

Those Who Cannot Get a Grip on the City: Substance Abuse and the Migration Relationship in the Case of Konya

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Abstract: Internal migrations performed with the hope of finding work and living in better conditions also brings along problems such as urbanization gone askew, squatting, unemployment, lack of education, and cultural conflict. People who cannot find what they are looking for in the city, who maintain their own way of life, who cannot adapt to urban life, and who cannot break away from their own culture are excluded and marginalized. In other words, these migrants who cannot get a grip on the city sometimes use substances and remain faced with the risk of becoming addicted. This study intends to research the impact the phenomenon of migration has on drug use in families that have migrated to Konya from the Eastern and Southeastern Anatolian regions between 1980 and 2000. The province of Konya, where the dimensions of substance use and the problem of addiction increase day by day, is a province that both receives and provides migrants. The vast majority of migrations made to Konya are seen to be from the Southeastern and Eastern Anatolian regions. In this context, my study focuses on the relationship between substance addiction and migration. The qualitative research method has been adopted within the scope of the study, and life history interviews will be held using the semi-structured interview technique with 10 substance-addicted youths who will be determined through snowball sampling. In Turkey, studies performed in this field on the increasing number of addicts and the age of becoming addicted getting younger with each passing day becomes ever more important. No study is encountered in the literature to have researched the impact migration has on substance use or to have researched in depth migration and the problems it brings; this study will contribute to the literature related to this topic. Alongside this, the study carries additional importance due to being the first study that will research the impact internal migrations made to Konya have on substance use.

Keywords: Internal migration • Konya • Adapting to the city • Addiction • Substance use

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People are seen to migrate to the city for being able to access better life standards, receive education, and most importantly find work. Whatever the reason for migration, major social, economic, political, and psychological results emerge in migrants' lives (Castles & Miller, 2008, p. 39). People who migrate continue living their lives in the places to which they've migrated and are unable to detach from their culture. This situation causes them to be "otherized" by the other city people and also leads to cultural conflicts (Koçak & Terzi, 2012, p. 182). These conflicts increase the risk of migrants' substance use and of becoming addicted (Balcioglu et al., 2001, pp. 190–191). The social change that has been quickly experienced brings along problems such as being involved in criminal activity, being a member of radical groups, and substance use in addition to internal migration, squatting, unemployment, and being unable to adapt to the city (Köknel, 1983, p. 710).

Although substance abuse is seen in every segment of society regardless of religion, language, race, or socioeconomic status (Czechowicz, 1988), the risk of poverty, being uneducated, being involved in criminal activity, and substance abuse is seen to have increased in the outskirts of the city in particular (Kaylı et al., 2016). Migrants have been determined to have high levels of anxiety, depression, and stress (McKelvey et al., 2002) and low self-esteem (Ponizovsky et al., 2009). The risk of substance abuse is high for children and youths who want to deal with these feelings (Kızmaz & Bilgin, 2010, p. 269).

Konya, as a city located at the crossroads that receives refugees, is one of the provinces under the risk of drug addiction. This study, performed with the goal of examining the relationship substance use in Konya has with migration, carries additional importance due to being the first study to research the effect internal migration made to Konya have on substance use.

Method

The qualitative research in the scope of the study has been conducted between January and March 2018 with eight people suffering from drug addiction who have migrated to Konya from the Eastern Anatolian and Southeastern Anatolian regions. The semi-structured interview technique has been used in the interviews, allowing the opportunity to address new questions and problems on topics that had been previously prepared with a clear framework. In this context, the eight people have been reached using the snowball sampling technique, which was used for sampling the sub-cultures. The data obtained from the interviews has been separated into themes with respect to the related literature, and an analytical analysis has been performed.

Findings

This section discusses the relationship of migration with the reasons for substance abuse by addressing the themes obtained as a result of the content analysis.

Demographic Findings

The participants are seen to have greater numbers of siblings, with the household average being around 6-7; they are seen to have low education levels. One person is a high school graduate, one dropped out of high school, and the others are middle school graduates. The participants stated not continuing their education due to the influence of the friends around them. Their parents have been determined to also have low education levels; in fact, parents were even identified to be illiterate.

The Families' Reasons for Migrating

While most of the participants who had migrated to Konya between 1980 and 2000 stated their families to have migrated to Konya because of blood feuds, another group stated their families to have migrated for the purpose of finding work. Those who had migrated for the purpose of finding work in particular were observed as in network theory to have come to Konya because relatives who had previously migrated to Konya called on them; they stayed with the relatives for a while and benefitted from their knowledge and experience.

The Language Problem Experienced After Migration

The participants expressed the language problem they experienced after migrating to have lowered their educational success, to have made adapting to the environment difficult, and to have caused exclusion. The families who were excluded due to the language problem experience had difficulty finding work.

Economic Status Post-Migration

The participants, who stated their families to have been engaged in animal husbandry or farming prior to migrating and to not have had good economic status, expressed that although they had had economic activities at first after migrating, with time their situations had gotten better.

Substance Abuse and the Migration Effect

To the question of whether or not the migration they had experienced had impacted their substance use, the majority of the participants responded that migration had had an effect.

The Age and Reasons They Began Using Substances

While most of the participants stated having begun substance usage in middle school, some stated beginning substance usage in primary school or in high school. They used cannabis first, then synthetic pills followed by heroin and cocaine.

Cannabis appears to be a gateway drug.

The participants stated being the only ones in their family to be addicted. Only one person said they had siblings who were also addicted. Numerous participants, a small number of whom said they had a relative who was addicted, stated that an individual in their circle of friends was addicted.

All of the participants who specified having no one else in their family aside from them who was addicted stated that they had used drugs due to a friend, that their friends had encouraged substance use with expressions such as “You’re a mama’s boy” or “Nothing will happen from one time,” and that they had used drugs in order to not lose their circle of friends and to not be excluded.

Substance Abuse and the Relationship to Crime

The participants stated they had been compelled to commit crime in order to buy drugs and had even gone to jail.

Family Relationships and Empathy

Two of the participants said they had bad relationships with their families; the others stated having good relationships with their families despite using drugs. The participants who stated having good relations with their families said that they would not react harshly if they learned that their own children were substance users, that they would try to talk with their children, and that they would do their best to have them get treatment. The participants said they would supervise their children’s friends and environment in order to protect them from addiction, emphasizing the importance of the region where they reside and the friends around them.

The Problem with the Alcohol and Substance Treatment Center (AMATEM) and Questions

The participants stated that they had tried repeatedly to stop using drugs and had gone to AMATEM for treatment; however, they stated the staff at AMATEM to be incompetent and that these alcohol and substance treatment centers were a source of social capital and information on drug use; for this reason, they stated AMATEMs to not be useful. The participants who stated being unable to quit drug use through treatment in AMATEM were forced to quit drug use when they went to jail.

The participants, who had tried all kinds of ways to stop drug use, offered various suggestions when the question “How can the drug abuse problem be solved?” was directed at them. While they brought solutions such as making sports activities compulsory, having heavy fines, and not allowing the sale of drugs post-addiction, they stated that parents having knowledge about drug addiction would be a protective and preventative measure.

Discussion

This research, performed for the purpose of examining the relationship that the disadvantaged situations revealed by the phenomenon of migration has with drug addiction, determined that those who had migrated from the regions of Eastern Anatolia and Southeastern Anatolia had settled in the outskirts of Konya. Şaşman Kaylı et al.'s (2016) study addressed the relationship between the situation of migrating to İzmir with drug use; they stated that the migrants reside on the outskirts of İzmir and that they faced language problems, unemployment, poverty, and exclusion. That study concluded that the parents' low education levels and high numbers of children had made adapting to the city difficult and that the participants who had used drugs under the influence of their circle of friends and who had been involved in criminal activity had made the negative effects of migration visible. Şaşman Kaylı et al. (2016), who detected the rate of starting drugs to be higher in the participants who had migrated, reached the result that migration is one of the risk factors for drug usage. The results from our current research have similar characteristics to that study.

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