

THE EFFECT OF MENTAL REPRESENTATION OF ROMANTIC  
PARTNER ON AFFECT REGULATION IN BISEXUAL WOMEN'S  
ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS WITH MEN AND WOMEN+: THE ROLE  
OF PARTNER GENDER IDENTITY

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE EFFECT OF MENTAL REPRESENTATION OF ROMANTIC PARTNER ON AFFECT REGULATION IN BISEXUAL WOMEN'S ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS WITH MEN AND WOMEN+: THE ROLE OF PARTNER GENDER IDENTITY**

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An emerging literature on bisexual individuals shows that bi-specific stressors lead adverse psychological and physical health outcomes on bisexual individuals. Romantic relationship involvement is seen as bi-specific stressor provoking life event in bisexual people. Yet, adult attachment studies with heterosexual samples yield that imagery or physical contact with romantic partner as an attachment figure enhances one's affect regulation in the face of external or internal stressors. The current study, for the first time, provides an investigation of whether priming the mental representation of romantic partner facilitates the recovery from negative affect after exposure to a negative autobiographical memory and whether partner gender identity has an effect on the provision of affect recovery in the sample of bisexual women. Ninety-six bisexual women are studied under two groups: bisexual women in a relationship with men partners and bisexual women in a relationship with women+ partners. Results indicated that priming romantic partner following an upsetting autobiographical memory recall significantly eliminated the increased negative

affect compared to priming acquaintance in both groups. Bisexual women with women+ partners had significantly better negative affect recovery than bisexual women with men partners. Lastly, effect of partner gender identity became nonsignificant after controlling for Identity Uncertainty. Findings showed that romantic partner can provide affect regulation and may act as a protective factor in order to enhance psychological well-being in bisexual women regardless of the increased bi-specific stressors with relationship involvement. The implications of the findings on affect regulation, partner gender identity, mental health of bisexual women are discussed.

**Keywords:** Bisexual Women, Romantic Relationship, Partner Gender Identity, Affect Regulation, Autobiographical Memory

## ÖZ

### BİSEKSÜEL KADINLARIN ERKEK VE KADIN+ ROMANTİK PARTNERLERİYLE OLAN İLİŞKİLERİNDE ROMANTİK PARTNERİN ZİHİNSEL TEMSİLİNİN DUYGU REGÜLASYONU ÜZERİNE ETKİSİ: PARTNER CİNSİYET KİMLİĞİNİN ROLÜ

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Biseksüel kişiler hakkında henüz yeni oluşmaya başlayan alan yazın, bireylerin biseksüel olan cinsel yönelimini hedef alan stresörlerin onların psikolojik ve fiziksel sağlıkları üzerine olumsuz etkilerini olduğunu göstermektedir. Romantik ilişki içinde olmanın biseksüel kişilerin bu stresörlerle karşılaşma sıklığını artırdığı öngörülmektedir. Fakat heteroseksüel bireylerle yapılan yetişkin bağlanma çalışmaları romantik partner ile fiziksel veya hayali kontağın dıştan veya içten gelen stresörlere karşı duygu regülasyonu sağladığını göstermektedir. Bu çalışma ile ilk defa biseksüel kadınların üzücü bir otobiyografik anı hatırlama sonrasında artan olumsuz hislerinin, romantik partnerin zihinsel temsiline hayali ile yatışıp yatışmadığına ve bu yatışmaya partner cinsiyet kimliğinin etki edip etmediğine bakıldı. Biseksüel kadınlar iki grupta incelendi: bir erkek ile romantik ilişkide olan biseksüel kadınlar ve bir kadın+ ile romantik ilişkide olan biseksüel kadınlar. Mevcut araştırmanın sonuçlarına göre romantik partnerin zihinsel temsiline aktivasyonu tanıdığa kıyasla, üzücü otobiyografik anının hatırlanması ile artan olumsuz duyguları anlamlı oranda elimine etti ve duygu



regölasyonu saęladı. Kadın+ partneri olan biseksüel kadınlar erkek partneri olan biseksüel kadınlara kıyasla anlamlı oranda daha iyi duygu regölasyonu gösterdiler. Son olarak, kimlik belirsizlięi deęişkenin kontrol altına alındıktan sonra ise iki grup biseksüel kadın arasında partnerin saęladığı duygu regölasyonun farkı anlamlı bulunmadı. Mevcut bulgular biseksüel kadınların romantik partnerlerinin duygu regölasyonu saęladığını gösterdi ve psikolojik iyi olma hali üzerine koruyucu bir faktör olabileceęi öngöröldü. Araştırmanın bulguları biseksüel kadınların duygu regölasyonu, partner cinsiyet kimlięi ve ruh saęlıęı çerçevesinde tartışıldı.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Biseksüel Kadınlar, Romantik İlişki, Partner Cinsiyet Kimlięi, Duygu Regölasyonu, Otobiyografik Hafıza

*To all members of bisexual+ community with love, peace,  
and hope for a brighter future...*

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Research has shown that responsive and available attachment figures, such as caregivers or mothers during child rearing and romantic partners during adulthood, enable affect regulation, which is necessary to protect and reinforce psychological and physical health (e.g., Abtahi, 2016; Bowlby, 1988; Diamond & Hick, 2014; Harlow, 1958; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Pietromonaco, Uchino, & Dunkel Schetter, 2013; Robles & Kiecolt-Glaser, 2003; Slatcher & Selcuk, 2017). Repetitive interactions with these attachment figures allow mental representation to be formed in our memory after a period of time (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999; 2008). We use these mental representations to regulate our emotions not only when we face external threats (e.g., Eisenberger et al., 2011), but also when we cope with internally generated stressors (Selçuk, Zayas, Günaydın, Hazan, & Kross, 2012).

Attachment figures contribute to the psychological well-being of individuals by providing support and comforting individuals (e.g., Proulx, Helms, & Buehler, 2007; Selçuk et al., 2012). Yet, relationships can also be a source of stress and have a negative effect on individuals' psychological and physical health. Whisman (2007) revealed that low quality relationships are related to poorer well-being and psychological disorders. So far, relationship studies have focused on the positive and negative aspects of heterosexual people's relationships and few studies have focused on the unique experiences of bisexual individuals in romantic relationships. In the current study, we aim to understand whether bisexual women's romantic partner as an attachment figure in adulthood would provide affect regulation and whether this provision of affect regulation would differ based on partner gender identity. Researchers who conducted studies with heterosexual couples have shown that support and comfort received from

partners have a positive effect on an individual's psychological and physical health (e.g., Fekete, Stephens, Mickelson & Druley, 2007; Horn, Xu, Beam, Turkheimer & Emery, 2013; Selcuk, Stanton, Slatcher & Ong, 2017). Similarly, according to studies on lesbian and gay people's relationships, being involved in a romantic relationship increases the wellbeing of the participants (e.g., Kornblith, Green, Casey & Tiet, 2016; Wienke & Hill, 2009). Researchers also suggested, however, that these benefits may not extend to bisexual people's relationships due to several factors unique to such relationships (Feinstein et al., 2016).

Bisexual individuals encounter unique challenges in romantic relationships based on their partner gender identity, which may negatively affect their psychological well-being (Feinstein & Dyar, 2018). Negative stereotypes such as myths about bisexual individuals, that is, binegativity coming from a potential partner (Armstrong & Reissing, 2014), being invisible in romantic relationships especially with monosexual partners (also called *bisexual invisibility*; *bisexual erasure*, Fox, 2006; Yoshino, 2000) are some of these unique challenges. Moreover, double discrimination coming from heterosexual majority and lesbian/gay communities towards bisexual people also negatively impact bisexual individuals' mental health (e.g., Dobinson & Eady, 2010; Dodge et al., 2016; Ross). Furthermore, all of these negative experiences vary based on the partner's gender (Feinstein & Dyar, 2018). Therefore, a study on different types of relationships based on partner gender is critical for an understanding of the emotional regulatory function of adult attachment in romantic relationships among bisexual individuals. In the present research, the affect regulatory benefit of romantic partner in bisexual women based on partner gender identity was studied.

### **1.1. Attachment in Early Childhood**

Psychoanalyst John Bowlby (1969/1982, 1973, 1980, 1988) developed the well-established Attachment Theory that is still being repeatedly supported by

empirical studies (e.g., Cooke, Kochendorfer, Stuart-Parrigon, Koehn & Kerns, 2019). Bowlby (1969/1982) described attachment as an emotional tie between a child and a primary caregiver supplied by the child's built-in attachment behaviors during infancy. Primary caregiver refers to a mother, father, or a particular person who mainly takes care of a child, provides protection, and responds to the needs of the child. Through the attachment process, the primary caregiver becomes the child's attachment figure. Attachment is initially formed during the first two years of a human life. An infant endeavor to seek and maintain proximity to its primary caregiver during this time (Bowlby, 1982). Accordingly, an infant develops attachment to its primary caregiver by interacting with the caregiver through an innate set of behaviors that help maintain its proximity to the primary caregiver (Bowlby, 1982).

Attachment behaviors are crucial for children to ensure a secure base. Human beings are born with a complex attachment system, also referred to as *attachment behavioral system*, that is predominantly exhibited in infants' behaviors (Bowlby, 1982). Attachment behaviors reveal themselves in an infant's effort to seek and maintain proximity to its primary caregiver. Innately driven attachment behaviors such as crying, clenching, grasping, gazing and smiling are signals to call for the primary caregiver, drawing attention to the infant so that the primary caregiver can be nearby at all times (Bowlby, 1982). For instance, a crying infant signals a need to the primary caregiver and it elicits the primary caregiver to approach the baby and respond by soothing the baby. Congruently, when a primary caregiver is in reachable distance and attentive, infants tend to exchange glances by smiling and babbling, which serve as a reciprocal reward to both the caregiver and infant for the maintenance of proximity. Both of these examples show how attachment behaviors of an infant mutually reinforce close proximity and facilitate the primary caregiver's responsiveness (Bowlby, 1982). As a result, these ongoing interactions dynamically strengthen their attachment to each other (Bowlby, 1982).

A primary caregiver who is available, attentive to a child's signals, interprets them correctly, and responds sensitively helps the child to develop a secure base (Bowlby, 1982, 1988). The ongoing repetitions of attachment behaviors between a primary caregiver and a child has survival value, protects the infant from danger or threatening situations in times of need, and provides feelings of safety. This is referred to as a *safe haven*. The child, whose needs are met, feels comfortable and achieves a *secure base* where it can explore and master the environment (e.g., Bowlby 1982; Bretherton & Munholland, 1999; Cassidy, Jones, & Shaver, 2013; Grossmann, Grossmann, Kindler & Zimmermann, 2008). Danger or threatening situations cause the child to feel distress which in turn activates the alarm in the attachment system (Bowlby, 1988). The activation of the alarm in the attachment system leads a child to search for help from its primary caregiver, which means first seeking proximity to the primary caregiver (Bowlby, 1988). Then, if the primary caregiver is available and sensitively responsive at these moments, the contact and synchrony between them helps the child to relieve distress and instill feelings of safety (Bowlby, 1988). Reduced distress levels enable the child to remain in a safe haven where it feels protected and safe. Afterwards, the child can explore the environment and play in a secure base (Bowlby, 1988). When the proximity, safe haven, and secure base are repeatedly accomplished, the child eventually begins developing a secure attachment to its primary caregiver (Bowlby, 1982). A securely attached child learns that relying on the primary caregiver will make the child feel secure and the environment safe to explore (Bowlby, 1982). Yet not every child experience secure attachment; in fact, some individuals differ in their attachment styles (Cassidy, 1999).

Ainsworth was the first researcher (1978) who identified individual differences among children in terms of attachment security (Van Rosmalen, Van der Veer & Van der Horst, 2015) and named it as attachment style. For determining the variety in attachment security, she created the Strange Situation Procedure (SSP) and coded the child's behavioral reactions to separation and reunion (Van Rosmalen et al., 2015). In SSP, the experiment involved the strange environment

(lab), the stranger (researcher), and separation from the caregiver (Van Rosmalen et al., 2015). The purpose of the separation from the caregiver was to elicit stress in the child and in turn, it alarms the attachment system and lead occurrence of attachment behaviors. They coded the child's behaviors in separation from caregiver and in reunion with the caregiver following the separation (Ainsworth et al., 1978/ 2015). For example, they measured whether the child continues to explore the environment or intensely cry after separation and whether the child calms down, or avoids contact, or gets angry at the caregiver in reunion. As a result of the experiment, they classified attachment styles into three broad categories: secure, insecure-avoidant, and insecure-anxious attachment (Ainsworth et al., 1978/2015). One of the underlying factors in different attachment styles was the role of the primary caregiver in these interactions with the child, more specifically, the caregiver's availability, responsiveness, and sensitivity to the child (Ainsworth et al., 1978/2015).

The primary caregiver's attentiveness, responsiveness, and understanding the child's needs correctly helps the child to develop secure attachment. A securely attached child will be certain that the primary caregiver is available when needed (e.g., Cassidy, Woodhouse, Sherman, Stupica & Lejuez, 2011). Thus, these children continue seeking proximity to a particular primary caregiver when needed, react to the absence of the caregiver, and become calm when reunited with the caregiver (Ainsworth et al., 1978). On the other hand, knowing that the primary caregiver is emotionally unavailable to provide the needs of the child causes the development of insecure attachment (e.g., Powell, Cooper, Hoffman, & Marvin, 2013). Avoidant and anxious attachments are defined under the category of insecure attachment styles. Insecurely attached children develop *secondary attachment strategies* in order to cope with attachment flaws. They learn to cope with distress in cases of emotional or physical unavailability of the caregiver (Cassidy & Kobak, 1988).

The emotionally distant primary caregiver who avoids close contact with the child and who is not very attentive or responsive to the child's needs leads to the

development of avoidant attachment (e.g., Powell, Cooper, Hoffman, & Marvin, 2013). Avoidant children learn to engage in deactivation strategies, such as shifting attention to exploration rather than the primary caregiver (Cassidy & Kobak, 1988; Main, 1990). When repetitive efforts to seek proximity fail, these children do not expect to maintain proximity with their primary caregiver. Furthermore, they either suppress or block connection with their negative emotions and represent them as more pleasant emotions and attempt self-soothing during times of discomfort (Mikulincer & Florian, 1998). Therefore, they do not react much to separation or reunion with their primary caregiver (Ainsworth et al., 1978).

Finally, anxious attachment develops through an unpredictable interaction with a primary caregiver (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Such caregivers are sometimes available and responsive, but sometimes they are not. Moreover, their reaction to needs of the child differs from time to time. For example, they are sometimes caring and sensitive and at other times, they are unavailable. In contrast to avoidantly attached children, anxiously attached children learn to use hyperactivation strategies as a part of a secondary attachment strategy, such as continuing to cry even after their needs are met or reacting excessively to the absence of a primary attachment figure due to the uncertainty of proximity maintenance (Cassidy & Kobak, 1988). In such cases, it is obvious that the child is uncertain about the primary caregiver as to whether the caregiver will be available or responsive when required by the child. Hence, reunion with a primary caregiver does not easily calm the child (Ainsworth et al., 1978).

In summary, attachment behaviors are a prerequisite for the survival of the human infant are shaped by the responsiveness of the primary caregiver. Understanding how an attachment system is formed during early childhood and how caregiving quality affects attachment security can also aid us in comprehending the link between attachment and emotion regulation.

## 1.2. The Link between Attachment Theory and Emotion Regulation

Emotion regulation has been a controversial topic that has been defined and measured in several ways. Emotion regulation is a process that involves the ability to modify emotions in the most adaptive way possible in a given time and context (Thompson, 1994). The terms emotion regulation and affect regulation were used interchangeably in the present thesis. More specifically, affect refers to subjective interpretations of feeling in a specific moment (Vohs & Baumeister, 2004) and is measured by self-reports of positive and negative affect in a specific moment and context (e.g., Yaseen, Zhang, Muran, Winston, & Galynker, 2016). Neuroimaging tools, such as fMRI, have provided information indicating that the prefrontal cortex (PFC), in addition to its connection to other regions of the brain, is the main brain region responsible for emotions and emotion regulation (e.g., Coan, Allen & Mcknight, 2006; Ochsner & Gross, 2005). Cortisol levels in the blood are also indicators of negative affect, such as pain or stress. Stress triggering stimuli increase cortisol levels in blood, whereas decreases in cortisol levels are a marker of the down-regulation of emotion (Kemeny, 2003). Self-report of negative affect yields consistent results with neural activation in emotion-related regions and cortisol level change (Beckes & Coan, 2015; Yaseen et al., 2016). Thus, self-report of negative affect is considered a valid method of measuring negative affect levels.

Thompson et al. (2012) described *emotional reactivity* as an increased emotional response compared to a baseline level of affect, elicited by a triggering stimulus (as cited in Abtahi, 2016). Moreover, Gruber, Harvey and Purcell (2011) explained *emotional recovery* as change in the magnitude of emotions when stimulus is elicited lasting until the stimulus is removed (as cited in Abtahi, 2016). Stuart Parrigon et al. (2015) also asserted that self-ratings of positive and negative affect can be used to assess changes in emotions due to emotional reactivity and emotional recovery (as cited in Abtahi, 2016).

According to Gross, Sheppes and Urry (2011), emotion regulation is a goal-oriented process during which emotions are regulated in terms of magnitude or



duration. The goal can be either to regulate one's own or someone else's emotions. Emotion regulation processes are divided into two categories based on the subject matter of the goal: *extrinsic* and *intrinsic*. In extrinsic emotion regulation, a person regulates somebody else's emotions and in intrinsic emotion regulation people regulate their own emotions (Gross & Thompson, 2007). Gross (2013) criticized the heavy emphasis on intrinsic emotion regulation in previous adult attachment studies (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2014) and expressed a need for studies on extrinsic emotion regulation. As the attachment theory broadens its perspective to lifelong relationship formation, romantic partners in close adult relationships can have an important role in extrinsic emotion regulation throughout life.

The attachment system, which begins most manifestly in infancy and continues throughout life, basically serves the function of emotion regulation (McCutcheon, 2017). It also serves a function of protection from danger and alleviates physiological and psychological states of stress (Bowlby, 1980). More recently, attachment theory researchers focused heavily on the link between the attachment system and emotion regulation, in which attachment theory is used to understand emotion regulation processes (Mikulincer, Shaver, & Pereg, 2003). Schore and Schore (2008) claimed that attachment security is directly related to synchronic and mutual affective interactions between the child and the primary caregiver, which gives rise to positive emotional arousal and the capability of alleviating negative arousal. A responsive, attentive, and sensitive caregiver allows the child to depend on the attachment figure in terms of emotional needs, which is a key feature of a good functioning attachment bond. Thus, secure attachment experiences help a child achieve more flexible and sufficient emotion regulation. In contrast, insecurely attached children develop less capacity for emotion regulation due to inconsistent care and unsynchronized interactions between the child and the caregiver in terms of emotional needs (Collins & Feeney, 2004). Attachment experiences with a primary caregiver becomes a prototype for later attachment-related contexts in terms of emotion regulation (Collins & Feeney, 2004).

### **1.3. Adult Attachment and Emotion Regulation**

Hazan & Shaver (1987) proposed a model for romantic love based on attachment theory framework, conceptualizing a romantic partner as an attachment figure. They integrated the attachment behavioral system seen in childhood with adult attachment in romantic relationships. In this model, the romantic partner became an attachment figure in adult intimate relationships and served as an extension of early attachment figure (Fraley & Shaver, 2000; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). For instance, romantic infatuation between partners, including behaviors such as mutual exchange of gazing, were considered similar to the emotional tie between the child and primary caregiver, involving behaviors such as baby talk (Shaver, Hazan & Bradshaw, 1988). Moreover, the organization of the attachment behavioral system, including proximity seeking, separation distress, safe haven, and a secure base were just as applicable to a romantic relationship with a partner (Hazan & Zeifman, 1994). Thus, a romantic partner acquired the status of an attachment figure and provided a secure base to explore the environment and instill a feeling of security (Feeney & Thrush, 2010). In fact, this reappearance of attachment formation between romantic partners also included the emotion regulation function of the attachment system (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

Attachment behavioral systems provide a survival advantage to humans by activating the attachment system during times of threat (Bowlby, 1982). Threat, danger, innately threatening stimuli such as darkness and loud noise in the environment, or attachment-related stress triggers, such as separation from attachment figure, activate the attachment system (Bowlby, 1973). Greatest activation of attachment system and followingly occurrence of excessive distress arise when an individual is faced with threatening stimuli directed from outside the attachment system and the person cannot access the attachment figure. Similarly, threatening situations activate the attachment system in adults (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). Yet, the threshold for activation is much higher in adults than children, due to the development of a number of problem-solving and

coping skills in adulthood (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). Furthermore, adults are capable of referring to the symbolic presence of an attachment figure to alleviate stress or at least postpone the need for support from the attachment figure, until the attachment figure becomes available and provides actual support (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). Therefore, the adult attachment is a more advanced system and adults are more capable of regulating their negative affect and increasing positive affect.

Several empirical, observational, and neuroimaging studies have supported the idea that romantic partners provide a secure base and alleviate stress for each other, which helps with recovery from negative affect and increases positive affect (e.g., Collins et al., 2014; Mikulincer et al., 2003; Xu et al., 2011). Simpson, Rholes, and Nelligan (1992) showed that close and supportive interactions between romantic partners provide higher affect regulation by instilling calmness during times of stress, compared to insensitive interactions or being alone. Moreover, holding hands with a romantic partner, as opposed to a stranger, attenuates the negative affect of stress based on the observations of prefrontal cortex activation (Coan, Schaefer, & Davidson, 2006). Accordingly, a romantic partner provides significantly more affect regulation compared to a stranger (Coan et al., 2006). Moreover, partners can benefit more from higher quality relationships in terms of stress alleviation and negative affect recovery, compared to lower quality relationships (Coan et al., 2006). In another study, Collins & Ford (2010) measured blood cortisol levels and attributed negative affect recovery to sensitive partner support. An available and responsive partner provides faster emotional recovery following stress triggering tasks compared to no support from partner (Collins & Ford, 2010). In conclusion, all these findings supported the notion that an attachment figure in a romantic relationship enhances the recovery of negative affect, promotes feelings of security, and increases psychological well-being.

Individuals develop *mental representations*, also known as internal working models, of attachment figures based on the quality of early attachment

experiences with primary caregivers. Mental representations involve references to self, attachment figure, and their relationship between self and attachment figure that accompanies the development of one's emotion regulation capacity (Ainsworth, 1989; Bowlby, 1982; Bretherton & Munholland, 1999; Kogan, 1997). These mental representations involve the memories of an individual's conscious and unconscious interpretations of interactions with attachment figures (Ainsworth, 1989; Bowlby, 1982; Bretherton & Munholland, 2008; Günaydın, Zayas, Selcuk & Hazan, 2012). Individuals refer to these mental representations in times of stress to regulate their negative emotions (Collins & Feeney, 2004). In fact, the concept of *self* also involves the value of self, which forms as a result of caregiving quality (e.g., Wang, Schale & Broz, 2010). For example, if primary caregiver is responsive and loving, then the child internalizes this and conceptualizes the self as being worthy and loved (Bretherton & Munholland, 2008). Thus, once a child attributes meaning to the self by using the cognitive and affective information preserved in these mental representations, the individual continues referring to these early shaped mental representations in later close relationships (Bowlby, 1982; Bretherton & Munholland, 2008; Collins, Ford, Guichard, & Allard, 2006).

Mental representations are composed of individuals' expectations or scripts regarding availability, responsiveness, and the sensitivity of attachment figures in times of stress such that they continue being referred to in adult romantic relationships (Mikulincer, Shaver, Sapir-Lavid, & Avihou-Kanza, 2009; Waters & Waters, 2006). Experiencing positive interactions with sensitive attachment figures repeatedly in romantic relationships reinforces the connection between stress reduction and partner support in long-term memory (Mikulincer & Shaver; 2003, 2007; Zayas, Merrill, & Hazan, 2015). Individuals basically construct if-then statements in their memories in order to cope with distress. They might think, for instance, that if they face a struggle and feel distressed, they can seek proximity to their attachment figure and this person is likely to be available, responsive, and sensitive. Also, they might think that they will feel relieved and comforted as an outcome of this contact, and afterwards,

they can go back to exploration and other activities. (Mikulincer et al., 2009; Waters & Waters, 2006). If-then scripts, also referred as *secure base scripts*, consist the information that “If there is a threat, I can make a contact with my attachment figure.” Repeated construction of secure base scripts become a crucial determinant for alleviating stress (Mikulincer et al., 2009; Waters & Waters, 2006). Similarly, expectation of receiving comfort after stressful events, in turn, improves mood, which is referred to as *recovery hypothesis* (Collins & Feeney, 2000). Moreover, partners ultimately become conditioned to feeling comfort, safety, and relief after stress triggering events as a result of their repeated positive interactions (Beckes, Simpson & Erickson, 2010). Therefore, not only the actual presence but also the basic mental representation of an attachment figure is sufficient to activate a feeling of safety and calmness at the physiological and psychological levels.

Researchers studying the link between attachment and affect regulation focused on activating attachment figure representation in the absence of an attachment figure under external stressors and investigated the effects of attachment figure representation on affect regulation (e.g., Gillath, Selcuk, & Shaver, 2008; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2015a; Sbarra & Hazan, 2008). For example, Mikulincer & Hirschberger, Nachmias & Gillath (2001) showed that viewing a positive stimulus relevant to attachment, such as photograph of the attachment figure, in stressful contexts has a significant positive effect on affect regulation. Priming attachment related stimuli has a significant effect preserving the positive affect compared to any positive picture unrelated to attachment (Mikulincer et al., 2001). Furthermore, seeing a photograph of a romantic partner, compared to a photograph of a stranger, while exposed to thermal stimulation decreased not only the subjective report of pain but also neural activity in the pain related regions (Eisenberger et al., 2011). These findings revealed that priming attachment-related stimuli, romantic partner priming in particular, under an external stressor has a faster and prolonged effect on affect regulation than any other positive stimulus. Although several researchers found that activation of the mental representation of attachment figures effects affect

regulation when the person faces external stressors, researchers started to examine the effect of attachment figure's mental representation on internally generated stressors only recently (Selcuk, Zayas, Günaydın, Hazan & Kross, 2012).

Security priming via activating mental representation of attachment figures not only has a powerful effect on affect regulation under external stressor, it also has an equally powerful effect under internal stressors (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2015b). For the first time, Selcuk et al. (2012) demonstrated the effect of mental representations of attachment figures on affect regulation after being exposed to internally generated stressors. The mental representation of attachment figures, such as mothers and romantic partners, has facilitated the recovery of negative affect after being triggered by a negative autobiographical memory (Selcuk et al., 2012). In their study, they stated that imagining a supportive interaction by viewing a photograph or seeing the initials of the attachment figure following an upsetting autobiographical memory recall significantly decreased negative affect compared to the baseline (Selcuk et al., 2012). Thus, activating a mental representation of an attachment figure, compared to an acquaintance, after being exposed to an internal stressor provided negative affect recovery.

In summary, attachment has a positive effect of on emotion regulation from childhood to adulthood and mental representations of a romantic partner can alleviate negative emotions triggered by both external and internal stressors in adulthood. Yet, most of the aforementioned research was conducted with heterosexual couples and not much is known about the stress alleviating effect of romantic partners of bisexual individuals. Hereafter, how bisexual individuals experience their romantic relationships with different partner genders and bisexual people's psychological difficulties due to discrimination and invisibility in romantic relationship will be presented.

#### **1.4. Bisexuality**

Bisexuality as a sexual orientation is “the potential to be attracted romantically and/or sexually to people of more than one gender, not necessarily at the same time, not necessarily in the same way, and not necessarily to the same degree” (Ochs, 2007, p.84). Lately, the word bisexual has become an umbrella term, including numerous bi-spectrum identities, that stands for sexual or romantic attraction towards more than one gender identity. One can identify as pansexual, omnisexual, polysexual, bicurious, homoflexible, heteroflexible, fluid, queer and other bi-spectrum identities which can represent their gender, sexual, political identities (Eisner, 2013). This umbrella term allows bisexual people with diverse identities to unite under one category and become a community that shares the effect of oppression, biphobia, and monosexism and that can resist together against the standardized understanding imposed by the heterosexual majority and gay communities (Eisner, 2013). Yet, it is important to note that identifying oneself as bisexual, or any other way for that matter, is completely personal and there is no one true identity for everyone. Everyone is free to identify themselves as they feel comfortable personally and publicly (Swan, 2018).

In 2011, *Bisexual Invisibility: Impacts and Recommendations* by San Francisco Human Rights Commission Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Advisory Committee (LGBTAC) published a report. This was the first report that defined bisexual erasure or invisibility. Bisexual erasure, as a term, refers to the invisibility of bisexual identities (Yoshino, 2000). Being invisible creates a burden on individuals and causes bisexual people to alter some of their behaviors to show that they exist. Bisexual people may be concerned about not being recognized with their already existing, legitimate, valid identity due to bisexual erasure and try to display evidence of their sexual identity overtly (Flanders, Dobinson & Logie, 2017). In order to deal with the adverse psychological effects of being invisible, bisexual individuals reported feeling pressured to alter their sexual behaviors or engage in romantic relations with people of a particular gender identity to prove the validity of their sexual

orientation (Boyer & Galupo, 2015; Flanders et al., 2017). Unfortunately, outcomes of invisibility go beyond the adoption of some behaviors and have more serious effect on bisexual people's health.

LGBTAC report also mentioned the implications of invisibility for bisexual people in terms of mental and physical health, financial welfare, and overall well-being. For example, bisexual individuals reported poorer health outcomes compared to heterosexual people and lesbian or gay people. Bisexual individuals had higher rates of depression, anxiety (MacLeod, Bauer, Robinson, MacKay & Ross, 2015), other mood disorders, suicidality (Mereish, Katz-Wise & Woulfe, 2017), eating disorders (Watson, Velez, Brownfield & Flores, 2016), and alcohol and substance use (LGBTAC, 2011). Consistent with this report, young bisexual women also have poorer mental and sexual health than lesbian and heterosexual women and the underlying reasons for this were eminently prevalent bisexual erasure and stigmatization (Flanders, Dobinson & Logie, 2017). Bisexual people also suffer from higher levels of hypertension, greater pain and poorer overall physical health than heterosexuals and lesbian/gay counterparts (LGBTAC, 2011). Moreover, bisexual people hesitate to disclose their sexual orientation to their physicians, and as a result they cannot be provided with sufficient information on safe sex practices (LGBTAC, 2011). Bisexual women in a relationship with monosexual partners (heterosexual, gay, or lesbian) are at a greater risk of domestic violence than women in other demographic groups (LGBTAC, 2011). Also, intimate partner violence and sexual assault are highly prevalent in romantic relationships of bisexual individuals compared to lesbian, gay or heterosexual people (Walters, Chen & Breiding, 2013).

In addition to being invisible, bisexual individuals also face negative attitudes and discrimination. With the increasing visibility of lesbian and gay people towards the end of the 1970s, psychologist George Weinberg (1972) defined negative attitudes toward homosexual people as homophobia (as cited in Eliason, 2000). However, today's researchers argue that the word homophobia is



not scientifically correct (Eliason, 2000), because *phobia* means an unmanageable and illogical fear regarding a certain stimulus that causes physiological arousal. Yet, the term homophobia actually refers to a conscious, intentional type of anger that is full of hostility and aggression instead of fear. The same principle applies to the term biphobia (Eliason, 2000). Despite the highly frequent use of words homophobia and biphobia, scholars studying bisexuality recommend the use of binegativity when referring to bisexual people's experiences of discrimination and stigmatization (Eliason, 2000). Binegativity is a type of minority stressor and involves negative attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors filled with aggression, hostility, and intolerance towards bisexual people from non-bisexual people (Brewster & Moradi, 2010; Mohr & Rochlen, 1999; Watson et al., 2016). Particularly, invalidation and discrimination coming from heterosexual and lesbian/gay people towards bisexual individuals referred as *double stigmatization* and *double discrimination* (Dodge et al., 2016).

In the last decade, newly emerging literature on romantic relationship involvement of bisexual people point out the increase in experiences of bisexual erasure, invisibility, and binegativity when a bisexual person enters into a romantic relationship and researchers suggest that these experiences may alter based on one's partner gender. Therefore, relevant findings about romantic relationships of bisexual individuals will be introduced and variety of relationship experiences will be highlighted based on partner gender in the next section.

### **1.5. Romantic Relationships of Bisexual Individuals**

Recent findings on bisexual people's mental health and relationship involvement indicated that relationship involvement may have a negative effect on bisexual individuals' well-being. For instance, relationship involvement and increased anxiety symptoms were positively correlated for bisexual individuals (Feinstein, Latack, Bhatia, Davila and Eaton, 2016). Moreover, Whitton, Dyar,

Newcomb & Mustanski (2018) claimed that relationship involvement and level of psychological distress were also positively associated among bisexual people. Therefore, relationship involvement may act as minority stress buffer for lesbian or gay people but not for bisexual individuals (Feinstein et al., 2016). It was suggested that increased stress due to relationship involvement may be related to increased invisibility of bisexual individuals in the monogamous relationship with a monosexual partner (Feinstein & Dyar, 2018). When considering high levels of discrimination and stigmatization in and out of relationships towards bisexual individuals, a better understanding of bisexual individuals' experiences in relationships and regarding attachment gains importance.

Binegativity plays a significant role in bisexual individuals' relationships, not only at the beginning of a relationship but also during the relationship (Davids & Lundquist, 2018). Binegativity as a minority stressor is experienced in bisexuals' relationships in two different ways: External stressors that the bisexual person and their partner experience individually or as a couple, such as discrimination or binegativity coming from outsiders; and internal stressors between the partners, such as binegativity of one partner towards the bisexual partner (Perry, 2018). External stressors that bisexual individuals face is related to the way their sexual orientation is perceived by others. People mostly use partner gender as a cue to determine one's sexual orientation, especially when pertaining to bisexual individuals (Dyar, Feinstein & London, 2014).

The majority of people label bisexual people as lesbian, gay, or heterosexual based on the gender of their partner (Brekhus, 1996; Dyar et al., 2014; Hequembourg & Brallier, 2009; Ross, Dobinson, & Eady, 2010). For example, bisexual women in a relationship with lesbian women are usually and incorrectly assumed to be lesbian, but when they were with heterosexual men, they are incorrectly perceived as heterosexual (Arriaga & Parent, 2019). Bisexual people who are in a relationship with other-gender partners are considered heterosexual and may have more space to be themselves among heterosexual people but experience a lower sense of inclusion in LGBTIQ+ communities, because of the

negative attitudes regarding their relationship involvement with other-gender partners (Dyar et al., 2014). Moreover, the experience of exclusion and rejection from the LGBTIQ+ community towards bisexual people in relationships with other-gender partners led to high rates of depression due to the lack of social support from their allies (Dyar et al., 2014). On the other hand, when bisexual individuals are in a relationship with same-gender partners who are lesbian or gay, they were included in LGBTIQ+ communities, but were excluded by heterosexual people (Dyar et al., 2014; Hequembourg & Brallier, 2009; Ross et al., 2010). Furthermore, being perceived as lesbian had a negative effect on bisexual women's identity certainty (Dyar et al., 2014). In conclusion, being in a relationship with both a same-gender partner and other-gender partner seem to have a somewhat negative effect on bisexual individuals' psychological well-being.

The experience of binegativity between couples, previously referred to as an internal stressor, is also very common in bisexual people's romantic relationships (Armstrong & Reissing, 2014) and can have direct or indirect effects on the partners' psychological well-being. Internal stressors can be related to stereotypes and myths about bisexual partners. Accordingly, bisexual people are viewed as promiscuous, unfaithful partners who are willing to have relationships with individuals from their own gender and the other gender simultaneously. They are also viewed as being hypersexed and unable to commit in a monogamous relationship (Armstrong & Reissing, 2014; Eliason, 1997; 2000; Fahs, 2009; Herek, 2002; Israel & Mohr, 2004; Gustavson, 2009; Lanutti & Denes, 2012; McLean, 2004; 2008; Ochs, 1996; Rust, 2002; Spalding & Peplau, 1997; Yost & Thomas, 2012). Moreover, they are blamed for spreading sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), notably from same-gender partners to heterosexual partners (Eliason, 1997; 2000; Herek, 2002; Kleese, 2005; Spalding & Peplau, 1997). Bisexual people who are in romantic relationships with other-gender partner have increased levels of internalized binegativity, which is binegativity towards the bisexual person by themselves, as well as higher incidents of alcohol abuse and depression symptoms (Molina et al., 2014).

Hence, the findings indicate that stigmatization not only affect the perception of people towards bisexual people negatively, but also bisexual people's own perception of themselves when entering or maintaining a relationship. Binegativity, in turn, also leads non-bisexuals to be less willing to date or to be in a relationship with bisexual individuals (Gustavson, 2009; Israel & Mohr, 2004; Kleese, 2005; McLean, 2004; Mohr & Rochlen, 1999; Spalding & Peplau, 1997).

More specifically, in the study of Armstrong and Reissing (2014), they explored attitudes of men and women towards being in a relationship with bisexual partner and found some differences between men and women about considering a relationship with bisexual partner. Results of their study indicated that men have lower level of negative attitudes about being in a relationship with bisexual woman, however, they suggested that these low levels of negative attitudes could be linked with eroticism about bisexual partner (Armstrong & Reissing, 2014). Whereas women reported higher levels of negative attitudes about being in a relationship with bisexual man (Armstrong & Reissing, 2014). Moreover, as the commitment of relationship is being considered, bisexual identity of partner gained even greater importance and women showed negative behaviors towards their bisexual men partner such as being jealous about men friends of their partner, worrying about their partner's sexual orientation ("becoming gay"), or pressuring their partner (Armstrong & Reissing, 2014). They attributed these negative attitudes of men and women towards bisexual partner, particularly in committed relationship context, to the existence of common myths about bisexual people such as hypersexuality, promiscuity, and untrustworthiness (Armstrong & Reissing, 2014). As a result, common myths about bisexual people negatively affect others' attitudes against being in a relationship with a bisexual partner. Furthermore, internal stressors are not the only factor that may lead to unique challenges, but external stressors that come from outsiders (other than partner) to bisexual individuals when bisexual people enter into a relationship.

Bisexual women with same-gender partners experienced binegative exclusion and rejection from LG people less frequently than bisexual women with different-gender partners (Dyar et al., 2014). They also found that bisexual women with same-gender partners had higher levels of identity uncertainty and more frequently assumed as lesbian compared to bisexual women with different-gender partners (Dyar et al., 2014). Furthermore, bisexual women in a relationship with same-gender partner had significantly lower depression compared to bisexual women in a relationship with different-gender partner or single (Dyar et al., 2014). In more detail, higher frequency of lesbian assumption mediated the identity uncertainty in bisexual women with same-gender partners, whereas higher binegativity from LG people mediated higher depression in bisexual women with different-gender partners (Dyar et al., 2014).

On the contrary, Arriaga and Parent (2019) found a significant interaction between binegativity coming from LG people and partner gender in bisexual women but not in bisexual men. Besides, internalized binegativity mediated this interaction at highest among bisexual women with women partners. Indeed, bisexual women who reported experiencing binegativity from LG people had highest level of internalized binegativity, when they are in a romantic relationship with same-gender partners, whereas these findings did not apply to bisexual women with men partners (Arriaga & Parent, 2019). They attributed the inconsistency in their findings with previous study of Dyar and their colleagues (2014) to the expectation of stigma (Arriaga & Parent, 2019). They suggested that bisexual women with women partners may not expect to face with binegativity from LG community, whereas bisexual women with men partners already expect to face with binegativity from LG community (Arriaga & Parent, 2019). As a result of this expectation, Arriaga and Parent (2019) suggested that bisexual women with women partners feel unexpectedly invalidated when they experience binegativity coming from LG community and may tend to attribute it to their identity and internalize the binegativity.

Moving from minority stress factors to attachment in bisexual individuals' romantic relationship with same-gender and different-gender partners, there are very few studies in the literature. For example, Peterson (2014) examined one group of bisexual women who have or had sexual and relational experiences with men and women and investigated the effect of attachment style on the intimacy ratings with same-gender and different-gender partners. Results revealed that only secure attachment style had a significant effect on the intimacy ratings between same-gender and other-gender partners. Bisexual women with greater attachment security rated significantly higher on multi-aspects of intimacy with women partners compared to bisexual women with other attachment styles (dismissing, fearful, preoccupied). Although it was expected to find this effect on bisexual women's relationship with men partner too based on the theory of Hazan and Shaver (1987), in which they claimed as the attachment security increases, feelings of intimacy increases, Petersen (2014) did not find the same effect of secure attachment on ratings of intimacy with men partner. Further analysis to uncover these findings showed that as bisexual woman's view of others (dimension of attachment) become more positive, they rated intimacy with women partners more favorably, whereas there was no significant effect of view of others on intimacy with men partners. They also did not find any effect of view of self on intimacy with women or men partners. They claimed that being in a relationship with women is stepping outside of heteronormativity for bisexual women, which may create stress, and viewing other more positively in this case may help to overcome this possible tension. Petersen (2014) concluded that same-gender relationship involvement can activate attachment system because facing with a threat of binegativity may become more salient in this relationship context. Lastly, Petersen (2014) called for a between group study design for the further research in order to reveal other potential factors that may underline the differences in relationships of bisexual women with different partner genders. These potential factors can be related with minority stressors, especially binegativity in the context of bisexual people's relationships.

In conclusion, bisexual people's romantic relationship involvement with same-gender or other-gender partners do not seem to bring psychological benefits of being in a romantic relationship, due to increased level of bi-specific stressors in every relationship context. Despite the limited number of studies, as mentioned previously, few researchers suggested that there might be differences between same-gender and other-gender partners of bisexual people in regard to relationship quality (Arriaga & Parent, 2019; Armstong & Reissing, 2014; Dyar et al., 2014; Molina et al., 2014; Petersen, 2014). These studies highlighted the importance of studying the positive and negative psychological outcomes that may arise in romantic relationship involvement with different partner gender identities. As a result, relationship involvement can be either a source of stress or a source of support for bisexual individuals. At this point, one of the main determinants of this variance is partner gender (same-gender vs. other-gender partner) (Feinstein & Dyar, 2018). Thus, studying the experiences of bisexual individuals in relationships with same-gender and other-gender partners is critical.

Although there is a growing body of research focusing on bisexual individuals in countries where either same-gender marriage is legal or the LGBTIQ+ community is highly visible, there is no known study focusing particularly on the bisexual population in Turkey. In Turkey, same-gender marriage is not legal yet and LGBTIQ+ individuals are still under threat of violence, hostility, and discrimination (Yılmaz & Göçmen, 2015). Therefore, it was hypothesized that relationships may be a greater source of stress for bisexual women who are in a relationships with women or nonbinary partners compared to men partners in Turkey.

### **1.6. The Current Study**

Previous findings indicated that attachment to a primary caregiver in childhood and romantic partner in adulthood provides emotional regulation and contributes to psychological and physiological well-being. In fact, imagining a supportive

interaction with a partner provides emotion regulation by reducing the negative affect among heterosexual couples. The purpose of the present study was to test this effect among bisexual women who are in a romantic relationship. Additionally, it was found in previous studies that partner gender has an effect on both the internal and the external relationship dynamics of bisexual individuals. Therefore, the present study also aimed to test the effect of partner gender on the affect regulation of bisexual women. It was expected that bisexual women with men partners would show better affect regulation following an upsetting autobiographical memory recall compared to bisexual women with women+ partners.

In the present study, relationships are not categorized as *same-gender* and *other/different-gender* relationships because such use of the words *same* and *different* are based on the assumption of gender as binary. To achieve methodological and theoretical harmony, we named partners of bisexual women under two categories as men and women+. Bisexuality is an identity that allows fluidity (Ochs, 1996), which means relationship types are not limited to only same-gender or different-gender partners. Moreover, bisexual individuals who are in a relationship with transgender partners, including nonbinary individuals, transmen, and transwomen or intersex partners, also experience discrimination and also suffer from heteronormativity. As a result, we categorized the relationships of bisexual women with men versus women+, with the plus sign referring to nonbinary identities under the trans umbrella.

Moreover, not only partner gender identity but also one's bisexual identity can have an influence on bisexual person's romantic relationship and psychological well-being. Therefore, sexual identity development is a fundamental factor to consider when studying an LGBTIQ+ sample. Especially identity uncertainty is a critical dimension of identity for bisexual individuals. Nonmonosexual individuals (bisexual, pansexual, other identities under bisexual umbrella) may experience identity uncertainty during the process of realizing their attraction to more than one gender identity (Weinberg, Williams & Pryor, 1994). Lesbian and



gay people also go through a similar phase of sexual identity development when they first realize their attraction towards same-gender people and once they identify as lesbian/gay (e.g., Cass, 1979; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996; Troiden, 1989). However, nonmonosexual people's experience of sexual identity uncertainty may last longer than lesbian and gay individuals due to external factors (Weinberg et al., 1994). These external factors are mainly centered around the expectation of the society for everybody to be defined with binary identities (Weinberg et al., 1994).

On the other hand, positive sexual identity development may affect participants' experiences of binegativity, making the person emotionally more resilient towards stigmatization and discrimination (Kemer, Demirtaş, Pope & Ummak, 2017; Mohr & Kendra, 2011). Therefore, LGB identity development of the participants was controlled to eliminate its possible confounding effects. Moreover, openness to self-disclosure of one's bisexual identity in a romantic relationship was correlated with having a positive expectation about disclosure to others (Petersen, 2014). Thus, a question asking the participants about their openness to disclosing their bisexual identity in a relationship was added and the responses were included in the analyses as another control variable.

The primary aim of this thesis was to investigate whether activating mental representation of romantic partner could provide affect recovery following an internal stressor in a sample of bisexual women. For this reason, their romantic partner's contribution to affect recovery was compared with their acquaintance. The second aim was to examine whether the affect recovery provided by their romantic partner would differ based on partner gender identity. For this purpose, contribution of men and women+ partners to affect recovery was compared. Lastly, the LGB identity was controlled in order to eliminate its potential effect on attachment of bisexual women.

## 1.7. Hypotheses

*Hypothesis 1:* There would be a significant effect of priming figure on negative affect recovery. Bisexual women would show significantly greater negative affect recovery in partner condition compared to acquaintance condition.

*Hypothesis 2:* There would be a significant effect of partner gender identity on negative affect recovery. Bisexual women in a relationship with men will show significantly greater negative affect recovery compared to bisexual women in a relationship with women+ partners.

*Hypothesis 3:* There would be a significant interaction between priming figure and partner gender identity. Activating mental representation of partner following an upsetting autobiographical memory recall would lead to greater negative affect recovery for bisexual women in a relationship with man partners compared to bisexual women in a relationship with women+ partners whereas activating mental representation of acquaintance following an upsetting autobiographical memory recall will not differ for groups of bisexual women.

*Hypothesis 4:* Exposure to upsetting autobiographical memories would significantly increase negative affect relative to baseline.

*Hypothesis 5:* There would not be a significant difference between different upsetting autobiographical memory cues belonging to two different traumatic memories.

*Hypothesis 6:* Exposure to upsetting autobiographical memory cues for the second time would still significantly increase negative affect.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **METHOD**

#### **2.1. Participants**

Purposive sampling was used in this study. Sample inclusion criteria for participants were being over 18 years of age, native language being Turkish, self-identification as a bisexual woman, and currently being in a romantic relationship. Participants who fulfilled the sample inclusion criteria and attended the two sessions (online survey and laboratory experiment) of the study were included in the final sample.

A total of 633 people participated in the online survey, but 438 of the 633 participants had incomplete questionnaires. The data from these 438 participants were excluded. The remaining participants, 196 people, completed the entire online survey. Seven people had participated in the online survey from abroad and 12 from cities in Turkey other than Istanbul, Ankara, or Izmir. Due to the long distance difficulties, these 19 people did not receive a second session invitation and their data were also excluded. A total of 177 participants completed the online survey and met the participation criteria, but only 96 agreed to participate in the second session (laboratory experiment) of the study. Therefore, the final sample included 96 bisexual women (92 women, 3 non-binary and 1 gender fluid) with bi+ identities (83 bisexual, 4 pansexual, 3 attracted to women and men, 2 bisexual/pansexual, 2 bi+, 1 homoflexible, 1 fluid) successfully completed their participation in the first and second sessions of the study and were included in the final analysis.

The final sample consisted of 96 bisexual women from the three largest cities in Turkey: 63 from Ankara (65.6%), 30 from Istanbul (31.3%) and 3 from Izmir

(3.1%). The ages of the final sample ranged from 18 to 38 ( $M = 23.84$ ,  $SD = 4.3$ ). In terms of education, 67 (69.8%) had undergraduate degrees, 20 (20.8%) had Master's degrees, 1 (1%) had a PhD degree, and 8 (8.3%) had high school certificates. In terms of employment, 61 (63.5%) were students, 32 (33.4%) were employed, 2 (2.1%) were unemployed and 1 (1%) did not specify. For marital status, 3 (3.1%) were married, 91 (95.8%) were single, and 1 (1%) was divorced. In terms of the mostly lived regional area type, 76 (73%) had indicated having lived in urban areas most of their lives, 13 (13.5%) in towns, and 10 (10.4%) in villages. Only 1 participant (1%) had a child, whereas 95 participants (99%) did not have a child. All of the demographic information of the participants is shown in Table 1.

When chronic disease was surveyed (yes/no), 17 out of 96 (17.7%) reported having a chronic disease, whereas 79 (82.3%) reported not having had any chronic disease. In terms of psychological disorders, 36 participants (37.5%) reported currently having a psychological disorder(s), and 60 (62.5%) reported not having any psychological disorder. When their responses were categorized, 10 (10.4%) reported having had anxiety disorders, 7 (7.3%) depressive disorders, 2 (2.1%) OCD, 1 (1%) schizophrenia spectrum disorders, 2 (2.1%) bipolar and related disorders, 4 (4.2%) ADHD, 3 (3.1%) mixed/various psychological disorders, 3 (3.1%) anxiety and depression, 1 (1%) anxiety and anorexia, 2 (2.1%) OCD and ADHD, and 1 (1%) anger management problems. Finally, 40 participants (41.7%) selected yes for the use of medication while 56 (58.3%) selected no.

**Table 1.** Sample Demographic Information (N=96)

Variable	%	(N)	Variable	%	(N)
<b>Gender identity</b>			<b>Regional area type</b>		
Woman	95.8	(92)	Urban	76	(73)
Non-binary	3.1	(3)	Town	13.5	(13)
Gender Fluid	1	(1)	Village	10.4	(10)
<b>Sexual orientation</b>			<b>Education</b>		
Bisexual	86.5	(83)	Primary School	0	(0)
Pansexual	4.2	(4)	High School	8.3	(8)
Bisexual/Pansexual	2.1	(2)	Undergraduate degree	69.8	(67)
Homoflexible	1	(1)	Master's degree	69.9	(20)
Fluid	1	(1)	PhD Degree	69.10	(1)
Bi+	2.1	(2)	<b>Employment</b>		
Attracted to women & men	3.1	(3)	Student	63.5	(61)
<b>Partner gender identity</b>			Unemployed	2.1	(2)
Woman			Employed	33.4	(32)
Man	36.5	(35)	Not specified	1	(1)
Agender	54.2	(52)	<b>Monthly income</b>		
Trans man	1	(1)	< 1000 ₺	27.1	(26)
Gender non-conforming	1	(1)	1000-2000 ₺	44.8	(43)
Non-binary	1	(1)	2000-3500 ₺	13.5	(13)
<b>Partner sexual orientation</b>	6.3	(6)	3500-5000 ₺	4.2	(4)
Bisexual			> 5000 ₺	10.4	(10)
Heterosexual	25	(24)	<b>Marital status</b>		
Lesbian	53.1	(51)	Married	3.1	(3)
Pansexual	16.7	(16)	Single	95.8	(92)
Queer	1	(1)	Divorced	1	(1)
Bi+	1	(1)	<b>Chronical disease</b>		
Homoflexible	2.1	(2)	Yes	17.7	(17)
<b>City of residence</b>	1	(1)	No	82.3	(79)
Ankara			<b>Psychological disorder</b>		
İstanbul	65.6	(63)	Yes	37.5	(36)
İzmir	31.3	(30)	No	62.5	(60)
	3.1	(3)	<b>Use of medication</b>		
			Yes	41.7	(40)
			No	58.3	(56)

96 bisexual women were divided into two major categories based on their partner gender identity. Forty-four participants were in a relationship with women+ (35 women, 6 non-binary, 1 agender, 1 trans man and 1 gender-nonconforming) and 52 participants were in a relationship with men. In the women+ partner category, 23 partners (52.2%) were bisexual, 16 (36.3%) were lesbian, 2 (4.5%) bi+, 1 (2.27%) pansexual, 1 (2.27%) heterosexual, and 1

partner (2.27%) was homoflexible. Among those whose partners were men, 50 partners (96.1%) were heterosexual, 1 (1.92%) was queer, and 1 partner (1.92%) was bisexual. Only 1 participant did not come out to their partner who was in a relationship with man, whereas 95 participants reported coming-out to their partner. Besides, the average relationship duration in months was 20.85 for bisexual women with men partners, whereas it was 12.42 for bisexual women with women+ partners. Detailed information about partner sexual orientation and coming-out to partner is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Partner Sexual Orientation and Coming-Out by Groups (N=96)

Variable	in a relationship with women+ (N = 44)		in a relationship with men (N =52)	
	%	N	%	N
<b>Partner sexual orientation</b>				
Heterosexual	2.27	(1)	96.1	(50)
Bisexual	52.2	(23)	1.92	(1)
Lesbian	36.3	(16)	0	-
Bi+	4.5	(2)	0	-
Pansexual	2.27	(1)	0	-
Queer	0	-	1.92	(1)
Homoflexible	2.27	(1)	0	-
<b>Coming-out to partner</b>				
Yes	100	(44)	98.1	(51)
No	0	(0)	1.9	(1)

## 2.2. Instruments

### 2.2.1. Demographics

The demographics form consisted of questions regarding age, gender identity, sexual orientation, relationship status (in a relationship/not in a relationship), partner gender identity, partner sexual orientation, relationship duration (in months), coming-out to partner in a relationship (yes/no), city of residence, regional area type (mostly lived), education level, employment status, monthly

income, marital status, children (yes/no), chronic diseases, name of disease (if yes), any current psychological disorder(s), name of the psychological disorder(s) (if yes). In the demographics form, one extra question was inserted asking for partner name initials. The answer to this question was used in the experimental session of the study.

### **2.2.2. Generating Upsetting Autobiographical Memories**

During the online survey, the participants were asked to recall and describe the two most traumatic events (upsetting autobiographical memories) that had occurred in their lives not involving their current romantic partner. To gather detailed information about each traumatic event, four questions were asked: “What happened?”, “Why is it a negative/traumatic event?”, “Where did it happen?”, “When did it happen and who else was there?” The participants were then asked to specify one memory cue (1-3 words) for each event. These cues were used to recall the upsetting autobiographical memory and ultimately elicit internal stress in the experimental session. This procedure was an exact replication of the procedure used in Selçuk et al.’s study (2012), which was originally designed by Kross et al. (2009).

The participants were also given a short questionnaire that was developed by Selcuk et al. (2012) to measure the significance of each event in their lives. The short questionnaire consisted of eight questions wherein the participants rated the significance of the respective event in their lives based on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = not at all, 4 = moderately, 7 = very much). The average Cronbach’s alpha of the short questionnaire was 0.86 (Selçuk et al., 2012). In the current study, the Cronbach’s alpha of the scale was 0.75. The average rate of significance of the first traumatic event was 4.98, and it was significantly above the mid-point  $t(94) = 17.217, p < .001$ . The average rate of significance of the second traumatic event was 4.97, and it is significantly above the mid-point  $t(94) = 15.141, p < .001$ .

### **2.2.3. Assigning an Acquaintance**

The participants were asked to assign an acquaintance, defined as someone who has little impact on the participants' lives. This person may be someone they interact with on a regular basis at a superficial level or someone whom they have only met a few times (McGowan, 2002; Selçuk et al., 2012). The participants were asked to type the initials of this person. These initials were presented on the screen whenever they were asked to imagine the acquaintance in the experimental session while performing the Attachment Affect Regulation Task (AART).

### **2.2.4. The Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identity Scale – Turkish (LGBIS-TR)**

The participants also responded to the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identity Scale-Turkish (LGBIS-TR). This inventory was adapted from the LGBIS (Mohr & Kendra, 2011) into Turkish by Kemer, Toplu-Demirtaş, Pope and Ummak (2017). It assesses LGB identity and has eight subscales: Identity Centrality ("My sexual orientation is an insignificant part of who I am."), Identity Uncertainty ("I get very confused when I try to figure out my sexual orientation."), Identity Affirmation ("I'm proud to be part of the LGB community."), Identity Superiority ("Straight people have boring lives compared with LGB people), Concealment Motivation ("I keep careful control over who knows about my same-sex relationships."), Difficult Process ("Admitting to myself that I'm an LGB person has been a very painful process."), Acceptance Concerns ("I often wonder whether others judge me for my sexual orientation."), and Internalized Negativity ("I wish I were heterosexual."). The LGBIS-TR is a 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 6 =strongly agree). After reverse scoring items, the scores for each subscale are calculated by averaging the items belonging to the relevant subscale. In the original version of LGBIS, Cronbach's alpha estimates was at a minimum of 0.72 and a maximum of 0.94 among the subscales. The correlation coefficients of test-retest reliability with 6



weeks interval ranged between 0.70 to 0.92 for the eight subscales (Mohr & Kendra, 2011).

For confirmatory factor analysis, Kemer et al. (2017) measured standardized regression weights and squared multiple correlations for 8 subscales of LGBIS-TR. Standardized regression weights for Acceptance Concerns ranged between .73 and .77, Concealment Motivation ranged between .28 and .74, Identity Uncertainty ranged between .77 and .82, Internalized Homonegativity ranged between .49 and .96, Difficult Process ranged between -.55 and .83, Identity Superiority ranged between .48 and .78, Identity Affirmation ranged between .62 and .85 and Identity Centrality ranged between -.25 and -.95. Besides,  $R^2$ s yielded high variances for items relevant to their construct except for the item 11 and item 19. As a result, all subscales were significantly loaded with their subscales ( $p < .001$ ) and no change occurred after modifications, then they decided to keep item 11 and item 19 in LGBIS-TR (Kemer et al., 2017). In terms of reliability, they assessed the internal consistency for 8 subscales. Cronbach's alphas were above .70 for 6 subscales and only Concealment Motivation and Identity Superiority subscales were below this minimum cutoff with Cronbach alpha values of .58 and .66, respectively.

Prior to examining validity of LGBIS-TR, Kemer et al. (2017) assessed significant differences in their sample of bisexual, lesbian and gay people. Only Identity Uncertainty subscale yielded significantly higher scores in bisexual participants ( $M = 2.62$ ,  $SD = 1.30$ ) compared to lesbian ( $M = 1.77$ ,  $SD = 1.21$ ) and gay ( $M = 1.58$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ) participants with a small effect size (Cohen's  $d = 0.14$ ). Due to the small effect size, they ignored the group difference and furthered the criterion related validity examination with whole sample-including bisexual participants (Kemer et al., 2017).

In terms of investigating validity of LGBIS-TR, Kemer et al. (2017) analyzed whether the eight subscales of LGBIS-TR have significant correlations with the

Turkish versions of satisfaction with life scale (SWLS, Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985; Köker, 1991), the positive and negative affect schedule (PANAS, Gençöz, 2000; Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988) and the self-compassion scale (SCS, Akın, Akın, Abacı, 2007; Neff, 2003). There were significant correlations between LGBIS-TR and SWLS, PA, NA, and SCS's subscales. Akın et al. (2007) found statistically correlations between 8 subscales of LGBIS-TR and the Turkish version of the satisfaction with life scale (SWLS) (Köker, 1991). Moreover, five subscales of the LGBIS-TR were significantly correlated with the Turkish version of Positive Affect and six were significantly correlated with the Turkish version of Negative Affect (Gençöz, 2000). Besides, they found 29 correlations with statistically significant results out of 48 correlations between the subscales of LGBIS-TR and the subscales of self-compassion scales (SCS). These findings indicated an evidence for convergent validity of LGBIS-TR (Kemer et al., 2017).

#### **2.2.5. Memory Recall Training**

Based on the procedure used in previous studies (e.g., Kross et al., 2009; Selçuk et al., 2012), the attachment affect regulation task (AART) experiment began with the recall of upsetting memories. Previously, participants' traumatic events and pre-determined memory cues were shown on the screen as reminders. The purpose for this was to ensure a connection between the traumatic event and its memory cue supplied by the participants in the online survey. After spending as much time with the memory cues as the participant needed, the AART was started. Two cues appeared on the screen successively with a random order and the participants were asked to recall the memory. They were instructed that if they recalled the memory related to that specific cue, they could press the space bar and continue with the next cue training.

### **2.2.6. Prime Manipulation (Initials Training)**

Following memory recall training, the participants performed initials training prior to the AART. The initials of partner and acquaintance names that were elicited in the online survey were used as prompts for priming these figures in the experimental session. The initials of partners and acquaintances were shown successively on the screen. Whenever participants viewed the initials of their partner's name, they were asked to imagine their partner giving support and comfort to them as vividly as possible. The same instruction was given for the acquaintance initials. The purpose of priming the partners and acquaintances for the same participant as a within-participant factor variable (partner vs. acquaintance) was to compare their effects on emotional recovery after reminding the participants of an upsetting autobiographical memory and to determine the score of attachment-induced affective recovery.

### **2.2.7. Attachment Affect Regulation Task (AART)**

This task was performed to test whether the attachment figure provides emotional recovery after being triggered by an internal stressor (recovery hypothesis) (Selçuk et al., 2012). The partner was the attachment figure and the traumatic event was the trigger of an internal stressor.

To measure the changes in stress levels, affect was quantified with two questions: "How well do you feel right now?" and "How bad do you feel right now?". A 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = not at all, 4 = moderately, 7 = immensely) was used for the responses. These questions represented positive and negative affect scores. In order to conduct further calculations based on negative affect change (negative affect recovery), positive affect scores were reversed and added to negative affect scores to obtain total negative affect scores for each block.

### 2.3. Procedure

Two sessions were conducted for this study. The first session was an online survey and the second was the experimental session involving memory recall training, initial training, and AART in the lab. The online survey in the first step was prepared using Qualtrics Survey Software. The second session was a computer-based experiment held in the lab 1 to 15 days after the first session. The experiment was written on MATLAB (R2018b) and Psychtoolbox was used as a supplementary product.

The online survey consisted of an informed consent form (Appendix B), a demographics form (Appendix C), group of questions for generating upsetting autobiographical memories and a short questionnaire to assess the significance of upsetting autobiographical memories (Appendix D), and the LGB Identity Scale-Turkish (The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Identity Scale-Turkish, LGBIS-TR; Kemer, Demirtaş, Pope & Ummak, 2017) (Appendix E). Additionally, the initials of the names of partners and acquaintances were asked to use them as prompts for priming these figures in the experimental session.

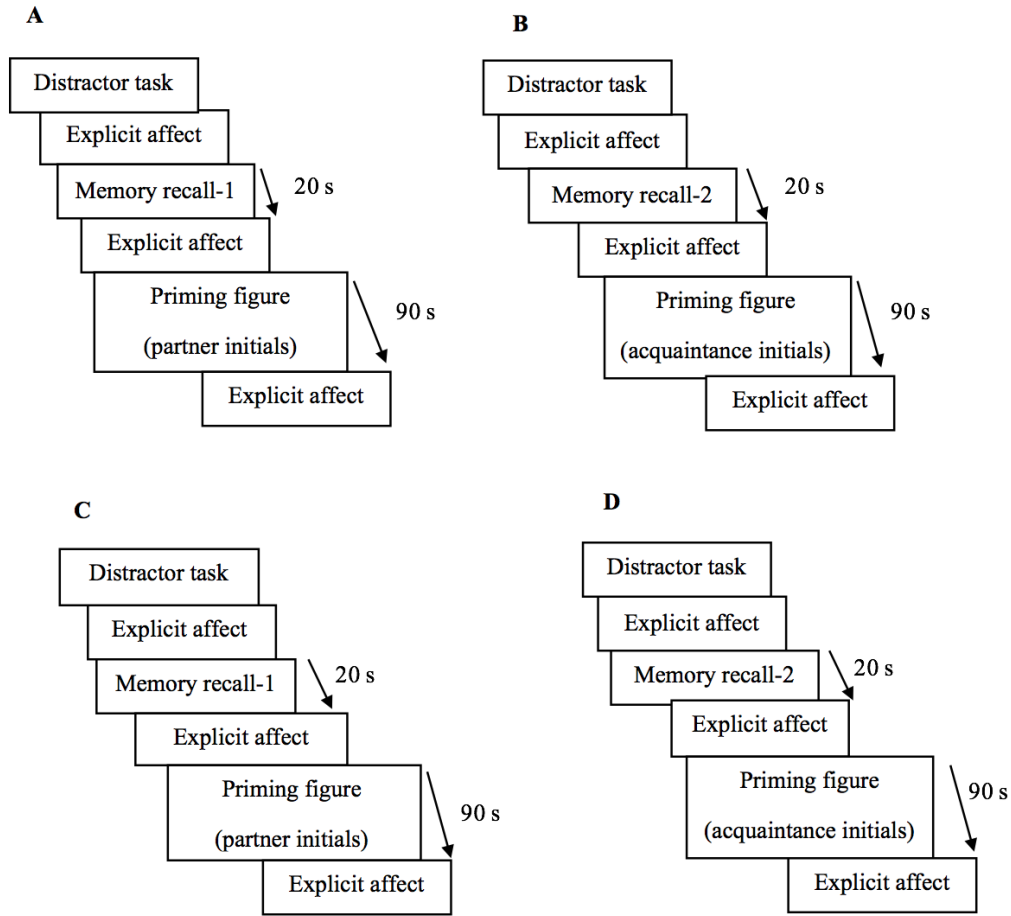
The experiment commenced with memory recall training followed by initials training. During the memory recall training each traumatic event was paired with its memory cue displayed on the screen. In subsequent screens, the participant practiced focusing on the traumatic event whenever they saw the related traumatic memory cue on the screen. The training part continued with the initials training. The initials of partner's name and initials of acquaintance's name were consecutively displayed. On each screen, the participant was asked to practice imagining the partner when they saw the initials of the partner name; the same process was applied for acquaintance. After completing the training session, the participants performed the AART, which consisted of four blocks (see Figure 1). The AART started with the distractor in order to cleanse the mind before starting the trial. The distractor involved simple two-digit adding calculations (e.g.,  $15 + 36 = ?$ ). The participants' explicit affect was assessed with the two

previously mentioned questions (positive/negative affect) at the outset (baseline score), followed by a memory cue being displayed on the screen for 20 seconds (e.g., Kross et al., 2011; Selçuk et al., 2012). Explicit affect questions were asked again (positive/negative affect) comprising a post-memory affect score. Afterwards, partner or acquaintance initials appeared on the screen with their order being counterbalanced for the participants in each experimental group. During the AART experiment, initials were shown for 90 seconds. It should be noted that same memory cues were followed by same priming figure in the second block of the experiment. Thus, first two blocks were repeated in the last two blocks. Please see Figure 1 for all trials of AART.

At the end of the experiment, the participants were fully debriefed about the study, both verbally (by the researcher) and in written format (Appendix F). Finally, the researcher informed the participants that they can be sent a list of psychotherapists if they feel the need to consult with one.

The underlying reason to show the memory cue for 20 seconds was explained by previous experimental and fMRI studies. According to an fMRI study conducted by Kross et al. (2011), 15 seconds is sufficient for the neural regions related to suffering and pain (social and physical) to be activated by a cue. Similarly, Selçuk et al. (2012) showed the memory cue for 20 seconds in their experiment and found it to be effective. Therefore, a memory cue was displayed as a stimulus to recall the traumatic event for 20 seconds in the current study as well. Participants were instructed to focus on the traumatic event as much as possible with the instruction noting “Let your deepest thoughts and emotions awaken in your mind as it happened during the event.”

The label of “bisexual women” was used in the poster and invitation note to call for anyone who self-identified as bisexual and as a woman. The aim was to create two groups of bisexual women. One group consisted of bisexual women in relationship with men and the other group with women+ (women and nonbinary/trans gender identities).



**Figure 1.** Visual representation of the attachment affect regulation task (AART) trials.

First two trials: first for partner (A) after recall of traumatic event-1 and second for acquaintance (B) after recall of traumatic event-2 to compare the effect of priming figure on affect regulation. Third and fourth trials: third for partner (C) after recall of traumatic event-1 again, one for acquaintance (D) to compare the effect of priming figure on affect regulation after recall of traumatic event-2.

## 2.4. Data Collection

Ethical approval from the Middle East Technical University (METU) Ethical Committee was received in August 2018 (Appendix A). A lab team, including the primary researcher and seven undergraduate psychology students, was formed. Our lab team commenced the data collection phase in October of 2018 and continued until the end of February 2020. The three largest cities in Turkey,

Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir, were targeted for participants. Every LGBTIQ+ community and non-governmental organization (NGO) in these cities were sought out and contacted. Each showed their support in one way or another. Their suggestions included the correction of language (against LGBTIQ+ phobia) in the instruments, information on how to reach bisexual people, and the provision of additional feedback for the study.

During this time, the poster of the study was distributed around the METU campus and shared on Facebook groups targeting the LGBTIQ+ community, bisexual community, women's solidarity groups, feminist women groups, and the solidarity groups of different neighborhoods (Kadıköy, 100. Yıl) with an invitation note. People could either use the included QR code, direct web page link, or mailing/messaging method to participate in the study. Every participant who completed the two sessions of the study was offered an opportunity to participate in a Queer Latin Dance workshop (one time only with everyone together in one day). Five participants were each awarded 100 TL for winning the raffle at the end of the data collection.

In addition, a list of psychotherapists working in Ankara, Istanbul, and Izmir was prepared. These psychotherapists were selected based on their educational background on sexual minorities in psychotherapy. A summary of the literature on relationships of bisexual people was shared with the participants in order to draw their attention to recent findings in this area of research and to create awareness for bisexual clients. The list was then sent to 126 participants at the end of the second session. Contact information of the psychotherapists, the cost for one session, and the city in which they worked were also provided on the list. Furthermore, these therapists were requested to provide discounts for the participants of this study. The therapists agreed to charge a minimum of 50 TL less than their normal rates.

## 2.5. Data Analytic Strategy

The rationale for data analytic strategy was to determine the extent to which priming figure (partner or acquaintance) maintained or positively enhanced baseline affect score after being triggered by upsetting autobiographical memory recall. In other words, we aimed to measure whether activating mental representation of the partner versus acquaintance as the priming figure helped to recover from the increase in negative affect after exposure to an upsetting autobiographical memory (traumatic event). For these purposes, the rationale and key formulations in data analytic strategy were replicated as in Selçuk and his colleagues' study (2012). First of all, positive affect scores were reversed and added to negative affect scores, then reversed positive affect scores and negative affect scores were averaged to obtain a composite score of negative affect (NA).

$$NA = \frac{\text{Reverse Positive Affect} + \text{Negative Affect}}{2} \quad (1)$$

Then, the change in negative affect after exposure to a traumatic event relative to baseline was calculated for each trial and named as post-memory  $NA_{\Delta}$ . To calculate post-memory  $NA_{\Delta}$ , baseline negative affect score was subtracted from negative affect score after exposure to a traumatic event. Equation for post-memory  $NA_{\Delta}$  is shown below.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Post Memory } NA_{\Delta} \\ &= NA \text{ after Trauma Exposure} \\ &- \text{Baseline NA before Trauma Exposure} \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

Afterwards, the change in negative affect after exposure to a priming figure relative to baseline was calculated for each trial and named as post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$ , which reflected the negative affect recovery. To calculate post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$ , baseline negative affect score was subtracted from negative affect score after



activating mental representation of the priming figure. Equation for post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  is shown below.

$$\begin{aligned}
 & \textit{Post Prime } NA_{\Delta} \\
 &= NA \textit{ after Priming} \\
 &- \textit{Baseline NA before Priming}
 \end{aligned} \tag{3}$$

After post-memory and post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  calculations of each trial were made, two partner priming trials were averaged, and two acquaintance priming trials were averaged within each participant. Therefore, two repeatedly measured scores of dependent variables were obtained: average post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  in partner condition and average post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  in acquaintance condition. Equation for average post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  in partner condition, average post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  in acquaintance condition are given below.

$$\begin{aligned}
 & \textit{Average Post Prime } NA_{\Delta} \textit{ in Partner Condition} \\
 &= \frac{(\textit{1st Post Prime Partner } NA_{\Delta} + \textit{2nd Post Prime Partner } NA_{\Delta})}{2}
 \end{aligned} \tag{4}$$

$$\begin{aligned}
 & \textit{Average Post Prime } NA_{\Delta} \textit{ in Acquaintance Condition} \\
 &= \frac{(\textit{1st Post Prime Acq } NA_{\Delta} + \textit{2nd Post Prime Acq } NA_{\Delta})}{2}
 \end{aligned} \tag{5}$$

For post-memory  $NA_{\Delta}$  and post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$ , a score of zero signifies no change in negative affect relative to baseline, a positive score signifies increase in negative affect relative to baseline, and a negative score signifies decrease in negative affect relative to baseline. Therefore, zero or negative scores of post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  reflects that priming figure provided negative affect recovery after being triggered by an upsetting autobiographical memory recall, whereas positive score of post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  reflects that priming figure does not provide negative affect recovery after being triggered by an upsetting autobiographical

memory recall. On the other hand, positive score of post-memory  $NA_{\Delta}$  reflects that traumatic event led to an increase in negative affect after being triggered by an upsetting autobiographical memory recall whereas zero and negative scores of post-memory  $NA_{\Delta}$  reflects that traumatic event did not lead to an increase in negative affect after being triggered by an upsetting autobiographical memory recall.

Prior to data analysis, the online survey data set was transferred from Qualtrics platform to SPSS, the experimental data set was transferred from Excel to SPSS. Then, the complete data set was examined for missing values and accuracy of data transferring. After data transference and all calculations were made, first of all, preliminary analysis was performed for all variables to test normality, outliers, and multivariate outliers. The results of the preliminary analyses were provided in the results chapter.

To identify significant covariates in demographic variables, two groups of bisexual women with male and female partners were compared using independent samples t-test on age. In addition, Pearson's chi square tests were conducted to compare the two groups on gender identity, partner's sexual orientation, regional area type, education, employment, monthly income, having chronic disease, having psychological disorder, and use of medication. Then, to identify significance of control variables, two groups of bisexual women were compared using independent samples t-tests on LGBIS-TR's subscales and relationship duration. The effect of upsetting autobiographical memory recall on negative affect was tested by using series of one sample t-tests. The effects of exposure to different memory cues and repeated exposure in first and second-time measurements was tested by using Mixed ANOVA. Another Mixed ANOVA was conducted to test the main effect of priming figure, partner gender identity, and their interaction effect on negative affect recovery. Effects of all significant covariates were eliminated using ANCOVA. The effect of partner gender identity on negative affect recovery across repeatedly measured partner and acquaintance conditions was analyzed in this ANCOVA. All ANOVA and

ANCOVA tests were conducted using GLM approach in SPSS Version 23 and all relevant assumptions for each test were also tested.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESULTS

#### 3.1. Preliminary Analysis

There was no missing value in the online survey data set. Yet, there was 1 missing value in the first negative affect score of baseline in the experimental data set. The mean value of relevant baseline variable was entered instead of this missing value. Then, normality of dependent variables, post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  across 4 trials, were tested. Mahalanobis distance ( $X^2 = 18.467, p < .001$ ) was calculated to identify the multivariate outliers. The results of this analysis indicated that there was 1 multivariate outlier, and this outlier was excluded from the data analysis. Therefore, the data analysis was performed with the scores of 95 participants.

As a part of preliminary analysis, descriptive statistics (mean, median, standard deviation, variance, skewness, kurtosis and range) for post-memory  $NA_{\Delta}$  scores across 4 trials (see Table 3) and average post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  in partner and in acquaintance conditions were calculated and shown in Table 4.

Post-memory  $NA_{\Delta}$  score for the Memory Cue-1 in the first time was normally distributed with a skewness of .935 ( $SE = .247$ ), and a kurtosis of .404 ( $SE = .490$ ). Post-memory  $NA_{\Delta}$  score for the Memory Cue-2 in the first time was also normally distributed with a skewness of .967 ( $SE = .247$ ) and a kurtosis of 1.862 ( $SE = .490$ ). Besides, post-memory  $NA_{\Delta}$  score for the Memory Cue-1 in the second time was also normally distributed with a skewness of .468 ( $SE = .247$ ) and a kurtosis of .070 ( $SE = .490$ ). Finally, post-memory  $NA_{\Delta}$  score for the Memory Cue-2 in the second time was also normally distributed with a skewness

of .253 ( $SE = .247$ ) and a kurtosis of -.123 ( $SE = .490$ ), see Table 3. Moreover, average post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  in partner condition was normally distributed with a skewness of .363 ( $SE = .247$ ) and a kurtosis of .381 ( $SE = .490$ ). Average post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  in acquaintance condition was normally distributed with a skewness of .527 ( $SE = .247$ ) and a kurtosis of 1.011 ( $SE = .490$ ), see Table 4.

Descriptive statistics of control variables were presented in Table 5. Relationship duration was not normally distributed; therefore, logarithmic transformation was applied. The new variable was named as Log10-Relationship Duration. On the other hand, coming-out to partner was tested based on Yes/No answers and data showed that only 1 participant did not come out to their partner. Thus, coming-out to partner was not used as a control variable. LGBIS-TR with 6 subscales were shown in Table 5 with detailed descriptive statistics. Scores on Internalized Homonegativity subscale was extremely positively skewed and Difficult Process subscale was moderately positively skewed, whereas Acceptance Concerns, Concealment Motivation, Identity Uncertainty, Identity Superiority, Identity Affirmation, and Identity Centrality were normally distributed. Internalized Homonegativity and Difficult Process scales did not make any significant difference in the further analyses when logarithmic transformation was applied. Therefore, the data of these subscales were kept in their original format.

**Table 3.** Descriptive Statistics of Post-Memory  $NA_{\Delta}$ 

	Post-Memory $NA_{\Delta}$			
	Memory	Memory	Memory	Memory
	Cue-1	Cue-2	Cue-1	Cue-2
	(1st)	(1st)	(2nd)	(2nd)
N	95	95	95	95
Mean	.95	1.08	1.08	.92
Median	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Std. Deviation	.94	1.05	.98	1.03
Variance	.88	1.11	.96	1.07
Skewness	.935	.967	.468	.253
Std. Error of Skewness	.247	.247	.247	.247
Kurtosis	.404	1.862	.070	-.123
Std. Error of Kurtosis	.490	.490	.490	.490
Min-Max	(-.50) – (3.5)	(-1.5) – (4.5)	(-1.0) – (4.0)	(-1.5) – (3.5)
Range	4	6	5	5

**Table 4.** Descriptive Statistics of Average Post-Prime NAA Scores across conditions

	Avg. Post-Prime NAA	
	Partner Condition	Acquaintance Condition
N	95	95
Mean	-.26	.64
Median	-.25	.50
Std. Deviation	.81018	.82571
Variance	.656	.682
Skewness	.363	.527
Std. Error of Skewness	.247	.247
Kurtosis	.381	1.011
Std. Error of Kurtosis	.490	.490
Range	4.25	4.75

**Table 5.** Descriptive Statistics for Subscales of LGBIS-TR and Relationship Duration (N=95)

Variables	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Range	Min-Max
<b><i>LGBIS-TR</i></b>						
Acceptance Concerns	2.50	1.21	.797	.174	5	1 - 6
Concealment Motivation	3.43	1.09	.106	-.599	4.67	1.33 - 6
Identity Uncertainty	1.99	.90	.756	-.334	3.25	1 - 4.25
Internalized Homonegativity	1.34	.83	3.540	14.221	5	1 - 6
Difficult Process	2.10	1.10	1.480	2.380	5	1 - 6
Identity Superiority	2.17	1.21	1.193	1.034	5	1 - 6
Identity Affirmation	4.55	1.27	-.893	.270	5	1 - 6
Identity Centrality	3.58	1.17	-.259	-.296	5	1 - 6
<b><i>Relationship Duration</i></b>	16.95	17.06	2.517	8.932	108	1 - 108
<b><i>Log10-Relationship Duration</i></b>	1.03	.45	-.482	.170	2.33	-.30 - 2.03

### 3.1.1. Group Differences in Demographic Variables

Independent samples t-test was conducted for testing group differences of women+ partnered bisexual women and men partnered bisexual women in one continuous demographic variable. Pearson's chi square tests were conducted for testing group differences across women+ partnered bisexual women and men partnered bisexual women in categorical demographic variables. Result of independent samples t-test showed that groups of bisexual women did not significantly differ on age,  $t(71.17) = 1.18, p > .05$ . A series of Pearson's chi square tests indicated only one significant group difference between women+ partnered and men partnered bisexual women, which was partner's sexual orientation,  $X^2(6, N = 95) = 87.20, p < .001$ . Crosstabulation of partner gender identity and partner's sexual orientation showed that 61.3% of partners with woman+ identities had bi-spectrum orientations, 36.4% were lesbian and 2.3% were heterosexual; whereas 96.1% of partners with man identities were heterosexual and 3.9% had bi-spectrum orientations (see Table 6). All other categorical demographics were non-significant: gender identity  $X^2(2, N = 95) = 4.84, p > .05$ , regional area type  $X^2(2, N = 95) = 1.47, p > .05$ , education  $X^2(3, N = 95) = 1.04, p > .05$ , employment,  $X^2(3, N = 95) = 1.22, p > .05$ , monthly income,  $X^2(4, N = 95) = 8.73, p > .05$ , having chronic disease  $X^2(1, N = 95) = 1.01, p > .05$ , having psychological disorder,  $X^2(1, N = 95) = 1.29, p > .05$ , and use of medication,  $X^2(1, N = 95) = 2.16, p > .05$ . To sum up, only partner's sexual orientation was determined to be used as a covariate.



**Table 6.** Partner Gender Identity X Partner's Sexual Orientation Crosstabulation

Partner's Sexual Orientation	Partner Gender Identity	
	Woman+ ( <i>N</i> = 44)	Man ( <i>N</i> = 51)
Heterosexual	1 (2.3%)	49 (96.1%)
Lesbian	16 (36.4%)	0
Bi-spectrum	27 (61.3%)	2 (3.9%)

### 3.1.2. Group Differences in Control Variables

A series of independent samples t-tests were conducted to identify differences between groups of women+ partnered bisexual women and men partnered bisexual women on LGBIS-TR's subscales and relationship duration. Bisexual women in a relationship with men scored significantly higher in Identity Uncertainty ( $M = 2.16$ ;  $SD = .97$ ) compared to bisexual women in a relationship with women+ partners ( $M = 1.80$ ;  $SD = .77$ ),  $t(92.34) = -2.021$ ,  $p < .05$ , when equal variances were not assumed. Bisexual women in a relationship with women+ partners also scored significantly higher in Identity Centrality ( $M = 3.85$ ;  $SD = 1.17$ ) compared to bisexual women in a relationship with men ( $M = 3.36$ ;  $SD = 1.14$ ),  $t(93) = 2.06$ ,  $p < .05$ , when equal variances were assumed. Groups of participants did not significantly differ on the other six subscales of LGBIS-TR: Acceptance Concerns,  $t(93) = .952$ ,  $p > .05$ , Concealment Motivation,  $t(93) = -.03$ ,  $p > .05$ , Internalized Homonegativity,  $t(93) = -1.28$ ,  $p > .05$ , Difficult Process,  $t(93) = -.99$ ,  $p > .05$ , Identity Superiority,  $t(93) = -.01$ ,  $p > .05$ , and Identity Affirmation,  $t(93) = 1.67$ ,  $p > .05$ . Although all participants scored positively on both identity uncertainty and identity centrality, women+ partnered bisexual women scored significantly more positively on identity centrality and significantly less positively on identity uncertainty compared to bisexual women with men partners. Besides, relationship duration of bisexual women with men partners ( $M = 20.85$ ,  $SD = 20.22$ ) was significantly longer than bisexual women with women+ partners ( $M = 12.42$ ,  $SD = 11.04$ ),  $t(79.49) = -2.57$ ,  $p < .05$ , when equal variances were not assumed. As a result, Identity

Uncertainty, Identity Centrality, and relationship duration were used as covariates in the following analyses.

### 3.2. Effect of Upsetting Autobiographical Memory Recall on Negative Affect (Post-Memory NA<sub>Δ</sub>)

Consistent with previous studies (Kross et al., 2009; Selçuk et al., 2012), exposure to the upsetting autobiographical memory recall significantly induced negative affect. A series of one sample t-tests indicated that Post-memory NA<sub>Δ</sub> scores for both memory cues (Memory Cue-1 and Memory Cue-2) across 4 trials were significantly above zero ( $M_s > 0.92$ ,  $t_s > 8.64$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d_s > 1.13$ ). Detailed results of one-sample t-tests across 4 trials are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7.** Mean Post-Memory NA<sub>Δ</sub> across 4 Trials

	<i>M</i>	<i>t</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>	<i>SE</i>	%95 CI of Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Post-memory NA (Memory Cue-1-first time)	.95	9.879	1.01	.10	.76	1.14
Post-memory NA (Memory Cue-2-first time)	1.08	10.031	1.03	.11	.87	1.30
Post-memory NA (Memory Cue-1-second time)	1.08	10.738	1.10	.10	.88	1.28
Post-memory NA (Memory Cue-2-second time)	.92	8.640	0.89	.11	.70	1.13

A 2 x 2 Mixed ANOVA was performed to compare the effect of different memory cues (Memory Cue-1, Memory Cue-2) on inducing negative affect across two times (first time and second time). Results of Mixed ANOVA indicated that there was no significant main effect of using different trauma memory cues on inducing negative affect ( $F(1,94) = .025$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Therefore, Memory Cue-1 and Memory Cue-2 similarly induced negative affect. Furthermore, results showed that there is no significant main effect of time on

inducing negative affect ( $F(1,94) = .56, p > .05$ ). Thus, participants reacted similarly in the first time and second time they were exposed to the trauma cue in terms of negative affect. Finally, results showed that there is no significant interaction between different memory cues and time ( $F(1,94) = 3.004, p > .05$ ). In conclusion, neither different memory cues nor time made any difference in terms of negative affect induction among participants.

### **3.3. The Effect of Priming Figure, Partner Gender, and Interaction Between Priming Figure and Partner Gender Identity on Negative Affect Recovery (Post-Prime $NA_{\Delta}$ )**

Two (partner gender identity: woman+ vs. man) by two (priming figure: partner vs. acquaintance) Mixed ANOVA, partner gender identity as a between factor and priming figure as a within factor was performed. Number of participants were shown in Table 8 for each group and each condition. Normality and homogeneity of variance assumptions were met. Results indicated a significant main effect of priming figure on negative affect recovery,  $F(1,93) = 38.33, p < .001, \eta^2 = .29$  (see Table 8). This result supported and replicated the recovery hypothesis (Selçuk et al., 2012) that priming partner significantly lowered negative affect compared to priming acquaintance based on the post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  scores across conditions. Therefore, imagining being supported and comforted by one's partner compared to one's acquaintance led to greater negative affect recovery after being triggered by an upsetting autobiographical memory.

Results also indicated a significant main effect of partner gender identity on negative affect recovery,  $F(1,93) = 4.020, p < .05, \eta^2 = .041$  (see Table 8). This result indicated that participants in a relationship with woman+ partners had significantly lower post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  compared to participants in a relationship with men. Referring to mean negative affect recovery scores, post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  scores of women+ partnered bisexual women were significantly closer to zero than post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  scores of men partnered bisexual women. Stated differently, women+ partnered bisexual women benefited significantly more

from activating mental representations of their romantic partners (relative to acquaintance) in recovery from negative affect, compared to men partnered bisexual women.

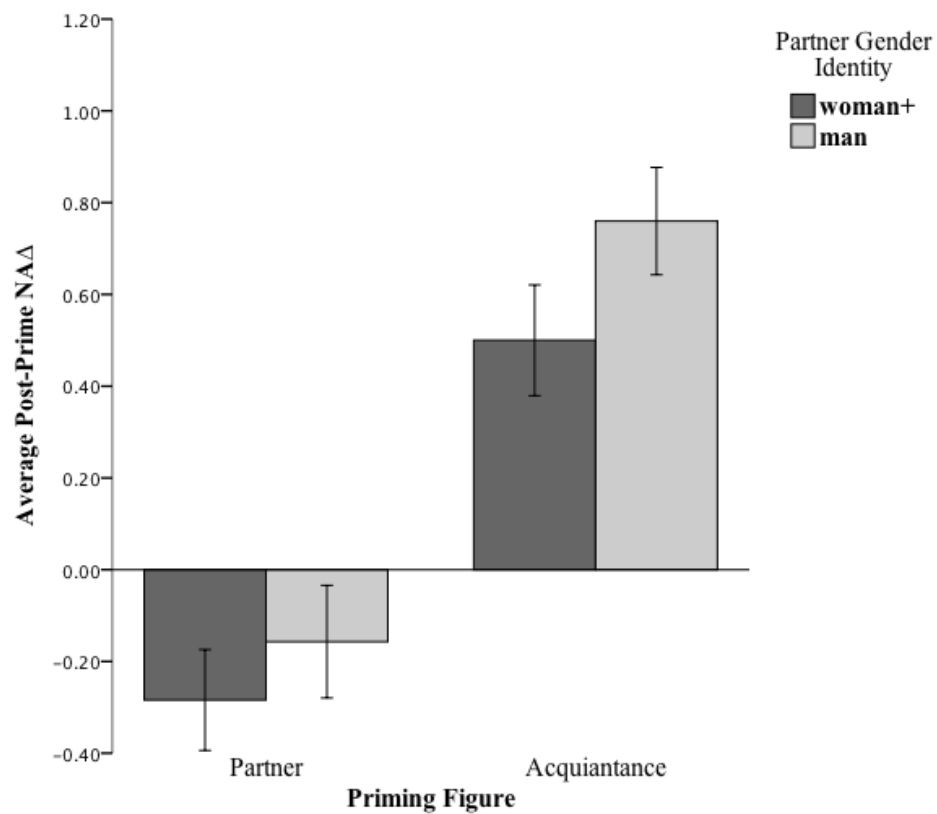
On the other hand, interaction hypothesis was not supported. Results indicated a non-significant interaction between partner gender and priming figure (see Table 9). Activating mental representation of partner following an upsetting autobiographical memory recall did not significantly differ for man versus woman+ partnered bisexual women in terms of negative affect recovery (post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$ ), nor activating mental representation of acquaintance did not significantly differ for man versus woman+ partnered bisexual women. Both groups recovered similarly in partner versus acquaintance conditions. See Figure 2 and Figure 3 for detailed information about the effect of priming figure and partner gender identity on negative affect recovery.

**Table 8.** Descriptives for Main Effects of Priming Figure and Partner Gender Identity

Post-Prime NA <sub>Δ</sub>				
Main effects				
			95% CI	
Variable	Mean	SE	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
<i>Priming Figure</i>				
Partner	-.220	.084	-.386	-.055
Acquaintance	.630	.084	.462	.797
<i>Partner Gender Identity</i>				
Woman+	.108	.071	-.032	.248
Man	.301	.066	.171	.432

**Table 9.** Descriptives for Interaction between Priming Figure and Partner Gender Identity

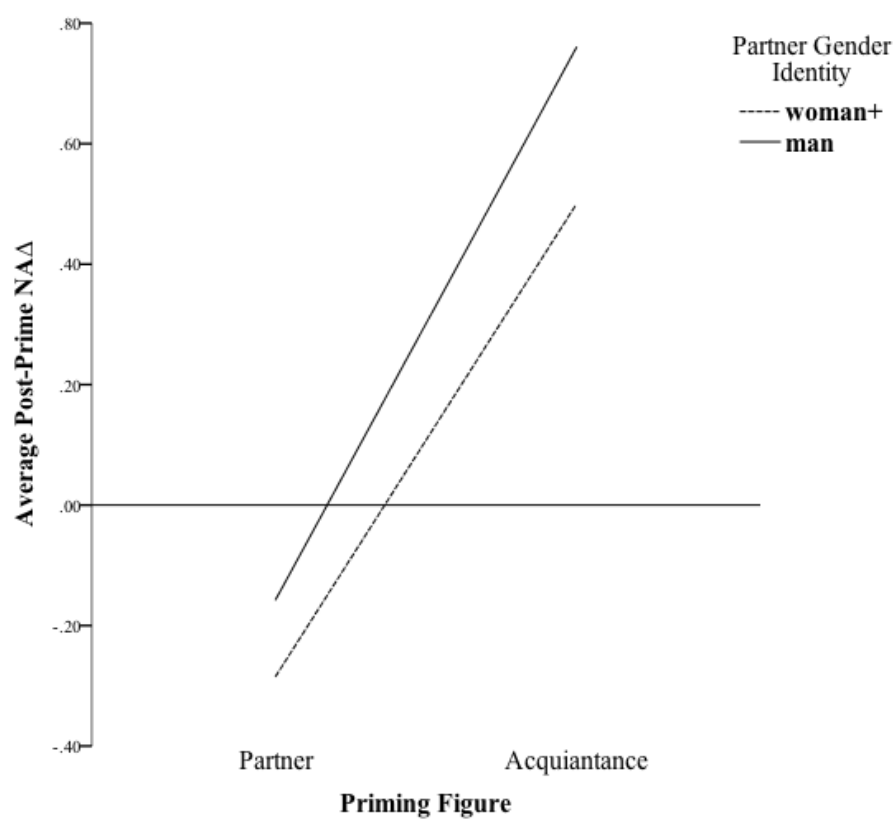
Variable	Post-Prime NA <sub>Δ</sub>							
	Partner Gender Identity							
	Woman+ (N= 44)				Man (N=51)			
	95% CI				95% CI			
	Mean	SE	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Mean	SE	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
<b>Priming Figure</b>								
Partner	-.284	.122	-.527	-.041	-.157	.114	-.383	.069
Acquaintance	.500	.124	.255	.745	.760	.115	.532	.988



**Figure 2.** 2x2 ANOVA Bar Graphs

Bars represent post-prime NA, as a function of priming figure (partner vs. acquaintance) for woman+ and man groups. Error bars represent 1 SE above and below the mean. A NA score of zero reflects no change in negative affect

compared to baseline, a positive NA score reflects increased negative affect compared to baseline, and a negative NA score reflects decreased negative affect compared to baseline. NA negative affect.



**Figure 3.** The Effect of Priming Figure and Partner Gender on Negative Affect Recovery

### 3.4. Stepwise Multiple Regression

Stepwise Multiple Regression is a recommended statistical strategy to obtain information about the sources of variability of a dependent variable when findings in the literature are not sufficient (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). For this reason, Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis was used to determine control variables that can predict post-prime NA<sub>Δ</sub>. Based on the findings obtained from previous analyses, partner’s sexual orientation, Identity Uncertainty, Identity Centrality, and relationship duration were tested to predict post-prime NA<sub>Δ</sub> score in the partner condition and acquaintance condition. Results of the Stepwise Multiple Regression analysis, in which post-prime NA<sub>Δ</sub> scores in partner

condition were computed as dependent variable, indicated that 11.8% variation in post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  scores in partner condition was significantly predicted by only Identity Uncertainty ( $F(1,93) = 12.45, p = .001$ ) with  $R^2 = .118$ . Also, results of the Stepwise Multiple Regression analysis, in which post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  scores in acquaintance condition were computed as dependent variable, indicated that 5.1% of variation in average post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  score in acquaintance condition was significantly predicted by only Identity Uncertainty ( $F(1,93) = 5.02, p < .05$ ) with  $R^2 = .051$ . In conclusion, Identity Uncertainty subscale of LGBIS-TR was a significant predictor of average post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  score both in partner and acquaintance conditions and was included in the following analysis as a covariate.

### **3.5. The Effect of Priming Figure, Partner Gender, and Interaction between Priming Figure and Partner Gender Identity on Negative Affect Recovery After Controlling Identified Covariates**

A 2 x 2 Repeated Measures ANCOVA was performed to evaluate the main effect of partner gender identity on negative affect recovery after computing Identity Uncertainty as a covariate. Each participant provided a single score on LGBIS-TR's Identity Uncertainty subscale (covariate) prior to the experiment; therefore, this study design was suggested to test using repeated measures ANCOVA which only enables to test the main effect of between-subjects factor but not main effect of within-subjects factor nor interaction effect (Huitema, 2011). Because single covariate does not account for between or within-level variability on repeated measures-factor (Huitema, 2011). Assumptions of ANCOVA including normality, homogeneity of variance (Box's M Test), equality of error variance (Levene's test), linearity (scatterplots) and homogeneity of regression (customized model testing) were checked.

Normality assumption was satisfied, because all the variables used in 2 x 2 Repeated Measures ANCOVA were normally distributed. Box's M test showed no violation of homogeneity of variance assumption ( $p > .05$ ). Levene's test also

indicated no violation of equality of error variance both for average post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  in partner condition ( $p > .05$ ) and average post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  in acquaintance condition ( $p > .05$ ).

To check the assumption of linear relationship between CV and DVs, scatter plots were checked for linearity. Also, bivariate correlation between control variable and dependent variables were tested by performing a series of Pearson correlations analyses (see Table 10). The results showed that Identity Uncertainty (CV) had a linear relationship with average post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  score in partner condition and average post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  score in acquaintance condition. On the other hand, based on Pearson correlation result, Identity Uncertainty was positively correlated with average post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  score in partner condition ( $r = .344$ ,  $p = .001$ ). Also, Identity Uncertainty was negatively correlated with average post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  score in acquaintance condition ( $r = -.226$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Stated differently, when Identity Uncertainty increases, partners provided less negative affect recovery and acquaintances provided more negative affect recovery. Based on these bivariate correlation analysis and scatterplot, Identity Uncertainty was appropriate to use as a covariate in 2 x 2 Repeated Measures ANCOVA.

**Table 10.** Bivariate Correlation Between Control Variable and Dependent Variables

	Avg. Post-Prime $NA_{\Delta}$ in Partner Condition ( $N=95$ )		Avg. Post-Prime $NA_{\Delta}$ in Acquaintance Condition ( $N=95$ )	
	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Identity Uncertainty	.344**	.001	-.226*	.027

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



To check for the assumption of homogeneity of regression, a customized model testing was applied in ANCOVA. The results of between-subjects effects table showed that there is no interaction between partner gender identity (IV) and Identity Uncertainty (CV),  $F(1,91) = 0.576, p > .05$ . This result supported the idea that Identity Uncertainty was suitable to be used as a control variable in ANCOVA.

Finally, 2 x 2 Repeated Measures ANCOVA was run. Results indicated non-significant main effect of partner gender after controlling Identity Uncertainty. To clarify, bisexual women in a relationship with men did not significantly differ from bisexual women in a relationship with women+ on the average post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  scores of partner and acquaintance conditions, once Identity Uncertainty was controlled (see Table 11). Therefore, when the effect of identity uncertainty was eliminated, partner gender identity did not significantly influence the negative affect recovery in partner and acquaintance conditions. To see the effect of partner gender identity on post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  after controlling for Identity Uncertainty, check Figure 4. To see the means, adjusted means, standard deviations, and standard errors for post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  between groups across conditions after controlling for Identity Uncertainty, please check Table 12.

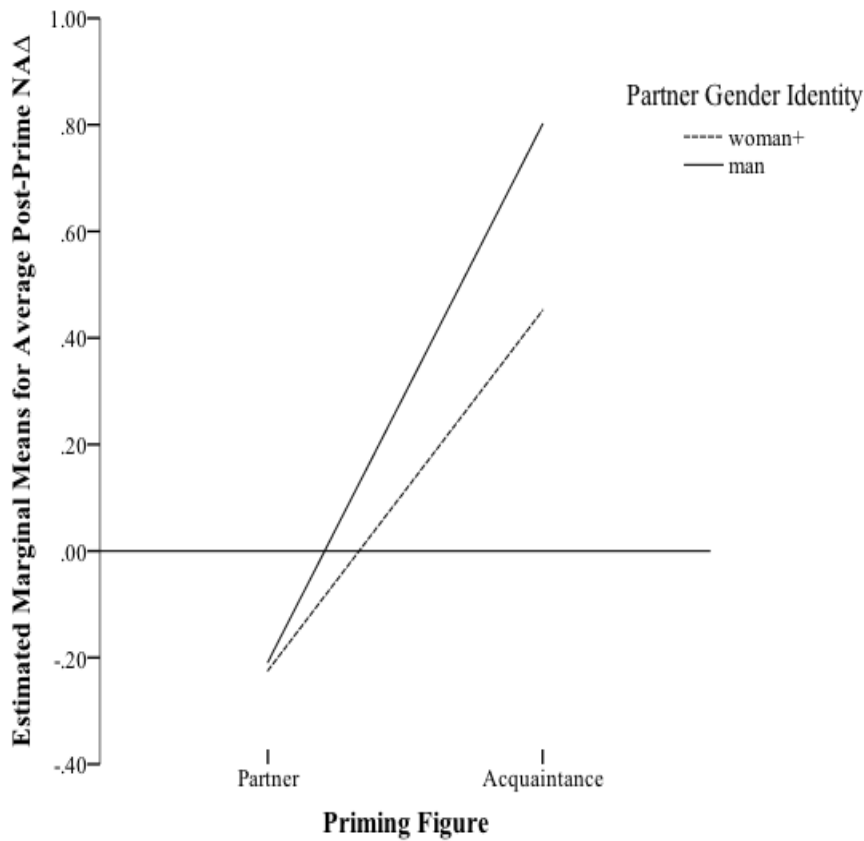
**Table 11.** Results of the Test of Partner Gender Identity Effect in 2 x 2 Repeated Measures ANCOVA

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$
Intercept	.643	1	.643	1.450	.232	.016
Identity Uncertainty	.135	1	.135	.304	.583	.003
Partner Gender Identity	1.510	1	1.510	3.406	.068	.036
Error	40.788	92	.443			

**Table 12.** Means, Adjusted Means, Standard Deviations, and Standard Errors for Post-Prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  between Groups across Conditions

Post-Prime $NA_{\Delta}$	Conditions			
	Partner		Acquaintance	
	Woman+	Man	Woman+	Man
N	44	51	44	51
<i>M</i>	-.284	-.157	.500	.760
( <i>SD</i> )	.73	.88	.80	.83
<i>Madj</i>	-.224	-.208	.452	.801
( <i>SE</i> )	.11	.12	.12	.12

*Note.* Negative scores indicate decrease in negative affect; positive scores indicate increase in negative affect



Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: Identity\_Uncertainty = 1.9947

**Figure 4.** The Effect of Priming Figure and Partner Gender on Negative Affect Recovery After Controlling for Identity Uncertainty

### **3.6. Supplemental Analysis for Order Effect on Post-Prime $NA_{\Delta}$ across Priming Figure Conditions**

Supplemental analyses were conducted to test whether administration order of two levels of priming figure has any significant effect on results of the study. Before explaining results of supplemental analyses, it is important to note that administration order of two levels of priming figure was randomly assigned for each participant. Order effect was categorized under two groups (partner-acquaintance and acquaintance-partner): participants who were asked to imagine being comforted by their partner in the first and third block and their acquaintance in the second and fourth block (partner-acquaintance); participants who asked to imagine being comforted by their acquaintance in the first and second block and their partner in the second and fourth block (acquaintance-partner). There were 46 participants in the partner-acquaintance order and 49 participants in the acquaintance-partner order.

Independent-samples t-tests were conducted to test the effect of order on post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  scores across conditions. Results yielded no significant effect of order on post prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  in partner condition,  $t(93) = -.082$ ,  $p = .935$ . Participants did not differ in the partner-acquaintance and acquaintance-partner orders in terms of their post prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  scores in the partner condition. However, there was a significant effect of order on post prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  in acquaintance condition,  $t(93) = 2.310$ ,  $p < .05$ . This result indicated that participants reported lower post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  in acquaintance condition who imagined being comforted by their acquaintance prior to their partner compared to the participants who imagined being comforted by their partner prior to their acquaintance. Imagining being comforted by acquaintance at first led to unexpectedly greater effect on post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  for acquaintance condition compared to imagining partner at first. In other words, participants who imagined being comforted by their acquaintance prior to their partner showed significantly greater negative affect recovery in acquaintance condition compared to participants who imagined being comforted by their acquaintance after their partner.

Further analyses were conducted to check whether this unexpected order effect led to any disruption in results of the study. For these purposes, Pearson correlation tests and two separate Repeated Measures ANCOVA were run. Pearson correlations indicated a significant correlation between order effect and post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  in acquaintance condition ( $r = -.22, p < .05$ ), whereas there was no significant correlation between order effect and post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  in partner condition ( $r = .01, p > .05$ ). As participants imagined being comforted by their acquaintance prior to their partner, their negative affect recovery scores in acquaintance condition increased, while order effect did not lead any pattern in negative affect recovery scores in partner condition. For ANCOVAs, normality, homogeneity of variance, and equality of error variance assumptions across repeated conditions were met.

Repeated Measures ANCOVA was conducted to test whether order as a covariate had any significant effect on main Mixed ANOVA results of the study. ANCOVA results still indicated a significant effect of priming figure on negative affect recovery,  $F(1,92) = 11.236, p = .001, \eta^2 = .109$ , and a significant effect of partner gender identity on negative affect recovery after controlling for the order effect,  $F(1,92) = 4.40, p = .04, \eta^2 = .046$ .

Then one more Repeated Measures ANCOVA was conducted in which order effect was computed as covariate again accompanied by Identity Uncertainty as a second covariate to check whether it has any significant effect on main Repeated Measures ANCOVA results of the study. Results of this ANCOVA still indicated non-significant effect of partner gender identity on negative affect recovery scores across conditions,  $F(1,91) = 3.82, p = .054, \eta^2 = .040$  and a significant effect of priming figure,  $F(1,91) = 27.859, p < .001, \eta^2 = .234$ . Therefore, it was concluded that order effect did not influence the results obtained from previous analyses, indicating that partner gender identity still had a significant effect, but lost its effect once participants' Identity Uncertainty was controlled.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DISCUSSION**

The role of an attachment figure in providing emotion regulation in response to either external or internal stress has never been studied in the context of the relationships of bisexual people. This study could be the first to replicate the basic findings on the association between adult attachment and affect recovery among heterosexual people in a sample of bisexual women, as well as the first study demonstrating the role of partner gender identity in this association. Thereby, this study helps us understand the unique challenges that bisexual people face in relationship involvement based on their partner gender identity and how this may interact with romantic partners' function in emotion regulation.

The results of the present study revealed that priming romantic partner significantly lowered negative affect compared to priming acquaintance among bisexual women. In other words, imagining a mental representation of an attachment figure who was the romantic partner in this study allowed bisexual women to recover from escalated negative affect compared to imagining a mental representation of an acquaintance. This result supports and replicates the findings of Selçuk and his colleagues (2012), who found that activating mental representation of an attachment figure facilitated negative affect recovery following an upsetting autobiographical memory recall among heterosexual individuals.

Current findings of this study were also consistent with another study asserting that imagining an attachment figure following a painful stressor alleviated hormonal stress (noradrenergic) response compared to imagining non-attachment figure (Bryant & Chan, 2015). In this study, participants were asked to place an

arm in ice water (cold pressor task) and then one group of participants were asked to imagine their attachment figure whereas other group imagined nonattachment figure (Bryant & Chan, 2015). Placing one's arm in cold water (external stressor) resulted in increased noradrenergic response, which indicated an enhanced physiological stress, and imagining an attachment figure significantly ameliorated this stress response (tested via saliva) compared to non-attachment figure (Bryant & Chan, 2015). More recently, Bryant and Chan (2017) ascertained how mental representation of an attachment figure reduces distress by lowering the frequency of intrusive memory recall. They showed negative and neutral images to participants and two days later asked participants to either imagine their attachment figure or imagine being very wealthy (non-attachment positive prime) right before they asked participants to recall former images in the study (Bryant & Chan, 2017). Participants who were primed by their attachment figure significantly recalled fewer intrusive memories than participants who were primed with non-attachment positive stimulus (Bryant & Chan, 2017). In line with these studies, in the present study, priming the attachment figure of bisexual women following an upsetting autobiographical memory recall significantly provided negative affect recovery, regardless of the unique challenges that the participants may have due to their partner's gender identity in bisexuals' romantic relationships.

Present findings also showed that romantic partner can act as a protective factor and have a significant potential to enhance psychological well-being in bisexual women. Although relationship involvement can be a risk factor for bisexual individuals, Meyer et al. (2003) suggested that relationship involvement can also be a minority stress buffer for sexual minorities. Similarly, Feinstein et al. (2016) found an association between discrimination and escalated depressive symptoms in single bisexual people and this association was not applicable to bisexual individuals who were in a relationship. Besides, Whitton et al. (2018) found that single LGBT people who face victimization also experienced increased psychological distress and this did not differ based on sexual orientation. Stated differently, having bisexual versus lesbian or gay identity did not make any

significant difference between the association of victimization and psychological distress. Congruently, they did not find the same association for those who had a partner. Thus, it was argued that relationship involvement can play a protective role with a function of stress regulation in the face of discrimination and victimization experiences. Yet, at the same time, relationship involvement may increase psychological distress, particularly reflected in increased anxiety symptoms in bisexual individuals (Feinstein et al., 2016). In a review study, Feinstein and Dyar (2018) emphasized the need for further studies to investigate the effect of romantic relationship involvement with different partner genders on mental health in bisexual samples. Findings of the current study provided a more concrete answer regarding the effect of romantic partner on affect regulation among bisexual women. Results of this study clearly showed that activating mental representations of romantic partners after exposure to a traumatic memory recall significantly facilitated negative affect recovery compared to priming acquaintance in bisexual women either with women+ partners or men partners. Inconsistency of findings about mental health outcomes between single and bisexual individuals can be related with what is measured as a dependent variable. Because anxiety, depression and emotion regulation difficulties are all related with one's mental health, but they could be rooted from distinct reasons.

It was also hypothesized in the present study that bisexual women in a relationship with men would feel greater sense of security by receiving their partners' support compared to bisexual women in a relationship with women after exposure to an internal stressor. The results, however, showed that bisexual women with women+ partners recovered significantly better compared to bisexual women with men partners. One reason behind this unexpected finding could be the partners' sexual orientation. Sixty-one percent of women+ partners self-identified as bisexual based on our participants' reports, whereas only 3.9% of men partners self-identified as bisexual in this study. As a bisexual woman, having a bisexual partner could help establish better attachment and lead to having better negative affect recovery scores. Similarly, Breno and Galupo (2008) asserted that bisexual people are more commonly seen as

potential partners by other bisexual people compared to partners with other sexual orientations. Breno and Galupo (2008) also suggested that mixed orientation relationship involvement, in which partners identify themselves with different sexual orientations, can be an anxiety triggering factor for bisexual individuals.

In order to account for a partner's sexual orientation, we defined the partner's sexual orientation as a control variable and analyzed its effect on the relationship between partner gender identity and negative affect recovery. Covariance analysis did not reveal any significant effect of partners' sexual orientation on the relationship between partner gender identity and negative affect recovery. However, this could be due to within group variability in terms of partners' sexual orientation in the present study. Stated differently, equal within group variability of partner's sexual orientation in the groups of men versus woman+ partner was required to compare two groups of bisexual women more efficiently. Yet, we could accurately eliminate the effect of partner's sexual orientation from the role of partner gender identity on affect regulation. To grasp a more accurate understanding of partner gender identity on emotion regulation function of attachment in bisexual individuals' relationships, homogenous groups of partner's sexual orientation can be studied as a control variable in future studies in order to eliminate its effects more effectively.

Interestingly, the significant role of partner gender identity on attachment-induced affect regulation disappeared after controlling Identity Uncertainty in bisexual women in the present study. In other words, the ultimate finding of the current study indicated that partner gender identity did not have a significant effect on attachment-induced affect regulation anymore, when Identity Uncertainty was controlled. In the present study, bisexual women in a relationship with men had higher Identity Uncertainty compared to bisexual women in a relationship with women+. One reason for this result could be that being in relationship with men as a bisexual woman could lead to one's bisexuality to be invisible. Outsiders may incorrectly assume that these bisexual



women are heterosexual. As a result of this invisibility, bisexual person may also question their identity and experience greater Identity Uncertainty.

Before interpreting the difference in identity uncertainty levels of bisexual women with men and women+ partners more thoroughly, it should be accounted that anti-bisexual discrimination (e.g., identity invalidation) can have consequences on identity uncertainty in bisexual individuals. Besides, anti-bisexual discriminations may differ based on bisexual person's partner gender identity. First of all, researchers previously found a significant association between exposure to anti-bisexual discrimination and increased level of internalized binegativity and sexual identity uncertainty (Dyar & London, 2018). Also, experiences of identity invalidation by others worked as a unique form of discrimination and it was related to increased identity uncertainty (Dyar & London, 2018).

There are contradictory findings in the literature in regards to the relationship between sexual orientation identity, experiences of discrimination, and partner gender identity. For example, Dyar and colleagues (2014) found that bisexual women with same-gender partners experienced higher levels of Identity Uncertainty compared to bisexual women with different-gender partners. Nevertheless, more recent finding on identity invalidation experiences of bisexual+ people indicated that no bisexual woman who have same-gender partner reported any experience of identity invalidation from outsiders (Feinstein, Franco, Henderson, Collins & Davari, 2019). Furthermore, having different-gender partner, either currently or in the past, was incorrectly seen as having a heterosexual identity by others and resulted in experiencing identity invalidation (Feinstein et al., 2019). More in line with Feinstein et al. (2019)'s study, we found that bisexual women with women+ partners had significantly lower level of identity uncertainty compared to bisexual women with men partners. To speculate, heterosexuality assumption as a result of having men partners may bring greater experience of identity uncertainty compared to lesbian assumption as a result of having women+ partner. Moreover, bisexual

women could become more visible in the context of relationships with women+ partners due to feelings of belongingness to LGBTIQ+ community. Therefore, lesbian assumption may make bisexual woman feel more visible as a sexual minority compared to heterosexual assumption, which in turn may decrease their identity uncertainty and increase their attachment to their partners.

Consistent with our interpretations, Kwok, Rostosky and Riggle (2020) asserted that when bisexual women were in a relationship with men partners, they felt greater pressure to conform to heteronormative gender roles, particularly femininity. On the contrary, when bisexual women had women partners, they felt more freedom and flexibility in terms of gender expression. The differences in gender socialization experiences in romantic relationships may have some effect on one's identity uncertainty as well. Although underlying reasons behind the effect of Identity Uncertainty on romantic attachment could be explained in several ways, this finding signals the need for further inquiry into the relationship between identity uncertainty and bisexuals' adult attachment in romantic relationships.

Further studies can focus on the effect of identity uncertainty on emotion regulation in relationships of bisexual individuals to better understand the link between relationship involvement and mental health outcomes. For example, Feinstein et al. (2016) claimed that romantic relationship involvement was significantly associated with increased symptoms of anxiety in bisexual individuals, yet there was no association between romantic relationship involvement and depressive symptoms. They concluded that being in a relationship, especially with monosexual partners, may lead to one's bisexual identity to be invisible and provoke anxiety symptoms (Feinstein et al., 2016). However, they did not ask the partner gender in their study and reported the fact as a limitation. Thus, in the current study we provided an answer to this call, given that partner gender identity was one of the main variables. Further research can aim for a theoretical explanation regarding the connection between relationship involvement and psychological outcomes for bisexual individuals

and also integrate the identity and emotion regulation variables into this connection. By this means, future interventions can focus on key areas for enhancing bisexual individuals' mental health.

Moreover, in future studies, binegativity coming from others and binegativity coming from a partner can be separately measured in order to understand the main reasons behind the potential increase in anxiety and depressive symptoms due to relationship involvement. It should also be noted that outcomes of one's minority identity cannot be evaluated independently from majority's attitudes, cognitions, and behaviors. Therefore, sociopolitical context of the place and time are crucial factors to be considered for every study working with a community. Hence, future studies can consider not only the effect of identity development but also experiences of binegativity when studying the bisexual community. The present study provided opposite findings about the effect of having man versus woman+ partners compared to Dyar and colleague's study (2014), however, due to lack of research on bisexual people's experiences in LGBTIQ+ community in Turkey, findings showing a positive trend in women+ partnered bisexual women compared to men partnered one cannot be clearly evaluated. Thus, future studies on bisexual people's experiences within the LGBTIQ+ community in Turkey could enlighten the underlying factors behind such contradictory findings.

### **Clinical Implications**

Amongst bisexual and gay/lesbian men and women, bisexual women reported the highest levels of psychological distress, anxiety, and depression and bisexual men reported poorer mental health than gay men and women (Smalley, Warren, & Barefoot, 2015). Bisexual women also face unique barriers when they receive mental health care. Bisexual women were less comfortable to disclose their sexual orientation to mental health providers compared to lesbian women (Smalley et al., 2015). Even though psychological problems are not necessarily related to one's sexual orientation, it is critical for sexual minorities to receive affirming mental health care from a culturally competent mental health care

provider when they disclose their sexual orientation (APA, 2012; Smalley et al., 2015). Furthermore, double discrimination from heterosexual majority and LG community towards bisexual individuals may put bisexual individuals under higher fear of discrimination in terms of disclosing to their mental health care provider (Smalley et al., 2015). Considering the fact that bisexual individuals face a great deal of discrimination and negative attitudes, health care providers should emphasize an affirmative approach for bisexual individuals.

Mental health professionals (MHPs) are responsible for providing a safe environment in which bisexual individuals can share their identity. For this purpose, adopting a nonbinary language as a MHPs is *sine qua non*. As mentioned in APA's (2012) guidelines for working with LGB clients, MHPs and clients can discover the client's social and personal resources to enrich their psychological development and heal traumas more efficiently in a secure environment. Moreover, empowering the bisexual identity of a client by being aware of the discrimination towards bisexual community is crucial for an effective clinical intervention (Serpe, Brown, Criss, Lamkins & Watson, 2020).

As the findings of the present study showed, romantic partner as an adult attachment figure provided negative affect recovery to bisexual women. Especially, bisexual women in a relationship with either women+ partners or men partners reached their positive base emotional state by imagining their partner supporting them, after exposing to a traumatic memory. Although bisexual women with women+ partners benefitted from the attachment figure imagining significantly more than bisexual women with men partners, it should be noted both significantly recovered from their negative affect. Also, the effect of partner gender identity on negative affect recovery was nonsignificant when identity uncertainty of bisexual women was controlled in the current study. These results enlighten future therapeutic interventions in two aspects. One is that partner gender identity affects outsider's discriminatory attitudes towards bisexual women. This relatively occurring discrimination based on partner gender identity targets bisexual person's identity. Nevertheless, romantic partner

as an attachment figure can play a protective role in bisexual women's mental health regardless of the partner's gender identity despite increased level of exposure to binegativity once bisexual women enter into a relationship. MHPs should still be attentive to the discrimination experiences of bisexual individuals coming either from heterosexual majority or LGBTIQ+ community based on bisexual person's partner gender identity and how it may affect bisexual women's mental health.

Literature findings pointed that relationship involvement increases the sense of invisibility in bisexual individuals. Niki (2017) addressed that psychotherapists' lack of awareness about binegativity and bisexual identity may also increase the feelings of invisibility in therapy for bisexual individuals. MHPs should identify the possible effects of invisibility experiences on the bisexual person's identity when bisexual people are in a relationship with a romantic partner. Especially, MHPs should be careful whether binegativity experiences are coming from LGBTIQ+ community or heterosexual majority, or both and how experienced binegativity influence bisexual client's identity and mental health. Since, symptoms of anxiety, depression or alcohol consumption and binge-drinking can be rooted from minority stress, affirming interventions are necessary to enhance mental health of bisexual community.

Finally, considering the negative effect of discrimination on bisexual individuals, figuring out some protective factors such as sense of belonging for enhancing bisexual client's psychological health is also fundamental. For instance, for bisexual women who feel less sense of belonging to the heterosexual majority, feeling sense of belonging to the lesbian community can serve as a protective factor in terms of depressive symptoms (McLaren & Castillo, 2020). Also, bisexual women who feel a higher sense of belonging to the heterosexual community showed lower levels of depressive symptoms. Having a lower level of belonging to the lesbian community was not a mental health protective factor for these women (McLaren & Castillo, 2020). Bisexual women who did not feel a sense of belonging to either community reported the greatest level of

depressive symptoms (McLaren & Castillo, 2020). Although engaging with the LGBTIQ+ community may not offer sufficient protection for bisexual women (Feinstein, Dyar & London, 2017; Prell & Traeen, 2018), feeling needed and validated by either the heterosexual or the lesbian community was psychologically protective for bisexual women (McLaren & Castillo, 2020). Therefore, identifying bisexual person's need for sense of belonging to either community and monitoring the changes in times of relationship involvement would provide a better understanding of bisexual client's social resources.

## **Limitations**

In the present study, two different negative autobiographical memory cues were used to induce internal stress in participants and two priming figures (partner and acquaintance) were used to test the effect of attachment figure on affect regulation. However, using the same memory cues with the same priming figures in the first two and last two blocks of AART did not allow to counterbalance the effect trauma memories. We missed a chance to see how internal stress induced by different memories was alleviated by different priming figures in the four blocks of AART. Rather, we only gathered information on how a partner influenced the stress triggered by one negative autobiographical memory and how an acquaintance influenced the stress triggered by another negative autobiographical memory. If different memory cues were followed by different priming figures, then it would have enabled counterbalancing different trauma memories and eliminate the time variable.

This study focused only on bisexual women and their romantic relationship involvement. First of all, we did not ask our participants to describe their relationships but assumed that it would be a monogamous and committed romantic relationship. This assumption could be a limitation because the type of relationship (i.e., monogamous versus non-monogamous) may have an effect on attachment and attachment-induced affect regulation. Molina et al. (2015) also found that bisexual women in non-monogamous relationships suffered from

bisexual-specific stress more than single bisexual women and reported higher levels of depression and alcohol consumption. There is lack of research on the prevalence and effects of consensual or non-consensual non-monogamy among the bisexual the community. It could be important to include non-monogamous bisexual individuals into research to acknowledge potential sources of support and challenges in this kind of relationship context for further research as it was also suggested in the study of Arriaga and Parent (2019).

The effect of partner gender identity on affect regulation was the main focus of the current study, whereas partner sexual identity was used only as a control variable. We found a significant effect of partner gender identity on affect regulation until Identity Uncertainty (as the only significant control variable) was controlled. Therefore, it was difficult to interpret how controlling identity uncertainty cancelled the significant effect of partner gender identity on affect regulation. It was particularly complex to explain when we also found a significant difference of identity uncertainty between bisexual women with women+ partner and men partner. At this point, the complex association between identity uncertainty and partner gender identity was explained based on the existing literature. Previous studies examined binegativity experiences of bisexual individuals in the LGBTQ+ community engagement when they are in a relationship with different partner gender identities in order to understand how their identity is affected. Nevertheless, research is non-existent on bisexual individuals' experiences with LG/or LGBTIQ+ communities in Turkey. Thus, some of the interpretation of the current study's results require further research. For an accurate scientific explanation, future research can focus on bisexual individuals' engagement with LGBTIQ+ community and their experiences of binegativity coming from monosexual people in Turkey when they are involved in a relationship.

### **Further Research**

For future research, trans and nonbinary inclusive bisexuality studies are eminently required. In this study, we included bisexual women with nonbinary and trans-identified partners; however, we combined them with women partners and defined the category as women+. One reason to have men and women+ categories for partner gender identity in this study was the nature of quantitative experimental research which required equal numbers of participants in different groups. It was foreseen that finding bisexual women participants with trans or nonbinary partners equal to the number of bisexual women with women or men partners would be extremely challenging based on the previous research findings and particular invisibility of bisexual and trans individuals in Turkey. Parker (2015) indicated that bisexual individuals were predominantly in a relationship with different-gender partners (84%), only 8% were in a relationship with same-gender partners, and 6% were in a relationship with transgender partners. At this point, experiences of bisexual individuals with transgender or nonbinary partners can be studied using qualitative method. Thereby, bisexual people's identity experiences in the context of a relationship with trans or nonbinary partners can be investigated. By these means, relationship dynamics of bisexual individuals who are partnered with nonbinary or transgender individuals can be understood in more detail. For this purpose, qualitative studies can better shed light upon bisexual people's relationships with partners who identify themselves under trans umbrella.

Not only trans-inclusive partner gender identity but also trans-inclusive bisexual identities should be included into bisexuality research. There is lack of knowledge on people whose gender identity is trans or nonbinary and whose sexual orientation is bisexual or bi+. Since bisexuality is not limited to cisgender people, transgender bisexual individuals should also be included in bisexuality studies and their unique sources of stress can be studied to refer to binegativity, discrimination, and identity experiences. Understanding such difficulties can help to produce effective support mechanisms and incorporate these mechanisms into psychotherapy for trans bisexual people.



Finally, we did not ask for the ethnicity of bisexual women in this study. Minority stress literature in multicultural societies (e.g., United States) recently focused on the effect of minority stress for individuals who have both ethnic/racial identity and sexual orientation and gender identity on mental health (also referred as *border identity stress*). Considering the diverse ethnicities living in Turkey, especially Kurdish people as a major ethnic minority in Turkey, building hypotheses examining the effect of border identity stress on mental health is crucial to point out the struggles these people might face. Investigating these individuals' experiences of discrimination, prejudice, and exclusion can provide knowledge on how such experiences influence their psychological and physical well-being.

## **Conclusion**

In the present study, bisexual women who are in a relationship benefitted from their partner in terms of affect regulation after they encountered an internal stressor. Moreover, bisexual women with women+ partners significantly benefitted from their partner more than bisexual women with men partners. However, this significant effect of partner gender identity became non-significant when Identity Uncertainty was controlled. Indeed, both groups of bisexual women scored significantly lower than the cut-off score on Identity Uncertainty, bisexual women with women+ partners scored significantly more positively than bisexual women with men partners. If bisexual women with men partners had similar levels of Identity Uncertainty as bisexual women with women+ partners have, then partner gender identity could have remained significant. After controlling Identity Uncertainty, provision of affect regulation boosted in bisexual women with men partners. This is how the significant difference became non-significant. Considering these results altogether, it shifts the attention from the effect of partner gender identity on affect regulation to the effect of identity uncertainty on affect regulation. Furthermore, there was no significant interaction between identity uncertainty and partner gender identity on affect regulation despite the significant difference between bisexual women

with women+ partner and bisexual women with men partners' scores on identity uncertainty. These results may signal the existence of another factor which could have a relation with identity uncertainty other than the partner gender identity that may have an effect on affect regulation.

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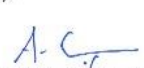



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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

<b>UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ</b> APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER	 <b>ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ</b> MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY
CUMHURİYET NABİ HÜSNİ CADDESİ NO:300 ÇAYIRLIYAZI, 06531/06531/06531 T: +90 312 290 77 99 F: +90 312 290 79 50 E: <a href="mailto:etik@odtu.edu.tr">etik@odtu.edu.tr</a> U-Sayı: 28020816 / 442	
	12 Aralık 2019
Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu	
Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)	
İlişi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu	
Sayın Doç. Dr. Deniz Canel ÇINARBAŞ	
Danışmanlığını yaptığımız İdili UĞURLUOĞLU'nun "Biseksüellerin hemcinsleriyle ve karşı cinsleriyle olan ilişkilerinde bağlanmanın rolü" başlıklı araştırması İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülmüş ve 422 ODTU 2019 protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.	
Saygılarımızla bilgilerinize sunarız	
	 Doç. Dr. Mine MISIRLISOY Başkan
 Prof. Dr. Tolga CAN Üye	Doç. Dr. Pınar KAYGAN Üye
 Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ali Emre TURGUT Üye	 Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Şenle SEVİNÇ Üye
 Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Müge GÜNDÜZ Üye	 Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Süreyya Özcan KARASAKAL Üye

## **APPENDIX B. INFORMED CONCENT / ARAŞTIRMAYA GÖNÜLLÜ KATILIM FORMU**

Bu araştırma, ODTÜ Klinik Psikoloji Bölümü Yüksek Lisans öğrencisi İdil Uğurluoğlu tarafından Doç. Dr. Deniz Canel Çınarbaş danışmanlığında Yüksek Lisans tezi olarak yürütülmektedir. Bu form sizi araştırma koşulları hakkında bilgilendirmek için hazırlanmıştır.

### **Çalışmanın Amacı Nedir?**

Araştırmanın amacı, romantik ilişki içinde olan biseksüel bireylerin yaşadıkları bazı anıların onların üzerinde yarattığı etkilere bakarak hafızalarının bu durumdan nasıl etkilendiğini tespit etmektir.

### **Bize Nasıl Yardımcı Olmanızı İsteyeceğiz?**

Araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ederseniz, size bilgisayar ortamında hafıza ile ilgili birkaç test yapılacaktır. Ayrıca bu test sırasında araştırmacının sorduğu soruları yanıtlamanız beklenecektir.

### **Sizden Topladığımız Bilgileri Nasıl Kullanacağız?**

Araştırmaya katılımınız tamamen gönüllülük temelinde olmalıdır. Çalışmada sizden kimlik veya kurum belirleyici hiçbir bilgi istenmemektedir. Görüşme sırasında sorulara verilen yanıtların kime ait olduğu tamamıyla gizli tutulacak ve sadece araştırmacılar tarafından değerlendirilecektir. Katılımcılardan elde edilecek bilgiler toplu halde değerlendirilecek ve bilimsel yayımlarda kullanılacaktır.

### **Katılımınızla ilgili bilmeniz gerekenler:**

Görüşme sırasında yöneltilecek olan sorular veya katıldığınız testler genel olarak rahatsızlık verici olmamakla birlikte, herhangi bir nedenden dolayı kendinizi rahatsız hissetmeniz durumunda katılımınızı istediğiniz zaman sonlandırabilirsiniz. Böyle bir durumda görüşmeyi yürüten kişiye çalışmadan çıkmak istediğinizi söylemeniz yeterli olacaktır.

**Arařtırmayla ilgili daha fazla bilgi almak isterseniz:**

Bu alıřmaya katıldığınız iin řimdiden teřekkr ederiz. alıřma hakkında daha fazla bilgi almak iin Yksek Lisans ğrencisi olan İdil Uğurluoğlu (E-posta: [idilugurluoglu@gmail.com](mailto:idilugurluoglu@gmail.com)) veya Psikoloji Bölümü ğretim yelerinden Do. Dr. Deniz Canel ınarbař ile (E-posta: [dcanel@metu.edu.tr](mailto:dcanel@metu.edu.tr)) ile iletiřim kurabilirsiniz.

***Yukarıdaki bilgileri okudum ve bu alıřmaya tamamen gönll olarak katılıyorum.***

(Formu doldurup imzaladıktan sonra uygulayıcıya geri veriniz).

İsim Soyad

Tarih

İmza

---/---/---

**APPENDIX C. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FORM /**  
**DEMOGRAFİK BİLGİ FORMU**

Aktif kullandığınız e-posta adresiniz:

Yaşınız:

Şu an yaşadığınız şehir:

Yaşamınızın büyük bir bölümünü nerede geçirdiniz?

☐ Köy/Kasaba

☐ İlçe

☐ İl

☐ Büyük Şehir

Eğitim durumunuz:

☐ İlköğretim

☐ Lise

☐ Üniversite

☐ Yüksek Lisans

☐ Doktora

Mesleğiniz:

Cinsiyet kimliğiniz (cinsiyetiniz):

Cinsel yöneliminiz:

Aylık geliriniz:

☐ 1000 TL'den az

☐ 1000-2000 TL

☐ 2000-3500 TL

☐ 3500-5000 TL

☐ 5000 TL ve üzeri

Medeni durumunuz:

☐ Bekar

☐ Evli

☐ Boşanmış

☐ Dul

Çocuğunuz var mı?

☐Evet

☐Hayır

Şu anda romantik bir ilişki içinde misiniz (sevgiliniz var mı)?

☐Evet

☐Hayır

İlişkiniz ne kadar zamandır sürmekte? (ay olarak giriniz)

Partnerinizin cinsiyet kimliği (cinsiyeti):

Partnerinizin cinsel yönelimi:

Partneriniz sizin cinsel yöneliminizi biliyor mu?

☐Evet

☐Hayır

Herhangi bir kronik rahatsızlığınız var mı?

☐Evet

☐Hayır

Evet ise nedir?

Herhangi bir psikolojik rahatsızlığınız var mı?

☐Evet

☐Hayır

Evet ise nedir?

Herhangi bir ilaç kullanıyor musunuz?

☐Evet

☐Hayır

Evet ise ilaçların adını belirtiniz.



**APPENDIX D. GENERATING UPSETTING AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL  
MEMORY RECALL / ÜZÜCÜ OTOBİYOGRAFİK ANILARIN  
YENİDEN ÜRETİMİ**

Bu bölümde geçmişte yaşadığınız sizi çok üzen veya travmatik diyebileceğiniz bir anıyı düşünün. *\*Bu anı şu anki romantik partnerinizi içermemelidir.*

Olay anında ne oldu?

---

Neden olumsuz/travmatik?

---

Nerede oldu?

---

Ne zaman oldu?

---

Olay sırasında başka kimler vardı?

---

Size bu anıyı hatırlatan 3 adet anahtar kelime (veya kelime grubu) yazınız.

Örnek: şemsiye, trafik kazası, sel baskını

---

Bu bölümde bir önceki sayfada tarif ettiğiniz anınız ile ilgili bazı sorular yer almaktadır. Sırasıyla aşağıda yer alan bu soruları üzerinde gereğinden fazla düşünmeden, her bir soruyu verdiğiniz ilk tepkiye göre cevaplayıp diğer soruya geçiniz.

**1      2      3      4      5      6      7**  
**(Hiç)                      (Kısmen)                      (Çok fazla)**

1. Olay olduğu zaman o dönemdeki hayatınızı ne oranda etkiledi?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Şu anki hayatınızda bu olay sizin için ne kadar önemli?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Şu an bu anıyı hatırladığınızda sizi ne kadar kötü hissettiriyor?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Bu olay yaşandığında ne kadar kötü hissettiniz?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Bu anı aklınıza geldiğinde ne kadar güçlü canlanıyor?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Bu olay olduğundan beri ne sıklıkta aklınıza geliyor?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Bu olay şu sıralar ne sıklıkta aklınıza geliyor?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Bu olayın olduğu anın hemen sonrasındaki dönemde olayı ne sıklıkta düşündünüz?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Bu bölümde geçmişte yaşadığınız sizi çok üzen veya travmatik diyebileceğiniz bir önceki anıdan farklı başka bir anıyı düşünün.    *\*Bu anı şu anki romantik partnerinizi içermemelidir.*

Olay anında ne oldu?

---

Neden olumsuz/travmatik?

---

Nerede oldu?

---

Ne zaman oldu?

---

Olay sırasında başka kimler vardı?

---

Size bu anıyı hatırlatan 3 adet anahtar kelime (veya kelime grubu) yazınız.

Örnek: şemsiye, trafik kazası, sel baskını

---

Bu bölümde bir önceki sayfada tarif ettiğiniz anınız ile ilgili bazı sorular yer almaktadır. Sırasıyla aşağıda yer alan bu soruları üzerinde gereğinden fazla düşünmeden, her bir soruyu verdiğiniz ilk tepkiye göre cevaplayıp diğer soruya geçiniz.

**1      2      3      4      5      6      7**  
**(Hiç)                      (Kısmen)                      (Çok fazla)**

1. Olay olduğu zaman o dönemdeki hayatınızı ne oranda etkiledi?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Şu anki hayatınızda bu olay sizin için ne kadar önemli?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Şu an bu anıyı hatırladığınızda sizi ne kadar kötü hissettiriyor?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Bu olay yaşandığında ne kadar kötü hissettiniz?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Bu anı aklınıza geldiğinde ne kadar güçlü canlanıyor?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Bu olay olduğundan beri ne sıklıkta aklınıza geliyor?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Bu olay şu sıralar ne sıklıkta aklınıza geliyor?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Bu olayın olduğu anın hemen sonrasındaki dönemde olayı ne sıklıkta düşündünüz?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**APPENDIX E. THE LESBIAN, GAY, AND BISEXUAL IDENTITY  
SCALE – TURKISH (LGBIS-TR) / LEZBİYEN, GEY VE BİSEKSÜEL  
KİMLİK ÖLÇEĞİ (LGBIS-TR)**

Aşağıda Lezbiyen, Gey ve Biseksüellerin (LGB) cinsel yönelimlerine ilişkin kişisel deneyimlerine dair sorular yer almaktadır. Siz cinsel yöneliminizi “lezbiyen, gey ve biseksüel” terimlerinden daha farklı kelimelerle tanımlıyor olabilirsiniz (örneğin; queer, panseksüel). Bu çalışmada, kullanım yaygınlığı nedeniyle biz LGB terimini kullanacağız. Eğer bu terim sizin cinsiyet kimliğinizi yansıtmıyorsa şimdiden anlayışınız için teşekkür ederiz. Lütfen bir LGB olarak şu anki yaşantılarınızı en iyi şekilde yansıtan seçenekleri işaretleyiniz. Soruları cevaplarken olabildiğince dürüst ve samimi olmanız araştırmanın bulgularının sağlıklı olması açısından önemlidir; lütfen **nasıl hissetmeniz** gerektiğini değil, **şu an nasıl hissettiğinizi** belirtiniz. Üzerinde gereğinden fazla düşünmeden, her bir soruyu verdiğiniz ilk tepkiye göre cevaplayıp diğer soruya geçiniz.

(1) Kesinlikle katılmıyorum	(2) Katılmıyorum	(3) Biraz katılmıyorum	(4) Biraz katılıyorum	(5) Katılıyorum	(6) Kesinlikle katılıyorum
1. Eşcinsel duygusal ilişkilerimi gizli tutmayı tercih ediyorum.				1 2 3 4 5 6	
2. Seçme şansım olsaydı heteroseksüel olmayı seçerdim.				1 2 3 4 5 6	
3. Cinsel yönelimimden tam olarak emin değilim.				1 2 3 4 5 6	
4. Eşcinsel duygusal ilişkilerimi kimlerin bildiğini dikkatle kontrol altında tutuyorum.				1 2 3 4 5 6	
5. Başkalarının cinsel yönelimim nedeniyle beni yargılayıp yargılamadığını sıklıkla merak ediyorum.				1 2 3 4 5 6	
6. LGB olduğum için mutluyum.				1 2 3 4 5 6	
7. Heteroseksüellere tepeden bakıyorum.				1 2 3 4 5 6	
8. Cinsel yönelimime ilişkin fikrimi sürekli değiştiriyorum.				1 2 3 4 5 6	
9. Başkalarının beni cinsel yönelimim nedeniyle yargıladığını bildiğimde rahat edemiyorum.				1 2 3 4 5 6	
10. LGBlerin heteroseksüellerden üstün olduğunu düşünüyorum.				1 2 3 4 5 6	
11. Cinsel yönelimim kim olduğumun önemsiz bir parçasıdır.				1 2 3 4 5 6	
12. LGB olduğumu kabullenme sürecim çok sancılı geçiyor.				1 2 3 4 5 6	
13. LGB topluluğunun bir parçası olmaktan gurur duyuyorum.				1 2 3 4 5 6	
14. Biseksüel mi yoksa eşcinsel mi olduğumdan emin olamıyorum.				1 2 3 4 5 6	
15. Cinsel yönelimim kimliğimin temel parçasıdır.				1 2 3 4 5 6	
16. Cinsel yönelimim hakkında insanların ne düşündüğünü, bunun onları nasıl ve ne derece etkilediğini çok fazla düşünüyorum.				1 2 3 4 5 6	
17. LGB olduğumu kabullenme sürecim çok yavaş ilerliyor.				1 2 3 4 5 6	
18. Heteroseksüellerin yaşamları, LGBlerin yaşamlarına kıyasla daha sıkıcı.				1 2 3 4 5 6	
19. Cinsel yönelimim oldukça kişisel ve özel bir konudur.				1 2 3 4 5 6	
20. Keşke heteroseksüel olsaydım.				1 2 3 4 5 6	
21. Bir birey olarak kim olduğumun anlaşılması için LGB olduğumun bilinmesi gerekir.				1 2 3 4 5 6	
22. Cinsel yönelimimi anlamaya çalışırken kafam çok fazla karışıyor.				1 2 3 4 5 6	
23. Cinsel kimliğim konusunda başından beri kendimi rahat hissettim.				1 2 3 4 5 6	
24. LGB olmak hayatımın çok önemli bir parçasıdır.				1 2 3 4 5 6	
25. LGB olmanın benim önemli bir parçam olduğuna inanıyorum.				1 2 3 4 5 6	
26. LGB olmaktan gurur duyuyorum.				1 2 3 4 5 6	
27. Kendi cinsiyetimden insanları çekici bulmamın adil olmadığına inanıyorum.				1 2 3 4 5 6	

**APPENDIX F. DEBRIEFING FORM / KATILIM SONRASI**  
**BİLGİLENDİRME FORMU**

Bu araştırma ODTÜ Psikoloji Bölümü Yüksek Lisans öğrencisi olan İdil Uğurluoğlu tarafından Doç. Dr. Deniz Canel Çınarbaş danışmanlığında Yüksek Lisans tezi olarak yürütülmektedir. Deney sırasında stres yaratılarak romantik ilişkide bulunduğunuz partnerin bu stresi hangi düzeyde yatıştırabildiği test edilmiştir.

Bu çalışmanın amacı biseksüel bireylerin partnerlerinin cinsiyet kimliklerine bakarak (ör. queer, transgender, trans erkek, trans kadın, interseks, cisgender kadın, erkek, kadın, cisgender erkek, +’larla) yaşadıkları romantik ilişkilerinde bağlanmalarını ölçmekte ve bu bağlanmanın stresin yarattığı olumsuz duyguların iyileştirilmesini sağlayıp sağlamadığını cinsiyet kimlik grupları arasında karşılaştırma yaparak araştırmaktır. Bu yolla ruh sağlığı alanında çalışan uzmanlara ve araştırmacılara biseksüellerin toplumda ve romantik ilişkilerinde maruz kaldıkları ayrımcılık ve bunun sonucu olarak ortaya çıkabilecek olan ruhsal ve fiziksel problemlere karşı farkındalık kazandırmak ve özellikle psikoterapide biseksüellerin daha iyi anlaşılmasını sağlamak, uzman tarafından daha destekleyici ve pozitif bir tutum ile karşılaşabilmelerini amaçlamaktadır.

Bu çalışmadan alınacak Mayıs 2019 sonunda elde edilmesi amaçlanmaktadır. Elde edilen bilgiler katılımcının kimliği gizli tutulacak şekilde araştırmada kullanılacaktır. Çalışmanın sağlıklı ilerleyebilmesi ve bulguların güvenilir olması için çalışmaya katılacağını bildiğiniz diğer kişilerle çalışma ile ilgili herhangi bir bilgi paylaşımında bulunmamanızı dileriz. Bu araştırmaya katıldığınız için çok teşekkür ederiz.

Araştırmanın sonuçlarını öğrenmek ya da daha fazla bilgi almak için aşağıdaki isimlere başvurabilirsiniz.

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## APPENDIX G. TURKISH SUMMARY / TRKE ZET

### **BİSEKSEL KADINLARIN ERKEK VE KADIN+ ROMANTİK PARTNERLERİYLE OLAN İLİŞKİLERİNDE ROMANTİK PARTNERİN ZİHİNSEL TEMSİLİNİN DUYGU REGLASYONU ZERİNE ETKİSİ: PARTNER CİNSİYET KİMLİĞİNİN ROL**

#### **1.GİRİŞ**

Baęlanma figrleri, bireylere destek olup onları rahatlatarak ruh saęlıklarına katkıda bulunur. (Proulx, Helms ve Buehler, 2007; Seluk ve ark., 2012). Ancak ilişkiler aynı zamanda stres kaynaęı da olabilir, bireylerin ruhsal ve fiziksel saęlıklarını olumsuz ynde etkileyebilir. Whisman (2007) dşk kaliteli ilişkilerin nispeten mutsuz ruh hali ve psikolojik bozukluklarla ilgili olduęunu ortaya koymuştur. Şimdiye kadar, yakın ilişki araştırmaları heteroseksel kişilerin ilişkilerinin olumlu ve olumsuz yanlarına odaklanmıştır ve biseksel bireylerin romantik ilişkilerindeki benzersiz deneyimlere odaklanan ok az sayıda araştırma bulunmaktadır. Bu alıřmada, biseksel kadınların romantik partnerlerinin yetiřkinlik dneminde baęlanma figr olarak duygu dzenlenimini saęlayıp saęlamayacaęını ve duygu dzenleniminin saęlanması için partnerin cinsiyet kimliğine gre deęiřip deęiřmedięini anlamayı amalıyoruz. Araştırmacılar, heteroseksel iftlerle yaptıkları alıřmalarda, partnerden gelen destek ve rahatlatmanın bireyin ruhsal ve fiziksel saęlığına olumlu ynde etkisi olduęunu gstermiştir (Fekete, Stephens, Mickelson ve Druley, 2007; Horn, Xu, Beam, Turkheimer ve Emergy, 2013; Selcuk, Stanton, Slatcher ve Ong, 2017). Aynı řekilde, lezbiyen ve gey iftlerin zerine yapılan alıřmalara gre, romantik ilişki srdrmenin, araştırmadaki katılımcıların psikolojik iyi olma halini arttırdıęı ortaya konmuştur (Kornblith, Green, Casey ve Tiet, 2016; Wienke ve Hill, 2009). Ancak araştırmacılar bu faydaların, heteroseksel, lezbiyen ve gay kişilerin ilişkilerinin benzeri olmayan bazı

unsurlardan ötürü biseksüel kişilerin ilişkilerine genellenemeyebileceğini öne sürmüştür (Feinstein ve ark., 2016).

Biseksüel bireyler, partnerlerinin cinsiyet kimliklerine bağı olarak romantik ilişkilerinde benzeri olmayan zorluklarla karşılaşrlar, ki bu da ruhsal sağılıklarını olumsuz yönde etkileyebilmektedir (Feinstein ve Dyar, 2018). Biseksüel bireylere dair mitler -olası bir partnerin binegativite (Armstrong ve Reissing, 2014), özellikle monoseksüel partnerlerle yaşanan romantik ilişkilerde görünmez olma (buna *biseksüel görünmezliğı*; *biseksüel silinikliğı* de denmektedir, Fox, 2006; Yoshino, 2000)- gibi olumsuz klişeler, bu benzeri olmayan zorluklardan bazılarıdır. Dahası, biseksüel kişiler heteroseksüel çoğunluk ve lezbiyen/gey camiasından çifte ayrımcılığa maruz kalmaktadırlar, bu da biseksüel bireylerin ruhsal sağılığını olumsuz yönde etkilemektedir (Dobinson ve Eady, 2010; Dodge ve ark., 2016; Ross). Öte yandan, tüm bu olumsuz deneyimler, partnerin cinsiyet kimliğine göre de çeşitlenmektedir (Feinstein ve Dyar, 2018). Bu nedenle partnerin cinsiyetini baz alan farklı ilişki türlerine dair bir araştırma, biseksüel bireyler arasındaki romantik ilişkilerdeki yetişkin bağlanmasının duygusal düzenlenim işlevini anlamada kritik bir önem taşımaktadır. Bu çalışmada, partnerin cinsiyet kimliğini baz alarak, biseksüel kadınların romantik partnerinin duygu düzenlenimine katkısı araştırılacaktır.

### **1.1. Erken Çocuklukta Bağlanma**

İnsanlar karmaşık bir bağlanma sistemiyle doğarlar. Buna aynı zamanda *bağlanma davranış sistemi* de denmektedir ve ağırlıklı olarak çocukların davranışlarında görülmektedir (Bowlby, 1982). Bağlanma davranışları, çocuğun birinci derecede bakımını sağılayanlara olan yakınlık arayışında ve onlarla yakınlığını sürdürmesinde kendini göstermektedir. Bağlanma sistemindeki alarmin çalışması, çocuğun birincil bakımını sağılayandan yardım arayışına çıkmasına yol açar, ki bu da birincil bakımını sağılayandan yakınlık görmek istemesidir (Bowlby, 1988). Bu durumda birincil bakımını sağılayan kişi mevcutsa ve bu anlarda hassasiyetle karşılık veriyorsa, aralarındaki iletişim ve



senkron; çocuğun sıkıntısını gidermesine ve güven duygusunun aşılmasına yardımcı olur (Bowlby, 1988). Stresin bağlanma figürünün katkısı ile yatışması, çocuğun kendisini korunaklı ve güvende hissettiği güvenli bir limanda kalmasını sağlar. Ardından çocuk çevresini keşfedip güvenli bir ortamda oyun oynayabilir (Bowlby, 1988). Yakınlık, güvenli bir liman ve güvenli ortam sürekli olarak sağlandığında çocuk sonunda birincil bakımını sağlayana karşı güvenli bağlanma yetisini geliştirmeye başlar (Bowlby, 1982). Güvenli bağlanan çocuk, birincil bakımını sağlayana güvendiğinde kendisini güvende hissedeceğini ve çevresinin, keşfetmek için güvenli olduğunu öğrenecektir (Bowlby, 1982).

## **1.2. Bağlanma Teorisi ve Duygu Düzenlenimi Arasındaki İlişki**

Kendisini en çok çocuklukta göstermeye başlayan ve hayat boyu devam eden bağlanma sistemi temelde duygu düzenlenim işlevine hizmet etmektedir (McCutcheon, 2017). Ayrıca tehlikelerden koruma işlevine de hizmet etmekte, fizyolojik ve ruhsal stresi hafifletmektedir (Bowlby, 1980). Yakın zamanda bağlanma teorisi araştırmacıları ağırlıklı olarak bağlanma sistemi ve duygu düzenlenimi arasındaki ilişkiye odaklanmışlardır. Bu noktada; bağlanma teorisi, duygu düzenlenim süreçlerini anlamakta kullanılmıştır (Mikulincer, Shaver ve Pereg, 2003). Schore ve Schore (2008), güvenli bağlanmanın; çocukla birincil bakımını sağlayan arasındaki eş zamanlı ve karşılıklı etkin etkileşimle doğrudan ilintili olduğunu, böylece olumlu duygusal uyarılmanın artışında ve olumsuz duygusal uyarılmanın azalmasında etkisi olduğunu öne sürmüştür. Bakımı sağlayan duyarlı, dikkatli ve hassas bakım veren, duygusal ihtiyaçlar bağlamında çocuğun kendisine inanmasını sağlar, ki bu bağlanma olgusunun işlevini yerine getirmesinde ana etmendir. Bu nedenle güvenli bağlanma deneyimleri çocuğun daha esnek ve yeterli bir duygu düzenlenimine ulaşmasına yardım eder. Buna karşıt olarak, güvensiz bağlanan çocuklarda, tutarsız özen ve duygusal ihtiyaçlar bağlamında çocukla bakımını sağlayan arasındaki eş zamanlı olmayan etkileşim yüzünden duygusal düzenlenim yetisi daha düşük olur (Collins ve Feeney, 2004). Çocuğun birincil bakımını sağlayanla yaşadığı bağlanma

deneyimleri, duygusal düzenlenim bağlamında daha sonraki bağlanmaya ilişkin deneyimlerde ve durumlarda prototipi oluşturur (Collins ve Feeney, 2004).

### **1.3. Yetişkin Bağlanması ve Duygusal Düzenlenim**

Bağlanma ve duygusal düzenlenim arasındaki ilişkiyi inceleyen araştırmacılar, bağlanma figürünün olmadığı durumlarda, dış stres kaynakları söz konusuysa bağlanma figürünü temsil edeni harekete geçirmeye odaklanmışlardır ve duygu düzenleniminde bağlanma figürünün temsilinin etkilerini mercek altına almışlardır (Gillath, Selcuk ve Shaver, 2008; Mikulincer ve Shaver, 2015a; Sbarra ve Hazan, 2008). Bağlanma figürlerinin zihinsel temsilini harekete geçirerek güven duygusunu desteklemenin yalnızca dış stres kaynakları mukabilinde duygusal düzenlenime güçlü bir etkisi olmakla kalmaz aynı zamanda iç stres kaynakları mukabilinde de aynı güçlü etkisi görülür (Mikulincer ve Shaver, 2015b). İçsel olarak oluşturulan stres kaynaklarına maruz kaldıktan sonra, duygu düzenleniminde bağlanma figürlerinin zihinsel temsillerinin etkilerini ilk olarak Selcuk ve arkadaşları (2012) göstermiştir. Anne ve romantik partner gibi bağlanma figürlerinin zihinsel temsili, olumsuz otobiyografik anının tetiklediği olumsuz etkinin giderilmesini kolaylaştırmıştır (Selcuk ve ark., 2012). Bu çalışmalarda, üzücü otobiyografik bir anıyı hatırlamanın ardından bir fotoğrafa bakarak ya da bağlanma figürünün adıyla soyadının baş harflerini görerek oluşturulan destekleyici bir etkileşimi hayal etmenin önceye kıyasla olumsuz etkiyi anlamlı oranda azalttığını belirtmişlerdir (Selcuk ve ark., 2012). Böylece içsel bir stres kaynağına maruz kaldıktan sonra bağlanma figürünün zihinsel temsilini harekete geçirmek, -bir tanıdığa kıyasla- olumsuz etkiden kurtulmayı sağlamıştır.

### **1.4. Biseksüellik**

Cinsel yönelim olarak biseksüellik “romantik ve/ya cinsel anlamda bir cinsiyet kimliğinden daha fazla kimliğe karşı aynı zamanda, aynı şekilde, aynı derecede olmaksızın ilgilenme/çekim duyma ihtimali olma hali”dir (Ochs, 2007, p.84).

Son zamanlarda biseksüel sözcüğü, cinsel ya da romantik anlamda birden fazla cinsiyet kimliğine ilgi duymayı temsil eden, biseksüel spektrumdaki birçok kimliği içeren kapsayıcı bir terime dönüşmüştür. Biseksüel kişiler kendilerini; cinsiyet, cinsel, siyasi kimliklerini temsil eden panseksüel, omniseksüel, poliseksüel, kadın ve erkeklere çekim duyan, homoflexible, heteroflexible, akışkan, kuir ve bunun gibi pek çok kimlik ile tanımlayabilirler (Eisner, 2013). Bu kapsayıcı terim, çeşitli kimliklere sahip biseksüel kişilerin tek bir şemsiye altında toplanmasını; baskının, binegativitenin, monocinsiyetçiliğin etkilerini ortaklaşa yaşayan ve heteroseksüel çoğunluk ve gey topluluklarca empoze edilen tek tiplleştirilmiş biseksüel algısına karşı birlikte direnebilen bir topluluk olmasını sağlamıştır (Eisner, 2013).

### **1.5. Biseksüel Bireylerin Romantik İlişkileri**

Biseksüel kişilerin ruh sağlıkları ve yaşadıkları ilişkilerle ilgili son bulgular, bu ilişkilerin biseksüel bireylerin psikolojik iyi olma haline olumsuz etkisi olabildiğini göstermiştir. Örneğin, biseksüel bireylerde ilişki yaşamaları ve anksiyete belirtilerinin artışı arasında pozitif bir korelasyon vardır (Feinstein, Latack, Bhatia, Davila and Eaton, 2016). Hatta Whitton, Dyar, Newcomb ve Mustanski (2018)'nin çalışmasının bulgularına göre biseksüel bireylerin ilişki yaşamaları ve ruhsal sıkıntı seviyesi arasında da doğrusal bir ilişki vardır. Bu sebepten, ilişki yaşamak lezbiyen ya da gey kişilerde azınlık stresi konusunda tampon oluştursa da aynı şey biseksüel bireyler için geçerli değildir (Feinstein ve ark., 2016). İlişki yaşamalarından kaynaklı stres artışının, monoseksüel partnerle yaşanan tek eşli ilişkide biseksüel bireylerin git gide artan görünmezliğiyle ilintili olabileceği öne sürülmüştür (Feinstein ve Dyar, 2018). Biseksüel bireylerin, ilişki içinde de dışında da maruz kaldıkları aşırı ayrımcılık ve damgalanmayı düşününce biseksüel bireylerin ilişkilerde ve bağlanma konusundaki deneyimlerini daha iyi anlamak önem kazanmaktadır.

Eş cinsiyet kimliği taşıyan partnerle birliktelik yaşayan biseksüel kadınlar, farklı cinsiyet kimliği ile ilişki yaşayan biseksüel kadınlara göre, binegativitenden

dolayı lezbiyen/gey topluluklardan dışlanmaya ve reddedilmeye daha az maruz kalmışlardır (Dyar ve ark., 2014). Eş cinsiyet kimliği taşıyan partnerle birliktelik yaşayan biseksüel kadınların, farklı cinsiyet kimlikleri ile ilişki yaşayan biseksüel kadınlarla kıyaslandığında, kimlik belirsizliğinin daha fazla olduğu, daha sıklıkla lezbiyen olarak görüldüğü bulgusuna varılmıştır (Dyar ve ark., 2014). Buna ek olarak, eş cinsiyet kimlikli partner ile ilişki yaşayan biseksüel kadınlarda, farklı cinsiyet kimliği ile ilişki yaşayan ya da ilişkisi olmayan biseksüel kadınlara göre anlamlı oranda düşük depresyon seviyelerine rastlanmıştır (Dyar ve ark., 2014). Eş cinsiyet kimlikli partner ile birliktelik yaşayan biseksüel kadınlarda daha sıklıkla lezbiyen olarak görülmeleri kimlik belirsizliği yaşamalarına sebebiyet verirken, farklı cinsiyet kimlikli partner ile ilişki yaşayan biseksüel kadınlarda lezbiyen/gey topluluklarında yaşadıkları binegativite bu bireylerde daha yüksek depresyon seviyelerine yol açmıştır (Dyar ve ark., 2014).

Öte yandan Arriaga ve Parent (2019), biseksüel erkeklerin değil ancak biseksüel kadınların lezbiyen/gey topluluklarında karşılaştığı binegativiteyle partnerin cinsiyet kimliği arasında anlamlı bir ilişki bulmuştur. Ayrıca içselleştirilmiş binegativitenin, kadın partnerleri olan biseksüel kadınlarda tepe yapmasına yol açtığını bulmuştur. Hatta lezbiyen/gey topluluklardan binegativiteye maruz kaldığını bildiren biseksüel kadınlarda eş cinsiyet kimlikleriyle romantik ilişki yaşadıklarında bu içselleşmiş binegativite maksimum seviyeye çıkmaktadır, ancak aynı bulgular erkek partnerler ile ilişki yaşayan biseksüel kadınlar için geçerli değildir (Arriaga ve Parent, 2019). Bu sonuçlar, damgalanma beklentisi konusunda Dyar ve arkadaşlarının (2014) çalışmasının bulguları ile örtüşmemiştir (Arriaga ve Parent, 2019). Erkek partneri olan biseksüel kadınlar lezbiyen/gey topluluklarından binegativiteyle karşılaşmayı beklerken, kadın partneri olan biseksüel kadınların karşılaşmayı beklemediklerini öne sürmüşlerdir (Arriaga ve Parent, 2019). Arriaga ve Parent (2019), kadın partnerleri olan biseksüel kadınların, lezbiyen gey topluluklarda binegativiteyle karşılaşmayı beklemedikleri için karşılaştıklarında bunu kimliklerine

yorabilmeye ve dolayısıyla karşılaştıkları binegativiteyi içselleştirmeye meyilli olabileceklerini öne sürmektedir.

Sonuç olarak, ilişki yaşamak biseksüel bireylerde stres kaynağı da olabilir, destek kaynağı da. Bu noktada, bu şıkların belirleyicilerinden biri partnerin cinsiyet kimliği olduğu öne sürülmüştür (eş cinsiyet veya farklı cinsiyet kimlikli partner) (Feinstein ve Dyar, 2018). Bu sebepten biseksüel bireylerin eş cinsiyet kimlikleriyle ya da farklı cinsiyetten partnerleriyle yaşadıkları ilişki deneyimlerini incelemek anlamlıdır.

Eşcinsel evliliklerinin yasal veya LGBTIQ+ topluluğunun fazlasıyla görünür olduğu ülkelerde biseksüel bireyleri odağa alan araştırmalar artışta olsa da Türkiye’de özellikle biseksüel popülasyonuna odaklandığı bilinen bir çalışma yoktur. Türkiye’de eşcinsel evlilikler henüz yasal değildir ve LGBTIQ+ bireyler hâlâ şiddet, düşmanlık ve ayrımcılık tehdidiyle karşı karşıyadır (Yılmaz ve Göçmen, 2015). Bu yüzden Türkiye’de erkek partnerleriyle ilişkisi olanlara kıyasla, kadınlarla ya da non-binary partnerleriyle ilişki yaşayan biseksüel kadınlar için ilişkilerinin anlamlı stresi kaynağı olabileceği varsayılmıştır.

#### **1.6. Çalışmanın Konusu**

Bu tezin öncelikli amacı bir grup biseksüel kadında, içsel bir stres kaynağını takiben romantik bir partnerin zihinsel temsilini harekete geçirmenin duygu düzenlenimine yardımcı olup olmadığını incelemektir. Bu sebeple romantik partnerin duygu düzenlenimine katkısı bir tanıtım katkısıyla karşılaştırılacaktır. İkincil amaçsa, duygu düzenleniminin romantik partnerin cinsiyet kimliğine göre değişip değişmediğini incelemektir. Bu amaçla biseksüel kadınların erkek ve kadın+ partnerlerinin duygusal düzenlenime katkısı karşılaştırılacaktır. Son olarak, biseksüel kadınların, kimliğin bağlanmaya olan potansiyel etkisini ortadan kaldırmak için, LGB kimliği kontrol edilmiştir.

## 1.7. Hipotezler

*1.Hipotez:* Olumsuz duygu düzenleniminde birincil figürün anlamlı bir etki beklenmektedir. Biseksüel kadınlar tanıdık durumuyla kıyaslandığında partner durumunda çok daha iyi olumsuz duygu düzenlenimi gösterecektir.

*2.Hipotez:* Olumsuz duygu düzenleniminde partnerin cinsiyet kimliğinin anlamlı bir etki göstermesi beklenmektedir. Erkeklerle ilişki yaşayan biseksüel kadınlar, kadın+ partnerleriyle ilişki yaşayan biseksüel kadınlara göre çok daha iyi olumsuz duygu düzenlenimi gösterecektir.

*3.Hipotez:* Birincil figürle partnerin cinsiyet kimliği arasında anlamlı bir etkileşim beklenmektedir. Üzücü bir otobiyografik anıyı hatırlamanın ardından partnerin zihinsel temsilini harekete geçirmek, kadın+ partneriyle birlikte olan biseksüel kadınlara kıyasla, erkek partneriyle ilişkide olan biseksüel kadınların daha iyi olumsuz duygusal düzenlenimi sağlayacaktır. Ayrıca, üzücü otobiyografik bir anıyı hatırlamanın ardından bir tanıdığın zihinsel temsilini harekete geçirmek, biseksüel kadın grupları arasında bir fark yaratmayacaktır.

*4.Hipotez:* Üzücü otobiyografik anılara maruz kalmak, taban değere kıyasla olumsuz duyguyu anlamlı oranda artırması beklenmektedir.

*5.Hipotez:* İki farklı travmatik (üzücü otobiyografik) anıya ait ipucu kelimelerin yaratacağı olumsuz duygu artışı arasında anlamlı bir fark olmaması beklenmektedir.

*6.Hipotez:* Üzücü otobiyografik anılara ikinci kez maruz kalmak olumsuz duygunun artışında anlamlı bir fark yaratmaması beklenmektedir.

## 2. YÖNTEM

### 2.1.Örneklem

Bu çalışmada amaçlı örneklem yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Örneklem bi+ kimlikleriyle (83 biseksüel, 4 panseksüel, 3 hem kadına hem erkeğe ilgi duyan, 2 biseksüel/panseksüel, 2 bi+, 1 homo-esnek, 1 akışkan cinsiyet) 96 biseksüel kadın dahil olmuştur (92 kadın, 3 non-binary ve 1 akışkan cinsiyet). Bu kişiler, birinci ve ikinci aşamaları başarıyla tamamlamış ve çalışmanın son analizine dahil edilmiştir. Nihai örneklem Türkiye'nin büyük üç şehrinde 96 biseksüel kadın katılmıştır: 63'ü Ankara'dan (%65.6'sı), 30'u İstanbul'dan (%31.3'ü) ve 3'ü İzmir'dendir (%3.1'i). Son örnekleme yer alanların yaşları 18 ila 38 arasında değişmektedir. ( $M = 23.84$ ,  $SD = 4.3$ ) Eğitim bağlamında 67 kişi lisans (%69.8'i), 20 kişi yüksek lisans (%20.8'i), 1 kişi doktora derecesine (%1'i) sahiptir ve 8 kişi lise mezunudur (%8.3'ü). İş bağlamında, 61 kişi öğrencidir (%63.5'i), 32 kişi çalışmaktadır (%33.4'ü), 2 kişi çalışmamaktadır (%2.1'i), 1 kişi iş durumunu belirtmemiştir (%1'i). Medeni durum bağlamında, 3 kişi evlidir (%3.1'i), 91 kişi bekardır (%95.8'i) ve 1 kişi boşanmıştır (%1'i). En çok yaşanılan bölge tipi bağlamında, 76 kişi hayatlarının çoğunda şehirleşmiş bölgelerde (%73'ü), 13 kişi kasabalarda (%13.5'i) ve 10 kişi köylerde yaşamıştır (%10.4'ü). Sadece bir katılımcının çocuğu vardır (%1'inin), 95 katılımcının çocuğu yoktur (%99'unun).

### 2.2. Veri Toplama Araçları

#### 2.2.1. Demografik Özellikler

Demografik özelliklere dair formda; yaşa, cinsiyet kimliğine, cinsel yönelime, ilişki durumuna (ilişkide olma ya da olmama), partnerin cinsiyet kimliğine, partnerin cinsel yönelimine, ilişki süresine (ay bazında), ilişkide partnere açılma konusuna (evet/hayır şeklinde) ikamet edilen şehre, bölge türüne (en çok yaşanılan), eğitim seviyesine, iş durumuna, aylık gelire, medeni duruma, çocuk

durumuna (evet/hayır şeklinde), kronik hastalıklara, hastalığın adına (varsa eğer), mevcut psikolojik bozukluk(lar)a, psikolojik bozukluğun adına (varsa eğer) dair sorular sorulmuştur.

### **2.2.3. Üzücü Otobiyografik Anıların Yeniden Üretimi**

Katılımcılardan hayatlarındaki, mevcut romantik partnerleriyle ilgili olmayan en travmatik iki olayı (üzücü otobiyografik anıları) hatırlayıp tasvir etmeleri istenmiştir. İlk travmatik olayın ortalama önem oranı 4,98'dir ve ortalamanın  $t(94) = 17.217, p < .001$  değerleri ile anlamlı oranda üzerindedir. İkinci travmatik olayın ortalama önem oranı 4,97'dir ve yine bu oran ortalamanın değerleri ile  $t(94) = 15.141, p < .001$  anlamlı oranda üzerindedir.

### **2.2.4. Tanıdık Belirleme**

Katılımcılardan bir tanıdık, yani katılımcının hayatında çok az etkisi olan birini belirlemeleri istenmiştir.

### **2.2.5. Lezbiyen, Gey ve Biseksüel Kimlik Ölçeği – Türkçe (LGTIS-TR)**

Katılımcılar aynı zamanda Lezbiyen, Gey ve Biseksüel Kimlik Ölçeği – Türkçe (LGBIS-TR)'yi de tamamlamışlardır. Bu envanter, LGBIS (Mohr ve Kendra, 2011)'den Türkçe'ye Kemer, Toplu-Demirtaş, Pope ve Ummak tarafından uyarlanmıştır (2017). Bu envanter, LGB kimliğini değerlendirmektedir ve sekiz alt ölçeği bulunur: Kabullenilme Kaygısı, Gizlenme Motivasyonu, Kimlik Belirsizliği, İçselleştirilmiş Homonegativite, Kimlik Üstünlüğü, Zorlu Süreç, Kimlik Olumlama ve Kimlik Merkeziliyeti. LGBIS-TR, altılı bir likert ölçeğidir.



### **2.2.6. Anı Canlandırma Alıştırması**

Öncesinde katılımcıların yaşadığı travmatik olaylar ve önceden belirlenen anı ipuçları, hatırlatıcı olarak ekranda gösterilmiştir.

### **2.2.7. İlk Yönlendirme (Baş Harf Alıştırması)**

Partnerlerin ve tanıdıkların ad ve soyadlarının baş harfleri ardı ardına ekranda gösterilmiştir.

### **2.2.8. Bağlanma Figürü ile Duygu Regülasyonu Deneyi (BFDR)**

Partner, bağlanma figürüdür. Travmatik olay, içsel stres kaynağının tetikleyicisidir. Stres seviyesindeki değişikliği ölçmek için duygu iki soruyla tartılır: “Şu anda ne kadar iyi hissediyorsun?” ve “Şu anda ne kadar kötü hissediyorsun?” Cevaplar için yedili likert tipi ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Bu sorular olumlu ve olumsuz duygu ölçümlerini göstermektedir.

## **2.3. İşlem**

Bu çalışma iki aşamada yapılmıştır. İlk aşama çevrimiçi bir ankettir ve ikinci aşama ise anı canlandırma alıştırmasını, baş harf alıştırmasını ve BFDR’yı içeren laboratuvarda yapılan deney oluşturmaktadır. İlk aşamadaki çevrimiçi anket Qualtrics Anket Yazılımı kullanılarak hazırlanmıştır. İkinci aşama, ilk aşamadan 1 ila 15 gün sonra laboratuvarda, bilgisayar tabanlı olarak gerçekleşmiştir.

Deneyin sonunda katılımcılara hem sözlü olarak (araştırmacı tarafından) hem de yazılı olarak (Ek F) çalışma hakkında tam bilgilendirme yapılmıştır.

## **2.4. Veri Toplama**

Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi (ODTÜ) Etik Komitesi'nden etik onay Ağustos 2018'de alınmıştır (Ek A). Veri toplama için Türkiye'nin en büyük üç şehri olan Ankara, İstanbul ve İzmir belirlenmiştir. Bu şehirlerdeki LGBTIQ+ toplulukları ve sivil toplum kuruluşları (STK) araştırılmış ve onlarla iletişime geçilmiştir.

## **2.5. Veri Analiz Stratejisi**

Üzücü otobiyografik anı canlandırmasının olumsuz duygulara etkisi, birçok tek örneklemli t-testi analizi (one sample t-test) kullanılarak test edilmiştir. Farklı anı ipuçlarına ve aynı şeye tekrar maruz kalmanın etkilerinin birinci ve ikinci kez ölçümleri, ANOVA Tekrarlı Varyans Analizi kullanılarak elde edilmiştir. Ayrıca Karma ANOVA analizi, olumsuz duygu düzenlenimi üzerindeki birincil figürün, partnerin cinsiyet kimliğinin temel etkisini ve ikisinin etkileşiminin etkisini test etmekte kullanılmıştır. Bütün anlamlı ortak değişkenlerin etkisi ANCOVA kullanılarak ortadan kaldırılmıştır. Tekrarlayarak ölçülen partner ve tanıdık durumları boyunca partnerin cinsiyet kimliğinin olumsuz duygu düzenlenimine etkisi ANCOVA'da analiz edilmiştir. Tüm ANOVA ve ANCOVA testleri, SPSS'nin 23. Versiyonu'ndaki GLM Yaklaşımı kullanılarak yapılmıştır. Her teste dair tüm ön koşulların sağlanıp sağlanmadığı da test edilmiştir.

## **3. BULGULAR**

### **3.1. Ön Analiz**

Ön analizin bir parçası olarak, deney süresince anı-sonrası olumsuz duygulanım değişimi (post-memory  $NA_{\Delta}$ ) sonuçları için betimsel istatistik (aritmetik ortalama, ortanca, standart sapma, varyans, çarpıklık ölçüsü, basıklık ölçüsü ve açıklık) ve partnerin ile tanıdığın durumları kısmında ortalama figür-sonrası olumsuz duygulanım değişimi (post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$ ) hesaplanmıştır.

### 3.2. Demografik Değişkenlerde Grup Farklılıkları

Pearson'ın ki-kare testi serisi, kadın+'larla partner olan ve erkeklerle partner olan biseksüel kadınlar arasında tek bir anlamlı grup farkı olduğunu göstermiştir, ki bu partnerin cinsel yönelimidir,  $X^2(6, N = 95) = 87.20, p < .001$ . Partnerin cinsiyet kimliği ve cinsel yönelimi çapraz tablolaması, kadın+ kimlikli partnerlerin %61.3'ünün biseksüel spektrum yönelimleri olduğunu, %36.4'ünün lezbiyen ve %2.3'ünün heteroseksüel olduğunu; öte yandan erkek kimlikli partnerlerin %96.1'inin heteroseksüel ve %3.9'unun biseksüel spektrum yönelimleri olduğunu göstermiştir.

### 3.3. Kontrol Değişkenlerindeki Grup Farklılıkları

Birbirinden bağımsız t-testi analiz (independent t-test) serisi yürütülmüştür. Erkeklerle ilişki yaşayan biseksüel kadınlar ( $M = 2.16; SD = .97$ ), kadın+ partnerle birlikte olan biseksüel kadınlara kıyasla Kimlik Belirsizliği'ndeki sonuç anlamlı oranda yüksek çıkmıştır ( $M = 1.80; SD = .77$ ),  $t(92.34) = -2.021, p < .05$ . Kadın+ partnerle birlikte olan biseksüel kadınlar ( $M = 3.85; SD = 1.17$ ), erkeklerle ilişki yaşayan biseksüel kadınlara kıyasla Kimlik Merkeziyeti'nde de sonuç anlamlı oranda yüksek çıkmıştır ( $M = 3.36; SD = 1.14$ ),  $t(93) = 2.06, p < .05$ . Ayrıca biseksüel kadınların erkek partnerle ilişki yaşama süresi ( $M = 20.85, SD = 20.22$ ), kadın+ partnerle ilişki yaşama süresine göre anlamlı oranda daha uzundur ( $M = 12.42, SD = 11.04$ ),  $t(79.49) = -2.57, p < .05$ . Varyansların eşit olduğu varsayılmamıştır.

### 3.4. Üzücü Otobiyografik Anı Canlandırmasının Olumsuz Duygular Üzerinde Etkisi (Post-memory NA<sub>Δ</sub>)

Tek örneklemli t-testi serisi, her iki anı İpucunun da (Anı İpucu-1 ve Anı İpucu-2) anı-sonrası olumsuz duygu değişimi sonuçlarının dört deney boyunca anlamlı

ölçüde sıfırın üstünde olduğunu göstermiştir ( $M_s > 0.92$ ,  $t_s > 8.64$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d_s > 1.13$ ).

Farklı anı ipuçlarının (İpucu-1 ve İpucu-2) etkisini kıyaslarken iki sefer (birincisinde ve ikincisinde) boyunca olumsuz etki yaratmada A 2 x 2 ANOVA Varyans Analizi kullanılmıştır. Karma ANOVA analizinin sonuçları, olumsuz duygu yaratımı bağlamında ne farklı anı ipuçlarının ne de zamanın katılımcılarda bir farka yol açmadığını göstermiştir.

### **3.5. Birincil Figürün, Partnerin Cinsiyetinin ve Birincil Figürle Partnerin Cinsiyet Kimliğinin Etkileşiminin Olumsuz Duygu Düzenlenimine Etkisi (Post-Prime NA<sub>Δ</sub>)**

İkiye (partnerin cinsiyet kimliği: kadın+'ya karşı erkek) iki (birincil figür: partnere karşı tanıdık) şeklinde Karma ANOVA analizinde, bağlı faktör olarak partnerin cinsiyet kimliği ve bağlı olmayan faktör olarak birincil figür sunulmuştur. Sonuçlar, olumsuz duygu düzenleniminde birincil figürün anlamlı etkisi olduğunu göstermiştir  $F(1,93) = 38.33$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .29$ . Bu yüzden kişinin, üzücü otobiyografik bir anının tetiklenmesinin ardından bir tanıdığına kıyasla, partneri tarafından desteklendiğini ve rahatlatıldığını hayal etmesi olumsuz duygu düzenleniminin daha anlamlı oranda olmasını sağlamaktadır.

Sonuçlar; olumsuz duygu düzenleniminde, partnerin cinsiyet kimliğinin anlamlı etkisi olduğunu da göstermiştir  $F(1,93) = 4.020$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .041$ . Bu sonuç kadın+ partnerle ilişki yaşayan katılımcıların, erkeklerle ilişkide olan katılımcılara kıyasla daha iyi seviyede figür-sonrası olumsuz duygu düzenlenimi olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Farklı bir şekilde dile getirecek olursak, kadın+ partneri olan biseksüel kadınlar, erkek partneri olan biseksüel kadınlara göre olumsuz duygudan kurtulmada, romantik partnerlerinin zihinsel temsilini (tanıdığa kıyasla) harekete geçirmekten çok daha anlamlı oranda faydalanmışlardır.

Öte yandan, etkileşim hipoteziye desteklenmemiştir. Partnerin cinsiyetiyle birincil figür arasındaki etkileşimde istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir sonuç ortaya çıkmamıştır. Olumsuz duygu düzenlenimi bağlamında (post prime  $NA_{\Delta}$ ) üzücü otobiyografik bir anıyı canlandırmanın ardından partnerin zihinsel temsilini harekete geçirmek erkek ya da kadın+ partneri olan biseksüel kadınlar arasında anlamlı bir fark yaratmazken aynı şekilde bir tanıdığın zihinsel temsilini harekete geçirmek de erkek ya da kadın+ partneri olan biseksüel kadınlarda bir fark yaratmamıştır.

### **3.6. Aşamalı Regresyon Analizi**

Partnerin cinsel yönelimi, Kimlik Belirsizliği, Kimlik Merkeziliyeti ve ilişki süresi, partner durumu ve tanıdık durumunda post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  sonucunu tahmin etmek için test edilmiştir. Partner durumunda post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  sonuçlarının bağımlı değişken olarak hesaplandığı Aşamalı Regresyon Analizi sonuçlarına göre, partner durumunda post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  sonuçlarındaki %11,8 oranındaki değişkenlik anlamlı oranda sadece Kimlik Belirsizliğiyle ön görülmüştür ( $F(1,93) = 12.45, p = .001$ ) ve  $R^2 = .118$ . Ayrıca, tanıdık durumunda post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  sonuçlarının bağımlı değişken olarak hesaplandığı Aşamalı Regresyon Analizi sonuçlarına göre, tanıdık durumunda ortalama post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  sonuçlarındaki %5,1 oranındaki değişkenlik anlamlı oranda sadece yine Kimlik Belirsizliğiyle ön görülmüştür ( $F(1,93) = 5.02, p < .05$ ) ve  $R^2 = .051$ .

### **3.7. Belirlenen Ortak Değişkenlerin Kontrolünden Sonra Birincil Figürün, Partnerin Cinsiyetinin ve Birincil Figürle Partnerin Cinsiyet Kimliğinin Etkileşiminin Olumsuz Duygu Düzenlenimine Etkisi**

Ortak değişken olarak Kimlik Belirsizliği verisi girildikten sonra olumsuz duygu düzenlenimi üzerinde partnerin cinsiyet kimliğinin temel etkisini değerlendirirken 2 x 2 ANCOVA Tekrarlı Varyans Analizi kullanılmıştır. Sonuçlar, Kimlik Belirsizliği'ni kontrol ettikten sonra, partnerin cinsiyetinin temel etkisinin anlamlı olmadığını göstermiştir. Bu yüzden, kimlik belirsizliğinin

etkisi ortadan kaldırılınca, partner ve tanıdık durumlarında partnerin cinsiyet kimliği, olumsuz duygu düzenlenimini anlamlı oranda etkilememiştir.

### **3.8. Birincil Figür Durumlarındaki Post-Prime $NA_{\Delta}$ Üzerine Sıra Etkisi Konusunda Tamamlayıcı Analiz**

Birincil figürün iki seviyesindeki uygulanma sırasının, çalışmanın sonuçlarına anlamlı bir etkisi olup olmadığını test etmek için tamamlayıcı analizler yapılmıştır. Bağımsız örneklem t-testleri uygulanmış ve sonuçlar tanıdık durumunda, tanıdığından önce partneri tarafından rahatlatıldığını hayal eden katılımcılara kıyasla, partnerinden önce tanıdığı tarafından rahatlatıldığını hayal eden katılımcılarda daha düşük post-prime  $NA_{\Delta}$  olduğunu göstermektedir.

ANCOVA Tekrarlı Varyans Analizi, olumsuz duygu düzenlenimindeki birincil figür etkisinin hâlâ anlamlı olduğunu göstermektedir,  $F(1,92) = 11.236, p = .001, \eta^2 = .109$ , ve sıra etkisini kontrol ettikten sonra olumsuz duygu düzenlenimindeki partnerin cinsiyet kimliğinin anlamlı etkisini göstermektedir  $F(1,92) = 4.40, p = .04, \eta^2 = .046$ . Sonrasında bir ANCOVA Tekrarlı Varyans Analizi daha yapılmıştır. Çalışmadaki temel Tekrarlı Varyans Analizi ANCOVA sonuçlarında anlamlı etkisi olup olmadığına bakmak için ikinci ortak değişken olarak Kimlik Belirsizliği'ne eşlik eden sıra etkisi ortak değişken olarak hesaplanmıştır. Bu ANCOVA'nın sonuçları hâlâ partnerin cinsiyet kimliğinin bu sıra faktörü göze alındığında olumsuz duygu düzenlenimine anlamlı bir etkisi olmadığını göstermektedir  $F(1,91) = 3.82, p = .054, \eta^2 = .040$  ve birincil figürün ise hala anlamlı bir etkisi olduğunu göstermektedir  $F(1,91) = 27.859, p < .001, \eta^2 = .234$ . Bu sebeple, partnerin cinsiyet kimliğinin hâlâ anlamlı etkisi olduğunu ancak katılımcıların Kimlik Belirsizliği kontrol altına alınca etkisini kaybettiğini gözler önüne sererek sıra etkisinin önceki analizlerden ortaya çıkan sonuçları etkilemediği sonucuna varılmıştır.

#### 4. TARTIřMA

Biseksüel kiřilerin iliřkileri bağlamında içsel ya da dışsal strese karşılık olarak duygu regülasyonu sağlamada bağlanma figürünün rolü daha önce incelenmemiřtir. Bu çalıřma, biseksüel kadın örneklemindeki heteroseksüel kiřiler içinde yetiřkin bağlanması ve duygu düzenlenim arasındaki iliřkilendirmede temel bulguları türeten ilk çalıřma olabileceęi gibi aynı zamanda bu iliřkilendirmede partnerin cinsiyet kimlięinin rolünü gösteren ilk çalıřma da olabilir. Bu sebeple, bu çalıřma, partnerlerinin cinsiyet kimlięi ve bunun duygu regülasyonundaki romantik partnerlerin iřleviyle nasıl etkileřime geçtięine dayanarak, biseksüel kiřilerin iliřki yařarken karşılařtıkları özgün zorlukları anlamamıza yardımcı olmaktadır.

Çalıřmanın sonuçları, biseksüel kadınlar arasında romantik partnerin tanıdığa kıyasla olumsuz etkiyi anlamlı oranda azalttıęını ortaya çıkarmıřtır. Dięer bir deyiřle, bu çalıřmada romantik partner olan bağlanma figürünün zihinsel temsilini hayal etmek, bir tanıdığın zihinsel temsilini hayal etmeye kıyasla, biseksüel kadınların travma hatırlama sonucu artmıř olumsuz duygularının azalmasını sağlamıřtır. Bu sonuç, heteroseksüel bireyler arasında olumsuz duygu düzenlenimini başlatan řeyin üzücü otobiyografik bir anıyı canlandırmanın ardından bağlanma figürünün zihinsel temsilini hayal etmek olduęunu keřfeden Selçuk ve arkadaşlarının (2012) bulgularını desteklemektedir.

Çalıřmanın řu anki bulguları stres artıřından sonra bağlanma figürünü hayal etmenin, bağlanma figürü olmayan birini hayal etmeye kıyasla, hormonal stresi (noradrenerjik) hafiflettięini iddia eden başka bir çalıřmayla da tutarlılık göstermektedir (Bryant ve Chan, 2015). Kiřinin kolunu soęuk suya sokmak (dışsal stres etkeni) noradrejenik tepkinin artmasıyla sonuçlanmıřtır. Bu da fizyolojik stresin arttıęını ve bağlanma figürünü hayal etmenin, bağlanma figürü olmayan birini hayal etmeye kıyasla, bu strese olan tepkiyi (tükürükle test edilmiřtir) anlamlı oranda düzenledięini göstermektedir (Bryant ve Chan, 2015).

Daha günümüze yakın bir zamanda, Bryant ve Chan (2017), bağlanma figürünün zihinsel temsilinin istem dışı anıların hatırlanmasının sıklığını azaltarak sıkıntıyı nasıl aza indirdiğini saptamıştır. Bağlanma figürünü öncüllestiren katılımcılar, bağlanma figürü olmayan olumlu uyararı öncüllestiren katılımcılara göre anlamlı oranda daha az sayıda istem dışı anı hatırlamıştır (Bryant ve Chan, 2017). Bu çalışmalara paralel olarak, elimizdeki çalışmada, biseksüel romantik ilişkilerde katılımcıların partnerlerinin cinsiyet kimlikleri sebebiyle karşılaştıkları benzeri olmaya zorlukları göz önüne almazsak, üzücü otobiyografik bir anıyı hatırlamanın ardından biseksüel kadınların bağlanma figürünü öncüllestirmesi olumsuz duygu düzenlenimini anlamlı oranda sağladığı ortaya çıkmıştır.

Mevcut bulgular romantik partnerin koruyucu bir faktör olabileceğini ve biseksüel kadınların ruhsal sağlığını iyileştirme yolunda anlamlı bir potansiyel taşıdığını da göstermiştir. Aynı şekilde, Feinstein ve ark. (2016), ayrımcılık ve partneri olmayan biseksüel kişilerde artan depresyon belirtileri arasında anlamlı bir korelasyon bulmuştur. Bu korelasyon ise ilişki yaşayan biseksüel bireyler için geçerli değildir. Ayrıca, Whitton ve ark. (2018) partneri olmayan ve mağdur olan LGBT kişilerinin ruhsal sıkıntılarının arttığını ve bunun cinsel yönelime göre değişmediğini keşfetmiştir. Başka bir deyişle, biseksüel ya da lezbiyen/gey kimliğe sahip olmak mağduriyetle ruhsal sıkıntı ilişkilendirmesinde bir fark yaratmamıştır. Benzer bir şekilde, partneri olanlarda aynı korelasyon bulunamamıştır. Ancak aynı zamanda ilişki yaşamak ruhsal sıkıntıyı arttırabilir, özellikle biseksüel bireylerdeki anksiyete belirtilerinden bu anlaşılmaktadır (Feinstein ve ark., 2016). Biseksüel kadınlar arasında duygu regülasyonu üzerinde romantik partnerin etkisine bakacak olursak bu çalışmanın bulguları daha somut bir tepkiyi ortaya koymaktadır. Bu çalışmanın sonuçları, travmatik bir anıyı hatırladıktan sonra, romantik partnerlerin zihinsel temsilini harekete geçirmenin, biseksüel kadınların, bir kadın+ partneri ya da erkek partneri olsun, bir tanıdığı öncüllestirmesine kıyasla olumsuz duygu düzenlenimini başlattığını net bir şekilde gözler önüne sermektedir. İlişkisi olmayan ve ilişkisi olan biseksüel bireyler arasındaki ruh sağlığıyla ilgili sonuçlara dair bulgulardaki



tutarsızlık, bağımlı değişken olarak ölçülen unsurla ilgili olabilir. Çünkü anksiyete, depresyon ve duygu regülasyonu zorluklarının tümü kişinin ruh sağlığıyla ilgilidir ancak kaynağında farklı nedenler bu bulguların kıyaslanmasında zorluk yaratıyor olabilir.

İlginç bir şekilde partnerin cinsiyet kimliğinin anlamlı rolü, Kimlik Belirsizliği'ni kontrol ettikten sonra bağlanmaya bağlı regülasyonu ortadan kalkmıştır. Diğer bir deyişle, Kimlik Belirsizliği kontrol edildikten sonra, çalışmanın nihai sonucu partnerin cinsiyet kimliğinin bağlanmaya bağlı duygu düzenleniminde artık anlamlı olmadığını göstermiştir. Şu anki çalışmada erkeklerle ilişkide olan biseksüel kadınların, kadın+ kişilerle ilişkide olan biseksüel kadınlara kıyasla, daha çok Kimlik Belirsizliği yaşadığı bulunmuştur. Bu sonucun bir sebebi, biseksüel bir kadın olarak bir erkekle ilişkide olmanın kişinin biseksüelliğinin görünmezliğine yol açması olabilir. Dışarıdan bakanlar biseksüel kadınların heteroseksüel olduğunu varsayabilir. Bu görünmezliğin sonucu olarak da biseksüel kişi de kendi kimliğini sorgulayabilir ve daha yüksek oranda Kimlik Belirsizliği yaşayabilir. Romantik bağlanmada Kimlik Belirsizliği etkisinin altında yatan nedenler birkaç şekilde açıklanabiliyor olsa da bulgular, romantik ilişkilerdeki kimlik belirsizliği ve biseksüel yetişkin bağlanması arasındaki ilişkiye dair daha detaylı araştırma ihtiyacını göstermektedir.

### **Klinik Uygulamalar**

Bu çalışmanın bulgularının gösterdiği üzere, yetişkin bağlanma figürü olan romantik partner, biseksüel kadınlarda olumsuz duygu düzenlenimini sağlamaktadır. Özellikle de kadın+ partnerler ya da erkek partnerlerle ilişki yaşayan biseksüel kadınlar, travmatik bir anıya maruz kaldıktan sonra, partnerinin onları desteklediğini hayal ettiklerinde olumlu ruh haline geçmişlerdir. Her ne kadar kadın+ partnerle birlikte olan biseksüel kadınlar, erkek partnerle birlikte olan biseksüel kadınlara göre bağlanma figürünü hayal etmekten anlamlı oranda daha fazla faydalanmış olsalar da, iki grubun da anlamlı ölçüde olumsuz duygudan kurtulduğu göz önünde bulundurulmalıdır. Ayrıca

partnerin cinsiyet kimliğinin olumsuz duygu düzenlenimine etkisi, çalışmada biseksüel kadınların Kimlik Belirsizliği unsuru kontrol edildiğinde önemini yitirmiştir. Bu sonuçlar, iki açıdan ileriki terapötik müdahaleleri aydınlatmaktadır. Bunlardan biri, partnerin cinsiyet kimliğinin dışarıdan bakanların biseksüel kadınlara olan ayrımcı tavırlarını etkilemesidir. Bu görece partnerin cinsiyet kimliğini baz alan ayrımcılık, biseksüel kişinin kimliğini hedef almaktadır. Yine de biseksüel kadınlar ilişkiye girdiğinde, biseksüellere karşı olumsuz yargılar artmasına rağmen partnerin cinsiyetini göz ardı edersek, bağlanma figürü olarak romantik partner, biseksüel kadınların psikolojik iyi olma halini koruyan bir rol oynayabileceği öngörülmektedir. Ruh sağlığı uzmanları biseksüel kişinin partnerinin cinsiyet kimliğini baz alarak ve bunun biseksüel kadınların ruh sağlığını nasıl etkileyebileceği konusunda, heteroseksüel çoğunluğun ya da LGBTIQ+ toplulukların biseksüel bireylere uyguladığı ayrımcı davranışlara karşı yine de dikkatli olmalıdır.

Son olarak biseksüel bireylere uygulanan ayrımcılığın olumsuz etkisini göz önüne alınca, biseksüel danışanın ruh sağlığını düzenlemede ait olma hissi gibi bazı koruyucu faktörleri keşfetmek çok anlamlıdır. Örneğin, heteroseksüel çoğunluğa aidiyet hissini daha az yaşayan biseksüel kadınlar için, lezbiyen topluluğa aidiyet hissi depresyon belirtileri bağlamında koruyucu bir faktör olarak bulunmuştur (McLaren ve Castillo, 2020). Ayrıca heteroseksüel topluluğa daha fazla aidiyet hissedenden biseksüel kadınlar daha az depresyon belirtisi göstermiştir. Lezbiyen topluluğa daha az aidiyet hissedilmesi hali hazırda heteroseksüel çoğunluğa daha çok aidiyet hissedenden biseksüel kadınlar için ruh sağlığını koruyucu bir faktör olarak anlamlı bulunmamıştır (McLaren ve Castillo, 2020). İki topluluktan birine aidiyet hissetmeyen biseksüel kadınlarda ise en yüksek depresyon belirtileri görüldüğü kaydedilmiştir (McLaren ve Castillo, 2020). LGBTIQ+ topluluğuyla bağ kurma biseksüel kadınlar için yeterli koruyuculuğu sunmayabiliyor olsa da (Feinstein, Dyar ve London, 2017; Prell ve Traeen, 2018), heteroseksüel ya da lezbiyen toplulukta ihtiyaç duyulması ve onay görülmesi biseksüel kadınlar için ruh sağlığı açısından koruyucu olmaktadır (McLaren ve Castillo, 2020). Böylece, biseksüel kişinin iki

topluluktan birine aidiyet hissi ihtiyacını belirlemek ve romantik ilişkileri sırasında değişiklikleri gözlemlemek, biseksüel danışanın psikososyal kaynaklarının daha iyi anlaşılmasını sağlayacaktır.

### **Çalışmanın Kısıtlılıkları**

Bu çalışmada katılımcılarda içsel stres yaratmak için iki farklı olumsuz otobiyografik anı İpucu ve duygu düzenlenimindeki bağlanma figürünün etkisini test etmek için iki birincil figür (partner ve tanıdık) kullanılmıştır. Ancak BFDR’de ilk iki ve son iki aşamada aynı birincil figürle aynı anı ipuçlarını kullanmak, travma anılarının etkisini karşılıklı olarak dengelemeye izin vermemiştir. Farklı anıların yarattığı içsel stresin dört BFDR aşamasında farklı birincil figürler tarafından nasıl hafifletildiğini görme fırsatını kaçırılmış oldu. Sadece bir partnerin olumsuz otobiyografik anının tetiklediği stresi ve bir tanıdığın başka bir olumsuz otobiyografik anının tetiklediği stresi nasıl etkilediğine dair bilgi toplanmış oldu. Farklı birincil figürlerin akabinde farklı anı ipuçları olsaydı, o zaman farklı travma anılarını karşılıklı olarak dengelemeyi ve zaman değişkeninin etkisi ortadan kaldırılabilirdi.

Şu anki çalışmanın ana odak noktası, duygu düzenleniminde partnerin cinsiyet kimliğinin etkisidir. Partnerin cinsel kimliği sadece kontrol değişkeni olarak kullanılmıştır. Kimlik Belirsizliği (tek anlamlı kontrol değişkeni olarak) kontrol edilene kadar partnerin cinsiyet kimliğinin duygu düzenlenimine büyük etkisi olduğu keşfedildi. Bu sebeple kimlik belirsizliğini kontrol etmenin; duygu düzenleniminde, partnerin cinsiyet kimliğinin anlamlı etkisini nasıl ortadan kaldırdığını yorumlamak zor oldu. Daha net bir bilimsel açıklama için ileriki çalışmalar, ilişkisi olan biseksüel bireylerin LGBTIQ+ topluluklarla olan bağlarına ve Türkiye’deki monoseksüel kişilerden gördükleri binegativite deneyimlerine odaklanabilir.

## Gelecek Arařtırmalar iin neriler

İleriki alıřmalarda, iliřkide olma durumundan kaynaklı anksiyetede ki ve depresyon belirtilerindeki potansiyel artıřın ardındaki ana nedenleri anlamak iin, dıřarıdan gelen binegativite ve partnerden gelen binegativite ayrı ayrı llebilir. Kiřinin azınlık kimlięinin sonuları, oęunluęun tutumu, kavrayıřı ve davranıřlarından baęımsız olarak deęerlendirilemez. Bu sebeple zamanın ve mekanın sosyopolitik baęlamı, bir toplulukla alıřan her arařtırma iin ok anlamlı bir faktrdr. Dolayısıyla ileriki alıřmalarda, biseksel topluluęu arařtırırken sadece kimlik geliřiminin etkisi deęil, aynı zamanda binegativite deneyimleri de gz nne alınmalıdır. Bu alıřmayla, erkek ya da kadın+ partnerin etkisi konusunda Dyar ve arkadaşlarının arařtırmasına (2014) kıyasla karřıt bulgular elde edilmiřtir. Ancak Trkiye’deki LGBTIQ+ topluluęundaki biseksel kiřilerin deneyimleri zerine yeterli arařtırma bulunmamasından dolayı, biseksel kadınların erkek partnere kıyasla kadın+ partnerle olmasına dair olumlu bir trend olduęunu gsteren bulgular net bir řekilde deęerlendirilememektedir. Bu nedenle Trkiye’de LGBTIQ+ topluluęundaki biseksel kiřilerin deneyimleri zerine ileriki alıřmalar, byle si eliřkili bulguların altında yatan faktrlere ıřık tutabilir.

## Sonuç

Bu alıřmada, iliřkisi olan biseksel kadınlar isel bir stres etkeniyle karřılařtıklarında duygu dzenlenimi baęlamında, partnerinden fayda grmřtir. Kadın+ partneri olan biseksel kadınlar, erkek partneri olan biseksel kadınlara gre, anlamlı lde daha fazla fayda grmřtir. Ancak Kimlik Belirsizlięi kontrol altına alındıęında partnerin cinsiyet kimlięinin bu anlamlı etkisi ortadan kalkmıřtır. Hatta iki biseksel kadın grubu da Kimlik Belirsizlięi’nin sonucu arařtırmadan ıkarıldıęındaki duruma kıyasla anlamlı lde dřk bir sonuca sahip olmuřtur. Kadın partneri olan biseksel kadınlar, erkek partneri olan biseksel kadınlara gre anlamlı lde olumlu bir sonuca sahiptir. Bu sonular, partnerin cinsiyet kimlięinin duygu dzenlenimine olan etkisinin dıřında kimlik

belirsizliđiyle bağlantısı olabilecek başka bir faktörün varlığına işaret ediyor olabilir.

## APPENDIX H. THESIS PERMISSION FORM / TEZ İZİN FORMU

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### YAZARIN / AUTHOR

**Soyadı / Surname** : UĞURLUOĞLU  
**Adı / Name** : İDİL  
**Bölümü / Department** : Psikoloji / Psychology

**TEZİN ADI / TITLE OF THE THESIS (İngilizce / English):** THE EFFECT OF MENTAL REPRESENTATION OF ROMANTIC PARTNER ON AFFECT REGULATION IN BISEXUAL WOMEN'S ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS WITH MEN AND WOMEN+: THE ROLE OF PARTNER GENDER IDENTITY

**TEZİN TÜRÜ / DEGREE:** **Yüksek Lisans / Master** ☒ **Doktora / PhD** ☐

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- 2. Tez iki yıl süreyle erişime kapalı olacaktır. / Secure the entire work for patent and/or proprietary purposes for a period of two years. \*** ☐
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