4.1: Introduction

It is useful to define the culture before discussing the term. According to the definition made by Turkish Language Institution Culture, the culture is described as the sum of all the material and spiritual values created in the process of social development and the tools that are used to create and hand these values down to next generations and show the extent of the man’s authority and control over their natural and social environment [1].

According to another definition, the culture is the general total of beliefs, attitudes and behaviors, customs and traditions, learned and shared values, and sustains its existence through learning and teaching of attitudes, actions and role models [2].

As it can be understood from these definitions, culture is a non-written link from the past to the present day, bridging the individuals in society. As a phenomenon, The term “culture,” which diversifies in each community and so is experienced differently, also affects the way individuals perceive the phenomena such as health, illness, happiness, sadness and the manner these emotions are experienced [3].

Culture is a relative concept that varies according to health cultures as well as affecting the perception of health [4].

Health is determined by biological and environmental factors as well as by cultural practices [5].

Culture affects many aspects of human life, such as parental attitudes, child rearing patterns, how to speak, what language to speak, how to dress, believe, treat patients, what to do with and how to feed them and to deal with funerals [6, 7].

Individuals’ health behaviors and health perceptions are regarded inseparable from each other. Communities having endeavored to maintain their cultural characteristics for centuries have passed down this on their health behaviors and strived for finding cures to their health problems in their cultural lives. Types of food, cooking methods, sleeping habits,
dressing patterns, forms of treatment of diseases, housing and residence, perception of diseases, modes of acceptance of innovations are characteristics varying from culture to culture and intertwined with culture. It is known that people cannot act independently of the culture they live in [8].

Culture is influential at many levels in health, ranging from the formation of new diagnostic groups, to the diagnosis of disease to the determination of what is called a disease or not symptoms and disease cues [6, 7].

However, in almost all regions of the world, wars, ethnic conflicts, repressive regimes, environmental and economic crises along with globalization have forced many people to abandon their country and migrate in their country or to immigrate other countries as refugees. As a result, multicultural populations comprised of individuals, families and groups from different cultures and subcultures are rapidly emerging all around the world [9, 10, 11].