

Chapter 14

Measuring the Poverty of Elderly People With Needs Analysis in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to analyze the economic, social, and cultural needs of elderly people to determine the poverty thereof in Ankara (the capital city of Turkey). The economic, social, and cultural needs of individuals, which are among the indicators taken into consideration by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in measurement of human poverty index, were subject to research in measurement of poverty of elderly people. Face-to-face surveys were conducted with individuals over 65 years of age in the study, with 2,522 surveys qualified for evaluation. It was seen that the majority of elderly people were covered by social security. The elderly people reported their health to be good. They stated satisfaction regarding interindividual relationships with regard to social needs. However, it was concluded that the income of elderly people was not sufficient, and that they could not sufficiently afford electrical power and water invoices, medicine, food, and clothing expenses.

INTRODUCTION

In the old age, retirement results in a decrease in income, loss of usual social status, and an alteration in the relations and interactions. Besides, overlapping of losses that are manifest with such original problems as cognitive and physical recession, decline in productive role, change in social position, decrease in interpersonal support, and loss of health that emerge in this period results in poverty. As a notion, which is difficult to define and to determine the limits thereof, poverty has various aspects. Poverty is reflected to the lives of elderly people primarily “in the form of lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihoods,” along with “hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increased morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments; and social discrimination and exclusion. It is also characterized by a lack of participation in decision-making and in civil, social and cultural life”

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(World Summit for Social Development Programme of Action, UN). This study was inspired by both the limited number of scientific studies on poverty of elderly people, and by the fact that having foreseen the number of individuals over 65 years of age, who constitute the dependent population, would also increase in Turkey as it was the case throughout the world, the national and international institutions and organizations focused on initiatives to ensure healthy and successful aging by determining economic, social, and cultural needs of elderly people.

According to the Address Based Population Registration System (ADNKS) by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK), the total population of Turkey is 76 million 667 thousand people (2013), composed of 50.2% (n=38.473.360) male, and 49.8% (n=38.194.504) female citizens. The median age in Turkey, which was 30.1 in 2012, increased to 30.4 in 2013. The median age of men and women were 29.8, and 31 respectively. The ratio of elderly people aging 65 years and over was 7.3% in 2011 (n=5.490.715). The same ratio was 7.5% in 2012, and increased to 7.7% in 2013. Pursuant to the population projections, it is predicted that this ratio will increase to 10.2% in 2023, 20.8% in 2050, and 27.7% in 2075. In line with these ratios it can be asserted that Turkey has completed the mature population period and passed to elderly population period.

In this section, the level of ability of elderly people to meet economic, social, and cultural needs, which is among the indicators taken into consideration by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in measurement of human poverty index, will be analyzed. The scope of economic, social, and cultural needs can be explained as follows:

In the scope of the *economic needs*, the level of ability of elderly people to meet basic needs and life standards thereof will be determined so as to obtain information and measure awareness with regard to having economic/material resources along with their use and control.

In the scope of the *social needs*, data will be collected concerning the quality of relations and communication of elderly individuals with other family members, their permanent network of relations, also including friends, neighbors, and relatives, their interaction with this network of relations, intergeneration solidarity, social support systems, and confidence.

Finally, educational background, cultural values, habits, and whether the totality of the foregoing reflected concretely and objectively in the form of such documentation as diplomas etc., certain indicators regarding their lives in connection with the culture inherited from the family (age of marriage, last school of graduation etc.), social participation, and the ways of recreation will be determined in the scope of the *cultural needs*.

BACKGROUND

Having existed since the day human beings started to live together, poverty has been subject to a more intense debate especially after growth stalled in developed countries, people steered by the market, and increase underemployment during the foregoing process. Poverty at global and international level has macro reasons along with micro reasons specific to individual, family, and society (Oktik, 2008). The most important society-specific reason is inequality due to income distribution in a given country. Income differences between individuals, regions, and families living in the same city are considered the most important reason of poverty. Economic crises, inflation, and accordingly decrease in the purchasing power of individuals, difficulty or failure in meeting basic needs results in the fact that low-income individuals and families feel poverty deeply (Jehoel-Gijsbers & Vrooman, 2007). However, meeting

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