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University students' perception of discrimination on campus in Turkey

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This study explores discrimination on campus in Turkey. The participants were 164 university students from the first, third, and fourth classes of two departments in a university in Turkey. The data was gathered through a questionnaire developed by the author. The results revealed that students were discriminated against because of their clothing style; their religious attitudes; their political leanings; their gender; their ethnicity; their hometown or nationality; their age; and their IQ levels on campus. Besides, it appears they were discriminated against by both lecturers and peers. This study contributes to the literature demonstrating types of discrimination, and exclusive behaviours resulting from discrimination in higher education in Turkey. The findings of this study highlight the importance of attracting the attention of lecturers to be aware of discrimination and biases in their classes, and policy makers to support non-discrimination by establishing diversity courses in higher education curriculum.

Keywords: campus; discrimination; exclusive behaviours; higher education; students; Turkey

Introduction

Billions of people around the world are suffering from injustice and indignity as a result of the global financial situation. The Amnesty International Report (2009) indicates that the world is in the middle of a human rights crisis, and a social, political and economic time-bomb will explode if human rights concerns are not addressed. Meanwhile, 75 million children do not have access to basic education. The Right to Education Project (2008) states that 150 million students will drop out before completing primary education because of discrimination against and violation of their rights. Discrimination means different treatment or making a distinction in favour of or against a person based on the group, class, or category to which that person belongs rather than on individual merit (Dictionary.com, 2012). The Right to Education Project (2008) suggests the '4A's (availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability) as requirements for education to be a meaningful right.

Availability means that education is free and government-funded and that there are adequately trained teachers at schools. Accessibility means that the system is non-discriminatory and unrestricted to all. Acceptability means non-discriminatory and culturally appropriate, that the school itself is safe and teachers are professional. Adaptability means that education can contribute to challenging inequalities, such as gender discrimination, and can be altered to fit the local needs. The project suggests this framework of the 4As as a useful tool to enable people to think through what the right to education means to them (Right to Education Project, 2008).

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Although the accessibility and acceptability criteria of the 4As emphasize non-discrimination, negative prejudices find their expression in sometimes clear maltreatment of others on college campuses in various countries. Prejudice and discrimination are universal, and conflicts between people of different ethnicities and religions have been increasingly noticeable in various regions, such as Jews and Arabs in the Middle East, Turks and Kurds in Turkey, Christians and Muslims in Indonesia, Muslims and Hindus in India (Kenrick, Neuberg, & Cialdini, 2009). These conflicts impact people in education too.

Literature review

Discrimination is identified as 'any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity and treatment in employment or occupation' by the Discrimination Convention in 1958 (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2003, p. 16). It includes treating people differently, negatively or adversely without a good reason. The idea behind it is that people should not be placed at a disadvantaged situation because of their racial and ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation (The Right to Education Project, 2008). Discrimination on the basis of age, disability, national origin, race/colour, equal-pay/compensation, genetic information, pregnancy, religion, retaliation, sex, and sexual harassment at the workplace is prohibited by laws (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2012).

Prejudices and stereotypes are at the heart of direct discrimination (see Figure 1). Stereotyping is the process that assigns people particular attitudes or lack of talent on the grounds of their membership in a group, and treating them as a representative of a racial, sexual, and religious or other group, ignoring their skills and work experience (ILO, 2003).

Discrimination can take many forms, such as threats, intimidation, and verbal abuse. Additionally, it involves unacceptable expressions or jokes about subjects like ethnicity, religion, disability or age. Further, displaying racist or other offensive pictures or posters

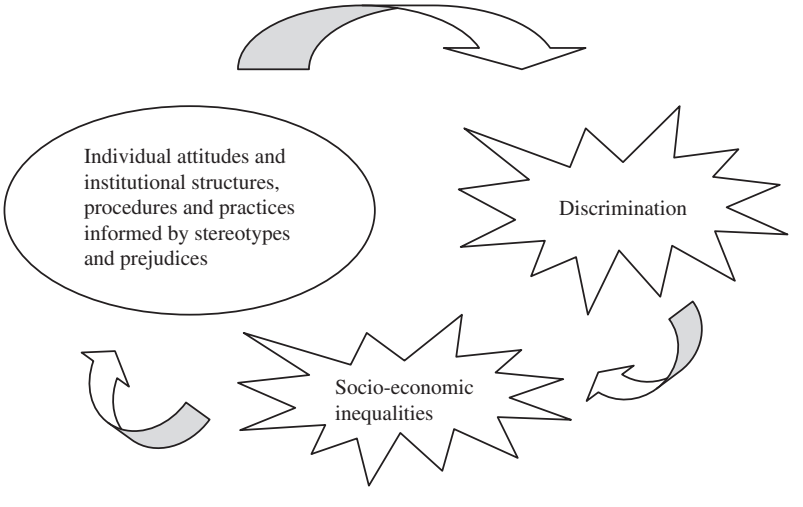


Figure 1. The vicious cycle of discrimination and inequality.
Source: Time for equality at work, © ILO, 2003, p. 21.

are some of the forms of discrimination. Discrimination can be direct or indirect. Treating an individual or a group less fairly than another on the grounds of age, sexual orientation, disability, racial or ethnic origin, or belief or religion is direct discrimination. Job advertisements that exclude applications from people over a certain age is another example of direct discrimination. Indirect discrimination involves unequal treatment that results from the operation of rules that are not themselves apparently discriminatory in intention. Thus, indirect discrimination evolves when neutral rules and practices have negative effects on an overbalanced rate of members of a particular group regardless of whether they meet the requirements of the job or not. Affording differential treatment to particular groups in a workplace is an example of indirect discrimination. Furthermore, treating part-time workers less favourably than full-time workers, or excluding domestic, agricultural or seasonal workers from social protection measures by law, as many countries have, are examples of indirect discrimination. Indirect discrimination exposes biases in the workplaces, which have traditionally been built for workers with no physical disabilities. In addition, work schedules, including working meetings, are often fixed according to a male model that ignores the parenting responsibilities of employees. These practices may dismiss the participation of workers who have to leave work at a certain time to take their children from nursery schools to the meetings (ILO, 2003; Marsh & Dikmen, 2002).

Discrimination in education

People are exposed direct or indirect discrimination in education not only as employees but also as students at schools. There are large differences in the attainment of education in the world. Persons with disabilities have limited access to education and vocational training in many developing countries. Besides, females are disadvantaged as regards access to education in these countries (ILO, 2003). Despite improvements in literacy and school enrolments, female participation in higher education improved only slightly from 36.6 per cent in 1970 to 38.0 per cent in 1990 in Asia and the Pacific, which means females remain a disadvantaged group compared to males (Lee, 2002). Consequently, the female representation in higher education is lower than the male representation level in developing countries. Participation in higher education is especially important for females because of its implications for their future opportunities in the long term. This is one of the most vital parts of higher education's role in conveying equity to communities (Brennan & Naidoo, 2008).

Equality is an expectation of unbiased treatment and it concentrates on the individual and the circumstances surrounding him or her. It presumes that since the individual has been assimilated into the society he or she should not be precluded by traditional expectations or stereotypes (Caldwell, Shapiro, & Gross, 2007). Therefore equality in schools means that schools must treat students neutrally and not focus on group differences based on factors such as disability, race, social class, and gender.

The types of discrimination in education are gender, age, disability, religious, race, and sex as described by the Minnesota Department of Human Rights (2011). Although discrimination is declared to be illegal by laws and regulations, unfair treatment in education happens a lot. For example, the National School Climate Survey revealed that 90 per cent of high school students reported having heard the term 'gay' used generally to imply someone is stupid or worthless in 2005 (Hanna & Linden; 2009; Young, 2011). The Minnesota Human Rights Act declares that treating people differently in education because of their race, colour, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age (for 25 years or older), marital status, disability, public assistance, and sexual orientation is illegal. Examples of what

could be discrimination in education are as follows (Minnesota Department of Human Rights, 2011, p. 1):

(1) College will not accept applications from people who are over 50 years old.
(2) A teacher treats non-English speaking students unfairly because he/she thinks these students cannot learn, and they should not be in school anyway.
(3) An Asian student is bullied a lot at school because of his/her race. The student tells his/her teachers and the school principal what is happening. The school does nothing about the bullying even though it happens every week.
(4) A college takes fewer applications for enrolment from people of colour than it does for white people. The college does this because it wants most of its students to be white.

Teachers' expectations affect students' behaviour in schools. Even the students' beliefs that they are safe and protected by adults at school can affect their decisions whether to drop out or graduate. Furthermore, students learn more, make better grades, and have enhanced emotional well-being when they are protected from verbal and physical harassment by educators in their schools. While discrimination prevents the effectiveness of education in levelling the playing field for children from different backgrounds (Hanna & Linden; 2009; Young, 2011), equality may support the effectiveness of education.

Studies examining equity access in higher education (Clancy & Goastellec, 2007; Ertl & Yu, 2011; Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009; Kariya, 2011; McCowan 2007; Scull & Cuthill, 2010; Yu & Ertl, 2011) are the majority in literature related to exclusion or discrimination in higher education. Boysen, Vogel, and Madon (2006) claimed that explicit measures of attitudes toward stigmatized groups resulted more positively when assessed in a public situation than when assessed in a private situation due to the fact that people want to appear unprejudiced to others. However, several researchers have examined discrimination both explicitly and implicitly such as examining attitudes toward stigmatized groups or biases in education. For example, Ancis, Sedlacek, and Mohr (2000) found that African American students perceived and experienced more racial conflict on campus and racial-ethnic separation than did Asian American and white students. In addition, Marcus et al. (2003) found that only 10 per cent had encountered racially motivated bias in public spaces on campus, but 32 per cent had encountered bias in class. In the meantime, Rankin (2003) found that 30 per cent of gay, lesbian and bisexual students were harassed in their classes. Hockings, Cooke, Bowl, Yamashita, and McGinty (2008) found that diversity extends beyond the traditional structural divisions of class, gender and ethnicity in higher education. Lavy (2008) examined gender stereotypes and discrimination by teachers, and found that male students faced discrimination in each subject in Israel. Negy and Lunt (2008) found that Hispanic and African American students did not believe that ethnic student organizations contributed to racial or ethnic separatism on campus. Boysen and Vogel (2009) studied biases in classroom and found that stereotyping was the most common form of explicit bias, and verbal derogation of specific groups was the most common form of implicit bias. In addition, Boysen, Vogel, Cope, and Hubbard (2009) found that 44 per cent college students perceived an obvious incident of bias in the classroom, and 63 per cent perceived a subtle incident. Hanna and Linden (2009) tried to measure teachers' discrimination through students' statistics, and found that teachers discriminated against low caste children in grading exams. Studying perceived discrimination, Karuppan and Barari (2010) found that perceptions of discrimination have a negative affect on student learning outcomes. Furthermore, Canal, Bonini, Micciolo, and Tentori (2011) studied the consistency

of teachers' judgments, Tatar and Da'as (2011) examined teachers' perceptions of their significance towards their students, and Boysen (2011) studied teachers' responses to bias in the classroom.

Sakallı-Uğurlu and Beydogan (2002) examined college students' attitudes toward female managers on the basis of patriarchy, sexism and gender in Turkey. They found that male students had less positive attitudes toward female managers than did female students. Studying sex discrimination among Turkish university students, Çırakoğlu (2006) found that students who had previous contact with homosexual people held more positive attitudes toward homosexuality than did the others. Halici and Kasimoglu (2006) compared levels of discrimination against academic staff between the two Turkish and Azerbaijani universities. They found that all instructors faced discrimination, and Azerbaijani instructors faced more discrimination than did Turkish instructors. Gokce (2009) studied educational equality in the slums of Ankara, the capital city of Turkey, and found that the children who lived in the slums had fewer opportunities at the schools than did the other children. Baloğlu (2009) found that teachers exhibited discrimination against students in his study examining high school teachers' negative behaviours towards students.

In line with these studies, the need to identify discrimination on campus in Turkey has arisen. This paper gives an overview of identifying discrimination against students on university campuses. In this respect the aim of the present study is to identify the kinds of discrimination perceived by students, and the maltreatment by teachers, peers and staff against students on campus. Thus, the following research questions were examined:

(1) What kinds of discrimination were students exposed to on campus?
(2) Who are the perpetrators (lecturers, peers or staff)?
(3) What are the exclusive behaviours perceived as discriminatory by the students on campus?
(4) Is there any difference between male and female students with regard to the exclusive behaviours exhibited by lecturers and peers?

Methods

Sample

The research was carried out in two departments; the Department of Education and the Department of Arts and Humanities in the 2010–2011 academic year in Turkey. The sample included 164 students from the first, third and fourth classes. A structured questionnaire was administered during class time to collect data on students' attitudes and the behaviours they have experienced during their courses and their compulsives. Personal information (gender, age and departments) was asked at the beginning of the questionnaire. Of the total 164 responses, 79 per cent were from female participants ($n = 130$) and 21 per cent from male participants ($n = 34$). The age range of the students was 18–24 years. While 32 per cent were studying in the English language teaching department, 41 per cent were studying in the science education department, and 28 per cent were studying in the pre-school education teaching department. In addition, both of the rates of the third and fourth year students were 36 per cent while 28 per cent were first year students.

Instrument

The questionnaire was developed by the researcher after reviewing the literature (A Whole New Approach, 2012; Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2012; Citizens

Advice, 2011; Equal Opportunity Commission of South Australia, 2012; FindLaw, 2012; Ohio Legal Services, 2012; The Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division, 2000). The questionnaire includes three parts: the first one asked the types of discrimination perceived by the participants and the identity of discriminators (included in the checklist of each type of discrimination item as teachers, peers, or staff). The second part involved the particular examples of exclusive behaviours (20 items on a five-point Likert Scale) exhibited by the teachers. The Cronbach's alpha for the second part of the questionnaire was .87. Lastly, the third part sought exclusive behaviours (19 items with five-point Likert Scale) exhibited by their peers, and the Cronbach's alpha for the questionnaire was .90. The data were analysed through descriptive statistics.

Results

To get answers for the first and the second questions of the study, the students were asked to indicate reasons for the discrimination they perceived, and to identify perpetrators in the scale. So, the reasons perceived by the students as well as the perpetrators discovered through descriptive statistics are shown in Table 1.

As Table 1 shows the students perceive having been discriminated against by lecturers, peers and staff because of their clothing style, make-up style, hair style or beard style; their religious attitudes; their political affiliations; their gender; their ethnicity; their hometown or nationality; their age; and their IQ levels. In addition, they perceived that they experience discrimination from both lecturers and peers because of their speaking or pronunciation style; their economic condition; and their handicaps such as a physical disability or speech impediment. Finally, they perceive having been discriminated against because of their sexual orientation only by peers.

The third question of the study sought the behaviours perceived as discriminatory by the students. The students were first asked to indicate the exclusive behaviours exhibited

Table 1. Percentages of discriminators through the perceived reasons of discrimination.

	Perpetrators				
	Lecturer	Peers	Staff	Teacher + Peers	Peers + Staff
Types of discrimination	Per cent				
1. Clothing/make up/hair/beard styles	29.3	43.9	2.4	14.6	4.9
2. Religion/belief	19.4	38.7	6.5	29.0	3.2
3. Political notion	17.5	52.5	2.5	17.5	7.5
4. Gender	40.0	36.0	12.0	8.0	4.0
5. Ethnicity	8.3	66.7	8.3	16.7	–
6. Hometown/nationality	5.6	72.2	16.7	5.6	–
7. Age	12.5	75	6.3	6.3	–
8. Level of IQ	50.0	40.0	–	–	10.0
9. Way of speaking/pronunciation	12.9	67.7	–	19.4	–
10. Economic condition	11.1	77.8	–	–	–
11. Having any kind of handicap (being disabled, stammered, etc)	50.0	50.0	–	–	–
12. Sexual orientation	–	100.0	–	–	–

Table 2. Percentages of exclusive behaviours exhibited by the lecturers.

Exclusive behaviours	Per cent
1. Berating me for failure in front of other students	50.6
2. Threatening me verbally in front of other students	42.0
3. Withholding permission for me to speak while giving permission to others in the class	31.7
4. Ignoring me in the classroom	29.4
5. Criticizing my clothing style	28.8
6. Mocking my statements	25.5
7. Making fun of my political affiliation	24.7
8. Allowing the other students to make fun of me	24.7
9. Making fun of my religious attitudes	23.8
10. Berating me as foolish	20.6
11. Asking mocking questions	16.9
12. Making fun of my personality	18.1
13. Calling me humiliating names	14.8
14. Suggesting that I am psychologically disturbed	13.0
15. Mocking me on account of my private lifestyle	11.9
16. Making fun of my IQ	11.3
17. Making implications about my sexuality	10.8
18. Making fun of my ethnicity	8.3
19. Making fun of my parents' profession	5.0
20. Making fun of my handicap	3.8

by lecturers that they perceived as discriminatory. Table 2 shows descriptive statistics of exclusive behaviours exhibited by lecturers. Half of the students expressed that the lecturers seem to discriminate against them by berating them for failure in front of the other students (50.6 per cent). Besides this, 42 per cent revealed that the lecturers discriminate against them by threatening them verbally in front of the other students. In addition, one-third (31.7 per cent) expressed that lecturers discriminate against them by withholding their permission to speak while allowing others to speak in the classroom. Furthermore, they stated that the lecturers ignored them in the classroom (29.4 per cent); and criticized them with regard to their clothing style (28.8 per cent). On the other hand, a few students revealed that the lecturers discriminated against them by making fun of their handicaps, their parents' professions and their ethnicity.

The students were then asked to indicate the exclusive behaviours exhibited by their peers that they perceived as discriminatory. Table 3 shows descriptive statistics of the behaviours of the peers perceived as discriminatory by the participants.

As Table 3 demonstrates, 41.4 per cent perceive that the other students discriminate against them by mocking their behaviours. Besides this, one-third (30.2 per cent) revealed that the other students discriminated against them by criticizing their clothing, make up, hair, or beard style; and ignored them in the classroom (27.7 per cent). In addition, one-fourth expressed that they were mocked because of their statements (25.3 per cent), lifestyle (24.8 per cent), and political affiliation (23.6 per cent). On the other hand, only a few students revealed that they were made fun of for their sexual orientation (1.9 per cent), and their parents' professions (2.5 per cent).

The last research question sought any differences between male and female students with regard to the exclusive behaviours demonstrated by lecturers and peers. Since the data did not have a normal distribution, the Mann Whitney U-test was used to explore the

Table 3. Percentages of exclusive behaviours exhibited by the peers.

Exclusive behaviours	Per cent
1. Mocking my behaviours	41.4
2. Criticizing my clothing/make up/hair/beard style	30.2
3. Ignoring me in the classroom	27.7
4. Trying to make me behave ridiculous	27.0
5. Mocking my statements	25.3
6. Mocking me on account of my private lifestyle	24.8
7. Making fun of my political affiliation	23.6
8. Calling me humiliating names	17.9
9. Forcing me to behave as a foolish	16.8
10. Making fun of my religious attitudes	14.3
11. Suggested that I am psychologically disturbed	13.0
12. Making fun of my nationality/hometown	9.4
13. Making fun of my IQ	9.3
14. Making fun of my sexuality	8.7
15. Making fun of my ethnicity	7.5
16. Making fun of my economic condition	6.8
17. Making fun of my handicap	5.7
18. Making fun of my parents' profession	2.5
19. Making implications about my sexuality	1.9

difference in exclusive behaviours that students experienced. Table 4 and Table 5 show the difference between male and female students with regard to the exclusive behaviours exhibited by lecturers, and peers.

As Table 4 shows, there is significant difference between males and females only in being ignored in the classroom by lecturers ($U = 1731.00$, $p < .05$). The mean rank of the male students' perception is higher than the female group's perception.

As Table 5 demonstrates, there is a significant difference between males and females in being ignored in the classroom by peers ($U = 1553.00$, $p < .05$), and being mocked on account of his/her private lifestyle ($U = 1792.50$, $p < .05$). Similarly to the lecturers' behaviours, the mean rank of the male students' perception is higher than the female group's perception in both behaviours.

Conclusion and discussion

The present study examined the kinds of discrimination that university students were exposed to, and the behaviours they perceived as discriminatory in class and on campus. The data indicated that university students seem to be discriminated against by lecturers, peers and staff on campus. Analyses revealed that the students perceived themselves as discriminated against due to their religion or belief and political affiliation; their hometown/nationality and ethnicity; their gender, age, economic condition, sexual orientation and IQ; and their styles of clothing/make up/hair/beard and speaking. Therefore the data indicate four components as participants' perception of discrimination: (1) religious attitude and political affiliation; (2) hometown/nationality, ethnicity; (3) gender, age, economic condition, sexual orientation and levels of IQ; and (4) clothing/make up/hair/beard and speaking or pronunciation style. These findings are in line with the Minnesota Human Rights Act (Minnesota Department of Human Rights, 2011).

Table 4. Mann Whitney U test for exclusive behaviours exhibited by lecturers.

	Gender	n	Mean rank	Sum of rank	U	p
1. Ignoring me in the classroom	F	126	77.32	9742.00	1731.00	.034*
	M	34	92.29	3138.00		
2. Withholding permission for me to speak while giving permission to others	F	128	79.40	10163.00	1907.00	.287
	M	33	87.21	2878.00		
3. Mocking my statements	F	128	78.74	10078.50	1822.50	.108
	M	33	89.77	2962.50		
4. Asking mocking questions	F	127	80.86	10269.00	2050.00	.767
	M	33	79.12	2611.00		
5. Berating me for failure in front of other students	F	129	80.06	10327.50	1942.50	.372
	M	33	87.14	2875.50		
6. Making fun of my ethnicity	F	125	78.78	9847.50	1972.50	.802
	M	32	79.86	2555.50		
7. Threatening verbally in front of other students	F	129	80.78	10420.50	2035.500	.651
	M	33	84.32	2782.50		
8. Mocking me on account of my private lifestyle	F	127	79.82	10137.00	2009.00	.515
	M	33	83.12	2743.00		
9. Making fun of my personality	F	126	80.60	10156.00	2129.00	.935
	M	34	80.12	2724.00		
10. Making fun of my IQ	F	126	81.02	10209.00	2076.00	.615
	M	34	78.56	2671.00		
11. Making fun of my parents' profession	F	126	79.67	10039.00	2038.00	.251
	M	34	83.56	2841.00		
12. Calling me humiliating names	F	128	82.16	10516.00	2092.00	.574
	M	34	79.03	2687.00		
13. Allowing the other students to make fun of me	F	129	82.22	10606.50	2035.50	.605
	M	33	78.68	2596.50		
14. Berating me as foolish	F	127	80.38	10208.00	2080.00	.926
	M	33	80.97	2672.00		
15. Suspecting that I am psychologically disturbed	F	127	79.37	10080.50	1952.50	.143
	M	34	87.07	2960.50		
16. Making fun of my handicap	F	126	79.52	10020.00	2019.00	.440
	M	33	81.82	2700.00		
17. Making fun of my religious attitudes	F	127	80.40	10210.50	2082.50	.941
	M	33	80.89	2669.50		
18. Making fun of my political affiliation	F	126	80.06	10088.00	1945.00	.681
	M	32	77.28	2473.00		
19. Making fun of my sexuality	F	126	80.40	10131.00	1902.00	.358
	M	32	75.94	2430.00		
20. Criticizing my clothing style	F	127	80.81	10262.50	2056.50	.834
	M	33	79.32	2611.50		

*$p < .05$; p = significant (two-tailed); U = Mann Whitney U value.

Second, the data revealed that the participants perceived that they were discriminated against because of their sexual orientation only by peers. Besides this, the students felt discriminated against because of their clothing/make up/hair/beard, style or beard style; their religious attitude; their political affiliation, their gender, their ethnicity, their hometown or nationality, their age, and their IQ by lecturers, peers and staff. The result that participants perceived discrimination due to religion or belief on campus is significant because most of the students are Muslims in the departments studied. The perception of belief discrimination might be a result of secularism in Turkey. Women must uncover their heads while on duty as public servants or at school as students because of secularism

Table 5. Mann Whitney U test for exclusive behaviours exhibited by peers.

	Gender	n	Mean rank	Sum of rank	U	p
1. Ignoring me in the classroom	F	128	76.63	9809.00	1553.00	.016*
	M	31	93.90	2911.00		
2. Mocking my statements	F	128	80.62	10319.00	2063.00	.537
	M	34	84.82	2884.00		
3. Mocking my behaviours	F	128	80.27	10275.00	2019.00	.449
	M	33	86.12	2928.00		
4. Making fun of my nationality/hometown	F	126	79.35	9998.00	1997.00	.231
	M	34	84.76	2882.00		
5. Making fun of my ethnicity	F	126	78.94	9947.00	1946.00	.073
	M	34	86.26	2933.00		
6. Mocking me on account of my private lifestyle	F	127	78.11	9920.50	1792.50	.043*
	M	34	91.78	3120.50		
7. Making fun of my IQ	F	127	80.47	10220.00	2092.00	.582
	M	34	82.97	2821.00		
8. Making fun of my parents' profession	F	126	79.89	10066.50	2065.50	.833
	M	33	80.41	2653.50		
9. Calling me humiliating names	F	128	79.66	10196.00	1940.00	.144
	M	34	88.44	3007.00		
10. Trying to make me behave ridiculous	F	129	80.22	10348.00	1963.00	.222
	M	34	88.76	3018.00		
11. Forcing me to behave as a foolish	F	127	80.81	10263.00	2135.00	.878
	M	34	81.71	2778.00		
12. Suggesting that I am psychologically disturbed	F	127	80.64	10241.50	2113.50	.747
	M	34	82.34	2799.50		
13. Making fun of my handicap	F	125	79.32	9914.50	2039.50	.370
	M	34	82.51	2805.50		
14. Making fun of my personality	F	127	79.64	10114.50	1986.50	.238
	M	34	86.07	2926.50		
15. Making fun of my religious attitudes	F	127	79.75	10128.00	2000.00	.371
	M	34	85.68	2913.00		
16. Making fun of my political notion	F	127	81.20	10313.00	2133.00	.805
	M	34	80.24	2728.00		
17. Making fun of my sexuality	F	127	80.34	10203.00	2075.00	.476
	M	34	83.47	2838.00		
18. Making implications about my sexual orientation	F	126	80.27	10114.00	2113.00	.607
	M	34	81.35	2766.00		
19. Criticizing my clothing/make up/hair/beard style	F	128	81.05	10374.00	2118.00	.764
	M	34	83.21	2829.00		

*$p < .05$; p = significant (two-tailed); U = Mann Whitney U value.

in Turkey. The government repealed the secular regulation 'de facto' in higher education and students who wanted to cover their heads have been covering their heads in classes in universities since September 2011. This study was conducted during the conflicts about whether to allow students wearing head scarves into the classrooms. During this period, some deans and lecturers let covered women into the classes, while others refused on the grounds that the regulations at the time prohibited headscarves in higher education. There are lots of students wearing headscarves in classes today, and henceforth Muslim students who do not want to cover their heads have become minorities in the classes that were examined in this study. Moreover, many students, especially in the Department of Education have come to identify the Republic of Turkey as Muslim Turkey instead, rejecting the idea of a secular nation.

The data revealed that participants perceived themselves as 'being berated for failure', and 'being threatened verbally' in front of the other students by lecturers as discriminatory behaviours. In addition, they perceived that they were discriminated against by 'being ignored' and 'being criticized for their clothing style' by lecturers. On the other hand, the students felt discriminated against by their peers by being mocked because of their behaviours; by being criticized because of their clothing, make-up, hair or beard style; and by being ignored.

The results showed that the students were discriminated against because of their religious attitudes more by lecturers than their peers. Besides this, both lecturers and peers seemed to discriminate against them by ignoring them. Additionally, both lecturers and peers seemed to discriminate against them because of their political leanings.

Lastly, the male students appear to be more discriminated against by being ignored in the classroom by both lecturers and peers than female students. In addition, they seem to be more discriminated against by being mocked on account of their private lifestyles by peers than female students.

Although this research shows that students are discriminated against by lecturers, peers and staff in terms of their religious and political attitudes, sexual, social and cultural backgrounds, a more detailed analysis reveals that all students who are discriminated against based on such factors in higher education in Turkey remain under-represented. Nevertheless, this study contributes to the literature demonstrating types of discrimination, and the behaviours resulting in discrimination in higher education in Turkey. The findings of this study highlight the importance of drawing the attention of lecturers to be aware of discrimination and biases in their classes, and policy makers to support non-discrimination by establishing diversity courses in higher education curriculum.

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