

BÖLÜM 17

İleri Yetişkinlik Döneminde Fiziksel ve Bilişsel Gelişim

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İleri yetişkinlik dönemi bazı araştırmacılar tarafından kayıp, gerileme ve ölüm sürecine hazırlanma dönemi olarak değerlendirilirken (Cumming ve Henry,1961) bazı araştırmacılar tarafından bilgelik (Baltes ve Staudinger, 2000) ve yaşamda ustalaşma dönemi olarak (Baltes ve Baltes, 1990) ele alınmaktadır. Erikson (1982) bu dönemin çıktısının benlik bütünlüğü sağlama (ego integrity) veya umutsuzluk (despair) olacağını belirtmiştir. Çelen (2021) yaşam evrelerinin çok boyutlu değerlendirilmesi gerekliliğine atıf yapmaktadır. İleri yetişkinlik dönemine çok boyutlu bir bakış açısı sunmaları açısından (bireysel farklılıklar, önceki yaşam dönemlerinin etkisi, kültürel faktörlerin önemi) Çelen (2021) ve Erikson'un (1982) görüşleri oldukça değerlidir. Aşağıda ileri yetişkinlik döneminde fiziksel ve bilişsel gelişim bölümü ele alınmıştır.

İLERİ YETİŞKİNLİK DÖNEMİNDE FİZİKSEL GELİŞİM

Baltes'e (1997) göre fiziksel yaşlanma evrenseldir, ama yaşlanma biçimi bireyseldir. Yaşlanmayla birlikte fiziksel değişimler kaçınılmaz olsa da bu değişimler bireyler arası farklılık göstermektedir. İleri yetişkinlik döneminde kas kütlesi ve kas gücünde azalma, kemik mineral yoğunluğunda düşüş, kardiyovasküler sistemin yapısal ve işlevsel özelliklerinde değişiklikler ile görme ve işitme gibi duyuşal işlevlerde kayıplar ortaya çıkabilmektedir (Cruz-Jentoft vd., 2019; North ve Sinclair, 2012; Owsley, 2011). Kas gücündeki düşüş, mobilite kaybına ve düşme riskine neden olabilirken; kemik yoğunluğunun azalması kırık riskini artırmaktadır.

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Sonuç

İleri yetişkinlik döneminde bilişsel gelişim, genel bir yavaşlama eğilimi gösterse de bu süreç tek tip ve evrensel değildir. Yaşlanmayla birlikte dikkat, hafıza, bilgi işleme ve problem çözme gibi alanlarda düşüş gözlemlense de, bu değişimler bireyden bireye önemli ölçüde farklılık gösterebilir. Bireysel bilişsel performanstaki farklılıklar, hem yaşam boyu öğrenme fırsatları, eğitim düzeyi, fiziksel sağlık durumu hem de zihinsel stimülasyon düzeyi ile yakından ilişkilidir (Lindenberger ve Baltes, 1997; Nyberg vd., 2012).

Örneğin, eğitim düzeyi yüksek bireylerin yaşa bağlı bilişsel kayıpları daha geç yaşadığı, “bilişsel rezerv” kavramı çerçevesinde açıklanmaktadır (Stern, 2002). Ayrıca, aktif bir sosyal yaşam, düzenli fiziksel aktivite ve zihinsel olarak uyarıcı faaliyetler, bilişsel işlevleri desteklemekte ve yaşlanma sürecindeki gerilemeleri yavaşlatabilmektedir (Park ve Reuter-Lorenz, 2009).

Sonuç olarak yaşlanma, bilişsel kapasitede bazı sınırlılıklar getirir de bu süreci etkileyen pek çok koruyucu faktör ve müdahale fırsatı mevcuttur. Bilişsel egzersizler, fiziksel aktivite, sağlıklı beslenme ve sosyal etkileşim gibi yaşam tarzı bileşenleri, bilişsel sağlığın korunmasında kilit rol oynamaktadır. Ayrıca bireyler, duygusal olgunlukları ve yaşam deneyimleri sayesinde bazı bilişsel alanlarda genç bireylerle kıyaslanabilir hatta üstün performans gösterebilirler (Baltes ve Staudinger, 2000). Bu nedenle ileri yetişkinlik dönemi, sadece kayıplar dönemi değil, bilgelik, deneyim ve yeni potansiyellerin gelişebileceği aktif bir yaşam evresidir.

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