

## **Chapter 5**

### **CHILDREN AND THEIR RIGHTS IN TURKISH NOVELS: IDEOLOGICAL MODERNIZATION**

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

The history of children in Turkish society goes back to 19<sup>th</sup> century with the emergence of modernization and modern practices (Parla, 2010). Consequently, the fact that the concept of childhood and children found a place in Turkish literature in the 19th century delayed the formation of the concept of children's literature (Şahin & Bayrak, 2020). Turkish literature, especially novels, show how children appeared in Turkish society, and one can follow the traces of violation of children's rights in novels because both in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries children were seen as objects of ideology which exercised certain ideas on children. Children were expected to behave in a certain manner on a physical, social, cultural and pedagogical level. Children did not refer to a uniform category at that time, either. War-victimized children, street children, poor ones and slave children appeared in a century or so. A child who could be an individual in its modern sense still hardly figures in our society today. The reasons for this absence can be sought in history because the emergence of a free child is cultural and social. The dominance of certain ideologies scarcely allows them to be individuals or independent individuals. In this way or another, children are reared dependent on certain ideologies and state apparatus. Modernization is also an ideology that is dictated on another society, in our case Turkey (Meric, 1983). The discourse of modernization has engulfed the whole Turkish society and has been normalized, although considerable conflicts have been experienced between the conservative and progressive elites, scholars and people. Even today, how children should be reared and education is a contentious issue.

In Ottoman culture, the youngster was relegated to a secondary place, as seen by the fact that people who thought about children and educators who constructed the school system on a critical basis were, for the most part, absent. (Cebeci, 2009)

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This proves that the school system was founded on a critical premise. The Ottomans' attitude toward children and the continuation of child education based on ancient methods, such as the use of beating as a means of instruction in the school system, can be seen in the guidance books that have been used by Ottomans at home and in schools for centuries (Kesebir, 2010). These books have been used by Ottomans to teach their children moral lessons and teach them how to behave appropriately. As an illustration of this, the Ottoman educational system included the use of corporal punishment, more often known as beating, as a teaching method. This book was packed with guidelines and recommendations that imposed as many restrictions on the life of children and teenagers as was physically conceivable. The Ottomans had a very limited grasp of socialization and conventional forms of discipline, and they considered that the most essential instructional tools were physical punishment and fear. In other words, they believed that fear and physical punishment were the most essential instructional instruments (Mardin, 2001).

There is a connection that can be made in Ottoman culture between the fact that a child lives in close proximity to his or her family, the child does not have any problems in school and is able to easily adjust to new environments, and the architecture of the schools is similar to that of a home. This connection is thought to be the reason why Ottoman children are so well-adjusted. When the mental state of the child is taken into account, it is possible to make the assertion that the child benefits from this circumstance in the process of gaining social skills. The preponderance of religious instruction in schools as well as the teaching of the Holy Quran via memorization exemplify an inventive, award-winning, and unscientific educational system. It was the duty of the Enderun School, which occupied a prominent place within the Ottoman educational system, to ensure that non-Muslim children were brought up in accordance with Ottoman culture in order to prepare them for careers as bureaucrats serving the upper classes of the state (Mardin, 2001). Efforts were made to Turkify and Islamize non-Muslim youngsters before their parents were permitted to let them live in Enderun with their families. In order to attain this goal, they were educated about the norms and rituals of Turkish culture while they were in the company of Turkish families (Tunaya, 1960).

Due to the fact that Ottoman intellectuals were cut off from the process of modernity that was going place in the West, they kept their distance not only from the subject of children but also from its interpretation and philosophy (Tunaya, 1960). In spite of the fact that during the 19th century there was an increase in efforts to modernize, perspectives in the field of infancy were unable to evolve,

and a modern philosophy of education was not able to be reached because of the pressure that was placed by tradition and religion. The traditional Ottoman perspective of education was based on the cultivation of an ideal human type that was pious, submissive, silent, and did not question authority. This conception of the human being formed the foundation of the Ottoman educational system. The religious training of children was given a very big part in the old Ottoman way of life, and this played a very significant role in the entire formation of their personalities. The fact that education in neighborhood schools is founded on religion, the reluctance of residents of the neighborhood to maintain traditionalism as a whole in social life, and the phenomenon of a community in terms of belief system are all indicators of an awareness of socialization. The existence of a neighborhood is thought to play a role in the process of socialization because of all of these elements. During the westernization that took place in the nineteenth century, it showed that education by itself was not enough to meet the demands of the new society. According to Mardin (2009), education, which is arguably the single most important aspect of modernization, is not yet at its complete stage of development. It is obvious that this is the case. These include the fact that education is not properly accessible to members of the population, that schools such as neighborhood schools are both incomplete and inadequate, and that there is a lack of consciousness regarding the relevance of people's literacy levels. In addition, there is a lack of awareness regarding the significance of people's literacy levels.

## **MODERNIZATION AND CHILDREN**

Since the inception of the Tanzimat era, significant endeavors have been undertaken to assure the provision of education to children in Turkey, aligning with the continuous process of modernization inside the nation. During the tenure of Abdulhamid II, a period marked by political unrest within the Ottoman Empire, there was a notable surge in the enrollment of individuals pursuing a Western-style education. Moreover, the rate of attendance in educational institutions exhibited a consistent upward trajectory. During this concurrent time frame, the Ottoman Empire played a significant role in facilitating the advancement of the scientific method. The measures undertaken to achieve women's emancipation were equally significant in advancing the cause of children's emancipation. Both cohorts had significant advantages as a result of these modifications. Primarily due to the perception of the mother-offspring bond as a crucial and noteworthy element within Ottoman and Turkish society. Throughout the modernizing

process, the safeguarding of children by both the state and society has been a longstanding and commendable tradition, dating back to the Ottoman Empire. However, it is important to acknowledge that these very institutions can also present significant obstacles to a child's ability to cultivate and express their individuality. Despite the fact that safeguarding children has been a longstanding practice profoundly embedded in the process of modernity, this phenomenon has persisted. Throughout the duration of the Ottoman Empire, there has been a consistent provision of child protection by both the state and the society. As a consequence, children who come from impoverished backgrounds have been excluded from participating in a historical trajectory that would enable them to access a comprehensive education encompassing liberal, democratic, and critical perspectives, as well as individual-focused skills. The involvement of children in the modernization process in Turkey has been a challenging aspect, mostly attributed to the exclusion of impoverished children from this historical trajectory. As a consequence, children have emerged as a significant source of grief and difficulty within this societal transformation. The underlying explanation for this phenomenon can be attributed to the perception of children as passive entities by both the state and families within the context of ideological frameworks. This is a matter that necessitates alteration. This poses several issues due to multiple factors.

While political secularism gained momentum in the Western world until the mid-19th century, it is widely acknowledged that the Ottoman Empire maintained a steadfast commitment to religion and adhered to a religious-based policy, despite its divergence from the transformative developments taking place in Europe. This phenomenon has been widely acknowledged for an extended period of time. During this particular historical era, there was a significant emphasis on the equitable treatment of all individuals, which aligned with the Tanzimat Edict. The Tanzimat Edict, being the inaugural instance of specific prohibitions being established, coincided with this emphasis. The non-Muslim residents of the Ottoman Empire saw a reawakening as a direct result of the significant emphasis placed on equality. The rapid implementation of reforms in the Middle East can be attributed to Europe's sustained attention to the awakening that occurred in the region. During the 1850s, there was a notable expansion of rights, and the Ottoman Empire began to demonstrate an increasing awareness of the impact exerted by Western powers. According to Ortaylı's (2008) analysis, the reforms enacted during the Tanzimat period were primarily driven by the objective of granting rights to Christians. The granting of these rights was meant to take place within

the context of the Tanzimat period. The reforms intended for implementation within Turkish society during the Tanzimat period were ultimately not effectively realized.

The illusions described by Berkes (2002) can indeed be observed in Turkish literature, however their manifestation may differ from the author's depiction. Mardin (2001) asserts that Ottoman novelists, operating in an era characterized by limited advancement in the field of history, conducted meticulous analyses of social transformation. These authors effectively communicated to their readers the consequences of the modernization movement on political establishments, the evolving dynamics of social interactions, and the hardships experienced by individuals as a consequence of this transformative process. This event occurred at a period characterized by the nascent phase of the Ottoman Empire's formation. This accomplishment was realized in an era characterized by a relatively less developed state of historical study compared to the present. He proceeded to assert that Turkish novels abound with very informative content pertaining to the social predicaments encountered by Ottoman society in the Tanzimat era, as well as the peculiar circumstances that ensued as a direct consequence of these obstacles inside Ottoman society. According to his statement, the aforementioned facts can be located throughout Turkish literary works. The individual made reference to the availability of this knowledge in Turkish literature as a primary source. Turkes (2003) similarly emphasized that the ongoing conflict between the East and the West would be a consequence of the nationalist and conservative discourse that emerged in the post-Republic era. This conflict is identified as the central theme of the Tanzimat book, which serves utilitarian and pioneering objectives in terms of societal education. Turkes's perspective aligns with the sentiments articulated by Turkes (2003). Turkes posited that the enduring nature of this conflict, which constitutes the central thematic concern of the novel, will be transmitted across successive generations.

During the Tanzimat period, the representation of children in novels evolved as a literary mechanism that portrayed the children's plight of being trapped between the influences of Eastern and Western civilizations. This literary method depicted the children's predicament as a literary device. Because the authors had a low propensity toward embracing westernization and a high propensity toward maintaining traditional values, the novels provided children with direction on how to maintain those traditional values. This was due to the authors' relative lack of interest in westernization. The progress of modernization is greatly aided by the contribution of education in a significant way. Both the Ottoman and Western

educational systems understood the need of providing equal access to education for both males and females. The novels acted as a reflection of the societal challenges that young people all around the Ottoman Empire were dealing with at the time. The topic of discussion is the challenges that children in today's society confront as a result of the absence of either their mother or father in their life. The phenomena of young people in this particular setting going through the process of westernization has been observed, and most writers have a pessimistic outlook on it as a result. The story depicts a situation in which children going through a transition come into conflict with the values of their peers.

### **CHILDREN IN NOVELS**

There is no evidence in the literature to suggest that children are raised in a democratic environment, lack the ability to critically engage with ideology, or are not educated in accordance with democratic principles. The phenomenon of children being shielded from certain experiences can be attributed to the prevalence of traditional family structures within the majority of households. This can be attributed to either a conscious adherence to a particular ideology or the perpetuation of rituals that serve as manifestations of said ideology within educational institutions. It can be argued that early literature often serves as a means to impart moral instruction to children, particularly within the context of Islamic tradition. Furthermore, these literary works possess a notable inclination to influence children's adherence to the ideological and traditional beliefs embraced by their respective authors. The influence of this phenomena extended even to village writers who espoused Turkish nationalism, leading them to impart this ideology to children without subjecting it to critical examination, thereby considering it an unquestionable reality. Fakir Baykurt, who was raised in village institutes during his formative years, might be considered a prime exemplification of this assertion. The implementation of a democratic and critical educational approach within schools seems to be lacking, despite the inherent potential of education as a transformative opportunity for students. In this context, village institutes are largely autonomous entities as people are expected to uphold the philosophy through their own initiatives. As a result, the local institutes remain mostly undisturbed by the aforementioned process. Following the conclusion of their academic day, youngsters who had been raised in line with the ideological principles imparted within the classroom environment proceeded to engage in laborious activities within agricultural fields. The topics of play and the formation

of a child's personal identity are sometimes overlooked in discussions about childhood.

## **VIOLATION OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN NOVELS**

The findings of the research show that the functions that are assigned to children in literary works have evolved significantly over the course of human history. During the time of the Tanzimat, several different groups of people came into being, such as slaves, prisoners, people of European heritage, and children who had lost both of their parents and were therefore raised as orphans. Concurrently, novelists of the time were exploiting children as a tool to explore the issue of the conflict of values that existed between the East and the West. These conversations took place in the context of the novels that they were writing. During the Tanzimat period, it was noted that children who were brought up in a manner that was Westernized tended to encounter unpleasant repercussions, but children who adhered to traditional values were, to some extent, represented as being rewarded in the literary works. This can be seen as a contrast between the children who were brought up in a Westernized manner and those who clung to traditional values. During the Tanzimat period, novel writers showed the bureaucracy and the nobility, and as a result, they intimately experienced the clashes between eastern and western values (Mardin, 2001). During this period in history, children all over society experienced a condition of uncertainty as a result of the insufficient governmental determination of westernization. This was the case even for the youngest members of the population.

The empirical evidence supporting the sociological framework for understanding a child's experiences from a broader perspective is bolstered by the observation that not only sociologists, but also bureaucrats and teachers, contribute to and produce publications that align with the prevailing ideology. Sociologists also generate writings that are not associated with the dominant worldview. Throughout numerous historical epochs, the fates of children have been significantly shaped by political factors, exhibiting diverse degrees of impact. Since the era of the Tanzimat, children have been raised in accordance with the ideals of this sociological paradigm. The introspective contemplation of the child's own identity is limited to the boundaries of the postmodern literary piece, which functions as the platform for this observation. The present circumstances have escalated to an extent that the protagonists in a range of postmodern literary works have either already engaged in acts of self-inflicted mortality or are contemplating

such self-harming actions. The child depicted in the novel set in Tanzimat can be observed to have been influenced by postmodern literature, which has played a notable part in shaping the child's individuality within the narrative, as compared to a youngster residing in the contemporary age. Upon doing a more thorough analysis of the literary works produced under the framework of social realism, it becomes evident that these publications consistently endorse a particular ideology. This becomes evident when the works are subjected to close scrutiny. This phenomenon is observable to the unaided human eye. It might be argued that the postmodern novel possesses the capacity to transcend the constraints inherent in social realism literature, so substantiating its position as the sole literary subgenre capable of attaining a heightened degree of advancement. Postmodern novels are a kind of literary expression that surpasses the confines of ideology, enabling a comprehensive exploration of the individuality of young individuals via the lenses of sociology and psychology. The aforementioned characteristic is a fundamental element that differentiates postmodern novels from their classic counterparts.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

While modernism has indeed made notable strides in the realm of public and governmental institutions, the comprehensive modernization of individuals as a collective entity remains an ongoing and unfinished endeavor. As a result, the child's upbringing conformed to the state's agenda of modernization, which therefore impeded the child's capacity to achieve the position of an autonomous individual, a fundamental element of modernity (Oğuz, 2010). The recognition of the child as an independent being became evident in the framework of the postmodern novel. In the period following 1980, novels have persistently delved into themes surrounding conventional values, nationalist ideology, the process of modernization, and the influence of westernization. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the considerable emphasis placed on the importance of individuality.

There is the opportunity, in subsequent research initiatives, for a more in-depth investigation of the sociological situations surrounding children, particularly within the framework of Turkish modernization, by adopting a method that is period-specific. It would be useful for future research to investigate this topic via the lens of political sociology given the enormous influence that political and ideological forces have on the development of a kid within this historical environment. Studies in the topic have the potential to play an important part in the development of current Turkish history, in addition to the historical and



theoretical investigations that are already being conducted. In addition, taking an interdisciplinary approach to research that investigates in depth the place and role of children in the canonical works of Turkish literature may result in the production of new levels of comprehension. It is possible for sociological attention to be directed toward the analysis of various cultural approaches to child rearing by making use of comparative research. It is absolutely necessary to carry out research that investigates the experiences of children in their day-to-day lives from postmodern, poststructuralist, interpretive, and critical vantage points.

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