

Biostatistics Leader in Türkiye from the Eyes of His Students: Prof. Kadir Sümbüloğlu

Seval Kul ¹ , İlkay Doğan ¹ , Ayşe Balat ² , Bektaş Açıkgöz ³ , Zeliha Nazan Alparslan ⁴ , Alper Serçelik ⁵ , Mustafa Berhuni ⁶ 

¹ Department of Biostatistics, Gaziantep University School of Medicine, Gaziantep, Türkiye

² Department of Pediatric Nephrology and Rheumatology, Gaziantep University School of Medicine, Gaziantep, Türkiye

³ Retired Professor, Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit University, Medical Faculty, Head of Department of Neurosurgery, Zonguldak, Türkiye

⁴ Retired Professor, Department of Biostatistics, Çukurova University School of Medicine, Adana, Türkiye

⁵ Gaziantep Provincial Health Directorate Dr. Ersin Arslan Education Research Hospital, Department of Ophthalmology, Gaziantep, Türkiye

⁶ Department of Ophthalmology, Erciyes University, School of Medicine, Kayseri, Türkiye

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Corresponding Author

İlkay Doğan, PhD

Address: Department of Biostatistics,
Gaziantep University School of Medicine,
27310, Gaziantep, Türkiye.

E-mail: ilkay_dgn58@hotmail.com

In the scientific community, there has always been a need for leaders who will benefit and guide everyone. Thanks to these leaders, future generations will undoubtedly be able to reach their goals more easily [1].

In this special editorial, we aimed to tell about a master and leader, Dr Kadir Sümbüloğlu, who was the pioneer of biostatistics in Türkiye and who guided us, his students, opened our horizons and made important contributions to our academic life to get to this point and to express our gratitude to our teacher.

Regards,

Seval Kul, PhD

İlkay Doğan, PhD

Ayşe Balat, MD

Bektaş Açıkgöz, MD

Zeliha Nazan Alparslan, PhD

Alper Serçelik, MD

Mustafa Berhuni, MD

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From Prof. Seval Kul

The Leader of the Biostatistics Community in Türkiye, Prof. Kadir Sümbüloğlu (PhD)

The academic and scientific legacy of Prof. Kadir Sümbüloğlu stands as a cornerstone in Türkiye's medical education and research landscape. His influence has been felt broadly, from his students to his colleagues. Kadir Sümbüloğlu's pioneering role in the field of

biostatistics paved the way for a profound transformation at Hacettepe University and medical education institutions throughout Türkiye.

Kadir Sümbüloğlu's life symbolizes the beginning of an era that revolutionized medical education and scientific research. His education in community health at the Gevher Nesibe Health Education Institute directed him towards becoming a trailblazer in the fields of medical statistics and biostatistics. His academic journey at Hacettepe University under the guidance of Nusret Fişek led to the official establishment and development of biostatistics in Türkiye.

Throughout his teaching career, Kadir Sümbüloğlu's dedication to his students and colleagues solidified his role as a pioneer in advancing science and academic development. Under his leadership, the importance of research and educational programs in biostatistics at Hacettepe University Faculty of Medicine grew significantly. His wisdom, courtesy, and exemplary character among his students made him not just a teacher but also a mentor and guide.

In this editorial, I will delve into a comprehensive analysis of Kadir Sümbüloğlu's academic achievements and personal attributes, accompanied by heartfelt expressions from his students. Many academics and researchers he has influenced will share their experiences, emphasizing the significant impact of Kadir Sümbüloğlu as a prominent figure in their careers and personal development as well as mine.

After sharing his CV, I leave you alone with these valuable writings.

Regards,

Prof. Seval Kul, PhD

Department of Biostatistics, Gaziantep University School of Medicine, Gaziantep, Türkiye

Prof. Kadir Sümbüloğlu's Curriculum Vitae

Prof. Kadir Sümbüloğlu (Fig. 1) was born in Sivas, Zara, on June 1, 1936. He completed his primary and secondary education in Sivas. In 1968, he graduated from Gevher Nesibe Health Education Institute with a degree in Public Health. In the same year, he was appointed as an assistant in the Department of

Community Medicine under Prof. Nusret Fişek's supervision at Hacettepe University Faculty of Medicine. Prof. Fişek expressed his intention to train him as a medical statistics professor.



Fig. 1. Prof. Kadir Sümbüloğlu

He obtained his PhD in Medical Statistics and Medical Documentation from Hacettepe University Faculty of Health Sciences in 1972. He was appointed as the coordinator of this program in the same year and continued his duties as a lecturer in the Department of Community Medicine. These two roles are the official starting point of Biostatistics in Türkiye. During those years, "medical statistics" was recognized as a department by the Interuniversity Board for Associate Professorship, and its name was changed to "Biostatistics" in 1975.

After becoming an Associate Professor of Biostatistics in 1977, he initiated efforts to establish Biostatistics as an interdisciplinary field in medical faculties, with Hacettepe University taking the lead. After the establishment of the Higher Education Council (Yükseköğretim Kurulu-YÖK) in 1981, he ensured the establishment of the Biostatistics Department within the Department of Medical Biology at Hacettepe University Faculty of Medicine in 1982. He was granted the title of Professor of Biostatistics in 1988. Since 1993, the Biostatistics departments have been affiliated with the Department of Basic Medical Sciences.

In 1997, Prof. Kadir Sümbüloğlu founded the Biostatistics Association with seven founding members to promote the development of biostatistics, elevate the academic careers of healthcare personnel, and protect the rights of its members. He served as the president of the association until 2014 and is currently its Honorary President. Throughout his academic career, he supervised the theses of 13 master's and 12 doctoral

students and made significant contributions to the training of numerous faculty members in Biostatistics.

Prof. Kadir Sümbüloğlu has authored 26 national books and eight international book chapters in the field of biostatistics. One of his internationally authored chapters is in the book titled “Formation Patterns and Health” by the World Health Organization (WHO). He was thanked in the preface of the book for his valuable contributions as an author to WHO’s book titled “Teaching Health Statistics Lesson and Seminar Outlines Second Edition”. He has published 17 national and international articles in addition to providing biostatistics and research consultancy for numerous scientific studies. He has been the principal investigator in four national and two international scientific projects. He received a one-year international scholarship from WHO and a five-month international scholarship from Fulbright.

He served on the Sub-Committee for Health Information Systems of the 7th and 8th Development Plans, provided statistical consultancy in the Türkiye Clinics Medical Sciences Competitions from 1986 to 1993, and offered consultancy services in various capacities for institutions such as the Ministry of Health, State Planning Organization (Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı-DPT), State Institute of Statistics (Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü-DİE), and WHO. He has also participated in two different book projects with WHO.

Prof. Kadir Sümbüloğlu retired in 2003 but continues to attend biostatistics conferences, where he meets with all the academicians he has contributed to and continues to share his knowledge and experiences.

From Prof. Ayşe Balat;

Dear Prof. Kadir Sümbüloğlu

It was my first year at Hacettepe University, Faculty of Medicine. While we focused on health-related courses and tried to understand people with all our strengths, we met a teacher in biostatistics explaining the importance of numbers. He said, “You will have a lot of data throughout your lives, but what is important is how you make sense of this data”. He defined biostatistics and emphasized the importance of collecting data accurately and transforming it into information while providing healthcare services and/or working as a researcher. He explained many comparison methods and comments on numbers and pointed out that some things we think are important may only

work if they are statistically significant.

He made a classic exam that we all fear but stated that we could use the book. We were all surprised. Later, he congratulated me as a student with 100 points on this exam. I said, “Sir, the book was already open, and I did it easily”. He gave another lesson: “The important thing is not to memorize statistical methods, but to know which method to use and where.”

This professor is the esteemed Prof. Kadir Sümbüloğlu, the Founding Head of the Biostatistics Department at Hacettepe University between 1982 and 1987. I always remember with respect our valuable teacher, who first taught us statistical literacy and made us like biostatistics. I am proud to be one of the thousands of students he trained.

Regards,

Prof. Ayşe Balat, MD

*Department of Pediatric Nephrology and Rheumatology,
Gaziantep University School of Medicine, Gaziantep, Türkiye*

From Prof. Bektaş Açıkgöz;

Dear Prof. Kadir Sümbüloğlu

Taking into consideration the scientific discussions within the European Association of Neurological Surgeons and the European Academy of Neurosurgery, the Department of Neurosurgery at Hacettepe University offered a PhD program within the Hacettepe University Institute of Neurological Sciences to ensure that Neurosurgeons are trained as academicians in the post-residency period.

I began this program as a PhD student in February 1988, and the first course I enrolled in at the institute was the biostatistics course, where I had the opportunity to get to know Prof. Kadir Sümbüloğlu. In his classes, he taught us the methods of questioning as a scientist, searching for answers to questions, evaluating findings based on previous experiences, and drawing conclusions from these findings.

Throughout the PhD program and beyond, I personally observed the contributions of Prof. Kadir Sümbüloğlu in our participation in national and international scientific meetings, our research activities, and publications, and how his efforts enriched us and paved the way forward.

During my tenure as Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at Zonguldak Karaelmas University and later as Rector, our faculty members expressed their desire to receive biostatistics training. We immediately contacted our mentor. They and their team came to Zonguldak and devoted days and labor to training our faculty members. With our insistence, they left Prof. Vildan Sümbüloğlu (his wife and biostatistician) at our university.

Prof. Vildan Sümbüloğlu established the biostatistics PhD program, trained many valuable faculty members, and worked tirelessly for the institutionalization of science at the university. At this stage, my wife and I consider ourselves very fortunate to have gained the friendship of Prof. Kadir and Prof. Vildan Sümbüloğlu.

We wish Prof. Kadir and Prof. Vildan Sümbüloğlu many healthy and happy years.

With our regards.

Prof. Bektaş Açıkgöz, MD

Retired Professor, Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit University, Medical Faculty, Head of Department of Neurosurgery, Zonguldak, Türkiye

From Prof. Z. Nazan Alparslan;

Dear Prof. Kadir Sümbüloğlu,

I would like to begin by reiterating the words I expressed when I received my retirement plaque from our professional association (2022):

“My greatest gratitude in my professional life belongs to Kadir Sümbüloğlu, my mentor, who took my hand 40 years ago and never let go through my challenges.”

When I moved to Adana due to marriage (winter of 1980), I was offered the opportunity to teach “medical statistics (as it was called at that time)” at the Faculty of Medicine of Çukurova University. Since my undergraduate and graduate education were suitable, I accepted the offer and started working in the summer of 1980.

The discipline of biostatistics was still very new in our country, and training personnel was necessary. In 1982, news of Hacettepe University’s doctoral program in my field reached my faculty.

It was at this stage Prof Kadir Sümbüloğlu entered my life, and at each stage of my professional life, I discovered different characteristics of my mentor. When I went to Ankara for the exam, the way I learned about the exam results gave me the first clue about my mentor. Over time, I named this characteristic: “dedication to the field he founded.” My mentor was relentless; he informed me of the exam results of a candidate in Adana through an “intercity” phone call. Thus, a new path opened up for me.

Prof. Kadir Sümbüloğlu was attentive, compassionate, helpful, and understanding. I completed my doctorate by travelling back and forth to Ankara.

After my doctorate, there are, of course, stages, and there are staff matters. This time, I saw other characteristics of my mentor: extremely protective and supportive of me, self-sacrificing, but demanding (sometimes uncompromisingly) towards my institution when necessary. During these years, my mentor, who came to Adana to support the courses I opened for faculty members and the student juries I organized, also participated in rector’s programs.

In addition to all these supportive characteristics, and in my opinion, the most important feature, is that Prof. Kadir Sümbüloğlu is ‘reliable’. I always trusted my mentor. Prof. Kadir Sümbüloğlu’s energy and positive attitudes have always been a source of motivation for me as well. There were certainly times and situations when he was pessimistic, but he never reflected it; he always showed his positive, cheerful, fatherly side.

To my dear mentor, whom I always felt the spiritual support of even during my spouse’s illness and passing: I wish you many healthy, peaceful years with your loved ones and those who love you.

Prof. Z. Nazan Alparslan, PhD

Retired Professor, Department of Biostatistics, Çukurova University, Faculty of Medicine, Adana, Türkiye

From Assoc. Prof. Alper Serçelik;

A Legend; Prof. Kadir Sümbüloğlu

In the late 1980s, we were studying at the medical faculty of Hacettepe University. For each topic we were about to start, we would search for references. We did the same research when we

were about to start to study biostatistics. No matter whom we asked about biostatistics references, the answer always led to one address: Prof. Kadir Sümbüloğlu. That was the first time I heard his name. He had many books on biostatistics. I also learned that he was the founding chairman of the Biostatistics department at Hacettepe University. Then, he began teaching our classes.

His self-confidence while teaching was remarkable. His sense of humor allowed us to follow his lectures without getting bored. His lectures were followed with great interest by the students. I have seen many professors at Hacettepe University who added value to their departments with their presence. Prof. Kadir Sümbüloğlu was one of them. We learned a lot from him medically and for personal development. He was one of the legends of Hacettepe University.

Decades later, I learned that he was the husband of Prof. Vildan Sümbüloğlu, the head of the Biostatistics department at our university. Seeing my legendary mentor 35 years later at Sanko University Hospital, where I worked, touched, and excited me. Despite his advanced age, his mental functions were superb. When the time came, he continued with his subtle touches of humor. He had some heart-related problems, and I feel lucky to have had the opportunity to help my mentor with this.

My mentor, you are one of the people who add color to this world. May God bless you with health and a long life. I will always remember you with gratitude.

Assoc. Prof. Alper Serçelik, MD

Department of Cardiology, SANKO University, Faculty of Medicine, Gaziantep, Türkiye

From MD Surg. Mustafa Berhuni;

To my mentor, and mentor of mentors; Prof. Kadir Sümbüloğlu,

During the years when I led a very simple life in the Ceylanpınar district of Şanlıurfa and harbored great dreams, I had only one goal: to get admitted to Hacettepe University Faculty of Medicine. And I achieved this goal in the year 2000. I was literally flying with joy. I got into the best medical faculty. Until the age of eighteen, I had never ventured beyond Şanlıurfa. I was going to live in Ankara, a big and capital city. I was filled with excitement. Upon my first arrival in Ankara, what caught my attention were the crowds and the traffic of the city, which made me

nervous. The first year of my university life, joining preparatory class, was a chance for me to acclimate to the city. After the preparatory class, I started the first grade in 2001. But among them was one professor who, from the very first sight, I declared as my idol: Prof. Kadir Sümbüloğlu. His stance, mastery of the subjects and fatherly attitude caught my attention. Some of our friends did not take the biostatistics course seriously. Actually, these friends did not aware of that; being a physician was not just about diagnosis and treatment of patients, it was also about being a good researcher and scientist. We later understood how important biostatistics was in scientific and academic research. Indeed, when it came to biostatistics in Türkiye, perhaps even globally, Prof. Kadir Sümbüloğlu was one of the few names that came to mind. Prof. Kadir Sümbüloğlu was the mentor of mentors and had trained many professors. After biostatistics courses, I would approach him and ask questions related to the lessons. He was extremely gentle, calm, and sweet-tongued. He would listen to our questions with great seriousness and answer them in the best way possible. I must also mention this, Prof. Kadir Sümbüloğlu was also very charismatic. When he entered the classroom, everyone would fall silent, and no one would make a noise. I never witnessed him warning the class to be quiet. All the students showed him a serious respect. Prof. Kadir Sümbüloğlu had become an idol in my mind during my teenage years. Years flew by. I graduated from medical school in 2007 and started my residency in Ophthalmology at Kayseri Erciyes University Faculty of Medicine. I completed my residency in 2013. One day, while working in the ophthalmology clinic at Gaziantep Dr. Ersin Arslan Training and Research Hospital, I suddenly saw Prof. Kadir Sümbüloğlu and his esteemed wife Prof. Vildan Sümbüloğlu in front of me. The memories of my youth at the faculty flashed before my eyes, and I became very excited. Prof. Vildan Sümbüloğlu asked me to examine my mentor Prof. Kadir Sümbüloğlu. At that moment, I kissed the hands of both, and said, "I am your student, you have a special place in my heart," and we chatted for a while. They both had come to SANKO University. I was fortunate enough to examine my idol, Prof. Kadir Sümbüloğlu. After that, we met occasionally, and I provided follow-up and treatment for my mentor. Prof. Vildan Sümbüloğlu provided me with great support in my scientific research. Both of them have hearts as pure as diamonds. I wish them both a healthy, happy, and peaceful life.

With endless respect...

MD Surg. Mustafa Berhuni

*Gaziantep Provincial Health Directorate Dr. Ersin Arslan
Education Research Hospital, Department of Ophthalmology,
Gaziantep, Türkiye*

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