A Comparison of Dede Korkut and Nibelungen Epics: Family and Child

This study aimed to describe and compare the family and child themes in the Turkish Dede Korkut Epic and the German Nibelungen Epic. The qualitative study used a screening model and document analysis techniques. Two researchers first reviewed the epics’ authenticity and then created themes and sub-themes considering the narratives about the family and the child in the epics. The agreement rate among the three researchers was 83.15%. Three themes were labeled as family characteristics, family relationships, and family and education. It was concluded that there were similarities in both epics about the family and child issues and the differences about heritage.

Keywords: Epics, Dede Korkut Epic, Nibelungen Epic, Family, Child

Introduction

Epics are folk narratives that reflect cultural, social, and political events and extraordinary adventures of heroic characters. Epics might convey both actual historical events and fantastic stories. The epics that have left deep traces in the memory of nations mainly involve long narratives of historical events and heroic themes told orally. This narrative type is essential in introducing and transmitting cultures to future generations (Çobanoğlu, 2000; Ergin, 1981). Although epics’ content is not entirely consistent with the historical facts, they reflect various aspects of a nation such as characteristics, attitudes, behavioral patterns, values, feelings, thoughts, beliefs, morals, customs and traditions, craftsmanship heritage, dressing, and eating and drinking habits, so they are valuable sources of historical, social, technical and educational information (Şimşek, 2007). Epics show the landmarks in a nation’s history and shed light on the collective subconscious of a nation by indicating national perspectives, reaction mechanisms, and solutions for historical events (Keskin, 2018).

As considered, the subconscious of nations, especially the national epics, reflect the national ideals and implicitly or explicitly aims to transfer them to future generations (Keskin, 2018). Cultural codes can be found in narratives, and the collective cultural products include narratives such as myth, fairy tale, legend, epic, and folk tales, in which public memory is stored. The epic heroes, appearing in the name of the society and its virtues, are the society’s leaders. Society idealizes such heroes for future generations. Therefore, the epic heroes represent their cultures (Keskin, 2018).

Epics are long narratives that provide extensive information about a particular society and culture. Some researchers have conducted comparative
studies on epics to reveal the similarities and differences between communities. For example, in their studies Sepetçioğlu (1992), Adıgüzel (1997) and Özcan (2013) compared Turkish epics. Some researchers compared Turkish epics with other national epics (e.g., Abdurrezzak, 2014; Ertürk 2015; Kayak, 2010; Taflı 2006; Yılter, 2017). Kırgız (2019) also conducted an international comparison study on epics. The current comparison study aimed to examine Dede Korkut and Nibelungen’s epics to determine family and children themes and perspectives and compare the similarities and differences between Turkish and German nations.

Epics

Dede Korkut Epic (Stories)

As stated in the introduction of the book, the original name of the Book of Dede Korkut is “Kitab-ı Dede Korkud Alâ Lisân-ı Tâife-i Oğuzcan,” which means “the Dede Korkut Book in Oghuz Language.” There are a prologue and 12 stories in the book, each of which is about a tribe. The book includes sections on the tribal events, the tradition of naming, and the struggle with supernatural and otherworldly powers.

Dede Korkut Stories were first discovered in the Northeastern Anatolia region at the beginning or the middle of the 15th century and constitute a valuable piece of Turkish culture mosaic. The stories are the first examples of the shift from epic to story in Turkish literature and valuable sources of literature, language, tradition, history, and geography. They also provide much information about the family and social structure of the Oghuz tribe.

According to Ergin (1981), Dede Korkut Stories have both folk tales and epic roots and are short, so they should not be considered just epic. However, the protagonists are epic. Dede Korkut Stories are heroic legends based on historical events and including an epic style and epic elements (Ergin, 1981). Thus, we used the term epic for Dede Korkut Stories in the study, as it has been acknowledged as the shared legacy and symbol of the cultural identity in the Turkish world for centuries.

The stories’ contents in the Book of Dede Korkut are as follows:

- In the first story, Dirse Khan’s bold warriors slander him and urge his son, Bugach Khan, to kill his father. When they fail, they turn over Dirse Khan to the infidels.
- In the second story, while Kazan Khan has a hunting party with his beys, the infidels attack his tribe and capture his wife, son, and mother. Kazan Khan and his friends attempt to save them.
- In the third story, the infidels kidnap Beyrek at a wedding.
- In the fourth story, Kazan Khan teaches his son, Uruz, how to fight, and the infidels capture Uruz.
- In the fifth story, Azrail defeats Deli Dumrul.
- In the sixth story, Kan Turalı wrestles with monsters for the daughter of Trabzon Tekfur. On their way to the tribe, they are attacked by the infidels.
- In the seventh story, Yigenek fights the infidels to save his captive father.
- In the eighth story, Basat fights the Cyclops, a monster-human.
- In the ninth story, Begil falls off the horse during a hunt, his enemies attack his tribe, and his son fights and defeats the infidels.
- In the tenth story, Segrek fights to save his captive brother.
- In the eleventh story, Kazan Khan is captured by enemies while sleeping and is saved by his son.
- In the twelfth story, the Outer Oghuz revolts against the Inner Oghuz due to a matter of dignity (Kaplan, 2004, p.16)

The Nibelungen Epic

The Nibelungen Epic is the most elaborate German narration in Southern Germany. The anonymous epic was about the king of Huns Etzel (Attila) period and was written in the 17th century. The traces of the epic can still be observed in German culture today (Ünal, 2019). There are two significant parts, "Death of Siegfried" and "Kriemhild's Revenge," and 2437 stanzas in the Nibelungen Epic.

Briefly, it is about Siegfried, a young hero who kills a monster and takes Nibelungen's treasure. He falls in love with Kriemhild, the sister of Gunther, the king of Burgundians reigning in Worms. The king approves Siegfried's marriage with his sister if he helps him marry a queen. Siegfried manages to marry the king's sister. However, queen Brunhilda does not consent to marry king Gunther. Therefore, the king once again asks Siegfried's help. Siegfried brings Brunehilda's silk belt and gold ring to the king and helps them marry. After long years, a war breaks out between the two queens. Kriemhild accuses Brunhilda of being Siegfried's ex-wife and shows the silk belt and gold ring as evidence. Once upon a time, Siegfried covered his body with dragon blood; he is undestroyable except for a particular part of his body. The queen knows that body part and has her warriors to kill Sheffield. Kriemhild marries the King of Huns Etzel (Attila) and takes his revenge (Umar, 2001).

Both epics were examined periodically. In this sense, the Dede Korkut Epic originated in Central Asia in 10-12th centuries before the Oghuz became Muslim, and it has been conveyed to future generations by oral tradition for centuries (Gökyay, 1973). It was written down and immortalized by an anonymous poet with artistic skills and competence in Oghuz epics (Banarl,
Ergin (1981) stated that an unknown bard wrote down the Dede Korkut Epic at the end of the 15th century and the beginning of the 16th century.

Originally called Nibelungenlied, the Nibelungen Epic is a German narration written by an unknown author living around the Danube River. This epic is sometimes called Lied (poetry-epic) or Sage (legend) in German as it covers supernatural and extraordinary events, mythological stories, and legends. There are 36 manuscripts of the epic written between the 12th and 15th centuries (Keleş, 2010).

Method

The study was carried out with the document analysis method. Also called the document screening method, it is a qualitative research method for analyzing written materials such as books, magazines published on facts, or pictures and films about past events (Karasar 2008, Yıldırım and Şimşek 2013).

Data Analysis

Two researchers analyzed the epics by using content analysis, one of the most frequently used qualitative data analysis methods. The method is mainly used for deductively analyzing written and visual data (Silverman, 2001; Özdemir, 2010). In the first stage of the analysis, the Dede Korkut and Nibelungen Epics' authenticity was checked. In the second stage, researchers examined the epics separately and determined the themes and subthemes about the family and child in the epics. In the third step, the agreement rate was calculated 81.55% using the formula “Reliability = agreement/agreement + disagreement X 100”, which indicated reliability as it was higher than 70% (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Additionally, the researchers compared the analysis results and cooperatively determined the themes and sub-themes shown in Figure 1 below.
Figure 1. Themes and sub-themes related to family and child in Dede Korkut and Nibelungen Saga

I- Family Characteristics
1. Paternal characteristics
2. Children’s characteristics
3. Family structure and characteristics

II- Family Relationships
1. Parents-child relationships
2. Sibling relationships
3. Spouse relationships

III- Family and education
1. Education Goal
2. Education Type

Findings

Following the Dede Korkut and the Nibelungen Epics comparisons in terms of family and child concepts, the researchers determined three themes (i.e., family characteristics, family relationships, and family and education) and sub-themes. Table 1 shows the findings regarding the family characteristics theme and sub-themes in the epics.
Table 1. The Theme and Sub-Themes on Family Characteristics

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I. Family characteristics

This part includes the subthemes of parental characteristics, children’s characteristics, and family characteristics and structure.

1. Parental characteristics: Parents were generally considered to have
supportive, encouraging, protective, role modeling, and expectative features.

**Being supportive:** In the epics of Dede Korkut and Nibelungen, parents warn their children to be careful about their decisions, but they still support them.

> "Since you are determined about what is in your mind, I will help you on your journey, my dearest son," said Sieglinde Hatun (Nibelungen).

> Dirse Khan’s lady wanted to celebrate her son’s first hunt and told them to kill stallions, young male camels, and rams, saying, “it is my son’s first hunt, I will have a feast for the Oghuz princes.” (Dede Korkut).

**Being encouraging:** In both epics, mothers and fathers encourage their children to be courageous and prove themselves.

> Dirse Khan’s lady wanted to celebrate her son’s first hunt and told them to kill stallions, young male camels, and rams, saying, “it is my son’s first hunt, I will have a feast for the Oghuz princes.” (Dede Korkut).

> Their sword-wealding ceremony was to be held with that of the Young Khan. Unbelievable! it was a very magnificent feast (Nibelungen)

**Being protective:** Parents’ protective attitudes, especially mothers’, towards their children are common features in the epic of Dede Korkut.

> Kazan returned, followed the path he came from and ran day and night. His mother mounted and rode in search of him… She rescued his boy. (Dede Korkut)

**Being a role model:** In Dede Korkut and Nibelungen’s epics, mothers and fathers are role models for their children’s development.

> Kazan says: ... Look and learn, How I battle! How I wrestle and how I fight with the sword And, ambush for us, son (Dede Korkut) His father, Dankrat, was a sturdy man, He also managed to gain an excellent reputation in his youth (Nibelungen)

**Expectation:** In the Dede Korkut Epic, parents have expectations from their children. For instance, they expect them to be courageous and strong and to take their place.

> He said to his son: “You did not use a bow, shoot arrows, behead, or shed blood.
You didn’t make prize of the Bloody Oghuz, so when I die, and you live tomorrow, they would not give you my crown and my throne (Dede Korkut).

2. Children’s characteristics: Children’s factors were examined in two groups: children’s physical appearances and personality traits.

   Physical Appearances: In both epics, girls and boys are beautiful and robust.

   Beauty: In the two epics, beauty is emphasized for both men and women.

   He turned out to be an attractive and beautiful valiant (Dede Korkut).
   He’s so gorgeous that I can’t take my eyes off him.
   He is well-built. If it were my choice, I would take him as my husband. “(Nibelungen).

   Being assertive: In both the Dede Korkut Epic and the Nibelungen Epic, both men and women are strong and assertive.

   There is another myth that I know well.
   The hand of this valiant killed a monster with a sword blow (Nibelungen).

   The boy pulled away from his fist and ran to one side.
   The bull, unable to stand on its feet, and crashed on the ground head downward. (Dede Korkut).

   Personality traits: The theme involved the concepts of being bold and brave, diligent, well-behaved/virtuous, determined, obedient, and open-minded.

   Being bold and brave: In both epics, boys are considered bold, courageous, and fearless.

   The boy took his fist from the bull’s forehead, and he was cursed in his way.
   The bull could not stand on his feet, fell on his hill (Dede Korkut).

   Even before he became an adult man,
   That hero had done such extraordinary deeds (Nibelungen).

   Being well-behaved/virtuous: One of the critical characteristics of children in both epics is their moral behaviors.

   ...He would refrain from all shameful deeds. ... He treated well to his enemies;
   That was his virtue... (Nibelungen).
   Hey, Dirse Khan, give this boy a principality and throne. He has virtue.
   ...He is gifted to be your fellow and helper (Dede Korkut).
**Being determined:** In both epics, children make their own decisions and are willing to fulfill their choices.

The young man said: "Do not keep me from my mission. I shall not return to the country of the strong Oghuz before I reach the castle in which my brother is imprisoned. (Dede Korkut).

His father said then, "If you’re such determined, your request gives me sincere happiness. I help you achieve your goal as best I can (Nibelungen).

**Being open-minded:** In both epics, children take their parents’ and other adults’ opinions and follow rational thoughts.

…Beyrek says: What should we do? Pay Pure Bey says: Son, let us invite the mighty Oghuz beys to our house and make a deal with them. (Dede Korkut)

Acting wisely, Khan asked his relatives if Kriemhild married Etzel Khan, it would seem appropriate to you. All approved the marriage, except Hagen (Nibelungen).

**Being diligent and resolute:** The children in two epics struggle and fight for what they want.

It would be a shame for a valiant to be afraid of riding the winding paths. May ALLAH permit, I’ll ride a horse at night (Dede Korkut)

I dared to be killed, for the sake of her beauty, Worth for her; Brünhild will be mine…” (Nibelungen).

**3. Family structure and characteristics:** This sub-theme was discussed under two titles: family characteristics and family structure.

**a. Family characteristics:** The related factors included commitment/loyalty, solidarity, revenge, family honor/dignity, the continuation of the lineage, hospitality, and benevolence/helpfulness.

**Commitment/Loyalty:** One of the key characteristics is loyalty to the family and country, emphasized explicitly in both epics.

Gernot. “Even if we were a thousand people from the same family, we wouldn’t hand any of us, even at the cost of our lives. Absolutely no, we do not hand anybody” (Nibelungen).

Thank you, my mother, thank you, my father
Wouldn’t there be a son like me? (Dede Korkut)
Solidarity: It is remarkable in both epics that family members cooperate and are in solidarity.

Uruz called his uncle and sent word saying: "I am going to the castle where my father was imprisoned." All Oghuz beys assembled and learned the news. Uruz goes to save his father, so take your weapons and help… (Dede Korkut)

One day, while Gunther Khan and his Beys were sitting,
They discussed in detail and thought about what could be done or not (Nibelungen)

Consensus: In both epics, family members share decision-making.

Hagen said: "Wait for a little while, gentlemen.
Let us talk and consult each other;
I think this is the only right way (Nibelungen)

Revenge: In both epics, despite strong bonds, family members fight with each other due to conflicts and provocations.

They kissed Kazan's hand. They said Beyrek was dead. Your treacherous uncle betrayed. They called and imprisoned us… (Dede Korkut)

You committed a murder; you stole my property twice;
Know that I will take my revenge. " (Nibelungen).

Family honor/dignity: Family honor is acknowledged as critical in the epics of Dede Korkut and Nibelungen. Family members are expected to care about their physical appearances for family honor, which is thought to be the symbol of strength and courage.

Uruz took three hundred bold warriors with him. He took forty fearless young men with hazel eyes (Dede Korkut).

We will go to a palace in a faraway foreign country to ask for the girl’s hand.
We need sumptuous clothes to wear on this journey." (Nibelungen).

For family dignity, family members are expected to be just, fair, and self-sacrifice if necessary.

Do not get in the bed of an infidel, do not offer my glass, do not dishonor my father, Kazan. Never… (Dede Korkut)
Gernot said, "God Forbid!" "Even if we were a thousand people from the same family, we wouldn’t hand any of us, even at the cost of our lives. Absolutely no, we do not hand anybody" (Nibelungen).

Continuation of the lineage: It was stressed in both epics that the sons would continue his family’s blood and name, and they would take over their fathers’ roles.

It would be better for a son not to be born if he did not keep his father’s name and glory alive (Dede Korkut).

How much glory my country will gain if my courageous son, Siegfried, rules it.” (Nibelungen)

Hospitality and benevolence/helpfulness: In both epics, it is emphasized that a family should be hospitable and helpful.

…Even though they were your enemies, you, the mighty Gunther, welcomed and hosted them. Until your friends arrived to help (Nibelungen)

Khan also hosted Begil, gave him a beautiful horse and robe, and plenty of pocket money (Dede Korkut)

b. Family Structure: This theme was examined under management and decision making, inheritance, and marriage.

Management and decision making: In the epics, the concepts of participation, commitment, entitlement, and turning over the management were discussed under the ruling and decision-making process.

Participation: In both epics, all the family members and beys participate in the decision-making process.

Uruz called his uncle and sent word saying: “I am going to the castle where my father was imprisoned.” All Oghuz beys assembled and learned the news. (Dede Korkut)

“But first, let me talk and discuss with my relatives. ”

Then, he went to take advice from his Beys (Nibelungen)

It is also seen that women participate in the management and ruling in the Nibelungen Epic, but they do not in Dede Korkut’s epic.

Kriemhild Hatun says: “I can give up my inheritance, except my right to give orders to the Burgund Beys. (Nibelungen)
Commitment to management: In both epics, family members show commitment to the management. Even fathers accept the rule of their sons.

Let my uncle Hagen see them. ...Khan summoned Hagen to come with his men. Hagen went to the palace to see the Khan with respect (Nibelungen)

He sent the man and summoned his uncle. He came (Dede Korkut)

Entitlement: In both epics, the children or adults who will rule the country are expected to deserve this power.

...Hey, son of Ushun Koja, each one of these beys here has earned his place with his sword and bread. What have you ever done? Have you cut off heads, shed blood, fed the hungry, or dressed the naked? (Dede Korkut)

... Even before this valiant boy reaches adulthood, He had done such marvelous deeds, That deserved to be told in epics for centuries (Nibelungen)

Turning over the management: In the epic of Dede Korkut, the ruling power is transferred from father to son, but in the Nibelungen Epic, it can be transferred from father to a son or a different person.

He said, "Oh, bring my clothes, let my son wear it, bring my red stallion, let my son ride it and arrive at the city square" (Dede Korkut).

How much glory my country will gain, When my courageous son, Siegfried, must rule this country (Nibelungen).

Heritage: The concept of heritage deals with benevolence, helpfulness, sharing, and equality/inequality in epics.

Helpfulness/Sharing: It is seen that the ruling power and property are shared in the epics. In Dede Korkut's epic, the authority passes from father to son, but in the Nibelungen Epic, the administration and property are shared with others.

Pay Püre says: “How can I stop crying and shouting. I don’t have a mighty son or valiant brother... One day when I die, there won’t be anybody in my place, in my country” (Dede Korkut).
"Let us not hurry to set out; 
First, we must divide and share the country with my brothers.” (Nibelungen)

Equality/inequality: In the epic of Dede Korkut, girls are disinherited, and the country and the lands are inherited to only boys. However, in the Nibelungen Epic, girls and boys have equal rights in sharing property and management authority.

Kriemhild Hatun says: “I can give up my inheritance, except my right to give orders to the Burgundian Beys. (Nibelungen)

Marriage: Marriage was examined under the headings of choosing a partner and partner characteristics.

Choosing a partner: It involves selecting a spouse/partner, deserving a spouse, spouse consent, and gender.

The selection of a spouse/partner: In the epic of Dede Korkut, a man himself or sometimes his parents or family elders choose a partner for him. However, in the Nibelungen Epic, men and women choose their partners.

She was chosen by my father and mother (Dede Korkut)

Khan kept talking to Kriemhild: 
“I hope you will willingly allow me to fulfill my oath. 
I got you engaged to a valiant man if you accept him as a husband; … (Nibelungen)

Brünhild said: “If he is your Khan and you are his man, 
He will compete with me by my rules; 
If he beats me, I’ll be his wife (Nibelungen)

Deserving a spouse: In both epics, it is emphasized that it is necessary to merit the partner after having particular struggles.

He is not such a person that he will appear to you, but I am Banu Cicek’s nanny. 
Let’s go hunting. If your horse passes mine, you will pass his … Beyrek says: 
Well, jump on your horses then (Dede Korkut)

The noble girl said, 
“You will have three contests with me, 
You should know that if you lose one contest, you will die” (Nibelungen)
Spouse consent: In the Dede Korkut Epic, the elders’ consent should be obtained in choosing a partner, but in the Nibelungen Epic, the permission of both the elders and women was necessary for a marriage.

... By the command of Almighty Allah, and the words of the Holy Prophet Muhammed
I intend to marry your daughter (Dede Korkut)

Siegfried replied: “I’ll do this. If you let me marry your sister, I’ll help you. (Nibelungen)

Partner characteristics: In both epics, the primary characteristics of wives and husbands include being strong and valiant, noble, virtuous, well-behaved, and worthy of the country and family.

Being strong and valiant: It is stressed in both epics that men and women should be strong and fearless.

The tall lady, Burla Hatun, remembered her boy, and there was no decision left. She took her black sword and forty slim-waisted girls and sprang upon black stallion... (Dede Korkut)

She was unspeakably beautiful and robust. She would compete with the strongest hero in spear throwing (Nibelungen)

Nobility: In both epics, the spouses come from noble families.

... a noble girl grew up in the Burgundian land. She was so beautiful that she was unique in the country. If the strongest Khans wanted to marry, She would be perfect for them. “ (Nibelungen).

You are the sultan’s daughter, the bold. How could I kill you? (Dede Korkut)

Worthy of the country and family: Both epics underline that the woman to be married should possess the necessary qualifications for the decent of country and family.

If an unknown guest from the countryside visits her house, she hosts, feeds, and sends him even though her husband is absent. She is a descendant of Ayshe and Fatima. May she be your wife, and may her babies live long! (Dede Korkut)

The great Khan Etzel asked: “Tell me, my friend, Is that girl worthy of wearing a crown in my country? (Nibelungen)
In the Nibelungen Epic, the men whom the ruler’s daughters marry should have noble ancestors.

“It hurt me deeply,
Seeing your sister with a husband dependent on you. (Nibelungen)

Virtuousness: In the Nibelungen Epic, it is emphasized that both men and women are virtuous, while in the epic of Dede Korkut, only men are virtuous.

His virtuous wife deserved his love.
...He embraced his virtuous wife with his valiant arms... (Nibelungen)

Hey Dirse Khan, give this boy a throne; he is virtuous. (Dede Korkut).

II. Family Relationships: This theme includes parent-child relationships, sibling relationships, and spouse relationships. The findings are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Themes and Sub-Themes on Family Relationships

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1. Parent-child relationship
Love: As seen in Dede Korkut and Nibelungen's epics, there is a loving relationship between parents and children.

She glanced around but could not see her dear son. Her heart began to beat fast, and her black eyes filled with bloody tears (Dede Korkut).

Also, two brothers-in-law of yours asked me to persuade you not to refuse their wishes... They miss Kriemhild Hatun very much; They will be glad to her again.” (Nibelungen).

Support: In both epics, there is a supportive relationship between parents and children. In this sense, parents always support their children’s decisions and choices and help them if necessary.

His parents said: “Go then, Son, and good luck to you. If it is your fate to return, may you then return unharmed and well.” (Dede Korkut)

"If you are so determined,” his father said then, “Your request gives me sincere happiness (Nibelungen).

However, in the Dede Korkut epics, it is noteworthy that mothers support and protect their sons, especially against their husbands.

... Dirse Khan’s lady came back, but she could not rest. She took forty slim-waisted girls, rode her horse in search of her son. (Dede Korkut)

She started to worry about his beloved son. She was terrified of Gunther Khan’ Beys, That is why Soylu Hanım Sultan wept deeply (Nibelungen).

Respect: The mutual respect between parents and children can be seen in both epics. Parents especially respect the children’s decisions.

Basat says: Of course, I will go. Kazan says: You know. His father cried and said: Don’t leave my house unattended, do good deeds, and don’t go. (Dede Korkut).

“Now that you are determined about what is in your mind, I will help you on your journey, my dearest son,” said Sieglinde Hatun (Nibelungen).

In Dede Korkut’s epic, children respect their parents, listen to their parent’s advice, and especially sons show respect and value to their mothers.
You brought my camels in a row. Let them carry your goods. You got my old mother. Oh, you, the faithless, give me my mother back. Let me withdraw without fighting (Dede Korkut).

**Expectation:** The relationship between parents and children depends on parental expectations, especially in Dede Korkut's epic. Parents expect their children to behave favorably, maintain tradition, be virtuous, and protect the country.

Boğaçhan said, "Let my father praise me on my horse riding, let him feel safe and rejoice thanks to my arrow shot and using the sword. (Dede Korkut).

These gentlemen were benevolent, and they came from noble origins. They were distinguished heroes with daring and strength (Nibelungen).

**Gender:** In both epics, boys and girls are welcomed in the family.

Put the family with a son in a white tent, the one with a daughter in a red tent, and the one without a son or a daughter in a black tent (Dede Korkut)

The beautiful Brünhild, living in the homeland of Burgund, gave birth to a son, the wealthy Gunther. (Nibelungen)

In the epic of Dede Korkut, parents do not treat equally to their daughters and sons. They favor sons, and only sons have a say in the issues surrounding inheritance and management.

Oh, my lionlike son, whom I slaughtered nine male camels when he was born. Son, the support of my house with golden chimney (Dede Korkut)

**Trust/distrust:** There is a trust relationship between parents and children in the Nibelungen Epic, but the fathers in Dede Korkut Epic do not trust their sons.

The boy sat on the throne, and after a while, he despised forty warriors of his father. Therefore, they bore him a grudge and plotted: Let us turn his father against him. If he kills his son, our dignity and esteem may continue and grow. (Dede Korkut).

2. **Sibling relationships:** Sibling relationships are discussed under the headings of support, respect, love, and revenge.
Support: In both epics, siblings support each other in all circumstances and decisions.

Kazan Bey’s brother, Kara Göne, came galloping. He said: “Draw your sword, brother, I have caught up.” (Dede Korkut)

Khan’s daughter said: “My dear brother, I am ready to do whatever I can to help you; I am prepared to do it (Nibelungen).

Respect: The respect relationships between siblings can be seen in both epics. They, especially brothers, accept and respect all the decisions and rules of the ruler brother. The rules brother and respect his siblings either.

You don’t need to feel hesitant to ask a request,
You are my Khan, and it is a custom that you have the right to give orders. (Nibelungen)

The two brothers met and hugged each other. Egrek kissed his little brother’s neck. Segrek also kissed his brother’s hand (Dede Korkut).

Love: It is understood in both epics that there are commitment and love between siblings.

Let me die for your mouth, my brother! Let me die for your tongue, my brother!
Have you grown into manhood already, my brother? Did you ride so far just to search for your brother, my brother? (Dede Korkut).

There is nothing that pleases me much better than her in the world. I am full of happiness as I remember his kind-hearted sister. (Nibelungen)

Taking revenge: In both epics, although sibling bonds generally rely on love, respect, and solidarity, brothers take revenge from each other. For instance, in Dede Korkut’s epic, the brother who killed Cyclops took revenge for his brother who mistreated his people. Similarly, there is revenge against the brother who let his wife die and took her inheritance in the Nibelungen Epic.

He came to Salahana Rock, where the Cyclops were lying in the sun.
He drew an arrow and hit Cyclops’s back… (Dede Korkut).

Hatun said: “I will be grateful all my life for who takes my revenge. I will also give whatever he wants.” (Nibelungen)
3. Spouse relationships: Spouse relationships are addressed with the themes of love, respect, support, and commitment.

Love: In both epics, there is love and passion between men and women.

"Will you come here, my love, the crown of my home? Walking along so tall, like a cypress tree, With long black hair that falls to her feet… You, whom my parents gave me, You, whom I saw when I opened my eyes, The one whom I loved at first sight (Dede Korkut)

Indeed, when he lay down next to Kriemhild and felt her impermanent and lovely skin on his body, he became committed to her, like his soul; His virtuous wife deserved his love. (Nibelungen).

Support: As can be seen in both epics, the spouses support each other.

The tall lady, Burla Hatun, remembered her boy, and there was no decision left. She took her black sword and forty slim-waisted girls and sprang upon black stallion to look for Kazan, her dearest… (Dede Korkut)

We should similarly welcome and host Siegfried’s wife. “Of course, I will do that,” said Brünhild, “she is worthy.” (Nibelungen)

Loyalty/commitment: The spouses are loyal to each other in both epics.

“My young hero, I shall wait for you a year. If you do not return in one, I shall wait for you for two. (Dede Korkut)

She would beg the mighty God to give peace to her soul, She would cry for that hero with sincere devotion (Nibelungen).

3. Family and Education: Family and education sub-theme involve education goal, education type, and gender. The findings are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3 Theme and Sub-Themes on Family and Education

<table>
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2. Education type

**Play**

The rich Gunther charged instructors to teach him merit and virtue.

...Wise people, known for their dignity, taught him. (Nibelungen)

**Wise people**

The young hero should mount the Kazılık horse, and he should wear the armor of steel. He should have guests and shouldn’t lie. (Dede Korkut)

2. Education type: Education is given through play, role models, wise people, traditions, and customs.

**Play:** In both epics, events are organized for the heroes to acquire necessary skills. For example, hunting is used in the Dede Korkut Epic and sword games in the Nibelungen Epic.

Your father told you to chase and bring the deer to him. He said, "Let me see my son’s horse riding, sword playing, and arrow shooting. Let me rejoice, be proud, and trust him.” (Dede Korkut)

It was Han’s command to organize Atlı Bey plays always,

Many young heroes would enthusiastically join the event. (Nibelungen).

**Wise people:** In the Nibelungen Epic, wise tutors guide and instruct, but there is not any tutor or instructor in the epic of Dede Korkut.

Wise people, known for their dignity, were his tutors. (Nibelungen)

**Modeling:** In the epic of Dede Korkut, children learn by modeling their parents.
The daughter does not listen to advice unless she observed it in her mother, and the son does not feast unless his father feasts. (Dede Korkut)

3. Gender: The education of boys and girls differs between the two epics. Women are mostly taught domestic skills while men are trained to be warriors.

"The father has the son for honor / the son wears the sword for the father / May my head be a sacrifice to you" (Dede Korkut)

Hatun said: "It is a pity for her beauty and a good upbringing! (Nibelungen)

Discussion, Conclusion, and Implications

The current study compared Dede Korkut and Nibelungen’s epics in terms of family and child themes and indicated similar and different characteristics about family structure and family-child relationships. The epic heroes with the power and authority to represent the virtues of their society also reflect the culture in which social leaders and heroes grow up (Keskin, 2018). The events that happened to the heroes in both epics reveal several family structures and relations in Turkish and German societies. Koçyiğit (2018), in his study comparing the epics of Gilgamesh and Oghuz Khagan, found many similar aspects between the two societies. Therefore, the heroes in the Turkish and German epics in the east and west share many similar characteristics.

Researchers specified and compared three themes and sub-themes in the epics of the Dede Korkut and Nibelungen. The first theme, family characteristics, is discussed with parental characteristics, children’s characteristics, and family structure. In this sense, it was concluded that parents in both epics were supportive, encouraging, and role models for their children. They also expected them to take over the ruling and management power when they grew. Especially in the epic of Dede Korkut, mothers were very protective of their sons. Similarly, in the epic of Er Samır, mothers protect their sons, especially against their husbands (Dilek, 2002). Aytaç (2006) indicates that the child-rearing practices in American and European societies focus on children’s autonomy, independence, and self-reliance. As can be seen in the Nibelungen Epic, families still have fewer protective attitudes towards children in Europe today.

The children’s characteristics in the epics were dealt with from two aspects: physical appearances and personality traits. In both epics, boys and girls are beautiful and robust. The heroes’ common characteristics in both epics involve being bold, brave, aggressive, determined, open to others’ opinions
and advice, and striving to fulfill their decisions and promises. In a similar comparison study on common features of the sons in the epics of the Turkic world and the Kalavela epic, the sons were bold, brave, and warrior (Abdurrezzak, 2014). Indeed, the heroes’ most common feature involves their extraordinary achievements and good deeds (Ertürk, 2015). Bodmer compared the Nibelungen Epic with the Iliad and Odyssey and showed that the heroes in Nibelungen Epic have more honor, bravery, and honesty than the Iliad and Odyssey (Keleș as cited in Härd 1996, 2010). However, unlike the Nibelungen Epic, Dede Korkut Epic’s heroes are obedient and listen to their parents’ advice. Şahin and Cevher (2007) emphasize that parents in traditional Turkish society expect their children to be obedient, docile, and dutiful. In many works such as Dede Korkut, Kutadgu Bilig, Divan ü Lugat-it-Türk, there is much information on how to treat children considering their birth order, age, and gender, and on what skills should be taught. In these works, it is stressed to rear tender, lovely, well-behaved, and sympathetic girls while boys should be fearless, brave, and honest (Sınar 2006). Today, although there are changes in raising children, parents still expect them to be obedient and docile.

Family structure is a sub-theme of the family characteristics theme. In both epics, families take their strength from loyalty, solidarity, hospitality, and benevolence. It is also stressed that family members are expected to be honest and virtuous and protect family dignity, making the families strong. Keskin (2018) indicated that national epics reflect nations’ ideals and explicitly or implicitly aim to convey them to future generations. Therefore, although strong bonds and healthy relationships in the family and virtuous heroes are frequently emphasized themes in both epics, the existence of revenge in the epics can be considered a lesson for future generations, as revenge could lead to the extinct of a dynasty, as exemplified in the Nibelungen Epic.

Family characteristics are another subtheme of the family structure in epics. The findings regarding the ruling and decision-making process in the given epics indicated that rulers asked the opinions of wise men and even the public and then made decisions accordingly. Keskin (2018) researched similar results in his comparison study on epics.

There are profound differences in management and decision-making between the two epics. In both epics, the ruling power is transferred from father to son. However, in the Nibelungen Epic, women participate and assist the ruling. The ruling power can be belonging to a specific family or be transferred to another person. There are also differences in the share of inheritance between the two epics. Women can have a share in both inheritance, property, and administration only in the Nibelungen Epic.

In Dede Korkut and Nibelungen’s epics, there are both similarities and differences in the marriage theme. For instance, in the epic of Dede Korkut, with the consent of his parents, a man or sometimes parents choose a partner for him. However, in the Nibelungen Epic, women or men can choose their
partners, and parents should consent to the woman and the man. It is notable in both epics that a man should strive to deserve his wife and vice versa. Keskin (2018) reached similar results and revealed that a marriage following certain efforts and fighting is a tool for heroes to prove their heroism in the Kyrgyz-Kazakh epics. The characteristics of partners are similar in both epics. For example, partners should be strong, courageous, virtuous, noble, and worthy of the country and family. Similarly, the wives of the heroes in Şehname, Köroğlu (Kiyak, 2010) and Kyrgyz-Kazakh epics (Keskin, 2018) are noble persons.

Researchers also compared family relationships in both epics and underlined a supportive, loving, and respectful relationship between parents and children. Besides, parents had particular expectations from their children. In their study on the epic of Dede Korkut, Buldur, Meydan, and Gungör (2016) stressed sincere and loving relations between family members.

Although it is vital to have a child, regardless of gender, parents mostly want to have boys in both epics. In the Dede Korkut Epic, boys are considered superior and a source of pride due to their achievements in wars (Buldur, Meydan, & Gungör, 2016). There is a difference between the two epics in terms of trust in children. In the epic of Dede Korkut, especially fathers distrust their children. However, the trust relationship between parents and child is an important issue today. Recent studies have shown that securely attached infants are more social, adaptive, and cooperative than insecurely attached infants. The securely attached infants are patient and develop good social relations with their peers and problem-solving skills (Lamb 2004, Lamb et al. 1996).

The sibling relationship is another critical dimension of family relationship, and, especially in childhood, involves both cooperation and competition due to the frequent experience of opposite emotions such as love, anger, and jealousy (Cunningham 1993, Deckard et al. 2002, Fitness and Duffield 2004). There is a supportive, loving, and respectful relationship between the siblings in both epics. In his study on the brotherhood in the Dede Korkut Epic and the Kazakh epic Şakir-Şakirat, Özcan (2013) reached similar results. Similarly, Kaplan (2016) examined the sibling relations in Turkish epics and showed that siblings played a unifying role in some epics.

It was also found that the conflict between brothers in both epics turned into revenge. As can be seen in the Nibelungen Epic, the loss of family bonds, especially the sibling bonds, leads to feelings of revenge and family collapse. Ertürk (2015) highlighted the conflicts between brothers in Kazan-Tatar epics, while Kaplan (2016) indicated that siblings in Dede Korkut epics were very helpful and supportive to each other.

The partner/spouse relationship is based on love, support, and commitment in both epics. Ertürk (2015) found similar bonds in Alpamış Epic, and Abrurrezzak (2014) revealed that partners were always committed
and supported each other in the Dede Korkut Epic. It was concluded that in the epics of Dede Korkut and Nibelungen, both partners treated each other with love and respect, and especially wives supported their husbands.

Lastly, researchers compared the family and education themes in the given epics. The theme was addressed with the subthemes of education goal, education type, and gender. In both epics, education aims to raise bold, strong, virtuous, famous, and benevolent warriors who follow the traditions. The main characteristics of powerful states and kingdoms include being honorable, honest, and virtuous. In this regard, those fundamental values have kept the two deep-rooted Turkish and German cultures on the stage of history for centuries.

The education types in both epics include role modeling and following traditions and customs. Keskin (2018) found that heroes’ education begins in the family and continues in society as they grow. The only difference between the given epics is that instructors taught in the Nibelungen Epic. Additionally, girls were educated in the palace in the Nibelungen Epic. Today, a child’s personality and self-esteem mainly depend on their parents’ personality and role model behaviors. Parents with high self-esteem reflect a sense of security and confidence in their children. A child learns good and undesirable behaviors by adopting parents’ attitudes and behaviors (Yavuzer 2011). Thus, it can be inferred that as role models, parents always play a prominent role for children, which can also be seen in epics.

Children become happy and healthy adults when they grow up in a family with healthy and secure relationships (Erkan and Durmuşoğlu 2006). Family profoundly affects a child’s development and learning (Morrison, 2006). This comparison study revealed that although there are very few differences between Turkish and German societies regarding family and children, the two epics have many similar characteristics. Since epics undertake an essential role in conveying the culture, including ideal lifestyles and ideal people, to the new generations, the similarities between the given epics can suggest that all societies wish to create a family and society with universal values.

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