Chapter 19

Transformation in the Delivery of Public Social Services and E-Government Systems:
A Study on the Turkish Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Services

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ABSTRACT

The foremost aim of this study is to examine the role and substantiality of digitalization in public services in Turkey. In this context, public services provided by the Turkish Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Services in digital environment through e-government have been examined. Under the Law on the Right to Act, information on the aforementioned subject was requested from the Turkish Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Services. Based on the information acquired, it has been discussed the transformation in the delivery of public services at the ministry with the impact of digitalization. As a result of this study, it has been determined that the ministry benefits from digitalization in the delivery of public services through the e-government due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, it has been determined that the ministry would like to transfer all of its services to digital environment in the future.

INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technologies leads to the reorganization of social life. In particular, the opportunity of easier data portability and accessibility has remarkably brought several innovations. The technological transformation is briefly called 'digitalization.' Digitalization is a transfer of concrete data to the virtual platform. By means of digitalization, any dependence on physical space in the delivery of public services has decreased applausively. Thanks to digitalization, the deliv-

ery of public services has started to assert itself not only in public offices, but also in the cases/places which the citizens demand for. For instance, a citizen who will apply for social aid services can apply through electronic government (e-government) gateway as online instead of arriving to a relevant public institution. Hence, this has expectantly brought forth the acceleration of public social services and the increase of citizen satisfaction. The process of digitalization as a dynamic course is being advanced with the new-fangled developments through innovative technological approaches. The system of electronic government (e-government) gateway has emerged as a result of digitalization, as well. As briefly stated, e-government is a delivery system of public services in a digital environment. Through the e-government, public services can be provided in a digital environment easily, cost-free and speedily. The significance of digitalization in the delivery of public services has been well-understood during the restrictions that arose precisely as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. At first, curfew orders (lockdowns) have been officially applied in all over the world including Turkey due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The easy transmission and the fatal consequences of the COVID-19 have brought essential changes in social life. The fact that the COVID-19 pandemic has more devastating effects specifically on the citizens aged 65 and over has led to innovative efforts to ensure that citizens in this age group shall benefit from public services with ease. Moreover, the number of citizens who are unemployed due to the restrictions of the curfew orders and who are in need of social aids has further increased. Social aid is, briefly, a public service provided by state to its citizens on such issues as health, education and employment. Social aid includes certain citizens as young persons, families, disabled persons, persons in poverty, and all those in need. There are some substantial points for the sake of social aids to be managed effectively and so to function adequately to achieve their goals. Firstly, social aids must essentially be accessible for all applicants. Even though a state renders a variety of social services in terms of its social aids, the inaccessibility of social aids might avert the achievement of the intended goals undesirably. Because of the social aids are among the public services, different searches have also been undertaken in the delivery and accessibility of such aids. Public services are performed by state or by public legal entities in order to address the needs of citizens. The aim of public services is to fulfill the needs of citizens within the framework of the public interest in the most effective and efficient way. The main purpose of this study is to research the role and importance of digitalization in the delivery of public services in Turkey. Based on this, the study will examine the public services provided by the Turkish Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services in digital environment through the e-government. Under the law on the Right to Information Act for obtaining data on legal base, the related data has been requested from the Turkish Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services. The following questions have been directed to the Turkish Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services within the scope of the Law on the Right to Information Act for obtaining data:

1. Which services does the Turkish Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services provide through the e-government?
2. How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the Turkish Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services in the delivery of public social services?
3. How many people have applied to the Turkish Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services in order to benefit from the annual public social services through the e-government?
4. What percentage of public social services does the Turkish Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services provide through the e-government?

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