Refreshment University Students' Definitions about Their University: Anadolu Campus Example

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Abstract: Refreshing Universities are one of the models of third-age universities that are structured in ways specific to Turkey. Refreshing University aims to increase the quality of life by further developing and protecting information and individuals in old age. The purpose of this study, prepared in the phenomenology pattern, one of the qualitative research methods is to reveal how the students who studied at Refreshment University define Refreshment University, based on their experiences after the age of 60. To achieve this purpose, Refreshment University Anadolu Campus students were asked an open-ended question "How would you define Refreshment University?" in addition to their demographic characteristics and they were asked to answer this question in writing. The concepts included in the definitions of the Refreshment University by 194 participants; It was determined that the results were collected in themes including system evaluation, active aging, learning and information, socialization, personal satisfaction and suggestions regarding the system. As a result of the study, participants actively evaluated Refreshing Universities for individuals over the age of 60, defined them as a way of socializing, getting new information, refreshing, experiencing new excitement, and creating a valuable life for themselves, and saw them positively.

Keywords: Refreshment University, active aging, old age, third age university, lifelong learning

Introduction

Adults participate in lifelong learning activities in order to protect their mental health, seize the opportunity to socialize, continue their cultural development, obtain more detailed information about their field of interest, and learn something new (Kılıç, 2018, p. 65). Lifelong learning is defined as all kinds of learning activities that individuals participate in throughout their lives in order to develop their knowledge, skills, interests, and competencies with a personal, social, and employment-related approach (Güleç, Çelik, & Demirhan, 2012, p. 38). In lifelong learning, individuals are assisted to gain knowledge and skills to adapt to different periods of their lives (Turan, 2005, p. 89).

Today WHO classifies the 18-64 age range as young, the 65-74 age range as young elderly, the 74-84 age range as elderly, and those aged 85 and over as very elderly (Kalfa Somay, 2017). For the elderly population to increase gradually and for individuals to spend their old age in a healthier way both physically and mentally, various practices have been developed. One of these practices is the third-age universities. Third-age universities can be defined as sociocultural centers where older people acquire new knowledge about important issues or verify their knowledge in an acceptable environment and in accordance with acceptable methods (Formasa, 2012, p. 114). The "University of the Third Age" was first established in 1973 by the University of Toulouse in France. The Third-Age Universities, which are still operational today, have mostly found implementation in Western Europe, Canada, and the USA. The first "University of the Third Age" in the UK was established in 1982, modeled upon the French U3A model, and was not only structured as off-campus education but was also associated with traditional (formal) university structures (Demiray, 1990, p. 441).

In Turkey, the education of the elderly is supported by many institutions and organizations. It is seen that various programs are launched by municipalities or through public education centers and lifelong education centers that are in line with the understanding of social municipalism. Culture, art, sports, and health activities are organized for the elderly (Gönüllü, 2022, p. 30). The Universities of the Third Age, examples of which have started to be seen in Turkey since 2016, also come to the agenda as practices for the education of the elderly.

Universities of the Third Age provide education services to the elderly in many subjects such as history, music, foreign languages, philosophy, religion, and general culture. Besides these subjects, these universities ensure their participation in social life through activities such as excursions, collective meals, and nature walks. Thus, elderly individuals are enabled to connect to social life strongly and to improve themselves in areas that they did not have time to learn previously (Çölgeçen & Çölgeçen, 2020, p. 2498).

Refreshment Universities are one of the models of Third-Age Universities in the world, structured uniquely for Turkey. Established in 2016 at Akdeniz University under the leadership of Prof. Dr. İsmail Tufan, Refreshment University started as a social responsibility project. After 2016, it started education at Izmir Ege, MuğlaSıtkıKoçman, Istanbul Nişantaşı, Cyprus Girne and Alanya Hamdullah Emin Paşa (HEP) Universities. Later, Aydın Adnan Menderes University, Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, Denizli Pamukkale University, Eskişehir Anadolu University, Alanya Alaaddin Keykubat University, Muş Alparslan University, Malatya Turgut Özal University, Sivas Cumhuriyet University were included in the compound of Refreshment University. It consists of a four-year adult education model.

Refreshment University aims to lay the foundation for quality and successful aging by ensuring the preservation of knowledge, skills, and abilities in old age and the acquisition of new ones, to create a new perception of the elderly in Turkey, and to develop an elderly university model that is unique to Turkey that will serve as an example in the world. The organizations in all these campuses are based entirely on volunteerism and the lecturers who give lectures take part within the framework of the same volunteerism principles. At the campuses of Refreshment University, while lifelong learning is ensured through theoretical courses, students are enabled to discover their talents through applied courses. It is among the goals of Refreshment University that the young generations studying on the campuses meet with the students at Refreshment University in the same environment and benefit from their knowledge and experience. Studies are ongoing to increase the number of Refreshment University campuses.

The most crucial aim of the Refreshment Universities is to contribute to the active aging of individuals over the age of 60. The process of active aging was developed by the World Health Organization in the late 1990s. According to the definition of the World Health Organization, active aging is the process of optimizing and maximizing opportunities for health, participation, and security to improve people's life quality as they age (WHO, 2002, p.12). The process of active aging involves the ability of individuals to continue their lives in a healthy and safe environment with their physical, mental, and social dimensions as well as continuing their cultural, social, and economic activities in their daily lives (Kalyoncuo & Tekinsoy Kartın, 2021, p. 27). Active aging finds its place in activity theory.

In Activity Theory, it is particularly emphasized that for people to age successfully, they should spend their old age actively. According to the theory, the elderly need social relations as much as young people do, and psychological and social needs in old age can be met by being in the society itself (Gönüllü, 2022, p. 28).

The emergence of the need for learning in the aging period, the recognition of this need, the creation of opportunities to meet it, and the ensuring of continuity means supporting active aging. It means both the use of cognitive functions, the establishment of social relations, and the ability to do a task that they could not do before, that is, to acquire a new skill. Active aging has physical, mental, functional and social aspects. Educational activities can lead to revitalization in all areas of active aging except physical (Ünalan, 2012, p. 16). Refreshment Universities are very important in this sense as well.

Method

The aim of this study is to reveal how individuals over the age of 60, who are studying at Anadolu University Refreshment Campus, define Refreshment University based on their experiences and to evaluate their experiences in line with the phenomenon of Refreshment University.

Research Design

This study is a study prepared within the phenomenology design, one of the qualitative research methods. In the phenomenology design, the researcher analyzes the important meanings and sentences through the text obtained from the interviews and emphasizes the meanings of the experiences according to individuals by supporting the analysis with quotations (Ceylan Çapar & Ceylan, 2022, p. 303). In this analysis process, the researcher explains the information they have with significant statements and then combines these statements under certain themes. At the end of the research, the researcher combines the statements of the people whose experiences are included and reaches the basis that fully expresses the experience (Yalçın, 2022, p. 219). The phenomenon identified in the study is Refreshment University.

Sample Group

As of the 2023-2024 Academic Year, 247 students are studying at Refreshment University within Anadolu University. Of all the students who were informed before the research, 194 of them voluntarily agreed to participate in the research. The research was conducted with 155 female and 39 male volunteer participants. Of the participants, 188 were "young elderly" between the ages of 65-74, five were "elderly" between the ages of 75-85, and one participant did not specify their age. Since the age of enrollment in Refreshment University was determined as 60, participants in the 60-64 age group were included in the "young elderly" group.

Data Collection
The data were collected face-to-face through a written questionnaire on different dates for each class between October-December 2023 during their available class hours. The first part of the two-part questionnaire included questions regarding the demographic characteristics of the participants. In the second part, the participants were asked to answer the question "How would you define Refreshment University?".
Before starting the application, explanations about the study were provided and examples from different applications were given. In the pre-tests, it was observed that the reading comprehension and writing durations of students over the age of 60 varied. Considering this situation, students were expected to answer the questions during the course period in which the questionnaire was applied. Data were obtained with a questionnaire that included the question "How would you define the Refreshment University?".

Data Analysis
The data obtained were grouped according to the themes they contained, and the concepts and expressions were separated and tabulated based on the relevant theme. Since the participants could answer the question with more than one theme, differences occurred between the number of responses and the number of participants. While the data were grouped, certain concepts and statements that were similar to each other in the participants' responses to the question were brought together. The themes were grouped under six headings and frequency tables demonstrating the number of times which concepts or statements were repeated under the determined headings were created. Content analysis technique was employed in the analysis of the research data. Content analysis is used to provide an objective, measurable and verifiable explanation of the clear, explicit content of messages. It analyzes the plain-semantic level of interpretation (Fiske, 2003, p. 176).
The approval for the study was obtained from Anadolu University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Anadolu University on May 30, 2023 (Approval number: 526088). In addition, written consent was obtained by providing verbal information to the participants before data collection and the study was conducted on a voluntary basis.

Findings
As a result of the analysis of the responses of the participants over 60 years of age to the question "How would you define Refreshment University?" the concepts and statements used by the participants in defining Refreshment University were grouped under the following theme headings.
- Evaluating the system
- Active aging
- Learning and becoming knowledgeable
- Socialization
- Personal satisfaction
- Suggestion for the system

Table 1: Themes related to Refreshment University

Themes	Number	%
Evaluating the system	106	37,5
Personal satisfaction	61	21,6
Active aging	38	13,4
Learning and becoming knowledgeable	28	9,9
Socialization	26	9,1
Suggestion for the system	24	8,5
Total	**283**	**100**

In the study, a total of 283 concepts and statements were found in the answers given by the participants to the question "How would you define Refreshment University" (Table 1).
In line with the results in Table 1, the participants used concepts related to evaluating the system at the highest rate (37.5%) while defining Refreshment University. This was followed by statements about personal satisfaction with a rate of 21.6%, definitions based on active aging with a rate of 13.4%, definitions based on learning and becoming knowledgeable with a rate of 9.9%, and definitions related to the theme of socialization with a rate of 9.1%.

Table 2: Concepts for evaluating Refreshment University

ConceptsNumber%		
A wonderful system	26	24,5
An excellent project	15	14,2
A super implementation	12	11,3
A happy place	6	5,7
A very nice implementation	5	4,7
A place where I spend a pleasant time	4	3,7
A very nice project	4	3,7
A practice beyond words	4	3,7
Good planning	3	2,8
An exciting practice	2	1,9
An magnificent project	2	1,9
A very good initiative	2	1,9
The place that created a new me	2	1,9
A practice that is a source of happiness and joy	2	1,9
An initiative of a lifetime	1	0,9
Place of knowledge	1	0,9
A very productive event	1	0,9
A very positive project	1	0,9
Extraordinary project	1	0.9
A socializing institution	1	0,9
A very successful practice	1	0,9
The place where life begins anew	1	0,9
Simply a wonderful formation	1	0,9
An admirable practice	1	0,9
A precious formation	1	0,9
Beautiful environment	1	0,9
An institution that makes you happy	1	0,9
A place that contributes to me so much	1	0,9
A place that makes us important	1	0,9
Village of life	1	0,9
An institution that opens up horizons	1	0,9
Total	**106**	**100**

Among the answers given, 8.5% of the responses did not focus on defining the system, but included suggestions on how it should continue in the upcoming process and how to improve it. The concept of evaluating the system, which was used at the highest rate in definitions, is presented in Table 2. The concepts used to evaluate the system in the descriptions are not directed towards a specific activity or quality within Refreshment University but towards the entire implementation. The participants described the implementation as a great system (24.5%), an excellent project (14.2%), and a super implementation (11.3%) (Table 2). These are the concepts that participants associate with the experience of Refreshment University. The fact that the participants used the definitions of a place where life starts anew, a place that creates a new me, and an application that is a source of happiness and joy is the equivalent of this application that individuals over the age of 60 reach at an advanced age and brings renewal to their lives.

Table 3: Statements on the theme of personal satisfaction

Statements Number%		
I am very satisfied	8	13,1
I am happy	7	11,5
I am having a joyful time	4	6,6
I am experiencing the second spring	3	4,9
I find it fun	3	4,9
The source of my happiness	2	3,3
I gladly participate	2	3,3
Glad I came	2	3,3

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Glad I am its student	2	3,3
I am lucky	2	3,3
My life has become colorful	2	3,3
I am back to happiness	1	1,6
I recognized my youth	1	1,6
I felt good	1	1,6
Made me feel valued	1	1,6
It gave me life	1	1,6
I'm like a flower on vitamins	1	1.6
My indispensable	1	1,6
It can't be described	1	1,6
We lived happy years	1	1,6
We will never forget	1	1,6
I am joyful	1	1,6
I'm coming with excitement	1	1,6
I'm coming running	1	1,6
I'm glad I'm a member	1	1,6
Our spirit has been rejuvenated	1	1.6
Mixing with people	1	1.6
I still have the excitement of the first day	1	1,6
My life has come to order	1	1,6
I'm having the time of my life	1	1,6
My outlook on life has changed	1	1,6
The best thing I've ever done for myself	1	1,6
I'm glad it exists	1	1,6
Glad it was established	1	1,6
I enjoy the beauty of having time for myself	1	1,6
Total	**61**	**100**

The rate of participants' use of statements of personal satisfaction in describing Refreshment University ranked second at 21.6%, and these statements are given in Table 3. Among the statements of personal satisfaction, "I am very satisfied" ranked first with 13.1%, "I am happy" ranked second with 11.5%, and "I have a pleasant time" ranked third with 6.6% (Table 3). The satisfaction statements "I am experiencing a second spring" and "I find it fun" were used at a rate of 4.9%. Participants expressed their satisfaction with many different expressions. Statements such as "I am experiencing the second spring", "I feel like a flower on vitamins", "It made me feel valuable", "My life has come to order", "My life has become colorful", "It is the best thing I have ever done for myself" and "I am enjoying the beauty of having time for myself" express the satisfaction with the existence of the project and the chance to be in this application. This result indicates that the degree of participants' satisfaction is high.

Table 4: Concepts containing the theme of active aging

Concepts Number%		
Connecting to life/living	5	13,2
Refreshing with knowledge	4	10,5
Refreshment	3	7,9
True refreshment	3	7,9
Regeneration	2	5,3
Rejuvenation	2	5,3
Active life	2	5,3
Active aging	2	5,3
Healthy living	2	5,3
A planned life	2	5,3
Aging with health	2	5,3
Being active	1	2,6
Active living	1	2,6

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A dynamic life	1	2,6
Gaining zest for life	1	2,6
Conscious aging	1	2,6
Distancing from the feeling of old age	1	2,6
Aging by learning	1	2,6
Learning through age	1	2,6
Happy aging	1	2,6
Total	**38**	**100**

The concepts used in the definitions with the theme of active aging, which ranked third in the definitions, are given in Table 4.

The statements of the participants defining the Refreshment University within the theme of active aging were determined as the first three as connecting to life (13.2%), being refreshed with knowledge (10.5%), refreshment (7.9%), and real refreshment (7.9%) (Table 4). Amongtheconceptscontainingthetheme of activeaging, seven conceptswereusedwith a rate of 5.3% andtheseare; renewal, rejuvenation, active life, activeaging, healthy life, planned life andhealthyaging.

The concepts that support active aging such as renewal, active life, active living, conscious aging, dynamic life, and happy aging can be considered as indicators of the awareness level of the target group over the age of 60 on active aging and the awareness of the contribution of the Refreshment University to active aging.

Active aging individuals will have a higher level of self-confidence, feel themselves as active members of society, and have a higher level of usefulness in all areas (including working life) due to their active participation in the process, especially in their old age (Aydın & Sayılan 2014, p. 78). Active aging helps people achieve their physical, social, and mental well-being potential throughout life and participate in society according to their needs, wants, and capacities; while providing them with adequate protection, security, and care as they need it (Gürsoy Çuhadar, 2020, p. 371).

Table 5: Concepts containing the theme of learning and becoming knowledgeable

Concepts Number %		
Acquiring new knowledge-skills	8	36,4
Learning	3	13,7
Acquiring useful knowledge	2	9,1
Enlightenment	1	4,5
Getting very satisfying information	1	4,5
Expanding knowledge	1	4,5
Acquiring good knowledge	1	4,5
Getting a university education	1	4,5
Re-schooling	1	4,5
Learning new ideas	1	4,5
Learning to research	1	4,5
Learning from your mistakes	1	4,5
Total	**22**	**100**

The learning and becoming knowledgeable-themed concepts among the definitions of Refreshment University are given in Table 5.

When the concepts that contain the theme of learning and becoming knowledgeable are reviewed, it is seen that the concepts of acquiring new knowledge and skills (36.4%), learning (13.7%), and acquiring useful knowledge (9.1%) are in the first three places among the concepts used by those who define Refreshment University in the context of this theme (Table 5).

Concepts such as acquiring good knowledge, learning new ideas, and expanding knowledge can be considered as different concepts used to express the same thing in essence. Apart from these, although not prominent, the importance of going back to school and having university experience for individuals over the age of 60 was also included in the definitions.

Lifelong learning refreshes and expands the mind, improves cognitive learning abilities, maintains physical health, ensures happiness and active aging in later life, and thus improves the quality of life in older ages (Wei, 2015, p.10). The age of human learning is every moment between birth and death. Refreshment University is built on the foundation of lifelong learning. Human beings can only improve to the extent of the opportunities offered to them by the society in which they live. Improvement continues throughout life.

However, for this period to be a meaningful development, meaningful structuring of the aging period can be possible with "knowledge". Thanks to knowledge, the possibility of healthy, active, and successful aging increases significantly (Aegean Geriatrics Society). Participants' responses under this theme indicate that they are satisfied with and need learning activities.

The aim of the theoretical or practical courses offered at Refreshment University is for the participants to use and apply this knowledge, to share it with their environment, and to adapt to new knowledge. With the changes and developments in daily life, it is also sociologically important for elderly individuals to refresh their knowledge, correct their mistakes, or find educators to consult on related issues.

Table 6: Concepts containing the theme of socialization

ConceptsNumber%		
Gaining friendship	11	42,3
Socialization	6	23,1
Expansion of the social environment	3	11,5
A chance for intergenerational communication	2	7,7
A social life	1	3,8
Harmonizing with the environment	1	3,8
Mixing with people	1	3,8
Total	**26**	**100**

The concepts with the theme of socialization used in the definitions of Refreshment University are given in Table 6.

Another essential prerequisite for cognitive active aging is not to be isolated. Taking part in the social sphere helps active aging by leading to the use of cognitive functions. It is evident that the rate of participants defining Refreshment University with concepts involving socialization is low (9.1%-Table 1). Among the concepts related to socialization, the concepts of making friendships (42.3%), socializing (23.1%), and expanding the social environment (11.5%) were ranked the top three (Table 6).

In other concepts, the contributions of Refreshment University in maintaining socialization such as providing the opportunity for intergenerational communication, being a stimulus for conversation, and ensuring adaptation to the environment were emphasized.

Socialization is the process of any group and individual's learning to participate in social life at all ages. The socialization process is crucial in terms of increasing the life satisfaction and quality of the elderly. In this process, the elderly individual is socialized depending on learning something new in every social relationship they enter in order to hold on to life with the physical and mental changes they have undergone (Uysal, 2020, p.45). The elderly individual's communication with children and young people and being in social relations with close friends increases life satisfaction (İlgar, 2008, pp. 80-83). Being involved in social life implies preserving existing relationships and roles, and maintaining and even protecting cognitive skills (Ünalan, 2012 p. 15). It is seen that Refreshment University mediates the fulfillment of these needs of individuals in their old age.

Table 7: Suggestions for the system

Suggestions Number%		
Everyone should have this experience	6	25,0
It should be in all universities	5	20,8
Training duration should be increased	3	12,5
Must be continued	3	12,5
Quotashould be increased	2	8,3
It should be made available to other elderly people	1	4,16
Content should be enriched	1	4,16
Needsto be improved	1	4,16
Should be better promoted	1	4,16
There shouldn't be compulsory attendance	1	4,16
Total	**24**	**100**

The sixth category (Table 7) includes statements that contain suggestions regarding the system rather than evaluating Refreshment University. In the first place under this category were the suggestions that everyone should have this experience with a rate of 25%, in the second place were the suggestions that it should be in all universities with a rate of 20.8%, and in the third place were the suggestions that the duration of

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education should be increased and should be continuous with a rate of 12.5%. These suggestions were expressed as a continuation of the participants' positive experiences about Refreshment University to make it even more positive for the students who will be following them.

Expressions of gratitude to the project, implementers, trainers, and supporters of the Refreshment University project were among the responses of the participants as well. 22 participants used expressions thanking those who carried out the practice. These are as follows; "thank you very much to everyone who contributed, super, thank you to everyone, thank you for this opportunity given to us, endless thanks to our valuable teachers".

Conclusion

In this study, the concepts and expressions used by individuals over the age of 60 attending Refreshment University, which operates within Anadolu University, in their definitions of this application were reviewed. Meaningful information about Refreshment University was obtained through the concepts and expressions used by the participants. The responses of the participants were grouped under six main themes: evaluation of the system, active aging, learning and becoming knowledgeable, socialization, personal satisfaction, and suggestions for the continuation of the system.

When the data were evaluated, it was seen that the concepts related to the evaluation of the system were mostly used by the participants regarding the definition of Refreshment University. The theme of personal satisfaction was the second theme used in the definition. By using the concepts describing their satisfaction, the participants stated that they liked and approved of the activities of Refreshment University and that being there added value to them and helped them to be active in life. The third most frequently used theme in the definitions in the study was the theme of active aging. Through the Refreshment Universities, elderly individuals are provided with the necessary support to be active in life, opportunities are created for a healthy, planned, active, and mobile life, and thus their quality of life is improved.

Another theme seen in the responses is learning and becoming knowledgeable. The fact that the participants stated that in addition to what they have gained with their age-related experiences, education levels, work and lifestyles, a valuable learning process can also be experienced here, in this period of their lives, is a result that supports lifelong learning.

The concepts under the theme of socialization are related to friendship, companionship, and socialization opportunities provided to the participants by Refreshment University. It was concluded that Refreshment University gave the participants a sense of purpose, guided them in personal development, and helped them to participate in social activities and create their social circles. Establishing social connections with other individuals through an educational practice was evaluated as a practice that prevents the elderly from being removed from social life. The human need to be included in large social groups does not diminish at any stage of life.

As a result of the study, it was seen that the participants defined the Refreshment Universities as a way for individuals over the age of 60 to be active, socialize, gain new knowledge and refresh themselves, experience a new excitement and be valued in parallel with their founding purpose. The implementation was evaluated positively by the participants. These results suggest that more individuals aged 60 and over should be enabled to benefit from the Refreshment Universities and that older individuals should be encouraged to attend these universities by increasing the number of Refreshment Universities. About Refreshment University: https://www.tazelenme.com/

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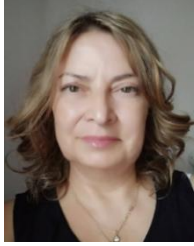
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