

A Social Dominance Theory Perspective on Attitudes Toward Girl Child Marriages in Turkey: The Legitimizing Role of Ambivalent Sexism

Meryem Kaynak Malatyalı¹ · Bağdat Deniz Kaynak¹ · Derya Hasta¹

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Abstract The girl child marriage practice (a forced marriage involving a young woman under age 18) is a serious problem in Turkey as it is in many developing countries. It is important to investigate the reasons behind individuals' support for girl child marriages. The aim of the present study is to examine attitudes toward girl child marriages in Turkey within the perspective of social dominance theory (Sidanius and Pratto 1999). Namely, we investigate the relationship between social dominance orientation and attitudes toward girl child marriages. We also examine the mediating role of ambivalent sexism (both hostile and benevolent) in this association. Students ($N = 388$) from two universities in Ankara completed the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, the Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) Scale, and our Attitudes toward Girl Child Marriages Scale. Results indicate that men have more positive attitudes toward girl child marriages than women do. In addition, SDO predicts positive attitudes toward girl child marriages. Also, hostile, but not benevolent, sexism mediates the relationship between SDO and attitudes toward girl child marriages. The present study shows that those who endorse male dominance and gender inequality also have more positive attitudes toward girl child marriages. It also shows that these people draw on their hostile attitudes toward women in order to legitimize these kinds of marriages.

Keywords Attitudes toward girl child marriages · Sexism · Gender equality · Dominance · Ambivalent sexism · Turkey

Millions of women are forced every year to get married at an early age in undeveloped and developing countries (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF] 2013a). According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), any human being under the age of 18-years-old is considered a child. Therefore, marriages with at least one of the spouses being under age is considered a child marriage, and when the young woman gets married before the age of eighteen, it is called *girl child marriage*. In developing countries, one in every nine female children are forced to marry before the age of 15; 70 million women who are between 20 and 24 years of age state that they were forced to marry before the age of 18 (International Center for Research on Women [ICRW] 2015; UNICEF 2013a). Unfortunately, if this trend continues, it is predicted that 180 million girl children will have been forced to marry within the following decade (ICRW 2015), with the number swelling to 710 million by the year 2050 (UNICEF 2013b).

The problem of girl child marriages constitutes an important issue in Turkey (ICRW 2007, 2015; Özcebe et al. 2007; UNICEF 2005). According to the Research on Family Structure in Turkey (T.C. Ministry of Family and Social Policies, General Directorate of Family and Social Services 2011), the proportion of girl child marriages in all marriages is 28%. Additionally, UNICEF (2013a) reviewed the studies conducted between 2002 and 2011 and concluded that 14% of women in Turkey were forced to marry before they were 18 years of age. Local studies (Acemoğlu et al. 2005; Ertem et al. 2008) conducted in the Eastern and South-eastern parts of Turkey demonstrate that the proportion of girl child marriages rises up to 56% in these regions. These statistics

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✉ Meryem Kaynak Malatyalı
mkaynak@ankara.edu.tr

¹ Faculty of Letters, Department of Psychology, Ankara University, Ankara, Turkey

indicate that girl child marriages pose a serious problem for Turkey, especially in the regions spanning across Eastern and South-eastern Anatolia.

One of the important steps to solve a certain problem is to investigate the processes that lead to it. Research related with this problem seems to explain girl child marriages mostly by macro-level variables such as poverty, inadequate education, rural lifestyle, and traditional practices (Save the Children 2004). However, as far as we know, there are not any studies that try to explain this problem within the framework of social psychology. At this point, social dominance theory (Sidanius and Pratto 1999) should be considered as a relevant social psychological theory which could explain girl child marriages. Social dominance theory (Sidanius and Pratto 1999) focuses on hierarchies within society and how they are maintained. Considering that girl child marriages maintain gender inequality in numerous fields such as health (Nour 2009) and education (Save the Children 2004), it can be suggested that social dominance theory (Sidanius and Pratto 1993) may explain the processes underlying girl child marriages. In addition, within this framework, hostile and benevolent sexism (components of ambivalent sexism; Glick and Fiske 1996) may be considered as legitimizing myths used to justify girl child marriages. By investigating these processes underlying the issue, we aim to contribute to the reduction of girl child marriages.

Girl Child Marriages and Gender Inequality

Because women are the main targets of the child marriages (Özcebe et al. 2007; Turkish Statistical Institute 2012), these kind of marriages may lead to many negative outcomes which maintain gender inequality and the subordinate status of women (Equality Now 2014). In the first place, girl child marriages are associated with serious health problems that can result in death (Nour 2009). Because these young women either have little to say about birth control or have to prove their fertility, many get pregnant at an early age even if their bodies are underdeveloped for such an experience (ICRW 2007; Nour 2009; Mathur et al. 2003). These young women also have little information about any kind of birth control methods, such as condom use, which may result in unwanted pregnancies or sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS (Mathur et al. 2003). Early pregnancies, on the other hand, are associated with higher rates of failure to utilize maternal health care services, morbidity, and mother and infant mortality (Nour 2009; Raj and Boehmer 2013). Considering all of these consequences, the girl child marriage can be seen as a life threatening practice that diminishes the social status of women.

Girl child marriages may also revoke the rights of women to education and employment, as well as to better life conditions. Young women who are forced to marry at a young age are often forced to drop out of school because of their

household responsibilities and social norms (Mathur et al. 2003; Save the Children 2004; Turkish Grand National Assembly – Commission of Gender Equality in Opportunities 2009). Therefore, they are unable to complete their education. Consequently, these women are not able to acquire the training and skills necessary to occupy a high-status permanent job and often end up being unemployed. Even if some find a job, these are usually temporary or jobs with low-status (Mathur et al. 2003). Furthermore, in this type of marriage, husbands tend to be much older than their wives are, and this age differences worsens the status of the women at home (ICRW 2007; Nasrullah et al. 2014a). Therefore, due to the low education level, unemployment, and younger age, women married as children tend to have lower status at home than men do and become more dependent on their husbands. For instance, according to UNICEF's (2005) report, a marriage in which the husband has the final say in big decisions (such as visits to family and friends, wife's health, and important domestic expenditures) is more likely to be a girl child marriage.

Additionally, girl child marriages were found to be positively associated with the controlling behaviors of husbands such as limiting his wife's contact with her family and friends (Nasrullah et al. 2014b). To make it even worse, women are more likely to experience domestic violence when they get married before age 18 (ICRW 2007; Nasrullah et al. 2014b; Raj et al. 2010; UNICEF 2005) and, in some cases, they are more likely to justify it (UNICEF 2005). Being the victims of domestic violence, those women with limited opportunities for education and employment also raise their children in poor conditions, and this creates a vicious cycle of poverty (UNICEF 2013b). In conclusion, this cycle of poverty reinforces gender inequality and fosters gender hierarchy by making the social status of women worse. Therefore, especially in developing countries, preventing girl child marriages is probably one of the most significant ways to improve women's social status and provide gender equality.

Social Dominance Theory

Social dominance theory proposes that societies tend to be structured as systems of group-based social hierarchies (Pratto 1999; Pratto et al. 2006, 1994; Sidanius and Pratto 1993, 1999). According to the theory, the development of a group-based social hierarchy is inevitable in societies producing sustainable economic surplus. Whereas certain (dominant) groups are at the top of this hierarchical structure, other (subordinate) groups are at the bottom of it. In such a hierarchy, dominant groups disproportionately benefit more from positive social values, such as high status jobs and high quality and accessible health services, than subordinate groups do whereas subordinate groups disproportionately and

comparatively get a larger share of negative social values, such as poor health conditions and unemployment. Such an asymmetric distribution of values causes the existing hierarchy to be maintained across generations. The theory asserts that a gender system or patriarchy is one kind of group-based social hierarchy (Sidanius and Pratto 1999). Therefore, in almost all societies men are the dominant group with more power than women have. For example, men are more likely to work in higher-status jobs and they have more say in political decisions. According to the theory, social practices such as domestic violence, rape, and unequal distribution of pay and promotion strengthen this existing hierarchical system. Within our perspective, forcing women to get married when they are children and thus holding them off from acquiring sufficient skills is one of the practices which maintains the gender-based social hierarchy.

Social dominance orientation (SDO), which is the basic component of the social dominance theory, is defined as an individual tendency to support or desire for group-based social hierarchies such as patriarchy (Pratto 1999; Pratto et al. 1994; Sidanius and Pratto 1999). In other words, individuals with high SDO claim that some groups (e.g., men) should be more dominant in comparison to others (e.g., women) in society. Moreover, existing studies show that there is a positive relationship between SDO and sexism (Lee et al. 2011), racism (Pratto et al. 1994, 2000, 2013), and prejudice towards outgroups (Hindriks et al. 2014). Sidanius and Pratto (1999) also propose that SDO is an important predictor of the support given to public policies that enhance or attenuate the existing hierarchy. Therefore, it may be suggested that individuals with high SDO give more support to hierarchy-enhancing practices and oppose hierarchy-attenuating practices. In the current study, social dominance orientation is expected to be a positive predictor of attitudes toward girl child marriages, which is a practice enhancing gender hierarchy. In other words, higher SDO scores are expected to be associated with stronger support for girl child marriages. (Hypothesis 1).

Ambivalent Sexism as a Legitimizing Myth

According to ambivalent sexism theory (Glick and Fiske 1996, 2001) not only hostility towards women but also subjective positive attitudes toward them maintains existing gender inequality. This theory views sexism as a multi-dimensional construct that consists of both hostile sexism (HS) and benevolent sexism (BS). HS represents an explicitly expressed negative attitude towards women who threaten the power of men and it acts as a vehicle to oppress women. In contrast, BS reflects a seemingly more favorable attitude toward women by suggesting that women, on the one hand, are pure and wonderful creatures who ought to be adored and should be put on the pedestal but, on the other hand, are also

weak and in need of male protection (Glick et al. 2000). Conceptualizing women as warm, caring, and pure limits them to their traditional gender roles and perceiving them as weak and innocent assigns men the role to protect women and intervene within their lives. Therefore, BS usually goes along with HS to legitimize women's subordinate status (Glick and Fiske 2001). BS justifies it through implicit and gentle ways whereas HS justifies it through explicit and cruel ways. Studies support the proposition that although HS and BS correlate with each other (Glick and Fiske 1997; Glick et al. 2000), they operate differently yet in tandem to maintain gender inequality (Glick et al. 2015; Sakallı-Uğurlu 2003; Sakallı-Uğurlu et al. 2007).

From the perspective of social dominance theory, both HS and BS may be conceptualized as myths which legitimize the gender hierarchy. According to Pratto et al. (2006), brutal and hostile practices used to keep subordinate groups in their places will eventually result in an outbreak of these groups. Therefore, the dominant groups try to use some legitimizing myths to maintain and justify their superior position. These legitimizing myths include “attitudes, values, beliefs, stereotypes and ideologies that provide moral and intellectual justification for the social practices that distribute social value within the social system” (Sidanius and Pratto 1999, p. 45). Related with this, ideologies such as HS and BS may justify practices, such as girl child marriages, which aim to oppress and dominate women. In other words, individuals may rationalize girl child marriages either through beliefs that these young women will pose threats to male dominance when they grow up (hostile sexism) or through beliefs that young women need to get married because they need protection (benevolent sexism). Therefore in our study, both hostile sexism (Hypothesis 2a) and benevolent sexism (Hypothesis 2b) are expected to mediate the relationship between social dominance orientation and the attitudes toward girl child marriages.

Additionally, similar natures of SDO and HS imply that HS has a special role in justification of girl child marriages. In other words, SDO expresses a motivational drive for inter-group competition and reflects a competitive world view based on group dominance and superiority (for further information, also see the dual process motivational model for prejudice; Duckitt and Sibley 2009). Similarly, HS reflects a competitive prejudice and discrimination against women who endanger men's power and status (Glick and Fiske 2001). In contrast, BS originates from men's dependence on women (e.g., their sexual relationship) and, rather than competition between genders, it emphasizes a role division that maintains patriarchy in harmony (Glick and Fiske 1997). Also, studies on the relationship between SDO and ambivalent sexism indicate that SDO has a stronger correlation with HS than with BS (Christopher and Mull 2006; Christopher and Wojda 2008; Sibley et al. 2007). From this point of view, we predict that HS will have a stronger mediating role in the

relationship between SDO and attitudes toward girl child marriages than BS will (Hypothesis 3).

Participant Gender Differences

Finally, a gender difference on attitudes toward girl child marriages is expected. An invariance hypothesis suggests that men as the dominant group in the gender hierarchy have higher levels of SDO than women do, independent from the context (Pratto et al. 2006; Sidanius et al. 1994). Moreover, compared to women, men are more likely to hold hierarchy-enhancing attitudes, such as rape acceptance (Anderson et al. 1997) and positive attitudes toward sexual harassment (Sakallı-Uğurlu et al. 2010) and domestic violence (Nayak et al. 2003). Therefore, we expect that male participants will have more positive attitudes toward girl child marriages than female participants will (Hypothesis 4).

Method

Participants

Initially, 395 undergraduate students from Ankara University and Gazi University in Ankara, the capital city of Turkey, participated in the present study. Six of the participants (1.5%) did not report their gender, one participant (.3%) had missing values on their SDO score, and none of the participants had missing values on HS, BS, and attitudes toward girl child marriages scores. Little's MCAR test showed that these missing values were at random, $\chi^2(3) = 2.13$, $p = .55$. Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) proposed that in handling missing data, different methods lead to similar results when missing values are at random and less than 5% as is in the case in the present study (1.77%). Therefore, seven participants were excluded and analyses were conducted with the remaining 388 participants (291 women, 97 men).

The mean age of participants was 20.20 years ($SD = 2.81$), ranging from 17 to 52 years. Female participants' mean age was 19.93 years ($SD = 2.72$, range = 17–52), and male participants' mean age was 21.01 years ($SD = 2.96$, range = 18–37), with a significant age difference, $t(153.72) = -3.18$, $p = .002$. In terms of perceived economic condition, 6 (1.5%) participants were from the lower class, 49 (12.6%) from the lower-middle class, 254 (65.5%) from the middle class, 74 (19.1%) from the upper-middle class, and 4 (1%) were from the upper class. According to mothers' education level, 17 (4.4%) of participants' mothers were illiterate, 13 (3.4%) were literate, 157 (40.5%) had primary school, 35 (9%) had secondary school, 102 (26.3%) had high school, 61 (15.8%) had university, and 2 (.5%) had graduate degrees. In terms of fathers' education level 1 (.3%) of participants' fathers were illiterate, 2 (.5%) were literate, 99 (25.5%)

had primary school, 45 (11.6%) had secondary school, 104 (26.8%) had high school, 124 (31.9%) had university, and 12 (3.1%) had graduate degrees.

Procedure

Following the approval by the Research Ethics Committee of Ankara University, the students rated the scales in classrooms with the permission of instructors. The first page of the questionnaire consisted of the information regarding the study and a consent form informing participants that it was voluntary to participate in the study and they could stop participating any time they feel uncomfortable. Following, participants completed the questionnaire in the following order.

Measures

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory

Glick and Fiske (1996) developed the scale and Sakallı-Uğurlu (2002) adapted it into Turkish. The scale consisted of a total of 22 items, 11 of them measuring hostile sexism (e.g., “Women exaggerate problems they have at work”) and 11 items measuring benevolent sexism (e.g., “Women should be cherished and protected by men”). Participants rated their level of agreement with each item on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). The means of each subscale were the benevolent sexism and hostile sexism scores of participants. Higher scores indicated higher levels of benevolent and hostile sexism. Sakallı-Uğurlu (2002) found the Cronbach's alpha coefficients .78 and .87 for benevolent and hostile sexism, respectively. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .81 for benevolent sexism and .87 for hostile sexism.

Social Dominance Orientation Scale

Social dominance orientation was assessed using the 16-item (e.g., “To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on other groups.”) scale developed by Pratto et al. (1994). Participants evaluated their level of agreement on each item on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The scale was developed as unidimensional including eight reverse-scored items. After recoding these items, the average of all items was computed to create an overall SDO score for each participant. Higher scores in SDO indicated participants' greater desire for the dominance of one group over the other and their greater desire for the inequality of groups. Karaçanta (2002) adapted the scale into Turkish and found a Cronbach's alpha of .85 for the scale. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was .88.

Attitudes Toward Girl Child Marriages Scale

We developed this scale based on previous qualitative studies (Çakır 2013; Nasrullah et al. 2014b) about girl child marriages (for initial reliability analyses, see Kaynak et al. 2016). The scale consisted of 12 items, including four reverse-coded items. The English translation of these 12 items is presented in Table 1, and an [online supplement](#) includes both the original Turkish and English items. Participants indicated their level of agreement with items on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). An explanatory factor analysis via principle axis factoring extraction method was performed to test construct validity of the scale. Results indicated that a one-factor solution is appropriate for the scale. This factor accounted for 48.14% of total variance, with an eigenvalue of 5.78 (see Table 1 for factor loadings). The Cronbach's alpha for this factor was .91. Four items had negative factor loading that they were reverse coded. After recoding reverse items, all items were averaged to form an overall score of attitudes toward girl child marriages. Higher scores indicated participants' higher approval of girl child marriages.

Results

Means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations among study variables (Attitudes toward girl child marriages, SDO, HS, and BS) were separately computed for women and men and are presented in Table 2. Attitudes toward girl child

marriages were significantly and positively correlated with SDO and HS for both women and men. That is, as female and male participants' SDO and HS scores increased, the participants tended to have more positive attitudes toward girl child marriages. Attitudes toward girl child marriages were significantly correlated with BS for men, but not for women, indicating that as BS scores increased, male participants' positive attitudes toward girl child marriages increased as well.

We conducted a MANCOVA to test for gender differences on study variables, controlling for the age of the participants. The MANCOVA results indicated that there was an overall significant effect of gender on study variables (Wilks' $\lambda = .83$), $F(4, 382) = 19.18$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .17$. According to the results of univariate ANCOVAs (see Table 2), there were significant gender differences on attitudes toward girl child marriages, $F(1,385) = 18.87$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .05$ (supporting Hypothesis 4); SDO, $F(1,385) = 21.08$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .05$; and HS, $F(1,385) = 68.46$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .15$. That is, men scored significantly higher than women did on these three variables. However, men and women did not significantly differ from each other in terms of BS scores, $F(1,385) = .48$, $p = .49$, $\eta^2 = .00$.

In order to test whether SDO differently correlated with HS and BS or not, a difference test between dependent correlation coefficients was performed via an equation formulated by Chen and Popovich (2002, as cited in Field 2009). In other words, the difference between the SDO's correlation to HS ($r = .41$, $p < .001$) and to BS ($r = .21$, $p < .001$) was examined. We found that the correlation between SDO and HS was

Table 1 Attitudes toward girl child marriages scale

Items	Factor loading
1. Girls do not have adequate physical qualities to marry before 18 years of age. ^a	-.55
2. Girls married at an early age can adapt to their marriage and their new lives better.	.62
3. No matter what happens, I wouldn't allow my daughter to get married before 18 years of age. ^a	-.48
4. In some cases, marriages before the age of 18 may protect women from evil-minded people.	.57
5. Following a detailed investigation, a candidate who wants to marry a girl younger than 18 may be granted an affirmative answer.	.77
6. I'm against marriages of girls younger than 18 years of age. ^a	-.62
7. There is nothing wrong with a girl getting married before 18 years of age if she has a trustworthy husband.	.87
8. If a girl finds the right person at an early age, her marrying before 18 years of age may be supported.	.84
9. I don't see any harm in the marriage of a girl before 18 years of age if there is mutual love, respect, and understanding in her marriage.	.85
10. In some cases, it may be necessary for a girl to get married before 18-years-old.	.68
11. If a girl doesn't want to continue on with her education, she can marry before 18 years of age.	.72
12. Forcing girls to get married before 18 years of age is a social problem. ^a	-.62

^a reverse-scored

Table 2 Descriptive statistics and correlations among study variables for women and men

Variables	Women (<i>n</i> = 291) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Men (<i>n</i> = 98) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Correlations			
			1	2	3	4
1. Attitudes toward girl child marriages	1.82 (.86) _a	2.25 (1.08) _b	--	.10	.24**	.34**
2. Benevolent sexism	3.65 (.96) _a	3.70 (.92) _a	.28**	--	.26**	.22**
3. Hostile sexism	3.04 (.98) _a	3.97 (.92) _b	.39**	.26**	--	.36**
4. Social dominance orientation	2.49 (.88) _a	2.97 (1.23) _b	.49**	.21*	.40**	--

Correlations for women are shown above the diagonal; for men, below the diagonal. Different subscripts across each row point to a significant ($p < .05$) mean difference between genders

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$

significantly higher than was the correlation between SDO and BS ($\Delta r = .20$, $\Delta t(385) = 3.57$, $p < .001$). That is, as expected, SDO was more strongly related to HS than to BS.

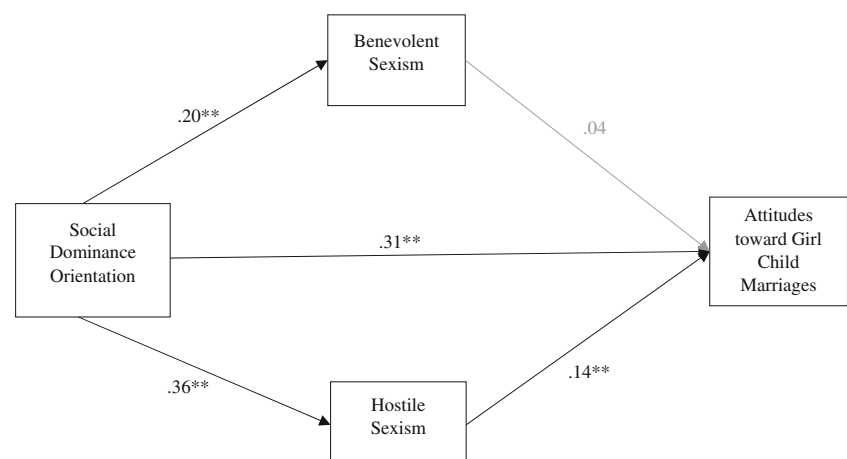
Next, a mediation analysis based on 1000 bootstrapped samples was conducted via PROCESS macro (Hayes 2013) to test whether HS and BS mediated the association between SDO and attitudes toward girl child marriages. SDO was the independent variable, HS and BS were the mediators, gender was the covariate, and attitudes toward girl child marriages was the dependent variable. As can be seen in Fig. 1, the higher participants' SDO scores, the higher were both their BS ($B = .20$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.11, .30]) and HS ($B = .36$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.27, .46]) scores. In addition, stronger endorsement of HS was associated with reporting more positive attitudes toward girl child marriages ($B = .14$, $SE = .05$, $p = .005$, 95% CI [.04, .23]). Unexpectedly, the association of BS with attitudes toward girl child marriages was not significant ($B = .04$, $SE = .05$, $p = .338$, 95% CI [−.05, .14]). Bias-corrected confidence intervals demonstrated that the association between SDO and attitudes toward girl child marriages was mediated by HS ($B = .05$, $SE = .02$, 95% CI [.02, .09]), but not by BS ($B = .01$, $SE = .01$, 95% CI [−.01, .03]). That is, SDO predicted more positive attitudes

toward girl child marriages through HS, but not through BS. These results supported Hypothesis 2a and Hypothesis 3 but did not support Hypothesis 2b. There was also evidence supporting Hypothesis 1 that SDO influenced attitudes toward girl child marriages directly after controlling for gender, HS, and BS ($B = .31$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.22, .40]). The model accounted for 21% of variance in attitudes toward girl child marriages ($R^2 = .21$), $F(4, 383) = 25.80$, $p < .001$.

Discussion

In our study conducted in Turkey, we explored the relationship between SDO and attitudes toward girl child marriages, as well as the mediating roles of HS and BS in this relationship. Supporting Hypothesis 1, SDO positively predicted attitudes toward girl child marriages. Hypothesis 2a suggested that HS would mediate the relationship between SDO and attitudes toward girl child marriages and Hypothesis 2b suggested that BS would mediate this relationship. The results of the study confirmed Hypothesis 2a but not Hypothesis 2b. These results imply that people with higher SDO use HS, but not BS, to legitimize girl child marriages. Hypothesis 3 which suggested

Fig. 1 Mediation model predicting attitudes toward girl child marriages. Social dominance orientation was the independent variable, gender was the covariate, and hostile sexism and benevolent sexism were the mediators. Unstandardized coefficients are presented. Indirect effects' unstandardized coefficients were .05 for hostile sexism and .01 for benevolent sexism. ** $p < .01$



that HS would have a stronger mediating role in the association between SDO and attitudes toward girl child marriages than BS would was confirmed. Finally Hypothesis 4, which predicted that men's attitudes toward girl child marriages would be more positive than those of women, was also confirmed.

The finding that individuals with higher levels of SDO had positive attitudes toward girl child marriages may show that these individuals may see this practice as a tool to maintain the status quo. Specifically, individuals with high levels of SDO have a desire to maintain and support intergroup inequality and dominance of superior groups (Sidanius and Pratto 1999). Related with these relationships, available studies (UNICEF 2005; Vogelstein 2013) have shown that girl child marriage practice is a direct cause for women to experience severe health problems, to be dominated by their husbands, and to be vulnerable to domestic violence. Also, girl child marriages may make women dependent on their husbands and may cause significant gender inequalities such as in education and health (ICRW 2007; Mathur et al. 2003; Nour 2009). Therefore, girl child marriages seem to be a practice that maintains gender inequality and male dominance. In line with our expectations then, the present study shows that people with higher levels of SDO also more strongly support girl child marriages.

Furthermore, our results pointed out the mediating role of HS between SDO and attitudes toward girl child marriages. Social dominance theory (Sidanius and Pratto 1993) proposes that myths are required to maintain and enhance the existing social hierarchy and that these myths act as a medium to support hierarchy-enhancing practices. The present results suggest that HS, defined as “hostility toward women who challenge male power, whether directly (e.g., feminists) or through ‘feminine wiles’” (Glick et al. 2004, p.715), may have an important role in the persistence of girl child marriage practice via rationalization of it. In other words, it is possible to say that as SDO levels increase, individuals are more likely to see women as threats to be repressed (i.e., endorse HS), which creates its own myths for justification and this, in turn, increases their support for girl child marriages.

Findings of our study also showed that BS does not mediate the relationship between SDO and attitudes toward girl child marriages. In Hypothesis 3, we expected that BS would have a weaker mediating role than HS in the association between SDO and attitudes toward girl child marriages. However, we found that BS does not have a mediating role in this relationship and SDO tends to increase positive attitudes toward girl child marriages only through HS. Additionally, the correlation of SDO with BS was weaker than it was with HS. These results are consistent with previous studies about the relationship between SDO and ambivalent sexism (Christopher and Wojda 2008; Sibley et al. 2007). Because SDO holds a desire for competitive dominance between groups, it is understandable that people with high SDO

levels legitimize girl child marriages more through HS than they do through BS and this was already predicted in Hypothesis 3. However, people with higher levels of SDO might have no need to use BS to justify girl child marriages in contexts where gender competition is cruel and overt. In Turkey, women are the more common victims of domestic violence, rapes, and murders. For instance, in Turkey, 39% of women reported that they experience domestic violence (Jansen et al. 2010), and 303 women were murdered by their husbands or relatives in 2015 (We Will Stop Femicide Platform 2016). Within such a violent context, individuals may easily adopt the beliefs of HS, which include acceptance of overt violence and hostility towards women. Specifically with regards to girl child marriages, individuals who are inclined to believe that men should dominate women do not need, or even may prefer, to disregard the beliefs represented within BS, which emphasize women's vulnerability and their need for protection, in order to legitimize girl child marriages. In other words, when a person does not value women as much as men and view them as an economic burden or commodity to be sold in return for dowry (CARE 2015), it becomes clear why they choose the hostile ideologies towards women to legitimize girl child marriages.

Finally, our findings confirmed the expectation that male participants would have more positive attitudes towards girl child marriages than women would (Hypothesis 4). This finding indicates that at the dominant side of the gender hierarchy, men support girl child marriages, which serve to maintain this system. Moreover, this finding is in line with other studies which indicate that men are more tolerant of issues related with the suppression of women (Anderson et al. 1997; Nayak et al. 2003). It seems that, as the dominant group, men are more likely to support such practices and, as the subordinate group, women are more likely to disapprove of these practices.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Our study has certain limitations. First of all, our study sample consists of university students and that may diminish the generalizability of our findings. This sample also represents a relatively more educated population of Turkey who might view girl child marriages as a problem. Therefore, the study should be replicated in rural parts of Turkey where girl child marriages are much more common (e.g., rural parts of Central Anatolia or the south-eastern part of Turkey). Additionally, recent studies (Hindriks et al. 2014; Ho et al. 2012, 2015; Jost and Thompson 2000) suggest that SDO is composed of two complementary dimensions: social dominance orientation-dominance and social dominance orientation-egalitarianism. SDO-dominance refers to a personal desire for the overt oppression of subordinate groups by dominant groups whereas SDO-egalitarianism refers to the personal tendency to

prefer non-egalitarian intergroup relations (Hindriks et al. 2014; Ho et al. 2012). In our study we approached SDO as a unidimensional construct. Future research may investigate the association between dimensions of SDO and attitudes toward girl child marriages.

Future researchers may also investigate the relationship between BS and attitudes toward girl child marriages more closely. On the one hand, some families think of girl child marriages as a way to protect their daughters from premarital sex and unwanted pregnancies (Nour 2006). On the other hand, they disapprove of girl child marriages because these marriages may produce women who cannot fulfill their traditional family roles (Nasrullah et al. 2014b). Thus it is possible that BS could be related to both acceptance and rejection of girl child marriages, suppressing the overall relationship between the two variables. Future researcher then may try to parse out these relationships.

Practice Implications

There are also several practical implications of our findings. A desire for male dominance and unequal gender relations was found to be a maintaining factor in the persistence of girl child marriages and hostile attitudes toward women were found to be used to legitimize positive attitudes toward this practice. There are several activist organizations (e.g., Girls Not Brides 2017) that aim to end girl child marriages. Our findings indicate that these activist organizations may also focus on decreasing target people's desire for gender hierarchy and hostile attitudes toward women in their intervention programs. In addition, policymakers may develop policies that will maintain gender equality in order to prevent girl child marriages. For example, it may be practical to include lectures about gender equality in the curriculum in schools in order to reduce girl child marriages.

Conclusion

Our study shows that individuals who more strongly endorse men's domination of women and gender inequality also more strongly support girl child marriages—a practice which perpetuates women's suppression in the gender hierarchy. Moreover, individuals who desire male dominance and support gender inequality use HS to legitimize girl child marriages. Previous studies (CARE 2015; ICRW 2007) conclude that girl child marriages occur mainly as a result of social issues such as poverty and lack of education. Thus, they suggest strategies such as enhancing formal schooling for girls or providing economic support for their families to prevent girl child marriages. Social and cultural norms that devalue women and discriminate against them are additional reasons for girl child marriages (CARE 2015). Accordingly, especially in the areas where girl child marriages are common, women are

viewed as individuals who have only domestic roles and can be “sold” for an ascertained dowry. Taken in sum, these studies propose that gender inequality is one reason to blame for the practice of girl child marriage.

Using a social dominance perspective, our study shows that individuals, both men and women, who more strongly endorse men's domination of women and gender inequality also have more positive attitudes toward girl child marriages. It also shows that these people use their hostile attitudes toward women in order to legitimize these kinds of marriages. In that sense, the present study extends our knowledge about the reasons for this deleterious practice and identifies the specific beliefs and processes that maintain it. Thus, it may help to construct more advanced gender equality-enhancing intervention programs to stop the practice of girl child marriages.

Compliance with Ethical Standards All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Conflict of Interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Animal Studies This chapter does not contain any studies with animals performed by any of the authors.

Informed Consent Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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