



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# A Phenomenological Analysis of the Life Experiences of Elderly Individuals

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## ARTICLE HISTORY

**Received:** 06.08.23  
**Accepted:** 16.12.23

## KEYWORDS

Old Age, Aging, Life  
Experience, Aging  
Experience

## ABSTRACT

This study is intended to make sense of the life experiences of elderly individuals over 65 years living in Samsun. The study was designed with phenomenology, one of the qualitative research methods. The participants constitute 15 elderly individuals, determined with the snowball sampling technique. The semi-structured interviews were done, and content analysis was performed through the MAXQDA. Three themes emerged: family life, education life, and social life. Based on these themes, it was revealed that the family was an essential support for elderly individuals that made them happy or sad in their life course. The other social interactions satisfied elderly individuals; they did not feel lonely in this way. In those ages, they had different hobbies like gardening or religious activities. These gave them peace. Besides, they gained importance to education, and some regretted their education process. These regrets arose from problems like low-income levels, family issues, and wrong choices.

Aging is a gradual decrease in physiological functions, social opinions, intellectual abilities, and the ability to adapt to an individual's environment (Erdoğan & Dinç, 2020; Kalyoncu & Tekinsoy, 2021). The World Health Organization (2015) considers 65 years as the threshold for aging. It defines it as a gradual decrease in physical and mental capacity, a growing risk of disease, and an increase in dependence on other people. Elderliness can vary according to sex, economic conditions, social factors, and individual situation (Kalyoncu & Tekinsoy, 2021; Varışlı, 2020). The concept of old age is defined in different ways at different perspectives. Biologically, old age refers to the changes observed in the basic functioning of an entire organism, from a single cell to the physical health status. On the other hand, old age as a social concept is defined as the changes in social roles and functions within society. As a psychological concept, it encompasses cognitive and mental changes (Samancı-Tekin & Kara, 2018).

The longer an individual lives, the more life experiences they gain (Kiremitçi & Akçay, 2019). Individuals experience many life events that may originate from themselves, others, or natural circumstances. Some of these experiences are more significant than others and can be positive or negative (Şahin, 2018). It is essential to focus on the experiences gained until this period, rather than experiences from their time as an older person since many factors, such as hobbies, occupations, social relationships, and regrets, determine how an individual lives their old age. Each individual has a different emotional life, experiences, and

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thoughts (Akış & Korkmaz-Yaylagül, 2021; Tereci et al., 2016). How individuals evaluate the situations and events they experience is essential in how these events positively or negatively impact them (Şahin, 2018).

As an important phenomenon, aging is studied in different disciplines, especially in the medical field. In this field, studies are generally related to diseases (Greicius et al., 2004; Hsu et al., 2003; Miller et al., 2011). However, aging is also a social phenomenon. People in their life course have experiences with people, somewhere and sometimes. These experiences have different life outcomes. Sometimes it is possible to change behavior, and sometimes to change the social environment. These changes or decisions have an impact on later life. For this reason, focusing on elderly individuals' life experiences from different perspectives has different implications for other people.

Studies on the life experiences of elderly individuals have received considerable attention in international literature. A study of 64 elderly individuals in China revealed how smart cities can be shaped based on their life experiences (Li & Woolrych, 2021). In a similar study in Holland, elderly individuals were asked how the municipalities could organize cities for them (Van Hoof et al., 2022). Hsu and McCormack examined the hospitalization experiences of elderly individuals and found that the data could be used to improve services and practices (Hsu & McCormack, 2011). In Uzbekistan, elderly individuals' experiences, daily routines, nourishment, personalities, leisure time activities, bad habits, and physical activities were examined by Inakov et al. (2020). The results revealed that when elderly individuals divorce or lose their spouses, they do not care for their health; nevertheless, living with a relative can have a positive effect (Inakov et al., 2020). These studies show that studying elderly individuals helps event municipalities to improve their actions.

Similar research interests can be observed when the national literature is examined. For example, Cantekin (2020) attempted to determine whether city opportunities suit elderly individuals and put forth appropriate and ideal options. Görgün-Baran et al. (2020) researched to determine the relationships of elderly individuals with their surroundings and their expectations from the connections to reveal their experiences regarding their feelings of trust, participation in society, and ability to join sociocultural activities. Consequently, families and neighbors can make older individuals feel happy and diminish their sense of loneliness; however, trust is key to these relationships. The common observation in the literature is that elderly individuals have an important place in the lives of younger people. As Canatan points out, 'By transferring the results of their experiences, elderly individuals ensure the continuation of cultural values and knowledge' (Canatan, 2008). The literature also has a concept called "successful aging." Bowling and Dieppe (2005) explain it in terms of biomedical and psychosocial theories. As viewed through biomedical theories, successful aging is primarily characterized by achieving optimal life expectancy while minimizing physical and mental decline and disability. These theories emphasize the importance of factors such as the absence of chronic diseases and risk factors for diseases, overall good health, and maintaining high levels of independent physical functioning, performance, mobility, and cognitive abilities. Psychosocial theories prioritize life satisfaction, active social participation, functioning, and psychological resources, encompassing personal growth and development. When a person gets age healthily and happily, it means successful aging. However, these definitions are based on theoretical assumptions. Therefore, it is essential to focus on the experiences of elderly individuals to plan the next step toward successful aging in the future, which will pave the way for significant research on the subject. As a result of the need for further research, this study aims to explain the essence of the life experiences of elderly individuals over 65 years in terms of their family, education, and social relationships, to evaluate how these experiences affect their current lives. Accordingly, the following questions were explored.

1. What is the essence of the life experiences of elderly individuals concerning their family lives?
2. What is the essence of the life experiences of elderly individuals concerning their educational background?
3. What is the essence of the life experiences of elderly individuals concerning their social lives?

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

This research is designed as a phenomenological design, one of the qualitative research designs. In phenomenological research, the researcher attempts to interpret participants' experiences from their

perspectives. In these studies, participants' perceptions of the phenomenon, how they experienced it, what they felt, and how they conveyed or interpreted it to different individuals are highly significant (Patton, 2018). Individuals should have shared experiences with the phenomenon. In this research, elderliness was determined as a phenomenon, and the life experiences of elderly individuals regarding this phenomenon, in terms of family, social relationships, and educational background, were evaluated. Thus, the essence of elderliness was tried to be made sense.

### Participants

The participants comprised 15 elderly individuals over 65 living in Samsun, Turkey. Snowball sampling, a qualitative sampling method, was employed. Individuals aged 65 and over who are literate and have no diagnosed psychiatric disorders were included in the study. First, a pre-interview was conducted with eight individuals who agreed to participate in the study. Then, with the help of three participants during the pre-interview, the researchers recruited seven more participants. Participants' sociodemographic characteristics are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Findings on Socio-Demographic Characteristics (n=15)

Gender	Age	Education	Income rate	Person living with
K1	66	Primary School	Middle	Husband
K2	70	Primary School	Middle	Husband
K3	66	High School	Middle	Husband
K4	66	High School	Middle	Husband
K5	68	High School	Middle	Husband
K6	72	Middle School	Middle	Husband
E1	66	University	Middle	Wife
E1	70	University	Middle	Wife
K7	66	University	Middle	Husband
K8	66	High School	Low	Husband and child
E3	72	High School	Low	Wife and child
K9	67	Associate Degree	Middle	Daughter
K10	69	High School	Low	Alone
K11	78	Primary School	Middle	Alone
K12	77	High School	Middle	Alone
AgeX±SS	69.2±3.9			

Table 1 reveals that the participants belong to the middle/low-income level. There is diversity in educational backgrounds, but most participants graduated from high school. Only three live alone, and the others have a life partner. The eldest person is 78, and women constitute the majority.

### Data Collection

A personal information form, including five questions about age, gender, economic status and housemates, was used to gather socio-demographic data. This data is necessary since family, education, and social relationships are important for the research aim. The primary data collection tool was a semi-structured interview form prepared by the researchers. The semi-structured interview comprised eight questions on the participants' past and current life experiences. The sample questions can be seen below.

- Could you think about your school days when you were approximately 11 years old and describe how that time in your life prepared you for adulthood?
- Do you believe that the education you received brought out the existing potential within you? If so, please explain.
- When you think about your life, what event or situation brings you happiness?

First, the interview questions were created by conducting a literature review and forming a pool. Particularly, questions were narrowed down while considering the absence of leading or guiding aspects and the

sensitivity of topics concerning the elderly. Then, the questions were presented to experts for their approval regarding appropriateness, and thus, they were finalized accordingly. Additional questions were asked when there was necessary information regarding the phenomenon. Pilot interviews were not conducted due to the limited number of participants. The interviews were conducted during January and February 2022. Before the interviews, the participants were provided informed consent covering the study’s purpose and that the analysis would be carried out for scientific research, that the information would be kept confidential and private, and that they could leave at will.

The interviews were conducted in a quiet room at the participants’ homes. Each participant was individually interviewed once and recorded, each lasting almost 20 minutes. The notes and voice records were transferred to a computer and reviewed before the analysis. At the end of the interviews, 20 pages of interview transcripts and notes were gathered.

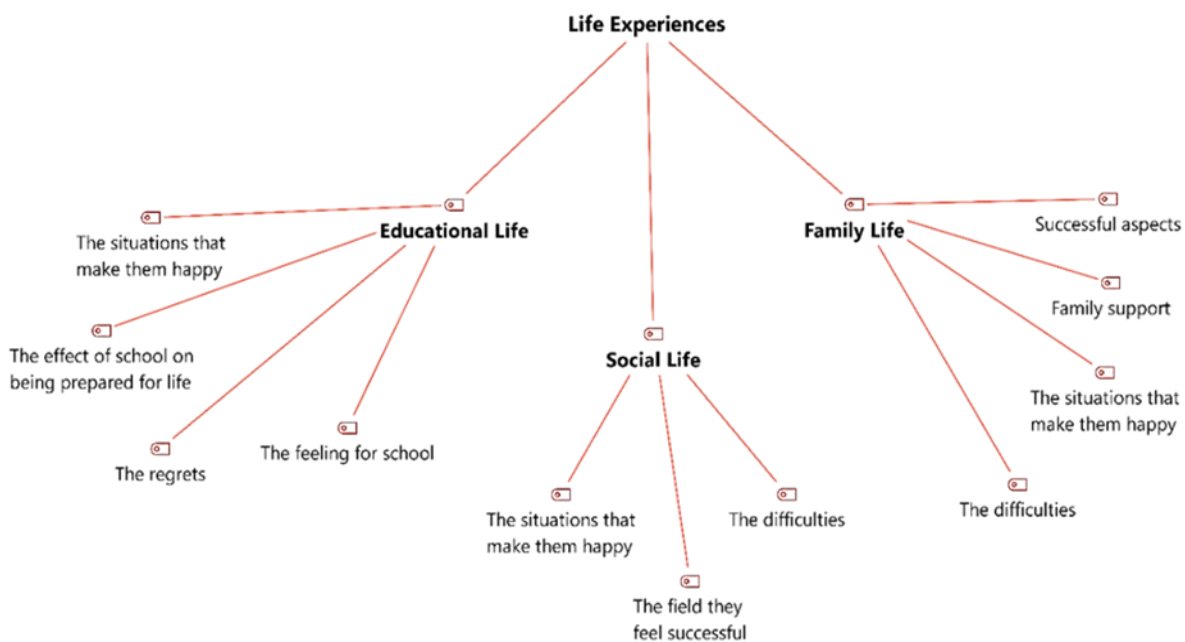
**Data Analysis**

The content analysis was made through MAXQDA 2020. Content analysis involves the in-depth analysis of collected data, aiming to uncover previously undisclosed themes and dimensions (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021). First, the collected data were read to be familiar with it. After reading, the codes and categories were developed for the first participant, followed by the second participant, and the analysis proceeded cumulatively. Second, the descriptive codes, based on the theoretical framework of the research, were determined; then, the codes and themes were integrated. The male participants were coded E1, E2, and E3; the female participants were coded K1, K2, and K3. The analysis was presented to experts to achieve reliability in coding and, after evaluation, was entered into the final version. In qualitative research, validity and reliability are approached differently compared to quantitative research (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021). To ensure credibility (validity) throughout the study, in-depth interviews were conducted, direct quotations were included, and experts' opinions were sought in the data collection and analysis process. The entire process has been transparently explained to achieve transferability and detailed descriptions have been provided. Additionally, purposive sampling was utilized. To ensure consistency (reliability), the data obtained from participants were analyzed comparatively.

**Results**

When the life experiences of the participants were evaluated, three themes were identified: ‘educational background,’ ‘social life,’ and ‘family life.’ The themes and categories of the analysis are presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** The Code Tree of Life Experiences of Elderly Individuals



The ‘family life’ theme includes family support, events/situations that make them happy, difficulties, and success. The categories of the subthemes of family life and some of the codes are presented in Figure 2.

**Figure 2.** The Code Tree of Family Life Experiences of Elderly Individuals

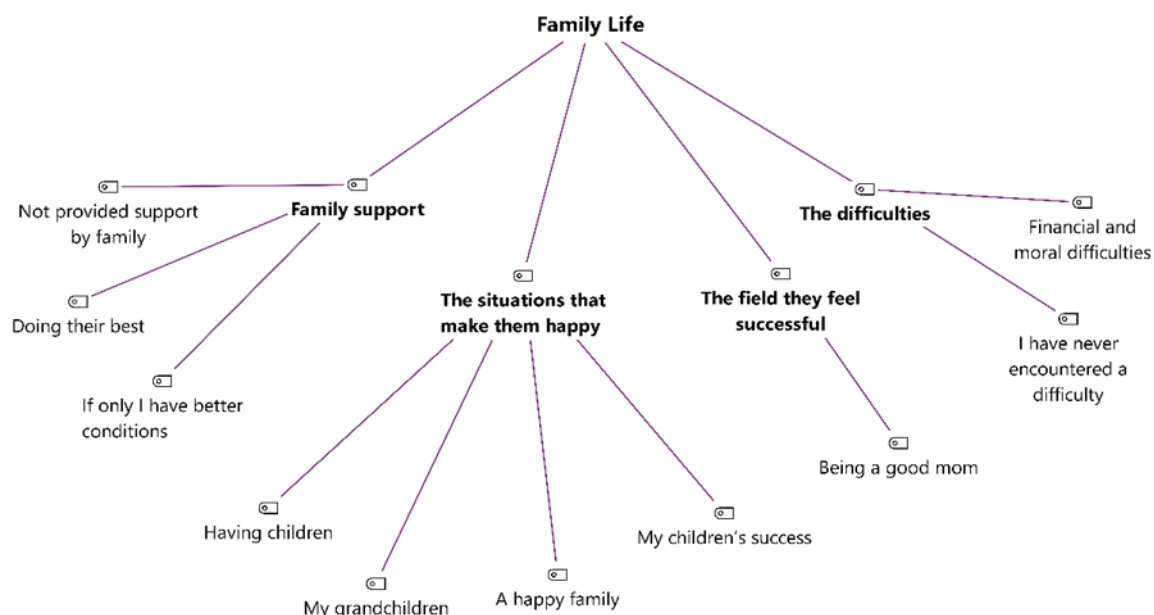


Figure 2 shows that under the ‘family support’ category, elderly individuals opined that their families had done their best for them. Families included mothers, fathers, siblings, and close relatives. Some of their statements are as follows:

*“My elder siblings became a guide to me. My elder sister made an effort for me growing up.” (E1)*

*“I’m aware of that, especially my father tried so hard for his daughters to attend school. So, I cannot say anything negative to my family about their effort.” (K2)*

*“My uncles, especially, supported and guided me in choosing this profession.” (E3)*

The participants primarily provided answers concerning how their families supported their educational life and their choice of profession. Specifically, the emphasis on fathers’ support for girls’ education is significant. Other participants stated within other categories, such as ‘not supported by their families’ and ‘if only I had better conditions.’ K4 emphasized her wish for better conditions, saying, “We didn’t have separate rooms. We had only two rooms, but I used to wake up early and study for my exam on my bed. If I had better conditions, I’d be somewhere else”. This shows that she tried to study hard even if she did not have better conditions. Participant K6 stated that because they lived in the village, her mother could not care for her too much. Her father wanted her to go to school, but responsibilities, such as animal husbandry, prevented her. This reveals that struggling to earn a living dominates her education. Contrary to K6’s father, K8’s father did not want his daughter to go to school or work; though she was accepted to Midwifery School, he prevented her. The participant expressed sadness, saying, ‘I have always felt down about that.’

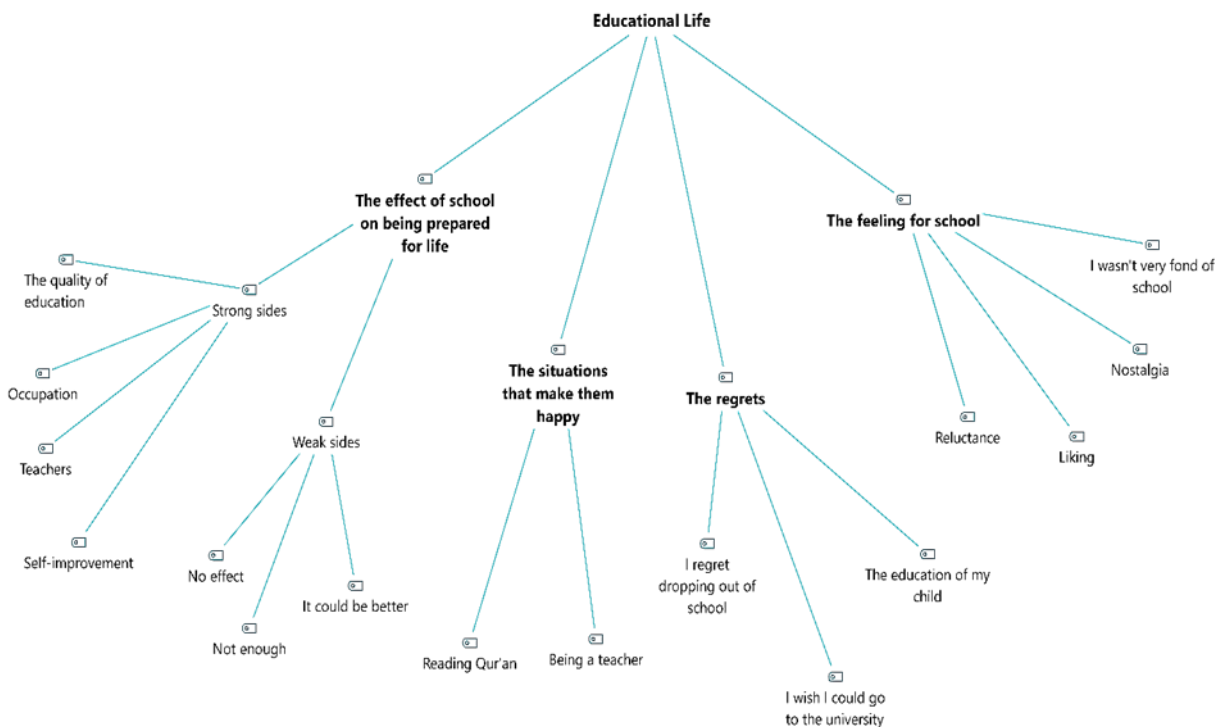
Under the ‘family life’ theme, there are various opinions within sub-categories, such as ‘the events/situations that make them happy,’ ‘my children’s success,’ ‘my grandchildren,’ and ‘a happy family.’ K9 and K10 expressed their happiness about their children’s success: “The happiest moment for me is when I am with my children and see them standing on their feet.” It can be said that elderly individuals support their children in earning a living. Having grandchildren is another aspect that brings them happiness. Therefore, the participants showed emotional dependence on their families.

In the context of ‘the difficulties, they encountered’ in their lives, categories, such as ‘I have never encountered a difficulty’ and ‘financial and moral difficulties’ were observed. Some participants stated never encountering difficulties, whereas others focused on financial and moral difficulties. Participants K2, K3, and K7 made similar statements: “I had both financial and moral difficulties while my children were going to school.” Nevertheless, they contributed to their children’s education, even though this was difficult. Another participant stated that they encountered difficulties but were not unhappy: ‘We had some difficulties as my family’s financial situation was bad. However, I do not regret it. Fortunately, I succeeded. I feel pleased and grateful about that’ (K4). This opinion reveals that difficulties may result in people having different experiences. Still, the difficulty level may change: “Financial difficulties make life difficult from time to time. It was only me that was working. We suffered a lot. As we did not have money, we could not do many of the things we wanted to do” (K10, K2). Another participant stated that the first years of her working life were quite difficult; additionally, in the later periods of life, when she lost her husband, she felt lonely and reencountered problems. Examining the opinions revealed that participants used first-person plural sentences when discussing difficulties, pointing out that they faced trouble as a family.

In the context of the category ‘I have never encountered a difficulty,’ there was an emphasis on family. Two participants emphasized never having faced moral difficulties with their children or husbands (K5 and K6). While two male participants expressed difficulties, they also mentioned they had the power to overcome them (E1 and E3). When all the opinions on this theme were evaluated, it could be discerned that there are positive and negative experiences in family life; negative experiences can be regarded as a lesson, while positive experiences bring happiness and tranquility. The relationships among the family are important from the beginning of life.

Regarding the ‘education life’ theme, categories such as ‘the effect of school on being prepared for life,’ ‘the feeling for school,’ ‘the events/situations that make them happy,’ and ‘the regrets’ were determined. The code tree for these categories is presented in Figure 3.

**Figure 3.** The Code Tree of Education Life Experiences of Elderly Individuals



The first category in educational life is ‘the events/situations that make them happy.’ The participants expressed their opinions on different occupational/educational issues in this category. Participant K3 said she found happiness in being a teacher to be a unique and sacred aspect, whereas E2 expressed his happiness at ‘the success of his students.’ K11 emphasized that reaching an occupational goal would make her happy.



Focusing on religious education, participant K6 expressed: “The most important event that makes me happy is reading Qur’an. I love reading Qur’an a lot. That is the place where I feel most happy. I cannot live without it.” This means that she finds happiness and inner peace by reading the sacred text of her religion, thanks to her religious education.

In contrast to happy situations, some situations lead to regret. In terms of ‘regrets,’ participant K7 expressed her wish under the category ‘I wish I could go to the university’: “I had an occupation and became an officer. However, I believe my life would have turned out differently if I could have gone to the university.” Participant K1 expressed regret about leaving school: ‘I regret dropping out. If I could finish school, I would be more successful; maybe I would have become a teacher.’ She expressed her abilities: “I was good at painting.”

Under the ‘the effect of school on being prepared for life’ category, the codes were sub-categorized into ‘weak sides’ and ‘strong sides.’ Under ‘weak sides,’ participant K4 evaluated her school experience: “It did not have much effect. We went to the teacher’s training school, and here we are.” Participant K12 said: “With better education and support, I could have had better conditions.” This shows her dissatisfaction with her current status and living conditions. Under ‘strong sides,’ there were opposing opinions on the same issues. Those who assumed they had a profession as a result of their education said:

*“Those were the good times. The education was much better; the people were much better. It helped me be where I am today and have a profession.” (K7)*

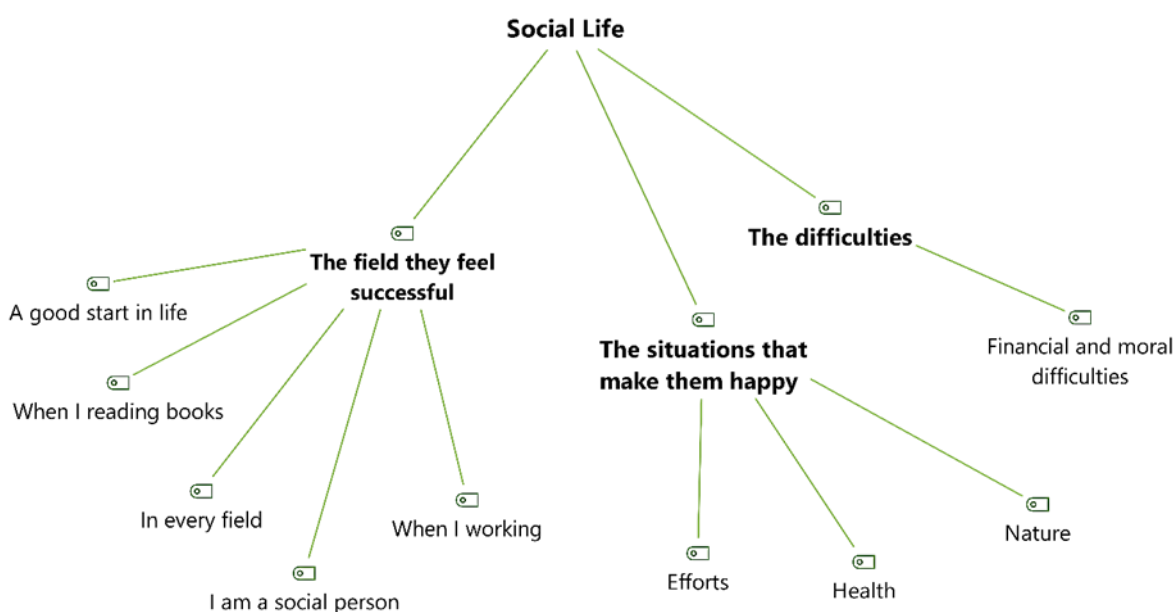
*“The education I received guaranteed my future and enabled me to have a profession.” (E3)*

The opinions reveal that they felt gratitude towards their educational process, because of which they have a profession and lead their lives. They also expressed nostalgia in terms of education and society. Another vital aspect was the contribution of education towards self-improvement. Participant K6 emphasized the importance of education in terms of professional experience and confidence.

*“If I did not go to school, my life would mean nothing. What happens when you are illiterate? If I had not continued my education, I could not get a job, and my life would have worsened. I would have become more experienced and confident in my life.”*

*‘Social life experiences’ was another theme, whose categories included ‘the field they feel successful,’ ‘the events/situations that make them happy,’ and ‘the difficulties they encountered.’ The code tree for these categories is shown in Figure 4.*

**Figure 4.** The Code Tree of Social Life Experiences of Elderly Individuals



The first sub-dimension under the ‘the events/situations that make them happy’ concerns the participants’ health. Participant K8 expressed happiness in her social relationships and life: “I enjoy good health; I can go anywhere. I raised my children to become good. This makes me so happy. I feel quite peaceful.” Moreover, the participants stated that nature makes them happy; most dreamt of having a house with a garden. For example, participant K5 expressed her love for nature: “Waking up happy, saying good morning to my friends, saying good morning to my flowers and watering them make me happy. When I say good morning to my neighbors, I feel happy. I feel happy with the stones, birds, and flowers.”

One of the categories was ‘I am a social person,’ under which participants emphasized their social relationships and activities. Participant K1 said: “I am a social person. For years, I worked in important organizations, and was part of the administration. I effectively maintain relationships in every field.” Participant K3 emphasized her success in human relations, stating she had good relationships with her neighbors, which made her happy. Under the ‘I am good at everything’ category, participant K4 emphasized her interest and success in art: “I used to create magnificent paintings. I am good at everything. I can achieve anything I want.” Participant K5 spoke about the field in which she felt successful: “If I read books every day, I feel successful. If I cannot read, I feel incomplete.” Participant K6 emphasized her self-confidence and self-efficacy: “When I work, I feel more successful. I get through all the things I can manage.” Moreover, she links working hard to success. Similarly, three participants added that they missed the time they worked and said they could refresh themselves when working (K7, K9, E2).

### **The Essence of the Aging Phenomenon**

According to the results, the phenomenon of aging can be summarized as follows: Aging is the culmination of experiencing positive and negative events throughout life in interaction with one’s environment, which includes institutions that either contribute to or hinder these events. As a result, aging entails a sense of completeness or incompleteness based on accumulated habits in the current position. Deaths represent a sense of loss during aging, while births and nurturing symbolize feeling proud. Fulfilling oneself leads to successful aging. In this process, the happiness of the elderly individuals makes them take up new hobbies and embrace life. At the same time, regrets serve as valuable lessons to be passed on as advice to future generations.

### **Discussion & Conclusion**

The results show that some elderly individuals did not live as they wanted because of financial problems and lack of familial support. In their study, Kalaycı and Özkul asked the elderly about the issues they had trouble with the most and what they wanted to change; they found various answers, such as ‘having a good profession,’ ‘ensuring social security,’ and ‘better financial conditions for themselves and their families.’ Individuals prefer a good and comfortable life (Kalaycı & Özkul, 2017). In Çicek et al.’s (2021) study, older women gave various reasons for leaving their education life: ‘insufficiency of family’s financial situation,’ ‘father’s unwillingness for their daughters to go to school,’ and ‘the obligation to work in the fields’ (Çicek et al., 2021). This study shows that women may have educational problems because of their families especially fathers.

In addition to the physical, spiritual, and social problems, losing a spouse negatively affects elderly individuals’ quality of life. As spouses support each other both financially and morally, the loss of their spouses results in them encountering many problems in their lives (Kalaycı & Özkul, 2017; İçli, 2010). Similarly, this study highlights that spouses support each other to cope with difficulties. In their study of people who lost their spouses, Kiremitçi and Akçay (2019) stated that when their spouses were alive, they took responsibility and did things together; however, when they passed away, they had to do all the things alone. Akbayrak and Aysan (2022) emphasized in their research on successful aging in elderly individuals that marriage positively contributes to successful aging. Participants believed that being married is essential for maintaining social relationships and leading a regular and healthy lifestyle. In a different study, phenomenological research focused on never-married elderly individuals. As a result of the study, all participants perceived “relying on nobody” as their independence, leading to a sense of peace and reduced marital tensions. This independence allowed them to maintain personal integrity and confidently engage in social acts. While all participants spent more time alone compared to others, their experiences varied.



Voluntarily single individuals adapted well to living alone and accepted loneliness as part of life. Involuntarily single participants, especially men, viewed loneliness as the most bitter aspect of their singleness. Participants had to rely on their abilities and avoid seeking help from others and build self-efficacy to solve problems independently. Close relations with family and friends played a significant role in overcoming loneliness. Women benefited from larger social networks and regular meetings with old friends, while men relied more on close family connections. Stigmatization was experienced differently among participants, with voluntary singles being less affected by negative views compared to involuntary singles, particularly women who experienced feelings of grief and loss due to others' opinions (Hamedanchi et al., 2021). It shows that marriage has different pros and cons in later life.

Some participants expressed that reading books and the Qur'an, creating paintings, and having social relationships made them feel more successful and happier. In their study, Görgün-Baran et al. (2020) stated that a 74-year-old woman said she loved reading and that it made her feel better. A similar study with 17 elderly individuals showed that they tended to engage in religious activities and spent their spare time reading religious texts and engaging in religious activities (Yüksel et al., 2014). Studies conducted indicate that the importance of religious beliefs and practices increases in later life, and elderly individuals tend to turn more towards religion. Additionally, it is stated that engaging in religious activities comforts them (Kılavuz, 2005; Zorn & Johnson, 1997). Similarly, Chen et al. (2023) highlighted the significant mediating role of religious attendance in the connection between living arrangements and subjective well-being. Elderly individuals promoted their well-being by attending religious activities. A strong sense of religiosity provides individuals with a sense of purpose and fulfillment in life, leading to a feeling of accomplishment, happiness, and inner peace. It gives them a profound meaning in life and satisfies them across all aspects of their existence (Tabatabaei & Ebrahimi, 2023).

Healthy aging can be ensured by being productive, creating social relationships, and participating in activities (Öztürk & Kayıhan, 2018). Therefore, social life is important for healthy aging experiences. Although family and relative relationships are important support for elderly individuals, research shows that social relationships may be more critical (Akbarak & Aysan, 2022; Görgün-Baran et al., 2020; Softa-Kaçan et al., 2016). For elderly individuals, the social environment is as important as the physical environment. Elderly individuals often continue their lives in their familiar social environments even if the physical conditions and facilities are unsuitable for their current needs. Having a peer group with a similar sociocultural background and establishing quality communication makes them feel better and more integrated into society (Akbarak & Aysan, 2022). Studies have indicated that elderly individuals like to chat with their friends and spend time in parks (İçli, 2010; Softa-Kaçan et al., 2016). Social relationships are necessary to improve the personality, positive identity, and self-respect of elderly individuals and to strengthen their social efficiency (İçli, 2010). Individuals withdraw and feel lonely as their social circle diminishes with age (Softa-Kaçan et al., 2016). Therefore, increasing social opportunities for elderly individuals is necessary. Gusdal et al. (2021) conducted a Delphi study about prerequisites for a healthy and independent life with older adults. The results revolved around three interconnected areas of significance: social life, safety, and freedom of choice. Unsurprisingly, having a social life emerged as one of the top three prerequisites, with 97 percent of the participants strongly agreeing that participating in organized social activities is crucial. The social environment is even important for a healthy life. The findings of a study suggest that residing in a positive social environment can potentially decrease the risk of depression in elderly individuals with diabetes and multiple chronic illnesses. This risk reduction is attributed to the enhancement of their social support, reinforcement of their sense of life purpose, and recognition of the capabilities of all older individuals to attain valued functioning (Yeung et al., 2022).

When life experiences concerning educational life are evaluated, it can be seen that the educational life of elderly individuals prepares them for life. It was generally held that the quality of education was better in the past. However, they were not content with how it is now. This can be interpreted as a concern for both their children and grandchildren. According to Ng et al. (2017), there is a noteworthy correlation between education level and life satisfaction among the oldest in China. Therefore, educational life had an impact on

both past and present life. When they received a quality education, they not only became content with their current positions but also constantly sought the quality of their past experiences. However, with quality education, they also came to appreciate the person they have become today. In sum, the essence of aging arising from the experiences of elderly individuals reflects complex emotions and behaviors. It includes many sad or happy events, many people, and acts with some outcomes. Adams-Price, Henley & Hale (1998) found what aging was for young and elderly individuals. In the perception of younger adults, aging is linked to significant life events, and despite these events being mostly positive, aging is viewed negatively. Younger individuals tend to associate aging with growing responsibilities and diminished freedom. On the other hand, elderly individuals associate aging with everyday occurrences or no particular events and hold a positive outlook on aging. (Adams-Price, Henley & Hale, 1998). Therefore, it can be said that aging is that every moment is precious.

### **Limitations**

This study is limited to 15 elderly individuals with different socioeconomic levels. It is conducted with a small group in a specific region. It is important for participants to possess health conditions suitable for participation based on their age and to be open to communication. In the study, the number of participants has been limited from this perspective. However, considering qualitative research, this limited number is appropriate for achieving data saturation. The inclusion of only elderly individuals from one province is related to the areas accessible to the researcher. Therefore, individuals who are relevant to the purpose and accessible within the boundaries of one province have been included in the study. It is known that social and cultural factors are influential in the life experiences of elderly individuals. It is recommended that further studies be conducted with larger samples in different regions. Furthermore, the themes have been limited to specific areas within the life cycles of elderly individuals. In future studies, the meaning attributed to old age can be explored through different dimensions. In this study, interview questions were developed for three dimensions identified through a literature review (education, social life, family life), and since elderly individuals did not touch upon dimensions outside of these, the study delved into these three dimensions. Additionally, inter-coder reliability was not calculated during the coding process; instead, expert opinions on coding were sought.

Future research should focus on the fact that elderly individuals of today and the future are different. Appropriate activities for their conditions should be supported and encouraged to support their social lives. Social interaction in the 21st century is based on technology. A study on social media interactions among elderly individuals and their effects on their lives can be done from different perspectives. In addition, the parent-child relationship seems vital. Families need to support and raise awareness about their children's education. Such programs should be developed to improve children's social activities and peer relationships and develop their personality right from primary and elementary schools.

**Author Contributions:** All authors have a joint contribution to the research.

**Funding Disclosure:** No funding was provided for this study

**Conflict of Interest:** The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

**Data Availability:** The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request

**Ethical Approval.** This research was carried out under the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki (2016). It was guaranteed that the data gathered from the participants would never be used for other purposes and would be used only for scientific purposes. Furthermore, the participants' identities would remain anonymous. The authors declare that they obey the principles of publication ethics. Before the data collection process, ethics committee approval was obtained from the Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee of the university to which the authors belong (31.12.2021, 2021-1022).

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