

An Investigation Into How Contact and Turkish Tv Series Shape Serbs' Attitudes Toward Turks

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Abstract: This study aims to investigate the attitudes of individuals living in Serbia toward Turks by looking at how contact with Turkish individuals and watching Turkish TV series have affected Serbian individuals' stereotyping. Furthermore, the study examines Serbians' tendency to donate 2,000 Serbian Dinars in an imaginary scenario. The sample consists of 492 adults living in Serbia, and the findings show watching Turkish TV series to be related to more positive feelings toward Turks, higher levels of feeling pleasant about contact, and willingness to have a Turkish friend, colleague, and neighbor. Moreover, having contact with Turks and the frequency of contact are related to having more positive feelings toward Turks. Surprisingly, the Serbs who are more populous and have more frequent contact with Turks were found to feel less pleasant and respected and more nervous and looked down upon. In general, while watching Turkish TV series might have positive associations with Serbs' positive feelings toward Turks, their contact with Turks seems to relate to more ambivalent feelings. Moreover, when participants were asked to donate money between Bosnians and Turks, most participants divided the money equally while donating the most money to their in-group when it was added. The study also discusses the findings and their implications.

Keywords: Serbs, Turks, contact hypothesis, stereotypes, TV series

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Introduction

The Ottoman Empire's rule over Serbia began in 1459 (Cox, 2002). Afterward, contact between Serbian and Turkish individuals increased, with interactions occurring in various fields such as language, food, dress, architecture, culture, and more (Cox, 2002; Marinković, 2012, 2018). Serbs, who are predominantly Orthodox Christians, have long coexisted with Turks, who are predominantly Muslims. As a result, Turkish phrases and Muslim rituals began to appear in Serbian daily life, and Serbian-Turkish vocabulary and notions relating to Islam can be found in the Serbian literature (Marinković, 2018).

Although the Ottoman Empire had dominated the country for many years, the Ottomans withdrew from Serbia in 1878. However, individuals in Serbia today still meet and interact with Turks in various ways in their daily lives (i.e., being friends, neighbors, and colleagues). Furthermore, Serbs come in contact with both Turks and Turkish culture through Turkish TV programs, and Serbian individuals' perceptions toward Turks are shaped as a result of these connections (Özalpman & Özmen, 2023).

Previous research has revealed that having direct contact (i.e., being friends) with out-group members (i.e., minorities) can help cultivate positive attitudes toward them (Vonofakou et al., 2007). Recent years have seen an increased interest in Turkish TV series around the Balkan region. Some previous literature has also suggested that exposure to mass media concerning minority or out-group members is able to influence the feelings and attitudes of individuals of the dominant culture (Atwell Seate & Mastro, 2015). Therefore, the current study examines how direct contact with Turks and contact through mass media (e.g., TV shows) affects Serbs' feelings and the quality of their relationships with Turks.

History of Serbian–Turkish Relations

Interactions and connections between Serbian and Turkish individuals have been mostly positive over the years, though at times also negative. Turks had lived in the cities where the Ottoman Empire ruled in today's Serbian region, while Serbian Christians lived in villages (Leovac, 2019). Later, once the Ottoman Empire lost control and Serbians gained dominance, the locals stopped welcoming Turks into the villages, thus reducing interactions between the two sides.

The relationship between Serbs and Turks became hostile, especially with the First and Second Serbian Uprisings that took place between 1804-1815, (Leovac, 2019). During these uprisings, Serbians began to protest Ottoman authority and its restrictions and nationalist ideology. The term nationalism refers to the general sense of identity that a group of people has due to common characteristics including language, culture, customs, and historical legacy (Cox, 2002). When this sense of belonging becomes politicized, nationalism emerges as an ideology. Serbians have experienced two sorts of nationalism throughout their history: civic and ethnic. The nation is viewed as a political population with regard to civic nationalism, with shared values such as the economy and politics being considered. Secondly, ethnic nationalists understand the country as a cultural or ethnic entity. Ethnic nationalism considers commonalities in blood, language, religion, customs, and genetics. Cox (2002) also noted that nationalism leads to feelings of aggression and xenophobia toward a group, such as Serbian individuals having hostile attitudes toward Turks throughout history (Leovac, 2019).

Meanwhile, this sense of nationalism aimed for a Great Serbia, one where Serbians could unite all Serbs in the same territory. Serbian soldiers killed many individuals in Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1992-1995 with this same intention (Mesic et al., 2018). Moreover, Some Balkan nationalists perceive the Bosnians as Islamized Slavic Christians who chose the faith of the Ottoman state, which they view as invaders, thus making them more enraged with Balkan Muslims than with Turks. Even the widespread use of the word Turk refers to all Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Muhasilovic, 2015). In other words, Bosnians are seen by some as Slavs and called Turks because they are Muslims, and this group may face more negative feelings from some Balkan nationalists than what Turks alone face.

Attitudes Toward Out-Group Members Through Direct and Indirect Contact

Stereotypes, discrimination, attitudes, and prejudices depend on experiences. Individual experiences and societal events may lead to these emotions and thoughts about an out-group (Ültanır et al., 2016). Ültanır et al. categorized stereotypes into two types: First are heterogenous stereotypes that concern other groups and their members and refer to having limitations with foreign cultures. Second are auto-stereotypes, which concern someone's group and its members. Stereotypical attitudes are also defined as

an inflexible and faulty generalization about a group or a person in a specific group (Allport, 1954). Due to Serbian-Turkish individuals' interactions over the years, these two societies started gaining stereotypes about each other, which has affected their attitudes toward each other. Upon considering the historical background of these two cultures, the current study aims to investigate Serbs' attitudes toward Turks following their in-person and indirect contact through Turkish TV series.

Although not like in Ottoman times, Turks are still living in Serbia today as a minority group (Cox, 2002). Previous literature has shown majority group members to tend to think more negatively about minority groups (Carter, 2018), and even negative thoughts could be seen to be approximately twice as negative than reality (Hamilton & Gifford, 1976). This disparity highlights that stereotypes and cognitive biases can skew the majority's perceptions of the Turkish minority in Serbia. In light of this, it is crucial to consider the possibility that popular perceptions of the socio-cultural dynamics may be overly biased, understanding that this may not necessarily reflect the actual situations and efforts made by the Turkish minority in today's Serbian setting.

Some studies have suggested that direct contact with an out-group reduces bias against out-group members and positively modifies attitudes toward them. For example, a study conducted in Indonesia and the Philippines found friendships with persons of other religious affiliations to reduce unfavorable sentiments toward out-group members who do not have the same religious affiliation (Kanas et al., 2017). Moreover, according to a study conducted with participants from Serbia, Croatia, and Cyprus, online friendships effectively diminish bias in the same way face-to-face contact does (Zezelj et al., 2017). Yet another study found personal contact to positively influence Korean individuals' attitudes toward Americans. However, in addition to this conclusion, the same study found a negative link between the frequency of personal interaction and intergroup attitudes (Shim et al., 2012). Bosnian Muslims who are in contact with Serbian individuals were also seen to have a higher sense of trust and forgiveness about the past toward Serbians than those who are not in contact with Serbian individuals (Cakal & Petrović, 2017). Therefore, direct contact with out-group members can cause variations in individuals' attitudes, though the relevant literature does yield inconclusive results.

Some limitations in Allport's (1954) contact theory can explain the inconsistency of findings relating to direct contact and attitudes toward out-group members. According to Herek (1997), even when individuals' attitudes change positively due to contact, they may only generalize this shift to certain out-group members. Depending on the circumstances, out-group members may still be viewed as a threat to in-group members.

On the other hand, the media unquestionably influences individuals' attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs about specific groups, whether out-group or in-group members (Mastro et al., 2008). However, both the amount and type of virtual exposure substantially impact individuals' attitudes about others (Lee et al., 2006). According to Shim et al. (2012), Koreans who watch American dramas have favorable opinions of intergroup relations with them. Another study conducted in Russia also found students' perceptions of elderly individuals to be influenced by the movies they watch (Kubrak, 2020). However, the content of shows also affects attitudes. For instance, those who watch youth shows are more likely to adopt unfavorable assumptions about female friendships and gender norms (Behm-Morawitz & Mastro, 2008).

Current Study

Along with what has transpired throughout history, an extended interaction has occurred between Serbian and Turkish individuals. Although this relationship has at times been beneficial to these groups, other times it has affected their relationship negatively. Because of their experiences, both countries have formed prejudices and negative attitudes toward each other (Jovanović, 2017). Turkish culture and its influence in Serbia persist today, although this is not as prevalent as it had been during the Ottoman period. Despite being a minority, Turks continue to live in Serbia or visit the country as tourists. Moreover, from the perspective of Serbians, a religious divide and a history of oppression occurred due to the Ottoman Empire. Although Turks may constitute a realistic as well as symbolic threat to Serbs, the contact hypothesis predicts that Serbs' biases will shift positively if they become more familiar with Turks and Turkish culture.

In today's technological age, this contact can be direct or indirect. Turkish TV shows, in particular soap operas, have attracted more and more viewers in 76 different nations over the past decade (Gündüz, 2020). According to studies, television series have

positively impacted Türkiye's citizens overseas (Bilgin & Danis, 2016). Turkish TV shows are watched in various parts of the world, and these shows ethnically and culturally portray Türkiye and Turkish culture to the viewers (Aburaddi, 2022). Furthermore, Aburaddi claimed that foreigners watch these Turkish shows, which center on the concept of history and Islam. Furthermore, Arab viewers who watch Turkish television programs believe a cultural similarity exists between Turkish and Arab culture (Berg, 2017).

Nowadays, Turkish TV series are very popular in Balkan countries (Gündüz, 2020). As a result of Turkish TV series being viewed with interest in Balkan nations, these TV series began to be broadcast in these countries with subtitles (Özalpman & Özmen, 2023). A few Turkish TV shows have started airing on Balkan channels and received high ratings. In fact, individuals have started bringing up the Turkish productions they've watched in ordinary conversations throughout Balkan countries (Mihalakopoulos, 2011). According to Akgün and Gündoğar (2012), Turkish TV shows are actually quite popular, even in Serbia and Greece where more animosity exists toward Türkiye than in other Balkan nations. According to Bilgin and Danis (2016), some viewers of Turkish TV series have begun learning Turkish to comprehend these shows better. Aside from that, tourism from Balkan countries to Türkiye has started to rise due to these series (Aydos, 2017).

In summary, Turkish TV programs portray Türkiye and Turkish culture to foreigners and may help reduce prejudiced views toward Turks and Turkish culture. As such, individuals can develop indirect contact with others through the media. This study considers participants' watching of Turkish TV series to count as indirectly interacting with Turkish individuals.

This study also employs an author-created donation measure to determine whether Serbs distinguish between Turks and Bosnians, both of whom they refer to as Turks due to their shared religious beliefs. Along with this differentiation, the study applies an author-created donation measure to the participants with regard to a scenario where they can donate to Serbs, Turks, and Bosnians in order to see if they will act in a nationalist manner. In addition to the donation measure, the study also separately examines participants' attitudes toward Turks and Muslims to see whether the hostility toward Turks primarily stems from the difference in religion.

This study aims to add a significant contribution to the scarce literature on Serbian-Turkish relations. Given the various historical instances such as Bosnians being killed by Serbs (Suljagić, 2021), the research on the impact of this event on Turkish-Serbian relations has been insufficient (Ekinci Sarier, 2016). Furthermore, as technology has advanced, contact among individuals, nations, and countries has risen considerably. One example is the global transmission of Turkish TV programs and series, which are becoming increasingly popular in Serbia (Özalpman & Özmen, 2023). Therefore, another purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between Turks and Serbs through the viewing of Turkish TV shows to examine the following research hypotheses:

H1: A positive relationship exists between Serbs' watching Turkish TV series (number and frequency) and their feelings toward Turks (measured by the Contact Quality Scale).

H2: A positive relationship exists between Serbs' watching Turkish TV series (number and frequency) and their feelings toward Turkish individuals (measured with the Feeling Thermometer Scale; Haddock et al., 1993; Branković et al., 2016).

H3: A positive relationship exists between Serbs' watching Turkish TV series (number and frequency) and their willingness to engage with Turkish individuals (measured by the Social Distance Scale; Levy et al., 2019).

H4: A relationship exists between Serbs' contact with Turks (number and the frequency) and their different feeling states toward Turks (measured by the Contact Quality Scale; Stephan et al., 1999).

H5: A positive relationship exists between Serbs' contact with Turks (number and frequency) and their feelings towards Turkish individuals (measured by the Feeling Thermometer; Haddock et al., 1993; Branković et al., 2016).

H6: A relationship exists between Serbs' contact with Turks (number and frequency) and their willingness to engage with Turkish individuals (measured by the Social Distance Scale; Levy et al., 2019).

H7: Participants distinguish between Turks and Bosnians by donating differently to each of them.

H8: Participants will donate the most to Serbians when given the choice among Turks, Bosnians, and Serbs.

Method

Participants

In total, 492 individuals participated in the study. The data were collected from individuals 18 years of age or older who live in Serbia and were able to participate in the study online. Of the participants, 386 described their gender as female (78.4%), 105 as male (21.3%), and 1 as “other” (0.2%). Participants’ ages range between 18-56 ($M = 23.39$).

While 463 of the participants (94.1%) describe their ethnicity as Serbian, two (0.4%) describe themselves as Bosnian and 15 (3.0%) as “Other;” 12 (2.4%) did not want to answer. Moreover, 369 of the participants (75%) described their religious affiliation as Orthodox Christian, three (0.6%) as Muslim, one (0.2%) as Catholic, six (1.2%) as “Other,” and 113 (23%) as non-religious.

Also, two of the participants (0.4%) mentioned their educational background as elementary school, 81 (16.5%) as high school, 337 (68.5%) as college, 68 (13.8%) as master’s degree, and four (0.8%) as doctorate level. Moreover, 308 participants (62.6%) mentioned the place they in which lived most was a metropolis, 106 (21.5%) as a city, four (0.8%) as a county/district, 38 (7.7%) as a small town, and 36 (7.3%) as a village.

Data Collection Procedure

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee of the researcher’s undergraduate university. Google Forms was used for the data collection process. The study used the snowball technique to collect data. The researcher first informed the participants about the purpose of the study and the participation criteria (i.e., being voluntary and being at least 18 years old), then obtained their consent and took their surveys. Participants were asked to fill in the survey anonymously. On the first page, the participants were informed that they could leave the study any time. Completing the form was expected to take approximately 10-15 minutes. Participants did not receive any compensation for completing the survey.

Data Collection Instruments

Demographic Form

The researcher prepared this form in the Serbian language, which is used to collect information about the participants' gender, age, ethnicity, religion, most lived place, income, education history, and family information.

Donation Form

The researcher designed this form containing two different donation questionnaires to be given to the participants. The first question asks the participants to hypothetically donate 2,000 Dinars between a Turk and a Bosnian. The participants' responses are categorized based on the following distributions: "I would donate equally," "I would donate more to Bosnians," "I would donate more to Turks," "I would not donate," and "I would donate to whoever's situation was more urgent."

The second questionnaire asks the participants to donate 2,000 Dinars among a Turk, a Bosnian, and a Serb. The participants' responses are categorized as "I would donate equally," "I would donate more to Bosnians," "I would donate more to Serbs," "I would donate more to Turks," "I would donate more to Bosnians and Serbs and less to Turks," "I would donate more to Serbs and Turks and less to Bosnians," "I would donate more to Bosnians and Turks and less to Serbs," "I would donate to whoever's situation was more urgent," and "I would not donate."

Social Distance Scale

The study utilizes the Social Distance Scale (Levy et al., 2019) to gauge Serbs' feelings about facing some possibilities such as having a Turkish neighbor, a Turkish colleague, a Turkish friend, or marrying/dating a Turk. The aim is to understand whether Serbs saw a difference between Turks (*I would not mind living in the same neighborhood with Turks*) and if they had a bias toward Turks. A 5-point Likert scale is used in the study. Four questions are asked to assess Serbian's feelings toward these groups. The four items consist of a 5-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating more positive attitudes toward the group. The Serbian-adaptation's internal consistency values range between .78 and .89, with Cronbach's alpha for this study being .74.

Feeling Thermometer

The Feeling Thermometer Scale (Haddock et al., 1993) assesses whether Serbian individuals think positively or negatively toward Turkish individuals and Muslims. The degrees range from 0 (very unfavorable) to 100 (very positive), with 50 meaning no positive or negative feelings toward a group. The study uses the Serbian adaptation of the scale (Branković et al., 2016) for the participants in Serbia.

Contact Quantity Scale

The study uses the Contact Quantity Scale (Barlow et al., 2012) to see Serbian individuals' contact levels with Turkish individuals by asking the Serbian participants how many Turkish individuals they know personally and how often they are in contact with them (*How many Turks do you know personally?*). The scale's internal consistency values range between .71 to .90, with Cronbach's alpha being .52 in this study. In addition, the Serbian individuals were asked if they follow Turkish TV series, and if so, how many (*How many Turkish TV series/films do you watch?*) to see these series' impact on the participants.

Contact Quality Scale

The Contact Quality Scale (Stephan et al., 1999) measures participants' feelings toward contact with other groups. The scale has four items and uses a 5-point Likert scale. The participants are asked if they feel pleasant, nervous, respected, or looked down upon (*When you interact with [Turkish], how often does something of the following happen to you?*) when they are in contact with Turkish individuals. A positive correlation exists between higher scores (maximum of 5) and the emotion felt. This study calculated Cronbach's alpha as .86.

Data Analysis

First, the study examines the demographic variables utilizing a t-test and one-way ANOVA by checking the assumptions of the analyses, including normality, sample independence, and equal variances. The study then uses the Pearson product-moment correlation analysis to determine the relationship among participants' attitudes toward Turks, their contact levels with Turks, and the amount of exposure to Turkish TV series.

Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics regarding the scales the study uses. A glance into the study's descriptive statistics shows the participants' scores on the Social Distance Scale for willingness to marry or date Turks to be relatively lower than in other scenarios. Also, according to the mean scores on the Feeling Thermometer, the participants were observed to indicate relatively higher positive feelings toward Turks compared to Muslims.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables (N = 492)

Variable	M	SD
Social Distance Scale		
Neighbor	4.69	.78
Colleague/Classmate	4.83	.60
Close Friend	4.72	.80
Marrying/Dating	3.33	1.49
Feeling Thermometer (Turks)	7.36	2.31
Feeling Thermometer (Muslims)	6.86	2.25
Contact Quality Scale		
Pleasant	3.59	1.43
Nervous	2.08	2.07
Respected	3.68	1.35
Looked down upon	1.89	2.21

Next, the study examines the possible demographical group differences using the t-test and one-way ANOVA. Only group differences appeared concerning the educational levels of the participants. Two groups (elementary and doctoral education) were excluded from the analysis due to the smaller number of participants in these categories. Thus, the high school-, college-, and master-level participants were compared.

Participants' education levels are seen to affect their feelings toward Turks ($F_{(2, 483)} = 3.551, p = .029$), where participants with high school education feel more respected when they come in contact with Turks ($M = 4.00$), compared to participants with a master's level of education ($M = 3.43$). Also, participants who defined themselves as having a college-level of education felt more respected when they come in contact with Turks ($M = 3.67$) than participants with master's degrees ($M = 3.43$).

The intercorrelations among the number of Turkish TV series participants watch, the frequency with which they watch these Turkish TV series, and these factors' relationships with the participants' attitudes toward Turks are provided in the correlation matrix (see Table 2).

Table 2

Intercorrelations among Study Variables (N = 492)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Number of Turkish TV Series	1										
2. Frequency of Watched Turkish TV Series	.73**	1									
3. Felt Pleasant	.11*	.09	1								
4. Felt Nervous	.03	.06	.57**	1							
5. Felt Respected	.04	.06	.75**	.52**	1						
6. Felt Looked Down Upon	.00	.04	.54**	.93**	.51**	1					
7. Feeling Thermometer	.24**	.24**	.13*	-.20**	.19**	-.22**	1				
8. Turkish Neighbor	.08	.11*	.17**	-.07	.25**	-.11*	.53**	1			
9. Turkish College/Classmate	.12*	.11*	.22**	-.02	.31**	-.08	.46**	.74**	1		

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
10. Turkish Close Friend	.07	.12**	.19**	-0.09	.28**	-0.12**	.53**	.77**	.82**	1	
11. Turkish Husband/Wife	.07	.07	.04	-0.14**	.12**	-0.16**	.50**	.39**	.30**	.40**	1

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

The correlation matrix examines the number of and frequency with which participants watch Turkish TV series, as well as their feelings (i.e., nervous, pleasant) toward Turks. The results show a high correlation between the number of Turkish TV series participants watched and the frequency of these series ($r = .73, p < .001$). According to the matrix, a significant positive relationship exists between feeling pleased about Turks and watching Turkish TV series ($r = .11, p = .019$; see Table 2).

A glance into the relationship between Turkish TV series and participants' ratings on the Feeling Thermometer Scale regarding their feelings toward Turks shows a weak but positive relationship, indicating that as Serbs' feelings toward Turks (on the Feeling Thermometer Scale) increase, the number of ($r = .24, p < .001$) and frequency with which ($r = .24, p < .001$) they watch Turkish TV series increases as well.

The study also examines the correlation matrix in Table 2 in terms of the relationships between watching Turkish TV series and participants' attitudes toward willingness to engage with having a neighbor, colleague/university friend, close friend, or spouse who is Turk. The results table shows a weak but significantly positive relationship to exist between the number of series watched and willingness to have a Turkish colleague/classmate ($r = .12, p = .011$). Remarkably, significant positive relationships were found between the frequency of watching series and agreeing with having a Turkish neighbor ($r = .11, p = .019$), Turkish colleague/classmate ($r = .11, p = .014$), and a Turkish close friend ($r = .12, p = .008$; see Table 2).

The intercorrelations among the number of Turkish individuals the participants know, their frequency of contact with them, and their relationship regarding the participants' attitudes toward Turks is also provided in the correlation matrix (see Table 3).

Table 3*Intercorrelations among Study Variables (N = 492)** $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Number of Turkish People Known	1										
2. Frequency of Contact with Turkish People	.48**	1									
3. Felt Pleasant	-0.18**	-0.17**	1								
4. Felt Nervous	-0.35**	-0.35**	.57**	1							
5. Felt Respected	-0.20**	-0.18**	.75**	.52**	1						
6. Felt Looked Down Upon	-0.37**	-0.36**	.54**	.93**	.51**	1					
7. Feeling Thermometer (Turks)	.20**	.15**	.13*	-0.20**	.19**	-0.22**	1				
8. Turkish Neighbor	.06	-0.01	.17**	-0.07	.25**	-0.11*	.53**	1			
9. Turkish College/Classmate	.04	-0.05	.22**	-0.02	.31**	-0.08	.46**	.74**	1		
10. Turkish Close Friend	.09	.03	.19**	-0.09	.28**	-0.12**	.53**	.77**	.82**	1	
11. Turkish Husband/Wife	.12**	.06	.04	-0.14**	.12**	-0.16**	.50**	.39**	.30**	.40**	1

A Pearson product-moment correlation was run to see the relationship between the number of Turkish individuals known and the frequency of contact with them with regard to different feeling states. According to the results, a significant negative correlation exists between having contact with Turks and feeling pleasant toward Turks ($r = -0.18$, $p < .001$) and feeling respected ($r = -0.20$, $p < .001$), while a significant negative relationship exists between Serbian participants being in contact with a Turkish

individual and feeling nervous ($r = -0.35, p < .001$) and feeling looked down upon ($r = -0.37, p < .001$).

Moreover, a significant positive correlation is found between participants from Serbia having contact with Turkish individuals and having positive feelings toward them ($r = .20, p < .001$). This result indicates that having more contact with Turks also increases the positive feelings toward them. Additionally, the results show that the relationship between the participants' frequency of contact with Turks and their attitudes toward Turks to have a significant positive correlation ($r = .15, p < .001$; see Table 3).

Table 3 also shows the relationship between the number of Turkish individuals whom the participants are in contact with and their willingness to engage in different scenarios with Turks. A significant positive relationship exists between the number of Turkish individuals known and willingness to have a Turkish spouse ($r = .12, p = .008$).

Furthermore, a two-stage hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to investigate the extent to which the amount of contact with Turkish individuals predicts feeling pleasant about Turks. The first step examines the predictive role of the number of Turkish TV series watched. The results show that the number of Turkish TV series watched significantly predicts feelings of pleasantness in the participants ($R^2 = .01, F_{(1, 490)} = 5.56, p = .019$) and accounts for 1.1 % of the variance in the outcome variable. After controlling for the number of Turkish TV series, the second model is seen to be significant ($R^2 = .05, F_{(2, 489)} = 11.87, p < .001$). The number of Turkish individuals known explains an additional 3.5% of the variance in the outcome variable.

Table 4

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Feeling Pleasant

Variable	B	SE B	β	t	R^2	ΔF
Model 1	.04	.08	.11	2.36*	.01	5.56*
Number of Turkish TV series watched						
Model 2	-0.10	.02	-0.18	-4.24**	.05	11.87**
Number of Turkish people known						

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

Furthermore, when participants were asked to donate 2,000 Dinars between a Turk and a Bosnian, 401 participants (81.5%) would donate the money equally between a Bosnian and a Turk. Also, while 60 participants (12.2%) mentioned that they would donate more to the Bosnian, only five (1%) said they would donate more to the Turk.

When adding a Serb as a third donation option, 267 participants (54.3%) this time mentioned that they would donate equally, while 157 (31.9%) would donate more to the Serb. Additionally, while 28 (5.7%) would donate more to the Bosnian and Serb and less to the Turk, 10 (2%) would donate more to the Bosnian. Remarkably, only some participants would donate more to the Turk.

While the participants chose to share the money equally between the Turk and the Bosnian, they donated more money to the Serb than the Turk and Bosnian when a Serb was added to the scenario. Also, when including the Serb in the donation story, participants' tendency to distribute the 2,000 Dinar equally showed a decline.

Discussion

This study has sought to determine how watching Turkish TV series (indirect contact) and communicating with people from Türkiye (direct contact) contribute to Serbians' sentiments regarding Turks. The first aim of this study was to determine the relationship between Serbs' watching Turkish TV series (number and frequency) and their different feelings toward Turks. The results show that, as the participants' number of Turkish TV series watched increases, they found the out-group more pleasant. Moreover, and as expected, a positive relationship was found between watching Turkish TV series and feeling more positive toward Turks. As Bilgin and Danis (2016) mentioned, Turkish TV series positively impact foreign viewers. Additionally, one study stated that Turkish TV series are getting more and more popular in Balkan countries (Balaban, 2015). The type of TV series watched may also be important in shaping attitudes. For example, although the Serbs who watched TV series such as the *Magnificent Century*, which is about the Ottoman Empire and Suleiman the Magnificent, commented positively about the series, they also made negative comments about the Ottoman Empire and its attitude toward Serbia (Aydos, 2017). In this regard, the importance of culture and cultural distance can also be emphasized. According to studies, many of the TV series are liked by Arab viewers, and Arab viewers were noted to have significant

positive attitudes about Türkiye (Kaya, 2015; Öztürk, 2018; Yıldırım, 2016). Similarly, Aydos (2017) in a study conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina stated that Bosniaks who identified themselves more with Turks compared to Serbs gave more positive reactions to Turkish TV series.

When examining the relationship between the amount and frequency of Turkish TV series watched and the willingness to engage with Turkish individuals, only a positive relationship was found between number of Turkish TV series watched and the desire to have a Turkish college/classmate. A significant positive relationship was also found between the frequency of watching Turkish TV series and the willingness to have a Turkish neighbor, college/classmate, and close friend. Previous literature has shown the genre of television viewing to perhaps relate to prejudices regarding out-groups (Gattino & Tartaglia, 2015). Among other possibilities, the subjects of the viewed TV shows may be connected to the willingness of those who watch more TV series to have exclusively Turkish college or classmates. Additionally, even while participants enjoy Turkish TV shows, they might not wish to envision themselves in a more intimate connection with someone from a culture other than their own in their daily lives. The fact that individuals who watch Turkish TV series more frequently are willing to choose options other than a Turkish spouse can be explained by Allport's (1954) contact theory. As individuals are more frequently exposed to individuals from Türkiye and productions about Türkiye, their prejudices about Turks and Türkiye may decrease, and they may be able to imagine themselves with Turks in different roles. Interestingly, the lack of a significant relationship for number and frequency of watching Turkish TV series with willingness to have a Turkish spouse may be related to the cultural difference between individuals in such an intimate relationship and the stereotypes between the two societies. The significance of shared understanding and emotional ties to particular cultural stereotypes in every country was underlined by Lukšik et al. (2023).

The study has also examined the relationship between contact with Turkish individuals (number and frequency) and Serbs' different feeling states. The results have shown that both being in contact with Turks and the frequency of the contact to be negatively related to feeling pleasant, and to be positively related to feeling nervous, looked down upon, and disrespected. In other words, Serbs who interact with Turks more frequently and in greater numbers exhibit both positive and negative sentiments. Interestingly, when controlling for the effects of the number of Turkish TV series watched, contact

with the number of Turkish individuals predicts less pleasant feelings. This shows that, although the participants make contact with Turks while watching Turkish TV series, this contact is established indirectly, and the viewer does not make any special effort during the contact. During this indirect contact, individuals receive various information from what they are exposed to (Ross, 2019).

The relationship between being in contact with Turks and participants' feelings toward Turks revealed a positive relationship between being in contact with Turks (more Turks and higher frequency) and feeling positively toward Turks. Hence, participants in more frequent contact with Turks have more positive feelings about Turks. Previous literature supports these ambivalent attitudes of participants toward Turks. As mentioned, the situation of contact is essential, and even if an in-group member's opinion changes positively toward an out-group member, this person may only generalize these changes to only certain out-group members (Herek, 1997). However, when Serbs interact with Turks in real life, they have to be directly in contact, and the individual's past experiences (Emerson et al., 2002), such as the environment in which the communication occurred, the level of happiness experienced as a result of the communication, and the individuals with whom they interacted (Laar et al., 2005), as well as prejudices and stereotypes about the Turkish individuals and culture, may also play a role. Nevertheless, the fact that better understanding of a different culture does not inevitably result in lessening prejudices or bias against that society is important to remember (Zuma, 2014).

Moreover, a positive relationship was found between being in contact more with Turkish individuals and feeling positive about having a Turkish spouse. Except for this relationship, no significant relationship being found between being in contact with Turks (both number and frequency) and accepting having a Turkish neighbor, college/classmate, and close friend is also noteworthy, as well as the relationship between being in more frequent contact with Turks and feeling more positive about having a Turkish spouse, which is in contrast to results regarding the number of Turkish TV series watched. Individuals may become more aware of similarities rather than differences as they interact directly with individuals from other cultures and as they learn more about their lives, environments, and civilizations (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). This finding may explain the importance of direct contact with an out-group member. According to the literature, direct contact may be more potent than indirect forms (Brown & Paterson, 2016).

Remarkably, the Serbian participants who watch more Turkish TV series were found to have more positive feelings about Turks. In contrast, the participants with more one-on-one contact with Turks numerically have more negative attitudes about Turks. As mentioned above, different factors may play a role in these results, such as the topics of the series people watch and the frequency with which they watch these series, the participants' previous experiences with Turks and their satisfaction with this experience, and the context in which communication was established. A previous study found individuals' prejudices to decrease as a result of indirect contact. Moreover, indirect contact occurring before entering one-on-one contact was observed to be effective regarding the one-on-one contact (Wölfer et al., 2019). In other words, watching Turkish TV series before having one-on-one contact with Turks can positively affect individuals' attitudes toward Turks regarding future communications. From a different angle, individuals can respond negatively when they come in contact with Turks in real life, even though they may believe a show is a play and have been influenced by its various components.

The findings related to the participant demographics in this study have shown that participants' positive attitudes toward Turks for both direct and indirect contact decrease as the participants' education level increases. Specifically, those participants with master's levels had fewer positive attitudes toward Turks than the high school and college groups. The finding that negative attitudes toward Turks rise with Serbs' education levels may be affected by a number of reasons. Previous hostilities between the two countries may be emphasized in the educational curriculum, which could reinforce preconceived notions as students continue their studies. Higher education can also expose people to intricate geopolitical conflicts, patriotic narratives, social factors, and media representations, potentially forming a more skeptical attitude toward Turks throughout the educated population. The distribution of educational levels among the study's participants should be underlined to differ in addition to the previously indicated possibilities. Moreover, this study is correlational, meaning correlation does not imply causation. The link between bias and education is impossible to ignore. Previous literature has shown mixed results when considering the relationship between attitudes toward out-group members and education level (Hello et al., 2002; Wagner & Zick, 1995). Furthermore, divergent perspectives on the Ottoman occupation of the Balkans have long existed in Serbia. This understanding, which is primarily unfavorable

in Serbia, is frequently presented in educational materials as 500 years spent under the Turkish yoke. This also signifies an inability to distinguish between the current Turkish government and the Ottoman Empire. When addressing academic debate and popular culture, both are frequently viewed as one (Jovanović, 2017).

In addition to education level, the course curricula students have taken during their education can have substantial effects on their attitudes toward the outgroup. Despite the fact each education level had unequal numbers of participants, these mentioned factors should be considered. For example, when Bosnia and Herzegovina separated from Yugoslavia and declared its independence, each nation living in the country continued education in its own language, and books were published in three different languages: Bosnian, Serbian, and Croatian. The negative words used in Serbian books about the Ottoman Empire have been examined, such as the period of oppression and persecution (Aydos, 2017), invader (Muhasilović, 2015), and Serbs not identifying themselves as having been part of the Ottoman Empire when these written books (Alibašić, 2007). Individuals who are exposed to such content during their education can be predicted to have more prejudices about Turks.

This study has also investigated whether participants would distinguish between Bosnians and Turks. In order to understand this, when participants were asked to divide 2,000 Serbian Dinars between a Bosnian and a Turk, the majority of the participants chose to donate the money equally between the two. Although no significant difference was found, the second most preferred type was to donate more to a Bosnian than a Turk. Unsurprisingly though, participants gave the most to Serbians (i.e., their in-group) once a Serb was added as a third group.

The participants were asked the donation question as a classic question, and answers were categorized during the analysis. Despite this, some of the participants verbally stated that race is not essential and that they would donate money equally according to need. The reasons for donating more to the Bosnian individual in the first scenario were collected under similar topics, such as Bosnians sharing a similar culture with individuals living in Serbia, the country being in the same geographical region, having relatives from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and wanting to donate more to the Bosnian because Serbs live in Bosnia. In the second scenario, answers were also found to explain the reason for donating more money to the Serbian person based on ethnic origin.

Even one of the participants who donated all their money to the Bosnian in the first question had said, "One of the participants explained the donation reasons as '0-2000-0 (0 Turkish, 2000 Serb, and 0 Bosnian (in the previous idea I gave the Bosnian 2000, a lot for me).'" Other such answers were found, and these findings are consistent with the previous literature. Such answers may be consistent with political and ethnic nationalist ideologies (Cox, 2002). In other words, participants might behave as a nationalist during the process.

One of the possible mediators for Serbs' negative feelings after having contact with Turks could be their level of perceived threat. Studies have shown out-group members to be seen as a realistic threat because of competition for such scarce resources as land, money, and jobs (Belán & Popper, 2021; Obaidi et al., 2018; Schneider, 2007). Serbian individuals may see Turks as a threat because they had lived for a long time in their lands during the Ottoman Empire's rule. Also, Turks still live in Serbia who work in jobs and live in homes that otherwise could be occupied by Serbs (Bizman & Yinon, 2001; Cox, 2002). In addition, the symbolic threat is related to the values, traditions, and customs of the in-group, with out-group members being seen as threatening to change the majority's (in-group's) way of life (Bizman & Yinon, 2001). As mentioned, the Serbian language and Serbian traditions have been affected by the Turkish language and culture of the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, in-group members may have concerns about adverse outcomes or threats to their group esteem, such as embarrassment or rejection if they maintain contact with out-group members. Lastly, the similarities between different groups are considered distinctiveness threats because these similarities may cause competition (Bizman & Yinon, 2001). As an out-group, although Turks do not have many similarities with Serbs, Bosnians share the same ethnicity, culture, language, and history as Serbs, as both were part of former Yugoslavia. The most important difference between them is religion (Mrduljaš, 2018). Additionally, two participants emphasized that the terms Bosnian and Bosniak are different. In the literature, while Bosnian Serbs are defined as Bosnian, Bosnian Muslims are defined as Bosniaks (Pavasović-Trošt, 2013). In summary, future studies need to measure these different types of threats in mediating the relationship between Serbian- Turk contact and negative attitudes.

One possible limitation of this study is the age range of participants, which was between 18-56 ($M = 23.39$). When considering historical events such as the 1992-1995

genocide, the inclusion of participants from older ages might give different results. Therefore, future studies might consider reaching different age groups. Also, most of the participants were female, and as previously stated, women might have less of a kinship ideology than men in Serbia (Hammel & Yarbrough, 1974). Future studies should include an equal number of male and female participants in order to eliminate the domination of one group and get more representative results.

Apart from these, some education groups had to be excluded from the analyses due to the number of participants in those groups. The results of this study have shown that education is an essential factor regarding differences in attitudes toward out-group members. Therefore, including individuals from different education groups in future studies can give a clearer picture regarding the role of education on attitudes toward out-group members. Additionally, the education curriculum in Serbia was not studied or discussed here, as this is outside the scope of the current study. Future studies might examine the education curricula in Serbia to show the relationship between education and attitudes toward out-group members.

In addition to all these, the participants who encountered various questions from Turks throughout the study may have been affected by the fact that the researcher is Turk. Therefore, either positively or negatively, the participants may not have been objective. On the other hand, through the social desirability effect, the participants may not have been objective throughout the study. Accordingly, future studies might yield covert ways to measure attitudes toward out-group members to eliminate the effect of social desirability bias or might obtain participants' social desirability levels for use in analyses as a control variable. As another limitation, the participants were not asked which Turkish TV series they watched. Because the previous literature has stated the TV series that was watched to have affect participants' prejudices (Gattino & Tartaglia, 2015), this question can be added to future studies.

Lastly and in line with the explanatory nature of this study, correlational analyses were conducted to explore the relationships among variables. Therefore, no cause-effect relationships can be inferred from the results. Future studies might utilize different ways to study the relationship among variables, such as through experimental methods to obtain cause-effect relationships. In addition, as understood from the participants' answers, words that may confuse them (such as Bosnian and Bosniak) should be explained more appropriately to the participants to get more accurate answers.

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