

An Analysis of the Social Wellbeing of Youth in Turkey Based on the “2017 Global Youth Wellbeing Index”*

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ABSTRACT

Social wellbeing is critical in assessing the social status of the youth and revealing both their opportunities and problems. The ‘2017 Global Youth Wellbeing Index’ (GYWI) is an international index explaining the social wellbeing status of the youth of different countries in terms of ‘civil participation’, ‘economic opportunities’, ‘education’, ‘health’, ‘information and communication technologies’, ‘safety and security’, and ‘gender equality’. In the current study, the social wellbeing of the youth in Turkey was analyzed on the basis of the data related to the specified domains of this index. Aiming to reveal a view of the social wellbeing of the youth in Turkey, the social wellbeing of young people was compared using the ‘2017 GYWI,’ and the data in the current national statistics database in Turkey (Turkish Statistical Institute [TurkStat], 2020, 2021). This comparison places a sociological emphasis on the urgent need for a general social wellbeing indexing of the youth. The indexing on the social wellbeing of young people reveals in which areas young people do not sufficiently benefit from the opportunities and resources of the society they live in. In this respect, the results of this study will guide social policies in related fields.

Keywords: Youth, Social Wellbeing, 2017 Global Youth Wellbeing Index

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1. Introduction

Besides being shaped by the society they live in, young people have the power to shape the future of their societies with their ideas, energy, skills and potential. Due to the nature of society, this two-way interaction determines the desires, development, opportunities and status of young people. The factors that shape the development of young people are multidimensional, including the economic, cultural and political conditions of the society (Isiugo-Abanihe & Oyediran, 2004). The field and social conditions related to youth can be clarified by defining youth. Youth can be defined not as a special category that is reduced to age in sociology, but as a social relationship (Baker, 1983). In addition, youth as a subculture expresses subordination and resistance to adult domination, an area where the young-old dichotomy is reproduced (Tait, 1993). Bessant (1995), on the other hand, similar to Baker (1983) and Tait (1993), focused on the state's reproduction and shaping of youth with the opportunities provided to the youth. Youth is seen as a social category that is reshaped by the state through economic opportunities such as job opportunities offered to young people. Furlong, Woodman, and Wyn (2011) emphasize the need for youth cultural and subcultural studies to take into account the changing nature of young people's cultural identities. Looking at the definitions of youth in sociology, it is seen that it is defined as a category that includes age, class and gender as a social process and is visible in social relations. Periodic characteristics of youth, including the above definitions in sociology, are important for societies in terms of determining the problem areas related to youth.

Youth is a period that covers the transition in many domains such as the labor market, educational expectations and family relations. This transition includes changes in the lives of young people that contribute to an atmosphere of uncertainty and instability. Young people are the actors whose skills, motivation and energy are essential for the development, transformation, and growth of their societies. Youth is a period when participation in the labor market, education, and politics begins. This period often encompasses rapid changes that contribute to an atmosphere of uncertainty. As Bucheli (2021) states, it is a period that covers the transition in many areas such as the youth labor market, educational expectations and family relations. This uncertainty is pivotal in identifying the problem domains as well as the opportunities offered by the society, which is only feasible through an evaluation of their social wellbeing (Bucheli, 2021).

Identifying the current status and problems of the youth and opportunities offered to young people in all spheres of society, is only possible with a holistic view. This view is explained through the *social wellbeing of the youth*. Wellbeing has been defined by McLeod and Wright (2016) as a measure of a ‘good life’. A good life refers to an overall assessment that includes indicators of health, subjective happiness, economic wellbeing, and basic security needs. Similar to the term used by McLeod and Wright (2016), Teghe and Rendell (2005, p.3) associate wellbeing with a single dimension of subjects such as economics, politics and health, but this concept is actually used to determine the general condition of the society as a whole. In other words, it is used as a criterion in determining society's access to and ownership of resources.

A social wellbeing perspective in sociology provides a holistic view in determining the problems in society and offering solutions to these problems. In other words, the concept of social wellbeing is used to evaluate the problems in the lives of individuals in different stages of life (children, young and old) and to develop solutions. Social wellbeing is a dynamic phenomenon that is shaped by economic, psychological, and environmental changes in society (Surtaeva, et.al., 2017, p.394-396). Interventions aimed at increasing the social wellbeing of young people have been increasingly implemented to draw attention to their problems, such as unemployment and an uncertain future, and to seek solutions to these problems. This concept enables the measuring of the problems they experience particularly in finances, education, health, and housing. Thus, the social wellbeing of young people is important in terms of preparing and organizing their future (McLeod & Wright, 2016). Social indicators are used as the basic tools to determine the complexity, the dynamic structure of society, various social processes, and phenomena. This allows an assessment of the developmental aspects of social conditions, tendencies and actions in terms of quantity and quality. Various indicator systems for wellbeing are used to determine the social wellbeing level of a population. Indicators of social wellbeing allow a holistic analysis of a society and the determination of the degree of social risk (such as unemployment and deprivation of education rights) (Surtaeva, et.al., 2017, p.396). In this study, the welfare of the youth was expressed as ‘the social welfare of the youth’, supported by definitions of the youth period in sociology. From this point of view, this study focuses on the social wellbeing of young people, starting from the focal points in the sociological definition of youth.

With regard to certain indicators of the social wellbeing of young people, researchers have mainly focused on issues such as juvenile delinquency (Durrant, 2000), their use of time (Møller, 1992), an inability to access material resources (Makiwane & Kwizera, 2009), security, positive relationships with others, and opportunities for development (Eriksen & Seland, 2021). As youth participation in voluntary activities increases, they attach more importance to

interpersonal values and increase their employment opportunities (Dávila de León et.al., 2020). Similarly, Cicognani et.al. (2015) found that being a member of an association and participating in voluntary activities positively affect the social wellbeing of young people. On the other hand, young people who are neither educated nor in the workforce are faced with risks such as low economic status, poor mental health, a low rate of working in voluntary jobs, and a higher rate of tobacco consumption of (Muir & Powell, 2012).

The wellbeing of the youth is even more important for developing countries such as Turkey, where the percentage of young people (15-24 years) is 15.4% (TurkStat, 2021a). One of the studies on the welfare of young people in Turkey was conducted by Aysan and Avcı (2015). The changing roles of public institutions within the scope of youth wellbeing education, housing, social security and employment policies are discussed through social policy and welfare. The findings by Özmete and Bayoğlu (2008) reveal that young people are concerned about their social wellbeing, economic conditions, poverty, and job opportunities. Kahya (2020) emphasizes that the youth are generally satisfied with their living conditions, but they lack opportunities for educational, cultural, social and sports activities. Apart from these three studies (Aysan & Avcı, 2015; Kahya, 2020; Özmete & Bayoğlu, 2008), no studies on the wellbeing of the Turkish youth could be identified.

The research related to this subject has been conducted on the basis of factors affecting the wellbeing of young people. The studies mostly focus on certain indicators of social wellbeing and are limited in reflecting the opportunities, current situation and problem domains in the lives of young people. Moreover, mapping a range of indicators together to have a general and comparable understanding of the social wellbeing of young people is important. In other words, comparing the social wellbeing of young people at national and international level is only possible with an indexing. The 2017 GYWI prepared by Sharma, Henneman, Qadri, and Vignoles (2017), is the first index in the literature to focus on the wellbeing of young people. It was created with an effort to develop an understanding of the social wellbeing of young people on the basis of wellbeing, both at a national and international level. Therefore, this study is based on the data of the 2017 GYWI, which is an indexing study for the social wellbeing of young people. Evaluating the social wellbeing of the youth in many spheres such as education, health and economy is important to determine the current opportunities and problems experienced by the youth in Turkey, which has very dynamic demographics. In the current study, each domain in the 2017 GYWI and the indicators related to these domains were compared and sociologically interpreted on the basis of TurkStat (2020, 2021), which is the national database of Turkey. Based on these definitions, it can be said that the youth will contribute to being aware of the problem areas in society by understanding the complex and intersecting processes of social change in society.

1.1. Social Wellbeing of Youth

Youth has been classified by international organizations on the basis of age periods. Youth is defined as the period between 15 and 24 years by the United Nations (UN) (2013) and by the TurkStat (2021a), while this age range is given as 15-29 by the European Union Statistical Office (EUROSTAT) (2009). In Turkey, youth is defined as individuals between the ages of 14 and 29 by the decision of the Council of Ministers dated 15/11/2012 and numbered 2012/4242 (Council of Ministers Decision on the National Youth and Sports Policy Document, 2012). The age-based lower limit for youth usually coincides with the age at which education ends. Therefore, the starting age of the youth period varies according to the age of compulsory education in countries. The upper limit, on the other hand, has been increasing in recent years due to the prolonged duration of education and uncertainties in labor markets (Genç Hayat Vakfı, 2017, p.12). 'Youth' is just a term. Youth can be classified by age or generations. However, these boundaries are completely fluid. Since the relationship between social age and biological age is quite complex, the definition of youth cannot be reduced to age. 'Youth' and 'age' are actually constructed in the struggle between young and old and are part of a struggle for classification (Bourdieu, 1993, p.94-95). Social cohesion is necessary for the reflexive development of a young person's identity, which explains individualization as defined by Giddens (Gill, 2009, p.34) through an approach that questions the policies that affect the lives of individuals. Giddens (1991) focuses on the life span of the individual, which is organized in terms of the predicted life span. He evaluates it from a temporal perspective that involves the colonization of the future and the control of time. In this respect, a young person is one who wanders around and has no thought of the future (Gill, 2009, p.100). Giddens (1991, p.148) defines youth as a transitional stage within the life cycle. This transitional stage is an identity crisis for the youth. In fact, the course of life is built on the individual's awareness of the crises in this period, his/her confrontation with these crises and his/her anticipated needs to solve them.

As can be seen, there is no consensus on the exact age range to describe the youth. However, youth is a social category in which physiological, psychological and sociological changes are experienced, covering a rapid transition period

between childhood and adulthood (Burcu, 1997, p.7). The definition of youth, the description of the characteristics of this period, and its problem domains are explained by sociology through social factors. Many factors such as the youth’s integration with the social structure, social problems and solutions to them, the expectations and hopes of the society from the youth are explained on the basis of sociological theories (Burcu, 1998). While young people experience age-related social, cultural, biosocial, physiological and psychosocial changes like other individuals in all age groups, the opportunities provided by their society also affect these changes (Furlong et.al., 2011). Therefore, as stated by Bourdieu (1993), Burcu (1997, 1998) and Furlong et.al. (2011), rather than covering an age period, youth is a social category shaped by many changes in the society.

The concepts of ‘happiness’, ‘life satisfaction’, and ‘wellbeing’ are used interchangeably by Veenhoven (1991, 2000) to determine the general condition of the society. A statement that demonstrates life satisfaction also shows the level of happiness. Although there is a tendency to associate wellbeing with a single dimension of social life such as economy, politics, health, it is actually used to evaluate the general condition of the society. In other words, it is a term that is used to evaluate the general public’s access to and ownership of resources (Teghe & Rendell, 2005, p.3). Wellbeing has been built on the idea of how individuals perceive services and conditions in many domains of society such as family, consumption, labor force participation, leisure time, health, finances. This perception affects individuals’ general view of wellbeing, commitment to society and life satisfaction (Sirgy et.al., 2010). According to Awartani et.al. (2008), wellbeing is often associated with happiness or health, and as a result, it allows an assessment to be made of the structural conditions related to poverty, education, employment, housing and health services. More specifically, this holistic assessment of young people’s wellbeing is only possible through a multi-faceted approach (Bourke & Geldens, 2007).

The individualistic tendency of concepts such as wellbeing has been criticized by youth sociologists, who draw attention to the importance of structural conditions such as poverty and access to education, housing, employment, health care that shape youth’s ‘feel-good’ potential (Bourke & Geldens, 2007). The social wellbeing of young people is a process that includes structural, institutional and individual factors in a relational approach (Wyn et.al., 2015). In other words, the social wellbeing of young people is beyond their control and depends on much broader circumstances. In addition to the socio-economic conditions of the youth, factors such as family and friend support are also important in their social wellbeing. More recently, a holistic view of youth wellbeing has been developed, including many domains such as stress, abuse, trauma, financial difficulties, friendships, family, and work (Coffey, 2022). In this study, based on Bourke and Geldens (2007)’s definition of welfare, the social welfare of young people is examined from a relational perspective. Elements related to welfare, more specifically social welfare, are related to each other and are discussed holistically in a framework that explains social wellbeing and many related problems, opportunities and the current situation.

The social wellbeing of young people takes into account their cultural differences, the way they perceive the society they live in, and the differences in their transition to adulthood (Cahill, 2015; MacDonald & Shildrick, 2013; Petrova, 2002). Therefore, conducting an analysis of the social wellbeing of young people allows a multidimensional evaluation to be made to determine the opportunities, the current situation and the problem areas of the youth. The wellbeing of young people, who are considered to be the most dynamic segment of society, has drawn particular attention in youth research, as pointed out by McLeod and Wright (2015), because while wellbeing reflects an ‘ideal’ situation, a ‘lack of wellbeing’ helps detect and solve problems. With this aspect, wellbeing guides the policies aimed at improving the lives of young people.

1.2. 2017 Global Youth Wellbeing Index

After the 1960s, quality of life studies paid less attention to measuring the quality of society in general, while efforts to develop reliable and valid measures of individual wellbeing began to increase (Møller et.al., 2018). One of these efforts is the indexes developed to portray the wellbeing of young people accurately, the most recent of which is the 2017 GYWI. This index was created for the first time in 2014 in collaboration with the ‘International Youth Foundation’, ‘Hilton and the Center for Strategic and International Studies’. This index, the second of which was published in 2017, consists of youth wellbeing measures, their, ‘*civil participation*’, ‘*economic opportunities*’, ‘*education*’, ‘*health*’, ‘*information and communication technologies*’, ‘*safety and security*’ and ‘*gender equality*’. The index includes data from 30 countries, including Turkey. These domains that shape the transition of young people to adulthood allow an assessment of their support status in these domains. Each indicator belonging to these domains has been prepared for the goals of ‘Transforming Our World, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’ (SDG) published by United Nations, (2015). More precisely, each of the seven index domains is associated with at least one of the 17 SDGs. As

such, the index can serve as a tool for measuring and understanding progress towards the 2030 global goals and for visibility into investments in youth.

Each domain in the index include some indicators that are not specific to youth (such as per capita income, internet use, and global competitiveness), factors affecting young people (such as adolescent fertility rate) and young people's perceptions (satisfaction with services such as education, and health). This index was created by combining data containing objective (democracy, election age, income, youth unemployment, youth borrowing, youth literacy, public investments in education, suicide) and subjective (youth perceptions of government, expectations about living standards, satisfaction with education, perceptions of health, perceptions of violence, perceptions of gender, etc) factors related to social wellbeing.

2. Methodology

2.1. Data Collection and Method

The method of this study is secondary analysis through descriptive statistics. Accordingly, the 2017 GYWI and TurkStat (2020, 2021) data were used in the study. Two main data sources, the 2017 GYWI and TurkStat (2020, 2021) were used in the study. The first of these is the 2017 GYWI, which measures the social wellbeing of young people. This index explains the social wellbeing status of young people in terms of '*civil participation*', '*economic opportunities*', '*education*', '*health*', '*information and communication technologies*', '*safety and security*', and '*gender equality*'.

Each domain and its indicators are scaled with a score between '0' and '1'. Here, the highest (or lowest) value gets '1' and the lowest (or highest) value gets '0' points. In all cases, one (1.0) represents the highest relative score for youth wellbeing and zero (0.0) represents the lowest relative score for it (Sharma, et.al. 2017, p.146).

In this study, the national database TurkStat (2020, 2021) was used as the second data source. There is no indexing for the social wellbeing of young people in Turkey. However, the data on the seven domains in the 2017 GYWI and the indicators in these domains were drawn from multiple reports in TurkStat (2020, 2021). The data in TurkStat (2020, 2021) reports cover all cities and towns within the borders of Turkey.

In the current study, the data on the domains and indicators of the 2017 GYWI for the social wellbeing of young people were compared with the most recently published data of TurkStat (2020, 2021), the national official database in Turkey. As such, TurkStat (2020, 2021) data for Turkey were used, based on the seven domains of the index and 35 indicators belonging to these domains. Thus, the wellbeing of the youth and the social wellbeing of the youth in Turkey were compared by using the findings comprising these domains and indicators.

2.2. Limitations

In this study, a comparison was made regarding the wellbeing of young people in Turkey through the data in the 2017 GYWI and the data obtained from the TurkStat (2020, 2021), which clearly revealed the necessity of an indexing that evaluates the social wellbeing of young people holistically. An indexing of youth wellbeing allows comparison of the living standards of young people both within a particular country and from the perspective of other countries. Therefore, 2017 GYWI stands out among the indexes focusing on the wellbeing of young people. One limitation of this study concerns the accessibility and thus comparability of the indicators related to each domain. The data for Turkey regarding the indicators of the indexed domains were obtained from the TurkStat (2020, 2021) database. However, no data are included for some indicators in the TurkStat database. Therefore, the accessibility and comparability of the data is the first of the limitations.

The second limitation is that the seven domains in the index for the wellbeing of the youth and the indicators of these domains are insufficient to make a valid assessment. In other words, not being able to make comparisons by the development status of countries and regional differences is another limitation of this study.

Considering these limitations, and comparing the data on the index countries and Turkey, the sociological necessity of an indexing for the social wellbeing of the youth is strongly highlighted.

3. Results

In this study, a comparison was made regarding the wellbeing of young people in Turkey by using the 2017 GYWI data and TurkStat (2020, 2021) data. For this purpose, a comparison was made for each index domain and its indicator values. The comparisons of the index values obtained for the data of 30 countries in the 2017 GYWI and the data of TurkStat (2020, 2021) are presented in tables. The indicator value of Turkey, its rank among these 30 countries and the current values in the TurkStat (2020, 2021) database are included. However, it should be noted that since data on some

indicators were not available in the TurkStat database, the indicator values for them were not included. This comparison was made by using the current values that were available.

3.1. Civic Participation Domain

As can be seen in Table 1, there is no data in the TurkStat (2020, 2021) database for the indicators of democracy, youth volunteering, and youth government perceptions for civic participation.

Table 1. Index score, ranking and TurkStat values in the domain of civic participation for Turkey

Indicator	Band Score	Rank	TurkStat value
Democracy	0.41	20	-
Youth volunteering	0.04	28	-
Youth policies	1	1	1
Minimum age to be elected	30	25	18
Youth perceptions of government	0.98	2	-
Civic Participation	0.425	24	

It expresses the existence of youth policies (0= no policy, 0.5= policy is being revised/developed, 1= there is a policy). This value is ‘1’ for Turkey in the 2017 GYWI. The existence of a national youth policy is an indicator of how much attention governments pay to the special needs and potential of their youth. *The minimum age to be elected* is another indicator of civic participation. The age to be elected in the 2017 GYWI is 30 for Turkey in 2016, and thus ranks as the 25th out of 30 countries. However, with the amendment made in the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey (16/4/2017-6771/3 article 76) in 2017, the minimum age for election eligibility was reduced to 18.

The average of the civic participation domain in the index is 0.573. Turkey’s value for this domain is 0.425, and it ranks 24th out of 30 countries. With this value, Turkey ranks below the average index score. Regarding this domain, the social wellbeing of the Turkish youth is negative. However, in the current data in this domain, lowering the election age to 18 in Turkey can be considered a development that supports their more active participation in governance. However, the data are inadequate to compare the index and TurkStat (2020, 2021) values. While youth policies and minimum age to be elected as elements of youth social wellbeing seem to be positive for their civic participation, youth social wellbeing should be considered together with structural, institutional and individual characteristics.

3.2. Economic Opportunities Domain

As seen in Table 2, no data on global competitiveness, early entrepreneurial activities, youth borrowing, and future expectations of youth about living standards are available in the TurkStat (2020, 2021) database.

According to the 2017 GYWI, Turkey’s *per capita income* was 11,522 USD, and it ranked 10th with a score of 0.20. However, this is reported to be 8,598 USD in the ‘Gross Domestic Product by Province, 2019’ report of TurkStat (2021b) for 2020, which indicates a significant decrease in income. The ratio of *youth NEETs* is in 24th place, with a score of 0.24, according to the data of TurkStat (2021c) ‘Sustainable Development Indicators, 2010-2019’. The 15-24 year-old youth make 0.26 (26%) of the total, of whom 34% are women and 18.3% are men. The high rate of women who are not in education or employment is noteworthy. Regarding *youth unemployment*, Turkey ranks 20th with 0.74 points according to the ‘2017 GYWI.’ However, according to the TurkStat (2021d) ‘Labor Force Statistics, October 2021’ data, 24.07% of youth (15-24 years) are unemployed (34.0% women and 18.3% men). The high unemployment rate among young women is remarkable.

The overall index average for economic opportunities is 0.452. Turkey’s index value is 0.38, and it is in 19th place among the 30 countries. This value portrays an even worse picture regarding the social wellbeing of the youth in Turkey. The most recent TurkStat (2020, 2021) data available make it clear that the negative situation in this domain continues due to the decrease in per capita income, the increase in the rate of young NEETs, and the increase in youth unemployment in Turkey. It is observed that the social wellbeing scores of young people related to economic

Table 2. Index score, ranking and TurkStat value in the domain of economic opportunities for Turkey

Indicator	Band Score	Rank	TurkStat value
GDP per capita in dollars	0.20	10	8.598 dollars
Global competitiveness	0.43	17	-
Youth not in education, employment, or training (NEETs)	0.24	24	0.26
Youth unemployment	0.74	20	24.07%
Early entrepreneurial activities	0.34	11	-
Youth borrowing	0.30	18	-
Future expectations of young people regarding living standards	0.74	10	-
Economic Opportunities	0.38	19	

opportunities are high. However, it is important to evaluate factors such as a lack of education, an inability to find a job, the region of residence and gender in relation to the economic opportunities of young people.

3.3. Education Domain

Education is the third domain for the social wellbeing of young people as seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Index score, ranking and TurkStat value for the domain of education for Turkey

Indicator	Band Score	Rank	TurkStat value
Youth literacy	0.99	12	0.99
Public investments in education	0.09	29	5.40%
Low enrollment in secondary education	1	10	95.70%
Low completion in secondary education	94.57	10	94.57%
Youth satisfaction with education	0.61	26	59.50%
Education	0.69	21	

According to the 2017 GYWI, the literacy rate of youth (15-24 years) in the population ranks 12th, with 0.99 points (99%). This rate did not change with 0.99 (99%) for the youth (15-24 years old) in the TurkStat (2021e) 'National Education Statistics Database, 2008-2020' report. The percentage of expenditure on education in total government expenditure is 5.4% according to TurkStat (2021f) 'Educational Expenditure Statistics, 2020' data. The indicator of low enrolment in secondary education refers to what percentage of the population who are of the official age range for secondary education, regardless of age, is enrolled in secondary education. According to the 2017 GYWI, it is 94.57% of the population in this age range. According to the TurkStat (2021f) 'Educational Expenditure Statistics, 2020' report, this rate is 95.7% (95.9% for women and 95.5% for men). Secondary education completion indicator, on the other hand, shows the percentage of those who complete primary and secondary education for both men and women. According to the 2017 GYWI, this indicator is 94.57% for young people (18-24 years old). According to the TurkStat (2021f) 'Educational Expenditure Statistics, 2020' report, this rate is 97.1% (96.8% for women and 97.4% for men). While the rate of women starting secondary education is higher, girls are less likely to complete secondary education than boys, which means that a higher number of girls than boys are excluded from the formal education system. The indicator of the *satisfaction of young people with education*, on the other hand, shows the percentage of those who are very satisfied and satisfied with the education system and school. According to the index, this rate is 61% in Turkey. According to

the TurkStat (2021a) ‘Youth with Statistics, 2020’ report, 59.5% of the youth (18-24 years old) were satisfied with their education and 23.5% stated that they were moderately satisfied with it.

While the index average score in education is 0.71, Turkey’s score in this domain is 0.69. With this score, Turkey ranks 21st and remains below the index average, thus depicting a grim outlook. According to TurkStat (2020, 2021), the budget allocated to education has increased, but the satisfaction of young people with education has decreased. Therefore, it can be said that the negative picture regarding the social wellbeing of the youth in Turkey still holds. Education, which is another component of youth social wellbeing, seems to be closely related to youth literacy, public investment in education, low enrolment rates in secondary education, low completion rates in secondary education, and youth satisfaction with education.

3.4. Health Domain

Health, which is the fourth domain for the social wellbeing of the youth, as seen in Table 4 no data were available on the youth stress indicator in this domain.

Table 4. Index score, ranking and TurkStat value in the domain of health for Turkey

Indicator	Band Score	Rank	TurkStat value
Adolescent birth rate	26.81	14	15
Self-harm rate	15.27	17	11.24
Youth stress	0.72	29	-
Perceptions of youth regarding health	0.82	6	84.6%
Tobacco use	0.27	23	28.0%
Health	0.63	19	

The *adolescent birth rate* in represents births given per 1000 women aged 15-19. According to the index, the adolescent birth rate in Turkey ranks 14th, with a rate of 26.81 per thousand. According to the TurkStat (2021g) ‘Birth Statistics, 2020’ report, this rate has decreased to 15 per thousand among the young people (15-19 years old). The rate of *self-harm among young people* (suicide rate per 100.000 in the 15-24 age group) is 15.27 per hundred thousand for Turkey in the index, and it ranks 17th. According to the TurkStat (2020a) ‘Death and Cause of Death Statistics, 2019’ report, this rate is 11.24 per hundred thousand for young people (15-24 years old). There appears to be a decrease in youth suicides. *The health perceptions of young people* shows the percentage of the Turkish youth who agree with the statement ‘My physical health is near perfect’. Accordingly, the ratio of young people’s perceptions of their health is 0.82, and with this score, Turkey ranks 6th among the index countries. A percentage of 84.6% of the youth (18-24 years old) (82.2% of women, 86.9% of men) state that they are satisfied with their health in the ‘Youth with Statistics, 2020’ report of TurkStat (2021a). *Tobacco product use* refers to those among people aged 15 and over who use tobacco products. According to the index, this rate is 27%, and it ranks 23rd among the index countries. According to the TurkStat (2020b) ‘Turkey Health Survey, 2019’ report, 28.0% of the population aged 15 and over use tobacco products.

While the overall average for this domain is 0.65, Turkey is below the index average, with 0.63 points (19th). It can be said that its outlook is more negative in terms of health. Among the indicators in this domain, the birth rate in adolescence and the rate of self-harm decreased and their perceptions of health were positive; however, the increase in the use of tobacco products is one of the negative changes, while the social wellbeing of the youth is negative according to the health index value, there is a better change according to TurkStat (2020, 2021).

3.5. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Domain

Information and communication technologies, as seen in Table 5, no data on the indicators of the development of information and communication technologies and the access of young people to the Internet at home are available in the database of TurkStat (2020, 2021).

Table 5. Index score, ranking and TurkStat value in the domain of ICTs for Turkey

Indicator	Band Score	Rank	TurkStat value
Development of ICTs	5.59	12	-
Youth access to the Internet at home	55.58	11	-
Use of the Internet	0.78	10	79%
Mobile phone subscriptions	96.02	23	97.37%
Information and Communication Technologies	0.59	12	

The use of the Internet indicator shows the 'percentage of individuals of all ages who use the Internet'. According to the index, the rate of internet use in Turkey is 0.78 (78%), and it ranks 10th among the indexed countries. This rate is 0.70 (79%) for individuals aged 16-74, according to the TurkStat (2020c) 'Household Information Technologies (IT) Usage Survey, 2020' report. This indicator is not included in the index for young people, and this rate is 95.7% for young people (16-24 years old) in the 'Youth with Statistics, 2020' report of TurkStat (2021a). The mobile phone subscriptions indicator shows the 'mobile subscriptions per 100 people (all ages) as a percentage'. According to the index, this rate is 96.2%, and Turkey ranks 23rd among 30 countries. According to the TurkStat (2020c) 'Household Information Technologies (IT) Usage Survey, 2021' report, the data for the same indicator is 97.37%.

The overall average score of the information and communication technologies domain is 0.54. For this domain, with a score of 0.59, Turkey ranks 12th out of 30 countries. TurkStat (2020, 2021) data for this domain also supports this positive conclusion. In other words, the social wellbeing of young people in Turkey fares better regarding this domain.

3.6. Safety and Security Domain

As seen in Table 6, in indicators, data on internal peace, violence among youth and perceptions of violence are not available in TurkStat (2020, 2021).

Table 6. Index score, ranking and TurkStat value for the domain of safety and security for Turkey

Indicator	Band Score	Rank	TurkStat value
Road fatalities (per hundred thousand)	5.59	13	8.9
Internal peace	55.58	24	-
Violence among youth	8.06	16	-
Human trafficking (per hundred thousand)	0.50	10	74
Perceptions of violence	0.93	3	-
Safety and Security	0.69	14	

The road fatalities indicator shows the death rates in traffic accidents per 100,000 young people (15-24 years old). According to the index, this rate is 5.59 in Turkey, which ranks 13th. This value is 8.9 for young people (15-24 years old) in the TurkStat (2021c) 'Sustainable Development Indicators, 2010-2019' report. According to the same report, the number of victims of human trafficking per 100.000 people in Turkey (18-29 years) is 74 per hundred thousand.

The overall average for safety and security is 0.67. Ranking 14th, Turkey’s index score in this domain is 0.69. The current indicators of TurkStat (2020, 2021) clearly shows that road fatalities and human trafficking have increased, and thus, it can be said that the social wellbeing of the youth in Turkey has become relatively worse in terms of security and safety. The safety and security dimension plays an important role in the social wellbeing of young people. Therefore, the situation of young people regarding road fatalities (per hundred thousand), internal peace, violence among youth, human trafficking (per hundred thousand), and perceptions of violence affects their social wellbeing with a focus on safety and security.

3.7. Gender Equality Domain

As seen in Table 7, TurkStat (2020, 2021) offers no data regarding limited civil liberties and young people’s perception of gender.

Table 7. Index score, ranking and TurkStat value in the domain of gender equality for Turkey

Indicator	Band Score	Rank	TurkStat value
Limited civil liberties	0.54	20	-
Early marriage among women	0.10	21	2.7%
Women’s fear of walking alone	0.52	20	49.6%
Young people’s perception of gender	0.89	18	-
Social gender	0.51	24	

The *rate of early marriage for women* is between the ages of 15-19 and represents the percentage of those who are married. This ratio is 0.10 in the index. The proportion of women aged 16-17 getting married is 2.7% in the TurkStat (2021h) report titled ‘World Population Day, 2021’. In the same report, the rate of women aged 20-24 who got married before the age of 18 is 4.6%. However, no data are available to make a one-to-one comparison for this indicator due to the age range difference. The indicator of *women’s fear of walking alone* represents percentage of female participants who answered ‘Yes’ to the question ‘Do you feel safe walking alone at night in the city or region you live in?’ Regarding this indicator, Turkey is in 20th place, with 0.52 points in the index. According to the TurkStat (2021c) report titled ‘Sustainable Development Indicators, 2010-2019’, 49.6% of women and 73.8% of men feel safe while walking on the streets.

While the overall average of this domain is 0.63, Turkey ranks 24th with 0.51 points and is below the index average, which demonstrates that Turkey has a more negative outlook regarding gender. Nevertheless, the decrease in the ratio of women who are afraid of walking alone according to the current TurkStat figures portrays a better picture in terms of the social wellbeing of the youth. The social wellbeing of young people may differ depending on their gender roles. In particular, female youth may be in a more unequal position in terms of gender than male youth. Therefore, gender equality is an important factor that increases social wellbeing.

4. Conclusion and Discussion

Looking at the results of this comparison, it is observed that the index averages are higher in the domains of *health, information and communication technologies*, and *safety and security* vis-à-vis the 2017 GYWI. On the other hand, the index reveals a negative social wellbeing picture for the youth in Turkey in the domains of *gender equality, economic opportunities, education and civil participation*. The comparison in this study demonstrates that the negative situation in *economic opportunities* and education continues.

According to Bourdieu (2016, p.81), the focus of relational sociology is to analyze social actors through interrelated processes. Again, according to Emirbayer (1997, p.282), relational sociology requires a focus on social processes rather than an individualist or general view. Therefore, in terms of relational sociology, social reality is dynamic, continuous and processual. In this respect, when the social wellbeing of young people is to be explained and understood, all the elements that determine social wellbeing should be considered based on the dynamic structure of that society and the

continuity of relations with each other. The social wellbeing of young people is dynamic and involves an ever-changing process. Therefore, through this relatedness, social wellbeing studies should be emphasised by addressing the thoughts, feelings, problems, needs and demands of young people in a relational process. Therefore, the social wellbeing of young people represents a relatedness that includes many interactions from economic opportunities to educational opportunities and from institutional support to individual characteristics. Although the current study portrays a positive picture regarding the social wellbeing of the youth in Turkey, it also reveals a problem when the current social wellbeing indicators of the youth are analysed in terms of difficulties and opportunities. This outlook for the social wellbeing of young people is important in emphasising the importance of youth-oriented policies, services and future plans for countries. It should be taken into account that the lack of opportunities, opportunities and services offered to young people will bring risks such as brain drain and impoverishment.

The social wellbeing of the Turkish youth was compared using the 2017 GYWI and TurkStat (2020, 2021) data. With this comparison, a holistic analysis of the social wellbeing of the Turkish youth was attempted. Accordingly, among the index domains, Turkey has a relatively more positive status in the domains of *health, information and communication technologies, safety and security*, and *gender equality* compared to the index average. On the other hand, according to the index average, Turkey has a negative standing in the domains of *economic opportunities* and *education*. However, the data on the domain of *civil participation* are not sufficient enough to allow a valid comparison.

Achieving a true understanding of the social wellbeing of the youth is only possible with a holistic view of their problem domains, opportunities and current status in society (McLeod & Wright, 2015). Inequalities in access to ICTs contribute negatively to the youth identity formation, development of their connections with the society they live in, and their health (Lotrean et al., 2016; Walker et al., 2021). On the other hand, young people are an important part of providing information as a sub-field of ICTs, creating change in society and responding to changes (Rice et al., 2016). ICTs have an important role in the development of health and identity, which is a key element in the integration of young people into the society (Rice et al., 2016; Walker et al., 2021). According to Görgün-Baran and Erdem (2017), who state that young people's internet literacy is related to computer usage skills and e-safety, there is a relationship between young people's IT usage skills and gender, education, computer, internet and mobile phone usage. In addition, the social wellbeing of the youth hinges on the support and assistance offered to them in coping with problems such as being immigrants, a lack of employment opportunities, language barriers, and access to education (Heyeres et al., 2021).

Revealing the social wellbeing of young people is important in terms of identifying the opportunities, current situation and problem domains offered to them. Giving family support to young people (Burgos et al., 2017) is a positive factor that increases their social wellbeing. In addition, their good social wellbeing status, their belonging to school, an increased participation in political life and voluntary activities increase their belonging to society (Arslan et al., 2020; Cicognani et al., 2008; Teare et al., 2021). However, the related literature reports more findings that negatively affect the social wellbeing of the youth than those affecting it positively. Young people in NEET, which is one of the indicators of the social wellbeing of young people, are considered marginal in their society and are the group that is excluded from education and/or the labor market. Therefore, young people are more likely to face risks such as poverty and not benefiting from health services (Dieckhoff & Gash, 2015) and poor socio-cultural and structural conditions of the families of NEET youth negatively affect the youth's wellbeing, because these conditions are reflected in the young person's thoughts, decisions, and therefore their involvement in social life (To et al., 2021). The low social wellbeing of the youth causes deprivation of economic opportunities, decreased access to health services, and increased levels of stress and anxiety. Furthermore, the socioeconomic conditions of the youth prevent them from being in the fields of education and employment (Kivijärvi et al., 2020). Health, which is one of the determinants of the social wellbeing of the youth, is closely related to the socio-economic status. The socio-economic status of the family limits young people's access to economic opportunities and health services, with a negative impact on the social wellbeing of the youth (Plenty & Mood, 2016). The social wellbeing of young people is closely related to their physical and psychological health. The demands of modern life cause young people to feel more overwhelmed and anxious than the previous generation. This negatively affects their psychological health (Eckersley, 2011; Woodhead, 2022). In the case that young people are immigrants, they are viewed as marginalized individuals and are excluded from social networks. This leads to a negative outlook on their social wellbeing (Buchanan et al., 2017). Global economic crises cause a decrease in youth wellbeing (Parker et al., 2016). Riordan and Claudio (2021) found that immigrant youth's access to education creates facilitates their adaptation to their host culture, and leads to an increase in their employment opportunities. Therefore, the better social wellbeing of young people positively affects the wellbeing of their families, friends, and the rest of their society.

Gender represents the social and cultural characteristics of the individual. This distinction emerges in society as

‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’ and emphasizes the social differences between men and women (Burcu, 2020, p.85). In this respect, young people’s inequalities in education and the labor market may increase according to their gender and family structures. Moreover, while these inequalities are less in developed countries, they are more pronounced in Eastern European countries (Iannelli, & Smyth, 2008). Gender roles influence young people’s choice of school, career and occupation (Tinklin et.al. 2005). In addition, as reported by Basu et.al (2021), young women feel less safe than young men when walking on the street at night and using public transportation. Young people’s gender roles and especially their education, safety and economic opportunities play an important role in social wellbeing. In addition, depending on gender, young women may differ from young men in their ability to participate independently in social life, feel safe and make independent decisions. One set of the conditions that affect the youth social wellbeing most strongly is the economic conditions. The young people in Turkey experience negative economic opportunities compared to the youth living in the other index countries. In support of these index-based findings, Özmete and Bayoğlu (2008) found that young people are most concerned about their wellbeing, economic conditions, poverty and employment. The rate of unemployed young university graduates in Turkey is 13.7% (15.4% for women and 9.8% for men) according to the TurkStat (2021d) report titled ‘Labor Force Statistics, October 2021’. Youth unemployment has many negative outcomes such as poverty, social inequality, alcohol and substance use, depression, and deterioration of health (Kırcı, 2017).

5. Suggestions

In analyzing the social wellbeing of young people, it is necessary to address social realities on a relational basis through elements that reflect social realities in terms of quantity and quality. In the process of evaluating the social wellbeing of young people, structural conditions such as poverty, education, housing, employment, cultural differences, and the way young people perceive society and the conditions of the transition to adulthood should be taken into account. These noteworthy factors are important to see the reality that determines the social wellbeing of young people in a relational way and to show the social position of young people. It is highly recommended that future research use the wellbeing framework to better understand the societies in which young people live, youth experiences and perceptions, and what consequences these have. Doing this requires a reconsideration of not only how the youth interacts with their families, friends and community, but also the methods applied to measure these interactions. To put it more clearly, future research needs to apply objective and subjective measures to understand to what extent young people perceive their lives as positive, negative, or neutral. This study, which reflects the effort of looking at the social wellbeing of young people in a holistic manner, can provide a deeper perspective on the problem areas, expectations and opportunities of young people by using a qualitative and mixed research design.

There is an obvious need for further research involving detailed analyses of the social wellbeing of the youth based on gender, disability status, residential setting (ie. urban vs countryside), regional development differences, and the development status of the countries. In the study, the visibility of the lack, inadequacy and inefficiency of the policies for the youth has been made visible with this analysis of the social wellbeing of the youth. There is also a need for both academic studies and official statistics on the holistic assessment of the social wellbeing of young people in Turkey. Efforts to create a database that reveals the factors that positively/negatively affect the social wellbeing of young people in Turkey and that complies with the standards of international organizations in this context seem important. Undoubtedly, these efforts will also enable the comparison of the social wellbeing status of young people in Turkey with young people living in other countries.

Studies conducted with a holistic perspective on the social wellbeing of young people and having data that allows comparison with international standards are important in improving the social wellbeing of young people living in Turkey. These studies can also play a critical role especially in the formulation of development plans and can guide social policies regarding the Turkish youth. The social wellbeing lens can be used to identify young people’s individual experiences and perceptions, risky situations in society, and problems that need to be addressed. Thus, it will help determine both the effect of their current situation on their social wellbeing and their future aspirations on their wellbeing perceptions.

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