

ON THE THRESHOLD of SOCIAL EROSION: THE DYNAMICS of SOCIOLOGICAL and PSYCHOLOGICAL COLLAPSE

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Abstract: Throughout history, societies are not only with large -scale disasters such as wars, natural disasters or economic crises; At the same time, value abrasions, collective consciousness and collective mental fatigue have entered into collapse processes. In the modern age, this collapse has taken a quiet, invisible and progressive form. The loneliness of the individual, the weakening of social ties, the loss of meaning and the widespread psychological disorders are no longer individual problems; It should also be considered as an indicator of a structural and cultural dissolution. Émile Durkheim's concept of “anomi, is still valid in explaining the increasing alienation in today's societies; Viktor Frankl's definition of “meaning gap” also summarizes the existential crisis of the modern individual. This article aims to address how the basic basis of the social structure crashes and how a multi -layered dissolution process works from family to institutions, from values to individual mental health. It is observed that these symptoms of collapse become more visible and intense in societies that experience rapid social change processes such as Türkiye. In the study, both structural (macro) institutional dissolution, value erosion and social insecurity; As well as individual (micro) burnout, digital loneliness and psychological fragility indicators will be examined. The social collapse shaped by concepts such as anomy, alienation and depreciation in the historical process reveals itself with structural indicators such as insecurity in institutions, deterioration of family structure and dysfunctional of collective values. Parallel to this process, anxiety disorders, burnout syndrome, digital isolation and sense of meaninglessness are becoming widespread; Collective traumas are eroding the psychological strength of individuals. In this study, the dynamics of collapse in which contemporary societies are exposed to on the basis of socio-psychological interactions are analyzed; A comparative perspective supported by field studies and up -to -date data from Turkey is presented. In addition, solutions such as reconstruction of social capital, community -based mental health support and restorative social policies are developed to increase the capacity of social resistance to collapse. The findings allow both pessimistic and hope for the future of the society.

Keywords: Social collapse, psychological erosion, anomy, digital loneliness, burnout, social capital, psychological strength, socio-psychological interaction.

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INTRODUCTION

Social collapse is that the structural, cultural and psychological integrity of a society is seriously disrupted; It can be defined as a multi -layered process in which institutions lose their functions, wear value systems and weaken the mental strength of individuals. The collapse of civilizations throughout history is not only for economic or military reasons; It is also associated with the breakage of social ties, the loss of collective values and the proliferation of psychologically exhausted individuals (Tainter, 1988). This process in the sociological level; While the loss of legitimacy of institutions, weakening of social norms and decreasing confidence between individuals; In the psychological level, depression, despair and loss of meaning manifests itself with symptoms (Bauman, 2000). The theoretical foundations of the concept of social collapse have undergone an important evolution with émile durkheim's concept of “anomy .. According to Durkheim, anomy is a condition that causes individuals to feel worthless and aimless as a result of the dissolution in the normative structure of the society (Durkheim, 1897/2002). This approach has

gained importance in the context of increasing individuality and social isolation in modern societies. The conceptualization of Zygmunt Bauman's “fluid modernity ((Liquid Modernity) draws attention to the identity crisis created by individuals inability to root in constantly changing, unstable and uncertain social structures (Bauman, 2000). Gilles Lipovetky (2006) emphasizes that with the increase of narcissistic individuals in postmodern societies, the sense of responsibility is weakened and that common goodness has lost its importance. These theoretical frameworks contribute to the understanding of crisis societies that become more visible with factors such as pandemia, climate crisis, migration waves and economic inequalities.

In order to understand the impact of digitalization on spiritual loneliness more systematically, in an empirical study we conducted in this field on behalf of the standing Health Education Consultancy Services Limited Company. Together with Prof. Dr. Derya Berrak Yenturk, we took the Fomo (Fear of Missing Out - Fear of kidnapping the developments). Our research does not only

cause FOMO's mental breaks at the individual level; It also revealed that it triggers social pressure mechanisms such as visibility pressure, status competition and normative harmony coercion. The data obtained from 1019 participants show that there are strong relationships between digital dependence and social anxiety, low self-esteem and burnout syndrome. In addition, the digital detox process we applied in the experimental plane had a significant effect on psychological healing and cognitive relaxation in individuals. The findings show that it has become a dynamic of digital loneliness not only the internal peace of the individual, but also to a dynamics of collapse that erodes collective psychological resistance (Yildirim & Yenturk, 2024).

This study aims to analyze the multi-dimensional nature of the collapse by dealing with the phenomena of alienation, sense of worthlessness, social fragmentation and individual burnout in contemporary societies at both sociological and psychological levels. The examination of mutual interactions between the dissolution of the social structure and the psychological health of the individual aims to contribute to the development of healing interventions both at individual and social level. This research is looking for answers to the following basic questions:

- How does sociological collapse manifest in today's societies?
- What is the relationship between individual psychological deteriorations and social erosion?
- How does the loneliness created by corporate dissolution and digitalization affect the mental health of individuals?
- How can resistance mechanisms against socio-psychological collapse be developed?

The research is carried out with a qualitative design and is based on theoretical literature screening. It also includes current field studies from Turkey and comparative analysis of social crises in countries such as the USA, Japan and France. A holistic picture of socio-psychological collapse was drawn by blending sociological theories and psychology theories.

INDICATORS of SOCIOLOGICAL COLLAPSE

The decrease in trust in public institutions, the cornerstone of social integrity, is one of the main indicators of sociological collapse. Structures such as state, education, justice and health are the basic institutions that feed the sense of legitimacy, equality and social justice of societies. However, in recent years, the insecurity against these institutions has become a global scale. In particular, corruption, merit and partisan government forms are combined with bureaucratic blockages and corporate activity weakens and the people's belief in the state shaken (Rothstein & Theorell, 2008). Studies in Türkiye show that citizens' concerns about the justice system and the impartiality of public services has increased (Kalaycıoğlu, 2020). The decrease in institutional confidence also weakens the hopes of individuals to the future and the principle of "mutual trust" on which the social agreement is based is eroded. This is not only an administrative crisis, but also creates a problem of social integrity. The dissolution in the family structure is one of the most concrete examples of the weakening of social ties at the micro level. With the increase in divorce rates, the proliferation of single-parent families and the transition to individual life, the family gradually loses its function in solidarity and value transfer (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Traditionally, the family, which is the main institution of social control, belonging and trust, turns

into an area where more emotional breaks are experienced today. In addition, the spread of the culture of loneliness leads to the breaking of individuals from both family and wide social structures. Especially in the metropolitan cities, the young population lives in the digital world but physically lonely, which increases socio-psychological fragility. Generation conflicts are not only in value transfer; It also points to a major break in the imagination of the common future (Twenge, 2017). When the weakening of collective values is combined with the excessive encouragement of individualism and competitiveness, the sense of social solidarity leaves its place to alienation. In modern societies, basic human values such as compassion, justice, empathy and belonging begin to become dysfunctional, constitutes the most shocking dimension of sociological collapse. While the over-consumption culture of the capitalist system directs individuals to act in their own interests, collective ethical values lose their meaning over time (Sennett, 1998). Especially individuals who are exposed to "Violence Violence üzerinden through media and digital platforms become insensitive to traumatic events and numbness is developing against the suffering of others (Chouliraki, 2006). This is not limited to the monitoring of violent content; It also causes decrease in empathy capacity and relaxation of social ties. The society is increasingly "thickening" emotionally, usualizing violence and filling with individuals who experience the fatigue of conscience.

SYMPTOMS of PSYCHOLOGICAL BREAKDOWN

In modern societies, threats to individual mental health become increasingly widespread and complex. Depression, anxiety disorders and suicide attempts are not only by the individual's personal traumas; It is also directly related to the fragility of the social structure (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023). Especially in young people, anxiety disorders and worthlessness; The instability in the family structure is fed with uncertainties in the education system and economic insecurity. The individual mental health crisis was deepened in the period after the COVID-19 pandemic; Uncertainty, insulation and economic concerns have taken place in the minds as a collective trauma (Pfefferbaum & North, 2020). The effects of this collective trauma were not limited to the period of pandemic, but continued with long-term anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and social withdrawal behaviors. Social closure increased the tendency of individuals to avoid social interactions; It has caused weakening of spiritual support systems. The concept of "meaning gap" developed by Viktor Frankl (1985) is very explanatory in terms of understanding the mental state of contemporary societies. Frankl emphasizes that when the individual suffers from the loss of meaning in his life, he will fall into the existential void and that this will have destructive consequences on mental health. In today's societies, it is seen that individuals live not only physical, but also emotional and mental burnout. In the psychological literature, "Well-Being", *olma goodness* ", is associated with the capacity of the individual to get satisfactory from life; Nowadays, this concept is increasingly replaced by the "folding state" (Seligman, 2011). People now live life focused on survival and crises; This deepens the sense of collective hopelessness. Burnout syndrome (Burnout) is not limited to professional life, but also at the level of social relations and individual identity. The apparent ease of attachment brought by digitalization in fact makes individuals more lonely and isolated. The "false commitment" established on social media causes individuals to exist in superficial relations that are far from real

social support (Turkle, 2011). Although people appear to be “connected” in the digital environment, they are psychologically disconnected. Especially in the younger generation FOMO (Fear of Missing Out-Fear of kidnapping developments) and Doom-Scrolling (non-stopping between bad news), such as behavioral syndromes are widespread; It is observed that this increases the sense of anxiety, sleep disorders and dissatisfaction (Elhai et al., 2020). In this regard, my colleague. In our study with Prof. Dr. Derya Berrak Yenturk, we discussed the effects of digitalization on individual mental health within the framework of the concept of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). Our research is that FOMO is not only causing mental breaks at the individual level; It also reveals that it triggers socio-psychological printing mechanisms such as visibility pressure at social level, status competition and normative harmony. At the end of the quantitative data collection process with 1019 participants, the findings we obtained show that there is a strong relationship between digital addiction and social anxiety, low self-esteem and burnout symptoms. These data clearly reveal that digital loneliness has become not only the internal balance of the individual in contemporary societies, but also a central collapse dynamics that threatens collective mental health (Yildirim & Yenturk, 2024). In addition, algorithmic content flows are trapped in social shell by surrounding individuals with similar thoughts only; It is seen that this situation narrows the empathy capacity and fuel the social polarization. As a result, digitalization fuels a spiritual collapse intertwined with loneliness, burnout and loss of meaning; It weakens the psychological strength of the society as well as the individual as well as the individual.

SOCIOPSYCHOLOGICAL DYNAMICS and INTERACTIONS

Social traumas have serious psychological effects at the individual level. Collective crises such as migration, economic collapses and natural disasters lead not only to material losses, but also to damage the sense of identity, security and belonging. Migration process triggers psychological tensions such as displacement, rootlessness, exclusion and cultural shock in individuals (Silove, 2013). In the periods of economic crisis, unemployment, borrowing and loss of social status brings intense anxiety, despair and burnout in individuals (Roubini & Mihm, 2010). Undefined events such as natural disasters and pandemics shake the individual's existential security; The loss of security may manifest itself with symptoms such as post-traumatic stress disorder (TSSB), depression and anxiety. Such traumas can be transformed not only into an individual but also a social dissolution (Bonanno et al., 2010). In the moments of crisis, communities tend to develop defense mechanisms such as panic, excessive reaction or collective denial. In particular, information pollution spread through media and social media can fuel mass panic by disrupting the perception of reality (Glassner, 1999). Social panic weakens individuals' rational thinking skills; With short-term and reflexive reactions, it can endanger social compliance. Freud (1921/2004) shows that individuals have lost their personal limits within the group and easily caught up in collective emotions. Today, this dynamic works faster and uncontrolled through digital media. In the social psychology literature, “emotional contagion (emotional contagion) is defined as the process of unconsciously imitating and internalizing the emotions of people around them (Hatfield, Cacioppo & Rapson, 1994). Negative emotions such as anger, fear and helplessness, especially in times of crisis, spread rapidly in the social field; This makes it difficult for individuals to manage their own emotional states. This spread can have pathological

consequences such as protest waves, lynching culture or social polarization. The role of the media, especially social media in this process, is decisive. The spread of emotions without filter and uncontrolled increases the risk of social instability. Psychological resistance (Resilience) refers to the capacity of individuals and societies to recover in the face of traumatic events. However, this capacity is related not only to individual characteristics but also with structural conditions. Factors such as unfair income distribution, social exclusion, institutional insecurity and inequalities of opportunities weaken the capacity of individuals against crises (Masten, 2001). In addition, the positioning of neoliberal policies as responsible for everything causes the individualization of structural problems; It creates a sense of guilt and inadequacy in the individual. This is another structural factor that consumes the resistance capacity. The general endurance of the society is not only from its reaction to crises; Before the crisis, it also feeds on its social capital, trust, solidarity and value integrity.

FIELD WORK EXAMPLES and CURRENT INDICATORS from TURKEY

In recent years, anomaly indicators, which have become evident in various fields of social structure in recent years, clearly reflect the state of “normlessness” by Durkheim's definition. Increased young unemployment, continuous changes in the education system, public appointments far from merit and the proliferation of segments that are dependent on social assistance reveal a structural dissolution in social functioning (Korkut & Esen, 2020). The prevalence of violence against women and child abuse is an indication of not only individual pathologies, but also of institutional and cultural weaknesses. In addition, the “lynch culture” or organized through social media refers to a digital anomaly where individuals act with rapid reactions and collective anger. The lack of coordination in disaster situations such as earthquake, flood and fire revealed a serious crisis of trust in the state-society relationship (Ergüder, 2022). The dynamics of social collapse are not unique to Turkey, but on the global level, we encounter in different ways:

- The opioid crisis in the US has become a public health disaster that makes it visible to the health system, insecurity, poverty and individual loneliness. As of 2022, more than 200 people die every day for opioid-linked reasons (CDC, 2023). This crisis also reveals the tendency of the individual to destroy his own body in the meaning gap.
- Lonely Deaths in Japan (Kodokushi) are the dramatic consequences of rapidly aging population, weakened family ties and individual isolation. Every year, tens of thousands of elderly individuals stayed at home for days or even weeks without noticing their death in life (Yamada & Suzuki, 2020).
- The Yellow Vests Movement in France is the expression of collective anger that explodes against economic inequality and social exclusion. This movement expressed the insecurity of the state's neoliberal policies, the invisibility of the lower classes and the social injustice (Béland & Roco, 2020).

These examples reveal how the social structure becomes fragile in its own dynamics and shows signs of collapse in different countries. The theme of social collapse has been intensively processed in the field of media and art, especially in recent years.

This shows that the perception of collapse in both individual and collective unconscious is rooted. Dystopian series (eg Black Mirror, The Handmaid's Tale, Years and Years) are about the ethical, emotional and social collapse of humanity lost in technological progress. In the world of cinema, films such as Joker (2019) have become the symbol of the anger and madness of the individual pushed out of the system; The collapse has become a social mirror through individual tragedy. In Turkey, such as another productions, class division, repressed emotions and the search for meaning of meaning. Discourses such as "moral collapse", "values erosion", "Where to go", which are frequently used in the public opinion, show that the sense of collective uncertainty and the perception of dissolution spreads daily language (İnceoğlu, 2021).

SOLUTION SEARCH: RESILIENT SOCIETY and PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID

One of the most critical headings in preventing social collapse is the reconstruction of the social capital of society. Social capital is directly related to the functionality of inter-individual trust, reciprocity norms and the functionality of social networks (Putnam, 2000). However, in the environments where trust is damaged, the sense of belonging is shaken and the participation is weakened, the social capital is seriously exhausted. In order to reorganize the society, individuals should be confident to institutions, neighbors and civil structures. Belonging is not only a physical space; It also includes an emotional connection to value, meaning and common goals. Participation is not only in the election periods of citizens; It also expresses that it is actively involved in decision-making processes in daily life. The holistic reconstruction of these three hairpins will increase the collective endurance of society. In environments where psychological collapse becomes widespread, individual interventions are insufficient and more comprehensive and systematic solutions are needed. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2022) proposes the expansion of "community-based mental health services" especially in times of crisis. According to this approach, mental health is not only a clinical issue; It is an area intertwined with social support systems, community dynamics and cultural contexts. The establishment of psychological support centers at the neighborhood level, group therapies and volunteer support networks can be evaluated within this scope. In addition, culturally sensitive, accessible and sustainable psychosocial intervention models should be developed for trauma communities (Tol et al., 2011). With the erosion of social values and the increase in individualistic lifestyles, education and media have become more critical in terms of value production. Priority to the transfer of social emotional learning (flood), empathy, cooperation and ethical values in the education system will support the growth of future generations as durable and sensitive individuals (Casel, 2020). The media should be considered as a tool that produces value not only, but also provides news. Strengthening public broadcasting, supervision of content containing violence and manipulation, expanding positive role models and increasing campaigns for the benefit of the society may contribute to the social repair process through the media. In the media, an informative and constructive language far from the exploitation of emotion should be adopted. In addition to classical therapy methods to strengthen psychological resistance, complementary and alternative support systems are also important. Reflexology is a method that provides

physical and mental relief through the pressure points associated with the nervous system and has been found to cope with the physical manifestations of stress (McVicar et al., 2007). Art therapy is a powerful tool that supports individuals' feelings, transforming their traumas, and creative ways of healing. The therapeutic effects of art-based practices such as drawing, music and drama in individuals with post-traumatic stress disorder have been scientifically proven (Malchioid, 2013). Trauma support groups allow individuals who have experienced similar experiences come together to share and develop solidarity. Particularly in post-disaster periods, group-based support models accelerate individual recovery processes and reduce the feeling of loneliness.

CONCLUSION

Social collapse is not only a physical or economic destruction; It also refers to the loss of meaning, trust, compassion and solidarity. This study revealed how the collapse affects both individual mental health and collective consciousness through the analyzes carried out on sociological and psychological indicators. This process, which progresses from institutional insecurity to individual burnout, from loneliness to social anger, has become one of the greatest fragility of modern societies. However, each collapse also carries the opportunity to restructure. The darkest periods of societies can be overcome in search of solidarity and meaning. In this context, not only structural reforms for reconstruction; At the same time, holistic support systems that increase psychological resistance are needed. It is essential to take repairing steps in every field from educational policies to media language, from neighborhood culture to alternative therapy methods. This article aims to present not only a diagnosis of sociopsychological collapse, but also a map of the solutions that would arise from this diagnosis. Future studies should focus on intervention models supported by more local examples and community-based mental health programs. The findings of the study are not independent of the processes of sociological and psychological collapse; On the contrary, it has revealed that there are structures intertwined, mutually fed and threatening social integrity in a multidimensional way. The decrease in trust in social institutions, the dysfunctional of value systems and the weakening of the social ties of individuals accelerates the collapse process at an institutional and structural level. This situation causes disintegration not only at the level of "society", but also in the psychological integrity of the individual. The findings examined within the scope of the article; It shows that psychological symptoms such as widespread depression, anxiety disorders, burnout syndrome, digital loneliness and loss of meaning are a reflection of environmental and social pressures experienced by individuals. It was understood that these symptoms were collective trauma, especially in the post-pandemic period, and eroded the psychological strength of the society. Indicators of collapse at the socio-psychological level are not limited to the abrasion of the individual's mental health or the ethical norms of the society. These processes also show themselves in areas such as media, education, economic structure and public discourses. Samples of field study presented in the article support that this collapse has become a global phenomenon that transcends national borders. Two basic scenarios about the future of societies stand out:

Pesimist Scenario:

If the current trends continue; In other words, if corporate trust continues to weaken, individual isolation increases and social

values continue to wear; This may fuel civil disintegration, political radicalism and social conflicts. In an environment where individuals become alienated from society, institutions become dysfunctional and meaning production, collective morale collapse will become inevitable. In such a table, mental health problems will become widespread, solidarity networks will weaken, and individuals will begin to adopt the “state of fold” as normal of their lives.

Optimistic scenario:

However, the crisis also offers a transformation opportunity. Societies can reconstruct themselves with “Repair Social Policies”, “Inclusive Education Systems”, “Society Based Mental Health Supports” and “Ethical Media” tools by realizing the collapse signals. When the social capital is reinforced, confidence between individuals repaired and collective durability is strategically supported; Psychological recovery is possible. This optimistic scenario is based on the assumption that society can repair itself and necessitates scientific, cultural and political interventions.

The limitations of this article are primarily methodological. The study does not include an field research supported by empirical data because it is based on theoretical literature screening and field study analyzes presented in the article. Therefore, the determinations and inferences presented are based on the analytical synthesis of secondary resources, not directly observed data. In addition, considering cultural context differences, it may be necessary to detail the dynamics of collapse specific to each country. The following suggestions can be made for further research:

- Through qualitative field research, it can be examined in depth how individuals experience the collapse process.
- The relations between quantitative studies and social trust, mental health and social capital can be tested numerically.
- Intercultural comparisons can contribute to distinguishing universal and local components of collapse dynamics.
- Media representations are an important data source for analyzing how society's perceptions of collapse are built.

Finally, solution -oriented intervention programs should be designed and community -based pilot applications should be made and their effectiveness should be measured scientifically.

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