

PROVISION OF HOUSING AND SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY IN TURKEY

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Abstract

The primary goal for the old-age accommodation is to enable elderly people live in their familiar housing environments. However, it has become obvious that traditional approaches can no longer be solutions for the old-age accommodation problem in large cities and metropolitan areas of Turkey. Changes in the social structure and people's expectations are the main reasons for the shift. Primary goal of this research is to identify the perceptions of both old and young people on housing and services for the elderly. For this purpose, two questionnaires were developed that focused on elderly satisfaction from care centres and young people's perception of the elderly one hindered thirty-nine young and 234 old respondents were interviewed and the answers were statically analysed. Design guidelines for the elderly housing in Turkey were developing. The results indicated to four important points. First the government has to change its policy for the provision of care and accommodation for the elderly people. Second, the production of small size housing units suitable for the elderly should be encouraged. Third, alternative forms of care centres suitable for elderly with different social and economic status should be provided. Forth, these alternatives should be made affordable in the all elderly people.

Key words: *quality of space, life satisfaction, design for elderly*

Özet

Yaşlı barınması için ilk hedef yaşlının alışık olduğu çevrede ve kendi evinde yaşamını devam ettirmesidir. Her ne kadar şimdiye kadar geleneksel olarak yaşlı bakımını çocuklar ve yakınlar üstlenmişse de metropol alanlarında ve büyük kentlerde de artık bu mümkün olamamaktadır. Sosyal yapıda ve beklentilerdeki değişim, bu problemin başlıca nedenidir. Öncelikle bu çalışmanın amacı gençlerin ve yaşlıların konut ve hizmetler konusuna bakışını belirlemektir. Bu amaçla iki anket düzenlenmiştir. Burada yaşlı kurumlarının (huzurevi) yeterliliği ve gençlerin yaşlı bakımı konusundaki

kabulleri sorgulanmıştır. 139 genç ve 234 yaşlı ile anket yapılmıştır ve sonuçlar analiz edilmiştir. Yaşlılık için barınma ülkemizde henüz gelişmemiş devlet sektöründe sadece yardım amacıyla ele alınan bir konudur. Sonuçlarda önemli bulgular; ilk önce Devletin yaşlı barınması konusunda, yardım politikasının değişmesi gereklidir. İkinci olarak küçük konut üretimi desteklenmelidir. Üçüncü, sosyo-ekonomik seviyelere göre farklı özellikteki yaşlı kurumları, alternatifler sunulmalıdır. Son olarak ta bu alternatiflerin ekonomik karşılanabilirliği sağlanmalıdır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Yaşlılıkta mekan kalitesi, yaşam yeterliliği için tasarım.

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1- INTRODUCTION

The dynamic transformation of cities and changing social life has been creating problems for some sections of the society. Elderly, disabled people, children and women in certain communities have been facing difficulties in this process. However, it has become clear that the housing problem of the elderly cannot be solved within the context of traditional family relationships in large cities and metropolitan areas. Elderly people have some problems and difficulties to sustain their own life in almost every country. One of these problems is accommodation. In the development process of Turkey, housing policies that have been pursued mostly aimed to encourage the production of sufficient amount of housing suitable for a standard family of four people. Consequently, the housing stock is dominated by such housing types and thus elderly people face contradictions between what is being built in the housing market

And what they really require to satisfy their needs.

2- HOUSING NEED OF THE ELDERLY

The existing housing production in Turkey includes both legal and illegal forms of housing provision. Legal forms of provision include mass housing construction built by housing cooperatives and some public agencies, and housing produced by small-capital speculative builders, mostly on single parcel of land (Tekeli 1993). Illegal forms of provision include are squatter houses built on 'invaded' land, and unauthorized residential buildings built on illegally subdivided land.

With rapid urbanisation since 1950s, a large number of three bedroom houses (mostly having around 100 m2 floor area) have been built, many of which have been financed with housing credits from public funds, with high interest rate subsidies. Although some agencies have attempted to build small-size

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housing during 1990s, their contribution in relation to the total housing production has been rather small. Therefore these attempts have not had a significant impact on the supply of convenient and affordable housing for elderly households. Furthermore, the average floor area of newly constructed housing has been increasing over the past years, as there is not much encouragement to housing industry to produce smaller housing.

On the other hand, families living in villages, small towns and cities have traditional lifestyles and they are in charge of their elders. Moreover, although childless elderly people are often looked after by relatives living in the same area many elderly people have been left on their own by their offspring who has migrated. In addition to that, in the recent earthquake disasters in 1999 in Turkey, many elderly people were left on their own because of the death of their children or relatives. The above discussion implies that presently, some elderly people face two types of problems in urban areas. The first one is the acquisition of affordable housing, which is both suitable to their needs and relate to their pensioners' income which is rather small.

If the elderly care will be in a house rather than in an institution, the question is whose house elderly person should live. Generally, if elderly has own house and income, children and relatives are willing to care him/her. Otherwise family members don't want to take care of husband's or wife's parent and there create problems within the family. (Marsden 1999)

In Turkey, as in many countries, the elderly prefer to carry on living on their own. However, when the income level of retired people is taken into account, it becomes evident that most elderly people in Turkey cannot afford paying for the typical house or flat offered in the market.

3. DETERMINATION OF THE NEEDS OF THE ELDERLY ACCORDING TO THEIR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

We cannot always say elderly become happy to live with their children. Cultural attitudes have changed in modern Turkey. Population of women working away from home is increasing rapidly so elderly living with relatives stay alone during the daytime. On the other hand generally elderly who is well educated and has income wants to keep their status into private life. I mean, elderly are not same and do not prefer always living with the relatives.

For the sheltering problem of the elderly, following objectives can be specified;

- The right for private life and privacy
- To maintain the familiar living

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- Respectable life at the old age with the greatest possible self-sufficiency
- To be cared while living private life
- Private living without being separated from the society
- Living by participating the urban life

When economic factors are considered the housing problems of the elderly people can be classified in three categories, by taking into consideration of economic factors:

1. Low income households at the old age who do not have their own houses
2. Middle income households at the old age who are owner-occupiers but unable to meet the expenses of their houses
3. Those who have their own houses and sufficient income but can not meet their social needs and are unsatisfied with the services offered in their neighbourhoods.

Various types of buildings can be designed according to the status and health conditions of the elderly. These are:

- Specially designed apartment houses for the elderly
- Conversion of existing houses according to the needs of the elderly.
- Naturally, houses in city centres and holiday houses are transformed into elderly house.
- Care Centres

4- ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR THE ACCOMODATION OF AND CARE FOR THE ELDERLY IN TURKEY

After understanding the problem of elderly, lots of academic research has been conducted in Turkey. Even though these proposed solutions, there are no planning projects at the government level. Solution to elderly accommodations is brought naturally or by private sector and only are being built in larger cities. Fernandes-Ballesteros (2001) conclude that the social relationship factors and physical comfort are the most important dimensions of the residential environment.

4.1. Specially Furnished Flat for the Elderly

The objectives specified above elderly can be realized by specially furnished flats which include secure and ergonomics interiors. In developed countries there are many examples of these settlements. However, in Turkey there are no specially produced private houses for the elderly with a few exceptions. In Istanbul, there is a housing complex, which is known as the 'Ataburgaz

Village for the Elderly'. Pakdil (2001). Although it's spatial quality and provision of services are good, this housing complex looks like a concentration camp for the elderly since it is isolated from the city.

4.2. Housing for the Elderly in the Old Housing Stock of Central Districts

In central districts of cities, many apartment buildings are being converted into non-residential use such as offices. Elderly couples continue to live in such buildings but they complain about the inconveniences triggered by mixed uses. Management problems become particularly important in mixed-used apartments as owners or tenants of these types of flats (presently used as offices); do not provide heating, hot water or janitor services at night or during weekends.

4.3. The Use of the Holiday Houses by the Elderly

This solution is obviously related to the ownership of holiday houses, and consequently mostly upper income groups are be involved. Since these housing estates are generally developed by cooperatives, there is the chance to live with the people having similar occupational and social backgrounds. Some of the houses are permanently used by the retired persons. Since holiday houses are located in small towns and cities along the seashore, suitable climate and fresh air give opportunities for cheaper, easier and healthier life. Only negative factor for the elderly people become when they need day care and health services can reach in long distance.

4.4. Care Centres

As displayed in Table (1), care centres are not sufficient in Turkey in number and capacity. Furthermore, these houses are located in big cities, and there is no homogeneity in the regional distribution of these institutions. There are also problems related to the quality of service in care centres. Initially, care centres were the institutions only for the homeless elderly who did not have any income. They were organised like dormitories, lacking any feelings of a home. Elderly people who had to live in these institutions did not have any other choices. However, currently, with the changing social life and living conditions of families in urban areas, these institutions are preferred mostly by educated middle-income groups. Therefore, there is demand for high-quality spaces. The importance of the physical features of the residential environment for the feeling of being at home or sense of homelike was indicated by the research of Marsden (1999), too.

Table (1) The Number and Capacity of the Care Centres Institutions in Turkey S: SHCEK(**) report 1999

	Number	Capacity (*)
The Institutions owned by SHCEK (**)	50	5435

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The Institutions owned by other Ministries	4	763
The Institutions owned by Municipalities	21	1926
The Institutions owned by various associations and foundations	22	1442
The Institutions established by the minorities	6	900
The Private Care Centres	24	792
TOTAL	127	11258

(*) Number of beds

(**) General Directorate of Social Services and Care for Orphan Children

At the old age some changes in the body occur, and this makes elderly people ashamed both in the family and in an institutional environment. (Lawton 1975). For this reason, living alone can be preferred. If this is not possible, sharing room with another elderly person will be the second best solution. In the interviews that have been carried out in some care centres, it has been found out that as the number of people sharing a room increases, conflicts between those people sharing a room also increase.

An important mistake in the establishment of care centres in Turkey has been in their location. Most of the publicly owned care centres have been built on donated land which are located at the fringe of cities and do not relate to existing settlements.

Fig (1) Trying to create for personal space by hanging rugs around the bed at Care Centre in shared room.



5. MEASURING SATISFACTION AT THE CARE CENTERS

In this study, two questionnaires have been used. The first questionnaire has been conducted in order to determine the viewpoints of young people towards old age. The particular aim is to determine changing cultural attitudes about elderly care and insufficiency of care centres. Research population was chose from the senior students of Mersin University. The reason for this choice was that these students had lived away from their families for period of four years and they could be really objective and between 18-22 years old. Simple random method was used at this research and population was 1425. Variance was calculated as 62, 54 and related to tolerate limit was found as 1.49. The results from calculation of these values was determined as 150 for sample extent. Mersin is developing city and located in the transforming area by immigration from the traditional area of east side of Turkey. So young people was chose from here in state of big cities.

The other questionnaire was conducted with elderly people in the care centres in Ankara, the capital of Turkey. It made for purpose to state socio-economic level and life quality of elderly people in care centres.

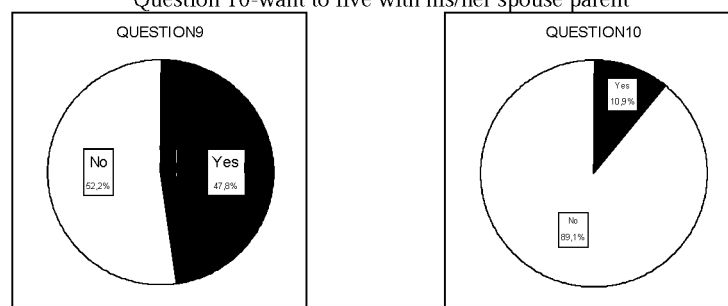
During the first stage of the research, the sampling method has been divided into two stages which are private and state-owned care centres. Obviously, private sector care canters have had better conditions than state owned. The sample used included 234 people and ages are between 70-80 years old. Questionnaires were made face to face, same of the samples were deeply interweaved.

5.1 Findings

The young people who answered the questionnaires are 39.6% male, 59.7% female. According to the house and car ownership, 28.8% is upper middle income group, and the rest belongs to a middle and lower middle income group. The parents of young people are 40% primary school graduates, 27.3% high school graduates and 31.7% university graduates. When they are asked which life style they will prefer in their old ages, 89.2% answer that they will live in their own houses by getting help if necessary, 7.9 %answer that they will live in their children's houses. Although the students come from the Central Anatolia region in which the customs and conventions are very strong, this answer is quite significant; as it does not really relate to the traditional expectations.

Another important question (9) is whether they want to continue to live with their parents or not. 47.8% of the respondents answered yes and 52.2% no, to this questions.

Fig (2) Question9-want to live with his/her parent.
Question 10-want to live with his/her spouse parent



The question (10) of whether they want to live in the same house with the parents of their spouse is answered as yes 10.9%, and no 89.1%. Another question that supports this question is what they will do if their parents can not look after themselves and besides the options of employing a nurse, assisting financially, visiting frequently and so on. The answer of caring them in their own house is chosen with a rate of 79.4%. Although this answer is contradictory to the other answers; the respondents have answered so in accordance with the traditions which dictated that the person who does not care for his/her parents will be criticized in the society.

In that case, there is dilemma between Turkish traditions and present life conditions about elderly people's care. The desire to live independently and to make their own decisions is finding similar in both young and elderly people. The elderly person becomes a problem in the family as there are no plans for the old age and no appropriate accommodation conditions. The young person wants to look after his/her own family with the traditional duty feeling, on the other hand he/she does not want his/her spouse's family. The domestic troubles and the inadequacy of the space make both parties unhappy.

5.2. Findings from the Care Centres.

The other questionnaire has been conducted with the elderly people who are accommodating in the care centres. 47.5% of them are female, 50% are male. 22.8% of them are illiterate, %14.17 of them is university graduates, others are primary school and high school graduates. It has been determined that 50.42% of them have lost their spouse, married 15.83. %, divorce 17.08 and single 14.17.

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Fig (3) Gender and Occupations elderly staying care centres.



The important findings are 68.75% of them have more than one child and 28.77 without children. 28.33% of them have very little income and 32.50% of them have an income less than the minimum wage. When these values are reviewed, it is observed that the people in the care centres have a low social-economical level. 1000YTL (New Turkish Liras) is accepted as mid income level.

Table (2) Income and education level of elderly.

s8

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid <300	68	28,3	28,3	28,3
300-500	79	32,9	32,9	61,3
500-1000	56	23,3	23,3	84,6
>1000	31	12,9	12,9	97,5
unanswered	6	2,5	2,5	100,0
Total	240	100,0	100,0	

s3

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid unlettered	52	21,7	21,7	21,7
literate	22	9,2	9,2	30,8
elementary sch	62	25,8	25,8	56,7
secondary sch	25	10,4	10,4	67,1
high school	35	14,6	14,6	81,7
universite	35	14,6	14,6	96,3
master-dr	3	1,3	1,3	97,5
unanswered	6	2,5	2,5	100,0
Total	240	100,0	100,0	

When the elderly people in the care centres are asked about the previous place in which they accommodated, it is observed that 65.83% of them lived in their own houses, % 22.92 lived in the house of a relative, 6.25% of them lived in another care centres and 2.50% of them lived in the house of their children. Although 38.75% of them answered the question of why they live in the care centres as their own wish; in the thorough interview, they answered that they are tired of being a problem for their children. Among other reasons are the absence of a person to take care with a rate of 36.25%, the desire of their children with a rate of % 17.50, financial impossibility with a rate of 2.50% and loneliness in the rate of 2.50%.

In the issue of satisfaction about the care centres, the questions about the interest of the personnel, heating, food quality, cleanliness, social activities, health service are asked and they are requested to assess them as very well, well, intermediate or very bad.

56% of the elderly people evaluated the personnel interest in the care centres in which they stayed at as very well. When the private and state-owned care centres are compared, it is observed that the personnel interest is very well in the private houses with a rate of 60% and in the state-owned houses with a rate of 40%. On the issue of heating, it is evaluated as 'very well' with a rate of 63% in the winter months. When the private and state-owned houses are compared, 'very well' answer is observed 48% in the private houses and the remaining 52% in the state-owned houses.

The food quality is evaluated as 'very good' by 32.50%, as 'good' 38.75%. When compared, the food quality in the private houses is 'very good' by 54% and in the state-owned houses 46%. The people who evaluated the food quality as 'good' are in the private houses in the rate of 42%, and in the state-owned houses in the rate of 58%. The cleanliness is evaluated as very good by 55% and as good by 36%. These rates are lower in the private care centres.

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As the social activity; cinema, excursion, entertainment and conversation are evaluated separately. Of all people 27%, find them as satisfactory and 70% find them as unsatisfactory are in the rate of. When the private and state-owned houses are compared, the people who do not find it as satisfactory accommodate in the private houses with a rate of 44%, they accommodate in the state-owned houses with a rate of 56%.

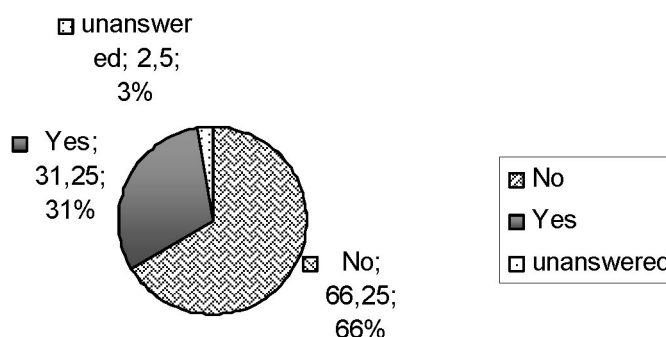
On the health service, the evaluation is 'very well' with a frequency of 45%, well in the rate of 38%. Again, the answer of very well with a rate of 55% belongs to the private houses and with a rate of % 45 to the state-owned houses.

The point that should be taken into account here is that the people who live in the state-owned care centres are satisfied with every condition, because the social-economical level of the majority of them is very low and they think that they found a place to accommodate. In the private care centres' economic levels are rather higher and the expectations also increase. According to the statistical values, it is not right to say that the state-owned care centres provide better life quality.

An expected answer was given about the question concerning friendliness, attachment and solidarity in the care centres. The people who answered the question as 'bad' accommodate in the private houses with a rate of % 40, and in the state-owned houses with a rate of % 60. When the answers of 'very bad' and 'very well' are disregarded, the answers concentrate on 'well', 'intermediate' and 'bad'. This is caused by the fact that the elderly people of many different social-economical levels live together.

Another significant result of the questionnaire is the answer for the question whether the elderly people need help to continue their daily lives. 66.25% of the elderly people in the care centres do not need continuous help of anyone and 31.25% of them are in need of help.

Fig (4) Question24-Whether elderly staying care centres permanently need help.



In that case, the service provided with many personnel is unnecessary. It is clearly observed that people come to care centres due to financial impossibilities. If their housing problems are solved, they can take care of themselves.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The State has been looking to the elderly care as the provision of shelter and aid for those who do not have sufficient income to look after themselves. For this reason the space quality in the State owned care centres are rather poor, as the number of people living in rooms with one or two beds constitute only one-third of total number of residents. Lack of privacy, absence of a sense of living similar to home, and remoteness of these institutions from residential settlements of cities are the most pronounced problems. There is a long waiting list for single rooms whereas there is plenty of vacancy in shared rooms.

There is a need to separate the elderly care service for very low income households who are homeless and without the support of family members, which are provided within the context of the welfare policy of the State. Although, according the findings most of them have children, the elderly who do not have any income and their own houses, can chose the only the State owned care centres free of charge. However these institutions appear not to be operated efficiently as the staff-to-resident ratio is too high. (2:1, elderly/nurse)(Turel2004) The main reason of the inefficiency is that the residents themselves could perform many of the services provided by the institution. Findings show that 66.25% don't need permanently help stayed care centres. Due to their high operating cost, care centre services for the physically incapable elderly should be separated from that for the elderly who can look after themselves. According the finding young people rate of 89.2 % doesn't want to live with children when they become elderly. So, small flats and care centres provide better quality life needs will get increasing.

The findings of this study proved the significance of developing alternative accommodation facilities besides the home and care centres.

Instead of building apartments for only elderly, small size flats in apartment's buildings or including different size flats in blocs provide the elderly to live with the society.

Elderly people living in these units will have the choice to cook for themselves, but they will also have access to all the services that are provided for the elderly in a care centres. Such an accommodation would provide both privacy and the opportunity participate to the social life, so that the elderly people will feel themselves as part of the society rather than living in a temporary shelter. Elderly care in this form can be provided at a lower cost, and consequently will be more efficient, compared to the existing care centre services of the State.

Fig (5) Design Guidelines for Elderly Apartment Units. (35-50m²) Principles of design: division living-sleeping area; connection cooking-living area.



The designs fig (2) made for the elderly people are the places furnished specially for the elderly people. Moreover, in order to increase the space quality; these should be created by considering a living, eating-drinking place instead of only sleeping-bathing function in the flats. (Robson, Nicholson, Barker 1997)

The bedrooms should definitely be separated from the living space and bedrooms which have two beds for the couples should be provided. The details encouraging friendship and greeting inside the building and in its surroundings should be taken into account. (Moos, 1980) This can be solutions for the elderly classified economically middle and high income level which mentioned in third section.

Whereas low income senior households can be accommodated in specialized institutions, there is a need for small rental units for middle income senior households. In this respect state and local governments should produce rental apartments for elderly with a stabilized rent plan. Meanwhile, these plans should be affordable by the retired salary.

These recommend suitable housing policies for elderly providing cost efficient small houses in urban area.

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