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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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INVESTIGATION OF THE PERCEPTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS OF ELDERLY
INDIVIDUALS LIVING AT HOME REGARDING NURSING HOMES:
THE CASE OF ZONGULDAK

Evde Yaşayan Yaşlı Bireylerin Huzurevine İlişkin Algı ve Beklentilerinin İncelenmesi:
Zonguldak Örneği

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the perceptions and expectations of elderly individuals living at home regarding nursing homes. The increasing elderly population in Turkey highlights the importance of elderly care services and necessitates an understanding of the social, economic, and cultural factors shaping perceptions of nursing homes. While elderly individuals were traditionally cared for within the family structure, modernization has brought nursing homes forward as an alternative care model. Therefore, exploring the perceptions and experiences of elderly individuals living at home regarding nursing homes has gained significance. The study adopts a phenomenological design, one of the qualitative research methods, and conducts in-depth interviews with 16 elderly individuals selected through criterion sampling. Participants are individuals aged 65 and over, living at home, and with no prior experience in nursing homes. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using the descriptive analysis method. Findings indicate that the majority of elderly individuals perceive nursing homes as a last resort, prioritize family care, and consider nursing homes inconsistent with cultural values. However, some participants viewed nursing homes as an option providing professional care and independent living. Participants emphasized that biases against nursing homes are reinforced by media and societal perceptions, that state-supported care services are insufficient, and that home care models should be further promoted. Additionally, recommendations were made to organize activities that enhance social interaction in nursing homes and to develop alternative models that promote a more active lifestyle for the elderly. Accordingly, it is necessary to change the

negative perceptions of nursing homes, diversify elderly care policies, and improve the quality of nursing home services. The study's findings provide valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners in developing elderly care services.

Keywords: Elderly, nursing home, perception of nursing homes, social work

ÖZ

Bu çalışma, evde yaşayan yaşlı bireylerin huzurevlerine ilişkin algı ve beklentilerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Türkiye’de yaşlı nüfusun artışı, yaşlı bakım hizmetlerinin önemini artırmakta ve huzurevlerine yönelik algıları şekillendiren sosyal, ekonomik ve kültürel faktörleri anlamayı gerektirmektedir. Geleneksel aile yapısında yaşlı bireylerin aile içinde bakılması yaygınken, modernleşmeyle birlikte huzurevleri alternatif bir bakım modeli olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Bu nedenle evde yaşayan yaşlı bireylerin huzurevlerine ilişkin algı ve deneyimlerini keşfetmek önem kazanmaktadır. Araştırma, nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden fenomenolojik deseni benimsemiş ve ölçüt örnekleme yöntemiyle belirlenen 16 yaşlı bireyle derinlemesine görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Katılımcılar; 65 yaş ve üzeri, ev ortamında yaşayan ve daha önce huzurevi deneyimi olmayan bireylerdir. Veriler yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yoluyla toplanmış ve betimsel analiz yöntemiyle değerlendirilmiştir. Bulgular, yaşlı bireylerin çoğunluğunun huzurevlerini son çare olarak gördüğünü, aile bakımını öncelikli tercih ettiğini ve yaşlı bireyler tarafından huzurevlerinin kültürel değerlere uygun bulunmadığını göstermektedir. Bununla birlikte, bazı katılımcılar huzurevlerini profesyonel bakım ve bağımsız bir yaşam sunan bir seçenek olarak değerlendirmiştir. Katılımcılar, huzurevlerine ilişkin önyargıların medya ve toplumsal algılarla beslendiğini, devlet destekli bakım hizmetlerinin yetersiz kaldığını ve evde bakım modellerinin daha fazla teşvik edilmesi gerektiğini vurgulamıştır. Ayrıca, huzurevlerinde sosyal etkileşimi artıracak etkinliklerin düzenlenmesi ve yaşlı bireylerin daha aktif bir yaşam sürmelerine yönelik alternatif modellerin geliştirilmesi önerilmiştir. Bu doğrultuda, huzurevleri hakkındaki olumsuz algıların değiştirilmesi, yaşlı bireylere yönelik bakım politikalarının çeşitlendirilmesi ve huzurevi hizmetlerinin kalitesinin artırılması gerekmektedir. Çalışmanın bulguları, politika yapıcılara ve uygulayıcılara yaşlı bakım hizmetlerinin geliştirilmesi konusunda rehberlik edebilecek önemli veriler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Huzurevi, huzurevi algısı, sosyal hizmet, yaşlı

INTRODUCTION

Aging is an inevitable process for all living beings, representing a biological phenomenon that leads to physical, cognitive, and social changes in individuals (Yanardağ & Say Şahin, 2019). The increasing proportion of the elderly population in both developed and developing countries has transformed this demographic shift into a significant global social transformation (Danış, 2009; Öngören, Aydemir & Öngören, 2018). Advances in healthcare, improvements in nutritional conditions, and declining birth rates have contributed to an increase in average life expectancy, thereby raising the proportion of elderly individuals within the total population (Nazlier Keser, 2019; Şenol & Cansever, 2023). According to data from the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK), the population aged 65 and over accounted for 8.8% of the total population in 2018, increasing to 10.2% in 2023. It is projected to reach 12.9% by 2030 and 16.3% by 2040 (TÜİK, 2024). According to the United Nations, a country is classified as having an “aged population” if 10% of its total population is aged 65 and above (Ak & Közleme, 2017).

The increase in the elderly population also brings a growing need for healthcare, social support, and care services for elderly individuals. While elderly individuals were traditionally cared for within the family in conventional societal structures, factors such as the rise of the nuclear family, increased female labor force participation, and urbanization have heightened the demand for institutional elderly



care services (Günler, 2022; Bahar, Tutkun & Sertbaş, 2005). In Turkey, elderly care services are provided through nursing homes and elderly care centers affiliated with the Ministry of Family and Social Services (Cengiz, 2018). Nursing homes serve as institutions designed to provide elderly individuals with a safe environment while addressing their social and psychological needs (Altun, 2021). According to 2022 data, there are a total of 452 nursing homes in Turkey, of which 164 are state-owned, 268 are privately operated, and 20 are affiliated with other public institutions. In state-run nursing homes, 14,535 elderly individuals reside, while private nursing homes accommodate 11,467 residents (Ministry of Family and Social Services, 2022).

Although nursing homes play a crucial role in meeting the healthcare and care needs of elderly individuals, their perception of these institutions is generally negative. In traditional societies, elderly individuals were regarded with respect due to their wisdom and experience. However, the rise of individualism and changes in intergenerational relationships in modern societies have made it more difficult for elderly individuals to maintain active roles within the family (Street, 2007). In Turkey, there is a widespread perception among elderly individuals that nursing homes are a last resort, primarily for those who are in need of care, financially disadvantaged, or unable to be cared for by their families (Arpacı & Ersoy, 2009). Research indicates that the majority of elderly individuals do not prefer living in nursing homes and, whenever possible, wish to stay with their families (Şenol & Erdem, 2017; Ardahan, 2010).

In Turkey, the primary reasons behind elderly individuals' negative attitudes toward nursing homes include strong family bonds, the perception that nursing homes are not aligned with cultural values, social stigmatization, and the fear of losing independence (Açıkgöz, Artan & Arıcı, 2019). Studies show that most elderly individuals do not prefer to stay in nursing homes; however, they may consider this option in cases of loneliness or when in need of care. Key factors influencing the decision to live in a nursing home include lack of family support, inability to manage personal care, and cultural incompatibility (Arpacı & Ersoy, 2009; Gürbüz, 2019; Açıkgöz, Artan & Arıcı, 2019). When examining developed countries, home care services are generally preferred over nursing homes. Although some elderly individuals perceive nursing homes as an option that allows them to maintain social interactions without losing their independence, for others, residing in a nursing home carries a negative connotation (World Health Organization, 2015).

In this context, a comprehensive examination of elderly individuals' perceptions of nursing homes is crucial for understanding how these institutions can better meet their needs and expectations. Additionally, it is well known that negative perceptions of nursing home services make it more difficult for elderly individuals to adapt to care processes and adversely affect their psychosocial well-being (Pakdil, 2001). Although the literature includes studies on elderly individuals' perceptions of nursing homes, research specifically focusing on the expectations of elderly individuals living at home regarding nursing homes and alternative care models remains limited (Aktaş Polat, 2016; Gürbüz, 2019).

This study aims to examine the perceptions, expectations, and recommendations of elderly individuals living at home regarding nursing homes and alternative care models. In this context, a comprehensive analysis will be conducted by evaluating elderly individuals' level of knowledge about nursing homes, their perceptions, and their attitudes toward institutional care services to understand their preferences in care processes. Furthermore, an essential component of this research is exploring elderly individuals' perspectives on alternative care models they might prefer over nursing homes. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners, guiding them in enhancing the effectiveness of elderly care services and improving the satisfaction levels of elderly individuals receiving care.

METHOD

Research Design

This study was conducted using a qualitative research method to understand the perceptions and expectations of elderly individuals living at home regarding the concept of nursing homes. Since perceptions of nursing homes are shaped by personal experiences and social environments, a phenomenological design was adopted in the study. The phenomenological approach is a method aimed at revealing how individuals make sense of a particular phenomenon and how they respond to it. Therefore, it was considered appropriate for examining elderly individuals' thoughts on nursing homes (Patton, 2001; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018).

Study Group

In this study, the criterion sampling technique, one of the purposeful sampling methods, was used to determine the study group. Criterion sampling ensures that participants are selected based on their direct relevance to the research question, thereby forming the most appropriate sample for the study's objective (Patton, 2001). Accordingly, inclusion criteria were established, and participants were selected based on the following conditions: Being 65 years or older, living at home, having no prior experience residing in a nursing home, residing within the boundaries of Zonguldak province.

Data Saturation

In qualitative research, data saturation is a crucial criterion for determining the number of participants, and the process is concluded when recurring themes become evident within the data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). In this study, a total of 16 participants were interviewed, and as certain themes began to repeat, it was determined that data saturation had been reached. Therefore, no additional participants were included, and the analysis was conducted using the existing data. The sociodemographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.



Data Collection Process

The data collection phase of the study was conducted between February and June 2024. A semi-structured interview form, prepared by the researchers, was used during the data collection process. The interview form consisted of two sections: the first section gathered sociodemographic information such as participants' age, gender, educational background, marital status, and income level, while the second section included open-ended questions exploring elderly individuals' perceptions of nursing homes, their expectations, and their suggestions for alternative care models. The interview form consists of a total of 16 questions, with 8 questions in the first section and 8 questions in the second section.

The interviews were conducted face-to-face in environments where participants felt comfortable, lasting between 20 and 30 minutes. The primary reason for keeping the interview duration within this range was the possibility that elderly individuals might lose focus or experience cognitive fatigue during prolonged conversations. Indeed, qualitative research suggests that interviews with elderly individuals lasting between 20 and 30 minutes are ideal for maintaining participants' engagement and concentration (Drake, 2013; Kümbetoğlu, 2005). Before the interviews, participants were informed about the study's purpose and ethical guidelines through an informed consent form, and voluntary participation was ensured. With participants' consent, the interviews were recorded using an audio device and later transcribed verbatim into written form.

Data Analysis

In the data analysis process, the descriptive analysis method was adopted and a four-stage procedure was followed. First, the interview transcripts obtained from audio recordings were carefully read, and meaningful units were identified. Based on these units, participants' statements were analyzed line by line and open codes were created. For example, the statement "When I hear the word nursing home, fear comes to my mind" was categorized under the code "negative perception of nursing homes." In the second stage, codes with similar characteristics were grouped together to form themes. For instance, codes such as "lack of family support," "fear of loneliness," and "concerns about mistreatment" were grouped under the theme "Perception of Nursing Homes." The coding process was conducted manually without the use of any analysis software. In the third stage, the themes and subthemes were finalized, and participants' opinions were supported with direct quotations under each theme. Finally, the analyzed data were compared with the literature and the findings were interpreted accordingly.

Validity and Reliability

Various measures were taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the study. To enhance the credibility of the research, a member-checking process was conducted with participants to verify whether the findings were consistent with their narratives. To ensure the transferability of the study, the

participant selection process and research context were explained in detail, providing a reference for similar future studies. Regarding consistency, data collection and analysis procedures were carried out systematically, with each stage of the process clearly documented. To maintain objectivity, efforts were made to minimize potential biases during data analysis, and all stages of the analytical process were recorded after the study's completion (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

Ethical Principles

This study was conducted in accordance with scientific ethical guidelines. Before the research began, ethical approval was obtained from the Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit University Human Research Ethics Committee with the decision dated February 8, 2024, and numbered 411691. All participants were informed about the study's purpose, scope, and confidentiality policy. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and participants' names were kept confidential, with all data anonymized. To protect participants' privacy, personal data were securely stored and made accessible only to the researchers. It was also decided that all records would be destroyed within two years after the study's completion.

Table 1. Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Marital Status	Educational Status	Place of Residence	Monthly Income
Participant 1	Female	66	Married	She is literate.	She lives with her husband	Her husband's pension
Participant 2	Female	70	Married	She is literate.	Lives with husband at son's residence	Her husband's pension
Participant 3	Female	72	Married	Primary school	She lives with her husband	Her husband's pension
Participant 4	Male	72	Widow	High school	Lives with his son	Pension
Participant 5	Male	65	Married	University	He lives with his wife	Pension
Participant 6	Female	86	Single	High school	Lives alone	9000 TL
Participant 7	Female	65	Widow	High school	Lives with his son	9000 TL
Participant 8	Female	77	Married	She is literate.	She lives with her husband	Pension
Participant 9	Male	66	Married	High school	He lives with his wife	Pension
Participant 10	Male	74	Married	Primary school	He lives with his wife	Pension
Participant 11	Female	78	Married	She is literate.	Lives alone	Her husband's pension
Participant 12	Male	68	Married	Primary school	He lives with his wife	Pension
Participant 13	Female	65	Married	She is literate.	She lives with her husband	Her husband's pension
Participant 14	Male	66	Married	Primary school	He lives with his wife	13.000 TL
Participant 15	Female	72	Married	High school	Lives with his son	10.000 TL
Participant 16	Male	68	Married	Primary school	He lives with his wife and two sons.	10.000 TL

FINDINGS

As a result of the descriptive analysis conducted within the scope of the study, the identified themes and sub-themes are comprehensively presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Themes and Sub-Themes

Themes	Sub-Themes
1. Perception of Nursing Homes: A Last Resort or a New Beginning?	<i>Fears and Prejudices About Nursing Homes</i>
	<i>Positive Perspective on Nursing Homes</i>
2. Reasons for Moving to a Nursing Home and Resistance to It	<i>Moving to a Nursing Home Out of Necessity</i>
	<i>Family Relationships and Nursing Home Preferences</i>
	<i>Reluctance to Move to a Nursing Home</i>
3. Life in a Nursing Home: Expectations, Realities, and Experiences	<i>Services Provided and Living Conditions</i>
	<i>Spending Time in a Nursing Home and Daily Routines</i>
	<i>Real Experiences and Concerns</i>
4. Elderly Care: Who is Responsible and What Alternatives Exist?	<i>Family Responsibility and Changing Perspectives</i>
	<i>The Role of the State in Elderly Care</i>
	<i>Alternatives to Nursing Homes</i>

1. Perception of Nursing Homes: A Last Resort or a New Beginning?

Fears and Prejudices About Nursing Homes

Some participants perceive nursing homes not as a care and support institution, but as a place that weakens family structure and pushes individuals into loneliness. The idea that moving to a nursing home signifies abandoning responsibilities within the family is particularly common.

“Probably the place for the abandoned, but of course, it’s not suitable for family structure. If a person has a child at home and the parents are in a nursing home, it’s not a good thing. It’s fine if you have no one, but those with children don’t take care of their parents, they place them in nursing homes. They never consider that they will end up there themselves. The child doesn’t want to live with the parents, the family order is disrupted, peace is disturbed.” (Participant 9, 66 years old, Male)

“Anyone in need can stay in a nursing home. But those with broken family ties feel uncomfortable there; they don’t feel at peace.”(Participant 16, 68 years old, Male)

Some participants expressed concerns that elderly individuals may be subjected to mistreatment in nursing homes. It appears that negative news stories about nursing homes on television have reinforced this perception. There is a belief that state-run nursing homes are insufficient, with low-quality care, and that only individuals with good financial standing can live in favorable conditions in private nursing homes.

“When I think of a nursing home, I feel fear. There is no care in nursing homes, they are mistreated there, they don’t take care of them. We see it on television, they wash them with a hose in nursing homes. There is no care in nursing homes. Private ones are good. Women’s shelters are good.” (Participant 11, 78 years old, Female)

“They say they treat the ones who are sick. They give them food and do their laundry. But in some nursing homes, they say people get beaten, washed with hoses. God forbid, I hope none of us end up in such places.” (Participant 3, 72 years old, Female)

For some participants, nursing homes are perceived as institutions where ungrateful children place their parents to avoid responsibility. The prevailing belief is that elderly care within the family is an obligation, and there are opinions that view placement in a nursing home as a form of neglect or abandonment.

“When I think of a nursing home, I think of ungrateful children. Because we took care of my mother, my mother-in-law, and my father-in-law.” (Participant 5, 65 years old, Male)

“If children refuse to take care of their parents and send them to a nursing home, I would disown those children and donate all my wealth to the state.” (Participant 14, 66 years old, Male)

These findings indicate that there is a significant prejudice and fear toward nursing homes. While the belief that family care is ideal is widespread, there are major concerns about whether nursing homes provide safe and high-quality care for elderly individuals. Particularly, allegations of mistreatment and neglect contribute to the perception of nursing homes as undesirable places for elderly individuals. This suggests that there is a need for improvement in elderly care services and an increase in trust toward nursing homes.

Positive Perspective on Nursing Homes

Some participants do not view nursing homes solely as a necessity but instead as an important center for care and support for elderly individuals. Specifically, nursing homes are seen as a good alternative for maintaining independence, not being a burden on children, and receiving professional care.

“Honestly, I think it’s a good thing for those who need care. Also, I have this thought; just because I have children, it doesn’t mean that my child will endure my troubles and take care of me. They also have their own responsibilities. I tell my children, when my mind is not clear, place me in a nursing home, give them my pension, and they will take care of me there. I look at it positively.” (Participant 7, 65 years old, Female)

Some participants stated that nursing homes offer an environment where elderly individuals can live without being a burden on anyone, receive regular and reliable care, and live independently. In particular, when care at home is not possible, nursing homes are considered the best option.

“Actually, it’s a good thing. Honestly, if there’s no one to take care of me, I won’t be a burden to anyone, I’ll go to a nursing home. I’ll go to my daughter. That’s more important than



anything else. You have property, wealth, and if you hire a caregiver, they won't take proper care of you, but in a nursing home, you'll be well." (Participant 12, 68 years old, Male)

Some participants advocating for the expansion of nursing homes have noted that family care for elderly individuals is not always the ideal solution, and professional care services may be more reliable. In this regard, it was emphasized that nursing homes are important for elderly individuals to be able to move independently from family members and live a more comfortable life.

"It's a very good thing. It should be available everywhere. Where else can you go? I think that's very important. It should open everywhere. When your children take care of you, it's heavy to say something; when someone else takes care of you, it's not as hard." (Participant 13, 65 years old, Female)

These findings indicate that some elderly individuals have a positive perspective on nursing homes. In particular, individual independence, professional care, and the desire not to be a burden on family members are key factors that make nursing homes a viable option. Furthermore, there are demands for the expansion of nursing homes and offering more access to elderly individuals.

2. Reasons for Moving to a Nursing Home and Resistance to It

Moving to a Nursing Home Out of Necessity

Some participants view nursing homes as an option only when they become dependent on care, are unable to meet their physical needs, or face serious health issues. In particular, they mentioned being open to the idea of moving to a nursing home when they reach a point where they can no longer live independently.

"I would choose it because I need care. Health and finances are the two factors that bind me." (Participant 16, 68 years old, Male)

"If I become disabled, I would stay, but if I become blind, I wouldn't. My wife wouldn't leave me, but if I were in a really bad condition, that would be the last place I would go." (Participant 14, 66 years old, Male)

"If you're alone, you would prefer it. If you need care. Let's say you can't prepare your food, wash the dishes, clean the house, what would happen? In the nursing home, there are people to take care of you. Because you have become dependent." (Participant 9, 66 years old, Male)

These statements show that elderly individuals perceive nursing homes as a last resort rather than a preferred choice. They are willing to accept the idea of moving to a nursing home, particularly when their health deteriorates, their independence diminishes, and they lack close relatives to provide support.

Family Relationships and Nursing Home Preferences

Some participants stated that the decision to move to a nursing home is not only related to physical limitations but also connected to family relationships. They noted that, in situations where their children cannot care for them or if family conflicts arise, a nursing home could be considered as an alternative.

“If my children don’t take care of me, I would stay. It’s not the same as home. Staying in a house with grandchildren is different from staying between four walls. In the nursing home, everyone has their own room.” (Participant 13, 65 years old, Female)

“I don’t want to be a burden to my children, so they can get along well with their spouses. When children want to take care of you, but their wives don’t want to, isn’t that right? Children are like that, they want to take care of their mother/father, but if it’s your daughter, the son-in-law doesn’t want to; if it’s your son, the daughter-in-law doesn’t want to. Tensions arise if you live too long.” (Participant 8, 77 years old, Female)

These statements highlight that the decision to move to a nursing home is not solely dependent on an individual’s physical or health condition, but also influenced by family dynamics. Elderly individuals indicated that while their children might want to care for them, spouses, especially daughters-in-law or sons-in-law, may not be as receptive, which could lead to unrest within the family.

Reluctance to Move to a Nursing Home

Some participants firmly oppose the idea of moving to a nursing home. Especially those who believe their family members will take care of them and who fear loneliness in a nursing home, reject this option entirely.

“I won’t go, of course, my children will take care of me.” (Participant 1, 66 years old, Female)

“I would feel really bad if I had to go to a nursing home. I would wait for my children, always.” (Participant 6, 86 years old, Female)

These statements demonstrate that individuals with strong family support reject the idea of moving to a nursing home, as they perceive it as an emotionally difficult experience. Participants who associate nursing homes with loneliness expressed that they are entirely closed to the idea of using this option.

These findings suggest that the decision to move to a nursing home is based on different justifications for each individual. Factors such as dependency on care, physical limitations, and loneliness may make moving to a nursing home a necessity, while family dynamics and personal preferences also play significant roles in this decision. There is a strong tendency toward rethinking nursing homes as a supportive service model, rather than a last resort, for elderly individuals.



3. Life in a Nursing Home: Expectations, Realities, and Experiences

Services Provided in Nursing Homes and Living Conditions

Elderly individuals' perceptions of the services provided in nursing homes vary significantly. Some participants noted that nursing homes offer essential services such as healthcare, nutrition, and cleaning, providing a comfortable environment in this regard. For example, one participant highlighted the satisfaction of an acquaintance who lives in a nursing home:

"Care is good, everything is good. Nursing homes are better than one's own home." (Participant 10, 74 years old, Male)

"I've never been there myself, but from what I've seen in the media and here and there, the elderly chat and socialize among themselves, they receive healthcare services, and sometimes NGOs visit them. Occasionally, there are even entertainment activities... So basically, the state does everything to help them spend their days well." (Participant 5, 65 years old, Male)

This statement suggests that some elderly individuals view nursing homes not just as a place of care but also as an alternative offering a more organized and comfortable lifestyle. However, not every participant shares the same view about the quality of services provided. Another participant pointed out that the quality of care in nursing homes is directly related to financial status:

"If you don't pay, they don't take care of you." (Participant 4, 72 years old, Male)

"From what I've heard, doctors take care of them. If you have a lot of money and can go to a good place, it's nice. If you pay well, the care is good. It can even be better than your own home. I've seen it in some cases." (Participant 8, 77 years old, Female)

This comment indicates that the services provided in nursing homes may vary based on financial capabilities. In particular, elderly individuals with lower incomes may have significant concerns about the quality of care and services in these institutions. Another participant expressed concerns about potential mistreatment in nursing homes:

"There is no care in nursing homes, they beat them, they don't take care of them. We see it on television, they wash them with hoses." (Participant 11, 78 years old, Female)

Such statements reflect some of the existing prejudices and fears about nursing homes in society. Negative media reports about nursing homes exacerbate elderly individuals' difficulties in trusting these institutions.

Spending Time in a Nursing Home and Daily Routines

Participants shared different experiences regarding the daily time spent in nursing homes. Some elderly individuals described nursing homes as having a social environment that made them feel better, while others found life there monotonous. For instance, one participant described the daily routine of an acquaintance living in a nursing home:

"There's a woman in the nursing home in our village. She says she's very comfortable. She has rented a private room. She visits us occasionally. She has friends there. She says, 'I sit in my room, when I get bored, I go outside, look around, then sit again.' She just sits. It's all about sitting. Everything is taken care of." (Participant 1, 66 years old, Female)

This comment suggests that although some elderly individuals may be physically comfortable in nursing homes, they might feel that they cannot spend their days in a productive or meaningful way. The need for social interaction emerges as an important issue for individuals living in nursing homes. Another participant described daily life in a nursing home as follows:

"Some who have confidence go to the market and wander around, they return in the evening. Those who can't go out stay in the garden, they can't do anything else. Eat, drink, wander, sleep. Nothing else." (Participant 4, 72 years old, Male)

These statements indicate that the level of activity in nursing homes is largely dependent on the individual's health condition. More active and outgoing elderly individuals can participate in various activities, while those who are physically limited experience a more restricted life. Some participants mentioned that the activities offered in nursing homes are enough to occupy them:

"They watch TV, play backgammon, those who are physically able go out for a walk." (Participant 7, 65 years old, Female)

However, the adequacy of social activities in nursing homes remains debatable. For some elderly individuals, these activities may be sufficient, while others suggest that the days spent in a nursing home should be made more meaningful.

Real Experiences and Concerns

Expectations about nursing homes do not always align with reality. While some participants view nursing homes as a positive option, others feel that the facilities provided are insufficient or that there is a risk of mistreatment. For example, one participant expressed the following concern regarding the potential mistreatment elderly individuals might face in nursing homes:

"It's a place for women who need care. If there's no one to take care of you at home, you go there, you surrender, they take care of you. But in some nursing homes, they beat them, they wash them with hoses. I hope that doesn't happen to me." (Participant 3, 72 years old, Female)

Such statements reflect the fears that some elderly individuals have about nursing homes. However, there are also participants who view nursing homes positively. For instance, one participant described the care services in nursing homes as adequate and expressed satisfaction with having their basic needs met:

"They are being taken care of well now. Healthcare and meals are good. I have no prejudice against nursing homes, but living in a nursing home is psychologically different from living with family members." (Participant 5, 65 years old, Male)



These findings show that views on nursing homes are shaped by individual experiences, economic conditions, and social expectations. For some elderly individuals, a nursing home is a sanctuary and a safe living space, while for others, it may become a place of loneliness and anxiety.

4. Elderly Care: Who is Responsible and What Alternatives Exist?

Family Responsibility and Changing Perspectives

Some participants argue that the care of elderly individuals should be the responsibility of the family. Those who hold this view have expressed that, along with the weakening of the traditional family structure, changes have also occurred in elderly care. For example, one participant stated:

“If the children don’t take care of them, they send them to a nursing home. I would disown such children, and donate all my wealth to the state.” (Participant 14, 66 years old, Male)

These statements reflect the resentment some elderly individuals feel when their children do not take enough responsibility for their care. However, some elderly individuals accept going to a nursing home because they do not want to be a burden to their children:

“I tell my children, when my mind is not clear, place me in a nursing home, give them my pension, and they will take care of me there.” (Participant 7, 65 years old, Female)

The Role of the State in Elderly Care

The state’s role in elderly care has led to varying opinions among the participants. Some believe that the services provided by the state are sufficient and that the state plays a significant role in the care of elderly individuals. On the other hand, some feel that these services are more advantageous for individuals with better financial situations.

“The state helps more in this regard. If you are bedridden, you can apply to the state and find support there, they help more than your children.” (Participant 8, 77 years old, Female)

Some participants have stated that the nursing home services provided by the state are subject to certain conditions, and access to these services is not equal for everyone. They mentioned that it is difficult to find a place in state-supported nursing homes and that individuals with better financial conditions have easier access to better care.

“They don’t accept everyone. We went to find a place for an acquaintance, we tried and tried, and used some influence to get them in.” (Participant 4, 72 years old, Male)

On the other hand, some participants feel that the state’s services for the elderly are insufficient and that more support should be provided for individuals with poor financial situations. The fact that nursing homes are fee-based and that individuals with limited financial means cannot fully benefit from these services is a topic of criticism.

"I support the increase of such institutions as long as they are healthy. Because there is a great need for them. But they shouldn't expect someone to have financial income. Because in these places, they give a lot of importance to money. If you have money, you're well taken care of. If I don't have money, I should still be cared for. That's very important." (Participant 7, 65 years old, Female)

Some participants emphasized that the state's role in elderly care should not be limited to nursing homes alone, and that more importance should be placed on home care services. They suggested that elderly individuals should be supported at home, with financial assistance and care services provided within their own homes.

"If you hire a caregiver, the state gives you money, and you take care of your mother and father at home." (Participant 11, 78 years old, Female)

"I think being cared for at home makes more sense. Health services, medicine, and doctor services are important expectations." (Participant 16, 68 years old, Male)

These findings suggest that the state's role in elderly care is evaluated from different perspectives. While some participants consider the state's services sufficient, there is a strong emphasis on the need to improve accessibility, especially for elderly individuals with poor financial conditions. Additionally, there is a common demand for the development of home care services, increased financial support, and an improvement in the quality of care in nursing homes.

Alternatives to Nursing Homes

Some participants argue that elderly care should not be limited to nursing homes and that different care models should be developed. They emphasized that alternatives should focus on elderly individuals remaining active in society while maintaining their productivity.

"For example, a village council rents a place, and directs you to activities like farming or gardening." (Participant 14, 66 years old, Male)

Similarly, it was noted that instead of elderly individuals staying in confined environments like nursing homes, spaces should be created where they can live a freer life, surrounded by nature. The creation of rural living spaces that integrate nature and the development of community-based models that keep elderly individuals active were suggested.

"I can't stay there; we are used to being outside. Gardens, fields, digging... To end up in a nursing home means to be worn out." (Participant 14, 66 years old, Male)

Moreover, some participants emphasized that systems should be promoted where elderly individuals can receive care in their own homes instead of nursing homes. There was a call for the widespread implementation of home care services supported by the state or private institutions.

"If you hire a caregiver, the state gives you money, and you take care of your mother and father at home." (Participant 11, 78 years old, Female)



"I think being cared for at home makes more sense. Health services, medicine, and doctor services are important expectations." (Participant 16, 68 years old, Male)

The importance of social activities in improving the quality of life for elderly individuals was also highlighted. Some suggested that nursing homes should provide workshops, courses to develop hand skills, and more opportunities for social interaction, rather than just offering time-killing activities.

"There should be workshops for those with hand skills, and exhibitions should be held. They bring artists, but I can listen to them on TV or the radio. It's very important to have something that will engage me, something to keep me busy." (Participant 7, 65 years old, Female)

These findings show that elderly individuals need alternative care models that allow them to live more active, social, and productive lives instead of being confined to nursing homes. The creation of community living spaces in rural areas, the expansion of home care services, and the increase in social activities for elderly individuals were highlighted as major alternatives.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide significant data on understanding the perceptions and expectations of elderly individuals living at home regarding nursing homes. One of the key results presented by the research is the generally negative attitude of elderly individuals toward the concept of nursing homes. This aligns with the impact of the traditional family structure on elderly care, as frequently highlighted in the literature (Açıkgöz, Artan & Arıcı, 2019; Bahadır, Ay & Özgün Başibüyük, 2022). In traditional societal structures, elderly individuals are expected to be cared for within the family. However, with modernization and changing social structures, perceptions of nursing homes and preferences regarding elderly care processes are directly influenced (Ministry of Family and Social Policies, 2010; Yaman, 2020).

The findings reveal that elderly individuals perceive nursing homes as a necessity or last resort, which leads to significant resistance toward moving to a nursing home. This finding is consistent with Daniş's (2009a) study on elderly individuals' perceptions of institutional care services, where it was highlighted that elderly individuals preferred home care services over nursing homes. A similar trend was observed in this study as well; participants generally viewed nursing homes as a solution only when they were in need of care or had no other options left. In a study by Arling, Kane, Cooke, and Lewis (2010), it was found that individuals' care decisions were largely shaped by their level of dependence and family support, with nursing homes often being chosen when alternative care options were exhausted. The reluctance to move to a nursing home is not only a reflection of personal preferences but is also directly related to societal norms and cultural values (Açıkgöz, Artan & Arıcı, 2019). As noted in Daniş's (2009a) study, in countries where the traditional family structure is strong, elderly individuals tend to show higher resistance to institutional care services. In Turkey, the cultural expectation of

family care plays a significant role in the reasons elderly individuals prefer not to move to a nursing home (Bahadır, Ay & Özgün Başibüyük, 2022; Daniş, 2009b). These results align with international literature, which suggests that the motivations and decision-making processes of individuals who choose to stay in a nursing home should be addressed from multiple perspectives (Abrahamson, Hass & Arling, 2018).

Especially, the negative perceptions of living in nursing homes can adversely affect individuals' psychosocial well-being. Studies have shown that individuals living in nursing homes experience higher levels of loneliness compared to those living at home (Çevik Akyıl et al., 2018). Additionally, elderly individuals living in nursing homes have limited access to social support mechanisms, which negatively impacts their happiness levels. However, considering individual differences and expectations, for some elderly individuals, life in a nursing home can offer advantages in terms of social interaction opportunities and access to care services (Bradshaw, Playford & Riazi, 2012). In a systematic review by Brownie, Horstmanshof, and Garbutt (2014), it was noted that moving to a nursing home requires an important psychological adjustment process for elderly individuals, during which they experience anxieties such as loneliness, loss of belonging, and the loss of independence. Similarly, in the current study, one of the biggest concerns among elderly individuals regarding moving to a nursing home was distancing themselves from their social environment. Çevik Akyıl and colleagues (2018) found that elderly individuals living in nursing homes had higher loneliness scores and lower perceived social support levels compared to those living at home. This explains the psychosocial dynamics behind elderly individuals' preference for living with their families or social circles rather than in institutional care.

According to the research findings, negative perceptions of nursing homes are also directly related to elderly individuals' fear of losing their independence. Specifically, it is observed that elderly individuals prefer to live at home as long as they are able to care for themselves. This aligns with the perception of personal independence, which is one of the key factors influencing the decision to move to a nursing home (Ryan & Scullion, 2000). Additionally, studies have shown that the majority of individuals who choose to live in nursing homes do so because of their health conditions; however, after a certain period, they adapt to the nursing home environment (Sury, Burns & Brodaty, 2013). On the other hand, negative attitudes toward nursing homes can also be linked to the physical and social conditions of the institutions. It has been noted that elderly individuals' life satisfaction in nursing homes is largely dependent on the quality of services provided, the availability of social activities, and relationships with staff (Altıparmak, 2009; Yüksel & Bahadır Yılmaz, 2022). Similarly, in a study by Ng, Tey, and Yew (2012), it was indicated that elderly individuals' negative perceptions of nursing homes are directly related to the inadequate physical and social facilities of these institutions. The findings obtained in this study also support this view. A significant portion of participants expressed that they found the living standards in nursing homes inadequate, and one of the biggest obstacles to their preference for these institutions was this issue.



Another significant finding of the study is that elderly individuals' expectations of nursing homes are shaped around social support and care services. While there are limited studies in Turkey regarding how well the services provided in nursing homes meet elderly individuals' expectations, international research emphasizes the impact of nursing home services on individuals' quality of life (Van Malderen, Mets & Gorus, 2013). In particular, the preference for home care services over nursing homes in developed countries can be explained by elderly individuals' tendency to maintain their social connections by receiving care within their own living spaces (Farber et al., 2011). In this context, it is clear that in order to better meet the needs of elderly individuals, nursing home services should be shaped according to their expectations and priorities. The tendency to prefer home care services over nursing homes, particularly in developed countries, is noteworthy. Kaye and Williamson (2014) noted a trend toward home care services rather than nursing homes in developed countries and emphasized that state-supported home care models help elderly individuals maintain their independence. The World Health Organization (2015), in its World Report on Ageing and Health, also stated that supporting elderly individuals within their own living spaces is more sustainable in terms of both their psychosocial well-being and the burden on health services.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aimed to understand the perceptions and expectations of elderly individuals living at home regarding nursing homes, and significant findings were reached based on the data obtained. The results revealed that the vast majority of elderly individuals view nursing homes as a last resort, with family care being the preferred choice. Additionally, nursing home services are generally perceived in a negative light. However, factors such as individual independence, the desire not to burden children, and the need for professional care led some elderly individuals to view nursing homes as a positive option.

An important finding of the research is that there are serious prejudices and fears about nursing homes within society. In particular, allegations of mistreatment in nursing homes, often spread through social media and news outlets, reduce trust in these institutions. Furthermore, elderly individuals' concerns about being alone in nursing homes negatively affect their psychosocial well-being and limit their preference for these facilities. Nevertheless, some participants viewed nursing homes as an option offering regular care and social interaction opportunities and emphasized the need for the development of these institutions.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made to improve elderly individuals' perceptions of nursing homes, develop alternative care models, and make elderly care policies more inclusive:

- Public awareness campaigns should be organized to change the misconceptions about nursing homes, and successful examples of nursing homes should be made more visible.

- Instead of focusing on negative news about nursing homes, media content should highlight the quality of services provided by these institutions and positive elderly experiences.
- Open house days, informational seminars, and visitation programs should be organized to allow elderly individuals to become more familiar with nursing homes.
- Activities that enhance social interaction in nursing homes should be organized, and social environments that reduce feelings of loneliness should be created.
- Home care services should be expanded, enabling elderly individuals to maintain their independence by receiving support in their own living spaces.
- Community-based care models (such as elderly cooperatives, assisted living centers, rural care homes) should be developed to allow elderly individuals to live without disconnecting from social life.
- To better understand perceptions of nursing homes, similar studies should be conducted in different socioeconomic groups and in various regions.

These recommendations aim to improve the quality of life for elderly individuals and provide better care options for them. Improving perceptions of nursing homes, making care services more effective, and developing alternatives that align with the needs of elderly individuals will enhance the sustainability of elderly care policies.

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