

OBITUARY

A NAME PIONEERING HEALTH SOCIOLOGY IN TÜRKİYE: ASSOC. PROF. DR. ELİF KAYA

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On the morning of April 13, 2025, around 4:00 AM, in a tragic traffic accident, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elif Kaya, a faculty member of the Health Management Department at Süleyman Demirel University's Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, completed her worldly journey.

Death is, in fact, an ordinary event. Globally, thousands die every day. In our country, our cities, and our communities, we frequently witness deaths. Naturally, the face of death is cold. One of our greatest fears is witnessing the death of loved ones... Thus, we try to ignore death as much as possible, leaving our joy of life stuck in our throats, attempting to place an irrational distance between ourselves and death. Yet, despite all efforts, death inevitably knocks on the door of those closest to us—and eventually, our own.

People die constantly; we, too, will die. A century from now, almost none of those alive today will remain. Death is as ordinary as life, as real as existence itself... No one denies these facts theoretically. Yet, because death severs all worldly ties in an instant, we struggle to speak of it openly. Especially when consumed by worldly ambitions, endless calculations, and hopes for better days—persuading ourselves that spring will follow winter—we act as though death will never touch our lives. This is a delusion, a numbing illusion. The truth is, with each passing moment, we draw closer to our appointment with death.

Even speaking of it dampens the spirit, yet death overturns lives in an instant. On April 13, I, too, faced such a loss. We bid farewell to Assoc. Prof. Elif Kaya, my former student, longtime colleague, and collaborator. We worked together for years, consulting on academic matters, planning research, managing joint projects, advising graduate students, and sharing common

intellectual ground. She left all worldly affairs behind, departing suddenly due to a traffic accident.

She leaves behind grieving parents, a spouse, a five-year-old child, and thousands of relatives, friends, and students who will pray for her.

Dr. Kaya and I collaborated on numerous academic works: articles, books, and conference presentations. In her academic profile, she wrote:

"Born in Ankara in 1988, she graduated from Hacettepe University's Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Department of Health Administration in 2010. She completed her master's and doctoral studies at Süleyman Demirel University, where she continued as a faculty member in the same department. Her research focused on health management, healthcare professionals, health sociology, and socio-cultural aspects of health. She was married and a mother of one."

After overcoming prolonged challenges, she earned her associate professorship in February 2024. We first met in 2010 when she came to Isparta for her master's degree. She enrolled in our newly established program, and I became her advisor. Even as a recent graduate, her academic talent, curiosity, resilience, and diligence promised a bright future. During her studies, she secured a research position at Gaziosmanpaşa University but was assigned to Süleyman Demirel University for her postgraduate work. Thus, she became both my student and colleague in the same faculty, sharing 15 years of academic endeavors.

Losing her amid academic pursuits compelled me to memorialize her in writing.

First, she was a gentle soul. She meticulously respected others' rights, avoiding harm to anyone. When faced with injustice, her conscience stirred;



she emphasized humanity, compassion, and mercy to resolve issues. Her ethical and humane approach left a lasting legacy. What more could one need in their eternal journey?

She stood "*as steadfast as the Arabic letter Elif (ا)*", dignified, principled, and resolute. She refused silence in the face of wrongdoing, discerning right from wrong with clarity. Her commitment to truth during critical times was admirable. She resisted pressures to side with power over principle, questioned societal norms, and stood firm in her beliefs.

Her pen was powerful, weaving profound critiques with striking words. Unswayed by academia's glitter, she never bowed to its pretensions or compromised her integrity. Her identity and principles even hindered her academic advancement, yet she overcame barriers with patience and determination.

She consistently highlighted the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, deeply moved by the suffering of children—a sensitivity heightened by her motherhood. At conferences, she condemned academic silence on Gaza's genocide. Her office door bore a poster of a raised fist amidst barbed wire, painted in Palestinian colors, reading "Free Palestine."

Academically, she was passionate about culture and sociology. Her master's thesis examined doctor-patient relationships through agency theory, while her doctoral work explored cultural determinants of medical practice. At a time when qualitative research was undervalued in health management, she pioneered its use. With her students, she studied illness identity and value, elevating her discipline's stature.

Students at all levels—undergraduate, master's, and doctoral—wept uncontrollably at her passing. Memories of her "mission to build goodness, beauty, and quality" lingered. She loved traveling and drawing lessons from her journeys.

Her final lesson was her most profound. Amid our worldly clings, she declared, "Take it all, this is my last!" and departed. While we mourned her, we realized we ought to mourn ourselves—our attachments, our trivial pursuits, and the futility we drown in. Indeed, "This worldly life is no more than play and amusement."

We bear witness to Elif Kaya's faith, passion, ethics, and diligence. May the Almighty Allah make this testimony of ours a means to ease her eternal journey. May Allah treat her with forgiveness, grace, and mercy. May her soul find peace, her *maqam* be exalted, and her abode be Heaven...

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