

**Reducing Myth Endorsement Towards LGBTI+ to
Tackle Prejudice Towards Gender Diversity and
Sexual Orientation**

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between religiosity and essentialist beliefs on anti-LGBT+ prejudice has been largely investigated. These studies have shown that high religiosity, being male and having environmental essentialist beliefs enhance prejudice against LGBT+ community. Despite these findings, myths toward LGBT+'s have not yet been measured, hence one of the aims of the current study was to assess myth endorsement to LGBT+'s. Moreover, text-based manipulation on essentialist beliefs has been used widely in the literature, however, the effect of other manipulation methods on essentialist beliefs to reduce myth endorsement and anti-LGBT+ prejudice have not been assessed. The current study was the first experimental research to develop a myth scale and use video manipulations to influence essentialist beliefs. This study aimed to assess the role of religiosity and essentialist beliefs on myth endorsement toward LGBT+ community and to determine common myths about individuals from LGBT+ community to reduce discrimination and prejudice.

A sample of 112 Turkish speaking cisgender female and male 1st year university students from Eastern Mediterranean University in North Cyprus were assigned to three conditions and each group received a video recording regarding the etiology of homosexual sexual orientation. Participants in reality conditions were provided with actual literature findings regarding the etiology of homosexuality, whereas in environmental and genetic conditions, participants were provided with fictitious findings regarding environmental and genetic etiology of homosexuality. Gender, as an independent variable, and attitude, as a dependent variable, were also included in the variables. It was hypothesized that participants in environmental condition would

have highest myth endorsement and more negative attitude toward LGBT+'s, followed by participants in genetic and reality conditions. Participants with higher religiosity were expected to have higher myth endorsement and more negative attitude than those with lower religiosity. Also, male participants were expected to have higher myth endorsement, higher religiosity, and more negative attitude than female participants. Findings indicated significant impact of religiosity and essentialist beliefs on myth endorsement. Additionally, participants in environmental condition had higher myth endorsement than genetic. Also, participants in reality condition showed the lowest myth endorsement and negative attitude. Male participants had more myth endorsement and more negative attitudes toward LGBT+. The findings of the study are discussed in light of the literature.

Keywords: Essentialist Beliefs, Religiosity, Myth Endorsement, LGBT+

ÖZ

Dindarlık ve mit inanışların, özcü inançlar ve LGBT+ karşıtı önyargılar arasındaki ilişki birçok araştırmacı tarafından incelenmiştir. Bu araştırmalar, yüksek dindarlığın, erkek olmanın ve çevresel özcü inançlara sahip olmanın mitlerin desteklenmesini ve LGBT+ topluluğuna karşı önyargı geliştirmeyi artırdığını gösterse de, LGBT+'lere yönelik yaygın mitleri değerlendirecek bir ölçek literatürde yoktu. Ayrıca, özcü inançlar üzerinde metne dayalı manipülasyon literatürde yaygın olarak kullanılmış, ancak diğer manipülasyon yöntemlerinin özcü inançlar üzerindeki mit inanışını ve LGBT+ karşıtı önyargıyı azaltma etkisi hiçbir zaman değerlendirilmemiştir. Mevcut çalışma, LGBT+ bireylere yönelik yaygın mit inanışları ölçeğini geliştiren ve özcü inançlar üzerinde video manipülasyonu kullanan ilk deneysel araştırmadır. Bu çalışma, LGBT+ topluluğuna yönelik mitlerin desteklenmesinde dindarlık ve özcü inançların rolünü değerlendirmeyi ve ayrımcılığı ve önyargıyı azaltmak için LGBT+ topluluğuna mensup bireyler hakkında ortak mitleri belirlemeyi amaçlamıştır. Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi'nden 112 Türkçe konuşan cisgender kadın ve erkek üniversite 1. sınıf öğrencileri üç farklı gruba atanmış ve her gruba eşcinsel cinsel yönelimin etiyojisi ile ilgili video kaydı verilmiştir. Kontrol koşulundaki katılımcılara eşcinselliğin etiyojisine ilişkin güncel literatür bulguları sunulurken, çevresel ve genetik koşullarda katılımcılara sırasıyla eşcinselliğin çevresel ve genetik etiyojiye dayandığını savunan bulgular verilmiştir. Ayrıca bağımsız değişken olarak cinsiyet ve bağımlı değişken olarak LGBT+'lere yönelik sosyal tutum değişkenlere dahil edilmiştir. Kontrol ve genetik etiyoji gruplarından sonra, çevresel etiyoji grubundaki katılımcıların en yüksek mit inanışına ve LGBT+'lere karşı en olumsuz sosyal tutuma sahip olacağı varsayılmıştır. Daha yüksek dindarlığa sahip

katılımcıların, daha düşük dindarlığa sahip olanlardan daha yüksek mit inancına ve daha olumsuz bir tutuma sahip olmaları bekleniyordu. Ayrıca erkek katılımcıların kadın katılımcılara göre daha yüksek mit inancına ve daha yüksek bir dindarlığa ve daha olumsuz bir tutuma sahip olmaları bekleniyordu. Bulgular, dindarlığın ve özcü inançların mit inancının üzerinde önemli bir etkisi olduğunu göstermiştir. Buna ek olarak, çevresel etiyoloji grubundaki katılımcılarda, genetik etiyoloji grubundaki katılımcılara kıyasla daha yüksek mit inancı bulundu. Ayrıca, kontrol grubundaki katılımcılar en düşük mit inancı ve LGBT+ bireylere yönelik daha pozitif bir tutum sergilediler. Erkek katılımcılar, LGBT+'ye karşı daha fazla mit inancına ve daha olumsuz tutumlara sahip olduğu gözlenmiştir. Çalışmanın bulguları literatür ışığında tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Özcü İnançlar, Dindarlık, Mit İnancı, LGBT+

DEDICATION

For those who have suffered from prejudice and discrimination.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Although the human rights of sexual and gender minorities have significantly increased, there are a number of societies worldwide that still regard different sexual orientations and gender diversity as illegal and punishable by law such as in many Muslim countries (Chua, 2015). Even though previous research has shown that low religiosity (Janssen & Scheepers, 2019), being female (Roggemans et al, 2015), and genetic essentialist beliefs (Frias-Navarro et al., 2015) can reduce the prejudice and discrimination, those studies only used text-based manipulation. This study was first to use video recordings to manipulate essentialist beliefs and to assess myth endorsement toward LGBT+. Therefore, the aim of the current research was to call attention to myth endorsement toward LGBT+ individuals by analyzing religiosity and essentialist beliefs as potential sources of bias, in order to challenge false beliefs and decrease prejudice and discrimination against individuals from the LGBT+ community.

1.1 Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation is defined as erotic, romantic or affective nature to another person. According to Van Anders, sexual orientation is the affection or interest toward another person (2015). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning are determined as different types of sexual orientation. Also, as stated by Lesbian & Gay Community Services Center (2022), although, gay refers to a person who has

affectionate and sexual feelings to the same-sex person, women prefer to use the term lesbian which means women who have erotic, romantic and affectional feelings toward other women. Moreover, bisexual refers to people who have sexual, romantic and affectionate feelings to both men and women. Sexual orientation is not limited to but inclusive of these aforementioned terms.

1.2 Gender Diversity

APA explains gender diversity as the degree to which a difference exists between gender identity, social roles and expressions of an individual and society's assigned characteristics of a person from a specific gender (American Psychological Association, 2015). Moreover, gender diversity is considered as an umbrella term that refers to differences and varieties in expressing gender (García Johnson & Otto, 2019). Queer refers to people who don't identify with any of sexual/gender identities above due to limitation in expressiveness of those labels. Lastly, questioning refers to people who have no clear-cut label and are in search of their sexual/gender identity. Gender diversity is a significant term for people who do not want to identify with any of existing gender identities, people who do not prefer to limit their identity, or people who prefer to change their gender identity etc. For instance, agender which is not identifying with any gender identity (Bosse & Chiodo, 2016), bigender which is identifying with two gender identities (Blechner, 2015), cisgender means identifying with biological/assigned gender identity (Aultman, 2014), gender nonconforming refers to individuals whose self-gender identity does not match with their biological identity which is assigned at birth (Vance et al., 2014), intersex refers to people who were born with sexual or reproductive organs that do not fit into traditional definitions of man and woman (Sax, 2002), non-binary refers to people don't identify with traditional male and female as a gender (Scandurra et al., 2019), transgender means

not identifying with biological gender identity (Kurdyla et al., 2021) and is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity does not match with their biological gender identity, are few gender identity terms. Moreover, people who identify as transgender may or may not use gender affirmative treatment to match their body with their felt identity (O'Neil et al., 2008).

Cumulatively, sexual orientation and gender diversity come under the acronym of LGBT+ which refers to lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual, intersex, and more.

1.3 Prejudice Toward LGBT+

Prejudice is mostly unfavorable attitude toward an individual or a group (Brown, 2011). Prejudice has three components which are affective component that includes emotions such as hatred, dislike; a cognitive component which includes stereotypical attitudes or attributions; and a behavioral component such as discrimination or violence. Moreover, there are many categories of prejudice such as sexual, religious prejudice, ageism, sexism, and racism etc. (APA, 2020). Discrimination and prejudice toward LGBT+ members usually stem from bias against gender diversity and sexual orientation (United Nations Human Rights, 2021).

In a study conducted with 200 university students in Middle East Technical University in Turkey, researcher aimed to investigate sexism and attitudes toward LGBT+ individuals. Results revealed that participants who had especially higher hostile sexism scores had the most negative attitudes toward gay people (Sakallı, 2002). Sexism in homophobic attitudes is also supported by many researchers and it was found that female gay relationship is considered as 'erotic' and 'submissive' by general population whereas male homosexuality is considered as more perverted and abnormal

(Bernuy & Noe, 2017). Another study, conducted to assess essentialist beliefs toward masculine vs. feminine gay men, showed that essentialist beliefs were strongly associated with sexual prejudice and participants reported highest discomfort and discrimination toward feminine male gay individuals than masculine male gay individuals (Kiebel et al., 2020).

Sexual prejudice is having a negative attitude toward a person due to his/her sexual orientation (Burn, 2019). Especially, individuals from LGBT+ community are at most risk for experiencing sexual prejudice (Meyer, 2003).

Recent examples of discrimination and violence toward gay individuals include diagnosis of homosexual in DSM III (Morris, 2009), constant police arrests in bars, clubs and restaurants such as in Stonewall (Lorenzo, 2019), mass shooting in a gay club in Orlando, USA in 2016 (Zambelich & Hurt, 2016), hired assassins killed gay individuals in Iraq (Chua, 2015), gay activists were murdered in Budapest (Human Rights Watch, 2020), and a transgender woman named Hande Kader who was raped and set on fire in Istanbul, Turkey (Atria, 2021). Discrimination and prejudice against individuals from LGBT+ community exist in daily life such as in healthcare (Stonewall, 2016), members also experience institutional discrimination which is biased practices or regulations that do not allow or give access to minority groups to seek resources and opportunities in education, in business/work, and in sport etc. (Cunningham & Light, 2016). For instance, 14% of LGBT+ members in Britain avoid seeking health care due to fear of being discriminated, 13% of LGBT+ members reported unequal health care and treatment from staff due to their sexual orientation (Stonewall, 2018). Moreover, 34% among the members of LGBT+ in Britain reported they have to hide their identity due to fear of discrimination and hatred, 18%

mentioned they were bullied at work (Stonewall, 2018). Also, 64% of LGBT+ individuals experienced hate crime which is defined as use of violence and aggression toward others regarding their race, sexual orientation, gender, ethnicity etc. (Chakraborti, 2018), violence, and abuse (Hubbard, 2021). According to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, many LGBT+ members worldwide report they have faced discrimination and unfair treatment especially when seeking medical help, looking for jobs, and attending higher education (FRA, 2013). Furthermore, many LGBT+ individuals report experiencing violence and harassment in public places where getting help would seem easier (FRA, 2013). In the same report, 35% of LGBT+ members reported being attacked, harassed, and bullied just because of their sexual orientation over a 5-year period. Moreover, members of LGBT+ in Turkey face with constant rejection from society, legal restraints and homophobia due to high religiosity and patriarchal norms. There are many hate crimes, abuse, and harassment toward LGBT+ members that even some LGBT+ individuals commit suicide (Yenilmez, 2021). Access to health care in Turkey is another problem for LGBT+ members because of the prejudiced and discriminative attitude of health care professionals in Turkey toward sexual minorities. They refuse to help, or they simply prefer to ignore sexual diseases (Taşkın et al., 2020). LGBT+ individuals also experience bullying both offline and online more than heterosexual individuals (Koehler & Copp, 2021). Similarly, statistics show that transgender and gay individuals worldwide are at greater risk for violence and harassment than other members within LGBT+ community.

1.4 Myth Endorsement Toward LGBT+

Patai (1972) explained myths as traditional, religious false beliefs or stories that were used to explain cultural phenomena (as cited in Berger, 2018). The word ‘myth’ derives from ‘mythos’ in Greek and means word, saying or story (Bolle, 2021).

Moreover, according to Burhoe (1979), myths redefine and shape significant values or norms in a culture (as cited in Steadman & Palmer, 1997).

1.4.1 Types of Myths

Although myths are commonly referred to ancient histories, there are three classifications of myth which are aetiological/etiological, historical, and psychological (Cohen, 1969). Aetiological myths explain natural events, forces, and reasons behind these events (Mark, 2018). For instance, myths that explain how the universe or world was created or how religion and rituals were established are example of aetiological myths (Mills, 2010). Historical myths include historical events that were passed to next generation to keep the meaning of the story alive like *Odyssey* and *Iliad* epics (Mark, 2018). Lastly, psychological myths are defined as misconceptions or misbeliefs regarding psychological factors that explain or justify human behavior and feelings (Mark, 2018). For instance, ‘opposites attract’, ‘people use only 10% of their brain’, and ‘people with mental disorders display violent behavior’ etc. (School of Humanities and Social Sciences, 2021). Since, the focus of this paper is psychological myths, the next section will continue with common myths toward homosexuality and gay individuals.

1.4.2 Common Myths Toward Homosexuality and Homosexual Individuals

Myths toward gay people and homosexuality stem from psychological-social-cultural-developmental factors such as prejudice, sexual stigmatization, masculinity (Stotzer & Shih, 2012), upbringing/parents (Farr et al., 2019), culture, religion, and low education (Damante, 2016). Some of the common myths toward homosexuality and gay individuals include misbeliefs about their mental health. These include beliefs about orientation being a mental illness, having an abusive childhood (Schlatter & Steinback, 2011), their morality and personality traits (Madon, 1997), and lack of masculinity

perceptions (Steffens et al., 2019) or excess masculinity for gay women (Kite & Deaux, 1987). Moreover, many negative personality traits are associated with homosexuality such as being lonely, a coward, or being selfish (Staats, 1978). Some myths include false beliefs regarding religiosity such as ‘they are not religious’, ‘homosexuality is against all the religions’ and ‘homosexuality is a sin’ (Strong Family Alliance, 2017). Moreover, results revealed a positive correlation between negative attitudes toward sexual minorities and avoidance of any type of interaction with those minorities (Davis-Delano et al., 2020).

Other myths include society such as the belief that homosexuality destroys all societal values and norms and that homosexuality is a Western fashion (Youth Pride, 2021; as cited in Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Center, 2021). Also, society affects the way people perceive homosexuality and treat gay individuals by reinforcing social norms about masculinity and heterosexuality such as ‘men should be strong, gay men are feminine (Parrott et al., 2002), ‘men should be masculine and tough and ‘feminine characteristics are undesired and make men weak (Kilianski, 2003). Furthermore, infra-humanization which is defined as attributing less human characteristics to outgroup (Vaes, 2006) can be seen in common myths such as ‘identity of gay people are not real, it is just a trend’. One of the many misbeliefs about homosexual individuals and members of LGBT+ community is that they demand special rights to be known and accepted by the society (PG Action, 2021). Lastly, another common myth about gay people and individuals from LGBT+ community is that they have HIV/AIDS, or they all eventually will (PG Action, 2021).

1.4.3 Negative Consequences of Anti-LGBT+ Myths

As mentioned, myths toward the LGBT+ community implicate their mental health, family, relationships, social status, personality, moral norms and values. It is therefore assumed that these false beliefs will have a strong negative impact on the LGBT+ community in the form of negative attitudes and prejudice. These false beliefs create myth endorsement against the LGBT+ community which can reinforce the discrimination and violence against them.

It is not uncommon in the literature to find examples of the negative influences of myth endorsement for other stigmatized or disadvantaged groups. For instance, rape myth endorsement includes beliefs that support and justify sexual assault especially toward women (Edwards et al., 2011). Some of the rape myths are ‘women like/enjoy hard sex, women are asking for it, not all women are raped, its women’s fault to take attention of a man, and women lie about rape’ etc. which works to blame the survivor of rape and take away attention from the perpetrator (Johnson et al., 1997). Similarly, ‘prostitute myth endorsement’ justifies that sex workers, especially women, enjoy their work, they earn a lot of money and hence deserve to get beaten and mistreated in their line of work (Sawyer & Metz, 2009). Also, domestic violence myths, which justifies domestic violence towards women, were found to be high among men and women who have strong traditional gender norms (Rani et al, 2004). Moreover, individuals with high traditional gender role myth endorsement tend to blame the victim, women especially, for domestic violence and support myths as 'A husband can love and beat' etc. (Hüsnü & Mertan, 2017). It is evident that any type of myth endorsement blames the victim and justifies the negative and discriminative actions against them. By

supporting and believing in these myths, people continue to discriminate, use violence, and even kill others whom they think is an outsider.

With regards to the LGBT+ community, many myths may reinforce discrimination, and victimization increasing the rates of depression, stress, discomfort, and anxiety experienced, a concept known as minority stress (Meyer, 1995). Research conducted by Meyer assessed the reasons why members of LGBT+ community have a higher prevalence of mental disorders than heterosexual people. Researcher analyzed the minority stress, sexual prejudice, discrimination, hostile/stressful social environment, and homophobia as reasons behind this high prevalence. It was found that discrimination, stigmatization, rejection, and violence toward LGBT+ individuals are main factors for experiencing high levels of stress which leads to many stress-related psychological disorders (Meyer, 2003). Moreover, individuals from LGBT+ community are more likely to experience depression and mood disorder (Bostwick et al., 2010), develop post-traumatic stress disorder (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2009), anxiety disorders (Cochran et al., 2003), have increased consumption of substance and alcohol (Burgard et al., 2005), and develop suicidal thoughts (Cochran et al., 2003). Besides, gay men are paid less than heterosexual men for same job (Carpenter, 2007), and 20% individuals from sexual minority groups report experiencing crime due to their sexual orientation (Herek, 2009). Moreover, gay individuals are sentenced to prison, flogging, or execution in many Muslim countries (Chua, 2015) which all have a negative impact on well-being. As it can be seen, LGBT+ individuals suffer from inequalities in education, health, justice, business, and they even have to give up on their freedom and life just because society and people do not accept that every individual deserves to be treated fairly, respectfully and to have equal rights.

To support these myths, people might use factors such as religion, politics, cultural norms as justification for the discrimination and negativity they have against LGBT+ because the social/cultural norms (in the form of myths) support sexual prejudice. To date, as far as the researcher is aware, there have been no studies assessing myths toward the LGBT+ community, hence this study aims to fill this void in the literature.

1.5 Factors That Predict Anti-LGBT+ Prejudice and Myth Endorsement Toward LGBT+

There are many factors that may reinforce myth endorsement, prejudice, and discrimination toward LGBT+ such as up-bringing (Dweck, 2009; Pirchio et al., 2018), lower education (Thijs et al., 2018), age (Gonsalkorale et al., 2009), socio-economic status (Williams, 1999) etc. however this study focuses on the role of psychological essentialism, religiosity, and gender.

1.5.1 Psychological Essentialism

Essentialism is derived from 'essence' which refers to shared similarities between kinds and categories such as all tigers have lines over their body, and it makes them unique at the same time from other animal species (Haslam & Whelan, 2008). Essentialism is defined as having an opinion that certain categories have a fixed reality and characteristics that cannot be observed directly (Gelman, 2021). People also think categories or other natural kinds have an essence (Medin & Ortony, 1989) and people who hold essentialist beliefs tend to believe that human characteristics are permanent (Bastian & Haslam, 2006). Innate potential is referred as one of the mechanisms in essentialism that is described as the belief that characteristics or properties are determined at birth and cannot be changed (Gelman et al., 2007).

There are different concepts of essentialism. For instance, gender essentialism suggests that there are fixed and certain characteristics or features that are attributed to men and women and biological sex determines the gender and social roles, and that it is unchangeable (Gülgöz et al., 2019). Social essentialism states that social categories such as race, or ethnicity determine specific features or characteristics of people and are the reason why people come together as a group (Rhodes et al., 2012). Cultural essentialism proposes that there are fixed, unchangeable values, cultural norms and practices that people in that culture hold these attributions (Chao et al., 2017). Moreover, according to Agadullina et al. (2018), psychological essentialism suggests that social categories are natural and fixed. Psychological essentialism includes fixed traits or characteristics that differentiates members of a category from others and define all members within that category based on fixed traits (Haslam, 1998). Formerly, psychological essentialism was assessed by Allport to explain the relation with prejudice and stereotype (Rhodes et al., 2012). Allport stated that individuals who believe traits are fixed and stable are more likely be stereotyped and prejudiced toward others because people assume that social categories, like traits, are unchangeable or essence-based (1954). Moreover, people with high essentialism can use justification for their discriminative and biased behavior (Heyman & Giles, 2006).

Overall, essentialism has been associated with biological factors such as genes, genetic etc. that cannot be changed. In terms of definition, it has always been assumed that essentialist beliefs refer to genetic factors that are used to define or categorize someone (Furnham et al., 1985) and socio-environmental factors are overlooked in literature as a part of psychological essentialism (Sayer, 1997). However, essentialism is not only limited with genetic/biological determinism, but also social determinism should be

taken into consideration. Social determinism is defined as a lay theory which indicates that an individual's characteristics, behaviors, or actions are determined by social factors such as raising, social environment etc. (Rangel & Keller, 2011). It is important to consider and assess social determinism as a part of psychological essentialism because people do not make judgements or categorize others solely based on genetic/biological factors. In a study, researchers aimed to assess whether belief in social determinism comprises essentialist belief by intensifying biological concept of it, whether belief in social determinism and biological determinism are correlated, whether belief in social determinism also increases stereotype and prejudice like genetic determinism. Researchers measured participants' prejudice and beliefs in genetic and social determinism independent from each other. It was found that both beliefs in genetic and social determinism constitute psychological essentialism and participants displayed prejudice and bias toward out-group and in-group favoritism as a result of social determinism. Moreover, results found that participants with high prejudice toward out-group were more likely to endorse social determinism (Rangel & Keller, 2011). Also, studies showed that as the education level of individuals increases, the less they tend to think based on genetic determinism; yet university students have more beliefs in social determinism as a part of essentialist beliefs which shows why they still have prejudice or bias against minority groups (Dambrun et al., 2008). Another study showed the impact of belief in social determinism and manipulation of 'psychological essentialism' which is considered based on genetics. Researchers aimed to assess whether 'women are bad at math' stereotype applies to female participants since they all share same genetic make-up, and whether it would affect their math performance. Participants had written essays and one essay mentioned that differences in math performance are due to genetic while the other

essay mentioned environmental factors such as experience. Also, all participants received non/stereotype threat texts as a test. Participants who had essays regarding the environmental factors in math performance had higher math score than participants who had essays regarding the genetic differences in math performance (Dar-Nimrod & Heine, 2006). As it can be seen, limiting essentialist beliefs with genetic determinism could result with missed opportunities to reduce stereotype and prejudice. Therefore, analyzing social and genetic factors as components of psychological essentialism is crucial to understand why people show discrimination and prejudice and it is significant to recognize that both social and genetic determinism in psychological essentialism can be used to reduce prejudice in a given context. Hence, environmental essentialism was used to refer socio-environmental factors or social determinism in the current study.

As Allport (1954) suggested that essentialist beliefs about social categories can enhance prejudice and bias (as cited in Haslam et al., 2002) was supported in a study conducted by Mandalaywala et al. (2018), to assess whether social essentialist beliefs increase racist attitudes and discrimination toward Black people, researchers conducted three studies by manipulating essentialist beliefs of participants. Results of these studies indicated that essentialism was associated significantly with higher discrimination and prejudice among White participants and participants in pro-essentialist condition displayed higher prejudice than participants in anti-essentialist condition (Mandalaywala et al., 2018).

With regards to sexual prejudice, it has been found that psychological essentialism is related to prejudice and discrimination towards individuals from LGBT+ community (Kiebel et al., 2020). Psychological-gender essentialism may have a role in increasing

the prejudice and discrimination towards LGBT+ individuals by considering them ‘abnormal’ and ‘different’ (Kiebel et al., 2020). These essentialist beliefs not only increase discrimination and prejudice but also increase myths and false beliefs toward LGBT+ individuals (Sheldon et al., 2007). For instance, people who hold more essentialist beliefs tend to think that there are only two genders, female and male, and there should be one sexuality which is heterosexuality. As mentioned by Skewes et al (2018) people who hold essentialist beliefs about gender tend to have higher gender discrimination, sexism, and support traditional gender roles. Therefore, such people might display more hatred, and discrimination against LGBT+ community by marginalizing them (Agadullina et al., 2018). Moreover, individuals with higher essentialist beliefs are more likely to believe that gender is assigned at birth and cannot be changed, and this belief increases stereotypes and bias against the LGBT+ community (Şahin & Yalçınkaya, 2021).

Nevertheless, literature studies suggest that essentialist beliefs or opinions can be manipulated, rejected, or accepted (Falomir-Pichastor & Hegarty, 2014). Moreover, there are some promising results in the literature regarding the relation between essentialist beliefs and prejudice toward homosexuals and/or homosexuality (Kahn & Fingerhut, 2011). For instance, discrimination and prejudice may be lower when a person makes assumptions based on a category than on traits (Prentice & Miller, 2006). So, if a person who relies on categorical assumptions, which are assigning someone to a category based on the social category the person is in such as being male-female, American-Asian etc. (Crisp & Hewstone, 2007), and hence has essentialist beliefs, can be changed, then the bias and discrimination in that person can potentially be decreased as well.

In one study conducted to assess whether essentialist beliefs can be changed and whether this manipulation influences attitudes regarding homosexual sexual orientation. For that purpose, participants were randomly assigned to two experimental conditions in which they were given a text regarding genetic and environmental etiology of homosexual sexual orientation. Then, participants' attitudes toward rights of gay people were measured. Results showed that essentialist beliefs can be manipulated and, more importantly, can be weakened. Participants in environmental condition showed higher negativity and discrimination toward gay people than those in genetic condition (Frias-Navarro et al., 2015). Results of these studies demonstrate the power of essentialism on attitudes.

1.5.2 Religiosity

Religiosity can be defined as one's own link to and adherence for religion (King & Williamson, 2005). Religiosity is one's inclination to develop an attachment and commitment to religious activities and beliefs (Ellis et al., 2019). According to literature, there is a positive correlation between religion and increase in stereotype and discrimination (Janssen & Scheepers, 2019; Roggemans et al., 2015). It has been shown that people with strong religious beliefs tend to show more discrimination towards gay people, and other LGBT members (Janssen & Scheepers, 2019; Whitley, 2009; Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005; Harbaugh & Lindsey, 2015).

An additional study that was conducted with university students revealed that participants who scored higher in religiosity and heteronormativity also received higher scores on homophobia (Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005). As claimed by Chadee et al., in their research which was conducted with 204 female and male university students, it was reported that participants with higher religiosity scores had more bias

toward gay individuals than participants whose religiosity scores were less and who specified no belief in any religion (2017). Furthermore, researchers conducted a study with 529 college students in USA to analyze religiousness and sexual prejudice. As stated by the researchers, amount of commitment to a religion was also found to be positively related with prejudice toward sexual orientation. Moreover, participants with high religious fundamentalism reported higher bias and negativity toward male homosexual individuals (Leak & Finken, 2011).

Findings from another study showed that highly religious people display more homonegativity, which means that having negative or discriminatory attitude toward certain people due to their sexual orientation (Lottes & Grollman, 2010), toward homosexuality and gay individuals. Also, it was found that higher religiosity tends to increase sexual prejudice in people. (Yeck & Anderson, 2019).

Moreover, Barringer et al. emphasized that people with high religiosity in general reported to have more negativity and prejudice toward individuals with different sexual orientations than people with high spirituality (2013). Furthermore, literature studies show that level of commitment, and how religious practices are conducted (public vs. private) may affect the attitude toward homosexuality and gay individuals (Barringer et al., 2013). People who participate religious services and practices regularly tend to hold more prejudicial attitudes toward homosexuality (Sherkat et al., 2011). In addition to that, participating public religious services and practices enhance traditional religious beliefs and increase religiosity, therefore, people who usually attend public religious services tend to display more negativity toward gay individuals (Finlay & Walther, 2003).

Critically, for the current study sexual prejudice is significantly higher among people who have high religiosity and from strict religious groups and this can also be explained with essentialist beliefs embedded in religious writings. For instance, Islam condemns homosexuality, and considers it as a choice (Bonthuys & Erlank, 2012). Therefore, sexual prejudice is high among Muslim people mostly because they have environmental based essentialist beliefs toward gay people and homosexuality, believing that their sexual orientation can be changed (Bonthuys & Erlank, 2012). It is therefore necessary to take into consideration religiosity levels when assessing the influence of essentialist beliefs on LGBTI+ prejudice.

1.5.3 Gender

Definition of gender has been controversial by many researchers. Although it is wrong, gender is usually used interchangeably with sex. For instance, while gender can be defined as traits that are associated with biological sex (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018), it can also be defined as behaviors, roles, and attributes that are under the impact of social and cultural factors (Freeman & Knowles, 2012). Based on the literature, gender was also found to be related with discrimination/prejudice toward individuals from LGBT+ community. As stated by Roggemans et al., Muslim and Christian male participants displayed more negativity and discrimination toward LGBT+ community than female participants in both religion groups (2015). Moreover, it was found that compared to women, religiosity tends to be more common among men. For instance, men who have high masculinity and sexism are also found to have higher religiosity (Schnabel, 2017). Also, Muslim men are found to be more active and religious than Muslim women (Sullins, 2006). In a study conducted with 200 university students in Turkey, researcher aimed to investigate sexism and attitudes toward LGBT+ individuals. Results revealed that male participants displayed more sexist and negative attitudes

toward male gay individuals than female gay individuals (Sakallı, 2002). In addition to that, a study conducted in Belgium with ethnic, religion minorities and Belgian individuals, researchers stated a significant gender difference in religiosity and sexual prejudice. Muslim male minorities and Belgian male adults who had higher scores on religiosity, also scored higher on homophobia and sexual prejudice than female participants in both groups (Hooghe, 2010). Also, a study, which was conducted with Christian and Muslim students to assess their attitudes toward gay individuals, displayed that Muslim male students had more negativity toward gay individuals and homosexuality than Muslim female students. Among Christian students, male participants reported higher negative attitude toward gay individuals than female students (Roggemans et al., 2015). Higher prejudice and discrimination from men toward gay people were also supported by Yeck and Anderson (2019). In their study, researchers aimed to analyze the relation between gender, religion, and sexual prejudice among 166 heterosexual people. Men displayed more negativity toward male gay individuals than women did (Yeck & Anderson, 2019).

1.6 Context of the Current Study

Based on the literature, the current study aimed to assess the role of religiosity and essentialist beliefs on myth endorsement toward individuals from the LGBT+ community by manipulating the essentialist beliefs of participants toward etiology of homosexual sexual orientation. A number of organizations within the north of Cyprus (e.g., Kuir Cyprus Association) and Turkey (e.g., KAOS-GL, Pembe Hayatlar Dernegi) exist with the aim of supporting LGBT+ people and their human rights. Despite this, they report that discrimination, hate crimes and prejudice against LGBT+'s is high and still a threat to members in Turkey and Cyprus. As stated by Kaos GL, at most 20 cases out of 150 were reported to the police due to fear of

discrimination and judgement by the police, family members, and distrust to authorities. Moreover, out of 150 members of LGBT+, 126 people reported they were victim of verbal assault, 54 people reported threats of violence, and 47 people reported physical violence (Kaos GL Association, 2020). Furthermore, as mentioned by Görkemli (2011), LGBT+ individuals are not hired in public and private sectors due to sexual prejudice, discrimination against them (as cited in Aydin & Ozeren, 2020). Also, especially transgender individuals in Turkey have more difficulties in finding jobs, and in daily life because of their 'trans appearance' (Ucar, 2014). Discrimination and prejudice LGBT+ individuals face in Northern Cyprus is an ignored research area (Şahin, 2021). LGBTI+'s in Northern Cyprus also face discrimination and prejudice (Uluboy & Husnu, 2020). Relatedly, anti-LGBT+ attitudes have recently been found to be most prevalent in a nationally representative sample in the north of Cyprus, whereby high levels of bias and lack of support for human rights have been documented (Kuir Cyprus Association, 2021). Moreover, a recent study which was conducted in Northern Cyprus revealed that 20% of LGBT+ members, especially lesbian individuals, did not come out due to fear of violence and discrimination and 41% preferred to hide their identity because of family and societal pressure (Kuir Cyprus Association, 2022). Also, the same study found that rejection (9%), violence (35%), sexual orientation/gender identity (14%) and death threats (2%) are main reasons why LGBT members have to leave their house or residency (Kuir Cyprus Association, 2022). As it can be seen from the given examples, the status and human rights of LGBT+ individuals in Turkey and North Cyprus are open to development.

Previous studies showed that essentialist beliefs tend to increase the false beliefs and cause more negativity and discrimination toward LGBT+ individuals (Kiebel et al.,

2020), yet essentialist beliefs can be manipulated or changed (Mandalaywala et al., 2018). Therefore, with the use of manipulation, any essentialist belief which are based on discrimination and prejudice can be decreased. For instance, a study which this research is based on, aimed to assess whether manipulating essentialist beliefs about homosexual sexual orientation initiate a decrease or increase in attitudes toward same-sex parenting. For that purpose, researchers assigned participants randomly to one of these experimental conditions; genetic and environmental etiology in which participants were given a text to read regarding the etiology of homosexual sexual orientation based on the experimental condition they are assigned to. Texts in both conditions included scientific studies explaining the etiology of homosexual sexual orientation to convince the participant. Before and after the manipulation, researchers measured participants' beliefs about the etiology of homosexuality, the rights of same-sex partners, and adoption of children raised by same-sex parents in order to have a comparison of pre- and post-manipulation results. It was hypothesized that participants in environmental etiology condition would have more rejection and bias toward same-sex parents and display less support for rights of same-sex couples. Results of the study showed that essentialist beliefs can be changed in a way that if participants believe homosexuality is not affected by environmental factors, then it is possible to reduce discrimination and bias against gay people. Also, participants in environmental etiology condition displayed more support for the idea that homosexuality is affected by environmental factors and participants in genetic etiology showed more support for the idea that homosexuality is genetic and can't be changed. Moreover, participant in environmental condition showed less support for the rights of same-sex couples, same-sex parents than those in genetic etiology condition (Frias-Navarro et al., 2015).

In the current study, utilizing the same design of texts on etiology essentialist beliefs of participants toward homosexuality were manipulated by providing video recordings of genetic vs. environmental etiology of homosexual sexual orientation vs. reality condition. Use of texts has been used many times by researchers as a manipulation tool. Although its easiness and effectiveness has been supported, literature findings show that people tend to pay more attention to visualization (Sachin, 2019) and are more likely to recall information when they watch a video than read a text (Fallon et al., 2018). Moreover, by giving texts to participants, many factors such as their reading speed, attention to detail cannot be controlled (Kintsch, 1994). Another reason why video manipulation was preferred for this study is that no similar study has used video recordings as a manipulation tool. Thus, it would be the first to use video recordings as a manipulation on essentialist beliefs to reduce bias and discrimination against LGBT+ and if found to be effective, it can be an effective tool to use in different contexts (e.g., school curricula, TV public service broadcasts, etc.).

Also, as studies suggest, individuals with higher religiosity were found to display more hatred, and discrimination toward LGBT+ community (Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005). Furthermore, Muslim participants are found to hold more prejudice and negativity toward homosexuals/homosexuality than Christian participants (Roggemans et al., 2015). Therefore, religiosity was also assessed to examine the relation with myth endorsement and discrimination toward LGBT+ individuals.

Correspondingly, the hypotheses in the current study were as follow:

- i. People who have strong religious beliefs are expected to believe in common myths toward the LGBT+ community and have more negative attitudes than those lower in religiosity.

- ii. A gender difference in believing in myth endorsement and attitudes is expected. Men will be higher in myth endorsement toward LGBT+ community and more negative attitudes than women.
- iii. Those participants receiving the environmental etiology condition (high essentialism) will hold more negative beliefs and score higher on common myths toward LGBT+ scale compared to those participants in the genetic etiology condition (low essentialism).
- iv. Those participants receiving the third group (reality condition) will hold the minimum negative attitudes and score lowest on common myths toward LGBT+ scale compared to participants in other two conditions.

Chapter 2

METHOD

2.1 Participants

A total of 130 participants were recruited for the study. The participants were recruited using convenience and snowball sampling technique via social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram), Microsoft Teams and EMU participant pool. For the purposes of the study, those participants who were not identified as cisgender ($N=1$), heterosexual ($N=10$), and participants who did not state agreement with the manipulation check questions (assessed by median split) were excluded from the study ($N=7$). This left the total sample size as 112. The average age of participants was 22.64 years ($SD = 5.16$). The minimum education level of participants was high school, and maximum was doctorate level ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 3.76$). Bachelor's degree had the highest frequency among participants ($N = 102$, 91%). Based on the g-power analysis, minimum required sample size was 158.

Out of 112 participants, 65 participants were identified as cisgender female (48%), and 47 participants were identified as cisgender male (42%). Ethnicity of participants was as follow; Turk/Turkish ($N= 93$, 83%), Cypriot/TRNC ($N= 6$, 5.4%), Arab ($N= 4$, 3.6%), Kurdish ($N= 5$, 4.5%), Balkan ($N= 1$, 0.9%), Azerbaijani ($N= 1$, 0.9%) and two participants did not give a valid answer. There was a total of 38 participants in reality condition (G1), 32 participants in environmental etiology condition (G2) and 42 participants in genetic etiology condition (G3).

2.2 Design

In the current study, an online experimental questionnaire utilizing a video manipulation was designed in order to test the hypotheses of the study using Google Forms. Participants were randomly assigned to two experimental and one reality condition: genetic etiology, environmental etiology condition, and reality group. To increase genetic-base essentialist beliefs toward LGBT+ individuals among participants, participants were given the genetic etiology condition video recording, whereas to increase environmental-based essentialist beliefs among participants, participants were given the environmental etiology condition video recording. For participants in the reality group, a video recording that included actual literature findings for the etiology of homosexual sexual orientation was provided. After watching the videos, participants were given manipulation check questions, myth scale (attitude scale), religiosity and demographic questions in this order to prevent any likely order effects. Study had a 2(gender) x 3(essentialist beliefs) x 2(religiosity) experimental questionnaire design.

2.3 Materials

2.3.1 Video Manipulation

To manipulate participants' essentialist beliefs, two scripts were used from a similar study that manipulated essentialist beliefs (Frias-Navarro et al., 2015). A volunteer was recruited for this study in which a video recording was made of him reading the 3 different scripts. In order to minimize third variables and ensure standardized conditions, the volunteer was chosen outside of the university, and was used in all videos, with the same clothing, speed of speech, same voice tone and same background. In order to manipulate essentialist beliefs toward environmental vs. genetic etiology of homosexual sexual orientation, participants were randomly

assigned to one of the videos. In environmental etiology condition participants were given the video recording in which they were being informed that homosexual sexual orientation is determined by the environmental factors such as parenting. Conversely, participants in the genetic etiology condition were given video recording in which participants were being informed that homosexual sexual orientation is determined biologically, using examples of hormones and twin studies. For participants in reality condition, they were given the video recording in which they were being informed about the actual literature findings on the etiology of homosexual sexual orientation in which a combination of factors might determine orientation. To be able to input the videos in questionnaire in Google Forms, videos were uploaded to YouTube first to receive an URL address. After having an URL address, videos were uploaded to Allocate Monster for receiving a random redirect link for videos and then one link address was distributed to participants.

2.3.2 Manipulation Check Questionnaire

Participants were given Beliefs about Etiology of Sexual Orientation Scale (Cronbach's alpha level $\alpha = 0.85$) and Opinions About the Rights of Individuals with Homosexual Sexual Orientation Scale (Cronbach's alpha level $\alpha = 0.83$) which were adopted from Frias-Navarro et al. (2015) and tailored according to the need of this study for the video manipulation check and combined under the name of Beliefs About Etiology of Sexual Orientation Scale. The questionnaire had 12 items, and participants were requested to rate the items on a Likert Scale (1=Strongly disagree- 2=disagree- 3=neutral- 4=agree- 5=strongly agree). Taken from Beliefs about Etiology of Sexual Orientation Scale, the first four items (e.g., 'One's sexual orientation is caused by biological factors like genes and hormones') aimed to assess participants' opinions about genetic etiology (the Cronbach's alpha was 0.93) and items from five to eight

(‘A child who is raised by same-sex parents will have a greater probability of having a homosexual sexual preference’; Cronbach’s alpha= .88) aimed to assess opinions about environmental etiology of homosexuality. Since there was not an available Turkish version of the questionnaire, items were translated into Turkish by the researcher and back translated by the research supervisor.

2.3.3 Attitudes toward Homosexuality

The last four items taken from Opinions About the Rights of Individuals with Homosexual Sexual Orientation Scale (e.g., ‘I have nothing against people with a homosexual sexual orientation, but I don’t think it is appropriate to call the union of same-sex-couples marriage’) aimed to assess general attitudes of participants regarding marriage and adoption rights of LGBT+’s. The Cronbach’s alpha for this subscale was .87, and items were translated into Turkish by the researcher and back translated by the research supervisor. Participants were requested to rate the items on a Likert Scale (1=Strongly disagree- 2=disagree- 3=neutral- 4=agree- 5=strongly agree) and higher scores indicated more negative attitudes toward LGBT+ community.

2.3.4 Myths toward LGBTI+

Currently there is no scale in the literature that measures myths toward LGTB+, therefore as part of this thesis, such a scale was developed based on the literature. Participants were given a ‘Social Attitudes Scale’ in order to assess the common myths they uphold regarding the LGBT+ community. The scale includes 19 items of common myths toward homosexuality and homosexual individuals that were obtained from several sources (Schlatter & Steinback, 2011, Cromer & Goldsmith, 2008, Stakic, 2011). Example items were ‘many homosexuals suffer from childhood abuse’, ‘homosexual people consume more alcohol and substance than heterosexual people’, ‘homosexuality is not biological, but it is a choice’ etc. Participants were requested to

rate the items on a Likert Scale (1=Strongly disagree- 2=disagree- 3=neutral- 4=agree- 5=strongly agree) and higher scores indicated higher myth endorsement toward LGBT+ community. The items were subjected to PCA. The KMO value was .94 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity reached statistical significance which supported the reliability of the scale. PCA revealed the presence of one component with eigenvalues exceeding 1, explaining 65.21% of the variance. An inspection of the scree plot revealed a clear break after the first component. This was further supported by Parallel Analysis, which showed only one component with eigenvalues exceeding the corresponding criterion values for a randomly generated data matrix of the same size (4 variables x 112 respondents). Those items derived from English resources were once again translated into Turkish by the researcher and back translated by the research supervisor.

2.3.5 Religiosity Scale and Demographic Questions

In order to eliminate any likely priming effect of religiosity, questions pertaining to religiosity were given before the demographic questions and after the video manipulation. Participants received some items from Mutlu's Religiosity Questionnaire (1989) along with other relevant questions that were added later to the questionnaire. The religiosity questionnaire was edited based on the required sample characteristics which include items that are relevant to Islamic culture such as reading Qur'an, praying, and pilgrimage etc. To assess religiosity, total 9 items aimed to measure whether participants belong to any religion, whether they followed religious obligations and knowledge on Islam. For calculations, participants were given 1 point if they chose 'yes' for reading Qur'an and 0 points if they did not. For the item asking how many times participants read the Qur'an, participants were given 0 points if they did not read it, they were given 1 if they read it one time, and they were given 3 if they

read it more than once. Participants were given 1 if they read all of the Qur'an, and 0 if they didn't read all of the Qur'an. For the item asking whether participants read the original, Turkish translated, they were given 1 for reading it in the original language, 2 for in Turkish translation, 3 for reading in both languages, and 0 was given if they chose none of the options. For religious obligations items, a number was given based on how many options participants chose (1-5) among the provided obligations. Scores of these items were added to create a total religiosity score. For the purposes of this research, scores of the participants who state that they don't feel they belong to any religion were excluded from the study. For statistical analyses, median split method was used to determine high and low religiosity scores of participants. The total reliability of the scale was .77.

Lastly, in the demographic questionnaire, participants' gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and education level were assessed.

2.3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was received by research and ethics committee at Eastern Mediterranean University. All participants received the same informed consent and debriefing forms. In order to ensure that participants in experimental conditions (genetic vs. environmental etiology) understood there was a video manipulation used in the study, and what they listened in the videos are not scientific and they don't reflect the truth, two debriefing formats were used. First, a debriefing form was obtained from Institute of Graduate Studies and Research at Eastern Mediterranean University. The second debriefing was another video which was created to explain the reason why some studies may use deception, purposes of the current study to use deception and manipulation and that literature findings do not provide a certain cause

for sexual orientation, and regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity, everyone should be respected. In case participants may feel discomfort, offended, or sad, contact information of professionals who working on LGBT+ issues were given in the debriefing form.

2.4 Procedure

Three links, which were created by using a free online survey tool developed by Google Forms, were combined under one study link by using Allocate Monster (2016) and were shared in departmental research pool of Eastern Mediterranean University. Additionally, some lecturers, in the Psychology department in EMU, were kindly asked to share the survey links in their online classes which were given to students from any department on Microsoft Teams during Covid19 pandemic. Once participants clicked on one study link and agreed on proceeding by accepting the study terms in Informed Consent, they were automatically assigned to one of three conditions. Then, participants had the video recordings which is followed by Beliefs about Etiology of Sexual Orientation Scale (manipulation check questionnaire). After that, participants received the Social Attitudes Scale (myths scale), Religiosity Scale and Demographic Questionnaire. Participants were thanked for their participation and debriefed about the manipulation. Lastly, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS – Version 26) was used in order to conduct all the analyses related to the current study.

Chapter 3

RESULTS

A Pearson's correlation analysis showed that there was a significant positive relation between myth endorsement and attitudes as well as religiosity. Similarly, negative attitudes and higher religiosity were positively correlated. Male gender and myth endorsement as well as negative attitudes were correlated. There was no significant relation between gender and religiosity. This can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Correlations Between Gender, Myth Endorsement, Attitude and Religiosity

Variables	M	SD	Min. - Max	1	2	3	4
1. Gender	1.42	.50	1; 2	-			
2. Myth Endorsement	2.11	.87	1; 5	.41*	-		
3. Attitude	2.97	1.04	1; 5	.27*	.62*	-	
4. Religiosity	3.88	2.69	1; 9	.003	.27*	.32*	-

Note: *Correlation is significant at .01 level.

3.1 Manipulation Check

Between-subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of video manipulation on the two experimental groups and the reality condition. Overall, the video manipulation was found to be effective for both environmental $F(2,109) = 9.40$, $p < .001$ and genetic etiology conditions $F(2,109) = 13.53$, $p < .001$. See table 1.

Table 2. Mean Values for Beliefs About Etiology of Sexual Orientation Items Between Conditions

Conditions	Genetic Manipulation	Environmental Manipulation
	M (SD)	M (SD)
Reality	3.10 (0.95)	2.82 (0.73)
Environmental	2.51 (0.94)	3.49 (0.65)
Genetic	3.64 (0.91)	2.85 (0.78)

All groups were statistically significant than each other such that for genetic manipulation, those in the genetic condition reported highest score than reality and environmental. For the environmental manipulation, non- significant difference was found between the reality and genetic conditions. Most importantly, participants in the environmental condition scored higher than the genetic condition

3.2 Attitudes

In order to assess the effect of conditions (reality vs. environmental vs. genetic condition), religiosity (high vs. low), and gender (female vs. male) on attitude, a 2x3x2 Factorial ANOVA was conducted on attitudes toward LGBTI+. The main effect of gender $F(1, 98) = 6.71, p = 0.01$ was found to be significant. Compared to female participants ($M = 2.76, SD = 0.12$), male participants ($M = 3.26, SD = 0.15$) had more negative scores on attitude. Moreover, condition had a significant main effect on participants' attitudes toward LGBT community $F(2,98) = 6.82, p = 0.002$. Participants in environmental etiology condition had higher scores ($M = 3.52, SD = 0.18$) on attitude than participants in reality ($M = 2.71, SD = 0.17$) and genetic etiology conditions ($M = 2.79, SD = 0.16$). Although there was no significant main effect of religion $F(1,98) = 1.31, p = 0.26$, results showed that participants with high religiosity

had more negative attitudes ($M= 3.12, SD= 0.14$) than those with low religiosity ($M= 2.90, SD= 0.14$).

No significant two way interaction effect between religion-gender $F(1,98)= 0.60, p = 0.44$, religion-condition $F(2,98)= 0.83, p = 0.44$, gender-condition $F(2,98)= 1.49, p = 0.23$ and three way interaction effect between religion-gender-condition $F(2,98)= 1.28, p = 0.28$ was found. Although there was not a significant interaction effect between religion and condition, results revealed that participants had more negative attitudes in reality ($M= 2.93, SD= 0.27$) and genetic etiology ($M= 2.98, SD= 0.23$) conditions when religiosity was high. Moreover, participants in environmental condition ($M= 3.59, SD= 0.28$) had more negative attitudes when religiosity was low.

3.3 Myth Endorsement

2x3x2 ANOVA was conducted to assess mean differences between gender, conditions, and religiosity on myth endorsement. Analyses showed that there is a significant main effect of gender $F(1,98) = 22.32, p < .001$ Female participants scored less ($M = 1.81, SD = 0.62$) on myth endorsement compared to male participants ($M = 2.53, SD = 1.00$). Furthermore, a significant main effect for condition $F(2,98) = 9.91, p < .001$ was found. Post hoc analyses showed that participants in environmental etiology condition showed higher myth endorsement ($M= 2.62, SD= 0.13$) compared to the reality condition ($M= 1.88, SD= 0.13$) and the genetic condition ($M= 2.00, SD= 0.12$). No significant difference was found between reality and genetic conditions. Statistically significant difference was found between reality and environmental, and environmental and genetic conditions. The means and standard deviations can be seen in Table 2.

Table 3. Mean and Standard Deviations for Myth Endorsement Between Groups.

Condition	Gender	Religiosity	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reality	Female	Low	1.62	0.58
		High	1.99	0.69
	Male	Low	1.91	0.72
		High	2.01	0.50
Environmental	Female	Low	2.14	0.82
		High	1.64	0.48
	Male	Low	3.37	1.06
		High	3.34	0.89
Genetic	Female	Low	1.69	0.53
		High	1.91	0.64
	Male	Low	1.68	0.70
		High	2.72	0.79

According to analysis, religion did not have a significant main effect on myth endorsement $F(1,98) = 2,02, p = 0.16$. However, it was found that participants with low religiosity ($M= 2.07, SD= 0.10$) scored less on myth than those with high religiosity ($M= 2.27, SD= 0.10$).

According to analysis, there was a significant two way interaction effect for condition-gender $F(2, 98) = 7.54, p = 0.001$. Male ($M= 3.35, SD= 0.19$) and female ($M= 1.89,$

$SD= 0.17$) participants in environmental condition scored highest compared to other groups. For the genetic and reality conditions there was no significant difference between men and women. In the environmental condition however, male participants ($M = 3.35, SD = .19$) scored higher in myths compare to women ($M = 1.89, SD = .17$).

Table 4. Mean and Standard Deviations for Condition*Gender Two-way Interaction Effect on Myth Endorsement.

Condition	Gender	Mean (M)	Std. Error
Reality	Female	1.81	0.14
	Male	1.96	0.21
Environmental	Female	1.89	00.17
	Male	3.35	0.19
Genetic	Female	1.80	0.16
	Male	2.20	0.17

Also, there was a significant two way interaction effect for condition-religion on myth endorsement $F(2, 98) = 3.40, p = 0.04$. Results showed that for low religiosity, those in the reality condition showed less myth endorsement than those in the environmental. In addition to that, those in the genetic condition showed less myth endorsement than those in the environmental condition. As for those participants with high religiosity, no significant differences were found between the conditions, see Table 4 for descriptive statistics.

Table 5. Mean and Standard Deviations for Condition*Religiosity Two-way Interaction Effect on Myth Endorsement.

Condition	Religiosity	Mean	Std. Error
Reality	High	2.00	0.20
	Low	1.76	0.16
Environmental	High	2.49	0.16
	Low	2.76	0.20
Genetic	High	2.32	0.17
	Low	1.69	0.16

Chapter 4

DISCUSSION

The aim of this research was to analyze the effect of religiosity, gender, and essentialist beliefs on myth endorsement toward LGBT+ community. Although previous research has shown the role of religiosity (Hinrichs & Rosenberg, 2002; Herek, 2002; Worthen, 2012) essentialist beliefs (Haslam & Levy, 2006; Kiebel et al., 2020) and gender (Falomir-Pichastor et al., 2010; Ratcliff et al., 2006) on discrimination and prejudice toward LGBT+ community, the current study was the first one to apply an experimental questionnaire design to the subject with video recordings to manipulate essentialist beliefs. The current study included participants who speak Turkish, identify as cisgender female/male and Muslim.

Results showed that video manipulation was successful. Analyses showed a significant difference between experimental conditions this shows that it is possible to manipulate beliefs regarding attitudes and myths to different social groups, in this case LGBT+'s. It was hypothesized that individuals with high religiosity would have higher myth endorsement toward LGBT+'s. Also, a gender difference was expected; men would show higher myth endorsement than women participants. Additionally, participants in environmental etiology condition were expected to have higher myth endorsement compared to participants in genetic etiology condition. Lastly, participants in reality condition would have the minimum myth endorsement than participants in genetic and environmental etiology conditions.

Findings supported the first hypothesis by indicating that participants with high religiosity in reality and genetic etiology conditions displayed higher myth endorsement than those with lower religiosity. Literature also shows that high religiosity is associated with more negative attitudes and higher discrimination against sexual minority groups (Ng & Gervais, 2017; Rowatt et al., 2009; Yilmaz et al., 2016; Rowatt et al., 2006; Štulhofer & Rimac, 2009). Moreover, engaging in religious activities in public such as attending religious services, reading religious books enhances prejudice and myth endorsement toward LGBT+ community (Worthen, 2016; Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009; Jäckle & Wenzelburger, 2015). However, findings also showed that participants in environmental etiology condition with lower religiosity scored higher on myth endorsement than participants with high religiosity. It can be interpreted such that religiosity was not as effective in environmental etiology condition as in other groups. The reason of this finding can be explained such that participants with high religiosity in environmental condition might held attitudes or beliefs that enhance genetic etiology of homosexuality. For instance, for many religions and religious beliefs, human beings are created by God and every individual is special, important, and loved by God (Jeremiah, 2012; Greenway, 2011). It is not possible to anticipate why participants with low religiosity showed more myth endorsement toward LGBT+ but with highly religious participants, ‘acknowledging that LGBT+ members can’t change who they are and yet they are still loved by God’ could affect their myth endorsement and attitude towards them. Another factor is the effect of essentialist beliefs over religiosity in a way that lower religiosity might have enhanced participants’ beliefs regarding the environmental etiology of homosexuality. For instance, since those participants had lower religiosity and religious beliefs, ‘acknowledging that LGBT+ individuals are still a human being who deserves to be

loved and respected' might not be the case. Therefore, with high essentialism on environmental etiology of homosexuality, focus of those participants could be 'gay individuals can stop being gay if they want to'. This finding shows a promising implication that religiosity can also be used to change essentialist beliefs and even to reduce discrimination and myth endorsement toward LGBT+ community. Although, previous studies have shown that high religiosity increases prejudice and stereotype (Janssen & Scheepers, 2019; Roggemans et al., 2015), accepting, and loving side of the religions and religious beliefs can enhance the positive attitude toward LGBT+ and reduce myth endorsement.

Results also indicated a main effect of gender on myth endorsement. In line with the second hypothesis, male participants had higher myth endorsement than female participants in all conditions. Gender differences on myth endorsement, prejudice and discrimination toward LGBT+ community has been supported previously in the literature (Rampullo et al., 2013; Vieira de Figueiredo, & Pereira, 2021). Furthermore, male participants had more negative attitudes toward LGBT+'s than female participants. There are several reasons why heterosexual men display higher prejudice and myth endorsement toward gay individuals. For instance, authoritarianism is found to be linked with more prejudicial opinion, negative attitude, and rejection especially among men (Lippa & Arad, 1999; Ching et al., 2020; Duckitt, 2006; Gormley & Lopez, 2010). Also, social dominance orientation which supports the idea that some social groups should be controlled, that there should be a hierarchy and inequality has been found to be positively correlated with negative attitudes, and discrimination (Duncan et al., 1997; Turner & Reynolds, 2003), which is found to be higher in men compared to women (Licciardello et al., 2014; Pratto et al., 2000). Furthermore, people

with high masculinity, acceptance, and obedience to traditional gender norms such as being strong, assertive, and independent tend to have more negative attitudes and higher myth endorsement toward gay individuals which are again found more strongly in men than women (Kranz, 2021; Franklin, 2000; Kilianski, 2003; Parrott et al., 2002).

Third hypothesis which expected participants in environmental condition to have higher myth endorsement was also supported. Participants in environmental etiology condition had more negative attitudes and highest myth endorsement toward LGBT+ community than other conditions. This finding indicates the significant impact of essentialist beliefs on attitude and myth endorsement toward LGBT+ community. Findings from other studies also reveal that myth endorsement and discrimination are lower when people have essentialist beliefs of the biological etiology of homosexual sexual orientation (Kahn & Fingerhut, 2011; Haslam et al., 2002; Hegarty, 2010). However, if people believe that etiology of homosexuality can be changed and is based on environmental factors such as social learning, homosexual parents, society, then discrimination and myth endorsement toward LGBT+ increases (Frias-Navarro et al., 2015; Finken, 2002; Waterman et al., 2001). Moreover, forming pro-gay attitudes and reducing myth endorsement toward LGBT+ were found in people who were led to think that etiology of homosexuality is biological and cannot be changed (Hegarty & Pratto, 2001; Eldridge et al., 2006; Hegarty, 2002.; Horvath & Ryan, 2003; Jayaratne et al., 2006; Malcomnson et al., 2006). In the light of these findings, it is important to understand whether people assume sexual orientation and gender identity can be changed, such that it affects their essentialist beliefs and attitudes toward LGBT+'s.

Therefore, to tackle prejudice and reduce myth endorsement toward sexual minority groups, essentialist beliefs should be the first to change.

Lastly, participants in reality condition had the lowest scores on attitude and myth endorsement which supports the hypothesis. A significant main effect for condition on attitudes and myth endorsement was found. Findings revealed that, regardless of gender, participants in environmental etiology condition had the highest negative attitudes and myth endorsement followed by participants in genetic etiology condition. Even though, participants in reality condition had the lowest score, results indicate that the overall mean value for myth endorsement in the reality group was moderate. This finding suggests that the lowest myth endorsement actually still exists at moderate degrees.

Findings from the current study should be assessed attentively for several reasons. Firstly, sample size was relatively small compared to required size based on g-power analysis. Therefore, number of participants was not enough to assess minimal differences between groups. Also, due to not having a funding, a professional enunciator for the video recordings could not be found. Therefore, it is possible that factors such as speed of speech, pronunciation, hand movements, gestures of the enunciator etc. could cause problems in equivalence of the videos. Religiosity was another limitation to this study in a way that there was no statistically significant difference between groups in myth endorsement when participants had high religiosity. As in line with literature, this finding indicates that manipulation was not effective when religiosity was high and shows that even participants in genetic and reality condition had myth endorsement toward LGBT+'s (Roggemans et al., 2015; Johnson et al., 2012; Jäckle & Wenzelburger, 2015; Leak & Finken, 2011; Hicks &

Lee, 2006). This might also be because the religiosity questions used mostly aimed to assess religious practices but not implicit beliefs which might also affect the total religiosity scores of participants. Furthermore, characteristics of the participants such as being undergraduate student, and average age being young ($M=22.64$ years) can create generalizability problems. Also, even though translation of the scales and manipulation texts were necessary as there was none in the Turkish literature, it is important to develop more culturally valid scales for a better understanding. Moreover, the items that were used to measure attitude toward LGBT+ community were about attitudes toward LGBT+ family and adoption which can create problems in assessing the general attitude toward LGBT+. Lastly, the environment or context where participants participate in the study could affect their responses.

In spite of these limitations, the current study has significant research and applied implications. As social identity and social categorization theories suggest, people assign others to different social groups and categories based on socially supported characteristics such as age, gender, race, sexual orientation etc. (Barth et al., 2021; Karnadewi & Lipp, 2011). Categorization of others is based on the perceived similarity and differences with others, stereotype, prejudice, and essentialist beliefs toward out-group etc. (Lieberman et al., 2017). The role of essentialist beliefs on social categorization have been studied by many, and it was found that essentialist beliefs shape how out-group is perceived (Bailey et al., 2021; O'Driscoll et al., 2021). Moreover, essentialist beliefs enhance category-based generalization (Rips, 2001), affects inter-group relations, and increase stereotype toward others (Prentice & Miller, 2006; Chao et al., 2007). Pursuant to results, the impact of essentialist beliefs on social categorization was supported. The current study found that essentialist beliefs are a

significant factor in encouraging myth endorsement and prejudice toward LGBT+ community as well as categorizing others as out-group. As in line with Allport, people who believe that homosexuality is sickness, sin, and not moral had higher myth endorsement and negative attitude toward LGBT+ individuals. Moreover, environmental-based essentialist beliefs were found to enhance anti-LGBT+ prejudice and myth endorsement toward gay individuals regardless of level of religiosity. Allport suggested that traits or characteristics that would be assumed as fixed by people would increase prejudice and stereotypical behavior (1954), however, current study found that participants in genetic etiology condition had less myth endorsement and negative attitude than participants in environmental etiology condition. This finding can be explained by interpreting that essentialist beliefs enhance prejudice when it's used to make generalization and include all the members of a community or a group. Also, when people think that a behavior or a trait is fixed at birth, that would leave no opportunity or chance to change that behavior, so an individual simply cannot be blamed of his/her specific action. However, when people assume that a behavior or a trait can be changed, then people immediately hold the individual responsible from her/his actions. Therefore, it is important to know and differentiate on what basis people hold these essentialist beliefs to make a judgement.

Also, video recordings were used first time in the literature to manipulate essentialist beliefs of participants. Success of this manipulation showed that essentialist beliefs can be changed via video recordings and different manipulation methods can be used in the literature. In addition to that, in terms of research and practical implication, it would be fascinating to assess and compare the effectiveness of video and other manipulation methods, such as texts, in reducing myth endorsement and prejudice

toward LGBT. With further studies, a targeted intervention can be developed based on the more successful manipulation technique.

Furthermore, current study was the first to translate scales regarding etiology of homosexual sexual orientation into Turkish and develop a Myth Scale which reached high reliability to assess the myth endorsement of participants toward LGBT+ community, however it is necessary that the psychometric qualities of this scale be further developed to ensure its validity.

In conclusion, it is vital to end such myths because they have a severe negative impact on the well-being of individuals from the LGBT+ community which are essentially their basic human rights. Moreover, interventions to increase tolerance, to reduce discrimination toward LGBT+'s need to be furthered. Training programs aimed at increasing awareness of the negative consequences of such myths, the impact of discrimination, as well as the negative effects of essentialist beliefs should be developed. By doing so we may contribute to creating a more equal, fair, and safe future for everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Manipulation Check Questionnaire

Lütfen size uygun olan şıkkı işaretleyiniz.

	K e s i n l i k l e K a t ı l ı m ı y o r u m	K a t ı l ı m ı y o r u m	K a r a r s ı z ı m	K a t ı l ı y o r u m	K e s i n l i k l e K a t ı l ı y o r u m
1. Eşcinsel cinsel yönelim genetiğe bağlı kaçınılmaz bir davranıştır.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Kişinin cinsel yönelimi genler ve hormonlar gibi biyolojik nedenlerden kaynaklanmaktadır.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Genetik faktörler eşcinsel cinsel yönelimin nedenleridir.	1	2	3	4	5
4. İnsanlar eşcinsel doğabileceği için eşcinsel cinsel yönelim bir seçim değildir.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Eşcinsel cinsel yönelimi olan ebeveynler tarafından büyütülen çocukların da büyük ihtimalle eşcinsel cinsel yönelimi olur.	1	2	3	4	5

6. Çocukların onlara maskülen ve feminen rolleri sağlayabileceği anne ve babaya ihtiyaçları vardır.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Hem-cins ebeveynlerin çocukların cinsel yönelimini etkilediğini düşünüyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Çoğu durumda, eşcinsel cinsel yönelimler öğrenilir.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Aynı cinsiyetten bireyler arasında gerçekleşen evliliği yasallaştırmanın bir hata olduğunu düşünüyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Her çocuğun anne ve babadan oluşan normal bir ailede büyüme hakkı vardır.	1	2	3	4	5
11. İnsanların cinsel yönelimlerine saygım var fakat evlat edinmelerine izin vermek çocuğun geleceğini içerdiğinden, anne ve babanın olması çocuğun gelişimini en iyi destekler.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Eşcinsel cinsel yönelimi olan insanlara saygım var fakat hem-sex bireyler arasındaki ilişkiye evlilik denmesini doğru bulmuyorum.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B: Myth Scale

Lütfen size uygun olan şıkkı işaretleyiniz.

	K e s i n l i k l e K a t ı l ı m ı y o r u m	K a t ı l ı m ı y o r u m	K a r a r s ı z ı m	K a t ı l ı y o r u m	K e s i n l i k l e K a t ı l ı y o r u m
1. Eşcinseller sekse daha çok düşkünlerdir, cinsellik önemlidir hayatlarında.	1	2	3	4	5
2. AIDS eşcinsel hastalığıdır.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Eşcinseller rastgele cinsel ilişki yaşarlar.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Eşcinseller uzun süreli sevgiye dayalı ilişki kuramazlar.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Eşcinsel eşlerden biri kadın biri erkek rolüne bürünür.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Eşcinseller doktor, psikolog, din adamı, öğretmen, asker, polis, ve sporcu olamaz.	1	2	3	4	5
7. LGBTI+ kişiler mutlu olamazlar.	1	2	3	4	5

8. Eşcinsellik hastalıktır.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Eşcinsellik ilgi çekme isteğidir.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Eşcinseller heteroseksüellerden daha fazla çocuk istismarında bulunurlar.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Eşcinsel ebeveynler çocuklarının eşcinsel olmalarına neden olurlar.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Birçok eşcinsel bireyin çocukluğunda istismar vardır.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Eşcinsellerin yaşama süresi kısadır.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Eşcinsel bireyler daha fazla alkol ve uyuşturucu tüketir.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Eşcinsellik doğuştan gelmez, eşcinsellik bir seçimdir.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Eşcinsellerin heteroseksüellerden daha fazla suç kaydı vardır.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Eşcinsellik topluma zararlıdır.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Eşcinsellik bir ruh sağlığı bozukluğudur.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Eşcinsel erkekler toplumda kolayca farkedilir.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C: Religiosity Questions

Kendinizi ait hissettiğiniz herhangi bir dini inanç var mıdır?

- a) Evet
- b) Hayır

Eğer varsa hangisidir? Lütfen aşağıda belirtiniz. (Örn. İslam, Hristiyanlık, Yahudilik vs.)

_____ Kısa Cevap _____

Eğer dini vecibeleri (şartları) yerine getiren bir Müslüman iseniz, lütfen aşağıda, kendinizi tanımladığınız mezhebi belirtiniz. (Örn. Şafii, Hanefi, Alevi vs.)

_____ Kısa Cevap _____

Lütfen varsa ebeveyn(ler)inizin dini inançlarını aşağıda belirtiniz.

_____ Kısa Cevap _____

Daha önce Kur'an-ı Kerimi okudunuz mu?

- a) Evet
- b) Hayır

Kaç defa okudunuz?

_____ Kısa Cevap _____

Tümünü mü okudunuz?

- a) Evet
- b) Hayır

Orijinal Arapça olanını mı yoksa Türkçe çevirisini (tefsir) mi okudunuz?

- a) Orijinal dil
- b) Türkçe tefsir
- c) Her ikisini de
- d) Hiçbiri

Dini yükümlülüklerinizi ne kadar yerine getirirsiniz? Birden fazla işaretleyebilirsiniz.

- a) Namaz kılmak
- b) Oruç tutmak
- c) Hacca gitmek
- d) Zekat vermek
- e) Camiye gitmek

Appendix D: Demographic Questions

Lütfen cinsiyetinizi belirtiniz

- a) Erkek
- b) Kadın
- c) Diğer
- d) Cevap vermemeyi tercih ederim

Lütfen yaşınızı aşağıda belirtiniz.

_____ Kısa Cevap _____

Lütfen etnik kökeninizi aşağıda belirtiniz.

_____ Kısa Cevap _____

Lütfen cinsel yöneliminizi belirtiniz.

- a) Heteroseksüel (Karşı cinse ilgi duymak)
- b) Eşcinsel (Aynı cinse ilgi duymak)
- c) Biseksüel (Bütün cinsiyetlere ilgi duymak)
- d) Diğer
- e) Cevap vermemeyi tercih ederim

Lütfen eğitim seviyenizi aşağıda belirtiniz.

- a) İlköğretim
- b) Lise
- c) Lisans Derecesi
- d) Yüksek Lisans Derecesi

e) Doktora

Bu çalışmaya katılarak dersinizden bonus puan kazanmak istiyorsanız öğrenci numaranızı giriniz.

_____Kısa Cevap_____

Bu çalışmaya katılarak dersinizden bonus puan kazanmak istiyorsanız lütfen ders kodunuzu ve grup numaranızı belirtiniz.

_____Kısa Cevap_____

Appendix E: Eastern Mediterranean University's Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Board Approval Letter

 <p>Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi "Erdem, Bilgi, Gelişim"</p>	<p>Eastern Mediterranean University "Virtue, Knowledge, Advancement"</p>	<p>Galileo Galilei Sk. / Str., 99628, Gazimağusa, KUZZEY KIBRIS / Famagusta, NORTH CYPRUS, via Mersin 10, TURKEY Tel: (+90) 392 630 1327 bayek@emu.edu.tr</p>
<p>Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Kurulu (BAYEK) / Board of Scientific Research and Publication Ethics</p>		

Reference No: ETK00-2021-0054

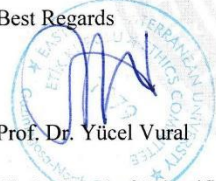
21.10.2021

Subject: Your application for ethical approval.

Re: Pınar Tekşen Rasheed and Prof. Dr. Şenel Hüsnu Raman
Faculty of Arts and Sciences

EMU's Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Board (BAYEK) has approved the decision of the Ethics Board of Psychology (date: 20.10.2021, issue: 21/12) granting Pınar Tekşen Rasheed and Prof. Dr. Şenel Hüsnu Raman from the Faculty of Arts and Sciences to pursue their work titled **"Reducing myth endorsement towards LGBTI+ to tackle prejudice towards gender diversity and sexual orientation"**

Best Regards


Prof. Dr. Yücel Vural

Chair, Board of Scientific Research and Publication Ethics - EMU

YV/ek.