



Three Decades of Gerontology in Türkiye: Historical Foundations, Multidisciplinary Growth, and Future Horizons

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ABSTRACT

The history of science is a field that not only outlines the chronological progression of studies across various disciplines but also reveals the social, historical, and economic developments that led to the emergence and growth of these fields. It involves compiling research in different areas and evaluating the historical conditions that interact with these studies. Although "Gerontology in Türkiye" has included numerous struggles and noteworthy developments over the past 30 years, few studies still assess this brief period. This paper will examine the phenomenon of demographic change in

Türkiye, utilizing a combination of externalist approaches to the history of science and addressing gerontology's past, present, and future. By nature, the mission of science to improve human life quality and clarify the contextual frameworks surrounding human beings has triggered the birth and rapid development of gerontology after these transformations. Understanding and shaping these phenomena related to aging and old age from a gerontological perspective may serve as an effective key to achieving goals such as improved quality of life, social integration, productivity, and sustainable development.

KEYWORDS: Gerontology in Türkiye; History of Gerontology; Aging Policies and Interventions; Multidisciplinary Aging Studies; Demographic Transformation; Gerontological Education and Practice.

KEY PRACTITIONER MESSAGE

1. Gerontology is inherently a multidisciplinary and complex field that cannot be associated with a single area of science.
2. Türkiye, one of the fastest-aging countries in the world, has experienced at least four transformative periods in the development of gerontology in a short time.
3. Scientific-historical studies on gerontology are essential for comprehending the future of the field in Türkiye, which evolved from an incubation period from 1998 to the early 2000s to development and institutionalization in the early 2000s and to general acceptance in the 2020s.
4. To identify and understand the developmental stages of gerontology in Türkiye, externalist and vertical approaches to the history of science would be most appropriate.

INTRODUCTION

The sources used in such studies are typically based on primary and secondary historical materials. Writing the history of a scientific discipline involves two principal approaches: horizontal and vertical (Unat, 2021). The horizontal approach generally addresses regional or overarching histories of science, such as the history of Chinese science, classical scientific studies, or Ottoman science. In contrast, the vertical approach focuses on the history of a specific scientific field, as exemplified by studies on the history of gerontology. This particular study adopts a vertical approach, concentrating on the historical development of gerontology. In writing scientific histories, both internalist and externalist perspectives can be employed. Ignoring political events, economic factors, and cultural influences when examining developments in the history of gerontology can lead to significant gaps in explaining chronological advancements. Consequently, this study adopts an externalist approach, which emphasizes the societal influences on scientific development, opposing the idea that scientific advancements should be considered solely based on their intrinsic characteristics. For instance, Alexander Koyré's assertion that "Florence does not explain Galileo" contrasts with the externalist focus on societal impacts. The externalist perspective argues that scientific advancements cannot be isolated from

societal, economic, ideological, or political contexts (Acot, 1999, p. 95).

Similarly, in the introduction to "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions," Kuhn highlights the intertwined nature of science and belief systems:

"If we are to call past beliefs myths, then it is evident that the methods and logic underpinning what is now considered scientific knowledge would also produce myths. If, however, we call those beliefs science, then science encompasses belief systems that are entirely incompatible with what we hold today" (Kuhn, 2006, p. 73).

Thus, it becomes essential to document and analyze the myths and realities surrounding aging, old age, and gerontology in both recent history and contemporary times through scholarly works.

A Comprehensive Definition of Gerontology Informed by Scientific Research

The question of which scientific discipline gerontology belongs to may arise. If this question is being asked, it indicates a fundamental misunderstanding of gerontology. As a relatively new field of science in Türkiye, it is necessary to define gerontology to address potential confusion. Gerontology is the scientific study of aging and old age (Tufan, 2021). The term derives from two ancient Greek words: geron (older) and logos (science, among other meanings). The concept of gerontology was first introduced by

Metschnikoff in 1903 (Baltes & Baltes, 1992), though the definition of gerontology as "the study of aging" was proposed by Rybnikov in 1929 (Jasper, 2002).

The literature presents a range of conceptualizations and definitions of gerontology. The National Institute on Aging (NIA) in the United States defines gerontology as *"The study of aging from the broadest perspective"* (Wahl & Heyl, 2004, p. 37). Another definition states, *"Gerontology concerns itself with the description, explanation, and modification of the physical, psychological, social, historical, and cultural aspects of aging and old age. This also includes the environments and social institutions that structure aging"* (Baltes & Baltes, 1992, p. 8). Also according to Marwedel, *"Gerontology positions itself as an overarching concept above the sub-disciplines concerned with old age, such as medicine, sociology, and psychology"* (Marwedel, 2005, p. 17). Gerontology generates knowledge on aging and old age, primarily through empirical research, and participates in national and international research programs (Wahl, 2004). Kruse and Martin emphasize, *"Gerontology interprets the theories, concepts, methods, and findings of various sciences from its own perspective to describe, explain, and predict phenomena related to aging"* (Kruse & Martin, 2004, p. 9).

These definitions underline that gerontology cannot be classified as a sub-discipline of any single scientific field. Experts today refer to gerontology as

a "cross-sectional science" (Wahl, 2004), highlighting its interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary nature. For instance, the decision to transfer the Gerontology Department at Akdeniz University from the Faculty of Literature to the Faculty of Health Sciences does not signify a view of gerontology solely as a health science. Instead, it reflects the more significant intersections between health sciences and gerontology.

Gerontology is not confined to a single scientific domain but is inherently interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary (Kruse & Martin, 2004). It focuses on the aging individual throughout their lifespan, examining the processes that influence aging within the social structures they are born into and live within, as well as external factors. Gerontology aims to address or prevent deficiencies and sacrifices arising from a lack of knowledge about these processes.

Gerontology provides a multidimensional and multifaceted explanation of aging and old age. Aging represents positive developments in these dimensions, such as health, sociopolitical, socioeconomic, and sociocultural factors. For example, new and complex perspectives on aging and shifts in perceptions of old age should be understood and explained by considering these dimensions. This understanding can lead to more effective intervention strategies. Therefore, successful aging encompasses

not only the personal aging processes of individuals but also the conditions affecting these processes and their complex interrelationships (Tufan, 2020).

Table-1 illustrates how the development periods of gerontology relate to significant historical events within their cohorts, as will be examined in subsequent sections.

The Incubation and Establishment Period of Gerontology in Türkiye: 1998–2009

The history of gerontology in Türkiye officially begins in 1998. However, the groundwork for this initiative was laid in Berlin between 1991 and 1998 (Tufan, 2016). During this period, it became necessary to demonstrate the significance and relevance of gerontology for Türkiye, which was then described as a young and dynamic country. This need culminated in the launch of the "Türkiye Gerontology Atlas" (GeroAtlas) research project on January 1, 2000.

However, Prof. Dr. İsmail Tufan's interest in aging and gerontology dates back to his student years, well before the formal establishment of the field in Türkiye. His fascination was partly driven by his awareness of the growing demographic challenges, including the "gray tsunami" and the circumstances of Turkish immigrants in Europe (Borazan, 2019). From his work in a hospice in Germany to his studies in gerontology at the University of Vechta, Tufan recognized the pressing need for gerontological research in Türkiye and the lack of existing data. This

realization inspired him to lay the groundwork for the country's first gerontology department.

In a 2019 dated oral history study by Borazan, Tufan reflected on his early vision for gerontology in Türkiye:

"... During my student years, my desire to work on aging in Türkiye stemmed from a curiosity to know who was researching aging and what topics were being studied in my country. ... I wondered, why can't we foresee the future? Will our country always remain young? Are we so confident that our people will always live long and healthy lives? Or where does this lack of interest stem from? These questions occupied my mind a lot."

To address these questions, Tufan initiated GeroAtlas, Türkiye's first and, as of 2024, only longitudinal gerontological research project. From 2000 to 2023, GeroAtlas aimed to map Türkiye's aging demographics, uncover the needs and risks of older adults, and identify their potential contributions. Supported by the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye (TUBITAK), the project gathered data from 5,523 participants aged 40 and above across Türkiye's seven regions. Over time, GeroAtlas became the foundation for various projects and applied service models, significantly advancing gerontology education, research, and policy-making in Türkiye. Despite these strides, gerontology

faced challenges in gaining recognition due to its multidisciplinary nature, which delayed potential collaborations. Tufan expressed his struggles during this period:

"Interestingly, two studies I sent to GEBAM (Research and Application Center for Geriatric Sciences) and YASAD (Journal of Aging Issues) were rejected. This was around 2003–2004. ... The concept of gerontology started with me in Türkiye. Before that, there was geriatrics. For example, if Hacettepe University's 'Center for Geriatric Research' had been named the 'Center for Gerontological and Geriatric Research,' it would have been better, as it would encompass sociology and social work. ... Ger-ontology was seen outside medicine and considered a social science. There were misunderstandings, but one must see these as part of the scientist's journey. Scientific development is possible through the clash of ideas. ..."

Thomas Kuhn's (2006) notion of a "scientific revolution" aptly describes gerontology's transformative phase in Türkiye, especially after 2020, leading to collaborations that shaped public policies. However, in the early 2000s, Tufan and his contemporaries could not foresee these advancements.

The findings from the initial phase of GeroAtlas (2000–2004) were shared with relevant ministries and the Council of Higher Education (YÖK). In 2005, Tufan proposed the establishment of Türkiye's first gerontology department. Following deliberations

by the Cabinet, the Department of Gerontology was established at Akdeniz University's Faculty of Arts and Sciences in 2006, with Tufan serving as its founding chair. The department made history by becoming the first in Türkiye with an official logo, overcoming initial rejections (Akdeniz University, 2022).

Parallel to these developments, Tufan published the first gerontological book in Türkiye (Tufan, 2001) and organized the First International Symposium on Social and Applied Gerontology in Antalya in 2005. The same year, a report emphasizing the need for a "new culture of care" and social care insurance was submitted to political parties (Tufan, 2006). Two other milestones were achieved in 2005: the founding of the National Association of Social and Applied Gerontology, which became a member of the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics, and the publication of Türkiye's first "aging report" (Tufan, 2007).

Support from prominent figures like İlhan Tekeli, a founding member of the History Foundation of Türkiye and a former YÖK member, and Cigdem Kagıtcıbaşı, Türkiye's first social psychology professor, played a crucial role in establishing the department. Despite challenges, the teaching staff was assembled in 2009, and the first graduates emerged in 2013. This marked a significant milestone, as Türkiye now had a generation of experts

Table 1: Türkiye's Chronological Gerontology Agenda

1991–1998	Preparatory work to introduce gerontology as a field of science in Türkiye	2000	Start of the Türkiye GeroAtlas study (GeroAtlas, 2000–2023)
2001	First edition of *Aging and Old Age from Antiquity to the Present* by Prof. Dr. İsmail Tufan	2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 1st International Türkiye Gerontology Symposium was held Establishment of the İsmail Tufan Gerontology Institute (ITGE)
2006	The first gerontology chair in Türkiye was established at Akdeniz University	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of the National Association of Social and Applied Gerontology (USUGD) Publication of Türkiye's First Aging Report
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of the National Council on Aging (UYAK) Organization of the 1st Türkiye Gerontology Awards 	2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Akdeniz University's Gerontology Department admitted its first students Establishment of the Turkish Advanced Aging and Geriatrics Research Center
2010	Türkiye's first Alzheimer-Dementia Patient and Caregiver Meeting and Consultation Center was established in Nazilli, Aydın	2012	Türkiye's first age-friendly model house was established in Nazilli
2013	Türkiye's first gerontologists graduated	2012–2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alzheimer-Dementia Patient and Caregiver Meeting and Consultation Centers (Antalya, Dinar, İzmir, Gököy-Ordu) DemoS: Mobile health services for dementia patients
2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> YADOO: Development of age-friendly organizations Establishment of the 60+ Refreshment University GeroLib: Library for gerontology publications 1st International Care Network for Older People and Local Governments Symposium held 	2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of the Senior Parliament Establishment of YAÇUMER Faculty of Health Sciences transition completed
2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fresh Companion Project Refreshed Orchestra Refreshed Solidarity 	2019	Development of MesGeroDes (Professional Gerontological Support) program
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch of the first doctoral program in gerontology Public appointments of gerontologists Graduation of the first cohort from Refreshment University (COVID-19 online lectures) The 9th International Social and Applied Gerontology Symposium was held online 		

Note: Adapted from Prof. Dr. İsmail Tufan's lecture notes in the Department of Gerontology, Akdeniz University, with verbal permission

trained to address aging and aging-related issues from diverse perspectives.

In 2008–2009, significant public policy initiatives also emerged. For example, the Waste Building Evaluation Concept [Atık Bina Değerlendirme Konsepti: ABİDE] enabled unused public buildings, such as meteorology offices and district governorate

properties, for innovative aging services. This approach laid the foundation for the Care Network for Older People [Yaşlı Bakım Ağı-YBA] in Anatolia.

Development and Institutionalization of Gerontology in Türkiye: 2010–2020

Chronologically organizing the institutionalization process of gerontology in Türkiye is challenging.

Initiatives such as the establishment of the department, symposiums, and the founding of associations can be considered part of this institutionalization process. Significant milestones include the establishment of Türkiye's first gerontology department, the creation of the first logo, the graduation of the first cohort of gerontologists, and the organization of the first gerontology symposium. During this period, networks established with numerous key figures created opportunities for enhancing national and international recognition. The Gerontology Oath, written by İsmail Tufan on January 27, 2010, in the ancient city of Nysa during the establishment process of AYBA (Aydın Care Network for Older People), was not a coincidence. Shortly after that, the location for the İbrahim Şencan Gerontology Center, affiliated with Türkiye's first and only gerontology department with its own building, was selected, and construction began. On October 25, 2013, Türkiye's first Gerontology Center was inaugurated at Akdeniz University. This milestone can be regarded as the genesis of gerontology's institutionalization in Türkiye. However, an earlier event in 2009 also significantly contributed to the development of gerontology. Media coverage of efforts to increase the academic recognition of gerontology led Aydın Municipality to request the preparation of an action plan on aging and older people's care during local elections. Following

the establishment of AYBA, the first gerontological center in Türkiye serving Alzheimer's patients and their families, NAYBA (Nazilli Care Network for Older People) was implemented in 2010 without any financial demands. It was transferred to the municipality as a fully operational system in 2012. This system, built on the theoretical foundation of the Tufan-Cark Gerontological Service Model, was later adopted by Dinar Municipality. Subsequently, it played a pivotal role in the establishment of the "Blue House" [Mavi Ev] Alzheimer's Center in Antalya in 2016, similar to previous Alzheimer's centers, without financial expectations (Demiroren Haber Ajansi, 2024). The Tufan-Cark Service Model, developed based on findings from Tufan's GeroAtlas, aimed to establish and manage service models for aging and older people's care in Türkiye. According to this model, gerontology services should commence with research and data, identifying needs and primary intervention areas, planning the distribution of resources and services, monitoring transformations, addressing new questions arising from these transformations, and designing new research within a dynamic framework. Examples of gerontological services and application centers produced using this model across Türkiye include: (1) Alzheimer's Patients and Relatives Meeting and Counseling Center, (2) Counseling Center for Aging and Older People, (3) DeMos (Dementia and

Aging Mobile Services), (4) Dementia School, (5) Parkinson's School, (6) National Dementia Program, (7) Workplace Training for Public Sector Employees Beyond national initiatives, international collaborations with Japan, the USA, Austria, and Germany have been crucial. These partnerships aimed to observe services for older people in these countries meet experts to benefit from their experiences, and share information about Türkiye's gerontological efforts. With Prof. Dr. İsmail Tufan's leadership, close relations with German and Austrian gerontologists facilitated knowledge transfer and experience through seminars, conferences, and symposiums. Many of these experts' names have been commemorated by naming classrooms at the İbrahim Sencan Gerontology Center. In 2014, Biruni University established a gerontology department under the Faculty of Health Sciences, followed by Istanbul University in 2015 (Biruni University, 2015). The same year, Gumushane University initiated a two-year gerontology program, but it was closed before admitting students. Other universities, such as Zonguldak Bulent Ecevit University and Dogu Akdeniz University, also began offering gerontology education. By 2019, Istanbul Gelisim University had established a gerontology department, marking the first time a gerontologist chaired and taught in a department. However, the department became

inactive after producing only eight graduates. Gerontology education in Türkiye achieved accreditation by AGHE (The Academy for Gerontology in Higher Education) in 2014 and gained professional legitimacy with the Level 6 health personnel designation for undergraduate education in 2016 (Vocational High Council of Turkey [Meslek Yuksek Kurulu], 2016). Since 2015, gerontologists have been employed in municipalities, private sectors, and universities. By 2020, the first gerontologists were appointed within the Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Services. Efforts for recognition within the Ministry of Health also progressed, producing significant outcomes for the dissemination of gerontology. Since 2011, Türkiye has offered master's degree programs in gerontology, with doctoral programs beginning in 2019. Deniz Pamuk was the first graduate to have an undergraduate degree and a PhD in the gerontology program. Additionally, on February 11, 2016, the first cohort of gerontologists from Akdeniz University, led by Faruk Yasar Gurdal, established the "Association of Gerontologists in Türkiye." This development has been instrumental in advancing professional solidarity and promoting gerontologists' work within the Ministry of Health. Educational efforts include Türkiye's first Third Age University, the 60+ Refreshment University. Initiated by Prof. Dr. İsmail Tufan as a social

responsibility project, this innovative education model aims to address demographic changes and their consequences (Tazelenme University, 2017). Starting with 350 students at Akdeniz University in 2016, the university now boasts over 10,000 students nationwide. The program provides theoretical and practical courses tailored to participants' needs and interests, fostering functional adequacy among older adults. Notable awards attest to his success, such as the 2018 "Educator of the Year" by the Antalya Chamber of Industry and Commerce (ACCI) (Akdeniz University, 2018). On November 21, 2019, the Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Services declared November 21 as Gerontologists' Day, marking another milestone in the profession's recognition and development in Türkiye (Tufan, 2019).

The Expansion of Gerontology and Its Developments in the Last Four Years: 2020–2024

Since 2014, professional consultancy and training services have been consolidated under the MesGeroDes [PgA Professional Gerontological Assistance] Program as of 2020. This program offers two distinct models for applied and academic professionals, providing free training and internship opportunities at leading institutions worldwide. The participation rules for the MesGeroDes Program are as follows: (1) Only gerontologists

with a bachelor's degree are eligible to apply. (2) Candidates must apply to their desired programs by the application deadline announced at least a year before the pro-gram's start date. (3) Both theoretical and applied programs last 14 days. (4) For applied training, accommodation and daily meal expenses are covered by the host in-stitutions. (5) Theoretical training does not include accommodation or meal allowances. (6) Candidates can apply for only one program per year (theoretical or applied). (7) Candidates may apply for both programs consecutively (e.g., theoretical in 2021 and applied in 2022). (8) After completing the theoretical and applied programs, candidates must wait two years before applying to another MesGeroDes program. The program is structured under the leadership of an internationally recognized Program Director and an esteemed advisory board. The Program Director, serving from 2020 to 2024, is Prof. Dr. Bernd Seeberger. The advisory board comprises a distinguished group of scholars and professionals, including Prof. Dr. Gerhard Naegele, Prof. Dr. Rolf Heinze, Prof. Dr. Andrea Helmer-Denzel, Prof. Dr. Monika Reichert, Prof. Dr. Andreas Ehgartner, Dr. Martin Pallauf, Dr. Denis Roth, Dr. Esfendar Tabari, and Dr. Gerd Schuster. A significant milestone was achieved on November 20, 2021, when gerontologists were included under the regulation titled "*Regulation on the Amendment to the Regulation on the*

Job and Duty Definitions of Healthcare Professionals and Other Professionals Working in Health Services."

This inclusion formally recognized the roles and responsibilities of gerontologists in public service. According to the regulation, gerontologists are tasked with: (1) conducting primary consultations with older individuals, their families, and caregivers, planning geriatric services, and ensuring coordination, (2) identifying services accessed by older adults and organizing medical, social, legal, and other service processes, (3) preparing Gerontological Assessment Reports (GAR), (4) identifying and addressing the needs of older adults through home visits, (5) organizing activities to prevent social isolation and strengthen social networks for healthy aging, (6) identifying and arranging ergonomic needs in gerontological service delivery, (7) managing crises related to acute health issues and emergencies in older adults, and (8) facilitating the placement of older adults in nursing homes or providing financial assistance in coordination with relevant authorities.

This development has facilitated the appointment of gerontologists in the public sector, marking a significant achievement. By 2023, the number of gerontologists working in public hospitals and the YASAM [Healthy Aging Centers Project by Ministry of Health] exceeded 100 (Gerontologlar Dernegi, 2023). Increased collaboration with public institutions since 2021 has transformed service models into more

institutionalized structures. For instance, Türkiye's first 60+ Refreshment University, established at Akdeniz University, served as a model for other institutions. Following protocols with the Ministry of Family and Social Services, this initiative was transferred to the ministry under the public interest clause. At the time of the transfer, the project was active in six universities, and protocols were signed with three additional universities while discussions were underway with eight others.

The establishment of the Gerontology Departments Advisory Board (GeDaK) in 2021 contributed significantly to expanding academic and practical studies in the field. Universities affiliated with GeDaK include: (1) Akdeniz University, (2) Balikesir University, (3) Bandirma Onyedi Eylül University, (4) Bartin University, (5) Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University, (6) Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, (7) Cankiri Karatekin University, (8) Gumushane University, (9) Inonu University, (10) Istanbul Gelisim University, (11) Istanbul University-Cerrahpasa, (12) Kirsehir Ahi Evran University, (13) Malatya Turgut Ozal University, (14) Mugla Sitki Kocman University, (15) Mus Alparslan University, (16) Nevsehir Haci Bektas Veli University, (17) Ondokuz Mayıs University, (18) Osmaniye Korkut Ata University, (19) Selcuk University, (20) Suleyman Demirel University, (21) Tokat Gaziosmanpasa University, (22) Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit University, (23) Dogu Akdeniz

University, and (24) Erzurum Technical University. These departments have collaborated on the Türkiye Aging Profile Research Project, using a unified questionnaire and presenting their findings at Zonguldak Bulent Ecevit University (BEUN, 2024). Among the actively teaching institutions are Akdeniz University, Mus Alparslan University, Istanbul University-Cerrahpasa, Istanbul Rumeli University, Osmaniye Korkut Ata University, Inonu University, Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, and Mugla Sitki Kocman University (YOKA-TLAS,2024). As of 2024, the Gerontology Department at Akdeniz University continues its work under the leadership of its new head, Prof. Dr. Nilufer Korkmaz Yaylagul. Meanwhile, Prof. Dr. İsmail Tufan contributes to the development of Mus Alparslan University. The department at Akdeniz University is expected to maintain its longstanding International Social and Applied Gerontology Symposium (USUGS) tradition (Akdeniz University, 2024).

Forecasts for the Future of Gerontology

The development of gerontology in Türkiye must continue. What has been achieved so far in gerontology pales compared to what still needs to be done. The development of gerontology should follow a "maturation" phase, where gerontologists will have important roles and responsibilities. Despite the 20-year history of gerontology, there has been no significant shift in the perception of old age, which

is still primarily viewed as "exhaustion," "collapse," and "dissolution" (Urfalioglu *et al.* 2018, 2008, p. 22). The "theory of life force depletion" from the 19th century, which posited that humans have a finite life force that results in death when it is exhausted (Lehr, 1988, p. 4), continues to find support in Türkiye today, indicating the tasks gerontology will face in the future.

Humans have been concerned with diagnosing aging signs, the forms of aging processes, and how to influence them for centuries. In the past, people resigned to the aging process, convinced they could not significantly influence it. In the early 20th century, the focus was mainly on what diminished, deteriorated, or what abilities were lost. Long-term strategies to counteract or intervene in these changes were not considered. Now, along with the development of diagnostic options, there needs to be a strong focus on therapy, rehabilitation, and prevention (Lehr, 1988, p. 3).

Gerontological research has provided ample evidence that reaching advanced old age does not necessarily mean the deterioration of skills and abilities, nor does it always decrease quality of life and satisfaction. Under specific conditions, the health competence of future older generations can be improved. This requires opportunities for lifelong skill acquisition and application, enhanced prevention strategies for diseases associated with immobility and functional

decline, increased awareness of health behaviors through medical and caregiving resources, improved diagnostic methods for geriatric conditions, and timely therapeutic and rehabilitation interventions to address or mitigate diseases and functional impairments (Gorres & Martin, 2004, p. 463).

In Türkiye, the increase in life expectancy has led to a growing population of older individuals. This trend will continue in the future. At the same time, the number of older people needing care is rising rapidly.

The reasons for needing care are diverse, and family members often provide care at home (Tufan, 2007; 2016a). However, in the context of work division and organization, public life also represents a societal agent of professional care and solidarity. Even though most are older, individuals in need of care, regardless of age, should be considered both direct recipients and indirect clients of care services (Schwerdt, 2004, p. 492).

Today, in cases where "care allowances" are provided, the criteria for receiving the allowance are no longer solely based on a need for care but also on "income." In non-professional care settings, family members who provide care are the "recipients" of care allowances, and the care-dependent individual becomes their "customer." In the social care insurance system proposed by Tufan (2006), the roles of the care-dependent person and the caregiver are

completely reversed. The care-dependent individual becomes the "employer," and the caregiver is the "employee" assigned by them. The care-dependent person has the right to choose and change the care provider. This "caregiver" can be a family member, neighbor, friend, or professional caregiver.

In addition to health and care policies, one of the most important objectives of gerontology in Türkiye should be its involvement in the design, delivery, and development of aging policies that take into account living conditions based on social policies. Therefore, the relationship between gerontology and scientific social policy must be strengthened (Schulz-Nieswandt, 2006).

Gerontology should focus on successful interventions in aging processes that align with social policy goals, take responsibility to create conditions that help individuals successfully age, and offer social policy proposals based on empirical findings that reduce or prevent the risks of aging for both individuals and society. As a result, gerontology must acquire the skills and capabilities necessary to advance beyond its current position.

Türkiye is facing a critical and rapid demographic transformation, which makes focusing on scientific and applied aging and old-age studies an especially vital need. Although Türkiye's gerontology journey is short, it has already achieved significant strides in this brief history, with strong foundations to

bloom shortly. Over the past 20 years, Türkiye has completed its first institutional establishment and organizational process in gerontology, entering the development phase. Education, academic, and applied services will continue to evolve and expand.

The Journal of Aging and Long-Term Care (JALTC): Pioneering Contributions to the History and Development of Gerontology in Türkiye

The inclusion of a discussion on the history of gerontology within the Journal of Aging and Long-term Care (JALTC) is far from coincidental. Since its inception in 2017, under the visionary leadership of Prof. Dr. Emre Şenol Durak, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mithat Durak and Prof. Dr. İsmail Tufan, JALTC, have established themselves as a cornerstone in advancing gerontology, particularly in Turkey. This journal not only serves as a critical platform for disseminating scholarly insights but also bridges national and international perspectives in the field of aging and long-term care. By fostering interdisciplinary dialogue, JALTC has significantly contributed to gerontology's theoretical, clinical, and practical dimensions.

Published triannually as an open-access, peer-reviewed journal, JALTC is guided by a distinguished editorial board comprising globally respected academicians. It invites diverse scholarly works, including original research, review articles, brief

reports, theoretical analyses, clinical trials, and systematic reviews, from a wide array of disciplines such as gerontology, geriatrics, psychology, sociology, nursing, engineering, and public policy, among others. This inclusive approach underscores the journal's commitment to embracing both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, as well as mixed-method research designs.

JALTC's ongoing efforts to expand indexed resources and promote high-quality research continue to play a pivotal role in shaping the gerontological landscape. The journal remains a vital resource, facilitating the growth of gerontology and fostering collaborations between Turkish and international researchers. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the exceptional editorial and publishing team of JALTC for their invaluable contributions to the field and their enduring impact on the history and future of gerontology.

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