

THE FIFTH PLAYER: UNDERSTANDING
BYSTANDER RESPONSES TO
GENDER-BASED EXCLUSION IN
ESPORTS

A Master's Thesis

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To my forever teacher Orhan Ayhan



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THE FIFTH PLAYER: UNDERSTANDING BYSTANDER RESPONSES TO GENDER-BASED EXCLUSION IN ESPORTS
By Serengeti Ayhan

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Psychology.

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ABSTRACT

THE FIFTH PLAYER: UNDERSTANDING BYSTANDER RESPONSES TO GENDER-BASED EXCLUSION IN ESPORTS

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Children and adolescents draw on multiple factors to inform their bystander judgments and behaviors to gender-based exclusion. The current study aimed to understand how these factors collectively inform bystanders' judgments, attitudes, and the five-step Bystander Intervention Model (BIM).

Data was collected from 227 middle school (11-14 years, $M_{age} = 12.56$, 131 girls), and 345 high school (15-18 years, $M_{age} = 15.68$, 216 girls) students. Participants were randomly assigned to one of eight conditions, varying by the excluder's intentionality (good vs. bad), bystander peer norms (supporting vs. opposing exclusion), and the victim's response (active vs. passive). Moral judgments (acceptability, fairness), intergroup judgments (victim inclusion, victims' behavior, future inclusion of victim and excluder), and attitudes towards exclusion (funniness, seriousness) were evaluated. Bystander intervention behavior was measured using the five-step BIM. Social-cognitive skills (ToM, empathy, humor

styles) and gender-related factors (gender stereotype endorsement, growth mindset in esports) were measured.

Results indicated that gender shaped intergroup judgments: boys were more likely to judge exclusion acceptable than girls. Intentionality of the excluder shaped moral judgments: exclusion done with good intentionality was more acceptable. Peer norms interacted with intention and victim response: exclusion was seen acceptable only in the bad intentions, passive victim, and supportive norms conditions. Higher ToM, cognitive and affective empathy, affiliative humor, and growth mindset, and lower aggressive humor, endorsement of gender stereotypes predicted steps in the five-step BIM. Overall, findings offer insights for bystander intervention programs by illustrating how naturally interacting factors in dynamic social interactions shape bystanders' judgments, attitudes, and behaviors.

Keywords: bystander judgments and behaviors, gender-based social exclusion, intergroup judgments, moral judgments, social-cognitive abilities

ÖZET

BEŞİNCİ OYUNCU: ESPORDA CİNSİYETE DAYALI SOSYAL DIŞLANMADA TANIKLARIN DAVRANIŞLARINI ANLAMAK

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Çocuklar ve ergenler, cinsiyete dayalı dışlamaya tanıklık ettiklerinde yargılarını ve davranışlarını belirlemek için birden fazla faktörden yararlanırlar. Mevcut çalışma, çeşitli faktörlerin bir araya geldiğinde tanıkların yargılarını, tutumlarını ve beş adımlı Tanık Müdahale Davranışlarını (TMD) nasıl şekillendirdiğini anlamayı amaçlamaktadır.

Veriler, 227 ortaokul öğrencisinden (11-14 yaş, $Ort_{yaş} = 12.56$, 131 kız) ve 345 lise öğrencisinden (15-18 yaş, $Ort_{yaş} = 15.68$, 216 kız) toplanmıştır. Katılımcılar, dışlayan kişinin niyeti (iyi veya kötü), akran grubunun normları (dışlamayı destekleyen veya karşı çıkan) ve dışlananın tepkisi (aktif veya pasif) olmak üzere üç bağımsız değişkenin manipüle edildiği sekiz koşuldan birine rastgele atanmıştır. Ahlaki yargılar (kabul edilebilirlik, adillik), gruplar arası yargılar (dışlananın dahil edilmesi, dışlananın davranışları, dışlananın ve dışlayıcının

ileride dahil edilmesi) ve dışlamaya yönelik tutumlar (komiklik, ciddiye) değerlendirilmiştir. Tanık davranışı beş adımlı TMD ile ölçülmüştür. Sosyal bilişsel beceriler (Zihin Kuramı, empati, mizah stilleri) ve cinsiyete ilişkin faktörler (cinsiyet kalıp yargıları, esporda gelişim odaklı düşünce) ölçülmüştür.

Sonuçlar, cinsiyetin gruplar arası yargıları şekillendirdiğini göstermiştir: erkekler dışlamayı kızlara kıyasla daha kabul edilebilir bulmuştur. Dışlayan kişinin niyeti ahlaki yargıları etkilemiştir: iyi niyetle yapılan dışlama daha kabul edilebilir değerlendirilmiştir. Akran normları, niyet ve dışlananın tepkisiyle etkilemiştir: dışlama, yalnızca kötü niyet, pasif dışlanan ve dışlamayı destekleyen normlar koşulunda daha kabul edilebilir bulunmuştur. Yüksek düzeyde Zihin Kuramı, bilişsel ve duygusal empati, pozitif mizah ve esporda gelişim odaklı düşünce ile düşük düzeyde agresif mizah ve cinsiyet kalıp yargıları, TMD'nin beş adımını yordamıştır. Bulgular, dinamik sosyal etkileşimler içinde bir araya gelen faktörlerin, tanıkların yargılarını, tutumlarını ve davranışlarını nasıl şekillendirdiğini göstererek müdahale programları için önemli çıkarımlar sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: ahlaki yargılar, cinsiyet dayalı dışlanma, gruplar arası yargılar, sosyal bilişsel beceriler, tanık davranışı

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Social exclusion involves actions that hinder an individual's participation in events or activities, impacting their social standing and sense of belonging (Killen et al., 2013a). Intergroup social exclusion is especially harmful since it is rooted in prejudicial attitudes related to group membership, targeting gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, and culture (Killen et al., 2016). As a salient form of group identity, gender has frequently served as a basis for peer exclusion during childhood and adolescence (Mulvey & Killen, 2015; Rogers & Meltzoff, 2017). Gender-based social exclusion has detrimental consequences, including challenges in gender identity development, increased pressure related to societal expectations about gender roles, and reduced academic and career aspirations (Garriot et al., 2017). Furthermore, such exclusion often reflects and reinforces broader societal gender biases and contributes to the development of stereotypes, thereby sustaining unequal norms within peer contexts (Hitti et al., 2011a). Experiences of gender-based exclusion in childhood and adolescence, whether observed or directly experienced, can shape attitudes toward gender

roles and influence adolescents' willingness to support peers who violate gender expectations (Bussey, 2011; Horn, 2007; Mulvey & Killen, 2015). Given these developmental and social implications, it is crucial to identify the actors that may reduce both the occurrence and the negative influence of gender-based exclusion. One of the actors that can significantly shape peer group norms and influence whether exclusionary behavior is challenged or supported are bystanders (Salmivalli et al., 1996). The importance of bystanders has been recognized; however, few studies have examined the role of the excluder, peers, and the victim related to bystander behavior. Accordingly, the present study aims to understand children's and adolescents' bystander judgments and responses to gender-based exclusion within the Bystander Intervention Model (Latané & Darley, 1970).

1.1. Esports as the Gender-Based Social Exclusion Context

Gender-based exclusion has been extensively documented in traditionally male-dominated fields such as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), where gender stereotypes often restrict female participation (Beasley & Fischer, 2012). Although these stereotypes lack any significant basis in differences in gender performance or ability (Wang, 2013), they can lead to the exclusion of girls and women from childhood to adulthood in STEM (Raabe et al., 2019). A similar pattern emerges in the sports domain, where gender disparities are also attributed to differences in physical strength (Plaza et al.,

2017). For example, in football, masculine norms and qualities, including aggression, competitiveness, and physical strength, are used to exclude female players (Shiakou et al., 2025). For example, a study by Mulvey & Killen (2015) showed that 75.6% of children aged 9-10 and 82.6% of children aged 13-14 associated boys with football, while 85.6% of children aged 9-10 and 83.6% of children aged 13-14 associated girls with ballet. Accordingly, these prevailing norms can alienate girls who do not conform to traditional masculine standards, thereby fostering environments in which behaviors such as the gender-based social exclusion of girls become normalized.

Besides the STEM and sports domains, gender-based exclusion extends to non-physical online contexts (Madden et al., 2021). One unique context of such exclusion in a non-physical setting is electronic sports (esports). Esports can be defined as "a form of sport where the primary aspects are facilitated by electronic systems; the input of players and teams, as well as the output of the esports system, are mediated by human-computer interfaces" (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017). While traditional sports such as football demand both physical and mental effort, esports rely primarily on cognitive skills such as reaction speed, reflexes, and strategic thinking (Argan et al., 2006; Jenny et al., 2017). Given that physical strength is not required in esports, one might assume that stereotypes discouraging female participation would be less applicable. However, gender stereotypes persist in esports, reflecting similar physical gender stereotypes in STEM and sports (Jenny et al., 2017).

According to the Türkiye Game Market Report (2024), among licensed esports athletes participating in all games within Türkiye, 45.6% are female, while 54.4% are male. This near parity in licensing figures suggests a significant presence of women in the Türkiye esports scene. While these figures provide a general insight into the esports field, there is no specific gender distribution data available for esports football. Further, findings within the esports and gaming contexts indicate that gender-based exclusion remains prevalent, as female players are often perceived as minorities in gaming spaces and are targeted for exclusion as members of an outgroup (Ballard & Welch, 2015; Chess & Shaw, 2015; Fox & Tang, 2017). This discrepancy suggests that while formal participation is increasing among females, esports gaming experiences may still be shaped by exclusionary gender norms and stereotypes.

For example, a focus group study with adolescents aged 16 gamers in Türkiye revealed that female participants frequently encountered negative reactions upon joining games, with male players immediately questioning or objecting to the presence of girls on their teams (Demir et al., 2024). Despite the increasing number of female gamers in Türkiye, many continue to face exclusion, often choosing to remain silent or conceal their gender identity to avoid harassment (Demir et al., 2024), reflecting the findings from other countries (Braithwaite, 2014; Kuss et al., 2022). Moreover, descriptive studies continue to report a predominantly male player base in Turkish esports teams (Argan et al., 2006;

Gülsoy & Tunca, 2024; Mustafaoğlu et al., 2018), suggesting that formal participation data may mask deeper structural and cultural barriers that female players navigate in these spaces.

Female players not only contend with stereotypes rooted in traditional sports but also face biases commonly encountered in technology-related fields where female gamers are often perceived as less technologically competent than male gamers (Jenson & de Castell, 2010). As esports brings together characteristics of both competitive sports and technology-oriented activities, domains in which boys are often seen as more competent, it may exacerbate the gender-based exclusion and bias experienced by females. For instance, regardless of actual performance, avatars with female voices received three times more negative comments than those with male voices in an online game (Kuznekoff & Rose, 2013). Similarly, even when female players performed at an expert level, they were rated less competent than equally skilled male players (Kaye et al., 2017; Kelly et al., 2023). These biased perceptions are not exclusive to male players. In a focus group study with a female esports team, participants described their skills in relation to male norms, using phrases like “pretty good for a girl” despite their competitive-level expertise (Beavis & Charles, 2007). Likewise, Demir et al. (2024) found that Turkish adolescent girls who played the same competitive games as boys for comparable durations still evaluated their skills with gendered qualifiers, reflecting an internalization of competence-related stereotypes and stereotype threat.

Gender-based stereotypes and exclusion not only undermine children and adolescents' sense of belonging but can also shape long-term academic and career aspirations (Moss-Racusin et al., 2018). These findings highlight the importance of addressing gender-based bullying within esports contexts to inform effective strategies for reducing gender-based social exclusion. Given these dynamics, understanding how children and adolescents evaluate and respond to gender-based exclusion in esports, particularly from the perspective of bystanders, remains an underexplored yet critical area of research.

1.2. Bystander Responses

Bystanders are actors who are present during instances of social exclusion (Hawkins et al., 2001; Salmivalli et al., 1996), and their reactions can determine whether exclusionary behaviors are reinforced or challenged. Existing research on bystander behaviors has identified distinct roles that bystanders may exhibit when witnessing bullying. For example, the participant roles approach by Salmivalli et al., (1996) categorizes bystanders as a) *Assistants*, who actively take part in the bullying by helping the main aggressor; b) *Reinforcers*, who do not directly bully but support it through behaviors like laughing or encouraging the bully; c) *Defenders*, who attempt to help or protect the victim by standing up to the bully or offering comfort; and d) *Outsiders*, who remain passive, avoiding involvement and neither supporting nor opposing the bullying.

Extant literature showed that bystanders successfully reduce social exclusion if they challenge excluders, help the victim, and draw support from peers or teachers (Gönültaş et al., 2022; Palmer & Abbott, 2018). However, when bystanders remain silent or actively encourage the exclusion, the harmful behavior is more likely to persist (Salmivalli, 2011; Salmivalli, 2014). Given the pivotal role of bystanders in disrupting the cycle of social exclusion, it is essential to identify the key factors that promote prosocial bystander behaviors.

Although bystander behaviors are categorized into distinct roles based on their intervention decision, there is a multi-step decision-making process behind their behaviors (Nickerson et al., 2014). To explain this multi-step decision-making process, Latané and Darley (1970) proposed the five-step Bystander Intervention Model (BIM), which suggests that for a bystander to intervene they need (1) to notice the situation, (2) interpret it as an emergency, (3) to assume responsibility to act, (4) to know how to help and (5) implement intervention behavior. These five sequential steps come together to facilitate a successful bystander intervention behavior. Moreover, a study by Jenkins and Nickerson (2017) has shown that participant role behaviors, as identified by Salmivalli et al. (1996), predict the likelihood that individuals will engage in the five steps of BIM. Accordingly, adolescents (aged 12-14) with higher defending behavior were more likely to notice the event, interpret it as an emergency, assume responsibility, know how to act, and intervene (Jenkins & Nickerson, 2017).

With its multi-step framework, the Bystander Intervention Model (BIM) provides a comprehensive understanding of why and when children and adolescents choose to intervene or fail to intervene in bullying situations. The model has been adapted and validated in various bullying contexts, with findings indicating that each decision-making step is associated with bystander behavior and that the steps function sequentially, with earlier stages shaping the progression to later ones (Jenkins & Nickerson, 2017). As such, the BIM has been widely employed to examine bystander responses across age groups (e.g., middle and high school students) and forms of bullying, including social exclusion, cyberbullying, and sexual harassment (Ayhan & Gönültaş, 2024; Jenkins & Nickerson, 2017; Nickerson et al., 2014).

However, despite its utility, prior research on gender-based social exclusion has primarily centered on the final stage of the model, intervention behavior, without systematically examining the earlier cognitive and evaluative steps in the decision-making process. This leaves a gap in our understanding of how children and adolescents process and respond to exclusion that is rooted in gender stereotypes.

To address this gap, applying the complete BIM framework to gender-based social exclusion scenarios is essential. Doing so would allow researchers to

explore how children and adolescents attend to, interpret, and morally evaluate such incidents, and how these evaluations ultimately shape their willingness to intervene.

1.3. Factors Related to Bystander Responses to Gender-Based Exclusion

Considering the previous literature that bystander responses are shaped not only by individual factors but also by broader features of the social environment, it is essential to consider multiple possible factors involved. However, much of the existing research has focused on individual factors in isolation, rather than examining how multiple contextual elements operate in tandem. From childhood to adolescence, decisions can increasingly vary depending on who is being excluded, who is present, and how the group typically responds to similar situations.

Within the context of gender-based exclusion, relevant social agents may be organized around the key actors involved in the situation. The first actor is the bystander themselves, whose gender group membership might influence how they interpret the exclusionary act. The second actor is the excluder, whose intentionality (i.e., whether the act is done with good intentions or bad intentions) can shape moral judgments of bystanders. The third actor is the peer group, whose bystander group norms (i.e., what the peer group opposes or supports in terms of exclusion) may influence whether a bystander feels pressure to

conform or intervene. The fourth actor is the victim, whose reaction to being excluded (e.g., remaining passive or being active) can affect bystander perceptions of harm and fairness.

The Social Reasoning Development (SRD; Rutland et al., 2010; Rutland & Killen, 2017) perspective supports this interactive view by emphasizing that, from childhood through adolescence, children evaluate exclusion based on a combination of factors such as moral reasoning (i.e., whether exclusion is fair), group identity (i.e., whether the target belongs to an in-group or out-group), group norms (i.e., whether exclusion aligns with what the group typically does), and group dynamics (i.e., whether challenging the exclusion might lead to social costs such as personal exclusion). This framework is particularly relevant to the present study, which investigates how adolescents evaluate and respond to gender-based exclusion depending on peer group norms and the excluded individual's reactions; both may activate competing moral and group-based considerations.

The antecedent of SRD, Social Domain Theory (SDT; Turiel, 1983), posits that children and adolescents make judgments about social decisions by considering three distinct domains: the moral domain (fairness, justice, equality and rights), the societal domain (group functioning, conventions, and traditions), and the psychological domain (related to autonomy and personal choice) (Jambon &

Smetana, 2014). In the context of the present study, bystander responses may reflect a coordination of these domains; such as when an adolescent weighs the unfairness of excluding a peer based on gender (moral), the disruption of group expectations (societal), or the victim's right to participate (psychological).

Together, these considerations highlight the importance of examining bystander behavior not in isolation, but as part of a broader social and moral decision-making process shaped by the multiple factors outlined below.

1.3.1. The Role of Gender Group Membership

An essential aspect of understanding gender-based social exclusion involves examining how group dynamics and identity shape bystander behaviors and perceptions. As children develop their sense of gender identity, they increasingly view same-gender peers as members of their in-group and opposite-gender peers as out-group members (McGuire et al., 2021; Rutland et al., 2010). While forming a cohesive group identity is a key developmental milestone during adolescence, it can also reinforce the exclusion of peers who do not conform to established group norms (Horn, 2003). Accordingly, gender-based exclusion is often directed at children and adolescents who deviate from widely accepted gender expectations.

Empirical findings also support that gender group membership influences both evaluations of exclusion and bystander behavior. A study with adolescents (aged 11-15) found that girls were more likely than boys to report positive attitudes toward confronting perpetrators of gender-based harassment, especially when they strongly identified with their own gender group membership (Tam & Brown, 2020). In another study investigating how gender group membership shapes children's and adolescents' (aged 9-11 and 12-14, respectively) evaluations of peers who challenge gender norms found that boys consistently evaluated a challenger peer less positively than girls, regardless of the challenger's gender identity (McGuire et al., 2022). Importantly, boys' individual evaluations for the challenger aligned with their perceptions of their gender group's evaluation, while girls evaluated the challenger more positively than they believed their gender group would (McGuire et al., 2022). Regarding their reasoning, few participants referred to gender identity, while negative peer evaluations were predominantly associated with references to group norms. In contrast, positive evaluations were more likely to refer to the challenger's behavior and shared activity preferences (McGuire et al., 2022). These findings suggest that gender group membership is not only a salient social identity in peer contexts but also functions as a reference point in evaluating exclusion-related behaviors.

Children's reasoning also varies by context. In a study of Danish children (aged 8-12), Møller and Tenenbaum (2011) found that participants were more likely to

use social-conventional reasoning when evaluating gender-based exclusion than when evaluating exclusion based on ethnicity. This is in line with findings suggesting that sexism is often perceived as more socially acceptable or less harmful than racism, leading children to view gender-based exclusion as a matter of group norms or traditions rather than a clear moral violation (Mulvey & Killen, 2015; Møller & Tenenbaum, 2011).

This insight is particularly relevant for understanding how bystanders respond to exclusion in gender-based contexts, where group norms and expectations may shape whether exclusion is recognized as unjust. For instance, they may be more inclined to intervene when exclusion violates fairness norms or targets someone unjustly, particularly when their peer group supports inclusive behavior. With an adolescent sample (aged 13-18), Nickerson et al. (2023) found that when peer norms were perceived as less anti-harassment, compared to boys, girls were more likely to notice sexual harassment of girls. Similarly, in gender based social exclusion of a girl, female bystanders may be more likely to notice gender-based social exclusion of another girl because of a stronger sense of identification with the victim and increased relevance of the event to their own gender group.

Previous research has not investigated the five-step BIM in terms of gender-based social exclusion, but given findings from studies examining the bystander

intervention decision, it is possible that the other four steps are also influenced by the role of gender group membership. For example, Herry et al. (2023) found that female college students (aged between 18-25) were more likely to actively intervene in a gender-based social exclusion of a female victim compared to male participants. Further, females who held stronger beliefs about fairness and equality were more likely to view the exclusion as unacceptable and to expect that bystanders would intervene when a female is excluded (Herry et al., 2023). These findings support that gender group membership not only shapes whether individuals judge exclusion as unacceptable but also influences expectations around intervention. Accordingly, suggesting that alignment of gender group membership with the victim may play a role across multiple stages of the bystander process, from recognizing exclusion to assuming responsibility and deciding to act, offering a valuable foundation for understanding how children and adolescents respond to gender-based exclusion.

1.3.2. The Role of Intentionality of the Excluder

Another critical factor shaping bystanders' moral judgments is the intentionality of the excluder. Researchers have debated whether children primarily base their moral evaluations on an individual's intent (Vaish et al., 2010) or whether they rely just on outcomes, regardless of intention (Killen et al., 2011; Zelazo et al., 1996). Some propose that with age, children shift from focusing on outcomes to placing greater emphasis on intent, a trajectory that is moderated by age and

task demands (Cushman et al., 2013; Li & Tomasello, 2018). However, this line of research has been focused on understanding how young children (aged 3-5) attribute intentionality to a transgressor. Yet, as children age, they encounter more complex social interactions where the intentionality of the transgressor does not match their actions, making intentionality attribution more difficult (Farooq et al., 2024). Given children's increased ability to judge the intentions of others when assessing the acceptability of their statements and actions, research should further investigate children and adolescents' behavior when they witness such complex transgressions (Heyman et al., 2009). For example, in social exclusion, excluders might explicitly say that they have good intentions behind their actions to decrease the saliency of their exclusionary behaviors (Glidden et al., 2021). With previous research showing that bystanders are more likely to intervene when they perceive an intention to harm, it is important to understand the role of intentionality of the excluder.

For instance, Cameron et al. (2023) presented children (aged 6-8) with scenarios in which a transgressor's actions were either clearly harmful or ambiguous, and manipulated the transgressor's moral character (good, mixed, or bad). Findings showed that actions committed by morally bad characters were judged as more intentional than identical actions committed by morally good or mixed characters, indicating that character information can bias attributions of intent (Cameron et al., 2023). While their study focused on how children make inferences under ambiguous conditions, less is known about the

role of the excluders' clearly stated intentions (i.e., good or bad) when the outcome is always negative, and how older children would make judgments on intentionality.

In this line of research, to the best of our knowledge, there has been no previous study that investigated the five-step BIM in relation to an excluder's intentionality. Additionally, the existing research on bystander behavior and intentionality has been primarily focused on accidental transgressions, not clearly stated intentions (e.g., Glidden et al., 2021; Hukker et al., 2024). However, previous studies on moral reasoning acceptability judgments might provide further insight into the role intentionality can have in bystander behavior. For example, Thomas et al. (2017) extended this line of research to contexts involving bullying to an adolescent sample. In their study with adolescents (aged 12-17), intentionality was explicitly manipulated as either harm-intended ("X did this because they wanted to make Y feel bad") or harm-unintended ("X did this as a joke and did not mean to hurt Y"). Findings showed that participants placed significant consideration on both the transgressor's stated intention and the victim's perception of that intention (Thomas et al., 2017). Scenarios where the intent to harm was clear and perceived as such by the victim were rated as the most harmful. Conversely, scenarios lacking both intent and perceived harm were rated significantly lower (Thomas et al., 2017). Accordingly, children and adolescents who are able to notice that social exclusion can be masked under good intentions might be better able to move on to the following steps in the

BIM.

1.3.3. The Role of Bystander Peer Norms

Another critical factor shaping bystanders' moral judgments in social exclusion scenarios is the perceived peer norm within the bystander group. The SRD perspective also offers a valuable lens in understanding the role of peer group norms in children's and adolescents' moral judgments (Rutland et al., 2010; Rutland & Killen, 2017). As children transition into adolescence, their evaluations of exclusion become increasingly nuanced, balancing moral concerns with growing sensitivity to group-based judgments. They are increasingly inclined to reflect on group dynamics and the implications of violating group norms in situations involving moral transgressions (Killen et al., 2013b).

Specifically, exclusion that is perceived as aligned with prevailing ingroup norms or necessary to maintain group cohesion may reduce adolescents' motivation to intervene (Hitti et al., 2011b). Conversely, moral reasoning centered on fairness and concern for the victim can motivate intervention, particularly when such actions challenge group-based expectations (Gönültaş et al., 2022; Hitti & Killen, 2015). Moreover, developmental research has shown that from middle childhood through adolescence, youth begin to consider multiple, and sometimes conflicting, group norms (i.e., such as those of both the ingroup and outgroup)

when evaluating instances of social exclusion and inequality (Palmer et al., 2023). For example, in a study with children (aged 5-11), McGuire et al. (2015) manipulated peer group norms (inclusion vs. exclusion) and found that when peer norms endorsed exclusion, children were less likely to express positive attitudes toward out-group members, even when an inclusive school norm was present.

Previous studies have shown a connection between bystander peer group norms and bystander responses among children and adolescents within intergroup bullying scenarios (Gönültaş & Mulvey, 2021; Gönültaş et al., 2024; Palmer et al., 2015). Recent findings by Gönültaş et al. (2024) showed that inclusive and exclusive group norms shape children and adolescents' (aged 9-13 and 15-18, respectively) evaluations of prosocial bystanders and their responses to the intergroup social exclusion. Results showed that adolescents in the inclusive ingroup norm condition were more likely to perceive that their group would evaluate a prosocial bystander positively than those in the exclusive norm condition (Gönültaş et al., 2024). Importantly, participants who were exposed to inclusive peer norms expected that if they themselves acted inclusively, their peers would be more supportive of them (Gönültaş et al., 2024). This expectation, in turn, increased the likelihood that they would directly challenge exclusionary behavior (Gönültaş et al., 2024). Accordingly, finding that inclusive peer norms lead to greater expectations of peer support and, in turn, more direct intervention behaviors reinforces the idea that perceived group

norms are a powerful influence on bystander behavior. However, most prior studies (e.g., Gönültaş et al., 2024; Palmer et al., 2015) have focused on intergroup exclusion related to ethnicity or refugee status, leaving a gap in our understanding of how peer norms operate in the context of gender-based exclusion.

Complementing this, Killen et al. (2013b) found that children and adolescents (aged 9.5 - 13.5) prioritized moral group norms (i.e., fairness in resource distribution) over gender group membership when making inclusion decisions. In particular, participants preferred to include a gender out-group member who upheld moral norms rather than an in-group member who violated the norms (Killen et al., 2013b). These findings suggest that children and adolescents are capable of evaluating group dynamics in relation to gender group norms and may support peers who oppose exclusion when it aligns with perceived moral or inclusive group norms, even at the expense of group loyalty. Reasoning analyses in line with the SRD perspective further revealed that those who favored norm-adhering out-group members predominantly used fairness-based justifications. In contrast, those who favored norm-deviant in-group members often cited concerns related to group identity and cohesion (e.g., “Keep the group all boys”) (Killen et al., 2013b).

Moreover, Mulvey and Killen (2015) demonstrated that peer group norms

significantly influence children's and adolescents' (aged 9-10 and 13-14, respectively) evaluations of resistance to gender-stereotypic expectations. When presented with scenarios involving gendered group norms (e.g., boys playing football, girls doing ballet), participants anticipated that peers would be less likely to resist norms associated with gender-atypical roles or activities (e.g., boys doing ballet). Notably, adolescents showed increased sensitivity to peer norms than children, indicating that peer norms regulate behavior through anticipated social consequences like exclusion (Mulvey & Killen, 2015).

While previous research has demonstrated that peer group norms strongly influence children's and adolescents' judgments about social exclusion, less is known about how bystander responses are shaped when these norms specifically align with or oppose the actions of the excluder. In gender-based exclusion contexts, such as those involving stereotype-challenging behaviors, adolescents may be especially attuned to whether their peer group supports or challenges the excluder, and whether this might affect their perceived threat to intervene, which in turn might shape their bystander intervention decision. Additionally, to our knowledge, the only studies that have directly examined the role of peer norms within the five-step BIM are those by Ayhan and Gönültaş (2024) and Nickerson et al. (2023). Ayhan and Gönültaş (2024) did not find a significant effect of inclusive versus exclusive peer norms on bystander behaviors, while Nickerson et al. (2023) focused solely on perceived peer norms rather than experimentally manipulating them. However, given the extensive

literature demonstrating the influence of peer norms on bystander responses to intergroup social exclusion, it is plausible that an opposing bystander norm (i.e., an inclusive norm) may be more effective than a supportive norm (i.e., an exclusive norm) in enabling bystanders to progress through all five steps of the BIM in gender-based exclusion.

1.3.4. The Role of the Victim Reaction

The victim's response to being excluded is another salient situational feature of social exclusion scenarios. Previous research has divided victim reactions into aggressive and passive (Schwartz et al., 2001). While aggressive victims are seen as retaliatory and angry, passive victims are evaluated as withdrawn and sad (Macaulay et al., 2022; Schwartz et al., 2001). Research suggests that bystanders do not interpret these reactions in a vacuum; rather, they use them as important cues to evaluate the nature of the bullying incident and to determine whether, and how, to intervene (Gao et al., 2024; Salmivalli, 2010).

The emotional or behavioral stance of the victim may signal the severity of harm, the victim's vulnerability, or the ongoing power dynamics between victim and aggressor.

Much of the existing literature has focused on aggressive victim reactions, particularly retaliatory acts (e.g., getting revenge from the bully by hitting them),

and has demonstrated that these often lead to lower bystander intervention behaviors. For instance, Mulvey et al. (2019) found that adolescents in 6th grade and 9th grade ($M_{age} = 11.73$ and 14.82 , respectively) rated victim retaliation as more acceptable than the original aggressive act by the bully, yet reported a lower likelihood of intervening in response to retaliation. While such studies provide insight into how bystanders respond to physical or overt victim reactions, they offer limited understanding of bystander responses in cases of social exclusion, where victim responses are not as physical. In exclusion contexts, victim responses are less likely to involve physical retaliation and more likely to reflect emotional or behavioral decisions, such as whether they give an active response such as reporting the incident to an authority figure.

Given the relational nature of exclusion, studies that investigate how bystanders interpret victims' emotional responses can shed light on the mechanisms underlying bystander decision-making in such contexts. For example, Sokol et al. (2016a) showed short hypothetical videos with transgression scenarios to 5th and 7th graders ($M_{age} = 11.13$ and 13.18 , respectively), in which children viewed the videos as bystanders. Findings showed that bystanders themselves would also show sad and angry response to bullying, but confident and ignoring victim responses would be more effective to elicit bystander intervention behaviors (Sokol et al., 2016a). Participants reported that victims who responded with confidence were seen as less vulnerable, which led participants to judge the incident as less serious and less in need of immediate intervention (Sokol et al.,

2016a). In a follow-up study, Sokol et al. (2016b) asked teachers to evaluate similar scenarios and found that angry victims were assigned the most blame. In contrast, bullies who targeted confident or angry victims were evaluated as having less blame (Sokol et al., 2016b). Furthermore, scenarios involving sad or passive victims promoted stronger emotional concern and a higher likelihood of teacher intervention (Sokol et al., 2016b).

To the best of our knowledge, no previous study has investigated how the five-step BIM is influenced by a victim's behavioral response, such as reporting the incident. However, existing research on bystander behavior and victim reactions provides relevant insights. In a large-scale study conducted in China, Gao et al. (2024) presented children and adolescents (aged 8-19) with scenarios depicting different types of bullying, each accompanied by a distinct victim reaction; crying, fighting back, seeking help, pretending nothing happened, or showing no response. The results showed that victims who cried elicited stronger intentions to help, while those who fought back or ignored the incident were perceived as having experienced less severe harm. These findings suggest that bystanders may interpret victim behaviors as cues to the emergency of the situation and decide further to intervene.

This may be particularly important in cases of gender-based social exclusion, where reporting the incident could be seen not only as a response to harm but

also as a challenge to dominant gender group norms and systematic inequalities. Accordingly, bystander intervention may also depend on how well the victim's actions align with group norms related to both gender and group functioning (Killen et al., 2013b; Rutland et al., 2015).

1.4. Potential Correlates of Bystander Responses

Having outlined the factors that shape bystander responses to gender-based exclusion, it is also essential to examine demographic and individual factors that might influence how children and adolescents evaluate and respond to such scenarios. While group dynamics, peer norms, and intentionality of the excluder create the broader context in which exclusion unfolds, individual-level factors also play a critical role in shaping bystanders' intervention decisions.

This section synthesizes key correlates identified in the literature, focusing on age and gender differences, gender-related factors (e.g., gender-stereotype endorsement and growth mindset in esports), social-cognitive factors (e.g., empathy, Theory of Mind and humor styles). These correlates are not only conceptually distinct but may also interact with the social context, ultimately shaping the bystander responses in gender-based exclusion.

1.4.1. Age and Gender

An important consideration for any work on intergroup relations is whether gender and age differences may emerge.

Regarding age-related patterns in peer interactions, as children grow older, they become more attuned to peer dynamics, group identity, and social norms, which can influence their judgments about exclusion. For example, Killen et al. (2002) found that 10th graders were more likely than 4th and 6th graders ($M_{age} = 16.2$, 10 and 13.7, respectively) to evaluate gender-based exclusion as acceptable. Also, in line with this, research has also shown that younger adolescents are more likely than older ones to reject bullying and anticipate intervening in exclusion scenarios (Mulvey et al., 2016a; Shohoudi Mojdehi et al., 2019). The research on BIM also found that adolescents were less likely to intervene than children in social exclusion scenarios (Ayhan & Gönültaş, 2024), suggesting a potential decline in intervention behavior with age. These findings reflect the developmental shift outlined in the SRD framework, which suggests that as children move into adolescence, they increasingly coordinate moral reasoning with group-based concerns, such as loyalty, identity, and conformity to peer norms (Rutland et al., 2010). In situations where group identity is highly salient (such as gender-based exclusion) older adolescents may give greater weight to maintaining group cohesion or aligning with perceived group expectations, even when doing so conflicts with moral concerns like fairness or inclusion (Klein et al., 2025). This developmental shift helps explain why older adolescents may be

less likely to view exclusion as wrong or to intervene, particularly when exclusion aligns with group-based stereotypes or social norms.

Gender differences in bystander responses have also been consistently documented. In general, findings show that girls are overall more likely than boys to notice bullying, interpret it as an emergency, and report stronger intentions to intervene (Gönültaş & Mulvey, 2021; Jenkins & Nickerson, 2017; 2019; Mulvey et al., 2019). Girls are often perceived as more likely to assume defender roles, especially in same-gender peer contexts where such behavior is seen as normative (Herry et al., 2021; Saino et al., 2011). Similarly, a recent study on gender differences in social exclusion among children and adolescents (ages 10-17) found that girls were more likely to notice the exclusion and interpret it as an emergency compared to boys (Ayhan & Gönültaş, 2024). Meta-analyses have reinforced these trends, showing that girls are more frequently identified as defenders, whereas boys are more often engaged in aggressive or passive roles (Cook et al., 2010).

Gender socialization also contributes to these trends. Girls and women are typically socialized to be more relationally aware and emotionally responsive to social harm. This socialization may explain their greater likelihood to identify exclusion and bullying as harmful, view them as morally wrong, and act in defense of victims (Barlett & Coyne, 2014; Herry & Mulvey, 2023). In contrast,

boys are often socialized to tolerate or ignore exclusion and aggression, contributing to lower rates of intervention and greater acceptance of bullying behavior (Mulvey et al., 2019). This dynamic also explains why defending behavior is often more expected of girls and perceived as less normative for boys.

1.4.2. Gender-Related Factors

1.4.2.1. Gender Stereotype Endorsement

Stereotypes are defined as shared societal beliefs linking social groups to specific traits or roles (Bigler & Liben, 2006). From a young age, children categorize individuals based on gender and form expectations about appropriate attributes, behaviors, and social roles based on gender (Xiao et al., 2022). During middle childhood, these beliefs become more stable and are integrated into children's self-concepts (Master & Meltzoff, 2020; Sani & Bennett, 2008; 20011). Developmental research emphasizes that children actively construct gender stereotypes based on cognitive and social experiences, including peer norms, gender identity development (Rogers & Meltzoff, 2017), and sensitivity to peer dynamics (Master, 2021). For example, gender attitudes encompass both ingroup bias (i.e., favoring one's own gender group) and stereotyping, such as associating boys with sports or girls with emotional sensitivity (Rowley et al., 2007). These beliefs often guide judgments about who belongs in specific social

contexts and justify exclusion based on perceived norm violations (Killen, 2007; Mulvey, 2016a). While children's endorsement of gender stereotypes reflects internalized beliefs that guide their social preferences, examining how these beliefs are cognitively represented and applied across contexts may offer further insight into exclusionary behavior.

Previous research by Banse et al. (2010) shows that although stereotype flexibility increases significantly between the ages of 5 and 11, children's spontaneous behavioral responses often remain aligned with rigid gender associations. Banse et al. (2010) demonstrated that children at all ages responded more quickly when assigning toys in stereotype-congruent ways (e.g., giving a truck to a boy), compared to stereotype-incongruent pairings. These findings suggest that automatic gender-stereotypical associations may persist even in children who can explicitly recognize that both boys and girls can engage with a wide range of activities and objects (Banse et al., 2010). In another study by Law et al. (2021) revealed that both boys and girls demonstrated systematic ingroup biases: boys more frequently endorsed and justified stereotypes favoring males, while girls showed a parallel pattern favoring females. These patterns are consistent with existing literature on children's ingroup preferences and their implications for intergroup bias (Bigler & Liben, 2007; McGuire et al., 2015). Such findings underscore the importance of considering both developmental stage and group membership when evaluating stereotype-related judgments, particularly in contexts where gender norms are

salient and socially reinforced, such as instances of gender-based social exclusion. Importantly, such perceptions may influence children's and adolescents' academic and career aspirations by shaping their sense of belonging within a particular domain (Master & Meltzoff, 2020). This process, referred to as group-stereotype-to-self inferences, involves drawing deductive conclusions from one's group's perceived traits to one's own self-concept (Liben & Bigler, 2002; Tobin et al., 2010). For example, a girl who hears that "Girls are not good at esports" may infer, "I must not be good at esports either."

To the best of our knowledge, no previous research has investigated the role of gender stereotype endorsement within the framework of the five-step BIM. However, prior research informs that internalized gender beliefs may significantly influence how children and adolescents evaluate and respond to gender-based social exclusion. For example, in decisions about whether a girl should be included in a male-dominated context such as esports, children who endorse traditional gender stereotypes may be more likely to justify exclusion based on perceived group-based competence or norms (McGuire et al., 2022). These beliefs can reduce the likelihood that bystanders interpret exclusion as unfair or feel compelled to intervene, particularly when the exclusion appears consistent with group expectations (Mulvey & Killen, 2015). Gender stereotype endorsement may therefore influence multiple steps in the BIM, including whether exclusion is noticed, whether it is interpreted as a situation requiring intervention, and whether action is taken.

1.4.2.2. Growth Mindset in Esports

Growth mindset refers to the belief that intelligence and abilities are malleable and can be developed through sustained effort and learning (Dweck, 2006).

Children and adolescents who endorse a growth mindset tend to embrace challenges, persist through setbacks, and prioritize self-improvement. In contrast, a fixed mindset assumes that abilities are innate and unchangeable, leading individuals to focus on performance outcomes and to avoid contexts that may threaten their perceived competence (Haimovitz & Dweck, 2017).

The social implications of these beliefs are particularly salient when considering how children and adolescents interpret intergroup peer interactions. Fixed-mindset beliefs often reinforce essentialist thinking, which is the assumption that certain abilities are biologically determined and intrinsically tied to social categories such as gender (Gelman & Taylor, 2014). For instance, Heyder et al. (2021) found that adolescents (aged 11-18) who endorsed math-male stereotypes showed lower math self-concept among girls but not boys. Similarly, Degol et al. (2018) found that girls who believed math ability was fixed reported lower expectations of success, which in turn predicted lower academic performance in math. These findings underscore the role of a fixed mindset in sustaining gender-based disparities in perceived competence.

Growth mindset may also influence how children and adolescents engage with peer norms and social dynamics in extracurricular domains, particularly those involving performance evaluation. Esports football represents a uniquely relevant context, as it intersects two historically male-dominated spheres: traditional football and digital gaming. Girls navigating this space may confront stereotypes rooted in both athleticism and technological competence. Mindset beliefs may serve as cognitive filters that either reinforce or counteract these exclusionary behaviors (Daw & Scharf, 2024). Children and adolescents who endorse a growth mindset in esports (e.g., “Anyone can excel with practice”) may be more likely to reject essentialist beliefs and advocate for inclusion. In contrast, fixed-mindset beliefs (e.g., “Boys are naturally better at gaming”) may legitimize exclusion based on perceived fixed gender traits (Lee et al., 2012).

Evidence from intervention research further supports the utility of a growth mindset in addressing gender bias, particularly in technology-related domains. Law et al. (2021) conducted a mindset intervention with children (aged 5-12), targeting gender stereotypes in STEM, which is a field that includes technology. Children exposed to the growth mindset intervention reported significantly lower gender stereotyping in STEM than their peers in the control group. This finding is particularly relevant for understanding esports football, where technological competence plays a central role and where similar biases about gender and ability are observed.

Complementary insights arise from traditional sports settings. In a qualitative study on a Youth Soccer Program, Moore et al. (2021) found that adolescent girls (aged 7-11) that had coaches that emphasized growth mindset principles were more likely to seek feedback and reflect on their performance, which are behaviors that are essential for persistence and resilience in competitive, male-dominated environments. The relevance of these findings extends to esports football, where similar gender dynamics are observed and where mindset may similarly influence confidence, performance, and inclusion.

In the esports domain, Himmelstein et al. (2017) reported that adult esports players who endorsed a growth mindset demonstrated greater resilience, openness to feedback, and adaptability during gameplay. These participants were also less likely to internalize gendered beliefs about gaming competence. Moreover, Trotter et al. (2022) examined adolescent esports participants (aged 13-18) and found that younger participants reported more growth-oriented beliefs than older peers. Although group-level differences were not statistically significant, the age-related trend suggests that early adolescence may represent a particularly critical period for shaping beliefs about ability, effort, and gender inclusion in esports.

Taken together, these findings highlight the potential of growth mindset beliefs to

shape not only academic outcomes but also social evaluations and behavior in peer contexts marked by gendered expectations. In the context of esports football, where gender stereotypes about competence persist, individual differences in mindset may influence how children and adolescents perceive exclusion, evaluate fairness, and decide whether to intervene.

1.4.3. Social-Cognitive Correlates

1.4.3.1. Empathy

Empathy is the ability to understand and feel the cognitive and affective experiences of others (Davis, 1983; Hodgson & Wertheim, 2007). Empathy comprises two related components. Cognitive empathy refers to the capacity to understand others' emotions and perspectives (Vossen et al., 2015). Affective empathy involves feeling what others feel, while maintaining a distinction between one's own emotions and those of others (Vossen et al., 2015).

Extensive previous research on bystander behavior and empathy has shown that higher empathy is correlated with a higher likelihood of defending and active bystander intervention behavior (Caravita et al., 2009; Nickerson et al., 2008).

Previous research on five-step BIM has extensively investigated the role of empathy in promoting bystander intervention behavior, by taking empathy as a

general ability or measuring its affective and cognitive components. When treated as a general ability, empathy has been shown to predict greater likelihood of defending behaviors and active intervention in bullying incidents (Nickerson et al., 2008). Within the five-step BIM, general empathy has been linked to multiple stages of intervention. For example, Nickerson et al. (2014) found that adolescents (aged 13-20) with higher empathy were more likely to notice the incidents, recognize them as requiring help, accept responsibility, know how to intervene, and decide to intervene in bullying and sexual harassment incidents. Similarly, Ayhan and Gönültaş (2024) found that among children and adolescents (aged 10-17), empathy significantly predicted outcomes across all five BIM steps in the context of interpersonal social exclusion.

However, studies investigating empathy as cognitive and affective reveals further on how subcomponents of empathy may be functioning differently in each step. For example, Fredrick et al. (2020) found that students in 4th and 5th grade cognitive empathy was related to earlier steps in the BIM such as noticing bullying events, accepting responsibility to intervene, and knowing how to intervene. In contrast, affective empathy was more closely linked with later-stage decisions, such as interpreting the event as an emergency and taking action. Similarly, Menolascino (2016) and Menolascino and Jenkins (2018) reported that affective empathy was associated with recognizing the emergency of bullying situations, accepting personal responsibility, and implementing

intervention behavior.

Taken together, these findings suggest that considering the distinct roles of cognitive and affective empathy is critical for understanding the psychological processes underlying bystander intervention, particularly in contexts such as gender-based social exclusion.

1.4.3.2. Theory of Mind

Theory of Mind (ToM) is the ability to infer mental states, including intentions, beliefs, and desires of oneself and others (Premack & Woodruff, 1978; White et al., 2009). This ability plays a crucial role in shaping how children and adolescents interpret social situations, particularly those involving peer interactions such as exclusion or bullying. ToM has been consistently linked with prosocial outcomes, including increased likelihood of defending victims of bullying and social exclusion (Caravita et al., 2010; Gini, 2006; Gönültaş et al., 2021; Metallidou et al., 2018).

While limited research has examined ToM within the five-step BIM specifically, a broader body of work has shown that ToM is positively associated with prosocial behavior in contexts of peer conflict and exclusion. To date, the only known study applying ToM to the BIM is by Ayhan and Gönültaş (2024), who found that

children and adolescents (aged 10-14) with higher ToM were more likely to notice interpersonal social exclusion and interpret it as a situation requiring intervention. This suggests that ToM may support the early stages of the bystander process by increasing sensitivity to social harm and intention-based judgments.

Beyond BIM-specific research, several studies have demonstrated that ToM is positively associated with defending behaviors and negatively associated with reinforcing or assisting exclusion. Metallidou et al. (2018) found that children in grades 3rd to 6th ($M_{age} = 10.1$) with higher ToM were more likely to engage in defending behavior and less likely to support aggression. Similarly, Mulvey et al. (2016b) reported that children (aged 3-6) with more advanced ToM were more likely to support peers who challenged traditional gender norms, suggesting that ToM may contribute to recognizing unfair treatment or biased exclusion.

ToM may enhance bystander responses by helping children and adolescents mentalize the emotional impact of exclusion on the victim and discern whether the excluder's behavior reflects intentional harm. Adolescents with stronger ToM skills have been shown to evaluate exclusion more critically and are more likely to judge such behavior as unjust (Imuta et al., 2016; Razza & Blair, 2009). Related research also suggests that ToM facilitates a more individualized understanding of outgroup members, enabling children to move beyond group-

based judgments (Chalik et al., 2014; Rizzo & Killen, 2018).

Taken together, these findings suggest that ToM plays a foundational role in shaping bystander intervention by enabling children and adolescents to detect intentional harm, empathize with victims, and override group-based biases in morally complex social contexts such as gender-based exclusion.

1.4.3.3. Humor Styles

Humor, particularly when used to target gender stereotypes, can act as a subtle yet powerful social-cognitive ability for gender-based exclusion. In peer contexts where teasing and joking are often normalized, humor can serve to reinforce exclusionary norms while concealing bad intent. This covert quality might make it more difficult for bystanders to recognize and intervene in exclusionary behavior, particularly during adolescence, a period when peer acceptance and group belonging strongly shape social behavior and identity formation (Brown & Larson, 2009; Reich et al., 2021). In such contexts, humor that targets gender stereotypes may be dismissed as harmless, even when it contributes to the marginalization of peers who deviate from traditional gender norms.

Within this line of research, humor styles are categorized into four types: affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive, and self-defeating (Martin et al., 2003).

While affiliative and self-enhancing humor are generally considered adaptive and prosocial, aggressive and self-defeating humor are viewed as maladaptive due to their association with interpersonal harm (Fox et al., 2016). Aggressive humor, which includes mocking, teasing, or ridiculing others for amusement, has been linked to bullying behavior and interpersonal social exclusion (Burger, 2022). For example, Sari (2016) found that Turkish adolescents (aged 15-18) who frequently used aggressive and self-defeating humor were more likely to engage in cyberbullying, suggesting that these humor styles may function as mechanisms for harmful online behavior. Similarly, Fox et al. (2015) found that experiencing victimization among adolescents (aged 11 - 13) were associated with increased use of self-defeating humor and decreased use of affiliative humor over time. These shifts not only reflect internalized distress but may also relate to how adolescents engage in peer dynamics. For instance, lower use of affiliative humor might coincide with fewer opportunities for positive social interactions, while frequent use of aggressive humor may align with more dismissive or exclusionary attitudes, both of which could influence how bystanders interpret and respond to exclusionary behavior (Zhu et al., 2022). Falanga et al. (2014) further emphasized the dual nature of humor in adolescent peer relations and group norms, showing that while some humor promotes group cohesion, antisocial humor often aligns with bullying and exclusion (Klein & Kuiper, 2006; Maftai & Măirean, 2023).

Yet, the role of humor in shaping bystander behavior remains underexplored

and no existing studies have investigated humor styles within the five-step BIM. While research has addressed how humor affects victims and perpetrators, to our knowledge, studies have not yet examined how bystanders respond to gender-based exclusion communicated through humor. This is a notable gap, particularly given the group-level nature of humor, where shared peer norms and audience reactions can either reinforce or disrupt exclusionary dynamics (Zhu et al., 2024). Bystanders may passively laugh, ignore, or actively intervene, responses that can significantly shape the social meaning of humor (Salmivalli et al., 2011).

1.5. Present Study

The current study aimed to examine children and adolescents' (aged 10-18) moral judgments (acceptability and fairness), intergroup judgments (victim inclusion, victims' behavior judgment, future inclusion of the victim and the excluder), and attitudes towards exclusion (funniness and seriousness), and five-step BIM behaviors to gender-based social exclusion in the context of esports football.

Specifically, the study investigated how these bystander outcomes vary as a function of three experimentally manipulated factors: the intentionality of the excluder (good vs. bad), bystander peer norms (supporting exclusion vs. opposing exclusion), and the victim's response (active vs. passive response). In

addition, the study explored the role of demographic factors (age and gender), gender-related factors (gender stereotype endorsement and growth mindset in esports), social-cognitive skills (empathy, ToM and humor styles) in shaping bystander behavior to gender-based social exclusion.

In the current study, esports football was selected to understand bystander behaviors in a domain that remains culturally male-dominated and where gender stereotypes about competence persist (Madden et al., 2021). Prior research in Türkiye indicates that girls are often perceived as less suited for online gaming, which can lead to exclusionary practices that are both explicit and subtle (Demir et al., 2024). By presenting a female target in this setting, the study aimed to examine participants' endorsement of or resistance to traditional gender norms, as well as their willingness to intervene in a context that may normalize such bias.

Gender-based social exclusion was selected as the focal form of harm in the present study due to its subtle yet impactful nature. Prior research has shown that adolescents and parents often perceive social exclusion as less severe than more overt forms of bullying, such as physical or verbal aggression (Thomas et al., 2017). This perception may stem from the covert and relational character of exclusion, which can mask its social and emotional consequences and reduce the likelihood of recognition or intervention (Vaillancourt, 2005). In the context of

gender, exclusion is often justified or normalized through stereotypes about group membership or competence, particularly in male-dominated domains (Tam & Brown, 2020). A study investigating children and adolescents' bullying behavior in online gaming also showed that participants reported social exclusion as the most frequent bullying behavior they encountered as victims (Huang et al., 2019).

As outlined in the preceding literature review, prior research has extensively examined the roles of gender group membership, the excluder's intentionality, bystander peer norms, and the victim's response in shaping bystander behavior and intergroup processes. These factors have been shown to influence how children and adolescents evaluate and respond to exclusion scenarios. However, to the best of our knowledge, existing studies have primarily investigated these influences in isolation. Few have employed experimental designs that simultaneously manipulate multiple features of the exclusion context. The present study addresses this gap by systematically varying three key contextual elements: the excluder's intentionality, the norms of the bystander peer group, and the excluded victim's reaction. This approach enables a more comprehensive examination of how children and adolescents interpret and respond to social exclusion when exposed to intersecting social cues, offering a more ecologically and developmentally grounded understanding of bystander behavior.

Additionally, the present study included children and adolescents aged 10 to 18 years, encompassing two schooling processes: middle school and high school. Middle and high school offer different peer contexts that differ significantly in peer dynamics, cognitive abilities, and exposure to social norms, all of which are known to influence how children and adolescents interpret and respond to exclusion. In particular, children and adolescents may vary in how they interpret excluder's intentionality, peer group norms, and victims' behavioral cues, as these elements become increasingly salient with age and social experience. By comparing these two age groups, the study aims to capture potential developmental shifts in how children and adolescents engage with gender-based exclusion within differing peer group contexts.

The current study aimed to answer the following research questions with related hypotheses:

Research Question 1: How does participants' school level and gender shape children and adolescents' judgments, attitudes and five-step BIM behavior to gender-based exclusion?

Hypothesis 1: Based on prior research on developmental and gender differences in social reasoning and bystander behavior, participant gender and school level were expected to influence children's and adolescents' responses to gender-based exclusion. Specifically, *girls and middle school students*: (a) would be less likely to judge the exclusionary

behavior as acceptable or fair, include the excluder in the future, and judge the joke as humorous; (b) would be more likely to judge the situation as serious, include the excluded peer in the future; (c) would be more likely to show greater prosocial bystander behavior across the five-step BIM model compared to *boys and high school students*.

Research Question 2: How do children's and adolescents' bystander judgments, attitudes and five-step BIM behavior vary by the intentionality of the excluder (good or bad)?

Hypothesis 2: Based on previous research on the role of intentionality on bystander behavior, participants in the *bad intentionality* condition: (a) would be less likely to judge the exclusionary behavior as acceptable or fair, include the excluder in the future, and judge the joke as humorous; (b) would be more likely to judge the situation as serious, include the excluded victim in the future; (c) would be more likely to show greater prosocial bystander behavior across the five-step BIM model compared to the participants in the *good intentionality* condition.

Research Question 3: How do children's and adolescents' bystander judgments, attitudes and five-step BIM behavior vary by the bystander peer norms (supporting exclusion vs opposing exclusion)?

Hypothesis 3: Based on previous research on the role of bystander peer

norms on bystander behavior, participants in the *opposing exclusion peer norms* condition: (a) would be less likely to judge the exclusionary behavior as acceptable or fair, include the excluder in the future, and judge the joke as humorous; (b) would be more likely to judge the situation as serious, include the excluded victim in the future; (c) would be more likely to show greater prosocial bystander behavior across the five-step BIM model compared to the participants in the *supporting exclusion peer norm* condition.

Research Question 4: How do children's and adolescents' bystander judgments, attitudes and five-step BIM behavior vary by the reaction of the victim (active vs. passive)?

Hypothesis 4: Based on previous research on the role of victim response on bystander behavior, participants in the *active victim* condition (a) would be less likely to judge the exclusionary behavior as acceptable or fair, include the excluder in the future, and rate the joke as humorous; (b) would be more likely to judge the situation as serious, include the excluded victim in the future; (c) would be more likely to show greater prosocial bystander behavior across the five-step BIM model compared to participants in the *passive victim* condition.

Research Question 5: How do gender-related factors (gender stereotype

endorsement and growth mindset in esports) predict children and adolescents' five-step BIM behavior to gender-based exclusion?

Hypothesis 5: Participants with *lower gender stereotype endorsement and higher growth mindset in esports* are expected to predict prosocial bystander behavior across the five-step BIM.

Research Question 6: How do social-cognitive abilities (empathy, ToM and humor styles) predict children's and adolescents' five-step BIM behavior to gender-based exclusion?

Hypothesis 6: Participants with *higher levels of cognitive empathy, affective empathy, and ToM ability, higher affiliative humor style, and lower aggressive humor style* were expected to predict prosocial bystander behavior across the five-step BIM.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

2.1. Participants

The final sample consists of 572 children and adolescents ($M_{age} = 14.44$, $SD = 1.78$; 347 girls). Of these, 227 were middle school students aged between 11 and 14 years ($M_{age} = 12.56$, $SD = .77$; 131 girls), and 345 were high school students aged between 15 and 18 years ($M_{age} = 15.68$, $SD = 1.02$; 216 girls). The initial sample comprised 631 participants; however, 57 were excluded for failing at least one of three manipulation-check questions, and one participant aged 19 years was removed due to age criteria.

A priori power analyses were conducted using G*Power to determine the minimum required sample sizes for the planned analyses. For the 5-way ANCOVA (effect size = .25, $\alpha = .05$, power = .95), a sample size of at least 599 participants was required. For the repeated measures ANOVA (effect size = .25, $\alpha = .05$, power = .95), the minimum required sample size was 192. Finally, for

the linear regression analysis with 12 predictors (effect size = .25, α = .05, power = .95), the required sample size was 115 participants (G*Power version 3.1.9.6, Faul et al., 2009).

Participants were recruited from four public and six private high schools and five public and one private middle school in Ankara, Türkiye. The sample consisted of children and adolescents from predominantly middle socioeconomic backgrounds, with 87.3% of mothers and 88.9% of fathers having attained at least a high school education.

2.2. Design

The current study employed a 2 (Intentionality of the excluder: Good vs. Bad) x 2 (Bystander peer norms: Supporting exclusion vs. Opposing exclusion) x 2 (Victim response: Active vs. Passive) between-subjects factorial design. In total there were eight conditions: Good intention – Supporting exclusion norm – Active victim (GSA); Good intention – Opposing exclusion norm – Active victim (GOA); Bad intention – Supporting exclusion norm – Active victim (BSA); Bad intention – Opposing exclusion norm – Active victim (BOA); Good intention – Supporting exclusion norm – Passive victim (GSP); Good intention – Opposing exclusion norm – Passive victim (GOP); Bad intention – Supporting exclusion norm – Passive victim (BSP); Bad intention – Opposing exclusion norm – Passive victim (BOP).

Each participant was randomly assigned to one of eight scenario conditions, in which the story always followed the same order: first describing the excluder's intention (Good vs Bad), then the bystanders' norm (Supporting exclusion vs Opposing exclusion), and finally how the victim responded (Active vs Passive). Participants were randomly assigned to one the eight condition by considering the balance in terms of gender and age across conditions (GSA: 64 participants, 40 girls; GOA: 78 participants, 49 girls; BSA: 73 participants, 48 girls; BOA: 71 participants, 39 girls; GSP: 80 participants, 51 girls; GOP: 61 participants, 33 girls; BSP: 75 participants, 47 girls; BOP: 70 participants, 40 girls).

2.3. Procedure

The study was first approved by the Ethics Committee of Bilkent University (please see Appendix B). Subsequently, permission for data collection from middle and high schools in Ankara was obtained from the Turkish National Ministry of Education (Decision No: MEB.TT.2024.004922).

Schools were then contacted, and teachers distributed parental consent forms to students. Only students who had signed parental consent forms were eligible to participate in the study. Surveys were administered in classroom settings using paper-and-pencil forms under the supervision of the classroom teacher and a research assistant. Data collection took place between December 2024 and April 2025. The survey took approximately 25 to 35 minutes to complete, and no compensation was provided. The measures were presented in a fixed order.

2.4. Open Science

The sample size, materials, and analysis plan of the current study were pre-registered on AsPredicted.org (please see Appendix C). However, due to time constraints imposed by the limited duration of instructional periods in participating schools, a subset of the originally planned measures was not administered.

The current study forms part of a larger research project, and only the data and variables pertinent to the current research questions are presented in this report.

2.5. Materials

2.5.1. Hypothetical Scenarios

2.5.1.1. Introduction for All Conditions

Participants were presented with the hypothetical scenario (please see Appendix D). The introduction to the hypothetical scenario remains consistent across conditions, with variations introduced based on the condition the participant received:

“Now imagine yourself on a school day. You are about to read a story

about what happened to you that day. When answering the questions we ask, we want you to imagine that it happened to you, feel yourself there, and respond accordingly.

One day, you arrive at school and you see on the board at the entrance that Esports friendly matches are being organized to participate in the inter-school Grand Champions Tournament.”

A short definition of esports was provided at the beginning of the scenario to ensure participants understood the context. Esports football was selected due to its popularity among adolescents and its association with male-stereotyped activities, both in traditional and digital gaming settings (Yusoff & Yunus, 2021). Previous research with adolescents has shown that such environments often reflect gender stereotypes that favor boys in perceived competence (Boiché et al., 2014).

“Esports definition: Esports is an activity in which computer and video games are played as a competitive sport. In these games, people compete individually or in teams. In esports football, like real football, players form teams, play matches and develop strategies. But these matches are played on a screen, not on the field. Players follow the rules of real football, and their goal is to play their best and win.”

Later in the scenario, participants were introduced to a team made up entirely of male students. An all-male team was used to reflect the gendered dynamics

present in esports (Madden et al., 2021). Research has also shown that male-dominated teams in online gaming settings often reinforce traditional gender norms and contribute to the exclusion of female players the group (Ruvalcaba et al., 2018).

“For this tournament, an online football game was chosen. The winner of the friendly match will qualify for the Grand Champions Tournament organized by the Esports Federation. Each school has a team of 6 players and everyone manages one player on the team from their own computer. You like esports games very much, so you go and put your name on your school team. The next day you meet the other 5 people on your team, everyone is from different classes in your school. Your team captain is Emre, goalkeeper Onur and the other players are Arda, Can and Mert.”

Then participants are informed that:

“Two days before the tournament, unfortunately Mert gets sick and has to leave the team. So, you start looking for a new teammate.”

At this point in the scenario, three key independent variables were introduced in a fixed order: first the excluder's intentionality, then bystander peer norms, and finally the victim's response. Each of these variables represented an independent variable with two levels, and their combination formed eight unique

versions of the scenario. These conditions were not presented as isolated components, but as parts of a continuous narrative in which the elements were interdependent. Participants read one complete version amongst eight of them, that they were randomly assigned. The following sections describe how each variable was presented within the scenario.

2.5.1.2. Hypothetical Scenario for Intentionality of the Excluder

First, participants were presented with either bad or good intentionality (please see Appendix E).

Participants in the bad intentionality condition read that:

“The next day Öykü says she wants to join your team. Emre, the team captain, doesn’t want Öykü on the team. In order for his friends to agree with him and so that Öykü will feel bad and leave the team, he makes an intentionally bad joke to Öykü about girls always failing at esports football. He makes this joke so that Öykü will feel bad and leave the team and will not be wanted by the other players in the team.”

Participants in the good intentionality condition read that:

“The next day Öykü says she wants to join your team. Team captain Emre wants Öykü on the team. But when he sees that there are a lot of

boys on the team, he makes a joke with a good purpose so that Öykü doesn't feel inadequate among the others and wants to stay on the team. In other words, he makes a joke to Öykü about how girls are not very good at esports football, so it is normal that there are more boys on the team. He makes this joke to make Öykü feel good on the team and to make her feel wanted on the team by the other players.”

A manipulation check question was asked: “What was the intentionality of Emre’s joke?” with two response options: “a) For a good intention, so that Öykü feels good and does not leave the team” and “b) For bad intentions, so that Öykü feels excluded and leaves the team”. 21 participants could not pass this manipulation check, and they were excluded from the analysis.

2.5.1.3. Hypothetical Scenario for Bystander Peer Norms

Secondly, to manipulate bystander peer norms, participants were presented with the beliefs and ideas of their bystander peers to Emre’s joke and their expectations for the participant's behavior (please see Appendix F).

Participants in the supportive bystander peer norms condition read that:

“When you look at your teammates, you see that they also find this joke very funny and laugh. Emre always makes such jokes and your teammates take Emre's jokes normally and support Emre. So, they also

think that girls are not very good at football, even in esports football.

Your teammates look at you and expect you to laugh at this joke and support Emre. If you don't laugh at Emre's joke about Öykü, that is, if you don't join them, you will have to leave the team because you don't think about the good and integrity of the team.”

Participants in the opposing bystander peer norms condition read that:

“When you look at your teammates, you see that they don't find this joke funny and they don't laugh. Emre always makes such jokes, but your teammates don't take Emre's jokes normally, and they don't agree with Emre. So, they think that both girls and boys are good at esports football.”

Your teammates look at you and expect you not to laugh at this joke and support Emre. If you laugh at Emre's joke about Öykü, that is, if you support Emre, you will have to leave the team because you do not adapt to the team spirit and do not think about the good of the team.”

In both the supportive and opposing norm conditions, compliance with the group's expectations was linked to a potential social cost. Participants read that failing to align with their peers' reactions would lead to exclusion from the team. This additional cost was included as previous research showed that peer group norms can significantly influence children's intergroup attitudes, especially when

they are made accountable to their peers (Gönültaş et al., 2024; McGuire et al., 2015). A manipulation check was followed this section, asking participants to identify the expected consequence of not supporting Emre's joke: "What would happen if you did not laugh at Emre's joke and did not support him?" with two response options: "a) My teammates would expect me to leave the team" and "b) My teammates would expect me to stay on the team." 39 participants could not pass this manipulation check, and they were excluded from the analysis.

2.5.1.4. Hypothetical Scenario for Response of the Victim

Thirdly, to manipulate the response of the victim, participants were presented with the reaction of the victim after the joke and learning that she can report the victim (please see Appendix G).

Participants in the active victim response condition read that:

"You realize that Öykü is very hurt by this joke. Öykü, who is very offended by Captain Emre's joke about her, feels excluded and leaves the team crying. After leaving the team, Öykü learns that she has the right to report Emre and the team. Öykü decides to report Emre and the team to the teacher and the federation that organizes the competition."

Participants in the passive victim response condition read that:

“You realize that Öykü is very hurt by this joke. Öykü, who is very offended by Captain Emre's joke about her, feels excluded and leaves the team crying. After leaving the team, Öykü learns that she has the right to report Emre and the team. But Öykü does not report them to the teacher and the federation that organizes the competition.”

A manipulation check followed this section, asking participants to recall the victim's response: “What did Öykü do after leaving the team, after learning that she had the right to report Emre and the team?” with two response options: “a) Öykü reported us to the teacher and the federation organizing the tournament” and “b) Öykü did not report us to the teacher and the federation organizing the tournament.” 28 participants could not pass this manipulation check, and they were excluded from the analysis.

To maintain consistency across conditions, the victim's emotional reaction and the outcome were the same regardless of intentions, norms, or response of the victim: the victim was always excluded from the esports team at the end of the story and leaves the team crying. In order to mitigate any possible incongruency the good intentionality condition may cause, participants read this additional text in the victim response section: *“Even though Captain Emre made the joke with good intentions, Öykü is offended by this joke, feels excluded, and leaves the team crying.”* This statement underscored that the victim experienced harm regardless of the excluder's intent.

All scenarios were designed informed from previous studies that used hypothetical scenarios to investigate bystander behavior in gender-based exclusion (e.g., Gönültaş & Mulvey, 2023; McGuire et al., 2022).

2.5.2. Demographic Information Questionnaire

Participants first answered a demographic information questionnaire asking their birth date, age, grade, gender, highest education level of their mother and father (please see Appendix H).

2.6. Outcome Measures

2.6.1. Moral Judgments

2.6.1.1. Acceptability Judgment

Participants' acceptability judgment was measured with a single item (e.g., "How would you evaluate Emre's behavior?") rated on a six-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not OK at all) to 6 (totally OK). This question was taken from previous research (Gönültaş et al., 2022; Rutland et al., 2015) (please see Appendix I).

2.6.1.2. Fairness Judgment

Participants' fairness judgment was measured with an item (e.g., "Do you think what Emre did was fair?") rated on a six-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not fair at all) to 6 (totally fair). This question was adapted from previous research (Rizzo et al., 2016) (please see Appendix I).

2.6.2. Five-Step BIM Behavior

Participants' bystander behavior was measured using the sixteen-item scale by Nickerson et al. (2014), measuring five steps of bystander intervention behavior rated on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). The scale was originally created to measure bystander responses to bullying and sexual harassment; thus, the items were adapted to apply to the social exclusion context in esports. This measure has also been previously used in a social exclusion context in Turkish (Ayhan & Gönültaş, 2024).

The five subscales are:

- a. Notice the event (3 items; $\alpha = .79$; e.g., "Social exclusion is a problem in the esports team I am a part of.")
- b. Interpret event as an emergency (3 items; $\alpha = .66$; e.g., "Even if the person making inappropriate comments on the esports team says they are joking, those comments can hurt someone's feelings.")
- c. Accept responsibility to help (3 items; $\alpha = .71$; e.g., "I feel personally responsible to intervene and assist in resolving incidents of social

exclusion in the esports team.”)

- d. Know how to help (3 items; $\alpha = .71$; e.g., “When I see things like this happening on the esports team, I know what to say to the person who is excluding someone to stop it.”)
- e. Implement intervention decision (4 items; $\alpha = .84$; e.g., “When I see a student on the esports team being rude and disrespectful to a vulnerable student, I say something to stop them.”)

Composite scores for each subscale were calculated by averaging the item scores. Higher scores indicated a greater endorsement of bystander judgments and responses at that specific stage (please see Appendix J).

2.6.3. Intergroup Judgments

2.6.3.1. Inclusion Decision

Participants inclusion decision was measured with a single item (e.g., “Do you think that Öykü should be included in the esports football team?”) rated on a six-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (definitely should not be included) to 6 (should be definitely included). This question was adapted from previous research (Gönültaş et al., 2023) (please see Appendix K).

2.6.3.2. Victim’s Behavior Judgment

Depending on the condition the participant was assigned, participants were presented the item “How would you evaluate Öykü’s decision to report Emre and the team?” or “How would you evaluate Öykü’s decision to not report Emre and the team?” rated on a six-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not OK at all) to 6 (totally OK). This question was created to investigate the effect of the experimental manipulation (please see Appendix K).

2.6.3.3. Future Inclusion Decision

Participants are asked to imagine that in the future, an esports tournament is organized at their school again. This time they are the team captain and Öykü and Emre want to be on their team. To measure their inclusive attitudes towards the victim they were asked (i.e., “What are the chances of you including Öykü in the team?”) and the excluder (i.e., “What are the chances of you including Emre in the team?”) rated on a six-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (would not include at all) to 6 (definitely would include). These questions were adapted from previous research (Gönültaş et al., 2023) (please see Appendix K).

2.6.4. Attitudes Towards Exclusion

2.6.4.1. Seriousness Judgment

Participants’ seriousness judgment was measured with a single item “How serious is what Öykü experienced?” rated on a six-point Likert-type scale

ranging from 1 (not serious at all) to 6 (very serious). This question was adapted from previous research (Coyne et al., 2019) (please see Appendix L).

2.6.4.2. Humor Judgment

Participants' humor judgment was measured with a single item, "How would you evaluate the joke Emre told?" rated on a six-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not funny at all) to 6 (very funny). This approach aligns with questions used in prior humor research measuring perceived funniness (Aykan & Nalçacı, 2018) (please see Appendix L).

2.7. Correlates

2.7.1. Gender-Related Correlates

2.7.1.1. Gender Stereotype Endorsement

Gender stereotype endorsement was measured using an adapted version of the occupations subscale from the Occupations, Activities, and Traits Scale - Short Form (Liben & Bigler, 2002). The Occupations subscale was used in the present study and the items were adapted to reflect occupations relevant to Turkish culture and gender norms.

For the occupations subscale, participants were asked, "Who should do these

jobs?” and rated ten occupations ($\alpha = .81$), including five traditionally male-oriented occupations (e.g., police officer) and five traditionally female-oriented occupations (e.g., nurse) on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Only males) to 5 (Only females). A score for gender-stereotypic occupations was determined by calculating the ratio of stereotypical responses. This involved summing the female stereotypic items categorized as "Only females" and the male stereotypic items categorized as "Only males," then dividing by the total number of items. Higher scores indicate a greater endorsement of gender-typed views about who should perform certain jobs (please see Appendix M).

2.7.1.2. Growth Mindset in Esports

Participants' growth and fixed mindset in esports was measured using an adapted version of the gender attitude items originally developed by Dweck (2017) and later adapted by Law (2023). Growth mindset on esports was measured with the item “Most people can learn to be good at esports games.” and fixed mindset on esports was measured with the item “To be good at esports games, you need to be born with this ability.” The two items were rated on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (definitely disagree) to 7 (definitely agree). A single growth mindset in esports score was calculated by reverse-scoring the fixed mindset item, adding to the growth mindset item, and averaging the scores. Higher scores indicate a higher level of a growth mindset in esports (please see Appendix N).

2.7.2. Social Cognitive Correlates

2.7.2.1. Empathy

Participants' cognitive and affective empathy was measured using the Empathy and Sympathy Scale for Adolescents by Voessen et al. (2015), which was adapted into Turkish by Zengin et al. (2018). The eight-item scale was rated on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always).

The two subscales used are:

- a. Cognitive empathy (4 items; $\alpha = .77$; e.g., "I can easily tell how others are feeling.")
- b. Affective empathy (4 items; $\alpha = .74$; e.g., "When my friend is sad, I become sad too.")

To calculate the composite score, all items were averaged, and higher scores indicate higher empathy levels (please see Appendix O).

2.7.2.2. Theory of Mind

Participants' ToM abilities were assessed using the Strange Stories Task (White et al., 2009; Perez-Zapata et al., 2016), which included double bluff, white lie, and misunderstanding stories. After each story, participants were asked a

question that required causal inference based on the mental states of the characters. Responses were scored on a 0-2 scale according to their accuracy and level of mental state reasoning. A score of 0 was given for incorrect or irrelevant answers, a score of 1 was given for correct answers that did not reference mental states, and a score of 2 was assigned to correct answers that explicitly made a mental state attribution. The scores for the three stories were summed to calculate an overall ToM ability score, ranging from 0 to 6. The responses were coded separately by four coders with acceptable inter-rater reliability (*Cohen's* $\kappa = .97$) (please see Appendix P).

2.7.2.3. Humor Styles

Participants' humor style was measured using the Humor Style Questionnaire for Children (Child HSQ; Fox et al., 2016), which was adapted into Turkish by Anlı (2021). For the purposes of the current study, only the affiliative humor (5 items; $\alpha = .91$; e.g., "It is easy for me to make others laugh.") and aggressive humor (4 items; $\alpha = .73$; e.g., "I don't like it when people laugh at another person in order to embarrass them. (r)") subscales were used. The nine items were rated on a four-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (definitely disagree) to 4 (definitely agree). Composite scores were computed by averaging the items, and items on the aggressive humor subscale were reverse-coded so that higher scores reflected a greater endorsement of aggressive humor (please see Appendix R).

2.8. Control Variables

2.8.1. Interest in Esports and Football

Participants' self-interest in esports and football was measured with two items (e.g., "Are you interested in esports/ football?") rated on a six-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (I am not interested at all) to 6 (I am very interested) (please see Appendix S).

2.8.2. Future Interest in Esports

Participants future interest in esports was measured with a single item i.e., "In real life, if an esports football club was formed at your school next week, how likely would you be to join?" rated on a six-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (I would not join at all) to 6 (I would definitely join) (please see Appendix S).

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

The results section begins with preliminary analyses, which examined whether demographics, control variables, social-cognitive abilities and gender-related factors differed across participants in different experimental conditions and whether the missing data were missing at random. Following this, the main analyses involved a series of between-subjects ANOVAs, ANCOVAs, and repeated-measures ANOVAs. Lastly, hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to examine the contribution of individual and contextual variables in predicting bystander responses.

In this section these abbreviations were used to refer to conditions: Good intention – Supporting exclusion norm – Active victim (GSA); Good intention – Opposing exclusion norm – Active victim (GOA); Bad intention – Supporting exclusion norm – Active victim (BSA); Bad intention – Opposing exclusion norm

– Active victim (BOA); Good intention – Supporting exclusion norm – Passive victim (GSP); Good intention – Opposing exclusion norm – Passive victim (GOP); Bad intention – Supporting exclusion norm – Passive victim (BSP); Bad intention – Opposing exclusion norm – Passive victim (BOP).

3.1. Preliminary Analysis

3.1.1. Condition-based Differences in Demographics, Control Variables, and Predictors

3.1.1.1. Demographic Factors

Participants' age was categorized by school level (middle school and high school) using grade-level information. A chi-square test showed that school level was similarly distributed across the conditions ($X^2(7) = 10.06, p = .185$). Further, a chi-square test showed that gender was also similarly distributed across the conditions ($X^2(7) = 3.92, p = .788$).

3.1.1.2. Control Variables

Between-subjects ANOVAs showed that there was no significant difference between conditions in terms of esports interest ($F(7, 561) = 0.23, p = .979, \eta_p^2 =$

.003), football interest ($F(7, 561) = 0.52, p = .824, \eta_p^2 = .006$) and interest in future participation in esports football ($F(7, 545) = 0.49, p = .846, \eta_p^2 = .006$).

3.1.1.3. Social Cognitive Abilities

Between-subjects ANOVA analysis showed no significant difference between conditions in terms of ToM abilities, $F(7, 540) = 1.24, p = .281, \eta_p^2 = .016$.

Similarly, between-subjects ANOVA showed that there was no significant difference between conditions in terms of cognitive empathy, $F(7, 553) = 2.02, p = .050, \eta_p^2 = .025$. However, results documented that there was a significant difference between conditions in terms of affective empathy, $F(7, 547) = 3.01, p = .004, \eta_p^2 = .037$. Post hoc comparisons using Bonferroni correction showed that participants in the BOP condition ($M = 2.65, SD = .92$) reported significantly lower affective empathy than participants in the BSA ($M = 3.17, SD = .96, p = .021$), GSA ($M = 3.20, SD = .83, p = .013$), and BSP ($M = 3.14, SD = .95, p = .035$) conditions. No other pairwise comparisons were significant. Additionally, between-subjects ANOVA analysis showed no significant difference between conditions in terms of affiliative humor ($F(7, 518) = 2.00, p = .054, \eta_p^2 = .026$). Likewise, between-subjects ANOVA analysis showed no significant difference between conditions in terms of aggressive humor ($F(7, 528) = 0.70, p = .676, \eta_p^2 = .009$).

3.1.1.4. Gender-Related Factors

Between-subjects ANOVA analysis showed that there was no significant difference between conditions in terms of gender stereotype endorsement ($F(7, 536) = 1.21, p = .293, \eta_p^2 = .016$) and growth mindset in esports ($F(7, 542) = 0.84, p = .558, \eta_p^2 = .011$).

3.1.2. Missing Data Analysis

In order to detect any significance of missing patterns in the data, Little's Missing Completely at Random (MCAR) test was conducted. The results indicated that all values were missing completely at random ($X^2(1588) = 1605.233, p = .376$). Thus, no data imputation was conducted. The missing data percentage was lower than 8.7% across all variables.

3.2. Main Analyses

3.2.1. Condition-Based Differences

To examine condition-based differences, five-way between-subjects ANOVAs were conducted with the following factors: Gender (boy, girl), School Level (middle school, high school), Intentionality of the Excluder (bad, good), Bystander Peer Norms (supporting exclusion, opposing exclusion), and Victim Response (active, passive). When any of the control variables were significantly

correlated with the outcome measures, ANCOVAs were conducted (see Table 1).

3.2.1.1. Bystander Judgments and Attitudes

3.2.1.1.1. Acceptability Judgment

A 2 (Gender: boy, girl) x 2 (School Level: middle school, high school), x 2 (Intentionality of the Excluder: bad, good) x 2 (Bystander Peer Norms; supporting exclusion, opposing exclusion), x 2 (Victim Response: active, passive) ANCOVA was conducted to understand the effect of conditions on participants' judgments of the acceptability of the excluder's behavior controlling for esports interest, football interest and interest in future participation in esports football.

Among the main effects, gender was significant, $F(1,516) = 12.56$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .024$. More specifically, boys were more likely to find the excluder's behavior as acceptable ($M = 2.24$, $SE = .09$) compared to girls ($M = 1.84$, $SE = .07$).

Results also documented a significant three-way interaction between intention, peer norms, and victim response, $F(1, 516) = 4.21$, $p = .041$, $\eta_p^2 = .008$.

Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons indicated that, across all conditions,

regardless of peer norms and victim response, participants in the good intentionality conditions judged the excluders behavior significantly more acceptable compared to participants in the bad intentionality conditions (all $ps < .05$). Furthermore, Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons based on peer norms indicated that only when the intention was bad and the victim was passive, peer norms supporting exclusion led to significantly higher acceptability judgments (BSP; $M = 1.75$, $SE = .15$) than peer norms opposing exclusion (BOP; $M = 1.31$, $SE = .14$), $F(1, 516) = 14.68$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .028$. Additionally, when the intention was good and norms opposed exclusion, participants rated the excluder's behavior as more acceptable when the victim was active (GOA; $M = 2.33$, $SE = .14$) compared to when the victim was passive (GOP; $M = 2.74$, $SE = .15$), $F(1, 516) = 4.13$, $p = .043$, $\eta_p^2 = .008$.

3.2.1.1.2. Fairness Judgment

A 2 (Gender: boy, girl) x 2 (School Level: middle school, high school), x 2 (Intentionality of the Excluder: bad, good) x 2 (Bystander Peer Norms; supporting exclusion, opposing exclusion), x 2 (Victim Response: active, passive) ANCOVA was conducted to understand the effect of conditions on participants' fairness judgments controlling for esports interest and interest in future participation in esports football.

Results documented that the main effect of gender was significant, $F(1,517) = 17.24$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .032$. More specifically, boys were more likely to find the excluder's behavior as fair ($M = 2.28$, $SE = .09$) compared to girls ($M = 1.81$, $SE = .07$).

A significant four-way interaction was found between school level, intentionality, peer norms, and victim response, $F(1, 517) = 5.26$, $p = .022$, $\eta_p^2 = .010$.

Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons indicated that, across almost all conditions, regardless of school level, norm, and victim response, participants in the good intentionality conditions judged the exclusionary behavior as more fair compared to participants in the bad intentionality conditions (all $ps < .05$). The only exception was for middle school participants when peer norms are opposing exclusion and when the victim was active, the difference between good (GOA; $M = 2.06$, $SE = .22$) and bad (BOA; $M = 1.66$, $SE = .26$) intention was not significant, $F(1, 517) = 1.38$, $p = .240$, $\eta_p^2 = .003$. Furthermore, Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons based on school level showed that among middle school participants, when intentions were good and norms were opposing exclusion, the exclusion was judged as more fair when the victim was passive (GOP; $M = 2.98$, $SE = .22$) compared to when the victim was active (GOA; $M = 2.06$, $SE = .22$), $F(1, 517) = 8.86$, $p = .003$, $\eta_p^2 = .017$. Additionally, high school students that hear about good intentions, opposing norms and active victim, judged the exclusionary behavior as more fair (high school GOA;

$M = 2.63$, $SE = .17$) compared to middle school students in the same condition (middle school GOA; $M = 2.06$, $SE = .22$), $F(1, 517) = 4.14$, $p = .042$, $\eta_p^2 = .008$.

3.2.1.1.3. Inclusion Decision

A 2 (Gender: boy, girl) x 2 (School Level: middle school, high school), x 2 (Intentionality of the Excluder: bad, good) x 2 (Bystander Peer Norms; supporting exclusion, opposing exclusion), x 2 (Victim Response: active, passive) ANCOVA was conducted to understand the effect of conditions on participants' inclusion decision for the victim, controlling for esports interest and interest in future participation in esports football.

A significant two-way interaction was found between gender and intentionality, $F(1, 510) = 5.41$, $p = .020$, $\eta_p^2 = .011$. Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons indicated that in the bad intentionality condition, girls were more likely to include the victim ($M = 4.87$, $SE = .11$) compared to boys ($M = 4.05$, $SE = .16$), $F(1, 510) = 17.20$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .033$.

Another significant two-way interaction was found between gender and peer norms ($F(1, 510) = 6.20$, $p = .013$, $\eta_p^2 = .012$). Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons revealed that when peer norms are supporting exclusion, girls were more likely to include the victim ($M = 4.74$, $SE = .11$) compared to boys (M

= 3.90, $SE = .16$), $F(1, 510) = 18.24$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .035$. Furthermore, within-gender comparisons indicated that boys were more likely to include the victim when peer norms opposed the exclusion and ($M = 4.53$, $SE = .15$) compared to when peer norms were supportive of the exclusion ($M = 3.90$, $SE = .16$), $F(1, 510) = 9.12$, $p = .003$, $\eta_p^2 = .018$.

Additionally, another significant two-way interaction was found between school level and victim response, $F(1, 510) = 7.06$, $p = .008$, $\eta_p^2 = .014$. Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons indicated that, when the victim was active, middle school students were more likely to include the victim ($M = 4.77$, $SE = .15$) compared to high school students ($M = 4.22$, $SE = .11$), $F(1, 510) = 8.41$, $p = .004$, $\eta_p^2 = .016$.

3.2.1.1.4. Victim's Behavior Judgment

A 2 (Gender: boy, girl) x 2 (School Level: middle school, high school), x 2 (Intentionality of the Excluder: bad, good) x 2 (Bystander Peer Norms; supporting exclusion, opposing exclusion), x 2 (Victim Response: active, passive) ANOVA was conducted to understand the effect of conditions on participants' judgments of the acceptability of the victim's behavior.

A significant two-way interaction was found between gender and peer norms, $F(1, 534) = 10.25, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .019$. Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons indicated that when peer norms are supporting exclusion, girls judged the victim's behavior as more acceptable ($M = 3.93, SE = .11$) compared to boys ($M = 3.40, SE = .14$), $F(1, 534) = 9.01, p = .003, \eta_p^2 = .017$. Furthermore, within-gender comparisons showed that boys were more likely to judge the victim's behavior as more acceptable when peer norms opposed exclusion ($M = 3.97, SE = .14$) compared to when they supported exclusion ($M = 3.40, SE = .14$), $F(1, 534) = 8.39, p = .004, \eta_p^2 = .015$.

A significant two-way interaction was found between gender and victim response, $F(1, 534) = 24.14, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .043$. Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons indicated that when the victim was passive, boys judged this behavior as more acceptable ($M = 3.60, SE = .14$) compared to girls ($M = 3.11, SE = .11$), $F(1, 534) = 7.70, p = .006, \eta_p^2 = .014$. In contrast, when the victim was active, girls judged this behavior as more acceptable ($M = 4.52, SE = .11$) than boys ($M = 3.77, SE = .14$), $F(1, 534) = 17.34, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .031$. Additionally, girls judged the victim's behavior more acceptable when the victim was active ($M = 4.52, SE = .11$) compared to when the victim was passive ($M = 3.11, SE = .11$), $F(1, 534) = 79.59, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .130$.

Another two-way significant interaction was found between intention and victim response, $F(1, 534) = 24.45, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .044$. Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons indicated that, when the victim was passive, participants in the good intentionality condition judged the victim's behavior more acceptable ($M = 3.68, SE = .13$) compared to participants in the bad intentionality condition ($M = 3.03, SE = .13$), $F(1, 534) = 13.27, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .024$. In contrast, when the victim was active, participants in the bad intentionality condition judged the victim's behavior more acceptable ($M = 4.45, SE = .13$) compared to participants in the good intentionality condition ($M = 3.84, SE = .13$), $F(1, 534) = 11.24, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .021$. Furthermore, when the excluder's intention was bad, participants judged the victim's behavior as significantly more acceptable when the victim was active ($M = 4.45, SE = .13$) compared to when the victim was passive ($M = 3.03, SE = .13$), $F(1, 534) = 62.20, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .104$.

3.2.1.1.5. Seriousness Judgment

A 2 (Gender: boy, girl) x 2 (School Level: middle school, high school), x 2 (Intentionality of the Excluder: bad, good) x 2 (Bystander Peer Norms; supporting exclusion, opposing exclusion), x 2 (Victim Response: active, passive) ANCOVA was conducted to understand the effect of conditions on participants' judgment of the seriousness of what the victim experienced controlling for interest in future participation in esports football.

A marginally significant three-way interaction was found between gender, intentionality and victim response, $F(1, 511) = 3.25, p = .072, \eta_p^2 = .006$. Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons indicated that when the intention was bad, girls judged the situation as significantly more serious than boys, both when the victim was passive (girl $M = 4.74, SE = .14$; boy $M = 4.07, SE = .19$; $F(1, 511) = 8.04, p = .005, \eta_p^2 = .015$) and when the victim was active (girl $M = 4.60, SE = .14$; boy $M = 4.03, SE = .19$; $F(1, 511) = 5.58, p = .019, \eta_p^2 = .011$). Similarly, when the intention was good and the victim was active, girls judged the situation as significantly more serious than boys (girl $M = 4.16, SE = .14$; boy $M = 3.37, SE = .18$), $F(1, 511) = 11.22, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .021$. In contrast, boys when the intention was good, judged the situation significantly more serious when the victim was passive ($M = 3.87, SE = .17$) compared to when the victim was active ($M = 3.37, SE = .18$), $F(1, 511) = 4.09, p = .044, \eta_p^2 = .008$.

3.2.1.1.6. Humor Judgment

A 2 (Gender: boy, girl) x 2 (School Level: middle school, high school), x 2 (Intentionality of the Excluder: bad, good) x 2 (Bystander Peer Norms; supporting exclusion, opposing exclusion), x 2 (Victim Response: active, passive) ANCOVA was conducted to understand the effect of conditions on participants' judgment of the funniness of the excluders' joke controlling for

esports interest, football interest and interest in future participation in esports football.

A marginally significant three-way interaction was found between gender, school level, and intentionality, $F(1, 511) = 3.87, p = .050, \eta_p^2 = .008$. Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons indicated that both high school and middle girls, judged the joke as funnier when the excluder had good intentions (high school $M = 2.10, SE = .11$; middle school $M = 2.20, SE = .14$) compared to bad intentions (high school $M = 1.44, SE = .11$; middle school $M = 1.24, SE = .13$; high school girls $F(1, 511) = 19.73, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .037$, middle school girls $F(1, 511) = 25.51, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .048$). Similarly, high school boys judged the joke as funnier when the excluder had good intentions ($M = 2.88, SE = .15$) compared to bad intentions ($M = 2.26, SE = .14$), $F(1, 511) = 9.45, p = .002, \eta_p^2 = .018$.

Additionally, in the bad intentionality condition, boys rated the joke significantly funnier than girls in both middle school (boys $M = 2.05, SE = .19$; girls $M = 1.24, SE = .13$; $F(1, 511) = 12.88, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .025$) and high school (boys $M = 2.26, SE = .14$; girls $M = 1.44, SE = .11$; $F(1, 511) = 19.65, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .037$). Additionally, when the excluder had good intentions, high school boys rated the joke as significantly funnier ($M = 2.88, SE = .15$) than high school girls ($M = 2.10, SE = .11$), $F(1, 511) = 17.93, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .034$. Furthermore, in the good intentionality condition, high school boys judged the joke significantly funnier ($M = 2.88, SE = .15$) than middle school boys ($M = 2.20, SE = .17$), $F(1, 511) = 9.88, p = .002, \eta_p^2 = .019$.

Another significant three-way interaction was found between school level, intentionality and norms, $F(1, 511) = 4.00, p = .046, \eta_p^2 = .008$. Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons indicated that, in the good intentionality condition, high school students judged the joke significantly funnier when peer norms were supportive ($M = 2.78, SE = .12$) compared to when peer norms were opposing ($M = 2.20, SE = .13$), $F(1, 511) = 10.83, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .021$. Furthermore, in the good intentionality and supportive norms condition, high school students judged the joke significantly funnier ($M = 2.78, SE = .12$) than middle school students ($M = 2.09, SE = .16$), $F(1, 511) = 12.52, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .024$. In addition, within the opposing norms condition, both middle school ($M = 2.32, SE = .15$) and high school students ($M = 2.20, SE = .13$) judged the joke significantly funnier when the excluder had good intentions compared to bad intentions (middle school $M = 1.60, SE = .16$; $F(1, 511) = 11.13, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .021$; high school $M = 1.79, SE = .13$; $F(1, 511) = 4.95, p = .027, \eta_p^2 = .010$). Similarly, in the supportive norms condition, high school students judged the joke significantly funnier when the excluder had good intentions ($M = 2.78, SE = .12$) than bad intentions ($M = 1.91, SE = .12$), $F(1, 511) = 25.67, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .048$.

3.2.1.1.7. Future Inclusion of Victim and Excluder

A 2 (Future Inclusion: Victim, Excluder) x 2 (Gender: boy, girl) x 2 (School Level: middle school, high school), x 2 (Intentionality of the Excluder: bad, good) x 2 (Bystander Peer Norms; supporting exclusion, opposing exclusion), x 2 (Victim Response: active, passive) repeated-measures ANCOVA was conducted for controlling for esports interest, football interest and interest in future participation in esports football. The within-subjects factor was the future inclusion target (victim vs. excluder), while the between-subjects factors were gender (girl, boy), school level (middle school, high school), intentionality of the excluder (good, bad), bystander peer norms (supporting exclusion, opposing exclusion), and victim response (active, passive).

A significant two-way interaction was found between future inclusion and gender, $F(1, 511) = 25.35, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .047$. Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons indicated that across gender groups, participants were more likely to include the victim in the future than the excluder, both among girls (victim $M = 5.19, SE = .07$; excluder $M = 3.17, SE = .09$), $F(1, 511) = 270.36, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .346$, and boys (victim $M = 4.50, SE = .10$; excluder $M = 3.58, SE = .12$), $F(1, 511) = 29.97, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .055$. Furthermore, girls were more likely to include the victim in the future ($M = 5.19, SE = .07$) compared to boys ($M = 4.50, SE = .10$), $F(1, 511) = 30.03, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .056$. In contrast, boys were significantly more likely to include the excluder in the future ($M = 3.58, SE = .12$) than girls ($M = 3.17, SE = .09$), $F(1, 511) = 6.54, p = .011, \eta_p^2 = .013$.

A significant two-way interaction was found between future inclusion and intentionality, $F(1, 511) = 25.11, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .047$. Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons indicated that participants were more likely to include the victim in the future than the excluder, both when the excluder had bad intentions (victim $M = 4.81, SE = .08$; excluder $M = 2.85, SE = .10$), $F(1, 511) = 194.24, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .275$, and when the excluder had good intentions (victim $M = 4.88, SE = .08$; excluder $M = 3.90, SE = .10$), $F(1, 511) = 51.01, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .091$. Furthermore, participants were significantly more likely to include the excluder in the future when the excluder had good intentions ($M = 3.90, SE = .10$) compared to bad intentions ($M = 2.85, SE = .10$), $F(1, 511) = 53.82, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .095$.

3.2.1.2. Five-Step BIM Behavior

3.2.1.2.1. Notice the Event

A 2 (Gender: boy, girl) x 2 (School Level: middle school, high school), x 2 (Intentionality of the Excluder: bad, good) x 2 (Bystander Peer Norms; supporting exclusion, opposing exclusion), x 2 (Victim Response: active, passive) ANCOVA was conducted to understand the effect of conditions on participants' bystander behavior to notice the event controlling for esports interest, football interest and interest in future participation in esports football.

Among the main effects, gender was significant, $F(1, 503) = 6.61, p = .010, \eta_p^2 = .013$. More specifically, girls were more likely to notice the social exclusion ($M = 4.06, SE = .05$) compared to boys ($M = 3.83, SE = .07$).

Among the main effects, intentionality of the excluder was also significant, $F(1, 503) = 51.08, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .092$. More specifically, participants in the bad intentionality condition were more likely to notice the event ($M = 4.23, SE = .06$) compared to the participants in the good intentionality condition ($M = 3.66, SE = .06$).

3.2.1.2.2. Evaluate as Emergency

A 2 (Gender: boy, girl) x 2 (School Level: middle school, high school), x 2 (Intentionality of the Excluder: bad, good) x 2 (Bystander Peer Norms; supporting exclusion, opposing exclusion), x 2 (Victim Response: active, passive) ANCOVA was conducted to understand the effect of conditions on participants' bystander behavior to evaluate the situation as an emergency controlling for esports interest, football interest and interest in future participation in esports football.

A significant two-way interaction was found between gender and intentionality of the excluder, $F(1, 509) = 4.86, p = .028, \eta_p^2 = .009$. Bonferroni-corrected pairwise

comparisons indicated that when the excluder had bad intentions, girls were more likely to interpret the situation as an emergency ($M = 4.51$, $SE = .05$) compared to boys ($M = 4.13$, $SE = .07$), $F(1, 509) = 16.61$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .032$.

A significant two-way interaction was also found between peer norms and the victim's response, $F(1, 509) = 6.83$, $p = .009$, $\eta_p^2 = .013$. Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons indicated that when peer norms opposed exclusion, participants were more likely to interpret the situation as an emergency when the victim was active ($M = 4.48$, $SE = .06$) compared to when the victim was passive ($M = 4.24$, $SE = .06$), $F(1, 509) = 6.96$, $p = .009$, $\eta_p^2 = .013$. Additionally, when the victim was active, participants were more likely to interpret the situation as an emergency when peer norms are opposing exclusion ($M = 4.48$, $SE = .06$) compared to when norms are supporting exclusion ($M = 4.24$, $SE = .06$), $F(1, 509) = 7.04$, $p = .008$, $\eta_p^2 = .014$.

A significant three-way interaction was found between gender, school level, and victim response, $F(1, 509) = 7.87$, $p = .005$, $\eta_p^2 = .015$. Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons indicated that among middle school girls, participants were more likely to interpret the situation as an emergency when the victim was active ($M = 4.58$, $SE = .09$) compared to when the victim was passive ($M = 4.24$, $SE = .08$), $F(1, 509) = 7.95$, $p = .005$, $\eta_p^2 = .015$. In contrast, among high school girls, participants were more likely to interpret the situation as an emergency

when the victim was passive ($M = 4.55$, $SE = .07$) compared to when the victim was active ($M = 4.40$, $SE = .07$), $F(1, 509) = 2.43$, $p = .120$, $\eta_p^2 = .005$.

Additionally, when the victim was passive, high school girls were more likely to interpret the situation as an emergency ($M = 4.55$, $SE = .07$) compared to middle school girls ($M = 4.24$, $SE = .08$), $F(1, 509) = 7.77$, $p = .006$, $\eta_p^2 = .015$. In contrast when the victim was passive, middle school boys were more likely to interpret the situation as an emergency ($M = 4.34$, $SE = .11$) compared to high school boys ($M = 4.00$, $SE = .09$), $F(1, 509) = 5.87$, $p = .016$, $\eta_p^2 = .011$.

3.2.1.2.3. Assume Responsibility

A 2 (Gender: boy, girl) x 2 (School Level: middle school, high school), x 2 (Intentionality of the Excluder: bad, good) x 2 (Bystander Peer Norms; supporting exclusion, opposing exclusion), x 2 (Victim Response: active, passive) ANCOVA was conducted to understand the effect of conditions on participants' bystander behavior to assume responsibility controlling for esports interest.

Among the main effects, gender was significant, $F(1, 523) = 6.33$, $p = .012$, $\eta_p^2 = .012$. More specifically, girls were more likely to assume responsibility ($M = 3.68$, $SE = .05$) compared to boys ($M = 3.46$, $SE = .07$).

A significant two-way interaction was found between school level and peer norms, $F(1, 523) = 5.77, p = .017, \eta_p^2 = .011$. Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons indicated that among high school students, participants in the opposing exclusion norms condition were more likely to assume responsibility ($M = 3.82, SE = .08$) compared to those in the supporting exclusion norms condition ($M = 3.52, SE = .07$), $F(1, 523) = 8.26, p = .004, \eta_p^2 = .016$.

Additionally, when peer norms are opposing exclusion, high school students were more likely to assume responsibility ($M = 3.82, SE = .08$) compared to middle school students ($M = 3.43, SE = .09$), $F(1, 523) = 10.08, p = .002, \eta_p^2 = .019$.

3.2.1.2.4. Know How to Help

A 2 (Gender: boy, girl) x 2 (School Level: middle school, high school), x 2 (Intentionality of the Excluder: bad, good) x 2 (Bystander Peer Norms; supporting exclusion, opposing exclusion), x 2 (Victim Response: active, passive) ANOVA was conducted to understand the effect of conditions on participants' bystander behavior to know how to help.

Among the main effects, gender was significant, $F(1, 531) = 4.51, p = .034, \eta_p^2 = .008$. More specifically, girls were more likely to know how to help ($M = 3.90, SE = .05$) compared to boys ($M = 3.73, SE = .06$).

A significant two-way interaction was found between school level and peer norms, $F(1, 531) = 5.85, p = .016, \eta_p^2 = .011$. Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons indicated that among middle school students, participants were more likely to know how to help when peer norms were supporting exclusion ($M = 3.85, SE = .08$) compared to when peer norms were opposing exclusion ($M = 3.59, SE = .08$), $F(1, 531) = 4.69, p = .031, \eta_p^2 = .009$. Additionally, when peer norms are opposing exclusion, high school students were more likely to know how to help ($M = 3.97, SE = .07$) compared to middle school students ($M = 3.59, SE = .08$), $F(1, 531) = 11.99, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .022$.

3.2.1.2.5. Implement Intervention Decision

A 2 (Gender: boy, girl) x 2 (School Level: middle school, high school), x 2 (Intentionality of the Excluder: bad, good) x 2 (Bystander Peer Norms; supporting exclusion, opposing exclusion), x 2 (Victim Response: active, passive) ANCOVA was conducted to understand the effect of conditions on participants' bystander behavior to implement intervention decision controlling for esports interest.

A significant three-way interaction was found between gender, school level, and victim response, $F(1, 527) = 4.95, p = .026, \eta_p^2 = .009$. Bonferroni-corrected

pairwise comparisons indicated that among middle school girls, participants were more likely to implement intervention decision when the victim was active ($M = 4.19$, $SE = .10$) compared to when the victim was passive ($M = 3.87$, $SE = .10$), $F(1, 527) = 5.24$, $p = .022$, $\eta_p^2 = .010$. Additionally, among girls in the passive victim condition, high school girls were more likely to implement intervention decision ($M = 4.28$, $SE = .08$) compared to middle school girls ($M = 3.87$, $SE = .10$), $F(1, 527) = 10.67$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .020$. Furthermore, among high school students, girls were more likely than boys to implement intervention in both the passive victim condition (girls $M = 4.28$, $SE = .08$; boys $M = 3.77$, $SE = .11$), $F(1, 527) = 14.09$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .026$, and the active victim condition (girls $M = 4.15$, $SE = .08$; boys $M = 3.85$, $SE = .10$), $F(1, 527) = 5.68$, $p = .018$, $\eta_p^2 = .011$.

Another significant three-way interaction was found between school level, peer norms, and victim response, $F(1, 527) = 4.12$, $p = .043$, $\eta_p^2 = .008$. Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons indicated that among middle school students in the peer norms opposing exclusion condition, participants were more likely to implement intervention decision when the victim was active ($M = 4.08$, $SE = .12$) compared to when the victim was passive ($M = 3.72$, $SE = .10$), $F(1, 527) = 5.22$, $p = .023$, $\eta_p^2 = .010$. Additionally, participants in the peer norms opposing exclusion and passive victim conditions, high school students were more likely to implement intervention decision ($M = 4.17$, $SE = .10$) compared to middle school students ($M = 3.72$, $SE = .10$), $F(1, 527) = 9.21$, $p = .003$, $\eta_p^2 = .017$. In

contrast, participants in the peer norms supporting exclusion and passive victim conditions, middle school students were more likely to implement intervention decision ($M = 4.13$, $SE = .11$) compared to high school students ($M = 3.89$, $SE = .08$), $F(1, 527) = 4.21$, $p = .041$, $\eta_p^2 = .008$. Furthermore, among middle school students in the passive victim condition, participants were more likely to implement intervention decision when peer norms supported exclusion ($M = 4.13$, $SE = .11$) compared to when peer norms opposed exclusion ($M = 3.72$, $SE = .10$), $F(1, 527) = 7.70$, $p = .006$, $\eta_p^2 = .014$.

3.2.2. Correlation and Hierarchical Analyses

3.2.2.1. Correlations Between Predictors and Five-Step BIM

Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to examine the associations between predictors and the five-step BIM. Only the correlation between the variables that are controlled for in the hierarchical regression analysis was reported in this section.

For the first step of the BIM, Pearson's correlations indicated that the notice the event step was negatively correlated with gender ($r(553) = -.19$, $p < .001$; 0: girls, 1: boys), intentionality of the excluder ($r(553) = -.31$, $p < .001$; 0: bad intentionality, 1: good intentionality) gender stereotype endorsement, ($r(526) = -.16$, $p < .001$) and aggressive humor ($r(519) = -.24$, $p < .001$). In contrast, it was

positively correlated with ToM ($r(530) = .09, p = .017$), cognitive empathy ($r(543) = .14, p < .001$), affective empathy ($r(536) = .11, p = .004$) and growth mindset in esports ($r(531) = .17, p < .001$) (all other $ps > .05$).

For the second step of the BIM, Pearson's correlations indicated that the interpret the situation as emergency step was negatively correlated with gender ($r(561) = -.22, p < .001$; 0: girls, 1: boys), aggressive humor, ($r(525) = -.45, p < .001$) and gender stereotype endorsement ($r(534) = -.25, p < .001$). In contrast, it was positively correlated with ToM ($r(538) = .17, p < .001$), cognitive empathy ($r(551) = .11, p = .006$) affective empathy ($r(544) = .23, p < .001$) and growth mindset in esports ($r(539) = .25, p < .001$) (all other $ps > .05$).

For the third step of the BIM, Pearson's correlations indicated that the assume responsibility step was negatively correlated with gender ($r(557) = -.15, p < .001$; 0: girls, 1: boys), aggressive humor ($r(522) = -.42, p < .001$) and gender stereotype endorsement ($r(531) = -.21, p < .001$). In contrast, it was positively correlated with school level ($r(557) = .12, p = .002$; 0: middle school, 1: high school), ToM ($r(534) = .17, p < .001$), cognitive empathy ($r(547) = .08, p = .030$), affective empathy ($r(540) = .17, p < .001$) and growth mindset in esports ($r(536) = .16, p < .001$) (all other $ps > .05$).

For the fourth step of the BIM, Pearson's correlations indicated that the know how to help step was negatively correlated with gender, ($r(561) = -.11, p = .004$;

0: girls, 1: boys), aggressive humor, ($r(526) = -.26, p < .001$) and gender stereotype endorsement ($r(536) = -.11, p = .004$). In contrast, it was positively correlated with school level, ($r(561) = .12, p = .002$; 0: middle school, 1: high school), ToM ($r(539) = .08, p = .041$), cognitive empathy ($r(551) = .22, p < .001$), affiliative humor ($r(517) = .23, p < .001$) and growth mindset in esports ($r(539) = .08, p = .026$) (all other $ps > .05$).

For the fifth step of the BIM, Pearson correlations indicated that the implement the intervention decision step was negatively correlated with gender ($r(561) = -.20, p < .001$; 0: girls, 1: boys), aggressive humor ($r(525) = -.42, p < .001$) and gender stereotype endorsement ($r(535) = -.18, p < .001$). In contrast, it was positively correlated with ToM ($r(539) = .15, p < .001$), cognitive empathy ($r(551) = .12, p = .003$), affective empathy ($r(544) = .17, p < .001$) and growth mindset in esports ($r(539) = .20, p < .001$) (all other $ps > .05$).

3.2.2.2. Hierarchical Regression Analyses

To examine predictors of each step in the five-step BIM, a series of hierarchical linear regression analyses were conducted. For each outcome variable, the predictor variables were entered in four steps. In the first step, school level, gender, intentionality of the excluder, bystander peer norms, and victim response were entered as control variables. In the second step, ToM, cognitive

empathy, and affective empathy were entered to assess the contribution of social-cognitive skills. In the third step, affiliative and aggressive humor were added to evaluate the unique variance explained by individual differences in humor styles. Finally, in the fourth step, growth mindset in esports and gender stereotype endorsement were entered to examine the gender-related factors as predictors.

3.2.3.1. Predictors for Noticing the Event

For the notice the event step, the final hierarchical regression model was significant and accounted for 18% of the variance, $F(12, 490) = 10.22, p < .001$ (see Table 1). Participants in the good intentionality condition ($B = -.555, \beta = -.309, p < .001$), those with higher cognitive empathy ($B = .116, \beta = .091, p = .038$), and those with lower aggressive humor styles ($B = -.259, \beta = -.180, p < .001$) were more likely to notice the exclusion event. All other predictors were non-significant ($ps > .05$) (see Table 2).

3.2.3.2. Predictors for Evaluating as an Emergency

For the evaluating as an emergency step, the final hierarchical regression model was significant and accounted for 26% of the variance, $F(12, 490) = 15.35, p < .001$ (see Table 2). Participants in the opposing peer norms condition ($B = -.120,$

$\beta = -.086, p = .029$), with higher ToM abilities ($B = .074, \beta = .107, p = .007$), higher affective empathy ($B = .071, \beta = .093, p = .028$), lower aggressive humor style ($B = -.398, \beta = -.356, p < .001$), higher growth mindset in esports ($B = .050, \beta = .097, p = .019$), and lower gender stereotype endorsement ($B = -.438, \beta = -.125, p = .003$) were more likely to interpret the situation as an emergency. All other predictors were non-significant ($ps > .05$) (see Table 3).

3.2.3.3. Predictors for Assuming Responsibility

For the assume responsibility step, the final hierarchical regression model was significant and accounted for 23% of the variance, $F(12, 490) = 13.60, p < .001$ (see Table 3). Participants who were high school students ($B = .291, \beta = .157, p < .001$), in the opposing exclusion peer norms condition ($B = -.229, \beta = -.126, p = .002$), with higher ToM abilities ($B = .119, \beta = .133, p = .001$), lower aggressive humor style ($B = -.553, \beta = -.381, p < .001$) and lower gender stereotype endorsement ($B = -.492, \beta = -.108, p = .011$), were more likely to assume responsibility. All other predictors were non-significant ($ps > .05$) (see Table 4).

3.2.3.4. Predictors for Knowing How to Help

For the knowing how to help step, the model at the third step was significant and accounted for 15% of the variance, $F(10, 492) = 10.15, p < .001$ (see Table 4).

Participants who were high school students ($B = .253$, $\beta = .148$, $p < .001$), with higher cognitive empathy ($B = .160$, $\beta = .135$, $p = .002$), higher affiliative humor style ($B = .245$, $\beta = .211$, $p < .001$), and lower aggressive humor style ($B = -.354$, $\beta = -.264$, $p < .001$) were more likely to know how to help. All other predictors were non-significant ($ps > .05$) (see Table 5).

3.2.3.5. Predictors for Implementing the Intervention Decision

For the implementing intervention decision step, the model at the third step was significant and accounted for 21% of the variance, $F(10, 492) = 14.32$, $p < .001$ (see Table 5). Participants who were high school students ($B = .162$, $\beta = .098$, $p = .015$), in the opposing exclusion peer norms condition ($B = -.148$, $\beta = -.091$, $p = .025$), with higher ToM abilities ($B = .081$, $\beta = .101$, $p = .013$), and lower aggressive humor style ($B = -.518$, $\beta = -.398$, $p < .001$) were more likely to implement intervention decision. All other predictors were non-significant ($ps > .05$) (see Table 6).

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how children and adolescents respond to gender-based social exclusion by examining the simultaneous and interacting roles of multiple factors. Adopting a multi-factorial approach, the study demonstrated that bystanders do not rely on a single cue but instead coordinate information from several sources, such as the excluder's intention, bystander peer norms, victim responses when forming their judgments, attitudes, and the five-step BIM. These processes were investigated in the context of esports football, a field that uniquely reflects intersecting gender stereotypes against girls due to its roots in two traditionally male-dominated spheres: football as a competitive sport and digital gaming culture. Within esports football, girls are not only underrepresented but also often perceived as less competent, facing stereotypes that question both their gaming skill and their belonging in football. By situating the exclusion scenario in this setting, the study captures a particularly relevant context where gender-

based social exclusion is normalized, yet rarely investigated in developmental research.

Additionally, moving beyond a narrow focus on bystander intervention behavior, the study also assessed a range of outcomes, including moral evaluations (acceptability and fairness), intergroup attitudes (victim inclusion, victims' behavior, future inclusion of the victim and the excluder), attitudes towards exclusion (humor and seriousness) and the five distinct steps of the BIM behavior.

4.1. Bystander Judgments

Overall findings revealed that each factor interacted with others in unique ways to shape and explain bystanders' moral judgments, intergroup judgments, attitudes towards exclusion, and five-step BIM behavior. These insights are important because in intergroup relations involving more than two individuals, what others are thinking and doing might influence how children and adolescents reason about exclusion and decide whether to intervene. By embedding these factors into an interactive exclusion scenario, the present study investigated the complexity of real-life peer interactions.

4.1.1. Moral Judgments

Findings for acceptability judgments revealed that children and adolescents were more likely to judge the exclusion as acceptable when the excluder had good intentions, regardless of peer norms or the victim's response. This suggests that bystanders may have reduced moral blame when the excluder's motive was marked as "good". Prior research has shown that unintentional transgressions are judged as more acceptable than intentional ones (Vaish et al., 2010; Cushman et al., 2013; Li & Tomasello, 2018), and although the exclusion in the current study was clearly stated, good intentions may have provoked the idea that good intentioned transgressions are unintentional in nature. In this way, good intentions appeared to mitigate the perceived moral acceptability of the exclusion, even in a context where the harm was explicit.

Findings showed that a similar pattern emerged in fairness judgments, with participants generally rating exclusion as more fair when the excluder had good intentions. However, the only exception was among middle school students, when they heard that peer norms opposed exclusion and the victim responded actively, there was no significant difference in fairness ratings between good and bad intention conditions (GOA vs. BOA). This suggests that middle school students may have found the exclusion unfair regardless of the excluder's intent, possibly due to the combination of clear peer opposition and an active victim response. This can be explained by age-related patterns in shifting from relying on outcomes to integrating intentions in moral reasoning (Heyman et al., 2009).

More specifically, children compared to adolescents might be more likely to consider outcomes when it interacts with other social contextual cues like norms and victim reaction.

Further, a significant three-way interaction revealed that when the excluder had bad intentions, peer norms supported exclusion, and the victim remained passive (BSP), participants judged the behavior as significantly more acceptable compared to when peer norms opposed exclusion (BOP). This finding suggests that supporting group norms of exclusion can validate exclusion, particularly when the victim does not challenge the act, reinforcing the importance of peer norms in children's and adolescents' moral judgments (Rutland et al., 2015). Notably, when intentions were good and norms opposed exclusion, participants judged the exclusion as more acceptable when the victim responded actively (GOA), compared to passively (GOP), contrary to expectations that an active victim would be viewed more favorably in this context. While the victim's active response aligns with peer norms that discourage exclusion, it may be perceived as misaligned with the excluder's good intentions, leading participants to interpret the response as unnecessarily disruptive. In contexts where the excluder's motives are perceived as prosocial and group norms are inclusive, active resistance might be seen as violating social-conventional expectations or undermining group cohesion. From the SRD perspective, this finding may reflect how children and adolescents coordinate multiple social domains, such as interpreting active resistance as a challenge to group functioning when intent is

good and peer norms are inclusive (McGuire et al., 2022; Mulvey & Killen, 2015). Thus, participants may have evaluated the exclusion more leniently, not because they approved of it, but because the victim's response was interpreted as disproportionate given the perceived intent behind the act.

Additionally, age-related findings provided insight into how victim responses were interpreted. Results showed that when the excluder had good intentions and norms opposed exclusion, middle school students judged the exclusion as more fair when the victim remained passive (GOP), whereas high school students rated the exclusion as more fair when the victim was active (GOA). This finding points to age-related patterns in how bystanders interpret victim agency and group dynamics. For younger adolescents, passivity may signal vulnerability, eliciting moral concern and support for the victim (Sokol et al., 2016b). In contrast, older adolescents may perceive active challenging from a victim as undermining group cohesion, particularly when the exclusion is framed as good intentioned, and the peer group is inclusive (Rutland & Killen, 2015). This interpretation is reinforced by the finding that high school students judged exclusion as significantly more fair than middle school students in the GOA condition, suggesting that older adolescents were more likely to weigh intention and group norms over individual harm. This developmental pattern also aligns with SDT, which posits that adolescents increasingly coordinate moral and social-conventional concerns in peer contexts (Turiel, 2015; Killen et al., 2013).

Findings showed that gender group membership also shaped moral judgments. Boys were more likely than girls to judge exclusion as both acceptable and fair, suggesting that they may be more likely to evaluate exclusion as morally permissible in this context. Prior work has shown that girls often emphasize inclusion and concerns about harm, whereas boys may be more likely to view exclusion as contextually justified, especially in a male-dominated field like esports (Demir et al., 2024; Smetana & Ball, 2018). In this case, the competitive setting may have also led boys to downplay the moral severity of exclusion, interpreting it as acceptable for the well-being and success of the group. These findings underscore the need to consider how moral concerns and gender role expectations shape adolescents' evaluations of exclusionary behavior.

4.1.2. Intergroup Judgments

In the present study, gender group membership was made salient by design. The exclusion scenario was explicitly framed as gender-based and centered around a female victim, with the use of exclusionary humor serving to highlight gendered dynamics. This deliberate framing was intended to increase female participants' ingroup membership with the victim. Similarly, the choice of esports football, a stereotypically male-dominated and competitive field, was selected to facilitate ingroup membership among male participants with the excluder and the bystanders. These design elements were implemented to create a context in which gender group dynamics would be particularly relevant, allowing us to

examine how shared group memberships shape intergroup judgments (victim inclusion, victims' behavior, future inclusion of the victim, and the excluder).

Results showed that girls were more likely than boys to include the victim, particularly when the excluder had bad intentions and peer norms supported exclusion. This finding suggests that girls may have interpreted the exclusion as a threat to their gender ingroup, especially when all members of the gender outgroup (the excluder and the bystanders) supported the exclusion. In this context, inclusion of the victim may have served not only as an act of support for a victim but also as an expression of ingroup solidarity and a rejection of exclusionary group norms that marginalize girls in male-dominated spaces (McGuire et al., 2022). Our findings also showed that girls judged active victim responses as more acceptable than passive ones, further illustrating that, in addition to including the victim because of shared gender identity, girls may have perceived active resistance as necessary to challenging exclusionary group norms and affirming the victim's right to inclusion. Findings also showed that girls were more likely than boys to include the victim in the future at their own esports football team. In this case, extending an invitation to the victim may have served not only as a moral response but also as a symbolic inclusion effort to rebalance gender dynamics within a male-dominated esports football environment (Elling & Knoppers, 2005; Hextrum et al., 2024). From this perspective, girls' decisions to include the victim in the future could be seen as

reaffirming values of equity while also reshaping the boundaries of who belongs in competitive esports spaces.

Findings also showed that boys' inclusion decisions were more contingent on peer norms: they were more likely to include the victim only when their gender ingroup peers (male bystanders) opposed exclusion. Accordingly, boys may have only felt able to oppose the excluder's gender-stereotyped behavior and include the victim when their gender ingroup peers also showed support for inclusion. This finding aligns with research showing that boys perceive greater social difficulty in challenging gender-stereotyped group norms, particularly when those norms are endorsed by same-gender peers (Mulvey & Killen, 2015). Findings also indicated that boys were more likely than girls to include the excluder in their own esports football team in the future, particularly when the excluder had good intentions. As previously discussed, good intentionality may have been equated with a lack of harmful intent, leading boys to view the exclusion as less severe or even unintentional. Accordingly, their inclusion of the excluder may reflect a greater willingness to forgive or overlook exclusionary behavior when it aligns with prosocial motives, especially when maintaining group cohesion or supporting a fellow gender ingroup member is more important to them (Killen & Dahl, 2021). Further, boys judged passive victims' responses as more acceptable than active responses, particularly when exclusion was done with good intentions and supported by peers. Accordingly, boys may

interpret active resistance not as a moral stand but as a challenge to the cohesion and expectations of their gender ingroup (McGuire et al., 2022).

It should be noted here that these contrasting patterns should not be taken as an implication that one type of victim response is inherently better or worse to promote prosocial bystander responses. Rather, they reflect how children and adolescents make sense of victim behavior in relation to the broader social context, including peer norms and the excluder's intent (Salmivalli, 2010; Gao et al., 2024). Previous work has shown that victim responses are rarely evaluated in isolation, and that confident resistance can reduce bystanders' perceived need to intervene, especially when the victim is seen as capable of coping (Sokol et al., 2016a). As explained before, in this study, girls' stronger support for active victims may reflect their recognition of structural gender inequalities, particularly in male-dominated spaces such as esports.

Age-related findings showed that middle school students were more likely than high school students to include an active victim. This result aligns with prior work indicating that younger adolescents are more attuned to overt unfairness and prioritize individual rights over group norms (Mulvey et al., 2016a; Shohoudi Mojdehi et al., 2019). Research has further indicated that children often believe that both they and their peers will positively evaluate those who challenge unfair norms (Mulvey et al., 2014). However, as children age into adolescence, they

develop a better understanding of group dynamics and begin to anticipate that their peers may respond less favorably to norm challengers, even when they themselves would support the challenger (McGuire et al., 2019). In the context of the current study, this developmental pattern may explain why high school students were less likely to include an active victim: although they may have recognized the exclusion as unfair, they may also have expected that their peers would view the victim's assertiveness as disruptive to group cohesion.

4.1.3. Attitudes Toward Exclusion

Findings revealed gender differences in both seriousness and humor judgments. Girls were more likely than boys to judge the exclusion as serious, particularly when the excluder had bad intentions, regardless of the victim's response. This result suggests that girls may have been more attuned to the harm underlying gender-based exclusion, even if presented with good intentions. This is consistent with prior work showing that girls are victims of relational harm more than boys, which might be increasing their perceptions of severity in social exclusion (Orpinas et al., 2015).

In contrast, findings indicated that boys judged the exclusionary joke as funnier than girls, especially when the excluder had good intentions. Additionally, results showed that high school boys judged the joke funnier than middle school boys

when norms supported exclusion and the excluder had good intentions. These results suggest that high school boys may be more likely to interpret exclusionary humor as socially permissible when others allow it, compared to middle school boys. This finding supports that high school students are more susceptible to peer norms compared to middle school students (Killen et al., 2013b). Prior studies also show that boys are more likely to endorse humor that reinforces dominant group positions, particularly in male-dominated environments (Demir et al., 2024; Fox et al., 2015), and that humor can act as a mechanism for managing peer dynamics while avoiding the risk of going against peer norms (Mulvey & Killen, 2015; Reich et al., 2021).

Further, a broader age-related finding indicated that high school students judged the exclusionary joke as funnier than middle school students when peer norms supported exclusion and the excluder had good intentions. This pattern suggests that older adolescents may be more likely to accept humor that aligns with peer group expectations and does not appear overtly harmful. Rather than focusing solely on the exclusion itself, high school students may have evaluated the humor through a lens of peer group alignment and intent, reflecting a growing awareness of how their judgments may be perceived by others. In this context, humor may function as a low-cost way to maintain their status within the group cohesion without explicitly endorsing exclusion (Bowker & Etkin, 2014). Notably, even when peer norms opposed exclusion, high school students judged the joke as funnier when the excluder had good intentions and the victim

responded actively. This finding suggests that humor, when paired with prosocial intent, may enable adolescents to morally disengage from the exclusion (Zhu et al., 2022).

4.2. Five-Step BIM Behavior

The second novel aspect of this study is our examination of the bystander decision-making process across all five steps of the BIM. While previous research tends to focus on a single outcome (e.g., intention to intervene), step-by-step approach revealed how earlier stages (such as noticing, interpreting the situation as an emergency, assuming responsibility, knowing how to help) may set the groundwork for the ultimate decision to intervene. This stepwise structure allowed us to identify which factors play a role at specific stages, offering a more fine-grained understanding of what helps or hinders intervention. Overall findings investigating the five-step bystander intervention revealed that intentionality primarily influenced early steps of decision-making (notice the event and interpret it as an emergency), while peer norms and the victim's response played a more salient role in later steps (assume responsibility, know how to help and intervene).

Findings on the predictors of five-step bystander responses illustrated that, higher ToM abilities, cognitive and affective empathy, affiliative humor, and

growth mindset, with lower aggressive humor and endorsement of gender stereotypes, predicted five-step BIM behavior.

4.2.1. Notice the Event

Findings showed that bystanders were significantly more likely to notice the exclusion when the excluder had bad intentions. This might be that an explicit sign of a transgression, especially when it is marked as knowingly bad-intended, enhances the salience of exclusion. In the current study, even though the exclusion scenario was held constant across conditions, the intention behind the exclusion may have altered how detectable the event was. Conversely, when the excluder acted with good intentions, bystanders were less likely to notice the exclusion, potentially due to a diminished sense of social harm or justifying cues. This asymmetry highlights the role of perceived intentionality in influencing early awareness, even before more deliberative judgments are made.

Findings showed that girls more likely than boys to notice the event. This aligns with prior findings suggesting that girls tend to exhibit heightened sensitivity to interpersonal dynamics and relational conflict, which may be due to differences in socialization, emotional attunement, or cumulative experience with peer exclusion (Zimmer-Gembeck & Duffy, 2014). Additionally, boys may be less likely to recognize exclusion as socially problematic in competitive and male-

dominated contexts such as esports where they might feel pressure to adhere to stereotypical male gender role norms (Exner-Cortens et al., 2021). Prior work in Turkish esports has shown that gender-based exclusion is often justified through stereotypes about competence (Demir et al., 2024), which might also reduce the likelihood of noticing the event in gender-based exclusion.

Findings for predictors of noticing the event showed that higher cognitive empathy and lower aggressive humor significantly predicted noticing the exclusion. Consistent with Fredrick et al. (2020), cognitive empathy may facilitate noticing by helping bystanders differentiate exclusion from other types of peer conflict, which is a cognitive process that relies more on logical reasoning. Additionally, participants with higher levels of aggressive humor may be less likely to recognize the antisocial nature of exclusion, particularly when it is presented as a joke with good intentions, as they may be more accustomed to using or interpreting such humor themselves (Burger, 2022).

4.2.2. Evaluate as Emergency

Results showed that girls were more likely than boys to interpret the situation as an emergency when the excluder had bad intentions. This result parallels the previous step of the BIM; girls might be more likely to think of intentional exclusion as clear transgression. This finding might be a reflection of the gender

ingroup membership girls have with the victim, and that intentionality serves as a critical cue in determining whether exclusion is framed as harmful or tolerable. Boys, in contrast, appeared less responsive to intentionality differences when judging the severity of the exclusion.

In line with expectations, peer opposition to exclusion, by challenging the excluder's behavior, heightened the perceived severity of the situation. However, it was the combination of opposing norms and an active victim response that produced the strongest sense of emergency. This suggests that active victim responses may serve as an additional social cue, reinforcing the interpretation that the exclusion is serious and requires action. In the absence of either cue, the situation may have been perceived as less urgent or more ambiguous, underscoring the role of interacting cues in shaping emergency judgments.

Results also showed a developmental pattern in which among middle school girls, active responses from the victim heightened perceptions of emergency, whereas high school girls were more likely to interpret exclusion as an emergency when the victim was passive. This reversal may reflect a shift in how children and adolescents interpret the cues coming from the victim. In contrast, high school girls may interpret passive victim responses as indicating that the exclusion is more isolating or harder to challenge, which could heighten the

perceived severity of the situation. Rather than viewing passivity as a lack of distress, adolescent girls may understand it as a sign that the victim lacks social support or agency, prompting greater concern and a stronger sense that the situation requires intervention. In contrast, middle school boys judged passive responses to exclusion as more serious than did high school boys, suggesting that the perceived urgency of exclusion may decline with age, particularly among boys.

For evaluating as an emergency, almost all predictors were significant, where higher ToM, affective empathy, and growth mindset, with lower aggressive humor and endorsement of gender stereotypes, predicted the likelihood of perceiving social exclusion as an emergent situation. This might be that moving from just noticing an event to marking it as a highly emergent situation may be a key turning point that facilitates progress through the rest of the bystander intervention process. Likewise, children and adolescents with higher ToM abilities may be better equipped to infer the excluder's intent, evaluate the exclusion as deliberate and unjust, and view the situation as one requiring action. In particular, interpreting the exclusion as an emergency likely requires distinguishing that a transgression can still be done with good intentions, a process supported by reasoning about others' beliefs, goals, and motivations. These results align with prior research showing that ToM predicts defending behavior in exclusion contexts (Gönültaş & Mulvey, 2021; Metallidou et al., 2018) and that children and adolescents with more advanced ToM are more

likely to judge exclusion as unjust (Imuta et al., 2016). Additionally, if we map this process onto the scenario used in the study, the moment participants read about peer norms may be where they begin to interpret the event as an emergency. In this section, participants are exposed to group expectations and must weigh whether they agree with the norm to either oppose the exclusion or support it. Further, this might require the use of affective empathy skills, as bystanders might need to think about how the victim feels in response to being excluded. Bystanders also need to think about whether anyone can be good at esports, requiring a higher growth mindset in esports, and whether gender would matter; lower gender stereotype endorsement would be required here to interpret the event as an emergency. Accordingly, children and adolescents with a stronger growth mindset in esports may be more likely to reject the idea that gaming competence is fixed or gendered, and therefore more likely to identify exclusion as unjustified. Conversely, those who endorse gender stereotypes may perceive exclusion as a reflection of ability rather than a violation of fairness. These cognitive filters may either amplify or suppress bystanders' recognition of the act as requiring intervention. Results also showed that lower endorsement of aggressive humor predicted a greater likelihood of interpreting exclusion as an emergency. This may be because adolescents who reject aggressive humor are less likely to interpret exclusionary acts as socially acceptable or comical, and more likely to evaluate them as harmful.

4.2.3. Assume Responsibility

Findings showed that girls were more likely than boys to assume responsibility, consistent with prior findings that girls report higher prosocial intentions in peer conflict situations. In assuming responsibility in gender-based social exclusion, girls might be more inclined to view intervention as a personal duty as it also targets their gender identity. Boys' lower endorsement of responsibility may also be shaped by group dynamics in contexts like esports, where exclusion may be normalized or perceived as less their concern. This is consistent with prior literature documenting that girls are more likely to take on defender roles and express moral concern in social exclusion contexts (Cook et al., 2010; Gönültaş & Mulvey, 2021).

Moving onto developmental patterns, high school students were more likely to assume responsibility when peer norms opposed exclusion, compared to when norms supported it. However, this pattern did not emerge among middle school students. Furthermore, under opposing norms, high school students assumed more responsibility than middle school students. These findings suggest that for older adolescents, peer disapproval of exclusion may enhance a sense of individual responsibility. As adolescents gain social awareness and internalize group expectations, they may increasingly interpret group norms as cues to take action in social exclusion. Results indicate that high school students may be more attuned to the reputational consequences of inaction in norm-violating situations, especially when group expectations are clear. In contrast, middle

school students may be less responsive to peer norm cues or more uncertain about their role in resolving group conflict.

Predictors for assuming responsibility showed that higher ToM, lower aggressive humor and lower gender stereotype endorsement were positive predictors.

Assuming responsibility involves recognizing that intervention is necessary and acknowledging oneself as a potential agent of that intervention. Children and adolescents with higher ToM may be better able to recognize that others in the group may not step in, and that the victim may be depending on them specifically. This ability to mentally simulate others' thoughts and expectations may strengthen the sense of individual responsibility. For findings on the aggressive humor, one possible explanation is that adolescents who frequently rely on aggressive humor may be more likely to morally disengage from exclusion (Zhu et al., 2022). If humor is regularly used to mock, tease, or draw attention to others' differences, then exclusion done with humor may be interpreted as normal. In these cases, the behavior may not be seen as a moral violation, and the need assuming responsibility might not be warranted. These findings suggest that gender stereotype endorsement diminish bystanders' sensitivity to exclusion as a moral violation, especially in male-dominated contexts such as esports football. This pattern aligns with prior work indicating that children and adolescents who endorse traditional gender roles are more likely to justify exclusion based on perceived group-based competence (McGuire et al., 2022; Mulvey & Killen, 2015). When gendered expectations about who

belongs in specific domains are strongly held, exclusion may be interpreted as normatively appropriate rather than unjust, thereby reducing both emotional salience and perceived responsibility to intervene. Within the present study, stereotype endorsement appears to constrain engagement in key evaluative and motivational stages of the bystander process.

4.2.4. Know How to Help

Findings show that girls were more likely than boys to report knowing how to help. Girls may have more readily recognized the barriers faced by the victim and drawn on that understanding to generate possible strategies for addressing the exclusion. Results also show that among high school students, peer norms that opposed exclusion were associated with greater confidence in knowing how to help. This finding further suggests that when exclusion is clearly marked as inappropriate by the peer group, older adolescents may feel more equipped to respond, possibly due to greater experience with intergroup conflict resolution or clearer expectations around what can be a successful intervention strategy. Contrary to expectation, middle school students reported greater confidence in knowing how to help when peer norms supported exclusion. For younger adolescents, conformity to perceived norms may override critical evaluation of what constitutes helpful behavior. Alternatively, they may misinterpret helping strategies as simply aligning with peer group behavior (Chávez et al., 20255).

Findings on the predictors of knowing how to help showed that higher cognitive empathy, higher affiliative humor and lower aggressive humor were positive predictors. Knowing how to help requires having an array of intervention solutions and being able to infer which one is the correct one. Cognitive empathy likely supported this coordination by allowing children and adolescents to infer what kind of help the victim might need. If we were to map the five-step BIM into our hypothetical story, the knowing how to help would likely occur after participants read about the victims' response. Since the victim's response was experimentally manipulated (active vs. passive), participants needed to understand the emotional and social implications of each type of response to choose an appropriate intervention strategy. This may explain why cognitive empathy, but not affective empathy, predicted this stage, recognizing what others are feeling may not be enough if the bystander cannot translate that into an actionable form of help. In this step, both affiliative and aggressive humor significantly predicted knowing how to help, suggesting that adolescents' ability to generate appropriate intervention strategies may be shaped by how they typically use and interpret humor in social contexts. Affiliative humor, which involves using humor to strengthen social bonds, may be positively related to bystander self-efficacy which is the belief that one can successfully support peers without escalating conflict (Fowler & Buckley, 2024). Adolescents who favor affiliative humor may be more practiced in using inclusive, relationship-focused communication, allowing them to identify constructive ways to intervene

that preserve peer dynamics. In contrast, adolescents high in aggressive humor may have lower self-efficacy in situations requiring socially sensitive responses. Because this style often involves normalizing or downplaying harm, those high in aggressive humor may struggle to recognize exclusion as a serious problem or to know strategies that would be perceived as helpful rather than confrontational (Falanga et al., 2014). Thus, the association between humor style and knowing how to help may reflect differing levels of confidence and skill in navigating peer conflict in a prosocial way.

4.2.5. Implement Intervention Decision

Findings showed that middle school girls were more likely to implement an intervention when the victim responded actively. This suggests that among younger girls, victim resistance may serve as a necessary cue to carry out an intervention decision. However, when the victim remained passive, middle school girls were less likely to intervene, potentially interpreting passivity as uncertainty about whether help was appropriate. In contrast, high school girls were more likely to intervene when the victim was passive, indicating a developmental shift in how passive responses are interpreted by bystanders. Rather than seeing passive behavior as a lack of need, older girls may perceive it as a sign of vulnerability or emotional withdrawal requiring support. However, it should be noted that this pattern did not reverse under active victim conditions, suggesting that high school girls were equally willing to intervene whether the

victim resisted or not. Furthermore, across both victim response conditions, high school girls intervened more than high school boys, reinforcing a consistent gender pattern.

Findings further showed that among middle school students, intervention was more likely when the victim was active, and peer norms opposed exclusion. This combination may have provided converging cues that the exclusion was both harmful and unacceptable, prompting intervention. It should also be noted that when either cue was missing (the victim was passive, or norms supported exclusion) intervention behavior declined. This pattern suggests that younger adolescents may rely more heavily on multiple, reinforcing cues to interpret exclusion as a situation requiring personal involvement. In the absence of clear social validation or explicit victim resistance, middle school students may hesitate to act, possibly due to uncertainty about whether intervention is appropriate or would be supported by peers.

Contrary to our expectations, middle school students reported higher levels of intervention when peer norms supported exclusion than when they opposed it, particularly in the passive victim condition. In contrast, high school students were more likely to intervene when peer norms opposed exclusion, and the victim was passive. This suggests a more flexible interpretation of victim

behavior among older adolescents, who may be more capable of recognizing harm even when it is not explicitly expressed.

For predictors of implementing the intervention decision, findings illustrated that higher ToM and lower aggressive humor were positive predictors. Adolescents with higher ToM may be more likely to act at this stage because they can consider how all actors (the victim, the excluder, and peers) might interpret their behavior (Gönültaş & Mulvey, 2023). This may support a more confident decision to intervene, particularly when the situation involves competing social concerns such as fairness, loyalty, and group belonging. The ability to coordinate multiple perspectives may help bystanders choose an intervention strategy they believe will be effective and socially appropriate. Aggressive humor, in contrast, was negatively associated with implementing intervention decision. As previously discussed, adolescents who regularly use humor to tease, ridicule, or assert dominance may interpret exclusion as part of ordinary peer dynamics rather than as a situation that calls for intervention. In this way, aggressive humor may reflect a reduced sensitivity to peer harm or a lower sense of responsibility to challenge exclusion. As a result, these adolescents may be less inclined to take initiative, especially in contexts where stepping in could disrupt group cohesion or challenge accepted norms.

4.3. Limitations

While the present study offers valuable insights into how multiple interacting factors shape bystander judgments, attitudes, and five-step BIM behavior to gender-based exclusion in esports, several limitations should be acknowledged to guide future research.

First, although the study design accounted for several interacting variables, it did not vary the gender of the exclusion target. The excluded peer was always a girl, which mirrors real-world dynamics in esports but limits the generalizability of findings. The consistent exclusion of a female victim also restricts the ability to distinguish whether girls' stronger support for the victim reflects an ingroup preference or broader gender differences in prosocial behavior (Gönültaş & Mulvey, 2021; Mulvey et al., 2019). Existing literature has shown that girls tend to intervene more frequently in social exclusion scenarios, regardless of group membership (Cook et al., 2010). However, given the well-established finding that individuals are more likely to behave prosocial toward ingroup victims, it is highly likely that the gender differences observed in this study can be attributed, at least in part, to shared gender group membership. Without varying the gender of the excluded peer, it remains unclear whether participants' reactions were shaped primarily by group identity or general gendered tendencies in moral reasoning. Notably, the joke in the scenario explicitly targeted girls, rather than being presented in a gender-neutral context, which further supports the

interpretation that gender group membership played a meaningful role in shaping responses.

Second, a limitation arises from the nature of our intentionality manipulation. Since we aimed to manipulate the intention (good or bad), it was plausible not to ensure the victimization perception was clearly conveyed. To address this, we made the exclusion explicitly gendered and emphasized that the victim experienced psychological harm across all conditions. Despite these efforts, we cannot be certain how participants ultimately interpreted the victimization especially when the intentions were good. Our findings reflect this where adolescents were less supportive of the active victim when the excluder had good intentions, suggesting that the victim may not have been perceived as a legitimate target of harm in this condition.

Third, although exclusion was situated within a humor context, the study did not assess participants' humor comprehension or provide the actual content of the joke. To avoid variability in how the joke might be interpreted, only the intention behind the humor was manipulated, and participants were told that the excluder made a joke with either good or bad intentions. While this approach ensured experimental control, it also limited insight into how adolescents interpret humor as either harmless or exclusionary.

Finally, the present study relied exclusively on self-report measures within a cross-sectional design. This design provided a snapshot of children's and adolescents' judgments and likelihood to intervene, but it limits the ability to draw conclusions about how these processes unfold over time.

4.4. Future Directions

The present study also provides directions for future studies. Since the gender of the victim was always a girl in the current study, future research should examine whether similar bystander patterns emerge when boys are excluded, especially in contexts where male exclusion might be dismissed or normalized due to prevailing gender norms. Future studies using fully crossed designs, where both the gender of the victim and the bystander vary, would help to clarify these underlying mechanisms.

The current study used hypothetical scenarios were used to manipulate key factors (the excluder's intentionality, peer norms, and the victim's response). While this method allowed for a systematic experimental control, it may not fully replicate the emotional and social dynamics of real-life exclusion. Even though every manipulation check followed a manipulation check question, it is not certain whether imagined responses would align with their real-life bystander behaviors. To further enhance ecological validity, future studies should incorporate diverse methodologies, such as behavioral tasks, peer nominations,

or observational tools, particularly in digital environments where gender-based exclusion often occurs.

While the present study manipulated the excluder's intentionality to examine its direct effect on bystanders' judgements and behaviors, future research might explore how children and adolescents attribute intentions when there are no clear clues about the motives of the intentions. Future studies could instead ask participants to evaluate the excluder's intentionality (e.g., "Do you think the excluder had good or bad intentions?"). Such designs would allow for a more nuanced understanding of how moral reasoning develops in situations where intentions must be inferred rather than provided.

Conducting the study in Türkiye, where esports is culturally prominent and gender norms are conservative, provided an ecologically valid test of gender-based exclusion and peer dynamics. However, given the cultural specificity of gender norms, social expectations, and esports participation, the findings may not be generalizable to children and adolescents in other sociocultural contexts. Future cross-cultural research could explore how bystander responses to gender-based exclusion differ across countries, especially in light of variations in gender equality, gaming cultures, and educational practices. Further, extending this work to include nonbinary or gender-nonconforming children would provide a more inclusive understanding of peer dynamics and moral reasoning around exclusion.

4.5. Conclusion and Implications

The present study examined how children's and adolescents' moral and intergroup judgments, attitudes towards exclusion, and five-step BIM behaviors are shaped in response to gender-based exclusion within the context of esports football. Using an experimental design that systematically manipulated the excluder's intentionality, bystander peer group norms, and the victim's response, the current study examined how these contextual factors, in interaction with demographics, social-cognitive skills, and gender-related beliefs, inform five-step BIM behavior.

By situating exclusion in a competitive esports scenario, a field where masculine norms and gendered competence beliefs are especially pronounced, the study highlights a relevant and timely context for understanding youth social dynamics. As esports becomes increasingly recognized as a structured and legitimate career pathway for many children and adolescents, exclusion in these virtual environments may have tangible implications for future participation and inclusion. Accordingly, the present findings contribute not only to research on gender-based exclusion but also to broader discussions about equity and inclusion in emerging digital careers.

Importantly, the study's results emphasize that bystander responses are not the product of isolated reasoning but emerge from the integration of multiple, naturally interacting factors. While excluder intentionality was most influential in early decision-making steps of the BIM peer norms and victim response gained prominence in later steps. These findings reflect a dynamic process in which children and adolescents weigh contextual signals and internalize group expectations, shaped by both age and gender group membership. For instance, while girls were generally more supportive of the excluded peer, their responses varied depending on the norms and perceived fairness of the victim's behavior, underscoring that prosocial behavior is contingent rather than fixed.

The findings also clarify inconsistencies in prior work on peer norms by demonstrating that their influence is conditional. Norms alone did not drive bystander responses; rather, their impact depended on the alignment with other cues, such as whether the exclusion was intentional or whether the victim responded actively. This pattern suggests that adolescents evaluate peer dynamics holistically, seeking consistency among moral and conventional cues before committing to action. Such nuance may explain why some studies report strong effects of norms (e.g., Gönültaş et al., 2024; Palmer et al., 2015), while others find null results (Ayhan & Gönültaş, 2024; Killen et al., 2013).

Beyond esports, the findings offer implications for other male-dominated and stereotype-relevant areas, including STEM and sports. Bystander interventions can benefit from addressing the ways in which children and adolescents interpret intent, respond to peer norms, and make sense of exclusionary acts that are justified through humor or framed as merit-based. Critically, such programs should help students reflect on exclusion not only as a moral transgression but as a product of structural and gendered norms, equipping them to challenge exclusionary dynamics in both digital and physical spaces.

Practically, interventions should be developmentally tailored. For middle school students, fostering awareness of harm and emphasizing fairness may be key. For high school students, promoting resistance to peer conformity and validating inclusion-oriented responses can support more autonomous moral reasoning. Interventions should also explicitly address underlying beliefs, such as gender stereotypes about competence and fixed ability in esports, as these were found to shape how exclusion was interpreted and whether it was deemed worthy of action. Further, helping adolescents understand that active victims are not necessarily disruptive, and that passive behavior does not imply lower need, may help reduce biased judgments of victims. Additionally, step-specific interventions that align with the five-step BIM can provide targeted support, such as building awareness of harm in early steps, and increasing bystander efficacy and confidence in later stages. Interventions should also address career beliefs, such as gendered expectations about competence in esports, and equip

students with both the critical reasoning and practical strategies required to challenge exclusionary dynamics. For instance, bullying intervention programs aimed at enhancing ToM skills could encourage bystanders to actively consider the thoughts, intentions, and perspectives of each actor they might see in an exclusion scenario. From our findings, this form of mentalizing may help youth detect subtle exclusion, understand the social motives behind it, and better anticipate how different responses might impact others. Bystanders' cognitive and affective empathy should be deliberately developed in interventions by encouraging them to take the victim's perspective and reflect on the emotional impact of exclusion, thereby fostering both an understanding of the situation and the emotional motivation needed to assume responsibility and intervene. Additionally, addressing aggressive humor, gender stereotype endorsement, and fixed mindset beliefs is essential not only for fostering individual prosocial behavior but also for diminishing the peer norms that perpetuate exclusion.

In sum, this study offers a comprehensive account of how bystanders evaluate and respond to gender-based exclusion through the interplay of social, cognitive, and contextual influences. It underscores the importance of interventions that move beyond observable behavior to address the reasoning processes, group norms, and gender-related beliefs that guide adolescents' decisions. As gender-based exclusion is closely tied to prevailing stereotypes about competence and belonging, addressing these beliefs is essential for fostering more inclusive environments for youth. Future research should build on

these findings by exploring other intergroup contexts, including the exclusion of all marginalized groups, to support the development of inclusive norms across the diverse settings where children and adolescents live, learn, and interact.



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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: TABLES

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics by Condition

Outcome Variables	GSA (N = 64)		GOA (N = 78)		BSA (N = 73)		BOA (N = 71)		GSP (N = 80)		GOP (N = 61)		BSP (N = 75)		BOP (N = 70)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
AJ (1-6)	2.68	1.05	2.28	1.39	1.48	.88	1.44	.75	2.46	1.28	2.77	1.36	1.59	1.21	1.30	.86
FJ (1-6)	2.62	1.19	2.29	1.37	1.52	.54	1.49	.84	2.48	1.25	2.60	1.45	1.52	1.02	1.41	1.01
ID (1-6)	4.19	1.68	4.56	1.47	4.64	1.31	4.39	1.51	4.35	1.53	4.69	1.33	4.34	1.51	4.71	1.53
VBJ (1-6)	3.92	1.45	3.99	1.43	4.70	1.23	4.38	1.25	3.36	1.34	3.87	1.61	2.99	1.61	3.00	1.57
SJ (1-6)	3.80	1.21	3.94	1.33	4.32	1.22	4.41	1.10	3.83	1.26	4.00	1.38	4.35	1.21	4.67	1.26
HJ (1-6)	2.52	1.10	2.15	1.15	1.67	.97	1.76	.99	2.36	1.31	2.28	1.14	1.69	1.19	1.55	1.17
FIV (1-6)	4.80	1.45	4.99	1.28	4.89	1.23	4.86	1.29	5.01	1.03	5.07	1.05	4.73	1.56	5.03	1.29
FIE (1-6)	3.91	1.55	3.82	1.44	2.92	1.57	2.86	1.37	3.89	1.48	4.00	1.45	2.68	1.66	2.59	1.65
B1-NE (1-5)	3.59	.85	3.72	1.01	4.25	.58	4.16	.81	3.83	.85	3.59	1.08	4.33	0.79	4.22	.83
B2-EE (1-5)	4.22	.68	4.49	.51	4.35	.66	4.46	.50	4.33	.77	4.28	.84	4.35	.73	4.26	.83
B3-AR (1-5)	3.55	.85	3.68	.84	3.49	.88	3.70	.74	3.58	1.03	3.67	.95	3.57	.94	3.76	1.01
B4-KH (1-5)	3.82	.74	3.89	.69	3.84	.79	3.78	.83	3.89	.89	3.71	1.01	3.95	.89	3.93	.86
B5-ID (1-5)	4.02	.74	4.12	.71	3.97	.74	4.13	.63	3.99	.94	3.89	1.02	3.99	.87	4.13	.81

Note. AJ = Acceptability Judgment; FJ = Fairness Judgment; ID = Inclusion Decision; VBJ = Victim's Behavior Judgment; SJ = Seriousness Judgment; HJ = Humor Judgment; FIV = Future Inclusion of Victim; FIE = Future Inclusion of Excluder; B1-NE = Notice the Event; B2-EE = Evaluate as Emergency; B3-AR = Assume Responsibility; B4-KH = Know How to Help; B5-ID = Implement Intervention Decision; GSA = Good Intentionality, Supportive Norms, Active Victim; GOA = Good Intentionality, Opposing Norms, Active Victim; BSA = Bad Intentionality, Supportive Norms, Active Victim; BOA = Bad Intentionality, Opposing Norms, Active Victim; GSP = Good Intentionality, Supportive Norms, Passive Victim; GOP = Good Intentionality, Opposing Norms, Passive Victim; BSP = Bad Intentionality, Supportive Norms, Passive Victim; BOP = Bad Intention, Opposing Norms, Passive Victim

Table 2
Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Noticing the Event

Variables	Step 1			Step 2			Step 3			Step 4		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β
School Level	.04	.08	.02	.05	.08	.03	.09	.08	.05	.08	.08	.04
Gender	-.34	.08	-.19***	-.27	.08	-.15**	-.20	.08	-.11*	-.14	.08	-.08
Intentionality	-.55	.08	-.31***	-.54	.08	-.30***	-.56	.07	-.31***	-.56	.07	-.31***
Peer Norms	.06	.08	.03	.02	.08	.01	.02	.07	.01	.03	.07	.02
Victim Response	-.08	.08	-.04	-.09	.08	-.05	-.06	.07	-.03	-.06	.07	-.03
ToM				.05	.04	.05	.03	.04	.03	.02	.04	.03
Cognitive Empathy				.13	.05	.10*	.11	.06	.09*	.12	.06	.09*
Affective Empathy				.07	.04	.07	.03	.04	.03	.01	.04	.01
Affiliative Humor							.002	.05	.002	.01	.05	.008
Aggressive Humor							-.30	.06	-.21***	-.26	.06	-.18***
Growth Mindset										.06	.03	.08
Gender Stereotype										-.37	.20	-.08
Adjusted R^2		.12			.14			.17			.18	
F for change in R^2		15.12***			3.58*			11.08***			4.03*	

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 3
Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Evaluating as an Emergency

Variables	Step 1			Step 2			Step 3			Step 4		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β
School Level	-.04	.06	-.02	-.02	.06	-.01	.03	.06	.02	.03	.06	.02
Gender	-.33	.06	-.23***	-.21	.06	-.15**	-.11	.06	-.08	-.04	.06	-.03
Intentionality	-.02	.06	-.01	-.01	.06	-.004	-.03	.06	-.02	-.03	.05	-.02
Peer Norms	-.08	.06	-.06	-.13	.06	-.09*	-.13	.06	-.09*	-.12	.06	-.09*
Victim Response	.07	.06	.04	.04	.06	.03	.09	.06	.06	.09	.06	.06
ToM				.11	.03	.15***	.08	.03	.12**	.07	.03	.11**
Cognitive Empathy				.07	.04	.07	.04	.04	.05	.05	.04	.05
Affective Empathy				.15	.03	.20***	.08	.03	.11*	.07	.03	.09*
Affiliative Humor							-.01	.04	-.01	.001	.04	.001
Aggressive Humor							-.44	.05	-.39***	-.40	.05	-.36***
Growth Mindset										.05	.02	.10*
Gender Stereotype										-.44	.15	-.13**
Adjusted R^2	.05			.10			.23			.26		
F for change in R^2	5.98***			11.50***			42.99***			7.98***		

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 4
Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Assuming Responsibility

Variables	Step 1			Step 2			Step 3			Step 4		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β
School Level	.22	.08	.12**	.23	.08	.13**	.30	.07	.16***	.29	.07	.16***
Gender	-.27	.08	-.15**	-.14	.08	-.07	-.003	.08	-.002	.06	.08	.03
Intentionality	-.01	.08	-.01	.01	.08	.003	-.02	.07	-.01	-.02	.07	-.01
Peer Norms	-.18	.08	-.10*	-.23	.08	-.13**	-.23	.07	-.13**	-.23	.07	-.13**
Victim Response	-.07	.08	-.04	-.10	.08	-.06	-.05	.07	-.03	-.05	.07	-.03
ToM				.16	.04	.17***	.13	.04	.14**	.12	.04	.13**
Cognitive Empathy				.08	.06	.06	.04	.06	.03	.05	.05	.04
Affective Empathy				.16	.05	.16***	.08	.04	.08	.07	.04	.07
Affiliative Humor							.02	.05	.02	.03	.05	.02
Aggressive Humor							-.58	.06	-.40***	-.55	.06	-.38***
Growth Mindset										.02	.03	.03
Gender Stereotype										-.49	.19	-.11*
Adjusted R^2	.04			.09			.22			.23		
F for change in R^2	4.62***			10.40***			44.40***			3.66*		

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 5
Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Knowing How to Help

Variables	Step 1			Step 2			Step 3			Step 4		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β
School Level	.20	.08	.12**	.22	.07	.13**	.25	.07	.15***	.25	.07	.14**
Gender	-.18	.08	-.11*	-.11	.08	-.07	-.05	.08	-.03	-.02	.08	-.01
Intentionality	-.05	.07	-.03	-.03	.07	-.02	-.01	.07	-.01	-.01	.07	-.01
Peer Norms	.02	.07	.01	-.02	.07	-.01	-.02	.07	-.01	-.02	.07	-.01
Victim Response	-.06	.07	-.04	-.05	.07	-.03	-.04	.07	-.03	-.04	.07	-.03
ToM				.06	.04	.07	.05	.04	.06	.05	.04	.06
Cognitive Empathy				.26	.05	.22***	.16	.05	.14**	.17	.05	.14**
Affective Empathy				.002	.04	.002	-.05	.04	-.06	-.06	.04	-.06
Affiliative Humor							.25	.05	.21***	.25	.05	.21***
Aggressive Humor							-.35	.06	-.26***	-.34	.06	-.25***
Growth Mindset										.01	.03	.01
Gender Stereotype										-.29	.19	-.07
Adjusted R^2		.02			.06			.15			.16	
F for change in R^2		2.85*			8.72***			27.86***			1.30	

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 6
Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Implementing the Intervention Decision

Variables	Step 1			Step 2			Step 3			Step 4		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β
School Level	.09	.07	.05	.10	.07	.06	.16	.07	.10*	.16	.07	.10*
Gender	-.33	.07	-.20***	-.22	.08	-.14**	-.11	.07	-.07	-.06	.07	-.04
Intentionality	-.04	.07	-.03	-.03	.07	-.02	-.05	.07	-.03	-.04	.07	-.03
Peer Norms	-.10	.07	-.06	-.15	.07	-.09*	-.15	.07	-.09*	-.14	.07	-.09*
Victim Response	.04	.07	.02	.02	.07	.01	.06	.07	.04	.06	.07	.04
ToM				.11	.04	.13**	.08	.03	.10*	.08	.03	.09*
Cognitive Empathy				.10	.05	.09*	.05	.05	.05	.06	.05	.05
Affective Empathy				.11	.04	.13**	.04	.04	.04	.03	.04	.03
Affiliative Humor							.07	.05	.06	.07	.05	.07
Aggressive Humor							-.52	.06	-.40***	-.49	.06	-.38***
Growth Mindset										.04	.03	.07
Gender Stereotype										-.27	.17	-.07
Adjusted R^2	.04			.07			.21			.22		
F for change in R^2	4.93***			7.27***			43.77***			2.84		

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

APPENDIX B: Ethics Approval



Bilkent Üniversitesi

AKADEMİK İŞLER REKTÖR YARDIMCILIĞI

İNSAN ARAŞTIRMALARI ETİK KURULU KARARLARI

Toplantı Tarihi : 05/10/2024
Toplantı No : İAEK_2024_10_05_01
Saat : 17:00

Üyeler: Prof. Dr. Halil Altay Güvenir (Başkan), Bilgisayar Mühendisliği
Doç. Dr. Işık Yuluğ, Moleküler Biyoloji ve Genetik
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Burcu Ayşen Ürgen, Psikoloji
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Arif Barış Özbilen, Hukuk
Uzman Öğretim Görevlisi Dr. Emine Öncüler Yayalar, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi
Prof. Dr. Özgür Ulusoy (Yedek Üye), Bilgisayar Mühendisliği
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Şemsi Barış Özçelik (Yedek Üye), Hukuk

Gündem: 596 no.lu "Understanding Bystander ..." adlı çalışma için etik kurul onay başvurusu.

Karar: Üniversitemiz İktisadi, İdari ve Sosyal Bilimler Fakültesi, Psikoloji Bölümü Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Seçil Gönültaş'ın 596 no.lu "Understanding Bystander Behavior to Gender Based Humor in Peer Relations" adlı çalışması kapsamında yapmayı önerdiği etkinliğin genel bilim etiği açısından uygun olduğuna, uygunluk verilen çalışma önerisinin karar ekinde yer alan çalışma önerisi, çalışma yürütücüleri ve bilgilendirme formu için geçerli olduğuna, toplantıya katılan üyelerin oy birliği ile karar verildi.

Prof. Dr. Halil Altay GÜVENİR
Başkan
Katıldı

Doç. Dr. Işık YULUĞ
Üye
Toplantıya Katılmadı

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Burcu Ayşen ÜRGEN
Üye
Katıldı

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Arif Barış ÖZBİLEN
Üye
Katıldı

Dr. Emine ÖNCÜLER YAYALAR
Üye
Katıldı

Prof. Dr. Özgür ULUSOY
Yedek Üye
Katıldı

Bu belge, güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.

Evrak doğrulama <https://ebys-dogrulama.bilkent.edu.tr/> adresinden 317778d7 kodu ile yapılabilir.

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APPENDIX C: Pre-registration Document



Understanding Bystander Behavior to Gender-Based Humor in eSports (#194489)

Author(s)

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Pre-registered on: 2024/10/17 - 02:19 AM (PT)

1) Have any data been collected for this study already?

No, no data have been collected for this study yet.

2) What's the main question being asked or hypothesis being tested in this study?

The current study aims to understand how individual (age, gender, empathy, moral disengagement, theory of mind, humor styles, humor comprehension ability, real-life interests, critical consciousness, growth mindset, experiences as a cyber-bully or cyber-victim, perceptions of gender inequality) and contextual (intentionality, peer norms, the victim's reaction, gender stereotypes) factors can shape children's and adolescents' bystander responses to gender-based humor in the context of eSports, age, and gender of the bystanders.

Specifically, we would hypothesize that:

1. Intentionality: Participants would be more likely to report prosocial bystander responses to gender-based humor and exclusion in bad intention condition compared to good intention condition.
2. Peer Norms: Participants would be more likely to report prosocial bystander responses to gender-based humor and exclusion in challenging group norm conditions compared to supporting group norm conditions.
3. Participants' prosocial bystander responses to gender-based humor and exclusion would differ based on the victim's reaction (if the victim tells others about the exclusion versus if the victim stays quiet and does not disclose the exclusion).
4. Interaction between these conditions will be explored. Accordingly, we would expect that higher prosocial responses would be observed when the intention is bad and when the group norms are challenging. The least prosocial responses would be observed when the intention is good and the group norms are supporting.
5. Age and Gender Differences: Bystander responses would vary based on the age and gender of the participants, with younger participants and girls being more likely to intervene than older participants and boys.
6. Interaction between conditions, age and gender will be explored.

3) Describe the key dependent variable(s) specifying how they will be measured.

- Gender-stereotypic tendencies: 4 items, e.g., "Getting [Boy name] football tickets" (1 = extremely unlikely, 6 = extremely likely).
- Gender-based trait tendencies (Liben et al., 2022): 12 items, e.g., "Helpful" (1 = doesn't fit, 5 = extremely fitting).
- Moral Evaluation: "How would you evaluate [Excluder]'s behavior?" (1 = not right, 6 = definitely right), and reasoning.
- Fairness Evaluation: e.g., "Was [Excluder]'s action fair?" (1 = not fair, 6 = definitely fair), and reasoning.
- Severity Evaluation: "How severe was [Victim]'s experience?" (1 = not severe, 6 = extremely severe).
- Funniness Evaluation: "How funny was [Excluder]'s joke?" (1 = not funny, 6 = extremely funny).
- Emotion Evaluation: "How would you feel if others made similar jokes about you?" (1 = very bad, 6 = extremely good).
- Future Inclusivity Evaluation: "How likely are you to include [Victim]?" (1 = wouldn't, 6 = definitely would).
- Real-life Interest: e.g., "How likely would you join an E-sports club?" (1 = not likely, 6 = definitely likely).
- Bystander Behavior (Nickerson et al., 2014): 16 items, e.g., "I am aware some students are excluded from the e-sports team." (1 = disagree, 5 = agree).
- Gender Stereotyping (Liben & Signorella, 1980): 14 activities (e.g., "Hunting") and careers (e.g., "Police"; 1 = mostly men, 5 = mostly women).
- Peer and Parent Norms: 2 items, e.g., "Would peers support you?" (1 = disagree, 5 = agree).
- Empathy (Zengin et al., 2018): 12 items, e.g., "I can tell how others feel." (1 = never, 5 = always).
- Experiences as a Cyber-Bully or Victim (Thomas et al., 2019; Özbey & Başdaş, 2020): 15 items, e.g., "We sent hurtful messages." (1 = never, 5 = multiple times a week).
- Moral Disengagement (Hymel et al., 2015): 15 items, e.g., "When someone I dislike is bullied, I join in." (1 = not true, 4 = true).
- Theory of Mind (White et al., 2009): 3 stories (White lie, Double bluff, Misunderstanding).
- Humor Comprehension (Aykan & Nalçacı, 2015): 6 cartoons, choosing the best humorous interpretation.
- Humor Style (Fox et al., 2013; Anlı, 2021): 17 items, e.g., "I easily make others laugh." (1 = disagree, 4 = agree).
- Critical Consciousness (Diemer et al., 2020): 8 items, e.g., "Women have fewer job chances." (1 = disagree, 6 = agree).
- Growth Mindset (Law, 2023): 2 items, e.g., "Most can learn to be good at e-sports." (1 = disagree, 6 = agree).
- Gender Stereotype Awareness (Liben & Bigler, 2002): 4 items, e.g., "Girls can be good at e-sports." (0 = disagree, 100 = agree).
- Perceptions of Gender Inequality (Neff et al., 2007): 6 items, e.g., "Who holds power in politics?" (1 = mostly women, 5 = mostly men).

4) How many and which conditions will participants be assigned to?

Participants in this study will be assigned to one of eight experimental conditions, which result from the manipulation of three independent variables:

1. Excluder's Intentionality:
 - Good intention (the excluder may believe they are acting for a valid or harmless reason)



- Bad intention (the excluder is knowingly acting with harmful intent)
- 2. Peer Norms:
 - Supportive norm (the peer group condones and supports the exclusionary behavior)
 - Challenging norm (the peer group disapproves and challenges the exclusionary behavior)
- 3. Victim's Reaction:
 - The victim tells others about the exclusion
 - The victim stays quiet and does not disclose the exclusion

These factors result in a 2x2x2 factorial design for a total of 8 conditions. Participants will be randomly assigned to one of these conditions and will read a corresponding hypothetical scenario with the specific combination of intentionality, peer norms, and victim reaction.

5) Specify exactly which analyses you will conduct to examine the main question/hypothesis.

1. Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA):
 - A MANOVA will be used to test the effects of the three independent variables (excluder's intentionality, peer norms, and victim's reaction) on multiple dependent variables (bystander response types such as moral reasoning and perceived fairness).
 - Interaction effects between the three variables will also be examined to see how combinations of intentionality, peer norms, and victim reaction influence bystander responses.
2. Post-hoc Pairwise Comparisons:
 - If significant main or interaction effects are found, post-hoc tests will be conducted to compare the specific levels of independent variables (e.g., comparing good vs. bad intentionality within each peer norm condition).
3. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) or Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA):
 - Depending on the nature of the dependent variables (if there are multiple dimensions or latent constructs involved in moral reasoning or bystander responses), either an EFA or CFA may be conducted to validate the underlying factor structure of these responses.
4. Moderation Analysis (Optional):
 - Age and gender will be examined as potential moderators of the relationships between the independent variables and bystander responses. This analysis will reveal whether these demographic factors influence how participants react to the various conditions.

6) Describe exactly how outliers will be defined and handled, and your precise rule(s) for excluding observations.

Participants who fail our attention check questions will be excluded.

7) How many observations will be collected or what will determine sample size? No need to justify decision, but be precise about exactly how the number will be determined.

A G*Power calculation with a small to medium effect size of $f = .15$, power of .95, alpha of .05, and including our most complex analysis comparing the eight conditions in our gender-based humor and social exclusion eSports story suggests a sample size of 580 participants. However, to allow for possible participant error or drop-out, we will aim to recruit 600 participants.

8) Anything else you would like to pre-register? (e.g., secondary analyses, variables collected for exploratory purposes, unusual analyses planned?)

Nothing else to pre-register.

APPENDIX D: Hypothetical Scenario Intro

Şimdi kendini bir okul gününde hayal et. Birazdan o gün yaşadıklarınla alakalı bir hikâye okuyacaksın. Sorduğumuz soruları cevaplarken **bunlar başına gelmiş olarak hayal etmeni, kendini orada hissetmeni ve buna göre cevap vermeni istiyoruz.**

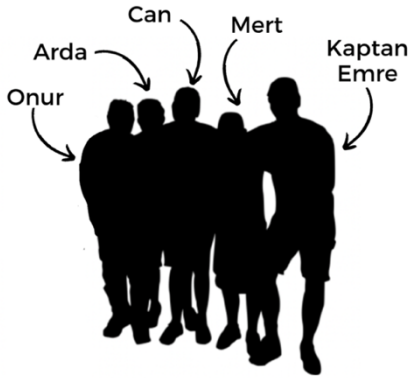
Bir gün okula geldiğinde girişteki panoda okullar arası **Büyük Şampiyonlar Turnuvasına** katılmak için E-Spor hazırlık maçları düzenlendiğini görüyorsun.

E-Spor tanımı: E-spor, bilgisayar ve video oyunlarının bir yarışma sporu olarak oynandığı bir etkinliktir. Bu oyunlarda insanlar bireysel ya da takımlar halinde yarışır. E-spor futbolunda ise gerçek futbol gibi, burada da oyuncular takımlar kurar, maçlar yapar ve stratejiler geliştirir. Ama bu maçlar sahada değil, ekran başında oynanır. Oyuncular, gerçek futbol kurallarını takip eder ve hedefleri en iyi şekilde oynayarak galip gelmektir.

Bu turnuva için bilgisayarda oynanan bir **futbol oyunu** seçilmiş. Hazırlık maçının kazananı E-Spor Federasyonu tarafından düzenlenen **Büyük Şampiyonlar Turnuvasına** katılmaya hak kazanacak.

Her okuldan **6 kişilik bir takım** çıkıyor ve herkes takımdaki bir oyuncuyu kendi bilgisayarından yönetiyor. E-spor oyunlarını çok seviyorsun bu yüzden **sen de ismini gidip okul takımına yazdırıyorsun.**

Sonraki gün takımındaki diğer 5 kişiyle tanışıyorsun, herkes senin okulundaki farklı şubelerden. Takım **kaptanınız Emre**, kaleci **Onur** ve sahadaki diğer oyuncular **Arda, Can ve Mert**.



Haydi! takımın için bir isim bul: _____

Şimdi de takımınız için bir logo seç:



Turnuvaya iki gün kala maalesef Mert hastalanıyor ve takımdan çıkması gerekiyor. Bu yüzden yeni bir takım arkadaşları aramaya başlıyorsunuz.

APPENDIX E: Hypothetical Scenarios for Intentionality of the Excluder Conditions

Bad Intentionality

Öykü



Ertesi gün **Öykü** takımınıza katılmak istediğini söylüyor. Takım kaptanı Emre, Öykü'yü takımda **istemiyor**. Diğer arkadaşları da onun gibi düşünsün, Öykü de kendini kötü hissederek takımdan ayrılışın diye Öykü'ye **kızların E-Spor futbol oyununda başarısız olduğu** hakkında **kötü amaçla** bir **şaka** yapıyor. Bu şakayı Öykü'nün kendini **kötü hissederek takımdan ayrılması** ve takımda **diğer oyuncular tarafından da istenmemesi** için yapıyor.

1. Emre yaptığı şakayı nasıl bir amaçla yapmıştı?

- a) **Kötü** amaçla, Öykü kendini dışlanmış hissetsin ve takımdan ayrılışın diye
- b) İyi amaçla, Öykü kendini iyi hissetsin ve takımdan ayrılmasın diye

Good Intentionality

Öykü



Ertesi gün **Öykü** takımınıza katılmak istediğini söylüyor. Takım kaptanı Emre, Öykü'yü **takımda istiyor**. Fakat takımda **çok erkek olduğunu görünce** Öykü kendini takımda diğerlerinin arasında **yetersiz hissetmesin** ve takımda **kalmak istesin** diye iyi amaçla bir şaka yapıyor. Yani, Öykü'ye kızların **E-Spor futbol oyununda çok da iyi olmadıkları için** genelde takımlarda **erkek sayılarının fazla olmasının normal olduğu** hakkında **iyi amaçla** bir **şaka** yapıyor. Bu şakayı Öykü'nün kendini takımda **iyi hissetmesi** ve diğer oyuncular tarafından da **takımda istenmesi** için yapıyor.

1. Emre yaptığı şakayı nasıl bir amaçla yapmıştı?

- a) **İyi** amaçla, Öykü kendini iyi hissetsin ve takımdan ayrılmasın diye
- b) **Kötü** amaçla, Öykü kendini dışlanmış hissetsin ve takımdan ayrılışın diye

APPENDIX F: Hypothetical Scenarios for the Bystander Peer Norms Conditions

Bystander Peer Norms Supporting Exclusion

Takım arkadaşlarına baktığında onların da bu şakayı **çok komik bulduklarını ve güldüklerini görüyorsun**. Emre bu tür şakaları **hep yapıyor** ve takım arkadaşların da Emre'nin yaptığı şakaları **normal karşılıyorlar** ve Emre'yi **destekliyorlar**. Yani onlar da **E-Spor bile olsa kızların futbolda çok iyi olmadığını** düşünüyorlar.

Takım arkadaşların sana bakıp senden de bu şakaya **gülmeni ve Emre'ye destek vermeni** bekliyorlar. Eğer Emre'nin Öykü hakkında yaptığı şakaya gülmezsen yani onlara katılmazsan takımın iyiliğini ve bütünlüğünü düşünmediğin için **takımdan ayrılman gerekecek**.

2. Arkadaşlarınla Emre'nin şakasına gülmezsen ve Emre'ye destek vermezsen ne olur?
 - a) Arkadaşlarım takımdan **ayrılmamı** bekleyecekler
 - b) Arkadaşlarım takımda kalmamı bekleyecekler

Bystander Peer Norms Opposing Exclusion

Takım arkadaşlarına baktığında onların bu şakayı **hiç komik bulmadıklarını ve gülmediklerini görüyorsun**. Emre bu tür şakaları **hep yapıyor** fakat takım arkadaşların Emre'nin yaptığı şakaları **normal karşılamıyor ve Emre'ye katılmıyorlar**. Yani onlar **hem kızların hem erkeklerin E-Spor futbolunda iyi olduğunu** düşünüyorlar.

Takım arkadaşların sana bakıp senden de bu şakaya **gülmemeni ve Emre'ye destek vermemeni** bekliyorlar. Eğer Emre'nin Öykü hakkında yaptığı şakaya gülersen yani Emre'yi desteklersen takım ruhuna uyum sağlamadığın için ve takımın iyiliğini düşünmediğin için **takımdan ayrılman gerekecek**.

2. Arkadaşlarına karşı çıkıp Emre'nin şakasına gülersen ve Emre'ye destek verirsen ne olur?
 - a) Arkadaşlarım takımdan **ayrılmamı** bekleyecekler
 - b) Arkadaşlarım takımda kalmamı bekleyecekler

APPENDIX G: Hypothetical Scenarios for the Response of the Victim

Active Victim

Öykü'nün bu şaka yüzünden çok kırıldığını fark ediyorsun. Kaptan Emre'nin kendisi hakkında yaptığı şakaya çok kırılan Öykü dışlandığını hissediyor ve **ağlayarak takımdan ayrılıyor**. Takımdan ayrıldıktan sonra Öykü, Emre'yi ve takımı **şikâyet etme hakkı olduğunu öğreniyor**. Öykü sizi hocaya ve yarışmayı düzenleyen federasyona **şikâyet ediyor**.

3. Öykü Emre'yi ve takımı şikâyet etme hakkı olduğunu öğrenmişti. Öykü takımdan ayrıldıktan sonra ne yaptı?
 - a) Öykü bizi hocaya ve yarışmayı düzenleyen federasyona şikâyet **etmişti**
 - b) Öykü bizi hocaya ve yarışmayı düzenleyen federasyona şikâyet **etmemişti**

Passive Victim

Öykü'nün bu şaka yüzünden **çok kırıldığını** fark ediyorsun. Kaptan Emre şakayı **iyi bir niyetle yapsa da** Öykü bu şakaya kırılıyor, dışlandığını hissediyor ve **ağlayarak takımdan ayrılıyor**. Takımdan ayrıldıktan sonra Öykü, Emre'yi ve takımı **şikâyet etme hakkı olduğunu öğreniyor**. Fakat Öykü sizi hocaya ve yarışmayı düzenleyen federasyona **şikâyet etmiyor** ve takımdan ayrılıyor.

3. Öykü Emre'yi ve takımı şikâyet etme hakkı olduğunu öğrenmişti. Öykü takımdan ayrıldıktan sonra ne yaptı?
 - a) Öykü bizi hocaya ve yarışmayı düzenleyen federasyona şikâyet **etmemişti**
 - b) Öykü bizi hocaya ve yarışmayı düzenleyen federasyona şikâyet **etmişti**

APPENDIX H: Demographic Information Questionnaire

1. Doğum tarihin: Gün: _____ Ay: _____ Yıl: _____
2. Yaşın: _____
3. Kaçınıcı sınıftasın?
☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10 ☐ 11 ☐ 12
4. Cinsiyetin: ☐ Kız ☐ Erkek
5. Anne ve babanın eğitim seviyesi (Lütfen en son mezun olunan okulu hem annen hem baban için sayılardan sadece birini seçerek belirt):

	Anne	Baba
İlkokul mezunu değil	1	1
İlkokul mezunu	2	2
Ortaokul mezunu	3	3
Lise mezunu	4	4
Meslek yüksekokulu veya iki yıllık üniversite mezunu	5	5
Dört yıllık üniversite (veya Tıp Fakültesi) mezunu	6	6
Yüksek lisans derecesi	7	7
Doktora (veya tıpta uzmanlık) derecesi	8	8

APPENDIX I: Moral Judgments

Acceptability Judgment

Emre'nin bu davranışını nasıl değerlendirirsin?

Hiç Doğru Değil	Doğru Değil	Biraz Doğru Değil	Biraz Doğru	Doğru	Kesinlikle Doğru
1	2	3	4	5	6

Fairness Judgment

Sence Emre'nin yaptığı adil midir?

Hiç Adil Değil	Adil Değil	Biraz Adil Değil	Biraz Adil	Adil	Kesinlikle Adil
1	2	3	4	5	6

APPENDIX J: Five-Step BIM

Şimdi senden aşağıdaki maddeleri e-spor takımında **yaşanan durumu düşünerek** cevaplamani istiyoruz. Bunların doğru ya da yanlış cevapları yok. Senden istediğimiz bu ifadeleri okuyup sana ne kadar uygun olduğunu belirtmen.

	Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Kararsızım	Katılıyorum	Kesinlikle Katılıyorum
1.Sosyal dışlanma katıldığım e-spor takımında bir sorundur.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Katıldığım e-spor takımında bazı öğrencilerin dışlandığının farkındayım.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Katıldığım e-spor takımında bazı öğrencilerin dışlandığını gördüm.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Bana göre e-spor takımından dışlanan biri yardıma ihtiyaç duyar.	1	2	3	4	5
5. E-spor takımında uygun olmayan yorumlar yapan kişi, yaptığı yorumların şaka olduğunu söylese bile o yorumlar birilerinin duygularını incitebilir.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Takımdan birini dışlamanın incitici ve zarar verici olduğunu düşünüyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
7. E-spor takımında dışlanma olaylarının çözümüne yardımcı olma ve müdahale etme	1	2	3	4	5

konusunda kendimi sorumlu hissedirim.					
8. E-spor takımında başkalarını dışlayan kişi ben olmasam bile bunu durdurmaya çalışmak benim sorumluluğumdur.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Benim davranışlarımın e-spor takımında yaşanan dışlanmayı azaltmaya yardımcı olabileceğine inanıyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
10. E-spor takımında kendisine saygısızca davranılan bir öğrenciye destek olabilecek becerilere sahibim.	1	2	3	4	5
11. E-spor takımında böyle olaylar gördüğümde birisini dışlayan kişiye, bunu durdurması için ne söyleyeceğimi biliyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
12. E-spor takımında dışlanan birinin içinde bulunduğu o durumdan kurtulmasına yardım edebilirim.	1	2	3	4	5
13. E-spor takımındaki diğer öğrencilerden birinin ya da birkaçının uygun olmayan	1	2	3	4	5

davranışlarda bulunduğunu görürsem bu davranışlara son vermelerini söylerim.					
14. E-spor takımında savunmasız bir öğrenciye kaba ve saygısızca davranan bir öğrenci gördüğümde onu durdurmak için bir şeyler söylerim.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Takımdan biri e-spor takımında başka biri hakkında küçük düşürücü şekilde konuşuyorsa böyle konuşmayı bırakmasını söylerim.	1	2	3	4	5
16. E-spor takımında çok iyi tanımadığım bir öğrencinin dışlandığını görürsem onun bu durumdan kurtulmasına yardım ederim.	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX K: Intergroup Judgments

Inclusion Judgment

Sence Öykü E-Spor futbol takımında yer almalı mı?

Kesinlikle Yer Almamalı	Yer Almamalı	Biraz Yer Almamalı	Biraz Yer Almalı	Yer Almalı	Kesinlikle Yer Almalı
1	2	3	4	5	6

Victim Behavior Judgment

Öykü'nün Emre'yi ve takımı şikâyet etmesini nasıl değerlendirirsin? *ya da*
Öykü'nün Emre'yi ve takımı şikâyet etmemesini nasıl değerlendirirsin?

Hiç Doğru Değil	Doğru Değil	Biraz Doğru Değil	Biraz Doğru	Doğru	Kesinlikle Doğru
1	2	3	4	5	6

Future Inclusion Judgment

Gelecekte okulunuzda yine bir E-Spor turnuvası düzenlendiğini hayal et. Bu sefer takım kaptanı sen oldun ve Öykü ve Emre takımında olmak istiyorlar!

1. Inclusion of the Victim

Öykü'yü takıma dahil etme ihtimalin ne kadardır?

Kesinlikle Dahil Etmem	Dahil Etmem	Biraz Dahil Etmem	Biraz Dahil Ederim	Dahil Ederim	Kesinlikle Dahil Ederim
1	2	3	4	5	6

2. Inclusion of the Victim

Emre'yi takıma dahil etme ihtimalin ne kadardır?

Kesinlikle Dahil Etmem	Dahil Etmem	Biraz Dahil Etmem	Biraz Dahil Ederim	Dahil Ederim	Kesinlikle Dahil Ederim
1	2	3	4	5	6

APPENDIX L: Attitudes Towards Exclusion

Seriousness Judgment

Sence Öykü'nün yaşadığı ne kadar ciddi bir durum?

Hiç Ciddi Değil	Ciddi Değil	Biraz Ciddi Değil	Biraz Ciddi	Ciddi	Kesinlikle Ciddi
1	2	3	4	5	6

Humor Judgment

Emre'nin yaptığı bu şakayı nasıl değerlendirirsin?

Hiç Komik Değil	Komik Değil	Biraz Komik Değil	Biraz Komik	Komik	Çok Komik
1	2	3	4	5	6

APPENDIX M: Gender Stereotype Endorsement

Aşağıda bazı meslek dalları yer almaktadır. Sence bu meslek dallarını kim yapmalı?

	Sadece Erkekler	Çoğunlukla Erkekler	Hem kadınlar hem erkekler	Çoğunlukla Kadınlar	Sadece Kadınlar
Polis	1	2	3	4	5
Psikolog	1	2	3	4	5
Hakem	1	2	3	4	5
Hemşire	1	2	3	4	5
Otobüs Şoförü	1	2	3	4	5
Bebek Bakıcısı	1	2	3	4	5
Pilot	1	2	3	4	5
Anaokulu Öğretmeni	1	2	3	4	5
Tamirci	1	2	3	4	5
Bale Sanatçısı	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX N: Growth Mindset in Esports

İnsanların çoğu e-spor oyunlarında iyi olmayı öğrenebilir.

Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Biraz Katılmıyorum	Kararsızım	Biraz Katılıyorum	Katılıyorum	Kesinlikle Katılıyorum
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

E-spor oyunlarında iyi olmak için doğuştan bu yeteneğe sahip olmak gerekiyor.

Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Biraz Katılmıyorum	Kararsızım	Biraz Katılıyorum	Katılıyorum	Kesinlikle Katılıyorum
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

APPENDIX O: Empathy

Lütfen aşağıdaki sorulara kendini en iyi ifade edecek şekilde yanıt ver. Bu soruların doğru ya da yanlış cevabı yok, sadece senin düşüncelerini öğrenmek istiyoruz.

	Hiçbir zaman	Nadiren	Bazen	Sıklıkla	Her Zaman
1. Genellikle insanlar bana ne hissettikleri söylemeden önce bile ne hissettiklerini anlayabilirim.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Saklamaya çalışsa bile bir arkadaşımın öfkeli olduğunu anlayabilirim.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Mutlu gibi davranan birinin aslında mutlu olmadığını anlayabilirim.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Başkalarının nasıl hissettiğini kolayca anlayabilirim.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Bir arkadaşım korktuğunda ben de korkmuş hissederim.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Arkadaşım üzgünken ben de üzgün olurum.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Bir arkadaşım öfkeliyse ben de öfkeli hissederim.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Etrafımdaki insanlar endişeli olduğunda bende endişelenirim.	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX P: Theory of Mind

Şimdi kısa birkaç hikâye göreceksin. Hikayeleri dikkatle okumanı ve ardından gelen sorulara cevap vermeni istiyoruz.

Murat başıboş ve doğruları söylemeyen biri. Murat'ın kardeşi Ahmet, Murat'ın böyle olduğunu ve asla doğruyu söylemediğini biliyor. Murat bir gün Ahmet'in futbol topunu alıyor. Ahmet, Murat'ın futbol topunu bir yere sakladığını biliyor fakat yine de sakladığı yeri bulamıyor ve çok sinirleniyor. Ardından Murat'ı bulup "Futbol topum nerede? Ya dolabına ya da yatağının altına saklamış olmalısın çünkü diğer her yere baktım. Nerede, dolapta mı yoksa yatağının altında mı?" diye soruyor.

Murat ona topun yatağın altında olduğunu söylüyor. Ahmet topu bulmak için neden dolaba bakacak?

Sedef bütün sene, yeni yılın gelmesini bekledi, çünkü yılbaşı hediyesi olarak anne ve babasından fotoğraf makinesi isteyecek. Sedef fotoğraf makinesi olmasını her şeyden daha çok istiyor. Yılbaşı günü geldiğinde, Sedef anne ve babasının verdiği kocaman hediye paketini büyük bir heyecanla açıyor, paketin içinden bir kutuda fotoğraf makinesi çıkacağından emin. Bütün aile yanındayken paketi açtığında, içinden fotoğraf makinesi yerine hiç de istemediği sıkıcı bir kitap çıktığını görüyor. Fakat yine de anne ve babası yılbaşı hediyesini nasıl bulduğunu sorduklarında Sedef, "Çok güzel, teşekkür ederim, bu kitap tam da istediğim şeydi!" diye cevap veriyor.

Sedef neden böyle söylüyor?

Gece geç bir vakitte yaşlı kadın Sevinç Hanım sahilden evine doğru yürüyor. Sevinç Hanım karanlıkta yalnız başına eve yürümeyi sevmiyor çünkü her zaman kendisine birinin saldıracağından ve çantasını çalacağından korkuyor. Kendisi gerçekten çok tedirgin bir insan! Sevinç Hanım yürürken, aniden, bir ağacın arkasından bir adam beliriyor. Adam, saatin kaç olduğunu sormak istiyor ve Sevinç Hanım'a doğru yürüyor. Sevinç Hanım kendisine doğru gelen adamı görür görmez titremeye başlıyor ve "Çantamı al, ama bana zarar verme lütfen!" diyor.

Sevinç Hanım neden böyle söylüyor?

APPENDIX R: Humor Styles

Lütfen aşağıdaki sorulara kendini en iyi ifade edecek şekilde yanıt ver. Bu soruların doğru ya da yanlış cevabı yok, sadece senin düşüncelerini öğrenmek istiyoruz.

	Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Katılıyorum	Kesinlikle Katılıyorum
Biri bir hata yaptığında hatası hakkında şaka yapmaktan kaçınırım.	1	2	3	4
Başkalarını güldürmek benim için kolaydır.	1	2	3	4
Bir şey gerçekten komik olsa bile eğer birini üzecekse bu konuda şaka yapmam ve gülmem.	1	2	3	4
Genellikle şakalar yaparak ve komik hikayeler anlatarak insanları güldürürüm.	1	2	3	4
Şaka yaparken insanların kırılabilceğinden endişe duyarım.	1	2	3	4
İnsanları güldürmek için çok uğraşmam gerekmez-doğuştan komik bir insanımdır.	1	2	3	4
Şakalarım ve komik hikayelerim insanları güldürür.	1	2	3	4
Başkalarını güldürebilirim.	1	2	3	4
İnsanların başka birini küçük düşürmek amacıyla onlara gülmesinden hoşlanmam.	1	2	3	4

APPENDIX S: Control Variables

Football and Esports Interest

Şimdi sana hikâyeden bağımsız, kendi hayatın ile ilgili birkaç soru soracağız.

1. E-Sporla ilgileniyor musun?

Hiç İlgilenmiyorum	İlgilenmiyorum	Biraz İlgilenmiyorum	Biraz İlgileniyorum	İlgileniyorum	Fazlasıyla İlgileniyorum
1	2	3	4	5	6

2. Futbolla ilgileniyor musun?

Hiç İlgilenmiyorum	İlgilenmiyorum	Biraz İlgilenmiyorum	Biraz İlgileniyorum	İlgileniyorum	Fazlasıyla İlgileniyorum
1	2	3	4	5	6

Future Interest in Esports Football

3. Gerçek hayatta önümüzdeki hafta okulunda E-Spor futbol kulübü kurulsa katılma ihtimalin nedir?

Kesinlikle Katılmam	Katılmam	Belki Katılmam	Belki Katılırim	Katılırim	Kesinlikle Katılırim
1	2	3	4	5	6