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Favoritism and Nepotism in The Ottoman Empire

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Abstract : The professional criteria can be neglected in both the developing countries and the countries that have intensive traditional ties. One can be recruited or appointed according to his relations with a politician, the owner or the manager of a business instead of his qualifications. We come across with this situation, what is called as 'kin selection' or 'nepotism,' in our society both in the past and today.

In this study, we will try to explain the cognitive frame of favoritism especially nepotism (relative/kin favoritism) in Ottoman Empire, which has a very important role both in the world and the Turkish history, and also give some examples to it. Because nepotism is very important today for taking control of the management process in associations and corporations as in the past.

The Concept of Nepotism and Favoritism

Favoritism is giving someone preferential treatment. In other words it can be explained as the public officers defending their relatives when they behave against law. In literature, relative favoritism is called as 'nepotism,' friends and acquaintances favoritism is called as 'cronyism' and political favoritism is called as 'patronage' (Aktan and Çoban, 2008)

The reason of favoritism in public sector is more than money; it is about loyalty and responsibility. It is possible to use relative ties as an impression tool to affect the public officers instead of something economical like some goods or money. The essence of this cooperation depends on favoritism. (Yılmaz and Kılavuz, 2002)

Favoritism is a big problem of the bureaucracy. Favoritism, which in bureaucracy can be found in various forms, first took place in the literature when General Jackson won the presidential elections in 1828. The 'Protection System' he carried out was misused and afterwards the concept favoritism took place in the politics and management literature.

Yılmaz and Kılavuz (2002) define favoritism as some specific measures like going to the same schools, being from the same town, supporting the same political party being much more important than the universal measures that regulates the management practices.

The degeneration in politics provides a basis for degeneration in the society as well. The negativeness and the corruption in the politics affect the society's trust on the political system. This in turn reflects as the corruption in the society, which is most known as favoritism. (Aktan and Çoban, 2008)

The laziness and the blindness of being unable to see the future changes the society's habits from producing to consuming. It is really hard to make decisions about future in an environment like this where all the balances in the economy and politics are destroyed. The distrust that comes along with hopelessness drags the society to bribery or other illegal ways to become rich. (Özbilen, 2001: 1-2)

The most common types of favoritism are relative favoritism and political favoritism. In the public institutions 'relative favoritism' can be seen in the assignment of the jobs. It shows itself as showing preferential treatment to someone because of some personal factors such as his town, relatives, friends, etc. other than his qualifications. People sometimes try to take advantage of being friends or a relative of the public officer and ask the officer to treat him specially. In these kinds of situations sometimes the public officer depending on his responsibilities his relations require, treats the citizen in a special way then he does a plain citizen. (Yılmaz and Kılavuz, 2002: 25)

The first type of relative favoritism as known as “Nepotism” is “assigning someone to a public position according to his relative relations instead of the required qualifications.” According to some studies, especially in less developed countries, the close relative relations still have an important affect in formal organization structure. The second type is known as “cronyism” which is known as “assigning someone to a public position according to his relations such as friendship or citizenship.” Some researches say that there is no difference between nepotism and cronyism. (Yılmaz and Kılavuz, 2002: 25-26)

Another type of favoritism occurs when someone influential uses his force to ask a privileged treatment from a public officer. In this situation; the officer in case of asking a favor later or just to protect himself from the possible negative reactions, might does a privileged procedure. (Yılmaz and Kılavuz, 2002)

Nepotism, cronyism and partisanship can be seen in almost all the public offices. The wrong policy carried out in personnel management decreases the efficiency and also affects the trust to the government negatively. (Özbilen, 2001: 1-2)

The Formation Of Nepotism

Nepotism is a fact that is seen mostly in countries that have intense traditional ties and relations and where the market mechanism isn't developed well as well as in those family businesses in the developed countries. (Özler, Özler ve Gümüştekin, 2008: 438; Tepav, 2006)

“Kin selection” is a natural instinct in humans and as some scientist say in animals. According to the biological/ecological approaches nepotism is a rational behavior. These approaches define nepotism as a chosen behavior. (Özler, Özler ve Gümüştekin, 2008: 438)

The phrase “Friendship lasts a day, kinship lasts every day.” is taken from Kramer's book ‘L’Historie Commence a Summer’, summarizes nepotism as the continuance of trust from the human being's point of view. (Danışmend, 1979: 27)

Another factor in the forming of nepotism is the structure of family and society. The degree of society's being individualist or collectivist also affects nepotism. The appropriate composition of society's individualism or collectivism is important for the balance and health of society. In the western societies estrangement is seen because of excessive individualist structure. On the opposite side the excessive collectivist structure prevent the forming of non-governmental organizations; while the sharp collectivist structure forms estrangement in the eastern societies. In this context the spirit of cooperation should be built again in the western societies. On the other hand in the eastern societies the individualism should be supported so as to turn the firm and close community into a society. (Bayhan, 2002)

According to Fukuyama traditional family ties form dependant individuals and prevent the development of the countries. The continuance of only family and complex relative relations prevents economical progress. The individuals who only trust their family or relatives can't establish free will relationships. Nepotism is effective in those societies where the self-interest and solidarity in family comes before the ethical values. Family, relatives, citizenship, political party, clan, ideology or a religious community play a deterministic role in social relations. “When loyalty in social structure exceeds economical rationalism; then the cooperation in the commune will lead to favoritism in simple employment procedures.” (Bayhan, 2002)

The definitions of nepotism in the literature are as follows:

Nepotism is “employing or giving promotion to people according to their relative ties and ignoring whether they have the required qualifications such as education, skills, ability, etc.” (Özler, Özler and Gümüştekin, 2008: 438)

Nepotism is derived from a Latin word ‘nepos’ which means a ‘male cousin’ or a ‘grandson’. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nepotism>) The negative meaning of the word comes from the Renaissance period where the Popes assigned their nephews to the highest positions without looking at their qualifications. (Khanri vd.; 6-7) Thus it can be defined as giving position to nephews or other relatives according to relations other then capability or suitability. (Khatrı vd.; 7)

Another definition of nepotism is using one's preference in favor of a relative in assignment of important positions. The applications of nepotism can be seen mostly in less-developed countries where the traditional ties are more intense. (Özsemerci, 2003: 20, Uluyol, 2004: 63)

Some researches say that in case of nepotism the public officers don't have a benefit whereas other researches disagree with this idea. As a result it is obvious that the public officer gains prestige and recognition as well as monetary benefit from a status he doesn't deserve. (Tepav,2006)

In the private sector we see the applications of nepotism during the establishment of family businesses. (Uluyol, 2003: 63) It should be seen something natural to put family members in the important positions; but it can hurt the company negatively to employ someone without the required qualifications just because they are family members. Just like Nejat Eczacıbaşı said “It's a big mistake to hire inadequate talented family members and give them a managing position just because of their relations.” (Eczacıbaşı, 1999: 257)

The application of nepotism can be seen in two different ways:

- ✓ The ones who gain power give important positions to their friends and acquaintances. The most known way of nepotism is this. (Fişek; <http://webarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/2000/10/05/246865.asp>) In this kind of application nepotism is done by the one who owns power. The one who has authority uses this power to gain benefit to his relatives. We can say that in this kind of nepotism the person deliberately uses his position badly.
- ✓ In the other type of application the relatives themselves use the person's authority, name or power to gain advantage. (Fişek) We can see this kind of application especially in the government bidding processes.

Nepotism in History

Favoritism is seen in all periods of history: in Archaic China, India, Greece, the Roman Empire, the Sumerians, the Middle Ages, Age of Reason and today in most of the world. The Sumerian tablet, found in BC 4000, in Istanbul Archaeological Museum shows how an unsuccessful student became the most successful student of the class as well as the president of the class. It tells in the tablet how the family invites the teacher to their house, serve him food and give him presents.

(<http://www.tepav.org.tr/tur/admin/dosyabul/upload/yolsuzluk1.pdf>)

It is known that 2300 years ago the president of Brahmani counted the 40 ways of corruption and in the old China the civil servants were paid 'yang-lien' in addition to their salary just to prevent bribery. (http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/komisyon/yolsuzluk_arastirma/kaynaklar/Kisim_1.pdf)

Another interesting example of favoritism in history is Platon assigning his sister's son Speusippos to the management of the academy after himself in order for him to survive. (Platon; 2005: 13)

When the president of USA J. Garfield gets killed by an unemployed person, the system was questioned and The Law of Pendleton (1883) which decreased patronage and formed Government Personnel Unit was accepted. Thus the system changed from captured property to merit and career system. The senator Frank Murkowski, when chosen as the chief magistrate of Alaska assigned his daughter as the representative of the state was blamed for nepotism. John F. Kennedy was blamed for nepotism as well when he assigned his brother Robert Kennedy as his advisor. The second Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Abdul Razak, assigned his son Najib Tun Razak as vice president. The first prime minister of Singapore Lee Kuan Yew assigned his son as prime minister after himself. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nepotism>) In 1952 the Truman management was blamed for Cronyism because of assigning his friends to the public offices. (Khatri vd.;3)

Favoritism and Nepotism in Establishment of The Ottoman Empire

Until the 16th century it is possible to say that favoritism isn't seen in the Ottoman Empire. The reason of this was because of the theologians and their advices that were effective in the establishment of the empire as well as the precautions to prevent the bad going of the empire. During the 16th and 17th centuries when the favoritism starts, many tractates, which gave advices and warnings towards corruption and moral, such as tractate of Koçibey was indicted. (Özcan Yeniçeri, www.kibris.com, Erişim: 09.04.2009)

The advices of Şeyh Edebali to Osman Gazi have been the most important principles in the establishment of the Ottoman Empire. One of these advices was: "The country isn't an asset that is shared between the Sultan and his brothers or sons. The country only belongs to the Sultan." (Topbaş, 1999: 28) When we take these advices as a whole it isn't a surprise to not find a sign of favoritism during the establishment of the empire. Osman Gazi also advices his son Orhan Gazi not to turn aside from honesty and justice. (Topbaş; 1999: 26-29, 34- 35) It is hard to find applications of favoritism in such a system like this.

It can be said that nepotism isn't seen until the end of the 16th century. But towards the end of 16th century many resources show that corruption, bribery and nepotism becomes widespread.

Nepotism is a management style just like monarchy or dynasty and it has both its advantages and disadvantages just like every other system. Every culture has it's own trends towards nepotism where the traditions, symbols and rules differ in the application process. Thus there are differences between the Turkish nepotism, the American nepotism or the Italian nepotism. For example it is possible to come across with two different ways of becoming the Sultan in the Ottoman Empire. One is a relatively institutionalized method where the most talented brother becomes the Sultan. This is rather a way that covers both nepotism and competition. The other way is becoming the Sultan without having the talent or the capacity thanks to the intrigues. (Özler, Özler, Gümüştekin, 2008:438)

Favoritism And Nepotism During The Decline Period Of The Ottoman Empire

In the book of "The Moral and Mentality World of Economic Disengagement" Ülgener gives place to couplets showing the portrait of the people in the disengagement period. These couplets show that nepotism is a

matter of preference and that people should be leery on the cooperation with the foreign and should prefer their relatives even if they are unqualified. The couplets express that there should be distance with the foreign. (Ülgener, 1981: 205)

Favoritism is one of the major problems that come across after Kanuni. (Yılmaz ve Kılavuz; 2002: 26) C.H. Fleischer, in his monography on Mustafa Ali from Gallipoli, tells that the Ottoman intellectuals in the 16th century have a strong awareness of the law. These people criticize those who are assigned to some duties without having deserved it and talk about the concept of 'kanun-i kadim' which is a law on punishment, management and finance. Even though it is said that the government system is destroyed before the 16th century, nepotism is widespread after this century. (Özsemerci: 29- 30) After the 16th century corruption started wide spreading in every area.

After the 16th century the administrative system as well as the financial system fell down and the authority got lost in time. The loosing of the authority provides a basis on favoritism and bribery. (Özsemerci; 2003: 27).

"Another factor that supports this development is the financial problems that the public managers go through at the end of the 16th century. As a result of this the managers fell in trouble of surviving and negative effects on honesty and prestige occurs." (Bayar; 1979: 48)

From this point of view one can say that the applications of nepotism start with the government loosing power on economy and politics. These kinds of applications start even in the education system. The Medresseh structure starts to drop back after the 16th century and from this date on politics and favoritism starts to interfere with the education system. Before the 16th century, in order to become a teacher in the Medresseh academical qualifications were important whereas after the 16th century favoritism became more important. (Sağ; 2003: 17)

Some Examples of Favoritism and Nepotism in The Ottoman Empire

The Ottoman Empire was unable to cope with the applications of favoritism. The cradle of ulema is a good example of this. The scientists were called ulemas and they were intellectual people who were educated on both religion and social sciences. But during the decline period of the empire, in case the ulema had a son he would gain a salary as much as his father (the ulema himself) and he would be called 'cradle of ulema.' Thus just after he is born it is thought that he would be an intellectual person just like his father. Also in the 18th century it was ordered the non-educated boys of the ulema to grow a beard so as to cover for their illiteracy, which was made fun of. In the beginnings the salary was cut off when the son didn't become an intellectual; but later on this application was discarded. The cradle of the ulema has been the most beautiful example on favoritism in the Ottoman Empire. (Ortaylı, 2006)

The men who married with the daughters or the sisters of the Sultans were called as bridegroom. The ones married with the bigger sister of the Sultan was called brother-in-law. When choosing bridegroom, the status of the person was taken into importance not the age, the degree or the aristocracy. During the establishment period the gentleman of the Anatolian Seljuks, later on the gentlemen of sanjaks were chosen as bridegroom. Beginning from the 16th century the bridegroom was chosen from the Ottoman civil servants. The election would be told to the chosen person and ask him to get ready for the wedding. The bridegroom would indulge to the princess because of his respect to the dynasty. The bridegrooms who were working in the provinces would be assigned to Istanbul because the princesses weren't allowed to get out of Istanbul.

During the 18th century some high degreed public officers imitated the Sultan's way of living. They lived in very big residences and hired hundreds of servants. In order to strengthen their power they would hire young and talented Ottomans. And then make them marry with someone from the family in order to become relatives with them. This application was similar to making the grand vizier as bridegroom. If a young talented person succeeds to take attention of a high degreed officer, he will be assigned to important positions. During the 18th century this application was so common that the historians of that period used the term 'being bridegroom' as the finding of a protector and climbing up the steps of the Ottoman management. Fall from grace meant to confiscate the assets of the officer. (Findley, 1996)

One of the examples of favoritism in the Ottoman Empire is İbrahim Pasha. He has been first assigned as the grand vizier and then became the bridegroom after marrying with the Sultan's sister. Uzunçarşılı wrote about this event in his book called the History of Ottomans and pointed out that by marrying with the Sultan's sister Hatice he has raised his prestige. Clever, educated and someone very talented İbrahim Pasha has been the object of compliments never seen before in the empire. One of the main reasons of İbrahim's promotion is the closeness to the Sultan Süleyman. (Tezcan; 2004: 12- 14-15)

After the 17th century the occupation of ulema lost its importance and instead of the qualified people the ones who are patronized and who give a bribe were assigned to this occupation. Below are some examples of favoritism that occurred after the breakdown. There is emphasis on nepotism in these examples; because the favoritism in the examples are about the first and second degree relatives.

Sir Saadettin, who first was the teacher of Murat the 3rd and later on became his son's teacher became the Muslim judge of Mekka when his older son was 3 years old only. Immediately he was assigned as the Muslim judge of Istanbul which caused a rumor. A poet even wrote a poem about this corruption.

This child became a military judge after two months when he was only 29 years old. The other son of the teacher, named Esad suddenly became a Muslim judge of Edirne and after that at about 25 years old he became the Muslim judge of Istanbul. These promotions closed the doors to the real scholars and the positions of judges were opened to the sons of the Sultan's teachers, Military judges and the chief religious officials. (Uzunçarşılı, 1995: 123)

Sultan Mehmet the 3rd once complained about not having found an equitable and trustable man. When they asked him the reason he would tell them that he had complimented the chief religious official Sir Bostanzade and he had immediately assigned his ignorant brother as a military judge and also assigned another ignorant young as a Muslim judge to Salonika. He also told that his father's teacher Saadeddin by assigning one of his young sons to the military judge of Anatolia and the other to the Muslim Judge of Edirne, made him gain a bad reputation and himself shameful. (Uzunçarşılı, 1995: 123-124)

A study oriented to the working women in the Ottoman Bank has interesting results. According to the results most of the women working in the bank during 1911-1939 are the daughters of the privileged people.

"Behiye the daughter of the Commander of the Bosphorus Asaf Pahsa; Zaruhi Acemiyan the daughter of Sir Dikran, the eye doctor; Halab diplomat Michel Yakimansky's daughter Irène Yakimansky; Adèle Huri the daughter of a cotton Merchant Joseph Huri; Bedriye the daughter of a sergeant; lawyer Hasan Tahsin's daughter Meryem Muazzez [Berkand]; the daughter named Pierrette Alyanaki of a hat seller named Antoine; Alba Pech daughter of one of the old worker's of the bank; a commissioner's daughter Elsa Filozof; the gardner Alexandre's daughter Athanassia Fasulakis; the granddaughter of Cemile Sultan Mevhibe Cellaledin, etc... They all worked in the Otoman Bank in one part of their lives." (Ammour and Baruh; 1999)

The Precautions Taken in The Ottoman Empire to Prevent Favoritism and Nepotism

One of the main problems that bother the Ottoman Empire was favoritism. Lots of effort was made in order to prevent favoritism in the government businesses. The most significant example to these efforts was recruiting boys for the Janissary corps. This system can be explained as taking the non-muslim children to the palace and educating them for to give duties on different stages of the government. One of the reasons why this system was formed was to prevent favoritism. The children who were raised with this system couldn't do any favoritism since they didn't have any relatives. We can say that many great people such as Sokullu Mehmet Pasha, Mimar Sinan, etc. have been raised with this system. (Ortaylı, 2006)

Especially the researches who have claimed that the breakdown started in the 16th century, have stated that favoritism in education, military and Muslim judgement have begun. The government which affected negatively from this favoritism made some reforms.

The breakdown that started in the second half of the 16th century affected the judgment system as well. Especially the breakdown in the education system made the students graduate without having enough knowledge and skill; thus the negativeness that occurred because of the Muslim judges increased. The precautions that were taken weren't enough. No positive results were gained from the orders that have been declared during the 17th century. Especially with the precautions taken in 1838 the judgment institutions have been set in order and the assignments, the promotions and the dismissals have been tied to legal rules; trying to prevent favoritism. (Fevzioğlu and Kılıç, 2008)

Immediately after the innovations done in civil, fiscal and other areas; beginning from 1844 arrangement in military was done while trying to get volunteer support from the citizens. Especially precautions that will get support and contribution from the Muslim citizens were taken. The concepts of religion, government and homeland were used in order to make some propaganda. Along with this it was emphasized that the laws would treat everyone equally, that no one will be looked out and transparency will be the principle in hiring military personnel. (Tunalı, 2008)

A solution such as lottery was found for the military where favoritism was extremely common. The lottery being picked in front of the eyes of the participants ended the injustice in hiring military personnel and the applications of favoritism which were reminders of the old period.

Along with these general reforms some Sultans gave importance to individual reforms as well. Selim the 3rd, apart from the Sultans before him tried to widespread the reforms through the society. Before having formed the reform project he asked opinions of the notables and also opened a way to participation. Understanding truly the breakdown in social, political, economical and legal areas of the Ottoman Empire, Selim the 3rd tried to attract attention to prevention of favoritism and bribery, delegation of the government to the qualified people and sharing of the responsibilities of the management. But the idea and the importance of socializing wasn't understood by his politicians thus his attempts were unsuccessful. (Akça ve Hülür, 2008: 239)

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ABSTRACTS

