TURKISH JOURNAL OF
APPLIED
SOCIAL WORK

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ABOUT

Turkish Journal of Applied Social Work is an international refereed journal. The journal started its publication life in 2018. The present scientific journal is published in December and June, with two issues per year. The working languages of the journal are English and German. Turkish Journal of Applied Social Work is meeting the academic community with the first issue in December, 2018 and the processes required to be screened in many indexes have already started. Our journal, which is the first academic Social Work Journal in Turkey operating in foreign languages (English and German), is planning to have a new lease on social work and expects the support of the authors. Any publications which can contribute to the development of the social work academic field and the related areas are welcome to our journal.

AIM

Turkish Journal of Applied Social Work started its publication life in 2018. This journal has embarked on the Open Access Policy with the idea that scientific information produced by academics, professionals, and others can be accessed by anyone, both locally and internationally, without any limitation.

SCOPE

Any publications which can contribute to the development of the social work academic field and the related areas are welcome to our journal. Academic studies which were carried out by academicians from social work field, social workers, social work undergraduate and graduate students, professionals from different professions working in the field of social work, and other academic units with social work on mind are the scope of this journal.

PUBLICATION POLICIES

Turkish Journal of Applied Social Work is an international refereed journal that adopts double-blind peer-review process. Editorial board of our journal follows Editorial Policy of the Council of Scientific Committee.

PUBLICATION PERIOD

Our journal is published twice a year in June and December. Publications are made from the following areas, which will contribute to the development of social work discipline and contribute to the literature: Other disciplines assessed in relation to Social Work, Sociology, Medicine, Psychology, Psychological Counseling and Guidance, Human Rights, Social Policy, Philosophy, Law, Economics, Health Management, Nursing, Physiotherapy, Gerontology, Geriatrics, Child Development, Special Education.

🇬🇧 FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Dear academics, practitioners and readers;

Turkish Journal of Applied Social Work has been published regularly since December 2018, with two issues per year in December and June. Our journal is one of the rare journals in the field of social sciences and social work in Turkey that publishes only in English and German. Many academics from dozens of different universities take part in the national and international advisory board of our journal and contribute to the publication processes. Our journal is scanned in many national and international academic indexes in its uninterrupted publication life, which has completed its fifth year. In addition, we have different national and international index applications that we are in the application stage and will share with you, our valuable followers, when they are finalized. Turkish Journal of Applied Social Work meets the criteria for associate professorship of the Interuniversity Council and the academic incentive criteria of the Higher Education Institution.

We would like to thank our authors who made valuable contributions by submitting articles to this issue of the Turkish Journal of Applied Social Work, our esteemed academicians who evaluated the articles by refereeing, our journal editorial board members, and Asst. Prof. Dr. Elvan ATAMTÜRK, who made a significant contribution to bringing this issue to you. We would like to take this opportunity to sincerely congratulate you on the New Year and wish that the year 2024 will bring health, happiness and peace to the world and humanity...

<div align="right">

Prof. Mehmet Zafer DANIŞ (PhD)
Editor-in-Chief

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☾ BAŞ EDİTÖRDEN

Değerli Akademisyenler, uygulamacılar ve okurlarımız;

Dergimiz, 2018 yılı Aralık ayından bu yana, Aralık ve Haziran aylarında yılda iki sayı olmak üzere düzenli biçimde yayınlanmaktadır. Dergimiz, Türkiye'de sosyal bilimler ve sosyal hizmet alanında yalnızca İngilizce ve Almanca dillerinde yayın yapan ender dergilerden biridir. Dergimizin ulusal ve uluslararası danışma kurulunda, onlarca farklı üniversiteden birçok akademisyen yer almakta ve yayın süreçlerine katkı sağlamaktadır. Dergimiz kesintisiz olarak devam ettiği ve beşinci yılını doldurduğu yayın hayatında birçok ulusal ve uluslararası akademik indekste taranmaktadır. Bunun yanı sıra başvuru aşamasında bulunduğumuz ve sonuçlandığında siz değerli takipçilerimizle paylaşacağımız farklı ulusal ve uluslararası indeks başvurularımız da söz konusudur. Türk Uygulamalı Sosyal Hizmet Dergisi Üniversitelerarası Kurul doçentlik şartları ile Yükseköğretim Kurumu akademik teşvik ölçütlerini sağlamaktadır.

Türk Uygulamalı Sosyal Hizmet Dergisi'nin bu sayısına makale göndererek değerli katkı sağlayan yazarlarımıza, hakemlik yaparak makaleleri değerlendiren sayın akademisyenlerimize, dergi yayın kurulu üyelerimize ve bu sayının sizlerle buluşmasında önemli katkı sağlayan Sayın Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Elvan Atamtürk'e teşekkürlerimizi sunarız. Bu vesileyle yeni yılınızı en içten dileklerimizle kutlar, 2024 yılının dünyaya ve insanlığa sağlık, mutluluk ve barış getirmesini temenni ederiz...

Prof. Mehmet Zafer DANIŞ
Baş Editör

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of physical and cognitive characteristics of elderly individuals living in nursing homes on their smartphone usage. The study included 67 volunteer individuals residing in a nursing home in Muğla. Sociodemographic characteristics and smartphone usage details of the individuals were questioned using a form prepared by the researchers. Participants' physical functions were assessed using the 6-Minute Walk Test, the 5 Times Sit-to-Stand Test, and the Berg Balance Scale. The Montreal Cognitive Assessment Scale (MoCA) was used to examine cognitive function. The mean age of the individuals included in the study was 74.18±3.26 years. A statistically significant moderate positive relationship was observed between the smartphone usage duration and MoCA score of the individuals (r=0.530, p<0.05). No statistically significant relationship was found between smartphone usage duration and physical functions (p>0.05). As per the results of our study, an increase in smartphone usage duration has been seen to be associated with the preservation of cognitive abilities in elderly individuals. We believe that smartphones, which can provide access to various health services when used effectively, as well as meeting the socialization needs of individuals living in nursing homes, play an essential role in promoting active aging.

Keywords: Elderly, nursing home, cognition, technology, social work.

ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı huzur evinde yaşayan yaşlı bireylerin fiziksel ve bilişsel özelliklerinin akıllı telefon kullanımı üzerindeki etkisini incelemekti. Çalışmaya Muğla'da huzurevinde konaklayan 67 gönüllü birey dahil edildi. Araştırmacılar tarafından hazırlanan form yardımıyla bireylerin sosyodemografik özellikleri ve akıllı telefon kullanım detayları sorgulandı. Katılımcıların fiziksel fonksiyonları 6 Dakika Yürüme Testi, 5 Kere Otur Kalk Testi ve Berg Denge Ölçeği kullanılarak değerlendirildi. Bilişsel fonksiyonun incelenmesinde Montreal Bilişsel Değerlendirme Ölçeği (MBDÖ) kullanıldı. Çalışmaya dahil edilen bireylerin yaş ortalaması 74.18±3.26 yıldı. Bireylerin akıllı telefon kullanım süresi ile MBDÖ skoru arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı orta düzeyde pozitif ilişki görüldü (r=0.530, p<0.05). Akıllı telefon kullanım süresi ile fiziksel fonksiyonları arasında istatistiksel açıdan anlamlı ilişki görülmedi (p>0.05). Çalışmamızın sonuçlarına göre, akıllı telefon kullanım süresindeki artışın yaşlı bireylerin bilişsel yeteneklerinin korunması ile ilişkili olduğu görülmüştür. Huzur evinde yaşayan bireylerin sosyalleşme ihtiyacını gidermekle birlikte etkili kullanıldığında pek çok sağlık hizmetine ulaşımını da sağlayan akıllı telefonların bireylerin aktif yaşlanmasında etkili olduğunu düşünmekteyiz.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yaşlılar, huzurevi, kognisyon, teknoloji, sosyal hizmet.

INTRODUCTION

Aging is a natural process characterized by the complex interplay of biological, psychological, and sociocultural processes that result in the changes an individual experience over their life course (López-Otín et al., 2013). The aging process is the result of biological mechanisms that lead to a decline in the functions of cells, tissues, and organs, as well as a reduction in overall life span (Niccoli and Partridge, 2012). It is also associated with psychological processes that cause changes in individuals' emotional and cognitive abilities (Schaie and Willis, 2010). At the sociocultural level, aging refers to the transition to later stages of life, accompanied by varying life experiences, roles, and expectations across societies and cultures (Settersten and Hagestad, 2015).

The World Health Organization (WHO) categorizes middle-aged individuals as those between the ages of 45-59, and older adults as those between the ages of 60-74. Further, they classify older adults into three subcategories: young-old (65-74 years), middle-old (75-84 years), and oldest-old (85 years and over) (Arulat, 2009). According to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TSI), if the current population growth rates continue, Turkey will be among the countries experiencing an aging population. The percentage of the population aged 65 and over is expected to rise to 12.9% in 2030, 22.6% in 2060, and 25.6% in 2080 (TSI, 2022).

Aging results in a decrease in an individual's ability to adapt to their environment, leading to structural and functional changes in many organs and systems. Examining the changes that occur in the musculoskeletal system with aging reveals a decrease in muscle strength and mass, changes in the histomorphological characteristics of ligament and tendon structures, and a reduction in bone tissue mineral support with a tendency toward increased breakdown of metabolism (Roberts et al., 2016; Yiğitbaş et al., 2016; Tails et al., 2003). These changes in the musculoskeletal system negatively affect an individual's balance performance and the sustainability of their balance (Vanbeveren and Avers, 2012). Another change observed with aging is the impact on cognition, which is the ability to acquire information through all sensory organs, and to understand and interpret this information. Cognitive functions include attention, short- and long-term memory, perception, orientation, language skills, decision-making ability, abstract thinking, arithmetic calculation ability, and executive functions (Glisky, 2007). Executive functions allow an individual to independently plan and process goal-directed behaviour appropriately, determining the next step in sequential tasks. Symptoms of executive dysfunction include attention deficits, decreased problem-solving ability, and difficulties in daily living activities. With age, there is a decline in general cognitive capacity, particularly in the speed of executive functions (Güler, 2011). Aging can be defined as the stress and regression on the functional and cognitive capacity of physical health, deterioration in psychosocial processes, decreased access to social networks, regression in social participation, loss in quality of life and social roles, compromises in independent life, economic losses and inability to utilize new opportunities in daily life (Kalınkara and Kalaycı, 2020).

Old age should be evaluated not only physically but also psychosocially. Physically, old age encompasses the physiological changes brought about by the aging process, while psychosocially, it examines the changes in adaptive abilities related to memory, perception, mood changes, communication, and personality traits with aging. Social isolation and feelings of loneliness associated with aging cause individuals to become introverted. In this regard, the participation of older adults, especially those living in nursing homes, in social activities is negatively affected due to the decline in both physical and cognitive functions. A review of the literature highlights the importance of technological innovations such as mobile internet for older individuals seeking to maintain active engagement in life and escape social isolation. Through mobile internet, individuals' needs are met in various areas, including banking transactions, various reservations, purchasing goods or services, video calls, and medical support. Mobile internet, which can act as an immediate alarm in case of elderly individuals experiencing difficulties, also facilitates social connections (Demiris, 2008). Individuals living alone can call their relatives, engage in video conversations, and make friends to escape loneliness using mobile internet. Thanks to applications installed on smartphones through mobile internet, some health-related issues can also be detected (Plaza, 2011). Online health applications, such as calorie counting, heart rate monitoring, emergency services, and ambulance services, first aid, pedometers, and stress level measurements, contribute to the successful aging of elderly individuals.

In advancing age, elderly individuals experience physical difficulties and an increased need for health-related support. Due to age-related mental and physical decline and the rapidly growing elderly population, the need for technology is steadily increasing (Palmore, 1985). Physical, cognitive, and psychological changes associated with aging, such as decline in social relationships, difficulty in performing daily activities, and health issues, can be addressed with the assistance of technological devices (Rowe, 1987). Therefore, the acceptance and effective use of technology by elderly individuals become crucial for successful aging (Olson, 2011). The use of digital technologies and social media applications intensifies the relations of older individuals with their social environment and actively includes them in social life (Artan and Urhan, 2019).

Despite the changes and losses observed in all organs and systems of elderly individuals, it is essential to improve holistic adaptation ability to maintain active aging. Technology acceptance and usage facilitate coping with various deficiencies and enhancing adaptation. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between smartphone usage and physical and cognitive functions in elderly individuals living in nursing homes.

The hypotheses of the study are listed below:

H_1: Health-related factors in elderly individuals are influenced by the use of smartphones.

H_{1-1}: There is a relationship between the physical functions of the elderly and the duration of smartphone use.

H_{1-2}: There is a relationship between the cognitive functions of the elderly and the duration of smartphone use.

METHOD

The study population consisted of 82 elderly individuals residing in a nursing home in the central district of Muğla province. The sample size of the study was calculated using GPower Version 3.1.9.4 software. Considering 80% power and a 0.05 margin of error, the study was completed with 67 volunteers who met the inclusion criteria.

Inclusion criteria:

• Being 65 years old or older and voluntarily participating in the study

• Having sufficient cooperation and cognitive level to understand the tests (Mini Mental Test score of at least 24)

• Being able to walk independently

• Being a smartphone user

Exclusion criteria:

• Having serious chronic diseases that may be contraindicated for physical activity (such as symptomatic coronary artery disease, uncontrolled hypertension, or metabolic disorders)

• Having a diagnosed neurological, vestibular, psychiatric, or cognitive disorder

• Having severe vision loss

• Having undergone surgical operations within the last 6 months

• Having a compression fracture risk due to osteoporosis

Study Design

This cross-sectional and descriptive study was conducted in a nursing home in Muğla-Turkey, between January and August 2022.

Data Collection Tools

Descriptive Information Form: This form was used to recorded individuals' features such as age, gender, marital status, education level, height, body weight, body mass index (BMI), chronic illnesses, medications, duration of stay at the nursing home, and details about their smartphone usage. Additionally, opinions regarding how the elderly perceive themselves physically, socially, cognitively, and emotionally were recorded.

Participants' physical functions evaluated using the 6 Minute Walk Test, the 5 Times Sit-to-Stand Test, and the Berg Balance Scale; their cognitive functions were assessed using the Montreal Cognitive Assessment Scale.

6 Minute Walk Test (6MWT): The 6MWT is a test used to assess functional exercise capacity. Participants are asked to walk as far as possible within 6 minutes on a flat, unobstructed, and straight area with defined 30 m boundaries. They are informed that they can rest if they feel fatigue, shortness of breath, dizziness, nausea, or pain and continue when they feel ready. Participants are encouraged at 2-minute intervals with a consistent tone. The total distance walked in meters is recorded after 6 minutes. Heart rate, systolic and diastolic blood pressures, oxygen saturation, perceived fatigue, and shortness of breath levels are recorded before and after the test (Görek and Dilektaşlı, 2019).

Five Times Sit-to-Stand Test (5TSST): The 5TSST was developed by Whitney et al. in 2005. Participants are asked to stand up and sit down quickly from a standard chair with their arms crossed over their shoulders and their backs against the chair. The stopwatch starts with the "start" command and stops when the participant contacts the chair on the last repetition. The activity is repeated 5 times consecutively, and the time is recorded in seconds (Whitney, 2005).

Berg Balance Scale (BBS): The BBS was developed by Berg KO et al. in 1989 and has been translated, adapted, and validated in Turkish by Şahin et al. in 2013 (Berg 1989; Şahin 2013). The scale consists of 14 functional parameters, each scored between 0 and 4. The maximum total score a participant can achieve is 56. The level of proficiency in the performed activity is determined as 0 for "cannot do" and 4 for "can do independently and safely." Functional activities in the 14 items include supported and unsupported sit-to-stand, transfers, standing with eyes open and closed, standing with a narrow and wide support surface, picking up an object from the floor, looking over the right and left shoulders, turning 360 degrees, standing on one foot, stepping onto a step, tandem stance, and reaching forward with arms and elbows straight while standing. A high score indicates good balance function. A score of 0-20 on the scale with a cut-off value of 21 indicates a high risk of falling, 21-40 indicates a moderate risk, and 41-56 indicates a low risk.

Montreal Cognitive Assessment Scale (MoCA): MoCA is an assessment scale that includes 8 different cognitive functions designed to detect mild cognitive impairment. It was developed by Nasreddine et al. in 2005. In addition to abstract thinking tests such as trail making, clock drawing, and similarities, the test also includes executive functions like cube copying. The test also evaluates naming, memory and attention, sentence repetition, verbal fluency, and delayed recall subgroups. The highest possible score on the test is 30. A total score of 21 or higher indicates the participant is within normal limits. The test takes approximately 10 minutes to administer (Nasreddine, 2005). The Turkish adaptation, validity, and reliability studies of the scale have been conducted (Kaya, 2014; Özdilek, 2014).

Data Collection

The data of this study were collected face-to-face using the data collection tools.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 25. The Shapiro-Wilk test was used to determine the suitability for normal distribution. Spearman correlation analysis was used to explain the scores of participants in analysing the data with normal distribution. In the statistical analysis of other data that do not follow a normal distribution, the results were interpreted using the Mann-Whitney U test and the Kruskal-Wallis H test. Analysis results are expressed as a mean±standard deviation, and a frequency (percentage). A probability value of $p < 0.05$ was considered statistically significant.

Ethical Consideration

Before starting the study, ethics committee approval was obtained from the Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University Medicine and Health Sciences Ethics Committee-2 (December 22, 2021, No: 43). In addition, a study permit was obtained to conduct the study from Muğla Family and Social Policies Provincial Directorate (November 19, 2021- No: E-83531317-500-1787407). This study was conducted in accordance with the principles of the Helsinki Declaration. Participants were informed about the aim of the study. Informed consent was also obtained from the participants after a detailed explanation of the study.

RESULTS

The demographic and social characteristics of the participants in the study are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic and Social Characteristics of the Participants (n=67)

Characteristics		n	%
Gender	Female	40	60
	Male	27	40
Marital status	Married	30	45
	Single	25	37
	Divorced	12	18
Education level	Literate	7	10.44
	Primary school	40	59.7
	High school	15	22.4
	College	5	7.46
Chronic illness	Yes	26	38.81
	No	41	61.19

Chronic illness type	Under-controlled hypertension	15	22.4
	Diabetes Mellitus	11	16.4
Regular medication use	Yes	17	25.37
	No	50	74.63
Characteristics		Mean	Standard Deviation
Age (years)		74.18	3.26
Height (m)		1.64	0.04
Weight (kg)		80.35	15.24
Body Mass Index (BMI- kg/m2):		28.78	4.35
Duration of stay at the nursing home (years)		7.02	5.04

The responses to the questions asked to examine the smartphone use of the individuals included in the study are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Participants' Smartphone Usage Details

Variables		Mean±Standard Deviation
Duration of using smartphone (years)		8.82±2.03
Duration of daily using smartphone (hours)		6.61±2.01
Variables		n
Purpose of smartphone usage	News reading	40
	Communication	67
	Social media	32
	Shopping	21
	Banking transactions	15
Applications used	Social media apps	32
	Communication apps	67
	Shopping apps	21
	Hobbies and interests' apps	12
	Puzzle and game apps	8

According to the Mann-Whitney U test analysis, no significant difference was found between smartphone usage duration and gender (p>0.05). Additionally, according to the Kruskal-Wallis H Test result, there was no statistically significant difference in smartphone usage duration and education levels of individuals (p>0.05).

The 6 Minute Walk Test (6MWT), 5 Times Sit-to-Stand Test (5STS), Berg Balance Scale (BBS), and Montreal Cognitive Assessment Scale (MoCA) scores of the individuals who voluntarily accepted to participate in the study are shown in Table 3 as follows.

Table 3. Scores of evaluation parameters

Parameter	Mean±Standard Deviation
6 Minute Walk Test (m)	407.59±47.23
5 Times Sit-to-Stand Test (sec)	18.11±3.43
Berg Balance Scale	43.18±6.3
Montreal Cognitive Assessment Scale	23.38±2.08

When the relationship between smartphone usage details and other evaluation parameters was examined by spearman correlation analysis, the following results were obtained:

- A statistically significant moderate positive relationship was observed between smartphone usage time and MoCA score (r=0.530, p<0.05).

- No statistically significant relationship was observed between smartphone usage time and BBS, 6MWT, and 5STS results (r1=0.179, r2=0.203, r3=-0.331, p>0.05), respectively.

When other measurement results evaluating physical performance were examined;

- A statistically significant moderate negative relationship was observed between 6MWT and 5STS results (r=-0.601, p<0.05).

- A statistically significant moderate positive relationship was observed between 6MWT and BBS scores (r=0.534, p<0.05).

- A statistically significant negative moderate relationship was detected between BBS and 5STS results (r=-0.509, p<0.05).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Technology is an important tool in maintaining daily activities, eliminating physical and environmental barriers caused by aging, maintaining social relationships, helping the elderly live healthy, independent and safe, and improving their quality of life (Kalınkara and Sarı, 2018). The rapid advancement of technology can make it difficult for older individuals to keep up with and adopt. Elderly individuals often struggle to use many new technological products due to problems in their general physical condition and the decline in their cognitive abilities. In this study, we investigated the relationship between smartphone usage and physical and cognitive functions of elderly individuals living in nursing home.

The aging population has been growing, and with it, the need for appropriate technology to assist older adults in their daily lives. Smartphone use among older adults has been increasingly recognized as a means to provide social engagement, cognitive stimulation, and assistance with daily tasks (Charness and Boot, 2009). Nursing homes are perceived as an institution that takes shelter in the last stage of life, but where elderly individuals feel lonely and abandoned (Danış, 2009; Oktik et al, 2004). Elimina-

tion of this perception, raising the quality of life, developing the social relations network of the elderly will be possible with the use of protective and preventive gerontological services and communication technologies. In our study, the elderly indicated that their smartphone use was primarily for socialization. This was because their perception of their social situation was that they were isolated. They expressed that they used smartphones as a solution to their feelings of social isolation. Loneliness and social isolation are significant issues for older adults living in nursing homes (Cacioppo et al., 2014). Encouraging and supporting the use of smartphones by older adults in these settings could provide a means for maintaining social connections, accessing information, and enhancing their overall well-being. Increased usage and adoption rates are primarily attributed to the duration of use. Grewal and Sahni (2019) included 90 elderly individuals in their study and reported that their daily smartphone usage time ranged from 3 to 8 hours (Grewal and Sahni, 2019). In our study the average daily smartphone usage time was found to be 6.61±2.01 hours. This result was similar to the literature.

Smartphone use may provide an opportunity for these individuals to maintain social connections with friends, family, and caregivers through communication apps, such as messaging and video calls. The use of smartphones can facilitate the continuation of relationships and contribute to a sense of belonging among older adults (Chen & Schulz, 2016). Additionaly, based on the findings of our study, it was observed that older adults used their smartphones to solve puzzles and play games related to their hobbies, such as gardening, home decoration, and meal preparation. Indeed, our findings are consistent with the existing literature on older adults' use of smartphones and technology. Numerous studies have demonstrated that older adults can benefit from engaging with technology and using smartphones for pursuing hobbies (Charness and Boot, 2009; Mitzner et al., 2010; Heinz et al., 2013). Providing older adults with access to smartphone applications tailored to their interests and needs may have a positive impact on their overall well-being and quality of life. By engaging in activities they enjoy and find meaningful, older adults may experience a reduction in feelings of loneliness and isolation, particularly in nursing home settings (Preusse et al., 2017). It is important for nursing home staff and caregivers to recognize the value of smartphone use in promoting the well-being of older adults and to support their engagement with technology through training and assistance.

Cognitive decline is a common concern among older adults. Smartphones offer various applications that may help promote cognitive health and maintain cognitive abilities (Faisal et al., 2014). For example, puzzle games, memory exercises, and brain-training apps may provide mental stimulation and help slow cognitive decline among older adults living in nursing homes (Barnard et al., 2013). It reveals that these activities not only provide entertainment, but also contribute to maintaining cognitive function and promoting a sense of achievement among older adults (Charness and Boot, 2009). In a recent study investigating the cut-off values for the MoCA in elderly individuals without cognitive problems, scores were reported to range between 22 and 27 (Engedal et al., 2022). According to the results of our study, the cognitive functions of the participants were found to be similar to the liter-

ature. Therefore, the relationship between cognitive function and smartphone usage duration is not surprising.

Smartphones can also aid older adults with daily tasks and activities. Applications that provide reminders for medication, appointment scheduling, and management of chronic health conditions can support older adults in managing their health and maintaining their independence (Preusse et al., 2017). Additionally, smartphones can offer access to information about health, news, and entertainment, catering to the diverse needs and interests of older adults living in nursing homes (Faisal et al., 2014). Contrary to the literature, our study found that elderly individuals did not frequently use their smartphones for healthcare services.

The barriers to older adults using mobile applications have been the subject of various studies. In one of these studies, 113 older adults aged between 65 and 85 stated that they did not want to use technology due to security and reliability issues, as well as the technology disrupting their lives (e.g., unwanted calls, advertisements) and being expensive (Mitzner et al., 2010). A review which to investigate the potential and barriers related to aging and information technology use made by Charness and Boot. They found that older adults are less likely to adopt new technologies compared to younger adults (Charness and Boot, 2009). Barriers to technology adoption among older adults include cognitive and physical limitations, lack of experience or familiarity with technology, and negative attitudes towards technology. The authors concluded that more research is needed to understand the factors that influence technology adoption among older adults and develop interventions to overcome the barriers they face. They also emphasized the importance of designing technology that is accessible and easy to use for older adults, considering their cognitive and physical abilities. In similar, Alvseike and Brønnick (2012) reported that age-related cognitive impairments and low self-efficacy significantly reduced the participants' ability to use technology (Alvseike and Brønnick, 2012). In a study conducted in 2015, the physical functions of individuals living in a nursing home with an average age of 84.4±4.9 years were evaluated using the 6MWT, BBS and 5STS, and their scores were found to be 290.6±110.7m, 46.9±5.8, and 15.9±7.9 seconds, respectively (Caballer et al., 2015). In our study, it was observed that the scores of the 6MWT test and BBS were better. This may be due to the lower average age of our sample (74.18±3.26 years). However, the worse results of the 5STS may be possible due to participants not being fully focused on the test. Therefore, the lack of relationship between smartphone use time and physical function may have resulted from this heterogeneity. Contrary to expectations, our study's results did not support the view that smartphone use time negatively affects physical function levels.

Designing mobile phone apps and features that address the needs and preferences of elderly users is crucial to promoting their digital inclusion and improving their quality of life according to other study. The authors have indicated that developers should consider the specific needs and limitations of elderly users when designing mobile phone applications and interfaces, ensuring that these tech-

nologies are accessible and user-friendly for this age group (Faisal et al. 2014). Heinz et al. (2013) investigated daily needs and challenges, advantages and disadvantages related to technology use, how technology could help, and ways to make technology easier to use with 30 older adults (average age 83). Participants appeared to be willing to adopt new technologies when they acknowledged the benefits and usability of technology and overcame feelings of inadequacy. However, they expressed some concerns about society's overdependence on technology, the loss of social contact, and the complexity of technological devices (Heinz et al., 2013). In our study, we consider that the elderly acceptance of technology was aided by the user-friendly feature of the smartphones they used, which did not contain complicated applications.

The adoption of technology and the use of mobile applications by older adults are influenced by numerous variables, including the characteristics of the technology (e.g., perceived complexity, level of novelty) and the user's characteristics (e.g., experience and personal traits) (Mitzner et al., 2010). In our study, it was observed that smartphone usage, which is directly affected by cognitive abilities of individuals living in nursing homes, plays a significant role in helping older adults cope with feelings of loneliness. We consider that ensuring the acceptance and effective use of technology by older individuals will contribute to maintaining their health.

In conclusion, this study found a significant positive relationship between smartphone usage time and cognitive functions, while no significant relationship was found between physical performance measurements and smartphone usage time. These findings suggest that elderly individuals can support their cognitive functions by using technology. Furthermore, we consider that following physical performance indicators that are crucial for maintaining independence level, reducing the risk of falls, and promoting an active lifestyle is essential for the elderly.

Limitations of the study include the only center, narrow age range and limited access to the social environment of the participants. Future studies can more comprehensively investigate relationship between cognitive and physical functions of elderly individuals and technology usage with a wider age range and multicenter. In addition, studies can also evaluate the effects of technology usage on social adaptation and quality of life in elderly individuals.

In our study, our suggestions about elderly individuals staying in nursing homes;

- Strengthening social networks, providing easier use of technological products, and facilitating adaptation to these products, so that individuals staying in nursing homes can cope with the feeling of loneliness, which is the most important problem.

- Diversifying physical activities in accordance with age groups,

- In accordance with today's communication age, it is necessary to establish infrastructures suitable for other communication and information technologies, especially smart phones.

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EVALUATION OF THE EXPECTATIONS OF ELDERLY INDIVIDUALS TOWARDS PUBLIC SPACES AND THE RESIDENCES THEY LIVE IN

Yaşlı Bireylerin Kamusal Alanlara ve Yaşadıkları Konutlara Yönelik Beklentilerinin Değerlendirilmesi

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ABSTRACT

Many problems come to the fore with urbanization, urban transformation, and the increasing elderly population. For urbanization to be realized by taking the elderly population into account, the opinions of the elderly should be considered. This research aims to focus on the approaches of the elderly to the phenomenon of urbanization. For this purpose, in-depth interviews were conducted with 16 participants with a semi-structured interview form. Socio-demographic data were analyzed with IBM SPSS 26. In order to support the findings, the prominent statements of the participants were directly quoted. Considering the prominent findings according to the analyzes made, it is seen that the participants need help in terms of transportation, the availability of places to socialize, neighborly relations, and the existing physical conditions of the houses. As a result of the study, suggestions were presented to field workers, local governments and policymakers.

Keywords: Elderly people, housing, public area, place

ÖZET

Kentleşme, kentsel dönüşüm süreci ve artan yaşlı nüfus beraberinde birçok farklı sorunu gündeme getirmektedir. Kentleşmenin yaşlı nüfusu göz önüne alarak gerçekleştirilmesi için yaşlıların bu konu hakkındaki fikirlerinin dikkate alınması gerekmektedir. Bu araştırmayla, yaşlıların kentleşme olgusuna yaklaşımları üzerine durulması amaçlanmıştır. Belirtilen amaç doğrultusunda, yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu ile 16 katılımcıyla derinlemesine görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Sosyodemografik veriler IBM SPSS 26 programı ile analiz edilmiştir. Bulguların desteklenmesi için katılımcıların öne çıkan ifadeleri doğrudan aktarılmıştır. Yapılan analizlere göre öne çıkan bulgulara bakıldığında katılımcıların ulaşım, sosyalleşebilecek mekân varlığı, komşuluk ilişkileri ve evlerin mevcut fiziksel koşulları konusunda sorun yaşadıkları görülmektedir. Çalışma neticesinde yaşlılık alanında çalışan saha çalışanlarına, yerel yönetimlere ve politika yapıcılara öneriler sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yaşlı, konut, kamusal alan, mekân

INTRODUCTION

The concept of space is essential because the elderly spend most of their lives at home. Today, the narrowing in the living spaces of the elderly and the isolation that comes with this narrowing can bring feelings such as loneliness, exclusion, and insecurity to the elderly. Along with the loneliness that increases with age, the possibility of individuals being dependent on another person also increases. Considering this situation, it is necessary to plan and build residences and spaces for elderly individuals, who are increasingly lonely in modern cities, according to elderly individuals (Huxhold et al., 2014).

The old people need to adapt to new spaces to realize the reconstruction of the cities by considering the accessibility, green space availability, and continuity of belonging for the elderly. The concept of accessibility in terms of space for the elderly is directly related to transportation. It may cause the elderly to struggle to access essential services (Çunkuş et al., 2019). Elderly individuals who struggle to perform daily activities move away from social life over time (Roger, 2010). In addition, Dodson et al. state (2004) that the elderly are among the risky groups that may be exposed to social exclusion due to the inconvenience of transportation. Therefore, the healing aspect of green spaces, which offer socialization opportunities, was also determined in Roger's study (2010), and the beneficial aspect of these spaces that are good for human health was emphasized.

Reconstruction of cities makes it difficult for the elderly to continue living in tight spaces (Neves and Amaro, 2010). A study looking at the urban transformation from the eyes of the elderly has shown that the elderly will be alone with the urban transformation, lose their identity, and fear that the places that meet their basic needs will disappear. The relatives-neighbor solidarity will disappear (Çunkus et al., 2019).

Old age is alleviated by the moral contributions of social relations and support (Ulrich et al., 1991). This symbolic bond that elderly individuals who feel they belong to their environment establish with their environment ensures that both the elderly and the environment are mutually influenced by each other. In this respect, it is seen that the areas accessible to the elderly play an essential role in maintaining the biopsychosocial well-being of the elderly (Ergun and Ergun, 2020).

In order to have a healthy and active aging process, living spaces should be created in a way that is suitable for the participation of the elderly. For this reason, it is necessary to evaluate the expectations of elderly individuals from local governments and the current situation in constructing areas for the elderly. In-accordance with this, the main problem of this study is "What are the expectations of the elderly from public spaces and what is their satisfaction level?". The sub-questions of the study are as follows:

- What are the main factors affecting the spatial preferences of the elderly?

- What is the spatial and technological accessibility of the elderly?

- How does the changing urban life affect elderly people's sense of belonging and commitment to living spaces?

METHOD

Research Design

A qualitative research method was used in this research, which was conducted to observe the current situation in the construction of public spaces and residences and to see the expectations of the elderly. The data collection process was carried out using an in-depth interview technique. The reason for using the qualitative research method in this study is to understand the expectations of the elderly with open-ended questions and to discover the problems that were not addressed in the questions during the interview process.

Participicants

The sample of the study consists of 16 volunteers aged 65 and over. Among the selection criteria of the participants are being 65 years old and over and having the ability to evaluate and respond to spatial and environmental conditions. Face-to-face interviews with elderly individuals were conducted indoors (private homes) and outdoors (parks, mosque courtyards, and recreational facilities).

Data Collection Tools

The data collection phase of the research was designed to last approximately 30 minutes, and the interviews were conducted to face-to-face. Socio-demographic information was obtained from the elderly who were approved to participate in the study. Then, semi-structured interview questions and additional questions were asked during the interview. The questions asked to the participants were based on the problem of what kind of expectations the elderly have in the construction of public spaces and residences and how the current situation meets these expectations. In the questions covering the subject of the research, a total of 25 open-ended questions were asked, five under the

titles of accessibility, transportation, and use of space, six under the title of architectural change, and four under the title of belonging, and the thoughts of the elderly were discussed.

Data Analysis

The socio-demographic data of participants were analyzed with the IBM SPSS 26 program and categorized at regular intervals. The interview answers obtained were interpreted in the line with descriptive analysis. The data obtained from the participants were categorized and transferred manually, without changing their statements, accompanied by prominent theme headings. Spelling arrangements have been made in a way that will keep the meaning of the collected data the same.

RESULTS

Table 1: Socio-demographic Findings

Gender	n=16	%
Female	11	68.8
Male	5	31.3
Age		
65	1	6.3
66	2	12.5
67	1	6.3
68	1	6.3
70	2	12.5
74	2	12.5
75	3	18.8
77	2	12.5
81	1	6.3
92	1	6.3
Family Income Status		
Low	3	18.8
Below the middle	3	18.8
Middle	8	50.0
Above the middle	2	12.5
Who do you live with?		
Spouse	5	31.3
Family	5	31.3
With children	4	25.0
Alone	1	6.3
With grandchildren	1	6.3
Where do you currently live?		
Big city	15	93.8

Village	1	6.3
Do you live in an urban renewal area?		
Yes	8	50.0
No	8	50.0
How many children do you have?		
2	5	31.3
3	2	12.5
4	4	25.0
5	2	12.5
7 and above	3	18.9
How is your relationship with your child?		
Very good	4	25.0
Good	8	50.0
No bad	3	18.8
Too bad	1	6.3
How many years have you lived in the same area?		
1-10	3	18.9
11-20	1	6.3
21- 30	4	31.4
31-40	3	18.9
41-50	5	25.1

Considering the prominent findings from the socio-demographic data in the table; there are 68.8% female and 31.3% male participants. Looking at the age range, the mean age was 73.25±6.88 years. In the question of family income status, half of the participants stated that they were at a middle-income. In addition to this, the answer of the question of whom the participants live with is spouse and family. It is seen that 93.8% of the participants live in metropolitan cities while half of the participants live in the urban transformation area. Considering the number of children of the participants had, the average number of children was 4.25±2.54. Looking at the participant's relationship with their children, 8 participants stated that it was good. When the duration of the participants' living in the same region is examined, 5 participants stated that they lived in the same region between 41-50 years.

Accessibility

There are five questions under the heading of accessibility, and in the first question, their opinions about the measures taken for their safety in the city they live in were asked. According to the answers given, three participants thought there was security, while one person stated it was not enough. The remaining thirteen think that they need more security. Looking at the featured answers:

> "When you do not say anything to anyone, no one will say anything to you. We do not have the right way. Our path was not made. How many years have I been here? They

have made asphalt. They did it at our own expense. I am dating myself, but I cannot take my child out. It is not safe…" (P9,75, Male)

"I live in Erenköy, Istanbul. No factor can negatively affect my life in this region. Environmental regulations are positive for our health. The roads are well-built, and traffic lights and signs are enough. I live in a safe area for the elderly." (K1, 74, Female)

The second question is about whether they are satisfied with the physical conditions of the house they live in. Six participants stated that they were satisfied with all conditions, four participants were not satisfied with any situation. Looking at the featured answers:

"The house I live in is in a central location where I can meet my basic needs such as market, hospital, and health center. However, since my house is on the main street, I am not satisfied with much noise. I also worry about the earthquake as I live in an old building." (K1, 74, Female)

"I made it myself. It's considered rotten. The slum is single-story. I'm burning the stove. There is natural gas, but I can't burn it. 1 billion bills. I'm thinking of giving it to the contractor, no lie. It's small, but they don't give an apartment." (K9.75, Male)

The third question is about the problems experienced in transportation to hospitals and public buildings. While eleven participants stated they had no problems, six stated they had problems. The prominent answers are as follows:

"The hospital is already closed. We are going on foot, but do you have a vehicle for others to go? Bus we wait, but they do not come. I am already old… The municipality can do something like a special service for us. The occasion is very troublesome." (K13, 74, Male)

"I cannot go alone. Considering that I am alone, I must be able to reach the ambulance in any way possible. Regulations can be made in the communication system in health. Especially in the appointment system!" (K5, 68, Female)

The fourth question of the study is related to the easy access to green areas such as parks. According to the answers, eleven participants stated they could access it easily, while six said they could not. The prominent answers are as follows:

"We are not going anywhere. Always in the courtyard of the mosque, in the park... I wish there were a place for old men to gather if tea was cheap. I would love to. But there is none." (K13, 74, Male)

"I performed the noon prayer, I am sitting here (in the courtyard of the mosque). This green area of the mosque is very beautiful. For the elderly, for sitting, for rest. This place

is so ideal." (K4, 92, Male)

The last question of the accessibility title is about whether they have problems accessing the internet. Six of the participants stated that they did not have any problems using the internet. While seven participants stated they do not use the Internet, the remaining four stated they had problems.

Transport

There are two questions under the heading of transportation, the first of which is about the problems they experience in transportation while going from place to place. According to the answers given, eight participants stated that they had no problems, and nine stated that they had problems. The problems they experience are usually about the lack of vehicles, the distance from the stops, the inability to get on alone due to their discomfort, or the vehicles being too crowded.

The second question about transportation is about the problems they experience in finding a place in public transportation or getting on and off. While eight participants stated that they did not experience any problems, nine stated they had problems with these issues. The prominent statements are as follows:

> *"I am having great difficulty. I get in the car, they don't give a place. I have to stand. I go to the heads of young people, but they close their eyes and pretend to sleep...» (P16, 77, Female)*

> *"Of course, it is difficult because the steps are very high. And because the society often does not care for the sick and the elderly, it is often necessary to travel on foot." (K17, 77, Female)*

Use of Space

When the participants were asked where the places they socialize, seven participants stated that they preferred open spaces such as parks and green areas and three preferred closed areas such as shopping centers and cultural areas. While three participants stated that they spent time with their family and neighbors to socialize, one participant stated that he did not leave his house due to his illness, and another stated that he did not leave the house by his own choice. Two participants stated that no places are suitable for the elderly. The prominent answers are as follows:

> *"Mosque. There is a park opposite my house. Sometimes I just go and sit there. I have friends from the mosque community. Mostly I come and sit here." (K4, 92, Male)*

> *"There is no place to socialize. I want a place to sit and have tea and chat with my peers." (K2, 66, Female)*

When the elderly were asked about the places they would like to go or not go to other than the places they went to socialize, the participants often explained that they could not go to the places they wanted to be due to transportation problems, economic problems, and accessibility problems due to their illnesses. While six of the participants stated that economic reasons were an obstacle, seven stated that the health problems and physical difficulties brought about by old age constitute an obstacle to going where they want to go.

> "We cannot go too little through transport. There is nothing for the elderly to breathe... And financial difficulties. I am not retired. An old-age pension." (K13, 74, Male)

> "There is no mosque I did not visit a year or two ago, whether across or on these sides... However, now I cannot go this year. I am scared. Somewhere I get hit by a car or fall. I stand up. I walk well. Moreover, lately, I have not been able to balance it for the last month or two." (K4.92, Male)

While eight of the participants think that there are places that appeal to their age group in the region where they live, nine of them think that they are not.

> "I do not think I will not rest my head comfortably. I will take a walk. There are no social facilities." (K2.66, Female)

> "There is no place I can go where I live, except at my neighbor's house." (K6, 67, Female)

When the participants were asked whether they would like to participate and if there was a place where they could spend time with young people, twelve participants said they would like to participate. One of the participants stated that he did not want it, another said he wanted it occasionally, and another stated that he thought the young people would not chat with them.

> "What am I to do with young people? It would be better if she was my age." (K6, 67, Female)

> "Some of the young people do not chat with us." (K16, 77, Female)

When the participants were asked whether there were places they would like to spend time with their peers, three participants stated that there were no such places, twelve participants stated that they were few. One of the participants stated that they spend time with their peers in front of their houses and the others in their associations.

Architectural Change

The participants in the study were asked about the spatial changes they observed today compared to ten years ago, and three participants stated that nothing had changed. In contrast, the fourteen participants stated that economic problems have increased, the effects of urbanization have been observed, green areas have decreased, and neighborhood relations have undergone negative trans-formations. Some of the prominent answers are as follows:

> *"Many buildings have been built, when there were no shops. The environment became crowded and alienated." (P5, 68, Female)*

> *"Everything was better 10 years ago. There was kinship. Now we are closed to homes due to illness." (P11, 70, Female)*

While one participant commented on the neighborhood relations with the changing architecture: "It is okay for me." and one participant answered that it has not changed, fifteen participants stated that architecture weakens neighborly relations and as time passes, they cannot establish spiritual relations as before. Some of the prominent answers are as follows:

> *"Neighborhood is gone. There is none. If you have time… There is no neighborhood left. However, we split our bread in half. Not so now. Now, if someone dies of pain, no one gives a bite. Well, it is getting worse and worse." (P4, 92, Male)*

> *"There is no respect and love left. There are no old neighbors. We used to call each other all the time, now they pass by, but they do not greet." (K16, 77, Female)*

When asked how green areas are affected by the architectural change, 3 participants stated that green areas did not decrease, while fourteen said green areas decreased. Some of the prominent responses are as follows:

> *"I think the existing green spaces are not used for their purpose. Animals use the parks as toilets. This should not be allowed. There is no place for people to sit or step on. Bicycles hinder and endanger traffic. The roads are irregular, and the parks must be cleaned of the animals' dirt; putting cat-dog food on the pavements causes environmental pollution." (P2, 66, Female)*

The question of what kind of spaces have started to take place in order to meet their needs in the place where they live with the changing conditions; Answers were given in the form of markets, sports complexes, social and recreational facilities, cafes, cultural centers, parks, apartments, gardens, buildings, health institutions and shopping centers. Some of the prominent ones among these answers are as follows:

"Markets never existed, they did. Sports complex, park, garden, cultural center, social facilities, our market, apartments and residences... It was better in the past." (K5, 68, Female)

"Health, markets and shopping centers, social areas and recreational facilities increased." (P17, 77, Female)

When asked whether there were spaces that needed to be added in the changing architecture to meet the basic needs, eight participants stated that they were not missing. In contrast, nine participants stated there were deficiencies in accessibility. Some of the prominent responses are as follows:

"The sites are lacking in gardens, parking lots are not enough, huge places are being built, but there is no place for people to go down and breathe." (P2, 66, Female)

"I wish the bakery and market were closer to my house." (K16, 77, Female)

In the research, when the participants were asked whether the noise pollution brought by urbanization bothered them, two stated that there was no noise in the place where they lived and were not disturbed, and one stated that they were used to it. In contrast, fourteen participants expressed their discomfort in various sentences:

"Yes, the fact that my house is on the main street, the increased traffic, and the increasing population in my region as a result of renewal have created such disturbances." (P1, 74, Female)

"Yes, it is a lot, especially in this neighborhood, the sound is never missing, I cannot lift my head that much anymore." (K15, 74, Female)

Belonging

In order to observe the belongings of the participants in their homes and social environments, a question was asked about the memories of the region where they lived. The prominent answers are as follows:

"... I have never worked. I do not have insurance either. The kids did not make me work. I wish I worked. I did not think about today. I am not satisfied with this life. Because I cannot say I do not have pocket money, I cannot ask... This place is valuable to me. The hospital is very close. If I get sick today, my child can take me to the hospital." (K4, 92, Male)

"For 44 years. It is okay, I cannot live anywhere, but here. I always call my neighbors here." (K15, 75, Female)

The question of how people who moved to the region they live in affect their sense of belonging. Three participants mentioned that their communication with newly moved people was good. Five participants stated that they were not affected at all.

> "I have tenants. When they come and go, I always cry after them because I get used to it." (K15, 75, Female)

> "I am at an equal distance from everyone, but we cannot communicate much. There must be a common point. They do not even get greetings. I do not care much, even if it affects me. I do not care. After a certain age, human relations weakened..." (P2,66, Female)

Asked whether they have the right to have a say in changing the layout of their house, one of the participants stated that they lived alone and the other one stated that they could not change it. In contrast, fifteen participants stated they had authority in the household and their decisions were respected. Some of the prominent responses are as follows:

> "I am first in line. My children see me as the head of the house." (P5, 68, Female)

> "Myself myself. When I say I will do something, I do it, no one interferes." (P9, 75, Male)

The participants in the study were asked how they felt when they were away from their place of residence for a long time, and answers were obtained that met on a common theme, such as longing for their homes and neighbors, wanting to leave the place they went and return to their homes, being sad, bored elsewhere. Some of the prominent responses are as follows:

> "I miss it so much. I want to go back right away. I am bored somewhere else." (P15, 75, Female)

> "I miss going back to my home and being with my children and grandchildren and spending time with them." (P7, 81, Female)

DISCUSSION

This study aims to present the current problems in the public and private living spaces of individuals aged 65 and over.

From the answers given under the heading of accessibility, it was understood that there was no security where the participants lived in, insufficient infrastructure, and problems in finding places and directions. In a similar study, elderly individuals mentioned, especially urban infrastructure problems. They have been observed to complain about the inadequacy of functional walkways, elevators, traffic lights, and signs (Dodson et al., 2004).

From the answers related to their access to the internet, it was understood that the participants did not have internet access problems because they did not have any access to technological devices. Contrary to this study, in a study conducted in Portugal, more than half of the participants found that they regularly use technological devices (Huxhold et al., 2014).

The elderly said they prefer parks and green areas to get fresh air rather than closed areas. It is seen that green areas in urban life have positive effects on elderly individuals and contribute to keeping their social lives active (Alidoust and Bosman, 2015).

Almost half of the elderly think the spaces designed for them are sufficient. In a study on the effect of social activities on the well-being of elderly individuals, it was observed that participants who communicated with their peers experienced fewer adverse effects of aging (Garginlo et al., 2018).

The participants stated that they wanted to share the same places with the young people regarding socialization, but they were worried about being understood and excluded. A study focusing on intergenerational communications and dealing with interaction of young-old adults observed a significant decrease in the social anxiety levels of older individuals interacting with young people (Şentürk, 2018). With this result, there was a need for more places where older individuals could interact with young people.

When the participants were asked about the spatial changes, they have observed today, compared to the last ten years, most of them stated there were so many economic, environmental and urbanization problems and negatively neighborhood relations. Similarly, in the literature, economic, cultural, and political processes are experienced together with urban modernization. It is seen that these processes also affect the shaping of architectural structures (Kurtkapan, 2018).

Those who lived in the same region for a long time were more willing to talk about their memories of the place they lived in during the interviews. Elderly people who had only lived in the region for a short time did not share their memories because they could not connect with the environment. A study showed that living in the same place for a long time contributed to the accumulation of memories (Atchley, 1977).

All of the participants yearn for their sense of belonging to their living spaces when separated from their place. The literature shows that the elderly living in the same residence for a long time have a higher sense of belonging to the living space (Cramm and Nieboer, 2013).

The findings obtained as a result of this study are important because it is a resource that policymakers, field workers and especially local governments can benefit from working with elderly individuals in the field. In this reason, at below some suggestions are offered related to the subject.

For Policymakers

• Developing social policies to combat the inequality created by urban aging for the elderly.

• Improving living standards on a macro scale by evaluating the space use of elderly individuals in national action plans on aging and aging.

For Field Workers

• Providing ergonomic and gerontological arrangements that will provide autonomy to the elderly indoors and outdoors,

• Organizing peer group activities to facilitate the adaptation process of elderly individuals in the urban transformation process,

• Conducting longitudinal studies to see whether the expectations of the elderly from public spaces and spaces are met.

For Local Governments

• Disseminating age-friendly urban practices and making them accessible to all elderly people in the country,

• Planning the infrastructure works that will help the elderly to engage in physical and social activities,

• By the principle of aging in place, providing conveniences specific to older adults in the zoning planning of houses where they spend most of their lives.

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TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS, OPINIONS AND TRAINING NEEDS ABOUT THE GUIDANCE, DIAGNOSIS AND EDUCATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH SPECIAL TALENTS[1]

Özel Yetenekli Bireylerin Yönlendirme, Tanılama ve Eğitimi Hakkında Öğretmenlerin Algı, Görüş ve Eğitim İhtiyaçları

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ABSTRACT

In this study, it was aimed to determine teachers' views, perceptions and training needs regarding the identification and education of gifted and talented students. By determining the opinions of teachers, new and functional suggestions regarding the identification and education processes of gifted students were presented. 358 teachers working in Sakarya province participated in the study. Frequency analysis and descriptive statistics methods were used in the statistical analysis of the research. According to the results of the study, it was determined that teachers need training on "identifying gifted students", "choosing appropriate teaching methods for gifted students" and "determining the learning needs of gifted students". When the opinions of the teachers regarding the education of gifted students were examined, it was seen that they expressed opinions on giving more space to gifted students in education policies, enriching BILSEMs, (science and art education center) and constantly renewing themselves in this field. Under the sub-heading of teachers' perceptions of gifted students, it was determined that teachers' perceptions of the characteristics of gifted students in general were above average

Keywords: Gifted, intelligence, emotional intelligence, special education

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1   This article was prepared from the research project titled "Perceptions, Opinions and Training Needs of Teachers about the Guidance, Diagnosis and Education of Individuals with Special Abilities" conducted by Adapazarı Guidance Research Center in 2021

ÖZET

Bu araştırmada öğretmenlerin özel yetenekli öğrencilerin tanılanması, eğitimleri ile ilgili görüşleri, algıları ve eğitim ihtiyaçlarının belirlenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Araştırmada öğretmenlerin görüşleri belirlenerek, özel yeteneklilerin tanılanma ve eğitim süreçlerine ilişkin yeni ve fonksiyonel öneriler sunulmuştur. Araştırmaya Sakarya ilinde görev yapan 358 öğretmen katılmıştır. Araştırmanın istatistiksel analizlerinde frekans analizi ve betimsel istatistik yöntemleri kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın sonuçlarına göre öğretmenlerin "özel yetenekli öğrencileri tespit etme", "özel yetenekli öğrencilere uygun öğretim yöntemi seçme" ve "özel yetenekli öğrencilerin öğrenme ihtiyaçlarını belirleme" konularında eğitim ihtiyaçları olduğu belirlenmiştir. Öğretmenlerin özel yeteneklilerin eğitimine ilişkin görüşlerine bakıldığında eğitim politikalarında özel yetenekli öğrencilere daha fazla yer verilmesi, BİLSEM'lerin zenginleştirilmesi, öğretmenlerin bu alanda sürekli kendilerini yenilemeleri konusunda görüş belirttikleri görülmüştür. Öğretmenlerin özel yeteneklilere ilişkin algıları alt başlığında öğretmenlerin genel olarak özel yetenekli öğrencilerin özelliklerine ilişkin algılarının ortalamanın üstünde olduğu belirlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Özel yetenek, zekâ, duygusal zekâ, özel eğitim

INTRODUCTION

Intelligence has been defined in various ways in the literature. Among these, Piaget's definition is "the development and activation of mental processes such as perception, assimilation and recall". Gardner, on the other hand, defines intelligence more comprehensively as "the ability to create products, produce solutions, and discover problems" (as cited in Demirok, 2012). The concept of "special talent" is used by MEB (2013) instead of the concepts of "giftedness/intelligence". Giftedness, on the other hand, is defined in the literature as "an individual's ability to be at a higher level than his/her peers in one and/or several or all of the following areas of physical growth and development, movement development, perception- attention control, cognitive development such as analysis, synthesis, problem solving, the ability to understand and express language, social, emotional and aesthetic development, which can be observed and/or measured by experts through various observation and measurement tools" (Baykoç Dönmez, 2012).

Gifted students are emerging as a strategic driving force in the development of a country and in keeping pace with technology. The education of gifted individuals is an investment in the future and is of great importance in raising leading cadres and artists in a country. It is seen that this issue has been given importance all over the world in the historical process. (Genç, 2016) In the "Strategy and Implementation Guide for the Education of Gifted Individuals", the strategic importance of gifted education is explained with the sentence "The high and qualified level of education of human resources helps the country to use other resources more efficiently and to make the country technologically, economically, politically and militarily strong" (MEB, 2013).

The first step in the education of gifted students is the identification process. Following the right path in identification ensures that education achieves its goal. The earlier the existing talents are recognized, the more they have the opportunity to develop their talents. Group intelligence tests, individual intelligence tests, critical thinking tests and special tests for artistic fields are generally used in diagnostics. The teacher's opinion takes the first place in directing the student to these tests. In this

respect, teachers' ability to recognize gifted students and their equipment in this field are important (Levent , 2011).

Turkey has come a long way in the education of gifted students with the establishment of BİLSEMs. It has taken its place in education as a unified version of the Science Centers and Art Centers established separately in the world. In research studies on separate and combined education in the education of the gifted in the world, it has been concluded that the education that students receive with their peers in their own classrooms is more effective. In the current education in Turkey, there is a need to make progress in the individual education of students and education without segregation (Genç, 2016).

Definitions of Intelligence

Although intelligence has many different definitions, its dictionary meaning in the Turkish Language Association is given as "all of human thinking, reasoning, perception of objective facts, judgment and inference abilities" (http://www.tdk.gov.tr). In the literature, intelligence has been a concept that science has tried to define and explain in the historical process. Intelligence has been defined in many ways by many scientists. Therefore, it is not possible to talk about a single definition of intelligence. The society, cultural structure, personal experiences and disciplines in which scientists live and work have had an impact on their theories of intelligence (Sak, 2016). Binet defined intelligence in 1905 in terms of "reasoning, practical meaning, initiative and adaptability" (as cited in Hindes, Schoenberg, & Saklofske, 2011). David Wechsler, who introduced the Wechsler Intelligence Scale, defined intelligence as "the general capacity of the individual to act purposefully, think rationally, and interact effectively with his or her environment" (Wecshler, 1958).

Piaget defines intelligence as follows: "*Intelligence is an adaptation... To say that intelligence is a special case of biological adaptation is to admit that it is fundamentally an organization and that its function is to structure the universe just as the organism structures its immediate environment. Intelligence is the assimilation of all the data of experience into its own framework. There is no doubt that mental life also adapts to the environment.*" (Piaget, 1963)

Sternberg's (1997) definition of intelligence is as follows: *"The mental abilities necessary to adapt to any environmental context, the real world, as well as to shape and select this environment"*.

In a declaration published in the Wall Street Journal in 1994, 52 researchers agreed on the following definition:

"It is a very general mental capacity that encompasses the functions of reasoning, planning, problem solving, abstract thinking, grasping complex ideas, learning quickly and learning from experience. Intelligence is not just an academic skill. Rather, it is a much broader and deeper capacity that enables us to comprehend and interact with the environment around us." (Gottfredson, 1997)

Another definition of intelligence published in APA (Intelligence: Knowns and Unknowns, 1996) and accepted by 11 psychologists is as follows:

"Individuals differ in their ability to understand complex ideas, adapt to the environment, learn from experience, reason in different ways and cope with challenges. However, although such individual differences are very large, they are not immutable. An individual can demonstrate different levels of intellectual performance at different times and in different domains." (as cited in Sak, 2016)

The difference in the definitions of intelligence shows the difference in the perspectives in explaining the concept of intelligence. Researchers working in this field have put forward various theories of intelligence arising from these various perspectives. Theories of intelligence facilitate the explanation of the concept of intelligence by offering various perspectives.

What is Special Talent / Giftedness ?

The concepts of special talent and giftedness are sometimes used interchangeably in the literature. In the past, the concept of giftedness was used more frequently, but today, especially MEB sources use the concept of "giftedness". The term "gifted" has various definitions.

In MEB (2017), giftedness is defined as *"children who are identified by field and subject matter experts as performing at a higher level than their peers in intelligence, creativity, art, leadership capacity or academic fields. Gifted or gifted children are children who need special education and activities to develop their talents".*

Terman (1925), who conducted the first and most important studies in this field, explained giftedness as *"the upper limit of the 2% who have achieved the highest scores in standard intelligence tests."* (as cited in Sürmeli, 2015) This definition, based on intelligence as a single criterion by Terman, has evolved into multifaceted definitions over time.

When other definitions in the literature are examined, giftedness is defined as individuals who have remarkable superior achievements and whose skills that enable them to show high-level creativity develop early (Şenol, 2011).

The most widely accepted definitions and explanations in this field in the literature are made by Renzulli. According to Renzulli (1990), giftedness or giftedness emerges through the interaction of three basic elements.

1. Above average ability (talent).

2. Ability to generate creative solutions (creativity).

3. Being highly motivated in their work (motivation).

Diagnosis and Assessment of Gifted Students and Educational Diagnosis and Evaluation

The identification of gifted children as early as possible and the orientation of gifted children according to their needs are very important in terms of educational strategies. Identification of gifted students is important in the following four aspects:

- Early identification and guidance accelerates and regulates the development and learning of these children.

- In this period when it is important to follow and produce technology, gifted children are seen as economic resources that can make significant contributions to science, production, art and technology.

- When gifted children cannot find the opportunity and environment they are looking for, when they cannot realize themselves, they may have a destructive, maladaptive position that harms themselves and their environment.

- By definition, the concept of equal opportunity includes access to educational environments suitable for development and abilities. Accordingly, the fact that children with special abilities cannot access the necessary educational environment is contrary to the understanding of contemporary education (MEB, 2017).

According to Dönmez (2012), the identification and guidance of gifted children in the preschool period is of great importance. In this period, parents should observe their children's behaviors well, and when they detect significant differences between them and their peers, evaluating this well can give the right results. For this, parents should of course be familiar with the developmental characteristics of infancy and early childhood. However, diagnosis in early childhood is often very difficult and infrequent.

In the preschool period, more qualitative assessments are conducted based on teacher and parent observations. However, standardized quantitative assessments required for diagnosis cannot be conducted in this period. The reason for this is that standardized measurement tools have been found to give more reliable results on school-age and older children. Of course, standardized tests should not be used alone to identify gifted children. In this respect, it is seen that there are various methods used for diagnosis in the literature (Şenol, 2011).

Teacher evaluations, parents' opinions, developmental assessments, checklists, peer observations and opinions, standardized tests and performance and behavior scales are among the methods used in the diagnostic phase (Baykoç Dönmez, 2012).

Measuring Tools

The most commonly used tools in the diagnostic process are standardized tests. They can be analyzed under two headings: group tests and individual tests.

Group intelligence tests are mostly used for screening purposes. They can be applied to more than one person at the same time. However, it does not provide enough information for a detailed evaluation. There is a possibility that gifted and talented children with motivational and emotional problems may be overlooked in screening with group tests. Therefore, individual tests should be supported by other diagnostic tools such as teacher opinions (MEB, 2017).

Individual intelligence tests classically used to make a more precise diagnosis of the gifted child's abilities. They are expensive and require time and expertise to administer. They are also considered to have cultural limitations. (Baykoç Dönmez, 2012) Since they are administered individually, it is possible to observe the student in more detail and collect more detailed information about his/her skills. In this respect, it can be said that it provides more reliable results than group intelligence tests. Although it is a tool that must be used in diagnosis, supporting it with other tools makes the diagnosis stronger (Şenol, 2011).

Scales belonging to these areas are used to determine special talent areas (Şenol, 2011). Creativity tests, critical thinking tests, tests suitable for painting and music can be counted in this category (MEB, 2017). Torrance Creative Thinking Test and Reading Maturity Test are examples of these tests (Şenol, 2011).

Diagnostic Process in Turkey

In Turkey, cooperation between Guidance and Research Centers and BILSEM is at the forefront in the process of identification of gifted students. In the pre-school period, identification can be made through appropriate measurement tools by referring to Guidance and Research Centers (Bilgiç, et al.).

The first stage in the province-wide process is the sharing of the necessary announcements by the Ministry of National Education and the determination of class levels and related procedures. Students are assessed in the areas of general intellectual ability, visual arts and music talent. In the second stage, classroom teachers fill in the observation forms prepared by the Ministry of National Education and nominate students who they think have different development than their peers. The observation forms are then evaluated by the BILSEM commission. Candidate students are then subjected to group screening tests (Bilgiç, et al.) Group screening tests are conducted on tablet computers. After the group screening tests, students who score the threshold score determined for each talent area are subjected to individual evaluation. Individual assessment is conducted separately for each talent area. Students who pass the threshold score determined by the ministry from the individual evaluation are eligible to enroll in Science and Art Centers (Science and Art Centers Student Identification and Placement Guide, 2019).

In BILSEM, students receive education in parallel with their formal education. In addition, students diagnosed as gifted can benefit from support education in support education rooms as mainstreaming in their schools (Bilgiç, et al.).

Educational Practices for Gifted Students

There are various opinions on how gifted students should be educated. While some experts state that a separate education model should be adopted; according to some experts, a co-education model should be adopted. (Avcı Doğan & Ateşgöz, 2020) In the separate education model, gifted children receive an education in specially designed educational environments, with specially trained teachers, where they are subject to a special education program. Homogeneous groups are provided. In the co-education model, gifted students are supported and educated without being separated from their peer groups (MEB, 2017).

Separate Education

It is carried out by bringing together gifted children according to certain levels and educating them in a special institution subject to an education program specific to gifted children. Usually, special institutions for the gifted provide this education. In the Ottoman Empire, the Enderun School was one of the first examples of this. Currently, there are special institutions for gifted students in Turkey (MEB, 2017).

Anatolian Fine Arts High Schools and Science High Schools are also included in the scope of separate education, while the Turkish Education Foundation Inanç Türkeş Private High School provides this service as a private institution (MEB, 2017).

Turkish Education Foundation Inanç Türkeş Private High School: Provides education to students at the secondary education level. It selects students through in-house diagnostic studies. The institution first ranks the applicants according to their LGS scores; students with scores above the determined base score proceed to the next stage of the identification process. In the second stage, students take a test. For 2021, the CAS (Cognitive Assessment System) test is applied. After this test, students are interviewed by teachers, subjected to a language test and then a total score is obtained by taking the information required for the scholarship. The student then receives a final enrollment (Turkish Education Foundation Inanç Türkeş Private High School, no date).

The institution implements the curriculum of Anatolian High Schools providing education in a foreign language and includes activities prepared for gifted students in its curriculum (Baykoç Dönmez, 2012).

Education Together

After the identification process, the potential and educational needs of the gifted student are determined and an appropriate program is prepared and the student continues to receive education in the same group with his/her peers without being separated. This practice can be carried out in various ways; acceleration, enrichment and grouping.

Acceleration

Gifted students have a more advanced developmental level and learning speed compared to their peers. Acceleration practice refers to moving the student further in the education program based on his/her individual learning speed. In acceleration, the cognitive, social and affective characteristics of the student are important, not his/her age (Avcı Doğan & Ateşgöz, 2020).

Acceleration prevents students from getting bored in teaching due to their learning speed. Thus, children become more willing to participate in education. Acceleration can be implemented in various ways: starting class (school) early, skipping classes, skipping courses, taking exams without taking the course, and completing the program before the deadline (Baykoç Dönmez, 2012; MEB, 2017).

Enrichment

Enrichment is the situation in which a gifted student is included in a program that is deepened and enriched in parallel while continuing classroom education with his/her peers. Enrichment enables gifted children to be together with their peers, to produce projects with them, to participate in activities and to be a model for them. At the same time, it enables the child to progress in his/her own talent areas through a separate program (Avcı Doğan & Ateşgöz, 2020). There are process and content goals in enrichment practices. Process goals are critical thinking, creativity, scientific thinking and problem solving. Content objectives are activities and lessons (Baykoç Dönmez, 2012).

Grouping

The Grouping application is the educational grouping of gifted students with similar abilities in or out of the classroom for long or short periods of time (Baykoç Dönmez, 2012). It has been determined that grouping practice has very positive effects on the production, success and self-perception of gifted students. There are various models in grouping practice; full-time homogeneous grouping, full-time heterogeneous grouping, part-time homogeneous grouping, part-time heterogeneous grouping.

METHOD

Problem Statement

What are the perceptions, opinions and training needs of primary and preschool teachers regarding the recognition, identification and education of gifted students?

Limitations

1. The research has conducted in Sakarya province. Teachers from the central districts of Sakarya constituted the sample.

2. Due to the pandemic period, data collection has carried out online.

Research Method

The current study is a descriptive model research. An attempt was made to determine a situation by reaching the current views of teachers regarding the identification and education of gifted students.

The research was conducted as a cross-sectional study. Teachers working in Sakarya province were taken as a cross-section. It can be described as a provincial case study. The results of the analysis made with the data obtained were generalized to the sample.

Descriptive statistical analyses were made using the SPSS program with the data obtained through questionnaire applications.

Population and Sample

In the study, primary school classroom teachers working in Sakarya province were determined as the study population. The sample of the study consists of 358 participants determined by convenience sampling method from primary school classroom teachers working in Adapazarı, Arifiye, Erenler, Sapanca and Serdivan districts of Sakarya province.

Data Collection Tools

"Personal Information Form" and "Scale for Determining Perceptions, Opinions and Educational Needs of Individuals with Special Abilities" were used as data collection tools. The scales were administered through the online platform.

Personal Information Form

A personal information form consisting of a total of 7 items regarding demographic information, professional information and teachers' methods of obtaining information on special talent was prepared. The form was used to obtain this information from the participants before the survey.

Scale for Determining Perceptions, Opinions and Educational Needs of Individuals with Special Talents

The scale was developed by Demirok at the Near East University in 2012. Permission for the use of the scale is presented in the appendix. The scale consists of 3 separate subscales. Each subscale was prepared to measure a different value.

The "Determination of Teachers' Perceptions of Gifted Students' Characteristics" scale aims to determine teachers' knowledge about the characteristics of gifted students, how they perceive gifted children, and what they observe as distinguishing characteristics. The validity and reliability studies of the scale were completed with 175 participants. According to the factor analysis results, the scale consists of 5 factors. These factors were named as "willingness to learn" (9 items), "expressive characteristics" (8 items), "personality characteristics" (6 items), "learning characteristics" (6 items), and "mental characteristics" (4 items). Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale was calculated as .95 for the whole scale and .90 for the two half tests. The alpha coefficient for the first factor was .92 and the two half-test reliability coefficient was .89, the alpha coefficient for the second factor was .89 and the two half-test reliability coefficient was .87, the alpha coefficient for the third factor was .90 and the two half-test reliability coefficient was .87, the alpha coefficient for the fourth factor was .86 and the two half-test reliability coefficient was .82, and the alpha coefficient for the fifth factor was .68 and the two half-test reliability coefficient was .67. (Demirok, 2012)

In the "Determining Teacher Needs for Gifted Students" questionnaire, the training needs of teachers in the stages of identification of gifted students, their education in the classroom and support education will be tried to be determined. The questionnaire prepared with 30 items was finalized as 26 items with 4 items removed after expert opinions (Demirok, 2012).

In the "Determining Teachers' Opinions on the Education of the Gifted" scale, it will be tried to determine the opinions of teachers about the education processes available for gifted students and their suggestions, if any, on this issue. The scale has 31 items. According to factor analysis, it consists of 6 factors. According to the results of the reliability analysis of the scale, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was found to be .89 and the two half test reliability coefficient was found to be .92. (Demirok, 2012)

FINDINGS

In this section of the study, the demographic information of the study group within the scope of the research as well as frequency tables and column graphs regarding their responses to the measurement tool applied are presented.

Distribution of Participants

Table 1. Distribution of the Study Group

		Count	%
Gender	Female	243	67,9
	Male	115	32,1
	Total	358	100,0
Age	Between 22-30	38	10,6
	Between 31-40	122	34,1
	Between 41-50	130	36,3
	51 years and over	68	19,0
	Total	358	100,0
Professional Seniority	1-5 years	34	9,5
	6-10 years	35	9,8
	11-15 years	71	19,8
	16-20 years	68	19,0
	20 years and over	150	41,9
	Total	358	100,0

When the distribution of the study group according to gender was analyzed, the proportion of female teachers was 67.9% (n:243) and the proportion of male teachers was 32.1% (n:115).

When the distribution of the study group according to the age variable is analyzed, the proportion of those aged between 22-30 years is 10.6% (n:38); the proportion of those aged between 31-40 years is 34.1% (n:122); the proportion of those aged between 41 and 50 years is 36.3% (n:130); and the proportion of those aged 51 years and over is 19.0% (n:38).

When the distribution of the study group according to the professional seniority variable is examined, the proportion of those with 1-5 years of professional experience is 9.5% (n:34); the proportion of those with 6-10 years of professional experience is 9.8% (n:35); the proportion of those with 11-15 years of professional experience is 19.8% (n:71); the proportion of those with 16-20 years of professional experience is 19.0% (n:68); and the proportion of those with 20 years or more is 41.9% (n:150).

Table 2 . Distribution of the Study Group According to the Variable of Receiving or Not Receiving Education on Giftedness

Receiving or Not Receiving Training	Count	%
Yes	85	23,8
No	273	76,2
Total	358	100,0

When the distribution of the study group according to whether or not they received training on giftedness, the rate of those who said 'yes' was 23.8% (n:85); the rate of those who said 'no' was 76.2% (n:273).

Table 3 . Distribution of the Study Group According to Having a Gifted Student in the Classroom

How Many Gifted Students Are There?	Count	%
None	165	46,1
1	61	17,0
2	54	15,1
3	27	7,5
4 and over	15	4,2
I'm not aware of it	36	10,1
Total	358	100,0

Regarding the "Awareness of Having a Gifted Student in the Classroom" of the study group, 46.1% (n:165) said 'none'; 17.0% (n:61) said '1'; 15.1% (n:54) said '2'; 7.5% (n:27) said '3'; 4.2% (n:15) said '4 or more'; and 10.1% (n:36) said 'not aware'.

Table 4. Distribution of the Study Group According to Their Answers to the Question "Where Do You Access Resources on Giftedness?"

Where Do You Access Resources on Gifted and Talented People?	Count	%
From The Internet	192	53,6
From Books	62	17,3
From Experts	104	29,1
Total	358	100,0

In response to the question "Where do you access resources on giftedness?", 53.6% (n:192) of the study group said 'from the internet'; 17.3% (n:62) said 'from books'; and 29.1% (n:104) said 'from experts'.

Table 5. Skewness and Kurtosis Values of the Scale for Determining Sample Group Teachers' Perceptions, Opinions and Educational Needs Regarding Individuals with Special Abilities (Normality Test)

The Scale	n	X̄	Ss	Skewness	Kurtosis
Teacher Needs for the Gifted and Talented	358	2,4423	,52088	-,707	-,288
Perception of the Gifted and Talented	358	3,8902	,47197	-,170	,130
Opinion on the Gifted and Talented	355	4,0265	,41042	-,308	,486

Note: The kurtosis and skewness coefficients given in the table are the values obtained by dividing by their standard errors.

When we look at the values shown in the table, the skewness and kurtosis coefficients of the Scale for Determining Perceptions, Opinions and Educational Needs of Individuals with Special Talents are between -1.50 and +1.50 at the 5% significance level. From this point of view, it can be accepted that all the preliminary measurements obtained are normally distributed.

Table 6 . Determination of Teachers' Perceptions of the Characteristics of the Study Group's Gifted Students at the Item Level

	N	Min. Score	Max. Score	Average	SS
They are very sensitive both to themselves and to what is happening around them.	358	1,0	5,0	3,838	,9966
They are patient	358	1,0	5,0	2,779	1,0500
They want their own rules to prevail.	358	1,0	5,0	3,785	,8241
They like to collect stones and insects.	358	1,0	5,0	3,637	,8110
They try to do everything perfectly.	358	1,0	5,0	3,520	1,0336
They are very curious.	358	1,0	5,0	4,285	,7759
They are very sociable.	358	1,0	5,0	3,511	1,0062
They want their different ideas and dreams to be respected.	358	1,0	5,0	4,123	,7570
Their reasoning skills are highly developed.	358	1,0	5,0	4,187	,8104
They give details in their ideas.	358	1,0	5,0	3,980	,8416
They are very enthusiastic about learning activities such as reading and writing.	358	1,0	5,0	3,707	,9675
Their physical development is advanced compared to their peers.	358	1,0	5,0	2,955	,9002
They ask many questions.	358	1,0	5,0	4,196	,7856
They like to read books 1-2 years above their grade level.	358	1,0	5,0	3,936	,7624
They like competition.	358	1,0	5,0	3,707	,9559
They have a developed sense of humor.	358	1,0	5,0	3,830	,8960
They are productive, capable of presenting clear detailed ideas.	358	1,0	5,0	4,070	,7242
They learn quickly and remember easily.	358	1,0	5,0	4,207	,7609
Their physical energy levels are high.	358	1,0	5,0	3,721	,9199
They have a strong enough imagination to create imaginary friends.	358	1,0	5,0	3,712	,8491

They are very sensitive, so much so that their feelings are easily hurt.	358	2,0	5,0	3,698	,8155
They don't like to be under the orders of others.	358	1,0	5,0	3,961	,7769
They take place as leaders in the group.	358	1,0	5,0	3,827	,8522
They choose as friends those who are 2-3 years older than them.	358	1,0	5,0	3,648	,8495
In areas such as music, painting, dance, drama they succeed.	358	1,0	5,0	3,626	,8332
They do not need to work much.	358	1,0	5,0	3,640	,9205
They can retain and remember what they hear for a long time.	358	2,0	5,0	4,159	,6170
They can retain and remember what they read for a long time.	358	1,0	5,0	4,151	,7058
They have their own original interests.	358	2,0	5,0	4,218	,6195
They are capable of questioning existing rules.	358	1,0	5,0	4,148	,7202
They are interested in abstract subjects such as dinosaurs, space, numbers.	358	1,0	5,0	4,134	,7053
Their mental energy levels are high.	358	2,0	5,0	4,190	,6331
They like to engage in mental activities such as puzzles and mazes.	358	2,0	5,0	4,145	,6317
They have a high aptitude for academic achievement.	358	1,0	5,0	3,994	,7956
General	358	2,5	5,0	3,89	,4719

When the values obtained are examined, it is seen that the teachers who constitute the study group have the highest perception of gifted students' characteristics in the subjects of 'They are very curious' (x_{av}=4,285), 'They have original interests of their own' (x_{av}=4,218), 'They learn quickly and remember easily' (x_{av}=4,207). Teachers' perceptions of the least gifted students are "They are patient" (x_{av}=2,779), "Their physical development is advanced compared to their peers" (x_{av}=2,955), "They are very sociable" (x_{av}=3,511).

Table 7. Determination of Teacher Perceptions of the Study Group on the Characteristics of Gifted Students at the Sub-Dimension Level

	N	Min. Score	Max. Score	Average	SS
Willingness to Learn	358	1,56	5,00	3,7405	,54075
Features of Expression	358	2,33	5,00	3,8430	,55405
Personality Traits	358	2,00	5,00	3,7612	,57936
Learning Characteristics	358	2,17	5,00	3,9902	,53217
Mental Features	358	2,25	5,00	4,1159	,58204
General Teacher Perception	358	2,50	5,00	3,8902	,47197

When the values obtained are examined, the "willingness to learn" sub-dimension of the teachers constituting the study group was found to be at the level of 'agree' (x=3,74); the "expressive characteristics" sub-dimension was found to be 'agree' (x=3,84); the "personality characteristics" sub-dimension was found to be 'agree' (x=3,76); the "learning characteristics" sub-dimension was found to be 'agree' (x=3,99); the "mental characteristics" sub-dimension was found to be 'agree' (x=4,11); and the "general teacher perception" was found to be 'agree' (x=3,89).

Table 8 . Evaluation of the Perceptions of the Sample Group Regarding the Characteristics of Gifted Students in Terms of Gender Variables

Dimensions	Gender	N	X̄	SS	t	p
Gifted Student Perception Score	Female	243	3,7869	,53765	2,375	,018
	Male	115	3,6425	,53647		

In the values in the table, N numbers, arithmetic averages and standard deviations of the scores of the sample group within the scope of the research are given according to the gender variable, and the difference between the scores of "Determining Teacher Perceptions of the Characteristics of Students with Special Talents" was examined with the Independent Sample t Test depending on the gender variable.

Based on the data obtained from the table, according to the gender variable, the arithmetic mean of the "Scale for Determining Teachers' Perceptions of the Characteristics of Gifted Students" of the female sample group is 3.93; the arithmetic mean of the "Scale for Determining Teachers' Perceptions of the Characteristics of Gifted Students" of the male sample group is 3.78. A significant difference was found between the groups (t(356) =2,889; p=.004; p<0.05).

Table 9. Evaluation of the Perceptions of the Sample Group Regarding the Characteristics of Gifted Students in Terms of Professional Experience Variable

Dimensions	Professional Experience	N	X̄	Sd	f	p	Significant Difference
Gifted Student Perception Score	1-5 years	34	3,8598	4	,734	.569	-
	6-10 years	35	3,8314	353			
	11-15 years	71	3,8308				
	16-20 years	68	3,9334				
	20 years and over	150	3,9192				

In the table, the results of the analysis of variance of the scores of the gifted perception of the sample group based on the "professional experience" variable are presented. According to the data analysis, the levels of perception of gifted students of the sample group do not differ significantly according to the professional experience variable ($f_{(0,05:4-353)}$:,734, p>0.05).

Table 10. Evaluation of the Sample Group's Perceptions of the Characteristics of Gifted Students in Terms of Participation in Education on Gifted Students

Dimensions	Gender	N	X̄	SS	t	p
Gifted Student Perception Score	Yes	84	4,0229	,43411	2,967	,003
	No	273	3,8499	,47716		

In the values in the table, N numbers, arithmetic averages and standard deviations of the scores of the sample group within the scope of the research according to the gender variable are given and the difference between the scores of "Determining Teachers' Perceptions of the Characteristics of Gifted Students" was examined with the Independent Sample t Test depending on whether they participated in the training on giftedness or not.

Based on the data obtained from the table, according to the variable of whether they participated in the training on giftedness, the arithmetic mean of the "Scale for Determining Teachers' Perceptions of the Characteristics of Gifted Students" of the sample group who said "Yes, I participated" was 4,02; the arithmetic mean of the "Scale for Determining Teachers' Perceptions of the Characteristics of Gifted Students" of the sample group who said "No, I did not participate" was 3,84. A significant difference was found between the groups (t(356) =2,967; p=.003; p<0.05).

Table 11. Evaluation of the Sample Group's Perceptions of the Characteristics of Gifted Students in Terms of the Number of Gifted Students in the Classroom

Dimensions	Number of Gifted Students	N	X̄	Sd	f	p	Significant Difference
Gifted Student Perception Score	1	165	3,8120	5 352	4,451	.001	1-2; 1-3; 1-4; 1-6; 3-6; 4-5; 4-6
	2	61	3,9604				
	3	54	4,0111				
	4	27	4,1605				
	5	15	3,8641				
	6	36	3,7562				

The table shows the results of the analysis of variance of the sample group's gifted student perception scores based on the variable "Number of Gifted Students in the Classroom". According to the data analysis, the "Perception of Gifted Students" levels of the sample group differ significantly according to the variable "Number of Gifted Students in Class" ($f_{(0,05:5-352)}$: 4,451, p<0.05).

Table 12. Evaluation of the Sample Group's Perceptions of the Characteristics of Gifted Students in Terms of the Variable "Where Do You Access Resources Related to Gifted Students?"

Dimensions	How to access	N	X̄	Sd	f	p	Significant Difference
Gifted Student Perception Score	Internet	192	3,8655	2 355	1,785	.169	-----
	Books	62	3,8448				
	Experts	104	3,9627				

The table shows that the sample in the sample group Analysis of variance results of the Gifted Perception Scores based on the variable "Where do you access information about gifted students" are presented. According to the data analysis, the levels of Perception of Gifted Students of the sample group do not differ significantly according to the variable 'Where do you access information about gifted students' ($f_{(0,05:2-355)}$: 1,785, p>0.05).

Table 13. Determination of the Study Group's Teachers' Opinions on the Education of the Gifted

	N	Min. Score	Max. Score	Average	SS
Education programs can meet the needs of gifted learners.	358	1,0	5,0	2,765	1,0615
There is no harm in educating gifted children in normal classroom settings.	358	1,0	5,0	2,793	1,0299
Special education programs should be prepared to develop the abilities of the gifted.	355	2,0	5,0	4,346	,6518
A safe, peaceful and warm family environment is essential for the development of giftedness.	358	1,0	5,0	4,179	,7458
Classroom teachers should prepare additional learning design for gifted and talented students.	358	1,0	5,0	3,947	,9136
Assignments that require problem solving techniques appropriate to the speed of the gifted should be given.	358	1,0	5,0	4,142	,7252
Teachers should use more methods such as experiments, observations and projects when teaching gifted children.	358	1,0	5,0	4,165	,7281
There is a need for separate/differentiated programs for the gifted in our education system.	358	1,0	5,0	4,232	,7017
Special classes should be opened for the gifted and talented.	358	1,0	5,0	4,101	,9112
There should be a course on giftedness in teacher training faculties.	358	1,0	5,0	4,383	,7151
If necessary, specially equipped schools should be opened for the gifted.	358	1,0	5,0	4,288	,8391
Gifted students should not be given long repetitive assignments on the same topic.	358	1,0	5,0	4,145	,8541
They should be given priority in answering their classmates, not them, and they should not be discouraged.	358	1,0	5,0	3,268	1,0455
Students who are recognized as gifted should not be assigned routine tasks.	358	1,0	5,0	3,631	1,0005
Creative, unconventional ideas of gifted people that are impractical or unlikely to be implemented should be listened to.	358	1,0	5,0	4,182	,6803

They should not be asked to help their friends learn subjects for part of the school day.	358	1,0	5,0	3,327	,9827
Teachers should not compare the achievement of the gifted student with the achievement level of his/her classmates, but with his/her own learning power and speed.	358	1,0	5,0	3,723	1,0554
Children should be given the opportunity to develop the creative side of their intelligence by asking more difficult questions and asking them to develop new ideas.	358	1,0	5,0	4,045	,8423
Teachers should constantly renew themselves.	358	1,0	5,0	4,397	,6604
Neglecting subjects such as art, music and physical education for academic subjects should be avoided.	358	1,0	5,0	4,209	,8456
Students should be guided to collaborate with experts in choosing the most appropriate pathway for further learning.	358	1,0	5,0	4,341	,6534
The program prepared by the Ministry of National Education should include content for the gifted.	358	1,0	5,0	4,341	,6990
School supervisors should also be asked for their views on giftedness.	358	1,0	5,0	4,168	,7521
Classrooms for the gifted should be opened within the existing system.	358	1,0	5,0	4,095	,8448
There are institutions and associations in our country where we can direct gifted children.	358	1,0	5,0	3,254	,9928
Teachers should establish a dialog with the families of gifted children.	358	1,0	5,0	4,335	,6773
School administrations should establish a dialog with the families of gifted students.	358	1,0	5,0	4,251	,6969
Courses should be designed for gifted children.	358	1,0	5,0	4,268	,7452
Teachers should also inform the school administration about students who are considered gifted.	358	1,0	5,0	4,260	,7463
Science and Art Centers within the ministry for the gifted should be enriched and developed.	358	1,0	5,0	4,433	,6608
The education policy of the Republic of Turkey should also include the gifted and talented.	358	1,0	5,0	4,441	,6268
General	355	2,84	5,00	4,0265	,41042

When the values obtained are examined, the highest averages in the opinions of the teachers who constitute the study group on gifted students are seen in the subjects of 'Special talented students should

be included in the education policy of the Republic of Turkey' (xav =4,441); 'Science and Art Centers within the ministry for gifted students should be enriched and developed' (xav =4,433); 'Teachers should constantly renew themselves' (xav =4,397). The least average of the teachers' views on gifted students were "Education programs can meet the needs of gifted students" (xav =2,765), "There is no harm in educating gifted students in normal classroom environments" (xav =2,793), "There are institutions and associations in our country where we can direct gifted children" (xav =3,254).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

When the research findings were evaluated, the three topics that teachers needed the most training were "identifying gifted students", "choosing appropriate teaching methods for gifted students" and "determining the learning needs of gifted students". These results are in line with the results of Demirok (2012). In his 2012 study, Demirok revealed that teachers have a significant need for training on giftedness. In 2019, Levent and Kansu Çelik conducted a research study with BILSEM teachers and revealed the existence of teachers' training needs regarding the identification process. The need for training for teachers in the field of "identifying gifted students", which is one of the results of our research, confirms the results of previous studies. Similarly, in a study conducted by Mindivanlı Akdoğan, Koçak, and Subaşı (2017) with preschool teachers, it was revealed that teachers needed more information about diagnostic scales in order to identify gifted children in early childhood.

Considering the training needs of teachers for gifted students, it is recommended that in-service training, seminars or informative meetings be organized for teachers at pre-school, primary and secondary education levels regarding gifted education. In order to determine the learning methods of gifted students and to provide education with these methods, it is recommended to provide workshops based on appropriate teaching methods by preparing environments where gifted students can receive education separately from their classes. These findings support the findings in the research of Bedur, Bilgiç and Taşlıdere (2015). In their research, Bedur, Bilgiç and Taşlıdere (2015) determined that teachers needed educational support the most, after material support, in terms of both content preparation and training in the training given to specially talented students in support training rooms. The survey answers consisting of open-ended questions in the study show that teachers have difficulty in accessing previously prepared resources, especially in the preparation of content for support education. It needs training that can enrich the content in this field.

According to the findings of the study, teachers need less training on 'giving appropriate projects for gifted individuals' compared to other topics. In this direction, it is recommended to increase the number of project studies on the specific interests of gifted students in schools and to organize trainings to increase the equipment of coordinator teachers about gifted students to carry out these projects.

In the sub-heading "teachers' perceptions of gifted students" measured in the study, it was determined that teachers' perceptions of the characteristics of gifted students were generally above aver-

age. Among the characteristics of the students, it was determined that the area in which they were least equipped was "personal characteristics of the students". This finding coincides with the findings of Sürmeli (2015). In the 2015 study conducted by Sürmeli with classroom teachers, it was found that teachers' awareness of the academic characteristics of students with special abilities was high, but low in terms of personal characteristics.

In the findings of the research, it was concluded that there was a significant difference between the teachers who participated in the training on giftedness and the teachers who did not participate in the training in terms of their perceptions about giftedness. Based on this, it is recommended that comprehensive training studies on the characteristics of gifted children should be carried out especially for teachers at the grade levels where BILSEM referrals are made in order for classroom teachers to recognize students with special abilities and make correct guidance. In addition, it is recommended to plan studies to increase the level of knowledge in this field at pre-school and secondary education level.

Another characteristic measured in the study, "teachers' views on the education of gifted students", showed that teachers expressed opinions on giving more space to gifted students in education policies, enriching BILSEMs, and constantly renewing themselves in this field. This finding supports Nar's (2017) finding that support education rooms are inadequate in terms of equipment and training and that teachers need in-service training; Pemik and Levent's (2019) finding that there is no specific curriculum in support education rooms; Cengizhan's (2019) finding that teachers working in support education rooms have difficulties in preparing content. In the research study of Afat (2017) as an example of Istanbul province, support training rooms were examined and as a result of this examination, 124 (11%) of the teachers working in the support training rooms received in-service training on the subject, and 973 (89%) It was determined that they did not receive any in-service training on the subject. This analysis also coincides with one of the findings of our research, "the training needs of teachers". Considering this training need:

- In terms of determining the learning methods of gifted students, it is recommended to provide workshops based on appropriate teaching methods by preparing environments where gifted students can receive education separately from their classes, taking into account the training needs of teachers.

- It is recommended to increase the number of projects in schools that focus on the specific interests of gifted students, and to organize trainings for coordinator teachers to increase their knowledge about gifted students.

- It is recommended that studies be carried out to enrich BILSEM training programs so that students attending BILSEM can benefit more in line with their interests and talents.

- Students who do not attend BILSEM but are identified as gifted should be provided with more

support education in schools. In this context, it is recommended to improve ZEP implementations and to provide trainings that will increase the equipment of implementing teachers.

- Schools with a high number of students identified as gifted should be supported to open workshops and provide these students with environments where they can receive education and carry out projects outside their classrooms.

- The training of teachers who work with gifted students is as important as the equipment required to carry out this training. It is also necessary to provide physical equipment that will facilitate and support the education, projects or experiential work that students will receive in separate classrooms or laboratories (math, science, nature, etc.). Teachers' views revealed their training needs, but even in cases where the educational equipment is complete, physical conditions must also be provided for teachers to enable gifted students to progress further. Robotic coding workshops, mathematics physics chemistry laboratories, environments where they can use applications that can provide their development in specific fields (mathematics, physics, chemistry, music, etc.) on computers or tablets can be counted among the physical equipment.

- Based on teachers' opinions on education programs, education practices for the gifted that can be carried out in our country can be listed as follows:

- In schools, the physical infrastructure required for gifted students to benefit from support education rooms should be created and supported in accordance with ministry policy. The Enriched Education Program (ZEP), which should be implemented in support education, should be prepared and implemented in accordance with specific areas of talent by including practical activities. Experiments, research, functional use of technology, coding skills should be included in these programs.

- Institutions that provide education in the support education dimension, such as BILSEM, should be separated from normal education processes and should provide full-time education. Students selected for BILSEM can be educated in these institutions with the versions of the ZEPs implemented in the support education rooms transformed into an expanded enriched curriculum. Providing full-time enriched education will enable gifted children to participate in education much faster and more productively.

- Separate educational institutions should be opened for individuals with an IQ score of 150 and above, and these children should be included in educational processes with special education and techniques. Considering that these separate educational schools, just like the sports high schools and fine arts high schools that currently provide education, are exemplary educational institutions that accept students with talent; the opening of educational institutions in the fields of science and mathematics, where students selected with talent and intelligence scores can do special studies in these fields, will fill an important gap.

SUGGESTIONS

In the light of the findings of the study, suggestions for future studies in this field can be listed as follows:

- One of the findings of the study is that improvements should be made in the system regarding the education of the gifted. It may be recommended to conduct a qualitative study in order to obtain teachers' views on this issue in a more comprehensive manner.

- It is recommended that a qualitative study be conducted to determine all teachers' views on giftedness and gifted education and teachers' perceptions of gifted children.

- The level of self-efficacy regarding gifted education, the level of perception towards gifted children and the level of knowledge regarding gifted education can be replicated with a qualitative study.

- Qualitative or quantitative studies should be conducted to determine preschool teachers' attitudes towards acceleration, ability grouping and enrichment strategies

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SUPERVISION NEEDS OF SOCIAL WORKERS WORKING IN TÜRKİYE: AN EXPLORATORY QUALITATIVE STUDY[1]

Türkiye'de Çalışan Sosyal Hizmet Uzmanlarının Süpervizyon İhtiyaçlarının Değerlendirilmesi: Keşfedici Nitel Bir Çalışma

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to assess the supervision needs of social workers in various social work institutions in Türkiye based on three functions of supervision (administrative, educational and supportive). The study used a phenomenological approach. Two focus group interviews were conducted. Each group consisted of six social workers from different social work fields. Data collection tools consisted of a "Personal Information Form" and a "Semi-structured Interview Form". Data were analyzed with thematic analysis method using the MAXQDA 2020 program. The analysis of the study was based on social workers' opinions on supervision and their experiences about administrative, educational and supportive functions of supervision. The results supported the notion that there is a need for supervision at the institutional level for social workers. These findings are important in terms of providing some insight on how social workers define supervision and through which functions they need institutional supervision. As a result, the employer institutions and organizations are recommended to establish a formal, structured, institutional and systematic supervision system for social workers.

Keywords: Social work supervision, social work practice, supervision functions, focus group, social worker

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1   The study has previously been presented at "European Social Work Conference 2023"- 21-24 May, Prague as an oral presentation.

ÖZET

Bu çalışma, Türkiye'deki çeşitli sosyal hizmet kurumlarında çalışan sosyal hizmet uzmanlarının süpervizyon ihtiyaçlarını, süpervizyonun üç işlevi (idari, eğitsel ve destekleyici) temelinde değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmada fenomenolojik bir yaklaşım kullanılmıştır. İki odak grup görüşmesi gerçekleştirilmiştir. Her grup farklı sosyal hizmet alanlarından altı sosyal hizmet uzmanından oluşmaktadır. Veri toplama araçları "Kişisel Bilgi Formu" ve "Yarı Yapılandırılmış Görüşme Formu"ndan oluşmaktadır. Veriler, MAXQDA 2020 programı kullanılarak tematik analiz yöntemiyle analiz edilmiştir. Araştırmanın analizi, sosyal hizmet uzmanlarının süpervizyona ilişkin görüşlerine ve süpervizyonun idari, eğitsel ve destekleyici işlevlerine ilişkin deneyimlerine dayanmaktadır. Sonuçlar sosyal hizmet uzmanlarının kurumsal düzeyde süpervizyona ihtiyaç duyduğu fikrini desteklemektedir. Bu bulgular, sosyal hizmet uzmanlarının süpervizyonu nasıl tanımladıkları ve kurumsal süpervizyona hangi işlevler aracılığıyla ihtiyaç duydukları konusunda fikir vermesi açısından önemlidir. Sonuç olarak işveren kurum ve kuruluşların sosyal hizmet uzmanlarına yönelik resmi, yapılandırılmış, kurumsal ve sistematik bir süpervizyon sistemi kurmaları önerilmektedir

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal hizmet süpervizyonu, sosyal hizmet uygulaması, süpervizyon işlevleri, odak grup, sosyal hizmet uzmanı

INTRODUCTION

The word "supervision" originates from the Latin words "super" (over) and "videre" (to watch) (Fehmerling, 2013, as cited in Magnussen, 2018). That is why a supervisor can be called an observer who watches the work of another. Social work is one of the professions that emphasize the importance of supervision the most (Poertner and Rapp, 1983). Social work supervision is defined as "a joint endeavour in which a practitioner, with the help of a supervisor, attends to their clients, themselves as part of their client-practitioner relationships and the wider systemic and ecological contexts, and by so doing improves the quality of their work, transforms their client relationships, continuously develops themselves, their practice and the wider profession" (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012).

Social work supervision is generally recognized for its three functions: administrative, educational and supportive (Erera and Lazar, 1994; Kadushin and Harkness, 2002; Tsui, 2005). Kadushin and Harkness (2002) describes administrative function as ensuring effective implementation of agency policies and service delivery. The main goal of this function is to ensure adherence of the personnel to the institutional policies (Kadushin, 1992). Education function enhances the values, knowledge and skills of social workers. Its main goal is to upgrade the skills of the social workers (Kadushin, 1993). Lastly, supportive function of supervision increases job satisfaction as it provides sustenance, and motivation (Kadushin, 1992; Kadushin and Harkness, 2002; Tsui, 2005). Supervisors are expected to have a positive relationship with the educational and supportive functions while fulfilling responsibilities such as directing, coordinating and improving the performance of employees (Kadushin and Harkness, 2002). These functions are not discrete. They overlap, interplay, and complement each other.

Although social work supervision has a short history of theory and model, it has a long practice history (Tsui, 2021). The origins of social work supervision and social case study can be traced back to the Charity Organization Societies (COS) movements that began in Buffalo in 1878. Firstly, supervision started on the administrative level. Supervisors were assigned to monitor untrained volunteer visitors

(Tsui, 1997). The COSs have published a guide for the case assessments and have developed a supervision system. This way, it provided knowledge and skills training for the case studies (Munson, 1978; Mo et al., 2020).

Supervision is accepted as one of the main determinants of professional development and job satisfaction for social workers and the service quality provided for the clients (Kadushin and Harkness, 2002; Tsui, 2005; Tsui et al., 2017). In other words, supervision supports social workers as it ensures their professionalism in case management, protecting their emotional and psychological health, and conducting a competent case management process.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review showed that there was no formal, structured, institutional and systematic supervision system for social workers in social service institutions and organizations in Türkiye. There were a limited number of studies about supervision needs of social workers. One of these studies, evaluated supervision needs of social workers from different fields of social work. The results showed that there was a need for supervision in multiple areas such as professional competence, case management, intervention techniques, dealing with anxiety, and ethical dilemmas (Artan et al., 2018a). Another study, focusing on social workers working with immigrants, showed that this group of professionals had very same needs, especially when they were at the beginning of their career (Artan et al., 2018b). A review study also emphasized the importance and the need of a well-established supervision system for social workers in Türkiye (Taşğın, 2019). In addition, there were only three master's theses (Karabenk, 2018; Özkan, 2020; Özkan, 2016) and one doctoral thesis (Atamtürk, 2021) on social work supervision on the national thesis screening centre (YOK Thesis). Also, there was one book on the subject called "Supervision in Social Work: A Model Proposal for Supervision System in Child Welfare" written by Atamtürk (2022). Lastly, a training for supervisor training project named "Training of Trainers on Supervision and Guidance in Refugee Protection" was detected as one and only in Türkiye (https://sabif.istanbulc.edu.tr, 2021). Project's partners were Istanbul University- Cerrahpaşa Faculty of Health Sciences, Ministry of Family and Social Services Istanbul Provincial Directorate and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

In the light of this information, determining the supervision needs of social workers in Türkiye will provide awareness to academicians to increase publications in the field of supervision. It will also guide social work institutions in terms of establishing a formal social work supervision system. Furthermore, this study is a first in Türkiye by carrying out focus group work with social workers for supervision needs.

This study aims to reveal how the supervision needs of social workers are shaped based on three functions of supervision: administrative, educational and supportive. The results will provide a perspective for employers and the Turkish Social Workers Association for the establishment and development of a supervision system.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Study Sample

This research was carried out with social workers working in public and private social work institutions and organizations in Türkiye. In Türkiye, social workers are employed in many places, including public, private and non-governmental organizations. In this context, it was decided to establish two focus groups consisting of social workers.

Focus group interviews are a data collection technique that has been frequently used in recent years. It helps the participants get a detailed, in-depth and multi-dimensional view, reveal how the participants perceive the situation, and help the emergence of new and different ideas within-group interaction (Çokluk et al, 2011; Kitzinger, 1995; Krueger, 1994).

Sampling Technique

Two focus groups consisting of 6 social workers each (12 in total) were established. All the participants were working in social work institutions and organizations. Academicians were not included in this study. And social workers with less than one year of experience were excluded. Purposive sampling was used with these criteria.

The sociodemographic information of the social workers who participated in the study is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of socio-demographic characteristics of study participants

Demographic Variable	Characteristics	Frequency
Age	24-30	8
	31-40	2
	41-50	2
Gender	Male	5
	Female	7
Professional Field	Child	4
	Family	1
	Medical	3
	Forensic	3
	Local Administration	1
Occupational Experience	0-2 years	1
	3-5 years	4
	6-10 years	5
	11 years and above	2

Interview Process

Group sessions were held between 15.12.2020-29.12.2020 via online video conference due to pandemic conditions. Each session lasted between 90-100 minutes on average. In-depth interviews were conducted by asking the participants 4 semi-structured questions:

1. What do you think when you hear the term "supervision", as a social worker?

2. How is the administrative functioning in your institution?

3. How are the training and guidance practices provided in your institution to improve professional knowledge and skills?

4. What are the events that cause negative effects/stress in your professional life? In such cases, what kind of support mechanisms does your institution have?

Data Analysis

MAXQDA software was used to analyze transcriptions of focus groups. In order to identify themes from the participants' responses, the codes of two groups were combined. Three main themes were conducted for coding based on the conceptual categories of supervision: administrative, educational and supportive. The codes assigned under these main themes take a descriptive keyword phrase that captures the main themes. Sub-themes are categorized under each main theme.

Data Credibility

The deciphered data obtained from the Social Workers Focus group was reviewed by 2 social workers and 1 psychologist during the first reading process. Basic encodings and high-frequency expressions were determined through the deciphered interview texts and the questions transferred to the MAXQDA 2020 program. Afterwards, the deciphered texts were re-read, and the main themes were determined by combining the common expressions of the codes created for each question. These main themes were re-read, and the codes that could enter the main themes were rearranged. In the next process, sub-themes were formed over the main themes, and the final reading was carried out. Question-based evaluations and theme expressions related to the main themes and sub-themes are explained below for each question.

Ethical Considerations

All of the participants were informed about the research, and the research was carried out with their voluntary participation. Ethics committee approval of the study was obtained from Istanbul Aydın University (No: E-45379966-050.06.04-14008).

RESULTS

Results are grouped under four main themes: (i) thoughts on the supervision concept, (ii) administrative function of supervision, (iii) educational function of supervision, (iv) supportive function of supervision. Narrative examples are presented under the related codes for each theme.

Thoughts on Supervision Concept

Regarding answers to the "What do you think when you hear the term 'supervision', as a social worker?" question, focus groups' explanation of the concept and comments on the need for supervision are listed below.

Two basic themes have been specified by the focus groups. One of them was the definition of supervision term (13 mentions), the other was the need for supervision (16 mentions) during occupational life (Table 2).

Table 2. Thematic Content Analysis of the Focus Groups on the Supervision Concept and Needs of Social Workers

A-1- Comments on Supervision Term
1a- Definiton of Supervision with Guidance and Mentoring Aspects
1b- Definiton of Supervision as Colleague Support
A-2- Need for Supervision
2a- Absence of Institutional Supervision System
2b- Tendency to Meet Supervision Needs through Master-apprentice Relationship
2c- Absence of Colleague Support in Institutions

Definition of Supervision

Sub-themes of the definition of supervision main theme contains a definition of supervision with guidance and mentoring aspects (6 mentions) and definition of supervision as colleague support (7 mentions).

Definition of Supervision with Guidance and Mentoring Aspects

"I can describe supervision more as guidance and counseling."

"I can consider supervision as a guiding light for me."

Definition of Supervision as Colleague Support

"Under the name of «Adaptation Training», the compulsory training is given to the new employees in the hospital. Other than that, we may informally ask for support from more experienced friends in relatively important cases"

"We received colleague supervision while performing in Service and Profession in this field, we did not receive it in an institutional or a structured way, but we always worked in kind of a master-apprentice relationship."

Need for Supervision

The second main theme presents the supervision needs of the social workers. Sub-themes are (i) absence of institutional supervision system, (ii) tendency to meet supervision needs through master-apprentice relationship, and (iii) absence of colleague support in institutions.

Absence of Institutional Supervision System

"I don't know if there is a system in Ministry of Health or other ministries on an institutional level, of course, there is no structured supervision program."

"We received the supervision of our colleagues in the field while performing their profession; we did not receive it in an institutional structure."

Tendency To Meet Supervision Needs Through Master-Apprentice Relationship

"We have always worked in a master-apprentice relationship, from the day I started working. There were more experienced people with me and we learned the principles and procedures of the job by following more experienced constructions in every subject from how to write an article to how to handle a case."

"We got support from more experienced people in informal way, and then there was a problem, which was that it gave the impression that we –as a social worker- knew a lot less than the people we asked questions, so we started asking people around us and getting support, it was a kind of an unofficial need."

Absence of Colleague Support in Institutions

"There was a social worker and he was so angry that he never gave us any guidance because he always said «I had to re-teach every new-comer!»."

"We can't help each other much through colleague support, because most of us are recent graduates and it will grow eventually as we get more experienced."

Administrative Function

According to answers given by the Social Workers focus group to the "How is the administrative functioning in your institution?"; the main theme was determined with the created codes. The sub-themes of this main theme are the division of labor in the institution (10 mentions), resources (12 mentions), and problem-solving methods in institutions (11 mentions) (Table 3).

Table 3. Thematic Content Analysis According to the Codes and the Answers Given in the Focus Groups on the Administrative Function of Supervision

B-1- Accountability-Administrative Responsibility
1a- Division of Labor
1a1- Fair Division of Labor
1a2- Random Division of Labor
1b-Resources
1b1- Lack of Institutional Support
1b2- Getting Institutional Support
1c- Problem Solving Methods in Institutions
1c1- Solving Within Group as Social Workers
1c2- Applying Institutional Management

Division of Labor

Fair Division of Labor

"Only appointments and relocations are made by the management, we have just created an equal system in terms of division of labor for ourselves."

"Now I am working in the Provincial Directorate and I think that the issue of fair case distribution is taken into consideration."

Random Division of Labor

"We distributed the work as a Social Workers Unit. Since the nature and the characteristics of the cases always change, it is not possible to provide an absolute equality anyway. We only distributed it on the basis of service but there could be deficiencies also."

"There is no work distribution plan in the unit I work for, because I work in a unit that belongs to me, but we see that the real administration does not observe this and is not fair, but in the periods we worked, we were directly accountable to the inspector."

Resources

Lack of Institutional Support

"When we request support where I work, we can get the answer that "you can handle it yourself"."

"…we were cleaning our own desk, apart from that, when I went to Bakırköy (institution-hospital), I have paid for the file out of my own pocket and my institution have never interfered with it."

Getting Institutional Support

"In terms of resources, how we can use the resources in the institution or how we can make it suitable, and they generally provide the necessary contribution for the resources we request."

"In terms of providing resources for the applicants, especially if there is no money inflow within the first 3 months of their visit to the institution, if they cannot meet the basic care materials, if they do not have any conversations with their families, the institution meets some of their needs... I do not have a problem with the source."

Problem Solving Methods in Institutions

Solving Within Group as Social Workers

"In general, when we have a problem with our colleagues, we solve it by talking among ourselves."

"If I were to talk about my own experiences during this period, I did not have a situation to go and share with the administration, after all, we have to be here by necessity and there were examples where I went to the solution with the logic that we can solve it among ourselves as adults."

Implementing Institutional Management

"...there may be some instances that will cause disruption of the work, even if it is small. If the event reaches this point, I will request a meeting from the administration and share it in an environment where we are all present."

"I tried to tolerate it a few times, I chose different alternative ways, but I saw that this situation affects both my private life and my work efficiency. At this point, I talked to the management, and they said that I should wait for a while and look for another place instead, and this problem was solved in this way."

Educational Function

Answers given by the Social Workers Focus Group to the question "How are training and guidance practices provided in your institution to improve professional knowledge and skills?" main theme was determined. Sub-themes of this theme were in-institutional training (4 mentions), and training on self-development and occupational development (11 mentions) (Table 4).

Table 4. Thematic Content Analysis According to The Codes And The Answers Given in The Focus Groups On The Educational Function Of Supervision

C-1-Education and Occupational Development
1a- In-Institutional Training
1b- Training on Self-development and Occupational Development
1b1- Training Based on Self-Development
1b2- Therapeutical Training
1b3- Academical Education

In-Institutional Training

"When I started working in an institutional way, there was a 40-day training in Ankara and there were also small trainings after this training process."

"When I started my educational session, I had a 3-day orientation training on the field and about practical application and some information we needed to know was given from various Non-Governmental Organizations."

Training on Self-development and Occupational Development

Training based on Self-Development

"In addition, I would try to support this with articles or readings on that field in order to complete my lack of knowledge."

"...especially the resources were very useful for me, there were books that I used especially on social work, these are the books that I sometimes profit by on even now. I've been looking back at what I said would be useful from the notes I took while I was studying at the undergraduate level."

Therapeutical Training

"I received Art Therapy training for about a year, and then I received Family & Couples Therapy training for 5 years. Then I received training in psychiatry relations with children and adolescents, but it was incomplete due to the COVID-19 Pandemic."

"I first took psychodrama training for about a year. It was useful for discovering myself completely and understanding how to act in a group."

Academic Education

"Apart from that, I was reading and researching myself, and then I headed towards Master's and PhD period."

"Afterwards, of course, if you do not update yourself, you cannot dominate this process if you do not

follow the new regulations, and then I started my doctorate academically and now I am at the thesis stage, I can say that I can try to improve my professional background in this way."

Supportive Function

"What are the events that cause negative effects/stress in your professional life? In such cases, what kind of support mechanisms does your institution have?"

In this main theme, there are codes regarding the support expectations of social workers in terms of support, help about the mental state that they receive from the work environment, institutions and managers in the corporate field and their professional lives. The group's need for support due to traumatic experiences (4 mentions), the wear and burnout caused by the institutional structure (4 mentions), the burnout due to the nature of the profession (4 mentions), and the perceived stigma, especially in the mental health field (2 mentions), were formed as sub-themes of this main theme (Table 5).

Table 5. Thematic Content Analysis According to the Codes and the Answers Given in the Focus Groups on the Supportive Function of Supervision

D-1 Support
1 a- Traumatic Experiences
1 b- Burnout/Wear Out
1b1- Burnout in Institutional Field
1b2- Burnout in Occupational Area
1 c- Stigmatization

Traumatic Experiences

"They had a 5-year-old girl who had been abused and was left with the effects of it. The interview I had with the child was very difficult, and her mother was very nervous and very sad. She blamed herself a lot, and after going through this, I had dreams about a child for about a week or so, and sometimes I wonder how she was doing, what she was doing, and I had a little bit of guilt. I wonder if I could help more. Whether I helped enough or not, or if I said something wrong and made her worse, and other than that."

"I didn't experience anything extreme, just sometimes the parties threaten us."

Burnout/ Wear Out

Burnout in Institutional Field

"I have experienced a lot of burnouts. The number of Child Support Centers in Turkey is low, we are

psychologically worn out, and I have been petitioning to leave this institution for 2 years. My petitions have not been answered for 2 years."

"These institutions are such psychologically difficult areas that the state does not have any official application, and if you have a reference, you can work in the most comfortable place of the family units, and at the same time, if you do not have a reference and you are not a skilled employee, they will consume you."

Burnout in Occupational Area

"We can experience a lot of burnouts due to the field we work in, unfortunately there is no support for burnout on the institutional level, at least I can say that there is nothing structured."

"Due to the nature of the files and cases that come to us, the people we meet wear us out, we are threatened. When I went to the homes of the children who were dragged into crime in juvenile courts, I was threatened and kicked out of the house, and I had no security measures with me."

Stigmatization

"When you receive mental health support, you can be stigmatized. For example, if you take an anti-depressant or go to therapy, you may be exposed to statements like «it's not good for you to work here»."

"There is no strategy at the institutional level, on the contrary, when you try to get support from somewhere on your own and someone hears it, you may encounter discourses such as "your mental health is unstable since you seek for psychological help"."

DISCUSSION

One of the interesting results of this research has been the supervision definitions of social workers. The participants perceived the word "supervision" as equivalent to the words "colleague support, guidance, mentoring". They perceived it as getting help only in cases where they had difficulties. However, concepts such as supervision, consultation, mentorship and coaching have different basic purposes, formats, roles, relationships between partners, sources of authority, and durations (Tsui et al., 2017). Studies conducted with social workers in Türkiye also indicate that social workers define supervision as "the master-apprentice relationship, the guidance of an experienced person, counseling, and receiving support" (Atamtürk, 2021; Özkan, 2020). Therefore, the research findings are similar to the findings in the literature. The purpose of supervision is not merely guidance or mentoring. It is more than colleague support. The way the participants view supervision lacks the administrative function of supervision. Supervision is supposed to aim retaining social workers in organisations in line with the organization policies (Australian Association of Social Workers [AASW], 2014).

Social workers did not make any definitions of the supervision concept over the administrative functions. Özkan's (2020) study also showed that social workers emphasized the supportive and educational functions when they define supervision. This perception of supervision may be related to the lack of administrative supervision at the institutions. As it was clearly detected, the administrative function of the supervision is usually the least preferred one (Kadushin, 1993). Supervisors are tended to avoid the administrative responsibilities, such as monitoring, reviewing, and evaluating supervisee's work, as much as possible (Kadushin, 1993). However, the lack of this function may harm the effectiveness of the job. Without this function, ethical and practice standards cannot be monitored efficiently, and this may possible result in a decrease in accountability of the client outcomes (AASW, 2014).

Another important result of the research is that there was no fair distribution of work or the social workers distributed the work among themselves to ensure justice. Likewise, the participants stated that when there are institutional problems or problems in finding resources, social workers try to solve these problems among themselves. These findings of the study indicate that social workers need the administrative part of organizational supervision. The purpose of the administrative function is sufficient and accountable management of the staff members. The history of supervision shows that the development supervision has started with the administrative function (Tsui, 1997). The lack of this function might harm the peace in the workplace.

Another finding of the study was that most of the participants had traumatic experiences, professional burnout, and weariness due to the cases they encountered. They needed support in this regard. Besides, some of the participants stated that they experienced stigma when they received mental health support. These findings show that social workers also need the supportive function of supervision because of the absence of support mechanisms. Similarly, in the study conducted by Atamtürk (2021), social workers reported that they experienced burnout, fatigue and could not benefit from the supportive function due to the absence of a supervision system. Likewise, Özkan (2020) in their research determined that social workers have negative experiences such as traumatic experiences, stress, fatigue, and burnout. Social workers stated that they need professional support, that is, supervisors who provide the supportive function of supervision, in order to cope with these negative experiences.

The difficulties of the job might escalate when social workers do not get the support they require. Social workers are faced with secondary traumatization since they start their education as a social work student (Cunningham, 2004). In spite of these conditions, secondary traumatic stress in social workers has gained attention relatively recently (Bride, 2007). Demirbaş (2021), in their research with social workers working in the field of child welfare, also found that social workers experienced secondary traumatic stress. They suggested that an in-house supervision system should be developed. The lack of supportive function might cause a decrease in psychological well-being of social workers.

Consequently, it might have a negative effect on the quality of the service provided in institutions.

Additionally, the participants received various in-service training, continued their postgraduate education or received various therapy training from outside voluntarily. They reported less deficiency in the educational and professional development function of supervision. Social workers value teaching and giving/receiving feedback as well as development of leadership and management skills (Ketner et al., 2017). Social work profession requires an on-going education and learning period. This result shows that social workers acknowledge this necessity.

This finding also indicates that social workers mainly continue their training from other sources than their institution. This means that social work institutions do not usually provide educational function of supervision. Similarly, Özkan (2020) found in their study that social workers try to remedy their professional deficiencies in different ways. They stated that social workers need supervision regarding the educational function in a professional way. Social workers tend to reach out to other sources in order to continue their professional development. Internal supervision emphasizes the administrative function and there is usually less emphasis on professional development of social workers (Rankine, 2019). These conditions might make outsource training more appealing. External supervision provides a safe space for supervisee to evaluate their practice (Busse, 2009).

Lastly, study findings revealed that there is not an established supervision system in the institutions where the participants work. Other studies conducted in Türkiye have also concluded that social workers had supervision needs and there were no structured supervision systems in institutions (Artan et al, 2018a; Artan et al, 2018b; Karabenk, 2018; Taşğın, 2019; Özkan, 2016). High rates of absence due to stress-related problems are common in social work (Rose and Palattiyil, 2020). It is evidently possible to say the profession has a challenging nature. It is crucial for a social work unit to have a well-functioning supervision system to serve efficiently. The lack of this system results in burnout of the personnel, low job satisfaction, as well as decrease in efficient service delivery levels.

CONCLUSION

In the light of all these research findings, we can state that social workers have institutional supervision needs. A structured supervision system should be established in institutions. It is recommended that the Turkey Association of Social Workers (SHUDER) take action across the country to establish a supervision system and raise awareness of the necessity of the supervision system by disseminating this and similar studies at the level of ministries, local administrations and non-governmental organizations. In addition, SHUDER should produce various projects in the field of supervision with international organizations such as IFSW / EASSW / IASSW.

Study Limitations

The limitations of this study are worth mentioning. The sampling was purposive in order to include participants from different fields, ministries, gender and age. However, this may have an effect on the representativeness of the data. Secondly, the study was not longitudinal. This is why any change of the opinions, needs, and experiences of the social workers over time could not be evaluated due to time and resource limitations.

Lastly, this study had an exploratory approach within the context of three functions of supervision. Although there are more recently defined additional functions, such as mediation function (Wonnacott, 2012) or transformative function (Weld, 2012), researchers have decided to adapt the functions as originally coined by Kadushin (1992). This choice is due to the fact that this model is one of the most comprehensive conceptualizations of social work supervision and is acknowledged by practitioners and academics (Erera and Lazar, 1994).

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning this article's research, authorship, and/or publication.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for this article's research, authorship, and/or publication.

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CHALLENGES FACED BY SOCIAL WORKERS IN FIELD PRACTICE WITH SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS

Sosyal Hizmet Uzmanlarının Sosyal Hizmet Uygulama Öğrencileri ile Saha Uygulamasında Karşılaştıkları Sorunlar

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ABSTRACT

One of the most important and indispensable elements of social work education is social work practice. For this reason, it would be beneficial to identify the problems that prevent students from being active and productive in the practice period and to offer solutions. This study aims to identify the challenges faced by social workers when working with social work students during field practice and proposes solutions to address these issues. Employing a qualitative research design, the experiences of 140 social workers serving as institutional supervisors were examined. The investigation centered on three key open-ended questions, with face-to-face interviews being conducted with the social workers. The results revealed that the primary difficulties encountered by social workers in supervising students in practice include issues such as absenteeism and non-compliance with institutional rules, challenges associated with open-plan education programs, and instances of indifference and reluctance displayed by students during their practice periods. To prevent these problems, the social workers came up with suggestions, such as academic supervisors monitoring students more frequently, students having learning motivation and being idealistic, developing students' communication skills. The findings obtained from this research will contribute to planning a more effective and productive practice period and having a qualified social work education through increasing awareness about problems encountered during the practice process.

Keywords: Field practice, social work practice, social work students, social worker

ÖZET

Sosyal hizmet eğitiminin en önemli ve vazgeçilmez unsurlarından biri de sosyal hizmet uygulamasıdır. Bu nedenle öğrencilerin uygulama sürecinde aktif ve verimli olmasını engelleyen sorunların tespit edilerek çözüm önerileri sunulmasının faydalı olacağı düşünülmektedir. Bu araştırmanın amacı sosyal hizmet uzmanlarının sosyal hizmet uygulama öğrencileriyle yaşadıkları sorunları tespit etmek ve bu sorunlara yönelik çözüm önerileri geliştirmektir. Nitel araştırma desenine göre yapılan bu araştırmaya sosyal hizmet uygulama öğrencilerine kurum danışmanlığı yapmış 140 sosyal hizmet uzmanı katılmıştır. Çalışmada üç ana soru üzerinde odaklanılmıştır. Araştırmadan elde edilen bulgulara göre, uygulama sürecinde sosyal hizmet uzmanlarının en çok devamsızlık ve kurallara uymama, açık öğretim programları ile ilgili sorunlar, ilgisizlik ve isteksizlik ve eğitsel danışmanlarla iletişim sorunu yaşadıkları görülmektedir. Bu sorunları çoğunlukla uygulama öğrencileriyle karşılıklı açık iletişim kurarak ve beklentileri belirleyerek, eğitsel danışmanlar ve diğer kurum çalışanlarıyla birlikte hareket ederek, uygulama süreci ve yeri hakkında önceden bilgi vererek çözümledikleri belirlenmiştir. Bu araştırmadan elde edilen bulguların, uygulama sürecinde karşılaşılan sorunlarla ilgili farkındalığı arttırarak, daha etkin ve verimli bir uygulama sürecinin nasıl planlanabileceğine ve sosyal hizmet eğitiminin nitelikli olmasına katkı sağlayacağı düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Saha uygulaması, sosyal hizmet öğrencisi, sosyal hizmet uygulaması, sosyal hizmet uzmanı

INTRODUCTION

In social work education, it is not possible to separate theoretical and practical knowledge from one another, because they complete each other. The first stage of the social work profession is to have an effective and productive practice period. The importance of social work can be understood from its definition. According to this definition, "Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion and the empowerment and liberation of people." (IFSW, International Federation of Social Workers, IASSW- International Association of Schools of Social Work, 2014). In other words, the field practice of social work education is a component of social work education wherein students see real social work practices and deal with cases under the guidance and supervision of social workers in various institutions or organisations (Tanga, 2013).

As stated in the United States' Council of Social Work Education's Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards in 2008, social work not only affects the socialisation of a student but also contributes to the prominence of the role of a practitioner (Wayne et al., 2010).

As a social science, the discipline of social work is constantly evolving and changing. Thus, practices carried out in institutions and organisations are constantly undergoing change and development as well. It is possible to keep track of this process with the training taken both during and after undergraduate studies. At this point, the assignation and handling of real cases under the supervision of both the academic supervisors and the institution supervisors provide an advantage to students' professional development.

Today, social work practices and education have gained more significance because of the importance attached to individual differences by postmodernism and the increase in the variety of problems. Numerous studies are carried out at the national and international level to ensure that both the theoretical and practical training of social work meet contemporary needs (Pak et al., 2018).

Social work has been the subject of various studies in the literature, and these studies emphasise different problems encountered in practice environments. It is stated that the most common problem among these is the practice students' lack of knowledge in both theoretical and practical areas (Cha et al., 2006; Rehn & Kalman, 2018; Dominelli & Hackett, 2011). Besides, there is an emphasis on the importance of legislative knowledge as well as theoretical knowledge, and it is stated that one of the most crucial solutions for students to feel better in the professional field is to have a command over the legislation (Rehn & Kalman, 2018). In addition to the lack of knowledge, it is observed that there are problems regarding students' indifference and reluctance to learn, student advisers' lack of supervision (Dominelli & Hackett, 2011), students' non-adherence to rules and students being undisciplined (Dominelli & Hackett, 2012).

Today's social work educational approach has a philosophy that focuses on the student, gives weight to the development of practical skills, is sensitive and values differences and is based on the ethical principles of social work (Ping, 2012; Ferguson, 2018). Therefore, the information obtained from the theoretical education of social work is very effective and essential in forming the basic framework for the practice of the profession (Pak et al., 2018). In this respect, it is of utmost importance to increase the knowledge and skills of the student in the theoretical educational process and to contribute to the transfer of the acquired knowledge to the practical process.

In Tanga's (2013) study regarding the problems encountered in social work practice, the insufficiency of guidelines or materials for the practical process, the lack of coordination between school (academic) and institutional supervisors, the lack of information about the institutions where students practice, the decrease in the quality of supervision work especially when academic and institutional supervisors have to deal with a large number of application students and not all social work students having practical opportunities in main social work institutions come to the fore.

In the literature, the lack of motivation and the insecurity of the practice students were among the other problems encountered (Dominelli & Hackett, 2011). It was stated that doing the practice voluntarily, fondly and willingly contributed to the clients coping with their basic problems both in practical and in professional life (Tippa & Mane, 2018).

The most important system that enables students to transfer the theoretical and legislative knowledge they acquire in the education process to the practice environment is the supervision system. It is stated that actions such as supervision meetings, homework and case discussions held with both academic and institutional supervisors contribute to the permanence of the acquired knowledge and the development of skills (Rehn & Kalman, 2018). However, it is emphasised that it is essential for students to act within the framework of the standards, rules, ethical principles and responsibilities that are the basis of the social work discipline in practice environments (Dominelli & Hackett, 2012; Tippa & Mane, 2018).

This study aimed to examine the problems social workers experience with social work students in field practice. In Turkey's social work literature regarding problems that social workers encounter with social work students in the field, there is no evidence of any previously conducted research. It is crucial that the practice period, which is the first step into the social work profession, is effective and productive for both the members of the profession and the individuals who benefit from the service. It is believed that finding solutions to the problems encountered in this process will contribute to the quality of social work education. In addition, this research allows social workers to express their solution suggestions and expectations regarding the practice period. With this study, it is expected that future social work field practice will be carried out more systematically.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study was prepared and conducted following a qualitative research design. Qualitative research generally carries out data collection methods through observations, interviews, content analysis and in-depth interviews (Yildirim & Simsek, 2013: 46). This study collected data through the interview method. The study used the phenomenological approach, which is one of the qualitative study methods. In the phenomenological approach, it is essential to think about the desired result and to produce a solution based on events, situations, experiences or concepts (Ergun, 2005). Regarding these concepts, the individual presents or expresses his/her knowledge and experience about the event (inefficiency in practice, lack of theoretical knowledge, etc.). The researcher can choose any concept to understand or reveal an event or notion (Erdogan, et al. 2014). This study will analyse the problems faced by social workers who work with social work undergraduate students and their suggestions for solving these problems.

Data Collection

In the study, the following questions were asked to the social workers (participants) about what problems they encounter with the students in social work and what they do to solve them. Also the questions were evaluated by academicians for the suitability of to the purpose of the study. These questions are:

(1) What is the biggest problem you encountered with the practice students throughout your career?

(2) If you experienced a problem, were you able to find any solution to this problem? Did you get any help from someone while finding a solution? and

(3) Do you have any solution suggestions to prevent the problems you are experiencing?

The data for the research was collected between January and March 2017. The information was obtained by taking notes during interviews, which lasted an average of 20 minutes each.

Participants

The participants of the study include 140 social workers who have served as institutional supervisor for social work practice students for at least two years.

According to the data of the Turkish Association of Social Workers (SHUDER), the total number of social workers working in the public sector was 4975. This study reached the participants through the convenience and snowball sampling methods and obtained the data through face-to-face interviews. Then, these data were coded and the problems experienced were determined. The perceptions and events are presented as is, in their natural environments and in a holistic way.

In qualitative research, the election of participants is related to the research design and framework. Sometimes "diversity" and at other times "uniformity" are important (Punch, 2005). In this framework, in the election of the participants, the study tried to achieve diversity through conducting the most objective interview with social workers who have worked with social work practice students as institution supervisor for at least two years. For this purpose, the study reached 140 participants.

Each researcher, who is one of the authors of the study, conducted interviews with approximately 35 participants, reaching a total of 140 participants. Maximum variation was sought by including social workers from various fields of expertise. The main aim of the research was to uncover the most common challenges experienced by social workers with social work students and to propose solutions to these issues. Since the participants' demographic and personal characteristics were not correlated with the challenges they faced, this information was not included in the study.

Data Evaluation

In the data evaluation, the coding system was applied by using the content analysis technique. Content analysis is mainly used for analysing the written and visual data of the focus (sample) group. The purpose of content analysis is to find the relationship between the concepts that will clarify the data obtained from the participants (Erdogan et al., 2014). Themes are usually created in the analysis of the collected data, and these are subjected to a comparative analysis. "Thematic coding is the classification of observation and interview data according to concepts, titles and themes." In thematic coding, the comparison and abstraction of the contradictory and overlapping content obtained is in the foreground, and the emphasis is on the repeating expressions (Geray, 2006). In the content analysis process, firstly the participants' answers and the recorded interviews were transferred to the Microsoft Word word processing software, and in the second stage, the interview texts were coded in Microsoft Word with the annotation function; then the themes were created by combining the coding in separate tables. The codes and themes created were shown to two researchers who had previous qualitative research experience, and they reached a consensus regarding the codes. In order to increase the reliability in the presentation of qualitative data, direct quotations from the participants' expressions were presented.

Ethical Issues

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

FINDINGS

The findings section includes the problems participants faced with the practice students, how they resolved these problems and the distribution of solution suggestions related to the problems.

Table 1. Problems encountered with social work practice students

Themes related to the problems encountered	Number of people (n)
Absenteeism and non-compliance	32
Problems with open-plan education programmes	30
Indifference and reluctance	26
Communication with academic supervisor	17
Lack of information on the legislation	13
Extreme self-confidence	11
Inability to put theoretical knowledge to practice	9
Not familiarising with the institution	7
Dress-code disorder	6
Communication problem with client	5

Table 1 focuses on the most relevant problems that participants encounter with the practice students. Accordingly, during the practice period, participants mostly experienced problems regarding absenteeism and non-compliance (32), problems with open-plan education programmes (30), indifference and reluctance (26), dialogue with academic supervisors (17), lack of information on the legislation (13), extreme self-confidence (11) and the inability to put theoretical knowledge into practice (9). Some of the statements of participants regarding the problems they experience are as follows:

> *"So sometimes there can be absence. Else, I am satisfied with the practice students. If I should mention the problems I rarely encountered in 24 years, absenteeism, a little reluctance to participate in professional studies and sometimes dressing can be problems. Among these, the most common problem is absenteeism. For example, I experienced this yesterday. The student was absent for a few days and then did not come. The student will probably fail. However, in the past years, we could not say anything to the hardworking students. They know their timing, when to come and go and their job. After a while, we run them as a social worker, but some students cannot commit themselves fully. If a student has some problems and if I observe the other student slacking, I tell them."*

"We don't have any serious problems, but for example, the students are easy-going; when they go to school, there are no rules for work. For this reason, they may have trouble in complying with official institutional rules and working hours. These problems mostly occur with open-plan education students. Formal education students do not have these problems. The lack of academic supervisor for open-plan education students is a problem in itself. While we cannot say that we do not want to work in this department even though we are civil servants, students say that they do not want to work in that department because it is too intense. They neither come to the institution, nor do they inform us. The students do not inform anybody, including the academic or institutional supervisors."

"Overall there is no problem. We want the students who come here to practice to become qualified and strive for this. They should take responsibility, be interested and insist on learning from me. They should take notes to make what they have learned permanent. Very few students take notes. If the student is competent, I even give them the chance to meet with the client. However, it is necessary to take notes to describe the procedures and gain knowledge."

"Communications of both academic and institutional supervisor must be continuous and reliable to control and monitor students. For example, sometimes we do not get to know the academic supervisor of the student even though they have been practicing for a year, and we do not always get information about what is required and what should be done during the educational process."

"Students do not usually come here to learn. They come because it is mandatory. We will become colleagues in a year. Maybe we will work in the same institutions, but they are not aware of this. When they come here, they have insufficient knowledge and do not know what to do, yet they can be very pretentious and act like know-it-alls."

"At the beginning of the practice, we see that there is a lack of knowledge among students. However, we know that they have received enough theoretical information and that there are lessons. They cannot transform the theoretical knowledge they have learned into practice. Maybe they just try to pass the exams, I do not know why. Some students I met, for example, did not even know the content or scope of Legislation 2828 (Social Services Law). I have encountered similar problems many times. For example, I think they either do not know or have forgotten which report or which law we use for the elderly or disabled. Sometimes I witnessed that students did not even know the child protection law."

"All of these students are senior students and may not even know which institution they came to practice in. Social work students have to adapt themselves with awareness for the practice and the willingness to practice. For example, I saw that students were not curious about the institution before they came to it. They are not aware of what is happening in the institution and what kind of services and activities it has."

"I'm not saying this for all of the social work students who come to the practice, but generally they don't pay attention to the way they dress, it doesn't matter if they are male or female. Now, if we are to provide an effective and trust-based service to the other person or the client in our profession, we should also pay attention to our appearance.

"I give students the opportunity to meet the client, but students can do almost anything to avoid getting in touch with the client. I think our students, who cannot communicate with the client, generally work on their theoretical knowledge only to pass the exams. I find it normal that some of our students who come to the practice cannot contact the client in the first weeks, but unfortunately, sometimes this can continue until the end of the term. I also see that they are afraid or anxious to meet with the client. There are also those who are concerned with doing something wrong or not being able to anything."

As can be seen, student-based problems such as absenteeism and non-compliance with the rules, reluctance, lack of information and extreme self-confidence may be encountered during the practice period, as well as institutional problems such as the inability to communicate with academic supervisors. It is thought that the problems emphasised by social workers in this study also negatively affect the practice process of the students.

Table 2. How the problems with the practice students are resolved

Themes related to how the problems encountered are resolved	Number of people (n)
Establishing mutual open communication with the practice student and setting expectations	46
Acting together with academic supervisor and other institution employees	41
Providing prior information about the practice period and place (orientation)	18
Emphasising the importance of the privacy policy	12
Popularising the practice and teaching how to make an effort to develop skills	12
Completing the lack of information on the legislation	11
Stating that they should take care of the dress code	8
Guiding them to fulfil the lack of theoretical knowledge	6
Emphasising the value of being humble	4

Table 2 shows the solutions social workers suggested to the problems they encountered with the practice students. Accordingly, it is seen that social workers resolve the problems mostly by communicating openly with the practice students and establishing their expectations (46), acting together with academic supervisors and other institution employees (41), providing prior information about the practice period and place (orientation) (18), emphasising the importance of the privacy policy (12) and popularising the practice and teaching how to make an effort to develop skills (12). Some of the statements of the social workers about how they resolve the problems are as follows:

> "We start by talking and reaching an agreement with the social work students who come to the practice from the first week. I can say that I do not have much trouble, because we continue in this fashion. These students are required to do the practice on a voluntary basis and with the thought of fulfilling a role in this profession in the future. They must be respectful, honest and devoted to their clients and supervisors. I do not think we will encounter any problems if they act in accordance with these things."

> "Students are a little more careful when they are spoken to. Students who ignore the warnings are directed to another unit. We talk more about overtime work. We experience such problems mostly with open-plan education social work students. We cannot meet with their professors as they do not have any academic supervisors. The principal or the vice-principal here are informed; they have a meeting to partially solve the problem."

> "We talk to them (the students). There are other peers here, too. We have to treat everyone equally. Therefore, this place has established rules. The student has to do this. It is also a fact that each student's capability is different. In other words, there is no such thing as getting the same productivity from everyone. What we do here is this: We have the opportunity to work side-by-side next year with students who are practicing with me this year, as colleagues. Second, there is not much of a subordinate–superior relationship in our relations with the practice students. There is always respect. I see students as social workers—we work that way. Therefore, the dialogue between us is professional. Mostly, we continue and give responsibility in this manner. They really act like social worker. When you value them, they feel worthy too."

> "I will meet with their academic supervisor and my colleagues. There are three points here. I first meet with the student himself/herself, and if there are still problems in this process, I meet with my colleagues. Gradually, if this problem goes beyond what we can solve and exceeds us, I talk to his/her academic supervisor. After all, we are not in a position to make decisions on our own here. We also inform the administration."

"If there is a problem, I can handle it alone, because I see students as my colleagues. They are all senior students. That is why I try to deal with the problem one-on-one. As a solution, I always try to inform students about legislation and practice. This situation is directly proportional to the student's desire to learn. The student must first be monitored by his/her academic and institutional supervisors, be willing to learn and practice and if he/she acts in accordance with the ethical rules of social work, of course, there is nothing that cannot be solved. Also, I tell them that the more prepared they are, the better their professional life will be."

"I usually deal with students' problems alone. It makes more sense to go over the problem. I think it is unnecessary to spread the problem and complicate it. In general, I explain that the student should show interest in the practice; if he/she does not show interest, it will be easier for him/her to forget, and therefore, I emphasise the need to take notes."

"Social work education is a profession where the practice is important as well as the theory. Therefore, it will be easy for them to put theoretical information to practice when they obtain the full knowledge of the most basic laws. The desire to willingly practice and learn will allow the process to be more fruitful."

"Another issue is that I recommend the practice students to gain information about the way institutions function, their regulations and discipline. I especially draw attention to privacy and the right to privacy. I deal with the problems I experience, sometimes by talking to the student individually and sometimes by consulting with my colleagues."

Considering the results obtained from the research, it is seen that establishing open communication between students and institutional supervisor (social workers) and determining expectations at the beginning of the practice period are very important in solving problems. In addition, academic supervisors and other institution employees also contribute to the resolution of problems. Also, it is seen that getting the student to like the practice and teaching them how to make an effort to develop skills is effective in problem-solving.

Table 3. Solution suggestions for the problems experienced with the practice students

Themes related to solution suggestions	Number of people (n)
Students must be monitored frequently by academic supervisors	33
Students must be idealistic and motivated to learn	25
Students should improve their communication skills	22
The number of practice days should be increased, or the departments should be closed in the open-plan education social work departments	14

Increasing students' awareness	11
Confidentiality of cases should be considered	9
Practical solutions should be produced	9
Institution rules must be followed	7
Students should learn the basic legislation	6

Table 3 shows the solution suggestions for the problems social workers face with practice students. Accordingly, it is seen that social workers suggest solutions such as academic supervisors frequently monitoring students (33), students being idealistic and motivated to learn (25), students improving their communication skills (22), increasing the number of practice days in open-plan education social work departments or closing open-plan education social work departments (14) and increasing students' awareness (11). Some of the expressions of the social workers regarding their solution suggestions are as follows:

"We do not have much communication with academic supervisors. Maintaining this communication and working in coordination are my primary suggestions. The student should show interest, be self-confident and serious while practicing, then there will be no problem."

"When the students arrive, we provide information about the working rules of this place, how to behave, how to establish relationships with clients, times of entry and exit and the dress code. In this context, if problems arise, we talk and share this with the student appropriately. We must treat them well. When we become colleagues, if they say we treated them badly, that would upset me. Problems should be stated without offending anybody. In other words, ethical rules should be followed in communication with the student. Thus, fewer problems will occur. Here, we take the first step for students to have a good education. We are trying to raise awareness. In order to avoid such problems, first, if the institution the student will go to and the unit he/she will work in is certain, it is necessary to do a detailed investigation, for example, which employees they will work with, what the working conditions of the unit are, what they should pay attention to and what the entry and exit hours of the institution are. In other words, students should not have the perception that they can come and go as they wish; the practices that the student follows here are very, very important and are the first step for his future career. They should come to practice consciously. Their awareness should be high."

"The student should be able to express himself/herself, be self-confident and strive to improve himself/herself. He/she should be able to express his/her problems to the institutional supervisor clearly. It is very important that the institutional supervisor is not offensive and adjusts his/her style accordingly. The student should pay attention to the

rules and sensitivities of the institution. I think open communication should be established and a common language should be used in solving problems."

"As formal education students have more practice days than open-plan education students; it is possible to maintain integrity when following-up on cases. Problems are easier to solve. However, it is impossible to follow-up on cases with open-plan education students as the practice is just one day a week. I personally think that these departments should be closed. And if they continue to come, I recommend increasing the number of practice days for continuity, case follow-up and compliance with official institution rules."

It is believed that the solution suggestions at this stage will be beneficial for social work practice students to make a good start to their professional life. At the same time, very important issues regarding what the institutional supervisors should pay attention to during the process were emphasised. It is thought that these suggestions will provide important outcomes especially for the practice students in terms of completing the practice in a successful way and developing their knowledge and skills.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This research was conducted to determine the problems social workers experience with social work practice students. The literature states that practice students will be professionally incompetent if they do not display the performance desired by social workers and this may cause problems in practice (Baum, 2010). In this study, according to the evaluation of social workers, the problems encountered during the practice process are absenteeism and non-compliance with rules, problems with open-plan education programmes, indifference and reluctance, communication problems with academic supervisors, lack of information on the legislation and the inability to put theory to practice. Similar to the findings of our study, it is stated that the problem for most students who participated in the practice in Tanga's (2013) study was the lack of theoretical knowledge and not being able to establish healthy communication with social workers. Weitzman and Beder (2000) also state that problems are encountered in practice when students do not fulfil their roles and functions, do not understand the limitations of these roles and cannot take responsibility.

According to the findings obtained in this study, it is seen that social workers mostly have problems with practice students related to absenteeism and non-adherence to rules. It is thought that this problem may be due to the students not having enough information about the seriousness of the practice process, the importance of its outcomes and the different dynamics of the institution where they practise. At this point, the following inferences can be made about the reasons for the problems experienced: (1) The differences between the entrance and exit hours of the institutions (some institutions are more flexible in terms of working hours and some institutions are more rigid) may cause students to have problems with attendance. (2) There may also be problems in complying with the

dress code. The dress code rules may vary depending on the institution's quality. The students lacking a formal dress code suitable for the institution may be perceived as impolite by clients, and clients may think that the students do not take them seriously. It can be thought that students experience issues, as they have difficulties in adapting from the regular and sporty clothing style in the university environment to the formal dressing style in the working environment. (3) In some institutions, the lack of a working environment and opportunity to make students feel like they belong to the institution (for example, not providing a desk or computer, limited professional interview rooms or the lack thereof) may hinder the student's attendance and decrease their motivation. (4) Due to the confidentiality of cases in the institutions, students may not be accepted as observers in meetings (sometimes because the client does not want it and sometimes the social worker does not approve); this may negatively affect students' attendance, interest and desire. In the literature, it is stated that the rapid encounter of students with difficult cases in practice causes them to feel unprepared (Walker & Gant, 2021).

In the study, social workers stated that they had various problems with practice students from the Social Work Departments of Open-Plan Education Faculties. These problems are students' serious lack of theoretical knowledge and lack of knowledge about the social work institutions, practice days and hours being quite insufficient, frequent absenteeism of the students and the inability to communicate with the academic supervisors who follow the students' practice period. The researchers were not able to predict these problems that the social workers stated at the beginning of the research process. These issues in practice are important topics discussed in relation to social work education in Turkey in the present state.

The literature states that due to the nature of social work, because it is a practical discipline as well as theoretical, social work education cannot be given with open-plan education, the number of students accepted is very high and it is not possible to supervise the high number of students, practice days are extremely insufficient and social work education provided through the open-plan education programme in Turkey is against the standards of international social work training (Alptekin, 2016).

Another problem faced by social workers is the inability to communicate and cooperate adequately with academic supervisors. It is thought that this problem stems from the fact that academic supervisors have to counsel many students. It is frequently emphasised in the literature that a high number of students reduces the quality of supervision and creates an obstacle in case discussions, and this situation is not adequate to transfer theoretical knowledge to practice (Tanga, 2013; Dominelli & Hackett, 2011).

Social work students' lack of legislation knowledge, which is among the problems mentioned by social workers in the study, is also emphasized in the literature (Rehn & Kalman, 2018). Students' lack of knowledge about the importance of the legislation can be associated with their lack of conscious awareness about learning the profession during their university education.

The second finding of the research is regarding how social workers resolve the problems they encounter with the practice students. Accordingly, social workers try to solve the problems by establishing mutual and open communication and setting expectations, acting together with academic supervisors and other institution employees, giving information in advance about the practice period and place (orientation), emphasising the importance of the privacy policy, popularising the practice and teaching how to make an effort to develop skills. It is emphasized in the literature that it is very important for the practice process to receive a sufficient level of training on the application before the practice (Walker & Gant, 2021).

The third finding of the study, which is the solution suggestions of social workers regarding their problems with practice students, is that students should be frequently monitored by their academic supervisors, they should be idealistic and motivated to learn, they should improve their communication skills before the practice, the number of practice days of the open-plan education faculty social work departments should be increased or open-plan education faculty social work departments should be closed and students' awareness should be increased.

Different findings have been found in the literature regarding how to solve the problems experienced in the practice environments. While Cha et al. (2006) emphasised the importance of theoretical knowledge of basic concepts and theories of social work in the practice of the most effective social work, Rehn and Kalman (2018) especially drew attention to the importance of legislation knowledge. It is stated that for social work students to achieve success in the practice they should do it voluntarily, fondly and willingly (Tippa & Mane, 2018; Theresa et al., 2006). Further, it is emphasised that the practice students' acting in accordance with the institution's rules and ethical standards is of great importance in solving the problems (Dominelli & Hackett, 2012).

It is thought that the approaches of social workers in practice settings are very significant in solving the encountered problems. In his study, Unbehaun (2005) emphasises that the social worker who is the institutional supervisor should have qualitative characteristics, such as being an adviser, guide, helper and social work educator, as the problems of the clients in the field of social work are multi-dimensional and complex.

In addition, social workers play an active role in transforming theoretical knowledge to practice. It is believed that good communication between the academic supervisor and the institutional supervisor and both parties sharing the responsibilities will contribute to the solution of the problems.

Social work is of great importance to the development of social work students' cognitive and emotional awareness. It is a known fact that the supervision given by both academic and institutional supervisor in the practice is effective in the development of students (Mavili Aktas, 2011). Besides, some studies indicate that good supervision is required to perform a reliable practice (Sahin, 2005; Guldali, 2014). In his study, Baser (2018) emphasises the importance of minimising the feelings of

stress, anxiety and inadequacy and supporting the students so that social work students complete a fruitful course and practice period.

Social work enables students to learn about many issues related to the nature of social work and gain a more comprehensive understanding (Baum, 2010). In this respect, social work practice is an indispensable part of social work education.

For an effective practice process in the light of the data obtained from the research,

- Social work students who participate in the practice are recommended to first overcome their shortcomings in their theoretical knowledge.

- It is recommended that students possess and have a good command of the basic legislative knowledge of social work and the regulations of the institutions they practice in, to the best of their abilities.

- Students should be aware of their responsibilities towards the institution they practice in and their clients and advisers and act within the framework of the ethical principles and responsibilities of the social work.

- There should be continuous interaction and communication between the institutional and academic supervisors during the practice process. It is thought that it would be beneficial for academic supervisors to share the knowledge, skills and values the students' are expected to acquire during the practice process, the required reports and the rules to be followed (importance of attendance and compliance with entry–exit times) with the institutional supervisors.

- Academic supervisors should plan an orientation study for students before the practice starts, and a briefing should be conducted on the importance of social work practice, how to behave in practice environments, how to communicate with both social workers and clients, formal correspondence rules, the hierarchical structure, expectations of social workers and ethical principles and rules.

- Academic supervisors are recommended to make institution visits regularly.

- In order for the supervision meetings to be effective and productive, it is recommended to assign a certain number of practice students to the academic supervisors and enrich the supervision meetings with case discussions.

- The practice students should be informed by the institutional supervisor about their expectations, what rules should be followed, the functioning and dynamics of the institution, the hierarchical structure of the institution, the characteristics of the client and the socio-cultural structure of the environment in which the institution is located.

- The social worker should take a facilitating role by sharing his/her professional knowledge, skills and experiences in the student's transformation of theoretical knowledge to practice.

- For open-plan education students' to have a productive and reliable process, it is recommended to increase the practice time and that students receive supervision from their academic supervisors.

Limitations

Social work encompasses various fields of practice such as child and youth welfare, elderly care, women's well-being, etc., and the challenges encountered in these areas can vary. This research, however, did not differentiate between these fields, as it involved a diverse group of individuals, and thus focused on common issues.

The demographic (age, gender, years of experience, etc.) and personal characteristics of social workers were not correlated with the challenges they experienced with social work students in the field of practice.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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UTILISATION OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY: COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

Dijital Teknolojiden Yararlanma: Sosyal Hizmet Uzmanları İçin İş Birliği Fırsatları

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ABSTRACT

Today, digital technologies affect every aspect of our lives and transform the way we work, communicate, and collaborate. The field of social work can't avoid this change process. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that the use of digital technology tools in the fields of expert-client relationships, social work education, communication, and cooperation between colleagues and institutions is mandatory in the social work profession. This study examines the use of digital technologies in social work through remote collaboration and communication, cloud-based document management, online collaboration platforms, data analysis and visualization, social media, and online communities. In the rapidly changing world order, professional integration of digital technology tools should be made a part of the process in a fast but effective way. In this process, social workers have both personal and professional reservations about using digital technology tools that are not in widespread use. Social workers have doubts about the adequacy of personal competencies in the use of digital tools, as well as the problems experienced by clients in accessing technology-based tools, the size of the relationship to be established with the client in the use of these tools, and ethical concerns.This study aims to emphasize the importance of the contributions of developing digital technology for social workers for themselves, their profession, and their clients in practice, and to discuss the necessity of adapting the ways of working, communicating, and collaborating in the context of opportunities and risks.

Keywords: Digital technology, social work, collaboration

ÖZET

Günümüzde dijital teknolojiler yaşamımızın her alanına etki etmekte, çalışma, iletişim ve iş birliği biçimlerimizi dönüştürmektedir. Sosyal hizmet alanının da bu değişim sürecinden kaçınması mümkün değildir. Özellikle COVID-19 salgını sosyal hizmet mesleğinde de uzman müracaatçı ilişkisi, sosyal hizmet eğitimi, meslektaşlar ve kurumlar arası iletişim ve işbirliği alanlarında dijital teknoloji araçlarının kullanımının zorunlu olduğunu göstermiştir. Bu çalışmada dijital teknolojilerin sosyal hizmet alanında kullanımı, uzaktan işbirliği ve iletişim, bulut tabanlı belge yönetimi, çevrimiçi işbirliği platformları, veri analizi ve görselleştirme, sosyal medya ve çevrimiçi topluluklar üzerinden incelenmiştir. Hızla değişen dünya düzeninde dijital teknoloji araçlarına yönelik mesleki entegrasyon da hızlı ancak etkin bir şekilde sürecin bir parçası haline getirilmesi gerekmektir. Bu süreçte sosyal hizmet uzmanlarının çok da yaygın kullanımda olmadıkları dijital teknoloji araçlarını kullanmada hem kişisel hem de mesleki çekinceleri de söz konusu olmuştur. Sosyal hizmet uzmanlarının dijital araçların kullanımı konusunda kişisel yetkinliklerin yeterliliği konusunda şüpheleri olmasının yanı sıra müracaatçıların teknoloji tabanlı araçlara erişimde yaşadıkları sorunlar, bu araçların kullanımında müracaatçı ile kurulacak ilişkinin boyutu ve etik kaygıları da mevcuttur. Bu çalışma, sosyal hizmet uzmanları için gelişen dijital teknolojinin uygulamada kendilerine, mesleklerine ve müracaatçılarına sağlayacağı katkıların önemini vurgulamayı ve çalışma, iletişim kurma ve işbirliği yapma biçimlerini fırsatlar ve riskler bağlamında uyarlamanın gerekliliğini tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dijital teknoloji, sosyal hizmet, iş birliği

INTRODUCTION

Today, digital technologies have impacted every aspect of our lives and transformed how we work, communicate, and collaborate. The field of social work can't avoid this process of change. Social work's adoption of technology has been delayed due to limited resources, ethical and legal concerns, lack of training, and the fact that social work has historically been based on face-to-face communication, but despite this, technology integration continues (Berzin vd., 2015). The COVID-19 pandemic has made the use of digital technology tools mandatory in the relationship between social service professionals and applicants.

With the spread of digitalization, the transformation in the field of social services has resulted in a new area of specialization within the framework of "e-social work"(Peláez ve Marcuello-Servós, 2018). With the emergence of technologies such as computers, smartphones, and tablets, the internet, cloud computing systems, big data analytics, artificial intelligence, virtual and augmented reality, social media, and digital cameras, social workers now have unprecedented opportunities to enhance collaborative efforts, streamline processes, and improve outcomes for their clients. This study highlights that digital technologies can revolutionize collaboration in social services and empower professionals to address societal challenges more effectively. It is argued that new digital tools complement face-to-face meetings, enhancing the therapeutic process by providing increased accessibility and flexibility for both social service professionals and applicants (Nordesjö and Scaramuzzino, 2023). Digital technologies have elevated the quality of professionals' core responsibilities regarding applicants, encompassing the collection, recording, and reporting of maximum information. This includes the adept management of applicants' financial transactions.

Consequently, digital technologies have evolved into effective tools for connecting applicants with the necessary resources (Karasoy and Yıldırım, 2023). Digital technologies employed in social work

practices offer advantages in alleviating potential workload intensities within social service institu-tions. They contribute to lightening the workload of professionals, enabling more efficient resource utilization to reach a broader audience, enhancing the accessibility of services, and facilitating close monitoring of applicants (Öngen, 2014). Using digital tools and online platforms has been shown to have many benefits, including providing services to a wider population and making social work more accessible and available (Afrouz and Lucas, 2023).

However, it should not be ignored that there are concerns about digital technologies. Social workers are hesitant to be a part of the process. For example, in a study conducted with social service pro-fessionals in Sweden, participants indicated that they had increased the use of digital tools in their interactions with applicants and had a more positive attitude towards their use. However, it was found that they also harbored concerns that the use of digital tools could potentially harm the relationship established with the applicants. It has also been determined that the stress level of social workers using these tools is high (Nordesjö and Scaramuzzino, 2023). Chan (2016) found that there was some uncertainty about the widespread use of technology in social work practices, including protection of professional boundaries and privacy concerns.

Technical problems arising from the information systems used by professional staff, infrastructural problems related to the computers in the organization, insufficient in-service training to use infor-mation technologies, and the fact that information technologies are not positioned in a way that all professional staff can easily access can increase the workload of professional staff. At the same time, it has been observed that the majority of professionals do not think that the data and statistics collected through information systems are reliable (Öngen, 2014).

This study emphasizes that for social workers, digital technology can contribute to their relationships with colleagues, supervision needs, professional development, and communication with clients. At the same time, it discusses the current situation of adaptation to digital processes in the context of opportunities and risks created by this process.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY IN SOCIAL WORK

With the increase in social media and technology-based communication, social workers' boundaries may shift as they attempt to create support networks, develop external support systems, and bring together multiple avenues of support. Professionals' activities now extend beyond the office or desig-nated therapeutic environment. At the same time, social work roles may also change because access to more readily available information may lead practitioners to a role that gathers and legitimizes information sources. Immediate response to the crisis can be provided with artificial intelligence, mobile applications, and even robot technology. Applicants can benefit from integrating artificial in-telligence into phone interviews. By analyzing incoming phone calls in real-time using algorithms, optimal response patterns can be determined, client satisfaction can be increased, and the match

between applicants and specialists can be improved. In addition, newly developing forms of communication enable the sending and receiving of texts between the client and the specialist, being accessible regardless of time and place, and making it easier to work with clients who have multiple problems. Thus, technology can also assist in more collaborative therapeutic problem-solving for both the specialist and the client by providing improved participation in prevention and intervention efforts (Berzin et al., 2015).

In this section, information about the use of digital technologies in social work is given under the headings "remote collaboration and communication", "cloud-based document management", "online collaboration platforms", "data analysis and visualization", and "social media and online communities".

Remote Collaboration and Communication

Information communication technologies are factors that facilitate information sharing and interprofessional communication (Dellor et al., 2015; Peckover et al., 2008). In this context, the remote collaboration and communication capacity of digital technology now enables social workers to connect with colleagues, clients, and other stakeholders regardless of geographical restrictions (Harris, 2021; Chan, 2016). Video conferencing tools such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams, which are among the most popular applications of recent times that enable remote connection, also enable face-to-face interaction, thus strengthening people's connections and eliminating the need to be in a physical environment. This flexibility effectively minimizes delays and enhances efficiency by fostering more frequent and targeted collaboration.

Many studies are showing that the use of technology provides accessibility to a wider population in social work practice (Menon and Rubin, 2011; Mishna et al., 2015; Chan, 2016; Byrne et al., 2019; Owen, 2020; Harris, 2021).

Digital tools provide the opportunity to maintain relationships beyond the physical space, but this also creates pressure for social workers to be available 24/7 (Mishna et al.,2012; Mishna et al., 2019; Ramsey ve Montgomery, 2014; Stanfield and Beddoe, 2016).

Reasons such as not being together physically, discussing the effectiveness of non-verbal communication channels, and interrupting the naturally developing communication channels in communication with the client are also seen as reasons for reservations about technological communication (Menon ve Rubin,2011; Mishna ve ark.,2012; Tranca,2021).

Technology has provided different ways of communication with clients (Mishna et al., 2015), and the level of accessibility has been made more effective with online visits (Owen, 2020). Technology-based communication has transformed the relationship between interlocutors and social workers from a distinctive one to a collaborative and dialogue-based one. (Chan, 2016; Chan and Holosko, 2017). Chan and Holosko (2017) found that compared to outreach in physical settings, online outreach has

shown that interactions are more visible and involve closeness, but also involve a process that implies loss of privacy and changes in professional identity.

Cloud-Based Document Management

Physical document filing systems need to be included. Digital technology has given rise to cloud-based document management solutions that offer secure storage, easy access, and real-time collaboration on applicant records, progress reports, and other important documents. Platforms such as Google Drive, Dropbox, or Microsoft OneDrive allow social workers to share, edit, and update files in real time, ensuring that everyone involved is working with the most up-to-date information. This stream-lined process saves time, minimizes errors, and improves collaboration between team members.

Harris (2021) and Mishna et al. (2015) stated social workers can record their meetings and conversations with clients and reflect on them later. There is research showing that incorporating digital technologies into social work practices in accessing online databases, connecting with colleagues, and sharing information helps the process (Brownlee et al., 2010; Chan and Holosko, 2017; Sitter and Curnew, 2016).

Online Collaboration Platforms

While online collaboration platforms are a fundamental element in the use of digital technologies, there are also ones specifically offered to social workers. These platforms offer a centralized space where professionals can collaborate, share resources, exchange ideas, and seek guidance from colleagues. Users can create discussion forums, ask questions, and become part of a vibrant community of social workers by sharing best practices. Examples of such platforms include "Social Work Helper," "Social Work Toolbox," and various social work groups on professional networking platforms such as "LinkedIn."

In a study, social service professionals identified mobile phones as the most suitable and acceptable tools for remote communication and collaboration, as well as learning media, audio and video data storage (YouTube), conference and chat software (MS Teams, Zoom, Google Meet, Skype, Facebook Messenger, Viber, WhatsApp, Board Connect, Telegram), social networks (Facebook, Messenger), technical tools (smartphone, computer, Internet connection) (Gudžinskienė and Mačiu Maikienė, 2022).

Digital professional co-operation networks (PCNs) are based on the application of well-established professional learning networks for learning and knowledge management in the field of teacher train-ing. These networks are expanding the use of digital opportunities to develop professional relation-ships, cooperate, broaden their cooperation, and create formal and informal opportunities. For ex-ample, a researcher can connect and communicate with social service practitioners and researchers

from other disciplines to get feedback on his findings, while using social media platforms such as Twitter and LinkedIn to share his research findings. Similarly, a practitioner can use their PCNs to extend their knowledge of intervention options for a researcher and other practisers to access the network. (Sage, etc. al., 2021).

Data Analysis and Visualisation

Digital technology also presents an innovative approach to data collection and analysis in social work, offering valuable insights into client needs, program effectiveness, and social trends. Advanced analytical tools enable social workers to make data-driven decisions, identify patterns in social problems, and more accurately predict outcomes. Visualization tools such as charts, graphs, and dashboards facilitate communication and collaboration between teams by helping to transform complex data into easily understandable formats. This information equips social workers to develop evidence-based strategies and interventions.

Data science supports data-based decisions to predict social problems. This can be both a limitation and an opportunity, depending on the context and needs of users and professionals, because the causes of social problems are not understood. Data science is an innovative approach to information gathering and generation. By using data science and other techniques such as big data, machine learning, visualization, and data mining, social workers will be able to achieve more effective results on complex social issues. This method will also save time and resources as it will provide real-time data collection and accurate analysis. Social workers, especially in managerial positions, can play an intermediary role in establishing deeper cooperation between organizations, consumers, and clients by conceptualizing data as a product (Cariceo et al., 2018). For example, in a study conducted in Sweden, an application and a web-based tool called "OmMej" designed to help organizations working in the childcare sector was implemented. Thanks to this tool, it was found that more effective results were obtained in social service practices with the active participation of families and children (Russo et al., 2022).

Social Media and Online Communities

Social media platforms offer important opportunities for social workers to engage with communities, raise awareness about social issues, and share resources. Using platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, they can collaborate with colleagues, advocate for change, and connect with individuals in need of support. Online communities dedicated to specific topics or populations can serve as virtual meeting spaces for collaboration, information sharing, and mutual support.

In the field of social work, using the Internet as a platform for connecting with peers and colleagues is seen as a model for peer group supervision. For example, a study found that social workers are increasingly using Facebook to communicate about a variety of issues such as professional peer support, informal records, emotional support, and personal social connections (Gandy-Guedes et al. 2016).

The social networked form of practice has great potential to be accepted and developed among leading social workers (Chan and Holosko, 2016). Social media has been found to enable certain outsourcing practices in the conversation, such as initial search, first discoveries, ice-breaking, and networking. Traditional communication activities are often limited by geographic boundaries such as neighborhoods, communities, or organizations. Thanks to technological developments, it has now become possible to develop external link models based on social networks (Chan and Holosko, 2017).

CONCLUSION

Digital technology has unlocked enormous potential for collaboration among social workers, transforming how they communicate, share information, and address social challenges. Remote collaboration tools, cloud-based document management, online platforms, data analytics, and social media have become invaluable assets in professional toolkits. As the field of social work continues to evolve, professionals must embrace these digital tools and explore innovative ways to harness their power. By doing so, social workers can maximize their impact, improve client outcomes, and collectively work towards creating a more just and inclusive society. A collaborative process design should be planned between the social worker and the client, explaining the purposes, possibilities, and content of digital tools.

Some clinical social work professionals provide counseling services to individuals they have never met in person, communicating with them solely through video, email, chat room messages, text messages, and online avatars. Many social work professionals supervise their work without the opportunity for face-to-face meetings with certain supervisors. The remaining social work experts use technology to support in-person communication (Reamer, 2018).

One of the concerns of experts regarding the use of technology in social work intervention is ethical considerations. In recent years, significant changes in the ways social work professionals utilize technology have underscored the necessity for the development of new ethical standards within the profession. Some social work professionals express concerns that remote counseling options undermine the meaning of therapeutic relationships and alliances in clinical social work. They argue that such practices jeopardize social work professionals' abilities to adhere to fundamental ethical values and standards, such as informed consent, confidentiality, privacy, professional boundaries, competent practice, and service termination. These concerns highlight the potential risk of overlooking crucial clinical cues (Reamer, 2018).

Failure to adapt to changing social processes is a risk to societies. Therefore, the integration of technology and the social service profession should be carried out by monitoring ethical concerns and certain technology-based risk factors (possible technology failures, data security and governance, legal issues, etc.).

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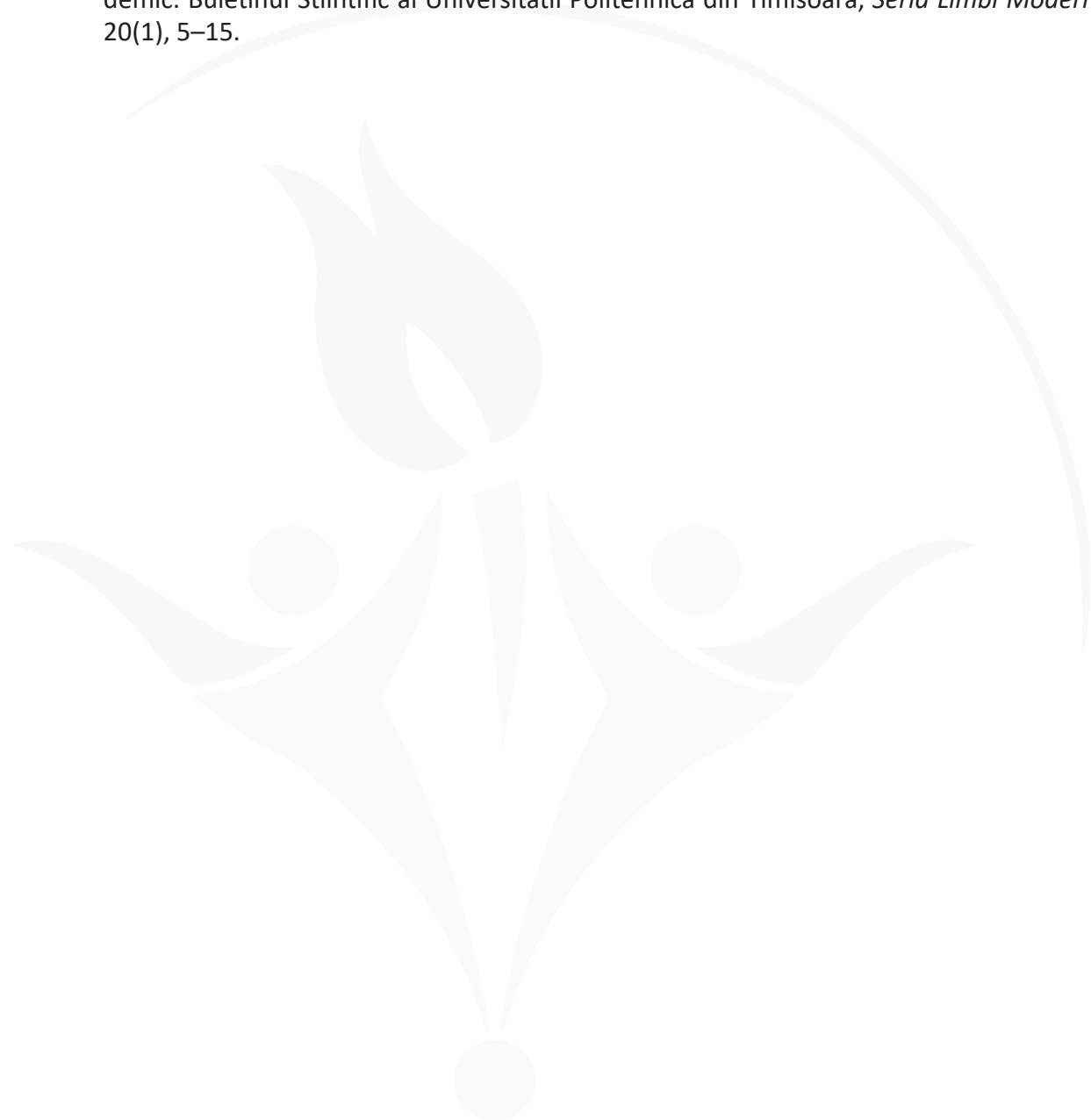
AN EVALUATION OF THE OBESITY PHENOMENON IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL WORK THEORIES

Sosyal Hızmet Kuramları Bağlamında Obezite Olgusu Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme

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ABSTRACT

Obesity is a disease that negatively affects millions of people worldwide. This disease, which causes many people to experience physical, psychological, emotional, social and economic problems in terms of its consequences, is one of the most discussed diseases both in the world and in our country in recent years. Millions of people apply to obesity diagnosis and treatment centers in the world and in our country every year for treatment. It is very important to evaluate this disease, which has various treatment methods, not only from a medical perspective and to understand not only its medical consequences but also its biopsychosocial consequences. Social work is a profession and discipline that aims to understand the biopsychosocial aspects of problems and diseases and to make a holistic planning, intervention and evaluation with an individual approach in the environment. The phenomenon of obesity is a public health problem where various applications can be made for individuals, families and society experiencing this phenomenon. In this study, it is aimed to make an evaluation of social work theories towards the obesity phenomenon in order to give more space to obesity in the social work profession. Practices in the social work profession are based on theoretical foundations. Some of these theoretical approaches that guide practices are discussed in this review study. These are biopsychosocial approach, ecological approach, system approach and empowerment approach.

Keywords: Obezite, sosyal hizmette obezite, sosyal hizmet kuramları

ÖZET

Obezite, dünya genelinde milyonlarca insanı olumsuz etkileyen bir hastalıktır. Sonuçları itibariyle birçok insanın fiziksel, psikolojik, duygusal, sosyal ve ekonomik sorunlar yaşamasına neden olan bu hastalık, son yıllarda hem dünyada hem de ülkemizde en çok tartışılan hastalıklardan biridir. Dünyada ve ülkemizde her yıl milyonlarca kişi tedavi için obezite tanı ve tedavi merkezlerine başvurmaktadır. Çeşitli tedavi yöntemleri olan bu hastalığı sadece tıbbi açıdan değerlendirmemek ve sadece tıbbi sonuçlarını değil biyopsikososyal sonuçlarını da anlamak çok önemlidir. Sosyal hizmet, sorunların ve hastalıkların biyopsikososyal yönlerini anlamayı ve çevrede bireysel bir yaklaşımla bütüncül bir planlama, müdahale ve değerlendirme yapmayı amaçlayan bir meslek ve disiplindir. Obezite olgusu, bu olguyu yaşayan bireyler, aileler ve toplum için çeşitli uygulamaların yapılabileceği bir halk sağlığı sorunudur. Bu çalışmada, sosyal hizmet mesleğinde obeziteye daha fazla yer verilmesi için sosyal hizmet kuramlarının obezite olgusuna yönelik bir değerlendirmesinin yapılması amaçlanmıştır. Sosyal hizmet mesleğindeki uygulamalar kuramsal temellere dayanmaktadır. Uygulamalara yön veren bu kuramsal yaklaşımlardan bazıları bu derleme çalışmasında ele alınmıştır. Bunlar biyopsikososyal yaklaşım, ekolojik yaklaşım, sistem yaklaşımı ve güçlendirme yaklaşımıdır..

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dijital teknoloji, sosyal hizmet, iş birliği

INTRODUCTION

Obesity is a disease that negatively affects millions of people worldwide. This disease, which causes many people to experience physical, psychological, emotional, social and economic problems in terms of its consequences, is one of the most discussed diseases both worldwide and in Turkey in recent years. Millions of people apply to obesity diagnosis and treatment centers in the world and in Turkey every year for treatment. It is very important to evaluate this disease, which has various treatment methods, not only from a medical perspective and to understand not only its medical consequences but also its biopsychosocial consequences.

Social work is a profession and discipline that aims to understand the biopsychosocial aspects of problems and diseases and to make holistic planning, intervention and evaluation with an approach of person in the environment. The phenomenon of obesity is a public health problem where various interventions can be made for individuals, families and society. This study aims to evaluate social work theories regarding the obesity phenomenon in the social work profession.

Practices in the social work profession are based on theoretical foundations. Some of these theoretical approaches that guide practices are discussed in this review study. These are the biopsychosocial approach, ecological approach, system approach and empowerment approach.

Biopsychosocial Approach

The biopsychosocial approach systematically considers psychological and biological factors. Psychological factors are composed of emotions and thoughts and biological factors are composed of cells, organs and the central nervous system. The absence of one of the parts that make up this integrity means that the balance is disturbed. For this reason, human health should be evaluated from a holistic perspective and the treatment and services to be provided should be based on this holistic basis. This holistic perspective inevitably necessitates interdisciplinary cooperation.

The biopsychosocial approach addresses the non-medical causes of the disease together with its biological components. For example, when creating a treatment model for a disease, it is necessary to consider not only the medical and physical consequences of the disease, but also the psychosocial and economic problems or deprivations that trigger the disease or negatively affect the course of treatment.

When evaluated in the biopsychosocial context, obesity is not only a problem with medical and physical consequences in terms of its definition, causes and consequences. It is useful to evaluate the problems caused by the disease from a holistic perspective and to evaluate the biopsychosocial consequences of the disease in order to understand social work intervention.

Social work has multidimensional roles in the fight against obesity. These roles such as influencing social policies, preventing poverty, regulating family lifestyle, creating a healthy environment, making food in school environments healthy, promoting physical activity in schools and families (Burke, 2011). In addition to developing policies for healthy developmental environments for children, social workers should also be able to work with the family system and carry out advocacy activities (Burke, 2011). Problems in the family should be revealed with a holistic perspective. It is important to support individuals with a history of obesity primarily within the family and social environment. Social workers also responsible for carrying out plans and programs to ensure that social policies are fair and functional against every social problem and advocating for disadvantaged groups (Guttmann, 2006).

Another theoretical framework that we can use to understand social work intervention to understand the obesity phenomenon is the ecological approach.

Ecological Approach

The Ecological Approach (Davison & Birch, 2001) has been used to provide a framework for understanding the role of multiple interventions on obesity outcomes by examining the synergistic environmental interactions through which behaviors occur. The approach can be used by social workers to assess risks and potential strategies at the micro, meso and macro levels when working with overweight and obese clients suffering from chronic diseases (Melius, 2015). Melius (2015) analyzed the content of 51 articles and examined the factors affecting obesity in each article within the framework of the ecological approach. According to this study, twelve of these 51 articles pointed to social factors, seven to interpersonal relationships, fifteen to societal effects and thirty-six to individual effects.

• Individual Effects: Many studies have focused on individual-level factors. Among these studies, common ones have focused on racial or ethnic identity (Bertera et al., 2003) and mental health (e.g., self-esteem, self-concept, body image, depression) (Mazzo et al., 2005).

• Interpersonal Effects: The majority of these studies focused on the relationship between parents and children and the interpersonal risk factors of obesity. For example, Wong (2010a) conduct-

ed two qualitative studies examining eight Chinese families with children with obesity and their relationship with their children. Sealy and Lawrence (2011) also conducted a study investigating the relationship between parents' healthy eating behaviors and their children's healthy eating behaviors and physical activity experiences. According to these studies, the relationship between parents and children is the main issue affecting a child's weight and health.

- Environmental Impacts: Studies in this category have examined the effects of children's relationships with their neighborhoods (Valera et al., 2009), access to entertainment (Melius, 2003), workplace (Miller and Han, 2008), and school environment (Miller, 2011) on obesity among children and youth.

- Effects of Social Situation: Social work researchers have explored socioeconomic status (SES) (O'Dea and Caputi, 2001), cultural beliefs (Valera et al., 2009) and religious views (Latzer et al., 2009) in their research on social situation. O'Dea (2008) documented the effects of social situations on childhood obesity as follows:

    a. Children in families with lower socioeconomic income are less likely to have breakfast, engage in weight control behaviors, seek advice about weight control behaviors, or perceive a positive body image.

    b. While low self-esteem in children is not affected by socioeconomic status, especially among boys, physical self-esteem is not negatively affected, whereas physical self-esteem of overweight children of middle or high socioeconomic status is significantly reduced in older age groups (Bertera et al., 2003).

Using the ecological approach in social work to understand the phenomenon of obesity can enable the planning of social justice-based intervention studies at the individual, family, group and community levels (Melius, 2015). Social justice involves the full and equal participation of all groups in a society where resources are equal and members are physically and psychologically safe (Bell, 2007). A social justice approach that focuses on equal participation and access can generate sustainable recommendations to reduce obesity rates, especially among vulnerable groups (Mayhew, 2006). For example, social workers can play a vital role in identifying policies that create obesogenic conditions and advocating for clients to change the characteristics of the environment in which they live. Using the ecological approach as a guide provides social workers with a tool to assess environmental influences on clients' overweight or obesity status.

Ecological assessment can be a useful method in understanding the obesity phenomenon. This assessment method allows the evaluation of individuals' development in five developmental dimensions. These five developmental dimensions are (1) physical dimension, (2) cognitive dimension, (3) social dimension, (4) affective dimension and (5) spiritual dimension.

The physical dimension includes several physical issues such as nutrition, exercise, sleep, self-care, illnesses, and medication use that have a negative impact on health related to self-care and development. The body interacts with the mind and physical disorders can also trigger mental disorders (Derezeotes, 2000).

The Cognitive Dimension involves the gradual formation of beliefs about oneself, one's relatives, others and the universe, and effective problem solving, decision making and conflict resolution skills (Derezotes, 2000).

The Social Dimension encompasses harmony, balance and maturation in individuals' relationships with their families, relatives, friends and other individuals in society. It includes the individual's ability to establish a balance with the environment. It is an important dimension in the development of individuals' sense of belonging and trust with a safe social environment.

The Affective Dimension has entered the social work literature as a concept that consists of three interrelated elements and defines the emotional capacity of the person. This dimension is related to self-awareness and self-acceptance, the capacity to experience, feel and express emotions (Derezeotes, 2000).

The Spiritual Dimension includes all religious and non-religious values and belief systems of individuals (Derezotes, 2000). The concept of spirituality is defined inclusively in the literature. They define spirituality as the individual's effort to make sense of the connections between himself/herself and the universe, absolute reality, to search for depth, to discover the purpose of life and his/her purpose and to turn towards purpose (Derezotes, 2000).

As a result, the ecological approach supports a more comprehensive methodology for assessing and identifying the lifelong deprivations (i.e. environmental risk factors) of vulnerable groups and provides a framework for development, evaluation and advocacy at the policy level (Melius, 2015).

Thirdly, when addressing obesity in social work, it is inevitable to use the systems approach, another important approach of social work, in creating a theoretical framework.

System Approach

The systems approach is crucial for understanding how to work with obesity (Eliadis, 2006). When working with an obese or overweight person, it should be remembered that he/she is part of a family system (Eliadis, 2006). A system can be defined as a whole consisting of many parts (Eliadis, 2006). Most of the eating habits may stem from unhealthy eating habits or psychosocial characteristics of the individuals who make up the family system. When the impact of parents on children is considered, factors such as the presence of neglect or abuse, structural problems such as poverty, unemployment, being dragged into crime, the presence of mental diseases or psychosocial problems, lack of

healthy and regular eating habits, lack of physical activity, and excessive use of addictive electronics such as television, telephone and computer should be taken into consideration (Eliadis, 2006). In all these theoretical frameworks, another very important approach is to empower individuals, families and groups in order to help them solve their problems. In this context, it is necessary to focus on the power of the clients.

Considering the environment in which the individual lives, the family is the system that is primarily affected. Obesity may be a genetic disease in terms of its causes and consequences. Therefore, it is not possible not to investigate the contribution of a family whose child is obese to the problem. Likewise, it is not possible for the family not to be affected by the consequences of the problem. Individuals have the behavioral patterns of the family they live in. Family relationships, the family's lifestyle, the family's relationship with food, cultural and ethnic structure, neighborhood relations and the effects of the environment they live in on the individual are among the factors affecting the obesity problem. At this point, social workers should definitely evaluate the family as a system and examine it in detail while working with obese children.

Another important approach in social work is the empowerment approach. By helping the individual to rediscover their strengths, the social worker enables the individual to take action to solve the problem.

Empowerment Approach

The empowerment approach in social work aims to enable the child or adolescent to discover the power to make the necessary behavioral changes in their lifestyle by taking into account the positive aspects of the child's life (Eliadis, 2006). Poulin (2000) argues that with a strengths-based perspective, social workers can help children and adolescents recognize and strengthen their natural strengths and abilities and motivate them to solve their problems. She added that this power is the path to change and success for them. In this context, it is an important issue to reveal the strengths of children who cannot stay with their families for various reasons and to strengthen their coping mechanisms in institutions where they are under protection.

CONCLUSION

When the studies on obesity are examined, the epidemic of obesity or obesity in the studies conducted in the last decade is referred to as the "postmodern epidemic" as cited by Natalie Boreo (2012). This epidemic needs to be addressed as an issue that needs to be considered especially in people where social problems may occur frequently. These people are generally females, foreigners and children (Kilgore-Bowling, 2014).

Obesity is also considered as a public health problem in many studies. In terms of being a public health problem, two issues come to the fore in obesity. First, as a result of increasing obesity, there will be intense demands on healthcare and social services, and second, obesity is seen as an indicator

of laziness and moral laxity among a population that cannot regulate its own behavior (Campos et al., 2006). In particular, claims of moral laxity have led to stigmatization and discrimination.

Obesity is a disease that negatively affects millions of people worldwide. This disease, which causes many people to experience physical, psychological, emotional, social and economic problems in terms of its consequences, is one of the most discussed diseases both in the world and in our country in recent years. Millions of people apply to obesity diagnosis and treatment centers in the world and in our country every year for treatment. It is not possible to evaluate this disease, which has various treatment methods, only from a medical point of view and to discuss only the medical results. Obesity is a systemic disease and negatively affects many systems in the body such as movement, nervous, digestive and respiratory systems.

Research in different years has shown that obesity causes many health problems. While some of these diseases can be physical problems such as hypertension, heart diseases, diabetes, musculoskeletal pain and even cancer, some of them are anxiety, depression (Brown, 2001, Openshaw, 2008), self-esteem problems (Endocrinology and Metabolism Society of Turkey (TEMD) 2018, Brown, 2001), deterioration in body perception (Davison et al. 2000, Davison et al. 2001), stigmatization, exposure to negative prejudices, social exclusion and bullying (Puhl and Latner, 2007).

Social workers have a serious role and background in influencing, criticizing and changing social policies. They are responsible for carrying out plans and programs to ensure that social policies are fair and functional not only in the fight against obesity, but also against every social problem that concerns social work, and for advocating for disadvantaged groups (Guttmann, 2006). Social workers also fight against social policies that serve discrimination and stigmatization (Friedman, 2012). As social workers, we should be aware that common sense is affected by policies that are not inclusive. For example, as social workers, we should be aware of the groups (such as refugees, the poor, females) to whom issues such as structural hatred, stigma and discrimination are presented (Friedman, 2012).

With this study, the place and importance of the obesity problem in the field of social work have been tried to be discussed through the main theories used in social work. It is aimed to convey the contributions of the biopsychosocial approach, ecological approach, systems approach and empowerment approach, which are widely referenced in the social work profession, in understanding the obesity phenomenon.

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