

BÖLÜM 16

Orta Yetişkinlik Döneminde Sosyoduygusal Gelişim

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GİRİŞ

Yaşam boyu gelişim perspektifine göre genç yetişkinlik ve ileri yetişkinlik arasında kalan, yaklaşık olarak 40 ile 65 yaş arasını kapsayan gelişim evresi orta yetişkinlik dönemi olarak nitelendirilmektedir (Levinson, 1986; Santrock, 2024). Bu yaşam dönemi ile ilgili araştırmaların görece yeni olduğu ve diğer gelişimsel dönemlere kıyasla en az çalışan dönem olduğu söylenebilir (Santrock, 2024). Bunun en önemli sebebi, günümüzdeki ortalama yaşam süresi ile karşılaştırıldığında geçmişte yaşam sürelerinin nispeten kısa olmasıdır (Christensen vd., 2009; World Health Organization, 2024). Gelişim psikolojisi alanında yapılan orta yaşlı bireyleri kapsayan mevcut çalışmaların ise ebeveynlik ve çocuk gelişimi temalarına yoğunlaştığı görülmektedir (Lachman, 2004). Oysaki günümüzde bu dönem, yaşamın erken ve geç dönemlerini birbirine bağlayan, birçok yeni sorumluluk ve yeni rolleri kapsayan önemli bir gelişimsel dönem olarak kabul edilmektedir (Lachman vd., 2015; Infurna, 2020). Son yıllardaki içlerinde Türkiye'nin de dahil olduğu birçok ülkenin demografik yapısındaki değişimler ile özellikle orta ve ileri yetişkin nüfus oranının belirgin şekilde artması (TÜİK, 2025; United Nations, 2024; World Health Organization, 2024), bu gelişimsel dönemin dinamiklerinin incelenmesini daha da önemli hale getirmiştir.

Orta yaşın duygusal, düşünsel ve varoluşsal yükünü işleyen Cahit Sıtkı Tarancı'nın "Otuz Beş Yaş" şiirinde de bahsettiği gibi bu dönem, bireyin aynada kendiyi yüzleşmesi ve içsel sorgulamalarını içeren, yaşamına dönüp anlam yüklemeye çalıştığı bir dönemdir. Aynada fark edilen ilk beyaz saç, büyüüp evden ayrılan çocuk ya da yaşlanan bir ebeveyn bakarken hissedilen sorumluluk... Tüm bu deneyimler, bireylerin hem kendisi hem de yaşamla yeniden ilişki kurmasına neden olur. Bu nedenle orta yaş, bireylerin duygusal

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larının bağımsızlaşması ve kendi hayatlarına yönelmeleriyle hayata uyum sağlama çabası içinde olabilirler. Ayrıca, yetişkin çocukların geçici olarak geri dönmesi gibi durumlarla karşılaşabilir, aynı zamanda ihtiyaç duyan aile üyelerine bakım sağlama sorumluluklarını üstlenebilirler. Ayrıca, arkadaşlıklar ve romantik ilişkilerde algılanan karşılıklı duyarlılık ve destek hem bireysel mutluluğu hem de psikolojik esenliği olumlu etkiler. Orta yaş, duygusal düzenleme becerilerinin geliştiği, kişinin kendini daha iyi tanıdığı ve stresle daha etkili başa çıkabildiği bir dönemdir. Bu süreçte, insanlar sosyal ilişkilerinden anlam ve destek buldukça hem yaşam doyumu hem de psikolojik esenlik düzeyleri yükselir. Birçok araştırmacı, orta yaşın insanların genellikle yaşlanma gibi önemli sorunlarla yüzleştiği, hayatlarını değerlendirdiği ve hedeflerini gözden geçirdiği bir zaman olduğu konusunda hemfikirler. Öte yandan, çoğu yetişkinin bu dönemde gerçek bir kriz yaşadığı iddiası için çok az destek vardır. Sonuç olarak, orta yaş, psikososyal becerilerinin geliştiği, bireylerin hem kendileriyle hem de çevreleriyle daha uyumlu ilişki kurdukları bir olgunluk dönemi olarak değerlendirilebilir. Böylece, orta yaşta bireyler sosyal ve duygusal becerilerindeki olgunluk sayesinde hem kişisel gelişimlerinde hem de aile ve toplum içinde üretken ve anlamlı katkılar sağlayabilirler.

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