Full Length Research Paper

An image study on the rich and poor perception

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The aim of this study is to project people's perceptions about the rich and poor. In this descriptive study, a questionnaire developed by the researcher and caricatures were used to collect data. The questionnaire composed of seven items including questions directed to adjectives related to the participants' perceptions about the rich and poor as well as questions of gender, age, and socio-economic status. The study composed of 973 participants (653 males and 320 females), sampled conveniently among people living in the Central Black Sea Region of Turkey in 2014. 76.74% of the participants characterized the poor by using seven adjectives: honest, moral, happy, legal, sincere-friendly, empathetic-modest, and fair-objective. On the other hand, 77.41% of the participants characterized the rich by using eleven adverse adjectives; arrogant, defrauder, bribe-taker, immoral, unfair-subjective, imposter, penny pincher, liar, aggressive-oppressive, shrewd-evil minded, and insensible. The study reached inferences and offered suggestions based on the results.

Key words: Image study, the rich and poor perception.

INTRODUCTION

Every person is eager to share his or her life, to survive, to be happy and to be satisfied with life despite problems, contradictions, failures, and drawbacks. Humans as psychosocial beings try to maintain healthy and well-balanced relations; so, they need to recognize their thoughts and emotions, which are the mirror their inner world. It is difficult for the individuals who are not aware of their own inner world to maintain healthy and well-balanced relations with other individuals. On individuals' thoughts and emotions, Dökmen (2000) stated "a living being needs its emotions to maintain a normal and ordinary life; however, human beings need emotions in two points: Firstly, in maintaining their daily life as an incentive source, and secondly, in improving their existence level and have a quality and extraordinary life."

Emotions, behaviors, language, and consciousness are in coherence, and people need to put them in harmony in their existence process. Actually, who we are and how we react to events depends on the relationship between our emotions, thoughts, and behaviors.

Problem statement

How people react to the stimulus around them has been an issue on which scientists think and try to explain. How we react to our colleague passing by without saying 'hello', the news that we watch on TV and sad event we witness on street depends on our emotions and thoughts from past experiences. Our emotions, thoughts, and

behaviors follow a cyclical process in interaction with each other. The etiologic relation (cause and effect relationship) among the emotion, thought, and behavior of human beings has not been unearthed yet. However, the most satisfying and assertive explanation is the concept of primacy of cognition proposed by Beck (1995). Beck argues that even though the cause and effect relationship between emotions, thoughts, and behaviors has not been proven yet, cognition has a primary position in terms of time. No one can exhibit a behavior without first envisioning it in mind. Therefore, which attitude and reaction people will display in the face of events depends on cognitive processes, that is, how they perceive the events. As Ellis (cited in Köknel, 1989, p. 196) pointed out in ABC Personality Theory, it is not the events that prepare human behaviors but instead their thoughts about those events.

It is not important which event you have experienced, it is important how you perceive it

Cognitive process involves *cognitive activities such as sensation, attention, perception, recognition, comprehension, understanding, thinking, interpretation, questioning, remembering, organizing, coding, and criticizing* (Solso et al., 2013). The most basic difference between cognitive approaches and others is the importance given to the cognitive processes between the stimulus and response. According to behaviorist theories, there is a response to each stimulus. In other words, the behaviors of an individual are generally determined by the stimuli coming from the environment. People are passive beings responding to stimuli around them. All people respond in similar ways by their biological structures (Clark et al., 2002; Morris, 2002). However, cognitive theorists reject this notion strongly by stating that an individual is not a simple creature by only responding to stimuli. According to the cognitive theory, people can respond to similar stimuli in different ways depending on their perception and interpretation in their cognitive processes. People can respond to the same stimulus in different ways and can experience different emotional states (Bruning et al., 2014).

Cognition is a way of perceiving and interpreting the outer world along with the inner emotions, impulses and thoughts. Perception is one of the processes that help an individual recognize and interpret a stimulus that he/she encounters (Solso et al., 2013). People develop specific basic thinking and belief systems, assumptions, implications, and generalizations during the socializing process from the beginning of their life (Lane and Schwartz, 1987).

These basic assumptions create schemata by repeating themselves. These schemata are used by individuals to organize perceptions and interpret and understand the outer world and events. According to Lazarus (1982), cognitive assessments including perceptions, schemata, generalizations, and implications are the source of human behaviors and emotions.

In conclusion, how a person reacts or feels when encountered with the words rich or poor depends on the meaning he/she attributes to these concepts in cognitive processes and his/her perceptions. Images are based on perceptions. In recent years, perception, image, and identity concepts have been used together in order to explain, especially, behavior and attitude. Image is described as "an image created during a serial of enlightenment" (Christensen and Askegaard, 2001; as cited in Cerit, 2006; Özenç, 2002). Like all living creatures, people struggle to create their own existence and having a more peaceful and happy lives. For this purpose, it is natural to make an effort to make money and get rich, which is the most important tool. However, people have to make this effort within the moral boundaries unlike other creatures. It is not moral for people to get rich by making use of every opportunity and power they have because they have a thinking mind and will unlike other creatures. Therefore, he knows the reasons behind his behaviors and he takes responsibility of what he does.

Whether people will stay within the moral boundaries for the aim of getting rich is not independent of their perceptions about rich and poor. If a person approves every way as legitimate and violates moral and religious rules, rules of law and even the universal principles, it means that he/she has a problem in his/her perception system. The main aim of this research is to project people's perceptions about the rich and poor and try to understand which adjectives come to their minds and which figures appear when the words *rich* and *poor* are mentioned.

One of the most effective ways in expressing this projection is the use of caricature. Caricature is an art form, which involves different contemporary meanings. It can be expressed as humorous drawings of a number of descriptions in a sense. The reason why the caricature has been used in technical and scientific papers and why it attracts attention is its effectiveness in making it possible for the desired information and message to arrive at the desired place and its permanence (Arıkan, 2004; Uslu, 2004).

The concept caricatures used in this study are paintings in the caricature style which involves daily events and they make it easier to understand the characters by bringing in a different perspective on scientific issues (Uğurer and Moralı, 2006; Uslu, 2004). Caricatures are in a different format from the ordinary caricatures structurally and they focus on interpreting events in a humorous and exaggerated style.

Finding out which adjectives come to people's minds when the words *rich* and *poor* are mentioned or which adjectives are chosen for them, and then caricaturing their images related to the points mentioned above is the basic aim of this study. Within this general aim, the

following research questions are answered.

Research questions

1. What are the participants' perceptions about their own economic conditions and what is the distribution of their monthly income?
2. Which adjectives do the participants use for rich and poor people and how do they caricaturize their images about rich-poor people?
3. Is there a significant difference between the participants in terms of their beliefs on the proverb "there is no palaver without lie, there is no lucre not gained illicit"?
4. Is there a significant difference between the participants in terms of their responses to the question "do you want to be rich?"

METHOD

This is a descriptive study. Concept caricatures were used in the research. The caricatures are the pictures in caricature style, which involves daily events and experiences and they present a different perspective by drawing attention to the scientific issues. Caricatures have recently been used in the research in countries such as England, Russia, Slovenia, and Norway (Keogh and Naylor, 1999). In order to draw attention to the findings and make it easier to understand, participants' images about rich and poor people were caricaturized in the study.

Participants

The study was conducted with a total of 973 participants (653 males and 319 females), randomly selected among people from different occupations living in a province located in the Central Black Sea Regionin Turkey. The distribution of the participants in terms of gender, occupation, and age is indicated in Table 1.

Table 1 shows that 653 of the participants are males and 320 are females. On the other hand, the age of the participants varies from 15 to 70, but there is a density in the range of 20-45. As for the occupation, most of the participants are students (N= 218, 22.4%) and the rest are teachers (N= 161, 16.5%), civil servants (N= 82, 8.4%), workers (N= 66, 6.8%), tradesman (N= 25, 2.6%), policemen-soldiers (N= 21, 2.2%), industrialist (N= 17, 1.7%), and doctors (N= 16, 1.6%).

Procedure

In this study, a questionnaire, which was developed by the researcher with the help of experts' opinions was used as the data collection tool. The questionnaire was composed of seven items, directed to adjectives related to the participants' perceptions about rich-poor and gender, age and economic status. The data were collected through the questionnaires with the help of master and doctoral students. A total of 1005 individuals participated in the research; however, 32 participants were excluded because of missing data. Therefore, this study was completed with the data obtained from a total of 973 participants, 653 of whom were males and 319, females.

Data analysis

Statistical Package for Social Sciences software was used for the

Table 1. The distribution of the participants in terms of gender, occupation and age.

Variables	Variable categories	N	%
Gender	Female	320	32.9
	Male	653	67.1
	Total	973	100
Occupation	Civil Servant	82	8.4
	Doctor	16	1.6
	Worker	66	6.8
	Tradesman	25	2.6
	Industrialist	17	1.7
	Policeman-soldier	21	2.2
	Teacher	161	16.5
	Student	218	22.4
	Others	367	37.7
	Total	973	100

analysis of the data. During the data analysis, frequency and percentage analyses, along with the X^2(Chi Square) analysis, which is a non-parametric test, were performed. One sample Chi-Square test was used in experimental or screening studies, which investigate the variability of a single variable in one sample studies (Büyüköztürk, 2011, p. 145). The concept caricatures which characterize the images and adjectives determined as a result of the research were drawn by Bülent OKUTAN (Member of Caricaturists Association, 2014).

RESULTS

In this section, the aim of the research, the sub-problems in accordance with this aim and the analyses along with the findings related to the analyses are explained with the help of tables.

Problem 1. What are the participants' perceptions about their own economic conditions and what is the distribution of their monthly income?

When Table 2 examined, it can be observed that 13.1% (N= 127) of the participants express their economic conditions as poor, 81.2% (N= 790) as average and 5.8% (N= 56) as rich. On the other hand, 26.3% (N=263) of the participants have a monthly income below 1000 Turkish liras (TL), 39.1% (N= 380) have a monthly income between 1000TL and 2000TL, 27% (N= 263) have income between 2000TL and 3000TL, 5% (N= 49) have income between 3000TLand 5000TL and 1.2% (N=12) have income of 5000TL or above.

Problem 2.Which adjectives do the participants use for rich and poor people and how do they caricaturize their images about rich-poor people?

The data related to frequency and percentage values about this problem are explained with the use of tables

Table 2. Participants' perceptions about their own economic conditions.

Variables	Variable categories	N	%
Perception about economic condition	Poor	127	13.1
	Average	790	81.2
	Rich	56	5.8
	Total	973	100
Monthly average income	Below 1000 TL	256	26.3
	Between 1000-2000 TL	380	39.1
	Between 2000-3000 TL	263	27.0
	Between 3000-5000 TL	49	5.0
	5000 TL and Above	12	1.2

and concept caricatures.

When Table 3 is examined, it can be observed that the majority of participants use positive adjectives for poor people such as honest (85.8%), moral (81.7%), happy (79.9%), legal (78%), sincere-friendly (72.9%), emphatic-modest (72.4%), and fair-objective (66.5). However, it is determined that the participants use negative adjectives for rich people such as arrogant (89.7%), fraudster (87.3%), bribe taker (85.6%), immoral (80.1%), unfair-subjective (78.9%), dishonest (76.7%), courageous (75.9%), penny pincher (75.1%), liar (72.3%), aggressive-oppressive (70%), shrewd-evil minded (68.9%), and insensible (67%). On the other hand, the number of participants using hardworking and helpful for rich and poor people are close to each other (44% and 55%) (Figure 1).

When the findings are examined thoroughly, it is possible to state that the distinctness between poor and rich in terms of the adjectives of hardworking and helpful. However, it is concluded that 76.74% of the participants used 7 positive adjectives such as *honest, moral, happy, legal, sincere-friendly, emphatic-modest, and fair-objective* for poor people. On the other hand, 77.41% of the participants used 11 adjectives such as arrogant, fraudster, bribe taker, immoral, unfair-subjective, dishonest, penny pincher, liar, aggressive-oppressive, shrewd-evil minded, and insensible for rich people. Besides, these negative adjectives, 75.9% of the participants used the adjective courageous for the rich people (Figure 2).

In conclusion, it can be observed that people tend to use positive adjectives for poor people while they tend to use negative ones for the rich people except for one adjective- courageous.

Problem 3. Is there a significant difference between the participants in terms of their beliefs on the proverb "there is no palaver without lie, there is no lucre not gained illicit"

The distribution of frequencies and percentages related to this problem was determined and Chi-Square test was conducted. The findings are interpreted with the use of Table 4.

When Table 4 is examined, it is observed that 44% (N=428) of the participants state that the proverb is "absolutely true, 43.4% (N=422) as "it may be true", 11.5% (N=112) as "not true" and 1.1% (N=11) as "absolutely not true". Chi-Square results show a significant difference between these opinions (**p=.000). Depending on this finding, it can be stated that the majority of the participants (87.4%, N=850) believe that the proverb "*there is no palaver without a lie, there is no lucre not gained illicit*" is true while 12.14% (N=123) do not.

Problem 4. Is there a significant difference between the participants in terms of their responses to the question "do you want to be rich?"

The distribution of frequencies and percentages related to this problem was determined and Chi-Square test was conducted. The findings are interpreted with the use of Table 5.

When Table 5 is examined, it is observed that 6.5% (N=63) of the participants responded to the question as "no", 73.9% (N=719) as "yes", 19% (N=185) as "neutral" and 6% (N=6) as "others". Chi-Square results show a significant difference between the responses of the participants (**p=.000). In conclusion, the majority of the participants (719 out of 973) responded to the question as "yes".

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

It is observed that 13.1% (N=127) of the participants perceive their economic state as poor, 81.2% (N=790) as average, and 5.8% (56) as rich. Moreover, it is found out that the majority of the participants (65.4%, N=636) had a monthly income below 2000 TL. This finding is in parallel with the average income distribution of Turkey. Depending on this, it can be said that the sample represents the general population.

When the findings are examined thoroughly, it can be stated that the discrimination between poor and rich is not clear on the use of two adjectives – hardworking and

Table 3. Frequency and percentage values of the adjectives used by the participants for the poor and rich people.

Adjectives	Variable categories	N	%
Hardworking	Poor	431	44.3
	Rich	541	55.5
Honest	Poor	835	85.8
	Rich	137	14.1
Liar	Poor	270	27.7
	Rich	703	72.3
Foxy-Clever	Poor	253	26.0
	Rich	720	74.0
Helpful	Poor	501	51.5
	Rich	471	48.4
Dishonest	Poor	227	23.3
	Rich	746	76.7
Fraudster	Poor	124	12.7
	Rich	849	87.3
Aggressive-Oppressive	Poor	292	30.0
	Rich	681	70.0
Legal	Poor	759	78.0
	Rich	214	22.0
Shrewd-Evil Minded	Poor	303	31.1
	Rich	670	68.9
Emphatic-Modest	Poor	704	72.4
	Rich	268	27.5
Sincere-Friendly	Poor	709	72.9
	Rich	264	27.1
Penny Pincher	Poor	242	24.9
	Rich	731	75.1
Arrogant	Poor	100	10.3
	Rich	873	89.7
İnsensible	Poor	321	33.0
	Rich	652	67.0
Moral	Poor	795	81.7
	Rich	178	18.3
İmmoral	Poor	194	19.9
	Rich	778	80.1
Bribe Taker	Poor	140	14.4
	Rich	833	85.6
Fair-Objective	Poor	647	66.5
	Rich	326	33.5
Unfair-Subjective	Poor	204	21.1
	Rich	768	78.9
Happy	Poor	777	79.9
	Rich	196	20.1
Courageous	Poor	234	24.1
	Rich	738	75.9

helpful. However, the majority of the participants (76.74%) used seven positive adjectives for poor people such as *honest, moral, happy, legal, sincere-friendly, emphatic-modest,* and *fair-objective.* On the other hand, the majority of the participants (77.41%) used 11 negative adjectives for rich people such as *arrogant, fraudster, bribe taker, immoral, unfair-subjective, dishonest, penny pincher, liar, aggressive-oppressive,*
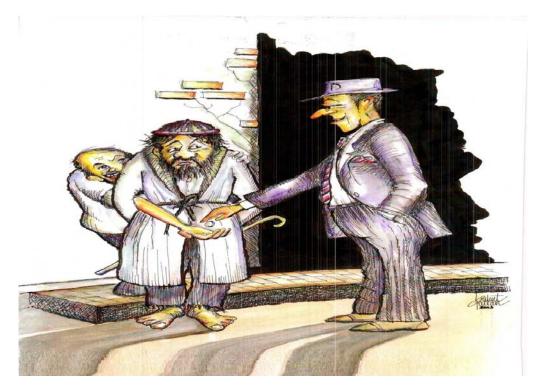
Figure 1. Distinctness between the poor and rich in terms of the adjectives of hardworking and helpful. *Caricatured byBülent OKUTAN.*
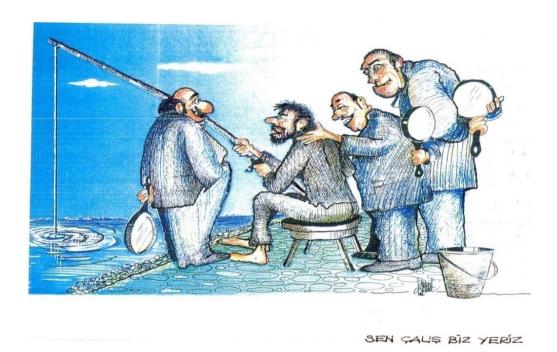

SEN ÇALIŞ BİZ YERİZ

Figure 2. Positive and negative adjectives used for the poor and rich.

shrewd-evil minded, and *insensible.* This finding is important and worth to be examined because while the positive adjectives such as honest, moral, happy, legal, sincere-friendly, emphatic-modest, and fair-objective come to the participants' minds when they think of a poor person, negative adjectives such as arrogant, fraudster,

Table 4. The opinions of the participants on the validity of the proverb "there is no palaver without a lie, there is no lucre not gained illicit."

Variable	1 Absolutely True		2 It may be true		3 Not True		4 Absolutely not true		$\overline{X}$	Sd	$X^{2\,P}$
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%			
To what extent do you think the proverb "there is no palaver without a lie, there is no lucre not gained illicit" is valid?	428	44	422	43.4	112	11.5	11	1.1	1.70	.714	564.23**

**p=.000.

Table 5. The responses of the participants to the question "do you want to be rich?"

Variable	1 No		2 Yes		3 Neutral		4 Other		$\overline{X}$	Sd	X^2
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%			
Do you want to be rich?	63	6.5	719	73.9	185	19	6	.6	2.14	.511	1309.38**

**p=.000.

bribe taker, immoral, unfair-subjective, dishonest, penny pincher, liar, aggressive-oppressive, shrewd-evil minded, and insensible come to their mind when they think of a rich person. Moreover, the majority of the participants (87.4%, N=850) believe that the proverb "there is no palaver without a lie, there is no lucre not gained illicit" is true, and this finding also supports the negative image of rich people.

These findings are extremely important because this negative opinion held by the people of a society on rich people is a dangerous situation in terms of public health and future. The question "who is responsible for such a negative image?" may arise. We are all responsible for this image but in the first place, broadcasters in mass media, administers from village headman to the top, educators, teachers, and parents are responsible since they are not a good role model about how to be an honest, fair, respectful to the law and rules but at the same time rich.

It is observed that there is a significant difference between the responses (yes, no, neutral, others) of the participants to the question "do you want to be rich?" as a result of the Chi-Square test (**p=.000).In conclusion, 719 out of 973 participants (74%) responded "yes" to the question "do you want to be rich?" This finding is especially important. Every person wants to be rich and it is totally natural. Now, let uss ask ourselves this question: "do you want to be rich? But how? Actually, the answer is in the previous finding. In people's mind, there is an image of rich people who are *arrogant, fraudster, bribe taker, immoral, unfair-subjective, dishonest, penny pincher and liar.* In this situation, people may start to think

that running a scam, taking bribe, leaving justice and lying is a way of getting rich. Some clichés such as "everybody does that; it is not that bad as it seems; this isn't even bribe; there is no other way to be rich" are an evident to this situation. The failure in preventing bribe, corruption and stealing can be sourced from this thought and perception because it is not realistic to expect the behavior of people to change unless their mentality and perspective changes. According to cognitive psychology, cognitive assessments including perceptions, schemata, generalizations and implications are the source of human behaviors and emotions (Lazarus 1982). Therefore, in order to prevent bribes, corruption, fraud and stealing in a society, the cognitive structure of people, which includes the perception and image about the rich people should be changed. Whether the people will stay within the moral boundaries for the aim of getting rich is not independent of their perceptions about rich and poor. If a person approves every way as legitimate and violates moral and religious rules, rules of law and even the universal principles, it means that he/she has a problem in his/her perception systematic.

Many of us have heard the charity stones in Ottoman Empire. Charity stones were situated in social places such as mosque, library and hospice. They were one and a half or two meters high and its top was carved.

Especially the Muslims, going to the mosque for the night prayer used to put some money in the stone without anyone seeing. Similarly, another person who needs it and cannot ask from anyone took the money but only the amount he/she needed. Therefore, no one knew neither the man who put the money nor the man who took it. The

cognitive structure of the thoughts and emotions that let people perform those behaviors was definitely different from that of today's. It is not easy to explain the evolution of the society from such a point to the state of today.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Social changes are possible through education. Therefore, a reform starting from kindergarten is required. We need to leave the notion which glorifies the academic achievement and blesses the knowledge behind and develop a notion which glorifies and rewards the basic moral values and behaviors.

In order for the positive moral values to replace the negative ones, it is necessary to change the negative perception and image about rich people. To do that, role models who are rich but at the same time honest, hardworking and loyal to laws and rules should be presented in mass media tools such as radio, TV and newspapers.

It is necessary that the administrators, teachers, educators, and parents should behave responsibly about the moral values and they should produce efficient projects related to this.

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interest.

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