

The Understanding of Culture by Australia-Born Turkish Youths

Mehmet Dinç

Probationary Psychologist

Associate Member of Australian Psychological Society

Arakiyeci Hacı Mehmet Mah. Lami Çelebi Sok. No:2/2 34668 Üsküdar İSTANBUL

Telephone: +902163105630

E-mail: mehmetdinc@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper is interested in the cultural understanding of Australia-born Turkish youth aged 15 to 25 by using a questionnaire survey and it searched to what extent Australia-born Turkish youth practice their cultures. The samples consisted of 21 Australian-born Turkish with a mean age of 17.5. They fill in a questionnaire which is developed by researcher. The questionnaire was self-explanatory, nevertheless a standard instruction was given at the start of each implementation in which participants were informed that participation was voluntary, and responses were confidential. It is surprisingly found that although they felt closer themselves to their parents' culture, they do not really know it. They think culture is important nonetheless they cannot clearly express why? To sum up; acculturation "refers to cultural maintenance (the importance of maintaining key aspects of the ethnic culture) and to cultural adaptation (the importance of adapting to key aspects of the majority group)" (To'th & Vijver, 2003, p.2). Although it seems quite ideal, two main issues need to be solved: a) more tolerance for migrant to practice their culture, b) more effort to teach migrant children to internalize their original culture.

Keywords: cultural understanding, Australian-Turkish born youth, acculturation

ÖZET

Avustralya Doğumlu Türk Gençlerinin Kültür Algıları

Bu araştırma, 15–25 yaş arası Avustralya doğumlu Türk kökenli gençlerin kültürel algılayışlarını anket yöntemiyle araştırmayı ve söz konusu gençlerin kültürlerini hayatlarının hangi boyutlarında yaşadıklarını tesbit etmeyi hedeflemektedir. Örneklem grubunu, yaş ortalaması 17.5 olan Avustralya doğumlu 21 genç oluşturmaktadır ve bu grup araştırmacı tarafından araştırma için özel olarak geliştirilen anketi doldurmuşlardır. Anket açık uçlu olarak hazırlanmış 9 sorudan oluşmaktadır. Uygulamadan önce, katılımcılara, katılımın gönüllü olduğu ve özel bilgilerin gizli kalacağı söylenmiş ve dolayısıyla soruları içtenlikle cevaplamaları istenmiştir. Araştırma sonucunda gençlerin kendilerini ailelerinin kültürüne yakın hissetmelerine rağmen, ailelerinin kültürü hakkında çok fazla bir şey bilmedikleri ortaya çıkmıştır. Meselâ kültürün önemli olduğunu düşünmelerine rağmen, neden önemli olduğunu açıkça ifade edememektedirler. Özet olarak akültürülasyon "kültürü muhafaza (etnik kültürün temel özelliklerini korumanın önemine) ve kültürel adaptasyona (içinde yaşanılan grubun çoğunluğunun kültürünün temel özelliklerine intibak etmenin önemine) dayanır" (To'th ve Vijver, 2003, s.2) tanımı her ne kadar mükemmel görünse de, akültürülasyon uygulamaları ile ilgili iki önemli mesele hâlâ çözülmeyi beklemektedir: a) Kültürünü yaşayan göçmenlere daha fazla hoşgörü, b) Göçmen çocuklarının orijinal kültürlerini özümseyebilmelerini öğretmek için daha fazla çalışma.

Anahtar Kelimeler: kültürel algılayış, Avustralya doğumlu Türk gençleri, akültürülasyon

Introduction

Human needs human regarding physiological, psychological, social and intellectual needs. It is one of unavoidable rules of being human. Therefore human needs to be together and create a society in which beliefs, behaviours and normative structures are shared to hold social collectives together (Lehman et al, 2004). We may name it as a "culture" because "a culture can be seen as a set of guidelines, both explicit and implicit, which individuals inherit as members of a particular society, and which tells them how to view the world and how to behave in it in relation to other people" (Cavlak et al 2005). It simply means culture is a tool which shapes every side of our lives and makes possible to live together as a society. Without any doubt cultures have been established during ages and they have been establishing unceasingly now until the last human will die.

It is note-worthy that human can effect the culture as well as culture can effect a human. It is not big deal if everyone of society has a same cultural background. However what about if it is not? Due to increased international migration during the last century, the populations of most countries and societies have become culturally diverse. At first cultural assimilation was expected from migrants. They were assumed to give up their original ethnic identity in favour of the adoption of a new identity. Then because the assimilation process was mostly unsuccessful, the term of "multiculturalism" was born. Multiculturalism is defined as a "social-intellectual movement that promotes the value of diversity as a core principle and insists that all cultural groups be treated with respect and as equals" (Fowers and Richardson 1996). Moreover "it refers to the attitude in which groups' value and actively supports mutual cultural differences and equal chances and opportunities. This means that cultural diversity is not only recognized as a demographic characteristic of the society but also evaluated by its citizens as important for the functioning of the society as a whole"(To'th and Vijver 2003). However, although I think globalization is the biggest threat for culture, multiculturalism was seen as a threat for culture, social unity and cohesion. Then another concept came into our world: acculturation.

Acculturation "refers to how an immigrant, who has temporarily or permanently settled, deals with the culture of origin (cultural maintenance) and with the culture of the country of settlement (cultural adaptation)" (To'th et al 2006).

Acculturation is a big issue for migrants. However it is bigger issue for children of migrants who have not voluntarily chosen a status as migrant. Although they

were born in Australia, children of migrants may face bigger problems more than their parents did in the long term because from an ideal perspective they are supposed to balance between the culture of their origin (cultural maintenance) and the culture of the country of settlement (cultural adaptation). On the other hand the question of how good they know their culture of origin has not an easy answer anymore and moreover they do not feel as a part the culture of their settlement. Hence this paper was interested in the cultural understanding of Australia-born Turkish youth aged 15 to 25 by using a questionnaire survey and it searched to what extent Australia-born Turkish youth practice their cultures. The samples consisted of 21 Australian- born Turkish with a mean age of 17.5.

METHOD

Participants

21 Australia-born Turkish aged 15 to 25 were involved in this study. The sample consisted of 9 females and 12 males; their mean age was 17.5 year. Female's mean age was 16 while male's 18.5. The educational level was not asked however participants were chosen from high schools or university students. The parental socio-economic statuses of participants were controlled. They fill in a questionnaire which is developed by researcher. Because the researcher is from Turkish background, the response rate was 95%.

Instruments and Procedure

The questionnaire was self-explanatory, nevertheless a standard instruction was given at the start of each implementation in which participants were informed that participation was voluntary, and responses were confidential.

The questionnaire was in English. However participants could choose in which language (Turkish or English) they wanted to fill in the questionnaire; 100% preferred to use English language.

The inventory consisted of three parts and 11 questions. The first part (2 questions) asked for demographic information: gender and age. The second part (2 questions) asked to understanding of culture: meaning of culture, importance of culture and reasons. The third part (7 questions) of the inventory attitudes toward Turkish culture in 4 domains of life. The source and main elements of the culture, cultural habits, advantage of disadvantage of the culture and strategy for transferring to culture. In each domain, there was at least one item formulated. 7 of the 9 questions were open-ended questions.

Meaning of culture

Question1: "What does the word "culture" mean to you?"

Male

3 of 12 participants thought that culture is;
- Customs
- Religious belief

2 of 12 participants thought that culture is;
- Country
- Norms and values
- The way they grow up
- The concept which make them who they are

1 of 12 participants thought that culture is;
- Lifestyle
- A group someone belong to
- Food
- A way of enriching lives and staying true to one's values and beliefs

Female

6 of 9 participants thought that culture is;
- background

5 of 9 participants thought that culture is;
- family and community

3 of 9 participants thought that culture is;
- activities (cultural gatherings, events, festivals)

Cultural identity

Question 2: "Which culture do you feel closer to?"

Male

9 of 12 participants felt themselves closer to Turkish culture

3 of 12 participants felt themselves close to both of Turkish and Australian cultures

Female

7 of 9 participants felt themselves closer to Turkish culture

1 of 9 participant felt herself closer to Australian culture

1 of 9 participant felt herself close to both of Turkish and Australian culture

Source of culture

Question 3: "How did you find out about your culture?"

Male

12 of 12 participants thought that they found out their culture from their families

6 of 12 participants thought that they found out their culture from school as well as from families

4 of 12 participants thought that they found out their culture from their friends as well as from families

Female

9 of 9 participants thought that they found out their culture from their families

Main elements of culture

Question 4: "What are the main elements of your culture for you personally?"

Male

6 of 12 participants thought that religion and religious symbols -such as mosque, religious holiday- are the main element of their culture

5 of 12 participants thought that reputation is the main element of their culture

4 of 12 participants thought that respect is the main element of their culture

1 of 12 participants thought that cooking or moral values or history or national anthem or discipline are the main element of his culture

Female

6 of 9 participants thought that community events are the main element of their culture

2 of 9 participants thought that food is the main element of their culture

2 of 9 participants thought that the style of bringing up is the main element of their culture

2 of 9 participants thought that parents are the main element of their culture

Cultural behaviours in daily life

Question 5: "What are the 3 cultural behaviours you mostly practice them in your daily life?"

Male

11 of 12 participants perceive that practicing values such as being clean, visiting sick people, telling the truth, kindness, caring, anti racism and respect for older are the cultural behaviour which they mostly do in their daily lives.

4 of 12 participants perceive that praying is the cultural behaviour which they mostly do in their daily lives.

4 of 12 participants perceive that food is the cultural behaviour which they mostly do in their daily lives.

3 of 12 participants perceive that speaking Turkish is the cultural behaviour which they mostly do in their daily lives.

2 of 12 participants perceive that pay attention to be together with the family is the cultural behaviour which they mostly do in their daily lives.

Female

5 of 9 participants perceive that speaking Turkish is the cultural behaviour which they mostly do in their daily lives.

5 of 9 participants perceive that cooking Turkish food is the cultural behaviour which they mostly do in their daily lives.

4 of 9 participants perceive that acting as a Turkish is the cultural behaviour which they mostly do in their daily lives.

2 of 9 participants perceive that serving guests is the cultural behaviour which they mostly do in their daily lives.

2 of 9 participants perceive that cleaning is the cultural behaviour which they mostly do in their daily lives.

2 of 9 participants perceive that showing respect for older is the cultural behaviour which they mostly do in their daily lives.

Importance of culture

Question 6: "Do you think culture is important? Why?"

Male

12 of 12 participant saw that culture is important

8 of 12 participant thought that culture is important because it defines them

2 of 12 participant thought that culture is important because it makes them good

2 of 12 participant thought that culture is important because it keeps them unique

1 of 12 participant thought that culture is important because it is directory for life

Female

9 of 9 participants saw that culture is important

3 of 9 participant thought that culture is important because it helps them to know their background

2 of 9 participant thought that culture is important because it defines them

2 of 9 participant thought that culture is important because it keeps them unique

1 of 9 participant thought that culture is important because it makes her good

Advantages of cultural choice

Question 7: "What are the advantages of your cultural choice in your life?"

Male

2 of 12 participants receive that having two perspectives (Australian and Turkish) is the advantage of their cultural choice

2 of 12 participants receive that learning diversity is the advantage of their cultural choice

1 of 12 participants receive that learning another language, religion, learning moral values, respect, discipline is the advantage of their cultural choices

Female

6 of 9 participants receive that easy communication is the advantage of their cultural choice

2 of 9 participants receive that feeling proud to be Turk is the advantage of their cultural choice

2 of 9 participants receive that meeting different people from different backgrounds is the advantage of their cultural choice

1 of 9 participants receive that learning and living her families background or having unique tradition is the advantage of their cultural choice

Disadvantages of cultural choice

Question 8: "What are the disadvantages of your cultural choice in your life?"

Male

6 of 12 participants felt that racism, isolation and being teased because of cultural background are the disadvantage of their cultural choice

4 of 12 participants felt that there is not any disadvantage for their cultural choice

1 of 12 participant felt that being outsider in Australia and in Turkey is the disadvantage of his cultural choice

Female

4 of 9 participants felt that gossip within the community is the disadvantage of their cultural choice

2 of 9 participants felt that racism and isolation are the disadvantage of their cultural choice

1 of 9 participants felt that there is not any disadvantage for their cultural choice

Transferring the culture

Question 9: "What would you do to transfer your culture to your children?"

Male

7 of 12 participants thought that they will teach their culture to their children to transfer Turkish culture to them

2 of 12 participants thought that they will send their children to Turkish schools

2 of 12 participants thought that they will be role model to their children to transfer Turkish culture to them

1 of 12 participant thought that he will do everything to transfer Turkish culture to them

Female

6 of 9 participants thought that they will marry to someone from the same culture to transfer Turkish culture to their children

2 of 9 participants thought that they will teach the culture to their children to transfer Turkish culture to them

2 of 9 participants thought that they will show the beauty of Turkish culture to their children to transfer Turkish culture to them

1 of 9 participants thought that they will send their children to Turkish school to transfer Turkish culture to them

Methodological issues

There are some methodological issues which must be kept in mind when interpreting the results. First, our sample consisted of 21 subjects and analyses have been separately performed for boys and girls. The size of the study population may have limited the power of the study.

FINDINGS

DISCUSSION

Meaning of culture

Question 1: "What does the word "culture" mean to you?"

The definition of culture was so important for me because I saw the definition as a main point which if it is clear, everything would be clear. However I surprisingly saw that male and female participants are very different side about the definition even within themselves. Females are clearer than males about it:

- Most of them thought that culture is someone's background.
- Nearly half of them (5 to 9) thought that culture is family and community.
- Some of them (3 of 9) thought that culture is activities.

All of these answers are quite understandable because the mean age of female participants were 16 which means they are still in high school. Because Turkish people usually live in Turkish dominant area, their children usually study in the same area or maybe in Turkish schools with Turkish students. They don't know many things about other cultures and they do know background, family and Turkish cultural activities as a culture.

On the other hand male participants have different views. Some of them thought that culture is religious belief; some of them thought it is food. Because boys have been more tolerated than girls to go out in Turkish community, they make more contact with people other than Turkish. Therefore they would define the culture according to their friends. However none of participants could give a comprehensive definition for culture.

Cultural identity

Question 2: "Which culture do you feel closer to?"

Majority of male and female participants feel closer to Turkish culture more than Australian. However male participants slightly more open to Australian culture than female. 3 male felt closer to both of cultures

while 1 female felt the same. On the other hand none of male felt closer to Australian culture than Turkish culture but 1 female felt closer. It is not surprising because feeling closer to Australian culture than Turkish culture does not fit their teachings which they took them from their parents. Even they feel closer to Australian culture; they don't want to say it.

Source of culture

Question 3: "How did you find out about your culture?"

All of participants found out their culture from their families. However male participants saw their schools and friends as a part of cultural source with their families. Nevertheless it is noteworthy that; they meant Turkish schools and Turkish friends when they wrote schools and friends.

Main elements of culture

Question 4: "what are the main elements of your culture for you personally?"

Half of male participants thought that religion and religious symbols are the main elements of their culture while majority of female participants thought that community events are the main elements. The reason behind differences is the role of male and female in Turkish community. Boys are supposed to go to mosque every Friday, Ramadan nights and bayram prayers which is held two times a year and they do the prayers with big crowd. On the other hand girls just saw a big crowd in festival activities and community events. Furthermore because Turkish boys are told every time "a man would live for honour"; respect and reputation are other main elements for male participants. Meanwhile female saw food, bringing up style and parents are the main elements of culture because they are advised to be good mother and good cooker.

Cultural behaviours in daily life

Question 5: "What are the 3 cultural behaviours you mostly practice them in your daily life?"

Because in Turkish culture; "fathers are still considered the head of the family and the main earners" (Granelli and Kilinc 2003), families are shaped by fathers. Therefore it is very important to teach boys the cultural values in Turkish culture. Thus it is not surprising that 11 of 12 participants indicated practicing values is the

cultural behaviour which they mostly do in their daily lives. Moreover 4 of 12 participants indicated that food and praying are the cultural behaviour which they mostly do in their daily lives. Although both of them are not cultural behaviour, because their families keep prayers and traditional food alive in their houses and because families are the main source of culture, some male participants thought that they are cultural behaviours. 3 of 12 participants thought that speaking Turkish is the cultural behaviour which they mostly do in their daily lives while 2 of 12 thought that paying attention to be together with family. Because males are more tolerated to go out than females and adolescent boys usually spend their times at out-side of their houses, speaking Turkish and paying attention being together with family have taken a low rates.

On the other hand because females are expected to be house except school, shopping and paying a visit to friend times, 5 of 9 indicated that speaking Turkish is the cultural behaviour which they mostly do in their daily lives. Furthermore 5 of them indicated that food is the cultural behaviour which they mostly do in their daily lives. Female participants have more reasons than boys to choose food is the cultural behaviour which they mostly do in their daily lives, because females are responsible from food and other house works. Therefore 4 of 9 participants indicated house works such as serving guest and cleaning as the cultural behaviour which they mostly do in their daily lives. However 4 of 9 indicated that acting as a Turkish is the cultural behaviour which they mostly do in their daily lives and it is not clear what they meant. Nevertheless I assume the cultural values which are mostly chosen by male participants. 2 of 9 participants supported my thought by indicating respect for older is the cultural behaviour which they mostly do in their daily lives which concretize acting as a Turkish.

Importance of culture

Question 6: "Do you think culture is important? Why?"

All male and female participants thought that culture is important. However male participants are clearer than females about why it is important. 8 of 12 male participants thought that culture defines them which are so important for their ages and their situation as a child of migrant family. However 2 of 12 thought simpler and indicated that culture is important because it makes them good. Besides 2 of 12 thought like other 2, culture is important because it keeps them unique. It might be the reason for the other 2 to feel

good. Finally just 1 of 12 indicated that culture is important because it is directory for life.

On the other hand, girls have similar reasons about the importance of culture. Although 3 of them indicated that culture is important because it helps them to know their background, 2 of 9 indicated it defines them, 2 of 9 indicated it keeps them unique and 1 of 9 indicated it makes her good as a reason why culture is important.

Advantages of cultural choice

Question 7: "What are the advantages of your cultural choice in your life?"

Male participants have too many different reasons as an advantage of their cultural choice. 2 of 12 received that having two perspectives, other 2 of 12 received that learning diversity, and others 1 of 12 received learning another language or religion or learning moral values or respect or discipline as an advantage of their cultural choices.

However because Turkish people can easily communicate within themselves even they do not know each other 6 of 9 female participants received that, easy communication is the advantage of their cultural choices. In addition 2 of 9 female participants receive that feeling proud to be Turk is the advantage of their cultural choices. Ironically the other 2 of 9 receive that meeting different people form different background is the advantage of their cultural choices. It is ironic because the first to saw being Turk is the advantage and the latter two saw multiculturalism which is very important part of Australian culture as the advantage of their cultural choices. This clearly shows to be between in 2 cultures. Finally 1 of 9 female participants received that living her families' background or having unique tradition is the advantage of their cultural choices.

Disadvantages of cultural choice

Question 8: "What are the disadvantages of your cultural choice in your life?"

Half of male participants (6 of 12) and 2 of 9 female participants felt that racism, isolation and being teased because of cultural background are the disadvantage of their cultural choice. This result supports the thesis of: "Despite the growing prominence of multiculturalism in Western government policies, multiculturalism has received scant attention in empirical research. Studies on multiculturalism indicate that majority of group members generally do not have positive feelings about immigrants" (To'th and Vijver 2003). If we did this survey in another European country, we found the feeling of discrimination and isolation signi-

ificantly higher than now. However because moderate support for multiculturalism found in Australia (Ho 1990), the result is assumingly lower than any other European country. Nevertheless it does not change the fact that, discrimination is still current in Australia and it is felt by even Australian- born youths.

4 of 12 male participants and 1 of 9 female participant felt that there is not any disadvantage for their cultural choices. It might be because of two reasons. First in Turkish community it is not acceptable to complain about one's own culture to someone. Secondly as we saw "being proud to be Turk" mentality above in advantage of cultural choice question, some people do not give any possibility that their culture has disadvantages.

4 of 9 female participants felt that gossip within the community is the disadvantage of their cultural choices. Because Turkish community is apparently introverted community, people usually talk about other Turkish people like it is inside paparazzi. However especially Australia-born females do not want to be talked by other people and they felt it is the disadvantage of their culture.

Finally 1 of 12 male participant felt that being outside in Turkey and in Australia is the disadvantage of the culture. According to my observation it is very common problem in Turkish community. Because Turkish youths need to develop an identity however they live a conflict between their parents which represent Turkish culture and their living society which represent Australian culture. Then they usually cannot be as successful as they can be because they cannot cope with this dilemma. Therefore many Turkish youths can be seen as a worker of kebab shops even they have good qualifications enough to have good jobs in Australia or in Turkey. Sam rightly points this problem as saying: "An adolescent's inability to develop identity may result in role confusion, which may subsequently undermine the person's self-esteem and mental health. An aspect of identity that is very important to children and adolescents of immigrant backgrounds is ethnic identity. However, researchers have suggested that psychological problems arise when great conflicts exist between the old and the new values" (Sam 2000).

Transferring the culture

Question 9: "What would you do to transfer your culture to your children?"

7 of 12 male participants and 2 of 9 female participants thought that they will teach their culture to their

children to transfer it. 2 of 12 males and 1 of 9 female participants thought they will send their children to Turkish schools to transfer their culture to them. 2 of 12 male participants thought to be role model to transfer their culture to their children. Finally 1 of 12 male participants thought that he can do everything to transfer his culture to his children. The result is not surprising. Participants thought to use the ways which their parents used it to transfer their culture to them: teaching, sending Turkish schools or being role model.

On the other hand 6 of 9 female participants thought that they will marry to someone from the same culture to transfer Turkish culture to their children. As mentioned above, fathers are still the head of family in Turkish culture. That's why most of female participants thought that marrying to someone is the solution to transfer the culture.

CONCLUSION

Intercultural relations have sharply increased after globalisation. Consequently cultural awareness has increased as well. However living or working with someone from different culture who practices his/her cultural behaviours and understanding in daily life is not tolerated by others who come from same culture. Although multiculturalism is supported and even it is legislated by governments, less or more people from different cultures are treated differently as long as he/she assimilate his/her culture. Therefore migrant people mostly live together and they are closed to the society. Nonetheless their children who have to be together with people from other cultures in school or work or street etc. have to live in between and have become outsider of both cultures.

This paper examined to cultural understanding of Australia-born Turkish youth aged 15 to 25. It is surprisingly found that although they felt closer themselves to their parents' culture, they do not really know it. For example they prefer to not use the language because they don't feel confident themselves. Moreover they have not clear thought about the meaning of culture. They took their cultural understanding from their families however they just have superficial knowledge of the main elements of their culture. They are given some borders as cultural behaviours such as respect for older or serving to guests; however they are limited for just some occasions. They think culture is important nonetheless they cannot clearly express why? They enjoy some small advantage of their cultural choices; on the other hand they face the problems of become from different culture in their daily lives.

They want to transfer their culture to their children nevertheless their plan does not seem usable.

On the other hand there is an obvious difference between male and female participants and it is because of partly Turkish culture which is very keen to protect females. Furthermore it is partly because of the fact that: "Gender was also found to be related to psychological adaptation, with females generally showing poorer adaptation than the males." (Virta et al 2004)

To sum up; acculturation "refers to cultural maintenance (the importance of maintaining key aspects of the ethnic culture) and to cultural adaptation (the importance of adapting to key aspects of the majority group)." (To'th and Vijver 2003) Although it seems quite ideal, two main issues need to be solved:

More tolerance for migrant to practice their culture.

More effort to teach migrant children to internalize their original culture.

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