

Ensar Acem

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I am a researcher specializing in the evolutionary and cultural foundations of morality, cooperation, and belief systems through the lens of Dual Inheritance Theory. I use experimental and cross-cultural methods to examine how biological predispositions, cultural norms, and individuals' thinking styles interact to shape social behavior. My work emphasizes methodological rigor, open science, and international collaboration. For potential collaborations, [see my website](#).

Interests: Cooperation, morality, political psychology, cognitive science of religion, dual-process models.

EDUCATION:

2023 – 2027	Ph.D., Psychological Sciences , Kadir Has University (Moral Intuitions Lab)
2020 – 2023	M.A., Psychological Sciences , Kadir Has University GPA: 3.87/4.00
2015 – 2019	B.A., Psychology , Ankara University GPA: 3.80/4.00, <i>The Top Student, Highest Honor Degree</i>

HONORS, GRANTS, & SCHOLARSHIPS:

2024 – Present	Performance-Based Ph.D. Scholarship, TÜBİTAK (highest-level performance in all semesters)
2021 – Present	Research Assistant Scholarship (M.A. & Ph.D.), TÜBİTAK
2020 – Present	Full Tuition Waiver (M.A. & Ph.D.), Kadir Has University
2022 – 2024	Research Assistant Scholarship, Templeton Religion Trust Long-Term Research Grant
2018 – 2019	ERASMUS+ Internship Grant (two times)
2016 – 2019	State Scholarship, Republic of Turkey
2015 – 2019	Dean's High Honors & Very High Achievement Awards, Ankara University (all semesters)
2015	SABANCI Achievement Grant (Renounced)

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE:

2022 – Present	<u>Researcher – ManyLabs, ManyAnalysts, and Independent Collaborations</u> - Active contributor to large-scale collaborative projects (e.g., Global Cooperation Project, Happiness MegaStudy, Psychology of Science group, Replication Games). - Co-authored several multi-author publications resulting from these collaborations.
2020 – Present	<u>Research Assistant – Moral Intuitions Lab, Kadir Has University</u> (Funded by Templeton Religion Trust [TRT0424] and several TÜBİTAK projects) - Managed 30+ behavioral studies (N = 30,000+) on cooperation, religion, morality, reasoning, and threat perception using economic games and experimental manipulations. (PI: Assoc. Prof. Onurcan Yilmaz, Assoc. Prof. Burak Dogruyol, Dr. Ozan Isler)
2019	<u>Intern – Environmental Health Group, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, University of London – (Funded by ERASMUS+)</u> - Validated the (Evolved) Human Motives Scale (PI: Prof. Robert Aunger, Prof. Val Curtis) - Weekly meetings with Evolutionary Demography Group led by Prof. Rebecca Sear
2018 – 2019	<u>Research Assistant – Experimental Psychology Laboratory, Ankara University</u> - Designed and conducted seven reaction-time experiments (PI: Prof. Hakan Cetinkaya)
2018	<u>Research Assistant – Social Neuroscience Lab, Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience, University College London (UCL) – (Funded by ERASMUS+)</u> - Assisted in eye-tracking study on autism and Theory of Mind, co-authored publication (Royal Society Open Science). (PI: Dr. Sarah White)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

2022 – 2025

Department of Psychology, Kadir Has University (Teaching Assistant)

Fall 2025	Advanced Theoretical Discussions in Psychological Sciences (PhD)
Fall 2025	Advanced Selected Topics in Social Psychology (MA)
Fall 2025	Rethinking Psychology (undergrad)
Spring 2024	Thinking Mathematically (undergrad)
Fall 2022	Introduction to Statistics (undergrad)

OTHER EXPERIENCE:

2020 – Present

Moral Intuitions Lab

- Lab manager & Project Manager
- Project writing for 15+ grant applications (including ERC Starting Grant and TRT)
- Academic proofreading – Team leader
- Academic peer reviewing

2020 – 2023

Social Media

- Social media management (multiple X/Twitter accounts with 50k+ organic followers)

PUBLICATIONS:

1. Aczel, B., Szaszi, B., Clelland, H. T., Kovacs, M., Holzmeister, F., ... **Acem, E.**, ... Nosek, B. A. (2025; accepted). Investigating the analytical robustness of the social and behavioural sciences. *Nature*.
2. **Acem, E.**, Aczel, B., Albayrak, N., Brown, N. J. L., Dudda, L. A., Elsherif, M. M., Gjoneska, B., Kowal, M., Krishna, A., Miłkoś, S., Paruzel-Czachura, ... , Verheyen, S., & Zubaly, B. (2025; accepted). Why I declare a conflict of interest and you should not. *Theory and Society*. doi.org/10.1007/s11186-025-09641-3 (doi will be activated soon)
3. Şeker, F., **Acem, E.**, Bayrak, F., Dogruyol, B., Isler, O., Bahçekapili, H. G., & Yilmaz, O. (2025). Cognitive Reflection and Religious Belief: A Test of Two Models. *Judgment and Decision Making*, 20, e13. doi.org/10.1017/jdm.2024.41
4. Dogruyol, B., Velioglu, İ., Bayrak, F., **Acem, E.**, Isler, O., & Yilmaz, O. (2024). Validation of the Moral Foundations Questionnaire-2 in the Turkish context: Exploring its relationship with moral behavior. *Current Psychology*. doi.org/10.1007/s12144-024-06097-z
5. Wu, R., Lim, J. T., Ahmed, Z., Berger, R., **Acem, E.**, Chowdhury, I., & White, S. J. (2024). Do autistic adults spontaneously reason about belief? A detailed exploration of alternative explanations. *Royal Society Open Science*, 11(7), 231889. doi.org/10.1098/rsos.231889
6. **Acem, E.**, Yilmaz, O. (2024). *Heroism as moral intuition*. In: Allison, S.T., Beggan, J.K., Goethals, G.R. (eds) Encyclopedia of Heroism Studies. Springer, Cham. doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-48129-1_340
7. **Acem, E.** (2023). *Does cognitive reflection predict cooperation behavior after a seven-month period?* [Master of Art Thesis]. Kadir Has University. Thesis number and link: [818096](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-48129-1_340)
8. Cetinkaya, H., **Acem, E.**, & Sakin, M. (2023). Temporal-SNARC: Time may be of a special way of spatial mental representation. *International Journal of Psychology*, 58(S1), 754–755. doi.org/10.1002/ijop.13045

PUBLICATIONS IN PROGRESS:

1. Speelman, J., Orifici, M., Neo, S., Block, K., Buczny, J., Dorrough, E., ... **Acem, E.**, ... Primbs, M. (in submission). A many-analyst many-labs investigation of the generic masculine effect.
2. Gunaydin, G., **Acem, E.**, Yilmaz, O., & Isler, O. (in review). The intention-behavior gap in moral psychology: Moral behavior and economic games.
3. Şeker, F., **Acem, E.**, Vurgun., R., Dogruyol, B., Isler, O., Bahçekapili, H. G., & Yilmaz, O. (in review). Divine verification: Introducing a CAPTCHA-based religious priming technique. (co-first author)

4. Albayrak, M., **Acem, E.**, Dogruyol, B., Isler, O., Bahçekapili, H. G., & Yilmaz, O. (in review). Do meta-ethical beliefs predict moral behaviors among religious believers and non-believers?
5. Vurgun, R., **Acem, E.**, Şeker, F., Dogruyol, B., Isler, O., Bahçekapili, H., Zizzo, D., & Yilmaz, O. (in review). Cognitive reflection predicts utilitarian behavior after 17 months.
6. **Acem, E.**, Yilmaz, O., Isler, O., & Gaechter, S. (in a registered report submission). Cooperation under pressure: When intuition helps—and when it does not.
7. **Acem, E.**, Yilmaz, O., & Isler, O. (in a registered report submission). Reflective disbelief or reflective doubt: How do cognitive styles affect the belief in God or gods?.
8. **Acem, E.**, Isler, O., Yilmaz, O., & Maule, J. (in a registered report submission). Fearing God or society? On the validity and effects of religious primes on prosociality.
9. **Acem, E.**, Alper, S., Isler, O., & Yilmaz, O. (in submission). Cross-cultural stability of the association between cognitive reflection and political ideology.

POSTER PRESENTATIONS:

1. Şeker, F., **Acem, E.**, Vurgun, R., Dogruyol, B., Isler, O., Bahçekapili, H., & Yilmaz, O. (2025, February). *Divine verification: Introducing a CAPTCHA-based religious priming technique*. Poster was presented at SPSP Annual Convention, Denver, CO.
2. **Acem E.**, Sakin M., & Cetinkaya H. (2018, March). *The confounding effect of color in the implicit measures of SNARC Effect*. 1st Annual Cognitive-Experimental Psychology Conference, Ankara University, Turkey.

ORAL PRESENTATIONS:

1. **Acem E.**, Yilmaz O., Isler O., & Dogruyol B. (2023). *Does cognitive reflection predict cooperation?*. II. National Symposium on Morality Studies in Social Psychology, Istanbul University, Turkey.
2. Şeker F., **Acem E.**, Bayrak F., Yilmaz O., Dogruyol B., Isler O., & Bahçekapılı H. G. (2023). *The relationship between cognitive reflection and religiosity: A test of two models*. II. National Symposium on Morality Studies in Social Psychology, Istanbul University, Turkey.
3. **Acem E.**, Yilmaz O., Dogruyol B., & Isler O. (2023). *Heroism as moral intuition and its relation to social behavior*. Everyday Heroism Conference 2023, Tauranga Moana, New Zealand. ([Abstract](#))
4. Cetinkaya, H., **Acem, E.**, & Sakin, M. (2021). *Temporal-SNARC: Time may be of a special way of spatial mental representation*. ICP 2020+: The 32nd International Congress of Psychology, Prague, Czech Republic. ([Abstract](#))
5. **Acem E.** (2018). *Theory of mind and implicit mentalizing in autism*. 1st Annual Cognitive-Experimental Psychology Conference, Ankara University, Turkey.
6. **Acem E.** (2018). *Sociobiology of incest taboo*. 7th Annual Sociology Conference, Ankara University, Turkey.

INVITED TALKS:

- 2025 *The effects of religious and secular primes on third-party punishment among believers and nonbelievers*. Workshop on Trust and Cognition at Özyeğin University, Social Cognition Lab.
- 2024 *Religious and secular primes' effect on moral behavior and its consistency*. Religion and Morality Workshop (Funded by Templeton Religion Trust).
- 2023 *Cooperation and cognitive reflection*. The Psychological Origins of Cooperation Workshop (Funded by Templeton Religion Trust).
- 2022 *Graduate education and internship abroad*. Mersin University Psychology Students Society.
- 2018 *Improve your career abroad: How and why Erasmus+ internship?* Ankara Uni. Psychology Students Society.

CERTIFICATES:

- 2023 Improving Your Statistical Questions, Eindhoven University of Technology (Prof. Daniel Lakens)
- 2021 Introduction to R, DataCamp
- 2021 Introduction to Statistics in Spreadsheets, DataCamp
- 2020 The Data Scientist's Toolbox, Johns Hopkins University
- 2020 Understanding Medical Research, Yale University

- 2019 Improving Your Statistical Inferences, Eindhoven University of Technology (Prof. Daniel Lakens)
2019 Introduction to Python, Ankara University Neuroscience Society
2015 Advanced Computer Skills, Ministry of Education, Turkey

TECHNICAL SKILLS:

- **Eye-tracking:** Tobii Eye Tracker, Tobii Studio, SMI Eye Tracker, BeGaze.
- **Experimental design:** SuperLab, Qualtrics.
- **Online data collection:** Prolific, Qualtrics, Survey Monkey, Google Forms.
- **Statistical analysis:** GPower, SPSS, JASP, Jamovi, R (intermediate), Mplus (beginner).
- **Reference management:** Zotero.
- **Social media management:** Twitter, TweetDeck.
- **Image editing – stimuli design:** PowerPoint, Pixlr X, Adobe Photoshop (intermediate).
- **Web design:** Wordpress, Google Sites, Blogger, Wix.
- **Other computer skills:** MS Office, MS Teams, Google Suite, Zoom, Slack, Teamviewer, etc.
- **Languages:** Turkish, English.

COLLABORATION & SERVICES:

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| ▪ Consultancy (academic and professional) | ▪ Academic writing |
| ▪ Online data collection (US/UK/Turkey) | ▪ Grant writing & applications |
| ▪ Lab studies/interviews (Turkey) | ▪ Proofreading & editing |
| ▪ Survey & experimental design (Qualtrics, etc.) | ▪ IRB procedures |
| ▪ Stimuli design (visual, audio) | ▪ Project/Lab manager |
| ▪ Data analysis & report | ▪ Social media manager |

AFFILIATIONS:

- The Center for the Science of Moral Understanding, University of North Carolina ([Affiliate](#))
- The Moral Intuitions Lab at Kadir Has University ([Lab Manager & Research Assistant](#))

NON-PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS:

- Chess, cinema, poetry, blogging.
- Ontology, epistemology, philosophy of science, philosophy of religion, philosophy of state and society, political economy, sociology of law.

PERSONAL VALUES:

- Kindness, open-mindedness, intellectual humility, creativity & novelty, cooperation...

REFERENCES:

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Prior to contacting my references, please reach out to me. This will allow me to ensure their availability and provide any necessary context. For more information and collaboration opportunities, [visit my website](#).

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