control some destructive aspects of the market. He inspires businessmen who follow the movement to work and earn money to participate in religiously informed communal activities with selfless diligence. (p. 121)

In this sense, the Gülen Movement intends to achieve a social transformation along with a religious one. Highlighting such a “dual goal”, Yavuz (2013) states “Gülen has opened the floodgates for a radical conscientious transformation that offers the possibility of salvation only through rendering service to others and working to improve the human condition” (p. 122). He also adds “The businessmen I have interviewed usually see themselves first as ‘believers’ (*inananlar; inanlar olarak*) and ‘volunteers of the movement’ (*hizmet erleri*) with the responsibility to transform the world in accordance with their vision of the good life” (p. 122).

Another point that Gülen places importance in the process for a society to reach success is the significant role of culture. Yavuz (2013) mentions that “Cultural values, more than politics, are regarded as most effective in the transformation of society. Since cultural values, practices, institutions and attitudes shape economic and political development, Gülen wants to reinvent positive values to promote the development of the society (p. 126-127).

Gülen disseminates his product through his writings and speeches in which he blends the stories from the life of Prophet Muhammad and other historical Islamic figures with the content from Western philosophers and scientists. The influential power of Gülen’s content is managed mainly through references to the “Golden Age” of Islam and their analogies with contemporary situations. Besides pious Muslims, Gülen also manages to capture the attention of more liberal individuals by making explicit

references to popular science and establish connections between them and Quranic verses. However, the power of this content is even magnified when all that Gülen writes or preaches is immediately recorded or published by his followers and distributed to everyone including the remotest follower. As the community acquires new channels of communication, they are exploited for the dissemination of Gülen's speeches in no time. For example, the newspaper of the Gülen Movement, *Zaman* boasts to be the very first paper on the Internet. The metaphors, also, have an important role in the organization of community. Gülen is called *Hodjaeffendi* by his followers, an alias that exerts the power of a religious teacher. Moreover, the close circle of Gülen has assumed roles as *abis* over the other followers, another alias that provokes respect from others.

Although Gülen himself rejects the idea, his followers consider him as a role model that resembles the great role models of Islam during its Golden Age. In this respect, Gülen's acting as an exemplar to his followers, just as the Prophet and his friends did to later generations, comes to forefront and shapes his leadership. Fontenot & Fontenot (2008) analyzes Gülen's influence on his followers by employing the dimensions of transformational leadership identified by Bass (1985 cited in Fontenot & Fontenot, 2008). According to Fontenot & Fontenot (2008) transformational leaders use a variety of modes of expression and make full use of all the available media to communicate to others their shared identity. They use metaphors and figures of speech, give examples, tell stories, and relate anecdotes. They also draw word pictures and offer quotations and recite slogans (Zorn, 1991 cited in Fontenot & Fontenot, 2008). Another feature of transformational leadership is the articulation of a vision. The transforming leader uses a compelling rhetorical vision to focus followers' attention and energy and to build commitment to organizational purposes (Fontenot & Fontenot, 2008). All these

dimensions clearly show that Gülen exerts his influence on the community through the process of transformational leadership, assuming the transformative role of an adult educator as defined by Gramsci (Mayo, 1999). Yavuz (2013) summarizes the influential leadership of Gülen:

Gülen not only seeks to mobilize the hearts and minds of millions of Turks but also succeeds in convincing them to commit to the mission of creating a better and more humane society and polity. By stressing social activism and this-worldly accomplishment and success – Gülen is a religious modernist and a social innovator. (p. 77)

2.4.4 The discourse of the Gülen Movement

The purpose of this sub-section is to provide the basic concepts defined about the Gülen Movement with regard to the academic studies conducted on the movement so far. It is aimed that the following discourse of this dissertation is better interpreted by the readers who consider the conceptual definitions provided below. Indeed, literature on the Gülen Movement incorporates so many concepts specific to Islamic terminology and most researchers are disposed to provide conceptual definitions for them rather than strive to translate. The concepts presented below are in such fashion.

Hizmet: According to Yavuz (2013), the meaning of *hizmet* is ‘rendering service’ or ‘working for some higher common good.’ He further delineates his definition:

Many people also refer to the Gülen movement as a *Hizmet* Movement to describe its overall activities. People who have been persuaded by Gülen’s message help with, and invest in, such activities, especially those related to education. Although these activities are decentralized and the movement itself is loosely knit, because the activities are conducted by like-minded people in different places, it looks like a single organizational structure is directing them from above. This is why critics of the Gülen movement tend to portray it as a single hierarchical ‘organization’ controlled by an eminence grise who operates behind the scenes. In short, it would be fair to say that *hizmet* activities are not based on a single hierarchical movement, but on loosely structured and coordinated activities of like-minded individuals and organizations whose actions are directly inspired by Gülen's ideas and encouragement (p. 76-77).

Kalyoncu (2011) defines *hizmet* as “the sum of values and practices that instruct one to serve one’s community” (p. 32). He further provides a literal definition for *hizmet*, which means ‘service’ and which is used to mean ‘altruistic service for the good of others.’ Solberg (2005), who conducted a research on the schools of the Gülen Movement, states that *hizmet* is a key notion in all the *Nur* communities, meaning ‘service’ and further explains that it is the ideal of working hard and sacrificing one’s own needs in order to serve other human beings and society, which ultimately means to serve Allah.

Regarding the practice of *hizmet* and its pragmatic effect on the participants of the Gülen Movement, based on the definitions he obtained through interviews with the participants of the Gülen Movement and writings of Gülen, Yavuz (2013) states:

Although each person offers his own meaning of *hizmet*, the generic definition of *hizmet* is a religiously motivated series of worldly performances in order to secure afterlife through virtuous actions in the here and now. In Gülen's case, *hizmet* is a religiously motivated labor to reform the world and create moral conditions for a just society... The practice of *hizmet*, or religiously motivated labor, charity and service, is used to restructure society according to religious ideals. *Hizmet* could also be used for civic concerns in education, healthcare, media and new sets of associations to build a public ethics of interaction. The activities of *hizmet* members and groups have been increasingly attractive to ordinary Anatolians who would like to bridge the gap with the urban Westernized elite in the area of education. That is why Gülen's project of raising an intellectually able and morally stable generation was enthusiastically welcomed by many of the lower classes, and marginalized Anatolian Muslim majority in Turkey, also referred to pejoratively as the ‘Black Turks.’ (p. 78)

Vicini (2007) states that “A central concept Gülen extrapolates from tradition is *hizmet*, which generally refers to religious service. According to his socially-oriented idea of Islam, he has extended this concept to every act of serving the benefit of others” (p. 437).

Yavuz (2013) also emphasizes the collective meaning of *hizmet* in terms of its appeal to the public. As a summary of the definitions provided above, he states that:

In short, *hizmet* functions as social capital by bringing people together for a collective goal in terms of rendering their time and resources to create a positive environment for the advancement of society. These *hizmet* activities also help to build interpersonal trust and a code of ethics. *Hizmet* thus becomes the externalization of an internalized belief system. Through *hizmet* the values of community have been transformed, and access to ‘power’ and ‘domination’ is sanctified on moral and religious grounds. (p. 79)

Abi, Büyük Abiler, or Abiler: Yavuz (2013) classifies the participants of the Gülen Movement within three concentric circles. The central circle of the movement is comprised of a core group of believers who leads *hizmet* in “a spirit of full and unconditional loyalty to the movement and Gülen, as the leader” (p. 87). The participants in the central circle are a large number of university graduates, most of whom are specialized in technical subjects (such as engineering), from rural areas or small towns in Turkey. Yavuz (2013) mentions that:

This main core of the movement consists of ‘elder brothers’, or *büyük abiler*, and a new generation of leaders with an American or European university education, some of them being Gülen's closest associates and students, who are highly respected and regularly consulted on major policies and day-to-day activities. Most of these elder males are full-time activists who work as professionals with salaries at the movement's institutions. (p. 86-87)

The second circle, as mentioned by Yavuz (2013), has a horizontal organization which encompasses webs of networks in different neighborhoods which are led by an *imam*, a title, or term, which has not been frequently used as before in the last years and has preferably been replaced with *abi* or *hadim*. In explaining the organization of the second circle of the Gülen Movement regarding the role *abis*, Yavuz (2013) states that:

The second circle is administered through municipal, provincial, or state level leaders, *abis*. These leaders, who are responsible for the implementation of

decisions and also facilitate the flow of information from the grassroots to the leadership, are selected by the first circle. One becomes a leader (*abi*) because of his creative thinking, competence, tested sincerity, and sociability. In some cases, sincerity and loyalty are more important as values than capability or competence. Thus, many local leaders [*abis*] are sincere and creative organizers, but they are not intellectuals and some have limited curiosity about other cultures. As the new generation of educated sympathizers join the movement, there is a much richer pool from which to choose local leaders [*abis*]. (p. 87)

Esnaf: Yavuz (2013) describes the second circle of people in the Gülen Movement as the *affiliates* who support Gülen's religio-national goals both by directly and indirectly participating in the creation of *eser* (good deeds and work) through fundraising charities. He mentions that “this circle includes small and medium-size merchants (*esnaf*), and businesspeople (*işadami*), who constitute the board of trustees of the movement's numerous foundations. They support the movement's activities in their area through fundraisings organized by local volunteers” (p. 87).

Sohbet: In his analysis of how the Gülen Movement has spread, Kalyoncu (2011) provides definitions of some operational concepts, one of which is *sohbets*. He considers *sohbet* as an integral constituent of *hizmet*, whose definition is provided above, and therefore defines both concepts in relation to each other. He states:

If *hizmet* is the sum of values and practices that instruct one to serve one's community, *sohbet* is the medium through which the necessity for *hizmet* is communicated to individuals. *Sohbet* has various meanings, such as ‘pleasant conversation, verbal exchange on a certain subject within a group of individuals, and engaging in fellowship.’ Operationally, however, within the practices of the Gülen movement, the meaning of *sohbet* goes beyond mere conversation and becomes a routine activity utilized by the movement participants to cultivate a sense of service, reach out to ever more individuals, and share the educational vision with new people. *Sohbet* is a platform where individuals find an opportunity to socialize, chat, and exchange ideas about their projects (either education- or business-related), but absolutely nothing about politics or such potentially divisive subjects as nationalism, ethnicity, and regionalism. These are generally avoided in the *sohbet*, since participants' differences of opinion concerning secondary issues might eventually impede their cooperation on the primary issue: building educational facilities and carrying out cultural activities

to promote dialogue and tolerance among different segments of society. Therefore, the movement volunteers seek to use the *sohbet* forum to cultivate a sense of commonality, address common needs and goals as opposed to differences, and communicate the necessity of *hizmet* (literally ‘service,’ used to mean “altruistic service for the good of others”). (p. 32-33)

In defining the concept of *sohbet* in the above excerpt, Kalyoncu (2011) points to the fact that *sohbet* has become a staple of the Gülen Movement through which potential participants to the movements are recruited and the educational vision of the movement is shared. The socializing platform of *sohbets* is not threatened by divisive subjects being topics of conversation. They serve to the mingling of separate segments of society. In addition to the conceptual definition of *sohbets*, Kalyoncu (2011) also explains how they are organized:

The *sohbet* groups are mostly organized according to the participants’ occupation, as long as there is a sufficient number of people, which could be as low as three or four participants. For instance, public servants group together with their fellows, while businessmen do so with other business owners. The main idea of grouping the same or similar job holders, which is not ultimately necessary, is again to increase the commonalities among the *sohbet* meetings’ participants so that they can better socialize, share their experiences, and network with each other. For the businessmen, these meetings also provide an opportunity to get to know potential business partners, customers or suppliers. (p. 33)

2.4.5 Some criticisms on the Gülen Movement

Along with a large volume of research on the contributions of the Gülen Movement to the national and international community and interfaith dialogue, there have been many criticisms against the ideology and activities of the Gülen Movement not only from non-Islamic but also from Islamic intellectuals, movements, and communities both at the national and international level. Following are the main objections, or criticisms, on the Gülen Movement.

Turam (2007) poses her criticism against the Gülen Movement over the issue of gender segregation. She mentions that women are pretty visible on the public sites of the Gülen Movement, but soon she realizes that the welcoming attitudes that she faced were only limited to female outsiders of the movement; that is to say, sympathizers to the movement but not the participants inside. Turam (2007) explains and illustrates gender segregation that she encountered in the Gülen Movement:

Gender segregation was a central part of social life on the ‘inside’ of the movement... They [women] have not only accepted ways of life that are based on gender segregation but have also voluntarily participated in compartmentalizing the public and private spheres accordingly. During my visits to their homes, I realized that women only socialized with other women... Men and women in the movement organize the degree and nature of gender segregation in the private sphere, often collectively. (p. 188-119)

Arat (2005) also poses an indirect criticism against the Gülen Movement over the daily *Zaman*, which is affiliated with the Gülen Movement, for the negative attitude towards Islamist women writers who showed sympathy to feminist values. She states:

A group of women writing for the Islamist daily *Zaman* initiated a polemic with the prominent male opinion makers in the newspaper when they defended secular or radical feminists. The Islamist intellectual Ali Bulaç ridiculed pro-feminist Islamist women with an article entitled “Feminist Women Have Small Brains,” which triggered the polemic and ended up with the women having to leave the newspaper. (p. 23)

Later, another criticism by Arat (2010) is about the gender roles to which students who study at schools affiliated with the Gülen Movement are exposed. She states, “Although the schools provide excellent secular education, students are gently guided into the pious culture of the group, particularly through dormitory life. They are, thus, led to accept more orthodox religious understandings of gender roles and interests” (p. 877).

Yavuz (2013) summarizes the criticisms against the Gülen Movement under four categories, based on the interviews he made in the field. The first criticism that is uttered

is that critical thinking and individualism are not encouraged by the Gülen Movement; that is to say, the Gülen Movement adopts a communitarian way of thinking and a result of highly-stressed Islamic-based values, critical thinking is prevented; eventually, the Gülen Movement aims to build a conservative society. The second criticism is that the Gülen Movement, being an ally of the reigning government of Turkey by Justice and Development Party (JDP), serves to the continuation and establishment of social conservatism by providing grassroots support. The third criticism is that as a result of the Gülen Movement's aspiring to take control of important state posts in the ministries of interior, national education, higher education and justice, the solidarity and network of the Gülen Movement cause 'othering' and exclude other groups, or members of other social movements, from the opportunities of social mobility. Finally, the Gülen Movement is criticized for perpetuating patriarchal values surpassing traditional gender relations and for stressing hierarchy regarding one's position within the movement circles.

2.5 Adult education, social movements, and the Gülen Movement

This section defines the interrelationships among social movements, adult education and the Gülen Movement. Based on the literature review above, I argue that social movements are conducive settings where adult education can take place, and in the case of the Gülen Movement adult education carries an important function in the transmission of religious values to create a transformation both at the individual and societal level.

In addition to the literature presented above on social movement learning, there is yet other literature which explains how learning takes place in social movements.

Jamison (2006) refers the concept of "cognitive praxis" to characterize the knowledge-

making activity that takes place in social movements (p. 47). Through the notion of cognitive praxis, Eyerman and Jamison (1991) emphasize the creative role of consciousness and cognition in all human action, individual and collective. Hall (2011) further mentions that “Eyerman and Jamison focus simultaneously on the process of articulating a movement identity (cognitive praxis), on the actors taking part in this process (movement intellectuals), and on the context of articulation (politics, cultures and institutions)” (p. 350). Della Porta and Diani (1999) explain that social movements claim ownership of certain social or political problems concerning the public and “impose their own interpretation on these” (p. 70). Hall (2011) concludes that when social movements succeed in bringing their interpretation to the social issues, they “change the way that we understand knowledge and the relations of power” (p. 350).

Finger and Asun (2001) also consider new social movements as the catalysts for personal transformation and emphasize that they provide the appropriate context in which transformations occur. They further state learning that takes place in social movements has considerably more impact on society in comparison to the learning that takes place in schools.

Therefore, from the perspective of adult education, one of the many aims of which is to develop a critical understanding of major contemporary problems and social changes and the ability to play an active part in the progress of society with a view to achieving social justice, I conclude that social movements are settings where adult education is implemented with its transformative learning aspect.

Regarding the case of the Gülen Movement, adult education plays a significant role in realizing the transformation the Gülen Movement seeks at the individual and societal level. That is to say, the Gülen Movement is a social movement that intends to

transform the society with its own interpretation of applying religious values into the life of the individuals so that participants to the movement change their perspectives to the social issues around them and take action in order to create a better humane society, as the intellectuals of the Gülen Movement put it. I conclude that adult education becomes the means of such individual and social transformation in the Gülen Movement.

2.6 Literature review

The literature review has provided background information on which this research has intended to build its grounded theory. The first major part of literature review focused on adult education and social movements. Literature defines adult education as a process in which participants whose main social roles are characteristics of adult status receive systematic and continued learning activities for the purpose of developmental change in knowledge, attitudes, values, or skills. Of the several aims and objectives of adult education stated in literature, the one that relates to the topic of this research is as follows: Developing a critical understanding of major contemporary problems and social changes and the ability to play an active part in the progress of society with a view to achieving social justice. The basic principles of adult education mentioned in literature are to involve learners in planning and implementing, to draw upon learners' experiences as a resource, to cultivate self-direction in learners, to create a climate that encourages and supports learning, to foster a spirit of collaboration in the learning setting, and to use small groups.

The transformative aspect of adult education, particularly in social movements, is also discussed in the literature review. In the case of new social movements, the primary goal of education is shifted towards personal transformation rather than achieving social

goals because it is expected that personal transformation will lead to changes in the social, cultural, and political life. It is emphasized that social movements constitute the larger context within which transformational educational initiatives can be effectively carried out.

The literature review has shown that social movements have conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents, are framed upon dense informal networks, eventually develop a distinct collective identity, are conscious, concerted, and sustained efforts which are primarily composed of ordinary people who operate through extra-institutional means, and finally did not need to carry a political aspect. It has also presented the major reasons why social movements emerge, such as society's being deprived of intermediary organizations to represent itself and accumulation of enough number of people to be alienated from the society, certain social, political and, cultural factors, resource mobilization, social networks. It has also been revealed how social movements recruit participants through social networks, framing and establishing a collective identity.

The second major part of the literature review focused on Turkish Islamic social movements and examined the relationship between the opportunity spaces that emerged as a result of the transformations within the Turkish society in the second half of the 20th century and how Islamic social movements filled up these spaces by creating identities through their efforts in media, market and social life. A typology of Turkish Islamic social movements is then provided, which contextualizes the Gülen Movement among the societal (everyday-life based) movements with legitimate repertoire of action whose goals are society-oriented, associational, identity-oriented, and social change from below.

The discussion on the most prominent Islamic social movements in Turkey reveals that the cultivation of the individual and the transformation of the society are the main concerns for their followers and education is given the central role to this aim. Particularly, in the case of the Nurcu Movement, *dershanes* serve as education centers where individuals attend *sohbets* develop a certain cognitive and ethical attitude toward themselves, each other, and the whole community. The Nurcu movement has made it clear that ideas matter in planting the seeds of a social transformation. It is stressed that the focus should be at the level of the individual and the society, rather than the state, in order to address effectively the many problems confronting Muslim countries.

The literature review on the Gülen Movement shows that education, according to the Gülen Movement, has a primary role for the cultivation of the self, and the educational practice of the Gülen Movement is based on three objectives, which are cultivation of ethics, teaching of science, and self-discipline. Cultural values, more than politics, are regarded as most effective in the transformation of society. It is assumed that the inner transformation of individuals can only take place by impacting and shaping contemporary society and mastering the exigencies of modernity. It has also been revealed that *sohbet* is the medium through which the necessity for *hizmet* is communicated to individuals. In addition, *sohbet* goes beyond mere conversation and becomes a routine activity utilized by the movement participants to cultivate a sense of service, reach out to ever more individuals, and share the educational vision with new people.

The literature also accumulated some criticisms against the Gülen Movement. It is highlighted that although not apparent in the public face of the movement, some degree of segregation against females occurs in the private space, which is in a form that

women socialize with other women. Furthermore, other criticisms such as limited critical thinking, not allowing individualism, supporting social conservatism, infiltrating into government agencies, and fostering patriarchic values.

2.7 Conceptual framework of the study

To explore the educational aspects of the *sobhets* of the Gülen Movement and the transformations the participants who attend the *sobhets* go through, I used variations and parts of the following studies:

1. New social movements theory (Cohen, 1985; Melucci, 1985, 1988, 1996; Touraine 2001)
2. Islamic social movements in Turkey (Yavuz, 1997, 2003)
3. The Gülen Movement (Yavuz, 2013; Çetin, 2012; Kalyoncu, 2011)
4. The aims, objectives, and principles of adult education (Darkenwald and Merriam, 1982; Knowles, 1992)
5. Transformative dimensions of adult education and adult education in social movements (Mezirow, 1991; Mayo, 1999; Hall, 2011)

Literature review on social movement indicates that individuals participate in social movements with some purpose, which can be just a protest against a specific state action to his/her existence or a commitment to create social change. At the same time, social movements sustain their existence and realization of their goals through recruiting new individuals by their own diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames. Based on such understanding of social movements, I sought the answer to the following sub-question(s) of my study: For what reasons and how did businessmen I interviewed participate in the Gülen Movement?

Literature on social movements also indicated that participants are engaged in collective action through creating a distinct collective identity. Moreover, it is also revealed that collective identity is strongly related to recognition and the formation of connectedness. These concepts helped me to explore the answers the participants gave to the following sub-question(s): What is the significance of the Gülen Movement in their (the participants') lives? How did they (the participants) position themselves within the Gülen Movement?

The literature on Islamic social movements has made it clear that they, especially the Nurcus and the *Nakşibendis*, have searched for ways to reconstitute everyday life by transforming personal identity and consciousness by means of societal microinteractions that take place through contact with Sufi orders, the media, printed texts, and local communities. It is also mentioned that Islamic social movements in Turkey are less about the resurgence of religion and mostly about 'communal / empowerment,' introduction of a new moral language and the reconstitution of a repertoire of action. Particularly, in the case of Nurcu Movement, *dershanes*, and in the case of the Gülen Movement, *sohbets*, have been the major media to communicate the repertoire of action the movement envisioned for social change as well as cultivating a sense of service, reaching out to ever more individuals, and sharing the educational vision with new people. Based on the accumulated literature on the educational functions of Islamic social movements in Turkey, particularly the Gülen Movement, I searched the answers to the following question: What are the educational aspects of *sohbets* in the Gülen Movement?

Finally, literature on transformational aspect of adult education and social movements clearly indicated that new social movements are the catalysts for personal

transformation and provide the appropriate context in which transformations occur. In the study, I relied on the data accumulated in literature to search the answers to the following question of my research: What are the contributions of *sohbets* to the participants' personal and social lives?

2.8 Summary of Chapter 2

This chapter presented a literature review on social movements and adult education. The review specifically focused on the Gülen Movement as one of the Islamic social movements in Turkey and the transformative aspect of adult education in social movements. The conceptual framework employed in the research is also presented. In the following chapter, I will discuss the methods and procedures I used to conduct this research.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This chapter discusses the methods and procedures undertaken during the research. First, it explains the research approach in terms of the theoretical perspective and strategy of inquiry that guides the dissertation. Second, it poses the research questions. Third, it explores the design of the study in depth by describing the pilot study, the sample, and the instrument. In addition, it explains how the data were collected, recorded, and analyzed. Fourth, it presents the researcher, including his identity and position in the research, and documents the challenges while conducting the research.

3.1 The research approach

3.1.1 Theoretical perspective

This dissertation is an exploratory qualitative research. It analyzes the perceptions of businessmen and *sohbet hocaları* to explore how businessmen who participate in the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement are educated in these *sohbets* and how they are transformed as a result of this education. Having evaluated the strong and weak sides of qualitative and quantitative research design, I came to a conclusion that a qualitative paradigm would be a better choice because an in-depth qualitative study would enable me:

1. to explore the reasons why businessmen attended the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement
2. to explore the educational aspects of the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement

3. to explore the transformations participants of the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement go through

Furthermore, what makes this study exploratory is the fact that there is almost no empirical research on the educational aspects of *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement. That is to say, the studies on the Gülen Movement so far have considered, or examined, *sohbets* as one of the concepts that underlie the structure and operations of the movement (Kalyoncu, 2011, Çetin, 2012, Çobanoğlu, 2012). Among the 17 Doctoral dissertations and 18 Master's theses that have studied the Gülen Movement so far which I was able to access, several of them tapped *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement but did not examine their educational functions. From this perspective, by exploring the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement, I intended to discover the process of these *sohbets* and understand their educational aspects, if any.

3.1.2 Strategy of inquiry

The strategy of inquiry I was informed by is grounded theory. In its brief definition, grounded theory approach is a way to generate a theory based on data that are systematically gathered and analyzed (Edmonds and Kennedy, 2013). According to Cresswell (2013), the researcher employing the grounded theory approach derives a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the perspectives of participants in a study. "The two major characteristics of grounded theory design are the constant comparison of data with emerging categories and theoretical sampling of different groups to maximize the similarities and the difference of information" (Cresswell, 2013, p. 14). Corbin and Strauss (2007) list the essentials of a good grounded theory as follows:

- a. Fit the phenomenon,
- b. Provide understanding,
- c. Provide generality, in that the theory excludes extensive variation and is abstract enough to be applicable to a wide variety of contexts , and
- d. Provide control, in the sense of stating the conditions under which the theory applies and describing a reasonable basis for action.

Using grounded theory was appropriate since there is little, or even no, prior information as to the educational aspects of the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement as mentioned above.

3.1.3 Research questions

The two research questions of this research are:

1. What are the educational aspects of *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement attended by businessmen?
2. What are the contributions of the Gülen Movement *sohbets* to personal and social lives of businessmen?

The sub questions of Research Question 1 are:

- a. How are *sohbets* organized in terms of
 - i. their schedule?
 - ii. their location?
 - iii. their announcement?
 - iv. participant recruitment?
- b. Who are the *sohbet hocaları* in terms of
 - i. their personalities?
 - ii. their proficiency / expertise?

- iii. teaching style?
- c. What is the curriculum and/or syllabus of the *sohbets*, if any?
- d. What are the aims and objectives of *sohbets*?
- e. What activities are done in a typical *sohbet*?
- f. What is the content of the *sohbets*?
- g. What are the educational materials used in the *sohbets*?
- h. What are the instructional strategies employed by the *sohbet hocaları*?
- i. How is the interaction between *sohbet hocaları* and businessmen during the *sohbet*?
- j. What are the preparations done by businessmen before coming to the *sohbets*?
- k. What are the preparations done by *sohbet hocaları* before coming to the *sohbets*?
- l. What are the assignments given to businessmen after the *sohbets*?
- m. What are the participants' attitudes to *sohbets* in terms of
 - i. finding what they expect?
 - ii. attendance?
- n. How is a *sohbet* group managed in terms of
 - i. placing/reorganizing participants into groups?
 - ii. assigning *sohbet hocaları* to groups?
 - iii. dropouts?
 - iv. complaints and responses by participants?

The sub questions of Research Question 2 are:

- a. What are the effects *sohbets* on the daily lives of businessmen?

- b. What are the effects *sohbets* on the families of businessmen?
- c. What are the effects *sohbets* on the friends and relatives of businessmen?
- d. What are the effects *sohbets* on the business lives of businessmen?

3.2 Research design

3.2.1 An overview

This is an exploratory and qualitative study. It is exploratory in the sense that the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement and the education and transformation of the participants through these *sohbets* have not been examined in educational sciences. In this dissertation, there are two units of analysis. One is *sohbets* in terms of their educational aspects, and the other is businessmen in terms of the changes they have experienced in their lives as a result of attending *sohbets*. I first interviewed 21 businessmen in two different cities of Turkey. The interviews were made face-to-face and covered a variety of areas including the reasons why they participated in the Gülen Movement, what they did in the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement, and what changed in their personal, business and social lives through *sohbets*, as well as some demographic details and life stories. I also interviewed 5 *sohbet hocası* in order to collect information about the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement from the trainers' point of view and compare their responses to those of businessmen while generating my theory. Then, I interpreted and analyzed their responses through the perspective of conceptual framework I built with respect to transformative adult education. The immediate aim was to identify the educational aspects of the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement and the transformations the participants undergo.

3.2.2 Research sites

The sites for the study were two cities in Turkey: one big city (City A) and one relatively small city (City B). City A was selected because it is one of the most cosmopolitan cities in Turkey. A center of education and business, City A attracts people from almost all other cities of Turkey, which results in the formation of hybrid identities and different dynamics in the population of this city. Moreover, City A is one of the first cities where the Gülen Movement started *sohbets* for businessmen. In addition, I had lived in City A for 24 years, so regardless of how long the research took, it was convenient to me.

City B, on the other hand, was a mid-Anatolian city renowned for its successful businessmen, and a considerable majority of businesses operating in this city were supporters of the the Gülen Movement, based on the observation that their owners appeared in the vision of the Gülen Movement organizations, such as board members of schools or charity organizations affiliated with the Gülen Movement. Furthermore, this city was the place where I spent my childhood and where my parents still lived, so I had numerous contacts and a good reputation thanks to my family name. Utilizing all these conveniences made it possible for me to carry out my interviews without any adversaries. To illustrate a few, I had a positive answer to every interview request or I did not have to travel long distances or spend time to locate addresses of the interviewees.

3.2.3 Research participants

There were two groups of research participants: businessmen who attended to the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement and *sohbet hocaları* who preached to and answered the questions of businessmen. By asking businessman questions about what was done at the

sohbets they attended, I intended to explore the educational aspects of the *sohbets*. In addition, by asking them further questions about what changes the *sohbets* caused in their personal and social lives, I intended to explore the transformative aspects of the *sohbets*. Likewise, *sohbet hocaları* were interviewed in order to explore what was done at the *sohbets* through the perspective of trainers and reveal the educational aspects of the *sohbets*. Moreover, by asking about the changes that they observed the businessmen experienced in their personal and social lives, I intended to reveal the transformative aspects of *sohbets* from the perspective of the trainers. Eventually, collecting data from two groups of research participants, either of whom is the sine-qua-non of *sohbets*, enabled me to explore the answers to my research questions both from the perspective of businessmen and from the perspective of trainers and also to compare the two perspectives.

3.2.4 Pilot study

3.2.4.1 Background and challenges

Having formulated my research questions based on an extensive literature review on the Gülen Movement and on adult education in social movements, I was ready for my pilot study in which I expected to see if any “refinement” to my questions and interview protocol is needed (Yin, 2011, p. 37). My reading and research so far had revealed that the Gülen Movement offered education to its participants through trainers, referred to as ‘*sohbet hocası*’². It was these *sohbet hocaları* who organized teaching sessions, referred

² The meaning of the Turkish word ‘*sohbet*’ was provided in the literature review. The Turkish word ‘*hoca*’ means teacher, trainer, or tutor literally. However, its use in modern Turkish is restricted to certain

to as ‘*sohbet*’, as an adult education activity of the Gülen Movement. The data collection of my research involved interviews both with *sohbet hocaları* and with businessmen who attended the *sohbets*. For my pilot study, I decided to conduct interviews with one *sohbet hocası* and two businessmen. At this point, I had to make a choice whether I should first contact a businessman or a *sohbet hocası*. Considering the well-known strict hierarchical organization of the Gülen Movement, it seemed plausible to start with a *sohbet hocası* since it was highly probable that the businessmen would not accept an interview request without the consent of their *sohbet hocaları*, just as attending a university course, even as a guest, practically requires the consent of the instructor. On the other hand, contacting a *sohbet hocası* directly would not be easy because there was not a specific place where *sohbet hocaları* would get together, or such a title would not be claimed explicitly at first encounter even if that person is a *sohbet hocası* himself. Indeed, getting inside the circles of the Gülen Movement would definitely require some effort and a careful strategy which involved contacting right people with an appropriate manner.

3.2.4.2 First encounters

Busy with abovementioned thoughts in mind, I decided to call one of my friends from whom I met during my undergraduate studies at university during the 1990s, with whom we were not very close friends but enough that I knew he was a participant of the Gülen

contexts. For example, it is not commonly used in elementary or high schools, but another Turkish word with the same meaning replaces it. At university context, all Turkish professors are referred to as ‘*hoca*’, and doctors are also called ‘*hoca*’ by a majority of people. However, apart from these uses, the word ‘*hoca*’ is most commonly used to refer to a clergyman or a Muslim preacher. In this sense, the phrase ‘*sohbet hocası*’ incorporates the meaning ‘someone who preaches about religious issues at spiritual conversations’. Throughout this dissertation, this phrase is also used as ‘*sohbet hocaları*’, which is the plural form in Turkish language.

Movement at the time. I told him briefly about the purpose of my research on the phone and requested his help to introduce me to some *sohbet hocaları* and participants of the Gülen Movement, if possible. He responded to my request positively and we decided to meet at his office on a Monday afternoon. He was the General Manager of a company which offered professional career planning and coaching services to adults. At our meeting, I had the opportunity to provide him with more details as to the content and purpose of my research, which he approached positively and stated that he believed my research would enable the Gülen Movement to express itself more clearly. Then, he told that he especially wanted to meet me on that Monday evening at his office because he attended a *sohbet* program of the Gülen Movement at a nearby place on Monday evenings. This invitation at once was much quicker than I originally expected and in fact I was not prepared for an interview with a *sohbet hocası* or businessman; yet it would not be a good idea to start interviews so quickly without establishing a good rapport with them (Yin, 2011; Creswell, 2013). I kindly accepted his invitation and we went to the place where *sohbet* was held by his car.

The *sohbet* place was the apartment of one of the participants. The host was a business owner and lived in that apartment with his family. I later learned that this periodic Monday *sohbet* had been hosted by him for the past few years. My friend introduced me to other participants who came one after another, and almost on time the *sohbet hocası* of the *sohbet* arrived. There were a total of six people in the spacious guest room of the apartment. We were all seated comfortably and could see each other; the *sohbet hocası* sat next to one of the participants. Just before the *sohbet* started, my friend demanded to give a brief introduction about me and my purpose for being among them, which I could understand that my presence had previously been discussed and

informed. His introduction allowed me a short speech in which I was able to express myself more clearly about my intentions. Others in the room listened to me carefully and each of them, including the *sohbet hocası*, articulated their consent and comfort for my attendance to their *sohbet*. In the following two hours, the *sohbet* involved watching a video preaching of Fethullah Gülen and reading excerpts from various religious books, with occasional breaks of tea, cookie and fruit treatments which cut for a while but the *sohbet* continued. From a general perspective, the *sohbet* was predominantly administered by the *sohbet hocası* who mostly spoke about the issues in the video and he read the book excerpts aloud. Nevertheless, each person in the room was often given the chance to express their ideas on the issues and asked questions. It was obvious that the *sohbet hocası* was much more knowledgeable on the religious issues, not to my surprise that he mentioned he held a Bachelor's degree in theology and was continuing his graduate studies. At the end of the *sohbet* that evening, the host kindly invited me for the next *sohbet* so that I could find more opportunity for my observations. This invitation was confirmed by others in the room.

3.2.4.3 The first interview attempt

With the intention that I needed to establish a good rapport with people whom I would ask for an interview, I attended the *sohbet* for several weeks, which also provided me with lots valuable observational notes about the process (Yin, 2011; Creswell, 2013). Feeling sure that I broke ice with participants of the *sohbet*, I asked them and the *sohbet hocası*, during a tea break of the *sohbet*, whether they could be available for an almost two-hour interview during the day. They all responded positively and the *sohbet hocası* invited me later in the week to make a plan for the interviews. During our meeting

with the *sohbet hocası*, I presented him my interview protocol and preliminary interview questions (Yin 2011). He was quite interested in them and asked how many interviews I intended to make. On learning that I needed at least 15 people for the City A section of the research, he mentioned that other *sohbet* groups should be contacted to ensure the sufficient number. Although I proposed that three people would be enough for the pilot study, he insisted that we should organize everything at the beginning, and thus I was invited to a meeting where several *sohbet hocaları* were getting together. In this way, I would be able to contact more people and find enough number of people for my interviews. The following week, I went to meet other *sohbet hocaları* and after their meeting was over, I was taken in and had the opportunity to talk about my research project and expressed my intention for the interviews. Like in the first *sohbet* I attended, I obtained positive responses and one of the *sohbet hocaları* accepted to have an interview at that time, although it was late evening. Others gave me their phone numbers and invited me to their *sohbet* groups.

3.2.4.4 The first ‘*sohbet hocası*’ interview

The place where I interviewed the *sohbet hocası* was a school building where one of the other *sohbet hocaları* worked as a teacher of religion. Before we started the interview, I gave him a copy of the consent form, and we went over it together. He also requested to see the questions beforehand, which indeed I was originally not planning to do so but later realized during the interview that it was a good idea to show the interviewees the questions beforehand which eased their apprehension, if any. After signing the consent form and thereby accepting that the interview could be recorded, the *sohbet hocası* started to answer my questions. I used my cell phone to record the interview and placed

it randomly on the table between us among other items, so I think I made sure that it did not distract the naturalness of his speech by reminding that his voice was recorded (Yin, 2011; Creswell, 2013). However, I felt stressed frequently to wonder whether it was properly recording the interview or not, so I definitely decided at that time that I would bring a second recording device for the following interviews (Yin, 2011). During the interview, I was lucky to see a clock on the wall and keep flow of time, but the interviewee sometimes looked at his watch. Therefore, I decided to place a small non-distracting time keeper on the table in the following interviews. During the interview, I had the chance to test my interview protocol and took occasional notes for future revisions (Yin, 2011). The interviewee was very enthusiastic to answer my questions which also reflected the vast extent of his knowledge on the issues. I was good at establishing a good rapport with the *sohbet hocası* and creating a relaxing speech context. The interview took almost one and a half hours as planned and I was able to ask all my questions. Nevertheless, the interviewee was willing to continue at a second interview if I felt the need and asked him.

3.2.4.5 The first businessman interview

Two days after my first interview with a *sohbet hocası*, I called one of the *sohbet hocaları* I met who had invited me to his *sohbet* group whose meetings were held on early Wednesday mornings at the student dormitory of a mosque complex in City A. At the early morning *sohbet*, there were four businessmen and one *sohbet hocası*. I was introduced to them and given some time to talk about my research and need for interviews. The businessmen all gave their cell numbers to me and told they were expecting my call for an appointment. Later that day, I called two of the businessmen

and lucky enough to arrange two consecutive interviews the following day. These two businessmen were among the important business people of Turkey and their immediate response to my interview request made me feel that they placed significance on my research. Both interviewees hosted me in their company headquarters, which were located on affluent neighborhoods of City A. The interviews took place in their spacious offices, which had comfortable seating areas and their secretaries were told not to take any phone calls or guests during the interview. However, there was occasional tea service. Neither of them wanted to see the interview protocol beforehand. Having signed the consent form, they both allowed me to record the interview and answered all my questions with great enthusiasm. I used my cell and my tablet simultaneously to record the interview in case one of them stopped working properly. The interviews lasted for about one and a half hours and all the questions were covered in detail. I often took notes for further revisions and additions to the interview protocol. Both interviewees kindly made sure that I could call them anytime if I needed a second interview or further clarifications.

Based on my observations and the feedback that I received from the three interviews I conducted as pilot study, below are some alterations and considerations to bear in mind for the following interviews.

1. I decided not to take any notes while listening to the responses of interviewees to the questions because I realized that this practice, although not frequent, distracted their attention, which resulted in lapses or distortions to the fluency of their speech in order to allow me time to take my notes. Rather, I decided to maintain eye contact with the respondents during the

interview (Yin, 2011). Nevertheless, I took some notes as soon as the interviews ended in order not to forget important points.

2. I decided to hold one interview rather than two or three with each interviewee because I realized that respondents gave detailed answers to my questions not leaving many points unclear.
3. I decided to make appointments for the interviews during the early morning hours, since at later hours the businessmen would be busy with visitors or timely business transactions.

3.3 Sample

3.3.1 Initial criteria for selecting the participants

The participants who took part in this research are Turkish businessmen who regularly attend to the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement and *sohbet hocaları* who organize these *sohbet* sessions, preach to businessmen and answer their questions. Kalyoncu (2011) explains how *sohbet* groups are organized:

The *sohbet* groups are mostly organized according to the participants' occupation, as long as there are a sufficient number of people, which could be as low as three or four participants. For instance, public servants group together with their fellows, while businessmen do so with other business owners. The main idea of grouping the same or similar job holders, which is not ultimately necessary, is again to increase the commonalities among the *sohbet* meetings' participants so that they can better socialize, share their experiences, and network with each other. For the businessmen, these meetings also provide an opportunity to get to know potential business partners, customers or suppliers (p. 33).

All the businessmen who participated in this study had their own businesses, similar to or different from each other's. Since there were many businessmen *sohbet* groups in a city, or even in a random district of a city, it was likely that some participants were from

the same *sohbet* group, whereas others were not. I did not consider the socioeconomic status of the businessmen as a criterion to select them, though I asked a relevant question during the interviews in order to add to the demographic description of the participants. The main reason why I did not take socioeconomic status as a selection criterion was that my study focused on what was done in the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement and on the transformation experienced by the participants rather than comparing businessmen of the Gülen Movement participants according to their socioeconomic status. In brief, for businessmen being a regular attendee of the Gülen Movement *sohbets* was enough to be selected for the study as a participant. Age was also another factor that I did not pay special attention as a criterion of selection since it was not to be a variable in my discussion of findings; nevertheless, the ages of businessmen varied from 25 to 79, which eventually produced variety.

In the selection of the *sohbet hocaları* as participants to the study, the basic criterion was that the person would hold regular *sohbet* sessions which are attended by businessmen. The *sohbet hocası* could be a university graduate or a university student regardless of the department whether theology, social or natural sciences, or engineering. He may not even have any university education as well. In this study, all *sohbet hocaları* were university graduates, some of whom went on to their post graduate studies.

3.3.2 Recruitment of participants

As I mentioned earlier, I established a good rapport with the businessmen and the *sohbet hocası*, both during the *sohbet* and also while interviewing them. Providing them with clear explanations of the purpose of my research and how I expected them to contribute

to my study, I secured their trust and goodwill to my scientific research. Indeed, I felt that they thought such a scientific study of the Gülen Movement through *sohbets* would help them express themselves to a wider public and increase their transparency. Therefore, after the pilot study, I was in the expectation that I would easily attend to other *sohbets* the Gülen Movement, tell about my study and recruit some businessmen and *sohbet hocası* to participate in my study. It was not too soon for me to realize that I was too optimistic with my envision, especially in the City A leg of my study, although I did not experience any significant barriers, except for those moments when I had to provide long explanations about my study.

In City A, recruiting the participants was not as easy as it seemed to be after the pilot study. I had to make numerous visits and explanations to potential participants to my study. I was never able to foretell whom to see in front of me for an interview, nor could I compile a potential list of candidates beforehand. In the end, I was able to interview with nine businessmen and two *sohbet hocası*.

To start with, I visited one of the businessmen I had interviewed for the pilot study and kindly asked him if he could refer me to his other friends, if any, who attended to the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement (Yin, 2011; Creswell, 2013). Although I had told him during our interview that I was planning to have interviews with 12 more businessmen, he kindly replied that he had only few friends and he was unsure whether they would agree to take part in the study. I politely asked him to provide me with the names and contact details of his friends, and he gave me the cell numbers of two other businessmen. I also asked if he could inform them about my future call to ask for an appointment. He then proposed to organize the appointments at that very moment to be more helpful to me, I believe. He called his friend and briefed him about my research in

a short and less detailed conversation, and to my surprise, he had an appointment for me that afternoon. He also said he would organize other appointments in the coming days. Thanking him once again about his contribution to my research, I left his office for my next interview, and hours later I was at the office of the businessman. He was very inquisitive about my research and asked many questions, including explicit and implicit ones to figure out, I suppose, where I stood in regard to the Gülen Movement. On learning the details of my research, he was very positive and told me he would be glad to participate, but he wanted me first to visit their *sohbet*, two days later, and meet his other businessman friends as well as the *sohbet hocası*. I considered this proposal significant for my research because in this way I would be able to reach another *sohbet* circle with other businessmen and a *sohbet hocası*. The *sohbet* I was invited was held after midnight because it was Holy Ramadan and those who were fasting ate *sahur*³ The meeting place was a student dormitory and there were around 40 people, which was apparent that participants of several *sohbet* groups were present. The businessman who invited me introduced me to the guests and I was given a chance to talk about my research for some fifteen minutes during the *sohbet*. After the *sohbet*, while the *sahur* was eaten, I had the opportunity to talk to a few *sohbet hocası* and several businessmen. They gave me their cell numbers and told they expected my calls for appointment. The interviews were completed in almost a 3-month period due to the occupation of businessmen and *sohbet hocaları* and other convenience issues.

In City B, the recruitment of participants to my research was much easier than what I experienced in city A. Being a native to City B with an entire childhood and

³ An early morning meal eaten by Muslim people before the sun rises and then people fast all day until the sun sets during the Holy Ramadan.

young adulthood spent there and coming from a well known family of City B, I established contacts with businessmen attending to the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement very easily. The first businessman I contacted was an old schoolmate of mine whom I had seen only once or twice after I moved from City B 25 years ago. In the meantime, I had heard that he was attending the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement. We met at his factory and I explained him about the details of my research. He had a positive approach from the beginning and when he learned that I had already interviewed businessmen from Istanbul, he confirmed that he would introduce me to his *sohbet* group and *sohbet hocası*. At the *sohbet* of the following night, I was welcome warmly and the group dedicated almost half of their time to organize an appointment schedule for me including businessmen and *sohbet hocaları* from various *sohbet* groups they knew of. At the end of the night, my list was ready and appointments were made for almost all potential participants to my survey. In City B, I was able to interview with 12 businessmen and three *sohbet hocası* attending to the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement.

The method I employed in the recruitment of participants to my study was snowball sampling technique. Yin (2011) explains snowball sampling technique, “For example, in the course of an interview you might learn of other persons who can be interviewed. The snowballing occurs when you follow such a lead and let those new ones result in identifying yet other possible interviewees” (p. 89). Patton (2002) mentions that “snowball sampling involves identifying participants from people who know people who know people who know what cases are information-rich, that is, good examples for study, good interview subjects” (p. 182). Having reached 26 participants through snowball sampling technique and interviewed them, I surely witnessed that data started to repeat and gave up interviews for the next step of my research.

3.3.3 Demographics and description of the final sample

I did not pay special importance to attain variety in the socioeconomic status (SES) of the participants to my research for two reasons: first, this variable would not be used in my data analysis; second, since they were all businessmen, they were unwilling to articulate their exact economic status and opted to provide general, superficial answers to this question, which was asked in the beginning of the interview. Age, was also another variable I did not pay special importance to attain variety; however, in the end the age range of the participants was from 25 to 79. The main hurdle to look for variety in age was the fact that it was not easy to find a large number of participants among whom I could make choices regarding age; rather, I had interviews with whomever until I reached substantial data sufficient for analysis.

3.3.3.1 Demographics

The 21 businessmen who took part in this study range in age from 34 to 79 years. Nevertheless, almost half of them are between 30 – 50 years old. Half of the businessmen came from a big city of Turkey, whereas others from a relatively small city. All businessmen who participated in the study were married. They had two or more children. Some of them had grandchildren too. All the businessman participants of the study owned, or co-owned their businesses. The number of years they have participated in the Gülen Movement ranges from 12 to 46 years.

The five *sohbet hocası* who took part in this study range in age from 26 to 41 years. Four of them are from different geographical regions of Turkey, but one of them is not from Turkey. All of them are married, and four of them have 2 children, but the other has one child. All but one of them works as a preacher, and the other works as a research

assistant. The number of years they have participated in the Gülen Movement ranges from 11 to 24 years.

3.3.3.2 Educational characteristics

Five out of the 21 businessmen in the study hold secondary school diplomas.. 16 of the businessmen hold at least a Bachelor's degree in various fields, predominantly in management or engineering. One of the 16 businessmen holds a Master's Degree as well and two others are continuing their PhD. It is interesting that two of the businessmen have degrees in education, but they make their living as businessmen with high socioeconomic status.

All of the *sohbet hocaları* are university graduates, and two of the five *sohbet hocası* are continuing their PhD, one in engineering and the other in History. In addition, one of them holds a Master's Degree in Theology.

3.3.3.3 The general outlook

Both businessmen and *sohbet hocaları* gave off a variety of impressions. During the interviews with businessmen, only few of them caused a feeling inside me that they could have told more but intentionally held themselves back. However, this should not mean that they provided incomplete answers to my questions; indeed, they provided me with enough data for analysis for the purposes of my research. In City A, I conducted all interviews at the workplaces of the businessmen.. All of them had high socioeconomic status as owners of large scale factories or firms. Contrary to my expectations, their offices were modestly decorated and I did not observe a high protocol around them, such as secretaries who would keep me wait or impossibility of obtaining a close

appointment. Their modesty also reflected on their attitudes during the interviews. When we were finished, all businessmen, without exception, told me I could call them whenever I needed to ask more questions and they passed me to the door personally. In City B, three businessmen invited me to their summer homes for interviews and I had the opportunity to meet their families as well. I observed the same kind of modesty as in City A in their domestic lives. For those I visited in the workplaces, the setting was again the same as City A. Either at the workplaces or at their homes, I did not observe expensive cars in front of the buildings but some mid-size ones, which caused the impression in me that they used these cars. None of the businessmen seemed too busy to me since they allocated extensive time to my interviews and there were no serious interruptions, not to mention one or two. Nevertheless, this impression may be due to the fact that they must have taken my interview seriously and organized their schedule accordingly. Finally, having learned about my university and experience on educational consultancy, they even asked advice from me about the educational future of their children. This was surely an indication of the good rapport that was established between us.

During the interviews with *sohbet hocaları*, I did not have a feeling they could have told more but intentionally held themselves back as did some businessmen. Rather, they answered my questions comfortably and long enough and even anticipated some of the forthcoming questions and went on, which I think indicated they must have comprehended the scope my study well. As a result, I should say I obtained rich data from the interviews with *sohbet hocaları*. In City A, I conducted all the interviews at the guestroom of a student dormitory affiliated with the Gülen Movement and therefore could not observe the workplace of *sohbet hocaları*, if any. Their clothing style was neat

and modern. Although their clothes did not seem expensive, I realized that each of them had expensive smart phones. I did not have the impression that they had busy lives because they gave me long answers; however, their phones rang several times and were texted a lot, though they were on silent mode with vibration. At the end of the interviews, they they told me that they found it significant that the Gülen Movement was a subject of a scientific study. In City B, I conducted two of the interviews with *sohbet hocaları* at my family's summerhouse. Since I was available for an interview only on Sunday, I kindly invited them to my place where they could get away from the city life and I was able to secure a suitable place for interview. For the other *sohbet hocası*, I was invited to his modest home at a suburban neighborhood. He lived in a shanty-like house with only one room and a kitchen in the middle of a small field where he grew vegetables. He mentioned that it was his summer place, and in winter he moved back to his apartment in the city center. All the *sohbet hocaları* in City B were also neatly dressed and had modest clothes, but they had expensive smart phones, too. During our interviews, I did not realize that their phones rang or were texted, and they allocated enough time for the interviews. In the end, they mentioned similar words to those in City A about the significance of my scientific study about the Gülen Movement.

Table 2 and Table 3 present the overall demographic characteristics of the participants to my study, the former for the businessmen and the latter for *sohbet hocaları*. While Table 4 (Appendix A) provides the detailed profiles of all participants, Tables 5 – 20 (Appendix B) present statistical descriptions of businessmen and *sohbet hocaları* who participated in this research. Participant biodata can be found in Appendix C.

Table 2. The Profiles of Businessman Participants of the Research

	Alias	Age	Education	Occupation	Number of Children	Socio-economic Status	Years in the Gülen Movement
1	Ali	50	B.A. Economy	Construction	3	High	29
2	Zeki	40	B.A Open University	Textile	2	High	24
3	Mehmet	63	B.A. Education	Construction	5	High	21
4	Hüseyin	62	B.A. Education	Construction	4	High	44
5	Emin	54	B.A Management, MBA, PhD Cont.	Retired Banker, Construction, Energy	2	High	38
6	Orhan	34	B.A. Management	Textile	2	High	20
7	Süleyman	36	B.A. Management	Media Communications	2	High	20
8	Selahattin	68	B.A. Cartography	Catering	3	Mid-High	35
9	Kemal	79	Secondary School	Textile	3	High	46
10	İhsan	55	B.Sc. Civil Engineering	Construction	3	High	25
11	Ümit	33	B.Sc. Economics	Foreign Trade	3	High	16
12	Yusuf	49	Secondary School	Furniture Factory Owner	3	High	24
13	Nedim	50	Secondary School	Jeweller	3	Mid-High	25
14	Muhammed	42	B.Sc. Electronics Engineering, MBA	Glass Factory Owner	2	High	18
15	Abdullah	61	Secondary School	Factory Owner	3	High	30
16	Cihangir	36	B.A. Management	Factory Owner	2	High	12
17	Mahmut	49	Faculty of Medicine	Medical Sector	2	Mid-High	20
18	Murat	41	B.Sc. Mechanical Engineering.	Factory Owner	3	High	25
19	Cengiz	65	Secondary School	Machine Factory Owner	3	Mid-High	46
20	Hakan	52	B.Sc. Civil Engineering	Construction	3	High	17
21	İsmail	37	B.Sc. Engineering	Merchant	3	Mid-High	14

Table 3. The Profile of *Sohbet Hocası* Participants of the Research

	Alias	Age	Education	Occupation	Number of Children	Socio-economic Status	Years in the Gülen Movement
1	Ahmet	41	B.A. Theology	Preacher	2	Mid-Low	21
2	Akif	41	B.A., M.A. Theology	Preacher	2	Low-Mid	24
3	Mustafa	39	B.A, M.A. History, PhD Cont.	Preacher	2	Mid-Low	24
4	Osman	31	B.Sc., M.Sc. Civil Engineering, PhD Cand.	Research Assistant	2	Mid-Low	12
5	Ömer	26	B.A. Management	Preacher	1	Mid-Low	11

3.4 Interview protocol and data collection

3.4.1 Description of the interview protocol

I used two interview protocols as instruments for data collection. Indeed, there were only slight differences between the protocols, which asked the same questions with different wording in order to accommodate for the businessman interviewees and *sohbet hocası* interviewees appropriately. The instrument was originally designed in Turkish (Appendix D) and only translated into English (Appendix E) for the purpose of including in the Appendix section of the dissertation. One of the challenges I experienced was with the selection of the words that would not offend the participants while asking questions about their *sohbet* experiences in the Gülen Movement. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Gülen Movement had many supporters in Turkey as well as many others who opposed and even criticized with insulting words. Reading

about the Gülen Movement from both sides of the coin clearly revealed that the Gülen Movement participants did not like to be called as *Gülen cemaati* (Gülen community) or *cemaat* (community); therefore, in the interview protocol and during the interviews *hizmet hareketi* (service movement) phrase is preferred in order not to offend the interviewees. Another challenge that I experienced during the interviews was that most of the interviewees gave long and detailed answers to the questions which included potential answers to the subsequent questions. Therefore, I kept the interview protocol within my sight during the interviews and canceled some of the upcoming questions based on the answers of interviewees to the current question which may include answers to later ones.

The interviews started with a series of short-answer questions that are intended to collect some demographic information about the participants. These questions included their age, level of education, occupation, details of the family, and socioeconomic status. This opening section was followed by a couple of questions about the reasons why and how they participated in the Gülen Movement. Then, related to the significance of the Gülen Movement in their lives, a couple more questions were asked.

In the second part of the interview the participants were asked questions about how the *sohbets* were conducted. Their answers were probed into through sub questions such as what preparations were made before the *sohbets*, how participants to the *sohbet* were found and communicated, what the content of the *sohbets* was, what kind of people the *sohbet hocaları* were and so on. This part was the longest part of the interviews.

In the final part of the interview, the participants were asked questions related to the transformations that they had experienced through the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement. The probing questions explored the individual and social aspects of the

transformations they underwent, if any. The closing questions of the interview were about the contribution of *sohbets* to the Gülen Movement and about the strong and weak sides of *sohbets*. At the end of the interviews, I told each participant that I would brief them about the results of my research if they demanded so.

3.4.2 Procedures for data collection

3.4.2.1 Protection of human subjects

The study is definitely in a sensitive area of research in Turkey. The primary factor what makes this area of research sensitive in Turkey is the tensions between the contemporary government of Turkey and the Gülen Movement. Whereas government officials blame the participants of the Gülen Movement for organizing a coup against the government of the day through a fabricated criminal investigation of bribery and corruption, the Gülen Movement clearly denies the accusations to overthrow the government and declares that the government officials falsely put the blame on the Gülen Movement to cover bribery and corruption. Amid such conflicts and at a time when participants of the Gülen Movement were threatened by the government with possible forceful measures, the potential participants of my study would not be comfortable to contribute to my study without protection of their identities. Therefore, in order to protect the research participants, I submitted my project including the consent form the participants would sign if they accepted my interview request for approval by the Research Ethics Committee at Boğaziçi University (İNAREK) and obtained an approval (Appendix F). The anonymity and confidentiality of the data were ensured by the consent form given in Turkish (Appendix G), which is also translated into English (Appendix H) to present in

this dissertation. I took utmost care to keep the names and personal information of the interviewees private not to reveal their identities. Later, during the data analysis stage, each interviewee was assigned an alias and therefore their real names were never mentioned in the dissertation.

3.4.2.2 Data collection and recording

The method used for collecting data in my research was an in-depth interview with a series of short-answer questions to collect some demographic information about the participants and open-ended questions based on the research to questions that are intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants (Creswell, 2013). The interviews were conducted in Turkish and digitally recorded with two separate devices simultaneously with the written consent of the interviewees. The interviews were semi-structured and provided me the opportunity to interact face-to-face with the participants, and in this way individual respondents could define their experiences in their unique ways (Yin, 2011).

Data were collected in two different cities during spring and summer over a period of five months, including the pilot study. All but one of the interviews took place on a one-to-one basis. In one interview, two *sohbet hocası* demanded to have interviews at the same time due to their tight schedules; therefore, I interviewed both of them asking the same questions to each with proper turn take patterns due to convenience issues. The length of the interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 110 minutes depending on the amount of information participants had or wanted to share with me. Each of the interviews was completed at one session without any breaks except for some interruptions of tea or treat service.

Most of the interviewees invited me to their companies, or shops, where we sat in comfortable and quiet places suitable for an interview. At one instance, I had to conduct an interview with a businessman at his workplace in the middle of a busy shopping environment. Although we were seated at a relatively quiet corner, there were moments I could not hear him clearly, but later caught his words at the recording. Other interviewees invited me to their homes to their convenience often on weekends. There was also one instance in which I hosted one interview at my parents' summer house since he knew my parents and desired to visit them as well. At the end of some interviews, off-record, I had the opportunity to ask them if they knew other individuals who would like to take part in my research and in this way I identified potential interviewees.

3.4.3 Validity of the data

Carrying out a pilot study provided me to ensure the validity and reliability of the qualitative survey questions' wording regarding the minor alterations I applied to my interview protocol after the pilot study (Clark, 2006). In terms of the construct validity of my survey questions, the extensive literature review enabled me familiarity with the conceptual terminology of the Gülen Movement and I made sure that the interviewees and I, as a researcher, agreed on the specific terminology used in the survey questions, including the probing ones (Clark, 2006). Another strategy I employed to strengthen the validity of my research was "respondent validation", which involved obtaining feedback from the people studied in order to lessen the misinterpretation of their self-reported behaviors and views (Yin, 2011, p. 78). Accordingly, after the recorded interviews were transcribed, they were emailed to the respondents in case they might want to clarify

some points. Except four businessmen who could not provide any feedback with the excuse of their busy work schedule, all others responded that they had nothing to add. Moreover, having had the opportunity to participate in a couple of *sohbets* as a guest allowed me to make valuable observations, casually though. These observations, combined with the discussion about *sohbets* in the literature review and the data I obtained from the interviews all allowed to some degree of triangulation as a strategy to strengthen the validity of the data, which is defined as “collecting converging evidence from different sources” (Yin, 2011, p. 78).

3.5 Data analysis

The data obtained through the interviews were exposed to data analysis procedures associated with the constant comparative method which involved the identification of recurring themes across respondents. The constant comparative method of data analysis was first developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as a way of generating a grounded theory, which is comprised of categories, properties, and hypotheses that form the conceptual links between and among the categories and properties (Merriam, 1998).

Employing the constant comparative method, the researcher takes a particular case, or expression, from an interview, field notes, or document and compares it with another case, or expression, in the same set of data or in another set. Constant comparisons eventually lead to tentative categories which are then compared to each other and also to other instances. Until a theory can be generated, comparisons are consistently made within and between levels of categories (Merriam, 1998).

Merriam (1998) explains the details of theory formulation in a qualitative study as follows:

The development of categories, properties, and tentative hypotheses through the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1999) is a process whereby the data gradually evolve into a core of emerging theory. This core is a theoretical framework that guides the further collection of data. Deriving a theory from the data involves both the integration and the refinement of categories, properties, and hypotheses. As the theory solidifies, “major modifications become fewer and fewer as the analyst compares the next incidents of a category to its properties. Later modifications are mainly on the order of clarifying the logic, taking out non-relevant properties, integrating elaborating details of properties into the major outline of interrelated categories” (p. 110). In short, more data can be processed with fewer adjustments because the theory emerges with a smaller set of higher level concepts (p. 191).

The data collected in this research were analyzed in a five-stage process, which are data organization, comparing incidents applicable to each category, synthesis of categories and their properties, delimitation, and writing the theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1999).

3.5.1 Data organization

First, I read all the transcribed interviews in their integrity to become familiar with the data I collected. During my readings, I assigned each participant an alias to use for the comparisons of incidents. At some interviews, I listened again to make sure that no details were missed. As I read down through the transcript, I jot down notes, comments, observations, and queries next to the bits of data that might be significant, “potentially relevant” to my study (Merriam, 1998, p. 181).

3.5.2 Comparing incidents applicable to each category

Each research sub-question was used as an umbrella theme to form categories under.

Most of these categories were already determined by the probing questions in the

interview protocol. The data analysis contributed other relevant topics, or categories. In order to ease the process of dealing with a large amount of data, each incident identified within the data was coded using different color highlights and a pool of categories essential to analysis has been formed. In the meantime, while I picked up each incident, I compared it with the previous incidents in the same and also the different groups of incidents included in the same category. Eventually, the constant comparison of incidents in a category, the theoretical properties of that category emerged gradually. The ultimate aim of this step was to determine categories as “discreet and non-overlapping” as possible (Seggie, 2007, p. 67).

3.5.3 Synthesis of categories and their properties

While I was coding the data and determining categories and identifying their properties, I also considered how I could develop new perspectives to interpret the data and started to test whether I could find them in the data I analyzed. Merriam (1998) explains this step of data analysis:

While building theory in the manner described by Glaser and Strauss is largely an inductive process, there are times throughout the investigation when a deductive strategy is used. Tentative categories, properties, and hypotheses continually emerge and must be tested against the data – that is, the researcher asks if there are sufficient data to support a certain category or hypothesis....When categories and their properties are reduced and refined and then linked together by tentative hypotheses, the analysis is moving toward the development of a theory to explain the data’s meaning. (p. 192)

3.5.4 Delimiting the theory

Having completed the coding and categorization of the data I collected, I referred back to my research questions and decided which category taps the specific research questions of my study.

3.5.5 Writing the theory

Throughout the process of writing the theory, “initial theoretical constituents”, some of which started to appear even at the earlier stages of identifying categories, “were compared...to connect them to larger elements for further theory building. At each step, there was a return to former steps to test fit, work, relevance, and modifiability” (Edmonds and Kennedy, 2013, p. 119).

“When the researcher is convinced that his analytic framework forms a systematic substantive theory, that is, it is a reasonably accurate statement of the matters studied, and that it is couched in a form that others going into the same field could use – then he can publish his results with confidence” (Glaser and Strauss, 1999, p. 113).

Accordingly, I started to report my findings thematically bringing together all my notes about each umbrella theme based on the research sub-questions. For every new point I had, I carefully validated it with the analyzed data and enriched it with illustrations taken from the original data. “The frequency of responses” pointing to a category and “the importance of the point” the category makes were the major criteria I employed for considering the category as part of the theory I was developing (Seggie, 2010, p. 68). If a point was mentioned by at least five candidates, it was eligible to become a constituent of the theory; however, some points, although they were not indicated as many as five respondents, were also included in the theory formation based on the importance it carries with regard to the literature review and my personal interpretation formed by my previous experiences in the Gülen Movement as well as “accumulated informal knowledge” during the data collection period of the research (Seggie, 2007, p. 68).

3.6 Challenges of conducting the research

3.6.1 Position of the researcher

My position as a researcher posed some challenges in front of me while working in this area of research. Before explaining those challenges, describing my personal background will help understand the emergence of those challenges better.

I have always been a conservative, or religious, person throughout my life. The primary source of religiosity in my life was undoubtedly the environment where I was raised. My parents and grandparents were deeply religious people and they were the primary people who were influential in shaping my worldview in my childhood. By using the adjective “deeply religious”, I do not mean they were lost in spirituality and left the entire material world behind. What I mean by “deeply religious” is that my family believed strongly in Islam and obeyed its rules carefully. Observing them practice Islam and the availability of Islamic literature at my convenient reach enabled me to learn a lot about Islam. However, my parents did not force me to learn about the rules of religion and to observe those rules in my life; rather, I was a keen observer and avid reader – I had learned how to read years before I started primary school – and therefore I was able to develop my religious knowledge, and the practice of religion in my private life has always stayed between me and God. To be more specific, I was never criticized or forced by my family to practice Islam, except for parental advices especially by my mother for several times.

My first encounters with Islamic social movements were when I was at high school. During those years, I read books by Islamic scholars on various subjects such as interpretations of Holy Quran, hadiths of the Prophet, political Islam and education. I

even took private courses to learn Arabic in order to be able better understand the Islamic literature I was reading. It was in these years I met the Gülen Movement literature and read *Risale-i Nur* by Bediuzzaman Said Nursi extensively. I also listened to the lectures preached by Fethullah Gülen and read some of his books and articles. My interest in the Gülen Movement continued when I moved from hometown to a metropolitan city for university education. While I was studying at the Faculty of Education, I made many friends, among whom there were participants of the Gülen Movement. I was occasionally invited by them to some *sohbets* or programs such as conferences, trips to nearby cities or club activities. During these interactions, I had the opportunity to observe who the participants of the Gülen Movement were and what they were doing. Upon my graduation, I searched for a position at privately founded universities and accepted the offer of a university affiliated with the Gülen Movement. I worked at this position for 5 years until I had to leave for military service, which was then, and still now, compulsory for male Turkish citizens at a certain age. During these 5 years at a university affiliated with the Gülen Movement, I met many participants of the Gülen Movement and had valuable intellectual exchanges with them, but I should also mention that there were other academicians at the university who were not participants of the Gülen Movement and with whom I also made good friends. After returning from compulsory military service 14 years ago, I accepted the post of director of studies at a private language course and then founded my own adult education institution and have managed it since then.

3.6.2 Challenges

As it is apparent in my background story that I was not an individual who was totally unaware of the Gülen Movement and its activities. Although this acquaintance with the Gülen Movement must have been the primary factor that intellectually attracted me to conduct a research on it, I was challenged by the potential influence of my previous interactions with the Gülen Movement on this research. Therefore, I took utmost care not to take off my researcher hat in any part of my study and remained objective. Indeed, even without my researcher hat on, I was in an equal distance to any social movement thanks to my democratic identity. In the literature review, I included both pro and counter arguments about the Gülen Movement while defining it from a political perspective. Moreover, during the interviews, I never mentioned about my previous contact with the Gülen Movement and took the objective attitude of a researcher. As required by ethics of scientific research, I did not interview any person, whom I knew well before. Nevertheless, having a substantial theoretical knowledge about the Gülen Movement, not to mention the knowledge comes from observation for long years, provided me with a significant advantage to interpret the discourse I listened to in the interviews and read in the literature of the Gülen Movement.

From the perspective of insider/outsider research, I can definitely declare that I was not an insider to the community during the period when I was carrying out my research, although I had previous contact with the Gülen Movement and was pretty knowledgeable about its ideology. I was neither employed in an educational institution affiliated with the Gülen Movement nor was I a regular attendee of *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement or a member of a social movement organization (SMO) affiliated by the Gülen Movement. Corbin Dwyer and Buckle (2009) define insider research as “when

researchers conduct research with populations of which they are also members, so that the researcher shares an identity, language, and experiential base with the study participants” (p. 58). In this sense, I do not hold an insider perspective to the research I conducted. On the other hand, my position as a researcher cannot be considered as an outsider counting on a supposed dichotomy of insider or outsider. Citing various research findings, Greene (2014) emphasizes that “It has been argued, however, that the insider-outsider dichotomy is a false one (Banks, 1998; Chavez, 2008; Naples, 2003); it has even been suggested that the role of the researcher be conceptualized on a continuum, rather than as an either/or dichotomy” (p. 2). Taking all these into account, I consider myself in-between insider and outsider to my study regarding that I am not a participant of the Gülen Movement on one hand, but I come from a similar conservative background to the one the Gülen Movement rests on and my previous contacts with the Gülen Movement make me quite knowledgeable about its dynamics on the other hand. All in all, Corbin Dwyer and Buckle (2009) summarizes best the position I held as a researcher throughout the study,

Furthermore, one does not have to be a member of the group being studied to appreciate and adequately represent the experience of the participants. Instead, we posit that the core ingredient is not insider or outsider status but an ability to be open, authentic, honest, deeply interested in the experience of one’s research participants, and committed to accurately and adequately representing their experience. (p. 59)

Reflexivity is yet another issue that needs to be considered in writing a qualitative study. I do not deny that without the pre-schemata that was formed earlier in me through my familiarity with the Gülen Movement, I would have to try hard and spend comparatively longer time to comprehend and interpret the data I collected. Nevertheless, this should not mean that if I had not had any familiarity with the Gülen Movement, I would not

have been able to interpret the data and carry out analyses on it. What I point out here is that my familiarity with the Gülen Movement undoubtedly shaped my interpretation of the research findings. However, I knew for sure that the influence of my a priori intellectual accumulation over the Gülen Movement assumed more of a guiding function not to lose myself in the labyrinths of immense and complex data than a function to shape the data itself. Regarding such an influence on the qualitative researcher, Creswell (2013) mentions, “How we write is a reflection of our own interpretation based on the cultural, social, gender, class, and personal politics that we bring to research” (p. 179). Nevertheless, the qualitative researcher is expected to continually mind “the interplay between their multiple social locations and how these intersect with the particularities of their personal biographies at the time of analyzing data” (Greene, 2014, p. 9). Greene (2014) concludes that

Establishing and maintaining an appropriate degree of both social and emotional distance is also an important element of the reflexive process; of course this requires the researcher to determine what that appropriate level of distancing is, which is no easy task. (p. 9)

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS: PARTICIPANTS' BACKGROUND

This chapter aims to familiarize the readers with the research participants in terms of their accounts as to how they first met the Gülen Movement, the reasons why they participated in the Gülen Movement, and the significance of the Gülen Movement in their lives, and how they positioned themselves in the Gülen Movement.

4.1 The recruitment to the Gülen Movement

Data revealed that the businessmen who took part in this study had their first encounters with the Gülen Movement through invitation to *sohbets*. Whereas half of the businessmen were invited to the *sohbets* for the first time when they had already started their business lives, the other half were invited to *sohbets* during their high school or university education before they became businessmen. The *sohbet hocaları*, on the other hand, met the Gülen Movement during their high school years when they stayed in student dormitories affiliated with the Gülen Movement.

The majority of businessmen had their first encounters with the Gülen Movement when they were invited to an occasion/event by their businessman friends. Ten out of 21 businessmen mentioned that they met the Gülen Movement participants for the first time when they were invited to and attended a dinner and talk, or tea and talk, meeting where there were other businessmen who had already participated in the Gülen Movement.

Telling about his first meeting/experience with the Gülen Movement, Ali, a businessman from a big city, stated “In fact, I started to participate in the Gülen Movement through a

sohbet invitation where I was invited for a tea and talk. I witnessed a free space where people met one another at that tea and *sohbet* setting.”

Yusuf, a businessman from a relatively small city, told his story about his first meeting with the Gülen Movement,

As you know, in Anatolia, especially in my city, there is the widespread practice of *sohbet* and *oturma*⁴ as a part of established culture. When we were young, we had been organizing meetings, which we call *oturma*, in our friendship and neighborhood circle. They did not have a regular order, or system. We wanted to be in a spiritual environment but since we had no background or social network, we could not provide such a setting in our meetings. One day when I ran into an old friend of mine from primary school, I asked him how he spent his time and what he did in the evenings. He said that they were gathering for *sohbet* together with merchants, businessmen, and civil servants in a group of 20-25 people. I was also invited to their *oturma*. Since I knew and trusted him, I accepted the offer and attended their meeting. I believe it is important to trust the person who invites you so I accepted the invitation. I also felt that it was not an invitation just for one day. That day was a very peaceful and useful day for me...After the third meeting, I decided I would be a part of that circle in all my life. (Appendix I, 1)

Cengiz’s meeting with the Gülen Movement was through his businessman friend who told Cengiz that he went to a house⁵ where he was offered tea and listened to a *sohbet* from a book [*Risale-i Nur* by Bediuzzaman Said Nursi] and he liked it. Cengiz then continued:

He invited me to the *sohbet*, and I asked what it was about. He told me that they read books, they had conversation, they were very good people, and he liked them. He said we could go together if I agreed to accompany him. He also said they served tea. I accepted his offer. We were welcome by one of the students of

⁴ The word “oturma” is a culturally specific word that is used in Central Anatolia to refer to the weekly meeting of males at each other’s homes by taking turns. They usually talk about daily issues and have tea with dessert and eat fruit.

⁵ The word ‘house’ means ‘ev’ in Turkish and denotes the same meaning as the Turkish word ‘ev’, whose plural is ‘evler’ in Turkish. However, in Gülen Movement, the word ‘ev’ assumes a secondary meaning. Yavuz (2013) mentions that these houses are also called ‘lighthouses’, where “same-sex roommates from different social and economic backgrounds live in a culture of harmony, brotherhood, and spirituality, provide a clean and safe alternative for university students from socially and politically conservative and/or insecure milieus in Turkey...Later on, they volunteer or work in movement-affiliated institutions as teachers, journalists, clerks, or they establish their own private companies and work in the market while remaining connected to the movement as new sponsors” (p. 100).

*Üstad Hazretleri*⁶ [Bediuzzaman Said Nursi] who delivered a very interesting lesson⁷ (lecture) to us and offered us tea after the lesson. It [*the sohbet*] was really very nice. We were indeed hungry, hungry for spirituality. (Appendix I, 2)

Other businessmen told about their first meetings with the Gülen Movement in the following words: Hakan said, “We met with the Gülen Movement with the invitation by one of our friends to the activities of the Gülen Movement” and Selahattin said “One of our friends invited us to tea and talks.”

There are also other businessmen who first met the Gülen Movement when they were at high school, or at university. Nine out of 21 businessmen mentioned that they first met the Gülen Movement when they were at high school, or university. Zeki was a first year high school student when he first knew about the Gülen Movement. He said that one of his elder schoolmates was very active at their school introducing students to the Gülen Movement. Zeki told how he met that active school friend of his:

Our meeting with him was interesting. During the first days of school, with the will of Allah, I saw Abdullah⁸ at the school corridors, although I did not know him, he was greeting people. He was shaking hands with people. I was watching him in a distance. I said to myself this man is greeting everybody, it’s interesting and I liked it. This is Allah’s guiding, there is no other explanation. I went to him with excitement, and I said you are greeting everybody, can we get to know each other? He was indeed looking for such opportunities to meet people, which we learned later. (Appendix I, 3)

Next day, Abdullah and Zeki went to a nearby mosque together after school, and there Abdullah introduced Zeki to another student group of 70-80 people. In the following days, Zeki started to meet Abdullah in a house affiliated with the Gülen Movement. He

⁶ Bediuzzaman Said Nursi is often called ‘Üstad’ among his followers. ‘Hazretleri’ is a Turkish expression meaning ‘highness, or majesty.’

⁷ Reading books on religious matters, especially by Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, is called ‘ders’ in Gülen Movement, a word that is translated into English as ‘lesson’ or ‘lecture.’ The word ‘ders’ also denotes the meaning of ‘sohbet’ in Gülen Movement.

⁸ This is an alias given to the person due to confidentiality for research participants.

sometimes stayed in this house, where some students of Fethullah Gülen visited to have *sohbets*.

Emin said that he already knew Fethullah Gülen through the recorded mosque preaches he had listened to before he met the Gülen Movement. When he moved to another city for university education, he stayed in a house where other participants of the Gülen Movement stayed, which was how he first met the Gülen Movement. Mahmut also met the Gülen Movement when he stayed in a student dorm affiliated with the Gülen Movement when he left home to study at a university in another city. İsmail said, “I met the Gülen Movement during my university years, but when I became a businessman, I continued to the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement thanks to some friends.” Ümit also said he met the Gülen Movement when he stayed in the houses during his university education. Murat said, “I met the Gülen Movement when I was at high school. Allah granted us this opportunity, and we were able to enter.” Cihangir said that he started to attend *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement when he was at high school. He also mentioned that he stayed in the dormitories affiliated with the Gülen Movement while he was preparing for the university entrance exams and considered that period as his first meeting the Gülen Movement. About his first meeting with the Gülen Movement, Muhammed stated:

I met *Hizmet* in my high school years, one of my friends... Studying in a boarding school, one looks for a place to go on weekends, being not always near family. My friend told me “Let’s go, there are elder brothers (*abiler*) who are university students, we study our lessons and we have conversations (*sohbetler*).” We went. Indeed, I have the conservative personality of being raised by a Muslim family. I liked the people I met through my friend. They were clean, honest and willing to help other people. Studying for lessons was indeed a pretext, though we studied for lessons, too. I then gradually knew [the Gülen Movement] in years. (Appendix I, 4)

Two out of 21 businessmen learnt about the Gülen Movement through a different story. In contrast to other businessmen who took part in this study, Mehmet was not invited to a *sohbet*, or tea and talk, at the beginning. Rather, one of their business partners frequently visited their company and established good relations with Mehmet and his brother. According to Mehmet, this business partner was a man of heart, a gentleman, a very polite and thoughtful person. During these visits, they performed prayers together, which made Mehmet to perform his prayers more regularly than he did not do so earlier. One day, this business partner asked him whether or not Mehmet had any connections to a religious group [movement]. Upon Mehmet's negative answer, he mentioned about Fethullah Gülen whose name Mehmet heard for the first time. Several months later, the business partner took Mehmet to a meeting where a number of businessmen gathered for *himmet*⁹, and he met Fethullah Gülen for the first time there. Later, Mehmet visited Fethullah Gülen several times more, and soon they started similar *sohbets* with businessmen in their own company. Orhan met the Gülen Movement when he was 14 years old but not through his school friends. He told about his first encounter:

In 1994, a *sohbet* was started in our company. I was a kid when at that time, and I don't know why they invited me but I attended too. There were people at ages of 35-40-45. I saw a *sohbet* there for the first time...I then continued. I did not know the *sohbet hocası*, but a modern looking man with his tie on was talking about Allah and the Prophet. He was telling very nicely, I mean, his style was not like that of a preacher at the mosque. He was eating like a gentleman. I was a kid watching. (Appendix I, 5)

Nedim's introduction to the Gülen Movement was very different from the stories of other businessmen. In fact, Nedim and his friends invited a *sohbet hocası* to their *oturma*

⁹ According to Kalyoncu (2008), the concept of *himmet* refers to one's personal commitment to carrying out the duty at hand, be it sponsoring a school project or reaching out to as many people as possible to share the movement's educational vision. Operationally, *himmet* seems to be a *sine qua non* for one's contribution to fulfilling the educational vision (p. 37).

rather than being invited to a *sohbet* of the Gülen Movement by their friends. Nedim told his story:

We had already been organizing an *oturma* here [his town] with our old friends. There were already *sohbets*, or *oturmas*, other than those of the Gülen Movement in our city. While we were talking at one of our *oturmas*, we decided to do some research and eventually reached the opinion that the Gülen Movement was the most appropriate social movement to our mindset or nature. Therefore, we organized an *oturma* for this purpose and invited a *sohbet hocası* from the Gülen Movement. (Appendix I, 6)

The *sohbet hocaları* had similar stories of meeting the Gülen Movement for the first time to those of businessmen. Four out of five *sohbet hocası* were graduates of Imam Hatip Schools¹⁰ (religious high schools), and they all first met the Gülen Movement when they were invited to tea and talks by their friends. Mustafa was studying at Imam Hatip School when he was first invited to a *sohbet* at a dormitory affiliated with the Gülen Movement. He said, “When I was a second-year student at Imam Hatip, there was a dormitory where there were *sohbets* held. Help for Imam Hatip classes was also provided. I met [the Gülen Movement] then.” Ahmet’s first meeting with the Gülen Movement was when he came to another city to study at university. He said, “In my town, we used to go to dormitories of some religious groups, where you walked in with your shoes. However, when I entered into the student dorm affiliated with the Gülen Movement, I said myself this is the ideal place for me, so I should stay here.” Akif was also studying in his senior year at an Imam Hatip school when he first met the Gülen Movement. He said that they were invited to an *iftar*¹¹ at a dormitory, and there they listened to one of the recorded sermons of Fethullah Gülen. Akif further explained, “I was very excited to listen to a preacher who cried and even passed away while talking

¹⁰ In Turkish educational system, Imam Hatip Schools are vocational high schools where students are educated for their future employment in religious services. They are commonly called ‘Imam Hatip.’

¹¹ ‘İftar’ is the dinner eaten after the sunset by Muslim people who fast during Holy Ramadan month.

about the agony of the Muslims of the world.” Ömer was at secondary school when one of his relatives suggested him to visit a house where university students stayed. His relative told Ömer that he could make use of his time better and study for his lessons there. Similar to those of Mustafa, Ahmet, Akif, and Ömer but in a different cultural setting, Osman, who is not from Turkey, was introduced to the Gülen Movement when he came to Turkey for university education although he studied at a private high school opened by Turkish businessmen inspired by the Gülen Movement. Osman said:

During my first year at the state dormitory for university students, I did not have facilities to perform my prayers appropriately, so I decided to stay at the houses affiliated with the Gülen Movement. Indeed, other elder students from my country who had earlier come for university education guided us. (Appendix I, 7)

To sum up, the businessmen and *sohbet hocaları* who took part in this research had similar stories of recruitment to the Gülen Movement. Data revealed that some businessmen were invited by their business friends to *sohbets* where tea or dinner was served. In addition, the recruitment of some businessmen happened well before they entered into business world when they were at high school or university. Nevertheless, they were likewise invited to *sohbets* by their friends who had earlier participated in the Gülen Movement. The *sohbet hocaları*, on the other hand, had their first encounters with the Gülen Movement when they are at high school or at university through invitations to dormitories or houses by their elder brothers.

4.2 The persuasion

The businessmen and *sohbet hocaları* mentioned various reasons why they participated in the Gülen Movement. The primary reasons that emerged from data analysis are as follows:

Four major reasons were articulated by businessmen in their answer to the interview question exploring their rationale to participate in the Gülen Movement. These are; regarding the Gülen Movement as a social space, given by four out of 21 businessmen; learning and/or teaching spiritual/religious values, given by seven out of 21 businessmen; raising a new generation, given by five out of 21 businessmen; and social activism in order to change the society, given by five out of 21 businessmen.

4.2.1 Teaching/Learning spiritual values

Hakan stated his observation that the students in the Gülen Movement were educated very well and tried to live the spiritual values [of Turkish culture and Islam] very well. He said that it was not easy to live and enable others to live such values at the time so such a lifestyle was not seen in many contexts. He then continued “However, when we saw that it was possible in the Gülen Movement, we liked it and decided to participate in this movement.” Nedim also considered the Gülen Movement as an opportunity to learn more about spiritual [Islamic] values. He said he asked a lot of questions at the first *sohbets* he attended. He said, “In the beginning, I used to ask too many questions because my Islamic knowledge was limited as a result of my father’s and grandfather’s membership to that party [Republican People’s Party]. I was very weak in religious knowledge. I was continually asking questions to satisfy my hunger for it.” Yusuf mentioned that he participated in the Gülen Movement because he saw an opportunity to improve himself spiritually, in terms of living a more consistent Islamic life. Likewise, Zeki mentioned that he already had a religious background from his family and saw the opportunity to improve his religious lifestyle when he started to participate in the Gülen Movement.

Ihsan mentioned that his decision towards participating in the Gülen Movement was formed gradually. He was aware that his religious knowledge was limited, and he believed he needed to improve it. He told his story:

I was already aware of Islam and faith. I believed that Islam had beautiful aspects and we should take it [Islam] out of a classical tradition or practice and make its principles the principal path to our lives. Though you are not quite knowledgeable, you come to a point to realize such a need. The people of my city are not [religiously] educated people. I mean if you wanted me to recite 18-20 verses from Quran, I would not be able to... We have no such [religious] education. Indeed, we come from a period of pressures as a public. What I mean, I remember listening to the sincere statements of Fethullah Gülen in the preaching cassettes... At those times, there were radical approaches such as seizing the state power, which we now see how wrong they were, but religion cannot be like this. Therefore, I found the discourse of Hocaefendi more acceptable in terms of interpreting what religion is. (Appendix I, 8)

4.2.2 Raising a generation

Selahattin said that he was convinced to take part in the Gülen Movement when his father-in-law, who was one of the students of Fethullah Gülen told him about what the Gülen Movement aims to achieve in the following words:

My father-in-law is a nice person. He told me that it took 1 year to raise wheat but 10 years to raise a tree, and then continued, 'It takes 100 years to raise a human being, so you have to set its foundation now. He said *Hocaefendi*¹² even did not say 100 years, but he said even 25 years, a quarter of a century. I remember listening to *Hocaefendi's* conference where he said these things [raising human beings] could happen in a quarter of a century with the permission of Allah. *Hocaefendi* stood in one side of our mind. Then, when we moved to this city in 1979-1980, we started to attend *sohbets* and since then they [the Gülen Movement] have never let us stay inactive. (Appendix I, 9)

Mehmet also had the similar motivation of taking care of children when he started to participate in the Gülen Movement. He remembers telling their *sohbet hocası* in the first days that:

¹² Fethullah Gülen is also called '*Hocaefendi*' by the participants of Gülen Movement.

Leave us, I mean, leave us in the sense that nothing will be obtained from us. Take care of our children, what matters to us is our children, take care of our children. They will have children too, and therefore their children are taken care of. In this way, Allah writes something on our record of good deeds; otherwise, nothing is obtained from us. (Appendix I, 10)

Cengiz mentioned about his sorrow for not having been able to continue his education after primary school due to the financial difficulties of his family. Therefore, he said, “There was always a pain, an agony, inside us for all children and all young people who are not able to go to school. Children in this country cannot go to school. Now that Allah has given us the [financial] possibilities, we have participated in the Gülen Movement so that we can give a hand to those children who cannot go to school.”

4.2.3 Social activism

Regarding the reason why he participated in the Gülen Movement, Muhammed pointed the voluntariness of participation in the Gülen Movement. He mentioned that the Gülen Movement offers certain actions to its potential participants, which he further explained in the following words:

My Lord granted [participation in the Gülen Movement] and we are trying to be in it. Indeed, it is not like signing up a club or an association, but there [in the Gülen Movement] are good actions that are pronounced, and if you want to take part in those actions, voluntariness is essential. There are various ways to take part in those actions. You can be in it through your profession as teachers do or through providing financial assistance. It’s not just helping financially, but it is also a primary duty of servanthood, I mean our responsibility to the Almighty Allah, for everyone to communicate the good things he or she believes in to others. We should start telling about these actions [of the Gülen Movement] and try to be a good example to everyone around us, from our immediate family circle, namely parents, wife, children, and relatives, as our Prophet suggests, and I do not mean we can do it very well, to friends, social environment and other people we meet. Indeed, the concept of participation is hidden here. I mean participation means: Do you want to perform this action; do you want to take part in this practice? (Appendix I, 11)

Mahmut, who stayed in a dorm affiliated with the Gülen Movement during his study years, mentioned that they learned the Gülen Movement took care of students by helping, or serving to those who cannot find a dormitory to stay due to economic difficulties, or even to those whose economic situation was strong but who cannot find suitable accommodation. He continued: “We were happy with this, and since then we have tried to be in the Gülen Movement.”

İsmail also stated the practice of helping students as the reason why he participated in the Gülen Movement. He said that “We, along with our businessman friends, started to visit and have our *sohbets* at the houses where students lived. We were trying to understand and meet the needs of students and help solve their problems.” He further stated:

Since this is a movement of volunteers, nobody stays here with force. An important principle in providing help to people is to cause others to do it as well. For example, help is needed somewhere, and indeed one person can meet that demand alone, but the purpose here is to get different people undertake this and cause them to do good things. I mean, becoming an agent for them to perform good deeds. (Appendix I, 12)

Murat, who first met the Gülen Movement during his high school years, mentioned that he already had a conservative background from his family and thanks to the Gülen Movement he was reminded of his essential faith. He further delineated:

I found it so there. I found the sincerity. Care, sincerity, and effort to do something. Outside the routine [practice of Islam], being able to tell something to our friends, to do some action. All these attracted me thanks to the conservatism in my background... Indeed, we used to perform only our basic religious duties, but the teachings of *Hocaefendi* had a different approach, I mean it attracted us, I can say we found what we looked for. Rather than just doing regular prayers, fasting and giving alms, the teachings that reminded our real duties towards Islam had a more effect on us. (Appendix I, 13)

Orhan emphasized the practice of helping others through the Gülen Movement as a factor that attracted him. He said:

We invite people and go abroad during Festival of Sacrifice and Ramadan, or go to Mardin and Diyarbakır within the country [to distribute food and meat to poor people living in the deprived areas of the world.] During these trips, those people we invite also see something [our help and care for poor people], and these trips become causes for them to take part in *Hizmet* activities. (Appendix I, 14)

4.2.4 Social space

Ali stated that he was attracted to the Gülen Movement because he saw it as a social space which laid a stage as a school for businessmen. He delineated his reasons:

I had gained the religious values through my family, but the environment we worked was a society which contradicted these values. When I was invited to the Gülen Movement, I found a space I could not even dream of. I mean, no matter that I was from a conservative family, there was no structure which could teach our cultural values in an institutionalized way in civil space. It was attractive to me because people normally learn about their religion and cultural values first from family then from school, and then from their environment, but the context of the Gülen Movement was, let me say, a school where businessmen could participate in these activities. I mean, I have always considered the Gülen Movement as a school. I believe I always gain something as long as I am in it. People say that this movement often teaches to give, to donate. True. It is organized on principle of giving not taking, giving from what people have. However, I believe that we learn a lot here [the Gülen Movement], this is indeed a school. (Appendix I, 15)

Hüseyin also pointed to the social space that was offered to him to fill in by the Gülen Movement. He explained that,

There was a sort of emptiness in us, but not the emptiness of faith. Thanks Allah, my father had memorized the Holy Quran, and my grandmother raised us with prayers. My mother, too. May Allah rest her soul. However, there was an emptiness of getting together socially and form a community, and the Gülen Movement was an important context for us to fill in that space, it offered important tasks. In this way, we found places for ourselves in the society. Our friends, too. Those who participate with us, those who come, they all liked, and they would say ‘look how nice this person is with us, that person with us and that other person...’ (Appendix I, 16)

Emin emphasized his background of a family who placed importance on religion and mentioned that the Gülen Movement offered him a social space in accordance with the values he was raised on. He said, “During the years I was at university, there was a

context which made people depend each other, act together and stay in a group. You needed to participate in a social group...I chose the one that suited to my values.”

Cihangir referred to the friendship atmosphere that he experienced when he started to visit houses of the Gülen Movement and occasionally stayed overnight during his high school years. He told about the social space he found:

There is a different friendship atmosphere [at the houses.] Preparing for the university entrance exam altogether, if I may say, friendship under stressful conditions is very special. This may not be the case for all houses, but to me it is a setting where you pray together and make intellectual discussions about the future of the country. Especially, when you stay overnight, you can spend even more time, which creates the opportunity for considerably more time compared to just going to and returning home from university preparation courses like school. The *sohbets* and as is popularly known the tea *sohbets*... (Appendix I, 17)

In contrast to businessmen who differed in their reasons for participation, the *sohbet hocaları* all concurred that the Gülen Movement, as they saw it, emphasized the practice of Islam in the sense that it is more than just doing your prayers but confers other responsibilities on individuals such as teaching spiritual/religious values to other people, raising new generations and becoming role models to people of the world by making Islam a lifestyle.

Ahmet mentioned that he saw the opportunity to practice his faith in Islam in a more delightful way and further explained: “After meeting the Gülen Movement, I saw this. You feel the sincerity of the religion [Islam] you believe in the Gülen Movement. That is to say, it is all right that you pray regularly 5 times a day, and we definitely have to do it. However, you feel its delight in the Gülen Movement.” Regarding how he was attracted to the Gülen Movement by the context it offered for the practice of Islamic faith, Akif said:

The most important thing we see in the Gülen Movement is that you put what you say into practice in your life. Indeed, this is the most important problem of today's people. Everybody knows something [about religion], hear something at the mosque or learn something at school. Nevertheless, how are you going to put all this knowledge into practice in your life? What is the context for this and how will it be achieved? When you enter into these circles [of the Gülen Movement] you realize the depth in practice of Islamic faith and values. For example, sincerity of intention, devotedness, having no expectation in return, and devoting yourself to humanity, all of which as lived by the firsts [the Companions of the Prophet]. And when you see all these ideals/values are put into practice in the Gülen Movement, you feel satisfied with your decision to participate. (Appendix I, 18)

Osman and Ömer, on the other hand, pointed out to the social environment and opportunities of personal development presented by the Gülen Movement as significant factors on their participation. Osman said: "When we visited the houses of the Gülen Movement, we did not experience anything that would disturb our logic. I mean everything was reasonable to us. We went to the houses, and they suited to our needs. They were praying regularly, and they were studying for their classes. They were honest and good people." Ömer continued: "When I was invited, I saw not only help for my classes but also the social environment and the activities they organized for our personal development. These were important to me, so I continued to visit the houses."

Finally, Mustafa referred to the vision of the Gülen Movement to raise a generation while stating his reasons, saying:

We come from a religious environment. I saw that Hocaefendi intends to synthesize modernity and religion through persuasion and adaptation of Islam to the contemporary era, as desired by Almighty God, rather than causing a conflict; that is to say, by introducing the contemporary era to Islam and applying this synthesis to real life, the generations that have internalized the desired national and spiritual values will be raised, and this will be achieved through persuasion and the method of the Gülen Movement rather than forcefully with politics or other means. (Appendix I, 19)

To sum up, the businessmen and *sohbet hocaları* who took part in this study expressed similar reasons as to their participation in the Gülen Movement. Their reasons were

grouped under four categories, which are the social space offered by the Gülen Movement, the opportunities to learn and/or teach spiritual/religious values, to raise a new generation with national and spiritual values, and social activism to change the society.

4.3 The significance

The businessmen and *sohbet hocaları* were interviewed about the significance of the Gülen Movement in their lives. All businessmen and *sohbet hocaları*, without exception, attributed very high importance to the Gülen Movement and explained how it shaped their lifestyles and their decisions in their social and business lives. They supported their answers with concrete examples, all of which are presented below.

While explaining the importance of the Gülen Movement in his life, Mehmet said that his four daughters are married to participants of the Gülen Movement, and told further about his second son-in-law: “The only reason, the most important reason accounting for 80 per cent of my decision, why I allowed him to marry my daughter was that he was a participant of the Gülen Movement.” He also mentioned that he is happy his son is talking to a girl from the Gülen Movement. Mehmet then continued:

Hocaefendi says that this community [the Gülen Movement] is such a community that they share even their family issues with their friends in the community but not with their closest relatives. This is my principle... What is *Hizmet* for me? It is my honor, my pride, my integrity, my faith, my existence, my all. If I am in *Hizmet*, I have everything. If I am not in *Hizmet*, I see myself to have nothing, I have nothing. (Appendix I, 20)

Selahattin mentioned that the Gülen Movement was as important in his life as water and bread. He illustrated his statement with an analogy, saying “As it is essential to have bread and water or as Prayer is essential to me, so is *Hizmet*. It is my lifestyle.”

Ümit said that he once made a prayer to Allah and told it to explain the importance of the Gülen Movement in his life:

I said O! My Lord! Draw me a path so that I contribute to myself, I contribute to *Hizmet*, and I contribute to my country. Draw me such a path, I said, that I devote my life to you and run for you. I will do everything I do for you, everything for this [the sake of Allah]. I decided that day and made a contract with Allah that I would give half of the money I earned in His [Allah] way. (Appendix I, 21)

Cengiz emphasized that if he were born once again, he would like to have lived what he lived in the Gülen Movement again and again. He then stated his reasons why he wished so:

This is because I do not see a better movement that *Hizmet* in the world. If there is any, I would go there. If there were a movement better than this movement, I would go there. Why? My brothers and sisters from the same mother could not be as sincere with me as my brothers in the Gülen Movement have been with me. Why? Material. However, there is no such thing [material] in the Gülen Movement. Brotherhood, brotherhood until death. Materially, in business life one can see everything, there are days when one falls in shortage, or feels difficulties. I have seen favors from my brothers in the Gülen Movement, which I have not seen from my brothers and sisters of the same mother. Sometimes, they gave me the keys of their cars, at other times pocket money. They asked how I felt and whether I could meet my essential needs or not, and they even met some of my needs. Sometimes, they gave me their credit cards so that I can use to make my payments. I am asking you! Who would do this? How many people would do such favors? I did not see this from my brothers and sisters from the same mother. (Appendix I, 22)

When asked about the significance of the Gülen Movement in his life, İhsan first said that the Gülen Movement was before everything and then added he was worried that he told what he felt in his heart but what if his practice did not match that. He continued:

Especially after this process [referring to the political atmosphere against the Gülen Movement then] this task [the Gülen Movement] should be held even firmer. This task is now even more essential, I mean, this is the last post. I have developed a principle in my life. If something, a duty, or responsibility, is demanded in the Gülen Movement, I have always assigned it the first priority. (Appendix I, 23)

According to Ali, the significance of the Gülen Movement is that it makes his life meaningful. He said that his life gained another meaning after he participated in the Gülen Movement. The change he experienced in his life is as follows:

You set a goal, and the goal you set is this: Consider this either from religious perspective or sociological perspective, or you can call it universal values from an international point of view, you are setting a goal in front of you for the sake of humanity, that is, the purpose of your life. The Gülen Movement is significant in the sense that it enables you to have such a goal. For you see that's done with your own eyes. I mean there are concrete things. I mean you walk upon certain words. You read and learn, which is a routine thing. But only then can you come to make it a target for all humans. Surely you come to learn to share the beautiful things you've learned not only with those immediately around you but also with complete strangers. Sharing is commonly spoken financial-wise; it is always said that people should share once they have something. I think even more important than sharing financial assets is the sharing of spiritual values, which are of superior value. I mean this gives one a noble ambition. (Appendix I, 24)

Zeki explained the significance of the Gülen Movement pointing to its essential role in his view of life. He said:

Hizmet is everything to us. I mean I have never thought about a life outside the movement. I only pray God that he would never allow us to lead such a life. I've never thought of such a life because once you take the movement out of our life, which I think about from time to time, I realized nothing is left. I mean a monotonous life: you go to work in the morning and come back in the evening; that's it. You would neither the good friends you have now, nor would you meet Tuesdays, nor would you go on trips. (Appendix I, 25)

Hüseyin emphasized that he would sacrifice his everything for the Gülen Movement. He further explained:

It is certainly our responsibility to go everywhere in the world in the path of God and the Prophet, without being forestalled by any boundaries. This is the aim of the movement and we would hold back neither our financial possessions nor our life nor our children. We all took this path without any second thoughts and keep walking in it. (Appendix I, 26)

Emin mentioned about the significance of the Gülen Movement that it became an essential part of his life and removing it out of his life was compared to taking off his

clothes. He added that his wife and his parents-in-law were also participants of the Gülen Movement.

Yusuf said that the Gülen Movement comprised the most important part of his life. He then explained how it contributed to his life positively:

The movement has changed me a lot; I mean all these meetings, the atmosphere, the conversations. I mean I now strive to lead an Islamic life more consciously which I used to follow like I would do any other tradition. And we didn't have such a vision; I mean we didn't have a spiritual vision. We had neither financial nor spiritual vision. I mean the movement didn't simply improve us but it taught us to be human, so to say. I mean not in the sense that it had a certain methodology or that it was scientific, or that it meant to be a career ladder. The movement has become a disciplinary process for me – sometimes willingly and sometimes not. (Appendix I, 27)

For Muhammed, the tasks and responsibilities that fall on the participants of the Gülen Movement were influential in constructing the significance of the Gülen Movement in someone's life. He explained in detail:

In some seasons it's tuitions for students; in others it's the Kurban (the Sacrifice): there's always something on the agenda that forces you to stay alert. As I already told you, you aren't required to carry out these responsibilities and tasks; it's simply your personal choice and it's a matter of free will. But once you start to do something, you come to realize that you should keep moving and do different and novel things. Action breeds action. But if you happen to stop, it takes a while to gain momentum. So remaining inert in the movement means going backwards; stopping may mean atrophying of certain feelings. (Appendix I, 28)

Nedim told how the Gülen Movement shaped his lifestyle through several aspects. He mentioned that he earned his personal maturity through the Gülen Movement. He said he learned the importance of consultation through the Gülen Movement. Other things he listed as taught by the Gülen Movement are the morality of the Prophet, how to do good deeds to help people, how to end fights and meet in the commons to live in peace, how to establish good relations with people, how to pray, and how to serve people.

Cihangir said that the Gülen Movement is the main propeller in his life which makes it possible for him to understand the life through what he learns at *sohbets*. He delineated,

From raising a child to what we have to be careful about in business life, *Hizmet* provides us guidelines and references. In this respect, the main reference [Qur'an and Hadiths of the Prophet] is interpreted [by the Gülen Movement] for us, so it [the Gülen Movement] becomes the unique guide, a very important part of my life, I mean. (Appendix I, 29)

Similar to Cihangir, Murat considers the Gülen Movement as propelling factor in his life in terms of his religious practices and his care about them. He further explained,

The Gülen Movement has the priority, I mean it is ahead of everything, since we consider it as a triggering catalyst to make us care more about our religious practices, which undoubtedly have the highest priority in a Muslim person's life, and eventually the Gülen Movement guides us in that direction. (Appendix I, 30)

Hakan also mentioned that the Gülen Movement is very important in his life and pointed that he tries to make the Gülen Movement to cover his entire life. He said, "I mean that we are trying to be together with the Gülen Movement in all moments and at all points of our lives." Likewise, İsmail said, "We are inside one another with the Gülen Movement. Thanks to the *sohbets*, you can allocate time for yourself, you find the ways to enrich, or satisfy, your soul at them."

Regarding the significance of the Gülen Movement in his life, Orhan emphasized that it is much more important to him than all his family members. He said:

I do not know how I can express, but you know one person has a mother, a father, children, siblings, nephews, nieces, and a lot of relatives. Say if you put all of them on one side of a balance and *Hizmet* on the other side, *Hizmet* is above all of them to me. (Appendix I, 31)

Mahmut mentioned that the Gülen Movement has a very important place in his life. He said the most significant change in his life came through the Gülen Movement, which was his starting to perform regular daily prayers. He explained, "My family had always

wanted me to start regular daily prayers for years, but I only started when I met participants of the Gülen Movement.” He also linked his social environment and his ethic of work to his participation into the Gülen Movement. He said, “My friendships that started during college years have been permanent and disinterested through conversations with the first days’ joy. Moreover, I believe my colleagues and I, all of whom participate in the Gülen Movement, work more ethically and properly compared to today’s conditions.”

From the perspective of *sohbet hocaları*, the Gülen Movement had no less significance to them than businessmen. Ahmet said that they [referring to participants including himself] were nothing without the Gülen Movement. He further explained, “We have seen in the Gülen Movement what we have seen in our lives. So far, everything we have or we do have become the Gülen Movement, including the choice of my wife.”

Ömer said that the Gülen Movement has covered all aspects of his life and if it were taken apart, he would experience a serious absence in his life. He added, “It has become a character, a lifestyle for us. Sometimes I think if we did not participate, how would our life be? I cannot imagine a life other than the one without the Gülen Movement.”

Osman mentioned that he cannot drop out of the Gülen Movement because his life has been shaped with the Gülen Movement. He further explained,

In my opinion, the Gülen Movement can be associated with Islam because *Hizmet* tells us about the essence of Islam. The Gülen Movement teaches us Islam and its implications into our lives. So there is no possibility that we leave *Hizmet*. Are we going to convert from Islam? Of course not. (Appendix I, 32)

Mustafa, another *sohbet hocası*, said that the Gülen Movement covered all aspects of their lives. He provided details,

I mean the Gülen Movement is entirely in our lives because it reflects on every moment of our lives from waking up with the issues of the Gülen Movement to the time we return home, including the raising of our children. I can say that I only have one friend who is not a participant of the Gülen Movement. (Appendix I, 33)

4.4 Positioning of the self

When asked about how they regarded their own position in the Gülen Movement, all interviewees, both businessmen and *sohbet hocaları*, without any exception, gave humble answers. That is to say, the interviewees who took part in this study considered themselves as an unimportant member/individual who tries to contribute to the Gülen Movement.

Yusuf said, “I see myself as a member who is wandering around its edge, or its borders. My only thought, prayer from my Lord is to give my last breath in the Gülen Movement.” Mahmut said, “I see myself as an individual who is trying not to leave the Gülen Movement.” Hakan said, “I saw myself as a person at one side, corner of the Gülen Movement who is trying to give some support.”

Cengiz sees himself as having done relatively nothing in the 46 years he has participated in the Gülen Movement. He said:

They put the fastest athlete in the last order in a flag competition so that he finishes the race. I feel that I am the last in this competition and I work with all my effort to reach the target. Nevertheless, I am at the level of a new participant to the movement. I see myself like that. I see myself as if I did nothing so far. I see myself at the very beginning of the business. (Appendix I, 34)

Nedim answered the question almost in the same way as Cengiz did. He said he saw himself at the lowest level of the Gülen Movement. He then added, “I mean I feel as if I have just started.”

Cihangir said he saw himself as a private who is trying to run in the Gülen Movement. He then added, “It is against the nature of the Gülen Movement to say that I am an important part of the Gülen Movement because this is such a teaching that stipulates you to improve yourself and try to become a perfect person.”

Likewise, Hüseyin said he saw himself as a private of the Gülen Movement. He said:

I mean I am a private of *Hizmet* now. It is appropriate to say like that; indeed, I do not know if I am even a private. I cannot see where I am but I can say that if a responsibility falls onto us, if something needs to be done by us, if we have the power to do it, we fulfill that responsibility. (Appendix I, 35)

Ali refused such a ranking, positioning, or assigning a title for participants of the Gülen Movement. He said:

I saw myself as an individual, who has taken part in the ring of the Gülen Movement. I do not see a hierarchy. There is no ranking as it exists in government or business sectors. This is a movement of volunteers since this is a voluntary action. (Appendix I, 36)

For İsmail, the more beneficial he is, the better no matter he becomes/is the smallest point in the Gülen Movement. He said, “I see myself as a private, very simply because I do not consider an office, or a title for myself within the Gülen Movement.” Then he continued,

There is no expectation of promotion here. On the contrary, everybody wants to do something but does not desire to be in the front or to be seen. This is indeed related to the practice of ‘your left hand does not see what your right hand gives.’ (Appendix I, 37)

Murat gave a humble answer, too. He said:

I cannot see myself anywhere of it [the Gülen Movement]; in fact, there is no such seeing yourself at somewhere in the religious teachings. I mean, we cannot be even the *Kitmir*¹³ of this movement, we think this way. Some people may see us differently, but we do not think that way. If we can be the custodian...(Appendix I, 38)

Like Murat, Mehmet also said he was ready to be the *Kitmir* of the participants of the Gülen Movement. He explained in detail,

Hizmet means to stay as a private whoever you are and wherever you are whenever the time is, so I want to stay as a private. As to the question where I position myself in the Gülen Movement, I want to be as much in the front as I can contribute to it, but in the farthest back when there is a reward. (Appendix I, 39)

Muhammed stated that there is no positioning of the self in the philosophy of the Gülen Movement. He told about the philosophy in detail,

The principle of ‘mission is not asked for but given’ is essential here. I mean if a person demands something insistently, then we have to stop and think... Therefore, asking for a title insistently, asking for a position, is not a proper thing as far as we have learned. The proper thing is that if a task, responsibility, or request, whatever you call, is given to you, you first need to say that, maybe not in explicit speech but in your heart and mind, you are not eligible for that given responsibility, or request. This is the point where I suppose the impotence starts, which is the first step of active prayer. Though you are not eligible, this is bestowed upon you and you need to utilize this grace, or lottery. And it totally falls onto your free will. This is indeed a very natural system, I mean most things are improvised. Nobody forces you that if you do this, you will get a worldly benefit in return, or if you do not, you will incur a worldly damage. There is nothing such because this is not a business performed in expectation of rewards. (Appendix I, 40)

İhsan emphasized that the most important thing is to be in the Gülen Movement. He said:

¹³ Kitmir is the name of the dog in a story told in Quran. In his public speeches, Fethullah Gülen frequently refers to himself as being Kitmir of the Prophet Muhammad and those who serve Allah. The verses of Quran are as follows: ‘And you would have thought them awake, while they were asleep. And We turned them on their right and on their left sides, and their dog stretching forth his two forelegs at the entrance [of the Cave or in the space near to the entrance of the Cave (as a guard at the gate)].’

Is there a place in the Gülen Movement, we are in it. Insha'Allah we are in it, there is no behind, front, left or right of this business. If something is demanded in the Gülen Movement, a responsibility needs to be undertaken or something is asked for, I have always considered it first to be done, I mean I have tried to assign the priority to the Gülen Movement. (Appendix I, 41)

Selahattin employed an analogy while telling about how he saw himself as an unimportant person in the Gülen Movement. He said:

There is a doormat at the entrance of our shop, I see myself like that doormat. I do not see myself anywhere [any important position] of the Gülen Movement, and if you are here for that, please tear the survey paper and please leave. I am nothing; I mean, what am I?...I am just a particle of this brick, or cement. I see myself in this way. (Appendix I, 42)

Orhan said, "I do not know where I am, but as long as I am in it, there is no problem to me. Nevertheless, we are neither very high nor very low but around middle I suppose."

Zeki gave a relatively different answer to the question about how he positioned himself. He said he claimed the Gülen Movement like his family and/or like his work. He explained in detail,

Now this Gülen Movement is under our responsibility. For example, when my friends bring something [a task such as building a dormitory/school, helping poor people, or granting scholarships to students], it is I, or we, who will figure it out, I mean we will do, we will complete. *Hizmet* is now like our place, our family, our occupation. I see *Hizmet* the same way as I protect and support my family. If there is a problem in the Gülen Movement that needs to be solved, I do not see it as a problem of *Hizmet* that comes to me for help. Rather, I see it as my own problem. (Appendix I, 43)

A *sohbet hocası*, Ahmet explained that although he takes part as a teacher/trainer in the Gülen Movement and they call him *sohbet hocası*, he sees himself still as a student. He added, "I am still trying to learn something. Indeed we are nothing. I do not place myself to any position. We are the servants of this movement." Mustafa, another *sohbet hocası*, gave a shorter answer, "I see myself as a person who is trying to participate in it [the Gülen Movement]."

Ömer, another *sohbet hocası*, also said that his position in the Gülen Movement compares to a position of nothing. Referring to Rumi, the eminent Islamic philosopher, Ömer explained,

I mean there is not a position I can hold, but there is this saying by Rumi ‘I am just a particle of sand but I suffer for the entire desert.’ We do not assume a position in the Gülen Movement, but we are ready to undertake responsibility for every action, every organization, or every task where we are needed. (Appendix I, 44)

Osman, another *sohbet hocası*, emphasized that every person is at the same position no matter what responsibility, or duty, they undertake. He explained the reason why he thought so,

Every individual may have different responsibilities in the Gülen Movement. Nevertheless, since everyone serves to the same purpose, from the person who cooks food to the one who cleans the floor, and they do not interfere with each other’s responsibilities. These are good practices. During the time of our Prophet, one of the respected Companions was commanding the army for Islam, and the imam at the mosque was performing his duties. Both of them were serving for Islam. In this sense, every individual is at the same position in the Gülen Movement. (Appendix I, 45)

To sum up, this chapter first presented the story of each participant of this study about how they started to participate in the Gülen Movement and its *sohbets*. Then, the reasons why they started to take part in the Gülen Movement were presented under four main categories. Thirdly, the participants’ statements on the significance of the Gülen Movement in their lives were given. Finally, the chapter closed with the information regarding how the participants of this study positioned themselves in the Gülen Movement. In the following chapter, the educational aspects of *sohbets* are presented through the statements of businessmen and *sohbet hocaları* who took part in this study.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH FINDINGS: EDUCATIONAL ASPECTS OF *SOHBETS*

This chapter aims to provide the readers with the findings regarding the educational aspects of *sohbets* in the Gülen Movement in terms of their schedule, location, announcement, organization of *sohbet* groups, the *sohbet hocalari*, syllabus and content, aims and objectives, teaching and learning styles and dropouts.

5.1 The schedule of *sohbets*

All participants, both businessmen and *sohbet hocalari*, stated that the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement are held regularly at least once a week. Some participants said they attended more than one *sohbet* weekly. Based on the answers of the participants, it was revealed that the *sohbet* day can be different for each group, but once it is determined, it is not frequently changed and all participants arrange their weekly programs accordingly. Moreover, the *sohbets* continue year-round, though there may be short breaks due to holiday season. Below are the excerpts from the answers of some participants regarding the question about the schedule of *sohbets*.

Ten out of 21 businessmen stated that they attended one *sohbet* every week. Ali emphasized the continuity of *sohbets* and stated that they had them at least once a week. He further explained,

There have been *sohbets* since the very beginning, and they never stop. They are done on a regular basis, sometimes once a week, and sometimes every two weeks. Or there might be breaks during say holidays but otherwise it is a continuous structure. We try to do them every week, but sometimes it takes place every two weeks. (Appendix I, 46)

Orhan also gave a detailed answer emphasizing the continuity of the *sohbets*,

We have a *sohbet* once a week. It changed once. It used to be Thursdays. Now the group is divided into two. There's one on Monday and the other on Thursday. The group is set, the time and day are set and it continues. (Appendix I, 47)

Hüseyin said, "The *sohbets* are done one day every week." Emin told the same, "Once every week." Nedim said, "Our *sohbets* are held once a week. They are not always held on the same day of the week. Seldom does their day change." Muhammed said, "They are held once a week and have a fixed day. We have *sohbets* on Thursday evenings."

Cihangir also said the *sohbets* were held once a week. He stated, "Generally it's one day a week. We do it on Thursday evenings. And everyone knows that we come together in a friend's home Thursday evenings." Murat said that they had their *sohbets* on Thursdays every week, "Once a week. We prefer the same day. A Thursday that is special on its own." İsmail gave the same answer as others, "It's generally the same day but it may change according to the available day of the attendants so that more people can attend."

Yusuf also stated that the *sohbets* were held once a week. He further explained how the days for *sohbets* were set,

It's a day set by the friends in the group. It definitely happens a day every week. A common day is generally set for all the attending friends. This goes on for say a month or a two or six months or for a year. If a friend happens to have an excuse, we change it to say Monday or Wednesday but not Tuesday. (Appendix I, 48)

Five out of 21 businessmen stated that they attended more than one *sohbet* every week.

Zeki said they meet for breakfast on Wednesdays, which they start at 9 a.m. He further explained, "Then our hoca does a class for twenty minutes. That's the way it is."

Additionally, Zeki mentioned about a second weekly *sohbet* he attended, which he

called *mütevelli*¹⁴. He said, “And on Tuesdays we hold *sohbets* with the *mütevelli* and we share the issues about the *hizmet*.” Mehmet also attends two *sohbets* every week. He stated, “First we have a *sohbet* on Fridays, and also on Tuesdays for quite a while.” Selahattin stated, “For the *mütevelli* it was Tuesdays so as not to disrupt their [*sohbet hocaları*] schedule; It wasn’t used to be Tuesdays. But the businessmen *sohbets* were on Wednesdays.” Hakan also said he attended two *sohbets* weekly, “Every week, one day every week. They it rose to two days a week. And we continued that way.”

Ümit, who also attended more than one *sohbet* every week, provided more details,

Indeed there are two types of *sohbets*. The first one is called *mütevelli*. The second one is more for reaching other people. The participants of this second *sohbet* are reached by *mütevelli* in an effort to cause them to start doing daily prayers, to make them support religion more, and help them learn more about religious practices. The first one is attended by those who are *mütevelli*. In fact, the *sohbet* participants who want to support [the Gülen Movement] take part in *mütevelli* after a while. We say ‘Look we have such a cause, if you would like to help more come and continue here. You bring other people and cause them to do good deeds. (Appendix I, 49)

Three participants mentioned about other instances when they come together for *sohbet* in addition to the weekly *sohbets*. Zeki said, “From time to time, there are extra programs, we come together and organize short trips. For example, this weekend we were at Bilecik. We stayed overnight and visited Söğüt. We had wonderful spiritual conversations.” Mehmet told the same, “There are also extras every now and then.” Hüseyin also mentioned about extra gatherings, “There are also meetings held once

¹⁴ Kalyoncu (2008) describes the concept of *mütevelli* as follows: “Operationally, the concept of *mütevelli*, or essentially a board of trustees, has meant that the movement relies on several small groups of individuals who have volunteered to take on relatively more responsibility, whether overseeing more projects or donating more money when compared to other individuals. The *mütevelli* circle is open to anyone who consistently carries out the responsibilities that fall on his or her shoulders” (p. 36-37).

every month attended by greater number of people. There are also conferences held every three months for even larger audience.”

Furthermore, one participant also told about how they determine the days of weekly *sohbets*. Ali said:

One feels to bring an order. As I just said, you ask people with whom you meet through this voluntary movement in order to share your good intentions which days they are available so that you make a schedule for *sohbets*. Having determined the most optimum available day, say it's Thursday that week, indeed Thursday has been traditionally the most convenient day since it is a good day preceding Thursday. If friends are available for Thursday, you prefer that day. Nevertheless, new *sohbet* groups may also be started when a participant invites others in his circle. Then you look for their available day and determine another day. Yet Thursday is most often the available day. (Appendix I, 50)

The *sohbet hocaları* all concurred that the *sohbets* are regularly held once a week for each group. Ahmet said that he had several *sohbet* groups who met once a week on certain days assigned to each. He stated:

The *sohbet* day of each is group is the same. Say, if you have a Monday group, they always meet on Monday, though the place may change. Let's say you have a Wednesday *sohbet*, it is on Wednesday every week, but places may change. Sometimes you have *sohbets* at fixed places depending on the participants of that *sohbet* group. Their day is fixed, time is set, the participants are listed. These *sohbets* with fixed date, time, and place can be for worker groups, businessman groups, and officer groups. (Appendix I, 51)

Mustafa, another *sohbet hocası*, emphasized that the *sohbets* are always held on the fixed the day of the week and participants arrange their schedule accordingly. He said:

The *sohbets* of businessmen are such important occasions of their life that their wives know for sure that their husbands have *sohbets* on Wednesdays, say. They never invite guests or accept invitation on that day. That is to say, if they are going to make a plan about their husbands they know that *sohbets* are regularly held every week. Only during religious holidays, twice a year, *sohbets* are discontinued. (Appendix I, 52)

Ömer said that the *sohbets* are held weekly and the day is determined considering the availability of the participants. He explained:

The *sohbet* schedule is determined considering the available days of the *sohbet* group and *sohbets* are held regularly every week on certain days. Say, if it is on Wednesday, it continues year round on the same day. However, in our city people move to their summer houses far from the city center traditionally. Therefore, we experience some attendance problems, but we compensate this by extra organizations. (Appendix I, 53)

Osman agreed that they held *sohbets* regularly every week for businessmen and emphasized that having regular *sohbets* weekly makes sure that the participants do not stay away from spiritual nourishment.

5.2 The venue of *sohbets*

Regarding the venue of the *sohbets*, the findings revealed that the homes of the participants were the most common places where *sohbet* meetings were held. It became clear that the participants took turns and invited others to their homes. There were also other places where *sohbets* were held, such as workplaces, student dormitories, student houses, and conference halls of merchant associations.

Ten participants out of 21 stated that they held *sohbets* at each other's homes in turns. Nine other participants said that they occasionally held *sohbets* at other venues such as workplaces, student dormitories, student houses, and conference halls of merchant associations in addition to their homes. Two participants said that they had a specific place designed at their workplaces for *sohbets*.

Ihsan said the *sohbets* were held in their own homes, every week another participant taking the turn. Ümit told the same that they had *sohbet sohbets* in another participants' home every week. Yusuf said, "They [*Sohbets*] often take place in one of the businessman friends' homes." Nedim provided details about how they took turns to host *sohbets* every week. He said, "*Sohbets* are held in our own homes, we visit each other's homes in turns. If the home of one of our friends is not available, another one

hosts us twice or three times. This is because this [hosting *sohbets*] is voluntary and visitors are Allah's guests." Mahmut said, "Sure, sure, in our homes." Cengiz said, "Our homes, the homes of our brothers are always open. That is to say, we meet at our houses, drink tea and do our *sohbets*." Hakan said, "The businessman *sohbets* are generally at a businessman friend's home."

Muhammed told that *sohbets* were held in the homes of participants. He further explained, "Once the day is determined, people know that we gather in one of the participants' home every Thursday. Occasionally we meet outside. However, most often we host our friends at our homes." Cihangir said, "It's often at our homes, I mean the homes of the participants, every week in another participant's home. Occasionally, at workplaces, too. There's a cycle, I mean."

Ali said that they held *sohbets* not only in their homes but also at a number of other venues. He explained in detail,

We hold *sohbets* in our homes. For example, we invite a friend we call for the first time to our home. This way our homes become blessed and the family take part in it. There are also the houses where four or five students live in. High school or college students, I mean. We invite the friends to these places so that they get to know the atmosphere. Or it could be dorms. Places change but the businessmen's homes are generally more suitable for it. (Appendix I, 54)

Likewise, Zeki said that they had various venues to hold their *sohbets*. He provided further details,

The Tuesday *mütevelli* designed the upper floor of an *abi* [an elder businessman] in his way for this purpose. We generally hold them there but sometimes we hold it in our workplace and sometimes in an *abi*'s home, but it is the regular meeting place. Yet we also do it in different place such as a dorm. We have a dorm in ...¹⁵ where we sometimes come together. (Appendix I, 55)

¹⁵ The exact name of the place is hidden due to confidentiality.

Selahattin also said they had various venues for *sohbets*. He further explained, “We hold the *sohbets* in our homes, in brothers’ [other businessmen participants] homes that are available. We hold them in students’ houses. When we are a large group, we do them in dorms.” Likewise, İsmail said, “It [*Sohbet*] happens in different places but generally in participants’ homes. Sometimes it’s held in student homes, and sometimes outside or at schools.”

Murat mentioned about different *sohbet* venues in addition to homes of participants. He stated,

At home. They are generally held at homes. But if there’s no available home they are sometimes in a dorm or a student home. When the organization includes meal, we hold it at an attractive place like an association’s headquarters or something. (Appendix I, 56)

In contrast to other *sohbet* groups, Mehmet himself became the host for the *sohbets* by organizing a convenient place in his company. He said, “We become the host. The 150 square-meter place in the attic is for this purpose. It has a small room in it and other facilities such as place for taking wudu, bathrooms and a small dining hall.” Orhan also said they had a place in his company which is specifically designed for hosting *sohbets*.

Hüseyin said that there were no fixed places for *sohbets*. He further explained, “The *sohbets* take place in associations affiliated with the Gülen Movement, or dorms, in the offices of friends. I mean there isn’t a specific place around here.” Emin said that *sohbets* were had been held in the home of another participant every week until recently. Then he added, “However, for the last year they have been organized in a more convenient place because people were being late to each other’s home due to the fact that their workplaces were scattered around the city.”

Likewise, the *sohbet hocaları* mentioned about various places where *sohbets* were held, but still the homes of the participants were the most common venues. Ahmet said, “80 per cent of our *sohbets* are done at the participants’ homes. The businessmen open their houses to *sohbets* so we go there. Sometimes for a change, we hold the *sohbets* in the student houses of the Gülen Movement, usually once a month.” Mustafa also said they held *sohbets* at the homes of participants but he added,

There can be other places occasionally. For example, one of our participants has opened a new factory, or workshop. Or there may be another event. Then we hold *sohbets* outside the homes. The seasons are another factor. Especially in our city, *sohbets* are held in summer houses during summertime. (Appendix I, 57)

Ömer agreed with Ahmet and Mustafa, saying “They are usually held at the homes of businessmen. Indeed, there is such a tradition in our city that people, especially males, gather at each other’s homes weekly in a turn, known as *oturma*. This makes our job much easier.” Osman also said that they held their *sohbets* at the homes of businessmen, except for a few cases where they are invited to the workplace of a businessman participant.

5.3 The announcement of *sohbets*

Once the schedule and venue of the *sohbets* are determined, they are announced to participants through various channels, namely public announcements at the end of the *sohbets*, calls by *sohbet hocaları*, calls by a participant who assumes the responsibility, and smart phones through texting in closed groups.

Ali said that one of the participants assumes the responsibility to communicate the time and venue to others including the *sohbet hocası*. He explained, “Whoever organizes this [the *sohbet*] calls the *sohbet hocası* to do the *sohbet* as well as the

invitees.” Nedim also said that one of the participants carries the communication. He said, “One of us establishes communication. He says that businessman is not available that day; who wants to replace him? One of us immediately does and host the *sohbet* meeting at our home.”

Hüseyin said that the schedule and venue is communicated through phone. However, he also added the *sohbets* are not always pre-scheduled. He explained in detail, “No, not regularly. It [the time and venue] is not said that often. A friend may invite for that particular day; he may say we could do it [the *sohbet*] at his place. It’s not so well-scheduled I mean.”

Mehmet also said the participants are contacted through phone for regular *sohbets*. He also added that some extracurricular activities are announced at the *sohbets*. He said, “We have their [participants] phone numbers all. Either we call them personally, or we call some friends [to spread information to others.] When there’s a special occasion, the friends at the previous *sohbet* are told which day we’d come together.” İhsan also mentioned that the time and location of the upcoming *sohbet* is announced at the end of the latest one. He said, “Probably at the previous week’s meeting, whoever wants to host the following meeting makes the announcement.” Hakan said the information regarding the next *sohbet* is announced at the end. He said, “And in that *sohbet* I mean at the end of the *sohbet* we talk about where the following meeting would be, what time it would be and we reach a decision together.” İsmail told the same, “Sometimes we put it in a certain order and try to follow the order. Everyone is told where we’d be next week in that *sohbet*. But if something comes up, we find a way to set a *sohbet* day.”

Yusuf provided a detailed explanation of how they announced the time and location of the next *sohbet*. He said:

It's usually like this. For example, there may be a list of who is next and it is followed. At the end of the last *sohbet* meeting, one of the participants invite others to his home the following week. The host of the upcoming *sohbet* meeting personally calls and invites some participants who may not be at that *sohbet* meeting. Sometimes our *sohbet hocasi* manages the flow of information through messages on the phone or various modes of communication. (Appendix I, 58)

Zeki mentioned texting on smart phones as their medium of communication to announce the schedule and location of the *sohbets*. He said, "Communication was established by sending messages to each other every week. Once we used Whatsapp¹⁶. I mean it is never a single means of communication." Emin said they were contacted through sms texting, too. He said, "Whoever does the *sohbet* sends us a message or a reminder that it will be the following day or so."

Cihangir mentioned that they were informed about the time and venue of the *sohbet* through phone and/or SMS in addition to the announcement at the end of the last *sohbet*. He said, "It sometimes happens through the phone or SMS. But everyone already knows where it would be. Or it's told the previous week where it'd be held. But they are reminded still with a reminding message or phone call." Likewise, Mahmut emphasized the time and venue of the next *sohbet* is announced at the end of *sohbets* and then reminded to them via phone. He said:

Communication is determined wherever we've held the previous meeting. But if it's not, whoever feels responsible makes the phone call well in advance and lets everyone know that we'll meet at his place. Or we call them and ask if we could come. If no one comes up or if no one can do it in their place, we do it in my place, so that's the way it is. (Appendix I, 59)

¹⁶ A popular smart phone application that allows sending messages to individual friends, or specific friends in a closed group via the Internet.

Selahattin mentioned that the *sohbet hocaları* announces the time and location of the *sohbets* through phone or other means. He further explained,

I adhere to the *sohbet hocaları*. They suggest we take it to Tuesday and we agree. They may say Wednesday or Friday. Ours is a bit different. There's always some open means of communication. He calls us or lets us know about it in some way. (Appendix I, 60)

Muhammed told how they updated the old system of announcing the upcoming *sohbet* and utilized technology. He said:

People used to ring each other. We would divide the list and everyone would call some. In the last four or five years we've put it in order. When it's our turn, the secretary friend makes the calls and asks whether they will be hosting us, whether they are available. If they are, they tell the address on the phone or send it with an SMS message. Because social networks have become popular, we've had a Whatsapp group in the last meetings, where people say if they'll be attending or not, coming or not. (Appendix I, 61)

Like Muhammed, Murat provided details how they brought an order to communicate the time and venue of the *sohbets*. He explained in detail,

We often use social media for communication; we are part of the jet-set in this sense. We used to tell the secretaries about it, about whose home we'd meet at. They would have the lists and call everyone and then inform the host about the number of participants. And whoever would do it would become clear that way; it was such an organization. We still maintain the Thursday meetings in this way. But we also use Whatsapp. (Appendix I, 62)

Cengiz also pointed out how they utilized new technology to announce the information about the *sohbets*. He said:

Thanks to modern technology, we can find each other whenever we grab the phone. What's been launched? The Internet technology and other means of communication. You can contact the other end of the world; it didn't used to be that way. It was really hard. We would meet and decide where we'd be the following week. We'd agree on the time. But we no longer need to do that. Now that we have cell phones, you can do it whenever you want. The businessman may have an excuse and we say we could go to another businessman's home. (Appendix I, 63)

Unlike other businessmen, Orhan said that he personally communicated the time and venue information through personal visits. He explained, “The friends I just talked about are people I see all the time but we also visit the new participants every week on a regular basis.”

The *sohbet hocaları* all concurred that the announcement of *sohbets* was communicated among businessmen by themselves, mostly the host, or the main organizer businessmen of the *sohbet* taking the lead. Ahmet said that in the past when communication technology was not very widespread, they announced the next meeting at the end of each *sohbet*. However, they employed various methods in time. He explained in detail:

There was certainly a main organizer businessman of the *sohbet*, who used to inform others about the next venue. Then, with the advent of smart phones, the *sohbet hocaları* assumed the responsibility and businessmen were put aside. However, we resumed the old system five or six months ago. We determine the next venue at the end of the *sohbet* and the responsible businessman acknowledges and invites the other participants. (Appendix I, 64)

When asked about the reason why it was insisted that the businessmen invite other participants to the *sohbet* rather than the *sohbet hocası*, Ahmet made the following explanation:

The invitation by businessmen is more effective. When people are called by the *sohbet hocası*, the new comers, especially, have such a worry that they will come to an organization which they do not know exactly what will happen. However, when businessmen are the organizer, the *sohbet hocaları* assume a mediator role and tell the newcomers about activities of the Gülen Movement more easily. In this way, businessmen recruit other businessmen into the Gülen Movement *sohbets*, a system which has been proved to be more effective. (Appendix I, 65)

Mustafa agreed with Ahmet and stated, “We talk about the next venue at the end of *sohbet*, and the businessmen make the invitations during the week. The organization our *sohbets* are organized by businessmen themselves.”

5.4 The holiday season of *sohbets*

The businessmen and *sohbet hocaları* were asked if they had a holiday season when *sohbets* were temporarily discontinued. The majority of businessmen and all of the *sohbet hocaları* concurred that *sohbets* were held year round without any break. Some of them even mentioned that they held make-up sessions for the *sohbets* that have not been held due to some reason.

Ali said that the *sohbet* program is never discontinued, though minor changes can happen due to national or religious holidays. He said:

There isn't a certain period for giving a break. Yet what are the groups? Say there's a religious holiday in the summer or the summer holiday and a group can go but a few should stay. In such periods if it doesn't happen every week, we make it every fortnight. It may get less frequent at such times even if with three or four people if not with seven or eight. This program continues nonstop, we can say. (Appendix I, 66)

Orhan said they had occasional breaks. He said, "It might have happened for a brief time. I mean because there was a one-week or a two-week holiday." Zeki also told that they may skip a few *sohbets* during religious holidays. He also told the reasons why they took short breaks,

The holiday season for the *mütevelli* is three or four times a year and on religious holidays, and the same is true for the *sohbets*. I mean the period right after the sacrificial festival and the Ramadan festival may not be suitable and the *sohbet hocaları* go out of town. It's never more than three times a year. (Appendix I, 67)

Muhammed also said that they only had break during the Ramadan festival. He said, "Thanks God, we haven't had any, including the Ramadan. Maybe only in the week when there was the religious festival because most people were out of town. Otherwise it [the *sohbet*] happens every week."

İhsan said that the *sohbets* can be cut off for a short while during the summer. He further explained, "There seems to be some during the summer maybe because the

Ramadan happens to be in the summer. There might be some breaks.” Similarly, Cihangir said, “I think we only give break during the religious festivals and the holiday season.” Nedim also said they took breaks during Holy Ramadan. He stated, “We don’t normally have a period called holiday. For us Ramadan is a holiday. The Lord lets us rest in the Ramadan.”

Mehmet said that they used to give a break to *sohbets* when it was the holiday season especially in summer. However, they later changed this practice. He explained in detail,

We had such a holiday season in the first years. Then I voiced my personal opinion. Depending on the common decision, I said we shouldn’t stop doing them even if a few of us remains; otherwise, we’d be denied divine providence. My *sohbet hocaları* found it reasonable; so did the businessmen. Even with five people and even during the summer or whether comes rain or snow, we do it. (Appendix I, 68)

Some businessmen like Selahattin emphasized *sohbets* are never discontinued. He said, “We don’t have any holidays.” Mahmut also gave a very sharp answer if they gave any breaks to *sohbets*, “None.” Likewise, Murat stated, “We didn’t have any during the holiday period. We’ve heard of other groups doing it I mean during the holiday but we weren’t able to.” Cengiz was very clear about not having any breaks. He said, “*Sohbets* end in grave. There’s no holiday whatsoever.” Hakan said, “There isn’t much holiday season,” and İsmail stated, “I can say there’s no period of holiday.”

Hüseyin said the *sohbets* continued year round but some businessmen, including himself, often had business trips abroad and skipped some *sohbets*. He further explained:

Sure, some friends may not show up. They let us know a few days beforehand. I go abroad for business a lot, to Russia or Nigeria, for example, the only times I cannot attend. Otherwise I do my best to be there. I tell them if I cannot be with them. Other friends do the same. (Appendix I, 69)

In contrast to other businessmen, Emin said that *sohbets* are temporarily discontinued during summer. He stated, “It [the break for *sohbets*] happens during the holiday season, the summer, for example. When the schools end, so does it until they open.”

The *sohbet hocaları* all concurred that the *sohbets* continued year round without any breaks except during the religious festival holidays. Nevertheless, some businessmen could take some vacation, the *sohbets* continued though. Regarding such continuity, Ahmet said, “We continue our *sohbet* even if there are only two or three people, when others are on vacation. However, if all participants ask for a short break, that can be given but rather occasionally indeed.”

Mustafa agreed with Ahmet, saying “Our *sohbets* are regular and continuous. We only give break twice a year during the religious festivals.” Mustafa also told the same and stated that they had breaks only during the religious, or national, holidays.

5.5 The formation the *sohbet* group

In general, businessmen stated that they attended *sohbets* with people whom they knew at their friendship or business circles. Nevertheless, based on the answers of the interviewees, it was not common that participants of *sohbets* could start or stay in any group they wanted. It became clear that *sohbet hocaları*, as well as those experienced businessmen, assumed the major responsibility in the organization of *sohbet* groups and assignment of businessmen into these groups.

Ali, who has been attending to *sohbets* for more than 20 years, mentioned that he organized the *sohbet* group he attends among the people in his social circle. He said, “Yes. In fact with the friends I already have around me and urge them a bit. Similarly, Orhan said that his group is comprised of his own friends in his social circle. He said,

“It’s my close friends or other people close to me. It was my priority. The friends in my group have been my friends since I was 12 when I used to go to our summer house.”

Muhammed was another businessman who started a *sohbet* groups around his social circle. He said, “Because it was we who started the *sohbet* group, we never had a chance to make a choice.” Cihangir also said he chose the *sohbet* group he is currently attending from his social circle. Murat stated his *sohbet* group was comprised of both friends he chose to be with and other friends of his friends. He said, “To tell the truth, my friends are there as well as other friends I chose. There are other businessmen as well as their friends.”

İsmail mentioned that his *sohbet* group has changed a few times since he started.

He further explained,

How should I put it? Somehow I started in a group but then moved to another one. Then I met other friends. Our hocas may have changed a dozen times. When the hoca changed, so did the group. Yet change turns up to be good. You get to know new people and it’s no problem at all. (Appendix I, 70)

Zeki, who has been taking part in the Gülen Movement since his early ages, also stated that he has so far been in many different *sohbets* groups of businessmen. He explained in detail:

We didn’t choose it. I mean when we were accepted as a mütevelli, when we were taken in, there’s something that forms in your minds you go along. Because *hizmet* grows so fast, say if we have a group of 10 here, they say how about transferring three of you here. Then this ‘here’ becomes District A and then District B, then District C and District D. Because there’s constant flux, they assign you to a certain place, if I may say so. (Appendix I, 71)

Hüseyin, one of the oldest participants of the Gülen Movement who took part in this study, said that he did not choose the *sohbet group* he attended. He then explained, “Oh, no. We don’t have a chance to make a choice. We used to do it in larger District A. There didn’t use to be a narrow district then. We continue it.” Selahattin stated that he

was invited to a *sohbet* years ago and he still continues. He said, “I didn’t choose it [*sohbet* group.] They told me there was a *sohbet* and that was the way I went.” Yusuf also explained how he was invited to a group and continued with it since. He said, “We’ve been meeting with these friends for about five or six years. I didn’t choose them. Someone had invited me and then I continue for some reason and try to attend without skipping.” Cengiz also said that his *sohbet* group was organized by the *sohbet hocalari* based on the age level of participants. He said, “No. Our *sohbet hocalari*. Generally they choose for us. Because we’ve gotten older, they [the participants] are generally old businessmen.” Hakan’s group was also determined by the *sohbet hocalari*. He said, “When I met the Gülen Movement, the *sohbet hocalari* included me in that group. That way I joined the group.”

İhsan provided details about how the groups were organized and people were invited accordingly. He explained,

Sure, I mean the people we invite... the groupings tend to be on a basis of homogeneity. I mean it might be age, occupation, etc. So you invite people for whom you say ‘it’d be nice if this friend would also come here.’ (Appendix I, 72)

Emin provided a more detailed explanation how *sohbet* groups were organized:

No, we don’t choose it [*sohbet* group.] I mean maybe I should put it this way. We had a certain kind of organizations for a long time. I mean a certain number of friends. They say Mr. Salih will be attending from now on. He is a parent at such and such school. We say ‘welcome’ and continue from where we left off. We get to know each other. If for example it doesn’t suit you, you can be part of another group elsewhere... Or there might be a group you already know well and you may suggest joining them. Such changes can happen. It’s a flexible structure that changes if need be. Let’s say the number has risen to eight or nine, and it’s not very efficient with high numbers. If it goes more than eight or nine the group may be divided into two and meet separately. (Appendix I, 73)

Like İhsan and Emin, Nedim told how *sohbet* groups were organized and people are invited in detail. He said:

We were maybe five friends who we had started the *sohbet* and then everyone brought another friend along, and then there were ten of us. We started a second *sohbet* with these ten people. For example, if it's on Monday, we arrange a second *sohbet* for Tuesday. And we call our relatives, our uncle's or aunt's children, or colleagues from the workplace, and other nice people. The people we invite might be drinking or hooked on gambling. We don't care about it. Humans are as humans by nature; humans are chaste. They descend from something that is chaste, for the prophet Adam. What's important is that we invite him to the *sohbet*. He repents for his sins. When he repents, he soon stops drinking or smoking. His swear words or rude behaviors disappear; he kicks the habit. And some time later... we used to be that way when we started. He becomes a man of *hizmet* after a time. A man of *hizmet* is the most harmless man in the society and in the world. A man of *hizmet* is a man whose tongue won't bite you. He is a man who keeps his tongue, hand, and loins in check. He never looks at others in lust. He doesn't envy others' Money or wealth. He doesn't intend to kill anyone. A man of *hizmet* never kills anyone; he lives to make others live. (Appendix I, 74)

Mahmut mentioned that his *sohbet* group was formed on the basis of occupation and shared interests. He explained in detail:

It's a process that develops naturally... I mean it's not a matter of choice. I came to this city to become a specialist and I say it because I'm in this city. When I arrived in this city, we needed such a *sohbet* for specialization. Just like people need to eat three times a day, just like people cannot live without water, man cannot live alone. So he wants a group of friends and because we had certain ideology I started looking for such a group when I arrived. And when we saw there was already such a group of people, and as friendship developed among us, we became part of the group as far as I can remember. There's also the relationship resulting from sharing an occupation. You become a natural member of the group. (Appendix I, 75)

The *sohbet hocaları* unanimously stated that the *sohbet* groups were mostly organized by the businessmen themselves who invited their friends, relatives and other acquaintances. Ahmet said, "I mean there are only a few *sohbet* groups that are entirely organized by the *sohbet hocası* himself. Generally, the groups are formed via the social circle of *mütevelli* businessmen." Mustafa agreed with Ahmet, saying "I did not organize the *sohbet* groups myself. They were mainly formed by the efforts of the businessmen who supported the Gülen Movement, but we sometimes helped them during the formation of the groups."

Likewise, Ömer stated, “It [the formation of *sohbet* groups] has nothing to do with us [*sohbet hocaları*.] The participants are people who are invited by the businessmen. It’s not like ‘this person shall come, but that person shall not come.’” The *sohbets* are open to everyone.”

5.6 The circulation of participants in the *sohbet* group

Related to the information regarding the organization of the *sohbet* groups as stated in the previous section, the participants were also asked whether they have attended with the same people all the time or there were newcomers and those who leave for another group. In general, all interviewees, without exception, mentioned that their *sohbet* groups continually accepted new members and transferred some members to other groups or generated entirely new groups in the years.

Ali mentioned that his *sohbet* group is very dynamic in terms of newcomers and transfers to other *sohbet* groups. He said:

It’s complicated. For example, let’s say it starts with four or five people with the same group of friends, then I’m included by other groups of friends. When they invite other friends, the group becomes heterogeneous. The group may change after some time but the core remains. (Appendix I, 76)

Not different from other businessmen, Mahmut said that his *sohbet* group has hosted various businessmen who came then either stayed or transferred to another *sohbet* group.

He then told about the circulation:

Well it’s generally the same with us. I mean there are newcomers and also those who leave or those who are appointed elsewhere. There are also people who have never come but get to like the friendship we have and want to be a part of us. But because it’s a certain line of occupation and a certain age group, we tend to meet similar people. (Appendix I, 77)

Likewise, Selahattin said their *sohbet* group had an ever changing structure in terms of the participant businessmen. He emphasized, “There’s a continuous turnover, and in the *mütevelli* too. They keep changing.” İhsan also admitted the circulation of participants. He said, “Well sure there is. That’s right.” Yusuf told about the details of the turnover. He stated:

Turnover takes place whether you want it or not. Our friends may happen to get busy at times. Or someone in our group may want to join another group because he can’t make it on that particular day. And sometimes...we are all human; not everyone wants to think in the same way or to share a certain setting. He may come and then leave for some reason, which is quite natural. It’s not compulsory; it’s a matter of will. If you’re not willing, unless you want to follow it out of your own will, no one will be insistent. If your friend wants to come along, so be it. We have a lot of friends who have been coming for a long time. (Appendix I, 78)

Zeki said that his *sohbet* group sometimes hosted visiting *sohbet hocaları* who may or may not come with their *sohbet* group. He further stated, “Sometimes we join another group and whoever goes there does it [the *sohbet*.] It is not different people who do it. It’s generally the same person. But like I said, when it’s a mass gathering, different people may do the *sohbet*.”

Hüseyin pointed to the process how new groups are generated within a *sohbet group*. He explained in detail, “As numbers increase, a new *mütevelli* forms. They may assign one the District A, another, District B, and another District C. The district is also liable to change.” Emin also mentioned about how new groups are formed when numbers increase. He said, “It’s a flexible structure that changes if need be. Let’s say the number has risen to eight or nine, and it’s not very efficient with high numbers. If it goes more than eight or nine the group may be divided into two and meet separately.” Muhammed stated that once the participants of a *sohbet* groups reaches to a high number, it is eventually divided. He said:

Our *sohbet* group has changed over the years. It's grown over the years and then divided into two, and then the new groups kept growing. Currently, there are 25 friends in our group but when we actually come together, there happens to be 15 or 16 of us, or maybe 20. But about 12 or 13 friends join regularly. (Appendix I, 79)

Likewise, Cihangir stated that there have been many newcomers and transfers to other *sohbet* groups in his own *sohbet* group. He then added the benefits he sees in this process:

We come together with different people every two or three years, which helps meeting people with different natures, people with different educational backgrounds. It develops one's outlook to life, one's horizons. Although they are mostly self-employed or industrialists, they are least from different lines of work. There is always the element of difference. Your network keeps growing. (Appendix I, 80)

In contrast to other *sohbet* groups from which new *sohbet* groups were generated with the participation of newcomers, that of Murat had a different tendency as follows:

It happened somewhat like that. In fact it is not the usual way it develops. This meeting is supposed to give birth to another. I mean we got divided once but because it turned out to be inefficient, we did not do the second division. I mean we couldn't dare do it. (Appendix I, 81)

The *sohbet hocaları* stated that there was a constant circulation, extension and division in the *sohbet* groups in time. Ahmet said, "The group that you start with three people extends to 15 people in 6 months. It then becomes a problem to be in a house with 15 people. You divide them into two groups...Our ideal number is nine indeed."

Mustafa provided some details regarding the circulation in *sohbet* groups, saying "The participants of the *sohbets* sit at the beginning of the new season and discuss about whom to invite to *sohbets* among their acquaintances. They form groups considering the accordance among potential participants."

Ömer, on the other hand, mentioned that once a *sohbet* groups started with certain people, it continued for one to two years until there were enough people to divide the group.

5.7 The *sohbet hocaları*

All the participants to this study, including the *sohbet hocaları* themselves, provided information regarding the *sohbet hocaları* who managed the *sohbets*. The main points that interviewees stressed were their education on religious matters, their general manners as well as their attitudes towards participants in the *sohbet*. The relations between *sohbet hocaları* and businessmen during other times than *sohbets* were also mentioned by all interviewees.

Ali emphasized that the *sohbet hocaları* were quite knowledgeable individuals in religious matters and he added this was what should be expected from such people who undertake the responsibility of managing *sohbets*. He explained in detail:

I mean he's generally got to come from imam-hatip high schools or have been educated in religion. If you look for more, he's got to be a theology graduate. It's more appropriate for people well-versed in religious literature. When he starts the *sohbet*, he may need to cite from Quranic verses and translations, hadith and other religious books. We prefer friends who can explain the readings and convince the audience. (Appendix I, 82)

Selahattin said that the *sohbet hocası* can be any person around his circle as long as he has the education to answer their questions. He further explained:

In our region whichever hoca is staying there, whichever has the education, does the *sohbet*. And we attend them too. It's not necessarily a lecture; more often it's like a question-answer session and we ask questions too. We also look for answers for the questions on our minds. Anyone might be doing the *sohbet* I mean. (Appendix I, 83)

İhsan said that the *sohbet hocaları* are very young people but he was sure that they were constantly improving themselves to learn more and teach them. He stated, “Frankly speaking, our friends [*sohbet hocaları*] are much younger than we are. They are really very nice people who we call ‘my *hoca*’ and I pray for them. I can’t help smiling as I say it.” Cengiz told the same that their *sohbet hocaları* were young people but he also added the businessmen respected him highly. He said:

Like I said at the beginning, when they tell an eighteen-year-old to go to these abis and do *sohbets* for them, he is our child, our son, and we obey him no matter what. When he does something wrong, we tell him to do it a particular way. We are in a college environment. Those who graduate from here go to every corner of the world, suffer all kinds of troubles and sometimes torture. They do it for God’s sake and do not feel any offence. Nor do they complain about it. Why not? They are raised that way. That was the way Ottomans reared children. (Appendix I, 84)

Hakan said that “They are the *hocas* raised by the Gülen Movement. They have been inside the Gülen Movement since early ages, schooled by *Hizmet*, brought up with its culture.” Yusuf provided a very detailed profile of the *sohbet hocaları* including how they have been effective on the participants by presenting a role model. He stated in detail:

They are generally friends raised by the Gülen Movement. Most are college graduates. They may have started educating themselves in secondary or high school, studied certain books, developed themselves by listening to certain sermons. Apart from our core principles, apart from core Islamic principles, my observation is that the life of the Prophet’s companions receives so much emphasis nowhere but *hizmet*. I’ve seen the correct way of behaving not in speeches, *sohbets* or lectures but in the way my *hoca* friends actually live: They are the embodiment of living right. How to sit, how to stand up, how to speak to whoever you do, I mean the correct way of speaking – if I may say so – which are very important... you see them all in them. If there isn’t certain discipline when you come together, I mean as you know each other better, your way of interaction may change. But in our *sohbets* we address each other in the same way today as we did when we first started five years ago. It’s indeed very interesting. I mean as you get closer to someone, the way you communicate changes, your expressions change, your hand movements change. But here we still call a friend Mr. Ahmet, if his first name is Ahmet. We are indeed close but I

think this also an example. I mean certain cultural codes in the system develop us in this way. (Appendix I, 85)

Likewise, Nedim told that the *sohbet hocaları* are young college graduates and often have an education on religion. He further stated:

Sohbets are generally held by people who are residents of a *hizmet* institution, people who have studied theology, or if there is none, people who are studying at these places. For example, college juniors who are my children's age or new college graduates come to us for *sohbet*. I have no resentment for this because these children are mature. Sometime later we learn that they've gone to Africa or to Pakistan, working there voluntarily. They are very nice friends. God bless them all. (Appendix I, 86)

Muhammed also said that the *sohbet hocaları* were fresh university graduates but he added they may as well graduate from departments other than theology. He also pointed out that their *sohbet hocaları* changed in years. He said:

Sure, it hasn't always been the same person. Because these friends get new responsibilities over the years, they may move to another side of town, to a new city and even to a new country. They are college graduates who devote their life to their students. As these friends fulfill their numerous responsibilities, we come together during scholarship periods, sacrificial festival periods and evening *sohbets*. Some are management graduates; others, engineering. For example, we haven't had any theology graduate so far who did *sohbets*. But we've had an imam-hatip graduate. But because they have educated themselves in religious matters, they study before they come and can do excellent *sohbets*. (Appendix I, 87)

İsmail agreed with Muhammed and said that the *sohbet hocaları* were from various departments of universities with one common point, which is they were well educated in religious issues. He further stated:

This is done by abis who have finished college, engaged in educating students at the university, and devoted himself to this mission. They are not all theologians; they are from all kinds of departments. After educating themselves when they were still in college, they come this way and tell about religion in *sohbets*. If someone does not know how to recite Quran, they teach him. They know about hadith, manuals of Islamic faith, life in general and Islam as a whole. We call these *sohbets* classes. They try to charge us and we try to get charged like a battery. And this is repeated every week. (Appendix I, 88)

Like Yusuf, Nedim and Muhammed, Cihangir also said that the *sohbet hocaları* were young university graduates who were raised within the Gülen Movement circles. He explained in detail:

I mean they have a certain educational background. They are college graduates. I haven't seen a *sohbet hocası* who isn't a college graduate. They are sometimes engineers, sometimes history teachers. The truth they talk about may be the same but a mathematician or engineer who can think more analytically approaches it from another perspective and tells it more logically. For example, a history teacher still tells from another angle from a sociological point of view. That's a positive side. They are from schools affiliated with the Gülen Movement or some other institutions. Some are new graduates; others have worked for years in *hizmet* and been abroad for different missions. They might as well be older than us. (Appendix I, 89)

Mahmut emphasized the religious knowledge of the *sohbet hocaları* and said that the main characteristics that make one a *sohbet hocası* is his comprehensive knowledge in religious issues. He further explained:

Frankly speaking, The expression '*sohbet hocası*' is in fact wrong. Why so? I mean one has to have certain basic knowledge of religious matters but unfortunately we are not taught these matters in our culture. When we are not, we start looking for people who can impart this knowledge, people who can answer our questions. If their name is '*sohbet hocası*' we shall call them so. It is a process indeed. When people get inside such an environment, they want to know about religion and ask about it. So they want to meet people who are well equipped. How do we choose them? We don't have such a right in fact. We ask people who are accepted by the society, people well-known within *hizmet* circles, or people we believe to be knowledgeable both in religion and the world. We have such a group. We sometimes ask them if they have time to answer our questions. For example, we want to ask questions about our profession. For example, is getting extra fees for an operation is allowed in religion? Or is abortion allowed? Or what are the differences between banking and Islamic financial institutions? (Appendix I, 90)

Similarly, Murat pointed to the religious knowledge of *sohbet hocaları* and explained how he and his other businessman friends made use of this knowledge. He stated:

Our *hocas* are generally college graduates. Their knowledge of the world is comparable to that of the group members. They come and we thank them for that. They are well-educated in religion. They can do *sohbets* in religious matters and answer our questions. There is also an atmosphere of discussion, which take

place in a friendly way. In places like the mosque or other traditional Islamic institutions of learning you cannot ask questions when you feel like it. But we have an extremely friendly environment. When you don't understand something, you can fire your questions and open a discussion. People start talking about opposite ideas they've read or heard about elsewhere, which contributes to the friendly discussion environment. (Appendix I, 91)

Zeki focused on the point that the *sohbets* are always managed by the same *sohbet hocası* but sometimes another *sohbet hocası* may take the lead in the event that groups are merged for a widely attended *sohbet*. He said:

Our friends [*sohbet hocaları*] in attendance do the *sohbets* on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. When we attend a different program which we do from time to time, whoever is responsible for that day does it. It's not different people who do it. It's generally the same person. But like I said, when different groups come together for what we call a mass program, different people do the *sohbets*. (Appendix I, 92)

Mehmet emphasized the respect the businessmen showed towards the *sohbet hocaları* and considered this respect fair due to the fact that *sohbet hocaları* were very knowledgeable people. He then told about how frequently they changed. He said:

It [*sohbet hocaları*] sure changes at times. I mean for some reason this place is stable. Generally the term of a *hoca* is 1.5-2 years but here it's 4.5-5, and we've spent 4 years with three *hocas* or ours. Our *hocas* change every to years, but our *hocas* have stayed here for 4, 4.5, and 5 years, respectively. (Appendix I, 93)

Hüseyin also mentioned about the change of *sohbet hocaları* during the years. He said, "I think they change every few years or six months. It depends on the needs of *hizmet*. For example, when someone is transferred elsewhere, someone else replaces him."

Orhan agreed and said, "They change at regular intervals, I think, every two or three years. But I'm not sure if there's a certain period."

5.8 The quality of *sohbet hocaları*

All the participants who were interviewed in this study, including the *sohbet hocaları* themselves, provided information regarding the qualification of the *sohbet hocaları* who managed the *sohbets* businessmen attended. A considerable majority of the businessmen were satisfied with the quality of their *sohbet hocaları*. Nevertheless, there were some businessmen who expected their *sohbet hocaları* to improve themselves even more, though they still appreciated their religious knowledge and effort to preach them at the *sohbets*. All the *sohbet hocaları* stated that they know about their poor sides and constantly improved themselves. They also pointed to the importance of going to the *sohbets* well-prepared.

Ali said that he found *sohbet hocaları* proficient in general; however, he also added that the proficiency of the *sohbet hocaları* is dependent on the level and expectations of the participants in the *sohbet* group. Assuming a couple of conditions, he stated:

I generally do but - I refrain from saying they are proficient or not – the style might not always match the dynamics of the group. I mean if the group is a new one, the *hoca* we call in might be speaking in a more complicated way, which might not be efficient. Or if the group has higher expectations and the *hoca* does the class for medium level listeners, it might again not be very efficient. I believe at this point it is vital that whoever is organizing the class and inviting the group inform others because he has to inform about the profile of the group members and the *hoca* should be prepared accordingly. I mean who is he going to address? Will it be for primary school level? Or college? Your preparation depends on your audience. Who will be the audience? What will it be for? When the needs are analyzed, the person invited for holding the class should be well-organized. The organizer should also inform the audience of the details. Only after such synchronization will it be efficient. (Appendix I, 94)

Zeki evaluated the quality of *sohbet hocaları* in terms of their religious proficiency and mentioned that those who have an education in theology are much more satisfying than those who do not. He further explained:

Theology graduates are very well-equipped. When these friends come, it's a completely different matter because he does the *sohbet* very conscientiously. When he becomes the imam for prayer, you do not face any problems. Like I just said, I can recite the Quran well enough, for which I have received education. My grandfather was a hafiz or maybe it's in my genes. And others say I have a beautiful voice. Therefore I immediately notice the way prayers are carried out. If the imam is not good enough, you feel uneasy. We sometimes have problems in this sense if the friend is not a theology graduate. And there's a problem in this area unfortunately. Our friends should educate themselves in it. Why? I wish our friends would at least learn the last ten surahs of the Quran from someone who knows them well and recite them during the prayer, not bigger surahs like Yasin and Duha, which require greater proficiency. When such problems arise, others may follow. For example, when there are bigger programs, outsiders come along as well. And when the friends who you respect as hoca becomes the imam and the outsider has some knowledge about recitation, he may say 'he can't even recite properly, what kind of a hoca is he?' That perspective makes us uneasy. Second, questions are asked in *sohbet* groups about Islamic law. When that happens, our friend may not meet up to the expectations because he's not qualified enough. His answers are lacking. He either does not know or knows little. Or when he starts interpreting, his words are perceived as a fatwa. That's why, when we have meetings with hoca friends, I ask them to avoid interpretations unless they know matters about Islamic law for sure, telling them there's nothing wrong with doing so. Otherwise people may get what they say as a fatwa. In this sense, our friends who are theology graduates are well qualified and we feel relaxed with them. We've also had a lot of friends who are not theology graduates. They serve well depending on their self-education. Their frankness makes up for many shortcomings as well. And our friends are extremely frank. Frankness and a profound sense of faith compensate a lot. But from the perspective of qualification, theology graduates stand out. (Appendix I, 95)

Emin said that he was sure about the quality of their *sohbet hocası* in terms of his field, apparently religion. He stated in detail:

Everyone has their own accumulation of knowledge. Everyone has a different background. For example, our hoca has definitely more knowledge than I can ever appraise, He's light years higher than we are. There isn't a question he can't answer. That's the way we see it. (Appendix I, 96)

İhsan agreed with Emin and emphasized that the *sohbet hocaları* were well-educated although they were young. He said "Frankly speaking, our friends [*sohbet hocaları*] are younger than we are... They definitely know what they are doing. They are extremely busy but they keep teaching themselves." Regarding the quality of his *sohbet hocası*,

Orhan mentioned that he has never thought of the opposite. He said, “I can’t pass any judgment on this. I only wish they would find us proficient enough.” Cihangir said that their *sohbet hocaları* were well-educated, too. He stated in detail:

I find a vast majority of them qualified because they prepare for the lessons – let’s call them lessons. They research the details of the topic and work towards an end. Before they come for the lesson, they study sources like the Quran and the hadith and the lessons center on forming the ideal man, supporting the good, and preventing the bad. Because, like I said, people come in different natures, you may find some more close to your heart and from whom you learn more. (Appendix I, 97)

Mahmut agreed that the *sohbet hocaları* came well prepared and ready to answer the various questions of participants. He explained:

When people get inside such an environment, they want to know about religion and ask about it. So they want to meet people who are well equipped. How do we choose them? We don’t have such a right in fact. We ask people who are accepted by the society, people well-known within *hizmet* circles, or people we believe to be knowledgeable both in religion and the world. (Appendix I, 98)

Yusuf focused not only on the proficiency of the *sohbet hocaları* but also on their eagerness to answer the questions of *sohbet* participants. He stated in detail:

No one I believe can be qualified enough in a sense but they are certainly enough for me and my friends. I mean our friends [*sohbet hocaları*] definitely teach themselves well. And when they do not know a point, they say it openly. If our friends cannot answer a question right there, they give an answer the following week or in a few days. In some cases they visit our workplace to provide the answer. They say ‘Abi, I’ve found the answer to the question that was nagging you.’ We have nice discussions. The *sohbets* are not monotonous. They aren’t like a lecture. In some part of the *sohbet*, there’s the question-answer session. And we can provide our interpretations. But when there’s a dead end, I mean when he [*sohbet hocası*] doesn’t have an answer, he starts researching immediately and finds an answer, which proves that our friends are well qualified. (Appendix I, 99)

Murat pointed to the same point as Yusuf while telling how *sohbet hocaları* continually improved themselves and answered the questions of participants. He said:

When our friends [*sohbet hocaları*] are insufficient in some respect, they come back with documents and relevant references. I should say they always cite

books, which is good. I mean they are qualified, I mean well-qualified. At least they are much better than we are. (Appendix I, 100)

Emphasizing the fact that *sohbet hocaları* are young in general, Hakan agreed with

Murat and told how *sohbet hocaları* continued to improve themselves:

The *sohbet hocaları* are not qualified in matters of religion because they are very young. They are not well-equipped and 100% efficient in religious matters but they are always open to question. If they can't answer a question immediately, they can do it a week later after doing necessary research. They are pious guys whose aim is to live religion to the full extent. (Appendix I, 101)

Likewise, İsmail finds them qualified but he does not put them in a position of all-

knowing individuals. He said:

I find them well-qualified. There have been young ones among them, and experienced, older ones. But it is never like they behave as if they knew everything. They keep studying, and when they don't know something, they promise to find an answer to the issue the following week. (Appendix I, 102)

According to Nedim, since the *sohbet hocaları* are young people in general, one should

not expect a high level of proficiency from them. He explained in detail:

For being qualified, I should say when people stand before you do *sohbet* at the age of 22, 23, 24, and sometimes 25, I mean when they are almost still children, it would be naive to say that they are well qualified. They can't be. If someone like that comes out and dares to do the *sohbet*, we need to support him. We should overlook his shortcomings if there are any because if he's studied at home before coming, he won't let you get bored; you listen to him attentively. If he comes unprepared, he just reads aloud and cuts it short. And you listen to it as well and learn something. The important thing is that you get something from them. (Appendix I, 103)

Muhammed said that the *sohbet hocaları* are often people who have improved

themselves over the years, and he especially highlighted their different teaching styles:

Some might be new in this. There's a period of orientation. Some have great experience after years of hard work and have educated themselves to high standards. But every *sohbet hocası* has a different style, a different way of doing things, so even if you listen to the same topic, you learn something new and understand something you didn't. (Appendix I, 104)

In contrast to other businessmen who stated that they considered their *sohbet hocaları* well-qualified, Selahattin approached from a different perspective. From a comparison and contrast view, he said, “I don’t think they [*sohbet hocaları*] are qualified enough because we have access to Hocaefendi’s *sohbets*.”

The *sohbet hocaları* were asked about whether they found themselves and their friends who are also *sohbet hocaları* proficient. They all concurred that they still had a lot to learn, but they sat well-prepared in front of the businessmen during the *sohbets*.

Ahmet stated that they constantly needed to recharge themselves in order to satisfy the participants of the *sohbets*. He explained in detail:

We are not fully proficient including myself. We have many poor sides and we have to renew ourselves because there those who read a lot, follow the actuality, and listen to the *sohbets* of Hocaefendi. Therefore we must renew ourselves. We know that we should read a lot and improve ourselves. The essential point at the *sohbets* is this: You may not know everything but if you go to the *sohbets* well-prepared both academically and mentally, the *sohbet* time is spent more productively for participants. (Appendix I, 105)

Mustafa, another *sohbet hocası*, explained how *sohbet hocaları* prepared themselves in order to conduct efficient *sohbets*. He said:

We come together with our *sohbet hocası* friends every week before the *sohbets* to discuss what we will cover during the *sohbets*. We discuss on the books, or materials, to be followed and brainstorm on the potential questions that may be posed. The topics on the religious books are interpreted through 15-20 different points of view and understood in detail. In this way, the person who will be doing the *sohbet* goes to *sohbet* well-prepared. (Appendix I, 106)

Ömer mentioned that the *sohbet hocaları* of the businessmen *sohbets* were mostly experienced people who had been doing *sohbets* to university students for years. He said, “Those who have already been doing *sohbets* for a long time learn the religious issues in detail and then they are in front of the businessmen. The businessmen may pose detailed questions so the *sohbet hocası* should be proficient enough.” Nevertheless,

Ömer also said, “We actually need to learn about religious issues that we preach as much as the businessmen. Indeed, while doing *sohbets* we also improve our poor sides in religious knowledge and practice.”

Osman, on the other hand, emphasized the point that the *sohbet hocaları* should be selected from the theology graduates considering the religious content of the *sohbets*. Reminding that he was not a theology graduate, he added, “Currently, the society is still at the elementary levels of religious knowledge, so we can answer their questions. However, as they improve their level of religious knowledge, the *sohbets* will have to be managed by theology graduates.”

5.9 The interaction between *sohbet hocaları* and businessmen during *sohbets*

The interviewees of the study provided information about interaction between the businessmen and the *sohbet hocaları*. It appeared that some part of the *sohbets* was managed by the *sohbet hocaları* in a monologue fashion where the businessmen stayed in the listening position. Nevertheless, the interviewees mentioned that during most *sohbets* a question-answer part follows the initial presentation of the *sohbet hocaları*. In general, it became clear that the *sohbets* were conducted interactively both *sohbet hocaları* and businessmen taking turns.

Ali said that the *sohbets* were exclusively managed by the *sohbet hocaları* rather than everyone speaking on any topic as they wish without a certain order. He explained in detail:

At first, yes, the *sohbet hocası* manages the *sohbet*. But it’s a bit complex. It’s not an environment where everyone asks questions. In the end, the hoca picks a topic so that the lesson serves an end. By end I mean, if it’s Ramadan, the topic may be Ramadan. If it’s the Sacrifice period, it might be about it. Or If there is an item on national or international agenda, discussions may focus on it.

Therefore, considering that it would be more productive to make an initial presentation of 15-20 minutes, the *sohbet hocası* first introduces the topic. Following that, if there are questions, the conversations start. However, there is this order: Let's say there is a certain topic, first Quran verses, then hadiths of the Prophet, then other relevant literature. After this presentation ends, the interactive conversations start since there are questions asked by participants to clarify the topic or to make additional comments, I mean, some businessmen put what they already know, or think about the issues discussed. Naturally, the environment becomes a free conversation setting. (Appendix I, 107)

Like Ali, Hüseyin also said that the businessmen contributed to the *sohbets* by making comments. He stated, "Sure we all contribute to it. Every friend talks about what they know. Hoca I mean the *sohbet hocası* already says 'Dear elder brother, do you have anything to say?' and whoever has something to say speaks their mind." Regarding the contribution of businessmen to the *sohbets*, Nedim provided a detailed explanation:

They are very nice, very kind guys... They do the *sohbet*, and ask us to contribute at times. 'Elder brother!', they ask, 'what do you think about it?' Some of the guys are very alert. When some start to nod off, for example, they tell a joke. And they repeat what was missed and ask questions. There are new friends every year. It's not the same person all the time. They finish college and then leave. When they go away, we look for another friend and sometimes find him by ourselves. We ask them, 'Do you have a *sohbet hocası*, brothers?' Everyone has work to do. And age is not a matter of dispute. Someone comes and does the *sohbet* nicely. These friends are like diamonds. (Appendix I, 108)

Zeki said that although the *sohbet hocası* manages the *sohbets* with their presentations, the businessmen are allowed to ask questions. He stated, "The hoca does the lessons [*sohbets*.] We may participate during the lesson, I mean ask questions or add something." Mehmet also mentioned that the *sohbet hocaları* first make a presentation about the topic of the day and then there is a question and answer session. Orhan also emphasized the opportunity to ask questions. He said, "It sure has a certain schedule, which is generally observed, but we can ask whatever questions we want to ask and interrupt the *sohbet*. If we are not clear about something we can ask again and again." Cihangir agreed and explained:

Sure, the participants' educational backgrounds and personal interest in the topic helps with a livelier lesson. Everyone can contribute, and if they have any doubts, they can ask questions. Yes, some of it is lecture-type but when refreshments are served it's more likely that there are discussions. (Appendix I, 109)

Ihsan mentioned that the *sohbets* include dialogs. He said:

We should listen as he tells something or as we listen to a tape but it turns into a dialog later, without ever becoming a monologue. The topic may change completely at times but that's what he's [*sohbet hocası*] doing. Often we stick to the topic at hand and converse about it. (Appendix I, 110)

Hakan said that the interactive nature of the *sohbets* varies from one *sohbet hocası* to another. He said, "It depends on the hoca doing the *sohbet*. Some hocas, like you said, do it interactively in discussions. Others do it like lectures; they keep speaking and answer any questions meanwhile."

In contrast to other businessmen, Muhammed came up with a criticism on the interactive nature of *sohbets*. He stated in detail:

We should do self-criticism about it. There are times when the *sohbet* becomes a monologue. We have made attempts to make it more interactive, and participation from the audience is crucial for these attempts. There have been times when we read a book aloud for discussion, but if I have to make a choice, I prefer interactive lessons. But some friends [*sohbet hocaları*] prefer monologues, talk half an hour about a topic, elaborates, and turn goes into question-answer session, which is also a method. But I think two-way communication will keep us more active as the topic unfolds. And a much acclaimed method in these times is doing lessons by questioning and referring to others' opinions. Sure, there are times when we do not obey the *sohbet hocası*. (Appendix I, 111)

On the other hand, Mahmut opposed to Muhammed and other businessmen who favored interactive conversations between *sohbet hocaları* and businessmen and advocated the monologue fashion is more effective. He explained in detail:

I should put it this way. We prefer monologues. We want to stick to the agenda. If it's hadith, for example, we want related hadiths to be read; if it's about reading the Quran, we want it read; or if one of Hocaefendi's books is to be read, we want it read; or if it's Risale, we want it finished. We want order. But because of daily concerns, the mood of the audience, the questions in their minds prevent

sticking to a schedule. So it doesn't take place in the form of a monologue. It's more likely to be a discussion where questions are asked. (Appendix I, 112)

Like Mahmut, Cengiz also favored the *sohbets* exclusively managed by *sohbet hocaları*.

He mentioned that it is important the *sohbet hocası* preaches to them. He said:

Our new hoca does the lesson and helps us become more religious. He reads a book in the name of Allah. What kind of books? Books written by Said-i Nursi or other books. How should I put this? Any book that could be useful is read aloud and we get what we can. I mean it's not a funeral house. If there's no *sohbet*, if the friends are not read a book, if nothing is shared, there's no point in us being there. (Appendix I, 113)

The *sohbet hocaları* all stated that the *sohbets* included an interactive part when businessmen asked posed questions to the *sohbet hocaları* and/or an issue is opened to discussion by the participants, each of whom expressing their views.

Ahmet explained what was done in the interactive part of the *sohbet*. He emphasized that this part was the most favorite by participants. He stated:

We first preach for about 40 minutes. The following *sohbet* then is more conversational with questions and answers. It even includes the agenda of the day. The businessmen ask questions about the content that we have covered such as Islamic principles in life and other unclear points in their minds. In the first part, we usually do not accept questions so that our concentration on the issue is not disturbed. The next part where businessmen also take part is the most liked part by them. For example, they ask questions, or they tell an event they experienced. Or they may have listened to something from another hoca and tells about it. This second part is indeed much more productive for the participants, especially telling their experiences. This is usually much more effective on the other participants. (Appendix I, 114)

Likewise, Mustafa, another *sohbet hocası*, stated that they had the interactive part of the *sohbets* after the first 40-minute presentation. He then explained in detail:

When the question-answer part starts, some older participants even ask questions whose answers they already know considering that some newcomers may be shy to ask for the worry that others would think he does not know about the simplest religious matters. This part is never monologue. In fact, even in the Quran, God asks questions and answers are given. I mean Quran shows us the way, and this teaching style is Quranic. (Appendix I, 115)

Ömer and Osman agreed with other *sohbet hocaları*, saying respectively “We have a presentation of that day’s topic for 30-40 minutes and then while tea is served the question-answer part starts and businessmen ask about the topics they want to learn more,” and “after our initial presentation, the businessmen ask question about religious matters and these questions do not have to be only about the topic of that day’s *sohbet*.”

5.10 The duration of *sohbets*

The businessmen and *sohbet hocaları* were asked about the duration of the *sohbets* they attended and managed. A great majority of businessmen stated that the *sohbets* continued for about one hour and 45 minutes. Nevertheless, there were a few businessmen whose *sohbets* lasted shorter or longer due to several reasons they stated.

Ali told that their *sohbets* lasted for about one and a half hours and provided details as to how this period is divided into activities. He explained:

It’s one or one and a half hours. There’s also the food service, which is in fact one of the most important parts. You have to make it more attractive and you can’t do it with tea only. When you serve *maklube*¹⁷ for example to newcomers, it opens many doors. When you overturn the pot, sit cross-legged on the floor in a ring, and eat the *maklube* comfortably with people who are accustomed to eating alone at the comfort of their homes, some people may find it awkward. But later they can’t stop talking about the experience. I mean it’s something different; there’s something shared by all. Sometimes it’s *çiğ köfte*¹⁸ (raw meatballs), which also makes it colorful. This takes about half an hour of the *sohbet* and it’s an attraction because it’s all connected to one’s stomach. (Appendix I, 116)

¹⁷ *Maklube* is the traditional food made from rice, meat, potato, carrots, zucchini and eggplant, which is eaten with salad and yoghurt on the side. This food is often served at *sohbet* gatherings in Gülen Movement.

¹⁸ Another traditional food especially popular in the south eastern region of Turkey.

Orhan and Selahattin agreed and they said respectively “It lasts one hour to one hour and 45 minutes,” and “One to one and a half hours.” Mehmet also said the *sohbets* lasted for one and a half hour and added that they were shorter when they first started. He stated:

No, it was 45 minutes when there was a smoking break. Now the *sohbet* begins, and if there isn't a prayer break, and because it's the winter season, we said 'let's have a session before the prayer, then perform the prayer, and then continue the *sohbet*. If there was no such case, I mean if we had prayed, we started the *sohbet* after performing the prayer – which was before the summer saving time – and it lasted 1.5 or 2 hours depending on the circumstances. But it's never shorter than 1.5 hours. (Appendix I, 117)

Hüseyin said the *sohbets* he attended lasted for two hours. He said, “Including book reading and whatnot it lasts for a total of two hours.” İhsan also said he attended longer *sohbets* than others. He explained, “It takes about two to two and a half hours with us. But it's not a continuous lesson.” The *sohbets* Nedim attended also lasted for two hours. He stated, “Our *sohbets* don't last more than two hours. Two hours, they are. We drink teas, and no food is served but some do. Madams are very kind; they sometimes make a few things. No one complains about it.”

Muhammed said that their *sohbets* often lasted more than two hours. He then gave some details, saying “It takes about two to two and a half hours from the initial gathering to leaving. Sometimes friendly discussions do not end and the total time gets up to three hours.” İsmail also pointed to the friendly conversations in the final parts of *sohbets* and said, “Generally they [*sohbets*] last about two to three hours but the actual *sohbet* part is about thirty to sixty minutes. The rest is friendly conversation.” Similarly, Hakan said that their *sohbets* continued up to three hours. “Yusuf also attends to *sohbets* that last longer than two hours. He explained in detail:

Depending on the season of the year it takes about 3-4 hours but there are two sessions of lessons that take about 40 to 60 minutes. The part we all participate lasts about 20-30 minutes. He may talk as long during lectures. Then like I said

it's friendly conversations about different topics and including the meal session time runs up to two to three hours. (Appendix I, 118)

Likewise, Murat attended to *sohbets* that lasted more than two hours. He further explained:

Generally we set aside two and half or three hours. When for example we meet at around eight-thirty or nine, we generally leave around midnight. It doesn't consist of *sohbet* only; only one hour is that way. The rest is tea and conversations. (Appendix I, 119)

Cengiz stated that the length of their *sohbets* depended on the agenda of the day. He further said:

It depends on the conditions, needs and problems. If there's a need, if a dorm for example needs something, if a kindergarten needs something, it may last up to five hours. And we may even stay for the night to meet the need. (Appendix I, 120)

The *sohbets* Zeki attended were shorter than the others. He said, "*Sohbets* last about an hour." Mahmut said their *sohbets* lasted for about an hour. He further stated:

The *sohbet* part takes about an hour. But there's food service before and after the *sohbet* in some friends' places. Some friends serve çığ köfte. Our discussions about our professions take a long time. We are all like close family friends because they are all people with whom we've met for fifteen or twenty years in some way. (Appendix I, 121)

The *sohbet hocaları* all concurred that the *sohbets* lasted at least two hours, which was divided into two sessions. The first part was the presentation session of the *sohbet hocası* about a religious topic, and the second part, usually after a tea break, was the conversation session where questions were posed to the *sohbet hocası* and the entire group discussed on both religious and daily issues.

5.11 The syllabus of *sohbets*

The participants to the study provided information about whether they were following a syllabus during the *sohbets*. All participants to the study unanimously mentioned that they followed a certain syllabus including reading verses from Quran, the hadiths of the Prophet, and other religious books including those by Fethullah Gülen. The specifically mentioned that they started their *sohbets* by reading, or listening to, Quran in original Arabic and then their *sohbet hocası* presented the interpretations of those Quran verses through his notes, occasionally businessmen contributing with their own perspectives. It was also mentioned that the *sohbet* continued with a presentation of religious topic. Following a tea break, conversation session starts when businessmen pose their questions to the *sohbet hocaları* and discuss on various topics.

Ali said that they followed a syllabus for their regular group except for the cases when they have guest participants. He stated:

If there's a regular group, then there's a syllabus. If it's the same group, a strategy is set. For example, it's decided that it will go in the same order as verses if it will start with the verses. It could be as interpretation of the Quran first and then its translation. Then there could be a hadith or if the topic is about faith the lesson may follow a particular order of topics. But when there are different group members, when the audience is mixed, then there's no certain order and daily agenda takes precedence and is discussed during the *sohbet*. (Appendix I, 122)

Zeki mentioned that they follow a syllabus which is partially formed together with their *sohbet hocası* considering the demands of the businessmen. He also mentioned that the syllabus of the *mütevelli* was prepared by their *sohbet hocası*. He said:

No, the hoca decides on the topic to be done today but here's the way it's generally done. A topic opens, talking about others from their back, for example, or the salt. It could be something from Hocaefendi's works, or the *Risale-i Nur*. The topic is further explained with a hadith, which we generally demand. It's generally shaped by the demand from the group members. But the *mütevelli* group is not part of us. That group is formed by the hoca. (Appendix I, 123)

Orhan told about what they have done in the *sohbets*. He said, “Let me tell you what we’ve been doing lately. We first recite a few pages from the Quran and then read its translation. A topic opens another. We ask questions according to the messages in the Quran.” Mehmet also said that they followed a syllabus in their *sohbets* and provided an example of it by giving the names of some books they used. He stated in detail:

For example, we follow the Quran in Friday *sohbets*, and it’s like in many other *sohbets*. We read the translation of the *Fatiha* [the first surah in Quran] along with its original, for example. A friend or a hoca who recites well comes and asks everyone to recite a couple of verses and then we read the translation. Our hoca explains the translation and we sometimes contribute too. In the footnotes of the translation there are excellent explanations by Suat Yıldırım who in red ink makes references to other verses related to that particular verse. Someone gets curious and finds that verse immediately, which also has its own explanations and cross-references. (Appendix I, 124)

Likewise, Selahattin told that they followed a syllabus comprised of religious teaching and content. He said, “I learned how to recite the Quran by attending the *sohbets*. We recite the Quran and do hadith lessons. We read the *Risale-i Nur*, passages from Hocaefendi’s works. This is how they are done.”

Similarly, Emin pointed out that they followed a syllabus, saying “I mean all the books, verses, hadith and their explanations are part of this.” However, he said they did more than just following some religious books. He mentioned about the interactions among businessmen during the *sohbet*. He said:

We pack and take food and drinks to the *sohbet*. They are served with tea and we talk about this and that as we eat them. A topic opens, say, about the gold market, and you get information about it. So talk about exchange rates, saying how it changed and what they did in response. In our line of work the market may become active or inactive or exports may explode. People start talking about their experiences at work. And this is one of its attractions. Sometimes people have questions and there may be experts on the topic and guides the other about how they should act. These are all important. Why is the economy in City B powerful? People share everything when they come together when they meet say in their summer houses and new work relations are established. And what we do

here is similar. People share all their experience and they do this without any bias or expectations. It's a factor that brings success. (Appendix I, 125)

Mahmut agreed with Emin that they did more than just following a syllabus in the *sohbets*. He explained, "Yes, some of it. If it's hadith, we do hadith; if it's translation [of Quran,] we read translation. But some part of it is about current news and events in our jobs, which is done in a question-answer format."

İhsan said that the *sohbets* followed a syllabus that includes reading Quran, hadiths, *Risale-i Nur* and the books of Fethullah Gülen. He stated in detail:

Yes, yes of course. There are books by Hocaefendi. Indeed, if there are latest books by Hocaefendi, especially those in line with the current conjuncture, I mean suitable to the expectations. Therefore, I think that the readings from those books include, or follow, the current issues and the agenda of the day. It is always that way, indeed. Furthermore, there can be certain topics from the *Risale-i Nur* which is followed by our friends [*sohbet hocaları*]. Sometimes they choose certain points to cover, other times those who participate in the *sohbet* demand some topics to be covered. For example, the participants say 'Let's cover the surah of Yasin from the Quran. It's a well known surah. The friend [*sohbet hocası*] prepares for it and comes to the *sohbet*. It sometimes happens like this. What I mean the syllabus can be determined specifically by the demands of the group. During the *sohbets*, the discussion topic is generally about the religious understanding of the items on the agenda, which is the way I believe it should be. Also people have questions on their minds that pop up during the week sometimes because of the propaganda machine they are exposed to. The TV mostly talks about the light side of things, which should be expressed in a truer Islamic-Quranic sense. (Appendix I, 126)

Likewise, Cihangir also agreed that they followed a syllabus and emphasized that the effectiveness of the syllabus depended on the eagerness of the group. He stated:

Sure, everything goes within the framework of a syllabus which starts from fundamental truths to various other, more profound and harder-to-grasp topics. Yet it requires that the group be more eager and motivated because these are topics in theology which needs contemplation. A syllabus is maintained for harder and special topics. During the Ramadan for example the topic becomes the merits of fasting or during the month of *zakat*¹⁹ it becomes *zakat*. The same is

¹⁹ Zakat is one of the five pillars of Islam, and is expected to be paid by all practicing Muslims who have the financial means

true for topics about the Quran. When it's the month of sacrifice, the lesson centers on it. (Appendix I, 127)

Yusuf told in detail how the participants and the *sohbet hocası* prepared a syllabus together before they start the weekly *sohbets* with the group. He explained:

The *sohbet hocası* makes a tentative seasonal program after getting our opinions. We say what we want included. For example, we asked for the topics we loved from previous season, topics like talking behind others' back or those that is worth repetition or those problems we encounter in life. We go over several issues throughout the year and our friends follow patiently without any sign of boredom. We update fundamental topics so that new friends can benefit from them. We determine the program in such a way that they can read and master the works they study. They either read by themselves or summarize what they've read. (Appendix I, 128)

Likewise, Murat accepted that they had a syllabus in which businessmen participants of the *sohbets* took part actively. He said, "I mean we generally shape the program by ourselves. There isn't a syllabus specific for everyone. Topics are decided according to the needs of the group like following a book on Islamic way of life." Ismail agreed with Murat in preparing the syllabus together with *sohbet hocaları*. He explained, "We have a meeting about it with the hoca at the beginning of the year and we decide how much Quran to recite and how much *Risale-i Nur* to listen to."

On the other hand, Muhammed pointed to the importance of informing participants about the syllabus. He further explained why he thought so:

Indeed, there is no syllabus. Maybe this is one of the poor sides. For example, September can be considered the beginning of term and certain topics can be spread within the year. In fact, this used to be so in the past. We followed a syllabus, say the life of our Prophet was read. Now, the friend [*sohbet hocası*] who does the *sohbet* chooses the topic himself and conducts the *sohbet*. We have no idea about whether there's a syllabus. Even if people knew about the issue, they are not very proactive. If they knew about it, they would read it at home. Some may do but I think most of us learn about the topic when we get there and make guesses. To do it better and more effective, a constructive criticism would

be having a syllabus so that people can read the sources beforehand and discuss the issue in the *sohbet*. (Appendix I, 129)

The *sohbet hocaları* provided detailed information on the syllabus implemented in the *sohbets*. Ahmet emphasized that the *sohbets* definitely have a syllabus and explained it in detail:

We have *sohbet* groups with whom we follow a syllabus. We start with the pillars of Islamic faith and continue with principles of Islamic lifestyle, religious knowledge, prayers and other issues. We have such a syllabus. However, we do not apply this in every group. I mean it depends on the teaching methodology of the *sohbet hocası*. Sometimes, a *sohbet hocası* visits the businessmen during the week before the *sohbet*. Relying on the questions and conversations they had, he identifies the needs of the participants and prepares a *sohbet* session accordingly. (Appendix I, 130)

Ahmet also provided information about the books and materials they used during the *sohbets*. He said:

The Quran is the sine-qua-non reference book in our *sohbets* because you need to present references to what you tell people in the *sohbets* and verses in the Quran provide the proof. For the hadiths of the Prophet, we benefit from *Riyazu's-Salihin*. Then we cite from the parts of *Risale-i Nur* related to the topic of the *sohbet*, namely The Words or The Letters. Additionally, we refer to the Pirlanta series by Fethullah Gülen with one or two paragraphs. These are the four main sources we use at our *sohbets*. (Appendix I, 131)

When asked if any audio visual materials used in the *sohbets*, Ahmet replied, “Of course we use audio visual materials. If there is a *sohbet* of our hoca [Fethullah Gülen], we use it in the *sohbets* for five to ten minutes the most.”

Mustafa mentioned that they made a presentation about a religious topic in the first 40 minutes of every *sohbet* as part of their syllabus. He explained the details of their syllabus:

The syllabus is as follows: Essentials of Islamic faith such as the unity of Almighty God, the scientific evidence about the existence of God, festival of sacrifice, fasting in Holy Ramadan, zakah and so on. For example, when the issues related to business life is in focus, the advice of our Prophet about trade

such as being honest or observing principles of fair trade. We also include the social issues of Islam. (Appendix I, 132)

Mustafa also stated the books that were used in the syllabus, which were the same as those listed by Ahmet: “First of all, the Turkish interpretations of Quran by Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır, then the hadith book Riyazu’s Salihin, *Risale-i Nur* and various books by our hoca Fethullah Gülen.”

Ömer, another *sohbet hocası*, emphasized that their syllabus started with the essentials of Islamic faith and gradually became more detailed into the practice of Islam in human life. Ömer also mentioned about the books they used in their *sohbets*. He said, “We use the interpretation of Quran by Ali Ünal, the hadith book *Riyazu’s Salihin*, *Hayatu’s Sahabe* which tells about the companions of our Prophet.”

Agreeing with other *sohbet hocaları*, Osman added that they were open to the demands of businessmen while preparing the syllabus. He said, “For example, some businessmen demanded to learn about Islamic way of trade, so we followed a book on hadiths on Islamic trade for three months.”

5.12 Preparing for *sohbets*

The participants to the study provided information regarding the preparations they make before attending the *sohbets*. The majority of businessmen stated that they did not do any specific preparations whereas few others said that they got prepared for the issues to be followed in the *sohbets*. Several businessmen emphasized that it is important that the *sohbet hocaları* be prepared for the *sohbets*. Few businessmen mentioned that they used to make preparations for *sohbets* in the past but now they are not requested to do so, which they wished it were the way in the past. The *sohbet hocaları*, on the other hand,

stated that they made extensive preparations before the *sohbets* by studying various resources and taking notes.

Ali said that he only made minor preparations before the *sohbets* and emphasized that the *sohbet hocası* should be well prepared. He said, “As a participant, if there is a really significant, or specific, agenda, I can make some minor preparations; however, much more important is that the *sohbet hocası* gets prepared.”

Like Ali, Muhammed also stated that the participants expected to see their *sohbet hocası* to be prepared and did not consider preparing themselves as well. He said, “The audience have high expectations from the friend [*sohbet hocası*] who will do the *sohbet*. But when they are asked to participate, they prefer to be listeners only than to come to *sohbets* prepared.” Cengiz agreed, saying “No, our businessmen brothers don’t have any preparation. The *sohbet hocaları* are already prepared for us.”

Nedim said that that he did not make any specific preparations for *sohbets* but he stated he did certain prayers and read Quran as advised by their *sohbet hocası* to all at the *sohbets*. He explained, “I never make preparation before I go to a *sohbet* because I got used to it. *Sohbets* teach us how a believer should live. A believer lives by praying for other people.” İsmail also said that he got prepared for the *sohbets* by doing certain prayers and reading Quran. He further said, “I try to do it because it helps with your self-discipline. You try to push yourself harder to earn God’s favor and remember God.”

Zeki said, “No, we don’t make any preparation.” Emin and Selahattin stated that they did not make any preparations before the *sohbets*. Mahmut agreed, saying “No, we don’t make much preparation.” Murat told the same, “To tell the truth, I don’t get prepared unfortunately.” Hakan was no different, saying “No, I don’t do it.” Yusuf also

said they did not prepare for *sohbets* and stated the reason, “Frankly speaking, we can’t make much preparation because we are very busy. We always work against time.”

İhsan said they sometimes prepared for the *sohbets* depending on the topics that are to be covered. He further explained:

No, I mean if you expect certain questions you may need to do some research. For example, once we followed a translation of the Quran. We would all bring our own translation of the Quran such as the one by Ali Unal. It’s a good method. (Appendix I, 133)

On the other hand, Hüseyin said they now made no preparations but he added, “We used to do at the beginning.” Similarly, Mehmet said that they used to make preparations before the *sohbets* when he first started to attend. He added that he wished they did so now. He explained in detail:

We used to do it that way and I hope to go back to those days. Our hoca did *Risale-i Nur* lessons and he assigned us five pages every week. The lessons became much more enjoyable and participation was high. People felt they had to study. But it’s not so anyway. I just remembered. We now have a new hoca who puts extra emphasis on the *Risale-i Nur*. I ask myself what extra preparation I can make. We had *hocas* who had an excellent knowledge of the *Risale-i Nur*. Just like what Suat Yıldırım makes references for many verses in his translation of the Quran, our *hocas* would refer to multiple locations although there were no references. For example, as we were reading the 28th Word of *Risale-i Nur*, he would say “Elder brothers, let’s now go to page number X.” And from there we would go to another page and this would go on ad infinitum. He was so very knowledgeable. He would read passages by taking us to a number of other related pages. And I loved those lessons. When our new hoca comes this evening, I’ll ask him to assign us certain pages so that we can study them beforehand and participate in the lesson. (Appendix I, 134)

Cihangir stated that he himself prepared for the *sohbets* but not everyone did so in his *sohbet* group. He further explained:

I’ve always wanted to do it. I’ve wanted to get prepared like I was going to teach at graduate level but I’ve never had such a group. If the participants were more active, if they urged the hoca more, it could be different. So far I haven’t made much preparation for any lesson but I try to do some research throughout the week but the research is not generally for the *sohbets*. Sometimes I’m lucky

enough to read something in the *sohbet* about the research topic. (Appendix I, 135)

Some of the *sohbet hocaları* told about their preparations before the *sohbets* as well.

They said that they came together with other *sohbet hocaları* before the *sohbets* both at the beginning of the year once to determine the general topics and weekly to identify what to focus on in that week's *sohbet* to exchange their views. Mustafa provided the details of weekly meetings of *sohbet hocaları*:

We hold a meeting of on the topics our next *sohbets* with our fellow *sohbet hocaları* every week. We discuss on the resources to be followed, and those who are more knowledgeable on certain issues of religion offer us detailed information and prepare each other for the expected questions from the businessmen. For example, various views on an issue about the practice of an Islamic rule are put on the table among 10-20 people so that the issues are interpreted with the contribution of different perspectives. Therefore, one who will do the *sohbets* goes to the *sohbet* extensively prepared on the topic. (Appendix I, 136)

Ömer, another *sohbet hocası*, stated that he prepared for the *sohbets* by making a research through the verses of Quran and hadiths of Prophet so that he can give references to them while presenting religious issues. He added that he read through life stories of Companions of the Prophet because he believed they were good examples of Islamic lifestyle.

5.13 The homework

The participants to the study provided information regarding if any homework, or assignments, were given at the *sohbets* they attended. The majority of businessmen stated that they were given homework about their personal spiritual improvement in terms of doing certain prayers, reading Quran and Hadith, and other religious books. It

was also mentioned that the performance of the homework was checked by the *sohbet hocaları* during the *sohbets*.

Zeki explained in detail what kind of homework they received while attending *sohbets*. He also added how they followed up the homework. He said:

Not in the *sohbets* but in the *mütevelli* we have a checklist to follow about say the Quran, the regular prayers or some other extra prayer. We read [the books by] Hocaefendi, the *Risale-i Nur*, the Quran: these are the things we share but there's a problem with monitoring progress. (...) Once for example we implemented a program because my friends and I insisted on it. We said, "Our hoca!, we keep these checklists but how about introducing a scoring system as an incentive, like assigning certain points for the regular prayers and other extra prayers. We suggested including late-night prayers or late-morning prayers, which were not commonly performed. We wanted to make them regular and this was about twelve years ago. We said we could add up the scores at the end of the month and buy gifts for the highest scorer or send him on a pilgrimage. That year was full of blessings and many friends performed the late-morning prayer regularly. Now when I pray the late-morning prayer, I feel like I haven't performed the noon prayer; Or maybe I should say I feel anxious for not having missed the morning prayer because it's closer in time to it. (Appendix I, 137)

Mehmet also mentioned that their homework on personal spiritual improvement was checked during the *sohbets*. He said, "They [*sohbet hocaları*] ask us about our self-progress at the beginning of the lesson like what we've done in the past week. This Tuesday for example they are going to check the assignment given last week." Emin mentioned about the spiritual self-progress homework but he also emphasized the voluntary nature of it. He explained:

Hardly ever. They only make suggestions about saying certain prayers like when you wake up for the morning prayer or when you leave home in the morning. I don't know exactly how many friends do it but I believe they do. They must be doing it. (Appendix I, 138)

Likewise, Orhan said they are given homework for spiritual improvement. He further explained:

We are given homework assignments. Let me tell you what I've been given. I have to read one section of the Quran. I read it and they ask me the following

week whether I've done it. There are also other assignments from the *Risale-i Nur* and the *Jawshan*²⁰, for example. (Appendix I, 139)

Cengiz stated that their homework was spiritually oriented practice. He said, "I think we shouldn't consider this as homework. You are supposed do them in the name of God; I mean all the wudu, prayer or Quran things. The *sohbet hocaları* as well as other friends [businessmen] keep reminding each other of them." İsmail also pointed to the spiritual aspect of homework, saying "We have homework as well about say the Quran or saying prayers." Selahattin agreed that they were given assignments about their self spiritual improvement and provided details about their homework, saying:

We have assignments like saying certain prayers, which we do. We read newspapers, read the Quran from cover to cover or certain parts of it. They assign reading a certain section of the Quran and they don't forget about the assignment. This way we finish reciting the Quran. We also have other similar assignments. (Appendix I, 140)

Similarly, Cihangir mentioned details about the homework including practices for spiritual self improvement. He stated:

Once we decided that we should read one page of the Quran's translation every day as a homework assignment. We went quite a long way then. We kept a checklist as well and we were asked whether we'd read the assignment. Our hoca strictly followed our progress for almost two years. We don't have such homework now but we have started studying correct pronunciation of the Quran, say of the *surah Fatiha*. During the lesson we study how the sounds should be pronounced and how the words should be stressed. I don't know whether our guys study or not but we've had such classes. (Appendix I, 141)

Hakan said that they were expected to attend *sohbets* having read some books beforehand. He stated, "Our *sohbet hocaları* recommend that we read the book we are

²⁰ Jawshan is a long Islamic prayer that contains 1000 names and attributes of God. Jawshan means "steel plate" or "mail" and thus the name of the prayer refers to Muhammad's heavy armor in battle. According to Muslims, God taught the prayer to him as a protection from injuries in war, instead of hard armor. The prayer was written by Ali ibn Husayn Zayn al-Abidin and mentioned in Balad al-Amin.

following before we come to the *sohbet* but not many businessmen friends do it.” İhsan focused on the revision homework about what was covered in that week’s *sohbet* when their *sohbet hocası* asked them questions to recall what they had covered so far. He explained:

I mean we have homework at times. For example, we had a friend who used to tell us useful information about Islamic way of living. We would ask us questions about the previous lesson, which I enjoyed a lot. He would also tie these topics to articles of faith which he also supported with hadiths. He enriched the lessons the way and taught us correct ways of thinking and analysis. His questions certainly had positive effect on our learning. (Appendix I, 142)

Yusuf stated that they were given homework and he explained the approach of *sohbet hocaları* while giving businessmen assignments. He said:

Our friends [*sohbet hocaları*] have suggestions for the types of things we can do. They sometimes ask what we’ve done, which I really like because I believe following progress is a good method of education if we want to make sure that we are learning. Our friends assign say certain number of pages to be read till the following week and we try to do it. They recommend that we recite the Quran. They ask “Elder brother, would you be able recite these pages?” They make suggestions about some extra prayers and we do our best to listen to them. (Appendix I, 143)

Nedim said, “Yes, we do have homework type of things.” Hüseyin said he did not consider what was given at the *sohbets* as homework but responsibilities, saying “They don’t give us homework but they assign us certain responsibilities.”

On the other hand, Muhammed said that they were not given any homework.

Mahmut and Murat both agreed, saying respectively “No, we are not given any homework assignments,” and “Oh no, we don’t have any homework for *sohbets*.”

The *sohbet hocaları* also provided information about the homework given to the businessmen attending the *sohbets*. They all concurred that businessmen were given homework, and the homework was followed by the *sohbet hocaları* every week. Ahmet gave an example of the homework given in his *sohbets*. He said:

Besides the reading assignments I mentioned at the preparation for *sohbets*, we have given assignments about the life stories of Companions of the Prophet. We assigned each businessman one of the Companions of the Prophet considering the topic of the *sohbet* sometimes. For example, we said ‘Brother! If you could tell us about Halid bin Velid. Let’s listen to the life story of Noble Umar ibn al-Khattab from you, brother! Let’s hear about the Ten Companions Promised Paradise from you, brother!’ These are relatively easier assignments than asking businessmen to prepare the entire presentation of the *sohbet*. It is much easier to explore a person’s life story and present it, and they learn a lot while preparing. The often come to *sohbets* well-prepared and share information even we, as *sohbet hocaları*, learn for the first time. (Appendix I, 144)

5.14 The aims (and objectives) of *sohbets*

The participants to the study provided information about the aims and objectives of the *sohbets* as they perceived what they were to be.

Regarding the aims and objectives of *sohbets* he attended, Ali provided a detailed explanation. First, he focused on how Islamic discourse is aimed to put into action by participants, saying:

Now I realize when I first started attending the *sohbets* the aim was go beyond words. To do what you know; action I mean. Discourse and information is fine but information that is not acted out, that is not internalized, that is not practiced in real life is meaningless. So is this. You should first learn the information, then internalize it, comprehend it, and finally share it. Then you should go into action. So it’s only an initial step for *sohbet*-goers to continue with acquiring information, which gets boring by itself. But when they are introduced to action, they become more enthusiastic. Why? Because they learn how to carry the Quranic knowledge from the *sohbet* to other people; I mean they learn action. This is what we learned. It’s sharing messages in the Quran such as *zakah*, giving alms, ordering the good and preventing the evil for people and in the name of God. How will this happen? In the *sohbet* ring they will learn what good and bad deeds are. (Appendix I, 145)

Ali, then, focused on the aim to spread Islamic perception of morality to the layers of society, saying:

When you read the Quran, you see that much more of it is about morality than prayers and other routines. Then there’s the issue of telling others, other layers of the society of this morality. What will it happen? It’ll happen through social activities. How will the people in the *sohbet* ring carry the newly adopted values

then? They will hold *sohbets* in their homes to take these values to their family or introduce them to their friends. How will the values be shared? Some time later you tell people how things are done, how students teach themselves, how they stay in dorms. Some of these people come from the country and they don't have any means. They should accommodate somewhere. Now we see on the news that there's a drug on the streets called *bonsai*, which kill the addict in say three years. Someone should prevent people from this evil and other drugs. A lonely figure from the country with no family in the city. He will be useful to no one, not to his family, not to the society. But there's a way of protecting him. (Appendix I, 146)

Ali also mentioned about how young people are supported through the scholarships given by the businessmen who participate in the *sohbets*. He explained in detail:

He should have a place to stay when he arrives. You should give him some sort of scholarship he can live on. And you should protect him spiritually. In this way you isolate him from environments in which he could harm himself, his family, his society and humanity in general. The people who join the *sohbet* rings witness this side of events. They witness how these young people are protected from the evils of the city once they are placed under the roof of an institution. The *sohbet*-goers visit these students in the houses or dorms and personally see what they do. For example, when we held a *sohbet* in a dorm in a district of City A that included *maklube*, we saw the *sohbet* environment of these young people with our own eyes. It's an environment where young people aged between 17 and 22, or maybe 15 and 20, listen to their *hoca* attentively. When we see them in this way, we feel excited. (Appendix I, 147)

Ali concluded on how *sohbets* aimed to put people into action and help those in need in the society around them. He stated:

You look at their peers outside who are open to dangers in the society. But these young people will develop themselves and complete their education. We get excited when we see them in this conducive environment that protects them both physically and spiritually. So we ask "what are the needs of the dorm?" What are the needs of the students? Some people should channel their *zakah* and alms to these places. Here they see that they should be of some help and they start giving. Then you ask for their *himmet* and explain how it will be used. You can wire it from your company account and get your receipt. There are also other activities for carrying such good intentions to the outside world. When you make donations for humanitarian organizations like *Kimse Yok Mu* and when you personally see how your donations are put to use, you move to a new level in perspective. People see how giving leads to action and how they can become a part of it. (Appendix I, 148)

Zeki focused on the aim of *sohbets* to ensure the self-development of participants, saying:

One of the activities in the *sohbet* is about self-development, about adopting the new set of ideas and feelings. If the *sohbets*, the content of the *sohbets* do not offer the participants the feelings and ideals of *Hizmet* or do not facilitate their self-development...because when people improve their Islamic knowledge, their attitudes towards *Hizmet* become [positively] different, they bear different feelings and thoughts. For example, a person who learns how to read Quran through attending *sohbets* – one of our *sohbet hocaları* may teach him – develops a more positive outlook to *Hizmet* and feels more connected. (Appendix I, 149)

Selahattin said that aims and objectives of the *sohbets* are to improve the religious knowledge of the participants. He further stated, “It’s the right path; it’s the path to God. We renew our faith. I go there for myself, not to get anything in return.” Murat also pointed out to the religious aspect of aims and objectives of *sohbets*. He further explained:

People have their normal work life and style. Religious topics are sometimes forgotten in daily life or pushed to the background or abused. They need to be renewed and updated once a week and we should be reminded of our priorities. Learning something new makes you different and you become happier when you make others happy. There’s a machine out there working for which you may make contributions. Student houses or dorms might have urgent needs. (Appendix I, 150)

Hakan emphasized that the aims and objectives of *sohbets* focus on the teaching of Islam to the participants. He explained, “*Sohbets* aim to help people know our religion better and organize their life according to its principles. In other words, they are done to help us accept the guidance of religion and enable us to live accordingly.” İhsan mentioned that the aims and objectives of *sohbets* are to remind businessmen participants about their responsibilities [as a Muslim person.] He explained through an anecdote he and his businessmen friends experienced. He said:

Let me tell you what happened 20 years ago. We went to a town to pay a visit to an imam, who was healthy in those years. We started the *sohbet* and soon it was

time for the afternoon prayer. He had a mosque in the back. He said we could go there together. As he was going inside to take wudu, he put a tape on the cassette player, one that belonged to *Hocaefendi* and said in his typical kindness that we could listen to it till he came back. He said man is nourished through the ears. I can never forget these words. Man is nourished by the ears. We live in such an era that we could get lost if we do not hear something at least once a week. We are already a culture with an oral tradition. Sure there's always the option to read this or that. Here's how it happens in the *sohbets* of the *mütevelli*. There's a checklist which is filled in by the *mütevelli*, even if not during the *sohbets*. The checklist shows what we are supposed to study during the week but if we don't hear certain things once a week, it causes problems. We have so many minor and unnecessary tensions during some days at work. We've got to get normal again. We got to be reminded of our priorities, for which *sohbets* are crucial. (Appendix I, 151)

İsmail said, "At first it's more like social responsibility. Then it's supporting one another and encouraging others to remember God more." Yusuf agreed that the *sohbets* aim to provide businessmen with opportunities to develop themselves as well as socialize. He stated:

Like I just said, it's very useful in helping us develop ourselves. Apart from this, when we look at the activities namely the *sohbets* I should say they're occasions when you can connect with those around you and you become motivated. I mean these things don't go well with a single person; you need others to induce you. (Appendix I, 152)

Nedim said that the aims and objectives of the *sohbets* are to educate human beings. He explained in detail:

The main purpose... educating people is the best investment because uneducated people... we witness that they lest Muslims uneducated. Then they call them terrorists or use other names. It's not so. They send the people in their countries to schools but leave Muslim countries uneducated. After getting to know the Gülen Movement, I believe I moved from imitating believer to a true believer. Why? You see there that there's always war and dissention in Muslim countries. They try to deny Muslims education. Institutions of learning used to belong to Muslims. Just like our people go to America or England today for graduate education, they used to come to Anatolia I think during the Seljuk reign from abroad and they would boast for having a degree from the Seljuks. The land of the Muslims used to be that way. I hope it will again be so one day. The Gülen Movement was born to make this true, to educate Muslims. It educates young people and opens schools or colleges for them. *Hizmet* also organizes activities such as evening *sohbets* for older business people or civic workers like me,

which are kind of schools. You are not taught to use guns or swear words. All you learn is to say God or Quran. There's no evil here. (Appendix I, 153)

Muhammed stated that the primary aim of the *sohbets* is to reach people and introduce the activities of the Gülen Movement if they would like to take responsibility. He further explained:

Sohbets are only a beginning for reaching people and introducing them what we do. The aim is to get them participate in the activities and to take over responsibility. We want them to work consciously and willingly. But if they do that, there's nothing like they shouldn't attend the *sohbets*. Some people may decide to participate in the activities after a month; for others it may take years. So *sohbets* are maintained patiently. In other words, no one asks anyone to stop coming unless they decide to do so. The aim in participation is surely getting them to learn the movement and then to become active in it and finally become an action person. But it's not fair to expect the same thing from everyone. (Appendix I, 154)

Cihangir mentioned that the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement aim to cultivate the ideal human being in terms of Islamic way of life. He explained in detail:

The aim is to raise the ideal man. The approach is not deductive but inductive. If a person is good, so will be the family, which is the building block of the society, and the society will be good. It's about raising people who abide by ethical rules and avoid theft, corruption or abuse of power. And there's always a brainstorming for developing techniques that would encourage people to embrace prayers so that they can stay away from dangers like alcohol. In its more general sense, it's about doing good and preventing evil. To do this, you have to be particular about certain details. Alcohol for example is forbidden by religion. What things are forbidden? What do they lead to? The worldly life is temporary, and we are middle-aged before we know it. Our reference is the Quran and the hadith, whose principles we should make our way of life. (Appendix I, 155)

On the other hand, Mahmut stated that the aims and objectives of *sohbets* were to offer participants opportunities for socialization. He said, "Our aim in *sohbets* is to see each other, share information, learn new things and most importantly improve our friendship. Another is establishing connection with others because as businessmen we may not have a social life outside."

5.15 What is learned at *sobhets*?

The participants to the study provided information regarding what they learn at the *sobhets* they attended. It became clear that the *sobhets* predominantly have a religious content as stated by the majority of the businessmen.

Orhan said that he learned most of the religious practices in his current life through what he listened to at the *sobhets* he attended. He said:

Let me speak for myself. Those in my group including me didn't perform the prayers when we first started. We simply didn't do it. I can say now there's no one in the group who doesn't pray. We didn't know how to read the Quran. I'd go to the neighborhood mosque when I was a child. I learned it then but forgot later, a process that repeated itself. Now everyone in the group knows how to read the Quran. We thought we knew our religion, a claim generally made by everyone. We understood we didn't know the religion. We learned there was a place that could teach us the religion. This is change from a religious perspective. It's harder to describe ethics-wise. Sins still look attractive – which is the devil's work – but there's now some kind of mechanism of conscience or a mechanism of some kind. I don't know how *sobhet hocaları* do it but they make you stay away from sins. They format you, though one day, which makes do for a week. When you come back the following week, they give you another format and you are renewed again. If you make a break, the devil wins. (Appendix I, 156)

Mahmut stated that they learned about religion in the *sobhets*. He explained in detail:

Sure, for a religious education. I graduated from a state high school, for example, and learned many religious topics by attending the lessons regularly. Teaching might not be enough but this not an actual school. It's not an intensive course like the ones you take when you prepare for the university entrance exam. But it's a process and as you attend the lessons you automatically develop a basic understanding of Islam. (Appendix I, 157)

Likewise, Emin said that the *sobhets* were an opportunity to learn about religion by bringing in their questions. He explained:

You definitely learn new things each time. You have a chance to ask all kinds of questions. If we happen to come across a problem in daily life, you bring it for religious discussion. Everyone has their own experiences which they share with the group. Your doubts are erased one by one. You ask yourself how in the world you never heard about it. Then you say to yourself that you should change yourself in a particular way. And this is an endless process. (Appendix I, 158)

Ali emphasized that he saw the Gülen Movement as a school in general and told about what he learned through attending *sohbets*. He stated:

When I expect to receive one but happen to get eight and see that the goal of nine is met, I can think of two reasons. One is that this job has a spiritual side to it, that it happens thanks to God's help, that you have to set off by setting some goal, and that you have to show some effort for doing it. You also learn that none is the result of your efforts. You go from place to place but can't get anything for days but then God somehow sends it to you from a most expected source and you understand your ego stands for nothing. You see the result is not your product. Your duty is to make some effort and tell the job but it's a heavenly sender that makes it come true. I've always drawn a moral from this. In this sense *hizmet* is a school and I have a lot more to learn. I keep learning in my social life and want to share my experiences. (Appendix I, 159)

Selahattin said that he learned how to be happy in life. He explained, "My life changed, for example. It's the same with other friends who attend. You reach happiness in this world and hope to do the same for the next. This world is in fact a cropland for the hereafter. You reap what you sow."

The *sohbet hocaları* stated that businessmen learn about religion at the *sohbets* they attend. However, they also pointed out that what businessmen learn at the *sohbets* is not just the theoretical aspect of religion but how this theoretical knowledge can be put into practice in life.

Akif, a *sohbet hocası*, provided the details of what they taught about religion at the *sohbets*. He said:

First, they learn about the truths of Islamic faith, or tenets of belief, namely belief in God, belief in the Angels, belief in the holy Books, belief in the Hereafter, and so on. Then, they learn about Islam, namely prayers, fasting, zakah, pilgrimage, social relations and related issues. Third, they learn about *ihsan*²¹ which can be defined as a human being's journey with God in his heart, that is to say to feel the constant awareness of being supervised by God both in your heart and mind. (Appendix I, 160)

²¹ Acting and praying as if seeing God, and being conscious of that He sees you though you do not see Him

5.16 Attendance

The participants to the study provided information as to how they felt if they missed one or more *sohbets* for some reason. All the businessmen unanimously responded that they rarely missed *sohbets* because they placed very high importance on them. They also added that missing a *sohbet* would incur a strong feeling of absence in them.

Ali said that he already organized his program considering the schedule of *sohbets* and so far had missed at most one or two *sohbets* due to very important events such as death of a relative or serious illness. He explained in detail:

Yes. I certainly join the *sohbets* that are consultative in nature. You either need to be ill or there needs to be a funeral. Otherwise, I have no excuse for not attending. I feel guilty when I can't go. I feel something's missing because I make all my schedules according to it. It's like a meeting by the board of directors: you'll feel something's wrong when you're not there. Similarly, you feel the deficiency deep inside because it's become your duty. It becomes part of your job specifications. (Appendix I, 161)

Cengiz said that when he missed a *sohbet* meeting, he would feel as if his world collapsed. He stated, "My world would fall apart. If I happen to skip two weeks because of an emergency, I feel like I'm isolated from the world." Hakan agreed, saying "Sure, sure. These *sohbets* quench or spiritual thirst. You feel something's lacking if you skip a week."

Likewise, Mehmet emphasized that he never missed *sohbets* and in the event he did he started to experience significant changes in his lifestyle. He considered *sohbets* a staple of his life, saying:

I generally attend the *sohbets*. By generally I mean all the time. Because I'm the host, I hardly ever miss them. But when I'm on a leave or something, something feels lacking. The way I look changes; the way I behave changes. It's like the body is not nourished. Just like what you feel when you aren't nourished physically. (Appendix I, 162)

Mehmet then delineated the significance he attributes to continuing *sohbets* regularly with an example in his life, saying:

My cousin also attends the Tuesday *sohbets*. I asked him to speak to my brother-in-law because they are close and he would feel offended if I said anything. I wanted him to ask my in-law why he wasn't going to the *sohbets* because I knew he wasn't for quite a while. He was speaking in a way no decent man would. I told my cousin to tell my in-law that your discontinuing the *sohbets* will lead you to leave the movement. He refused to say this but I insisted. I said "Show him the scorpion on his back!" People can really degenerate fast; it can't be otherwise because there are worldly benefits that attract the ego. The path to heaven is full of setbacks. The path to hell is full of attractions. This is the way I think because if I can share with my friends here what I can't with anyone else. (Appendix I, 163)

Hüseyin, who had earlier mentioned that their *sohbets* were early in the morning, stated that he insisted on attending the *sohbets* even at times he feels not well. He said, "You certainly want them. Sometimes you wake in the morning and feel unwell. But on these days you say I'll get better by the time I go there." Emin said he never missed and added that the participants all followed the attendance of each other. He explained, "You definitely miss your friends. When you skip one week they immediately ask questions about it." Orhan and Selahattin declared that they never missed any of the *sohbets*, saying respectively "There isn't a time I missed unless there was an absolute necessity," and "I attend, I always attend."

İhsan said that he never thought of missing a *sohbet*, especially the mütevelli, because it was an important responsibility to be in that circle. He explained, "I cannot miss a mütevelli because it is composed of people who say I'm in this and I'm ready to share responsibility for what needs done. They are places where solutions to problems are sought."

Yusuf also admitted that he had the feeling of absence when he missed that week's *sohbet*. He said, "Definitely yes. Sometimes we are on a trip and call our friends

to say we won't be able to come. But we try to make up for it the following week.

We've got so used to it after a period of 20—25 years.” İsmail agreed that he felt bad when he missed a *sohbet*, saying “Yes, like I said it wouldn't be as effective if it were done monthly. Two times a week would cause problems as well. Once a week is the best option.”

Muhammed stated that he regretted the other day when he missed a *sohbet* that he could have attended even if he had some reason for not going. He explained:

Sometimes people in the group talk about it. They say they may find it hard to attend because they feel tired or because it was an extra stressful day, a feeling which they say they could hardly suppress. You will sorry when you can't go. When you wake up the following morning and when you feel refreshed, you regret that you didn't go and wish you had forced yourself to. Other friends will tell you similar stories, that they feel bad for not making it to the *sohbet*. (Appendix I, 164)

Cihangir agreed with Muhammed and admitted that he felt very sorry if he could not make it to the *sohbet*. He said:

I do [feel sorry.] Somehow I couldn't make it one day. Was it a coincidence or a test, I don't know. It was five o'clock. The venue wasn't set and we didn't know what to do. I had a guilty conscience because of the religious holiday. I wanted it over and wished we could at least come together in a café. I should be able to say I made it to the *sohbet*. It's essential that I attend it even when attendance is low. (Appendix I, 165)

Likewise, Mahmut stated that he felt something missing when he could not attend the weekly *sohbets*. He explained how he felt in detail:

We sure feel something's missing, like we've been apart for a long while. For example, I have to be on duty on some nights and can't go to the *sohbet*. It feels like I haven't seen my friends for a long time. We feel the urgency to attend the next one. (Appendix I, 166)

For Murat, attending weekly *sohbets* became an integral part of his life and when he missed it he felt bad. He said:

That week would be – how shall I put this – weird. I try to maintain my attendance and to avoid producing excuses. It's become a habit. Even when there is some urgency at home, I try to do my best to attend. I get tired by the evening. The environment in our plant is a tiring one. Sometimes I feel especially dead. But when it's a *sohbet* day, an extra generator starts working and it takes me to the *sohbet*. It's become such a lifestyle. (Appendix I, 167)

5.17 The recruitment to the *sohbet* group

The participants to the study provided information regarding how newcomers were recruited to their *sohbet* group and explained whether there are certain criteria for accepting more people to their *sohbet* group. Some businessmen said they opened the doors of their *sohbets* to everyone without any criteria, whereas others emphasized that those who would join their group should bear certain characteristics.

Ali said that everyone is invited to their *sohbets* for the sake of God. Moreover he emphasized that by opening *sohbets* to everyone the aims of the Gülen Movement is better understood by those who stay in a distance. He explained in detail:

Indeed, you do not select people, because I mean you feel yourself responsible to that person, I mean you feel the urge to reach him for the sake of God. We may also consider that there must be a way to reach him. This is because everyone is not under the same category, there may be those who have prejudice against you, I mean those who prefer to stay in a distance to what we do. It is probably because he does not know you, I mean those who look from outside may think we are a sect, or we perform invocation. You see that there are sometimes negative attitudes in the society against activities like ours. Most people perceive the Gülen Movement as a sect, a closed circle, or a different structure. However, it is not like that. Only if he enters into it does he see it is not such a structure but a voluntary organization. He sees that this is the Gülen Movement. Therefore, it is often not easy for biased people to accept this movement and they stay in a distance. Then, you invite these people to an appropriate program. You say that there is a festival, say the Turkish Olympiads. You invite them to such festivals. You invite them to occasions that are perceived more clearly in the society. In this way, the wrong image and false perception is corrected. (Appendix I, 168)

Zeki said that they invite the people within their business environment to the *sohbets* primarily but he did not mention any specific criteria. He stated:

Considering we are businessmen, the newcomers can be first the people you do business with and secondly your neighbors. I mean the neighbors around your shop, those whom you know in this market. That's the principle. You cannot easily spread into your relative circle. It is very difficult to make your relatives accept something. Also there is the fact that our home and workplace are in very far districts from each other, which makes us less accessible to our home neighbors. Those whom we invite are mostly from our business circle. We sometimes meet people outside of our business circle through friends but this is not so common. Those we invite are often related to our business, our market. (Appendix I, 169)

Mehmet said that the number of *sohbet* participants is extended when each participant reaches another one and invites to the *sohbets*. He further explained:

We beg our friends, we tell them that look you have liked this so other people should benefit too. Please invite other people so that they benefit from this. I mean one participant causes another to come and it extends and circulates in this way. Some move to other cities, or districts, some change their business, some join other *sohbet* groups. However, our Tuesday *sohbets* never change. The names of participants may change but there are always a certain number of people. What I mean is there are around 50-60 people that we are contact with and there are always around 15 people in the *sohbet*. (Appendix I, 170)

İsmail agreed with Mehmet, explaining how their *sohbet* group was extended when every participant reached a friend and invited him:

It is generally the friend of the friend. I mean, everybody says he has such a friend and asks if he should bring him. People meet each other and then propose to form new *sohbet* groups. Three or four people there each bring one or two friends and it becomes a group of 10. The new groups are formed in this way. This also brings a change to the *sohbet* after being in the same group for two or three years. (Appendix I, 171)

Hüseyin emphasized that they are extending their *sohbet* circle by inviting people they can reach through relatives and friends. He further explained:

Let's say, two or three businessmen from my circle meet each other, or some of my relatives take part in some NGOs. I ask them what they are doing, or if they are participating in a religious circle. If they are close to religious circles, I invite them once, twice. For example, a new *sohbet* has started in this district, then you invite people in your circle to this *sohbet*. Some of them accept the invitation and continue, others come once then drop out. Nevertheless, those who drop out often come back and continue to participate. What is important is to put the seed. We are trying to do this everywhere. (Appendix I, 172)

Emin also explained how they invited new people into their *sohbet* circles through acquaintances and friendship environments. He said:

People meet us in some way. For example, I know someone, a friend who moved to this city. Now he comes to the same *sohbet* group with me. Likewise, someone says he has friend and wants to bring him to the *sohbet* circle. As long as that newcomer is suitable for the ambience of the group, he participates and continues. However, if he is not suitable for that *sohbet* group, then a new group is formed with 7-8 people and he participates in it. (Appendix I, 173)

Likewise, Orhan said that he invited all of his close friends in his business and residential environment who in turn called their friends and the *sohbet* circle was then extended. He explained:

We invited people, some came but some did not. Then we called them once again, then they came. I do not know. It happened some way. We do not have much effort in but the circle keeps extending. I do not have specific criteria. I started with close friends and concentrated on them. Those who are in our group now have been my friends since I was 12 years old from our summer house district. For example one of my friends joined in our *sohbet* group with his 3-5 friends with whom they shared the same house at college years. We had such an extension, I mean. (Appendix I, 174)

İhsan stated that there was no specific criteria to invite people to their *sohbets*; however, he said they evaluated potential candidates with their *sohbet hocası* and acted according to the decision they took. He explained:

There are no specific criteria. If you are the person who is planning to invite a friend, you consult a few friends who are *mütevelli* and try to start a new *sohbet* group. You focus on the homogeneity of the group. I mean you try to put a group of people together who would get along with each other better. (Appendix I, 175)

Yusuf agreed with İhsan that they employed no specific criteria on new participants but they focused on participants' getting along with each other. He told how *sohbet* groups are formed in detail:

There are no set criteria but eventually the new invitees are often friends within our circle, mostly our businessmen friends. The most important point is that they should adapt to the group. This is because it is the human character to have

different ideas and thought from others, and this difference is always respected in our *sohbet* groups. Nevertheless, we do not prefer to invite people who would ruin the setting with their attitudes and behaviors, especially with political comments. Even if they come, they see after a while that the setting is not inspiring for themselves and drop out. Moreover, I invite people from the companies I do business with, or from our partner companies. Another friend invites one of his relatives or friends. Eventually, the *sohbet* circle is extended, and we continue the season with a group of 15-20 people. (Appendix I, 176)

Likewise, Hakan stated that they did not consider any specific characteristics while inviting people to their *sohbets*. He said:

There are no detailed criteria but we invite friends whom we think will benefit, or indeed whom we think should benefit from the *sohbet*. There are no other important criteria. There are no criteria as it should be like this or like that. The people in our environment, among our relatives and friends, whom we want them to benefit from the *sohbets*. (Appendix I, 177)

Nedim listed some of the characteristics they expected when they invited people to their *sohbet* groups, though he mentioned these were not specific criteria that anybody could come. He said:

There are no criteria for them. Let me explain why there is not. Among your relatives or businessmen friends, those with a good character and deeds. The most important features are he should not have bad character, not be hypocrite, or a thief. If he is a thief, he comes to the *sohbet* and steals the items of participants. I pay importance to these. Nevertheless, are not we going to reach that kind of people as well? Yes, they will be reached for sure. But now we are selecting people to accept into our *sohbet* group. Those who have bad intentions are obvious through their looks. We do not accept them, for example. We form a *sohbet* group with businessmen like us, at our level. (Appendix I, 178)

Cihangir provided details of how the *sohbet* circle was extended by participants reaching their friends who in turn reach their other friends like a chain reactions. He also emphasized that no specific criteria is applied and *sohbets* are open to everyone.

Nevertheless, he stated the problems they sometimes had when people with different characteristics met in the *sohbet* groups. He explained in detail:

It is all about how many people you know in your environment. There is an interesting study about this. If I remember correctly, it is found that people know

each other through every fifth or sixth friend of a friend. For example, one of my relatives knows another person, that person knows another, and so on. Then you see maybe the fifth or sixth person knows American president or some other important person. I mean world is very small from this perspective. [Regarding the *sohbets*] when someone comes among us, he or she causes another person to come and that person has other friends to call. I mean when there are people who adopt and like our *sohbets*, it is not difficult to reach other people. Regarding criteria, I can say there are not any. It is very encompassing like the line of Rumi. Come whoever you are, whatever political view you have, or whatever your educational level is. Of course groups are organized as homogeneously as possible so that participants spend better time with each other and understand one another more easily but different people should be reached too. Nevertheless, if they are to come to the *sohbets*, people should feel such a need, they should say let me go to a *sohbet* and improve myself in religious issues, prayers and so on, I mean they should show this intention. We sometimes have this problem in the community. You invite a person with some characteristics; you invite another with other characteristics. You accept them into the group but then we experience misunderstandings in the society like how come we invite them. Shall we not invite? Unfortunately, this is a very thin and sensitive line. (Appendix I, 179)

Mahmut told how they invited their friends to *sohbet* groups and how they continued their social relations when the invited friend discontinued the *sohbets*. He explained in detail:

We invite some of them. For example, a new person comes into our business circle. We take care of him by helping him in social life, offering our business experience and establishing communication. The friendship then extends to family visits. We tell him about our *sohbet* group and invite him. Indeed, our city is very lucky in this respect because there is *oturma* culture. Once he comes into our *sohbet*, he continues if he likes it, but he may not like and come next time as well. However, our business and family relations with him continue normally. (Appendix I, 180)

Like Nedim, Murat listed certain characteristics on which they placed importance when they invited a new businessman to their *sohbet* group. He emphasized that such criteria were important for the smooth operation of the *sohbet* group. He stated:

First of all, the educational level and socio-cultural structure of the person should be suitable for our *sohbet* group. This is because there are *sohbets* at all levels, there are various *sohbet* groups. As I mentioned, first of all, the newcomer should be suitable for our *sohbet* group and he should not have moral problems so that he does not ruin the spiritual atmosphere. We usually bring our friends

with such references, and we also consult our *sohbet hocaları* about our new friend. If he has tendency to religious matters and has familiarity with the Gülen Movement or is curious to learn more about it, we invite them to our *sohbet* groups and inform them about these issues. Our most important selection criterion is the appropriateness of moral and socio economic structure of the person. (Appendix I, 181)

Cengiz focused on the responsibilities that fall on the businessmen who take part in the *sohbets*; otherwise, he considered those who did not undertake any responsibilities would waste their time. He stated they invited such responsible people to the *sohbet* groups and explained:

We prefer much more to be with people who can carry this burden, or undertake this responsibility. If he cannot undertake, carry this burden, there is no point in killing time indeed. If that businessman attends the *sohbet* in vain, he should not go there of course. A person should not waste his time, and you should not put effort in vain. Time is very precious. Once someone [a *sohbet hocası*] gave me a responsibility, let me not utter his name, I accepted it but then it was too heavy for me. I called him on the phone and told I could not carry the responsibility and asked what I should do. He said once one gave it to you and you accepted, so you have to carry. I considered this an order and have been carrying that responsibility since then. (Appendix I, 182)

5.18 The dropouts

The participants to the study provided information about businessmen who dropped out *sohbets*. All participants stated that there were dropouts in their *sohbet* groups, and the most common reasons for leaving the *sohbet* groups included family pressure, political reasons, differences in thinking, dissatisfaction with the *sohbet hocası* besides various other reasons.

Ali attributed the reasons of dropping out to the involuntariness of some participants to take responsibilities. He said that some businessmen stay away when they are expected to take part in some tasks such as helping people in need financially. He explained in detail:

Some do leave but never because they see it inappropriate, ugly or lower than their expectations. Those who leave may think that taking over some responsibility or doing volunteer work is difficult in later stages. There's you know the sacrifice, donations or other social activities. What do we do as an example? Say Kimse Yok Mu organizes a relief program for the Van earthquake to help the people up there and serve them meals. Or we'll give out food during the Ramadan. Or we'll take sacrificial meat to some distant Anatolian town. As the number of activities increase, people who prefer their comfort may opt out. And then they may think of taking their leave. But I'm not blaming them. They must be thinking that it's a serious responsibility and they'll feel guilty when they are in it but don't help out. They might be staying away because responsibility is heavy stuff. They may prefer to offer help from afar. If you're inside it you can't help feeling responsible. That's probably the reason why want to stay away. I've never met anyone who has left because they've sensed something wrong. (Appendix I, 183)

Likewise, Cengiz pointed to the cases that some businessmen were not able to carry the responsibilities that may have been asked in the *sohbets* and therefore discontinued attending to them. He further explained:

Some may not bear it: they may have other goals in the first place. They might think how he could use these people both financially and spiritually. Some may find it hard to cope with the demands made by the *sohbet hocası*. Some souls can't tolerate giving. Our job is to work, earn a life, do *hizmet*, and bringing up students. How does this happen? It happens if you work hard as much as you can. Some may not have the means but he works physically to make a contribution. He says he's willing to work if a new school or dorm is being built and so he pays the *zakah* of his body. But if he finds all this unbearable he simply walks away and we can't stop him. (Appendix I, 184)

Zeki stated several reasons why some businessmen left their *sohbet* group. One is the undeveloped sense of belonging, another is the political atmosphere of the day, yet another is the unavailability of the participant for the fixed *sohbet* day. He explained in detail:

If we fail to help a friend in terms of self-development, that is, if he doesn't feel he belongs in *Hizmet*, such attritions happen. One needs to feel a sense of belonging. He should see personally that he's started performing prayer after befriending these people, his business has improved, and he's met beautiful people. If he can say that he's met some friendly guys we know that his connection will be different. But we know that some of our have friends left as a result of this process. We were planning to offer some of these friends to be part

of the *mütevelli*. I don't want to say that we've lost them because I believe they'll come back. We've travelled abroad so many times with them. We've met for Wednesday *sohbets*. We've shared so much with them. However, they didn't take side with *Hizmet* during this process [the political atmosphere of the day.] They aren't supporting us now. One of them fell completely apart. Another continues the *sohbets* but doesn't support us like he used to. There're also other cases. There doesn't seem to be a problem but the friend cannot be available on Wednesdays. He comes for some time but doesn't come later and you can't pay attention to them. It's generally physical restrictions. They may move their business or home. Some people come and go. (Appendix I, 185)

Mehmet mentioned about a very different incident as compared to others. He said that their *sohbet hocası* left the group. Mehmet speculated on the reason why he dropped out, saying:

Our hoca left. He had some personal problems. Maybe it was his young age. If we're on this ship, we must stay here. We can't say we didn't like the route. We stay on the ship and voice our opinions about a problem if we see one but maintain our place. I don't think we can get anywhere by abandoning ship. (Appendix I, 186)

Emin also attributed the reasons for dropping out to the political developments of the day. He said:

There are some departees but I mean a few friends. They don't stay away: they are just a bit shy because of the latest events but we'll deal with it. We keep meeting there are even divorce cases due to the latest events. It's really terrible: I can't believe these are happening. (Appendix I, 187)

Likewise, Selahattin mentioned about the political atmosphere of the day, which caused some participants to stop attending to *sohbets*. He expressed his sadness, saying:

The latest political events made me extremely sad. I've been stabbed many times because I've traveled with some abroad who knows how many times, eaten together and then for a mere nothing they simply walked away. To me such political conflicts are as unimportant as sugar beet pulp. (Appendix I, 188)

İhsan also mentioned about the political atmosphere of the day as a negative factor on attendance to *sohbets* and added, "There are quite a few people who leave during this period [the political atmosphere of the day.] If we put aside external influences, I think

we fail to show the real we inside. And then they may start considering their presence here meaningless.”

For Nedim, family reasons caused some of the participants to drop out their *sohbet* group. He explained:

Why do some leave? For some, their wives don't want them to leave home. They may want their husbands at home beside them and we can't raise any objections for that. We can't interfere with people's family traditions. If their wives don't allow them, we respect that. (Appendix I, 189)

Hakan stated that some participants dropped out because they cannot get adapted to the *sohbet* atmosphere. He said, “That happens, though rarely. Some friends cannot get accustomed to the atmosphere and so discontinue. Muhammed pointed that some people discontinued attending *sohbets* because they may have not liked the way they were conducted or the content that was presented, though only few people did so. He further explained:

Some people not want to come after a certain period. Some may not like the way the *sohbet* is done. Others prefer other things like more time for reading principles of Islamic living. Some offer their criticisms, which we appreciate. Do some leave because they find *sohbets* unsatisfying? Some do. There have been three or five people in these fifteen years. Or some may turn against us in time but friendship is forever: they may like us but do not want to participate. (Appendix I, 190)

Cihangir emphasized that he and his friends should put the blame on themselves when there are people who drop out *sohbets* after a while. He explained in detail why he thought so:

We believe we couldn't speak our hearts to them and express truths properly. We have to question what they expect and what they find. We need to talk to them to answer this. They may find our approach insufficient. Or they may want more. Yet the groups can't be homogeneous. Some come for a year or two, develop a lot and then have different expectations. They may leave afterwards. Others prefer other environments like being with their family or sitting before the TV set. Although there's the socializing part including refreshments, there's also the

lesson part that last almost 60 minutes in a disciplined way. Some people may find this time period hard after a tiring work. (Appendix I, 191)

Murat pointed to the cultural factors in their city that caused some people to leave their *sohbet* group. He said:

We have a group of 25 people and not everyone can be available all the time. One may feel offended, saying “I go to his house but he doesn’t come to mine.” This is the situation in our city. Many friends are on business trips quite a lot and a friend was troubled by this. Now the *sohbets* in our city is for people over a certain age and they do not travel much. Some keep track of who’s come to whose house, which results from the traditions here. Sometimes people may create storms out of such teacups. (Appendix I, 192)

İsmail said that some of their friends discontinued *sohbets* temporarily and most often resumed attending to *sohbets* after a while. He explained:

I don’t know if we should talk about in terms of leaving forever or attending irregularly. Some friends come for two years, don’t for some time later, but come back in the end. It might be due to his personal life. There’s been no such thing as leaving permanently. (Appendix I, 193)

5.19 The participants’ complaints about *sohbets*

The participants to the study provided information as to whether they had friends who attended to the *sohbets* and then complained about them. Some of the businessmen cited examples of some friends who complained about matters such as length of the *sohbet*, attitudes of some *sohbet hocaları*, or the syllabus, whereas others mentioned that they did not hear anybody complaining about anything.

Zeki said that they sometimes heard complaints about the duration of the *sohbets* and the changes of *sohbet hocaları*. He explained in detail:

We sometimes hear complaints about the length of the lesson, which is supposed to begin and end at a certain time. Another problem might be about the *sohbet hocaları*. A friend might particularly like a hoca, for example, and when the hoca changes problems might start. This problem has nothing to do with us: we don’t care whether we like the hoca or not. But one who keeps saying nothing but, say,

“Ali Hoca” might have problems. Sometimes topics arise that shouldn’t be discussed at all. (Appendix I, 194)

İsmail stated that they had complaints from some of the participants related to the duration of the *sohbets* as well as about other participants, saying “There have been complaints, naturally. Some find them long or might have met someone in the group he doesn’t like at all.”

Hüseyin said that they occasionally had complaints from friends which are easy to handle. He stated, “Complaints do come at times but we deal with them. There aren’t many questions we can’t answer and with God’s help they don’t pose any problem.”

Yusuf said that some participants complained that the spiritual self-progress expected from them is too heavy to follow. He further explained:

There are such cases. People aren’t all cut out of the same stone. Everyone has their ideas, opinions, and way of life. They may not accept it. Some may say they find prayers difficult, and I believe we don’t do much in this respect. Some say they do not want to perform salat but everyone else is doing it. No one ever forces anyone else but when the evening *sohbet* coincides with the praying time a few friends may stand away. The friends who feel awkward about this may not attend, which doesn’t happen often. If the friend had a tendency to pray, he starts to join the others and soon rivets it into his life, if I may say so. And you see a few years later that salat has become a part of the friend’s life, which makes you happy. It gives you spiritual joy to share a beautiful experience of yours. (Appendix I, 195)

Nedim said that he had never met any participant complaining about the *sohbets* so far and added he continued his relationships with those who dropped out for some reason.

He explained:

I’ve never met anyone who attends the *sohbets* but complains about them. I’ve never broken contact with the friends who’ve left. Some have left because they wanted to spend time with their wife, children and family or because they had personal problems. We never asked why they left when they did but I stayed in contact with them. They are our friends. We want to go to the judgment day with the ones we love. We want to keep them in the circle of our friends and hope that God greet us all in the same circle in the hereafter. (Appendix I, 196)

Like Nedim, Murat stated that he never heard any complaints other than those who could not regularly come to *sohbets*, saying “Some have problems with regular attendance because, say, they travel a lot. I don’t remember anyone who’s left blaming us for this or that.” Hakan agreed, saying “I haven’t heard anyone complain so far.”

Muhammed focused on the complaints he heard about the content of the *sohbets*, but he emphasized that some participants complained without any ground. He said:

You want to do something about it but some do complaints simply to complain. I accept that you might not be having a lesson on the Islamic principles of living but you hear about the life of the Prophet or about some matters of faith. If you are really curious about Islamic principles of living, bring in your questions and ask. But to encourage them to keep coming, we think that he’s trying to do something not that he complains and asks irrelevant questions. Still some find an excuse not to come. (Appendix I, 197)

Cihangir also mentioned about the complaints related to the content of the *sohbets* but he added that some people complained about the occasional financial demands to help out poor people. He explained in detail:

There can be. Some may discontinue because we talk too much about worldly matters. But these are negligible cases. We don’t hear much criticism from the ones who leave: they respect us and may or may not say why they don’t come anymore, so we don’t know exactly why they don’t. Why are we criticized? Well *hizmet* has certain goals to be able to reach out to people. Sometimes it’s explicitly demanded that donations be made to distribute meat across the world during Sacrifice fest or to give scholarships to needy students. Some people may not like the idea of contributing financially. (Appendix I, 198)

Mahmut said that the complaints he heard were mostly caused by the high expectations of participants related to the content of the *sohbet*. He further explained:

Let’s not call them complaints but great expectations. For example, he may say he’s there for a translation class but couldn’t get enough information because he didn’t find the hoca knowledgeable. We respect his idea but there isn’t anything we can do. We tell him ours is like a university prep course and we can refer him to another group led by top-level hocas and theology graduates. He may accept the offer; otherwise we respect his decision. (Appendix I, 199)

CHAPTER 6

RESEARCH FINDINGS: CONTRIBUTIONS OF *SOHBETS* TO PARTICIPANTS, THEIR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS, AND THEIR BUSINESS LIVES

This chapter aims to provide the readers with the findings regarding what effects their attending to *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement had on their daily lives, on their immediate families, on their friends and relatives, and on their business life.

6.1 Effects on daily life

The businessmen participants of the study provided information about the effects of attending the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement on their daily lives. Ten out of 21 businessmen started to live more religiously oriented lives as a result of attending to *sohbets*, whereas six businessmen started care more about humanity and yet four improved their social relations. Nevertheless, the effects businessmen described in their responses sometimes fit into more than one category. Below are the excerpts from the answers of some participants regarding the effects of attending *sohbets* on their daily lives.

6.1.1 Religiously oriented lifestyles

Zeki emphasized that the greatest change he lived in his personal life was the discipline that came into his life. He admitted that he felt happier as he put his life under a discipline with what he learned at the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement, mainly through religious teachings. He further explained:

It certainly disciplines our life. For one thing, we came to understand the importance of prayers right here. We developed sensitivity towards prayers as we listened to our hoca. It was because of his perspective of prayers; I mean Hocaefendi. There are also the prayers performed by our hocas and what they tell about prayers. When you develop a certain sensitivity towards prayers, half of your life is disciplined. Prayers correct and improve a lot of things. It also makes our family life better; the way you treat your wife and family changes. We have learned through *hizmet* for example that the best among us are the ones who treat our wives most fairly. We know this hadith thanks to *hizmet*. How else would I ever know it because we don't read books regularly? If you don't read or listen, how can you ever learn about it? As we read and listen to such things, our behavior towards our wives changes. If we get angry, we are stopped by another hadith: patience is most precious when you are most angry. And such things shape your life. The life of the Prophet and his words shape our life. You reflect the light you get from here to your life. Your family life changes, so does your work life. (Appendix I, 200)

Mehmet stated that he experienced significant changes in his moral and religious life, saying:

It's been 22 or 23 years now. I look back and see a lot of improvement in my moral life, religious life and work life and I thank God for all of it. I never compare myself to other fellows in the movement but I don't know what I'd be if I weren't here [the circles of the Gülen Movement.] (Appendix I, 201)

Orhan admitted that he started to follow a more religiously oriented life thanks to what he has learned through the *sohbets*. He listed the changes he, as well as his friends who attended the *sohbets*, experienced in their lives:

Let me speak for myself. Those in my group including me didn't perform the prayers when we first started. We simply didn't do it. I can say now there's no one in the group who doesn't pray. We didn't know how to read the Quran. I'd go to the neighborhood mosque when I was a child. I learned it then but forgot later, a process that repeated itself. Now everyone in the group knows how to read the Quran. We thought we knew our religion, a claim generally made by everyone. We understood we didn't know the religion. We learned there was a place that could teach us the religion. This is change from a religious perspective. It's harder to describe ethics-wise. Sins still look attractive – which is the devil's work – but there's now some kind of mechanism of conscience or a mechanism of some kind. I don't know how *sohbet hocaları* do it but they make you stay away from sins. They format you, though one day, which makes do for a week. When you come back the following week, they give you another format and you are renewed again. If you make a break, the devil wins. (Appendix I, 202)

Likewise, Selahattin mentioned about how he followed religious practices better in his life thanks to *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement. He said:

It's like bread or water for my life because I believe in the hereafter. I've seldom skipped daily prayers. I haven't missed the noon prayer in the last 50 or 60 years...Just as bread and water are essential for me, so is prayers and *hizmet*. I live the way I do thanks to *hizmet*. (Appendix I, 203)

Ihsan mentioned about the positive consequences of attending to *sohbets* in his behaviors and attitudes. He explained in detail:

Well, you learn what you heard in the evening corresponds to what in your daily life. You learn how to correct your wrong behavior. *Sohbets* activate your conscience and you realize what you do wrongly in your life. This might be the best product of *sohbets*. You ask yourself what you've been doing. You ask what the truth is and where you stand vis-à-vis the truth. It's certainly had enormous influence. (Appendix I, 204)

According to Yusuf, attending the *sohbets* not only contributed to bringing discipline in his daily and spiritual life but also enabled him a considerable amount of self-improvement. He further explained:

Apart from disciplining our daily life and our spiritual life, it's had great contributions to our self-improvement. I see books on the market about self-development, and people come for seminars, telling what to do for self-development. I think *sohbets* already provide us with self-development and they do so without us realizing it. Their seminars might be crammed into 2-3 hours, of the books might be a few hundred pages long. I don't know what one can get from them; they may provide little improvement on your life. The most important benefit of the *sohbets* on the other hand is the fact that they teach you self-development by having you interact with those around you, by having you observe correct way of behavior, by penetrating your very soul. This is not something to be accomplished by reading a book or listening to a three-hour seminar. It's a long process that changes you gradually. (Appendix I, 205)

Nedim stated that attending to *sohbets* enabled him to live a better spiritual life in terms of placing prayers into every second of his life. He explained in detail:

How does a believer live his daily life? A believer lives by praying for other people. This is what *sohbets* teach us. As a believer, I open my shop in the name of God every morning at the same hour at ten to eight. I open it at that hour, or I get sick. When I open it, I sit down and recite the surah Feth and some other prayers.

If do it earlier at night, I don't in the morning. If I don't do it at night, I do. We don't open the shop to make more money but to say some prayers, which take about an hour. Then my friends come one by one; there are about eight of them. I don't open the safe in the shop; I only unlock it. They open it. I don't open the safe before they come in. then if we can make time during the day, we try to remember God; I mean we say more prayers. Or we recite some special prayers for that particular day. Or we remember the Prophet in our prayers. These may all change. Sometimes friends say that we could recite a certain verse a certain number of times. I realize its importance only later. They say for example that Abdulkadir Geylani (the Muslim scholar) recited this verse this many times. At the time of some calamity we recite Tefriciye 4444 times, for example. Friends divide it among us and everybody recites his part. I say for example that I can get the rest, I mean the unshared part because I can recite fast. But when it's a recitation of the surah Yasin, I opt out because I can't read fast. When it's the surah Feth, I get it. Everyone takes according to what he can do. All we do is recite and say prayers. (Appendix I, 206)

Likewise, Cihangir emphasized the effects of attending *sohbets* in the religious practices he followed in his life. He mentioned in detail:

Their contributions? You tend to be more careful about issues like prayers. You try to be more careful about what's allowed and what's not because you cannot guide people as you lead a second life. No one can lead such a second life for long unless they expect to get some financial gain or unless they have some type of personality disorder. So it's not possible to tell others of good deeds and live another life simultaneously. I think that's the reason why Hocaefendi's phrase "to live to make others live" is crucial. I mean you teach yourself to be good as you tell others to be good. This is the greatest gain I think: you try to improve someone's life both here and in the hereafter. What you call religion is not simply about the afterworld: it's also related to the order of this world, which leads to the unfair sharing of its resources. Some find it in Hindu teachings; others in Christianity... But when you think about it, you see that the world is that way because religions are not a way of life. Religions have common moral values, which offer positive contributions. You shouldn't overlook them even when it's a matter of a few liras. The line between what's religiously allowed and what's not becomes vitally important. Let me tell you what I experienced but not to praise myself. I owed a few liras to someplace. I could get to the place a month later and said to the man that I owed them three liras. It was a company with numerous branches. I bought the ticket from the man and then tore it apart in front of him. I said thank you I owed you this money. The man thanked me as well. I didn't mean to talk about myself but they have contributions in terms of what's religiously correct. Raising our children well. (Appendix I, 207)

6.1.2 Caring for humanity

Ali focused on the point that attending the *sohbets* made his life meaningful and happier.

He said that this happened when he started to care about humanity and turned his

spiritual thinking into noble ideals, as he matured in the *sohbets*. He explained in detail:

I think its most important contribution is the fact that it makes my life meaningful. I mean it will be a repetition but let me tell you this: You may set certain goals for your work life or family life but here's the way life becomes meaningful after the Gülen Movement. You set a certain goal, which you can consider in a religious sense or a social sense or within the framework of universal values that have a worldwide sense or in the name of humanity. It's a goal for which you live and *hizmet* gives you this goal. You may not realize it initially but you come to realize it over the years because you see what's being done. There are concrete things. Elsewhere everything runs on rhetoric: your school life is a typical example. But only here can you learn to make this a goal in life. You live and learn how to share the good things you experience with others, not just with your immediate family and friends. What's even more important than sharing certain concrete values is the sharing of superior spiritual values. It provides you with very noble ideals. When you travel abroad for the sacrificial holiday or the Ramadan or a graduation ceremony and witness the excitement in the local people as they come to know these values, your excitement grows and you make it your goal. Let me give you an example. We went to Niger and Chad in Africa for the sacrificial holiday. These are some of the poorest countries in the world. I also brought along a couple of my friends. You see such a different environment there. There's no electricity, no water, no food. They don't even have basic utilities. No roads, no water. Then you look at the people, whose majority are Muslim, and see that people look happy even though they live on plant seeds. My friends literally left behind everything they had on them and they said they wished they had brought more with them. Some left even their shoes and came back with some slippers on. Upon my return, I visited some European and developed cities. I had a chance to make a comparison between the two. You offer some physical help for the people in Africa in terms of food, for example. When you go to developed countries you see they lack spiritually. In places like Africa people might be losing their worldly life, but those in developed countries might be losing both this world and the next because of their spiritual hunger. The latter may be in greater need: you have more to share with them. (Appendix I, 208)

Mahmut said that as a result of attending *sohbets* he observed his religious practices

better, started to care more for helping other people in need and gaining self-control. He

explained in detail:

I would otherwise have been an ordinary university graduate who might or might not be a practicing Muslim. But now I've been performing prayers without skipping any since 1986, which is certainly a positive thing for me. Also if I hadn't met *hizmet* and the people in it, I would probably be someone who gives donation upon request from the imam of the mosque and I would complain like others that the imam asks for too much. Or I would think I was making a lot of donations by giving small sums to beggars in the street. But after being in this group and seeing the donations made by others, I think I've developed in this sense as well. Otherwise I would buy another car, though I have one; or another house. I don't know if I'd be better off economically because Allah grants material wealth. *Hizmet* presented us a better perspective of looking at life. It made us more sensitive to matters about donation. We've developed an ear to hear other people's houses need: thank God we don't need anything in our house. Another thing is that it provides you with self-control. Being part of such a group or having *sohbets* with your circle of friends prevents you from doing what you shouldn't do in your daily life. Everyone has desires and there could be many other things one could do alone but I have a feeling that I should be more careful in the hospital where I work because I come face to face with these people every week. (Appendix I, 209)

Murat emphasized that the most important thing he learned and so far tried to apply in his life was the concept of 'living for the others.' He further explained what that phrase meant by providing examples from his life, saying:

To tell the truth, it's a good thing to learn to live for others. This is what *Hizmet* teaches. Once you see this not through teachings but through their way of living, the hoca's way of living, the leading businessman participant's way of living, Hocaefendi's way of living and once you have the picture, the way you live changes. You don't live for egocentric reasons anymore, but prioritize others' interests. (Appendix I, 210)

He continued with an example in his life:

When you look at the nuclear family you may tend to become egocentric. My wife for example might be solely interested in the well being of our children. But you say, "no, I have a *sohbet* and I have people to look after" and you reduce the time you spend with your beloved children and your wife, who is your soul-mate and your lifelong partner and maybe you lower the home budget. You try to do things on this side; you work to make sure students go to schools; you work to make sure *hizmet* continues; and you try to have people understand the fact. (Appendix I, 211)

He then concluded:

Living to make others live is such a different thing. Once you're inoculated with it, your life changes completely; the universe no longer orbits you. If someone serves something to you, you first offer it to someone else and have what remains for yourself. When you have an opportunity, you go to your friend and tell him about it and try to guide him. You shed your egotism and say "others come first." (Appendix I, 212)

Muhammed said that attending the *sohbets* had influence on gaining him the feeling of responsibility towards others around him. He further explained:

I think we should deal with them [contributions of attending to *sohbets*] separately as participants, organizers and inviters. The active ones who take over responsibilities benefit themselves as they want to serve others at the outside. In order not to face the criticism in the verse that why do you say what you don't do, you have to do it yourself first. Second, every one of you is a shepherd and responsible for those you look after. This shepherd issue is not just about your family but your friends, your *sohbet* group, or other people you interact with as well. You have responsibilities towards them, which you sometimes have to carry out despite your own desires or feelings whispered by the devil. You have to fight all such feelings. Sometimes you may have to overcome your nature and take the message across. The ideal is that you give it top priority throughout the day but some days you may forget all about it. But because *sohbets* are held every week, they remind you beforehand of what you are supposed to do, like calling, asking about, or at times visiting people. These keep you alert. I mean your responsibilities keep you awake. (Appendix I, 213)

6.1.3 Improved social relations

Cengiz said that he understood much better what brotherhood meant through attending to *sohbets*. He especially highlighted that he was grateful to the Gülen Movement that he became a member of distinguished social group not based on material expectations. He further explained:

If I were reborn, I would live what I live today. I'd want to do it again and again because I can't see a movement better than this one. If there were, I'd go there. If there were a better movement, I'd join it. Why? My real brothers have never been as intimate to me as my friends in the movement. Why not? Material world. There's no such thing in *Hizmet*. It's brotherhood to the grave. There are times in your work life when you are in dire straits. My friends in the Gülen Movement helped me in a way my real family, my bothers couldn't. They gave me their car

keys where necessary, and even pocket money. They always asked how I was doing and met my needs. Sometimes they gave their credit cards for me to use. Now I ask who would ever do such things. What percentage of people would do this? My paternal brothers wouldn't. But my other brothers, my spiritual brothers, the brothers I am with in *Hizmet* did everything. And they keep doing. We try to do the same to others younger than us, to those who come after us, to those who don't have the means. And we do this to the extent that God enables us to do. (Appendix I, 214)

Hakan also mentioned that attending *sohbets* positively influenced his religious life as well as his social and business relations. He said:

We are more careful in our daily life in the business world about what is religiously allowed and what's not. Also we have a chance to discuss work matters with the friends in the *sohbet*. We say for example we do something in a certain way and ask whether it's OK. We do brainstorming about matters and reap its benefits afterwards. (Appendix I, 215)

İsmail agreed, saying:

It helps you correct your mistakes in your work life and interpersonal relations in the first place. *Sohbets* instill correct ways of behaving slowly into you. You learn not to offend others and not to cheat anyone simply because you are Muslim. (Appendix I, 216)

6.2 Effects on the family

The businessmen participants of the study provided information about the effects of attending the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement on their family members, namely their spouse and children. 12 out of 21 businessmen stated that their family members started to take part in the activities of the Gülen Movement, whereas seven others mentioned that their relations improved with the immediate family members, yet they also mentioned they sometimes took part in activities of the Gülen Movement. Below are the excerpts from the answers of some participants regarding the effects of attending *sohbets* on their daily lives.

6.2.1 Taking responsibility in the Gülen Movement

Ali mentioned that his family members, seeing the *sohbets* held at their homes, assumed responsibility on taking part in the activities of the Gülen Movement, such as helping those in need. He explained in detail:

Very positive. They [my family] feel they are taking part in such an activity when I invite my friends to my place. I think you need to share this experience with your family, which is why home *sohbets* are important. The children at home also personally see what's done here. They see it from within: it cannot be taught by mere telling. They can't know unless you tell them; they can't understand unless you show them. I try to include them in different activities such as food or meat distribution and Ramadan dinners. I once made a promise to myself, which I shared with my family. I told them we've been spending the two religious holidays with them. One, we would spend in our hometowns visiting our parents; but the other – the Sacrifice Festival – I would spend with people who couldn't be with their families on such festivals, people who go abroad to carry across these values, people who forgo their families and their egos. (Appendix I, 217)

Mehmet emphasized point that all members of his family got introduced with the Gülen Movement activities through his attendance to *sohbets* and he was happy to see them taking responsibility in the Gülen Movement. He further stated:

I don't want to compare myself to my brothers in *hizmet* but when I think about what would happen if there were no *hizmet* and especially over the years as my children left one by one, the answer becomes a simple one. I have four daughters and a son. My first son-in-law was a practicing Muslim from our hometown. The second one studied at the same university with my second daughter: I consented to their marriage mainly because he was a *hizmet* guy. We welcomed sons from *hizmet*. So were my third and fourth son-in-laws. Thanks God my son is almost engaged to someone in *hizmet*. We tried to teach this to our children and each follows suit. *Hizmet* is everything for me. (Appendix I, 218)

Selahattin said that his children chose career paths in the Gülen Movement as teachers and raised students. He was happy that his daughter became a teacher. He explained in detail:

My eldest daughter has been in *Hizmet* since she was an eighth grader. When she was a senior in high school, I said that I wanted her to become an architect. I'm a cartographer and believed the two would complement each other. She cried and

cried. I didn't know then that *Hizmet* needed biology teachers, especially those with English credentials. She started tutoring when she was a sophomore. Her students went to the best universities in the country. Then she finished college and started teaching in one of the university preparation courses affiliated with the Gülen Movement. Years later I told her that I was happy that she'd become a teacher. I wanted her to be an architect and my little girl to be a doctor, but they both chose the field of education. (Appendix I, 219)

İhsan simply stated his family took him as a role model and tried to contribute to activities of the Gülen Movement, saying “Thanks God they've embraced it. They are now trying to do the female version of what we do.” Yusuf agreed with İhsan and explained in detail:

Well, my wife is happy about it. We've never had even a slight problem. She believes I've benefited a lot from it and she's found a *sohbet* group for women to attend every week. We both enjoy the benefits. My son finished college recently. I was planning to suggest that he go to *sohbets* but then I thought if I get insistent he could one day think that he went because of this father. It's been only a month since he graduated from college. He came to me the other day asked whether I could arrange a *sohbet* group for him, which made me very happy. I infer that he's seen the changes in his parents and then personally demanded it. He'll be starting a *sohbet* group soon. (Appendix I, 220)

Likewise, Nedim stated that his wife and children adopted the activities of the Gülen Movement as he did himself. He further explained:

Both my wife and children... My children go to *Hizmet* schools. I'm very pleased with the way they progress. They are much, much better than me. They are superior and noble. Why? Because they were raised by the teachers in *Hizmet*. They are made of gold. My wife has her own *sohbets* both in the Gülen Movement and with other friends of hers. She's trying to make up for her lacks. She joins Quran recitals one or two times a week. They come together on Fridays. They have recitals every day during the Ramadan. They do similar things to what we do. (Appendix I, 221)

Cengiz admitted that he regretted not having shared more time with his children when ran for activities of the Gülen Movement in the first days. Nevertheless, he was happy to have sent his children to schools affiliated with the movement. He added that his wife always supported him taking responsibilities in the Gülen Movement. He stated in detail:

We couldn't spend much time with our children perhaps partly because of the *sohbets* but we had to do it that way in those early times. We had to sacrifice a lot. Yet our children went to our schools [those affiliated with the Gülen Movement.] Thanks God they've never done anything wrong. I sometimes wonder what they'd do if they went to some other school, a question we can never answer. We've never seen even the slightest disadvantage. Our house was never free of guests. We had a few guests every day. If they didn't come two consecutive days, my wife would ask "Husband, why aren't any guests coming to our house? Is there something wrong with me or with you? I'll bring in some guests tomorrow." Friends and family from across Turkey never let us feel alone, and our door's always open for them. Allah gives us from his infinity generosity. If you give a single amount for others, God gives you a lot more in return, which makes us happy and urges us to work harder. (Appendix I, 222)

6.2.2 Improved family relations

Zeki admitted that thanks to *sohbets* his attitudes towards his family changed significantly, which in turn positively changed the attitudes of his family towards him.

He further explained:

Your behaviors change. You are different from many other spouses. They tell you about this, I mean our wives do. Other family members also talk about it. I think this is also true for other friends in *hizmet*. There's a known phenomenon. Some outsiders keep criticizing *Hizmet* but they always try to marry their daughters to someone in *Hizmet* because these guys are different: they don't smoke, they're careful about prayers, they don't lie, and they have bright faces. I may not have all the traits but I try to be careful about not telling any lies. Your stance changes people's perspective, including your wife, her family and your family. So what do you do differently? You treat your children differently. You register your child to a *Hizmet* school which offers a sterile environment to bring up children. My wife says my presence in *Hizmet* has changed my attitude a lot. And the change doesn't end in you. My elder and little brothers come along with me to the *sohbets* and the hoca addresses them as he does me. And friendships are established. As you invite them to other programs, your brothers become part of the movement. It shapes up like a family. I can confidently say that a friend in *Hizmet* can act as cement in his family; he can unite the family. (Appendix I, 223)

Cihangir mentioned that attending to *sohbets* and living a religious life in accordance with what he learned at them enabled him to be a role model for this family. He further stated:

Hocaefendi's book *From Seed to Cedar* says there's no correct child education, but there's correct parent education. Children imitate what they see in life. If you set a good example, your children will form a good generation for you. It's a striking example. Lots of books are written on educational psychology. Parents know well that they repeat a swear word like a parrot or a nice word in the same vein. I have children in the kindergarten. We learn how to pray on a trip or how to say graces at dinner from them. Then we believe it's the *Hizmet* culture. Then as you read the Quran you realize that they are verses from the Quran. Then your faith in the movement gets stronger. It's not something new but the Quran's the main source. What your children have memorized as a prayer is in fact a verse, a fact you realize later. (Appendix I, 224)

Similar to Cihangir, Murat also mentioned his being a role model to his family changed the attitudes of his wife and then she started to take part in activities of the Gülen Movement. He explained in detail:

Sure there are. It's hard to share what we know especially with your wife. It's hard to be your wife's teacher. At this point your lifestyle gains prominence. My wife and her family were left-wingers. I learned later that before we got married her family did some intelligence work on me and consented to our marriage once they were sure I was not related to *hizmet*. Later they found me smack in the middle of it and got surprised. My lifestyle made all the difference and my wife goes to *sohbets* now. (Appendix I, 225)

İsmail also admitted that what he gained through *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement certainly reflected on his family. He said:

There must have been because you don't normally think of such things. When you go to *sohbets* you think "I should teach this to my children, do that to nourish their souls or take better care of them. This feeling develops as you develop personally. They must be benefiting from them. (Appendix I, 226)

6.3 Effects on friends and relatives

The businessmen participants of the study provided information about the effects of attending the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement on their friends and relatives. Nine businessmen stated that their friends and relatives started to take part in the activities of the Gülen Movement. Seven others mentioned that their friends and relatives learned more about religion via the conversations they held or questions they asked. Yet one

businessman stated that some of his relatives displayed negative attitudes to his attendance to *sohbets*. Below are the excerpts from the answers of some participants regarding the effects of attending *sohbets* on their daily lives.

6.3.1 Taking responsibility in the Gülen Movement

Selahattin stated that some of his relatives also participated in the Gülen Movement but his other close relatives are even against the activities of the Gülen Movement. He said, “My brother-in-law is in the movement but my brothers aren’t. In fact my brothers are a bit averse. I couldn’t have them come.”

İhsan said that there were still friends in his environment he wished they could have reached and invited to take part in the activities of the Gülen Movement. He stated:

Frankly speaking, all my circle of friends is from *Hizmet*. I sure have old friends from outside this circle but my new friends happen to be inside it. Maybe we should do some self-criticism about this. We have to see the fact that we still haven’t been able to introduce our old friends to *Hizmet*. (Appendix I, 227)

Likewise, İsmail mentioned that he desired his relatives and friends to attend *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement and take responsibility with the activities. He said, “I can say many of my friends welcomed the idea. Many friends attend the *sohbets* regularly today.”

Cengiz focused on the trust that was formed in his friendship circle towards him since they knew that he was a participant of the Gülen Movement. He also mentioned about how important for him to offer a helping hand to his friends and relatives. He said:

Our friends have never expected anything from us – neither material or spiritual. You can be sure that they are harmless people who’d never hurt you. Thanks God we haven’t had the slightest argument. The doors are wide open; just visit a merchant to test it. Last year I broke up with my brothers to open a new business. I needed to buy machinery. I you go to a bank for a loan of ten thousand liras, what’ll they ask of you? For a million liras worth of machinery? Indemnity,

security, and who knows what else. What could be greater wealth? Our friends provided the money, and fortunately managed to pay it back without any problems. What else can you expect? Our relatives and friends know that we have *sohbets* on certain days so we wouldn't be at home. And we haven't had any thing with them. I really don't know how to express myself. And they've always been respectful to us. Would you be harmed if you offered someone a helping hand, patted a shoulder, or solved someone's problem? Our mission is to offer a helping hand. (Appendix I, 228)

6.3.2 Learning about religion

Yusuf admitted that his friends benefited from his attendance to the Gülen Movement *sohbets* because he invited them to *sohbets* enabling them learn their religion better. He said, "Definitely [they benefit from the *sohbets*,] because we both invite them and recommend it." Hakan agreed that he wanted his friends and relatives to benefit from *sohbets* and invited them, saying "Sure we tell immediate family and friends and some of them have joined us."

Muhammed agreed with Yusuf that he also invited his relatives and friends to the *sohbets* so that they can benefit from the teachings. He further stated:

Sure, there're people from our relatives we invite for the *sohbets*. There are also friends who keep attending. They're the first once I call. My brothers-in-law, old school friends, for example. In fact we're trying to form a new *sohbet* group with friends from middle and high school. (Appendix I, 229)

Murat said that his relatives referred to him when they need to learn more about some religious issues. He said:

We're already in the same friend circle. It's not much known by my relatives. When there happens to be a discussion on religious matters they may say "Let's ask Murat." And this is not because I'm very knowledgeable. Because they know we are particular in this matter. Sometimes I learn myself and answer them. (Appendix I, 230)

Nedim, on the other hand, said that some of his relatives did not approve his attendance to *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement. He then explained:

Some of my close friends attend the *sohbets* and we see each other more often. We are happier together because we see eye to eye. We may see some less often; some may not practice the teachings of Islam. And when you meet them often, arguments take place, which I prefer to stay away from. I don't want to argue with my relatives. (Appendix I, 231)

6.4 Effects on business life

The businessmen participants of the study provided information about the effects of attending the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement on their business lives. Five businessmen stated that they improved the way they did business through what learned at the *sohbets*.. Besides, four businessmen stated that they exchanged valuable information about their businesses and established partnerships with or via other businessmen who attended *sohbets*. Another four businessmen stated that they learned about Islamic way of doing business at the *sohbets* and applied it in their workplace. One businessman mentioned that *sohbets* help relieve from the stress of business life and through spiritual healing at *sohbets* businessmen are more motivated. Below are the excerpts from the answers of some participants regarding the effects of attending *sohbets* on their daily lives.

6.4.1 Improved ways of doing business

Zeki pointed to the business associations founded by businessmen in the Gülen Movement circles and admitted that they learned a lot through the seminars organized by the associations. He explained what he learned in detail along with examples from his business life:

We've benefitted a lot in our work life. Our association has also been helpful. I'm a member of the board of directors in our association. We sometimes have seminars to which we invite others. There are principles established by Hocaefendi and we are careful about them. Hocaefendi finds method important, for example; he likes working methodically. Brainstorming comes first. We have acquired the culture of brainstorming from *Hizmet*. When we have something to

do, we come together and discuss it. It might sound a bit exaggeration but once I was going to rent a warehouse for my company. I asked our friends what they think about it and whether it would be appropriate. We've changed so much that even if we want to buy a car we ask for their consultation. There's a certain discipline I mean. I'm partners with my hoca, my elder brother and my younger brother. We've learned the culture of partnership and fairness in partnership thanks to *hizmet*. How have we done it? We came together in *sohbets* with our group every Tuesday and discussed the matters. Now that we are partners, how should we share and move along? A businessman said one thing; another said something else. And we applied the final decisions in our company. Since that day, there's peace in the company. Salaries are regular and fair. My brothers are happy. If I weren't in *hizmet*, I don't know I would discuss with these people apply their ideas. I think it'd be impossible. (Appendix I, 232)

Selahattin said that after attending to *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement and listening to the advice of Hocaefendi, he extended his business and was able to contribute more to activities of the Gülen Movement. He explained:

Like I said at the beginning, I could be like my friends who got retired and keep giving their *zakah* if I hadn't entered *hizmet*. Hocaefendi said, go abroad and make some contribution. I travelled abroad. Now we have holdings abroad and companies, thanks God. We do exports. (Appendix I, 233)

İhsan admitted that he learned many of the principles he applied in his business life while he was running for activities of the Gülen Movement and through what he learned at *sohbets*. He further explained and made some warnings as well:

Once we traveled to Far East 20 years ago I think. There were three or four people with us. *Hizmet* was just forming then in Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea. Our *hoca* friends were also accompanying us. They were responsible for the organizations in those country but they weren't from our city. One of them said that *Hizmet* made people diplomats. The global position of *hizmet* shapes a global perspective in you, if not a true diplomat. You understand doing business isn't the ultimate end in life; *hizmet* chisels off your unnecessary ambitions. But if you lose all your ambition, you may overlook the conditions you should take into careful consideration, which presents certain risk. *Hizmet* makes you become honest and principled. It improves your mental vision. But you should never neglect your business by producing *hizmet* as an excuse. Such a risk may come up because of personal deficiency, about which we should be very careful because *hizmet* needs successful business people who represent the movement. I understand this fact better these days. We should make our businesses more successful both at home and abroad. We should search ways of doing it. (Appendix I, 234)

6.4.2 Exchanging information and establishing partnerships

Yusuf mentioned about how *sohbet* circles of the Gülen Movement offered businessmen platforms to share information and establish potential partnerships in the business world.

He explained in detail:

You know communication is of utmost importance. People can get a lot from successful communication when they interact with others. I mean in the part of *sohbets* when businessmen entered into social conversations about their businesses. Once you learn about an event that an industrialist or a business person has experienced, you can avoid the mistakes they've made. These settings are conducive to such information-sharing. We can talk about anything: Sometimes it's about a problem and sometimes it's a piece of advice that you can use in your family or work life. I've personally enjoyed many such benefits. Some partnerships may be formed in these *sohbets*, I mean business partnerships. We had a successful partnership with our friends for about 15 years, for example. Then because of some unforeseen troubles in the sector we had to discontinue it. We are still very close as ex-partners; we continue our friendship. Another benefit of the *sohbets* is that you know yourself along with other people better and feel them close. When there comes up a possible partnership with them, you know that there's no way they may ever harm you. And some time later you see that you are business partners who grow their business and make it an international one. I have many friends in the *sohbet* group who've done that. (Appendix I, 235)

Muhammed agreed with Yusuf that *sohbets* offered opportunities of exchanging information about their business lives to the participants. He explained in detail how businessmen interacted with each other at the *sohbets*:

We sat down during the *sohbet* to talk about some religious matters. It's not that we talk about religious matters throughout the *sohbet*; sometime later the topic switches to business life. You hear from your friends things you've never heard about before. Then it has effects on you and your business. Let me give you an example. Let's say there's a businessman in town that week as the guest of an association, chamber of commerce or chamber of industry. You hear about this at the *sohbet* and participate in the guest's program. We discuss such matters about business live in the evenings. And we learn a lot through such discussions. A topic we know little about is trade law in Islam for example. When we talk about this topic, we sometimes see that our actual practices are a little in the shady area. Or we may also see that what we know to be wrong is actually right in Islam if we meet certain conditions. (Appendix I, 236)

6.4.3 Islamic way of doing business

According to Nedim, the moral values he learned at the *sohbets* were influential in his approach to his business. He explained how he had a successful business:

I believe I'm successful in my business life, which I attribute to the Prophet's morality I acquired through the *sohbets* in *hizmet*. We sometimes read and discuss hadiths and learn from the Prophet for example how to be a good merchant. We owe our success to this. A good Muslim must be honest, avoid cheating, and be truthful to his customers. And the customer sees that we're not cheating them. (Appendix I, 237)

Likewise, Mahmut emphasized that they learned to act ethically in the sense of what would be expected from a Muslim while doing their business. He explained the issue by giving a common inappropriate behavior some people do in his sector. He said:

Sure. For example, I ask whether I can get knife payment (=money illegally demanded before a medical operation). I can't. I'm a general surgeon and have my own office; how can I ever get knife payment? Is it beneficial or harmful for the society? It sure is harmful. It's something people complain about. The government closed down private offices. Why? Because doctors made money illegally. We didn't make any such money then. We just served people who wanted better conditions in private offices and hospitals which we couldn't offer in state hospitals. But we knew what we were supposed to do in the state hospital on examination or operation days. We knew that we got our salary for that work and if we didn't stick to the rules, our act would be religiously wrong. Would it be right if we told about it but didn't do it ourselves? Sure, no. There are such limiting factors. You can't tell others for example to be decent in their family life if you don't personally observe this rule. This I believe is a social brake system, which has to be present in humans. One should fear social embarrassment as well as God. If you don't fear God, you won't fear social embarrassment. (Appendix I, 238)

Murat also said that what he learned about Islamic way of approaching business at the *sohbets* reflected in his business life. He changed many of practices in order to be fair and ethical towards his employees and customers. He explained in detail:

This is business life. It can get pretty merciless. So can life. If you say nothing but work, personal interest and money, you are drifted to foreign shores. When you prioritize fairness, law, and other religious concerns in these *sohbets*, you can see what you do wrong. You are going to sign a job agreement with a worker and the workers union makes certain demands, for example. In the *sohbet* one of

the hadiths is read and a discussion starts about fairness and unions. Then you step back. As you incorporate such events into your life, your personal life and work life start to improve. (Appendix I, 239)

İsmail agreed with other businessmen and explained how he started to pay more attention to work ethics after what he learned at *sohbets*. He said:

It [what I learned at *sohbets*] forced me to be a decent person and a decent merchant because I now know people's rights are more important than anything else. You're in continuous interaction with other people in business life and you run the risk of making illegal gains. Normally you'd try to avoid such breach but when you're reminded of it often you become more careful so that you wouldn't make any illegal gains with which to feed your children. You also learn to avoid conflicts and try to make people happy by becoming nicer to customers. You can enjoy such benefits. (Appendix I, 240)

6.4.4 Psychological relaxation

Ali said that the primary effect of attending to *sohbets* for businessmen is the opportunity of psychological healing after a tiring and stressful business world. He explained in detail:

Here's how it affects our work life. Your work setting tires you mentally and physically and keeps you busy all the time. Many may not feel it in our society; we don't see a doctor until we feel a physical disposition but when we have a psychological illness, which doesn't cause our people to look for medical help unlike Europeans who don't mind it, we tend to overlook it. I mean when we cough or have the flu or other illnesses, we immediately seek treatment. Yet when we have psychological problems, we don't. In the same vein *sohbets* are crucial in maintaining this motivation. For one thing, being a part of this atmosphere and opening your mind for religious learning is psychological healing. It is healing and I based this on a verse, which says, "Only in the remembrance of Allah can the heart find peace." Here remembrance has a wider sense. It can be saying prayers, talking about God, or mentioning God's name, and *sohbet* settings are settings for such remembrance. These activities are all settings for remembering God. Only then can one find peace. Physical satisfaction doesn't satisfy the heart. How can this affect your work life? Well, such motivations leads to such blessings that your keep getting refreshed. You heal yourself, in a sense. In fact as you heal yourself, you also perform social healing. You sometimes push people you feel close. You know he would just sit in front of the TV set, have some snacks, and kill time without actually doing anything. He is reluctant to come along not because he doesn't like it but because he's being lazy. Once he goes into that atmosphere and feels the peace, he thanks

before he leaves. He has a hard time getting there, but he's satisfied and refreshed as he leaves. This mood has repercussions in work life and social life. This people may get together in social life, which contributes to its aftereffects. It helps you put your relationships in order. He gets a wider social network and develops a moral compass in work life. (Appendix I, 241)

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION

7.1 Findings and discussion

This chapter focuses on a general discussion of all the research findings, highlights their implications for research and practice, makes recommendations for adult educators and future researchers on social movements and adult education, explain limitations of the study, and offers suggestions for future research.

The findings of the study were grouped under three major sections in the previous pages of this dissertation (Chapters 4 – 6). The first group of findings was related to how the participants of this study, including the businessmen and were introduced to the Gülen Movement, the reasons why they decided to participate in the Gülen Movement, the significance of the Gülen Movement in their lives, and how they positioned themselves in the Gülen Movement. The second group of findings was related to the educational aspects of *sohbets* including their aims and objectives, their content and syllabus, the participants, the trainers and teaching and learning styles. The third group of findings was related to the effects of attending *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement on the daily lives of businessmen, on their families, on their friends and relatives, and on their business lives.

7.1.1 Discussion on findings about the participants of *sohbets*

Both the businessmen and *sohbet hocaları* gave detailed responses to the questions how they met the Gülen Movement, why they decided to participate in it, what its significance to them was, and how they positioned themselves within the Gülen

Movement. Most of the answers were long and included detailed explanations. Additionally, although these questions were posed to interviewees at the beginning of the interview, some parts of their answers at other sections of the interview included information related to these questions, which made it crucial to search for data relevant to this section throughout the entire interview record.

7.1.1.1 The recruitment to the Gülen Movement

Findings reveal that inviting businessmen to an occasion such as tea, or dinner occasionally, is the most common method the Gülen Movement employs while it extends its circle of participants among businessmen. Findings also show that such an invitation is not made publicly but rather through the friendships businessmen invite their acquaintances to spend some time together. During these gatherings, the new comers are introduced to the goals of the Gülen Movement and invited to participate in it.

From the perspective of theories of social movement, in Chapter 2 of this study, it was stated that “Once initial activists in a social movement form groups and begin to think of themselves as a movement, their next step is usually to try to expand their movement by recruiting others to their cause” (Goodwin and Jasper, 2003, p. 51). Moreover, recruitment can be conducted by using different kinds of social networks, not necessarily political in its content or inspiration (McAdam, 2003). Based on the findings, I argue that the Gülen Movement has already evolved into a social movement having systematized its expansion by utilizing *sohbets* as gates to invite people to the movement. I also argue that the Gülen Movement extends the number of its participants

via social networks among businessmen by offering a non-political discourse but a religious one.

Nevertheless, the political stance of the Gülen Movement has long been a matter of dispute in Turkish society, some claiming the movement to bear a strong political tendency, but others assuming political neutrality on it. For example, Ağırđır (2014) considers the Gülen Movement as a political power rather than a religious group. Özipek (2014) also agrees and warns that the Gülen Movement will lose its social support by claiming a political stance, especially against the reigning political power of the time. However, Yılmaz (2014) emphasizes that the Gülen Movement is a widespread and heterogeneous community comprised of people embracing a variety of ideas, political stances and general approaches. In my opinion, the Gülen Movement succeeds in reaching much more people by emphasizing a common set of beliefs rather than political separations.

Another perspective that can be employed to interpret these findings is found in the early history of Islam. Research accumulated on the Gülen Movement shows that it is an Islamic faith based movement which promotes education, interfaith dialogue, and non-political, non-conflictual and non-violent community services, improving oneself and developing social and cultural potential (Çetin, 2014; Tittensor, 2014; Yavuz 2003). Then, it would not be surprising to expect Islamic way of action from the Gülen Movement. That is to say, as reported in the history of Islam, when Prophet Mohammad started to spread Islam, he was commanded by God to invite his close relatives to Islam, and until the number of Muslims reached a majority, they had invited their close friends one by one to the *sohbets* at the house of Ibn-i Erkam where they read the first revelations of Quran (Haylamaz and Harpci, 2014). Given that the model Fethullah

Gülen, the inspirational leader of the Gülen Movement, takes for the development of morality in individuals is the Prophet Muhammad, who plays a shaping role in building self-identity, or personality (Yavuz, 2003), and that, according to Gülen (2000) the prophet Muhammad's life story is the greatest narrative for Muslims who search for morality and identity, I argue that the Gülen Movement models on the way Prophet Muhammad invites other people to Islam and reaches potential participants accordingly. I also argue that by acting in this way the Gülen Movement assumes the responsibility of spreading Islam in the prophetic way.

However, it should also be noted that the Gülen Movement receives criticism from other Islamic groups for the way it spreads Islam in the community. Tuğal (2009) seeks the source of the criticism in the different methods the Gülen Movement employs, while telling the story of an ex-radical who had shifted to the *Nurcu* line and saying "Now believers had started to spread Islam by using 'the language of the Prophet,' the language of tolerance and reason, rather than 'crude politics' and dogmatism" (p. 202).

Furthermore, choosing to reach people through inviting them to tea and talk is a strategic decision in the sense that such a practice coincides well with the local culture. As reported earlier in this study, there is the tradition of *oturma* in many cities of Anatolia, Turkey where males in a neighborhood or business circle gather at each other's home weekly taking turns and have tea and chat. The Gülen Movement utilizes these gatherings as an advantage to reach people through an already familiar gathering to the potential participants. In my opinion, relying on the local cultural practices helps the Gülen Movement grow as a grassroots movement because it opts to synthesize with the local culture rather than importing a new practice to local public.

On the other hand, there were other businessmen who said they first met the Gülen Movement during their school years. It is not unknown that the Gülen Movement reaches the members of society at all levels including the secondary school students. These young people stay at the dormitories or attend to schools and university preparation centers and courses opened by the foundations sponsored by the businessmen participants of the Gülen Movement. Michel (2014) considers these spaces as centers of formation and states:

In these centers of formation, the students not only supplement their secular high school and university studies or prepare for entrance exams, but they form friendships, and a network of social relations. They also receive spiritual training through the study of the Qur'an and spiritual texts such as Said Nursi's *Risale-i Nur*, and they pursue their educational goals in a social environment free from the use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco, premarital sex, and violence. (p. 104)

Not surprisingly, based on the findings, I argue that these individuals who became participants of the Gülen Movement at their younger ages later functioned as the starters, or organizers, of businessmen *sohbets* if they continued their career as businessmen.

7.1.1.2 The reasons

Findings have revealed that there were four main reasons why businessmen and *sohbet hocaları* started to take part in the Gülen Movement. These are; regarding the Gülen Movement as a social space, learning and/or teaching spiritual/religious values, raising a new generation, and social activism in order to change the society.

As stated in Chapter 2, people are mobilized into social movements through social networks due to the fact that the existence of social ties among the potential participants lays the ground for the emergence of a social movement (Goodwin and Jasper, 2003). The Gülen Movement, in this sense, creates a conducive social space by

gathering businessmen every week around a common topic and makes them undertake responsibilities such as helping those in need or finding a remedy to a social problem altogether rather than every individual taking a solitary responsibility. In her research “*Resource Mobilization in Gülen-Inspired Hizmet*”, El-Banna (2014) emphasizes that the Gülen Movement organizations contribute to the accumulation of social capital and cites Weller (2005) who points out that faith-based community services significantly contribute to the development of bonding and bridging social capital. From these perspectives, I argue that the Gülen Movement offers a social space in which connections between the social network of the Gülen Movement and new participants create a social capital along with the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness (Putnam, 2001).

However, Toprak (2009) poses a criticism against the social space that the Gülen Movement is said to offer, based on the findings of her research on religion, conservatism, and otherization in Turkey. She reports one of the interviewees, telling about her experiences in her community, “There is widespread social transformation and social pressure. Whether you like it or not, you feel isolated” (125). In my opinion, this is an important conflict against the positive contribution that the Gülen Movement followers claim they inflict on the society. While they are creating social networks for people who follow them, the movement may be otherizing those who do not participate rather than leaving them alone without any pressure.

Secondly, the teaching and learning of spiritual values is one of the primary goals of religious social movements. While categorizing the Islamic social movements, Yavuz (2003) refers to everyday life-based movements emphasizing that Islamic identity involves the definition and practice of ‘the good life.’ In such movements, the

individual's moral commitment is what defines his or her political engagement. From this perspective, religious faith, or religiously informed moral character, is considered the primary factor that propels one into action. Yavuz (2003) maintains that "Islamic practices and ideas are utilized to legitimize alternative practices and lifestyles.

Questions like these – What is the good life and how does one realize it? – are very much at the center of the contemporary religious revival." Based on the findings, I argue that the Gülen Movement is an Islamic social movement which intends to spread the message of Islam, and *sohbets* are one strong channel to that end. I also argue that *sohbets* provide a bi-directional opportunity for the spread of Islamic values, regarding the responses of the participants to the study, some of whom said they participated in "to teach Islam, while others mentioned "to learn about Islam." In my opinion, *sohbets* teach methods and offer opportunities to those who want to teach Islam to others, while they [*sohbets*] also function as social centers where Islam is taught. Needless to say, learning Islam involves the teaching of it to others as a responsibility commanded by God in Qur'an and many hadiths of the Prophet. I think this also explains the dual function of the *sohbets* better.

Thirdly, the objective of raising a new generation definitely refers to the teaching of spiritual values too, which are Islamic principles and lifestyles, to the younger generations, an ideal which mostly has top priority among the goals of many Islamic social movements. While explaining the new direction Islamic social movements took after the 1980s in Turkey, Yavuz (2003) mentions about the *Nakşibendi* tradition, on which the Nurcu Movement, which constitutes the foundation of the Gülen Movement, rests. This tradition caused a transformation within the mosque-based community, where elders would go to the mosque and just sit and pray, and turned it into a center for

shaping young people. In the case of the Gülen Movement, the responsibility of raising a new generation is considered the top priority and thus the responsibility is given to the entire schooling system rather than the mosques. Such an expected function of school system to cultivate new generations is defined by Michel (2014) citing from Gülen (1999):

For this [raising the ideal generation] to come about, Gülen asserts that a new style of education is necessary, one “that will fuse religious and scientific knowledge together with morality and spirituality, to produce genuinely enlightened people with hearts illumined by religious sciences and spirituality, minds illumined with positive sciences,” people dedicated to living according to humane qualities and moral values, who are also “cognizant of the socio-economic and political conditions of their time.” (p. 65)

The schools affiliated with the Gülen Movement are now all over the world in order to realize the abovementioned function of education, and obviously supported by businessmen who participate in the Gülen Movement so that they can assume responsibility in raising a new generation, as is put in the findings.

Nevertheless, the educational activities of the Gülen Movement, which may as well include the businessmen *sohbets* in this case, attracts considerable criticism from the advocates of secular education. Balçı (2013) states that the schools inspired by Gülen are accused of “educating new elites opposed to the regime, as well as to the secular principles of the Turkish republic” (p. 109). Turam (2007) attributes the dislike and becoming “an object of revulsion” by the secularists of Turkey to “the increasing influence of Gülen movement on education” and “its claims to be part of civil society” (p. 71).

In my opinion, the above finding has significance in the political history of Turkey. I argue that the intention of “raising a new generation” is a response that has developed in the grassroots and political Islamic movements against the top-down policy

of building a nation by the founding fathers of Turkey. The founding fathers of the new Turkish republic intended to disestablish Islam and take it under state control (Arat, 2005). Accordingly, a secular educational system was implemented in schools where religion was almost non-existent in the curriculum, with the intention of raising new generations through modern science that was not under the influence of Islam which was seen as a hindrance before the development of science. However, Süleyman Efendi and Bediüzzaman Said Nursi responded to the exclusion of religion in the raising of generations by starting underground social movements that appealed to millions of supporters (Kuru, 2009). Said Nursi explained in his writings that Islamic faith and modern science are compatible (Saritoprak, 2008; Mardin, 1989). The Gülen Movement further put the ideal of Said Nursi into practice by opening schools that aims to raise a generation who mingles modern science and Islamic faith. Needless to say, the businessmen who attend the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement are the sponsors, or initiators, of such schools.

Lastly, social activism and/or helping others is one of the primary reasons why people take part in social movements. As stated in Chapter 2, Snow and Bedford (1988) define three consecutive types of framing that are essential for successful recruitment to social movements. One of them is *diagnostic* framing, which involves convincing potential converts that a problem needs to be addressed. In the case of the Gülen Movement, findings have revealed that the problem addressed is helping those in need, namely students who cannot find enough money to go to university in another city or poor people who cannot take meat or essential supplies to home. In my opinion, the Gülen Movement defines such socio-economic problems more substantially by building dormitories all around the country and by establishing philanthropic organizations which

obtain national and international accreditation, as in the case of *Kimse Yok Mu?* In this way, the businessmen are able to see more clearly where help is needed and feel confident that their efforts address the problems successfully.

7.1.1.3 The significance

Findings have revealed that both businessmen and *sohbet hocaları* place high importance to the Gülen Movement in their lives and express this importance using highly emotional words, such as “It is my honor, my pride, my integrity, my faith, my existence, my all.” (Mehmet), “My Lord! Draw me a path so that I contribute to myself, I contribute to *Hizmet*, and I contribute to my country.” (Ümit), “I’ve never thought of such a life because once you take the movement out of our life, which I think about from time to time, I realized nothing is left.” (Zeki) and so on.

Related to the commitment to a social movement, Goodwin and Jasper (2006) state “in order to attract people to join and remain committed to a movement, its issues must be presented or “framed” so that they fit or resonate with the beliefs, feelings, and desires of potential recruits.” Categorizing the types of frames created within a social movement, Snow and Bedford (1988), as mentioned earlier, define three consecutive types of framing that are essential for successful recruitment to social movements. One of them is motivational framing, which includes exhorting participants to get involved in these activities by arousing their emotions. In the case of the Gülen Movement, the findings of this study make it clear that the emotions of the participants are aroused and they take part in the movement with high motivation and such loyalty.

In my opinion, the Gülen Movement owes its success in generating such loyalty to the way it defines loyalty for the participants. The following reading extract from a text read in *sohbets* explains what I mean clearly:

For a person, there are three important friends. One of them is loyal, while the other two are not. These are one's belongings and wealth, his relatives and friends, and his good deeds. When death arrives, belongings fade away... His friends who come to his grave wave their hands in pain, and yet, they leave... Only God's grace and the good deeds go beyond the grave and walk with him on the Bridge of Sirat, and thus greet him as eternal joy and happiness. (Akar, 2008, p. 76)

Considering the active pietism emphasized in the Gülen Movement, as mentioned earlier, I, therefore, argue that loyalty and commitment expressed by the businessmen participants of the Gülen Movement is not towards people but the divine causes, the first of which are good deeds performed for the sake of God, to please God.

On the other hand, Toprak (2009) explains the loyalty that is formed by businessmen to the movement from a critical perspective. Emphasizing that the meetings of businessmen form a network-like establishment among the businessmen for “getting in touch with people who share the same understanding” and “initiating business contacts,” she considers these meetings functional in “proving stability and loyalty to the community” (p. 124). Rather than seeking divine causes behind the loyalty of businessmen to the Gülen Movement, Toprak (2009) points to the mutual relationships between the movement and businessmen who certainly receive several benefits to their business lives.

7.1.1.4 The positioning of the self

Findings have revealed that none of the businessmen and *sohbet hocaları* attributed themselves an important position in the Gülen Movement. Apparently, such an expression of positioning is clearly due to their being humble. Regarding the responsibilities they have taken so far, as they told in the interviews, such as sponsoring

school buildings, or help organizations of for the poor, they function important roles. At this point, the teachings of the Gülen Movement help understand the humble expressions of interviewees. In his essay “Modesty and Humility”, which appeared in *The Fountain*, Gülen (2010) defines humility as follows:

Humility has been defined in many ways: seeing oneself as devoid of all virtues essentially originating in oneself, treating others humbly and respectfully, seeing oneself as the worst of humanity (unless being honored by a special Divine treatment), and being alert to any stirring of the ego and immediately suppressing it. Each definition expresses a dimension of humility. However, the last definition relates to those made sincere by God Himself and who are near to Him. (p. 1)

In my opinion, based on the findings of the study, participants of the Gülen Movement follow Gülen’s advice and do not consider themselves at important positions though they may be assuming important responsibilities.

7.1.2 Discussion on findings about aims and objectives of *sohbets*

Through the analysis of findings, it is possible to categorize the aims of *sohbets* in two groups. The first group of the aims is related to the outside world, including not only the human beings in the immediate circle but also those in every corner of the world, as participants put it. The second group of aims are more directed to the participants of the *sohbets* and related to their self-improvement and religiosity.

Based on the findings, the Gülen Movement has aims related to the entire society, or even humanity in the world. It can be argued that the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement, therefore, aims to increase the awareness of participants about the social problems in their circle and evaluate them from the perspective of not only religion but also universal humanistic values. Below are the relevant expressions of various participants which denote to such aim of *sohbets*:

- a. To spread Islamic perception of morality to the layers of society (Ali)
- b. To introduce the need to support young people through the scholarships collected by the charity organizations founded by businessmen who attend *sohbets* (Ali)
- c. To put participants into action in order to help those in need in the society around them (Ali)
- d. To encourage businessmen to build student dorms and furnish student houses where poor university students who come from rural areas can stay (Murat)
- e. To remind participants about their social responsibilities (İsmail)
- f. To reach people and introduce the activities of the Gülen Movement if they would like to take responsibility (Muhammed)

Based on the findings, the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement have aims related to the individual and his social life. Below are the relevant expressions of various participants which denote to such aim of *sohbets*:

- a. To ensure the self-development of participants (Zeki)
- b. To improve the religious knowledge of the participants (Selahattin)
- c. To help people organize their life according to principles of Islam
- d. To teach how to read Quran in Arabic through attending *sohbets* (Zeki)
- e. To teach Islam to the participants (Hakan)
- f. To remind businessmen participants about their responsibilities [as a Muslim person.] (İhsan)
- g. to provide businessmen with opportunities to develop themselves and socialize (Yusuf)
- h. To educate human beings (Nedim)
- i. To cultivate the ideal human being in terms of Islamic way of life (Cihangir)

- j. To offer participants opportunities for socialization (Mahmut)
- k. To help people know our religion better and organize their life according to its principles (Hakan)

Regarding the societal aims of *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement, it was stated in Chapter 2 that social movements are seen as efforts to control the direction of social change largely by controlling a society's symbols and self-understandings, and such a control is realized through shaping or creating their own collective identities as social movements (Melucci, 1996). So far, other research on the Gülen Movement has revealed its discourse related to the society, or entire humanity. Kalyoncu (2011) defines an important element in the Gülen Movement discourse. He states that "According to Gülen, altruism is an essential characteristic of a person who is dedicated to a grand ideal, such as serving society" (p. 24). He cites from Gülen (1985):

Those who strive to enlighten others, seek happiness for them, and extend a helping hand, have such a developed and enlightened spirit that they are like guardian angels. They struggle with disasters befalling society, stand up to "storms," hurry to put out "fire," and are always on the alert for possible shocks. (p. 21)

Ergene (2011) mentions another discursive element that is significant in understanding societal aims of the Gülen Movement, which is living for others. He resembles living for others to idealistic heroism and defines the characteristics of such people. "These are people who are able to instill in the society a consciousness of responsibility and concern for others." The *sohbets* then become the channels to gain participants the above mentioned behaviors and make them carry social responsibilities.

Regarding the aims of *sohbets* related to the individual and his social life, as stated by the participants to this study, it is very obvious that teaching of Islam and

related theoretical and practical issues is the most articulated goal. Indeed, this is not a surprising finding when the Islamic essence of the Gülen Movement considered. Moreover, the Gülen Movement places utmost importance to the cultivation of the individual because the building of the society rests on the appropriately educated individuals. The *sohbets* serve this purpose and provide Islamic teaching to the participants. That is to say, the cultivation of the individuals is essential in the Gülen Movement. About the importance of educated individuals, Kalyoncu (2011) mentions that “Gülen emphasizes that just as important as having altruistic and dedicated heroic individuals is the necessity of these individuals’ collective action; a collective revival is possible only through the individual revival that must precede it” (p.25).

How the foundation of the Gülen Movement rests upon the teachings of Said Nursi was explained in detail in Chapter 2 of this study. The findings related to the aims of *sohbets* about the individual and his social life coincide with the vision of Said Nursi that cultivating individual Muslim personalities would be the first step of Islamic social transformation. Yavuz (2003) states:

[Nursi’s] writings constantly try to build a pious and modern Muslim personality, one that is tolerant but firm about core virtues of Islam...Nursi tried to protect the Muslim personality from the destructive impact of the state’s nationalism and positivism by carving an inner space of self-development and direction to cope with external events and pressures. The development of this inner space was the major aim and challenge of his writings. (p. 160)

Given that the books by Nursi are used as reference books in *sohbets*, as stated by the participants, the aims of *sohbets* related to the teaching of Islam is not surprising.

Moreover, the relationship between the societal aims of *sohbets* and those related to individual cultivation can be found in the social vision of Said Nursi. Yavuz (2003) states:

Nursi imagined a gradual transformation, beginning with the process of (1) raising individual Muslim consciousness, continuing to (2) the implementation of faith in everyday life, and then to (3) the restoration of sharia. He sought to equip individual Muslims with the necessary tools to guide their lives in accordance with Islamic precepts. By a sharia-governed society, Nursi meant a law-governed, just society. (p. 161)

Nevertheless, there is an important point that needs to be clarified. The teaching of Islam to the individuals denotes to a rather different interpretation in the Gülen Movement compared to other Islamic social movements or initiatives. Ergil (2012) explains the envisage of Islam by the Gülen Movement:

He [Gülen] believes that Islam has a universal message which can be transformed into a broad humanistic philosophy. He feels that this philosophy could be used to kindle the sense of solidarity which has been in decline and then spread it to the world. (p. 38)

Based on the above discussion, I argue that the realization of the aforementioned aims and objectives of in each *sohbet* group ensures the creation of a better humane society, which is the ultimate goal of the Gülen Movement for wider society. To such end, each *sohbet* of the Gülen Movement functions as a micro society. That is to say, in a *sohbet* group, each participant is cultivated with the pietistic activism of the Gülen Movement and starts performing good deeds for his society, along with the other good deeds performed as entire group activity. Considering that such *sohbet* groups exist almost in every neighborhood and that the expansion of the *sohbet* groups is essential to their existence, I can conclude that the Gülen Movement follows a systematic bottom up approach to spread its message to the entire community.

Although the aforementioned aims and objectives portray a clearly envisioned personal and social improvement with regard to Islam, they cause some reservations on the side of those critical of the Gülen Movement. For example, Toprak (2009), with the support of the findings obtained in her research in which she interviewed those who do

not follow the Gülen Movement but observe their activities, claims that “this community network founded on social conservatism has made the Anatolian cities more conservative and provided evidence for the argument that Turkish society is becoming more Islamicized” (p. 125).

7.1.3 Discussion on findings about the organization of *sohbets*

The analysis of findings has showed that the *sohbets* have an organized structure in terms of their schedule, venue, announcement, holidays and the formation of the *sohbet* group.

7.1.3.1 The schedule

The schedule of *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement is very strict in the sense that once their days and hours are set, they are never skipped and participants arrange their schedule accordingly, as stated by the participants to the study, although there can be some exceptional cases when all participants and *sohbet hocaları* agree to reschedule or skip. The weekly continuity of *sohbets* is an important characteristic, along with many other findings to be discussed in the following lines of this section, which makes it possible to consider them as an educational activity. In the UNESCO (1976) definition, adult education refers to the whole body of organized educational processes with any content, level, and method. In this sense, meeting weekly on predetermined days and at the same hour is one aspect of ‘organized’ educational process. Nevertheless, I argue that such scheduled and continuous educational activities are not common to those in social movements, which rather involve non-formal adult education (English and Mayo, 2012).

7.1.3.2 The venue

Findings have shown that the *sohbets* are held mostly in the homes of businessmen, and less frequently in student dorms or houses. There are also occasions when they *sohbets* are held at workplaces or businessmen associations.

The hosting of *sohbets* by another businessman taking turns every week certainly involves the businessmen actively in the organization of the *sohbets*. From the perspective of adult education, this practice taps to a basic principle, which is to involve learners in the planning/organization of educational activities. (Brookfield 1986; Draves 1997; Grissom 1992; Knowles 1992)

Holding *sohbets* at businessmen's homes is also a good strategy from the perspective of cultural norms. It is a common code of behavior in the society to invite the owner of the house once you have been hosted as a guest by that person. In the case of the Gülen Movement *sohbets*, therefore, when the *sohbet* is held at one businessman's house with 15 people at the beginning of the season, it is culturally expected that those 15 participants will each invite others to come for the *sohbet* to their homes. In this way, not the *sohbet hocası* but the participants assume the responsibility of organizing the venue of the *sohbets*.

There are also less frequent cases when *sohbets* are held in student dorms or houses. The analysis of findings has shown that this is an important strategy to motivate participants. As mentioned in the aims of *sohbets* in the previous section of this chapter, one of the goals of *sohbets* is to encourage businessmen to build student dorms and furnish student houses where poor university students who come from rural areas can stay. When the *sohbets* are held in a dormitory or student house, most probably built and

furnished thanks to their financial assistance, the businessmen felt motivated seeing their substantial contributions to those in need.

7.1.3.3 The announcement

Findings have also shown that the announcement of *sohbets* is another responsibility that falls onto businessmen in the organization of *sohbets*. As mentioned earlier, involving businessmen in the planning of educational activities is an important principle of adult education (Brookfield 1986; Draves 1997; Grissom 1992; Knowles 1992). Moreover, considering that most of the *sohbet* groups consist of close friends or acquaintances and that the *sohbet hocaları* are not the hosts of the *sohbets*, it is more appropriate and can be more effective for businessmen to invite their friends to their homes, even including the *sohbet hocası*.

7.1.3.4 The holidays

Findings have revealed that the *sohbets* continue year round without a holiday period except for the religious festivals twice a year. This finding accords with the continuing nature of adult education. That is to say, in contrast to formal education, non-formal nature of adult education enables it to start or finish any time regardless of time of the years, and a holiday season may not be needed as in formal education.

Another explanation of continuing *sohbets* without a holiday season can be related to their religious content. As was mentioned in Chapter 5, the businessmen read Quran, hadiths of the Prophet and other religious documents. Moreover, it is written in Quran and hadiths of the Prophet that when Muslims come together to learn about religion, they take part in an activity that is liked by God and this is considered a good

deed. That is to say, the businessmen consider their *sohbets* as a holy activity not only they read Quran but also they read and learn knowledge, which is the first order from God as the first verses of Quran in Islamic history, and also they plan social activities to help people in need or solve a problem in the society. From this perspective, I argue that the businessmen do not consider giving a break to an activity which they see like a prayer.

7.1.3.5 The *sohbet* group

Findings have revealed that the attendees of the *sohbets* are mostly friends and acquaintances of each other, and most of them indeed stated that they formed the *sohbet* group by inviting their friends and relatives. Such a finding also emerged when interviewees were asked how they met the movement for the first time. From this perspective, it becomes clear that the *sohbet* groups are like the gates to the Gülen Movement. Relying most probably on the trust that develops as a result of kinship or long term acquaintance, businessmen who have already been participating in the activities of the Gülen Movement invite their friends and relatives both to “become a part of a larger group in which they can help” humanity and improve themselves spiritually (Melucci, 1996).

Secondly, although the *sohbet* groups are predominantly comprised of friends and acquaintances, they tend to include businessmen from similar sectors and/or socio-economic status; that is, homogenous groups, as put so by some interviewees. From the perspective of adult education, the homogeneity of the *sohbet* group may lay a better ground for communication and peer learning, in terms of starting discussions on common ground.

It is also an important finding that the *sohbet* groups are not formed by the *sohbet hocaları* as a result of a top-down approach but the businessmen come together and form a group then to invite a *sohbet hocası*. From the perspective of adult education, such a practice taps to several principles of adult education such as involving adults in the planning of education or promote self-direction in learners (Draves, 1997; Grissom, 1992; Knowles, 1992).

Another important finding about the *sohbet* groups is the average number of participants, which is nine to twelve people. The apparent reason for not keeping a larger group is the fact that the *sohbet* places are often the homes of businessmen, and a large sitting room can naturally accommodate a certain number of people. Moreover, keeping groups nine to twelve people for *sohbets* complies with one of the principles of adult education that is using small groups. Structured appropriately, small groups emphasize the importance of learning from peers, and they allow all participants to be involved in discussions and to assume a variety of roles (Draves, 1997; Grissom, 1992; Knowles, 1992).

Yet one more finding related to the *sohbet* group is the circulation of participants. As mentioned by all interviewees, the *sohbet* groups continually accept new members and transfer some members to other groups or generate entirely new groups as they progress. The circulation of the participants of the *sohbets* reflects the aim of the Gülen Movement to diffuse into all segments of society. In other words, by keeping the gates of the *sohbets* open to new comers and generating new ones out of the existing *sohbets*, the Gülen Movement tries to extend its outreach to every member of society. According to Kalyoncu (2011) the Gülen Movement employs the relational model of diffusion which explains the spread of ideas, values, and vision through direct interpersonal

contacts and relations. There is no doubt that the *sohbets* constitute an important medium for the diffusion of the Gülen Movement.

On the other hand, Toprak (2009) criticizes the organization of *sohbet* groups from the perspective of those excluded from attending to the *sohbets* for various reasons, based on the interviews made with such people. She states:

As far as we understand, these “meetings” are different from social gatherings such as the “weekly receptions” held by women that are common in all Anatolian cities. People who wanted to establish a new business or open a shop were invited to the houses of the community members and were excluded in business life unless they responded to the invitation. (p. 123)

7.1.4 Discussion on findings about the syllabus of *sohbets*

Findings have revealed that the *sohbets* follow a syllabus. The most important characteristic of this syllabus is that it is prepared taking the demands of participants into account. Such a practice applies one of the important principles of adult education. Including learners in the planning and implementing of their learning activities is considered to be a hallmark of adult education. Their participation can begin with the needs assessment process where members of the target population help establish the program goals and objectives and continue throughout the learning activity to the evaluation phase (Draves 1997; Grissom 1992; Knowles 1992).

7.1.4.1 The duration and sessions

The duration of *sohbets* is around two hours and may extend to the three hours depending on the availability of the venue and social talks that may continue among the participants. Though this may seem a long time for an educational activity, it is indeed

divided into two sessions, between which tea and/or treats are served. This 10-15 minute can be considered a break time between two consecutive classes as well.

Participants mentioned in their statements that the *sohbets* had a certain routine that follows from the previous week. The routine starts with a 40-minute presentation by the *sohbet hocasi*. The presentation is comprised of four main parts:

1. Reading Quran in Arabic along with its Turkish interpretation
2. Reading hadiths of the Prophet and their interpretations
3. Readings from *Risale-i Nur*
4. Readings from books of Fethullah Gülen or listening to his sermons

The findings clearly show that the focus of this 40-minute initial session is entirely on religious topics, and this is not surprising regarding the fact that the Gülen Movement is an Islamic social movement and draws its teachings upon Islam. It is possible to trace the significance the Gülen Movement ascribes to teaching of religious values to the society in the writings of Said Nursi whose ideas can be said to have constituted the intellectual foundation of the Gülen Movement that emerged after his death. Agai (2002) states:

Gülen, just like Nursi, tries to fulfill three major goals: (1) to raise Muslim consciousness; (2) to reexamine the connection between science and religion in order to refute the dominant intellectual discourses of materialism and positivism; and (3) to recover collective memory by revising the shared grammar of society, Islam.

Therefore, I argue that the teaching of Islamic values is the main factor that shapes the syllabus. The individual is the main concern, whose cultivation will inflict a greater social change as in the case of new social movements, explained in Chapter 2 in detail.

Another point to consider in the first 40-minute session is the order of the readings. It starts with the Quran which is the essential text for all teachings of Islam.

Second only to Quran is the hadiths of the Prophet. However, after these main texts, the syllabus focuses on the interpretation of Islam by Said Nursi and his follower Fethullah Gülen. That is to say, the *sohbets* apparently teach religion from the original texts but interpretations of the Islam in the Quran and hadiths of the Prophet are borrowed from Nursi and Gülen.

The second session after the tea and treat break is allocated to the questions which businessmen pose to the *sohbet hocaları* often about the topics discussed in the initial presentation session and in other religious issues. Findings have also shown that these questions are not only about practice of religion in life but also about religion in all aspects of life. In the question-answer sessions, the businessmen are allowed to express their views about the topics under focus and they tell about relevant experiences. Sometimes, this second session of *sohbets* can include discussions about actuality and business related issues; that is to say, social conversations may take place. As a result, the total duration of the *sohbets* can be extended up to three hours.

7.1.4.2 The books and other resources

An important finding related to the syllabus of the *sohbets* is the list of books and other materials used during the presentations and further readings. The primary materials used in the *sohbets* are Turkish translations/interpretations of the Quran written by three different authors:

1. Kuran-ı Kerim Meali (Translation of the Holy Qur'an) by Prof. Dr. Suat Yıldırım
2. Kuran-ı Kerim ve Meali (The Holy Qur'an and its Translation) by Ali Ünal

3. Kuran-ı Kerim Türkçe Meali (The Turkish Translation of the Holy Qur'an)
by Elmalılı Muhammed Hamdi Yazır

In the Turkish religious books market, there are tens of translations of Qur'an and no one would argue that they have huge differences from each other. Nevertheless, the first two books in the above list are written by authors affiliated by the Gülen Movement and published by the house, which also publishes Gülen's books. What is particular about these two translations/interpretations of the Quran is that they are written in modern Turkish and include references to Said Nursi's and Fethullah Gülen's interpretation on some verses.

Secondly, for the hadiths of the Prophet, one particular book comes to the forefront, which is *Riyad As-Salihin (The Gardens of the Righteous)* by Imam Nawawi who lived in the 13th century. In the introduction of the book, the publishing house, the same house that publishes the Quran translations mentioned above, provides a summary of its content:

Riyad as-Salihin can be briefly defined as a book of enhancing morals, mannerliness, encouraging goodness, and warning against the evil. This work consists of the wisdom of the noble Prophet setting the criteria about the manners to be observed by individuals. The hadiths preferred by the author to include in his collection are about:

- a. Enhancing morality
- b. Purifying hearts
- c. Protecting body parts from sin
- d. Being a means for happiness in this world and the next
- e. Encouraging for goodness, warning against evil, and revealing the outward and inward manners of journeying on the spiritual path
- f. Enjoining the good and forbidding the evil

The third book of the syllabus is *Risale-i Nur* by Said Nursi. This is an anthology comprised of 14 books. The ideology that constitutes the foundation of *Risale-i Nur* is stated by Yavuz (2003) as follows:

Nursi struggled to come up with a new interpretation and methodology of Islam. He stressed the study of Qur'an to adapt Islam to modern conditions... Nursi's understanding of Islam was based on his understanding of human nature. He believed that certain characteristics are innate to all human beings. Religious faith, for Nursi, is the outcome of man's intellectual weakness and failure to create permanent harmony in his life and society. He argued that individuals are in a state of constant tension between desire and reason, because humans have infinite appetites but limited resources. The only way to manage this tension is by developing a full connection with God. Nursi criticized positivist epistemology and its desire to control nature and man simultaneously. Since religion is innate to human nature, Nursi sees the lack of religion as the source of many conflicts and wars. He extended this concept of tension to the societal level, where the absence of God in public space is the source of man's problems. His goal, therefore, was to bring God back to the public space. (p. 157)

The presentation sessions also include reading books by Fethullah Gülen and listening to selected parts of his sermons. As stated in Chapter 2, Fethullah Gülen's intellectual work is so prolific that he has written more than 60 books and has delivered hundreds of sermons in mosques and private meetings, all of which are recorded and now accessible on the Internet. During the interviews some participants specifically mentioned the names of the books by Gülen that they followed. One of books most frequently mentioned by participants is *The Statue of Our Souls*. Published by a house that is affiliated with the Gülen Movement in 2011, the book is about revival in Islamic thought and action, as it is spotted on its front cover. The book consists of selected articles that were written by Gülen through the years and published as editorial in one of the magazines issued by the Gülen Movement. Woodhall and Cetin (2011), in their preface to the book provide a brief summary of not only the content of this book but also a general plot of Gülen's writings:

For the sake of a revival, in other words for the sake of repairing the shaken Muslim logic, of compensating for deviations, and of establishing a new and healthy life, the entire Muslim world needs to go through a 'resurrection.' This revival is one that will protect the origin of the religion within the width and universality promised by the flexible principles of Islam, a revival that will meet the needs of all classes of people and embrace all aspects of life in every time

and in every place. It has been pointed out that humanity, life, and the universe should be approached from an Islamic perspective, and that it is an obligation of the Muslim societies that have pushed aside Islamic logic; thought, and concepts to be encouraged toward a renewal in all its depths. Those who undertake this heavy responsibility and who help to realize a universal change should be a new type of people. The author calls them ‘the inheritors of the Earth,’ and he describes them as people who reflect the spirit of the Prophet and Qur’anic morals. (p. viii)

As for the mosque sermons and private *sohbets* of Gülen which are listened to in the first session of the *sohbets*, the *sohbet hocaları* mentioned they incorporated them into their presentation regarding time limits. Most of the mosque sermons are one and half hours, which is apparently too long for part of a 40-minute presentation, and therefore ten-minute excerpts are prepared in accordance with the topic of the *sohbet* and presented. Additionally, weekly *sohbet* videos of Gülen, who now resides in the United States and preaches there, are broadcast on the Internet. These are 20-40 minute conversations and often used in the presentations of *sohbets*.

7.1.4.3 Preparing for *sohbets*

Findings have made it clear that businessmen are not expected to come to the *sohbets* prepared although some of them attend the *sohbets* having prepared on what they follow emphasizing that they know the topic to be covered beforehand. On the other hand, it is expected by businessmen that their *sohbet hocaları* come to the *sohbets* well prepared and ready to answer their questions.

The most important point here is that some businessmen especially stated they used to make preparations in the past when their *sohbet hocası* assigned them to read certain number of pages from the book they followed. Therefore, I argue that the businessmen get prepared for *sohbets* as long as they are requested but not on their

initiative. In accordance with this argument, one businessman, Mehmet, said in the interview, referring to their previous *sohbet hocası*:

He [the previous *sohbet hocası*] was so very knowledgeable. He would read passages by taking us to a number of other related pages. And I loved those lessons. When our new hoca comes this evening, I'll ask him to assign us certain pages so that we can study them beforehand and participate in the lesson.

From the side of *sohbet hocaları*, preparing for *sohbets* requires an extensive work because, as mentioned above, the businessmen expect them to be well prepared. Moreover, in the question-answer session they may face with various questions that may require references to a vast religious literature.

Findings have revealed that *sohbet hocaları* get prepared for *sohbets* in an organized way. As they express it, rather than transmitting the absolute knowledge from religious books to the businessmen only through the interpretation of one *sohbet hocası*, they hold weekly meetings in which the topics they plan to cover in the *sohbets* are discussed with various perspectives of other *sohbet hocaları*. They also discuss about the teaching methods they could employ. In my opinion, such meetings before the *sohbets* enable *sohbet hocaları* to become aware of their level of knowledge and teaching styles as they receive evaluations from their peers in a sense. Cranton (2000) emphasizes importance of educator self-awareness, saying, "Ideally, increased self-awareness also helps us to recognize exactly how others are different and to create learning experiences that better meet the needs of others...Discussing teaching with our peers gives us alternative frames of reference on teaching" (p. 87).

7.1.4.4 What is learned at *sohbets*?

Findings have revealed that the businessmen learn about Islam at the *sohbets* they attend. In order to understand the extent of religious teaching in the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement, they need to be separately evaluated than what is thought at mosques or religion classes at schools. Yavuz (2003) explains how Islam and its teaching as a religion are viewed in the Gülen Movement:

Islam, for Gülen, is the constitution of morality and identity, so he stresses the role of education for the cultivation of the self... In his faith-inspired education project, morality and discipline consist of sacrifice, responsibility to others, hard work, and idealism. In fact, this religiously motivated global education movement is a way of bringing God back to one's life through the ethic of self-sacrifice and hardwork. Muslims constantly are reminded that avoiding sin is not enough; rather, engaging to create a more humane world is required. Salvation means not only to be 'saved from' sinful activities, but also to be engaged actively in the improvement of the world. According to Gülen, moral consciousness toward other cultures can be raised only through participating in an action. In a way, becoming a morally upright person (*insan-ı kamil*) is possible only through morally informed conduct. Those who contribute to take part in this educational activity in fact become a part of bringing the good of Islam to others. (p. 26-27)

Indeed, Islamic knowledge presented in the *sohbets* goes beyond absolute knowledge but requires action. That is to say, it means nothing in Islam that a person knows everything about compulsory daily prayers unless he or she performs them regularly. This is valid for every aspect of Islamic knowledge such as giving alms to the poor, helping those in need, being nice to people, care for others and so on. From this perspective, I argue that the Islam taught in the *sohbets* is more related to the practice of it in life. Khan (2011) states that "Gülen transmits Islamic tenets in a way that everyone can see a role for himself and herself in building a compassionate society where all human beings can co-exist with one another for greater causes based on sacrifice and altruism."

7.1.4.5 The homework

Findings have revealed that the homework given to the businessmen aimed to foster their spiritual improvement. They are given two types of homework, the first of which involves doing certain prayers and following an Islamic lifestyle and in this way putting what is learned in the *sohbets* into practice. Nevertheless, although some of the participants referred to these as homework, in the long run this is what is expected as the desired objective of the *sohbets*. That is to say, one of the aims of the *sohbets* is to help participants organize their life according to principles of Islam. Therefore, it can be argued that the *sohbet hocaları* expect that participants will adopt their homework as their lifestyle and live a more pious life.

Regarding the focus of *sohbets* on businessmen's following the prescribed prayers and fulfilling the duties of a Muslim people in their daily lives, the explanations of Değirmenli (2013) in his book *Inner Dynamics of the People of Hizmet* help understand such insistence on prayers more clearly:

Certain people in our day who lower the dignity of the matter make the assertion that, 'My heart is pure and I believe in God.' It is self-evident that the notion of purity of heart exclusively will not avail them in the slightest. Expressed differently, belief is consolidated with the road leading to worship and is cemented through the establishment of the prescribed Prayer. Belief is fortified through fasting. Belief is reinforced through utilizing the means leading to the removal of miserliness from the heart. Belief is fortified through undertaking the pilgrimage and patiently enduring a great amount of hardship. Belief is reinforced through enjoining the good and forbidding the evil. However many there are pillars in Islam, they serve as supports reinforcing belief from all directions – from its right and left, from in front and from behind, and from underneath it. (p. 231)

The second homework is reading books on various topics about Islam such as the interpretations of the Holy Qur'an, hadith books, or other books, most of which are published by a house affiliated with the Gülen Movement. In addition, readings can be

research oriented in order to make a presentation in some part of the *sohbet* about a religious issue. The books and research topics are often selected to enable businessmen understand certain topics under focus at the *sohbets* more deeply as further reading.

7.1.4.6 The attendance

Findings have clearly showed that businessmen place very high importance on attending *sohbets* regularly and feel absence when they miss a *sohbet* session. Following are a few statements of many which describe their feelings when they could not attend a *sohbet* session for some reason. “My world falls apart” (Cengiz), “Something feels lacking.” (Mehmet, Hakan), “You feel sorry when you can’t go.” (Muhammed).

Ebaugh (2010), who conducted a sociological analysis of the Gülen Movement, presents an explanation such commitment of businessmen to attending *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement. She states:

Interviews with supporters in the Gülen Movement demonstrate that they identify the goals of the movement as their own personal goals. Being part of the Gülen Movement, participating in the local circles, and making contributions to the projects supported by the movement is central to their identity. (p. 63)

However, Toprak (2009) provides an alternative explanation to the perfect attendance of to the *sohbet* meetings, by citing an interviewee’s comments during her field study:

There were religious community members that kept track of the people establishing new companies, going bankrupt or having serious financial problems in every neighborhood in the city. They invited them to the community meetings and after they began to attend meetings, these persons would benefit from the new business directed to them. (p. 123)

7.1.5 Discussion on findings about the *sohbet hocaları*

Findings have revealed that the *sohbet hocaları* are knowledgeable people in religion but not necessarily the graduates of theology faculty. They are well-versed in Islamic literature and possibly have a comprehensive repertoire of Qur'an verses and hadiths of the Prophet in memory. The majority of the *sohbet hocaları* are younger than the businessmen whom they are preaching to; nevertheless, they are highly respected by the businessmen based on their knowledge.

The significant finding is that the *sohbet hocaları* are raised by the Gülen Movement from early ages. Several businessmen emphasized that the *sohbet hocaları* have been inside the Gülen Movement since early ages, by staying in the *dershanes* of the Gülen Movement and brought up with its culture. It was stated in Chapter 2 that the Gülen Movement offers a widespread informal network of *dershanes*, which were inhabited by college students. Yavuz (2003) explains the function of *dershanes* in raising the *sohbet hocaları*:

Dershanes integrate religious and secular publicity together and remove the boundary between private and public space by arming the students against temptations and seductions of the modern world... The achievement of the *dershanes* lies in their institutional and conceptual ability to reconstitute the Muslim personality at the most subjective level. They offer necessary means for the self-realization of a Muslim personality. The religious ambience offered by the *dershane* structure encourages the internalization of the ideals (archetypes) as a map of action that would lead to the discovery of the richness of Muslim identity. In other words, people's interests are informed by their values and these values constitute the map of action. This shared cognitive map of ideals and action is at the core of the Gülen movement. (p. 194)

On the other hand, regarding the raising of *sohbet hocaları* in the student houses or dormitories, critics of the Gülen Movement point to a non-democratic context, as claimed by those who exit from these places expressing a repressive environment as

their excuse. Turam (2007) voices such criticism through the experiences in her field research, stating:

Most of them [students who stay in house or dormitories of the movement] left [the houses or dormitories] because of personal issues; some could not tolerate the extent of the Community's control over their lives. They explained to me that they needed more individual freedom to test different worldviews and experiment with different life styles. (p. 76-77)

Another finding regarding the characteristic of *sohbet hocaları* is that they constitute role models of what they preach, as stated by several businessmen. For example, one businessman mentioned "I've seen the correct way of behaving not in speeches, *sohbets* or lectures but in the way my *hoca* friends actually live: They are the embodiment of living right. How to sit, how to stand up, how to speak..." This finding denotes to an important principle in the educational perspective of the Gülen Movement, which is the notion of *tamsil*, or representation, which involves becoming role models for others in good deeds and moral conduct (Ebaugh, 2010). The significance of *tamsil* (representation) in the Gülen Movement is further explained by Ergil (2011) in detail:

Every process of *tabligh* (communication of message) has an aspect related to *tamsil*. The one who makes the *tabligh* should be able to represent in his own life the values and the knowledge he propagates at the same time. This means that the one who makes the *tabligh* should be able to practice it, to live according to the values he preaches, and to execute in his life the ethical rules he defends. The carrier, if he cannot represent the value and the measure he carries, cannot impart them to others. Gülen finds this relationship in the sincere, emotional, and trustworthy bonds of the Prophets, the Companions, and the Apostles. Otherwise, he believes, an ideal cannot turn into a movement, a movement into a cause, and a cause into an organizational activity. (p. 27)

Furthermore, almost all businessmen participants of the *sohbets* appreciate the quality of their *sohbet hocaları* and find them proficient enough to answer their questions.

Nevertheless, some businessmen emphasized an important point that when their *sohbet hocaları* were posed a question about a topic that they did not know in detail, they

researched it and provided detailed answers the following week, or sometimes they even visited them in their workplace to compensate for the insufficient information they provided. Therefore, I argue that the *sohbets* sometimes cause *sohbet hocaları* to learn about new things. In my opinion, this learning may happen during their interactions with relatively older and experienced participants as well.

From the perspective adult education, the learning by *sohbet hocaları* themselves tap an important principle of adult education. As stated in Chapter 2, the fifth principle of adult education is to foster a spirit of collaboration in the learning setting.

Collaboration in the adult classroom is frequently founded on the idea that the roles of teachers and learners can be interchangeable. Adult learning is a cooperative enterprise that respects and draws upon the knowledge that each person brings to the learning setting (Draves 1997; Grissom 1992; Knowles 1992).

7.1.6 Discussion on findings about teaching and learning at *sohbets*

Data analysis of findings has revealed that the businessmen *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement incorporate many aspects related to the theory and practice of adult learning and teaching to adults.

As mentioned earlier, the *sohbets* consist of two sessions interrupted with a tea break. The first part is the presentation session which is predominantly monologue and managed by the *sohbet hocası*, whereas the second part is much more conversational where all participants take part actively.

The first aspect related to the educational process is that presentation of the subjects by the *sohbet hocaları*, or lecturing, is the preferred teaching style at the first session of *sohbets*. In the presentation session, which continues for about 40 minutes, the

sohbet hocaları bring together various texts from the Qur'an, hadiths of the Prophet, *Risale-i Nur*, and books by Fethullah Gülen around the topic of the day or the topic of the followed syllabus and deliver a lecture on them. During the presentation, participants focus on the *sohbet hocası* and/or the audio and video material listened to or watched. Seldom do participants ask questions or express their opinions.

Employing lecturing in the *sohbets* of businessmen, which is “a teacher-centred method” in adult education, can be discussed from various perspectives (Brookfield, 2013). However, the place of lecturing in adult education needs to be clarified first. Jarvis (2004) considers lecturing one of the most commonly preferred teaching techniques in adult education emphasizing that it has attracted many criticisms so far, though. He borrows the definition of Bergevin et. al. (1963) who define lecturing as “a carefully prepared oral presentation of a subject by a qualified person.” (p. 159). He then emphasizes that lecturing can be as effective as other methods of teaching only in the transmission of information. Jarvis also states, “Additionally, it is clear that because students are familiar with this approach [lecturing] to teaching, or because it means that some of them may be passive learners, they prefer this approach.” (p. 161).

Based on the above mentioned perspectives, therefore, I argue that the *sohbet hocası*, who is highly perceived as a knowledgeable person on religious matters by the participants of the *sohbets*, is the “qualified person” on whom the duty of transmitting the religious knowledge falls without any apparent rejection from the participants rather even with high respect. Moreover, as stated by some businessmen, not all attendees of *sohbets* are eager to take an active part but prefer to stay “passive” learners. A probable explanation to the passive stance of participants is made by Jarvis (2004), saying “Even if they (passive listeners) are provided with the time to raise queries, individual students

may not do so because they may not wish to reveal their ignorance or to hinder the remainder of the group.” (p. 161). Clearly, not only the well-established quality of the *sohbet hocası*, as stated by the businessmen, but also the tendency of participants to stay passive during the presentation make lecturing a suitable teaching technique in the *sohbets*.

On the other hand, there are some voices both from businessmen and *sohbet hocaları* about the non-interactive nature of the lecturing but in opposite directions. For example, Muhammed, made a criticism, along with a suggestion with unsuccessful result, unfortunately as he put it, about the monologue lecturing. He said, “We should do self-criticism about it. There are times when the *sohbet* becomes a monologue. We have made attempts to make it more interactive, and participation from the audience is crucial for these attempts.” On the contrary, Ahmet, a *sohbet hocası*, explained why he did not preferred lecturing in the first part of the *sohbet*. He said, “In the first part, we usually do not accept questions so that our concentration on the issue is not disturbed.” It can therefore be argued that *sohbet hocaları* prioritize the transfer of information without any disturbances in the first session and businessmen get along with this practice. Nevertheless, it cannot be concluded that *sohbets* have a non-interactive, or non-participatory, nature just based on the first session because the second session that starts after the tea break involves question-answer and discussions. In the following paragraphs, the second session will be discussed in detail.

Before the discussions moves on to the second session of *sohbets*, however, there is another possible reason why lecturing is employed as a teaching technique in the *sohbets*. Considered from the perspective of traditional teaching of Islam, lecturing is the most common way in which some people, specifically males, receive their first religious

education through listening to the sermons which are delivered by the imams before and during the Friday prayers at the mosques. That is to say, the established way of teaching religion in Turkey is through the sermons given by imams, all of whom have received education in theology and whose proficiency is certified by Directorate of Religious Affairs of Turkish Republic. Additionally, one important part of the compulsory Friday prayers for Muslim males is the 15 to 20-minute sermon given by the imam about a religious issue. Bearing all these in mind and regarding the fact that *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement has a religious content and that the participants attend with the expectation of learning about religion, it would not be unusual for participants of the *sohbets* to listen to a lecture given by a *sohbet hocası* on religious topic. Needless to say, plenty of the audio and video material that involves the sermons by Fethullah Gülen is also lectures from 20 to 90 minutes. Nevertheless, it should also be pointed out that there are lectures by Gülen where the questions are collected from the listeners and then answered one by one.

Furthermore, the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement include a second session which follows after the lecture and the subsequent tea break. In this second part, the businessmen pose questions to the *sohbet hocaları* about religious issues, including the subject matter of the lecture, and make discussions. It is this second session that brings *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement an interactive fashion. In a total contrast to the first session where the absolute knowledge is presented without any questioning, the second session opens a ground for the interpretation and critique of what is presented in the lecture via the questions posed by the participants as well as critical discussions that are initiated by participants themselves. Regarding critical discussions in small groups, as in the case of *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement, Brookfield (2013) emphasizes that small

groups are conducive settings to develop critical thinking in adult education. He maintains that "...peers serve as critical mirrors, shedding light on assumptions that have never been checked and introducing new perspectives that have not been previously considered" (p. 36). He also points out that critical thinking is experienced primarily as a result of social learning process in adult groups. Therefore, it can be argued that the *sohbets* enable the development of critical thinking by allowing a discussion session after the lectures.

Another finding about the second session of *sohbets* is that the businessmen participate in the discussions with their knowledge and experiences primarily in business life and general issues as well counting on their older ages. That is to say, it is not pure religion that is the focus of the second session but the practical application of religion into personal, social and business life. At this point, businessmen who are often older than the *sohbet hocaları* bring various aspects into discussion so that the group benefits from it. One participant, Cihangir, refers to such contribution, saying "the participants' educational backgrounds and personal interest in the topic helps with a livelier lesson." From the perspective of adult education, participants' contributions to *sohbets* taps to an important principle; that is, to draw upon learners' experiences as a resource. This principle of adult education revolves around the idea of using the experiences of participants as a learning resource. Not only do adult learners have experiences that can be used as a foundation for learning new things but also, in adulthood, readiness to learn frequently stems from life tasks and problems. The particular life situations and perspectives that adults bring to the classroom can provide a rich reservoir for learning. (Merriam & Biarema, 2014; Brookfield, 2013).

There is an interesting finding about the second session of *sohbets*. A *sohbet hocasi* stated that he encouraged asking questions in the *sohbets*, emphasizing that he himself poses questions to the participants as well, because it was the Qur’anic way of teaching, which is apparent in the many verses of Qur’an that are grammatically structured in the interrogative form after a part ends. This section of the study does not intend to explore how Qur’an teaches by asking questions, as put forth by the *sohbet hocasi*; however, asking questions at the end of lectures has a significant point in teaching adults. Brookfield (2013) explains how asking questions at the end of lectures increases the efficiency of lectures. First, he criticizes closing a lecture with a summary and not opening it to questions, saying “Even more worryingly, ending with a summary of what’s already been said establishes a sense of definitive closure, of the last word having been spoken on the subject” (p. 43). Then, he offers a suggestion to adult educators, saying “If possible, lecturers should spend the last ten minutes of a lecture asking students to write down the questions the lecture has raised for them and then find a way to make them public” (p. 44). Corder (2002) also focuses on the importance of allowing some time for a question-answer activity, warning “Otherwise, the ideas you have been trying to get across will soon be lost” (p. 45). Therefore, I argue that the second session of *sohbets* consolidate the knowledge transferred in the lecture by analyzing it more deeply.

There were also other findings related to teaching and learning at the *sohbets*. One of those findings is the frequent use of narratives during the lectures. Besides the Qur’anic stories told about the old civilizations and the prophets sent to them, the *sohbet hocaları* elaborate their presentations with snapshots from the lives of the Prophet, as well as the other prophets whose stories are told in Qur’an. Even more frequently, they

incorporate stories from the life of the Prophet and his Companions. Clark and Rossiter (2008) discuss the significance of narrative learning in the education of adults. Stating that using stories to foster learning is a relatively new practice in adult education, the authors explore learning through stories at three levels, namely stories heard, stories told, and stories recognized. Regarding these levels, they state:

First, the hearing of stories implies reception; the stories come from outside the learner and must be received and interpreted by the learner. Stories are powerful precisely because they engage learners at a deeply human level. Stories draw us into an experience at more than a cognitive level; they engage our spirit, our imagination, our heart, and this engagement is complex and holistic. (p. 65)

In the case of *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement, what are often narrated are the stories about the Companions of the Prophet, the snapshots of whose life stories are intended to be examples to how listeners should organize their personal, social and business lives. This is because learning about the lives of the Companions of the Prophet is significant in Islam based on one of the hadiths of the Prophet who says, “My Companions are like the stars, whichever of them you follow you will be rightly guided.”

Clark and Rossiter (2008) then focus on the second level of learning through stories, the telling of stories which makes learners the actors rather than the receivers as in the case of listening to them. They state:

In the classroom context, this [telling stories] means the learner moves from a cognitive understanding of a concept to link it to his or her own experience. But this does not simply mean the learner has plucked an example of this concept from a collection of personal experiences; it means the learner has made a connection between the two, and in the making of the connection new learning occurs... The learner is more connected to the course because of a personal contribution to it. (p.65)

In the case of *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement, findings have revealed that businessmen are given assignments about the life stories of the Prophet and/or His Companions and they present their research to other businessmen in the *sohbet*. This activity is done

interactively and businessmen tell their experiences and/or intentions about how they can adapt their lives in the way the Prophet and His Companions lived.

The final level of learning through stories is recognizing stories, which is more abstract than the previous two explained above. Clark and Rossiter (2008) state:

It [recognizing stories] presumes that learners begin to understand the fundamental narrative character of experience. As they gain understanding, they also begin to understand that they themselves are narratively constituted and narratively positioned; this applies to themselves personally, as well as to groups, societies, and cultures. (p. 66)

In the case of the Gülen Movement, I argue that such level of learning through stories can be manifested in the behaviors of businessmen who donate a significant portion of their income for philanthropic causes organized by the Gülen Movement, probably after having listened to the story of third Islamic caliph Uthman Ibn Affan, who donated his fortune for the cause of spreading Islam many times, and taking him as a role model. Moreover, I also argue that the entire movement may have narratively constituted and positioned itself in the stories of the age of the Prophet and His Companions based on the statements by interviewees of this study that they resemble the activities of the Gülen Movement to the efforts of the Prophet and His Companions who spread Islam to the world.

Last but not least, there is another important finding about teaching and learning at the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement. Based on the interviews it has become clear that businessmen do not just sit at each other's home, listen to the lectures and make conversations. Rather, they often gather in activities such as visiting a student dorm or a house they have sponsored for poor students to stay, distributing food to poor people in Ramadan and other religious festivals, or visiting their social circle to collect scholarships for students in need and so on. In my opinion, these activities serve to

consolidate what they learn at the *sohbets* by putting it into action, which is referred to as action-based learning in adult education (Jarvis & Holford & Griffin, 2003). Jarvis (2004) explains how learning takes place during action, saying “It is in practice that skills are actually learned from practical experience. Individuals use their classroom learning, but they still have to plan their actions, monitor them, and maybe reflect upon them, and then learn from their experiences” (p. 98).

7.1.7 Discussion on findings about the dropouts and complaints about the *sohbets*

Findings have revealed that some businessmen discontinue the *sohbets* because they find the responsibilities far too heavy to carry. As mentioned earlier, among the aims and objectives of the *sohbets* is to increase the awareness of participants against the social problems in their environment such as poor students who need accommodation and financial help or poor people who cannot find food. As a result, businessmen are expected to take initiative and contribute financially to this social cause. Ebaugh (2010) argues the significance of financial contribution by businessmen in the Gülen

Movement, stating:

Financial giving is an inherent characteristic of participants in the Gülen movement... The substantial contributions made by wealthy businessmen and entrepreneurs in the movement are important not only for their financial consequences in terms of what can be accomplished in terms of building and sustaining expensive projects but also because such support gives legitimization and visibility to the movement. Throughout interviews frequent mention is made of the ‘businessmen’ who are able to make possible the service goals of the movement. (p. 55-56)

Having emphasized the importance of giving financially in the Gülen Movement, Ebaugh (2010) stresses how this functions in generating commitment to the cause,

saying:

Interviews with supporters in the Gülen movement demonstrate that they identify the goals of the movement as their own personal goals. Being part of the Gülen movement, participating in the local circles, and making contributions to the projects supported by the movement is central to their identity. (p. 63)

I, therefore, argue that the businessmen who do not assume the financial responsibilities are those who have not developed a commitment to the cause of the Gülen Movement and therefore drop out in time.

Criticizing the movement from the perspective of otherization to those who do not participate, Toprak (2009) reports a finding obtained via her interviews, “After every ‘meeting’, ‘huge’ donations were collected for community aid” (p. 124). Such a finding supports the abovementioned reason for discontinuing the *sohbets* by some businessmen. However, Toprak (2009) then presents another finding that contradicts the stated reason of heavy financial obligations for dropping out the *sohbets*. She reports an interviewee who “witnessed that people who became members of this circle were suddenly raised in business,” saying “This is a reality that we witness and live with” (p. 124). In my opinion, gaining or losing financial benefits cannot explain the discontinuation of businessmen of the *sohbets*, rather commitment provides an answer, as explained earlier in this section.

Another significant finding that is found to be effective in dropping out *sohbets* is the political atmosphere of the day. Starting in the last months of 2013, an array of political discussions has taken over Turkish politics. While some people accuse the government for bribery and setting up their cadre in public offices, the government rejects all accusations and puts the blame on the Gülen Movement claiming that it aims to set up a parallel state and defames the present government with slander. It is those taking the side of the government discontinue attending the *sohbets*. Nevertheless, the

accumulated research shows that the Gülen Movement does not act with political intentions that include overthrowing the government. Cetin (2012), in his research, states:

A notable feature of the Gülen Movement is that participants acknowledge and abide by the political system, and display disinterest towards seizing power and gaining control over the state apparatus. The Movement assumes forms of action and organization which are accountable and amenable to political mediation by the Turkish political system, without becoming identifiable with it. The Movement therefore does not act like an oppositional action which involves a minority, or which rejects the system in Turkey, or which resists the 'rationality' of decisions and goals imposed by the Turkish system. (p. 150-151)

Ebaugh (2010) agrees and states that the fear of an Islamic state by the Gülen Movement is an unfounded claim. She explains:

Having read hundreds of pages of Mr. Gülen's speeches and writings, and having talked over a hundred of its followers, I see no evidence that he intends to take over the Turkish state and replace the secular government with an Islamic state. In fact, Mr. Gülen shies away from political discussions. (p. 116)

Ergil (2012) explores whether it is realistic to see the Gülen Movement as an alternative organization to the state and concludes:

As a spiritual leader of a civil society, Gülen approaches the state without any protective shield. But does he have to be statist by virtue of that fact? I do not think so. He is so much pressed, pressured, and accused, he gives the impression that he has to exaggerate his assurance to make it abundantly clear that he is not competing with the state, nor does he have political ambition. (p. 179)

It seems that some participants may have considered the political stance of the Gülen Movement as against the reigning political party and therefore dropped out the *sohbets*, although the accumulated research on the political intentions of the Gülen Movement shows the other way.

7.1.8 Discussion on findings about the effects of the *sohbets*

Research findings have revealed that the businessmen participants of the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement experienced significant changes of their behaviors in their personal, social and business lives. From the perspective of educational sciences, the expression ‘change in behavior’ may simply be considered as an indicator of learning, but in order to understand better the transformation/change participants undergo as they attend the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement, traditional and modern learning theories and their applications to transformative adult learning need to be revisited.

Merriam and Bierema (2014) discuss five different orientations to theory of learning. The first one is behaviorism, which defines learning as a change in behavior. However, its implications are limited for the curriculum design and instruction in adult education, because “behaviorism’s principles ignore the complexity of the human being in the learning process” (p. 28). The second one is humanism, which posits that learning is about the development of the person. The effect of humanistic learning theory on adult learning theory manifests itself on three major adult learning models, which are andragogy, self-directed learning and transformative learning. The last model relates to the findings of this study the most because transformations in the personal, social, and business lives of the interviewees are under focus. The core of transformative learning is “the notion of personal development, that is, through transformative learning experiences our perspective becomes more inclusive, open and permeable” (p. 31). The third one is cognitivism, which considers learning as a mental process. This theory “explains a lot about how we use the brain and our senses to process information. For adult educators, the work in cognitive development, memory, and instructional design theory can be used to facilitate learning and plan instruction with adults” (p. 35). The

fourth one is social cognitive theory, which assumes that learning is social and context bound. Merriam and Bierema (2014) emphasize the importance and relevance of this theory to understanding adult learning, saying “The addition of a social dimension to learning theory models resonates well with what we have come to know about adult learning. Adults learn social roles by observing and modeling others” (p. 35). The fifth one is constructivism which posits that learning is creating meaning from experience. Adult learning theory and practice benefit significantly from constructivism in the sense that “the social construction of knowledge is central to self-directed learning, transformational learning, reflective practice, situated cognition and communities of practice” (p. 37).

In the following paragraphs, the findings related to the effects of *sohbets* on the personal, social and business lives of businessmen are evaluated on the basis of abovementioned theories of learning, especially humanism and constructivism which explain transformative learning.

7.1.8.1 Effects on the individual

Findings have clearly revealed that attending the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement has resulted in certain changes in the lifestyles of the businessmen. Based on their statements, the businessmen have started to follow a more religious lifestyle, to care more about humanity, to have improved social relations. Each of these transformations is discussed with reference to accumulated literature in the following paragraphs.

Findings have shown that businessmen who attend the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement start to care more to follow religiously oriented lifestyles. Indeed, this is not a surprising finding considering the religious content of the *sohbets*, as well as their aims

and objectives directed to increase the religiosity of the participants. However, there is an important nuance in the personal religious lifestyle interpreted by the Gülen Movement. In the classical sense, most people would argue that being a Muslim involves observing the five principles of Islam and staying away from committing sins. In the sense the Gülen Movement perceives being a Muslim, certain responsibilities that fall onto the individual, besides observing five principles and staying away from sins, are emphasized, certainly based on the Qur'anic Islam and hadiths of the Prophet, as mentioned by the *sohbet hocaları*. Although the businessmen told about how their lifestyles were transformed into a more religious one in the interviews, the extent of how being a Muslim is interpreted by and implemented in the Gülen Movement needs to be clarified through references to accumulated literature.

Yavuz (2013) explores the contextual theology of the Gülen Movement through the essays and sermons of Gülen. He emphasizes that the interpretation of Islam by Gülen extends beyond individual piety to communal consciousness about Islam. He states:

The gist of Gülen's theology is to raise religious consciousness through action in the here and now by building a moral community. His theology provides religious ground for believers to become morally perfect persons (*insan-ı kamil*) by renouncing worldly urges, clearing themselves from all types of desires, and offering themselves to God by acting to please Him. In his writings, Gülen argues that Islam requires hand-in-hand cooperation of self-development and glorification of God through communal actions. Thus, the main purpose of an Islamic life is not self-fulfillment or realization of appetites but consciousness of God through sacrifices and service to Him and His creation. In other words, to be sanctified, one must live and act with constant readiness and willingness to transform one's own thoughts and emotions. This becomes a possibility if believers themselves stay clear from all the pollutions of the flesh and surrender themselves to God. Gülen argues that, by definition, Muslims need to engage in building communities, obeying the Sharia, and responding to socioeconomic challenges through religiously sanctioned actions. (p. 47-48)

Apparently, Gülen argues that it will not be sufficient for a Muslim just to follow a religious lifestyle on his own. He simply stresses that religion should be accompanied by action towards community service. Likewise, Khan (2011) emphasizes that the Gülen Movement demands more from a Muslim identity than just being a devout Muslim and further explains:

A major problem with the Orthodox Islamic interpretation is that it gives too much importance to outer aspects of Islamic rituals at the cost of inner values ingrained in them. As a result, many religious groups have become simply ritualistic in their behaviors and tend to ignore responsibility toward society at large and their fellow citizens in particular... Gülen transmits Islamic tenets in a way that everyone can see a role for himself and herself in building a compassionate society where all human beings can co-exist with one another for greater causes based on sacrifice and altruism. It is not an easy task to accomplish for a society where everyone is concerned only for his or her own material gain. Gülen has argued tirelessly that even for the material wellbeing, a Muslim must follow an Islamic way of life. (p. 102-103)

Ergil (2012) also highlights the emphasis on social action in the interpretation of religiosity by the Gülen Movement, saying:

In the Gülen movement, the ‘religious sentiment’ and the ‘social action’ move together in great harmony. The internal purification, improvement, the effort for understanding, comprehension, and enlightenment are necessary to reach the Creator, but reaching to the ‘created’ and extending helping hands to them are also necessary, necessary for being a good servant of God, necessary to be pious. (p. 50)

Therefore, based on the above cited literature on the interpretation of living a religious life by the Gülen Movement, I argue that the businessmen who start to live more religiously oriented lives focus on their responsibilities to the society as much as they do on their personal piety, such as praying, fasting, giving prescribed purifying alms, making pilgrimage and etc. (Ergene, 2011). Yavuz (2003) calls such piety that goes beyond the individual to the society “activist pietism” and explains it as follows:

Gülen’s followers see themselves not as an interest group but rather as a community brought together by their religious commitment to create a more

humane society. This community's mission is to realize, discuss, and bring the message of Islam to one's everyday life, to set the matrix of social and cultural action in a given society...Gülen and those who follow him measure their spiritual success, to a certain extent, in terms of the worldly consequences of their actions...Religious ends are achieved through worldly actions rather than purely inward perfection. Gülen assumes that the inner transformation of individuals can only take place by exercising full control over modern processes. Indeed, Gülen's method of moving from the outer to the inner may be a reaction to the failure of previous Turkish-Islamic movements to move from inner-individual to the outer-public. Islam, for Gülen, must be represented by actions, and these actions, in turn, are expressions of faith. (p. 186-188)

The changes in the businessmen's perception and practice of religion in their lives can be discussed from the perspective of adult learning. Considering the fact that these changes happen as a result their attending to *sohbets* with their friends and that they learn about a new perspective of religiosity through the lectures and discussions, the transformative learning model can provide an explanation. Merriam and Bierema (2014) state that transformative learning changes how we know about something. To illustrate how transformative learning process works, they cite Mezirow (2000) who states:

[Transformative learning is a] process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning schemes, habits of mind, mindsets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide actions. (p. 84)

Therefore, I conclude that attending to *sohbets* leads to a transformation in the perception of religiosity by businessmen from an individual pietism to a more social, activist one.

Findings have revealed that businessmen attending the *sohbets* have started to care more for humanity, as they put it. It is clear that this finding totally relates to the religiosity that participants of the Gülen Movement are expected to display, the core of which is to be active to create a more humane society. At this point, one piece of discourse that is frequently uttered in the dynamics of the Gülen Movement comes to

forefront, which is ‘living for others’. Understanding the scope of this discourse will help understand the extent of the transformation that businessmen attending the *sobhets* undergo.

To start with, Kalyoncu (2011) explains the significance of ‘living for others’ in the discourse of the Gülen Movement, saying “Altruism or selflessness and living for others in the broadest sense, are prerequisites for a person to dedicate himself or herself to an overarching *gaye-i hayal* [purpose of one’s life] of serving fellow humans” (p. 24). Ergene (2011) extends the definition of ‘living for others’, saying:

Gülen attaches importance to this principle of ‘living for others’ (*yaşatma ideali*) such that he interprets it as a basic dynamic that would make a nation awaken. Every society must make sacrifices. Sacrifice is beyond and above worldly gain, and thus its definition exceeds that of mere altruism. On the contrary, it is more akin to idealistic heroism. Such altruism constitutes the character of people who are uninterested in personal or worldly gain, and who are committed to God’s favor. Gülen describes these types of people as ‘architects of soul’ and as ‘physicians of thought.’ These are people who are able to instill in the society a consciousness of responsibility and concern for others. (p. 171-172)

Therefore, I argue that businessmen who start to care for humanity, based on the findings of this study, are transformed into people who can make sacrifices in order to reach every other individual and create a more humane society for them.

From the perspective of adult learning, such transformation can be discussed as transformational learning in the communal context. Merriam and Bierema (2014) emphasize that a community can provide a conducive setting for transformational learning and cite from Cranton (in press), saying:

Some of this [individual] learning is inner-oriented and personal (but still always within a social context), and other times this learning may be about social injustice, unveiling oppression, social action, and so forth, but it is the individual who is transforming his or her perspectives on social issues. Transformative learning involves action, so when a person transforms a perspective related to social issues, that person acts on the transformed perspective. And there we join individual transformation and social action. (p. 94)

Considering the statements by businessmen that they feel themselves responsible to give a helping hand to those in need in all over the world and they visit the poor areas of the world with their *sohbet* group to see how they can help, I argue that their transformation towards caring more for humanity goes in hand with the social action they perform.

Findings have revealed that businessmen who attend the *sohbets* significantly extend their social circle and establish better relationships with other people in the society, as they put it. Many factors can be argued to have played a role in enabling businessmen to have improved social relations as a result of attending *sohbets*.

One factor that gained businessmen such a social skill to make better relations with people can be found at the heart of the religious teaching at the *sohbets*. Kalyoncu (2011) states that the Holy Qur'an advises people to be in good relations with other human beings. He further explains :

The phrase [*basmala*, a phrase which appears at the beginning of all surahs, except one, in the Qur'an] describes God as 'the Compassionate and the Merciful.' Repeating this phrase one hundred and thirteen times, the Qur'an teaches Muslims to be compassionate and merciful in their relations with their fellow human beings and with nature. (p. 10)

Indeed, it is possible to find a lot of advice in the Qur'an and the hadiths of the Prophet who preaches Muslim people to be in good terms with everyone. To illustrate, establishing good relations with one's neighbors is highly recommended in at least seven different hadiths of the Prophet, published in Riyazu's-Salihin, the book which is followed in the *sohbets*. One hadith stresses the importance of exchanging gifts with neighbors, another recommends to do favors for the neighbors, and another advises to behave in good manners to the neighbors. The examples in religious literature that advise good relations among humans are indeed almost infinite.

Another factor that is effective in the learning of improved social relations can be the communal spirit which receives high attention and care in the Gülen Movement.

Değirmenli (2013) lists some signs of guarding the communal spirit:

1. We must never insult others, and avoid speech and actions that will harm the feelings and dignity of others. A believer must be self-criticizing and supportive to others. Investigating the shortcomings of others is an immoral act, and relating these shortcomings to others is a sinful act. If we do see mistakes in others we should warn them with kindness and in a suitable manner.
2. A person must never consider himself superior to others, and should display humbleness. A believer must avoid succumbing to conceit and pride, and even if an individual holds a position of superiority, must never consider himself superior to others. Performing in such an honorable act, not only signifies the individual's maturity, but also the spiritual excellence of the community of which he is a member.
3. There is trustfulness between individuals of communal spirit. They trust one another and encourage trustworthiness. They never disappoint their friends, or discourage them in their faith, devotion and enthusiasm in their service towards the Qur'an. (p. 171-172)

Therefore, I argue that the businessmen attending the *sohbets* learn about the importance of communal spirit and apparently implement it into their lifestyles. Considering the details of the advice on how to keep the communal spirit as stated above, it is not surprising that businessmen have improved social relations.

7.1.8.2 Effects on family, friends and relatives

Findings have clearly revealed that attending the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement has led to certain effects on businessmen's immediate family members, relatives and friends.

Based on the statements by businessmen, their family members and friends have started to take responsibility in the Gülen Movement, learned more about religion and improved their family relations. Each of these transformations is discussed with reference to accumulated literature in the following paragraphs.

Findings have shown that the friends and families of businessmen who attend the *sohbets* start to take part in the activities of the Gülen Movement such as collecting scholarships for poor students, work in voluntary charity organizations or work at institutions affiliated with the Gülen Movement.

A significant factor in the successful diffusion of the Gülen Movement within the family and social circle is that the businessmen attending the *sohbets* become positive role models to those around them. An important discourse of the Gülen Movement can help explain how others around the participants of the Gülen Movement get influenced from them. As explained earlier, the notion of *tamsil* involves becoming role models for others in good deeds and moral conduct (Ergil, 2012; Ebaugh, 2010). Diffusing among family members and friends and inviting them to take responsibility in the activities of the Gülen Movement can be accomplished through *tamsil*. Yavuz (2013) explains its significance in creating an ethical society, saying:

The way of creating an ethical society, for Gülen, is not to offer courses in religion or ethics in schools, but rather to set good examples, known as *temsil*, in one's daily life, whether one is a teacher, policeman, businessman, or journalist. Today, in a modern world where representation and visibility are very important, living an exemplary life and proper conduct are the key to winning people over to Islam. (p. 80)

Therefore, I argue that the businessmen attending the *sohbets* appeal to their relatives and friends not only through their verbal invitations but also through their behaviors so that they start to take responsibilities in the Gülen Movement activities.

Furthermore, there is another factor to be considered in the taking roles of family and friends in the activities of the Gülen Movement, which is found in the beyond rational approaches to transformative learning theory. In explaining how the way a person sees the world around himself or herself transforms through meeting others who

have undergone such transformation, Merriam and Bierama (2014) borrow the notion of cultural-spiritual transformation from Charaniya (2012), saying:

She [Charaniya] sees a three-part process that begins when someone's cultural or spiritual identity is challenged by some experience or contradiction between beliefs and practice. One's cultural or spiritual identity "is then expanded through engagement with experiences that are intellectual, relational, and reflective. Finally, the culmination is a clearer or more pronounced understanding of the self and of one's role in the world (p. 231). What makes this kind of transformation different from Mezirow's is in terms of process and outcome. The process is not limited to rational discourse but relies heavily on engaging in "an ongoing, cyclical smorgasbord of opportunities to dialogue, share stories, explore symbols, and learn from each other" (p. 238). What changes in one's own identity as a cultural or spiritual being, and how one now sees the world and his or her role in the world. (p. 87)

Therefore, I argue that the families and friends of participants of *sohbets* go through a transformative learning as a result of their social interactions with the participants of the Gülen Movement through observing them as role models or helping them in the activities of the Gülen Movement, namely the philanthropic ones. That is to say, it is common practice by businessmen who attend the *sohbets* to tell about the deeds and social activism they perform to their friends and relatives in order to encourage them to take part, which in turn result in their transformation and taking more active roles to create a better humane society, as the findings of this study and accumulated literature on the Gülen Movement suggests.

Findings have revealed that the participants attending the *sohbets* start to have better relations with their family members, and their participation to the *sohbets* is approved by their family members on the basis of their more positive attitudes to the family. As mentioned so far, the businessmen go through a transformation in their behaviors as a result of attending to *sohbets*. The main factor in the improvement of their relations with their families can be attributed to the religious advice on the duties of a

Muslim person towards his family, a topic which is covered in the lectures and discussed in the question-answer session of *sohbets*. Therefore, an excerpt from one of the books used in the *sohbets* on the family relations will make the point much clearer. Gülçür (2013) discusses the duties of a Muslim person against his family in his book *Good Character: A Comprehensive Guide to Manners and Morals in Islam*. He states:

Each member of the family must accept some responsibility for the others in the family. Some of the primary duties of a husband, for instance, are to behave kindly toward his wife, to meet her basic needs, and to be loyal to her. A narration of the Prophet says, “The best of you is he who is the best to his wife.” A wife who is happy with her spouse will support her husband’s decisions, as long as they do not conflict with religious directives and contribute to protecting the family honor and property. All these are pivotal to happiness in marital relations and to a happy family.

Parents in such an atmosphere commit themselves to nurturing, educating and training their children to the best of their ability, setting them on the path to success in life. Fathers and mothers should treat their children equally, holding them in equal regard and affection. They should be gentle towards their offspring, and raise them in such a way that they will not be inclined to rebel. Parents also have the duty to be models of virtue for their children. (p. 7)

Assuming that the above advice is well comprehended and implemented in the life of a businessman attending the *sohbets*, I argue that he has improved relations in family with mutual respect, which is indeed articulated so at the interviews.

Another significant effect of attending to the *sohbets* on the families and friends of businessmen is that they have opportunities to learn more about religion, which happens via two channels.

First, friends and relatives are invited to the *sohbets* as guest listeners when the *sohbet* is in one their relatives’ or friends’ house, in this case the children of the host may also sit among the participants. These guests are not expected to be regular attendees of *sohbets*, though they are allowed to continue if they wish to do so. In this way, every week at a different businessman host’s home his friends, family members

and relatives benefit from the religious teachings at the *sohbets*. Based on the findings about these guest listeners, I argue that they have the opportunity to learn about the religious matters discussed at that *sohbet*, but since they are not regular attendees of a syllabus covered in long term they may not go through a transformative learning. Yavuz (2013) considers these people as sympathizers and explains their position as follows, “The outer circle is dominated by the movement’s sympathizers who express support for the activities of Gülen without becoming active participants in the religious projects of the movement” (p. 88).

Secondly, the businessmen attending the *sohbets* for some time are renowned in their family and friendship circles as experts on religious matters, though this may not be fully correct but relatively, as they put in the interviews. This makes them a firsthand reference in their immediate family and friend environment when there is a need to consult on a religious matter. In fact, considering the religious content of the *sohbets* and the literature covered in them, businessmen may not have difficulty answering minor questions in religious matters and may know which sources to refer in case something they might not know of is asked, and eventually they learn themselves too.

7.1.8.3 Effects on business life

Findings have clearly revealed that attending the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement has led to certain effects on the business lives of businessmen. Based on the statements by businessmen, they have improved the ways they do business, exchanged information related to their business and established partnerships, started to do business in accordance with the Islamic code, and felt psychological relaxation from the stress they

suffer in business world. Each of these transformations is discussed with reference to accumulated literature in the following paragraphs.

Findings have clearly showed that the businessmen attending the *sohbets* are encouraged to extend and expand their businesses by applying the contemporary business principles in their companies and employing modern technology so that they are able to compete in the world market. Although this may at first seem more a requisite of surviving in the business life than a transformation, the businessmen attending the *sohbets* especially highlight that they have started to consider improving their businesses. To give a few examples, “We’ve benefitted a lot in our work life...There are principles established by Hocaefendi and we are careful about them” (Zeki), “Hocaefendi said, go abroad and make some contribution. I travelled abroad. Now we have holdings abroad and companies, thanks God” (Selahattin), “Because *hizmet* needs successful business people who represent the movement, we should make our businesses more successful both at home and abroad” (İhsan).

In order to understand how business and making money gains importance in such religiously oriented *sohbets* and participants change the way they do business in order to expand it, one needs to refer to the interpretation of importance of business in Islam by Fethullah Gülen. Yavuz (2013) explains how Gülen focuses on the interconnectedness between commerce, science, and education in order to build a new civilization. He states, referring to Gülen’s ideas:

Neither has it been overlooked that the ascetic life also played a part in the Prophet Muhammad’s own role as an exemplar. Thus, Gülen’s Islam is both activist and ascetic, while focusing on bringing about change here and now without rejecting otherworldly salvation. Gülen often reminds his followers that the Prophet Muhammad was a successful merchant who engaged in the competitive and free market economy in Mecca and Medina. (p. 118)

Having emphasized that the Prophet is the example of a successful merchant and therefore a role model for the businessmen in the Gülen Movement, Yavuz (2013) focuses on the significance of economic expansion of businessmen to the goals and relevant activities of the Gülen Movement. He explains in detail:

Gülen would also argue that engagement in daily life and seeking to transform it in order to glorify God is more important than just contemplation. Gülen therefore calls his followers to work and never waste any of their time over worthless things...Gülen brings Islam into daily life by highlighting active living, and arguing that serving the community and humanity is a sacred duty. Gülen strives to bring the spheres of economy and religion together in order to control some destructive aspects of the market. He inspires businessmen who follow the movement to work and earn money to participate in religiously informed communal activities with selfless diligence. The main purpose of such activities, including those of an economic nature, is the glorification of God more than personal salvation. Gülen wants Muslims to complement their prayers with actions that aim to create better conditions and understanding with different sectors of the society. In a way, Gülen's discourse on faith-informed action wishes to sanctify labor and enterprise...The Gülen movement has a dual goal of social and religious transformation. Gülen has opened the floodgates for a radical conscientious transformation that offers the possibility of salvation only through rendering service to others and working to improve the human condition. The followers of the movement believe that only hard work, along with ritual activities, could glorify God. (p. 121-122)

Based on the above quotation, I argue that the Gülen Movement expects its businessmen participants work hard without wasting their time on worthless things, abstain from wasting on luxury but earn money in order to sponsor the activities that are intended to spread Islam to the world. It is especially stressed that business done with the intention of extending a helping hand to those in need and improve human condition is itself an action that glorifies God, besides regular prayers.

The transformation of businessmen in their approaches to doing business can be discussed through the social change aspect of the transformational learning theory. Merriam and Bierema (2014), referring to the renowned Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, explain how individual and social transformation are accomplished inseparably:

In numerous writings, most famously *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1997/2000), Freire discusses some of the major components of this transformative process. The process begins with the individual, who in dialogue with other learners and facilitators (coinvestigators) propose concerns about their daily lives. These concerns or themes are discussed, examined, and reflected upon, with the ultimate goal of taking action to change oppressive and disenfranchising practices and structures. Freire calls this process conscientization, where through dialogue and critical reflection, participants move from a fatalistic, passive acceptance of their situation, to realizing they can have some influence, to critical consciousness. (p. 88)

In the case of the Gülen Movement, the participants are made aware of the need to be economically powerful in order to stand against the destructive aspects of the market and accumulate wealth to accomplish a social and religious transformation. Such a social transformation requires investing in education by founding schools and granting scholarships to university students, establishing media outlets to spread the message of the Prophet for creating a humane society and philanthropic activism to reach those in need and transform the world into “a more equitable place for all to live.” (Taylor, 2008).

Findings have shown that attending to *sohbets* has positively influenced the business lives of businessmen by allowing them to exchange information and establish partnerships thanks to the contacts and acquaintances they have made during the social interactions at the *sohbets*.

Such a transformation that makes it possible for businessmen to widen their perspectives by listening to others and entering into business ventures with their fellows is indeed a significant step in achieving the goals of the Gülen Movement, which is to create a more humane society. Yavuz (2003) explains how the social capital built within the circles of the Gülen Movement is utilized, saying:

Gülen not only does mobilize the hearts and minds of millions of Turks but also succeeds in convincing them to commit to the mission of creating a better and

more humane society and polity. By stressing social synergy—the willingness of Muslims to act from their ideals and conception of good life—Gülen is a religious modernist and a social innovator. The practice of *hizmet*, or religiously motivated labor, is used to restructure society according to Islamic ideals. *Hizmet* easily could be used for civic concerns in education, healthcare, media, and new sets of associations to build a public ethics of interaction. By employing people in its educational, media, and other activities, the movement teaches the way in which social capital is built and put into practice in the Turkish society. In short, *hizmet* functions as social capital by bringing people together for a collective goal in terms of rendering their time and resources to create a positive environment for the realization of specific goals. These *hizmet* activities also help to build interpersonal trust and a code of ethics. (p.186)

Therefore, I argue that *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement provide a platform for the participants on which the businessmen can discuss how to utilize the social capital that has been formed in order to perform collective action on the areas where the Gülen Movement intends to bring a change for the creation of a more humane society.

In her sociological analysis on the Gülen Movement as a civic movement rooted in moderate Islam, Ebaugh (2010) explains how social capital is built and provides concrete examples related to its utilization. She first provides an excerpt from the interviews she did with a businessman participating in the Gülen Movement, saying:

“Being in the same type of business means that we have a strong basis for coming together and understanding one another. We also network and refer to customers among us. Then we have a basis for discussing projects that need doing in our community and how we can help with these projects. We also see the results of our efforts which encourage us to be even more generous.” (p. 49)

Ebaugh then explains how Gülen advises the businessmen to institutionalize the social capital that they have built and spread to the world. She states:

In fact, helping one another to be successful in their businesses is promoted by Mr. Gülen. In 2007 Tuskon, a Gülen-inspired business association with 1,500 members, sponsored a conference in Istanbul for a thousand business owners from developing countries such as Africa or Central Asia at which they were coached in ways to grow their businesses. Assisting one another in a given industry and networking among themselves is one reason that the Gülen business community in Turkey is known as one of the richest communities in the country. (p. 49)

Findings have revealed that businessmen attending the *sohbets* change the way they are doing business into a way that they care more about Islamic principles as a result of the religious teachings at the *sohbets*. Statements of some businessmen indicate the significance they attribute to doing their business as Islam advises them. To illustrate a few, “A good Muslim must be honest, avoid cheating, and be truthful to his customers” (Nedim), “We knew that we got our salary for that work and if we didn’t stick to the rules, our act would be religiously wrong” (Mahmut), and “You are going to sign a job agreement with a worker and the workers union makes certain demands, for example. In the *sohbet* one of the hadiths is read and a discussion starts about fairness and unions. Then you step back” (Murat).

Undoubtedly, the main sources of learning about the ways of doing business in the Islamic way are the Qur’an and hadiths of the Prophet, both of which are used as the main textbooks at the *sohbets*. During the interviews, there was a hadith compilation book which was visible on the tables or in the libraries of some businessmen. Published by a publishing house affiliated with the Gülen Movement, *33 Hadiths and their Interpretations for the Business World* includes pieces of advice by the Prophet about the points that Muslim people should pay attention to while doing business. A brief summary of the content of the book will make it clear what is meant by Islamic way of doing business. Some of the hadiths presented in the book are about:

1. that a honest merchant will be with martyrs and prophets in the Heaven,
 2. that the wage of a worker should be given even before his sweat dries off,
 3. that the producer should be allowed to meet the last consumer without the intervention of intermediaries who may receive commission unfairly,
 4. that if a creditor extends the term for a debtor, God will reward him,
 5. that trade should be done consciously and professionally,
 6. and that Muslim people should represent themselves with business ethics.
- (Gökçe, 2011)

7.2. A critical evaluation over the findings

As a researcher, I have so far taken the utmost care not to give up my objectivity while reporting the findings of the study and discussing their significance from the perspectives of social movements and adult education theories. Nevertheless, the study has revealed some findings that are open to criticism and I would like to express my criticisms over the findings as a researcher and adult educator myself, not to mention that I will maintain the distance of objectivity that I have kept since the beginning.

To start with, as findings have shown that the content of the *sohbets* is comprised of Islamic knowledge based on the Qur'an and hadiths of the Prophet. In the traditional teaching of Islam, the two abovementioned sources are often complemented with their interpretations by Islamic scholars. In the case of *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement, the Qur'an interpretations by Said Nursi and Fethullah Gülen, as well as their other books, are extensively used, but such interpretations or books by other Islamic scholars are less visible. Therefore, the degree of critical thinking, which is an important dimension of adult learning, becomes questionable. If there were not a second session of *sohbets* where the issues are opened to some degree of discussion, I would call such a focus on certain authors indoctrination. Still, however, the syllabus of the *sohbets* needs to accommodate a wider variety of books by different authors, although none of the participants expressed such a need during the interviews. In my opinion, such a revision in the syllabus of *sohbets* will enable the participants to appreciate a wider understanding of Islam.

Secondly, knowing that it would be ignorance to expect being critical on the religious knowledge since its essence is dogmatic, I would still make a criticism on the issue. What I mean is that the religious knowledge communicated at the lectures should

further be evaluated by the businessmen, and in order to achieve this they should be given further readings to develop themselves on critical thinking. The *sohbets* may include such activities, too. My point with this criticism is not a bias on the dogmatic nature of religious knowledge but to pointing to a significant intellectual ability that adult learners are supposed to develop and use. In this way, they will even comprehend the religious knowledge more extensively and learn it better and deeply.

7.3 Implications for practice and future research

The findings imply issues and concerns for international society, Turkish society and adult education. In this section, some of these issues and concerns that need to be considered by international and Turkish society as well as adult educators are discussed.

7.3.1 Implications for international society

Based on the findings of the study, I argue that adult education the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement have significant implications in the international context by providing an example of a grassroots movement influential in transforming the society through adult education, with secondary effects such as helping to eradicate the misconception of Islam as a violent and aggressive practice, and opening doors to dialogue between civilizations.

It is well established by research and historical experience that such top-down transformation, or creation, of a society is practically short-lived, or even impossible. I argue that adult education with its aim to create social change serves much more efficiently to the purpose of transforming a society, as explained earlier in this dissertation. Accordingly, the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement are significant examples

to a grassroots movement which starts by transforming individuals towards an Islamic way of life who eventually transform the society in such a way. In my opinion, the findings of this study should concern Muslim communities who especially seek the foundation of an Islamic state as their ultimate goal to create a desired community that lives according to Islamic principles.

The current perception of Islam in the international arena is far from being a positive one due to the fact that the violence and radicalism that is associated with Islam has increased visibility in the recent decades since the September 11 events to the current turmoils in some regions of the world, especially Middle East. However, the findings of this study reveal a moderate interpretation of Islam that focuses primarily on the inner cultivation of the individual to create a more humane society. Ebaugh (2010) emphasizes that the Gülen Movement has been a response to Islamic radicalism on the part of the Muslims in the world as a moderate, or nonviolent Muslim movement that is not only growing rapidly in its origin Turkey but also in the former countries of Soviet Union, Europe, Australia, Canada, Africa, and in the United States. Considering the teaching of Islam at the *sohbets* which aim to educate “morally conscious individuals who develop a humane and virtuous society,” I argue that the Gülen Movement can potentially present a truer picture of Islam to the world, in terms of its humanistic aspect.

On the other hand, although the Gülen Movement may be disseminating a message comprised of universal humanistic values, as stated above, its stance on gender equality and the roles identified with women in Islamic theology are open to criticism. For example, Jassal (2013), who conducted a study about the women followers of the Gülen Movement, states “Notwithstanding, although holding promise for altering traditional ways, gender-based volunteerism observed in the Gülen Movement, more than

any other outcome, seemed to reinforce traditional gender roles by encouraging women to focus first on family and community” (p. 206). This may be a potential hindrance for the movement which aims to spread globally where, especially in western and predominantly non-muslim countries, they will undoubtedly meet women who would like to participate actively in the philanthropic activities of the movement, but they may not be appropriately accommodated by the movement.

Another implication of *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement for the international community is that they open doors to dialogue between civilizations. This practice also taps an important function of adult education, which is to raise creative individuals, not only by improving the individuality of persons and social consciousness but also protecting social balance. It is also maintained that adult education is important to protect and improve a democratic life. Concomitant with the findings of the study, the businessmen attending the *sohbets* sponsor projects of the Gülen Movement in other countries outside of Turkey (Yavuz, 2013; Ebaugh, 2010). These projects are mostly schools built in poorer areas, scholarships distributed to students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, hospitals which provide free medical services in poor areas and so on. Accordingly, the *sohbet* groups organize trips to these countries and meet the people whom they extend a helping hand. I argue that during these interactions, different civilizations have the opportunity to understand each other and appreciate their differences, let alone the friendships established among peoples of the world.

7.3.2 Implications for Turkish society

Based on the findings of the study, I argue that the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement have significant implications in the Turkish context by providing an interpretation of Islam

that neither negates or challenges the processes of modernization nor is incompatible with democracy (Yavuz, 2013). Needless to say, modernity and democracy are two important pillars of Turkish Republic, and in the republican history of Turkey there has always been discordance between Islamic actors and the Turkish revolution, which would never give up from modernity and democracy, as well as secularism. However, in the case of the Gülen Movement, as findings have shown, the focus is on teaching Islam to the individual rather than fighting with democracy and modernity because “religion is considered primarily a personal or communal matter as opposed to a political or state matter” (Yavuz, 2013, p. 63). As to the significance of democracy to the Gülen Movement, Gülen states that “For democracy the existence of the meritorious, virtuous human beings is very important. In my opinion, Islam gives a very good education and training of democracy to humans. Democracy can be reconciled perfectly with the virtuous people who have gone through Islamic moral training” (Ergil, 2012, p. 129). Yılmaz (2012) emphasizes that the Gülen Movement does not see a contradiction between Islam and democracy and refers to Gülen, who says “Islam establishes fundamental principles that orient a government’s general character, leaving it up to the people to choose the type and form of government according to time and circumstances” (p. 47). He further voices Gülen, saying “Islam does not need a state to survive and that civil society or the civilian realm in liberal-democratic settings is sufficient for its individual and social practice” (p. 50). Therefore, based on the above considerations, I believe that the Gülen Movement has a potential to contribute to the establishment of democracy in social and political life of Turkey by the Islamic moral training it offers.

On the other hand, Toprak (2009) emphasizes that public is misguided by the media for the function of the Gülen Movement towards a more democratic Turkish

society. Based on her field research, she states that “The ‘democratic and moderate’ attitude of the community [the Gülen Movement] that has been well accepted by the media and leaders of public opinion in major cities appears to have been replaced by conservative, discriminative and repressive provincials in the smaller districts” (p. 132). It seems that the activities of the Gülen Movement produce different reflections depending on the socio-cultural pattern of the communities. Nevertheless, this research did not identify such a perceptual difference related to the ‘democratic and moderate’ discourse of the Gülen Movement among the participants. In explaining the different perception in smaller cities, Toprak (2009) mentions that such “repressive conservatism” is already existent in Anatolian cities of Turkey, and concludes that the activities of the Gülen Movement help intensify the conservatism. However, the researcher does not rest her conclusion on any analytical findings as to how the Gülen Movement is instrumental in aggregating an already existent repressive conservatism, which therefore makes it unfounded.

7.3.3 Implications for adult education

The findings of this study have clearly outlined the details of adult education practice in a social movement which successfully resulted in the transformation businessmen participants and spread into the society. The extent of the transformation not only stayed with the individual but also included their social and business circles. In such sense this study tapped the function of adult education in creating a social change. However, what is even more significant is that the characteristics of the adult education implemented in the Gülen Movement do not fit to the non-formal nature of adult education that is supposed to take place in social movements. Therefore, the findings of this study urge

adult education researchers to focus on adult education with a formal structure in social movements.

7.3.4 Recommendations for adult educators

I recommend that adult educators to turn their focus on the mutual relationship between social movements and adult education. This research has clearly showed that a formal version of adult education could lead to better results in the transformation of individuals and wider public. Therefore, adult educators should analyze the adult education in the Gülen Movement and explore the possibilities of implementing it in other contexts.

7.4 Limitations of the study

First of all, the research sample of the study is comprised of only male participants, which casts a significant hindrance on the generalization of results for the entire society. Nevertheless, some circumstances outside the power of the researcher have been influential on not being able to involve women in the study. First, the research area is a social movement that focuses on the practice of Islam both on the individual and public spheres. Needless to say, the religious communities propagate religious world-views that restrict women's engagement in the public world (Arat, 2010). Not surprisingly, as a male researcher, I knew that I would carry little chance to reach women followers of the Gülen Movement and persuade them to participate in the study. Moreover, it would not be easy to find enough number of businesswomen to interview with. Even more importantly, I should also mention that previous studies on the women followers of the Gülen Movement have all been conducted by women researchers (Ozdalga, 2000; Rausch, 2014; Curtis, 2005).

Secondly, the study was conducted at a very sensitive time amidst fierce tensions between the Gülen Movement and Turkish government of the day. Due to the government pressure on activities and followers of the Gülen Movement, I often had difficulty in reaching people to participate in the study because they were worried that there could be some consequences of giving interviews in a study about the Gülen Movement, although I clearly explained them the confidentiality I would ensure. As a result, I was turned down by some potential interviewees who had earlier accepted to take part in, and I could do interviews only with 26 people rather than 30, as I planned.

On the other hand, I should say that the above mentioned problem did not cause any hindrances during the interviews, and I believe that all my questions were clearly answered by the interviewees without any reservations, thanks to, I suppose, the consent forms that we mutually signed which ensured full confidentiality and security on the part of the interviewees.

7.5 Suggestions for future research

This study has clearly showed that the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement function as an adult education practice and aims to create a societal change through the cultivation of the individual according to Islamic principles. However, the findings of the study were collected from male participants, and apparently the society is not comprised of only males but women as well. Therefore, I suggest that a similar study needs to be conducted with women participants in order to produce a better picture that can apply to the entire society. Nevertheless, I also suggest that such a study should be conducted by women researchers due to the reasons stated in the section of limitations of the study.

Secondly, adult education in social movements is a significant practice for the development of a society. This study focused on a social movement that aimed to transform the society to a more religious one through a moderate interpretation of Islam. Nevertheless, there are certainly other social movements with different worldviews that seek to transform the society for a better place to live, based on their perspective of the world and community. Future researchers should explore the significance of adult education and possibility of implementing a more structured version in social movements.

Finally, there are other Islamic social movements whose goals are also spread Islam. Future researchers can comparative the activities of those social movements with those of the Gülen Movement.

7.6 Conclusions

This study aimed to explore the educational aspects of the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement and the transformations that the participants to the *sohbets* experience in their personal, social and business lives, in terms of adult education. The relevant data was collected through in-depth interviews conducted with 26 participants in two different cities of Turkey. Grounded theory approach was employed to analyze the findings of the study. The analysis has led to significant conclusions.

To start with, based on the findings, it has become clear that adult education has a significant function in social movements to cause a transformation in the followers, which then leads to wider social change. The Gülen Movement, which is under the focus of this research, is an Islamic social movement in which businessmen assume an important role to sponsor its philanthropic and educational activities. The businessmen

are attracted to the Gülen Movement via social networks in their friendship and business relationship circles. The *sohbets* function as gates to the Gülen Movement, and the businessmen attendees of *sohbets* are introduced to the contextual theology of the Gülen Movement that is shaped around the principles of Islam based on the Qur'an and hadiths of the Prophet and interpreted by Said Nursi and Fethullah Gülen. As businessmen continue to attend *sohbets*, their understanding of Islam evolves into a more action-oriented one. As a result of the teachings at *sohbets*, the businessmen practice the Islamic ideas and values not only in their personal lives to become morally perfect persons but also in a transformative action to improve their community. At this point, considering the function and potential of adult education in changing participants' world views and creating a social change, I argue that the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement is a successful practice of transformative adult education. Therefore, I conclude that the Gülen Movement is a religious social movement that employs adult education through the *sohbets* attended by businessmen who eventually experience transformations in their lives and in turn at societal level.

Furthermore, a second conclusion based on the findings is that the Gülen Movement employs a significantly different form of adult education that is not common in social movements. It is possible to analyze the difference of adult education in the Gülen Movement from several aspects.

First of all, adult education, or the learning processes, is considered as part or even "byproduct of their [social movements] work (English and Mayo, 2012, p. 128). However, in the case of the Gülen Movement, adult education receives comparatively more importance than any other social movement and is indeed the sine-qua-non of the Gülen Movement. That is to say, based on the findings of this study and other related

literature, every participant of the Gülen Movement, not just the businessmen, attends a weekly *sohbet* where he or she listens to lectures and joins discussions on Islam and relevant issues. As discussed earlier in the study, *sohbets* function as an adult education practice in the sense that they play an important role in the transformation of the participants and society. Therefore, with such centrality and importance placed on adult education, or *sohbets*, I argue that the Gülen Movement brings a new form of relationship between adult education and social movements.

Secondly, as explained in Chapter 2, one of the many facets of adult education is education for community action, or development, the distinguishing feature of which is that this facet does not have a formalized educational system but rather a non-formal one (Jarvis, 2004). Indeed, adult education takes place in social movements mostly in an informal fashion through mentoring or modeling, as well as occasional workshops or seminars (Holst, 2002). On the contrary, the adult education implemented by the Gülen Movement significantly differs in the sense that the *sohbets* are elaborately structured educational activities that are offered in a formalized way, as revealed by the findings. The primary distinguishing characteristics of *sohbets* in the Gülen Movement, in contrast to non-formal nature of adult education in social movements, are as follows:

- a. Extension of the *sohbet* group is essential, so there is a deliberate effort to recruit new participants through social and business circles. Although participation is on voluntary basis, there is continuous and systematic encouragement and invitation to potential participants.
- b. The *sohbet* groups are formally organized and maintained taking certain factors into consideration such as socio-economic homogeneity, social relations, maximum group size, and sustainability.

- c. Continuity of and attendance at the *sohbets* is highly emphasized and strictly observed, which results in an education that continues year round and in students who almost misses none of the classes.
- d. The *sohbets* follow an elaborately structured syllabus, which is comprised of a non-flexible schedule, a certain book list, and a teacher-oriented education.
- e. The *sohbet hocaları* hold formal meetings to determine the syllabus and often go through a systematic process of teacher training.

I, therefore, argue that the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement depart from the non-formal, flexible form of education that is specific to adult education in social movements and gain a comparatively formal structure, which is common to formal education.

All in all, this research, which has explored adult education in social movements as in the case of the Gülen Movement, ends with two conclusions:

- a. Adult education has a significant role in enabling a transformation in the followers of social movements and creating a social change, as it is extensively implemented in the Gülen Movement with success. Adult education in the Gülen Movement results in the transformation of personal, social, and business lives of the participants, as covered by this study.
- b. The adult education implemented in the Gülen Movement has a comparatively formal structure, which is not common to adult education in social movements.

7.7 Reflections

Working on this dissertation contributed significantly to my intellectual and personal growth. It allowed me to deepen my knowledge on topics which I had general

information so far. By far the most substantial development was on my knowledge about Islam. Although I myself believed in Islam, I realized that I knew it only at personal level and I was not deep into its social implications. In addition, I had always kept a distance towards Islamic social movements, but during this research I had the opportunity to understand their cause and relevant actions much more clearly.

As a scholar, I faced some challenges. The political context of Turkey, during the time when I conducted this research, was not a bright one for the Gülen Movement due to some allegations put forward against the Gülen Movement by the authorities. This situation made the field I researched on a sensitive one. I had to put much more care during my initial contacts and interviews with the participants. Moreover, my social circle, including some of my academician friends, made occasional discouraging remarks on the course of my study. However, knowing that such stresses could be experienced while doing research on sensitive areas, I kept my focus on the scientific methodology I followed and completed my research.

APPENDIX F

PROFILES OF ALL PARTICIPANTS

Table 4. Profiles of All Participants

	Name (Alias)	Age	Education	Occupation	Marital Status	Number of Children	Socio- economic Status	Hometown	Residence	Years in the Gülen Movement
1	Ahmet	41	B.A. Theology	Preacher	Married	2	Mid-Low	Eastern Black Sea	Metropolitan	21
2	Ali	50	B.A. Economy	Construction	Married	3	High	Eastern Black Sea	Metropolitan	29
3	Zeki	40	B.A Open University	Textile	Married	2	High	Eastern Anatolia	Metropolitan	24
4	Mehmet	63	B.A. Education	Construction	Married	5	High	Eastern Black Sea	Metropolitan	21
5	Hüseyin	62	B.A. Education	Construction	Married	4	High	Eastern Black Sea	Metropolitan	44
6	Emin	54	B.A Management, MBA, PhD Cont.	Retired Banker, Construction, Energy	Married	2	High	Eastern Marmara	Metropolitan	38
7	Orhan	34	B.A. Management	Textile	Married	2	High	Eastern Black Sea	Metropolitan	20
8	Süleyman	36	B.A. Management	Media Communications	Married	2	High	Eastern Black Sea	Metropolitan	20
9	Selahattin	68	B.A. Cartography	Catering	Married	3	Mid-High	Eastern Anatolia	Metropolitan	35
10	Kemal	79	Secondary School	Textile	Married	3	High	Eastern Marmara	Metropolitan	46
11	Akif	41	B.A., M.A. Theology	Preacher	Married	2	Mid-Low	Eastern Marmara	Metropolitan	24
12	Mustafa	39	B.A, M.A. History, PhD Cont.	Preacher	Married	2	Mid-Low	Mid Anatolian	Mid Anatolia	24
13	Osman	31	B.Sc., M.Sc. Civil Engineering, PhD Cand.	Research Assistant	Married	2	Mid-Low	Turkic Countries	Mid Anatolia	12
14	Ömer	26	B.A. Management	Preacher	Married	1	Mid-Low	Mid Anatolian	Mid Anatolia	11
15	İhsan	55	B.Sc. Civil Engineering	Construction	Married	3	High	Mid Anatolian	Mid Anatolia	25

16	Ümit	33	B.Sc. Economics	Foreign Trade	Married	3	High	Mid Anatolian	Mid Anatolia	16
17	Yusuf	49	Secondary School	Furniture Factory Owner	Married	3	High	Mid Anatolian	Mid Anatolia	24
18	Nedim	50	Secondary School	Jeweller	Married	3	Mid-High	Mid Anatolian	Mid Anatolia	25
19	Muhammed	42	B.Sc. Electronics Engineering, MBA	Glass Factory Owner	Married	2	High	Mid Anatolian	Mid Anatolia	18
20	Abdullah	61	Secondary School	Factory Owner	Married	3	High	Mid Anatolian	Mid Anatolia	30
21	Cihangir	36	B.A. Management	Factory Owner	Married	2	High	Mid Anatolian	Mid Anatolia	12
22	Mahmut	49	Faculty of Medicine	Medical Sector	Married	2	Mid-High	Eastern Anatolia	Mid Anatolia	20
23	Murat	41	B.Sc. Mechanical Engineering	Factory Owner	Married	3	High	Mid Anatolian	Mid Anatolia	25
24	Cengiz	65	Secondary School	Machine Factory Owner	Married	3	Mid-High	Mid Anatolian	Mid Anatolia	46
25	Hakan	52	B.Sc. Civil Engineering	Construction	Married	3	High	Mid Anatolian	Mid Anatolia	17
26	İsmail	37	B.Sc. Engineering	Merchant	Married	3	Mid-High	Mid Anatolian	Mid Anatolia	14

APPENDIX B

AGGREGATED DATA (STATISTICAL DESCRIPTION) OF PARTICIPANTS

Table 5. Distribution of Businessmen According to Age Groups

Age Group	Number of Participants
Under 30 years	0
30 – 39 years	5
40 – 49 years	5
50 – 59 years	5
60 – 69 years	5
70 – 79 years	1
	TOTAL: 21

Table 6. Distribution of *Sohbet Hocaları* According to Age Groups

Age Group	Number of Participants
Under 30 years	1
30 – 39 years	2
40 – 49 years	2
50 – 59 years	0
60 – 69 years	0
70 – 79 years	0
	TOTAL: 5

Table 7. Distribution of Businessmen According to Marital Status

Marital Status	Number of Participants
Married	21
Single	0
Divorced	0
	TOTAL: 21

Table 8. Distribution of *Sohbet Hocaları* According to Marital Status

Marital Status	Number of Participants
Married	5
Single	0
Divorced	0
	TOTAL: 5

Table 9. Distribution of Businessmen According to Level of Education

Level of Education	Number of Participants
Secondary School Diploma	5
Bachelor's Degree	13
Master's Degree	1
PhD Continuing / M.D.	2
	TOTAL: 21

Table 10. Distribution of *Sohbet Hocaları* According to Level of Education

Level of Education	Number of Participants
Secondary School Diploma	0
Bachelor's Degree	2
Master's Degree	1
PhD Continuing / M.D.	2
	TOTAL: 5

Table 11. Distribution of Businessmen According to Field of University Education

Field of Study	Number of Participants
Engineering	5
Management	5
Theology	0
Education	2
Economics	2
History	0
Turkish Literature	0
Cartography	1
Medicine	1
	TOTAL: 16

Table 12. Distribution of *Sohbet Hocaları* According to Field of University Education

Field of Study	Number of Participants
Engineering	1
Management	1
Theology	2
Education	0
Economics	0
History	1
Turkish Literature	0
Cartography	0
Medicine	0
	TOTAL: 5

Table 13. Distribution of Businessmen According to Occupation

Occupation	Number of Participants
Factory Owner	9
Construction Company Owner	6
Jeweler's	1
Merchant	1
Foreign Trader	1
Medical Sector	1
Catering Company Owner	1
Communications Company Owner	1
	TOTAL: 21

Table 14. Distribution of *Sohbet Hocaları* According to Occupation

Occupation	Number of Participants
Preacher	4
Research Assistant	1
	TOTAL: 5

Table 15. Distribution of Businessmen According to Number of Children

Number of Children	Number of Participants
1	0
2	7
3	12
4	1
5+	1
	TOTAL: 27

Table 16. Distribution of Businessmen According to Number of Children

Number of Children	Number of Participants
1	1
2	4
3	0
4	0
5+	0
	TOTAL: 5

Table 17. Distribution of Businessmen According to Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic Status	Number of Participants
Low	0
Mid-Low	0
Mid-High	5
High	16
	TOTAL: 21

Table 18. Distribution of *Sohbet Hocaları* According to Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic Status	Number of Participants
Low	0
Mid-Low	5
Mid-High	0
High	0
	TOTAL: 5

Table 19. Distribution of Businessmen According to Years in the Gülen Movement

Years in the Gülen Movement	Number of Participants
0 – 10	0
11 – 20	8
21 – 30	8
31 – 40	2
40 +	3
	TOTAL: 21

Table 20. Distribution of *Sohbet Hocaları* According to Years in the Gülen Movement

Years in the Gülen Movement	Number of Participants
0 – 10	0
11 – 20	2
21 – 30	3
31 – 40	0
40 +	0
	TOTAL: 5

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT BIODATA

Ahmet

Ahmet participates in the Gülen Movement as a *sohbet hocası*. He is 41 years old. He was born and grew up in a small city in Eastern Black Sea region of Turkey. His father was a religious officer and as a result his interest in religious issues started at early ages. After he graduated from the *Imam Hatip* School (a kind of high school in the Turkish educational system which trains prayer leaders and preachers who can work at mosques.) in his hometown, he moved to Istanbul to study Theology at university. While he was leaving home for university, his father strongly advised him not to join any political party or group and return home just after his graduation. In the last year of his university studies, he lost his father and with the permission of his family he did not return home for work. Since then he has been preaching to businessmen groups in the Gülen Movement. He is married and has one child. His socioeconomic status is mid-low.

Akif

Akif participates in the Gülen Movement as a *sohbet hocası*. He is 41 years old. He comes from eastern Marmara region of Turkey. He studied theology at university and now he holds an M.A. degree in theology. He met with the Gülen Movement 24 years ago. Currently, he lectures at *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement several times a week, as well as he meets with other *sohbet hocaları* to discuss on the syllabus and course of *sohbets*. He is married with two children. His socio economic status is mid-low.

Osman

Osman participates in the Gülen Movement as a *sohbet hocası*. He is 31 years old. He comes from one of old Soviet Turkic Republics. He came to Turkey for university education in an engineering department. He was graduated one of the Turkish high schools in his country opened by the businessmen affiliated with the Gülen Movement. However, his first introduction to the Gülen Movement was when he started his university education. He continues his studies at the graduate level now, and at the same time he lectures to businessmen at the weekly *sohbets* together with his other *sohbet hocası* friends. He is married with two children. His wife also comes from his home country, and she works at a university affiliated with the Gülen Movement. His socio economic status is mid-low.

Ömer

Ömer participates in the Gülen Movement as a *sohbet hocası*. He is 26 years old. He comes from a mid Anatolian city. He is currently a graduate student in social sciences at a university affiliated with the Gülen Movement. He spends his time remained from his studies on the activities of the Gülen Movement such as visiting businessmen during the daytime to answer their questions if any, lecturing at evening *sohbets* and helping university students who stay at the dormitories sponsored by businessmen attending the *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement. He is married with one child. His socio economic status is mid low.

Ali

Ali participates in the Gülen Movement as a businessman. He is 51 years old. He was born in a small city in Eastern Black Sea region of Turkey but grew up in Istanbul. He is one of the first graduates of Imam Hatip Schools, where religious education is prevalent in the curriculum. Although he studied at Faculty of Theology in a northern city for a while, he later dropped out school and came back to Istanbul. He worked as a goldsmith for 10 years and then entered into construction sector, where he has been active for the last 20 years. During these years, he also graduated from the Department of Economics of Open University in Turkey. He is married with 3 daughters and lives in a conservative neighborhood. His socioeconomic status is high.

Zeki

Zeki participates in the Gülen Movement as a businessman He is 40 years old. He comes from the Eastern Anatolia region of Turkey. He now lives in a metropolitan city. He has a family company at textile sector. They manufacture textile products for the overseas market. He graduated from the Department of Economics of Open University in Turkey, and his wife graduated from the theology department. He met with the Gülen Movement in his high school years, and has contributed to its activities for 24 years. He is married with two children. His socio economic status is high.

Mehmet

Mehmet participates in the Gülen Movement as a businessman. He is 63 years old. He comes from the Eastern Black Sea region of Turkey. He is a graduate of department of physics, chemistry, biology teaching at an Institute of Education in Turkey. He went to

university while he was married with children. His family did not want him to become a teacher due to the political turmoil of 1980s of Turkey. As a result, he has never worked as a teacher. In the 198

Hüseyin

Hüseyin participates in the Gülen Movement as a businessman. He is 62 years old. He comes from the Eastern Black Sea region of Turkey. He had his primary education in Erzurum, a city in the eastern part of Turkey. He graduated from Faculty of Education in 1979, but previously he had started to study engineering at Middle East Technical University, which was one of the top universities of Turkey then. He had to leave his first university due to the political struggles of the period in Turkey between rightists and leftists. He is the co-president of a charity foundation started by his family, whose population, as stated by him, reaches about 500,000 people. Emphasizing that not a single member of his family is far from loving his/her nation, his/her country, and his/her religion, Hüseyin is proud of his family. He has 8 siblings, and his parents passed away. He is grateful to his parents because he says they raised him and his siblings very well. He has 4 children and 3 grandchildren. He is currently the owner of a large scale construction company and his socio-economic status is high. He is also very active in social/economic life due to his responsibilities as the president of a charity organization as well as other seats in a number of nongovernmental organizations.

Emin

Emin participates in the Gülen Movement as a businessman. He is 54 years old. He comes from Eastern Marmara region of Turkey. He obtained a master's degree and gave

up his post graduate studies before he completed his doctoral thesis in management. He worked in the banking sector for 25 years, and since he retired 4 years ago, he started his own business in the energy sector. Moreover, his company has business relations in Western Africa. He considers himself at a mid socioeconomic level. His wife graduated from a technical high school, and she is currently the president of a women's association affiliated with the dialogue activities of the Gülen Movement. He has two daughters, one of whom studies mechanical engineering at one of the top universities in Turkey, and the other is a high school applying a social sciences program. He met the Gülen Movement in 1976 when he was a high school student in the suburbs of Istanbul, Turkey.

Orhan

Orhan participates in the Gülen Movement as a businessman. He is 34 years old. His elder family comes from Eastern Black Sea region of Turkey, but he was born in Istanbul as second generation. He graduated from department of management in a foundation university in Turkey and soon entered into business life. He works at his family business having taken over his post of CEO from his late father. He is married with 2 children and lives close to other family members in an affluent neighborhood of Istanbul. He maintains a high socio economic level. Orhan met the Gülen Movement in 1994 when his uncle started a *sohbet* in the company.

Süleyman

Süleyman participates in the Gülen Movement as a businessman. He is 36 years old. He comes from Eastern Black Sea region of Turkey. He now lives in a metropolitan city of Turkey. He met the Gülen Movement during high school years when he attended one of

the university preparation courses affiliated with the Gülen Movement. He then graduated from department of management. He now owns a company that operates in the sector of media communications and advertising. He is married with two children. His socio-economic status is high. He has been a participant of the Gülen Movement for 20 years. Before he set up his own company, he had worked in one of the media companies affiliated with the Gülen Movement.

Kemal

Kemal participates in the Gülen Movement as a businessman. He is 79 years old. He comes from Eastern Marmara region of Turkey. He graduated from secondary school. He now lives in a metropolitan city of Turkey. He owns a textile company which manufactures clothing for the domestic market. He is married with three children. He met the Gülen Movement 46 years ago when he listened to Fethullah Gülen preaching at the mosque. Since then he has been active in the Gülen Movement. His socio-economic status is high.

Ümit

Ümit participates in the Gülen Movement as a businessman. He is 33 years old. He comes from a city in the Mid Anatolia region of Turkey. He now lives in the city where he was born. He graduated from one of the high schools affiliated with the Gülen Movement. He then obtained a diploma in Economics. He also attended an English course abroad for one year. He now has a trading company which buys from and sells to overseas markets. He is very active in civil society organizations, such as presidency of the alumni association of his school, and vice presidency of a businessman association in

his sector. He is married with three children. His socio-economic status is high. He has been active in the Gülen Movement for 16 years.

Nedim

Nedim participates in the Gülen Movement as a businessman. He is 50 years old. He comes from a city in the Mid Anatolia region of Turkey, and still lives in the city where he was born. He graduated from secondary school and started his business life in those years as a jeweller. The political stance of his parents, as he stated, was more republican and far from conservative parties. However, his father made a sharp turn and became a religious person after he visited Mecca for pilgrimage purposes. He started to participate in the Gülen Movement activities 25 years ago. He married the same year and now has three children. His socio economic status is mid-high.

Abdullah

Abdullah participates in the Gülen Movement as a businessman. He is 61 years old. He comes from a city in the Mid Anatolia region of Turkey, and still lives in the city where he was born. He graduated from secondary school and started his business life in those years. He now has a factory which manufactures household appliances for domestic and international market. However, his children have taken over the management of the business and he spends all his time as a president of a philanthropic organization affiliated with the Gülen Movement. He is married with three children. He has been active in the Gülen Movement for 30 years.

Cihangir

Cihangir participates in the Gülen Movement as a businessman. He is 36 years old. He comes from a city in the Mid Anatolia region of Turkey, and still lives in the city where he was born. He had his university education in a metropolitan city. He is now a member of the executive board of their family business. He is responsible for foreign sales of the company. His comes from a conservative family, but not a deeply religious one as he puts it. He met the Gülen Movement during his secondary school years when he attended an exam preparation school affiliated with the Gülen Movement. He is married with two children. His socio economic status is high. He has been an active participant of the Gülen Movement for 12 years.

Mahmut

Mahmut participates in the Gülen Movement as a businessman. He is 49 years old. He comes from a city located in Eastern Anatolia and now lives in a city in mid Anatolia. He is married with two children. His father was a worker and his mother was a housewife. He graduated from Faculty of Medicine, and he is now employed in the medical sector. He met the Gülen Movement during his university years when he stayed in a student form affiliated with the Gülen Movement. He has been an active participant of the Gülen Movement for 20 years. His children attend a school affiliated by the Gülen Movement.

Murat

Murat participates in the Gülen Movement as a businessman. He is 41 years old. He comes from a city in the Mid Anatolia region of Turkey, and still lives in the city where

he was born. He had his university education in the same city, too. He holds an engineering degree. He also spent one year abroad to improve his English. He is now a member of the executive board of their family business. He is married with three children. His wife works as a professor at a state university. All his children go to schools affiliated with the Gülen Movement. He met the Gülen Movement during his high school years. He has been an active participant of the Gülen Movement for 25 years. His socio economic status is high.

Cengiz

Cengiz participates in the Gülen Movement as a businessman. He is 65 years old. He comes from a city in the Mid Anatolia region of Turkey, and still lives in the city where he was born. He graduated from secondary school. He was born into a very poor family so his father could not afford his further education although Cengiz was the first of his class. He started as an apprentice in the industry, and now he owns a machine factory. He is married with three children. His socio economic status is high. He has been an active participant of the Gülen Movement for 46 years.

Hakan

Hakan participates in the Gülen Movement as a businessman. He is 52 years old. He comes from a city in the Mid Anatolia region of Turkey, and still lives in the city where he was born. His father was a lawyer. He graduated from department of civil engineering, and he owns a company that operates in the construction sector. His socio economic status is high. He is married with three children. Two of his children continue their studies abroad. He has been active participant of the Gülen Movement for 17 years.

Mustafa

Mustafa participates in the Gülen Movement as a *sohbet hocası*. He is 39 years old. He comes from a mid Anatolian city of Turkey. He has a prolific educational life. He graduated from Imam Hatip High School and went to university in a North African country to study Islamic Civilization. Following that, he moved to an Asian country to obtain his Bachelor's Degree in History. After returning to his hometown, he obtained his Master's Degree in History. Now he is pursuing his PhD in an Asian university online. When asked about his occupation, Mustafa answered that he preached in the *businessmen sohbets* of the Gülen Movement but gave no mention of how he made his living. Mustafa met the Gülen Movement in the 1990s when he was at high school.

İsmail

İsmail participates in the Gülen Movement as a businessman. He is 37 years old. He comes from a mid Anatolian city of Turkey. He graduated from Faculty of Engineering in his hometown. He is married with 3 children. He entered into business life soon after he finished university in 2000, and since then he has been active in trade, selling computer parts and offering IT services. His wife graduated from Faculty of Education, but she has never worked as a teacher but been a housewife and mother to her children since then. His socioeconomic status is at mid-level. İsmail met the Gülen Movement in the late 1990s when he was at university.

İhsan

İhsan participates in the Gülen Movement as a businessman. He is 55 years old. He comes from a mid Anatolian city of Turkey. He graduated from Civil Engineering

department of one of the top universities in Turkey. After his graduation, he entered into the business life in their family company which operates in a variety of sectors ranging from textile to construction. He has a family with conservative tendencies. He is married with three children. His socio economic status is high. He has been active participant of the Gülen Movement for 25 years.

Yusuf

Yusuf participates in the Gülen Movement as a businessman. He is 50 years old. He comes from a mid Anatolian city of Turkey. He graduated from secondary school and then entered into the business life. For the last 20 years, he has had factories in the furniture industry. He states that business/trade goes back even further in their family. He is married with 3 sons. His socio economic status is high. He has been an active participant of the Gülen Movement for 24 years.

Muhammed

Muhammed participates in the Gülen Movement as a businessman. He is 42 years old. He comes from a mid Anatolian city of Turkey. He graduated from Department of Electrical and Electronics Engineering of Middle East Technical University. After graduation, he accepted a job offer in the States worked there for 3 years. Then, he obtained an MBA and came back to Turkey. He started to work in his family business, which produces glass for furniture and construction sectors. In his first years he was responsible for the foreign sales of family company, but now he is the general manager. The company is a mid scale business with 25 managers and 200 workers. He is married with 2 children, both of whom attend to schools affiliated with the Gülen Movement.

His wife could not complete her program at Faculty of Education due to the headscarf ban at Turkish universities in the late 1990s. His socio economic status is high.

Selahattin

Selahattin participates in the Gülen Movement as a businessman. He is 68 years old. He comes from a city in the Eastern Anatolia region of Turkey, and he now lives in a metropolitan city. He holds a diploma in cartography. He worked for the government for some time, but then he became a businessman. Now he is the executive board of a holding. He is married with three children. His daughter works at one of the university preparation courses affiliated with the Gülen Movement. His socio economic status is high. He has been an active participant of the Gülen Movement for 35 years.

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS USED IN THE STUDY (IN TURKISH)

İŞADAMLARI İÇİN GÖRÜŞME SORULARI

1. Kendinizi tanıtır mısınız?
 - a. Yaşınız
 - b. Eğitim durumunuz
 - c. İşiniz
 - d. Aileniz
 - e. Sosyo ekonomik olarak kendinizi nasıl tanımlarsınız?
2. Hizmet hareketine neden katıldınız?
 - a. Hizmetle nasıl tanıştınız?
 - b. Hizmetten önce hizmet hakkında ne düşünüyordunuz?
 - c. Kaç yıldır hizmettesiniz?
 - d. Kesintiler oldu mu? Neden geri döndünüz?
3. Hizmet hareketinin hayatınızdaki yeri ve önemi nedir?
4. Şu anda kendinizi hizmet hareketin neresinde görüyorsunuz?
5. Katıldığınız sohbetleri anlatır mısınız?
 - a. Ne kadar zamandır esnaf sohbetlerine katılıyorsunuz?
 - b. Hangi aralıklarla yapılıyor? Aynı gün veya günlerde mi yapılıyor?
 - c. Nerelerde yapılıyor?
 - d. Sohbetin nerede ne zaman yapılacağıyla ilgili iletişim nasıl sağlanıyor?
 - e. Tatil dönemi oluyor mu?
 - f. Sohbetleri kimler yapıyor? Hep aynı kişiler mi?
 - g. Yapan kişileri yeterli buluyor musunuz?

- h. Dersleri sadece hoca mı yapıyor? Siz de katkıda bulunuyor musunuz?
 - i. Ne kadar sürüyor?
 - j. Belli bir müfredat takip ediyor musunuz?
 - k. Sohbet gelmeden hazırlık yapıyor musunuz?
 - l. Ödev veriliyor mu? Veriliyorsa, nelerdir?
 - m. Sohbet esnasında yapılanları yeterli görüyor musunuz?
 - n. Sizce sohbette yapılan etkinliklerin amacı nedir?
 - o. Neler öğreniyorsunuz?
 - p. Katılmadığınız zaman bir eksiklik hissediyor musunuz?
 - q. Bulduğunuz sohbet grubunu siz mi seçtiniz?
 - r. Hep aynı kişilerle mi sohbetlere katıldınız? Sohbet grubunuzdaki kişiler değişiyor mu?
 - s. Yeni gelenler hangi yollarla geliyor? Bunun bir kriteri var mı?
 - t. Sohbet grubundan ayrılanlar oluyor mu? Niçin ayrılıyorlar?
 - u. Sohbetlere katılıp şikâyet eden arkadaşlarınız oldu mu? Neden şikâyet ettiler?
6. Esnaf sohbetlerinin size katkıları nelerdir?
- a. Günlük yaşantınız üzerine etkisi nedir?
 - b. Eşiniz ve çocuklarınız üzerine etkisi nedir?
 - c. Akraba ve arkadaş çevrenize karşı etkisi nedir?
 - d. İş hayatınız üzerine etkisi nedir?
7. Esnaf sohbetlerinin harekete katkısı sizce nedir?
8. Esnaf sohbetlerinin güçlü ve gelişmeye açık yönleri nelerdir?

SOHBET HOCALARI İÇİN GÖRÜŞME SORULARI

1. Kendinizi tanıtır mısınız?
 - a. Yaşınız
 - b. Eğitim durumunuz
 - c. İşiniz
 - d. Aileniz
 - e. Sosyo ekonomik olarak kendinizi nasıl tanımlarsınız?
2. Hizmet hareketine neden katıldınız?
 - a. Hizmetle nasıl tanıştınız?
 - b. Hizmetten önce hizmet hakkında ne düşünüyordunuz?
 - c. Kaç yıldır hizmettesiniz?
 - d. Kesintiler oldu mu? Neden geri döndünüz?
3. Hizmet hareketinin hayatınızdaki yeri ve önemi nedir?
4. Şu anda kendinizi hizmet hareketin neresinde görüyorsunuz?
5. Katıldığınız sohbetleri anlatır mısınız?
 - a. Ne kadar zamandır esnaf sohbetleri yapıyorsunuz?
 - b. Hangi aralıklarla yapılıyor? Aynı gün veya günlerde mi yapılıyor?
 - c. Nerelerde yapılıyor?
 - d. Sohbetin nerede ne zaman yapılacağıyla ilgili iletişim nasıl sağlanıyor?
 - e. Tatil dönemi oluyor mu?
 - f. Sohbet gruplarına hep aynı kişiler mi sohbet yapıyor?
 - g. Sohbet hocaları olarak kendinizi ve diğer hocaları yeterli buluyor musunuz?
 - h. Dersleri sadece hoca mı yapıyor? İşadamları da katkıda bulunuyor mu?

- i. Ne kadar sürüyor?
 - j. Belli bir müfredat takip ediyor musunuz?
 - k. Sohbeta gelmeden siz ve işadamları hazırlık yapıyorlar mı?
 - l. Ödev veriliyor mu? Veriliyorsa, nelerdir?
 - m. Sohbet esnasında yapılanları yeterli görüyor musunuz?
 - n. Sizce sohbette yapılan etkinliklerin amacı nedir?
 - o. Neler öğretiyorsunuz?
 - p. Sohbetlerinize katılmayan işadamları olduğunda bir eksiklik hissediyor musunuz?
 - q. Sohbet yaptığınız grubu siz mi seçtiniz?
 - r. Hep aynı kişiler mi sohbetlere geliyor? Sohbet grubunuzdaki kişiler değişiyor mu?
 - s. Yeni gelenler hangi yollarla geliyor? Bunun bir kriteri var mı?
 - t. Sohbet grubundan ayrılanlar oluyor mu? Niçin ayrılıyorlar?
 - u. Sohbetlere katılıp şikâyet eden işadamları oldu mu? Neden şikâyet ettiler?
6. Esnaf sohbetlerinin sizce, eğer gözlemleyebiliyorsanız, işadamlarına katkıları nelerdir?
- a. Günlük yaşantıları üzerine etkisi nedir?
 - b. Eşleri ve çocukları üzerine etkisi nedir?
 - c. Akraba ve arkadaş çevrelerine karşı etkisi nedir?
 - d. İş hayatları üzerine etkisi nedir?
7. Esnaf sohbetlerinin harekete katkısı sizce nedir?
8. Esnaf sohbetlerinin güçlü ve gelişmeye açık yönleri nelerdir?

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS USED IN THE STUDY (IN ENGLISH)

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR BUSINESSMEN

1. Can you introduce yourself?
 - a. Your age
 - b. Your level of education
 - c. Your occupation
 - d. Your family
 - e. How do you define yourself socio-economically?
2. Why did you participate in the Gülen Movement?
 - a. How did you meet with the Gülen Movement?
 - b. What did you think about the Gülen Movement before you met it?
 - c. How long have you been in the Gülen Movement?
 - d. Have you ever dropped out? Why have you returned?
3. What is the significance of the Gülen Movement in your life?
4. Where do you position yourself in the Gülen Movement?
5. Can you tell about the *sohbets* you attend?
 - a. How long have you have attended the *sohbets* for businessmen?
 - b. How often are the *sohbets* held? Are they held on the same day(s)?
 - c. Where are they held?
 - d. How is the time and venue of the *sohbet* communicated?
 - e. Is there a holiday season?
 - f. Who does the *sohbets*? Is it always the same person who does them?
 - g. Do you find those who do *sohbets* proficient enough?

- h. Are the *sohbets* done only by the *sohbet hocası*? Do you contribute, too?
 - i. How long does the *sohbet* last?
 - j. Do you follow a certain syllabus?
 - k. Do you prepare for the *sohbets*?
 - l. Is any homework given? If yes, what is it?
 - m. Do you think what is done at the *sohbets* is sufficient?
 - n. What do you think the aims of the activities done at the *sohbets* are?
 - o. What do you learn at *sohbets*?
 - p. Do you feel anything missing when you do not attend the *sohbets*?
 - q. Have you chosen the *sohbet* group you are attending?
 - r. Have you always attended the *sohbets* with the same people? Do people in your *sohbet* group change?
 - s. Through which channels, do new comers join in your *sohbet* group? Are there any criteria for acceptance?
 - t. Are there people who drop out your *sohbet* group? If yes, why?
 - u. Have any of your friends attending the *sohbets* complained about them?
What did he/they complain about?
6. What are the contributions of businessmen *sohbets* to you?
- a. What are their effects on your daily life?
 - b. What are their effects on your family?
 - c. What are their effects on your friends and relatives?
 - d. What are their effects on your business life?
7. What do you think are the contributions of *sohbets* to the Gülen Movement?
8. What are the strengths and weaknesses of businessmen *sohbets*?

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR *SOHBET HOCALARI*

1. Can you introduce yourself?
 - a. Your age
 - b. Your level of education
 - c. Your occupation
 - d. Your family
 - e. How do you define yourself socio-economically?
2. Why did you participate in the Gülen Movement?
 - a. How did you meet with the Gülen Movement?
 - b. What did you think about the Gülen Movement before you met it?
 - c. How long have you been in the Gülen Movement?
 - d. Have you ever dropped out? Why have you returned?
3. What is the significance of the Gülen Movement in your life?
4. Where do you position yourself in the Gülen Movement?
5. Can you tell about the *sohbets* you attend?
 - a. How long have you have done *sohbets* for businessmen?
 - b. How often are the *sohbets* held? Are they held on the same day(s)?
 - c. Where are they held?
 - d. How is the time and venue of the *sohbet* communicated?
 - e. Is there a holiday season?
 - f. Is it always the same person who does the *sohbets* to the groups?
 - g. As a *sohbet hocasi*, do you find yourself and other *sohbet hocalari* proficient?

- h. Are the *sohbets* done only by the *sohbet hocası*? Do businessmen contribute, too?
 - i. How long does the *sohbet* last?
 - j. Do you follow a certain syllabus?
 - k. Do you and businessmen prepare for the *sohbets*?
 - l. Is any homework given? If yes, what is it?
 - m. Do you think what is done at the *sohbets* is sufficient?
 - n. What do you think the aims of the activities done at the *sohbets* are?
 - o. What do you teach at *sohbets*?
 - p. Do you feel anything missing when businessmen do not attend the *sohbets*?
 - q. Have you chosen the *sohbet* group you are doing *sohbets* for?
 - r. Have the same people always attended the *sohbets*? Do people in your *sohbet* group change?
 - s. Through which channels, do new comers join in your *sohbet* group? Are there any criteria for acceptance?
 - t. Are there people who drop out your *sohbet* group? Why do they drop out?
 - u. Has any businessman attending the *sohbets* complained about them?
What did he/they complain about?
6. What do you think the contributions of *sohbets* to businessmen are, if you can observe any?
- a. What are their effects on businessmen's daily life?
 - b. What are their effects on businessmen's family?

- c. What are their effects on businessmen's friends and relatives?
 - d. What are their effects on businessmen's business life?
7. What do you think are the contributions of *sohbets* to the Gülen Movement?
 8. What are the strengths and weaknesses of businessmen *sohbets*?

APPENDIX F

APPROVAL FORM BY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE AT BOĞAZIÇI

UNIVERSITY (İNAREK) (IN TURKISH)

BOĞAZIÇI ÜNİVERSİTESİ
İnsan Araştırmaları Kurumsal Değerlendirme Kurulu (İNAREK) Toplantı Tutanağı
2014/2

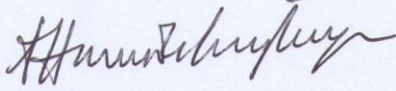
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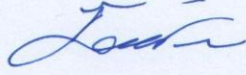
Salih Cingilloğlu
Boğaziçi Üniversitesi, Eğitim Fakültesi,
Eğitim Bilimleri Bölümü
İstanbul
scingillioğlu@yahoo.com

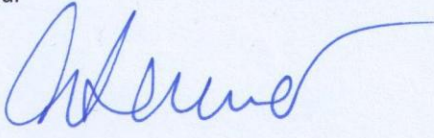
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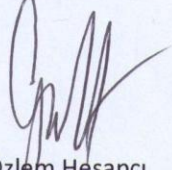
“Toplumsal Hareketlerde Yetişkin Eğitimi: Gülen/Hizmet Hareketi İncelemesi” başlıklı projeniz ile yaptığınız Boğaziçi Üniversitesi İnsan Araştırmaları Kurumsal Değerlendirme Kurulu (İNAREK) 2014/35 kayıt numaralı başvuru 21.04.2014 tarihli ve 2014/2 sayılı kurul toplantısında incelenerek etik onay verilmesi uygun bulunmuştur.

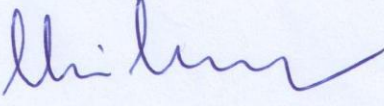
Saygılarımızla,


Prof. Dr. Hande Çağlayan (Başkan)
Moleküler Biyoloji ve Genetik Bölümü,
Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi, Boğaziçi Üniversitesi,
İstanbul


Yrd. Doç. Dr. Özgür Kocatürk
Biyo-Medikal Mühendisliği Enstitüsü
Boğaziçi Üniversitesi,
İstanbul


Prof. Dr. Yeşim Atamer
İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi
Hukuk Fakültesi
İstanbul


Doç. Dr. Özlem Hesapçı
İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi,
İşletme Bölümü, Boğaziçi Üniversitesi,
İstanbul


Yrd. Doç. Dr. Ekin Eremsoy
Psikoloji Bölümü, Doğu Üniversitesi,
İstanbul

APPENDIX G

CONSENT FORM (IN TURKISH)

Araştırma İçin Katılımcının Muvafakati Formu

Bu araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ettiğiniz için teşekkür ederim. Okuduğunuz bu form yapılan araştırmanın amacı, bu araştırmaya katkıda bulunmanız açısından sizden beklenenler ve katılımcı olarak haklarınız konularında bilgi sunmaktadır.

Bu araştırma, Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Eğitim Bilimleri alanında yapılan bir doktora çalışmasının tez bölümünü oluşturmaktadır. Bu tez çalışmasının amacı Gülen Hareketi bünyesindeki esnaf *sohbet*lerini bir yetişkin eğitimi programı olarak incelemektir.

Araştırma, bu *sohbet*lere devam eden her bir katılımcı veya eğitici ile yüz yüze yapılacak olan 60-90 dakikalık bir görüşme ve ihtiyaç duyulması ve katılımcının da zamanının olması durumunda, ikinci bir tamamlayıcı görüşme içermektedir. Yapılan bu görüşmeler nitel araştırma prosedürleri uygulanarak, Salih CINGILLIOĞLU tarafından veri analizine tabi tutulacaktır.

Siz, Gülen Hareketinin esnaf *sohbet*lerine katılan veya eğitici olarak görev yapan pek çok birey açısından rastgele seçilen herhangi bir birey olarak bu ankete katılmaktasınız. Bu görüşme neticesinde isminizin veya herhangi bir tanımlayıcı özelliğinizin verdiğiniz cevaplarla ilişkilendirilmeyeceğini bilmenizi isterim.

Bu araştırmaya katılmak için en az 18 yaşında veya daha büyük olmalısınız. Katılımınız tamamen gönüllülük esasına dayalı olup, görüşmeler esnasında veya sonrasında istediğiniz herhangi bir anda ve herhangi bir neden belirtmeksizin bu araştırmadan geri çekilebilirsiniz. Bunun yanı sıra, kişisel soruları yanıtlamamakta ve diğer sorulara geçmekte serbestsiniz. Kişisel soruların yanı sıra görüşme sırasında cevaplamak istemediğiniz soruları da “Cevaplamak istemiyorum.” diyerek geçebilirsiniz.

Sizinle yapılan görüşmede elde edilen veriler çözümlenirken ve yazıya geçirilirken kimliğiniz tamamıyla gizli tutulacaktır. Bu araştırma neticesinde ortaya çıkacak olan doktora tezi, sunum, rapor ve makalelerde verdiğiniz bilgiler hiçbir şekilde isminizle ilişkilendirilmeyecektir. Özel yaşamınız kanunların elverdiği ölçüde

maksimum düzeyde korunacaktır. Bu konularla ilgili herhangi bir rahatsızlık hissetmeniz durumunda arařtırmadan istediđiniz anda çekilebilirsiniz.

Görüşmeler esnasında ses kayıt cihazı kullanılacaktır. Lütfen görüşmelerin sesli olarak kaydedilmesini istemiyorsanız bana bildirin. Sizi temin ederim ki bu ses kayıtları veri analizi bittiđi anda imha edilecektir. Bu arařtırmayla ilgili bir sorunuz olursa ařađıda iletiřim bilgileri belirtilen arařtırmacılarla temasa geçebilirsiniz.

1. Doç. Dr. Fatma Nevra SEGGIE

Adres: Bođaziçi Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Eğitim Bilimleri Bölümü,
Bebek, İstanbul

Tel: 0212 359 4613

E-mail: nevra.seggie@boun.edu.tr

2. Salih CINGILLIOĐLU

Adres: Bođaziçi Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Eğitim Bilimleri Bölümü,
Bebek, İstanbul

Tel: 0533 331 1212

E-mail: scingilloglu@yahoo.com

Bu formu imzalayarak yukarıda detayları verilen arařtırmaya gönüllü olarak katılmayı kabul ettiđinizi beyan etmiř olmaktadır.

_____	_____
Katılımcının Adı	İmzası
_____	_____
Ses kayıt cihazı kullanılmasını onaylıyorsanız imzalayın.	Tarih
_____	_____
Arařtırmacının Adı	İmzası

APPENDIX H

CONSENT FORM (IN ENGLISH)

Consent Form for the Participants to the Study

I would like to express my gratitude for your acceptance to participate in this study. This consent form provides information about the purpose of this study, what is expected from you to contribute to the study and your rights as a participant.

This study constitutes the dissertation part of doctoral study carried in the Department of Educational Sciences of Social Sciences Institute of Boğaziçi University. The purpose of this dissertation study is to explore the businessmen *sohbets* in the Gülen Movement as an adult education program.

The study involves a 60 to 90-minute face-to-face interview with a participant or an educator, and a second complementary interview if needed and provided that interviewee has time for it. These interviews will be subjected to data analysis by Salih CINGILLIOĞLU using qualitative research procedures.

You are being interviewed as an individual who has been randomly selected among many people who participate in the businessmen *sohbets* of the Gülen Movement or who do these *sohbets*. I would like to inform you that neither your name nor a defining characteristic of yours will be associated with the answers you have provided after the interview has been completed.

In order to take part in this study, you have to be at least 18 years old or older. Your participation is solely on voluntary basis. You can withdraw from this study anytime during the interviews or later when you wish to do so and without providing any reasons. Additionally, you are allowed to reject personal questions and skip to the following ones. You can also skip the questions that you do not want to answer by saying “I do not want to answer this question.”

Your identity will always be kept hidden while the data obtained from the interview made with you is analyzed and is put in writing. Your name will never be related to the data you have provided in the doctoral dissertation, proceedings, reports, and articles written as a result of this study. Your private life will be protected at the maximum level ensured by the law. You can withdraw from the study anytime when you feel uncomfortable about these issues.

A voice recording device will be used during the interviews. Please let me know if you do not want the interviews to be voice -recorded. I would like to ensure you that these recordings will be erased as soon as the data analysis is completed. Should you have any questions regarding this study, you can contact the researchers whose contact details are provided below.

1. Assoc. Prof. Fatma Nevra SEGGIE

Address: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Eğitim Bilimleri Bölümü,
Bebek, İstanbul

Tel: 0212 359 4613

E-mail: nevra.seggie@boun.edu.tr

2. Salih CINGILLIOĞLU

Address: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Eğitim Bilimleri Bölümü
Bebek, İstanbul

Tel: 0533 331 1212

E-mail: scingilloglu@yahoo.com

By signing this form, you declare that you have accepted to voluntarily take part in the study whose details are provided above.

Name of the Interviewee

Signature

Please sign if you approve the use of a voice recorder.

Date

Name of the Researcher

Signature

APPENDIX I

QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS – TURKISH

1. Yusuf

Biz özellikle Anadolu’da biliyorsunuz biraz sohbet ve oturma kültürü fazlasıyla yaygın bir altyapısı var. Biz de tabi gençliğimizde yine mahalle aralarında, kendi semtlerimizde, arkadaş çevremizde bu tür oturmaları, oturma diye tabir ettiğimiz toplantıları tertip ediyorduk. Burada tabi mutad bir düzen yoktu, belli bir sistem dahilinde değildi ama bu manevi ortamlarda da bulunmak istiyoruz ama bir altyapı olmadığından, bir çevremiz olmadığından böyle bir gelişme sağlayamıyorduk bu toplantılarda, oturmalarda. Bir vesile ile ilkokul arkadaşımınla karşılaştığımızda napıyorsun, gününü nasıl geçiriyorsun, akşamları nasıl değerlendiriyorsun falan deyince beni bir yere davet etti. Dedi ki ya biz böyle akşamları, o zaman yirmi yirmi beş kişilik gruplar halinde, esnaf, sanayici, memur arkadaşlarla bir oturma oturuyoruz dedi, gelmek ister misin dedi. Ben de yani arkadaşı tanıyorum yani bir güven telkin ettiği için, önce tabi ilk başlangıcı karşıdaki insana bir böyle güveneceksiniz ki davet ettiği yere icabet edesiniz. Çünkü mutad yani bir sefere mahsus bir davet değildi bu. Ben de iştirak ettim. O ilk gün tabi benim için huzurlu ve yararlı bir gün oldu... Üçüncü toplantıdan sonra karar verdim yani dedim ki ben buraya ömrüm yettiğince devam edip gitmek istiyorum.

2. Cengiz

Sohbete gidelim, gider misin dedi. Nasıl oluyor dedim. Kitap okuyorlar, sohbet ediyorlar, çok iyi insanlar, sevdim ben onları. Katılırsan, gidersen beraber gidebiliriz dedi. Orada bir de çay da ikram ediyorlar dedi, olur gidelim dedim. Üstad Hazretleri’nin talebesi bir abi bizi karşıladı, güzel bir ders yaptı, dersten sonra bize çay ikram etti. Hakikaten çok güzelmiş. Biz de açız, maneviyata açız.

3. Zeki

Tabii onla tanışmamız enteresan. Biz okulun ilk açıldığı günlerde Cenab-ı Hakkın sevki, okul koridorlarında baktım Abdullah abi, ben tanımıyorum ama, insanlarla merhaba ediyor işte. Merhaba, merhaba el tutuyor falan. Ben de uzaktan bakıyorum. Ya bu adam herkesle merhaba ediyor enteresan hoşuma gitti dedim. Orda Cenab-ı Hakkın sevki, başka bir izahı yok. Ben durup dururken yanına gittim, abi dedim siz herkese merhaba ediyorsunuz. Biz de dedim, tanışabilir miyiz? O da zaten öyle bir şey arıyor onun için insanlarla tanışıyormuş da, biz tabii onu sonradan öğrendik.

4. Muhammed

Lise yıllarında tanıştım, bir arkadaşım... Tabi yatılı okumanın getirdiği belki hafta sonları bir insan gidecek yer arıyor tabi her zaman ailesinin yanında değil.

Arkadaşım, gidelim böyle böyle üniversiteli abiler var, ders çalışıyoruz, sohbet ediyoruz dedi. Gittik, Müslüman bir aileden gelme tabi yetişmenin getirdiği bir muhafazakar yapı var. Onla birlikte tanıştığım insanları da sevdim. Temiz, dürüst, ondan sonra insanlara faydalı olmak isteyen insanlardı. Ders çalışmak bahanesi oldu, ders de çalıştık. Derken yavaş yavaş tanıma fırsatı oldu. Tabi yıllar içerisinde.

5. Orhan

1994 yılında işyerimizde bir sohbet başladı. Ben çocuktum ilk başladığı zaman beni de çağırdılar, niye çağırdılar bilmiyorum ben de geldim. O zaman 35-40-45 yaşında insanlar vardı. İlk orada bir sohbet gördüm... Yani geliyordum bakıyordum böyle kravatlı bir adam Allah Peygamber bişeylerden bahsediyor. Yok gelen hocamızı tanımıyordum, anlatan insan da çok güzel anlatıyor üslubu konuşması yani böyle camii gibi değil. Camii sohbeti değil bakıyorsun beyefendi gibi yemek yiyor anlatıyor. Ben de çocuğum seyrediyorum.

6. Nedim

Buradaki eski arkadaşlarımız oturuyorduk. Normalde bizim şehrimizde sohbet oturumları var zaten Hizmet hareketinin dışında. Onlarla otururken dediler ki ya böyle böyle ya biz araştırma yapalım, araştırmamızda bizim fitratımıza en uygun hareketin Hizmet hareketi olduğuna kani olduk, ona oturma kurduk. Hoca olarak da Hizmet hareketinden bir hocayı davet ettik.

7. Osman

İlk üniversite yıllarımda üniversitede Kredi Yurtlarında ibadetlerimizi yaşayamama durumundan dolayı hizmet hareketinin evlerinde kalmaya karar verdik. Aslında, benim ülkemden daha önce üniversite eğitimi için gelen bizden büyük öğrenciler yol gösterdi.

8. İhsan

İslam ve imani farkındalık süreci insanda oluyor. İnsanlar islamın güzellikleri var bunu klasik bir adet ve gelenekten çıkarıp hayatımızı daha bir en temel yol olarak tesis etmeliyiz bu prensipleri ilkeleri gibi bir noktaya geliyorsunuz. Çok bilinciniz bilginiz olmasa bile bir samimiyetle belki geliyorsunuz. Çünkü bizim memleket tarafı daldan inme insanlarız. Yani bana bir tane sureden 18-20 ayeti hadi ezbere oku deseniz ben okuyamam... Öyle bir eğitimimiz de yok. Zaten millet olarak epey bir tazyiklerin arkasından geliyoruz. Velhasıl belki de o kadar bilmeden belli bir samimiyetle, samimi bir şekilde mesela hocaefendi' nin vaaz kasetlerini hatırlıyorum... Fakat bir taraftan da çok böyle palas pandıras bir takım radikal bir takım böyle bir anda devleti ele geçirdik şöyle böyle bugün tezahürlerini çok daha iyi gördüğümüz yanlış şeyler, fevkalade gördüğümüz, yol ve yöntemleri de içinde bir fren vardı, yani din bu şekilde olmaz. Dolayısıyla hocaefendinin söylemlerini de bu manada daha sıcak buluyordum.

9. Selahattin

Kayınpeder de güzel bir insan. O da dedi ki ama bak bir buğday yetiştirmek için 1 yıl lazım ama bir ağaç yetiştirmek için 10 yıl lazım. Bir insan yetiştirmek için de dedi yüz yıl lazım, temelini şimdi atacaksın dedi. Hocaefendi yüz yıl da demiyor dedi, 25 yıl diyor çeyrek asır diyor dedi. Orda şeyde de konferansında da çeyrek asırda inşallah bu işler olur, böyle Hocaefendi zihnimizin bir tarafında var, yerleşti. Sonra bu şehire geldik 79-80 yılında sohbetlere katıldık artık devamlı o gün bugün bizi hiç boş bırakmıyorlar işte.

10. Mehmet

Bizi bırak dedim yani bizi şu anlamda bırak dedim yani bizden bişey olmaz dedim. Bizim çocuklarımıza sahip çık, bizim derdimiz çocuklarımız, çocuklarımıza sahip çık. Onların da yani çocukları olur, onlara sahip çıkılmış olur. Biz de bu sayede Allah bize hasenatımıza bişey yazarsak yazarız yoksa bizden bişey olmaz.

11. Muhammed

Rabbim nasip etti, içinde bulunmaya çalışıyoruz yani katılmak deyimi aslında hani siyasi bir partiye katılmak, bir kulübe üye olmak veya bir derneğe üye olmak gibi değil aslında yani bu orada da anlatılan güzel aksiyonlar var, o aksiyonun içerisinde olmak istiyorsan gönüllülük esas. O aksiyonun içerisinde olabilecek yollar var, bunun mesleğinle içinde olabilirsiniz ki öğretmen arkadaşların yaptığı gibi veyahut madden yardım ederek içinde olabilirsiniz. Sadece maddi taraf değil, her insanın yapması gereken inandığı güzel olan şeyleri başkalarına da aktarabilmek ki bu adı aslında asli kulluk görevi yani Allah-u Teâlâ'ya karşı sorumluluğumuz. Bunu en yakın çevreden, insanın ailesinden, çoluğundan çocuğundan, eşinden, akrabasından başlayarak ki Efendimiz bu anlamda akrabadan, yakınlardan başlamanın belki ne kadar çok hakkıyla yaptığımızı da söyleyemiyoruz, ama ondan sonrasında arkadaş, çevre veya tanıştığın insanlara bu güzel aksiyonları anlatma, örnek olmaya çalışma. Aslında katılma deyimi bence burada gizli yani katılmak demek aksiyonu yapmak istiyor musun yani o işin içerisinde olmak istiyor musunuz?

12. İsmail

Hani gönüllüler hareketi olduğu için hani kimse yani hiçbir şekilde zorlamayla durmuyor. Orada önyak olmak hani amaç vesile olmak derler zaten. Yani bir yere mesela yardım yapılacak, buraya bir kişiden atıyorum tamamı alınıp da olabilir ama burada amaç farklı farklı kişilerden vesile olup onları da hayra vesile etmek. Yani onların da hayır işlemesi için vesile olmak.

13. Murat

Orada öyle buldum. Samimiyeti buldum. İlgi alaka, samimiyet ve bir şeyler yapabilme gayreti normal rutinin dışında, ekstra arkadaşlarımıza birşeyleri anlatabilme, edebilme... Cezbetti yani bir de mayamızda da hani olunca

muhafazakarlık biraz da... Onun üzerine bu yani Hocaefendinin sohbetleri, öğretileri, işine yaklaşımı çok farklı oldu bize, çok cezbetti yani aradığımızı bulduk desek yeridir. Bir mana, bildiğimiz hani beş vakti kılıp, oruç tutup zekat vermekten ziyade din adına, İslam adına gerçek görevlerini hatırlatan öğretiler çok daha farklı etkiledi bizleri.

14. Orhan

Yani insanları çağırıyoruz, yurt dışına gidiyoruz orada Kurban var Ramazan var bazen yurt içinde Diyarbakır' a Mardin' e ne bileyim bir yerlere gidiyoruz geziler oluyor. Birilerini de götürüyoruz o da vesile oluyordur herhalde, gittiğimiz insanlar da bir şeyler görüyor.

15. Ali

Dini öğretileri aldığımız sağlam bir aile yapısı. Ama bulunduğumuz ortam bu tür değerlerle çatışan bir toplum görüntüsü veriyordu. Hizmet hareketine davet edildiğimde, çok da hayal edemeyeceğim bir alan buldum. Yani her ne kadar dini öğretileri olan bir aileden gelmiş olsam da sosyal alanda insanlara böyle kurumsal anlamda bu işi öğretebilecek, sivil alanda bu işi yapabilecek çok fazla bir şey yoktu ortada. Benim için cazipti çünkü genellikle halk içerisinde hani insanların dini olarak aileden önce, sonra okuldan, sonra çevreden insanlar dini öğreniyorlar. Fakat böyle bir ortamda iş hayatındaki insanların da aslında esnafın da bu tür faaliyetlere katılabileceği bir okul diyeyim. Yani ben Hizmeti hep okul olarak gördüm. Çünkü bulunduğum zaman içerisinde hep bir şeyler aldığım kanaatindeyim. Yani insanlar hep böyle bu harekete vermeye yönelik, vermeyi öğrettiğini söylüyorlar, doğru hep alma değil bir şeyler verme üzerine kurgulanıyor, insanlarda olan şeylerden verme. Ama ben şuna inanıyorum, çok şey öğreniyoruz aslında bura bir okul.

16. Hüseyin

Bizde olan bir boşluk vardı, boşluk inanç değil. İnanç elhamdülillah babam hafız-Kuran dı. Nenem çocukken bizi salavatlarla, okuduğu ayetlerle büyüttü. Annem de öyle, Allah rahmet eylesin. Ama biz dini boşlukta ziyade bir toplumsal bir araya gelip, cemaat olgusunu, camii olgusunu bir boşluk vardı o boşluğu doldurma adına Hizmet bizim için önemli bir yerdi, önemli işlerdi. Bundan dolayı da toplum içerisinde kendimize yerler bulduk. Arkadaşlarımız da öyle bizimle birlikte katılanlar, gelenler herkes hoşuna giderdi. Ne kadar güzel bak işte şu adam da var bu adam da var o da var diye.

17. Cihangir

Tabi orada ayrı bir arkadaşlık dostluk iklimi var yani orada birlikte üniversite sınavına hazırlanıyor olmak yani tabiri caizse stres altında olan arkadaşlık özel oluyor. Bu her dersane için aynı anlam ifade etmeyebilir tabi birlikte namaz kıldığınız, entelektüel ülkenin geleceğiyle ilgili tartışmalar yapabildiğiniz bir ortam. Bir de yatılı kısımları olunca daha fazla vakit geçirilebilen, sadece hafta sonu okula

gidip gelmekten, okul gibi dershaneye gidip gelmekten öte daha geniş zaman geçirilen bir ortam olunca orada o sohbetler, işte klasik tabiriyle çay muhabbetleri...

18. Akif

Gülen hareketinde gördüğümüz en önemli şey söylenenlerin gerçek hayatta icraate geçirilmesidir. Aslında bu günümüz insanların en önemli sorunudur. Herkes birşeyler biliyor, camide duyuyor okulda öğreniyor. Ama bütün bu bilgileri nasıl hayatınızda pratiğe aktaracaksınız? Bunun ortamı nasıl olacak ve nasıl başaracaksınız? Bu daireye girdiğinizde, İslami inanç ve değerlerin derinliğini farkedersiniz. Örnek vermek gerekirse, niyette halis olma, adanmışlık, karşılığında bir şey beklememe ve kendini insanlığa adama, ki bunların hepsi ilkler tarafından yaşanmıştır. Ve tüm bu ideallerin, değerlerin Gülen hareketinde hayata geçirildiğini gördüğünüzde, katılmakla iyi bir karar verdiğiniz konusunda mutmain oluyorsunuz.

19. Mustafa

Çevremiz itibariyle çok dindar bir çevreden geliyoruz. Hoca Efendi'nin Cenab-ı Hakk'ın istediği tarzda modern çağa uyumlu en müspet ve mukni yani moderniteyle dini çatıştırmadan, birleştirip, çağla İslam'ı buluşturup bunun en reel şekilde hayata tatbik edilip, istenilen milli manevi değerlere sahip nesillerin yetiştirileceğine bu şekilde zorla siyasetle, başka yollarla değil de ikna ile ve bu hizmet metoduyla olacağına inandım.

20. Mehmet

Hocaefendi diyor ki bu cemaat öyle bir cemaattir ki ailevi meselelerini dahi en yakınları ile paylaşamaz ama cemaatteki arkadaşları ile paylaşır, bu benim düsturumdur... Hizmet benim için nedir namusumdur şerefimdir haysiyetimdendir imanımdır, varlığımdır, her şeyimdir. Hizmet var her şeyim var, Hizmet yok, hiç bir şeyim sahip saymam kendimi, hiç bir şeye sahip değilim.

21. Ümit

Dedim ki ya Allah'ım bana bir yol çiz, kendime de katkı olsun, Hizmete de katkı olsun, ülkeme de katkı olsun. Öyle bir yol çiz ki bana ben dedim bundan sonra hayatımı vakfedeyim, senin için koşturayım. Yaptığım işleri de senin için yapayım, her işi bunun için yapayım. Dedik öyle bir akitleşmemiz oldu. Hatta o gün orada ben bir karar aldım, Allah' la sözleştim dedim ki ben kazancımın yarısını Allah için vereceğim dedim yani

22. Cengiz

Çünkü bundan daha güzel bir hareket dünya üzerinde ben göremiyorum. Eğer varsa oraya giderim. Bu hareketten güzel bir hareket varsa oraya giderim. Niye? Benim anadan doğma kardeşlerim benimle diğer Hizmetin içinde kardeşlerimle olduğu gibi samimi olamadılar. Neden? Madde. Ama Hizmet hareketinde maalesef öyle bir şey

yok. Kardeşlik ölünceye kardeşlik... Ben maddi planda, iş hayatında insan yaşadıkça her şeyi görebiliyor, sıkıntıya düştüğü günler de oluyor, dara düştüğü günler de oluyor. Öz kardeşlerimden, aynı anadan doğma kardeşlerimden görmediğim iyilikleri Hizmet hareketindeki kardeşlerimde gördüm. Bana, yerine göre arabalarının anahtarını verdiler, yerine göre bana harçlık verdiler. İmkânın var mı yok mu diye hal hatır sordular, ihtiyaçlarımı karşıladılar. Yerine göre bugünkü şartlarda kredi kartı, şu kartı kullanabilirsin dediler. Soruyorum size hangi insan bunu yapar? Kaçta kaç insan yapar bu hareketi? Öz kardeşim, anadan doğma kardeşimden göremedim ben bunu.

23. İhsan

Hele bu süreçten sonra ben bu işin ne kadar daha, evet, bu iş tutulmalı, aman bırakılmamalı. Aman bu iş o kadar lazım ki o kadar gerekli ki değilse Allah muhafaza, bu iş, yani bu son karakol. Ben hayatta bir şeyi, bir prensibi kendime edindirmeye çalıştım hep. Yani Hizmette bir şey isteniyor bir vazife talep ediliyor bir şey söyleniyorsa bunu hep öne almaya, yani önceliği geçiş üstünlüğünü Hizmete vermeye dönük baktım.

24. Ali

Bir hedef koyuyorsunuz yani koyduğunuz hedef de şu; ister bunu dini anlamda değerlendirin, ister sosyal anlamda değerlendirin, isterseniz evrensel değerler deyin bütün dünya çapında değerlendirin, insanlık adına, yani hayatta yaşadığımız gaye adına önünüze bir hedef koyuyorsunuz. O hedefi verme açısından bence çok önemli. Daha önceki şeylerde, belki başlangıç yıllarında hani insan her ne kadar ilgisini çekse de yıllar içerisinde bunu hedef haline getiriyorsunuz. Çünkü yapılanları gözle görüyorsunuz. Yani somut birşeyler var. Yani hep söylemler üzerine gider insanlar, okur öğrenir rutin şeyler bunlar ama bunu hedef haline birebir insanlık adına hedef haline getirmeyi o zaman öğrenmiş oluyorsunuz. Tabi sadece kendi etrafınızda değil, bildiğiniz o güzel tattığımız şeyleri bür başkalarına da anlatabilme aslında paylaşabilmeyi öğrenmiş oluyorsunuz. Yani paylaşma hep maddi anlamda konuşulur ya insanlar işte olduğundan başkalarıyla da paylaşmalı falan. Aslında bence daha önemlisi maddi değerlerin değil, buradaki manevi değerlerin, çok daha üstün değerlerin paylaşılması sözkonusu. Yani bu insana çok büyük bir hedef veriyor.

25. Zeki

Bizim Hizmet herşeyimiz. Yani ben hizmet dışında, bir hayat hiç düşünmedim yani. Bize böyle bi hayat da Cenab-ı Hak yaşatmasın yani. Ben böyle bir hayat hiç düşünmedim, çünkü bizim hayatımızdan Hizmet'i çıkardığımızda, yani ben zaman zaman düşündüm, Hizmet olmasa çıkaralım bir yana, acaba geriye ne kalır, baktım bir şey kalmıyor hocam. Yani kupkuru hayat, sabah işinize giderseniz, akşam eve gelirsiniz o kadar. Ne bugünkü o değerli arkadaşlarımız olur, ne salılarda bi birlikteliğiniz olur, ne gezileriniz olur.

26. Hüseyin

Tabii ki bizim görevimiz Allah ve Resulü ‘nün yolunda sınır tanımadan dünyanın her yerine gidebilmektir, hizmet edebilmektir. Hizmet in amacı bu biz bunun için ne paramızı ne malımızı ne canımızı ne çocuğumuzu esirgedik. Hepimiz bu yola daldık ve o yola gidiyoruz.

27. Yusuf

Bana çok şeyler kattı Hizmet hareketi, bu sohbetler, bu ortamlar, bu toplantılar. Yani en azından aile kültüründen gelen İslami yaşantıyı biraz daha tam merkezli yani eğitilmiş, bizim anlayabileceğimiz şekilde yaşamaya çalışmaya gayret ediyorum. Ama ondan önceki hayatımda böyle bir hedefimiz yoktu yani manevi anlamda bir hedefimiz yoktu. Manevi anlamda hedefimiz olmadığı gibi maddi anlamda da bir hedefimiz yoktu. Yani aslında Hizmet bizi sadece manevi anlamda geliştirmede, bizi tabiri caizse terbiye etti. Yani böyle bir metotlu, böyle bir bilimsel, yani böyle bir kariyerini yapma manasında değil ama isteyerek veya istemeyerek o bir disiplin yöntemi oldu Hizmet hareketi benim üstümde.

28. Muhammed

Kimi mevsimde öğrenciler için burs, kimi mevsimde Kurban zamanı buna benzer mevsimler var. Bunlar seni bir defa gündemde tutuyor, zinde tutuyor. Bu görev ve sorumlulukları başta söylediğim gibi yapmak zorunda değilsin, tamamen kişisel seçimine, özgür iradene kalmış bir şey. Ama aslında bir şeyler yaptıkça arkasından durmaman gerektiği daha da farklı, daha da yeni şeyler yapman gerektiğine inanıyorsun yani. Hareket hareketi doğuruyor. Ama bir kez durdun mu bir daha hareketlenme elbette zaman alıyor. O yüzden bu işin içerisinde hareketsiz kalmak demek geri saymak demek, durmak demek hatta belki bazı duyguların körelmesi demek yani.

29. Cihangir

Bir çocuk yetiştirmekten iş hayatında nelere dikkat etmemiz lazım bir bu noktalarda ölçeği belli, referans kaynaklar belli. Burada da ana referansı yorumlanmış bir bizim için, benim için yegane kılavuz yani hayatımın çok önemli bir kısmı diyeyim yani

30. Murat

Hizmet önceliğimiz, yani her şeyin önünde. Hizmet hareketi de bizim dini yaşantımızı, hassasiyetimizi artıran bir itici unsur, tetikleyici katalizör şeklinde düşündüğümüz için zaten yani din bir Müslümanın hayatında her zaman birinci öncelikte olduğu için Hizmet hareketi de haliyle o da daha fazla yönlendirdiği için birinci öncelikte, her şeyden önce yani.

31. Orhan

Yani onu nasıl ifade ederim bilmiyorum da, insanın annesi olur babası olur çocuğu olur kardeşi olur, yeğeni kuzeni bir sürü akrabası olur diyelim bunların hepsini toplasanız bir yere koysanız bir de Hizmet diye koysanız benim için Hizmet hepsinden daha öndedir.

32. Osman

Benim kanaatime göre hizmet hareketini bir İslam kelimesi ile özdeşleştirebiliriz. İslam hayatımızın hayatı olduğu için, hizmetin bize söylediği biraz daha hayatın özü, esası olduğu için, biz aslında hizmetten ayrılacak bile ayrılmamış oluyoruz bir mana da. Çünkü hizmetin bize öğrettiği şeyler İslam'ın kanunları. Müslümanlığımızdan vazgeçecek değiliz Allah'ın izniyle.

33. Mustafa

Yani şu an hizmet bizim hayatımızın tam içerisinde çünkü sabah kalkıyoruz hizmetin meseleleriyle evimize döndüğümüz ana kadar çoluk çocuğumuzun yetiştirilmesinden hayatımızdaki her her şeye yansıyor. Şunu söyleyebilirim benim hizmetin dışında sadece bir tane arkadaşım var.

34. Cengiz

Bir bayrak yarışı vardır, bayrak birinden birine teslim edilir, en hızlı koşanı da en sona korlar. En hızlı koşanı en sona korlar ki bitirmesin, hedefe ulaşsın diye. Biz de bu bayrak yarışında en sonda olduğumu, hedefe ulaştırmak için bütün gayretimle uğraştığımı hissediyorum. Bununla birlikte en tabanda yeni başlayan bir insan ne yapıyorsa o seviyedeyim, kendimi öyle görüyorum, hiçbir şey yapmamış gibi görüyorum, daha işin başında görüyorum.

35. Hüseyin

Yani şu anda bir neferiyim ben hizmet in. Öyle demek doğrudur, yani nefer miyim tam onu da bilmiyorum. Tam göremiyorum nerede olduğumu ama şöyle söylemek lazım bize bir şey düşüyorsa, bir şey yapmamız gerekiyorsa elimizde imkanımız varsa yerine getiriyoruz.

36. Ali

Bir fert. Yani bu işin, halkasına dahil olmuş bir fert olarak görüyorum. Hani bir hiyerarşi gibi bakmıyorum. Yani bir devlette görev yapan olsun veya sivil hayatta görev yapan bir kademe, mevki, makam anlamında değerlendirildiği noktada burada böyle bir şey olduğuna inanmıyorum. Bu gönüllüler hareketi çünkü bu gönüllü bir şey yani.

37. İsmail

Hani iş yerinde olur, iş hayatında olur hani yükselmek, ama burada öyle bir şey yok. Bilakis herkes hani bir şeyler yapayım ama ön planda olmayayım, gözükmeyeyim. Bu şekilde alakalı yani verdiğiniz elin görmemesi, onla alakalı.

38. Murat

Valla hiçbir yerinde göremeyebilirim yani biz zaten dini öğretilerde de öyle biryerinde görme diye bir şey yok. Yani biz Kıtmiri olamayız yani bu işin, böyle düşünüyoruz yani. Hani birileri bizi farklı görebilir ama biz öyle düşünmeyiz, biz kapı bekçisi olabilsek...

39. Mehmet

Hizmet kim olursan ol nerede olursan ol ne zaman olursa olsun daima nefer kalmaktır, ben nefer kalmak istiyorum. Hizmetin neresinde olduğum konusuna gelince, yapabildiğim kadar Hizmetin en önünde, ama mükafatta en geride.

40. Muhammed

Vazife istenmez ama verilir düsturu burada da temel esas. Yani bir insan bir şeyi ısrarla istiyorsa burada oturup düşünmek lazım... O yüzden ısrarla bir konum istemek, bir pozisyon istemek, öğrendiğimiz kadarıyla pek doğru olmayan bir şey. Doğru olan şey ise sana gelen herhangi bir görev, sorumluluk, rica, her neyse adı, onun için aslında o işe liyakatin olmadığını başta dille söylemek değil ama zihnen ve kalben de onu kendine önce bir kabul ettirmen lazım. Zaten burada zannederim işte o şeyin içerisindeki fiili duanın başlangıcı olan acziyet burada başlıyor. Yani bir şeye her ne kadar liyakatin olmasa da bu sana ikram edilmiş yani bu ikramı veya bu piyangoyu değerlendirmek. Yine geliyor iş özgür iradene kalıyor. Bu sistem aslında çok doğal bir sistem yani doğaçlama birçok şey. Kimse sana zorla gelip, bunu yaparsan karşılığında dünya menfaati olarak bu, yapmazsan da dünya adına zararın şu diye bir şey yok yani. Çünkü karşılık bekleyerek yapılan bir iş de değil.

41. İhsan

Hizmet' in bir yer var mı ki, içindeyiz. İnşallah içindeyiz yani önü arkası, üstü altı sağı solu yok bu işin. Hizmet' te bir şey isteniyor bir vazife talep ediliyor bir şey söyleniyorsa bunu hep öne almaya, yani önceliği geçiş üstünlüğünü Hizmet'e vermeye dönük baktım.

42. Selahattin

Bizim dükkanın girişinden üst kata çıkarken orada bir paspas var, ben kendimi o paspas gibi görüyorum. Hizmet' in hiç bir yerinde görmüyorum yani onun için bana gelmişsen bu şeyleri, o kağıdı da yırtın lütfen. Ben bir hiçim yani neyim ki? Ben bu tuğlanın, harcın bir danesiyim yani ben kendimi öyle görüyorum yani.

43. Zeki

Bu hizmet bizim sorumluluğumuzda olan bir şey. Mesela arkadaşlar bir şey getirdiğinde, ya ben bunu çözmem lazım veya biz yapacağız biz halledeceğiz yani artık orayı bir kendi yerimiz gibi nasıl ki kendi işimiz kendi ailemiz, nasıl ki biz sahiplenip nasıl görüyorsak şu anda ben hizmeti öyle görüyorum hocam yani. Hizmetle alakalı bir problem mi var diyelim, veya benle alakalı bir problem çıktığında şöyle bakmıyorum yani, hizmetten bana bir problem değil. Kendi problemimiz gibi.

44. Ömer

Yani aslında hani öyle bir pozisyon olarak değil de Hz. Mevlana'nın biz sözü var ya: "Kum tanesiyim ama çölün derdini taşıyorum." diye. Biz de şu anda hizmetin içerisinde hiç denilebilecek bir pozisyondayız ama yani hizmet hareketiyle alakalı her hareket her hamle yapılan her organizasyonda, sorumluluk almaya hazırız.

45. Osman

Herkesin hizmet hareketinde çok farklı durumları, vazifeleri olabilir. Ama sonuç olarak herkes aynı gaye içerisinde hizmet ettiği için, bu işin hizmetçisinden aşçısına kadar herkes aynı gaye içerisinde hizmet ediyorlar ve herkes birbirinin vazifesine karışmıyor. Bunlar güzel bir şey. Sahabe efendilerimiz döneminde, İslam için ordu komutanlığı yapıyordu. Camideki imam da İslam için camideki imamlığını yapıyordu. Ama ikisi de İslam adına hizmet ediyorlardı. Bu manada yani herkes bence aynı konumdadır hizmette.

46. Ali

Başlangıcından beri sohbetler var, hiç kesintisiz var. Bu periyodik oluyor bazen haftada bir, bazen onbeş günde bir. Veya işte tatil günlerinde vesairelerde bazen inkıtaya uğrayabiliyor ama hemen hemen kesintisiz devam eden bir yapı bu. Her hafta yapılmaya çalışılıyor ama bazen on beş günde bir oluyor.

47. Orhan

Haftada bir gün sohbetimiz oluyor. Yani bir kere değişti, daha önceden Perşembe idi şimdi grup ikiye bölündü Pazartesi Perşembe iki grup oldu. Grup belli, sürekli aynı gün aynı saat o şekilde devam ediyor.

48. Yusuf

Tamamen o ortamdaki arkadaşların belirlediği haftanın bir günü, kesin haftada bir gün olur bu. Genel olarak katılan arkadaşların, katılımcıların ortak bir günü tespit edilir. Bu ne olur işte bir ay, iki ay, altı ay, bir sene gider de bir iki arkadaşın mazereti çıkarsa denir ki ya bunu işte Salı değil de Pazartesine alalım Çarşambaya alalım.

49. Ümit

İki tip sohbet var aslında. Yani birincisi müteveli sohbeti, bir de ilgilenme sohbeti dediğimiz oturması dediğimiz bir oturma var. Müteveli dediğimiz insanlar etrafında ya işte bu adam da namaz kılabılır mi acaba, dine biraz daha sahip çıkabilir mi veya dine daha çok öğrenir mi diye kolundan tutup getirmeye çalıştığı insanlardan oluşan ikinci bir oturmamız var. Birincisi de müteveli olan sadece müteveli olan kişilerin geldiği oturma. Zaten sohbetlerdeki bu işe sahip çıkmak isteyen insanlar bir süre sonra müteveli olarak gözükyor bak bizim böyle bir şeyimiz var, eğer bizimle birlikte bu işlere biraz daha koşturmak istersen gel bu tarafta devam et. Sen bu sefer adam getir, başkasına sebep ol.

50. Ali

Bir düzene koyma ihtiyacı hissediyor insan. Mesela dedim ya az önce paylaşmak için insanlara bu gönüllü hareketle tanıştığımız insanlara, bu tür şeyleri düzene sokma adına işte onların müsait günlerini soruyorsunuz. En optimum müsait günü belirledikten sonra işte o hafta Perşembe günü diyelim mesela uygun bir gün Perşembe günü genellikle böyle bir adet olmuş ertesi gün Cuma olduğu için güzel bir gün. Perşembe gününe uygun oluyorsa arkadaşlar onu tercih ediyorsunuz. Ama öyle grupla insanlar var mesela tanıştığımız bir insan kendi arkadaşına veya kendi çevresine böyle bir şeyi yaydığında böyle bir grup da oluşabiliyor. Onların müsait bir günü varsa onlara yönelik bir şey de olabiliyor. Ama Perşembe günü uygun oluyor genelde.

51. Ahmet

Her sohbet grubunun sohbet günleri aynı oluyor. İşte sizin Pazartesi grubunuz varsa Pazartesi grubu her Pazartesi, yerler değişebilir ama gün olarak aynı. İşte Çarşamba sohbetiniz vardır her zaman Çarşamba günü yerler değişebilir. Bazen de sabit mekanlarda yaptığınız kişiye göre sohbetleriniz olur. Günü bellidir, saati bellidir, katılımcıları bellidir o sohbet gruplarının. İş gruplarına göre eğer işçiyse işçilerin katıldığı, esnafsa esnafın katıldığı, memursa memurların katıldığı sohbetlerimiz olur günü saati belli olan sohbetler.

52. Mustafa

Esnaf sohbetleri onların hayatının en önemli toplantılarıdır, yani o evin hanımına kadar bilir ki Çarşamba günü eşimin sohbeti vardır. O gün misafir almaz, misafirliğe gitmez. Yani eşiyile ilgili bir program yapacaksa bu mutattır, haftalıktır. Yani bayram haftalarında senede 2 defa olmaz.

53. Ömer

Belirli günlerle, haftalık, mutattır, yani genellikle o bulunan esnaf grubunun müsait olunan gününe göre belirleniyor. İşte, farz-ı muhal Çarşamba günüyse, belki o bir sene bir dönem boyunca Çarşamba günü şeklinde devam edip, işte bazen yazın bizim

şehirde şöyle bir adet var, kültür var; bağ evleri diye bir kültür var. Yani şehirdeki evlerinden bağ evlerine göç ediyorlar. Yazın belki o anlamda bağ evleri uzak olduğu için katılmalar çok sağlıklı bir şekilde geçmez ama telafi için onun dışında ekstra organizasyonlar yapılır.

54. Ali

Sohbetler kendi evlerimizde oluyor. Mesela ilk davet ettiğimiz arkadaş kendi evimize çağırıyoruz. Yani evimiz de bu anlamda bereketleniyor, ev halkının da bu işe katılmasını sağlıyorsunuz. Bu arada öğrencilerin de kaldığı evler oluyor 4-5 kişilik işte lise, üniversite öğrencilerinin. Onların da ortamlarını görme adına oraya davet edilebiliyor, öğrenci yurtlarında olabiliyor. Farklı mekanlarda oluyor ama daha çok, genellikle esnaf veya iş adamlarının evleri buna müsait.

55. Zeki

Salı mütevellisi bi bizim burda bi abimizin işyerinin üzerini kendisine göre dizayn etmiş, bu işler için. Genelde orada yapıyoruz fakat zaman zaman bizim iş yerimizde, abiler zaman zaman evlerinde yapıyoruz ama esas sabit yerimiz orası. Fakat farklı yerlerde yaptığımız da oluyor. Yurtta yaptığımız oluyor, yakında bir yurdumuz var, orada bir araya geldiğimiz oluyor.

56. Murat

Evlerde. Genelde evlerde hani olur ya evlerde müsait olmaz filan, bazen yurtta, bazen öğrenci evinde olduğu da oldu, bazen yemekli organizasyonlar olur böyle bir locada falan yani bir şekilde cazip hale getirip devam ettirdik.

57. Mustafa

Başka mekanlar bazen olabilir. Mesela bir abimizin fabrikası, atölyesi açılmıştır, başka bir şey olmuştur. Yani o şekilde yerler değişir. Bir de mevsimine göre bizim memleketimizde bağ evi kültürü var, yazın bağ evlerinde olur.

58. Yusuf

Genelde şöyle olur mesela ya bir silsile olur takip olur veya en sohbet oturması kimdeyse orada birisi der ki haftaya bana buyurun, orada olmayan arkadaşlara telefonla bizzat ev sahibi koordine ederi, haber verir veya hoca arkadaşımız kimse o da haberleşmeyi sağlayabilir yani mesaj yoluyla veya işte farklı iletişim kaynaklarıyla.

59. Mahmut

İletişim genellikle en son sohbeti kimin evinde yapmışsak orada belirlenir. Ama belirlenmemişse zaten onu kendine sorumluluk addeden kişi günü gelmeden telefon

açar ve söyler, şu gün bizde olalım veya biz ararız bugün sizde olalım. Kimse olmazsa da zaten kimse o hafta müsait değilse de genelde bizde olur, öyle diyelim yani.

60. Selahattin

Ben hocalara bağıyım. İşte onlar diyorlar ki Salı gününe alalım, tamam diyoruz. Çarşamba günü sohbeti yapalım, Cuma akşamı derlerse, yani değişik bizim. O zaman hani bu aslında bu iletişim var bir şekilde, o sizi arar görüşür gelir haber verir.

61. Muhammed

Eskiden insanlar birbirini telefonla arıyordu işte belirli arkadaşları, birkaç arkadaşı bir insan böyle bölüşülerek çağırılıyordu. Dört beş yıldır biz bunu şey yaptık, bir sıraya koyduk. Koyduğumuz sıraya geldiğinde, bizimle çalışan sekreter arkadaş arıyor, ondan sonra bu hafta ağırlayacak mısınız, müsait misiniz diyor. Orası tamamsa adresini, telefonunu sms mesajı atıyor. Ondan sonra bu sosyal ağ geliştiği için son şeylerde whatsapp ta da grubumuz var, orada akşam katılıyorum, katılamıyorum, gelicem, gelemicem şekliyle insanlar duymuş oluyor.

62. Murat

İrtibat genelde böyle biz biraz sosyal ağları kullanıyoruz, biz biraz sosyeteğiz o konuda. Geçmişte sekreterlere söylüyorduk yani diyorsun işte falanda toplantı, onun listeleri var, ondan sonra o kişinin arıyordu sekreteri, herkesi arıyor kaç kişi katılacak edecek ev sahibine de bilgi veriyor. Kimde olduğu da belli oluyor, böyle bir organizasyondur. Hala bu Perşembe oturmasında buna devam ediyoruz. Ama bi tane de whatsapp'ı da ekledik.

63. Cengiz

Bugünkü teknoloji, telefonu kaldırdın mı anında birbirinizi buluyorsunuz. Ne çıktı? İnternet çıktı, iletişim araçları çıktı. Anında dünyanın bir ucuna ulaşıyorsunuz, eskiden böyle değildi. Eskiden hakikaten zordu, bir hafta önceden toplanıyordun, bir hafta önceden gelecek hafta kimdeyiz, falan abideyiz diyorduk. İşte kaçta saat, şu saatte öyle diyorduk, gidiyorduk. Ama şimdi ona da şey kalmadı, telefon olunca istediğin zaman, o gün o abinin bir mazereti olabilir, falan abideyiz diyoruz oraya gidiyoruz.

64. Ahmet

Sohbeti organize eden mutlaka bir abimiz, genelde o kanal üzerinden işte haber veriliyor o gün itibariyle. Şu dönemde cep telefonları çok kullanıldığı için bir dönem biz hep hocalar üstünden gittik. Abileri biraz daha devre dışı bıraktık. Ama son 5-6 aydır da eski sisteme döndük ayrılmadan önce tekrar mekânları belirliyoruz ve sorumlu olan bir abimiz var o haberdar ediyor.

65. Ahmet

Abilerin çağırması daha etkili. Eğer hoca tarafından yapılan bir organizasyonsa, yeni gelen insanlarda şöyle bir endişe var. Tam olarak ne olacağını bilmeyecekleri bir organizasyona gelecekler. Ama esnaflar organize ettiğinde, hoca sadece burada takip eden ve onlara böyle hizmetle alakalı kafalarında soru işareti varsa onları anlatan pozisyonda aracı yani diyelim. Böylece esnaflar diğer arkadaşlarını Hizmet sohbetlerine çağırıyorlar. Esnafın yapmış olduğu organizasyonlar daha tescilli.

66. Ali

Ya böyle toplu bir kesinti dönemi yok bu işte. Ancak nedir gruplar işte yazın diyelim ki bayram tatili var, yaz tatili var ama nedir bir grup gidebiliyor ama birkaç kişi kalabiliyor. Yani o dönemlerde de biraz mesela her hafta olmaz da on beş günde bir. O zaman biraz seyrekleşebilir ama yedi sekiz kişiyle olmaz da iki üç kişiyle de olsa yine bu program bir şekilde var kesintisiz diyebiliriz bunlardan yani.

67. Zeki

Tatil dönemi hocam sadece senede müteveli için diyebiliriz, aslında sohbet de aynı, senede iki veya üç kere denk gelir o da bayramlarda hocam. Yani kurban bir Ramazan bayramının arkaları uygun olmayabiliyor, hoca arkadaşlar şehir dışında oluyor, senede üçü geçmez.

68. Mehmet

İlk senelerde öyle bir tatil dönemi yaşadık. Ondan sonra ben de kişisel fikrimi söyledim istişareye binaen ya dedim bir iki kişiyle de olsa şu tatillerde bir kopmayalım bereketi kaçıyor dedim bu için. Sağ olsun hocamlar da uygun gördü esnaf abiler de uygun gördü 5 kişiyle de olsa yaz da olsa hangi tarih biz karde kışta yazda o kesintiye uğramıyor hiç.

69. Hüseyin

Tabi. Gelmeyen arkadaşlar oluyor. Bir gün önce iki gün önce söylüyorlar işte yurtdışına gidiyorum mesela ben Rusya'ya çok gidip geliyorum Nijerya'ya falan, tek katılmadığım zaman, katılmaya çalışıyorum mümkün olduğunca da, belki giderken gelemiyorsam diyorum ben bugün gelemiyorum diğer arkadaşlar da öyle.

70. İsmail

Nasıl söyleyeyim hani bir şekilde bir gruba başlandı ama ondan sonra başka gruba geçildi, hani başka arkadaşlarla tanışıldı. Belki sekiz on sefer hocamız değişmiştir. Hoca değişince grup değişti, arkadaşlar değişti. Değişiklik de aslında iyi oluyor yani. Hem başka insanlar tanıyoruz, bir sıkıntı olmuyor.

71. Zeki

Biz seçmedik. Yani biz mütevelliyeye alındığımızda zaten alındığımız bir yerde şekillenebilen bir şey var tabii hizmet çok hızlı büyüdüğü için sürekli, diyelim burada 10 kişilik bir heyetimiz varsa dediler ki siz içinüz şurada olsanız. Daha sonra burayı A bölgesi, oldu burası B bölgesi oldu burası C bölgesi oldu burası D bölgesi oldu diye zaten sürekli bir gelişim olduğu için sizi de bir yerlerde istihdam ettiler öyle diyelim yani.

72. İhsan

Yani tabii davet ettiğimiz kişiler bazen biraz da birden fazla oturma olabiliyor orda biraz daha homojenite esasına göre gruplandırmalar yapılabilir. Yani işte ya efendim meslek vesair gibilere göre. Dolayısıyla da ya bu arkadaş da şuraya gelse hoş olur diyebileceğiniz arkadaşları davet ediyorsunuz.

73. Emin

Yok biz seçmiyoruz. Yani şöyle söyleyeyim, eskiden gelen belli bir yapımız var, işte bir takım arkadaşlar diyorlar ki falan bey de katılacak bundan sonra. Falanca okulda veli arkadaşımız falan buyur hoşgeldiniz devam ediyoruz. Tanışmış oluyoruz öyle mesela size uygun olmazsa bir şey diyelim başka bir gruba bir yere katılabilirsiniz(...)Veya orada yakından tanıdığınız bir yer vardır onlarla olayım falan diyorsundur, o tür değişiklikler olabiliyor. O kendiliğinden gelen bir yapı orada yani. Sayı belki arttı diyelim 8-9 kişilik bir, hani çok kalabalık olduğunda da iyi olmuyor, 8-9 kişilik bir grup sayı artmaya başladı bu defa ikiye bölüp ayrı bir şey yapabilirler.

74. Nedim

Sohbete katıldığımız arkadaşlar genelde mesela beş kişi başladıysak herkes birer tane arkadaşını getirdi, on kişi oluyor. O on kişiyle birlikte otururken ikici bir sohbet kuruyoruz mesela Pazartesi günüyse bu, Salı günü kışın ikinci sohbet ayarlıyoruz. Oraya da akrabamızı, amca çocuğumuzu, hala çocuğunu bilmem ne iş arkadaşlarını, böyle fitratı temiz güzel insanlardan çağırıyoruz. O çağırduğumuz arkadaşlardan içki içen kumar oynayan olabilir. Bunları önemsemiyoruz. İnsan fitratında insandır, insan tertemizdir. Temiz bir şeyden gelmişti, Hz Adem' (a.s.) dan geliyor insanoğlu. Önemli olan onu sohbeta davet ediyoruz. Tövbe ediyor. Tövbe ettiğinde bakıyoruz ki içkiyi bırakmış, sigarayı bırakmış. Kötü küfürlü hareketleri oluyor mesela, onları bırakmış. Ve bir zaman sonra, biz de belki öyleydik ilk başladığımızda. Bir zaman sonra Hizmet insanı oluyor. Hizmet insanı toplumda dünyanın en zararsız insanıdır bence. Hizmet insanı elinden dilinden korkmayacağınız insandır. Eline diline beline sahip olan insandır Hizmet insanı. Çünkü başkasının ırzına namusuna bakmaz. Başkasının parasına puluna bakmaz. Hiç kimsenin malında gözü yoktur, canında kastı yoktur. Hizmet adamı insan öldürmez, insanı yaşatmak için vardır.

75. Mahmut

Bu bir doğal süreç... Yani seçme değil, ben ihtisas için bu şehre geldim, şu an bu şehirde olduğum için söylüyorum. Buraya geldiğimde ihtisas için biz zaten böyle bir sohbeti ihtiyaç olarak görüyoruz yani. Bu bizim nasıl üç öğün bir insanın en azından yemek yeme ihtiyacı varsa, susuz insan yaşayamayacağı için mecbursa, insan da yalnız yaşayamaz. Dolayısıyla doğal olarak bir arkadaş çevresi istiyor ve bizim de belli bir fikrimiz olduğu için, geldik böyle bir çevreye bakıyoruz, doğal olarak bu tür arkadaşların bir arada olduğunu görünce, zaten onlarla samimiyet artınca biz de hatırladığım kadarıyla öyle var olan bir arkadaş grubunun içine katılıyorsunuz. Sonra yıllar geçtikçe zaten samimiyetiniz artıyor, iş ilişkisi de var, devam ediyor ve bir de oranın doğal üyesi oluyorsunuz.

76. Ali

Karışık. Mesela diyelim dört beş kişiyle, aynı arkadaş grubuyla başlıyor, sonra ben başka arkadaş gruplarından dahil ediyorum. Onlar başka arkadaş davet ettiğinde grup çeşitleniyor. Belli bir zaman sonra grup değişebiliyor ama çekirdek kalıyor.

77. Mahmut

Ya bizim genelde aynı olur. Yani ilave olur yeni gelen olur, ayrılan olur, tayini çıkan olur. Daha önce hiç gelmeyip de kendi aramızda dostluk ve arkadaşlığı seven ve örnek alan insanlar gelmek isterler, onlar gelir. Ama belli bir meslek ve belli bir yaş olunca genelde aynı tür insanlarla aynı tip insanlarla görüşüyoruz.

78. Yusuf

Sirkülasyon tabi ki ister istemez oluyor, arkadaşların zaman zaman farklı meşguliyetleri çıkıyor. Veya bizim grubun içerisinde yine başka bir sohbe gitmek istiyor, günü denk gelmiyor. Bazen tabi işte insan, herkes aynı şeyi düşünmek veya aynı ortamda bulunmak istemeyebiliyor. Geliyor, bir müddet sonra farklı mazeretlerden ayrılabilir da bu en doğal şey yani burada hiç kimseden emri vaki olan bir şey değil çünkü bu bir gönül meselesi yani rıza olmadığı müddetçe, kendi isteğiyle bu işi takip etmediği müddetçe de kimseye ısrar edemiyorsunuz. Arkadaşınız gelmek istiyorsa, uzun süredir devam eden de pek çok arkadaşımız var bizim.

79. Muhammed

Değişti yıllar içerisinde. Yıllar içerisinde katılan arkadaşlarla gelişti hatta ikiye ayrıldı, sonra yeni grup yine gelişti. Şu anda bizim grubumuzda 25 arkadaş var ama tabi toplandığımızda bir 15-16 kişi, buluyoruz bazen 20 kişiyi. Ama genelde yaklaşık 12-13 kişi devam ediyor.

80. Cihangir

Her iki üç yılda bir farklı insanlarla beraber oluyoruz. Bu da aslında insan, farklı farklı fitratlarda, farklı eğitim durumlarında insanlarla tanışmaya vesile oluyor. Bu insanın dağarcığını, ufkunu da geliştiren bir o manada özelliği var değişik meslek gruplarında yani genelde sanayici ya da serbest meslek erbabı oluyor ama en azından farklı farklı iş kulvarından oluyor, değişik bir şey oluyor. O manada networkunu insanın geliştiriyor yani.

81. Murat

Bizde biraz öyle oldu, aslında işin raconu pek öyle değil. Bu oturma oturmayı doğurması lazım yani biz bir sefer bölündük. Çok da verim alamayınca biz ikinci bölünmeyi gerçekleştiremedik yani cesaret edemedik.

82. Ali

Yani genellikle tabi ya imam hatip kökenli olması lazım veya dini tedrisat almış olması lazım. Daha da tercih ediyorsanız ilahiyat mezunu olması lazım, tabi dini literatüre daha vakıf olan insanların olması daha uygun. Sohbette oturduğu zaman işte ayettir, mealdir, hadistir, diğer dini bilgilerle alakalı birtakım kitaplardır; bunları açıklaması yani okuduktan sonra izahı, iknası velhasıl tabi bu tür talep ediyoruz anlatımı iyi olan arkadaşları.

83. Selahattin

Sohbeti bizim o anda bölgede hangi hocamız, işte biraz mürekkep yalamışsa, sohbeti o yapıyor. Biz de katılıyoruz yani. Sohbet yani öyle illa şey değil yani soru cevap şeklinde, biz de soru soruyoruz. Biz de kafamızdaki sorulara cevap istiyoruz. Sohbeti herkes yapabilir yani.

84. Cengiz

Ben işin başında dedim ya on sekiz yaşındaki bir çocuğa, gidip bu abilerle beraber olacaksınız, onlara sohbet edeceksiniz diyorlarsa, o bizim hem çocuğumuzdur, hem evladımızdır, her haliyle biz ona itaat ederiz. O yanlış bir şey yapıyorsa şöyle şöyle yap deriz, bilmediklerini yani bizim bulunduğumuz mekan bir üniversite mekanıdır. Buradan mezun olanlar dünyanın bir ucuna giderler, bütün eziyetleri, zahmetleri, işkenceleri çekerler. Allah rızası için yaparlar bunu, hiç de gocunmazlar. Hiç de bundan dolayı yakınmazlar, böyle bir şey olmaz. Niye? Böyle terbiye alıyorlar. Geçmişte, Osmanlı terbiyesinde bu vardı.

85. Yusuf

Genelde Hizmet hareketinin yetiştirdiği arkadaşlarımız işte. Birçoğu üniversite mezunu, üniversiteyi bitirmiş arkadaşlarımız. Kendilerini tabi belki ortaokulda, lisede yetiştirmeye başlamış işte belli eserleri okumuş, belli kitaplarla kendilerini

tabiri caizse geliřtirmiş, belli sohbetleri dinleyerek kendini geliřtirmiş insanlar ki tabi bizim temel meselelerin dıřında, temel İslami meselelerin dıřında iřte sahabe hayatını en çok ben bu Hizmette önem verildiğini gördüm. Yani adab-ı muařereti bu Hizmetteki arkadaşlarımızın bizzat yaşayarak yani anlatmayla, sohbetle, dersle deęil özellikle o bahsettiğiniz hoca arkadaşlarımızın yani onların yaşantısından gördüm. Nasıl oturulur, nasıl kalkılır iřte kimlerle nasıl bir muhabbet edilir yani tabiri caizse yani bir konuřma adabı bile ki bunlar çok önemli, yani insan bir araya geldiğinde başınızda bir disiplin olmazsa yani bu samimiyetler ilerledikçe yani konuřma adabınız bile deęiřebiliyor. Ama bizim bu sohbetlerde başladığınız günde, beř sene olmuş bugün mesela o arkadaşlarımıza aynı tarzda hitap edebiliyoruz yani. Bu da çok enteresandır. Yani bir insanla siz bir müddet samimi olduktan sonra yani muhabbet şekliniz deęiřir, ifadeniz deęiřir, hareketleriniz deęiřir, el hareketleriniz bile deęiřir. Ama biz burada bakıyoruz, beř senedir oturduğumuz arkadaşla hala iřte adı Ahmetse Ahmet Bey, Mehmet Bey; samimi de olmuşum ama bu da bir demek ki yani bu iřin sisteminde olan bir kültür, bir ahlak bizleri bu şekilde geliřtirdiğini düşünüyorum.

86. Nedim

Sohbetleri genelde böyle hizmet müesseselerinde kalan, İlahiyat fakültesinde okuyan veya o yetmiyorsa eęer, hizmet müessesinde kalan ve okuyan biri olabilir. Mesela üniversite üçe giden, benim evladım yaşında, veya üniversiteyi bitirmiş insanlar bize sohbet ediyor. Ben hiç ondan gocunmuyorum. Çünkü o olgunlukta pırıl pırıl çocuklar. Bir zaman sonra bakıyoruz ki Afrika'ya gitmiş, bakıyoruz Pakistan'a gitmiş. Orada gönüllü olarak hizmet ediyor. Çok iyi arkadaşlar. Allah hepsinden razı olsun.

87. Muhammed

Tabi bu her zaman aynı kiři olmadı řimdiye kadar arkadaşlar yıllar içerisinde yeni görevler aldığı için gerek řehir içinde veya řehir dıřında hatta yerine göre yurt dıřına gidenler de oldu. Üniversite mezunu olup burada iřte öğrencilerin başında kendisini, zamanını vakfetmiş arkadaşlardır. Bu arkadaşların da hep dięer görev ve sorumluluklar icra ederken, burs döneminde ve kurban döneminde olduğu gibi birlikte olduğumuz gibi akřam sohbetinde de beraber oluyoruz. Onda sonra kimisi bunun iřletme mezunu, kimisi mühendislik mezunu. Bizim mesela hiç bugüne kadar ilahiyat mezunu sohbet yapan arkadaşımız olmadı. Ama imam hatip mezunu olan arkadaşımız oldu. Fakat insanlar tabi kendilerini dini manada da geliřtirdikleri için akřamları bir konuya hazırlanıp geliyorlar ve fevkalade sohbet yapabiliyorlar.

88. İsmail

Bunları iřte bu Hizmette yani ağabey dediğimiz üniversiteyi bitirip, üniversitede de öğrencileri yetiřtirmekle bir şekilde meřgul olup, ondan sonra kendisini bu iře adanmış kişiler tarafından yapılır. Bunların hepsi ilahiyatçı deęil, her bölümden insanlar. Bir şekilde kendini iřte üniversite zamanında geliřtirdikten sonra bu şekilde hem orada dini bilgiler anlatırlar. Kuran bilmeyen varsa bunları öğretmeye çalışırlar,

hadisle ilgili bilgiler olur, ilmihalle ilgili bilgiler, genel güncelle ilgili, İslamiyetle ilgili bilgiler. Orada dediğim gibi hani biz ona ders diyoruz, onlar şarj etmeye biz şarj olmaya çalışırız. İşte bu da bir hafta gider gitmez. Bir hafta sonra tekrar...

89. Cihangir

Yani bunlar genelde işte belli bir eğitim durumları, üniversite mezunu. Yani üniversite mezunu olmayan bir abi bugüne kadar ben görmedim. Kimi zaman mühendis, kimi zaman bir tarihçi, bu da aynı katılımcı gibi, seminer diyelim buna artık veya panelist mi dersiniz, onun da değişmesi yani mesela anlatılan hakikat aynı ama birisi daha bir analitik düşünme yeteneğine sahip matematikçi veya mühendis olayı farklı yönünden yakalıyor, daha akılcı bir yerden anlatıyor. Mesela bir tarihçi daha farklı, sosyolojik bir bakış açısıyla anlatıyor. Onun da öyle bir artışı oluyor. İşte bunlar Hizmetin değişik dershanesinden, kurumlarından vesairesinden yetişmiş üniversite mezunu. Kimi zaman yeni bir mezun, kimi zaman yıllarca bu işin içerisinde çalışmış, değişik yurtdışı görevlerinde bulunmuş yaşça bizden büyük insanlar olabiliyor, böyle.

90. Mahmut

Valla sohbet abisi tabiri aslında yanlış yani nasıl yanlış? Yani insanın temel bazda dini bilgileri olması gerekiyor, ama maalesef bizim kültürümüzde o bilgilerle donanımlı yetişemiyoruz. Yetişemeyince bu bilgileri aksettirecek veya sorulacak sorulara cevap verecek insanlar arıyorsunuz. Bunun adı da sohbet abisi oluyorsa sohbet abisi diyelim. Bu bir süreç zaten... İnsanlar böyle bir ortamda olduğu zaman dini bilgide de bazı şeyleri öğrenmek istiyor ve sormak istiyor. Dolayısıyla o donanımdaki insanlarla da görüşmek istiyor. Bunu yani nasıl seçiyoruz? Böyle bir seçme hakkımız yok aslında, toplum nezdinde kabul görmüş, Hizmet camiası içinde tanışılmış herhangi bir vesileyle, dini yönde veya bilgi yönünde iyi olduğunu düşündüğümüz insanlara teklif ediyoruz. Bizim böyle böyle bir grubumuz var, oturma grubumuz. Bize zaman ayırıp gelebilir misiniz, bazen sorular sormak istiyoruz. Mesela mesleki olarak soru sormak istiyoruz, bıçak parası helal midir, alınabilir mi? Kürtaj tıbbi olarak helal midir? Mesela sorulardan bazıları, finans kurumlarıyla bankaların farkı nedir?

91. Murat

Genelde işte üniversite mezunu abilerimiz. Ya sosyal bilgi seviyesi gruba yakın olması, oluyor zaten öyle abilerimiz. Geliyorlar, sağ olsunlar dini bilgilerde kendilerini yetiştirmiş insanlar. Bu konularda sohbet edebilecek, bizim sorularımızı cevaplayabilecek kabiliyette insanlar. Bir güzel istişare ortamları oluyor, samimi ortamlar oluyor yani normal din öğretisi hani cami gibi veya daha ağır tekke, zaviye tarzı yerlerde hani böyle sorunu pat diye soramazsın. Buradaki ortamlar çok daha samimi ortamlar yani adam takıldığı zamanda pat diye oradan sorusunu soruyor, orada istişaresi yapıyor, yani karşılıklı fikirler, farklı duyular yani ben şöyle de duymuştum, böyle de duymuştum, şöyle mi olur böyle mi olur gibi yani güzel tartışma ortamları oluyor.

92. Zeki

Sohbetleri bizim Salı ve Çarşamba'da tabii ki vazifeli arkadaşımız yapıyor. Bu zaman zaman farklı bir ortama katıldıysak oraya gelene o günkü kimse o yapıyor, çok farklı kişiler yapmıyor. Genelde aynı kişi yapıyor. Ama dediğim gibi toplu program dediğimiz diğer sohbet gruplarının da olduğu gruplarda farklı kişiler sohbet ediyor.

93. Mehmet

Değiştiği oluyor tabii, yani şöyle burası istikrarlı bir yer ne hikmetse, genelde bir hocanın hizmet alanı 1.5-2 sene gibi sürüyor ama biz burda 4.5 sene 5 sene ve 4 sene 3 tane hocamızla bu kadar zaman geçirdik. Genelde 2 senede bir hocalarımız değişiyor ama hocalarımızın biri 4.5 biri 4 biri 5 sene kaldı burada.

94. Ali

Genellikle buluyorum ama şu manada belki yeterli yetersiz demeyeyim de gelen gruba yönelik aktif yani o gruba hitap edebilecek tarzda bazen denk gelmeyebiliyor. Yani çağırdığımız grupta tamamen işte az önce bahsettiğim gibi sıfır bir grupsa, çağırdığımız hocamız biraz daha üst düzeyden ders yapabiliyor, verimli olmayabilir. Veya gelenler daha bilgilere haiz, biraz daha üst düzeyden bir şeyler bekliyor, gelen daha alt gruba ders yapıyorsa o zaman da verimli olmayabilir. Burada zannediyorum dersi organize edecek olan yani davet edecek olan kişinin bilgilendirmesi önemli, çünkü gelen kişilerin profilini söylemesi lazım ve hocanın da ona göre bir hazırlık yapması lazım. Yani çünkü nereye hitap edecek, kime hitap edecek, siz işte akademisyensiniz gideceksiniz liseye mi ders vereceksiniz, ilkokula mı ders vereceksiniz, üniversiteye akademik derse mi gireceksiniz ona göre hazırlık yaparsınız. Kime ne vereceksiniz, ihtiyaç ne, o ihtiyacın belirlenmesi lazım. O ihtiyaç belirlendiğinde ki burada da dediğim gibi derse davet eden kişi, hocanın iyi bir organize yapması lazım, gelenleri bilgilendirecek ki ona göre de hocanın o seviyede bir ders yapması lazım ki verimli olsun.

95. Zeki

İlahiyat mezunu arkadaşlar çok donanımlı oluyor. İlahiyat mezunu arkadaşlar geldiğinde zaten işin rengi değişiyor. Çünkü sohbeti çok bilinçli yapıyor. Namaz kıldırıldığında, sorun yaşamıyorsunuz. Biraz önce de bahsettim ya hocam, ben Kuranı Kerim'i biraz şeyimiz var hani, okuma anlamında yatkınlığımız diyeyim. O anlamda eğitimini de aldık. Dedem rahmetli hafızdı, belki genlerde mi var diyelim. Sesimiz de yani söyleyenler güzel diyor hocam, ikisi bir şey olunca, ondan da tabii bi şeyim var. Namaz kıldırın hocalarda haliyle bir algıda seçicilik oluyor hemen bir alıcılar kitleniyor, eğer kıldırın arkadaşın o donanımı yetersizse bir rahatsız oluyorsunuz. Bu anlamda namaz kıldırılmalarda sorun yaşıyoruz eğer arkadaş ilahiyat mezunu değilse. Ve maalesef şöyle bir sorun var hocam, bu anlamda kendini arkadaşların yetiştirilmesi, belki orada bir eksiklik var. Neden, ya şöyle bir elemtereden aşağısı, sureler şöyle bir bilen birinin dizinin dibine oturup eğitimi alınsa arkadaşlar da bize

namazda onlardan kıldırırsa. Yani bir Yasin'den Duha'dan değil de, çünkü daha o halledilmemişken. O olunca tabii zaman zaman şu da oluyor. Toplu programlarımız oluyor, oraya dışarıdan gelen insanlar oluyor. İşte sizin hoca diye taltif ettiğiniz arkadaş geçip namaz kıldırıldığında, o gelen de biraz anlıyorsa ya bu okuyuşta sıkıntı var nasıl hoca diyor yani. O da bakış açısı biraz sıkıntı oluyor bir bu. İkincisi de fihhi konularda sohbet gruplarında sorular geliyor. Sorular geldiğinde arkadaşın donanımı yeterli olmadığı için, o konuyla alakalı söylediği eksik kalıyor. Ya bilgisi yok, ya eksik kalıyor. Ya da maalesef yorumu girdiğinde o yorum fetva gibi algılanıyor. Ben o yüzden de hoca arkadaşlarla istişare ederken, hocam fihhi konularda kesin emin değilseniz. Lütfen yoruma girmeyin, bunda ayıp bir şey yok, bir bakalım. Öyle konuşalım demek de, çünkü sizin söylediğinizi fetva olarak algılıyorlar ve o şekilde uygulamasını yapıyorlar sıkıntı oluyor. Bu anlamda ilahiyat mezunu arkadaşlar donanımlı oluyor ve biz çok rahat ediyoruz. Diğer arkadaşlar da tabii, ilahiyat mezunu olmayan çok arkadaşımız oldu, bunlar da kendilerini yetiştirmelerine göre o heyette istifadeli oluyorlar. Samimiyetleri tabii bir çok açığı kapatıyor. Arkadaşlarımız hakikatten çok samimi, samimiyet ihlas olunca hocam bir çok şeyi kapatıyor. Ancak donanım açısından ilahiyat mezunlarının rengi çok farklı oluyor.

96. Emin

Yeterli derken herkesin kendi bilgi birikimi var. Herkesin birikimi farklı şu anda mesela şu anda gelen hocamız son derece yeterli bilgi seviyesi bilmem ne bizden fersah fersah yukarıda bir insan hani soru sorup da size açıklayamayacağı bir şey yoktur öyle bakarız biz.

97. Cihangir

Açıkçası yani çok büyük bir çoğunluğunu yeterli bulurum. Çünkü derslere, ders diyelim bunlara, hazırlanıp geliyorlar, konunun detaylı araştırmaları, hedeflere yönelik. İşte az önce dediğimiz kamil insan oluşmasına yönelik işte iyiliği emret, kötülükten menet, bu düşünceye uygun dersler, ayet hadis kaynaklarından beslenip geliyor sohbete, denli insanlar tabii dediğim gibi fitratlar kimi zaman farklı olunca daha kendinizi yakın hissettiğiniz, onun dersinden daha fazla verim aldığınızı diğerlerine göre insanlar da olabiliyor yani.

98. Mahmut

İnsanlar böyle bir ortamda olduğu zaman dini bilgide de bazı şeyleri öğrenmek istiyor ve sormak istiyor. Dolayısıyla o donanımdaki insanlarla da görüşmek istiyor. Bunu yani nasıl seçiyoruz? Böyle bir seçme hakkımız yok aslında, toplum nezdinde kabul görmüş, Hizmet camiası içinde tanışılmış herhangi bir vesileyle, dini yönde veya bilgi yönünde iyi olduğunu düşündüğümüz insanlara teklif ediyoruz.

99. Yusuf

Tabii hiç kimse yeterli değildir yani baktığınız zaman özünde ama bana ve arkadaşlarıma gayet yettiklerini düşünüyorum. Yani arkadaşlar gerçekten kendilerini

yetiřtiriyorlar. Ve bilmedikleri bir konuyu bilmediklerini aleni olarak söylüyorlar. Hemen akabindeki hafta veya müteakiben ilk günlerde, belki de bizzat yani orada o arkadaşımız bizim sorduğumuz soruya bir cevap veremiyorsa, akabinde eğer o bireysel bir soruysa hemen iş yerimizi ziyaret ediyorlar. Diyorlar ki abi bak o günkü sizin kafanıza takılan meselenin cevabı şuymuş, buldum diyorlar. Yani böyle fikir teatisinde de buluyoruz. Sohbetler sadece tek düze geçmiyor. Arkadaşlarımız okuyor biz dinliyoruz şeklinde de değil, sohbetin bir bölümünden sonra soru cevap şeklinde de geçebiliyor. Veya biz de bir yorumumuzu arkadaşımıza katabiliyoruz. Ama bireysel bir çıkamaz olduğu zaman yani cevap veremediği zaman da bizzat o arkadaşımız kendi hemen tabiri caizse araştırıyor, sorguluyor, bize cevabını verebiliyor ki bu da yeterli demektir bu arkadaşlarımız.

100. Murat

Arkadaşların yeterli olmadığı noktalarda direk dökümanla yani referansla geliyorlar, kitaptan konuşuyorlar demek lazım yani. O bakımdan iyi oluyor yani yeterli insanlar yani gayet yeterli insanlar. Bizden en azından daha fazla iyiler

101. Hakan

Sohbet hocaları olsun, sohbet abilerimiz şöyle tabi bir din hocası olarak yeterli değiller çünkü yaşları çok genç. Öyle dini konularda tam dört dörtlük yetişmiş, donanımlı birileri değiller ama her zaman sorulara açık, anında cevap veremese bile bir sonraki haftaya hazırlanıp gelip cevap verebilen; dini olarak, dini yaşama olarak kendisine düstur edinmiş abilerdir.

102. İsmail

Genelde yeterli bulurum. Bunların içinde genç olanı da oldu; tecrübeli, yaşlı olanı da oldu. Ama hiçbir zaman şey olmadı bilgileri, kendilerini sürekli geliştirirler ama bi hani bilmedikleri bir durumda da abi ben onu araştırayım, şey yapayım o konuyla ilgili, haftaya ben size cevap vereyim. Hiçbir zaman ben her şeyi bilirim, yaparım, şöyledir, böyledir bir durum olmadı.

103. Nedim

Bu arkadaşları yeterli buluyor musunuz derken şöyle söyleyeyim. Yani 22, 23, 24 bazen 25 yaşında yani çocuk denecek yaşta insanlar karşınıza çıkıp sohbet yapıyorsa onu yeterli bulmamak safdillilik olur, öyle bir şey olmaz. Öyle biri çıkıp senin karşına, cesaret edip sohbet ediyorsa ona destek olmamız lazım... Onun eksikleri de olsa onu görmezden geleceğiz. Onlar çünkü eğer o evinde çalıştıysa gelmeden, zaten seni uyutmuyor, canla başla dinliyorsun. Çalışmadan geldiyse okuyor ve de kısa kesiyor. Onu da dinliyorsun, bir şeyler alıyorsun. Önemli olan oradan bir şeyler alabilmek.

104. Muhammed

Yeterli manası şöyle kimisi ilk defa başlıyordur belki işte acemilik dönemi oluyor. Kimisi de yıllar içerisinde gerçekten çok ciddi süreçler yaşamış, kendini yetiştirmiş insanlar oluyor. Ama her gelen insanın farklı bir stili, farklı bir tarzı olduğu için belki aynı konuyu farklı insanlardan dinliyor da olsak farklı şeyler öğrenme, farklı şeyleri kendine özümseme, kabul ettirme durumu oluyor.

105. Ahmet

Şöyle tam yeterli değiliz yani kendimde dahil. Eksik taraflarımız çok işte kendimizi yenilememiz gerekiyor çünkü belli bir zaman sonra esnaf abilerimiz arasında çok okuyan ve gündemi takip eden işte hocamızın kitaplarını işte diğer sohbetleri takip eden abilerimiz var. O yüzden bizim de kendimizi yenilememiz gerekiyor. Çok okumamız, okuma yönüyle eksik kaldığımız taraflar var. Sohbetlerde asıl şey şu: yani eksik olabilir bilgi eksikliğiniz olabilir ama sohbet öncesi şöyle bir iki saat zihnen hazırsanız sohbet bereketli geçiyor.

106. Mustafa

Hoca arkadaşlarımızla her hafta ne sohbet edileceğinin zümresini yapıyoruz. Yani bunun için de bir şey oluyor takip edilecek kaynaklar noktasında hem de orda bu konuda yetkin kişiler anlatıyorlar gelebilecek sorulara karşı hem öğrenmek maksadıyla hem ilmihal bilgilerindeki değişik şeyler, söylenenlerin daha net olması için on kişi yirmi kişi farklı bakış açılarıyla düşünce tarzlarıyla meseleyi irdeliyor. Sohbet yapacak kişi o sohbeti pişirmiş bir şekilde sohbe gidiyor.

107. Ali

Başlangıçta evet sohbet hocası sohbeti yönetir. Ama böyle biraz karışık, herkesin bir söz söylediği bir sohbet ortamı değil. Neticede hani işin verimli olması açısından bir konu seçiyor hoca yani gündem de olabilir bu. Belki gündem dediğim Ramazan varsa Ramazan'la ilgili, Kurban varsa Kurban'la ilgili veya işte sosyal ortamda bir gündem varsa tartışılan onla ilgili. Dolayısıyla bunu bir önce on beş yirmi dakika bir sunum şeklinde değerlendirmek daha verimli olacağından dolayı önce bir hoca bunu anlatsın, daha sonra sorular varsa doğal sohbet ortamına giriliyor. Ama bir şöyle düzen var, yani konu şudur, başlangıcı var ayet, hadis ve diyelim diğerleri. O sunum bittikten sonra diğer karışık ortama geçiliyor yani çünkü sohbet halkasının içinden hakikaten öğrenme adına veya yorum adına sorular olduğu gibi bazıları da fikren kendi hani bildiklerini de aktarabiliyor. Bu şeye dönüşüyor doğal olarak zaten serbest ortama dönüşüyor

108. Nedim

Derslerde zaten beyefendi çok kibar çocuklar... Onlar sohbet ediyorlar, ara sıra bizlere söz hakkı veriyorlar. Abi bu konuda ne düşünüyorsunuz? Bazıları çok uyanık oluyor çocukların. Mesela uyuklama falan olduğunda araya bir şaka

koyuyorlar. Ondan sonra anlamadığımı tekrar ettiriyorlar, soru soruyorlar bazıları. Her sene değişik arkadaşlar oluyor. Her zaman aynı kişi olmuyor. Üniversiteyi bitiriyor, gidiyor. Gittikten sonra başka bir arkadaş, arıyoruz rica ediyoruz buluyoruz bazen. Diyoruz ki sohbet hocanız var mı abiler? Herkesin de bir işi gücü var. O zaman yaşı falan önemli değil. Biri geliyor. Güzelce sohbet ediyor. Pırlanta gibi arkadaşlar.

109. Cihangir

Tabii orada katılan insanların eğitimleri veya o konuya olan ilgi alakaları dersin daha farklı, daha güzel geçmesini sağlayabiliyor. Derse katılım, herkes yorum paylaşabilir, sorusu olanlar merak ettiği konularla ilgili sorular sorabilirler. Yani belli bir kısmı evet ders şeklinde direk dinleme ama belli bir işte çay meyve şu bu ikramları esnasında da genel sohbet yani katılımcı bir şekilde geçebiliyor.

110. İhsan

Tabii yani o anlatırken ya da bir şey dinletirken bir süre dinlemek lazım ama ondan sonra zaten fazla monolog haline dönüştürmeden bir diyalog da geliyor. Bazen konu başka taraflara gidebiliyor ama o da hocanın marifeti. Merkezden çok saptırmadan bir diyalog bir şey geliyor yani.

111. Muhammed

Orada bir özeleştiri yapmak lazım, o konuda çok da monolog olduğu zamanlar oluyor. Daha interaktif olsun diye denemelerimiz oldu, interaktif yapmaya çalıştığımızda kişilerin de bu işe iştiraki, katılımı önemli. Ya mesela bir konuyu kitap çevirerek okuduğumuz zamanlar da oldu, aslında seçim yapmak gerekirse ben daha çok interaktif taraftayım. Ama tabii bazı arkadaşların tercihi monolog yapmak oluyor, bir yarım saat tek başına konuyu alıyor, irdeliyor, daha sonra soru-cevap şekliyle interaktif şeye geçiyor, bu da bir metot. Ama konu ilerledikçe karşılıklı görüş alışverişleri işi biraz daha zinde tutar diye düşünüyorum. Ki günümüzün de aslında çok tavsiye ettiği metot meseleleri irdelerek, kişilerin görüşlerini ortaya koyarak ders yapılması. Tabii bu konuda biraz söz dinlememezlik yapıyoruz yani.

112. Mahmut

Şöyle söyleyeyim aslında bizim arzu ettiğimiz biraz monolog olması. Yani bir özellikle hani bir gündem takip edilmesi, mesela hadisse konumuz hadisler okunsun sırayla her türlü veya Kuran-ı Kerim'den meal okunacaksa Kuran-ı Kerim'den meal okunsun veya Hocaefendinin kitabı okunacaksa belli bir kitap okunsun veya Risale okunacaksa oradan bir konu bitirilsin gibi. Düzenli olmasını isteriz. Ama güncel hayat, gelen kişinin o anki durumu, gelen insanların bir hafta içerisinde kafasına takılan birikmiş notları, çok böyle düzenli bir program olmuyor. Dolayısıyla monolog olmuyor, daha çok diyalog şeklinde oluyor, soru cevap şeklinde oluyor.

113. Cengiz

Şimdi gelen hocamız en azından bir ders yapar, maneviyatımız yükselir. Allah adına bir kitap okur, tabi kitaplar ne? Üstad hazretlerinden ya da diğer kitaplardan işte nasıl söyleyeyim faydalı olan her şey okunur. Biz de orada alacağımızı alırız. Yani ora bir şey değil ki, cenaze evi değil ki, sohbet olmasa, arkadaşlara kitap okunmazsa, bir şey paylaşılmazsa orada bulunmamızın bir manası yok ki.

114. Ahmet

Önce 40 dakika sohbetimizi biz yapıyoruz. Ondan sonraki sohbetimiz biraz daha karşılıklı muhabbet soru-cevap şeklinde. Gündemi de konuşuyoruz. Yine abilerin sorularına cevap verme. İlmihal bilgileri gelebiliyor onlarla alakalı ve anlattığımız meselelerle alakalı abilerin eğer zihinlerine takılmış sorular varsa soru sorarak onların o sorularına cevap şeklinde geçiyor. İlk sohbette eğer bazen abilerin soru sormasına müsaade etmeyelim ki bizim konsantrasyonumuz bozulmasın. Ondan sonraki kısım aslında abilerin katıldığı kısım, abilerin çok hoşlandığı kısım. Yani soru sorup katıldıkları kendilerinin de birşeyler anlattığı başından geçen bir hadiseyi anlatıyor. Bir hocadan başka bir şey dinlemiş onu paylaşıyor. O aslında biraz daha verimli oluyor diğer katılımcılar için, yaşanmış hadisleri birebir anlatması. Diğer insanlar üzerinde daha etkili oluyor.

115. Mustafa

Sorular alınmaya başladıkça zaten daha önceden sohbete gelen abilerimiz sohbete yeni gelenlerin soramayacağı, utanacağı, ya işte bunu da bilmiyormuş demesinler diyebileceği şeyler de kendisi bilse de belki onu tekrardan sorar yani. Monolog şeklinde değil, yani orda çok aykırı sorular da gelir. Zaten o sohbette muhabbet ortamında biraz önce söylediğim gibi nefse de şeytana da söz hakkı tanındığından dolayı bu aynı zamanda Kuranın da usulüdür.

116. Ali

Yani bir saat bir buçuk saat arası, biraz ikram da var bu işin içinde. En önemli kısımlarından biri de o, yani insanlara hani böyle bir sadece çayla değil, bunu biraz da cazip getirme adına mesela ilk defa davet edeceğiniz bir insana mesela bir mahlube koyduğunuzda çok kapıları açıyor bu. Yani mahlubeyi hiç bilmeyen insanların belki evinde çok işte tek, münferit böyle ailesi içinde de yemek yediği bir ortamda siz yere tepsinin içine böyle tencereyi ters çevirerek, halka halinde böyle diz kurarak yerde, çalakaşık böyle bir mahlube yedirdiğiniz zaman ilk başta yadırgayanlar da olabiliyor. Ama ondan sonra onu günlerce anlata anlata bitiremiyor insanlar. Yani bu bir farklılık, hoş çünkü orada ortak bir şey var. İşte bu bazen çiğ köfte olabiliyor, dolayısıyla bu da işi renklendiriyor aslında burada ikram da var. Sohbet bu süre içerisinde bir yarım saati de alıyor bu ikram kısmı, o da onun cazibesi aslında. Çünkü mideden geçiyor bu iş biraz.

117. Mehmet

Yok 45 dk o sigara molası olduğu zamandı. Şimdi sohbet başlıyor, eğer namaz molası olmuyorsa bizim, mesela mevsim itibarıyla kışa girdik Cuma günü şöyle dedik, namazdan önce bir seans yapalım namazı kılalım devam edelim. Öyle bir sıkıntı yoksa eğer namazı kılmışsak saat bir saat ileri alınmadan önce namazı kılıyor başlıyorduk 1.5 saat duruma göre 2 saat sürdüğü oluyordu. 1.5 saatten kısa sürmüyor.

118. Yusuf

Şimdi yani bizim ilk oturduğumuzla kalktığımız yaklaşık mevsimine göre iki ile üç saat arasında sürüyor ama bunun toplamında kırk dakika, altmış dakika arasında yani bazen iki sohbet yapıyor arkadaşlarımız. O işte birlikte paylaştığımız kısım belki yirmi dakika, otuz dakika sürüyor. Tek başına anlattığı da yirmi otuz dakika sürebiliyor, böyle kırk ile altmış dakika arasında işin sohbet kısmı. Ondan sonra dediğim gibi ticari muhabbetler, farklı sohbetler, kendi aramızda görüşmeler, yeme içme yani o da iki saati üç saati alabiliyor.

119. Murat

Yani genelde iki buçuk üç saatlik bir zaman dilimini ayırıyoruz. Mesela şöyle sekiz buçuk dokuz gibi buluştuk mu on ikiye falan da dağılıyoruz genelde. Yani bunun hepsi sohbet değil, bir saatlik kısmı sohbet. Öbür tarafta çaydı, sohbeti falan filan.

120. Cengiz

Şartlara bağlı, ihtiyaca bağlı, sıkıntıya bağlı. İhtiyaç var ise, talebenin ihtiyacı varsa, yurdun ihtiyacı varsa, yuvanın ihtiyacı varsa yani ihtiyaca bağlı. Bir saat de sürer, beş saat de sürer yerine göre yatarız da o ihtiyacı gidermek için.

121. Mahmut

Yaklaşık bir saat civarında bu sohbet kısmı sürüyor. Ama onun öncesinde ve sonrasında bazı arkadaşlarımızda yemekli oluyor, bazı arkadaşlarımızda çığ köfteli oluyor, bizim mesleki sohbetlerimiz uzun sürüyor. Aile dostu gibiyiz artık yani on beş yirmi yıldır az çok görüştüğümüz insanlar olduğu için.

122. Ali

Şimdi ders grubu düzenli oluşmuşsa o zaman müfredat oluyor. Yani aynı grupsa bu bir mesela strateji belirleniyor deniyor ki işte ayetlerden başlanacaksa bir ayet sırasıyla gidilebiliyor mesela tefsir, meal sırasıyla gidilebiliyor, peşinden bir hadis ilave edilebiliyor ya da bir imani konuya sırayla o insanların artık ders gibi öğrenene öğrenene devam ettiği bir yine şey olabiliyor. Ama farklı farklı gruplar olduğunda, dersler biraz çeşitlendiğinde o zaman da o sıra değil de gündem biraz

öne geçiyor. Bu sefer gündemdeki konular işlenebiliyor, yani o şekilde devam ediyor.

123. Zeki

Yok o hocanın o gün geçireceği konu olur ama genelde format şu olur, bahis açılır mesela gıybet denir namaz bahsi denebilir iman ile alakalı bir konu olur. Bi bahis açılır Hocaefendi'nin eserlerinden olabilir, risaleden yapabiliyor arkadaşlar. Böyle bir hadisi şerifle bir bağlama oluyor. Biz de genelde bunu talep ediyoruz. Sohbet gurubundan yani, bu biraz bizim talebimizle şekilleniyor. Ama bu mütevelli ekibi bizden değil, mütevelli ekibi tamamen hocanın tasarrufu ile gerçekleşiyor.

124. Mehmet

Mesela bizim burada Cuma sohbetinde ve bir çok sohbette öyle, Kuran takip ediyoruz. Başladık, Fatıha'dan başladık mealini okuya okuya, orijinalini ve mealini okuyarak gidiyoruz. İyi okuyan bir arkadaşımız veya bazı hocalarımız geliyor herkese bir iki ayet okutuyor o şekilde okutarak dolanıyor sonra sırayla onun meallerini okuyoruz. O meal üzerine hocam da açıklama yapıyor biz katkıda bulunuyoruz, yani katkıda bazen diyoruz ki hocam mesela ne yapıyor. O mealin altında, özellikle Suat Yıldırım hocam enfes bir meali var, bazı kırmızı yazılar var aynı ayete işaret eden başka ayetlere de atıfta bulunuyor. Biri merak ediyor hemen o ayeti açıyor bakıyor, açıyor ki onun da orada geniş bir açıklaması var.

125. Emin

Yiyecek şeyler bunları paketleyip oraya götürüyoruz. Çayla birlikte onlar geliyor, bunları yerken konuşuyorsunuz sağdan soldan ne oldu ne bitti işte kimi altın piyasasından laf açıyor diyelim, o konuda bir bilgi sahibi oluyorsunuz, kimi döviz piyasasından bahsediyor işte kurlar şöyle oldu şunu şöyle erteledik. Bizim segmentte yani bizim iş tarafında işler durdu yok açıldı hareket etti, işte ihracatta şöyle güçlendi bilmem ne. Gündelik hayattan insanlar kendi yaşadıkları tecrübeleri masaya yatırıyorlar. İster istemez yani işin aslında çekici taraflarından bir tanesi bu, veya soracağı danışacağı şeyler oluyor uzman olan arkadaşlar oluyor ya ne diyorsun bu konuda şöyle mi davranalım böyle mi davranalım. Bunlar önemli, yani oradan mesela B şehrindeki iş hayatı niye çok güçlüdür, işte nedir bağ evlerinde oturma moturma dediğimi şeyler hep paylaşırlar çünkü orda hatta iş birliktelikleri doğar beraber hareket ederler falan. Bu da benzer bir şey yani insanlar bütün birikimini paylaşıyor orada bir öngörü olmaksızın farklı beklentileri bir şeyi olmaksızın. Bu da önemli ölçüde başarıyı getiren unsurlardan biri.

126. İhsan

Tabii tabii canım, yani Hocaefendi'nin kitapları olur. Zaten Hocaefendi'nin güncel kitapları varsa o şu andaki konjonktüre de uygun, ne diyelim muktezai hale uygundur da. Dolayısıyla ordan okumalar, esasında varsa bir takım günceldeki .. izleyecek mahiyettedir diye düşünürüm. Öyle oluyor çünkü. Diğer yandan tabii şey

var, arkadaşların takip ettiği Risalelerden belli hususlar olabiliyor, belki onların onda gördükleri, belki oturmaya gelenlerden, bir diyelim ki Yasin suresine bir bakalım, Yasin çok okunan bir sure falan. İşte arkadaşın biri hazırlanıp geliyor tabii hoca arkadaş. Derken böyle de bir şeyler olabiliyor, kendine göre bir müfredat da takip edebiliyor. O gün orda belki daha güncel olabilen şeylerin dini ve imani şeylerle ilgili tarafları olan hususlar da gündeme gelir ve gelmeli de zaten. İnsanların kafalarını da bir hafta boyu şu ya da bu şekilde kulaklarında bir şeyler var, zaten belki algıyla da oluşturulan tam ters istikametteki bir takım şeyler de olabiliyor. Şu anda da veya genel olarak da televizyonlarda mesela işin özünden ziyade işin magazin tarafı çok daha fazla konuşuluyor. Onu esas çizgisinde imani Kurani İslami çizgisinde bir şekilde ifadelendirmek gerekiyor.

127. Cihangir

Tabi yani belli bir şey, müfredat çerçevesinde gidiyor işte yani en temel iman hakikatlerinden başlayıp daha farklı, ağır, anlaşılması güç olabilecek benlik üzerine veya kader gibi konulara doğru... Tabi o grubun da istekli ve iştiaklı olması icap ediyor yani bu derslerin yeterince hazır mı ilgili mi. Çünkü neticede teolojik konular üzerinde ciddi kafa yorulması gereken, fikir, düşünmesi gereken konular. O ekibin ne kadar bu daha yoğun dersler, belki ağır tabir edebileceğimiz konulara olan ilgi alakasıyla ilgili belirli bir müfredat, bir disiplin içerisinde gidiyor. İşte Ramazan ayında işte orucun faziletleri veyahut da zekatın ayı olduğu için zekat. Efendim Kuran'la ilgili konular. Kurban geldiği zaman ona uygun dersler.

128. Yusuf

Bizlerin de ortak görüşünü alarak sohbet hocası arkadaşımız o dönemin programını belirliyor aşağı yukarı, ben şunları şunları anlatmak istiyorum diyor. Biz mesela geçen dönemde anlattığı ama çok hoşumuza giden, tekrarının olmasını istediğimiz mesela bir gıybet meselesi ne bileyim bizim her sene birkaç kez işlememiz gereken bir şey, çünkü günlük hayatta o kadar çok isteyerek veya istemeyerek karşılaştığımız meseleler ki. Buna benzer birçok konuyu biz yılda birkaç kez tekrarlatıyoruz arkadaşımıza. Onlar da sabırla, bıkmadan, tekrar tekrar anlatıyorlar. İşte biz temel meselelerimizi güncelliyoruz, yeni katılan arkadaşlarımız da oluyor onlar da istifade etsin diye. Böyle bir müfredat belirliyoruz ki onlarda kendi belirledikleri eserleri okuyorlar, hazmediyorlar. Yaz bizzat okuyorlar ya da okuduklarını bize naklederek devam ediyorlar.

129. Muhammed

Belli bir müfredat işin aslı yok. Belki diğer eksik olan taraflardan bir tanesi de bu. Genelde aslında Eylül ayı gibi bir dönem başı kabul edilerek, bir yılın içerisine belli konular yayılarak yapılabilir. Bu eskilerde böyle oluyordu aslında, bir müfredat mesela diyelim ki Efendimizin hayatı, Siyer-i Nebevi takip ediliyordu. Şimdi biraz daha sohbeti yapan arkadaş kendisi konuyu seçip, gelip onu yapıyor. Konuyu bilmiyoruz aslında işte böyle bir müfredat olsa, insanlar konuyu bilse ama

insanlar da bu konuda da hani çok bir proaktiflik yok. Konuyu bilse gider evde okur da gelir mi? Bir kısım inanlar belki okuyabilir ama herhalde birçoğumuz da sadece oraya geldiğimizde konu hakkında sadece fikir yürütürüz yani. Ama diğer bunun iyi olması, daha güzel olması için yapılacak bir yapıcı eleştiri ise bunun aslında müfredatının olması, insanların kaynak verilerek yani kaynağın da aynı yer okunarak gelip o hafta birlikte, interaktif şekilde konuyu görüşmeleri daha faydalı olur diye düşünüyorum.

130. Ahmet

Müfredat olarak takip ettiğimiz gruplarımız var. İşte nedir iman hakikatlerinden başladığımız. Daha sonra ilmiyal bilgileri, dini bilgileri, namaz ve diğer şeylerle alakalı takip ettiğimiz bir müfredatımız var. Ama tabii bunu her grupta yapamıyoruz. Yani şöyle ağırlıklı hocanın takip metoduna kalmış. Hoca bir yol takip ediyor. O gün işte abilerle gün içi ziyaretlerinde birkaç abiyi ziyarete geliyor. Abiler kendilerine sorular soruyorlar. Hocanın da zihninde ya abilerin ihtiyacı herhâlde bu diyerek o akşam için hazırladığı bir paket şey olabiliyor sohbet grubu.

131. Ahmet

Kuran bu dakika olmazsa olmaz Kuran sohbetlerimiz ayetlerden istifade ediyoruz çünkü insanlar anlattığımız şeylerin bir dayanağının bir ispatın olması gerekiyor siz ayetlerden örnekler veriyorsunuz hadislerden Riyazü's Salihin bizim istifade ettiğimiz bir kaynak arkasından o konuyla alakalı risalelerde geçen bahisler varsa onlar araştırılıyor işte sözler, mektubat risalelerden istifade ediyoruz arkasından işte o konuyla alakalı yine hocamızın pırlanta serisinden yine araştırılıp bir iki paragraf oradan istifade ediliyor ve bu dört kaynak bizim istifade ettiğimiz kaynaklar

132. Mustafa

Müfredat meseleleri şu şekilde temel imani meseleler Cenabı hakkın birliği, varlığı bunla ilgili ilmi deliller, kimine göre kurban, ramazan ayında oruç, zekat, muharrem ayında aşure bunun gibi bizim sohbetlerimiz ona göre. Mesela ticari hayatın hareketleneceği meselelerde Efendimiz 'in ticari öğütleri: dürüst olmak işine riayet etmek... İslam'ın sosyal meseleleri üzerine sohbetler yapmaya çalışırız.

133. İhsan

Yok, yani eğer sorulacaksa ufak tefek illa ki bakılır yani. Mesela biz bir tarihte Kur'an-ı Kerim meali üzerinden de gitmiştik. Böyle devam eden bir ortamımız var hepimiz kendi Kuran'ımızı mealimizi alıp geliyorduk mesela Ali Ünal hocanın Kur'an- Kerim meali, o da iyi bir yöntem mesela.

134. Mehmet

Bunu bir zamanlar şöyle yaptık, inşallah o günlere yine döneriz. Hocam bize Risale dersi işliyordu o zaman ders veriyordu ya diyordu bir 5 sayfa okuyun gelin, o zaman Risale dersleri çok daha zevkli geçiyordu, katılım çok daha fazla oluyordu. Herkes az veya çok bir şuuraltı oluşturuyordu. Şimdi de böyle olmuyor, ben de şimdi siz söyleyince aklıma geldi. Yeni bir hocamız geldi o da Risale-i Nur'a biraz ağırlık veriyor hocamız. Belki ben ona bugün mesela bunu götürebilirim ki eskiden biz böyle, o risalelere çok hakim olan bir hocamız vardı. Yani Kur'an-ı Kerim'de Suat Yıldırım hocam nasıl ki ayetlerin altında işaret koyuyor başka ayete atıfta bulunuyor. Bu Risalelerde öyle bir not yok, olmamasına rağmen o bir bakmışsın Sözleri okuyoruz mesela, değerli abiler 28. Söz bilmem kaç bilmem kaçınıcı şeyi açalım diyor, oradan oraya oradan oraya böyle link yaptırırdı bizi, o kadar hakimdi yani Risalelere o kadar hakimdi. Yani bir Risale dersi olurken o konuyla alakalı bir başka yerinden bir kaç tane, bir başka yerden bir başka yerinden örnek vererek oradan da pasajlar okurdu bize oradan da açıklamalar yapardı ederdi güzel de oluyordu o. Şimdi bu risale derslerine, inşallah bu akşam gelecek ben paylaşacağım hocamızla yani madem bir Risale dersi işleyecek önceden bize ders ver biz de bunlara katkıda bulunalım yani.

135. Cihangir

Valla bugüne kadar mesela arzuladık. Yani daha işte bu bir yüksek lisans, doktora havasında yani lisans seviyesinde değil de konulara hazırlanma. Ama öyle bir grup henüz şey olmadı yani öyle bir grup ben arzuldum şahsen. Yani herkesin takip ettiği işte biraz evvelki disiplinli, belki hoca sağlıyor ama öğrenciler diye tabir ettiğimiz o sohbe katılanlar da o şeyde hareket etsin. Şu ana kadar çok fazla o yönde hazırlık vesaire olmadı yani ama tabi hafta içi belki o dersle alakalı olmasa bile başka kaynaklardan okuma, dinleme vesaire gibi kendimce bir şeyler yapıyorum yani. Ama o haftaki dersle ilgili denk geliyor gelmiyor, o tevafuk yani.

136. Mustafa

Hoca arkadaşlarımızla her hafta ne sohbet edileceğinin zümresini yapıyoruz. Yani bunun için de bir şey oluyor takip edilecek kaynaklar noktasında hem de orda bu konuda yetkin kişiler anlatıyorlar gelebilecek sorulara karşı hem öğrenmek maksadıyla hem ilmihal bilgilerindeki değişik şeyler, söylenenlerin daha net olması için on kişi yirmi kişi farklı bakış açılarıyla düşünce tarzlarıyla meseleyi irdeliyor. Sohbet yapacak kişi o sohbeti pişirmiş bir şekilde sohbe gidiyor.

137. Zeki

Sohbette değil de mütevellide de belki salı günleri dediğimiz salı akşamları bizim cüzlerimiz olur, keyfiyet programlarımız işte namazlarla alakalı, bi Duha namazı kılsak, bi Ebvabin namazı kılsak diye böyle bir çetele diyoruz, yaygın olan bir şey var ki orada Hocaefendi'den bir şeyler okuma, risale okuma, Kuran-ı Kerim okuma gibi kendi aramızda paylaştığımız şeyler var fakat bunların takibi

konusunda sıkıntımız var.(...) Mesela biz zamanında şöyle bir uygulama yaptık, o dönemde arkadaşlar çok ısrar etti, hatta benim fikrimle olmuştu. Hocam biz bu çeteleleri yapıyoruz ama bi teşvikçi olsa da puanlama sistemi getirsek, işte namaza şu, Teheccüd namazına şunu versek, duha namazı koysak mesela. Çok kılınan bir şey değildi bu benim dediğim belki on sene önce. Duha namazını acaba oturabilir miyiz, Evvabini koysak. Bunlara da puanlar versek, bu ayda bir de birinci seçip hediyeler versek, ayın sonunda da umreye göndersek gibi bir uygulama yaptık. O sene elhamdülillah çok bereketli oldu, bir çok arkadaşımızda Duha oturdu mesela. Şimdi ben duha namazı kılmadığımda, öğlen namazı kılmamış gibi hissediyorum. Ya da sabah diyelim, sabaha daha yakın olduğu için. Yani sanki namaz kaçırmışım gibi Duha'nın telaşı oluyor.

138. Emin

Ödev mödev çok ender olan bir şey olmaz ama işte işin maneviyat boyutu itibariyle hani şu tesbihatı yapsak şu duaları okusak mesela işte yazılı bir kağıda falan bir küçük dua bunu sabah namaza kalktığımızda arkadan da şunu okusanız falan ne bileyim mesela sabah evinizden çıkarken ayetel kürsi yi 11 defa okusanız bunlar tavsiye mahiyetinde falan. Tabii arkadaşların ne kadarı yerine getiriyor, genelde yerine getirdiklerini tahmin ediyorum. Getiriyorlardır.

139. Orhan

Bize ödev veriliyor. Haftalık, yani ben bana verileni söyleyeyim mesela haftalık 1 cüz veriliyor, o cüzü okumam gerekiyor. Onu okuyorum, onu önümüzdeki haftaya soruyorlar işte okuyup okumadığımı. İşte risaleler var, cevşen var, buna benzer ev ödevleri var diyelim.

140. Selahattin

Ödevler vardır yani şu duaları yapın falan diyorlar bize onları yapıyoruz. Gazete okuyoruz, şu hatim yapıyoruz kendi aramızda cüz dağıtıyoruz. Sen bu hafta 9. Cüzü okuyacaksın, ertesi hafta ona yüz yüze geliyor. Böyle bir ayda Kur'an ı hatmediyoruz. Tabii tabii böyle şeyler.

141. Cihangir

Ödevden kasıt, hatırlıyorum her hafta her gün bir sayfa meal okuyalım denmişti. O sayede Türkçe mealini Kuran'ın baya ileri sayfalara taşımıştık, ciddi her hafta düzenli çetele diye tabir edilen yaptınız mı okudunuz mu gibi bu sorulurdu yani şu anki oturmayla ilgili böyle bir konu yok, yok diyeceğim ama burada da ayetlerin doğru telaffuz edilmesiyle ilgili Kuran'ın, bir çalışmamız oldu. Her hafta düzenli mesela Fatıha suresini geçene kadar orada vurguların yapılması gibi, evet bu böyle bir ders belirliyordu yani. Millet çalışıyor çalışmıyor bilemeyiz ama böyle bir ders mevcut oturmamızda oldu. Öncekiyle ilgili meal oldu. O sayede yani belki tefsirlerden okuduğumuz Kuram-ı Kerim'i belki meallerden de okuma fırsatı bulduk yani düzenli bir buçuk iki sene o dönemki hocamız ciddi takip etmişti yani.

142. İhsan

Zaman zaman verir yani o da olur, mesela bir arkadaşımız vardı bu sene o çok da hoş yaptı sağolsun. Kısa ilmihal bilgileriyle ilgili bir şeyler anlatıyor, çok hoş. Yani kısa ama, ondan sonra da ertesi hafta soruyor, yani güzel. Bazı ilmihal bilgileri de var imani bir takım hususları da beraberinde onu da gündeme getiriyor tabii. Ordan belki destekleyen bir Hadis-i Şerif falan söz konusu oluyor. Bunlar zenginleştiriyor, kafayı, kafa yapma konusunda ya da konuları daha iyi süzme ya da yerine oturturma konusunda daha önemli oluyor tabii. Dolayısıyla belki sormak ya da efendim bir hafta sonra tekrar da bu konuda olumlu bir etki yapıyor tabii.

143. Yusuf

Böyle tabii bizim kendimiz yapabileceğimiz tarzda arkadaşlar tavsiyede bulunuyorlar. Ara ara da sorguluyorlar bunu, nasıl yaptınız ne ettiniz diye. O da güzel oluyor çünkü takip iyi bir metot yani bu eğitim, biz eğer bir şeyler öğreneceksek ki bunu da zaman zaman yapıyorlar işte. Ya tabii bu ederlerin okunması yönünde işte haftalık belli bir sayfa, program veriyorlar arkadaşlarımız. Biz de buna gayret etmeye çalışıyoruz. Kuran-ı Kerim üzerinde tavsiyeleri oluyor, abi şu kadar okusanız diyorlar. İşte farklı farz ibadetleri dışındaki bazı ibadetleri tavsiye ediyorlar arkadaşlarımız. Biz de gücümüzün yettiğince yapmaya çalışıyoruz, vaktimizle işte.

144. Ahmet

Kitap okumaları haricinde aslında ağabeylerin bize sahabe hayatıyla alakalı ödevler verdiğimiz oldu işte abi bu konuyla alakalı işte olmasa bile siz sahabe hayatı Halid Bin Velidi anlatsanız sizden dinlese Hz. Ömer'i siz anlatsanız o aşarei mübeşşereyi sizden dinlese ödev verdiğimiz ağabeylerinde daha rahat hissedebilecekleri anlatırken aslında kıssadan hisseler var bir insanın hayatını araştırmak daha kolay bir sohbeti yapın dediğimizde insanlar çekiniyor ama sadece bir biyografi sahabe hayatı dediğimiz zaman ağabeyler ciddi hazırlanıyor bizim bilmediğimiz o bilgileri bizimle paylaşıyorlar

145. Ali

Sohbete başladığımda işin sadece sohbetle kalmayıp amacı şu, direk amacı. İnsanların bildiğiyle amel etmesi, aksiyon yani; hep söylem, bilgi tamam bilgi güzel ama hayata geçmeyen veya öğrenildiğinde önce içselleştirilip, içselleştirildikten sonra günlük hayata uygulanmayan bilginin bir anlamı yok. Bu da öyle. Bir önce bilgiyi öğrenme, öğrendikten sonra içselleştirme, bunu kavrama, kavradıktan sonra bu paylaşım kültüründen bahsettik ya bu manada da bu değerleri paylaşma. E o zaman insanların aksiyona geçmesi lazım ve bunu aksiyona geçebilme adına sohbet halkasından başlayan bu insanların sadece sohbet yapıp ilânihaye devam etme bu bilgilenme şeklinde değil, zaten o da belli bir zaman sonra sıkıcı olabiliyor insanlar için. Ama bu aksiyonu gördüğü zaman o insanlar o zaman daha müdavim oluyorlar. Neden? Çünkü o aldığı bilgiyi o işte Kuran'dan

veya işte o sohbet halkasında öğrenmiş olduğu bilgiyi o insanlara taşımayı ve aksiyonu öğreniyor insan. Biz bunu öğrendik. Yani işte insanlar için, işte Allah için Kuran-ı Kerim’de var paylaşma, zekat, sadaka, işte bilgilerini anlatma, iyiyi emretme kötülükten men etme. Bunlar nasıl olacak? Sohbet halkasında işte iyilikler bunlar, kötülükler bunlar, işte kul hakları bunlar öğrenecekler.

146. Ali

Kuran-ı Kerim’deki baktığımızda ibadet ve rutinlerin dışında çok daha fazlası ahlak üzerine yazılmış. E o zaman bu ahlakı anlatma, toplumsal katmanlara yayma meselesi var. Nasıl olacak bu iş? Bu sosyal faaliyetlerle olacak. E o zaman bu sohbet halkasına gelen insanlar bu değerleri aldığı zaman bunu nasıl taşıyacak? Kendi ailesine taşımak için ya evinde sohbet olacak, ya iş arkadaşıyla bunu tanıştıracak. Paylaşım nasıl olacak? E bu insanlara belli bir zaman sonra diyorsunuz ki ya bu işler nasıl oluyor, bu öğrenciler kendilerini nasıl yetiştiriyorlar, yurtlarda nasıl kalıyorlar, taşradan gelen insanlar var, ekonomik gücü olmayan insanlar var. Bu insanlar burada barınacak, şu anda görüyoruz mesela toplumumuzda bonzai diye bir illet çıkmış. Yani bu uyuşturucunun ağına düşmüş belki bu insanı üç yılda öldüren bir meret var, dolayısıyla bu uyuşturucudan korunacak bu insan. Münferit olarak taşradan gelmiş bir insan, aile ortamı da yok, böyle bir ortamda heba olabilir. Ne kendisine, ne ailesine, ne de topluma faydası olacak. Ama bunu korumanın bir yolu var.

147. Ali

Bu insan geldiği zaman burada barınacak, barındığı ortamda bu insana maddeten bir menfaat, yetişmesine bir burs imkanı sağlıyorsunuz ve onun manen de korunmasını sağlıyorsunuz. Yani bu tür kendine ve ailesine, toplumuna, insanlığa zarar verebilecek ortamlardan tecrit de etmiş oluyorsunuz. E bu sohbet halkasına gelen insanlar bu boyutunu görüyor bu işin. Yani buradan gelen bu öğrencilerin, bu insanların, bu değer taşıyıcıların bu tür müesseselerde, sosyal ortamlarda korunmasını sağlıyor. Nasıl sağlayacaksınız? Bir yurttta, işte hep evde değil hani yurttta sohbetler oluyor ya, bazen bu yurtlarda öğrencilerin toplu ortamını da görüyorlar bu insanlar. Mesela yine bir Üsküdar’da öğrencilerin yurdunda akşam maktubeli bir sohbet yaptığımızda, o yeni gelen insanların, öğrencilerin toplu olarak bir sohbet ortamını şöyle kapıda salonda bir gördük. Dedim bakın on yedi ile yirmi iki yaş arasında, on beş ile yirmi yaş arasında gençlerin böyle herkesin hocasını can kulağıyla dinlediği bir sohbet ortamı var. Onlar okuyorlar, sohbet ediyorlar, harıl harıl o öğrencileri gördükleri zaman onlar da heyecanlanıyor.

148. Ali

Akranlarına bakıyorsunuz, dışarıda topluma zarar verebilecek ortam açıkken, burada çok daha hem kendini yetiştirecek hem ileriki hayatta eğitimini tamamlayacak, hem de müsait bir ortamda, maddi manevi müsait bir ortamda onları gördükleri zaman da heyecanlanıyorlar. İster istemez o zaman kendi de soruyor. Ya işte bu yurt nasıl barınıyor, işte burada ihtiyaçlar neler, bunlar taşradan

gelmiş nasıl geçiniyorlar? İşte bunlar bu insanlara bir takım kendi zekatından, sadakandan vermekle oluyor. E o zaman ihtiyaç hissediyor, bir şeyler vermeye başlıyor. E o zaman da himmet istiyorsun, diyorsunuz ki böyle yani diyorsunuz ki işte bu öğrenciye burs verebilirsin. Bunu kendi şirketinden banka aracılığıyla da verebilirsin, makbuzlu da yapabilirsin, bu işin bir boyutu. Öbür tarafta bu güzellikleri dünyaya taşımadan bahsettiğimizde ne tür bir faaliyet var işte kurban diyorsunuz, bir mevsimsel faaliyet. Kimse Yok mu aracılığıyla tam düzenli bir şekilde buradan bağışını yaptığında bizzat sadece bağış yapmakla kalmayıp, kendi de giderek gördüğünde işin bir başka boyutuyla tanışıyor. Dolayısıyla bu hareketliliği gördüğü zaman insan verme, vererek bu işin yayıldığına ve aktiviteyi görmüş oluyor. Aksiyon... Aksiyona geçmiş oluyor bu insan o zaman.

149. Zeki

Sohbetteki etkinlik birincisi işte bu bahsettiğimiz hani keyfiyet, size yol aldırma, insanın duygu düşüncesini benimsetme yani orada sohbetler, sohbetlerin içerikleri, eğer oraya katılanlara hizmet duygu ve düşüncesini vermiyorsa veya keyfiyetini ilerletmiyorsa, keyfiyetle çünkü kişiler ilerlediğinde hizmete ayrı bir bakış açıları oluyor, duygu düşünceleri farklı oluyor. Mesela biz kuran ı kerim öğrettiğimiz bir arkadaşın, hizmete gelen bir arkadaşımızın, kuran ı kerim öğrettiğimiz bir arkadaşın bizde diyelim bi hoca arkadaş kuran ı kerim öğretmiş. O kişinin hizmete bakışı ve bağlanması daha farklı oluyor.

150. Murat

İnsanların hani günlük olarak bir ticari hayatı var, bir yaşam tarzı var falan. Bu günlük hayatın içinde dini konular bazen unutuluyor, ikici plana atılıyor bazen yozlaşabiliyor. Bunları yeniden tazelemek, yeniden güncellemek, haftalık olarak bunlara bir daha dikkat çekmek yani senin önceliğinin ne olduğunu anlamak adına çok önem arz ediyor ve doğasını söylüyor. Yani arkadaşlarımızdan ziyade bizlerin hani bir şeyler öğrendiğin zaman, karşı tarafı memnun ettiği zaman bir şeyler öğrettiği zaman, yani bakın burada da böyle bir din hizmetleri var, şurada da böyle evler var, şurada da böyle yurtlar var falan... Yani bu konularda da ihtiyaç oluyor bazen dediğim zaman biraz daha yani zaten odak belli, orada senin dışında devam eden bir çark var, o çarka da katkıları daha fazla olabiliyor insanların.

151. İhsan

Bir 20 yıl olmuştur, bir yıl böyle bayram ziyaretinde bir imamı ziyarete gittik. Tabii 20 yıl kadar önce olunca sağlık da daha iyiydi. Elini öptük sohbet ediyoruz ondan sonra vakit ikindi namazına yaklaştı, onun bir camisi var arka tarafta. Kendisi oraya ikindiye gideceğiz beraber gideceğiz aynı arabada bizim arabada falan, biz 3-4 kişiyiz. Kendi odasında abdest tazelemek için hocafendi içeriye doğru geçerken, teybe bir tane kaset koydu. Hocafendi' nin kasetini. Dedi ki ben gelene kadar dedi, müsaadenizle tabii o nezaketi ile falan, ben gelene kadar siz bunu dinlersiniz dedi. Malum insan kulağından beslenir dedi. Bunu hiç unutmuyorum tabii Ahmet Hisaroğlu Hoca'nın bu ifadesini. İnsan kulağından beslenir.

Dolayısıyla da öyle bir devirde yaşıyoruz ki haftada bir gün bir şeyler duymazsa insan kaybolur. İnsanlar bu devirde yani, biz zaten sözlü kültürün insanlarıyız. Yani oturup da böyle bütün bir hafta boyu şunu bunu okuyalım, yani okunur da tabii bütün bir hafta, bizim bir sohbetlerde mütevellilerde şu da oluyor, çetele de var. Tabii sohbet oturmalarda olmasa tabii mütevellide tutuluyor bu. Bizim haftaiçi biraz çalışmış olmamız isteniyor normal olarak, ama bir şeyleri haftada bir de duymazsanız sıkıntılı bir ortam var. Bizler iş hayatında tamamen gün oluyor ki çok maddi çok gereksiz çoğu gerginlikler içerisinde bir süreç yaşıyoruz. Burda az çok şöyle normalleşebilmemiz, yani önceliklerimizi tekrar biraz daha yerine yerleştirebilmemiz için o haftada bir gün sohbetin çok büyük önemi var tabii.

152. Yusuf

Ya biraz önce de söylediğim gibi bizim özellikle kendimizi geliştirme adına çok ciddi faydası oluyor yani şahsi hayatımızı yönlendiriyor. Onun dışında etkinlikler yani sohbetlere baktığımız zaman bu, insan çevresindeki etkileşim diyebileceğimiz hadise yani çevresindeki arkadaşlardan da etkileniyor. Yani bu bir tabiri caizse tek kişiyle bu işler olmuyor ama böyle bir cemaat ortamında, sohbet grubu ortamında birbirine bir sinerji oluyor, birbirine bir etkileşim oluyor yani bu faydası oluyor bize.

153. Nedim

Genel amacı... İnsana verilen eğitim en önemli eğitimidir. Çünkü eğitimsiz insan... Görüyoruz Müslümanları eğitimsiz bırakmışlar. Ondan sonra da terörist diyorlar, bilmem ne diyorlar. Öyle değil yani. Kendi ülkelerinde insanları okutuyorlar, tahsil yaptırıyorlar ama Müslüman ülkeleri eğitimsiz bırakıyorlar. Hizmet hareketini tanıdıktan sonra ben taklidi imanı tahkiki imana geçtiğime inanıyorum. Niçin? Onda insan görüyor ki Müslüman ülkelerde hep savaşlar çıkmış, hep fitneler çıkarmışlar. Müslümanları mümkünse okutmamaya çalışmışlar. Eskiden ilim yuvaları hep Müslümanların elindeymiş. Anadolu'da mesela Selçuklular dönemi yanlış bilmiyorsam, Yunanistan'dan artık o zamanki Yunanistan ülkesi hangisiyse, hangi devlet olarak adlandırılıyorsa oradan, hani şimdi bizimkiler gidiyor Amerika'da, İngiltere'de yüksek lisans doktora yapıyorlar ya. O zaman Selçukludan diploma aldım diye övünüyorlarmış. Öyleymiş Müslüman ülkesi. Yani inşallah yine öyle olacak. Hizmet hareketi onu yapmak için yani Müslüman insanları da tahsilli yapmak için ortaya çıkmıştır. Gençleri eğitiyor, yetiştiriyor, o gençlere okullar açıyor işte üniversiteler açıyor. Benim gibi yaşı ilerde olan işte tüccarlık yapan, memurluk yapan insanlara da aksam sohbetleriyle, tekrar bir okul vasfıyla, bir anlamda okul diyorum ben çünkü orada eline silah vermiyor, ağzına küfür vermiyor. Allah diyor, Kuran diyor ve kesinlikle kötü hiçbir şey yok.

154. Muhammed

Aslında sohbet işin başlangıç noktası insanlara ulaşmak, tanıtmak açısından yani sohbe gelen insandaki hedef; en başta konuştuğumuz orada da anlatılan, tavsiye edilen aksiyonlarda fiili olarak görev alsın, sorumluluk alsın. Gönlüyle, aklıyla

kalbiyle bu işi yapsın. Tabi bunu yapmıyorsa işte sohbeta davet edilmesin, zamanla uzaklaştırılsın gibi felsefe yok. Kimi insan böyle bir şeye bir ayda karar verebilir, kimisi on yılda karar verebilir. O yüzden sabırla sohbetlere devam ettiriliyor yani insanlar ben gelmiyorum demedikçe sen artık gelme arkadaş buraya şudur budur gibi bir sistem yok. İlk sohbeta katılma hedefi de bu insanların elbette önce alıcılarıyla bu işi öğrenmesi yani Hizmet hareketini öğrenmesi, daha sonra da fiili olarak bu işe gönüllü bir lokomotif gibi kendisinin de görev alarak aksiyoner bir insan haline gelmesi. Ama her insandan da aynı şeyi beklemek çok doğru olmayabilir.

155. Cihangir

Kamil bir insan oluşturmak yani burada tündengelim değil tümevarım veya doğru algılayabildiysem ben, Hizmetin böyle bir prensibi vardır yani. Biri iyi olursa aile iyi olur, aile toplumun en küçük yapı taşı, dolayısıyla toplum iyi olur. Sürekli buna yönelik insanların işte hem etik, genel ahlak kurallarına uygun işte hırsızlık, yolsuzluk bilmem efendim görevi kötüye kullanmayacak her ne şekilde olursa olsun insanlar yetiştirmek. Öte taraftan buna kanalize edebilecek insanı şeylerdi işte alkole uzak tutmak, işte buna yaklaştırabilecek insanı ibadetse ibadetlerini hassasiyetle yapması gerektiğini sağlayacak telkinlerde bulunmak yani. Bu da işte iyilikleri emretmek, kötülüklerden nedir engel olmak en genel anlamıyla bu. Bunun da detay, alt kolları var işte alkol haram. Neden haramdır? Nelere sebep olur? İşte dünya hayatının geçiciliği hep gençlerle yavaş yavaş orta yaşa geldik, bu gençliğin geçici olması işte hayatın ölümün bir anda hepimizin başına gelebileceği. Yani bu detaylarla da bu anlatılmaya çalışılıyor tekrar dediğim gibi referans, ana referans Kuran-ı Kerim ve hadislerin ölçüsünden sapmamak kaydıyla yani.

156. Orhan

Ben bana dönüğünü söyleyeyim, bizim gruptaki arkadaşlar ben dahil başladığımız zaman biz namaz kılmıyorduk. Bunun Türkçesini söylemek gerekirse kılmıyorduk. Şu an bizim grubumuza namaz kılmayan yok diyebilirim, biz Kur'an okumayı bilmiyorduk, yani bunu net söyleyeyim çocukken belki camiye gittik öğrendik unuttuk öğrendik unuttuk ama bilmiyorduk. Şu an bizim grubumuzda Kur'an okumayı bilmeyen de yok. Dini bildiğimizi zannediyorduk, bizde bu çok bilinir ya herkes bildiğini iddia eder, biz dini bilmediğimizi de anladık. Dini bizi öğretecek bir yer varmış, bunu da öğrendik. Dolayısıyla yani dini noktada değişim bu. Ahlaki noktada bunu tarif edemem, yani bugün yine günahlar insanın gözüne belki şeytan güzel gösteriyor ama o vicdan mekanizması mıdır artık ne mekanizmasıysa, onu bu abiler ne yapıyor nasıl etkiliyor bilmiyorum. Ama insanı günden koparıyor. Haftada bir gün de olsa bir format atıyorlar sana, o bir hafta götürüyor seni, öteki hafta yine geldin. Bir format daha atıyorlar, yine yenileniyor. Aradan koparsan, şeytan kazanıyor.

157. Mahmut

Din öğretimi açısından tabii ki mesela ben normal lise mezunuyum, birçok dini konuyu düzenli olarak devam etmekle öğrendim. Yani tabii ki eğitim öğretim çok olmayabilir burası öğrenim yeri değil derken şunu kastediyorum: Mesela bir üniversite sınavına hazırlanıyor gibi yoğun bir bilgi aktarımı olmaz. Ama bu bir süreçtir, insan oraya devam ettiği zaman zaten otomatik olarak bilinçaltından da olsa belli bir temel İslami nosyonu olur.

158. Emin

Mutlaka tabii yeni yeni şeyler öğreniyorsunuz her seferinde ne kadar bilgili ise sizin hocanız, yani soru sorma interaktif olduğu için zaten işte soru cevap soru cevap hocam şöyle miydi böyle miydi diye yani konuları tartışma imkanımız var bir konuyla karşılaştık diyelim dini anlamda hayatta e onu masaya yatırılıyorsunuz. İnsanların belki değişik tecrübeleri vardır herkesin, işte orada izah ediyor konu birileri bir katkı sağlıyor falan. Bunlar gideriliyor tabii giderek daha bir olumlu yani hatta diyosun Allah Allah bu zamana kadar ben bunu niye duymadım, şöyle oluyor da ben kendimi böyle değiştireyim. Mesela bunlar böyle şeyler, sonu yok yani.

159. Ali

Ben bir tane beklerken oradan, sekiz tane dediğinde, buradaki verilmiş olan dokuz tane hedefin tuttuğunu görünce tabii orada iki şey var tabii düşündüm. Bir, bu işin manevi boyutunun olduğunu, Allah'ın yardımının olduğunu, özellikle bir hedef olarak seçip de yola çıkmanız gerektiğini, bu iş için fiili gayret göstermeniz gerektiğini düşünüyorsunuz o zaman anlıyorsunuz. Bir de tabii sizin kendinizden bilmemeniz gerektiğini öğreniyorsunuz. Neticede orada o kadar dolaşma neticesinde, günlerce bir şey alamadığınızı ama onun gayretiyle başka bir yerden bu işin lütuf olduğunu, o zaman kendi nefsinize işte hani dediniz ya ilk başta, derecede konumda nerede görüyorsunuz. Bu şunu da öğretiyor insana, bu sizden değil. Ama size düşen gayretin olduğu, bu işi anlatmak olduğu ama bu işi lütfedenin, verenin İlahi güç olduğunu da bilmenizi sağlamış oluyor. Bu benim için önemli bir örnektir Hizmetin başlangıcında. Ben bunu kendime hep ders olarak gördüm. Hakikaten Hizmet bu manada bir okul, ben hala bir şeyler, çok öğreneceğim şeyler var, hala öğreniyorum sosyal hayat içerisinde öğrenmeye devam ediyorum. Bunu da paylaşmak istiyorum yani.

160. Akif

Önce, iman esaslarını öğreniyorlar. Örneğin, Allah'ın iman, meleklerle iman, kutsal kitaplara iman, ahrete iman ve diğerleri. Sonra, İslam hakkında öğreniyorlar, mesela namaz, oruç, zekat, hac, beşeri münasebetler ve ilişkili konular. Üçüncü olarak, ihsan konusunu öğreniyorlar. Yani bir insanın kalbinde Allah'a doğru olan yolculuğu, yani, hem kalben hem de aklen sürekli Allah tarafından görüldüğünüm farkında olma.

161. Ali

Evet. Yani mesela istiřare mahiyetindeki sohbetlere yani ok ok nemli bir olay yoksa mutlaka katılıyorum. Ya hasta olmanız lazım katılmamanız iin, ya bir lm cenaze vuku bulması lazım. Bunun dıřında yani keyfi olarak katılmadıđım hi olmadı diyebilirim. Katılmadıđım zaman vicdan azabı duyarım yani, eksiklik hissedirim ünkü programımı ona gre yaptım hani bir ynetim kurulu toplantısına iřinizde katılmadınız, orda bir Őeyin eksik kalacađını dřndğnz gibi byle bir dřnce oluyor ister istemez. Var yani. Onu kesinlikle hissediyorsunuz ünkü vazife olarak addediyorsunuz. Yani iř gibi dřnmeye bařlıyorsunuz artık.

162. Mehmet

Ben genelde sohbetlere katılıyorum, genelde derken hep katılıyorum ev sahibi olmam hasebiyle ok nadirdir olmadıđı. Ama bir Őekilde bir izin vs olup da olmadıđımız zaman eksik oluyoruz. Yani bakıřım kaymaya bařlıyor, davranıřlarım kaymaya bařlıyor. Vcut sanki beslenmiyor yani bir insan fizyolojik olarak beslenmeme ile ne hissederse ruhen beslenemediđi zaman da o eksikliđi bariz bir Őekilde hissediyorsun.

163. Mehmet

Halamın ođlu o da salı sohbetlerine gidiyor. Dedim sen onla samimi grřyorsun, ben sylesem ađırına gider, takip ettim ünkü ben onu, sen ona syle de ki dedim ne zamandan beri sohbeta gitmiyorsun, ne zamandan beri Salılara gitmiyorsun sana bir cevap verecek uzun zamandan beri salıları da yok sohbetleri de yok ünkü salısı da diđer sohbetleri de olan bir insan o ifadeleri kullanmaz. De ki ona dedim sen bu gidiřle sohbetleri terk ettin yetmeyecek yakında cemaati bırakırsın ondan sonra sohbetleri de bırakırsın. Onu diyemem dedi, dedim de! De, sırtındaki akrebi gster. Gerekten kayıyor insan, kaymaması mmkn deđil, ünkü dnya nemaları var bir Őekilde insanı cezbediyor yani, nefsinin. Cennete giden yol hep engellerle dolu. Cehenneme giden yol da hep cazibelerle dolu ben bunu sevgili bir kardeřim, namus meselem de olsa, akrabam da olsa yakınımla paylařamayacađım Őeyi cemaatimle paylařıyorsam yle dřnyorum.

164. Muhammed

Tabi yani insan katılmak iin ki sohbeta katılan diđer insanlar da zamanla anlatıyorlar, zorlanıyorlar yani bazen gelmekte akřam yorgunluktur iřte gnn getirdiđi bir problem, sıkıntı řudur budur gibi Őeyleri ařmak zorunda kaldıklarının sylyorlar ama aynı Őeyleri insan olarak biz de yařıyoruz. Gidemediđin zaman Őey yapıyorsun yani zlyorsun getikten sonra. Ertesi sabah kalktıđında, kendini daha byle din hissettiđin anda ya akřam en azından kendimi zorlasaydım, gitseydim diyorsun ki katılan arkadařların birođu da bunu anlatıyorlar yani gelemedim ama iime de dert oldu, keřke gelseydim diyorlar.

165. Cihangir

Çok hissederim. Bugün işte bir türlü şey yapamadım, tevafuk bu da bizim belki imtihanımız oldu. Saat beş oldu, akşam nerede olacağı belli değil ne yapacağımız belli değil böyle işte bayram tatili sonrası ciddi bir üzerimde şu anda suçluluk psikolojisi var. Bitsin, en azından bir kafede bir yerde toplanalım bu görüşme bitince gelen gelsin ama ben bu pazartesini bu ölçüde geçirdim diyebilmem lazım yani öyle bir evet. Yıllardır katılım az da olsa çok da olsa yani evet bizim için, benim için vazgeçilmez yani.

166. Mahmut

Tabi eksiklik şöyle hissederiz, uzun süre ayrıymışız gibi. Mesela bir hafta nöbetimiz olur gidemezsek sanki o arkadaşlarla uzun süre ayrı kalmış şeyi olur, o bizi üzer. Yani mutlaka bir dahaki sefere gitmek gibi bir ihtiyacımız olur.

167. Murat

Yani o hafta biraz şey geçer bende, tuhaf geçer yani. Bir katılma oranını yüksek tutmaya çalışırım yani bahane, mazeret üretmemek için çok şey ederim, çok da böyle bir alışkanlık olmuştur. Evde bazen yani ev durumları hiç müsait olmadığı halde bile durumları zorlayarak giderim. Kendim yoruluyorum akşama kadar, biraz fabrika ortamımız yorucu bir ortam. Bazen öyle cansız düşerim ama o gün eğer sohbet günüyse, bir şekilde yani ekstra bir jeneratör bir yerden çalışır ve beni götürür oraya yani. Yani böyle bir hayat tarzı oluşmuş.

168. Ali

Aslında insan ayırmıyorsunuz yani neticede bu manada kıskançlık veya bu manada o insana da olacak sorumlu hissettiğiniz için kendinizi, Allah için yani ona da ulaşma mecburiyetinde hissediyorsunuz kendinizi. Çünkü ha şu şöyle değerlendirilebilir belki, yani ona ulaşmanın da bir yolu olmalı. Çünkü her insan aynı kategoride değil, belki önyargıyla bakan insanlar da var yani böyle bir şeye mesafeli duran insanlar da var. Belki bilmediğinden dolayı, hani dedim ya dışarıdan bakan insanlar tarikat gibi veya işte burada zikir yapılıyor gibi falan, dışarıdan çünkü kamuoyunda da birtakım olumsuz şeyler var yani bunu dünyada da görüyorsunuz. Çünkü yurtdışından gelen birçoğu diyalog altında gelen birçok insanı karşılıyoruz biz sivil toplum örgütlerinde. E onlar da dışarıdan baktığında Türkiye'yi belki bir Afrika veya Ortadoğu ülkesi gibi veya bir geri kalmış ülke konumunda görebiliyorlar. Bunların hepsi algıyla ilgili, oradaki algı burada çok farklı şekilde tezahür ediyor. İnsanlar o imajı ve algıyı düzeltiyorlar, hani görmesi gerekiyor. Aynı şekilde kendi içimizde de bu var, dışarıdan bakıldığında böyle bir Hizmet hareketinin işte bir tarikat, zikir böyle bir kapalı kutu, farklı bir yapıymış gibi algılıyor. Halbuki öyle değil. Bunun içine girdiği zaman ancak görebiliyor böyle bir yapının olmadığını, tamamen gönüllü serbest bir hareket olduğunu görüyor, hizmet hareketi olduğunu görüyor. Dolayısıyla önyargılı olan insanların bir anda bu işi kabullenmesi kolay olmuyor yani uzak durabiliyor. Ona da ona

uygun bir programa davet ediyorsunuz. Diyorsunuz ki bir şenlik var, bir Türkçe olimpiyatı var diyorsunuz. Bu tür şöenlere davet ediyorsunuz, daha belki kamuoyunda yani algısı onun için kolay olabilecek bir ortama davet ediyorsunuz. O da böyle bir açılım, açılım diyorum ben ona yani.

169. Zeki

Yeni gelenler hocam esnafa bakan yönüyle birincisi sizin iş yaptığımız insanlar olabilir, ikincisi komşularınız oluyor. Yani işyerindeki komşularınız, bu piyasadan tanıdıklarınız oluyor, esas bu hocam. Çok bu böle akraba çevresine nüfuz edemiyorsunuz, akrabaya bişey kabul ettirebilmek de çok zor. Ya da bizim evimiz ve işyerimiz birbirine uzak olunca öyle bir sıkıntı da var. Daha çok iş çevremiz ile oluyor bizim davet ettiğimiz insanlar. Yani birisinin belki vesilesi ile tanışırız, böyle de oluyor ama bu çok az. Daha çok bizim işimizle alakalı yani, iş piyasası ile alakalı insanlar.

170. Mehmet

Arkadaşlara yalvarıyoruz sızlıyoruz bak bunu siz beğendiniz hoşunuza gitti o aman biri daha istifade etsin bundan birini daha çağırın onlar da istifade etsin yani biri birine biri birine vesile oluyor değişiyor devamlı. Bazılarının şehirleri değişiyor işleri değişiyor başka gruplara da katıldıkları oluyor ama bizim sohbet grupları da yani isim değişse de salıları değişmiyor Salıları hocalarımız belirliyor zaten isim değişse de sayı değişmiyor yani. Her zaman birileri oluyor, yani 50-60 kişilik ayarladığımız birileri var 50-60 kişiden 15 civarında kişi gelir.

171. İsmail

Bu genelde arkadaşın arkadaşı şeklinde hani herkes mesela benim böyle bir arkadaşım var getiriyim mi denir hani o şekilde olur. Yine birbiriyle hani insanlar tanışır, yeni gruplar hadi oluşturalım denir. Orada mesela üç dört kişi, herkes atıyorum bir kişi iki kişi getirirse hani on kişi olur. O şekilde hani yeni grup oluşturulur. O da bir değişikliğe sebep olur hani bir oturmada aynı kişiler iki sene üç sene olduktan sonra o da biraz.

172. Hüseyin

Öyle bir şey değil, şimdi oturup sohbet ediyor iki kişi üç kişi iş adamları öyle arkadaşlarımız var, çevre akrabalarımız STKlardan ben mesela öyle konuşuyorum ne iş yapıyorsun bir cemaate gidiyor musun falan biraz cemaate yakınsa ben onu bir iki götürmeye çalışıyorum. Mesela burda bir sohbet başladı şu an, çevreden sağdan soldan böyle toparlıyorsun yani. Onların bir kısmı geliyor tutmuyor bir kısmı kalıyor. Kalıcılar da var tutmayanlar da ders alıyor, yine geliyor. Önemli olan bunu bir aşı yapmak, her yerde bunu yapmaya çalışıyoruz.

173. Emin

Yani bir şekilde tanışmış oluyorlar. Mesela benim tanıdığım oluyor, gördünüz bir arkadaş, o işte gelmiş buraya yerleşmiş ne oldu şimdi benimle beraber aynı gruba gelmeye başladı. Bunun gibi yani bir tanıdığı bir başka birini getireyim diyor falan orada çok ambiansı da bozmayacak bir durum varsa söz konusu ise tamam katılıyor ama hani ben de bir Salıya geleyim hiç bişey olmazsa da o zaman bir başka grup bir şey de oluşturulabiliyor bir yan grup oluşuyor başka bir 7-8 kişilik bir şey oluşturuluyor yani.

174. Orhan

Yani çağırdık geldiler, çağırdık gelmediler bir daha çağırdık bu sefer geldiler, bilmiyorum bir şekilde oldu hani bizim çok bir emeğimiz yok ama bir şekilde o masa hani genişliyor. Yani ekstra bir benim kriterim yok çevremde arkadaşlarım yakın çevremdeki insanlardan başlayarak onlara ağırlık verdim. Şu an bizim grupta benimle beraber olan arkadaşlar benim 12 yaşından beri arkadaşım olan yazlık grubumdan arkadaşlarım. Hatta o arkadaşlarından biri üniversitedeyken aynı evde kaldığı üç beş tane arkadaş var, onlar da katıldı bize. Öyle bir genişleme oldu diyelim.

175. İhsan

Yok belki kısmen. Onu çağırmaya çalışan sizseniz kafanızdan bir kaç arkadaşla istişare ile, yani mütevellî olan bir kaç arkadaşla beraber yeni sohbet oluşturmaya çalışıyorsunuz. O homojenite üzerinde duruyorsunuz. Yani birbirlerine daha uyum gösterecek insanları bir arada tutalım diyorsunuz.

176. Yusuf

Ya şimdi buna şöyle belirlenmiş bir kriter yok ama ister istemez kendi çevremizdeki arkadaşlarımız oluyor, biraz esnaf arkadaşlar daha ziyade katılıyor. Yani en önemli özelliği de uyum sağlaması. Çünkü biraz insan karakteristik özelliği de genelde geldiği zaman o ortamda da yani tabii ki farklı fikirlerden de olabilir, farklı düşüncede de olabilir, bunlara her zaman için saygı duymuşuzdur. Ama ortamı bozucu hal ve hareketler, özellikle de siyasi mülahazalarla ortalığı bozmaya çalışan arkadaşlarımızı çok fazla tercih etmiyoruz, davet etmiyoruz. Gelse de bir müddet sonra zaten bakıyor ki o ortam kendini açmıyor ve bırakıp ayrılan arkadaşlarımız da oluyor. Onun dışında ben işte çalıştığım firmalardan veya ortak iş yaptığımız firmalardan birini davet ediyorum. Bir başka bir arkadaş bir eşini dostunu davet ediyor derken bu halka genişlemiş oluyor, bir on beş yirmi kişilik grupla sezonu götürmüş oluyoruz.

177. Hakan

Yani çok detaylı bir kriteri yok ama o sohbeta gelip istifade edebileceğini, istifade etmesi gerektiğini düşündüğümüz arkadaşları davet ediyoruz. Onun dışında belli

başlı bir kriter yok, illa şöyle olması lazım böyle olması lazım diye kriter yok. İşte çevremizde, eşimizde, dostumuzda, arkadaşlarımızda bu sohbetlerden istifade etmesini istediğimiz arkadaşlar.

178. Nedim

Onlar için ölçüt yok. Yani nasıl yok? Kendi akrabalarından, esnaf olur, o insanlarsan fitratı bozuk olmayan, temiz olanlar. En önemli özelliği karaktersiz olmayacak, ikiyüzlü olmayacak, hırsız olmayacak. Hırsızlık ederse oturmaya gelir, oturmadaki adamın eşyasını alır. Bunlara ben önem veriyorum. Ama onlara ulaşılmayacak mı, onlara da ulaşacaklar. Ama biz şimdilik bunları seçerek alıyoruz, arkadaşlarımızı seçerek aramıza alıyoruz. İçlerinde mesela art niyetli olanlar da gözünden belli oluyor. Onları almıyoruz mesela. Şey yapıyoruz, kendi ayarımızda esnaf grubu, öyle insanları şey yapıyoruz.

179. Cihangir

Bu tabi çevrede ne kadar insan tanıdığımızla alakalı, bu zaten yani her mesela ilginç bir araştırma var. Yanlış hatırlamıyorsam dünyada herkes beşinci mi altıncı kişilerin birbirini tanıyormuş. Yani işte bugün bir cumhurbaşkanını veyahut da bilmem nerenin başkanını tanımak demek benim bir akrabam birini tanıyor, o onu tanıyor filan sonra bakıyorsunuz Amerikan başkanını beşinci kişide tabi daha bile kısalıyor yani neticede bu bir böyle bakınca dünya çok küçük yani. Birileri gelince o başka birilerine vesile oluyor, onun tanıdıkları oluyor seven benimseyen yani insanlar olunca kişilere ulaşmak çok zor olmuyor. Kriter yani hayır yani çok böyle geniş yani Mevlana'nın çizgisinde kim olursan ol gel yani hangi siyasi görüş, hangi eğitim durumu, ne olursa olsun. Tabi olabildiğince belki homojen gruplar oluşturup, insanların birbiriyle daha iyi vakit, daha kolay birbirlerini anlayabileceği gruplar oluşturuluyor olabilir ama yani olabildiğince farklı insanlara ulaşmak. Ama tabi yani böyle ihtiyacı hissetmesi de lazım insanların, ben bir sohbe gideyim orada işte dini telkin, namaz, ibadet vesaire gibi konularda kendimi geliştireyim gibi bu isteği göstermesi lazım bir insanın. Yani toplumda da ne olursa olsun şöyle bir sıkıntı da oluyor, işte çağırıyorsunuz bu sefer şey oluyor yani o işte şöyle bir adam, bu böyle bir adam. Onu da aranıza alıyorsunuz böyle şeyleri de oluyor, anlaşılakta da güçlük çekiyoruz yani hani kendinde bir şeyi yok çocuğun ama ailesi sevilen sayılan, e napalım yani çağırmayalım mı? Ama böyle yanlış anlaşılmalarda olabiliyor bu çok ince ve hassas bir çizgi maalesef yani.

180. Mahmut

Biz davet ediyoruzdur bazılarını. Mesela iş çevremize yeni bir arkadaş geldi diyelim. O arkadaşımızın zaten hal hareket davranışı, mesleki etiği, etik yönü, onunla konuşup ilgilenmek, ona sosyal hayatta ev tutmaydı vesaireydi, çocuğunu okula yazdıracaksa okula yazdırma gibi, alışveriş yapacaksa bilmiyor ona zarar vermeyecek şekilde davranması gibi... Böyle bir iletişim olunca zaten dostluk oluyor, dolayısıyla ailece görüşmeye başlıyorsunuz. Ve bizim böyle bir oturma grubumuz olduğunu, bu şehir bu yönden çok şanslı, herkesin oturma grubu var

zaten o da bir kültür. Oturma grubumuz olduğunu, arzu ederse gelebileceğini söylediğimizde kabul ederse geliyor. Geldiğinde memnun kaldı hoşuna gittiyse devam ediyor, ama hoşuna gitmedi beklentilerini karşılayamadıysa bir daha gelemebiliyor. Ama iş ilişkimiz, normal hayattaki ilişkimiz devam ediyor.

181. Murat

Elbette yani öncelikle hani topluma uygun halde yani eğitim seviyesi ve sosyokültürel yapısı bizim oturmamıza uygun olması lazım. Çünkü her seviyede oturma var, her türlü arkadaş grupları var, öncelikle oturmamıza uygun olması lazım ve ahlaki problemlerinin olmaması lazım bu insanın tabii o manevi ortamı bozmasın. Böyle bir referansla getirmeye çalışırız genelde arkadaşlarımızı, istişare ederiz abilerimizle böyle böyle bir arkadaşımız var diye. Bu konuda eğer dini yatkınlığı da varsa veya Hizmet konusunda biraz aşinalığı varsa veya yoksa da merak ediyorsa, getirip oturma gruplarımıza bu konularda bilgi veririz yani böyle seçeriz. Özellikle seçme kriterimiz biraz hani ahlaki ve sosyo-ekonomik yapısının uygun olması önem arz ediyor.

182. Cengiz

Valla bu yükü taşıyabilecek, kaldıracabilecek insanlarla daha çok beraber olmayı arzu ederiz. Eğer kaldıramayacaksa, bu yükü taşıyamayacaksa yani şeyin de bir gereği yok işin doğrusu zaman öldürmenin de bir gereği yok. O abi açısından da eğer o boşa gelecekse oraya gitmesin tabii. İnsan zamanını boşa harcamamalı, boşa emek vermeyeceksiniz. Zaman çok kıymetlidir, onun için gelen, bana birisi bir şey vermişti de ben onun adını söylemeyeyim, ben de onu aldım o verdiği şey bana ağır geldi, o yükü kaldıramadım. Abi de, o veren abi de şehir dışındaydı, telefon ettim. Dedim ki ya ben senin verdiğin yükü kaldıramadım, taşıyamıyorum, ne yapayım? Dedi ki, veren vermiş alan da almış, taşıyacaksın dedi. Ben de emir telakki ettim, aldım o yükü taşıyorum. Ne diyebildiğimi anlatabildim mi?

183. Ali

Ayrılanlar olabiliyor mu oluyor. Ama kesinlikle ya bu uygun değil, hoş değil, beklentim değil diyen anlamında değil ayrılanlar. Ayrılanlar belki böyle bir şeyde bir görev alma, gönüllü olarak görev yapma biraz şey gelebiliyor insanlara, zor gelebiliyor ileriki aşamada. Ya işte bir kurban var, işte himmet var, işte sosyal bir faaliyet var. Napıyoruz Kimse Yok Mu'nun bir programı var, işte bir afet durumunda Van'a gideceğiz, işte o insanlara yardım edeceğiz, yemek dağıtacağız. Veya işte Ramazan'da erzak dağıtacağız veya işte Kurban'da et götürücez Anadolu'nun bir yerine gidicez gibi aktiviteler arttıkça o insan, belki biraz daha rahatı tercih eden insanlar bu tür şeylerde çok vazife almak istemiyor. O zaman biraz kopabiliyor belki bu tür şeyden. Yani çok... Ama onların da ben iyi niyetiyle düşünüyorum, böyle oluyor yani bunu bir sorumluluk görüyor, değer veriyor, böyle bir şeyin içinde olduğu zaman yapmazsa vicdan azabı duyacağını düşünüyor, çünkü görev aldığı zaman orada eksiklik olduğunu hissediyor, onun için uzak durabiliyor. Katıldığı zaman hani bir görev alabilirim korkusuyla biraz daha uzakta

kalarak uzaktan destek verme şeklinde olan da olabiliyor. Çünkü hakikaten içine girdikçe bu işin hani sorumlu hissediyorsunuz kendinizi. Onlar da belki sorumluluktan dolayı böyle bir şeyden kaçıyorlar, sorumluluk almak istemiyorlar. Daha uzaktan destekleyeyim diyor, bu şekilde uzaklaşıyor. Yoksa ya bu işte uygun değil veya ya bu doğru değil deyip uzaklaşan ben görmedim yani bu manada görmedim

184. Cengiz

Taşıyamayanlar olabilir yani başka niyetlerle gelmiştir. Manen, maddeten bu insanlardan nasıl istifade ederim diye gelenler de olmuş olabilir. Bununla birlikte o abilerin yükünü taşımaya muktedir olmayanlar da olabilir. Kaldıramaz, taşıyamaz bünyedir bu vermeyi. Bizim işimiz çalışıp kazanıp hizmet etmek ya, talebe yetiştirmek ya. Neyle olur bu, nasıl olur? Öyle olur yani maddeyle olur, çalışmayla olur, gayretle olur yani herkes gücünün yettiğince. Birinin hiçbir imkanı olmaz, o da bedenen çalışır yani benim şeyim de bu olsun der. Yani ben de bir okul yapıyorsa, bir dersane yapıyorsa, bir evde bir şey varsa ben de bedenen çalışırım, bedenimin zekatını veririm. Ama o adam bunu kaldıramıyorsa, taşıyamıyorsa o zaman bırakır gider, biz şey yapmayız.

185. Zeki

Yani tabii ki, şundan oluyor biz eğer arkadaşı işte demin bahsettiğim gibi keyfiyet anlamında yol aldırمامışsak, yani hizmete karşı bir aidiyet duygusu olması lazım. Yani bir aidiyet hissetmesi lazım, yani ben bu arkadaşların içine girdim ama bak namaz kılmıyorum namaz kılmaya başladım. İş yerim bereketlendi, çevrem güzelleşti. Farklı güzel insanlarla tanıştım diyebiliyorsa, biliyoruz ki bu arkadaşın bağlılığı daha farklı oluyor. Ama biliyoruz ki bu süreçte bu anlamdaki bir kaç arkadaşımız uzaklaştı. Her şeyde dört dörtlük, nerdeyse müteveli heyeti dediğimiz salı gününe alacağımız neredeyse teklif yapacağımız arkadaşlarımız bu süreçte biraz uzaklaştı. Kaybettik demeyelim de, çünkü ben o arkadaşların dönüp geleceğine inanıyorum. Ama şöyle bir şey oldu, herşeyi bir kenara bırakıp, o kadar yurtdışı gezi yaptırдық, o kadar orada Çarşamba sohbetlerimiz oldu, keyfiyetlerimiz oldu orada paylaşımlarımız oldu ama bütün bu kadar bunlara rağmen süreçte hizmetin yanında olmadılar bi iki arkadaşımız. Bi tanesi tamamen hani süreçte bizden uzaklaştı, bi tanesi ise sohbeti devam ettiriyor, ama destek anlamında bize desteğini yapmıyor şu anda. Daha önce yaptığı destekleri yapmıyor. Böyle bir durum var, şöyle de bir durum var hani hiçbi problem yok ama arkadaşın zamanı, Çarşamba günü sohbet yapıyorsunuz, arkadaşına uymuyor. Belli bir süre geliyor belli bir süre gelmiyor veya siz ilgilenemiyorsunuz fiziki şartlar, işyerini taşıyor, evini taşıyor gibi durumlar da oluyor. Gelip giden insanlar oluyor.

186. Mehmet

Hocamız ayrılmıştı. O kendi içinde herhalde bir sıkıntılar yaşandı, belki onun gençliğinin vermiş olduğu bir şeydi, biz bu geminin içerisinde isek biz geminin

içinde kalmalıyız. Bu geminin dümeni bana uymuyor şeklinde deyip gemiyi terk edemeyiz. Orda gemide kalırız, yanlış bir şey görüyorsak onu müceddidin ismini veririz ama yine orda kalırız, orda kalmalıyız diye düşünüyorum ben. Terk ederek bir şeye varmış olmayız.

187. Emin

Dediğim gibi taksim oluyor. Ya bir iki arkadaşımız oldu ama onlar da çok dışarıda değil bu olaylar biraz şey yaptı onu da kotarıcaz. Görüşüyoruz sıkıntı yok ama ailelerde bile, şu anda kadınlarda erkeklerde boşanma var. Çok kötü bişey, çok acı bişey olacak şey değil yani.

188. Selahattin

Bu siyasi şeyler beni çok üzdü, çok hançerler yedim yani. Çünkü bir kişiyi hizmete kazandırmak için kaç sefer yurtdışına seyahatlere gitmişiz gezmişiz beraber yemişiz içmişiz sonra bir hiç yüzünden, bir hiç yüzünden, siyaseti ben hiç görüyorum. Şeker pancarının posası yani.

189. Nedim

Ayrılan niçin olur? Eşleri mesela evden gitmesine razı olmaz, hiç bir yere gitmeyeceksin. Evde dizimin dibinden ayrılmayacaksın derse ona da söyleyeceğimiz bir şey yok. Bazı insanların ailesinin adetlerine şey yapamayız. Eğer dizimin dibinden ayrılmayacaksın diyorsa eşi, ona da biz saygı duyuyoruz.

190. Muhammed

Zamanla gelmek istemeyen insanlar olabilir. Mesela gelmek istemeyişinin sebebi şu olabiliyor: yapılan sohbetin tarzını, stilini beğenmeyebiliyor. Mesela bazısı çok farklı tonlar mesela ben geleydim biraz daha ilmihal dinlemek isterdim; bazı eleştirilerde de buldukları oluyor, olmuyor değil yani bunu da kabul etmek lazım. Doyurucu bulmayıp gelmeyen oluyor mu? Oluyor bu 15 sene içerisinde bu şekilde devam etmeyen 3-5 insan oldu. Veyahut zamanla sistemi tasvip etmeyen ama sadece işte dostluk baki, sempatisi var ama katılmak istemeyebiliyor.

191. Cihangir

Valla biz onlara yeterince anlatamadık belki şeyi diye bakıyoruz, bu işe daha çok gönül veren, bu işleri idare, sevk, teşvik ettiğine inanan kişiler daha çok demek ki biz muhabbetlerimiz sevdiremedik, onlara bu hakikatleri layıkıyla anlatamadık diye düşünüyorum. Onlar ne umuyorlar, ne buluyorlar? Bi onlarla konuşmak lazım yani belki bizi yeterince şey bulmuyor yani yeterli bulmuyor telkinlerimizi. Daha fazlasını istiyor, arzuluyor çünkü homojen olmuyor gruplar. Kimileri bir yıldır, iki yıldır katılanlar var belki mesafe kat edip, bu mesafeden kasıt dediğimiz gibi hani biraz evvelki ders mevzularında daha farklı dersler yapmak, daha farklı konulara girmek etmek arzu edenler olabilir. Kimi bu yönde belki terk edişler oluyor. Kimisi

de belki daha farklı ortamlar cazip geliyor insanlar için aileleriyle birlikte olmak, ne bileyim bir televizyon karşısında olmak, daha farklı sosyal ortamlar cazip gelebilir. Neticede bu işin dünyevi bir o yeme içme tarafı, sosyalleşme tarafı olsa da disiplinli şekilde kırk beş dakika, bir saatlik bir ders yönü de var. Yorucu bir günün ardından belki insanlara bu belli bir süre sonra ağır geliyor olabilir yani.

192. Murat

25 kişilik bir grubumuz var, her zaman herkes müsait olamıyor. Birisi rahatsız oldu mesela öyle olmaz ki dedi, ben gidiyorum onların evine, onlar benim evime gelmiyor dedi. Kayseri’de biraz böyle bir durum var, bu sırayı gözeten biri rahatsız oldu mesela. Ya iyi de bizde aynı durum olamıyor işte çok fazla seyahat eden arkadaşlar var, bunu dert etti kendine. Şimdi bizim şehirde oturmalar böyle belli bir yaş grubunun üstünde olur ve o insanlar çok fazla seyahat etmez yani illa ki gelir. O onun evine geldi, o gelmedi bizim artık hakaret sayılabilir noktada kabul edilebilecek bazı şeyler var, kültürel kabuller var hani bunlara takılan insanlar oldu mu sıkıntı oluyor tabi.

193. İsmail

Burada hani ayrılma mı şeklinde bakılmalı yoksa girip çıkma şeklinde mi hani. Öyle arkadaşlar oldu hani atıyorum iki sene katıldı, sonra katılmadı, sonra yine geldi. Onun özel hayatıyla ilgili olabilir yoksa hani öyle kati bir giriş kati bir çıkış şeklinde bir şey olmadı.

194. Zeki

Şu şikayetler olabiliyor, dersin süresi ile alakalı bazen sorunlar yaşayabiliyoruz. Yani belli bir saatte başlayıp belli bir saatte bitmesi gerekiyor. Herkesin o saatte gelip gitmesi. İkinci sorun da hocalarla ilgili yaşayabiliyoruz mesela arkadaşın benimsediği bir hoca var, o değişince eğer gelen arkadaş onun benimsediği bir arkadaş değilse tabii orda sorunlar başlıyor yani bu bizim için geçerli değil biz benimsesek benimsemesek bizim bakış açımız farklı olduğu için belki sıkıntı olabiliyor ama fark etmez bizim için. Ama sohbet gurubuna gelen işte Ali hoca Ali hoca diyor gelen arkadaş benimsenmekte zorluk çekiyor. Bu anlamda sıkıntılar oluyor. Bazen orda konuşulan bir şey ölçü veya maksadı aşan bir konu oluyor.

195. Yusuf

Ya illa ki oluyor dediğim gibi yani insanlar tekdüze değil. Herkesin fikri, görüşü, yaşam tarzı yani kabullenmeyebiliyor mesela diyor ki ya bu ibadetler bana ağır geliyor yani bir şey yaptığımız da yok da. Yaa ben namaz kılmak istemiyorum, o ortama da geliyorum herkes namaz kıyor diyor mesela hiç kimse kimseyi zorlamıyor hiçbir şekilde olmuyor ama hadi o gün bir akşam sohbette namaza denk geliyorsa, hadi namazı kılalım dediyse üç beş kişi bir kısım arkadaşlar da ayrı kalıyor. Bundan rahatsızlık duyan arkadaşlar katılmayabiliyor ama bu da çok nadir oluyor. Bir müddet sonra bakıyorsunuz ki o, namaza meyli varsa o arkadaşımızın,

ister istemez o ortamda başlıyor namaza, hayatına raptediyor tabiri caizse. Ve bakıyorsunuz ki üç sene beş sene o arkadaş artık namazla hem dem olmuş. O da sizi mutlu ediyor yani biz kendi yaşadığımız güzelliği bir başka biriyle paylaşmak size ayrı bir manevi haz veriyor.

196. Nedim

Sohbetlere katılıp şikayet edene ben şimdiye kadar hiç rastlamadım. Ayrılan arkadaşlarla da ilişkiyi tamamen hiç koparmadım. Ayrılanlar oldu. Eşiyle, çocuğuyla, ailesiyle vakit geçirmek isteyenler veya kendiyi problemlili insanlar oldu. Onlarla da ayrıldıklarında ya niye ayrılıyorsun demedik hiç. Ama ilişkiyi hiç koparmadım. Onlarla da görüşüyorum. Arkadaşlarımız, dostlarımız... Niye ayrıldın niye katılmadın demiyoruz onlara da. İnsanlar sevdikleri ile haşır olacak diyorsa, biz de sevdiklerimizle haşır olmak istiyoruz. Onlar da dost dairesinde kalıyor, inşallah öbür dünyada inşallah dost dairesi anlamında görüştürecektir Cenabı Allah.

197. Muhammed

Bir şeyler yapmaya çalışıyorsun tabi yani de şimdi o konuda bazıları şikâyet etmek için şikayet ettiği de oluyor yani. Hani tamam ilmihal dersi duymuyorsun ama diyelim türlü Sıyer-i Nebeviyi duyuyorsun, ondan sonra itikadi konuları duyuyorsun, ilmihal konusunda fevkalade neyi merak ediyorsan getir, sorabilirsin. Ama tabi biz zaman zaman o konuda o insanların gelmesi için mutlaka hani tamam eleştirdi boş bir arkadaş şekliyle değil, bir şeyler yapılmaya çalışılıyor ama kendince bir sebep bulup gelmeyen insanlar da var yani.

198. Cihangir

Yani tabi olabiliyor işte biraz evvelki dediğim noktada mesela belki kimisi ya çok dünyevi konuştuk falan sohbet uzadı falan diye. Bunlar tabi çok küçük örnekler, az da olsa böyle bir şey oluyor yani bu tür yönde eleştiriler... Ama ayrılanlar yani belki bizlere olan saygı ve şeylerinden yani işte ben gelmiyorum ama niye gelmiyorum işte falan çok da eleştiri biz duymuyoruz belki de yani bunu, neden gelmediğini bilmiyoruz. Yani bu yönde de belki yani çok da fazla ne için eleştiriyoruz? Yani işte Hizmet'in belli işte insanlara ulaşmak adına hedefleri vesaireler var, kimi zaman da belki açıkçası istenilen iş işte Kurban dağılıyor dünyanın dört bir tarafına veyahut da öğrencilere faydalı olmak adına burs talep ediliyor. Belki işte insanlarda işin o maddiyat yönüne takılmalar da olabilir.

199. Mahmut

Şikayet demeyelim de tabi şöyle beklentisi çok yüksek geliyor. Mesela diyor ki ben meal dersi için geldim ama yeteri kadar bilgi alamadım mesela hocamız, gelen kişi yeteri kadar bilgili gelmedi bana. Bu onun fikridir saygı gösteriyoruz ama yapacağımız başka bir şey de yok. O zaman onu farklı bir bilgi alma kaynağı olarak bunu bir ben hep öyle örnek veriyorum üniversite hazırlık yeri gibi veya

kendini bu ilme adıyorsa daha üst seviyede hocaların olduğunu, ilahiyatçıların olduğunu tanıdığımız bildiğimiz, arzu ederlerse onlarla tanıştırabileceğimizi söylüyoruz. Kabul ederse ediyor, etmezse onun fikri diyor ve saygı gösteriyoruz.

200. Zeki

Bizim tabii ki hayatımızı disipline ediyor. Bi kere bizde namaz duygu düşüncesi buralarda kazandığımız bir şey namaza olan hassasiyet bizim sohbetlerde hocamızı dinlemekle kazandığımız bir hassasiyet hocamızın namaza bakış açısı, Hocaefendi'yi kastediyorum. Bi de bizim hocalarımızın namazı da yani o konuda bize anlattıkları bi namaz hassasiyeti kazandığınızda sizin hayatınızın yarısı belli bir disipline oturuyor. Namaz birçok şeyi düzeltiyor, törpülüyor düzeltiyor. Bunun dışında aile hayatımıza hocam müthiş katkısı var yani ailenizde, eşinize davranışınız değişiyor. Yani biz şunu mesela hizmetten biliyoruz sizin hayırlılarınız, içinizde en hayırlı olanlar eşlerinize güzel davrananlardır. Bu hadisi şerifi biz hizmetten dolayı biliyoruz, ben bunu nereden bilecektim evet çünkü doğru düzgün kitap okumuyoruz hocam. E dinlemiyorsunuz okumuyorsunuz bunu size kim anlatacak yani. Biz bunları okuyunca veya dinledikçe eşimize davranışımız değişiyor. Sertleşeceğimiz zaman da -Sabır ilk tosladığınız andadır hadisi şerifi bizi orada frenliyor. Derken bunlar sizin hayatınıza şekil veriyor. Efendimizin hayatı, efendimizin söylieri hayatımıza şekil veriyor. O tabii oradan aldığımız ışığı hayatınıza yansıtıyorsunuz. Aile hayatınız değişiyor, iş hayatınız değişiyor.

201. Mehmet

Şimdi aradan 22-23 sene geçti, bakıyorum ruhi hayatımızda ahlaki hayatımızda ibadet hayatımızda ticaret hayatımızda elhamdülillah bişey olmaz dedik ama bişeyler oldu. Bize göre bişeyler oldu. Asla kendimi burdaki diğer bu hizmet erbabı olanlarla mukayese değil ama yani olmasaydı ne olacaktık.

202. Orhan

Ben bana dönüğünü söyleyeyim, bizim gruptaki arkadaşlar ben dahil başladığımız zaman biz namaz kılmıyorduk. Bunun Türkçesini söylemek gerekirse kılmıyorduk. Şu an bizim grubumuza namaz kılmayan yok diyebilirim, biz Kur'an okumayı bilmiyorduk, yani bunu net söyleyeyim çocukken belki camiye gittik öğrendik unuttuk öğrendik unuttuk ama bilmiyorduk. Şu an bizim grubumuzda Kur'an okumayı bilmeyen de yok. Dini bildiğimizi zannediyorduk, bizde bu çok bilinir ya herkes bildiğini iddia eder, biz dini bilmediğimizi de anladık. Dini bizi öğretecek bir yer varmış, bunu da öğrendik. Dolayısıyla yani dini noktada değişim bu. Ahlaki noktada bunu tarif edemem, yani bugün yine günahlar insanın gözüne belki şeytan güzel gösteriyor ama o vicdan mekanizması mıdır artık ne mekanizmasıysa, onu bu abiler ne yapıyor nasıl etkiliyor bilmiyorum. Ama insanı günden koparıyor. Haftada bir gün de olsa bir format atıyorlar sana, o bir hafta götürüyor seni, öteki hafta yine geldin. Bir format daha atıyorlar, yine yenileniyor. Aradan koparsan, şeytan kazanıyor.

203. Selahattin

Ya benim hayatımdaki yeri ve şeyi su ekmek gibi çünkü eğer öbür dünyaya inanıyorsam ben vakit namazlarım çok nadir kaçmıştır yani belki 50-60 yıldır öğlen namazını kaçırmadım ama dün maalesef öğlen namazını kaçırdım. Kaçıyormuş işte, bana su ekmek gibi nasıl elzemse, namaz gibi nasıl elzemse bana kendimi Hizmet' in dur diyemem yani. Hizmet olduğu için benim yaşam tarzım.

204. İhsan

Nasıl olmuştur, akşamdan duyduğunuz bir şeyin günlük hayatta neye tekabül edebileceğini bir takım yanlış uygulamalarınızı nasıl düzeltebileceğini, o sohbette duyduğunu bir şeyi bir takım yanlış uygulamalar yaptığınızı da aslında kendi vicdanınızda, aslında vicdan harekete geçiyor yani. Belki de bu sohbetlerin en iyi tarafı vicdanı harekete geçirmek. Ya ben ne yapıyorum diyorsunuz bazen. Yani ne yapıyoruz biz diyorsunuz yani bu ne Allah aşkına doğru nerede biz ne yapıyoruz. Dolayısıyla şüphesiz etkisi çok olur yani.

205. Yusuf

Günlük yaşantımız üzerine tabi manevi hayatımızı düzene sokmanın dışında işte başta da söylediğim gibi biraz kişisel gelişimimize çok ciddi manada katkısı olmuştur. Şimdi ben bazen bakıyorum işte bazı kitaplar geliyor, bazı insanlar geliyor diyorlar ki ya seminer veriyor kişisel gelişimle şunla bunla falan, biz farkında olmadan bu sohbetlerde kişisel gelişimi zaten fazlasıyla aldığımızı düşünüyorum ben. Onlar küçük, iki üç saate sığdırılmış veya elli yüz sayfalık kitaplara sığdırılmış, bir sefer okuduğunuzda ne kadar hayatınızı tatmin edersiniz bilemiyorum ama onlar böyle küçük şeyler. Ama bu sohbetlerin en önemli faydası insanın kişisel gelişimini, çevresiyle irtibatını, işte başta da söylediğim gibi bir insanla konuşmasını yani adabı muâşeretini çok ciddi manada sizin deminize, damarınıza işliyor. Yani böyle bir kitapla okuyup da bitirecek veya üç saatlik seminerle beş saatlik seminerle olacak bir iş değil bunlar. Bu bir süreçtir yani uzun soluklu bir süreçtir. Ben öyle faydasını gördüğümü düşünüyorum.

206. Nedim

Günlük yaşantısında bir mümin nasıl yaşar? Mümin insanlara dua ederek yaşar. Sohbetler bize bunu öğretiyor. Mümin sabah dükkânı besmeleyle açıyorum. Her gün devamlı aynı saatte, sekize on kala on geçe. O saatte açıyorum, açmazsam hastalanıyorum. Açınca da oturuyorum, bir tane Fetih suresi okuyorum, işte evradı ezkarları okuyorum. Eğer gece yaptıysam okumuyorum. Gece yapmadıysam okuyorum yani dükkânı sabah erkenden para kazanmak için açmıyoruz. Dua etmek için açıyoruz. Bir saat falan sürüyor tesbihatımız. Daha sonra arkadaşlar, işyerinde 7-8 kişiyiz, onlar geliyor yavaş yavaş. Ben dükkânın kasasını açmıyorum, kilidini açıyorum sadece. Onlar açıyor kasayı. Yani onlar gelmeden kasayı ben açmıyorum. Bu şekilde daha sonra da işte vakit oldukça, mümkünse Allah'ı anmaya çalışıyoruz. Yani Estağfurullahlar çekiyoruz. İzaca okuyoruz mesela bu

günlerde, gündeme özel. 85 tane izaca okuyoruz. Yani böyle... Salatı tefriciye okuyoruz. Onlar değişebiliyor. Mesela şu ayet şu kadar okunsun diyor arkadaşlar. Onun ehemmiyetini ben sonradan anlıyorum. Mesela Abdulkadir Geylani hazretleri şu ayeti şu kadar okumuş diyorlar. Bakıyoruz ki cidden öyle olmuş. Mesela bir musibet anında, Salat-ı Tefriciye okuyoruz. Musibetin defî için Salat-ı Tefriciye 4444 tane. Bunu 4444 taneyi bölüştürülüyor. Kime kaç tane düşerse herkes alıyor. Ben mesela şey yapayım diyorum kalanı ben alıyım diyorum. Hızlı okuyorum çünkü. Öbürü mesela Yasin şerif olduğunda ben almıyorum hızlı okuyamıyorum çünkü. Fetih suresi olduğunda alıyorum. Herkes kendine göre. Böyle işimiz gücümüz okumak, dua etmek.

207. Cihangir

Evet yani ne katkısı oldu? İbadet gibi konularda daha hassasiyetli davranıyor insan. Helal haram çizgisinde daha hassasiyetli olmaya çalışıyor, çünkü yani bu hem birilerine kılavuzluk etmeye çalışıyorsun hem de yani hem kılavuzluk edeceksin hem de o telkin ettiğin hayatın ötesinde bir hayatın olacak. Bu böyle bir ikiyüzlülüğü insanın bir maddi bir çıkarı olmadığı sürece, ruhen bir kişilik bozukluğu yaşamadığı sürece böyle bir hayatı insan uzun süre devam ettiremez yani. Dolayısıyla hem birilerine iyilik telkin edip hem de farklı bir hayat yaşamak çok mümkün olmuyor. O yüzden hani Hocaefendinin “yaşatma arzusu için yaşama” bu işin herhalde en önemli noktası yani birilerine iyiliği telkin ederken aslında kendi nefsinize bunu telkin etmiş oluyorsunuz. En büyük kazanç bu olabilir yani birilerinin imanını yani ahretini ve dünyasına da değiniyor, çünkü din dediğiniz şey sadece öyle ahiretle de ilgili değil dünyanın da düzeniyle alakalı bir konu. Yani bugün kıt kaynakları paylaşanlardan dünyanın nerede olduğu besbelli... Artık kimileri bu şeyi Hindu öğretilerinde buluyor, kimisi Hıristiyan olmuş vesaire... Ama işin aslına baktığımızda yaşanmayan dinler yüzünden dünya bu durumda. Yani dinlerin ortak ahlak kuralları var yani. Neticede o yönde bir pozitif olumlu katkısı var. Yani bir liranın, üç liranın bile insan insanlığını doğru yapabilmek istiyor yani. Yani helal haram çizgisi çok önemli oluyor yani hani kendimi ifade etmek anlamında değil işte ama mesela geçen üç lira bir yere borcum var, bir ay sonra nasip oldu yan gittim adam üç lira benim dedim borcum vardı, hatta farklı şubeleri olan bir işletme. Adamdan bileti satın aldım önünde yırttım, dedim teşekkür ederim benim böyle bir borcum vardı. Adam da teşekkür etti yani bu kendimi anlatma olarak değil ama yani işte böyle helal haram çizgisinde bu tip katkıları oluyor. Çocuklarımızı doğru yetiştirmek.

208. Ali

Benim için en önemli şeyi hayatı anlamlandırma olarak ben değerlendiriyorum. Yani şöyle ki yine ben tekrar başa döneceğim, ev iş ortamında insan kendine belki sadece bir maddi hedef koymuş olabilir. Ama Hizmet hareketinden sonra hayat şöyle bir anlam kazanıyor. Bir hedef koyuyorsunuz yani koyduğunuz hedef de şu; ister bunu dini anlamda değerlendirin, ister sosyal anlamda değerlendirin, isterseniz evrensel değerler deyin bütün dünya çapında değerlendirin, insanlık adına, yani hayatta yaşadığımız gaye adına önünüze bir hedef koyuyorsunuz. O

hedefi verme açısından bence çok önemli. Daha önceki şeylerde, belki başlangıç yıllarında hani insan her ne kadar ilgisini çekse de yıllar içerisinde bunu hedef haline getiriyorsunuz. Çünkü yapılanları gözle görüyorsunuz. Yani somut birşeyler var. Yani hep söylemler üzerine gider insanlar, okur öğrenir rutin şeyler bunlar ama bunu hedef haline birebir insanlık adına hedef haline getirmeyi o zaman öğrenmiş oluyorsunuz. Tabi sadece kendi etrafınızda değil, bildiğiniz o güzel tattığınız şeyleri bür başkalarına da anlatabilme aslında paylaşabilmeyi öğrenmiş oluyorsunuz. Yani paylaşma hep maddi anlamda konuşulur ya insanlar işte olduğundan başkalarıyla da paylaşmalı falan. Aslında bence daha önemlisi maddi değerlerin değil, buradaki manevi değerlerin, çok daha üstün değerlerin paylaşılması sözkonusu. Yani bu insana çok büyük bir hedef veriyor. Bunu daha da öncelediğiniz nokta, yurtdışına gittiğiniz zaman işte bir şekliyle işte kurban vesilesiyle veya Ramazan vesilesiyle veya bir mezuniyet vesilesiyle yurtdışına gittiğiniz zaman oradaki insanların bu konudaki değerlerle yeni tanıştığınızdaki heyecanı veya oradaki ihtiyacı gördüğünüz zaman daha da heyecanlanıyorsunuz. O zaman bunu hedef haline getiriyorsunuz. Yani bir örnek vereyim buna kısaca. Şimdi mesela bir kurbanda Afrika'ya gitmiştik, Nijer'e gitmiştik. E dünyanın en fakir ülkesi diye biliniyor Çad, Nijer filan. Misafir de davet etmişim, arkadaşlarımdan bir iki kişiyi davet etmişim. Şimdi orada hakaten öyle bir ortam görüyorsunuz ki elektriğin, suyun işte yiyeceğin olmadığı bir ülke. Maddeten bitik. Yani yol, su hiçbirşey yok. Fakat insanlara bakıyorsunuz yüzde doksan dokuzu Müslüman ama o sefalet içerisinde bile hani süpürge tohumunun yendiği bir ortamda bile insanlar kendi halinde mutlu görünüyor. Hatta götürdüğüm arkadaşlarla beraber üzerinde ne varsa artık böyle bir atletle dönecek pozisyonda herşeyini bırakarak döndü insanlar, öyle yani. Keşke bir şeyler daha getirmiş olsaydık da onları da bıraksaydık filan diye. Ayakkabısına kadar bıraktı arkadaşlar. Terlikle döndüler yani öyle geldiler. Sonra dönünce Avrupa'daki veya gelişmiş ülkelerdeki birkaç yere de gitmişim ben programa. İki arasında bir kıyas yapma şeyim oldu, şöyle ki burada Afrika'da maddeten yardıma gittiğimiz insanlarda kurban vesilesiyle, aç insanlara, maddeten aç insanlara yardım yapıyorsunuz. Fakat gelişmiş ülkelere baktığınız zaman bunlar da aç, bunlar da manen aç. İki arasında bir kıyas yapıyorum. Burada insanlar belki dünyasını kaybedebiliyor maddeten ama öbür tarafta gelişmiş ülkelerde o manevi açlık hem dünyasını hem de ahiretini kaybettiriyor. Dolayısıyla belki daha fazla ihtiyaç sahibi, e o zaman sadece maddeten değil belki manen paylaşılacak oranın daha fazla ihtiyacının olduğu yani.

209. Mahmut

Bir defa ben normal bir hayat yaşayan birisiyim, üniversite öğrencisi olacaktım, yüzdeye vurursanız o yüzdeyle ibadeti taat yapacaktım. Ama şimdi namazımı doksan, seksen altıdan beri kılan bir insanım. Bu bana bir defa pozitif bir şey. İki ben eğer Hizmet grubunu, camiasını tanımasaydım gördüğüm şey şuydu, camiden çıkarken istenilen bir hayrı vermek, bazen de hocalar çok hayır istiyor diye homurdanan cemaat daha cazip gelince belki homurdanacaktım. Veya yoldan geçen bir fakire vereceğim çok cüzi miktarlarla hayır yaptığımı, zekatımı verdiğimi, benim hayırsever bir insan olacağım hissi doğacaktı. Ama böyle bir

grubun içinde olunca, yapılan hayırları yardımları görünce bir defa hayır yönümü arttırdığımı düşünüyorum. Yoksa bir evim varken bir evim daha olacaktı, bir arabam varken bir arabam daha olacaktı. Belki ekonomik olarak çok daha zengin birisi olur muydum onu da bilmiyorum çünkü malı veren Allah, alan da Allah. Burada bize bakış açısı olarak daha dini bir yaşam kalitesi sundu. Hayır konusunda etrafla daha çok ilgili hale getirdi. Kendi evimizde olan değil de daha çok dışarıdakiler ne yapıyor oraya da bakar hale geldik, yoksa evimizde hiçbir eksikimiz yok çok şükür. Üçüncü bir şey de ben kendi adıma söyleyeyim, bir insan için otokontrol bu. Yani bir grubun içinde olmak veya bir arkadaş grubuyla böyle bir dini ortamda sohbetle bulunmak insanın güncel hayatta yapmaması gereken şeyleri de yaptırtmıyor. Yani insan nefis taşıyor, tek başına olunca çok daha cazip gelecek şeyleri benim bir arkadaş grubum var, haftada oturuyorum o insanlarla beraber yüz yüze bakıyorum, çalıştığım mekanda da daha dikkatli olmam gerekir gibi bir his veriyor.

210. Murat

Valla öncelikle başkaları için yaşamayı öğrenmek güzel bir şey. Yani Hizmet hareketi başkaları için yaşamayı öğretiyor. Bunları bilfiil belki öğretilerle değil de yaşam tarzını, hocaların yaşam tarzından, bu işin önde giden abilerinin yaşam tarzından, Hocaefendinin yaşam tarzından, sistemin şöyle ana yapısını gördüğün zaman ortaya çıkan yani başka, yaşatmak için yaşayan bir sistem ve bunu görmek bile başlı başına yaşantını değiştiriyor. Yani kendi menfaatlerinin üzerine bir noktada değilsin, başkalarının menfaatlerini ön planda tutuyorsun.

211. Murat

Şimdi insan hani çekirdek aile yapısına baktığında bazen egoist olabiliyor yani ben eşim diyor, benliğiyle, çocukların benliğiyle sadece ben merkezli onları düşünebiliyor. Ama sen diyorsun ki yok arkadaş yani benim bir oturmam var ve benim ilgilenmem gereken bazı insanlar var diyorsun ve senin için aslında ciğerlerinden bir parça olan çocuklarından vakit ayırıyorsun veya yani en önemli yoldaşından, hayat yoldaşından vaktini kısıyorsun, belki bütçesini kısıyorsun falan... Bu tarafta bir şeyler yapmak için uğraşıyorsun, talebelerin okuması için uğraşıyorsun, bir hizmetlerin devam etmesi için uğraşıyorsun, sohbetin devam etmesi için uğraşıyorsun ve bunları insanların odaklarına da koymaya çalışıyorsun.

212. Murat

Hani o yaşatma için yaşama şeyi çok farklı bir hadise yani o insanı zaten onun lezzeti bir şekilde şırınga olduktan sonra hayat değişiyor, hayatın değişiyor, ben merkezli hiçbir şeyi düşünmüyorsun yani, her şey, yani bir şey ikram edilecekse önce birine ikram ediyorsun sonra kalanıyla sen şey yapıyorsun. Eline bir fırsat geçtiği zaman önce arkadaşına diyorsun ki ya sen bak şöyle bir durum var diyorsun, onu yönlendiriyorsun yani ben merkezlilikten çıkıp artık başkaları için bir şeyler yapmayı ön plana koyuyorsun, bu zaten farklı.

213. Muhammed

Şimdi sohbe katılan insanları bir katılımcı olanlar, bir de bizzat derleyici, toparlayıcı insanlar, çağırıcı olan insanlar diye herhalde ayrı ayrı ele almak lazım. Yani aksiyoner olan, görev alan insan için dışarıya faydalı olmak isterken aslında en başta kendisine de faydalı oluyor. İşte hani ayet-i kerime de neden yapmadığınız şeyleri söylüyorsunuz hitabıyla karşı karşıya gelmemek için önce kendin yapman gerekiyor, bu bir. İkincisi hepiniz bir çobansınız, güttüğünüzden mesulsünüz. Bu çobanlık konusu sadece ailen değil, etrafın, arkadaşların, dostun, işte sohbet grubun her neyse. Bunlara da karşı bir mesuliyetin var, bu mesuliyetin de yeri geliyor bazen nefsinin isteklerine rağmen veya işte şeytani duygulara karşılık onları aşmak zorundasın. Fitratını bazen belki yenmek zorundasın ama o mesajı götürmek zorundasın. Gün içerisinde yani her gün aslında ideal olan bunun gündeminde olması bir insanın ama yani bazen hiç gündemine girmediği günler de olmuyor değil. Ama her hafta oluşu, özellikle sohbetin olduğu gün, bir gün öncesi gibi günler insana hatırlatıyor yani yapmak gereken şey işte insanları aramak, sormak, yerine göre gidip bizzat ziyaret etmek. Ondan sonra bunlar aslında işi zinde tutuyor. Görev ve sorumluluklar insanı daha çok bilinçli tutuyor yani.

214. Cengiz

Ben bir daha doğsaydım, sıfır yaş grubunda, bir yaşında insan az çok bir şeyleri görüyor, anlıyor. O günden bugüne yaşadıklarımı bir daha yaşardım, bir daha yaşardım. Çünkü bundan daha güzel bir hareket dünya üzerinde ben göremiyorum. Eğer varsa oraya giderim. Bu hareketten güzel bir hareket varsa oraya giderim. Niye? Benim anadan doğma kardeşlerim benimle diğer Hizmetin içinde kardeşlerimle olduğu gibi samimi olamadılar. Neden? Madde. Ama Hizmet hareketinde maalesef öyle bir şey yok. Kardeşlik ölünceye kardeşlik... Ben maddi planda, iş hayatında insan yaşadıkça her şeyi görebiliyor, sıkıntıya düştüğü günler de oluyor, dara düştüğü günler de oluyor. Öz kardeşlerimden, aynı anadan doğma kardeşlerimden görmediğim iyilikleri Hizmet hareketindeki kardeşlerimde gördüm. Bana, yerine göre arabalarının anahtarını verdiler, yerine göre bana harçlık verdiler. İmkânın var mı yok mu diye hal hatır sordular, ihtiyaçlarımı karşıladılar. Yerine göre bugünkü şartlarda kredi kartı, şu kartı kullanabilirsin dediler. Soruyorum size hangi insan bunu yapar? Kaçta kaç insan yapar bu hareketi? Öz kardeşim, anadan doğma kardeşimden göremedim ben bunu. Ama diğer kardeşlerim, benim manevi kardeşlerim, Hizmette beraber olduğum kardeşlerim her şeyi yaptılar. Bugün de aynen devam ediyorlar. Biz de bizden küçüklere, bizden sonra gelenlere, elinde imkânı olmayanlara aynı hareketi yapmaya çalışıyoruz. Hasbelkader Cenabı Allah'ın lütfu olduğu kadar.

215. Hakan

Bizim günlük yaşantımızda işte özellikle ticari hayatta bazen tabi her ne kadar dikkat etsek de helal haram kavramlarını daha bir dikkatli, hassas davranıyoruz. Bir de mesela bu sohbetlere katılan arkadaşlarla kendi işimizle alakalı konularda istişare imkanı oluyor. Yani işte bizim şu işimizi şöyle şöyle yapıyoruz, bu nasıl

olur iyi mi olur kötü mü olur? Sohbeta katılan arkadaşlarla zaman zamana istişare yapıyoruz ve o istişarelerin bereketini de görüyoruz.

216. İsmail

Bu bir kere insanın kendini düzeltmesini sağlıyor yani ben bu sohbetlere katılıyorum, ticari hayat olarak da, insani ilişkiler olarak da benim artık hani yanlış yapmamam gerekiri insan aklına oturuyor, yatıyor yani. Doğru insan olma, yanlış yapmama. Hem insani ölçülerde yanlış yapmama yani kimseyi kandırmama, yalan söylememe, yanlış yapmama şeklinde hem de çünkü önce insan sonra Müslüman deriz.

217. Ali

Çok olumlu. Neticede eve sohbeta çağırdığım zaman böyle bir faaliyetin yapılmasında kendileri de pay hissediyor, kendileri de katılmış oluyor. Bunu paylaşmak gerekir, evle de paylaşmak gerekir. Ev sohbetleri onun için önemli. Çocuklar da burada yapılanları fiili olarak görüyor. Yani bu hayatın içinden görüyor ama dışarıda yapılan bir faaliyeti anlatmakla, hani ilk o cümleye geliyorum, anlatmazsanız bilmezler, göstermezseniz görmezler, görecekler. Tabi onları da bu faaliyetlerin içine ben, işte erzak dağıtımı olsun, iftarlar olsun hatta kurban olsun, katmaya çalışıyorum. Allah nasip ederse kendime vermiş olduğum bir söz vardı benim, bunu ailemle de paylaştım. Dedim ki yani yıllarca bayramlar biz birbirimizle hep bayramımızı yapıyoruz ailenin yanında sıla-i rahim var ama Kurban'da özellikle Allah fırsat verdiği sürece ben Kurban Bayramları'nda ailesinin yanında olamayan, bu değerleri taşımak için evinden, yurdundan, ailesinden, nefsinden feragat edip de farklı diyarlara gitmiş olan insanlarla bayramlaşmak üzere ben gideceğim.

218. Mehmet

Asla kendimi burdaki diğer bu hizmet erbabı olanlarla mukayese değil ama yani olmasaydı ne olacaktık noktasına baktığım zaman, ailemin gidişine baktığım zaman çoluk çocuğumun gidişine baktığım zaman Hizmet' in bu anlamda benim hayatımdaki yeri nedir? En basit 1. Damat benim, 4 tane kızım bir oğlum var, 1. Damadım benim o zaman yine alını secdeli bir insandı, o zaman da memleketimizden diye aldık. İkinci damadım benim İzmir' li benim kızım ile aynı üniversitede okuyorlardı. Benim ona kız vermemin tek sebebi, en önemli sebebi %80i Hizmet' ten oluşu. %20 si başka sebepten. Bir kere Hizmet' tense geldiler. O noktaya geldik biz, en azından fikir olarak bu noktaya geldik. 3. Damadım keza öyle oldu. 4. Damadım da öyle oldu. Şimdi elhamdülillah sözlü gibidir, ilgilendiği görüştüğü bir kız var, onu da gene bizim Hizmet' ten bir şekilde bağlaması var. Yani biz çocuklarımıza bunu, öncelikle çocuklarımıza bunu aşlamaya çalıştık onlar da hamdolsun her biri omuz omuz gidiyorlar. Damatlar da öyle, benim için Hizmet her şey.

219. Selahattin

Şimdi tabii benim büyük kızım orta3 ten beri bu işin içerisinde o yol gösteren sohbetten geldiğiniz zaman da evde ders yapıyor. Biyolojicidir ama bir .. kadar şeyi vardır, üniversiteye gireceği zaman ortaokuldan beri bu işin içerisinde. Ben illa sen mimar olacaksın, ben haritacıyım, illa sen de mimar olacaksın ileride mimar ile haritacı bir bütündür birbirini tamamlayan iki şey gibi bir şey. O ağladı falan, meğerse o anda biyoloji öğretmenine ihtiyaç varmış, İngilizce biyoloji öğretmenine. Orta 2 de üniversite ikinci sınıftan itibaren öğretmenlik yaptı o. Yine her yere 14 öğrencimden 13 tanesi üniversiteye girdi hem de şu üniversitelere, Boğaziçi' ne, İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi' ne, Marmara' ya veya Sakarya' ya. Sonra okulu bitirdi işte Fem dershanesinde öğretmenlik yaptı falan sonra ben ona dedim ki kızım iyi ki de sen öğretmen oldun. Ben istiyordum mimar olsun, küçük kızım da istiyordum doktor olsun. Ama eğitimi istediler.

220. Yusuf

Ya tabi ki mesela eşim memnun, en ufak bir şimdiye kadar yani yakın zamanda böyle bir şeyle karşılaşmadım, istifade ettiğimi düşünüyor, zaten kendisi de gidiyor böyle hanımlarla alakalı bir sohbet bulmuş. O da haftada bir gün mutad devam ediyor. Biz karşılıklı faydasını görüyoruz. Hatta oğlum yeni üniversiteyi bitirdi şimdi geldi ben onu da söyleyeyim ben teklif edecektim işin açıkçası. Ya oğlum sen böyle sohbetlere gider misin falan diye, dedim acaba ben ısrarcı olurum da yarın bir gün ya babam istedi de gittim diye ses etmedim. Daha da bir ay oldu üniversite bitti geleli, evvelsi gün bana dedi ki ya baba böyle bizim sizin hocalara söyleseniz de benim gidebileceğim bir sohbet yok mu dedi. Ya tabi bir taraftan mutlu oldum yani kendi istemesi özellikle, demek ki babasında annesinde kendi çevresinde böyle bir fayda görüyor ki ben hiç ısrar etmeden, hiç bahsetmeden bile kendi talep etti. Ya herhalde işte bugünlerde bir arkadaş sohbetine o da başlayacak.

221. Nedim

Eşim ve çocuklarım da. Hizmetin okullarına gidiyor çocuklarım. Okuyor yazıyorlar. Çok memnumum, benden çok daha üstün çocuğum. Çok karakterli ve üstün. Niçin? Çünkü Hizmet hareketinin öğretmenleri yetiştirdi onu. Pırıl pırıl bir çocuk. Eşim de kendi sohbetleri var hem Hizmet hareketinde hem de diğer arkadaşlarıyla sohbetleri oluyor, arkadaşlarıyla onlara katılıyor. O da eksikliğini tamamlamak için uğraşılıyor. Kuran okumaları oluyor gündüz haftada bir iki sefer. Cuma günleri toplantıları... Ramazanda her gün hatim programı oluyor. Yani bizim gibi şeyleri var onların da kendi aralarında.

222. Cengiz

Çocuklarımızla çok ilgilenemedik desek sohbete gittiğimizden yeri var. Ama ilkti, o dönem öyleydi, öyle gerekiyordu. Bizim fedakarlık etmemiz gerekiyordu. Bununla birlikte bizim çocuklarımız bizim okullarımızda okudular. Allaha şükür ki hiçbiri de yanlış bir iş yapmadılar. Baştan ona dua ediyoruz. Başka okullara

gitselerdi ne yaparlardı? Onun da şimdi hesabını yapamıyoruz. Yani hiçbir zararını, hiçbir şeyini görmedik. Evde ailemiz, bizim evimiz hiç boş kalmadı. Misafirler, her gün misafirimiz var. İki gün veya üç gün geçmez ki, eğer öyle bir şey olacak olursa hanım der ki bana: Bey bey niye misafir gelmiyor bizim eve? Ben de mi bir şey var, sizde mi bir şey var? Ben yarın misafir getiriyorum der. Eşlerimiz, dostlarımız Türkiye'nin her tarafından hiç eksik olmaz, kapımız açık, hanemiz açık. Cenab-ı Allah var ediyor, onun sonsuz bir lütfu var, bereketi var. Yani şu rakam, şunu verin demiyoruz. Sen bir verirsen Cenab-ı Allah bunun karşılığını kat kat verir. O verdikçe biz mutlu oluyoruz, O verdikçe biz de çalışıyoruz, gayret ediyoruz.

223. Zeki

Şu var sizin hal ve hareketleriniz farklı oluyor. Yani bir çok eşten farklısınız. Bunu ifade ediyorlar. Kendi eşiniz de ifade ediyor. Aile çevreleri de ifade ediyor hocam. Bu sadece bende değil de, diğer hizmette olan arkadaşlarda da vardır zannediyorum. Yani şöyle bir söz de var hatta, dışarıda bazı insanlar hizmeti eleştirir eder ama kendi kızlarını da hep hizmetten birilerine vermeye çalışırlar. Çünkü onlar böyle farklılardır yani sigara içmezler, namazlarında dikkatlidirler. Yalan konuşmazlar, yüzleri ayrı bir parlar. Bu bizde yok çok fazla da hocam. Ama yalan konuşmamaya dikkat ederiz. Dolayısıyla şöyle bir şey oluyor hocam, sizin o duruşunuz, hem eşinizde, hem onun ailesinde hem sizin ailenizde bakış açısını değiştiriyor tabii ki. Ne yapıyorsunuz hocam, çocuğunuza farklı yaklaşıyorsunuz. Çocuğunuzu alıyorsunuz hizmet duygu düşüncesinde olduğunuz için hizmetin müesseselerine veriyorsunuz. Orda zaten hijyenli bir ortam var hocam. Hijyenik bir ortamda çocuklar yetişiyor. Eşim bunu ifade de etti. Senin hizmette oluşun, senin bakış açını çok değiştirmiş diye ifade ediyor. O kişinin sadece kendisiyle kalmıyor hocam. Kardeşleriyle de alakalı, işte benim abim, kardeşim, bizim hizmette olmamızdan dolayı bizimle birlikte programlara iştirak ediyor, e hoca arkadaş gelince sadece bana hitap etmiyor ki. Abime kardeşime de hitap ediyor gelen hoca. Onlara da burada sohbet ediyor veya bir dostluk kuruyor bi arkadaşlık kuruyor. Bi genel programa davet ediyor derken sizin kardeşleriniz de o işin içerisinde yer alıyor. Bir aile şekilleniyor hocam. Yani şunu çok rahat ifade edebilirim, hizmetten olan bir arkadaş kendi ailesiyle ilgili bir çimento görevi görebilir. O ailenin çimentosu gibi olabilir.

224. Cihangir

Hocaefendinin Çekirdekten Çınara kitabında der ki yani doğru çocuk eğitimi yoktur, doğru ebeveyn eğitimi vardır. Onlar zaten o küçük dağarcıklarıyla kopyalayarak hayatı yaşarlar, iyi bir örnek olursanız çocuklarınız da iyi bir nesil sizin için oluşturacaktır. Yani çok çarpıcı bir örnektir. Bir sürü eğitim psikolojisiyle ilgili kitaplar yazılıyor, yani gerçekten öyle. Yani çocuğu olanlar bunu çok rahatlıkla bilir, ağzınızdan kötü bir sözü papağan gibi tekrarlarlar veya iyi bir örneği de iyi olarak. Mesela anaokuluna giden çocuklarım var, bir seyahatte nasıl dua edilmesi gerektiğini, bir yemek duasını onlardan öğreniyoruz sonra işte bunun bir cemaat kültürü falan olduğunu düşünüyoruz. Sonra bir Kuran-ı Kerim

hatminde görüyorsun ki o ayetler aslında Kuran-ı Kerim’de var. Sonra bu harekete olan imanın artıyor yani bu böyle yeni bir şey değil yani. Yani bu aslında yani kaynağı orası... Yani o ayette çocuğun ezberlediye eğer duasını gördüğün zaman öğreniyorsun ki aslında o bir ayetmiş yani ona dua diye öğretilen şey.

225. Murat

Olmaz mı bilgilerimizi paylaşma veya orada da dahil yani bir şey anlatmak çok zordur, özellikle de eşine anlatmak, eşine öğretmenlik yapmak zor bir iştir yani burada tabi yaşam tarzın önemlidir yani benim eşim ailesi de, aile yapısı da sol görüşlü bir aileydi. Ondan sonracağıma bu işleri, hatta benle ilgili istihbarat yapıp Hizmetle alakam olmadığını düşününce kızı vermeyi tercih etmişler falan, ondan sonra işin ta göbeğinde buldular beni de bazen. Ondan sonra şaşırmışlardı o zaman ama orada işte yaşam tarzıyla bir şey gösterdi benim eşim de şu an sohbetlere gidiyor yani.

226. İsmail

Olmuştur. Çünkü insan orada şey yapıyor dediğim gibi normalde unutup insan ama oraya gittiğinde diyor hani ha şöyle yapayım mesela çocuğuma da şunu öğreteyim, ilgileneyim ya da işte onların da ruhlarını doyurmak için düşünüyorsun sen kendini doyurdukça sen neler yapmalıyım diye. Onlara da o şekilde illa ki faydası oluyordur.

227. İhsan

Valla benim şu anda arkadaş çevrem hep Hizmet’ ten. Dolayısıyla yani, eski arkadaşlarım var Hizmet’ ten olmayan ama yani yeni arkadaşlarımız da hep öyle oluyor. Belki burada bir öz eleştiri yapmak lazım, daha eski arkadaşlarımız ama Hizmet’ le bir şekilde tanışmamış arkadaşlarımızı ihmal ettiğimiz gerçeğini de burada görmemiz lazım.

228. Cengiz

Arkadaşlarımız hiçbir zaman bizden en ufak bir şey, maddi ve manevi planda şey beklemediler yani, zarar görmeyeceğim, emin insanlar der, buradan zarar gelmez der. Elhamdulillah bugüne kadar da en ufak bir şeyimiz olmamıştır. Bütün kapılar açıktır, gidin bir esnafa bir yere. Sizden Allah için iyi şey almışsa, referans almışsa... Geçen yıl ben bir işte kardeşlerimden ayrıldım, yeni bir işyeri, burayı kuruyoruz, geçen yıl kuruyoruz burayı. Tezgah alacağız. Bir bankaya gitseniz, bir on bin lira talep etseniz sizden neler isterler? Bir trilyonluk tezgah, bir trilyonluk tezgah... Ne bankadan teminat, ne ipotek, ne bir bilmem ne... Bundan daha büyük zenginlik olur mu? Soruyorum olur mu bundan daha büyük bir zenginlik? Allaha hamdolsun verdiler, biz aldık. Allaha çok şükür borçlarımızı da ödedik, en ufak bir şey, kaza bela geçirmeden. Daha ne isteyelim biz? Ne isteyebiliriz yani? Yani dostlarımız... Akralarımız, bizi tanıyanlar bilirler ki benim, şu gün oturmam var. Onların bizim o gün evde olmayacağımızı katıyetle bilirler. Çünkü yıllarca alıştılar artık. Hepsini de, bizim akralarımıza karşı en ufak bir şeyimiz olmamıştır ne

biliyim onu ifade etmekte biraz zorlanıyorum. Onların da bize saygıda kusur ettiklerini görmedik. Ne de birisinin elinden tutarsam, başını okşarsa, bir yetimin başını okşarsam, bir çaresizin derdine derman olursan zarar görür müsün? Soruyorum size, görür müsün? Bizim vazifemiz bu, birinin balını okşamak. Bir imkanı olmayanın elinden tutmak.

229. Muhammed

Tabi yani akraba çevresinden çağırdığımız kişiler de var şu anda devam eden arkadaş çevremde. İlk zaten başvurduğum insanlar onlar oluyor. Başvurduğum insanlar onlar oluyor, katılıyorlar. Yani gerek kayınbiraderim, bacanağım, okul arkadaş çevrem, okula arkadaşlarım hatta. Hatta yeni bir şu anda sohbet grubu kurmaya çalışıyoruz. Onlar da aynı şekilde ortaokul ve liseden arkadaşlarım mesela.

230. Murat

Arkadaş ortamında zaten aynı arkadaş ortamındayız. Akraba çevremde de bu bilinmiyor, böyle bir şey olduğu zaman da hani böyle bir dini mevzuda tartışmaya girildiği zaman da ya Murat'a soralım diyenler oluyor. Yani çok bilgili olduğumuzdan değil ama öğrenip yanıtlıyorum.

231. Nedim

Yani en yakınlarımdan bazıları onlar da katılıyorlar, o zaman onlarla daha sık görüşüyoruz, daha mutlu oluyoruz, kafa yapım daha uyuyor. Bazılarıyla da daha az görüşüyorsun yani tek din İslam'dır şeyini hayatına uygulamayanlar olabiliyor. O zaman da sık görüşmek hoş olmuyor, tartışmalar çıkabiliyor, ben de tartışmalardan uzak kalıyorum. Akrabalarımınla tartışmak istemiyorum.

232. Zeki

İş hayatımızla ilgili çok çok istifade ettik. Bizim hem bu derneklerimizden de kaynaklanan bişey mesela iş adamları derneğimizde ben mabiyad yönetim kurulu üyesiyim orda işte zaman zaman seminerlerimiz oluyor onları paylaşıyoruz işte hizmette olmamızdan dolayı Hocaefendi'nin koyduğu düsturlar var Hocaefendi'nin koyduğu düsturlar var onlara dikkat ediyoruz işte Hocaefendi mesela metodu çok önemsiyor, metotlu çalışmayı çok önemsiyor. İstişare birinci sırada gelen bişey. Biz istişare kültürünü hizmetle aldık hocam. Bi işimiz olacak istişare ediyoruz, yani mübalağa olmasın ben firmaya depo tutacaktım hocam dedim ki ya vazifeli arkadaş ya hocam şurada şu kadara bir depo tutacağım uygun mu tutayım mı ne diyorsun uygun görüyor musun dedim yani biz artık öyle bir hal aldık ki araba alacağız hocam şu arabayı alacağız nasıl uygun mu onayınız var mı diyoruz. Böyle bir disiplin var yani. Mesela biz belki en önemli kazanımlardan birisi de, biz ortağız hocam abim ve kardeşimle. Ortaklık kültürünü ve ortakların adil olması gerektiği kültürünü biz hizmetle öğrendik hocam. Nasıl öğrendik? Hizmette işte salı günü dediğim arkadaşlar var ya heyet, orda oturduk istişare ettik.

Ya biz ortağız, bizim aramızdaki paylaşımımız yürüyüşümüz nasıl olmalı? O abi bişey söyledi o abi bişey söyledi biz aldık onları istişare ettik geldik firmamıza uyguladık ve bizim firmamızda o gün bugündür bi huzur var. Maaş düzenli bir adalet var. Kardeşlerim çok memnun, ben acaba hizmette olmasaydım böyle bir şeyi nasıl yansıttım nasıl böyle insanlarla istişare ederdim bu mümkün olmazdı yani.

233. Selahattin

Baştan bahsetmiştim zaten. Benim arkadaşlarım vardı, emekli olmuşlar. Zekat veriyor, ben de onlar gibi olabilirdim. Hizmet' e girmeseydim. Yurtdışına gittik, Hocaefendi gidin dedi yurtdışına, katkıda bulunun. Gittik yurtdışına şimdi işte holdingler var. Şirketler var elhamdulillah, ihracat yapıyoruz.

234. İhsan

Şu var, biz bir tarihte, 20 yıl oldu herhalde. Bir Uzakdoğu seyahati yapmıştık beraber olduğumuz oradaki işle ilgili bir seyahatti 3-4 kişi. Ama tabii oradaki, Uzakdoğu işte Japonya Tayvan Kore falan orada Hizmet yeni oluşmaya başlıyor. Buradan oralarla ilgilenmesi için giden hoca arkadaşlarımızla beraber gitmiştik, buluşmuştuk yani. Onun bir lafı vardı abi bu Hizmet insanı diplomat yapar demişti. Şimdi öyle tabii, diplomat olma anlamında değil de mesela Hizmet in tabii global pozisyonu sizde bir vizyon oluşturuyor bu böyle. Fakat tabii yaptığınız iş konusunda fenafil iş olmamanız gerektiğini de size söylüyor, bunlar ideal nokta şeyler ama gerçekten de olabiliyor süre içerisinde bakıyorsunuz. Belki gereksiz hırslarınızı törpülüyor. Bazen fazla törpülüyorsa, yani işinizde becerikli olmak, işinizde de himalet veren hatta çok akıllı hareketlerde bulunmanız gerektiği sebep şartını da ihmal edebiliyorsunuz. Burada böyle de bir risk var. Dolayısıyla da daha doğru, daha dürüst, daha ilkeli iş hayatına dönük prensipler edindiriyor size Hizmet. Vizyon katıyor. Ama belki şu olabiliyor, tamamen kişisel bir şey bu, belki siz biz sonuçta iş adamıyız. Hizmeti, ben onu öyle diyorum, bahane edip de işimizi ihmal etmemeliyiz. Böyle bir risk kişisel olarak zafiyetten oluşabilir dikkat etmek lazım. Çünkü Hizmetin de başarılı iş adamlarına ihtiyacı var. Temsil diyoruz ya. Mesela şimdilerde ben bunu daha iyi anlıyorum. İşimizi yurt içi yurt dışı daha iyi hale getirmeliyiz. Nasıl getireceğiz bunun yollarına bakmalıyız

235. Yusuf

Şimdi iletişim tabii çok önemli biliyorsunuz, insanlar bazı şeyleri oturduğunda, konuştuğunda, paylaştığında bundan ciddi fayda sağlayabiliyor. Yani şöyle ki sohbetin dışında kalan kısımlardan diyorum ben, oradaki bir sanayicinin, bir esnafın başından geçen bir hadise, belki sizin yaşamadığınız bir hadise olduğu için, duymasanız, bilmeseniz aynı hatalara belki aynı yaşlara sizin düşmeniz de mümkün. O ortamlar zaten buna da çok açık oluyor yani meşru dairede biz orada her şeyi konuşabiliyoruz yani başından geçen sıkıntılardan konuşabiliyoruz veya yaşadığı bir güzellikte ettiği bir istifadeden tavsiyeyle biz de aynı tavsiyeyi hayatımıza veya işimize yansıtabiliyoruz. Bundan dolayı da ben çok ciddi katkısını

gördüm. Tabi bazı ortaklıklar bu sohbetlerde çıkabiliyor yani ticari ortaklıklar da olabiliyor ki biz bir dönem bu arkadaşlarımızla yaşadığımız bir ticari ortaklığımız oldu, çok da güzel geçti, on dört on beş sene geçti. Sonra Allah kısmet etmedi, sektörel bir sıkıntıdan yani tamamen sektörel bir sıkıntıdan dolayı ortaklığımız devam etmedi ama on beş on yeni sene devam ettik. Ortaklık bittikten sonra da hala o arkadaşlarla çok samimi bir biçimde görüşüyoruz. Ticaretimiz olmadığı halde de devam ediyoruz. Bu tür sohbetlerin buna da çok ciddi faydası oluyor yani o insan orada tanıyor, kendini geliştiriyor, o arkadaşla yakınlık kuruyor. Ve bir müddet sonra iş ticari birlikteliğe geldiği zaman diyor ya ben onla uzun yıllar oturdum diyor, benim diyor malıma, namusuma, herhangi bir şeye zarar getirmesin diyor test ediyor. Ve bir bakıyorsunuz ki bir müddet sonra ticari birliktelik olmuş, bunu geliştirmişler, yaymışlar, uluslar arası hale getirmiş olan birçok arkadaşımız var, ben tanıyorum bu sohbetlerde.

236. Muhammed

Şimdi tabi akşam o sohbete oturduk, dini konuları konuşacağız. Kalkana kadar dini konuları konuşacağız diye bir şart yok zaten işin doğası gereği belli bir şeyden sonra konu, gündem iş hayatına geliyor ondan sonra bunu orada konuşuyorsun. Bazen belki bilmediğin, duymadığın bir konuyu oradaki arkadaştan duyuyorsun. Ondan sonra bunun şirkete yansması, kendine yansması. Basit bir misal söyleyelim, diyelim ki o hafta şehre gelen iktisadi iş hayatıyla alakalı bir misafir var diyelim. Bunu iş adamları derneği düzenliyor olabilir, sanayi odası, ticaret odası düzenliyor olabilir. Öyle bir şeyi o akşam arkadaşından duyuyorsun. Sonra ertesi gün programını yakaluyorsun, gidiyorsun, dinliyorsun ondan sonra çok basit bir şey yani. Bunun gibi iş hayatına yönelik şeyleri de akşamları oturduğumuzda değerlendiriyoruz, konuşuyoruz. Bunların da bize getirdiği faydalar, yansımalar olduğu gibi artı bazen de özellikle çok eksik olduğumuz konu İslamiyet'teki ticari hukuk mesela yani ticaret hukuku. Bu konuyu işlediğimiz zamanlar oldu ve şunu gördük ki birçok doğru diye uyguladığımız, bildiğimiz şey yerine göre şüpheli konuma da düşebiliyor yani. Veya tam tersi çok yanlış diye bildiğimiz bir şey de aslında sistem içerisinde, eğer şartlarını yerine getirirsen de İslami olduğunu da görüyorsun.

237. Nedim

Ben iş hayatımda başarılı olduğuma inanıyorum. O da Hizmet hareketinde sohbetlerde aldığım peygamber ahlakından diyelim. Hadisi şeriflerde açıklamalarına giriyoruz bazen, bir hadisi alıyor bazen açıyor. Açınca iyi bir tüccar nasıl olmalıydı, Peygamber efendimizden öğrenmiş oluyoruz. O zaman burada başarılı oluyoruz. İyi bir Müslüman dürüst olmalı, hile yapmamalı, müşterisini kandırmamalı. O anlamda müşteri de kandırmadığımızı anlayınca.

238. Mahmut

Tabi şimdi mesela ben diyorum ki bir hekim bıçak parası almamalı, ben genel cerrahım. Muayenehane işletiyorum, bıçak parası nasıl alırım? Alamam. Bu

topluma faydalı mı zararlı mı? Tabi ki faydalı... Milletın zaten Őikayet ettiĐi Őey bu. Muayenehaneleri kapattı devletimiz, niye kapattı? GayrimeŐru para kazanılmasın diye. Biz o zaman zaten kazanmıyorduk gayrimeŐru para. Sadece devlet hastanesinde sunduĐumuz hizmetten daha iyi bir hizmet almak isteyip de muayenehanemize veya özel hastaneye gelmek isteyen varsa onlara hizmet veriyorduk. Ama devlette normal iŐimizi, poliklinik gnmzde, ameliyat gnmzde yapmamız gerektiĐini maaŐımızın karŐılıĐını biliyorduk ve bunun dıŐına ıkarsak haram olacaĐını ĐrenmiŐiz. Őimdi biz bunu anlatırken kendimizin bunu yapması nasıl olurdu? Olmaz. Bu tip sınırlamalar oluyor. Veya ahlaki olarak insanın aile yaŐantısı varsa hastaneler vesaireler bu tr Őeyler iin daha uygun bir ortam, biz bunu herkese sylerken kendimizin yle gayri ahlaki bir yaŐantısı olması olmayacaĐı iin bunlar sosyal olarak bir fren sistemidir. İnsanda da zaten olması gereken Őeyler budur yani bu hani kuldun utanıyor yapmıyor, Allah'tan korkmuyor kuldun utanıyor gibi bir mantık doĐurmasın yani insan hem Allah'tan korkmalı, hem de kuldun utanmalı. Yani kuldun utanmayan zaten Allah'tan hi korkmaz.

239. Murat

İŐ hak hukuk ve Őey ya iŐ hayatı Őudur, ok acımasız bir hayat. Sen srekli iŐ, menfaat, para Őu bu dediĐin zaman iŐ bazen alıp seni baŐka mecralara gtrebiliyor. Yani bu sohbetlerde de hak hukuk ve bu dini hassasiyetleri n plana aldıĐın zaman bazı Őeyleri yanlış yapıyorum diyebiliyorsun yani, bir iŐi szleŐmesi yapıcan, karŐı taraf sendika ektiriyor sen ektiriyorsun falan... Bir gn Peygamber efendimizin bir hadisi oturmada konuŐuluyor, ya bak Őurada da hak hukuk mesele sendika etmek lazım diye geri adım attıĐın oluyor yani byle hadiseleri hani yaŐantının belli yerlerine srekli monte ettiĐinden dolayı, belli taŐlar konduktan sonra muhakkak dzeltmeler yapıyor hayatında ve iŐ hayatında.

240. İsmail

İŐ hayatımda dzgn bir insan, dzgn bir esnaf olmaya zorladı beni. nk kul hakkı her Őeyden nemli, bu ticarete de hani srekli insani iliŐkileri hani bir yanlış yapsan sonuta kul hakkı hani haksız kazan. Yani ondan her zaman korkar insan ama bir Őekilde daha ok hatırlatıldıĐı zaman daha ok ona dikkat ediyorsun. Ki aman bir Őekilde haksız kazan elde etmeyeyim ocuklarıma haram lokma yedirmeyeyim. Artı insanları memnun etme hani daha sert, kavgalı bir Őekilde ticari iliŐki deĐil de daha yumuŐak, insani iliŐki kurma mŐterilerle. Bu Őekilde faydaları oluyor.

241. Ali

İŐ hayatımız zerinde Őyle bir etkisi var. İŐ, dediĐim gibi insanı zihnen, bedenlen, malen meŐgul eden, yoran bir ortam. İnsanların tabi hani biroĐunda, toplumda baktıĐınız zaman belki oĐu bunu hissetmiyor hani bedenlen rahatsızlık hissettiĐimizde doktora gidiyoruz da ama ruhen rahatsızlık hissettiĐimizde insanların oĐu hani bizim toplumumuzda byle belki biraz alışkanlık, Avrupa'da

belki gelişmiş ülkelerde biraz yaygın da, psikolojik olarak ruhi olarak insanlar böyle tedaviye çok alışkın değil. Yani öksürdüğümüzde, grip veya başka hastalıklara duçar olduğumuzda hemen tıbbi tedaviye başvuruyoruz. Ama ruhi manada sıkıntılarımız ve hastalıklarımızdan dolayı çok bu tür şeylere başvurmuyoruz. İşte sohbet ortamı aslında insanı iş hayatında da bu motivasyonu sağlama adına bence çok önemli bir şey. Bir kere sosyal olarak insanın bu ortama açılması, dini olarak bu alana açılması insanın ruhi manada tedavisidir. Tedavidir, bir ayetten yola çıkarak söylüyorum: “e la bi zikrillahi tatmeinnul gulub” ayetinde “Kalpler ancak Allah’ı zikirler mutmain olur.” Ayeti. Oradaki zikir geniş manadadır, yani bildiğimiz sadece sözlü zikir değil, yani Allah’ı anlatma zikirdir bizzat, Allah’ın adının anılması zikirdir yani bu sohbet ortamları da bir zikir ortamıdır. Yani bu faaliyetlerin hepsi birer zikir ortamıdır, dolayısıyla ancak işte bu ancak ve ancak ifadesi var orada. O zaman bu mutmain olma, tatmin olma buna bağlı. Yani bir sohbe, bu tür aksiyona yani çünkü sizi maddeten, maddi tatminler kalbi tatmin etmiyor. Bu hareket tamamen kalbin mutmain olmasıdır. İş hayatına nasıl bir şeyi olacak, yani sizin bu motivasyonunuz iş hayatında öyle güzelliklere vesile oluyor ki yeniden, bir yenilenme hareketi aslında bu kendi içinizde bir yenilenmedir. Bu motivasyonu sağlayıp kendinizi tedavi de ediyorsunuz bu manada. Sadece kendinizi değil, sosyal bir tedavi de yapıyorsunuz. Çünkü bazen hani biraz zorlayarak, nazımız geçtiği için zorlayarak davet ettiğimiz, yani işte tembellikten dolayı insan gidip televizyonun karşısına oturacak işte maçını seyredecek veya işte oturacak çekirdek yiyecek, tembellik yapacak. Gelmeye biraz tembellik ediyor, sevmediğinden değil ama bir şekilde getirdiğiniz insan oradaki o manevi atmosferle öyle bir rahatlık hissediyor ki sonunda teşekkür ederek çıkıyor bu insan. Gelirken zorlanıyor ama giderken çok mutmain olmuş, ferahlamış olarak çıkıyor. Bu insanın iş hayatına yansır, sosyal hayatına yansır. Sosyal hayatta da bu ortamda bu insanların bir birlikteliği de oluyor, iş hayatına da maddeten de yansacaktır. Bir kere ilişkilerini düzenliyor, yani daha düzenli hale getirebiliyor. Hem çevresini arttırıyor, sosyal çevresini de arttırıyor hem ahlaki ve iş hayatındaki ahlaki düzenlemesine de katkıda bulunuyor. Bu manada ciddi katkısı olur.

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