

Do Universities Challenge Hierarchy? A Longitudinal Examination of Hierarchy- Legitimizing Attitudes Among Turkish Undergraduates

Hanife Merve Çatan

University of Health Sciences, Turkey

Abstract

University education has been shown to foster critical thinking, reduce prejudice, and reinforce democratic values. Yet whether higher education meaningfully shifts authoritarian tendencies, social dominance orientations, sexist attitudes, and system-justifying beliefs in non-Western contexts and through longitudinal designs remains an empirical question with limited systematic evidence. The findings reported here draw on the first two waves of an ongoing longitudinal data collection of Turkish university students. Data were collected from 259 participants at T1 (213 female, 46 male; $M = 21.19$, $SD = 3.40$) and 232 at T2 (206 female, 26 male; $M = 21.08$, $SD = 3.36$), spanning all four undergraduate years. Male participants scored significantly higher on hostile sexism and gender-based system justification at both waves, and Muslim participants reported higher levels of sexism, system justification, and right-wing authoritarianism across both time points. Cross-sectional comparisons revealed consistent class-level differences in social dominance orientation at both time points, with additional differentiation emerging in hostile sexism and the dominance subscale at T2. Longitudinally, right-wing authoritarianism declined consistently across all cohort transitions ($d = .33-.43$), indicating a reliable attenuating effect of university education on authoritarian tendencies. These preliminary findings suggest that university education in Türkiye exerts a consistent attenuating effect on right-wing authoritarianism, while social dominance orientation shows cross-sectional variation across academic years. The full four-wave dataset will allow more definitive conclusions regarding the trajectory and scope of attitude change across the undergraduate experience.



International Conference on
Humanities, Psychology and Social Sciences

Keywords: Authoritarianism; Conservatism; Longitudinal Design; Sexism; System Justification