



## THE EXAMINATION OF RESPECT LEVEL OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS FOR DIFFERENCES ACCORDING TO VARIOUS VARIABLES<sup>i</sup>

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### Abstract:

The purpose of this descriptive study is to examine respect level of the undergraduate students for differences according to the various variables such as gender, department and foreign language preparation class education. The participants of the study consisted of 242 students studying at Afyon Kocatepe University, Turkey in the spring term of 2016-2017 academic year. Simple random sampling method was used in selecting the participants., "Respect of Difference Scale" developed by Öksüz and Güven (2012) was used to collect the data. The scale consists of three subscales of 'informational', 'social categories' and 'value' differences. In the analyses, firstly, descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means, and standard deviations were computed to display the subjects' overall responses to the respect level for differences. Secondly, t-test was conducted in order to determine whether there were any significant differences in respect level of undergraduate students for respect in terms of gender, department and prep class education variables. It has been found that undergraduate students have a high respect level for differences.

**Keywords:** differences, respect, undergraduate, university

### 1. Introduction

Human resources have become the most fundamental element in terms of service and production during the information age we live in. The differences in societies have become the focus of social sciences with globalization, (Memduhoğlu, 2007). In

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addition, one of the most important characteristics of organizations is that they have individuals with different thinking styles (Memduhoğlu, 2011). In this context, it is seen that there are differences in many field in our society and institutions, especially in the individual, social and cultural fields. As a result, the differences between individuals and the attitudes towards these differences have gained importance and it gets more attention for individuals and organizations to sustain their existence within their organizations happily (Williams, Myerson and Hale, 2008). Individual differences represent the most distinctive features that distinguish individuals from others (Williams, Myerson and Hale, 2008). When the literature is examined, it is seen that there are various definitions about the concept of difference. According to the Turkish Language Association (2011), the difference is expressed as "*Otherness and the distinctive feature that differentiates every event and phenomenon based on natural, social, and consciousness from all others*" (TDK, 2011). 'In English, the concept is usually "difference", which means that *'a point or way in which people or things are dissimilar'* (<http://oxforddictionaries.com>). However, it is seen that this concept is also expressed with the word "diversity" in various studies in the field (Güven, 2012). The difference is expressed as a mixture of various characteristics such as different identities, ethnicity, experience, beliefs, values, gender, educational status, family status, personality and lifestyle of any group or group of individuals in the group or organization (Foxman and Easterling, 1999). Similarly, Dobbs (1996) examines difference in two distinct groups: real difference and perceived difference and defines this concept as the diversity between people, such as gender, age, physical and mental competence, ethnicity, work and family status, which significantly influence their interactions. Ashkanasy, Härtel, and Daus (2002) noted that differences between individuals may manifest in three different ways:

- Demographic differences (race, nationality, ethnicity, gender, age, experience, etc.).
- Socio-cultural differences (values which have been already had and adopted such as religion and philosophical belief, political opinion, level of education, economic situation, perception of the world, cultural background, lifestyle, tradition, customs and value judgments)
- Differences in individual characteristics (personality, physical and mental abilities, level of knowledge and skill, attitude style, psychological, mental and emotional structure, personal conception and emotional adjustment features, etc.).

Lickona (2016) approaches the difference in two groups as positive and negative. The positive difference is the differences we acknowledge and approve as the strengths of different races, ethnic groups or cultures that constitute a society or class. The negative difference is the negative diversity that all rational individuals will morally reject, such as belief systems that lead to hatred.

Respect is an important concept that strengthens relationships between individuals and allows for social peace. Furthermore, respect helps individuals in the community live in harmony. Respect for differences is to accept every difference as a

natural situation and people as they are (Topçubaşı, 2015). The concept of respect is considered as a basic moral value that must be taught in many cultures and societies. Moreover, in the family, parents teach their children to be respectful in many cases, to be respectful to their teachers, other friends, and their grandparents. The notion of respect, which has a crucial place in the regulation of human relations, is a phenomenon that values people, sincerely understands people, treats people according to their behavior rather than their appearance, and assumes that all individuals have equal rights (Öksüz and Güven, 2012). In our daily life, the difference is a natural phenomenon encountered in various organizations. Individuals face differences in every aspect of life. Therefore, it is very important to respect the differences in terms of ensuring that individuals can live in peace in society and ensuring social order (Güven, 2012).

The issue of difference is of great importance in terms of education as well as being important in terms of all organizations. Students need to learn to respect individual differences within different cultures and countries (Lickona, 2016). When examined from the educational point of view, it is seen that individual differences are the most important features affecting student performance. Therefore, individual differences need to be considered, especially in terms of education. It is also important to understand individual differences in the educational process (Williams, Myerson and Hale, 2008). In schools, respect is an important factor for learning and respect is vital for student success (Celkan, Green and Hussain, 2015). Students who are respected by others seem to be more willing to learn and to show commitment class. Moreover, Deutsch and Jones (2008) found that respect moderates youths' perceptions of and relations to authority. When student feel respected, they feel more engaged in class. Therefore, respect is seen as an important factor for students to be motivated to learn (cited in Merz, Eckloff, Johannsen and Van Quequebeke, 2015). On the other hand Güven (2012) states that the students with high tendency to respect differences are more autonomous individuals. The fact that these differences have contributed positively to the school staff, the development of dynamism within the school, the development of different and richer perspectives among the individuals, the development of skills such as thinking and problem solving in the individuals, the development of empathy skills, the breaking down of the prejudices and the development of human relations. In addition, the respect for differences contributes to the development of courtesy and tolerance cultures (Memduhoğlu, 2011).

Turkey's location and its historical and cultural background make the country a multicultural country. Especially, the refugee and immigrant flood into Turkey contributes to the country's multicultural dimension. Furthermore, the internationalization target of the higher education in Turkey university campuses has become multicultural places where people from different culture, region, religion, belief come together to pursue their education and this situation increases the importance of management of the diversity. It is important to determine the respect level for differences in such places to avoid the conflicts and to provide peace. Within these

concepts, this study aims to determine the respect level of undergraduate students for differences.

## 2. Research Problem

In this study, it is aimed to determine the respect level of the undergraduate students for differences. Within this context, the following sub-problems have been sought:

- 1) What is the respect level of the undergraduate students for differences?
- 2) Is there a statistically significant difference in the respect level of the undergraduate students for differences according to the gender variable?
- 3) Is there a statistically significant difference in the respect level of the undergraduate students for differences according to the department variable?
- 4) Is there statistically a significant difference in the respect level of the undergraduate students for differences according to the preparatory class education variable?

## 3. Method

This section gives information about research model, participants, data collection tool and data analysis.

### 3.1. Research Model

In the study, survey method, one of the quantitative research methods, was used. Descriptive survey models describe, compare, analyze and interpret the situations of individuals, institutions, groups or sources in the way they are (Cohen & Manion & Morrison 2007).

### 3.2. Participants

The participants of the study consisted of 242 students studying at Afyon Kocatepe University, Turkey in the spring term of 2016-2017 academic year. Simple random sampling method was used in selecting the participants. The participants included 81 male and 161 female students. They were the students from Social Sciences (174) and Physical Sciences (68) departments. 158 of the students had preparation class education while 84 of them did not. Demographic features of the sampling are given in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Demographic features of the sampling

		N	%
Gender	Male	81	33,5
	Female	161	66,5
	Total	242	100
Department	Social Sciences	174	71,9
	Physical Sciences	68	28,1
	Total	242	100

	Yes	158	65,3
Prep Class Education	No	84	34,7
	Total	242	100

### 3.3. Data Collection Tool

“Respect of Difference Scale” developed by Öksüz and Güven (2012) was used to determine the respect level of the undergraduate students for differences. The scale consisted of 30 Likert-type questions. This scale was used to respond to statements from a five-item Likert range from disagree= 1 to strongly agree= 5. The questions were developed to cover three aspects of respect for differences. These aspects were 1) Informational, 2) Social Categories, 3) Value differences. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient and concurrent validity of the scale is .94 and .83, respectively. Moreover, some demographic information was available via self-report questions placed on the top of the scale.

### 3.4. Data Analysis

After collecting the completed scales, all the data were coded and then analyzed through the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS18.0). Five-item Likert type scale ranges from disagree= 1 to strongly agree=5 and it consists of five equal intervals. The scores were determined according to the group intervals. For this aim, the minimum score (1) is subtracted from the maximum score (5) and the obtained value is divided into group number. Therefore, the score intervals corresponding to each option are determined (Büyüköztürk & Çokluk & Köklü 2011). Firstly, descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means, and standard deviations were computed to display the subjects’ overall responses to the respect level for differences. Secondly, t-test was conducted in order to determine whether there were any significant differences in respect level of undergraduate students for respect in terms of gender, department and prep class education variables.

## 4. Findings

To assess the students’ respect level for differences, descriptive statistics were applied and means and standard deviations were presented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** The respect level of undergraduate students for differences

Respect of Differences Scale and its sub-dimensions	$\bar{X}$	ss
Informational	4.17	.415
Social Categories	4.40	.471
Value	4.23	.561
Total	4.25	.353

n=242

The mean scores of the scale are found as  $\bar{X} = 4.17$ ,  $\bar{X} = 4.40$ ,  $\bar{X} = 4.23$  for the sub-dimensions of the scale, respectively. Moreover, the total mean score of the scale is found as  $\bar{X} = 4.25$ .

The independent samples t-test was utilized to see whether the students' gender differ in respect level for differences. The t-test results are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3:** The respect level of the undergraduate students for differences according to the gender variable

Respect of Differences Scale and its sub dimensions	Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	ss	t	p
Informational	Female	161	4.25	.378	4,334	.000*
	Male	81	4.02	.441		
Social Categories	Female	161	4.41	.477	0.183	.855
	Male	81	4.39	.462		
Value	Female	161	4.23	.540	0.142	.887
	Male	81	4.24	.603		
Total	Female	161	4.29	.345	2.675	.008*
	Male	81	4.16	.354		

It has been found that there is a statistically significant difference between female and male students in the informational sub-dimension in favor of female students. The mean of the female students is  $\bar{X} = 4.25$  and the mean of the male students is  $\bar{X} = 4.02$  ( $t = 4.334$ ;  $p = .000$ ). Furthermore, there is also a statistically significant difference in the total score in favor of the female students. The mean of the female students is  $\bar{X} = 4.29$  and the mean of the male students is  $\bar{X} = 4.16$  ( $t = 2.675$ ;  $p = .008$ ).

In the third problem, it was aimed to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference in respect level of undergraduate students for differences according to department variable. The results are given in Table 4.

**Table 4:** The respect level of undergraduate students for differences according to the department variable

Respect of Differences Scale and its sub dimensions	Department	N	$\bar{X}$	ss	t	p
Informational	Social Sciences	174	4.20	.031	1.381	.168
	Physical Sciences	68	4.11	.050		
Social Categories	Social Sciences	174	4.43	.036	1.587	.114
	Physical Sciences	68	4.33	.055		
Value	Social Sciences	174	4.25	.039	0.981	.108
	Physical Sciences	68	4.17	.079		
Total	Social Sciences	174	4.27	.026	1.746	.082
	Physical Sciences	68	4.18	.041		

As it is seen in table 4, in the first sub-dimension of the scale, the mean of the social sciences is  $\bar{X} = 4.20$  and the physical sciences is  $\bar{X} = 4.11$  ( $t = 1.381$ ;  $p = .168$ ). In the second sub-dimension of the scale, the mean of the social sciences is  $\bar{X} = 4.43$  and the physical sciences is  $\bar{X} = 4.33$  ( $t = 1.587$ ;  $p = .114$ ). In the third sub-dimension of the scale, the mean

of the social sciences is  $\bar{X}=4.25$  and the physical sciences is  $\bar{X}=4.17$  ( $t=0.981$ ;  $p=.108$ ). In the total scale, the mean of the social sciences is  $\bar{X}=4.27$  and the physical sciences is  $\bar{X}=4.18$  ( $t=1.746$ ;  $p=.082$ ). It has been concluded that there is not a significant difference in the scale and all its sub dimensions according to the department the undergraduate students study.

In the fourth problem of the study, it was tried to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference in respect level of undergraduate students for differences according prep class education variable. The results are given in Table 5.

**Table 5:** The respect level of undergraduate students for differences according to the preparatory class education variable

Respect of Differences Scale and its sub dimensions	Preparatory Class Education	N	$\bar{X}$	ss	t	p
Informational	Yes	68	4.07	.045	-2.437	.016*
	No	174	4.21	.032		
Social Categories	Yes	68	4.43	.054	0.541	.589
	No	174	4.39	.036		
Value	Yes	68	4.28	.068	0.930	.355
	No	174	4.21	.042		
Total	Yes	68	4.21	.040	-1.024	.307
	No	174	4.26	.027		

As seen in the table 5, there is not a significant difference in social categories and value sub dimension of the scale as well as in the total score of the scale according to the preparatory class education variable. However, it has been found that there is statistically significant difference in the informational sub dimension of the scale in favor of the undergraduate students who did not have not preparatory class education. The mean of the students who did not have preparatory class education is  $\bar{X}=4.07$  while it is  $\bar{X}=4.21$  for students who did not have preparatory class education ( $t=-2.437$ ;  $p=.016$ ).

## 5. Results and Discussion

In this study, it was aimed to determine the respect level of undergraduate students for respect. The findings showed that the mean scores of the scale are  $\bar{X}=4.17$ ,  $\bar{X}=4.40$ ,  $\bar{X}=4.23$  for informational, social categories and value sub-dimensions of the scale, respectively. Moreover, the total mean score of the scale is found as  $\bar{X}=4.25$ . Therefore, it can be concluded that the undergraduate students have a high level of respect for differences. Similarly, in the study conducted by Çoban, Karaman and Doğan (2010) to examine the perspectives of prospective teachers on cultural diversity, it was obtained that prospective teachers they have positive views towards cultural diversity. In the society, we live with differences. Therefore, differences play an important role in regulating social life. It is stated that in classroom setting when the differences are

accepted and respected students have a stronger sense of self. Moreover, accepting the differences is a powerful tool in regulating the beliefs and behaviors (Olafson & Latta, 2002). In the study conducted by Mertz et al. (2015), a strong relationship between respect and performance was obtained. Students who feel respected showed better performance. This shows that respect has a powerful tool and teachers should be aware of the power of accepting and respecting differences and provide an environment in a way to support the respect.

In the study, the role of gender in the respect level of undergraduate students for differences is examined. The results show that the gender plays an important role in the level of respect of differences. It is seen that the female students have higher points in the informational category of the scale and in the total score than male students. Therefore, it can be said that the female students have high level of respect for differences in informational category. Güven (2012) has also found that there is a significant difference in favor of the female prospective teachers in the level of respect of differences. Olur and Oğuz (2017) have also concluded that the female prospective teachers' perception of multicultural education and democracy level is higher than the male prospective teachers. Saracaloğlu, Evin and Varol (2004) have also found out that the female prospective teachers' democratic attitudes are higher than male prospective teachers. Within this content, it can be interpreted that the female students are more sociable and extrovert, they are more likely to meet new people from different cultural background and this affects their attitude and perception to the differences.

It has been concluded that the department of the undergraduates have no effects on the respect level of undergraduate students for differences. In other words, the students studying at different departments have similar respect level for differences. Gömleksiz and Çeliktaş (2011) have examined the democratic attitudes of prospective teachers and concluded that the democratic attitudes of prospective teachers differs according to the department they study and that the Turkish Language Teachers have the highest attitude point and the Art Teachers have the lowest points. It can be interpreted that the language is a social peace maker and affects the attitude of the people.

The results of the study show that the foreign language preparatory class education has no effects on the level of respect of differences. The students who did not have a prep class education have higher points in the informational category sub dimension of the scale than the students who had prep class education. It can be said that the foreign language prep class has no effect on the level of respect. All the students have a high level of respect of differences. And it can also be said that the level of respect of differences of the students is not only affected by the education but it is also be affected by the environment they study in as all the participants study in the same campus.

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