

## Summary

# Psychological Correlates of Negative Attitudes of Turks and Kurds Toward One Another

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In this research, political orientation and religiosity, social dominance orientation and level of system justification motives were examined as basic predictors in order to understand the prejudices of Turks and Kurds towards each other. It has also been investigated whether values are associated with prejudicial attitudes for both ethnic groups and whether this relationship is mainly explained by their identification with their ethnic identities.

According to social dominance theory, the most important factor that leads to group-based prejudice is the social dominance orientations of the people, and that social dominance orientation is also strictly related to right-wing political orientation (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). The findings from Turkey are also compatible with the general predictions of social dominance theory (Balaban, 2013; Karaçanta, 2002; Karaoğlu, 2015; Yılmaz & Sarıbay, 2016). Moreover, according to social identity theory, people perceive their group memberships as their own, and they also evaluate the people around them in terms of their group's dynamics (Tajfel, 1978, Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This situation not only increases in-group favoritism, but also negative attitudes towards out-groups (Brewer, 2001).

Furthermore, Jost and Banaji (1994) seek answers with the system justification theory to how disadvantaged groups conceive of a system that does not serve anybody at all. Although this theory seems to be a theory arising out of the arguments against social identity theory, it, in fact, aims to overcome some limitations and to increase the explanatory power of that theory (Rubin & Hewstone, 2004). According to this theory, people internalize and maintain the inequalities in the system, even if it only serves the interests of the advantageous groups. According to Napier and Jost (2008), justifying the system would alleviate the negative consequences for the disadvantaged individual. However, this mitigating effect applies to the advantageous group as well as to the disadvantaged group. Jost, Pelham, Sheldon and

Sullivan (2003) argue that although disadvantaged individuals legitimize the system more than advantageous individuals, the advantageous group is already legitimizing the system in order to preserve its advantageous position (Josh, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004). However, if the disadvantaged group has a high in-group identification (i.e., ethnic or religious), then justification of the system would be low (Jost et al., 2004).

In addition to all these, there are some findings that relate right-wing authoritarianism, right-wing political orientation, and higher levels of religiosity with prejudice (Allport & Ross, 1967; Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992; Spilka, 1986; Whitley & Bernard, 1999). Furthermore, another variable that can influence people's prejudiced attitudes might be the values people possess, because political and cultural groups unite their members in common worldviews with value-laden ideologies. Thus, this research examines whether the values people possess mediate the above-mentioned relations.

The main aim of this research is to understand which variables predict the prejudiced attitudes of Turks toward Kurds and vice versa. The second aim of the current research is to understand the mechanisms that lead Turks or Kurds to feel socially distant toward the other group. In this context, political orientation and religiosity, social dominance orientation and level of system justification were taken as the main predictors. We also investigated whether the basic values or levels of identification with their ethnic identities (for Turks or Kurds) can mediate the relations between above-mentioned variables and prejudicial attitudes.

### Method

#### Participants

A total of 338 (164 Turks, 174 Kurds) subjects participated in this research (Mean age = 31.13, *SD* = 10.78, min. 16, max. 67, 152 females, 187 males).

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### Materials and Procedure

Prejudice was measured with three different scales in this research. The first scale is the well-known Social Distance Scale (Bogardus, 1925). The others are Modern Prejudice Scale (McConahay, Hardee, & Batts, 1981; see Cingöz-Ulu, 2008 for the Turkish adaptation) and Feeling Thermometer from 0 (very cold) to 100 (very warm). The latter two scales were evaluated together because they correspond to some generalized attitudes towards the out-group. More specifically, the Modern Prejudice Scale and the Feeling Thermometer form were combined into a single score, called the Prejudice score.

In the demographic questions, participants were asked to report some demographic information including their age (in years), political orientation (1 = left, 7 = right), religiosity (two questions: 1 = not religious / religion is not important in my life, 7 = highly religious / religious is important in my life), and gender (0 = female, 1 = male).

The participants were also asked to respond to the Social Identity Scale developed by Cameron (2004) and adapted into Turkish by Cingöz-Ulu (2008). They also responded to the System Justification Scale, developed by Jost and Kay (2005), and adapted into Turkish by Yıldırım (2010). They also answered the Social Dominance Orientation Scale, developed by Sidanius et al. (1994), and adapted into Turkish by Karaçanta (2002). They were also asked to complete The Portrait Values Questionnaire, developed by Schwartz et al. (2001) and adapted into Turkish by Demirutku and Sumer (2010). The Portrait Values Questionnaire evaluates values on two dimensions. The first one is Openness to Change (Self-direction and Stimulation), and Conservation (Security, Conformity, and Tradition), while the other one is Self-transcendence (Benevolence and Universalism) and Self-enhancement (Hedonism, Achievement, and Power).

The data were collected from Istanbul, Samsun, Van, and Zonguldak via snowball sampling method.

### Results

The results showed that the Kurds and the Turks significantly differ in their level of identification with their ethnic identities, levels of system justification, social dominance orientation, and the values of self-transcendence, self-enhancement, and openness to change. Kurds showed significantly higher levels of identification with their ethnic identity and self-transcendence than Turks. Turks showed significantly higher scores in the level of system justification, social dominance orientation, self-enhancement and openness to change than Kurds.

We found significant correlations between Turks' prejudice towards Kurds and their level of ethnic identification ( $r = .294$ ), conservation values ( $r = .237$ ), and

right-wing political orientation ( $r = .318$ ). Hierarchical linear regression analysis was conducted with variables showing significant correlation with prejudice. We included right-wing political orientation in the first step, conservation values in the second step, followed by the level of identification with Turkish identity in the third step. The results showed that identification with Turkish identity (in addition to right-wing political orientation) significantly predicted prejudice toward Kurds in the last step. When we looked at the relationship between the level of social distance and the other variables, it was seen that only religiosity ( $r = .156$ ) and right-wing political orientation ( $r = .232$ ) had significant relations with the level of social distance toward Kurds. A linear regression analysis, however, suggested that only the right-wing political orientation significantly predicted the level of social distance.

When we look at the Kurds' prejudice towards Turks, we found significant relations between high prejudice towards Turks and low levels of system justification ( $r = -.300$ ), higher levels of Kurdish identification ( $r = .252$ ), and low social dominance orientation ( $r = -.238$ ). There was also a marginally significant correlation between prejudice and conservation values ( $r = .151$ ,  $p = .069$ ). Hierarchical linear regression analysis was conducted with variables showing a significant relationship with prejudice. We included system justification and social dominance orientation in the first step, conservation values in the second step, followed by the level of identification with Kurdish identity in the third step. In addition to the independent contribution of the system justification motive ( $\beta = -.281$ ), the strength of Kurdish identification also independently contributed to the model in the last step ( $\beta = .194$ ). The level of the social distance of Kurds toward Turks was significantly correlated with gender ( $r = .164$ ) and age ( $r = -.172$ ). There was also a significant correlation between the level of social distance and self-transcendence ( $r = -.285$ ) and conservation values ( $r = -.302$ ). Hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to determine which value dimension explained more variance in the level of social distance for the Turks. In the first step, we included gender and age followed by self-transcendence and conservation values. In addition to the independent contribution of gender ( $\beta = -.221$ ), conservation values also independently (but marginally) contributed to the model in the last step ( $\beta = -.186$ ,  $p = .057$ ). The results showed that as conservation values increase, the social distance score towards Turks decreases.

### Discussion

The two most important variables predicting prejudices of the Turks toward the Kurds are higher levels

of Turkish identification and right-wing political orientation. The only variable that predicts the willingness of Turks to be socially distant from Kurds is right-wing political orientation. This result is parallel to both the right-wing authoritarianism literature (Allport & Ross, 1967; Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992) and social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). However, these results also suggest that negative attitudes can be influenced by socio-political dynamics beyond individual variables. The level of Turkish identification, which predicts the prejudicial and distant attitudes of the Turks toward the Kurds, indicates that the dominant identity, the Turkish national identity, serves as a political position as well. In this sense, the finding that higher levels of conservation values and right-wing political orientation predict Turks' prejudice toward Kurds, is compatible with not only the basic assumptions of social identity (Tajfel, 1978; Turner, 1987), but also system justification Theory (Josh, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004). The most important variable that predicts the Kurds' negative attitudes toward the Turks is higher levels of Kurdish identification. This finding is also compatible with social identity theory.

However, the results of this research also have some implications that are not compatible with the general literature. For example, the findings that both social dominance orientation and system justification motive are negatively correlated with the Kurds' prejudice toward Turks, are incompatible with both the social dominance and system justification literature. Moreover, the only variable that reduces the level of social distance of Kurds toward Turks is to have high conservation values.

Bayad (2015) obtained similar results on the relation between value dimensions of Kurds and their tendency to explain their group belongings through a superordinate category, that is, Turkish identity. Furthermore, Esmer's (2012) analysis of the World Values Survey indicates that post-materialistic values such as freedom of thought, environmental awareness, and self-realization were found higher in the Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia regions, where Kurds live extensively. These studies show that in regions where the Kurdish population is concentrated, traditional values are closely related to Turkish identity, which represents the dominant culture, not the minority identity. This particular situation regarding the Kurds might show that the Kurds' modernization process operates differently from the modernization process of Turks (Boehnke, 2001; Inglehart and Baker, 2000).

In this sense, a critique of the social identity theory argues that it is insufficient to explain the intergroup conflicts (Cuhadar & Dayton, 2011; Huddy, 2001) since the theory does not take into account the political environment or historical processes. These criticisms argue that social identities can be best understood by exploring the meaning and ideological aspects it has.

As a result, this research tried to reveal the main variables determining the attitudes of Turks and Kurds living in Turkey to each other at the psychological level. However, it must be noted that our sample is not based on a probabilistic, representative sample. Thus, similar attempts should examine the same relationships in the samples representing both the Turks and the Kurds living in Turkey.