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AUTHORS: Harun Ismail INCEKARA, Enver ULAS

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## THE EFFECTS OF DIFFERENT SEXUAL ORIENTATIONS OF INDIVIDUALS ON THEIR PROFESSIONAL LIVES

Harun İsmail İNCEKARA\* & Enver ULAŞ\*\*

### Abstract

*Individuals with different sexual orientations may face various problems in society because of their sexual orientation or gender at birth. This includes individuals who classify themselves as "LGBTI+Q", i.e. "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersexual and queer". The aim of this study is to examine the impact of individuals' sexual orientation on their professional lives. In this study, which is based on the phenomenological design of qualitative research, a total of 22 participants (10 gay, 4 transsexual, 4 bisexual, 3 queer and 1 lesbian) were selected by snowball sampling method. In the survey, 6 personal information forms prepared by the researcher and 4 semi-structured interview questions were used. Semi-structured interview questions were interviewed with each participant for 45 minutes via video conferencing method over online (Zoom programme). The data were analysed by content and analysis methods. In order to ensure the reliability of the study, themes were identified in the process of analysing the data subjected to content analysis, and each theme was first divided into codes and then into categories and analysed within itself. The responses of 22 LGBTI+Q individuals participating in the survey regarding the effects of their sexual orientation on their professional lives were grouped under 4 themes, 21 codes and 8 categories. Each of the four themes was further divided into two different categories. According to the results of the survey, it was determined that sexual orientation affects career choice positively and negatively, sexual orientation can be both revealed and concealed in business life, sexual orientation affects professional performance and various problems may arise in terms of overlapping sexual orientation and career goals.*

**Keywords:** Sexual Orientation, LGBTI+Q, Career, Profession.

## BİREYLERİN FARKLI CİNSEL YÖNELİMLERİNİN PROFESYONEL YAŞAMLARINA ETKİLERİ

### Öz

*Farklı cinsel yönelimlere sahip bireyler, cinsel yönelimleri veya doğuştan gelen cinsiyetleri nedeniyle toplumda çeşitli sorunlarla karşılaşabilmektedir. Kendilerini "LGBTI+Q", yani "lezbiyen, gey, biseksüel,*

\* Doktorant, Harun İsmail İncekara, İstanbul Medipol Üniversitesi, Rehberlik ve Psikolojik Danışmanlık Bölümü, incecara-harun@outlook.com.tr, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0302-2814>

\*\*Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Enver Ulaş, İstanbul Sabahattin Zaim Üniversitesi, Rehberlik ve Psikolojik Danışmanlık Bölümü, enver.ulas@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1881-7014>

*transseksüel, interseksüel ve queer" olarak sınıflandıran bireyler bu kategoriye dahildir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, bireylerin cinsel yönelimlerinin iş yaşamları üzerindeki etkisini incelemektir. Nitel araştırmanın fenomenolojik desenine dayanan bu çalışmada, kartopu örnekleme yöntemi ile toplam 22 katılımcı (10 gey, 4 transseksüel, 4 biseksüel, 3 queer ve 1 lezbiyen) seçilmiştir. Ankette araştırmacı tarafından hazırlanan 6 adet kişisel bilgi formu ve 4 adet yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme sorusu kullanılmıştır. Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme soruları her bir katılımcı ile 45 dakika süreyle internet üzerinden video konferans yöntemiyle (Zoom programı) görüşülmüştür. Veriler içerik ve analiz yöntemleri ile analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmanın güvenilirliğini sağlamak amacıyla içerik analizine tabi tutulan verilerin analizi sürecinde temalar belirlenmiş ve her bir tema önce kodlara daha sonra kategorilere ayrılarak kendi içinde analiz edilmiştir. Ankete katılan 22 LGBTİ+Q bireyin cinsel yönelimlerinin iş yaşamları üzerindeki etkilerine ilişkin yanıtları 4 tema, 21 kod ve 8 kategori altında toplanmıştır. Dört temanın her biri ayrıca iki farklı kategoriye ayrılmıştır. Anket sonuçlarına göre cinsel yönelimin kariyer seçimini olumlu ve olumsuz etkilediği, cinsel yönelimin iş hayatında hem açığa çıkabildiği hem de gizlenebildiği, cinsel yönelimin mesleki performansı etkilediği ve cinsel yönelim ile kariyer hedeflerinin örtüşmesi açısından çeşitli sorunların ortaya çıkabildiği tespit edilmiştir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Cinsel Yönelim, LGBTİ+Q, Kariyer, Meslek.*

## **Introduction**

Individuals with different sexual orientations face various problems in society due to their sexual preferences or innate gender. "Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersexual and queer" individuals classified as LGBTİ+Q are included in this group (Valfort, 2017). Various discriminating and biased attitudes exhibited against individuals having different sexual orientations continue to be among the important issues of society recently. There are various international initiatives such as the Istanbul Convention titled "Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence" prepared by the European Council and signed by 45 member countries, to support women and LGBTİ+Q individuals (Istanbul Convention, 2022).

Since the beginning of the 2000s, different conceptualisations have been used in relation to sexual orientations. In previous years, it was claimed that there were three different sexual orientations such as heterosexuality (closeness to the opposite sex), homosexuality (closeness to the same sex, "gay" for men and "lesbian" for women) and bisexuality (closeness to both opposite and same sex) (Yıldırım, 2018). Transsexualism, which is outside the aforementioned sexual orientations, is thought to be a sexual identity that manifests itself with the desire for gender reassignment operations by thinking

and feeling that the individual's body is in the wrong body (Landen, et al., 1996). Looking at the literature, it is seen that LGBTI+Q is added to the concept of LGBT. The "i" here is 'intersexuality', the sexual orientation of individuals with both male and feminine characteristics, and the "Q" is 'queer', that is, a theory that argues that both sexual identity and orientation are related to sociological and political fields as well as sexuality (Love, 2014).

There appears to be different definitions of the terms sexual identity, gender identity and sexual orientation. Sexual identity can be reviewed from two different perspectives, namely biological identity and sexual orientation. While biological gender is an anatomical situation relating to being male or female, sexual identity refers to the psychological situation affinity that an individual feels towards women, men or both (American Psychological Association, 2012). A study analyzing gender of being male or female (Başar, 2014). Sexual orientation is the romantic, sexual or emotional roles and clothing styles across women and men finds that women prefer a masculine clothing style in the society while men follow a feminine image when they have long hair and use earrings (Tanriverdi, 2020).

Recent discussions over sexuality and sexual orientation focus on sexual orientation and LGBTI+Q individuals (Schnabel, 2018). Unlike the common view that heterosexuality is recognized as a norm in societies, it is observed that heterosexual perspective has also started to be questioned. A process of transformation may be anticipated in societies as a result of such questioning. Certain individuals or groups in the society resist to the creation of an equalist social order. As a result of this resistance, the inequalities, (Kabacaoğlu, 2015) discrimination and biased attitudes in terms of sexual orientation and sexual identity seem to persist (Meyer, 1995). In Turkey, one of the most important reasons why LGBTI+Q individuals face difficulties maintaining their presence in public spaces appears to be the heteropatriarchal perspective and individuals having such a perspective seem to display a discriminative attitude against LGBTI+Q individuals (diseased, prostituting, immoral, etc.) (Erdoğan and Köten, 2014). In an extensive survey conducted by Esmer (2009) with 1715 people, the question "Whom would you prefer not to be neighbors with?" was answered by 87 percent of respondents as "I would not prefer being neighbors with homosexual individuals", which reveals that LGBTI+Q individuals experience problems in their social and professional lives.

According to Kuzgun (2014), profession is an activity performed by individuals to maintain their lives, requiring certain skills acquired through education. While profession brings along financial satisfaction, the individual's use and realization of their own capacity serves as an instrument (Kuzgun, 2013). In his study, Arayıcı (2019) found that individuals with different sexual orientations are subjected to discrimination by other individuals in the society on the grounds that they do not comply with cultural norms, and that such negative experiences are observed especially in

education and business life. As a result of the marginalization of the individuals in this group by the society, they not only experience problems in their interpersonal and social relations in terms of their individual development, but also have negative economic experiences. This is because these individuals may also be exposed to various incidents of abuse and violence in their professional lives. *“Appearing as a homosexual individual during the interview process is a reason for not being hired. Therefore, you need to be careful about everything, from your clothing to your attitudes, and prove to the other side that you are heterosexual”* said one of the LGBTI+Q panelists in a panel titled “Meeting of LGB Workers” (Çakır, 2022).

Career is defined as a process relating to the professional experiences that an individual will live through and be able to partly keep under control in achieving both individual and organizational goals throughout their life (Sabuncuoğlu, 2000). The relevant literature demonstrates that there are many different career approaches and this is due partly to the fact that an individual is a versatile being and also to the fact that career plays a key role in the life of the individual through both internal and external factors. One of the career choice theories is psychoanalytic theory. Psychoanalytic career theory essentially bases the individual's career choices on conscious and unconscious requirements. According to this theory, career choice is explained through the concepts of "sublimation and identification". It is considered that the individual directs their choices by identification with the people they feel affinity with (Özgüven, 2001; Yeşilyaprak, 2012). Furthermore, an individual specifies the needs in their childhood life and leans towards their profession in line with these needs (Karahan, 2019). During the first six-year period which is one of the most important periods in the development of personality, behaviors like walking, eating, drinking, toilet training, etc. are thought to form the basis of complex behaviors in the later stages of the individual (Kuzgun, 1985).

Individuals' career choices are influenced by factors such as skills, interests, personal characteristics, cultural and environmental factors, but these factors may predominantly apply to heterosexual individuals. Individuals with different sexual orientations state that they are subjected to discrimination in both recruitment and employment processes of their careers and feel obliged to hide their sexual orientation (Karakaş, 2021; Polat, 2021). Individuals with different sexual orientations state that they want to be hardworking and harmonious in order to rise in their professional careers and working lives, but they are exposed to a homophobic perspective, therefore they cannot find a place for themselves in their working lives, they face domestic pressure and violence, and therefore they do sex work (Serin, 2021). On the other hand, respondents state that people with different sexual orientations experience various problems as they are exposed to discrimination in their professional lives and careers. In particular, during recruitment interviews, the professional skills of LGBTI+Q members are

disregarded and they cannot reach the professional position they target due to their sexual orientation. In the study analyzing the personal traits of LGBTI+Q individuals in their work and professional lives, it has been observed that the personality perceptions of intersexual and transsexual individuals are higher than the averages of lesbian and gay individuals (Uzun, 2020). The literature shows that transsexuals, who are one of the individuals with different sexual orientations, leave their families at an early age and migrate to metropolises such as Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara because they are exposed to domestic violence and abuse. Particularly in Beyoğlu district of Istanbul, they had to engage in prostitution and lead a "*ghetto*" style life, vulnerable to all types of violence and abuse (Erdoğan and Köten, 2014; Gürsu and Elitemiz, 2012). Various institutions and organizations (such Pink Life Platform) have been working on the rights of LGBTI+Q members recently. In the Worker Symposium organized in 2011, it was stated that transsexual individuals were forced to work as sex workers being exposed to all types of violence (Gürsu and Elitemiz, 2012).

This concept of "homosexuality", which encompasses individuals with different sexual orientations, globally, has been removed from the disease status of WHO (World Health Organization) and APA (American Psychological Association) (Okutan, 2010). Still, due to the sexual orientation of individuals, they are not accepted by the society and face discrimination, and they experience some problems in adapting to social life. The objective of this study is to examine the effects of individuals' different sexual orientations on their professional lives. When the literature is examined, it is seen that there are few studies examining the work life of individuals with different sexual orientations. The society views that it would be important for the welfare of the society that each individual in this group is accepted by the society and is included in social life, and that they have economic freedom and can work under fair working conditions just like other individuals. In the light of all these findings, this study aims at contributing to the literature and shedding light onto future studies.

People with diverse sexual orientations encounter a variety of issues in society. LGBTI+Q persons are those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersex, and queer (Valfort, 2017). Various forms of prejudice and discrimination against people of various sexual orientations are among the most pressing issues facing society today. The Council of Europe created the Istanbul Convention, also known as the "Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence," which 45 member nations have ratified. The Istanbul Convention coordinates numerous international initiatives to support women and LGBTI+Q people. Since the start of the 2000s, it has been noted that several conceptualizations have been applied to sexual orientations. There are three different sexual orientations, according to previous studies: heterosexuality (intimacy with the opposite sex), homosexuality (intimacy

with the same sex, also known as "gay" for men and "lesbian" for women), and bisexuality (intimacy with both the opposite sex and the same sex) (Yldrm, 2018). Transsexualism, which is defined as a sexual identity distinct from the aforementioned sexual orientations, is said to emerge as a desire for gender reassignment procedures as a consequence of the person's perception that his body is in the incorrect body (Landen et al., 1996). When the material is analyzed, it becomes clear that the concepts of LGBTI+Q have been introduced. The "i" in this sentence stands for "intersexuality," which is the sexual orientation of people who exhibit both male and female traits. The "Q" in this sentence refers to a theory that asserts that sexual orientation and identity are tied to social and political issues in addition to sexuality (Love, 2014). It can be observed that the meanings of the phrases sexual identity, gender identity, and sexual orientation vary. Biological identity and sexual orientation are two separate angles from which to view gender identity. Sexual identity conveys a person's psychological connectedness to women, men, or both, despite biological sex being an anatomical condition of being a woman or a man (American Psychological Association, 2012).

Skills, hobbies, personality traits, cultural norms, and environmental variables all have an impact on people's employment decisions, but they may be more relevant to heterosexual people. People of all sexual orientations claim that they are subject to prejudice throughout the hiring and promotion procedures for their occupations and that they feel compelled to conceal their sexual orientation (Karakaş, 2021; Polat, 2021). People of all sexual orientations claim that they want to work hard and get along with others in order to advance in their professional careers and working lives, but because of homophobic perspectives, they are unable to find a place for themselves in the workforce. As a result, they experience domestic pressure and violence and turn to sex work (Serin, 2021). On the other hand, participants claim that since they are subjected to discrimination in their professional life and workplaces, persons of different sexual orientations encounter a variety of issues. Due to their sexual orientation, LGBTI+Q individuals' professional abilities are disregarded, particularly during recruitment interviews, and they are unable to get the desired professional job. The personality perceptions of intersexual and transgender people were found to be higher than the averages of lesbian and gay people in the research looking at the personality features of LGBTI+Q people in their employment and professional life (Uzun, 2020).

The purpose of this research is to investigate how people's various sexual orientations affect their professional life. When the literature is evaluated, it becomes clear that there aren't many studies looking at how people with diverse sexual orientations behave at work. The general public believes that it is crucial for the benefit of society that each member of this group be welcomed by it, participate in social activities, enjoy economic independence, and be able to work under equal working conditions with

everyone else. This study intends to add to the body of knowledge and provide insight for future research in light of all of the results.

## 2. Methodology

This research intends to analyze the perspectives of people with various sexual orientations, known as "LGBTI+Q" in the literature, on how their sexual orientation affects their ability to get and keep a job. To choose the study's participants, a targeted sampling technique called snowball sampling was utilized. There were 22 participants in all, including 10 homosexual, 4 transgender, 4 bisexual, 3 queer, and 1 lesbian. The Istanbul Medipol University Social Sciences Scientific Research Ethics Committee provided the report with the decision number 77 that was needed for the study on June 9, 221. The researcher utilized 4 interview forms to collect thorough information regarding the goal and methodology of the study. The goal in developing the questions was to learn in-depth details on the working and professional life of people of all sexual orientations. A literature research was done in order to create the questions, and the insights of four professionals in the area of educational sciences were also considered. Two people with various sexual orientations who were excluded from the sample according to their sexual orientation participated in a pilot research after the questions had been developed. The views and recommendations from the people who participated in the form's piloting were taken into consideration when it was amended. The study group did not include any of the participants in the pilot trial. Due to the participants' varied nationalities (Turkey, 11; Syria, 1; Austria, 2; United States, 1; Canada, 2; Sweden, 2; Germany, 2; and a South American nation, 2), the study's data were collected through semi-structured online interviews (Zoom Program) that lasted roughly 45 minutes between August 10 and August 25.

### 2.1. Research Model

This study was prepared based on phenomenological pattern as a qualitative research method. Phenomenological pattern analyzes phenomena observed in the society, lacking any detailed information (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005). This study aims to discuss the views of individuals with different sexual orientations, defined as "LGBTI+Q" in the literature, on the impact of their sexual orientation on their work life.

### 2.2. Study Group

Snowball sampling, a targeted sampling method, was used to determine the participants of the study. This sampling method selects a reference individual relating to the subject of the study and then reaches out to other people through this reference person (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981; Yağarand Dökme, 2018). In this study, there were a total of 15 participants, 8 gay, 4



transsexual, 2 bisexual and 1 lesbian. The reason why the number of participants was limited to 15 people was because it was not deemed necessary to interview other participants as the data started to repeat. No inclusion or exclusion criteria were used for the individuals participating in the study. Nicknames were given to the participants, such as “P1- P2- P3- P4- P5- P6- P7- P8- P9- P10- P11- P12- P13- P14- P15- P16- P17- P18- P19- P20- P21- P22”. The results reflecting the personal characteristics of the individuals participating in the study such as age, education, profession, sexual orientation, when they realised their sexual orientation and when the people around them realised their sexual orientation are given in Table 1.

**Table 1. Personal Characteristics of the Individuals in the Study Group**

Variable	Group	Participant (N)
Sex	Male	10
	Female	12
	19-22	8
	23-26	7
	27-30	4
	31-34	3
Education	Primary and secondary school	2
	College	5
	Undergraduate	10
	Postgraduate	5
	Sex worker	1
	Students	3
Profession	Sales Counsellor	3
	Interpreter	1
	Digital Nomad	1
	Civil Engineer	1
	Physiotherapist	1
	Teacher	1
	Architect	1
	Public Relations	1
	Sports Coach	1

	Design Specialist	1
	Dentist	1
	Dermatological Specialist	1
	Finance Specialist	1
	Pharmacist	1
	Visual Arts Specialist	1
	Dancer	1
		1
	Gay	10
	Bisexual	4
Sexual Orientation	Lesbian	1
	Transsexual	4
	Queer	3
What Age Did He Realise His Sexual Orientation	5-10	8
	11-16	11
	23 +	1
	Unknown	2
What Age Did The People Around You Realise Your Sexual Orientation	5-10	4
	11-16	5
	17-22	5
	23 +	2
	Unknown	6

As seen in Table 1, the gender of the participants: male (10), female (12); age ranges: 8 people (19-22), 7 people (23-26), 4 people (27-30), 3 people (31-34); education: 2 people primary and secondary school, 5 people college, 10 people undergraduate, 5 people postgraduate; profession: 1 sex worker, 3 students, 3 sales counsellor, 1 interpreter, 1 digital nomad, 1 civil engineer, 1 person physiotherapist, 1 person teacher, 1 person architect, 1 person public relations, 1 person sports coach, 1 design specialist, 1 dentist, 1 dermatological specialists, 1 finance specialist, 1 pharmacist, 1 visual arts specialist and 1 dancer; sexual orientation: 10 people (gay), 4 people (bisexual), 1 person (lesbian), 4 people (transsexual), 3 people (queer); at what age they realised their sexual orientation: 8 people between the ages of (5-10),

11 people between the ages of (11-16), 1 person between the ages of (23 and above), 2 people do unknown; regarding when the individuals around them realised their sexual orientation: 5 people in the (5-10) age range, 5 people in the (11-16) age range, 5 people in the (17-22) age range, 2 people in the (23 and over) age range, and 6 people stated that they did not know.

Some of the participants' answers to some questions in the personal information form are given below.

When did you realise that your gender and sexual orientation are different from the gender you were born with?

P12: *"That urge started when I was 7-8 years old. That innocent love started when I was 6-7 years old, I even had a friend, I kissed her, I still remember that day, it affected me a lot. And where I live is a place that constantly questions sexual orientations and never welcomes them. I did it with a purely internal impulse"* (M; Gay; Undergraduate; Architect).

P15: *"Around the age of 12-13, I started to realise that I liked women. I wanted to be close to my female teachers, I didn't like male teachers, I wanted to gain the appreciation of female teachers and be in front of their eyes. Then I started to feel emotional towards my girlfriends, I wanted boys to be my friends and buddies but girls to be in my life"* (F; Lesbian; High School; Sports Coach).

P18: *"At the age of 10, I realised after I was circumcised. What was said at that time was always this, after circumcision you start masturbating, you start dreaming, you start dreaming, you desire someone sexually. After the age of 10, when I started to masturbate, I realised that for some reason I did not desire women, I realised that I always desired men, that I was interested in penis and that I dreamed about them"* (M; Gay; Undergraduate; Dentist).

P21: *"To be honest, I don't remember clearly, but I can say that I noticed it when I was about 6-7 years old. since my childhood, I always played with girl games, I always preferred pink, yellow, red colours in colours such as barbie doll, cooking, dressing up clothes, etc. while my peers were always playing football games, fighting, etc. I was very bored with those games, I was beyond bored, I was actually scared, it's strange, but I remember I was really scared"* (M; Gay; Undergraduate; Dermatological Specialist).

When did your environment realise that your sexual orientation is different from the gender you were born with?

P12: *"The environment was always aware of it, I am Syrian by the way, but I have been living in Turkey for 7 years."*

*Anyway, as I said, the environment was always aware of it, but since the society cannot accept an orientation other than heterosexual, frankly, they do not mention it. But of course, there is also this, because you are gay, women can especially welcome you, at least they are not afraid of you and they say, 'he is our brother, he is our brother', they look at you as he cannot be harmed" (M; Gay; Bachelor's Degree; Architect).*

*P17: "I would say 8-9. My family didn't notice at first, I mean my mother sensed that something was different, but I think she couldn't suppress it because I was her son. my friends were aware of it, but my peers knew that I didn't play with them and that my behaviour was different, of course all this came out after I told them my sexual orientation" (M; Gay; Postgraduate; Pharmacist).*

### **2.3. Data Collection**

The ethics committee report with decision number 77, which is required for the research, was received from Istanbul Medipol University Social Sciences Scientific Research Ethics Committee on 09.06.2022. In order to obtain detailed information regarding the objective and method of the research, 4 interview forms were used by the researcher. While preparing the questions, it was aimed to obtain detailed information about the working lives and careers of individuals with different sexual orientations. In order to formulate the questions, the literature was reviewed and the opinions of 4 experts in the field of educational sciences were taken into consideration. After the questions were prepared, a pilot study was conducted on individuals with 2 different sexual orientations who were not included in the sample due to their sexual orientation. The form was revised as a result of the feedback and suggestions received from the individuals who were piloted. Individuals participating in the pilot study were not included in the study group. The study data were obtained through semi-structured online interviews (Zoom Program) lasting approximately 45 minutes between 10 August and 25 August, as the participants resided in different countries (11 people from Turkey, 1 person from Syria, 2 people Austria, 1 person USA, 1 person Canada, 2 people Sweden, 2 people from Germany and 2 people from South American countries that they did not want to give their names).. Finally, the participants were informed in detail about the objective of the study, the confidentiality of data, and a voluntary consent form was obtained from them. There was no need for a specific time limit for responding to the questions.

## **2.4. Research Questions**

- 1) Did your sexual orientation affect your career choice? If so, what are these effects?
- 2) What are the requirements to hide (or not hide) your sexual orientation?
- 3) How does your sexual orientation affect your performance?
- 4) How do your sexual orientation and career goals overlap?
- 5) Has your sexual orientation affected the profession you've chosen? 6) What are these impacts, if any?
- 7) What conditions must be met in order to conceal (or not conceal) your sexual orientation?
- 8) Does your sexual orientation have an impact on how you perform?
- 9) How do your sexual orientation and professional aspirations intersect?

## **2.5. Data Analysis**

For the analysis of the research data, descriptive analysis and content analysis, which are qualitative research methods, were used. Descriptive analysis tries to explain what events, situations, groups and other various areas are (Kaptan, 1988). Descriptive analysis is a research design carried out in the survey model (Selçuk et al., 2014).

Content analysis is an approach that provides a systematic examination of written, oral and other data (Tavşancıl and Aslan, 2001). Within the framework of content analysis, by writing audio recordings of video conference calls made online (Zoom program) by hand, interview transcripts were prepared. A framework was created for content analysis through interview transcripts and Microsoft Office programs (Word and Excel), and the data were processed according to the thematic framework. The aim is to define the data obtained through content analysis and to reveal the important points from these data. Content analysis in research is carried out in four stages. These include coding the data, finding the themes, organizing the codes and themes, and defining and interpreting the findings (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006). From this point of view, firstly coding was made according to the concepts defined in this research and themes were obtained. In the next stage, the data were arranged, coded according to the themes and presented in accordance with the purpose of the research. As a final step, the obtained data were interpreted.

In the data analysis process, each question in the research questions was accepted as the themes of the research. For this reason, each theme was analyzed within itself and firstly divided into codes and then into categories. This theme was defined and interpreted with the findings obtained by arranging categories and codes.

## 2.6. Validity and Reliability

In qualitative studies, validity and reliability are tried to be evaluated in the context of credibility and transferability in the study (Şencan, 2005). During the analysis of the data, two different researchers conducted coding studies separately, and the reliability formula suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) was used to calculate the reliability between coders.  $\text{Reliability} = \text{Consensus} / (\text{Consensus} + \text{Disagreement})$  formula was used and the reliability level of the research was 90%. It is seen that studies with a reliability coefficient above 70% obtained by the application of the reliability formula are considered reliable. On the other hand, in order to determine the level of credibility in the study, the answers given by the participants to the research questions were directly quoted and included in the findings section. For the transferability dimension of the study, the selection and characteristics of the participants, the stages of data collection and analysis were presented clearly. The personal characteristics of the participants were tabulated, and the answers to the research questions were given through direct quotations.

## 3. Findings

As a result of the analysis, the research findings were included under 4 themes such as the effect of sexual orientation on career choice, revealing or hiding sexual orientation in professional life, the effect of sexual orientation on professional performance, and views on the overlap of sexual orientation and career goals. The responses of 15 LGBTI+Q participants to the survey question on how their sexual orientation affects their professional lives were categorized into 4 themes, 21 codes, and 8 categories. The four themes are then broken down into two distinct divisions. The survey's findings show that sexual orientation has both positive and negative effects on career choice, that it can be revealed or kept a secret in the workplace, that it has an impact on professional performance, and that it can cause a number of issues when sexual orientation and career goals overlap.

### 3.1. The Theme of Positive and Negative Effects of Sexual Orientation on Choosing a Profession

The effect of sexual orientation on career choice was formed under two categories and 5 codes: "*positive effects in professional life*" and "*negative effects of sexual orientation in professional life*". The opinions of individuals with different sexual orientations on the positive and negative effects of sexual orientation on career choice are presented in Table .2

**Table 2. Positive and Negative Effects of Sexual Orientation in the Professional Lives of Individuals with Different Sexual Orientation**

Categories	Codes	Participant (N)
Positive effects in professional life	The positive attitudes of colleagues and members of the opposite sex	P2, P8, P16, P18
	Interest and success in certain professions	P3, P4, P17
	Solidarity between lgbti+q individuals	P11, P15, P19
Negative effects of sexual orientation in professional life	Marginalisation, harassment and abuse	P1, P5, P7, P10, P12, P20
	Termination of employment contract	P6, P9, P13, P14, P21, P22

According to the findings of the study, it was revealed that the participants' having different sexual orientations had not only negative but also some positive features. Some of the opinions of the participants that sexual orientation has a positive effect on the choice of profession, in their own words, are as follows:

*"I can say that one of the positive effects of my sexual orientation on merchandising is my colleagues. Even though we live in a homophobic country, I could feel freer thanks to the support of my colleagues. Or because people have a stereotyped perception, that is, this is a cosmetic or make-up store here, they approached us within the framework of a logic as if LGBT individuals were working here, they did not exclude me from my work. Because I was working in a placent they offered me. In fact, when I first revealed my gender identity to my brother, he told me that there were always gay people working in the cosmetics store, so he guessed it" (the positive attitudes of colleagues and members of the opposite sex, P8)*

According to the results of the research, it was observed that individuals with different sexual orientations face the risk of marginalisation and exclusion in their professional lives. Some of the opinions of the participants that sexual orientation negatively affects the choice of profession are as follows:

*"So, there was no difficulty in Germany, but there were disturbing customers in Turkey. But his colleagues were never like that. While I was living in Turkey, my ex-boss tried to harass me, and he didn't settle for that, he attacked me, moreover, this person was someone with homophobic approaches who always*

*made bad comments about LGBT individuals”* (marginalisation, harassment and abuse, P5)

### 3.2. The Theme of Revealing or Hiding Sexual Orientation in Professional Life

Revealing or hiding sexual orientation in professional life was created under two categories and 5 codes: *“disclosure of sexual orientation in professional life”* and *“concealment of sexual orientation in professional life”*. The opinions of individuals with different sexual orientations on disclosing or hiding their sexual orientation in their professional lives are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Disclosure or Concealment of Sexual Orientation at Work by Individuals with Different Sexual Orientation on the Basis of Sexual Orientation**

Categories	Codes	Participant (N)
Disclosure of sexual orientation in professional life	Revealing, physical appearance	P2, P7, P21, P22
	The work environment is decisive	P1, P16
	Company policies	P14, P17
Concealment of sexual orientation in professional life	Hiding	P1, P3, P5, P6, P12, P18, P19
	Extra work performance	P4, P8, P9, P11, P15
	Homophobic attitudes	P10, P20

It was concluded that individuals with different sexual orientations should not hide their sexual orientation, but they should still be careful in this regard. Some of the views of the participants on revealing their sexual orientation in their professional lives are stated as follows in their own words:

*“I don't feel the need to hide it because it is not something to be ashamed of, we are like heterosexuals normally, there is no extra situation. I can't say what it is like in being gay or lesbian or in heterosexuality as I think and believe that all sexual orientations are equal to each other. However, I think that physical appearance is an issue to be considered here. Men may have problems in this regard, but there is no such situation in women, so lesbianism is not understood by physical appearance”* (revealing, physical appearance, P2)

According to the results obtained in the research, it was observed that individuals in this group should hide their sexual orientation, and if they reveal it, they may face some negative situations in their professional life. Some of



the opinions of the participants about hiding sexual orientation in their professional life are as follows:

*"I don't usually say my sexual identity, I don't think it's necessary to say that. After all, it seems ridiculous to me to say that I like men unless a hetero comes and says I like women. Even if they are not homophobic in business life, they look at you differently when you say you are gay. For example, you can see that a hetero tries to pay attention to his words while talking to you, it is very obvious, they talk as if they don't want to offend you, but they actually offend you. The problem is that you don't have to be careful when talking to me anyway. Why do you care, am I not a human being? I mean, am I eating people? Still, of course I don't say this, after all, business life is important for me and I don't want to be harmed because of my sexual identity. Actually, we need to say that we are everywhere, we are present at every step of life and society, but you don't say this, the instinct of self-protection comes into play in some cases."* (hiding, P12)

### 3.3. Effects on Occupational Performance of Individuals with Different Sexual Orientation

The effects of sexual orientation on professional performance were formed under two categories and 5 codes such as "sexual orientation affects professional performance" and "sexual orientation does not affect professional performance". The opinions of individuals with different sexual orientations on the effects of their sexual orientation on their professional performance are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. Effects on Occupational Performance of Individuals with Different Sexual Orientation**

Categories	Codes	Participant (N)
Sexual Orientation Affects Professional Performance	Effects, psychological issues	P1, P6, P12, P15, P16
	Exposure to mobbing	P2, P4, P5, P7, P18, P19
Sexual Orientation Does Not Affect Professional Performance	Intimacy with the opposite sex in some professions	P3, P9, P17
	Working conditions	P6, P10, P20, P21
	Economic conditions	P13, P14, P22

According to the results obtained in the study, it was observed that sexual orientation of individuals with different sexual orientations can directly affect their professional performance. The opinions of one of the participants about the effects of sexual orientation on professional performances were stated in their own words as follows:

*"I think that when a person says that he/she is gay, their perspective towards that person is not very favourable, so I don't know whether they will hire that person or not, and if they do, how long they will work, whether double standards will be applied. I think it affects them, of course. The emotional state he is experiencing is like not being accepted by society... because we are individuals who are more prone to some negative emotional states. I've actually lived in a similar situation, so this is a good question. I'm a direct live example of me." (effects, psychological issues, P12).*

It was concluded that the sexual orientation of individuals with different sexual orientations has no effect on occupational performance and that this situation is not a preference as a result. The opinions of one of the participants that sexual orientation cannot have an effect on professional performances were expressed in their own words as follows:

*"Things like that don't affect performance. I think that performance is a dynamic that is completely related to loving the job, being happy at the place where you work, and making you feel happy financially, just like in other sexual orientations"* (economic conditions, P13)

### 3.4. The Effects of the Overlap of Sexual Orientation and Career Goals of Individuals with Different Sexual Orientations

Effects of overlapping sexual orientation with career goals such as *"sexual orientation does not overlaps with career goals"* and *"sexual orientation overlaps with career goals"* were formed under two categories and 6 codes. The opinions of individuals with different sexual orientations on the effects of their sexual orientation on their career goals are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5. Overlap of Career Goals and Sexual Orientation of Individuals with Different Sexual Orientations**

Categories	Codes	Participant (N)
Sexual Orientation Does Not Overlaps with Career Goals	The egalitarian perspective of society	P3, P8, P20, P21
	Provides an advantage	P10, P16
	Civil society organisations	P2, P17
Sexual Orientation Overlaps with Career Goals	Unfair working conditions	P5, P6, P13, P19
	Loss of promotion	P7, P12, P14, P18
	Obligation to prefer certain professions	P1, P4, P9, P11, P15, P22

According to the results obtained in the study, it was observed that there may be some advantages of individuals' different sexual orientations overlapping with their career goals. The opinions of the participants that the sexual orientation of some of the participants did not have any effect on their career goals were stated as follows:

*“Now I live abroad and travel around the world. I wanted to leave behind the alienation that I had seen in my country and the professional life that only they offered me. Every individual has the right to be free and to work in the field they want. Now I live as a digital nomad. My job is in South America and I work with a local. There is positive discrimination against homosexuals here. My work is APA or ABNT style article etc. arrangement. I had a gay marriage here. And I can easily say that I am married to a man while chatting with people due to my job because the reactions don't scare me. LGBT individuals can do whatever they want here. Whether in the government office or the private sector, when hiring you, they question you not with your sexual identity, but with your experience and knowledge. If I had decided earlier to live in another country instead of my own, I'm sure the psychological war I went through would have worn me out less. I hope this alienation and professional pressure against LGBT individuals in my country will come to an end. Because we are not different from anyone else. I should be able to freely determine my career in a government office” (the egalitarian perspective of society, P8)*

It is stated that if individuals have different sexual orientation, they may face the risk of not having fair working conditions in their professional life. The opinions of the participants that the sexual orientations of some of the participants have an effect on their career goals are stated in their own words as follows:

*“I would like to answer this question as follows. Prostitution is a bad thing, yes, it is disgusting, but how can we find a job in this homophobic and masculine society? In other words, they make prostitution compulsory for us. Of course, there is no such thing as careers overlap with their goals or not! Do you know my friend graduated from Mimar Sinan School of Fine Arts? Sculptor actually, but what does he do? A prostitute... Look, I'm saying, a sculptor, that even in such a profession, his sexual orientation has come so far in front of his work and this person is extremely feminine, much more feminine than me, even more than many women, despite this, he can't do his job, then you say that your career goals, your professional life are bla bla bla...” (obligation to prefer certain professions, P1)*

#### 4. Conclusion

Sexual orientation, expressing an individual's emotional, romantic and sexual desires for another taking into account their sexual identity and orientation, is thought to be related to psychological impulse and biological system rather than a preference (APA, 2009). It is seen that certain segments of society perceive sexual orientation as a preference and they exhibit various prejudicial, discriminatory and alienating behaviors against LGBTI+Q individuals. As a result of these negative attitudes, individuals in this group are considered to have difficulties in many areas of their lives including their career.

The research looked at how LGBTI+Q people's sexual orientation affected their professional lives. 22 people of gay, lesbian, queer, trans, and bisexual orientation from Turkey, Syria, Austria, the United States, Canada, Sweden, Germany, and South America make up the study group for the study. In this situation, it is believed that expanding the research's study group to include more people of diverse sexual orientations would be suitable. One of the study's shortcomings is that since the data were gathered using semi-structured, online (Zoom) interviews, some participants were unable to provide truthful responses. In order to eliminate discrimination based on sexual orientation in the workplace, it is believed that certain actions should be performed. It is anticipated that the political system will be crucial in encouraging businesses to hire a certain amount of people with various sexual orientations and gender identities and in recognizing positive discrimination against LGBTI+Q people.

In this study, when the results related to the category "*sexual orientation has positive effects on business life*" were analysed, it was seen that "*the positive attitude of colleagues and members of opposite sex, interest and success in certain professions and solidarity between lgbt+q individuals*". When opinions of the participants are taken into account, individuals of different sexual orientation do not feel sexual or emotional attraction towards individuals of the opposite sex. It is stated that these individuals establish effective communication with individuals of the opposite sex, work together in some professions and have a high level of solidarity among them. As a result of this situation, it is thought that it increases the occupational satisfaction and success rates together with a decrease in the risk of discrimination. Kaos GL (2009) asked the participants "Do you work with a different LGBTI+Q individual in the same workplace?" and most of them answered, "Yes, I want to work, there will be solidarity and risk of exclusion will be decreased. Antecol, Jong and Steinberger (2008) state that gay individuals are mostly interested in the professions of women, and lesbian individuals are interested in the professions that men do, and in the study of Özgünlü (2019), it was found that the majority of the participants were exposed to discrimination by their colleagues at the workplace due to their

sexual orientation, and are at risk of decline in job performance and their contract of employment being terminated.

In this study, when the results related to the category "*sexual orientation has negative effects on business life*" were analysed, it was seen that "*marginalisation, harassment and abuse and termination of employment contract*". It is stated that as a result of the heterosexist mentality of the society, individuals with different sexual orientations are exposed to discrimination in all areas of social life, including their professional lives. In some cases, the termination of employment contracts and the stigmatization of individuals in this group as sick and deviant may cause them to be isolated from social life and seen as second. When the literature is examined, according to the Kaos GL (2009) report, it is found out that LGBTI+Q individuals living in Turkey are exposed to physical, verbal and psychological violence along with humiliation in their work life. Pizer et al. (2015) found that 90% of transgender participants were exposed to sexual, physical and verbal harassment in the workplace. Öner (2013) stated in her study with white-collar gay and lesbian people that when lesbian women disclosed their sexual orientation in their professional lives, they were most often verbally abused. Powers (1996) stated that some institutions exclude LGBTI+Q employees, and as a result of this exclusion, individuals do not feel they belong to that institution and there is some decline in their job performance. Ng, Schweitzer and Lyons (2012) found that LGBTI+Q individuals expect a lower salary than heterosexual individuals.

In this study, when the results related to the category "*disclosure of sexual orientation in professional life*" were analysed, it was seen that "*revealing, physical appearance, the work environment is decisive and company policies*". They state that even if the physical appearance of individuals evokes a heterosexual structure, they should state that their orientations are different when necessary. It is thought that they can prevent negative experiences that can be experienced with the awareness that gay, lesbian, transgender, intersexual or queer orientation is not a shameful or deficient orientation. In the study of Göregenli and Serdengeçti (2017), it was stated that out of 166 participants working in the private sector, only 17 revealed their sexual identity in their work life, and 46% of the participants in the recruitment interviews did not experience discrimination because they concealed their sexual identities. Weichselbaumer (2003) examined the relationship between recruitment interviews and physical appearance, and it was stated that with the thought that women with broad shoulders and short hair could evoke lesbianism, the recruitment of individuals with this appearance decreased by 12% to 13%. In her research, Karakaş (2018) finds that sexual orientation is not important in recruitment, but features such as education, competence, etc. are taken into account.

In this study, when the results related to the category "*concealment of sexual orientation in professional life*" were analysed, it was seen that

*"hiding, extra work performance and homophobic attitudes "*. LGBTI+Q individuals may be exposed to various homophobic attitudes in their working life, and it is thought that they have more professional performance anxiety so that their orientation is not disclosed or that they can continue to work when disclosed. As a result of the fact that the individual has the instinct of self-preservation by nature, it can cause the individuals in this group to see themselves as secondary and it is thought that they hide their sexual orientation. Smith and Ingram (2004), in their study on victims of heterosexism, found that colleagues of homosexual individuals could give upsetting or hurtful reactions to them. Karataban and Balcıoğlu (2021) stated that the participants were not exposed to any discrimination in their professional lives, but they concealed their sexual orientation, and on the contrary, their colleagues who revealed their sexual orientations were subjected to discrimination and alienation. Levine and Leonard (1984) stated that LGBTI+Q individuals always fear that their employment contracts will be terminated in their professional lives.

In this study, when the results related to the category *" sexual orientation affects professional performance "* were analysed, it was seen that *"effects, psychological issues and exposure to mobbing "*. It can be stated that individuals' professional performance and job satisfaction have a complex structure that includes many factors such as professional duties, responsibilities, and corporate culture. It is thought that individuals are not accepted and embraced by the society due to their different sexual orientations. As a result of this situation, it is stated that these individuals are more likely to experience some psychological problems than heterosexual individuals and that they may directly affect their job performance as a result of some negative experiences. Öner (2013) reported that it is more appropriate to work in places such as gay bars and non-governmental organizations, where LGBTI+Q interviewees think that certain professions are safe and where they are less likely to be discriminated against. Badgett et al. (2009) reported that transgender individuals are exposed to discrimination in their workplaces and they cannot perform adequately because of this. Göçmen and Yılmaz (2017) reported that 15% of the participants cannot choose the profession they want because they think they may be discriminated against. Özer (2019) reported that LGBTI+Q individuals are not directly subjected to mobbing in their business life, but it has been observed that they are exposed to discrimination such as extra workload and high-performance expectation.

In this study, when the results related to the category *" sexual orientation does not affect professional performance "* were analysed, it was seen that *"intimacy with the opposite sex in some professions, working conditions and economic conditions "*. It is seen that individuals in this group tend to work in professions with more flexible working conditions such as cosmetics, entertainment and fashion design. It is thought to be related to interpersonal relationships, professional performance and working conditions

in these occupational fields. In the research by Gdl and olak (2018), it is stated that LGBTI+Q individuals are subjected to many discriminations from the recruitment process to their salary and benefits. Karakaş (2018) stated that a participant who applied for a job in a retail sector was rejected because of the thought that he might get reaction from customers because of his sexual orientation. Baert (2018), in the concept of preference-based discrimination, observes that in an environment where individuals with different sexual orientations sell, customers have a negative attitude towards the products that are sold by these individuals.

In this study, when the results related to the category "*sexual orientation does not overlaps with career goals*" were analysed, it was seen that "*the egalitarian perspective of society, provides an advantage and civil society organisations*". According to the ILGA-EUROPA report, it has been observed that the best countries where LGBT individuals can have equal rights to life are Malta, Norway and England, respectively, and that individuals with different sexual orientations have positive discrimination in their work lives in these countries. On the other hand, it can be observed that some global companies are sensitive about sexual orientations, and positive discrimination is given to the relevant individuals turning it into an advantageous situation in recruitment, promotion, etc. In the report they prepared, Lewis and Pitts (2011) stated that the rates of working in the public sector for LGBT individuals in the USA has increased, and that they preferred teaching, managerial and policing professions. Griffith and Hebl (2002) found that supportive and inclusive attitudes towards LGBT individuals in the workplace created a high level of job satisfaction and a low level of performance anxiety for these individuals. zgnl (2019) stated that a participant who is a communication specialist works in a global company where sexual orientations are respected and he has no problems in this regard. In a qualitative study conducted by ner (2015) with 20 gay and lesbian individuals, it was determined that the most important thing for LGBT individuals than the working environment is that their colleagues adopt an egalitarian structure and less discriminatory attitudes are exhibited in departments such as social sciences and fashion design.

In this study, when the results related to the category "*sexual orientation overlaps with career goals*" were analysed, it was seen that "*unfair working conditions, loss of promotion and obligation to prefer certain professions*". It is stated that in the patriarchal social order, sexual orientations are of great importance and all orientations except heterosexual orientation are accepted as non-normative. It is stated that LGBTI+Q individuals also try to exist in unfair working conditions and that they may experience problems in promotion, wage, etc. Kirby (2006) stated that university student LGBTI+Q individuals, although their careers have not started yet, are afraid of discrimination in terms of employment and promotion in the profession. Colgan et al. (2009), in a study conducted in England, explained that

individuals working in non-profit organizations are exposed to less discrimination, and that those working in the public sector are exposed to harassment and alienation. Chung, Williams, and Dispenza (2009) advocated that heterosexual individuals have wider areas of freedom when making career decisions and LGBTI+Q individuals have to consider discrimination and coping strategies in their career decisions, which limits their career choices. Durmaz, Topateş, and Topateş (2017), in a study conducted with immigrant LGBTI+Q individuals, confirm that although a large part of the participants are well-educated individuals, they work in poor working conditions with low wages and no social security. Özgünlü (2019) reported that one of the participants worked as a foreign trade specialist, met all the requirements for promotion in the workplace but could not get it due to their sexual orientation, also in the same study, one participant, who was a teacher, was dismissed in the middle of the semester after revealing their sexual orientation.

In the society, people are limited by a dual gender system as men and women, and different sexual identities and orientations are perceived as a threat. With the prevalence of these negative attitudes, which are frequently encountered in social life, some stereotypes are effective and as a result of these stereotypes, LGBTI+Q individuals may face negative situations. As a result of these negative experiences that individuals are subjected to, it is seen that their sense of allegiance and belonging to the society are negatively affected and they develop feelings of distrust towards both the society and the law. It is thought that all these are factors that will weaken the social belonging and that individuals are forced to live in isolation from the society. When the local literature is examined, although it has been observed that studies on discrimination based on sexual orientation have increased in recent years, it is still not at a sufficient level when compared to the foreign literature.

In the study, the effects of sexual orientation of LGBTI+Q individuals on their professional lives were examined. The study group of the research consists of 15 individuals with gay, lesbian, transgender and bisexual orientations from Turkey, Syria, Germany and a country in South America. In this context, it is thought that it would be appropriate to develop the study with a larger and different sexual orientation study group.

That the research data were collected through semi-structured and online (Zoom) interviews, and thus some participants might not be able to answer the questions sincerely could be cited among the limitations of the study.

It is believed that concrete steps should be taken regarding the issue in order to find a solution to discrimination based on sexual orientation in professional life. It is thought that it would be important for the political mechanism to provide incentives for companies to employ a certain number of individuals with different orientations and to recognize positive discrimination regarding LGBTI+Q individuals.



As a results of the research looked at how LGBTI+Q people's sexual orientation affected their professional lives. 22 people of gay, lesbian, queer, trans, and bisexual orientation from Turkey, Syria, Austria, the United States, Canada, Sweden, Germany, and South America make up the study group for the study. In this situation, it is believed that expanding the research's study group to include more people of diverse sexual orientations would be suitable.

One of the study's shortcomings is that since the data were gathered using semi-structured, online (Zoom) interviews, some participants were unable to provide truthful responses.

In order to eliminate discrimination based on sexual orientation in the workplace, it is believed that certain actions should be performed. It is anticipated that the political system will be crucial in encouraging businesses to hire a certain amount of people with various sexual orientations and gender identities and in recognizing positive discrimination against LGBTI+Q people.

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