Names | A Journal of Onomastics

Unveiling Identity: Understanding and Addressing Name Bias and Prejudice among the Marginalized in Turkey

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ISSN: 0027-7738 (print) 1756-2279 (web) Vol. 73, No. 1, Spring 2025 DOI 10.5195/names.2025.2694

Abstract

This study explores the pervasive impact of name bias on Kurdish-origin individuals and Syrian Arab refugees within Turkey's socio-political landscape. Using quantitative methodology, the research developed a Likert-scale questionnaire through exploratory factor analysis, identifying five key factors: Personal Experiences, Institutional Practices, Societal Perceptions, Personal Attitudes, and Occupational Settings. Grounded in social identity theory and Allport's contact hypothesis, the study investigates the influence of name bias on socioeconomic opportunities, cultural integration, and psychological well-being. The findings show significant disparities in perceived name bias across ethnicities, genders, and educational levels, with Kurdish-origin individuals experiencing higher bias in personal and institutional contexts. Further, this study highlights the intersectionality of name bias and its amplification by societal structures. It provides empirical insights from a non-Western context, advocating for systemic policy, education, and workplace changes to reduce name-based discrimination. Finally, this study contributes to the field of onomastics, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to create an inclusive society where one's name does not constrain identity and opportunities.

Keywords: anthroponymy, socioonomastics, personal names, ethnonym, name bias, implicit bias, identity formation

1. Introduction

Name bias, a subtle yet pervasive form of discrimination, holds profound implications for marginalized communities (Nick 2023), particularly within the complex socio-cultural landscape of Turkey (Gürpınar 2012; Suveren 2022). Among those most affected are Kurdish-origin individuals and Syrian Arab refugees (Aytaç & Çarkoğlu 2019), whose names often serve as markers of their ethnic and cultural identities (Felecan & Oliviu 2021). These markers, while central to personal and communal identity (Dion 1983; Edwards 2006; Finch 2008), can also trigger bias (Anderson 2010), influencing not only social interactions but also access to economic opportunities and essential services (Toros et al. 2018). This bias is not merely a reflection of individual prejudice but is deeply intertwined with broader societal dynamics (Eagly 2005), reinforcing existing social hierarchies and perpetuating systemic inequalities (Sarıgil 2018).

The theoretical underpinning of this study is grounded in social identity theory, as articulated by Tajfel and Turner (2004). This theory posits that individuals derive a significant portion of their self-concept from group affiliations, which can lead to ingroup favouritism and out-group distinctions (Otten 2005; Trepte 2013). In the Turkish context, where ethnic identity is a critical factor in social relations (Kasapoğlu & Ecevit 2004; Dönmez 2007), the identities of Kurdish-origin individuals (Allsopp 2016; Baser 2017; Kirişci 1998; Natali 2005; Romano 2006; Tezcür 2009) and Syrian refugees (Morgül & Savaşkan 2021; Taşdemir 2018) are often viewed through a lens of cultural and political difference (Abbas 2016; Fitzherbert 2019). This perception, shaped by historical and contemporary narratives (Anthias 2013), can reinforce social divisions (Anthias 2011) and influence how these groups are integrated or marginalized within the broader society (Ferguson et al. 1992). Social identity theory thus provides a critical framework (Hogg 2016; Hogg et al. 1995) for understanding how name bias operates within Turkey's intricate intergroup relations (Bükün 2014; Verkuyten 2006).

Complementing this perspective is Allport's contact hypothesis (Pettigrew & Tropp 2005), which suggests that under conditions of equal status (Koschate & van Dick 2011; Wittig & Grant-Thompson 1998), shared goals (Amir 1969), and institutional support (Robinson & Preston 1976; Smith 1994), intergroup contact can be a powerful mechanism for reducing prejudice (Pettigrew 1997) and fostering social cohesion (Pettigrew 1998). This hypothesis is particularly relevant in Turkey's diverse society, where fostering positive interactions between the majority Turkish population and minority groups, such as Kurdish-origin individuals (Fırat 2019) and Syrian Arab refugees (Firat & Ataca 2020), could be instrumental in mitigating name-based biases (Bagci et al. 2022). By facilitating meaningful contact across ethnic lines (Green & Wong 2009), there is potential to challenge and change the stereotypes and prejudices that underlie name bias (Gaunt, 2011; Wilson 1996), promoting more inclusive and equitable social dynamics (Allport 1963; Paluk et al. 2019).

This study seeks to explore these dynamics by examining the role of intergroup contact in reducing name-based bias and enhancing social integration. Specifically, it will investigate whether increased interaction between the broader Turkish population and minority groups can contribute to breaking down the barriers imposed by name bias, thereby fostering a more cohesive and inclusive society. This investigation aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that sustain or mitigate discrimination and identify practical pathways for promoting equity and cohesion in Turkey's multicultural context. By situating this study within the frameworks of social identity theory (Brown 2000; Ellemers & Haslam 2012; Harwood 2020; Hogg

ISSN: 0027-7738 (print) 1756-2279 (web) Vol. 73, No. 1, Spring 2025 DOI 10.5195/names.2025.2694

2016; Scheepers & Ellemers 2019; Trepte 2013) and the contact hypothesis (Connolly 2000; Forbes 2004; McKeown & Dixon 2017; Paluck et al. 2019), this research will not only elucidate the specific impacts of name bias on marginalized communities in Turkey but also offer broader insights into the interplay between identity, prejudice, and social integration.

In brief, this study aims to investigate how personal experiences, societal perceptions, and institutional practices related to name bias and prejudice impact the socioeconomic opportunities, cultural integration, and psychological well-being of Kurdish-origin individuals and Syrian Arab refugees in Turkey. The findings are expected to have significant implications for policy and practice, offering evidence-based strategies for addressing name bias and promoting social cohesion in diverse societies.

2. Past Research on Name-Based Biases

The exploration of name-based biases has evolved into a complex and richly layered area of research (Abel & Burger 2023; Aldrin 2017; Brédart 2018; Carsenat & Shokhenmayer 2014; Gebauer et al. 2012; Haim et al. 2024; Hafner et al. 2023; Itzkowitz & Itzkowitz 2017; Jiang 2023; Kozlowski et al. 2022; Maudslay et al. 2019; Morin 2024; Nghiem et al. 2024; Sánchez et al. 2024; Smith & Williams 2021; Towfighi et al. 2022; Wei et al. 2024), offering profound insights into how names—often regarded as simple identifiers—function as powerful markers of social, cultural, and ethnic identity (Felecan & Oliviu 2021; Kim 2007). These markers can significantly influence social interactions, educational outcomes, and economic opportunities, perpetuating systemic inequalities across various domains (Foster 2008; Kozlowski et al. 2022; Mateos 2007).

2.1. Economic Consequences of Name-Based Bias

The economic ramifications of name-based biases have been well-documented, starting with landmark studies such as Bertrand and Mullainathan's (2004) field experiment. This study vividly illustrated how job applicants with names perceived as African American were systematically disadvantaged in the hiring process compared to those with traditionally white-sounding names. Moreover, this research established a crucial link between names and economic mobility, highlighting that name-based biases are not only pervasive but deeply entrenched in the labour market (Booth & Leigh 2010; Cotton et al. 2008; Derous et al. 2009; King 2006; Widner & Chicoine 2011).

Further reinforcing these findings, studies by Fryer and Levitt (2004) explored the socioeconomic impacts of distinctively African American names, demonstrating that such names often serve as proxies for racial identity, influencing hiring decisions and career trajectories. This line of inquiry has been expanded by Oreopoulos (2011), who examined similar patterns of discrimination against immigrants with ethnically distinctive names in Canada, and by Carlsson and Rooth (2007), who conducted a field experiment in Sweden, revealing that applicants with Middle Eastern-sounding names were less likely to be called back for interviews compared to those with Swedish names.

Globally, the significance of these findings is underscored by research in diverse cultural contexts and Australia. Booth, Leigh, and Varganova (2012) conducted a large-scale audit study that demonstrated significant discrimination against job applicants with Chinese, Middle Eastern, and Indigenous-sounding names. Similarly, studies by Wood et al. (2009) in the UK revealed that applicants with ethnic minority names were less likely to be shortlisted for jobs, further highlighting the pervasive nature of name-based biases in employment. These patterns are mirrored in the housing market, where discrimination based on names, ethnic backgrounds, and limited applicant information has been documented across various contexts, including Norway, Spain, and the United States, reinforcing the broader socioeconomic impacts of name-based and ethnic discrimination (Ahmed et al. 2010; Anderson et al. 2012; Bosch et al. 2010; Carpusor & Loges 2006; Feldman & Allyson 2013; Gaddis & Ghoshal 2015).

2.2. Educational Impacts of Name Bias

Name-based biases also have far-reaching implications in the educational sector, influencing teachers' expectations, students' academic outcomes, and broader educational inequalities (Erwin & Calev 2011; Van Ewijk 2011). Early research by Harari and McDavid (1973) revealed that students with names perceived as lower-status or ethnically marked were often judged more harshly by teachers, leading to biased academic assessments that adversely affect students' long-term educational prospects. This foundational research has been expanded by subsequent studies, including those by Anderson-Clark et al. (2008), who provided robust

DOI 10.5195/names.2025.2694 Vol. 73, No. 1, Spring 2025 ISSN: 0027-7738 (print) 1756-2279 (web)

evidence that teachers' biases significantly skew their evaluations of students, thereby reinforcing educational disparities.

Further supporting this line of inquiry, Nick (2017) conducted a comprehensive socio-onomastic study in Germany, highlighting the systemic nature of name bias in educational settings. This study found that students with ethnically marked names consistently received lower grades than their peers with names more aligned with the dominant culture, a finding echoed by McDavid and Harari (1966) and consistent with the research of Steele and Aronson (1995) on stereotype threat. These studies collectively illustrate how name bias operates as a subtle yet powerful mechanism that perpetuates educational inequalities, affecting students' academic trajectories and, ultimately, their social mobility.

The persistence of name bias across different educational systems and contexts highlights its deeply ingrained nature (Paludi & Lisa 1985). For example, research by Lavy (2008) in Israel demonstrated that students with culturally distinct names faced similar challenges, indicating that name-based biases in education are not confined to any single region but are a global issue. The implications of this research are further enriched by studies such as those by Rumbaut (2008), who explored the impact of ethnic names on educational attainment among immigrant children in the United States, and by Wright, Taylor, and Moghaddam (1990), who examined how name-based biases influence peer relationships and academic performance in multicultural classrooms.

2.3. Digital and Online Environments

The rise of digital and online environments has introduced new contexts in which name-based biases can manifest, further complicating the landscape of discrimination. Conaway and Bethune (2015) explored how name-based stereotypes persist even in online settings, where traditional visual and contextual cues are absent. Their research revealed that implicit biases linked to names could still influence judgments and decisions in virtual environments, such as online learning platforms. This finding aligns with earlier studies by Greenwald et al. (1998), who developed the Implicit Association Test (IAT) to measure unconscious biases, including those related to names. Their work demonstrated that these biases are deeply embedded in our cognitive processes (Cunningham & Turk 2017; Turk et al. 2008) and can operate even when unaware.

The implications of these findings are particularly relevant in the context of increasingly digital interactions. As more aspects of education, work, and social life move online, understanding and addressing name-based biases in these environments becomes critical. The persistence of these biases in the digital realm suggests that interventions must be tailored to address the unique challenges posed by online interactions, where anonymity does not necessarily eliminate the influence of names on perceptions and decisions.

Research by Daniels (2013) on digital racial formation provides valuable insights into how racial and ethnic identities are constructed and perpetuated in online spaces, further complicating how name-based biases manifest in virtual environments. Moreover, the work of Hanife (2021) on biases in digital environments supports the view that digital spaces may amplify certain biases, as the lack of physical presence can lead to greater reliance on names as primary identifiers. This research underscores the importance of developing digital literacy programs that address implicit biases and promote more equitable online interactions. Studies by Noble (2018) on algorithmic discrimination and by Sweeney (2013) on the impact of online search algorithms on racial biases further highlight the need for comprehensive strategies to mitigate name-based biases in digital environments.

2.4. Interventions to Mitigate Name Bias

Addressing name-based biases requires a multifaceted approach encompassing policy changes, educational reforms, and broader societal shifts. One of the most widely advocated strategies is the implementation of blind recruitment practices, as proposed by Baird (1998). Through anonymization of candidates' names during the initial stages of the hiring process, these practices aim to reduce the impact of name-based discrimination and ensure that decisions are based on qualifications and merit rather than unconscious biases. This approach has been supported by research by Goldstein and Stecklov (2016), who examined the effects of name anonymization on occupational success, finding that it can significantly mitigate bias and promote fairer hiring practices. Similar interventions have been proposed in the educational sector to address the impact of name bias on student outcomes.

Sprietsma (2009) suggested adopting anonymous grading policies to prevent biases related to students' names from influencing their academic evaluations. This approach has been shown to reduce disparities in grading and create a more equitable academic environment for students from diverse backgrounds. The work of Erwin (1993) further supports this strategy, highlighting how name-based stereotypes can influence teacher

ISSN: 0027-7738 (print) 1756-2279 (web) Vol. 73, No. 1, Spring 2025 DOI 10.5195/names.2025.2694

assessments and suggesting that anonymizing names in academic settings can help level the playing field for all students.

These interventions have precedent. Anonymous grading has been successfully implemented in various educational systems, leading to more equitable outcomes. For instance, research by Lovaglia et al. (1998) demonstrated that anonymous grading could reduce the impact of social biases on academic evaluations, promoting fairness and inclusivity. Implementing similar measures could be crucial in ensuring that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed, regardless of their background. The potential for blind recruitment practices to mitigate biases has been further validated by studies such as those by Kraiger et al. (1993) and by Bohnet et al. (2016), who explored how anonymity in assessment processes can reduce the impact of prejudices related to race, ethnicity, and gender. These findings underscore the importance of implementing such practices across various domains to foster a more equitable society.

2.5. Theoretical Foundations: Social Identity and Contact Hypotheses

The theoretical frameworks underpinning the study of name-based biases are deeply rooted in social identity theory, as articulated by Tajfel and Turner (2004). This theory provides a lens to understand how individuals categorize themselves and others into social groups, leading to ingroup favouritism and out-group discrimination. As salient markers of social identity, names often trigger these processes, resulting in differential treatment based on perceived group membership. This perspective is further elaborated by Moss-Racusin et al. (2013), who explored how implicit social identities influence decision-making processes, often to the detriment of individuals from minority groups. Their research underscores the importance of understanding the cognitive mechanisms that drive name-based biases and the need for interventions that address these underlying processes.

In addition to social identity theory, Allport's contact hypothesis offers a complementary framework for mitigating name-based biases. Pettigrew and Tropp (2005) provided extensive evidence that meaningful intergroup contact can reduce prejudice and improve intergroup relations under equal status and shared goals. This hypothesis has been applied to the study of name bias, suggesting that fostering positive interactions between members of different ethnic groups can diminish the influence of name-based stereotypes and promote more inclusive social dynamics. Research by Van der Bergh et al. (2010) supports this hypothesis, showing that increased contact between ethnic groups in educational settings can reduce prejudicial attitudes and behaviours.

Through facilitatation of meaningful interactions between individuals from different backgrounds, it may be possible to reduce the impact of name-based biases and foster greater social cohesion. The relevance of the contact hypothesis in mitigating name-based biases is further supported by the work of Dovidio et al. (2003), who explored how intergroup contact can reduce implicit biases and promote more positive intergroup relations. This research highlights the potential for contact-based interventions to address the root causes of name-based discrimination, particularly in multicultural societies.

2.6. Global Perspectives and Implications

Research conducted in various international contexts further illustrates the global relevance of name-based biases. Studies in countries such as the United States, Canada, Germany, Israel, and the United Kingdom have consistently demonstrated that name-based biases are not confined to any single region or culture but are a widespread phenomenon affecting individuals worldwide. For example, research by Oreopoulos (2011) in Canada found that immigrants with ethnically distinctive names were less likely to be hired, reflecting similar patterns observed in the United States and Europe. These findings highlight the universal nature of name-based discrimination and the need for cross-cultural strategies to address it.

In addition to the studies conducted in Western contexts, research in non-Western settings has also contributed to our understanding of name-based biases. For instance, studies in India by Jodhka (2017) explored how caste-based names influenced perceptions and opportunities, revealing that name-based discrimination can be deeply intertwined with historical and cultural factors. Research by Heath and Cheung (2007) in the UK and Martiniello and Verhaeghe (2022) in Belgium further illustrated how name biases intersect with racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic factors, contributing to complex patterns of discrimination across different societies.

These insights are particularly relevant for understanding the complexities of name bias in different countries where ethnic identities are closely linked to historical and socio-political contexts (Zhao & Monica 2017). The cross-cultural examination of name biases is essential, although Chiswick and Miller (1995) did not specifically focus on name bias. Their study on the economic assimilation of immigrants and the role of ethnic

DOI 10.5195/names.2025.2694 Vol. 73, No. 1, Spring 2025 ISSN: 0027-7738 (print) 1756-2279 (web)

identity in shaping labour market outcomes highlight the broader implications of cultural and ethnic factors on employment experiences. While their research primarily addresses economic integration, the underlying data suggest that ethnic names could play a role in influencing these outcomes, potentially leading to name-based biases. This underscores the importance of adopting a global perspective when addressing biases, as these factors influence individual experiences and broader societal dynamics.

3. Method

This study employed a structured quantitative research design to explore the multifaceted phenomenon of name bias and prejudice, mainly focusing on their impact on the socioeconomic opportunities, cultural integration, and psychological well-being of Kurdish-origin individuals and Syrian Arab refugees in Turkey. The research was firmly grounded in two key theoretical frameworks: social identity theory and the contact hypothesis. These frameworks guided the development of the survey instrument, the data collection process, and the analysis, ensuring a comprehensive examination of the issue from individual and societal perspectives.

3.1. Theoretical Framework

3.1.1. Social Identity Theory (SIT)

Social identity theory, developed by Tajfel and Turner (2004), posits that individuals derive a significant portion of their self-concept from group memberships, leading to in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination. In this study, SIT was applied to understand how name bias functions as a marker of social identity, influencing how individuals are perceived and treated within society. The items under F1 Personal Experiences and F3 Societal Perceptions are particularly relevant to this framework. For instance, F1 includes items such as “I have encountered situations where I was judged or treated differently due to the connotations of my name”, which directly addresses the negative consequences of being associated with a stigmatized out-group based on one's name.

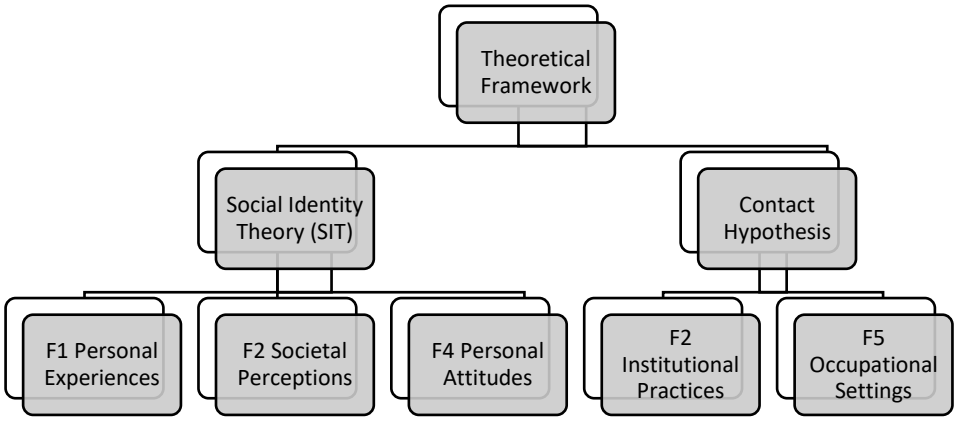
Similarly, F3 explores how societal perceptions of a name influence an individual's self-concept, with items like “My name is a significant component of my social identity”, emphasizing the deep connection between personal identity and social recognition. The items under F4 Personal Attitudes explore individual-level attitudes and implicit biases regarding names, providing insights into how personal beliefs perpetuate stereotypes and biases. This factor is critical in highlighting the role of individuals as both subjects and agents of bias (for instance, “People often make assumptions about others based solely on their names”). This reflects the recognition of implicit biases that social identity theory informs. Including F4 adds depth to the theoretical framework by addressing the cognitive processes that underlie name-based discrimination, emphasizing the importance of self-awareness and personal responsibility in mitigating bias.

3.1.2. Contact Hypothesis

Allport's contact hypothesis (1954) suggests that under conditions of equal status, shared goals, and institutional support, intergroup contact can reduce prejudice and improve intergroup relations. This hypothesis is operationalized in the F2 Institutional Practices and F5 Occupational Settings items. For example, F2 includes items such as “Public awareness campaigns to address name bias in public institutions would be beneficial”, highlighting the role of institutional interventions in fostering positive intergroup contact. F5 addresses the role of name bias in professional settings, with items like “Anonymous CV practices could reduce the impact of name bias in job applications”. This reflects the contact hypothesis’s practical application in reducing prejudice by minimizing initial biases triggered by names.

ISSN: 0027-7738 (print) 1756-2279 (web) Vol. 73, No. 1, Spring 2025 DOI 10.5195/names.2025.2694

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework of the Study



3.2. Participants

The study sample comprised 1,008 participants, including 564 Kurdish-origin individuals and 444 Syrian Arab refugees, ensuring a diverse representation across gender (549 females, 459 males) and educational backgrounds (446 high school, 562 university). This diverse sample was selected to capture a broad spectrum of perspectives on name bias within Turkey, allowing for a detailed analysis of how these biases manifest across different demographic groups.

3.3. Rationale for Instrument Development

Before the questionnaire was developed, a pilot study was conducted to assess the prevalence of name bias among Kurdish-origin individuals and Syrian Arab refugees. Participants were asked one question in this pilot study: "Have you ever experienced name-based bias? Explain in detail". The responses revealed various experiences related to name bias, spanning education, employment, and social interactions. These detailed accounts provided crucial insights into how name bias manifests, informing the instrument's design. The rich qualitative data gathered from this pilot study ensures that the questionnaire is comprehensive and sensitive to the nuanced experiences of the target population, reinforcing the likelihood that informants in the main study will reliably report their experiences of name bias.

3.3.1. Instrumentation

The primary data collection tool was a structured questionnaire designed to assess participants' experiences with name bias and prejudice, societal perceptions of names, and the impact of institutional practices on reducing these biases. The questionnaire employed a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Totally disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree, 5 = Totally agree) and was developed in alignment with the study's theoretical frameworks. The questionnaire was divided into five factors:

> F1 Personal Experiences: Addressing participants' direct experiences related to name bias, such as being judged or treated differently because of their name, reflecting the emotional and social consequences central to social identity theory.
>
> F2 Institutional Practices: Focusing on participants' beliefs about the role of institutions in mitigating name bias, in line with the contact hypothesis.

DOI 10.5195/names.2025.2694 Vol. 73, No. 1, Spring 2025 ISSN: 0027-7738 (print) 1756-2279 (web)

F3 Societal Perceptions: Examining how participants perceive the societal value of their names and the impact on their social identity, consistent with social identity theory.
F4 Personal Attitudes: Exploring personal beliefs and assumptions about names and their impact on social interactions, addressing implicit biases and their role in perpetuating stereotypes, in line with social identity theory.

F5 Occupational Settings: Investigating the role of name bias in professional environments, including recruitment and promotion processes, and reflecting on how institutional practices can be structured to reduce bias, conforming to the contact hypothesis.

Table 1: The Instrument for Data Collection

Content	Subscale	Item	Source for Reference	CR	α
Personal Experiences	F1: Personal Experiences	1–6	McDavid & Harari (1966); Anderson et al. (2012); Bertrand & Mullainathan (2004); Abel & Burger (2023); Jiang (2023); Harari & McDavid (1973)	0.84	0.74
Institutional Practices	F2: Institutional Practices	7–10	Pettigrew & Tropp (2005); Baert et al. (2015); Daniels (2013); Hanife (2021); Ahmed et al. (2010)	0.82	0.72
Societal Perceptions	F3: Societal Perceptions	11–15	Phinney (1990); Aldrin (2017); Anderson-Clark et al. (2008); Zhao & Biernat (2017); Grønstad (2024); Haim et al. (2024)	0.85	0.76
Personal Attitudes	F4: Personal Attitudes	16–19	Moss-Racusin et al. (2013); Crenshaw (1991); Edwards (2006); Cunningham & Turk (2017); Greenwald et al. (1998); Booth et al. (2012)	0.81	0.70
Occupational Settings	F5: Occupational Settings	20–22	Bertrand & Mullainathan (2004); Oreopoulos (2009); Baert et al. (2015); Widner & Chicoine (2011); Fryer & Levitt (2004); Van Ewijk (2011)	0.86	0.78

Note: CR = Construct Reliability; α = Cronbach's Alpha.

Table 1 presents the structure and reliability of the questionnaire designed to assess various dimensions of name bias and prejudice. The instrument is organized into five subscales: Personal Experiences (F1), Institutional Practices (F2), Societal Perceptions (F3), Personal Attitudes (F4), and Occupational Settings (F5). Each subscale comprises items grounded in established research, with sources including seminal works such as McDavid & Harari (1966), Anderson et al. (2012), Pettigrew & Tropp (2005), and Bertrand & Mullainathan (2004), among others. Construct reliability (CR) values for the subscales range from 0.81 to 0.86, indicating strong internal consistency, while Cronbach's alpha (α) values between 0.70 and 0.78 further confirm the instrument's reliability. This robust foundation ensures that the questionnaire effectively captures the intended constructs, making it a reliable tool for exploring name bias in various contexts.

3.3.2. Scale Development and Validation

The questionnaire underwent rigorous validation through exploratory factor analysis (EFA), with a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of 0.93 and a significant Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($X^2 = 12317.60$, $df = 595$, $p < 0.001$), confirming the suitability of the data for factor analysis. The EFA identified five distinct factors, accounting for 46.28% of the total variance. Items that did not load onto any factor or had low communalities were systematically removed, resulting in a final scale of 22 items. The factor loadings for each item are presented in table 2, demonstrating the strength of each item's contribution to its respective factor.

ISSN: 0027-7738 (print) 1756-2279 (web) Vol. 73, No. 1, Spring 2025 DOI 10.5195/names.2025.2694

Table 2: Factor Loadings for Finalized Scale

Item	1	2	3	4	5
A1	0.79	0.27	0.24	0.36	0.40
A4	0.78	0.24	0.24	0.33	0.39
A2	0.71	0.29	0.21	0.37	0.43
D1	0.67	0.27	0.26	0.32	0.42
A3	0.64	0.24	0.14	0.35	0.44
A5	0.49	0.25	0.21	0.35	0.29
G2	0.26	0.79	0.36	0.30	0.39
G1	0.31	0.79	0.39	0.30	0.37
G3	0.26	0.72	0.42	0.27	0.30
G4	0.23	0.58	0.37	0.28	0.23
F3	0.15	0.33	0.76	0.24	0.17
F2	0.19	0.37	0.67	0.31	0.24
F1	0.20	0.34	0.62	0.34	0.23
F5	0.28	0.35	0.55	0.26	0.28
F4	0.29	0.33	0.51	0.22	0.21
B2	0.32	0.28	0.32	0.72	0.40
B1	0.38	0.27	0.23	0.71	0.43
B3	0.35	0.33	0.29	0.61	0.39
B4	0.29	0.21	0.25	0.58	0.38
C2	0.49	0.34	0.28	0.49	0.84
C3	0.39	0.36	0.24	0.40	0.58
C1	0.32	0.29	0.20	0.36	0.57

3.3.3. Reliability Analysis

The internal consistency of the scale and its subscales was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha. The results demonstrated that the overall scale and its subscales possessed acceptable to high reliability, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.67 to 0.88, indicating strong internal consistency and reliability across the factors. The reliability coefficients are detailed in Table 3.

Table 3: Reliability Coefficients

Scale	Alpha
Total	0.88
Factor 1	0.83
Factor 2	0.80
Factor 3	0.75
Factor 4	0.74
Factor 5	0.67

3.3.4. Normality Testing

The normality of the data was assessed using skewness and kurtosis measures to determine the suitability of parametric statistical tests. The results indicated that the overall scale, Factor 1, Factor 2, Factor 3, and Factor 4 were normally distributed, with skewness and kurtosis values within the acceptable range of -1 to +1. However, Factor 5 exhibited skewness and kurtosis values outside this range, suggesting a non-normal distribution. As a result, non-parametric analyses were applied to Factor 5, while parametric t-tests were employed for the normally distributed factors. The normality results are summarized in Table 4.

DOI 10.5195/names.2025.2694 Vol. 73, No. 1, Spring 2025 ISSN: 0027-7738 (print) 1756-2279 (web)

Table 4: Skewness and Kurtosis Values

Scale	Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE
scale	0.13	0.08	-0.03	0.15
Factor 1	-0.56	0.08	-0.49	0.15
Factor 2	0.35	0.08	-0.47	0.15
Factor 3	0.54	0.08	-0.11	0.15
Factor 4	0.06	0.08	-0.47	0.15
Factor 5	2.01	0.08	26.99	0.15

4. Data Analysis

Given the results of the normality testing, different statistical methods were employed to analyse the data: T-tests were utilized to compare the normally distributed factors (Factor 1 through Factor 4) across various demographic groups, including gender (female vs. male) and educational background (high school vs. university). This analysis examined how personal experiences, societal perceptions, and institutional practices related to name bias and prejudice varied across these subgroups.

The Mann-Whitney U Test was applied to Factor 5 due to its non-normal distribution. This non-parametric test does not assume normality and is appropriate for ordinal data or data that do not meet the assumptions of parametric tests. The Mann-Whitney U test compared responses across the same demographic groups, focusing on occupational settings and name bias in recruitment and promotion processes.

These analyses provided comprehensive insights into how personal experiences, societal perceptions, and institutional practices related to name bias and prejudice impact the socioeconomic opportunities, cultural integration, and psychological well-being of Kurdish-origin individuals and Syrian Arab refugees in Turkey.

4.1. Research Framework

As illustrated in the Research Framework Diagram (figure 1), the study's conceptual framework integrates the key variables: personal experiences, societal perceptions, and institutional practices, and examines their impact on socioeconomic opportunities, cultural integration, and psychological well-being. The model also highlights the mediating role of intergroup relations and social identity, drawing on social identity theory and the contact hypothesis principles. This framework guided the analysis and interpretation of data, providing a structured approach to understanding the complex relationships between the variables.

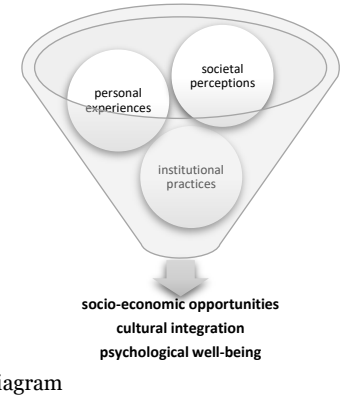


Figure 2: Research Framework Diagram

ISSN: 0027-7738 (print) 1756-2279 (web) Vol. 73, No. 1, Spring 2025 DOI 10.5195/names.2025.2694

4.2. Descriptive Results

The descriptive statistics for the overall scale and its subscales are presented in table 3. The overall mean of the scale was 3.17 (SD = 0.71), indicating a moderate level of perceived name bias across the sample. Among the subscales, Factor 1 (Personal Experiences) had the highest mean (M = 3.72, SD = 1.00), suggesting that participants most strongly perceived bias related to their personal experiences. In contrast, Factor 3 (Societal Perceptions) had the lowest mean (M = 2.55, SD = 0.95), indicating relatively lower concerns about societal perceptions of their names. Factor 5 (Occupational Settings) showed considerable variation with a mean of 3.44 (SD = 1.15), reflecting diverse experiences of name bias in professional environments.

Table 5: Descriptive Results

Scale	M	SD	Min	Max
Total	3.17	0.71	1.09	5.64
Factor 1	3.72	1.00	1.00	5.00
Factor 5	3.44	1.15	1.00	18.33
Factor 4	3.13	0.95	1.00	5.00
Factor 2	2.93	1.05	1.00	5.00
Factor 3	2.55	0.95	1.00	5.00

4.3. Comparison of Name Bias According to Ethnicity

Ethnic group comparisons revealed significant differences between Kurdish-origin individuals and Syrian Arab refugees in their perceptions of name bias (Table 4). Across the overall scale and all subscales, Kurdish participants reported higher levels of perceived name bias than Arabic participants, except for Factor 4 (Personal Attitudes), where Arabic participants reported slightly higher mean values.

Total Scale: Kurdish (M = 3.27, SD = 0.75) vs. Arabic (M = 3.04, SD = 0.64), $t(999.26) = -5.32$, $p < .001$

Factor 1 (Personal Experiences): Kurdish (M = 3.91, SD = 1.00) vs. Arabic (M = 3.48, SD = 0.93), $t(1006.00) = -7.09$, $p < .001$

Factor 2 (Institutional Practices): Kurdish (M = 3.00, SD = 1.15) vs. Arabic (M = 2.83, SD = 0.89), $t(1005.90) = -2.65$, $p = .01$

Factor 3 (Societal Perceptions): Kurdish (M = 2.68, SD = 0.97) vs. Arabic (M = 2.39, SD = 0.91), $t(1006.00) = -4.95$, $p < .001$

Factor 4 (Personal Attitudes): Kurdish (M = 3.07, SD = 1.05) vs. Arabic (M = 3.21, SD = 0.80), $t(1004.54) = 2.50$, $p = .01$

Factor 5 (Occupational Settings): Kurdish (M = 3.58, SD = 1.25) vs. Arabic (M = 3.27, SD = 0.98), Mann-Whitney U test, $p < .001$

These results suggest that Kurdish-origin individuals perceive higher levels of name bias across most dimensions, particularly in personal experiences and institutional practices, highlighting the more pronounced challenges they face in comparison to Syrian Arab refugees.

DOI 10.5195/names.2025.2694 Vol. 73, No. 1, Spring 2025 ISSN: 0027-7738 (print) 1756-2279 (web)

Table 6: Name Bias Comparison According to Ethnicity

Scale	Ethnicity	N	M	SD	t	df	p
Total	Arabic	444	3.04	0.64	-5.32	999.26	< .001
	Kurdish	564	3.27	0.75			
Factor 1	Arabic	444	3.48	0.93	-7.09	1006.00	< .001
	Kurdish	564	3.91	1.00			
Factor 2	Arabic	444	2.83	0.89	-2.65	1005.90	.01
	Kurdish	564	3.00	1.15			
Factor 3	Arabic	444	2.39	0.91	-4.95	1006.00	< .001
	Kurdish	564	2.68	0.97			
Factor 4	Arabic	444	3.21	0.80	2.50	1004.54	.01
	Kurdish	564	3.07	1.05			
Factor 5*	Arabic	444	3.27	0.98	-4.54	-	< .001
	Kurdish	564	3.58	1.25			

(*Mann-Whitney U Test Used for Factor 5)

4.4. Comparison of Name Bias According to Gender

When comparing name bias across genders, significant differences were observed in Factor 1 (Personal Experiences) and Factor 5 (Occupational Settings) [table 5]. Female participants reported higher perceived name bias levels in these areas than male participants.

> Factor 1 (Personal Experiences): Female (M = 3.79, SD = 0.96) vs. Male (M = 3.64, SD = 1.03), t (945.40) = 2.38, p = .02
>
> Factor 5 (Occupational Settings): Female (M = 3.57, SD = 1.18) vs. Male (M = 3.28, SD = 1.09), Mann-Whitney U test, p < .001

No significant gender differences were found in the overall scale or Factor 2 (Institutional Practices), Factor 3 (Societal Perceptions), and Factor 4 (Personal Attitudes), indicating that both genders share similar perceptions in these areas.

Table 7: Name Bias Comparison According to Gender

Scale	Gender	N	M	SD	t	df	p
Total	Female	549	3.19	0.68	0.92	940.29	.36
	Male	459	3.14	0.75			
Factor 1	Female	549	3.79	0.96	2.38	945.40	.02
	Male	459	3.64	1.03			
Factor 2	Female	549	2.91	1.02	-0.59	1006.00	.55
	Male	459	2.95	1.08			
Factor 3	Female	549	2.48	0.92	-2.52	950.23	.01
	Male	459	2.64	0.98			
Factor 4	Female	549	3.14	0.95	0.25	973.01	.80
	Male	459	3.12	0.95			
Factor 5*	Female	549	3.57	1.18	-3.80	-	< .001
	Male	459	3.28	1.09			

(*Mann-Whitney U test used for Factor 5)

ISSN: 0027-7738 (print) 1756-2279 (web) Vol. 73, No. 1, Spring 2025 DOI 10.5195/names.2025.2694

4.5. Comparison of Name Bias According to School Level

Comparisons based on school level revealed significant differences across the total scale and all subscales (table 6). University students reported higher levels of perceived name bias across all factors except Factor 4 (Personal Attitudes), where high school students had a slightly higher mean.

Total Scale: University (M = 3.27, SD = 0.75) vs. High School (M = 3.04, SD = 0.64), t(1000.02) = -5.23, p < .001

Factor 1 (Personal Experiences): University (M = 3.91, SD = 1.00) vs. High School (M = 3.48, SD = 0.93), t (1006) = -7.04, p < .001

Factor 2 (Institutional Practices): University (M = 3.00, SD = 1.15) vs. High School (M = 2.84, SD = 0.90), t (1005.84) = -2.54, p = .01

Factor 3 (Societal Perceptions): University (M = 2.68, SD = 0.97) vs. High School (M = 2.39, SD = 0.91), t (1006) = -4.96, p < .001

Factor 4 (Personal Attitudes): High school (M = 3.22, SD = 0.80) vs. University (M = 3.06, SD = 1.05), t (1004.29) = 2.65, p = .01

Factor 5 (Occupational Settings): University (M = 3.58, SD = 1.25) vs. High School (M = 3.27, SD = 0.98), Mann-Whitney U test, p < .001

These findings indicate that university students perceive higher levels of name bias across most dimensions, particularly in personal experiences and institutional practices. The higher mean values among university students suggest that as individuals advance in their education, they become more aware of, and perhaps more sensitive to, the effects of name bias in various aspects of life, including educational and occupational settings.

Table 8: Name Bias Comparison According to School Level

Scale	School Level	N	M	SD	t	df	p
Total	High School	446	3.04	0.64	-5.23	1000.02	< .001
	University	562	3.27	0.75			
Factor 1	High School	446	3.48	0.93	-7.04	1006	< .001
	University	562	3.91	1.00			
Factor 2	High School	446	2.84	0.90	-2.54	1005.84	.01
	University	562	3.00	1.15			
Factor 3	High School	446	2.39	0.91	-4.96	1006	< .001
	University	562	2.68	0.97			
Factor 4	High School	446	3.22	0.80	2.65	1004.29	.01
	University	562	3.06	1.05			
Factor 5*	High School	446	3.27	0.98	-4.56	-	< .001
	University	562	3.58	1.25			

(*Mann-Whitney U Test Used for Factor 5)

DOI 10.5195/names.2025.2694 Vol. 73, No. 1, Spring 2025 ISSN: 0027-7738 (print) 1756-2279 (web)

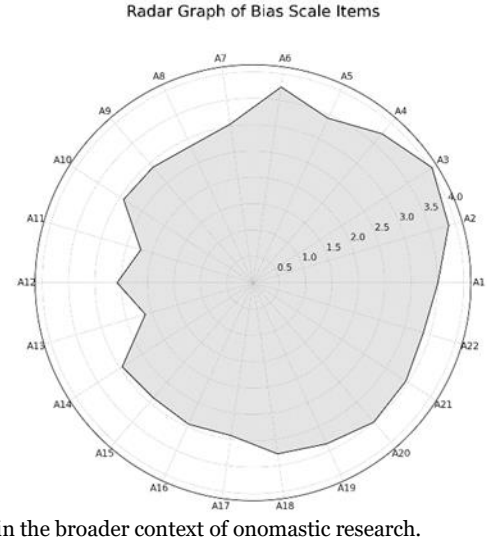
The findings from this study reveal significant differences in the perception of name bias across ethnicity, gender, and educational level. Kurdish-origin individuals reported higher levels of name bias compared to Syrian Arab refugees across most dimensions, except for personal attitudes, where Arabic participants showed slightly higher sensitivity. Gender comparisons highlighted that female participants perceive more name bias in personal experiences and occupational settings compared to their male counterparts. Lastly, school-level analysis demonstrated that university students reported greater awareness and experience of name bias, particularly in institutional practices and occupational settings.

Figure 3: Radar Graph on the Impacts of Name Bias

The radar graph reveals that participants perceive significant impacts of name bias on their lives, particularly in education and employment opportunities, as reflected in high mean scores for items like A3 (4.04) and A2 (3.87). There is a strong perception of ridicule or differential treatment based on names (A4: 3.74, A1: 3.51), with a notable belief that name bias is prevalent in recruitment and career advancement (A20: 3.50, A21: 3.45). While there is some awareness of stereotypes linked to names (A18: 3.28), participants show moderate confidence in public awareness campaigns or institutional changes to mitigate name bias (A7: 3.04, A22: 3.37). Lower scores related to the personal significance of names (A11: 2.22, A13: 2.13) suggest that these aspects are less recognized or valued. Overall, the graph highlights the perceived seriousness of name bias in specific contexts while showing scepticism about the effectiveness of broader interventions.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study offer significant insights into the complex and pervasive nature of name-based bias, particularly within Turkey's socio-political landscape. The focus on Kurdish-origin individuals and Syrian Arab refugees reveals the depth of this issue, providing a comprehensive understanding of how names influence social (Olatunji et al. 2015), educational (Aldrin 2017), and occupational (Ahmad 2020) outcomes. This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on name-based discrimination and critically examines its implications by



situating these findings within the broader context of onomastic research.

5.1. Comparison with Existing Research

The results of this study align with and expand upon existing research in onomastics and name-based bias. The higher levels of perceived name bias among Kurdish-origin individuals, as indicated by the t-test results ($p < .001$ across most factors), are consistent with the findings of Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004), who documented the systematic disadvantages faced by job applicants with African American-sounding names in the United States. Similarly, this study's finding that Kurdish participants reported significantly higher mean

ISSN: 0027-7738 (print) 1756-2279 (web) Vol. 73, No. 1, Spring 2025 DOI 10.5195/names.2025.2694

scores (M = 3.27, SD = 0.75) on the overall name bias scale compared to Syrian Arab refugees (M = 3.04, SD = 0.64) echoes the work of Oreopoulos (2009) in Canada, where immigrants with ethnically distinctive names were less likely to be hired. Kurdish-origin individuals perceive higher levels of name bias across most dimensions, particularly in personal experiences and institutional practices, likely due to the ongoing socio-political challenges and discrimination they have historically faced within Turkish society. This aligns with findings from Ucarlar (2009), who documented how the ethnic identity of Kurdish individuals often exacerbates their experiences of discrimination across various sectors in Turkey.

Arabic-origin individuals tend to perceive lower levels of name bias across various dimensions, especially in personal experiences and institutional practices, compared to Kurdish-origin individuals. This difference may partly be attributed to the shared Islamic heritage within Turkish society (Özdalga 2006), which could foster a sense of cultural and religious affinity (Mehrotra 1982).

In the educational context, the t-test results revealed significant differences in name bias perceptions based on educational level ($p < .001$), with university students reporting higher mean scores across most factors. Comparisons based on school level revealed significant differences across the total scale and all subscales (table 6). University students reported higher levels of perceived name bias across all factors except Factor 4 (Personal Attitudes), where high school students had a slightly higher mean. This disparity may be attributed to the heightened social awareness and identity development that intensify during adolescence, particularly within the university setting. As students mature, they become more cognizant of social hierarchies and the nuances of identity, making them more susceptible to perceiving name-based biases. This is consistent with research by Phinney (1990), who noted that adolescence is a critical period for ethnic identity formation, during which individuals are susceptible to social evaluations.

The slightly higher mean in Factor 4 among high school students may reflect the early stages of this identity formation process, where initial social interactions shape their attitudes and perceptions of bias. This finding aligns with Aldrin's (2017) and Nick's (2017) research, who observed that students with ethnically marked names often received lower grades, reflecting the systemic nature of educational inequalities perpetuated by name-based biases.

The mean scores for Factor 1 (Personal Experiences) and Factor 3 (Societal Perceptions) in this study highlight the role of societal perceptions in shaping these biases, with Kurdish-origin participants reporting higher levels of bias in these domains than their Syrian counterparts. As observed in this study, the persistence of name bias in digital environments aligns with the findings of Conaway and Bethune (2015), who explored how name-based stereotypes persist in online interactions.

When name bias across gender were analysed, significant differences were identified in Factor 1 (Personal Experiences) and Factor 5 (Occupational Settings) (table 5), with female participants reporting higher levels of perceived bias compared to their male counterparts. This discrepancy can be understood through the lens of intersectionality, where the convergence of gender and ethnicity intensifies the discrimination experienced by women from marginalized groups. The observed gender disparity in name bias aligns with the findings of Moss-Racusin et al. (2013), who demonstrated that implicit biases related to gender and names can substantially influence decision-making processes. Further supporting this analysis, Crenshaw (1991) highlighted that women, particularly those belonging to minority backgrounds, are disproportionately subject to bias and discrimination in both personal and professional domains.

5.2. Contributions to Onomastics and Name-Based Bias Research

This study makes several important contributions to the field of onomastics and name-based bias research. First, it provides empirical evidence from a non-Western context, broadening the scope of onomastic research to include the experiences of marginalized groups in Turkey. The focus on Kurdish-origin individuals and Syrian Arab refugees offers a unique perspective on how name bias operates within a socio-political context marked by ethnic tensions and historical marginalization.

Second, the study integrates social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2004) and Allport's contact hypothesis (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2005) into its analysis, providing a robust theoretical framework for understanding name bias. The high mean scores in Factor 1 (Personal Experiences) (M = 3.72, SD = 1.00) and Factor 5 (Occupational Settings) (M = 3.44, SD = 1.15) suggest that name bias is deeply intertwined with social identity and group membership. These findings are supported by research in other cultural contexts, such as the work of Steele and Aronson (1995) on stereotype threat, which emphasizes the impact of social identity on individual outcomes.

DOI 10.5195/names.2025.2694 Vol. 73, No. 1, Spring 2025 ISSN: 0027-7738 (print) 1756-2279 (web)

Third, this study contributes to developing reliable measurement tools for assessing name bias. The exploratory factor analysis conducted in this study resulted in a validated questionnaire with five distinct factors, each capturing different dimensions of name bias. The strong reliability coefficients ($\alpha = .877$ for the overall scale) and significant factor loadings demonstrate the robustness of the instrument, making it a valuable tool for future research in both Western and non-Western contexts.

5.3. Limitations and Comparisons with Other Studies

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that must be acknowledged. One of these limitations is the cross-sectional design, which, while providing a snapshot of current perceptions, does not capture changes over time. This is a standard limitation in name-biased research, as noted by Booth, Leigh, and Varganova (2012), who also relied on cross-sectional data in their study of ethnic discrimination in the Australian labour market. Future research could adopt a longitudinal approach to explore how perceptions of name bias evolve and how interventions mitigate bias over time.

Another limitation is the reliance on self-reported data, which may be subject to social desirability bias. Although the study employed rigorous validation techniques, the subjective nature of self-reporting may influence the results, a limitation also noted by Carlsson and Rooth (2007) in their field experiment on ethnic discrimination in Sweden. To address this, future research could complement self-reported measures with behavioural experiments or observational studies, as Greenwald et al. (1998) suggested in their development of the Implicit Association Test (IAT) to measure unconscious biases.

Additionally, the focus on Kurdish-origin individuals and Syrian Arab refugees, while providing valuable insights, may limit the generalizability of the findings to other ethnic groups or regions. This limitation is similar to that observed by Oreopoulos (2011), whose study on name-based discrimination in Canada was primarily focused on Asian and African names. Expanding the sample to include other marginalized communities in Turkey and beyond could enhance the generalizability of the results.

Finally, the study's findings regarding the digital environment highlight the need to explore further how name bias operates in online settings. As digital interactions become increasingly prevalent, understanding the role of algorithms and artificial intelligence in perpetuating or mitigating name-based biases is crucial. This area of research still needs to be explored, as Noble (2018) noted in her examination of algorithmic bias in search engines.

6. Conclusion

This study sheds light on the profound impact of name bias within the socio-political landscape of Turkey, revealing how a name can shape the experiences, opportunities, and well-being of Kurdish-origin individuals and Syrian Arab refugees. This is accomplished using a comprehensive analysis encompassing five distinct factors: Personal Experiences, Institutional Practices, Societal Perceptions, Personal Attitudes, and Occupational Settings. The aim of the research is to explore how these biases influence socioeconomic opportunities, cultural integration, and psychological well-being. The findings have uncovered the deep-seated nature of these biases, demonstrating how they permeate personal, societal, and institutional realms. Further, the results highlight that name bias is far from trivial; it is a powerful force influencing social interactions, educational outcomes, and economic opportunities. Kurdish-origin individuals, in particular, face significant challenges as their names often become barriers rather than identifiers of their true potential.

The intersectional nature of this bias is also evident, with factors such as gender and educational background further intensifying the discrimination faced by those with ethnically marked names. While this research provides important insights, it underscores the urgent need for systemic change. Addressing name bias requires more than just awareness—it demands concrete actions in policy, education, and the workplace to create environments where individuals are judged by their abilities, not by the sound of their names. The path forward is clear: We must dismantle these biases and build a future where a name symbolizes identity and pride, not a source of discrimination.

In conclusion, this study broadens our understanding of name bias in a specific cultural context and serves as a call to action. By recognizing and addressing these biases, we can move towards a more inclusive society where everyone has the opportunity to succeed, regardless of their name. The findings of this research offer valuable implications for policy and practice, emphasizing the importance of creating equitable systems that respect and celebrate the diversity of all individuals.

ISSN: 0027-7738 (print) 1756-2279 (web) Vol. 73, No. 1, Spring 2025 DOI 10.5195/names.2025.2694

7. Suggestions for Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights into the impact of name bias on Kurdish-origin individuals and Syrian Arab refugees in Turkey, several avenues for future research could further elucidate the complexities of name-based discrimination. First, although the study utilized a large sample size and employed rigorous quantitative methods, future research should consider expanding the demographic diversity of the sample. Including participants from different regions of Turkey and incorporating a more gender-balanced sample could provide a more nuanced understanding of how name bias varies across different populations. This approach would allow for more sophisticated statistical analyses to explore how age, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status influence perceptions of name bias (Ainiala & Östman, 2018). Such an approach is supported by research indicating that demographic variables significantly impact the perception and impact of name-based biases (Rooth 2010).

Additionally, while this study focused on the influence of first names, growing evidence suggests that surnames also play a significant role in name-based biases. For example, research by Silberzahn and Uhlmann (2013) showed that surnames could trigger biases related to ethnicity and social status. Replicating this study with an emphasis on surnames could yield new insights into how different aspects of a person's name contribute to discriminatory practices. Furthermore, in the Turkish context, societal pressure for women to adopt their husband's surname after marriage represents an area ripe for further exploration, particularly in understanding how these practices reinforce traditional gender roles and impact women's identity (Grønstad 2024; Peters 2023; Ünal 2020).

Another area for future research involves exploring the cultural and generational dynamics surrounding naming practices in Turkey. The widespread tradition of naming children after grandparents or choosing names with deep religious or sectarian significance underscores the role of names in perpetuating cultural and familial ideologies. Türköz (2017) has noted that these naming practices can reinforce intergenerational values but may also contribute to the persistence of outdated social norms. Investigating the implications of these practices could provide insights into how names serve as vehicles for transmitting cultural and ideological beliefs across generations. Recent trends indicate a significant increase in the number of young people in Turkey petitioning courts for name changes, often to dissociate themselves from names that carry religious, sectarian, or political connotations. This phenomenon suggests a growing desire among the younger generation to redefine their identities and distance themselves from the socio-political baggage associated with their given names. Future research could explore the motivations behind these name changes and their implications for identity formation in modern Turkish society.

Moreover, the current study did not specifically address the potential impact of xenophobic attitudes towards certain ethnic or religious groups, such as those with Arabic or Kurdish names. Given the increasing body of research highlighting biases against Arabic-sounding names (Ahmed et al. 2010; Rooth 2010), it would be worthwhile to explore whether broader societal prejudices against Muslims or Middle Eastern individuals drive the negative perceptions of names like *Mustafa*. Such an investigation could involve experimental designs that manipulate the perceived ethnicity or religion of name bearers to isolate the effects of xenophobia on name bias.

Finally, future research could benefit from adopting an action research (AR) approach, particularly in educational settings (Hine 2013). Burns (2005) argues that involving students in collaborative AR projects can provide profound educational benefits while advancing scholarly understanding of name bias. Engaging students in the research process fosters a deeper appreciation for onomastics and encourages them to critically examine their biases and how they might influence their professional judgments. The transformative potential of AR in promoting social justice and equity within academic institutions makes it a promising avenue for future onomastic research. These suggestions for future research are intended to build on the foundation laid by the current study, advancing the field of onomastics and contributing to a more equitable understanding of names' role in shaping social outcomes.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the three anonymous reviewers and the Editor-in-Chief of NAMES for their constructive and motivating feedback and insights, which significantly improved the quality of this article. I also thank all the participants for their valuable contributions to this study.

Funding

This study was not supported by any funding.

AI Disclosure Statement

No AI Tools or Technology were used to conduct the research or write this article.

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