

# Attachment Styles, Self-Construal, Sociodemographic Variables and Discriminatory Attitudes in Turkish Counselor Candidates

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## Abstract

In this study, relationship of counselor candidates' discriminatory attitudes to religiosity, political ideology, academic achievement, self-construal and attachment styles was examined. Differences in discriminatory attitudes in terms of gender and class level variables were also investigated. The study was carried out with 383 counseling students from a state university which located in northeast of Turkey. The data were collected with Sociodemographic Data Form, Discriminatory Attitudes Scale, Relational, Individual and Collective Self-Aspects Scale and Relationship Scales Questionnaire. Discriminatory attitudes were found as significantly related with religiosity, political ideology, academic achievement, self-construal and attachment styles. Besides, religiosity, political ideology, academic achievement, individualistic and collectivist self-construal emerged as significant predictors of discriminatory attitudes. In terms of gender, male students were found as having stronger discriminatory attitudes than female students to homosexuals, women, different races-ethnicities and religions and in total. There were no significant differences by class-level except discrimination against women. By discussing these findings, suggestions for counselor education and further studies were presented.

**Keywords:** Counseling, discriminatory attitudes, education.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Discrimination

Today, more rights have started to be given to cultural groups such as homosexuals, women and native groups who had clearly been despised in the past and who had been subjected to negative behaviors, but discrimination still exists as a condition negatively affecting the relations among cultures (Harnois, 2014). Forms of discrimination such as racism, homophobia and sexism have been negatively affecting the target people both in daily life and in public aspect, and these people have been facing psychological and physical health problems arising from exposure to discrimination (Schmitt, Branscombe, Postmes & Garcia, 2014; Schunck & Reiss, 2015; Vauclair et al., 2015). And discrimination is sometimes able to transform to self-fulfilling prophecies. The groups characterized by some specific negative features are able to exhibit low performance due to the concern of exhibiting such negative features even if they do not actually have the same (Barber, Mather & Gatz, 2015; Hively & El-Alayli, 2015).

Discrimination, which is among the subjects within the scope of social psychology, is being defined as the "tendency of an individual or group to exhibit humiliating and insulting attitudes towards the members of a different group" (Taylor, Peplau & Sears, 2003). The individuals, who are the members of a specific social or cultural group may believe that they bear features of the members of another cultural group (outgroup) which are basically similar and negative, and they may assess the members of relevant group on the basis of membership of group as based on prejudice. Even if not all the time, the tendency to exhibit humiliating and insulting attitudes, in other words discrimination against relevant groups accompanies these cognitive and emotional features. The tendency of human mind to think based on categories and to simplify the complex world reveals the condition of minimizing the differences within category (ingroup) and exaggerating the differences among categories (outgroup). Based on that, the differences between groups are exaggerated by minimizing the differences within groups, in other words the distinction of "us" and "others" is made (Plous, 2003; Stangor & Thompson, 2002).

### 1.2. Discrimination and Sociodemographic Variables

Initial research on discrimination has focused on factors relevant to personality, and it has been reported that personality characteristics such as tendency of authoritarianism (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson & Sanford, 1950), right-wing authoritarianism (Altemeyer, 1988) and social dominance orientation (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth & Malle, 1994) show positive relation with ethnocentrism and xenophobia. Following studies have urged on socio-demographic variables such as gender, age, educational status, political ideology, religiosity and variables relevant to the self (e.g. need for self-esteem) regarding prejudiced and discriminatory

attitudes towards the members of outgroups. In the general sense, it has been reported that outgroup hostility is higher in men (Gormley & Lopez, 2010; Johnson, Brems & Alford-Keating, 1997), some discriminatory attitudes like homophobia decrease as the age increases (Johnson et al., 1997; Matthews, Selvidge & Fisher, 2005; Woodford, Silverschanz, Swank, Scherrer & Raiz, 2012), and educational degree has a negative relationship with discriminatory attitudes (Grapes, 2006). It has been shown that religiosity is positively related with some discrimination types like homophobia and sexism (Johnson et al., 1997; Woodford et al., 2012). In respect of political ideology, it has been found out that attitudes towards cultural groups like foreigners, homosexuals, women become more positive as the level of liberalism level increases (Kirkpatrick, 1993; Woodford et al., 2012).

### **1.3. Discrimination and Self-Construal**

In the researches focusing on testing the effect of the self on hostile attitudes towards outgroups based on Tajfel's (1974) social identity theory, it has been shown that the individuals are able to exhibit more discriminatory attitudes as the result of the requirement of protecting and enhancing their self-esteem. In experiments that have been built in some researches, self-esteem hypothesis has been supported by indicating that negative attitudes towards a different cultural group increase as a result of threats towards self-esteem (Fein & Spencer, 1997; Galinsky & Ku, 2004; Kosic, Mannetti & Livi, 2014). As a striking finding regarding the relation of self-esteem with prejudice and discrimination, it has been indicated that the individuals who identify themselves with their group at a higher level exhibit more negative attitudes towards outgroups in the name of protecting their self-esteem (Florack, Scarabis & Gosejohann, 2005). This result gives the opinion that self-construal, a second variable relevant to self –along with self-esteem-, may be related to discrimination. Self-construal -that specifies the effect of culture on self- indicates whether the individual defines himself on the basis of dependence on others, social attachment and valuing the relations, or by his distinctive, unique skills and the level of distinction among him and the others (Singelis, 1994). While the borders of the self being indefinite and being interwoven with other identities specify that the self is constructed as collectivist, the self structure whose borders are definite and discrete from other identities indicate that the self is constructed as individualistic (Hofstede, 1980; Kağıtçıbaşı, 2012). The researchers work on self-construal in recent years state that the individual may have both collectivist and individualistic at specific levels, they mention the existence of a third dimension called “relatedness”, and this dimension has also been included in the measurement tools (i.e. Kashima & Hardie, 2000). Despite having limited number of researches focused on the relation in between self-construal and attitudes towards outgroups, there are opinions (Fujimoto & Hartel, 2004; Kağıtçıbaşı, 2012) and findings (Al-Zahrani & Kaplowitz, 1993) regarding that the prejudice towards outgroups is higher in collectivist cultures. And in a different related research, it has been found that the independent self-construal is positively related with multicultural competency level covering the areas of awareness, sensitivity and skills in counselors (Constantine, 2001).

### **1.4. Discrimination and Attachment Styles**

Along with the subject of whether the self is defined as attached to a group(s) or as autonomous, the questions of how the individual deems himself and others in his relations and how he approaches the others can be considered as significant in respect of explaining discriminatory attitudes. The attachment, referring to the influence of relationship experiences in early childhood on psychosocial development, is being characterized by four different styles as being secure, fearful, dismissive and preoccupied based on assessment by the individual of her/himself and others in relationships (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). The attachment styles have been found to effective on mental health and the quality of romantic and social relationships (Galinha, Oishi, Pereira, Wirtz & Esteves, 2014; Ho et al., 2012; Jenkins-Guarnieri, Wright & Hudiburgh, 2012; Raja, McGee & Stanton, 1992; Towler & Stuhlmacher, 2013). Along with the feelings towards individuals within the group(s) belonged, Mikulincer and Shaver (2001;2007) have expanded the attachment theory by carrying out theoretical and applied studies towards testing the effect of attachment styles on attitudes towards outgroups. The findings of these studies generally give the idea that prejudice towards outgroups is a characteristic of insecurely attached people. This opinion has also been supported by findings of studies indicating that secure attachment is related to positive attitudes towards foreigners (Hofstra, Van Oundhoven & Buunk, 2005), homosexuals (Gormley & Lopez, 2010) and individuals from different religions (Boag & Carnelley, 2012).

### **1.5. The Present Study**

In the fields of psychology and counseling, recent studies have urged upon that mental health needs of some ethnical-racial minority groups and specific client groups (e.g. LGBTI people, different religious groups, clients from lower socio-economic status, women, elderly people) may not be sufficiently met (Chao, 2013; Katz & Hoyt, 2014; McBride & Hays, 2012; Stracuzzi, Mohr & Fuertes, 2011). Also, counseling students seem to have significantly low multicultural and sexual orientation counselor competency scores (Bidell, 2012). Another

striking research finding shows that psychological counselors may demonstrate bias based on race, gender, sexual orientation and social class at moderate levels (Miller, Miller & Stull, 2007). According to multicultural counseling competency model put forward by Sue et al. (1992), psychological counselors are product of the culture(s) in which they grow up and may adopt discriminatory opinions of their culture(s) which include stereotype and prejudice towards different cultures. They may reflect their such opinions on their communication style with the clients, on the conceptualization of the client's problem, their interventions and they may convey the clients their emotions related to their own cultural identity, either by recognizing it or not. Therefore, understanding the counselor candidates' attitudes towards different cultures important for counselor educators to help the students to be aware of their own stereotypes and prejudices (Sue & Sue, 2008). These statements are stressing the need for examining the prejudices and discriminatory attitudes of students -studying in the field of psychological counseling- towards individuals from different cultures. Such studies may give ideas for efforts aiming to improve multicultural cultural competencies in counseling and psychology students in terms of undergraduate and graduate education and experimental research. Based on these, the present study aims to examine discriminatory attitudes' relationship to religiosity, political ideology, academic achievement, self-construal and attachment styles in counselor candidates. To determine whether the discriminatory attitudes differ in terms of gender and class level variables is also aimed. With a comprehensive analysis of discriminatory attitudes, it is thought that the present study contribute to the relevant literature significantly.

## **2. Method**

### **2.1. Participants**

The research was performed in the spring term of the 2014-2015 academic year by 383 students studying at Psychological Counseling and Guidance undergraduate program of a state university at the northeast of Turkey. 72.3% of the participants are female, and 27.7% of them are male. The distribution in respect of ethnic origin is as 88.3% Turkish, 5% Kurdish, 1.6% Laz and 5.1% other nationalities and ethnicities (Turkic States, Georgian, Zaza and Hamsheni). 19.3% of the students are studying at 1<sup>st</sup> grade, 27.5% at 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, 27.2% at 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and 26% at 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Average of age of the sample is 20.97 (SD=1,94). 76.2% of the students have reported that they are coming from middle income families.

### **2.2. Procedure**

The permits required for the collection of data were obtained from the faculty and department directorate to which the Psychological Counseling and Guidance undergraduate program is affiliated. The measurement tools were applied within a one week period in class environment and during course hours by researchers. After determining the aim of research and that the participation in research is on voluntariness basis, the measurement tools were provided to the volunteering students. All students gave their informed consent prior to take part in the study as a source of data. The students answered all the questions within a period of about 40 minutes.

### **2.3. Data Collection Tools**

#### **2.3.1. Sociodemographic Data Form**

Sociodemographic Data Form was prepared by the researchers. It consisted of questions relevant to students' gender, age, class level, ethnic origin, perceived socio-economic status, GPA, religiosity and political ideology. In the determination of perceived socio-economic status, the income status intervals based on data of Turkish Statistical Institute for the year 2014 were provided, and it was required from the students to mark the option that best fits the income status of their families. And in the data analysis, some income level intervals were combined, and they were divided into three categories as being "low", "middle" and "high". And in the determination of political ideology, a rating from 1 to 7 (1= excessively conservative, 7= excessively liberal) was used. The religiosity level was rated in the same manner from 1 to 7 (1= very low, 7= very high), and it was required from the students to select the degree that suits them. GPA was taken as measure for academic achievement and it was determined according to the 4.00 grading system.

#### **2.3.2. Discriminatory Attitudes Scale**

The scale was developed by Gömleksiz, Poyrazlı and Vural (2008) through their study performed on Turkish university students. The scale of five point likert scale type consists of 21 items including positive (i.e. "the family's head is man") and negative-reverse coding ("we should willingly accept the foreigners who want to live in our country") phrases. The scale consists of four factors as discrimination against homosexuals (Cronbach's alpha= .88), discrimination against women (Cronbach's alpha= .87), discrimination based on race-ethnicity and religion (Cronbach's alpha= .61) discrimination against foreigners Cronbach's alpha= .51). In this study, total point obtained from the scale is also used and Cronbach's alpha value of whole scale was calculated to be .87.

#### **2.3.3. Relational, Individual and Collective Self-Aspects Scale**

The scale was developed by Kashima and Hardie (2000) in order to assess the self-construal. Relational, Individual and Collective Self-Aspects Scale consists of 10 questions (30 items in total) as "i regard myself

as...” and each reflecting the three self-construal dimensions as “someone with his or her own will, individual (individualistic), “a good partner and friend (relational)”, a good member of my group (collectivistic).” The scale is of seven point likert type (1= Definitely don’t agree, 7= Completely agree). The scale was adapted to Turkish by Ercan (2011). In the adaptation study, the Cronbach Alpha reliability of the scale was calculated as .73 for the individualism sub-scale, .68 for the relatedness sub-scale, .77 for the collectivism sub-scale, and .86 for the whole scale.

#### **2.3.4. Relationship Scales Questionnaire**

This questionnaire of 30 items was developed by Griffin and Bartholomew (1994) in order to assess the attachment patterns of adults. The scale was adapted to Turkish by Sümer and Güngör (1999) through a study performed with university students. It is being expected for the participants to answer the phrases such as “I don’t easily trust people”, “I know that I’ll find people by me when I need” by using a seven point rating system (1= Definitely doesn’t define me, 4= Partially defines me, 7= Completely defines me). The scale consists of four factors namely secure, fearful, dismissive and preoccupied attachment styles. In the reliability studies of the scale, the reliability values for test-retest were found in between .54 and .78.

#### **2.4. Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed by using SPSS, version 15.0. Descriptive statistics were used in obtaining sociodemographic characteristics of the participants. Pearson correlation was used in determining the relationship of religiosity, political ideology, academic achievement, self-construal and attachment styles to discriminatory attitudes. The predictive roles of religiosity, political ideology, academic achievement, self-construal and attachment styles on the discriminatory attitudes were determined by multiple linear regression analysis. ANOVA was used in the determination of differences in respect of class level in discriminatory attitudes. And the differences based on gender were determined by independent samples *t* test.

### **3. Results**

#### **3.1. Relationships Among Variables**

In Table 1 indicating the Pearson correlation values among research variables, it is observed that level of religiosity is significantly and positively related with the discrimination against homosexuals ( $r=.15, p<.01$ ), discrimination against women ( $r=.10, p<.05$ ) and total score of discrimination ( $r=.15, p<.01$ ). Political ideology, in other words the liberalism level is significantly and negatively related with discrimination against homosexuals ( $r=-.23, p<.01$ ), discrimination against women ( $r=-.23, p<.01$ ), discrimination based on race-ethnicity and religion ( $r=-.12, p<.05$ ) and total score of discrimination ( $r=-.25, p<.01$ ). Academic achievement is significantly and negatively related with the discrimination against homosexuals ( $r=-.10, p<.05$ ), discrimination against women ( $r=-.22, p<.01$ ) and total score of discrimination ( $r=-.16, p<.01$ ). Secure attachment was found to have significant relation only with foreigner discrimination ( $r=-.17, p<.01$ ). Dismissive attachment shows significant relation only with discrimination based on the race-ethnicity and religion ( $r=.11, p<.05$ ). And fearful attachment is significantly and positively related with the discrimination against homosexuals ( $r=.13, p<.05$ ), discrimination based on race-ethnicity and religion ( $r=.23, p<.01$ ), foreigner discrimination ( $r=.27, p<.01$ ) and total discrimination ( $r=.18, p<.01$ ). Preoccupied attachment is found to be significantly and positively related with the discrimination based on the race-ethnicity and religion ( $r=.12, p<.05$ ), foreigner discrimination ( $r=.20, p<.01$ ) and total score of discrimination ( $r=.12, p<.05$ ). Individualistic self-construal found to be significantly and negatively related with the discrimination against homosexuals ( $r=-.15, p<.01$ ), discrimination against women ( $r=-.20, p<.01$ ), discrimination against foreigners ( $r=-.11, p<.05$ ) and total score of discrimination ( $r=-.20, p<.01$ ). Relatedness has not shown significant relation with any discrimination type. And the collectivist self-construal is significantly related with discrimination against homosexuals ( $r=.10, p<.05$ ) and discrimination in total ( $r=.12, p<.05$ ).

**Table 1. Relationships Among Independent Variables and Discriminatory Attitudes**

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Religiosity	1	.13**	.11	-.08	-.03	.03	-.05	.09	.15**	.12*	.15**	.10*	.07	.02	.15**
2. Political Ideology		1	.00	.06	-.07	-.02	.05	.07	.02	.03	.23**	-.23**	-.12*	-.05	-.25**
3. Academic Achievement			1		-.05	-.05	-.07	.09	-.05	.00	-.10*	-.22**	-.08	.05	-.16**
4. Secure Attachment				1	-.38**	-.41**	-.10	.04	.18**	.09	-.09	.03	-.08	-.17**	-.07
5. Dismissive Attachment					1	.40**	.24**	.17**	-.08	-.05	.02	.09	.11*	.05	.08
6. Fearful Attachment						1	.55**	-.11*	-.02	.00	.13*	.07	.23**	.27**	.18**
7. Preoccupied Attachment							1	-.05	.00	-.07	.06	.09	.12*	.20**	.12*
8. Individualistic Self-Construal								1	.47**	.41**	.15**	-.20**	-.10	-.11*	-.20**
9. Relatedness									1	.61**	.00	.00	-.05	.00	-.01
10. Collectivist Self-Construal										1	.10*	.09	.09	.04	.12*
11. Discrimination against homosexuals											1	.54**	.35**	.22**	.87**
12. Discrimination against women												1	.45**	.06	.82**
13. Discrimination based on race-ethnicity and religion													1	.25**	.62**
14. Discrimination against foreigners														1	.35**
15. Discrimination															1
<b>Total</b>															
Mean	4.96	4.16	2.97	26.76	26.70	29.60	36.97	52.99	50.77	48.12	20.00	16.56	8.16	6.95	51.70
SD	1.13	1.30	0.44	5.57	5.43	8.06	8.99	5.63	6.21	7.22	7.38	6.26	2.80	2.18	14.14

\*p<.05  
 \*\*p<.01

### 3.2. Prediction of Discriminatory Attitudes

The results of multiple linear regression analysis presented in the Table 2 indicate that the established regression model is significant, and religiosity, political ideology, academic achievement, attachment styles and self-construal explain 20% of the total variance in the total score of discriminatory attitudes ( $F_{(10,371)} = 10.41$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Religiosity ( $\beta = .14$ ,  $p < .01$ ), political ideology ( $\beta = -.22$ ,  $p < .01$ ), academic achievement ( $\beta = -.14$ ,  $p < .01$ ), individualistic ( $\beta = -.26$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and collectivist ( $\beta = .27$ ,  $p < .01$ ) self-construal significantly contributed to the regression model. On the other hand, relatedness dimension of self-construal and attachment styles have no significant predictive role.

**Table 2. Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Relevant to Prediction of Discriminatory Attitudes**

Variable	B	Std. Error	$\beta$	t	p	R	R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$	F
Constant	76.62	10.65	-	6.81	.00				
Religiosity	1.76	.59	.14	2.95	.00**				
Political Ideology	-2.38	.50	-.22	-4.7	.00**				
Academic Achievement	-4.7	1.52	-.14	-3.15	.00**				
Secure Attachment	-.03	.13	-.01	-.23	.82				
Dismissive Attachment	.18	.14	.07	1.29	.19				
Fearful Attachment	.08	.11	.05	.77	.43	.47	.22	.20	10.41
Preoccupied Attachment	.14	.08	.09	1.67	.09				
Individualistic self-construal	-.67	.14	-.26	-4.7	.00**				
Relatedness	-.15	.14	-.06	-1.1	.28				
Collectivist self-construal	.53	.11	.27	4.6	.00**				

\*\* p<.01

### 3.3. Differences Based on Gender

In Table 3 indicating the results of independent samples *t* test in which the gender based differences are determined in discriminatory attitudes, it is observed that there is a significant difference between female and male students in favor of males regarding discrimination against homosexuals ( $t = -5.14$ ,  $p < .01$ ), discrimination against women ( $t = -11.38$ ,  $p < .01$ ), discrimination based on race-ethnicity and religion ( $t = -2.36$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and total score of discrimination ( $t = -7.82$ ,  $p < .01$ ). And no significant difference based on gender was found in foreigner discrimination.

**Table 3. Results of Independent Samples *t* Test**

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Sd	df	t	p
Discrimination against homosexuals	Female	277	18.84	6.06	139.42	-5.14	.00**
	Male	106	23.04	9.44			
Discrimination against women	Female	277	14.62	5.46	195.86	-	.00**
	Male	106	21.66	5.28			
Discrimination based on race-ethnicity and religion	Female	277	7.95	2.66	168.91	.1138	.02*
	Male	106	8.70	3.07			
Discrimination against foreigners	Female	277	7.03	2.11	172.92	1.29	.19
	Male	106	6.71	2.36			
Total Discrimination	Female	277	48.45	12.47	165.5	-7.82	.00**
	Male	106	60.2	14.76			

\*p<.05

\*\*p<.01

### 3.4. Differences Based on Class Level

In Table 4 indicating the results of ANOVA, it is observed that significant difference relevant to discriminatory attitudes only arise in the dimension of discrimination against women ( $F_{(3/379)} = 2.86$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The results of LSD multiple comparison test indicated that the significant difference arise from the fact that discrimination against women scores of 1<sup>st</sup> grade students are higher than the scores of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade students. There is no significant difference based on class level in respect of other dimensions of discriminatory attitudes.

**Table 4. Results of ANOVA**

Variable		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
<b>Discrimination against homosexuals</b>	Between groups	395.9	3	131.96	2.44	.06
	Within group	20464.08	379	53.99		
	Total	20859.98	382			
<b>Discrimination against women</b>	Between groups	332.05	3	110.68	2.86	.03*
	Within group	14641.35	379	38.63		
	Total	14973.4	382			
<b>Discrimination based on race-ethnicity and religion</b>	Between groups	15.16	3	5.05	.64	.58
	Within group	2983.42	379	7.87		
	Total	2998.58	382			
<b>Discrimination against foreigners</b>	Between groups	3.8	3	1.26	.26	.85
	Within group	1820.25	379	4.80		
	Total	1824.05	382			
<b>Total Discrimination</b>	Between groups	1194.33	3		2	.11
	Within group	75243.73	379	398.11		
	Total	76438.06	382	198.53		

\*p<.05

#### 4. Discussion

##### 4.1. Religiosity and Discriminatory Attitudes

In the present study, level of religiosity was found to be positively related with discrimination attitudes towards women and homosexuals. These findings seem to support the past researches (Taşdemir & Sakallı-Uğurlu, 2010; Mikolajczak & Pietrzak, 2014; Woodford et al., 2012). In all the Abrahamic Religions (Islam, Judaism, Christianity), having sexual interest and for someone of the same gender is being found as a sin and being prohibited, and in parallel to that, in studies made by participants who are members of different religions, it was indicated that the attitudes towards homosexuals become more negative as the religiosity increases (Marsh & Brown, 2011). Religiosity's positive relation with discrimination against women has been shown by many past research findings addressing benevolent and hostile sexism and these researches have urged upon mediating factors such as gender, culture and values (Mikolajczak & Pietrzak, 2014; Spierings, Smits & Verloo, 2009). Majority of individuals in Turkey who are dependant on a specific religion are members of Islam (Republic of Turkey Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2014). Despite having clear verses in Koran relevant to equality of women and men (Mashhour, 2005) and despite studies in recent years for re-examination of some verses in the context of feminism (Wadud, 2008), it has been shown that there is a significant relationship between religiosity and sexism in Turkey (Taşdemir & Sakallı-Uğurlu, 2010). In here, along with hostile attitudes targeting women's rights and dignity, it should be kept in mind that benevolent sexist attitudes may be in subject parallel to emphasis of privacy and innocence of women's identity and body.

##### 4.2. Political Ideology and Discriminatory Attitudes

In this research, it was found that discrimination against homosexuals, discrimination against women, foreigner discrimination and total discrimination significantly decrease dependent on the political ideology, in other words as the liberalism level increases, and that political ideology is found to be a significant predictor of total discriminatory attitudes. These findings are parallel to the findings of past researches indicating that the attitudes towards foreigners, women and homosexuals become more positive as the liberalism level increases (Christopher & Mull, 2006; Kirkpatrick, 1993; Laythe, Finkel & Kirkpatrick, 2001; Woodford et al., 2012). Conservatism has been characterized by features such as resisting to assess and consider new opinions and different perspectives, carrying out social traditions, and excluding and condemning members of society who act against these (Laythe et al., 2001). On the other hand, liberals generally tend to believe in equality, and to consider and tolerate different alternatives on moral, religious and political issues (Chambers, Schlenker & Collisson, 2013). In this research, supporting of positive attitudes towards women, foreigners and homosexuals by liberalism as supporting the findings of past researches and its prediction of discrimination may be interpreted by the flexibility and tolerance of liberals on moral and political issues and their belief in equality.

### **4.3. Academic Achievement and Discriminatory Attitudes**

In the present research, academic achievement was found to be negatively and significantly related with discrimination against woman, discrimination against homosexuals and total discrimination score. These findings are similar with a part of the findings of past researches on the issue and in conflict with a part of them. In the past researches, while GPA has been negatively related with the racism (Sidanius & Lau, 1989; Sidanius, 1993) and homophobia (Olivero & Murataya, 2001) among university students, there have been conflicting findings regarding sexism (Hong, 2004; Sidanius, 1993). Sidanius and Lau (1989) states that the political and social attitudes of individuals will be less extreme and polarized at the extent of their cognitive complexity. The researchers have addressed academic achievement as an indicator of cognitive competency, and they have found that racism level decreases as the GPA increases, and that GPA is a significant predictor of racism. This finding has been supported in a similar research relevant to racism (Sidanius, 1993). Regarding homophobia, it has been shown that it exhibits a negative relationship with homophobia (Olivero & Murataya, 2001). As a conflicting finding that academic achievement has positive relationship with sexism has been explained by the relevant researcher (Hong, 2004) as the result of culture and family structure. According to the Hong (2004), this finding has been related to the fact that students with high academic achievement feel themselves more responsible and affiliated to their families, and that they significantly get affected from the traditional Confucian belief. In the present study, finding academic success as negatively related with discrimination against women, discrimination against homosexuals and total discrimination score is thought to be related to the fact that students with higher academic achievement may have higher level of academic readings, along with the possibility of having higher cognitive competency and complexity. Subjects and examples in the textbooks used in counseling education relevant to working with diverse clients may assist at some degree in respect of affecting rigid attitudes. Also, academically more successful students may have higher motivation about being a successful counselor which requires working with different people collaborately, accordingly may have motivate themselves more about to display basic counselor attitudes which includes empathy and unconditional positive regard towards different people.

### **4.4. Attachment Styles and Discriminatory Attitudes**

The findings of the present study regarding the relationship between attachment styles and discriminatory attitudes support the findings of the past similar research at a large extent. According to the results of relevant studies, the individuals with insecure attachment style have higher degree of negative attitudes towards foreigners (Hofstra et al., 2005, Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007), homosexuals (Gormley & Lopez, 2010) and individuals from different religions (Boag & Carnelley, 2012) compared to ones with secure attachment. The secure attachment to have positive relation with tolerance towards foreigners, innovation and members of outgroups is being related to the fact that such individuals feel less threat and fear and show less negative reactions (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2001). Fearful attachment has been characterized by a negative self-perception and deeming others as unreliable (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Depending on that, it is expected that perception of threat towards the different one will be higher, and that that expectation was supported in the present research by finding the fearful attachment positively related with discrimination against homosexuals, discrimination based on the race-ethnicity and religion, discrimination against foreigners and total score of discrimination. The individuals who attach dismissively are deeming other unreliable along with having a positive self-perception (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). These individuals may deem their racial and religious identity as valuable, and the threat they perceive against the different one may be the cause of their negative attitudes towards other religions and races. The finding of the present study relevant to dismissive attachment can be interpreted in this manner. Finding preoccupied attachment positively related with discrimination based on the race-ethnicity and religion and total score of discrimination is explained by the possibility that such individuals may feel an excessive affiliation to the ethnic and religious groups they are a member of, as is the case with their daily relationships. In this manner, they may feel better about themselves and perceive that they belong to somewhere. This excessive need of ingroup belonging and anxiety of being excluded may give rise to a perception of threat and fear towards outgroups.

### **4.5. Self-Constraint and Discriminatory Attitudes**

The findings of the present study regarding self-construal indicate that the individualistic self-construal is negatively related with discrimination against homosexuals, discrimination against women and total score of discrimination, and that it is also a significant predictor of the total discriminatory attitudes. In addition, collectivistic self-construal was found to be positively related with discrimination against homosexuals and total score of discrimination, and it was also found as a significant predictor of total discriminatory attitudes. Along with lacking sufficient number of researches on the relationship between self-construal and discrimination, it has been specified that outgroup distinction and prejudice may be at higher levels in collectivist cultures (Fujimoto & Hartel, 2004; Kağıtçıbaşı, 2012). The finding of only one research on the subject has supported this opinion



(Al Zahrani & Kaplowitz, 1993). For the individuals having collectivist self-construal, dependence on the group that they are a member of, on the roles that the group deems proper and on the social system is very important (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In addition, when collectivism is addressed in a normative structure (focusing on the requirements of the group the individual belongs to), it has been stated that it relatively reflects more traditional and conservative ideology (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2012). In contrast with that, individualism is based on personal rights, benefits and privileges (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). It is possible that the individuals having collectivist self-construal with higher level of dependence on traditions, family-relative ties and values have more traditionalist gender role attitudes and have anti-homosexual opinions transmitted with traditions. On the contrary, the individuals with individualistic self-construal, said to have more sensitive to and defender of personal rights and privileges, are expected to be more sensitive regarding the rights of women and homosexuals, and the relevant findings of the present research is interpreted in this manner. Along with including interpersonal relations and identification in relatedness dimension, it emphasizes relation oriented mutual dependency instead of group oriented mutual dependency (Ercan, 2013). It can be specified that it is an expected result for relatedness not to show a significant relation with discrimination due to the fact that it doesn't just include individualism or collectivism.

#### **4.6. Gender and Discriminatory Attitudes**

In the present research, the male students have obtained significantly higher scores than the female students in respect of discrimination against homosexuals, discrimination against women, discrimination based on the race-ethnicity, religion and total discriminatory attitudes. These findings supports the similar past research substantially. The men seem more homophobic (Gormley & Lopez, 2010; Johnson et al., 1997; Woodford et al., 2012), racist, ethnocentric and authoritarian (Gormley & Lopez, 2010; Sidanius, 1993) compared to women. The men are supporting hierarchy more compared to women, and they are exhibiting higher levels of social dominance orientation (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth & Malle, 1994). This tendency may be explaining their discrimination attitudes towards individuals from other races and religions. The fact that men have more discrimination attitudes towards homosexuals compared to women may be explained by deeming heterosexuality as the prerequisite for masculinism (i.e. "being a real man") (Theodore & Basow, 2000). On the other hand, the fact that women are being exposed to discrimination in family and business life may be facilitating their more accepting attitudes towards excluded and despised cultural groups due to their empathetic attitudes.

#### **4.7. Class Level and Discriminatory Attitudes**

In the present study, no significant difference was found among students in respect of class level at any discriminatory attitudes dimension except the discrimination against women. In only one study regarding class level, Vural and Gömleksiz (2010) have found that there was no significant difference among the discrimination attitude scores of 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade university students. But the present study's finding seems remarkable as the study was performed with the students of Psychological Counseling and Guidance undergraduate program. In a sense, the students preserve their attitudes towards homosexuals, different races-religions and foreigners in counseling education process despite there are many courses within their program that will help them to gain attitudes regarding understanding different people in their own cultural context, and respecting and accepting them. As the courses in undergraduate program is lack in providing experiential learning opportunities, they may be insufficient in respect of enabling the required affective change despite making a cognitive positive effect in respect of discrimination. Making contact with different cultures can be thought as a experiential activity, accordingly, the increasing contact of male students with females in relatively less pressured university context may assist them to change their rigid attitudes towards women. As for female students, possibility of being away from family, feeling thysself as more independent and knowing thysself better as a woman in time may help female students in changing their rigid attitudes about gender. Significant difference in discrimination against woman by class-level can be explained this way.

#### **Conclusion and Suggestions**

In the present study, religiosity, political ideology, academic achievement, self-construal and attachment styles were found to be significantly related to some discriminatory attitudes. In addition, religiosity, political ideology, academic achievement, individualistic and collectivist self-construal were found as significant predictors of discriminatory attitudes. Male psychological counselor candidates were found to have higher levels of discriminatory attitudes compared to female psychological counselor candidates except foreigner discrimination. No significant difference had occurred in respect of discrimination types except the discriminatory attitudes towards women in respect of class level. Based on these results, it can be said that the counseling students need to recognize the effect of their religious tendencies on their biased and discriminatory attitudes. It may be beneficial to attract attention to the issues of equality, honor and respect to human which are included in religious texts. Also, it is thought that it will be helpful to use activities that will enable the students –especially

the ones with high conservatism tendency- to contact with ones from different cultures and opinions, or to develop empathy for them. Along with observing a tendency towards individualism in recent years in Turkish society, dependency on family and traditions is still being deemed important (Özdemir, 2012). Creating an awareness in students regarding that respect to family, group and traditions doesn't mean excluding and despising ones from other cultures seems like a requirement. Addressing in courses the issues relevant to recognizing different life styles and respecting them may assist in this respect. In relation to the effect of attachment styles on discriminatory attitudes, in theoretical and experiential studies during courses, urging upon how the students perceive themselves and others in their relationships and how their perceptions affect their approaches to ones from different cultures may be beneficial in decreasing the perception of concern and threat towards the different one. Especially for male students, it may be beneficial to use experiential activities such as watching movies or role playing to help them being aware of growing up "as a real man" and its effect of their beliefs and attitudes regarding rigid male gender role. Studies such as empathy training, that will assist them to understand the emotions and lives of women and homosexuals, may be performed. It will be beneficial to address at each class level the issues such as culture, cultural diversity, human rights and social responsibility within the scope of counselor training curriculum, and to use experiential activities such as role playing, cultural contact, watching movies and playing games that probably effect change in affective domain.

This study has certain limitations. It has been carried out at a university in northeast of Turkey with a partially homogenous sample in cultural aspect. Possible similar studies may be carried out with a sample that is more heterogeneous in cultural aspect, and that covers a couple of universities. As the data relevant to variables in the study were collected by data collection tools based on self-report, the possibility of being affected from social desirability may also be specified as a limitation.

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