

The Role of Moral Foundations and Moral Disengagement in Predicting Moral Courage: Evidence from a non-WEIRD Context

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Earlier studies have demonstrated that moral values play a critical role in mobilizing against moral norm violations. Despite its importance, scientific knowledge of the concept is limited, especially in non-Western cultures. This study examined the roles of moral foundations and moral disengagement in relation to moral courage in the Turkish cultural context. In total, 658 adults (410 females, 248 males; $M_{age} = 23$, $SD_{age} = 9.12$) participated in the current study through an online survey. Participants filled out Moral Disengagement Scale (Bandura et al., 1996), Moral Foundations Scale (Graham et al., 2011), and Moral Courage Scale (Bronstein et al., 2007). Results indicated that individualizing moral foundations had a direct and positive association with moral courage; they were also related to moral courage indirectly through decreasing moral disengagement. Binding moral foundations, on the other hand, directly and negatively associated with moral courage, but had no indirect role through moral disengagement. Moreover, exploratory analyses revealed that females tended to be more sensitive to moral issues, were less likely to disengage from moral principles, and were more likely to raise their voices against moral norm violations. Our findings showed that moral engagement is a substantial part of intentions to stand up against moral norm violations.

Key words: moral foundations, moral courage, moral disengagement, gender, prosocial behavior, moral behavior

On May 17, 2014, preschool teacher Saadet Özkan revealed that a teacher had been sexually harassing students. The suspect, who worked as the principal in the same institution for 22 years, sexually harassed six female

students between the ages of 6 and 11. Upon hearing this incident from the students, Saadet Özkan confronted the suspect and reported the situation to legal authorities. The suspect was arrested following the incident,

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yet at a hearing held on October 15, 2015, he was released, as the court considered the time he served in prison. While the legal process was about to terminate, Saadet Özkan brought the case to the Prime Ministry Coordination Center, thereby allowing the case to be reopened, and consequently ensuring the convict to be sentenced to 82.5 years of imprisonment (Hürriyet Daily News, 2017).

These efforts by Saadet Özkan in ceasing sexual harassment against minors and ensuring justice was restored are labeled as *moral courage*. Moral courage, rooted in virtues, ethics, and moral principles, refers to standing up against moral transgressions (e.g., bullying, harassment, theft, mobbing) even in the presence of potential risks (Sekerka et al., 2009). With its positive impact on protecting and maintaining the functionality of society, moral courage has a critical role in human life (Fehr & Gächter, 2002). Nevertheless, scientific knowledge of moral courage is somewhat limited. Although there is a developing literature on this topic, only a handful of studies from Western literature investigated the factors related to moral courage (e.g., Greitemeyer et al., 2006; Skitka, 2012). Considering the lack of research in non-Western literature, the current study aims to investigate possible psychological correlates of moral courage intentions with a sample of participants from Türkiye. In this regard, the study adopts an integrative model of moral courage perspective (Halmburger et al., 2017); and specifically focuses on the roles of moral foundations and moral disengagement in moral courage.

Moral Courage

When facing others' misconduct, some individuals stand up against the wrongdoings and defend moral norms and principles; these behaviors are regarded as moral courage (Miller, 2000). As is evident from the terminology,

moral courage encompasses two essential parts, namely *morality* and *courage* (Halmburger et al., 2017). In line with the morality aspect, morally courageous behaviors are aimed at protecting moral values by preventing or changing the behaviors of others that violate social norms and moral principles (Baumert et al., 2013; Sasse et al., 2022). Additionally, as related to the courage aspect, individuals demonstrate moral courage at the cost of potential negative consequences (Halmburger et al., 2017) even if they are not the target of these violations (Miller, 2000). In this regard, a wide array of behaviors is considered examples of moral courage, such as standing up against bullying (Pouwels et al., 2020), opposing sexual harassment (Goodwin et al., 2020), or confronting group-based discrimination (Kutluca et al., 2020).

Although considered a form of prosocial behavior (Brandstätter & Jonas, 2004), moral courage is differentiated from other common prosocial behaviors, such as helping or volunteering with several aspects and with psychological processes underlying it (Greitemeyer et al., 2006; Sasse et al., 2022). In this regard, the use of moral courage is predominantly directed against advantaged individuals or powerful groups/institutions (Greitemeyer et al., 2006); thus, it requires a confrontation with powerful perpetrators who violate moral norms and values (Halmburger et al., 2017). Demonstrating moral courage by confronting the perpetrator brings with itself anticipated physical, social, psychological, or financial costs (Baumert et al., 2021). For example, people who show moral courage may experience negative consequences such as social exclusion (Parmarlee et al., 1982), social disapproval (Miller, 2000), stress or fear of rejection (Libdh et al., 2010), verbal or physical attack of perpetrators (Greitemeyer et al., 2006), and loss of a job (Dyck et al., 2010). Considering these potential costs, people exhibit moral courage less frequently

than other forms of prosocial behavior (Skitka, 2012). Nevertheless, some individuals continue to show everyday heroism and persistently demonstrate moral courage; thus, it is crucial to understand the motivations that underlie morally courageous behavior.

The integrative model of moral courage explains cognitive and emotional factors predicting moral courage along with situational and personal antecedents (Halmburger et al., 2017). The model, similar to the bystander intervention model, offers a five-stage explanation for the occurrence of moral courage: 1) realizing a situation that might require intervention, 2) interpreting the situation as a norm violation, 3) acknowledging responsibility to intervene in the situation, 4) considering subjective intervention skills, and 5) calculating costs and benefits, and deciding to act. This model draws an overall picture of the steps going toward moral courage, but the research that explores the personal and situational factors about when and how individuals show moral courage can be regarded as being in its infancy. In that sense, the present study identifies the moral antecedents of morally courageous intentions through a particular focus on the roles of moral foundations and moral disengagement. Since the study of moral courage has recently begun in non-Western cultures like Türkiye, we chose to examine moral courage through trait-based measures (i.e., overall tendency to show moral courage) for a broader approach rather than focusing on the more specific moral courage scenarios such as whistleblowing, confronting discrimination, or bullying.

Moral Foundations

As previously mentioned, moral values play a critical role in moral courage. To better understand how moral values might be related to moral courage, the current study draws on

Moral Foundations Theory (MFT; Graham et al., 2011; Haidt & Joseph, 2004). The MFT proposes five universally available opposing moral values: care/harm, fairness/cheating, loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, and purity/degradation. *Care/harm* pertains to protecting and caring for others who need help. *Fairness/cheating* concerns a sensitivity to injustice and a motivation to protect justice within one's group. *Loyalty/betrayal* refers to one's inclination to favor their in-group over other groups and a desire to protect the interests of the in-group. *Authority/subversion* relates to one's motivation to respect and protect hierarchy in society; and finally, *purity/degradation* refers to the suppression of bodily impulses and a desire to be pure physically and spiritually (Doğruyol et al., 2019; Graham et al., 2009). The theory regards care and fairness as the individualizing foundations since they focus on individual rights; whereas it considers loyalty, authority, and purity as the binding foundations, as they function in a way to hold groups together (Graham et al., 2011). The structure and the main propositions of the MFT have been validated across both WEIRD (Western, Education, Industrialized, Democratic, and Rich) and non-WEIRD samples (Berniunas et al., 2016; Davies et al., 2014). Studies also confirm the existence of five moral domains in the Turkish cultural context (Doğruyol et al., 2019; Yalçındağ et al., 2019; Yilmaz et al., 2016).

The existing literature shows that moral foundations or values are related to prosocial intentions and behaviors, just like moral courage (Clark et al., 2017; Mikani et al., 2022; Nilsson et al., 2016). For instance, in their study, Nilsson and colleagues (2016) captured different effects of binding and individualizing moral foundations on prosocial behaviors. They found that individualizing foundations significantly and positively predicted participants' intention and actual behavior to help in favor of the outgroup, whereas binding foun-

dations were negatively associated with it. A more recent study conducted in Iran also revealed that individualizing foundations were positively related to prosocial behaviors and negatively associated with in-group bias in helping (Mikani et al., 2022).

Although there are numerous studies indicating the association between moral foundations and prosocial behaviors, only a limited number of them investigated how moral values might relate to moral courage. Previous studies incorporating the MFT perspective into the moral courage literature revealed that individualizing foundations of morality were significant predictors of morally courageous behaviors (Dungan et al., 2019; Goodwin et al., 2020; Waytz et al., 2013). For instance, fairness was positively related to whistleblowing (Waytz et al., 2013), whereas loyalty was negatively related to it (Dungan et al., 2019; Waytz et al., 2013). Fairness was a positive predictor of confronting and reporting sexual harassment, while loyalty was a negative predictor of acting against sexual harassment (Goodwin et al., 2020). Loyalty and fairness seem to work in conflicting ways in predicting morally courageous actions. It is, therefore, conceivable that individualizing and binding foundations may work in opposite patterns, and we expect to see such a pattern in the Turkish cultural context as well. To our knowledge, no study investigated the association between moral foundations and moral courage in the Turkish cultural context. Relying on the moral courage and prosocial behavior lines of literature, it is plausible to expect individualizing foundations to be positively and binding foundations to be negatively associated with moral courage in Türkiye.

Moral Disengagement

In addition to moral foundations, another factor that can predict moral courage is one's

predisposition to acknowledge or deny responsibility in general (Bandura et al., 1996; Greitemeyer et al., 2007). Regarding this predisposition, related literature highlighted the role of moral disengagement (Halmburger et al., 2017; Pouwels et al., 2020). Moral disengagement refers to individuals' inclination to disentangle themselves from moral norms through attributing responsibility to situational determinants (Bandura et al., 1996), which may occur through different mechanisms such as moral justification, advantageous comparison, displacing responsibility, and dehumanization (Bandura, 1990).

Past research shows that moral disengagement is a negative predictor of prosocial behaviors in general (Paciello et al., 2013; Hodge & Gucciardi, 2015; Jiang et al., 2022). Paciello and colleagues (2013) found that individuals with higher moral disengagement were less likely to report an inclination to help others in need of help. A different study conducted with adolescents with a bullying victimization history found moral disengagement to be negatively associated with defending other bullying victims and positively associated with demonstrating passive bystander behaviors (Jiang et al., 2022).

Regarding the link between moral disengagement and moral courage, Halmburger and colleagues (2017) propose that people with high levels of moral disengagement would be more likely to attribute their failure to prevent or change moral norm violations to external factors. Moreover, previous research revealed that higher moral disengagement is associated with lower moral courage (Baumert et al., 2013; Paciello et al., 2013; Sijtsema et al., 2014). In a more recent study, Pouwels and colleagues (2020) examined the predictive role of moral disengagement in adolescents' standing up against bullying in a classroom context. Their study showed that moral disengagement negatively predicted

morally courageous behaviors. So far, only a handful of studies, all from Western cultures, showed the link between moral disengagement and moral courage. While we do not specifically expect culture to play a crucial role in this context, we nevertheless find it important to extend these results to non-Western cultures. Hence, based on the existing literature, we expected a negative association of moral disengagement with moral courage in the Turkish cultural context.

As mentioned above, previous literature suggested that moral foundations and disengagement are significant predictors of moral courage. Nevertheless, to the best of our knowledge, only a single study investigated the predictor role of moral foundations in moral disengagement. This study found that individualizing foundations negatively predicted moral disengagement, whereas binding foundations positively predicted moral disengagement (Balish & Caron, 2015). Although that study provided essential information, it did not take the possible mediating role of moral disengagement into account. Especially, empirical evidence demonstrated that moral disengagement can function both as a mediator and a moderator in reaction to morally challenging situations (Moore, 2015). Thus, exploring the potential mediating effect of moral disengagement may shed light on understanding the association between

moral values and moral courage. Within this scope, considering the overarching conceptualization of moral foundations, we examine the direct role of moral foundations on moral courage and their indirect roles through moral disengagement.

The Current Study

The current study tests moral foundations and moral disengagement as underlying factors of moral courage intentions. Specifically, we examine the indirect role of moral foundations in moral courage through moral disengagement. Additionally, since the above-mentioned studies were predominantly from Western literature, replicating these findings in the Turkish cultural context would provide valuable information to the literature as moral judgments and behaviors substantially differ across cultures (Graham et al., 2016). Cross-cultural differences in moral psychology research suggest that people in WEIRD cultures generally are more inclined to individual rights and independence, while non-WEIRD cultures are likely to adopt moral values like loyalty and spiritual purity (Graham et al., 2011; Graham et al., 2016; Yılmaz et al., 2016). Türkiye is a country where individualistic and collectivistic cultural values are intertwined (Kağıtçıbaşı & Ataca, 2005) with different religious, political, and social struc-

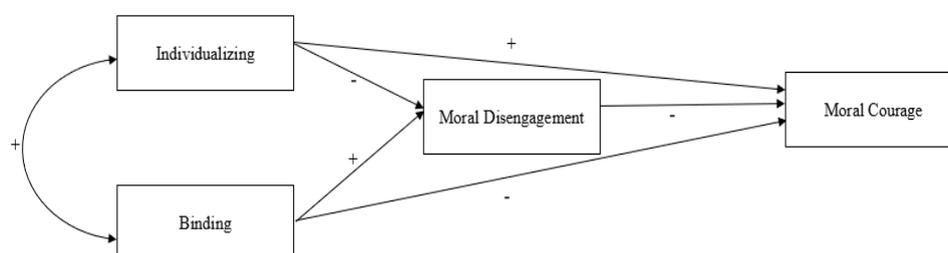


Figure 1 Hypothesized model.

tures compared to Western societies. In this regard, exploring predictors of moral courage in Türkiye would contribute to the relevant literature (Coşkun & Cingöz-Ulu, 2022).

In this regard, we hypothesized that individualizing foundations would positively predict behavioral intentions for moral courage both directly and indirectly through moral disengagement. More specifically, we expected that individualizing foundations would negatively relate to moral disengagement, which in turn would negatively predict moral courage. Likewise, we expected binding foundations to show the opposite pattern. Particularly, binding foundations would positively predict moral disengagement, which in turn would negatively predict moral courage.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Ethical approval for the current study was obtained from the Human Subjects Ethics Committee of a public university in Türkiye (No: E-66323135-900.99-2214). The sample consisted of 658 (410 females, 248 males; $M_{age} = 23$, $SD_{age} = 9.12$) Turkish-speaking undergraduate students. Most of our participants ($N = 428$, 65% of the sample) viewed themselves as middle class in terms of socio-economic status. After informed consent, participants filled out the survey package online. All participants earned a bonus credit for their participation.

Measures

Demographic Information. We collected data on socio-demographic information (e.g., gender, age, religiosity, and socio-economic status) to provide more background on the characteristics of the participants. Demographic information on participant characteristics is presented in Table 1.

Moral Disengagement. Bandura et al. (1996) developed this scale to measure individuals' inclination to disengage themselves from moral norms by attributing responsibility to situational variables (i.e., "It is alright to beat someone who bad mouths your family"). The original scale (Bandura, 1986; 1996) intended to measure eight distinct mechanisms of moral disengagement, such as moral justification, advantageous comparison, displacing responsibility, diffusion of responsibility, distorting consequences, attribution of blame, and dehumanization. However, both the original (Bandura et al., 1996) and its Turkish adaptation of the scale (Gezici-Yalçın et al., 2016) failed to discern any sub-dimensions; hence resulting in a single-construct measure consisting of 24 items. In our study, the Cronbach alpha internal consistency score was .87. The participants evaluated each item on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) Likert-type scale. Higher scores represented an increased level of moral disengagement.

Moral Foundations. The Moral Foundations Scale has 30 items aiming to tap its five dimensions (Graham et al., 2011; Turkish adaptation, Yılmaz et al., 2016). The scale has two parts with 15 items in each with additional two filler items. In the first part of the scale, participants evaluate what they see as morally relevant while making their moral decisions. In the second part, they are asked to rate to what extent they agree with the moral judgments provided in the items. However, because the five-factor model of the MFQ did not meet the conventional fit values in some early studies (e.g., Yalçındağ et al., 2017), we followed the alternative route of obtaining a two-dimensional structure from this questionnaire as it increases the reliability of the scale (Yılmaz & Sarıbay, 2017). A mean score for care and fairness items forms the *Individualizing foundations*, while a mean score for loyalty, purity, and authority items is cal-

culated to form the *binding foundations*. Respondents indicated their responses on a 1 (not at all relevant) to 6 (extremely relevant) Likert scale (e.g., “Justice is the most important requirement for a society”). The present study found internal reliability scores of .82 for individualizing moral foundations and .83 for binding moral foundations. Higher scores for individualizing and binding moral values represent an increasing endorsement of each dimension.

Moral Courage. Bronstein et al. (2007) developed this scale to measure morally courageous intentions with 15 items (i.e., “When I hear someone make a derogatory remark or joke about some person or group, I say something to challenge it”). It has two subscales: moral courage (raising voice against unfairness) and moral reticence (avoiding standing up against moral violations). In the current study, participants indicated their responses on a 7-point (1 = not at all true, 7 = very true) Likert scale. Adaptation studies into Turkish culture were conducted by Yalçındağ (2009), but the Turkish version yielded a one-factor

solution. Hence, we followed her method of constructing a single composite score with the reticence subscale reversed, where higher scores indicated increased moral courage intention. The internal reliability score was .72 for the current study.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Preliminary analyses of descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients were carried out first. The absolute values of skewness and kurtosis were between -2 and +2, which indicated a relatively normal distribution for the main study variables (Byrne, 2010; Kline, 2015). However, seven multivariate outliers were removed from the data, as the results of Mahalanobis distance measure suggested. Pearson correlation coefficients indicated that moral courage has a positive medium relationship with individualizing moral foundations ($r = .32, p < .01$) and a weak but positive relationship with binding moral foundations

Table 1 *Descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients for the study variables (N = 658)*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Age	-						
2. Religiosity	.13**	-					
3. Perceived SES	.00	.08*	-				
4. Individualizing M. F.	-.01	.03	.01	-			
5. Binding M. F.	.11**	.19**	.05	.62**	-		
6. Moral Dis.	-.13**	-.12**	-.02	-.22**	-.19**	-	
7. Moral Courage	-.03	.04	.08	.32**	.09*	-.24**	-
Mean	22.60	4.39	2.92	4.66	4.28	2.28	4.99
Standard Deviation	3.44	1.61	.68	.71	.69	.52	.83
Skewness	3.71	-.87	-.44	-.89	-.32	-.01	-.16
Kurtosis	19.01	.76	1.32	1.24	.52	.46	-.36
Reliability	-	-	-	.82	.83	.87	.72

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. M. F. = Moral Foundations; Moral Dis. = Moral Disengagement

($r = .09, p < .05$). Moral disengagement relates negatively to moral courage, ($r = -.24, p < .01$). Moreover, moral disengagement has relatively weak and small negative associations with individualizing moral foundations ($r = -.22, p < .01$) and binding moral foundations ($r = -.19, p < .01$). All correlations, descriptive statistics, and internal reliability scores (Cronbach's α) are given in Table 1.

For an exploratory description of our sample, we conducted independent samples t -tests to investigate whether there were mean differences in moral disengagement, moral courage, and moral foundations scores between males and females. Results showed that females ($M = 5.12, SD = .81$) scored higher in moral courage than males ($M = 4.78, SD = .82$), $t(655) = 5.26, p < .001$. Females ($M = 4.79, SD = .63$) also scored higher in individualizing moral foundations as compared to males ($M = 4.45, SD = .77$), $t(655) = 6.22, p < .001$. On the other hand, moral disengagement scores were higher for males ($M = 2.49, SD = .53$) than females ($M = 2.16, SD = .46$), $t(655) = -8.53, p < .001$. There were no significant difference between females ($M = 4.31, SD = .66$) and males ($M = 4.25, SD = .73$) on binding moral foundations, $t(655) = 1.03, p = .303$ (see Table 2).

Main Findings

We conducted a path analysis using AMOS 24 (Arbuckle, 2014), with individualizing and binding moral foundations as exogenous vari-

ables and moral disengagement and moral courage as endogenous variables. Age and religiosity were also added as control variables in this hypothesized model. First, the hypothesized saturated model was tested, and then the only nonsignificant path from binding moral foundations to moral disengagement was trimmed from the model. The trimmed model showed a good fit to the data: $\chi^2 (n = 658, df = 5) = 4.07, \chi^2/df = .813, p = .54$, comparative fit index (CFI) = 1.000, Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) = 1.005, root mean square error approximation (RMSEA) = .000. Considering the standardized effect of exogenous variables on endogenous variables, individualizing moral foundations significantly predicted moral disengagement ($\beta = -.22, SE = .03, p < .001$) and moral courage ($\beta = .41, SE = .05, p < .001$) in the expected directions. Moreover, binding moral foundations significantly predicted moral courage ($\beta = -.20, SE = .06, p < .001$), but not moral disengagement, which was the trimmed path. Finally, moral disengagement negatively predicted moral courage ($\beta = -.19, SE = .06, p < .001$). In addition, age ($\beta = -.12, SE = .01, p = .002$) and religiosity ($\beta = -.10, SE = .01, p = .011$) significantly predicted moral disengagement. Our model also revealed that the indirect effect of individualizing moral foundations on moral courage through moral disengagement was significant ($\beta = .05, 95\%CI [.028, .081]$). The standardized parameter estimates are presented in Figure 2.

Due to the gender differences observed in three of the variables in our explorato-

Table 2 Independent samples t -tests for gender

	Female		Male		$t(655)$	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Moral Courage	5.12	.812	4.77	.817	5.26	< .001	.423
Individualizing	4.79	.630	4.44	.773	6.22	< .001	.501
Moral Disengagement	2.15	.460	2.49	.563	-8.53	< .001	-.687

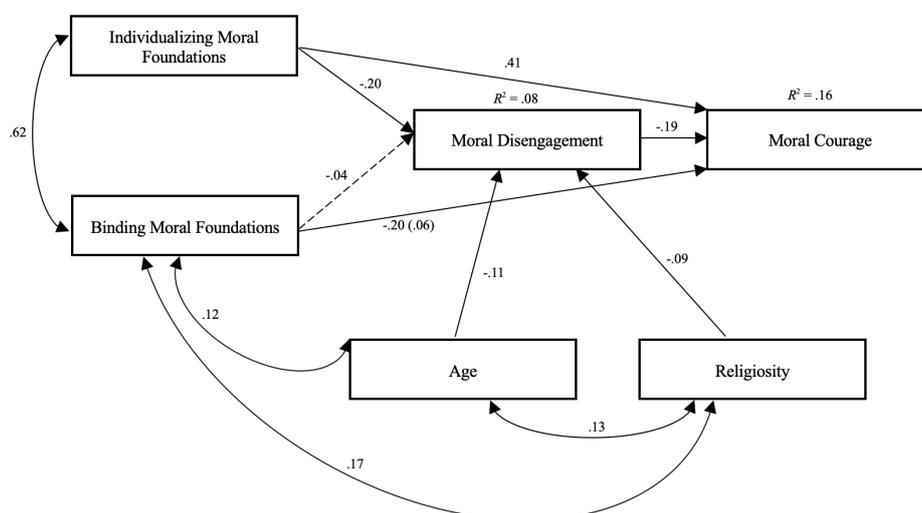


Figure 2 The final path model.

ry analyses, we also checked whether the model differed according to gender. Because these were not hypothesized beforehand, we present these analyses as a supplement to our main analyses. The results show that our model did not differ across genders (see Appendix).

Discussion

Moral courage is a specific type of prosocial behavior that is crucial for human functioning in society. Hence, exploring the underlying factors that facilitate or hinder moral courage is important. To this end, the current study examined the moral bases behind morally courageous behavioral intentions in a non-Western culture through moral foundations and moral disengagement.

Regarding the association between moral foundations and moral courage, while individualizing foundations positively predicted moral courage, binding foundations negatively

predicted it. In line with the findings, early research also revealed that fairness and justice sensitivity increase the likelihood of showing moral courage (Dungan et al., 2019; Goodwin et al., 2020), while loyalty concerns restrain it since standing up against moral norm violation might be perceived as disloyal (Goodwin et al., 2020; Waytz et al., 2013; Weidman et al., 2020). The individualizing foundation consists of care and fairness modules, which involve defending the rights and freedom of people (Haidt & Graham, 2007). Likewise, moral courage shows itself in situations with violations of fairness and care (Sasse et al., 2022). On the other hand, as a distinct type of prosocial behavior, moral courage is related to civil disobedience and opposing conformity within the group (Niesta Kayser et al., 2010). Consequently, although fairness motivates standing up against wrongdoings, it may also be seen as an antisocial act against one's in-group. Both individualizing and binding foundations are important parts of individuals'

morality, but they may clash, as shown in this study.

Distinct effects of the different moral foundations were also captured in relation to moral disengagement. Individualizing foundations were negatively associated with moral disengagement, but no significant effect was found for binding foundations. The moral disengagement theory (Bandura, 1990) argues that individuals cognitively regulate and monitor the match between their internal moral standards with their thoughts and behavior. This theory also underlines that sometimes people selectively prefer disengaging from moral self-regulation in specific conditions; in return, they justify the occurrence of harmful moral violations without feeling any dissonance (Bandura et al., 1996). In line with this theory, we expected binding foundations to predict moral disengagement positively because it may justify the acceptance of social and moral wrongdoings for the sake of loyalty (Brüggeman et al., 2019; Page & Pina, 2015). However, no significant effect was captured for binding foundations. To the best of our knowledge, only one study directly examined the effect of moral foundations on moral disengagement, and they found a significant and positive association between binding foundations and moral disengagement (Balish & Caron, 2015). However, because the empirical evidence is quite scarce, it does not allow for an appropriate comparison of this relationship to similar findings to draw clear inferences.

As expected, individualizing foundations negatively predicted moral disengagement. It was already known that, with a more universal emphasis, fairness and care concerns extend beyond the benefit of the ingroup (Graham et al., 2011), but as mentioned earlier, only one earlier study tested and confirmed the negative effect of individualizing foundations on moral disengagement (Balish

& Caron, 2015). Nevertheless, one meta-analytic review concluded that people who are high in conscientiousness, honesty, and humility give more emphasis to fairness, sincerity, and adherence to rules, and consequently, they are less likely to morally disengage (Ogunfowora et al., 2022). This may be taken as somewhat distal evidence suggesting the relationship between individualizing foundations and moral disengagement.

Typically, moral disengagement has been shown to be a negative predictor of prosocial acts such as helping behavior (Paciello et al., 2013; Hodge & Gucciardi, 2015; Jiang et al., 2022). A limited number of studies in the related literature also indicated this negative effect on moral courage as a specific type of prosocial behavior (Baumert et al., 2013; Jiang et al., 2022; Pouwels et al., 2020). In accordance with these early findings, the current study also revealed the negative impact of moral disengagement on moral courage. In other words, when individuals are prone to disengage morally, they are likely to think some situations that require moral courage do not apply to them.

In the current study, we controlled for two important demographic variables, religiosity, and age, that were previously shown to be related to moral foundations and moral disengagement. Our findings revealed a positive association between religiosity and binding foundations. Consistent with the outcomes of our study, previous literature demonstrated a positive link between binding moral foundations and religiosity in Christian samples (Johnson et al., 2016; Labouff et al., 2017; Yi & Tsang, 2020). In particular, Johnson and colleagues (2016) found that both personal aspects of religiosity, such as allocating time to prayer, and social aspects, like donating money or time to religious groups, were predicted by binding foundations. In addition, consistent with previous studies conducted

with Muslim (Bulut et al., 2022) and Christian (D'Urso et al., 2019) samples, we observed a negative association between religiosity and moral disengagement. Specifically, D'Urso and colleagues (2019) discovered that intrinsic religiosity, which pertains to the personal significance placed on devoting time to prayer, negatively predicts moral disengagement. This finding suggests that internalizing religious principles and practices may serve as a protective measure against moral disengagement by fostering adherence to moral standards. In essence, individuals with higher levels of intrinsic religiosity are more inclined to internalize these moral principles, resulting in a reduced inclination to engage in moral disengagement mechanisms.

Additionally, the findings of this study demonstrated a positive association between age and binding moral foundations. Previous research on the relationship between age and moral foundations produced inconclusive results. While some studies showed a positive association between binding moral foundations and age (e.g., Friesen, 2019), Sağel's (2015) findings indicated that both foundations exhibit positive relationships with age. In a meta-analysis by Castilla-Estevéz and Blazquez-Rincon (2021), the authors suggested that age and moral foundations are not associated. Regarding the relationship between age and moral disengagement, our findings revealed a negative association. Similar findings were reported in previous studies (Aftab & Malik, 2021; Eisenberg et al., 2005). For instance, Aftab and Malik (2021) examined the mediating role of moral disengagement mechanisms in the relationship between emotional manipulation and psychological well-being and found that young adults exhibited a heightened tendency to engage in moral disengagement behaviors compared to late adolescents. Similarly, Eisenberg et al. (2005) demonstrated that perspective-taking and

prosocial moral reasoning tend to develop and mature as individuals progress through various stages of development, from adolescence to adulthood.

Finally, past research demonstrated that moral disengagement has various mediating and moderating roles in people's responses to moral misconduct (Moore, 2015). However, no study up to now has investigated the mediating role of this term regarding the moral bases of moral courage. In that sense, moral disengagement was proposed to explain the effect of moral foundations on moral courage, and we found that it mediated this relationship. Being high in individualizing moral foundations increases moral engagement, which in turn promotes showing more moral courage.

Approaching these results from a broader perspective, the findings also support the literature related to social domain theory (Turiel, 1983). Social domain theory distinguishes between the moral domain and social/conventional domain. While the former involves concerns such as fairness and welfare/care for others; the latter includes norms, traditions, and authority-related issues aimed at the functioning of societal groups (Smetana, 2006). In alignment with the propositions of the theory, a recent meta-analysis confirmed that individuals tend to view transgressions within the moral domain as significantly more intolerable and deserving of punishment in comparison to social/conventional transgressions. (Yoo & Smetana, 2022). Thus, people may strive to protect moral values like fairness and care for others over societal norms and traditions. Similarly, as our findings indicated, people who endorse individualizing moral values are more likely to intervene in moral transgressions to fight against unfairness and harm to others.

Considering the relevant literature, additionally, potential gender differences were

examined in an exploratory manner, and significant differences in individualizing moral foundations, moral courage, and moral disengagement were revealed. Women reported higher individualizing moral foundations (fairness and care) and moral courage than men; whereas men reported higher moral disengagement than women. Regarding moral foundations, past research revealed similar findings indicating that women are more concerned about fairness and preventing harm than men (Efferson et al., 2017; Kubinski et al., 2018; Nejat & Hatemi, 2019; Yalçındağ et al., 2019). Existing literature supports our findings on gender differences in moral courage, as females are more likely to stand up against moral violations (Bronstein et al., 2007; Goodwin et al., 2020). The gender difference regarding moral disengagement was aligned with the previous research (Pelton et al., 2004; Thornberg & Jungert, 2014). Overall, these exploratory results suggest that women are more likely to have moral sensitivity, less likely to disengage from their moral standards, and more prone to challenge moral norm violations, yet the tested model for this research did not differ across the two genders.

Limitations and Contributions

There are a number of limitations that need to be mentioned before overall generalizations and conclusions are drawn. First, the correlational design does not provide evidence of a cause-and-effect relationship. Thus, experimental research is needed to test the causal effects of moral bases on moral courage, although we provide a plausible causal model that may further be tested. In this regard, future studies might involve assigning participants to experimental conditions where individualizing or binding moral values are manipulated (Waytz et al., 2013). Such experimental methodology could help us understand mor-

al courage beyond correlational predictors and assess its antecedents with causal links. Moreover, the current study relies on self-report data, which is prone to socially desirable answering where moral courage intentions may be over-reported or moral disengagement may be under-reported. Hence, assessing actual behaviors of moral courage for specific incidences of moral violations might provide robust research outcomes (Baumert et al., 2013).

Furthermore, the current work addresses trait-based moral disengagement and moral courage, which does not encompass situational variations. For instance, while an individual may not morally disengage and exhibit moral courage in a situation of sexual harassment, they may morally disengage and overlook cheating in an exam scenario. In other words, variations in individuals' personal moral sensitivities and different moral violation contexts with varying levels of risk may lead to differences in demonstrating moral courage. Therefore, further research should aim to replicate the current model in more specific situations.

Regarding the trait-based nature of moral courage, it is also essential to consider personality traits that could either foster or hinder the demonstration of moral courage. According to relevant literature, extraversion or openness to experience are associated with intervention tendencies in contexts such as bullying, sexual harassment, and workplace transgressions (Baumert et al., 2013; Moisu et al., 2018; Tedone & Bruk-Lee, 2021). However, personality correlates of moral courage were not assessed in the current study; hence, future studies should take these factors into account when examining trait-based moral courage.

Finally, the sample of this study is limited to college students, and this limits the generalizability of the present findings. It is known

that education plays a critical role in facilitating moral reasoning and decision-making (Doyle & O'Flaherty, 2013; King & Mayhew, 2022). In this regard, there is a need for replicating the findings of the current study with participants from different socio-demographic backgrounds such as various educational, socio-economic, and age groups, which could help extend our findings to broader samples.

Despite these limitations, the current study was the first attempt to examine moral factors related to moral courage in a non-Western context. Therefore, we adopted a more general approach to provide an overview that may promote future research for filling out the addressed gaps/limitations in this current study. Our study indicated that differences in moral foundations influence people's moral disengagement and moral courage tendencies in the Turkish context. Individualizing foundations of morality were related to decreased moral disengagement, and in return increased moral courage tendencies. However, people with high binding moral values, despite its non-significant association with moral disengagement, were less likely to show moral courage. With these findings, this study offers promising directions for future research and practical implications.

Moral courage is a newly studied concept despite its vital importance. Therefore, addressing its correlates, especially in non-Western cultures, is valuable for a better understanding of this concept. This will also contribute to introducing this concept in the Turkish context and pave the way for future research. Historically, Türkiye has been regarded as a collectivistic country (Hofstede, 1980). However, the country underwent significant societal transformations, and more contemporary approach indicates that Türkiye is a country where both individualistic and collectivistic cultural values are common (Imamoglu, 1998; 2003; Kagitcibasi, 2007). In

this regard, the current study offers a unique perspective in understanding the roles of moral foundations on moral disengagement and moral courage from a non-Western perspective. In terms of practice in the field, the current results imply that moral courage training programs should be developed, and they should consider including individual (i.e., psychological counseling) and societal level (i.e., educational policies) interventions that target increasing moral sensitivity on fairness and care. Naturally, these interventions or training programs should not aim to transform individuals into mere heroes in perilous situations. For example, as reviewed by Osswald and colleagues (2010), existing moral courage programs engage trainees in group discussions and role-playing exercises. The objective is to facilitate brainstorming on safe intervention strategies, encouraging participants to consider actions like mobilizing others in the incident rather than handling a situation personally.

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Appendix

Results of the Multigroup Path Analysis

In order to understand whether there were significant differences between male and female groups, a multigroup path analysis was carried out by using Jamovi (2022). The model fit was good as goodness of fit results indicated: $\chi^2 (n = 658, df = 6) = 10.78$, $\chi^2 / df = 1.80$, $p = .095$, comparative fit index (CFI) = .989, Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) = .978, root mean square error approximation (RMSEA) = .049. Considering the effect of exogenous variables on endogenous variables, individualizing moral foundations significantly predicted moral disengagement ($\beta_{females} = -.16$, $p < .001$; $\beta_{males} = -.17$, $p < .001$) and moral courage ($\beta_{females} = .35$, $p < .001$; $\beta_{males} = .44$, $p < .001$). Moreover, binding moral foundations significantly predicted moral courage ($\beta_{females} = -.18$, $p < .001$; $\beta_{males} = -.21$, $p < .001$) and moral disengagement ($\beta_{females} = -.15$, $p < .001$; $\beta_{males} = -.18$, $p < .001$). The standardized and unstandardized parameter estimates are also indicated in Table A.

Table A Path Coefficient Estimates

Paths	Females		Males	
	<i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)	β	<i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)	β
Individualizing M. F. Moral Courage	.46(.06)	.35***	.46(.06)	.44***
Binding M. F. Moral Courage	-.23(.06)	-.18***	-.23(.06)	-.21***
Moral Disengagement Moral Courage	-.28(.07)	-.15***	-.28(.07)	-.18***
Individualizing M. F. Moral Disengagement	-.12(.03)	-.16***	-.12(.03)	-.17***

Note. *** $p < .001$, M. F. = Moral Foundations.