Important Values of American and Turkish Students

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Abstract

Problem Statement: Societies want to ensure that their children receive an education that includes an emphasis on good character. Therefore, character education classes in schools are an effective means of achieving this goal. Character education curricula in societies that are experiencing global changes strive for their students to gain universal values. However, although character elements are similar, character education applications and individual attitudes and behaviors can vary from country to country. This situation is due to the fact that societies have different socio-cultural, economic and religious beliefs, which effect character education curricula regarding societal behaviors.

Purpose of Study: The purpose of this research is to determine and compare the perception of certain character values among middle school students who attend American and Turkish schools. When reviewing these countries' character education curricula, it seems that they have many similar traits. However, differences in their societal backgrounds reveal student's perspectives about certain character values. Recognizing similarities and differences that exist between American and Turkish middle school students' values about good character, this study will try to explain the reasons for such differences.

Method: In this study, a quantitative method was used as the research design. The research sample consisted of 286 American and 278 Turkish students. Survey results were evaluated with the SPSS statistical program.

Findings and Results: Descriptive statistics for each character value shows that each country's students demonstrated their highest intensity on issues of substance abuse. However, the lowest intensity focused on environmentalism with the American students and multiculturalism with the Turkish students. Empathy and tolerance were the highest in terms of mean difference between the two countries' students. In

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contrast, American and Turkish students have the lowest mean difference in terms of responsibility and multiculturalism.

Conclusions and Recommendations: Student responses indicated that each country's students have different perspectives on certain core values. One of the most highly contrasted characteristics of America and Turkey is diversity and multiculturalism. This situation offers both more opportunities and more challenges to Americans. However, the survey results show that American students can be adversely affected in terms of tolerance and empathy. Communal living, parental and peer effects on the students' responsibility and substance dependency are also apparent in their effects on the students. Educators recognize that societal differences can impact a student's ability to gain good character values.

Keywords: Character education, good character, different values, comparative education.

Introduction

All societies want to have citizens who have good character. The sustainability of society depends on citizens who protect their cultural values. All people believe that education is essential for having a strong society and raising citizens who have good character. What can we do to ensure that our children will grow up with good character? The answer to this question presupposes a systematic way of teaching character education. Character education is an effective program for schools; it values students with good character and schools with a positive school climate. Knowing why they are in school helps students develop a better character by helping them see how what they are learning leads to success in their life goals (Tully, 2009). Although schools know that character education is important, they do not know what they can do to create quality character education in their daily curriculum. To answer these questions, it is helpful to define character and character education.

Character is defined as "the complex set of psychological characteristics that motivate and enable an individual to act as a moral agent, i.e., the subset of psychological characteristics that lead one to want to and be able to do the right thing." This definition has been simplified by the Character Education Partnership (2008) and defined as "understanding, caring about and acting upon core ethical values." These definitions include properties of a good person such as empathy, compassion, conscience, moral reasoning, moral values, moral identity, perspective-taking, moral indignation, moral sensitivity, etc. (Berkowitz & Hoppe, 2009), and they are not formed automatically. Good character is developed through an effective and appropriate teaching process. In this process, schools are the basic institution for students to learn good character. Today, media tools such as television and Internet can affect children negatively, because children often spend much more time with media tools than with their families. Therefore, communication is decreased between parents and children. Negative pressure of the media and ineffective parent

communication can produce children who are annoying, disrespectful and aggressive within the society (Kirkorian, Wartella, & Anderson, 2008). Schools can decrease the negative effects of media tools. With a good character education program in the schools, independent thinking and strong moral principles can help children make correct choices even in stressful situations. Thus, students can become polite, dependable and influential members of society (Creasy, 2008). In this case, schools' responsibilities and challenges in relation to character education have increased significantly in modern times. Clearly, Kevin Ryan, Director of the Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character at Boston University, stated, "Rather than being the schools' latest fad, character education is the schools' 'oldest mission' (as cited in Schaeffer, 1999, p. 2).

What is Character Education?

Character education is the exact and ever-developing set of experiences designed to promote positive social attitudes and related behaviors that encourage the growth of social competence and a congenial disposition. This learning is supported by the development of opportunities that introduce students to six valued traits, and it provides direct instruction in the common traits of self-control and feelings management, such as respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, fairness, caring, and honesty. In other words, students from early childhood years onward are tutored in the principles of mediation and positive communication, which develops the characteristics of conscientiousness, affability, and an inner confidence that allows them to successfully engage in new adventures and experiences (White & Warfa, 2011).

Good character education should incorporate some core properties, which are gathered under the following two traditions. One of these traditions is social and emotional learning (SEL). SEL skills presented to students include good study habits, effective skills for group work and positive classroom participation, emotional competence, thoughtful problem solving, and nonviolent decision making (Elias, 2010; Çağatay, 2009). Another tradition is character and moral education (CE). Schools that incorporate CE emphasize safe learning environments, prevention of peer bullying, victimization, discipline problems, reduction of cheating, and promotion of ethical development in order to produce public-spirited citizens (Elias, 2010). Also, social and sporting activities are important for students' character development (Üstünyer, 2009). When these ideas are presented successfully, schools effectively prepare their students for life.

Assessing Character Education in Different Educational Systems: America and Turkey

Obviously, certain character traits are useful in order to make a society function. Although character elements are similar, character education applications can vary from country to country. Because this research is conducted among American and Turkish students, a review of these countries' character education programs is important.

In the United States, character education has changed over time. Until the 1950s, character education was not highly valued, because America was involved in an

economic revolution, and it had to offer specialized courses in these fields. After World War II, civic values gained importance. From 1960-70, the country experienced a cultural revolution. Ethical dilemmas and controversies resulting from this revolution included emerging concepts of individualism, personalism, and relativism. Recently, an increase in violent events in schools and individual conflicts has obligated school programs to emphasize character education in the U.S. (Beachum & McCray, 2005). As a result, character education has received attention among educators and policy makers and has become a high priority both for now and in the future (Edgington, 2002).

Six core universal moral values have been currently emphasized in American schools. These values were outlined by a group including 29 people from state school boards, teachers' unions, universities, ethics centers, youth organizations, and religious groups. Those people participated in what has come to be known as the "Aspen Conference" in Mississippi in July 1992 (Terri, Dunne, Palomares & Schilling, 1995). They agreed that character education should include the values of trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, justice and fairness, caring, civic virtue and citizenship.

Now, according to statistical data, 18 U.S. states have mandated character education through legislation, 18 states have encouraged character education through legislation, 7 states have supported character education but have no current legislation, and 7 states have no legislation specifically addressing character education in their schools (The Character Education Partnership, 2011).

In Turkey, character education applications have been in practice for a longer time. In the beginning, this education generally motivated students to adopt a successful social life. From 1920 to 1980, Turkey primarily emphasized the values of responsibility, cooperation and sensitivity. The values of respect, trustworthiness, justice and civic virtue were also important for students. Since 1980, Ataturk nationalism has gained greater importance. The goal is to raise all individuals as citizens who are committed to the principles and reforms of Atatürk and to the nationalism of Atatürk as expressed in the constitution. Character education further promotes raising citizens who adopt, protect and promote the national, moral, human, spiritual and cultural values of the Turkish nation, who love and always seek to exalt their family, country and nation, who know their duties and responsibilities towards the Republic of Turkey which is a democratic, secular and social state governed by the rule of law, founded on human rights and on the tenets laid down in the preamble to the Constitution, and to exhibit these individual behaviors. Turkish nationalism continued with the 2005 character education curriculum, which emphasizes multiculturalism (Keskin, 2008) along with commitment to the state of Turkey. Turkish schools still use this curriculum, and this program of character education is integrated into the social studies curriculum. As a result, the Turkish social studies curriculum includes similar values to those recognized in America.

Each theme in the Turkish social studies curriculum emphasizes at least one value. Values correlate with curriculum standards. For example, the "production, distribution, and consumption" theme emphasizes the importance of resources for

Turkey's economy and what can be done to improve areas such as skilled labor, payment of taxes and environmental awareness. This theme also correlates the "responsibility" value with its standards. Another example is the "global connections" theme. This theme mentions Turkey's relations with other countries in economic, political and social cooperation. In addition it emphasizes that when natural disasters or other catastrophes occur, cooperation and solidarity are priorities. As such, this theme has been associated with the "helpfulness" value (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2011). Thus, students are encouraged to associate values with specific issues.

When American and Turkish character education programs are reviewed, it is seen that common values exist in both countries' education programs. However, perspectives on good character may change these countries' middle school students who have different cultural characteristics. For this reason, this study was designed to gather and compare data on American and Turkish students' views and attitudes about good character, and it was based on a case study approach. Specifically the following research questions were addressed:

- Is there a difference in students' character scores on the character survey based on the interaction of nationality and gender?
- What similarities and differences exist between each country's students' values about good character?

Method

Research Sample

The purpose of this study is to determine middle school (6th, 7th and 8th grade) Turkish and American students' attitudes related to their values. With this purpose, school survey was used as a research design in this study. The reason this selected study group focuses on middle school students is that at this level character education has been strongly infused in each country. The selected American study group was a middle school located in San Diego, California. The Turkish study group was a middle school located in Ankara. It is noteworthy that in each school the socio-economic level is similar according to the demographics of the city. The survey was conducted in each school during the 2011 spring semester. The participants in this study were 286 American and 278 Turkish middle school students, totalling 564. Among the students, 21% (n=118) were American females, 30% (n=168) were American males, 23% (n=130) were Turkish females and 26% (n=148) were Turkish males.

Research Instrument and Procedure

This study is intended to determine differences between Turkish and American students' perspectives about good character. The survey instrument was created by the researcher. First, educational systems and curriculums were reviewed for each country to determine the place of character education. Next, character education

standards and curriculum values were listed and compared. Field literature was reviewed and survey items were composed. When statements were prepared for the survey, common values of each country were emphasized. The survey was divided into two sections. The first section asked participants their personal information such as gender and grade level. The second section involved 40 statements that were constructed for the purpose of measuring views about good character. After the survey was completed, its content was evaluated by two American Art and Character Education instructors in San Diego (U.S.) and two Turkish social studies teachers in Ankara (Turkey). They responded positively that the survey items reflected the aims of character education, and the survey was valid in reflecting student attitudes toward character education. The prepared survey was conducted with the 75 students. The pilot test helped to ensure validity and reliability of the survey. The conducted survey was assessed using the SPSS. According to the statistical analysis of the pilot test, some statements who had a lower score were removed from the survey. Finally, the survey statements were reduced to a number of 25.

The survey items indicate a large range of character values. Respect for others, honesty, politeness, tolerance, multiculturalism, empathy, responsibility, charity, citizenship, environmentalism, substance dependency and socialization are items queried in this survey. Table 1 shows example statements reflecting values in the survey.

Table 1

Some Items of the Character Survey

Character Values	***Items***
Respect for others	I could never pay back my mother for all she has done.
Honesty	I tell the truth even though I may receive a consequence.
Politeness	It is important for me to use manners.
Tolerance	If I am being tolerant of other people, I make friends much more easily.
Multiculturalism	Everyone who lives here has to adapt to our cultural values.
Empathy	I can put myself in somebody else's place and understand how he/she feels.
Responsibility	I get annoyed with myself if I do not turn my homework in on time.
Charity	If I give help to poor people, they will probably become lazy.
Citizenship	I am honored that I am a member of American society.
Environmentalism	I would like to join an environmental protection association as a volunteer.
Sociability	I share my sadness and my happiness with my friends.
Substance dependency	Marijuana usage turns peoples' lives upside down.

Data Analysis

In the first phase of the analysis, the survey statements were coded. The survey statements asked the respondents to rate their agreement with statements about the value of good character, using a 5-point Likert scale from 1= strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree on the positive items. Items with negative statements had reversed coding (1= strongly agree to 5= strongly disagree). After coding the survey items, the survey validity and reliability were determined. The result of the survey's validity analysis was KMO .866. That point was significant for the survey's validity, because KMO values must range up to .60 for survey factorability (Büyüköztürk, 2010; Tabachnick & Fidell 2001, as cited in Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). The alpha reliability coefficient of the survey indicated .82. After the survey was proven as valid and reliable, students' responses were determined using mean and standard deviation. Next, the students' average scores from each country were compared using independent sample t-tests about certain character values. In addition to determining students' gender and nation interaction two-way ANOVA statistical analysis was used.

Results

The results of this study indicate that American and Turkish students have significant differences in relation to some character values. In the study, key indicators for character education included respect, helpfulness, friendship, tolerance, honesty etc. Relevant responses about character perspectives of American and Turkish students are discussed below.

In order to determine the differences in total character scores based on nationality (Turkish and American) and gender, scores were analyzed by means of a 2x2 (nation X gender) factorial analysis of variance. Significant main effects were found for both nation [$F(1, 560) = 39.55$; $p<0.05$] and gender [$F(1, 560) = 5.07$; $p<0.05$]. The nation X gender interaction was not significant [$F(1, 560) =,45$; $p>0.05$] making interpretation of main effects difficult. Turkish females had a mean of 4.32 (SD=.31), while American males had the lowest mean of 3.60 (SD=.45). Overall, Turkish students had a statistically significantly higher mean (4.23, SD= .37) than American students (3.68, SD=.46) (Table2).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Sample Group

Gender	*American*			*Turkish*		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
Male	168	3.60	.45	148	4.14	.39
Female	118	3.80	.45	130	4.32	.31
Total	286	3.68	.46	278	4.23	.37

American and Turkish students' perspectives about some character values have different points in terms of statistical analysis. Table 3 indicates descriptive statistics for means and standard deviations according to each nation's students and compares these values with the t test.

Table 3

The Result of The t-test on the American and Turkish Students' Opinions about Survey's Values

		American Students		Turkish Students				
Some Core Values	N	M	SD	M	SD	Mean Dif.	t	p
Responsibility	564	3.77	.887	3.66	.742	.11	1.677	.094
Multiculturalism	564	3.14	1.251	3.34	1.368	.20	1.862	.063
Charity	564	3.69	.825	4.11	.833	.42	6.075	.000*
Sociability	564	3.94	.662	4.37	.618	.43	7.966	.000*
Politeness	564	4.21	.856	4.66	.717	.45	6.787	.000*
Substance abuse	564	4.31	.946	4.88	.495	.64	8.886	.000*
Citizenship	564	4.05	1.155	4.74	.704	.69	8.604	.000*
Environmentalism	564	2.99	1.129	3.68	1.009	.69	7.599	.000*
Honesty	564	3.31	.840	4.04	.798	.73	10.563	.000*
Respect for others	564	3.92	.690	4.67	.430	.75	15.430	.000*
Empathy	564	3.38	.922	4.23	.951	.85	10.734	.000*
Tolerance	564	3.45	.785	4.32	.679	.87	14.056	.000*

*p<0.05

Descriptive statistics for means and standard deviation values of students' opinions for each value showed that each country's students (American students' average score is 4.31 and Turkish students' average score is 4.88) demonstrated their highest intensity on issues of substance abuse. However, the lowest intensity was focused in the realm of environmentalism with the American students (M=2.99) and in the realm of multiculturalism with the Turkish students (M=3.34). However, empathy and tolerance were the highest two mean differences between the two countries' students. While American students had an average score of 3.45 regarding tolerance, Turkish students had a 4.32 average score. In addition, although the average score of American students on empathy was 3.38, Turkish students had a 4.23 average score for this perspective. In contrast, American and Turkish students had the lowest mean differences in terms of responsibility and multiculturalism. Americans scored an average of 3.77 compared to Turkish students 3.66 on responsibility. The average score of American students' multiculturalism was 3.14 and Turkish students' multiculturalism average score was 3.66.

Discussion and Conclusion

Character education has a value for all countries' education systems. McDonnell (1991) notes that character education is a top priority in order to remedy the national crisis of the diminishing real character among students (as cited in Beachum & McCray, 2005). This paper aims to review good character perspectives of middle school students in the countries of America and Turkey, which have different cultural features. It also shows which character values are different among students in these countries' middle schools. Student responses indicated that each country's students have different perspectives on some core values. These results are expected, because these countries have different social, cultural, economic and religious backgrounds. One of the most highly contrasting characteristics of America and Turkey is *diversity*. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2009) explained that since the 1960s, the number of immigrants arriving in the United States each year has tripled and includes groups from all over the globe (as cited in Healey, 2011). Diversity offers both opportunities and challenges to a society like America and its educators. This feature provides American society with a multitude of enhanced ways to target, describe and resolve social, economic and political problems. Diversity also presents important challenges to this nation, to schools and to educators. As a result students may have erroneous stereotypes, misconceptions and poor attitudes toward outside racial, ethnic and social class groups (Banks, 2002). When young students enter formal schooling, their family and societal values can either be solidified or contradicted as they become part of the school community. When the ethnicities and cultural backgrounds of students and educators diversify, their values are also subject to realignment (Manning, 2009). In this case, universal values are important for both America and other countries which are experiencing global changes.

Although the teaching of some universal values that are important in the global world has been emphasized much more recently (Hicken, 2002), student responses indicated that each country's students have different perspectives on some values. The most important differences between the two countries' students are reflected in the categories of tolerance and empathy. Each value is more positive for Turkish students than American students. Actually these values are interrelated with each other. If students show empathy, they can put themselves in another person's shoes; they can understand the inner feelings of another person. Thus they can show tolerance toward other people who think differently from them and do not agree with their ideas. Increasing lack of tolerance might be a risk for anti-social behaviors like bullying (Acker, 2007). Also included in tolerance is the idea of students not making fun of other students who are different from them or from another race, but instead trying to understand and reach out to these students. If a student has offended another student, tolerance can be demonstrated by the giving and accepting of apologies (Prestwich, 2004). In the past decade tales of bullying, isolation leading to suicide, and more tragically to school shootings, point to the imminent need to address the causes underlying school violence in America (Hollingshead, Crump, Eddy & Rowe, 2009). In addition, in American schools, students tend to be

segregated by social class, race, neighborhood, etc. (Berkowitz & Hoppe, 2009). However, tolerance, understanding, acceptance, and respect are cornerstones of sound social studies values, which is premised on the 1997 NCSS position paper on character education. Therefore, social studies teachers should provide opportunities for students to understand and to practice character traits that lead to more enlightened, tolerant, and inclusive understandings from preK to 12th grade, to provide opportunities for students to understand and to practice values that lead to more enlightened, tolerant, and inclusive understanding of diversity and acceptance (Lintner, 2011).

In the study, the highest degree of similarity between the two countries' students is shown as the values of responsibility and multiculturalism. Some educators believe that at the heart of character education is the belief that responsible behavior should be taught, and generally researchers agree that responsibility is a core value (Edgington, (2002); Richardson, Tolson, Huang & Lee (2009); Dancer (2007); Harak, (2006); Elias, (2010) in the character education programs. However, in addition to schools' participation, parents have an important role in developing this responsibility in their children. The similarity of each country's students' perspectives about responsibility indicated that although parents are from different cultures, their children's perspectives are not different in the area of responsibility. This result can be explained because each country is a democratic society. In a democratic society, citizens behave honestly, responsibly and fairly. In this context, perpetuating these values in students is the duty of schools (Schwartz, Beatty & Dachnowicz, 2006, as cited in Avcı, 2011).

An important and positive result from this study indicates that each country's middle school students show the highest level of opposition toward substance abuse. It is clear that all educators and parents share mutual concern that children will engage in risky behaviors such as substance abuse, which could endanger their lives and futures (Williams, 2010). In school environments, many character education programs are geared toward information, prevention, and treatment of substance abuse and dependency (Elias, 2010; Davis, 2006).

In contrast to substance abuse, American middle school students indicated a low level of concern about environmentalism. This result can be explained because independence and individualism are very highly valued in America. Environmentalism interferes with other freedoms, as it requires a considerable amount of regulation to be effective. This regulation often interferes with corporate profitability and individualism. American citizens tend to value medical insurance, retirement etc. more than the environment. However, in America environmentalism is seen as a cornerstone for a sustainable environment. There are efforts to develop more consciousness among American students regarding their environment. For example, *American School & University*'s Green Cleaning Award Program was created in conjunction with the Healthy Schools Campaign and the Green Cleaning efforts of schools around the nation to move forward with green cleaning as they aimed to embrace green principles and practices (Lustig, 2007). Despite these efforts, American students do not seem to internalize environmentalism as well as expected,

though educators might think that developing environmentalist youth is an ongoing process and students' sensitivity has increased during the past decade.

Turkish middle school students also indicated less concern about multiculturalism. Multiculturalism has a plural perspective. Respect, tolerance, kindness, empathy, and sociability can affect this perspective positively. However, in the study, students have a positive attitude about respect, tolerance etc. in Turkey. Başbay and Bektaş (2009) stated that people who are opposed to multiculturalism have the idea that multiculturalism injures integration into the society in Turkey. In spite of this Turkish people who support multiculturalism believe that multiculturalism can promote cultural richness and emphasize important values of each individual. (as cited in Ünlü & Örten, 2013). Lower level positive multiculturalist attitudes can reflect students who do not have many experiences with a multicultural life, and thus this value can be insignificant for them. Additionally, tolerance is linked with multiculturalism as "majority rule with respect for minority rights," and this may be misunderstood by the students. Most school children quickly grasp the concept of "majority rule" but the idea of "respect for minority rights" is much more difficult to comprehend (Avery, 2002). This situation is evident in American students. If we think about multiculturalism among American students who have many experiences with different cultures, we see their average score related to multiculturalism is lower than Turkish students' score. This result can be explained because many American citizens consider the U.S. a super power and the U.S. culture to be a dominant culture. Especially in Southern California, where immigration is a huge concern, many people feel other cultures should adapt to the U.S. culture. However, it is important to note that multicultural education's goal is to be inclusive and tolerant by exposing all students to the wide variety of cultural heritages found in the schools, districts, states or nation in America. In this way, American culture moves away from the image of the culturally dominant Anglo-Saxon Protestant majority, and becomes enriched by the diversity. During the 1990s, most Americans came to accept this understanding of multiculturalism. Typically, more than seven in ten respondents agree with survey questions asking if schools should "increase the amount of coursework, counseling and school activities….to promote understanding and tolerance among students of different races and ethnic backgrounds." This is a fairly new mantra for most Americans; the rapidity of its acceptance is a testimonial to Americans' belief in the need for mutual tolerance and respect in order to solidify its democracy (Hochschild & Scovronick, 2003).

Finally, societies' moral practices may differ, but the fundamental moral principles underlying the practices do not. This point emphasizes universality. The sense of universality makes teaching character education both easy and exciting. The study of universally honored virtues keeps us from focusing too much on what people *should* do or how they *should* act. (Jacobs & Spencer, 2001). However, all countries' character education programs must assume responsibility for developing good behaviors. Brimi (2008) emphasizes that although American schools do have programs, classes, and assemblies to educate students in developing good character

traits, there is a lack of success in students' daily lives. Students do not participate fully in these programs, because they feel they are treated like children and the programs are too repetitive and simple and boring. Thus they dismiss them and go about their daily lives just as before, without changing their behaviors. This situation can be a generalization applied to each country's education systems. To see positive results of character education in the schools, effective character training methods must be applied in the learning environment.

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Amerikan ve Türk Öğrenciler İçin Önemli Değerler

Atıf:

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Özet

Problem Durumu: Toplumlar sürdürülebilirliklerini sağlayabilmek için inandıkları kültürel değerlerin toplum bireyleri tarafından benimsenmesi ve muhafaza edilmesi gerektiğini düşünürler. Bu ideali gerçekleştirmede eğitim kurumlarının etkili ve önemli bir unsur olduğu herkes tarafından kabul edilir. Okulların uygulayacakları karakter eğitimi programları bireylerin çocukluklarının ilk yıllarından itibaren toplumsal yaşamda olumlu sosyal beceriler edinebilmelerine ve bu becerilerini davranışlara dönüştürmelerine neden olacak saygı, dürüstlük, sorumluluk, çalışkanlık ve güvenilirlik gibi bazı değerleri etkili bir şekilde kazanmalarını sağlayacaktır. Ancak, eğitimcilerin de vurguladığı üzere, karakter eğitimi programı tek başına etkili bir faktör değildir. Çocukların aile yaşantısından elde ettikleri deneyim ve tecrübelerin, medya unsurlarının ve edinilen arkadaş çevresinin çocuğun psiko-sosyal davranışlarına olumlu ya da olumsuz katkısı tartışılması gereken önemli faktörler olarak ön plana çıkmaktadır. Nitekim bu durum şunu göstermektedir ki, karakter eğitiminde göz önünde bulundurulan ve bütün toplumların kabul edecekleri evrensel değerler, okulların karakter eğitimi programlarında yer almakla birlikte, toplumların kültürel özellikleri ve bu özelliklerin sosyal yaşantılarına etkisi farklı toplumlarda yer alan bireylerin farklı değerlerle donatılmasına neden olmaktadır.

Araştırmanın Amacı: Bu araştırmanın amacı, ortaokul düzeyindeki Amerikan ve Türk öğrencilerinin bazı değerlerle ilgili sahip oldukları bakış açılarını yansıtabilmektir. Araştırmada, iki ülke öğrencilerinin sahip oldukları değerlerle ilgili düşünce benzerliklerinin ve farklılıklarının neler olduğunu belirlemeye ve bu perspektiflerin hangi faktörlerin etkisi altında gerçekleşebileceği ile ilgili yorumlamalarda bulunulmaya çalışılmıştır.

Araştırmanın Yöntemi: Araştırmada tarama yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Veri toplama aracı olarak da 20 sorudan oluşan 5'li Likert tipi bir ölçek kullanılmıştır. Bu ölçek, 286 Amerikan ve 278 Türk olmak üzere toplam 564 öğrenciye uygulanmıştır. Elde edilen veriler ile öncelikle her iki ulusa ait öğrencilerin toplam değer puanları hesaplanmıştır. Daha sonra bu değer puanı üzerinde, ait olunan ulus, sahip olunan cinsiyet ve her iki değişkenin ortak etkisini hesaplamak üzere çift yönlü ANOVA istatistik modeli kullanılmıştır. Son olarak da her iki ülkeye ait öğrencilerin araştırma kapsamında yer alan değerlerle ilgili sahip oldukları düşüncelerin ulus değişkeni göz önünde bulundurularak değişebilirliği bağımsız örneklemler t testi istatistik yöntemi ile tespit edilmiştir.

Araştırmanın Bulguları: İstatistiksel analizler sonucunda elde edilen bulgulara göre, öğrencilerin bir bütün olarak sahip oldukları değer yargıları üzerinde ait olunan ulus değişkeninin [F (1, 560) = 39.55; p<0.05] ve sahip olunan cinsiyetin [F (1, 560) = 5.07; p<0.05] istatistiksel açıdan anlamlı etkileri vardır. Buna karşın ulus ve cinsiyet değişkeninin öğrencilerin toplam puanları üzerindeki ortak etkisi istatistiksel açıdan anlamlı değildir [F (1, 560) = ,45; p>0.05]. Hem Amerikan hem de Türk öğrencilerin kendi içlerinde en yüksek ortalama puana sahip değer yargıları madde bağımlılığına karsı olan tutumlarıdır. Amerikan öğrencilerinin kendi içlerinde en düşük ortalama puana sahip değer yargıları çevrecilik iken, Türk öğrencilerin sahip olduğu en düşük ortalama puana sahip değer yargısı ise çok kültürlülüktür. Amerikan ve Türk öğrencilerin ortalama puan açısından en yüksek farka sahip değer yargıları tolerans ve empatidir. Buna karşın, Amerikan ve Türk öğrencilerin ortalama puan açısından en düşük farka sahip değer yargıları ise sorumluluk ve çok kültürlülüktür.

Araştırmanın Sonuçları ve Öneriler: Araştırma sonuçları, öğretim sürecinde öğrencilere her ne kadar evrensel değerlerin benimsetilmesi öngörülse de, ulusların sahip oldukları farklı sosyo-ekonomik ve kültürel özelliklerin onların değerlerle ilgili bakış açılarına yansımasına neden olabileceğinin bir göstergesidir. Çalışmada Amerikan ve Türk öğrencilerin en fazla tolerans ve empati kurma ile ilgili birbirilerinden farklı düşüncelere sahip oldukları görülmektedir. Bu durum iki toplumun sahip olduğu farklı sosyal yaşam tarzından kaynaklanabilmektedir. Amerikan toplumunun, Türk toplumundan daha fazla farklı etnik ve dinsel kökene sahip insanları barındırdığı bir gerçektir. Amerikan toplumunda insanlar bir arada yasamaya daha alışık olmalarına karsın, toleransın bu toplumda Türk toplumundan daha düşük seviyede olduğu görülmektedir. Bu sonucun en önemli nedenlerinden biri, Amerikalıların kendilerini "süper güç" olarak görmeleri ve kendilerinin farklı toplumlara ait insanlara hoşgörü ve tolerans göstermeleri yerine bu insanların kendilerine uyum sağlamaları gerektiğine inanmaları olabilir. Buna karşın, Amerikan ve Türk öğrencilerin sorumluluk ve çok kültürlülük ile ilgili değer yargılarında birbirlerine en yakın oldukları sonucu görülmektedir. Sorumluluk, karakter eğitimi müfredatında öğrencilere kazandırılması gerekli görülen değerlerden bir tanesidir. Ancak, bu değeri sadece öğretim sürecinde ve okullarda öğrencilere aşılamak mümkün değildir. Aile yaşantısı da öğrencilerin sorumluluk sahibi olmalarında önemli bir etkendir. Her iki toplumda da, öğrencilerin okul ve aile içerisinde üstlendikleri sorumlulukların birbirlerine yakın seviyede olduğu söylenebilir. Birbirine en yakın bir diğer değer olan çok kültürlülük ise, dikkat çekici özelliğe sahip ve yorumlanması kolay olmayan bir değerdir. Bu değer, Amerikan ve Türk öğrencilerin birbirleri ile çok farklı olmadıklarını gösteren bir değerdir. Oysa çok kültürlülük, daha önce de söz edildiği gibi Amerikan toplumunun farklı etnik, din ve kültüre sahip insanları barındıran bir toplum yapısına sahip olması açısından, Amerikan öğrencilerinin günlük sosyal yaşantılarına yansıyan bir değerdir. Ne var ki, demografik anlamda daha sade bir toplum yapısına ve daha milliyetçi bir anlayışa sahip Türk toplumunda, öğrencilerin bu değere ait ortalama puanlarının Amerikan öğrencilerinden kısmen yüksek olması, gerçek yaşamda bu değerle ilgili çok fazla tecrübeye sahip olmasalar da soyut anlamda bu değerle ilgili olumlu bir tutum içerisinde olduklarını göstermektedir. Ancak, bu değerin Türk öğrencilerinin kendi

içlerindeki değer yargıları arasında en düşük ortalama puana sahip olduğunu da vurgulamakta fayda vardır. Bu durum, öğrencilerde tecrübeye dayalı yargıların, soyut anlamdaki yargılara göre daha baskın olduğu gerçeğini bize göstermektedir. Amerikan öğrencilerinin ise, çevrecilik konusunda en düşük seviyede duyarlılığa sahip oldukları görülmüştür. Bu sonuç, Amerika'da her ne kadar bu konu ile ilgili eğitimsel faaliyetler gerçekleştirilse de çevre sorunlarının ve çevre bilincinin öğrencilere yeteri kadar verilemediğinin bir göstergesi olabilir. Her iki topluma ait öğrenciler, kendi içlerinde en yüksek ortalama puana madde bağımlılığı konusunda sahiptirler. Günümüz gençliğinin önemli problemlerinden biri olan madde bağımlılığının her iki toplumun öğrencileri tarafından da yadsınması olumlu bir sonuçtur.

Sonuç olarak, farklı toplumlara ait bireylerin değer yargılarında farklılık olsa dahi, temelde bütün toplumlar benzer evrensel değerlerin altını çizmektedirler. Evrensel değerlerin önemsendiği karakter eğitimi programlarının sorumluluğu öğrencilerde iyi davranışlar geliştirmektir. Ne var ki, Amerikan toplumunda öğrenciler karakter eğitimi programlarının kendi seviyelerinden daha düşük, basit, tekrarcı ve sıkıcı olduğunu düşünmektedirler. Bu durumu başka ülkelerdeki karakter eğitimi programları için de genellemek mümkün olabilir. Bu sorunu aşabilmek ve okullardaki karakter eğitimlerinin pozitif sonuçlarını görebilmek için öğrenme ortamında etkili metodların uygulanması gerekmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Karakter eğitimi, iyi karakter, farklı değerler, karşılaştırmalı eğitim.