



Education Quarterly Reviews

Bozdağ, Faruk. (2020), Acculturation Orientation of Migrant Students. In: Education Quarterly Reviews, Vol.3, No.4, 578-586.

ISSN 2621-5799

DOI: 10.31014/aior.1993.03.04.163

The online version of this article can be found at:
<https://www.asianinstituteofresearch.org/>

Published by:
The Asian Institute of Research

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Acculturation Orientation of Migrant Students

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Abstract

Due to the intensification of global migration movements, the importance of studies in the field of acculturation has been increasing. In order to develop a healthy adaptation process between the migrant community and the host society, it is especially necessary to conduct studies on the acculturation processes of young migrants. Exploring the acculturation orientation of migrant students in Turkey, one of the leading countries experiencing the migration movements intensively, this study collected data from a total of 110 migrant students, 69 females and 41 males. “Vancouver Index of Acculturation”, “Revised Social Contact Scale”, “Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support”, “Turkish Proficiency Level Questionnaire” and “Personal Information Form” were employed as data collection tools. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to analyze the data. The analyses results revealed that the level of perceived social support of migrant students from their families and the quality of social contact significantly predicted their heritage culture orientation and explained 18% of them. In addition, the quantity of migrant students’ social contact and the quality of social contact significantly predicted their mainstream culture orientation and explained 25% of them. As a result, the present study put forth that in order to support the heritage culture orientation of migrant students, the perceived social support from the family should be improved, and the quantity and quality of social contact should be increased to reinforce their mainstream culture orientation and to facilitate the acculturation processes.

Keywords: Acculturation Orientation, Social Contact, Migrant Students, Social Support

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of migration, one of the most important issues in Turkey and the world lately, has affected and continues to affect the lives of societies at every period (Akıncı et al., 2015). The migration movement affects various components of the society and may cause problems related to adaptation in society (Apak, 2014). Beyond displacement, migration has a complex structure referring to a transition from one culture to another and from one social environment to another (Özdemir & Budak, 2017). As a result of migrations, individuals from different cultures come together, and the importance of relationships between individuals increases in the changing social structure. The interaction between migrants and host society members brings along the process of cultural change (Akıncı et al., 2015). Acculturation refers to individuals from different cultures coming together and interacting and thus having changes in their feelings, thoughts and behaviors (Berry, 1999; Gordon, 1964; Kim et al., 2001; Sam, 1992).

Although the studies in the field of acculturation have a long history (Gordon, 1964; Gillin & Raimy, 1940; Thurnwald 1932), it has become one of the most important and interesting topics with the increase of migration movements on a global scale (Castro & Rudmin, 2017). Turkey has always been one of the countries where migration movements were intensely encountered. Also, in recent years, there has been an intense influx of refugees due to political unrest and war in neighboring countries. Indeed, at the present, Turkey is one of the countries hosting the highest number of migrants in the world (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2020). It is believed that it is important to examine the acculturation process of migrants in Turkey. With the studies conducted in this direction in Turkey, contributions will be made to the development process of healthy relationships between the member of the host society and the migrant communities and to the integration process.

Migrants develop different orientations during the acculturation process. Berry et al. (1987) stated that ethnic and cultural minority groups in the multicultural societies formed after migration, basically seek answers to two questions. The first question is about “whether to maintain the ethnic identity or not” and the second is about “whether to be actively included in the mainstream culture or not”. In the process of acculturation, migrants are faced with the questions of “Is maintaining my cultural heritage valuable?” and “Is maintaining relationships with other groups valuable?”. Their acculturation processes are shaped in line with their answers to these questions. When they maintain their heritage, their “heritage culture orientation” develops, and when they adopt the mainstream culture, their “mainstream culture orientation” develops. Furthermore, different acculturation strategies such as assimilation, separation, integration and marginalization may come to the fore based on these two acculturation orientations (Berry, 1990; 1997).

As a result of migrations, people’ desire to live together develop with the adaptation process. However, this process can sometimes bring along maladjustments and conflicts, and intercultural communication may be disrupted. Solving such problems is among the priorities of many countries. It is especially important for migrant students to integrate with the society (Akıncı et al., 2015). In this respect, various studies internationally (Berry et al., 2006; Berry and Sabatier, 2010a, 2010b, 2011; Goforth et al., 2014; Virta et al., 2004) and in Turkey (Akdeniz, 2018; Bozdağ, 2020; Tunay-Aytekin, 2018) were conducted. However, these studies generally addressed the associations between the acculturation strategies of migrant adolescents, and their psychological and sociocultural adaptation. Only the study conducted by Goforth et al. (2014) explored the various variables (age, sex, religiosity and length of stay in the United States) predicting the heritage and mainstream orientations. Therefore, it is believed that it is important to examine the factors affecting the heritage and mainstream orientations of the migrant students in more detail. Thus, this study examined whether migrant students’ perceived social support from their families, friends and significant other, their quantity and quality of social contact, their level of Turkish proficiency and their duration of residence in the Turkey predict their heritage and mainstream orientations. With the results to be obtained, contribution to the theory and practice studies on the acculturation processes of migrant adolescents is aimed.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

Exploring the variables predicting the acculturation orientations of migrant students in Turkey, this study employed the which tries to determine the predictors of acculturation orientations of the correlational design. In the correlational model, the degree and direction of the changes between the variables in the study are determined (Fraenkel et al., 2011).

2.2 Study Group

The study group consisted of a total of 110 students, 69 females and 41 males, who migrated from Afghanistan, Iraq, Qatar, Libya, Lebanon, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Jordan and Yemen. The mean age of the participating migrant students was 18.23. While 75% of them stated that they came to Turkey because of war in their country, most of the remainder stated that they migrated due to family reasons and education. The years they had been

residing in Turkey varied between 1-7 years. 18% of the participants were attending middle schools, whereas 82% of them were attending high schools. 88% of them stated that they were economically from very low income families.

2.3 Data Collection Tools

In order to collect the study data, “Personal Information Form”, “Vancouver Index of Acculturation”, “Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support”, “Revised Social Contact Scale” and “Turkish Proficiency Level Questionnaire” were used. “Personal Information Form” and “Turkish Proficiency Level Questionnaire” were developed by the researcher. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the Turkish Proficiency Level Questionnaire was calculated as .82.

Based on a two-dimensional approach in acculturation, Vancouver Index of Acculturation was developed by Ryder et al. (2000). The index consists of two subscales, namely heritage culture and mainstream culture. Turkish and Arabic adaptation of the index was made by Bozdağ and Bilge (2019a). In the present study, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of the index was .84 for heritage culture and .87 for mainstream culture.

The Revised Social Contact Scale was adapted from the “Social Contact Scale”, developed by Islam and Hewstone (1993), to Turkish by Akbaş (2010). The validity and reliability analyses of the revised scale for the sample of refugee children were conducted by Bozdağ and Bilge (2019b). In the present study, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of the scale was calculated as .88 for the frequency of social contact and .75 for the quality of social contact.

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support was developed by Zimet et al. (1988) to determine individuals’ level of perceived social support. The scale was adapted to Turkish by Eker and Arkar (1995). In this study, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of the scale was found as .84 for perceived social support from family, .83 for perceived social support from a friend, and .85 for perceived social support from significant other.

2.4 Data Analysis

The study data were analyzed through SPSS 25. Multiple linear regression analysis was performed as the analysis technique. The upper limit of the margin of error was accepted as .05. For the multiple linear regression analysis, first, basic assumptions were checked. For this purpose, sample size, univariate and multivariate outliers, normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, multicollinearity and independence of errors were examined (Hair et al., 2014). In the data set, two univariate outliers were determined, whereas multivariate outliers were not determined. Since no significant difference was observed in the analysis results when the two univariate outliers were removed, these values were not removed from the data set in order to avoid data loss. It was determined that the sample size (110) was sufficient in line with the criterion presented by Tabachnick and Fidell (2012) [$n \geq 50 + 8m$ (m is the number of independent variables, since there were seven independent variables in this study, the calculated sample size is 106)]. Skewness coefficients varied between -1.43 and .10, and kurtosis coefficients varied between -.99 and 1.74. The fact that the skewness and kurtosis coefficients were between +2 and -2 indicated that the normality assumption was met (George & Mallery, 2010). Also, the scatter plots of the residuals were examined for the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity, and it was determined that these assumptions were met. The fact that correlation coefficient between the variables was below .90 (Field, 2009), the VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) value was less than 10, and the TV (Tolerance Value) was greater than .10 (Hair et al., 2014) indicated that there was no multicollinearity problem.

Bivariate correlations between variables varied between -.14 and .65. The VIF values of independent variables were between 1.15 and 2.06, and the TV values were between .49 and .87. Therefore, there was no multicollinearity problem. Durbin-Watson value should be around 2 for the errors to be independent from each other (Field, 2009). As the Durbin-Watson value for the dependent variable was 1.92 for heritage culture and 2.26 for mainstream culture, all the assumptions for multiple linear regression analysis were met.

3. Results

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were determined to reveal the relationships between the heritage culture orientation and mainstream culture orientation of migrant students, and independent variables. The analysis results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of analysis of correlation between dependent and independent variables

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Heritage culture orientation	47.03	11.57	-								
2. Mainstream culture orientation	44.97	12.99	.29**	-							
3. Quantity of social contact	15.36	5.67	.08	.43**	-						
4. Quality of social contact	17.51	4.56	-.14	.37**	.29**	-					
5. PSS from friends	18.81	6.79	.27**	.06	.09	.07	-				
6. PSS from family	22.09	6.07	.32**	.03	.06	.10	.49**	-			
7. PSS from significant other	20.83	7.07	.25**	.14	.18	.11	.65**	.54**	-		
8. Turkish proficiency level	14.54	3.54	-.04	.22*	.57**	.17	.21*	.06	.09	-	
9. Duration of residence in Turkey	4.07	1.74	.02	.21*	.38**	.31**	.11	.11	.16	.37**	-

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, $N = 110$, PSS: Perceived social support

As seen in Table 1, there were positive significant relationships between heritage culture orientations of migrant students, and their perceived social support from family ($r = .32$, $p < .01$), from friends ($r = .27$, $p < .01$), and from significant other ($r = .25$, $p < .01$). Furthermore, positive significant relationships between mainstream culture orientation of migrant students, and quantity of social contact ($r = .43$, $p < .01$), quality of social contact ($r = .37$, $p < .01$), Turkish proficiency level ($r = .22$, $p < .05$), and duration of residence in Turkey ($r = .21$, $p < .05$) was found. Multiple linear regression analysis was performed to determine the variables that predict the heritage culture orientations of migrant students. The analysis results are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Multiple regression analysis results for predicting the heritage culture orientations of migrant students

Predictor variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Constant	41.59	6.44	
Quantity of social contact	.41	.24	.20
Quality of social contact	-.55	.24	-.22*
Perceived social support from friends	.29	.21	.17
Perceived social support from family	.49	.21	.26*
Perceived social support from significant other	-.01	.21	-.01
Turkish proficiency level	-.57	.38	-.18
Duration of residence in Turkey	.21	.68	.03
R		.43	
R ²		.18	
ΔR^2		.13	

* $p < .05$, $N = 110$

As seen in Table 2, the perceived social support from the family ($\beta = .26$, $t(102) = 2.37$, $p < .05$) and quality of social contact ($\beta = -.22$, $t(102) = -2.23$, $p < .05$) predicted heritage culture orientations of migrant students, respectively. These two variables explained 18% ($R^2 = .18$, $F(7,102) = 3.22$, $p < .01$) of the heritage culture orientations of migrant students. As the level of perceived social support from the family increased and the quality of social contact decreased, migrant adolescents preferred heritage culture orientation. Quantity of social contact, perceived social support from friend and significant other, Turkish proficiency level and the duration of residence in Turkey did not significantly predict the heritage culture orientations of migrant students.

Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the variables predicting the mainstream culture orientations of migrant students. The analysis results are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Multiple regression analysis results for predicting the mainstream culture orientations of migrant students

Predictor variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Constant	20.87	6.90	
Quantity of social contact	.82	.26	.36*
Quality of social contact	.76	.26	.27*
Perceived social support from friends	-.03	.23	-.01
Perceived social support from family	-.13	.22	-.06
Perceived social support from significant other	.17	.23	.09
Turkish proficiency level	-.14	.41	-.04
Duration of residence in Turkey	-.001	.73	.000
R		.50	
R ²		.25	
ΔR^2		.20	

* $p < .01$, $N = 110$

As seen in Table 3, the quantity of social contact ($\beta = .36$, $t(102) = 3.24$, $p < .01$) and quality of social contact ($\beta = -.227$, $t(102) = -2.91$, $p < .01$) predicted mainstream culture orientations of migrant students, respectively. These two variables explained 25% ($R^2 = .25$, $F(7,102) = 4.95$, $p < .001$) of the mainstream culture orientations of migrant students. As the quantity and quality of social contact increased, migrant adolescents preferred mainstream culture orientation. Perceived social support from family, friend and significant other, Turkish proficiency level and the duration of residence in Turkey did not significantly predict the mainstream culture orientations of migrant students.

4. Discussion

Examining the acculturation orientations of migrant students, this study aimed to mainly determine the factors affecting the heritage and mainstream culture orientation. According to the study findings, as the migrant students' perceived social support from family, friend and significant other increases, these students prefer heritage culture orientation. Also, as the quantity and quality of social contact, Turkish proficiency level and duration of residence in Turkey increase, they prefer mainstream culture orientation. The acculturation process is shaped by both intra-group and inter-group relationships (Mohanty et al., 2018). When migrant adolescents arrive in the host society, they are likely to experience some psychological problems, as there is not enough contact with the new culture yet (Furnham & Bochner, 1982). Because of the sudden life changes at this stage, they can access less resources and social support (Briones et al., 2010). For this reason, the perceived social support especially from their close environment (family, friend and significant other) reinforces their heritage culture orientation. In addition, with the passage of time, more exposure to new culture reinforces heritage culture orientation. Learning the language of the host society and increase in the duration of residence in the host society positively affect the life satisfaction of migrant adolescents in the host society. The more time spent in the new culture, the easier it is to acquire a second language (Briones et al., 2010). Also, language acquisition affects the social contacts of migrant adolescents. The study conducted by Mercan-Uzun and Bütün (2016) determined that Syrian migrant children were subjected to social isolation and their problems increased because of not knowing Turkish. As the Turkish language proficiency of young migrants in Turkey improves and length of their stay increases, their marginalization (rejecting both cultures, rejecting heritage culture and rejecting mainstream culture) orientations also decrease (Balcı & Ögüt, 2019). Therefore, it is especially important to develop linguistic skills of migrant students as these skills play a key role in their social contacts.

According to another finding of the present study, the level of perceived social support from the family and the quality of social contact significantly predict the heritage culture orientations of migrant students. Accordingly, as the level of perceived social support from the family increases and as their quality of social contact decreases, migrant adolescents prefer heritage culture orientation. Furthermore, the quantity of social contact and the quality of social contact significantly predict the mainstream culture orientation of migrant students. As their quantity of social contact and quality of social contact increase, migrant adolescents prefer mainstream culture orientation. It

is also important to ensure that migrant children maintain their heritage and maintain ties with their past, as well as helping them adapt to the society they are in through interaction and thus preventing them feeling like strangers (Sever, 2020). At this point, the importance of the family comes to the fore. Family origins are one of the determining factors in the social integration process of young migrants (Akıncı et al., 2015). In the psychosocial adaptation process, the social support migrant adolescents receive from their families and close environment enables this process to proceed in a healthier way (Gülmez & Öztürk, 2018; Karataş, 2019). The adaptation process becomes easier with the increase of psychosocial support provided by the family (Gülmez & Öztürk, 2018). Similarly, the present study determined that the migrant adolescents' perceived social support from their families helps them maintain their heritage. On the other hand, migrant families may also have fears about their children being assimilated (Bal & Arzubagia, 2014). Families do not prefer their children to forget their culture and adopt the mainstream culture completely. In this context, the importance of the support migrant families provide to their children increases even more. Deprived of adequate support, migrant adolescents may drift apart from their family roots and become alienated to their own culture.

Migrants tend to maintain their heritage in their private lives, often with their families and ethnic communities. In areas where they interact with people from the host society, they try to adapt to the mainstream culture (Berry, 1997). The adaptation of migrant adolescents to the mainstream culture and their general mainstream culture orientation vary depending on how they are perceived by the host society and how they are treated (Mohanty et al., 2018). According to the study conducted by Briones et al. (2010), ethnic discrimination faced by migrant adolescents decreases their life satisfaction in the host society. Although individual, intergroup and contextual factors directing the acculturation processes of the host society and migrants are emphasized, social contact stands out among these factors (Perez-Moreno et al., 2014). Perez-Moreno et al. (2014) stated the level of prejudice against migrants in the host society is associated with the acculturation orientation of migrants and that social contact affects the prejudiced attitudes towards migrants (Perez-Moreno et al., 2014). Social contact with the members from the out-group under certain conditions improves intergroup relationships. Thanks to social contact, stereotypes and prejudices towards the out-group decrease and the perception of similarity with the out-group increases (Pettigrew, 1986). According to the present study, the lack of qualified social contact between migrant adolescents and the host society causes migrant adolescents to gravitate towards their own group and not to establish a relationship with the out-group. On the other hand, increased quantity and quality of social contact enables migrant adolescents to gravitate towards the mainstream culture and thus to develop intergroup relationships. Social contact between the migrant community and the host society is effective in preventing possible problems and in the healthy progress of the acculturation process. Social networks of migrant adolescents can develop through social contact. Social networks allow migrants to be in contact with family members and friends from their heritage, to establish relationships with the host society members and to achieve social adaptation (Avolonto, 2019). The positive attitudes of the host society towards migrant adolescents maintaining their heritage improve the contact of migrant adolescents with the members of the host society, thus accelerating the integration process. The mismatch between the acculturation orientations of the host society and the migrant adolescents can lead to intergroup conflict, discrimination, weakening of group communication and a decrease in the well-being of migrants (Matera et al., 2018). Therefore, the migrant adolescents need to maintain their heritage on the one hand, and gravitate towards the mainstream culture on the other. As a matter of fact, various studies (Sam, 2000, Ward, 2006) determined that a strong identification with both acculturation orientations is associated with psychological well-being.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, it is important for the host society member give social support to the migrant adolescents trying to psychologically and culturally adapt to the host society (Karataş, 2019) based on an acceptance and adaptation understanding in order to reduce the stress that migrant adolescents can experience (Karataş & Baloğlu, 2019). The present study revealed that in order to support the heritage culture orientations of migrant students, their perceived social support from the family should be improved, and the quantity and quality of social contact should be increased in order to reinforce their mainstream culture orientations and facilitate the acculturation processes. The most important factor for a qualified social contact is the positive attitude and behavior of the host society members towards migrant adolescents.

6. Limitations and Recommendations

The relatively low number of participants whom the data collected from in the study can be considered as a limitation in terms of the generalizability of the study results. It should also be kept in mind that this study is a cross-sectional study, therefore it does not provide a framework for how the acculturation orientations of migrant students developed over time. Similarly, it should not be overlooked that the participants were mostly migrant adolescents from Arab countries, so the findings should be assessed in this context. In future research, data can be collected from different migrant groups and comparisons can be made about the acculturation process of migrant adolescents. In this study, the effect of the family, and the quantity and quality of social contact in the acculturation process of migrant adolescents was revealed. Various studies can be conducted on the differences in acculturation orientations between migrant families and their children, and their psychosocial consequences. In addition, research can be conducted to develop the qualified social contact between migrant adolescents and host society members.

Acknowledgments

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article. The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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Notes

This study was presented in the VIIth International Eurasian Educational Research Congress (EJER) in Eskişehir, Turkey on 10-13 September 2020

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