State of Research on German Retirement Migration to Turkiye: A Qualitative Systematic Review

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Abstract

Background: The Alanya region on Turkey's southern coast has become an important destination for German retirement migration. **Objective:** Identify research studies on German retirement migration to Turkey which deal with the life situation, the motives, the handling of critical life situations in the context of retirement migration, and the reasons for return migration. **Methods:** The researcher conducted a qualitative systematic literature review from January 2021 to May 2021 in MEDLINE, CINAHL Complete, and APA Psychlnfo. **Results:** Eleven studies on German and European retirement migration to Turkey were included after a critical assessment based on defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Motives for retirement migration are climatic, scenic, cultural advantages and the lower cost of living in Turkey. **Conclusion:** It has been found that most of the studies are thematically narrowly defined, detailed studies deal with and describe the development of retirement migration in a more general way.

Keywords

retirement, aging, gerontology, quality of life, systematic review

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What this paper adds

- 1. Comprehensive synthesis of existing literature on German retirement migration to Turkey, identifying key trends and gaps in knowledge.
- Examination of factors motivating German seniors to migrate to Turkey, including cost of living, climate, and social connections.
- 3. Evaluation of the impact of retirement migration on the receiving Turkish communities and the implications for healthcare and social support systems.

Applications of study findings

- 1. Shape gerontological practice by providing insights on how to improve support of the integration and the well-being of German retirees in Turkey.
- Influence policy development, including bilateral agreements and support programms, to address the specific needs and challenges of German retirement migrants in Turkey.

3. Guide future research by highlighting areas of limited understanding or under-representation in existing literature, promoting a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon.

Introduction

This paper documents several key contributions to German migration to Turkey. "Live where others take vacations" (Kéry, 2020) is a common phrase that describes a tempting life in a vacation region. A steadily increasing proportion of retirees from many European countries seem to take this advice and have decided on a permanent or temporary retirement in a freely chosen location—mostly in the south (O'Reilly, 2007; Phillipson & Ahmad, 2006). "Lifestyle migration is the spatial

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Creative Commons Non Commercial CC BY-NC: This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) which permits non-commercial use, reproduction and distribution of the work without further permission provided the original work is attributed as specified on the SAGE and Open Access pages (https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/open-access-at-sage). mobility of relatively affluent individuals of all ages, moving either part-time or full-time to places that are meaningful because, for various reasons, they offer the potential of a better quality of life" (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009). The German share of this phenomenon is not overlooked. In 2022, 230,868 pensions were paid to people abroad Retirement migration is a multifaceted phenomenon for which a diverse repertoire of term variations has been developed in scientific literature. For example, retirement migration, retirement location migration, international retirement migration, second home tourism or lifestyle migration are mentioned (Haas, 2013; Janoschka & Haas, 2013). The phenomenon of retirement migration is regarded as a special variant of the large and diverse field of global migration dynamics and, at the same time, a comparatively young field of research (C. Kaiser, 2011, p. 14). Alanya is a city in Turkey with a particularly large number of German older migrants. In Alanya, there are approximately 15,400 Europeans living as permanent residents (ADNKS, 2021). The German magazine Der Spiegel estimates the number of older migrants to be over 10,000, including 2,466 Germans with a permanent residence permit and around 3,000 Germans as property owners (Wandt, 2006). The number of 10,000 German retirees was also reported in 2017 by the Turkish newspaper Dailysabah (DAILY SABAH, 2017). İçduygu (2009) has stated the number of European older migrants in Alanya to be 6,000, with Germans making up the majority, referencing unspecified statistics and residence permits.

The research group focusses on older German individuals with temporary or permanent retirement residence in the Alanya region. The research group of older migrants was defined based on the following characteristics: The focus is on the relocation of older individuals with German citizenship (>60 years) from Germany to Turkey. This relocation is intended to be permanent by the participants. This means: The retirement residence there can be considered their center of life. The possibility of pendulum migration (alternating life between Germany and Turkey) is taken into account. The participants should be oriented toward lifestyle, not employment. Based on the short preview above, this work tries to answer the following main question:

How do older Germans perceive their living situation in Turkey and what motives and reasons do they have for retirement migration?

The goal of improving the quality of life mentioned by most retirement migrants points to an active and initiative strategy regarding one's aging process. Climate and landscape advantages, but also the possibility of lifestyles that are not possible in the country of origin, are some of the specific motives (C. Kaiser, 2011, p. 68). On the other hand, notions of imminent need and deficiencies can also justify migratory movements in old age. Another important research question looks at the often-dynamic migration experience of retirees. Retirement migrants, for example, experience critical life situations at the retirement location that entails appropriate adjustments and reactions. Critical life events are understood to include health impairments leading up to the need for care, loss of a partner at the place of retirement, and dealing with pandemics. Further research is needed on the individual impacts on the decision to migrate.

Material and Method

The literature review was done according to systematic criteria from January 2021 to May 2021. The research was conducted in MEDLINE, CINAHL Complete, APA PsychInfo, GreenFILE LISTA, Academic Search Elite, APA PsycArticles, and ERIC via EBSCOhost GeroLit and as a supplementary manual search in Google Scholar. The following English keywords were used for the literature review: "retirement migration," "motivation," "aging," "Turkey," "return migration," and "critical life events," as well as the following German search terms: "Altersmigration," "Ruhesitzmigration," "Motivation," "Altern," "Türkei," "Rückwanderung," "Kritische Lebensereignisse." Literature in English and German not older than 10 years was included. Based on the defined inclusion criteria: older people, retirement migration, Turkey, other European countries, year of publication from 2011, publications in German and English, as well as the defined exclusion criteria: younger people, other migration types, other regions, year of publication before 2011, other languages, the studies obtained from them were selected for the results utilizing title and abstract as well as subsequent full version research. The results of the critical assessment of the studies were not used as an inclusion or exclusion criterion for the analysis. The complete search strategy can be provided upon request. For the systematic literature review, the search was conducted in the standard databases for social science inquiries. However, their scope was limited. The expansion of the search through Google Scholar is therefore justified to ensure a more comprehensive literature review. Google Scholar captures a broader spectrum of sources, including grey literature, and thus helps to identify potentially overlooked but relevant works. Examining German older migration to Alanya, it is particularly useful to focus on studies from the last 10 years, as statistical data on this phenomenon have so far been poorly available, and tourism and older migration often overlap. More recent studies can help to delineate these areas more clearly and enable a more grounded analysis. The rapid changes in migration patterns and reasons, advances in research methodology, as well as the current political and societal context are better taken into account with this temporal limitation. Additionally, this time frame facilitates data comparability and is appropriate for practical reasons, such as the availability of studies and the



Figure 1. Search strategy in the databases.

workload involved. Furthermore, it makes sense to expand the time period under discussion to compare it with findings on older migration from other European countries (Figure 1).

Results

As a result of the literature research, 11 studies were identified (Table 1), which contain the relevant inclusion criteria in the narrower sense (retirement migration to Turkey, particularly of German retirement migrants and related to Alanya).

In specific terms, however, only two works have been identified as significant in research, that is, on German retirement migration in Turkey. These studies of Karacan (2020) and Kahveci et al. (2020) were listed in the EBSCOhost research platform. It is striking here, that these are the latest publications, which shows that the research field of German retirement migrants to Turkey has hardly been developed until now Kahveci et al. (2020). In their studies, they compared German retirement migrants with returning Turkish migrant workers and saw similarities in the content of both groups regarding mobility patterns, legal uncertainties, and health uncertainties. For Kahveci, both groups show tactical mobility and a common desire to improve life situations in old age (Kahveci et al., 2020).

On the other hand, they present the patterns of vulnerability of German retirement migrants in Alanya in detail. The escape from a problematic financial situation in Germany due to a low pension led to higher satisfaction with life and meant new potential threats and the need for adaptation strategies. In particular, the latter study provides numerous starting points for further research on retirement migration to Turkey.

Another nine studies have dealt with retirement migration from other European and non-European countries to Turkey. These are the works of Gehring (2016, 2019), Özyurt et al. (2018), Nudrali and O'Reilly (2016), Böcker and Balkir (2012), and Südaş (2011). In addition, there are two general presentations on retirement migration to Turkey (Balkir & Südas, 2014). Publications

Title	Authors country of origin year	Design	Sample
Tactical mobility: navigating mobile aging and transnational retirement between Turkiye and Germany. A comparison between Turkish- German and German retirees	Cagri Kahveci, Elifcan Karacan, Kira Kosnick Germany 2020	Qualitative study, semi- structured problem- centered interviews, expert interviews	34 German retirement migrants, aged 50–89; 10 expert interviews with locals; 33 German-Turkish retirement migrants, aged 50–80
Coping with vulnerabilities in old age and retirement: cross-border mobility, family relations and social networks of German retirees in Alanya	Elfican Karacan Germany 2020	Qualitative study	34 German retirement migrants, aged 50–89, problem-centered interviews, expert interviews
Pensioners are on the move. A socio-legal study on retirement migration from the Netherlands to Spain and Turkiye	Anoeshka Gehring Netherlands, Spain 2019	Qualitative study	95 interviews with retirement migrants in Spain, Turkiye, and the Netherlands, 24 expert interviews
Residential Tourists' Perceptions of quality of life: Case of Alanya, Turkiye	Pasa Mustafa Özyurt, Murat Alper Basaran, Kemal Kantarci Turkiye 2018	Quantitative study, Questionnaire	386 residents, the survey of demographic profiles and quality of life variables
Dutch retirement migration to Spain and Turkiye: Seeking access to healthcare across borders	Anoeshka Gehring Netherlands 2016	Qualitative study	45 in-depth interviews, follow- up interviews, and expert interviews
Taking the risk: the British in Didim, Turkiye	Ozlem Nudrali and Karen O'Reilly Great Britain 2016	Qualitative study	In-depth interviews with 20 British retirement migrants and 20 locals
A comparison of residence, social security, and citizenship strategies of Turkish return migrants and Dutch retirement migrants in Turkiye	Canan Balir, Anita Böcker Turkiye; Netherlands 2015	A qualitative study with semi-structured interviews	Interviews with 43 Turkish retirement migrants and 29 Dutch retirement migrants
Guests and hosts: European retirees in coastal Turkiye	Canan Balkir, Ilkay Südas European retirement migrants 2014	A quantitative study, statistical surveys, and questionnaire supplemented with in- depth interviews	754 European retirees and 500 locals; emigration since at least 5 years previously, older than 55 years of age, Turkish Riviera
Migration in later life. Residence, social security and citizenship strategies of Turkish return migrants and Dutch retirement migrants in Turkiye	Anita Böcker and Canan Balkir Turkiye, Netherlands 2012	A qualitative study with individual interviews and two group interviews	Interviews with 43 Turkish retirement migrants and 29 Dutch retirement migrants, group discussion with 21 Turkish retirement migrants
Two distinct groups of EU immigrants in coastal Turkiye	Ilkay Südas Various EU nationalities 2011	Qualitative study	Interviews with 131 EU immigrants, including retirement migrants
Turkiye, the new destination for international retirement migration	Canan Balkir and Berna Kirkulak Various countries 2009	Review work	Summary presentation based on existing studies

Table I. Studies on German and European Retirement Migration to Turkiye (Especially Alanya).

that, for example, address the purchase of second homes and associated tourism were not considered (Abbasian & Müller, 2019; Balkir & Kirkulak, 2009).

In particular, Gehring (2016, 2019) describes the challenges of access to the Turkish healthcare system and draws attention to inadequate nursing care for Dutch retirement migrants in Turkey. Nudrali and O'Reilly (2016) present a superficial but mutually beneficial integration of British retirement migrants into local Turkish society. They see reasons for a return migration such as insufficient financial resources, poor planning, and health problems (Nudrali & O'Reilly, 2016). In the study of, a warm climate, favorable living costs and scenic and cultural benefits are listed as motives for emigrating Dutch retirement migrants. Südaş (2011) notes that, as described by Nudrali and O'Reilly (2016), health and financial problems, partner loss, security problems, and a reduced personal mobility are causing European retirement migrants to migrate back. Turkey as a new target area of European retirement migration represents a growing need for research (Balkir & Kirkulak, 2009).

Balkir and Südas (2014) overview work is also worth mentioning. In the first place, they point to the particularity of Turkey's ongoing transition from an emigration country to an immigration country. Turkey represents a dynamic and attractive field of research due to many migrant groups, among other things. The authors present the settlement processes and geographical distributions and collected demographic characteristics and socio-economic data of European retirement migrants. As a result, they show evidence of xenophobic attitudes of the local population toward European retirement migrants.

Consequently, integrating European pensioners is a challenge for the local community. Retirement migrants usually live in closed residential communities with little intercultural dialog. They are not perceived as immigrants and maintain the status of guests. The results, however, also show positive effects of retirement migration, such as growing economic prosperity and increasing multiculturalism of the population. To cite another example, Özyurt et al. (2018) determined the housing satisfaction level of resident tourists in Turkey. They see an increased level of satisfaction among resident tourists in Alanya.

Discussion

According to the relatively new dynamics of European retirement migration in this geographical region, it can be concluded that Turkey is hardly dealt with in the research branch of retirement migration and is virtually an "unknown quantity." This provides excellent opportunities to record new phenomena and thus significantly contribute to research. The elaboration of a broad and in-depth study would provide the opportunity to elaborate a comprehensive case study that would, in principle, allow access to the current state of retirement migration to Turkey and also make an important contribution in the context of the still comparatively small number of studies on European retirement migration. German retirement migrants belong to one of the most important groups of retirees in Turkey and the Alanya region.

Tolay (2015), Turan and Karakaya (2010); and were reviewed as works on general migration to Turkey. Another two works focus especially on EU immigration to Turkey and, in particular, on German immigrants (B. Kaiser, 2004), so six works could be identified on this general topic. Also worth mentioning are press articles in the magazine "der Spiegel" (Kubisch, 2010; Wandt, 2006) on retirement migration in Turkey. Tolay (2015) highlights the already mentioned ongoing change of Turkey toward an immigration country, in particular also through newly arriving non-Islamic migrants, and locates the associated migration studies as the beginning of a still new field of research with regard to Turkey anchored "traditionally" in the West.

The only two individual studies that address the topic of German retirement migration to Turkey as well as examine this question using the example of the Alanya region are of recent dates (Kahveci et al., 2020; Karacan, 2020), which already indicates the lack of detailed empirical data on the phenomenon and specifically for Alanya. As outlined above, both studies address specific questions: Karacan (2020) deals with the new challenges in Alanya and Kahveci et al. (2020) with the phenomenon of tactical mobility. According to the comparatively narrow task, the results presented here fall short of providing a comprehensive insight into older German people's life situation or their own perception of the new life situation.

Other studies are available, particularly on the retirement migration of Dutch people to Turkey, often compared to the return migration of Turkish migrants, for example, Böcker and Balkir (2012). These works are far more extensive than those on German retirement migrants but also cover the subjective view of retirement migrants only fragmentarily, while the main focus is on the organizational framework (health insurance, legal conditions). Some general data on retirement migration enable a good comparative classification of the planned study. Among other things, Böcker and Balkir (2012) indicate the number of properties owned by foreigners, with Germans dominating within the framework of Turkey (24,178 properties) and specifically for the Antalya region (7,315 properties).

In the studies that generally consider the phenomenon of migration concerning Turkey, for example, and the novel field of research on migration-related to Turkey (Tolay, 2015), it is particularly pointed out that Turkey has experienced a transition from an emigration country to an immigration country in recent decades. Although there were already waves of immigration in earlier times of the Ottoman Empire, often by people identified as "Turkish" (Tolay, 2015, pp. 59-60), the new immigration differs dramatically, among other things, due to the diverse and for Turkey new background of these immigrants. This new migration includes Turkey's importance as a transit country of often illegal refugees to Europe. The new dynamics and importance of retirement migration, especially from Europe to Turkey, are briefly mentioned in these studies but do not play a special role. A targeted study on retirement migration would also close an important research gap from this perspective.

The literature on European retirement migration to countries other than Turkey is far more extensive and significantly begins at the end of the 1990s. The focus is on migration to different Spanish areas, in particular on British and German retirement migrants, for example, Hall and Hardill (2016), Haas (2015), C. Kaiser (2011), O'Reilly (2007), and Gustafson (2001). The publications are usually based on case studies focused on comparatively narrow topics, which can result in important comparative possibilities for the research topic proposed here. However, larger-scale, in-depth studies highlighting the evolution of retirement migration in one place are also lacking here.

It has also been found that most studies about European retirement migration are either thematically narrowly defined, detailed studies, or deal with and describe the development of retirement migration in a completely general way. That is why there is such an urgent need to elaborate on the peculiar phenomena of retirement migration comprehensively and coherently at a mid-level of research, as is only possible in the context of further research.

The results presented in the studies suggest that older migrants in Alanya generally experience a positive living situation. There are indications that the favorable cost of living could be a possible reason for this positive experience. However, further research is required to conclusively clarify this question.

Conclusions

In addition to the research question, the result of the systematic literature search has revealed further research gaps. The research desiderata, which have so far not been addressed or often only indirectly, include, for example, the role of family relationships for the retirement migrants, the influence of these relationships on the migration decision as well as the manner of the form of migration (stationary, commuting). For example, little is known about the influence of the transnational way of life on the quality and sustainability of social relations. Can retirement migrants continue to receive support from relatives in the same way as the older in Germany? What role do relatives play in coping with critical life situations in the context of retirement migration? What consideration do one's children receive in the course of retirement migration?

Furthermore, no study until now has dealt with the issue of return migration to Germany. Are retirement migrants generally planning a return, or choose this option when it is inevitable? Under what conditions and feelings does a return take place, and where? Which retirement migrants stay permanently in Turkey and die there? Other research desiderata deals with the new living environment, the manner of integration, and forms of typical conflicts and crises.

The few research studies on German retirement migration in general and Turkey in recent years contrast the continuing increase in migration figures. This indicates an existing need for research. Research studies that aim to survey retirement migrants in a larger sample or that would collect further findings in a longitudinal Gerontology & Geriatric Medicine

retirement migrants (children), give rise to the assumption of exciting findings. Research findings on retirement migrants in Turkey can also be compared to studies from other regions (e.g., Spain, Italy, and Greece). In addition, the research topic can also be supplemented by other disciplines (geography infrastructural effects; psychology deepening of motives and everyday life).

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Informed Consent

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