

# Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan in Terms of Biographic Sociology

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## Abstract

Research based on life story is based on seeing from the perspective of the person being researched and revealing the social structure and processes that make up this perspective (Yildirim, 1999). For this reason, studies based on biographical sociology are one of the most appropriate qualitative studies in terms of explaining the life story of the researched person. Disability is a condition in which a person cannot fully perform certain movements, senses, or functions due to a physical or mental disorder that occurs at birth or later. Many scientists have done various studies on this situation. One of them is the founder and Honorary President of Turkish Spastic Children Foundation (TSCV), Prof. Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan. Özcan, who is a professor of neurology, has contributed to the better recognition and solutions of spastic children, especially disabled people and their problems in Türkiye. The life, Works and contributions of Özcan, who is one of the names who construct the infrastructure of the current situation of disability with the books he wrote and the thoughts he put forward, are discussed in this research. Thus, it is aimed that Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan, who has contributed to the participation of Türkiye in the Special Olympic Games, will be better known in our sports culture.

**Keywords:** Cerebral palsy, Special Olympic Games, Special athletes

## 1. Biographic Sociology

Biographical sociology; it is a field of study aimed at understanding people's experiences, perspectives and every situation they consider important throughout their lives (Roberts, 2002). For this reason, this sub-branch of sociology is related to many fields such as history, sports, education, politics, literature and anthropology.

Life story methods in Europe often fall into the field of biographical sociology. Because, in studies conducted to obtain life stories, data on life events such as date of birth, marital status, birth of children, education date and employment of the researched person are presented as an objective criterion (Jindra, 2014). While life stories show how the curious person lived his

life, they also enable the researcher and the reader to see and understand the relationships, values and issues of that person's life (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001). Thus, by making inferences from life stories, the causes of social events and changes can be revealed.

Biographical studies are concerned with the main theme and constructive nature of the life story of the person being researched (Apitzsch & Siouti, 2007). Because biography; It is a general life story or a special life moment (Peeler, 2012). A bibliotectic study can be prepared in which the bibliographic parts of graduate theses prepared in the field of sports activity and autism are examined in detail, A research can be prepared that compares the environment of sports activity conducted individually and as a group (Gumusdag et al., 2022). For this reason, single-subject and historical studies investigate situations that emerge from lived experiences.

There is no scientific biography of many successful and imprinted people who lived in our country. Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan is one of these people. Therefore, the main purpose of this research is to introduce Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan, who has made great contributions in the field of medicine and disabled sports, from a different perspective. Thus, it was aimed to contribute to the change and development of the subject of disability in Türkiye and the understanding of sports related to this subject.

## **2. The Life of Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan**

Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan was born in Konya in 1927. Özcan, who started primary school in İzmit and secondary school in Ankara, finished high school in Ankara Gazi High School. Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan, who started his university education at Istanbul University Faculty of Medicine in 1945, graduated from the Faculty of Medicine in 1951. Later on, he started working as a volunteer in the Neurology Clinic of the faculty. When he started as a volunteer in the neurology clinic, Prof. Sabahattin Kerimoglu (1912-1988) had great support. Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan's salary, the main assistantship, did not come during his 4-year residency period, and then he became a specialist in 1956. An internal medicine specialist who is a classmate of she married Dr. Nevin Özcan in 1954.



Photo 1. Dr. Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan, in his first years as a neurologist

Between 1956 and 1968, he worked at Zeynep Kamil Hospital for 12 years as a neurologist (it was used for both neurologists and psychiatrists in those years). Seeing many examples from the medical literature, including developmental defects and various disorders, including birth trauma, Dr. Özcan started to do research on these issues. He continued his research on pediatric neurology by going to pediatric clinics in Haseki and then in Çapa.

He took an active part in the poliomyelitis (polio) epidemic in 1963. In 1965, he completed his thesis on “Neuropathological findings of experiential allergic encephalomyelitis in Wistar rats”. Having received the title of Associate Professor of Adult Neurology, Dr. Özcan was appointed to the Associate Professor staff of the Neurology Clinic of the Istanbul Faculty of Medicine. In this clinic, he focused his research on developmental neurological disorders in adults and children (Eraksoy, 2013).



Photo 2. Dr. Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan when worked at Zeynep Kamil Hospital

Özcan was sent to Paris at the end of 1968, with the decision of the faculty assize, to conduct research on child neurology. Hospital St. in Paris Vincent de Paul went to Hospital Bicetre and Hospital Pitie Salpetriere. Here he followed studies in the field of child neurology. The head of the French branch of the international organization, where children with brain damage are trained, he participated in the work of Prof. Tardieu. Özcan returned to Türkiye in 1970 and received the title of Professor in 1971. Prof. Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan became a pediatric neurology minor specialist in 1983. During his career, he taught child neurology to 116 neurology and child psychiatrist assistants.

Under the Department of Neurology, Faculty of Medicine, Istanbul University, Child neurology, which was founded as a department by Prof. Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan, later became a unit. Özcan was a founding member of the Turkish Multiple Sclerosis Association in 1989. He left his job at Istanbul University Faculty of Medicine in 1994 and started his retirement

life.

During his academic life, Prof. Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan has many scientific publications and books on “Cerebral Palsy”, “Multiple Sclerosis” and “Myelin” diseases in pediatric neurology. The book “Every Eight Hours”, which consists of the memories of the Turkish Spastic Children’s Association and deals with events from past to present in Türkiye, has been published (TSCV, 2022).



Figure 1. A book every eight hours by Prof. Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan

Prof. Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan, in his other book, mentioned that the topic of cerebral palsy is a social problem that interests many branches of science and is as much a medical problem as it is a social one. He states that the subject of Cerebral Palsy maintains its currency in the countries of the world and shows the nature of being a multidisciplinary subject. This disease is referred to as “Cerebral Palsy” in the international medical literature when the movement-related regions of the brain are damaged due to various reasons during or immediately after birth. It is seen that the statistics of “Cerebral Palsy” disease are higher among the groups containing central nervous system findings in children examined by pediatric neurologists (TSCV, 2022).

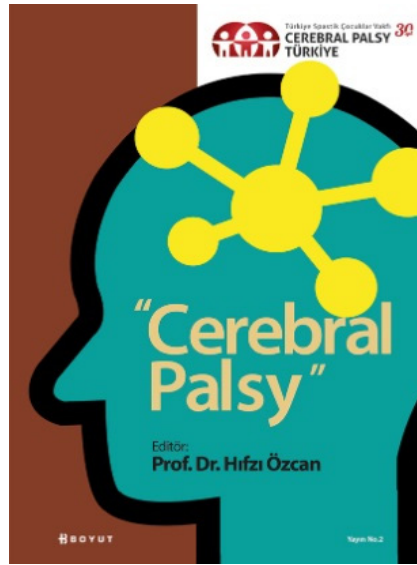


Figure 2. Cerebral Palsy book by Prof. Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan

### 3. Studies on Disability

When Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan was in London (Great Ormond Street Hospital Sick for Children) in 1971, he went to Dr. John Wilson (1937-2007). For a year he was interested in children's neurology and spastic children with disabilities due to movement-related damage to the brain. At that time, he met famous child neurologists and the executives of the International Cerebral Palsy Society and became a member on behalf of Türkiye.

Returning to Türkiye in 1972, under the leadership of Prof. Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan, Turkish Spastic Children's Association was established in a modest building in Kadikoy. A brochure titled "Who is called spastic" was published for the first time and families were tried to be informed about Cerebral Palsy (CP) and its types. The association, which intensified its work with the cooperation of a group of valuable supporters and families who believed in the importance of the issue, decided to ask the Sabanci Family for help in 1976 (Us, 2004). Sakip Sabanci (1933-2004) attempted at the request of Prof. Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan and his friends, who contacted him at that time. A villa located in the Acibadem district of Kadikoy was purchased by Akbank in 1976 and allocated to the Association by the Hacı Omer Sabanci Foundation, and the institutionalization process began.

After settling in the building called Erol Sabanci Center for Spastic Children, a protocol was signed with the General Directorate of Social Services of the Ministry of Health, and thus, staff support was received from the state for the first time (TSCV, 2022).



Photo 3. Villa allocated to Turkish Spastic Children Association in Acıbadem district of Kadikoy

Mehmet Nuri Sabuncu (1932-...), an important name for Hıfzı Özcan and his friends, played professional football in Türkiye in the 1950s and later went to America and established his own construction company in Rochester, the center of Monroe district in New York (Sabuncu, 2022). Nuri Sabuncu, who was selected as the “Turkish American of the Year” by the Turkish-American Association board of directors in 1988, sponsored the Spirit Award for the Special Olympics held in Brockport in 1979. Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan and his friends told to Sakip Sabancı about the Special Olympic Games organized for children with intellectual disabled. On this occasion, they established cooperation with Sabuncu and ensured that the Special Olympics were put on the agenda of Türkiye in 1982.

In 1972, the Turkish Spastic Children’s Association was established in Kadikoy under the leadership of Professor Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan (tscv.org.tr). Special Olympics Türkiye, which continues its activities in this association, gained an autonomous status on November 26, 2002 under the name of Special Athletes Sports Education and Rehabilitation Association. This new association, which was brought to life with the founding memberships of Sakip Sabancı, Professor Hıfzı Özcan and Dilek Sabancı (1964-...), has gained the official name of “Türkiye Private Athletes Sports Education and Rehabilitation Association” by taking the name ‘Türkiye’ to its head with its works carried out all over Türkiye (Special Olympics Türkiye, 2016).



Photo 4. At the Special Olympics Games

Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan told to Sakip Sabanci about the need to build a gym so that children with disabilities can participate and perform in the Special Olympics games. Subsequently, a gym was built at the Erol Sabanci Spastic Children's Center where they could practice. Thus, in addition to the education of children with special needs, the issue of participation in sports events and "Special Olympics" began to be given great importance. In an interview on Special Olympics Games, Sakip Sabanci said that 10 special athletes from Türkiye participated in the Special Olympics held in Georgia and won 7 gold and 3 silver medals (Day Archive, 1995).



Photo 5. Professor Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan and special athletes

Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan carried out studies that ensured the establishment of the Türkiye Sports

Federation in 1990 and he also served as the first president of the Türkiye Disabled Sports Federation between 1990-1992 (Wikipedia, 2022). The facility, which will serve individuals with Cerebral Palsy (CP) on a 35-decare land, was completed in 1996, and the foundation moved here. The foundation, known as the Metin Sabanci Center, later opened branches in Zonguldak, Isparta, Antalya and Sinop. Proffesor Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan supported the volunteer communities that started these studies in Edirne, Kırklareli, Balıkesir, Bursa, İzmir, Aydın, Düzce, Bodrum, İzmit, Çorlu and Denizli. The foundation was accepted as a member by the American Academy of Cerebral Palsy and Developmental Medicine in 1992, and Professor Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan was shown as one of the five people in the world who developed these issues in his country (KASDER, 2011).



Photo 6. Professor Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan and Sakip Sabanci, at the Metin Sabanci Center construction site

Until 2011, Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan served as the director and foundation chairman of the Metin Sabanci Spastic Children and Youth Education and Rehabilitation Center. In addition, from 2003 to 2011, he organized the annual “Cerebral Palsy and Developmental Disorders Symposium and Congress” with National and International participation. After the death of Proffesor Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan, this scientific event was organized by Proffesor Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan International Congress on Cerebral Palsy and Developmental Disorders” continued to be organized every 2 years. The name of Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan, who has been working on disability for more than half a century, is also kept alive today with the Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan Special Education and Rehabilitation Center.

#### **4. Discussion**

Physical education and sports are an important learning area for the development of targeted human characteristics. Since this desired development occurs in a planned way, effective teaching determines what kind of sports experience the person will have (Carpenter, 2010). It



was determined that when physical education, sports, and exercises applied to individuals with mental disabilities at a trainable level systematically and regularly, provided positive and significant improvements on their bio motor properties (Bastik et al., 2021). The same is true for people with disabilities. Physical education and sports positively affect the physiological, psychological and sociological development of people with disabilities.

Biographies are very effective in economic, sportive, political, historical, pedagogical and psychological dimensions in social life (Jindra, 2014). For this reason, Biographical Sociology is the study of biographical processes in historical periods and It is a branch of sociology that plays a role in revealing its relations with the social structure.

The philosopher Francis Bacon (1561-1626) accepted memory as the source of history while making a systematic classification of science (Freund, 1973). The memoir of Hıfzı Özcan, which is the subject of this article, is an important text in terms of the specific information it contains about the education of the disabled with sports. In addition, Hıfzı Özcan, whose biography we have given, is a professor of neurology. In this respect, he is a scientist who pioneered the introduction of sports education to people with disabilities in Türkiye. With this study, the memories of Hıfzı Özcan were aimed to be presented to the benefit of scientists.

## 5. Conclusion

A scientist is a person who has the ability to observe and to draw conclusions from what (s)he observes. Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan is also an accomplished scientist who has achieved important studies both in Türkiye and in Europe as a professor of neurology thanks to his abilities and skills of this kind. Özcan, who has been involved in important projects in the field of disability along with his studies in child neurology, also contributed to the establishment of the Türkiye Disabled Sports Federation and became its first president. He has enabled Türkiye to participate in the Special Olympic Games organized for children with disabilities.

The fact that there are few scientific studies conducted about Professor Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan is a deficiency in terms of medical and sports literature. However, studies based on biography are very effective in sociological, economic, political, historical and psychological terms. For this reason, it is necessary to carry out more scientific studies that will increase the awareness of Professor Mehmet Hıfzı Özcan, especially in our sports culture. In addition, it is thought that keeping Özcan's books in the central libraries of universities will be beneficial for those who work on disability, and it will be beneficial for readers to access them easily.

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