

Yumurtaci, Aynur; Bagis, Bilal

**Working Paper**

## Turkish University Students' Self-Perceptions of Aging: An Analysis Over Socio-Economic Dimensions

GLO Discussion Paper, No. 391

**Provided in Cooperation with:**  
Global Labor Organization (GLO)

Suggested Citation: Yumurtaci, Aynur; Bagis, Bilal (2019) : Turkish University Students' Self-Perceptions of Aging: An Analysis Over Socio-Economic Dimensions, GLO Discussion Paper, No. 391, Global Labor Organization (GLO), Essen

This Version is available at:  
<http://hdl.handle.net/10419/202327>

**Standard-Nutzungsbedingungen:**

Die Dokumente auf EconStor dürfen zu eigenen wissenschaftlichen Zwecken und zum Privatgebrauch gespeichert und kopiert werden.

Sie dürfen die Dokumente nicht für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, öffentlich zugänglich machen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Sofern die Verfasser die Dokumente unter Open-Content-Lizenzen (insbesondere CC-Lizenzen) zur Verfügung gestellt haben sollten, gelten abweichend von diesen Nutzungsbedingungen die in der dort genannten Lizenz gewährten Nutzungsrechte.

**Terms of use:**

*Documents in EconStor may be saved and copied for your personal and scholarly purposes.*

*You are not to copy documents for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the documents publicly, to make them publicly available on the internet, or to distribute or otherwise use the documents in public.*

*If the documents have been made available under an Open Content Licence (especially Creative Commons Licences), you may exercise further usage rights as specified in the indicated licence.*

# Turkish University Students' Self-Perceptions of Aging: An Analysis Over Socio-Economic Dimensions

Aynur Yumurtaci<sup>1</sup> and Bilal Bagis<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

University students represent nearly more than half of the youth population (age group of 15-24) in Turkey. Meanwhile, the latest demographic data shows that they will constitute a majority of the elder generation in the context of the recent rapid aging trend in the near future. That said, and although the number of studies related to the students' perceptions of old ages are increasing in recent years, there is still room to extend our understanding of the influence of demographics, social and economic patterns on students' self perceptions of old age. To investigate the Turkish students' views towards their own 65+ ages, a questionnaire is applied to 450 students from two different universities located in different regions in Turkey. Survey analysis shows that, almost 85 percent of "engineering" and "economics and administrative science" faculty students describe health and elderly care as the two major concerns in their old ages. On the contrary, answers of the two faculties differentiated clearly in terms of happiness, ability to save more and living with someone else in their old ages. Also, students accept retirement period as a reflection of aging and most of the students claim they had never thought about the aging process before. Yet, female and male students describe the meaning of retirement as the most comfortable period and a period that makes no sense, respectively.

**Keywords:** University Students, Turkey, Aging, Perceptions

**JEL code:** J0, J1, I3, Z190

## Introduction

Populations are entering a challenging aging phase due to the dropping birth and death rates as well as an increasing longer life expectancy all over the world. This is true in particular since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to the United Nations Population Profiles of 2017, while there were approximately 143 million old people (65+) in 1950; that number has reached nearly 657 million (65+) in 2017 (United Nations, 2018a; Glaser and Hank, 2018). Since 1950, the old age population has increased by 4.5 times while the world population has increased by a mere 3 times. In this context, 8.7 percent of the world population consists of the old people as of 2018. Considering the impact of the expected demographic transition, this ratio is likely to rise to 15.8 percent by 2050.

According to the recent assessments of the aging populations in terms of the regions, it is observed that Europe is pioneering with its elderly population rate of 17.6 percent (Botev, 2012; Deeg et al., 2018; United Nations, 2018b). Yet, despite this high proportion of the old population in Europe, Asia has recently been on the forefront with its rapidly aging population (Aspalter and Walker, 2015; Sahoo, 2011). As both an Asian and a European country, demographic transformation has occurred in a much shorter time, in Turkey, than in particular

---

<sup>1</sup> Corresponding Author, PhD, Istanbul University, Institute of Social Science, Department of Labor Economics and Industrial Relations, Turkey, e-mail: aynur.yumurtaci@gmail.com, ORCID ID: 0000-0003-0277-5750.

<sup>2</sup> Visiting Asst. Prof., UC Berkeley, Department of Economics, Berkeley, CA, e-mail: bilalbagis@yahoo.com, ORCID ID: 0000-0003-2314-8991.

most of its European counterparts (Yumurtaci, 2013). According to the Turkish Statistical Institute Reports (TUIK), for instance, while the proportion of the population of age 65+ constituted 3.3 percent of the total population in 1950, the same rate has so far risen to 8.5 percent in 2017 (TUIK, 2018a).

That said, and as of 2017, Turkey is still considered as a country with a demographic window of opportunities. Yet, the demographic data (especially the dropping birth rates) indicates that this demographic window of opportunities is likely to close in a very near future. The current trends in demographic variables shows that the share of Turkey's population of ages 65+ will rise to 10.4 percent in 2025 and to 20.6 percent in 2050 (TUIK, 2018a). Therefore, Turkey, in particular, has been suffering from the demographic transformation much more (Bagis, 2017). Social security systems, education, labor supply and unemployment rates are all directly impacted by this variable.

Despite these unfavorable projections, though, a basic comparison of the youth population rates among the European and the Asian countries shows that Turkey's relatively young population (around 12.9 million) still exhibits a significant and dynamic potential today. Meanwhile, in Turkey, nearly 7.5 million university students are still under the age of 25 (TUIK, 2018b; Council of Higher Education-CoHE, 2018). Hence, a socio-economic assessment of the university students' perceptions and projections of their own old age perspectives is essential in determining the middle and long-term social and economic policies.

Based on this potential, we dig into the Turkish students' self-perceptions of aging. We aim to understand the perceptions and changing attitudes in the Turkish society and especially the youth. The literature, on the other hand, points to a general negative perception of aging. Details matter though, as the big picture may indeed vary a lot. Survey analysis shows that education and majors seem to matter here, as the business students usually have negative perceptions. Women seem to have a greater degree of anxiety compared to the men. Perceptions of self-aging improve by age and education. Middle-aged groups (or the sandwich generation) usually are busier and the least optimistic. Attitudes towards the elders may vary depending on the culture as well, with a relatively positive attitude in the eastern cultures such as China and Iran and a relatively negative perception in others such as Chile and Mexico.

## **Literature Review**

A number of previous studies has emphasized the general tendency that students mostly describe aging as a process of decreasing productivity and lower efficiency; and an increasing loneliness and dependency period (Lucacel, 2015). However, it has also been observed that these prejudices do actually decline when an in-depth assessment is carried out. Hawkins (1996), for instance, analyzes 420 university students' attitudes for three different old age groups (65-74, 75-99, 100+) with gender separation. She finds that the male university students preserve a much more negative perception of the female older people than the older male people.

In that line, Mosher-Ashley and Ball (1999) conducts another study over the college students' (business, psychology, occupational therapy, nursing students) attitudes towards elderly people and their self-perceptions of the age of 75. Among the students, attitudes are evaluated in the context of two different age groups, the traditionally aged (18 to 22 years old) and the nontraditionally aged (23 or more years old). Results show that traditionally aged students are

significantly more concerned about self-aging than the nontraditionally aged students. Moreover, while the business and psychology students showed relatively negative attitudes; the occupational therapy students, on the contrary, exhibited positive attitudes towards both the old age and their own ages of 75. This was true both in general and in individual patterns.

On the other hand, Kropf et al. (2000) examines the relationship between the non-elderly people's (18-55 aged) knowledge of anxieties regarding aging, their gender and race. The study indicates that the non-elderly women faced with their own aging process with a greater degree of anxiety than the non-elderly men. They also find that, color men have greater anxiety over aging than the Caucasian men. On the other hand, there is no significant difference between different women groups, regarding aging.

Similarly, Laditka et al. (2004) investigates different age, gender groups (including 534 younger, middle-aged, and older adult participants, with respective age groups of 21–34, 35-59 and 60 +) and their views on self-aging. In that study, it is concluded that the elder participants usually had a much more positive attitude towards aging than the middle-age participants. Yet, the youngest participants are more positive than the older participants. In contrast, the middle-age participants had the least positive attitude towards both aging in general and their self-aging process, among all the groups. This is most probably because, the middle-age groups (35-59) has so many responsibilities regarding both their parents and their (grand) children's care (hence called the sandwich generation).

In another survey analysis, “students’ attitudes towards the elderly in China” were investigated by sampling 199 students (73.3 percent female, 26.7 percent male) from the mainland Chinese Universities. Age range varied between 18 and 26, here. According to the survey, male and female students’ attitudes towards elderly were generally positive (more positive for the elder male than the elder females, mainly due to the long-living Confucius tradition here). Students also described the older men as more positive than the older women. In addition, students’ age, education (their academic discipline), their family structure (being the only child or having any siblings) did not seem to be correlated with their attitudes towards the elderly (Tan et al., 2004).

Furthermore, perceptions regarding the meaning of an old age are also investigated by Cathalifaud et al. (2008) in another study over the young Chilean people. This research is conducted among 682 Chilean university students. Findings strongly emphasize the negative tendencies of the Chilean youth towards the elder ages. One of the indicative results showed that the previous stereotypes based on bias played an important role in shaping young people's views of the elder ages. It has also been demonstrated that social image of the elder ages determines the well-being of senior citizens looking forward. Levy et al. (2002), further, shows that positive attitudes towards the older ages is likely to increase life expectancy.

Allan and Johnson (2008) conducts another eye-catching analysis on the Canadian undergraduate students’ attitudes towards the elderly. In this study, knowledge, anxiety and attitudes towards the elderly were investigated among 113 university students between the ages of 17-49 years. As a general result, no considerable differences in the samples were found in terms of ages, gender-based knowledge or anxiety.

Kane (2008) conducts yet another interesting research over 183 students and investigates how the social work students would more likely feel when they reach the age of 75. As a result, it shows that although most of the respondents didn't believe they would be as capable at the

age of 75 as they are now; most respondents didn't believe that. at that age, they would be as vulnerable either, in terms of loneliness, living in a nursing home etc.

Cheong et al. (2009), on the other hand, presents the differences between first and third grade (a total 366 medical students) university students' attitudes in Singapore. The results indicate that students who lived with an older family member and provide care showed more positive attitudes than those who did not live with any older family member.

Following upon the findings of this study, Van Dussen and Weaver (2009) investigates importance of "aging education" for the university students. This research was carried out among 543 university students from Midwestern University to explore these students' attitudes and views towards the elder people, serving elder people, and the rising interest of "aging education". It was observed that students who somehow communicated with old people had a relatively positive attitude towards the elders than those who had not been communicating with the elders at all. Van Dussen and Weaver's (2009) research is critical in revealing that "aging education" might actually improve students' perceptions of the old ages, which would in return affect the quality of their future life.

Xiaoping and Bryant (2009) queried the widespread belief about "attitudes towards the elderly were generally negative in the Western cultures and positive in the Eastern cultures" over 65 undergraduate students. This is a relatively underrepresented analysis of cultural differences. And as a result, it was found that attitudes toward elderly were generally positive in both cultures. However, more importantly, this study also emphasizes similarity of attitudes between cultures, towards the older people.

Huang (2013) analyzes a sample of 1402 students in four countries (Japan, China, Taiwan, and Vietnam) in the Eastern culture and two countries (United States and United Kingdom) in the Western cultures. According to Huang (2013), in addition to the culture, education also has a significant role to play. Over his analysis of undergraduate students' knowledge of and attitudes towards aging and elderly, it is emphasized that knowledge of aging should be improved by education in order to develop positive attitudes towards the elderly. In the process, Van Dussen and Weaver (2009) also put forward the differences between the department and education for the "aging education" analysis.

In Iran, on the other hand, Tabari et al. (2015) carries out a research on dental students' attitudes towards elderly. The majority of dental students demanded to work with the elderly patients. In particular, 70.6 percent of dental students wanted to work with the elderly patients in the future. This is, indeed, a reflection of the positive attitudes of the Iranian or the Eastern culture university students towards the older ages. Therefore, it is emphasized that this positive attitude could be used to improve the quality of life of the elderly.

In yet another study, Vasquez et al. (2017) attempts to identify the differences and similarities between male and female students (the total number of the sample is 1669 here, and covers 851 female and 818 male students) in a Mexican University regarding the perception of and anxiety about aging. The results show that no significant differences were found between genders, in terms of the physical appearance and psychological concerns. According to the analysis, female students usually showed higher levels of anxiety in terms of the fear of loss of social support and autonomy, while the male students manifested higher levels of anxiety as to any contact with the elderly. Briefly, these results suggested that male and female students displayed higher levels of anxiety during their aging periods.

Mishra and Rawat (2017), in another survey over the Indian students, study the attitude of youths (21-26 age group) towards elderly. As a result of this research, it is observed that most of the respondents were aware of the difficulties faced by elderly in their old ages. Also, due to the altering structure of family and living conditions, the elders are usually neglected in society. One of the significant results of this study is that; despite the attempts to solve the issue of elderly care materially, the emotional communication with the elderly has actually been neglected.

Overall, in the brief literature review provided, it is clear that there is a general negative perception of aging. Details do matter though. The big picture varies a lot, as education and majors seem to matter. Women, meanwhile, seem to have a greater degree of anxiety compared to the men. Attitudes towards the elders seem to vary depending on the culture as well. However, it is also clear that there is still no empirical analysis over the Turkish undergraduate students' perceptions regarding their old ages. This study is the first research in Turkey, to our knowledge, comparing and evaluating the (engineering and economics and administrative science faculty) students' perceptions of old ages and their own 65+ ages.

The aim of this study is, based on some socio-economic and gender factors, to inquire about the similarities and differences between two different faculty students' views over their old ages. Understanding the youth's perceptions of aging and their expectations about the future matters, in particular considering that the middle and long term social and economic policies are usually an outcome of future demographic transformations.

## **Methodology**

For the analysis of this study, a questionnaire consisting of 32 multiple choice questions, covering demographic information and various questions related to students' perceptions and expectations regarding elder ages (and whether these perceptions and expectations would change depending on socio-economic and psychological factors) is distributed to 450 students in the faculties of economics and administrative sciences and engineering of the Turkish universities. The survey took place in the 2017-2018 spring semester at different Turkish state universities in the western and northern parts of Turkey to make sure our sample is a good representative of the Turkish university students. Hence, a wide range of student profiles with diverse perspectives is provided.

After informing the students about the purpose of the study, questionnaires were handed out to the students studying at the "engineering" and "economics and administrative science" faculties. The questionnaire consists of structured questions that were organized in an order to understand the university students' ideas about both the old age in general and the students' own old age perceptions. The questionnaire is also divided into three subjective groups;

- (a) six questions are related to the demographic information (age, gender, department, etc.)
- (b) thirteen questions are related to the socio-economic conditions of both the students and their parents (income level of students and their parents, housing, working, scholarship status of students, retirement status of their parents etc.)
- (c) thirteen questions are related to the old age in general (meaning of old age, issues related to old age, housing status in older age, income status in old ages etc.)

Participation to the questionnaire was based on a voluntary basis and the questionnaires were applied and collected face to face at one time. Once the missing questionnaires are ignored (excluded from analysis), the rest of the questionnaires (433 fully filled) are analyzed by a frequency analysis using the SPSS 19.0.

## Results

In this study, a total of 450 participants belonging to the Turkish undergraduate students population are selected from economics and administrative sciences, and engineering faculties. An evaluation of the descriptive statistical results shows that once the missing values are excluded, the total number of participants is 433 students. The distribution of these student is shown in Table 1 below. Accordingly, 47.6 percent of participants are female and 52.4 percent are male. Meanwhile, a significant amount of the participants (68.1 percent) are senior students between the ages of 21-25. The number of male (227) and female (206) students are very close to each other. When students' housing status is examined, it is clear that the majority of the students prefer to stay in a rental house with their friends (37 percent) and state dormitory (32.1 percent) respectively. The monthly income level of 51.5 percent of the students is below ₺1300. Only 1.8% of the students have an income level of more than ₺5000 (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Socio-Demographic and Socio-Economic Characteristics of the University Students

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	206	47.6
	Male	227	52.4
	Total	433	100
Department	Engineering	232	53.6
	Economics and Administrative Science	201	46.4
	Total	433	100
Age	17-20	138	31.9
	21-25	295	68.1
	Total	433	100
Housing	Stay with Family	21	4.8
	Stay with Relatives	3	0.7
	Stay At Own House	27	6.2
	Rental House (with Friends)	160	37
	Dormitory (State)	139	32.1
	Dormitory (Private)	83	19.2
	Total	433	100
Income*	Under ₺ 1300	223	51.5
	₺ 1300-2300	120	27.7
	₺ 2301-3300	51	11.8
	₺ 3301-4000	22	5.1
	₺ 4001-5000	9	2.1
	Over ₺ 5000	8	1.8
	Total	433	100

\*As of 2017, the Minimum Wage Determination Committee announced minimum wage was ₺ 1404

After a brief assessment of the socio-demographic and socio-economic data, the answers obtained from the questionnaires related to the students' old age perspectives are evaluated. Based on the survey, it is observed that the meaning of an older age is generally assessed in the same direction for both faculty students. Although Turkey is a rapidly aging country, a significant share of students studying at both the economics and administrative sciences (48.3 percent) and engineering (44 percent) faculties stated that they had never thought about meaning of the old age before (Table 2). Whereas, the description of old age as “the most comfortable period of life” was selected at an equal percentage level by each faculty’s students (19 percent).

Among the participants, the number of students that described the old age as “a period of rising economic problems” had the lowest level among all the categories and the students. Briefly, the rank of answer and percentages shows a similar distribution between the two faculty’s students (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Meaning of Old Age According to University Students

Faculty	Meaning of Old Age According to Students	Frequency	Percent
Economics and Administrative Science	A period of rising economic problems	25	12.4
	The most comfortable period	38	18.9
	Does not make any sense	41	20.4
	I have never thought about it before	97	48.3
	Total	201	100
Engineering	A period of rising economic problems	31	13.4
	The most comfortable period	44	19.0
	Does not make any sense	55	23.7
	I have never thought about it before	102	44.0
	Total	232	100

Meanwhile, there is no significant difference between female and male students in terms of the meaning of old age. All students, without any faculty discrimination, mostly answered that they have never thought about meaning of the old age before (Table 3).



**Table 3.** Meaning of Old Age According to Gender and Faculty

Gender	Meaning of Old Age	Engineering Faculty		Economics and Administrative Science Faculty	
		Frequency	Percent (%)	Frequency	Percent (%)
<i>Female</i>	A period of increasing economic problems	14	20.9	17	12.2
	The most comfortable period	9	13.4	27	19.4
	Not make any sense	15	22.4	22	15.8
	Never thought before	29	43.3	73	52.5
	<b>Total</b>	67	100	139	100
<i>Male</i>	A period of increasing economic problems	17	10.3	8	12.9
	The most comfortable period	35	21.2	11	17.7
	Not make any sense	40	24.2	19	30.6
	Never thought before	73	44.2	24	38.7
	<b>Total</b>	165	100	62	100

Contrary to the results demonstrated on Table 3, about the perceptions of old ages, there are clear differences between genders regarding the meaning of retirement. In particular, female students studying both at engineering, and economics and administrative science faculties described the meaning of retirement as the most comfortable period. On the other hand, male students from both faculties declared the meaning of retirement as a period that did not make any sense (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Meaning of Retirement According to Gender and Faculty

Gender	Meaning of Retirement	Engineering Faculty		Economics and Administrative Science Faculty	
		Frequency	Percent (%)	Frequency	Percent (%)
<i>Female</i>	A period of increasing economic problems	17	25.4	25	18
	The most comfortable period	23	34.3	64	46
	Not make any sense	14	20.9	31	22.3
	Just need spiritual support	13	19.4	19	13.7
	<b>Total</b>	67	100	139	100
<i>Male</i>	A period of increasing economic problems	35	21.2	9	14.5
	The most comfortable period	35	21.2	16	25.8

Not make any sense	72	43.6	23	37.1
Just a period when I need spiritual support	23	13.9	14	22.6
<b>Total</b>	165	100	62	100

Interestingly, it was clear that a fascinating more than 70 percent of the students of both faculties did not want to stay with someone else at an elder age (Table 5). More specifically, students who did not want to stay with anyone else at an age of 65+ were almost 80 percent of all the participants. This was the case regardless of the gender; with a slightly higher share for the female students. In this context, it was interesting that both faculties' students had a similar point of view regarding their preferences over staying with the others during an older age.

**Table 5.** The Preferences Regarding Staying with Someone Else During the Old Ages

Faculty	The Preferences Regarding Stay with Someone Else During Old Ages	Frequency	Percent
Economics and Administrative Science	Yes	53	26.4
	No	148	73.6
	Total	201	100.0
Engineering	Yes	53	22.8
	No	179	77.2
	Total	232	100.0

Moreover, another question is directed regarding what could be the primary reason to feel obliged to stay with someone else at an older age (Table 6). According to the majority of students in the economics and administrative science faculty, it would be the security problems (49.3 percent); which was considered as the least important issue for engineering faculty students (1.3 percent). On the other hand, a significant number of engineering faculty students stated that health problems would be the main reason for staying with someone else in their older ages (86.6 percent).

**Table 6.** Staying with someone else in old ages depends on which factors

Faculty	Staying with someone else in old ages depends on which factors	Frequency	Percent
Economics and Administrative Science	Financial Problems	6	3.0
	Health Problems	57	28.4
	Security Problems	99	49.3
	Loneliness	39	19.4
	Total	201	100
Engineering	Financial Problems	3	1.3
	Health Problems	201	86.6
	Security Problems	3	1.3
	Loneliness	25	10.8
	Total	232	100

Generally, economic issues are in the last ranks among the reasons of staying with someone else in old ages for both faculty students. On the second rank, loneliness is stated as an

important reason for staying with someone else in elder ages for engineering faculty students (10.8 percent); and for economics and administrative science faculty students, health problems are accepted as the second ranked reason (28.4 percent) (Table 6).

When the students' saving tendencies are compared, in the context of their old age period habits, in particular students from the economics and administrative science have relatively higher tendency (60.7 percent) to save than the engineering students (47.4 percent) (Table 7).

**Table 7.** Do you believe that you could make any saving in old ages

Faculty	Do you believe that you could make any saving in old ages	Frequency	Percent
Economics and Administrative Science	Yes	122	60.7
	No	79	39.3
	Total	201	100.0
Engineering	Yes	110	47.4
	No	122	52.6
	Total	232	100.0

Preferences of students that have a high income level in old ages, according to spending areas, have also displayed similarities. The most selected answer was “traveling the world” for both the economics and administrative science and the engineering faculty students, at 41.3 percent and 37.9 percent respectively. On the other hand, “accumulating income even more” is the least preferred option for both faculties' students (Table 8).

**Table 8.** If you have a high-income level in your old ages, which would you prefer to do?

Faculty	If you have a high-income level in your old ages, which would you prefer to do?	Frequency	Percent
Economics and Administrative Science	To invest	25	12.4
	Traveling the world	83	41.3
	To do charity works	71	35.3
	Make luxury consumption	18	9.0
	To accumulate income even more	4	2.0
	Total	201	100
Engineering	To invest	32	13.8
	Traveling the world	88	37.9
	To do charity works	82	35.3
	Make luxury consumption	22	9.5
	To accumulate income even more	8	3.4
	Total	232	100

According to almost 90 percent of the students, “health” and “elderly care” were more likely to be the most important problems in old ages; and income option followed by a 5.98 and 3.87 percent, respectively, for the economics and administrative science faculty and engineering students (Table 9). Dramatically, “communication” and “transportation” are identified as the two least important problems in old ages for both faculties. However, “communication” is also usually considered as the key factor for elderly people in every aspect of life.

**Table 9.** Which of the following is the most important problem in old ages?

Faculty	Which of the following is the most important problem in old ages?	Frequency	Percent
Economics and Administrative Science	Income	12	5.98
	Health	153	76.12
	Care	29	14.42
	Communication	4	1.99
	Transportation	2	1
	Other	1	0.49
	Total	201	100
Engineering	Income	9	3.87
	Health	171	73.7
	Care	36	15.51
	Communication	1	0.44
	Transportation	9	3.88
	Other	6	2.6
	Total	232	100

The issue of happiness in old ages was also researched with a question as to ‘what would make you “happy” in old ages’ (Table 10). Answers from students were changing in term of their selections of “health” and “family” options. According to the students of the faculty of economics and administrative sciences, “family” was the main factor of happiness in old ages (53.23 percent). On the contrary, the primary source of happiness in old ages for the engineering faculty students was “health” (39.66 percent). Meanwhile, while “money” comes before “faith” among the factors that provide happiness in old ages, for students of the faculty of economics and administrative sciences; the situation is reversed for the engineering faculty students (Table 10).

**Table 10.** Happiness Factors in Old Ages According to Faculty.

Faculty	What would make you happy in old ages?	Frequency	Percent
Economics and Administrative Science	Health	73	36.32
	Money	11	5.47
	Family	107	53.23
	Faith	8	3.98
	Other	2	1
	Total	201	100
	Engineering	Health	92
Money		18	7.75
Family		89	38.36
Faith		29	12.5
Other		4	1.73
Total		232	100

On the other hand, while female students in the engineering faculty chose ‘health’ as the primary source of happiness in old ages; male students in the engineering faculty and all of the students in administrative sciences faculty chose ‘family’ as the main source of happiness in old ages (Table 11).

**Table 11.** Happiness Factors in Old Ages According to Gender and Faculty

Gender	What would make you happy in old ages?	Engineering Faculty		Administrative Science Faculty	
		Frequency	Percent (%)	Frequency	Percent (%)
Female	Health	30	44.8	54	38.8
	Money	4	6.0	3	2.2
	Family	25	37.3	77	55.4
	Faith	7	10.4	4	2.9
	Other	1	1.5	1	0.7
	<b>Total</b>	67	100	139	100
Male	Health	62	37.6	19	30.6
	Money	14	8.5	8	12.9
	Family	64	38.8	30	48.4
	Faith	22	13.3	4	6.5
	Other	3	1.8	1	1.6
	<b>Total</b>	165	100	62	100

## Discussion

Aging is a major global issue in most of the developed and developing countries with changing demographic structures. It is associated not only with the today's elderly, but also impacts the whole future generations. In this context, it is important to understand the attitudes and perceptions of the young people regarding the elder people, old ages and even their own elder ages. After all, today's youth will also constitute a generation of future's elderly population.

Comparing various relevant studies on the perceptions of old age in the literature and our survey analysis, a number of significant findings are obtained. Mosher-Ashley and Ball (1999), for example, finds that 23+ non-traditionally aged students don't usually care about the old ages. On the contrary, younger students traditionally aged between 18-22 have more sensitivity towards their old ages. This might be due to the differences between various generations' behaviors and ability to reach the rapidly changing information, a globalization effect. So, the younger are usually more anxious about their future. In the same study, business and psychology students had relatively negative attitudes towards the old ages. Similarly, Cathalifaud et al. (2008) demonstrates that students in South America usually have negative attitudes towards the old ages. Vasquez et al. (2017) also confirms the negative attitudes of the South American youth about old ages. This might be because of lack of experiences of young people regarding the old ages. However, male students in China accept the old ages more positively than the female students (Tan et al., 2004). This, we reason, might be one of the results of the cultural characteristic of the Asian society.

In our case study, over the Turkish youth, there were no clear differences at gender level. Approximately half of the students, with similar gender distribution, have never thought about their old age periods before. But, 56 out of 433 students defined old ages as a period of rising economic problems, and 96 out of 433 students had no sense of the old ages. These results show that nearly one third of the Turkish students have negative attitudes towards the old ages.

In contrast, there are of course studies showing that students demonstrate a positive attitude towards the old ages, Laditka et al (2004), Van Dussen and Weaver (2009), and Tabari et al. (2015). Also, one of the significant results in Cheong et al. (2009) is that living with an elderly leads to some positive changes in the attitudes. In our study, 83 percent of the university students did not live with an elderly person. In this case, it would not be wrong to argue that living with an elderly is an important factor in having a clear idea about the old ages, which supports Cheong et al. (2009). Briefly, being together with the elderly affects the views of student regarding the old ages positively.

While business and psychology students showed greatest number of negative attitudes, occupational therapy students exhibited the greatest number of positive attitudes regarding both the old ages in general and their own age of 75 (Mosher-Ashley and Ball 1999). In our survey, 32.8 percent of the economics and administrative sciences faculty students and 37.1 percent of the engineering faculty students evaluated the meaning of self-old age. In this case, although there were differences in the perspectives of business, psychology and occupational therapy students in terms of the old ages; in the current survey, there were no major differences between the engineering and economics and administrative sciences faculty students' perceptions of old age.

On the other hand, students are also asked a question as to “what is the meaning of retirement” since a significant part of the retirement years are included in the old ages. According to the answers, the meaning of retirement does not include a significant variation in the context of faculties, just as in the question about the meaning of old age. However, significant differences are revealed in terms of gender. Accordingly, while male students in different faculties stated that retirement did not mean anything; female students in different faculties chose retirement as the most comfortable period. However, 83% of male and female students in both faculties do not live with a retired family member aging 65 or over. In this context, it is believed that the students' thoughts over the meaning of retirement are largely due to the impressions they receive from their external environment.

Kropf et al. (2000) shows that women are more worried about the aging process than the men. Tan et al. (2004) has also supported this trend. Accordingly, male undergraduate students perceived the older ages more positively than the female students in China. In contrast, Vasquez et al. (2017) shows that both female and male students have exhibited negative attitudes towards the old ages. As Sun and Wang (2010) points out, this might be due to the fact that younger people usually prefer living individually compared with the elders. In our survey analysis, students' concerns regarding the old ages and their own elder ages were found at the same level in terms of gender and faculty dimensions. In other words, faculty type had no effect on students' perceptions of the meaning of old ages. However, Van Dussen and Weaver (2009) claims that department or education type might actually be effective on the perceptions of students over the old ages.

In this survey, majority of the students in both faculties do not prefer to stay with someone else during their old ages. However, the preferences of the students of both faculties have fluctuated when they had to stay with someone else in their elder ages. In particular, while most of the students in the engineering faculty (86.6 percent) prefer to stay with someone else in old ages because of the potential health problems; most of those in the faculty of economic and administrative sciences prefer to stay with someone else because of the security concerns (49.3 percent).

Additionally, 60.7 percent of the students in the faculty of economics and administrative sciences answered ‘yes’ to the question as to ‘do you believe that you can make any saving in your old age?’. On the contrary, more than half of the engineering faculty students expressed their thought that they would not believe that it would be possible to make any savings in their old ages. Thus, the opinions of both faculty students regarding savings in old ages have differed. It is, therefore, clear that students of the faculty of economics and administrative sciences are more comfortable that they will be able to manage their income in old ages effectively. Although such an approach would be slightly opposite of the life cycle hypothesis, they believe they can make savings in old ages.<sup>3</sup> But, as discussed above and as a contrast, a significant majority of the engineering faculty students believe that they would have a lower tendency to make any savings in old ages. This is mainly because of the fact that their expenses would increase due to health reasons especially in the old ages.

In this survey analysis, there were differences among the faculties in the answers given to the question ‘what would make you happy in your old ages’. Accordingly, more than half of the students in the faculty of economics and administrative sciences (both male and female) considered ‘family’ as the primary source of happiness in old ages. In another study conducted by Özmete (2008), it is observed that the elderly from the middle-income groups has chosen family as the main source of happiness. Cid, Ferrés and Rossi (2018) also shows that living in a family increases happiness in old ages. On the contrary, in our study, a substantial proportion of the students of the engineering faculty stated that main happiness resources in the old ages would be health.

When the source of happiness for the engineering faculty students, in old ages, is evaluated in terms of gender; female students defined the primary source of happiness as health while the male students defined the same source as family. In this case, it is observed that happiness preferences of female students studying in the engineering faculty are varied from those in Rossi (2018). In addition, students in both faculties and of both genders stated that they would not prefer to stay with someone else (children, etc.). Taking these results into consideration, and together with the main source of happiness in old ages, it is clear that most of the students prefer living at home alone in their old ages.

Even though the main source of happiness in old ages, among the students participated in this study, is defined as family; the youth has broadly stated that they would prefer to live alone in their old ages. This is an important contrast to Cid Ferrés and Rossi (2018). Also, for both faculties, a significant portion of the students (nearly 80 percent) came from families in the middle- and upper-income groups. So, this situation may have prevented the selection of money as the main source of happiness among the students', in their old ages. Likewise, Mishra and Rawat (2017) points out that while the issue of financial care in old ages is being sufficiently analyzed, the issue of emotional communication, for the most part, is neglected.

## **Conclusion and Recommendation**

In this survey analysis, it is found that there are actually many similarities and differences between “engineering” and “economics and administrative science” faculty students regarding their views of the old ages. It is observed that the students of both the faculty of engineering and the faculty of economic and administrative sciences exhibited similar behaviors in terms

---

<sup>3</sup> According to this hypothesis, consumers tend to save more during the youth and the middle ages compared to the retirement period. As the accumulated reserves are planned to be used for consumption expenditures in old ages, household saving rates will decrease in the societies with the ages (Doshi, 1994).

of the meaning of old age, the preferences of staying with someone else in an older age, and the issues related to their own old ages. On the other hand, the answers of both faculty students were different in terms of the question as to “what would make you happy in your old ages”, “whether your income would allow to make savings in the old ages”, and “what could be the main reason for you to stay with the others in your old ages”.

Evaluating the perceptions and expectations of today’s youth regarding their age of 65 + will help in determining policies to deal with the economic and social problems of the potential elderly of the future (today’s youth). In this context, further studies should be carried out for various student groups studying at different countries and faculties (e.g. education, health sciences and visual arts faculties etc.) to better evaluate their ideas regarding their own 65+'s and the old ages in general. That way, it would be much easier to make in-depth assessments of pros and cons of students attitudes, understand the required policy actions, and propose suitable policy recommendations.

Based on some socio-economic and gender factors, this paper has, hence, intended to inquire about the similarities and differences between two different faculty students’ views over their old ages. Understanding the youth’s perceptions of aging and their expectations about the future matters, in particular considering that the middle and long term social and economic policies are usually an outcome of future demographic transformations.

### **Acknowledgments**

Author(s) would like to thank the university students who participated in the survey in the spring semester of the 2017-2018 in Turkey.

### **References**

- Allan, Linda J., Johnson, James A., (2008) “Undergraduate Attitudes Toward the Elderly: The Role of Knowledge, Contact and Aging Anxiety”, *Educational Gerontology* 35:1 1-14.
- Aspalter, C., Walker, A. (2015) “Introduction”, Alan Walker and Christian Aspalter ed., *Active Aging in Asia*, New York: Routledge Studies in Social Welfare in Asia.
- Bagis, B. (2017). “Macroeconomic Implications of Changes In Social Security Rules”, *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science*, Vol. 6 (1), pp. 01-20.
- Botev, N. (2012) “Population Aging in Central and Eastern Europe and Its Demographic and Social Context”, *European Journal of Aging*, Vol. 9(1) 69-79.
- Cathalifaud-Arnold, Marcelo, Thumala, Daniela, Urquiza, Anahi, Ojeda, Alejandra (2008) “Young People’s Images of Old Age in Chile: Exploratory Research”, *Educational Gerontology* 34: 105–123.
- Cheong, S., Teck W. and Gerald K. (2009) “Attitudes Towards The Elderly Among Singapore Medical Students”, *Ann Acad Med Singapore* 38(5) 857-861.
- Cid, A., Ferr´es, D., Rossi, M. (2018) “Testing Happiness Hypothesis among the Elderly”, Munich Personal RePEc Archive, MPRA Paper No: 84745.
- Council of Higher Education-CoHE. (2018) Students Number. Accessed September 5, 2018. <http://www.yok.gov.tr/web/cohe/homepage>.



Deeg, D.J.H., Wahl H.W., Litwin, H. (2018) “Aging and transitions: looking back and looking forward”, *European Journal of Aging* (2018) 15:1–3.

Doshi, K. (1994) “Determinants of Saving Rate: An International Comparison”, *Contemporary Economic Policy* Vo. XII; January 1994 37-45.

Glaser, K., Hank, K. (2018) “Grandparenthood in Europe”, *European Journal of Aging* pp.1-3. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10433-018-0476-1>.

Hawkins, M.J. (1996) “College Students’ Attitudes Toward Elderly Persons”, *Educational Gerontology* 22:3 271-279.

Huang, Chin-Shan (2013) “Undergraduate Students' Knowledge about Aging and Attitudes toward Older Adults in East and West: A Socio-Economic and Cultural Exploration”, *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development* 77(1), 59-76.

Kane, M. N. (2008) “When I'm 75 years old: Perceptions of social work students”, *Social Work in Health Care*, 47(2) 185-213.

Kropf, Nancy P., Cummings, Sherry M., DeWeaver, Kevin L. (2000) “Knowledge of and Attitudes toward Aging among Non-elders: Gender and Race Differences”, Social Work Faculty Publications, Paper 8. 76-91.

Laditka, Sarah B., Fischer, Mary, Laditka, James N., Segal, David R. (2004), “Attitudes About Aging And Gender Among Young, Middle Age, And Older College-Based Students”, *Educational Gerontology* 30:5 403-421.

Levy, B. R., Slade, M. D. Kunkel, S. R. and Kasl, S. V. (2002). “Longevity Increased by Positive Self-Perceptions of Aging”, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 2002, Vol. 83, No. 2, 261–270. DOI: 10.1037//0022-3514.83.2.261.

Lucacel, Raluca (2015), “Are young people’s views on aging accurate?”, *The European Health Psychologist* Volume: 17 Issue: 2 pp.64-66.

Mishra, Naresh, Rawat, Tanuja (2017) “Perception of University Students Towards Old Age Persons”, *Indian Journal of Gerontology*, Vol. 31, Issue 3, 289-305.

Mosher-Ashley, Pearl M., Ball, Pamilee (1999) “Attitudes of College Students toward Elderly Persons and Their Perceptions of Themselves at Age 75”, *Educational Gerontology* 25:1, 89-102.

Özmete, E. (2008) “Predicting The Meaning of Life in Older Age Through Well-Being Indicators”, *Aile ve Toplum* 4:3 7-20.

Sahoo, H. (2011) “Population Decline and Aging in Japan—The Social Consequences”, *Asian Journal of Social Science* Vol.39 Issue 2 263-264.

Sun, J., X. Wang. (2010) “Value differences between generations in China: a study in Shanghai”, *Journal of Youth Studies* Vol.13 Issue 1 65-81.

- Tabari, Z.A., Ghaedi F.B., Hamissi J.H. and Eskandari, S. (2015) "Assessment and Attitude of University Students About Elderly: Preliminary Study", *Journal of Medicine and Life* 8 (Special Issue 2) 28-31.
- Tan, P. Philip, Zhang, Naihua, Fan, Lian (2004) "Students' Attitudes Toward The Elderly In The People's Republic Of China", *Educational Gerontology* 30:4 305-314.
- Turkish Statistical Institute-TUIK. (2018a) Demographic Indicators. Accessed April 5, 2018. <http://www.tuik.gov.tr/UstMenu.do?metod=temelist>.
- Turkish Statistical Institute-TUIK. (2018b) Main Statistics. Accessed September 10, 2018. <http://www.tuik.gov.tr/UstMenu.do?metod=temelist>.
- United Nations (2018a) Profiles of Aging 2017. Accessed September 10, 2018. <https://population.un.org/ProfilesOfAging2017/index.html>.
- United Nations (2018b) World Population Prospects 2017. Accessed April 1, 2018. <https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Download/Standard/Population/>.
- Van Dussen, Daniel J., Weaver, Robert R. (2009) "Undergraduate Students' Perceptions and Behaviors Related to the Aged and to Aging Processes", *Educational Gerontology* 35:4 342-357.
- Vasquez, Susana Ivonne Aguirre, Contreras, Martha Ornelas, Delgado, Julio Cesar Guedea Martell, Gerardo Joel Arredondo, Pando, Elia Veronica Benavides (2017) "Anxiety About Aging in University Students Comparisons by Gender", *Humanities and Social Sciences* 5(1): 5-8.
- Xiaoping, Lin, Christina, Bryant (2009) "Students' Attitudes Toward Older People: A Cross-Cultural Comparison", *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 7:4, 411-424.
- Yumurtaci, A. (2013) "Demographic Transition: Ageing with a Psycho-social and Socio-Economic Dimensions", *Yalova Social Science Journal*, Vol. 6, 9-31.