Factors Affecting Perception of Multiculturalism

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine individual's perceptions of multiculturalism, according to some demographic variables. A total of 899 people including 400 male and 499 female working in different occupations in the city centre in Isparta participated in this research. "Perceptions of Multicultural Competence Scale" developed by Basbay and Kagnici (2011) is used to identify multiculturalism perceptions of the participants. Frequency analysis in SPSS 22.0 software, Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal-Wallis H test are utilized in the statistical analysis of the data obtained from this study. At the end of the study, in the scale's sub-dimensions 'awareness' and 'knowledge', scores of the participants are found to be moderate. Female participants' level of awareness are found to be higher than that of males (p<0.05), on the other hand, it is observed that the scores of the participants in the same sub-dimensions there is no statistically significant difference in terms of their marital status (p>0.05). Besides, participants' perception of multiculturalism differs statistically significant in terms of their occupations and educational levels (p<0.05), and it is concluded that number of siblings is not an important determinant on the perception of multiculturalism (p>0.05).

Keywords: Culture, Multiculturalism, Socio-demographic structure.

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1.Introduction

The concept of culture is a science which exists on the basis of societies and dates back to the beginning of mankind. Cultural process is a whole composed of individual characteristics of individuals for themselves in the society and knowledge and experience they have gained over time (Gencer, 2011). Culture manifests itself in every aspect of people's lives, thus it is a phenomenon that cannot be limited to art, culture and literature. Cultural features are shaped by the experiences people bring from past to present (Ozkan, 2006). It is obviously seen that people in many countries have started to settle as refugees in other countries because of the ethnic conflicts, environmental crises, wars, economic rout and the repressive regimes.

When the process of globalization is added to the aforementioned elements, it is stated that a multicultural population consisting of families and groups from different cultures in many parts of the world has emerged (Temel, 2008). When the societies with multicultural population are analyzed, some communities could live together in a smooth way on the other hand; in some communities it appears to have conflicts and crises in various sizes (Gencer, 2011).

Multiculturalism refers to people with different ethnic backgrounds or different communities live together (Hazir, 2012). In multiculturalism, individuals with different cultural characteristics live under the same roof whilst they remain their own cultures (Kymlicka, 2010). Therefore, the concept of multiculturalism is considered as supra-national unity or non-national unity (Ozensel, 2012). High level of multicultural perception is significant for individuals with different religion, ethnicity, socio-economic status and gender to live free and equal in the society (Karacam & Koca, 2012). In the historical process, many multinational empires have defended pluralism and adapt to life in multicultural. (Gundogan, 2002). To exemplify; the Ottoman Empire and the Roman Empire had been the state of human communities lived together who were the members of different language, culture and religion (Vertovec, 2010). On the contrary, it is speculated that multicultural life brings such problems as social structure deterioration and dismemberment of the unitary state. In this context, it can be said that there are both positive and negative views on multiculturalism (Basbay & Kagnici, 2011). Besides, multiculturalism perception of each community may be different from each other. It is established in a research with Turkish and German participants that views on multiculturalism and the minorities living in their country differ greatly (Verkuyten, 2005).

There are two propositions for multiculturalism. First idea is that cultures come from different origins thus; people from different cultures cannot live together. According to this view, coming from different cultures it is a phenomenon which prevents people to fit into society. Second idea for multiculturalism is multi-ethnic society structure. In these premises, people with a different culture are dissolved in a so-called superior culture thus it is advocated that even if people have different cultural backgrounds they can live together in a homogeneous manner. According to this view, rather than the differences between people the principle of equality between them are considered (Canatan, 2009: 83). For the reason that the perception of multiculturalism is acculturized in many counties, people manage to live on equal terms even though they have different cultural backgrounds. For instance; in the Netherlands hosting 10 different human communities having different cultural backgrounds, each ethnic group shares the hours of television broadcast according to their numerical proportion. The country's national television system is run by two Protestant, one Catholic and a Social Democrat communication network. Due to these features, Netherlands is defined as fortress of multiculturalism (Tekinalp, 2005).

Although there is not a very significant ethnic difference between people living in Turkey, there are some sub-groups and are some sub-cultures in parallel according to social class differences, religious beliefs, customs and traditions, family structures and geographical locations in our country (Karairmak, 2008). The presence of different cultural structures in Turkey, has also prepared the ground for increased cultural diversity (Gencer, 2011). Because human communities have different cultural characteristics, their values and beliefs may be different from each other. From this viewpoint, it is important to establish the common culture that people share in terms of determining at which level cultural elements are adopted by the people (Turan et al., 2005). However, it appears to be limited research on people's perceptions of multiculturalism in Turkey.

Determination of the community's perception of multiculturalism in Turkey is expected to contribute to a better understanding on cultural perceptions that the societies have adopted. In this regard, in this study it is aimed to examine individual's perceptions of multiculturalism, according to some demographic variables.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

In this research, one of the most commonly used descriptive research methods 'cross-sectional survey model' is used. In this context, participants' perception of multiculturalism is tested once and the obtained data are interpreted.

2.2 Research Population and Sample

The research population is composed of individuals living and working in Isparta. The sample of this study consists of 400 male and 499 female living and working in different professions in the city center of Isparta. Only volunteers participated in the study and they are selected from the universe through simple random sampling method.

2.3 Data Collection

A questionnaire is used as data collection tool. The questionnaire consists of two parts and in the first part; Personal Information Form prepared by the researcher is used in order to determine demographic characteristics possessed by the respondents (gender, marital status, educational status, occupation, number of siblings). In the second part, there used a scale to determine the participants' perceptions of multiculturalism. "Perceptions of Multicultural Competence Scale" developed by Basbay and Kagnici (2011) is used to identify multiculturalism perceptions of the participants. The scale consists of 41 items and three subscales. 'Awareness', 'knowledge' and 'skill' are the three sub dimensions in the scale. In the development process of the scale, factor loadings of the 'knowledge' is ranging from .52 to .72, 'awareness' factor loading is from .35 to .68 and the last sub dimension 'skill' factor loadings are found between .34 to .75. 'Skill' refers to the individual's level of reflecting the expected skills in relation to the multiculturalism. 'Awareness' subscale reflects the situation of the individual's perspectives about different cultures. 'Knowledge' subscale not only refers to the individual's knowledge about both their own cultural characteristics and the other individuals around them but also the level of their aim to reach knowledge. In this research, only 'awareness' and 'knowledge' sub dimensions of the scale are issued, 'skill' sub dimension is not handled.

2.4 Statistical Analysis

The analyses of the obtained data are performed using SPSS 22.0 program. Before analyzing the data, it is examined whether they are normally distributed or not. As a result of analysis, it is observed that 'awareness' and 'knowledge' sub dimensions do not demonstrate normal distribution. Therefore, non-parametric analyses are used. While Mann Whitney U test is used to compare scores of the participants they have from the subscales according to their gender and marital status, Kruskal Wallis H test is used to compare the groups according to their educational levels, professions and number of siblings. Mann-Whitney U test is used as post hoc test in order to detect in which groups significant differences have emerged as a result of the analysis carried out according to the educational levels and professions. The significance level during this analysis is $p<0.05$. Frequency analysis is used to determine the participants' percentage distribution of the demographic information.

3. Findings

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Participants' Demographic Information

Variables	Subvariables	F	%
Gender	Male	400	44.5
	Female	499	55.5
Marital status	Married	171	19.0
	Single	728	81.0
Educational status	Doctorate Degree / Master's Degree	34	3.8
	Bachelor's Degree	346	38.5
	Associate's Degree	92	10.2
	High School	373	41.5
	Secondary School	54	6.0
Profession	Officer	99	11.0
	Employee	47	5.2
	Self-employed	51	5.7
	Tradesman	42	4.7
	Retired	12	1.3
	Student	648	72.1
Number of siblings	No sibling	61	6.8
	1 sibling	163	18.1
	2 siblings	254	28.3
	3 siblings	197	21.9
	4 siblings	111	12.3
	5 siblings	48	5.3
	5 +	65	7.2

When we examine the distribution according to gender, it is seen that 44.5% of the participants are male and 55.5% are female. The distribution according to marital status demonstrates that 19% of respondents are married while a large proportion is single 89%. When handled according to the educational level, 3.8% of the participants have doctorate or master's degree, 38.5% of them have bachelor's degree, and 10.2% have associate's degree, 41.5% of them graduated from high school and 6% of the participants graduated from secondary school. When analyzed in terms of their profession, it is observed that a large proportion of the respondents 72.1% are students.

Table 2. Mean scores of the participants regarding their perceptions of multicultural competence

Sub dimensions	N	Lowest	Highest	X	Ss
Awareness	899	32	74	54.80	7.271
Knowledge	899	13	41	28.29	5.878

When the table is examined, it is observed that participants' scores are at moderate level in the sub dimensions 'awareness' and 'knowledge'.

Table 3. Comparison of participants' perceptions of multicultural competence scores in terms of their gender

Sub dimension	Gender	N	X	Ss	Mean rank	Total Mean	U	p
Awareness	Male	400	53.66	7.153	407.91	163163.5	82963.5	.001
	Female	499	55.71	7.243	483.74	241386.5		
Knowledge	Male	400	28.44	6.057	453.00	181198.0	98602.0	.756
	Female	499	28.17	5.735	447.60	223352.0		

When the table is examined it is seen that the awareness of female participants is significantly higher than male respondents (p <0.05). However, it does not appear to be statistically significant differentiation in 'knowledge' sub dimension levels of the participants according to their gender.

Table 4. Comparison of participants' perceptions of multicultural competence scores according to their marital status

Sub dimension	Marital status	N	X	Ss	Mean rank	Total mean	U	p
Awareness	Married	171	54.56	7.363	450.10	76967.5	62226.5	.995
	Single	728	54.85	7.253	449.98	327582.5		
Knowledge	Married	171	27.69	5.926	420.90	71974.0	57268.0	.103
	Single	728	28.43	5.862	456.84	332576.0		

It does not appear to be statistically significant difference in 'knowledge' and 'awareness' sub dimension levels of the participants according to their marital status (p>0.05).

Table 5. Comparison of participants' perceptions of multicultural competence scores according to their educational status

Sub dimension	Educational status	N	X	Ss	Mean Rank	x^2	p	Between group difference
Awareness	Doctorate/Master's Degree	34	53.44	8.147	408.46	53.237	.001	1-2
	Bachelor's Degree	346	56.84	7.038	522.68			2-4
	Associate's Degree	92	55.46	6.851	475.90			2-5
	High School	373	53.23	7.041	392.42			3-4
	Secondary School	54	52.28	7.109	364.11			3-5
Knowledge	Doctorate/Master's Degree	34	27.91	6,147	437,06	23.027	.001	2-4
	Bachelor's Degree	346	29.40	5.756	498.92			
	Associate's Degree	92	28.46	5.762	457.09			
	High School	373	27.36	5.685	407.15			
	Secondary School	54	27.59	6.908	428.59			

When we examine the table, 'awareness' and 'knowledge' subscale differentiated statistically significant according to the level of their education (p <0.05). Differences in the subscale 'awareness' stem from the graduation differences among the participants that doctorate and master's degree graduates' scores are higher compared to those of high school and secondary school graduates and associate's degree graduates scores are found to be higher than high school and secondary school graduates. On the other hand, differences in the 'knowledge' subscale are due to bachelor's degree graduates' high level of knowledge compared to those of high school and secondary school graduates.

Table 6. Comparison of participants' perceptions of multicultural competence scores according to their professions

Sub dimension	Profession groups	N	X	Ss	Mean rank	x^2	p	Between group difference
Awareness	Officer	99	56.91	6.545	530.31			
	Employee	47	53.15	7.292	398.46			1-2
	Self-employed	51	53.33	6.927	397.17			1-3
	Tradesman	42	52.86	7.524	380.99	16.736	.005	1-4
	Retired	12	55.17	8.321	491.17			1-6
	Student	648	54.83	7.303	449.34			
Knowledge	Officer	99	28.30	5.791	454.22			
	Employee	47	26.85	5.838	379.84			
	Self-employed	51	28.18	7.858	441.13			
	Tradesman	42	28.14	4.714	442.79	7.277	.201	-
	Retired	12	25.00	7.071	318.38			
	Student	648	28.47	5.748	458.05			

When we examine the table, awareness levels of the participants according to their professions differ statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) and there is no statistically significant difference between their level of knowledge ($p > 0.05$). Significant differences in the level of awareness result from officers' high level of awareness compared to those of employees, self-employed, tradesman, retired and students.

Table 7. Comparison of participants' perceptions of multicultural competence scores according to their number of siblings

Sub dimesions	Number of siblings	N	X	Ss	Mean rank	x^2	p
Awareness	No sibling	61	54.80	7.926	447.43		
	1 sibling	163	55.86	7.271	484.06		
	2 siblings	254	54.37	7.189	436.71		
	3 siblings	197	54.59	7.723	445.03	3.690	.718
	4 siblings	111	54.87	6.533	449.23		
	5 siblings	48	54.50	6.652	445.13		
	5 +	65	54.51	7.237	438.93		
Knowledge	No sibling	61	28.05	5.436	432.33		
	1 sibling	163	28.48	5.610	459.02		
	2 siblings	254	28.23	6.070	448.77		
	3 siblings	197	28.63	5.668	459.58	3.765	.708
	4 siblings	111	27.38	6.232	417.44		
	5 siblings	48	27.94	6.393	437.60		
	5 +	65	29.02	5.835	484.48		

It does not appear to be statistically significant difference in 'knowledge' and 'awareness' sub dimension levels of the participants according to their number of siblings ($p > 0.05$).

4.Discussion And Conclusion

Participants' perceptions of multicultural competence scale scores are found to be at moderate level, it appears to be statistically significant differentiation in 'awareness' sub dimension levels of the participants according to their gender. According to the findings, the scores obtained from awareness sub dimension it is identified that female participants have higher scores compared to male participants and it is concluded that scores obtained from knowledge sub dimension do not differ significantly in terms of gender. Considering that awareness subscale is a field that indicates the attitude towards the different cultures of the individual (Basbay & Kagnici, 2011), according to obtained data it can be said that women have more positive attitudes towards other cultures compared to men.

In the relevant literature, as well as such research findings as the perception of multiculturalism does not demonstrate differences according to gender (Polat, 2012: 339) and on the basis of differences which participants get from the awareness sub dimension in terms of gender, it can be considered that these differences stem from the different nurtures of the women and men. Research findings in the related literature also support this view. In a similar research conducted on teacher candidates, perspectives of prospective teachers on cultural differences are found to vary significantly according to gender and it is established that diversity of culture that the students grew up in is likely to be effective on these results (Coban et al., 2010).

It is determined that participants' scores in the 'awareness' and 'knowledge' sub dimensions demonstrate significant difference according to their educational levels. According to the obtained findings, differences in the subscale 'awareness' stem from the graduation differences among the participants that doctorate and master's degree graduates' scores are higher compared to those of high school and secondary school graduates and associate's degree graduates scores are found to be higher than high school and secondary school graduates. In other respects, differences in the 'knowledge' subscale are due to bachelor's degree graduates' high level of knowledge compared to those of high school and secondary school graduates.

In the developing and changing world even if multiculturalism is perceived as threat to disrupt the unity and integrity and an element to cause division (Tekinalp, 2005) it is stated that diversity and differences is a kind of individual richness. Even, it is indicated that cultural diversity and differences become a source of nutrition especially in democratic societies (Gencer, 2011). According to the findings obtained in the study, perceptions and attitudes towards multiculturalism is high in favor of high level of educational status, it can be inferred that raising the educational level of the society is of vital importance for the creation of a society respectful for cultural differences .

It is specified that awareness levels of the participants according to their professions differ statistically significant whereas there is no statistically significant difference between their levels of knowledge. Significant differences is found in the level of awareness result from officers' high level of awareness compared to those of employees, self-employed, tradesman, retired and students. According to these findings it can be concluded that officers' attitude toward cultural diversity is at high level. On the basis of the participants' views related to awareness subscale is in favor of the officers when compared to other professions by dint of officers' high level of educational status than those of the other occupations. As a consequence, obtained findings in research according to education indicate that the increasing level of education shows that increased awareness of the scores from the subscales.

Individuals whose educational levels and professional status are lower than that of officers have low level of multiculturalism perception as a result of their lack of knowledge about multiculturalism. Research findings carried out in our country on multiculturalism as a modern concept recently (Ozensel, 2012) shows that our citizens' perceptions and views on multiculturalism are lower. In a qualitative research carried out with teacher candidates studying at Physical Education department, the question what the concept of multiculturalism means is posed to the prospective teachers and it is observed that majority of the students answer this question pivoting around such regional, ethnic, socio-economic and cultural characteristics. In the same study, it is concluded that none of the participants takes into consideration such factors as gender, disability, sexual orientation, language and age composing multiculturalism (Karacam & Koca, 2012).

It is determined that It does not appear to be statistically significant difference in levels of the participants according to their number of siblings and marital status. On the basis of the participants' multiculturalism perceptions do not differ according to their marital status, great differences (81% single, 19% married) in the proportional distribution of the participants is considered to be effective besides, their nurture in the regions with similar cultural characteristics can be efficient. In addition, on the basis of the participants' multiculturalism perceptions do not show difference according to their number of siblings can be based on the same reason.

As a result, gender, occupation and education level variables are specified as an important determinant of perception of multicultural competence. It is considered that on the basis of the participants' multiculturalism perceptions differ according to gender, male and female participants' upbringing in a different socio-cultural environment and their nurture can be effective. According to the findings obtained in the study, perceptions and attitudes towards multiculturalism is high in favor

of high level of educational status, it can be concluded that increasing the educational level of the society is of vital importance for the creation of a society respectful for cultural differences. On the basis of the participants' multiculturalism perceptions is not an important determinant according to their number of siblings can be based on the fact that their nurture is the same.

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