

The Efficacy of Deism Among University Students: The Ankara University Example *Deizmin Üniversite Öğrencileri Arasındaki Etkinliği: Ankara Üniversitesi Örneği*

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Article Information / Makale Bilgisi

Citation / Atıf: Çevik, Mehmet Latif; Cizreli, Bahattin; Toker, İhsan. "The Efficacy of Deism Among University Students: The Ankara University Example". *Şırnak Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 33 (Aralık 2023), 7-35. <https://doi.org/10.35415/sirnakifd.1323381>

Date of Submission (<i>Geliş Tarihi</i>)	06. 07. 2023
Date of Acceptance (<i>Kabul Tarihi</i>)	11. 11. 2023
Date of Publication (<i>Yayın Tarihi</i>)	15. 12. 2023
Article Type (<i>Makale Türü</i>)	Research Article (Araştırma Makalesi)
Peer-Review (Değerlendirme)	Double anonymized – At Least Two External (Çift Taraflı Körleme / En az İki Dış Hakem).
Ethical Statement (<i>Etik Beyan</i>)	It is declared that scientific, ethical principles have been followed while carrying out and writing this study, and that all the sources used have been properly cited. (Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde bilimsel ve etik ilkelere uyulduğu ve yararlanılan tüm çalışmaların kaynakçada belirtildiği beyan olunur). This article was derived from the final report of the research with the code 20B0654001 and the title "Research on Deism Activity in University Youth: Ankara University Example" (Bu makale 20B0654001 kodlu "Üniversite Gençliğinde Deizm Etkinliği Araştırması: Ankara Üniversitesi Örneği" başlıklı araştırmanın sonuç raporundan türetilmiştir).
Plagiarism Checks (<i>Benzerlik Taraması</i>)	Yes (Evet) – Ithenticate/Turnitin.
Conflicts of Interest (<i>Çıkar Çatışması</i>)	The author(s) has no conflict of interest to declare (Çıkar çatışması beyan edilmemiştir).
Complaints (Etik Beyan Adresi)	suifdergi@gmail.com
Grant Support (<i>Finansman</i>)	The author(s) acknowledge that they received no external funding in support of this research. (Bu araştırmayı desteklemek için dış fon kullanılmamıştır).
Copyright & License (Telif Hakkı ve Lisans)	Authors publishing with the journal retain the copyright to their work licensed under the CC BY-NC 4.0. (Yazarlar dergide yayımlanan çalışmalarının telif hakkına sahiptirler ve çalışmaları CC BY-NC 4.0 lisansı altında yayımlanmaktadır).

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to evaluate whether or not deism is effective among students at Ankara University, as well as to develop a deism scale appropriate for the Turkish context. For this purpose, it was necessary to operationalize the concept of deism to identify four subcategories within it. These subcategories include distrust of religious institutions and organizations, the belief that God does not intervene in the world, independence from religious taboos and rules, and the choice of rationalism when reason and revelation conflict. The ranges in the deism questions, which were designed according to the Likert scale, were converted into a hundred-point system, and scored using an ideal theist scoring system of zero and an ideal deist scoring system of 100 to determine the level of influence of deism in each category. The research project was designed in 2018 and approved as decision number 289 at meeting number 09 of the Ankara University Ethics Committee on 19 July 2019. The study was conducted online using a haphazard sample of 453 students as a result of a number of difficulties encountered during the data collection period. There were 918 participants in the first phase of the study, but since the goal of the study was to measure the effectiveness of deism, atheists were excluded from participating in the study. The researchers found that one in five students were atheists, and one in four were deists or held another religious belief that was not related to Islam. A random sample of 1% of the student population at Ankara University was selected for the remaining participants. The demographic data obtained were regarded as independent variables, while the deism score was regarded as a dependent variable. As a result of these scores, political identity polarization among Ankara University students can be related to the effectiveness of deism. The political climate has an impact on the ongoing debates regarding deism. The cross-tabulations showed no significant differences between the scores of the independent variables such as age, gender, place of residence, and socio-economic status groups. It is notable that deism is more commonly respected by the students of the social sciences as compared to the students of the natural sciences in terms of faculties. It is also noteworthy that according to the results of the study, there is a tendency for some subcategories of students who declare themselves to be Muslim to exhibit deistic tendencies. As a traditional theistic religion, Islam, which is a very influential religion among its members with its congregational activities and cultural institutionalization, has a strong influence over the participants, but when it comes to rationality and the absence of God's intervention, there is a tendency towards deism. In the conclusion of this article, the shortcomings of this scale developed for Turkey are discussed and suggestions are made for further research in this area. International scholars will be able to gain deep insight into how deism affects university students in Turkey as a result of the study and will be able to gain valuable information about religious life in Turkey as a result of the study.

Keywords: Sociology of Religion, Efficacy of Deism, Political Identity, Religious Life, Ankara University.

Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Ankara Üniversitesi öğrencileri arasında deizmin etkili olup olmadığını değerlendirmek ve Türkiye bağlamına uygun bir deizm ölçeği geliştirmektir. Bu amaçla, deizm kavramını operasyonel hale getirmek ve deizm içinde dört alt kategori belirlemek gerekmiştir. Bu alt kategoriler dini kurum ve kuruluşlara güvensizlik, Tanrı'nın dünyaya müdahale etmediği inancı, dini tabu ve kurallardan bağımsızlık ve akıl ile vahiy çatıştığında rasyonalizmin tercih edilmesidir. Likert ölçeğine göre tasarlanan deizm sorularındaki aralıklar yüzlük sisteme dönüştürülmüş ve her bir kategoride deizmin etki düzeyini belirlemek amacıyla ideal teist sıfır, ideal deist 100 puanlama sistemi kullanılarak puanlanmıştır. Araştırma projesi 2018 yılında tasarlanmış ve 19 Temmuz 2019 tarihinde Ankara Üniversitesi Etik Kurulu'nun 09 numaralı toplantısında 289 numaralı karar olarak onaylanmıştır. Çalışma, veri toplama sürecinde karşılaşılan birtakım zorluklar nedeniyle 453 öğrenciden oluşan gelişigüzel bir örneklem kullanılarak çevrimiçi olarak yürütülmüştür. Çalışmanın ilk aşamasında 918 katılımcı vardı, ancak çalışmanın amacı deizmin etkinliğini ölçmek olduğu için ateistler çalışmaya katılmadı. Araştırmacılar, her beş öğrenciden birinin ateist olduğunu ve her dört öğrenciden birinin de deist olduğunu ya da İslam ile ilgili olmayan başka bir dini inanca sahip olduğunu tespit etmiştir. Kalan katılımcılar için Ankara Üniversitesi'ndeki öğrenci nüfusunun %1'i oranında rastgele bir örneklem seçilmiştir. Elde edilen demografik veriler bağımsız değişken, deizm puanı ise bağımlı değişken olarak kabul edilmiştir. Bu puanlar sonucunda Ankara Üniversitesi öğrencileri arasındaki siyasi kimlik kutuplaşması deizmin etkinliği ile ilişkilendirilebilir. Siyasi iklimin deizmle ilgili süregelen tartışmalar üzerinde etkisi vardır. Çapraz tablolar, yaş, cinsiyet, ikamet yeri ve sosyo-ekonomik statü grupları gibi bağımsız değişkenlerin puanları arasında anlamlı bir fark olmadığını göstermiştir. Fakülteler açısından bakıldığında, sosyal bilimler öğrencilerinin doğa bilimleri öğrencilerine kıyasla deizme daha fazla itibar ettiği dikkat çekmektedir. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre, Müslüman olduğunu beyan eden öğrencilerin bazı alt kategorilerinde deistik eğilimler görülmesi de dikkat çekicidir. Geleneksel teistik bir din olarak, cemaatsel faaliyetleri ve kültürel kurumsallaşmasıyla mensupları arasında oldukça etkili bir din olan İslam, katılımcılar üzerinde güçlü bir etkiye sahip olmakla birlikte, konu rasyonellik ve Tanrı'nın müdahalesinin yokluğu olduğunda deizme doğru bir eğilim söz konusu olmaktadır. Bu makalenin sonuç bölümünde, Türkiye için geliştirilen bu ölçeğin eksiklikleri tartışılmakta ve bu alanda daha fazla araştırma yapılması için önerilerde bulunmaktadır. Uluslararası araştırmacılar, çalışma sonucunda deizmin Türkiye'deki üniversite öğrencilerini nasıl etkilediğine dair derin bir içgörü kazanabilecek ve çalışma sonucunda Türkiye'deki dini yaşam hakkında değerli bilgiler elde edebileceklerdir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Din Sosyolojisi, Deizmin Etkinliği, Dini Hayat, Siyasal Kimlik, Ankara Üniversitesi.

Introduction

Throughout the social change in Turkey, religion has maintained its significance. It was also observed during the Ottoman period, the early years of the Republic, and in the following decades. Religion is at the forefront of today's changes and transformations. Turkey has undergone profound economic, political, and cultural changes during the twenty-first century. This is evidenced by cultural and religious instability, an unintended consequence of secularization, followed by desecularization. As a result, an increase in the frequency and visibility of reactive attitudes towards religion in popular culture and everyday life has been witnessed.

At the end of the 2010s, it has been claimed deism became a widespread belief among Turkey's youth. However, there are some shortcomings and inadequacies regarding the reliability of this common faith. Despite these deficiencies and inadequacies, this research represents the result of efforts aimed at developing a scale that may be utilized by researchers in the future. Based on a study among university youth in Turkey, this scale was developed. Data collected from the students at Ankara University is statistically analysed to demonstrate how deism affects university students. It should be noted that it is assumed that enough students are available to develop a scale about deism.

There are four main categories of deism in this research: distrusting religious institutions, non-interfering of God, performing religious rituals, and attitudes towards contradictions between religion and rationality. The researchers of this study constructed an operationalization based on these four categories. In order to limit the scope of the study to action research about theism, atheists were excluded. There is no claim of generalizability in this study since the haphazard sampling method was used. Through the categories and codes outlined above, it can be assumed that it is a scale that makes the phenomenon of deism more concrete and researchable in Turkey.

1. Discussing the Phenomenon

Recent years have seen an increase in academic interest in atheism and deism in Turkey. Having been ignored for an exceedingly long time, atheists and deists have once

again become the object of academic study.¹ The belief in the existence of at least one deity or god is called theism. Essentially, it is a religious or philosophical belief system in which people or communities acknowledge the existence of a divine and transcendent being or beings who created and governed the universe and everything in it. There are several kinds of theism, including monotheism (the belief in one God), polytheism (the belief in more than one God), and pantheism (the belief that God is identical with the universe). On the other hand, atheism refers to the denial of the existence of gods or deities. In general, atheists do not hold religious beliefs or believe in divine beings.²

Deism is the belief that God created the universe, but that God does not reveal himself in human history through miracles and does not play a significant role in creation. Deists may believe in the goodness of God and the existence of an afterlife.³ Deism is a complicated concept since the term "deism" can mean different things in various contexts. According to some interpretations, deism refers to "theism" or "pure theism," but in some contexts, it refers to those who reject the idea of revealed religion. The concept of deism has not always been held by deists, and some deists have claimed to be Christians in varying degrees of sincerity.⁴

Deism originated from the Indo-European word Dyeus. In the same way, deism refers to the Sky God, King of the Gods or Chief God, whom the Hellenes called Zeus and the Latins Deus. Deism, which derives from paganist/polytheistic cultures, was first discussed by Greek philosophers, and then developed into a relationship with monotheistic religions. Through this process, the concept came to represent a single God of reason and a virtuous life lived within the framework of this God's knowledge obtained through reason. In the 17th century, the concept of deism, in its present meaning, was first used in England. However, its origins go back to the beginning of philosophy before the concept was introduced in the US.⁵

¹ Wayne Hudson et al., "Introduction: Atheism and Deism Revived", *Atheism and Deism Revalued: Heterodox Religious Identities in Britain, 1650-1800*, Ed. W. Hudson et al (Surrey: Ashgate 2014), 1.

² İbrahim Yıldız, *Teizm ve Ateizm: Delilci Kötülük Problemi* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Doktora Tezi, 2021), 1-4; Engin Erdem, "Ateizm ve Ateistik Kanıtlar", *Din Felsefesi* (Ankara: Ankuzem Yayınları, 2013), 261-301.

³ Charles Taliaferro & Elsa J. Marty (Eds.), *A Dictionary of Philosophy of Religion* (New York-London: Continuum, 2nd Edition, 2010), 60-61.

⁴ Wayne Hudson, "Atheism and Deism Demythologized", *Atheism and Deism Revalued: Heterodox Religious Identities in Britain, 1650-1800*, Ed. W. Hudson et al. (Surrey: Ashgate 2014), 19-20.

⁵ Abdüllatif Tüzer, "Deizmi Anlamaya Çalışmak", *Doğu Batı 'Deizm'*, 23/94 (Ağustos-Eylül-Ekim 2020), 59.

This emergence of deism was primarily the result of the oppressive institutional religion that dominated Europe and the lack of reconciliation between this institutional religion and new scientific discoveries. Furthermore, religious reform movements in Europe, the rise of the bourgeoisie, the enlightenment thought, scientific discoveries, and the strengthening of philosophy all contributed to the development of deism.⁶ It is important to note that Deism emerged as a reaction against institutional Christianity, but it was seeded within the Christian faith early on and evolved over time into an anti-religious movement.⁷

Jean Bodin, one of the founding figures of the deism movement, called natural theology or natural religion, summarizes its basic principles as follows: Belief in the unity of God, moral consciousness, freedom, immortality, and an afterlife.⁸ Nevertheless, it is difficult to provide a precise definition of deism. The reason for this is that each deist thinker presents his or her own principles. Despite their differences, the basic theses of deism can be summarized as follows:

1. As the first interventionist, God created the universe.
2. There are unchanging laws in the universe that were created by God.
3. God has created the universe as a clock and does not intervene in its operation.
4. A revelation that does not accord with reason cannot be considered authentic.
5. Religion should not be characterized by mystical elements and miracles.

According to these basic principles and in the other paragraphs above, deism differs sharply from both atheism and theism. By rejecting the existence of God, atheists differ from deists.⁹ Atheism rejects all forms of creativity, whereas deism believes in a supreme creator.¹⁰

Theistic beliefs, including Abrahamic religions, have a tissue incompatibility with deism.¹¹ Abrahamic religions are based on God as the deity, whereas deism almost deifies the mind as its deity.¹² In deism, religion is a source that human beings naturally believe in directly through reason and conscience. Due to this, deists do not think that God's

⁶ Emre Dorman, *Deizm ve Eleştirisi* (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Doktora Tezi, 2009), 26-78; Sacide Çalışkan, *Z Kuşağında Deizm Algısı ve Deistliğe Yönelten Sosyolojik Faktörler* (Çanakkale: Çanakkale Üniversitesi, Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2021), 15-22; Aydın Topaloğlu, "Teizm" (İstanbul: TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi, 2011), 332-334.

⁷ Sacide Çalışkan, *Z Kuşağında Deizm Algısı ve Deistliğe Yönelten Sosyolojik Faktörler*, 11.

⁸ Yaşar N. Öztürk, *Tanrı, Akıl ve Ahlaktan Başka Kutsal Tanımayan İnanç Deizm* (İstanbul: Yeni Boyut Yayınları, I. Basım, 2015), 148.

⁹ Sacide Çalışkan, *Z Kuşağında Deizm Algısı ve Deistliğe Yönelten Sosyolojik Faktörler*, 41-43.

¹⁰ Emre Dorman, *Deizm ve Eleştirisi*, 22.

¹¹ Emre Dorman, *Deizm ve Eleştirisi*, 217-218.

¹² Çınar, Aliye, *Deizm ve Ateizm Üzerine*, (İstanbul: Köprü Yayınları, I. Basım, 2018), 16.

intervention in the world through revelation and structured rituals is necessary.¹³ It should be noted, however, that theistic believers can also exhibit a tendency towards deism. The early deists referred to themselves as true Christians and claimed that they were trying to grasp the essence of Christianity.¹⁴ As a Protestant clergyman in the 20th century, Paul Tillich exhibited deist tendencies.¹⁵ Therefore, it cannot be stated that anyone who professes to believe in any traditional theistic religion is completely free from deism. Moreover, it is stated that theism is an umbrella belief system that includes deism as well.¹⁶

The term deism was first used in the Christian West. Despite this, this belief tendency can be traced back to Ancient Rome and even to Ancient Greek thought.¹⁷ The movement that embraced the term deism in the modern age was a protest trend against the Catholic Church. Alternatively, some basic features of Catholic Christianity are not found in Islam, leading to the idea that there is no tension between deism and Islam, and even some commonalities.¹⁸ There are, however, significant differences between deism and Islam in terms of the rejection of revelation, the rejection of rituals, the rejection of religious institutionalism, and the exclusion of irrational elements. Deism remains effective among Muslims, but further research is needed in order to clarify the differences between Islam and deism.

Deism has been discussed in print and visual media in Turkey in 2018. Deism and its Criticism is Emre Dorman's (2009) doctoral thesis, which represents the most comprehensive academic research on the subject to this date. In 2017, Van Yüzüncü Yıl University Faculty of Theology organised a symposium titled "Contemporary Anti-Religious Movements: Deism" a qualified product has emerged that can bring together the experts on the subject in the relevant literature. As a result of its popularity in print and visual media in 2018 and thereafter, academic interest in the subject has also increased.

2. Significance and Objectives of Research

Throughout April and May 2018, political circles and the press in Turkey debated the claim that the youth is shifting towards deism. This debate began with the final declaration

¹³ Sacide Çalışkan, *Z Kuşağında Deizm Algısı ve Deistliğe Yönelten Sosyolojik Faktörler*, 13-17.

¹⁴ Emre Dorman, *Deizm ve Eleştirisi*, 117-120.

¹⁵ Yaşar N. Öztürk, *Tanrı, Akıl ve Ahlaktan Başka Kutsal Tanımayan İnanç Deizm*, 39-41.

¹⁶ Hamdullah Arvas, *Kelam'da Hak Düşüncesi: Hak Metafiziğinin İlkeleri* (Ankara: Fecr Yayınları, 1. Basım, 2021), 87.

¹⁷ Emre Dorman, *Deizm ve Eleştirisi*, 26

¹⁸ Yaşar N. Öztürk, *Tanrı, Akıl ve Ahlaktan Başka Kutsal Tanımayan İnanç Deizm*, 50-51.

of a workshop held in Konya on 2 April 2018 with the participation of fifty teachers of Religious Culture and Ethics.¹⁹ Within a brief period, politicians and party leaders began discussing this issue. Deism was confirmed by some writers, while others attempted to explain what it was. The President of Religious Affairs, Ali Erbaş, tried to end the debate on April 12 by stating that the claim of deism was a slander against the youth.²⁰ The issue was discussed on television throughout May. It was claimed by the conservative community that deism was a consequence of the spread of information via the internet, while opponents of the government argued that this was a result of Islamism's destruction of cultural values. While the debates, the Deism Association announced its establishment in Istanbul in October 2018. The Association (2018) stated in its founding declaration that it was established to correct unfavourable public perceptions regarding deism.

Despite all the public statements, we have found that no scientific study has been conducted measuring the tendency towards deism among young people during this period. A major factor that contributed to the importance of this research was the interest of the political and academic community in the topic at hand. The effectiveness of deism in Turkey could have been satisfactorily investigated with scientific sensibilities and reliable methods and techniques. It was, however, necessary to develop a scale that is valid and dependable to accomplish this. In recent years, academic interest in the influence of deism among young people has grown. Despite this, two issues need to be addressed in the research that has been conducted or will be conducted. The objective of the study should not only be to determine the proportion of deists in the target sample but also to examine the degree to which those who declare their belief in religion show a tendency towards deism. The reason for this is that research shows that deism can find a response among traditional religions with some of its arguments before it is formed as an independent movement. It is also important to consider the need to develop a unique scale of deism in Muslim-majority areas. Islam does not have some of the beliefs that deists believe should be eliminated from Catholic Christianity. The purpose of this study is to develop a scale that measures both the effectiveness of deism among believers of traditional religions and that pays regard to the characteristics of Islam.

¹⁹ Gazete Duvar, "Din Kültürü Öğretmenleri: Gençler Deizme Kayıyor", 03 Nisan 2018, 1.

²⁰ T24, "Diyabet İşleri Başkanı Ali Erbaş'tan Deizm Açıklaması: Kimse Gençlerimize İftira Atmasın", 12 Nisan 2018, 1.

Considering the above-mentioned issues, the main purpose of this study is to evaluate deism as a movement that emerged under European conditions and to develop a scale of its effectiveness in a Muslim-majority country such as Turkey. An extensive literature review and discussion process have been conducted within the focus of this study to determine the possible counterpart of deism in Turkey. A question scale regarding deism has been prepared, considering the specific circumstances of the country. This provides a scientific contribution to the academy and a resource for future research.

In this study, the topic of research is the effectiveness of deism among Turkish young people. The objective is to develop a scale that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of deism based on the specific conditions of the country. Accordingly, in a study attempting to measure the impact of deism on traditional religious believers, atheists should be excluded due to their strong differences in their belief in God. To evaluate the scale created following the literature, the main question of the study is as follows: In what way is the belief tendency of deism effective among university youth who believe in God?

In accordance with the general aims of the study, other problems can be stated as follows:

- Is there a relationship between deism activity and the education of the participants?
- Is there a relationship between the participants' political identity statements and deism activity?
- Is deism active among participants who declare themselves as Muslim?

In this study, no hypothesis was developed. These two reasons are primarily responsible for this. The first and most important reason is that the sample for the study was not selected based on random sampling. As a result, the study's data and findings are based solely on the information provided by the participants. It was not possible to develop hypotheses about a population under these conditions. In addition, the statistical analyses are based on numerical expressions. There were primarily nominal data presented in the independent variables constructed in the research. In the conclusion section of the study, this situation is discussed as an output.

3. Research Method, Population and Sample

In this study, a quantitative scale is developed, and a questionnaire technique is employed. The questionnaire is primarily composed of structured questions.²¹ Firstly, demographic, and social questions are asked of the participants, such as faculty, age, gender, socioeconomic status, and upbringing environment, to compare their trend towards deism. As the purpose of the study is not to measure different religious tendencies, there is a question that eliminates atheists and agnostics²² from the study. Based on the literature review, the main points of conflict between deism and mainstream Islam in Turkey have been identified. During the process of operationalization, the study was intended to capture its local authenticity. Some of the arguments employed by Deism, as a movement that opposes institutional understandings of religion, can be reconciled with those of Islam. This means that not all arguments in support of deism can be used in a research project to be conducted in Turkey. In Turkey, the contradictions between deism and established theistic traditions are operationalized as follows:

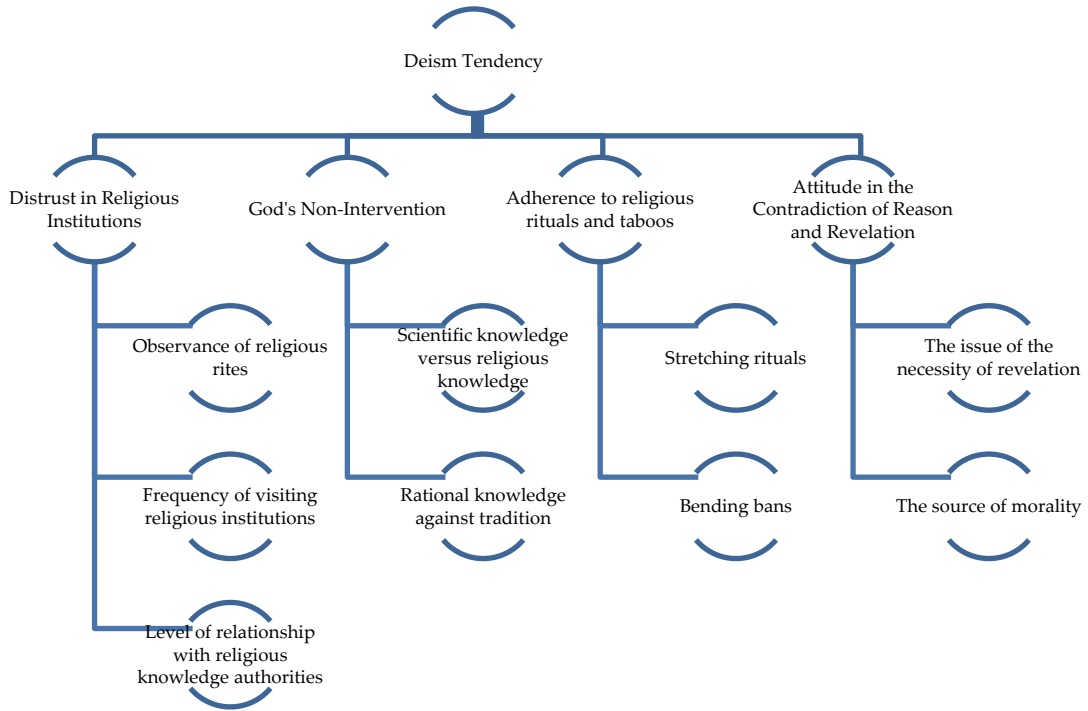


Figure 1 Operationalisation of the Concept

In each category, codes related to that category are identified. There is a total of nine subcodes within each of the four categories determined under the concept of deism. Three

²¹ Creswell, John W., *Research Design* (California: SAGE Publications, Fourth Edition, 2003), 17-18.

²² Bk. Aslantatar, Nesim, *Agnostisizm Tanrı'nın Bilinemezliği Sorunu*. (Ankara: Elis Yayınları, 1. Basım, 2023).

questions were developed for each of these characteristics. Then, twenty-seven questions prepared on the Likert scale were used as dependent variables and converted into deism scores. During the preliminary part of the study, nine demographic and economic questions were asked, and at the conclusion, three questions were asked about political identity. To exclude atheists from the study, a qualifying question was included since the primary objective is to measure the effectiveness of deism. The questionnaire contains thirty-nine questions in total. Once the elimination question for atheists was answered, participants continued with the questionnaire and answered questions measuring their deism tendencies. There are five answers for each question in each category, based on a Likert scale²³. A deism score is assigned to each participant based on the thesis that someone who chooses "one" for all questions will receive zero points (ideal theist) and someone who chooses "five" for all questions will receive one hundred points (ideal deist). Participants receive a score between 0 and 100 for each category. It was decided to use a 100-point scoring system because differences are more apparent at wide ranges. The range between 1 and 5 is measured by a score of one hundred. Scores of fifty indicate a neutral tendency, scores near 0 indicate a theistic tendency, and scores near 100 indicate a deistic tendency. A comparison is made between scores obtained in distinct categories and across all categories for Ankara University undergraduate students and some interpretations are drawn.

Subcategories Measured	Factor
	1
Score of Distrust in Religious Institutions	,912
Score of God's Non-Intervention Thought	,808
Score of Independence from Religious Rituals and Taboos	,912
Score of Rationalism in the Contradiction of Reason and Revelation	,872

Table 1 Factor Analysis Table to Test the Reliability of the Scale

A large population was not selected as the population for this research since its main purpose is to develop a scale on deism. Researchers selected undergraduate education units at Ankara University as their sample population. In this study, haphazard sampling was used with faculty-based quotas. During the research based on haphazard sampling, we attempted to reach 1% of participants from each faculty. The research project was designed in 2018 and approved as decision number 289 at meeting number 09 of the Ankara University Ethics Committee on 19 July 2019. The Ankara University Scientific Research

²³ Likert, Rensis, *A Technique for the Measurement of Attitudes*, (New York: Archives of Psychology, V 22, 1932), 17-20.

Projects Office was expected to approve the research project in the following period. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic ravaging Turkey in March 2020, face-to-face research was not possible. As a result, online applications were chosen to continue the research. In the first phase, 918 individuals were included in the sample. However, considering the faculty and gender distribution, the sample was randomly reduced to 453 people, which is 1% of 44,715 undergraduate students. Between 22 March and 6 May 2021, field research was conducted.

4. Research Findings

A control question was used in the first stage of the scale to eliminate participants outside the theist or deist beliefs since the purpose of the study was to measure the effectiveness of deism among university youth. Nevertheless, there are some basic findings that can be drawn from the view of atheists. One out of every five students who participated in the study considered themselves close to atheist tendencies, and one out of every four students held deism or another non-Islamic religious view before the data was cleaned.

			Would you describe yourself as a believer in a divine being?			Total
			I am a Muslim; I believe in the existence of God.	Yes, there is definitely a power that created the universe.	No, I do not believe.	
Science Area	Social, Humanities, Administrative Sciences and Arts	N	326	122	132	580
		%	56,2%	21,0%	22,8%	100,0%
	Natural Sciences, Technical and Sports Areas	N	205	67	66	338
		%	60,7%	19,8%	19,5%	100,0%
Total		N	531	189	198	918
		%	57,8%	20,6%	21,6%	100,0%

Table 2 Cross Table between Field of Science and General Belief Tendency

When the distribution of general belief tendency within genders is analysed, it is seen that the tendency of men (34,2%) towards atheist belief types is significantly higher than that of women (15,4%). According to socioeconomic factors, middle-income groups are more likely to disbelieve in religion and in the idea of a creator god.

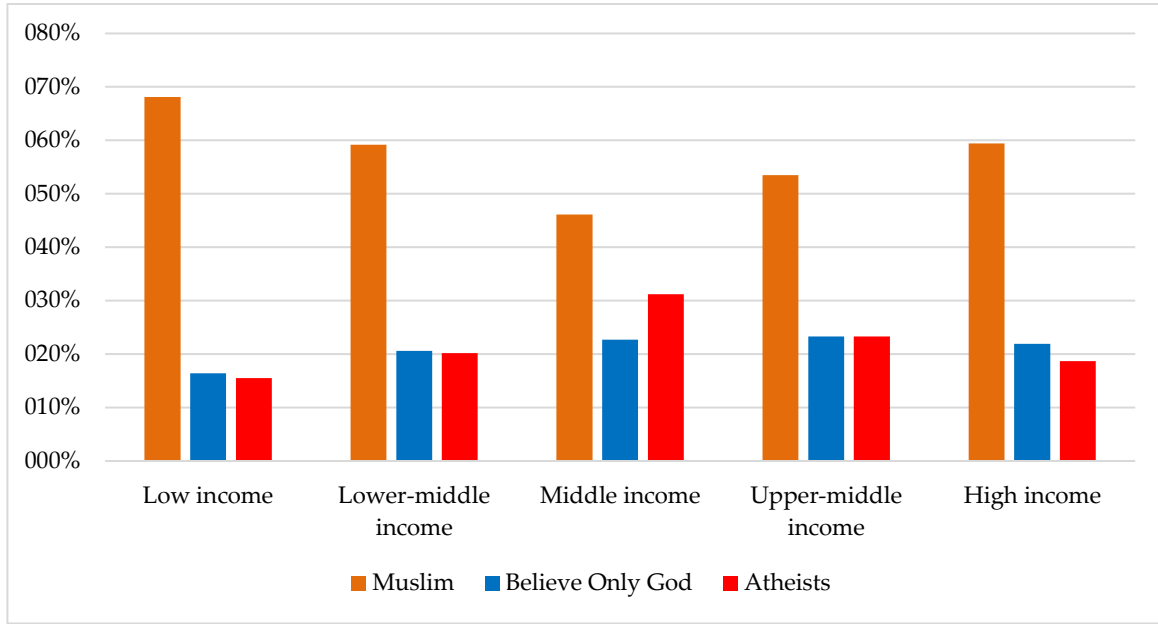


Figure 2 Socio-economic Income Groups and General Belief Tendency

As all the participants were university students, there was no significant difference between the independent variables of age and atheism tendency. In the same way, the nature of the places where the participants grew up did not appear to be a determining factor. Because of the Metropolitan Law enacted in 2012, even rural areas are now included within the boundaries of metropolitan municipalities within the provinces where they are located.

As a result of excluding 198 participants who declared that they did not believe in any divine being, 720 data points remained. In contrast, the research sample was determined based on university undergraduate units, and a 1% sample was taken to represent each unit, therefore the entire university. Data containing 720 participants were cleaned according to the 1% sample by random selection method, considering both the unit distribution and gender distribution in accordance with the universe as much as possible. Participants have been distributed near each other within the education year, totalling 453 people. In the last option, it seems normal that the distribution increases, given the medical faculty and the departments that provide English education.

	Frequency	Percent
First Year	97	21,4
Second Year	87	19,2
Third Year	122	26,9
Fourth or More	147	32,5
Total	453	100,0

Table 3 Distribution of Students Participating in the Study According to Years of Education

4.1. Distrust in Religious Institutions

As part of this section of the research findings, nine questions are assessed concerning the distrust of Ankara University students towards religious institutions and organizations. Whenever the scoring range is between 0 and 100, it is assumed that data near zero indicate high trust and data near a hundred shows high distrust.

N	453
Average	43,9110
Median	44,4444
Standard Deviation	23,85398
Range	100,00
Minimum Value	,00
Maximum Value	100,00

Table 4 Basic Descriptive Statistics of Distrust in Religious Institutions and Organisations

There are no significant differences between the average scores of both gender groups (female-male). Similarly, the average scores for distrust of religious institutions and organizations do not differ according to age group. The comparisons in the field of science do not show a significant difference. However, when comparing students from different faculties, it can be concluded that social science students have a lower level of trust in religious institutions and organizations. Below is a table showing which faculties have the highest and lowest levels of trust in religious institutions and organizations.

Which Faculty are you enrolled in?	Average
The 3 Faculties where the Participant Students Who Trust Religious Institutions and Organisations More	
Theology	22,9424
Dentistry	37,5000
Nursing	37,6543
The 3 Faculties with Participant Students Who Have Less Trust in Religious Institutions and Organisations	
Language, History and Geography	51,9935
Political Sciences	52,8889
Communication	55,3030

Table 5 A comparison of three faculties with students who are more and less to trust religious institutions and organizations.

Analysing the average scores of distrusts in religious institutions and organizations in relation to political identity results in the following table. According to the table below, respondents were asked about their closest political identities, and among these identities, the three that trust religious institutions and organizations the most and the three that trust them the least were identified.

Which of the following political identities do you feel closest to?		
Political Identity	Average	N
The three political identities that gathered the most trusting respondents		
Conservative	17,1053	19
Only Muslim	18,4028	16
Islamist	20,0000	30
The three political identities in which respondents with less trust are grouped		
Social Democrat	59,2222	25
Feminist	59,9415	19
Atatürkist	60,3224	81
Which of the following political identities do you feel second closest to?		
The three political identities that gathered the most trusting respondents		
Islamist	19,7318	29
Conservative	21,6049	27
Conservative Nationalist	22,7431	16
The three political identities in which respondents with less trust are grouped		
Feminist	59,2803	44
Social Democrat	62,2685	24
Socialist	65,9004	29

Table 6 Political Identities of the Respondents Who Trust Religious Institutions and Organisations More and Less

Compared with previous variable comparisons, there are clear differences between political identities in terms of trust in religious institutions and organisations. An important level of trust is held by some political identities in religious institutions and organizations, while a low level of trust is held by others. In addition, it was remarkable to observe that although the participants were asked about their first, and second political identities, the averages of some political identities were close to one another.

4.2. The Idea of God's Non-Interventionism

This category contains six questions. Using a Likert scale of 1 to 5, values between 6 and 30 are produced. It is assumed that people who tick one in each question are ideal theists with the assumption that they have thought that God will always intervene in the world, while those who tick five in all questions are ideal deists with the assumption that they have the thought that God will never intervene in the world. Using a range of zero to one hundred, the average scores of the God does not intervene thought types were compared between the values in the independent variables. The following table presents the descriptive statistics of this category.

N	453
Average	54,3230
Median	54,1667
Standard Deviation	18,64664
Range	91,67
Minimum Value	4,17
Maximum Value	95,83

Table 7 Basic Descriptive Statistics of The Idea of God's Non-Interventionism

Participants in this category scored higher than those in the previous category. Comparing genders, both groups in this category are quite close to both the general average and each other. Even though older groups are less distant from this idea, there are still no significant differences. There is no significant difference between the average scores of the idea that God does not intervene and the field of science. However, when comparing students from different faculties, it is evident that, despite taking intensive courses in natural sciences, the students of the faculty of natural science as well as social science students are susceptible to this idea.

According to the average score for the idea that God does not intervene in socioeconomic groups, participants in the lower-middle, middle, and upper-middle income groups are more likely to hold this belief than participants in other groups. In terms of the participants' declared belief tendency, it is clear that Muslims are further away from the idea that God does not intervene, but some are inclined to it.

Would you describe yourself as a believer in a divine being?	Average	N
I am a Muslim; I believe in the existence of God.	47,8009	324
Yes, there is definitely a power that created the universe.	70,7041	129
Total	54,3230	453

Table 9 Average Scores of God Does Not Intervene Thought Scores in Belief Tendency Groups

Analysing the average scores of God does not intervene based on their political identities, similar political identities have similar averages and opposite groups as in the previous category. Unlike the previous category, however, there are fewer clear differences between the political identities at opposite poles.

Which of the following political identities do you feel closest to?		
Political Identity	Average	N
Three political identities less favourable to the idea that God does not intervene		
Only Muslim	33,5938	16
Islamist	36,6667	30
Conservative	37,5000	19
Three political identities more inclined to the idea that God does not intervene		

Feminist	62,7193	19
Ecologist (Environmentalist)	65,5702	19
Atatürkist	66,3580	81
Which of the following political identities do you feel second closest to?		
Three political identities less favourable to the idea that God does not intervene		
Islamist	36,0632	29
Conservative	39,9691	27
Conservative Nationalist	40,6250	16
Three political identities more inclined to the idea that God does not intervene		
Social Democrat	66,1458	24
Feminist	67,1402	44
Socialist	68,6782	29

Table 10 Political Identities of the Respondents Who Are Less and More Likely to Think that God Does Not Intervene

4.3. Independence from Religious Rituals and Taboos

Participants were asked about their independence from religious prohibitions and rituals under this category. Participants are not asked whether they follow the rituals to the fullest extent, but rather whether they experience internal questioning when they do not follow them and whether they believe that religious rules are valid. This category consists of six questions. The ideal theist is someone who ticks one in each question under the assumption that they adhere to religious taboos and rituals, whereas the ideal deist ticks five in all questions under the assumption that he/she is independent of religious taboos and rituals. Between these two ideal types, a value ranging from zero to one hundred was established, and the average scores of independence from religious taboos and rituals were compared. Below is a table that provides descriptive statistics of this category.

N	453
Average	33,0850
Median	29,1667
Standard Deviation	25,99527
Range	100,00
Minimum Value	,00
Maximum Value	100,00

Table 11 Descriptive Statistics of Independence from Religious Taboos and Rituals Score

Under this category, the lowest scores are observed among all other categories. As a result, the participants' attachment to theistic traditional religions is greatest through taboo rituals. Once again, there is no significant difference between the average scores and the field of science. However, when examining comparisons between faculties, it can be observed that

students studying in the field of health are more attached to religious taboos and rituals than those studying in the social sciences.

Which Faculty Are You Enrolled in?	Average	N
Four Faculties with the Students More Attached to Religious Taboos and Rituals		
Theology	14,9691	54
Medicine	24,5370	27
Dentistry	27,7778	12
Pharmacy	27,8846	13
Four Faculties with Students Less Attached to Religious Taboos and Rituals		
Language, History and Geography	38,9706	85
Engineering	39,5833	40
Political Sciences	41,3333	25
Communication	47,7273	11

Table 12 Faculties with Students Who Are More and Less Committed to Religious Taboos and Rituals

Similar groups are grouped in close averages and similar groups are found at opposite poles when the average scores are compared for political identities and independence from religious taboos and rituals.

Which of the following political identities do you feel closest to?		
Political Identity	Average	N
Three political identities more closely tied to religious taboos and rituals		
Muslim only	10,1563	16
Conservative	12,0614	19
Islamist	12,9167	30
Three political identities less attached to religious taboos and rituals		
Ataturkist	45,9877	81
Feminist	46,7105	19
Ecologist (Environmentalist)	48,2456	19
Which of the following political identities do you feel close to second?		
Three political identities more closely tied to religious taboos and rituals		
Islamist	11,3506	29
Conservative	11,7284	27
Conservative Nationalist	12,5000	16
Three political identities less attached to religious taboos and rituals		
Feminist	44,9811	44
Social Democratic	52,7778	24
Socialist	55,1724	29

Table 13 Political Identities with Less and More Independent Participants Gathering Than Religious Taboos and Rituals

4.4. Attitude in the Contradiction of Reason and Revelation

In this category, the participants were asked about their opinions on the role of reason in the construction of morality and the conflict between science and scripture. There are six questions in this category that are rated using a Likert scale. The participants who

chose the value 1 in each question received six points in total, and the participants who chose the value 5 in each question received 30 points. An ideal theist with six points and an ideal deist with 30 points was assigned a score on the per cent system over a range of 24 points. Following are the descriptive statistics of this category. This average shows us that the participants prefer to stand in a middle ground in the reason-divine revelation contradiction.

N	453
Average	52,6858
Median	50,0000
Standard Deviation	22,42430
Range	100,00
Minimum Value	,00
Maximum Value	100,00

Table 14 Descriptive Statistics of Score the Contradiction of Reason and Revelation

In the comparisons of gender, age, and field of science, there is no significant difference in the average scores of rationality in the reason-divine revelation contradiction. Social sciences score higher than natural sciences, except for the Faculty of Theology. It is evident from the previous tables that students studying natural sciences do not experience a higher level of tension with theistic religions despite the positivist education they receive.

Faculties	Average	N
The 3 Faculties Where the Participants who are Less Committed to Rationalism in the Reason-Divine Revelation Contradiction		
Theology	38,5802	54
Pharmacy	45,5128	13
Dentistry	46,1806	12
The 3 Faculties where the Participants Who Adhered More to Rationalism in the Rationality-Divine Revelation Contradiction		
Language, History and Geography	59,3137	85
Political Sciences	60,5000	25
Communication	65,9091	11

Table 15 The 3 Faculties in which the Students Who Are More and Less Committed to Rationalism in the Rationality-Divine Revelation Contradiction

Middle-income groups differ slightly from high-income and lower-income groups in terms of rationality scores in the reason-divine contradiction. The place of the upbringing of the participants does not show any significant differences, similar to the socioeconomic variable. Theism is more prevalent among participants who grew up in small villages or districts. Analysing the average scores of participants' declared belief tendency and rationalism in the reason-divine contradiction, it is evident that participants who declared

that they were not Muslims but believed in God (75,9690) were more likely to choose rationalism in the reason-divine contradiction. The validity of the scale is confirmed by this situation. In this category, however, Muslim participants (43,4156) are near the neutral score of 50. Similar to previous tables, polarization is observed for political identities.

Which of the following political identities do you feel closest to?		
Political Identity	Average	N
Three political identities less committed to rationalism in the reason-divine revelation contradiction		
Only Muslim	23,6979	16
Islamist	32,0833	30
Conservative	37,0614	19
Three political identities that are more committed to rationalism in the intellect-divine contradiction		
Atatürkist	63,1173	81
Ecologist (Environmentalist)	64,6930	19
Feminist	66,4474	19
Which of the following political identities do you feel second closest to?		
Three political identities less committed to rationalism in the reason-divine revelation contradiction		
Islamist	31,8966	29
Conservative Nationalist	32,5521	16
Conservative	34,7222	27
Three political identities that are more committed to rationalism in the intellect-divine contradiction		
Atatürkist	63,6179	41
Social Democrat	65,4514	24
Socialist	71,2644	29

Table 16 Political Identities in which the Participants who are Less and More Committed to Rationalism in the Reason-Divine Revelation Contradiction

4.5. Overall Deism Tendency Score Comparisons

Under each heading above, the categories were analysed separately and summed up to form a general deism score. The following are the general descriptive statistics of the deism tendency score, which is assumed to be zero for an ideal theist and one hundred for an ideal deist. This table shows that the overall deism score for the 453 participants who did not express themselves as atheists and clearly stated that they believed in a God, whether Muslim or not, was quite close to neutral.

N	453
Average	45,7689
Median	44,4444
Standard Deviation	20,89452
Range	91,67

Minimum Value	2,78
Maximum Value	94,44

Table 17 Descriptive Statistics of Overall Deism Score

Compared to men, women have an average score of 45.1137 and men have an average score of 47.0926 in this category, and both scores are close to each other. The averages of residential area, age, and field of science are also close but not indicative. Moreover, participants from the Faculty of Theology have a lower deist score than participants from the social sciences field. There is no evidence of obligatory tension between the natural sciences and traditional theistic religions. Comparing faculties reveals a more pronounced situation.

Faculty of	Average	N
Theology	27,8978	54
Dentistry	40,3549	12
Pharmacy	40,5271	13
Health Sciences	41,2209	27
Medicine	42,0782	27
Agriculture	42,3280	35
Law	46,4625	39
Educational Sciences	48,4428	22
Veterinary Medicine	50,4630	12
Science	50,5185	25
Engineering	51,5741	40
Language, History and Geography	52,1786	85
Political Sciences	53,4444	25
Communication	58,1650	11

Table 18 Ranking of Participants' Overall Deism Score Averages According to Faculties

It is apparent that middle-income groups are more distant from theism than other groups, even though there are no extreme differences between the average deism scores across socio-economic income groups.

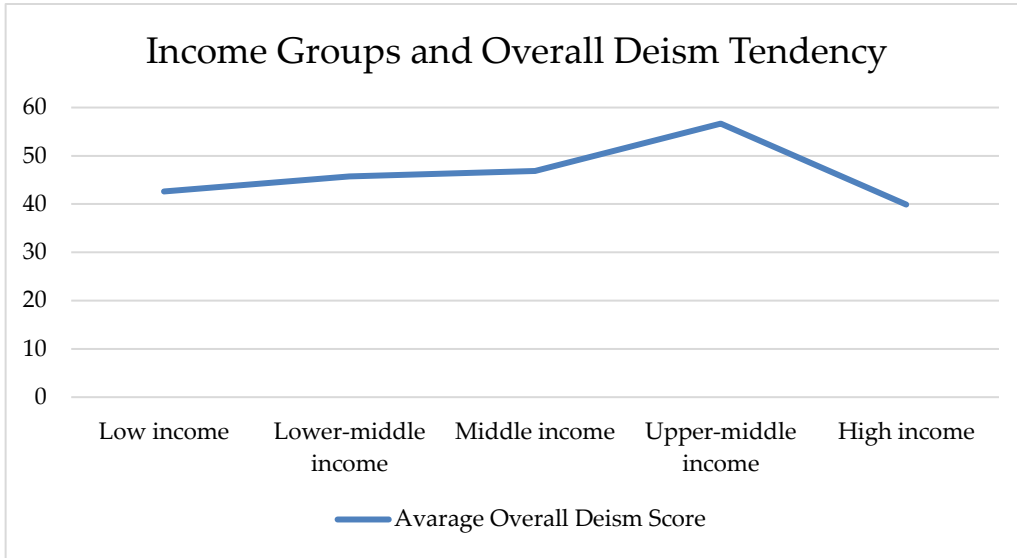


Figure 4 Income Groups and Overall Deism Tendency

When the average deism scores of the participants are compared with the place of the upbringing of the participants, it becomes apparent that participants who were raised in metropolises have an average score of 46.5835; participants who were raised in cities have an average score of 46.1089; and participants who were raised in rural districts have an average score of 40.3739. It is not surprising that theism is more prevalent in rural areas. For a more interpretable table, four identities were selected to compare political identities over general deism score averages, as shown in the table below.

Which of the following political identities do you feel closest to?		
Political Identity	Average	N
The four lowest political identities compared to the overall deism score		
Only Muslim	21,1227	16
Islamist	24,8148	30
Conservative	24,9513	19
Turkish Muslim	30,1453	79
The four political identities with the highest overall deism scores		
Ecologist (Environmentalist)	57,2125	19
Social Democrat	57,2593	25
Feminist	59,0643	19
Atatürkist	59,0992	81
Which of the following political identities do you feel second closest to?		
The four lowest political identities compared to the overall deism score		
Islamist	24,2018	29
Conservative	26,4060	27
Conservative Nationalist	26,6204	16
Turkish Muslim	31,2037	50
The four political identities with the highest overall deism scores		
Atatürkist	56,1879	41
Feminist	58,3965	44

Social Democrat	61,7284	24
Socialist	65,3257	29

Table 19 Political Identities with the Highest and Lowest Overall Deism Scores

It is evident from the table that, as with the previous categories, the average scores of some political identities are close to each other, and when political identities are placed in two poles based on belief tendencies, the same identities fall on opposing sides. In terms of belief tendencies, some political identities are integrated. The figure below illustrates the relationship between integration and polarization.

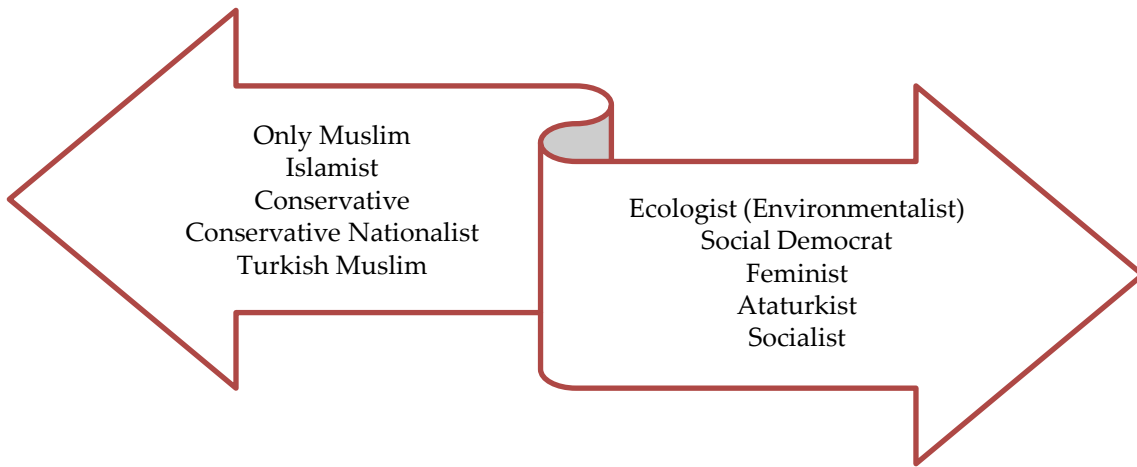


Figure 5 Political identities that combine and polarise in the average of overall deism score.

The above figure does not imply that participants can be grouped together as a single entity. It demonstrates only opposing views on deism. Identities in the deistic group are not claimed to not be Muslims.

4.6. Deism Tendency in Muslims

In addition to creating a deism scale suitable for Turkey's conditions, the research aims to assess the effectiveness of deism among participants who claim to be Muslim. A separate analysis is conducted for those participants who say that they are Muslim among those who were asked about their belief tendencies. The following are the descriptive statistics of the general deism score and other subcategory scores, based on a sample size of 324.

N: 324	Score of	Score of	Score of	Score of	Overall
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	Distrust in Religious Institutions	God's Non-Intervention Thought	Independence from Religious Rituals and Taboos	Rationalism in the Contradiction of Reason and Revelation	Deism Score
Average	33,8992	47,8009	20,6276	43,4156	36,1540
Median	31,9444	45,8333	20,8333	41,6667	35,1852
Standard Deviation	18,97157	16,50259	15,72277	17,51718	15,00939
Range	83,33	87,50	87,50	83,33	72,22
Minimum Value	,00	4,17	,00	,00	2,78
Maximum Value	83,33	91,67	87,50	83,33	75,00

Table 20 Overall and Subcategory Deism Scores of Participants Who Declare Themselves as Muslim

Deism may be regarded as a low value by those who identify themselves as Muslims. However, the categories that decrease the general deism score of participants who declare themselves Muslim are religious institutions and organizations, as well as religious taboos and rituals. There is an elevated level of commitment to Islam as a community activity and culture among Muslim participants. As compared to this situation, rationalism, and the belief that God does not intervene in the world are moderately prevalent.

According to the participants who identified themselves as Muslims, the most intense primary political identities were, respectively, Turkish-Muslim, Atatürkist, Humanist, Islamist, Turkish Nationalist, Conservative, Conservative Nationalist, and Only Muslim. Additionally, the following table provides a summary of the political identities with the highest deism score among respondents who claimed to be Muslim. Similar to the previous findings, certain political identities and deism tendencies belong to the same cluster. As well, it is understood that socialist and social democratic political identities are not respected among Muslims.

Political Identity	Average	N
Humanist	42,6698	36
Turkish Nationalist	43,5673	19
Feminist	43,6111	10
Ecologist (Environmentalist)	46,6330	11
Ataturkist	49,0741	44

Table 21 The Five Political Identities with the Highest Overall Deism Score Among Muslim Respondents

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this research was to develop a deism effectiveness scale appropriate for Turkey's conditions. Field research was conducted and completed in 2021 as a result of long duration of the official processes. In 2018, when the research was designed, there was a public discussion concerning the impact of deism, particularly among young people. Despite the fact that the debates were covered in the press at the time, there was not yet sufficient research in the Turkish literature. This research was initiated in response to this need. As a result of the long duration of the official processes, the exemption of the field component of the research from budgetary support, and the COVID-19 pandemic, the completion of the research was difficult, and so it was decided to use haphazard sampling. Therefore, in the results, comments are made only about the participants, not about the entire population.

To operationalize the concept of deism, a comprehensive research study was first conducted, and numerous codes were identified. By classifying these codes among themselves, four basic categories were formed. In each code, three questions were developed, and the level of agreement with these questions was determined using a five-point Likert scale. Since it is difficult to provide precise responses to the questions analysing belief tendency, it would be more accurate to expand the Likert scale to seven. In spite of the fact that the Likert scale is a type of interval scale, the responses received are categorical in nature, making statistical analysis more difficult. Because the demographic questions designed as independent variables were also nominal, statistical analysis was difficult, and therefore descriptive statistics were used instead of statistical analysis types. Categorical data, such as gender, political identity preference, and faculty of enrolment, must present nominal values. As a result of the uneven spacing between the questions that present numerical results, the questionnaire does not allow for different analyses to be conducted. Statistical analysis would have been possible with this scale by taking age directly rather than categorically, as well as writing estimated family income and estimated monthly personal expenditure directly. As a result of taking the place of the upbringing as qualitative, some problems also arose. In its place, the respondents' place of upbringing could have been classified as follows: a small settlement in a rural area, a settlement between a rural and urban area, an urban area, and a metropolitan area. By using this interval variable, a cross-tabulation could have been performed between the dependent variables.

The validity of the scale should also be emphasized in addition to this critique of the scale development. Factor analysis and correlation between belief tendency and general deism and subcategory scores support the scale's validity. Regardless of how valid a scale may be, in order to be able to make some generalizations, a good sample must be taken. Based on the number of undergraduate students enrolled in the program, the sample was randomly selected, and a 1% sample was intended. After the data cleaning process, 453 individuals' data were analysed. This is a respectable number of participants, but it cannot be generalized because the sample was not selected at random. Thus, assuming that the results obtained reflect those of the participants, the following conclusions can be drawn.

- To measure the effectiveness of deism, participants in the sample must believe in God. On the introduction page of the questionnaire, there is a question that eliminates atheists from taking part. One-fifth of the 918 undergraduate students who participated in the survey at Ankara University were atheists. Among the remaining students, one-fourth are deists or follow a religion other than Islam. While the participants are undergraduates who attend a university in Turkey's second-largest city, the number of participants who declare to be Muslims is quite low (57.84% of those who participated in the survey) compared with the frequently mentioned belief distributions in Turkey.

- It is not possible to say that there is a significant difference between social sciences and sciences when we consider the faculties where most of the participants who do not believe in God are gathered. In fact, it has been observed that there are proportionally more atheists or deists among students of the social and administrative sciences.

- Women are more likely than men to declare themselves Muslims when gender groups are analysed. Non-Islamic tendencies are concentrated in middle-income groups when socioeconomic groups are compared.

- There are no significant differences between the average scores for general deism and deism subcategories of 453 participants, which is the main sample, and the values of age, gender, and socio-economic income group. The comparison between the fields of science shows that, despite the secularisation theory's claim that traditional religions and natural science are at odds, the average scores of social science students and natural science students are the same. In fact, given that the participants enrolled in the Faculty of Theology decreased the overall deism and deism subcategory average scores of all participants in the

field of social sciences, it could be said that social science students are more prone to deism than natural science students in terms of both the general deism score and the deism subcategory average score.

- Based on a comparison of the average scores of the subcategories of deism, it is evident that participants are more theistic in the cultural and practical dimensions of religion and less theistic in the thought and belief dimensions. The Islamic religion, a traditional theistic religion among the participants, is quite effective with its community activities and cultural institutionalization, but it is not dominant at the level of thought in some cases.

- The most significant differences emerge in political identity comparisons when both the general deism score and deism subcategory scores are analysed separately. The first issue that needs to be discussed here is that, although Muslim identity was not included as a political identity in the questionnaire presented to the participants in the first stage, some participants frequently referred to themselves as only Muslims by choosing the expression other under this question. Therefore, only Muslim was added as a political identity. In fact, it has been observed that those participants who have a greater tendency toward theistic tendencies are those who define themselves only as Muslims. Aside from this identity, it is observed that the participants who identify themselves as Islamists, conservatives, conservative nationalists, or Turkish Muslims tend to be more theistic. According to the axis of belief tendency, the following political identities are opposite the theist-deist contrast: ecologist, social democrat, feminist, Atatürkist, and socialist.

- In the group of participants who define themselves as Muslims, it is evident that the tendency towards deism is in the realm of thought, and that an important level of commitment is shown to religious institutions, organizations, taboos, and rituals. As a consequence, changes may start with issues such as the qualities of reason and the necessity of revelation.

The strengths and weaknesses of the scale used in the research have been identified above. During the period when this research was designed and the field dimension was realized, many other studies were conducted. There is a likelihood that the related literature will continue to expand. It is believed that re-evaluating other research in light of the current findings, strengthening the scale and reapplication the scale in a broader scope will both

contribute to sociological studies in Turkey. We anticipate that the findings of this research will provide valuable insights into religious life in Turkey for international scholars.

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THANKS

We would like to express our sincere thanks to Research Assistant Rukiye Kardeş for her assistance during the field research, Lecturer Murat Öztürk for supporting the analysis, and Assistant Professor Alkan Üstün, who give us his support throughout the process.

This article was derived from the final report of the research with the code 20B0654001 and the title "Research on Deism Activity in University Youth (Ankara University Example)". Ankara University Scientific Research Projects Commission provided support for the related research, and the final report of the research was accepted as per a decision made at the commission meeting on 04/11/2021. For their support, we would like to thank the commission and Ankara University.



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(AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT)

Makale Bilgisi (Article Information): *The Efficacy of Deism Among University Students: The Ankara University Example*

Makaledeki Yazar Katkılarının Yüzde ile Gösterilmesi (<i>Showing Author Contributions in the Article as Percent</i>)		1. Sorumlu Yazar (<i>Responsible Author</i>)	2. Katkı Sunan Yazar (<i>Contributer Author</i>)	3. Katkı Sunan Yazar (<i>Contributer Author</i>)
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Veri Toplanması	Data Collection	%33	%33	%34
Veri Analizi	Data Analysis	%33	%33	%34
Makalenin Yazımı	Writingup	%33	%33	%34
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