



**TÜRKİYE'DEKİ SURİYELİ KADINLARA SİVİL TOPLUM ÖRGÜTLERİ TARAFINDAN
SUNULAN HİZMETLERİN SOSYAL ÇALIŞMA MÜDAHALE SÜRECİ BAĞLAMINDA
DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ: BİR ÖRNEK OLAY**

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Öz

Bu çalışmada Türkiye'deki Suriyeli kadınlara sivil toplum örgütleri (STÖ) tarafından sunulan sosyal hizmetler bir örnek olay üzerinden değerlendirilmiştir. Bu nitel araştırmada Türkiye'deki STÖ'lerden destek alan Suriyeli bir kadın mültecinin sosyal çalışma müdahale süreci ele alınarak kendisi ve ona sosyal hizmet sunan 7 STÖ servis sağlayıcısı ile derinlemesine görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Araştırmanın geçerliliğini, güvenilirliğini sağlayabilmek adına Suriyeli kadın mülteceden elde edilen sonuçlarla servis sağlayıcılardan elde edilen sonuçlar ve görüşmelerden elde edilen sonuçlarla dokümanlardan elde edilen sonuçlar birbirleriyle karşılaştırılmış ve araştırmanın sonuçları vaka yöneticisinin kontrolünden geçirilmiştir. Derinlemesine görüşmelerden ve örnek olaya ilişkin tutulmuş dokümanlardan elde edilen verinin tematik analizi yapılmıştır. Sosyal çalışma müdahale süreci tündengelim yaklaşımıyla analiz çerçevesi olarak kullanılmıştır. Keşfedilmemiş örüntüleri bulmak için veri yeniden okunmuş (tümevarımsal analiz), öncelikle açık kodlama ile yeni temalar belirlenmiş ardından eksenli kodlama ile bu temalar arasındaki bağlantılar aranmıştır. Analizde MAXQDA 2020 programı kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın sonuçları toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğine duyarlı, hak temelli STÖ'lerin özellikle toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı şiddete maruz bırakılan mülteci kadınların güçlenmesinde ne kadar önemli olduğunu göstermektedir. STÖ'lerin Suriyeli kadınları güçlendirici bir sosyal çalışma müdahale süreci yürütmeye çalıştığı ancak makro düzeyde karşılaşılan sorunlar nedeniyle onların hayatlarında sosyal çalışma perspektifinin hedeflediği değişimi sağlayamadıkları görülmüştür. Sonuçlar sosyal devletin sorumluluklarını yerine getirmesi ve bölgesel kalkınmacı yaklaşımların hayata geçirilmesi gerektiğine işaret etmektedir. Bunun yanı sıra STÖ'lerin projeci anlayışı terk etmesi ve politik savunuculuk faaliyetlerini daha etkili bir şekilde yürütmesi gerektiği sonuçlarına ulaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal çalışma, Türkiye'deki Suriyeli kadınlar, Sivil toplum örgütleri, Sosyal hizmetler, Sosyal çalışma müdahalesi.

***Evaluation of Services Provided by Non-Governmental Organizations to Syrian Women in Turkey in the
Context of the Social Work Intervention Process: A Case Study***

Abstract

This study evaluated social services provided by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to Syrian women in Turkey via a case study. This qualitative study discussed the social work intervention process applied to a Syrian refugee woman who received support from NGOs in Turkey, and in-depth interviews were conducted with her and 7 NGO service providers who provided her with social services. To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, the results obtained from the Syrian refugee woman were compared with the results obtained from service providers, the interviews, and the documents (triangulation). Finally, the case manager reviewed the study results. The thematic analysis of the data obtained from the in-depth interviews and the documents prepared with respect to the case study was carried out. The social work intervention process was used as an analysis framework with a deductive approach. The data were re-read to find undiscovered patterns (inductive analysis). First, new themes were determined with open coding, and then the connections between these themes were sought with axial coding. MAXQDA 2020 was used in the analysis. The study results show the importance of gender-sensitive, rights-based NGOs in empowering refugee women exposed to gender-based violence. It was observed that NGOs attempted to carry out a social work intervention process empowering Syrian women, but they could not achieve the change targeted by the social work perspective in their lives due to the problems at the macro level. The results indicate that the welfare state should fulfill its responsibilities, and regional developmental approaches should be

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implemented. Moreover, it was concluded that NGOs should abandon the projection understanding and carry out political advocacy activities more effectively.

Keywords: *Social work, Syrian women in Turkey, Non-governmental organizations, Social services, Social work intervention.*

1. Introduction

Immigration research from a gender perspective shows that Syrian women experience the migration process differently than men (Üstübcü, 2020). Syrian women are exposed to different forms of gender-based violence in addition to the problems experienced by refugees in the intersectionality of their female and refugee identities (Parker, 2015; Cantekin, 2019; Köroğlu & Dural, 2020; Salmanoğlu Erol & Kalkın Kızıldaş, 2020). Women are subjected to gender-based violence at every stage of migration. Persons in power (armed members of parties in conflict, bandits, border guards, pirates, smugglers, slave traders, etc.) abuse women before, during, and after migration; women are sexually bartered, sexually assaulted, raped, and forcibly impregnated. They are sexually abused by persons in authority when seeking legal status in an asylum country or access to assistance and resources (UNHCR, 2003). It has been reported that Syrian women are often forced to exchange sexual acts for items like food, clothing, and shelter on their journey out of Syria.

Moreover, women and girls have been subjected to intimate partner violence (Parker, 2015), and they are exposed to violence from their mothers-in-law and male children in the absence of a father (Albayrak et al., 2022). The other form of violence against women is the practice of forcing women to give birth to many children related to old traditions and customs. It was pointed out that poverty due to war and migration leads to girl-child marriages, which is also approved by the religion (Albayrak et al., 2022). It is reported that young Syrian women of school age cannot continue their education in Turkey. Instead, displaced families marry off their daughters at an early age to cope with the financial burden of children (Wringe et al., 2019). Doğutaş's (2019) analysis of Turkish media reveals that Syrian women in Turkey are most likely to be forced into prostitution, followed by sexual assault and murder. These are followed by co-wife, suicide, torture, and seizure. Research on Syrian women trying to cross from Turkey to Europe suggests that women refugees are vulnerable to multiple forms of insecurity and violence and that the EU has done nothing to reduce these vulnerabilities. Border closures leave women vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence by smugglers or obliging them to engage in sex to pay for their passage. Police and security forces in countries along refugee routes can also perpetrate sexual and gender-based violence against women (Freedman, 2016).

This study aims to understand what happened in Turkey, the country hosting the most significant number of Syrians in the world after the 2011 Syrian war (UN WOMEN, 2019), through the experiences of migrant women and the NGOs providing services to them. The study's starting point is that current statistics show that most Syrians under temporary protection reside in Istanbul, and almost half (% 47.6) are women (Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı, 2023). Another critical issue is that women do not receive regular psycho-social and economic support and are more vulnerable to male violence (Coşkun & Yılmaz, 2018). As a result, multiple disadvantages increase the vulnerability of Syrian women and reveal the importance of social service intervention that should be provided to them. Understanding the gender-based violence and discrimination experienced by women will contribute to developing social services offered to them (Afyonoğlu, 2023). Therefore, in-depth research should be conducted to understand Syrian women's processes better while receiving social services in Turkey. From this point of view, this qualitative research aims to make the experiences of Syrian women and service providers working in this field visible. Their discourses are vital in developing solutions to problems. In this context, the study will critically evaluate social policies implemented for Syrian women. The study will guide service

providers in terms of being an example explaining the social service intervention process. The study will also contribute to the literature on migration, gender, and social work.

1.1. Theoretical Framework

It is seen that studies on Syrian women in Turkey express the problems and needs of women and evaluate the (social) services they receive in general (AFAD, 2014; MAZLUMDER, 2014; Yücel et al., 2018; Köroğlu & Dural, 2020). Studies emphasize the critical role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in this field at the points where public institutions are inadequate (Çorabatır & Hassa, 2013; Kutlu, 2015; Mackreath & Sağrıç, 2017; Aras & Duman, 2019; Şenses, 2020). The empowering aspect of NGOs for refugee women is also mentioned (Erden, 2017; Sunata & Tosun, 2018; Ecevit et al., 2019; Özgür Keysan & Şentürk, 2021a). However, studies reveal that the activities of social workers in NGOs are predominantly at the micro level (working with the individual) (Koç & Paslı, 2022), and the case management process cannot be thoroughly carried out at this level (Ecevit et al., 2019; Afyonoğlu & Harputlu, 2021). According to these findings, it can be stated that NGOs play a very critical role in empowering Syrian refugee women, but a social work intervention, including a "planned change process" specific to them, cannot be fully implemented.

Sheafor and Horejsi (2014) describe the planned change process for a holistic social work intervention in five steps. These steps for micro-level application are as follows:

1. Intake and Engagement: Service users are met with, and problems are clarified. Whether to work with service users or transfer them to another institution is decided.
2. Data Collection and Assessment: Data on service users are collected with methods such as face-to-face interviews, home visits, document review, etc. An assessment is made about the social functionality of service users and their families and the social support they can receive from the person-in-environment perspective.
3. Planning and Contracting: First, the problems and needs of service users are identified. What needs to be done to solve problems is decided together with service users, and an intervention plan is created.
4. Intervention and Monitoring: The service provider performs the most appropriate intervention and continuously monitors this intervention. In case of a need for change in the intervention plan, suggestions are developed and presented to service users.
5. Evaluation and Termination: The planned change process is assessed in terms of the service user, service provider, and the institution providing services, and the work is terminated.

Among the basic theories of the social work discipline, the ecosystem and empowerment approaches accompany these steps. According to the ecosystem approach, individuals are in a mutual relationship with the systems surrounding them (Johnson & Yanca, 2010). According to the empowerment perspective, individuals, groups, families, and communities within the ecosystem have powers, and each environment is full of resources (Saleeby, cited by Johnson & Yanca). Social workers also assume the task of mobilizing these forces and the surrounding resources. At this point, social workers need to assume the role of case managers. In the case management process, service users benefit from services provided by more than one organization, but one takes the primary responsibility and manages the whole process (Mizrahi & Davis, 2008). The case manager collaborates with clients to plan, implement, and monitor the individualized services, which increase clients' well-being and help them achieve their goals by supporting them and creating changes in micro-level practice (NASW, 2013). To this end, a connection is established between the individual benefiting from the service and the services they need (Wolk et al., 1994). The case manager works to improve organizational structures and social policies that concern service users through mezzo- and macro-level implementation (Sheafor

& Horejsi, 2014). Thus, the case manager coordinates services and enables people to access the services that may be difficult for them to navigate on their own. The case manager tries to minimize the duplication and fragmentation in the system and the frustration of applicants (Hepworth et al., 2013).

2. Method

This section of the study will discuss the methodology employed in the research process.

2.1. Research Design

The research analyzed social services provided to Syrian women through a case study. In the qualitative research with a single-case holistic design, in-depth interviews were conducted with both the service user and service providers and documents related to the case study were reviewed. To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, the results obtained from the Syrian refugee woman were compared with the results obtained from service providers, the interviews, and the documents (triangulation). Finally, the case manager reviewed the study results (Krysik & Jerry, 2013).

2.2. Working Group

Theorists assert that working in a single-case study design increases the depth of analysis, and more information is obtained with this method compared to what can be learned from statistical descriptions (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002). In this regard, a rich case (Syrian refugee woman: Ş.Y.) was determined with the guidance of NGOs working with immigrants in Istanbul with the purposive sampling method.

Ş.Y. was 37 years old and had a 7-year-old child at the time of the interview. ¹ It was revealed that NGO1, the case manager, directed Ş.Y. to 3 NGOs for long-term support and 10 NGOs for one-time support in-kind and in cash. The research scope was limited to 4 NGOs with a longer relationship, and an interview was conducted with 7 service providers working in these organizations (see Table 1) and Ş.Y.

Table 1. Information on NGOs and service providers interviewed

NGOs			Service Providers		
No	Year of Establishment	Field of Work	No	Position	Education
1	2016	Immigration	1	Coordinator & Case manager	Sociology-Bachelor's Degree, Sociology-MD, Social Work Ph.D. Student
			2	Program supervisor	Econometrics-Bachelor's Degree, Human Rights MD, Sociology-Open Education Faculty Student
2	1988	Problems in health, education, and employment	3*	Consultant	Political Science and International Relations - Bachelor's Degree
			4	Psychologist	Psychology - Bachelor's Degree, Trauma and Disaster Mental Health Master's Program Student
3	1990	Combating violence against women	5	Feminist activist	Finance - Bachelor's Degree, Social Work - Bachelor's Degree
			6	Feminist activist &Coordinator &Psychologist	Psychology - Bachelor's Degree

4	1995	Immigration	7*	Outreach Assistant	Bachelor's Degree in English Language and Literature, Associate Degree in Social Work, Child Development Open Education Faculty Student
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* Service providers providing services to refugees in their native language.

2.3. Data Collection

A semi-structured in-depth interview guide was used in the interviews. The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions. An interview was conducted with the service user about the period she lived in Turkey and the social services she received. In the interviews conducted with the service providers, they discussed the social work intervention process they applied to Ş.Y. and the difficulties they experienced while working with Syrian women/other refugees in general. The interviews were conducted between March and July 2022 and lasted between 40 and 90 minutes.

2.4. Data Analysis

This study, which tried to understand the current situation, did not include generalization and representation. The thematic analysis of the data obtained from the in-depth interviews and the documents prepared concerning the case study was carried out. The social work intervention process of Sheafor and Horejsi (2014) was used as an analysis framework with a deductive approach (Patton, 2002). Afterward, the data were re-read to find undiscovered patterns (inductive analysis). First, new themes were determined with open coding, and then the connections between these themes were sought with axial coding (Neuman, 2006). MAXQDA 2020 was used in the analysis.

2.5. Ethics

The ethical codes of the social work profession and the International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM) were followed during the research process. Informed consent was presented to the Syrian refugee woman in her native language and writing. The interview with the Syrian refugee woman was conducted with a sworn translator sensitive to gender equality and in a place determined by the Syrian refugee woman. NGO permission was obtained for investigating Ş.Y.'s documents. Additionally, informed consent was obtained from the service providers. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of İstanbul Arel University (Ethics Committee Decision, dated 25/02/2022 and numbered 2022/05).

3. Findings

Case: Ş.Y. Exposed to Gender-Based Violence

Ş.Y. emigrated to Turkey in 2015 with her husband, to whom she was forced to get married, and a newborn infant. She was registered under the Turkish temporary protection regime. Ş.Y. said she had received an agricultural technician education in Syria and worked in her workplace. She stated that she could complete the education process with difficulties and experienced numerous difficulties because of the men in the family during her work life. She summarized the gender-based violence she had been exposed to in Syria as follows:

“My brothers do not allow girls to receive education and work. They strongly object to it. They forced me into marriage. They were trying to dominate me a lot. I paid them to send me to school. Or when I worked, I paid them so they could leave me alone. It's like a bribe... I suffered the oppression of both my family and my husband. I mean, they didn't like women, they didn't like girls. They like men more and discriminate against women.”

Ş.Y. lived with her husband for 3 years in the city where she first settled in Turkey. During this period, she suffered physical, sexual, and psychological violence from her husband. Neighbors who witnessed this complained to the police, but Ş.Y. could not testify at the police station where she was taken since she did not speak Turkish. Ş.Y. made the following inference about this experience:

“When we complain, men don't help women; they choose the male side, not to break the family.”

Ş.Y., who had to return home after this incident, was kicked out of the house with her child by her husband:

“My ex-husband told me 'Boş ol' (I'm divorcing you) three times and kicked me out in the middle of the night. The weather was freezing, and it was snowing heavily. I was also breastfeeding my child at that time. There was a barrack where people made bread (think of something flimsy). I took shelter there for 4-5 hours. After 4-5 hours, my husband opened the door and recited his prayer according to the requirements of Islam, put his hand on my head, said 'Helalsin' (you are halal), and took me back inside.”

Ş.Y. stated that her child, who witnessed many violent incidents, also had psychological disorders, particularly the inability to speak. Ş.Y. took her identity card and the identity card of her child and came to Istanbul with the help of a refugee family without an official travel permit. While waiting at the bus station on her way to Istanbul, she reported that she was harassed by a man she did not know:

“We arrived at the bus station at midnight. I waited for the bus with my child until 4 a.m. When I was sitting there, I didn't have a lot of clothes on me, and I felt freezing. A man sitting in the office at the bus station harassed me. He was blinking and doing other things. I was scared a lot. I left and went to a more crowded place where there were families.”

Ş.Y. arrived in Istanbul with difficulties and started living with her sister, who was staying with roommates. Meanwhile, she could not leave the house because she received threats from her husband by phone. At the end of 4 months, her sister was diagnosed with cancer. Therefore, she had to return to Syria for treatment. Ş.Y. could not pay the rent, stayed on the street, and applied to NGOs through an acquaintance. She lived in Turkey for seven years with the support of NGOs. Ş.Y. was relocated to the 3rd country in 2022 with her child after all she had gone through. Her statements within the scope of this study reveal the patriarchal system, the risk of gender-based violence, and difficulties in combating it in terms of women who have to emigrate.

Theme 1

NGOs as Social Service Providers: "This is one of the Places Where They Breathe"

In the analysis of the interview results with Ş.Y., the problems encountered in Turkey are listed as follows (Figure 1). It was found that Ş.Y. complained most about her psychological issues, followed by the difficulty of gender-based violence and shelter.

Code System	Ş.Y.	SUM
Ş.Y.'s PROBLEMS		0
Gender Based Violence	■	7
Economical Issues	■	6
Employment	■	3
Psychological Issues	■	15
Other Health Issues	■	4
Shelter	■	7
Education	■	5
Child Care	■	5
Language	■	4
Legal Issues	■	4
SUM	60	60

Figure 1. Problems experienced by Ş.Y.

The analysis based on the statements of Ş.Y. and NGO employees shows that the service provider in NGO1 fulfilled the role of a case manager. Ş.Y. received the following support from NGOs under the case manager's guidance:

- The procedures to obtain a residence permit for living in Istanbul were fulfilled together with the Presidency of Migration Management.
- She received legal support to obtain a protection order against her husband due to the violence from him.
- She took advantage of the shelter service.
- She benefited from rent support.
- She was provided with translation services during the interviews.
- Psychological support was provided to her and her child.
- Kindergarten service was provided to her child.
- Her child participated in play therapy groups.
- She attended a Turkish course and other vocational courses.
- She participated in empowering group activities for women.
- She received support for her health problems.
- She was directed toward socioeconomic support.

In her statements, Ş.Y. mentioned the support she received from state and local administrations quite rarely. She applied to local governments only under the case manager's guidance to provide nursery and food assistance to her child. Ş.Y. applied to the state mechanisms such as a women's guesthouse, police station, and district governorship. Ş.Y. said that she did not receive help at the police station where she applied for protection against violence, whereas she stated that the economic support she received from the district governorship was highly insufficient. Although Ş.Y. stayed in the state shelter, NGOs carried out the processes of applying for kindergarten for her child, rent assistance, and other socioeconomic support.

The case manager tried to carry out a systematic process with Ş.Y. starting from the intake and engagement stage. Document reviews performed within the research scope show that the problems/needs of Ş.Y. and her child were identified through comprehensive interviews during the data collection and assessment process. The interviews were recorded with other professional reports, especially the social assessment report. It was revealed that the planning and contracting stage of the intervention plan was created by deciding together with Ş.Y. She was also actively involved in conducting the study in cooperation:

“Think of someone who falls to the ground. They lifted me up and gave me strength. Such associations empower women.”

At the intervention and monitoring stage, the "empowerment" and "person-in-environment" approaches were prominent, and the women's NGO adopted a feminist approach. NGOs made intensive efforts to provide Ş.Y. with access to the resources around her. It is seen that psychological support was predominantly significant for Ş.Y. and her child. NGOs stated that not being able to find an interpreter in the case management process was a significant problem. To benefit from the interpreter most effectively, service providers who conducted the interviews together with an interpreter stated that they switched to the second data collection and assessment stage in the first phone interview at the intake and engagement stage. NGOs play an active role in solving the problem of interpreters. Particularly, NGOs dealing with refugee issues expressed that they provided interpreter support to other NGOs and even state institutions. Moreover, service providers who could speak Arabic emphasized that psychological support should be provided in the native language. Although accompanied by an interpreter, Ş.Y. was quite satisfied with the psychological support she received.

It is seen that all the needs of Ş.Y. and her child, especially the need for accommodation, were met with economic support. The intervention plan did not address the employment of Ş.Y. The NGO, which followed the settlement of Ş.Y. in the third country, expressed that the settlement to the third country could be impacted adversely if Ş.Y. worked. Afterward, the case manager and Ş.Y. made a joint decision and applied for socioeconomic support. At this point, the women's NGO acted quite carefully when providing financial aid so as not to cause a dependency relationship with Ş.Y. It should be noted that other NGOs act very carefully about financial support by referring to the empowerment approach. It is observed that the women's NGO, which adopts a feminist and empowerment approach, is quite critical of developing a relationship focusing on economic aid and criticizes the macro system:

“Women's solidarity, getting stronger together... Getting stronger does not mean a woman can do all these on her own. Changing the system and making it advantageous for us is one of the most important things.” (Service provider 5)

It was observed that NGOs approached Ş.Y. very supportively. The researcher had the opportunity to observe the relationship between Ş.Y. and the case manager. It was seen that they had quite a close relationship, and Ş.Y. defined NGOs as "my home." The service providers' thoughts are parallel with those of Ş.Y.:

“Actually, Ş.Y. felt comfortable near us. She told us about almost her whole life. For this reason, I tried to support her in every way possible for women's solidarity. Sometimes, she needed to ask something. She could call at any time and receive counseling. I didn't do much [laughs modestly].” (Service provider 7)

Ş.Y. said she was generally satisfied with NGOs and defined them as empowering. However, she also stated that she was sexually harassed by a worker in the NGO focusing on distributing aid. Ş.Y. hesitated to report this case and consulted with the women's service providers of NGO1. Although she received support, she did not dare to report this case.

“(Ş.Y. describes in detail the sexual harassment case she faced in the NGO)... I wanted to react there. I wanted to scream, to make myself heard. But my child was with me, standing on the doorstep. I didn't want to scare my child, so I was thinking quickly about what I could do. So, I pretended to be stupid. I pulled myself back as if nothing had happened and held my child's hand... After this incident, I didn't want to attend psychological sessions. I couldn't decide on whether I should tell about this.”

After sixteen months, the file of Ş.Y. within the scope of the Protection Project was closed since no additional request was made. The evaluation and termination stage was reported by NGO1. It was observed that other NGOs also discussed the evaluation and termination stage for Ş.Y. For example,

while the therapy support from NGO2 was terminated, the psychologist devoted the last two sessions to saying goodbye. In the last sessions, the psychologist performed the following activity to help Ş.Y. feel stronger in her later life:

“There is a story about the importance and value of the seed. I first read this story to her and asked her to choose a seed for herself. The seed she chose was the seed of a plant she had brought from Lebanon to heal herself. She gave me one, too. Then, I asked her to draw a tree from that seed to represent her. And we started talking... In that story, trees were used in different ways; their branches were broken, shattered, and cut down. Many things happened to them, but the seed was still hidden... Thinking in detail about herself through that tree... We said goodbye through this in the last two sessions.” (Service provider 4)

Considering that Ş.Y. received education in agriculture, it can be said that the activity of service provider 4 was quite meaningful. On the other hand, service provider 7 stated that Ş.Y. said goodbye before going to the third country. The case manager also said goodbye to Ş.Y. before she went to the third country and communicated with her after she settled there. These can be considered indicators of NGOs' importance to the termination and monitoring stages.

The interviewed NGOs claimed that activities such as education, therapy, group work, etc., for women's empowerment could remain in the background, and in-kind or in-cash support for women could come to the forefront. Although this finding was not valid for Ş.Y., service providers generally complained about the small number of participants in such activities:

“I wish we could reach more women. We have great difficulty engaging clients in workshops and solidarity groups. Because we get this answer, ‘How can I come there when I can't continue my life?’ It's like luxury...” (Service provider 3)

Therefore, Ş.Y. can be considered one of the few women who could reach these empowerment mechanisms. The case of Ş.Y., in which a holistic social work intervention process is observed, is assumed to be an example of good practice.

Theme 2

System: "It's Like a Tennis Match"

NGOs stated that Ş.Y. and all refugee women face problems accessing essential services such as accommodation, nursery, and employment. Service providers say these problems can only be solved by understanding a welfare state. Within the context of this study, the most prominent issues are the inadequate number of shelters and the lack of social housing that can be an alternative to shelters. The fact that the legislation in Turkey poses an obstacle to refugee women's access to the right to asylum is another critical problem mentioned. The women's NGO expressed the issues related to the macro system in a more critical language:

“(The woman) was exposed to violence in her country, escaped, and came here, but (the state) does not want to take her to shelter because ‘you have not suffered violence here.’ It says, ‘It's not my business. I am already fulfilling my responsibility by taking you to Turkey.’ However, she came here under the threat of being killed and took shelter here. Violence Prevention and Monitoring Centers (ŞÖNİM) pass it to the Presidency of Migration Management, and the Migration Management passes it to ŞÖNİM. It's like a tennis match... To solve the problem, we keep calling places... There is no intermediate mechanism, such as social housing. There is either a shelter or the outside world.” (Service provider 6)

It is seen that the problem of discrimination accompanies the issue of accommodation. Again, NGOs convince house owners who want to avoid renting their homes to Syrians. In the rental contract of Ş.Y., the case manager was a guarantor, and her rent was covered through NGOs. There was a solidarity network between NGOs, and they received support from each other predominantly when the service they provided was inadequate to solve the complex problems of Ş.Y. However, it should be

mentioned that the relationship between NGOs was relatively informal. At this point, there should be a standard for the relationship between NGOs, and cases should be followed up more systematically. NGOs criticized that these services, vital for women, are not delivered systematically by the state or local administrations. The lack of coordination between the state, local administrations, and NGOs is another important issue criticized.

“NGOs are eager to cooperate. We want to be part of the solution. Sometimes (she pauses), according to political opinion, according to which municipality the municipality is, or according to the psychological state of the manager of the social service organization, that is, according to his mode, according to his understanding, according to what he thinks about gender... This cooperation can change according to everything. There is a lot of cooperation, of course. But it needs to be spread and not changed according to every mentality; that is, it should be standard. I said a little hesitantly, but...” (Service provider 4)

The critical language of the women’s NGO, defining itself as feminist in terms of cooperation with the state, is also remarkable:

“We say to the state, ‘Don't stop us; we do not want any other benevolence.’ After all, we say every time that it should set up the necessary mechanisms, and we write this frequently in our activity reports. We do it for both advocacy and activism.” (Service provider 5)

Furthermore, an NGO stated that it established healthy cooperation with the state. The case manager of Ş.Y. expressed that NGOs did not know the working logic of the state and, therefore, service users might be harmed due to misguidance. The case manager also stated that Ş.Y. was not affected by such a negative process:

“There is a logic in how public service works. The fact that I had previously worked in the public service was advantageous. We were very cautious about how to direct the file to the public institution and how to direct the service user because we made all the documents, reports, and reporting techniques appropriate for the requirements of public institutions. Therefore, we did not face problems with any institution, including the Presidency of Migration Management.” (Case manager)

The case manager said no problem occurred regarding cooperation with the state with the accreditation of NGO1. The case manager also stated that all occupational groups working within their body were related to the field of social work. Some NGOs reported that service providers who did not have academic equipment related to the field of social work worked based on voluntary or helping relationships.

Theme 3: NGOs as a Third Sector

During the interviews within the research scope, NGOs frequently mentioned the problematic aspects of the international humanitarian aid system. They stated that the structure of this system could not fully empower Ş.Y. and other refugee women. First, it is seen that NGOs working in the field of migration in Turkey are trying to find resources mainly through grants and funds from abroad, which are limited to several-year projects. Local NGOs cannot apply for funding alone and need an international donor. Therefore, NGOs try to "grab" the funds distributed based on projects, "chase" the projects of other NGOs to meet the needs of service users while managing cases, and "direct" service users to these NGOs. NGOs are stuck in the framework drawn up by international funding organizations. It has been emphasized that it is tough to explain what is happening locally to international funding organizations; therefore, smaller-scale local NGOs have difficulty finding funds. It has also been stated that there is compulsory cooperation and competition between NGOs. Within this system, NGOs try to make themselves "liked" by international funding organizations to find funds. Therefore, instead of providing a holistic social service to service users, they try to increase their statistics by constantly

reporting their work within the project's scope and "getting ahead" of other NGOs. It is also indicated that the funds received do not allow the provision of a rights-based social service:

"In NGOs, there is an approach, 'I closed a case and directed it. They should look at it.' But we say, let's work together. It is necessary not to see women as a file or a source of funding for projects but to desire to establish solidarity with sincerity. However, the business has turned into projecting in NGOs in this field. There is no advocacy, and we cannot talk about a state of policy pursuit. It's just reporting... But how many people have received support, etc." (Service provider 6)

"To define anything as a right, it must have continuity. Projects last a maximum of 18 months. Can a right be granted for 18 months?" (Case manager)

It was stated that NGOs focused on keeping themselves afloat with projects and trying to show themselves as a "need." However, the funds received from these projects are inadequate to solve the real problems of refugees:

"Millions of dollars are flowing into organizations, UN funds, etc., but we are not getting any support for women's traveling money; we are getting it from our women's NGO and volunteers. They can't allocate money for women's medications from the millions they receive. I'm so angry about this (laughs nervously). We do not see any genuine use of international funds. They are not used to make a difference in women's lives." (Service provider 6)

It is stated that it is impossible to solve the employment problem, which is very important for women to be liberated and empowered economically, and the accommodation problem, which is the most crucial problem faced by Ş.Y., with these funds and projects. NGOs placed a particular emphasis on this issue:

"There are severe problems with accommodation services. Notably, placing women who are victims of violence in shelters is extremely difficult because shelters are pretty full. Using an extra fund for that woman is tough when you cannot place her in the shelter quickly. You have almost no chance of renting a house. Social support is already inadequate, and the approval processes take too long. Especially for refugees, this process is a bit longer. Therefore, the funds for women should be increased a little more." (Case manager)

4. Discussion

Studies indicate that refugee women struggle with gender-based violence at every stage of migration (before, during, and after), as in the case of Ş.Y., and indicate the continuum of violence and the prevalence of fear for women (Hajdukowski-Ahmed et al., 2008; Mouriki, 2021). This finding is essential for understanding the dimensions of institutional and structural sexism (Boyle et al., 2009), which prevent women from empowering. Ş.Y.'s experiences are pretty similar to experiences of refugee women who have suffered negativities at police stations, judicial institutions, and other public/private institutions (Support to Life, 2018; Kahraman, 2020) and who keep quiet to avoid stigmatization (Freedman, 2016; Salmanoğlu Erol & Kalkın Kızıldaş, 2020). Despite all the troubles as a single mother, Ş.Y. managed to survive without family support, and a new one was added to the examples of how resilient refugee women are (Pulvirenti & Mason, 2011; Lenette et al., 2013). At this point, it is seen that NGOs that establish solidarity relations with women help women by empowering them and making their voices heard, and women are more willing to receive help from such NGOs with every passing day (Desai, 2003). In the literature, a holistic social work intervention process where an NGO managed the case was observed in the case of Ş.Y. (Ecevit et al., 2019; Afyonoğlu & Harputlu, 2021) in response to studies revealing that a holistic case management process could not be carried out in the services delivered by NGOs in Turkey. It was seen that the service providers who worked with Ş.Y. adopted both the empowerment approach (Saleebey, 1996) and the approach of the feminist theory that focused on women's strengths and considered them as active subjects (Dominelli, 2017) and developed closer,

informal, friendly, and egalitarian relationships with them (Birger & Nadan, 2022). The fact that service providers in NGOs are predominantly from social work professions, have experience in the field of migration, and have a political stance that defends gender equality is assumed to be decisive. In this respect, the research findings are consistent with the literature emphasizing the quality of NGO service providers in the field of migration in Turkey (Cesur Kılıçaslan, 2016; Ecevit et al., 2019). The problems of not being able to find an interpreter and the quality of interpreters, another prominent theme in the research, are also parallel to the literature (Afyonoğlu & Harputlu, 2021; Koç & Paslı, 2022). The study results verify that well-educated, professional interpreters with a gender perspective should be involved in both institutions receiving violence applications and therapy processes (Robinson & Gallagher, 2019; Kahraman, 2020).

The interviewed NGOs focus on two issues to empower women: providing psychological support and casework advocacy. The importance of psycho-social support provided to both refugee women and service providers is evident (UNHCR, 2003; UNCHR, 2022). The empowering aspect of psycho-social support and casework advocacy ensuring that women can access the needed services has again come to the forefront in this study. In addition to these findings, it has been elucidated that service providers focus on micro-level casework advocacy rather than macro-level policy advocacy, as specified in the literature (Koç & Paslı, 2022). It can be stated that the priority is to meet the daily needs of women. NGOs criticize the structure of the humanitarian aid system, but policy advocacy remains in the background. In this context, the research results indicate two problems at the macro level: the structure of refugee law and the humanitarian aid system.

Ş.Y. experienced numerous problems, such as loss of social status, discrimination, poverty, stress, and gender-based violence, under the temporary protection regime in Turkey (Altunkaynak, 2016; Kılılcım, 2016). However, service providers stated that the needs of refugee women (especially accommodation) could not be met with the current humanitarian aid system and international fund understanding. It is seen that temporary and small amounts of social aid cannot solve women's poverty (Yücel et al., 2018). The interviewed service providers reported that economic support was the most basic expectation of Syrian women from NGOs in Turkey (Ecevit et al., 2019; Özgür-Keysan & Şentürk, 2021b). Approaches critical of the local interventions of international NGOs also consider these interventions as part of the capitalist economy and liberal development plans and express that they do not improve the status of refugees (Aras & Duman, 2019). Hence, it is recommended to reduce humanitarian funds and implement sustainable regional strategies based on the resilience-based approach instead (Sigmond, 2016; Idelbi, 2022). It is stated that funds are vital for the survival of NGOs. However, NGOs' need to act in line with the wishes of international organizations that provide funds is a disadvantage (Ecevit et al., 2019). The problems of unsustainable services of NGOs due to the projection approach, uncertainties experienced and reaching a limited number of people (Buz, 2008; Kutlu, 2015), the lack of communication and coordination experienced by NGOs with the state and other NGOs (Çorabatır & Hassa, 2013; Mackreath & Sağnıç, 2017) come into prominence in the field. It is also claimed that only state institutions can provide services that will empower women (Ecevit et al., 2019). Moreover, research reports that NGOs working in the field of migration in Turkey focus more on aid-based studies (Mackreath & Sağnıç, 2017; Güzel, 2020), and faith-based NGOs are more active in helping (Çorabatır & Hassa, 2013; Kutlu, 2015). NGOs with leftist, feminist, or social-democratic understanding carry out rights-based activities in this field. It is seen that the government has a close relationship with faith-based NGOs (Mackreath & Sağnıç, 2017) and excludes feminist and opposition NGOs (Diner, 2018; Aras & Duman, 2019), which results in the inability of small NGOs to find funds. All these problems reported in the literature were also stated by the service providers interviewed within the scope of the research through the case of Ş.Y., and it was mentioned that the projection approach should be abandoned.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

The case of Ş.Y. can be evaluated as an example of good practice in social services provided to Syrian women by NGOs in Turkey. Many macro-level problems mentioned in the literature are also expressed by those who provided services to Ş.Y., and these problems affect the case management process of Ş.Y. The most significant issues are that refugee women are systematically exposed to gender-based violence, and the state does not take full responsibility for establishing a mechanism to empower women. The interviews conducted within the scope of this study support the view in the literature stating that NGOs try to fill the gap left by the state on refugee issues with international funds and projects. NGOs attempt to carry out a social work intervention process for Syrian women. However, they cannot achieve the change targeted by the social work perspective in refugees' lives due to numerous systemic problems. Refugee issues are left to NGOs, the welfare state cannot provide the systems women need at the desired level, NGOs carry out their activities based on projects, and the international funds received for these projects incorporate NGOs, which are the chain problems in this field. For rights-based and empowering social services, the macro and humanitarian aid systems at the global level need to be addressed. It is crucial to revise refugee law at international and national levels from the perspective of gender equality for the welfare state to fulfill its responsibilities and to attach the necessary importance to regional developmental approaches that will ensure the resilience of societies.

On the other hand, NGOs need to abandon the projection understanding and carry out their political advocacy activities more effectively. It is recommended that economically strong and local NGOs – including small NGOs - should work in partnership with national and local government institutions. For the most effective functioning of the system for the benefit of service users, it is necessary to strengthen the cooperation between NGOs and between NGO-state-local administrations and increase the number of service providers who have social service professions and are aware of gender equality in NGOs.

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Endnote

¹ The interviewee chose her pseudonym and created it from the initials of her and her child's names. Before the researcher asked, she explained why she chose this pseudonym in the following way: "This consists of the initials of my name and my child's name. Both of us have had a hard time and have been under pressure. That is why the initials of the names of both of us should be written."

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