

The Relationships among Attitudes toward Gay Men and Lesbians, System Justification, Social Contact, Political Orientation and Gender

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Lezbiyen, gey, tutum, sistemi meşrulaştırma, sosyal temas, politik oryantasyon, cinsiyet

Abstract

The study explored the association among attitudes toward lesbians and gay men, system justification, social contact, political orientation, and gender in a Muslim heterosexual sample in Turkey. Participants (N = 377; Women = 276 & Men = 101; M_{Age} = 21.83, SD_{Age} = 2.00) completed scales of Attitudes toward Gay Men (ATG) and Lesbians (ATL), system justification, and demographic information. Men had more negative scores on ATG and ATL than women. Gay men were evaluated more negatively than lesbians by men. Having higher scores on system justification, being close to extreme right political orientation, and having lower social contact with gay men/lesbians were associated with negative ATG and ATL. Men scored higher on ATG, indicating negative attitudes toward gay men, but there was not a significant difference between women and men for ATL.

Geylere ve Lezbiyenlere İlişkin Tutumlar ile Sistemi Meşrulaştırma, Sosyal Temas, Politik Yönelim ve Cinsiyet Arasındaki İlişki

Bu çalışmada geylere ve lezbiyenlere ilişkin tutumlar, sistemi meşrulaştırma, sosyal temas, politik oryantasyon ve cinsiyet arasındaki ilişki Türkiye’de Müslüman heteroseksüel örnekleminde incelenmiştir. Araştırmaya katılan 377 katılımcı (Kadın = 276, Erkek = 101; Ort_{Yaş} = 21.83, SS_{Yaş} = 2.00) Geylere ve Lezbiyenlere İlişkin Tutumlar Ölçeği, Sistemi Meşrulaştırma Ölçeği ve Demografik Bilgi Formunu doldurmuştur. Erkek katılımcılar geyleri lezbiyenlere oranla daha olumsuz değerlendirmiştir. Sistemi meşrulaştırma düzeyinin yüksek olması, aşırı sağ politik oryantasyona yakın olma ve geyler/lezbiyenlerle düşük oranda sosyal temas kurma geylere ve lezbiyenlere ilişkin olumsuz tutumları yordamıştır. Ayrıca, erkek katılımcılar, geylere ilişkin tutumlarda yüksek puanlar alarak daha olumsuz tutumlar belirtmişlerdir; ancak lezbiyenlere ilişkin tutumlar açısından kadın ve erkek cinsiyet farkı anlamlı bulunamamıştır.

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Prejudice and discrimination against gay men and lesbians is an important social problem, and in return, some negative psychological consequences of such stigmatization (e.g., depression, self-harm behaviors, suicide (Lee, Oliffe, Kelly ve Ferlatte, 2017), anxiety, social withdrawal (Meyers, 2003)) are observed in almost every culture. The prejudiced Attitudes toward Gay men (ATG) and Lesbians (ATL) seem to be very high in Muslim countries such as in Turkey (e.g., Duyan & Duyan, 2005; Sakallı & Uğurlu, 2001; Oksal, 2008) and other countries (see Tamilchelvan & Ab Rashid, 2017). Gay men and lesbians are exposed to harassment and violence (Öztürk & Kındap, 2011), and because of the prejudice and discrimination, they tend to hide their sexual orientation (Öztürk & Kozacioğlu, 1998), and are reluctant to even identify themselves as gay man or lesbian in Turkey (Özyeğin, 2012). Despite the importance of these issues, few Turkish researchers (see Metin-Orta & Metin-Camgöz, 2018a for a recent review on the studies of homophobia in Turkey) have attempted to understand the associations among social psychological constructs and negative ATG and ATL. The goal of the current study is to fill the gap by understanding some of the social psychological constructs behind ATG/ATL. Therefore, the association among system justification, political orientation, social contact, gender of participants, and ATG/ATL is examined. The present study may contribute to the relevant literature on several ways. It may increase awareness of the social problem. It may also help researchers, educators, and lawmakers to create some social, political, and attitudinal changes to decrease discrimination against gay men and lesbians. Any possible positive changes in the reactions of heterosexual people may also increase life satisfaction and psychological well-being of gay men and lesbians.

Attitudes toward Gay Men and Lesbians

Researchers from Western cultures have focused on the issues of ATG and ATL since 1970s. Some studies have examined only ATG (Davies, 2004) or only ATL (Basow & Johnson, 2000), or both of them (Heaven & Oxman, 1999; Wilkonson & Roys, 2005). Almost all of the studies have found negative ATG and ATL (Herek, 1984; Lance, 1987). Further, being male (Herek, 1988); having lower education (Iraklis, 2010) and social contact (Hansen, 1982; Iraklis, 2010; LaMar & Kite, 1998); having higher level of sexism (Black & Stevenson, 1984; Krulewitz & Nash, 1980), authoritarianism (Crawford, Brandt, Inbar, & Mallinas, 2016), social dominance orientation (Goodman & Moradi, 2008), religiosity, and religious orientations (Herek & Capitanio 1996; Iraklis, 2010; Larsen, Reed, & Hoffman, 1980; Wilkinson & Roys, 2005) were associated with negative ATG/ATL.

Lately, Turkish researchers have started conducting empirical studies on ATG and ATL. Males (Çırakoğlu, 2006; Duyan & Duyan, 2005; Sakallı & Uğurlu, 2001; Oksal, 2008), people with sexist attitudes (Sakallı, 2002a), with greater social dominance orientation (Metin-Orta, 2019), and people who have low social contact with gay men (Çırakoğlu, 2006; Metin-Orta & Metin-Camgöz, 2018b; Sakallı & Uğurlu, 2001, 2002) had higher homophobia in Turkey. People with higher levels of openness to experience showed less negative attitudes toward homosexuals (Metin-Orta & Metin-Camgöz, 2018b). Further, Sakallı (2002b) demonstrated that the attributions of controllability and individual's perception about negative cultural values on gay man and lesbians predicted prejudice against them. Finally, religiosity was associated with prejudice against both lesbians and gay men in Turkey (Gelbal & Duyan, 2006; Sakallı-Uğurlu & Uğurlu, 2016; Saraç, 2012).

The present study extends previous research on understanding ATG and ATL in two main ways. First, a new social psychological concept, system justification (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004) is added into the study as well as some demographic variables such as political orientation, social contact, and gender to understand ATG and ATL. Second, we measure both lesbians and gay men to expand the scope of Turkish research from a focus on “homosexuals” in general to specific focuses on lesbians and gay men. As a meta-analyses article by Whitley (2009) suggested, many earlier studies have usually focused on attitudes toward “homosexuals” rather than distinguishing between lesbians and gay men, and that it is necessary to have the distinction between lesbians and gay men. Focusing on Turkey, it is seen that Turkish researchers have generally used Hudson and Ricketts’s homophobia scale (e.g., Sakallı, 2002a; Sakallı & Uğurlu, 2001) and have recently started to study ATG and ATL separately (e.g., Sakallı-Uğurlu & Uğurlu, 2016). Following Whitley’s suggestion, the study aims at providing information about whether system justification and some demographic variables such as social contact, political orientation, and gender predict both ATG and ATL in a heterosexual Muslim sample from Turkey.

System Justification

Social psychologists, Jost and his colleagues (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost et al., 2004), offered System Justification Theory to understand the relationship between groups and prejudice against disadvantaged groups. System justification is defined as a psychological process by which people either consciously or sub-consciously adopt ideologies and beliefs that legitimize existing social, political, and economic arrangements in a society (Jost & Hunyady, 2005; Kay & Jost, 2003). System justification theory suggests that people are motivated to defend and bolster existing social arrangements. In addition, the motive is usually activated under circumstances in which people perceive that their life style is threatened (Jost, Kivetz, Rubini, Guermandi, & Mosso, 2005; van der Toorn, Tyler, & Jost, 2011). It also indicates that both low status/disadvantaged/minority and high status / advantaged / majority group may justify the social order.

Recently, there are some researchs on how system justification felt by disadvantaged group members such as gay men and lesbians influence their perception of same sex parenting (Giuseppina Pacilli, Taurino, Jost, & van der Toorn, 2011), their psychological well-being (Bahamondes-Correa, 2016), health, and happiness (Suppes, Napier, van de Toorn, 2019). However, these studies did not cover how advantaged group members such as heterosexual individuals defend and bolster the existing gender system. In the present study we mainly suggest that heterosexual people might perceive gay men and lesbians as a threat to their life style and gender roles (Weaver & Vescio, 2015). They might have a motivation to justify the existing heterosexual relationship by showing prejudice gay men and lesbians because they are deviating from the existing system about gender roles and sexual orientation in Turkish culture.

To our knowledge, there is no study directly examining the association between system justification and ATG/ATL. However, researchers have studied some related constructs such as right-wing authoritarianism (Crawford et al., 2016; Rowatt, LaBouff, Johnson, Froese, & Tsang, 2009; Stefurak, Taylor, & Mehta, 2010) and social dominance orientation (Goodman & Moradi, 2008; Metin-Orta, 2019 in Turkey) to understand ATG/ATL. Right-wing authoritarianism which is briefly submission to authority was found to be correlated with anti-lesbian and gay prejudice (Basow & Johnson, 2000; Rowatt et al., 2009; Whitley & Lee, 2000). Further, social dominance, which is one’s desire to perceive one’s in-group as dominant and superior to out-groups, has been linked with negative ATG/ATL (Whitley & Lee, 2000).

Relying on the previous findings, it is possible to argue that system justification may be associated with higher level of negative ATG and ATL.

Demographic Variables as Social Contact, Political Orientation and Gender

Social Contact Hypotheses by Allport (1954) suggested that there is a tendency to reduce conflict and prejudice when people start having contact with other groups. Later, Pettigrew (1997) expanded the social contact hypotheses and argued that people who have friends from out-groups or minority groups are less likely to show prejudice against them because intergroup friendship might provide an insight about other groups, and humanize them. Researchers have applied the social contact into ATG and ATL. For example, Krulewitz and Nash (1980) found that heterosexual participants perceived gay men and lesbians as dissimilar to themselves, and this perception lead to negative ATG/ATL. Similarly, Whitley (1990) suggested that friendship with gay men and lesbians might be helpful for recognizing the similarities between, and reducing prejudice against them. Several studies have also demonstrated a positive association between social contact and positive attitudes toward homosexuals in Western countries (Anderssen, 2002; Haddock, Zanna, & Esses, 1993; Herek & Capitanio, 1996; LaMar & Kite, 1998), and in Turkey (Metin-Orta & Metin-Camgöz, 2018b; Sakallı & Uğurlu, 2001, 2002). People who had previous social interactions with a homosexual, expressed less discomfort with a homosexual than others who did not have any previous social interactions (Lance, 1987; Millham, San Miguel, & Kellogg, 1976). Consistently, we predict that having social contact with gay men and lesbians would be negatively associated with ATG and ATL in Turkey.

Political orientation can be an important variable to understand prejudice against gay men and lesbians because being on the right or left political spectrum may lead people to have certain attitudes toward outgroup, equality, and discrimination (Braungart, 1986). Researchers have demonstrated that political conservatism is associated with resistance to change on social arrangement (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003), and that political affiliation was correlated with attitudes toward non-traditional women in the USA (Sigillo, Miller, & Weiser, 2012). Further, Turkish researchers (Dalmış & İmamoğlu, 2000; Yılmaz, Sarıbay, Bahçekapılı, & Harma, 2016) presented that being on the right political spectrum is positively correlated with being less open-minded, more authoritarian, conservative and sexist whereas political leftist are more likely to support fairness in Turkey. As a result, we expect that people who lean towards the right in the political spectrum are expected to endorse negative ATG/ATL.

Finally, gender differences have been extensively examined in the literature on ATG/ATL. For example, men were more prejudiced against lesbians and gay men than women (Anderssen, 2002; Hunsberger, Owusu & Duck, 1999; Kite & Whitley, 1996; Oliver & Hyde, 1993; West & Cowell, 2015). Men evaluated gay men more negatively than lesbians (Gentry, 1987; Herek, 1988; Whitley, 1987). However, there have been some conflicting results for prejudice against lesbians as a target group. Heterosexual women's attitudes toward lesbians were sometimes more negative than heterosexual's men in some studies (Gentry, 1987; Whitley, 1987, 1990); but in the others there were no gender differences (Herek, 1988; Kite & Whitley, 1996).

Researchers have suggested several reasons why men are more prejudiced against gay men than women. Heterosexual men might be threatened by gay men who deviate from accepted traditional masculine roles (Herek & Capitano, 1999; Parrott, Adams, & Zeichner, 2002; Theodore & Basow, 2000). Similarly,

homophobia may be formed as a result of a cognitive developmental process during the childhood. Men are thought to be masculine and they are afraid of being feminine. They are forced to strictly conform to gender stereotypes (Fields et al., 2015; Lock & Kleis, 1995), and so they might have more negative ATG because gay men clearly deviate from their prescribed gender roles (Oliver & Hyde, 1995; Theodore & Basow, 2000). Finally, heterosexual men might desire to protect their masculinity and manhood by showing negative ATG (Mahalik et al., 2003; Levant, Gerdes, Alto, Jadaszewski, & McDermott, 2017; Vandello & Bosson, 2013).

Similar to the findings of American studies, researchers from Turkey (Sakallı, 2002a, 2002b; Sakallı & Uğurlu, 2001, 2002) found that men were more homophobic than women. However, the earlier studies of Sakallı did not differentiate gay men and lesbians and only used the term “homosexuals” by using Hudson and Rickett’s Homophobia Scale (1980). The “homosexuals” terms may bring the mind only gay men in Turkish culture, and so many earlier findings may not be able to cover gender differences for ATL. Consequently, the present study re-examine whether gender of the participants is relevant to prejudice against not only gay men but also lesbians in Turkey.

Overview and the Hypotheses of the Current Study

To our knowledge, there have been no empirical studies that directly focus on how system justification, political orientation, social contact, and gender all together predict ATG/ATL in Turkey. The present study builds on previous research in the area of sexual prejudice by focusing on the association among these variables. Relying on the previous studies, the hypotheses of the present study are:

- 1)- Men would have more negative ATG/ATL, particularly ATG, than would women.
- 2)- Gay men would be evaluated more negatively than lesbians by men in Turkey.
- 3)- System justification, political orientation, social contact and gender would significantly predict both ATG and ATL in Turkey. Specifically, higher system justification, being close to extreme right political orientation, lower social contact and being male would significantly predict ATG and ATL.

Method

Participants

The number of participants who completed the online survey was 581 (Women = 418, Men = 163). However, only Muslim heterosexual Turkish university students were preferred to be analysed because we had few numbers of participants for each categories of religion (e.g., other religions/no-religion), education (e.g., other education level, non-student), and sexual orientation (e.g., gay or lesbians). There were also some unfinished scales that could not be analyzed. As a result, we ended up with 377 participants (Women = 276, Men = 101) to analyze for the study. The mean age of our participants was 21.83 (SD = 2.00) ranging from 18 to 27. The participants were mainly from Middle East Technical University, Hacettepe University, and Ankara University from the capital city of Ankara, Turkey. Finally, 150 participants had at least a homosexual friend whereas 227 participants did not have any homosexual friends.

Measures

Attitudes toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale: A 10-item scale developed by Herek (Herek, 1988) to measure attitudes toward gays and lesbians was used in the study. The scale was translated from English into

Turkish by Duyan and Gelbal (2004). This scale includes five items that assess ATG (e.g., “I think male homosexuals are disgusting.” “Male homosexuality is a perversion.”) and five items that assess ATL (e.g., “I think female homosexuals are disgusting.” “Female homosexuality is a perversion.”). Items were rated on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores represent more negative ATG/ATL. Cronbach’s Alphas were .80 for ATL and .81 for ATG in the current study.

System Justification Scale: Gender Specific System Justification Scale of Jost and Kay (2005) was used in the study because being gay men and lesbians is relevant to gender roles and sexual orientation. The scale was highly relevant to how people tend to justify heterosexual relationship and gender roles. The scale had 8 items. The scale was translated from English into Turkish by graduate students of Psychology Department of Middle East Technical University (Ercan, 2009; Işık & Sakallı-Uğurlu, 2008). The scale was also back translated. Participants rated all 8 items of the scale in Turkish but only 5 items used in the analysis of the article because the other three items lowered the internal consistency of the scale in the Turkish sample. The items used in the study were “In general, relations between men and women are fair,” “Gender roles need to be radically restructured (rev),” “The division of labours in families generally operates as it should,” “For women, Turkey is the best country in the world to live in,” and “Society is set up so that men and women usually get what they deserve.” Items were rated on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores represent increased system justification. Cronbach’s Alpha of the scale was .71 for the current study.

Demographic Information Form: Participants were asked to indicate their gender, age, their religious affiliation (as Muslim, Christian or others), nationality (as Turkish, Kurdish, or others) their sexual orientation (heterosexual sexual orientation, gay men or lesbian sexual orientation, bisexual sexual orientation), and whether they have a homosexual friend as yes (coded 0) or no (coded 1). They also specified the type of their political orientation from 1 (extreme left) to 6 (extreme right) on a 6-point scale to see where they stand on political spectrum in Turkey.

Procedure

Following APA guidelines, we applied to METU ethic comitte to conduct the study. After getting the permission, data were collected by using an online survey. All participants were ensured that their responses were confidential and would be used for only reasearch articles in an informed consent form. After completing the questionnaire, participants were provided a written debriefing about the aims of the study. Students from Middle East Technical University and some students from Ankara University were given a course credit for their participation. The rest was not given any credit. They willingly participated into the study.

Results

Descriptive Results for the Studied Variables

MANOVA was performed to find whether there were any gender differences among ATG, and ATL. Results demonstrated that there were statistically significant main effects of gender differences on ATG, and ATL (Wilks’ Lambda = .86; $F(3, 373) = 20.58$, $\eta^2 = .14$, $p = .000$). As seen on Table 1, men ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.31$) scored higher on ATG than did women ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 1.23$, $F(1, 375) = 26.65$, $\eta^2 = .07$, $p = .000$). Similarly, men ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 1.30$) scored higher on ATL than women did ($M = 3.06$, $SD =$

1.22, $F(1, 375) = 4.44$, $\eta^2 = .01$, $p = 0.04$), suggesting that men had higher scores on ATG and ATL than did women. In terms of political orientation women ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 1.13$) were closer to extreme left political view than men on a 6 point scale ($M = 3.03$, $SD = 1.34$, $F(1, 375) = 14.68$, $\eta^2 = .04$, $p = .000$).

Table 1

Results Presenting Means, Standard Deviations and F-Values for Gender among Attitudes toward Gay Men and Attitudes toward Lesbians

Variables	Females		Male		F	Eta ²
	M	SD	M	SD		
ATG	3.07	1.23	3.82	1.31	26.65**	.07
ATL	3.06	1.23	3.36	1.30	4.44*	.01
Political Orientation	2.50	1.13	3.03	1.34	14.68**	.04

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$; Wilks' Lambda = .86; $F(3, 373) = 20.58$, $\eta^2 = .14$, $p = .000$.

Note: ATG, Attitudes toward Gay Men; ATL, Attitudes toward Lesbians. ATG and ATL ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Higher scores indicated higher tendencies to endorse each variable. Political Orientation ranged from 1 (extreme left) to 6 (extreme right) on a 6-point scale.

In addition, one-sample t-tests were separately performed for men and women. For men, ATG scores ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.31$) were significantly higher than ATL scores ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 1.30$; $t(100) = 5.21$, $p = .000$), suggesting that men had more negative ATG than ATL. However, ATG ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 1.23$) and ATL scores ($M = 3.06$, $SD = 1.22$; $t(275) = .56$, ns) did not significantly differ from each other for women.

The Prediction of ATG and ATL: System Justification, Political Orientation, Social Contact and Gender

The correlations among variables were presented in Table 2. In general, there was a significant positive correlation between ATG and ATL. Further, ATG and ATL were positively correlated with gender, social contact, political orientation, and system justification. In addition, political orientation was positively associated with system justification.

Table 2

Correlations among Attitudes toward Gay Men, Attitudes toward Lesbians, System Justification, Political Orientation, Social Contact and Gender for the Whole Sample

	1	2	3	4	5	6
ATG (1)	--	.89**	.41**	.43**	.23**	.26**
ATL (2)		--	.34**	.35**	.22**	.11*
System justification (3)			--	.35**	.23**	.38**
Political Orientation (4)				--	.15**	.19**
Social Contact (5)					--	.07
Gender (6)						--

** $p < .01$, $N = 377$

Note: ATG, Attitudes toward Gay Men; ATL, Attitudes toward Lesbians. Scales ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Higher scores indicated higher tendencies to endorse each variable. Coding for Gender 0, Female and 1, Male; for Social Contact 0, Have a homosexual friend and 1, Do not have a homosexual friend. Political Orientation ranged from 1 (radical left) to 6 (radical right).

Further, two separate multiple linear regression analyses were conducted to test if independent variables significantly predicted ATG and ATL. VIF values were between 1.06 and 1.35 (tolerance values were between .74 and .94); and so multicollinearity problem was not detected because, as a rule of thumb, multicollinearity is not a threat to multiple regressions if the VIF is less than 10 (O'Brien, 2007) or, more

conservatively, less than 5 (Alauddin & SonNgheim, 2010). The results of the regression are presented in Table 3. Consistent with our expectations, it was found that system justification, political orientation, and social contact significantly predicted ATG and ATL. However, gender did not significantly predict ATL whereas it significantly predicted ATG.

Table 3

Multiple Regression Results Performed on the Attitudes toward Gay Men and Lesbians

	Attitudes toward Gay Men		Attitudes toward Lesbians	
	β	t	β	t
System Justification	.23	4.57**	.24	4.47**
Political Orientation	.30	6.37**	.25	4.99*
Social Contact	.13	2.75**	.13	2.72**
Gender	.10	2.09**	-.04	-.81
R ²	.27**		.19**	
F	36.13**		22.16**	
DF	4.38		4.38	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Note: Scales ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Higher scores indicated higher tendencies to endorse each variable. Coding for Gender 0, Female and 1, Male; for Social Contact 0, Have a homosexual friend and 1, Do not have a homosexual friend.

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to explore how system justification and political orientation predict attitudes toward lesbians and gay men as well as social contact and gender differences in Turkey. Results demonstrated that on a six point scale, means of ATG and ATL were a little bit over three, suggesting a tendency of the participants to indicate a little bit negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbians, but not that strong hatred. The tendency may be due to our participants' characteristic. They were university students from the best universities in Turkey. They can be accepted as well educated sample of Turkey. Further, some students tend to lean on the left side of political spectrum and so may have caused middle scores on ATG and ATL because political leftists are more likely to support fairness in Turkey (Yılmaz et al., 2016). We may further argue that non-student sample and political rightists might have provided higher scores on ATG and ATL. In fact, a past study which used non-student samples from Turkey found higher prejudice against gay men and lesbians. They also presented that young adults' ATG and ATL were more liberal than those of their parents (Oksal, 2008).

Further, results supported the first hypothesis; men had higher scores on ATG and ATL than women, suggesting that men are more prejudiced against gay men and lesbians than women. The findings were consistent with earlier studies in Turkey (Sakallı, 2002a; Sakallı & Uğurlu, 2001) and studies in other countries such as the US (Herek, 1988; Kite & Whitley, 1996; Oliver & Hyde, 1995). Results also demonstrated that ATG scores were significantly higher than ATL for men whereas women did not show any significant difference on their ATG and ATL scores. Men may present higher ATG because the existing sexist and masculine ideologies in Turkey (Glick et al., 2000; Sakallı, 2002a) may lead men to be afraid of losing their masculinity and to perceive homosexuals as a threat to their heterosexual identity and masculinity. The sexist ideology may also force them to strictly conform to gender stereotypes, and consequently they may have more negative attitudes toward gay men who do not follow the existing gender

roles (Oliver & Hyde, 1995; Theodore & Basow, 2000; Sakallı, 2002b). As a result one may argue that as advantaged group members, Turkish men may try to protect their power and high status by having prejudiced attitudes toward gay men who deviate from gender roles.

Consistent with the second hypothesis of the study gay men were evaluated more negatively than lesbians by men in Turkey. The result was also parallel to a previous study in Turkey (Çırakoğlu, 2006) and Western countries (Herek, 1988; Kite & Whitley, 1996), suggesting that the label of gay was evaluated more negatively than the label of lesbians. One may argue that deviating from male gender roles may be perceived as a serious problem by Turkish participants. Gay men may be perceived as a threat to manhood and may create anger or aggression against gay men in people because, as it is well accepted by many cultures, men have to earn, maintain, and protect their manhood (Kray, Howland, Russell, & Jackman, 2017; Vandello & Bosson, 2013).

The Prediction of ATG and ATL: System Justification, Political Orientation, Social Contact and Gender

As hypothesized, system justification positively predicted both ATG and ATL. As mentioned in the introduction, system justification is a motivation to adopt ideologies and beliefs that legitimize social, political, and economic arrangements in a society. In this study gender specific system justification scale by Jost and Kay (2005) was used because it was more relevant to the issues at hand as compared to economic system justification scale. The used scale covered the issues of fairness in the relationships between women and men, of the appropriateness of labour divisions, and of acceptability of gender structure in Turkey. Consequently, the findings showed that participants who have high tendency to justify the existing heterosexual gender relationship are more prejudiced against both gay men and lesbians. The findings were consistent with earlier studies on the association between prejudice against gay men and lesbians and right-wing authoritarianism (Goodman & Moradi, 2008; Haddock et al., 1993; Rowatt et al., 2009; Whitley & Lee, 2000) and social dominance orientation (Goodman & Moradi, 2008; Whitley & Lee, 2000). Jost and Hunyady (2005) argue that system justification may be interrelated with a number of belief systems such as the belief in just world, protestant work ethic, power distance, right-wing authoritarianism, and social dominance orientation. The present study directly demonstrated that heterosexual people who support the existing gender system have tendency to reject the possibility of other sexual orientations and to be prejudiced against them.

The present study showed that political orientation positively predicted both ATG and ATL. People who endorsed right wing of political belief systems tended to present negative attitudes toward them. The finding is consistent with earlier studies showing that political affiliation is strongly associated with attitudes toward non-traditional women (Sigillo et al., 2012). One may argue that parallel to findings of Yılmaz et al. (2016), Turkish heterosexual participants who lean on left political orientation are less likely to support authority and sanctity; and are more likely to support fairness as a moral foundation. However, political rightists are less open-minded and more conservative in changing existing gender role arrangements.

Earlier studies including American samples (Anderssen, 2002; Haddock et al., 1993; Hansen, 1982; Herek & Capitanio, 1996; Lance, 1987) and Turkish samples (Çırakoğlu, 2006; Sakallı & Uğurlu, 2001, 2002) demonstrated that social contact may have a chance to reduce prejudice against homosexuals. The results of the present study replicated them. As some researchers argued, higher social contact may decrease

prejudice because having a homosexual friend might be helpful to recognize the similarities between gay men/lesbians and heterosexuals (Iraklis, 2010; Whitley, 1990).

Consistent with earlier studies (Kite & Whitley, 1996; Oliver & Hyde, 1993), gender significantly predicted only ATG. Heterosexual men hold more negative ATG than did heterosexual women. As discussed before, the prejudiced attitudes may result from masculine identity of men who desire to affirm their status as “real men” (Kray et al., 2017). However, congruent with earlier research (Herek & Capitanio, 1995; Kite & Whitley, 1996) gender did not significantly predict negative ATL. Both female and male heterosexuals tend to evaluate lesbians similarly. Male participants do not significantly give higher scores on ATL as they do on ATG. The results may support the argument that gay men are perceived as a threat to cultural codes about manhood (e.g., strong, macho, brave, tough, and coldblooded) and men’s dominance (e.g., superior, leader, decisive, and authoritarian) in Turkey (Sakallı-Uğurlu, Türkoğlu, Kuzlak, & Gupta, 2018).

Conclusion & Limitations & Future Directions

As a conclusion, the study demonstrated that system justification, political orientation, and social contact were significant predictors of both ATG and ATL in a Muslim heterosexual sample in Turkey. However, gender was a significant predictor for only ATG but not for ATL. The study builded on previous research in the area of sexual prejudice and added the importance of system justification in understanding ATG/ATL. Further, political orientation variable was examined for the first time in the current study in Turkey. In addition, the study measured both genders of target as lesbians and gay men to expand the scope of research from a focus on “homosexuals” in general to specific focuses on lesbians and gay men in Turkish culture.

The study is not free of limitations. First of all, the results relied on correlational analyses, and so it is not possible to provide a causal relationship. Second, political orientation and social contact were treated as demographic variables. They were measured with a single question. Participants were not asked to indicate what political party they support. However, the single item measure of degree of political orientation seemed to work well (Yılmaz et al., 2016). Further, we used Gender Specific System Justification Scale of Jost and Kay (2005) because there was no existing scale measuring sexual orientation system justification. Future studies may develop a scale specifically measuring system justification about sexual orientation, or modification of Jost and Kay (2005).

In terms of future directions, system justification tendency seems to increase negative ATG and ATL for the heterosexual sample which is an advantaged group in a social system. It would be interesting to examine how system justification is relevant to the perception of gay men and lesbians about their own situation in Turkish culture. As System Justification Theory argues, disadvantaged group member are more likely to justify existing arrangements (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost & Hunyady, 2005; Kay & Jost, 2003) and so gay men and lesbians as disadvantaged groups may consciously or non-consciously adopt ideologies and beliefs that legitimize social and political arrangements about homosexuality in a society. Those who are high on system justification may also have tendency to justify the existing intimate relationships and to derogate their own romantic or sexual relationships. They may have some psychological problems to accept themselves and to come out as homosexuals. They may demonstrate internalized homophobia. They may

even indicate dissatisfaction with their life style. Future studies should try to examine these arguments in detail.

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