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## International Forum

### Determination of the knowledge level, attitudes, and behaviors of islamic religious officials toward blood donation<sup>☆</sup>

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#### ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study was to determine knowledge level, attitudes, and behaviors of Islamic religious officials toward blood donation. This study included 334 religious officials rendering service in the province of Kahramanmaraş, located in the Mediterranean region of Turkey. A questionnaire was administered to gather sociodemographic data of the participants and their knowledge levels, attitudes, and behaviors toward blood donation. The questionnaire consisted of 11 questions that yielded a total of 11 points. The religious officials in the study included 206 imams (61.7%, males) and 128 Quran course instructors (38.3%, females). Of study participants, 134 (40.1%) reported a previous experience of blood donation and 200 (59.9%) denied previous experience of blood donation. The mean knowledge score was  $7.09 \pm 2.54$  points for males and  $6.89 \pm 2.18$  points for females. Male and female participants achieved comparable scores ( $p=0.476$ ). Of the participants, 291 (87.1%) agreed and nine (2.7%) disagreed with the expression, "Blood donation is permissible in Islam;" 34 (10.2%) participants had no idea. The present study revealed considerable deficiencies in knowledge about blood donation among religious officials. In addition, the rate of blood donation and willingness to donate blood were low among religious officials. Although the level of knowledge about blood donation was similar in males and females, it was an interesting finding that the blood donation rate was significantly higher in males than in females.

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## 1. Introduction

Blood is a vital component of the human body. Despite the advances in medicine and technology, blood cannot be artificially produced, and humans are the only sources of blood [1]. The life-saving role of the donated blood becomes more remarkable in severe accidents, new medical and surgical procedures, civil conflicts and wars, severe hematological disorders, severe anemias, and cancer therapy. Access to blood resources is of vital impor-

tance for the public [2,3]. The increase in the life expectancy has also increased the demand for blood and blood products [3].

Of the 108 million blood donations collected worldwide, approximately half of these are collected in the high-income countries, and 18% of the world's population has donated blood [4]. It is known that in low-income countries, more than 65% of blood transfusions were administered to children less than 5 years of age; whereas in high-income countries, more than 76% of blood transfusions were administered to individuals over 65 years of age [4]. The blood donation rate per 1000 people was reported to be 36.8 in high-income countries, 11.7 in low-income countries, and 15.0 in Turkey [4,5]. In 2014, Turkish Red Crescent reported a 13% increase in blood donations compared to the previous years, and 1,860,225 units of blood collection. In addition, 88% of the donors were males and 12% were females [6].

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**Table 1**

Sociodemographic data, previous blood donation behavior, and mean knowledge scores of the participants.

Parameter	Variable	N (%)	Mean knowledge score Mean ± SD	Previous blood donation behavior	
				Yes, n (%)	None, n (%)
Age	19–30	85 (25.4)	7.04 ± 2.17	19 (22.4)	66 (77.6)
	31–40	157 (47.0)	7.02 ± 2.41	57 (36.3)	100 (63.7)
	41–50	70 (21.0)	7.04 ± 2.60	43 (61.4)	27 (38.6)
	51–64	22 (6.6)	6.77 ± 2.74	15 (68.2)	7 (31.8)
P			0.970		<0.001
Gender	Male	206 (61.7)	7.09 ± 2.54	121 (58.7)	85 (41.3)
	Female	128 (38.3)	6.89 ± 2.18	13 (10.2)	115 (89.8)
P			0.476		<0.001
Marital Status	Married	286 (85.6)	6.97 ± 2.40	123 (43.0)	163 (57.0)
	Single	48 (14.4)	7.25 ± 2.47	11 (22.9)	37 (77.1)
P			0.472		0.009
Level of education	High-school graduate	74 (22.2)	6.47 ± 2.61	26 (35.1)	48 (64.9)
	University graduate	260 (77.8)	7.17 ± 2.33	108 (41.5)	152 (58.5)
P			0.027		0.321

Blood donors are unpaid volunteers who donate blood on their free will without feeling any encouragement or pressure [7]. Several factors play a role in the willingness of people to donate blood and their behavior. The studies have found a significant relationship between sociodemographic data (gender, age, and educational level) and blood donation behavior [8–10]. Religious opinions and acts, perception of national duty, service quality of the blood bank, encouragement from the family, and altruism are factors determining the behavior of blood donation [9,11]. The studies determined that religious officials have a profound effect on the attitudes and behavior of the public [12,13]. The role played by religious officials in leading the religious opinions of the public makes the knowledge, attitude and behavior of the religious officials important.

The aim of the present study was to determine knowledge level, attitudes, and behaviors of Islamic religious officials toward blood donation.

[b]

## 2. Methods

The majority of the population in Turkey is Muslim. The imams leading Islamic prayer in the mosques and providing information to the public and the instructors providing education in learning the Koran constitute the largest and most influential group in the community. The present study was conducted on a population of 1 million people living in the Kahramanmaraş province located in the Mediterranean region of Turkey between 15.02.2015 and 15.05.2015. A total of 380 imams and 144 Koran course instructors rendering a service in Kahramanmaraş were informed of the study. Of these, 206 imams and 128 Koran course instructors providing consent were included in the study. A questionnaire that was developed based on the literature was administered during face-to-face interviews in order to gather information about the sociodemographic features of the participants and their level of knowledge, attitudes, and behavior toward blood donation. The first section of

**Table 2**

Sources of knowledge about blood donation.

TV	184 (55.1)
Health care workers	99 (29.6)
Friends	48 (14.4)
Internet	34 (10.2)
Other	34 (10.2)
Newspapers	25 (7.5)
Family	22 (6.6)
Radio	19 (5.7)

the questionnaire included questions about sociodemographic features. The second section of the questionnaire included questions assessing the level of knowledge about blood donation. The last section of the questionnaire assessed attitudes and behavior towards blood donation. The questionnaire consisted of 11 questions, each rated a maximum 1 point and yielded a total of 11 points.

The ethics committee approval of the study was obtained from Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University Faculty of Medicine Ethics Committee in accordance with Helsinki Declaration (Seoul, 2008).

### 2.1. Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis was performed using the SPSS 20.0 software package. Mean, frequency, and standard deviation were used in the data analysis. The chi-square and the Student's t-test were used in the comparison of the two groups. In multiple group comparisons, one-way ANOVA was used to evaluate the difference between three and more groups. A p value <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

### 3. Results

Of 334 religious officials included in the study, 206 (61.7%, male) were imams and 128 (38.3%, female) were Koran course instructors. The mean age of the participants was  $36.47 \pm 8.31$  (min = 19, max = 64) years. The mean age was  $38.96 \pm 8.40$  years in males and  $32.46 \pm 6.39$  years in females. The mean age of males was significantly higher than the mean age of females ( $p < 0.001$ ). Of religious officials, 157 (47.0%) were in the 31–40 years age group and 286 (85.6%) were married. Sociodemographic data of the participants are presented in the table (Table 1).

Of religious officials, 316 (94.6%) knew their blood types and 18 (5.4%) did not know their blood types. Of study participants, 134 (40.1%) reported a previous experience of blood donation and 200 (59.9%) denied previous experience of blood donation. Of the study participants, 121 males (58.7%) and 13 females (10.2%) donated blood at least once. The rate of blood donation was significantly higher in males than in females ( $p < 0.001$ ). The subjects in the 51–64 years age group had the highest blood donation rate (68.2%). Blood donation rates were similar in high-school graduates and university graduates ( $p = 0.321$ ). Sociodemographic data and blood donation behavior of the religious officials are presented in the table (Table 1). Of the participants, 236 (70.7%) reported willingness to donate blood, whereas 21 (6.3%) were not willing, and 77 (23.1%) had no idea.

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