

THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGIES IN CHILDREN'S EXPECTATIONS
ABOUT MORAL AND CONVENTIONAL NORM VIOLATIONS

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Oya Serbest, certify that

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ABSTRACT

The Role of Religious Ideologies in Children's Expectations About Moral and Conventional Norm Violations

Previous research shows that children differentiate religious groups and expect different behaviors from them starting from 5 years of age. This study aimed to understand how children's expectations from religious groups change across social norm domains and age. In this online study, 81 6-7-year-olds and 80 9-10-year-olds were recruited and introduced to characters with contrasting religious beliefs based on randomly assigned conditions. Characters were Muslim-believers and disbelievers in one condition and were Muslim-believers and non-Muslim believers in the other condition. Across four trials, children were asked about which characters might have violated a moral or conventional norm. Then, they were asked about whom they would trust and play with, and which character is most like them. Overall, children expected more norm violations from disbelievers than believers. Older children attributed more norm violation to non-Muslims than younger children. Younger children expected more conventional violations from disbelievers, whereas older children expected more moral violations (vs. non-Muslim believers). Compared to younger children, older children expected more moral violations from disbelievers and conventional violations from non-Muslim believers (vs. Muslims). Also, children of all ages trusted Muslim characters more than non-Muslim characters, and this trend strengthened with age. On the other hand, children preferred to play with Muslims over non-Muslims, except younger children who were introduced to Muslim and non-Muslim believer characters. In sum, these results show that children

judge religious groups in a nuanced way; yet their expectations from and attitudes toward those groups might change during elementary school years.

ÖZET

Çocukların Ahlaki ve Geleneksel Norm İhlallerine İlişkin Beklentilerinde İnancın Rolü

Daha önce yapılan araştırmalar, çocukların 5-6 yaşlarından itibaren dini grupları ayırttıklarını ve bu gruplardan farklı davranışlar beklediklerini göstermektedir. Bu çalışmada, çocukların dini gruplardan davranışsal beklentilerinin sosyal norm alanlarına ve yaşa göre nasıl değiştiğini anlamak amaçlandı. Çevrimiçi yürütülen çalışmaya, 6-7 yaşında 81 ve 9-10 yaşında 80 çocuk katıldı ve katılımcılar rastgele atanan koşullara göre zıt dini inançlara sahip karakterlerle tanıştırıldı. Bir koşulda tanıtılan karakterler Müslüman ve bir ilahi gücün varlığına inanmayan karakterlerken diğer koşulda tanıtılanlar Müslüman ve başka bir ilahi güce inanan karakterlerdi. Dört denemede çocuklara hangi karakterin ahlaki veya geleneksel bir normu ihlal etmiş olabileceği, ardından kime güvenmeyi, kiminle birlikte oynamayı tercih edecekleri ve kendilerine en çok hangi karakterin benzediğini düşündükleri soruldu. Genel olarak çocuklar, bir ilahi güce inanan karakterlere göre inanmayanlardan daha fazla norm ihlali bekledi ve büyük çocuklar, küçük çocuklara göre Müslüman olmayan karakterlere daha fazla norm ihlali atfetti. Küçük çocuklar başka bir ilahi güce inanan karakterlere kıyasla, inanmayan karakterlerden daha fazla geleneksel norm ihlali beklerken, büyük çocuklar bu karakterlerden daha fazla ahlaki norm ihlali bekledi. Küçük çocuklarla karşılaştırıldığında, büyük çocuklar Müslümanlara kıyasla bir ilahi güce inanmayanlardan daha fazla ahlaki norm ihlali ve başka bir ilahi güce inananlardan daha geleneksel norm ihlali bekledi. Ayrıca, her yaşta çocuk, Müslüman karakterlere Müslüman olmayan karakterlerden daha fazla güvendi ve bu eğilimin yaşla birlikte güçlendiği gözlemlendi. Öte yandan, Müslüman ve başka

bir ilahi güce inanan karakterler tanıtılan küçük çocuklar dışında, çocuklar Müslüman olmayan karakterler yerine Müslüman karakterlerle oynamayı tercih etti. Özetle, sonuçlar çocukların dini grupları incelikli şekilde değerlendirdiklerini ancak ilkokul yıllarında bu gruplardan beklentileri ve tutumlarının değişebildiğini gösteriyor.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Religion is a broad, multifaceted concept (Saroglou, 2011). Building upon the most common religion family with more than 50% of human population as followers (Pew, 2015), namely Abrahamic religions, religion may primarily remind a divine supernatural power to believe and rules about how to please that supernatural power or how to simply be a good person. However, the impact of religion is beyond the existence of that supernatural power and rules. Religion is such a powerful concept that it is part of lives of humanity from the beginning until the end. After birth, families organize ceremonies in accordance with their religion, such as baptism in Christianity and mevlut in Islam. After death, the funerals are shaped by religious beliefs. Between birth and death, religion has an important influence on individuals' and communities' lives as well. For example, religion might shape individuals' search of the meaning of life in a way that people might dedicate their mortal life to live a peaceful afterlife. To do so, they might sacrifice earthly pleasures such as food and sex. On the other hand, people might rely on religion while deciding how to behave. For instance, they may avoid cheating or stealing if their religious teaching orders so. Moreover, religion might be influential in directing social relationships. It might provide cues about the values that people appreciate or not, such as honesty. In turn, inferences based on religion might navigate our expectancies from and attitudes towards others.

This thesis aims to investigate the developmental trajectory of children's expectations about people's violation of moral or conventional norms on the basis of their religious beliefs. I will focus on moral and conventional norms for the

following reasons: Primarily, moral norms serve to prevent harm to others and conventional norms are based on rules that regulate social contexts (e.g., Hardecker et al., 2016). Importantly, children can differentiate moral and conventional norms from early in life (e.g., Josephs & Rakoczy, 2016; Rakoczy & Schmidt, 2012). Their expectancies from individuals to follow moral and conventional norms vary according to the group that these individuals belong to (e.g., Killen & Dahl, 2020). In particular, children expect only members of a given group to follow conventional norms, while generalizing moral norms to members of all groups (e.g., Schmidt et al., 2012). Previous literature tested this understanding using groups based on cues, such as language and accent (e.g., Liberman et al., 2018; Schmidt et al., 2012). Even though the results of previous studies suggest that children do construct groups based on religious cues (e.g., Heiphetz et al., 2013b, 2014), their expectancies from members of these groups regarding their adherence to moral and conventional norms have not been examined yet. Considering that religious ideologies have an impact on regulating social life both in terms of morality (e.g., banning lying) and social conventions (e.g., prayer time), I predict that expectations about these norms from religious groups might show a different pattern compared to expectations from groups based on other cues. Thus, this thesis aims to explore the significance of people's religious beliefs for children's expectancies regarding others' behaviors violating moral and conventional norms.

1.1 Ontogeny and components of religion

The debate on the ontogeny of religion is still ongoing and the roots are being investigated by questioning how basic mechanisms of human cognition might facilitate religious beliefs (see Bloom, 2007). Particularly, some scholars believe that

religion is natural, first, due to humans' tendency for dualist beliefs which rely on the understanding of the mind and brain as separate entities (Bloom, 2004). Dualist beliefs support the idea that the soul can exist without a body, which might facilitate the belief in continuation of a soul after the death of the body as in the case of afterlife or an entity without a body, such as God. Second, the tendency towards anthropomorphism which emphasizes attributing human-like features to non-human beings, may have led to the development of religious concepts (e.g., "God knows and judges") (e.g., Guthrie, 1993). Third, the tendency towards teleological reasoning, which corresponds to reasoning based on purpose and function of entities, begins in infancy and is found to be universal across cultures regardless of secular or religious tendencies being prevalent in a country (e.g., Banerjee & Bloom, 2015; Csibra et al., 2003; Kelemen, 2004; Rottman et al., 2017; Schachner et al., 2017). Even scholars of physical sciences show this tendency under cognitive load (Kelemen et al., 2013), indicating the power of teleological reasoning in human cognition.

Religious beliefs are multifaceted, and their different components should be examined in detail, separately. To illustrate, religious sources may mention whom to believe (e.g., prophets, angels), where and when to do what (e.g., fasting during Ramadan, performing prayers in Mosques), and what to know as cultural knowledge (e.g., chants, religious stories) (Pargament et al., 2005). Bloom (2012) pointed out different aspects of religion, including the belief aspect, which is transmitted through religious doctrines, and a social aspect which is experienced through shared rituals. There is also a third aspect, namely the religious experience aspect, which focuses on the bodily feelings of religion. However, because studies (e.g., Cohen & Rozin, 2001) and surveys (e.g., World Values Survey, 2020) tend to focus specifically on the belief and social practice aspects, in this thesis, I will focus on these as well.

First, belief or faith aspect emphasizes that religions present common beliefs about not only the supernatural and sacred powers but also the supported or banned behaviors (Pargament, 1997). By providing such beliefs, religions may navigate interpretations regarding the meaning of life (Johnson et al., 2011; Park, 2005, 2007). Second, the social/conventional aspect focuses more on the actions requiring people to come together as a group. For example, Durkheim (1912) illustrates religion as “collective effervescence”, which works for binding to a social group with common values and enables the transmission of such values across generations. In fact, actions during rituals, such as swinging during invocation, may seem meaningless to someone out of the community. Importantly, ritualistic shared behaviors acquire and maintain a meaning within that community (Haslanger, 2018). Likewise, the community members interpret such social practices as normative; hence adherence to them is not necessarily based on willingness (Martin, 2005). Lastly, it is important to note that the belief and social components of religion may seem to have distinct characteristics; however, they are interconnected. Beliefs contribute to this relationship by providing the scaffold of rituals (Bloom, 2012). For instance, praying would be pointless unless there is a supernatural creator to devote.

Religions may emphasize not only similar religious concepts but also relatively different teachings. For instance, even though Islam, Christianity, and Judaism hold the belief that there is only one God who knows everything (Armstrong, 1993), the focus on the belief and social aspect might vary across religions (e.g., Cohen & Rozin, 2001; Soliman et al., 2015). Particularly, Christianity highlights the significance of shared beliefs more than Judaism, possibly because Judaism also emphasizes a common biological root to be part of the community (Morris, 1996; Neusner, 1993). Importantly, such differences in religious teachings

might be mirrored in people's importance attributions to the belief and practice aspects in religions (e.g., Cohen, 2002). Cohen et al. (2003) found that while evaluating religiosity, Jews and Christians emphasized the importance of religious practice equally; in contrast, Christians rated belief as more important than Jews.

To my knowledge, there is no study comparing importance attributions to belief and practice aspects in an empirical way for Islam. In advance, it is critical to note that when thinking about religions, it is crucial to consider not only different denominations but also the historical background of religions in different regions. For example, in case of Turkey, there are some practices which are treated as Islamic religious traditions (e.g., gathering and reading in Quran 40 days after a death) but in fact their roots trace back to previous beliefs in the region (e.g., Shamanism) (e.g., Oktem, 2002). For practical purposes, this thesis will not further discuss the religious differences between denominations or regions for practical reasons but rather focus on Sunni Muslims since this is the most common branch of Islam in Turkey (Nisanci, 2023). In Sunni Islam, the "Six Pillars of Faith" include the religious entities that followers of this religion should believe in (e.g., Allah, the books, the prophets). Hence, these requirements can be considered as the shared belief aspect. In contrast, the "Five Pillars of Islam" include the required activities for Sunni Muslims (e.g., fasting, performing the prayers, making the pilgrimage). Thus, it can be proposed that Islam emphasizes both the moral and conventional rules. Despite the lack of empirical data on Muslim people's importance attributions to moral and practical aspects of Islam, a survey data is available that asked a similar question to the participants (World Values Survey, 2020). It was found that approximately 53% of Turkish Muslims see "following religious norms and ceremonies" as the meaning of religion and 43% of them reported that religion means "doing good to other people"

(World Values Survey, 2020). In contrast, for more than 75% of US Christians religion means “doing good to other people” and approximately 20% of them give importance to “following religious norms and ceremonies” (World Values Survey, 2020). Overall, it might be proposed that for Turkish Muslims, religion may have a different meaning compared to US Christians.

In sum, some basic cognitive mechanisms may facilitate adopting religious beliefs. When it comes to religion itself, it might involve different components, namely the belief aspect and the social practice aspect. Importantly, religious teachings might put different degrees of emphasis on these different aspects. Therefore, the meaning of religion and the inferences based on religion might also show variability.

1.2 The relationship between religion and prosociality

It is crucial to examine the relationship between religion and prosociality before speculating about why people might hold diverse beliefs about others depending on their religious ideologies. First of all, the belief and social practice aspects might have different influences on prosocial behaviors (e.g., Randolph-Seng & Nielsen, 2007; Shariff & Norenzayan, 2007). For instance, believing in an omniscient God whose eyes are constantly on people was found to be related to prosocial behaviors (e.g., Bering, 2011), such as increased voluntariness for charity work (Pichon et al., 2007). Additionally, belief in the afterlife might influence prosociality in a similar way, since religion explicitly mentions the rewards and punishments of ordinary actions like telling the truth (e.g., Atran & Norenzayan, 2004; Johnson & Bering, 2006). In turn, being aware of the results of one’s own actions might boost prosocial actions.

The embodied cognition perspective claiming that the mind is influenced by bodily actions (e.g., Soliman et al., 2015) might also provide an additional perspective to understand the functions of social practices in religion (e.g., rituals). Particularly, shared bodily actions may create an impact on how we perceive other people that we share actions with. In fact, there are empirical studies that show increased bonding among individuals when individuals act and behave together, both with children (e.g., Kirschner & Tomasello, 2010) and with adults (e.g., Wiltermuth & Heath, 2009). The increase in group feelings, in turn, might increase group harmony (Bloom, 2012).

Despite the findings highlighting the link between religion and prosocial behaviors, careful interpretations of such findings are still needed. First of all, understanding of prosocial and antisocial behaviors emerges in infancy, which corresponds to a time before affiliating with a religion (e.g., Hamlin et al., 2007). In other words, the concepts of prosociality and antisociality already exist, and infants differentiate between them before they acquire religious beliefs. Also, experimental designs, unlike studies relying on self-report, indicate that religion may not always be the main mechanism behind prosocial behaviors (e.g., Norenzayan & Shariff, 2008; Shariff & Norenzayan, 2007; also see Tsang et al., 2021). For example, words about the secular authority, such as police, created a similar impact as religious words on scaling up moral sensitivity (Yilmaz & Bahçekapili, 2015). Furthermore, the belief that “someone” was watching was found to decline antisocial behaviors (e.g., cheating) during childhood (e.g., Piazza et al., 2011), indicating further possible explanations for the relationship between believing in an omniscient God and prosociality.

1.3 Development of religious understanding in childhood

Religion might be viewed as a quite complex phenomenon for children because it relies mostly on abstract concepts that are not self-evident. For instance, it is impossible to observe the existence of an omniscient God. Similarly, one cannot get evidence about the afterlife because it is practically impossible to talk to someone who has been there. However, children begin to opine about religious concepts starting from an early age (e.g., Evans, 2001; Kelemen & DiYanni, 2005; Richert et al., 2017). During the elementary school years, children may hold creationist beliefs about why living natural entities exist (Kelemen & DiYanni, 2005). In particular, both 6-7- and 9-10-years-old British children report that artifacts are created by a person, whereas natural phenomena (e.g., natural events such as storm, natural objects such as mountains, and animals such as birds) are created by a supernatural agent (i.e., God, Jesus, Allah) (Kelemen & DiYanni, 2005).

Children's beliefs about God might be prone to change with age. Examining children's visualizations of God, Yildiz (2013) found that 8-9-year-old Turkish children imagine God as living on earth (e.g., in minarets), while 10-11-year-olds believe that God lives in the sky or in heaven. In terms of the mental characteristics of the supernatural agent, even preschoolers differentiate between God's and humans' minds (Richert et al., 2017). Yet, adults, but not children, state that when there is a controversial action, God is the least likely agent to accept this action as moral (Heiphetz et al., 2018). Recent literature also proposes that the understanding of an all-knowing God increases as children grow up, and the critical turn point seems to be 5-6 years of age (e.g., Barrett et al., 2003; Wolle et al., 2021; Phelps & Woolley, 2001). For instance, compared to 6-7-year-olds, 4-5-year-olds report that God would have less knowledge about transgressions, and the difference in Theory

of Mind capacities between these age groups was found to mediate these expectations to some extent (Wolle et al., 2021). In a similar vein, while preschoolers report that God would fail in a false-belief task just like a human, they start to attribute more knowledge to God after 5-6 years of age (Barrett et al., 2001; Lane et al., 2014; Gimenez-Dasi et al., 2005). In light of these findings, the development of ToM might be one of the driving forces behind the change in religious cognition during those ages. Likewise, children of younger ages might be prone to exhibit cognitive biases, such as “wishful thinking”, when evaluating God’s mind (Wolle et al., 2021).

Even though religion can be comprehended, applied, modified, and transferred across generations just as any other meaning system (e.g., Park, 2005; Silberman, 2005), children evaluate religious ideologies as distinct from facts and preferences starting from 5 years of age (Heiphetz et al., 2013a). In particular, children think that only one of the conflicting facts can be right, both of the conflicting preferences can be right, and they place religious ideologies somewhere in between (Heiphetz et al., 2013a). Considering that testimony of others is a source of knowledge that children rely on specifically when learning about unobservable concepts including religious entities (e.g., God, angels) (e.g., Harris & Koenig, 2006; Harris et al., 2018; Harris et al., 2006), the ability to differentiate religious beliefs from others might be particularly important for children’s learning process, because it may enable them to filter the coming and sometimes conflicting information from various sources. Not surprisingly, children of religious societies show greater confidence about the reality of religious entities compared to children of secular societies (Corriveau et al., 2015; Davoodi et al., 2018). Even when the religious community of children holds minority status in the country (e.g., being Christian in

China), children rely on their inner circle and report high confidence in religious entities (Cui et al., 2020). In a similar vein, Richert et al. (2017) showed that Muslim preschoolers discriminate God's and humans' minds the most, among Protestant, Catholic and secular preschoolers, despite the fact that all participant children lived in the same country. The researchers argued that this finding might be the result of Muslim parents' relatively lower tendency to anthropomorphize God (Richert et al., 2017).

Schooling also plays an important role in the process of learning about religious phenomena. Specifically, religious schools shape children's justifications of religious stories in a way that they judge the intervention of a divine creature more possible compared to children from secular schools (Payir et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the differentiation between God's and humans' minds in false-belief tasks develops earlier for children from religious schools, compared to children from secular schools (Lane et al., 2012). It is also worthy to note that besides religious schools, secular schools may also provide an environment for children, in which they can be exposed to religious ideas and symbols through increased interaction with people from various backgrounds (Pew Research Center, 2019).

In sum, children begin to develop beliefs about religious phenomena from early in life. Previous literature has already established the roles of age and culture in this development. Yet, what is also critical is that children not only passively acquire information about religious concepts from their social environment via testimony, but they can also contrast different perspectives and adopt a particular religious belief even when their social environment provides conflicting perspectives.

1.4 Religion as a social cue

Social groupings are useful when figuring out friends and foes in social life. Humans navigate social relationships based on their inferences about in- and out-groups starting from early in life (e.g., Dunham et al., 2011; Misch et al., 2016; Plötner et al., 2016). Recent literature indicates that children may rely on different cues, such as race or language, when forming groups (Baron & Banaji, 2006; Kinzler et al., 2009). These features might be salient to the recipient as in the case of race or less salient as in the case of religion. It rarely happens that the cues about the religious ideology of an individual can be detected and perceived from the first instance unless the person wears accessories or traditional clothes which symbolize that specific religion. Nevertheless, regardless of how the information is received, religion is used for forming groups across cultures starting from childhood (e.g., Heiphetz et al., 2014; Srinivasan et al., 2019).

People of different religious groups are evaluated in a nuanced way by children. For instance, children show a preference for individuals with whom they share religious ideology (Heiphetz et al., 2013b). However, they do not evaluate all other religions in the same way, and instead they take the similarity of different religions to their own religion into account (Heiphetz et al., 2013b). In particular, 6-8 years-old Christian children show the same level of implicit and explicit preference for their in-groups compared to a Hindu character, whose religion is quite different from Christianity; however, just like adults, they show an implicit but not explicit preference for the in-groups when the alternative is a Jewish character, whose religion is perceived as more similar to Christianity (Heiphetz et al., 2013b). Furthermore, when 6-8-year-olds are introduced to Christian, Jewish and non-religious characters and asked to compare the character's similarity to each other,

children report non-religious characters as the least like Christian and Jewish characters, whereas they do not differentiate between Christian and Jewish characters (Heiphetz & Young, 2019). Moreover, religious children perceive the non-religious characters as the least similar to themselves, while non-religious children do not differentiate between religious and non-religious characters. In concert, these findings suggest that children are aware of and capable of comparing different religious out-groups from an early age.

When religion is associated with another social cue such as status, children's religion-based social attitudes exhibit distinct patterns, which may indicate the special role of religion as a social cue. Specifically, in India, children from both low and higher status of caste showed a preference for higher-status groups; yet, Muslim children showed an implicit in-group preference despite their lower rank in the status hierarchy of the country compared to Hindus (Dunham et al., 2014). This finding is particularly interesting considering that lower status was found to decrease children's in-group preference when the groups are formed based on other features than religion, such as race (Newheiser & Olson, 2012).

Children also seem to essentialize religious social groups to a certain degree (e.g., Davoodi et al., 2020). A cross-cultural study conducted in Turkey and the US about essentialist beliefs comparing religion to other social cues (e.g., gender and nationality) indicated similarities between these cultures in terms of children's and adults' essentialist views on religion (Davoodi et al., 2020). In this study, social categories based on religion were essentialized more than sports teams and SES but less than gender and nationality by children. Adults from both countries, on the other hand, held greater essentialist views for SES compared to religion (Davoodi et al., 2020).

1.5 The role of religion in norm expectancies

As discussed above, religion is a concept that provides different cues about people regarding which values they appreciate (e.g., honesty). Hence, unlike some other social cues that do not explicitly give such information about the characteristics of their members (e.g., language), religious groups, by definition, may reveal information about their members. One possible way to examine whether children really hold a distinct understanding of religious groups compared to other social groups is to ask their expectancies for social norms from people with different religious groups. The nuances in such expectancies might give insights about to what extent children see a “common ground” between diverse groups (Mammen et al., 2018), and in this way, they might help us to figure out the underlying reasons behind their nuanced preferences for particular religious groups from an early age.

The social norms, namely moral and conventional norms, differ in terms of their nature. Morality is defined differently monist and pluralist theorists (Dayoung, 2021). The monist theorists argue that morality can be reduced to one core assumption such as justice and fairness (Kohlberg, 1971) or sustaining the well-beings of others by opposing harm towards them (Gray et al., 2012), whereas the pluralist theorists challenge this view by proposing multiple dimensions for morality, namely “care/harm”, “fairness/cheating”, “loyalty/betrayal”, “authority/subversion”, and “sanctity/degradation” (Graham et al., 2013). On the other hand, the rationale behind conventional norms is sustaining the order within a social context by regulating its members (e.g., Hardecker et al., 2016; Mammen et al., 2018). Children discriminate these different types of social norms from an early age (e.g., Schmidt et al., 2012). For example, they argue that conventional but not moral norms are dependent on the context and have a higher possibility to be changed (e.g., Mammen

et al., 2018; Schmidt et al., 2012; Smetana, 1989). Moreover, children hold different expectations about the generalizability of these norms (e.g., Killen & Dahl, 2020; Liberman et al., 2018; Rhodes & Chalik, 2013; Schmidt et al., 2012). For example, when social groups are based on accent, even 3-year-olds expect moral norms to apply for all and conventional norms to be followed by in-groups only (Schmidt et al., 2012). Furthermore, when the groups differ by their languages, 3-11-year-olds expect in-groups to follow and out-groups to break conventional norms (Liberman et al., 2018). However, their expectations regarding moral norms indicate a different pattern: 7-11-year-olds, but not 3-7-year-olds, expect out-groups to break moral norms, whereas no systematic expectation is observed for the followers of moral norms (Liberman et al., 2018).

Even though children's expectations regarding conventional norms have not been studied for religious groups yet, there are studies that have investigated both adults' and children's expectations about moral norms. Adult studies showed that people associate faces with Dark Triad personality traits (i.e., narcissism, psychopathy, Machiavellianism) with lower level of religiosity (Alper et al., 2021). Among these personality traits, "Machiavellianism" in particular includes manipulative behaviors which also includes immorality (Jones & Paulhus, 2009). Also, atheists are evaluated as immoral both by theists and atheists (e.g., Gervais, 2014), and distrust was found to be the driving force of this inference (Gervais et al., 2011). Notably, atheists experience prejudice from a range of religious communities, including Christians, Muslims, and even by atheists themselves in a way that more immoral and less prosocial actions are expected from atheists (e.g., Edgell et al., 2006; Kossowska et al., 2017). Going back to developmental studies, 6-9-year-olds not only differentiate between religious ideologies, facts, and preferences, but they

also infer that only people they share religious ideologies with would commit prosocial behaviors (Heiphetz et al., 2014). On the other hand, 10-16-year-old Christian and Jewish (Nucci & Turiel, 1993) and 9-15-year-old Muslim and Hindu children (Srinivasan et al., 2019) evaluated moral norms negatively, regardless of the actors' religious ideology, whereas they apply religious norms (e.g., wearing a headscarf) to particular religious groups.

1.6 Religion in Turkey

According to surveys (e.g., Konda, 2019), more than 85% of Turkish citizens indicate their religious affiliation as Islam. Additionally, the citizens who report being affiliated with another religion than Islam are fewer than citizens with no religious affiliation. When it comes to the question that "How would you describe yourself in terms of religiosity?", approximately 10% report being ascetic, 52% as religious and 34% as a believer. The rest consists of disbelievers/atheists.

Furthermore, 71% of Turkish citizens indicate that religion is "very important" for their lives, whilst this ratio is 47% for US citizens (World Values Survey, 2020).

Regarding religious practices, approximately 70% of Turkish citizens state that they celebrate religious holidays, which correspond to the most-celebrated special day in Turkey (Konda, 2019). To make a comparison, the ratio of people who celebrate birthdays of their family members is approximately 50%. On the other hand, fasting appeared to be a more common religious ritual than performing prayer. 23% of males and 34% of females state that they perform prayer regularly, while 43% of males and 52% of females indicate that they fast regularly.

When it comes to the relationship between religion and morality, 75% of Turkish citizens report that "religion is needed for morality", while the worldwide

median is 45% and the US mean is 44% (Pew Research Center, 2019). Besides, the results of the same report indicated that citizens from countries with lower GDPs tend to see religion as a requirement for morality. Similarly, the level of education is negatively correlated with the idea that religion is needed for morality. Furthermore, approximately 79% of Turkish citizens indicated that religion should be involved in morality education while rearing children. In particular, approximately 50% of Turkish citizens argue that religion classes should be mandatory for all (Konda, 2019). Importantly, the answer to this question varies according to the level of self-reported religiosity ranging from being ascetic to being atheist. Interestingly, 7% of Turkish atheists took side with mandatory religious teaching, too. In addition to Turkish parents' support for mandatory religion classes, Quran courses are the second most common preference of parents for making their children involved during summer vacations, while their first preference is foreign language courses (see Konda, 2019). In concert, it might be proposed that Turkish parents consider morality and religion as interconnected, and this view might shape their child-rearing practices.

In terms of formal teaching, mandatory religious classes, named "Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge/Ethics" start from the 4th grade in Turkey. The Five Pillars of Islam, which are mostly about the ritualistic behavioral components of Islam, are taught in schools along with the Six Articles of Islamic Faith, which emphasize the belief component. As a result, children learn about the belief and ritualistic aspects of religion at the same time. Arguably, this situation could have led to an equal attribution of importance to these two components in Turkey, as also observed in the World Values Survey (2020).

CHAPTER 2

THE CURRENT STUDY

The current study aims to understand the developmental trajectory of expectancies from people with different religious ideologies regarding their violations of moral and conventional norms. In order to answer this question, characters with different religious ideologies were introduced to participants, and they were asked who might have violated a *moral* or *conventional* norm. In particular, it is aimed to investigate how targets' religious ideology shapes children's expectancies regarding violating different types of norms. Even though children think that moral norms apply to both in- and out-groups (e.g., Schmidt et al., 2012), there are conflicting findings when the groups are based on religion (e.g., Heiphetz et al., 2014; Srinivasan et al., 2019). For instance, Heiphetz et al. (2013b) found that when 6-8-year-olds are introduced to Christian and Hindu characters, children expected bad actions from the Christian characters less than the chance level; yet they did not show such an in-group preference for good actions. Importantly, this study did not differentiate between moral and conventional actions despite the fact that the items used for bad actions (stealing and not doing homework) and good actions (helping a friend and making cookies for friends) involved both moral and conventional connotations.

Second, religious teachings may pose different levels of emphasis on social practices (e.g., rituals) (e.g., Cohen & Rozin, 2001; Soliman et al., 2015), and previous studies present a correspondence between religious teachings and their followers in terms of appreciating social practices (e.g., Cohen, 2002; Cohen et al., 2003). Previous research has already shown that children draw a line to the generalizability of conventional norms and extend them only to members of a given

group (e.g., Schmidt et al., 2012). However, it is an open question as to whether similar generalizations would apply when groups are defined by religious ideologies.

Further conflicting findings in the literature regarding children's expectancies of bad and good behaviors from people of different religious ideologies might be explained by children's age. For example, Srinivasan et al. (2019) found that 9-15-year-old Muslim and Hindu children evaluated breaking a moral norm as bad regardless of the religious group that the actor belongs to. On the other hand, Heiphetz et al. (2013b) found that 6-8-year-old Christian children attributed fewer bad behaviors to Christian protagonists compared to Hindus. To my knowledge, no previous study investigated the developmental shift in children's evaluations of religious groups in moral and conventional norm contexts. Accordingly, the current study will compare 6-7-year-olds and 9-10-year-olds.

This thesis aims to fill a gap in the literature by contrasting expectancies regarding violations of moral and conventional norms and investigate the developmental trajectory of such expectancies using two religious contrasts. In the 1st contrast, a Muslim believer and a disbeliever character were introduced to participants. In the 2nd contrast, two believer characters, who believe in different supernatural agents, were introduced to participants to see whether the religious affiliation itself influences children's expectancies. Previous research has already established that children do not perceive religious out-groups as homogeneous and evaluate them in a nuanced way (e.g., Heiphetz et al. 2013b; Heiphetz & Young, 2019). Even though children's expectations for moral and religious norms have already been studied (e.g., Srinivasan et al., 2019), their expectations from different religious groups, including the non-religious ones regarding conformity to or violation of moral and conventional norms are still to be examined.

The main goal of this experimental design is to have a general idea about whether believing in God, simply being religious rather than non-religious, would result in similar expectancies with believing in the same religion or not. By introducing theist characters with different religious beliefs, it is possible to investigate whether children give more importance to belief in divine power or a specific religion when judging the characters.

In the current study, 6-7 (*younger*) and 9-10-year-olds (*older*) were recruited. Six- to 7-year-olds were selected because children at this age have already developed an understanding of God (e.g., Heiphetz et al., 2018), and they can judge individuals based on religious groups (e.g., Heiphetz et al., 2013b; 2014); however, their religious understanding is not shaped by formal schooling yet. Thus, there is also an older age group that was exposed to formal religious education in school. Children participated in seven trials where they were introduced to two characters whose religious groups changed based on children's randomly assigned condition. Across 4 trials, children were asked to make guesses about which character might have committed moral or conventional transgressions. Across 2 trials, they were asked about their preference between the characters in terms of trust (i.e., sharing a secret) and affiliation (i.e., playing a game together). Finally, in the last trial, children were asked about their self-perceived similarity to those characters. Additionally, a parental survey was collected from participant families to be able to control the religiosity level in children's evaluations.

2.1 Hypotheses

H1: I expected a main effect of Age. Older children would expect norm violations from non-Muslim characters more than Muslim characters because of the increased differentiation between different religions with age (Takriti et al., 2006).

H2: I expected a main effect of Religious Contrast. Children would expect norm violations more from disbelievers than from non-Muslim believers because they can rank the similarity of religious out-groups to their own religious group starting from an early age and they evaluate them differently such as liking believer out-groups more than disbeliever out-groups (Heiphetz & Young., 2019).

H3: I expected an interaction between Religious Contrast and Condition. Children would specifically expect moral violations from disbeliever characters more than believer characters. My expectation is based on Gervais et al. (2014), where not believing in a God is associated with immoral behaviors even by the people who do not believe in God.

H4: I expected an interaction between Age, Religious Contrast, and Condition. For the Moral domain, I expect children to attribute violations to disbelievers and this attribution to be greater with age. Heiphetz and Young (2019) found that Christian 6-8-year-olds were shown to perceive Jews (who also believe in God) more similar to themselves compared to non-religious characters (who do not believe in God), but this difference was marginally significant for children when it was highly significant for adults. Hence, it may be proposed that with age, children start to evaluate disbeliever individuals as more different from religious individuals in general, and again based on Gervais et al. (2014), such an increased differentiation of atheists would lead to increased expectations about immoral behaviors. On the other hand, I expect neither age group to show different expectations for believer characters for

the moral norm violations. My expectation stems from previous research (Nucci & Turiel, 1993; Srivivasan et al., 2019) showing that even older children generalized moral norms to all “religious” groups (e.g., Srivivasan et al., 2019). For the Conventional domain, I expect kids to attribute conventional norm violations to non-Muslim characters in general because they rely on group boundaries for conventional transgressions (e.g., Liberman et al., 2018); yet their expectancy will be greater with age again due to the increasing differentiation of religions throughout childhood (Takriti et al., 2006).

2.2 Method

2.2.1 Participants

In this online study, 81 6-7-year-olds (44 girls, $M_{age} = 7.02$, $SD_{age} = .66$) and 80 9-10-year-olds (40 boys, $M_{age} = 9.85$, $SD_{age} = .55$) participated. The sample size calculations based on Liberman et al. (2018) with the effect size in Cohen’s d value of 1.03 revealed that 14 participants in each cell should be enough to reach a power of .80 at the alpha level of .05. To reach a greater power, we planned to recruit at least 20 participants in each cell (e.g., younger children & moral norms, older children & moral norms). Participants were recruited via social media accounts and the database of Baby and Child Development Laboratory. One child was excluded due to experimenter error, and one child was excluded because of their diagnosis for learning disability.

All participants were residents in Turkey, and native speakers of Turkish. The socioeconomic status of participants was assessed via MacArthur Scale (Adler et al., 2020) which range from 1 to 10 as 10 indicates highest perceived-SES, and we found that most participants reported as having middle- to upper SES ($M = 6.50$, $SD =$

1.63). Among the parents of participants, 69.6% were Muslim, 1.2% were Christian, 13% were not religious and 15.5% did not return the survey or prefer to answer this question (for parent religiosity distribution, see Figure 1; for religious diversity of participants' close circles, see Figure 2; for child's attendance to religious classes, see Figure 3; for children's perceived similarity to Muslim or non-Muslim characters, see Figure 4).

Participants were randomly assigned to Condition (i.e., moral or conventional norms) and Religious Contrast (i.e., 1st or 2nd Religious Contrast). The ethics approval was obtained from The Ethics Committee for Master and Ph.D. Theses in Social Sciences and Humanities, in Boğaziçi University (see Appendix A).

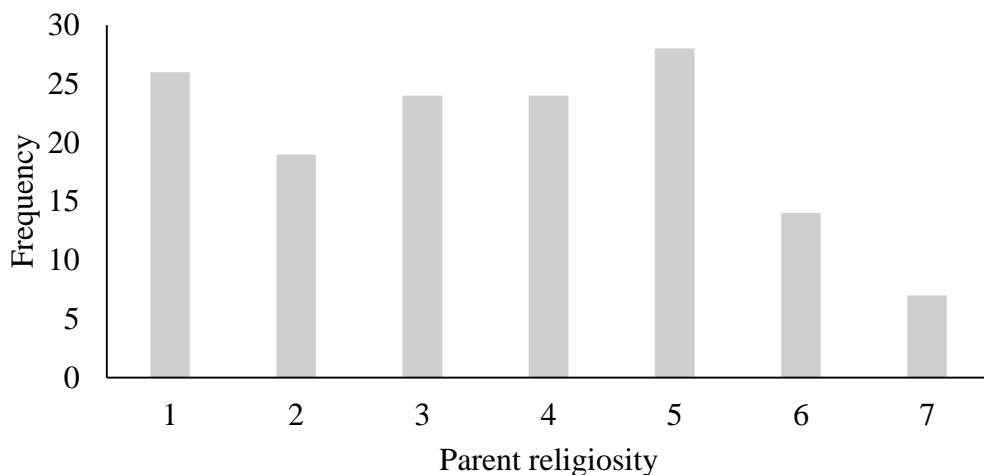


Figure 1. Histogram of parent religiosity.

Note: Data retrieved from Parent Survey, where parents were asked to rate their level of religiosity with a 7-item Likert scale (1 = not religious at all, 7 = very religious) (n = 142)

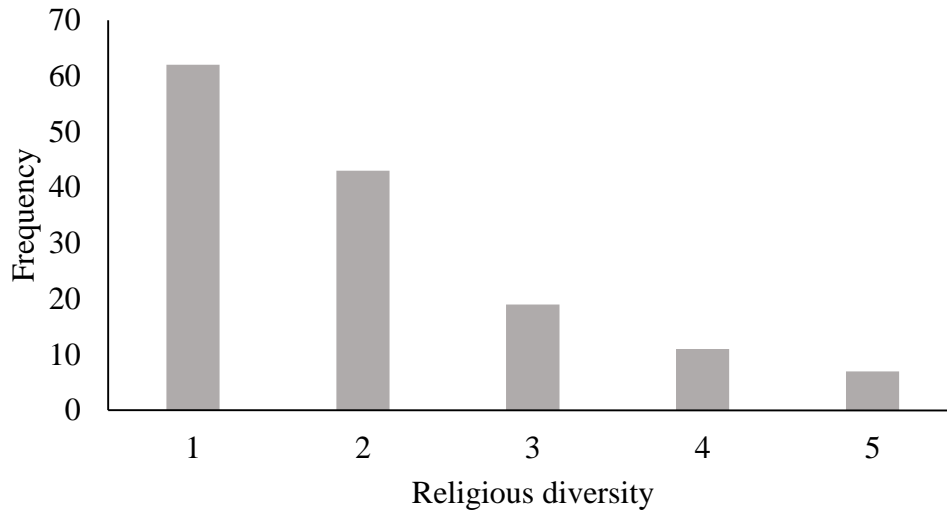


Figure 2. Histogram of religious diversity.

Note: Data retrieved from Parent Survey where parents were asked to indicate the religious diversity in their child's immediate close circle (e.g., close friends, classmates) with a 5-item Likert Scale (1 = not diverse at all, 5 = very diverse) (n = 142).

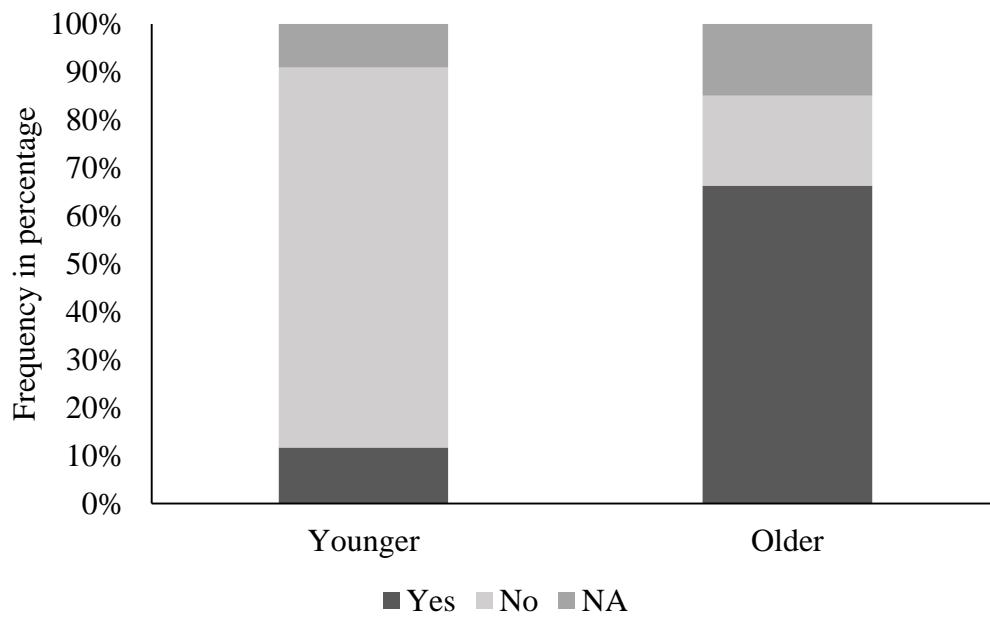


Figure 3. Stacked histogram of child's attendance to religious classes.

Note: NAs refer to missing data. Data retrieved from Parent Survey (n = 161).

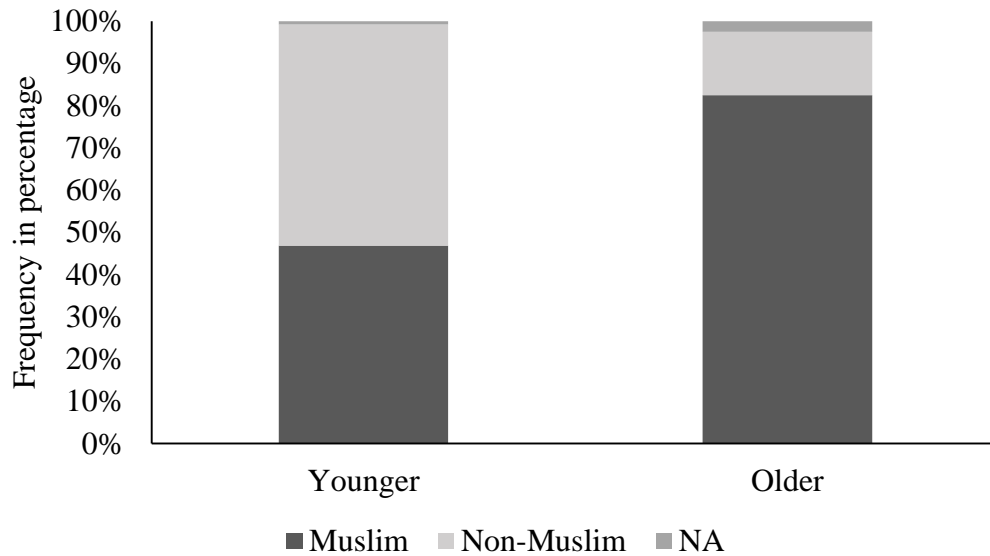


Figure 4. Children’s perceived similarity to introduced characters.

Note: Stacked histogram of children's perceived similarity to Muslim and non-Muslim characters (i.e., disbelievers, non-Muslim believers). It shows children's responses to the question of “Which one (of the two targets) do you think is most like you?” (n = 161).

2.2.2 Materials

Stimuli: Stimuli consisted of child drawings that were used by Davoodi et al. (2020).

There were 28 generic child drawings that had different clothing, hair and facial features. Half of these were male, and half were female. A small black dot and a big black dot were used when asking how sure children are with their answers.

We also compiled a list of norms consisted of six examples for each norm type based on previous research (e.g., Fu et al., 2015; Karadağ & Soley, 2023; Liberman et al. 2018; Mammen et al., 2018) (see Appendix B).

All visuals were arranged into PowerPoint slides.

Parent Survey: In addition to demographic questions (education level, and SES), the parent survey asked about the religious affiliation of the parents and the child, parents’ attendance to religious practices both in public and private settings (Huber & Huber, 2012; Rohrbaugh & Jessor, 1975), a self-religiosity question with 5-item

Likert scale (1: not at all religious, 7: very religious), whether children attend religious classes, how often the parents talk about religious matters with their child (1: never, 5: always), children's religious group diversity in their immediate environment (e.g., best friends, schoolmates) (1: not at all diverse, 5: very diverse), and parents' reaction to their children if they had different views on religion than parents do (*I react and I don't want to - I don't react but I don't want to - I don't react, it doesn't matter to me*) (see Appendix C for all items). The MacArthur Self-Reported Socioeconomic Status was used for the assessing SES of the participating families (Adler et al., 2000).

2.2.3 Design and procedure

All sessions were conducted online via Zoom. The procedure was adapted from Liberman et al. (2018); yet only negative actions (i.e., transgressions) were used. According to randomly assigned conditions, children were either asked about moral or conventional norm violations. Following Liberman et al. (2018), we avoided to introduce both norm types to children in the same experiment since they may compare the characters and instances within the experiment. In each condition, children were presented with 4 norm violation test trials in total, and all of them were about either moral or conventional norms. A list of 6 norms were provided to parents to fill before the experiment to confirm which norms they think their children know. Children were asked about four of the norms that their parents reported their children to be familiar with. If the parent indicated more than four items, four items were selected randomly.

2.2.3.1 Warm-up sessions

After greeting the participant child and their family at the beginning of the Zoom session, the participant and the family were reminded about the general procedure and the content of the study. Then, a warm-up session was conducted. First, across two trials, the participants were shown two different-colored columns one by one and asked which color they saw on the screen (see Figure 5). Then, across the next two trials, the same columns were shown one by one again, but this time with an animal on them, and the participants were asked which animal (i.e., cow and owl) they saw on the columns (see Figure 6). The warm-up session aimed to familiarize the child to the online procedure and the experimenter.

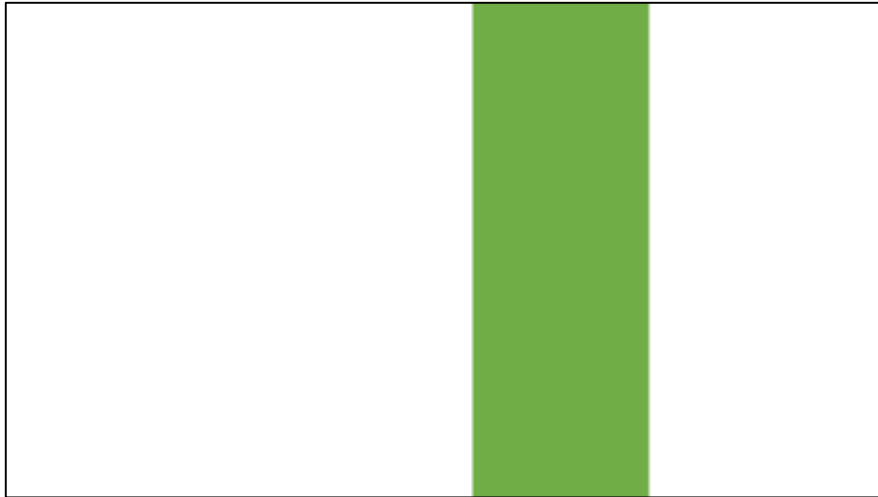


Figure 5. Example display from first part of warm-up session.
Note: The display that was shown when asking which colour they see on the screen.



Figure 6. Example display from second part of warm-up session.
Note: The display that shown when asking the animals which appear on different coloured-columns.

2.2.3.2 Training session

The training session is designed as an introduction to the game. It aimed to familiarize children with the paradigm and content of the study. First, the experimenter showed a display with both different-colored columns and told the participant: “During this game, I want you to give your answers by telling the color of the column such as the yellow column and green column”. When the experimenter

referred to the columns, the referred column was shaking to ease participants' understanding (see Figure 7). Throughout the experiment and for all questions, the experimenter first introduced the left-hand side. Then, across two trials, participants were shown the same animals each on the different-colored columns at the same time and asked which animal could fly and which animal could make milk (see Figure 8). Then, the experimenter told the participant that she wanted them to give their answers like this throughout the experiment. Second, the experimenter introduced the "sureness scale" and told the participant: "I may ask you about your sureness levels throughout the game (see Figure 9). This little circle means *I am a little sure* and this big circle means *I am very sure*".



Figure 7. Example display from the first part of training session.
Note: The display that was shown when explaining how children should answer the questions throughout the study.

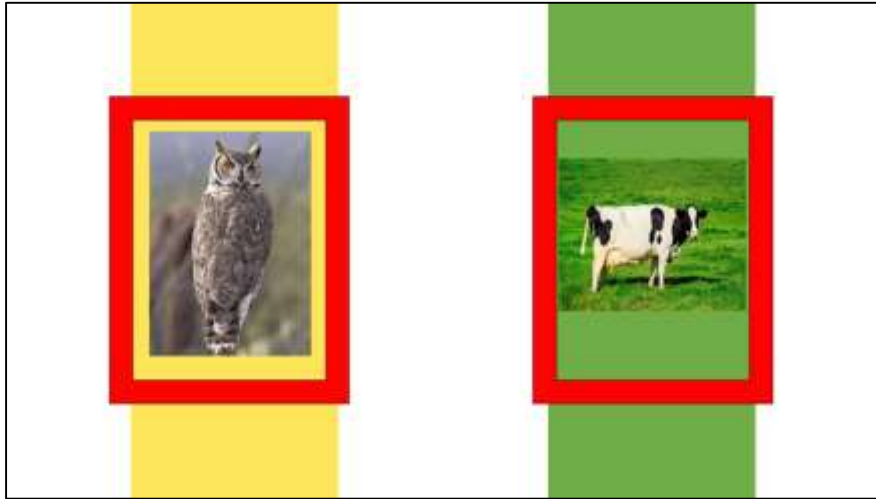


Figure 8. Example display from the second part of training session.
Note: The display that was shown when asking “Which animal can fly/make milk? This one or this one?”. A red frame appeared around each circle one by one depending on which one the experimenter was referring to.

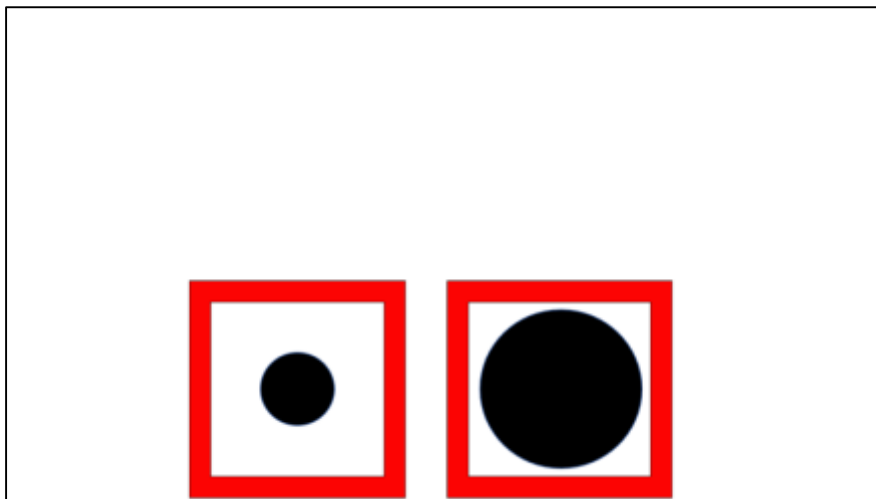


Figure 9. The display of sureness scale.
Note: The display that was shown when introducing the sureness scale to the participant and when asking participants’ sureness level across 6 trials.

2.2.3.3 Test session

During the test session, the participants heard the following before moving on to the game: “People may hold different beliefs. For example, some people believe that there is *a supernatural power named Allah* (same for 1st and 2nd contrast). On the other hand, some people believe that there is *no supernatural power* (1st contrast)/a

supernatural power named Elohim (2nd contrast). Now, we can start our game. Today I'm going to introduce you to some children and ask questions about them. Some of these children believe that there is a supernatural power named Allah (same for 1st and 2nd contrast). Some of these children believe that there is *no supernatural power* (1st contrast)/*a supernatural power named Elohim* (2nd contrast). Can you help me figure out what the kids I'm about to introduce to you might have done?". The order of the introduction of Muslim and disbeliever/non-Muslim believers were counterbalanced across orders. After this introduction, children were reminded one more time about how to answer questions during the experiment by using the same display with the different-colored columns (see Figure 7).

The test trials were conducted by introducing two same-gender cartoon characters side by side (see Figure 10) as one of them is a Muslim believer and one of them is a non-Muslim (i.e., a disbeliever or a non-Muslim believer depending on the participant's condition). The character pairs stayed the same (e.g., all girls saw the girl pair with blue and purple shirts on the 1st trial), yet the order of them were counterbalanced across orders (e.g., the girl with the blue shirt stayed either on the left or the right). As a red frame appeared around one of the children, the experimenter said: "This child is same age as you and believes that there is supernatural power named Allah." As a red frame appeared around the other child, the experimenter said: This child is same age as you and believes that there is *no supernatural power* (1st contrast)/*a supernatural power named Elohim* (2nd contrast)". Then the red frame disappeared, and the experimenter said: "One of these children *made noise in the library*. Which child do you think could have done this?". After the child gave their answer by telling the color of the column (e.g., the yellow one), they were asked "Are you a little sure or very sure?" by showing the sureness

scale on the screen. Throughout the experiment, the participants saw the yellow column on the left-hand side and green column on the right-hand side, but the order of the characters (e.g., Muslim on the left or non-Muslim on the left) were counterbalanced across children. Importantly, the side of the characters stayed the same throughout the study as well (e.g., if the child was introduced to the Muslim character first which was on the left side, then the Muslim character stayed on the left side for all questions). Additionally, children were introduced to either moral or conventional norm violations but the norms were presented in random order.

After four test trials, children were shown two characters side by side and asked exploratory questions regarding their trust and affiliation preferences between Muslim and non-Muslim characters and their sureness levels about their answers. The former was asked as “If you had a secret, which child would you choose to share your secret with?”, and the latter as “Which child would you prefer to play with?”. These questions always came after four test trials regarding children’s norm violation expectations, yet the order of them were counterbalanced across participants. In total, there were eight orders where the side of the religious groups, the side of the characters within pairs, and the order of exploratory questions were counterbalanced. At the end of the experiment, children were asked to select which character is most like them, following Heiphetz and Young (2019). At the end of the experiment, the participant was thanked, and a parent survey was sent to parents via an e-mail along with a participation certificate for the participant child.

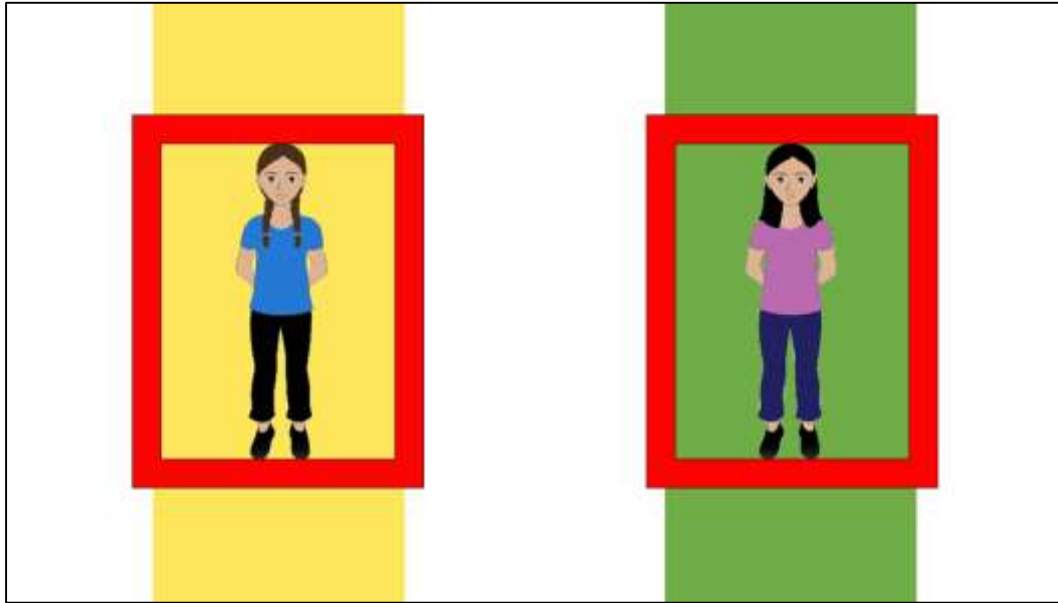


Figure 10. Example display from the test sessions.
Note: Similar displays were used across seven trials.

2.3 Data Analysis

2.3.1 Scoring

Children received “1” for choosing the non-Muslim character (either disbeliever or non-Muslim believer) and “-1” for choosing the Muslim believer character for questions including norm violation expectation (i.e., Expectancy Score), and perceived similarity (i.e., Similarity Score). For Expectancy Score, children’s answers were multiplied by “1” for being *a little sure* about their answer, and by “2” for being *very sure*. Thus, these scores ranged from -2 (choosing Muslim and being very sure) to 2 (choosing non-Muslim and being very sure). For Similarity Score, we did not have a “sureness” question; so, children either received “-1” (choosing Muslim) or “1” (choosing non-Muslim).

For trust and playmate preference questions, scoring was reversed for ease of processing the data and the graphs. Thus, children received “1” for choosing Muslim

and “-1” for choosing non-Muslim characters. Again, these scores were multiplied by “1” or “2” based on children's sureness and ranged from -2 to 2.

2.3.2 Results

Linear mixed model analysis was conducted on R (R Core Team, 2022) with lme4 package (Bates et al., 2015). The full model included Expectancy Score as output, Condition (Moral vs. Conventional), Age Group (6-7-year-olds vs. 9-10-year-olds), Religious Contrast (1: Muslim believer vs. disbeliever characters; 2: Muslim believer vs. non-Muslim believer characters), and their interactions as fixed effects, Similarity Score and Parent Religiosity as covariates, and random intercept of participant ID. Original data included 161 participants but due to missing data on covariate variables, we dropped 22 participants (for Similarity Score $n = 3$; for Parent Religiosity $n = 19$) from model analyses and conducted them with 139 participants.

First, we compared the null model which only included participant ID as random intercept with the model which included Order, Gender, and Trial in addition to the random intercept. We did not find significant difference between these models, $\chi^2(3) = 1.79, p = .6$. Thus, we did not include Order, Gender or Trial to the rest of the analyses. Second, we compared the null model with the full model which included all variables (i.e., fixed effects, interactions, covariates, random intercept). The full model improved the fit compared to the null model, $\chi^2(9) = 65.31, p < .001$.

For the rest of the analyses, we adopted backward elimination method and initially tested if the interactions are significant. The interactions were eliminated from the model one by one based on their significance level. In other words, the interaction with the highest p-value was eliminated from the full model first.

Primarily, we compared the first eliminated model with the full model. We did not

find significant difference between these two models; thus, we concluded to use the eliminated model. We used the same strategy for the rest of the analysis: When we found no difference between the model including that particular interaction and the model excluding that interaction, we used the latter one. We kept eliminating the non-significant interactions until the remaining interactions are significant. Eventually, we excluded all two-way interactions from the model (order of exclusion: Condition by Experiment, Condition by Age Group, Religious Contrast by Age Group; all $ps > .30$). The final model included Condition, Age Group, and Religious Contrast as fixed effects, a three-way interaction between Condition, Age Group and Religious Contrast, Similarity, and Parent Religiosity as covariates, and random intercept of ID.

The main effects were tested as the following: We compared the final model with and without that particular main effect to see if it contributed to the model significantly. We found a main effect of Age Group, $\chi^2(1) = 7.74, p < .01$. Older children ($M = 1.09, SD = 1.17$) expected norms to be violated by non-Muslims more than younger children ($M = .57, SD = 1.53$), $Estimate = .17, SE = .06, p < .01$. We also found a main effect of Religious Contrast, $\chi^2(1) = 10.33, p = .001$. Overall, children expected disbelievers ($M = 1.01, SD = 1.34$) to violate norms more than non-Muslim believers ($M = .64, SD = 1.42$), $Estimate = -.20, SE = .06, p = .002$. Condition did not significantly improve the model fit, $\chi^2(1) = 3.10, p = .08$, but the three-way interaction between Condition, Age Group, and Religious Contrast improved the model fit significantly, $\chi^2(1) = 6.85, p = .01$ (see Figure 11). The tukey adjusted pairwise comparisons showed that older children ($M = 1.31, SD = .95$) expected disbelievers to violate moral norms more than younger children ($M = .49, SD = 1.71$), $Estimate = -.66, SE = .18, p = .006$. Younger children expected

disbelievers ($M = .93$, $SD = 1.37$) to commit conventional norm violation more than non-Muslim believers ($M = .31$, $SD = 1.50$), $Estimate = .71$, $SE = .17$, $p = .002$; whereas older children expected disbelievers ($M = 1.31$, $SD = .95$) to violate moral norms more than non-Muslim believers ($M = .66$, $SD = 1.35$), $Estimate = .71$, $SE = .17$, $p = .002$. Additionally, older children ($M = 1.07$, $SD = 1.23$) expected non-Muslim believers to violate conventional norms more than younger children ($M = .31$, $SD = .1.50$), $Estimate = -.66$ $SE = .18$, $p = .006$. We also conducted post-hoc power analysis with pwr package (Champely, 2020) on R (R Core Team, 2022) based on the effect size of three-way interaction which is .05 and found that the analysis reached power of .73 at the alpha level of .05. Lastly, we found significant effects of the control variables which are Similarity ($Estimate = -.30$, $SE = .08$, $p < .001$) and Parent Religiosity ($Estimate = .14$, $SE = .04$, $p < .001$). Overall, when children felt more similar to non-Muslim characters, they attributed less violations to non-Muslims, and when the parent religiosity increased, they tended to expect more norm violations from non-Muslims.

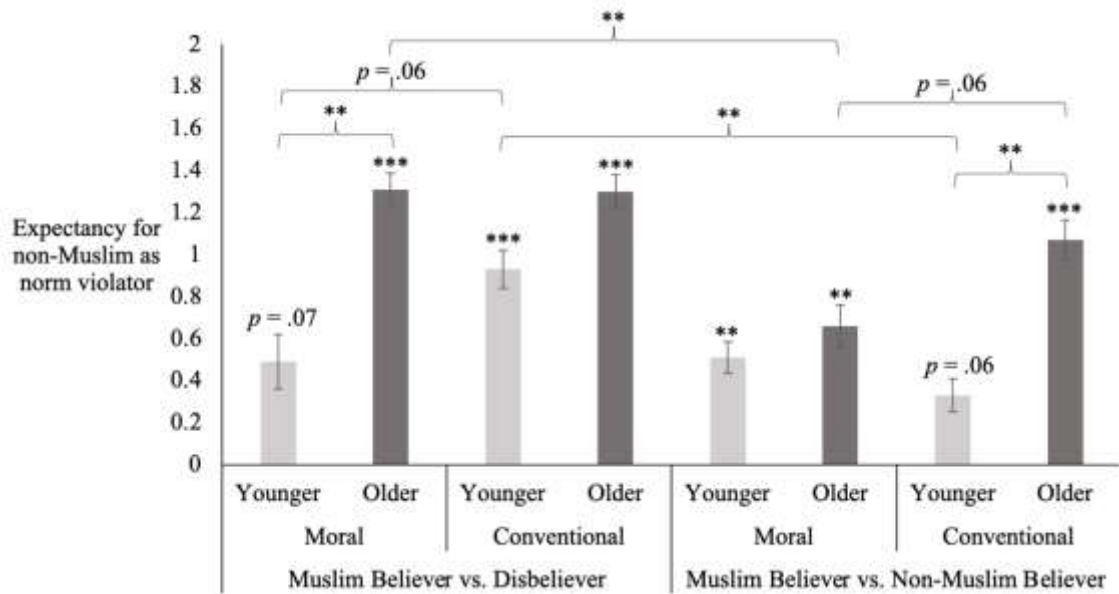


Figure 11. Results of the study.

Note: Comparison of Religious Contrast, Condition, and Age Group. Error bars represent standard error (significance codes: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$).

For exploratory purposes, we analyzed participants' trust and playmate preferences with chance-level analyses and ANOVAs. First, for trust, we used Age Group and Religious Contrast as independent variables. Two-way between-subjects ANOVA revealed that Age Group has a main effect on trust for non-Muslim characters, $F(1) = 12.17, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .07$ (see Figure 12). Even though both age groups trust Muslims more than non-Muslims according to chance-level analyses ($p < .001$), older children ($M = 1.52, SD = .97$) choose to trust Muslim characters more than younger children ($M = .77, SD = 1.65$), $t(155) = -3.49, p < .001$.

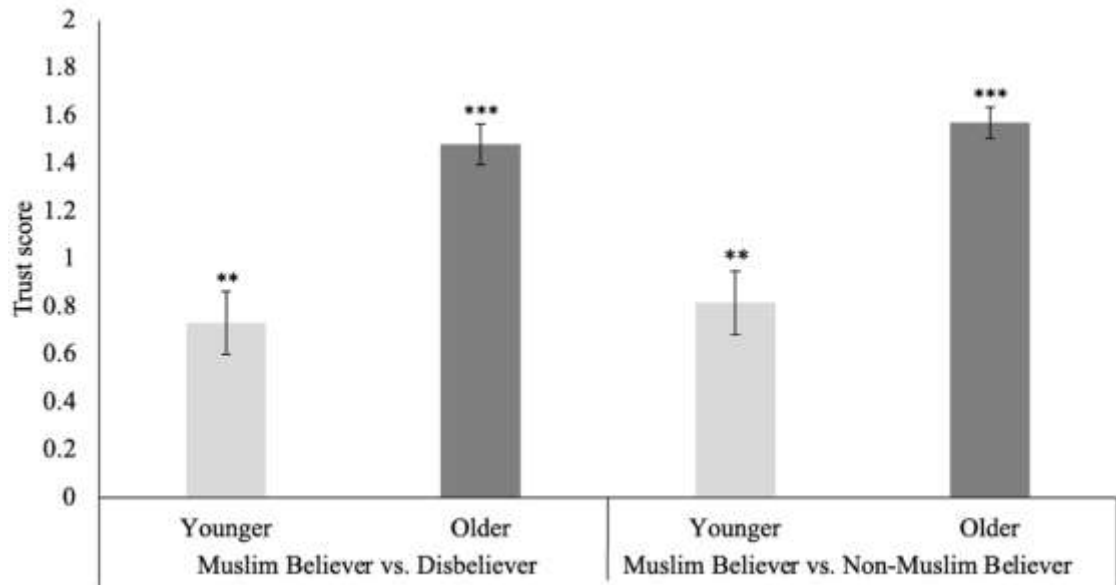


Figure 12. Children’s preferences in trust domain.

Note: Children’s trust was evaluated with the question of “If you had a secret, whom would you share it with?”. Higher scores indicate higher trust for Muslim character over non-Muslim character. Error bars represent standard error (significance codes: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$).

For playmate preferences, we used the same analysis strategy. Two-way between-subjects ANOVA showed that neither Age Group nor Religious Contrast affected participants’ playmate preferences ($ps > .11$, see Figure 13). Chance-level analyses revealed that both younger ($M = .59$, $SD = 1.73$) and older children ($M = 1$, $SD = 1.41$) choose to play with Muslim character more than disbeliever characters, ($ps < .05$). On the other hand, older ($M = .93$, $SD = 1.54$, $p < .001$) but not younger children ($M = .53$, $SD = 1.74$, $p = .07$) prefer to play with Muslim-believers rather than non-Muslim believers.

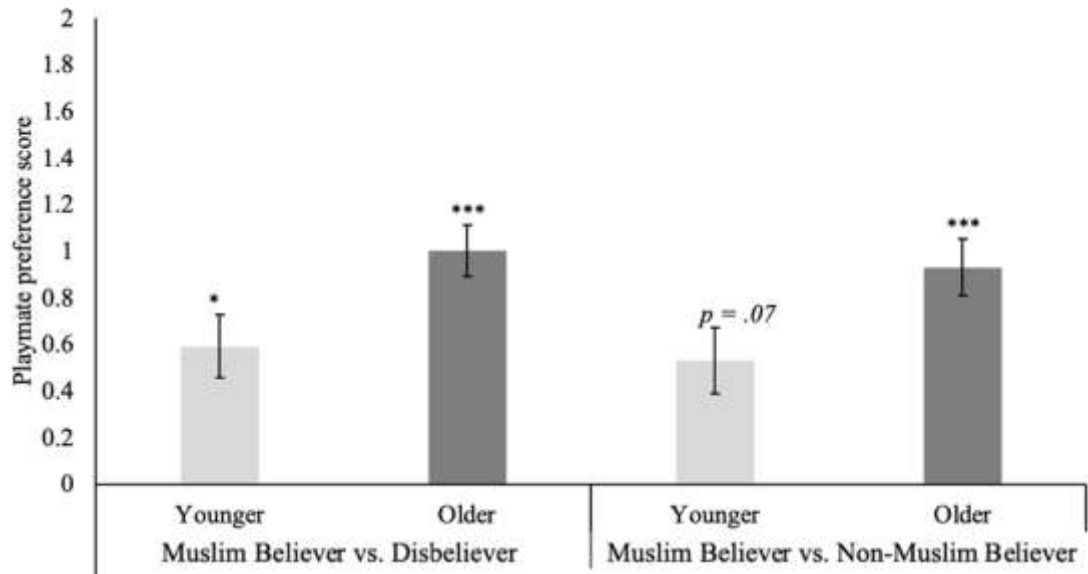


Figure 13. Children's preferences in affiliation domain.

Note: Children's social preference was evaluated with the question of "If you were to play a game, whom would you rather play with?". Higher scores indicate higher preference for Muslim character over non-Muslim character. Error bars represent standard error (significance codes: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$).

CHAPTER 3

DISCUSSION

This study investigated children's behavioral expectations from different religious groups by focusing on moral or conventional norm violations. As hypothesized, we found that children expected norm violations from non-Muslims more than Muslim characters. Again, as expected, there was a main effect of the characters' religious groups: Children expected disbelievers to violate norms more than believer characters. We also expected children to attribute conventional norm violations more to non-Muslim believers and moral norm violations more to disbelievers. Contrary to our expectation, we did not find an overall interaction between religious contrast and norm domain. Instead, we found a significant three-way interaction between religious contrast, norm domain and age. Specifically, compared to younger children, older children expected moral norm transgressions to come from disbelievers (vs. Muslims) and conventional norm transgressions to come from non-Muslim believers (vs. Muslims). Further, younger children attributed conventional norm violations to disbelievers more than non-Muslim believers, whereas older children expected disbelievers to violate moral norms more than non-Muslim believers. Also, based on our post-hoc power analysis where we found the power as .73, it is possible that we did not find the hypothesized two-way interaction between religious contrast and norm domain due to not reaching .80 power. These findings suggest that children's inferences based on others' religious beliefs become more nuanced with age: As they get older, children might perceive non-Muslim believers as belonging to another social group, and thus expect them to violate conventional norms that apply to their community. On the other hand, with age, children might be more likely to associate having faith in general, regardless of which religion one believes, with being more

moral. In sum, children's expectations from different religious groups are subject to change during the elementary school period.

For exploratory purposes, we also asked about children's trust (i.e., sharing a secret) and affiliation (i.e., playmate) preferences in order to further understand their attitudes towards individuals with different religious beliefs. We found that both age groups trusted Muslim characters more (vs. non-Muslim characters), and this trust increased with age. On the other hand, while both age groups preferred Muslim characters over the disbeliever characters as a playmate; only older children showed a preference for Muslim characters as a playmate when the other option is a non-Muslim believer. Overall, these additional analyses support our main analyses in a way that children do evaluate different religious groups in a nuanced way rather than evaluating all as general out-groups (e.g., Heiphetz et al., 2013b; Heiphetz & Young, 2019; Srinivasan et al., 2019). Further, these findings might suggest that children's in-group preferences based on religious distinctions might emerge later than their social choices based on other perceptually salient group-cues such as gender, race, language, or accent (e.g., Aboud, 2003; Hirschfeld & Gelman, 1997; Kinzler et al., 2010; Kinzler et al., 2009) as well as covert group cues such as shared cultural knowledge (e.g., Soley & Spelke, 2016). For instance, compared to our study where 6-7-year-old children showed at chance preference between believers in affiliation domain, previous research indicates even 3-year-olds prefer to be friends with same gender characters (Shutts et al., 2013), and 5-year-olds with native accented own language speakers (Kinzler et al., 2009; Souza et al., 2013). Thus, it can be another fruitful follow-up to understand why we observe such differences in onset of in-group preferences for different social groups. On the other hand, even young children trusted Muslim targets more than non-Muslim targets, even when they were

believers, suggesting that children's sensitivity to these religious distinctions already have social implications for young children. These findings further yield the increasing significance of religion as a social cue for children across elementary school years.

These results might be interpreted by primarily focusing on how younger and older age groups associate violations in different norm domains with different religious groups. Younger children had a lower tendency to attribute violations to non-Muslims (vs. Muslims) compared to older children. Further, younger children expected conventional norms more from disbelievers than non-Muslim believers while older children's expectations were similar for both outgroups. The overall expectations of young children suggest that they do differentiate religious groups, but they might have ranked them based on their relative similarity to Muslims. As Heiphetz and Young (2019) argued, children of this age group might calculate how many commonalities each religious group shares. In our case, they might have considered the number of similarities between religious groups in a way that believing in God and believing in the same God would count as two distinct commonalities. In other words, believer children might think that they share more beliefs with believers of the other religion because they still believe in God even this is actually a different God whereas the similarity between believer and disbeliever characters is less. Eventually, as stated by Liberman et al. (2018), children might have considered such relative differences in belief and related group boundaries when thinking about conventional norms. Eventually, this might have led them to hold lower expectations for non-Muslim believers as conventional norm violators compared to disbelievers. For the moral domain, it is particularly interesting that younger children did not hold different expectations for disbeliever and non-Muslim

believer groups which might suggest that instead of considering the details about religious beliefs (e.g., believing in God, believing in the same God), they rather relied on overall in- and out-group classification.

When it comes to older children, it seems like they not only expect non-Muslims to violate norms more than Muslims, but they also differentiate between non-Muslim groups, particularly for moral norm violations. In line with Gervais et al., (2011), “belief in God” might be specifically associated with moral actions, but this association strengthens as children grow up. Importantly, considering previous research where 9–15-year-old Muslim and Hindu children in India generalized the wrongness of moral norms to both religious groups (Srinivasan et al., 2019), older children might also be influenced by the way we asked questions. For example, children of this age group might be aware of the wrongness of the moral norms for both religious groups (e.g., Srinivasan et al., 2019); yet, when they are asked for their guess about the violator, they still attribute it to non-Muslims because they are not given the option to select “both” or “none”. In terms of the conventional domain, it seems like they mostly relied on in- and out-group classifications but did not take the nuances of religious beliefs into account as younger kids did. The reason behind this undifferentiation might be that older children are more likely to be aware of the importance of distinct characteristics of religions for drawing group boundaries (e.g., “believing in the same God” might matter the most for them) due to increased awareness of both their own religion as well as other religions (Takriti et al., 2006) and this might have led them to be more strict about group boundaries which in turn led them to expect conventional violations from all out-groups (e.g., Liberman et al., 2018).

Importantly, the exploratory analyses support our initial findings regarding children's changing nuanced understanding of religious groups with age by showing similar but different patterns for trust and affiliation preferences. Specifically, children's increased trust for Muslim characters with age versus the similar pattern for affiliation preferences across age groups might suggest a developing association of trust-related characteristics (e.g., trustworthiness or honesty) with own religious groups. Yet, considering the similar levels of trust for non-Muslims, it might be still early to use trust as a base for atheist discrimination as adults do (Gervais et al., 2011).

Taking all into account, changing expectations about religious groups might be related to several social factors. First, as discussed in the introduction, there is a mandatory religious class in Turkey starting at 4th grade, which corresponds to 9 years of age. Our descriptive analysis (see Figure 3) suggests that older children indeed attend religious classes more than younger children. Since the curriculum of mandatory religious classes mostly focuses on the teachings of Sunni Islam, it is likely that these classes play a role in shaping children's opinions about different religious groups. Second, besides religious teachings' spread via mandatory religious classes, Turkey is a country where religion and morality are highly associated by adults in general compared to other countries such as the US (Konda, 2019; Pew Research Center, 2019). Children's increased interaction with this mindset might create an additional impact on the increased association between religiosity and morality, since religion is a domain where children dominantly rely on testimony as a source of knowledge (e.g., Harris & Koenig, 2006; Harris et al., 2018; Harris et al., 2006). It is also important to consider low religious diversity in our sample (see Figure 2), which might in turn limit exposure to other sources other than mandatory

religious classes and majority mindset. Nevertheless, we used self-perceived similarity to religious groups and parent religiosity as controls in our analyses, which we believe helped to make sense of the data beyond cultural boundaries.

This study contributes to the literature in several ways by investigating children's expectations from religious groups about moral and conventional norm violations. First, we believe that children's different expectations in these domains are particularly important, because previous research already showed their differentiation of such norms by focusing on different groups such as language (Lieberman et al., 2018). Using a similar paradigm with previous studies (e.g., Lieberman et al., 2018) allowed us to further understand if children do evaluate religious groups just as any other groups. As predicted, we observed somewhat different patterns for religious group expectations. Second, comparing two age groups enabled us to better understand the potential social factors that might shape children's experience with religion and religious groups. Specifically, we argue that increased interaction with majority mentality and participation in strictly regulated religious classes might shape children's opinions about religious groups. Third, this study paved the path for better understanding the developing association between religion and morality. As discussed in the introduction, previous research showed how religion-related prompts increase prosociality (e.g., Bering, 2011; Pichon et al., 2007) and how even atheist adults expect immoral behaviors from atheists (Gervais et al., 2011). Besides, another line of research suggests religious beliefs are byproducts of several cognitive mechanisms including dualist beliefs (e.g., Bloom, 2007), anthropomorphism (e.g., Guthrie, 1993), and teleological reasoning (e.g., Kelemen, 2004). In our study, we observed an increased association of religion and morality with age and predict that increased knowledge about and interaction with

particular religious teaching may play a role in this developing association. Still, in order to better understand if religion is a natural byproduct that leads to intuitive ideas about disbelievers, it is crucial to investigate how these associations emerge and strengthen across childhood under different cultural inputs.

Future studies might recruit a greater sample size since the post-hoc power analysis indicate that the analysis reached .73 power, even though we aimed .80. Future studies might also use different paradigms, for example by including “both” and “neither” options in order to further understand the nuances in children’s expectations. We did not include those options because we were interested in scenarios where children should make a decision between two characters which is also highly relevant to children’s daily life experiences. However, we believe that utilizing different paradigms will increase the confidence in findings. Another methodological difference would be to conduct the study unmoderated (i.e., without an interaction with the experimenter). We did not expect to see any impact of demand characteristics on our online setting because the participants did not know the experimenter before the experiment, the experiment design was made age-appropriate which aims to limit parental interference, and the experimenter clearly emphasized to the participants throughout the experiment that there was no right or wrong answers in the game. However, based on previous research showing the impact of being observed on antisocial behaviors (e.g., Piazza et al., 2011), it is still possible that being observed and/or evaluated by a stranger would affect children’s ideas (e.g., Dahl, 2017; Rhodes et al., 2020) specifically in a domain which is related to prosociality. In terms of methodological differences, it would be also interesting to observe children’s real-life behaviors rather than asking them hypothetical questions since even adults’ reactions to hypothetical morality-related scenarios do not always

overlap with their real-life behaviors (Bostyn et al., 2018). Alternatively, the questions might be adapted in a way to emphasize the reality of situation (e.g., “You are going to play a game. Whom would you rather play with?”) instead of hypotheticality (e.g., “If you were to play a game, whom would you rather play with?”) to see if their preferences would change when it is emphasized that they were going to experience what they chose to do. Further, future studies may focus on children from different religious groups as well as atheists to better understand the developing ideas about own and other religious groups and eventually, the relationship between religiosity and morality. For instance, Heiphetz and Young (2019) showed that 6-8-year-old non-religious children draw religious group boundaries different than religious children. Specifically, non-religious children do not differentiate religious (e.g., Christian and Jewish) and non-religious groups in terms of the similarity to themselves, whereas religious children consider non-religious characters as least similar (Heiphetz & Young, 2019). Thus, it is possible that religiosity might mean different to younger non-religious children, which in turn may influence their expectancies related to religiosity, such as moral behaviors. Future studies may also shed light on the particular impact of religious diversity on children’s expectations from different groups since previous studies already showed the impact of racial diversity on children’s developing ideas of out-groups (e.g., Rizzo et al., 2022). Religious diversity is a critical concept which is also needed to better understand the status of religious and non-religious groups in a society. Specifically, the experience of a religious person in a country where religious diversity is high but most people are religious might be different from a non-religious person’s experience. Vice versa, as in the case of Turkey, atheists are a minority group both compared to religious denominations and religiousness in general. Thus,

this double minority status might have also boosted ideas about them, and similarly, double majority status of Muslims would have altered their own ideas about others. Lastly, even though we conducted the study online enabling participation from different regions of Turkey, our sample still consisted of families who were aware of and curious about scientific child development studies and has access to a technological device. Although we also reported the average SES level in our sample, it is still a legit concern if our sample is representative of Turkish society.

Overall, our findings might be used to shape future policies on decreasing religion-based discrimination across childhood. Specifically, in an era of increasing immigration (UN DESA, 2020), it is common to see countries welcoming people of different religious groups as in the case of Syrian immigrants in Christian-dominant European countries (Eurostat, 2021). Immigrant children's experience in classrooms and schools in general and the attitude of domestic students towards them are highly important topics if we want to create a more egalitarian atmosphere for all.

Importantly, further investigation of children raised in different cultures, under the influence of different religious teachings, and experiencing different levels of religious diversity (e.g., the US) is needed in order to better understand the mechanism behind discrimination of religious groups. For instance, it is also common to observe within-religion conflicts as in the case of Syrian immigrants in Turkey. Building on previous research suggesting the special role of religion as a social cue when contrasted with other cues (e.g., status: Dunham et al., 2014), it is still an open question how children value and rank further characteristics of religious groups (e.g., majority/minority status, nationality) and shape their attitudes towards them.

3.1 Conclusion

This study aimed to understand the development of children's behavioral expectations from religious groups. The results indicate that children do understand different religious groups and evaluate them in a nuanced way. Overall, they expect norm violations from characters of different religions, but they associate religious groups with different social norms throughout childhood. Future studies should focus on different cultures, different religious groups, and different levels of religious diversity to better understand the changing expectations from religious groups across childhood. By better understanding driving social factors of behavioral expectations, it would be possible to build interventions and policies to create an egalitarian atmosphere for people of all religious groups.

APPENDIX A

ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL

Evrak Tarih ve Sayısı: 07.01.2022-46714

T.C.
BOĞAZIÇI ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL VE BEŞERİ BİLİMLER YÜKSEK LİSANS VE DOKTORA TEZLERİ ETİK İNCELEME
KOMİSYONU
TOPLANTI KARAR TUTANAĞI

Toplantı Sayısı : 26
Toplantı Tarihi : 05.01.2022
Toplantı Saati : 14:00
Toplantı Yeri : Zoom Sanal Toplantı
Bulunanlar : Prof. Dr. Ebru Kaya, Prof. Dr. Fatma Nevra Seggie, Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Yasemin Sohtorik İlkmen
Bulunmayanlar :

Oya Serbest
Psikoloji

Sayın Araştırmacı,

"Çocukların Ahlaki ve Geleneksel Norm İhlallerine İlişkin Beklentilerinde İnancın Rolü" başlıklı projeniz ile ilgili olarak yaptığımız SBB-EAK 2022/04 sayılı başvuru komisyonumuz tarafından 5 Ocak 2022 tarihli toplantıda incelenmiş ve uygun bulunmuştur.

Bu karar tüm üyelerin toplantıya çevrimiçi olarak katılımı ve oybirliği ile alınmıştır. COVID-19 önlemleri kapsamında kurul üyelerinden ıslak imza alınmadığı için bu onay mektubu üye ve raportör olarak Fatma Nevra Seggie tarafından bütün üyeler adına e-imzalanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla, bilgilerinizi rica ederiz.

Prof. Dr. Fatma Nevra SEGGIE
ÜYE

e-İmzalıdır
Prof. Dr. Fatma Nevra SEGGIE
Raportör

SOBETİK 26.05.01.2022

Bu belge 5070 sayılı Elektronik İmza Kanununun 5. Maddesi gereğince güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.

APPENDIX B

NORM LIST

Conventional norms

1. One of these made noise in the library. (*Bu çocuklardan biri kütüphanede gürültü yaptı.*)
2. One of these children asked something from someone without saying “Please” beforehand when asking and saying “Thank you” afterwards. (*Bu çocuklardan biri “lütfen” demeden bir şey istedi ve sonrasında sonrasında teşekkür etmedi.*)
3. One of these children left their toys in mess after playing with them. (*Bu çocuklardan biri oyuncaklarıyla oynadıktan sonra onları dağınık bıraktı.*)
4. One of these children broke the rules when playing the game. (*Bu çocuklardan biri oyun oynarken kuralı bozdu.*)
5. One of these children cut in the shopping line. (*Bu çocuklardan biri alışveriş kuyruğunda sırasını beklemedi.*)
6. One of these children spoke in class without getting permission from the teacher. (*Bu çocuklardan biri sınıfta öğretmenden izin almadan konuştu.*)

Moral norms:

1. One of these children pushed someone on the playground. (*Bu çocuklardan biri oyun parkında birini itti.*)
2. One of these children took someone’s toy without getting permission. (*Bu çocuklardan biri birinin oyuncakını izin istemeden aldı.*)
3. One of these children stole his/her friend’s toy after playing with it. (*Bu çocuklardan biri arkadaşının oyuncakıyla oynadıktan sonra oyuncakı çaldı.*)

4. One of these children broke a friend's toy on purpose. (*Bu çocuklardan biri bir arkadaşının oyuncasını bilerek kırdı.*)
5. One of these children ate his/her cookie without sharing it, when his/her classmate is hungry. (*Bu çocuklardan biri sınıf arkadaşı açken kurabiyesini onunla paylaşmadan yedi.*)
6. One of these children lied his/her mother about who broke the vase, even though he/she broke the vase. (*Bu çocuklardan biri vazoyu kendisi kırdığı halde annesine vazoyu kimin kırdığı hakkında yalan söyledi.*)

APPENDIX C
PARENT SURVEY

1. Education level
2. SES Ladder
3. Gender identity
4. Attendance to religious practices (*More than once a week-Once a week-One a month-Only on special holy days-Once a year-Less than once a year Never, practically never*):
 - a. How often do you currently attend a place of worship (e.g., Koran recitation sessions, Mosque, Church, Temple)?
 - b. How often do you privately worship (e.g., pray)?
5. Religious affiliation:
 - a. Independently of whether you attend religious services or not, please indicate your religiosity level. (*1: not at all religious – 5: very religious*)
 - b. Do you belong to a religion or religious denomination? If yes, which one? (*Buddhist-Hindu-Islam-Judaism- Roman Catholic-Protestant- Taoism- Ancient cults-None- Other: __*)
 - c. If applicable: Does your partner belong to a religion or religious denomination? If yes, which one? (*Buddhist-Hindu-Islam-Judaism- Roman Catholic-Protestant- Taoism- Ancient cults-None-Other: __*)
 - d. Does your child belong to a religion or religious denomination? If yes, which one? (*Buddhist-Hindu-Islam-Judaism- Roman Catholic-Protestant- Taoism- Ancient cults- None-Other: __*)
6. Additional questions:
 - a. Do your children attend religious education classes? (*Yes / No*)

- b. How often do you talk to your child about religious matters? (*Never – Rarely – Sometimes – Often – Always*)
- c. Please evaluate your child's immediate environment (e.g., close friends, classmates) in terms of religious group diversity. (*1: not at all diverse – 5: very diverse*)
- d. How would you react if your child had different views on religion than you do? (*I react and I don't want to - I don't react but I don't want to - I don't react, it doesn't matter to me.*)

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