ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ / RESEARCH ARTICLE

ROLE OF PERCEIVED INTERGROUP DIFFERENCE ON STEREOTYPE CONTENT

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Abstract

People tend to categorize others as ingroup or outgroup. Social psychology literature attributes this distinction to similarity; *similar people are supposed to be ingroup and different people are supposed to be outgroup*. Similarly, people's attitudes, perceptions, and attributions towards others easily change depending on whether they are ingroup or outgroup. Moreover, studies investigating ethnic group relations showed that perceived intergroup difference is an important variable that influences stereotype content and other intercultural attitudes in the European context. This study measured the role of perceived intergroup differences towards three ethnic minorities (Circassian, Kurdish, and Armenian) by the Turkish participants on stereotype content. The study results showed that participants perceived ethnic minorities differently from one another in terms of perceived intergroup differences. The Turkish participants evaluated three ethnic groups as 'significantly different from themselves and also from one another. Furthermore, there might be credence to the idea of perceived intergroup difference having an influence on stereotype content since the outgroup that is rated as the most similar (Circassian) was significantly rated higher on warmth and competence dimensions as compared to other outgroups.

Keywords: Perceived intergroup difference, Stereotype content, Social categorization

ALGILANAN GRUPLARARASI FARKLILIĞIN KALIPYARGI İÇERİĞİ ÜZERİNDEKİ ROLÜ

Öz

İnsanlar, başkalarını iç grup veya dış grup olarak kategorize etme eğilimindedir. Sosyal psikoloji literatürü, bu ayrımı benzerliğe atfeder; kişiye benzeyen insanlar iç grup, kişiden farklı olanlar ise dış grup olarak

düşünülür. Benzer şekilde, insanların başkalarına karşı tutumları, algıları ve yüklemeleri, iç grup veya dış grup olmalarına bağlı olarak kolayca değişir. Ayrıca, Avrupa'da yapılan etnik gruplar arası ilişkileri inceleyen çalışmalar, algılanan gruplararası farklılığın, kalıpyargı içeriği ve bazı başka kültürlerarası tutumları etkileyen önemli bir değişken olduğunu göstermiştir. Bu çalışma, Türk katılımcıların üç etnik azınlığa (Çerkes, Kürt ve Ermeni) yönelik algıladıkları gruplararası farkın kalıpyargı içeriği üzerindeki rolünü ölçmüştür. Sonuçlar, bu çalışmada incelenen etnik azınlıkların, algılanan gruplararası farklılık açısından birbirlerinden farklı algılandıklarını göstermiştir. Türk katılımcılar, üç etnik grubu kendilerinden ve birbirlerinden anlamlı seviyede farklı olarak değerlendirmiştir. Ayrıca, en benzer olarak derecelendirilen dış grubun (Çerkesler) diğer dış gruplara kıyasla sıcaklık ve yeterlilik boyutlarında anlamlı derecede daha yüksek değerlendirilmesi, algılanan gruplar arası farklılığın kalıpyargı içeriği üzerinde bir etkisi olduğu iddiasına destek sunmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Algılanan gruplararası farklılık, Kalıpyargı içeriği, Sosyal kategorizasyon

1. INTRODUCTION

We live in a world that mostly consists of national states which lead several ethnicities and cultural groups to live under the same flag. People develop some form of a collective sense of belonging with the help of mental connections (Anderson, 1995), and the idea of a nation or identification with a certain ethnicity could be considered social cognition (Cerulo, 1997). Therefore, the social psychologist needs to understand the dynamics of a multicultural society and consequently, several studies that focus on intergroup relations are conducted. As focused on such a relationship, this paper aims to show that perceived intergroup differences might influence stereotype content towards ethnic minorities.

People tend to categorize others as ingroup or outgroup. Social psychology literature, since Allport (1954), attributes this distinction to similarity; *similar people are thought to be ingroup, and people who are different are thought to be outgroup*. This similarity does not have to be an important aspect of one's personality, lifestyle, culture, or ideology. As Tajfel and Turner (1979, 1986; Tajfel, 1970), had put forth with minimal group paradigm, even arbitrary distinctions might trigger a tendency to form a distinction between ingroup and outgroup. However, once the distinction is made, it becomes extremely easy for people to engage in social categorization and therefore, people's attitudes, perceptions, and attributions towards others easily change depending on whether they are ingroup or outgroup (Brewer, 1999). Allport clearly states that "The familiar is preferred. What is alien is regarded as somehow inferior, less 'good'…" (1954, p. 42). Certain stereotypical cognitions and prejudices are formed towards certain social groups and most of the time stereotypes outgroups are faced are not entirely positive.

However, to be fair, stereotypes are not always negative; they are beliefs about members of a social group regarding their characteristics and they are stable (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). The way of early

Social Psychological researchers examined stereotypes and asked people to list psychological traits they associate with various groups like Germans, Jews, etc. (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). It is virtually impossible to correctly represent a whole group with a few traits, however, since they help us make sense of the world around us, stereotypes are easily maintained.

According to the Stereotype Content model developed by Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, and Xu (2002) stereotypes function over warmth and competence dimensions. People perceive members of their ingroup as generally higher on both dimensions while members of outgroups are mostly perceived as high in either one or neither dimension. Therefore, it is expected for people to label various groups with distinct stereotypes since social groups are mostly evaluated differently within society (Lee & Fiske, 2006).

Up to this point, it is stated that people see others as either ingroup or outgroup based on similarity and difference (even the arbitrary ones), and certain characteristics that outgroups are thought to share might be evaluated along warmth and competence dimensions. Still, these are theoretical inferences, and it is important to study real-life instances of how similarity and difference of ingroup/outgroup influence perceptions, attributions, and evaluations in the real world. Many people live in multicultural societies and therefore studying intergroup dynamics is substantial.

Social psychologists, who are aware that it is necessary to comprehend how various ethnic groups interact and evaluate each other for a peaceful society, conducted many studies and formed many models that focus on intergroup dynamics among ethnic groups. Hagendoorn (1993) for instance, claimed that ethnic groups within one society might be perceived as having hierarchical statuses. A similar perspective is proposed by Verkuyten, Hagendoorn, and Masson (1996), who claimed that perceived difference among different ethnic groups in a society holds a consensus across groups. In other words, people can distinguish not only between ingroups and outgroups but also between outgroups to the extent that putting those groups in rank order. Moreover, minorities might be subjected to negative attitudes since they are perceived as low in competence (Esses, Dovidio, Jackson & Armstrong, 2001). Therefore, ethnic groups might be evaluated based on perceived stereotypical judgment and, such evaluations might give way to certain consequences. For instance, the study of Esses et al. (2001) showed that when migrants are perceived as low in competence, the majority group might have negative attitudes towards not only migrants but also migration itself. Another example would be the study of Bourhis and Dayan (2004), which showed that different ethnic groups might be expected to use different acculturation strategies by majority members. Therefore, it is important to paint a picture that encloses a general perspective on intergroup dynamics among various ethnic groups within a society.

Van Osch and Breugelmans (2011) suggested that perceived intergroup difference is a major variable that could help us understand intercultural attitudes. Their research showed that the majority group's perceived intergroup difference rating influence stereotype content and acculturation attitudes towards minorities in Dutch society. According to Van Osch and Breugelmans (2011), each group in

society is perceived differently by the other groups and these perceived differences among groups are concordance with each group. Their study indeed detected that perceived intergroup difference determines the variation in stereotype content and preference for acculturation strategies.

The current study aims to replicate their findings in Turkey regarding the concept of perceived intergroup differences. In this study, ethnic majority Turkish people's perception of intergroup differences and stereotype content evaluations towards ethnic minorities (Kurdish, Armenian and Circassian) were measured. It is not clear how the Turkish majority would perceive these groups since these groups are remarkably similar culturally yet political conflicts, religious differences, and historical relations make the intergroup relations quite complicated. However, it is expected that the majority group, Turkish would evaluate groups following perceived intergroup difference rating, which means groups that are more different are expected to be evaluated as lower on warmth and competent dimension, and groups that are less different are expected to be evaluated as higher on warmth and competent dimension. Van Osch and Breugelmas (2011) measured the role of perceived intergroup differences over acculturation attitudes as well. However, since ethnic minorities in this study are not migrants it would not be viable to include acculturation in this analysis. On the other hand, one important variable would be included, and that is the strength of national identity. The formation of ingroup and outgroup is simply based on similarity and dissimilarity in most cases (Allport, 1954). However, when a person has a strong identification with an ingroup, in this case, national identity, their cognition of other ethnic groups might be biased, and one can exaggerate similarities and differences. Therefore, participants who have a stronger national identification might be biased toward minorities especially if there is some sort of political conflict. Therefore, it is important to isolate the effect of perceived intergroup differences on stereotype content by controlling such biases. Therefore, identification with ingroup will be included in this research so that its effects can be controlled.

2. METHOD

2.1. Participants

There were 159 participants (47% women) in this study, and they identify themselves as Turkish ethnicity. All participants were currently citizens of the Turkish Republic. The age range of the participants was between 18 and 60 (M=37.07, SD= 12.24). Nineteen percent of the participants have a graduate degree while, 52% have a bachelor's degree, 25% have a high school degree and 4% have a degree below high school. Participants reported their SES situation in five levels; 17% reported they are middle-lower SES, 55% reported they were middle SES and 25% reported they were middle-upper SES and only 3% reported that they were high SES. Most of the participants were Sunni/Hanafi Muslims (81%) while the rest of the sample were Safii, Alevi, atheists, and undisclosed. There were three target groups (Kurdish, Armenian, and Circassian) and participants were randomly assigned to these groups. Each group filled in the demographic form, perceived intergroup difference scale, national identity scale, and stereotype content scale (with a different minority group in focus).

2.2. Materials

2.2.1. Demographic information form

The demographic form included open-ended questions about participants' age, gender, religious affiliation, and level of education. The socioeconomic situation was rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = incredibly low, 5 = remarkably high).

2.2.2. Perceived intergroup difference

Participants rated on a 5-point rating scale (1 = not different at all, 5 = completely different) regarding how different or similar they found themselves from the groups in question, which are Turkish, Kurdish, Armenian, and Circassian. All participants indicated their perceived difference for each ethnic group separately.

2.2.3. Stereotype content

Stereotype content-scale, developed by Fiske et al. (2002), measured stereotypes across two dimensions. The first dimension is warmth and the other one is competence. The first dimension is measured by seven items (e.g., friendly, sincere, and warm) and the latter is measured by eight items (e.g., independent, confident, efficient). Each participant rated their target group on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all, 5 = very much), regarding how much they think that the target group possesses those qualities. Factor analysis was conducted to see whether items would load in two dimensions. Items "Skillful" and "Efficient" loaded both incompetent and warmth dimensions. Therefore, those items were removed before conducting the main analysis. After the extraction, the warmth dimension's (7 items) reliability was found to be .95, and the competence dimension's (6 items) reliability was found to be .86, while the overall reliability of the remaining thirteen items was found to be .93.

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2.2.4. Strength of National Identity

This variable is measured with three statements adapted from Verkuyten's (2005) study. The participants rated their agreement level with the three statements regarding their Turkish (national) identity such as "My Turkish identity is very important to me" on a 5-point scale (1 = completely disagree, 5 = completely agree) Reliability of national identity measure was found to be sufficiently (3 items, α = .91).

3. PROCEDURE

Data was collected via snowballing technique. The data of this study was collected as part of master's thesis project written by the author. During data collection time, author's institution did not enforce ethics committee approval for master thesis projects therefore, for this study no ethics committee approval was submitted. However, author took necessary precautions to ensure the confidentiality, privacy, and other rights of the participants (see. Smith, 2003). All participants were provided with an informed consent form. Nonetheless, participants were informed verbally about voluntary participation, and privacy and anonymity of their answers would be ensured. They were also informed that they could

withdraw anytime they want. Moreover, the contact information of the author was shared with the participants if they would like to contact the author regarding the study.

After the participants signed the informed consent form, they were asked which ethnic group that they feel they belong to. The ones who identified as Turkish were included in the research. The questionnaires targeting one of the three minority groups in this study were randomly given to the participants.

5. RESULTS

5.1. Preliminary Analysis

The interaction between the target group and demographic variables (age, gender, level of education, SES, and religious affiliation) and control variable (strength of national identity) were examined on warmth, and competence measures which yielded no sizeable relations between target group and age (Wilks' Λ = .986, $F_{(2, 148)}$ = 1.024, p = .368, $\eta p2$ = .014), gender (Wilks' Λ = .982, $F_{(2, 148)}$ = 1.323, p = .270, $\eta p2$ = .018), education level (Wilks' Λ = .994, $F_{(2, 148)}$ = 458, p = .633, $\eta p2$ = .006), socioeconomic status (Wilks' Λ = .995, $F_{(2, 148)}$ = .389, p = .678, $\eta p2$ = .005), religious affiliation (Wilks' Λ = .993, $F_{(2, 148)}$ = .868, p = .598, $\eta p2$ = .007) and strength of national identity (Wilks' Λ = .992, $F_{(2, 148)}$ = .570, p = .567, $\eta p2$ = .008). Therefore, there was no need to include these variables as covariates for the remainder of the analysis.

5.2. Perceived Intergroup Difference

The mean scores of groups on perceived intergroup difference scales were measured and compared to each other. From this comparison, a rank order for each group was generated. Participants rated Turkish people as most similar (M = 4.56, SD = .78, 95% CI [4.43, 4.68]), and for minority groups, Circassian people were rated as most similar (M = 3.12, SD = 1.3, 95% CI [2.91-3.32]), followed by Kurdish people (M = 2.77, SD = 1.29, 95% CI [2.56,2.97]) and Armenian people (M = 2, SD = 1.19, 95% CI [1.82,2.16]). The mean scores for each group were compared by repeated measure analysis of variance. The sphericity assumption of the test was provided by Greenhouse-Geiser correction, which showed evidence of a statistically significant main effect ($F_{(2.67, 411.4)}$ = 185.9, p < .001, $\eta p2$= .547). The general linear model analysis yielded that perceived intergroup difference ratings for each group were significantly different from one another ($F_{(3,462)}$ = 185.9, p < .001., $\eta p2$ = .547). This result is in line with the expectations of the study. The Turkish people perceived different ethnic minorities as distinct social groups; different from themselves and one another based on perceived intergroup differences.

First, it was established that Turkish participants saw the minority groups as different from one another and their group in terms of perceived intergroup difference, then it was aimed to see the effect of the target group (Kurdish, Circassian or Armenian) on stereotype content dimensions warmth and competence. Originally, the strength of national identity was planned to be included in the analysis as a covariate. However, preliminary analysis showed that there was no sizeable relation between the target group and the strength of national identity, therefore this variable was to be excluded from the analysis.

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Nonetheless, a MANCOVA (strength of national identity as a covariate) and a MANOVA was conducted to see in case there was a difference. Since MANCOVA and MANOVA produced only marginally different p values, only the results of MANOVA were presented here. This analysis would offer a perspective to interpret the variation in stereotype content as a function of perceived intergroup differences.

MANOVA results showed that there was a statistically significant difference between minority groups on stereotype content scores (Wilks' Λ = .730, F (4, 306) = 13.103, p < .000, ηp2 = .145). Moreover, a post-hoc power analysis was conducted by G*Power version 3.1.9.6 (Faul et al., 2007). This analysis yielded that it achieved a power of .99.

For the warmth dimension, Circassian people received the highest scores (M = 3.82, SD = .82 95% CI [3.55,4.06]); followed by Kurdish (M = 2.86, SD = 1.10 95% CI [2.60,3.12]) and Armenian people (M = 2.54, SD = .94 95% CI [2.28,2.80]). This pattern was similar in terms of competence; trends in the ratings were in accordance only with perceived intergroup difference ratings for the Circassian target group. Circassian people are rated as the most competent (M = 3.77, SD = .77 95% CI [3.54,4.00]) and followed by Armenian people (M = 3.23, SD = .82 95% CI [3.00,3.46]) and Kurdish people (M = 3.17, SD = .92 95% CI [2.94,3.40]). Moreover, the pairwise comparison showed that the Circassian people were rated significantly different from Kurdish and Armenian people (for warmth dimension p < .000 and p < .000 respectively; for competence dimension p = .000 and p < .001 respectively) while Kurdish and Armenians did not differ from each other for both warmth (p = .087) and competence (p = .728) dimensions. Although these results were not following the expectations of the study there is still some merit to the idea that perceived intergroup differences influence stereotype content, which will be discussed below.

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6. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to show that people can distinguish between outgroups based on perceived intergroup differences and this perceived intergroup difference might influence stereotypical views about outgroups. Analysis showed that groups studied in this paper, are perceived differently from one another in terms of perceived intergroup difference. Moreover, results showed that perceived warmth and perceived competence were highest for the Circassian target group which was the group that is rated most similar by the Turkish majority, and this result followed the expectations. It was also expected that perceived warmth and perceived competence would be higher for the Kurdish target group as compared to the Armenian target group since this was the rank order in perceived intergroup ratings. However, these two groups were not rated significantly different from one another, even though they were both rated lower than the Circassian target group in terms of both warmth and competence. However, there might still be some credence to the idea of perceived intergroup difference having an influence on stereotype content since the outgroup that was rated as most similar was significantly rated higher on warmth and competence dimensions as compared to other outgroups.

Social psychology literature explains how it is easy for many to differentiate an ingroup from an outgroup (Haslam, 2001) especially the earlier literature was inclined to think that people might have a hard time

differentiating among various outgroups since it was advocated that individuals "tend to see outgroup as homogenous" (Malpass, & Kravitz, 1969, as cited in Robinson, 1996, pp. 98). However, more recent studies showed that people can differentiate outgroups from each other for several reasons (e.g., Kotzur et al., 2019). This study is another support for this perspective; the findings of this study regarding perceived intergroup difference show that the participants manage to perceive the difference between ingroup and outgroup but also among three outgroups. Turkish participants rated three ethnic groups as different from themselves and one another.

The results of this study also showed that perceived intergroup difference has some role in stereotypical judgments. The majority in society might not evaluate all social groups in the same manner; perceptions and expectations might change for groups based on how similar or different they are from the group. Van Osch and Breugelmans (2011) showed that most of the Dutch participants' perception of stereotype content, perception of acculturation, and preference for acculturation strategies of minorities in Holland, varied based on the perceived intergroup rating. Similarly, this study also found that stereotype contents for different ethnic groups in Turkey varied based on perceived intergroup ratings. The more similar a group is seen the more warmth and competence was attributed to that group. Turkish participants' ratings for Circassians in this study, which is the group that is rated as most similar, was significantly higher than Kurdish and Armenian. However, Turkish participants' ratings for Kurdish and Armenian groups did not differ from each other in terms of stereotype content. Circassian people rated as warmest and most competent is in line with the expectation of this study, however, lacking significant difference between Kurdish and Armenian groups needs an explanation. The first idea that comes to mind is that the last-ranking groups might be seen as more homogeneous and only differentiated from the most similar group. However, the literature signals otherwise (Hagendoorn, 1993; Verkuyten, Hagendoorn & Masson, 1996; Van Osch & Breugelmans, 2011) and results of this study clearly showed that participants rated each group as different in terms of perceived intergroup difference.

One explanation might be related to intergroup relations within the political context. Fiske et al. (2002; Fiske, 2018) mentioned that perceived social structure is a predictor of both warmth and competence. This means if a group is seen as cooperative more warmth is attributed to them and if a group is seen as competitive less warmth is attributed to them. Moreover, perceived status acts as a predictor of competence (Fiske et al., 2002; Fiske, 2018) so if a group is seen more high status, more competence is attributed to them. Regarding this case, these variables could explain as Kurdish and Armenian groups are certainly subjected to political disputes (Ayata, 2015) as especially compared to Circassians. Due to political conflicts, perceived threat levels related to Kurdish and Armenian groups might have increased and therefore similarly influenced warmth levels. When an outgroup is perceived as threat, even our perception regarding their cognition might change (Hackle et al., 2014), and therefore it is quite possible that threat perception would influence the perception of competence. Kurdish and Armenian groups being subjected to political disputes might lead Turkish participants to evaluate Kurdish and Armenian as similar regarding the perceived threat and therefore lead to a similar level of warmth ratings.

Moreover, the perceived status might influence competence perceptions; for instance, some studies showed that the low status of disadvantaged groups might lead to negative attributes (Prasad, Smith Sockbeson, & O'Brien, 2022). If participants thought Kurdish people are somehow disadvantaged, this might have influenced their rationale and led them to rate their competence lower than expected. However, such an explanation could be made more confidently if the study measured the perceived status of the outgroups. We should mention some limitations of this study and suggestions for future studies.

The first limitation could be the lack of knowledge regarding how the rank order rated by the majority is perceived by minority members. One suggestion for future researchers could be studying perceived intergroup differences in a design that allows mutual measurement so, all the groups included in the study can rate each other and see whether this ranking is agreed upon as some researchers claim that there is a concordance in perceptions regarding various groups within society (Piontkowski, Rohmann & Florack, 2002; Van Osch & Breugelmans, 2011). Another suggestion for future research could be to include some measures regarding contact with outgroups since literature indicate that intergroup contact might influence people's attitudes and discriminatory behaviour towards outgroups (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008; Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner & Christ, 2011). For instance, people's evaluations of other races are significantly context-sensitive; they tend to give more positive evaluations to other races when they are in mixed-race situations (Van Bavel & Cunningham, 2008). Similarly, positive and negative contact with outgroups is found to have different effects on outgroup attitudes (Bağcı & Turnuklu, 2018), and intergroup contact is found to be influencing stereotype content perceptions (Kotzur, Schäfer, & Wagner, 2018). Therefore, controlling for intergroup contact (positive and negative) could prove beneficial for future research.

Although this is a satisfactory study as confirming many expectations, its results would certainly be more reassuring if all expectations were met. However, the results of this study still could be considered a valid starting point for further studies regarding the perceived intergroup difference and their effects on our social cognition. First, this study showed that there is a rank order among outgroups; for some reason some groups are seen as more similar than others. What makes people tick, and consider an outgroup more similar is not clear (at least not from this data); for some cases, it could be religion or for some cases, it could be historical associations, or it is purely a lack of political conflict. The reasons that might lead to perceived intergroup differences could be an important aspect to study for future research.

Moreover, as being partly a replication of Van Osch and Breugelmans's study (2011), this study carries some weight. Their study demonstrated the relationship between perceived intergroup differences and intercultural attitudes and acculturation attitudes towards outgroups within Dutch society. This paper offers some support to their claim by showing stereotype content is affected by perceived intergroup rating scores. It was not possible to investigate acculturation in this study since acculturation is a concept that is primarily suitable for migrants, who migrate to a new culture whereas our target groups are local

ethnic minorities. However, it is still important to show that Van Osch and Breugelmans (2011) offered a perspective that might be valid in Turkey, as well as in the Netherlands. This account may be significant since the positions of minorities in this study are quite different as compared to the study of Van Osch and Breugelmans. In the Netherlands, a multicultural society is mostly created due to migration, and for Turkey that was not the case when this study was conducted.

Overall, this study aimed to demonstrate the effect of the perceived intergroup difference concept and indeed, the analysis showed that perceived intergroup difference has some role in stereotype content. This study offered some support to the idea that people's perceptions of outgroups might vary depending on how similar or different they perceive them. Therefore, the perceived intergroup difference is a concept that could prove useful for future researchers who aim to investigate how people evaluate and connect with "others."

DECLARATIONS / BEYANLAR

Declaration of Compliance with the Ethical Principles
In line with the "COPE-Code of Conduct and Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors" the following statements are included:

The data of this study was collected as part of master's thesis project written by the author in 2011. During data collection time, author's institution did not enforce ethics committee approval for master thesis projects therefore, for this study no ethics committee approval was submitted.

Etik İlkelere Uygunluk Beyanı
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