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MIGRATION, SOCIAL COHESION AND UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL WORK

Sosyal Hizmet Bağlamında Göç, Sosyal Uyum ve Refakatsiz Çocuk

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the concepts of migration, social cohesion, and unaccompanied children are discussed in the light of developments in the first quarter of the 21st century. Physical, mental and social difficulties faced by unaccompanied children who have had long and endless journeys, who are at risk of many social problems and whose basic rights and freedoms are at risk are considered in this study. Challenges faced by unaccompanied children, first admission of the unaccompanied child, social work practice with unaccompanied children; the importance of family support; education for unaccompanied child; mental health services for an unaccompanied child, the legislation regarding unaccompanied children and social cohesion and unaccompanied children are among the subheadings of this article. The steps to be taken by social workers and other professionals in the field for the best interests of the unaccompanied child have been discussed in line with the needs of the unaccompanied child.

Key words: *Unaccompanied child, social work, migration, social cohesion*

ÖZET

Bu çalışmada göç, sosyal uyum ve refakatsiz çocuk kavramları, 21. yüzyıl ilk çeyreğindeki gelişmeler ışığında ele alınmıştır. Olağanüstü koşullara bağlı olarak uzun ve sonu belirsiz bir yolculuğa çıkan, sosyal sorunların kısırcasında kalan, temel hak ve özgürlükleri risk altında olan refakatsiz çocuğun bedensel, ruhsal ve sosyal alanda yaşadığı güçlüklerle bu çalışmada yer verilmiştir. Refakatsiz çocukların karşılaştığı zorluklar, refakatsiz çocuğun ilk kabulü, refakatsiz çocuklarla sosyal hizmet uygulaması; ailenin önemi; refakatsiz çocuğun eğitimi; refakatsiz çocuğun ruh sağlığı, refakatsiz çocuklarla ilgili mevzuat ve sosyal uyum ve refakatsiz çocuk bu makalenin alt başlıkları arasında yer almaktadır. Refakatsiz çocuğun yüksek yararına yönelik sosyal hizmet uzmanları ve bu alandaki diğer profesyoneller tarafından atılması gereken adımlar refakatsiz çocuğun sosyal hizmet gereksinimleri doğrultusunda tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Refakatsiz çocuk, sosyal hizmet, göç, sosyal uyum*

1. Introduction

Migration is an ancient and deep-rooted concept in the whole history. From the first human to the present, people have felt the need to change their locations either as small groups or as a community, depending on nutrition, housing, climate, proximity to water resources, wars, and other various reasons. The concept of migration has influenced the host community as well as the immigrating individuals, groups, families and, societies. Migration can be defined briefly as the flow of people from one settlement to another (IOM, 2019). It can take place within the national boundaries as well as in the form of crossing national borders. Epidemics, war, unemployment or better living conditions in the migrated locations are among the triggers of migration (Soydan, 1998). Migration is not a new concept for humanity. However, social problems related to migration can change in time. In particular, complex social problems have emerged in recent years as the number of immigrants has increased. In this atmosphere, it is believed that the discipline of social work should focus on migration and that social work might have significant roles in the process (Williams, Soydan, & Johnson, 1998). In 2018 alone, 20,000 unaccompanied minors applied to European Union countries (Eurostat, 2019). Vulnerable groups are the main focus of social work discipline which aims for the well-being of individuals, families, groups and societies. Unaccompanied children have a special position in vulnerable groups and they are vulnerable to all kinds of abuse. Today, the best interests of the child are determined by national and universal norms of law, and the social work profession and discipline have important responsibilities for taking the appropriate steps for the best interests of the unaccompanied children.

Social cohesion has a similar meaning to social inclusion and social integration and is frequently used as the opposite of social exclusion (Zetter et al., 2006). Social cohesion is a dynamic process that refers to the inclusion of the individual in the economic, social, cultural and political life of the host community while preserving his/her own identity (Hickman, Mai, & Crowley, 2012).

Social cohesion has cultural and structural dimensions. Cultural dimension refers to intercultural interaction and the structural dimension refers to economic and political structures (Valtonen, 2008). Social cohesion has no universal definition which is

recognized by a wider environment. However, we can define social cohesion as being in unity and in cohesion. The lack of consensus on the definition of social cohesion makes it difficult to measure social cohesion and to obtain evidence-based information in this area. However, the concept is usually related to social trust and the intensity of social norms (Migration Observatory, 2017).

Migration has a bi-directional character. As migration can solve some problems in society, it may also cause new ones. The power relationship between the minority and the majority has new implications. Depending on age and gender, the individual can be significantly affected by the damage caused by power relations (Soydan, 1998). According to a study, as social diversity increases, social cohesion is significantly weakened. According to the findings, individuals have fewer levels of confidence in individuals who are not similar to them (Migration Observatory, 2017). On the contrary, some researchers and policymakers argue that immigrants make significant contributions to the host society in economic, social, cultural and political ways (Vertovec, 1999).

As immigration to Europe in the early 21st century increased in a short period time, ethnic and cultural diversity and the tension between the host societies and immigrants increased. The problem of insufficient services to meet the demands of immigrants, the anti-immigration policies, socio-economic injustices, housing problems and hostile rhetoric of the media have increased the debate on the issue and caused it to become more complicated (Zetter et al., 2006). Besides, in European countries, politics has been very intense on migration and migrants and this issue was used as a tool by the political parties to win the elections. Right-wing parties in the parliament in countries such as Italy, Spain, Germany, Austria, France, Sweden, Finland, Estonia followed anti-immigrant policies (BBC, 2019). Issues such as migration, employment and housing have been at the forefront of discussions on social cohesion. In our era of uncertainty and rapid change, social cohesion maintains its importance for the states. It is considered that the debates on migration, social cohesion and communities will continue to increase not only regarding the migration policies of the states but also obtaining the citizenship of the host country. In this study, it is aimed to discuss the unaccompanied child in the axis of migration and social cohesion. It is aimed to include the problems and needs of children whose fundamental rights and freedoms are violated due to extraordinary conditions in the migration process. Providing information to all professionals

working in the field of unaccompanied minors, especially social workers, is another purpose of this research.

2. Challenges Faced by Unaccompanied Child

The concept of the unaccompanied child can be defined as a special refugee status. Unaccompanied children are the children separated from their parents and other relatives and are not under the care for any person by law or by tradition (ICRC, 2014). Unaccompanied children are within vulnerable groups of society (Çelikaksoy & Wadensjö, 2017). Refugee status is complicated due to its individual and political dimensions. Problems such as not considering the refugees within their environment, their stigmatization as a criminal by the state and the media, provision of second-class services, ignoring the research conducted in the field, lack of knowledge of the professionals in the field and lack of coordination between service organizations are among the major problems in this field. Refugees experience significant problems within the host society. Problems such as not having positive responses for bona fide, missing the family and loved ones left behind and non-adaptation cause the refugees to have disappointment. The uncertainty of the duration of refugee status makes it difficult to make plans for the future. The happy news is expected with hope and in case of the negative results of the application, uncertainties continue (Humphries, 2006). Dealing with the problems faced by unaccompanied children independently of the difficulties faced by adult refugees does not seem accurate. In this context, the difficulties faced by unaccompanied children during the migration and in the host society are not less than the adult refugees face.

Being a refugee child has two dimensions: being a child, and being a refugee. While the refugee status provides fewer rights, being a child means having very broad rights (Humphries, 2006). Being a child under extraordinary circumstances such as war, armed conflict or epidemics, and especially being an unaccompanied child means being at a sensitive position to any violation of rights. A study conducted with unaccompanied children revealed that unaccompanied children had bad experiences during migration and they have not received any support (Mynott & Humphries, 2001).

In 2015 alone, it is estimated that 65.3 million people were displaced all around the world. About half of this number is composed of children. According to 2015 data, the number of unaccompanied or separated children is determined as 98,400, by

considering the total applications made to 78 countries. This is the highest number since 2006. Afghanistan, Eritrea, Somalia and Syria are the main countries where unaccompanied children come from (UNHCR, 2016). The number of unaccompanied children increases every year. Escaping from war, threats on life, poverty, drugs, sex trafficking and violence are in the background of the issue of unaccompanied children (Wilson, 2014).

According to the studies conducted, unaccompanied children who reach the host country have difficulty in meeting their own needs and they need social work. Refugee children in host countries live under poor living conditions. The assignment of social work to private companies by the host state may lead to the inability of refugee children to receive adequate support, inability to access social workers, or even to find the appropriate authority to file a complaint. Learning the language is one of the fundamental requirements. Also, refugee children may be subject to pressure and coercion both within and outside the school. Treatment of refugee children may violate international conventions on children's fundamental rights and freedoms (Humphries, 2006). These violations are reflected in the international reports.

In the Human Rights Watch (2015) report, violations of rights against unaccompanied children by many countries are covered. For example, according to the report, unaccompanied children in Croatia were placed at an institution for children with behavioral problems, and the institution did not have adequate security measures in place. Indonesia is another country in which unaccompanied children are violated. 110 unaccompanied children were detained because there was no law on refugees and asylum seekers in this country. Another violation of rights occurred in Mexico. Hundreds of thousands of immigrants, including unaccompanied children, cross the border of Mexico and are subject to violation of rights by crime organizations or security forces. Another violation of rights against unaccompanied children occurred in Serbia. Unaccompanied children who arrived to Serbia were not subjected to an assessment that was appropriate for their ages, they were treated as adults and they were not placed under protection.

3. First Admission of Unaccompanied Children

The first admission of the unaccompanied child is an important stage of the social cohesion process. The first admission phase includes the recognition of the child, assessment of age, provision of accommodation, health check, legal protection

assessment and education planning (Çelikaksoy & Wadensjö, 2017). Unaccompanied children should be given priority when registering and providing services. Because a significant part of clients do not hold any official document (identity, passport, etc.), it is not possible to determine their ages based on the document. Therefore, the client's age is determined according to the physical appearance and attitude of the child and the experiences of field officers. Age determination is carried out to consider the client as a child and to carry out the transactions within this framework. Professionals on the field should be informed that lawyers may be appointed as the guardians of unaccompanied children to help them have access to judicial authorities (Wright, 2014; SGDD, 2017). The ten important things that should be considered by professionals in the first phase of practice are below (UNHCR, 2002):

- Act friendly towards the child
- Meet the basic requirements of the child
- To arrange a safe place where the child can wait and rest
- To use an interpreter
- To provide information
- To direct the child to the social work organization as soon as possible
- To determine whether the child is accompanied or not
- To ensure that the adult accompanying the child can be entrusted or not
- To establish connections with organizations
- If available, to apply only to the specialist dealing with unaccompanied children

To summarize, a preliminary assessment should be carried out taking into account the socio-demographic characteristics of the children during the first application. During the application, the education, health and housing conditions of the child should be examined. It is also important at this stage to determine the age of the services to be offered to the child to sit on the legal ground. It is also important at this stage that professionals in the field exhibit a close and sincere attitude and behavior after determining the basic needs of the child. In the next section, social work practice with unaccompanied children will be discussed.

4. Social Work Practice with Unaccompanied Child

The time passes until the unaccompanied child reaches the host country contains potential dangers for the child. The unaccompanied child reaches the host country

after hundreds of miles of the journey (Wilson, 2014). In this new and unfamiliar environment, almost everything surprises the child. The unaccompanied child usually does have concerns as he/she does not know what to do in the host country. In this context, the attitudes and behaviors of social workers and professionals in the field are extremely important for the child to feel comfortable and safe (UNHCR, 2002; Çelikaksoy & Wadensjö, 2017).

Once the unaccompanied child enters into the host country, the active participation of the social worker is very important for the child's First admission, the determination of his/her needs and also for the best interests of the child (Çelikaksoy & Wadensjö, 2017). Social workers working with refugees have the opportunity to directly touch human life. For example, a 13-year-old unaccompanied child who has traveled thousands of kilometers escaping from the war and who has witnessed the death of family members and who is open to all kinds of risks... The protection of this child is extremely important in terms of physical and mental recovery and trauma (Braybrooke, 2002).

Social workers play very important roles in assessing the unaccompanied child by the cultural, religious and political environment he/she was raised, to discover their life experiences, selection of proper intervention regarding the needs of child and to support the child (Wright, 2014). The social worker is very significant for the child to learn a new language, begin at the school, receiving support in a psychosocial way and to meet his/her needs. All these interventions make it necessary to be equipped in child protection, knowing the legal rights of child and grief counseling (Braybrooke, 2002). In this context, supervision to social workers in the field will be appropriate for the effectiveness of the services to be offered to the unaccompanied child (Çelikaksoy & Wadensjö, 2017). It is not always possible to implement regulations on paper and to protect children from any kind of danger under extraordinary circumstances. Under tough conditions, governmental institutions may become incapable of substituting care and protection responsibilities for the children. At this point, the need for a large number of non-governmental organizations to act in coordination with the complex needs of children becomes a fact. The fact that policies and objectives are not clearly defined in working with refugees in public social work organizations is another reason for the need of non-governmental organizations in this field (ICRC, 2014; Hickman, Mai, & Crowley, 2012). By providing information on current legal regulations, services and

procedures by social workers in non-governmental organizations, unaccompanied children can be supported (Wright, 2014).

The host state should encourage community-based care as much as possible and strong control mechanisms should also be established. The special needs of the unaccompanied child should be taken into account (Wilson, 2014). Assignment of wet nurses to feed unaccompanied children under the age of six months, planning and monitoring of the nutrition of unaccompanied children by the relevant professionals are important for the development of the child (ICRC, 2014).

Advocacy and mediation roles are important for social workers working with refugees. The social worker supports the client by providing faster access to the services. Because clients cannot access the services they need without social work intervention. There is a need to increase access to services in institutions and organizations where social workers work. Otherwise, social workers will also be faced with the same obstacles witnessed by the clients (Collett, 2004).

According to a survey conducted in the UK, most of the unaccompanied children (even though some had to wait for three months) met with the social worker. Most of the unaccompanied children stated that they would like to meet with the social worker more often. As a result of the study, it was stated that social workers did not receive adequate training about the unaccompanied children, that they did not know the provisions of the legislation on the unaccompanied child and that the applicant's immigration status was not followed by the social workers (Mynott & Humphries, 2001). Related public institutions and organizations should meet and cooperate with social workers. Also, it will ensure the close cooperation between health, education, law, interpreting, social security and civil society, facilitate the social cohesion of the unaccompanied child to the host society and the knowledge base of different disciplines will be benefited from (Çelikaksoy & Wadensjö, 2017; Wright, 2014).

Uncompromised children can have very difficult and painful experiences until they arrive in the host country. For this reason, attitudes and behaviors of the social worker towards the child are of great importance especially during the assessment phase of the social work practice. To overcome the child's language barrier, obtaining support from the interpreter and determining the services to be provided to the child by completing the legal procedures as soon as possible constitutes an important dimension of the social work practice. Social workers play an active role in ensuring coordination between public institutions and organizations and non-

governmental organizations in this field. Following the determination of the basic needs of the child in the social work practice, the activation of the services and resources is important in the cohesion of the unaccompanied child. Family, education, mental health and legal aspects that support effective social work practice will be discussed in the next section.

4.1. Importance of Family

Supporting the child in the environment in which he/she lives and in the family is frequently preferred in social work practice. Institutional care should be considered as the last option for the placement of unaccompanied children and if possible, a child's support with a close relative should be preferred (Hessle & Hessle, 1999; MOFWSS, 2015). Within the context of migration, taking protective and preventive measures are important for unaccompanied children. Measures to be taken proactively before the emergence of important social problems will play a role in preventing any significant tragedies. Policies for the protection of family unity need to be followed. Measures need to be developed by states to prevent parents from choosing separating from their children as an alternative. When release is determined, the best interests of the child should be considered and release should be carried out by considering family unity. Professionals in the field must primarily ensure that the children are legally registered. Each step of the reunification of the unaccompanied child must be fulfilled by the provisions of the legislation (ICRC, 2014). Therefore, to protect the rights of the client, the social worker should be competent in legislation (Collett, 2004). Three basic principles are essential to meet the needs of children. The first principle is "continuity of family" and it can be defined as the fact that meeting the needs of child within the family is essential. The second principle, "proximity", can be explained as an understanding, sincere and reassuring attitude and behavior of adults serving the child. The last principle "acceptance" means that the child is understood and valued (Hessle & Hessle, 1999).

4.2. Education for Unaccompanied Children

All public institutions and organizations are responsible for the services to be offered to unaccompanied children (Humphries, 2006). Education is one of the most important services to be offered to the unaccompanied child by the host state. The services offered by the host country to the unaccompanied child in the first phase will affect the child's social cohesion and perhaps all his/her life. In this context, the education provided to the child should not be considered as temporary (Çelikaksoy

& Wadensjö, 2017). Supporting the access of the child to education, providing the vocational training option and documenting the training should be provided by the host state (ICRC, 2014).

As soon as the unaccompanied child reaches the host country, it is expected that the relevant state will begin to provide services which observe the best interests of the child. It is of utmost importance for the best interests of child that the child continues his/her education life in the host country. However, the complex problems that arise after the arrival in a foreign country can also be seen in the field of education. If the host country is a European country, the issue of child's education becomes more complicated. When the child arrives at the host country, the period he/she missed in education might be quite long. The issue is not only limited to adapting to a new language and a new curriculum, but the child is also expected to adapt to school life. As the child is deprived of education when compared with his/her peers, the refugee child might be placed in a class with other younger children (Crul et al., 2017). Defining refugee children as "illegal immigrants" and refusing to register them for school are examples of discrimination (Humphries, 2006). Measures to be taken by the host state to overcome the social obstacles faced by unaccompanied children are of great importance. Education is important not only regarding the social cohesion of unaccompanied children but also for the reshaping of social structure, provision of a safe social environment and for the best interests of the child (Çelikaksoy & Wadensjö, 2017).

4.3. Mental Health Services for Unaccompanied Child

Refugees may experience emotional and mental problems and have difficulty in accessing mental health services (Humphries, 2006). Migration may have occurred as a result of traumatic events. Besides, the long-lasting journey might have also included negative life experiences. In this context, mental health services that focus on the mental well-being of child must be implemented. The mental health service standards prepared for professionals working with refugees in the field of mental health are as follows (The National Service Framework, 1999):

1. Encouraging all individuals to be in a good mental condition, combating discrimination, and promoting social inclusion
2. Assessing and defining mental health needs and providing effective methods
3. Providing services with 24/7 principle

4. Establishing a current and written care plan that focuses on the client and minimizes the risks
5. Accessibility to health services
6. Identifying the client's requirements and establishing a written care plan
7. Taking measures to prevent suicide

Social workers provide a holistic approach to identifying the needs of the unaccompanied child and supporting and strengthening the child (Wright, 2014). In this context, social workers should play a pioneering role in taking preventive measures at the micro, mezzo and macro levels with the consciousness that mental area which is an important component of quality of life, is as vital as physical and social areas.

4.4. Legislation for Unaccompanied Child

There are legislative provisions at national and international levels about the unaccompanied children for the best interests of the child. Turkey has become the country which accepted the largest Syrian population into its territories following the civil war in Syria and the mass migrations followed, legislative actions were taken on migration, "Law on Foreigners and International Protection" was accepted and the legislation has emphasized that unaccompanied children were among the most vulnerable groups (Law No. 6458, article 3). We can say that the Turkish legislation firmly protects the unaccompanied children and includes provisions that observe the best interests of child. The following provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) provide the basis of services for unaccompanied children:

A child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment, or in whose own best interests cannot be allowed to remain in that environment, shall be entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the State. States Parties shall in accordance with their national laws ensure alternative care for such a child (*article 20*).

In Turkish legislation, an unaccompanied child is defined as "unless being under effective care of a responsible person, a child who arrived in Turkey without the accompany of a responsible adult (both in legal or more) or who becomes unaccompanied after arriving in Turkey". "Special protection mechanisms for those with specific needs" were established with legal regulations in Turkey and unaccompanied child was considered as "someone with special needs" (MOFWSS,

2015; DGMM, 2013). In the field of migration, it is expected that field workers to be able to meet the needs of unaccompanied children and help the child to benefit from the available resources. The “Unaccompanied Child Directive” is a guide for professionals and constitutes another legal basis for services provided to unaccompanied children (SGDD, 2017).

Although there are various national and international legal norms for unaccompanied children, the research literature on the extent to which these norms are reflected in the field is not adequate. The fundamental rights and freedoms recognized by the norms of universal law are at risk of being violated in the process of migration caused by war and armed conflict. For example, due to the control of human traffickers over the unaccompanied child, the child may not have voluntary control throughout course of the journey and the course of the migration (Çelikaksoy & Wadensjö, 2017). For this reason, destination country is usually selected by human traffickers, not the unaccompanied children. In a study conducted with unaccompanied children, it was found that the most common reason for the selection of specific destination country was the decision of human traffickers. Some of the unaccompanied children learn the country they are at only after a certain time passes (Wright, 2014).

Because of such violations of rights, all professionals, especially social workers, are responsible for the protection of the provisions of the “United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child” even under extraordinary circumstances. The rights becoming fundamental for the unaccompanied children are below (ICRC, 2014):

- Right of name, right of legal identity and birth registry
- Right of physical and legal protection
- Right to remain with parents
- Right to access opportunities for basic survival
- Right of access to care and support appropriate to age and developmental needs
- Right to participate in decisions regarding his/her future

Social work discipline is against oppression and discrimination. Unfortunately, there are complaints about discriminatory and racist attitudes of professionals in the field. Social work discipline defends the rights and freedoms of people. However, the rights and freedoms of refugees in the field are limited within the framework of immigration legislation. Migration is one of the areas where racism can appear. In

the context of anti-racism, awareness can be increased within society (Collett, 2004).

During the social work practice, in line with the best interests of the child, the traditional and non-traditional family members of the child should be taken into consideration. The right to education guaranteed by international agreements should be provided to the child as soon as possible by the host country. The services to be provided to the child in the field of mental health due to the traumatic life events experienced during the migration process and the competence of the professionals working in this field are also vital for the social cohesion. All services offered to the child should be placed on the legal basis, and the rights guaranteed by legislation should be implemented by all professionals. In line with all these services to be provided, the next section will cover the social cohesion of the unaccompanied children.

5. Social Cohesion of Unaccompanied Children

A significant number of unaccompanied children live in poverty. Depending on environmental risks, unaccompanied children are in a sensitive position for neglect and abuse. The emotional needs of unaccompanied children are hardly met. In addition to these conditions, education is an important component of social cohesion. However, it was observed that unaccompanied children did not follow the education process efficiently when they had plans to immigrate to a third country or change their country (Buchanan & Kallinikaki, 2018). These factors increase the importance of social cohesion efforts to be carried out on unaccompanied children and professionals in the field.

Services such as shelter, care, food, education, and medical support for the social cohesion of unaccompanied children is the focus of the practice (Kohli, 2006). Accordingly, it can be said that social services are closely related to social cohesion (Hickman, Crowley, & Mai, 2008). Social cohesion is an extremely important component in enhancing the well-being of individuals, groups, families and societies (Berkman, 2000). There is no clear definition of the concept of social cohesion in the literature. Therefore, the ability to measure social cohesion is related to how the concept is defined (Spoonley, Peace, Butcher, & O'Neill, 2005). Social cohesion means that individuals can continue their development in their community, have fair access to resources and enjoy their fundamental rights and freedoms (Michalos, 2014). In another definition, it is stated that social cohesion includes elements such

as loyalty, common values, trust in society, strong social relations and social justice. Since social cohesion is a multi-dimensional concept, all stakeholders should be involved in this process (Council of Europe, 2000). Social cohesion means the association and bond of the group in the community. Feeling belonging to society and relationships with other members constitute different aspects of the concept of social cohesion (Michalos, 2014). In the policies pursued in the field of migration, social cohesion is defined as an ultimate goal (Spoonley, Peace, Butcher, & O'Neill, 2005).

6. Discussion and Conclusion

It is stated in the definition of IFSW (2014) that social work is a practice-based profession and discipline that supports social change, development, social cohesion, empowerment and freedom of people. When looking at the definition, it is realized that social cohesion is an important component of social work. Social cohesion has both individual and social dimensions. While the individual establishes ties with the environment in which the individual lives, the social, cultural and economic capital of the society is effective in the social dimension (Berkman, 2000). Parallel to social cohesion, the objectives of social work include bringing resources and services together with the client. Thus, it will be better understood why social cohesion is an important component in the definition of social work.

The concepts of migration, social cohesion and unaccompanied children were discussed in this study. Multi-dimensional difficulties experienced by unaccompanied children who are facing many risks during the migration and whose basic rights and freedoms are at risk were assessed. Challenges faced by unaccompanied children, first admission of the unaccompanied child, social work practice with unaccompanied children; importance of family support; education for unaccompanied child; mental health services for unaccompanied child and the legislation regarding unaccompanied children were explained. Actions to be taken by social workers and all other professionals in this field for the best interests of the unaccompanied child have been analyzed.

Social cohesion is one of the three important dimensions of social work practice with unaccompanied children. Social work practice with unaccompanied children consists of social cohesion, connection and consistency dimensions. Creating routines with unaccompanied children represents the dimension of social cohesion, focusing on past traumatic experiences represents the dimension of connection dimension.

Constructing a strong relationship implies the consistency dimension of social work practice with unaccompanied children (Kohli, 2006). Within the scope of efforts to ensure social cohesion, social workers can organize small group activities and games with unaccompanied children with limited resources (Buchanan & Kallinikaki, 2018). The goals of social cohesion include strengthening clients, increasing trust in social services and policies, and ensuring social justice (Spoonley, Peace, Butcher, & O'Neill, 2005).

In this context, establishing positive emotional bonds with unaccompanied children facilitates the social cohesion process. The social worker can take a position with the unaccompanied child who experiences common successes and failures in the new social environment (Devenney, 2019). In the practice carried out to ensure social cohesion, the child needs to trust the social worker. Otherwise, the child may exhibit skeptical and silent behavior and behavior (Kohli, 2006). Social work, which is a human rights profession, aims to make full use of the fundamental rights and freedoms of clients. It can be said that the social work profession and social cohesion are integrated within the same principles. Because social cohesion refers to a dynamic process aimed at eliminating social injustices by promoting pluralism in society (Michalos, 2014).

The discipline of social work should take the role of advocacy for the protection of the rights offered to unaccompanied children by national and international law for the development of the legislation and the provisions of the legislation and the effective and dynamic implementation of the regulations for contradictory issues. Research should be conducted to increase the cooperation and coordination among the actors in the field, and host states should encourage multi-disciplinary teams to take joint responsibility for unaccompanied children. Public institutions and organizations should be allocated resources for unaccompanied children, and cooperation between civil society organizations and public institutions should be increased. Strict control mechanisms should be established to prevent violations of rights against unaccompanied children. Training should be provided for all professionals in the field to act within the framework of the principle of "the best interests of the child" in each decision taken. Priority should be given to community-based practices in the care of unaccompanied children. In this context, professionals in the field will assure that both the national and international legislation and the provisions created for the best interests of the unaccompanied child are realized.

Unaccompanied children should be supported in psychological and social ways. Non-governmental organizations operating at the international level should be strengthened, coordination between civil society organizations should be ensured and measures should be taken at the global level.

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