Double Challenges for the Elderly Turkish Immigrants in Montreal

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Abstract

The objective of this research is to better understand community workers' perspectives about social support in relation with community support service regarding elderly male and female Turkish immigrants in Canada. Semi-structured interviews were carried out among community workers who have/had been directly working more than two years with elderly Turkish immigrants in Montreal. Community workers' perspectives on social support is analyzed using central questions as follows: 1. What characterizes social support working with the elderly immigrants considering social determinants of health and the community services? 2. How could the community support system be improved? Analysis and interpretation of data were informed by a social constructionist theoretical perspective. Findings suggest that community support systems provide elderly individuals informational support dealing with linguistic challenges and emotional support in combating homesickness.

Keywords: *Elderly people, Turkish Immigrants, social support, community*

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Montreal'deki Yaşlı Türk Göçmenler için İkili Mücadele

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Öz

Bu araştırmanın amacı topluluk destek hizmeti ile ilişkili olarak Kanada'da göçmen olan Türk yaşlı kadınlara ve erkeklere dair topluluk çalışanlarının perspektifinden sosyal desteği daha iyi anlamaktır. Yaşlı Türk göçmenlerle 2 yıldan fazla doğrudan çalışmış/çalışmakta olan topluluk çalışanları ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Topluluk çalışanlarının sosyal destek hakkındaki bakış açıları aşağıdaki gibi merkezi sorular kullanarak analiz edildi: 1. Sağlığın sosyal değişkenleri ve topluluk hizmetleri düşünülürse sosyal desteği ne karakterize eder? 2. Topluluk destek sistemi nasıl iyileştirilebilir? Analiz ve data yorumlaması sosyal yapılandırmacılık teorik perspektifi ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bulgular, topluluk destek sisteminin yaşlı bireylere dil sorunlarıyla başa çıkmakta bilgilendirici destek ve memleket özlemi ile mücadele etmekte duygusal destek sağladığını göstermiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Yaşlılar, Türk göçmenler, sosyal destek, topluluk*

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INTRODUCTION

In the last decades there has been a considerable interest in social support, especially in ethnically sensitive migrant studies. Although social support is mainly provided by networks, the different categories of support are not clearly identified (Ryan, Sales, Tilki and Siara, 2008). The various categories and identities of social support contributed by networking of immigrants may be more relevant than a generalized notion of social capital, which is differentiated in its functioning depending on the individual (Hellermann, 2006; Morgan, 1990). Besides the importance of characteristics of social support, little is known about what meaning community workers attribute to social support or how the provided community services deliver social support to the target group. It is worthwhile to better understand and note the perspectives of the community workers whom elderly people, as well as other migrant age groups, heavily rely on for services. Given the gap in the literature regarding specifications and structures of social support, this study may help to better understand community workers' perspectives on elderly Turks' migration trajectory, language challenges, gender differences and much more. Community workers are working within the community that is representative of the larger socio-political structure of the host country. Therefore, learning about the influence of the social environment on social support rather than individuals' private specifications and conditions of social support, may allow us to view things "outside of the box." Hence, in this regard, the purpose of this research is to shed light on the community support system and what could improve the community support system.

To relate with this, the social constructivist theoretical perspective is preferred, in which Berger and Luckmann suggested "objective social reality(...) exists only as a product of human activity" (1967: 52). As suggested by this theory, human behavior may be influenced by aspects of the social environment in a dominant way, so that, understandably, social realms are constant creations of social actors. Within this regard, understanding social environment in which social support is provided and the interpretations of service providers who were intentionally selected by their experience and different immigration trajectories elaborate the whole picture of social

support to a greater extent.

In immigration literature, it is accepted to a certain extent that first-generation immigrants are less socially integrated than second-generation immigrants (Gijsberts, Van Der Meer and Dagevos, 2012). For example, in the UK, older Turkish immigrants are in need of culturally oriented services and better integration partly because they lack language skills similar to Black and Minority Ethnic Groups (Hussein and Oglak, 2012). Notwithstanding having similar socioeconomic characteristics with their peers, they may still be vulnerable due to lack of social support.

In a comparative study for elder immigrants in Stockholm, London and Berlin, in which over 50 elderly Turkish, Kurdish, Iranian and Assyrian individuals were interviewed, Songur (1992a; 1992b; 1996) reported that the way of life of elderly immigrants were characterized by social isolation and inactivity resulting from various encountered difficulties, as well as due to a move from so-called 'traditional Islamic societies'. Songur also suggested that older immigrants in Sweden were disadvantaged because they lacked not only economic resources but also the social capital that would enable them to adapt to their new surroundings.

While on the subject of integration process under social capital, social relations and roles can be lost during migration process (Schiffauer, 1991). Advantageously, immigrant associations are quite accessible for elderly people, as they bestow them a social surrounding with friends, families, co-nationals, etc. (Palmberger and Tosić, 2016). Thus, associational life could be a response for their specific needs, especially reconstructing the social sphere of immigrants in their host country and providing support. Nevertheless, cultural migrant associations in which many older migrants sense they are socially embedded are indispensable (Palmberger, 2017).

Torres argued that both the ethno-cultural backgrounds of elderly immigrants and the age of the migrants on arrival must be considered (2002) for better classification and understanding. An aging immigrant copes with various challenges differently than those who immigrated in the time of elderliness (Torres, 2006). Coping with migration related issues may be an indicator for social class and also health status.

Migration can possibly be considered as a social determinant to health (Marmot, Allen, Bell, Bloomer, and Goldblatt, 2012) and may affect the way in which elderly individuals experience health after their middle age (Kulla, Ekman, & Sarvimäki, 2010; Torres, 2001). In a study on first generation immigrants of Turks and native Germans older than 45, Turkish immigrants showed a considerably less healthy outlook than their native counterparts (Wengler, 2011). Elderly individuals lacked social support and may have felt depressed, isolated and lonely (Pehlivan, Ovayolu, Ovayolu, Sevinc, & Camci, 2012).

Moreover, Kwak and Lai (2012) argue that older adults in aging and immigration processes do not possess assets of cultural competence to overcome certain difficulties in the host country. Elderly immigrants are more prone to consider their friends, family members, communities, neighbors etc. for physical, emotional, and psychological support (Giles, Metcalf, Glonek, Luszcz, and Andrews, 2004; Kim & Nesselroade, 2003; Wu & Hart, 2002), more heavily than formal social support services (Statistics Canada, 2004). Nevertheless, the community workers carry great importance regarding delivering a positive response to elderly immigrants, supporting them when family or friends are not available or lacking resources.

In terms of data analysis, content analysis was made through initial transcripts. Meanwhile, minor changes to the interview protocol were made in order to allow for improved flow and depth of examination of topics. Codes, themes and subthemes were revised. Final confirmation and disconfirmation of themes and related interpretations were reviewed by a committee of peers (Kvale, 1996).

In qualitative studies (Patton, 2005), the size of the sample is determined by the quality of data. Two criteria were used to evaluate sampling: adequacy and appropriateness (Morse, 1994). A semi-structured interview is well-thought to be the most efficient tool for this type of qualitative study (Carspecken, 1996). Interview guidelines (Padgett, 1998) were followed. In order to avoid biasing the study, the interview guide was carefully constructed so that the questions were not leading, and were balanced and respectful of different opinions about social support of the elderly Turkish immigrants (Galletta, 2013). A purposively selected sample of community

workers who had worked more than two years with older adults (over 60 years old) living independently, with their families or at individual dwellings were selected as participants. Participants were interviewed by the author. Additionally, ethnic participant observation was carried out in order to develop an insight in mosques that Turkish people visited, especially in Yunus Mosque, Montreal Turkish Community Center, and at local coffee stores generally preferred by the Turkish Community. Observations were carried out between 2016 March to 2016 December.

Moreover, over twenty thousand words from interview data had been scanned into the VOS viewer program[1] after transcriptions of interviews were translated from Turkish into English using computer translation software. Generated terms from the interviews were also checked to ensure their validity in context. Girvan and Newman (2002; 2004) put forward a computer assisted program with a platform with algorithms offering "between-ness" scores that appear to identify relevant structure with some sensitivity.

First, this article will point out the immigration profile of Turks in Canada, hence introducing the immigration trajectory of Montreal Turks. Second, it will briefly review the provided services and visions of the Montreal Turkish Community Center. Third, it will identify the challenges of first generation immigrants in the social environment, as well as the community support system with data analysis using social constructivist theory. The study ends with concluding remarks.

ELDERLY TURKISH PRESENCE IN MONTREAL

According to a National Household Survey, in 2011, the foreign-born population represented one out of five of the total population in Canada, "the highest proportion among the G8 countries" (2011). Canada has an aging Turkish immigrant[2] population which is yet to be comprehensively

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1 A computer program for bibliometric mapping and important terms extractor from a body of scientific literature. VOSviewer stands for "visualization of similarities".

2 Immigrants are persons who are or have ever been, landed immigrants in Canada. A landed immigrant is a person who has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities: Statistics Canada 2006

researched, and this research is the first study of elderly Turkish people from the perspective of immigration in Canada. Quebec (a Francophone province) is the second largest immigrant territory after Ontario, with a Turkish immigrant population of 6965 women and 7250 men after Ontario (Canada Statistics, 2012). Of 55,430 Turkish people who have Canadian citizenship, almost one third speak Turkish most often at their homes. Canada has 3,400 first generation Turkish immigrants over 65 years old, including people who were born outside Canada (Canada Statistics, 2011).

Contrary to Turks in Europe, the Turkish community in Canada is better integrated and less challenged by immigration issues. The challenges they encounter are mainly restricted to individual members of the group rather than the group as a whole, partly on the ground that Canadian social/cultural life and integrated labor market differ in the aspect of multiculturalism (Ozcurumez, 2009). Also, Canada's individualist society may play a role.

When considering immigration to Canada, two waves of Turkish immigration exist. In the 1960s, highly educated individuals and students started to come to Canada, most of whom had been financed by the Turkish Government. However, immigrants with high levels of education were required to take the exams of Canada. Some passed their required exams to maintain their professions in their new country, while some failed. In 1980s, many Turkish people came to Canada for socioeconomic reasons before visa restrictions for Turkish people were put into place by Canada. Unlike the wave of immigrants in the 1960s, 1980s immigration trajectory has its own features. In this study, while the former is not overlooked, the latter is focused on more since Montreal Turkish Community Center is mostly consisted of the immigrants from latter wave.

When language issues are taken into account, Turkish immigrants from the 1980s had very challenging obstacles to overcome. Most of them came to Montreal to be employed without being able to speak either of the official languages of Canada, French and English. The first generation of individuals who arrived in the 1980s not only differed from those who came in the 1960s by the immigration path to the host country, but also in the class distinctions that appeared after becoming landed immigrants

which may be attributed to the opportunities which the host country offered according to their level of French or English.

In this research, community workers who have/had been working directly with aged Turkish immigrants for more than 2 years in Montreal were specifically interviewed because they were more articulate and deeply involved in the all scales of community activities, from evaluation to monitoring. They were not just working with the target groups (considering this research's target group, the elderly population), they also had actively taken a role in the community within families, neighborhoods, schools, gatherings and newly arrived immigrants' immigration processes.

In the Montreal Turkish Community Center, the community workers have tasks such as guidance, mediating, planning, educating, facilitating and catalysis. Elderly people can deliberately choose the community workers whom they would like to receive support from on the matters such as learning more about her/his permanent residence process with Canadian immigration officials or learning how to organize a mevlut (praying of the soul of a family member as a traditional mourning ritual.) The Montreal Turkish Community Center is a Turkish government recognized and supported foundation. The foundation's in-built Mosque (Yunus Mosque) provides religious events by an imam assigned by the Turkish government for the duration of five years, and the assignment can be extended an additional one year. However, the role and characteristics of the imam in Montreal differs from the ones in Turkey through greater embeddedness and more community work.

The community workers in Montreal organize events, gatherings, celebrations of national holidays and religious group meetings. Their yearly planned programs are not strictly limited to elderly Turks but also other population groups (the youth, the middle aged people, disabled individuals, other ethnic groups etc.). Community workers promote active participation of elderly people by publishing photos of gatherings and events by any means, including through social media.

On the other hand, considering gender differences in the experiences of Turkish immigrants, traditionally, men are expected to provide for

their family economically. This is a reason why men sometimes immigrated first, then invited their other family members after having a solid status and work assurance. Women, on the other hand, were expected to take care of children as is traditional within Turkish social structure. However, that has changed and both men and women now have to work to provide for their offspring.

In Montreal, first generation Turkish immigrants are often socializing within their own community. For example, they have three coffee shops in which they discuss current issues of the community and play table games, as well as mosques in which they organize their funerals, religious gatherings and ceremonies. The Montreal Turkish Community Center was founded by the charity funding of the Montreal Turkish population, which is mostly from the rural of Konya and Denizli provinces. Several Turkish leaders mortgaged their houses in order buying the center's building in early 90s.

PARTICIPANTS

All six interviewees were men. All interviewees were Turkish and French-speakers. The ages of the interviewees ranged from 31 to 65 years old, with the median of 45. Two interviewees were from the Central Anatolia Region, and four were from the Aegean Region of Turkey. The length of participants' active experience within the Turkish community ranged from two years to twenty years. Four worked full time, while one was a PhD student, and one was retired. Four worked in private practice. Two had a background in governmental positions. A confirmation letter and an informed consent form for participant interviews were fulfilled by the participants. Interviews were conducted face to face, and each interview lasted approximately 1 hour. Formal interviews took place between November and December 2016 and were recorded via electronic recorder and transcribed. Interview data was coded and organized by hand.

Participants with higher educational degrees reported the importance of socialization and language, emphasizing its relevance to social support. To the question of "why does language matter in the context of social support?" they replied that language and social support cannot be

overlooked, they are interwoven to each other because of the acculturation process of Canada. When asked if community resources lack language services, they replied that Montreal offers more challenges to adapt to because of the distinctive Quebec French, in addition to necessity of learning English as a global language. But not all agree with this proposal. Two older middle class participants replied that English is only required when leaving Quebec state for traveling. Also, one of the middle class participants added that "few elderly Turks ever travelled outside of Montreal in Canada in decades." Additionally, to the question of "why do elderly people intend to live in Turkey for up to six months?" all participants but one with a lower education degree replied that it is a part of customs to visit the homeland, their village and their relatives for the purposes of cultural or religious togetherness, such as the Muslim sacrifice holiday (Kurban Bayrami). However, the participant who disagreed with this argument suggested that "We have every opportunity here in Canada, and long stays in Turkey for my elderly family exert a lot of pressure on me simply because they cannot withstand transatlantic flights and they easily become sick, which is a helpless situation since no one really can take care of them in Turkey." The lack of social support in case of emergency may exert restrictive mobility of elders, thus limiting their potential for greater social sphere and their ability to seek social support when needed.

Hasan (65), who is a frequently visiting community member, invited me to his home to have tea. He landed in Montreal in 1989 with other villagers from the same village or villages nearby after receiving the widespread word that Canada did not require a visa. Just after landing, he and his fellow friends were almost deported because they refused to be political refugees. He said that he came to work in Canada. Since there is no protection class as economic refugees under international refugee conventions, they were provided a lawyer and were permitted to stay in hotels, which later turned into rental aid. A couple of months later, Hasan started working in a bakery, while his friends worked in unqualified positions such as pizza delivery, restaurants etc. Then, he rented a space with his fellow friends and lived for four years in Parc Extension of Montreal. Then, he became financially capable of inviting his wife, Serpil. He has three sons. Two

sons have higher education levels and are working in qualified positions. One son is mentally disabled and is working in a bakery. He had spoken about linguistic obstacles for the elderly to overcome, the importance of family as social support and community practices and involvement in the community as a Turkish community member. Serpil mentioned that the social support of the community is important, especially having occasional breakfasts with female members at the community center and Quran reading sessions and conversations after these readings. (Personal communication: Hasan's house)

From most of the personal communications with community members regarding their use of a community based support system, two main themes are deduced: firstly, the importance of family as emotional support and interactions between individuals and families through MTCC construing a "bigger family," and secondly social ties and norms of Turkish-ness.

RESULTS

The qualitative data suggested that all interviewees' transcripts showed that the feelings of belonging to Turkish-ness and eliminating linguistic barriers are key themes of the community based support system. While all were able to express themselves about community life, all were also able to describe situations related to varieties of support provided by community or community workers. All community workers have given responses with their common sense and their experience.

Of the six respondents, all but two said they would feel responsible for or obligated to initiate the socialization of elderly people in the community by encouraging them in the community. A typical response was "focusing on the children or grandchildren of the elder" as a referral to the future of the community. Elderly people's involvement in community activities and/or encouragement by the community workers were suggested by interviewees.
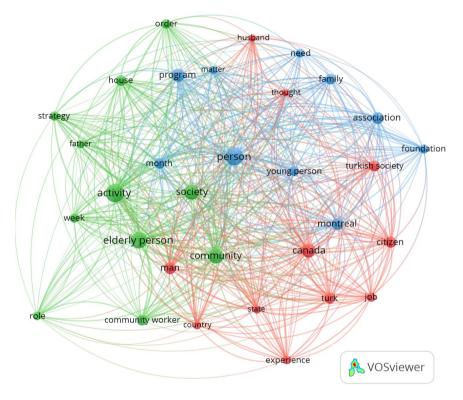
Figure: Minimum number of occurrence of a term from the formal interviews: 10

Source: VOSviewer and transcript of the interviews of the respondents

The figure above contains the most commonly used terms from the interviews. With 32 terms named as "nodes" (elder person, Montreal, citizen, state etc.), 3 clusters[3] (blue, red and green colors), 492 links and total link strength of 3448 are found from the interview transcripts. Nodes are located closer to each other if they are strongly related, while weakly related nodes are further apart. Clusters are indicators that certain terms (nodes) exist in a certain range of one another.

The weight of terms such as "activity", "person", "association", "Canada", "society" and "house" and "program" were indicated with the

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3 In the literature, it is mostly called "community structure".

larger labels and circles by importance. From the visualization mapping above, community workers had apparently associated elder individuals' life satisfaction and social support closer to "activities". Because these "activities" are mainly focused on national identity and collectivism in it, not necessarily, it can be asserted that it also promotes social support with strong social ties. "House" and "order" come up in very close vicinity to each other. When the context is evaluated again, it is apparent that when an elderly person is a part of a whole as an individual, then the person might focus on receiving social support, thus having greater satisfaction with life. Also, not surprisingly, "role" and "community worker" appear in the same vicinity to a certain extent, but distant from "house" and "order". This is partly due to the traditional place of the Turkish family, which is a sensitive subject related to confidentiality and its own particular system, defined here as "order (düzen)". Community workers mostly replied: "Every family has its own order."

Community workers pointed out the importance of and collaboration with family regarding social support. However, they were also evasive so as not to become involved with elderly person's family "order". Also, when questioning about an elderly individual's life satisfaction, they are restricted to a certain extent to "father" or "grandfather" family figures in which family roles are obliged on them rather than their centralization as individuals. However, their individual role is strongly related to which young people or general community are attributed in the interviews.

1- Linguistic challenges

It is a well-known phenomenon that language plays a crucial but not exclusive role in the integration of immigrants, as well as in their determination of social status in the host country (Akkaymak, 2016; Berry, 1997; Berry & Sam, 1997). Half of the participants pointed out that elderly people could learn neither French nor English because of their unqualified positions which bring little involvement in the mainstream life of the city. However, other participants emphasized that elderly people could not learn Canada's official languages partly due to insufficient grammar knowledge of the Turkish language, which makes it harder to understand another for-

eign language's structure. The problematic linking of lower educational levels in the culture of origin and a difficult integration applies in this case. Furthermore, failure to understand and speak either English or French has obvious practical consequences. As the participant, an experienced Turkish association member (42) who had been leading religious activities for more than 6 years pointed out:

> (...)some elderly Turkish people really have linguistic problems. For instance, they are reluctant to go to a governmental building due to their lack of linguistic skills(…)well sometimes their grandsons or granddaughters help them but this might have a negative impact on their self-confidence.

One participant, a community's education specialist (38), who had been actively planning events for national holidays, stated that: "From what I have experienced, elderly people give a lot of importance to young Turkish people's education under the association's framework. They struggle in speaking French or English. Hence, they don't want to witness the young people having the same problems."

Especially for those who had arrived in 1989 without visa requirement, lower levels of education are often attributed to fewer opportunities within the Canadian social structure in the context of adaptation and being an independent member of society. From my observations, the community in general perceives these immigrants who arrived in the 80s as "luckier" than those who stayed in the homeland, although most of them had experienced the disadvantaged group's vulnerabilities under immigration. Their arrival from rural areas often hinder their participation within the host country's social life.

Elderly people in the community feel altruistic and emphatic about the progress of young people's linguistic education. As elderly immigrants express themselves in Turkish, newborns are educated in their mother tongue. The statement below is about the younger generation's future put at stake being a priority concern for community members. This becomes a point of agreement amongst the majority of community members, in order for the community to prosper through the integration of younger generations. This could also shape the community's self-conceptualization through receiving respect from other communities in Montreal. Conse-

quently, for the community to better communicate and share, language is seen as crucial by the community members. One participant, the community's education specialist, further stated that:

> Of course, they feel better when they realize young people are improving. They often speak with me about how enthusiastic they feel when they observe that young Turkish people are educated in their mother languages. They speak with their families in Turkish, so the attendance of Saturday schools by their grandchildren is an essential character of the week.

The foundation strove strived to compromise on these linguistic challenges by the means of weekly planned lections at the community center. It is analyzed that elderly people in the community are dependent on the younger generations considering language. Although they are aware of the disadvantages of not being proficient in French or English, the daily interactions of elderly people are mostly based upon Turkish since they tend to spend time in local coffee shops with their peers and feel better socially expressing themselves in Turkish. As the community worker (45) who has over a decade of experience stated:

> Elderly people feel attached to places where a Turkish population or Turkish foundations exist. They choose a single coffee shop near to the community or where they live. Then most of them spend all day or their whole afternoon in that particular coffee shop. They speak Turkish all day with their peers, and when they come to the Turkish foundation or when they arrive home, they continue to speak Turkish within their families. They have Turkish TV channels in their homes. They have strong ties to relatives in Turkey, through which they further express themselves in Turkish.

From the statement above and from the other interviewees, what I frequently heard was "expressing themselves in Turkish". This is most fundamental for the self-realization of elderly immigrants considering social support. Apart from the earlier difficulties faced by them, language as an expression of the thoughts, patterns and feelings is the main determinant for better social support, as the interviews suggested. Community workers' perspectives on social support are often emphasized by the involvement in the Turkish community rather than in culturally similar communities because of language barriers with these people who speak Arabic, Persian, Armenian and Greek etc.

2- The feeling of belonging to "Turkish-ness"

Immigrants had immigrated to improve their economic status, but at the same time they appeared to prefer to stay connected to their home country. Apart from deeply impacted transnational ties (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002) through long phone calls, elder Turkish immigrants are mostly inclined towards the activities (national celebrations, folklore by young people) regarding national identity or religious events (mevlut, religious conversations) shaped by "Turkish-ness".

In this respect, traditional religious celebrations reinforce group identity and allow the elderly people to interact more intensely with the community at large and retain emotional support. During the Ramadan festivities, it is deducted from field notes taken during participant observation that "they feel as if they were at home surrounded by friends."

Although religion plays a fundamental part in building identity and providing a wide spectrum of emotional support among elderly members of the community, this may not be valid for all immigrants. The interaction of highly skilled immigrants from the 1960s and 80s is limited. The example of "uncle Aydin" is particularly emblematic in this respect. Recognized by the community as "uncle Aydin" (who passed away recently), he was involved with the 80s Turks, unlike his 60s immigrant peers who immigrated under qualified immigration status. One interviewee, a 42 year-old who is a PhD student and has been an active community member more than five years, suggested;

> (...)Uncle A. (an active community member) was a very educated person(…) He criticized most of his peers who had arrived in the 60s (…) because they avoided participating in the activities offered at the Montreal Turkish Community Center. He was very constructive regarding bringing our community together.

With respect to the feeling of longing and attachment to their origin country, five respondents suggested that emotional support is greatly needed. Considering that the results of Fokkema and Naderi (2013) suggested that feelings of loneliness were entirely attributable to elderly immigrants' lower socioeconomic status and poorer health, it was not solely the case with elderly Turkish immigrants. Loneliness was more pronounced in rela-

tion with homesickness, and they sought support by community to a certain extent.

One respondent pointed out that:

(...)The topic of visiting Turkey is an essential of almost every short talk amongst elderly people. Most elderly people live in Turkey up to six months. In winter, they spend their time in Canada and in summer they live in or visit Turkey, since weddings are planned in summer time and they are generally accompanied by their younger family members.

The sense of belonging to the host country is often considered as secondary to sense of belonging to the origin country, Turkey. One respondent (62) who has been an active member since the first days of the foundation and was a retired technician:

An immigrant cannot love Canada unless he/she loves his/her own land. Canadian people first try to recognize us by our own traditions and values. Elderly people are aware of this fact. That is why elderly people are mostly happy when our Turkish national celebrations or religious gatherings are facilitated.

The "us" was often referred during the interviews as a way of opening a door to the outer world. This imagines both the bonding and bridging within the Canadian society. After decades of residing in Canada, the retired community member elaborates the necessity of community values in the context of the Canadian social structure.

Here we live in with my family in Saint Michel, North of Montreal, where the other minorities settled down. I can explain why Turkish-ness is important as an immigrant. Whenever I first meet with a Canadian or another immigrant, first of all I am asked about my culture. Most of the time, these conversations contain the topic of Turkish food, the politics of Turkey, or Turkish cities which are mostly visited.

Some elderly individuals who have been withdrawing from community organizations in the long run may not access social support system, acknowledging that the probability of polarization within the community could surpass the benefits. One community worker with over 30 years of experience (60) pointed out the constant religious polarization within the community foundations and how they have been failing to bring Turkish people together. And he further suggested that:

> I accept every single Turkish, Kurdish, Azeri, Turkmen person as a member of our community. The other foundations had failed to become everlasting organizations because they are just trying to stratify the community regarding sect or religion or ideology. That is why they are not lasting long and elderly people feel reluctant to participate in their activities. In fact, they are striving more for power relationships than for community work.

There was a planned meal event for all community members in MTCC financed by private cooperation with the initiative of the community workers. Before it started at 8 PM, people started to participate for small talks at 6 PM. There was playing at a low volume in the background. Elderly people sat around the tables waiting for someone to talk. They made little groups but no one was really quite participative unless a community worker came and prompted the group by remarking "How do you do, Uncle Sagban and Huseyin? Today we will have fun [cheerful]", "I see you are early up to party [laughs]" or "When was the last time you three saw each other?" (Field note: Conference room of MTCC)

It was observed that elderly people were prone to participate and have a conversation when promoted or when finding their own social spheres. However, they were not quite interactive unless their "favorite" friends arrived or they were prompted by community workers. After the event, the Turkish Ambassador who was visiting from Ottawa participated in a group session. Elder people from different subgroups participated more to this group session; and there were no noticeable signs of subgroups forming. This was because the shared values of elder participants were more drawn into "Turkishness" rather than particular ways of subgroups. Furthermore, these social spheres are not quite rigid but quite flexible.

LIMITATIONS

Several limitations should be taken into consideration in the current paper. The limitations include the overall small study sample, which was recruited by convenience. Thus, generalizability may have limited to the population at large considering the research sample size (Marshall, 1996). Elderly people's roles in the society among varied economic classes have not been addressed, and warrant further study. Also, it should be taken into account that the sample consisted entirely of men. There were not any official female community workers, but women possess some stature in community

activities in accordance with their frequency of visits and dedication to the community center, as well as their spouses' social stature. Notwithstanding the limitations above, frequent participant observations and personal communications with the target group proved that shared values of subgroups and the emotional support provided by the community promote the end goal of social support. Informational support has more individualist characteristics; however, emotional support is more oriented towards the patterns of subgroups and social spheres. Because of the small sample size, the quotations are limited due to confidentiality.

CONCLUSIONS

There has been an inclination for previous research in the field of social support to neglect the perspective of community workers (Pehlivan, et al., 2012; Hussein and Oglak, 2012). Consequently, the literature has neglected the influence of social factors (religion, social ties), especially how social actors as providers can influence the experience of social support and how this is interwoven with the community perspective. Furthermore, few studies have included participants from diverse ethnic backgrounds and those living in the community. The research conducted here contributes towards the development of a broader view. The elderly population has been identified as a socially disadvantaged as well as a vulnerable group affected by immigration, poverty, disability, gender inequality and social injustice. This population requires special attention, and should benefit from a specific approach in which its cultural, socio-economic and social environmental characteristics of the provided services should be taken into account. The improvement of a community-based support system and services tailored to the needs of individuals (unique social spheres of members, the opportunities between the services in mainstream and community resources) as well as subgroups (religion, spiritual, secular etc.) using a multicultural approach would be particularly apt to such a socially-isolated and vulnerable group of immigrants.

Elderly people who are willing to volunteer in associations should be encouraged to do so by community workers for secured support. The specific needs of elderly people should be assessed individually by engaging directly with the elderly person, within his/her social sphere. Elderly

people are most likely to participate in religious events, but also it is observed that most of them are more active in their community life holistically, as some prefer to stay in their own social zones, while some expected to be promoted by community members.

Similarly to Akkaymak's (2016) study on social networks, first generation elderly Turks in the current study mainly interacted with inter-sub-groups, friendships, and extended family in terms of solidarity (2016) and social support. The other ethnic groups (Pakistanis, Iranians, Arab immigrants) are seen as closer to elder Turks due to similar patterns of culture and values. Understandably, immigrants come closer when they find the same or similar culture of their homelands unexpectedly (Armenians and Greek immigrants). However, the community has its own uniqueness for elderly Turks and is seen "irreplaceable". As concluded by Edith (2007) in a participant observation study, the Turkish community has strong group cohesion pursuing conventions of its own family practices and norms to such a great extent that Canadian law and norms not influence its uniqueness.

Also, most elderly people draw their participation from community based events and gatherings and sacrifice their place, assuming young immigrants could have more chances of integrating to Canada's social structure through education. However, this assumption may constrain the chances of delivering social support to elderly people and prevent them a voice in the society.

Similar to Ozcurumez, religion does not comply with higher levels of solidarity within the group (2009) however religion may be a beneficial social factor for emotional social support amongst those who favor of it in their own social spheres or subgroups of MTCC.

The role of imam is not limited to religion in the community and its characteristics and tasks differ not only due to community's self-conception but also because of the need of emotional support and the in-group shaped community structure. Despite passing decades, first generation elderly immigrants have limited integration to Canadian society with very limited internalization of the host country's prevailing cultural and social

norms.

Additionally, as elderly people are engaged in the community with a philanthropic purpose, they may develop new friendships and rebuild family ties. Thus, through volunteer activity and participation, elderly people can cope with immigration stress and integration problems more effectively. From my observations, the first generation Montreal Turkish immigrants may participate in religious and national events to reinforce their ethnic and social identity, not just seeking support.

This papers contributes to the literature on linguistic challenges by emphasizing the need of linguistic knowledge regarding adapting, integrating and embedding not just the host country but also the community giving informational support and emotional support to the peers. Particularly for first generation Turkish elderly people, the importance of being given a voice by community workers and their Turkish-speaking peers is seen as a key element of emotional and informational support. The particular way of social support is not a direct end product of law and social policies reigning in Canada, but unique structure and function of every individual.

Furthermore, elderly Turks seek social support within the community, especially from community workers. Their own networks are mostly shaped by national, religious or cultural components by which they are identified. Participants indicated that life satisfaction, elderliness and immigration were shaped by many multilayer and complex factors.

Finally yet importantly, occasionally, elderly people were conceived as if they were in their verge of life rather than experiencing a new phase in their lives. Such a social representation of old age is particularly detrimental to the necessary active involvement of the elders within the community. Future papers should seek to further study the interactions between the social structure of social support and its derivations at the community level for a better understanding of the interlacing services and its interpretations in the social environment in a multicultural context.

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Figure:

Figure: Minimum number of occurance of a term from the formal interviews: 10

Source: VOSviewer and transcript of the interviews of the respondents