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Cultural Comparison of University Students in Entrepreneurial Intentions, Creativity, and Emotional Intelligence: An Example of the USA and Turkey

Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Girişimcilik Niyetlerinin, Yaratıcılıklarının ve Duygusal Zekâlarının Kültürel Olarak Karşılaştırılması: ABD ve Türkiye Örneği

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Öz

İnsan kaynağının sağladığı katma değer, ülkelerin refah düzeyini önemli ölçüde etkilemektedir. İnsan kaynaklarının yetiştirilmesinde en önemli unsurlardan birisi ise eğitimdir. Eğitim sistemlerinin başarısı, yetiştirilen bireylerin niteliklerine bağlıdır. Özellikle girişimcilik niyeti, yaratıcılık, duygusal zekâ gibi kavramlar, eğitimden ve toplumsal kültürden etkilenebilir. Bu unsurlar, doğuştan sahip oldukları yeteneklere bağlı olarak bireyler arasında farklılıklar gösterebilir. Ancak iyi bir eğitim, çevresel ve baskın olan kültürel faktörler, bireysel faktörleri de geliştirebilmektedir.

Bu nicel çalışma, Türkiye ve Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'ndeki (ABD) üniversite öğrencilerinin girişimcilik niyetleri, yaratıcılık ve duygusal zekâ düzeyleri açısından bir karşılaştırma sağlamayı amaçlamıştır. Bu kapsamda Türkiye ve ABD'de iki farklı üniversitede 799 öğrenciye anket uygulanmıştır. Verileri analiz ederken, yapısal geçerliliği elde etmek için doğrulayıcı faktör analizi ve ardından karşılaştırmalı testler yapılmıştır. Sonuçlar, ABD eğitim gören üniversitesinde öğrencilerinin Türkiye'de eğitim gören öğrencilere oranla duygusal zeka boyutlarından; problem çözme becerilerinin, duygusal farkındalığın, kişilerarası ilişkilerin ve bunun yanında yaratıcılığın daha yüksek düzeyde olduğu gözlenmiştir. Öte yandan, Türkiye'deki öğrenciler daha yüksek düzeyde özdenetim ve girişimcilik niyeti göstermiştir. Sonuçlar kültürel bir bağlamda tartışılmış ve buna göre öneriler sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Duygusal Zekâ, Girişimci Niyeti, Yaratıcılık, Yüksek Öğretim

Abstract

The added value of human resources has a significant impact on the level of welfare of countries. One of the most important elements of human resource development is education. The success of education systems depends on the qualities of the individuals they educate. In particular, concepts such as entrepreneurship, creativity, and emotional intelligence can be influenced by education and social culture. These elements may vary from individual to individual, depending on their innate abilities. However, a good education, and environmental and dominant cultural factors can improve individual factors.

This quantitative study aimed to provide a comparison between graduate students in Turkey and the United States of America (USA) in terms of levels of entrepreneurial intentions, creativity, and emotional intelligence. Within this context, we surveyed 799 students in two different universities in Turkey and the USA. In analyzing the data, we completed a confirmatory factor analysis to obtain structural validity followed by comparative tests. The results demonstrated that the students in the US university had higher levels in emotional intelligence dimensions of problem-solving skills, emotional awareness, and interpersonal relations as well as creativity when compared with the students in Turkey. On the other hand, the students in Turkey showed higher levels of self-control, emotional intelligence, and entrepreneurial intentions. The results were discussed within a cultural context and recommendations were provided accordingly.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, Entrepreneurial intentions, Creativity, Higher education

Introduction

The added value provided by human resources affects the welfare level of countries significantly. One of the most important factors in preparing human resources is education. The success of education systems depends on the qualities of the individuals prepared. In today's world, emotional intelligence is one of the important characteristics that human resources have. Emotional intelligence varies between individuals depending on competencies they are born with. However, a good education and environmental factors, particularly cultural factors that are dominant, can improve personal factors (Hong and Milgram 2008). Therefore, it is important to identify and compare the levels of emotional intelligence in different cultures and different education systems.

Creativity is another characteristic that provides added-value, and similar to emotional intelligence it is a characteristic that can be improved. Particularly in cultures where values such as risk-taking are dominant, the level of creativity is high. The concept of creativity has drawn attention from researchers in various fields. Ways to increase creativity is an important topic to study for researchers. For some, creativity reflects intelligence or problem-solving skill while some consider it as personality or a comprehension skill (Malaga 2000; Torrance 1990). On the other hand, there are studies in the literature examining creativity from cultural and societal perspectives (Argyris and Schön 1996). In this study, creativity is addressed from two different education systems and cultures, as well as with emotional intelligence which contributes to the field.

Another variable used in the study is the entrepreneurial intentions. It is difficult to develop for economies with a high number of individuals who do not have an entrepreneurial character and prefer a low-risk work life with regular salaries (Yanık, Timuroglu, and Naktiyok 2017). Individuals with an entrepreneurial mindset contribute to increase the level of economical wealth. Thus, one of the missions of education systems is to train individuals to increase their entrepreneurial mindset. This study compares the entrepreneurial intentions of students by focusing on emotional intelligence and creativity.

Theoretical Framework

Emotional intelligence is the capability of being aware of one's own emotions, being able to perceive others' emotions, and being able to manage information through emotional clues (Robbins and Judge 2012). Goleman (1995) emphasizes that emotional intelligence (EQ) is more important than intelligence quotient (IQ) and that lack of emotional intelligence may have negative impacts in many aspects of life from a person's personal life to their success in career, from societal relationships to health status. Goleman's position on emotional intelligence had drawn attention from researchers who had built several evaluation systems based on IQ and opened a new direction for research (Epstein 1998). Until the concept of emotional intelligence received interest, emotions were thought to impact cognitive activities negatively, that they do not possess any cognitive aspect, and should not be included in IQ tests (Salovey and Mayer 1990). However, modern theories on emotions emphasize that emotions provide information about individuals, others, and their environment, that they help with thinking and decision making, and they are understandable and predictable. Additionally, emotions follow certain rules and paths, and play an important role in thinking, decision-making, and other activities as they carry information (Caruso and Salovey 2004). Emotional intelligence is directly related to other cognitive skills and it can be developed and obtained through experience (Mayer, Salovey and Caruso 2004). Therefore, emotional intelligence may be closely associated with creativity.

Creativity is a concept that is commonly confused with entrepreneurship or innovation; however, it is different from innovation. Creativity is producing different approaches to solve current problems (Goodman 1995). Creativity is not only about presenting novel outcomes but also developing an understanding, perspective or result through making connections between two situations or concepts that seem very different (Jones 2004). Creativity and invention are components that emerge before innovation and needed for the occurrence of new ideas and ventures. It is a cognitive process consisting of a perspective including new and unique ideas. Creativity is a cognitive process that involves perspectives on new and unique ideas and realization of ideas through these

perspectives which require different skillsets. New ideas produced through creativity also need to be applicable (Freeman 1989; Reber 1985).

Creativity is a situation that leads to innovation while innovation is the expression of creativity (Barker 2001). It emerges from interactions between people and refers to making connections on a topic or concept between components that were not connected before (EU Commission 2009; Certo 2000). Creativity is essential for entrepreneurship and innovation to emerge. King and Anderson (1995) mention three foundations to increase creativity that are: (i) providing an encouraging environment for producing new ideas such as group decision models, (ii) providing the necessary education, (iii) changing the culture towards creativity. In alignment with these foundations, it is important to provide an environment for students in which they can work together in decision-making, discuss, and share their opinions freely to bring their creativity into the forefront. In addition to such environments, students should be trained for creativity and skilled individuals should be supported. Another factor to consider in encouraging creativity is culture. Values, beliefs, norms, and symbols in a culture should be adjusted to embrace creativity while those that prevent creativity should be changed.

Entrepreneurship refers to innovative activities that bring forward resources that contribute to welfare (Drucker 1985). Identification of an opportunity to create value and taking that opportunity by organizing necessary resources to achieve the desired results such as a product, method or organization provide the foundation for entrepreneurship. Innovation, risk taking, and bringing resources together in a unique way are the main components of entrepreneurship. There are two foundational components in entrepreneurship that are creating opportunities for innovation and creating value. Creating value through opportunities provided by innovation is within the scope of entrepreneurship which is realized by individuals with entrepreneurial mindsets. It is important to identify individuals with a potential for entrepreneurship. Grichnik, Smeja, and Welpe (2010) state that there are efforts to distinguish entrepreneurship from a cognitive perspective. It is not possible to distinguish such a complex concept from a single perspective. Individuals' inner worlds, their environments, the culture they belong to and the education they receive are thought to influence their entrepreneurial intentions. Therefore, it is important to compare the concepts of emotional intelligence, creativity, and entrepreneurial intentions in two different education systems that are Turkish and American.

According to the World Bank (2018), the United States of America is a developed country with a gross national product (GNP) of $ 62.580 while Turkey is listed as a developing country with a GNP of $10.380. Additionally, the structures of the two countries consist of different cultural characteristics in various cultural models. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to provide a comparison between students in these two countries in terms of emotional intelligence, creativity, and entrepreneurial intentions.

Methods

The research population consists of graduate students in two universities; one located in the state of Texas in the United States and the other in the eastern part of Turkey. The reason why these two universities were selected is that they have a student population close to each other in number. In order to increase the representation power of both universities, a gradual simple random sampling method was used to recruit participants. As a result, a total of 799 students voluntarily participated in this study with 399 students from the American university and 400 from the Turkish university.

The survey instrument used in this study to collect data consists of 4 sections. In preparing the questions related to entrepreneurial intentions, we were influenced by Kickul and D'Intino (2005), and Naktiyok and Timuroğlu (2009). The survey included 5 questions related to entrepreneurial intentions. In preparing the emotional intelligence scale, we were influenced by Salovey and Mayer (1990). The survey consisted of 4 factors that are problem solving, emotional self-awareness, interpersonal relations, and impulse control. We included 20 questions on emotional intelligence and 5 questions related to creativity in the survey. The survey responses were based on a 5-Likert scale. Additionally, we included demographic questions on three variables that are; gender, the programme enrolled, and time in the programme.

Results

In this section of the paper, we present the results of the confirmatory factor analyses of the variables, and the results of the validity and reliability analyses of the survey items on emotional intelligence, creativity, and entrepreneurial intentions. Additionally, t-test results are presented to provide demographic information and show the differences.

In this study, 399 students participated from the United States of America while 400 students participated from Turkey. The participation ratios of both countries are almost equal and are important for comparison. 342 participants were male (42.8%), and 452 participants were female (56.6%) while 5 participants preferred not to provide their gender.

16.8% of the participants are enrolled education, 5% in humanities and social sciences, 10.1% in business, 4.1% in nursing, 1.2% in applied sciences, 2.2% in math and engineering, 1% in media design, 9.2% in professional studies, 19.1% in pharmacy, 7.4% in optometry, 6.1% in physical therapy, 1% in osteopathic medicine, 6.8 in extended academic programmes, 10% in online programmes in the American university. The distribution of participants by schools in the Turkish university include 27.3% in economics and administrative sciences, 27.4% in engineering, 20.3% science, and 25% in education.

When the distribution of years of education is evaluated, it is seen that 46.1% of the students have been in the programme for less than 1 year, 30.9% between 1-2 years, 15.2% between 2-3 years, and 7.4% between 3-4 years, and lastly 0.4% have been in the programme for over 4 years.

Table 1. Comparison of the views on emotional intelligence sub-dimensions, creativity, and entrepreneurial intentions between the universities by country

Sub-Dimensions**	Country	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t	P(sig.)
PS	USA TURKEY	399 400	4.2802 3.9500	.422 .718	7.918	.000*
INTERR	USA TURKEY	399 400	3.9900 3.7325	.550 .734	5.606	.000*
EMOTSA	USA TURKEY	399 400	3.9604 3.8250	.509 .707	3.104	.000*
IC	USA TURKEY	399 400	2.8135 3.2240	.693 .778	7.865	.017*
CREA	USA TURKEY	399 400	4.0664 3.8931	.587 .755	3.619	.001*
ENTREP	USA TURKEY	399 400	3.3489 3.6115	1.090 .824	3.841	.000*

*: $p<0.05$,

**PS: Problem solving, INTERR: interpersonal relations, EMOTSA: emotional self-awareness, IC: impulse control, CREA: creativity, ENTREP: entrepreneurial intentions.

When the data were examined, PS (p = .000), INTERR (p = .000), EMOTSA (p = .000) were found to be significant in the three sub-dimensions of emotional intelligence. According to the results of the students enrolled in the American university, the levels of PS, INTERR and EMOTSA are higher than that of students enrolled in the Turkish university. On the other hand, the levels of impulse control of students in Turkey (p = .017) were

significantly higher than the students in the United States. Additionally, students in the United States had significantly higher levels of **creativity** (p= .001) than the students in Turkey while the students in Turkey had significantly higher levels of **entrepreneurial intentions** (p=.000) than the students in the United States.

Discussion

A total of 799 students from two universities, one in Turkey and the other in the U.S.A., participated in this study aiming to compare the levels of entrepreneurial intentions, creativity, and emotional intelligence. First, a confirmatory factor analysis was completed on the data that was followed by a validity test. Then, it was found that the scales had a higher reliability based on the Cronbach Alpha coefficients. Demographic information on participants and the t-test results showing the differences of variables by countries are presented.

Social scientists describe a system as an integrated structure that consists of certain parts which are interconnected and connected to the external environment in which they are located (Immegart & Francis 1973). The whole system contains different systems within, and the subsystems work separately and become part of the upper systems in relation. Systems can fulfil their tasks with the relationship of the subsystems with each other. Due to the open system approach, systems must be in contact with the environment they are in to survive (Stoner & Charles 1986). Therefore, education systems cannot be considered independent of the culture they are in and they are in constant interaction with the culture of the country where they are present. Thus, we provide a discussion of our comparison within the scope of cultural effects and recommendations accordingly.

According to the results of this study, the problem-solving levels of students in the United States are higher than the students in Turkey. The reward effect of reinforcers that follow certain behaviours depends on whether the person establishes a causal relationship between their own behaviours and reward. Reinforcer is perceived as a result of other powers, such as luck, chance or other people with power, when the person attributes the results of their behaviours on other factors rather than the behaviours which is called the "external locus of control." If a person perceives events as being dependent on their own behaviour or their own relatively continuous characteristics, this is called the "internal locus of control" belief (Rotter 1966; Erdoğan and Ergün 2011). In their research on Turkish Culture, Sargut (2010) stated that Turkish Culture encourages externality, that is, behaviour depends on luck, chance, or the influence of other environmental forces. However, studies show that people with high internal locus of control score higher in performance evaluation (Day et al. 2002) which is related to problem-solving skills. While extrinsically oriented people leave the solution to problems to chance or luck, internally oriented people increase their performance to solve problems. Studies have shown that people with an external control focus can also develop internally focused characteristics over time (Sargut 2010). Therefore, it is recommended that cultures with a high external locus of control should integrate a system that will encourage the internal locus of control in their education systems.

Geert Hofstede, a psychologist from IBM company, conducted an important study on 116,000 employees in 53 countries, which classified and revealed the differences between cultures. In this study, which included Turkey and the United States, it was concluded that culture can be explained in four different dimensions that are: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism-collectivism, and masculinity-femininity. Upon the criticism that his studies are focused on the Western culture, he added the long-short term orientation dimension to four dimensions (Kutschker and Schmid 2011). In his later studies, he suggested that the culture can be explained in six different dimensions by adding the indulgence-restraint dimension (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov 2010). The differences between Turkey and the United States for these six dimensions are given in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Cultural differences between Turkey and the United States according to the Hofstede Model.

Source: Hofstede Insights, (2023).

According to our study, the level of interpersonal communication, one of the sub-dimensions of emotional intelligence, was higher in students in the United States. As seen in the Hofstede model, tolerance is higher in the American culture which is thought to be effective in the high levels of interpersonal communication. Kaya (2015) determined that people with high interpersonal communication have high investment performance. Therefore, the dominant culture must produce values in a way that encourages interpersonal communication and reduces restriction.

The emotional self-awareness level of the students in the American university was higher than those studying in the Turkish university. The modern method of education advocates for directly educating the emotion instead of using emotion to educate (Goleman 1995). In addition, self-consciousness is a type of intelligence that can be developed (Mayer 1998). Universities should provide students with skills such as controlling their emotions, keeping their individual characteristics open to others and being open to criticism.

Unlike other emotional intelligence sub-dimensions, self-control is higher in students in Turkey which is closely related with the reflection of the culture in general. In the cultural distinction of Hofstede given in the figure above, while the American society tends towards individuality with a very high rate, Turkish society has collectivist cultural characteristics. In collectivism, the decisions of a group or society are more important than one's self. Relationships between individuals are very weak in societies with a high level of individualism and individuals only care about themselves and their nuclear families (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov 2010). Individuals who grow up in this culture are more focused on "me" rather than "us" (Yie and Bothello 2010). In collectivist societies, belonging to a community or a group and acting in accordance with the norms of the society or group prevails (Hofstede 2010). For this reason, because individuals in Turkish society with high collectivism cannot easily act against the norms of the society, self-control is high. Therefore, it is recommended to encourage behaviours such as team or group work to increase this emotional intelligence level, especially within educational systems of America.

When we look at the comparison of the creativity level, the creativity level of the students in America is higher. This difference stems from the predominance of determinism in Turkish society. As seen in Figure 4, Turkish society avoids uncertainty at a high rate. Creativity is closely related to taking risks. Deshpandé and Farley (2004) stated that creativity is high in adhocratic cultures where risk taking is dominant. Therefore, risk taking should be developed as a value in the dominant culture in order to increase creativity.

Lastly, the entrepreneurial intentions of students in Turkey are higher than the intentions of students in the U.S.A. As seen in figure 4, the power distance in Turkish society is quite high. Title, status, and formalism gain great

importance in societies with a high power distance (Sargut 2010). Students keep their entrepreneurial intentions high in order to achieve a good status in the future and to develop their economies and gain power. In a study sharing the data obtained by the Pew Research Center in 2011, it was found that 48% of people living in Turkey have low income (Kochhar 2015). Another study by the same centre in 2016 showed the low-income level in America as 29% and middle-income level as 52% (Kochhar 2018). Low-income people have to engage in vertical social mobility to be in the middle-income level, and one of the best ways of achieving this is to take initiatives. Thus, people in lower income groups in Turkey have held high entrepreneurial intentions. On the other hand, another way of vertical social mobility is through education, and therefore countries with a high proportion of low-income groups should be provided with good educational opportunities.

Limitations and Recommendations

In this study, two universities with similar student numbers were selected as samples. There may be places in different regions of the countries where people with different demographic characteristics and different income levels are concentrated. Therefore, it would be beneficial in future studies to select a large number of universities involving people from all income groups, where country-wide information can be collected. In addition, a comparison was made between a developed country and a developing country in this study. It is recommended to include data from underdeveloped countries or countries from different regions in future research. On the other hand, entrepreneurial intentions of the students were measured in this study. This does not mean that all students with intentions will be entrepreneurial and take initiative. For this reason, it is recommended that future studies should include those who have taken initiative after school as well.

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