

A Quantitative Study on the Effects of School Development on Character Development

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Abstract—One of the aims of education is to educate individuals who have embraced universal moral principles and transform universal moral principles into moral values. Character education aims to educate behaviors of individuals in their mental activities to transform moral principles into moral values in their lives. As the result of this education, individuals are expected to develop positive character traits and become morally indifferent individuals. What are the characteristics of the factors that influence character education at this stage? How should character education help individuals develop positive character traits? Which methods are more effective? These questions come to mind when studying character education. Our research was developed within the framework of these questions. The aim of our study is to provide the most effective use of the education factor that affects character. In this context, we tried to explain character definition, character development, character education and the factors affecting character education using qualitative research methods. At this stage, character education programs applied in various countries were examined and a character education program consisting of Islamic values was prepared and implemented in an International Imam Hatip High School in Istanbul. Our application was carried out with the collaboration of school and families. Various seminars were organized in the school and participation of families was ensured. In the last phase of our study, we worked with the students and their families on the effectiveness of the events held during the program. In this study, it was found that activities such as storytelling and theater in character education programs were effective in recognizing wrong behaviors in individuals. It was determined that our program had a positive effect on the quality of education. It was seen that applications of this educational program affected the behavior of the employees in the educational institution.

Keywords—Character development, values education, family activities, education program.

I. INTRODUCTION

CHARACTER is the sum of all basic features that distinguish one person from another. Personality traits are unique to individuals.

The concept of character, nature, personality, temperament and value concepts are sometimes used in place of each other but each of these concepts has different meanings. The word 'nature' is defined as a trait that comes with birth, spirit, temperament, or a habit that is accepted because it is constantly being renewed [10]. Nature comes with birth and dies with the person. Character, on the other hand, has a structure that can be modified and improved. However, character cannot be considered independent of nature. Character is the improved and educated form of all traits that come with birth.

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The concepts of character and personality are also occasionally confused. Personality is the sum of features that distinguishes people from each other. An individual is required to be able to perceive and understand some concepts for the formation of human personality while character begins with birth.

The concept of value is often used instead of character education and creates the perception that both concepts have the same content. However, the concepts of value and character are different. While value expresses the tendency of people towards certain behaviors, character is the transformation of hereditary internal orientations into behavior. Character covers a wide range of contents, including the concept of value. For these values to be transformed into character, they should be acquired in the inner world of an individual and allowed to turn into behavior and transformed into natural faculties. The values that are settled into the spirit of the individual over time and the forms of behavior that emerge from these values constitute its character [5].

There are two dimensions of character. One of them is the moral dimension and the other is the non-moral dimension. Moral character is formed by the moral dimension. Moral character refers to the tendencies and behavioral characteristics that arise as the result of adopting and embracing moral values and behavioral styles of the community in which the person lives [4]. If the values and behaviors of the person are in accordance with the moral and social norms, the individual develops a positive character. If values and behaviors are not moral and do not conform to the norms of society, one develops negative character traits in the eye of the society.

For a person to be able to form a positive character, first moral behavior and then moral character traits need to be developed. Moral character consists of many factors such as genetic characteristics of the person, internal orientations, family, norms and values of the society they live and education.

Character traits of a person start from the prenatal period until the end of the adolescence period. Character development progresses through various processes. Individuals gain character traits within these processes, but these character traits can be negative as well as positive. Character education helps individuals develop many positive character traits in a social environment. Character education programs suitable for the developmental characteristics of children are developed in schools providing character education. An individual who receives character education is intelligent as well as having positive character traits, educated

and polite, well-informed and virtuous [9]. In schools where character education is provided, individuals respect the rights of people around them, and are responsible since they recognize citizenship and student rights.

The aim of character education is to ensure that social values are adopted by students and transform these into natural faculties by turning them into behavior. The right training methods and techniques must be applied for these values to be adopted and transformed into natural faculties. While applying the right methods and techniques helps children to develop positive character traits, wrong methods can negatively affect the development positive character traits as well as identity development. While instilling values during character education, wrong behavior should never be punished. Although the punishment method appears easy and solution oriented to adults, it can prevent the development of moral conscience. This is because punishment pushes individuals into externally-oriented behaviors. However, character education should transform internal orientations into behavior and make them continuous, ultimately turning them into character traits. Instead of punishment in character education, it is better for people to apply methods such as informing the results of negative behaviors, reinforcing positive behaviors and supporting empathy.

II. FACTORS AFFECTING CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

There are many factors that affect character. Character arises from the coexistence of behaviors as the result of factors such as heredity, family, education, and society.

A. Heredity

The characteristics transferred from individuals' parents through the genes are called hereditary characteristics. Genes that regulate the emergence of all features and the structure of the organism affect not only physical properties such as hair or eye color but also character traits such as intelligence and personality [6].

There are thousands of hormones encoded by different genes in a human body. These hormones cause different character traits to develop together with different variables such as quantity and structure of hereditary features. The effect of heredity on character indicates that character education begins before the birth.

B. Family

Psychologists and educators argue that human character is shaped in the first six years of life. Early childhood is therefore vital for the development of positive character traits. The child spends most of his time with his family during this period and constantly observes his parents. During this period, the family should help the character development of the child as a role model.

In early childhood, children cannot perceive the concepts of right and wrong because they cannot perceive abstract concepts. They shape their behavior according to the reactions they receive from their parents after they behave in a certain way. Parents' behavior should be as disciplined as

compassionate, and as tolerant as stimulating during this period, so that the child can create a stable and solid character structure.

No child is born aware of moral values. As a child grows and matures, he/she creates value judgments with what he/she sees from its surroundings. The family is of primary importance in the development of the child's value judgments. Family is the place where a child spends most of the time after birth and feels most comfortable. The family should always be a safe haven for children, a place of love and compassion, so that the steps of character development are well established. Parents should always be tolerant and stay away from insults or violence to help children develop their character. Parents should follow the child's internal orientations from a young age and direct them towards positive values. The family should make efforts to improve the feelings of conscience and empathy of the child [8].

C. Society

For an individual to develop positive character traits, the society he/she lives is as important as family and school. This is because individuals develop positive character traits in accordance with the value judgments of the society they live.

Lickona stated that the responsibility of providing character education falls not only on schools but on the whole society and expressed the responsibilities of the societies as follows.

1. Only virtuous people can support free and democratic government.
2. A good character is not formed itself.
3. A good character developed in the child is first the responsibility of the family. It is then the responsibility of society, schools, religious institutions and other groups serving young people.
4. Citizenship is only possible through effective academic teaching and character development.
5. Negative individual behaviors are reduced by effective character education. Academic success increases. Moral individuals are raised and become part of society [1].

D. School

One of the factors that influence character development is school. It is the responsibility of the school to help individuals develop positive character traits. Schools have two basic functions: one is to educate individuals who are academically successful, and the other is to educate individuals who adopt fundamental human values [3].

Societies organize and implement character education programs because raising individuals with positive character traits, which is one of the goals of every community, is consistent with educational goals.

In character education, the school should examine and determine the values of the society and strive to teach these values to the students and transforming them into natural faculties throughout the lives of the students. For the right character traits to become natural faculties and behavior, all school staff and parents should work together in collaboration. Character education should be organized in schools in such a

way that the values to be gained by formal and implicit programs will become a habit by addressing emotions of students while taking their mental development into consideration. Otherwise, character education is not possible in an environment that does not appeal to emotions, not turn into behavior and not become continuous.

Character education approach was first systematized by Thomas Lickona in the United States [7]. In this character education approach, schools and teachers are actively involved in teaching values. In this system, basic values that are accepted in the society are determined. Methods of transferring the determined values to the students in the school are taught to the school staff and parents.

Lickona divided the strategies to be applied in character education into school strategies and class strategies. Strategies to be implemented at schools include looking beyond the classroom; creating a positive moral culture in school; and ensuring that school, family and community work together. Through activities to be organized in a school, teachers should describe the school, society, good and bad behaviors in the surrounding communities to students in terms of morals and enable students to form opinions for these behaviors. Psychological methods and effective communication methods should be used in schools to help students develop positive character traits. Efforts should be made so that the school becomes a family with teachers, employees, students and parents that can agree on common values [7].

In Lickona Character education, teacher should be there as a mentor and consultant in class strategies. A moral community should be created in the classroom, and activities should be held to create ethical discipline. Conflict resolution should be taught to students. Cooperative teaching method should be used in value teaching and an integrated program should be applied. Teacher should improve the conscience of students and teach them to do their best. A democratic classroom environment should be established [8].

In character education, heroes are often brought to classrooms for examination. Students study character traits that are personalized in the hero [3]. However, this is only one function of schools. A day or a few days of examining heroes is not enough. School administrators, teachers, and staff should always be role models for students.

According to Lickona, Schaps and Lewis, there is not a single scenario for effective character education. However, there are some basic principles. They have identified eleven principles in effective character education;

1. Moral values form the basis of good character. Moral values should be emphasized in character education.

The task of the school is to promote moral values and to help students transform these into behavior in practice.

2. Character education should include the child's cognitive, emotional and behavioral dimensions.

Values should be instilled in a concrete manner into children who are able to understand concrete concepts.

3. The school should use an effective, comprehensive, and forward-looking character development approach.

Character education can provide positive outcomes over a

long period of time. Therefore, the values should be explained to the students in a comprehensive way in the applied programs, and time should be given to students to make them habits. In the meantime, students should be assisted in the contexts of character education.

4. The school should create a humane, compassionate community environment. Students can only form correct behaviors in environments where they feel comfortable and appreciated.

5. The educational institution should enable students to behave morally.

6. The school should offer an academic education where students respect teachers and each other, fosters the character of the students and helps them to succeed in every way.

7. The school should provide intrinsic motivation for the students. Intrinsic motivation should be enhanced in the school rather than an externally-oriented education. Moral goals should be determined, and students should be made aware of their feelings when they reach their goals.

8. All school staff should be part of a community of learning and ethics that share responsibilities and believe in the same values. Only people who share the same goals can be successful. While teacher acts as a guide for student in obtaining moral values, other staff working at the school should also act as role models for students with their behavior and life styles. Students are guided in an environment where everyone shares this responsibility.

9. The school should provide moral leaders both for the staff and the students in terms of character education.

10. Schools, families and community members should collaborate in character education.

11. The educational institution should absolutely evaluate character education programs [8].

III. EVALUATION OF THE EFFECT OF SCHOOL FACTOR ON CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

(A Study on Character Education in an Imam Hatip High School in Turkey)

Character education is carried out through formal and implicit programs within the formal education system. In addition to religion education for professional purposes, Imam Hatip High Schools are science and social high schools. Parallel to vocational religion education, these are given officially in the courses and implicitly given with activities.

Within the framework of character education, values common to Turkish-Islamic society were determined. Psychological methods related to the transfer of these values to the students were examined. Methods of narration were determined based on these methods considering the recommendation of the guidance service in the school. Integrated method was preferred in values education. The presentation method was used in value transfer and the collaborative method was used to transform values into behavior.

School and family cooperation was enabled in the

implementation of character education. Seminars were given to families within this framework. They were also informed about the system applied in the school. Families were encouraged to perform specific activities at home to instill these values. Articles, essays, and letters were sent to families related to the education topics of the students.

Cognitive-centered approach, affective-centered approach, behavior-targeted approach and storytelling, discussion, and demonstration methods were used in the application of character education.

Character education was prepared in accordance with the cognitive development of the students with the cognitive centered approach. Since high school students were able to understand abstract subjects, topics of good, bad, and justice were explained. At this level, the students were directed to find answers to the questions in their minds with discussion method and brainstorming.

The other approach we used in our character education practice was cognitive-centricity. Our goal was to combine values with young people's feelings. At this stage, cognitive-centricity was used to internalize cognition and behavior.

In our character education practice, a behavior-oriented approach was adopted so students could transform what they learned into behavior. Based on this approach, activities aimed at achieving positive character traits were carried out. The reason for behavioral approach to follow cognition and emotion is that system, behaviors performed by a person without his or her knowledge, will and desire do not express person or his/her behavior in the Islamic education.

In the story-telling method, moral values were explained to students in the form of stories they could understand. In the method of storytelling, students were enabled to identify themselves with the heroes in those stories. When the storytelling method was used, stories suitable for the Turkish-Islamic society were preferred.

People model what they see. Demonstration method was used for value transfer. For the use of the demonstration method, school employees collaborated with school administrators, branch teachers and school staff. Within the framework of this method, the individuals from the Turkish-Islamic society were selected and presented to the students.

IV. RESEARCH AIM AND TOPIC

The aim of our research is to determine factors affecting character education and examine the effects of school factor.

This study was conducted on students of Imam Hatip High School to determine the effects of a character education program organized in a planned and systematic manner. Gender, parental education status, and age of students were taken as variables.

V. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The implementation of the character education program helps students to develop positive character traits. Within the framework of this education, students become good citizens who respect their core values and develop fundamental

feelings.

VI. RESEARCH METHOD

In our study qualitative research methods were used, and the definition of character and character education practices were examined. A program was prepared by taking character education practices as an example. Within the context of this program, students and parents were informed about various educational methods and values.

Information about whether students turned this information into behavior was analyzed by descriptive analysis within quantitative research methods. At this stage, survey technique was implemented. Research population consisted of 260 students studying at Imam Hatip High School. Of these students, 130 were female students and 130 were male students.

VII. RESEARCH FINDINGS

A. Ages of Students

TABLE I
AGES OF STUDENTS

AGE (YEARS)	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
<14	5	1,9
14-15	103	39,6
15-16	100	38,5
≥17	52	20,0
TOTAL	260	100,0

Majority of the students participating in the research were in the 14-15 age group. It means students are at the beginning of adolescence. In our study, the number of students in late adolescence was lower.

B. Maternal Educational Status

TABLE II
EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF MOTHERS

	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
ELEMENTARY	83	31,9
MIDDLE	82	31,5
HIGH SCHOOL	69	26,5
UNIVERSITY	18	6,9
GRADUATE DEGREE	8	3,1
TOTAL	260	100,0

It was found that the maternal educational status of majority of the students studying at the Imam Hatip High School was in the elementary and middle school education level. The number of graduates of higher education was found to be low.

C. Paternal Educational Status

It was found that paternal educational status of most students studying at Imam Hatip High school were at the middle school – high school level. The number of higher education graduates were higher compared to mothers, but still low compared to other educational levels.

TABLE III
EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF FATHERS

	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
ELEMENTARY	51	19,6
MIDDLE	73	28,1
HIGH SCHOOL	89	34,2
UNIVERSITY	37	14,2
GRADUATE DEGREE	10	3,8
TOTAL	260	100,0

VIII. THE EFFECT CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICE ON MORAL BEHAVIOR

A. Evaluation Based on Age Variable

TABLE IV
IMPACT ON MORAL BEHAVIOR IN 14-15 AGE GROUP

	NUMBER
POSITIVE	66
NEGATIVE	4
PARTIALLY POSITIVE	23
NO IDEA	7
TOTAL	103

Fourteen to fifteen-year-old students, who constituted most of the participants, stated that the values presented in the Character Education program given in Imam Hatip High School were effective in converting them into ethical behavior.

TABLE V
CONVERTING VALUES INTO MORAL BEHAVIOR IN 15-16 AGE GROUP

	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
POSITIVE	74	71
NEGATIVE	3	3
PARTIALLY POSITIVE	13	13
NO IDEA	10	13
TOTAL	100	

Fifteen to sixteen-year-old students, who constituted the second largest group of participants, stated that the values presented in the Character Education program given in Imam Hatip High School were effective in converting them into ethical behavior. In addition, that, majority of participants aged 17 years and over reported positive opinion. No participants gave 'partially positive' and 'no idea' responses. The ratio of positive responses in terms of the conveyed values being converted into moral behavior was highest in this age group.

B. Findings According to Maternal Educational Status

TABLE VI
CONVERSION OF VALUES INTO MORAL BEHAVIOR IN STUDENTS WITH MOTHER EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

	NUMBER
POSITIVE	65
NEGATIVE	18
PARTIALLY POSITIVE	0
NO IDEA	0
TOTAL	83

Majority of the participants with maternal educational status of elementary school stated that character education had a positive effect in gaining moral behaviors. Based on these data, it was found that students with maternal education status of elementary school were more successful in converting values into moral behaviors after character education. Elementary school graduate mothers participated more in the seminars and conferences. In our opinion, this participation positively affects the family environment and therefore reflects positively on the behaviors of the students.

TABLE VII
CONVERSION OF VALUES INTO MORAL BEHAVIOR OF STUDENTS WITH MATERNAL EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF MIDDLE SCHOOL

	NUMBER
POSITIVE	58
NEGATIVE	3
PARTIALLY POSITIVE	14
NO IDEA	7
TOTAL	82

Majority of participants with a maternal educational status of middle school stated that character education program had a positive effect on converting values into moral behavior. 7% of the participants did not respond to this question.

TABLE VIII
CONVERSION OF VALUES INTO MORAL BEHAVIOR IN STUDENTS WITH MATERNAL EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF HIGH SCHOOL

	NUMBER
POSITIVE	50
NEGATIVE	2
PARTIALLY POSITIVE	10
NO IDEA	7
TOTAL	69

Majority of participants with a maternal educational status of middle school stated that character education program had a positive effect on converting values into moral behavior. 7% of the participants did not respond to this question.

TABLE IX
CONVERSION OF VALUES INTO MORAL BEHAVIOR IN STUDENTS WITH MATERNAL EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF UNIVERSITY

	NUMBER
POSITIVE	12
NEGATIVE	1
PARTIALLY POSITIVE	5
NO IDEA	0
TOTAL	18

Majority of the participants with maternal educational status of elementary school stated that character education had a positive effect in gaining moral behaviors. However, since most of our participants had a maternal educational status of secondary education, the ratios for participants with university education were low. No significant result was obtained for graduate degrees since the number of participants with a maternal educational status of master's or doctorate degree was only 8.

C. Findings According to Paternal Educational Status

TABLE X
 CONVERSION OF VALUES INTO MORAL BEHAVIOR IN STUDENTS WITH
 PATERNAL EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

	number
positive	36
negative	3
partially positive	8
no idea	4
Total	51

There are 51 students whose level of paternal education is primary education. Majority of these participants expressed the positive effect of character education programs on developing moral behavior.

TABLE XI
 CONVERSION OF VALUES INTO MORAL BEHAVIOR IN STUDENTS WITH
 PATERNAL EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF MIDDLE SCHOOL

	NUMBER
POSITIVE	60
NEGATIVE	0
PARTIALLY POSITIVE	13
NO IDEA	0
TOTAL	73

There are 73 students whose level of paternal education is secondary education. Majority of these participants expressed the positive effect of character education programs on developing moral behavior. 13 participants gave the 'partially positive' response. The students whose paternal educational status was secondary education were found to be more successful than other levels in terms of converting the values transferred after character education programs into moral behavior.

TABLE XII
 CONVERSION OF VALUES INTO MORAL BEHAVIOR IN STUDENTS WITH
 PATERNAL EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF HIGH SCHOOL

	NUMBER
POSITIVE	62
NEGATIVE	4
PARTIALLY POSITIVE	18
NO IDEA	5
TOTAL	89

There are 89 students whose level of paternal education is high school education. Majority of these participants expressed the positive effect of character education programs on developing moral behavior. 18 participants gave the 'partially positive' response.

TABLE XIII
 CONVERSION OF VALUES INTO MORAL BEHAVIOR IN STUDENTS WITH
 PATERNAL EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF UNIVERSITY

	NUMBER
POSITIVE	27
NEGATIVE	1
PARTIALLY POSITIVE	8
NO IDEA	1
TOTAL	37

There are 37 students whose level of paternal education is university education. Majority of these participants expressed the positive effect of character education programs on developing moral behavior.

There are 10 students whose level of paternal education is graduate degree education. Majority of these participants expressed the partially positive effect of character education programs on developing moral behavior. Only 2 participants in this group expressed positive effect.

TABLE XIV
 CONVERSION OF VALUES INTO MORAL BEHAVIOR IN STUDENTS WITH FATHER
 EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF GRADUATE DEGREE

	NUMBER
POSITIVE	2
NEGATIVE	1
PARTIALLY POSITIVE	5
NO IDEA	2
TOTAL	10

IX. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Character development begins with prenatal period and occurs through the effect of factors around the person. Individuals can develop positive character traits in this process as well as negative character traits. Character development and education consist of many factors in harmony. If there is a weakness in one of these factors, development of positive character traits may be disrupted. Therefore, character education will not be possible only at schools with teachers' effort, or only at home with parents' effort. It may be possible for individuals to develop positive character traits only if character education happens as a collaboration of school and families, in a coordinated manner and striving to infuse the values of society.

In character education, the responsibility of families is to show love, the bond of affection and interest to the child from birth, and to create a safe family environment. Parents should be role models for children with their own behavior. The responsibility of schools is to help the child understand and appreciate the values of society. On the contrary, the staff should not conflict with or act against the values of society.

According to our research, parental education status of students who study at Imam Hatip High Schools is at secondary education level on average. This level seems to be lower compared to other schools offering the same quality of education in Turkey. However, it is seen that parental education level has increased when compared with studies conducted 20-30 years ago.

According to these participation rates, students with maternal educational status of elementary school were found to be more successful than others in converting the values transferred by character education into moral behavior. This may have been the result of regular attendance of mothers with educational status of elementary school at seminars and conferences held. Paternal educational level was found to be higher than maternal educational level. Students with paternal educational status of high school were found to be more successful in converting the values transferred by character

education into moral behavior.

In terms of age groups, participants aged seventeen and over were found to be more successful in converting values into moral behavior. Due to the fact that the ability of young people at the end of adolescence to perceive, understand, and infer abstract concepts increase compared to the previous years. In our opinion, another cause is a clearer understanding of moral feelings of young people during the late adolescence period.

In the scope of these conclusions, we recommend the following: Communities should focus more on character education programs. Activities that attract the attention of students should be organized within the framework of these programs.

Accusatory attitudes and behaviors that diminish the values of a society should be abandoned. This should be one of the main tasks of social environments. It should be accepted that each community has its own values and these communities should be treated accordingly.

Character education programs should also be included and disseminated in pre-school education institutions without being delayed until adolescence. Ethical and moral values should be introduced to students through formal programs.

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