

## Human Rights Education in Religious Culture and Ethics Courses

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### Abstract

All individuals expect to be informed about and respectful of human rights for the sake of international peace. This study aims to evaluate students' views and suggestions on Religious Culture and Ethics courses regarding human rights education in Turkey. A qualitative method was followed by adopting a case study inquiry. The participants were 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students studying at a secondary school in Turkey. There were 30 voluntarily participants who took part in the study, and completed a questionnaire on the Religious Culture and Ethics Course. The results indicated that religious culture and ethics courses were considered as one of the most suitable platforms in which to teach human rights. The results also reported that there were fundamental differences in the perception of religious education and the emphasis on human and individual rights in religious culture and ethics courses, and instead of universal values, the results show that Islamic values were prioritized rather over universal values. The participants, who talked about the need to cooperate with other courses in a multidisciplinary way to ensure human rights education wanted to find solutions for the security of humanity in this age of wars and migrations. Based on these results, the subjects and themes covered in religious culture and ethics courses can be reviewed and teachers should be more sensitive while teaching human rights. In this regard, educational researchers and practitioners need tools that can be applied in a range of local, national, and international contexts and scales in this age.

**Key words:** *human rights education, religious education, ethics, Turkey*

### Introduction

Individuals need to be able to understand human rights as a concept. People must know that their rights and freedoms are their priorities, and basic education for this knowledge must be provided through education both in families and schools. Human rights education provides individuals with the skills to exercise their rights in daily life. Within the scope of human rights education, it is aimed to provide the students with the knowledge of human rights as well as practices protecting and defending human rights. One of the subject areas that forms the basis of adequate social studies education is human rights education. Social studies education, interdisciplinary religious culture,

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and ethics education present the main skills and objectives accordingly. Human rights is one of the objectives of religious classes.

Human rights or universal rights, are for everyone and need to be taught to children from an early age. When we consider human rights globally, there are three conventions in the modern era: the French Declaration of Human Rights (1789), the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), and the European Convention on Human Rights (1950). When we consider the progress of human rights over time, we see how many states ratified the instruments of human rights, and how widely they were applied by the various states (Ignatieff, 2017). As wars and conflicts increase all over the world, the need for human rights education also increases. By designing effective training programs on human rights, this need may be decreased. Education is the first step and is essential in creating a more beautiful and happier world.

Democracy and Human Rights Course Curriculum needs to be prepared in order to create a society in which human rights are dominant, and it is necessary to design activities by associating with different courses and intermediate disciplines. It is possible to talk about the existence of human rights in the countries governed by democracy. The concepts of democracy and human rights are very close and often directly linked (Beetham, 2013 & Freeman, 2008). Democratic education systems must establish an understanding of respect for human beings. Human rights education, as a requirement for democratic education systems, provides individuals with the skills to defend their rights in daily life.

Within the scope of human rights education, the aim is to provide students with knowledge of human rights as well as practices aimed at protecting and defending these rights. Human rights education without these dimensions, from pre-school to higher education, will not be successful (Karatekin, Meray, Sönmez & Kuş, 2012). Anthropologists, social experts, political scientists and legal experts studied how human rights users around the world participated in international human rights norms and how they interacted with one another and influenced the development of human rights norms (Merry, 2018).

Human rights education, which includes the processes of teaching, learning and implementing human rights, aims to develop and disseminate human rights culture in a society. The United Nations Human Rights Council was accepted by the General Assembly of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education in 2011. The prevention of human rights violations and abuses contribute to the construction and promotion of a universal human rights

culture (United Nations Declaration, 2011, para. 1). The United Nations defined the Decade of Human Rights Education (1995-2004) as education, dissemination and information work for the creation of a universal human rights culture through the molding of knowledge, skills, and attitudes of Human Rights Education (Flowers, 2010).

Learning concepts correctly and attributing them to the same meanings for everybody is vital. A solution to teaching the concept is to do activities based on concept teaching. While teaching the concept of human rights, which also reveals the ethical aspect of human beings, there is a need for teaching programs and interdisciplinary approaches that contribute to the development of the culture of democracy through recognition, protection, and use of freedoms.

Human rights education helps to develop the communication skills of democracy and to acquire the critical thinking skills that form the very basis of thinking. Human rights education provides a multicultural and historical perspective based on a universal strength that protects justice and dignity (Flowers, 2015) and should be seen as an international process aimed at raising awareness about the process followed for the elimination of human rights conventions and violations (Tibbitts, 2008).

There are various approaches and models in human rights education. Multiple approaches seem to be more applicable among them, we need an international, and comparative approach. It seems appropriate to apply these models to religious education.

Merey, Karatekin and Kuş (2012) stated that in primary schools in Turkey and the USA, one of the objectives of social science courses is to introduce students to some basic concepts of citizenship, democracy, and human rights. At the same time, these courses equip them with awareness, sensitivity, thought, attitude, and behaviour regarding the issues related to human rights.

Objectives related to human rights education in Turkey are clearly stated in the curriculum of social studies. Studies about human rights are still in progress, which forms the basis of practical social studies education. Social studies education and interdisciplinary religious culture and ethics education provide basic skills and objectives while social, economic, and cultural factors along with the effectiveness of educational practices are all essential in order to teach the concept of human rights (Mulhan, 2007).

The learning areas in the social studies program expand from the 4<sup>th</sup> grade level to 7<sup>th</sup> grade level. The curriculum for the Human Rights, Citizenship and Democracy course of the 4<sup>th</sup> grade

primary school consists of six units and are as follows; (1) Being a human, (2) Rights, Freedom and Responsibility, (3) Justice and Equality, (4) Reconciliation, (5) Rules, (6) Living Together.

Values, skills and concepts based on human rights must be gained considering the general objectives of the course. Themes for the overall outcomes for the course are the democratic system and living democracy, human rights and freedoms, living democracy: active citizenship, a pluralistic view of diversity, peace and reconciliation (Ministry of National Education (MoNE), 2018). Human rights education was integrated into primary education courses (Social Studies, Life Science, Turkish, Mathematics, Science and Technology, History of Revolution and Kemalism, Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge, Music and Physical Education) through intermediate disciplines.

In the general interpretation of the principles of Toledo, religious education in public schools, as long as it is consistent with human rights commitments, accepts human rights (Toledo Guiding Principles, 2007, p. 33). In Turkey, in order for the students to gain democratic attitudes and skills, there are various courses at different levels and classes on the educational process (Gömleksiz & Akyıldız, 2012).

The place of human rights in religious education programs has not been entirely integrated in Turkey yet. However, there are many examples of human rights throughout the life of Muhammad. Prophet Muhammad's Medina agreement (Constitution of Medina), which brought together different members of faith and ethnic groups in Medina, his behaviour to the people around him throughout his life, his relations with various religions and slaves, and his recommendations on this subject are all examples of essential texts and practices in terms of human rights.

Human rights lists in international documents are taken as a basis by religious educators to justify human rights as they are based on the principles of law which derive from an understanding of humanity where everyone is regarded as a free and autonomous person with equal attention and respect, regardless of language, religion, race and gender (Donnelly, 1995).

Human rights education is generally seen as the effort of educating, informing, and disseminating processes which promote human rights to a universal culture (Flowers, 2000; Rasmussen, 2012).

### **Aim of the Study**

The Culture and Ethics program, which has a vital role in the acquisition of human values and moral characteristics, has to assume new roles in the procurement of concepts such as universal values, human rights and ethics. It is possible to revise the Religious Culture and Ethics program by evaluating the human rights gains of the students from the course and revealing their significant achievements, skills and values. The content of the program itself is not designed to provide a comprehensive description of human rights. Therefore, program development studies should be carried out on the subject and the Religious Culture and Ethics course should better emphasize universal human rights. It should also be emphasized in the lessons that Islamic values are compatible with universal values and that one's right to life is considered sacred. The Religious Culture and Ethics course already focus on "Being the free person as Allah draws the boundaries in the Qur'an" and "Respecting Others". However, when the literature is examined, there are very few studies on human rights, citizenship and democracy content related to the Religious Culture and Ethics curriculum which necessitates the conduct of this study.

As an academician studying in the Religious Culture and Ethics teacher training program, there is controversy that human rights are not connected to religion today. If teacher candidates are equipped with the right information in a religious culture program, they can give the necessary information to students and contribute to the formation of a more peaceful society. In an environment, where terror and racism has recently increased, there is a necessity to raise more sensitive students for the next generation. The Religious Culture and Ethics program sees itself as just such a tool for teaching human values and morality.

As an academician studying in the field of teacher training, it seems that measuring how efficiently human rights education has been delivered and how it works would be of crucial importance. It can be useful to reveal if there are any missing objectives or achievements from this course, and to reorganize the Religious Culture and Ethics Program by revealing the opinions and suggestions of the students of the course regarding the education of human rights. The conclusions of this study may contribute to academicians, program developers, and stakeholders.

### **Method**

This study used a qualitative methodology, a literature review, interview and questionnaire as data collection. Identifying plausible causal networks that shape an event, situation, or condition are very important for this kind of research.

### **Research Design**

Case studies are ways of looking at what is happening in the environment, collecting, analyzing data systematically and presenting the results (Davey, 1991). This study was carried out to reveal what the students were taught about human rights in the Religious Culture and Ethics course, and what perspective they gained on this subject. It was a study of a specific event from different perspectives and was conducted as a situation analysis (McMillan, 2000). Case studies are defined as one or more events, environments, programs, social groups or interconnected systems and are examined in depth.

Students in many countries have a general view of human right and see the concept in many courses. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest three procedures such as data reduction, data display and conclusion in qualitative data analysis. Data reduction is the process in which the mass qualitative data such as observation and interview is obtained. Yinn (1984) describes a current phenomenon as a research method that works in reality and is used in cases where there is more than one data source and the boundaries between the fact and the content are not explicit. For this reason, the case study method was used primarily to reveal the students thoughts about the Religion Culture and Ethics program.

### **Population and Sample/ Study Group/Participants**

The participants were selected from the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students who took the Religious Culture and Ethics course. This is a compulsory course in Turkey, so all of these students from 4<sup>th</sup> grade up to 12<sup>th</sup> grade take this course. We restricted it to 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students because these students, who have taken the course for several years, would best show the relationship between human rights and religious culture and ethics. Therefore, no selection was made from younger groups. The data was collected in the 2019/2020 academic year.

The reason for selecting both 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students is for typical case sampling. Our reason for choosing that age group is that now they have the ability to think critically about an issue. These are students who know each other and interact on a daily bases. Fifteen students were

selected from the 7<sup>th</sup> grade and 15 people from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. A total of 30 students were selected in order to correctly observe the group behaviours. These students are studying in the same class, therefore, they have common views about this course. Additionally, they have taken the Religious Culture and Ethics course for the last three years. All students are studying in the centre of Nevsehir and were chosen from different socioeconomic levels so that we could form a heterogeneous group.

### **Data Collection Tools**

Accordingly, the semi-structured interview technique was used. The semi-structured interview technique has benefits of providing flexibility for the researcher, a high response rate, ability to observe non-verbal behaviours of participants, having control over the environment of the researcher and providing in-depth information (Neuman, 2000). Therefore, it is thought that the selected method and technique would be useful in obtaining the data that corresponds to the aims of this study. The semi-structured interview form was prepared for this research, and three field experts were consulted for the validity of the form. The interview form was finalized in line with the suggestions from the experts.

This study would shed light on whether religious culture and ethics lessons contribute to the knowledge of human rights education in Turkey. To meet the aims of the study, a form of open-closed questions was used. A few examples are given below:

1. What are human rights? Do you know anything about them?
2. Do you think that the Religious Culture and Ethics courses are related to human rights? Why?
3. Are human rights mentioned in Religious Culture and Ethics courses? If so, how much are they mentioned?
4. Is the concept of human rights emphasized in religious culture and ethics textbooks?
5. What do you think about the importance religion attaches to human rights?

### **Data Collection**

Researcher interviews were conducted alone by the researcher. Interview forms were collected, and coding was made according to the concepts extracted from the data. The data was obtained in accordance with the interviews with the participants who took the Religious Culture and Ethics

course. The coded data was gathered and classified and subject areas were determined from these classifications. The statements which were thought to be prominent among the views of the students were transferred directly.

### **Data Analysis**

The content analysis method was used in the analysis of the obtained data. The purpose of content analysis is to reach concepts and relationships that can explain the collected data (Neuman, 2000). Therefore, the data analysis method was chosen for this study. The structured interview form was evaluated by content analysis. Content analysis is defined as a systematic, repeatable technique in which some words of a text are summarized with smaller content categories based on certain rules-based encodings. The main purpose in content analysis is to combine data similar to each other within certain concepts and categories and to interpret them in a way that the reader can understand. In addition, thematic analysis was used for data analysis. Frequencies of the same themes were found and ranked from small to large according to the frequency number. Thus, the qualitative data was converted into quantitative data. Inferences and comments were made on the messages of the students and direct quotations were made from the students' opinions. The answers given to the interview form were classified as PT1 through PT30 in order to keep their personal information confidential. Content analysis was carried out in three steps. Firstly, answers were made into meaningful groups according to content. Secondly, these answers were converted into tables. Finally, the responses and frequencies given for each item were first literally and then broadly interpreted by applying a quantitative technique to the data items obtained. Due to the quantity of answers, the numbers of answers were taken into account instead of student numbers.

### **Findings**

It was revealed that the Religious Culture and Ethics course is one of the most successful courses for the covering of human rights education in Turkey. However, according to the participants, there is still not enough emphasis on human rights in the course. Among the reasons for this situation are that there are fundamental differences in the perception about religious education and the emphasis on human and individual rights in the Religious Culture and Ethics courses and instead of universal values, it was reported that Islamic values are prioritized more than universal



values. In the period of increasing wars and migrations, we can take advantage of the human rights lesson to seek solutions for the security of humanity.

If these findings are considered, the subjects and themes covered in Religious Culture and Ethics courses should be reviewed, and teachers should be more sensitive about the issues regarding the teaching of human rights.

## **Findings**

Findings obtained from the participants were reported under the 5 categories as follows:

- views on human rights,
- views on mentioning human rights in Religious Culture and Ethics courses
- views on how Religious Culture and Ethics courses relate to human rights
- views of religious culture and ethics books on human rights
- views on how religions value human rights

### **Finding 1:**

Participants' general opinions about the concept of human rights were revealed. They answered the question of what human rights are, which is independent from the course.

When defining human rights, students firstly regarded human rights as equivalent to the concept of justice and equality. Students who state that human rights are freedom, rights and law are around 50%. The students who perceive human rights as a value is only 3%.

*Participants' views on the concept of human rights.*

PT 9: “In my opinion, human rights are to be fair and to treat everyone equally.”

Students can be considered to see human rights as protecting their rights.

PT 3: “Human rights mean freedom, that no one interferes with anyone, that everyone is equal, that no one is superior to anyone.”

PT 7: “Human rights is a concept in which everyone has an equal and free right.”

PT 11: “It is an organization which was established to protect people and to prevent them from being oppressed, oppressed, humiliated by other people.”

According to the findings, the concept of human rights also imposes a responsibility on the person. Racism and similar exclusions can be eliminated if a person can achieve a life of respecting the human rights. Human rights not only protect people but also teach us to respect the rights of others.

**Table 1**

*Finding: Views on Human Rights*

Opinions	Frequency
Justice, equality	20
Rights (s), law	15
Freedom	19
Responsibilities	5
Protecting human beings	2
Values	2

While defining the concept of human rights, the participants gave answers such as justice, equality, rights, freedom, responsibilities and protection of people.

The fact that participants perceive human rights most as justice and equality shows that this is the result they expect most from the concept of human rights.

**Finding 2:**

*Views on mentioning human rights in Religious Culture and Ethics courses*

Finding 2: Participants' views on how human rights education and religious culture and ethics are related. With this question, the study tried to find out how students benefit from human rights in the Religious Culture and Ethics courses.

Most of the participants (80%) stated that human rights were mentioned in their Religious Culture and Ethics course, where only 20% stated that human rights were not mentioned at all.

The subject of human rights in Religious Culture and Ethics courses and the fact that it is voiced by participants show the importance religion puts on the topic. In this respect, just exposing participants to the topic may not be adequate; additionally, participants should be able to comprehend and adopt the values of human rights.

**Table 2***Views on mentioning human rights in Religious Culture and Ethics courses*

	F	%
Yes	25	80
No	5	20

**Finding 2A:***Human rights mentioned in Religious Culture and Ethics Courses*

Ten Participants pointed out that the prophet was at equal distance to all religions and gave them the same rights: PT 4: “Yes, they are mentioned. Even if they are from different religions, our Prophet gives them the same rights as Muslims.”

In the Religious Culture and Ethics course, the belief that not only are the rights granted to humans but are also given to animals and plants are mentioned. PT11: “In Religious Culture and Ethics, human rights are often mentioned. We also talk about protecting people, protecting animals, and protecting plants.”

Comprehension of human rights is also supported by tolerance and respect. PT 20 expressed this as follows: “In almost all of Religious Culture and Ethics classes, our teacher talks about the concepts of human rights, tolerance and respect in every lesson.”

**Table 3***Human rights mentioned in Religious Culture and Ethics courses*

Human rights, opinions	Frequency
are mentioned in the course content	11
are mentioned in the examples of the Prophet’s life	10
are mentioned in the Prophet’s life	3
are mentioned in the Holy Quran	4
are mentioned in teachers’ narrations	4
From past to present	2

10 participants who pointed out that human rights are mentioned in the examples of the life of the Prophet emphasized the existence of human rights in the course content. They pointed out that

human rights are mentioned in the Qur'an and stated in the religion itself, in the course content (especially in the examples of the Qur'an and the life of the prophet) human rights were mentioned.

### **Finding 3:**

#### *Participants' views on Religious Culture and Ethics courses' relation to human rights*

By questioning the relevance of the Religious Culture and Ethics course to human rights, the contribution (necessity) of the course to human rights can be demonstrated. In order to reveal the relationship between religious culture and ethics and human rights, the participants associate human rights with examples from the lives of the prophets. PT 8: "Because, I think it is one of the rights given to man in choosing his morality. Man determines morality. In Religious Culture courses, he speaks of the prophet's morality since ancient times."

Participants who think that religious culture and ethics are directly related to rights and conscience say PT 28: "I think yes because rights are directly related to religion. The subjects are very similar."

**Table 4**

#### *Religious Culture and Ethics courses' relation to human rights*

	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
Related	27	90
Not related	3	10

90% of the participants think that Religious Culture and Ethics courses are related to human rights. Most of the students think that Religious Culture and Ethics courses are related to human rights.

#### *Religious Culture and Ethics courses' relation to human rights*

The Religious Culture and Ethics course emphasizes the value of human beings. True peace and happiness in religion are taught by the prophets. PT 4: "If everyone in this world was like our prophet, we could now live in a peaceful and happy world with concepts such as rights, law, justice, equality and freedom". Similarly, the Religious Culture and Ethics course draws attention to respecting the rights of others.

According to the opinions of the participants (57%), human rights are mentioned in the Religious Culture and Ethics course in the examples of the lives of the prophets. Therefore, the lives of the prophets represent human rights as they had spread the word of human rights

throughout their lives. Religious culture is directly related to tolerance, respect, rights, law and conscience. It acknowledges that the values of honesty and responsibility are related to human rights.

Based on the participants' answers, it would be appropriate to examine the relationship between the course and human rights. When the concept of human rights is associated with the Religion Culture and Ethics course, priority issues, examples from prophets, values of tolerance and respect, values of honesty and responsibility come to the fore. Additionally, rights, law, conscience, women's and men's rights issues are all relevant concepts related to the course. Rights, law and democratic concepts can also be added to the list of values to be taught in the education program of Religious Culture and Ethics.

**Table 5**

*Religious Culture and Ethics courses' relation to human rights*

<b>Opinions</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Seeing the prophets as role models, human rights	12
The values of tolerance and respect	7
Rights, law, conscience issues	5
Honesty, responsibility values	5
Dignify human beings	4
God-human relationship	3
Men and women have separate rights	2
Being a person of good moral is a right ( choice).	2

*The irrelevance of religious culture and ethics about human rights*

In Finding 3B, the irrelevance of the course to human rights was questioned. Some of the participants think that the Religious Culture and Ethics course is not related to human rights. They stated that morality is the character of a man and that human rights are universal values, not religious.

However, religious culture is directly related to tolerance, respect, rights, law and conscience. It acknowledges that the values of honesty and responsibility are related to human

rights. In the Religious Culture and Ethics courses, the number of participants who think that dignifying human beings is related to human rights is 10%.

PT 3: "Because God gives man the right to choose his morality. Man will determine morality. In Religious Culture class, he talked about the morality of the prophet since ancient times."

PT 16: "As the name implies, the importance of human rights are emphasized in this course in terms of culture."

PT 20: "If everyone in this world were like our prophet, we can now live in a peaceful and happy world with concepts such as rights, law, justice, equality and freedom."

**Table 6**

*The irrelevance of religious culture and ethics about human rights*

Not related	3
The Qur'an focuses more on worship parables	1
Morality is the character of a man	1
Human rights are already values of humanity.	1

#### **Finding 4:**

##### *Human Rights in Religious Culture and Ethics Coursebooks*

The participants were asked how often human rights was mentioned in the textbooks of the Religious Culture and Ethics course. In this way, it can be revealed whether there is enough emphasis on human rights resources in textbooks.

Religious Culture and Ethics textbooks contain human rights because God wants every man to treat others well. It is understood that the subject is mentioned in some parts of the book because the teachers of Religious Culture and Ethics talk about human rights. Participant P 22 stressed: "I saw it when the teacher talked a lot, he reminds me". Also, since it was scattered in many parts of the curriculum of the Religious Culture and Ethics education program, the participants ( PT 5) said: "It exists in many parts of the book."

PT 9: "Yes, I did. If I had not learned human rights from the book, I would not have cared, and some people would come and take my rights away, so I am always careful."

When talking about the life of the prophet, the book gives priority to respect for human rights. The participant (PT 12): "It exists in the parts where the Prophet is mentioned." The Religious Culture and Ethics courses and the books of the course emphasized not only the religion

course but also morality, and the participants stated that the book refers to morality and rights rather than worship. PT 23 : “Yes, I think that human rights are mentioned in the books of Religious Culture and Ethics because there are human rights in religious courses.”

33% of the participants stated that their Religious Culture and Ethics teacher mentioned about human rights while using the coursebooks and made use of reminders from the book. Participants who stated that morality and rights are explained in many parts of the book said that when the prophet is mentioned and human rights are also emphasized in the book.

Two of the participants stated that human rights were not of interest in the Religious Culture and Ethics course book. PT 3: “Not interesting, I have never paid attention.” PT 8: “Might be mentioned, I have never paid attention.”

**Table 7**

*Human Rights in Religious Culture and Ethics Coursebooks*

Opinions	Frequency
The teacher mentions a lot and uses the coursebooks to remind them.	10
They are mentioned in many parts of the book (morality and rights)	10
In the parts where the Prophet is the subject	5
I saw it when I read the book to learn my rights.	2
General information about human rights was given.	3

**Finding 5:**

*Views on how religions value human rights*

The answers to the fifth question would reveal the value of religion given to human rights. In this way, the importance or influence of religion in human rights education can be revealed in the Religious Culture and Ethics courses.

Most of the participants think that God is fair and believe that there is a lot of evidence of human rights in the Qur'an. They believe that the prophets protected everyone by drawing attention to human rights and that Islam gives people freedom.

The Religious Culture and Ethics courses give quotations and examples from the Quran. In these examples, the lives of the prophets are explained and human rights are described by exemplifying the lives of the prophets. P7 stats: “Islam has given importance to human rights

because they are seen as important in the Holy Quran, religious books and the lives of the prophets.”

According to the course content, God is the very idea of ‘right’ personified, so God is already the defender and protector of human rights. With the emphasis on this in the lessons, the human model that God wants is the one that respects human rights and injustice in the period of Jahiliyya is expressed by the participants as follows:

PT 24: “These rights are fundamental in Islam because during the Jahiliyya period, girls were not valued at all, but now everyone is given equal rights.”

In the courses of Religious Culture and Ethics, the rights that Islam brings to everyone are discussed which the participants came to realize and commented as such:

PT 4: “In the past, humans were not given their rights. For example, people were slaves, and their freedom was taken away. Islam gave us rights.”

Two of the participants stressed that religion and human rights are not specific to one religion but are taught in all.

PT 7: “Human rights are given in every religion, and it has nothing to do with our religion.”

PT 11: “Human rights are in every religion, but people do not know.”

**Table 8**

*Views on how religion values human rights*

<b>Human Rights are highly valued because (Opinions)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Allah treats everyone equally. (He establishes the rights and secures the justice)	7
Proven by the book (the Qur'an gives people their rights)	5
Prophets protected (everyone's) human rights	5
They give humans their freedom (slavery ends)	4
They provide convenience	4
Concept of justice	3
They are crucial in Islam	2

### **Discussion, Conclusion and Implications**

Human rights have an important role in the promotion and consolidation of peace, democracy and development. Each country has its education and training programs, and each country tries to teach



its citizens to be aware of human rights. Children's rights and democracy education play an essential role in educating the citizens of the world to respect human rights, have democratic values and be responsible for themselves and others (Friedmann, 2013). There is a close relationship between peace and human rights. Therefore, in order for this to be actualized, schools should be turned into environments where students can learn by contextualizing democracy and where democratic principles can prevail (Kuzgun, 2000). Respect for human rights is the basis of peace and democracy and if somebody knows his/her rights, he/she will respect the rights of others. Therefore, it is the primary responsibility of every citizen to know what their duties and responsibilities are, protect their rights and make efforts to improve them (Audigier, 2000).

According to Apple and Beane (2007), educators with a democratic attitude are not only seeking to reduce the severity of social inequalities in the school but also seek to change the conditions that create them. In addition to social concerns, there has been an increase in international concerns as well (Salman, 2004). Terrorist incidents are at the top of these concerns. Human rights education should take place at the national, regional and international levels as living in a multicultural and globalizing world, human rights education only taught at the national level will be incomplete. Without universal efforts, human rights education will be inadequate. Religious and moral education programs in other countries should be examined as well as individual studies on this subject will be insufficient.

It is not only sufficient for students to learn about human rights, but they also need to be willing to learn and then be able to internalize these rights. With this, one can successfully know, understand, share and experience human rights (Kirchschlaeger, 2014).

In Turkey, it is known that there has been a variety of applications for human rights and citizenship education at different points in time. Human rights and citizenship education is sometimes organized as a course and sometimes as a program integrated within different courses (Akdağ & Taşkaya, 2011). One of these courses is the Religious Culture and Ethics course.

It is essential to teach the concept of human rights to students through teaching religion. With the emergence of religions, the concept of human rights has emerged as well and has survived to the present day. Religions share a universal knowledge of people's teaching of the social duties to others (Lauren, 1996), and the idea of human rights has existed in many religious traditions, including Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, and Christianity (Hayden, 2001). One of the most critical points that all religions jointly emphasize is human rights. We must create

a comprehensive system of human rights education, embracing formal and non-formal education. Universities play a special role in this as they train specialists who may ensure both the implementation of human rights standards and the dissemination of knowledge of human rights.

### **Conclusion**

With this research, we tried to reveal how much students know about their own rights. It is not enough for them to simply know their rights but how they apply them is also important. The students considered that the Religious Culture and Ethics course is one of the most appropriate courses in which human rights education is taught.

For the students, justice and equality is very important and they want to establish an environment of peace. However, they believe there is currently not enough emphasis on human rights in the Religious Culture and Ethics courses. If there is not enough emphasis on human rights, Islamic values are put in the forefront rather than universal values. However, students did give some examples from the Qur'an where human rights were mentioned.

If the teacher has a democratic attitude in the course of Religious Culture and Ethics, this will help students gain intellectual perspectives. In the globalizing world, we need to find conventional solutions to human rights problems, otherwise collective success in education cannot be obtained.

Students generally thought that human rights education and religious education are related. It has been determined that the students consider the Religious Culture and Ethics courses as one of the most suitable courses in which human rights education can be taught. In this regard, different countries could benefit from Turkey's religious education programs. The Religious Culture and Ethics coursebooks are tools for teaching values and morality. The importance of these courses is understood in the era of human rights in which human characteristics such as tolerance, justice, duties, powers, responsibilities, freedom of religion and conscience, and morality are emphasized and expressed. In order to establish a democratic world together, it is important to teach individuals their rights and responsibilities.

Students have an idea of what human rights are. The students who participated in the research also acknowledge that these rights are indispensable and we need to raise individuals who know and protect human rights. In order to create a culture of democracy, we should start educating people on human rights and democracy as early as possible. It is thought that the content of the

Religious Culture and Ethics course are already human rights. It is emphasized that the lives of the prophets were filled with examples of human rights. The prophets' lives and divine revelations contain enough material to explain a universal conceptual model of human rights and in fact, all orders made in the three religions are intended to protect and promote human rights.

Students should be able to synthesize national and universal values. Human rights that can be granted universally are not only for the benefit of one society but for other societies as well. In addition, it would be appropriate to design educational programs to teach students that Islamic values are similar to universal values. The course books put a greater emphasis on morality and rights than they do on worship. The Qu'ran itself has a lot of evidence of human rights and more comprehensive descriptive books should be prepared in order to explain the Qu'ran to the students in terms of human rights.

The students who want to work together with other courses in a multidisciplinary way to ensure human rights education want to find solutions for the security of humanity in a period of increasing wars and migrations. Social studies, which is one of the closest areas to religious culture and ethics, should be carried out jointly with the Religious Culture and Ethics course. However, conducting Religious Culture and Ethics courses based on a single religion in Turkey is not appropriate for today's pluralistic society. Therefore, it is necessary to prepare a more pluralistic program in Turkey. Teaching human rights is not just the task of social sciences or religious education as it is now a completely multidisciplinary field.

Human rights education, which includes elements of respect, acceptance, tolerance and empathy, seems to be essential for preventing or eliminating the sense of marginalization caused by differentiation. We must create a world where we strengthen respect for human rights. Teachers need to know how to teach human rights and civic duties. Therefore, teacher candidates of the Religious Culture and Ethics courses should be trained on these subjects and it will be beneficial to take from the experiences of countries that have gained a greater awareness of human rights education.

Students primarily want to learn about human rights in order to raise awareness in their own lives. It can be more effective as the emphasis on human rights is related to religious emphasis in teaching concepts. In Religious Culture and Ethics classes, students are taught about God and learn that the human model Allah wants is a person who respects others. For this reason, respecting each other can be supported by the Religious Culture and Ethics course as students learn that

respecting human rights is a responsibility. It is a pity that there is so much emphasis on human rights in the books, but not enough practice in real life. This should be investigated in more detail.

Another dimension that should be considered in human rights education is that religious life should not be confused with real religion. In fact, there is a general recognition that a distinction should be drawn between the 'internal' and the 'external' practice of a religion or belief.

### **Suggestions**

- ✓ Religious Culture and Ethics courses can be used to establish an understanding of education based on respect for human beings.
- ✓ Based on these findings, it may be suggested that the subjects and themes covered in Religious Culture and Ethics courses should be reviewed, and teachers should be more conscious about the issues in teaching human rights.
- ✓ It could be necessary to examine the education systems of the countries where human rights violations are very low and to prepare sample programs for the countries that are weak in this regard by using the necessary data.
- ✓ Communication of future generations will take place much faster in virtual environments. Therefore, teachers should adopt more interactive education or educational tools in these courses.
- ✓ Religious Culture and Ethics course teachers can teach the subject better by conducting multi-disciplinary studies with social studies teachers.
- ✓ In Religious Culture and Ethics courses, explaining that universal values and Islamic values are similar, students with a more pluralistic perspective can be trained.
- ✓ In order to eliminate segregation, it is necessary to educate students who respect others. A human rights program which is based on respecting people will help everyone understand each other.
- ✓ We may help to prevent issues such as racism and discrimination in the world by aiming to teach students to live by respecting human rights while creating educational programs.
- ✓ The themes and subjects of the lessons can be reviewed, and better examples can be given from the lives of the prophets.
- ✓ In countries where human rights violations are more frequent than others, it may be possible to prevent this by using religious or moral courses.

- ✓ The Medina agreement that the Prophet made during the emigration with members of different faiths and ethnic groups in Medina could be taught by adopting these lesson.
- ✓ The course should be diversified with more concrete historical events rather than slogans.
- ✓ Different religious instructors can come together and benefit from religion when teaching human rights and religious traditions can be used to promote human rights.

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