

## **A Strategic Analysis of Higher Education in Turkey**

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### **Abstract**

*The objective of this study is to elaborate on the relationship between higher education and moral values. Moral corruption is related to white collar crimes. They are one of most significant social problems for the developing countries like Turkey. On the other hand, at present, we see that possession of a higher education from an esteemed universities do not imply the person has been exposed to the necessary conditions for the development of ethical and moral values, as evidenced by campus and white collar crimes committed by these high educated persons. Sample size is 464 students, conducted at five universities located in Turkey to determine if courses in moral philosophy should be required as part of university education. The findings show that university students in this study strongly accept the notion that “there is not any meaningful relationship between qualified higher education and personality qualities like dignity, honesty and decency, as conceptualized by them.” In the light of secular social systems, in Turkey, this finding may suggest, there might be a strong need for a combination of university education and moral philosophy, at the universities.*

**Keywords:** Higher Education, Strategic Management, Moral Values, Religious, white collar crimes, Turkey

### **Introduction**

One significant sociological problem for developing nations is white-collar crime. Essentially speaking, moral corruption and unsatisfied human greed are independent variables of white collar crimes committed by high status, high income, and highly educated people in any given country (Williams, 1997:22, 59, 83; Mahan&O'Neil, 1998). White collar crime is inversely related to values built upon democracy, human rights, or freedom of thought. Also, they are inversely related to basic elements of economic globalization, like social justice, social citizenship, social cohesion and solidarity associated with social and economic inclusion rather than exclusion (Abadinsky 2010;217, 218, 229; Ruggiero,1996:7).

As a developing nation, Turkey experiences white-collar crimes (International Transparency Scale, 2010; Mutlu, 2000:381-389). Therefore, this study examines the extent to which there is a relationship between university education and moral philosophy.

Social systems maintain their own values through different socialization processes. Higher education in comparative to family and religion is one of the basic institutions by which citizens internalize the dominant elements of internationally accepted values like dignity, honesty, sense of obligation and responsibilities for oneself and for others. On the other hand, in the light of principles of democracy and human rights a social system may function well, unless institutions are administered by corrupt and immoral people (World Bank 2007; Desplaces 2007, 73-87). In other words, it is quite difficult, if not impossible to maintain democracy and human right principles in a social system without internationally accepted moral and ethical values. In view of that, achievement of higher education should focus on qualified professional knowledge as well as moral philosophy (Freeman 1988).

Development of moral and ethical values as personality characteristics is independent from social economic material wellbeing, and qualified higher education, to some extent.

Relatively speaking, people in third world countries mostly struggle against poverty, and political violence, and corruption disturbing democratization, while industrial modern western societies try to minimize rates of violent crime, drug and alcohol addictions. Yet, conventional crimes, white collar crimes and organized crimes are inversely related to institutionalization of democracy and human rights principles (Kappeler V. and Kappeler A. 2004; Viuhko 2009, 61-67). This is essentially because; crime is fundamentally an immoral or/and unethical act based upon societal mores.

Alternatively, most social sciences assume that humans are natural beings, therefore social economic material richness is inversely related to immoral and unlawful human acts. This can be expressed mathematically as:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Material wealth} &= \text{Happiness} \\ \text{Happiness} &= \text{Moral Behaviour} \\ &\text{therefore} \\ &\text{as material wealth } \uparrow, \text{ immorality } \downarrow \end{aligned}$$

However, statistics reported by the World Health Organization and NationMaster.com indicate that acts and crimes of an immoral or unethical nature might increase with national wealth and level of a population's education.

World Health Organization (WHO)<sup>1</sup> crime statistics raise the question why material wellbeing does not result in the minimizing immoral human acts, in developing nations? Although, it is mostly assumed, as noted above, that economic prosperity equals happiness.

### ***Campus Crimes***

Unfortunately, there is no reliable and available data about campus crimes in Turkey. Therefore, we review some reliable and available empirical studies related to campus crimes, in the literature.

As known, it is mostly assumed that education helps people to be honourable, dignified, and decent. However, as we argue, this assumption might be challenged by sociological studies related to white collar crimes, and campus crimes (Alan 2010; Henson and Stone 1999, 295-307).

White collar crimes tend to be committed by those people who have higher education. For example, it is the powerful that commit environmental crimes, computer crimes, commercial bribery, fraudulent import and export, embezzlement, insider trading, and fee splitting (De Angelis 2002, Hill 2006, Reppetto 2004, Grabosky 2009, 129-149).

There are several cross cultural studies which show problems of academic integrity and academic dishonesty, at universities. Risk factors for cheating are listed as "everyone else is doing," "it helps me get better grades," and "I see no reason not to cheat" (Caldwell 2009, 1-13). As known, every society has its' own value systems. Individualistic oriented societies mostly demonstrate "me, I" centred problematic academic integrity, while collectivism oriented societies provide "help others cheat" academic dishonesty models (McCabe, Feghali, and Abdallah 2008, 451-467).

Physical assault, sexual assault, rape, drug problems, alcohol problems, theft, property crimes, stalking, and bullying are types of crimes found on the most respected university campuses (Henson and Stone, 1999, pp. 295-307). Among them, theft, property damage and sexual assault are the most frequent. Studies show that about 35% of college women experienced unwanted sexual contact. About 20% of college girls reported being stalked. About 90% of college women said "yes" to the research statement "Is there any place around the campus where you would be afraid to walk alone, at night?" Ninety-four per cent of the students use alcohol and 42% reported consuming alcohol more than twice (Henson and Stone 1999, 295-307; Pezza and others 1995, 105-123).

Women who are stalked may experience psychological symptoms such as depression, anxiety, stress. They take a leave of absence, or transfer to a school closer to home (Buhi, Clayton and Surrency 2009, 419-425). Poor parenting, single parent homes, monitoring, lower self-esteem, domestic violence, rejection by normal peers and poor academic achievement are the significant factors for youth crimes.

<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization statistics are readily available at: <http://www.who.int/research/en/>

Some studies show that about 14% of young people carry a knife or club to school, and 3% carry a gun to school. The drug crime arrest rate is between 340 and 260 per 100,000 (Pickett and Craig 2005, 855-862; Singer and Miller 1999, 878-884; Ngale 2009).

### ***Secular Social System and Moral Philosophy***

In the beginning of the 19th century, it was mostly assumed that men are basically natural beings, and in the light of industrialization, and social economic welfare life styles, human happiness was a consequence of economic wellbeing. However, crime statistics challenge this assumption.

Dominant life styles and value systems in secular industrial countries are designed by pure rationality, as defined by Weber, by social Darwinism as discussed by Spencer, and by sex, aggression oriented human nature as discussed by Freud (Freud 2008; Coser 1977). Briefly speaking, we may suggest that modern industrial secular societies place too much emphasis on rationality, individuality, achievement, competition and bureaucratic organization (Park, 1950) on the basis of money and political power, and material gain – resulting in self-motivated decisions dominating our world, without human moral values (Güvenen 2007, 45-49).

Social actions are studied by many social philosophers. Max Weber argued that citizens in the modern industrial societies will be motivated by pure rational choices. This means without gaining any material reward or social reward to have social action will be very difficult. Weber argued that traditional or habitual actions, and emotional, or effectual actions, would be replaced by pure rational social actions via industrialization. Pure rationality involves the careful calculation of the efficient means to get what individuals wish to have. Max Weber named this “zweck rational=goal rational action, instrumental rationality.” On the other hand, “Wert rationality=value rationality” refers to the actions without regard to benefit or cost, like duty and honour. All these rational acts have the same outcome but their logic, thus their inner logic and thus their rationality is different. However, there are some difficult questions like under what circumstances do people become goal rational as opposed to tradition oriented? What is the relationship between religion and rational action? (Spickard 1998, 99-115; Bok 2001, 4-12).

On the other hand, Darwin’s theory of evolution influenced some social philosophers, extending mechanical, materialistic philosophy to social sciences. Herbert Spencer developed the concepts of survival of the fittest, struggle for survival, and natural selection. He argued survival is the essential goal for humans in a given social setting. Freud suggested that one of the basic motivational sources for the humans is sex drive. The theory of evolution pointed out that organisms must adapt to environment through natural selection, and John Dewey argued the notion that the human mind adopts its ideas, its normative rules to its environment, according to how successful those ideas are (Freud 2008; Coser 1977).

Most recently, George Homans developed exchange theory. He argued that human behaviour is not free but determined by rewards and punishments as available in the social system. People look for approval, recognition, love and money. For example, a little girl offers her toys to other kids around her to seek approval from them. A car thief steals a car to have approval and recognition of his colleagues – other professional car thieves. He wants to show how good he is within the profession (Homans 1958, 597-606).

On the other hand, Durkheim and Parsons argued that if social actions are motivated only by self-interested reasoning, then how is social life possible. They suggested that a sense of mutual obligations and altruistic ways of acting are necessary to handle social life. This is very similar to what Weber called value rational, effectual rational and traditional rational social acts. Therefore, we may conclude that there are type’s rational actions, not only pure rational social action (Coser 1977; Jeffrey 2007, 117-131).

### ***Higher Education System and Moral Philosophy***

The proposal for moral education in colleges is subsumed in the idea that higher education should not primarily be related to economic terms (Nord 2007, 29-54). It should not be primarily related to utilitarian values (Trachtenberg 1995; Tangian 2001, 64-78). At the present, higher education is related to the philosophy of the free market which is based on freedom of choice and competition. The love of money, a chaos of competing interest groups, a growing number of students willing to cheat on exams and papers, a climate of absolute moral relativism in which what was okay was whatever you could get away with, all these are issues which social scientists identify as the root of moral unethical behaviour.

Undergraduates are growing less altruistic and more preoccupied with self-serving goals; desire to be “very well off financially, to gain personnel recognition.” For all these reasons, courses in moral philosophy should be part of university education (Meriwether 2007, 73-101; Shleifer 2005, 151-174).

In the 19th century it was assumed that as societies emphasized more and more scientific reasoning they would produce more and more industrialization and as a result of these developments, societies would become welfare states. Ethical and religious values will be internalized and personnel happiness will be the end product. However, present violent crime statistics and campus crime statistics show that personnel happiness in industrial societies is very problematic. Those statistics suggest moral education in colleges which emphasizes the harmony of the individual good, the common good, and moral law is possible only because the universe is designed and directed by a merciful and benevolent God. Moral philosophy textbooks emphasize duties to oneself and one’s family and friends, and duties to the common good. Essentially, a European philosophical bias against religion, which degraded it as “false consciousness” according to Marx, “neurosis” according to Freud, and “masochism” according to Nietzsche, should be reconsidered (Spickard 1998, 99-115).

### ***The Findings***

Briefly speaking, since nepotism, favouritism and white collar crimes are committed by people who have university degree and respectful positions, in Turkey like else where the data was collected from 5 different universities located in or around Ankara, the capital of Turkey. A questionnaire was given to the students following non probability purposive sampling method in a classroom setting (N=464).

Among those participating in the survey, 63% (N= 90) were female, 37% (N=173) male; 43% (N=209) were senior students, 63% (N=355) have three siblings, and 31% (N=145) have two. It seems that they are mostly from small, nuclear families. Twenty-seven per cent (N=125) reported their fathers being retired, while 13% (N=59) have fathers working for the government and 7% (N=40) of fathers are farmers. Eighty-four per cent of the subjects’ mothers (N=388) are housewives. Sixty-four per cent (N=297) perceive their families economic standing as average, while 30% (N=137) conceptualize their families economic situation above the average. Mostly they are born and raised in cities (N= 264, 59%).

Some respondents did not answer all the questions in the survey; so reported numbers do not necessarily equal the sample size of 464. However, the reported percentages are based on the number of actual responses vice the number sampled.

The survey consisted of 120 questions and was designed to measure student perception of moral values (dignity, honesty, integrity, etc.) as relates to perceived social status base on education level. A ten point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree) was utilized. We studied the answers to the questions related to the personality characteristics of the people who have higher education and those who have very little education, as conceptualize by the respondents in this study. First we applied Cronbach’s alpha in order to measure reliability and internal homogeneity. Related to the responses of the subjects for conceptualization of those people who have very qualified education, we obtained alpha = 0.645 if the questions about honesty and modesty are eliminated, otherwise it is 0.481. However, in consideration to the responses of the subjects for conceptualization of those people who have very little education, we obtained alpha = 0.747, eliminating no any statements related to personality qualities. These numbers are depicted in Table 1 at the end of the text.

Students identified that higher educated people are considered to be respectful, modest, honest, hardworking, non-opportunistic, and non-gossipers. For these students, people who have little education are conceptualized as less respectful, less modest, less hard working, more opportunistic and enjoying gossip.

**Table 1:** Personality characteristics of the people who have qualified higher education (black numbers), and those who have very little education (red numbers), as perceived by the subjects (N=464)

Personality characteristics	Strongly Disagree (1,2,3)		Between(4,5,6,7)		Strongly Agree (8,9,10)	
1. Respectful	8 (1,8%)	102 (23,1%)	101 (22,1%)	245 (55,6%)	347 (76,1%)	94 (21,3%)
2. Egoist	291 (64,1%)	116 (26,2%)	131 (28,9%)	223 (50,5%)	32 (7%)	103 (23,3%)
3. Modest	28 (6,2%)	98 (22,3%)	189 (41,6%)	258 (58,8%)	237 (52,2%)	83 (18,9%)
4. Honest	16 (3,5%)	62 (14,1%)	152 (33,7%)	221 (50,1%)	283 (62,7%)	158 (35,8%)
5. Haughty (Big head)	281 (62%)	147 (33,5%)	110 (24,3%)	218 (49,7%)	62 (13,7%)	74 (16,9%)
6. Materialist	171 (37,9%)	90 (20,5%)	180 (39,9%)	212 (48,4%)	100 (22,2%)	136 (31,1%)
7. Hard worker	11 (2,4%)	109 (25%)	74 (16,3%)	200 (45,9%)	370 (81,3%)	127 (29,1%)
8. Gossiping	341 (75,3%)	158 (36,3%)	89 (19,6%)	174 (40%)	23 (5,1%)	103 (23,7%)
9. Opportunist	269 (59%)	117 (26,7%)	137 (30%)	197 (45%)	50 (11%)	124 (28,3%)

In summary, the findings in Table1 show that these students see a meaningful relation between having a good higher education and good personality qualities as defined in this study, against the assumption we argue in the light of white-collar crimes and campus crimes.

Students responded to the question “what is the essential source or the factors for the development of conscience for the average citizens.” An overwhelming majority reported family background, religious beliefs, justice, and traditional values, as main factors for maintaining conscience. It is interesting to note that respondents found that possession of a qualified education did not contribute to development of a conscience. The responses were almost equally distributed between the strongly disagree, moderate, and strongly agree categories. Conscience is an internalized personality quality that strongly stands against violation of moral ethical and lawful rules.

We applied Cronbach’s alpha in order to measure reliability and internal homogeneity. In consideration to the responses of the subjects for what they report as the responsible factors for the development of conscience, we obtained alpha = 0.823. Again, a ten point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree). The results are depicted in Table 2 at the end of the text.

**Table 2: The independent variables for the development of conscience as defined by the respondents (N=464)**

	Strongly Disagree (1,2,3)	Between (4,5,6,7)	Strongly Agree (8,9,10)
1 Qualified education	147 (32,8%)	169 (37,7%)	132 (29,5%)
2 Good family background	8 (1,8%)	66 (14,7%)	375 (83,5%)
3 Believe in God and religion	13 (2,9%)	77 (17,2%)	358 (79,9%)
4 Administration in justice	29 (6,5%)	103 (23,1%)	313 (70,3%)
5 Modernity	39 (8,8%)	133 (29,9%)	273 (61,3%)
6 Folkways, traditions,	28 (6,3%)	126 (28,2%)	293 (65,5%)

In summary, the findings in table 2 seem support the assumption that there is no meaningful relationship between quality of higher education and conscience as evidenced by frequency distributions.

Questions were asked to measure perception of morality in relation to education quality. Additionally, students were asked to compare the morality of western educated societies to non-western third world uneducated societies. Respondents strongly rejected the notion that having a degree from qualified higher education facilities corresponded with personal honesty. They also rejected the idea that western societies (as measured by a function of the numbers of people with higher education) produced “good” persons compared with third world countries. And an overwhelming number of students rejected the proposition that status (economic or political) corresponded with decency (goodness, honesty, or integrity).

We applied Cronbach’s alpha in order to measure reliability, and internal homogeneity. In consideration to the responses of the subjects for what they report as the relationship between possession of a qualified education and possession of certain personality characteristics, we obtained alpha = 0.539. Again, a ten point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree). The results are depicted in Table 3 at the end of the text.

**Table 3: the relationship between qualified higher education and personality characteristics as reported by the subjects (N=464)**

		<b>Strongly Disagree (1,2,3)</b>	<b>Between (4,5,6,7)</b>	<b>Strongly Agree (8,9,10)</b>
1.	Your graduation from top world university makes you to be a man of dignity	309	128	25
2.	There is no significant relationship between higher education and morality	167	188	102
3.	Being a big man doesn't mean being a good man.	16	53	388
4.	In order to be a good man it is necessary to have a good quality education	169	202	85
5.	Since western societies have a high rate of educated people it is a lot easier to be a good individual in those countries	286	145	27
6.	At present to be a modern man means to be a good human being	236	181	38
7.	Since developing countries have a low rate of educated people it is a lot difficult to be a good individual in those countries	249	155	53

Briefly speaking, the findings on table 3 seem support the assumption that there is no meaningful relationship between quality of higher education and being a moral or ethical person as evidenced by frequency distributions.

In asking the respondents to attach a cause to immoral and unlawful acts committed by students on university campuses, a series of potential factors were presented. These included domestic violence, moral corruption, radical ideologies, intolerance, and ego among others. We applied Cronbach’s alpha in order to measure reliability, internal homogeneity. In consideration to the responses of the subjects for what they report as the responsible factors for the development of campus crimes, we obtained alpha = 0.892.

Table 4, at the end of the text, shows the findings related to perceived causes of on campus immoral and unlawful acts. Responses indicated that the subjects strongly agree that domestic violence, unsatisfied human greed, passion, moral corruption, egoistic opportunistic mentality, are the responsible factors for campus crimes.

**Table 4: the responsible factors for immoral, unlawful acts, committed by the university students at the campus (N=464)**

		<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
1.	Domestic violence	205	196	32	19
2.	Moral corruption	132	245	61	11
3.	Radical ideologies	110	239	79	22
4.	Intolerance	130	217	73	24
5.	Ambition, passion	203	190	43	17
6.	Alcohol/drug problems	181	192	49	28
7.	Moral corruption in the name of modernity	198	181	49	21
8.	Rejecting existing social order	128	225	74	19
9.	Media	137	205	83	20
10.	Family honor matters	91	182	124	54
11.	Personnel matters	106	263	62	20
12.	Egoism/opportunism	192	205	35	20

In summary, moral corruption, ambition, passion, egoism and opportunism are the essential factors for the campus crimes (immoral and unlawful acts), as evidenced by frequency distributions.

In order to elaborate further, the conceptualization of the relations between causes of campus crimes and consequences of higher education related to personal traits of dignity and honesty, we calculated crosstabs. In other words, we considered the basic factors for campus crimes like domestic violence, materialistic values, unsatisfied human greed, drug or/and alcohol addictions, moral corruption in the name of modernity, and egoistic and opportunistic orientations. For this group Cronbach’s alpha = 0.849. Alternatively, we considered subject’s responses for the statements about consequences of higher education related to honesty, Grand vizier (high economic/political status) and decency. For this group, we obtained alpha = 0.527. Table 5 depicts the cross tabs between these groups.

Table 5: the relationship between higher education and campus crimes (N=464)

		Domestic Violence		Materialistic Value System		Passion, Ambition		Drugs, Alcohol		Modernity, Corruption		Egoistic, Opportunism	
		SA	S D	SA	SD	SA	SD	SA	SD	SA	SD	SA	SD
Higher education, honestly	SD	137	13	97	8	137	12	121	17	140	11	130	17
	SA	9	1	4	0	12	0	13	1	12	3	11	1
grand vizier,	SD	4	1	5	1	15	1	6	4	6	1	7	1
	SA	179	16	115	9	171	7	149	23	173	17	166	18
Higher education, nice man	SD	126	13	88	6	131	10	113	16	130	10	125	13
	SA	18	0	15	0	16	1	13	2	12	3	14	1
Lower education, nice MAN	SD	119		74	5	115	9	102	14	118	10	113	10
	SA	30	1	19	1	28	0	23	3	22	5	25	3

Table 5, at the end of the text, shows those students who strongly reject the relationship between higher education and the personality traits of honesty and decency; strongly agree with the factors responsible for campus crimes which have nothing to do with higher education. For example: 137, 121, 140, 130 (if we include those subjects who agree with these statements, then these numbers for each exceeds 210) strongly disagree with the idea there is a significant relationship between higher education and personality qualities.

**Conclusions**

Man is a natural being. Therefore, “the more the material conditions like food, housing, transportation, income, education, health care, welfare life styles, the better the personality qualities of men are” is one of the assumptions accepted by many social scientists. However, at present, the literature related to white collar crimes, campus crimes, violent crimes, challenge that assumption.

This survey paid special attention to the statistics related to social welfare societies. Statistics for the relationships between social economic poverty, corruption, violent crime, and domestic violence with the level of economic development and presence of qualified higher education are inconsistent with the aforementioned assumption.

We collected data from student responses to surveys at five different universities in Turkey using non-probability sampling. Group administered data collection procedures were applied in order to minimize social desirability effects and anonymity problems while maximizing reliability and validity, as possible.

The findings show that the respondents strongly believe that some internalized primary values like: moral corruption, ambition, passion, egoism and opportunism are the essential factors for campus crimes (immoral and unlawful acts). The respondents in this study strongly accept the assumption that there is no meaningful relationship between quality of higher education and being a decent, dignified, or honourable person, at the universities in Turkey. They also strongly believe that, there is no relationship between quality of higher education and development of conscience. As is known, policing itself cannot stop immoral and unlawful acts. Therefore, no matter how efficient or/and effective the legal system is we need conscience to minimize wrong doings.

White collar crimes are the immoral, unlawful acts committed by powerful elites in the societies. They are types of the people who have top bureaucratic and political positions in government, education, and business. For example, tax fraud, commercial bribery, plagiarism, embezzlement, insider trading, nepotism, favouritism, and discrimination are some types of white collar crime prevalent in western society. Campus crimes are the illegal acts committed by university students (future elites) on university campuses. For example, physical assault, sexual assault, rape, theft, property crimes, stalking, bullying, and cheating on exams are types of the immoral, and unlawful acts committed by university students of western societies while attending university.

We assume campus and white collar crimes suggest that presence of qualified higher educational systems just emphasize occupational knowledge, and ignore moral knowledge, without which the exercise of corruption and violence for material gain subsume personal qualities of honesty and dignity.

History shows that human reason and belief systems are presented in contradiction with each other. The Age of Reason and Enlightenment Era(s) emphasized human reason. As known, age of reason philosophy developed industrialization. On the other hand, religion is degraded by some social philosophers such as Marx and Freud who still dominate social science thinking.

This survey of university students supports our argument that higher educational systems should develop some sort of equilibrium between reason and religious beliefs without which moral training becomes problematic.

As a possible future member of Industrialized Communities, Turkey must follow values built upon democracy, human rights, or freedom of opinions, democratic and human right principles. Thus, higher education programs in Turkey should cover not only academic courses, but also should have social-cultural-moral programs without which globalizing economy might be highly problematic related to moral corruption, as evidenced by the findings in this study

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