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Addressing Opposition Toward Abortion: Adherence to Internalized Misogyny and Personal Belief in a Just World Moderate Religious Opposition to Abortion

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Abstract

Introduction The current study examined attitudes toward abortion to give a more nuanced perspective of a) the predictive value of conservatism (in political or religious terms) and b) whether one's sense of personal belief in a just world and internalized misogyny influence how strongly political conservatism, religion, and abortion attitudes are correlated.

Methods A convenience non-probability sample of 236 Greek Orthodox Christian female participants ($M_{age} = 33.31$, $SD = 12.56$) participated in the current online study. Using the bootstrapping method (Hayes, 2013; Model 1), we examined whether personal belief in a just world and internalized misogyny influence the degree to which religiosity and abortion attitudes and political positioning and abortion attitudes correlate.

Results Based on this study's findings, anti-abortion attitudes are higher in religious women who endorse personal belief in a just world and internalized misogyny.

Conclusion System-justifying ideologies can serve as significant foundations of gender discriminatory attitudes, such as anti-abortion attitudes. This study underlines the critical role of intervening at both the ideological and individual levels.

Implications This study's findings can be useful to organizations promoting gender equality and women's human rights worldwide. Given the significance of these issues for today's societies, it is most important to emphasize women's confronting ways and styles under critical conditions.

Keywords: Abortion attitudes, religiosity, internalized misogyny, personal belief in a just world.

One of the most contentious political problems is abortion (Osborne et al., 2022). Both supporters of women's right to choose and pro-life supporters who think that life begins at conception fervently defend their own specific ideas. (Osborne et al., 2022). Discussions around women's reproductive rights are currently taking place in several nations, including

Australia (Kallios, 2021), Germany (Sanyal, 2020), Northern Ireland (McCormack, 2021), United States (Borger, 2020) and Poland (Pronczuk, 2020). Rae et al. (2015) argue that abortion is among the most politically contested issues routinely moralized in social discourse and the media.

Public opinion generally favors expanding access to abortion (Osborne et al., 2022; Young et al., 2019), and this feeling is mirrored in shifting legal frameworks around the world since access to legal abortions has been proposed or passed in several nations through legislative measures (Ishola et al., 2021). However, despite these significant progressive development cases, some communities still strongly oppose legal abortion (Lockhart et al., 2023). For instance, the World Values Survey (WVS, 2019) found that almost one-third of Swedes agree that "abortion is acceptable in any situation." In contrast, Greece has a 6.4 rate of abortion acceptance under any circumstance (WVS, 2019). In addition, research data show that the public's opinions on abortion are becoming more controversial (Lockhart et al., 2023). Specifically, more conservatives are standing out against abortion (Koleva et al., 2012). According to Silver (2020), conservatism's opposition to abortion is motivated by a commitment to a moral system that prioritizes moral absolutism over the needs of the individual. Accordingly, one logical explanation for conservative resistance to abortion is religiosity, which positively correlates with conservatism (Guth et al., 2006) and anti-abortion beliefs (Osborne et al., 2022). Due to the abortion debate's popularity, stigmatizing public statements about abortion are readily available (Patev et al., 2019). Thus, women who seek abortions are routinely stereotyped as being selfish and deviant due to prevailing morality beliefs (Patev et al., 2019).

Abortion stigma is frequently depicted as a universal social fact in media accounts of abortion experiences. However, stigmatizing abortion can also be socially produced in a fundamentally local way. (Kumar et al., 2009). Stigma occurs in a "local world," which is the context for social interactions and cultural expectations (Yang et al., 2007). Several demographic, societal, and cultural factors influence people's attitudes about abortion. Examining studies that consider factors influencing abortion attitudes over the past 15 years, the most prevalent factors are religion, educational level, income level, political affiliation, age, gender, the number of kids, the feminist perspective, and prior abortion history (Adamczyk et al., 2020). Jelen and Wilcox (2003) argue that the main predictors of attitudes toward abortion are religion and religiosity.

Addressing opposition toward abortion is crucial since it is linked to adverse outcomes for women who seek abortions (Steinberg et al., 2017). Therefore, to increase understanding of a persistent—and strongly contested—topic that is essential to the women's rights movement, a thorough investigation of the psychological underpinnings of anti-abortion attitudes is required. Furthermore, an in-depth understanding of attitudes toward abortion may aid in predicting policy support (Patev et al., 2019). Hence, a thorough grasp of the elements influencing opinions toward abortion is necessary.

Greek society is significantly influenced by religion, especially regarding marriage and sexuality. Greek cultural beliefs emphasize heterosexual coupledness, supporting the idea that it is essential for personal satisfaction (Kantsa, 2014). For years, the Greek Orthodox Church has significantly impacted people's moral and social views (Giannou, 2017). The Greek Orthodox Church is a significant institution profoundly affecting moral and sexual issues and family values (Grigoropoulos, 2024, 2023a, c, 2022a, c, 2018), while at the same time, it promotes traditional gender and family roles (Grigoropoulos,

2023b, 2022b, 2021a, b). In addition, the recent harsh austerity policies that Greece has implemented have fueled far-right groups' growth (European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, 2015).

Considering conservatism is a significant component of Greek ideology (see Dianeosis, 2023), the current research examines the association between conservatism (conceptualized in religious and/or political terms) and anti-abortion attitudes. In line with earlier theories of the political right (Adorno et al., 1950; Sidanius, 1985), we hypothesized that the endorsement of political conservatism and religiosity would be associated with anti-abortion attitudes. Grounded on the theoretical line that misogyny aims to reward those women who maintain the existing status quo and ostracize those who oppose discriminatory gender roles and male domination (Illing, 2020), the current research also examines whether women's internalization of misogynistic beliefs is significant for understanding conservative-based anti-abortion beliefs. We further propose that personal belief in a just world (PBJW) is significant for understanding conservative-based anti-abortion beliefs. Thus, considering that an individual's PBJW and adherence to traditional gender roles may be significant intrapersonal elements in predicting attitudes toward abortion, this study extends the body of knowledge in social psychology.

Further study on this topic may also aid in elucidating how anti-abortion beliefs could be eradicated. Below, the anti-abortion literature grounded on conservative principles is examined first. Then, we discuss how internalized misogyny and PBJW may help us better comprehend the connection between conservatism and anti-abortion attitudes.

Religiosity

Numerous studies show that religion supports conservative attitudes (Yuchtman-Yaar & Alkalay, 2007) and that religious ideas and attitudes survive even as cultures develop (Adamczyk, 2013). Religion, which establishes moral standards and norms for people's lives, inevitably shapes how abortion is viewed (Yorulmaz, 2023). Accordingly, one personal trait that has been extensively researched concerning abortion attitudes is religiosity (Patev et al., 2019). The concept of religiosity has several facets and can be defined differently (Norona et al., 2016). How much someone adheres to rituals, beliefs, doctrines, and behaviors connected to some higher power and an affiliated organization may be considered religiosity (Hood et al., 2018). Mainly, religiosity consists of behavioral components (such as how frequently one attends religious activities and churches) and identity components (such as identifying with a specific religious affiliation; Norona et al., 2016).

According to the moral foundation's theory, abortion frequently violates fundamentally conservative norms concerning religious beliefs and sexual purity (Lockhart et al., 2023; Patev et al., 2019). Some may view abortion as challenging God's infallibility and rejecting society's values (Lockhart et al., 2023). In particular, pro-lifers frequently assert that life is God's gift and, as such, life is precious and fundamentally important (Jelen, 2014). A woman who chooses to end a pregnancy might question fundamental moral norms. The ethical dilemma thus arises from the moral permissibility of women making life-and-death decisions (Kumar et al., 2009).

Given the significance of religion in the debate over abortion (Lewis, 2017), it may not surprise that religiosity (variably conceptualized) relates negatively to attitudes toward abortion in many nations (Loll & Hall, 2019). However, although

religion is an essential variable in the abortion debate, religious traditions differ significantly. For instance, Catholics support abortion less than Protestants, Jews, and non-religious (Alvargonzalez, 2017; Francis et al., 2019). Additionally, both religious and non-religious individuals are encouraged to have pro-life attitudes by living in areas with high levels of religiosity (Adamczyk & Valdimarsdottir, 2018; Henry et al., 2022). Thus considering that few studies have examined anti-abortion attitudes in Orthodox religious countries, that the Greek Orthodox Church routinely marks the Greek public discourse, and that Greece consistently ranks among the highest EU nations in surveys for "believing in God," "trusting the Church as an institution," and "deeming religion as important" (see DiaNEOsis, 2023; The Press Project, 2023), this study assesses abortion opposition in an Orthodox religious population.

Political Conservatism

Differences between liberals and conservatives are not a novel concept. Research shows that conservatives have more traditional sexual behavior (Altemeyer, 1988). Research data on political ideology demonstrate that conservatives and liberals base their ethical judgments on contrasting psychological and emotional grounds (Graham & Haidt, 2010; Haidt & Graham, 2007; Haidt & Hersh, 2001). Unlike liberals, who are more likely to view deviant or sexual actions as privacy concerns and not susceptible to moral judgments, conservatives are more likely to moralize and criticize such behavior (Haidt & Hersh, 2001). According to Graham et al. (2009), political conservatism is associated with views on controlling sexuality, with conservatives being more prone than liberals to moralize and criticize challenges to sanctity and purity (Haidt & Hersh, 2001).

According to research, abortion is crucial for those who lean to the right (Jelen & Wilcox, 2003). Although there is a well-established correlation between conservative ideals and resistance to abortion, the causes are not entirely evident (MacInnis et al., 2014). However, research data also show that liberals may accept it more than conservatives (Jozkowski et al., 2018). Hess and Rueb (2005) argue that Republicans and conservative students at the University of Wisconsin are less likely than Democrats and liberal students to report holding pro-choice attitudes. Therefore, opposition to abortion significantly correlates with conservatism (Koleva et al., 2012).

To sum up, controversial issues such as abortion have been extensively examined for their congruence with both right and left political preferences. That left-of-center supports more women's right to choose in all areas. Those to the right of the center tend to hold opposite values (Jelen & Wilcox, 2003; Jozkowski et al., 2018). The Right-Left division heavily influences how Greeks feel about issues of economic values and those related to cultural liberalism and conservatism. Conservatism is a significant component of Greek ideology even though there is a considerable concentration of voters in the moderate positions of the political spectrum (Dianeosis, 2023; The Press Project, 2023). According to Dianeosis (2016), Greek society is conservative regarding culture. The "Left" group can be classified as culturally liberal more definitively regarding topics like racist violence, the death penalty, and mistrust in the church (and -in part- on the question of gay marriage). The majority of the "Right" group, on the other hand, is culturally conservative. Hence, in line with the literature above, the current study examines the anti-abortion beliefs of right-leaning women in a particular socio-cultural setting.

The Moderating Role Of The Personal Belief in a Just World (PBJW)

The just world hypothesis was first proposed by Lerner (1977, 1980) to explain why individuals blame victims by assuming that the victim must have done something to deserve their situation. The underlying tenet of this idea is that individuals believe they live in a just world where they typically receive what is due to them. (Lerner & Miller, 1978, p.1030). This idea holds that people think they live in a just society where everyone receives what they deserve (Lerner, 1970). When faced with injustice or inequity, people seek to restore justice, interpreting the world in analogous ways (Dalbert, 2009). When this idea is challenged or threatened by actual events, people frequently minimize the perceived or experienced unfairness (Lipkus & Siegler, 1993) or reframe the facts to conform to their personal beliefs (Maes, 1998). In this way, people try to reconcile unfair and unjust experiences with the reality of justice in the world without changing their core principles or beliefs (Dalbert, 2009; Maes, 1998).

Belief in a just world includes multiple components and adaptive roles (i.e., personal and general BJW; Wenzel et al., 2017). The general belief in a just world refers to the viewpoint that everyone is treated fairly and receives what they deserve (Dalbert, 2009; Hafer & Sutton, 2016). Personal belief in a just world (PBJW), on the other hand, refers to the belief that one's own life is just and that one will be treated fairly (Dalbert, 2009; Hafer & Sutton, 2016), which people typically hold more strongly than the general belief (Dalbert, 2009; Hafer & Sutton, 2016; Wenzel et al., 2017). Although much research has concerned beliefs in a just world, less is known about how PBJW affects anti-abortion attitudes.

Based on the notion that those who favor abortion might want consequence-free sexual behavior in a society where sexual behavior is not subject to repercussions, the current study examines whether women's endorsement of PBJW moderates the relationship between political conservatism and anti-abortion attitudes and religiosity and anti-abortion attitudes. Considering that PBJW provides people with a conceptual framework that enables them to interpret their own experiences of injustice meaningfully (Dalbert, 2001) and "assimilate" unjust situations to their just world beliefs by devaluing the injustice itself (Lipkus & Siegler, 1993), we assumed anti-abortion attitudes to be higher in women with increased PBJW. If that is the case, PBJW should strengthen the association between conservatism (conceptualized as religiosity and political conservatism) and anti-abortion attitudes.

The Moderating Role of Internalized Misogyny

The rules and expectations that support a patriarchal system—a system centered on the dominance of men—are what Manne (2017) described as sexism. In the scant literature on this concept, the phrases "internalized sexism" and "internalized misogyny" have been used interchangeably (Kaul, 2021). Even though misogyny works closely with sexism, misogyny can be considered as the "law enforcement branch" of sexism or the measures used to maintain sexism's standards and expectations (Manne, 2017). Therefore, misogyny enforces patriarchal social relations when this system is threatened, whereas sexism supports them (Illing, 2020). Despite the stereotype that associates misogyny with men's dislike for women, misogyny can be internalized by women as well (Kaul, 2021). Even though misogynistic attitudes and actions are more prevalent in men, both women and men can experience them. This is due to the internalization of misogyny (Yaman Sozbir et al., 2021). Given how frequently women in patriarchal countries are exposed to misogynistic

and sexist messaging, internalizing sexist ideology is often automatic and goes unnoticed. In addition, the inclination to believe you can predict a woman's character based on if, when, and how she had an abortion is unfortunately made worse because many people tend to presume the worst of a woman based on the slightest evidence (Dehlin & Galliher, 2019).

Based on the notion that both men and women can maintain patriarchal norms and that reproductive justice cannot exist unless misogyny in all its forms is exposed and overthrown, the current study expands upon the aforementioned literature, suggesting that internalized misogyny (as a facet of ingroup) will affect anti-abortion attitudes. We reason that internalized misogyny may establish conditions that intensify conservative-based anti-abortion attitudes due to adherence to conventional gender roles. If so, internalized misogyny should strengthen the link between conservatism (conceptualized as religiosity and political conservatism) and anti-abortion beliefs.

The current study

Acknowledging that there are still considerable anti-abortion attitudes (Norris et al., 2011; Hanschmidt et al., 2016), this study examines the relationship between conservatism (conceptualized as religiosity and political conservatism) with anti-abortion attitudes and uses the theoretical concepts of personal belief in a just world and internalized misogyny to elucidate anti-abortion attitudes further. Socio-cultural context is most significant in examining abortion attitudes (Bahr & Marcos, 2003). We, therefore, explore the social backdrop of abortion in Greece before developing the suggested theoretical model,

Greece's socialist government initially legalized first-trimester abortions in 1986 for any reason. Additionally, the government implemented a policy that permitted the National Health Insurance system to cover all of the costs associated with Greek women's abortions. Greece currently allows women to request an abortion in the first trimester. In addition, Greece has a largely homogenous population, with 98% identifying as Greek Orthodox Christians (Bahr & Marcos, 2003), whereas Greek society is conservative regarding culture (Dianeosis, 2023).

Grounded on the aforementioned literature, we hypothesized that even further social psychological factors could explain the link between socially conservative ideology (conceptualized as higher religiosity and political conservatism) and abortion condemnation.

Therefore, this study examines whether the association between socially conservative ideology and anti-abortion attitudes is more robust in women who endorse PBJW. Thus one's PBJW may intensify conservative-based anti-abortion attitudes. Examining PBJW in the context of conservative-based anti-abortion attitudes can shed new light on the effect of conservatism on anti-abortion attitudes. Given that attitudes surrounding abortion are rooted in gendered conceptions of women and lack of support for gender-egalitarian attitudes, a relationship is probably there (Kumar et al., 2009). Accordingly, we hypothesized that women's perspectives on gender roles could significantly elucidate anti-abortion attitudes. In particular, we assumed that women's higher levels of internalized misogyny might oppose abortion since women who have abortions are considered to be breaking traditional gender norms (Kumar et al., 2009). Hence, we hypothesized that women's endorsement of internalized misogyny would strengthen the association between religiosity

and abortion attitudes. In summary, to present a more nuanced understanding of abortion attitudes, the current research examined a) the predictive value of conservatism (in political or religious terms) and b) whether PBJW and internalized misogyny strengthen the relationship between political conservatism, religiosity, and abortion attitudes.

Method

Participants

A convenience non-probability sample of 236 Orthodox Christian female participants (age range: 18-59 years, $M_{age} = 33.31$, $SD = 12.56$) participated in the current online study between March 2, 2021, and June 30, 2021. With a snowball-like distribution method, the researcher's university social networks and forums were informed of the questionnaire's URL. Participants indicated their approval to participate by checking the consent box on the anonymous online survey. This work complied with the Declaration of Helsinki on Ethical Principles for Medical Research Using Human Subjects and all applicable institutional ethical policies and guidelines. The majority of participants identified themselves to be heterosexual. (228; 96.6%), 2.5 % as lesbian/gay (6), and 0.8% as bisexual (2). The majority of the participants were students 39.8 % (94), 31.8% (75) had a post-graduate degree, 21.6 % (51) were university graduates, and 6.8% (16) had completed high school. Respondents completed measures of religious affiliation, religiosity, political positioning, internalized misogyny, personal beliefs in a just world, and attitudes toward abortion. Back translation has been used to confirm translation accuracy in the Greek context (Brislin, 1970). This research is part of a broader project concerning women's attitudes toward different social values.

Measures

Explanatory Variables

In the demographic section of the survey, participants provided background data on their age (given by them in a numerical entry box), sexual orientation (heterosexual, gay/lesbian, bisexual, other- with specification required), level of education (high school diploma, undergraduate student, university degree, post-graduate degree), political positioning (left party, center-left party, center party, center-right party, right party), religious affiliation and religiosity (frequency of religious services attendance and frequency of praying; 1 = *never* to 5 = *always*; based on the average of the two components, one value was calculated.). The two items were adapted from the "Duke Religion Index" (DUREL; Koenig et al., 1997). The two items assessing religiosity were strongly correlated ($r_T = .665$, $p < .001$).

Internalized Misogyny Scale (IMS). Internalized misogyny was measured using the 17 questions comprising the Internalized Misogyny Scale (IMS; Piggot, 2004; Szymanski et al., 2009). Example items are "Sometimes other women bother me just by being around" and "I prefer to work for a male boss." Participants rated their agreement with each statement on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). A rise in the mean score indicates

more internalized misogyny. Szymanski's et al. (2009) study showed a coefficient alpha of .88.

Personal Belief in a Just World (PBJW). Seven items were used to measure PBJW using Dalbert's scale (1999). (e.g., "I believe that, by and large, I deserve what happens to me"). Participants responded to each item on a 6-point Likert scale with 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores indicated a stronger PBJW.

Outcome Measure

Abortion Attitudes

Attitudes toward abortion were assessed in the same way as in the study of Lockhart et al. (2023). Specifically, abortion attitudes were evaluated through the use of two items that examined support or opposition for a) legalized abortion (e.g., when the woman's life is in danger; traumatic abortion) and b) elective abortion (e.g., regardless of the reasons). The two items were assessed on a scale of 1 (*strongly oppose*) to 7 (*strongly support*). The two items assessing abortion attitudes were strongly correlated ($r_T = .450$, $p < .001$). Accordingly, they were combined into one measure of abortion attitudes.

Results

Preliminary Analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in AMOS-21 was used in the initial data analysis stage to evaluate the factorial validity of the newly translated scales. Firstly the three-component structure of internalized misogyny scale (IMS) was tested. The model-fit measures were used to assess the model's overall goodness of fit (CMIN/df, GFI, CFI, TLI, SRMR, and RMSEA). All the items had acceptable weights and were retained in the model (Figure 1). The model had an adequate fit (GFI = .888; CFI = .917; TLI = .900; SRMR = .076; RMSEA = .062). Alpha for the whole scale was .90. Moreover, testing the one-factor structure of the personal BJW scale (Figure 2) showed that the model had a good fit (GFI = .974; CFI = .988; TLI = .980; SRMR = .056; RMSEA = .031). Alpha for the whole scale was .86. Next, we examined our hypotheses using the bootstrapping method (Hayes, 2013; Model 1).

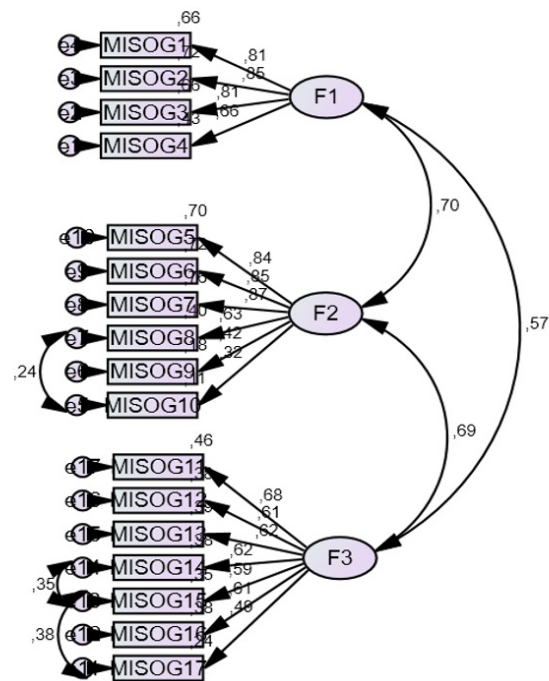


Figure 1. Factor structure of the IMS

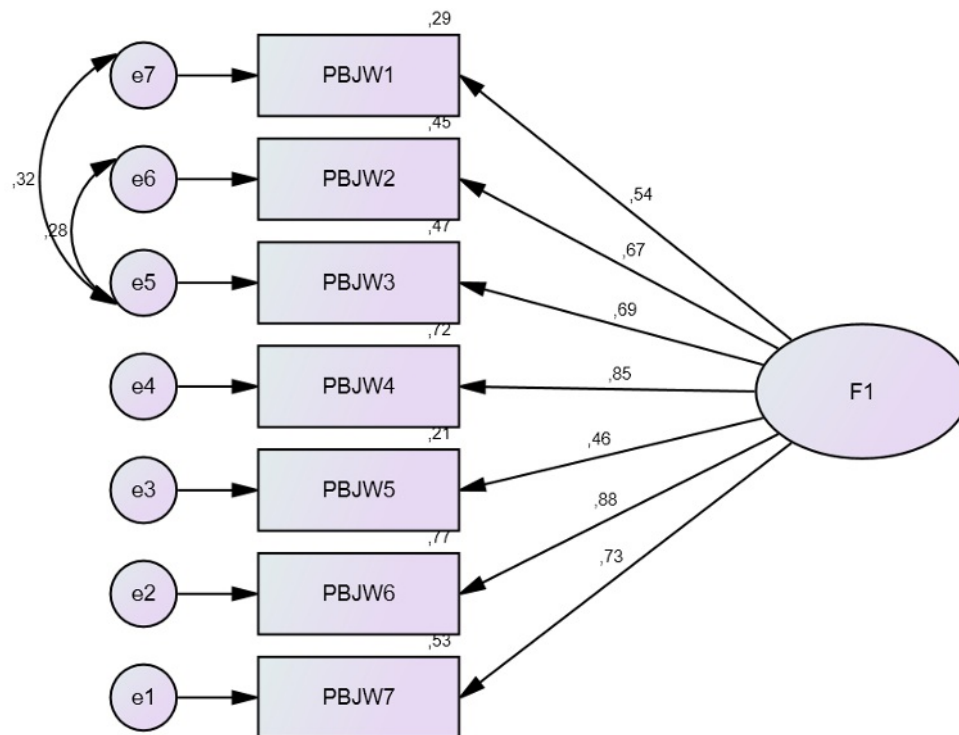


Figure 2. Factor structure of the PBJW

The Relationship of Study's Variables with Abortion Attitudes

The Shapiro-Wilk test was then used to evaluate whether the data distribution was normal. Data were not distributed normally. Bivariate correlation (Kendall's Tau correlation analysis) was used to investigate the relationships between the relevant variables. Table 1 shows this study's measures' means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations. Abortion attitudes were negatively correlated with political positioning, religiosity, and internalized misogyny.

Table 1. Cross-Scale Correlations for the study variables (n = 236)

| | Mean | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | α |
|---------------------------------|-------|-------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|------|---|----------|
| Variables | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. Political Positioning | 2.71 | 0.74 | — | | | | | | | |
| 2. Religiosity | 3.36 | 1.67 | .180** | — | | | | | | .78 |
| 3. PBJW | 3.70 | 0.86 | .065 | .149** | — | | | | | .86 |
| 4. IMS | 2.29 | 0.89 | .179** | .177** | .054 | — | | | | .90 |
| 5. Age | 33.31 | 12.56 | .011 | .139** | .135** | .139** | — | | | |
| 6. Level of Education | | | -.026 | .063 | .167** | .119* | .425** | — | | |
| 7. Abortion Attitudes | 5.67 | 1.69 | -.152** | -.134** | -.049 | -.120* | .001 | .072 | — | .65 |

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

Moderation Effect of Personal BJW on Study Variables

We examined whether PBJW influences the robustness of the relationship between religiosity and abortion attitudes and the strength of the relationship between political positioning and abortion attitudes. For this purpose, two moderation models were performed. The findings show that PBJW has a significant negative moderating effect on the association between religiosity and abortion opinions. ($b = -0.16$, $SE = 0.07$, $t = -2.13$, $p = .008$). As shown in Figure 3, PBJW strengthens the negative link between religiosity and abortion attitudes. Thus, for participants who reported higher-than-average levels of PBJW, the negative link between religiosity and abortion attitudes was stronger ($b = -.31$, $SE = .09$, $95\%CI [-.49, -.13]$, $p < .001$) when compared to average or lower levels of personal BJW ($b = -.17$, $SE = .06$, $95\%CI [-.30, -.04]$, $p < .01$; $b = -.03$, $SE = .09$, $95\%CI [-.22, .15]$, $p > .05$, respectively). These results provide evidence of the PBJW moderating effect. The negative link between religiosity and abortion attitudes was stronger among women, scoring higher but not lower on personal beliefs in a just world. Thus, our prediction that PBJW would mitigate the association between religiosity and abortion attitudes was confirmed. However, the moderating effect of PBJW on the link between political positioning and abortion attitudes was not significant ($b = .07$, $t = 0.41$).

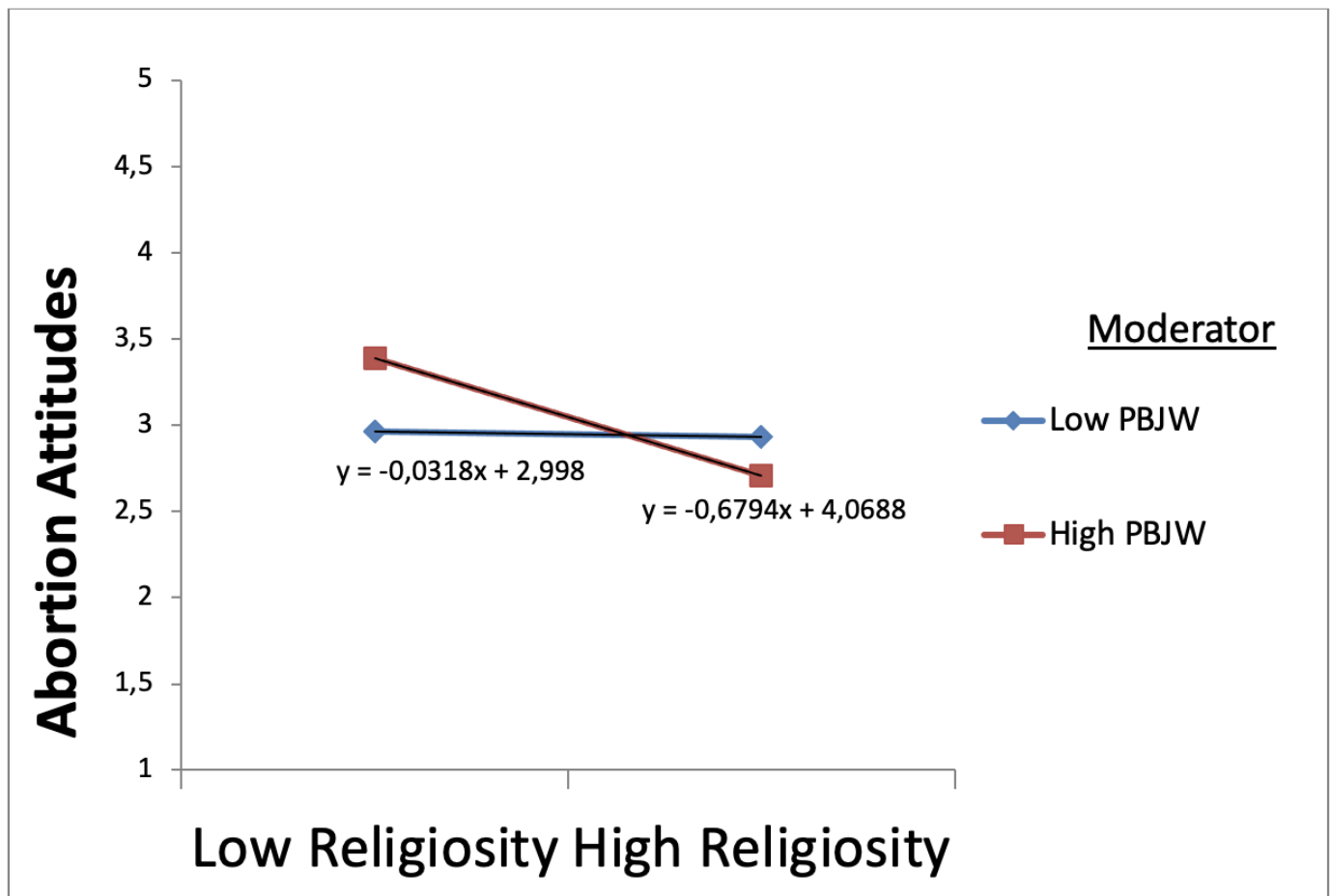


Figure 3. Moderation effect: The relationship between religiosity and abortion attitudes at lower (-1 SD) and higher (+1 SD) levels of personal belief in a just world (PBJW)

Moderation Effect of Internalized Misogyny on Study Variables

Next, we examined whether internalized misogyny affects the strength of the link between religiosity and abortion attitudes, as well as the link between political positioning and abortion attitudes. Again, two moderation models were performed. The findings show that internalized misogyny strongly moderates the association between religiosity and abortion attitudes ($b = -0.25$, $SE = 0.07$, $t = -3.62$, $p = .0004$). As shown in Figure 4, internalized misogyny strengthens the negative link between religiosity and abortion attitudes. Thus, for participants who reported higher-than-average levels of internalized misogyny, the negative link between religiosity and abortion attitudes was stronger ($b = -.40$, $SE = .09$, $95\%CI [-.58, -.22]$, $p < .001$) when compared to average or lower levels of internalized misogyny ($b = -.17$, $SE = .06$, $95\%CI [-.30, -.04]$, $p < .01$; $b = .05$, $SE = .08$, $95\%CI [-.118, .235]$, $p > .05$, respectively). In summary, the endorsement of internalized misogyny increased religious women's anti-abortion attitudes. The influence of internalized misogyny on the link between political positioning and abortion attitudes was not significant ($b = .18$, $t = 1.18$).

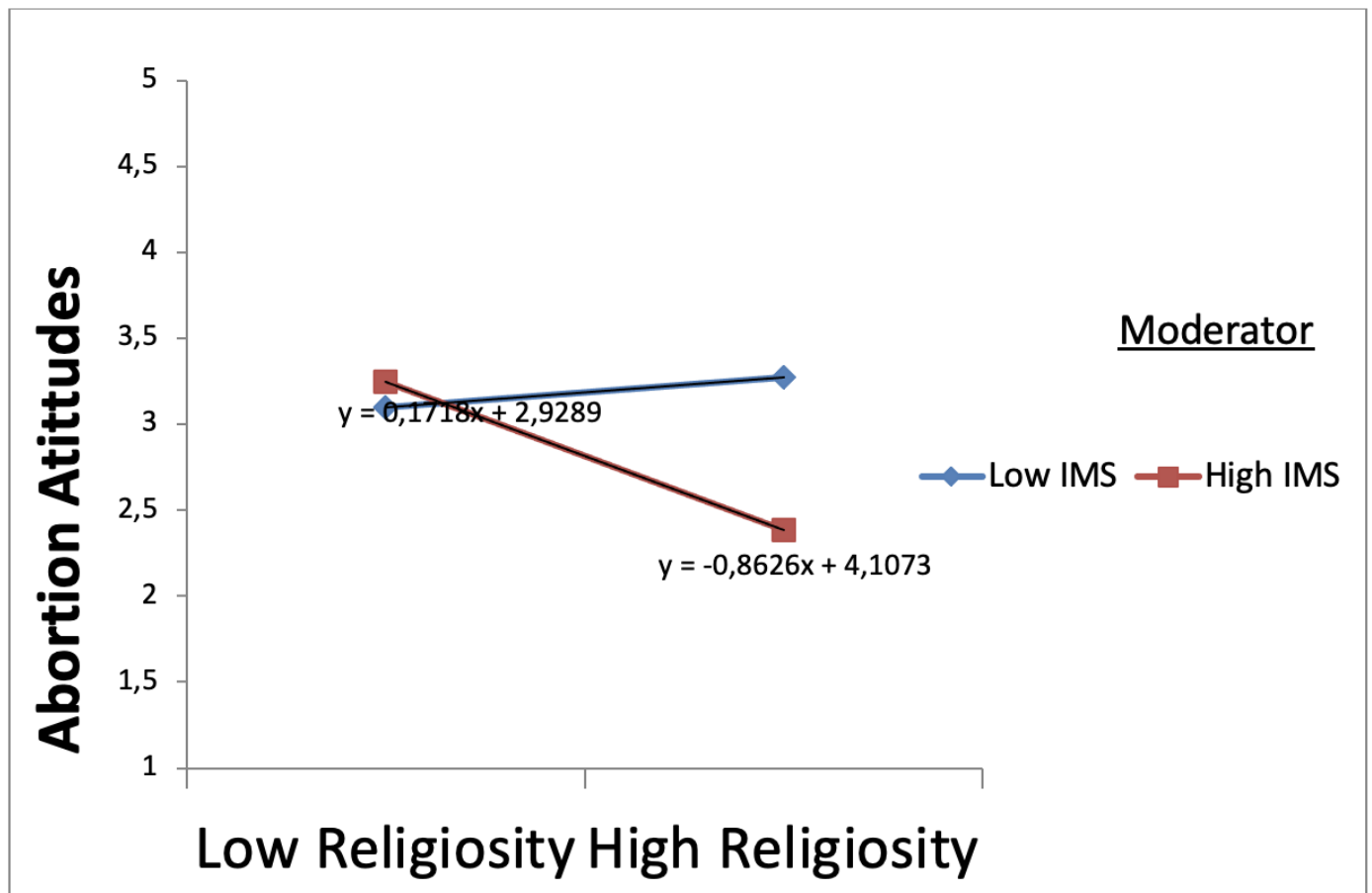


Figure 4. Moderation effect: The relationship between religiosity and abortion attitudes at lower (-1 SD) and higher (+1 SD) levels of internalized misogyny (IMS)

Discussion

In light of the discussion concerning the controversial issue of abortion, this study examined the attitudinal underpinnings of anti-abortion attitudes. In recent years, there has been a growing debate regarding the legality of abortion by certain institutions (e.g., religious institutions) and ideological systems (i.e., conservatism; Jelen & Wilcox, 2003).

Religion provides a clear ethical framework with attitudes and behaviors toward various social groups. Accordingly, the main predictors of abortion attitudes are religion and religiosity. Because religious organizations strongly oppose abortion, religious beliefs have a significant role in forming attitudes toward abortion. (Jelen & Wilcox, 2003). Thus, grounded on the theoretical line that religiosity is a significant indicator of having socially conservative values (Benin, 1985; Hunseberger, 1996). we hypothesized that anti-abortion attitudes would echo religious prohibitions and condemnations. Considering also that conservative individuals justify and act in a way that maintains the status quo (Jost, 2017; Toorn et al., 2017), we hypothesized that this motivation might take the form of a religious and political inclination to oppose abortion. Our second hypothesis was that political and religious opposition to abortion might be enhanced by adherence to traditional gender norms and PBJW.

This study's results align with previous research findings (Alvargonzalez, 2017; Esposito & Basow, 1995), showing that

religiosity strongly predicts anti-abortion attitudes. Based on the theories of social identification and self-categorization (Tajfel & Turner, 2004; Turner et al., 1987), religiosity may influence people's anti-abortion attitudes due to ingroup bias. In other words, religious women's anti-abortion attitudes may reflect their hostility toward other women who do not conform to religious prescriptions as an outgroup. This result also shows that the role of religions as organizational structures, which are usually hierarchically structured and conservative rule-based institutions, in preserving gender discriminatory attitudes is critical. This result could be interpreted based on the logic that religions, as formal institutions with officially inscribed sanctions and rules, can justify and legitimate gender inequality (Sequino & Lovinsky, 2009).

As Kemp (2020) argues, in Western societies, higher religiosity denotes the continual influence of the conventional gender role messages depicted in the Bible and a greater possibility that those stimuli will be internalized. Previous research reports that religious institutions and organizations profoundly influence the inflexibility of gender roles and attitudes by shaping cultural standards, social patterns, and behaviors (see Inglehart & Pippa, 2003). Sequino and Lovinsky's (2009) study examining how religious institutions preserve social norms that legitimate gender inequality showed that religiosity was invariably negatively associated with gender attitudes concerning issues of rigidity of gender identity and beliefs about gender hierarchy in politics and education. Thus, religiosity supports and preserves traditional gender norms, rules, and stereotypes. Hence, conservatism, in religious terms, can serve as a system justification ideology that has a palliative role in lessening gender discrimination impact (Jost et al., 2014).

The mother's condition is usually brought up while talking about abortion. Therefore, it makes sense that support for a woman's right to make her own decisions would be connected to cultural expectations of women's responsibilities. (Huang et al., 2014). Some might view abortion as rejecting the conventional gender roles associated with motherhood and/or as a symbol of the women's rights movement (Osborne & Davies, 2009, 2012). This study's findings are consistent with the assumption that women who seek abortions are not fulfilling their gender role responsibilities and are, hence, failing to live up to traditional social expectations of the ideal woman. Attitudes toward gender roles may be connected with people's positions on the abortion controversy because, for example, some people may view abortion as incompatible with the role of motherhood (Huang et al., 2012). In addition, gender roles are influenced by religion, and there is an opposition between religion and more egalitarian gender norms (Fidan, 2021). Becker and Wright (2011) report that women's endorsement of gender-specific belief systems that justify the existing gender inequality increases their tendency to perceive sexism as legitimate and fair.

Moreover, Pacilli et al. (2019) show that sexist beliefs (operating as a system justifying ideology that causes ingroup) can also serve as a form of self-protection to ameliorate the adverse outcomes of gender inequality. Thus, the moderating role of internalized misogyny may be explained based on the logic that religious women may be more motivated to preserve the gender status quo and consequently oppose abortion because it represents a deviation from religious prescriptions and traditional gender roles. Hence, religiosity and internalized misogyny may lead to a constricted set of ideas about women's place in society that oppose abortion.

The current study's results also provide evidence that higher levels of PBJW strengthen the link between religiosity and anti-abortion attitudes, even though these outcomes might put them in an unfavorable position in their own group (see

Jost et al., 2003). This result suggests that under a system-justifying perspective (i.e., PBJW; Kay et al., 2005), women may adopt the dominant ideology to have a positive image of the social system in which they live (Jost & Hunyady, 2003).

Political ideology also significantly shapes people's responses to and justifications for political and social issues (Hoyt & Goldin, 2016; Van der Toorn et al., 2017). As Crandall (2000) argues, political conservatism justifies stigmatization through internal attributions for individual outcomes and the support of social hierarchies. Although the findings of this study are consistent with studies showing that political affiliation is associated with anti-abortion beliefs (Hess & Rueb, 2005; Strickler & Danigelis, 2002), our findings contradicted the hypothesis that internalized misogyny and PBJW would moderate the link between political positioning and anti-abortion attitudes. Noteworthy is the asymmetric impact of internalized misogyny and PBJW as moderators of the relationship between religiosity and abortion attitudes compared to political conservatism on abortion attitudes. These findings might suggest that religious opposition to abortion is more flexible than that of conservative opposition. Another possibility is that the variables chosen as moderators - internalized misogyny and personal beliefs in a just world - are more closely aligned with religious anti-abortion values than those of politically conservative motivations.

Future studies should emphasize whether politically conservative women need a system-justifying perspective to consider anti-abortion attitudes as legitimate. Also, using more variables concerning political positioning may be more helpful in future studies. This study shows that higher levels of traditional gender roles (i.e., internalized misogyny) and PBJW intensify religious women's attitudinal opposition towards abortion.

Theoretical Implications

This study's results have important implications for the attitudinal underpinnings of anti-abortion attitudes. Our model suggests that in addition to religiosity, as a predictor of anti-abortion attitudes, internalized misogyny and PBJW can also play a crucial role in the link between religiosity and anti-abortion attitudes. Based on the association between religiosity and resistance to change, since religious doctrines tend to appraise conventionalism and perseverance of the societal status quo (see Jost et al., 2014), we hypothesized that religiosity would also be related to women's anti-abortion attitudes. In addition, we expected the impact of religiosity on anti-abortion attitudes to be enhanced by the endorsement of internalized misogyny and PBJW.

Grounded on the aforementioned results, a theoretical implication is that internalized misogyny strengthens the link between religiosity and anti-abortion attitudes. This can be logically explained since sexism stems from a desire to behave in accordance with cultural expectations (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Higher levels of religiosity would also propose greater exposure to religious teaching, which would subsequently influence one's attitudes and behaviors (Sequino & Lovinsky, 2009). The world will also be seen through a religious lens by those who support a high level of religiosity under their religious principles and values (Worthington et al., 2003). As a result, people who act in ways inconsistent with their religious beliefs are more prone to experience moral incongruence, including feelings of greater guilt and cognitive dissonance (Perry & Hayward, 2017). In addition, religion may undermine participants' perceptions of how fair the world is to them (Napier et al., 2010), increasing the motivation for system-legitimizing beliefs (i.e., PBJW; Kay et al., 2005), which

in turn might lead to anti-abortion attitudes.

This study provides evidence of the critical influence of system-justifying ideological manifestations in anti-abortion attitudes. More specifically, religiosity, PBJW, and internalized misogyny may serve as influential purveyors of opposition toward abortion because they offer the required defenses (justifications) for denying abortion. Overall, in the current study, we elucidate the role of system-justifying beliefs (i.e., religiosity, traditional gender role beliefs, in terms of internalized misogyny, PBJW) in shaping the moral standards and beliefs to perceive the world through (Crandall, 2000) and show the processes through which these ideological frameworks promote anti-abortion attitudes.

To the researcher's knowledge, limited research examines women's anti-abortion attitudes through the lens of system-legitimizing beliefs. Moreover, the current study examines system-justifying ideologies in a new political and socio-cultural context, offering new insights into this area of research. Greece's Orthodox faith, in particular, significantly impacts society's attitudes and views, emphasizing the importance of traditional gender and family roles (Grigoropoulos, 2022a, b, c, 2021a, b, 2020, 2019). Therefore, clarifying the social psychological procedures that form women's anti-abortion attitudes is crucial for illuminating theory and practice to strengthen the attempts of advocacy groups to advance social justice.

Last, studies on the connection between conventional gender role beliefs and abortion have primarily used American samples (Strickler & Danigelis, 2002; Walzer, 1994). By examining data from Greece, we can determine whether past research can be replicated across cultures in a country where religion dominates political discourse. Thus, this study examines the endorsement of religious and gender beliefs that justify anti-abortion attitudes in a new socio-political context. By demonstrating the critical role of system-justifying ideologies, this research proposes that without considering socio-cultural manifestations of negativity toward abortion, it would be difficult to understand the prevalence of opposition. To sum up, our results suggest that system-justifying ideologies can serve as significant foundations of gender discriminatory attitudes, such as anti-abortion attitudes, thus underlining the important role of intervening at both the ideological and individual levels. This study's findings can be useful to organizations promoting gender equality and women's human rights worldwide. Given the significance of these issues for today's societies, it is most important to emphasize women's confronting ways and styles under critical conditions.

Limitations

Unlike previous studies (Osborne & Davies, 2012), the current study did not assess multiple cases of traumatic and elective abortion. For instance, in our question about support for traumatic abortion, we did not ask respondents about their opinions on abortion in cases of rape, incest, or congenital disabilities—causes of traumatic abortion but not necessarily life-threatening ones. Therefore, assigning a single item to cover both sorts of abortion in its totality may overlook changes in people's support for abortion in these specific circumstances. Future studies in this specific area of research should include additional questions to gauge participants' perspectives toward various instances of elective and traumatic abortion. In addition, the fact that participants were recruited based on easiness of access limits the generalizability of the results. Future studies should further examine these associations with a larger emerging adult

population to support these findings. Moreover, looking into these constructs in diverse populations would benefit future research. Additionally, as the study's participants are all deemed young, acquiring a balanced sample size from various age groups would be ideal.

Statements and Declarations

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare they have no conflict of interest.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Compliance with Ethical Standards: All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the International Hellenic university research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual adult participants included in the study.

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