

Review Article

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PROBLEMS OF OLD MIGRANTS AND SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTIONS

YAŞLI GÖÇMENLERİN YAŞADIĞI SORUNLAR VE SOSYAL HİZMET MÜDAHALELERİ

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ABSTRACT

Old age is one of the periods of individual life such as infancy, childhood, adolescence, youth and adulthood. During this period, individuals experience many biological, psychological, social and economic problems. The problems generally arise due to reasons such as the slowing down of the regeneration rate of the body due to the advancement of age, job losses, retirement, and loss of relationships. Immigration is the movement of individuals inside or outside the country of residence for a number of reasons. The phenomenon of immigration brings along many problems such as adaptation to individuals, housing, nutrition, health, and economic problems. The transition to immigrant status for elderly individuals who are trying to cope with the problems of their old age by being included in the immigration process can make the problems intractable. These problems they experience make elderly people very vulnerable. Both old age problems and immigration process problems can cause serious traumas on the elderly. At this point, planned social work interventions for older immigrants become very important.

The purpose of this review is to explain the problems faced by elderly immigrants who have to go through the immigration process, and to provide information and suggestions about social work interventions for elderly immigrants. This study focuses on the problems of elderly immigrants in general, especially for older immigrants experiencing external migration, and social work interventions to address these problems. In this direction, problems of elderly immigrants were discussed, social work interventions that could be applied were emphasized, and solutions were proposed.

Keywords: Immigration, Social Work Interventions, Elderly, Problems Experienced.

ÖZ

Yaşlılık, birey yaşamının bebeklik, çocukluk, ergenlik, gençlik, yetişkinlik gibi dönemlerinden bir tanesidir. Bu dönemde bireyler biyolojik, psikolojik, sosyal, ekonomik birçok sorun yaşarlar. Sorunlar genel itibari ile yaşın ilerlemesine bağlı olarak yaşanan vücudun yenilenme hızının yavaşlaması, iş kayıpları, emeklilik, ilişkilerin kaybı gibi nedenlere bağlı olarak ortaya çıkar. Göç, bireylerin bir takım nedenlerden ötürü buldukları ülke içerisinde ya da buldukları ülkenin dışına doğru yer değiştirmeleridir. Göç olgusu, bireylere uyum barınma, beslenme, sağlık, ekonomik sorunlar gibi birçok sorunu beraberinde getirir. Yaşlılık dönemini sorunları ile baş etmeye çalışan yaşlı bireylerin göç sürecine dahil olarak göçmen statüsüne geçişleri sorunları içinden çıkılmaz bir hale getirebilmektedir. Yaşadıkları bu sorunlar yaşlı bireyleri iyice kırılğan hale getirir. Hem yaşlılık dönemi sorunları hem de göç süreci sorunları yaşlılar üzerinde ciddi travmalara neden olabilmektedir. Bu noktada yaşlı göçmenlere yönelik planlanmış sosyal hizmet müdahaleleri çok önem kazanmaktadır.

Bu derlemenin amacı, göç sürecini yaşamak zorunda kalan yaşlı bireylerin yani yaşlı göçmenlerin yaşamış oldukları sorunları açıklamak ve yaşlı göçmenlere yönelik sosyal hizmet müdahaleleri hakkında bilgiler vererek öneriler sunmaktır. Bu çalışma genelinde yaşlı göçmenlere, özelinde ise dış göç yaşayan yaşlı göçmenlere yönelik problemler ve bu problemlere yönelik olarak sosyal hizmet müdahaleleri üzerine odaklanmıştır. Bu doğrultuda yaşlı göçmenlerin sorunları ele alınmış, uygulanabilecek sosyal hizmet müdahaleleri üzerinde durulmuş ve çözüm önerileri getirilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Göç, Sosyal Hizmet Müdahaleleri, Yaşlı, Yaşadıkları Sorunlar.

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INTRODUCTION

Old age can be defined as the last stage of life, in which individuals experience biological and physiological changes, structural and functional differences are observed, and which is one of the life periods of individuals. In the old age, changes occur in terms of physical, mental and personality traits. Problems frequently seen in old age can be classified as economic, health, psychological, social, care, housing problems etc. Economic problems emerge from reasons such as the decrease in job opportunities of individuals and retirement, and individuals' dependence on other people increases in such cases. When health problems are taken into consideration, elderly individuals can get many diseases, especially chronic diseases, together with their changing physiological characteristics. Social problems can arise due to the disconnections in the roles and status of individuals and their relationships. The housing problem may arise due to the inadequate income of elderly people and therefore, elderly people may have to live in unhealthy environments (Tereci and Turan, 2016: 85-86). Types of migration include seasonal migration, labor migration, permanent or temporary migration, forced or voluntary migration, while worker migration, brain drain, population exchange migration, political and socio-economic migration form external migrations. Internal migration refers to the change of location within the borders of the country. It occurs temporarily or permanently from one place to another within the country and does not cause any change in the country's population (Erol and Ersever, 2014: 50).

Immigration can be defined as individuals moving from where they live to live in another geography for various reasons. Immigration can be temporary or permanent and the phenomenon of immigration affects all structures of society. Types of migration can be divided into internal immigration and external immigration. Internal immigration is the movement of individuals within the country of residence. External immigration is the transition of individuals from the country they are in to another country (Koçak and Terzi 2012: 164,169,172).

Elderly individuals are one of the groups most affected by the immigration process. Old age is a period in which physical, psychological, social, and economic returns are experienced. At the same time, being an immigrant elder makes the process more difficult and causes serious traumas in elderly individuals. Examples of possible problems that elderly people may experience due to immigration can be given as exclusion by the society due to their disadvantages, depression due to weakening social relations, trauma, neglect and abuse due to their weakness, accommodation, nutrition, health problems due to economic inadequacy, etc. Elderly individuals who are weak in many dimensions need social support, especially during the immigration period. Considering their cognitive capacities, it is likely that elderly people who are difficult to learn a new language and adapt to a new culture will stay away from many services and face many problems. Elderly immigrants should be handled multi-dimensionally and social policies should be reshaped on behalf of them (Kartal & Alptekin, 2015).

Old Age

The period from the end of the reproductive period to the death of the living being can be defined as old age. The World Health Organization (WHO) accepts the chronological aging limit as 65 years and above (Beğner and Yavuzer, 2012: 1). With the aging period, due to the regressions in muscles and joints, there are changes in the posture and gait styles of elderly individuals, fatigue and balance problems. Changes in the elderly cause the risk of falling in the elderly (Yerli, 2017: 1281). At the same time, nutritional problems, excessive use of medication, stress, unconsciously used drugs affect the health of the elderly negatively (Karadeniz, Yanikkerem Uçum, Dedeli, Oran, Talaz, and Version, 2009: 78). With the decrease in physical strength, the individual actions of the elderly are restricted. The loss of relatives in old age becomes difficult to endure in the elderly. Retirement reduces self-esteem of elderly people and makes them feel worthless and useless (İlgar and İlgar, 2007: 151). At the same time, the unplanned retirement period can cause economic problems for the elderly (Öztop, 2010: 189). Relationships of elderly individuals with their families have an important point for them to integrate with the society and enjoy life (İçli, 2010: 4). In this context, the decrease in the social relations of elderly people with their families prevents active participation in the society. Psychological changes are also experienced in old age and elderly individuals. With the old age period, elderly individuals long for the old times. Elderly individuals who are forced by the changing world conditions long

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for their old lives (Yerli, 2017: 1283). Changing world conditions, immigration from rural settlements to urban settlements, transition from extended family structure to nuclear family structure cause crises. Crisis experience causes neglect and abuse of elderly individuals, and an increase in feelings such as loneliness, worthlessness and uselessness (Gülen et al., 2013: 394).

In line with the physical changes that occur in elderly individuals due to the old age, their functionality decreases and they stay away from working life. Individuals who suffer from economic disabilities during retirement have to work. Elderly individuals who do not have the power to work experience economic deprivation by staying away from working life. While the economic problems experienced negatively affect the health and psychology of elderly individuals, they also reduce their social relations. In this context, active participation of elderly individuals in their social environment and society has an important point.

Immigration

Immigration involves the movement of temporary or permanent settlement based on short-term, medium-term or long-term resettlement, depending on individual problems or due to political and economic reasons (Bayraklı, 2007: 5). There are many reasons why people leave their places and go elsewhere. Examples of these are economic problems, deteriorating environmental structure, deficiencies in education, political and security-related problems, etc. (Günay, Atılğan, & Arslan, 2017: 39). For individuals who decide to live in a foreign place due to various reasons, it is difficult for them and the people where they are going to continue their lives in a foreign place, and it is also a challenging process for individuals to abandon their culture and language (Kömürcü & Özkan, 2011: 26).

According to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT 2020) data, the number of migrants from abroad to Turkey increased by 17.2% compared to the previous year in 2019 to 677 thousand 42 people. 54.4% of the population who migrate to Turkey from abroad are male, while 45.6% of them are female. Of the population from abroad, 98,554 are citizens of the Republic of Turkey (T.R.), and 578,488 are foreign nationals. The number of people who migrated abroad from Turkey increased by 2% in 2019 compared to the previous year to 330 thousand 289. 54.6% of the migrating population consists of men and 45.4% of women. Tr citizens make up 84,863 of the population going abroad from Turkey, and 245,426 are foreign nationals. When the distribution of migrants to Turkey in 2019 by provinces is examined, it is seen that Istanbul is the province with the highest migration rate of 45.3%. Ankara follows Istanbul with 9.2%, Antalya with 6.5%, Bursa with 3.5%, and Izmir with 2.2%. When the distribution of foreign nationals coming to Turkey in 2019 is examined, Iraqi citizens take the first place with 14.5%. Iraq is followed by Turkmenistan with 13.8%, Afghanistan with 8.2%, Syria with 7.5%, and Iranian citizens with 7.3%.

Immigration is a concept that is used for individuals who are going through the immigration process and is generally used in a negative sense. While even migrant individuals who can work are stigmatized as "unemployed immigrants", elderly individuals who are in a position of unemployment are devalued by the expression "elderly immigrant". Old age includes the isolation process of all elderly people, including immigrants. Older immigrants experience language and cultural problems in accessing social and care services provided to retired immigrants. As a result, they move away from the social environment. Older immigrants experience difficult socio-cultural conditions during their retirement. Due to migration, they leave the socio-cultural areas they are used to. Retirement is a process that can give elderly people a cultural devaluation. Accordingly, psychological problems are experienced in elderly immigrants. The elderly should be handled in contexts (Yüksel & Hirdürmaz, 2019).

Immigration has many physical, spiritual and social effects on older people. Older immigrants feel lonely, adversely affected and weakened mentally. In addition, family relations and social relations are damaged (Aslan and Akarçay Ulutaş, 2018: 13, 16). Social relations have a great impact on the health status and care of elderly immigrants. Older immigrants who have good social relations feel good and valuable (Kartal & Alptekin, 2015: 600). The places that receive migration want more educated and young people who can cope with the physical, psychological and sociological problems that may be experienced due to migration rather than older migrants (Etiler and Lordoğlu, 2010: 101).

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Problems of Elderly Immigrants

Immigration refers to the situation of individuals leaving their places, relationships, and order to move to other places. Immigrants migrate in order to improve their situation. Immigrant refers to the person who needs to socialize with the individuals and the society in the new places he/she came from, and who takes risks by leaving his/her place. Immigration negatively affects immigrants and the lives of migrated communities in economic, social, psychological, political, and cultural terms (Şahin, 2001: 58).

Elderly individuals have social support systems such as family, peers, and familiar circles. Being known where they live makes them respectable and ensures them to have status. Therefore, elderly people who leave their places of residence and encounter a different geography, culture, language and living standards have difficulty in adapting. The elderly who have difficulties in this adaptation process become social problems in the society in time.

Social Problems of Elderly Immigrants

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Problems such as adaptation problems, not being accepted by the new environment and exclusion can be given as examples of the social effects of migration. Good social relations affect elderly immigrants positively (Kartal and Alptekin, 2015: 599-607). Lack of family support among elderly immigrants and the elderly people seem to be a burden constitute a major problem (Arslan and Ulutaş, 2018: 12-22).

Older immigrants experience many social problems. An immigrant experiences a cultural difference between the country of origin and the country of immigration, and encounters problems of belonging and adaptation. Older immigrants who get the status of "elderly immigrants" due to their aging, the termination of their business life and their retirement are excluded and feel themselves worthless (Yüksel and Hiçdurmaz, 2019: 221). At the same time, elderly migrants have to cope with many problems such as being alone with the death of their spouses, decreased family social support, fear and unwillingness to go to a nursing home, fear of low respect for the elderly in the country where they migrate, longing for the hometown (Kartal and Alptekin, 2015: 602-603). Older immigrants are unable to maintain integrity with the country of immigration and try to establish a link between the country of origin and the country of immigration. The thought of not living the religion of elderly immigrants, the fear of different forms of death and burial after death due to different cultures are another problem (Yüksel and Hiçdurmaz, 2019: 221).

Economic Problems of Elderly Immigrants

Income level is an important factor that shapes the old age of immigrants. The absence of housing for elderly immigrants is a major problem. Among the reasons for housing problems, low pension fees can be given. The main problem of old age in the immigration process is poverty. Individuals' early retirement turns into a big problem in the old age period and results in low retirement income (Kartal and Alptekin, 2015: 599-607). With the retirement period, elderly people have to maintain their lives with low income in addition to the loss of status they experience. Elderly individuals with insufficient retirement wages and physically fit can earn additional income by working in jobs depending on their skills, but elderly individuals with poor health continue their lives under difficult conditions with low income. In cases where elderly immigrants experience economic deprivation, they are not where they live, so their opportunities are more limited than local elderly people. Due to language and cultural problems, immigrant elderly people stay away from working life and experience financial difficulties. Health, accommodation and nutrition problems arise due to economic insufficiency (Arab, 2013: 53). The social benefits that should be given to elderly immigrants in order to live in the same economic prosperity as the rest of the society and the

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current inadequacies were determined by the report written by Bachelay (2013). Older immigrants prefer affordable housing throughout their lives, including adulthood, due to their low income. As a result of this choice, they are exposed to a life below living standards and inadequate housing conditions and these inadequate housing conditions are one of the most important problems of elderly migrants. "Accommodation conditions and qualifications are directly linked to immigrants' social cohesion problems." Older immigrants try to keep their housing spending low so that they can send some of their wages to their countries of origin, even in their old age. This situation causes elderly immigrants to continue to stay in low-priced houses and to create a devaluation situation, including social problems, in the context of spatial impact (Yüksel & Hiçdurmaz, 2019: 281-282).

Health Problems of Elderly Immigrants

During migration and with the advancement of age, different health problems in psychological, physical and social nature emerge. Older immigrants have problems in terms of receiving health services due to the inadequacy of their language, insufficient information about health services in the place of migration (Kartal and Alptekin, 2015: 599-607). Immigration affects physical and mental health a lot. When older migrants have problems in accessing healthcare services, they may have to work in order to obtain the necessary services. It is a very important issue that elderly migrants can access health services and that both elderly and needy individuals can receive health services in their home environment (Arslan & Ulutaş, 2018). Culture is an important factor in determining the benefit of health services and health outcomes of elderly people (Day & Cohen, 2000). Cultural values and beliefs shape health processes when older immigrants from different cultures are in question (Lai, Tsang, Chappell, Lai and Chau, 2007: 172).

The pre-migration and migration process creates various stress factors for older migrants. During the settlement phase, immigrants have to experience a lot of harmony, such as new status, family members, routines, property, sense of place, etc. (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002). Reasons such as cultural differences and lack of language proficiency cause acculturation stress, ie culture shock. Acculturation stress generates feelings of anxiety, depression, marginality and alienation, increased psychosomatic symptoms, and identity confusion. Overcoming the stress of acculturation is part of the resettlement process. Gonsalves (1992) developed a five-step model developed for refugees, which is also applicable to migrants, to overcome their stress. This model includes the need to learn language, learn new traditions and roles, develop a support group and develop flexible cultural learning in order to achieve successful resettlement (Taylor, Taylor-Henley and Doan, 2002: 24). Older immigrants are at high risk of mental health problems and experience barriers to health care, especially if their cultures are inadequate (Tieu, Konnert, and Wang, 2010: 1318). Elderly immigrant health, which has differences from general elderly health, affects individuals physically, psychologically and socially. During immigration, various health problems occur depending on the advancement of age. The health status of older immigrants is below average compared to the local population, and psychological disorders are more common among them. Older immigrants get acquainted with chronic and multidimensional diseases and early retirement process earlier (Kartal & Alptekin, 2015: 600). The health and social conditions of older migrants are directly related to their disadvantaged position in the communities they migrate to. In general, elderly migrants' demand for preventive health services is lower than those of local population. The reasons for this situation can be given as insufficient language, disconnected social relations, inadequate policy implementation or low income level. Simple health problems of older migrants who benefit from treatment late become complicated and the cost of health care and treatment increases. Simple health problems of older migrants who benefit from treatment late become complicated and the cost of health care and treatment increases. This causes psychological pressure on the elderly. In addition, some elderly migrants need care services due to their severe illness, but cannot access these services due to discrimination, being away from their family, insufficient language, and low income (Yüksel and Hiçdurmaz, 2019: 285-286).

Social Work Interventions Related to Problems Experienced by Older Immigrants

Social work interventions shaped by innovative and human needs are important in eliminating the problems arising from migration. Interventions should be carried out in line with the basic philosophy and objectives of social work, such as the reasons for migration of elderly migrants, the adaptation process in the country of immigration, social exclusion, social justice, equal opportunities, and human rights (Cox and Geisen, 2014).

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Migrants need social work and migration is a subject of social work. In line with the problems encountered, social work interventions should be carried out within human rights. Social work is an important field in terms of needs and their fulfillment, and it is very important for social workers to be interested in micro, macro work and policies in migration studies (Yanardağ-Zubaroglu, Yanardağ, Avci, 2020). Social work activities required for the bio-psycho-social health of elderly migrants should be structured (Yaylacı and Sirkeci, 2019).

Services to elderly immigrants are divided into social security and care services. Care services are provided by social workers from the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services. It is aimed to protect and raise the living conditions of the elderly. For this purpose, experts are tasked with planning, organizing, monitoring, coordinating, and supervision. Care services are divided into home care services and institution care services. Within the scope of home care services, the needs that the elderly could not meet alone are addressed in the household without separating them from their social environment. In the institution care services, the elderly stay in elderly care and rehabilitation centers and nursing homes and social services are provided outside the household (Yerli, 2017:1285).

Social work interventions for elderly immigrants is implemented in three dimensions as micro, mezzo and macro;

- Micro dimension refers to individual studies for older immigrants. The aim of these studies is to enable immigrant elders to meet their own needs, to increase their capacity to cope with problems, and to ensure that they become self-sufficient. The micro dimension works to solve basic problems such as individual, accommodation and nutrition.

- Mezzo dimension aims to provide all kinds of psychosocial well-being and group studies are carried out for this purpose. At the mezzo level, practices such as information and support activities for families, self-support groups, etc. are carried out. Cultural differences and language problems can be challenging in this process.

- Macro dimension includes conducting multidimensional researches on old immigrants and making necessary policies and regulations in this context. It is necessary to strengthen macro practices and to reorganize policies.

- When social work specialists work with older immigrants, they should involve the family and social environment of their spouses, children, grandchildren, relatives, friends and neighbours in the support system of the elderly. Efforts to meet their basic needs, particularly shelter and feeding of the elderly should be organized. Then, psychosocial interventions should be carried out for the elderly individual whose basic needs are met. At the same time, social work specialists should assume advocacy roles and defend the rights of older migrants, do not help them meet with resources and institutions by assuming a mediation role, and provide information on many issues such as their rights by assuming the role of educator and informative.

CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATIONS

Older immigrants are perceived as a problem in the countries they go to. The reason for this perception is related to the inadequacy of the policies and the system. In other words, the main reasons why retired elderly migrants are seen as a problem is that services such as accommodation, health care and care services are not well planned. These inadequate planning negatively affect the quality of life of older immigrants. The low pensions received by older immigrants directly affect their lives, which causes immigrants to live in inappropriate conditions and deteriorate their health. The old age period is a difficult process in itself, and the negative benefits of immigration in the elderly immigrants make the situation even more difficult. Reasons such as difficult working conditions, malnutrition and accommodation, and inability to access health services cause immigrants to be deprived of social and cultural activities. Older immigrants may have to live a lonely and excluded life. This situation is contrary to the concept of good aging for the elderly immigrant. Language problem is one of the most important problems faced by immigrants in general. It is also a big problem for older immigrants. Insufficient language is a barrier in situations such as socialization of elderly immigrants and benefiting from health services. In this context, the work and interventions of social work specialists are of vital importance in order to minimize the aforementioned problems.

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In the light of this information and from a social work perspective, the following recommendations have been developed for elderly immigrants:

- Older immigrants should be informed about the services that will be provided to them in their country of origin.
- Efforts should be made to ensure that all immigrants are fully registered and that they can be covered by social insurance.
- All immigrants should be supported in terms of language. Those who can learn should be educated, and interpreter support should be provided in case of need, especially for individuals with learning difficulties such as elderly migrants.
- Funds should be created for immigrants who have financial difficulties, and if there is such a fund, the needy and funding sources should be brought together.
- Micro, mezzo, and macro applications should be carried out by social workers continuously and the uniqueness of individuals, human dignity, human rights and well-being of individuals should shed light on practices.
- Social workers should take a holistic approach to the biological, psychological and social health of elderly immigrants and take the necessary roles to meet all their needs, with priority being their primary needs.
- In the process of social adaptation of older migrants, social workers should provide the necessary social support and ensure the establishment of social support systems.
- Social work specialists should develop macro practices and policies on issues such as social exclusion, discrimination and isolation, and prevent vulnerable groups such as older immigrants from experiencing these processes.
- Social work specialists should also ensure that elderly migrants are screened regularly on health issues and that arrangements are made for those who need to be cared for at home.
- Considering the cultural differences of elderly immigrants, planned studies and practices should be carried out in this direction.

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