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Social Sustainability in Turkey: Darülaceze Model

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The different dimensions of sustainability, which entered the world literature as 'sustainable development', are discussed worldwide. Especially with the discussions on global warming and climate change, the debates have gained a different dimension today. In Turkey, these debates are mostly taken with their environmental and economic dimensions. On the other hand, although there is a large area regarding social sustainability, which is the social aspect of this issue, significant studies still need to be conspicuous. Therefore, this study has been prepared to discuss social sustainability for the future of elderly care in Turkey. In this respect, the Darülaceze model, which has been serving in the care of the elderly for more than a century since 1895, is discussed in terms of demography, equality, and social justice, which are the basic parameters of social sustainability. In examining these parameters, which are handled with the social capital approach, it has been seen that Darülaceze has an intergenerational demographic aspect. In terms of equality and social justice, it has been concluded that it provides an all-encompassing social work model by ensuring social inclusion and participation, regardless of religion, language, race, gender, etc.

1. Introduction

Sustainability, which entered the world literature as 'sustainable development' for our 'Common Future' with the 'Brundtland Report' in 1987, started to be discussed with its different dimensions (WCED, 1987). Sustainability handled its environmental and economic dimensions before it was addressed from a social point of view later on (Vallence et al., 2011). Regardless of its dimensions, sustainability focuses on realizing current generations' goals by living well without harming future generations (Berlin & Adams, 2017). For this reason, sustainability studies try to calculate better than today the future results of the

steps to be taken today. And accordingly, they help to develop permanent solutions by taking preventive measures.

To better understand the ever-widening scope of social sustainability, it is still necessary to explain its place in 'sustainable development' with economic and environmental sustainability. In short, economic sustainability is under discussion for profitability, business growth, and meeting the demands of the market. Environmental sustainability looks for resources and natural heritage. On the other hand, social sustainability stands out regarding demography, social justice, and equality (Berlin & Adams, 2017).

In this study, besides referencing aspects that intersect with other types of sustainability from time to time, social sustainability is within the framework of demography, social justice, and equality, which also concerns the elderly. For this reason, the situation of the elderly in Turkey is in terms of demographics with some data. Then, as a requirement of social justice, the dimension of looking at the orphaned older adults in the Darülaceze example in a sustainable way, from a transgenerational perspective, was discussed. Finally, as a requirement of social equality, the social sustainability model of the Darülaceze, which includes different religious groups and disadvantaged groups, is emphasized.

2. Theoretical and Methodological Framework

This study is an evaluation based on secondary sources. It is helpful to look at indirect studies, not direct studies, on the social sustainability of elderly care institutions in Turkey. The purpose of doing this is to lay the groundwork for studies in this field.

Social capital theory, which started with Durkheim, Marx, Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam, and creates an increasingly large literature, also helps us understand the social sustainability of aged care institutions. Because social capital establishes a network of relations based on state, civil, voluntary, and private enterprise in the sustainability of institutional care, it has a significant role in increasing participation and providing solidarity. It is due to the feature of social capital that can increase relationships, social trust, and a sense of belonging and enable us to look at the future with more confidence (Öztopçu, 2017).

3. Key Parameters of Social Sustainability

Social sustainability has three primary parameters: demographic transformation, equality, and social justice.

3.1. Demographic Transformation

The demographic structure of the society is essential for the sustainability of the future employees of that society (Berlin and Adams, p. 246). Many problems, especially the sustainability of care, deepen in communities where the population aged 0-14 and 65 and over is more dependent on the working people than the working population. The unemployment of the working population and the deprivation of an income-generating profession due to lack of education put the dependent population at significant risk. Moreover, the situation of illegal child labor is emerging.

In the latest research conducted in Turkey, the rate of older adults aged 65 and over is 9.7%, and the rate of children aged 0-14 is 22.4%. The ratio of the age group between the ages of 15-64 is 67.9% (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, 2022). The proportion of children and the elderly, which constitutes 32.1%, is considerably high. For example, this ratio is 14.3% in the elderly dependency ratio, which represents the number of older adults per hundred people of working age, which will cause severe problems in the sustainability of elderly care unless serious measures are taken.

To ensure sustainability in the life and care of the elderly, whose proportion is increasing, it is necessary to strengthen the elderly with social inclusion and to contribute to society with the silver economy. It is needed to provide opportunities for them to be 'active' individuals who can still produce despite all the difficulties in terms of social capital, not

the 'passive' individuals shown as a 'burden' utterly dependent on others. The emergence of job opportunities that do not require physical strength in the digitalized world has also opened a window of opportunity in this regard. However, to eliminate the 'digital divide' between the elderly and young people born to the Internet world as 'digital natives', they need to stop their 'digital immigrant' identity with the advantages of 'life experiences'.

3.2. Equality and Social Justice

Equality and social justice emerge in the distribution of resources, cultural recognition, and representation (Westwood, 2019). In other words, resource sharing in society does not exclude any age group. Furthermore, any age group must be culturally recognized and represented. Let's open these three points as follows:

First, from a sustainability perspective, it is seen that older adults are at a disadvantage in terms of equal and fair sharing of resources in Turkey. For example, the decrease in their previous salaries in the face of their increasing discomfort after retirement can make the working elderly poor. It is even more critical for seniors without a serious retirement plan. Moreover, the situation of the older woman, who was deprived of her right to retirement because she could not work in a paid job before, is even worse. There is an old-age pension, and the Ministry of Family and Social Services supports correcting this situation. However, more is needed to cover the difference after retirement or unemployment.

Secondly, the cultural recognition of the elderly in Turkey is insufficient compared to other age groups. Identifying the old with the old/past, and identifying

the youth with the new/modern, which started with modernization, has been a distinctive feature of Turkish modernization. The cultural recognition of the elderly, who had previously been advantageous due to gerontocracy, was made unsustainable by constantly comparing them with the young. It is in question that the elderly, shown as characters one can benefit from their experiences in all areas of culture, are now confronted with all kinds of ageism. For example, in cartoons, TV series, films, theater plays, and TV programs are drawn to entertain people, the elderly face cultural exclusion and humiliation.

Finally, the representation of the elderly in decision-making bodies in society has also decreased due to official retirement. Even in muhtarlık, the minor local administration, the advisory council of elders system has also lost its prevalence. Despite the youth branches and assemblies of different political formations, the absence of such structures based on the elderly reveals this. Older people can still be in voluntary activities in non-governmental organizations. However, the elderly in this field have been behind the young in the last few years. That is because the social responsibility activities are carried out on a student basis before the undergraduate degree, and the volunteering activities are elective courses in the undergraduate program. Furthermore, AFAD, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Red Crescent, and other institutions in this area have made the youth more visible in the field.

4. Darülaceze Model in Social Sustainability

It is helpful to look at what social sustainability means for the elderly and the

institution where they are cared for to understand the Darülaceze model in social sustainability. The reason for this is that the physical and social changes in the world affect the elderly, who are the most vulnerable link in societies, more (Gallopın & Raskin, 2002; Laws, 1995). It requires producing more sensitive sustainable spaces for them and developing sustainable approaches. Since the physical sustainability of the Darülaceze model is the subject of another study, its social sustainability has the following basic principles.

4.1. Age Intergenerational Dimension

When the Darülaceze started to service in 1895, it was not an institution that mostly accommodated the elderly. It presented a model that includes all disadvantaged groups called 'Aceze'. For example, it hosted refugees from different parts of the Ottoman Empire, regardless of age, due to the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-1878. It also offered shelter to disadvantaged groups who had to beg on the streets of Istanbul due to poverty, regardless of age (Yıldırım, 1996).

It socially included all age groups needing institutional care with an intergenerational understanding. For example, it has provided an intergenerational model by providing care to children in the Children's Department for orphans, young people who have a job in their workshops and mentoring the elderly, disabled people in need of institutional care regardless of age, and people aged 55 and over. Although the youth foot has weakened in the last quarter century because young people find jobs from outside and leave the institution, this gap has been closed mainly with the implementation of the Darülaceze

Dormitory and Cultural Facility Project for young people integrated with the institution on September 25, 2021.

Today, the workshops, which are now reserved for the technical studies of the institution, are reopened to the use of the youth living in the dormitory, and studies continue for the university youth to develop technological and social innovations in the field of old age. Because the Ministry of Family and Social Services has made significant progress in children's services in recent years and has taken care of orphans, the children's section has weakened a little in the Darülaceze. Still, the children's area is kept alive in coordination with the ministry for keeping intergenerational concepts. Even a kindergarten is in service for the children of the staff working there as a new step.

4.2. Inclusive Dimension Regardless Belonging

Darülaceze offers a unique model for 'social inclusion', an indicator of equality and justice, which are essential cornerstones of social sustainability. It has surrounded the members of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam with their places of worship and residents without separating them from each other. It also covered the elements of the Ottoman millet system, regardless of race or gender. The peace and satisfaction of the residents living together under the affiliation of Aceze are taken as a basis. The presence of residents from different cultures is evident. In other words, different colors enrich the institution's social structure. This riot of colors makes itself felt, especially in the institution's activities, music, games, and entertainment.

4.3. The Dimension of Universalism That Does Not Exclude Its Locality

Darülaceze has a local as well as a universal social structure. Since the first day of its establishment, the Nizamname, Regulation, based on the Western French Poverty Laws, did not ignore the universality as much as it took into account the locality. In the transition to the Republican Period (1923), almost all laws were adjusted according to the West, and radical changes were made, while the Regulation of the Darülaceze was not changed since it already had a Western standard. It shows that the Darülaceze is on a sustainable legal basis for universal human rights and dignity as well as local. In addition, Darülaceze has provided representation in its management from time to time with its administrators belonging to different religions and races. Social expression is ensured by constantly consulting with them in decision-making and taking authority.

5. Conclusion

Social sustainability in Turkey was handled with the Darülaceze model, with the basic parameters of demographics, equality, and social justice. We reached the following results: Firstly, it is not sustainable for the elderly to live in complete isolation from other age groups in terms of demographics. Living in intergenerational solidarity with different age groups offered by the Darülaceze model will also prevent conflict and ageism. Secondly, in terms of social sustainability, ensuring the equality and social justice of the elderly increased proportion to their social inclusion. In Darülaceze, religion, language, race, gender, age, etc. Social inclusion of all social segments without distinction is given as an example. Finally, social sustainability should have a universal

and a local dimension. With its regulation, it is evident that the Darülaceze offers a social-legal model according to a universal vision and its commitment to its historical local roots.

All these help Turkey's social development in terms of social capital and sustainability in care by generating socially added value.

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