

BÖLÜM 15

Orta Yetişkinlik Döneminde Fiziksel ve Bilişsel Gelişim

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GİRİŞ

“Hayatın öğleden sonraki evresine tamamen hazırlıksız bir şekilde adım atarız; daha da kötüsü, bu adımı şimdiye dek bize hizmet etmiş olan doğrularımızın ve ideallerimizin bundan sonra da bize hizmet edeceği şeklindeki yanlış bir varsayımla atarız. Oysa hayatın sabahına ait bir programla öğleden sonrasını sürdüremeyiz — çünkü sabah vakti büyük olan şey, akşam vakti önemsiz hale gelir; sabah doğru olan şey ise, akşam olduğunda bir yalana dönüşebilir.” (Jung, 1933)

ORTA YETİŞKİNLİĞİN TANIMI

Yaşam boyu gelişim yaklaşımına göre gelişim, yalnızca çocukluk ve ergenlik dönemleriyle sınırlı olmayıp, yetişkinlik ve yaşlılık gibi ileri yaşam evrelerinde de devam eden dinamik bir süreçtir (Baltes, 1987). Bu bakış açısı doğrultusunda, orta yetişkinlik de bireysel değişimlerin sürdüğü ve uyum süreçlerinin ortaya çıktığı önemli bir yaşam evresi olarak kabul edilmektedir. Orta yetişkinlik dönemi, yaş sınırı kesin olmamakla birlikte genellikle 40-45 yaşları arasında başlayan ve 60-65 yaş aralığına uzanan bir dönem olarak tanımlanmaktadır (Santrock, 2023).

Orta yetişkinlik dönemi günümüzde hem yaş hem de toplumsal beklentiler açısından geçmişten farklı bir anlam taşımaktadır. Eskiden 40’lı yaşlar yaşlılıkla ilişkilendirilirken, artık 60’lı yaşlardaki bireyler dahi kendilerini orta yaşlı olarak tanımlayabilmektedir. Bu değişim, yaşam süresinin uzaması, sağlık hizmetlerinin gelişmesi ve aktif yaşam biçimlerinin yaygınlaşmasıyla ilişkilidir. Nüfusun yaş yapısındaki dikdörtgenleşme yani daha fazla

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