

RESEARCH NOTE

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL COHESION SKILLS IN TURKISH IMMIGRANT CHILDREN OF PRIMARY SCHOOL AGE IN TURKEY AND SWITZERLAND

ADALET KANDIR

Abstract – *Immigration has social, cultural, political, demographic and economic outcomes that go beyond simply being a movement of changing locations. In particular, negative experiences during the post-immigration process affect the development of children and consequently their social cohesion. The survey reported in this paper was carried out in order to make a comparative analysis of the social cohesion skills of immigrant children of Turkish origin attending primary schools in Turkey and Switzerland. The population of the survey was composed of primary school age children of Turkish origin living in Turkey and Switzerland. The sample consisted (with $\alpha = 0.5$ and 5% deviation) of 351 children of Turkish origin aged 7 to 11. Of these children, 167 came from families that had immigrated to Turkey from the Balkans and were attending primary schools affiliated to the Directorate of National Education of Bursa Province in Turkey. The remaining 184 were emigrant children of Turkish origin attending schools affiliated to eight of Switzerland's twenty-six cantons. The Scale of Social Cohesion and Skill (SSCS), which was used for data collection, included the following three factors: (i) social cohesion; (ii) social disharmony; and (iii) limited social cohesion. Data analysis was carried out separately for each factor using graphical analysis and the Mann-Whitney U-Test according to their point average by taking into consideration the factors relevant to the scale. It was concluded that the social cohesion level of primary school age children living in Switzerland is higher than that of corresponding children living in Turkey. It was also determined that the limited social cohesion and social disharmony points of primary school age children living in Turkey are higher than the points of those living in Switzerland. In view of these findings, suggestions are made to the Turkish Ministry of National Education and universities regarding state policy.*

Introduction

Social life enables people to co-operate with each other and to solve their common problems. By living and interacting with one another, individuals influence the economic, social, cultural and administrative requirements of their societies.

Societies are dynamic structures and change is an important part of this structure (Ömeroglu, Kandır & Ceylan, 2006). An important indicator of social change is immigration. Members of immigrant families cut themselves loose from their existing environment and relations, and lose their previous social roles. They experience reduced feelings of belonging, efficiency and supervision. Experienced together, these disharmonies bring about problems of social cohesion. In particular, all the negativities experienced during the process of harmonisation with the society to which people immigrate affect the development of children and consequently their social cohesion (Türkyılmaz et al., 1998; Kagitçibasi, 2000).

As a result of immigration, children are confronted with a new natural and social environment. The resulting socio-cultural disadvantages that these children experience can permanently scar the development of their personality. Since children are at an age when they cannot protect themselves from negative external effects, they are influenced multi-dimensionally by immigration (Gökçe, 1996).

The feelings of lack of confidence, anxiety and helplessness that children experience are believed to play an important role in their social cohesion. Immigration can thus be seen as a situation that adds new problems to their existing ones. There is however limited research that focuses on this issue both in Turkey and internationally. Most studies focus instead on the cohesion of adults who have migrated from rural to urban areas or the effects of immigration on the physical development of children (Tezcan, 2000).

Putting forth children's social cohesion problems for consideration and focusing on possible solutions are important steps toward the development of healthy personality characters. For this reason, this survey also analysed the social cohesion skills of children at primary school age from Turkish families who immigrated to Switzerland from Turkey.

Method

The survey uses a screening model since the aim was to analyse the social cohesion skills of primary school children from families who came to Turkey and Switzerland by way of immigration.

Population and sample

The population of the survey comprised primary school children living in Turkey and Switzerland. It was decided that it would be appropriate to study a representative sample rather than the whole population due to time, accessibility

and control reasons. The resulting sample consisted of 351 children of Turkish origin. One hundred and sixty-seven of these children had immigrated to Turkey from the Balkans. They belonged to the Turkish minority living in that area. At the time of the study, these children were attending primary schools affiliated to the Directorate of National Education of Bursa Province. The remaining 184 children were Turkish immigrants living and studying in Switzerland. Their families had emigrated from Turkey to Switzerland for work purposes. At the time of the study, these children were attending schools affiliated to a number of Swiss cantons, namely, Bern, St Gallen, Basel Land, Basel Stadt, Aargau, Zug, Thurgau and Tessin. Using a sample of 351 individuals was considered appropriate to represent the entire population (with $\alpha = 0.5$ and 5% deviation) (Çingi, 1994).

The study focused on immigrant children of Turkish origin living in Switzerland and Turkey, as these two groups share a common cultural background. In order to be able to observe the effects of immigration, the researchers only admitted in the study those children whose families had been living in the host country for at least 5 to 6 years. All children in the sample were in the 7 to 11 age group. All families were legal residents in Turkey and Switzerland.

Data collection instruments

Data was collected using the Scale of Social Cohesion and Skill (SSCS) developed by Ömeroglu and Kandır in 2004 (see Ömeroglu, Kandır & Ceylan, 2006), which had been tested for validity and reliability for use with primary school children. The SSCS has three factors spread over 32 items. Factor 1 comprises 16 items regarding Social Cohesion, factor 2 comprises 11 items regarding Social Disharmony and Factor 3 comprises 5 items regarding Limited Social Cohesion (Ömeroglu, Kandır & Ceylan, 2006). Revolved Basic Component Analysis, which was developed to evaluate the social cohesion and skill behaviours in children, was used in order to analyse the factor structure of the scale of 32 items given to teachers and parents. Before using the Basic Component Analysis, the appropriateness of the data for factor analysis was tested. Firstly, the correlation between each item was found. It was seen that the calculated correlations between item points were generally around .30. Secondly, the analysed Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was calculated to be .82. Finally, it was determined that the results of the Barlett Test ($\chi^2 = 2214$, $df = 76$, $p < .001$) proved meaningful. Based on these findings, it was concluded that the data was appropriate for factor analysis. The reliability of the scale item total point (Cronbach's alpha .90) was found to be fairly high (Ömeroglu, Kandır & Ceylan, 2006).

Data analysis

Data analysis was performed by graphical analysis according to the point averages, taking into consideration the factors relevant to the scale. In addition, the data was analysed separately for every sub-factor of the scale using the Mann-Whitney U-Test to determine whether living in Turkey or Switzerland had a measurable effect on the social cohesion and skills of immigrant children.

Results

The findings of the study regarding the social cohesion and skills of primary school children living in Turkey and Switzerland are summarised in the figures and tables below.

FIGURE 1: Comparison of the results obtained on the factor of Social Cohesion

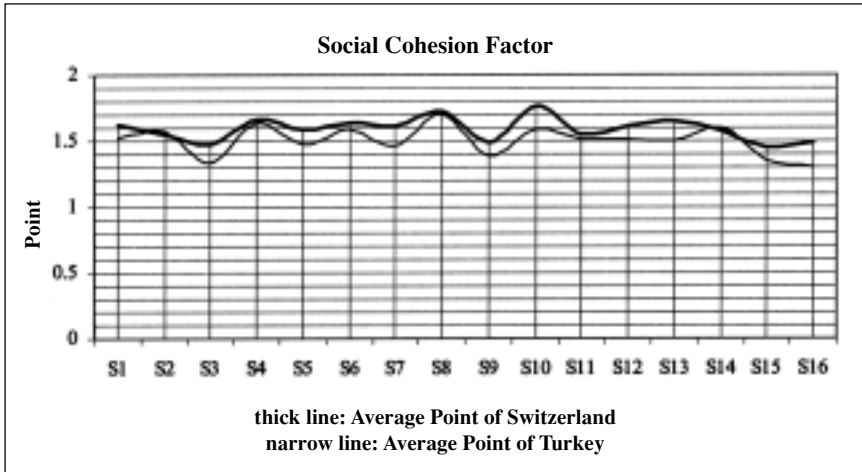


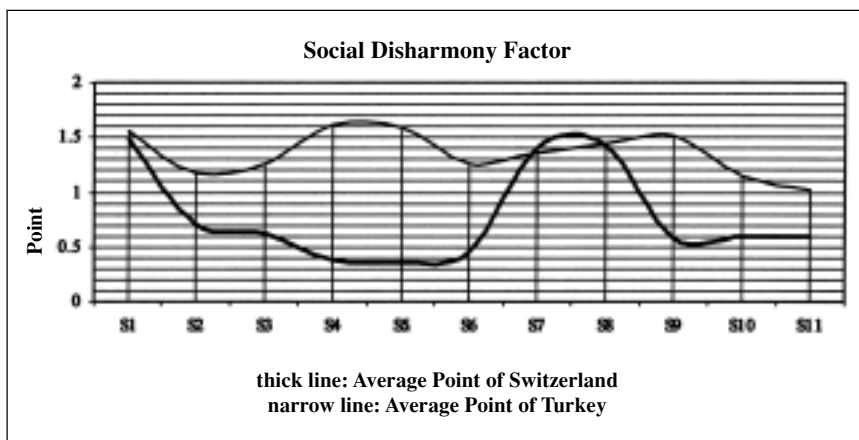
Figure 1 shows that the Social Cohesion level average for immigrant primary school children living in Turkey and Switzerland fluctuates around 1.55. At the same time, the points of the immigrant Turkish children living in Switzerland are higher than those of the immigrant children living in Turkey on all items of the factor of Social Cohesion. It can also be observed that the increases and decreases along the two curves representing the factor of Social Cohesion almost run parallel to each other.

TABLE 1: Results of the Mann-Whitney U-Test regarding the factor of Social Cohesion

Social Cohesion Factor	Country	N	Average	Ranking Point Average	Total Sum of Ranking Points	z-value	p
	Switzerland	184	1.5900	187.08	34423.00	-2.152	0.031
	Turkey	167	1.5022	163.79	27353.00		

Table 1, which summarises the Mann-Whitney U-Test results, shows that there is a significant statistical difference on the factor of Social Cohesion in favour of the Turkish students living in Switzerland ($p < 0.05$).

FIGURE 2: Comparison of the results obtained on the factor of Social Disharmony



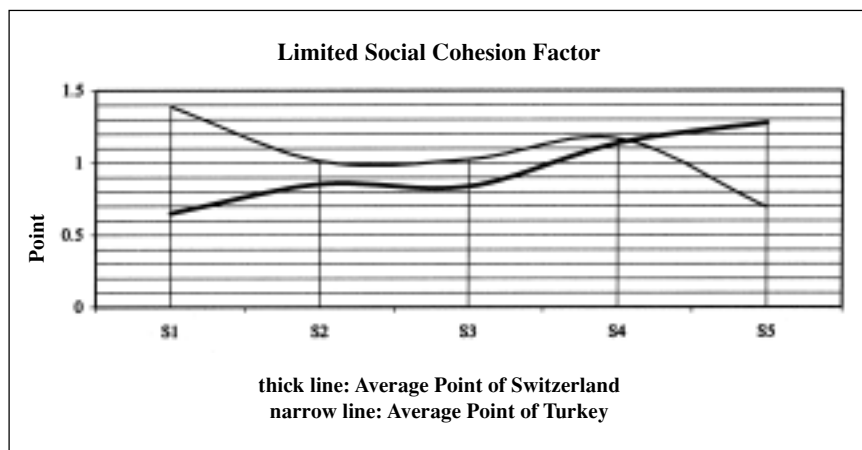
It can be seen from Figure 1 that the average of the factor of Social Disharmony for primary school children living in Turkey and Switzerland is around 1.05. The points of the immigrant children living in Turkey are higher than those of the immigrant children living in Switzerland for all the items of the factor of Social Disharmony. Whereas the results of the children living in Switzerland show an uneven progress, those of the children living in Turkey are more stable. It can be claimed that, generally speaking, the immigrant Turkish children living in Turkey tend to score higher than the immigrant Turkish children living in Switzerland on all the items of the factor of Social Disharmony.

TABLE 2: Results of the Mann-Whitney U-Test regarding the factor of Social Disharmony

Social Disharmony Factor	Country	N	Average	Ranking Point Average	Total Sum of Ranking Points	z-value	p
	Switzerland	184	0.7824	109.54	20155.00	-12.922	0.000
	Turkey	167	1.3615	249.23	41621.00		

Table 2, which summarises the Mann-Whitney U-Test results, shows that there is a significant statistical difference on the factor of Social Disharmony in favour of the immigrant Turkish students living in Turkey ($p < 0.05$).

FIGURE 3: Comparison of the results obtained on the factor of Limited Social Cohesion.



It can be seen from Figure 3 that the average level for Limited Social Cohesion of primary school children living in Turkey and Switzerland is around 1.00. Moreover, the points of the immigrant children living in Turkey are higher than those of the immigrant children living in Switzerland on most of the items of the factor of Limited Social Cohesion.

Table 3, which summarises the Mann-Whitney U-Test results, shows that there is a significant statistical difference on the factor of Limited Social Cohesion in favour of the immigrant Turkish students living in Turkey ($p < 0.05$).

TABLE 3: Results of the Mann-Whitney U-Test regarding the factor of Limited Social Cohesion

Limited Social Cohesion Factor	Country	N	Average	Ranking Point Average	Total Sum of Ranking Points	z-value	p
	Switzerland	184	0.9511	163.39	30064.00	-2.493	0.013
	Turkey	167	1.0575	189.89	31712.00		

Discussion

The aim of the survey was to analyse the social cohesion skills of primary school children who live as immigrants in Turkey or Switzerland.

The findings presented in Table 1 indicate that the Social Cohesion ranking point average for children of Turkish origin living and studying in Switzerland is higher than the ranking point average for immigrant children of Turkish origin living and studying in Turkey. Although both groups have similar family structures and socio-cultural backgrounds, and have spent almost equal time in their host country, it can be seen that the Social Cohesion level of immigrant Turkish primary school children living in Switzerland is higher than the Social Cohesion level of immigrant Turkish primary school children living in Turkey.

Immigrant children may be adversely affected by the education system in their host country. For instance, the education system in Turkey is not designed to accommodate the needs of immigrant children. Moreover, it is a rather centralised system. As a result, there may be conflicts between the education given at school in the host country and the cultures that immigrant children bring with them from their previous countries. This may lead in turn to conflicts between parents and these children. This can cause negative identity perceptions, development of lack of confidence and social disharmony in immigrant children (Hakan, 2003). This may explain the low Social Cohesion levels of immigrant Turkish primary school children living in Turkey.

An examination of Table 2 shows that the Social Disharmony ranking point average of children of Turkish origin living and studying in Turkey is higher than the ranking point average of children of Turkish origin living and studying in Switzerland. This suggests that the Social Disharmony level of immigrant Turkish primary school children living in Turkey is higher than the Social Disharmony level of immigrant Turkish primary school children living in Switzerland.

Kolaitis et al. (2003) examined in their survey the academic skills and social cohesion of 65 immigrant and 41 native Greek children aged between 8 and 12. The immigrant children had returned to Greece in the 1980s after living in the former Soviet Union. Kolaitis et al. (2003) found that the teachers described immigrant children as more anxious, more careless and socially more disharmonious than the native group. The children's families also confirmed this.

Immigration is one of the factors that affect social cohesion in its own right. However, when the host country presents difficult conditions and lack of facilities, social disharmony levels can be even higher. Since Switzerland is a rich and developed country, it has been home to many immigrants for a long time. The cantons in Switzerland strive to meet the needs of immigrants and value their integration in society. This may explain why children of Turkish origin living in Switzerland have lower Social Disharmony levels than children of Turkish origin living in Turkey. The underlying philosophy of the Swiss approach to immigration is that, apart from presenting problems of disharmony, it also enriches the host country.

Table 3 shows that the Limited Social Cohesion level of immigrant children of Turkish origin living in Turkey is higher than the Limited Social Cohesion level of immigrant children of Turkish origin living in Switzerland.

Hakan (2004) reports a survey by Takac in Switzerland that compared the harmonisation of immigrant children with others. This survey concluded that immigrant children were more anxious, aggressive and dependent than others. The survey also revealed that immigrant children have poor relations with their peers and their self-esteem seems to be lower than that of others. In line with Takac's findings reported by Hakan (2004), Table 3 shows that primary school children returning to Turkey after living in the Balkans display more borderline social behaviours than the immigrant children of Turkish origin living in Switzerland.

Suggestions

The survey found that the Social Cohesion levels of primary school children living in Switzerland are higher than those of primary school children living in Turkey. It was also determined that the Social Disharmony levels and the Limited Social Cohesion levels of immigrant Turkish children living in Turkey are higher than those of immigrant Turkish children living in Switzerland. Based on these findings, the following are some suggestions that can be made for Switzerland and Turkey:

- Switzerland has a huge number of immigrants and a sound immigration policy. However, the Swiss public may still be better encouraged to appreciate the

cultural enrichment brought by immigrants and to cherish their cultural differences. Activities may be organised to increase harmony between different immigrant groups.

- Research centres may be established in Turkey in order to identify the educational needs of immigrant families and their children. These may initially be established in cities that receive significantly high numbers of immigrants.
- The number of youth centres in Turkey should be increased and social cohesion studies should be undertaken for the benefit of teenagers and their families.
- Social cohesion centres should be established in Turkey to serve not only immigrant children, teenagers and their families, but also every individual in society.
- In-service training should be arranged for teachers to focus especially on the problems concerning social cohesion that immigrant children and families are confronted with in Turkey.
- School administrations should offer parent education and information meetings with the aim of facilitating the social cohesion of immigrant parents in Turkey. Additionally, social activities – such as, picnics, parties and trips – can be arranged in order to enable immigrant families to mix with local families.
- School administrations should arrange in-class activities, introducing the region's cultural features in order to promote respect for cultural diversity in Turkey.
- Teachers can rely on their observations and arrange in-class environments so as to facilitate socialisation between immigrant and local children in Turkey.
- Turkish non-governmental organisations should offer economic support to social cohesion centres by co-operating with state institutions.
- Universities should conduct research to identify the problems that children of immigrant families are confronted with. Social cohesion projects should be planned that offer implementation-oriented solutions in co-operation with the Turkish Ministry of National Education and non-governmental organisations.

Adalet Kandır is assistant professor in the Division of Early Childhood Education within the Department of Child Development Education, Faculty of Vocational Education, Gazi University, Turkey. Dr Kandır received her PhD in 1997 (Ankara University, Turkey) and has since published, both locally and internationally, in the fields of child development and education, preschool education programmes, peace education in preschool, and socially disadvantaged children and their education. Her e-mail address is: akandır@gazi.edu.tr.

References

- Çingi, H. (1994) *Sample Theory*. Ankara: Hacettepe University, Faculty of Science Publications.
- Gökçe, B. (1996) Immigration and methodological debates. In *II. Congress of National Sociology: Society and Immigration*. Ankara: State Statistics Authority Printing House.
- Hakan, S. (2003) A comparison of the perception of parent attitudes in Anatolian high school students and students returning to Anatolian high schools from overseas countries, *Journal of National Education*, Vol. 159, pp. 189-198.
- Hakan, S. (2004) A comparison of the concept of identity in Anatolian high school students and those returning to Anatolian high schools from overseas countries, *Journal of National Education*, Vol. 162, pp. 112-120.
- Kagitçibasi, Ç. (2000) *Cultural Psychology, Man and Family within the Concept of Culture* (in Turkish). Istanbul: Evrim Publishing.
- Kolaitis, G. J., Tsiantis, M., Madianos, S., & Kotsopoulos, S. (2003) Psychosocial adaptation of immigrant Greek children from the former Soviet Union, *European Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, Vol. 12(2), pp. 67-74.
- Ömeroglu, E., Kandır, A., & Ceylan, S. (2006) *The Project Report of Social Cohesion and Skills Analysis of Children at Primary School Age of Immigrant Families in Turkey*. Ankara: Gazi University Publications.
- Tezcan, M. (2000) *External Immigration and Education* (in Turkish). Ankara: Anı Publishing.
- Türkyılmaz, A., Çay, A., Avsar, Z., & Aksoy, M. (1998) *The Problems of Families that Immigrate from East and Southeast Anatolia*. Ankara: Family Research Institute Publications.