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- Perceptions of Young People in terms of Religious and Religiousness with in the Dilemma of Doubt and Belief - Asım YAPICI
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- Marginalized Religious Youngsters: The Case of Facebook Group 'Imam Hatips Should be Closed' - Abdullah ÖZBOLAT, M. Ertuğrul EVYAPAR
- A Quran Hero for Youngsters: Zayd as the Only Sahabah Mentioned in Quran - Ali AKPINAR
- Social Media Addiction, Cyber Bullying and Cyber Victimization Experiences Among the Generation Z High School Students - Vehbi BAYHAN
- Anti-Religious Publications and Reasons for Atheistic Orientations Among Youngsters - Mustafa ÜNVERDİ
- Authority Perception of Young University Students and Religion - Fatma ODABAŞI
- Changes and Transformations Regarding the Life Perceived by Youngsters During the COVID-19 Pandemic - Said SAMİ, Yasin TOPRAK, Ayşe GÖKMEN
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Table of Contents

Editorial

Erol ERKAN

Papers

Perceptions of Young People in terms of Religious and Religiousness with in the Dilemma of Doubt and Belief

Asım YAPICI

Factors Affecting the School Preferences of Youngsters Studying at Imam Hatip High Schools

Halil AYDINALP - Esra Nur ERİKOĞLU

Marginalized Religious Youngsters: The Case of Facebook Group 'Imam Hatips Should be Closed'

Abdullah ÖZBOLAT - M. Ertuğrul EVYAPAR

A Quran Hero for Youngsters: Zayd as the Only Sahabah Mentioned in Quran

Ali AKPINAR

Social Media Addiction, Cyber Bullying and Cyber Victimization Experiences Among the Generation Z High School Students

Vehbi BAYHAN

Anti-Religious Publications and Reasons for Atheistic Orientations Among Youngsters

Mustafa ÜNVERDİ

Authority Perception of Young University Students and Religion

Fatma ODABAŞI

Changes and Transformations Regarding the Life Perceived by Youngsters During
the COVID-19 Pandemic

Said SAMİ, Yasin TOPRAK, Ayşe GÖKMEN

A Study on the Advanced Marriage Age Among Youngsters from the Perspective
of Religious Sociology

Vildan DİNDAR

Publication Principles

From the Editor

This issue of the Journal of Theological Academia focuses on the topic of "Youth". The traces of social change as well as the direction of this change can be observed the best on the youth. Furthermore, the topic of youth cannot be neglected for a country like Turkey where most of the population consists of young people. Another topic to be considered in this context is the relationship between youth and religion.

Youth is one of the most important periods of life. How the life will be shaped in future years is a critical period for one. In addition to the search for ideological approaches such as assigning a meaning to life, gaining an identity or setting ideals, young people have responsibilities such as finding a job, establishing a family, being useful for the society, gaining a social environment, coping with the challenges of life and living in line with the objectives. In regard to the youth's aforementioned search and responsibilities, religion can help young people and make positive contributions.

Religion is regarded as a significant source of motivation for finding a meaning to existence, positioning the self, overcoming the negative events in life, adapting to the life and society, and managing the stress arising from the efforts to maintain the life or adapt to the society or unexpected situations in this regard for youth and any other period of life. Religion-society relationship in general and the topic of religion and youth in particular has a dynamic characteristic, and they should therefore be focused particularly.

In a process where all sorts of borders are passed/violated, social media use increased, young people select their own social environments, virtual groups emerged, virtuality replaced the reality, and religious thoughts and experiences were re-configured, the topic of "youth" appears to be an important research field. Within this frame, the reasons why students in the Religious Vocational High School chose to go to this kind of high school; the relationship between the perception of authority and religious attitudes and behaviors of university students who were at the last stage of their formal education; the perceptions of religion and religionism through religion-related questions and skeptical thoughts of today's youngsters; the changes that young people experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic regarding the meaning of life; and the coping strategies which they used during this stressful period were addressed in our issue on "Youth". Furthermore, the relationship between the Internet and social media addiction, which is one of the most important psychological issues of the modern day, and cyber bullying and victimization experiences, and identities of social media users in their real lives can be considered as an address paper for selecting a virtual congregation, which is among the topics reviewed in our journal.

As a person who believes that one of the most important responsibilities of universities is generating information, I extend my gratitude to anybody who made

great efforts for the publication of the Journal of Theological Academia. I also thank all the academics who contributed to the journal with their articles. I believe this issue will yield positive results as it helps the youth be understood as well as make great contributions to the academic society.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Erol ERKAN

Faculty of Divinity, Gaziantep University

Issue Editor of The Journal of Theological Academia

Perceptions of Young People in terms of Religious and Religiousness with in the Dilemma of Doubt and Belief*

Asım YAPICI*

Abstract

In the current study, religion and religiosity perceptions of the modern youth through their religious inquiry and doubts are investigated. The aim of the study is to determine the importance of religion and religiosity in the semantic world of the Muslim Turkish youth in the world that has evolved from modernism to post-modernism. In this study that has a qualitative pattern, the data was collected through participant observation and free conversations. The obtained data was analyzed with the techniques of descriptive analysis and content analysis, and then was interpreted depending on the phenomenological tradition. According to the findings, young people make harsh criticism against the religious principles of religion its aspect of Islamic jurisprudence (ibadah/prayers and sharia practices), devout people, congregation and sect leaders. The criticism of the young contains intense religious doubts and sometimes even partial denial tendencies. However, most of the young either seek peace by taking sanctuary in traditional religion or questioning religious beliefs and practices, evolving from imitation to verification belief. It is observed that the worship behaviour decreases among the young and the *needs based religiousness* increases. In this research, young people have been grouped into nine different types: "traditional devout people", "faithful interrogators", "resentful believers", "uninterested people", "purely spiritualists", "quiet people", "skeptics / indecisive ones", "deist-oriented" and "atheists". Stuck between their religious beliefs and secular pleasures, young people are experiencing an identity and value crisis. In this sense, the young have been evaluated through four different types which are "unpeaceful devout", "personal spiritualists", those on a quest", and those with denialist tendencies. Findings show that young people's relations with religion are not monotonous and one-dimensional, but rather complex and diverse.

Keywords: The young, Religious doubts, Religiosity, Spirituality, Deism, Atheism.

* **Date of Submission:** 23.09.2020 **Date of Acceptance:** 19.11.2020

This paper is the English translation of the study titled "Şüphe ve İnanç Kışkırcında Gençlerin Din ve Dindarlık Algıları" published in the 12th issue of *İlahiyat Akademi*. (Asım YAPICI, "Şüphe ve İnanç Kışkırcında Gençlerin Din ve Dindarlık Algıları", *İlahiyat Akademi*, sayı: 12, Aralık 2020, s. 1-44.) The paper in Turkish should be referred to for citations.

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Şüpheler ve İnanç Kısılcacında Gençlerin Din ve Dindarlık Algıları

Öz

Bu araştırmada günümüz gençlerinin dinî sorgu ve şüpheleri üzerinden din ve dindarlık algıları incelenmektedir. Çalışmanın amacı, modernlikten post-modernliğe doğru evrilen dünyada Müslüman Türk gençlerinin anlam dünyasında din ve dindarlığın yerini belirlemeye çalışmaktır. Nitel bir desene sahip olan bu araştırmada veriler, katılımlı gözlem ve görüşmelerle toplanmıştır. Elde edilen veriler betimsel analiz ve içerik analizi teknikleriyle çözümlenmiş, anlayıcı geleneğe bağlı olarak yorumlanmıştır. Ulaşılan bulgulara göre gençler dinin inanç esaslarına, fikhî (ibadet ve muamelât) boyutuna, dindarlara, cemaat ve tarikat liderlerine yönelik sert eleştirilerde bulunmaktadır. Gençlerin eleştirileri yoğun dinî şüpheler, hatta kısmen inkârcı eğilimler içermektedir. Bununla birlikte gençlerin büyük bir kısmı ya geleneksel dine sığınarak huzur aramakta ya da dinî inanç ve uygulamaları sorgulayarak taklidî inançtan tahkikî inanca doğru yönelmektedir. Gençler arasında ibadet davranışının azaldığı, *ihtiyaç dindarlığının* arttığı görülmektedir. Bu araştırmada gençler; "geleneksel dindarlar", "inançlı sorgulayıcılar", "dargın inançlılar", "dine ilgisizler", "salt maneviyatçılar", "suskunlar", "şüpheler/kararsızlık yaşayanlar", "deist yönelimliler" ve "ateistler" olmak üzere dokuz farklı kategoriye ayrılmıştır. Dinî inançlarıyla dünyevî hazları arasında sıkışan gençlerin, kimlik ve değer krizi yaşadıkları belirlenmiştir. Bu bağlamda gençler "huzursuz dindarlar", "bireysel maneviyatçılar", "arayış içinde olanlar" ve "inkârcı eğilimliler" şeklinde dört farklı tip üzerinden değerlendirilmiştir. Bulgular göstermektedir ki gençlerin dinle ilişkileri tek düze ve tek boyutlu değil oldukça karmaşık, yoğun ve çok çeşitlidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Gençlik, Dinî şüpheler, Dindarlık, Maneviyatçılık, Deizm, Ateizm.

Summary

Theoretical Framework

The period of youth, which covers the 13-25 age range, can be divided into "adolescence" and "first adulthood". In adolescents, physical change, emotional independence, orientation towards peers, sexual curiosity, desire for sexuality, abstract thinking, searching for identity, developing a unique moral understanding, interest in religious and mystical issues, and finally, stuck between religious belief and scientific and rational knowledge can be observed. During this period, young people may experience doubts, anxiety, difficulties, and depression in religious matters. The probable reason for this is that they feel cognitive conflict and emotional tension between their religious beliefs and worldly desires. According to the results of research in Turkey, young people experience religious doubts about the existence of God, the creation of the universe and man, destiny, sin-good deed, afterlife, heaven-hell, and gender inequality issues. At this point, questioning religion and belief in God, especially based on scientific data, the problem of evil (unexpected deaths, disability, economic deprivation, individual suffering, harassment, rape,

etc.), the question of why good people cannot enter Paradise even if they are atheists; critical approach to metaphysical entities such as angels, demons, devils, confusion between magical-mythic practices and scripture, interests towards other religions and sects, criticism towards traditional religion, new religious and spiritual pursuits, problem of functionality of prayer, etc. issues are among the issues that adolescents are most suspicious of.

In the first years of adulthood, the young begin to stay away from the mental and emotional turmoil that they experience intensely in adolescence. However, there is no complete reassurance. At this point, it can be easily stated that the dilemmas young people experience between religious belief and religious suspicion are not limited to the influence of their youth. Especially based on the concept of the spirit of the time, it can be said that people are undergoing rapid change and transformation, especially beyond the developmental characteristics of young people. For this reason, it would be meaningful to be able to trace the developmental characteristics of the youth period and the changes occurring according to historical time. Such an approach is functional in detecting the change and continuity observed in youth's perceptions of religion and religiosity as well as in religious doubts and hesitations.

It is mentioned that with the post-modern globalization, the world has turned into a global village and time and distance have disappeared. The rejection of all kinds of grand narratives and authority, the fragmentation of the truth, the dominance of the desire for individual freedom, the manifestation of individual spiritualism against institutional religion, the weakening of religious and national identities, the differentiation of value preferences, in the context of participating in the consumption culture, experiencing the craze of pleasure, speed and experience, the transformation of digitalization and virtualization into a phenomenon that affects daily life and relations, and finally the loss of authenticity and trust feelings appear as features that characterize the post-modern period. In this context, at least a triple attitude towards religion and religiosity among young people is followed: the first is to prefer individual religiosity and spiritualism with intense criticism of traditional-institutional religions, the second is to turn to deism and atheism with criticism of traditional-institutional religions, and the third is by ignoring the criticisms of traditional-institutional religion the desire to continue the current situation.

Problem

This research looking for an answer to the question "What is the perception of religion and religiosity of today's youth?". In this context, efforts will be made to identify the religious doubts that young people experience and their attitudes towards religion and belief. The aim of the study is to determine the place of religion in the meaning world of Muslim Turkish youth in a world that has evolved from modernity to post-modernity.

Perceptions of Young People in terms of Religious and Religiousness within the Dilemma of Doubt and Belief

Method

In this study, which has a qualitative design, the data were collected through participatory observations and interviews. 378 statements were identified regarding the attitude of young people to the principles of belief, their religious lives, perceptions of religion, religious doubts, religious concerns, prayer and worship behaviour. When 143 of the expressions and discourses containing belief, worship, anxiety, suspicion and denial were grouped together, 67 discourses / expressions that differ from each other more or less in terms of content have emerged. Among these discourses / statements, those that attract the most attention were given first, and the others were cited as similar statements.

Findings

According to the findings, some of the youth criticize the belief principles of religion, the dimension of fiqh (treatment), religious people, community and sect leaders harshly. In the context of the principles of belief, the doubts about the existence of God, the question of why God should be worshiped, the question of whether God is a good being (theodicy), the question of whether the Quran is divine or human, and questioning the principles come to the fore. The main criticism towards the fiqh (muamelat) dimension of the religion is whether Islam is a religion that fits the life, child marriages are allowed in religion, the pre-marital dating period prohibited by religion is mandatory in the modern world; Drinking unless others are harmed; It is meaningless to borrow money with interest to buy houses and cars and that games of chance (lottery, lotto, toto, etc.) are haram and sinful. Within the scope of the criticisms against religious leaders and religious leaders (community and sect leaders), the following expressions have been found: Children attending Quran courses are harassed, adultery is perceived differently for men and women among religious people; Structures such as the Taliban, ISIS and FETO exploit people and the world through Islam, leaders of the communities and sects live with religious and moral weaknesses, religious leaders exclude science and put the people to sleep with fabricated rumors; religion is becoming an opium for Muslims, Muslims who do not benefit humanity try to keep paradise in their monopoly. Such discourses show that some of the criticisms of young people towards religion and religious people are doubtful and some of them contain deist and atheist tendencies.

Conclusion

In this research, young people; It has been divided into nine different categories: "traditional religious people", "faithful questioners", "resentful believers", "uninterested people", "mere spiritualists", "silent people", "skeptics / indecisive people", "deist-oriented" and "atheists". It has been determined that the youth, who are stuck between their religious beliefs and worldly pleasures, experience an identity and value crisis. In this context, young people were evaluated in four different types: "restless religious people", "individual spiritualists", "seekers" and

"denialists". Findings show that youth's relations with religion are not uniform and one-dimensional, but rather complex, dense and diverse.

Özet

Kuramsal Çerçeve

Yaklaşık 13-25 yaş aralığını kapsayan gençlik dönemi "ergenlik" ve "ilk yetişkinlik" şeklinde ikiye ayrılabilir. Ergenlerde fiziksel değişim, duygusal bağımsızlık, akranlara yönelim, cinsel merak, cinsellik arzusu, soyut düşünebilme, kimlik arayışı, kendine özgü ahlak anlayışı geliştirme, dinî ve mistik konulara ilgi, nihayet dinî inanç ile bilimsel ve rasyonel bilgi arasında sıkışmışlık gözlenebilir.¹ Bu dönemde gençler dinî konularda şüphe, kaygı, zorlanma ve bunalım yaşayabilir. Bu durumun muhtemel nedeni, onların dinî inançlarıyla dünyevî arzuları arasında bilişsel çelişki ve duygusal gerilim hissetmesidir.

Türkiye’de yapılan araştırmalarda ortaya çıkan sonuçlara göre gençler Allah’ın varlığı, evrenin ve insanın yaratılışı, kaza-kader, günah-sevap, ahiret, cennet-cehennem ve kadın-erkek eşitsizliği konularında dinî şüpheler yaşamaktadır² Bu noktada özellikle bilimsel veriler üstünden din ve Tanrı inancının sorgulanması, kötülük problemi (beklenmedik ölümler, engellilik, ekonomik yoksunluklar, bireysel acılar, tacizler, tecavüzler vs.), ateist olsa bile iyi insanların neden cennete giremeyeceği meselesi; melek, cin, şeytan gibi metafizik varlıklara eleştirel yaklaşım, büyüsel-mitik uygulamalarla kitabî din arasında yaşanan bocalamalar, diğer din ve mezheplere yönelik ilgiler, geleneksel dine yönelik tenkitler, yeni dinsel ve manevî arayışlar, duanın işlevselliği problemi vb. hususlar ergenlerin en çok şüphe duyduğu konuların başında gelmektedir.³

İlk yetişkinlik yıllarında genç, ergenlik döneminde yoğun bir biçimde yaşadığı zihinsel ve duygusal çalkantılardan nispeten uzaklaşarak durulmaya başlar. Ancak bütünüyle bir durulma söz konusu değildir. Bu noktada gençlerin dinî inanç ve dinî şüphe arasında yaşadığı ikilemlerin sadece gençlik döneminin etkisiyle sınırlı olmadığı rahatlıkla ifade edilebilir. Özellikle *zamanın ruhu* kavramına dayanarak, insanların bilhassa gençlerin gelişimsel özelliklerinin ötesinde, hızlı bir değişim ve dönüşüm geçirdiği söylenebilir. Bu nedenle gençlik döneminin gelişimsel özellikleri ile tarihsel zamana göre tezahür eden değişimlerin izini sürebilmek anlamlı olacaktır.

¹ Patricia H. Miller, *Gelişim Psikolojisi Kuramları*, çev. Z. Gültekin (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2008); Mary. J. Gander - Harry W. Gardiner, *Çocuk ve Ergen Gelişimi*, çev. Ali Dönmez - Nermin Çelen (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2010); Adnan Kulaksızoğlu, *Ergenlik Psikolojisi*, (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2020).

² Hayati Hökelekli, "Ergenlik Döneminde Dini Şüpheler", *MEB Din Öğretimi Dergisi* 14 (1988); Abdülkerim Bahadır, "Ergenlik Döneminde Dini Şüphe ve Tereddütler", *Gençlik Din ve Değerler Psikolojisi*, ed. Hayati Hökelekli (İstanbul: DEM Yayınları, 2006); Tahsin Kula, *Ergenlerde Dinî Düşüncede Yaşanan Güçlükler* (Sivas: Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2006)

³ Bahadır, "Ergenlik Döneminde Dini Şüphe ve Tereddütler"; Hasan Kayıklık, "Psikolojik Açından İman, İnanç ve Şüphe", *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 46/1 (2005).

Perceptions of Young People in terms of Religious and Religiousness within the Dilemma of Doubt and Belief

Böyle bir yaklaşım gençlerin hem din ve dindarlık algılarında hem de dinî şüphe ve tereddütlerinde gözlenen değişim ve sürekliliği tespit etmede işlevseldir.

Post-modern küreselleşmeyle birlikte dünyanın küresel bir köye döndüğünden, zaman ve mesafenin yok olduğundan bahsedilmektedir.⁴ Her türlü büyük anlatının ve otoritenin reddi, hakikatin parçalanması, bireysel özgürlük arzusunun baskın bir hale gelmesi, kurumsal dine karşı bireysel maneviyatçılığın tezahürü, dinî ve millî kimliklerin zayıflaması, değer tercihlerinin farklılaşması, tüketim kültürüne eklenme bağlamında haz, hız ve deneyim çılgınlığının yaşanması, dijitalleşme ve sanallaşmanın gündelik hayatı ve ilişkileri etkileyen bir olguya dönüşmesi, nihayet sahicilik ve güven duygularının kaybolması post-modern dönemi niteleyen özellikler olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır⁵ (Yapıcı, 2018b). Bu çerçevede gençler arasında din ve dindarlığa yönelik en azından üçlü bir tavır izlenmektedir: Birincisi geleneksel-kurumsal dinlere yoğun eleştirilerle bireysel dindarlık ve maneviyatçılığı tercih etme, ikincisi geleneksel-kurumsal dinlere eleştirilerle deizm ve ateizme yönelme, üçüncü ise geleneksel-kurumsal dine yönelik eleştirileri görmezden gelerek mevcut durumu devam ettirme arzusudur.

Problem

Bu araştırma “günümüz gençlerinin din ve dindarlık algısı nedir?” sorusuna cevap aramaktadır. Bu bağlamda gençlerin yaşadıkları dinî şüphelerle birlikte din ve inanca yönelik tutumları tespiti çalışılacaktır. Çalışmanın amacı modernlikten post-modernliğe doğru evrilen dünyada Müslüman Türk gençlerinin anlam dünyasında dinin yerini belirlemektir.

Yöntem

Nitel bir desene sahip olan bu çalışmada veriler, katılımlı gözlem ve görüşmelerle toplanmıştır. Gençlerin inanç esaslarına bakışı, dinî hayatları, din algıları, dinî şüpheleri, dinî kaygıları, dua ve ibadet davranışlarıyla ilgili 378 ifade tespit edilmiştir. İnanç, ibadet, kaygı, şüphe ve inkâr içeren ifade ve söylemlerden 143’ü kümeleme ile tasnif edilince muhteva itibarıyla az ya da çok birbirinden farklılaşan 67 söylem/ifade ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu söylemlerden/ifadelerden en çok dikkat çekenler öncelenmiş, diğerlerine *benzer ifadeler* şeklinde atıf yapılmıştır. Elde edilen veriler betimsel analiz ve içerik analizi teknikleriyle çözümlenmiş, anlayıcı geleneğe bağlı olarak yorumlanmıştır.

⁴ Jonathan Friedman, “Küresel Sistem Küreselleşme ve Modernitenin Parametreleri”, der. ve çev. Abdullah Topçuoğlu - Yasın Aktay, *Modernizm ve İslam: Küreselleşme ve Oryantalizm* (Ankara: Vadi Yayınları, 1996); David Harvey, *PostModernliğin Durumu: Kültürel Değişimin Kökenleri*, çev. Sungur Savran (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1997); Ronald Robertson, *Küreselleşme Toplum Kuramı ve Küresel Kültür*, çev. Ümit Hüsrev Yolsal (Ankara: Bilim Sanat Yayınları, 2000).

⁵ Kemal Sayar, “Küreselleşmenin Psikolojik Boyutları”, *Yeni Symposium* 39/2 (2001).; Asım Yapıcı - Münir Yıldırım, “Küreselleşme Sürecinin Dinî Kimliklere Etkisi Sosyal Psikolojik Bir Değerlendirme”, *Dini Araştırmalar* 6/7, (2003), 117-138.; Poul Hirst - Grahame Thompson, *Küreselleşme Sorgulanıyor*, çev. Çağla Erdem-Elif Yücel (Ankara: Dost Yayınları, 2000).; Robertson, *Küreselleşme Toplum Kuramı ve Küresel Kültür*, çev. Ümit Hüsrev Yolsal.

Bulgular

Elde edilen bulgulara göre gençlerin bir kısmı dinin inanç esaslarına, fikhî (muamelât) boyutuna, dindarlara, cemaat ve tarikat liderlerine yönelik oldukça sert eleştirilerde bulunmaktadır. İnanç esasları bağlamında Allah'ın varlığına yönelik kuşkular, Allah'a niçin ibadet edilmesi gerektiği meselesi, Allah'ın iyi bir varlık olup olmadığı (teodise) problemi, Kur'an'ın ilahî mi yoksa beşerî mi olduğu sorusu ve bilimsel gelişmeler karşısında dinin temel esaslarının sorgulanması ön plana çıkmaktadır. Dinin fikhî (muamelat) boyutuna yönelik eleştirilerin başında İslam'ın hayata uyan bir din olup olmadığı, dinde çocuk yaşta evliliklere izin verildiği, dinin yasakladığı evlilik öncesi flört döneminin modern dünyada zorunlu olduğu; başkalarına zarar verilmediği müddetçe içki içmenin; ev ve otomobil almak için faizle kredi çekmenin ve şans oyunlarının (piyango, loto, toto vs.) haram ve günah olmasının anlamsızlığı gelmektedir. Dindarlara ve dinî önderlere (cemaat ve tarikat liderlerine) yönelik eleştiriler kapsamında şu tür ifadeler rastlanmıştır: Kur'an kurslarına giden çocuklar taciz edilmekte, dindarlar arasında zina eylemi kadın ve erkek için farklı farklı algılanmakta; Taliban, İŞİD ve FETÖ gibi yapılar İslam üzerinden insanları ve dünyayı istismar etmekte, cemaat ve tarikat liderleri dinî ve ahlakî zaafılarla yaşamakta, dinî önderler bilimi dışlayarak uydurma söylentilerle halkı uyutmakta; din, Müslümanlar için adeta afyon haline gelmekte/getirilmekte, insanlığa herhangi bir faydası olmayan Müslümanlar cenneti tekellerinde tutmaya çalışmaktadır. Bu tür söylemler göstermektedir ki gençlerin dine ve dindarlara yönelik eleştirilerinin bir kısmı şüphe bir kısmı deist ve ateist eğilimler içermektedir. Bununla birlikte gençlerin büyük bir kısmı ya geleneksel dine sığınarak huzur aramakta ya da dinî inanç ve uygulamaları sorgulayarak taklidî inançtan tahkikî inanca doğru yönelmektedir. Gençler arasında ibadet davranışının azaldığı, *ihhtiyaç dindarlığının* arttığı görülmektedir.

Sonuç

Bu araştırmada gençler; "geleneksel dindarlar", "inançlı sorgulayıcılar", "dargın inançlılar", "dine ilgisizler", "salt maneviyatçılar", "susunlar", "şüpheliler/kararsızlık yaşayanlar", "deist yönelimliler" ve "ateistler" olmak üzere dokuz farklı kategoriye ayrılmıştır. Dinî inançlarıyla dünyevî hazları arasında sıkışan gençlerin, kimlik ve değer krizi yaşadıkları belirlenmiştir. Bu bağlamda gençler "huzursuz dindarlar", "bireysel maneviyatçılar", "arayış içinde olanlar" ve "inkârcı eğilimliler" şeklinde dört farklı tip üzerinden değerlendirilmiştir. Bulgular göstermektedir ki gençlerin dinle ilişkileri tek düze ve tek boyutlu değil oldukça karmaşık, yoğun ve çok çeşitlidir.

Introduction

Thinking, talking and writing about one's relationship with belief and religion is both challenging and tempting. This process is challenging because different religious, social and human approaches are present and constant changes occur

Perceptions of Young People in terms of Religious and Religiousness within the Dilemma of Doubt and Belief

within these approaches, which causes the risk of losing the theoretical ground for the interpretations and discussions to be made in this context. Furthermore, as noted by Peck, only a limited number of people can act objectively in terms of religion.⁶ This topic is also tempting because talking about the relationship between people and religion means getting into an exciting and historical discussion regardless of whether the people here are believing or not.

The return of sacred topics, revival of religions and the discourse of rising to spirituality, as well as the claim that religious doubts and deist and atheist orientations adversely affecting the religions and beliefs have been among the points discussed by the academics or even the public. For instance, Kepel used the expression "God's Revenge" for the rising concepts of religion and religiousness,⁷ while Berger declared that secularism, rather than religions, was in a crisis.⁸ However, Ertit stated that the effectiveness of secularism did not decrease and that conservative people were in a concerned mood, reflecting a different aspect.⁹ Twenge's points indicate that institutional and traditional religion has been leaving the daily life faster every passing day.¹⁰ She mentions about various studies indicating that rational structures have been making efforts to purify themselves from religious contents, that religious identity lines have been weakened, and that religious thoughts no longer affect and direct the daily life with constructive global post-modernity.¹¹ The discussions based on the question "Is deism and atheism increasing among young people?" can be assessed in this context. There are also different approaches. For instance, according to Kayıklık, the concepts of religion and modernity which have clashed for a long time have finally agreed, and religiousness-based personal approaches which do not praise institutional religion have emerged.¹²

This study aims to determine the religious perceptions, doubts, hesitations and even rejectionist orientations of Muslim Turkish youth. Presenting sociological, psycho-social and psychological perspective in a combined manner, this interdisciplinary study will be functional in terms on understanding young people's religion and religiousness-related perspectives. The number of separate studies

⁶ M. Scott Peck, *Az Seçilen Yol: Sevginin, Geleneksel Değerlerin ve Ruhsal Tekamülün Psikolojisine Yeni Bir Bakış*, trans. Semra Ayanbaşı (İstanbul: Akaşa Yayınları, nd.), 2003, 234.

⁷ Gilles Kepel, *Tanrının İntikamı: Din Dünyayı Yeniden Fethediyor*, trans. Selma Kırmızı (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1992).

⁸ Peter L. Berger, "Dinin Krizinden Sekülerizmin Krizine", trans. Ali Köse, *Sekülerizm Sorgulanıyor*, ed. Ali Köse (İstanbul: Ufuk Kitapları, 2002), 75-93.

⁹ Ertit Volkan, *Endişeli Muhafazakarlar Çağı: Dinden Uzaklaşan Türkiye* (Ankara: Orient Yayınları, 2015).

¹⁰ Jean M. Twenge, *İ-Nesli* trans. Okan Gündüz (İstanbul: Kaknüs Yayınları, 2018).

¹¹ Asım Yapıcı, "Postmodern Dönemde Din, Kimlik ve Anlam Problemi", *Dinin Kaderi: Çağdaş Sorunların Kaskacında Din*, ed. Abdullatif Tüzer (Ankara: Elis Yayınları, 2017), 117-174.

¹² Hasan Kayıklık, "Değişen Dünyada Birey, Din ve Dindarlık", *Dindarlığın Sosyo-Psikolojisi*, ed. Ünver Günay - Celaeddin Çelik (Adana: Karahan Kitabevi, 2006), 157-174.

focusing on this topic is quite limited. Therefore, the purpose was to emphasize the importance of the topic and to fill the gap in the relevant literature.

Theoretical Frame

1. Religious Doubts and the Search for Identity During Youth from a Developmental Perspective

People who are aged between 13 and 25 are called youngster, and this period is called youth. Covering the period of adolescence, youth is the period of physical, mental and emotional transition from childhood to adulthood. Therefore, youth can be divided into two and the years of "adolescence" and "first adulthood". Adolescents may experience a dilemma between physical change, emotional independence, tendency to what the peers do, sexual curiosity, sexual desires, abstract thinking, search for an identity, developing a specific ethical understanding, interest in religious and mystic topics, religion itself, and scientific and rational knowledge. During the first years of adulthood, people leave the mental and emotional crises they undergo during adolescence behind and become calmer.¹³

Some of the problems young people experience in terms of religion, spirituality and values arise from the traits of the current era from the developmental perspective. Before adolescence, at the age of 11-12 years, children start to direct superficial criticisms to religious topics including "Allah" and "destiny". The period between the age of 12 and 14 years is experienced with the challenges of adapting to abstract idea of God. However, the period between the age of 14 and 17 is the mental disintegration where questioning and doubting is at the forefront. Between the age of 17 and 20, at the end of adolescence, young people start to become calmer. This period may occur as a dedication or failure of dedication to a belief.¹⁴ The age periods mentioned here should not be considered as the precise ages because it should be noted that the ages of adolescence and youth may change owing to developmental differences and socio-cultural factors. The concepts such as "state of moratorium", "delayed adolescence" and "prolonged youth" reflect the relativity of the mentioned age intervals.

According to the results found by the studies conducted in Turkey, young people have doubts in topics of Allah's presence, creation of universe and humans, accident-destiny, sin-good deed, afterlife, paradise-hell and inequality of men and women.¹⁵ What adolescents doubt about the most include the following processes and actions: questioning the religion and belief in God through scientific data, various problems (unexpected deaths, disability, financial deprivation, personal

¹³ Miller, *Gelişim Psikolojisi Kuramları*, çev. Z. Gültekin; Gander - Gardiner, *Çocuk ve Ergen Gelişimi*, trans. Ali Dönmez - Nermin Çelen; Kulaksızoğlu, *Ergenlik Psikolojisi*.

¹⁴ Asım Yapıcı, "Müslüman Türk Kültüründe İnanç Gelişimi: Bir Model Denemesi", *Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi Din Psikolojisi Özel Sayısı* (2016), 83-113.

¹⁵ Hökelekli, "Ergenlik Döneminde Dini Şüpheler", 73-82; Bahadır, "Ergenlik Döneminde Dini Şüphe ve Tereddütler", 307-368.

Perceptions of Young People in terms of Religious and Religiousness within the Dilemma of Doubt and Belief

sorrow, harassment, rape etc.), the issue of why atheist people cannot go to paradise despite being a benevolent person, critical approach to metaphysical creatures such as angels, jinn or devil, dilemmas experienced between sorcery-mythic practices and proper religion, interest in other religions and sects, criticism toward traditional religion, new religious and spiritual searches, the issue of functionality for prayers etc.¹⁶ The doubts young people experience are closely related to “developmental processes”, “desire of being independent and free”, “the feeling of guiltiness and idea of committing sin arising from the clash between sexual desires and religious beliefs”, “questioning the meaning of life”, “mental and emotional imbalance arising from the conflict between religion and science”, “unsuccessful religious socialization”, and “insufficient and wrong religious education”.¹⁷ Accordingly, adolescence and first years of youth are regarded as an unsettled period full of doubts, crisis, search and calmness in the context of religion and belief.

Adolescence is a *critical stage* for the development of one’s world view and identity. Adolescents question what they learned from their socio-cultural environment implicitly or explicitly with the impact of abstract thinking potential, emotional independence and their peer groups. They start to realize their emotions, thoughts and skills. Adolescents who are expected to develop professional, political, ethical and religious identity as a developmental duty of adolescence may develop *successful, mortgaged, shady, delayed, disorganized and reversed* identities.¹⁸ The following can be stated as an example: If adolescents experience a religious crisis, question their beliefs and internalize their religious beliefs without contradicting with their cultures, they gain a healthy and successful religious identity. Accordingly, the identities of adolescents who grew up in a Muslim environment, undergo a period of searching and questioning, and finally adopt a Muslim identity upon their own will can be considered *successful*. If adolescents adopt the dominant belief and values of a society just upon the impact of their families/friends without experiencing a period of searching and crisis, their religious identity becomes *mortgaged/dependent*. In other words, if adolescents accept and adopt what the society or their families teach them without getting into a process of searching or questioning in religious beliefs owing to various reasons such as the fear of misunderstanding, committing sin and rejecting the religion, the identity they create becomes dependent and “mortgaged”. The religious identity of adolescent people who adopt the beliefs

¹⁶ Bahadır, “Ergenlik Döneminde Dini Şüphe ve Tereddütler”; Hasan Kayıklık, “Değişen Dünyada Birey, Din ve Dindarlık”, *Dindarlığın Sosyo-Psikolojisi*, ed. Ünver Günay - Celaleddin Çelik (Adana: Karahan Kitabevi, 2006), 157-174.

¹⁷ Antoine Vergote, *Psychologie Religieuse* (Bruxelles: Charles Dessart, 1966); Bahadır, “Ergenlik Döneminde Dini Şüphe ve Tereddütler”; Mustafa Koç, “Din Psikolojisi Açısından Ergenlik Döneminde Dini Yaşam”, *Diyanet İlmî Dergi* 42/3 (2016), 7-32; Celal Çayır, “Ergenlerin Dini İnanç, Şüphe ve Dini Tutumları Üzerine Bir Araştırma”, *Bilimname* 27/2 (2014), 59-88.

¹⁸ Erik H. Erikson, *İnsanın 8 Evresi*, trans. Gonca Akkaya, (Istanbul: Okyanus Yayınları, 2014); James E. Marcia, “Identity in Adolescence”, *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology*, ed. J. Adelson, (New York: Wiley, 1980), 159-187.

of their families and those around them for different reasons, despite questioning their religious beliefs severely and determining a unique religious path for themselves, is called *shady* identity. Despite experiencing a period of searching and questioning, adolescents may not decide what to believe or not to believe and what belief to adopt or not to adopt, and they may declare moratorium and suspend the development of their religious identities. In such cases, determining the religious identity may take a long time and extend to the period of early adulthood. If adolescents cannot decide what to believe despite experiencing an explicit or implicit searching and questioning period, it means they leave their decision to future times. Identities of those who undergo such a period has a *delayed* characteristic. Adolescents who do not experience a crisis and depression in terms of their beliefs and values and who do not adopt a belief or value system, or more clearly, who adopt a momentary and state-based attitude occur to have a *disorganized* religious identity. In other words, it is safe to state that people who occasionally reflect religious, secular, deist or theist attitude have *disorganized and uncertain* religious identities. If adolescents clash with their sociocultural environment, particularly the domestic setting, and set themselves a new path, it means they developed a *reverse identity* from a religious perspective.¹⁹ Orientation to disbelief despite being raised in a family with high Islamic sensitivity is within this context. The contrary may also be the case. Those who were raised in a Christian or Muslim family but still accept a different religion can be assessed within the reversed identity category.

From a developmental perspective, the period until the age of 25 years, which are the first years of adulthood after adolescence, can be evaluated as the period of youth. These years mean a period when certain issues, such as identity crisis, religious perspective and world view, which cannot be solved during the adolescence are overcome. However, the first years of youth reflect a time when future-related concerns become distinctive.²⁰ The developmental characteristics and missions of the era cause young people to have more earthly and concrete targets. Therefore, the first years of adulthood are probably the era when people are the least religious²¹, which is an important point because young people have relatively weaker feelings toward prayers and religious impacts and this is closely associated with the developmental traits of the youth.

2. The Youth and Religiousness Changing with the Spirit of the Era

The psychosocial impacts of *historical time* conceptualized as *the spirit of era* (zeitgeist) should be considered to understand the youngsters and perform an objective analysis in this context, which directs us to trace the changes and

¹⁹ Yapıcı, "Müslüman Türk Kültüründe İnanç Gelişimi".

²⁰ Miller, *Gelişim Psikolojisi Kuramları*; Gander, & Gardiner, *Çocuk ve Ergen Gelişimi*; Kulaksızoğlu, *Ergenlik Psikolojisi*.

²¹ Hayati Hökelekli, *Din Psikolojisi* (Ankara: Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2005).

Perceptions of Young People in terms of Religious and Religiousness within the Dilemma of Doubt and Belief

transformations experienced in the social structure and personal awareness because understanding and analyzing what is occurring in the modern times without considering the historical journey is almost impossible.

In his work “A Secular Age”, Taylor searches an answer to the question “*what happened between 1500 and 2000?*”.²² According to Taylor, people who did not believe in God in both the East and West during 1500s constituted an exception since God could not be questioned. The meaning and objective of life was based on God and religion. Religious beliefs had a central role for one to achieve the feelings of completeness and satisfaction. Therefore, government, law, society, economy (earning, production, consumption, wealth, poverty), natural disasters, diseases, i.e. everything, were associated with God and explained accordingly. In 2000s, most of the people continued believing in God but God was no longer perceived as the absolute authority affecting and directing everything in the daily life like 1500s. This was also observed among the people who had belief in God and performed their prayers. However, intense doubts were felt toward God and religions, and deist and atheist attitudes distinctively increased during those years.

Re-asking Taylor’s question “What happened between the years of 1500 and 2000?” and tracing the change and transformation between the perceptions toward God and religion may be functional in analyzing young people’s perceptions of religion and religiousness.²³ Therefore, reflections of extensive social changes over the social and personal awareness should be taken into account.

From the perspective of Fukuyama, researchers who adopt the progressive approach accept that the society has evolved, leaving the tradition of hunting-gathering and adopting agricultural traditional life (first wave) and industrialization (second wave).²⁴ Furthermore, it is noted that a new era is experiencing, reaching beyond the borders of industrialization society (third wave). This period is called with the following concepts: *post-modernity*, *risk society*, *globalization*, *advanced industrial society*, *information society* and *artificial intelligence age*. It is mentioned that radical changes are experienced in the transition from modernity to post-modernity, which is also the case for the transition from traditionalism to modernity. At this point, it should be noted that Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam are the religions that emerged in the traditional world because we have to question within the relevant discussions whether the religions addressing the traditional society and people will have difficulties in appealing to the modern and post-modern society and people from this perspective.

The traditional social structure has a collectivist character. The unity of rationality and emotionality is dominant in humans’ approaches. Ethics is not so

²² Charles Taylor, *Seküler Çağ*, trans. Dost Körpe (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2019), 31-32.

²³ Taylor, *Seküler Çağ*, 31.

²⁴ Francis Fukuyama, *Büyük Çözülme: İnsan Doğası ve Toplumsal Düzenin Yeniden Oluşturulması*, trans. Hasan Kaya, (Istanbul: Profil Yayınları, 2015), 17.

independent from the religion. The reality is reflected by religion and revelation. Therefore, the laws to be enacted should be based on a religious reference. It should be noted that Cartesian movement, Renaissance and Reform, and Illumination Philosophy has a central role in the transition from the traditional to modern world.²⁵

The Cartesian movement makes the division of rationality and emotionality more distinctive through the dilemma of awareness and body, which paves the way for a process distorting the aforementioned unity of mind and emotions displayed by traditional people. With the Renaissance and Reform movements, the human and ethical approach of Christianity was combined with the ethical doctrine of Ancient Greece and Rome *first*, and *then* the influence of the Catholic Church over people weakened and Protestant movement stated to be developed.²⁶ In this period, the metaphysical concepts of the world were shaken, and it was claimed that God stopped managing this mortal world, leaving it to the people, and that earthly religiousness became the trend in place of ethereal religiousness.²⁷ With the period of Illumination, the criteria of truth transformed from revelations to rationality, and religion and ethics were totally separated. Furthermore, the principle that laws should be formed through human rationale instead of religion or religious influence and that governmental authority should be organized through human rationality instead of religious principles became popular. One of the most important results of the Philosophy of Illumination is undoubtedly the 1789 French Revolution. One of the most important results of this revolution is the idea of "nation state" and "secularism" principle, which have drawn attention in many locations of the world, particularly the continental Europe. In the period of modernity where scientific and technologic advancements, industrialization, urbanization and secularization became distinctive to a certain degree, the criterion of reality is not only rationality but also the scientific data that are based on experiments and observations and that are generated by the intelligence through methodological techniques. The human approach of modernity is essentially Cartesian. Criticizing the abstract and symbolic concepts or actions due to being based on experiments and observation, modernity focuses on the concrete and objective concepts.²⁸ It was claimed that the traditional concepts and traditions such as religion and belief, which were not rational and scientific, would be terminated, that a new world would be established under the dominance of science, and that religion would drop behind the science in the case of

²⁵ Asım Yapıcı, "Zihniyet ve Bilim: Noktayı Nazara Göre Değişen Manzara Algısı", *Zihniyet ve Din: Disiplinler Arası Zihniyet Çözümlemesi*, ed. Abdullah Özbek - Asım Yapıcı (Adana: Karahan Kitabevi, 2018), 25-52.

²⁶ Yapıcı, "Zihniyet ve Bilim".

²⁷ Carl Gustave Jung, *Psychologie et Religion*, Traduit par M. Bernson & C. Cahen (Paris: Buchet - Chastel, 1958); Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964).

²⁸ Yapıcı, "Zihniyet ve Bilim".

Perceptions of Young People in terms of Religious and Religiousness within the Dilemma of Doubt and Belief

modernity arising from the philosophy of illumination.²⁹ This is closely associated with the adverse attitude of modernity toward religion and God. Bauman describes this process as follows: “The objective was to establish a human order on the world where no metaphysical concepts or actions were present and where freedom and happiness was dominant.”³⁰ This means the following: As the religious impact shrinks with the modernity, a world where people can live their pleasures freely will be created.

With the science and technology that developed during modernity, life became relatively easier, medicine improved, and duration of life increased. Additionally, people adopted a position where they are motivated to experience their pleasures, particularly sexuality, instead of suppressing them. One of the differences between traditional and modern people emerges at this point. Death became natural while sexuality was a taboo for traditional people; for the modern people, sexuality was natural, while death was a taboo. Claiming that western people did not want to remember death which was an obstacle before the earthly pleasures, Ariés emphasized the concept “Forbidden Death”. The sexual revolution that took place in Europe and United States after the World War II resulted in blessing a pleasure-based life among the people of all ages, particularly the young ones.³¹ For Bauman, religious criticisms have a critical importance for increased sexual freedom in the modern era because sexual freedom does not seem possible when religion and God are not criticized.³² This is undoubtedly closely associated with the changed perception based on sins.

In line with the concept of liquid modernity by Bauman, freedom-related understanding of modern people, especially youngsters, changed and evolved from³³ “You cannot make me do anything that I do not like” to “I can do anything I like”. Whether the modern freedom in question liberalized people or not is controversial. Fromm believes that the modern people who escape from the religious pressure and appear as free become psychological slaves with desires of status, respect and power.³⁴

The post-modern era was felt with the termination of supra-identities where time and distance covers death in a globalized world, with the separative sub-identities becoming more distinctive,³⁵ with the authority and great doctrines being

²⁹ Sigmund Freud, *Uygurluk ve Hoşnutsuzlukları-Bir Yanılsamanın Geleceği*, trans. Aziz Yardımlı (İstanbul: İdea Yayınları, 2000); Auguste Comte, *Pozitif Felsefe Dersleri ve Pozitif Anlayış Üzerine Konuşma*, trans. Erkan Ataçay (Ankara: Bilgesu Yayıncılık, 2015).

³⁰ Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodern Etik*, trans. Alev Türker (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 1998), 245.

³¹ Philippe Ariés, *Batılının Ölüm Karşısında Tavırları*, trans. M. Ali Kılıçbay (Ankara: Gece Yayınları, 1991), 85-86.

³² Zygmunt Bauman, *Ölümlülük, Ölümsüzlük ve Diğer Hayat Stratejileri*, trans. Nilgün Demirdöven (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2000), 127.

³³ Zygmunt Bauman, *Akışkan Modernite*, trans. Sinan Okan Çavuş (İstanbul: Can Yayınları, 2017).

³⁴ Erich Fromm, *Özgürlükten Kaçış*, trans. Şemsa YeğİN (İstanbul: Payel Yayınları, 1996).

³⁵ Asım Yapıcı - Münir Yıldırım, “Küreselleşme Sürecinin Dinî Kimliklere Etkisi Sosyal Psikolojik Bir Değerlendirme”.

rejected,³⁶ with the neo-liberalism being added to capitalism and shaped in a one-way manner³⁷, with the consumption culture becoming more popular,³⁸ and finally, with the digitalization, virtualization and artificial intelligence becoming more dominant.³⁹ With the weaker and virtual identity lines, the feeling of authenticity began to disappear. People feel the challenge in deciding what to be faithful to.⁴⁰

Bauman (2018, 212) associates the depression experienced in the feeling and idea of dedication to permanent values with the crisis in continuity (eternality) and immortality because fame replaced the reputation. Accordingly, high number of followers on the social media is valued. The values, dedications and partnerships in this new world are the consumed elements, not the produced elements.⁴¹ It is safe to state the following if we are to reflect the change with our own terms: In traditional Islamic societies, the understanding "benevolence in disagreement, oppression in division", i.e. benevolence and glory in thinking differently and malevolence and evil in division, is present. The latter explanation of the aforementioned traditional understanding seems to be in a reversed manner in the present day (malevolence and evil in thinking differently and benevolence and glory in division). Friendships, partnerships and marriages end quickly, which is interesting in this regard. To sum up, the concepts and actions that were considered as sin, unlawful and undesirable before are not regarded totally normal in a world where everything changed and transformed. Extramarital sexuality, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) orientations or homosexual marriages can be assessed in this regard.⁴²

The following can be stated accordingly: The current era transforms people's perceptions, cognitions and attitudes to a certain degree. Every technological innovation or product brings its own ethics, and people change continuously whether they are aware or not. The time or the era people live in affects their characteristics more than their families. Accordingly, people may psychologically resemble to their age or era more than they do to their fathers. Bronfenbrenner's "Ecosystem Theory" explains this topic.⁴³ Mass communication instruments, global values and cultures, conditions of the home country, legal rules, occupations of the

³⁶ Yasin Aktay, "Postmodern Dünyada Din: Bir Anlatı mı, Tanrı'nın İntikamı mı?", *Din Sosyolojisi*, ed. Yasin Aktay - Mehmet Emin Köktaş (Ankara: Vadi Yayınları, 1998), 299-313.

³⁷ Poul Hirst - Grahame Thompson, *Küreselleşme Sorgulanıyor*, trans. Çağla Erdem-Elif Yücel; Robertson, *Küreselleşme Toplum Kuramı ve Küresel Kültür*, trans. Ümit Hüsrev Yolsal.

³⁸ Jean Baudrillard, *Tüketim Toplumu*, trans. Nilgün Tütal - Ferda Keskin (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 1997).

³⁹ Mustafa Derviş Dereli, *Sanal'a Veda* (Ankara: Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık, 2020); Ahmet Çiftçi - Yelda Karataş, "Dijitalleşen Zamanın İzdüşümünde: Kimliğin, Bedenin ve İletişimin Dönüşümü", *AJIT-e: Online Academic Journal of Information Technology* 10/37 (2019 Spring), 7-29.

⁴⁰ Sayar, "Küreselleşmenin Psikolojik Boyutları", 79-94.

⁴¹ Yapıcı, "Zihniyet ve Bilim".

⁴² Twenge, *İ-Nesli* trans. Okan Gündüz.

⁴³ Urie Bronfenbrenner, "Ecological Models of Human Development", ed. Torsten Husen - T. Neville Postlethwaite, *International Encyclopedia of Education* (Oxford, Pergamon Press and Elsevier Science, 1994), 3/1643-1647

Perceptions of Young People in terms of Religious and Religiousness within the Dilemma of Doubt and Belief

parents, co-workers, neighbors, relatives, physical environment, school, family and parental attitudes all affect one's physical, emotional, intelligent⁴⁴ and social development.⁴⁵

In this case, the following question should be asked: What are the impacts of the changing world on youth? It should be noted that young people's answers to the questions on the objective and meaning of life have changed. Selfishness increased under the name of individualization, narcissism became more common along with the extremely high levels of self-confidence, and a youth that is anxious, concerned but still highly self-confident emerged. As young people's expectations from life differed, the interest in "owning", rather than "being", increased and a life based on pleasure and speed was considered as a blessing. The term "owning" here should not be considered only in the context of goods, property, authority or brands. Having an experience, excitement and pleasure is considered to be more valuable than reaching the concrete objects and purposes. The idea of owning anything is motivated by the desire of consumption. Therefore, the feeling of dissatisfaction became more distinctive among the young people who established a direct relationship between consumption and happiness. Moreover, the feelings of satisfaction and thankfulness became lost, jealousy became dominant, and an exhibitionist lifestyle became a trend. Moreover, social media became the area of display in this regard.

Both the weakening of identity lines and subjectification and termination of reality paved the way for the sources, which helped young people feel safer, getting weaker and the feelings of sincerity and reality getting lost. Sociocultural norms and religious values that added value to the existence and daily life started to be uncertain. These are essentially closely associated with the values such as nation and family, which support the presence of society, being shaken deeply. These developments activated the feeling of rootlessness, abeyance and solitude among the young people.⁴⁶

Bauman (2018, 207-208) notes that momentary pleasures are attractive for the people of risky societies lacking safety and that the idea of obtaining whatever the life presents at the moment is dominant in these societies as what tomorrow will bring is not known because delaying the pleasure makes it lose its attraction. It is clear that the force behind the pleasure-based life among the post-modern people, particularly the youngsters, is the state of uncertainty, unsafety and flattery. What is attractive today may lose its attraction tomorrow. In this case, living the day and moment (*carpe diem*) becomes necessary. Rather than making long-term plans,

⁴⁴ Edinete Maria Rosa - Jonathan Tudge. "Urie Bronfenbrenner's Theory of Human Development: Its Evolution From Ecology to Bioecology", *Journal of Family Theory & Review* 5 (December 2013), 243-258.

⁴⁵ Fatih Kandemir. "Ekolojik Kuram Bağlamında Dinî Gelişim Psikolojisi", *Cumhuriyet İlahiyat Dergisi* 22/3 (15 December 2018), 1433-1456.

⁴⁶ Sayar, "Küreselleşmenin Psikolojik Boyutları".

living the short-term pleasures should be the goal. Friendships, partnerships and marriages ending quickly should be assessed in this context, not only from the perspective of the feeling of loyalty decreasing quickly, because the rationale behind the relationships is based on lasting until the benefits and pleasures disappear, rather than being separated by the death. However, evidences indicate that youngsters experience a dilemma between their desires of freedom and safety concerns. It is claimed that this dilemma causes them to escape the risks of the real life and take a shelter in virtual relationships, or get satisfied by watching pornographic movies instead of performing actual sexual activities.⁴⁷

Twenge names the modern youngsters as the “me generation”. Accordingly, the me generation is tolerant, self-confident, open-minded and ambitious, but also shy, depressive, lonely and concerned. Additionally, being *normal* in the modern world becomes more challenging in the modern world every passing day. These studies confirm that young people have difficulties achieving a normal and calm mood. Young people whose expectations are high experience difficulties due to the facts of life.⁴⁸ According to Twenge, *the rising* expectations of me generation are based on their excessive focus on themselves. It is without doubt that modernization and post-modernization that promotes the separation from traditions and religious authority is particularly effective in this focus.⁴⁹ It should be emphasized that post-modernity continuously supports the egoist attitudes in the dilemma between existential concerns and hedonism. Educational policies and domestic behaviors provide contribution to this process. Young people whose business and marriage are not as how they wish desire a perfect life where they can fulfill their personal wishes without stopping, but they still cannot find internal peace and balance no matter how many things they own. As noted by Twenge, this results in solitude in a crowd, mood disorder, and depression.⁵⁰ The ever-increasing rate of committing suicide can be assessed in this scope. Continuing her works following the conceptualization of me generation, Twenge named the people born after 2000s as *i-generation*.⁵¹ Accordingly, it is safe to mention about a new human type that focuses on virtual relationships and constantly aims to be visible. They are quite *selfish, anxious, concerned, unsure, consumption-focused* and *hedonist*. According to Harvey, this is caused by the reality losing its authenticity and objectivity and being left to subjectivity due to the process of blessing separation, temporariness, chaotic change, irregularity, uncertainty, discontinuity, hybridization and variety.⁵² Even the scientific data are approached with doubts now because the reality has gained a form that differs based on the perspective. Every one of many people who have different ideas in this topic may be

⁴⁷ Twenge, *İ-Nesli* trans. Okan Gündüz.

⁴⁸ Jean M. Twenge, *Ben Nesli*. trans. Esra Öztürk (İstanbul: Kaknüs Yayınları, 2009), 11.

⁴⁹ Twenge, *Ben Nesli*. trans. Esra Öztürk, 72-73.

⁵⁰ Twenge, *Ben Nesli*. trans. Esra Öztürk, 152.

⁵¹ Twenge, *İ-Nesli* trans. Okan Gündüz.

⁵² Harvey, *PostModernliğin Durumu: Kültürel Değişimin Kökenleri*, trans. Sungur Savran, 133.

simultaneously right. As noted by Bauman, the reality separated into pieces became liquid and submitted to relativity. Representing the spirit of the era, it is clear that these thoughts affect the young people deeply. Young people transform their personal perspectives into the reality discourse, and they even reject the points contradicting with their perspectives quickly.⁵³

3. Religiousness, Spirituality and Values Among the Youngsters

The question “Are the youngsters of the modern times becoming religious or leaving the religion in the transformation from modernity to post-modernity?” is critical. However, we do not have sufficient data to answer this question. Nevertheless, certain relevant studies may still provide an idea, but first,

the following point should be highlighted: The dual category generally defined as becoming religious and leaving the religion is quite generalizing and deceptive because such separations causes both basic categories, such as religiousness-related new concepts and extra-religious spiritualism, and the intermediate forms between these categories to be neglected. Generalization facilitates expressing ideas about a topic in social sciences because it paves the way for understanding the direction of the process and making estimations.

Certain modern young people make efforts to combine individualism and hedonism, aiming to find the middle point. The concepts of “*hedonist religiousness*” or “*hedonist spirituality*” are now mentioned more than ever. These concepts may also be reflected as “*pure individual religiousness*”, “*institutional flexible spirituality*” and “*religiousness with weak ethical basis*”.⁵⁴ In fact, these names are closely related with the term *Protestant religiousness* Weber explains as *earth-focused devotee*.⁵⁵

Most of the young people desire living freely and happily in this mortal world by keeping themselves away from dangers (desire of safety) (hedonic freedom). At this point, they may experience a dilemma, tension and conflict between the social and cultural expectations, and their personal demands. Shayegan explains this issue as *separated perspective*⁵⁶. The perfect concepts of *yaralı bilinç* (injured awareness) and *kültürel şizofreni* (cultural schizophrenia) are present in the Turkish translation of Shayegan’s work⁵⁷. With the socio-psychological terms, this can be explained as *identity disorder*. As understood, the sense of belonging becomes weaker among the young people who try to live on an uncertain identity-based ground, and individualization as well as consumption culture, excitement, experiences and

⁵³ Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodernlik ve Hoşnutsuzlukları*, trans. İsmail Türkmen (Istanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2000), 25.

⁵⁴ Asım Yapıcı, “Küreselleşen Dünyada Gençlik ve Gençlerde Dinî Hayat” (Ankara: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2018), 83-97.

⁵⁵ Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, 166.

⁵⁶ Daryush Shayegan, *Le Regard Mutilé: Pays Traditionnels face à la Modernité* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1989).

⁵⁷ Daryush Shayegan, *Yaralı Bilinç: Geleneksel Toplumlarda Kültürel Şizofreni*, trans. Haldun Bayrı (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1991).

pleasure-based lifestyle becomes more trendy. However, they aim to live healthily, peacefully and safely, which is the point of contradiction and conflicting.

Since 1960s, people have published works indicating that religiousness increased among the young people in United States.⁵⁸ There are evidences indicating that a similar orientation has occurred in Turkey⁵⁹ after 1980s. This question should be asked at this point: Are the young people who are individualist and hedonist in line with the era really religious? Having become a part of consumption culture through a pleasure-based life, young people experience difficulties focusing on the richness within their internal worlds and turn into another actor of a regular mechanical life. Inclination toward religion and spirituality is quite distinctive among the young people who aim to cope with the challenges brought by such a life. Regardless of being based on either traditional or institutional religious understanding, participation of young people in the new religious movements can be assessed in this context. Furthermore, it is safe to state that young people either utilize the radical religious congregations or mystic-Sufi organizations, or pure spiritualist groups to focus on themselves in this age of pleasure and speed. Nevertheless, it should still be noted that traditional religious orientations are popular among the current *religious young people*. However, the traditional religiousness of young people is different to that of their fathers or even grandfathers. Depiction of God in youngsters' eyes is forgiving in every case, not strict, authoritarian or punitive. Religiousness of young people becomes more individualist every day, despite staying affiliated with the traditional religion. Another relevant point is that *non-religious young people* prefer either a non-religious or a faithful life with no interest toward the religion. Regardless of being religious, spiritualist or non-interested toward the religion, young people's relationship with the religion and beliefs gains a new form and content.

In the process of evolution from traditionalism to modernity and from modernity to post-modernity, awareness of the people whose ties with metaphysics were weak shrank in time. This period paved the way for changed perspectives toward the religion and religiousness as well as weaker religiousness with poorer ethical basis. Furthermore, individual spirituality orientations came to forefront in this period when institutional religious perceptions were criticized.⁶⁰ Experiencing a dilemma between their religious and personal values, young people began to prefer the individual values.⁶¹ The idea that religions should contain a discourse that

⁵⁸ Charles Y. Glock, "Birleşik Devletlerde Dinsel Bir Uyanış Var mı?", trans. Esen Sinanoğlu, ed. R. Boudon - P. Lazarsfeld, *Toplum Bilimleri Sözlüğü* (Ankara: UNUSCO Türkiye Milli Komisyonu, 1982), 53- 55.

⁵⁹ Asım Yapıcı, "Religious Life of Turkish Youth in the Process of Modernization and Secularization", ed. Zuhâl Ağılkaya-Şahin et al., *Psychology of Religion in Turkey* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 107-136.

⁶⁰ Yapıcı, "Küreselleşen Dünyada Gençlik ve Gençlerde Dinî Hayat".

⁶¹ Asım Yapıcı, "Değerler Ve Dindarlık Algısında Değişim ve Süreklilik: Değerlerin Bireyselleşmesinden Bireysel Değerlere", ed. Mustafa Ergün et al., *Öğretmenliğin Mesleki Değerleri ve Etik* (Ankara: Anı Yayıncılık, 2018), 57-90.

increases the freedoms rather than limiting them and that improves the human merits rather than enforcing strict rules started to be popular among the young people. Stating that sociologists' concepts such as "believing without the sense of belonging", "religion at home" and "increasing spiritualism" defined those who were born before 2000 better and that those born after 2000 were not religious or spiritualist, Twenge believes that young people's relationship with the religion has weakened every day and that atheistic inclinations have increased. Explaining this issue with the absence of domestic interest toward the religion and inability of religious authorities to understand the new generation, Twenge asks a critical question: Do Internet and social media move youngsters away from the religion or do the young people use Internet and social media because they are moved away from the religion?⁶² We do not have sufficient knowledge to give an answer to this question through the relationship of cause and effect. However, considering the observations, it is safe to state that spending time on the Internet and social media transforms and consumes many things including the religious interests and orientations.

Is Twenge talking about the difference in the relationship of American youngsters with the religion before and after the millennium ⁶³or is her statement also valid for the Muslim Turkish youngsters? In other words, how did the Internet revolution experienced in Turkey during 2000s and smart phones that became integral with the daily life after 2012s affect the religious perception, living and value system of young people in Turkey?

Certain studies conducted during 2000s indicated that religiousness-related perceptions of young people should not be disconnected from Islamic world view Muslimhood. A study conducted by Yapıcı (2006a) yielded interesting results and showed that young people described the modern Muslims as "those failing in practicing their beliefs", "those failing in practicing their prayers", "those who are religious or secular in certain cases", "insincere", "hypocritical", "ostentatious", "unreliable", "selfish", "interest-focused" and "those who lost their ethical values"⁶⁴. The number of young people who say "*I have not met a good Muslim including myself*" is increasing every passing day. Young people associate these negative traits of Muslims (according to them) with the idea that *the love for Allah and fear of Allah no longer directs people's actions*, associating this issue with the trends of the modern era. According to youngsters, Muslims can achieve internal (personal) and external (social) peace if they can establish the balance between the mortal and eternal world, religion and ethics, and traditions and modernity. Meanwhile, the following point should be particularly noted: Young people want the current age to be interpreted in line with Islam, instead of Islam being assessed in line with the current age. Trying

⁶² Twenge, *İ-Nesli*, trans. Okan Gündüz.

⁶³ Twenge, *İ-Nesli*, trans. Okan Gündüz.

⁶⁴ Asım Yapıcı, "Algısal Açıdan Müslüman Kimliği ve Dindarlık", ed. Ünver Günay - Celaleddin Çelik, *Dindarlığın Sosyo-Psikolojisi* (Adana: Karahan Kitabevi, 2006), 206-258.

to understand Islam according to the age causes Islam to have uncertain borders. Young people also believe that such orientations are increasing in the Turkish society.

Another study conducted by Yapıcı demonstrated that Islam orders Muslims to organize their daily lives based on how Allah orders, as understood from young people's thoughts.⁶⁵ Therefore, the dedication and submission to Allah's orders comes to mind first when Islam is mentioned. The dedication and submission to Allah's orders happens by submitting the personal freedom to Allah's will and making efforts to arrange the life according to Allah's orders. According to young people, continuity to prayers is within the context of submission to Allah. Accordingly, it is fair to say that youngsters make a reference to prayers and fasting which are among the particular conditions of Islam. However, emphases on the prayers based on time and form, such as prayer and fasting, are not as impactful as the emphases on faith and submission because prayer-related attitudes distinctively weakened in the process of modernization and secularization. However, despite the decrease in youngsters' levels of praying, the contact of personal awareness with religious emotions continues existing. The concept of Islam means *the source of peace* and *happiness* in youngsters' minds, which is interesting. This result can be interpreted as that the modern life, which facilitates the personal and social life with the technological advancements, has made people more lonely, that the modern life exposed people to dissatisfaction and unhappiness, and that religion can provide meaning and peace to one's life against the impacts of modern life. Accordingly, it is safe to state that the meaning and value of religion continues to increase for the Turkish youth. According to the points of Yapıcı who performed a meta-analytical assessment on 23 different studies, which examined young people's religious lives and were conducted with a sample of 11,786 people, between 1980 and 2009, religious practices of young people, particularly prayers and fasting, increased after 1990s. Approximately 30% of young people make efforts to perform their prayers regularly, while 70% aim to fast regularly during Ramadan⁶⁶. It should also be noted that young people pray more as their psychological, financial and social issues increase. Regular prayers and habit of performing more prayers when needed are 8% less common among the university students compared to the youngsters who are not university students. The question "Is there a reverse relationship between higher education and religiousness?" may be asked in this context. The relevant literature has studies indicating that undergoing postgraduate education in secular fields has adverse impacts on religiousness in general, and religious belief and prayers in⁶⁷ particular⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Asım Yapıcı, "Modernleşme-Sekülerleşme Sürecinde Türk Gençliğinin Anlam Dünyasında Dinin Yeri: Çukurova Üniversitesi Örneği", *Çukurova Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 9/2 (Haziran 2009), 1-37.

⁶⁶ Asım Yapıcı et al., "Öğretmen Adaylarının Değer Yönelimleri", *ESOSDER: Elektronik Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 11/42 (July 2012), 129-151.

⁶⁷ Michael Argyle - Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, *The Social Psychology of Religion* (London: Kegan Paul, 1975).

⁶⁸ Asım Yapıcı, "Yeni Bir Dindarlık Ölçeği ve Üniversiteli Gençlerin Dinin Etkisini Hissetme Düzeyi", *Çukurova Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 6/1 (March 2006), 66-116.

Perceptions of Young People in terms of Religious and Religiousness within the Dilemma of Doubt and Belief

because the rational statuses of youngsters change from irrationality to rationality based on their academic knowledge level. University education has high secularization potential due to the aforementioned traits. As stressed by Kirman (2014), this potential was clearly felt in the Turkish modernization period.⁶⁹ There are also other causes supporting this process. Religion and science being presented in a clashing manner in the faculties and departments providing secular education, the religions being assessed in a critical approach with the questioning-based academic skills gained through higher education, and students becoming relatively more personal and freer during the university education can be assessed in this context. One may claim that the positivist structure of the education system may have a function of weakening the ties between awareness and beliefs. Higher rate of staying at a distance to religions, showing not much interest toward prayers, having atheistic orientations, and changing religion⁷⁰ among the people with higher educational status can be considered as the reflection of the modernist and secularist attitude questioning or even excluding the traditions in the general sense.⁷¹ Thus, it is claimed that “traditional”, “institutional”, “dogmatic” and “fanatic” religious orientations decrease among the youngsters with higher education, and that the inclination toward verified and conscious religiousness, rather than believing blindly, increased⁷² among them.⁷³

Keeping the relevant discussions conserved, the following can be stated: Although education weakens religious interests and orientations, the religious orientations and experiences of youngsters have distinctively increased from 1980s to the end of 2000s. It is without doubt that higher number of universities, increased urbanization, educational policies, and higher education possibilities for the youngsters coming from rural areas in Turkey all have a role in the aforementioned increase. However, it should be mentioned that the orientation of returning to religion and spirituality in United States during 1960s was felt approximately 30 years later in Turkey. The results from the Survey of Religious Life in Turkey conducted by the Presidency of Religious Affairs confirm that religiousness

⁶⁹ Mehmet Ali Kirman, “Din ve Eğlence Kültürü: KSÜ İlahiyat Fakültesi Öğrencilerinin Mezuniyet Gecesi Hakkında Sosyolojik Bir Değerlendirme”, ed. Mehmet Ali Kirman - Abdullah Özbolet, *Kültür ve Din* (Adana: Karahan Kitabevi, 2014), 97-121.

⁷⁰ Darren E. Sherkat - Christopher. G. Ellison, Din Sosyolojisinde Son Gelişmeler ve Gündemdeki Tartışmalar, trans. İhsan Çapcıoğlu, *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 45/1 (April 2004), 225-262.

⁷¹ Yapıcı, “Yeni Bir Dindarlık Ölçeği ve Üniversiteli Gençlerin Dinin Etkisini Hissetme Düzeyi”.

⁷² Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi – Michael Argyle, *The Psychology Of Religious Behaviour, Belief And Experience* (London – New York: Routledge, 1997).

⁷³ Argyle - Beit-Hallahmi, *The Social Psychology of Religion*.

increased among all age groups including the youngsters. The relative increase in religiousness can be explained with the self-protection instinct in the risk⁷⁴society.⁷⁵

Assessing the difference in the value-related preferences of the Turkish society through the period before and after 2010 may yield interesting results. Couple of studies performed before 2010 are examples in this regard; the study by Başaran found that university students adopted "eternal happiness"⁷⁶ as the target value, while the youngsters in the study by Arda (1993) considered "being happy after death" as this value.⁷⁷ Results of both studies conducted with "Rokeach Value Scale" indicate that religious values which provide a religious motivation to people's mortal lives and which support the view of religious world in this context are adopted by the students receiving education in secular schools to a certain degree. As one of the studies conducted using the "Schwartz Theory of Basic Human Values", the research by Kuşdil and Kâğıtçıbaşı (2000) on teachers found a positive relationship between religiousness and "traditionalism", "safety" and "obeyance/submission"; and a negative relationship between religiousness and "universality", "self-orientation", "stimulation" and "hedonism".⁷⁸ The results of the study conducted by Mehmedoğlu (2006) on the university students also support the aforementioned data. These results are normal and expected for the Muslim Turkish society.⁷⁹ However, the studies conducted after 2010 yielded quite different results. These studies suggest that the increase observed in the religious life is not experienced in the topic of ethics and values. For example, according to the results found by Yapıcı, Kutlu and Bilican (2012), traditional and religious values as well as stimulation and hedonism-based values of university students have been on a rise.⁸⁰ Acar, Akar and Baykara-Acar (2016) revealed that hedonist approaches significantly increased as students' income level increased, while⁸¹ Polat and Çalışkan (2013) found that traditional and social values decreased as students' income level increased.⁸² These results show that

⁷⁴ Zygmunt Bauman, *Cemaatler: Güvenli Olmayan Bir Dünyada Güvenlik Arayışı*, trans. Nurdan Sosyal (Istanbul: Say Yayınları, 2016).

⁷⁵ Ulrich Beck, *Risk Toplumu: Başka Bir Modernleşmeye Doğru*, trans. Kasım Özdoğan - Bülent Doğan (Istanbul: İthaki Yayınları, 2011).

⁷⁶ Fatma Başaran, "Üniversite Eğitim Süresi İçerisinde Öğrencilerin Değer Tercih Sıralamalarında Değişme", ed. Rüveyda Bayraktar - İhsan Dağ, VII. *Ulusal Psikoloji Kongresi Bilimsel Çalışmaları* (Ankara: Türk Psikologlar Derneği Yayınları, 1993). 49-58.

⁷⁷ Berna Arda, "Tıp Öğrencilerinin Meslek Seçme Motivasyonları ve Değer Sistemleri Konusunda Bir Durum Değerlendirmesi", ed. Rüveyda Bayraktar - İhsan Dağ, VII. *Ulusal Psikoloji Kongresi Bilimsel Çalışmaları* (Ankara: Türk Psikologlar Derneği Yayınları, 1993), 59-64.

⁷⁸ M. Ersin Kuşdil - Çiğdem Kâğıtçıbaşı, "Türk Öğretmenlerin Değer Yönelimleri ve Schwartz'ın Değer Kuramı", *Türk Psikoloji Dergisi* 15/45 (2000), 59-76.

⁷⁹ Ali Ulvi Mehmedoğlu, "İlahiyat Fakültesi Öğrencilerinin Değer Yönelimleri ve Dindarlık-Değer İlişkisi: M.Ü. İlahiyat Fakültesi Örneği", *M. Ü. İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 30/1 (2006), 133-167.

⁸⁰ Yapıcı et al., "Öğretmen Adaylarının Değer Yönelimleri".

⁸¹ Hakan Acar et al., "Sosyal Hizmet Öğrencilerinin Değer Yönelimleri", *Kastamonu Eğitim Dergisi* 24/1 (2016), 97-118.

⁸² Seyat Polat - Muhittin Çalışkan, "Ortaokul Öğrencilerinin Değer Yönelimlerinin Bazı Değişkenler Açısından İncelenmesi", *Uludağ Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi* 26/2 (2013), 387-404.

people are oriented to have a hedonist and consumption-based social approach as their income level increases. The qualitative study by Özbolat (2012) indicated that moderate-class religious people were added to the consumption culture and found the meaning of life in the action of consumption.⁸³ As an indication of position and social status in the modern world, consumption is also accepted as the key of happiness because people of consumption culture establish a direct relationship between accessing money and accessing happiness.

The study by Coşkun (2017) on the pre-service teachers of Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge (DKAB) from the Faculty of theology catches attention. According to the results of that study, female students who receive high level of religious education differed in the values of "achievement", "stimulation" and "hedonism" more significantly than male students.⁸⁴ These three values are among the critical principles of human type imposed by post-modernity, which can be interpreted as a the start of an evolution from religiousness to spirituality with the adoption to post-modernity.⁸⁵ Güngör, Ekşi and Arıca (2012) conducted a study and found that men significantly differed in the dimension of "hedonism", while women significantly differed in the dimension of "self-control". Moreover, women were found to adopt the values of "helpfulness", "harmony" and "safety" more.⁸⁶ Şahin-Fırat and Açıkgöz (2012) examined the value systems of teachers and found that female teachers valued the values of "achievement", "hedonism", "universality", "traditionalism" and "safety" more than the male teachers.⁸⁷ Women adopt both "traditionalism" value and the contradicting "hedonism" value more than men. At this point, it should be noted that "safety" and "hedonism" are not concordant to one another. These results indicate that there is a severe chaos of values among the youngsters. "Safety" is among the mostly preferred values in the studies by Yıldız and Kapu (2011).⁸⁸ The "safety" value becoming this much distinctive reflects the search for safety in an unsafe world with design-related risks in the post-modernity process. According to the "Atlas of Turkish Values" (2012) conducted by Bahçeşehir University within the World Values Survey, Turkey is in the low positions in terms of people's trust in one another despite being one of the most

⁸³ Abdullah Özbolat, "Postmodern Perspektifte Tüketimin Toplumsal Anlamına Sosyolojik Bir Yaklaşım", *Fırat Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 17/1 (2012), 117-129.

⁸⁴ Mehmet Kamil Coşkun, "Din kültürü ve ahlak bilgisi öğretmen adaylarının değer yönelimleri: İlahiyat-DKAB karşılaştırması", *ANEMON: Muş Alparslan Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 5/2 (2017), 507-516.

⁸⁵ Asım Yapıcı - Tuğrul Yürük. "Yüksek Din Öğretimi Öğrencilerinin Değer Tercih Sıralamaları: Çukurova Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Örneği", *Çukurova Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 15/1 (November 2015), 1-18.

⁸⁶ İbrahim Halil Güngör et al., "Genç Yetişkinlerde Değer Tercihlerinin Narsistik Kişilik Özellikleri Yordaması", *Kuram ve Uygulamada Eğitim Bilimleri* 12/2 (2012), 1271-1290.

⁸⁷ Necla Şahin-Fırat - Kemal Açıkgöz, "Bazı Değişkenler Açısından Öğretmenlerin Değer Sistemleri", *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi* 43 (2012), 422-435.

⁸⁸ Sebahattin Yıldız - Hüsnü Kapu, "Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Bireysel Değerleri ile Girişimcilik Eğilimleri Arasındaki İlişki: Kafkas Üniversitesi'nde Bir Araştırma", *Kafkas Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi* 3/3 (2012), 39-66.

religious countries.⁸⁹ Results from that study indicate every one out of ten people in Turkey trusts in other people. These results explains why the safety value is emphasized more than the others. The study by Akkaya (2013) indicating that people living in major cities desire to live a free life safely and comfortably can be assessed in this regard.⁹⁰

According to the study by Keskin and Sağlam (2014), thoughts of pre-service classroom teachers in terms of human values differed based on the genders. Results also indicate that women consider the values of “intellectuality”, “spirituality” and “freedom” more important compared to men.⁹¹ The freedom value prioritizing a free life without the pressure of the social environment and the spirituality value fed by the emotions of divinity and metaphysics is assessed collectively in this context. This result can be summarized as “I will believe and live freely”, and it reveals the cultural schizophrenia and related identity chaos arising from the dilemma between the Eastern and Western characteristics.

In the youth survey conducted by SEKAM (2013) in Turkey, there were people claiming that “marriage is not a must to have children” while some stated that “a girl and a boy cannot stay in the same house”.⁹² Young people are in an intermediary position with their beliefs, agreements, attitudes, actions and behaviors. It is obvious that their position suggests a pot of problems in terms of their identity and personality and social values, harmony and balance. The same study reported that young people with different ideological and religious identities, including the atheist ones, believe in Allah’s presence with a mean rate of 95%, that 13% of those who introduced themselves as an atheist performed prayers, and that 17.8% of those who named themselves as Islamist and 25.6% of those who introduced themselves as a Muslim never performed prayers. A similar scenario is present in terms of performing Friday prayer and fasting. According to the “Turkey Values Research” by Bahçeşehir University (2012), the Muslim Turkish society which is among the most religious societies of Europe or even the world associated religion/Islam with the eternal world rather than the mortal one. This means the following: The religion does not organize the world; moreover, the world is experienced with secular rules, but religious life is considered to be indispensable for eternal life.⁹³

⁸⁹ Bahçeşehir Üniversitesi (BAU), “Türkiye Değerler Atlası” (Accessed 4 November 2020).

⁹⁰ Nevin Akkaya, “Eğitim Fakültesi Öğrencilerinin Değer Tercihleri: DEU Buca Eğitim Fakültesi Örneği”, *TSA/Türkiye Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi* 17/2 (2013), 69-82.

⁹¹ Ummuhan Keskin - Halil İbrahim Sağlam, “Sınıf Öğretmeni Adaylarının İnsanî Değerlere Sahip Olma Düzeylerinin Çeşitli Değişkenler Açısından İncelenmesi”, *Sakarya University Journal of Education* 4/1 (28 March 2014), 81-101.

⁹² SEKAM, *Türkiye Gençlik Raporu Gençliğin Özellikleri, Sorunları, Kimlikleri ve Beklentileri* (İstanbul: SEKAM Yayınları, 2013).

⁹³ BAU, “Türkiye Değerler Atlası”.

Perceptions of Young People in terms of Religious and Religiousness within the Dilemma of Doubt and Belief

As the educational and income level increased, religious as well as traditional and social values began to drop behind⁹⁴ or be preferred less^{95,96}. These results show that people who are stuck between religion, spirituality, hedonism and security experience a crisis of identity (belonging). Those who are affected by this crisis the most are the youngsters.

Research and Method

This study searches for an answer for the question “how is the perception of current youngsters on religion and religiousness?” Moreover, efforts will be made to understand young people’s religious doubts as well as their attitudes toward the religion and beliefs. The purpose of the study is to reveal the place of religion for Muslim Turkish youth in this world which has been evolving from modernity to post-modernity.

Data were collected in two ways within this qualitative study: The first way covers the questions and explanations the researcher experienced in observations, speculations and conversations between 2005 and 2020. Some of these include religious doubts while some depict young people’s daily lives. The second way contains the claims and statements parents who were disturbed with their children’s religious orientations shared with the researcher. These claims and statements of parents can be assessed as a search or request for support. Some of the parents wanted to be informed about how to answer their children’s anti-religious and doubtful questions and statements, while some made efforts to prepare a sincere setting for a face-to-face interview between the researcher and youngsters. The data obtained from the observations and interviews were then recorded. A total of 378 statements regarding young people’s perception toward the religious principles, religious lives, religious perceptions, religious doubts, religious concerns, prayers and attitudes of praying were recorded. Of the statements about the beliefs, prayers, concerns, doubts and rejection, 143 were classified with the clustering method, and consequently 67 statements/expressions which differed to a certain degree based on their content emerged⁹⁷. The most interesting ones among these

⁹⁴ Asım Yapıcı, “Modernleşme-Sekülerleşme Sürecinde Türk Gençliğinde Dinî Hayat: Meta-Analitik Bir Değerlendirme”, *Çukurova Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 12/2 (Haziran 2012), 1-40.

⁹⁵ Yapıcı – Yürük, “Yüksek Din Öğretimi Öğrencilerinin Değer Tercih Sıralamaları: Çukurova Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Örneği”, 1-18.

⁹⁶ Polat - Çalışkan, “Ortaokul Öğrencilerinin Değer Yönelimlerinin Bazı Değişkenler Açısından İncelenmesi”, 387-404.

⁹⁷ The letter “G” was used while coding the participating students observed and interviewed. G1: Female, Fac. of Education., ELT.; G2: Male, Faculty of Aquaculture.; G3: Female, Faculty of Science and Letters, Biology; G4: Female, Fac. of Agriculture.; G5: Male, FEAS, Business; G6: Female, Science and Letters, Psychology; G7: Male, Science and Letter, Physics; G8: Female, Fac. of Architecture-Engineering; G9: Female, Faculty of Aquaculture.; G10: Female, VS; G11: Female, Fac. of Education, PCG; G12: Female, Fac.

statements/expressions were prioritized, and the others were referred to as *similar statements*. As this study was limited with the statements on beliefs, prayers, doubts and rejection, the interpretations and statements of youngsters who were interested in Salaf groups, cults and congregations were excluded. Data were analyzed through qualitative analysis and content analysis methods, and interpreted based on the explicative tradition.

Results and Discussion

1. Religious Doubts among Youngsters

Regardless of whether being believing, deist or atheist, young people distinctively and obviously have religious doubts and searches.

Religious doubts of young people can be examined in three groups:

a. Doubts on Religious Principles

The doubts directly related to religious principles are based on known claims and statements: For instance, the doubts expressed in the question form, such as “*Does Allah need prayers, or is Allah narcissist? Why do we have to pray?*” (G1; G5) can be assessed in this context. Although these words aim to question the purpose of praying, it essentially questions Allah’s presence. Furthermore, the questions “*Why does not Allah prevent me from committing a sin if Allah is capable of anything?*” (G1; G2; G18) and “*Why does Allah permit the harassment and rape toward little children?*” (G1; G2) aim to search for an answer about whether Allah, defined as the eternal authority, is benevolent or not. Reflecting the problem of theodicy, these statements

of Education, Classroom Teach.; G13: Male, Fac. of Agriculture; G14: Male, Faculty of Theology.; G15: Female, Faculty of Education, FLT.; G16: Male, Fac. of Education, ELT.; G17: Female, Fac. of Communication; G18: Male, High School Student; G19: Female, Fac. of Education, Classroom Teach.; G20: Female, Fac. of Education, Philosophy Group Teach.; G21: Female, Fac. of Medicine; G22: Female, Faculty of Law; G23: Male, Fac. of Architecture-Engineering (As expressed by his father); G25: Male, Fac. of Education, Classroom Teach.; G26: Male, Faculty of Science and Letters, Turkish Philology; G27: Female, Health VS; G29: Male, Fac. of Medicine (As expressed by his father); G30: Male, Fac. of Education, ELT.; G32: Female, Fac. of Agriculture; G33, Male, Architecture-Engineering; G34: Male, Fac. of Education, ELT.; G35: Male, Fac. of Education, Philosophy Group Teach.; G35: Male, Fac. of Law; G36: Male, Fac. of Agriculture; G37: Male, Fac. of Theology; G38: Male, Fac. of Medicine; G39: Male, Fac. of Education, Classroom Teach.; G40: Female, Fac. of Law; G41: Male, Fac. of Architecture-Engineering; G42: Female, Fac. of Theology; G43: Female, Fac. of Theology; G45: Male, Fac. of Education, FLT.; G46: Female, Faculty of Science and Letters, Turkish Philology; G47: Male, Fac. of Education, ELT.; G48: Female, Fac. of Theology; G49: Male, Fac. of Theology; G50: Male, Fac. of Education, Classroom Teach.; G51: Female, Fac. of Education, ELT.; G52: Male, FEAS, Business; G53: Female, Fac. of Theology; G54: Male, Fac. of Theology; G55: Male, Fac. of Science and Letters, Mathematics Teach.; G56: Male, Fac. of Education, Philosophy Group Teach.; G57: Female, Fac. of Science and Letters, Psychology; G58: Female, Faculty of Theology.; G59: Male, Faculty of Agriculture; G60: Male, FEAS, Finance; G61: Female, Fac. of Medicine; G62: Male, Fac. of Education, Classroom Teach.; G63: Male, Fac. of Agriculture; G64: Male, Fac. of Education, Classroom Teach.; G65: Female, Fac. of Architecture-Engineering; G66: Male, Fac. of Law; G67: Female, Fac. of Education, ELT.

Perceptions of Young People in terms of Religious and Religiousness within the
Dilemma of Doubt and Belief

emphasize that Allah should be not only the eternal authority, but also the eternal source of benevolence, and that Allah's benevolence should reflect on people's lives as beauty and more benevolence.

"Why are women always in a secondary position in Quran?" (G6), "It feels like Quran was written by men" (G6; G22) and "Why can men wear short and thin clothes in hot places like Adana or Mersin when women have to wear hijab? Allah must be caring about the men all the time" (G19). These criticisms mentioned by women are based on the idea that religion glorifies men with a patriarchal discourse, while assigning a secondary position to women. According to those with such a belief, reflecting female body as a sexual object as well as the obligation to wear hijab in hot weather makes the doubts that Allah protects or cares about men or Quran was written by men more distinctive.

"Quran mentions about the killing of a little child by El-Khader, with the idea that the child would be rebellious against the parents. I cannot overcome this. One cannot commit a sin if it is certain that one will be rebellious against the parents. It means we are playing a pre-written scenario. My will has been suspended. If I perform adultery, drink, do unlawful stuff or leave the religion, how am I held responsible if these are all written in advance? El-Khader kills a little child. Why did he kill the child if it is not certain whether the child would be rebellious in future? Killing a child that is rebellious against the parents, that is another controversial topic! I started to walk away from the religion as I hear about these" (G35). It is clear that a rational objection is made to a Quranic story, and the killing of a little child through a non-optional destiny is criticized. This criticism is directed to God and religion through the sacred book, covering the movement of deism straightening the path to atheism.

"I am a schizophrenia patient. Everything got distorted in my life. I used to believe in Allah before; now I still want to believe in. I am wondering about this: Why did Allah give such an issue to young girl like me who has dreams? Everybody says this is my fate, stating that Allah is testing me. I do not want to be tested in this way. Everybody is smiling, enjoying, having time with their husbands, and I am here suffering my pain. Why me? Or why the others, too?" (G32). In this case, we are witnessing an idea where the perception of faith is criticized due to an incident of malevolence. A young, schizophrenic girl associates her mental crisis directly with Allah and rejects the explanations from her relatives and friends with the concepts "fate" or "test" which arose from the religious culture. The problem of theological malevolence as well as the psychological deprivation and aggressive coping strategy is distinctive here. The schizophrenic girl who tries to protect her already weakened belief states the following: "The language of the traditional religious culture does not relieve me.

All religious claims become nullified when compared with the science. You have to close your eyes to believe" (G29). This thought, which distinctively reflects scientific approach as well as rational thoughts and secularism, is often mentioned by the scientific atheists. Closing eyes to believe, i.e. closing all sensory organs to what

science puts forward, resembles to the idea of many scientists, particularly Comte and Freud, that religion will disappear as science improves.

b. Doubts Regarding the Fiqh-Related Aspects of Religion

People often question whether Islam answers the needs of modern life and new people. Accordingly, the following question is often asked: *“Is Islam a religion that suits the daily life? I have doubts about this”* (G4; G7; G23).

“Islam permits child marriage. Is not this cruelty against a female child who does not even know that sexuality is?” (G11). Having been discussed on different TV channels and social media, this topic is among the subjects often criticized by students. The statement *“ Muhammad married a 9-year-old girl. As this child grew up, she asked the Prophet who wanted to marry young and beautiful women whether Allah sent verses so that he could satisfy his sexual desires. It is normal for one who hears these to get confused.”* (G21) criticizes child marriage and the nature of verses through the Prophet.

“Why is holding the hands of lover or going to here and there while holding hands is unlawful? I do not understand the rationale behind this. I do not want to perform a pre-arranged marriage like my mother. I want to get to know the person whom I will marry. I have time with him and end my relationship if we do not agree emotionally or ideologically. I do not want to distort my whole life with a random marriage” (G27). There are many statements resembling to the aforementioned words from a female student (G4; G6; G19). This thought includes both criticism and doubt. It contains criticism because it is based on the idea that traditional religious perception or the discipline of fiqh cannot answer the position, needs and life-based perceptions of new people. It contains doubt because if the religion itself states the afore-mentioned, it means there is a disharmony between the religion and new people. The perception of new people toward life and traditional religious perception contradicts, which paves the way for the emergence of doubts and extra-religious orientations among the young people.

The attitude of religion toward drinking is criticized with the following statements: *“I have difficulties trying to understand why drinking is unlawful if you do not harm or disturb somebody else”* (G16) and *“Drinking beer does not make you drunk. Why is something that does not make you drunk is unlawful?”* (G34). These topics often mentioned by male students indicate that young people experience a cognitive contradiction between their desires and religious bans. As much as understood, young people aim to solve their cognitive contradictions with non-religious approaches.

“Purchasing a house or car is a dream without receiving a bank loan. As financial interest is unlawful, civil servants pay rents and cannot buy a house in their lives. I do not think this is fair” (G16). *“If buying a house with bank loan is unlawful, then poor people can only have a home in paradise, while paying rent in this world.”* (G25) *“I want to buy a car, something average. It is almost impossible to buy one by collecting money beforehand. I think about getting a bank loan but this time I remember it being a sin; it is so challenging for us.”*

Perceptions of Young People in terms of Religious and Religiousness within the Dilemma of Doubt and Belief

(G26) Such statements indicate that young people want to buy a house and car, trying to reach their goals with long-term loans, but they experience stress as the financial interest is unlawful in Islam. *“One of my friends said ‘Usury and interest are two different things. What is unlawful is usury.’ I went to the office of muftu, asked about this and got answered ‘No, it is wrong; usury is interest, and interest is usury’ .”* (G13) It is clear that the person who made this statement searches for a way of escape for himself/herself, performing as many researches as possible. One of the sentences reflecting the challenge in the best way possible is as follows: *“Muslims try to live like a Muslim in the world they did not establish. If we cover our feet, our head remains uncovered. If we cover our head, then our knees remain uncovered. We look for a solution but cannot find anything”* (G14). This statement by a young man reflects the difficulty of living with beliefs in a modern or even post-modern world. This difficulty drives young people to delay their desires and targets by performing the religious orders, to get away from their religious sensitivities by making their desires and targets more distinctive, or to find a middle point (syncretism) by approximating the religious orders and human needs.

c. Criticisms Toward Religious People and Leaders

Criticisms of youngsters target not only the spiritual principles and fiqh-based rules. The most intense criticisms are also directed toward the religious people, religious leaders, cult and congregation leaders.

“What does having sexual actions in an elevator mean? Are these religious people perverts? They are stuck with sexual perversion” (G3). *“We read the news of those who harass male and female children in Quran courses; May Allah curse them”* (G8). *“Sheiks have become molesters and rapists; those who cannot control themselves are teaching me the religion, which is the case now”* (G9). These statements by three girls reflect the disturbance, disgust and hatred toward the sexual expressions and actions of religious people or even those representing religious positions.

“Is not adultery unlawful for everyone? Men can do whatever they like before marriage, and nobody says anything negative to them. People even say ‘He is a man, he can do that’. But, when women kiss somebody, they are treated like a prostitute by the narrow-minded people. Honor is the purity of feelings and thoughts” (G15). Statements similar to the aforementioned statement by a female student were made by many students (G12; G10; G20). The message of that student indicates that men live more comfortably, bravely and freely fulfilling their desires thanks to the gender-based stereotypes and roles, whereas women are oppressed, suppressed, excluded and made the secondary people. Additionally, the concept of honor is defined *“through the purity of emotions”*. As much as understood, sexual freedom is desired through the religious criticism of new people. *“I know girls wearing hijab; they are quite free and have boyfriends. They visit places; those girls wear makeup, using heavy perfumes. And then they talk about religion next to us. This is normal to me from a certain perspective”* (G16); the girl making this statement indicates that those who appear as religious do not actually live a religious life. The same content was mentioned by many female and male students

with different sentences. The first section of this idea includes criticism, while the second has approval. In other words, wearing hijab but failing to live as how hijab necessitates is criticized, and the statement "...this is normal to me" suggests that religious people started to change and that the age began to affect everybody. This idea can be assessed as legitimating one's own attitudes. "I say as a man. Women wearing hijab look more attractive to me" (G30); this statement by a male student reflects that hijab does not hide the sexual attractiveness and that even if it hides, the mystery feels more attractive for men.

The criticisms toward Muslims are not only based on sexuality, women and wearing hijab. Muslims who make statements through reality in Islamic countries are claimed to have killed people including children and elderly. The following statement can be an example; "Edison and Pasteur served the humanity. One illuminated the world, while the other found vaccination. But according to some, they must have punished with hell due to being a Christian... Muslims, on the other hand, provided no benefits to humanity and killed people, including children and elderly, just because they believed killing non-Muslims was a must, but they think they will go to paradise just because they say "ashadu..." Even children would not believe this" (G33). A meticulous assessment of this statement criticizing Muslims' religious perceptions indicate that ethnocentric and particularist religious comments are rejected. "Arabia applies rajm (stoning to death); those who steal something have their hands cut. But, the highest number of kidnapping and harassment cases are present in Arabia. There are people suggesting that rajm should be applied in Turkey, too. Some people want the shariah be applied. They have three intentions: The first is to marry four women, the second is to use women as handmaid like IS does, and the third is to kill those who disagree with them" (G41). These words said by a young male indicate that shariah cannot be applied in this age and that those who desire shariah target an environment where they can easily express their sexual desires and aggression. "People are killed for the name of a sect or political view. It is just pointless from every aspect" (G36); this statement from another student explains the doubts with the criticisms toward both religion and Muslims.

Furthermore, from the perspective of canon laws, logical criticisms were also directed. "Why are those who cut the hand of a thief under the name of religion quiet before imperialist countries such as United States or England which steal the petrol of Muslims?" (G37). This question by a male student includes both doubt and criticism. At this point, it should be noted that the following statement was made by many students: "I do not believe the religious Muslims are sincere" (G38; G42; G52).

"Why did the Europeans develop when Muslims believed in Quran and still dropped behind? There is a problem either with Muslims or Quran, or both... I am quite confused..." (G55) To analyze this statement, the first section was often mentioned by many youngsters. The second part belongs to the one who made that statement. If the Muslims dropped behind because of themselves, the criticisms are related to the religious perceptions and orientations of the society. However, if the issue arose from Quran or Muslims in line with Quran, the doubts and rejections target the essence of

Perceptions of Young People in terms of Religious and Religiousness within the Dilemma of Doubt and Belief

religion, i.e. the revelations. The statement *"I am confused"* indicates that youngsters have doubts and search for an exit.

The criticisms toward congregations and cults reveal the religious doubts. *"Those who introduce themselves as Muslims are not fair at all. Congregations and cults always prioritize their own men. Congregation and cults are spread all over Turkey. It is a problem even if you approach or do not approach to them"* (G52). This statement reflects that congregations and cults terminate anybody disagreeing with them to grow even bigger, indicating intense internal conflicts and dilemma between the advantage and disadvantage of utilizing a congregation due to different reasons. Many students used similar statements and directed criticisms as follows: *"July 15 as organized by a congregation. How can we trust in congregations?"* (G39; G40; G53; G54). The statement by a female student *"A cult sheikh was selling a non-flammable shroud. People were believing in him"* (G43) and the statement by a male student *"I listened to a sheikh on the social media. He was saying that the members of his cult should inform angels in the eternal life that they were a member of that cult so that they could immediately be sent to the paradise. What type of religious perception is that? Karl Marx was right. If this is religion, that I am away from the religion"* (G56) indicate that leaders of congregations and cults abuse people's beliefs, that they are after financial interests, and that religion makes the people numb rather than improving them psychologically.

"I believe in Allah and often pray but when I hear what religious authorities say on TV channels and social media, I say "what type of religion is this". Can the urine of a camel be drunk? Is such a discussion logical? There is something wrong with either the religion or religious authorities. I was talking to a friend of mine about this topic and s/he said they would not have discussed this if it had not been present in the context of religion. These all make me move away from the religion." (G45); this statement by a male student indicates that unnecessary and insignificant discussions adversely affect the perceptions toward the religion. *"Religious authorities do their best to make people walk away from the religion. Soon we will start discussing about the gender of angels or whether women have a soul"* (G46); this statement by a female student similarly suggests that religious speeches of people presented as religious authorities are outdated, meaningless and useless for humanity. *"Those speaking under the name of religion should speak for freedom or human rights, happiness and living like a human at least one day. What would happen if they do not talk about the rules and limits which always suppress and stress people? They believe we love what they are talking about; we are actually quite disturbed. But they do not understand."* (G47). There are also other explanations made in this regard (G17; G45; G46). It is clear that people talking under the name of religion use a language that do not appeal to youngsters' emotions and thoughts. The form of expressing a religion that does not consider young people's needs, interests, expectations and desire of living a better, wealthy and peaceful life puts people off, rather than warming people's heart for Islam. This criticism is an attention-grabbing and warning statement toward the people accepted as the religious authority.

2. Youngsters Taking Shelter in the Traditional Religion

Most of the young people adopted the religion and religiousness which are dominant in the sociocultural structure. However, they are still curious about the meaning and validity of certain information, interpretations and assessments which are communicated to them through TV, media, social media or their friends. For instance, many questions such as *"Should compensation prayer be performed?"*, *"Which hadiths are true, which are not, will we not consider the hadiths?"*, *"Does reading Quran in Arabic without understanding it provide good deed?"*, *"Can we understand the religion just by reading the translation?"*, *"Is Quran not read after the people lost?"*, *"Is reading Surah Ya-Sin for our lost ancestors lawful or not?"*, *"Is not there a concept such as sect?"*, *"Were kandil days (Mawlid, Raghaib, Mi'raj, Barat...) invented later as they were not initially present?"*, *"Are the murders of the brothers and sons of Ottoman sultans by the sultans themselves suitable to Islam?"* (G48; G49; G50; G51) reflect the young people dedicated to the traditional religion and their desire of understanding and interpreting the current beliefs and practices. Emerging as a protective measure against the potential doubts in this regard, these questions result in both accepting the traditional religion and achieving the verified beliefs.

3. Youngsters who Believe but Still Question

Although there are young people who question the religious topics and even have doubts, the orientation to believe is still significant.

"There are religious topics making me confused and seeming challenging to understand for me. But I would go mad if I do not believe in Allah. Allah's presence makes me comfortable" (G57); this statement by a female student indicates that she certainly believes in Allah despite her doubts. *"I believe and I do not have any doubts but I just do not understand why women are in a secondary position in Quran. Then I think I commit a sin with those thoughts and thus I foreswear"* (G58); this statement by another female student reveals her dilemma with her beliefs and gender identity supported by the modernity.

"I believe. I am a Sunni Muslim. I have Shiite friends. They are all good people. Most of them say they are Muslims, except a few. How can I think that they will go to hell due to their beliefs? They have their own beliefs. Allah that I believe in will accept the benevolent people to paradise." (G59) Similar statements were also made by other students (G60; G61). Accordingly, some of the students who said they believed in Allah stated that they could not understand why benevolent people did not deserve paradise by mentioning religious identities such as Christianity and Buddhism or ethnical identities such as being a German, Italian or Japanese.

The statements presented here are partially assessed in the context of religious doubts and hesitations but they are generally in the scope of questioning the religion or difficulty accepting certain traditional beliefs.

4. Need-Based Religiousness and Decreasing Attitudes of Praying among the Youngsters

There are some young people stating *"I try to perform my prayers as much as I can"*. Those make efforts to perform Islamic praying activities such as prayers and fasting. However, the following were also mentioned: *"I fast but do not perform prayers"* (G48; G57) *"I perform prayers but cannot fast"* (G62), *"I fast and perform prayers during the Ramadan"* (G64; G65), *"I perform prayers during the Kandil nights"* (G65; G66), *"I clean myself and perform prayers when I have a problem"* (G51; G66), or *"I cannot perform prayers but I constantly pray"* (G50; G67).

There are four main emphases in these statements: *The first* is that youngster make efforts to perform their prayers as much as possible. *The second* is that praying-related attitudes change according to the type of prayers. Those who do not fast despite performing prayers and those who do not perform prayers despite fasting are in this context. *The third* is that prayers are performed at certain times. Young people whose religious sensitivity increases during sacred days and nights can be assessed in this context. It is safe to state that the religious orientation defined as Ramadan Muslimhood is popular among the young people. These three groups of youngsters mentioned thus far pray to Allah. *The fourth* are those who pray to Allah despite not performing prayers and not fasting. The prayers of young people are mainly based on health, assignment through Public Personnel Selection Test (PPST), having a job and a happy marriage.

5. The Dilemma Between Religion and the World Among Youngsters

After forming a more sincere setting of conversation, certain youngsters mentioned about the dilemma they experienced between traditionalism and modernity, social identity and personal identity, and religious demands and hedonic desires. A university student saying *"I feel bad when I hold the hands of my girlfriend and hug and kiss her. I still do the same things but I feel guilty once again."* (G50) reflects his stress clearly. Similar statements were made by other students.

The following words by a female student are interesting: *"I used to tell no lies to my family. I hated lying and liars; I still do though. But as my family started asking 'Where were you? Where have you been?', I started saying white lies. I did not bother me first. But then I met my boyfriend for a couple of times, which yielded in more lies. I started to feel guilty. I foreswore, saying I would not lie again. I cannot keep my promise though."* (G51). One can see the tension arising from the contradiction between the beliefs and attitudes of a young female student.

"I watch porn and find it disgusting. I swear to myself that I will not watch porn again. But then, I watch again whenever I can, with the same feeling of being disgusted... I clean myself and pray... I feel bad..." (G64). These words from a university student

reflect the tension arising from the contradiction between “id and superego”, “current me and ideal me”, and “shy me and dominant me”.

“I grew up in a religious family. I am a faithful person. We occasionally gather and drink as a friend group. I promise to myself and Allah that I will not do the same the next day. I foreswear. I clean myself and perform prayers. We still keep on drinking when we gather. This continues like this. I am always concerned, like there is always a wound in me” (G63); the male student expressing his emotions experience a similar stress.

“I know that gambling games are unlawful. National lottery and other types of lottery games... I know they are unlawful but I still want to win once. Life without money is tasteless” (G50); these words from a male student indicate that he experiences a dilemma between his religious beliefs and desire of living an earthly life, preferring the earthly pleasures in the end.

These statements presented as examples indicate that youngsters experience a contradiction between their beliefs and attitudes, which causes them to experience emotional and cognitive dilemmas. Attitudes that were considered as a sin before are now seen normal with the period of desensitization. The feeling of guiltiness is either not experienced or lived to an insignificant degree upon the changed perception of committing sin.

6. From Results to Typing

According to our results, *young people can be assessed in nine different groups in terms of beliefs and religiousness.*

1. Traditionally Religious Ones: They are the youngsters who accept the religious beliefs and practices from their sociocultural environment including their parents and who close themselves to all sorts of doubts. Traditionally religious youngsters have full belief but they differ in terms of their manners of praying because the number of those saying “I believe and perform my prayers regularly” is lower, while those saying “I believe but cannot perform prayers regularly” are much more. Those who perform five-time prayers and fast during Ramadan as long as there are no obstacles constitute the group who perform prayers regularly. Some of those who cannot perform their prayers regularly still fast on Ramadan while some do not perform either of these praying activities regularly but still pray frequently. Among these young people, the attitude of praying when needed is more common.

2. Those who Believe and Still Question: These youngsters who adopted Islam as their religion and Muslimhood as their identity aim to rationally understand the wisdom and reason of religious orders to perform transition from traditional and imitation-based belief to verified, authentic belief. There are those who perform their prayers regularly among them, and there are also those people who pray when needed.

Perceptions of Young People in terms of Religious and Religiousness within the Dilemma of Doubt and Belief

3. Those Uninterested Toward Religion: The youngsters in this group who state that they believe in Allah, perform prayers from time to time but do not perform time and form-based praying such as prayer and fasting define themselves as Muslims. However, those who accept the principles of Islam, meaning not rejecting the traditional religion, do not feel the impact of religion not much. It is clear that the young people in this group are believing but still do not perform prayers such as fasting due to various reasons. The attitude of praying in challenging times is common among them; they even perform prayers occasionally.

4. Pure Spiritualists: Pure spiritualists whose ties with Islam and Muslimhood got weakened consider beliefs solely as a heart-felt concept. They do not value the traditional religious practices, and they try to establish relationship with Allah by praying. Our observations indicate that the number of people in this group is constantly increasing.

5. Offended Believers: Generally consisting of young females who believe in Allah, this group criticizes the attitudes of Muslims toward women through Quran, sunnah and historical practices. The topics of polygamy, handmaid, heritage and witnessing in Quran are among the practices where women are assigned a secondary position or even insulted. Therefore, they display an offended attitude while believing in Allah. The level of performing prayers vary among the offended believers.

6. Quiet Ones: Some of the young people who do not like to talk about religious topics display a quiet attitude. Their quiet sides arise from the insufficient amount of religious knowledge, and from the concern of committing sin if they talk. This means the following: At least some of the quiet ones experience religious doubts but cannot reflect their feelings due to different reasons. The form of performing religious activities also differs among them.

7. Those with Doubts/Hesitation: Some of the youngsters occasionally approach toward verses, hadiths and fiqh rules with doubt, questioning what to believe. Their doubts are not mainly based on rejection. Therefore, they aim to generate answers suiting the age and to escape the dilemma between the first periods of religion and modern world by questioning their traditional religious perspectives. Being motivated with this desire, young people analyze the traditional comments toward verses and hadiths and the fatwas in fiqh books through the mentality of the relevant age. Furthermore, young people have a fragile form of belief. Their ties with religion and believing weaken as the number of questions and topics they cannot answer reasonably increases.

8. Those with Deist Orientations: The youngsters who criticize what has been done under the name of religion in the past and present times and who take a position against the religion, despite believing in God, can be assessed in two categories as *deists* and *those interested in deism*. Deists are inclined to reject the religion based on the past and previous experiences. The main point catching attention here

is that a group of youngsters who cannot be considered a deist but who are interested in being one has emerged in time. This orientation will probably evolve into deism or occur as a return to religion once again.

9. Atheists: Young people who reject the religion and God, consider the intelligence and science as the sole reference, and direct harsh criticisms toward Muslims/religious people regard the religion as an obstacle before personal freedom. The number of those in the atheist group is limited but or observations indicate that atheist thoughts spread despite being slowly.

More different typing can also be performed. For example, young people who experience a dilemma between what the secular life presents and what they believe in can be evaluated under four main categories:

a) Concerned Religious Ones: Maintaining the dedication to the institutional religion, this group experiences a dilemma and tension between their desires and beliefs. Young people who experience emotional and ideological discomfort aim to achieve psychological comfort by praying and foreswearing. However, they experience guiltiness when their desires take the wheel again, which causes them to experience a dilemma between committing sin and foreswearing. The way of escaping from cognitive and emotional imbalance is either abstaining from committing an action defined as a sin or perceiving the action by excluding it from the category of sins. This can also be called desensitization to sins. They continue experiencing their pleasures and performing their prayers. Accordingly, they can be conceptualized as *hedonist religious people*. Those who take the side of their beliefs when stuck between their desires and beliefs may be oriented toward religious groups to not commit sin and to live their beliefs better. The concepts representing this group the best are traditional religion, personal desires, tension, sin, guiltiness and foreswearing.

b) Personal Spiritualists: Despite feeling dedicated to a religion, they do not care about the main principles, prayers and orders of a religion. However, they still aim to fill the space in their internal worlds with spiritualism with weak religious basis. Their most important form of praying consists of prayers. As they are totally individual, they do not join any religious groups. They make efforts to live their daily lives without losing their desires. Accordingly, they may be defined as *secular spiritualist*. The concepts of spirituality, belief, prayer, absence of belonging, a free life and earthly desires can be used to define the personal spiritualists.

c) Those in a Search: This group whose ties with the institutional religion weakened may focus on modern religious conceptions or spirituality-based groups with the desire of finding peace and meaning and meeting the needs of belonging and finding an identity. They find the traditional religious statements insufficient and meaningless. They think that beliefs should appeal to both the modern world and people's mental lives. Moreover, they are oriented to use spirituality to escape from their mental crises. Those who are in a search can be defined through the

following concepts: insufficiency of traditional religion, tension between the old and new, updating the religion, new comments, meaning, belonging, spirituality and functional belief.

d) Rejectionist Orientations: Some of them are a member of a religion from a cultural perspective, while some become alienated to religion and oriented to deist and atheist thoughts. Accordingly, they are totally moved away from religion and spirituality. They do not experience religious discomfort because their cognitive schemas and value system are totally purified from the religious content. The concepts reflecting rejectionist orientations include intelligence, science, existence, freedom, satisfaction of personal desires, and displeasure toward rules.

Conclusion

The results of studies examining the religiousness and value-based orientations of Turkish youth as well as our observations and points all indicate that the relationship between young people and religion is not routine and single-dimensional, but quite complicated and various. Accordingly, some of them aim to live a peaceful (mentally and spiritually) life within the borders of traditional religion, while some make efforts to approximate the demands of traditional religion and modern and post-modern world. Some youngsters show interest toward spirituality or deist and atheist thoughts through religious doubts and questioning.

The religious questions and doubts of modern people should not totally be assessed within deistic and atheistic orientations. There are undoubtedly a few youngsters with deist and atheist orientations. But the term *a few* here should not be overlooked because increased doubts feed the deist and atheist orientations every day. The young people search for reality within the borders of the traditional religion. Furthermore, it is fair to state that personal spirituality defined with the concepts "believing without the sense of belonging", "poor spirituality based on institutional thoughts" and "religion at home" became more distinctive among the youngsters, which can be clarified as follows: Despite being suppressed during the modernity era, the religion was not removed from the social life and moved away from the personal awareness. The appearance of religion increased within the public area, and beliefs and values such as spirituality which are independent from the institutional religion started to be valued in the post-modern era. Accordingly, different religious orientations based on institutional religion and *new religious and spiritual orientations* emerged among the young people.

Both the emotional worlds and awareness of youngsters are quite unclear and complicated. They experience difficulty understanding what is correct and wrong. Moreover, the number of young people who experience religious doubts and become oriented to deism and atheism increase every day to a certain degree. The claims that atheism and deism has increased in recent periods can be examined in this context.

It should be noted that neither atheism nor deism is present among young people because those who reflect themselves as atheist or deist still pray and ask for help from the authority they believe in. Accordingly, they are not atheist or deist; they are believers. However, they have difficulty accepting Islam in the form presented to them. It is clear that they experience a dilemma between their pleasures, desires and beliefs, which moves them away from the ancient traditions and directs them to personal religiousness. The religious doubts and problems experienced among the youngsters can be assessed in this regard.

This age we live in commoditizes everything such that “owning” rather than “being” is now universalized, and that people are only defined through production and consumption. Religious symbols, concepts and prayers became a meta in the consumption universe of the daily life. Religious interests and information shown publicly for rating are presented to the popular culture, resulting in religious perception being transformed and religiousness losing its essence. Discussion of critical religious topics on TV and Internet distort the religious perspective and life of people of every age group, particularly the youngsters.

Young people’s value-based preferences have two different orientations. The first is that religion, safety and traditionality become more popular while personal values such as hedonism and stimulation increase, which indicates that both a cultural and psychological dilemma is experienced. The second is that religious, traditional and social values either lose their priority or effectiveness, even if they are still prioritized, in terms of guiding the attitudes.

Values may resemble to the veins feeding the heart. Just like heart attack that occurs when there is a problem in veins, cultural as well as identity and personality crisis emerge when there is an issue in values. The forms of belief and religiousness are deeply affected by these crises. All crises experienced at this point can be explained with the transformation of social structure and personal awareness along with great social changes. It should be noted that increased religious doubts and crises are associated with the mentality of the era because the changed society resulted in “new people”. These “new people” which have recently appeared as a prototype have a dilemma between religiousness, spirituality and disbelief with their own psychic structure and psychosocial needs.

The points we reached through the relevant literature and our observations should be considered but not generalized. We can express thoughts about this topic more comfortably as new qualitative and quantitative studies are performed on young people’s religious lives, spiritualist orientations, religious questions and doubts, and orientations toward deist and atheist ideological systems.

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Dilemma of Doubt and Belief

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Perceptions of Young People in terms of Religious and Religiousness within the
Dilemma of Doubt and Belief

Factors Affecting the School Preferences of Youngsters Studying at Imam Hatip High Schools*

Halil AYDINALP*
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Abstract

This research aims to outline the reasons why students studying at Imam Hatip High Schools have preferred these schools. The survey technique was used in the research as an indirect observation method. Research hypotheses were tested by conducting field research with 600 students in four districts and five Imam Hatip High Schools in Istanbul. As a result of a factor analysis, the seven-factor Imam Hatip High School preference scale was created and differences in preferences were determined based on this scale. Reasons for preference are family desires, social environment, teacher qualifications, religious value education and religious socialization, university exam preparation opportunities and career potentials, religious services-based career possibilities and the physical and cultural environment of the school. The most influential factors in preferences were found to be "family" and "learning religious values and religious socialization". Significant meaningful differences were found in preferences according to gender, grade level and university choices and unmeaningful differences were found regarding economic background.

Keywords: Imam Hatip High Schools, Student Preferences, Preference Factors.

İmam Hatip Lisesi'nde Eğitim Gören Gençlerin Okul Tercihlerini Etkileyen Faktörler

Öz

Araştırma İmam Hatip Liseleri'nde okuyan öğrencilerin tercih sebeplerini çok faktörlü bir zeminde ele almaktadır. Dolaylı gözlem metodu olarak araştırmada anket tekniği

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kullanılmıştır. İstanbul'da dört ilçede ve beş İmam Hatip Lisesi'nde toplam 600 öğrenciyle saha araştırması yapılmak suretiyle araştırma hipotezleri test edilmiştir. Faktör analizi sonucu yedi faktörlü İmam Hatip Lisesi tercih ölçeği oluşturulmuş ve bu ölçeğe dayalı olarak tercihlerdeki farklılaşmalar tespit edilmiştir. Tercih faktörleri aile, sosyal çevrenin yönlendirmesi, öğretmen, dini değerlerin öğrenilmesi ve dini sosyalleşme, üniversite sınavlarına hazırlık imkânları ve kariyer, din hizmetleri eksenli kariyer ile okulun fiziki ve kültürel ortamıdır. Tercihlerde en etkili faktörler "dini değerlerin öğrenilmesi ve dini sosyalleşme" ve "aile" olarak tespit edilmiştir. Tercihlerde yine ekonomi hariç cinsiyet, sınıf kademesi ve tercih edilen üniversiteye göre anlamlı farklılıklar tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İmam Hatip Liseleri, Öğrenci Tercihleri, Tercih Faktörleri.

Summary

This research aims to outline the reasons why students studying at Imam Hatip High Schools (IHL) have preferred these schools. The survey technique used in the research is indirect observation method. Research hypotheses were tested by conducting field research with 600 students in four districts and five IHLs in Istanbul. As a result of a factor analysis, the seven-factor Imam Hatip High School preference scale was created and differences in preferences were determined based on this scale. IHLs are educational institutions that draw attention with their fluctuating historical adventure, from the point when they were closed to the point where they accept students with an entrance exam. The process of preferring these schools, which continuously changes between a lack of demand and an explosion of demand, has historically been shaped in the shadow of politics. In this sense, in the Turkish society with its conservative character to a great extent, it can be seen that IHLs have expanded horizontally, especially recently, as a manifestation of the Islamist tendencies of the current political authority. The research has dealt with the reasons for preference of modern IHLs on a multi-factor basis within this expansion process. The preference of IHL corresponds to a multifaceted sociology that cannot be explained by one-reason reductionist approaches. The hypotheses we put forward about preference factors were tested by the research findings as follows:

(H1) "The main factors of preference for IHLs are "the opportunity to learn religious values, the possibility of religious socialization and family influence." This hypothesis is supported by both the averages resulting from the factor analysis and the standard deviation scores. It was found that the desire to learn more about one's religion and family factors are more effective in preferences. In terms of dimensions, supporting the hypothesis we have set up, the highest averages for preferences were found in the dimensions of "learning religious values and socializing" and "family". Learning religious values and religious socialization dimension is ahead of the family by one-point difference in the overall total. Therefore, the predominant factor in our preferences is the belief that individuals can learn and live their beliefs better in these schools. Rather than economic expectation, "religious idealism" has been identified as a more dominant outcome in preferences. This is followed by the fact that these

schools are suitable for the religiousness and the desire and mentality of the family. It can be said that factors such as general career in IHL preferences, career in religious services, quality of teachers, university preparation, the influence of relatives and neighbors are overshadowed by the influence of religious education and family factors. Apparently, IHL is perceived by students as a school with no alternative for the maintenance of religious identity.

(H2) "There is a statistically significant difference in IHL preferences according to gender. Men have more positive attitudes in preference dimensions." Our hypothesis that there were statistically significant differences in favor of males in all dimensions except for two dimensions was substantially confirmed. There is no statistically significant difference in terms of gender in the dimensions of "Learning Religious Value and Religious Socialization" and "Physical Structure of the School and Cultural Activities". Therefore, young people have similar attitudes in these two dimensions.

(H3) "There is no statistically significant difference in the preferences of IHL according to the economic situation. Class differences are not an effective factor in preferences." Our hypothesis has been confirmed by the research findings. It has been revealed that there is no statistically significant difference in IHL preferences of students according to their economic situation. The economic situations of the youth differ according to their subjective definition of wealth; however, there is no mentality differentiation parallel to this separation, and class differentiation does not bring cultural differentiation in terms of preferences. Rather than being seen as an economic capital; IHLs have been preferred more dominantly with an idealism embodied by religious feelings and thoughts.

(H4) "There is a statistically significant difference in the preferences of IHLs according to the grade level. The preference averages are high in the first grades and low towards the last grades." This hypothesis has also been confirmed by the research findings. It was revealed that there are significant differences in preference factors according to grade level. In general, preference averages are high in the first grades and fall towards the last grades.

(H5) "There is a statistically significant difference in the reasons for preferring IHLs according to the university department to be studied. Despite the choice of different departments, the most effective dimension in preferences is "learning religious values and seeking religious socialization." The first part of our hypothesis that the most effective dimension in preferences is the learning of religious values and the search for religious socialization, despite the different department preferences, is supported by the research findings. The test of this hypothesis shows again that religious values and religious environment factors are effective in young people's preferences.

Özet

Araştırma İmam Hatip Liseleri'nde okuyan öğrencilerin tercih sebeplerini çok faktörlü bir zeminde ele almaktadır. Dolaylı gözlem metodu olarak araştırmada anket tekniği kullanılmıştır. Araştırma hipotezleri İstanbul'da dört ilçe ve beş İmam Hatip Lisesi'nde 600 öğrenciyle yapılan saha araştırmasında test edilmiştir. Faktör analizi sonucu yedi faktörlü İmam Hatip Lisesi tercih ölçeği oluşturulmuş ve bu ölçeğe dayalı olarak tercihlerdeki farklılaşmalar tespit edilmiştir. Tercih faktörleri aile, sosyal çevrenin yönlendirmesi, öğretmen, dini değerlerin öğrenilmesi ve dini sosyalleşme, üniversite sınavları hazırlık imkânları ve kariyer, din hizmetleri eksenli kariyer ile okulun fiziki ve kültürel ortamıdır. Tercihlerde en etkili faktörler "dini değerlerin öğrenilmesi ve dini sosyalleşme" ile "aile" olarak bulunmuştur.

İmam Hatip Liseleri, kapanma noktasından sınavla öğrenci alan bir noktaya ulaşan ve üzerinde siyasi tartışmaların eksik olmadığı inişli çıkışlı tarihi serüveniyle dikkat çeken eğitim kurumlarıdır. Talep yetersizliği ile talep patlaması arasında gidip gelen bu okulların tercih edilme süreci tarihsel olarak hep zamanın ve siyasetin gölgesinde şekillenmiştir. Bu anlamda muhafazakâr karakterini büyük oranda koruyan Türk toplum yapısında, mevcut siyasi otoritenin İslamcı eğilimlerinin de bir tezahürü olarak, özellikle son dönemde İHL'lerin yatay olarak genişlediği görülmektedir. Araştırma bu yatay genişleme süreci içinde modern İHL'lerin tercih sebeplerini çok faktörlü bir zeminde ele almaya çalışmıştır. İHL tercihi tek sebepli indirgemeci yaklaşımlarla açıklanmayacak çok yönlü bir sosyolojiye tekabül etmektedir. Tercih faktörleriyle ilgili ileri sürdüğümüz hipotezler, araştırma bulguları tarafından şu şekilde test edilmiştir:

(H1) "İmam Hatip Lisesi tercih faktörleri aile, sosyal çevre, öğretmen, dini değerlerin öğrenilmesi ve dini sosyalleşme, üniversiteye hazırlık imkânı, din hizmetleri eksenli kariyer, okulun fiziki yapısı ve kültürel faaliyetler şeklinde kurgulandığında, dini değerlerin öğrenilmesi ve dini sosyalleşme imkânı ile aile etkisi tercihlerde bir birini takip eden temel faktörlerdir." şeklindeki hipotezimiz, hem faktör analizi sonucu ortaya çıkan ortalamalar, hem de standart sapma puanları açısından desteklenmiştir. Çok faktörlü bir zeminde gerçekleşen tercihlerde dinin öğrenilmesi ve aile faktörlerinin daha etkili olduğu sonucu tespit edilmiştir. Boyutlar açısından bakıldığında, kurguladığımız hipotezi destekler mahiyette, tercih sebeplerinde en yüksek ortalamalar "dini değerlerin öğrenilmesi ve dini sosyalleşme" ile "aile" boyutlarında olduğu gözlenmiştir. Dini değerlerin öğrenilmesi ve dini sosyalleşme boyutu, genel toplamda bir puan farkla aile boyutunun önündedir. Dolayısıyla tercihlerde bu okullarda dini derslerle beraber diğer derslerin öğretilmesi, bireylerin inançlarını bu okullarda daha iyi yaşayabileceğini düşünmesi, değerlerin öğretilmesi için en uygun ortam olarak algılanması başat faktör olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Sınıfsal ayırım, ekonomik sermaye, ileriye dönük profan bir "çevirilebilirlik" güdüsünden ziyade, tercihlerde "dini idealizm" daha baskın bir sonuç olarak tespit edilmiştir. Bunu çok az farkla bu okulların ailenin dindarlığına ve düşünce yapısına uygun olması, ailenin arzusu ve

onların mutlu edilmek istenmesi takip etmektedir. İHL tercihlerinde genel kariyer, dini hizmetlerde kariyer, öğretmen, üniversiteye hazırlık, akraba ve komşuların etkisi gibi faktörlerin dini eğitim ve aile etkisinin gölgesinde kaldığı söylenebilir. Anlaşılan İHL öğrenciler tarafından dini kimliğin inşası ve muhafazası için âdeta alternatifsiz okul olarak algılanmaktadır.

(H2) “Cinsiyete göre İmam Hatip Lisesi tercihlerinde istatistiki açıdan anlamlı bir farklılaşma vardır. Erkekler tercih boyutlarında daha olumlu tutumlara sahiptirler.” şeklindeki hipotezimiz, iki boyut hariç bütün boyutlarda istatistiki açıdan erkekler lehine anlamlı farklılıklar tespit edildiği için, büyük oranda doğrulanmıştır. “Dini Değerin Öğrenilmesi ve Dini Sosyalleşme” ile “Okulun Fiziki Yapısı ve Kültürel Faaliyetler” boyutlarında cinsiyete göre istatistiki açıdan anlamlı bir farklılık tespit edilmemiştir. Dolayısıyla gençler bu iki boyutta daha benzer tutumlara sahiptirler.

(H3) “Ekonomik duruma göre İmam Hatip Lisesi tercihlerinde istatistiki açıdan anlamlı bir farklılaşma yoktur. Sınıfsal farklılık tercihlerde etkili bir faktör değildir.” şeklindeki hipotezimiz yine araştırma bulguları tarafından doğrulanmıştır. Ekonomik duruma göre öğrencilerin İHL tercihlerinde hiçbir boyutta istatistiki açıdan anlamlı bir farklılaşma olmadığı ortaya çıkmıştır. Gençlerin sübjektif zenginlik tanımlamalarına göre ekonomik durumları ayrılmaktadır; fakat bu ayrılmaya paralel bir zihniyet farklılaşması görülmemekte, sınıfsal farklılaşma tercihler açısından kültürel farklılaşmayı beraberinde getirmemektedir. Okulların ekonomik bir sermaye olarak görülmekten ziyade; daha baskın bir biçimde dini duygu ve düşüncelerle somutlaşan bir idealizmle tercih edildiği tespit edilmiştir.

(H4) “Sınıf kademesine göre İmam Hatip Lisesi tercihlerinde istatistiki açıdan anlamlı bir farklılaşma vardır. İlk sınıflarda tercih ortalamaları yüksek, son sınıflara doğru düşüktür” şeklindeki hipotezimiz araştırma bulguları tarafından doğrulanmıştır. Tercih faktörlerinde sınıf kademesine göre anlamlı farklılıklar olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Genel olarak ilk sınıflarda tercih ortalamaları yüksek, son sınıflara doğru düşmektedir.

(H5) “Okunmak istenen üniversite bölümüne göre İmam Hatip Lisesi tercihlerinde istatistiki açıdan anlamlı bir farklılaşma mevcuttur. Farklı bölüm tercihlerine rağmen tercihlerde en etkili boyut dini değerlerin öğrenilmesi ve dini sosyalleşme arayışıdır” şeklindeki hipotezimizin ilk bölümü, öğretmek boyutu hariç araştırma bulguları tarafından desteklenmiştir. İkinci bölümü de farklı bölüm tercihlerine rağmen en yüksek ortalamalar yine dini değerlerin öğrenilmesi ve dini sosyalleşme arayışında tespit edildiği için araştırma verileri tarafından doğrulanmıştır. Bu hipotezin testi de tercihlerde dini değerler ve dini ortam faktörlerinin gençlerin tercihlerinde etkili olduğunu göstermektedir.

Introduction

The reasons affecting the preference of high school of youngsters who were studying at Imam Hatip High School (IHHS) were examined through the sample selected in Istanbul. There are various studies examining the history of IHHS, but the researches, particularly the field researches, which are related to the reasons of preference different in line with the political and social changes in Turkey are rather limited. This study aims to fill the aforementioned gap, to contribute to the preference sociology in the axis of IHHS, and to examine which dynamics affected the preference of IHHS re-expanded in a horizontal manner. In this study structured with qualitative research model, the functional analysis was more dominant in this study in terms of differences. Furthermore, as the preference factors were among the main limitations of the study, the reasons of preference were theoretically examined rather than the historical background or general IHHS sociology.

1. School Preference Sociology and Imam Hatip High Schools

The demand of education turned into a formal process directed by the public authority, reaching beyond the limit of personal learning desires. Based on people's free will, the demand for education, whether formal or non-formal, reflects people's decision of continuing to a certain education program within the legal limits. The freedom of preference and establishing alternative education institutions suiting the preferences are two properties regarding the school preferences. The topic of school preference is a bi-directional subject despite appearing as a personal topic. Meeting the demand of personal and institutional education on an institutional level as well as generating relevant policies are among the responsibilities of the public authority. The actors of the topic were the children, youngsters or parents who had the freedom of making preferences among the alternatives. Efforts are made to meet the demand of education considering the historical and social conditions in a place and based on the needs, expectations, functions, and cognitive and emotional satisfaction with an "intention of communication" between the public authority and social demands. Accordingly, it is fair to state that the demand of education is a significant part of education planning.¹

There are a couple of factors affecting the preference of education. These factors may be personal, economic, socio-cultural or institutional based on the relevant actor or case.² From a functional perspective, there are many personal and social dynamics affecting the demand and preference of education such as age, gender, hereditary traits, academic success, skills, interest, class-based position,

¹ Nejla Kurul Tural, "Eğitim İstemi", *Ankara Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Fakültesi Dergisi* 27/2 (1994), 781-789.

² Işıl Ünal, *Eğitim ve Yetiştirme Ekonomisi* (Ankara: Torun Matbaası, 1996), 142.

family type, region, family group, social environment, social acceptance, usefulness and reputation. Therefore, the demands and preferences regarding the education is a topic with multiple aspects,³ and the professional preferences have a great role in determining the educational demands following the obligatory education. Education is shaped by the concerns of a functional future based on the professional grounds. Furthermore, modern societies are the ones which develop rational reflexes on the economic grounds. Therefore, the factors of income as well as the reputation and possibilities of employment are among the key elements in terms of school preferences.

The prospective concerns solely based on economy are not determinant by themselves in this context. Educational demands also form an educational market and a market approach in the axis of "rational preference theory". Education has become a "meta" that is generated, marketed, consumed, thus purchased and sold within a supply-demand circle in the countries that enforce liberal educational policies added to the capitalism. Monetary and class-based position deeply affects the quality of the "purchased" education service. Accordingly, the discussions of whether success can be purchased or whether the school preference is a mechanism ensuring the continuity of class-based differences and inequalities catch attention in this regard. Education is a significant capital in terms of creating resource, advantage and opportunities. However, it is also the instrument of social "discrimination" along with the economic and cultural capital. It is a significant mechanism contributing to the regeneration of the "field" and "habits". In addition to serving as a bridge to accessing the resources, it may also serve for the continuation of preferences and inequalities shaped in relation to the economic, social and cultural capital differences.

It is clear that the school preferences also suggest an economic-politic topic.⁴ At least the modern awareness started to perceive the preferences regarding education and school as a professional demand. People are oriented to prefer the school and professions which generally yield a financial income in an open and competitive society. Mass communication instruments, professional organizations, family, and peer groups serve as a filter for the people, affecting the personal and social preferences.⁵

³ Musa Altunsaray, *İmam Hatip Liselerinde Talebi Etkileyen Etmenler Ankara İli Örneği* (Ankara: Ankara University, ISS, Master's Thesis, 2000), 15.

⁴ Pierre Bourdieu - Jean Claude Passeron, *Vârisler, Öğrenciler ve Kültür* (Ankara: Heretik Yayınları, 2014), 34.; David Swartz, "Pierre Bourdieu: The Cultural Transmission of Social Inequality", *Harvard Educational Review* 47/4 (December 1977), 545-550.; Ünal, *Eğitim ve Yetiştirme Ekonomisi*, 144.; Selman Yarcı, "Pierre Bourdieu'da Sosyal Sermaye Kavramı", *Akademik İncelemeler Dergisi* 6/1 (2014), 130.

⁵ Altunsaray, *İmam Hatip Liselerinde Talebi Etkileyen Etmenler Ankara İli Örneği*, 16.

From a sociological and structuralist perspective, attention was drawn to the socio-cultural dynamics affecting the school-related preferences. Ünal emphasized the educational status of parents, domestic income level, geographical location, the identity, friendship ties, and size of the family within these dynamics.⁶ Altunsaray refers to the impact of the social groups covering people ethnically, religiously and socially within the differentiation of rural and urban areas. Moreover, children being inspired by the professions of their parents or maintaining what their parents did as a job indicate the impact of socio-cultural structure in terms of educational preferences.⁷ Arslan stresses the educational level of parents, domestic income, and students' order of birth in this context. According to that study, as the order of birth rises, the probability of continuing a general/academic high school increases. Residing in an urban area increases the probability of continuing high school education, and the probability of selecting the vocational high school is higher in the urban area. With the impact of the professional education they prefer, students from the families with lower income enter the labor market earlier and start to work at a younger age compared to their peers from the families with higher income, which is another result in the study by Arslan.⁸

Educational preferences are related to the educational system as well as the social structure. Structuring of educational and teaching processes as well as the conditions of applying to schools, selection policies of schools and cost of education for each student are closely associated with the educational system.⁹ Educational system obligatorily differs to meet the personal and social needs, which is essentially a modern process. Following the industrialization period, societies are shaped with the orientations of industrialization, urbanization, rationalization, individualization, secularization, specialization, differentiation and relativity. Differentiation of education shows itself through the variety of programs based on the processes in these macro periods. Variety and sequence triggers one another. For instance, the variety in secondary education program affects the preferences regarding the higher education program, which then shapes the secondary education preferences after the period of primary education.¹⁰

The results of the discussion about the topic of education and school preference performed in line with the of IHHS are as follows. Religion is more central

⁶ Ünal, *Eğitim ve Yetiştirme Ekonomisi*, 152.

⁷ Altunsaray, *İmam Hatip Liselerinde Talebi Etkileyen Etmenler Ankara İli Örneği*, 17.

⁸ Yunus Arslan, *Determinants of The Choice of High School Track in Turkey* (Istanbul: Sabancı University, ISS, Master's Thesis, 2016), 25-26.

⁹ Tural, "Eğitim İstemi", 782-789.

¹⁰ Ünal, *Eğitim ve Yetiştirme Ekonomisi*, 155.

for the traditional agricultural societies which have yet to differentiate, and it is a common element that can be seen in almost all stages of education. It is claimed that the basis of education in Ottoman Empire is “to raise a good Muslim person”.¹¹ However, as the world changed itself through the processes of Illumination, French Revolution and Industrialization, this change affected the Ottoman Empire deeply as can be seen from the conflict of “school” and “madrasah” that occurred in the Ottoman bureaucracy after the Reform. The implicit and explicit conflict between the madrasah-based religious bureaucracy and school-based secular bureaucracy existed in favor of those with school-related backgrounds following the preference of the relevant authority. Accordingly, religion has become a topic assessed in line with its relation with the political authority, rather than being solely considered a religious topic. The archetypes of the discussions performed in line with the IHHSs as an ideological “crisis” area are based on this historical ground in the axis of religion, authority and education relationships.¹²

From a more particular perspective, discussions on religious services and religious education occurred first in the 2nd Constitutional Era in a manner revoking the further conflicts. The scientific skills and knowledge of preachers as well as their professional competency, and the amendment and impacts of sermons caught greater attention during that era. Initiation of the topic “Madrasatu al-Waizin” in Islah al-Madaris Committee, which is about the amendment of madrasahs, in 1909 can be regarded as the first initiative in this context.¹³ The amendments made toward the madrasahs during the 2nd Constitutional Era also continued during the years of national war. Sadiye Tutsak defines the reform activities mentioned after the Tanzimat period and fulfilled after the 2nd Constitutional Era in a de facto form as the effects of raising madrasahs into the level of schools at the level of western schools.¹⁴ The schools founded in 1913 in the name “Madrasatu al-Aimma wa al-Hutaba” to raise qualified imams and preachers were combined with Madrasatu al-Waizin after a short period of time owing to certain reasons such as insufficient number of students, inability to achieve efficiency, and wars occurring on the global

¹¹ Ruşen Çakır et al., *İmam Hatip Liseleri: Efsaneler ve Gerçekler* (Istanbul: Tesev Yayınları, 2004), 56.

¹² See. Mümtaz Turhan, *Kültür Değişmeleri* (Istanbul: İFAV Yayınları, 1994), 44. ; Bernard Lewis, *Modern Türkiye'nin Doğuşu* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2004), 67.

¹³ Atiye Emiroğlu, *Türkiye'de Din Eğitimi Bağlamında İmam Hatip Okulları* (Konya: Selçuk University, ISS, Doctoral Thesis, 2016), 30.

¹⁴ Sadiye Tutsak, “Millî Mücadele Yıllarında Ankara Hükümeti'nin İlmiye Medreselerini Canlandırma Çabası”, *Bilgi-Türk Dünyası Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 5/2 (June 2003), 12.; Harun Yılmaz, “Osmanlı Son Döneminde Medreselerin Islahı ve Panislamizm Tartışmaları Bağlamında Bir Medrese: Kudüs Selâhaddîn-i Eyyûbî Külliye-i İslâmiyyesi ve Külliye Talimatnamesi”, *Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 51/51 (December 2016), 81.

scale.¹⁵ Madrasah education, which became secondary as the schools became more common, was discussed during the 2nd Constitutional Era in the context of certain topics such as graduates' employment, low interest in the madrasahs, inability of madrasah graduates to have the equal diplomas with the school graduates, and the rights to receive higher education.¹⁶

The initiative "Madrasata ul-Aimma wa al-Hutabah" dated 1913 was integrated to the Republic under the name "Imam Hatip School" upon the law on unification of education dated 1924. Following an interruption lasting 18 years, transformation of Imam Hatip institutions as Imam Hatip School between 1924 and 1930, ten-month Imam Hatip courses between 1948 and 1951, and the modern Imam Hatip School after 1951 resulted in various discussions in the axis of religion, policy, education and culture at certain periods. Modernization perception, the human type to be raised, traditional attitudes toward development, the balance between authority, safety and freedom, global and liberal trends based on rationality, power of the public to shape the religious education and services, legitimacy of religious publicity, engagement to a certain policy and ideology, capacity of social acceptance and integration, and Imam Hatip High Schools discussed in various contexts such as employment and efficiency corresponds to a broad theoretical and practical field which probably cannot be analyzed from the single-dimension perspective of religious people, public authority, those uninterested in religion, or those opposing religions. As an institution of the Institution, IHHS concerns the all classes of the society. Considering this topic as a field of discussion shaped by the contributions of the professionals, rather than as the platform of ideological conflicts, would be a more suitable approach as it is related to the neural characteristics of the society and authority in the triangular of religion, state and nation.

Preference of IHHS is shaped in line with the discussions made as this school has constantly been discussed thus far. The following results become apparent following the direct examination of a few studies regarding the preference of IHHSs. Korkmaz notes that the primary factors behind the preferences of IHHS include the relevant desires of family and acquaintances, the plan of learning more information about the religion, believing that the Imam Hatip environment is better, the possibility to get employed more easily at the Presidency of Religious Affairs, and having a test score which does not suffice for enrollment at other high schools.¹⁷ The reasons of preference are ordered as follows in the study conducted in the

¹⁵ Ömer Faruk Çelik, *Katsayı Uygulamasının Kaldırılması Sonrasında İmam Hatip Lisesi Öğrencilerinin Davranış, Tutum ve Özellikleri* (Gaziantep Örneği), (Bursa: Uludağ University, ISS, Master's Thesis, 2016), 21.

¹⁶ Zeki Salih Zengin, *II. Meşrutiyette Medreseler ve Din Eğitimi* (Ankara: Akçağ Yayınevi, 2002), 88.

¹⁷ Mehmet Korkmaz, "İmam Hatip Lisesi Öğrencilerinin Bu Okulu Tercih Süreçleri", *Erciyes Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 1/16 (2013), 24.

Turkish city of Gaziantep by Ateş: Learning religious information, believing that IHHS is the most suitable school for female and male students, ability to learn the religion and to have a profession, thinking that the teachers and administrators at IHHS are more understanding and helpful, visiting an IHHS and liking the schools, and being influenced by the life of people who are IHHS graduates.¹⁸

Altunsaray draws attention to the following factors: “being the most suitable school for knowledge and skills, liking the profession or working as an Imam or Preacher, finding the suitable environment for practicing the beliefs in Imam Hatip High Schools, preference of parents, peer group, personal decision, teaching the religious information in a better form, quality of teaching, quality of teachers, physical equipment of school, insufficient provision of religious at other institutions”.¹⁹ The reasons of preference were ordered along with similar and different elements in the study conducted on the case of Elazığ, Turkey, by Özdemir and Karateke as follows: The idea of learning the religion better, believing that the Imam Hatip environment is a better place for practicing the religion, the desire of enrolling at a good university, absence of mixed education, thinking that the education quality is high, believing that the teacher quality is high, high scores, thinking about studying theology, regarding the relevant school authority as proper, the possibility of getting employed right after graduation, the school being close to home, receiving the secondary education at Imam Hatip high school, having friends who go to a Imam Hatip high school, and lastly, presence of a dormitory at Imam Hatip high school.²⁰ According to the repetitive themes in the relevant studies, the following factors seem to be more dominant: desire of receiving religious education, search for a religious environment, the impact of the immediate circle, trust in teachers, and possibility of get employed in religious services with ease.

2. Method

Having been structured as a field research, this study utilized the methods of direct and indirect observation. One of the researchers work as a teacher in an IHHS. Therefore, that researcher had the chance of directly observing the students, teachers and institutional operations. This study was conducted using the qualitative data collection method, an indirect observation method. The survey method was used as this method enabled comparisons and measurement of orientations on the sample,

¹⁸ Pembegül Ateş, *İmam Hatip Lisesi'nde Okuyan Öğrencilerin İmam Hatip Lisesi'ni Tercih Nedenleri ve Beklentileri (Gaziantep Örneği)*, (Gaziantep: Gaziantep University, ISS, Master's Thesis, 2016), 37.

¹⁹ Altunsaray, p.7.

²⁰ Şuayip Özdemir - Tuncay Karateke, “Öğrencilerin İmam Hatip Liselerini Tercih Etme Nedenleri (Elazığ Örneği)”, *Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 45/45 (December 2018), 45.

and as this study was conducted in different schools. Furthermore, IHHSs being a sub-system of an educational system, analyzing the differences within this sub-system, and preferences regarding IHHS which necessitate the analysis of a multi-factor system resulted in structuring the study on a ground that was close to Functionalism. However, "functional analysis", rather than a functionalist perspective, was dominant in the study. The results of the study are limited with the sample selected; accordingly, the generalizations made should be considered in this context. However, these results may be guiding for the other IHHSs that display similar characteristics; IHHS provides the possibility of making an estimation for the preference sociology.

2.1. Hypotheses

(H1) *Learning the religious values, possibility of religious socialization and domestic impact are the main factors that follow one another when the factors of preferring IHHS are structured as family, social environment, teacher, learning religious values, religious socialization, possibility of preparation for university, career based on religious services, physical structure of the school and cultural activities.*

(H2) *The preferences of IHHS differ statistically and significantly based on gender. Men have more positive attitudes toward the preference dimensions.*

(H3) *The preferences of IHHS do not differ statistically and significantly based on economic status. Class-based differences are not a factor affecting the preferences.*

(H4) *The preferences of IHHS differ statistically and significantly based on class grade. The mean value of preference is higher in the lower grades, and lower in the higher grades.*

(H5) *The preferences of IHHS differ statistically and significantly based on the desired university departments. Despite the preferences of different departments, the most impactful dimension regarding the preferences is learning the religious values and searching for religious socialization.*

2.2. Study Site and Sample

The population of the study consisted of the IHHSs in the districts of Gaziosmanpaşa, Bayrampaşa, Ümraniye and Ataşehir. The sample was formed out of five IHHSs selected from four districts in both sides of Istanbul. While selecting the schools, extra attention was paid to selecting the rooted and newly-founded institutions. Therefore, two of the selected schools had a rooted history, while three were newly-founded. The field study was performed by administering survey to 600 students from the following schools: Gaziosmanpaşa Anatolian Imam Hatip High School (n=106), Şehit Halil İbrahim Yıldırım Anatolian Imam Hatip High School (n=120), Şehit Erol İnce Girls' Anatolian Imam Hatip High School (n=138), Esatpaşa

Anatolian Imam Hatip High School (n=111) and Esatpaşa Girls' Anatolian Imam Hatip High School (n=125).

Of the sample, 50.8% were female, while 49.2% were male. Regarding the economic status of families, 2.5% of the sample were from the low income group, while 55% were from the moderate income group, 38.5% were from the moderate-high income group, and 4% were from the high income group. Students in the sample were aged between 14 and 19 years. According to the data regarding the parents of these students, 2.5% of the mothers were illiterate. Moreover, 2.2% of the parents only knew how to write and read, 68.4% were primary school graduates, 19% were secondary school graduates, and 8% were university graduates or higher. Of the fathers of the participants, 0.3% were illiterate, while 0.7% solely knew how to read and write, 52.4% were primary school graduates, 29.8% were secondary school graduates, and 16.8% were university graduates or higher. Of the mothers, 86.3% were housewives, and 13.7% worked in different fields. Furthermore, 5% of the mothers were workers and teachers. Regarding the fathers, 12.2% were working as a civil servant, lawyer, doctor and engineer, while 62.2% were self-employed and working as a craftsman, worker or tradesman. According to further results regarding the families of the participants, the rate of siblings who studied at an IHHS before was 31.8, while this rate was 13.3% for the parents, and 26.4% for the cousins. Additionally, 47.7% of the participants went to an Imam Hatip Secondary School, whereas 52.3% studied at other secondary schools.

The following points should be considered to see the social profile of the sample group more clearly. The rate of those who preferred theology was 10.3%, and the highest rate of preferences included engineering (14%) and teaching 13.7%. Of the students in the sample, 46% received religious education within Quran Courses during summer. Furthermore, 16% were interested in the religion to a limited degree, while 30% were not so religious but still wanted to learn more about their religion. Of the participants, 4.8% defined themselves as social democrat, while 4.5% considered themselves liberal. In addition, 16.3% noted that they always or frequently experienced hesitations in terms of destiny. The rate of participants who always performed five-time prayers was 17.8%, while those who frequently performed these prayers constituted 22.2%, and those who never performed constituted 11.8%.

2.3. Data Collection and Statistical Analysis

Quota sampling method was utilized while selecting the sample, and random sampling method was used while administering the surveys. This study was conducted between 04.02.2019 and 01.03.2019. Accordingly, the study was conducted during the 2018-2019 Academic Year with students from different grades in five randomly selected schools in four districts of Istanbul.

To determine the validity and reliability of the information form, a prior practice was performed on 100 people. With the factor analysis performed later, the sub-dimensions within which the items were present were found, and the items with no validity and reliability were not included in the scale. The information collection form has 16 items questioning the social identity. A Likert-type scale with 39 items questioning the school-related preferences of IHHS students, the topic of the present study, and another Likert-type scale with eighth items examining the religious aspects of students as well as students' thoughts on IHHS were used in the study. The following options are used for the items questioning the thoughts about religiousness and IHHS: "Never", "Rarely", "Occasionally", "Frequently", "Always". For the items examining the factors that affect the school-related preferences of IHHS students, the following options were used: "Totally Disagree", "Disagree", "No Idea", "Agree", "Totally Agree". A scoring procedure starting from the negative statements and extending to the positive ones was used while scoring the answers. The scale has no items that reversely asks the positive statements. The orientation to prefer the IHHS increases from the 1 to 5 points. The value of 0.05 and below was accepted as the threshold of statistical significance ($p=0.05-0.01$).

All surveys were filled by the participants themselves. Administering a survey lasted around 15-20 minutes. A total of around 700 survey forms were administered. Surveys who were not totally completed were excluded from the assessment, and a total of 600 surveys were transferred to the digital environment following the data clearing procedure. No adverse events were experienced while administering the study, and no objection was seen from the participants while implementing the survey. The voluntary basis was taken into consideration during the implementation phase; the survey was not implemented on those who did not want to participate in the survey.

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 20 package software was used for data analysis. In addition to the mean values that emerged following the Factor Analysis, Independent Samples T-test was used in the bi-variate analyses to test the hypotheses. Moreover, One Way Analysis of Variance was utilized to determine whether there was a significant different between more than two groups. Scheffe and Lsd Post-Hoc multiple comparison methods were used to determine the levels of multiple comparisons.

2.4. Validity and Reliability of Scales

Using the validity and reliability tests, no relationship was found between the answers participants gave to each item regarding attitudes and behaviors, and the total score received from the scale. The method used the most for the reliability analysis is Cronbach's Alpha test. Whether each scale measures a single structure is

tested through the factor analysis.²¹ As a result of the factor analysis performed in this study, the floor and ceiling factor values ranged between 0.86 and 0.88. Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) value of the scale was 0.86, while the Cronbach's Alpha value was 0.87, and the variance value was 64.7%. These rates indicate that the scale is valid and reliable. The details regarding the scale items, dimensions and other elements are presented in Table 1.

Table-1: Validity and Reliability Analysis of Imam Hatip High School Preference Scale (IHHSPS) and its Sub-Dimensions

(KMO = .863; Alpha a =: .87; χ^2= 6229.767; p=000; Variance: 64.7%)				
F1: Family Dimension (a=.727)	N	M	SD	Factor Load
S.3 Suiting my family's ideology	598	3.73	1.259	.879
S.38 Religious character of my family	598	3.52	1.309	.877
S.37 My desire of making my family happy	598	2.96	1.441	.879
F2: Dimension of guidance from the social environment (a=.727)	N	M	SD	Factor Load
S.18 Guidance from our relatives	598	2.29	1.387	.880
S.20 Recommendation from my teachers at primary school	598	2.22	1.385	.879
S.19 Recommendation from our neighbors	598	1.90	1.188	.878
F3: Teacher Dimension (a=.714)	N	M	SD	Factor Load
S.15 Thinking that the teachers in this school are better	598	3.09	1.360	.873
S.16 Teachers in this school being more idealist	598	2.89	1.274	.872
S.17 Teachers in this school showing more attention to students	598	3.02	1.319	.872
F4: Dimension of Learning the Religious Values and Religious Socialization (a=.716)	N	M	SD	Factor Load
S.25 IHHS being a school where other courses are taught in addition to religious courses	598	3.64	1.276	.873
S.1 IHHS being a school where I can practice my beliefs	598	3.69	1.233	.873

²¹ Zeki Arslantürk - Hamit Arslantürk, *Uygulamalı Sosyal Araştırma* (İstanbul: Çamlıca Yayınları, 2016), 169-170.

Factors Affecting the School Preferences of Youngsters Studying at Imam Hatip High Schools

S.2 IHHS being the most suitable institution for teaching religious values	598	3.87	1.098	.873
F5: Possibilities of Preparation for University Test and Career Factor (a=.675)	N	M	SD	Factor Load
S.33 IHHS providing extra courses in the process of preparation to university	598	2.98	1.379	.871
S.32 Students being motivated better in the process of preparation to university	598	2.81	1.378	.868
S.31 Presence of people who graduated from IHHS and reached proper positions	598	3.04	1.386	.870
S.30 Social consideration toward those who study at IHHS as benevolent people	598	2.54	1.337	.871
F6: Dimension of Career Based on Religious Services (a=.714)	N	M	SD	Factor Load
S.6 Ability to receive necessary religious education solely from these schools before enrolling at a faculty of theology	598	2.36	1.331	.874
S.5 Being the most suitable school as I want to study theology	598	2.09	1.338	.873
S.4 Desire of working as an Imam, Preacher, Mufti or Quran Course Instructor	598	1.89	1.211	.873
S.27 Ability to work at the Presidency of Religious Affairs even as a high school graduate	598	2.41	1.417	.872
F7: Dimension of School's Physical Structure and Cultural Activities (a=.701)	N	M	SD	Factor Load
S.28 Limited number of students in classrooms	598	3.04	1.475	.875
S.24 Presence of more technological means in these schools	598	2.36	1.310	.874
S.11 Contests held in different fields in these schools	598	2.79	1.360	.870
S.10 Better physical structure of the school compared to other schools	598	2.89	1.436	.874
S.9 Presence of more social and cultural activities in these schools	598	2.58	1.402	.871

3. Results and Assessments

(H1) Learning the religious values, possibility of religious socialization and domestic impact are the main factors that follow one another when the factors of preferring IHHS are structured as family, social environment, teacher, learning religious values, religious

socialization, possibility of preparation for university, career based on religious services, physical structure of the school and cultural activities.

To test the first hypothesis in the study, the mean values and standard deviation scores found in the seven-factor IHHSPS were used. According to the results presented in the Table 2 below, the period of preference regarding IHHS occurs on a multi-factor social ground. This study indicated that these factors can be assessed in seven dimensions in relation to one another. Accordingly, IHHS preference is not a result of a single thought, but a process that happens with different motivations of people. This difference can be clearly understood from the mean values between the dimensions (see. *M* values).

From the perspective of dimensions, the highest mean values regarding the reasons of preference were found in the dimensions of “learning the religious values and religious socialization” and “family”. Dimension of learning the religious values and religious socialization was one point ahead of the dimension of family. Therefore, instruction of other courses in addition to religious ones, students’ belief that they will be able to practice their beliefs better in these schools, and considering the IHHSs as the most suitable environments for teaching religious values were the primary factors behind preferring these schools. Rather than the class-based discrimination, economic capital and a prospective, profane “convertibility” drive, religious idealism” was found to be a more dominant result regarding preferences, followed by these schools being suitable for the religious characteristics and ideologies of families, desire of families, and the desire of making the family happy by a small margin. Considering the standard deviation values, participants gave more similar answers in the dimension of family, along with other similar answers in the dimension of religious education and religious socialization, as the standard deviation values were lower compared to other dimensions (see. Table 2). In terms of standard deviation values, the aforementioned dimensions reflected the general orientation regarding the preferences. Results also indicated that thoughts differed more in terms of school’s physical structure and cultural activities among seven factors affecting the preference. Thus, it is safe to state that the physical structure and cultural activity dimension was attributed less importance than the other dimensions.

Factors such as general career, career in religious services, teacher, preparation to university, and influence of relatives and neighbors were not as impactful as the religious education and family effect in terms of IHHS preferences. It is safe to state that students consider IHHS as unparalleled for founding and preserving the religious identity. Although courses such as Quran and Prophetic Biography were integrated to the general curriculum as an elective course, IHHS appears to be a particular institution for experiencing and helping people experience a more intense Islamic identity. The positive impacts of an Islamist political movement should be considered while assessing the formation of such a perception because Justice and

Development Party considers showing a particular attention to IHHS a mission. The conservative characteristics of the Turkish society, combined with the current policy of the government in terms of IHHS, results in IHHS being perceived as a protected religious institution.

Accordingly, the idea that more quality education is provided in project schools is strengthened. The attractive side of these school is multiplied by the possibility of a career in the secular field. As stated in the early parts of the sample section, only 10% of the students aimed to have higher education in theology. The drive of protecting the religious identity along with the idea of having a religious career was clear in the preferences, and families' sensitivities in this regard were impactful for students' preferences. In terms of families, 9.3% of students defined themselves as social democrat and liberal despite the options of Islamist, conservative or nationalist conservative, indicating the family-based difference in the preferences. 10.3% of the students considered themselves Islamist and 24% believed they were solely Muslim, suggesting that students who prefer IHHS do not totally have an Islamist lineage despite having a dominant conservative characteristic.

Although family is a significant factor for preferences, families of new-era Imam Hatip students are different. Difference of IHHS preferences for both students and their parents can be explained with the rapid urbanization and personalization in Turkey, and with the social media affecting the religious information and authorities like the paparazzi. Internet and social media cause the religion to be a "meta" that is discussed and captures interest more, and this discussion results in the analysis of traditional religious perceptions. It is clear that IHHS is regarded as both a religious shelter and an ideological institution In such a complicated social context.

Table 2 Imam Hatip High School Preference Scale Mean and Standard Deviation Values

F1: Family Dimension	N	M	SD
S.3 Suiting my family's ideology	598	3.73	1.259
S.38 Religious character of my family	598	3.52	1.309
S.37 My desire of making my family happy.	598	2.96	1.441
F2: Dimension of guidance from the social environment (a=.727)	N	M	SD
S.18 Guidance from our relatives	598	2.29	1.387
S.20 Recommendation from my teachers at primary school	598	2.22	1.385
S.19 Recommendation from our neighbors	598	1.90	1.188
F3: Teacher Dimension	N	M	SD

S.15 Thinking that the teachers in this school are better	598	3.09	1.360
S.16 Teachers in this school being more idealist	598	2.89	1.274
S.17 Teachers in this school showing more attention to students	598	3.02	1.319
F4: Dimension of Learning the Religious Values and Religious Socialization	N	M	SD
S.25 IHHS being a school where other courses are taught in addition to religious courses	598	3.64	1.276
S.1 IHHS being a school where I can practice my beliefs	598	3.69	1.233
S.2 IHHS being the most suitable institution for teaching religious values	598	3.87	1.098
F5: Possibilities of Preparation for University Test and Career Factor	N	M	SD
S.33 IHHS providing extra courses in the process of preparation to university	598	2.98	1.379
S.32 Students being motivated better in the process of preparation to university	598	2.81	1.378
S.31 Presence of people who graduated from IHHS and reached proper positions	598	3.04	1.386
S.30 Social consideration toward those who study at IHHS as benevolent people	598	2.54	1.337
F6: Dimension of Career Based on Religious Services	N	M	SD
S.6 Ability to receive necessary religious education solely from these schools before enrolling at a faculty of theology	598	2.36	1.331
S.5 Being the most suitable school as I want to study theology	598	2.09	1.338
S.4 Desire of working as an Imam, Preacher, Mufti or Quran Course Instructor	598	1.89	1.211
S.27 Ability to work at the Presidency of Religious Affairs even as a high school graduate	598	2.41	1.417
F7: Dimension of School's Physical Structure and Cultural Activities	N	M	SD

Factors Affecting the School Preferences of Youngsters Studying at Imam Hatip High Schools

S.28 Limited number of students in classrooms	598	3.04	1.475
S.24 Presence of more technological means in these schools	598	2.36	1.310
S.11 Contests held in different fields in these schools	598	2.79	1.360
S.10 Better physical structure of the school compared to other schools	598	2.89	1.436
S.9 Presence of more social and cultural activities in these schools	598	2.58	1.402

(H2) *The preferences of IHHS differ statistically and significantly based on gender. Men have more positive attitudes toward the preference dimensions.*

To determine whether there was a difference in IHHS preferences in terms of gender, a basic element of sociological difference, T-test was performed. In terms of gender, there were significant differences in favor of male students in all dimensions except two in regard to preferring IHHS (see. Table 3). No significant difference within the relevant threshold was present in the dimension "Learning the Religious Values and Religious Socialization" ($p < 0.06$) and "School's Physical Structure and Cultural Activities" ($p > 0.92$). Absence of difference in the dimension "Learning the Religious Values and Religious Socialization" indicates that a common approach was displayed in students' approaches. According to this analysis, learning the religious values and searching for a religious environment is a more dominant orientation among other dimensions. Furthermore, low standard deviation value is another indication that students gave similar answers in this dimension.

Table-3: Imam Hatip High Schools Preference Scale T-Test Results based on Gender

<i>Preference Dimensions</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>
Family Dimension	Female	305	1.94	.913	-4.889	.000
	Male	295	2.34	1.107		
Social Environment Dimension	Female	305	1.94	.913	-4.889	.000
	Male	295	2.34	1.107		
Teacher Dimension	Female	305	2.86	1.064	-3.158	.002
	Male	295	3.15	1.197		
Dimension of Learning the Religious Values and Religious Socialization	Female	305	3.73	.902	-1.021	.061
	Male	295	3.81	.990		
Possibilities of Preparation for	Female	305	2.67	1.026	-4.108	.000
	Male	295	3.03	1.134		

University Test and Career Dimension						
Dimension of Career Based on Religious Services	Female	305	2.00	.932	-4.526	.000
	Male	295	2.39	1.173		
Dimension of School's Physical Structure and Cultural Activities	Female	305	2.66	1.032	-1.877	.920
	Male	295	2.67	.999		

Male students had more positive attitudes in their IHHS preferences in the dimensions of family, social environment, teacher, preparation for university test and career, and career based on religious services, which may be related to the idea that male students had more active awareness of the social dynamics around them. Higher mean scores regarding the dimensions of preparation for university, religious and secular career, and teachers' quality may suggest that male students had more future-related concerns than female students did. This is also in accordance with the cultural structure because male people think about the earthly concepts and actions more, and they feel more responsible in terms of earning income. Female students are also aware of this subject but they still act in a more obeying manner compared to male students, prefer watching the processes from outside, do not display ambitious attitudes in their preferences like male students do, and have an orientation which suits their conservative pasts and can be considered with the motto "let us see". Appearing more open to innovations, female students seemed more patient and decisive toward the life. Additionally, higher impact of the social environment on male students may be explained with the fact that male people are more active in life than females are.

(H3) *The preferences of IHHS do not differ statistically and significantly based on economic status. Class-based differences are not a factor affecting the preferences.*

As understood from the results in Table 4 below, no statistically significant difference was present in students' IHHS preferences in any dimensions based on their economic statuses ($p > 0.50$). It is clear that class-based factors are not major elements creating a significant difference in students' IHHS preferences. Even if youngsters' economic statuses varied based on their subjective definitions of wealth, no mental difference paralleling this variance was present, and class-based difference did not result in cultural difference. In terms of preference factors, similarity was a more dominant orientation. Despite the differentiating impact of economy, the aforementioned point can be explained with the joint characteristics of the cultural world, consideration of the common religious ideals, and the ideological impact of the conservative background. The ideological patterns formed by the religious identity and excitement suppresses the class-based differentiation. The integrative aspect of ideology was more dominant for the IHHS preferences in the differentiation between

the controversial subjects of economy and ideology in sociology. Ideology was more dominant than the class-based awareness in the sample.

With that point being said, the following should also be considered: Students who considered their economic statuses good were actually from the moderate-upper class, rather than being significantly or truly wealthy. It is safe to state that the wealth understood by the youngsters is not at a level that can create a “real” class-based differentiation with a more avantgarde lifestyle. Accordingly, if the people with good economic status are accepted to have a “moderate-high” economic status, it is safe to state that IHHSs are preferred more by the people from moderate and moderate-upper class. Therefore, IHHSs are the schools catching the attention of moderate classes more, despite certain differences regarding their social statuses. The cultural worlds of the people from moderate classes were close to one another. Moreover, moderate classes were the carriers of conservatism. Thus, from an economic perspective, developing similar ideologies rather than differences may be related to this context, which is also reflected on the mean scores (see. *M* values). The lower and upper classes differed based on scores, and the scores of the people from the moderate and moderate-upper classes were close and more stable. Another attention-grabbing point regarding the mean values is that people with better economic status had more positive attitudes in all dimensions, except for the factor of teacher. It is clear that upper classes make more conscious preferences related to IHHSs. High scores in almost all factors, rather than one or a couple of factors, indicate that they do not make single-dimension preferences and that they praise these schools considering different factors. The positive relationship between the capacity of multiple thinking and economy is visible at this point because money expands one’s space, social environment, imagination and horizon. From a sociological perspective, it is clear that there is a relationship between preference capacity and economic conditions.

Table 4: Imam Hatip High Schools Preference Scale One Way Anova Test Results based on Economic Status

<i>Preference Dimensions</i>	<i>Economy</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Family Dimension	a) Lower	15	1.91	.987	.993	.425
	b) Moderate	330	2.15	1.014		
	c) Good	231	2.10	1.011		
	d) Very good	24	2.41	1.455		
	Total	600	2.14	1.032		
Social Environment Dimension	a) Lower	15	1.91	.987	.993	.425
	b) Moderate	330	2.15	1.014		
	c) Good	231	2.10	1.011		
	d) Very good	24	2.41	1.455		
	Total	600	2.14	1.032		

	Total	600	2.14	1.032		
Teacher Dimension	a) Lower	15	3.57	1.003	1.663	.174
	b) Moderate	330	2.99	1.137		
	c) Good	231	2.95	1.139		
	d) Very good	24	3.20	1.211		
	Total	600	3.00	1.140		
Dimension of Learning the Religious Values and Religious Socialization	a) Lower	15	3.95	1.075	1.056	.367
	b) Moderate	330	3.74	1.014		
	c) Good	231	3.68	.964		
	d) Very good	24	4.00	.953		
	Total	600	3.73	.994		
Possibilities of Preparation for University Test and Career Dimension	a) Lower	15	2.86	1.295	.448	.719
	b) Moderate	330	2.86	1.094		
	c) Good	231	2.80	1.064		
	d) Very good	24	3.05	1.297		
	Total	600	2.84	1.095		
Dimension of Career Based on Religious Services	a) Lower	15	2.55	1.225	2.266	.080
	b) Moderate	330	2.19	1.046		
	c) Good	231	2.12	1.069		
	d) Very good	24	2.63	1.318		
	Total	600	2.19	1.074		
Dimension of School's Physical Structure and Cultural Activities	a) Lower	15	2.65	.857	.674	.568
	b) Moderate	330	2.68	1.007		
	c) Good	231	2.61	1.011		
	d) Very good	24	2.90	1.262		
	Total	600	2.66	1.015		

(H4) *The preferences of IHHS differ statistically and significantly based on class grade. The mean value of preference is higher in the lower grades, and lower in the higher grades.*

According to the results of ANOVA presented in the Table 5 below, a statistically significant difference was present between the class grade and guidance of family and social environment, teachers, learning the religious values and rules, possibility to prepare for university tests, a career based on religious services, school's physical structure and cultural activities ($p < 0.05$).

Factors Affecting the School Preferences of Youngsters Studying at Imam Hatip High Schools

With a margin of three points, ninth grade students had the highest arithmetic mean values in all dimensions except the factor of teacher. It is clear that students with more positive attitudes toward the preference factors display more questioning attitudes in the preference dimensions of the higher grades. The decline in the initial excitement and motivation can be considered normal, which can be interpreted as the difference between the theoretically expected and practically performed action. The same point was detected in the relationships between age and IHHS preference, suiting the aforementioned results. As the age increases, the mean values regarding the preference factors decrease, except for the dimension of teacher ($p < 0.05$).

Table-5: Imam Hatip High Schools Preference Scale One Way Anova Test Results based on Class Grade

<i>Preference Dimensions</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Family Dimension	a) 9	155	2.31	1.051	5.385	.001
	b) 10	155	2.12	1.069		
	c) 11	145	2.24	1.089		
	d) 12	145	1.86	.852		
	Total	600	2.14	1.032		
Social Environment Dimension	a) 9	155	2.31	1.051	5.385	.001
	b) 10	155	2.12	1.069		
	c) 11	145	2.24	1.089		
	d) 12	145	1.86	.852		
	Total	600	2.14	1.032		
Teacher Dimension	a) 9	155	3.15	1.077	4.443	.004
	b) 10	155	3.18	1.090		
	c) 11	145	2.82	1.087		
	d) 12	145	2.83	1.262		
	Total	600	3.00	1.140		
Dimension of Learning the Religious Values and Religious Socialization	a) 9	155	3.93	.956	7.565	.000
	b) 10	155	3.89	.872		
	c) 11	145	3.50	.978		
	d) 12	145	3.57	1.103		
	Total	600	3.73	.994		
Possibilities of Preparation for University Test and Career Dimension	a) 9	155	3.24	1.018	12.644	.000
	b) 10	155	2.92	1.051		
	c) 11	145	2.55	1.045		
	d) 12	145	2.65	1.142		
	Total	600	2.84	1.095		
Dimension of Career Based on Religious Services	a) 9	155	2.30	.965	2.502	.050
	b) 10	155	2.16	1.097		
	c) 11	145	2.00	1.046		

	d) 12	145	2.28	1.168		
	Total	600	2.19	1.074		
Dimension of School's Physical Structure and Cultural Activities	a) 9	155	3.12	.930	34.224	.000
	b) 10	155	2.93	.930		
	c) 11	145	2.40	1.012		
	d) 12	145	2.15	.885		
	Total	600	2.66	1.015		

(H5) *The preferences of IHHS differ statistically and significantly based on the desired university departments. Despite the preferences of different departments, the most impactful dimension regarding the preferences is learning the religious values and searching for religious socialization.*

According to the results presented in the Table 6 below, a statistically significant difference was present between the guidance of family and social environment, learning the religious values and rules, possibility to prepare for university tests, a career based on religious services, school's physical structure and cultural activities, except the dimension of university department to study and teacher ($p < 0.05$). According to the Lsd-Scheffe tests, there was a significant difference between those who preferred the police academy and others in the dimensions of family and social environment; between those who wanted to study theology and others in the dimensions of religious values, preparation for university and religious career; and between those who wanted to study medicine and others in the dimensions of school's physical conditions and cultural activities, with the differences being in favor of police academy and faculties of theology and medicine (Lsd-Scheffe: $p < 0.05$). Accordingly, family and social environment plays an active role in terms of enrollment at police academy after IHHS, which may be triggered by a couple of reasons. First of all, people with religious education are oriented to be employed in security-related units upon the impact of the government. Secondly, the issue of increasing unemployment rates in certain careers including teaching and paradoxically considering the governmental positions as the greatest source of employment despite all sorts of liberal policies is another factor. Thirdly, the reason may be related to students' conservative characteristics. Conservative people of the moderate class spare a more limited budget for education, aiming to ensure employment while acting more realistically and concretely and taking fewer risks. Working as a police officer may appeal to youngsters' exciting and active lives more, which might have influenced the results. The young generation is under the extensive impact of not only mafia or detective series, but also the video games such as "Counter Strike".

The mean values of those who preferred the theology were higher in the dimensions of career based on religious services, learning and practicing religious values, and university tests, which is an expected result because IHHS is regarded

by these students as the initial institution and first step of enrolling at a good university and receiving higher religious education. Students who received the highest score in the dimension of learning religious values and religious socialization were those who preferred the department of theology for their higher education, which suits the philosophy of establishment for IHHS. Those who preferred theology were followed by the ones who preferred medicine in the dimensions of religious values and socialization, university test and career, which is an interesting result. Compared to other faculties, these two faculties and departments were distinctive, indicating a sort of student idealism in IHHS preferences. Medicine and theology represent two separate edges when compared to the professions between these edges. Those who preferred medicine paid more attention to school's physical conditions and cultural activities. Accordingly, those who planned a secular career assessed the school's conditions on a realer plane. School buildings, sports complexes, general appearance, hygienic conditions and order as well as the intra-school cultural activities such as trips and contests catch the attention of those who want to receive technical education more.

Those who preferred the police academy had the lowest mean scores in this dimension. Evidences indicated that these youngsters focused on having a diploma and being employed later, rather than the physical appearance and cultural activities. Additionally, from a paradoxical perspective, those who preferred engineering and architecture had the lowest scores in the dimension of university test and career. However, they were expected to pay more attention to this dimension to receive a good higher education at these departments even within a challenging environment. The preference of IHHS is thought and believed to be not much affective in the dimension of university test and non-religious career. Although different departments came to forefront in terms of planning higher education, most of the youngsters had high arithmetic mean values in terms of learning religious values and socialization as a common orientation, which is interesting. It is clear that the career planning of youngsters differed but their demands of learning and practicing the religious values stayed the same.

Table-6: Imam Hatip High Schools Preference Scale One Way Anova and Lsd-Scheffe Tests Results based on University Department Preferences

<i>Preference Dimensions</i>	<i>Department</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Differences</i>
Family Dimension	a) Theology	62	2.01	1.059	2.737	.004	g-a,b,
	b) Teaching	82	1.95	.854			
	c) Law	55	2.28	1.139			
	d) Architecture	36	1.95	1.081			
	e) Engineering	84	2.32	1.002			

	f) Medicine	72	2.10	.973			d,f
	g) Police Academy	46	2.60	1.256			
	h) A two-year department	18	2.16	1.150			
	i) Undecided	74	2.24	.960			
Social Environment Dimension	a) Theology	62	2.01	1.059	2.737	.004	g-a,b, d,f
	b) Teaching	82	1.95	.854			
	c) Law	55	2.28	1.139			
	d) Architecture	36	1.95	1.081			
	e) Engineering	84	2.32	1.002			
	f) Medicine	72	2.10	.973			
	g) Police Academy	46	2.60	1.256			
	h) A two-year department	18	2.16	1.150			
	i) Undecided	74	2.24	.960			
Dimension of Learning the Religious Values and Religious Socialization	a) Theology	62	4.17	.776	3.573	.000	a-c, d,e,f, g,h,i
	b) Teaching	82	3.89	.855			
	c) Law	55	3.70	1.027			
	d) Architecture	36	3.61	.951			
	e) Engineering	84	3.64	1.145			
	f) Medicine	72	4.00	.884			
	g) Police Academy	46	3.56	1.083			
	h) A two-year department	18	3.48	1.133			
	i) Undecided	74	3.46	1.033			
Possibilities of Preparation for University Test and Career Dimension	a) Theology	62	3.32	1.257	3.629	.000	a-d,e, g,i
	b) Teaching	82	2.97	1.072			
	c) Law	55	2.97	1.074			
	d) Architecture	36	2.59	1.030			
	e) Engineering	84	2.72	1.120			
	f) Medicine	72	3.04	1.063			
	g) Police Academy	46	2.84	1.158			
	h) A two-year department	18	3.00	1.021			
	i) Undecided	74	2.44	.949			
	a) Theology	62	3.75	.958	24.682	.000	

Factors Affecting the School Preferences of Youngsters Studying at Imam Hatip High Schools

Dimension of Career Based on Religious Services	b) Teaching	82	2.19	.886			a<b,c d,e,f,g, h,i,i
	c) Law	55	2.13	1.105			
	d) Architecture	36	1.73	.825			
	e) Engineering	84	1.86	.885			
	f) Medicine	72	2.07	.905			
	g) Police Academy	46	2.30	1.055			
	h) A two-year department	18	2.54	1.160			
	i) Undecided	74	1.83	.877			
Dimension of School's Physical Structure and Cultural Activities	a) Theology	62	2.71	.981	4.078	.000	f-a,b, c,d,e, g,h,i,i
	b) Teaching	82	2.55	.862			
	c) Law	55	2.69	1.122			
	d) Architecture	36	2.74	1.110			
	e) Engineering	84	2.71	1.069			
	f) Medicine	72	3.24	.960			
	g) Police Academy	46	2.51	.972			
	h) A two-year department	18	2.57	.973			
	i) Undecided	74	2.34	1.010			

Conclusion

Imam Hatip High Schools are the institutions which were once on the verge of being closed and which now accept students following tests; these institutions have always caused a controversy and drawn attention with their checkered histories. The process of preferring these schools, which have undergone dilemmas between insufficient demands and extremely high number of demands, has always been overshadowed by time and policy. Accordingly, it is fair to state that IHHSs have horizontally expanded recently as a reflection of the Islamist orientations of the current political authority in the structure of the Turkish society that has mostly conserved its conservative form. Efforts were made to examine the reasons of preferring modern IHHSs on a multi-factor ground in this horizontal expansion period. The preference of IHHS corresponds to a multi-faceted sociology that cannot be explained with a minimalist approach containing a single reason. Our hypotheses regarding the preference factors were tested by the study results in the following manner:

(H1) *“Learning the religious values, possibility of religious socialization and domestic impact are the main factors that follow one another when the factors of preferring IHHS are structured as family, social environment, teacher, learning religious values, religious socialization, possibility of preparation for university, career based on religious services,*

physical structure of the school and cultural activities." This hypothesis was supported based on the mean values following the factor analysis and standard deviation scores (see. Table-2). Results indicated that the factors of learning the religion and family were more effective in terms of the preferences made on a multi-factor ground.

(H2) *"The preferences of IHHS differ statistically and significantly based on gender. Men have more positive attitudes toward the preference dimensions."* This hypothesis was mostly validated as there were statistically significant differences in favor of men in all dimensions except for two. In terms of gender, no statistically significant difference was present in the dimension "Learning the Religious Values and Religious Socialization" and "School's Physical Structure and Cultural Activities" (see. Table 3). Therefore, youngsters had similar attitudes in these two dimensions.

(H3) *"The preferences of IHHS do not differ statistically and significantly based on economic status. Class-based differences are not a factor affecting the preferences."* This hypothesis was verified by the study results. No statistically significant difference was present in students' IHHS preferences in any dimensions based on their economic statuses (see. Table 4). Youngsters' economic statuses varied based on their subjective definitions of wealth; however, no mental difference paralleling this variance was present. Class-based difference did not result in cultural difference in terms of differences (Please see the relevant comment of the relevant table). Rather than considering schools as an economic capital, youngsters preferred the IHHS with an idealist approach strengthened with dominant religious emotions and thoughts.

(H4) *"The preferences of IHHS differ statistically and significantly based on class grade. The mean value of preference is higher in the lower grades, and lower in the higher grades."* This hypothesis was verified by the study results. According to the results, there were significant differences regarding the class grade. The mean value of preference was higher in the lower grades, and lower in the higher grades. Furthermore, it was understood that the preference-related excitement of new students faded away toward the further grades (see. Table 5).

(H5) *"The preferences of IHHS differ statistically and significantly based on the desired university departments. Despite the preferences of different departments, the most impactful dimension regarding the preferences is learning the religious values and searching for religious socialization."* The first section of this hypothesis was supported by the study results except the dimension of teaching. Despite different preferences of departments, the highest mean scores were found in the dimensions of learning the religious values and searching for religious socialization, which was verified by the study data. The test of this hypothesis indicated that the factors of religious values and religious environment affected youngsters' preferences (see: Table 6).

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Factors Affecting the School Preferences of Youngsters Studying at Imam Hatip High
Schools

Marginalized Religious Youngsters: The Case of Facebook Group 'Imam Hatips Should be Closed'

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Abstract

Social media is constituted as the result of advances in computer and communication technologies. Virtual communities which were emerging in this area are known as places where people spend their leisure time and share their hobbies. In this study, it is claimed that social media youth can see this area as a ground for creating an identity beyond spending free time, hobby sharing, finding friends or sharing individual data. It is determined that othering, which is a natural result of this building process, can be realized by targeting a different group due to its specific characteristics. Real-life identities of social media users function like address cards in the selection of virtual communities. Hence these virtual communities can bring together those with a similar mindset and value judgments. A consequence of this is that becomes grounds for people to othering a particular group due to their specific characteristics in virtual communities known as post-modern communities without others. In this study in-group posts in "İmam Hatipler Kapatılsın" group example were analyzed by content analysis. It has been observed that members of the virtual community "İmam Hatipler Kapatılsın" in which they set themselves as secular-enlightened and the opposing group builds an identity by othering conservative people at the representation of imam hatip schools in seven different categories.

Keywords: Sociology of Religion, Othering, Religious Youth, Virtual Communities, Identity.

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Ötekileştirilen Dindar Gençlik: 'İmam Hatipler Kapatılsın' Facebook Grubu Örneği

Öz

Sosyal medya, bilgisayar ve iletişim teknolojilerindeki gelişmeler sonucu meydana gelmiştir. Bu alan içerisinde ortaya çıkmış sanal cemaatler insanların eğlendiği, boş vakit geçirdiği ve hobilerini paylaştığı gruplar olarak bilinmektedir. Bu çalışmada sosyal medya gençliğinin, bu alanı boş zaman geçirme, hobi paylaşımı, arkadaş bulma ya da bireysel özelliklerini paylaşmanın ötesinde bir kimlik inşa etme zemini olarak görebildiği iddia edilmektedir. Buna karşılık bu inşa etme sürecinin doğal bir sonucu olan ötekileştirmenin, farklı bir grubu belirli özelliklerinden dolayı hedef alarak gerçekleştirebileceği tespit edilmektedir. Sosyal medya kullanıcılarının gerçek yaşamundaki kimlikleri, sanal cemaat seçiminde birer adres kağıdı gibi işlev görmektedir. Bu nedenle sanal cemaatler benzer zihniyete ve değer yargılarına sahip insanları bir araya getirebilmektedir. Bunun bir sonucu ise insanların ötekisiz postmodern cemaatler olarak bilinen sanal cemaatlerde, belirli bir grubu belirli özelliklerinden dolayı ötekileştirmelerinin zemininin oluşmasıdır. Bu çalışmada, İmam Hatipler Kapatılsın Facebook grubu örneğindeki grup içi gönderiler içerik analiziyle incelenmiştir. İnceleme sonucunda kendilerini seküler-aydın ve muhalif olarak tanımlayan gençlerden oluşan sanal cemaat üyelerinin, imam hatip okulları özelinde (dindar gençlik) muhafazakar insanları yedi biçimde ötekileştirerek, kendilerine bir kimlik inşa ettikleri tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Din Sosyolojisi, Dindar Gençlik, Sanal Cemaatler, Ötekileştirme, Kimlik.

Summary

The aim of this study is to understand whether virtual communities that have emerged as a result of developments in communication technologies will cause marginalization. Virtual Communities are known as spending leisure time, making friends or hobby groups. Nowadays, individuals prefer to gather around virtual communities and to be in new forms of organization with similar-opinion people, due to the determining effect of space that almost disappears through virtual communication. However, as it is the subject of this study, there may be areas where a marginalization can be made due to the differences in identity and lifestyle. In this study, it is aimed to determine whether the people living in the same society marginalize people with different world views through virtual communities. For this purpose, the posts within the Imam Hatipler Kapatılsın Facebook Group, created by people who define themselves as secular, were analyzed. In this study, it is claimed that social media youth can see this area as a ground for building an identity beyond spending leisure time, sharing hobbies, finding friends or sharing individual characteristics. On the other hand, it is determined that marginalization, which is a natural result of this building process, can be realized by targeting a different group due to its specific characteristics. The real-life identities of social media users function

like an address paper in the selection of a virtual community. Therefore, virtual communities can bring people with similar mindsets and value judgments together. One consequence of this is that in virtual communities known as non-alien postmodern communities, a basis for marginalizing a certain group due to its particular characteristics is formed.

While the literature was being scanned, many current databases were scanned on the internet. As a result of this process, it was possible to reach various studies such as books, thesis and articles. Looking at the intersecting aspects of these studies, the imam hatip points to the existence of a negative perception of identity by some part of the society against the school students. Some negative perceptions in the society can be listed as the imam hatip students are introverted, integrated into a limited community rather than the general society, they are people who do not have a democratic culture and do not respect anyone but themselves. However, this negative perception of identity does not match the identity perception of imam hatip residents. Imam hatip people define themselves as intellectual, moral, not against modernization and even closely following the innovations brought about by modernization. There is no study in the literature that virtual communities, known as spending leisure time, friendship channels, and hobby groups, can actually be environments in which marginalization is made as a reflection of world views and reference frames in society. In this sense, the study is important in terms of categorically determining the existence of marginalization over identities and world views.

Content analysis was used to conceptualize the data by categorizing it in the study. Whether virtual communities will be grounds for marginalization due to differences in identity and world view constitutes the problem of the research. In the study, Imam Hatipler Kapatilsin 49 thousand 35 comments and posts in Facebook Group were subjected to content analysis. The data were analyzed twice in accordance with content analysis. Nvivo software was used to analyze the data. The two main characteristics of the chosen group are that it consists of members who define themselves as secular and they seemingly want only imam hatip schools to be closed. However, as the contents are examined, it is seen that the manifestations of the secular-conservative struggle, which started with the first period of Ottoman modernization, continued with the first years of the Republic, and became even more popular with the gaining power of the Justice and Development Party in the political field after 2002, took place in the virtual world. The group selected for research is a closed group on Facebook, and entering the group depends on a number of conditions. Some of these conditions are not to be a fake profile, not to be anti-secular and not to post religious content. When a request is made to enter the group, that profile (Facebook account) is examined by the group administrators and if it is found sufficient according to the above features, it can only be included in the group. Since the profiles and shares of the members in the group were examined at various time intervals and "cleaning" was made in the group, the contents of the group such as

comments and shares in the specified time period were transferred to the computer environment in a single database with the Nvivo software browser plug-in. With the contribution of the change and transformation accelerated by the effect of modernization and globalization in Turkish society, it has been accepted by a segment of the society that conservative people represent traditional and secular people. This distinction has created many schemas in minds. These schemes seem to have remained the same and lost their characteristics, despite the changing conservative human life over time. Such outdated schemes from the past can go as far as marginalization, a wholesale perspective and not giving opponent to live one step later. Such thoughts that seem out-of-date point to certain patterns. These do not appear to be broadly valid. In this sense, it has been determined that the members of the group, who define themselves as secular in the Facebook Group, are considered to be religious and conservative with a wholesale perspective in their own minds, and that they marginalize conservative people in seven different categories, especially for the imam hatip school youth. These categories include being seen as scapegoats, being marginalized due to religionism -religious distinction, being marginalized due to political preferences and actions, being marginalized due to differences in lifestyle and leisure activities, being seen as uncultivated-ignorant and condemned to academic failure, being seen as out-of-date, being marginalized due to low income constitute a whole. As can be seen, the categories that are formed as a result of examining the posts and comments in the Facebook group, "Imam Hatipler Kapatılsın", are expressed under seven headings. While creating these categories, 49 thousand 35 posts and comments were examined twice, resulting in the above categories. It has been observed that the posts on the Facebook group titled Imam Hatipler Kapatılsın, which is the subject of the study, and the comments made to these posts generally take place on the basis of religion, and in this interaction, the posts and comments with anti-religious content are intense.

Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı iletişim teknolojilerindeki gelişmeler sonucu ortaya çıkan sanal cemaatlerin ötekileştirmeye sebep olup olmayacağını anlamaktır. Sanal Cemaatler boş zaman geçirme, arkadaş edinme ya da hobi grupları olarak bilinmektedir. Günümüzde sanal iletişim vasıtasıyla mekânın neredeyse yok olan belirleyici etkisi sebebiyle bireyler, sanal cemaatler etrafında toplanmayı ve kendileri gibi düşünen insanlarla yeni örgütlenme tarzları içerisinde bulunmayı tercih etmektedirler. Ancak bu araştırmaya konu olduğu şekliyle kimlik ve yaşam tarzı farklılıklarından dolayı bir ötekileştirmenin yapılabileceği alanlar da olabilmektedirler. Yapılan bu çalışmada aynı toplum içerisinde yaşayan insanların sanal cemaatler aracılığıyla farklı dünya görüşünde olan insanları ötekileştirip ötekileştirmedikleri tespit edilmek istenmektedir. Bu amaçla kendilerini seküler olarak tanımlayan insanların oluşturduğu İmam Hatipler Kapatılsın Facebook Grubu içindeki gönderiler incelenmiştir. Bu çalışmada sosyal medya gençliğinin, bu

alanı boş zaman geçirme, hobi paylaşımı, arkadaş bulma ya da bireysel özelliklerini paylaşmanın ötesinde bir kimlik inşa etme zemini olarak görebildiği iddia edilmektedir. Buna karşılık bu inşa etme sürecinin doğal bir sonucu olan ötekileştirmenin, farklı bir grubu belirli özelliklerinden dolayı hedef alarak gerçekleştirebileceği tespit edilmektedir. Sosyal medya kullanıcılarının gerçek yaşamındaki kimlikleri, sanal cemaat seçiminde birer adres kâğıdı gibi işlev görmektedir. Bu nedenle sanal cemaatler benzer zihniyete ve değer yargılarına sahip insanları bir araya getirebilmektedir. Bunun bir sonucu ise insanların ötekisiz postmodern cemaatler olarak bilinen sanal cemaatlerde, belirli bir grubu belirli özelliklerinden dolayı ötekileştirmelerinin zemininin oluşmasıdır.

Literatür taranırken birçok güncel veritabanı internet ortamında taranmıştır. Bu işlem sonucunda kitap, tez ve makale olacak şekilde çeşitli çalışmalara ulaşılabilmektedir. Bu çalışmaların kesişen yönlerine bakılacak olursa imam hatip okullarına karşı toplumun bir kesimi tarafından olumsuz bir kimlik algısının varlığına işaret etmektedir. Toplumdaki olumsuz birtakım algılar, imam hatip öğrencilerinin içe kapalı bir yapıda oldukları, toplumun geneline değil de sınırlı bir topluluğa entegre oldukları, demokratik kültüre sahip olmayan, kendilerinden başkasına saygı duymayan kişiler oldukları şeklinde sıralanabilir. Ancak bu olumsuz kimlik algısı imam hatiplilerin kendi kimlik algısıyla uyuşmamaktadır. İmam hatipliler kendilerini entelektüel, ahlaklı, modernleşmeye karşı olmayan hatta modernleşmenin getirdiği yenilikleri de yakından takip eden şekilde tanımlamaktadırlar. Literatürde boş zaman geçirme, arkadaş edinme mecraları ve hobi grupları olarak bilinen sanal cemaatlerin aslında toplumda bulunan dünya görüşlerinin ve referans çerçevelerinin bir yansıması olarak ötekileştirmenin yapıldığı ortamlar olabileceğine dair bir çalışma bulunmamaktadır. Bu anlamda yapılan çalışma kimlikler ve dünya görüşleri üzerinden yapılan ötekileştirmelerin varlığını kategorisel olarak tespit etmesi açısından önemlidir.

Çalışmada verilerin kategorilere ayrılarak kavramsallaştırılmasında içerik analizi kullanılmıştır. Sanal cemaatlerin kimlik ve dünya görüşü farklılıklarından dolayı ötekileştirmenin zemini olup olmayacağı araştırmanın problemini oluşturmaktadır. Çalışmada İmam Hatipler Kapatılsın Facebook Grubundaki 49 bin 35 yorum ve gönderi içerik analizine tabi tutulmuştur. Veriler içerik analizine uygun şekilde iki defa incelenmiştir. Verilerin analizinde Nvivo yazılımı kullanılmıştır. Seçilen grubun temel iki özelliği kendisini seküler olarak tanımlayan üyelerden oluşması ve görünürde sadece imam hatip okullarının kapatılmasını istemeleridir. Ancak içerikler incelendikçe Osmanlı modernleşmesinin ilk dönemiyle başlayan, Cumhuriyetin ilk yıllarıyla devam eden ve 2002 sonrası Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi'nin siyasi alanda güç kazanmasıyla daha da popüler hale gelen seküler-muhafazakâr mücadelesinin tezahürlerinin sanal âlemde de yer almış olduğu görülmektedir. Araştırma için seçilen grup Facebook'ta kapalı bir grup olup, gruba girilmesi birtakım şartlara bağlıdır. Bu şartlardan bazıları sahte bir profil olmamak, paylaşımların laiklik karşıtı olmaması ve dini içeriklerde paylaşımlar yapmamaktır.

Gruba girmek için istekte bulunulduğunda grup yöneticileri tarafından o profil (Facebook hesabı) inceleniyor ve yukarıdaki özelliklere göre yeterli görülürse ancak gruba alınabiliyor. Çeşitli zaman aralıklarıyla gruptaki üyelerin profilleri, paylaşımları incelenip grupta “temizlik” yapıldığı için, grubun belirlenen zaman dilimindeki yorum, paylaşım gibi içerikleri Nvivo yazılımı tarayıcı eklentisiyle tek bir veritabanında bilgisayar ortamına aktarılmıştır.

Türk toplumunda modernleşmenin ve küreselleşmenin etkisiyle daha da hızlanan değişim ve dönüşümün de katkılarıyla muhafazakâr insanların gelenekseli, seküler insanların modernini temsil ettiği toplumun bir kesimi tarafından kabul görmüştür. Bu ayırım zihinlerde birçok şema oluşturmuş durumdadır. Bu şemalar geçen zaman içerisinde, değişen muhafazakâr insan yaşantılarına rağmen aynı kalmış ve özelliklerini kaybetmiş görünmektedir. Geçmişten gelen bu tarz güncel olmayan şemalar ötekileştirmelere, toptancı bir bakışa ve karşı tarafa bir adım sonra yaşama hakkı vermemeye kadar gidebilmektedir. Güncelliğini kaybetmiş görünen bu tarz düşünceler belli örüntüleri işaret etmektedir. Bunlar geneli kapsar geçerlilikte görünmemektedir. Bu anlamda incelenen İmam Hatipler Kapatılsın Facebook Grubunda kendilerini seküler olarak tanımlayan grup üyelerinin yine kendi zihin dünyasında toptancı bir bakışla dindar ve muhafazakâr olarak tanımladıkları imam hatip okullu gençler özelinde muhafazakâr insanları yedi ayrı kategoride ötekileştirdikleri tespit edilmiştir. Bu kategoriler Günah Keçisi Olarak Görülme, Dinci-Dindar Ayrımından Dolayı Ötekileştirilme, Siyasi Tercih ve Eylemlerinden Dolayı Ötekileştirilme, Yaşam Tarzı-Boş Zaman Aktiviteleri Farklılığından Dolayı Ötekileştirilme, Kültürsüz-Cahil ve Akademik Başarısızlığa Mahkûm Görülme, Düşük Gelir Düzeyinden Dolayı Ötekileştirilme, Çağ Dışı Görülme şeklinde bir bütünü oluşturmaktadır. Görüldüğü üzere İmam Hatipler Kapatılsın Facebook grubunda bulunan gönderi ve yorumların incelenmesi sonucunda oluşan kategoriler yedi başlıkla ifade edilmektedir. Bu kategoriler oluşturulurken 49 bin 35 gönderi ve yorum iki defa incelenmiş, sonuçta yukarıda bulunan kategoriler ortaya çıkmıştır. İncelemeye konu olan İmam Hatipler Kapatılsın adlı Facebook grubunda gönderilerin ve bu gönderilere yapılan yorumların genel olarak din eksenli cereyan ettiği, bu etkileşim içerisinde din karşıtı içeriklere sahip gönderilerin ve yorumların yoğun olduğu gözlemlenmiştir.

Introduction

The new social environments which emerged with the use of Internet and mobile devices as the carrier of Internet decreased the determinant characteristics of time and place including the human relationships and manners of organizations; therefore, the manner of organizing the social area and communication methods were shaped through the social networks. As one of the new social environments and new organization methods formed by communication technologies, virtual congregations are defined as the virtual areas where people gather to spend free time,

have fun and interact through common interests, and they may be formed as people with certain world view gather.

The world view of one reflects one's ideology and referential environment, and the identities that set people/groups/societies apart from the others are also represented in virtual congregations and get reaction on the social media based on the historical and social backgrounds as well as the transformations of the world. Interactions and intersections between different world views are experienced, and as users represent the identities that differ from one another with their grounds and reception, they consider different subjects and objects as the others, with "marginal" attitudes seen in their perceptions and attitudes. One of the fields including marginalization in social media is the marginalization between religious and secular youngsters. This study focuses on the marginalization toward the youngsters who define themselves regular by the secular youngsters, with the assessment of the Facebook group named Imam Hatips Should be Closed.

In his study entitled "Imam Hatip Figures in the Social Media: Reflections on the Collective Identity Discourse", Macit states that a minority among the people who are not Imam Hatip High School graduates uses positive expressions toward Imam Hatip graduates and shows them as positive social actors (smart, companionable, begrudged), that most of the people other than that minority make generalization and reflect Imam Hatip graduates as negative social actors (socio-politically active but personally passive, interested in politics and helped by the authorities), that non-Imam Hatip graduates define them as those who make great efforts to take a position and become rooted at anywhere, joining staff of every governmental bodies, taking the country back to dark ages, and being the background of outdated ideologies, and that non-Imam Hatip graduates assign adverse titles to Imam Hatip graduates such as the ruins of coup, while using terms such as inveigling, outdated, subjects of exploitation and hypocrisy. Macit also adds that these terms significantly contradict with how Imam Hatip graduates define themselves as well as the identity Imam Hatip graduates have. This study is important in terms of indicating the presence of marginalization, particularly against the Imam Hatip graduates on the social media. The virtual congregation patterns formed upon the gathering of the members of the aforementioned Facebook group, which suggests the traits of marginalizing a certain opposing group, indicate a congregation-alike movement style that goes beyond the singular thoughts in the study by Macit.¹

In the study "From Traditionalism to Conservative Modernity': The Case of Imam Hatip Schools" the data of which were collected from two field studies conducted in 1997 and 2009, it was claimed that the modernist, secular and religious

¹ Mustafa Macit, "Sosyal Medyada 'İmam Hatipli' Temsilleri: Kolektif Bir Kimlik Söylemindeki Sosyal Bilişsel İzdüşümler", *Kimlik ve Din*, ed. Abdullah Özbek - Mustafa Macit (Adana: Karahan Kitabevi, 2016), 110-120.

attitudes of female and male students in Imam Hatip Schools were affected by the economic-cultural and political transformations of Turkey, and that the direction of this transformation changed from radical-traditionalism to conservative-modernity. This result is critical in terms of showing that Imam Hatip High School Students were not independent from time and place and that they were affected by the politic-economic and cultural changes of the society they lived in. ² Furthermore, a homogeneous subject is out of question in regard to the Imam Hatip graduates who were marginalized in the aforementioned virtual congregation. However, the collective identity assumes a fictional identity where it defines the opposing party as homogeneous to make its own traits more distinctive.

Certain negative perceptions against the Imam Hatip students are that Imam Hatip students have an introverted characteristic, that they are integrated to a certain society rather than the entire society, that they do not have a democratic culture and that they do not respect anybody other than themselves. Nevertheless, 87.6% of the participants in the research entitled “Perception Toward Imam Hatip High Schools and Students” had no students of Imam Hatip High Schools among their first grade relatives. Moreover, of the participants in that research, 62% selected “Disagree” for the item “Imam Hatip High Schools should be closed”, while 17.9% selected “Neutral” for this item, indicating that more than half of these participants reported positive thoughts for Imam Hatip High Schools. Almost all participants believed that Imam Hatip High Schools should provide other courses as much as religious ones. According to the results of this research, the perception toward Imam Hatip High Schools students was as follows: Imam Hatip High School students were respectful toward national and spiritual values, agreeable, ethical, sharing and helpful people who would not commit terror crime.³

In the study entitled “Secular Dilemma Regarding Imam Hatip High Schools”, Mermutlu (2008, 92-96) stated that the profiles of students who enrolled at Imam Hatip High Schools changed following the abolishment of coefficient procedure and that most of the students in these schools were those who came to these schools to enroll at university faculties other than theology in future. Furthermore, these developments paved the way for having more earthly characteristics for Imam Hatip High School students and that they saw the secular section of the society against them in their efforts to secularize themselves. The same study associated the aforementioned result with the reasons that Imam Hatip High School students did not live independently from the society, that they were also affected by the recent changes in

² Mustafa Kemal Coşku - Burcu Şentürk, “Gelenekçilikten Muhafazakar Modernliğe: İmam Hatip Okulları Örneği”, *Mülkiye Dergisi* 34/268 (2010), 255-262.

³ Mehmet Ali Aydemir, “Türkiye’de İmam Hatip/li Algısı: Bazı Göstergeler Bağlamında Sosyolojik Bir Değerlendirme”, *Talim: Journal of Education in Muslim Societies and Communities* 1 (2017), 6-17.

the Turkish society, and that the identity of these schools was misunderstood by both conservative and secular sections.⁴

The study entitled "Identity of Religious Youth in the Social Media: The Case of İhlsözlük" reflects that Imam Hatip High School students became more subjective due to critical ideology. The group identity in the aforementioned study conducted with the motto "İhlsözlük is the virtual congregation of the religious youth" was defined by the users with the following explanations regarding ihlsözlük: "being ethical", "Imam Hatip soul" and "intellectual environment". While building this identity, the emphasis of "intellectual environment" is critical in terms of ihlsözlük members defining themselves. This intellectual environment creates an area where the religious youngsters can express their critical thoughts, shaping their subjective attitudes. The subjective attitudes found in that study included the criticism toward modernism, traditions, traditional Muslimhood, religious abuse, acts of exalting the government, Islamification, culture of emulation, questioning-based Muslimhood, emphasis on freedom, and argument of Islam.⁵ As can be understood from the subjective approaches of the authors of this platform, these points which are also self-criticisms from different perspectives are the objections against many governmental or authoritarian reflections and basic criticisms with transformative impact, which suggests that the marginalization categories found in the aforementioned Facebook group have a fictional basis for the establishment of an identity.

In the doctoral thesis which is entitled "Role of Imam Hatip Schools in the Political Socialization Process: A Study on Graduates" and aimed to assess the impact of people on political socialization through the Imam Hatip High Schools, Türköz (2020, 153-212) presented relevant field study results and found that 68.4% of the sample did not plan working as a religious official after graduation. The mean income of the sample in that study which consisted of 450 people was 4,414.66 Lira. Considering the fact that more than 70% of the sample were university graduates or students, participants were above the country standards in terms of awareness of their political selections and attitudes. Another result of that study was that 53% Imam Hatip High School students did not value political views while selecting a spouse, which suggests that Imam Hatip High School graduates had an ideology that was open to other views. Of the participants, 91.1% selected "No" to the item "Do you regularly participate in the activities of a political party?" That study shows that Imam Hatip High School graduates cannot be considered as the back yard of a political party. Nevertheless, 67.3% of the sample voted for the Justice and Development Party in the elections dated 24 June 2018. Most of participants voted for the same party during the elections dated 31 March 2019, although this rate fell to 64.5%, which suggests that Imam Hatip High School graduates had the potential

⁴ Bedri Mermutlu, "İmam-Hatip Liselerinin Seküler Açmazı", *Akademik Araştırmalar Dergisi* 38 (2008), 92-96.

⁵ Abdullah Özbolat, "İhlsözlük'te Dindar Gençliğin Özneleşmesi: İmam Hatipli, Ahlaklı ve Entelektüel", *Kimlik ve Din*, Abdullah Özbolat - Mustafa Macit (Adana: Karahan Kitabevi, 2016), 201-211.

of making different political preferences at different times. In the same study, the identity regarding Imam Hatip High School students were defined as “conservative, rightist, religious, patriot and idealist as well as neutral to modernization and interested in the innovations of modernization”. Accordingly, there were “idealism-related” differences between the old and new graduates. As new-generation graduates are more comfortable with technology compared to the old graduates, they got to learn the globalized world and such developments adversely affected the Islamic, ideological and mental development of new-generation Imam Hatip High School students.⁶

1. Virtual Congregations as a Reflection of Real Life for the Establishment of Collective Youth Identity

Human relationships and interaction orders gained a new form with the impact of modern communicational technologies, and a new era began. The dimension as well as the form of communication changed with the modern communication technologies providing the support of multiple environment, affecting the current social order deeply and resulting in a transformation. Virtual interaction and virtual networks caused the social structure to have a new form following the verbal and written culture and face-to-face relationships.⁷ Social relationships were generally believed to be associated with spaces. This association was also understood as the social relationships including neighboring and family relationships. However, following the developments in mobile phones and Internet technologies, the possibility of developing social relationships with no dependence on space became an agenda item, which also evoked the topic of new network of relationships where spatial as well as space-free social relationships are present. The role of Internet technologies is important for these new network of relationships⁸. Due to the determinant impact of space which is almost extinct owing to the modern virtual communication instruments, people prefer to gather within virtual congregations and be around the people with similar ideologies in the new forms of organization.

Virtual congregations are one of the areas as the form of congregation preferred by the people who escape from the modern and isolate themselves from the society. It is claimed that the values lost in the real world can be re-accessed within the borders of the virtual reality and that new forms of congregations that will

⁶ Şükrü Türköz, *Siyasal Toplumsallaşma Sürecinde İmam Hatip Liselerinin Rolü: Mezunlar Üzerine Bir Araştırma* (Konya: Selçuk Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Doktora Tezi, 2020), 153-212.

⁷ Orhan Çiftçi vd. “İletişim Teknolojileriyle Değişen Örgütlenme Biçimleri: Sanal Topluluklar”, *The Turkish Online Journal of Design, Art and Communication* 7/2 (2017), 330.

⁸ Barry Wellman - Milena Gulia, “Virtual Communities as Communities: Net Surfers Don’t Ride Alone”, *Communities in Cyberspace*, ed. M. A. Smith vd. (b.y.: y.y. 2005), 168-169.

show interest toward one another can be formed with these new instruments.⁹ With the motivation of finding the comfort of collective identity formed by congregation-alike organizations as well as finding the their protected area in the virtual congregations, people focus on such virtual relationships.

Indicating the definition of a personal or social entity by associating the self with another subject or entity, identity can also be defined from various perspectives. In terms of people, identity reflects how the particular traits of one can be separated on a social ground or in a group, and it indicates the separation of a social group or society from the others that are not alike.¹⁰ Accordingly, social identity can be perceived to have a significant role in terms of understanding who are present in the aforementioned group and who are outside the group or considered as the others.

Drawing attention to this role, Coşkun states that people internalize certain values that affect their identities in the period of socialization. As a result, people adopt the world of the others in parallel to adapting to their attitudes and roles because every role reflects a world. Accordingly, such an interaction is a form of dedifferentiation. People internalize the model person for themselves, considering their actions as an example, and they share their world by doing so. This internalization and dedifferentiation may result in a sort of homogeneity and formation of a stereotype against the people or groups who are largely considered as the others.¹¹ According to Yapıcı, people get involved in many natural and contractual groups from the beginning to the end of their lives, making efforts to maintain their lives. They divide their social environment and the identity they gain from these groups into categories, perceiving the people around with certain positive or negative stereotypes. This perception emerges in a subjective manner in general.

12

Identity is important in terms of determining the positions and statuses of people in a social system. It is present in an intersection that corresponds to the lifestyle like the value judgments, referential environment and beliefs.¹³ It also presents road maps covering the movement styles and patterns of a group lifestyle against the inferences based on conflicts and bias.

In addition to these distinctive and guiding traits, identity also brings people closer to one another and helps them gather. The collective identity present in congregation-alike organizations can ensure the aforementioned point. This identity aims to increase self-esteem. One of the elements that can ensure this is the sense of

⁹ Kevin Robins, *İmaj: Görmenin Kültür ve Politikası*, çev. Nurçay Türkoğlu (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2013), 168.

¹⁰ Ünver Günay, *Din Sosyolojisi* (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2011), 418-419.

¹¹ Ali Coşkun, "Din ve Kimlik", *Marmara Üniverrssitesi İlähiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 24 (2003), 13.

¹² Asım Yapıcı, *Din Kimlik ve Önyargı Biz ve Onlar* (Adana: Karahan Kitabevi, 2004), 1-2.

¹³ İbrahim Akkaş, "Çok Yüzlü İlişkiler Ağında Kimlikler ve Sanal Cemaatler", *Düzce Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 3/2 (2016), 40-41.

belonging. It should be noted that collective identities will result in unity and integration. In this form, identity helps maintain the social relationships and serves as the intermediary element keeping people together.¹⁴

The section that uses the Internet the most for purposes such as socialization or amusement etc. is the youth. The anonymous environment of the Internet results in freedom and causes the identity to be more flexible thanks to the capability to be rebuilt. As a result, an inconsistent identity structure may be formed in the virtual environment. Youngsters may join the virtual congregations and create new social formations. It seems important due to reflecting the characteristics of virtual environments that shape the identities.¹⁵

However, the identity structure which becomes experimental is not desired in the virtual congregations formed in line with world views because the posts shared and liked by the members of such groups should not contradict with the mentality of the congregation which these people are a member of. Interactions and the possibility to be followed on Facebook result in this self-control occurring in an easier manner.

The intra-group pressure naturally vanishes in the virtual congregations that contain homogeneous interactions. In these environments with no group pressure, people gain the opportunity to reflect their true identity with full clarity. People who cannot express themselves correctly for the purpose of being approved by others or not making anybody unhappy may establish a relationship with their true sides on the virtual environments¹⁶, which enables basic marginalization arguments regarding the marginalized group to be observed more clearly in line with the real life.

Perşembe noted that the process of establishing an identity became dependent on mass communication instruments, that local information met with different data and exchange of information occurred, that the borders of accessing information expanded when compared to previous times, that people who lived a spatial life could witness remote experiences thanks to Internet and that this witnessing period helped define the personal and group identity and activated the desire of communicating with the people with similar ideologies. It is clear that online virtual congregations that pave the way for specific human groups may contain marginalization to make the group identity more distinctive (congregational).¹⁷

Users of the virtual environment may join random groups, but they prefer the groups suiting their already-built identities in the virtual world. In this form, identity

¹⁴ Sibel Karaduman, "Modernizmden Postmodernizme Kimliğin Yapısal Dönüşümü", *Journal of Yasar University* 5/17 (2010), 2887.

¹⁵ Gülten Kır, *İnternet ve Gençlik* (İzmir: Şenocak Yayınları, 2008), 17.

¹⁶ Akkaş, "Çok Yüzlü İlişkiler Ağında Kimlikler ve Sanal Cemaatler", 52.

¹⁷ Erkan Perşembe, "Enformasyon Toplumunda Cemaatler: Sanal mı, Gerçek mi?", *Muhafazakar Düşünce Dergisi* 2 (2004), 34-40.

gains a form showing us where to turn on the social environment like an address paper, which inevitable draws attention to the presence of the “other” needed to make the real-life identities more distinctive.

The role played by the sense of belonging to a group in the separation between us and others is important for understanding the current marginalization patterns. The sense of belonging plays a role in determining the others, ones who are not with us, and us, i.e. the people with common aspects. The discrimination of us and others, which is important for forming an identity, occurs by associating those like us or resembling to us with positive traits, and those without our characteristics with adverse traits.¹⁸

Although it was believed that distances would disappear, people would get closer and optimistic tables would emerge with the developing communication technology, people instead got inclined to become polarized. The promise of multi-cultural life by the post-modernism against the universalist modernism resulted in separation, polarization and a distinctive discrimination of “us” and “others”. Identities established on the grounds of difference become distinctive as much as the others are emphasized. As a result, every different identity group drift apart from the “others” with the belief that they can only trust in their own group elements, becoming alienated to the society.¹⁹ Such an alienation paves the way for the alienation and polarization in virtual congregations based on the worldview, in a similar manner to the real world. A person or a group needs another one which has different traits and which they can assign adverse characteristics to define their limits. The negative traits assigned to the others help the identity become more distinctive and the people get more comfortable by assigning certain negativities to the others. Furthermore, they continue protecting their social order by assigning the negativities of the system to the others who display attitudes threatening the social order and deserve what they experience in a negative context.²⁰

People convey their thoughts, perspectives and patterns related to their world views, which they obtained in traditional societies, to the virtual world, and they gather with the people with similar ideologies in the cyber environment, consolidating their feelings and forming virtual societies.²¹ Such relationships are also conveyed to the virtual environment which is the continuation of polarizations with cultural and historical background.

¹⁸ Karaduman, “Modernizmden Postmodernizme Kimliğin Yapısal Dönüşümü”, 2010, 2888.

¹⁹ Senem Sönmez Selçuk, “Postmodern Dönemde Farklılığın Kutsanması ve Toplumun Parçacılaştırılması: Öteki ve Ötekileştirme”, *Sosyoloji Araştırmaları Dergisi* 15/2 (2012), 91-92.

²⁰ Sibel Karaduman, “Modernizmden Postmodernizme Kimliğin Yapısal Dönüşümü”, 2889.

²¹ Çiftçi vd., “İletişim Teknolojileriyle Değişen Örgütlenme Biçimleri: Sanal Topluluklar”, 334.

2. The Method and Dimensions of Marginalization

Religion and religious people are considered as the primary element and subjects that are the obstacles before achieving the target of modernization set in the early days of the Republic. Religion is regarded as an element worsening the society from a cultural, financial and social perspective, rather than ensuring developments. Thus, Imam Hatip High Schools, which have been institutionalized by religiousness in the governmental structure, are positioned in the focal point of the conflict between seculars and conservatives in Turkey. The secular section of the Turkish society does not want the presence of religious education in the secular governmental structure, but this section also remains silent against the violations of right suffered by these schools. Consequently, Imam Hatip High Schools became a symbol in the eyes of the conservative people. Owing to these reasons, the Facebook group “Imam Hatips Should be Closed” was examined in the study.

The two main traits of this group is that it consists of people who define themselves secular and apparently want the Imam Hatip High Schools to be closed. However, as the contents are examined, it can be understood that the reflections of the conflict between the seculars and conservatives, which started with the modernization of the Ottoman Empire, continued during the early years of the Republic and became more popular as the Justice and Development Party came to power in 2002, are also present in the virtual environment.

The “other” that the group selected to reflect its own identity is Imam Hatip High Schools, which is a significant aspect. These schools were not only considered as places of education, but also as a castle attacked by the secular section and defended by the conservative people, which suggests the presence of two opposing groups (ideologies). Therefore, the group selected is believed to suit the context of the study.

Objective and observable events have different meanings for different perpetrators as well as different observers. Interpretation is the first method to utilize to understand these meanings.²² In addition to the process of interpretation, the sensitivity of qualitative research to the natural environment contributes to this variety, and repeating a qualitative research does not seem to be possible as finding the same study setting in another study is not possible. Therefore, qualitative researches do not have certain repetitive data analysis strategies and study pattern which are specific to certain groups, and these strategies and patterns in every qualitative research.²³

The group selected for the study was a closed one on Facebook, and joining the group was subject to certain conditions Some of these conditions included having

²² Philipp Mayring, *Nitel Sosyal Araştırmaya Giriş* (Ankara: Bilge Su, 2011), 28.

²³ Ali Yıldırım - Hasan Şimşek, *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri* (Ankara: Seçkin Yayıncılık, 2013), 49-50.

no fake profile, no anti-secular posts, and no pro-religion posts. When a request to join the group was sent, the profile of the requestor (Facebook account) was examined, and the person was accepted only if he/she met the aforementioned conditions. The profiles and posts of group members were examined at certain intervals, which was a sort of “cleaning” in the group and which required the contents in the group such as comments or posts to be collected in a single database using the browser add-on called Nvivo. There were comments and posts between the members of this group in the study. While examining these interactions, no separation was made in terms of education, age groups or gender. While determining the data to be examined, efforts were made to prefer the data from the period between 22.07.2016 and 20.04.2017. It was believed that the intra-group interactions could be presented more clearly as they covered both the 15 July 2016 coup attempt and the agenda regarding the referendum dated 17 April 2017. Efforts were made to analyze the posts and comments of the members using the content analysis method.

While analyzing the data in a qualitative study, descriptive and content analysis can be used. Concepts and themes are formed for explaining the data that can be examined more closely with content analysis while performing descriptive analysis for the data that do not require in-depth analysis. In both analysis types, researchers have to perform description, and while performing a description, they need to exclude their own comments. Researchers may reflect their comments and explanations only after the phase of description.²⁴

Categorical analysis is one of the content analysis methods. In categorization, previously defined categories can be used or a new category system can be developed.²⁵ Data within the group examined in the present study were assessed, and new categories were developed.

2.1. Frequency Count Table

Table 1: Frequency Count Table

Term	Frequency	Weighted Percentage (%)
imam	1466	0.48
Atatürk	841	0.28
hatips	822	0.27
Allah	698	0.23
peasant	516	0.17
should be closed	504	0.17

²⁴ Yıldırım - Şimşek, *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri*, 96-97.

²⁵ Nuri Bilgin, *Sosyal Bilimlerde İçerik Analizi Teknikler ve Örnek Çalışmalar* (Ankara: Siyasal Kitabevi, 2014), 19.

already	494	0.16
yours	476	0.16
secular	432	0.14
all	382	0.13

The posts in the Facebook group, which was also founded to gather secular and religious people indicates that four out of ten most-frequently used terms included religious concepts directly or indirectly. Table 1 indicated that the names “Ataturk” and “Allah” were among the five most-frequently used terms, and that frequency values of these two names were very close to one another. These names seem to be important in terms of understanding the focal points of discussions within this group. Marginalizing terms such as “already”, “all”, “you or yours” were among the ten most frequently-used terms, which suggests that virtual congregations cannot be established based on only similar interests, and that these organizations can be established to make a specific identity more distinctive and to marginalize the opposing group due to their certain characteristics such as lifestyle, belief or political ideology.

2.2. Content Analysis

Approximately 49,035 comments and posts shared by the members and administrators of the Facebook group in the study between the dates of 22.07.2016 and 20.04.2017 were examined, and it was found that the people present in this virtual congregation group marginalized the conservative people, particularly the Imam Hatip High School graduates as the opposing group, in seven different forms. These forms or categories are as follows: being considered as the scapegoat, being marginalized due to the separation of religionist-religious, being marginalized owing to political reasons and actions, being marginalized owing to different lifestyle-spare time activities, being considered to be uncultured-ignorant and unable to escape from academic failure, being marginalized owing to low income level, and being considered to be old school.

As understood from the results, the categories which were formed following the assessment of the posts and comments in the Facebook group examined in the study are collected under seven categories. While forming these categories, 49,035 posts and comments were examined twice, and the categories above were formed consequently. The posts shared in the aforementioned Facebook group and comments made under these posts were generally religious and that anti-religious posts and comments were plenty in these interactions.

It was also observed that all incidents in Turkey ranging from the murdering of women, increased crime rate and worse economic statuses to the occurrence of cultural corruption were associated with the conservative people, indicating these were their responsibilities. This suggests a marginalization style that can be assessed

as being considered as the scape goat, which is reflected in the intra-group comments as follows: *“As they utilize anything for their own targets and as we are worsening in the last 15 years, #NO”, “Our women are dying, and their murderers are freed. I do not even mention the decline in the economic status. They utilize the religion, gain favors from others and gain votes by abusing the reforms of Ataturk who made efforts to prevent these back then. These bigots remain silent when they see their religion is used as a promotional material, but they do not hesitate to show reaction when they see some young people drinking at somewhere.*

Individual religiousness, which was believed to suit the secular lifestyle, was observed to be perceived positively by the group. Being considered as the representation of religion affecting and even shaping the life, religionism was considered abnormal, with the conservatives shown as the representatives of religionism, which was entitled *“Marginalization Based on the Separation Between Religionism and Religiousness”*. The following comments were made in this regard: *“Ataturk was a Muslim (religious one). Ataturk was against the exploiters of the religion, not the religion itself. Secularism actually reflected the essence of Islam. It is actually living per Quran. Islam values women and objects to those who use the religion to exploit others. It is the religion of tolerance. There is no obligation. You can either join or leave. Therefore, the action of removing the article “The religion of the country is Islam” is based on this approach. Atatürk practiced a better Muslimhood than we imagined but he did not leave not many personal religious details to the following generations.”* Another comment *“Praying, helping poor people, and reading Quran has become the trendy manners of advertisement in Turkey”* indicates that what is normal between the separation of religious-religionist is that religion should stay as an element concerning the internal thoughts and feelings of one and directing one’s life rather than influencing the life in an earthly manner, and that the contrary is not normal and thus should be corrected.

Marginalization due to political preferences and actions will be more meaningful if assessed from the perspective of being considered to be uncultured-ignorant and unable to escape from academic failure and being considered as the scapegoat. As the opposing group is ignorant and uncultured, people of that group cannot make preferences and selections as individuals and act as a herd of sheep. As a result, their preferences are determined by the government and the country becomes worse owing to the failure of this opposing group in making their own decisions. Members of the Facebook group examined in the study stated that the conservative people, particularly the Imam Hatip High Schools which should not even exist according to them as understood from the name of the group, gained greater visibility and effectiveness after 2002 and their positions and opportunities not because they deserved with their efforts but because they displayed devotion to the leading party, and they made the following comments: *“Why do they keep on praising this guy? What are his achievements? What they only mention is roads and similar stuff as achievement. Roads of Turkey are even worse than those of a German village. They also mention hospitals or universities. These facilities would be already built regardless of who leads the country. They give us an appointment for a later date, if we are lucky that day. I*

wish people would remove their blinders off and see what is happening around them. This guy is contradicting with what he previously said; why do they keep on believing in him? They watch "A news. Okay, they can do so but instead of watching just one channel, they should also watch fox news and other non-partisan channels, and they should read different newspapers."

The comments made by the members in the group indicated that they emphasized people's freedom of getting dressed and acting however they liked or doing whatever they wished, with this emphasis being made through secularism. However, while assessing the comments on conservative people's dressing style, tv series people watched or other collective activities, the same sensitivity was not showed for the conservative people, and the greatest difference between the opposing conservatives and this group was the freedom of acting freely as understood from the comments. The female members of the conservative section seen as the opposing group represented the malevolence, failure and a human type whose life was pre-determined owing to wearing hijab.

Group members defined the members of the opposing marginalized group as those who did not read and know arts, and lacked aesthetics and scientific knowledge. As understood from their comments, they stigmatized all conservative people, particularly those associated with Imam Hatip High Schools, as ignorant and uncultured. Another point to be highlighted is that the conservative group was considered ignorant not only from an intellectual perspective. Religionist people were noted to be both intellectually and religiously ignorant, being uninterested and ignorant toward the religious practices.

Following the general elections of 2002, Justice and Development Party came to power, and it is safe to state that the conservative people have financially prospered from then on, which was from time to time criticized by the conservative section itself as they also felt their prosperity. Nevertheless, the comments in the aforementioned group were assessed, and no comments mentioning and criticizing this prosperity among the conservative people were found. On the contrary, comments of most members indicated that conservatives with poor financial statuses were named "submissive sheep herd" as they accepted their statuses and admitted their poor living conditions.

The schemas that were formed in accordance with certain political developments from the era when the Republic was proclaimed got involved later. Although there are certain conservative people who criticize themselves due to having luxurious cars and expensive stuff, the comments in this Facebook group reflected these people as the "Peasants" who drove Fiat Doblo, did shopping in Bim rather than Migros as Bim was cheaper, who lived in Esenler rather than Kadıköy, and who were devoted to a certain political ideology in a blinded manner, showing orientations of marginalization.

According to the members of this group who considered themselves as the soldiers of Atatürk, Ottoman Empire and Turkey were two different states with no association and therefore, the time before 1923 should not be considered when the term “past” was used. As understood from the comments, symbolic representations of the Ottoman Empire disturbed the members to a significant degree. As an example, they showed reactions to the people who attached the stickers of Ottoman Tughra on the rear side of their cars (Fiat Doblo in particular). Furthermore, people who used these symbols one way or another in their lives were named “peasant” and classified bad and abnormal. From a different perspective, although these marginalization activities targeted Imam Hatip High School students and conservative sections and although conservative people seemed to become more modern and be able to keep up with the modern life, it is safe to state that the Facebook group examined in the study named the opposing group outdated.

Conclusion

New social environments have emerged with Internet and mobile instruments getting involved in our lives. The restrictive impact of time and place on the human relationships and organization manners has almost vanished. Many organization and communication forms can be found on the social networks. Before such developments in communication technologies, people were affected by the restrictive side of the physical world. However, the new communication technologies created new social areas, going beyond these limitations. One of the new organization manners present within these social areas is the virtual congregations.

According to the general belief, virtual congregations are the virtual environments where people gather to spend their spare time, have fun and interact upon their interests. However, virtual congregations can be formed with these purposes and with the gathering of people with a certain world view. The identities of people who gather in such manners may be like an address paper for others with the same ideologies.

The identity which may separate a group from the others may direct people in joining which virtual congregation. Virtual congregations provide the people with similar world view the ability to gather without the limitation of space and time. Accordingly, the question of whether the virtual congregations bring the people with similar world view and cause marginalization against the others comes to mind.

As a result of our modernization efforts following the proclamation of the Republic, a certain section of the society accepts that conservative people represent the traditions while seculars represent the modernity, with the contributions of changes and transformations gaining pace following the increased globalization in the last decades. This discrimination created many schemas in people’s minds. Just like a comment that is made to a picture, that stays the same and thus loses its

characteristics when the picture changes, these schemas stayed the same despite the lives of conservative people who changed in time, and they lost their specific characteristics. These outdated schemas from the past may result in marginalization, a holistic perspective, and even granting no right to live to the opposing party. These ideas may succeed in reflecting certain patterns, but they do not seem to cover the general. Accordingly, the people who were present in this virtual congregation group and defined themselves secular marginalized the conservative people, particularly the Imam Hatip High School students, in seven different categories with a holistic approach in their mentality. These forms or categories constitute an entirety as follows: being considered as the scapegoat, being marginalized due to the separation of religionist-religious, being marginalized owing to political reasons and actions, being marginalized owing to different lifestyle-spare time activities, being considered to be uncultured-ignorant and unable to escape from academic failure, being marginalized owing to low income level, and being considered to be old school.

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A Quran Hero for Youngsters: Zayd as the Only Sahabah Mentioned in Quran (V: H:8/M:629)*

Ali AKPINAR**

Abstract

There are countless subtleties includes some significant purposes in the narrations of the Wise Book. As its message is universal and everyone who reads it finds himself in its stories told, The Qur'an does not mention place and person names too much. However, sometimes it gives place to some names for very specific reasons and wisdom. For instance, any woman's name other than Meryem is not mentioned clearly in the Qur'an. There are many verses about the first addressees in the Qur'an, but except the name of the Prophet, only Zayd's name is clearly mentioned. Among the polytheists of the period when the Qur'an was revealed, only Abū Lahab's cognomen is clearly mentioned.

In this article, the short biography of Zayd, one of the names clearly mentioned in the Qur'an, and the reason and wisdom of his name will be discussed, the verses about Zayd will be touched, among these verses, especially the verse whose name is clearly mentioned will be analyzed. In this way, the personality of the hero of the Qur'an will be revealed in a guiding aspect to today's youth in particular and to all humanity in general.

Keywords: Qur'an, Zayd b. Hārise, Name, Companion, Wisdom.

Gençlere Örnek Bir Kur'ân Kahramanı: Kur'ân'da İsmi Geçen Tek Sahabî Hz. Zeyd (V: H:8/M:629)

Öz

Hikmetli kitabın anlatımlarında sayısız mesaj yüklü incelikler vardır. Kur'ân, mesajının evrensel olması, okuyan herkesin kendisini anlatılan kıssaların içerisinde bulması gibi hikmetlere mebnî olarak yer ve şahıs isimlerini çok fazla zikretmez. Ancak bazen de çok özel sebep ve hikmetler için bazı isimlere yer verir. Sözelimi Kur'ân'da Hz. Meryem'den başka kadın ismi açıkça geçmez. Kur'ân'da ilk muhataplarla ilgili pek çok ayet vardır, ancak

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A Quran Hero for Youngsters: Zayd as the Only Sahabah Mentioned in Quran

onlardan Hz. Peygamber'in ismi dışında yalnızca Hz. Zeyd'in ismi açıkça geçer. Kur'ân'ın indiği dönem müşriklerinden de yalnızca Ebû Leheb künyesi açıkça geçer.

Bu yazıda Kur'ân'ın açıkça andığı isimlerden biri olan Hz. Zeyd'in kısa özgeçmişi, isminin anılma sebep ve hikmeti üzerinde durulacak, Hz. Zeyd ile ilgili ayetlere temas edilecek, bu ayetlerden özellikle isminin açıkça geçtiği ayetin tahlili yapılacaktır. Bu şekilde bir Kur'ân kahramanının şahsiyeti, özelde günümüz gençlerine, genelde tüm insanlığa mesaj verici yönüyle ortaya konulacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kur'ân, Hz. Zeyd b. Hârise, İsim, Sahabi, Hikmet.

Summary

The Qur'an defines itself as the wise Qur'an: Yâ-Sîn, By the Quran, full of Wisdom! (Ya-Sin 36/1-2) Because it is the word of Almighty Allah, who has countless wisdom every time he says and acts. The revelation of the Book is from God, the Almighty, the Wise. (az-Zumar 39/1, al-Ghafir 40/2, al-Jathiyah 45/2, al-Ahkaf 46/2) The duty of the reader of the Quran is to investigate its wisdom and reveal them in proportion to his power. As the wisdoms of the Quran are understood, its uniqueness will be understood better, faith in it will become stronger and this strong faith will lead the interlocutors to fulfill the requirements of the Divine message. This will be possible by reading in depth.

While the Quran presents parables that happened before its revelation and what happened in the revelation period, it tells them in exemplary aspects without going into detail. Because he doesn't want his message to be lost in the details. As a matter of fact, he does not tell the events he describes in chronological order and from beginning to end, but rather in sections with message-giving aspects. For example, in the story of Moses, which is mostly described in the Quran, life story isn't told from the birth of Moses to his death. And his parable is presented in sections in different suras. The story of Joseph, which is described as the most beautiful of the stories, is also similar. For example, in that story, Joseph's family life and his struggle for tawhid after becoming a prophet are not explained in detail. For the same reason, the Qur'an does not include too many names of places and persons in its narratives. However, from time to time, the Quran mentions place and person names to prove that what it tells happened in real life. This method of expression also enables what is told to become concrete in the minds. In addition to the names of many prophets, the name of Mary, the only woman mentioned in the Qur'an, and the name Zayd, the only companion mentioned among the people of the period when Qur'an was revealed, are also quite remarkable. Mary is the only woman whose name is mentioned in the Quran, and Zayd is the only Companion whose name is mentioned in the Quran. There is a lot of wisdom in both presentations.

Although our tafsirs give extensive information about the wisdom of the mention of Mary's name in the Quran many times, they do not dwell on the wisdom of the mention of Zayd's name. Perhaps this was because of the mention of the name of Mary thirty-four times as a woman and the mention of Zayd once. However, even if it occurs once in the Quran, every word and every subject is worth focusing on and researching. Besides, although his name is not clearly mentioned, there are other verses were revealed about Zayd. There are verses sent down about other Companions, but the fact that Zayd's name is clearly mentioned makes him different from the others.

In this article, we will try to reveal the example of this beautiful person that sheds light on everyone young and old, male and female, with his beauty in childhood, youth and maturity by emphasizing the wisdom of Zayd's name being clearly mentioned. For this reason, we will try to explain the wisdom in the mention of the name of Zayd after summarizing the wisdom of the mention of name of Mary, who is the only woman mentioned in the Quran, in the verses.

Of course, every subject discussed in the Quran is important, and every name mentioned by the Quran is worth emphasizing. However, if this name is, like Zayd, has served the Prophet Muhammad since his early ages, was one of the first of those who believed in him, played a role in determining many religious rulings, and after living a life full of Islamic beauties, emigrated from this world as a martyr at the front, it will be of particular importance. Zayd was a person who entered the Prophet Muhammad's service at the age of eight and showed his foresight and strength saying I would not prefer Muhammad to anyone to his father who came to take him with his uncles when he was a young man at the age of fifteen. The fact that he was one of the first Muslims at the age of twenty-nine is another indicator of his prudence. After living a fertile life full of virtues such as sincerity, loyalty, prudence, foresight, wisdom, courage, sacrifice, compassion and surrender, leaving this world as a martyr at the age of fifties is a special grace of Almighty Allah for that beautiful person.

Zayd is a person with many attributes who has been a servant of the Prophet from childhood until the end of his life, his only companion in his migration to Taif, son of the Prophet Muhammad before adoption was banned, Hamza's brother in the Mecca era of Islam and in the Madinah period, Useyd b. Hudayr's brother, the servant of the Prophet who brought his family to Madinah in the Migration, herald of victory after the battle of Badr, a benefactor who has received the praise of the Prophet with his good deeds, the flag-bearer of the muhajirs in the Battle of the Trench, commander in many battles, commander-in-chief in the last war he was martyred, father of Usama, the commander appointed by the Prophet on his deathbed; actively participated in determining religious provisions such as prohibition of adoption, marrying the woman divorced by adopted person. Zayd is a person who was promoted from slavery to Prophet's commandership and finally to martyrdom. In addition to the thirty-seventh verse of Surat al-Ahzab, in which

A Quran Hero for Youngsters:
Zayd as the Only Sahabah Mentioned in Quran

his name is clearly mentioned in the Quran, there are other verses regarding him. They will also be mentioned in the article.

Recognition of heroes like Zeyd is of great importance in today's world, where beautiful role models are highly needed. Because Zayd's example is an example that guides everyone and can be lived in any period if desired. In this context, we tried to reveal Zayd's exemplary personality in this study in order to be recognized as a role model for young people.

Özet

Kur'ân-ı Kerîm, kendisini hikmetli Kur'ân diye tanımlar: Yâsîn, hikmetli Kur'ân'a andolsun! (Yâsîn 1/2) Zira o, her söylediğinde ve her eylediğinde sayısız hikmet olan Yüce Allah'ın kelimidir. Kitap'ın indirilmesi, Azîz ve Hakîm olan Allah katındandır. (Zümer 39/1, Ğâfir 40/2, Câsiye 45/2, Ahkâf 46/2) Kur'ân okuyucusuna düşen, onun hikmetlerini araştırmak ve gücü nispetinde onları ortaya koymaktır. Zira Kur'ân'ın hikmetleri anlaşıldıkça onun eşsizliği daha iyi anlaşılacak, ona iman güçlenecek ve o güçlü iman muhataplarını, İlahî mesajın gereklerini yerine getirmeye götürecektir. Bunun gerçekleşmesi ise derinlikli okumakla mümkün olacaktır.

Kur'ân, inişinden önce yaşanmış kıssaları ve indiği dönemde yaşananları muhataplarına sunarken onları, detaya inmeden ibret verici yönleriyle anlatır. Zira o, mesajının ayrıntılar içerisinde kaybolmasını istemez. Zaten o, anlattığı olayları kronolojik bir sırayla ve baştan sona anlatmaz, aksine mesaj verici yönleriyle kesitler halinde anlatır. Sözelimi Kur'ân'da en fazla anlatılan Musâ kıssasında, Hz. Musâ'nın doğumundan ölümüne bir hayat hikâyesi anlatılmaz. Ve onun kıssası, farklı surelerde kesitler halinde sunulur. Kıssaların en güzeli diye nitelenen Hz. Yusuf kıssası da benzerdir. Sözelimi o kıssada Hz. Yusuf'un aile hayatı, peygamber olduktan sonraki tevhid mücadelesi ayrıntılı bir şekilde anlatılmaz. Yine aynı sebeple Kur'ân anlatımlarında, çok fazla mekân ve şahıs isimlerine yer vermez. Ancak zaman zaman Kur'ân, anlattıklarının gerçek hayatta yaşandığına kanıt olsun diye yer ve şahıs isimlerini zikreder. Bu anlatım metodu, anlatılanların zihinlerde somutlaşmasını da sağlar. Pek çok peygamber ismi yanında Kur'ân'da ismi geçen tek kadın olan Hz. Meryem ismi ve Kur'ân'ın indiği dönem insanlarından adı anılan tek sahâbî olan Hz. Zeyd ismi de bu meyanda oldukça dikkat çekicidir. Hz. Meryem, Kur'ân'da ismi geçen tek kadındır, Hz. Zeyd de Kur'ân'da ismi geçen tek sahâbîdir. Her iki sunumda da pek çok hikmet vardır.

Tefsirlerimiz, Hz. Meryem'in isminin Kur'ân'da defalarca geçiş hikmetiyle ilgili bilgilere geniş yer verdikleri halde, Hz. Zeyd'in isminin geçiş hikmetleri üzerinde pek fazla durmazlar. Belki de bunda Hz. Meryem isminin kadın olarak otuz dört kere geçmesine karşılık; Hz. Zeyd'in isminin bir kere geçişinin etkisi

olmuştur. Ne var ki Kur'ân'da bir kere de geçse her kelime, her konu üzerinde durulmaya ve araştırılmaya değerdir. Kaldı ki ismi açıkça geçmese de Hz. Zeyd ile ilgili olarak inmiş başka ayetler de mevcuttur. Başka sahâbîler hakkında inmiş ayetler vardır. Ancak Hz. Zeyd'in isminin açıkça zikredilmesi, onu diğerlerinden farklı kılmaktadır.

Biz bu yazımızda, Hz. Zeyd'in isminin açıkça anılış hikmetleri üzerinde durarak bu güzel insanın çocukluk, gençlik ve olgunluk çağlarındaki güzellikleriyle genç-yaşlı, kadın-erkek tüm herkese ışık tutan örnekliğini ortaya koymaya çalışacağız. Bunun için de önce Kur'ân'da ismi geçen tek kadın Hz. Meryem'in ayetlerde anılış hikmetlerini özetledikten sonra buradan hareketle Hz. Zeyd'in isminin anılışındaki hikmetleri açıklamaya çalışacağız.

Elbette Kur'ân'da ele alınan her konu önemlidir, Kur'ân'ın andığı her isim de üzerinde durulmaya değerdir. Ancak bu isim Hz. Zeyd gibi, küçük yaşlarından itibaren Hz. Muhammed'in hizmetinde bulunmuş, ona iman edenlerin ilklerinden olmuş, pek çok dinî hükmün belirlenmesinde rolü olmuş ve İslamî güzelliklerle dopdolu bir hayat yaşadktan sonra cephede şehit olarak bu dünyadan göç etmiş bir şahsiyet olursa ayrı bir ehemmiyet arz edecektir. Hz. Zeyd, sekiz yaşlarında Hz. Muhammed'in hizmetine girmiş, on beş yaşlarında bir delikanlı iken amcalarıyla birlikte kendisini almaya gelen babasına, ben Muhammed'i, hiç kimseye tercih etmem diyerek onun yanında kalma feraset ve dirayetini gösteren bir şahsiyettir. Onun yirmi dokuz yaşlarında ilk Müslümanlardan olması da basiretinin bir başka göstergesidir. Samimiyet, sadakat, basiret, feraset, dirayet, cesaret, fedakarlık, sehavet, teslimiyet gibi pek çok erdemle dolu bereketli bir hayatı yaşadktan sonra ellili yaşlarda şehit olarak bu dünyadan ayrılması da o güzel insana Yüce Allah'ın özel bir lütfudur.

Hz. Zeyd, çocukluğundan yaşlardaki ahir ömrüne kadar Hz. Peygamberin hizmetkârı, onun Tâif'e hicretinde yegâne yol arkadaşı, evlatlık yasaklanmadan önce Hz. Muhammed'in oğlu, İslam'ın Mekke döneminde Hz. Hamza'nın Medine döneminde ise Üseyd b. Hudayr'ın kardeşliği, Hicrette Hz. Peygamberin ailesini Medine'ye getiren görevlisi, Bedir savaşından sonra zafer müjdecisi, yaptığı hayırlarla Hz. Peygamberin müjdesine ve övgülerine nail olmuş bir hayır adamı, Hendek savaşında Muhacirlerin sancaktarı, pek çok seriyyede komutan, şehit olduğu son seriyyede de komutanlar komutanı başkumandan, yine Hz. Peygamberin ölüm döşeginde atadığı komutanı Hz. Üsame'nin babası; evlatlığın yasaklanması, evlatlığın boşadığı kadınla evlenilmesi, gibi dini hükümlerin belirlenmesinde aktif olarak yer almış pek çok meziyetle mücehhez bir şahsiyettir. Kölelikten Peygamber komutanlığına ve nihayet şehadete terfi eden bir kişiliktir. Hz. Zeyd, Kur'ân'da ismi açıkça geçen Ahzab suresi otuz yedinci ayet yanında, onunla ilgili olarak başka ayetler de inmiştir. Yazıda onlara da temas edilecektir.

Rol model güzel insanlara hararetle ihtiyaç duyulan günümüzde Hz. Zeyd gibi kahramanların tanınması büyük önem arz etmektedir. Zira Hz. Zeyd'in

A Quran Hero for Youngsters:
Zayd as the Only Sahabah Mentioned in Quran

örnekliđi, herkese yön veren ve istenirse her dönemde yařanabilir bir örnektir. Bu bağlamdan hareketle özellikle gençler için bir rol model olarak tanınması gayesiyle bu çalışmamızda Hz. Zeyd'in örnek kişiliđini ortaya koyma gayretinde olduk.

A. The Brief Background of Zayd

Zayd ibn Harithah was born 35 years before the initiation of Prophecy (m: 581). Despite being a member of Qalb tribe from Yemen, our references introduced him in the list of Hashim tribe. He was kidnapped during childhood and sold as a slave in Uqaz fair, purchased by Haqim ibn Hizam, the nephew of Hatijah , gifted to her who gifted him to the Prophet Muhammad, her husband. Zayd was around eight years old during those times. His father who looked for him came to Mecca with his brothers and aimed to take him back in return for a certain sum. Our Prophet set Zayd free in terms of staying or going with his family, but Zayd preferred staying with the Prophet with the statement *I prefer nobody over you*¹. Upon hearing this, the Prophet set him free and adopted him as a son. During those years, Zayd was around 15 years old. Zayd's preference of staying with the Prophet thanks to the human and ethical merits he witnessed, rather than going with his family, indicates how tolerant and patient he was even during those early ages. He was among the first Muslims despite an early age, which is a clear evidence to the previous point.

Until the revelation of the fifth verse of surah Ahzab prohibiting adoption,² Zayd was called *Zayd ibn Muhammad*. As he was loved by the Prophet, he was also called *Hibbu-Rasul/Dear Friend of the Messenger*. He stayed with the Prophet throughout his life. Aisha expressed the love of Prophet to Zayd as follows: *Zayd ibn Harithah once came to Madinah; the Messenger was in my room. After Zayd knocked on the door, the Prophet stood up, and hugged and kissed him.*³

He was one of the first Muslims at the age of 29, and he is the first Muslim male from the class of freed slaves (mawla). While the Prophet was praying at Kaaba, Zayd sat with Ali behind the Prophet and observed and protected him. The Prophet declared him a sibling with Hamza in Mecca and with Usaid ibn Hudayr in Medina. During his journey to Taif, Zayd made great efforts to protect the Prophet as the only person accompany him , and he was soaked in blood together with him.

¹ Muhammad ibn Isa Abu Isa at-Tirmidhi, *Sunan* (Egypt: s.n., 1975), "Manaqib", 39.

² Prohibition of adoption does not mean that orphans should be left alone. Islam made numerous arrangements regarding the rights of these children. To prevent the confusions regarding the topics of heritage and marriage, the prohibition only covered the issue of registering a child of another person.

³ Tirmidhi, "Istizan", 32.

The Prophet ordered the following about him: *You are our brother and mawla*.⁴ Zayd deserved all these compliments with his sincerity, preference of Muhammad over his family and merits. After the revelation of the verse *None of you [believers] will attain true piety unless you give out of what you cherish: whatever you give, God knows about it very well*⁵, Zayd considered his favorite belonging as his horse named Shaybal(ah) and donated the horse to a charity; seeing his sincerity and submission, the Prophet gave good news to Zayd, saying *It is without doubt that Allah Almighty accepted your benevolent act*.⁶ This shows his sincerity and submission toward the verses.

Zayd was present in the battles of Badr, Uhud and Trench and in Hudaibiyyah. He also participated in the conquest of Khaybar. He was the person who brought the news of triumph at Badr to the Prophet in Medina while riding on his camel. He was also the banner bearer of refugees in the Battle of Trench. He joined many campaigns (seven or nine) as a commander. Aisha stated the following about him: *When the Prophet sent an army to a campaign, he would certainly assign Zayd as the commander. If he had been alive, he would have assigned Zayd as his caliph*.⁷ Zayd's strong will as well as his ability to make correct decisions rapidly and his strong body may explain the aforementioned statement. The Prophet stated that Zayd and his son Usamah were devoted to his command, after hearing the malevolent claims about Zayd assigning his son as the army commander. *You are criticizing his command, just like you did for the command of his father Zayd. I swear he is devoted to his command and sweetest person in my eyes*.⁸

When Zayd was 32, he had a son named Usamah from his marriage with Ummu Ayman, who was the nanny of the Prophet; she was a selected woman praised by the Prophet with the following words *my mother after my real mother, one of the noble women from the paradise*⁹. Having moved to Madinah, Zayd came to Mecca with Abu Rafi later, bringing the families of the Prophet and Abu Baqr to Madinah.

After the triumph of Badr, the Prophet let him marry Zaynab bnt. Jahsh, the daughter of his aunt. With this marriage performed under the surveillance of the Prophet, the aim was to present an example to the termination of a social layer such as slave and master in Islam. However, the marriage resulted in divorcement in just two years.

⁴ Abu Abdillah Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bukhari, *al-Jamiu as-Sahih* (Istanbul: al-Amirah, 1353), "Sulh", 6.

⁵ Ali 'Imran 3/92.

⁶ Muhammad ibn Jarir Tabari, *Jamiu al-Bayan an Ta'wili al Quran* (Beirut: Daru al-fiqir, 1988), 3/348; Jalal ad-Din Suyuti, *Tafsiru ad-Durri al-Mansur fi at-Tafsiri al-Ma'sur* (Beirut: s.n., 1983), 3/662.

⁷ Abu Abdillah Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Hanbal ash-Shaybani Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *al-Musnad* (Istanbul: s.n., 1981), 6/226-227, 254, 281.

⁸ Bukhari, "Fadailu Ashabi an-Nabi", 17, "Ayman", 2; Muslim, "Fadailu as-Sahabah", 63, 64; Tirmidhi, "Mana'iq", 39.

⁹ Asım Köksal, *İslam Tarihi* (Istanbul: Şamil Yayınevi, 1987), 2/54.

A Quran Hero for Youngsters: Zayd as the Only Sahabah Mentioned in Quran

At the age of 50-55, the Prophet assigned him as the commander of commanders to the Battle of Mu'tah, also called Jayshu al-Umarah due to multiple commanders being assigned, and sent him with prayers. After hearing the news of martyrdom, the Prophet cried and stated the following to those asking the reason: *This is the longing of a lover to his love... May you all pray for forgiveness for Zayd; he is in paradise and running there.*¹⁰ Omar gave the following answer to his son Abdallah who objected to Usamah, son of Zayd, receiving a higher salary than him, reflecting the noble position of Zayd and his son Usamah: *"Zayd and his son Usamah were closer to the Prophet than you and me. By doing so, I preferred the love of the Prophet over the love of mine."*¹¹

As understood from these brief statements, Zayd had many capabilities and could be a role model for people in any subjects.

B. Being the Only Sahabah Mentioned in Quran

1. Names Mentioned in Quran

Education of humankind started by learning names. Allah Almighty taught the names of goods to Adam. Humans' test with the angels occurred through names.¹² Names are the most important indicators helping objects and subjects be known. Without the names, learning could not be so easy and rapid.

As the last divine book, Quran uses the names of locations, people and others while presenting its message. From a general perspective, Quran does not mention the names of many heroes and locations while reflecting the real events of the past. The main reason here is that the message here is universal and that the message does not get lost within details. Therefore, anybody can take a specific lesson from the anecdote shared. However, Quran still mentions certain names to objectify the events it presents and reflect that these events were experienced in advance.

Names of 25 prophets out of thousands are mentioned in Quran.¹³ Based on the revelation order, the first person to be mentioned in Quran is the Prophet Jonah. He is mentioned in the verse 48 of the surah al-Qalam as 'Sahibu al-Hut' (Owner of

¹⁰ Muhammad Hamidallah, *Islam Peygamberi* (Istanbul: s.n., 1980), 1/72; Abu al-Ala Mawdudi, *Tafhimu al-Quran* (Istanbul: s.n., 1996), 4/423-424; Aisha Abd ar-Rahman Bintu ash-Shati, *Rasulullahın Annesi ve Hanımları* (Konya: 1987), 149-158; Bunyamin Arul, 'Zayd ibn Harithah', *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1988-1998), 44/319-320; Kasim Shulul, *Hız. Peygamber Devri Kronolojisi* (Istanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2003), 151-156; Mustafa Kılıç, *Zayd ibn Harithah* (Istanbul: Siyer Yayınları, 2016), 23-170.

¹¹ Tirmidhi, "Manaqib", 39, 40.

¹² See al-Baqarah 2/30-33.

¹³ See Ali 'Imran 3/33, an-Nisa, 4/163-164, al-Anam 6/83-86, al-Araf 7/65, 73, 85, al-Anbiyah 21/85, Sad 38/48. The name Muhammad is mentioned in four sections of Quran (Ali 'Imran 3/144, al-Ahzab 33/40, Muhammad 47/2, al-Fatih 48/29), while the name Ahmad is present in one section (as-Saf 61/6).

fishes); the Prophet Muhammad is told to be patient against the reactions of the disbelievers from Mecca just like how the Prophet Jonah did. Among the good people of the past, only the names of Imran, Uzayr, Tubba and Luqman are mentioned in Quran. Moreover, among the disbelievers of the previous era, only the names of Kharun, Khaman, Samiri, Jalut and Azer are mentioned. Our references discussed whether these are names or titles.

As a title¹⁴, Ilyas, Zulqifl (fortunate one) and Zulqarnayn (ruler with power) are mentioned in Quran as the good people from the pre-Quranic era, while the name of Pharaoh is mentioned as the disbeliever from the pre-Quranic era. Additionally, the terms "Israil" and "Messiah" are mentioned as the titles of the Prophet Ya'qub and Christ. Ilyas is claimed to be the title of Idris, while Zulqifl is thought to be used for calling Ilyas.¹⁵ Among the women, only the name of Mary is mentioned in Quran .

There are many verses about the believing and disbelieving men and women during the period of revelation. But, names of people are not clearly mentioned in these verses. We learn about whom these verses are through the interpretation sources. Learning about whom the verses are provides significant contribution to correctly understanding the verses with a true/concrete example. But the important point here is that the person mentioned in the verse is not actually mentioned clearly and that the purpose is to convey the message in the verse to broader sections. For instance, to understand the verses about the sahabah members correctly and easily, getting to learn the sahabah members and their traits that resulted in the revelations would be a suitable action. Therefore, meanings in the verse are conveyed to the other believers with similar attitudes and traits. Similarly, verses about the Mecca polytheists can be understood more easily and healthily by understanding the attitudes of these polytheists and their traits resulting in revelations. Similarly, conveying/implementing the verse to the polytheists with similar characteristics and letting them know about the figures of malevolence can be ensured. The message is conveyed to the following generations considering the common norm *the reason being particular in the Tafsir discipline does not prevent the order from being general*.

Following this introduction, efforts will be made to explain the wisdom behind mentioning the name of Mary, the only women mentioned in Quran who were explained in detail in our tafsir works in regard to her name being mentioned in Quran, and names of two figures from the era of revelation to understand the topic better.

¹⁴ *Laqap* is the title used to praise or criticize somebody with a word other than their names; *Qunyah* is the name assigned to a person along with the terms Abu or Um (father or mother). See Sayyid Sharif Jurjani, *at-Tarifat* (Istanbul: 1300), 187, 193.

¹⁵ See. Jalal ad-Din Suyuti, *al-Itqan fi Ulumi al-Quran* (Egypt: s.n., 1978), 2/183-184.

2. Mentioning Mary in Quran

As Israeli people blemished the name of Mary and her fatherless son Christ , Allah Almighty clearly mentioned her name several times to nullify their claims and show that Mary had no association with the gossips.¹⁶ There are many wisdoms behind this. First of all, Mary is not a regular woman. She delivered a boy, who is Christ, although she did not marry/was not with any men. Therefore, she was called Batul as she devoted herself to Allah and protected her bodily and mental purity *as well as* her honor.¹⁷

Mary was devoted to Allah even in mother's womb,¹⁸ and assigned to a temple under the surveillance of Zechariah. She was a person living in accordance with her name meaning Allah's servant, and she was able to stay pure in a malevolent society. She managed to be the representative of honor, being worth of being mentioned in Quran and a name for a surah in Quran with these benevolent traits of hers. Christ, who was born as the son of Mary upon the inaccessible order and power of Allah Almighty , was introduced as *Christ the son of Mary* to show that he had a proper lineage despite having no father.¹⁹

Only the names of two people, other than the Prophet Muhammad, from the revelation period are mentioned in Quran. One of them is Zayd ibn Harithah, a believer, while the other is Abu Lahab, a disbeliever. The wisdom behind mentioning the name of Abu Lahab will be explained in the following section.

3. Mentioning the Qunya of Abu Lahab

Quran mentions him with his qunya as it was known by everybody then or as his name Abd al-Uzza (servant of the idol Uzza) has an improper meaning.²⁰

Abu Lahab was a person with all sorts of negativeness in his personality. Despite his closeness to the Prophet , he was one of the first who objected to him and organized the polytheists against him. He was a malevolent uncle, a father in law, a family with his wife and a fierce enemy to the campaign of the Prophet. He was mentioned in Quran as a person who had all sorts of malevolence in his personality, who was confirmed that he would not be a Muslim later, and who was the leader of the polytheists, and he became a symbol in this context. By mentioning

¹⁶ Badr ad-Din Muhammad ibn Abdilllah Zaraqashi, *al-Burkhan fi Ulumi al-Quran* (Beirut: s.n., 1972), 1/163.

¹⁷ See Ömer Faruk Harman, 'Meryem', *Diyanet İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1988-1998), 29/241.

¹⁸ Ali 'Imran 3/35.

¹⁹ See Ali Akpınar, *Kur'ân Coğrafyası* (Ankara: Fecr Yayınları, 2002), 87.

²⁰ Zaraqashi, *al-Burkhan*, I, 162; Abu al-Faraj Ibnu al-Jawzi, *Zadu al-Masir fi ilmi at-Tafsir* (Beirut: s.n., 1984), 9/259. The verse mentioning Abu Lahab is as follows: "May the hands of Abu Lahab be ruined, and ruined is he" Tabbat 111/1.

his qunya, the aim was to give a permanent lesson to the people until the end of time.

4. Mentioning Zayd in Quran

There are many wisdoms in mentioning Zayd in Quran. First of all, the relevant topic in Quran is the clear indicator that the event in the topic is totally real. The topic covers a process of divorcement. Names are the determinant factors in marriage and divorcement. The authority of divorcement belongs to the husband first, therefore the name of Zayd was mentioned. Furthermore, a significant jahiliyyah practice was abolished and a new religious practice was performed in this divorcement. Therefore, explaining the event in a concrete form was needed. This practice showed that an adopted child cannot be the true child, and adopting a person does not prevent the adopting father from marrying the woman who got divorced from the adopted son. Regardless of the reason and wisdom, Zayd was clearly mentioned in Quran, which was a great blessing for this sahabah.

Allah Almighty mentioned the name of Zayd in Quran in an explicit manner, granting divine blessings. From then on, Zayd became a person whose name was mentioned in mihrabs/prayers and gained a significant importance, which was a consolation for Zayd who lost the honor of being Muhammad's son by being adopted. Therefore, Zayd's name has been mentioned by Muslims thanks to a Quran verse. Zayd's name was honor, exalted and written in pure pages. Honored clerks mentioned his name during tilawah. Such an honor was granted to Prophet and Zayd during the revelation period. The verse also brings good news to Zayd with the statement *the one who was favored by Allah*. The blessing here is believing, which approves the believer side of Zayd and is an evident that he is a member of paradise society. Moreover, learning this before passing was another blessing for him.²¹

Before the assignment of Prophecy, the Prophet adopted his slave Zayd ibn Harithah in line with Arabic traditions. Therefore, polytheists called Zayd *'Muhammad's son'*²². His name was clearly mentioned to show he was not the son of the Prophet.²³ Quran clarifies the topic as follows: *Muhammad is not the father of [any] one of your men, but [he is] the Messenger of Allah and seal [i.e., last] of the prophets. And ever is Allah, of all things, Knowing.*²⁴ Quran prohibited marrying the wife of biological son for fathers with the following verse: ... *Prohibited to you [for marriage]*

²¹ Abu Abdillah Muhammad ibn Ahmad Qurtubi, *al-Jami' li Ahqami al-Quran* (Beirut: Daru Ihya'i Turasi al-Arabi, n.d.), 14/194.

²² Abdallah ibn Omar stated that they called Zayd as Zayd as Muhammad's son until the revelation of the surah al-Ahzab verse 5. Tirmidhi, "Manaqib", 39.

²³ Zarkashi, *al-Burkhan*, II, 1/163.

²⁴ al-Ahzab 33/40.

A Quran Hero for Youngsters: Zayd as the Only Sahabah Mentioned in Quran

*are the wives of your true sons.*²⁵ Stating that the Prophet had no living son, it was explained that his marriage was legitimate.

The verse mentioning Zayd's name is as follows: *“So, when Zayd had no longer any need for her, We married her to you in order that there not be upon the believers any discomfort concerning the wives of their adopted sons when they no longer have need of them. And ever is the command of Allah accomplished.*²⁶

Just like Abu Lahab who had all sorts of malevolence in his personality, Zayd was the representative of benevolence who was a role model for the people around him. Some of his traits that were not granted to everybody were mentioned above.

Zayd could not hold his tears when the Prophet read him the verse with his name, *saying “O, so my name was mentioned in Quran?”*²⁷ The Prophet told Ubay ibn Qa’ba *Allah Almighty ordered me to read the surah Bayyinah to you* and upon hearing this, Ubay could not hold his tears saying *So Allah mentioned my name.*²⁸ Qurtubi reflects Zayd’s happiness as follows: *Considering how happy he became when he was told he was mentioned by Allah despite not being mentioned in Quran, how come he can hold his happiness when he will be mentioned until the end of time thanks to Quran!*²⁹

Despite being originally a slave, Zayd married Zaynap, a woman from a noble and free family, reflecting the principle/reform of equality in Islam with his personality.³⁰ Following a blessed life, he completed his time by falling a martyr in Mu’tah while commanding the army of Islam assigned by the Prophet, and he became a person mentioned in Quran by achieving the blessings of Allah and the Prophet as reflected by the relevant verse.

5. Examination of the Verses About Zayd

Owing to being one of the first Muslims next to the Prophet, Zayd was the person who heard many Quran verses for the first time and practiced them in the best way possible. An example in this regard is his attitude when infaq verse was revealed. Zayd is among the first to remember among the poor people in the verse *And do not drive away those who invoke their Lord in the morning and the evening, seeking His pleasure all the time*³¹ who are *Suhayb, Ammar, Bilal, Habbab, Ibn Ummi Abd*³² and others.

²⁵ an-Nisa 4/23.

²⁶ al-Ahzab 33/37.

²⁷ See Qurtubi, *al-Jami’*, 14/193-194.

²⁸ al-Bukhari, “Tafsir”, Surah 98.

²⁹ See Qurtubi, *al-Jami’*, 14/194.

³⁰ Qurtubi states that the verse is an evidence to that equality between the spouses can be established through religious topics rather than lineage. See Qurtubi, *al-Jami’*, 14/187.

³¹ al-Anam 6/52.

Until the revelation of surah Ahzab verse 5, Zayd was called *Muhammad's son*. After the revelation of the verse, he was associated with this father Harithah and called *Harithah's son*.³³ The verse in question is as follows: *Call them by (the name of) their (real) fathers; It is more equitable in the sight of Allah. And if you do not know their fathers, then they are your brothers in faith and your friends. There is no sin on you in the mistake you make, but in that which you do with intention of your heart; and Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.*³⁴

One of the believers who were mentioned and praised in some of the verses including the one regarding the false claims against Aisha *this is a great slander*³⁵ is Zayd. The verses in question are as follows: *When you heard of it, why did the believing men and women not think well of their own folk and say: "This is a manifest calumny?"³⁶ And why, when you heard it, did you not say, "It is not for us to speak of this. Exalted are You, [O Allāh]; this is a great slander"?*³⁷ Believers praised in the verse displayed a believer's attitude before the revelation. They were reflected as a model to the believers of the following periods after verses about them were revealed. Zayd was considered to be worth of these praises, which shows the sound characteristics of his knowledge and background from the Prophet and Quran. People who do not have such a solid background cannot protect their consistent and solid states against incidents and crises.

In addition to the verbal warnings and advices, the Prophet Muhammad took significant practical steps to abolish the social class discrimination in the society which existed as a jahiliyyah tradition. For that purpose, he declared brotherhood between the believers twice, once before Migration in Mecca and once after Migration in Medina, making believers equal to one another. In fact, the verse *The believers are but one brotherhood*³⁸ is a clear universal call in this regard. But he himself took a step for that purpose. Following these steps, slaves and masters became brothers, becoming closer to one another and protecting each other more than before. One of his relevant practices was to declare his slave Zayd a brother with his uncle Hamza. Another example was the marriage between Zaynab and Zayd. He mentioned his thought to Zaynab who did not initially want to accept this offer thinking Zayd was not match to her. *It does not behove a believer, male or female, that when Allah and His Messenger have decided an affair they should exercise their choice. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger has strayed to manifest error.*³⁹ This verse

³² Tabari, *Jamiu al-Bayan*, 7/200-203.

³³ Tabari, *Jamiu al-Bayan*, 21/119; Ibn Qasir, *Tafsiru Qurani al-Azim*; 3/465-467; Bukhari, "Tafsir", Surah 33.

³⁴ al-Ahzab 33/5.

³⁵ Said ibn Musayyab says the first sahabah members who rejected such claims saying *no way, this is an awful slander* were Zayd ibn Harithah and Abu Ayyub al-Ansari. In another narrative, Saad ibn Muaz was among the first to state that. See Suyuti, *Durru al-Mansur*, 3/662.

³⁶ an-Nur 24/12.

³⁷ an-Nur 24/16.

³⁸ al-Hujurat 49/10.

³⁹ al-Ahzab 33/36.

A Quran Hero for Youngsters:
Zayd as the Only Sahabah Mentioned in Quran

was revealed in this context, Zaynab accepted to marry saying *I cannot resist to the Prophet of Allah*.⁴⁰ This verse resulted in the occurrence of the marriage between Zayd and Zaynab which ended after two years. After saying he would get divorced from his wife, Zayd was advised to keep his marriage and wife. In fact, the marriage between Zayd and Zaynab became a revolutionary symbol in the society, and the divorce between this couple became the symbol of abolishing a significant practice.

The following verses were revealed in this regard:

When you said to the one on whom Allah bestowed favor and you bestowed favor, "Keep your wife and fear Allah," while you concealed within yourself that which Allah is to disclose. And you feared the people, although it was more convenient that you fear Allah. So, when Zayd had no longer any need for her, We married her to you in order that there not be upon the believers any discomfort concerning the wives of their adopted sons when they no longer have need of them. And ever is the command of Allah accomplished

*There is no problem for the prophet in (doing) what Allah has prescribed for him a customary practice of Allah in the case of those who have gone before and Allah's command is pre-determined by destiny.*⁴¹

What Allah Almighty blessed Zayd with was making him close to the Prophet Muhammed, honoring him Islam as one of the first to be honored, letting him learn Islam from the first source, and mentioning only his name among the other sahabah members in Quran. ⁴²

The blessings of the Prophet for him include receiving so many favors from him that he prefers the Prophet to his family, being freed and adopted as a child by the Prophet before the prohibition or, more importantly, being considered as the biological child by the Prophet, seeing the Prophet act as a parent for him⁴³ and let him marry a free and noble woman, being assigned the duties of ambassador, commander and attorney, being declared as the sibling of Hamza, Prophet's uncle, in Mecca and letting him marry Durrah, the daughter of his uncle Abu Lahab, showing that he is actually close to him, being treated benevolently by the Prophet and mentioned with particular words. After informing the people that he fell a martyr in the Battle of Muthah, he prayed for forgiveness for him, which was the last wish for him by the Prophet.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Tabari, *Jamiu al-Bayan*, 12/11; Abu al-Fida ibn Qasir, *Tafsiru al-Qurani al-Azim* (Beirut: s.n., 1982), 3/489.

⁴¹ al-Ahزاب 33/37-38.

⁴² See Tabari, *Jamiu al-Bayan*, 12/12-14; Fahr ad-Din ar-Razi, *at-Tafsiru al-Qabir* (Tahran: Daru al-Qutubu al-Ilmiyya, n.d.), 25/212; Qurtubi, *al-Jami'*, 14/188.

⁴³ Asım Köksal, *İslam Tarihi*, 12/14-15.

⁴⁴ See Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Abi al-Qaram Muhammad ibn Muhammad Ibnu al-Asir, *al-Qamil fi at-Tarih* (Beirut: s.n., 1987), 2/115.

In regard to the verse *While you concealed within yourself that which Allah is to disclose*, certain references included certain explanations which may cause confusion. Accordingly, when the Prophet visited Zayd in his home, he saw Zaynab in her casual home clothes and was affected by her beauty, saying to himself *I wish Zayd divorced her and I could marry her...*⁴⁵ However, the verse reflects that anything the Prophet hides will be disclosed by Allah Almighty. The following sentences report that the topic is about marrying her after she got divorced, and Allah almighty made no more explanations on this topic. Furthermore, many glossators said the following in this regard: *What the Prophet thought himself was that the marriage between Zayd and Zaynab would not continue, that Zayd would get divorced from Zaynab, and that Allah informed him he would marry Zaynab*⁴⁶. Ali ibn Husein Zayna al-Abidin stated that what Prophet kept to himself was that *Zaynab would be his wife after she got divorced from Zayd*. Accordingly, Allah Almighty warned him with the following verse: *I reported that you would marry Zaynab after she got divorced but you kept this as a secret for yourself!*⁴⁷ Although Allah Almighty informed that the marriage between Zayd and Zaynab would not continue and that Zaynab would marry the Prophet after getting divorced, the Prophet said to Zayd *Do not leave your wife, refrain from Allah's wrath*, is a reminder that should be made to be an evidence regardless of the result, just like Allah Almighty who calls the disbelieving people to believe in him although Allah knows they will not believe. Therefore, Zayd would have divorced Zaynab without knowing that she would marry the Prophet after divorcement. The Prophet who had a significant contribution to the establishment of this marriage would perform the duty of giving advice for the maintenance of the marriage.⁴⁸

Moreover, the narrative that the Prophet was impressed by the beauty of Zaynab after she married Zayd was confirmed to be not true by the authorities of investigation.⁴⁹ This marriage resulted in the gossips from Jews, polytheists and

⁴⁵ See Muhammad ibn Jarir at-Tabari, *Milletler ve Hükümdarlar Tarihi*, trans. Zakir Kadiri Ugan & Ahmet Temir (Istanbul: s.n., 1992), 5/461-466; Tabari, *Jamiu al-Bayan*, 22/12-13; Ali ibn Muhammad Mawardi, *al-Uyun wa an-Nuqat* (Beirut: n.d.), 4/406; Ibnu al-Jawzi, *Zadu al-Masir*, 6/387; Jarullah Muhammad ibn Omar Zamakhshari, *al-Qashshafan Haqaiqi at-Tanzil wa Uyuni al-Aqawil* (Beirut: n.d.), 3/524.

⁴⁶ See Tabari, *Jamiu al-Bayan*, 22/13; Mawardi, *al-Uyun*, 4/406; Ibnu al-Arabi, *Ahqamu al-Quran* (Beirut: s.n., 1967) 3/1543-1544; Ibnu al-Jawzi, *Zadu al-Masir*, 6/387; Ibn Qasir, *Tafsiru al-Qurani al-Azim*, 3/490-494; Mawdudi, *Tafhimu al-Quran*, 4/424-425.

⁴⁷ Ibn Qasir, *Tafsiru al-Qurani al Azim*, 3/491; Qurtubi prefers this ideology and reflects the following: *Our scientists stated that this idea was the most beautiful explanation regarding the interpretation of this verse. This is also the idea adopted by the investigator glossators and scholars. Other sorts of claims are made by the malevolent people who do not know the purity of the Prophet and attempt to banalize him. The Prophet was not asked to pray for being forgiven in the verse, which is a clear evidence. See Qurtubi, al-Jami', 14/190-191; Asım Köksal, İslam Tarihi, 12/33.*

⁴⁸ Ibnu al-Arabi, *Ahqamu al-Quran*, 3/1544.

⁴⁹ Aisha Abd ar-Rahman Bintu ash-Shati, *Rasülullah'm Annesi ve Hanımları*, 152-158; Muhsin Demirci, *Kur'an Tefsirinde Farklı Yorumlar* (Istanbul: M.Ü. Vakfı Yayınları, 2017), 2/583-586; Abu Baqr ibnu al-Arabi states that *these narratives are not true but superstitious, that he knew the daughter of Prophet's aunt from earlier periods, that he say her for multiple times before the verse of hijab, that the Prophet let Zayd marry her even if he*

A Quran Hero for Youngsters:
Zayd as the Only Sahabah Mentioned in Quran

disbelievers in the Medina of that day⁵⁰, and then orientalists developed speculative discourses⁵¹ in this⁵² regard. In fact, mentioning a topic of marriage in Quran aimed to prevent the doubts and hesitation in believers' minds rather than responding to the enemies of Islam. Hamidallah explains the narrative that the Prophet said *O Allah, changing hearts into different forms, how exalted you are after seeing Zaynab in her casual house clothes as follows: The Prophet was surprised seeing that Zayd who married Ummu Ayman, a black woman, and had a happy marriage with her could not get on with Zaynab, a beautiful and attractive woman from a noble family, and he thought himself that this issue between them was their destiny...*⁵³

What Quran reflects in terms of this topic is clear. The rational explanation is what Prophet kept himself was the information he received from Allah Almighty that he would marry Zaynab after divorcement. Prophets are the people who are pure. A Prophet who thought about marrying a person by himself/herself did not need to say *do not leave your wife and avoid from Allah's wrath* to a person who said *I will get divorced from my wife*.⁵⁴ Associating the idea *I wish she would get divorced from her husband so that I could marry her*, which is not even appropriate for a regular

had the chance to do that when he was single, and that a pure Prophet like him should be blemishes with these non-meaningful claims. See Ibnu al-Arabi, Ahqamu al-Quran, 3/1541-1543. Ebu Hayyan stated that he did not add these narratives to his interpretation saying that certain glossators included certain narratives blemishing the esteemed characteristics of the Prophet. See Muhammad ibn Yusuf Abu Hayyan, al-Bahru al-Muhit (Beirut: Daru al-fiq, 1992), 7/234. Ibn Kathir noted that he did not include certain narratives regarding this topic in his interpretation work as they had strange aspects. See Tafsiru al-Qurani al-Azim, 3/491. For detailed assessment regarding the topic, see Muhammad Tahir ibn Ashur, at-Tahrir wa at-Tanwir (Tunisia: 1997), 11/29-38. Elmalılı states the following about this story: This story, created by certain Christian authors to gossip, is not a real event for the discipline of Hadith. First of all, this narrative as not conveyed in true hadith books with a true path and method of proving. Then, it is rationally unacceptable that the Prophet just realized the beauty of Zaynab at that time, considering he had already seen her because Zaynab was a close relative to the Prophet who knew one another since childhood, and her physical beauty was already known by the Prophet, but reflecting a narrative that the Prophet saw her for the first time and liked her at that moment is contradictory within itself. The truth is the Prophet knew Zaynab beforehand and thus he had Zayd marry her. See Elmalılı Muhammed Hamdi Yazır, Hak Dini Kur'an Dili (Istanbul: Eser Yayınları, n.d.), 6/3901.

⁵⁰ The term in the verse *people/an-nas* being a clear concept indicates that the intended ones here are the disbelievers who spread the gossip that Prophet married the previous wife of his adopted son. See Ibn Ashur, *at-Tahrir wa at-Tanwir*, 11/33.

⁵¹ As an example, for the statements and criticism toward the Italian Historian Kaetani who twisted the facts and created false claims, see Asım Köksal, *İslam Tarihi*, 12/28-34.

⁵² Voltaire, a play writer who examined the claims regarding this topic, was praised by the Pope for this play despite being excommunicated by him earlier. See Muhsin Demirci, *Kur'an Tefsirinde Farklı Yorumlar*, 2/585.

⁵³ Muhammad Hamidallah, *İslam Peygamberi*, 2/735-736.

⁵⁴ Abdallah ibn Abi Sarh, one of the few people to be killed upon the Prophet's order during the conquest of Mecca, was brought to his presence after being forgiven by Uthman, and at that moment, the Prophet replied Omar's statement *I was looking into your eyes; I would kill him with one eye movement of yours: Prophets do not give messages with their eyes or limbs. They are pure inside and outside. Zamahshari, al-Qashshaf*, 3/524.

person, with a person who was known to be honorable before his prophecy cannot be considered rational and legitimate.

The Prophet was avoiding from the social belief that the woman who got divorced from the adopted son could not be married, and therefore he was hesitating to explain this and could make a direct explanation. He actually knew Zaynab, the daughter of his aunt, and her beauty beforehand. He was the person who persuaded her to marry Zayd. He let Zayd marry Zaynab with his own will but his marriage with Zaynab occurred upon the direct order of Allah Almighty.⁵⁵ If he had had a desire of marrying Zaynab, he would have already done so and nobody would have become surprised. He, however, aimed to realize a significant social revolution with the will of Allah Almighty. As he explained in the Final Sermon, he started practicing the divine orders on his family and close relatives.⁵⁶

Razi noted that the statement *So, as soon as Zayd had accomplished what he would of her, (i.e., accomplished his purpose, and divorced her. The reference is to Zaynab) We espoused her to you so that there should not be any restriction for the believers concerning the spouses of their adopted sons, when they have accomplished what they would of them* was a model not in terms of satisfying the Prophet's personal desires, but in terms of implementing the religious orders because these orders could be understood with the practices of the Prophet.⁵⁷ Mawdudi states that the statement in the verse *We gave her into your marriage* indicates that this marriage occurred not because of the personal desire of Muhammad and Zaynab, but because of Allah's order and also adds: *These words indicate that a social reform that could not be accepted by the people was conducted by Allah through the Prophet. There were not other options to end the traditions and customs regarding the relationships with the adopted children. Only Allah's messenger could take an action to abolish these traditions. Accordingly, this marriage was performed not only to add another wife to the house, but also to fulfill a social reform.*⁵⁸ The Prophet also responded to the social understanding which did not approve the marriage of a noble person with a woman who got married and divorced from a slave. By marrying such a woman himself, the Prophet declared that people were equal before Allah like the threads of a comb.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Zaynab was boasting against other wives of the Prophet with the following statement: *your marriage was established on this world, but my marriage was established in the sky by Allah Almighty.* See Tabari, *Jamiu al-Bayan*, 22/13.

⁵⁶ The following two sentences can be an example in this regard: *The first case of interest that I abolished belonged to Abd al-Muttalip's (my uncle) son Abbas... The first case of blood feud that I abolished belonged to Abd al-Muttalip's grandson Rabia.* See Muhammad Hamidallah, *İslam Peygamberi*, 1/298.

⁵⁷ Fahraddin ar-Razi, *at-Tafsiru al-Qabir*, 25/212.

⁵⁸ See Mawdudi, *Tafhimu al-Quran*, 4/425.

⁵⁹ Hakkı Dursun Yıldız, *Doğuştan Günümüze Büyük İslam Tarihi* (Istanbul: 1986), 1/328-329.

A Quran Hero for Youngsters:
Zayd as the Only Sahabah Mentioned in Quran

Conclusion

The first addressee of Quran were mentioned in many verses in Quran. However, their names were not explicitly mentioned, with Zayd being the only exception. Among the first addressee of Quran, name of Zayd was mentioned, which is interesting and full of messages.

Zayd got to know the Prophet closely as he was with him from earlier ages to the end of his life, witnessing many special moments in Prophet's life. He had the chance of receiving many financial and spiritual gifts and compliments from the Prophet and died a martyr as the commander assigned by the Prophet.

He was assigned the title of *Hibbu ar-Rasul* due to many reasons such as preferring to stay with the Prophet rather than going with his family who came to save him , being one of the first believers, being in the journey of Ta'if with the Prophet, being assigned as the commander to many campaigns initiated by the Prophet, and acting in the name of the Prophet during times when he was in Madinah .

The process in which Zayd married a female relative of the Prophet and then got divorced from her, and the Prophet married the same woman later resulted in a significant revolution in the Islamic history. This marriage, which happened with the help of the Prophet, showed once again that the superiority before Allah occurred through devotion instead of lineage and the marriage Prophet performed with the woman who got divorced from the Prophet's adopted son practically demonstrated that marriage was suitable for the father of an adopted son. Zayd was also a model in terms of implementing Quran orders that prohibited adopting a child.

Most glossators, except a few, made broad explanations regarding the marriage and divorce of Zayd and Zaynap, but nobody examined the fact that Zayd was the only sahabah whose name was mentioned in Quran. However, glossators made comprehensive explanations regarding the presence of the name of Mary in Quran.

As a role model, Zayd, who is the primary figure in terms of implementing an important order, will continue being mentioned while reading Quran and performing prayers.

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Social Media Addiction, Cyber Bullying and Cyber Victimization Experiences Among the Generation Z High School Students*

Vehbi BAYHAN**

Abstract

Those born after 2000 are described as Generation Z. Social media is very important for the Z generation, which is also called digital native. Internet and social media addiction is one of the most important psychological problems of today. There is a relationship between social media addiction and cyberbullying and victimization experiences. In this study, the social media addiction levels of generation Z high school students and their cyberbullying and victimization experiences are examined. In this context, a questionnaire was applied to the sampling of 7 high schools in the center of Malatya. The research was conducted in the 2017-2018 academic year. The sample consists of 336 high school students. Class distribution is 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grades. The age distribution is 15-18 years. 34% of the sample is male and 66% is female. Demographic questions, social media addiction scale, cyberbullying and victimization scale were used in the questionnaire. The social media addiction scale Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.813. Revised Cyber Bullying Inventory-II (RCBI-II) was used to measure the level of cyberbullying and victimization. Cyberbullying Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.824; Cyber victimization Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.799. In the research, T test, Chi-square statistical techniques were used. There was a significant relationship between social media usage patterns and narcissistic personality traits.

Keywords: The Z Generation, Youth, Digital İndigenous, Social Media Addiction, Cyberbullying and Cyber Victimization Experiences.

Z Kuşağı Lise Gençlerinde Sosyal Medya Bağımlılığı ile Siber Zorbalık ve Siber Mağduriyet Deneyimleri

Öz

2000 yılından sonra doğanlar Z kuşağı olarak betimlenmektedir. Dijital yerli olarak da adlandırılan Z kuşağı için sosyal medya çok önemlidir. İnternet ve sosyal medya bağımlılığı

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Social Media Addiction, Cyber Bullying and Cyber Victimization Experiences Among the Generation Z High School Students

günümüzün en önemli psikolojik sorunlarından. Sosyal medya bağımlılığı ile siber zorbalık ve mağduriyet deneyimleri arasında bir ilişki vardır. Bu çalışmada Z kuşağı lise öğrencilerinin sosyal medya bağımlılık düzeyleri ile siber zorbalık ve mağduriyet deneyimleri irdelenmektedir. Bu bağlamda, Malatya merkezde 7 lisede öğrenim gören örneklem kapsamındaki öğrencilere anket uygulanmıştır. Araştırma 2017-2018 eğitim öğretim yılında yapılmıştır. Örneklem 336 lise öğrencisinden oluşmaktadır. Sınıf dağılımı 9, 10, 11 ve 12. sınıflardır. Yaş dağılımı 15 ile 18 yaşları arasındadır. Örneklem %34'ü erkek, %66'sı kız öğrencidir. Anket formunda demografik sorular, sosyal medya bağımlılık ölçeği, siber zorbalık ve mağduriyet ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Sosyal medya bağımlılık ölçeği Cronbach's Alpha değeri 0,813'tür. Siber zorbalık ve mağduriyet düzeyinin ölçülmesi için, Gözden Geçirilmiş Siber Zorbalık Envanteri-II (RCBI-II) kullanılmıştır. Siber zorbalık Cronbach's Alpha değeri 0,82; siber mağduriyet Cronbach's Alpha değeri 0,799'dur. Araştırmada, T Testi ve ki-kare istatistik teknikleri kullanılmıştır. Sosyal medya bağımlılığı ile siber zorbalık ve mağduriyet deneyimleri arasında anlamlı bir ilişki ortaya çıkmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Z Kuşağı, Gençlik, Dijital Yerli, Sosyal Medya Bağımlılığı, Siber Zorbalık ve Mağduriyet Deneyimleri.

Summary

In this study, social media addiction, cyberbullying and victimization experiences of generation Z high school youth are examined. Especially, social media addiction carries the risk of creating problems as psychological addiction and increases the experiences of cyberbullying and victimization, especially in the generation Z youth, who express themselves with social media and are social media at the center of their lives. In this context, the problem statement is as follows: "Is there a relationship between social media addiction levels and cyberbullying and victimization experiences of generation Z high school youth?" The hypothesis of the research will be tested on this problem.

Generation classification used in the literature to include in Turkey's sociological structure can be expressed as follows.

a. Silent Zone, those born between 1927-1945, (Newspaper Belt, Republic Generation, Traditionalists).

b. Baby Boom Belt, those born between 1946-1964, (Radio Belt, 68 Generation, Sandwich Belt, Idealist Generation).

c. Generation X, those born between 1965-1980, (Television Generation, Ozal Generation, Pop Age Generation).

d. Generation Y or Millennials born between 1981-2000, (Internet Generation, Generation I, Boomerang Generation).

e. Generation Z, born between 2001-2020, (Smartphone Generation, Social Media Generation, Digital Natives, Virtual Belt, Shopping Mall Generation).

Cyber victimization is defined as the exposure to technical or relational harmful behaviors against an individual or group, a private or a legal person using the internet, and experiencing financial or moral victimization from these behaviors. In short, cyber victimization can be expressed as the situation of those who are victims of cyberbullying.

Studies on cyberbullying show that cyberbullying negatively affects individuals psychologically. For people who are exposed to cyberbullying; depression, delinquency, substance abuse, disappointment, sadness, anger, anxiety, loss of motivation towards class, academic failure, school absenteeism, suicide, etc. such problems have been observed.

Investigating the relationship between social media addiction and cyberbullying and victimization experiences of generation Z high school youth is important in revealing the effect of social media, which is the most important communication tool of our age. In this context, a questionnaire was applied to the sampling of 7 high schools in the center of Malatya.

Cyberbullying and cyber victimization experiences are also learned behavioral experiences as violent behavior is learned. As can be seen from the findings of the research, there is a relationship between social media addiction and cyberbullying and cyber victimization experiences in high school youth in the generation Z. Cyberbullying and cyber victimization experiences increase due to the increase in the rate of using social media. Psychological problems occur in the psychological structure of young people who use cyberbullying against other individuals, especially their peers, with their nicknames in the virtual world and simulation environment. First of all, with different nicknames and fake identities, different personalities in the virtual environment take on different personality forms in the real environment. This causes schizophrenic fragmentation in their personalities.

The fact that cyber bullying and cyber victimization experiences are mostly seen in men in terms of gender is related to the role models and socialization patterns that the male gender learned in growing up. Raising warriors who are more dominant and effective in the socialization process of men has also affected cyberbullying behavior. It is seen that the cyber victimization experiences are high among male students, and those who have been victimized produce the cyberbullying experience in the context of getting a rematch.

Cyberbullying and cyber victimization experiences increase as the age ratio increases according to age levels. It can be stated that cyberbullying and victimization experiences have increased in parallel with the increase in the experience of owning smart phones and using social media effectively.

Social Media Addiction, Cyber Bullying and Cyber Victimization Experiences Among the Generation Z High School Students

Another important sociological and social psychological result from the research findings is that the rate of social media addiction and the experience of cyberbullying and cyber victimization is high in the children of "uninterested" families according to the attitude of the students' families. Likewise, social media addiction rates and cyberbullying and cyber victimization experiences are high in students whose parents are separated and belong to a fragmented family. Therefore, the importance of family is revealed in this research finding.

Awareness trainings should be given to prevent social media addiction, cyberbullying and cyber victimization problems. First of all, the "Media Literacy" course, which is given as an elective in primary education, should be renewed with the critical new media literacy subject and should be given compulsory and functional. Not only students, but also teachers and parents should be told about the problems brought by the new media through in-service training and seminars.

Considering that students who are cyber-victims do not want to share their negative experiences with anyone, they should be provided with psycho-social support.

Cyberbullying and cyber victimization experience is not only seen in adolescents and young people. Considering social media as an area of limitless freedom, there are adults who think that every insult and bullying is permissible. In social media, there are only those who are suitable for their own ideology and mentality and those who live in virtual clans in the form of a closed community. Narcissistic individuals, who cannot tolerate and cannot tolerate any idea other than their own, are together with their peers in the virtual environment and believe what they say in the artificial world they create. They live in a schizoid and suspicious (paranoid) mood in the context of the resonance of what they say, which are expressed as "echo chambers". In this context, a social mood that always believes in its own truth and alienates everyone is being built.

It is important to teach philosophy, sociology, psychology and ethics lessons to high school students both in the treatment of the firm belief, paranoid-schizoid mood and in the process of teaching that cyberbullying is a crime against humanity. A good social science education is required in order to be a citizen, to respect the rights of others and to know oneself.

Özet

Bu çalışmada, Z kuşağı lise gençlerinin sosyal medya bağımlılığı ile siber zorbalık ve mağduriyet deneyimleri irdelenmektedir. Özellikle sosyal medya ile kendini ifade eden ve hayatlarının merkezinde sosyal medya olan Z kuşağı gençlerinde sosyal medya bağımlılığı hem psikolojik bağımlılık olarak sorun oluşturma riski taşımakta, hem de siber zorbalık ve mağduriyet yaşantılarını artırmaktadır. Bu bağlamda problem cümlesi şudur: "Z kuşağı lise gençlerinde

sosyal medya bağımlılık düzeyleri ile siber zorbalık ve mağduriyet deneyimleri arasında bir ilişki var mıdır?”. Araştırmanın hipotezi bu problem üzerinde test edilecektir.

Literatürde kullanılan kuşak sınıflamaları, Türkiye'nin sosyolojik yapısını da içerecek şekilde şu şekilde ifade edilebilir.

a. Sessiz Kuşak, 1927-1945 arası doğanlar, (Gazete Kuşağı, Cumhuriyet Kuşağı, Gelenekçiler).

b. Bebek Patlaması Kuşağı, 1946-1964 arası doğanlar, (Radyo Kuşağı, 68 Kuşağı, Sandviç Kuşak, İdealist Kuşak).

c. X kuşağı, 1965-1980 arası doğanlar, (Televizyon Kuşağı, Özal Kuşağı, Pop Çağı Kuşağı).

d. Y veya Milenyum Kuşağı, 1981-2000 arası doğanlar, (İnternet Kuşağı, Ben Nesli, Bumerang Kuşak).

e. Z Kuşağı, 2001-2020 arası doğumlular, (Akıllı Telefon Kuşağı, Sosyal Medya Kuşağı, Dijital yerliler, Sanal Kuşak, AVM Kuşağı).

Siber mağduriyet, interneti kullanarak bir birey ya da gruba, özel ya da tüzel bir kişiliğe karşı yapılan teknik ya da ilişkişel tarzda zarar verici davranışlara maruz kalınması ve bu davranışlardan maddi ya da manevi olarak mağduriyet yaşanması durumu olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Kısaca, siber mağduriyet, siber zorbalık mağduru olanların durumu olarak ifade edilebilir.

Siber zorbalıkla ilişkişel yapılan araştırmalar, siber zorbalığın bireyleri psikolojik açıdan negatif etkilediğini göstermektedir. Nitekim siber zorbalığa maruz kalan kişilerde; depresyon, suç işleme, madde kullanımı, hayal kırıklığı, üzüntü, öfke, kaygı, derslere karşı motivasyon kaybı, akademik başarısızlık, okul devamsızlığı, intihar etme vb. problemler gözlenmiştir.

Z kuşağı lise gençlerinin sosyal medya bağımlılığı ile siber zorbalık ve mağduriyet deneyimleri arasındaki ilişkinin araştırılması, çağımızın en önemli iletişim aracı olan sosyal medyanın etkisinin ortaya çıkartılması açısından önem taşımaktadır. Bu bağlamda, Malatya merkezde 7 lisede öğrenim gören örnekleme anket uygulanmıştır.

Şiddet davranışı öğrenilen bir davranış olduğu gibi siber zorbalık ve siber mağduriyet deneyimleri de öğrenilen davranış deneyimleridir. Araştırma bulgularından da görüldüğü üzere Z kuşağı lise gençlerinde sosyal medya bağımlılığı ile siber zorbalık ve siber mağduriyet deneyimleri arasında ilişki bulunmaktadır. Sosyal medyayı kullanma oranları yükselmesine bağlı olarak siber zorbalık ve siber mağduriyet deneyimleri artmaktadır. Sanal alemde ve simülasyon ortamında rumuzları ile akranları başta olmak üzere diğer bireylere siber zorbalık uygulayan gençlerin psikolojik dünyasında sorunlar oluşmaktadır. Öncelikle farklı

Social Media Addiction, Cyber Bullying and Cyber Victimization Experiences Among the Generation Z High School Students

rumuzlar ve sahte kimliklerle sanal ortamda farklı kişilik gerçek ortamda farklı kişilik formlarına bürünmektedirler. Bu durum kişiliklerinde şizofrenik parçalanmışlığa neden olmaktadır.

Siber zorbalık ve siber mağduriyet deneyimlerinin toplumsal cinsiyet açısından en fazla erkeklerde görülmesi, erkek toplumsal cinsiyetinin yetişmesinde öğrendiği rol modeller ve sosyalleşme örüntüleri ile ilgilidir. Erkeklerin sosyalleşme sürecinde daha baskın, etkin ve savaşçı yetiştirilmesi siber zorbalık davranışına da etki etmiştir. Siber mağduriyete uğrama deneyimlerinin erkek öğrencilerde fazla olması, mağduriyet yaşayanların rövanş almak bağlamında siber zorbalık deneyimini ürettikleri görülmektedir.

Yaş düzeylerine göre yaş oranı yükseldikçe siber zorbalık ve siber mağduriyet deneyimleri artmaktadır. Akıllı telefonlara sahip olma ve sosyal medyayı etkin kullanma tecrübelerinin artmasına paralel olarak siber zorbalık ve mağduriyet deneyimlerinin arttığı söylenebilir.

Araştırma bulgularından çıkan sosyolojik ve sosyal psikolojik diğer önemli sonuç, öğrencilerin ailelerinin tutumuna göre "ilgisiz" aile çocuklarında, hem sosyal medya bağımlılığı oranının, hem siber zorbalık ve siber mağduriyet deneyiminin yüksek olmasıdır. Aynı şekilde anne ve babası ayrı, parçalanmış aileye mensup öğrencilerin sosyal medya bağımlılık oranı ile siber zorbalık ve siber mağduriyet deneyimleri yüksektir. Dolayısıyla, ailenin önemi bu araştırma bulgusunda ortaya çıkmaktadır.

Sosyal medya bağımlılığı, siber zorbalık ve siber mağduriyet sorunlarının önlenmesi için farkındalık eğitimleri verilmelidir. Öncelikle ilköğretimde seçmeli verilen "Medya Okur Yazarlığı" dersinin, eleştirel yeni medya okur-yazarlığı konusu ile yenilenerek, zorunlu ve işlevsel verilmesi gerekmektedir. Sadece öğrencilere değil, öğretmenlere ve ebeveynlere de hizmet içi eğitim ve seminerlerle yeni medyanın getirdiği sorunlar anlatılmalıdır.

Özellikle siber mağdur olan öğrencilerin yaşadığı olumsuz deneyimi kimseyle paylaşmak istememesi dikkate alınarak, bu öğrencilerin psiko-sosyal destek almaları sağlanmalıdır.

Siber zorbalık ve siber mağduriyet deneyimi, sadece ergenlerde ve gençlerde görülmemektedir. Sosyal medyayı sınırsız özgürlük alanı olarak düşünerek, her yaptığı hakaret ve zorbalığın mubah olduğunu zannetme yetişkinler arasında da mevcuttur. Sosyal medyada sadece kendi ideolojisine ve zihniyetine uygun olanlar ile kapalı bir cemaat gibi sürü şeklinde sanal klanlar halinde yaşayanlar bulunmaktadır. Kendi fikrinden başka hiçbir fikre hoşgörü gösteremeyen ve tahammül edemeyen narsist bireyler kendi benzerleri ile sanal ortamda birlikte olmakta, oluşturdukları yapay dünyada kendi söylediklerine kendileri inanmaktadır. "Yankı odaları" olarak ifade edilen kendi söylediklerinin tekrar kendilerine yankılanması bağlamında içe kapalı (şizoid) ve kuşkucu (paranoid) bir

ruh halini yaşamaktadırlar. Bu bağlamda, hep kendi doğrularına inanan, herkesi ötekileştiren bir toplumsal ruh hali inşa olmaktadır.

Hem oluşan kesin inançlı, paranoid-şizoid ruh halinin tedavisinde, hem de siber zorbalığın bir insanlık suçu olduğunu öğretme sürecinde, lise öğrencilerine felsefe, sosyoloji, psikoloji, etik derslerinin işlevsel verilmesi önem taşımaktadır. Vatandaş olmak, başkalarının haklarına saygılı olmak, kendini bilmek için iyi bir sosyal bilimler eğitimi gerekmektedir.

Introduction

Societies have been classified as agricultural, industrial and informational society in the period of social history. Based on the Internet, the informational society forms the informational life spaces. People of Y or millennial generation and generation Z who were born in a period of common Internet use cannot dream about a world without Internet. They share their entire privacy through the social media which serves as a showcase for them.

“All the world’s a stage, all the men and women are merely players, and one man in his time plays many parts.” These words by Shakespeare indicate that people play their roles on the stage, which is a metaphor in this case. With the culture obtained during the socialization period, people display their ontological and epistemological identities in the environments they are present. People define their identity through others with the term “looking-glass self”, building their ontological presence with their performance. Goffman defines the actions one performs as long as one is present before an audience as well as the actions that are performed and leave an impact on the spectators as “performance”, and he explains the part of displaying this performance to spectators as “showcase”. Accordingly, showcase can be defined as a standard presentation environment used by people during their performance.¹ People show their performance by displaying themselves on the digital social media as the showcase. They witness the impact of their performances with the like button.

According to WAS 2020 World Digital Report, 4.54 billion Internet user, which is equal to 59% of global population, and 3.80 billion people, corresponding to 49% of the world population, are active social media users. Furthermore, 5.19 billion people, 67% of the world population, use social media on mobile devices. According to the mean global figures, the daily duration spent on the Internet is 6 hours and 43 minutes. The 2020 data regarding Turkey are as follows: Of the Turkish population, 74%, equaling to 62.07 million people, are Internet users, and 64%, corresponding to 54 million people, are active social media users. Moreover,

¹ Erving Goffman, *Günlük Yaşamda Benliğin Sunumu*, trans. B. Cezar (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2009), 33.

Social Media Addiction, Cyber Bullying and Cyber Victimization Experiences Among the Generation Z High School Students

77 million people, 99% of the entire population, use social media on their mobile devices. The mean daily duration spent on the social media in Turkey is 2 hours and 55 minutes. The first five social media platforms actively used in Turkey are YouTube, Instagram, Whatsapp, Facebook and Twitter. The mean daily duration spent on Internet in Turkey is 7 hours and 29 minutes.² Accordingly, it is safe to state that the social media is a significant element for the daily lives of the people living in Turkey and other countries. The social media used in every area of life facilitates the daily life but also carries the risk of creating an addiction.

This study examines the social media addiction, cyber bullying and cyber victimization experiences of generation Z high school students. Social media addiction has the risk of causing both psychological addiction and cyber bullying and victimization among the generation Z high school students who express themselves through social media and whose lives are based on the social media. The problem assessed in this study is as follows: "Is there a relationship between the social media addiction levels, cyber bullying and cyber victimization experiences of the generation Z high school students?" The hypothesis of the study will be tested through this problem.

1. Generation Z

A generation changes every twenty years within the generation cycle. Generations include and reflect not only the biological life cycle, but also the social and cultural habitus of the people in the current era. Accordingly, people living in the same age and period form similar behavioral codes with global interaction, while different behavioral models are produced owing to the social and cultural structure of every country. These realities are sociologically significant and natural.³

The generation classifications used in the literature can be reflected in a manner including the sociological structure of Turkey as follows:

a. Silent Generation, those born between 1927 and 1945. (Newspaper Generation, Republican Generation, Traditionalists).

b. Baby Boomers, those born between 1946 and 1964. (Radio Generation, 68 Generation, Sandwich Generation, Idealist Generation).

c. Generation X, those born between 1965 and 1980. (Television generation, Özal Generation, Pop Age Generation).

² We Are Social (WAS), "Digital in 2020" (Date Accessed: 31 August 2020).

³ Vehbi Bayhan, "Kuşaklar Sosyolojisi ve Türkiye İçin Yeni Bir Kuşak Analizi", *Sosyoloji Divanı Dergisi* 13/1 (January-June 2019), 29.

d. Generation Y or Millennial Generation, those born between 1981 and 2000. (Internet Generation, Me Generation, Boomerang Generation)

e. Generation Z, those born between 2001 and 2020. (Smartphone Generation, Social Media Generation, Digital locals, Virtual Generation, Shopping Mall Generation).⁴

There are approximately 2 billion people in the “digital locals” or Generation Z who were born in a truly digital world and who grew up playing with smart phones and tablets. It is safe to state that informational technology reflects a way of life for this generation. Moreover, people of this generation grew up in the environment of wars, migrations, financial and political crises, unemployed parents and increased terror. “Helicopter parents”, the parents of this era, follow each step of their children through smart phones. Generation Z pays great attention to “personalization”, showing no approval toward being patient or waiting.⁵

Twenge defines the Generation Y as “Me Generation”, naming the Generation Z as “generation I”. The letter I in the concept of generation I reflects the first letters of Internet, Iphone and individualism. Twenge uses the concept of generation I as people of this generation grew up with mobile phones and do not remember the time before Internet. The years 2011 and 2012 are the periods when most of Americans started to use the smart mobile phones with Internet access. Smart phones controlling the entire population of adolescents leaves various impacts on the lives of generation I including their social generation and mental health. Accordingly, an ordinary adolescent checks his/her mobile phone at least eighty times a day. People of the generation I are concerned with their safety and economic future; they cannot tolerate inequalities arising from gender, race or sexual orientation. The rate of depression and suicide during adolescence has been rapidly increasing since 2011.⁶ It is safe to state that cyber bullying and cyber victimization experiences are a significant factor for the increased rate of depression, concerns and suicide among the adolescents and youngsters.

2. Internet and Social Media Addiction

Being the main symbol of information society and globalization, Internet is a significant technological instrument in the lives of adolescents and youngsters. Internet provides the ability to access information from every location of the world, and it may also cause addiction among the youngsters. Developed in the context of Internet’s impact on the life of people, the concept of “Internet Addiction” is the new type of addiction defined in psychology. Internet addiction can be seen in any

⁴ Bayhan, “Kuşaklar Sosyolojisi ve Türkiye İçin Yeni Bir Kuşak Analizi”, 31.

⁵ Fatoş Karahasan, *Açılın Gençler Geliyor* (Istanbul: Doğan Egmont Yayınları, 2018), 30-32.

⁶ Jean W. Twenge, *İ-Nesli*, trans. O. Gündüz (Istanbul: Kaknüs Yayınları, 2018), 22-26.

Social Media Addiction, Cyber Bullying and Cyber Victimization Experiences Among the Generation Z High School Students

age, with the greatest risk group covering the youngsters aged between 12 and 18 years.⁷

There are certain signs indicating that one is an Internet addict: (a) Internet becoming the most important thing in life and having an prioritized position in thinking systems; (b) Internet usage causing people to experience the feeling of “escaping from the real world”; (c) Spending too much time on the Internet; (d) Feeling uncomfortable or unhappy when offline; (e) Internet usage causing conflicts between the addicts and their families, teachers or friends; (f) Returning back to old usage habits despite making efforts to reduce the rate of Internet use.⁸ People who bear these traits and cannot think about a life without social media bear the risk of addiction to Internet and social media, which may pave the way for the increased cyber bullying and cyber victimization experiences or these incidents reaching a pathological dimension.

As in the case of substance addicts (such as alcohol or drug addicts), Internet and social media addiction is a treatable psychiatric issue. Furthermore, it is fair to state that the fear of missing out (FOMO) is directly related with the social media addiction.⁹

In the circle of being popular, people focus on being those who have reputation on the social media. Liking social media posts, vibration of mobile phone, continuous control of e-mails and messages, and social media addiction reduces the levels of creativity and empathy levels among the young people. Accordingly, studies conducted in United States (USA) indicate increases in the creativity test results from , 1966 to 1980, but the scores young people received from creativity tests sharply fell after 1998.¹⁰ According to Gardner and Davis, the traits of modern App Generation are as follows: “avoiding risks”, “addiction”, “superficiality”, “narcissism” .¹¹

Generally, university students are not by themselves; it is safe to state that their parents follow their notes or even bank accounts. The concept of “helicopter parent” can be used to describe this case. According to certain studies covering undergraduate students, newly graduated students and their families in USA, university students contact their parents through a mobile phone by approximately

⁷ Vehbi Bayhan, "Lise Öğrencilerinde İnternet Kullanma Alışkanlığı ve İnternet Bağımlılığı", *XIII. Akademik Bilişim Bildirileri*, ed. Mustafa Akgül et al. (Malatya: Türkiye Bilişim Derneği, 2011), 917.

⁸ Şükrü Balcı et al., "Üniversite Öğrencileri Arasında İnternet Bağımlılığı ve İnternet Bağımlılığının Profili", *Selçuk Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Akademik Dergisi* 6/1 (July 2009), 8.

⁹ Vehbi Bayhan, "İnternet, Sosyal Medya ve Narsisizm", *Sosyoloji Divanı Dergisi* 9/1 (January-June 2017), 171.

¹⁰ Joel Stein et al., "The New Greatest Generation", *Time* 181/19 (May 2013), 26-33.

¹¹ Howard Gardner - Katie Davis, *App Kuşağı. Dijital Dünyada Kimlik, Mahremiyet ve Hayal Gücü*, trans. Ümit Şensoy (Istanbul: Optimist Yayınları, 2014), 171.

13.4 times a week¹², which shows a post-familial family type where family members spend time with their mobile phones rather than one another.¹³

According to Zimbardo and Coulombe, Internet addiction is increasing among the young male people, with porn and gaming addiction affecting the known masculine identity more adversely. Online gaming may cause young males to isolate themselves from the social life and prevent them from developing face-to-face social skills and having curiosity. The variety and intensity of actions within online games makes the other part of life, such as learning at school, more boring and causes issues in the academic performance, which increases attention deficiency and hyperactivity disorder resulting in a negative and devastating cycle.¹⁴

According to Twenge, the rates of concerns, depression and suicide have been increasing significantly among the generation I youngsters in USA since 2011. It is safe to state that the main factor behind this issue is the popularization of smart phones in USA between 2011 and 2012.¹⁵ The suicidal thoughts of generation I, the rate of which is around 28% if the duration spent behind a screen is under an hour, may reach 48% if this duration reaches five hours or longer.¹⁶ Accordingly, smart phones increase Internet addiction and suicidal orientations.¹⁷

3. Cyber Bullying and Cyber Victimization

Cyber bullying can be defined as the deliberate, malevolent and repetitive behaviors displayed through e-mail, instant messaging, chat rooms, social media or other digital messages on instruments such as smart phones or computers to cause harm. Cyber bullying can be performed in different forms. Sending or posting threat messages or other sorts of messages with insults on the Internet; sharing photographs, videos or private information of people implicitly or explicitly without their permission; sending malevolent e-mails or (insulting, threatening, mocking, sexually abusive or violent) instant messages; disturbing; harassing one on the Internet; slandering; sharing gossips; introducing oneself as somebody else; exclusion; and stigmatization on the Internet are among the common examples of

¹² Gardner - Davis, *App Kuşacağı. Dijital Dünyada Kimlik, Mahremiyet ve Hayal Gücü*, trans. Ümit Şensoy 95-96.

¹³ Gardner - Davis, *App Kuşacağı. Dijital Dünyada Kimlik, Mahremiyet ve Hayal Gücü*, trans. Ümit Şensoy, 117.

¹⁴ Philip Zimbardo - Nikita D. Coulombe, *Bitik Erkekler: Teknoloji Erkeklği Nasıl Sabote Etti?*, trans. Tolga Yalur (Istanbul: Pegasus Yayınları, 2017), 15-16.

¹⁵ Twenge, *İ-Nesli*, trans. O. Gündüz, 23-25.

¹⁶ Twenge, *İ-Nesli*, trans. O. Gündüz, 127.

¹⁷ Vehbi Bayhan, "Milenyum Gençliğinin Akışkan Eklektik Kimlik Örüntüleri", *Eğitim, Gençlik ve Gelecek*, ed. N. A. et al. (Düsseldorf: LAP Lambert Academic Publishing, 2018), 88.

Social Media Addiction, Cyber Bullying and Cyber Victimization Experiences Among the Generation Z High School Students

cyber bullying.¹⁸ Implementing psychological violence by using alias and hiding the identity constitutes the basis of cyber bullying.

Cyber victimization is the exposure to harmful behaviors within technical or other relationships with a person, group or a natural or legal entity on online environment and experiencing financial or spiritual victimization from these behaviors. To sum up, cyber victimization can be explained as the status of people who are the victims of cyber bullying.¹⁹ Cyber bullying and cyber victimization may result in one another. It is fair to state that people who commit cyber bullying sometimes experience victimization.

From a traditional perspective, bullying is mostly experienced in a school. Cyber bullying can, however, be suffered any time of the day, which causes bullying continue in a high rate without interruption and dependence on time and place. In other words, victims of cyber bullying cannot escape from the adverse comments and posts about them on the Internet, which is different compared to face-to-face peer bullying. Furthermore, these comments and posts are shared among a broad peer group in such a short period of time that victims are exposed to the attacks and abuse of the people they do not even know.²⁰ Cyber victims of bullying, also defined as psychological violence, also suffer from psychological issues.

The studies on cyber bullying indicate that cyber bullying adversely affects people's psychology. Problems such as depression, committing crime, substance usage, disappointment, sorrow, anger, concerns, loss of motivation to study, academic failure, abstinence at school, committing suicide etc. have been observed among the people exposed to cyber bullying. In a relevant study, females who suffered cyber bullying displayed more submissive attitudes than males did²¹, which can be explained with the idea that female people are raised to be more passive and that they prefer passiveness when exposed to cyber bullying.

The frequency of experiencing cyber bullying is a common topic in national and international literature. The rate of exposure to cyber bullying and of cyber victimization were found to be around 15-16% as a result of the meta-analysis covering 80 studies from the international literature. According to the studies

¹⁸ Ezgi Taştekin - Pınar Bayhan, "Ergenler Arasındaki Siber Zorbalığın ve Mağduriyetin İncelenmesi", *Online Journal of Technology Addiction & Cyberbullying* 5/2 (December 2018), 22-23.

¹⁹ Demet Pekşen Süslü - Ayla Oktay, "Lise Öğrencilerinde Siber Zorbalık ve Siber Mağduriyetle İlişkili Bazı Değişkenlerin İncelenmesi", *Elementary Education Online* 17/4 (2018), 1877-1895.

²⁰ Emel Baştürk Akca - İdil Sayımer, "Siber Zorbalık Kavramı, Türleri ve İlişkili Olduğu Faktörler: Mevcut Araştırmalar Üzerinden Bir Değerlendirme", *Online Academic Journal of Information Technology* 8/30 (2017), 2-3.

²¹ Erkan Yaman - Adem Peker, "Ergenlerin Siber Zorbalık ve Siber Mağduriyete İlişkin Algıları", *Gaziantep Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 11/3 (2012), 821.

conducted in Turkey, cyber bullying rates ranged between 6.4% and 47.6%, and the rate of being a cyber victim varied between 5.1% and 56%.²²

Moreover, according to a series of researches conducted by the Cyber Bullying Research Center in USA, cyber bullying rate was 19% among the adolescents in 2007, and this rate rose to 34% in 2016. Two-third (66%) of the adolescents who were exposed to cyber bullying display at least one suicide risk factor, with this rate being 9% higher among those who were exposed to bullying at school. Contrary to cyber bullying, adolescents who are exposed to cyber bullying state it is impossible to avoid bullying and certain people because bullying continues as long as they do not stop using smart phones. Additionally, cyber bullying may cause sorrow and depression, despite not causing suicide at all times.
23

In a study conducted in USA in 2011, 71% of the young people aged between 14 and 24 were oriented to use a racist and sexist language on the Internet or during messaging. The following words from Molly, a 16-year-old female student interviewed with qualitative method, are important: "I think they forget who they are on the Internet, thinking they are totally invisible on the digital environment and cannot be held responsible for anything they do on the Internet. They use their online profiles like an identity without responsibility." Gardner and Davis stated in their qualitative study that another student reflected the schizoid characteristics of online relationships as follows: "A person who shares his/her most private information on the Internet establishes a formal relationship with the person receiving this information in the outer world, which sounds strange to me."²⁴ Accordingly, it can be said that virtual social relationships and experiences cause schizophrenic fragmentation in the personalities of people, particularly adolescents and youngsters because people happen to reflect their ID and ego on the social media but act or play a role under the impact of their super ego in the real life.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Methods of the Study

Examining the relationship between the social media addiction as well as cyber bullying and cyber victimization experiences of generation Z high school students is crucial for revealing the impact of social media, the most important instrument of communication in modern times. A survey was administered to the

²² Çiğdem Topcu Uzer - İbrahim Tanrıkulu, "Siber Zorbalığı Önleme ve Müdahale Programları: Ulusal Bir Alanyazın Taraması", *Uludağ Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi* 30/1 (2017), 2.

²³ Twenge, *İ-Nesli*, trans. O. Gündüz, 127-129.

²⁴ Gardner - Davis, *App Kuşağı. Dijital Dünyada Kimlik, Mahremiyet ve Hayal Gücü*, trans. Ümit Şensoy, 122-125.

Social Media Addiction, Cyber Bullying and Cyber Victimization Experiences Among the Generation Z High School Students

sample studying in seven high schools in the Turkish city of Malatya. The study was conducted during the academic year of 2017-2018. The sample consisted of 336 high school students. The classes were distributed as 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grades. The survey form had demographic items, patterns of social media use, social media dependence scale, cyber bullying and victimization items. To measure the cyber bullying and victimization level, Reviewed Cyber Bullying Inventory-II (RCBI-II) was used. Participants assessed each item twice with a four-point scoring procedure in the column "I did" to assess their cyber bullying behaviors and in the column "I experienced" to assess their victimization and exposure to cyber bullying (1: Never, 2: Once, 3: Two times or Three times, 4: More than three times). The lowest score to be obtained from the scale was 10, while the highest was 40. High scores indicated frequent cyber bullying or cyber victimization. The internal consistency coefficient was 0.84²⁵ for the cyber victimization section of the scale and 0.69 for cyber bullying.²⁶ In this study group, Cronbach's alpha value was 0.82 for cyber bullying and 0.79 for cyber victimization.

The social media addiction scale consisted of the scale developed by Tutgun Ünal (2015). The items were scored in a five-point Likert type form: (1) Totally disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neutral, (4) Agree, (5) Totally agree.²⁷ Cronbach's alpha value was 0.813 for social media dependence scale. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 21 package software was used for data analysis. Chi-square and t-test were also used in the study. The survey items used in the study were assessed at the significance level $P < 0.05$ and 95% confidence interval.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Female	221	65.8	15 years	52	15.5
Male	115	34.2	16 years	104	31.0
Total	336	100.0	17 years	117	34.8
<i>Family Income</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	18 years	63	18.8
1500 TL and below	78	23.2	Total	336	100.0
1501-2500TL	122	36.3	<i>Social Media</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
2501-4500TL	91	27.1	Instagram	184	54.8

²⁵ Çiğdem Topçu, *Modeling The Relationships Among Coping Strategies, Emotion Regulation, Rumination, And Perceived Social Support In Victims Of Cyber And Traditional Bullying* (Ankara: Middle East Technical University, Department of Educational Sciences, Doctoral Thesis, 2014), 54.

²⁶ Çiğdem Topçu - Özgür Erdur-Baker, "RCBI-II: The Second Revision of the Revised Cyber Bullying Inventory", *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development* 51/1 (December 2017), 36.

²⁷ Aylin Tutgun Ünal, *Sosyal Medya Bağımlılığı: Üniversite Öğrencileri Üzerine Bir Alan Araştırması* (Istanbul: Marmara University, Institute of Social Sciences, Doctoral Thesis, 2015), 78.

4500-6500TL	29	8.6	Whatsapp	99	29.5
6501-8500TL	6	1.8	Facebook	35	10.4
8500TL and +	10	3.0	Twitter	18	5.4
Total	336	100.0	Total	336	100.0
<i>Type of High School</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	Daily Time	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Anatolian	238	70.8	0- 1 hour	104	31.0
Tourism	43	12.8	1-2 hours	84	25.0
Imam-Hatip	30	8.9	3-4 hours	65	19.3
Vocational	25	7.4	5-6 hours	36	10.7
Total	336	100.0	7 hours +	47	14.0

As seen in Table 1, 34% of the sample were male, while 66% were female. Participants were aged between 15 and 18. Based on monthly income, educational statuses and professions of parents, participants were from the moderate social class. Of the participants, 70.8% were Anatolian High School students, while 12.8% were Tourism High School students, 8.9% were Imam Hatip High School students, and 7.4% were Vocational High School students. Moreover, 31.3% of the participants had five people and more in their families, while 25.9% had four people, 20.5% had six people, and 7.7% had three people in their families. Of the people in the sample, 93.5% lived with their families, while 6.5% lived away from their families. Additionally, 29.5% had three siblings, while 24.7% had two, and 23.5% had four. Paternal educational statuses were higher than the maternal ones in this study. Of the mothers of the participants, 86.3% were housewives. Fathers of the participants were mostly self-employed, civil servant, worker, shopkeeper, farmer, teacher and retired. The item “the most important thing in your life” was replied as family by 32.4%, living by 11%, and respect and love by 9.5%. The course within which participants were successful the most was mathematics (26.5%). The faculty they wanted to study the most as an undergraduate student was the faculty of medicine (17.9%). The answers given to the attitudes of families toward them were as follows: protective (54.8%), democrat (22.9%), authoritarian (14.3%), and uninterested (8%). Regarding the music genre they listened to the most, 56% mentioned pop music, while 12.8% listened to arabesque, 11.9% listened to rap, 6% listened to Turkish folk music, and 4% mentioned Turkish artistic music.

4.2. Patterns of Social Media Use

Among the participants in the sample, 81.5% had a smart phone while 63.4% had an Internet connection at home. Of the participants, 77% had a mobile Internet package. The rate of those who used the Internet every day was 78.6%. The mean duration they spent on the social media was 0-1 hour (31%), 1-2 hours (25%), 3-4 hours (19.3%), 5-6 hours (10.7%), 7 hours and longer (14%). Of the participants,,

Social Media Addiction, Cyber Bullying and Cyber Victimization Experiences Among the Generation Z High School Students

ones who had accounts in all social media platforms constituted 39.9%, while the rate of Whatsapp users was 33%. Moreover, Instagram users constituted 18.8%, Facebook users constituted 6%, and Twitter users constituted 2.4%. The social media platforms used the most were as follows: Instagram (54.8%), Whatsapp (29.5%), Facebook (10.4%) and Twitter (5.4%).

Instagram was the most popular social media platform also for the university students. Both high school and university students used Instagram the most as they just checked a photograph rather than reading a text and valued visuals more. Instagram also served as a mirror for the satisfaction of narcissistic feelings.

The rate of those who shared a video on Youtube was 16.4%. Regarding the popular tv programs, Survivor was the contest 38.4% wanted to participate in, while 33% wanted to participate in The Voice Turkey. To be popular, 37.2% wanted to be an actor or actress, while 22.3% wanted to be a singer, 20% wanted to be a footballer, and 19.9% wanted to be a politician.

The frequency of checking social media accounts were as follows: Occasionally (53.9), constantly (31.5%), never (14.6%). The rate of those who continuously shared a photograph on the social media was 16.1%, and those who occasionally shared a photograph constituted 61.9%. Those who never shared a photograph corresponded to 22%. Of the sample, 20.8% stated they played games on the social media.

The rate of those who always wondered what their friends shared on the social media was 19%. Those who did the same occasionally was 58.3%, and those who never wondered corresponded to 22.6%. Those who always posted a comment to their friends' posts constituted 10%. The rate of those who did the same occasionally was 52.4%, and those who never did it corresponded to 37.5%. Furthermore, the rate of those who checked to see how much likes their posts received was 27.7%, while those who occasionally checked corresponded to 44%, and those who never checked meant 28.3%. Those who always clicked the like button constituted 31.8%, while those who did the same occasionally meant 50.9%, and those who never did it corresponded to 17.3%.

4.3 Social Media Addiction, Cyber Bullying and Cyber Victimization Experiences

The social media addiction rates of the participants were as follows: low addiction (20.8%), moderate addiction (37.8%), high addiction (40%). Based on the socio-demographic characteristics, social media addiction traits differed as follows: In regard to the factor of gender, the rates of addiction were 41% in male students and 39% in female students. Furthermore, social media addiction rate was 47% higher in those aged 18 years. The rate of cyber bullying, cyber victimization and social media addiction was high among those from the high income group based on

the monthly income level of families. Social media addiction was 47% higher among the students of the 12th grade. Moreover, social media addiction rate of youngsters whose families were uninterested toward them was 58, being higher than the democrat, protective and authoritarian families.

The cyber bullying experiences of participants were as follows: Bullying was not experienced by 35% of the participants, while 55% suffered bullying at a moderate level (one or three times), and 10% experienced bullying at a high level (more than three times). The cyber victimization experiences of the sample were as follows: 26% did not experience victimization, while 64% experienced a moderate level victimization (1 and 3 times), 10% suffered a victimization at a high level (more than three times).

Table 2: Degrees of Social Media Addiction and Cyber Bullying Experience

	Bullying_Group			Total
	No Bullying	Moderate Degree	High Degree	
0-18	36	30	4	70
Low Addiction	51.4%	42.9%	5.7%	100.0%
19-27	30.5%	16.8%	12.9%	21.3%
19-27	52	68	7	127
Addicted_group	40.9%	53.5%	5.5%	100.0%
Addiction at moderate degree	44.1%	38.0%	22.6%	38.7%
28-45	30	81	20	131
Addiction at high degree	22.9%	61.8%	15.3%	100.0%
28-45	25.4%	45.3%	64.5%	39.9%
Total	118	179	31	328
	36.0%	54.6%	9.5%	100.0%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

$\chi^2=0.000$ $p<0.05$

As seen in Table 2, youngsters with high social media addiction rates also had high cyber bullying degrees as understood from the relationship between the social media addiction degrees and cyber bullying degrees of the sample. Accordingly, social media addiction increased the cyber bullying risk. Therefore, it is safe to state that cyber bullying increased with the increased rate of social media

Social Media Addiction, Cyber Bullying and Cyber Victimization
Experiences Among the Generation Z High School Students

addiction. The relationship between two variables were statistically significant as understood from the chi-square test below the table.

Table 3: Degrees of Social Media Addiction and Cyber Victimization Experience

		Victimization_Group			Total
		No Victimization	Victimization at moderate degree	Victimization at high degree	
saddicted_group	0-18	24	43	3	70
	Low	34.3%	61.4%	4.3%	100.0%
	Addiction	27.3%	20,6%	9.7%	21.3%
	19-27	44	75	8	127
	Addiction	34.6%	59.1%	6.3%	100.0%
	at moderate degree	50.0%	35.9%	25.8%	38.7%
	28-45	20	91	20	131
	Addiction	15.3%	69.5%	15.3%	100.0%
	at high degree	22.7%	43.5%	64.5%	39.9%
Total	88	209	31	328	
	26.8%	63.7%	9.5%	100.0%	
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

$\chi^2=0.000$ $p<0.05$

As seen in Table 3, youngsters with high social media addiction rates also had high cyber victimization degrees as understood from the relationship between the social media addiction degrees and cyber victimization degrees of the sample. Accordingly, it is safe to say that social media addiction increased the cyber victimization risk. In conclusion, social media addiction increased in line with the cyber victimization levels. The relationship between two variables was also statistically significant.

The researches conducted in the literature yielded similar results. The study by Topçu indicated that those who used the Internet more frequently experienced

more cyber bullying.²⁸ Furthermore, studies by Erdur-Baker and Kavşut indicated a positive relationship between the use of Internet-based communication sources and being a cyber bully or victim.²⁹ The study by Taştekin and Bayhan reflected that cyber bullying and victimization scores of adolescents who spent more time on the Internet in a day were higher.³⁰ Pekşen, Süslü and Oktay found that cyber bullying and victimization scores increased as the duration of Internet use increased.³¹

Table 4: Degrees of Cyber Bullying and Cyber Victimization Experiences

		Victimization_Group			Total
		No Victimization	Victimization at moderate degree	Victimization at high degree	
bullying_group	No Bullying	79 66.9%	39 33.1%	0 0.0%	118 100.0%
	Bullying at a moderate degree	89.8%	18.2%	0.0%	35.1%
	Bullying at a high degree	9 4.9%	167 90.3%	9 4.9%	185 100.0%
	Total	10.2%	78.0%	26.5%	55.1%
	No Bullying	0 0.0%	8 24.2%	25 75.8%	33 100.0%
	Bullying at a moderate degree	0.0%	3.7%	73.5%	9.8%
	Bullying at a high degree	88 26.2%	214 63.7%	34 10.1%	336 100.0%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

$\chi^2=0.000$ $p<0.05$

²⁸ Çiğdem Topcu, *The Relationship of Cyber Bullying to Empathy, Gender, Traditional Bullying, Internet Use and Adult Monitoring* (Ankara: Middle East Technical University, Institute of Social Sciences, Unpublished Master's Thesis, 2008), 53.

²⁹ Özgür Erdur Baker - Fatma Kavşut, "Akran zorbalığının yeni yüzü: Siber zorbalık", *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research* 27 (January 2007), 31.

³⁰ Taştekin - Bayhan, "Ergenler Arasındaki Siber Zorbalığın ve Mağduriyetin İncelenmesi", 31.

³¹ Süslü - Oktay, "Lise Öğrencilerinde Siber Zorbalık ve Siber Mağduriyetle İlişkili Bazı Değişkenlerin İncelenmesi", 1892.

Social Media Addiction, Cyber Bullying and Cyber Victimization
Experiences Among the Generation Z High School Students

As seen in Table 4, youngsters with high cyber bullying degrees also had high cyber victimization degrees as understood from the relationship between bullying experience degrees and cyber victimization degrees of the sample. Accordingly, those who performed cyber bullying experienced cyber victimization. The same result was also yielded by the study of Taştekin and Bayhan and by the relevant literature. Cyber bullying and cyber victimization are two concepts triggering one another. An adolescent who experiences cyber victimization may perform cyber bullying to take revenge, and these attitudes may be repeated in a cyclic manner.³² Violent behavior is a learned attitude. Thus, the probability for performing cyber bullying increases for the people who experienced cyber victimization before. If other social variables and pattern of personality are suitable for performing cyber bullying, those who experienced cyber victimization perform cyber bullying. In other words, youngsters who performed cyber bullying are also the victims of cyber environment.

Table 5: Cyber Victimization Experiences Based on Gender (T-test)

	Your Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Bullying_Mean	Male	115	1.4217	.57838	.05393
	Female	221	1.3615	.50010	.03364

Sig. ,212 sig. (2-tailed) ,322

According to t-test, mean cyber bullying score of male students (1.4217) was higher than that of female students (1.3615). Following the cross-examination, male students had higher cyber bullying scores than female students did.

Table 6: Cyber Victimization Experiences Based on Gender (T-test)

	Your Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
vic_mean	Male	115	1.4539	.55603	.05185
	Female	221	1.4145	.49815	.03351

sig., 188, sig. (2-tailed), 509

³² Taştekin - Bayhan, "Ergenler Arasındaki Siber Zorbalığın ve Mağduriyetin İncelenmesi", 41.

According to t-test, mean cyber victimization score of male students (1.4539) was higher than that of female students (1.4145). Following the cross-examination, male students had higher cyber victimization scores than female students did.

Similar results were also found in the following studies: According to the study by Erdur-Baker and Kavşut, male students performed and were exposed to cyber bullying more than female students did.³³

As understood from the study by Taştekin and Bayhan, total cyber bullying and victimization score of female students were significantly lower than that of male students. Accordingly, males performed and were exposed to cyber bullying more than females³⁴.

In the study by Pekşen Süslü and Oktay (2018) on high school students, male students had higher cyber bullying scores than female students. Based on the studies conducted in Turkey, higher cyber bullying among males is correlated with gender roles in the Turkish culture where females are raised under control in their socialization with their environment and where females are expected to be more adaptive. On the contrary, violent acts by males are tolerated more. Studies indicated that violent orientations and attitudes of men were more common than those of women³⁵ and that cyber bullying behaviors were more common among male students, which might have arisen from the perception of gender.

The higher cyber bullying levels among male students are caused by gender roles, and violence and bullying attitudes being considered as an indication and instrument of braveness, power and status protection.³⁶

Table 7: Gossiping in the Virtual Environment based on Social Gender

	(Your act of) Gossiping				Total	
	never	once	2-3 times	more than 3 times		
Gender	Male	81 70.4%	15 13.0%	8 7.0%	11 9.6%	115 100.0%
	Female	44.0%	37.5%	22.9%	14.3%	34.2%
	103	25	27	66	221	

³³ Baker - Kavşut, "Akran zorbalığının yeni yüzü: Siber zorbalık", 31.

³⁴ Taştekin - Bayhan, "Ergenler Arasındaki Siber Zorbalığın ve Mağduriyetin İncelenmesi", 30.

³⁵ Süslü - Oktay, "Lise Öğrencilerinde Siber Zorbalık ve Siber Mağduriyetle İlişkili Bazı Değişkenlerin İncelenmesi", 1891.

³⁶ Akca - Sayımer, "Siber Zorbalık Kavramı, Türleri ve İlişkili Olduğu Faktörler: Mevcut Araştırmalar Üzerinden Bir Değerlendirme", 10.

Social Media Addiction, Cyber Bullying and Cyber Victimization
Experiences Among the Generation Z High School Students

	46.6%	11.3%	12.2%	29.9%	100.0%
	56.0%	62.5%	77.1%	85.7%	65.8%
	184	40	35	77	336
Total	54.8%	11.9%	10.4%	22.9%	100.0%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

$\chi^2=0.000$ $p<0.05$

According to Table 7 and as understood from the gender-based cross table regarding the item of gossiping in the virtual environment present on the scale of cyber bullying experiences, female students gossiped more than males did, which is significant from a sociological and social perspective.

Table 8: Gossiping in the Virtual Environment in Regard to Cyber Bullying based on Social Gender

	(Your experience of) Being Gossiped About				Total	
	Never	once	2-3 times	more than 3 times		
Gender	Male	77 67.0%	11 9.6%	15 13.0%	12 10.4%	115 100.0%
	Female	45.6%	33.3%	30.0%	14.3%	34.2%
	92 41.6%	22 10.0%	35 15.8%	72 32.6%	221 100.0%	
	54.4%	66.7%	70.0%	85.7%	65.8%	
Total	169 50.3%	33 9.8%	50 14.9%	84 25.0%	336 100.0%	
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

$\chi^2=0.000$ $p<0.05$

According to Table 8 and as understood from the gender-based cross table regarding the item of gossiping in the virtual environment present on the scale of cyber victimization experiences, female students gossiped more than males did, which is significant from a sociological and socio-psychological perspective.

In terms of cyber bullying and cyber victimization experiences of female students, gossiping about somebody or blemishing someone is related to the behaviors learned with gender role patterns. In terms of socialization, female children whose attitudes are limited in the real life in Turkey aim to overcome these limits by performing cyber bullying. Furthermore, the online environment enabling

to hide the identity may help female students display bold actions.³⁷ In fact, the easiness for both male and female students to hide their identities and use a nickname on the social media may provide a great opportunity for fulfilling their cyber bullying experiences with no regard to the concept of gender.

In the relationship between cyber bullying and cyber victimization and socio-economic statuses of families, youngsters from the families with high income had more cyber bullying and cyber victimization experiences. A similar result was found in other studies. According to the study by Taştekin and Bayhan, adolescents with high socio-economic status (based on monthly average income) had high cyber bullying and cyber victimization scores.³⁸

Other variable tested in the study was the relationship between cyber bullying and victimization experiences based on the attitude of the family toward the children. Accordingly, cyber bullying and cyber victimization experiences were more common among the youngsters whose families were uninterested toward them. Moreover, it is safe to state that children of fragmented families with separate parents had more cyber bullying and cyber victimization experiences.

Based on the school grade of the sample which is 12 as well as their age, cyber bullying and victimization experiences were more common among the 18-years-old students. The study by Taştekin and Bayhan yielded similar results. Based on difference of cyber bullying and victimization in terms of age, it was observed that adolescents aged 17 performed more cyber bullying than the ones aged 14, but cyber bullying did not differ based on age groups. The relevant literature has studies supporting the results related to cyber bullying and showing that cyber bullying did not differ based on age. The result that cyber bullying increased with age might have arisen from the independence of adolescents in terms of Internet use as they grew older and from their increased knowledge of Internet and technology use. Furthermore, hardware features of smart phones that are suitable for Internet use might have affected the result.³⁹ Cyber bullying as the method of expressing the self during the adolescence, a problematic period in terms of building the identity and personality, is an indicator of problematic socialization. Adolescents who clash with themselves, their families and the society perform bullying with their peers in the social environment, which causes the personality pattern to be traumatic in time.

³⁷ Akca - Sayımer , "Siber Zorbalık Kavramı, Türleri ve İlişkili Olduğu Faktörler: Mevcut Araştırmalar Üzerinden Bir Değerlendirme", 10.

³⁸ Taştekin - Bayhan, "Ergenler Arasındaki Siber Zorbalığın ve Mağduriyetin İncelenmesi", 30.

³⁹ Taştekin - Bayhan, "Ergenler Arasındaki Siber Zorbalığın ve Mağduriyetin İncelenmesi", 36-37.

Conclusion

In the reality of informational society, Internet and social media provide positive and facilitating impacts but they also increase addiction, cyber bullying and cyber victimization rates significantly. Like the addiction to other substances, social media addiction adversely affects people's psychological and social lives. Generation Z or the digital locals, who cannot think of a world without Internet and social media, are under the risk of social media addiction, cyber bullying and cyber victimization.

Cyber bullying and cyber victimization experiences are learned behavioral experiences like the violent attitudes. As seen from study results, there was a relationship between social media addiction, cyber bullying and cyber victimization experiences among the high school students of generation Z. Cyber bullying and cyber victimization experiences increase in line with the rate of using social media. Youngsters who perform cyber bullying with their nick names against the others, particularly their peers, on the social media and simulation environment may have issues in their psychology. They display different personalities in the virtual and real environment with their different nick names and fake identities, which causes schizophrenic fragmentation in their personalities.

Cyber bullying and cyber victimization experiences seen the most among the males may be related to the role models and socialization patterns males learn while growing up. Being raised to be more dominant, effective and warrior during socialization periods affects males' cyber bullying behaviors. Higher rate of cyber bullying experiences among male students indicates that victims perform cyber bullying to take revenge.

Furthermore, cyber bullying and cyber victimization experiences increased with higher age. It is safe to state that cyber bullying and victimization experiences increased in parallel to the increased rate of using smart phones and social media.

Another important sociological and socio-psychological result of the study was that social media addiction rate as well as cyber bullying and cyber victimization rates were higher among the students whose families were uninterested toward them. Similarly, social media addiction, cyber bullying and cyber victimization experiences of students whose parents were separate and fragmented were high. Therefore, it is safe to state that families were an important factor in this regard.

Awareness-based education should be provided to prevent social media addiction, cyber bullying and cyber victimization issues. The elective course "Media Literacy", instructed in the primary grades, should be renewed with the new topic of critical media literacy and provided in an obligatory and functional manner. Using the in-service trainings and seminars, the problems brought by the new media should be reflected to not only the students but also the teachers and

parents. Students, as the cyber victims here, do not want to share the adverse experiences with anybody, which should be considered for providing psycho-social support to them.

Cyber bullying and cyber victimization experiences are seen not only among the adolescents and youngsters. Considering the social media as the area of limitless freedom and believing that every bullying and insulting action performed is appropriate is also common among the adults. Social media has virtual clans of people who use the Internet with the others suiting their ideology and mentality as a closed congregation. Narcissistic people who cannot tolerate any idea other than theirs form a unity with those with the same idea of theirs, and these people believe in what they state in this virtual world. In terms of their statements being reflected back to them, which is defined as “reflection rooms”, they experience a schizoid and paranoid mood. Accordingly, a social mood is built with the people who believe in the correctness of what they state, marginalizing others.

Furthermore, courses of philosophy as well as sociology, psychology and ethics should be functionally instructed to high school students to treat the paranoid, schizoid mood with pre-established beliefs and to show that cyber bullying is a crime against humanity. Being a citizen, respecting others’ rights and knowing the position of the self requires a deep social education.

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Social Media Addiction, Cyber Bullying and Cyber Victimization
Experiences Among the Generation Z High School Students

Anti-Religious Publications and Reasons for Atheistic Orientations Among Youngsters*

Mustafa ÜNVERDİ**

Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between the atheistic thoughts of the youth and to discuss their effects on youth. Atheistic movements can easily reach people in today's communication world and it especially affects young minds. These publications reject the existence of a creator, the life after death, and the relationship between religion and morality, and reduce life only to this world. These kinds of publications destroy young people's belief world and cause people whose religious knowledge level is not enough to move away from religion. The determination of the projections of anti-religious movements in youth beliefs is important in terms of theology. This will be useful both in directing religious publications and in understanding the current problems of the science of theology. In this article, the analysis of the content of atheistic publications that merge in the anti-religious denominator and which are especially aimed at young people and the rationale of young people towards atheism has been examined. The study will help us to understand which motives the young people turn to atheistic views. For this, interviews were conducted with the qualitative research method and the factors affecting their beliefs were tried to be determined.

Keywords: Kalam, Atheism, Deism, Atheistic, Youth, Publication.

Din Karşıtı Yayınlar ve Gençlerde Ateistik Eğilimin Nedenleri

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı din karşıtı yayınlarla gençlerin ateistik düşüncelerinin ilişkisini araştırmaktır. İnkârcı akımlar, günümüz iletişim dünyasında insanlara rahatlıkla ulaşabilmekte ve özellikle genç zihinlerde karşılık bulabilmektedir. Söz konusu yayınlar bir

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Anti-Religious Publications and Reasons for Atheistic Orientations Among Youngsters

yaratıcının varlığını, ölümden sonra hayatın olduğunu ve din ve ahlak ilişkisini reddeden ve hayatı sadece bu dünyaya indirgeyen bir yapıdadır. Bu tür yayınlar, gençlerin inanç dünyasını tahrip etmekte ve dinî bilgi düzeyi yeterli olmayan kişilerin dinden uzaklaşmasına neden olabilmektedir. Din karşıtı yayınların gençlerin inançları üzerindeki etkisini tespiti kelim ilmi açısından önemlidir. Bu, hem dinî yayınlara yön vermede hem de kelim ilminin günümüz problemlerini anlamasında yararlı olacaktır. Bu makalede din karşıtlığı paydasında birleşen ve özellikle gençlere yönelik olan ateistik yayınların muhteva bakımından tahlili ve gençlerin ateizme yönelme gerekçeleri incelenmiştir. Çalışma, gençlerin hangi saiklerle ateistik görüşlere yöneldiklerini anlamada bizlere yardımcı olacaktır. Bunun için gençlerle nitel araştırma yöntemiyle mülakatlar yapılmış ve onların inançlarını etkileyen faktörler tespit edilmeye çalışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kelim, Ateizm, Deizm, Gençlik, Yayın, Ateistik.

Summary

Anti-religious currents are in the interest of young people today, as in the past. This should not be seen as surprising or extraordinary. Young people have always represented innovation, contradiction, change and dynamism in the society. Young; questions, researches and discusses. For this reason, he should not be surprised by the words such as "atheism is spreading, deism is advancing". It is not surprising that young people are interested in atheistic publications today.

Atheistic currents that are the subject of our study are of a quality that rejects institutional religion such as atheism, deism and agnosticism, reduces the understanding of value to human mind and nature. Common points of these thought-based publications are: The rejection of the belief in God and the hereafter, the degeneration of the concept of God, the rejection of the relationship between religion & morality and religion & science, the rejection of divine revelation, the advocacy of human absolute freedom and competence, the promotion of unlimited sexuality, different sexual inclinations and consumption.

It is not possible for young people not to be affected by these publications. The main sources that are effective in the belief world of young people are scientific and philosophical studies. These are the publications read by the relevant person. In this study, where we investigated the relationship between anti-religious publications and the atheistic tendency of young people, it was observed that young people accepted atheism, deism, agnosticism as a result of personal inquiries and scientific-philosophical readings. Just as faith is based on will and knowledge, atheism or deism is based on knowledge and voluntary attitude. The fact that someone makes definitions such as "I am an atheist, I am a deist" occurs as a result of his certain investigations, researches and readings.

The factors leading to atheism in general are psychological, socio-political and philosophical and experience reasons. It seems difficult to find a place in religion in the city culture that emerged with industrialization. Especially at this

time when everybody has to struggle with subsistence anxiety in everyday life, he feels constantly working for more pleasure and comfort and cannot devote time to religious rituals in this rush. The corporate religion, which has lost its active role in daily life, gradually withdraws from social life and then individual life.

Among the psychological causes of the atheist tendency is that one finds the classic and traditional style of religion "ordinary", "boring" and "restrictive of freedom". Some young people find a secular-atheist lifestyle more exciting, original and creative. While modern people have great self-confidence with their free lifestyles, religious people cannot break with tradition and remain provincial. That's why, for example, when a peasant man comes to university, he may want to get rid of the socio-cultural heritage he brought with him.

One of the reasons of atheism is the feeling of getting rid of the burden of religion. Praying five times a day, fasting, zakat etc. In addition to religious rituals, religion is a burden with the sensitivity required by faith. The teenager may be avoid this responsibility.

The internet seems to be the most influential factor affecting young people's beliefs and makes them to question their belief system. Social media actors and other internet broadcasts are the primary factor in shaping their young minds. However, this should not mean that the only internet is effective for young people. Research, questioning and tendency, which started on the internet most of the time, turn into a belief by reading printed publications. Therefore, it can be concluded that: Religious or anti-religious discourse has a high impact on the shaping of young people's belief. However, the formation of an identity other than the institutional religion such as "atheist" and "deist" is the result of certain readings.

Another striking point is that, like all other concepts, concepts such as "atheist", "deist", "Islamist" are emptied and young people use them unconsciously to be "different".

Apart from anti-religious publications in the atheistic tendency, the following factors are prominent: First, atheistic thoughts emerge in response to religious environment. The recent events both in our country and in the world seem to have a negative impact on young people towards religion. It seems that an unfair staffing within the state and ultimately an armed coup attempt by an organization that claims to be religious, on the contrary the conservative government's policy that is open to criticism about justice and merit, in turn, caused young people to react to institutional religion. As a matter of fact, in the interview we conducted in our study, all young people stated that there is reactive atheism in their environment.

The second important factor is the socio-cultural factor. In the Enlightenment period, criticisms directed to religion over Christianity in the West have taken on a quality that targets all religions in general. The secular-humanist world view in the

Anti-Religious Publications and Reasons for Atheistic Orientations Among Youngsters

modern era is the natural result of the positivist, humanist, strict rationalist philosophical thought of Enlightenment. When the intense work pace of the industrial society (mechanized person) and the dynamics of modern city life were added to such a mental background, religion almost faced withdrawal from minds and real life. Religion has now become an appetite for parables, most of the fiqh issues, dream interpretations, sect-congregation structures, theological debates and peace and happiness promised by religion is almost sacrificed like a prisoner who extended his neck to the guillotine. There is no room for religious beliefs and rituals in such a composition for the young. Science is his religion; Its activities such as football, music and social media are daily rituals.

Another factor influencing the atheistic tendency of the youth is the desire to be accepted, the desire for freedom and the quest to be unique. Developing techninformatics opportunities, questioning culture, secular life imposed by the modern lifestyle, and the fact that the language of religion and religious thought could not update itself seem to be among the other reasons that young people are interested in atheistic movements.

For all these reasons, the atheistic tendencies of young people should be taken into consideration and especially their sociological consequences should be considered. When this problem is handled in the context of morality, not in the faith-profanity equation, it will be easier to find solutions that will appeal to the faith worlds of young people.

Özet

Din karşıtı akımlar geçmişte olduğu gibi günümüzde de gençlerin ilgi alanındadır. Bu şaşırtıcı veya olağanüstü görülmemelidir. Gençler, toplumda her zaman yeniliği, aykırılığı, değişimi, dinamizmi temsil etmiştir. Genç, sorgulayan, araştıran, tartışan demektir. Bu nedenle "ateizm yayılıyor, deizm ilerliyor" gibi sözler karşısında şaşırılmamalıdır. Günümüzde gençlerin ateistik yayınlara ilgi göstermesi de şaşırtıcı değildir.

Çalışmamıza konu olan ateistik akımlar ateizm, deizm, agnostisizm gibi kurumsal dini reddeden ve değer anlayışını insan aklına ve doğaya indirgeyen niteliktedir. Bu düşünceye dayalı yayınların ortak noktaları şunlardır: Tanrı ve ahiret inancının reddi, Tanrı kavramının yozlaştırılması, din-ahlak ve din bilim ilişkisinin reddi, ilahi vahyin reddi, insanın mutlak özgürlüğü ve yetkinliğinin savunusu, sınırsız cinselliğin, farklı cinsel eğilimlerin ve tüketimin özendirilmesi.

Gençlerin söz konusu yayınlardan etkilenmemesi mümkün değildir. Gençlerin inanç dünyasında etkili olan başlıca kaynaklar bilimsel ve felsefi eserlerdir. Bunlar ilgilisi tarafından okunan yayınlardır. Din karşıtı yayınlar ve gençlerin ateistik eğilimi arasında ilişkiyi araştırdığımız bu çalışmada, gençlerin kişisel sorgulamalar ve bilimsel-felsefi okumalar neticesinde ateizm, deizm,

agnostisizmi kabul ettikleri görülmüştür. Nasıl ki iman bir irade ve bilgiye dayanıyorsa, ateizm veya deizm de bir bilgi birikimi ve iradi tutuma dayanmaktadır. Bir kimsenin “ben ateistim, deistim” gibi tanımlamalarda bulunması onun belirli soruşturma, araştırma ve okumaları neticesinde ortaya çıkmaktadır.

Genel olarak ateizme yol açan faktörler psikolojik, sosyo-politik, felsefi ve tecrübi nedenlerdir. Sanayileşmeyle birlikte ortaya çıkan kent kültüründe dine yer bulmak zor görünmektedir. Özellikle gündelik hayatta herkesin geçim endişesiyle boğuşmak zorunda kaldığı şu dönemde, bireyler daha fazla haz ve konfor için sürekli çalışmak zorunda hissetmekte ve bu koşurmacada dinî ritüellere zaman ayıramamaktadır. Günlük hayatta etkin rolünü yitiren kurumsal din, yavaş yavaş sosyal hayattan ve akabinde bireysel hayattan çekilmektedir.

Ateist eğilimin psikolojik nedenleri arasında insanın dinin klasik ve geleneksel tarzını “sıradan”, “sıkıcı” ve “özgürlüğü kısıtlayıcı” bulması vardır. Kimi gençler seküler-ateist bir yaşam tarzını daha heyecanlı, özgün ve yaratıcı bulmaktadır. Modern insan serbest yaşam tarzıyla müthiş bir özgüvene sahipken, dindar insan gelenekten kopamaz, taşralı kalır. Bu neden örneğin, taşralı bir genç üniversiteye geldiğinde yanında getirdiği sosyo-kültürel bagajdan kurtulmak isteyebilir.

Ateizmin nedenleri arasında dikkat çeken hususlardan birisi de maddenin egemenliğinde bir dünyada dinin getirdiği yükten kurtulma duygusudur. Beş vakit namaz, oruç, zekât vs. dini ritüellerin yanı sıra inancın gerektirdiği hassasiyetlerle din bir külfettir. Genç bu yükü omuzlamaktan kaçıyor olabilir.

Gençlerin inanç dünyasını etkileyen ve onları sorgulamaya sevk eden en etkili unsurun internet olduğu görünmektedir. Sosyal medya aktörleri ve cemaatleri ile diğer internet yayınları genç zihinlerin şekillenmesinde birincil faktördür. Ancak bu, gençler üzerinde sadece internetin etkili olduğu anlamına gelmemelidir. Çoğu zaman internette başlayan araştırma, sorgulama ve eğilim basılı yayınların okunmasıyla bir inanca dönüşmektedir. Dolayısıyla şöyle bir sonuca ulaşılabilir: Gençlerin inanç dünyalarının şekillenmesinde internette dinî veya din karşıtı söylemin etkisi yüksektir. Ancak özellikle “ateist”, “deist” gibi kurumsal dinin dışında bir kimliği oluşması belirli okumalar neticesindedir.

Dikkat çeken bir diğer husus, diğer tüm kavramlarda olduğu gibi “ateist”, “deist”, “İslamcı” gibi kavramların içinin boşaltılması ve gençlerin bunları “farklı” olma adına –bilinçsizce- kullanmasıdır.

Ateistik eğilimde din karşıtı yayınlar dışında şu faktörler öne çıkmıştır: Öncelikle ateistik düşünceler dinî çevrelere tepkiyle ortaya çıkmaktadır. Son dönemde gerek ülkemizde gerekse dünyada yaşanan hadiseler gençleri dine karşı olumsuz etkilemiş görünmektedir. Dinî olduğunu iddia eden bir örgütsel yapının devlete hükmetme çabası doğrultusunda devlet içinde haksız kadrolaşması ve

Anti-Religious Publications and Reasons for Atheistic Orientations Among Youngsters

nihayetinde silahlı bir darbe girişiminde bulunması, bunun karşısında, muhafazakâr iktidarın adalet ve liyakat konusunda eleştiriye açık politikası gençlerin kurumsal dine tepki göstermesine neden olmuş görünüyor. Nitekim çalışmamızda yaptığımız mülakatta tüm gençler, çevrelerinde tepkisel ateizm olduğunu ifade etmişlerdir.

İkinci önemli etken sosyo-kültürel faktördür. Aydınlanma döneminde Batı'da Hıristiyanlık üzerinden dine yöneltilen eleştiriler genel anlamda tüm dinleri hedef alan bir niteliğe bürünmüştür. Modern dönemde seküler-hümanist dünya görüşü Aydınlanmanın pozitivist, hümanist, katı rasyonalist felsefi düşüncesinin tabii sonucudur. Böyle bir zihinsel arka plana sanayi toplumunun yoğun iş temposu (makineleşmiş insan) ve modern kent yaşamının dinamikleri eklenince, din adeta zihinlerden ve reel hayattan çekilmeye yüz tuttu. Din artık kıssalara, çoğu -neredeyse günlük hayatta karşılaşma ihtimali olmadığımız- fikhî meselelere, rüya yorumlarına, tarikat-cemaat yapılanmalarına, ilahiyat tartışmalarına meze edilmiş ve dinin insana vadettiği huzur ve saadet adeta giyotinin önüne boynunu uzatmış bir mahkûm gibi kurban edilmiştir. Genç için böyle bir kompozisyonda dini inanca ve ritüellere yer yoktur. Bilim onun dini; futbol, müzik ve sosyal medya gibi etkinlikleri ise günlük ritüelidir.

Gençlerin ateistik eğiliminde etkili diğer faktör kabul görme isteği, özgürlük arzusu ve özgün olma arayışıdır. Gelişen tekno-bilişim imkânları, sorgulama kültürü, modern yaşam tarzının dayattığı seküler hayat, din dilinin ve dinî düşüncenin kendisini güncelleyememiş olması gençlerin ateistik akımlara ilgi duymasının diğer nedenleri arasında görünmektedir.

Tüm bu gerekçelerle gençlerin ateistik eğilimleri dikkate alınmalı ve özellikle bunun sosyolojik sonuçları düşünülmelidir. Bu problem iman-küfür denkleminde değil, ahlak bağlamında ele alındığında gençlerin inanç dünyalarına hitap edecek çözümler üretilmesi kolaylaşacaktır.

Introduction

Young people are those who reflect the future of a society. Their beliefs, thoughts and attitudes provide tips about what we will face in future. If we are looking for a better future, we have to raise our youth based on our beliefs and ideals. Educational institutions, social and cultural factors and publication-related activities are the essential factors guiding youngsters' path. Publications for youngsters are produced in two forms as digital and printed. It is obvious that Internet, social media and video channels affect not only the youth, but also everybody including children and elderly.

Considering the fact that the two concepts that emerged in the 21st century are profanation and consumption, the publications which affect the young people are related to these concepts, which is not surprising. Although the religious

publications that provide a spiritual perspective to life and indicate that the life does not solely consist of this mortal world are common, there is still an “anti-religious” field that affects young people’s thoughts. The declining trend of religiousness in Turkey and other countries indicates that the impact of such publications and activities cannot be neglected.¹

Türkiye Gençlik Raporu (Turkish Youth Report) published by Social, Economic and Cultural Research Center (SEKAM) in 2016 suggests that young people experience dilemmas and confusions in terms of their traits and identities, and that they are deviating from the religious and ethical values. This report also shows that young people experience conceptual issues because there are some young people who define themselves as “atheist” but still perform prayers and fast, and they are those youngsters who define themselves “Islamist” but do not perform prayers at all. According to the results obtained from the survey, youngsters generally consider smoking, alcohol and substance consumption, free sexuality and homosexuality as legit. Religious perspectives of young people weakened, and their trust in the religious institutions became distorted. Despite becoming personalized and feeling alone, young people have an understanding that “they can do anything as they have the right to do so”. They desire a limitless consumption and freedom. They attribute importance to brands and value abnormal dressing style. Their role models are the popular subjects, rather than the scientists, philosophers, religious people and politicians.²

The primary reason for this rapid change among the new generation is Internet. The main source of information for people is web sites and videos in this new communication and technology age. It is a known fact that Internet and videos also affect everybody, not only the youth. The distinctive trait of modern era is individualization, solitude, virtualization and Internet addiction, which are apparent in everybody. The topic that we are interested in at that point is the impact of religious and anti-religious content on young people.

The concept of theism reflects the belief in a single god, while atheism is the rejection of a god in philosophy. The trends of rejecting the theoretical religion can be named “atheistic” despite being conceptually different to atheism. To reflect the anti-religious trends guided by atheism and deism, the concept of “atheistic” was used in the study. The similarity between deism and atheism cannot be denied. In a field study on the atheistic and theistic perceptions of university students, the following were stated:

¹ For the studies on youngsters’ beliefs and religiousness, see. Fatma Aygün, “Ateizme Yol Açan Başlıca Faktörler”, *Mezhepler Tarihi Dergisi* 10/2 (Fall 2017), 535-536; Kenan Sevinç, “Ateizmin Boyutları ve Tipleri”, *İslami İlimler Dergisi* 12/3, (Güz 2017) (101/132), 104; Pew Research Center, “The Age Gap in Religion Around the World”, (Date Accessed: 15 March 2019).

² SEKAM, *Türkiye Gençlik Raporu* (Istanbul: May 2016) 6-7.

Anti-Religious Publications and Reasons for Atheistic Orientations Among Youngsters

“The results of the present study indicate that the difference between atheist and theist ideologies is limited with the belief in God. Atheists do not accept the existence of a god while theists still believe in God. The belief of subjects was shaped by the emotional needs, and they were the people who lost their interest in religion or were scared with religion, rather than being an intellectual atheist or theist. Accordingly, neglecting many important religious concepts including revelations supported the thoughts of atheists. The criticisms of theists toward religions drove atheists to adopt deism. An understanding that does not include a belief in revelations, miracles and eternal life and that does not accept the control of God over the universe (deism) means the half of the path to atheism has already been walked.”³

The aim of the present study is to discuss the reasons for the atheistic orientations among the young people and to determine the relationship between these orientations and anti-religious publications. This study also examines which topics the anti-religious publications focus on the most. It presents the interviews performed with 21 high school and university students aged between 18 and 24. The field studies on atheism and deism are among the primary source of reference for this study.

1. General Traits of Anti-Religious Trends

Anti-religious trends reflect the thoughts and ideologies that object to the religion. All ideologies rejecting the institutionalized religion and religious beliefs, such as atheism, deism, agnosticism or nihilism which indicate a different field of meaning, can be considered equal in terms of “rejecting the religious beliefs and objecting to the religion”. These trends are basically the rejection of the belief in God and last day, and they are based on the following:

a. The life is limited with the present world, and the reality covers the subjects and objects that can be perceived. There are no metaphysical objects or subjects that can be sensed. There is no life after the death. The belief in God and last day is limited with the conscientious acceptance of people.

b. Sources of information are solely the observation, experiments and rational idea. Other than these, non-testable channels such as revelations and inspiration are not valid sources.

c. Religions are a part of people’s needs, fears and historical acceptance. They are some sort of beliefs from the mythological era. Science is the only sufficient and valid subject for meeting people’s all sorts of needs in the modern era.

d. People are a result of the universal process and the nature itself.

³ Y. Sinan Zavalısz – Ensar Şahin, “Ateist ve Deistlerin Din Algısı: Üniversite Öğrencileri Üzerine Psiko-Sosyolojik Bir Araştırma”, *Tarih Kültür ve Sanat Araştırmaları Dergisi* 7/2 (June 2018), 598.

e. Ethical values were developed by people in line with the rational ideologies and experiences. The religious references of ethics as well as the obligatory relationship between religion and ethics cannot be accepted.

f. The purpose of life is pleasure and happiness. Performing actions that will benefit the society is the greatest happiness for one.

g. The superiority does not solely belong to a religious group or society; what is important is the unity and equality of people. The idea of superiority or ummah-related superiorities cannot be accepted.

h. People are free in their thoughts and attitudes. Freedom of people can only be established with the citizenship laws and universal human rights. Religious rules are not valid in terms of establishing the life.

As understood from the aforementioned, anti-religious trends minimize the limits of life to the present world and reject metaphysics entirely. Atheistic trends such as agnosticism, humanism, deism, secularism, nihilism or hedonism agree upon the principles of rejecting the religion, unnecessary trait of religion, independence of people from the God, and people's absolute competence and freedom, although they have different philosophical bases. Atheism is the umbrella term for all rejectionist trends. Furthermore, the relevant literature has many concepts reflecting this ideology. Faithless, anti-religious, anti-theist, non-religious, atheist, apostate, unchurched, unaffiliated, agnostic, secularist, humanist, naturalist, scientist, skeptic, free-thought. Despite the differences between them, they agree with the atheism in terms of objecting to religion.⁴

The trend of recently-conceptualized "New Atheism" represents the contemporary group represented by the figures such as Richard Dawkins (1941-), Christopher Hitchens (1949-2011), Daniel Dennett (1942-) and Sam Harris. New atheists claim that science is a guide for humanity and that they expect science to direct them in numerous fields including the ethical topics. New atheists reject the epistemological value of religion and associate the reality with the science only.⁵ To sum up, all anti-religious trends accept that religions do not reflect the reality, and that only the rationality and perceivable things are valid in this regard.

2. Anti-Religious Publications

Publications of anti-religious trends do not imply the publication activity managed from a particular center. The aforementioned point is particularly valid for

⁴ Sevinç, "Ateizmin Boyutları ve Tipleri", 105. For general details, see. Frederic Henry Hedge, *Atheism In Philosophy and Other Essays* (Boston: Roberts brothers, 1884).

⁵ Alper Bilgili, "Yeni Ateizm ve Eleştirisi", *Diyanet Dergisi –Deizm, Ateizm, Nihilizm Kısacasında İnsanlık-* (Ankara: August 2017), 23-24.

Anti-Religious Publications and Reasons for Atheistic Orientations Among Youngsters

anti-Islamic publications. Anti-religiousness is present in various platforms. These publications can be separated into two as digital and printed. Among the printed publications, the works that capture the attention of youngsters are related to science, philosophy, culture, art, literature, personal development, mysticism, humor, history and so on. Other channels that catch the attention of young people are social media, video channels, Internet and digital publications. Recent studies indicate that Internet use rates increased and that youngsters spend a certain amount of their daily time in the Internet using their smart phones or computers.⁶

Various web sites and social media accounts spread atheist propagandas with thousands of their atheist followers. These sites aim to leave an impact on the young people with their claims and statements based on the rejection of God and the religion that opposes the science as well as acts as the source of violence, assigns a secondary status to women and has no place in the modern world and based on the idea that people do not need religion to be ethical. Anti-religious publications can often turn into a propaganda on the Internet. Atheistic books can be published in different forms with no charge, and in certain cases, youngsters' attention can be captured with audio books. Accessing such works and ideas becomes easy for people with the aforementioned ways.

Another field where the anti-religious trends show themselves are the published works. Among these works, philosophical works have an anti-religious context in subjects such as the idea of God, evolutional existence, relationship between religion and science, problem of malevolence, and rejection of the relationship between religion and ethics.

In other words, publications of atheists are among the important youth works. For instance, the *God Delusion* by Richard Dawkins have been published for numerous times. Books of Turan Dursun, who has influenced a certain group with his books, continue being a source of inspiration for atheistic ideologies. Works by Dursun aim to provide a basis to atheism through the contradictions of Quran and criticism toward Muhammad.

Other sources that capture the attention of youngsters include science and fiction, art, literature, personal development and humor. The ones that can be considered as "anti-religious" among these indirectly blemish the religion. For instance, humor works directly focus on religious concepts, figures, symbols and values. A French humor magazine named Charlie Hebdo, which received adverse reaction from all Muslims owing to publishing the cartoon of Muhammad, is essentially based on the rejection of religious principles. It is a known fact that certain humor magazines from Turkey are also not much careful toward the

⁶ Celal Hayır, "Lise Öğrencilerinin İnternet Ortamında Fazla Vakit Geçirme Nedenleri Üzerine Bir İnceleme: İstanbul Köy Hizmetleri Anadolu Lisesi Örneği", *Karabük Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 9/2 (2019), 523-524; Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu (TUİK), "Hanehalkı Bilişim Teknolojileri Kullanım Araştırması 2019", (Date Accessed: 02.04.2020).

religious values. Novels and stories with an anti-religious context have a form of story-telling that influences the reader deeply. After reading the book, readers' belief in God's power and mercy can be distorted, based on the content. Readers may even think that religions promote violence in certain cases. They may believe that ethics have no relationship with the religion. The idea that happiness depends on absolute freedom and that religion is an obstacle preventing people may be accepted. Publications in the field of literature direct people to adopt their ideologies. For instance, *Candide, ou l'Optimisme* by Voltaire criticizes God through the problem of malevolence. Voltaire reflects his anti-religious approach with the statement: "God could have created a better world if God had desired so, which is not the case... Then, God is a creation of people."

There are many movies within which atheist people can feel more comfortable, which include "Mary and Max", "Man From Earth", "Charles Darwin: A Life From Beginning to End: ", and "Invention of Lying". The sector of cinema is actually a topic that should be reviewed from multiple dimensions. The anti-religious characteristic of a movie is not solely based on rejecting the God. All sorts of movies that blemish the name or traits of a religion can be included in this regard.

Publications with anti-religious statements may, in certain cases, target the religion. Regardless of being printed or Internet-based, anti-religious statements generally have a wording-based, superficial and eclectic reading style. Instead of religious works full of meaning and wisdom, they generally refer to common narratives without checking whether they are weak and false. Moreover, they do not consider the historical background and basis of verses and hadiths as well as the relevant wisdom and purposes. Therefore, readers may be misguided. These works and statements may make the religious subjects an object of ridicule. They consider the religion as equal to mythology, and reflect that religious information is not valid. Furthermore, these works and statements associate the religion, violence and terror, and they affirm pure feminism based on the claim that women are not valuable in Islam. With such a negative language and discourse toward the religion, anti-religiousness affects the youngsters on the Internet first, confusing their minds, and it makes them less interested toward the religion. Having no correct information and satisfactory explanations in religious topics, young people may find themselves disapproving the religion in the end.

3. Anti-Religious Publications Based on the Content

3.1. Rejection of the Belief in God and Last Day

Believers who assess the life in a religious content believe in the idea that the entire universe was created by God, that the universe has a purpose and order, that people have a responsibility in such an order, and that people believe in the Last

Anti-Religious Publications and Reasons for Atheistic Orientations Among Youngsters

Day when they will be accounted for what they have done in this world. However, ideologies that believe the life solely consists of the present world and that creatures only consist of the perceivable ones reject the belief in God and Last Day. Philosophical works do not include a metaphysical creature in terms of assigning a meaning to existence. Not only an atheist person, but also an agnostic, secular or humanist person also agrees upon the aforementioned point. In their world view, there is no place for the concepts of God and Last Day.

The God Delusion by Richard Dawkins questions the belief in God and roots of religions. In the book which is generally based on the Christian traditions, Dawkins presents opposite arguments to the evidences regarding the presence of God mentioned by Thomas Aquinas. At the end of his work, Dawkins presents a list consisting of the contact details of institutes, associations and other organizations representing atheist, humanist and secular ideology in the context of the anti-religious propaganda.⁷ In *The Magic of Reality*, Dawkins aims to reflect the operation of universe on a scientific basis and rejects the belief in God. He defines religion as a sort of belief people created due to their ignorance and fears, and he wants us to believe in the reality, rather than the God that wants people to pray to the divine authority. Accordingly, naming something as a miracle means “not understanding”. In the past, people considered natural events as a sort of sorcery, and they associated anything they did not understand with a divine power. However, people need to believe in the magic of reality, rather than mythology, in a period when they have understood the nature.⁸

God Is Not Great by Christopher Hitchens, a contemporary atheist philosopher, claims that religions harm the humanity, that the groundless structure of metaphysical statements as well as the dangers of unhealthy religious statements, invalidity of designed evidences and the doctrine in Quran were derived from Jewish and Christian myths, and that the miracles are a type of mythological stories.⁹

Furthermore, the thought which canonizes science and defends coincidences against the idea of creating power that manages the entire cosmic system is accepted as one of the approaches that reflect the idea of God as a negative concept. For instance, *The Drunkard's Walk* by Leonard Mlodinow claims that what directs people's lives are thousands of accidental events and concepts that cannot be controlled by the person. As where people can be directed by the coincidences cannot be known, one need to consider all probabilities and focus on the success. This work by Mlodinow does not reflect God or a metaphysical existence.

⁷ Richard Dawkins, *Tanrı Yanılgısı*, trans. Melisa Miller, Barbaros Efe Güner - Tunç Tuncay Bilgin (Istanbul: Kuzey Yayınları, 2006), 330, 359.

⁸ Richard Dawkins, *The Magic of Reality* (New York: Free Press, 2011), 7-259.

⁹ Christopher Hitchens, *God Is Not Great* (London: Atlantic Books, 2008), 15-295.

In addition to Turan Dursun, İlhan Arsel, Muazzez İlmiye Çığ and Arif Tekin, some of the first people who come to mind first when anti-religiousness is mentioned, the works based on the definition, grounds and arguments of atheism also capture attention. *Ateizm: Teori ve Pratik* by Tufan Çelebi and *Ateizmi Anlamak* by Aydın Türk can be mentioned in this regard.

3.2. Corruption of the Concept of God

Allah is unique with the divine personality and titles in the discipline of kalam. Allah's relationship with the creatures is accepted as the relationship between the creator and created. No creature can be equal to Allah. The titles and statements that are used to reflect people and that suggest deficiencies cannot be used for Allah. However, one of the issues seen in the publications of youth is the corruption of the term God. Such usage can be found in the written media, Internet and cinema. Showing themselves through science and fiction works or fantastic works in certain cases, these publications do not suit the belief of Allah presented by Islam. It cannot be rejected that such publications cause the idea of God in youngsters' minds to become ordinary and disreputable. In addition to the youth series named "The Last Goddess", "Hybrid Goddess", "Daughter of God", "Did God Die?", "Goddess" and "When God Spits" , movies such as "Greek Gods against the Adolescents", "Gods Must be Crazy", "When God Sleeps", and "Dirty God" are among the examples where the concept of God is used without attention.

3.3. Rejection of the Relationship between Religion and Ethics

Quran is a call for assigning ethics to a solid ground and developing positive ethical attitude among people. It is safe to state that what is present in the core of faith and prayers is ethical behaviors. Ethics and religion is correlated. All prayers are performed to assign a ground to this relationship. The metaphysical grounds of ethics causes it to be relative no longer. The relationship between ethics and religion is not to leave ethics to human conscience and to raise the religion to a normative level. A believer has to be ethical toward anybody at any place and time. Therefore, the obligatory relationship between religion and ethics is within the basic claims of religion.

It is without doubt that "being ethical" is not a trait solely displayed by religious people. Furthermore, isolating ethics from the religion means leaving ethics to people's conscience. However, factors such as socio-cultural environment as well as educational status, characteristics and benefits may adversely affect the continuity and effectiveness of ethical behaviors. Therefore, associating ethics with religion assigns a certain standard and power to ethics.

Anti-Religious Publications and Reasons for Atheistic Orientations Among Youngsters

One of the points reflected by anti-religious trends is the idea that ethics is independent from the religion. Accordingly, human mind and conscience can realize the truth and display ethical attitudes in the modern era. For that purpose, there is no need to believe in any religion. For instance, *Morality Without God?* by Walter Sinnott Armstrong defends this claim, stating that ethics is totally independent from religion with no particular reference to any religion in this context and that even an atheist can be more ethical than a religious person. Considering atheist, agnostic and secular people in the same pot owing to being anti-religious, Armstrong reflects the motto “atheists are not unethical”.¹⁰ If ethics, the basic purpose of religion, is based on absolute intelligence and experience with no dependence on the religion, it is without doubt that there will be no need for the idea of religion and God.

3.4. Rejection of the Relationship between Religion and Science

Religious hypotheses are primarily based on religious information. Information related to both history and nature is present in the content of the revelations to a significant degree. Anecdotes and verses on the earth, sky and universe contain such information. Atheistic trends of the modern era claim that the idea of God was invented by the people and that religious statements consisted of mythological elements. After the Age of Enlightenment, science was based on the view of world free from all sorts of religious concepts. Particularly the 19th century can be regarded as a period when religion was removed from all sorts of daily life activities for the science. The position of religion and science in that era was summarized as follows: Science belongs to intelligence, while religion belongs to conscience.

In the conference *L’Islamisme et la Science* (Islam and Science) held in Sorbonne in 1883, Ernest Renan claimed that Muslims contributed nothing to science, that Islam and science could not suit one another, that Islam was against the scientific ideology as a religion, and that Muslims were not capable of performing scientific and philosophical activities.¹¹ This conference then triggered the discussions which would last for a long time because supporters of the religion claimed that Islam did not prevent science, while anti-religious people believed that Islam was an obstacle before scientific ideology.

A significant anti-religious approach can be recognized in the religious, scientific and philosophical publications of the modern day. Accordingly, “substance” is the sole reality while “evolution” is the ideological ground of this

¹⁰ Walter Sinnott Armstrong, *Tanrısız Ahlak*, trans. Atilla Tuygan (Istanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2012).

¹¹ Düccane Cündioğlu, “Ernest Renan ve “Reddiyeler” Bağlamında İslam-Bilim Tartışmalarına Bibliyografik Bir Katkı”, *Divan* 2 (1996), 6; Cemal Aydın, “Türk Bilim Tarihi Yazımında ‘Din’ ve ‘Bilim’ İlişkisi: Osmanlı Örneği”, *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi*, 2/4 (2004) 29-44.

reality. "New atheists" including Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Daniel Dennett and Sam Harris claim that science is a guide for humanity and that they expect science to direct them in numerous fields including the ethical topics. According to them, religion is not a source of information but a system full of mythological narratives and thoughts. However, as science can be tested and felt, it can provide the data that can contribute to people's lives. Evolution is the most important theory explaining the existence. Accordingly, there is no need for the idea that the nature was created. It is clear that anti-religious people utilize the prestige of the science, associating religion with mythology and making efforts to blemish the religious ideology. They reject the epistemological value of religion and associate the reality with the science only.¹²

The Crucible of Time by John Brunner, which appealed to a certain number of readers in Turkey although it has yet to be translated into Turkish, reflects the independence of science and the belief that science will ultimately triumph. Furthermore, *The Armageddon Crazy* by Mick Farren associates religion with violence and radicalism, coding "the dominance of religious people as a sort of doom". *Galactic Rapture* by Tom Flynn defines religion as an irrational and harmful ideology. *Code of the Lifemaker* by James P. Hogan is a sci-fi work examining the conflict between science and religion.

Publications that explain the existence of humanity with evolution, that limit the borders of life with visible objects and subjects, and that associate the source of information with experiments and observation do not consider religion as a valid information source, rejecting it entirely. Such publications can often be seen in journals, books, social media accounts, web sites and video channels. With the Quranic verses on humans, nature and history and hadith narratives regarding the fields of medicine and astronomy, which are mostly weak, the conflict between religion and science continues. One of the points within which the anti-religious statements have become centralized recently is the aforementioned one.

It is without doubt that Quran is not a scientific book. Therefore, a scientific examination toward the verse on the cosmic system in Quran is not a necessity. Efforts to generate generally-accepted theories from the verses shaped by considering the knowledge level of the first addressee as well as the concepts they used or to test these theories with the data of the current science are futile. Quran is a guide to the correct path that does not aim providing scientific data to people. Therefore, accepting these verses as an instrument of consideration rather than as scientific data sources would be more suitable.

¹² Bilgili, "Yeni Ateizm ve Eleştirisi", 23-24.

3.5. *Rejection of Quran's Divine Characteristics*

Quran is a holy value for every Muslim people. Furthermore, it is the main source of Islam. Believers of Islam accept that Quran, the divine source of Islam, has reached the present day without any changes since the day of the Prophet. Islamic traditions do contain any doubts in this regard. One of the points present in the core of anti-religious publications is the aforementioned statement. Criticisms toward Quran is the common point of atheistic trends. These criticisms can be divided into two sections. The first is the criticism toward Quran texts in terms of content, while the second consists of the criticisms that the original form of the Quranic text has never reached the present day.

The book *Kur'an'ın Kökeni* which was first pressed in 2000s and published by Arif Tekin claims that Quran is both the entire and brief form of the laws and religious beliefs generated throughout the history.¹³ This work is based on the narratives related to Quran verses, hadith, interpretation and Islamic history references. Explanations made by Islamic scholars were not included, and the objectivity criteria that should be present in a scientific work were not considered at all. Furthermore, inclusion of narratives in a selective form and addition of only a certain part of a long narrative into the book can be considered as the result of the efforts to direct readers to a certain ideology.

Criticism of Quran by Swami Dayananda Sarawati, an Indian philosopher (1824-1883), was published in Turkey in 2018, and it is a work claiming that Quran was not a divine text. Dayananda reflects his thoughts on Quran as follows:

"It is without doubt that this book has information that suits the reality and that does not conflict with the doctrine of *Vedas*. I accept this information like another person who is free from bigotry and fanaticism. However, Quran introduces many concepts and actions that are a result of ignorance, that distort the idea or reality, that threaten the public order, that promote the fight in the society, and that result in pain. Additionally, the repetitive and ambiguous style of Quran does not suit the form of a philosophical book."¹⁴

Dayananda's criticism toward Quran can be summarized in three points: Quran is not based on revelations. The description of God in Quran is arbitrary, fanatic and sadist/violent; Quran's provisions are not fair and realist.¹⁵ Criticisms toward Quran are based on a simple and pure rationalism. Accordingly, Dayananda seems to have failed in associating the concept of God presented in

¹³ Arif Tekin, *Kur'an'ın Kökeni* (Istanbul: Berfin Yayınları, 3rd Edition, 2009), 18.

¹⁴ Sevan Nişanyan-Can Başkent, *Swami Dayananda Saraswati'nin Kur'an Eleştirisi*, trans. Sevan Nişanyan-Can Başkent (s.n.: Propaganda Yayınları, 2018), 175.

¹⁵ Cemil Kutlutürk, "Hindu Düşünür Dayananda Saraswati'nin Kur'an'a Yönelik Eleştirileri", *Milel ve Nihal* 15/1 (2018), 42-51.

Quran with his own socio-cultural approach. Furthermore, he acted wrongly as he assessed the relevant verses based on wording. For instance, in his criticism toward the verse “Who is it that would loan Allah a goodly loan so He may multiply it for him many times over”¹⁶, he claims that Allah cannot be a weak subject that requests a loan from the people, or a bankrupt merchant whose wealth is at a poor level.¹⁷ However, this verse was understood as follows in the Islamic tradition: “Sacrificing goods and life for Allah”. One of Allah’s titles in Islam is Gani, meaning “the one that is rich and needs nobody”.¹⁸

People are affected by the socio-cultural conditions surrounding them. Therefore, certain verses in Quran may seem contradictory at first. For example, while criticizing the verse “O wives of the Prophet, whoever of you should commit a clear immorality - for her the punishment would be doubled two fold, and ever is that, for Allah, easy”¹⁹, he says “Men are also responsible for the immoral act of women. While women are punished in a doubled form, will Muhammad be punished too?”²⁰ This criticism is against the principle “individualism of crime”. The verses associates the idea of punishing a crime in a doubled form or more in the context “People’s responsibility is assessed according to their positions.”, inviting people to morality. Swami’s criticism is probably based on the following principle in the ancient Brahmanist Law: “Women are under the guardianship of their fathers before marriage, their husbands after the marriage, and their sons after becoming a widow”²¹. It is without doubt that husbands will not be held responsible for the crime their wives committed based on the principle “individualism of crime” in Islam. The characteristic of text-targeting criticisms, which arises from cultural differences, can be recognized in this regard.

In addition to these criticisms toward the content of Quran, it is claimed that the anecdotes reflected in Quran are mythological stories and that these anecdotes were derived from the stories of other religions. For instance, in *God Is Not Great* by Christopher Hitchens, the doctrines regarding Moses, Abraham, Noah and Gabriel were also mentioned in other books. Hitchens stated that he participated in Arabic religious rituals in different Islamic countries and that he understood all Muslims were radical and religion is a dangerous system of beliefs. He defended his claim that Quran text was a citation from the books of previous religions, which was a similar form of action seen in other books with similar criticisms.

¹⁶ al-Baqarah 2/245.

¹⁷ Nişanyan, *Saraswati’nın Kur’an Eleştirisi*, 53.

¹⁸ an-Nisa 4/131.

¹⁹ al-Ahzab 33/30.

²⁰ Nişanyan, *Saraswati’nın Kur’an Eleştirisi*, 144.

²¹ Mahmud Es’ad b. Emin Seydişehrî, *Hukuk İlmi Tarihi*, “Kadim Brahman Hukuku-1”, ed. Hasan Özket, trans. Veysel İpekçi (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1332), <http://medhaldergi.com/oku.php?makaleno=110> (Date Accessed: 6 April 2019).

Anti-Religious Publications and Reasons for Atheistic Orientations Among Youngsters

3.6. *Argument of Absolute Freedom and Authority*

Although freedom is not separately present in the Islamic ideology, it is reflected as “the freedom of will” in the context of destiny. Quran indicates that people have the freedom of will and that they will only explain what they believed in and how they acted to their creator. The tawhid phrase starts with “La”, making people free of everything, and ends with “illallah”, keeping Allah as an exception. Accordingly, people become free of everything except Allah, which indicates the rejection of absolute freedom. People will be held accountable for their preferences in the dilemmas of faith and blasphemy, benevolence and malevolence, and good and bad.

Islam implements various orders and bans for the peace and happiness of people. Therefore, the life gets restricted through certain rules. Nihilism means the rejection of these rules. This trend can be realized on the covers of youth books with titles “I am Free Now”, “Children of Freedom” or “Great Freedom”, which give messages such as “You are sufficient by yourself”, “You are all you need”, or “You do not need to submit to anybody” and isolate them from moral values as well as personal and social responsibilities. These secular statements are close to religious references such as “with Allah’s permission” or “trust in Allah”.

The idea of self-sufficiency becomes highly popular in the world of youngsters. This idea, called *istighna* or reluctance in Quran, actually means the separation from Allah and becoming lonely: “No! [But] indeed, man transgresses; Because he sees himself self-sufficient...”²². Considering oneself as absolutely free, dominant, powerful and authorized to do anything is the trait of Pharaoh according to Quran. Pharaoh said to the people “I am the supreme lord of you all!”²³ Islam idealizes emotions such as submission, modesty and simplicity, instead of reluctance and arrogance. *O mankind, you are those in need of Allah, while Allah is the Free of need, the Praiseworthy.*²⁴ This verse does not nullify people’s freedom. On the contrary, people are asked to know they are free in terms of performing lawful or unlawful acts and to be grateful to Allah for the blessings. Therefore, the relationship between people and nature is a sort of deposited connection. People cannot even control their own selves. Therefore, they cannot harm or use their selves randomly or as however they wished.

As one of the primary figures capturing the attention of youngsters, Osho (Chandra Mohan Jain) is a typical representative of Far Eastern mysticism who makes efforts to keep people free from all sorts of religious institutions. The spiritual context of his publications combined with the topics such as people’s ego, free sexuality, unnecessary of the belief in God, harmful characteristics of religious rules for people and glorious position of love in people’s eyes catch the interest of

²² al-Alaq 96/6-7.

²³ an-Naziat 79/24.

²⁴ al-Fatir 35/15-17.

young people. Osho's nihilist and hedonist works aim to free people from the rules of religion and enable them to reach the unlimited freedom of the ego. His works do not have the God controlling the life. On the contrary, people should exist with their own competency. What will make people happy is to overcome the religious and social judgments, achieve the inner world and experience the absolute freedom. Osho appeals to the young people who are fond of their freedom and have limitless energy and demands. Many of his works were translated to Turkish and have been on the list of bestsellers. Moreover, some of Osho's books are provided free in PDF format on the Internet.

Objecting to the personality and social norms and rejecting the customs and traditions with religious roots are among the emotions recommended by these publications. For instance, *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka reflects the period of alienation a person experiences toward the society after feeling as a free subject. Social norms are totally sublated in this regard. Inability to break the chains of family and society means living as a slave.

Promotion of feminist ideology among the women and rejection of female perception by Islam can be assessed in this context. It is a fact that there are numerous publications with this topic. For instance, *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood is an influential work with the religious statements against the feminine perception and implicit feminist messages.

In fact, what is suggested in personal development books is the idea of self-competence. The personal development specialist aiming to help gain self-confidence has preferences such as "mind and ego" over God as the authority controlling the subjects and objects, "pleasure and happiness" over "Allah's approval" as the purpose of life, "yoga and meditation" over the prayers that make one peaceful, and "the highest success" over the religious ideals that build one's life. *Unlimited Power* by Anthony Robbins directs people to focus on their power while aiming to motivate them to earn and become wealthy and happy. Furthermore, the personal development book *The Leader in You* by Dale Carnegie is based on the statement that the power and motivation one needs is actually already present in that person. Such personal development books that do not mention the trust in and prayers to God dictate the secular world view.

3.7. Promotion of Limitless Sexuality and Different Sexual Orientations

The youth is accepted as the most energetic years in one's life. The feelings of anger and lust are at the highest levels during youth. The lust or sexual desire is an innate feeling that helps maintain the lineage. Islam reflects that this feeling should be experienced and fulfilled with morality. Therefore, Islam positions the relationships between people on a certain basis, regardless of the period they live in, and it restricts the acts of people with the lawful and unlawful actions. This is

Anti-Religious Publications and Reasons for Atheistic Orientations Among Youngsters

actually a standard developed for the peace of people and society. For example, the religion clearly explains how a man and woman can be together or whose relationship is lawful. A family established through a lawful marriage is ordered and idealized by Islam. Everybody has a limit in terms of their relationships with their relatives. Following these limits is not only a conscience-related liability, but also a religious and moral responsibility. This responsibility is a principle that suits people's nature and satisfy them in the end.

It is a known fact that sexuality is highlighted in the publications of youth. In the period of profanation and consumption, the products that draw customers in the easiest way are sexual publications. These publications blemish the religious and moral principles in the relationship between males and females. Promoting and presenting concubinage and incest relationships as something normal, these publications are quite common in our daily lives. Such works carry interesting names, with the following examples: "Immoral Love", "Immoral Offer", "Immoral Man", "Immoral Lives", "Mixed Love", "My Hetero Love", "Do not Call me Brother", "My Love-in-Law", "Spank Me Daddy", "My First Homosexual Relationship". The idea of "experiencing sexuality freely" is reflected in such publications, causing orientations of rejecting the religious limits under the name of "sexual freedom" among young people.

A young person who is exposed to a sexual and pornographic attack on the Internet finds himself/herself in the middle of a propaganda of incest relationship or homosexuality. For instance, homosexuality has been presented by the main actors in the movies that have left a mark on the Turkish cinema in the last decades. Homosexual characters that display themselves in a promotive and sympathetic form clearly normalize and even promote homosexuality. Although homosexual relationships are reflected as "perversion" by Abrahamic religions, they are considered as a "right" in modern times thanks to the significant impact of these publications.²⁵

From a scientific perspective, a person may be born with both masculine and feminine emotions. In the Islamic law, there are certain rules for the bisexual people who are called "hunsa". However, these rules do not affirm the homosexual relationships. People with such a physiology and psychology live their life as how they feel in terms of gender. No oppression or pressure can be implemented in this regard because one cannot be held responsible for one's innate characteristics. These traits cannot be insulted, or one does not need to reveal these. Moreover, these characteristics cannot be a reason for adultery. Islam considers adultery and homosexuality as a moral problem and indicates that these are among the reasons of punishment with examples from previous nations.

²⁵ For more details on homosexual in the cinema history as well as homosexual relationships becoming common, see. S. Paul Davies, *Eşçinsel Sineması Tarihi-Sinemada Görülür Olmak* (Istanbul: Kalkedon Yayınları, 2010).

Certain publications reflect the religious laws regarding sexual topics, which have become social traditions, as a taboo. This causes a negative attitude toward the religious limits among the youngsters. Considering religion as an obstacle before preferring a sexual identity and living sexuality freely, people almost sacrifice their minds and emotions to experience lust and start to lose their beliefs and religious emotions which build their identities as the most important instruments of personality. Accordingly, a nihilist and hedonist lifestyle that neglects the rules of religion and society and prioritizes pleasures is adopted.

3.8. Promotion of Consumption

In this period with higher profanation rates, young people always search for something. In certain cases, young people may be satisfied by consumption solely. It is without doubt that formation of such a trend among youngsters may seem like the success of commercial firms. Moreover, why people are interested in consumption that much is another topic of discussion.²⁶

Publications on fashion, culture, art or sports, which capture the attention of a great number of young people, are impactful in terms of making youngsters a subject of consumption. The rich and luxurious life in cinema and television as well as the lifestyles of footballers which are young people's dream and the free and flamboyant icons of the popular culture direct young people from spiritual to financial interests. Accordingly, in *Turkish Youth Report*, 21% of the youngsters purchased a product even if they did not need.²⁷ Young people who always search for the "new" with their passion toward brands and fashion, who are influenced by the tattoo of their favorite footballer or artist, or who dream about living the luxurious lives presented on TV forget about the concepts of being thankful and satisfied, and they search for happiness in material of financial processes. As people cannot be satisfied with what is normal in time, they start to show interest toward extraordinariness and get into the area considered unlawful by the religion, malevolent by the society and forbidden by the state. Practices as extreme as substance addiction, concubinage and perversion are in parallel with the dominant consumption culture. It is a fact that these practices terminate the spiritual emotions and direct youngsters to a world isolated from religion.

²⁶ For consumption-related theories, see: Erol Erkan, *Gençlerde Tüketim ve Din* (Istanbul: Hiperyayın, 2018), 38-65.

²⁷ SEKAM, *Türkiye Gençlik Raporu*, 121.

4. Relationship between Anti-Religious Publications and Atheistic Education:

4.1. Reasons for Atheistic Thoughts

Young people deviate from the religion and become inclined to adopt atheism or deism every passing day. Researches on the domestic and global scale indicate that the anti-religious trend is on climb.²⁸ How accurate these researches are is another topic of discussion. The studies on anti-religiousness and reasons for rejecting the religious belief indicate that people adopt atheism due to psychological, philosophical/ideological and experience-related reasons.²⁹

The main reason for the increased atheistic orientation in recent times includes the psychological and socio-psychological factors. It seems difficult to find a place for religion in the urban culture that emerged following industrialization. In this period when everybody is busy trying to maintain their lives, people have to work more for more pleasure and comfort, and they cannot find time for their religious rituals. As the institutional religion loses its effective role, people gradually abandon it in their social and personal lives. Secularization and rejection of religious concepts and actions/becoming an atheist seems a natural result of such a lifestyle. Therefore, the spread of atheistic ideology in the modern era should be associated with the new lifestyle brought by modernism, rather than the irrational characteristics of religion or rational structure of atheism. Industrial society left no place for religion and caused regression in the religion with the procedure of shift, festivals, sportive contests-competitions, consumption culture, and relationship between males and females.³⁰

²⁸ Sevinç, "Ateizmin Boyutları ve Tipleri", 102; Aygün, "Ateizme Yol Açan Başlıca Faktörler", 535-536; Gabe Bullard, "The World's Newest Major Religion: No Religion", <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2016/04/160422-atheism-agnostic-secular-nones-rising-religion/> (22.04.2016), (Date Accessed: 03.03.2020); Makdanışmanlık, "Türkiye'de Toplumun Dine ve Dini Değerlere Bakışı" June 2017, <https://www.makdanismanlik.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/MAK-DANI%C5%9EMANLIK-T%C3%9CRK%C4%B0YEDE-TOPLUMUN-D%C4%B0NE-VE-D%C4%B0N%C4%B0-DE%C4%9EERLERE-BAKI%C5%9E-ARA%C5%9ETIRMASI.pdf> (Date accessed: 03.03.2020); Sertaç Aktan, "Türkiye'de Deizm Neden Artıyor, Dindarlık Neden Azalıyor?", <https://tr.euronews.com/2019/03/19/turkiye-de-deizm-neden-yukseliste-ateizm-deizm-agnostizm-panteizm-ne-demek> 19.03.2019, (Date Accessed: 03.03.2020); Michael Lipka, "10 Facts About Atheists", <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/12/06/10-facts-about-atheists/> 06.12.2019 (Date Accessed: 03.03.2020).

²⁹ Among the studies on the reasons for atheism, except the ones in the previous footnote, the following can be mentioned: Derya Gülfil, *Psikolojik Açından Ateizm: Nitel Bir Araştırma* (Adana: Çukurova University, Institute of Social Sciences, Doctoral Thesis, 2018); Hasan Atsız, *Ateizmin Psikolojik Gereklere ve Teizmin Cevapları* (Samsun: Ondokuz Mayıs University, Institute of Social Sciences, Master's Thesis, 2000); Antonie Vergue, "Ateizmin Psikolojisi", trans. Hayati Hökelekli, *Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 3/3 (1991), 231-245; İbrahim Coşkun, "Modern Çağ Deizminin Nedenleri ve Sonuçları", *Din Karşıtı Çağdaş Akımlar ve Deizm*, ed. Vecihi Sönmez et al. (Van: Ensar Neşriyat, 2017), 41-71.

³⁰ Yasin Aktay, "Ateist Düşünce'nin Oluşumunda Psiko-Sosyal Faktörlerin Etkisi", *İslam Düşüncesinde Ateizm Eleştirisi*, ed. Cemalettin Erdemci et al. (Ankara: Elis Yayınları, 2019), 9-10.

The psychological reasons for atheist orientation include considering the classical and traditional form of religion as “ordinary”, “boring” and “freedom-limiting”. Certain youngsters consider a secular and atheist lifestyle more exciting, authentic and creative. Modern people have an excellent self-esteem with the lifestyle they have, while the religious people stay as traditional and rural ones. Therefore, a rural youngster may like to get rid of his/her socio-cultural traits after enrolling at a university. Modern life is more brilliant, aristocratic and sophisticated than the traditional life. The things people need to abandon to get into this environment do not only include traditional dressing or consumption style, but also religious beliefs and rituals.³¹

Atheism may be accepted for a target that is the initial desire. Rejecting the religious identity that, in certain cases, obligatorily represents ordinariness and submissiveness to capture the attention of the other gender or to climb up the career steps, and accepting the atheist, deist or agnostic definitions that are believed to represent authenticity/freedom may be the result of such a desire.

One of the points that catch attention as a reason for atheism is the idea of getting rid of the burden brought by the religion in a materialist world. As a figure who is accepted to be among the significant psychologists in the modern era, Paul C. Vitz (1935-) says the burden of the religion was among the impactful emotions and reasons for having atheist thoughts. “There is no need to dive into the details but it is not difficult to consider the sexual pleasures that I should have rejected to become a really religious person. I also knew that this period would cost time and money... The time spent for the rituals, church groups, prayer times, activities of reading holy texts and helping others. I was already busy. In fact, being religious would be too effortful.”³²

The psychological factors causing atheism include self-sufficiency (istighna), self-indulgence and hedonism, desire of freedom, disappointments arising from incidents, peer suggestions, and reaction and hatred against the adverse attitudes of religious people.³³ These can be regarded as “moral weakness”.³⁴

It is safe to state that atheism is accompanied by certain ideologies such as Positivism, Materialism, Nihilism and Darwinism in the west after the Age of Enlightenment. Natural sciences which gained importance after the renaissance rejected the epistemological value of religious information and reduced the limits of reality to sensible creatures Furthermore, the trend of atheism which was

³¹ Paul C. Vitz, “Ateizm Psikolojisi”, trans. Kenan Sevinç, *Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 2/2 (2013/1), 136.

³² Vitz, “Ateizm Psikolojisi”, 137-138.

³³ Hamdi Gündoğar, “Ateizme Götüren Psikolojik Sebepler”, *İslam Düşüncesinde Ateizm Eleştirisi*, ed. Cemalettin Erdemci et al., (Ankara: Elis Yayınları, 2019), 58-65; Selim Özarlan, “Ülkemizde Ateizme Yönelme Sebepleri”, *Diyanet İlmî Dergi* 55 (2019), 1021.

³⁴ Aygün, “Ateizme Yol Açan Başlıca Faktörler”, 547.

Anti-Religious Publications and Reasons for Atheistic Orientations Among Youngsters

developed based on the philosophical evidences developed a rebuttal against the Christian theology in the west in the last couple of centuries. The pre-eternal materialist characteristic, description of chaotic universe, unique characteristics of science, the issue of malevolence and God's justice, and autonomous side of ethics as well as its independence from religion generally formed the philosophical grounds of atheistic ideology.³⁵ With the philosophical questionings performed using the concepts of God, human, destiny and malevolence, a relationship was established with atheism.³⁶ It should be noted that the positivist, materialist, existential and humanist theories that emerged after the Age of Enlightenment are directly or indirectly related with atheism.³⁷

The anti-religious orientation such as atheism and deism is a significant role of reactance. The immoral attitudes of people and institutions that represent the religion, luxurious and flamboyant lifestyles of royal families in Islamic countries, and methods of conservative/rightist governments that do not suit justice direct various groups to an opposing position politically and religiously. Every religious sect, institution or people that are believed or claimed to represent the religion with their world view including their thoughts on the meaning of life reflect the "monopoly of reality", claim that only their approaches are correct, and reject other thoughts, which may be among the reasons of anti-religiousness that also include religious-appearing violent and terrorist activities.³⁸ Abusing the religion for commercial, political or personal purposes was accepted as one of the reasons for atheism in Turkey.³⁹ The well-known phrase "do what the hodja says, not what he does" is the reflection of the afore-noted point. The statements and attitudes of religious people that marginalize the atheistic people and groups make atheism an instrument of taking a shelter or defending themselves. In this case, atheism is a shelter against the religious institutions rather than the irrationality of the religious theses. Atheism is also a reaction shown against the religiousness in the era of oppressive and authoritarian governments that define themselves as conservative/rightist.⁴⁰

³⁵ Özarlan, "Ülkemizde Ateizme Yönelme Sebepleri", 1015-1020; Habib Şener, "Jean Meslier Düşüncesinde Ateizmin Temel Dayanakları ve Eleştirisi", *Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 27 (2018/1), 178-189.

³⁶ Fethi Kerim Kazanç, "Düşünce Tarihinde Ateizme Götüren Bir Neden Olarak Kötülük Sorunu: Kelami Açıdan Eleştirel Bir Değerlendirme", *İslam Düşüncesinde Ateizm Eleştirisi*, ed. Cemalettin Erdemci et al., (Ankara: Elis Yayınları, 2019), 203.

³⁷ Aygün, "Ateizme Yol Açan Başlıca Faktörler", 545.

³⁸ Aygün, "Ateizme Yol Açan Başlıca Faktörler", 549-550.

³⁹ Özarlan, "Ülkemizde Ateizme Yönelme Sebepleri"1022.

⁴⁰ Aktay, "Ateist Düşünce'nin Oluşumunda Psiko-Sosyal Faktörlerin Etkisi", 10.

4.2. Study Results Regarding the Impact of Anti-Religious Publications on Atheistic Orientation

Interviews were conducted with 21 people, some of whom were studying at the Faculties of Theology and Education in Gaziantep University, who defined themselves atheist or deist and Muslim on the social media, and whose ages ranged from 18 to 24, between the dates of 01.02.2019 and 05.03.2019 to examine the interest of young people in anti-religious trends such as atheism and deism and to investigate the impact of atheistic publications on the youngsters who had a rejectionist approach. The interviews were conducted with semi-structured interview method that contained three main titles and sub-items under these titles. The items as well as participant-related details are presented in the attachment. The data obtained in the interview and assessments regarding the data are as follows:

4.2.1. The Impact of Anti-Religious Publications and Atheistic Statements on Youngsters

Statements that are against the institutional structure and principles of religions and that are in digital, printed, audible, visual and written form can be defined as “anti-religious statements”. A statement can build a belief and ideology. As a statement or thought is repeated and presented with certain claims, it may direct masses. Accordingly, after the question “Do you think the anti-religious statement affected your approach?” was asked to the youngster who defined themselves atheist or deist, no significant difference emerged between the positive and negative answers to this question. The impact of education form, family structure and personal experiences on youngsters’ beliefs was almost equal to that of anti-religious statement.

Some of the youngsters stated that their own questions and experiences were impactful in the formation of their religious beliefs, while some believed they were affected by anti-religious statement. Those who claimed that they were affected by the anti-religious statement underlined the impact of audible and visual publications on the social media and Internet. A group that said they were affected by the anti-religious statement noted the impact of scientific and philosophical books, adding that propaganda-type works and publications had no effect on their ideologies.

Those who stated that they were not affected by the anti-religious statement emphasized that they were still under the impact of questions on the Internet, which caused them to question their beliefs. Youngsters who defined themselves as atheists and who read religious-philosophical works stated that they were influenced by certain philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, David Hume, Sigmund Freud, Jean-Paul Sartre, Karl Marx, Erich Fromm, Carl Sagan, Neale Donald Walsch, Jack Huberman, Richard Dawkins and Turan Dursun who is

Anti-Religious Publications and Reasons for Atheistic Orientations Among Youngsters

known for his anti-religious publications in Turkey. Some of the youngsters in the study said they watched the videos of Celal Şengör on the Internet. Moreover, some young people said they read philosophical books as well as religious publications and compared both genres to one another.

“Logical and questioning works captured my attention. Books on science and philosophy enlarged my attention particularly. B.K.A., 20”.

“Videos, rather than books, catch my attention. Celal Şengör’s videos, for instance. I have question marks in my mind after I find the answers in the videos. E.K. 23”.

“Propaganda-type works do not catch my attention, but philosophical books freshen up my mind. H.B., 20”.

“Anti-religious statements affect my thoughts. Questions in this topic make me question something from an intelligent and logical perspective. Then, I feel the need to perform a research. After I find the answers, I become convinced. There are some topics I still question. M.A.M. 23”.

“I feel the need to perform a research about the anti-religious statements that catch my attention and direct me to questioning. I am not affected by the questions that I have an answer for. Regarding the unanswered ones, I overcome these with my “faith”. K.S.Ö. 23”.

“Psychoanalysis works by Sigmund Freud influenced me deeply. I read Quran and books of other religions. I read Bible, Torah and religious books of Paganism, Shamanism and ancient Egyptian and Greek religions, and I understood that religions had no reality in themselves. B.K.A. 20”.

“I read Quran and realized that it had contradictions and that it did not suit the modern conditions. E.Ç. 20”.

It is clear that the impact of atheistic statement arising from anti-religious publications on the youngsters cannot be neglected. No matter how they define themselves in terms of their religious beliefs, it is clear that atheistic thoughts can reach the youngsters easily thanks to Internet and affect youngsters’ thoughts to a certain degree. Social media and Internet publications seem to be the most impactful factors. As mentioned in the first section of the study, field studies regarding the Internet use indicate that the time spent on the Internet has been increasing. Accordingly, it is safe to state that online publications have a more significant impact on youngsters than the printed publications. The web sites as well as video channels and social media accounts for which there is no need to mention separately perform atheist propagandas with thousands of their followers and audiences. These web sites aim to affect the thoughts of youngsters with their statements and claims that there is no God, that religion contradicts with science, that religion is a source of violence, that women are assigned a secondary position

by the religion, that religion does not suit the modern world, and that people do not need a religion to be a moral subject.

4.2.2. Reasons for Atheism and Topics of Discussion

The factors causing atheistic ideology were summarized with above. The aim in this section was to reveal why youngsters were inclined to be atheist or the religious topics that were discussed the most around the people who defined themselves as Muslims. The young people in this study reflected the description of God, perception of destiny, problem of malevolence, relationship between religion and science, creation, and position of women as the psychological and philosophical reasons for atheistic ideologies, as noted above in the form of factors causing atheism. These questions are the problems of neutral people or Muslims, not only the atheists, deists and agnostics. According to the data obtained from the interviews, metaphysical topics including the belief in God seem to be fully present in youngsters' minds.

"The topic that confuses me in terms of religious subjects is the issue of destiny. For instance, if the responsibility as well as the date and form of death regarding one is already pre-determined, then why was that one created? Then, the topic of creation. Why were we created? In addition, as people's religious responsibilities are shaped in line with their place of birth, does everyone have the same responsibility? Is there a justice in this regard? What is the relationship between people's malevolence and destiny? Why does God permit malevolence? E.K. 23. K.S.Ö. 23; M.B.A, 24, Ö.S., 21; M.A. 18; M. B. 23".

"I believe in the presence of God but I still have question marks in my mind. I am looking for as satisfactory point. M.A.M. 23".

"I believe that the metaphysical topics, particularly the concept of God, are actually anthropological. God is a sort of authority people need to apply to. H.Ş. 22".

"Why do we need the existence of Allah? S.H.U. 22".

"Allah's presence is among the religious topics we discuss. M.B. 23".

"I believe the Prophets are problematic people. The idea of God must be their products. F.B. 24".

Youngsters, particularly the female ones, in the interviews believe that Islam does not recognize women as a subject and that there is an inequality between men and women in Islam. According to some, this is the reason for atheistic thoughts, while some are disturbed by the secondary position of women in the religious environments although the latter group is not atheist or deist."

Anti-Religious Publications and Reasons for Atheistic Orientations Among Youngsters

"Islam does not recognize women as a subject. Women are insulted. Polygamy in means injustice toward women. Islam is a patriarchal religion. The presence of inequality between men and women in Islam is among the reasons for my loss of interest in the religion. H.D. 18." Similar reasons for rejecting the religion: M.B.A., 24; M.H. 22".

"The position of women is the primary controversial topic me and my friends have been discussing. There are also feminist reactions. The necessity of wearing hijab is another controversial topic. They claim that the religion insults women but I disagree. However, I must confess that the traditional statements actually do so. S.H.U, 22; E.K., 23; Ö.S., 21; M.A., 18; M.U. 21".

The majority of the youngsters who defined themselves as Muslim in the study believe that the religious ideas are unnecessary and do not suit the contemporary science. Accepting science as the sole truth, young people reduce the limits of religious statements to the level of mythology. Particularly, statements based on miracles and supernatural events are not considered real by the young people. Furthermore, an imperious language is far being persuasive and effective. Some youngsters associated the reason for their atheistic beliefs with the marginalizing language of religious people and their empathy-free approaches.

"People have been developing mentally. Religion was appealing to the people from the past but science now dominates the globe, and religion does not suit the scientific facts. There is no meaning of religion from a philosophical perspective. I believe religion only catches the attention of the common public. H.B. 22".

"The imperious language of religion puts me off. Unnatural events, like the event of Noah, do not convince me. O.K. 19".

"I am homosexual and severely criticized by the religion for that reason. However, according to the religion, it is God who created me and made me so, then why am I threatened like that? B.D. 18."

"Quran says humans are made out of mud. I do not understand this. M.B.A. 24; H.Ş. 22"

One of the important reasons for young people's atheistic thoughts is Quran itself. Some of the participants who introduced themselves as Muslims have certain criticisms toward Quran, the essential source of Islam. The issue of authenticity regarding the Quran text that reached the present day as well as the internal consistency within the book seems to have created significant confusions in young people's minds:

"I do not think that Quranic anecdotes have historical grounds. I am also not sure whether the Quran reached the current day in its original form. H. Ş. 22".

"I actually question the process Quran was transformed into a book. Why did the Prophet not ensure Quran was collected as a book when he was alive? M.A.M. 23".

"There are verses mentioned by the Prophet himself. How can these be stated by Allah? There are also contradictory information. H.D. 18".

"The controversial topics include why Quran creates numerous conflicts. For instance, prayers are not clearly mentioned in Quran. Like the five-time prayers. E.K. 23".

One of the reasons causing young people to deviate from religion is the promotion of religion through violence. Association of jihad verses with the violence in Islamic societies seems to have affected the youngsters adversely:

"One of the topics that I discuss with my friends include the issue of whether IS reflects Islam. E.A. 21; M.U. 21".

"The violence-containing verses of Quran are sufficient to reject the religion. The intelligence does not order fighting. H.D. 18; M.H. 22".

It should be noted that the problematic topics participants mentioned included the description of paradise and hell, belief in the Last Day, and the issue of slavery-concubinage. Moreover, why people live and are tested is also questioned by the young people.

To sum up, religious questioning and religion-related questions have a primary role in young people's orientation toward the atheistic belief. Religious beliefs and atheistic orientation become inevitable when questions including the concepts and topics of existence, God, arbitrary trait of creation, purpose of existence, reason for being tested, necessity of religion, relationship between miracles and mythology, relationship between intermediating and justice, issue of destiny and malevolence, current value of religious arrangements regarding the social life and human relationships, thoughts on homosexuality, relationship between religion and morality, and women from the perspective of religion do not result in satisfactory answers, despite being paradoxical in certain cases.⁴¹ Moreover, personal experiences and socio-political factors seem to be the second most important reason for atheistic orientation.

4.2.3. Young People's Thoughts on Atheistic Orientation and Religious Beliefs

The aim in the sections above was to gain information about the statuses of people who defined themselves as deist, atheist and agnostic. This section provides the thoughts of youngsters that introduced themselves as Muslim toward the

⁴¹ Namık Kemal Okumuş, "Gençliğin Ateizmle İmtihanı Ya da Bizi Bu Sorular Mahvetti Serzenişi", ed. Cemalettin Erdemci et al., *İslam Düşüncesinde Ateizm Eleştirisi* (Ankara: Elis Yayınları, 2019), 138-159; Aygün, "Ateizme Yol Açan Başlıca Faktörler", 552-553.

Anti-Religious Publications and Reasons for Atheistic Orientations Among Youngsters

sociological status of religion around them in terms of atheistic orientations and reasons. All of the young people in the study stated that the Turkish youth was interested in atheistic trends or at least questioned the traditional religious beliefs. The most important reason in this orientation is reactance. According to the participants, unfair statements and actions of the Muslims or Islamists who serve as governmental officers and defend the religion and ethics cause young people to deviate from the religion.

“Turkish youth adopted “reactive atheism”. Young people deviate from the religion as a reaction or response to religious groups that abuse the religion through political statements and practices with discriminatory traits. The religion is dictated by the political Islamist groups. In this case, atheism is an escape from this abuse. Young people equalize freedom with atheism. Imperious religious statements arising from families are also impactful in this context. A religion cannot be based on a ground by dictating religious beliefs. Young people need human-based statements and logical explanations. H.B. 22; H.Ş. 22; B.D. 18; K.S.Ö. 23; M.A.M. 23; M.B. 23; O.K. 19; F.B. 24; M.H. 22; E.Ç. 20”.

“There are reactions toward the lifestyles of Muslims. The inconsistencies between the statements and lives of religious authorities as well as lifestyles of Muslims direct young people to atheism or deism. The adverse impacts of cults and congregations, as understood from internal and external observations, cannot be neglected. Islamic groups harm youngsters while trying to make them accept Islam. Popular religiousness and people using the religion for their interests also cause young people to deviate from the religion. K.S.Ö. 23; M.A.M. 23; M.B. 23; M.U. 21; E.Ç. 20”.

According to the data obtained from the study, another reason for young people’s preference of atheism is that the religion does not have a form that can keep up with the new scientific developments. However, some of young people stated that the conflict between the religion and science is just a claim that was made a propaganda of atheism:

“An environment for conducting researches was developed. Youngsters may access different information on the Internet. They have the possibility to compare the information taught to them with the scientific data. As new scientific theories regarding evolution or formation of matter are learned, young people’s religious sides weaken. Religion has significantly fallen behind the science. B.K.A. 20; E.A. 21 M.A.M. 23; M.H. 22; F.B. 24; E.G. 19”.

“The conflict between religion and science adversely affects young people. Quran verses actually do not contradict with the scientific theories. E.K. 23”.

Another interesting point in the study was that certain youngsters aimed to utilize the popularity of atheism or deism. In other words, the feeling of “being different” seem more important than the religious identity for certain young people.

“Some say they are atheists or deists as atheism and deism are popular now. In fact, they know nothing in terms of Islam or atheism. Nevertheless, atheism is still popular, and youngsters believe that introducing themselves like that is a privilege. Moreover, I believe people are making this issue a propaganda for themselves. B.K.A. 20; O.K. 19”

According to the participants, the main factors that cause young people to deviate from Islam are the afore-noted reasons, and the below-noted points participants stressed particularly are among the reasons for atheistic orientations:

- Muslims’ marginalization toward the people from other religions.
- Appealing to a certain group despite the claim of being universal.
- Ignorance in terms of belief-related topics.
- Inability of religion to solve the psycho-social problems of young people in a satisfactory manner.
- Inability of the religion to reach the youngsters that are incompetent in terms of religious knowledge and emotions.
- Insufficient and “outdated” characteristics of religious statements for the young people who read scientific and philosophical works.
- The desire of escaping the religious responsibilities and limitations.
- People’s adverse reaction to destiny and Allah due to their traumas.
- Absence of Islamic knowledge and practice in the domestic environment.
- Discussing the theological topics concerning experts before the public and the uncertainties and conflicts arising as a result.
- The insulting and aggressive style in the religious discussion programs on the TV.
- Use of a dictating language, rather than convincing answers, to young people’s religious questions.

To sum up, young people question more in the age of science and technology, and they can perform comparisons with the ability to access information easily. Religion can be equalized with myths and mythology in the rapidly-progressing and constantly-changing dynamics of the age. With the prohibitive attitudes, ethical issues and religious abuse of religious people added to

the aforementioned point, anti-religious trends such as atheism and deism spread among the people.⁴²

Conclusion

Youngsters always represent innovation, opposition, transformation and dynamism. Young people's deviation from the traditional culture and beliefs has always been perceived as a problem by the adults. Youth suggests questioning, researching and discussing. Therefore, the news "atheism is spreading among the members of the new generation, and deism is progressing" should not be surprising. However, this does not change the fact that atheism and deism is a theological issue. The relationship between this issue and religious publications cannot be denied.

The content of the anti-religious publications indicates that these works affect the atheistic orientations of youngsters to a certain degree because the beliefs as well as thoughts and lifestyles reflected in anti-religious publications parallel what young people think and how they act. Our interviews indicated that some young people became atheist, deist and agnostic as a result of the scientific, philosophical and literary works they read. Atheism and deism is based on knowledge and voluntary attitudes, just like how faith is based on will and knowledge. Use of the phrases such as "I am an atheist or deist" arise as a result of certain questioning and researching periods as well as reading certain publications. It is not easy for somebody to neglect their Muslim environment and adopt an atheist or deist identity. It is without doubt that this requires a certain amount of knowledge and emotions. Therefore, the impact of such publications on the youngsters cannot be denied.

One of the factors that affect young people's beliefs and direct them to question is the Internet. The audible-visual content on the social media and Internet is the primary factor in shaping young people's minds. However, this should not mean that only the Internet affects the young people. The researching as well as questioning activities and reading printed and online publications transform the orientations into a belief. Therefore, the following can be assumed: The impact of religious and anti-religious statements on young people's beliefs is significant. However, formation of a non-institutional identity such as "atheism" or "deism" occurs after reading certain works. Furthermore, it is a fact that the concepts "atheist", "deist" and "Islamist" of the popular culture have been emptied, and that youngsters use these terms to be different, unconsciously in most cases.

The following factors were also impactful in terms of the atheistic orientation: Ideologies such as atheism and deism emerge as a reaction to religious

⁴² Aktan, "Türkiye'de Deizm Neden Artıyor, Dindarlık Neden Azalıyor?" (Date Accessed: 03.03.2020).

people. This is also called reactive atheism or deism. The recent events in Turkey indicate that young people do not trust in religious people and institutions. A so-called religious organization aiming to control the government, unfair employment in the governmental offices, and finally a military coup attempt with armed terrorists; form of management by the political power defined through conservative, rightist or Islamic codes, political attitudes from people with religious backgrounds and titles as well as cults, congregations or religious associations, interest-based relationships in policy, luxurious lives as well as unfair earnings of religious people who like to waste money, and thoughts and attitudes toward women... These have been on the upper positions in the agenda of Turkey, regardless of being realistic or not. Furthermore, standard sermons with no relevance to the current periods, standard actions that limit the borders of religion rather than making religion easy to practice, religious stories that do not sound logical at all, and narratives full of falsehood... Certain religious programs on the TV... Socio-economic statuses of all Muslims that do not seem that bright, association of Muslims with terrorist actions, sect-related conflicts, relationships with others, and perception of women... This table is like a curtain between youngsters and religion. In fact, atheism and deism mean the rejection of religious life, religious-appearing people, authorities and institutions, rather than God and the religion.

Another important factor regarding the atheist orientations is the socio-culture. In the Age of Enlightenment, criticisms directed toward Christianity actually targeted all religions on the world. The secular-humanist world view in the modern era is a natural result of positivist, humanist and strict rationalist ideology of the Enlightenment. Such a mental background combined with the busyness of the industrial society (mechanized people) and dynamics of modern urban life caused the religion to be abandoned mentally and practically. Religion was made a topic of fiqh-related subjects most of which are not a daily life issue any more, dream interpretations, organizations of cults and congregations, and theological discussions. Moreover, the spiritual language of religion became nostalgic, and the peace and happiness promised to humanity was lost in time. Religious beliefs and practices are not liked by youth in the flow of their lives. In this case, science is the religion of youngsters, while football, music and social media are their prayers or rituals.

The desire of being accepted and free as well as the search for authenticity are among the other factors affecting their rejection toward the religion and religious institutions. Considering the outdated structure of religious language and ideology against technologic-informational opportunities, culture of questioning, modern lifestyle, and various sources of satisfaction and happiness, or the bans of religion limiting the freedom, atheism and deism appear as a gate for escaping.

Anti-Religious Publications and Reasons for Atheistic Orientations Among Youngsters

Furthermore, another point learned from the youngsters in the field study was that discussing certain topics and issues such as the arbitrary traits of revelations, historical aspect of Quran, truth in the anecdotes and validity of the ahqam verses on TV screen affects them adversely. Young people who are dedicated to Quran text in full faith and who witness the severe arguments regarding Islam on TV in a period when they start to question the religion may cause them to have adverse emotions regarding the reality and esteemed structure of Quran. Therefore, having such discussions in suitable Islamic environments would be much better.

Publishing works that will appeal to young people's minds and emotions and receiving support from young people will be beneficial in this period. Liberal statements should be supported, and the habit of using flamboyant pages and covers on printed publications should be abandoned. Books that are useful for beliefs and ethics should be published and audible works on the Internet, and summaries of religious-scientific articles should be provided briefly in audible-visual format. The scientific and humorous publications that receive interest from the young people should not be neglected. Religious issues should be based on pluralist and rational methods, while a marginal, prohibitive, violent and imperious language should be abandoned. Religious language should be based on ethics with an emphasis on intelligence, rather than miraculous statements. Publications for the youth should not be felt like a "propaganda" instrument. Emotions should be valued, and human-related differences should be considered. Religious facts and truth should be provided in a simple and pure form.

With the aforementioned reasons, atheistic orientations of young people should be examined in detail, and the religious as well as ethical and socio-economic results of this issue should be assessed. It will be less challenging to generate solutions appealing to youngsters' beliefs if this problem is solved in the context of ethics, rather than the equation of faith and blasphemy.

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Anti-Religious Publications and Reasons for Atheistic Orientations Among Youngsters

ANNEXES:

1. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FORM

1.1. Impact of Anti-Religious Publications and Atheistic Statements:

- 1.1.1. Do you follow anti-religious publications?
- 1.1.2. What are the resources that you follow among the anti-religious publications?
- 1.1.3. Do printed or online publications affect your thoughts? If so, which?
- 1.1.4. Do you think you are affected by the anti-religious statements in the process of forming your beliefs?
- 1.1.5. Do you reject the religion because of your experiences or thought that religions are illogical?

1.2. Reasons for Atheistic Orientation

- 1.2.1. What is the reason you rejected religious sense of belonging?
- 1.2.2. What are the general religious topics that do not convince you?
- 1.2.3. What are the problematic topics in Islam?

1.3. Thoughts on Atheistic Orientation and Religious Beliefs

- 1.3.1. Is atheism or religiousness common among the people around you?
- 1.3.2. What are the reasons for the young people to become oriented to be anti-religious?

2. DETAILS OF THE PARTICIPANTS IN INTERVIEWS

Order	Name - Surname	Gender	Religious Belief	Age
1	H.B.	Male	Agnostic	22
2	B.K.A.	Male	Atheist	20
3	M. F.	Male	Muslim	23
4	E.K.	Female	Muslim	21
5	E.A.	Male	Muslim	21
6	H.D.	Female	Atheist	18
7	H.Ş.	Male	Agnostic	22
8	B.D.	Male	Atheist	18
9	K.S.Ö.	Male	Muslim	23
10	M.A.M.	Male	Muslim	23
11	S.H.U	Male	Muslim	22
12	M.B.	Male	Muslim	23

13	M.B.A.	Male	Undefined	24
14	O.K.	Male	Atheist	19
15	Ö.S.	Female	Muslim	21
16	F.B.	Male	Atheist	24
17	M.H.	Male	Atheist	22
18	E.G.	Male	Deist	19
19	E.Ç.	Female	Undefined	20
20	M.A.	Female	Muslim	18
21	M.U.	Female	Muslim	21

Anti-Religious Publications and Reasons for Atheistic Orientations Among
Youngsters

Authority Perception of Young University Students and Religion*

Fatma ODABAŞI**

Abstract

Youth, as a period, expresses a future both for the individual and society. While the individual determines his own goals and plans for his future, the society regards youth as the guarantor of his continuity. University youth, which is situated under youth categories and holds a highly significant percentage in overall population, requires to be researched from multiple angles. This article is written with an aim to provide an answer to the question "Is there a relationship between the religious attitudes and behaviors of the university youth, being in the last stage of their formal education, and their perception of authority?" Authority and religion, as the two main parameters of this study, are presented in two approaches: the theoretical and applied methods. Documentation technique was used in the theoretical part, and the interview technique, as one of the qualitative research methods, was used in the applied part. The theoretical framework includes conceptual, historical and theoretical information on the phenomenon of authority. Not only the religious attitudes and behaviors of the youth studying in different departments of state and foundation universities in Istanbul were tried to be revealed in various dimensions, but also their perceptions of authority were researched in the applied part of this study.

Keywords: Sociology of Religion, Religion, Authority, Youth, University Youth.

Üniversite Gençliğinin Otorite Algısı ve Din

Öz

Gençlik, hem birey hem de toplum için gelecek ifade eden bir dönemdir. Fert, kendi geleceği ile ilgili hedef ve planlarını belirlerken toplum da gençliği devamlılığının garantörü olarak görür. Toplam nüfusumuz içinde önemli bir orana sahip olan gençlik kesiminde yer alan üniversite gençliği, birçok açıdan araştırılması gereken bir alandır. Bu makale, "örgün eğitimlerinin son aşamasında olan üniversite gençliğinin otorite algıları ile dini tutum ve davranışları arasında bir ilişki var mıdır?" sorusuna cevap bulmak amacıyla yazılmıştır. Araştırmamanın iki ana parametresi olan otorite ve din, teorik ve uygulamalı olmak üzere iki

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yaklaşım ile sunulmuştur. Teorik kısımda dokümantasyon tekniği, uygulamalı kısımda ise nitel araştırma tekniklerinden mülakat tekniği kullanılmıştır. Teorik çerçeve, otorite olgusuyla ilgili kavramsal, tarihsel ve kuramsal bilgileri içermektedir. Din bağımsız değişken olarak kurgulandığından, bu açılarından ele alınmamıştır. Uygulamalı kısımda ise, İstanbul'daki devlet ve vakıf üniversitelerinin farklı bölümlerinde okuyan gençlerin, hem dinle ilgili tutum ve davranışları çeşitli boyutları içinde ortaya konmaya çalışılmış, hem de otorite algıları araştırılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Din Sosyolojisi, Din, Otorite, Gençlik, Üniversite Gençliği.

Summary

The youth period is a period which expresses a "future" for both the youth and the society. While the individual determines his goals and plans for his future; the society, at the same time, regards the youth as the guarantor of its continuity. Our being a young society in terms of its demographic structure means that we require more research on this issue. Youth is a broad concept, including many subgroups. One of these subgroups is the university youth. Being located within the youth segment and having a significant share in our total population, university youth needs to be researched with regards to many aspects as an area.

University youth, constituting the age group between eighteen and twenty-four (could be up to thirty with master's and doctoral education), receiving education in the last stage of formal education, and gaining a scientific mindset through researching and questioning, is a group that creates a youth culture of their own and eventually will be the leaders of the society. University education and the time spent in this process are highly important for the young people. In this period, the youth goes through the process of gaining identity and giving permanent shape to their personality. Likewise, this period is a process that is effective in the youth's perception of the natural, economic, social and cultural environment, and the formation and change of their values.

This research is based on the authority perceptions of university students, who are in the youth segment and at the last stage of their formal education, and its relation to religion. The question of "whether there is a relationship between the perception of authority and religious attitudes and behaviors of university youth" constitutes the starting point of this study. Based on this fundamental question, questions such as: What are the perceptions of religion in the context of faith, worship and social life of young people? What do they understand from the concept of authority? What do they accept as an authority in their social lives? Who / what do they regard as an authority in their religious lives? have also been tried to answer. The research aims to contribute to both youth research and religious life studies.

The study is a qualitative research, consisting of two parts. In the first chapter, the concept of authority is emphasized in conceptual, historical and

theoretical terms and the documentation technique is used. The second part is applied research and one of the qualitative research techniques, the interview technique was used. Interviews were conducted with a sample group of ten boys and ten girls studying in different departments of state and foundation universities in Istanbul. In the applied research, religious life, faith, worship and social life of the youth; with regards to their perceptions of authority presented under the titles of what do they understand from the concept, who/what do they accept as authority, what kind of relationship they establish between authority and power, and who/what do they regard as authority in the religious field. Since religion is considered as an independent variable in the context of its effect on the perception of authority, it has not been discussed in the conceptual and theoretical frameworks.

It has been observed that the university students participating in our study do not have any problems with belief, but they do not perform their religious practices regularly and religion is not very effective in their daily lives. Among young people, being honest, virtuous, and good is regarded as more important than being religious, and morality is sometimes perceived as a separate field independent of religion. Young people attach great importance to spiritual and moral values such as honesty, integrity, reliability and being a good person. This has been observed in our study to such an extent that, morality may become even more important than devotion to religion in the eyes of young people. It has been found that even those who prioritized religion in their lives reacted harshly against moral deviations. Thus, what draws attention is that while some moral values go beyond individual boundaries as they concern the general public, some religious values are accepted at a more individual and subjective level.

Authority is a phenomenon which is effective in all areas of human life from birth to death-with different figures having similar functions. The process that starts with the authority of the parents in the family continues with the teacher in the school, the administrator in the business life and the state authority in the political field. Above all of this, authority has a quality surrounding life and beyond with the authority of God, which we call the absolute authority. Even though, the fact that the concept is related to many fields such as psychology, sociology, philosophy, politics, law, education, and religion makes it difficult to make a clear definition; it is generally defined as the "right and power to issue and declare orders to be obeyed and obeyed" in political theory. Besides being a concept closely related to power, it is a power endowed with legitimacy, not the power in the sense of force.

Authority is both a complex and controversial phenomenon. On the one hand, in modern societies where individual rights and freedoms are expanded and indulgent and tolerant social morality has developed, authority has begun to be regarded by some as outdated, unnecessary and oppressive. On the other hand, these negative attitudes prompted the advocates of authority to a counter-action

aiming to bring it back to the agenda. According to them, the erosion of authority at home, school, workplace and administration can bring along the danger of disorder, instability and social disintegration.

In this study, in which the authority was analyzed through university students, it has been observed that young people mostly define this phenomenon in terms of political theory and dealt with concepts such as power, potency, hierarchy, and legitimacy taking place in the literature.

It has been accepted by the young people that authority is a multi-layered phenomenon, and parents, teachers, bosses/administrators, and the state are recognized as important authority figures.

Young people gave priority to the Quran and Sunnah in the framework of directing their religious beliefs, thoughts and behaviors. They evaluated the authority of other individuals and institutions in the context of their suitability to these two sources. Regarding the relationship between the perception of religion and the perception of authority, we could not come to a definite observation that religious life or the level of religiosity affect the perception of authority and that individuals who adopted absolute authority and organized their lives according to the orders and prohibitions of religion could more easily accept other areas of authority. Even those who claim that they are very religious and take religion as reference point in all areas of their lives may approach the authority in the family, school and workplace with caution. During this research, it has been determined that the religious perceptions of the youth do not directly affect their perceptions of the authority.

Özet

Gençlik dönemi, hem genç hem de toplum için “gelecek” ifade eden bir dönemdir. Fert, kendi geleceği ile ilgili hedef ve planlarını belirlerken toplum da gençliği devamlılığının garantörü olarak görür. Demografik yapısı itibariyle genç bir toplum olmamız bu kesimle ilgili araştırmalara daha çok ihtiyaç duyduğumuz anlamına gelir. Gençlik çok geniş bir kavramdır ve pek çok alt grubu barındırır. Bu gruplardan biri de üniversite gençliğidir. Toplam nüfusumuz içinde önemli bir orana sahip olan gençlik kesiminde yer alan üniversite gençliği birçok açıdan araştırılması gereken bir alandır.

Üniversite gençliği, on sekiz-yirmi dört arası (yüksek lisans ve doktora eğitimiyle beraber otuza kadar çıkabilir) yaş grubunu oluşturan, resmi eğitim-öğretimin son evresinde öğrenim gören, araştırmacı ve sorgulayıcı, dolayısıyla bilimsel zihniyet kazanmış, kendilerine has bir gençlik kültürü oluşturan ve toplumun önderleri olacak bir kesimdir. Üniversite eğitimi ve bu süreç içinde geçen zaman gençler için çok önemlidir. Genç bu dönemde kimliğini kazanma ve kişiliğine kalıcı biçim verme süreci yaşar. Aynı şekilde bu dönem gencin doğal,

ekonomik, sosyal ve kültürel çevreyi algılamasında, değerlerinin oluşmasında ve değişmesinde de etkili olan bir süreçtir.

Bu araştırma gençlik kesimi içinde yer alan ve örgün eğitimlerinin son aşamasında bulunan üniversite öğrencilerinin otorite algıları ve bunun dinle olan ilişkisi üzerine kurulmuştur. Araştırmanın çıkış noktasını, “üniversite gençliğinin dinî tutum ve davranışları ile otorite algıları arasında bir ilişki var mıdır?” sorusu oluşturmaktadır. Bu temel sorudan hareketle; gençlerin inanç, ibadet ve sosyal hayat bağlamında din algıları nasıldır? Otorite kavramından ne anlıyorlar? Sosyal hayatlarında neleri otorite kabul ediyorlar? Dinî hayatlarında kimi/neyi otorite olarak görüyorlar gibi sorulara da cevap verilmeye çalışılmıştır. Araştırma hem gençlik araştırmalarına hem de dini hayat araştırmalarına katkı sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır.

Çalışma nitel bir araştırma olup iki bölümden oluşmaktadır. Birinci bölümde kavramsal, tarihi ve kuramsal açılardan otorite kavramı üzerinde durulmuştur ve dolaylı gözlem metodu tekniği olan belge tarama kullanılmıştır. İkinci bölüm ise uygulamalı araştırmadır ve nitel araştırma tekniklerinden mülakat tekniği kullanılmıştır. İstanbul’daki devlet ve vakıf üniversitelerinin değişik bölümlerinde okuyan, on erkek-on kızdan oluşan örneklem grubuyla görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Uygulamalı araştırmada, gençlerin dini hayatları, inanç, ibadet ve sosyal hayat; otorite algıları ise, kavramdan ne anladıkları, kimleri/neleri otorite kabul ettikleri, otorite ile güç arasında nasıl bir ilişki kurdukları ve dini alanda kimi/neyi otorite gördükleri başlıklarıyla sunulmuştur. Araştırmada din, otorite algısına etkisi bağlamında bağımsız değişken olarak ele alındığından kavramsal ve teorik düzlemde tartışılmamıştır.

Araştırmamıza katılan üniversiteli öğrencilerin inançla ilgili bir problemlerinin olmadığı ancak ibadetlerini düzenli bir şekilde yerine getirmedikleri ve gündelik hayatlarında dinin çok etkili olmadığı görülmüştür. Gençler arasında dürüst, namuslu ve iyi insan olmak dindar olmaktan daha önemli görülmekte ve ahlâk, zaman zaman dinden bağımsız ayrı bir alan gibi algılanmaktadır. Gençler, dürüstlük, namusluluk, güvenilirlik, iyi insan olmak gibi manevi ve ahlaki değerlere büyük önem vermektedirler. Öyle ki, bizim çalışmamızda da gözlemlendiği üzere, gençlerin nazarında ahlâklılık dine bağlı olmaktan daha öncelikli hale gelebilmektedir. Hayatında dini önceleyenlerin dahi, ahlâki sapmalar karşısında sert tepkiler gösterdikleri tespit edilmiştir. Böylece bir kısım ahlâki değerler, toplum genelini ilgilendirdiği için bireysel sınırların ötesine geçerken, bazı dini değerlerin daha bireysel ve öznel düzeyde kabul gördüğü dikkati çekmektedir.

Otorite, benzeri işlevlere sahip değişik figürlerle, insan hayatının doğumdan-ölüme bütün alanlarında etkili olan bir olgudur. Ailede anne baba otoritesiyle başlayan süreç, okulda öğretmen, iş hayatında yönetici ve siyasi alanda devlet otoritesiyle devam eder. Tüm bunların üstünde de mutlak otorite olarak adlandırdığımız Tanrı otoritesiyle hayatı ve ötesini kuşatacak bir nitelik arz eder.

Kavramın psikoloji, sosyoloji, felsefe, siyaset, hukuk, eğitim ve din gibi birçok alanla irtibatlı olması net bir tanım yapmayı zorlaştırmakla birlikte, genel olarak siyasi teoride yer alan “tâbi olunması ve boyun eğilmesi gereken emirler düzenleme ve ilan etme hak ve yetkisi” olarak tanımlanır. Güçle yakından ilişkili bir kavram olmakla beraber, bahsi geçen cebir /icbar anlamındaki güç değil meşruiyetle donatılmış bir güçtür.

Otorite, hem karmaşık hem de tartışmalı bir olgudur. Bireysel hak ve özgürlüklerin genişlediği, müsamahakâr ve hoşgörülü sosyal ahlâkın geliştiği modern toplumlarda, otorite kimilerince modası geçmiş, gereksiz ve baskıcı olarak görülmeye başlanmıştır. Buna mukabil bu olumsuz yaklaşımlar, otorite savunucularını onu yeniden gündeme getirme noktasında karşı bir harekete sevk etmiştir. Onlara göre, evde, okulda, iş yerinde ve yönetimde otoritenin erozyona uğraması, düzensizlik, istikrarsızlık ve sosyal çözülme tehlikesini de beraberinde getirebilir.

Otoritenin üniversite öğrencileri üzerinden analiz edilmeye çalışıldığı bu araştırmada, gençlerin bu olguyu daha çok siyaset teorisindeki şekliyle tanımladıkları ve literatürde yer alan güç, iktidar, hiyerarşi ve meşruiyet gibi kavramlarla birlikte ele aldıkları görülmüştür.

Otoritenin çok katmanlı bir olgu olduğu, gençler tarafından da kabul edilmiş ve anne -baba, öğretmen/hoca, patron/yönetici ve devlet önemli otorite figürleri olarak kabul görmüştür. Gençler, dini inanç, düşünce ve davranışlarını yönlendirmesi bağlamında önceliği Kur’an ve sünnete vermişlerdir. Diğer birey ve kurumların otoritesini ise bu iki kaynağa uygunlukları bağlamında değerlendirmişlerdir. Din algısıyla otorite algısı arasındaki ilişkiye gelince, dini yaşantının ya da dindarlık düzeyinin otorite algısını etkilediği ve mutlak otoriteye itaati benimseyen ve hayatını dinin emir ve yasalarına göre düzenleyen bireylerin, diğer otorite alanlarını daha kolay kabul edebildiğine yönelik bir tespite varamadık. Çok dindar olduğunu, hayatının tüm alanlarında dini referans aldığını söyleyenler bile, ailede, okulda ve iş yerindeki otoriteye temkinli/tepkili yaklaşabilmektedir. Araştırma esnasında gençlerin din algılarının doğrudan otorite algılarını etkilemediği tespit edilmiştir.

Introduction

Subject, Objective and Methods

This study aims to reveal the religious and authority-related attitudes and behaviors of “young university students” who constitute a significant part of the total population. Efforts were made to analyze the topic through a sample consisting of youngsters studying at different university departments.

Young university students are those who constitute the age group of 18-24 years (which may reach 30 years with master's and doctorate programs), who receive education at the last stage of formal education, who like to research and question, who therefore have a scientific mentality, who have a specific youth culture, and who will be the social leaders.

University education as well as the time spent for that purpose is critical for the students. Youngsters undergo the period of gaining an identity and shaping their personality permanently. Similarly, this period is significant for the young people to perceive the natural, economic, social and cultural environment, and for the values to be formed and changed.

Researches indicate that the young people who are the values for all societies are the most important element of the development potential. Youth means "future" for both the young people and the society. While setting the dreams and targets regarding their own future, the society considers the youth as the guarantor of its continuation. Therefore, youth-related researches are particularly important on the personal and social scale.

The general purpose of this research is to examine the thoughts and behaviors of university students in terms of authority and religion as well as to contribute to the youth researches. This study is based on the following question: "Is there a relationship between the authority-related perceptions of university students and their religious attitudes and behaviors?" In accordance with this question, the following were also examined: How are youngsters' religious perceptions in terms of beliefs, prayers and social life? What do they understand from the concept of authority? What do they accept as the authority in their social lives? What or who do they see as the authority in their religious lives?

As a theoretical action, document scanning method was used, while the interview method, a qualitative research technique, was utilized in the practical parts of the study. This study is limited with the sample group that joined the interviews in the light of the adopted theoretical descriptions and approaches. The pandemic during which this study was authored also prevented the authors from accessing certain resources.

1. Authority from Conceptual, Historical and Theoretical Perspectives

This study has two main parameters: authority and religion. In terms of the impact on the religious authority, no conceptual and theoretical discussion was deemed necessary as it was considered as the independent variable, and the theoretical frame was presented through the concept of authority. Accordingly, after making the general description of authority, the reflections in different social types were included as authority was a social concept. Then, the theoretical

approaches regarding the topic were examined. The theoretical frame was detailed with the data from the relevant field.

The concept of authority is lexically associated with the concept of power, order and capacity and defined as “making someone do something, banning, the right or power to make somebody obey, power, representation of power, administrative or political power, and a successful person who got accepted thanks to their works”¹. In the political theory as one of the fields where the concept is used the most, the concept is used to mean “making binding decisions for somebody, or power to persuade or force people to follow these decisions”.²

Authority is a broad social term covering many fields including family, education, economy, politics and law, and therefore it is challenging to make a clear definition that can be accepted by all experts. One of the reasons for this challenge is that the concept of “authority” as well as the terms of “author” (those who assign a right, create or produce), “authentic” (original, correct, suiting the initial form), “authoritative” (based on authority, something that comes from an authority-based source) and “authorize” (leaving/transferring a certain power to somebody else) with the same roots have a long and complicated history that are specific to their periods and socio-cultural conditions of their periods. However, despite all the complicatedness, “dictating a type of claim specific to a certain behavior or belief to others or rejecting such a claim” while using this series of terms. Accordingly, certain belief-related principles/testaments, doctrines, thoughts and divine texts include authority to a certain degree. Moreover, regulating instruments and actions such as constitutional law, law, adjudications and orders, which aim to give an order to human life, contain authority to varying degrees. Therefore, authority has a variety of meanings that can be associated with different sections such as parents, teachers, specialists, intellectuals, judges, officers, law-makers, governmental officers, and religious people.³

Authority is a relationship that takes place between the practitioner of the authority and the addressee, and it is therefore a sociological phenomenon rather than a psychological one. To define authority correctly, the relevant and irrelevant phenomena should be distinguished: Authority is present anywhere with movements, changes and actions. Authority belongs to the changer, rather than the changed. Authority is essentially active, rather than being passive. In other words, authority is a free and conscious agent. The authoritarian performance is separated from other performances in that it is not resisted by its addressee. The fall of somebody that I push through a window is not related to my authority. However,

¹ See. TDK, “Otorite” (Date Accessed: 21.06.2020); Websters, “Authority” (Date Accessed: 21.06.2010).

² Hüseyin Bal, “Siyaset Teorisinde Otorite Kavramı”, *Turkish Studies International Periodical For the Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic*, 9/2 (2014), 247.

³ Bal, “Siyaset Teorisinde Otorite Kavramı”, 249.

when somebody jumps from a window because I order so, that means "I have an authority over that person".⁴

Based on the historical background and different social types, the perception of authority in traditional and modern societies as well as the sources on which the legitimacy of authority is based vary. Authority is one of the main figures of the social order shaped with the expectation of obeying. The source of authority in the traditional societies is present within the divine power and traditional orders exceeding the individualism. The divine or holy authority necessitates absolute obeying with no probability to act otherwise. In other words, human reaction or personal assessment is not possible toward this authority. Divinity-based authority is the indisputable determinant of the social and politic concepts and actions, just like the church and clergy seen as the absolute authority in the Europe of the Medieval Age. As human reaction is impossible toward divinity, people maintain a passive state.

Gradually turning into an active subject became possible as the divine authority was replaced by the rationalist and compromising authority. The ideology of Enlightenment that fought against all sorts of religious authorities distorted the authority-based grounds of the Medieval Age. Therefore, the authority of the Medieval age was replaced by the rationalist and compromising authority that focused on human mind. This authority was seen as the complementary element of modernity as its legitimacy was based on what was human. In terms of the traditional or divine authority, human reactions are obligatorily possible, and all human actions including the social ones should be organized based on the rationalism defining the people. However, whether this organization saved people from passiveness or resulted in a definition of authority that liberalized people is a topic to examine because most of the criticisms regarding modernity stress that modernity does not make people active subjects, that it instead killed or commodified people or made them more passive puppets.⁵

The definition of authority that arises from the ideology of enlightenment eradicated the traditions and paved the way for the intellectual authority, and it changed the meaning of authority and assigned a broader context to the concept. The new perception of authority matched the concepts of freedom, order and advancement predicted by liberalism. The capitalist system shaped the political structures that would confirm its own legitimacy, the relationships between employers and employee, and relevant field of values. Therefore, as reflected by Antonio Gramsci through the concept of hegemony, the classes within capitalist organization had the chance of presenting their interests as the universal ones in an ideal form.

⁴ Alexandre Kojève, *Otorite Kavramı*, trans. Murat Erşen (Istanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 2007), 13-14.

⁵ Ali Esgin, "Otoritenin Sosyolojisi: Otoriteye İtaatin ya da Otorite Bağımlılığının Sosyolojik Anlamları", *Sosyologca*, 5 (2013), 107-109.

Modernity enlarged the shrunk or even terminated personalities. The authority that is assigned a legitimate form through intelligence is a significant factor in enlarging the limits of a person. However, dictating a capitalist hegemony to the enlarged person paved the way for the eradication of the people or keeping people in iron cages as noted by Weber, to the degree that the authority was legitimized. These people got into the control of the new authorities at least on the cognitive scale. The concept of the consumption society which is one of the popular topics of the present times provides an example to how people direct their consciousness to an ideology that legalizes consumption through an rationalist and compromising authority or hegemony.

The instruments of legitimacy that paves the way for authority are constantly refreshed in a manner targeting the ideological dominance, and people legitimize this dominance in different forms based on their own interests, which makes the process of assigning a meaning to authority more challenging than before. The legitimacy-related sources of voluntariness that shape the authority patterns or personal life perceptions vary in the modern day. Authority is mostly the rulership itself. At the same time, dominant classes are the media and congregations. Authority reflects everything within which our beliefs, interests, fears, embarrassments, customs, facebook/twitter/instagram culture, addictions, and selfishness are legitimized.⁶

Gerard Mendel, a French sociologist who examines authority along with modernity, reviews the concept separately or in five sections that indirectly follow one another: Mendel calls the period which starts from the aristocracy of Cleisthenes in the Ancient Greece, according to him, as "authority and first modernity". With the era of the Republic of Rome where the secular understanding emerged, the "second authority" begins. Moreover, the "third authority" starts with the period when St. Augustinus authored the inner world of people in Confessions (4th century), and the "fourth authority" period begins with the Renaissance when reactions emerged. According to Mendel, the "fifth and last authority" was experienced with the collapsed idealism and rapidly-developing capitalism after the First World War in the 21st century.⁷

Theoretical discussions regarding the authority were assessed within the concept of rulership and reviewed with two different approaches: conflicting and adaptive. In the adaptive approach, it was accepted that the society is a structure which is integrated within a system and consists of balanced and consistent elements, and that the authority is an element that ensures the adaptation and enables the continuity and functional integration of the system to occur. Regarding the conflicting approach, the fact that organization is based on oppression and forcing in a society that always undergoes changes and controversies/conflicts was

⁶ Esgin, "Otoritenin Sosyolojisi", 110-111.

⁷ Gérard Mendel, *Bir Otorite Tarihi Süreklilikler ve Değişiklikler* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005), 125-187.

highlighted, and the force and oppression of the administrators on the administrated was explained in detail. In such an approach, authority is regarded as an instrument of oppression.⁸

The broadest theoretical explanation in this regard was made by Kojève who examines the concept of authority under four, irreducible titles that are simple/pure/primary. The first type is the “*paternal authority*”, explained with the authority of the elderly on youngsters or the authority of the traditions and traditionalists, and the authority of a dead person thanks to his/her testament. According to Kojève, the source of paternal authority is the “reason”, i.e. obeying toward the subject who a person owes his/her life to. The philosophical theory corresponding to this type is Scholastic philosophy. The second type is “*the authority of a master over his/her slave*”. Kojève mentioned the variations of this type as the authority of the noble over the non-noble class, authority of the soldiers over the civilians, authority of the male over the female, and authority of the winner over the defeated. The source of this authority type is “risk”. This authority is fed by the inability to take the risk about what to do after rejecting the master and explained by the philosophy of Hegel. The third type of authority is the “*authority of the Leader*” the source of which is drafts/foresights. Fed by the power of knowing or determining what to do or what will happen beforehand, which authority is explained by the philosophy of Aristoteles. The fourth type of authority is the “*authority of the Judge*” the source of which is the deep respect from people. Kojève explained this type of authority with the examples such as the authority of the referee, authority of the supervisor, authority of the confessor, and authority of the fair/honest people, with the source of explanations being the philosophy of Plato.⁹ Stating that witnessing the pure forms of these authority types in the real life is impossible and that the concrete forms of the authority are the combined forms of these four types, Kojève mentions that these authority types may take place in religious or political lives. Furthermore, he believes that the religious field is present with the authority over relationships and that the political field is present with the authority of the government.¹⁰

The obeying-related experiences of Stanley Milgram that are based on socio-psychology contain interesting theoretical points for understanding the nature and socio-cultural dimensions of authority. Aiming to measure the situational adaptation behavior, these experiments provide original theoretical information regarding the authority. While experiments aim to measure the level of obeying to the authority, they also target finding clear answers to certain questions such as what is authority and who are responsible for authority. Milgram’s experiments are

⁸ Esat Çam, *Siyaset Bilimine Giriş* (Istanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1984), 86-87; Salih Arslan, “Yönetim Sürecinde Otorite Kullanımı ve Ortaya Çıkan Sorunların Değerlendirilmesi: Eleştirel Bir Yaklaşım”, *Optimum Ekonomi ve Yönetim Bilimleri Dergisi*, 5/1(2018), 3-4.

⁹ Kojève, *Otorite Kavramı*, 21-35; Arslan, “Yönetim Sürecinde Otorite Kullanımı”, 4.

¹⁰ Kojève, *Otorite Kavramı*, 57.

important for their results even if they resulted in methodological discussions. The results regarding the authority can be summarized as follows: Authority is a contextual concept that arises from people's social power rather than their personality. In other words, authority of a person in a certain topic does not mean that the same person will have authority in other topics. Milgram lists the cases of authority as follows: 1) Cases where people are identified with authority 2) Cases where objects or symbols (like a uniform) ensure the acceptance of a person's authority 3) Cases where an objecting authority is not present 4) Cases with no clear contradictions.¹¹

Another figure that should be mentioned within the theoretical frame of authority is J. B. Bocheński who aims to explain the concept of authority based on his logical analysis. Bocheński sociologically examines the concept of authority as a relationship that arises from the association of authority figure, the people addressed by the authority, and the authority field.¹² Based on the idea "authority field is a class consisting of suggestions or orders", Bocheński presented two types of authority: The first is the "informational/epistemic authority", while the second is the "authority of the ordering figure/deontic authority". The difference between them is explained by him as follows:

"One of them is the authority of the one that knows, while the other belongs to the one that orders. Epistemic authority is the authority of the person that knows more than the subject. For instance, the authority of teachers over students is the epistemic authority. It is the authority of the expert. However, deontic authority does not belong to the one that knows better. It belongs to a supervisor, chef, commander or administrator. It should be known that a single person can possess both authorities for the same subject in the same field... A deontic authority also possessing the epistemic authority at the same time in the same field is something desired."¹³

Bocheński's another point regarding the traits of authority is that "one cannot be the authority over another one in all fields". The authority spreading over all fields is called "*the absolute authority*" and according to Bocheński, no human authority can possess the absolute authority. The authority that requires unconditional obeying is solely the authority of Tanrı, and such an authority being associated with a person or group means these people or groups are assigned a divine title.¹⁴

¹¹ See. Ülker Yükselbaba, "Milgram Deneyi: Otorite Ve İtaate Dair", *İÜHMC* 75/1, (2017), 227-270; Bal, "Siyaset Teorisinde Otorite Kavramı", 253.

¹² J.M. Bocheński, *Otorite Nedir? Otorite Mantığına Giriş*, trans. Hilal Görgün (Istanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2015), 25-30.

¹³ Bocheński, *Otorite Nedir?*, 43-47.

¹⁴ Bocheński, *Otorite Nedir?*, 37-38.

2. Applied Research

This study was conducted as a qualitative research that enabled the researchers to be more flexible, that helped us review the topic from the perspectives of the relevant people, and that enabled us to reveal the social structures and processes that formed the personal perceptions.¹⁵

The sample was formed using the maximum variation sampling model, a purposive sampling technique, and researchers' personal and academic contacts, and it consisted of 20 students (ten male and ten female) ¹⁶ who were studying in various departments of the governmental and private universities in Istanbul. As the type of interview, the standardized open-ended interview method "that consisted of items which were meticulously formed and ordered and that was implemented on every interviewed person in the same style and order" was used¹⁷.

The application phase was conducted on April 2020. The interviews were planned to be face-to-face but due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the plan could not be conducted. Therefore, some of the interviews were performed through phone calls, while some were conducted through written mails whenever requested by the participants. Participants' socio-demographic traits consisted of their gender, date of birth, university, department, and grade.¹⁸

Data were presented in two different manners through descriptive analysis. The original form of the data was observed as much as possible, and direct citations were made from the interesting and typical¹⁹ results. Additionally, systematical analyses were performed to achieve certain causal and explanatory results.²⁰ In other words, the aim was to review certain themes, the relationships between these themes, and relevant categories. Based on the concepts/themes in the data, the relevant theoretical knowledge and discussions were analyzed. While presenting the thoughts of participants, emphases were made on the dominant opinion and different ideas. The relevant sections from participants' statements were cited without changes and presented in *italic* form within apostrophes. Results were presented under the main titles of religious authority as a field where religion and authority intersects. The concept of authority was established as the dependent variable, while the religion, gender and department were accepted as the independent variables.

¹⁵ Ali Yıldırım - Hasan Şimşek, *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri* (Ankara: Seçkin Yayıncılık, 2000), 19.

¹⁶ Yıldırım - Şimşek, *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri*, 70.

¹⁷ Interview form is presented in Annex:1.

¹⁸ The table showing their socio-demographic traits is present in Attachment 2.

¹⁹ The information regarding the cited participant are presented in the relevant footnote with certain codes (F for females, M for males) along with students' departments and grades.

²⁰ For more details on descriptive analysis, see. Yıldırım-Şimşek, *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri*, 156-160.

2.1. Religious Perceptions/Beliefs, Praying and Social Life

In parallel to the development of sociological researches, the number of studies aiming to reveal the religious attitudes and behaviors of youngsters is on the rise. As of 2000s, the studies reviewing the relationship between the youth and religion has been increasing significantly.²¹ These researches focused on the belief that our society is generally conservative, and youth was examined as a separate title. In addition to the studies on the relationship between youth and religion, the relationship between the university youth as the target audience of the present study and the religion, which is a particularly specific area, has been examined in many studies in a general form and with the particular sub-topics.²²

The university years which are included in the youth reflect a period when the scientific ideology of youngsters that suggests researching and questioning emerges, when the personality and identity of these young people is shaped, and when the value-related perceptions of youngsters become distinctive. Among these values, the question “what is the place of religion?” is one of the starting points of this study. As can be guessed, this study does not focus on the religious life. Therefore, the beliefs as well as praying and social life were generally questioned without diving into the details, and efforts were made to understand whether religion was a reference in youngsters’ life. Furthermore, participants were asked whether they considered religion as a reference in terms of their beliefs, religiousness levels, prayers and daily lives.

Participants’ thoughts regarding their beliefs can be classified as follows: Most of the participants stated that they believed “without hesitation and doubts”. They explained their beliefs as follows: “I believe but there are points that I question”²³ “I research when I have questions or doubt”²⁴. “I am not a believer, and I have been lately questioning how logical and rational the religious rituals that were taught to me before...”²⁵; “I cannot be considered a believer as I have my doubts”²⁶; “...I do not doubt the existence of the creator but the manner people reflect or dictate the religion is what I

²¹ For more comprehensive studies, see. *Türk gençliği 98 Suskun Kitle Büyüteç Altında* (Ankara: Konrad Adenauer Vakfı, 1999); *Türkiye Gençlik Raporu Gençliğin Özellikleri, Sorunları, Kimlikleri ve Beklentileri* (İstanbul: SEKAM, 2013).

²² For relevant studies, see. Mehmet Bayyığıt, *Gençlik ve Din* (Konya: Yediveren Kitap, 2011); Zeki Arslantürk, *21.Yüzyılda Din Olgusu ve Türk Gençlerinin Dine Karşı Eğilimleri* (Bolu: 1994); Münir Koştas, *Üniversite Öğrencilerinde Dine Bakış* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları 1995); M. Ali Kirman, *Din ve Sekülerleşme Üniversite Gençliği Üzerine Sosyolojik Bir Araştırma*, (Ankara: Karahan Kitabevi, 2005); İnci Erdem Artan, *Üniversite Gençliği Değerleri: Korkular Umutlar* (İstanbul: Tesev Yayınları, 2005); Fatma Odabaşı, *Gençlerde Din ve Sivil İtaatsizlik Üniversite Öğrencileri Üzerine Sosyolojik Bir Araştırma* (İstanbul: Rağbet Yayınları, 2016).

²³ F/Law-1; M/Electrical and Electronic Engineering-2.

²⁴ F/Metallurgy Engineering-1.

²⁵ M/Faculty of Medicine-2.

²⁶ M/Faculty of Law-2.

question..."²⁷. As understood from the statements of these students who said they were not believers, the problem arises from the manner of practicing the religion and the form of religion taught to them, instead of the religion itself. Accordingly, the wrongs and mistakes in Muslims' lives were associated with the religion, which caused many people to keep a distance to the religion, which still is not the only factor because young people who are at a period when they can research and question the most can access the correct information through many ways.

Participants' statements regarding the levels of religiousness indicate that most of them except those who stated that they were not believers considered themselves "slightly religious"; there were two participants who thought they were quite religious, and a couple of participants did not make or objected to such distinctions.

Efforts were made to understand participants' interest toward religious activities through prayers, fasting and praying. Two male and female students stated that they performed five-time prayers regularly. Other than them, most students noted that they did not perform regular prayers; instead, they performed particular prayers, while a couple of them never did so. Regarding the action of fasting, all of the students who said they were believers, except those who could not fast due to medical issue, fasted since their childhood. The statement by a participant "...I only fast just because of the social pressure"²⁸ catches attention. It is safe to state that almost all of the students in the study pray as a habit. Some of them explained the concept of praying "*statement of gratitude*"²⁹, "*passive praying*"³⁰ and "*online communication form with God*"³¹.

What is more, efforts were made to understand their perceptions of the social religious dimension in terms of whether they considered religion as a reference in the natural flow of the daily life including the form of dressing, consumption, and relationships with one another and animals. Four students, two of whom were studying theology, noted that they prioritized the religious suitability of the aforementioned daily life concepts and actions. Some of the other participants considered ethical rules and religion, while some focused on the concepts of self-esteem and conscience. The general emphasis was made on the point of "*being a good and ethical person*", with some of the students mentioning that "*this point is in harmony with the religion*"³².

²⁷ F/Cinema and Television-2.

²⁸ M/Faculty of Law-2.

²⁹ F/Faculty of Theology-3; F/Metallurgy Engineering-1.

³⁰ F/Cinema and Television-2.

³¹ M/Electrical-Electronic Engineering-2.

³² M/Translation and Interpreting (English)-3.

The researches conducted on the daily life in Turkey indicate an inversely proportional relationship between educational level and religiousness.³³ As the educational level increased, the rates of performing the religious activities and practices decreased because academic knowledge results in an ideological transformation from irrationality to rationality. As can be seen in the Turkish modernization period, education, particularly the university education, has a high secularization potential. There are also other reasons resulting in the aforementioned point. Reflecting religion and science in an opposing manner in the university departments, particularly those offering secular education, examination of religion through a critical and questioning perspective, and modern young people who are mostly liberal and individual can be mentioned as some of the relevant reasons. Moreover, the fact that university education covers the period when people are the least religious (18-35 years) and the decrease toward the religious orientation that arises from the developmental psychological processes can be among these reasons.³⁴ Based on these assessments, researches on the youth indicate that religion has a special place in young people's lives, that most of the young people in Turkey have become secular in terms of their world views, and that this secularization was affected by an ethical approach.³⁵

Youngsters in the present study were believers but they had problems performing their religious practices. Moreover, the impact of religion is not irrelevant; instead, it is present with the ideology of ethics. The interesting point here is the perception of ethics as if it was irrelevant to the religion. However, the fact that there are religious people among those who value the ethical values prevents us from making a comment that these two fields are perceived as irrelevant and independent topics by the young people.

The ethical aspect of youngsters was found in many studies. Behavioral orientations of youngsters, including religion, possess the impact of this ethical idealism. Young people attribute great importance to spiritual and ethical values such as honesty, honor, reliability and being a benevolent person such that morality comes before the devotion to religion in youngsters' eyes, as can be seen in the present study. Results indicated that people, even those who prioritized the religion, gave harsh reactions to ethical deviations. Accordingly, as some ethical

³³ See. M.Taplamacıođlu, "Yaşlara Göre Dinî Hayatın Şiddet ve Kesafeti Üzerine Bir Anket Denemesi", *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 10 (1963), 141-151; Ünver Günay, *Erzurum ve Çevre Köylerinde Dinî Hayat* (İstanbul: Erzurum Kitaplığı, 1999); Celalettin Çelik, *Şehirleşme ve Din* (İstanbul: Çizgi Kitabevi, 2002); Ali Akdoğan, *Sosyal Değişme ve Din: (Trabzon İl Merkezi Örneği)* (İstanbul: Rağbet Yayınları, 2004); *Türkiye'de Dinî Hayat Araştırması* (Ankara: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, 2014).

³⁴ Hayati Hökelekli, "Gençlik ve Din", *Gençlik Din ve Değerler Psikolojisi*, ed. H. Hökelekli (İstanbul: Dem Yayınları, 2006), 9-31; Asum Yapıcı, "Modernleşme-Sekülerleşme Sürecinde Türk Gençliğinin Anlam Dünyasında Dinin Yeri, (Çukurova Üniversitesi Örneği)", *Çukurova Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 9/2 (2009), 7.

³⁵ See. *Türk Gençliği 98 Suskun Kitle Büyüteç Altında*, 43-51.

values concern the general society, certain religious values are accepted on a rather personal and subjective scale while going beyond the personal limits.³⁶

The following can be stated when the religious attitudes and behaviors of young university students are associated with their gender and departments: Female people constitute the majority in terms of having beliefs and performing prayers as seen from the results of the studies on the religious life in Turkey. No clear difference is present in terms of accepting the religions as a reference in their social lives. Regarding the department they are studying, students who are studying positive and western departments such as medicine, law or cinema and television question or criticize the religion more.

2.2. Authority Perceptions/Power, Rulership, Legitimacy and Hierarchy

Authority is the core concept in this study. What students perceived from this concept should be examined to understand their authority-related perceptions. Therefore, students were asked "how they defined authority; what they think of the relationship between the authority and power and oppression, and what or who they accept as the authority".

*"People, institutions, groups or similar that have power to have the last word or decide"*³⁷; *"power, capacity, power of sanction"*³⁸; *"an institution or person that aims to make people or entities be subject to oneself through various power relationship and balances"*³⁹; *"power of ordering"*⁴⁰; *"establishing dominance, power, being capable"*⁴¹; *"people or institutions that set the rules we have to follow"*⁴²; *"a person or group that has a say in a certain field"*⁴³; *"...a person's thoughts and attitudes affecting the others"*⁴⁴. As can be understood from these examples, three definitions of the concept from the relevant literature were presented. The first is the lexical meaning of the concept indicating "ordering/having the last say", while the second indicates "the right/power of talking or acting on behalf of others", and the last one suggests "the competence in a certain topic".⁴⁵ Furthermore, it should be noted that the definition of the concept within the political theory is emphasized more.

³⁶ Erol Güngör, *Değerler Psikolojisi* (Istanbul: Ötüken Neşriyatı, 1998), 77-78; Hayati Hökelekli, "Gençlik ve Din", 16-17.

³⁷ M/Psychological Counseling and Guidance-1.

³⁸ F/Psychology-4.

³⁹ M/Theology-4.

⁴⁰ M/Law-2.

⁴¹ F/Theology-3.

⁴² M/Business-4.

⁴³ F/Social Sciences-Doctoral Student.

⁴⁴ M/Translation and Interpreting (English)-3.

⁴⁵ Bal, "Siyaset Teorisinde Otorite Kavramı", 247.

The concept participants focused on the most while defining authority is “power/rulership”. From a broader perspective, rulership is the power of ordering or enforcing the orders by certain people, groups or institutions as a result of natural, financial and spiritual factors within a certain society.⁴⁶ Rulership may be based on permissions or force; and it may be used through influencing and controlling. Authority is the legal rulership. The political theory separates the rulership into two as the rulership with authority and bare rulership, with the former having a common belief in the authority and the latter having no such belief. Bare rulership can be practiced even by an illegal gang. The difference of the authority rulership becomes clearer at this point. Authority is based on the accepted feeling / responsibility of obeying rather than forcing or manipulation, which is different than the rulership.⁴⁷

Almost all of the participants added the concepts of “...*people or group/institution*” to their definitions, drawing attention to the personal and institutional aspect of the concept. Authority can be used both on the personal and social scale. It can be associated with the people who have personal and subjective capabilities and prestige, or with the people who objectively have official functions in the society. Personal authority arises from recognizing the superiority of a person in a certain field. On the other hand, formal authority occurs by assigning a function or at least reputation to a person, rather than considering the superiority of that person.⁴⁸

The authority definition in the literature and by the young people often refers to the concept of obeying. Obeying is closely associated with the concept authority. It lexically means acting in line with the orders, succumbing and being subject to someone. Although the emphasis that obeying terminates/makes the personality of people more indistinctive catches attention, it was noted that obeying contains a preference where human intelligence and freedom is active rather than a strict submission.⁴⁹ It was understood that the participants accepted the government at the highest level in terms of obeying/submitting. However, rather than voluntary or rational obeying, a form of submitting that arises from the sanctions and is considered to be necessary for ensuring the social order can be mentioned here.

Authority was associated with different fields. Authority is related to the government, ethics and psychology. It is believed to be associated with the government, if the idea that every state assumes the authority and is based on this concept is accepted. Authority is related to the ethics as it helps act in line with the

⁴⁶ İhsan Çapcıoğlu et al., “Max Weber Sosyolojisinde Karizmatik Otorite ve Dini Liderlik”, *TSA*, 14/2 (2010), 52.

⁴⁷ Atilla Yayla, *Siyasi Düşünce Sözlüğü* (Ankara: Adres Yayınları, 2004), 112, 184.

⁴⁸ Galip Türcan, “İslam’da Dinî Otorite”, *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 1/14 (2005), 96.

⁴⁹ Recep Özkan - Bayram Polat, “İtaat Kültürü ve Din”, *ZfWT*, 8/3 (2016), 140.

rules. Forming and protecting an authority is associated with psychology as it requires affecting the people.⁵⁰

Participants mentioned the theoretical and practices aspects of authority with the following concepts and phrases: "... people having a capacity in their own fields"⁵¹, "...people or institutions that have the authority and power to have the last say..."⁵². Examining the concept of authority from two different perspectives as theoretical and practical, Chan helps understand the concept more easily. *From the theoretical perspective, authority* means the expert that is accepted to be more valuable than the others with his/her thoughts and ideas and who is respected and trusted thanks to these traits. Being used more than the theoretical authority, *practical authority* reflects the people who influence the processes and actions of making decision by other people and who can make binding decisions regarding these other people owing to their positions or social statuses.⁵³

Having made a significant contribution to the literature in terms of authority, Friedman performed a similar classification as follows: *an authority* and *in authority*: *In authority* means a person's power of determining the attitudes of others thanks to or via the position or status of that person. On the other hand, *an authority* suggests considering the words and thoughts of a person worth of accepting and respecting. As can be understood from the definitions, the concept *an authority* is related to beliefs and knowledge, while *in authority* suggests the meaning of authority. Despite different names, it should be noted that the separations by Chan and Friedman had similar meanings.⁵⁴

Another separation in the literature is between *de jure* and *de facto authority*. *De jure authority*, which is also called the legal authority, is the type of authority that assumes certain official contracts, principles or the method of assigning an authority, and that determines who will have such a right. Legitimacy is based on procedures in this authority type. *De facto authority*, also called actual authority, is based on being an expert in a certain topic or the respect felt toward personal traits.⁵⁵

From a broader perspective, authority is a form of power; it is an instrument that ensures the impact of a person over the others. However, power and authority

⁵⁰ Kojève, *Otorite Kavramı*, 11.

⁵¹ M/Medicine-2.

⁵² M/PCG-1.

⁵³ Joseph Chan, "Authority", *Encyclopedia of Democratic Thought*, ed. Paul Barry Clarke and Joe Foweraker (London: Routledge, 2001), cited by. Bal, "Siyaset Teorisinde Otorite Kavramı", 249.

⁵⁴ Richard B. Friedman, "On The Concept of Authority In Political Philosophy", *Political Concepts and Political Theories* (USA: Wesview Press, 2000), cited by. Bal, "Siyaset Teorisinde Otorite Kavramı", 249-250.

⁵⁵ Andrew Heywood, *Key Concepts on Politics* (Newyork: Palgrave Mcmillian, 2000), 15-16. When this separation is associated with the typology of Weber to be mentioned below, *de jure authority* indicates the legal authority, while *de facto authority* corresponds to the charismatic authority.

can be separated as the opposite instruments through which obeying and submitting can be ensured. The capacity to affect the behaviors of other people is defined as power, while authority is understood as the manner of enforcing this power through valid and legal ways. The concepts of power and authority which can be separated analytically overlap with one another practically and may be confused. Having a central status particularly in the governmental practices, authority may become the administrative instrument of using fears, threats and violence in cases where voluntary obeying cannot be ensured.⁵⁶

The question "can authority be present in where power and oppression is used?" was directed to the participants to understand how this point which should be considered in understanding the authority better was perceived by the participants. Most of the participants consider this as a natural or even obligatory and answered "yes, it can be." Some of them said "it can be, if obeying is performed in the end"⁵⁷ while one of them mentioned "this is how it is in practice which is not ideal"⁵⁸. Some of the participants said there was no place for power and oppression in the authority with the following statements: "no, this is intimidating by scaring"⁵⁹, "oppression and power only results in slavery"⁶⁰, "authority cannot be present where there is oppression and power, this would be a fake authority, rather than a real one"⁶¹, "no, this would only be tyranny"⁶². Some participants indicated that the use of power would result in dictatorship if legal limits are exceeded: "...If authority is established with oppression and power, it would turn into dictatorship..."⁶³; "...we can mention about authority in places where oppression and power is used, as long as legal limits and concepts are kept in mind. Otherwise, the situation turns into dictatorship rather than authority"⁶⁴. As can be seen, participants have different approaches in this topic.

The topic was discussed in the relevant literature, and different perspectives were displayed. Kojave claims that power and authority cannot co-exist as they are the opposite concepts,⁶⁵ and Mendel, who disagrees with this point, suggests that authority includes the use of power.⁶⁶ Arendt stresses that authority is a concept that cannot be associated with the use of power and violence that prohibits applying to external oppressive instruments. Furthermore, authority goes bankrupt in places where oppression or violence is present. On the other hand, Arendt believes that authority does not resemble to the persuasion based on the grounds

⁵⁶ A. Heywood, *Siyaset Teorisine Giriş*, trans. Hızır Murat Köse (İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2014), 158-159.

⁵⁷ F/Metallurgical and Materials Engineering-1; F/Psychology-4.

⁵⁸ M/Economics-2.

⁵⁹ F/Political Science and International Relations-2.

⁶⁰ F/Medicine-5.

⁶¹ M/Institute of Science-Master's Program.

⁶² M/Translation and Interpreting (English)-3.

⁶³ F/Architecture-4.

⁶⁴ F/Theology-3.

⁶⁵ Kojève, *Otorite Kavramı*, 16.

⁶⁶ Gérard Mendel, *Bir Otorite Tarihi*, trans. Işık Ergüden (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005), 32.

where the equality is accepted. Accordingly, the authority is suspended if there are any efforts to persuade because the authority relationship between the one that orders and that obeys is based on neither a common mind nor the power of the one that orders. What they have in common is the hierarchy itself that is considered right and legit solely by both sides and that sets pre-determined fixed positions for both sides. Thus, according to Arendt, the greatest indicator of authority is that the obeying people accept the decision without questioning or without the persuasive efforts.⁶⁷

Max Weber, one of the figures whose thoughts are often consulted in regard to the concept of authority, holds the concepts of authority from the phenomenon of power. According to the German philosopher, power represents “the probability for actors to perform what they wish in case of a resistance regardless of the grounds roots of these actors are based on within a social relationships.”⁶⁸ Authority, on the other hand, means an order assigning the duty of obeying to others based on the principle of legitimacy. Authority emerges in places where people obey their administrators voluntarily. If they have difficulties obeying, the reason is that the administrators are not legitimate.⁶⁹ As understood from these, the legitimacy is based on respect and agreement rather than the use of authority. Accordingly, authority is the legitimized form of the right to order.⁷⁰

A participant touches upon the concept of legitimacy and defined authority as follows: “Establishing dominance, imposing sanction, using power, being capable and legitimizing this capacity”⁷¹. Legitimacy is basing the attitudes, relationships and claims on socially-acceptable legal, rational, obligatory, ethical, reasonable and natural grounds. This means thinking, acting and being judged according to certain laws. Legitimacy is accepted as the zone of influence utilized by the political rulership. A rulership cannot become legit unless informing the society about which principles it uses to manage the society or what it uses as the referential source, and unless being approved by the society. Legitimacy is also determining the acceptable criteria of political actions and beliefs.⁷²

Max Weber associated and even identified authority with legitimacy. According to him, people will not obey those whose authority is not legit for them. Defining authority based on the criterion of legitimacy, Weber believes authority has three pure forms. These are traditional, charismatic and legal authorities. The three pure forms of authority constitute the source of sovereignty, and they define

⁶⁷ Hannah Arendt, *Geçmişle Gelecek Arasında*, trans. Bahadır Sina Şener (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1996), 129; Esgin, “Otoritenin Sosyolojisi”, 95.

⁶⁸ Max Weber, *Bürokrasi ve Otorite* (Ankara: Adres Yayınları, 2008), 28.

⁶⁹ Weber, *Bürokrasi ve Otorite*, 29-33.

⁷⁰ Arendt, *Geçmişle Gelecek Arasında*, 129.

⁷¹ F/Theology-3.

⁷² Halis Çetin, “Siyasetin Evrensel Sorunu İktidarın Meşruiyeti-Meşruiyetin İktidarı”, *Ankara Üniversitesi SBF Dergisi* 58/3 (2003), 67.

the trait of the authority between the ordering party and obeying party. Traditional authority is the authority of the eternal past. It is based on the traditions where the habits of adopting and accepting the old concepts and actions, which are too old to be remembered, are sanctified. People who are subject to the traditions adopted the traditional authority and therefore they recognized the responsibility of obeying through traditional manners rather than official procedures. The charismatic authority is based on the extraordinary and given personality; i.e. the authority based on the devotion and trust felt toward a person or the belief in the heroism or other traits of that person. This authority is limited with people's belief in a charismatic leader. Legal authority depends on the functional power based on the validity of laws and rational rules. In this case, what should be followed is an order that is set by the laws and that is not personal. The power of authority arises from the legitimacy of laws.⁷³

Three models of Weber which are related to authority and the legitimate grounds of authority are criticized from certain perspectives. The first is the topic of how much these three pure authorities can be separated from one another. Particularly the claim of adopting and following the legal authority form unconditionally and voluntarily may lose its validity just like the Nazi laws about eradicating Jews or Stalin's law that children aged 12 could be killed. In this case, the main element that determines the validity of the authority and that makes authority a requirement is the legitimacy of authority arising from historical and cultural conditions rather than the laws. What makes authority rational, legitimate or irrational is the historical and cultural conditions that assign the meaning of understanding to the concept. This point does not neglect the condition of legitimacy within the definition of authority; instead, it makes the sources and forms of legitimacy more understandable. To sum up, the concept of authority corresponds to voluntarily following a power whose legitimacy is accepted and that represents a power followed without a need for oppression and persuasion. Sociological context requires assessing the reasons for authority for the ordering and obeying party within the historical and cultural conditions.⁷⁴

Making a similar differentiation, Leslie Lipson examines the sources of authority under three titles as the authority of God, authority of power and authority of paternal lineage. The concept "authority of paternal lineage" resembles to the traditional authority of Weber. The traditional and paternal authority is based on the principle of following the people who are thought to be superior. God's authority corresponds to the *paternal authority* reflected by Kojavé. Authority of power is the dominance of the selective minority over the majority. This type

⁷³ Max Weber, *Sosyoloji Yazıları*, trans. Taha Parla (Istanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı Yayınları, 1986), 81; Richard Sennett, *Otorite*, trans. Kamil Durand (Istanbul: Ayrintı Yayınları, 1992), 28; Esgin, "Otoritenin Sosyolojisi", 96.

⁷⁴ Mendel, *Bir Otorite Tarihi*, 40; Esgin, "Otoritenin Sosyolojisi", 96-97.

may correspond to the rational, legal authority of Weber because enacting a law and setting rules makes this section more powerful.⁷⁵

Another point stressed by the participants is that an authority is needed to “control the social order and create trust”⁷⁶ and “have regularly-progressing actions and processes”⁷⁷. Many interpreters within the sociological theory accept that authority is one of the key phenomena establishing the social area. The main reason behind this point is the necessity of authority to organize the obligatory aspect of co-existence. A society is an intricate structure that enables co-existence despite all complications, that organizes the behaviors of members, and that paves the way for cultural, financial and political effects. Living in a social area is possible by accepting and adopting the authority that represents the social organization.

Another concept related to authority is “hierarchy”, defined by certain participants as follows: “...I can state that authority is the product of a social stratification and represents a hierarchical state.”⁷⁸, “every people and institution that we see as the lower and upper system will be a part of authority...”⁷⁹ Authority becomes a reality where one person establishes dominance over the other, i.e. when the principle of equality is discussed. As noted by Mendel, “it is present in the relationship of ordering and submitting that assumes sociality”.⁸⁰ Examining the concept of authority in line with the class, Ralf Dahrendorf believes that a class can establish an authority in a specific area while other areas can accept the authority of other classes; and that certain classes are subject to the authority of administrators and they may not establish their own authorities. Furthermore, he mentions about the independent workers who accept no authority or establish one over the other classes. Dahrendorf focuses on the point that a class is determined by the degree of authority belonging to a group.⁸¹

2.3. Authority Everywhere

Authority has a limited meaning associated with an accepted power, powerful one or the one that has the power. Such an approach may result in deficiencies in the sociological assessment of the concept because authority covers a variety of contexts and is everywhere. A society is the field of interactions where the authorities are connected with hierarchical ties. Therefore, authority should be examined within a broad context ranging from parent-children relationships,

⁷⁵ Leslie Lipson, *Siyasetin Temel Sorunları*, trans. Fügen Yavuz (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 2005), 200-206.

⁷⁶ F/Psychology-4.

⁷⁷ M/Electrical-Electronic Engineering-2.

⁷⁸ F/Social Sciences-Doctoral Student.

⁷⁹ F/Cinema-Television-2.

⁸⁰ Mendel, *Sosyo-Psikanaliz Açından Otorite*, trans. Hüseyin Portal (Istanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 2005), 23.

⁸¹ Bal, “Siyaset Teorisinde Otorite Kavramı”, 253.

understanding the factors affecting the process of voting or results of the relationship between the instructors and students or employers and employee to describing the behaviors of the people who are conditioned to submit unconditionally. However, in the authority-related comments, this aspect of authority was generally neglected and often considered along with the power or as having the power.⁸²

The question “what do you accept as the authority in your family, school, business and political field?” was directed to the participants to understand whether they understood authority as a broad social phenomenon. Answers indicated that most of the participants accepted the authorities of their parents in their families, teachers in their schools, employers in their workplaces, and the government in the political field. Among these authorities, government is accepted as the obligatory field of authority associated with oppression, power and sanction, while the others were seen as the authority forms shaped based on “love, respect, trust, experience”. “...Yes, the topic of government. I think I am under the authority of the government the most, which is also the case for you. The greatest reason for this authority is that the governmental authority imposes sanctions, which is different than the other authority forms...”⁸³ “The only authority that I accept now is the administrative authority of the government. Other than that, the other forms cover the co-existence based on mutual respect.”⁸⁴ One participant stated: “I think my mentalist does not suit authority or a power. I mean, I do not want to be controlled by orders, I am rather free and liberal... Even if we do not consider the governmental authority as legit (indicating the authority of the rulership), we still have to accept the governmental authority due to the sanctions...”⁸⁵ Only one participant rejected the authority of the aforementioned: “I do not accept any system or person as an authority because I do not think that any person or system can be flawless and correct, thus I reject their authority. If an authority has to be accepted, everybody should regard themselves as the authority”⁸⁶. Another participant touched upon the different aspect of the topic: “My main referential source is religion so my main authorities are Quran and sunnah. All these institutions that you mentioned are an authority by themselves, and as I am a person within these institutions, I am subject to the power relationships in this regard. All of them are esteemed for me but the authority of Quran and sunnah is superior. When these authorities conflict with what I consider as the main authority, I choose the latter.”⁸⁷.

As seen from the approaches of the participants, there are different attitudes regarding the authorities of the social life. People expect authorities to not conflict with their own areas of acceptance or to ask things that do not exceed these areas.

⁸² Esgin, “Otoritenin Sosyolojisi”, 93; Arendt, *Geçmişle Gelecek Arasında*, 129.

⁸³ F/Law-1.

⁸⁴ F/Medicine-5.

⁸⁵ M/Economics-2.

⁸⁶ F/Psychology-4.

⁸⁷ M/Theology-4.

The elements that are effective in meeting these demands include the belief in what is reasonable, the awareness of responsibilities, fears, habits and the desire of achieving benefits for the self. What will be more effective depends on the relationship between the authority and addressee of the authority. In certain cases, authority is unconditionally obeyed, partially accepted, or totally rejected. Rejection of the authority becomes a reality when the administrators are not competent enough and do not bear the relevant traits. In this case, administrative distortions as well as secondary authorities may emerge. The way of correcting these distortions is to assign expert, educated, experienced, suitable and deserving people to the administrative offices.⁸⁸

Results indicate that young people do not have a problem with the *epistemic authority* examined within the theoretical frame, and that they consider the authorities of parents, instructors and employers as natural with regard to the principles of co-existence, knowledge and respect to experience. Furthermore, participants approach to the *deontic authority* in a hesitating and critical manner, and they obligatorily and involuntarily accept the governmental authority considering the punishments and sanctions.

No significant relationship was found between the religiousness levels and departments of participants, and their perception of authority. However, the differences between the approaches of female and male students caught attention in terms of power/oppression and authority. Moreover, female students were more reactant or even emotional toward the topic; while men were more realist and indicated the reality even if they did not accept it as ideal.

2.4. Religious Authority

When combined with a term, the concept of authority (religious authority, political authority etc.) indicates the power on a personal, class-based and institutional scale, binding aspects or the dominant structure. The main field which is closely related to authority is religion. Religious authority can be defined as follows: “*The conceptual, personal and institutional power and authority that is met with an absolute submission in defining and understanding the main religious elements.*” The field where the religious authority is effective and valid includes the beliefs, prayers and ethical claims that are prioritized in the religious definitions, that cannot be neglected, and that are declared as dogma.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Arslan, “Yönetim Sürecinde Otorite Kullanımı ve Ortaya Çıkan Sorunların Değerlendirilmesi: Eleştirel Bir Yaklaşım”, 9.

⁸⁹ Galip Türcan, “İslam’da Dinî Otorite”, *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 1/14 (2005), 98.

First, the differentiation between “religion’s authority” and “religious authority” should be made clear. İsmail Kara explains this differentiation from the Islamic perspective as follows:

The concept of “religion’s authority” indicates the authority of the religion, divine verses, sunnah, Allah Almighty as the preacher of the religion, and the Prophet . “Religious authority”, on the other hand, reflects the authority of religious sciences, religious wisdom, logic in the accumulation of knowledge and wisdom, conscience, scholars and sheikhs who are the representative of manners and methods, and their works and ideologies.⁹⁰

As can be understood from the aforementioned differentiation, religious authority receives the right to ask for doing or not doing an action directly from the religion or religious understanding. An authority receiving its power from the religion means that its legality and legitimacy is based on religious texts. The source of religious authority is metaphysical, rather than being social and physical. In fact, the devotion to the charismatic authority is based on this authority’s commitment to the metaphysical source. The authority arising from the metaphysical field are regarded legit by people.⁹¹

Considering the religious authority as a form of divine authority, Kojève makes the differentiation between human and divine authority as follows:

“What is divine is everything that has an authority over me without any possibility for me to act contrary. In other words, an adverse reaction to divinity is impossible. However, in case of (human) authoritarian actions, the contrary may be the case, meaning reactions are possible but voluntary and conscious rejection is present. What is divine is eternal, and divine actions and rules are practiced without the danger and risk of losing. Human authority can receive a reaction at any moment, which may nullify it.”⁹²

The relationship between religion and authority and the view of religions in general and Islam in particular toward authority is a separate topic of review and thus out of the scope of the present study.⁹³ Furthermore, the following can also be stated: As known to all, religions based on the divine belief generally associate the authority with the God that is accepted to be the highest authority. Accordingly, from the perspective of Islam, the absolute authority belongs to Allah, and validity of the structures and powers regarding the mortal life is assessed in terms of suitability to the main frame established in Quran. For Islam, if a social or political system suits the limits and rules set by Allah, it is considered legit; however, in the

⁹⁰ İsmail Kara, “İslâm’da Ruhbanlık Yoktur” Söylemi Etrafında Dînî Otorite ve Ulemâ Üzerine Birkaç Not”, *M.Ü. İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 21 (2001/2), 1.

⁹¹ Hamid Dabaşı, *İslam’da Otorite* (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 1995), 65; Erkan Yar, “Dinsel Otoritenin Yapısı”, *Fırat Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 8 (2003), 2.

⁹² Kojève, *Otorite Kavramı*, 18-19.

⁹³ For more details on the topic, see. *Milel ve Nihal* 14/1 (2017).

contrary case, this system is considered being on the limit and usurping the power.⁹⁴

All ideologies, thoughts and political structures need certain authorities to maintain their continuation. Results indicate that certain people are considered as authority figures in the Islamic history. Such an order can be seen for the authority in Muslim societies: The undisputable and most important authority is the Prophet Muhammad, followed by the sahabah members including four caliphs according to believers. After the sahabah, certain figures are accepted as imam and leader by the ummah upon the emergence of sects.⁹⁵

From a theoretical perspective, Quran and sunnah only recognize the religious authority of the Prophet on a personal and institutional scale. Accordingly, no person, group or institution cannot claim an authority that can be verified through religious works. There may be people or institutions that should be obeyed in various fields of the social life. However, they cannot claim being a religious authority and state that they are innocent and faultless.⁹⁶

But how is the situation from a practical perspective? What or whom do the youngsters consider and prioritize as a religious authority in their religious lives? To understand these questions, we asked the following question: "After Quran and sunnah, what or who do you accept as the authority to direct your religious beliefs, prayers, thoughts and attitudes?" After classifying the answers, we realized that six participants said they only considered Quran and sunnah as the religious authority, although we said "after Quran and sunnah" in the question. Some of the statements are as follows: "I do not follow any cults, sheikhs or hodjas to direct my religious life; I only follow Quran and sunnah. I believe Quran and sunnah are sufficient."⁹⁷ "I believe Quran and sunnah are quite clear so I do not consider anything as an authority other than these two."⁹⁸ One of the participants who seems deist based on the belief-related statements answered the question as follows: "As God is the only one that I can ask help from, God is my only authority". While some participants rejected it totally, seven people said they considered the Presidency of Religious Affairs as a religious authority as it is institutional and can provide answers to daily questions. Certain participants accepted the four caliphs and sect imams as an authority, and they mentioned "Sufism figures",⁹⁹ and even certain names such as "Yunus Emre, Mawlana and Pir Sultan Abdal"¹⁰⁰. All participants were negative toward religious

94 Şinasi Gündüz, "Otoritenin Teolojik Meşruiyeti: Kutsal Bir Fenomen Olarak Otorite", *Milel ve Nihal*, 14/1, (2017), 13.

95 Ahmet Aydın, "Dört Mezhep İmamının Otoritesini Tesis Eden Temel Unsurlar -Güven-Otorite İlişkisine Dair Analiz-", *Türkiye Din Eğitimi Araştırmaları Dergisi* 4 (2017), 78.

96 Türcan, "İslam'da Dinî Otorite", 111.

97 M/Electrical-Electronic Engineering-2.

98 F/Psychology-4.

99 M/Theology-4.

100 M/Translation and Interpreting-3; F/Law-1.

groups and congregations, and nobody accepted these groups and congregations as an authority. Couple of participants did not accept religious classics and works of the Faculty of Theology as an authority but they still followed them.

Regardless of the gender, department and religiousness level, youngsters – except two who stated that they did not believe and one that only accepted the God – accept Quran and sunnah as the authorities named as divine by Kojavé and “absolute” by Bocheński’. However, they approach to the authority of the people, institutions and works associated with religion with caution, and they even reject these.

Conclusion

Authority is a phenomenon that affects all periods of human life ranging from birth to delivery with different figures with same functions. Starting the parental authority at home, the process continues with the authorities of instructors at school, employers at work, and government at the political field. Furthermore, God’s authority, which we name as the absolute authority, covers the life and beyond. The fact that the concept is associated with many fields including psychology, sociology, philosophy, policy, law, education and religion makes it difficult to make a clear definition, but it is generally defined “as the right and power of organizing and enacting laws that should be submitted”. Despite having an association with the concept of power, it indicates a power equipped with legitimacy rather than a forceful power.

Authority is both complicated and controversial. In modern societies where personal rights and freedoms have expanded and where the social morality based on tolerance have developed, authority is regarded as outdated, unnecessary and oppressive. Furthermore, these adverse approaches directed the defenders of authority to an opposing movement in terms of making the concept a topic of agenda once again. According to them, distortion of the authority at home, workplace and government results in the danger of disorder, instability and social disintegration.

Authority is not a phenomenon that is universally accepted. Many people accept authority as the main guarantor of order and continuity and feel sorrow for the collapse of authority in modern society, while the others draw attention to the close relationship between authority and form of management, warning that the authority can easily become the opponent of freedom and democracy.

The main questions of the present study were the following: “Is there a relationship between the authority perceptions and religious perceptions of the young university students? Does the religious practices/religiousness level shaped by the submission to the absolute authority affect the authority perception of young

people? Before answering the questions, the results regarding young people's religious and authority-related perceptions should be summarized.

It was understood that the young university students in the present study had no problems with the beliefs, that they could not perform their prayers regularly, and that religion did not affect their daily lives significantly. Being honest, honorable and benevolent was considered to be more important than being religious, and ethics is occasionally perceived as a field that is independent from religion.

Aiming to investigate the authority through the university students, this study found that young people defined the concept based on its form in the political theory and that they reviewed the concept along with the concepts of power, rulership, hierarchy and legitimacy present within the relevant literature. Youngsters touched upon the conceptual differentiations of *an authority/in authority*, *theoretical authority/practical authority*, *de jure authority/de facto authority*, *epistemic authority/deontic authority*, and *traditional/charismatic/legal authority*, accepting the authority specific to the knowledge, experiences and specialization in a certain area unconditionally while approaching to the dictator/ordering authority from a distance and with criticisms and adverse reactions. The fact that authority is a multi-layered phenomenon was accepted by the youngsters, and parents, instructors, employers, administrators and government were seen as the significant authority figures. Youngsters assigned the priority to Quran in terms of directing the religious beliefs, thoughts and attitudes. They assessed the authority of other people and institutions in terms of their suitability to these two sources.

Regarding the relationship between the religious perception and authority-related perception, no results indicating that religious practices and religiousness level affected the authority-related perception and that people who accepted the submission to absolute authority and organized their lives in line with the religious orders accepted the other authority fields more easily were found. Even those who stated that they are very religious and consider the religion as a reference in all areas of their lives approach to the authorities in the family, school and workplace more carefully and reactively.

Young people's religious perceptions do not directly affect their authority-related perceptions. At this point, there are different psychological and sociological elements/impacts that should be examined. One of them is the phenomenon of generation. The phenomenon of generation provides significant opportunities in terms of observing the social structure and changes. Claiming that the people who were born and raised in the same period have the same meaning world is a problematic approach. Moreover, people and societies may display similar attitude and behaviors although they are present within different economic, politic and religious categories. Young people in this study all belong to the Generation Y, except one. It is safe to state that the traits such as "objecting the authority, fondness

of freedom and comfort, personality and rationality" affected young people's thoughts in this context. To obtain more detailed results, detailed studies examining where the concept of phenomenon is used as a methodological instrument and how the social phenomena are impactful over the people as well as the degree of this impact through different age groups are needed.

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Annex: 1 Interview Form

Your thoughts were consulted for an academic study entitled “Authority Perception of Young University Students and Religion”. They will not be used for any other purposes. Your identity details are not necessary. I request you to answer the items as honestly and instructively as possible to make broad explanations without the concerns of truth or false. Your additional thoughts and contributions will please me.

Thank you for your understanding and help.

Gender:

Date of Birth:

University–Department–Grade (Undergraduate/Postgraduate):

1. Are you a believer? Do you have any doubts or questions regarding this topic?

a) How do you assess yourselves in terms of religiousness? (Very religious/slightly religious/not religious/uninterested toward the religion/anti-religious/atheist/deist).

b) Do you perform religious activities? For instance, how often do you perform prayers? Do you fast on Ramadan? Do you pray?

c) Do you consider religion as a reference in your daily life? Do you follow the religious rules in your behaviors? Please assess in terms of dressing, relationships between men and women, shopping, human rights and responsibilities, relationships with the environment (nature and animals).

2. What do you understand from the concept of authority?

a) Do you think authority is present in where oppression and power is used?

b) What do you accept as the authority? (Parental authority, instructor’s authority, authority of the social environment, employer’s authority, governmental authority in the field of politics).

3. After Quran and sunnah, what or who do you accept as the authority to direct your religious beliefs, prayers, thoughts and attitudes? (Sheikh, saint, sayyid, ulama, father, leader of religious groups/congregation, religious classics, presidency of religious affairs, or faculties of theology).

Please add your further thoughts here.

Annex: 2 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Participants

No	Gender	Date of Birth	University	Department	Grade
1	Male	1999	Medeniyet University	Economics	2
2	Male	1999	Istanbul Technical University.	Control and Automation Engineering	1
3	Male	2001	Marmara University	Psychological Counseling and Guidance	1
4	Female	1999	Istanbul Technical University.	Metallurgical and Materials Engineering	1
5	Female	2000	Kültür University	Law	1
6	Female	1998	Işık University	Architecture	4
7	Female	1993	İstanbul University	Medicine	5
8	Male	1999	Boğaziçi University	Electrical-Electronic Engineering	2
9	Female	1998	Medipol University	Psychology	4
10	Male	1994	Marmara University	Theology	4
11	Female	1998	Turkish-German University	Political Science and International Relations	2
12	Male	1998	Marmara University	Business Management	4
13	Male	2000	İstanbul University	Law	2
14	Male	1992	Marmara	Metallurgical and	Thesis

Authority Perception of Young University Students and Religion

			University, Institute of Science, Post-Graduate Program	Materials Engineering	Period
15	Male	2000	İstanbul University	Translation and Interpreting (English)	3
16	Male	2000	Medeniyet University	Medicine	2
17	Female	1991	Marmara U. Institute of Social Sci. –Doctoral program	<i>Religious Sociology</i> , editor:	Course Period
18	Female	1996	Marmara University	Theology	3
19	Female	1996	Beykent University	Cinema and Television	2
20	Female	2000	İstanbul University	Audiology	1

Changes and Transformations Regarding the Life Perceived by Youngsters During the COVID-19 Pandemic*

Said SAMİ**
Yasin TOPRAK***
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Abstract

The aim of this study is to reveal the changes that young people experienced in the meaning of life in COVID-19 process and strategies to cope with this stressful process. In this article made with qualitative research method case study is adopted as a research design. The data were collected using a survey method with open-ended and closed-ended questions prepared online due to the process. In the research, convenience sampling method was adopted. According to this study, there are 441 young people between the ages of 18-35. As a result of the research; It was determined that the majority of young people gelled with positive changes that were intended to be life and that this option was used more for positive religious coping elements to alleviate some of them. In addition, it was determined that there was an increase in the participation of religious rituals such as prayer, reading the Quran, praying, and gratitude in some of the youth. Considering the findings, it is not only in the religious life of young people but also in their psycho-social life; It is understood that there are some positive changes such as looking at life more meaningfully and positively than before, realizing the beauties it has and paying more attention to its relations with people compared to the past.

Keywords: COVID-19, Youth, Religious Coping, Meaning of life.

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COVID-19 Sürecinde Gençlerde Hayatın Anlamına Yönelik Değişim ve Dönüşümler

Öz

Bu çalışmanın temel amacı gençlik çağındaki bireylerin COVID-19 sürecinde hayatın anlamına yönelik yaşadıkları değişiklikleri ve bu stres verici süreçte kullandıkları başa çıkma stratejilerini ortaya koymaktır. Nitel araştırma metodu ile yapılan bu makalede araştırma deseni olarak durum çalışması benimsenmiştir. Veriler yaşanan süreç gereği online olarak hazırlanmış açık uçlu ve kapalı uçlu soruların olduğu anket yöntemi ile toplanmıştır. Araştırmada kolayda örneklem metodu kullanılmıştır. Araştırmaya 441 adet 18-35 yaş arasında genç katılımı sağlanmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda; Gençlerin büyük bir çoğunluğunda hayatın anlamına yönelik olumlu değişiklikler meydana geldiği ve bu sürecin etkisini hafifletmek amacıyla olumlu dini başa çıkma unsurlarına daha çok yöneldikleri tespit edilmiştir. Ayrıca, gençlerin bir kısmında dua, Kur'an-ı Kerim okuma, namaz kılma, şükür gibi dini ritüellere katılımda artış olduğu da tespit edilmiştir. Bulgulara bakıldığında gençlerin sadece dini hayatlarında değil aynı zamanda psiko-sosyal yaşamlarında da; hayata eskisine göre daha anlamlı ve pozitif bakmak, sahip olduğu güzelliklerin farkına varmak ve geçmişe nazaran insanlarla olan ilişkilerine daha özen göstermek şeklinde bir takım olumlu değişimlerin olduğu anlaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: COVID-19, Gençlik, Dini Başa Çıkma, Hayatın Anlamı.

Summary

COVID-19, which emerged in China in November 2019, is a new virus that can be fatal with many symptoms. The rapid spread of the virus causing a pandemic, the treatment and vaccine has not yet been found; it has caused uncertainty, fear and isolation around the world. All of these cause psychological problems such as anxiety and suicidal tendencies, as well as existential problems such as the difficulty of people in determining their place in this world. Many individuals feel a sense of meaninglessness or emptiness. However, experiences such as facing death can create a healthy awareness of death and contribute to individuals' focus on what is more important in their lives, how they live and what can be changed in their lives against the "threat of nonexistence". In the face of this stressful process and all these changes, many individuals use the mechanisms of coping with the relevant problem or try new ways of coping.

At this point, the main purpose of this study is to reveal the changes experienced by adolescents regarding the meaning of life during the COVID-19 process and the coping strategies they use in this stressful process. In this article, in which the qualitative research method was preferred to describe the current situation, case study was adopted as the research design. The data (due to the process experienced) were collected by the online survey method by adopting the

convenience sampling method. 441 young people between the ages of 18-35 were included in the study. Young people were chosen as the sample, as the strongest inquiries about the meaning and purpose of life occur at the end of adolescence and early adulthood.

Regarding the changes in the meaning of life in the COVID-19 process, 303 of the participants in this study stated that there was a positive change, 41 negative and 97 neutral changes. The participants who declared that positive change occurred generally; They stated that life became more meaningful than before, they looked at life more optimistically, became aware of the beauties they had in their lives, their beliefs had a positive reflection in this process, their frequency of participation in religious rituals increased, and they started to give more importance to social relations than before. Here, the first of the most striking findings is that some of the participants have increased their frequency of attending the meetings. It can be said that the fact that people die every day due to the virus causes individuals to feel the reality of death more deeply and to prepare for the hereafter to deal with the reality of death. Indeed, religious beliefs are one of the most effective ways to deal with stress in difficult times. In addition, the participants who realized that they were a mortal creature during the COVID-19 process stated that this process reminded them once again the importance of the assets they have in their lives (For example, Person 168). In addition, witnessing tragic experiences during this period has also been effective in reducing the importance of some events that were stressful for the person in the past life or were considered extremely important (For example, Person 240).

According to the other findings obtained from the research; the participants who felt death deeply felt the existence of God in this process and realized their limitations in the face of the power of Allah; It is understood that they see this stressful situation that they experienced as a warning and a test from Allah (For example, 223. Participant). The perception of exam, can positively contribute to individuals' patience against stressful events and to cope with these events by making sense of them. Because the way a stressful event is interpreted, evaluated and directed is an important factor in reducing and increasing stress.

According to another finding, the participants who experienced positive changes explained that they had positive changes in terms of the meaning of life such as looking more optimistic about life than before, being more hopeful for the future and increasing the joy of life by referring to religious belief (For example 51st Participant). Therefore, it can be said that religious belief has an impact on the positive changes young people experience regarding the meaning of life.

In addition to these, according to the findings we have obtained, young people tend to change more positively in family relations during the COVID-19 process and it has been determined that the family is an important phenomenon that adds meaning to life. It can be said that the COVID-19 process prompted the

majority of young people to recognize their mistakes and to reconsider their family relationships (For example, 199th Participant)

Human beings' witnessing of pain in daily life can add meaning to their lives by making them understand the importance of what they have in their lives. However, sometimes this situation can also result in an existential sense of emptiness. As a matter of fact, people who stated that their lives had negative changes in this study stated that life became meaningless and their fear of death and anxiety levels increased at a level that could affect their lives (For example, Participant 143). According to this; While some of the young people are afraid of death due to virus contamination concerns, some are worried because they think that the people they love may die (For example, Participant 86). Some participants were more concerned about future plans and material life, while others stated that they were worried about transmitting the virus (For example, 249th Participant). In this process, some participants did not change their attitude towards the meaning of life (For example, 27th Participant). The fact that young people do not experience such changes can be explained by their high pre-virus life satisfaction and satisfaction, and their awareness of death.

This study can contribute to the consultancy, guidance and training activities to be carried out during and after the pandemic in terms of revealing what awareness and transformations young adults experience about the meaning of life. Quantitative, qualitative and mixed studies can be done based on this research, which has some limitations as it is a qualitative study.

Özet

Dünyada Kasım 2019'da Çin'de ortaya çıkan COVID-19 pek çok belirti ile görülen ve ölümcül olabilen yeni bir virüstür. Virüsün hızlıca yayılarak pandemi oluşturması, tedavisinin ve aşısının henüz bulunamamış olması; dünya çapında belirsizlik, korku ve izolasyon durumlarına sebep olmuştur. Bütün bunlar kaygı, intihar eğilimi gibi psikolojik sorunların yanı sıra insanların bu dünyadaki yerini tayin etmekte zorlanması gibi varoluşsal sorunlara da neden olmaktadır. Pek çok birey kendisini anlamsızlık veya boşluk duygusu içerisinde hissetmektedir. Ancak, ölümlerle yüz yüze kalma gibi deneyimler, ölüm konusunda sağlıklı bir farkındalık yaratarak "var olmama tehdidine" karşı bireylerin yaşamlarında neyin daha önemli olduğuna, nasıl yaşadıklarına ve hayatlarında neleri değiştirebileceklerine odaklanmalarına katkı sağlayabilir. Yaşanan bu stresli süreç ve bütün bu değişimler karşısında pek çok birey ilgili sorunla baş etme mekanizmalarını kullanır ya da yeni baş etme yolları dener.

Bu bağlamda bu çalışmanın temel amacı gençlik çağındaki bireylerin COVID-19 sürecinde hayatın anlamına yönelik yaşadıkları değişiklikleri ve bu stres verici süreçte kullandıkları başa çıkma stratejilerini ortaya koymaktır. Yaşanan

duruma yönelik betimleme yapmak amacıyla nitel araştırma metodunun tercih edildiği bu makalede araştırma deseni olarak durum çalışması benimsenmiştir. Veriler (yaşanılan süreç gereği), kolayda örneklem metodu benimsenerek online anket yöntemi ile toplanmıştır. Araştırmada 18-35 yaş arasında 441 genç yer almıştır. Yaşamın anlamı ve amacına dair en güçlü sorgulamalar ergenliğin sonu ve genç yetişkinliğin başlangıçlarında görüldüğü için örneklem olarak gençler tercih edilmiştir.

COVID-19 sürecinde hayatın anlamına yönelik değişimlerle ilgili olarak bu araştırmaya katılan katılımcılardan 303 kişi olumlu, 41 kişi olumsuz, 97 kişi ise nötr yönde değişiklik meydana geldiğini beyan etmişlerdir. Olumlu yönde değişiklik meydana geldiğini ifade eden katılımcılar genel olarak; hayatın eskisine göre daha anlamlı hale geldiğini, hayata daha iyimser baktıklarını, yaşamlarında sahip oldukları güzelliklerin farkına vardıklarını, inançlarının bu süreçte olumlu yansımaları olduğunu, dini ritüellere katılım sıklıklarının arttığını, sosyal ilişkilere eskisinden daha çok önem vermeye başladıklarını ifade etmişlerdir. Burada en dikkat çekici bulgulardan ilki, katılımcıların bir kısmının ibadetleri yerine getirme sıklıklarının artmasıdır. Her gün virüs nedeniyle insanların ölüyor olmasının, bireylerin ölüm gerçeğini daha derinden hissetmesine ve ölüm gerçeği ile başa çıkmak için ahiret hayatına hazırlık yapmasına neden olduğu söylenebilir. Nitekim dini inançlar zor zamanlarda stresle başa çıkmak için kullanılan en etkili yollardan biridir. Ayrıca COVID-19 sürecinde ölümlü bir varlık olduklarının idrakine daha çok varan katılımcılar bu sürecin hayatlarında sahip oldukları varlıkların önemini bir kere daha kendilerine hatırlattığını belirtmişlerdir (Örneğin 168. Kişi). Bunun yanı sıra, bu süreçte trajik yaşantılara şahit olmak, geçmiş yaşamda kişi için stres verici olan veya aşırı düzeyde önemsenen birtakım olayların önem derecesinin azalmasında da etkili olmuştur (Örneğin 240. Kişi).

Araştırmadan elde edilen diğer bulgulara göre; ölümü derinden hisseden katılımcıların bu süreçte Allah'ın varlığını yakın bir şekilde hissettikleri ve Allah'ın gücü karşısında kendi sınırlılıklarının farkına vardıkları; başlarına gelen bu stres verici durumu kendilerine Allah'tan gelen bir uyarı ve bir imtihan olarak gördükleri (Örneğin 223. Katılımcı) anlaşılmaktadır. İmtihan algısı bireylerin stres verici olaylara karşı sabır göstermesine ve bu olayları anlamlandırarak onunla baş etmesine olumlu anlamda katkı sağlayabilir. Zira stres verici bir olayın anlamlandırılma, değerlendirilme ve yönlendiriliş şekli stresi azaltma ve arttırmada önemli bir etkidir.

Diğer bir bulguya göre olumlu değişim yaşayan katılımcılar, hayata eskisine nazaran daha iyimser baktıkları, geleceğe yönelik daha umut dolu olma ve yaşam sevincinin artması gibi hayatın anlamına yönelik olumlu değişikliklere sahip olduklarını dini inanca atıfta bulunarak açıklamışlardır (Örneğin 51. Katılımcı). Dolayısıyla dini inancın, gençlerin hayatın anlamına yönelik yaşadıkları olumlu değişimler üzerinde etkili olduğu söylenebilir.

Bunların yanı sıra, elde ettiğimiz bulgulara göre gençler COVID-19 sürecinde aile ilişkilerinin daha çok olumlu yönde değişim eğilimi içerisine girdiği ve ailenin hayata anlam katan önemli bir olgu olduğu tespit edilmiştir. COVID-19 sürecinin gençlerin büyük bir çoğunluğunu hatalarının farkına varmasını sağlayarak aile ilişkilerini tekrar gözden geçirmeye sevk ettiği söylenebilir (Örneğin 199. Katılımcı).

İnsanoğlunun gündelik hayatta acıya şahitlik etmesi, hayatında sahip olduğu şeylerin önemini anlamasını sağlayarak yaşamına anlam katabilir. Ancak bazen bu durum varoluşsal bir boşluk duygusunu da ortaya çıkabilir. Nitekim bu çalışmada hayatlarında olumsuz yönde değişiklik meydana geldiğini ifade eden kişiler, bu süreçte hayatın anlamsızlaştığını, hayatlarını etkileyecek düzeyde ölüm korkularının ve kaygı düzeylerinin arttığını ifade etmişlerdir (Örneğin 143. Katılımcı). Buna göre; gençlerin bir kısmı virüs bulaşma kaygısı nedeniyle ölüm korkusu yaşarken bazıları sevdikleri insanların ölebileceğini düşündükleri için kaygılanmaktadır (Örneğin 86. Katılımcı). Bazı katılımcılar daha çok geleceğe yönelik planlar ve maddi yaşam konusunda kaygılanırken bazıları ise virüsü başkalarına bulaştırma konusunda kaygı yaşadıklarını ifade etmişlerdir (Örneğin 249. Katılımcı). Bu bulgulara göre kaygı düzeyinde artış görülen katılımcılar daha çok hayatın anlamına yönelik olumsuz anlamda değişiklik meydana geldiğini beyan eden kişilerdir. Bu süreçte bazı katılımcıların ise hayatın anlamına yönelik tutumlarında herhangi bir değişiklik meydana gelmemiştir (Örneğin 27. Katılımcı). Onların bu şekilde değişiklik yaşamamaları, virüs öncesi yaşam memnuniyetlerinin ve doyumlarının yüksek olması, ölüm bilincine sahip olmaları ile açıklanabilir.

Bu çalışma, genç yetişkinlerin yaşamın anlamına dair ne gibi farkındalık ve dönüşümler yaşadıklarının ortaya konulması suretiyle pandemi sürecinde ve sonrasında yapılacak danışmanlık, rehberlik ve eğitim çalışmalarına katkıda bulunabilir. Nitel bir çalışma olması gereği bazı sınırlılıkları olan bu araştırmadan yola çıkılarak nicel, nitel ve karma çalışmalar yapılabilir.

Introduction

Corona viruses represent *a large virus family that may cause mild common infections with self-restrictions such as cold, and more severe infections such as middle east respiratory syndrome (MERS) and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS)*. As the first international medical emergency in the modern times, SARS was first seen in 2003, and MERS was discovered in 2012. In the December of 2019, a virus that was never seen before was found in Wuhan, Hubei, China, and this virus was defined as a new corona virus type (COVID-19) on 7 January 2020. World Health Organization (WHO) declared this pandemic as "Public Health Emergency of International Concern" in January 30. Due to the emergence of COVID-19 cases in 113 countries other than China and spread and severity of the virus, COVID-19 outbreak was defined as a pandemic in March 11. The first COVID-19 case in Turkey was

detected in March 11.¹ Increased COVID-19 cases and the disease being defined as a pandemic on the global scale, restrictions on national and international travels, inability to go to work and interact with the relatives and friends, and increased number of death news on the social media resulted in a form of isolation, preventions, restrictions and fears in people's lives. Therefore, it is fair to state that the pandemic resulted in many risks including physical, social and psychological ones in people's lives.

According to Ran, uncertainties and unpredictability experienced in the pandemic have a high potential for the formation of fears.² These issues may often result in many psychological issues such as concerns, stigmatization, prejudices, and marginalization toward the disease. Particularly the media may cause misinformation and increased fears, concerns and uncertainty.³ The reasons for the aforementioned point may be that the news presented in all media organs (social media etc.) generally focus on the number of infected people and deaths arising from COVID-19. According to the evidences, these conditions have deep psychological effects on the people on the global scale.⁴ Furthermore, the source of infection remained uncertain in certain cases, while the directives regarding travel bans and quarantining the passengers and citizens were introduced; experts state that these factors may increase people's concerns regarding the public area and that people may think *public areas are not safe places*. They also claim that such factors may even result in committing suicide.⁵

All uncertainties and unpredictability regarding COVID-19 as well as fears, concerns, restriction of freedoms, news of death, unemployment and isolation may cause people to question or even search for the meaning of life because human-related topics such as death, loneliness, isolation, meaninglessness, feeling of emptiness and sorrow may cause people to question the meaning of life, according to the existentialist therapy.⁶ Considering the new "complexities and uncertainties" arising from the pandemic, it is safe to state that people may have difficulties repositioning themselves and begin to search for the new concepts and processes regarding their lives. Accordingly, they may need to find the providers of new

¹ Sağlık Bakanlığı (SB), "COVID-19; Genel Bilgiler Epidomoloji ve Tanı" (Date Accessed: 6 June 2020).

² W. Rana et al., "Mental Health of Medical Workers in Pakistan during the Pandemic COVID-19 Outbreak", *Asian Journal of Psychiatry* 51/102080 (April 2020), 55.

³ D.R.Garfin at al., "The Novel Coronavirus (COVID-2019) Outbreak: Amplification Of Public Health Consequences By Media Exposure", *Health Psychology* 39/5 (March 2020), 3-5.

⁴ Daniel K. Ahorsu et al., "The Fear of COVID-19 Scale: Development and Initial Validation", *International Journal of Mental Health And Addiction* (2020), 2.

⁵ Sun Jae Jun et al., "Mental Health And Psychological Intervention Amid COVID-19 Outbreak: Perspectives From South Korea", *Yonsei Medical* 61/4 (April 2020), 271-272.

⁶ Gerald Corey, *Psikolojik Danışma Kuram ve Uygulamaları*, trans. T. Ergene (Ankara: Mentis Yayıncılık, 2008), 185.

meanings to not experience the feeling of existential emptiness and to escape the feeling of meaninglessness.⁷

Period of Early Adulthood

The literature does not clearly define the age range covered by the early adulthood period. For instance, according to Erikson, the aforementioned age range is between 20 and 40 years, while Havighurst claims it is between 18 and 35 years, and Bühler believes the range is between 25 and 45 years. As this period reflects the transition to adulthood, it is one of the most important periods for people's life-long development. Although adolescence is considered as a period of preparation to adulthood, adolescents do not directly undergo adulthood.⁸

One of the important concepts introduced to the development psychology by Havighurst is the concept of "developmental tasks". This term indicates the skills and tasks people need to have in the particular periods of their lives. Fulfillment of the developmental tasks regarding the current developmental period contributes to achieving happiness and fulfilling the further developmental tasks. Failure to fulfill the tasks may result in sorrow and having difficulties in the following tasks.⁹

There are significant tasks to be performed in the early adulthood period. Selection of partner, learning to live with the partner, establishing a family, raising a child, doing the daily chores, initiating a hobby, joining a suitable social group,¹⁰ founding relationships with the people in different social groups or environments, starting a job, and maintaining that position are all among the developmental tasks.¹¹ Moreover, finding a purpose and meaning in life as well as developing a healthy identity are some of the most important developmental tasks. The most significant periods of questioning regarding the meaning and purpose of life can be seen during the end of adolescence and beginning of early adulthood. Changes in the ideas about the circumstances under which the meaning of life can be present may provide a flexible perspective to the lives of young adults. Therefore, the awareness-based activities regarding the meaning of life and targeting the young adults may help them overcome the difficulties of life with the minimum number of issues, cope with their problems better, and look at their future in a more positive mood.¹² Accordingly, revealing the transformations and developments young

⁷ Abdülkerim Bahadır, "Hayatın Anlam Kazanmasında Psiko-Sosyal Faktörler ve Din", *Selçuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 6/1 (2020), 185.

⁸ B. Onur, *Gelişim Psikolojisi: Yetişkinlik, Yaşlılık, Ölüm* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2008), 101.

⁹ Onur, *Gelişim Psikolojisi*, 112.

¹⁰ Onur, *Gelişim Psikolojisi*, 113.

¹¹ Z.K. Akça, *Genç Yetişkinlikte Algılanan Anne-Baba Tutumlarının, Kendini Toparlama Gücü ve Benlik Saygısı Arasındaki İlişki* (İstanbul: Maltepe University, Institute of Social Sciences, Master's Thesis, 2012), 16-17.

¹² R. Yüksel, "Genç Yetişkinlerde Yaşamın Anlamı", *Sakarya University Journal of Education*, 2/2 (2012), 81-83.

adults undergo in the period of pandemic may contribute to the counseling, guiding and training studies as well as the relevant literature.

In a study on the young adults, an open-ended question ‘What adds meaning to your life the most?’ was asked to 50 people aged between 18 and 27 years, and the following answers were given: family members (68%), friends (14%), God (8%), training (6%) and success (4%). In another study, 12 lists including the potential sources of the meaning of life were administered to 231 participants aged between 18 and 25 years. The young adults in that study gave the following answers respectively when they were asked to mention what adds meaning to their lives the most: family, happiness, friends, self-acceptance, personal targets, ego, personal development, helping others, achievements, religious beliefs, sincerity and justice. Both studies indicated that family is the most distinctive source of meaning for young adults. In other words, family relationships were more important than friendships and other social relationships, and happiness was mentioned more than religious beliefs, personal development and other alternative sources regarding the meaning of life. In terms of sincerity and support, the relationship between the factor of family and meaning of life continued even when the other factors such as self-respect, happiness, peer support and social desires were also checked in these studies. Therefore, it was understood that family relationships were a significant and distinctive source of meaning in the lives of young adults.¹³

Meaning of Life

The efforts made to experience the feeling of meaning and have a purpose of life are what separate people from the other creatures.¹⁴ The most important task of a person who is thrown into a meaningless world is to create a meaning of life in a solid and effective manner.¹⁵ Humans are the creatures that can assign a meaning to events and objects or generate relevant meanings. In fact, assigning a meaning to events or objects is not a luxury but a need for people. People aim to adapt to what is personally or socially happening around them by assigning a meaning. For instance, an earthquake can be interpreted as a divine warning or the sign of social corruptions that may be seen in the society.¹⁶ To sum up, human life can be described as a process of assigning a meaning. While an iron is called an object by a naturalist, a sociologist or culturalist calls it the instrument for driving nails. Meanings assigned to the natural objects constitute our material culture world, while the meanings assigned to social events and concepts form our spiritual

¹³ Nathaniel M. Lambert et al., “Family As A Salient Source Of Meaning In Young Adulthood”, *The Journal Of Positive Psychology* 5/5 (2010), 368-375.

¹⁴ Corey, *Psikolojik Danışma Kuram ve Uygulamaları*, trans. T. Ergene, 159.

¹⁵ Irvin D. Yalom, *Bağımlanan Terapi*, trans. Z. Babayiğit (Istanbul: Pegasus Yayınları, 2017), 151.

¹⁶ Üstün Dökmen, *Evrenle Uyumlaşma Sürecinde Var Olmak Gelişmek Uzlaşmak* (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2012), 116-117.

culture world. Thus, people may assign different meanings to what has been experienced in the COVID-19 pandemic, and they may search for the new meanings regarding their own lives.

According to the existential psychology, there is no meaning that has no association with a person. Therefore, meaning is a significant *life-related responsibility* that needs to be found by the people themselves. The existential approach encourages people to embrace their lives and leave their passive form. People's desire of instant meanings to be assigned to themselves or search for a different meaning is assessed as the result of irresponsibility regarding their lives. Existential approach suggests that a meaning can be found by people under every condition and that such a search is the responsibility of people. Accordingly, life of every people is unique, and efforts made by people are important.¹⁷

According to the existential approach, one of the main dimensions regarding the conditions people live in is *researching the meaning, purpose, values and targets* because people consider these existential issues a topic of psychological counseling. *What do I want from the life? What provides me the purpose of life? What is the source of meaning in life for me?* Formation of values that will add value to the lives of people who experience issues regarding the meaning of life during the pandemic and who therefore need to receive counseling may be one of the topic to be examined during psychological counseling.¹⁸

A research conducted during the pandemic indicated similarities between the reactions given during the camp experience mentioned in *Man's Search for Meaning* by Frankl and considered effective in the formation of logotherapy, and the reactions given during the social isolation period; furthermore, Frankl's experience can be considered as an example in terms of finding a meaning.¹⁹ Frankl observed that religious information, helping, love, importance of other people in life, responsibility, humor, freedom, making a decision, purpose, hope and bravery were all effective in the adaptation of people who overcame the shock in the first stage of the camp, and that the aforementioned traits were helpful in people's effort to maintain their lives.²⁰ Therefore, logotherapy can be considered important for the services to be given during the pandemic and for further services.

According to logotherapy, there are three mains ways of finding a meaning. First of these *is to create a work or conduct an activity*. In other words, it is finding a meaning in life through the things people add to life by doing or producing

¹⁷ S. Sezer, "Yaşamın Anlamı Konusuna Kuramsal ve Psikometrik Çalışmalar Açısından Bir Bakış", *Ankara Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Fakültesi Dergisi* 45/1 (2012), 216.

¹⁸ Corey, *Psikolojik Danışma Kuram ve Uygulamaları*, trans. T. Ergene, 159-160.

¹⁹ Eliane Ramos Pereira et al., "Psychological Phases And Meaning Of Life İn Times Of Social İsolation Due The COVID-19 Pandemic A Reflection İn The Light Of Viktor Frankl", *Research, Society and Development* 9/5 (2020), 2.

²⁰ Viktor E. Frankl, *İnsanın Anlam Arayışı*, trans. Selçuk Budak (İstanbul: Okuyanay Yay., 2018), 17-108.

something.²¹ The second way of finding a meaning is *to experience something or interact with a person*. Accordingly, people may find a meaning through love.²² The third way of finding a meaning is *people's ability to overcome or change a painful incident that initially seems unalterable*.²³ In other words, people may find a meaning in life with their attitudes toward unalterable and painful incidents.²⁴

People may find the meaning of life in religion other than these three fields²⁵ because people may get curious even about the smallest piece of nature (atom) due to their knowledge-related deficiencies or needs or their love for learning, or about why people, the atom of social events, need to display a behavior. Furthermore, which main motives (motivating elements or drives) or factors were present in the basis of human behaviors were also scientifically examined. The psychological concepts of sexuality, motherhood, realization and superiority drives; sociological concepts of exceeding the private property, searching for a meaning, having cultural conflicts and desiring to make the life easier/reliable; and Sufi concept of *fana' fillah* were mentioned in this regard. Among these concepts and factors, religion brings significant explanations to people's search for meaning. It helps the believers approach to the world and existence from a religious perspective by providing meanings related to the world and existence in the period before and after the life.²⁶ At this point, Frankl mentions about people's search for the ultimate meaning of life. In the search for ultimate meaning, people find the *ultimate existence* (God).²⁷ The literature indicates that the concept of ultimate meaning in logotherapy is also suitable for the Turkish society.²⁸ The impact of religious thoughts on logotherapy can be seen in terms of the temporariness of life and presence of death.²⁹ Religion helps people find an answer to life-related questions as well as assign a meaning to death and life-related experiences. Religion is a reference that helps assign a meaning to the painful events experienced throughout the life.³⁰ People may direct themselves to religion as their feelings of meaningfulness and control are harmed under challenging life events.³¹ In other words, people utilize spiritual elements and use religious coping methods against

²¹ Viktor E. Frankl, *Anlam İstenci: Logoterapinin Temelleri Ve Logoterapi Uygulamaları*, trans. M. Yalçınkaya (Istanbul: Öteki Yayınevi, 2018), 90.

²² Viktor .E. Frankl, *Duyulmayan Anlam Çılgılığı*, trans. Selçuk Budak (Ankara: Öteki Yay., 2019), 39.

²³ Frankl, *İnsanın Anlam Arayışı*, trans. Selçuk Budak, 157.

²⁴ Viktor E. Frankl, *Psikoterapi ve Din; Bilinç Dışındaki Tanrı*, trans. V. Atayman (Istanbul: Say, 2018), 90.

²⁵ Abdülkerim Bahadır, *İnsanın Anlam Arayışı ve Din; Logotepik Bir Araştırma* (Istanbul: İnsan Yay., 2018), 47.

²⁶ Bahadır, *İnsanın Anlam Arayışı ve Din*, 213.

²⁷ Ali Ayten, *Psikoloji ve Din: Psikologların Din ve Tanrı Görüşleri* (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2017), 168-169.

²⁸ Bahadır, *İnsanın Anlam Arayışı ve Din*, 42-49.

²⁹ Ö. Tagay et al., "Logoterapide Kullanılan Kavramların ve Tekniklerin Türk Kültüründe Uygulanabilirliği", *Ege Eğitim Dergisi*, 17/1 (2016), 112.

³⁰ Erol Erkan, "Postmodern Dönemde Ontolojik Bir Anlam Aracı Olarak Dini Kimlik", *Turkish Studies* 8/8 (2013), 1833.

³¹ Ali Ayten, *Din ve Sağlık: Kavram, Kuram ve Araştırma* (Istanbul: Marmara Akademi Yayınları, 2018), 14.

the aforementioned challenges.³² Thus, it is safe to state that religious beliefs are important both in the periods of coping and assigning a meaning to life.³³

The preventive and supportive function of religion can be mentioned in terms of people's physical and mental health. However, how religiousness affects the physical and mental health differs based on the type and intensity of religiousness because religiousness may positively or negatively affect health in certain cases. Therefore, it is fair to mention that how one interprets religion and practices religiousness is important.³⁴ For example, a relevant study showed a positive relationship between the orientation of internal religiousness and meaning of life, but no similar positive relationship was present between external orientation of religiousness and meaning of life, indicating no statistically significant relationship.³⁵

It is stated that the meaning of life varies by people under the changing time and conditions and that people may find the meaning of their own lives.³⁶ Furthermore, people need to reveal the meanings hidden in the "moments" in which they find themselves. Events such as death, marriage and separation may help us re-discover the meaning of life.³⁷ Thus, people may re-consider the meaning of their lives as a result of all events and restrictions they experienced following the extraordinary COVID-19 pandemic because undergoing the feeling of meaninglessness may draw people like a vacuum.³⁸

People are constantly exposed to the news of death in their social environment and media in the period when the cases increased rapidly. Staying under the impact of media excessively may create the illusion that we are under an extreme threat, making us more concerned.³⁹ Montemurro states that the fear of death due to the disease and the feeling of vulnerability may increase the rate of suicides. Moreover, owing to the concerns arising from the pandemic, cases of

³² Gülüşan Göcen, "Tüp Bebek Tedavisi Almış Kadınların Dini Başa Çıkma Süreçleri ve Dini Yaşantıları Üzerine Nitel Bir Araştırma", *İstanbul Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 32 (2015), 173.

³³ Ali Ayten, *Tanrıya Sığınmak* (İstanbul: İz Yay., 2012), 55.

³⁴ Ayten, *Din ve Sağlık: Kavram, Kuram ve Araştırma*, 12-13. The manners of perceiving and assessing religion also form the basis of religious discussions or groups. However, as the concept of perceiving is ultimately based on people's individual actions, such differences suggest that they should be considered natural. Moreover, these differences are a necessity of social and natural development. As an example in this regard, see. Osman Eyüpoğlu ve Murat Yıldız, "Kur'an'ı Anlamaya Yönelik Literal ve Kültürel Yaklaşımların Sosyal Değişmeye Uyum Açısından İşlevselliği", *MANAS Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 5/3 (2016), 163-198.

³⁵ Leslie Francis et al., "The Development Of The Meaning In Life Index (MILI) And Its Relationship With Personality And Religious Behaviours And Beliefs Among UK Undergraduate Students", *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 11/2 (2008), 217.

³⁶ Frankl, *Anlam İstenci*, trans. M. Yalçınkaya, 80-81.

³⁷ Bahadır, *İnsanın Anlam Arayışı ve Din*, 41.

³⁸ Corey, *Psikolojik Danışma Kuram ve Uygulamaları*, trans. T. Ergene, 160.

³⁹ Kemal Sayar, *Ruhun Derin Yaraları* (İstanbul: Kapı Yayınları, 2020), 24.

committing suicide can be observed on the global scale.⁴⁰ Accordingly, preventive and curative efforts and studies should be conducted to prevent that COVID-19 fears and the pandemic do not cause tragedies such as committing suicide.⁴¹ The meaning of life is a significant factor at this point because those who find the life meaningful and make efforts in this regard will have higher “probability of existing and reaching tomorrow” regardless of their age and position.⁴²

COVID-19 is an extreme experience that will wake us up against our existential position. The temporariness as well as the discontinuity, unpredictability, sense of (existential) emptiness, interrelated characteristic of life and death, and relevant stimuli are all effective in this context. The concerns triggered by the pandemic may direct us toward an ontological existential form that is authentic, conscious, responsible and familiar.⁴³ Yalom used the term “experiences of waking up” as this concept evokes the probability of experiencing death and reflects the shortness and value of life. Facing with death may serve as an experience of waking up, and it may help people value their own short and temporary life.⁴⁴ Existentialists consider death as a positive power as it adds meaning to life. Healthy awareness in terms of death may help people who receive counseling service for the *threat of non-existence* focus on what is important in their lives as well as how they live and what they can change in their lives.⁴⁵ Therefore, important results might have emerged in terms of what people discovered about their existence in this period and what they considered significant and important in their lives.

The relevant literature reflects that those who consider their lives more meaningful and valuable against challenging life conditions are more resistant, cope with the challenging feelings better and have better satisfaction of life.⁴⁶ In cases of diseases and crises such as COVID-19, the values that will add value to the potential issues such as fears, concerns, depression, isolation, loneliness, violence, meaninglessness, existential emptiness and suicide become important because finding a meaning in life may affect people’s lives positively. The question *What is the meaning of life?* becomes more distinctive particularly during crises (eg. Facing death, experience of loss).⁴⁷ The pandemic can be among these crises⁴⁸ because the continuity in facing the death risk through the news published in the media,

⁴⁰ Jae Jun et al., “Mental Health And Psychological Intervention Amid COVID-19 Outbreak: Perspectives From South Korea”, 271-272.

⁴¹ Ahorsu et al., “The Fear Of COVID-19 Scale: Development and Initial Validation”, 1-3.

⁴² Dökmen, *Evrenle Uyumlaşma Sürecinde Var Olmak Gelişmek Uzlaşmak*, 128-129.

⁴³ Mark Yang, “Resilience and Meaning-Making Amid the COVID-19 Epidemic in China”, *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* (2020), 1-3.

⁴⁴ Yalom, *Bağışlanan Terapi*. trans. Z. Babayiğit, 282.

⁴⁵ Corey, *Psikolojik Danışma Kuram ve Uygulamaları*, trans. T. Ergene, 163-174.

⁴⁶ Yüksel, “Genç Yetişkinlerde Yaşamın Anlamı”, 80.

⁴⁷ Cufta, “Yaşlılık Döneminde Hayatın Anlam Arayışı”, 108.

⁴⁸ Yang, “Resilience and Meaning-Making Amid the COVID-19 Epidemic in China”, 6.

experiencing restrictions as well as uncertainty and lack of confidence in certain fields owing to the pandemic, staying away from the beloved ones, being stigmatized and excluded, and failing to practice habits from the past may cause people to question the meaning of life continuously.

Method

Study Design

This study examined the impact of COVID-19 on youngsters' perception of life's meaning and the role of religious beliefs on coping with the stress arising from this period. Efforts were made to answer these following basic questions:

Did COVID-19 result in any changes in youngsters' attitudes and thoughts on the meaning of life?

If there are changes, how can you describe them (as positive or negative)?

Does the religious beliefs have an impact on the stress arising from COVID-19?

The qualitative research method was used in the present study. The main purpose in selecting this method is that it targets understanding and interpreting people's world of meaning rather than generalizing and making estimations and that it enables researchers to obtain detailed data rather than superficial evidences.⁴⁹ Qualitative study design can be defined as a strategy that defines the approach of the researcher and helps ensure that various stages are consistent in this approach. This strategy also ensures that various sections in a study are all consistent.⁵⁰ Accordingly, this research was conducted as a *case study* as this design suited the topic. Case studies aim to reflect the elements and interactions that affect a fact.⁵¹

Demographic Characteristics of Participants in the Study

Convenience sampling method, one of the sampling methods that are not under the group of probability sampling, was used in the study. Anybody who gives an answer to the survey items is accepted to the sample in this method. Process of sample formation continues until the targeted number is reached. This sampling method is often used in the online surveys.⁵² The number of participants in the study was 441. The mean age of the participants was 24 years. Of the participants, 156 were male and 285 were female. Moreover, 93 participants were

⁴⁹ Ali Yıldırım-Hasan Şimşek, *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri* (Ankara: Seçkin Yay, 2011), 78.

⁵⁰ Yıldırım-Şimşek, *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri*, 74.

⁵¹ Şener Büyüköztürk et al., *Bilimsel Araştırma Yöntemleri* (Ankara: Pegem Yay, 2013), 21.

⁵² Remzi Altunışık et al., *Sosyal Bilimlerde Araştırma Yöntemleri; Uygulamalı* (Sakarya: Sakarya Yayıncılık, 2012), 142.

married while 346 were single. Of the people in the sample, 168 had low income level while 155 had moderate and 118 had high income level. Regarding the educational status, 2 had primary school degree while 8 had secondary school degree, 70 had high school degree, 42 had associate's degree, 269 had bachelor's degree and 50 had master's degree. Participants participated in the study with their own free will.

Formation of the Data Collection Tool and Data Collection Process

A survey was used as a data collection tool in the study. A survey is defined as a research material that consists of a series of items to reveal people's living conditions, behaviors, beliefs or attitudes. This data collection instrument was preferred as it enabled reaching different groups faster, had lower expenses and helped collect more data compared to other data collection tools.⁵³ E-mail survey, a modern survey technique, was preferred in this study. While preparing the survey items, two items with an interpretational open-ended form and seven items with a closed-ended form aiming to reveal participants' demographic traits were preferred. Particular attention was attributed to making survey items clear, ensuring that they are free from implicit statements, and ordering questions within a certain logic. For that purpose, thoughts and recommendations of five academics from the relevant literature were utilized, and the survey form was re-designed according to their feedback. Before the data collection phase, pilot study was conducted with 13 people, and the items had their final form following the necessary amendments. An informational form regarding the study was also presented in the study, and participants were informed that their personal information would not be shared with anybody. Data were collected between April and May 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic period. Efforts were made to deliver the survey form to various social media platforms owing to the restrictions of the pandemic.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from the answers participants gave to the survey were examined using content analysis and descriptive analysis methods, two qualitative research analysis methods. Descriptive analysis can be defined as summarizing and interpreting the data under the pre-determined titles.⁵⁴ Some citations were made from the data sources of the participants as this process was believed to be useful for the reliability of the study. Another analysis method used in the study is content analysis. Content analysis is the period of conceptualizing and logically ordering the pre-collected data according to the relevant concepts as well as determining and

⁵³ Büyüköztürk, *Bilimsel Araştırma Yöntemleri*, 124.

⁵⁴ Altunışık et al., *Sosyal Bilimlerde Araştırma Yöntemleri*, 324.

explaining, coding and classifying the theme defining the data.⁵⁵ Based on the concept list that emerges after the coding process, these codes were collected under an upper theme with similar expressions. The results regarding the content analysis were administered to three researchers who conducted qualitative studies in the field of Religious Psychology. Researchers reflected their thoughts on the codes on which they agreed or disagreed. The rate of similarity between the codes was 0.87, which indicates that the coding we performed is correct. Following this stage, codes were classified under certain main themes. Our study underwent certain validity and reliability phases. Answers of the participants were protected and shared with nobody. Citations from the data were often used to support the study data. Within these citations, survey numbers of the participants, rather than their names, were mentioned.

Table 1: Content Analysis Regarding the Changes in the Meaning of Life

CHANGES IN THE MEANING OF LIFE									
UPPER THEMES	POSITIVE CHANGE						NEGATIVE CHANGE		
MAIN THEME	RELIGIOUS THOUGHTS AND ATTITUDES		PSYCHO-SOCIAL				PSYCHO-SOCIAL		
THEMES	Belief	Praying	Cleanliness	Social Relationships	Significance	Realizing the Values	Fear	Concern	Meaninglessness
SUB-THEMES	9	4	3	3	8	11	4	7	4
NUMBER OF CODES	145	40	16	35	85	150	11	19	20

As understood from Table 1, data were collected under two upper-themes as positive and negative changes. The positive change theme consisted of religious thoughts and attitudes, and psychosocial change themes, respectively. These themes also consisted of six sub-themes: belief, praying, cleanliness, social relationships, significance and realizing the values. The negative change theme only consisted of psycho-social change theme because no religious thoughts and attitudes theme was formed under the negative change theme as there were no participants who used the negative religious coping methods as can be seen in the title of negative changes. There are three themes under the psycho-social theme: fear, concerns and meaninglessness. These ten themes consisted of 53 sub-themes and were coded for 521 times. The aforementioned ten themes were examined in detailed graphs in the analysis section.

⁵⁵ Sharan B. Merriam, *Nitel Araştırma Desen ve Uygulama İçin Bir Rehber*, trans. Selahaddin Turan (Ankara: Nobel, 2018), 196.

Results and Remarks

1. Positive Changes and Transformations Regarding the Life Perceived by Youngsters During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Since the moment they are born, people make efforts to realize and understand the universe. Such orientation of people is one of the main differences that set them apart from the other creatures. This search for a meaning as a spiritual act has been present since the era of the first man. In conclusion, humans are the only that search for a meaning, and this searching period will continue until the end of life.⁵⁶ The aforementioned search can be defined as people's review of their relationships with themselves and the outer world. Moreover, as noted above, people make efforts to understand this world by asking questions like the following: "Why am I born to this world? What is the meaning and purpose of life? Why are there too many pains and sadness? While trying to answer these questions, people utilize religion or various thoughts and ideologies."⁵⁷

The existential emptiness, one of the greatest issues in the modern times, has become the common problem of the entire humanity and been waiting for a solution. At this point, logotherapy or the therapy through meanings is presented as a solution by Viktor Frankl who was in a concentration camp during the World War 2 and authored *Search for Meaning* after he was released. According to Frankl, one of the ways of adding meaning to human life is getting a meaning from the painful events.⁵⁸ During a period when people believe they already have the meaning of life, a deadly incident such as a traffic accident or losing a beloved one or undergoing a pandemic that distorted the order in people's lives may direct people to re-question the meaning of life.⁵⁹

Hearing the loss of hundreds of people owing to the virus may remind that death is always at the door. Experiencing such feelings may cause people to re-question and revise how they perceived their environments and how they lived in their daily lives.⁶⁰ Such experiences defined as the experience of waking up by Yalom initially cause a depressing impact but they in fact have a potential of enriching the life.⁶¹ Of the participants in the study examining the changes regarding the meaning of life during the COVID-19 pandemic, 303 people mentioned positive changes, while 41 people had negative changes, and 97 people experienced neutral changes. The participants who mentioned about the positive

⁵⁶ Erol Göka, *Hayatın Anlamı Var mı?* (Istanbul: Timaş, 2014), 52.

⁵⁷ Bahadır, *İnsanın Anlam Arayışı ve Din*, 22.

⁵⁸ Frankl, *Duyulmayan Anlam Çılgılığı*, trans. Selçuk Budak, s. 32

⁵⁹ Hamdi Kalyoncu, *Ölümsüzlük İhtiyacı: İntihar, Ötenazi ve Reenkarnasyon* (Istanbul: Boğaziçi Yay., 2011), 28.

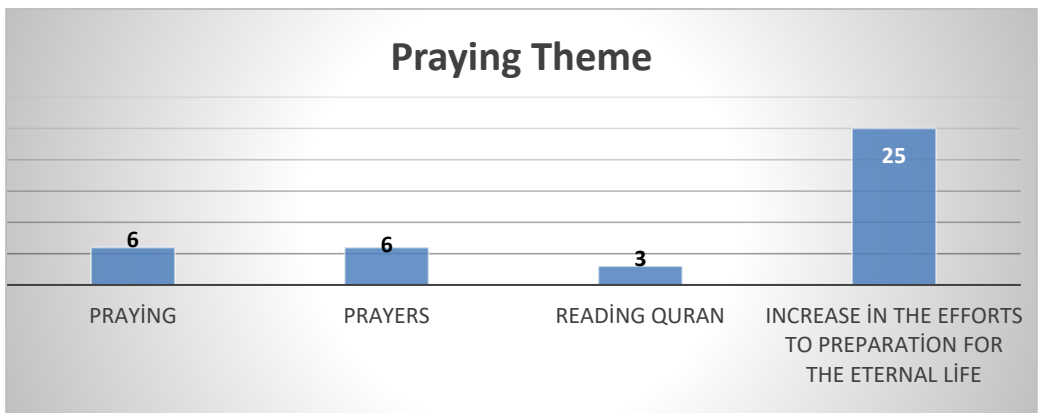
⁶⁰ Kemal Sayar, *Her Şeyin Bir Anlamı Var* (Istanbul, Kapı Yay., 2019), 70.

⁶¹ Irvin Yalom, *Güneşe Bakmak Ölümle Yüzleşmek*, trans. Zeliha İyidoğan Babayiğit (Istanbul: Kabcacı Yay., 2008), 37.

changes in their lives stated that their lives became more meaningful than before, that they were more optimistic toward the life, that they realized the beauties in their lives, that their beliefs had positive reflections on the pandemic, that their frequency of participating in religious rituals increased, and that they valued social relationships more than before.

1.1. Increase in the Frequency of Praying

Figure 1: Praying Theme



As the first theme under the theme of religious thoughts and attitudes, the praying theme consists of four sub-themes. These themes were coded 40 times in total. The themes coded the most and the numbers of coding are as follows: Increase in the efforts to preparation for the eternal life - 25, praying - 6, prayers - 6 and reading Quran - 3.

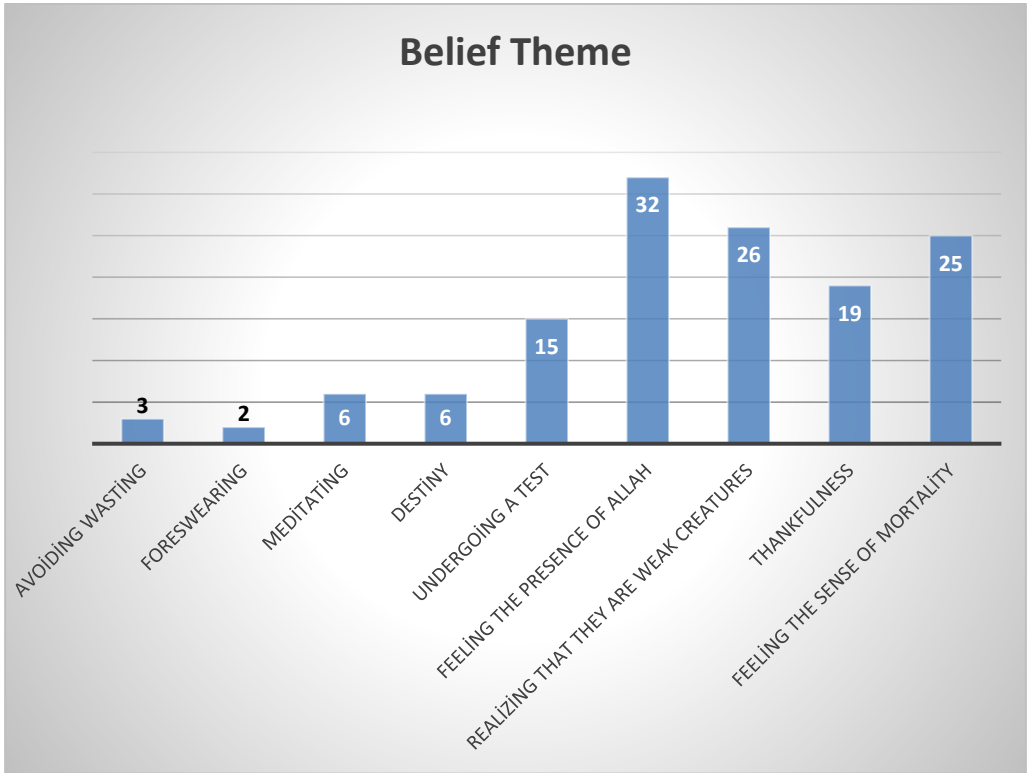
The death-related thoughts and awareness arising from the COVID-19 period can also be seen among the youngsters. The idea that death will come one day may direct youngsters to question the meaning of life, organize their life and re-question the relationship with the God, which is also the case for any age groups. *“My hopeful and happy perception of life as well as my like toward living became stronger, also affecting my prayers.”* (Participant. 97); *“I started to practice more prayers and helped more people, which made me happy.”* (Participant 109); *“Yes, I had that thought not to end my life, but to make greater efforts for both this world and the eternal world, with the idea of what I can do more.”* (Participant. 184); *“Of course, I realized how much I was failing to perform my religious duties.”* (Participant. 201); *“I started to read Quran more than before.”* (Participant. 302) These statements of participants indicate that their frequency of participating in prayers increased.

Hearing the news of people who die due to the virus every day may cause people to deeply feel the reality of death, which may be considered as the reason for the increase in people’s participation in religious rituals to prepare themselves

to the eternal life. Furthermore, participants might have preferred the religious rituals and practices to overcome the stress arising from COVID-19 because religious beliefs may have an important role in overcoming the stressful and challenging times.⁶² These results also matched the relevant literature. According to the study by Sami (2020), the rate of participating in the prayers by the people who witnessed death increased.⁶³

1.2. Belief

Figure 2. Belief Theme



There were nine sub-themes under the belief theme present within the themes of religious thoughts and behaviors. As seen in the Graph 2, the sub-themes under the theme of belief can be ordered in a respective form as follows: feeling the presence of Allah - 32, realizing that they are weak creatures - 26, feeling the sense of mortality - 25, thankfulness - 19, undergoing a test - 15, meditating - 6, destiny - 6, avoiding wasting - 3, foreswearing -2. In conclusion, as understood from the

⁶² Ümit Horozcu, *Din Psikolojisi* (Istanbul: Rağbet, 2015), 262.

⁶³ Said Sami, *Traumatik Kayıp (Ölümler) Sonrasında Dini İnanç Sahibi Olan ve Olmayan Bireylerin Ölümüne, Yasa ve Sonrasında Yaşanan Sürece Dair Tutumların Karşılaştırılması (Nitel Bir Araştırma)* (Istanbul: Istanbul University, Institute of Social Sciences, Master's Thesis, 2019), 142.

content analysis and descriptive analysis results, it is safe to state that the COVID-19 pandemic created certain positive changes on the religious thoughts and behaviors of the young people. As an adaptational system that orders the lives of the practitioners, religious belief has a significant place in people's lives and adds value to life. This result also matches the results of similar studies. The study by Tokur (2017) indicated that religion has factors that guide people in overcoming stressful events and direct them to certain spiritual orientations based on the situation and that religion is both a direct and indirect coping strategy.⁶⁴

The disasters people suffer while everything is under control in daily life may direct them to question the meaning of life once again. Every people who lose their lives owing to the virus may remind us the reality of death. As understood from the statements of certain participants "*Of course it happened; first, I discovered how natural and real the death was.*" (Participant. 156); "*It made me realize how close the death was. Life is short and we may experience a loss anytime, so I realized how important it was to live the moment. I try to focus on today and the moment rather than the past and future-related concerns.*" (Participant. 247), the cases of death heard and witnessed by the youngsters during the pandemic made them feel the death more deeply. The following statements by certain participants indicate that they felt the presence of Allah more deeply and realized the limits of their power (as weak creatures) compared to that of Allah: "*Weakness of humanity can be seen in such disasters, which reveal the power of Allah and orientation to fulfill what Allah orders.*" (Participant. 284); "*Yes, I thought how weak we were even in this brightest period of humanity when we could control everything.*" (Participant. 173).

Stress can be defined as the factor that harms and challenges people's physical and mental entirety due to having mental or physical difficulties.⁶⁵ We may face many stressful processes during our lives. COVID-19, which certainly causes fears and concerns among everybody, is one of these stressful processes. To overcome such stressful events, people may utilize the sources of coping. It is without doubt that one of the sources of coping is religious coping. Religious coping can be defined as the inclusion of spiritual elements into the stressful events.⁶⁶ Religious coping may be effective in reducing the depression because the feeling of meaning, control, safety, positivity and hope presented by religion to people may console people against the incidents, help them assign a meaning to all negativities and contribute to the *development of personal integrity and spiritual maturity*.⁶⁷ Religious coping may have different forms in human life: trust, gratitude, patience with the idea of being tested, paying and participation in

⁶⁴ Behlül Tokur, *Stres ve Din* (Istanbul: Çamlıca, 2017), 109.

⁶⁵ Adem Şahin, "Din Kaynaklı Stres Üzerine Bir Araştırma", *Selçuklu Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 21 (2006), 147.

⁶⁶ Göcen, "Tüp Bebek Tedavisi Almış Kadınların Dini Başa Çıkma Süreçleri", 173.

⁶⁷ Ayten, *Din ve Sağlık*, 38.

prayers.⁶⁸ *“Realizing the value of the moment and beloved ones was like a warning to me thanks to Allah. It helped me organize the points in which I was or we were failing.”* (Participant 51); *“I think considering this pandemic as a lesson to the humanity who were boasting about themselves and were in a delusion would be better. O humanity! You should pull yourself together! Allah is present and sees everything.”* (Participant 223); *“I had more faith and increased my gratitude.”* (Participant 147); *“I realized that we came to this world for a purpose and that Allah as the owner of the universe has the power for anything.”* (Participant. 258) These statements indicate that young people consider these stressful events as a warning and test by Allah. It is safe to state that such considerations facilitate assigning a meaning to stressful events and coping with such events because the processes of assigning a meaning as well as assessing and directing stressful events may be a significant factor in reducing and increasing the stress.⁶⁹ These results also matched the relevant literature. The study by Tokur (2018) indicated that perceiving the stressful events as a test had a positive impact on the intensity of desperate thoughts, the idea of helplessness, feeling empty and having negative thoughts.⁷⁰

It is also clear that there is an increase in the youngsters’ practices of praying, reading Quran and preparing for the eternal life. It is safe to state that religious belief is effective in young people’s orientation toward such religious practices because there is an eternal life where people will live forever after their death according to Islam. People believe that they will be rewarded for their mortal religious acts in the eternal world they believe they will reach after their death.⁷¹ Quran and hadiths, the main sources of Islam, can present many examples in this regard:

The Day every soul will find what it has done of good present [before it] and what it has done of evil, it will wish that between itself and that [evil] was a great distance. And Allah warns you of Himself, and Allah is Kind to [His] servants.”⁷²

Abu Hurayra narrated the following from the Prophet: Allah said *“I prepared various blessings for my true servants in paradise, and these blessings were not seen, heard or imagined by any person before. Abu Hurayra also suggested reading the following verse: “So, no one knows the delight of eyes that has been reserved for them in secret, as a reward of what they used to do.”⁷³*

Accordingly, it is fair to state that young people who feel that they are moral creatures have made efforts to fulfill Allah’s orders to prepare themselves for the

⁶⁸ Hayati Hökelekli, *Psikoloji, Din ve Eğitim Yönüyle İnsani Değerler* (Istanbul: Dem Yay., 2013), p. 117.

⁶⁹ Doğan Cüceloğlu, *İnsan ve Davranışı* (Istanbul: Remzi, 1998), 325.

⁷⁰ Behlül Tokur, *İmtihan Psikolojisi; Var Olmanın Hakkını Vermek: İmtihan* (Ankara: Fecr Yay., 2018), 143.

⁷¹ Muhammed Abdelhaleem, “Kur’an’da Ahiret- Dünya ve Dünya Hayatı”, trans: Şehmus Demir, *Ekev Akademi Dergisi* 1/3 (November 1998), 329.

⁷² Ali ‘Imran 3/30.

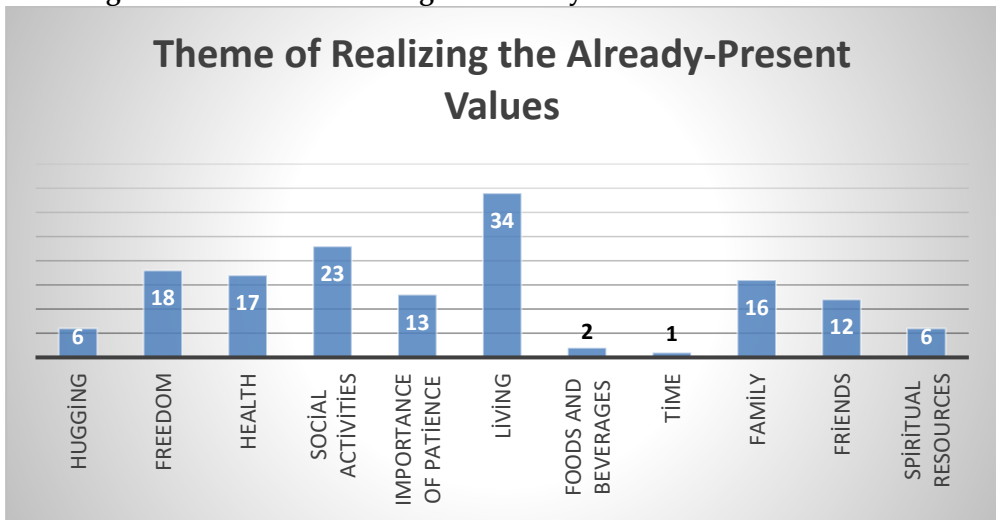
⁷³ Bukhari, “*Badiu al Halq*”, 8.

Last Day. However, religious beliefs may not always yield positive results in helping people overcome the problems they have. People may give different reactions to same events in the same physical and social environment. For instance, one may say “O Allah, what did I do wrong that you punished me like this”, while another one may say “O Allah, thank you for every blessing” against a stressful event.⁷⁴ For instance, according to Pargament, one may blame Allah for the stressful event one undergoes, which may increase the stress and despair one has. This is also called negative religious coping.⁷⁵ “I realized how much people were afraid of death and that they realized Allah’s presence. Therefore, I realized the benevolence in what we considered as malevolent.” (Participant 32); “We realized how important the permission of God while making a plan. The sentence ‘If Allah permits’ used to sound like a joke but this is what we are experiencing now.” (Participant 220) These statements indicate that most of the youngsters did not use a negative religious coping strategy against the stressful event they experienced. Furthermore, as understood from the content analyses made in line with the statements of the youngsters, 471 out of 541 codes were coded under the *positive change* main theme, which is the greatest indicator in this regard because negative changes should have been present more if the otherwise had been the case. This result also matched the relevant literature. The study by Mehmedoğlu (2011) suggested that Turkish people adopted Allah’s titles reflecting compassion and mercy rather than the titles indicating Allah’s wrath and anger.⁷⁶

1.3. Positive Psycho-Social Attitudes and Thoughts

1.3.1. Realizing the Already-Present Values

Figure 3: Theme of Realizing the Already-Present Values



⁷⁴ Doğan Cüceloğlu, *İnsan ve Davranışı*, 325.

⁷⁵ Kenneth I. Pargament, “Acı ve Tatlı: Dindarlığın Bedelleri ve Faydaları Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme”, trans. Ali U. Mehmedoğlu, *Çanakkale Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 7/1 (2005), 303.

⁷⁶ Ali Ulvi Mehmedoğlu, *Tanrıyı Tasavvur Etmek* (İstanbul: Çamlıca, 2011), 198-243.

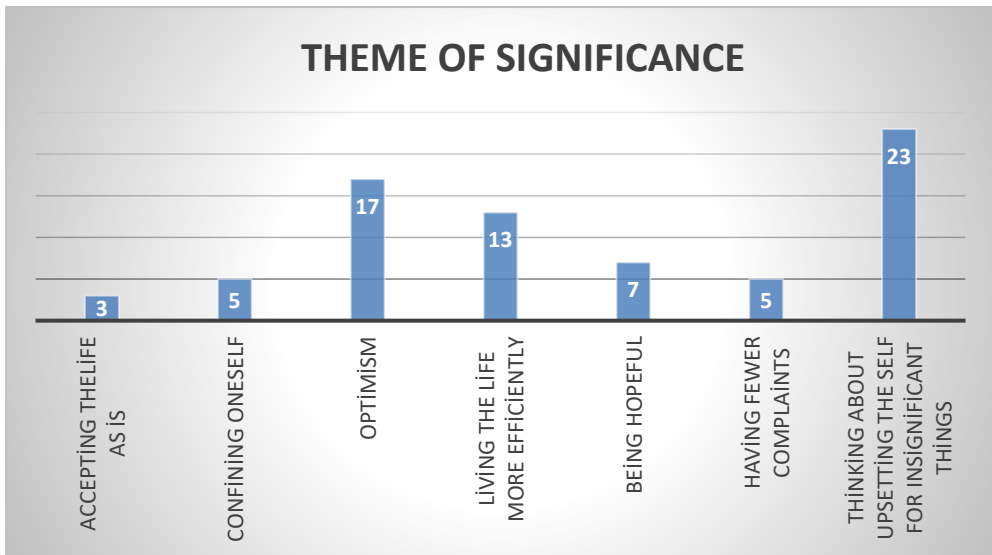
Another theme under the positive psycho-social change is the theme of realizing the already-present values. Eleven sub-themes under this theme were coded for 150 times. Based on then frequency of coding, these themes are as follows: living - 34, spiritual resources - 23, social activities - 23, freedom - 18, health - 17, family - 16, importance of patience - 13, friends - 12, hugging - 6, foods and beverages - 2, and time - 1 code.

How would our lives be if death was totally out of our lives and if we would not age at all? This question can be answered as follows: Knowing that we are immortal and do not age might have caused us to delay everything in our lives. The idea that there is time for everything might have made all significant subjects and objects in our lives rather meaningless. However, the idea of mortality may wake us from this meaningless world of imagination. Such a feeling may reflect that the life on this world is limited and help people know the value of what they have and utilize the opportunities they encounter. Therefore, the awareness of death can be considered as an opportunity enabling us to be responsible for our presence. The fact that we come to this world only for once and non-repeated and restorable characteristic of the life does not make one's life meaningless but serve for the potential of adding more meaning to life.⁷⁷ It is without doubt that one of the most important impacts of COVID-19 on people is the idea that we are mortal creatures. This idea may help people realize the things which they had in their mind before but could not acknowledge or neglected in time. Realizing the values that add value to life may help people have more positive judgments toward their own lives because As understood from the statements *"I realized how meaningful and important most of the things that I did in my daily life were for a person. I discovered that even the slightest things could make one happy once again. From now on, I will consider the flower that I touch or the path that I walk on differently."* (Participant. 178); *"I understood that event the random, simple and insignificant things in our lives are actually a significant reason for being thankful. I had the chance of thinking about my wrongs or behaviors that I wanted to correct and practicing them."* (Participant. 162); *"I understood the importance of health better and realized the impact of religion on the life."* (Participant. 162); *"I thanked to God much more as I survived, kept on breathing, and had the chance of being with my family and beloved ones."* (Participant. 48) which support the messages of the present study, participants emphasized that the COVID-19 pandemic reminded them of the importance of what they had in their lives. It is safe to state that such psychology of the participants arose from the thought that they would never come to this life in their current form once again. feeling the idea that the life has an end may help people abandon the insignificant actions in their daily lives and realize the value of the valuable subjects and objects.

⁷⁷ Viktor E. Frankl, *Hayatın Anlamı ve Psikoterapi* (Istanbul: Say Yay, 2019), 62-64.

1.3.2. The Life Having a More Significant Structure

Figure 4. Theme of Significance



Another theme under the psycho-social theme is the *significance* theme. Seven sub-themes under the significance theme were coded for 85 times. Based on the frequency of ordering, these themes were as follows: thinking about upsetting the self for insignificant things - 23, optimism - 17, living the life more efficiently - 13, being hopeful - 7, having fewer complaints - 5, confining oneself - 5, and accepting the life as is - 3 code.

The meaning of life is a concept that can be achieved by practicing the life itself. A person cannot transfer a meaning to another person or receive a meaning from that person. In other words, a meaning is not an experience that can be purchased like a computer application discovered by another person. Therefore, the meanings hidden in the “moments” one encounters in the daily life need to be discovered by the same person. The painful and happy moments in our daily lives such as marriage, separation or death may help us discover the meaning of life.⁷⁸ Feeling themselves as a mortal creature, people may consider what they experienced in their previous years, which may direct them to live their future life in a more meaningful manner. Some of the participants made the following statements to reflect that they looked at their life more positively and meaningfully following the stressful pandemic: “I learned to be more optimistic toward the life and to set myself a new path.” (Participant. 90); “Following this period, I discovered that I needed to guide my life better.” (Participant. 116); “I learned to get pleasure from the insignificant things and not to be unhappy in case of any negative events.” (Participant. 107); “The meaning and importance of life increased.” (Participant. 294). Witnessing tragic events

⁷⁸ Bahadır, *İnsanın Anlam Arayışı ve Din*, 41.

may result in perceiving the stressful or extremely important events of the past as less important. For instance, an event that concerns and stresses one in the past may become ordinary and neglected in time. Knowing death will happen one day may become the most important idea in people's minds during these harsh times, which may mean that every stressful event or process is temporary. The following statements from some participants may be an example in this regard: *"I faced the reality that the things or events that I was concerned with before the pandemic were actually insignificant."* (Participant. 136); *"I learned that the life was more than consuming something or visiting places."* (Katılımcı. 189); *"I say to myself that I exaggerated some of the events in my past.."* (Participant. 240).

One of the important sources for the life to gain meaning is the religion. It is without doubt that religious beliefs can serve as an important step for people's search for meaning. Additionally, religion can provide meaning-related opportunities to people in terms of the relationships with the self, environment and existence of love, which cannot be performed by any other structures. As a structure providing meaning to people's lives, religion may assign meanings to experiences that cannot be understood at first and turn these experiences into an acceptable form. This trait of religion can be strongly felt in the events deeply affecting people's lives. A couple of meaning-related references within the religion are used for that purpose. These can be evaluated in two categories: 1. Being hopeful and optimistic toward the future with the mercy of Allah, 2. Making people think about its purposes and directing them to be active in terms of fulfilling these purposes.⁷⁹ The aforementioned points can be understood from the following statements of participants, *"Yes, my perspective and actually everything changed a lot; now I believe that the life is more valuable, that we and this world are temporary, and that we need to turn to Allah."* (Participant. 241); *"I started to believe that we need to be more positive and thankful to Allah for everything we have."* (Participant. 390); *"I understood that the meaning of life was living in a better form in the path to Allah and with the blessings of Allah."* (Participant. 193); *"My hopes, love and hopeful perspective toward the life were consolidated alhamdulillah."* (Participant. 97).

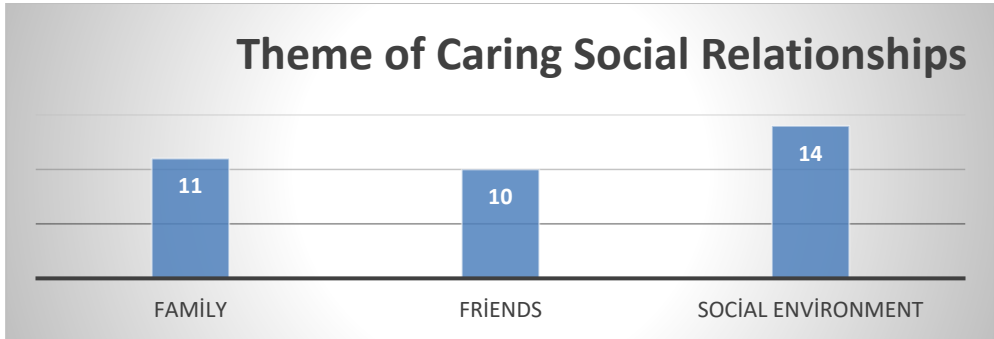
In conclusion, it is safe to state that COVID-19 created positive changes in the youngsters' perceptions of the meaning of life. These changes can be reflected as follows: being more optimistic toward the life and hopeful toward the future and having more like and satisfaction toward the life compared to the past. One of the important details catching attention here is that participants explained these positive changes with reference to their religious beliefs as follows: *"I started to feel that we need to be thankful to Allah more", "alhamdulillah", "I understood the importance of living with the blessings of Allah"*. Therefore, it is safe to state that religious beliefs were impactful on the positive changes young people experienced in terms of the meaning of life. These results also matched the relevant literature. The study by

⁷⁹Bahadır, *İnsanın Anlam Arayışı ve Din*, 127-150.

Ayten indicated that religious beliefs are important references in the period of coping and adding meaning to human life.⁸⁰

1.3.3. Caring Social Relationships

Figure 5: Theme of Caring Social Relationships



Another theme under the positive psycho-social thoughts and behaviors theme present in the content analysis that was performed in the light of the data obtained from the participants was the *theme of caring social relationships*. Three themes under this theme were coded for 35 times. Based on the frequency of coding, there themes are as follows: social environment - 14, family - 11, friends - 10 codes.

Deaths arising from COVID-19 in daily life may cause people to face the reality that they or their families may die, which may particularly direct people who feel that they are mortal creatures to revise their family relationships. With deep awareness of death, people may have certain changes about how they will spend the life credit and about knowing the value of the people in their lives. Accordingly, with such an awareness, people may re-discover the beliefs and values of the society they live in. Knowing the death will come one day may result in understanding the value of family members more and being more careful in the relationships with them.⁸¹ "I understood the importance of not delaying something and spending more time with the beloved." (Participant 68); "I discovered that I wanted to spend more time with the people that I loved." (Participant 105), "It directed me to re-question my relationships with myself and the people around me." (Participant 199); "Yes, I started to call my relatives, particularly my mother and father, more often." (Participant; 283); "I should show my beloved ones that I love them more." (Participant. 421) These statements indicate that the COVID-19 period directed most of the youngsters to re-

⁸⁰ Ayten, *Tanrıya Sığınmak*, 55.

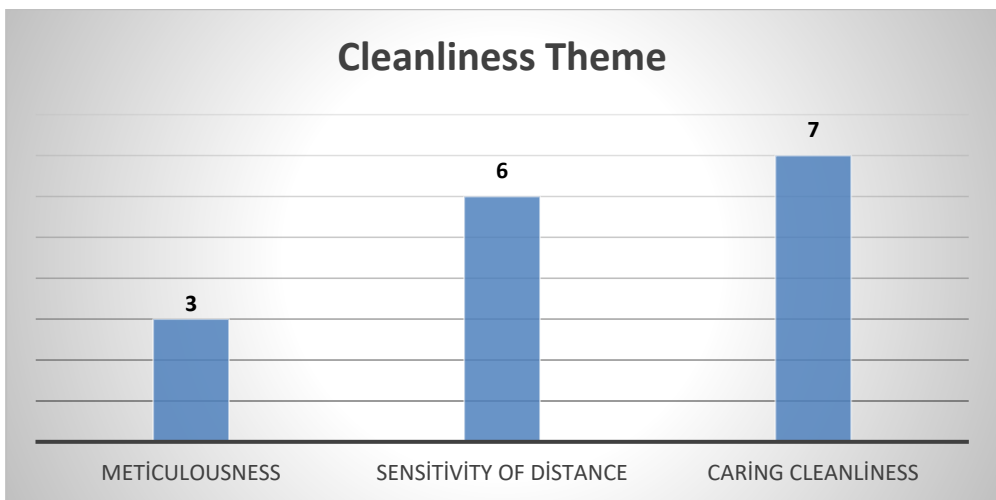
⁸¹ Erol Göka, *Ölme, Ölümün ve Geride Kalanların Psikolojisi* (İstanbul: Timaş Yay., 2010), 55-56.

consider their family relationships. Death of the people around us reminds us the reality that we will also die one day; therefore, we may regret the mistakes or heartbreaking actions we performed toward our families.

As understood from the results of content analysis and descriptive analysis results, young people had more positive changes in terms of their relationships with their families in the COVID-19 period, and families filled a significant gap that added value to the life. The results presented in this section also matched the results in the relevant literature. According to the results of the study by Lambert et al., family is one of the most important sources that add value to life according to youngsters.⁸²

1.3.4. Cleanliness

Figure 6. Cleanliness Theme



Another theme under the positive psycho-social thoughts and behaviors theme is the *cleanliness* theme. Three sub-themes under this theme were coded for 16 times. Based on the frequency of coding, these themes are as follows: caring cleanliness - 7, sensitivity of distance - 6, meticulousness - 3 code.

One of the issues arising from COVID-19 is the increased sensitivity of cleanliness. Experts on the social media and TV warned people to perform cleaning to decrease the risk of infection and prevent the spread.⁸³ The virus may spread by the droplets from the mouth or nose of a person infected by COVID-19 (by

⁸²Lambert et al., "Family As A Salient Source Of Meaning In Young Adulthood", 369.

⁸³World Health Organization (WHO), "Corona Virus Disease Advice For The Public", (Date Accessed: 29 June 2020).

coughing and sneezing), direct contacts, and contacts with the infected surfaces, which may increase⁸⁴ the sensitivity of cleanliness among people compared to their previous lives.. The results of the present study support the thoughts of the authors. Statements of the participants indicate that people are more sensitive toward the cleanliness rules compared to previous times. *"I value cleanliness more now."* (Participant 59); *"Cleanliness was important. But we discovered we are not sterile and clean enough. I hope we will be more careful from now on."*(Participant 77); *"I started to care hygiene rules more."*(Participant 140) These statements support the aforementioned point. However, the intention in increased cleanliness sensitivity is the sufficient sensitivity toward the cleaning rules compared to previous times. Otherwise, viruses like Covid-19 that infect people may cause panic and fears among people. In such a case, people who think they will die may experience fears and concerns. People may have cleaning-related habits to prevent such fears and concerns to prevent the adverse impacts of the pandemic, which may in time turn into worse situations.

2. Negative Changes and Transformations Regarding the Life Perceived by Youngsters During the COVID-19 Pandemic

As noted above, witnessing pain during daily life may add value to life by enabling people to understand the value of important subjects and objects. However, the contrary may also happen. In such cases, an existential feeling of emptiness as well as the idea that the life is meaningless and everything is futile may emerge.⁸⁵ The stressful events in people's lives may be caused by certain internal reasons, fear, concerns, pressure, guiltiness and certain physical problems. As a result, people may develop fears, concerns, tension, discomfort and hopelessness. To overcome such issues, people may develop certain defense mechanisms like the following: aggression, introversion, neglecting the truth.⁸⁶ Of the participants in the study examining the changes regarding the meaning of life during the COVID-19 pandemic, 303 people mentioned positive changes, while 41 people had negative changes, and 97 people experienced neutral changes. People who mentioned about the negative changes in their lives noted that their life became meaningless, that their fears of death increased to a degree affecting their lives, and that their concern levels also increased. Therefore, people who need to find a meaning in their lives during or after the pandemic may be offered counseling service.

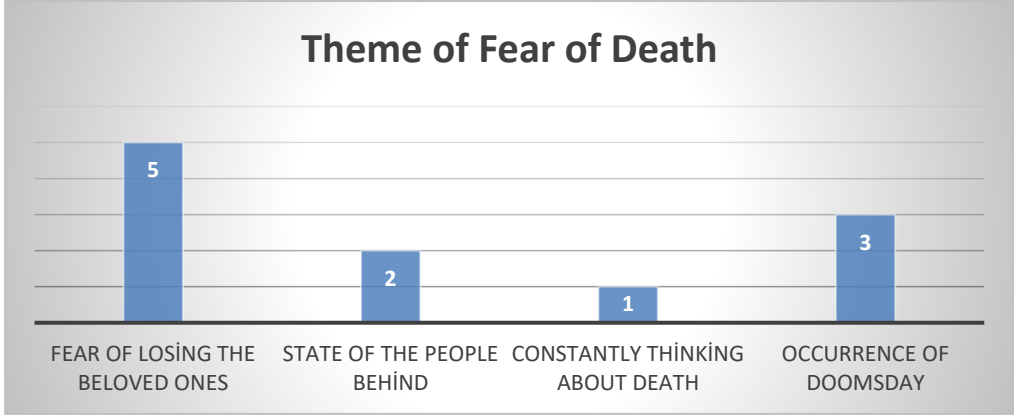
⁸⁴ Acı Badem Sağlık Grubu, "Yeni Corona Virüs (COVID-19) Nasıl Bulaşır?", *Youtube* (29 June 2020), 00.00.13-00.04.30.

⁸⁵ Frankl, *Duyulmayan Anlam Çılgılığı*, trans. Selçuk, 25.

⁸⁶ Frankl, *İnsanın Anlam Arayışı*, trans. Selçuk Budak, 150.

2.1. Fear of Death

Figure 7: Theme of Fear of Death



Another theme under the theme of psycho-social change (negative change) is the theme of *fear of death*. This theme was coded for 11 times in 521 general codes, and it covers four sub-themes. Based on the frequency of coding, these themes are as follows: fear of losing the beloved ones - 5, occurrence of doomsday - 3, state of the people behind - 2, constantly thinking about death – 1 code.

Fear can be reflected as the total of emotional and cognitive reactions toward a fact or situation with a known resource.⁸⁷ Regarding the fear of death, it may be defined as the fear that the presence of people on this world will end one day.⁸⁸ People who hear the passing of people around them may undergo two processes. The first is the positive changes in the attitudes toward the meaning of life. Moreover, the second is that the contrary situation may happen, and the life may become more meaningless and full of fear and concerns. The adverse impact on life with the increased fear of death thinking that oneself or the people around will die in this period may be an example in this regard. “Of course, differences happened because you may not exist in 14 days after the infection. Knowing this may frighten us, and we will restrict our lives and stay away from people even when they say the pandemic is over.” (Participant 119); “My fear of losing the beloved ones increased significantly. What’s more, the idea of failing to support them during harsh times due to this disease became a source of stress for me.” (Participant 86) These statements indicate that the concerns of infection increased some of young people’s fear of death. Furthermore, it is safe to state that participants are concerned with the thoughts of death among the people around them, rather than the passing of themselves, and that this issue increased the level of stress and concerns in their lives. “I am not afraid of death but I started to think about what my son could do or to whom I could entrust him if I die.” (Participant 49) This and similar statements indicate that thinking about the state of beloved ones

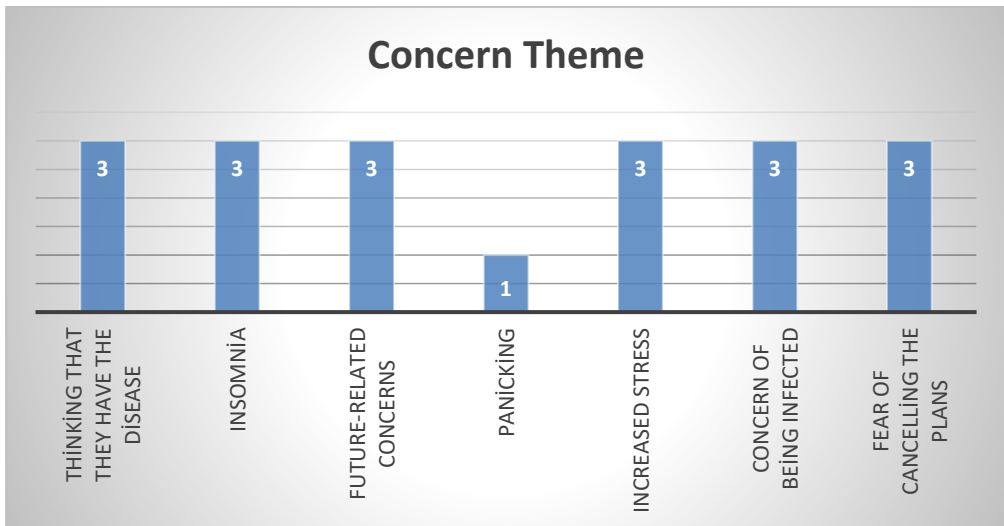
⁸⁷ Rod Plotnik, *Psikolojiye Giriş*, trans. Tamer Geniş (Istanbul: Kaknüs Yay., 2009), 517.

⁸⁸ Ahmet Cevzci, *Felsefe Terimleri Sözlüğü* (Istanbul, Paradigma Yay., 2003), 305.

after their death affects people adversely. Some of the participants had advanced fear of death. Statements like *"I have difficulties sleeping at night and see in my dreams that somebody dies."* (Participant 56) indicate that death shows itself among certain participants, even in their dreams. The attitudes and thoughts toward death might have affected such psychology of the participants. Association of death rather with the elderly may cause young people to think that death is quite away for them. Additionally, the idea that their expectations and targets would be interrupted owing to death at a young age might have directed young people to such a fear.

2.2. Concern

Figure 8: Concern Theme



Another theme under the psycho-social change theme is the *concern* theme. The concern theme is divided into seven sub-themes. Based on the frequency of coding, these themes are as follows: thinking that they have the disease - 3, insomnia - 3, future-related concerns - 3, increased stress - 3, concern of being infected - 3, fear of cancelling the plans - 3, panicking - 1 code. Based on the content analysis graph, a total of 19 codes (out of 541 codes) regarding the concern-related sub-themes were present. Considering the descriptive and content analyses, the concern levels of youngsters partially increased in the COVID-19 period.

Every people may have concerns at varied rates in the natural flow of life. Concern can be defined as the state of fear felt toward a case or situation with an unknown source.⁸⁹ There are many life events causing concerns: loss of reputation, social changes, state of uncertainty, death, separation, emotional losses, and

⁸⁹ Tülin Gençöz, "Korku: Sebepleri, Sonuçları ve Baş Etme Yolları", *Kriz Dergisi* 6/2 (1992), 10.

financial problems.⁹⁰ The COVID-19 period that pushes people toward uncertainty in terms of their health and future can be an example. If concerns become the center of people's daily lives and if people focus on the concerns, then people may have difficulties maintaining their normal lives, which may cause people to have psychological issues.⁹¹ Some of the participants indicated that their concerns increased, as understood from their following statements: "I am concerned with the idea that my planned actions would be interrupted or not take place." (Participant 143); "I left my job. So, I have concerns about my future." (Participant 58); "I am concerned about marriage and my children to be born." (Participant 249) Results indicated that participants were concerned more about future-related plans and financial life. Moreover, as understood from the statements of other three participants, people in the study were concerned about becoming infected and infecting others: "My concerns increased with the idea that I may harm others or bring the virus to the home when I return." (Participant 126), "I always feel sick. I started to panic and fear coughing." (Participant 67); "Fear of disease and death frightens us." (Participant 318). As understood from the statements of the participants, it is safe to state that participants with higher concern levels are those who mentioned negative changes in terms of the meaning of life. Therefore, as noted above, certain events people experience in their daily lives may direct them to existential emptiness, which may cause concerns among people.

2.3. The Life Gaining a Meaningless Form

Figure 9: Meaninglessness Theme



Another theme under the negative psycho-social change theme is the *meaninglessness* theme. Four sub-themes under this theme were coded for 20 times. Based on the frequency of coding, these themes are as follows: feeling emptiness - 6, despair - 6, increase in negative thoughts - 6, and negative existential questioning - 2 codes.

⁹⁰ Fatmaz Öz, *Sağlık Alanında Temel Kavramlar* (Ankara: İmaj İç ve Dış Ticaret Yay., 2004), 160.

⁹¹ Doğan Cüceloğlu, *İnsan ve Davranışı*, 440.

People may experience many stressful events in their daily lives, which include uncertainty, loss of job and death of a beloved one. The attitudes we have toward the painful incidents which cannot be controlled by the people may add new meanings to our lives. The painful incidents that have the potential of adding meaning to human life may create meaninglessness or existential emptiness based on displaying a wrong attitude in life. The state of meaninglessness may occur as feeling empty, having increased stress and suffering distress in the psychological world.⁹² Of the participants in the study, 41 people stated that they experienced negative changes in terms of the meaning of life in the stressful periods such as COVID-19. Some of the participants stated that their lives became meaningless and that they felt emptiness following the pandemic: *"I realized how meaningless this world is once again."* (Participant 66); *"Everything started to be boring."* (Participant 37); *"I cannot estimate. It is like I am floating in the mid air."* (Participant 155); *"I have been experiencing a strange feeling of emptiness."* (Participant 177) Some of the participants noted that they were more pessimist and desperate toward the life. *"I totally became pessimist."* (Participant 192); *"Unfortunately nothing is going to stay as the same."* (Participant 408); *"I just started to be pessimistic."*(Participant. 398) It is safe to state that such thoughts of the participants might have arisen from the intense feeling of uncertainty, increased fears of death felt by themselves or their beloved ones, intense exposure to negative news on the social media and television, failure in receiving sufficient social support as a result of the decreased communication with the people, and sudden changes in living conditions.

3. Neutral Changes and Transformations Regarding the Life Perceived by Youngsters During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Hearing and witnessing the death of the people with whom we share the same world may remind us the mortal characteristics of ours, which may result in certain changes in terms of people's death, their social relationships and meaning of life.⁹³ However, it cannot be stated that people experience changes in their perceptions of the life following every incident or stressful event. As a result of our research, 97 out of 441 people stated that they experienced no positive or negative changes in their perceptions of the meaning of the world during this period. Some of the participants noted that they were the people who already liked living and had responsibilities before the pandemic: *"No great changes occurred. I was already a person who liked the life and tried to live the moment. I now say that I fortunately discovered this before the pandemic."* (Participant 82); *"No changes occurred in my perception. I have social responsibilities."* (Participant 27) Some of the participants noted that they experienced no changes as they were already aware of their mortal

⁹² Frankl, *Psikoterapi ve Din*, trans. V. Atayman, 99-103.

⁹³ Zehra Işık, *Sen Öldün Ben Büyüdüm Anne ve Babası Ölen Yetişkinler Üzerine* (Istanbul: Açılım Kitap, 2015), 38.

characteristics: *"I experienced no stress or concerns as I already thought that life was simple and that death was closer to us than ever."* (Participant 338); *"No, I always thought life was temporary. I still think so. There is a reason behind every action."* (Participant 69); *"I experienced no changes in terms of my perception of the life because the concept of death that the virus thought the people is not so unfamiliar to us. As we were already raised with the reality of death, no new thoughts regarding the meaning of death emerged during the pandemic."* (Participant 213) Some of the participants associated the changes in their attitudes with the exaggerations toward this period: *"I do not think my perception will change because I think the reactions are a bit exaggerated."* (Participant 117); *"People are exaggerating this period. Therefore, no changes happened from my perspective."* (Participant 52) In conclusion, we believe that no changes occurred in the attitudes of certain participants toward the meaning of life during this period. Experience of no changes in the attitudes may be explained with their high satisfaction of life before the pandemic and awareness of death.

Conclusion

The following were understood when the data were compared with the results of other studies.

The impacts of certain religious and spiritual elements on the meaning of life in the fight against the stress arising from the pandemic come to the forefront in an undeniable manner. It was observed that young people had more positive coping strategies than the negative ones during this period. These include showing patience with the idea of being tested, mentioning problems to a divine authority and asking help from that authority, faith, gratitude and remembering Allah mostly with mercy-related titles. Young people experienced certain changes and transformations in their beliefs and prayers, not only in terms of the meaning of life. These include increase in the frequency of praying, avoiding wasting, realizing Allah's presence and power, and discovering the personal limits before Allah's power.

Important relationships were found between positive coping and meaning changes in the present study. Young people who utilized the religious coping methods in this period were the people who thought they experienced positive changes toward the life because all of the people who were thankful toward Allah in this period were those who experienced positive changes and transformations in their lives, which can be reflected as an evidence in this regard. However, almost all of the people who underwent negative changes and transformations during this period did not use religious coping method. Therefore, it is safe to state that religious belief serves as a significant step in assigning a meaning to events, adding a meaning to life and coping with the negative events.

Youngsters have experienced positive changes and transformations, rather than the negative ones, during the pandemic. These positive changes include the following: being more sensitive toward the social relationships and family members compared to old times, discovering the beauties of this life, the stressful and exaggerated processes or concepts of previous times gaining a less significant position, being more hopeful and optimist toward the future, and learning to confine themselves to what they have in their lives. It is fair to state that people faced death during the pandemic and discovered new actions or practices they considered worth being experienced. Efforts can be made to examine people's opportunities of having actions or practices worth being experienced, and contributions can be made to the meaning of life. At this point, we believe that the present study yielded significant results. There were mostly positive transformations regarding the meaning of participants' lives, and it is possible to provide counseling and guidance to people based on the themes found. For instance, people who are grateful to Allah or certain people may keep a diary of gratitude, which may help people have increased awareness and optimism toward the life.

However, some of the young people underwent negative changes and transformations toward the meaning of life. These changes can be listed as follows: concerns of death, fear of losing the beloved people, thinking about how the people left behind will do, pessimism toward the life, experiencing anxiety disorder, increased stress level, and insomnia. Factors as the reasons for these changes include excessive exposure to the negative news on the media or hearing the death news of the people around us.

As changes can be positive or negative, no changes in terms of the meaning of life may occur. A similar result was found in the present study. Some of the youngsters stated that they experienced no changes in terms of the meaning of life. They associated the relevant causes with their positive perception of life before the pandemic and traits of caring the social relationships, having awareness of death and a strict relationship with Allah. Therefore, it is safe to state that people who feel the meaning of life may meet the further crises in the following periods in a more prepared form and be able to cope with them. Accordingly, it is important for people to live in line with the meaning of their lives in the period of normalization. In the world of globalization, the diseases also spread in a global manner. Considering the fact that the feeling of emptiness and meaningless is a common reality in such a period, it is fair to consider the meaning of life a more important topic. Thus, preventive and curative studies regarding the meaning of all life periods including the early adulthood are considered important.

This study may contribute to the guidance, counseling and educational activities to be performed during and after the pandemic for the purpose of revealing what sort of awareness and transformation periods the early adults underwent in terms of the meaning of life. Studies to be performed may contribute

to early adults in the process of assigning a meaning to life and performing the developmental duties successfully, which may prevent the young adults from focusing on negative attitudes and help them prepare themselves better for the next developmental period and be happy. In addition to this study with certain limitations due to being a qualitative study, other qualitative as well as quantitative and mixed studies can be conducted. For instance, studies on the changes and transformations in the other age periods in terms of the meaning of life during the COVID-19 or researches on the values (religious, spiritual and human values as well as the strength sources of people) that will add meaning to life in the fight against the concerns and stress that may arise from COVID-19 and similar issues can be performed. The contribution of these values to the coping period and adding a meaning to life can be examined. As being cross-sectional is one of the limitations of the present study, longitudinal studies covering the post COVID-19 period can be conducted to better understand the changes and transformations in the youth due to the pandemic.

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Changes and Transformations Regarding the Life Perceived by Youngsters During the
COVID-19 Pandemic

A Study on the Advanced Marriage Age Among Youngsters from the Perspective of Religious Sociology*

Vildan DİNDAR**

Abstract

Being sociolog requires a different perspective and a different examination from the ordinary people. In a period in which post-modernization replaced modernization, the world is increasingly shrinking due to the effect of the globalization, the cities turn gradually into metropol ones and standard of living is gradually rising, the transformation of piety and family needs to be carefully observed. The primary objective of this study is to examine the main reasons of raising of marriage age among youth both sociologically and theologically. Moreover, this research was shaped by the assumption that the raising of marriage age was affected by the process of urbanization, rationalization, individualism, and secularization. Furthermore, the qualitative method was used in the relevant study which adopted the phenomenological approach. It consists of a theoretical and an applied section. In the theoretical section, it was discussed the concepts of family and marriage, the marriage age, and the main reasons of raising of the marriage age. In the applied section, it was interviewed with 15 people who defined themselves as conservatists and were university graduate, regarding how they approached to marriage and family and the main reasons of why they delayed their marriage. In addition to these, their relationship with the city, their marriage preferences in the context of urbanity level, and their religious life was evaluated.

Keywords: Sociology of Religion, Youth, Marriage, Religion, Secularization.

Gençlerde Evlilik Yaşının Uzaması Üzerine Din Sosyolojisi Açısından Bir Araştırma

Öz

Sosyolog olmak, herkesin bildiği yahut bildiğini sandığı konulara farklı bir bakış açısı ile bakmayı ve olanı olduğu gibi incelemeyi gerektirir. Modernleşmenin yerini postmodernleşmeye bıraktığı, küreselleşmenin etkisiyle dünyanın giderek küçüldüğü, kentlerin büyüyerek metropol halini aldığı, yaşam standartlarının giderek yükseldiği bir

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A Study on the Advanced Marriage Age Among Youngsters from the Perspective of Religious Sociology

dönemde gençliğin, dindarlığın ve ailenin geçirdiği dönüşüm dikkatle düşünmeyi gerektirmektedir. Bu çalışma gençlerde evlilik yaşının uzamasının nedenlerini hem dini hem de sosyolojik bir perspektifle inceleme amacı taşımaktadır. Araştırma; kentleşme, rasyonelleşme, bireyselleşme ve sekülerleşme süreçlerinin evlilik yaşının ötelenmesinde etkili olduğunu öne sürmektedir. Fenomenolojik yaklaşımın benimsendiği söz konusu araştırmada nitel araştırma yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Çalışma, teorik ve uygulamalı olmak üzere iki bölümden oluşmaktadır. Teorik kısımda, aile ve evlilik kavramları, gençlik ve evlilik yaşı, evlilik yaşının uzamasında etkili olduğu düşünülen süreçler ele alınıp tartışılmıştır. Uygulamalı kısımda ise, yükseköğrenim görmüş, kentli, kendini muhafazakâr olarak tanımlayan 15 kişi ile mülakat yapılarak, aile ve evliliği nasıl değerlendirdikleri, evliliği geciktirmelerinde yahut evlilik kararını geç vermelerinde etkili olan faktörlerin neler olduğu saha çalışması yoluyla çözümlenmeye çalışılmıştır. Kent ile kurdukları ilişkiler ve kentlilik düzeyi bağlamında evlilik tercihleri, dini algıları ve dindarlık pratiklerine ilişkin değerlendirmeler yapılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Din Sosyolojisi, Gençlik, Evlilik, Din, Sekülerleşme.

Summary

This study aims to investigate the main reasons of why the marriage of youth increased in terms of both a religious and sociological perspectives. There are many research which is related to family and religion in the perspective of social change. However, there is no other study which focused on our subject. According to this study, moderity, urbanization, individualizm and secularization accelerated the social change and these changes affect the approaches of youth towards the religion and marriage. This main hypothesis consists of the questions such as 'how urban life affected youth', 'what is the relationship between the long education life and the marriage age', 'how the developments and transformation of in religious life affected the youth's marriage', 'how individualism and secularization affected the marriage'. This study aims to help to the researchers whose main target is to understand youth.

Because it is not possible to examine every aspect of a social change, this study is limited to a particular frame and sample group. The sample group's age is above the average marriage age (according to TÜİK). So it was utilized from qualitative method. This study consists of two parts. Moreover, semi-structured interview and the documents were used. In the first part, there is literature review regarding family, youth, marriage, religion, education, modernization and so on. The questions in the interviews were determined with reference to the literature review. In the applied research section, there is interview section. This sample was composed of those who are citizen, educated and single males and females who are above marriage age average. The main reason of why interviewees who are above 30 were assumed as youth is due to the existing society's approach. However, youthfulness is accepted as passing from childhood to adulthood in the West. This period increasingly ambiguates the limits of youthfulness due to the modernization, urbanization and industrialization.

Modernity has changed every aspect of our life. One of these is the phenomenon of marriage. The understanding of prosperous and comfortable life may be lead to the long educational life, giving priority to the carrier and status and delaying marriage for the sake of these priorities. According to the data of TUIK (Turkey Statistical Institute) the marriage age in both males and females increased. There are many reasons of this situation such as social, economic, cultural and many different reasons. Although the marriage age rised in every group society, this study is limited to those who defined themselves as conservatist and religious. It is because of the main themes are religiosity, religion and change. Therefore, another criterion in choosing the interviewees is conservatism and religiosity. They were asked open ended questions. In case of where interviewees did not answer, alternative questions were asked in order to examine deeply.

As a result of the interviews, those who attended to the study exhibited positive approaches. That is, they emphasized the importance of the concept of family and marriage. Because many aspect of life have changed during the modern period, social adulthood process prominently increased. Furthermore, the participants evaluated the ideal marriage age in the context of the ageing. According to the applied research, even though they are biologically eligible for marriage, they do not want to marry without reaching to the particular social and economic level. In addition to this, the atmosphere of urban life plays an important role in delaying the marriage. Other reasons for the increasing of the marriage are rapid social life, social athmosphere enables indiviualism, the attractiveness of living alone. The heterogenic structure of cities led to the secularization of youths. The more education and urbanity level rises, the more the marriage age increases.

Özet

Bu çalışma gençlerde evlilik yaşının uzamasının nedenlerini hem dini hem de sosyolojik bir perspektifle inceleme amacı taşımaktadır. Sosyal değişme perspektifinde aile ve din konusunu ele alan pek çok araştırma mevcuttur. Ancak evlilik yaşının artışı sosyolojik ve dini bir perspektifle ele alan bir çalışmaya rastlanmamış olması, araştırmanın yapılmasını gerekli kılmıştır. Araştırma, modernite, kentleşme, bireyselleşme ve sekülerleşmenin toplumsal değişimin hızını ve yönünü arttırdığı, bu değişimlerin gençlerin aile, evlilik ve din konusundaki düşüncelerini etkilediği hipotezinden hareketle gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu temel hipotez daha sonra, "kent hayatı ve metropol yaşamının gençlerin eylem ve zihin dünyalarını nasıl etkilediği", "eğitim sürecinin uzaması ile evlilik yaşının artışı arasında nasıl bir ilişki olduğu", "günümüzde dini hayatta meydana gelen değişim ve dönüşümlerin muhafazakar gençlerin evlilik ve eş seçim tercihlerini nasıl şekillendirdiği", "bireyselleşme, dünyevileşme ve özgürleşme fikirlerinin evlilik yaşının artışı hangi şekillerde etkilediği" gibi sorular çerçevesinde alt hipotezlere ayrılmıştır. Araştırma, toplumsal değişimde aktif bir rol üstlenen, değişimin hem

öznesi hem de nesnesi olan gençliği anlamayı kendine amaç edinen araştırmacılara ışık tutmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Bilimsel bir çalışmada aynı anda toplumsal değişimin her alanını incelemek mümkün olmadığından çalışma belli bir çerçeve ve belli bir örneklem grubu ile sınırlandırılmıştır. Bu açıdan TÜİK'in yapmış olduğu Türk Aile Yapısı Araştırması istatistiki verilerine göre ortalama evlilik yaşının üzerinde kalan bekâr kişilerle çalışmanın yapılması planlanmıştır. Seçili örnekleme ulaşmanın güçlüğü ve evliliğin geciktirilmesinde etkili olan durumların analiz edilmek istenmesi nitel metodun kullanılmasını gerekli kılmıştır. Çalışma nitel bir araştırma olup iki bölümden oluşmaktadır. Çalışmada veri toplama maksadıyla yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme tekniği ve belgelerin incelenmesinden yararlanılmıştır. Birinci bölümde aile, gençlik, evlilik, din, eğitim, modernleşme, sekülerleşme gibi temalar dahilinde mevcut literatür taranmıştır. Literatür taramasından hareketle mülakatlar esnasında araştırmacıya yol gösterecek olan temalar belirlenmiş ve sorular bu temalardan hareketle oluşturulmuştur. Uygulamalı araştırma bölümünde ise amaca yönelik belirlenen örneklem grubu ile mülakat çalışması yapılmıştır. Bu örneklem grubu, ana ve alt temalara uygun olarak seçilen, TÜİK 2001-2018 yılı kadın ve erkek ortalama evlenme yaşı istatistiklerine göre, ortalama evlilik yaşının üzerinde olan bekâr, kentli, eğitilmiş kişilerden oluşmaktadır. "Evliliği geciktirmiş kişi kimdir?" sorusundan hareketle evlilik yaşı istatistiklerine dayanarak ortalama evlilik yaşının üzerinde kalan kişiler evliliği geciktirmiş kişiler olarak düşünülmüştür. Görüşmecilerin "gençlik" kategorisi altında değerlendirilmesi ise günümüzde gençliğin 30'lu yaşları aşmış olması sebebiyledir. Gençlik, bir toplumda toplumsal değişim ve gelişimin yönü, seyri ve niteliğini yansıtmaya bakımından önemli bir kategoridir. Gençlik dönemi Batılı araştırmacılar tarafından çocukluktan yetişkinliğe geçiş dönemi şeklinde kabul edilmektedir. Bu dönem, günümüzde modernitenin, kentleşmenin ve sanayileşmenin de etkisiyle daha geniş bir sürece yayılmış ve hangi yaş gruplarına karşılık geldiği noktasındaki sınır giderek muğlaklaşmıştır.

Modernite, günümüzde her alanda değişim ve dönüşümler meydana getirmiştir. Bu alanlardan biri de evlilik kurumudur. Konforlu ve müreffeh bir yaşam telakkisi, gençlerin daha uzun yılları eğitim kurumlarında geçirmelerine, kariyer ve statü gibi kavramlara öncelik vererek evliliği daha ileriki yaşlara ertelemelerine yol açabilmektedir. TÜİK tarafından yapılan araştırmaların istatistiki sonuçları, Türkiye'de ortalama evlilik yaşının tarihsel süreçte hem kadınlar hem de erkeklerde önemli oranlarda artış gösterdiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Şüphesiz ki evlilik yaşının artış göstermesinin arka planında dini, sosyal, ekonomik, kültürel, pek çok farklı neden bulunmaktadır. Evlilik yaşının artış göstermesi durumu toplumun her kesiminde etkili olmakla birlikte, çalışma kendini muhafazakâr-dindar olarak nitelendiren toplum kesimi ile sınırlı tutulmuştur. Bu durumun nedeni ana temalardan birinin "din, dindarlık, değişim" olmasıdır. Bu nedenle görüşmecilerin seçilmesinde bir diğer kriter kendini "dindar" ya da "muhafazakâr" olarak tanımlayan kişiler olmuş ve kadın ve erkek her iki cinsiyet grubu örnekleme dahil

edilmiştir. Görüşmecilere, araştırmacının bizzat kendisi tarafından ana ve alt temalara uygun olarak hazırlanan açık uçlu sorular sorulmuştur. Görüşmecinin sorulan sorular karşısında fikri olmaması ya da kısa cevaplar vermesi durumunda alternatif açıcı sorular sorularak konu daha derinlikli olarak incelenmeye çalışılmıştır.

Görüşmeler neticesinde katılımcıların aile ve evlilik kavramlarına pozitif bir yaklaşım sergiledikleri gözlemlenmiştir. Son yüzyılda aile ve evlilik kurumu değişime, küçülmeye ve başkalaşmaya maruz kalsa da görüşmecilerin bu kurumlara "yuva", "güven", "huzur", "sevgi bağı" gibi kavramlar çerçevesinde vurgular yapmaları, bu kurumların hala önemini koruduğunu gösterir niteliktedir. Günümüzde toplumsal yaşamın giderek daha heterojen bir hal alması, çocukluk ve yetişkinlik arasındaki süreci uzatmış, yaşamın idame ettirilmesi için gerekli olan beceri ve sorumlulukların üstlenildiği yaş, diğer bir ifadeyle sosyal yetişkinlik süreci hissedilir biçimde artış göstermiştir. Mülakatlar esnasında katılımcıların ideal evlilik yaşını özellikle "olgunlaşma" kavramı çerçevesinde değerlendirdikleri gözlemlenmiştir. Sahadan gelen bulgular, gençlerin günümüzde biyolojik açıdan yetişkinlik düzeyine ulaşılsa da sosyal ve ekonomik erginlik düzeyine ulaşılmadan evlilik kararı almadıklarını ortaya koymaktadır. Kent hayatı ve metropolün getirdiği özgürlük ortamının gençlerin evliliği ertelemelerinde etkili olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Kentte gerçekleşen hızlı sosyal akış, bireyselleşmeye olanak tanıyan sosyal ortam, yalnız yaşamının konforuna alışma gibi durumlar, gençlerde evlilik yaşının artmasına sebebiyet vermektedir. Heterojen yapısıyla karşımıza çıkan kentler, bireylerin istek ve beklentilerinin dünyevileşmesine neden olmaktadır. Eğitim seviyesi ve kentli olma pratiği arttıkça evlilik yaşı da artış göstermektedir.

1. Concepts of Family and Marriage

Making a comprehensive definition of family is challenging since the concept of family has been shaped in line with the social developments since the early ages and displayed different characteristics in different societies. However, from a general perspective, family can be explained as the social unit that maintains the continuation of human race through biological relationships, that serves as the first step of socialization, that is used as a place where the culture formed thus far is passed down to following generations, and that has social as well as legal, biological and psychological aspects.¹ Family has never lost its social importance no matter how many changes it has been exposed to. Certain philosophers believed that the social organizations emerging in parallel to industrialization and urbanization would terminate the concept of family. Accordingly, the west has examined the revolution of the institution of family in connection with the development of industrial capitalism from the 19th century. According to certain philosophers such as Karl

¹ Önal Sayın, *Aile Sosyolojisi* (İzmir: Ege Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1990), 2.

A Study on the Advanced Marriage Age Among Youngsters from the Perspective of Religious Sociology

Marx and Friedrich Engels, the institution of family will eradicate itself after the capitalist bourgeois society is abandoned and communist society form is adopted.² Displaying doubtful approaches regarding the destiny of family in the capitalist society, these philosophers question whether the bourgeois family has been totally terminated, challenge the institution of family, and state that this institution has lost its holy aspect during the modern era. Family has performed many functions between the eras of archaic societies and post-modern societies, and it has transferred its functions to other social institutions. The idea that family, which is accepted to have common functions in all societies in the periods of industrialization, urbanization and capitalization, has undergone a significant transformation and that it lost its function of being the basic institution of the society is commonly discussed.³

Marriage is more concrete compared to the concept of family. "Family" represents a group or organization, while "marriage" is the agreement between two people to share a common life and maintain the lineage. Malinowski reflected the difference between these two concepts as follows: "*Family is a group or organization, while marriage is an agreement made to have and raise a child.*"⁴ As a general definition, marriage can be explained as an institution of personal, psychological and social satisfaction people prefer to overcome the problems they encounter in their lives due to their natal weakness, to share the burden of life with somebody else, to feel safer for the future, and to act in a protecting and cooperating manner.

Family has a holy mission for the religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. For instance, Judaism considers staying single as a great sin, while Christianity highlights the importance and holy aspect of marriage that forms family and considers the married couples as a single body.⁵ Marriage is promoted through different verses and hadiths in Islam, and Quran reflects that family is the place of love and peace with the following verse: "*And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for people who give thought.*"⁶ Meeting the need for establishing a relationship with the other gender after a certain age, receiving social acceptance toward such a relationship, and establishing this relationship on a legit ground becomes a reality with marriage. Accordingly, Islam encourages young people to marry and guarantees the legitimacy of a sexual relationship between two genders through the agreement of marriage.

² Mustafa Erkal, *Sosyoloji* (Istanbul: Filiz Kitabevi, 1987), 77-78.

³ Ferhunde Özbay, *Dünden Bugüne Aile, Kent ve Nüfus* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005), 32.

⁴ Birsen Gökçe, "Evlilik Kurumuna Sosyolojik Bir Yaklaşım", ed. Beylü Dikeçligil - Ahmet Çiğdem, *Aile Yazıları 4* (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Aile Araştırma Kurumu Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1991), 386.

⁵ Fikret Karaman, *Din ve Sosyal Hayat* (Ankara: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2011), 167.

⁶ ar-Rum 30/21.

2. Youth and Marriage Age

As youth has an active and dynamic structure, it represents a significant category and period since it reflects the direction and content of social changes. Every category contains a sub-category, with some of these sub-categories focusing on the biological factors while defining the period youth by making periodical segregations. Moreover, certain sub-categories approach to the topic from a historical perspective on the axis of categorical segregations. As the product of modernity, urbanization and industrial society, youth has covered a longer period than ever. The modern industrial society is an adult-based society and therefore values the youth more and stresses the importance of youngsters in terms of social changes.⁷ Moreover, it is emphasized that the period of youth increased on a global scale with the processes of urbanization, industrialization and schooling. With the higher number of youngsters who undergo master's and doctoral education, the period of youth which was accepted to be between 15 and 25 years now reaches 30s.⁸ Youth is the period between childhood and adulthood. This period of transition means a biologically, psychologically and socially challenging and complicated time when people explore themselves, aim to prove their presence as an individual, and start to make efforts to assign new meanings to life and world. This period is also a stage when young people gain an identity and personality and have difficulties in terms of profession selection, satisfaction of psychological needs, conflicts arising from idealism, and relationships with the authority.⁹

Considering the changes and transformations experienced in the Turkish families of the modern times, youngsters' approach to the institution of marriage necessitates a research. Accordingly, one of the points to be investigated is the marriage age, indicating young people's age when they get married for the first time. Marriage age varies by society to society, and culture to culture, even showing differences in different regions within the same society. The factors causing such a change include urbanization, increased and common educational opportunities, unemployment, and changed populational structure. Not only do these factors transform the family structure, but they also play a primary role regarding the foundation of families.

Being considered as a holy agreement in Islam, marriage is the essential part of establishing a family. However, the Muslim family institution has been changing in the current day. These changes can be ordered as the higher number of educated and employed women, families becoming smaller, decreased number of arranged marriages, and higher marriage age.¹⁰ Studies on the history of family sociology

⁷ Demet Lüküslü, *Türkiye'de Gençlik Miti* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009), 19-20.

⁸ Fatma Odabaşı, *Gençlerde Din ve Sivil İtaatsizlik* (Istanbul: Rağbet Yayınları, 2016), 27.

⁹ Aylin Görgün Baran, "Genç ve Gençlik: Sosyolojik Bakış", *Gençlik Araştırmaları Dergisi* 1/1 (2013), 11.

¹⁰ Abdel Rahim Omran, *İslam Kültüründe Aile Planlaması* (Ankara: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1997), 19-20.

indicate that the institution of marriage has never been established in a challenging manner as the period of industrialization and urbanization that became more visible after the 18th century.¹¹

All societies have certain judgments regarding the youngest age range for marriage. This judgment is generally accepted as reaching the period of sexual maturity, and establishing a marriage before reaching this period is socially disapproved. The marriages performed as a relatively young age is considered as depriving people of their freedom, with various sanctions imposed upon these marriages.

However, sexual maturity is not solely enough for performing marriage; people are also expected to have reached a period of financial and social maturity. The intention behind the concept of finance here is people's ability to meet their own needs without depending on others and to perform production both for the benefit of themselves and the society. Furthermore, the intention behind the concept of social here is the internalization of the social norms and rules and the ability to make one's own decisions and to take responsibility. However, as societies have a dynamic form rather than being static, the social structure gains a complicated form and the limit between childhood and adulthood becomes ambiguous. Modern youngsters are now expected to be more educated and specialized. Having reached sexual maturity, people cannot meet the necessary conditions from social and financial perspectives in certain cases, which results in delayed and higher marriage age. Therefore, marriage age differs in every society based on socio-cultural structure and traits, with ups and downs at different periods even within the same society.¹²

The institution of family, which is fed by the traditions, culture and Islam, has undergone certain transformations with the impact of changes occurring on the local and global scale. The marriage age has been increasing as a result of modernity, and people are now not that interested in marriage with the increased rate of divorcement; therefore, the number of marriages decreases. Changes in the religious life as well as the transformations in the spiritual and ethical values affect the family structure and cause psychological issues.¹³

To assign meaning to the increased marriage age among the youngsters, the statistical data should be considered in line with the sociological factors. Studies indicate that the marriage age has been on the rise in Turkey. The mean first marriage age in Turkey was 22.7 for females and 26 for males in 2001, and these rates rose to

¹¹ Ziyaeddin Fahri Fındıkoğlu, "Evlenmede Güçlük", ed. Beylü Dikeçligil - Ahmet Çiğdem, *Aile Yazıları 4* (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Aile Araştırma Kurumu Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1991), 61.

¹² Hüseyin Bustan, *İslam ve Aile Sosyolojisi*, trans. Zafer Aydaş (İstanbul: el-Mustafa Yayınları, 2015), 21-22.

¹³ Salih Aybey, "Aile ve Dini Rehberlik Bürolarına Gelen Sorular Işığında Kadınların Boşanma Nedenleri (Ege Bölgesi Örneği)", *Pamukkale Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 2/4 (2015), 111-112.

24.8 for females and 27.8 for males in 2018.¹⁴ The mean first marriage age in Istanbul was 23.4 for females and 26.7 for males in 2001, and these rates rose to 26.1 for females and 28.8 for males in 2018.¹⁵ The mean marriage age in Turkey was 23.4 for females and 27.6 for males in 2001, and these rates rose to 26.5 for females and 30.2 for males in 2018.¹⁶ The mean marriage age in Istanbul was 24.3 for females and 28.3 for males in 2001, and these rates rose to 27.6 for females and 30.9 for males in 2018.¹⁷

3. Advanced Marriage Age; City-Awareness-Profanation Relationship

Being derived from the Latin terms “modernus” and “modo”, the concept of “modern” means “right now”, reflecting a change covering the social structure of previous and current times.¹⁸ From a historical perspective, modernization covers a series of historical developments from the 18th to the 20th century. In this period, differentiations have occurred in many fields including institution, beliefs, traditions and production relations. One of the grounds on which we will investigate the traits of social changes in modern industrial societies is the institution of family. Industrialization and urban life necessitated holistic changes in production forms as well as social relationships, which positions the context of family to a different ground. With the increased equality between genders and changed sexual roles, relationships between both genders gain a meaning as long as they are established under capitalist conditions, and spouses become “partners” while gaining a subjective form and developing a familial image in line with the ideals of modernity.¹⁹

Religion serves as a motivational source for social behaviors as it brings certain rules for social attitudes and organizes the daily life experiences. Accordingly, religion will be a key referential point for people in terms of assigning a meaning to life, overcoming the problems of daily life, protecting the self, and legalizing the participation in social life.²⁰ However, religion and religiousness cannot be assessed separately from ideologies, modern ideological imaginations, and modernization and post-modernization parameters. Personality traits and relevant conditions are important in terms of changing religion-related beliefs, attitudes, behaviors and shaping religious orientations as well as religiousness manifestations. The forms of religious reflection on the society change with the impact of economic, political and

¹⁴ Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu (TÜİK), “Evlenme İstatistikleri” (Date Accessed: 07 August 2018).

¹⁵ TÜİK, “Evlenme İstatistikleri”.

¹⁶ TÜİK, “Evlenme İstatistikleri”.

¹⁷ TÜİK, “Evlenme İstatistikleri”.

¹⁸ Sezgin Kızılcılık - Yaşar Erjem, *Açıklamalı Sosyoloji Terimler Sözlüğü* (Ankara: Atilla Kitabevi, 1994), 299.

¹⁹ Kadir Canatan & Ergün Yıldırım (Ed.), “Toplumsal Değişme Sürecinde Aile”, *Aile Sosyolojisi* (İstanbul: Açılım Kitap, 2016), 124.

²⁰ Ergün Yıldırım, *Değişen Din Anlayışının Sosyolojisi* (İstanbul, Bilge Yayınları, 1999), 30.

other factors.²¹ Accordingly, having a central position in human life during the traditional period, religion has lost its central traits during the modern day and resulted in transformations in people's relationships with the holy concepts and subjects. The current and future position of religion has caused secularization discussions. The concept of secularization is used by the sociologists to explain the lost impact of religious authority on social processes, institutions and services, as well as the process where the religious purposes have been replaced by the mortal purposes and desires. According to Ertit, secularization is the "*reduced social prestige of religion, religious structures, superstitions, and public beliefs as well as the impactful power of religion on the society*".²²

The public spaces where the secular and religious middle classes coexist sometimes change the lifestyle and habits of the religious middle class and cause these classes to engage in certain cases. Spaces shape and necessitate the re-definition of religious habits and religiousness criteria belonging to a certain religious middle class. Therefore, it is safe to state that different aspects and criteria of class-based religiousness are encountered often in the urban life.²³ The concept of space, which can be considered as a physical environment at first, requires a meticulous examination as people perform their actions in a certain period and on a certain ground within a space. The presence of a spatial formation is a must to mention the existence of people and society. Accordingly, it is safe to state that people are born in spaces and even gain spatial forms. Spaces influence people's orientations, and they provide a field of identity, value and reference to people. Giving tips regarding people's position and status, spaces serve as a main analysis parameter in terms of understanding and explaining people's actions.²⁴ The following statement by Berger and Luckmann reminds that the social reality cannot be examined independently from the people's awareness: "*Despite the objectivity that reflects the social world in people's experiences, this social world does not gain an ontological status separate from the activities of the people having a creator role in this regard.*"²⁵ The concept of city which cannot be reviewed independently from the ontological reality of its dwellers has a rational and individualist soul and therefore it may be effective in shaping the social behavior and people's attitudes and behaviors.

Urbanization has developed significantly on the global scale particularly after 1950s. It is understood that this change will increase in size and continue in the following years. Metropolitan life has resulted in significant changes playing a role in many institutions ranging from family to education, or economy to culture. The

²¹ Ahmet Onay, *Dindarlık, Etkileşim ve Değişim* (Istanbul, Dem Yayınları, 2004), 20.

²² Volkan Ertit, *Sekülerleşme* (Ankara: Liberte Yayınları, 2014), 59.

²³ Abdullah Özbolat, *Kapitalizme Eklemlenme, Dindar Orta Sınıfta Tüketim Kültürü* (Adana: Karahan Kitabevi, 2015), 204.

²⁴ Köksal Alver, *Siteril Hayatlar* (Ankara: Hece Yayınları, 2010), 11-19.

²⁵ Roger Trigg, *Sosyal Bilimleri Anlamak*, trans. Beyza Sümer - Filiz Ülgüt (Istanbul: Babil Yayınları, 2005), 68.

metropolitan and urban life where the monetary economy can be directly felt has transformed the human relationships and cultures codes rapidly.²⁶ A city is a structure that includes not only a physical but also an ethical organization. The urban basis with no bounds and simplicity arises from the nature of people who are actually a reflection of the city themselves. Although the city has been developed in parallel to the needs of urban dwellers, it still dictates itself as a rational and external reality and aims to shape the city based on its targets and interests.²⁷

With his assessments on the modernity and impact of modern that transforms the urban life and people, Simmel focuses on the question “*how does personality adapt itself to the external powers?*” and assigning the cultural formation dynamics to the basis of modern social analysis. According to Simmel, the 19th century required more freedom and specialization from people, which resulted in the opposition between the rural and urban sides because the rhythm of life is slower, more familiar and organized in the rural area, while it is more complicated, faster and spiritually controversial in the metropolitan area. Simmel states that the metropolitan areas demand a different form of awareness from people and notes that people of the urban life act with their intelligence, now with their emotions. Accordingly, human relationships are more superficial and secondary in the metropolitan area where the monetary economy is more significant. As metropolises are the places where people with different interests coexist, people experience their relationships in an extremely complicated structure in these locations. As the qualitative values are prioritized over the quantitative values here, urban people act with numbers and as those who are accountable, punctual, able to manage the time well, disciplined and rational.²⁸ Accordingly, a city is a place that directs the intelligent world of people, that shapes people’s personality and actions, and that exists in every part of the social life. M. Hauser makes the following statement in this regard: “*In addition to the change of physical culture and new shapes assigned to the economic organization, the inevitable effects of urbanization on culture, social order, changes in the intelligent and emotional structure of people, and even people’s behavioral patterns*”²⁹ Emergence of cities as social change phenomenon has been effective on the social roles and economic activities of people, and this development has resulted in transformations in people’s religious perceptions.³⁰

Modernism and metropolitan life has deeply changed the families in Turkey and other countries. The migration from rural to urban areas following the Industrial Revolution caused the transition from the agricultural to service sector, which

²⁶ Ahmet Oktay, *Metropol ve İmgelem* (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2002), 9.

²⁷ Robert E. Park - Ernest W. Burgess, *Şehir: Kent Ortamındaki İnsan Davranışlarının Araştırılması Üzerine Öneriler*, trans. Pınar Karababa Kayalığıl (Ankara: Heretik Yayınları, 2016), 40.

²⁸ Georg Simmel, “Metropol ve Tinsel Hayat”, trans. Nazife Kalaycı, *Modern Kültürde Çatışma* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003), 85-92.

²⁹ Gökçe, “Evlilik Kurumuna Sosyolojik Bir Yaklaşım”, ed. Beylü Dikeçligil & Ahmet Çiğdem, 397.

³⁰ Mehmet Özey, *Sekülerleşme ve Din* (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2007), 85.

resulted in large populational concentrations in cities due to the class that used to live by selling their physical efforts. The increased populational concentrations in cities also caused a metropolitan form, which played a key role in the transformation from traditional to nuclear family.³¹ Accordingly, it is safe to state that the nuclear family type is common in Turkey, which is in line with the urbanization trend, and that a new urban family type has emerged. Urban families differ from the rural families in every aspect. Urban families have high expectations from the future and different desires and needs. This difference obligated the female participation to working life and caused changes in family structure, and the traditional broad families were replaced by the modern nuclear families. Özkalp states that families have become a unit of consumption, rather than production, in the industrial societies, that the varying functions of small families reflect on the institution of marriage, that marriage is now more individual, and that people are now given the option to make their own decisions. Moreover, Özkalp explains the reason for older mean marriage age in metropolises as the obligation to study for long to have a decent job.³² The fact that metropolises suppress the natural instincts of human nature while creating their own living conditions should be remembered at this point. People consciously or unconsciously participate in the morality dictated by the urban life against the temptation of the modern urban life. Additionally, children who are considered as the successors of the future and attributed a high value in the modern metropolitan life, are a great responsibility for their parents. A father may think that running a farm is more challenging than running a family in the city. These may result in marriages occurring at older places or even not occurring at all.³³

4. Objectives and Methods

Examining the sociocultural and religious factors for the advanced marriage age among youngsters is the purpose of the present study. Based on the theoretical frame, it should be noted that the field study is based on the urban and educated people who are university graduates. While the urban life offers a specific lifestyle to people, they consciously join the city and internalize the urban values. Being a city dweller reflects the tips regarding people's status, socio-economic position, religious attitudes, behaviors and cultures. Accordingly, city can be regarded as a significant analysis parameter in terms of understanding and explaining human actions. The sub-purposes of this study include determining whether the periods such as secularization, prolonged education, individualization and rationalization were effective in the delayed marriage among youngsters. As modernity promotes a lifestyle based on speed and pleasure, the motto of "a better life" obligates the

³¹ Firdevs Gümüüşođlu, *21. Yüzyıl Karşısında Kent ve İnsan* (Istanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 2001), 306.

³² Enver Özkalp, *Sosyolojiye Giriş* (Eskişehir: Anadolu Üniversitesi Eğitim Sağlık ve Bilimsel Araştırma Çalışmaları Vakfı Yayınları, 1995), 116-121.

³³ Park - Burgess, *Şehir; Kent Ortamındaki İnsan Davranışlarının Araştırılması Üzerine Öneriler*, 83.

increase in the duration spent in educational institutions. Considering the fact that the years spent during educational periods can be considered a significant factor in prolonging marriage, efforts were made to make sure the people in the sample were at least university graduates. This qualitative study was conducted between April and July 2019. Social events display a heterogeneous appearance, and the emergence of an event may be based on multiple factors. Accordingly, qualitative studies enable more in-depth analyses than quantitative studies. As the purpose was to reveal the potential reasons in the background of youngsters' preference of delaying the marriage, a phenomenological approach was adopted. Phenomenology is a discipline that aims to explain the concepts, events, situations or experiences based on the meanings.³⁴ To collect data, semi-structured interview method and document analyses were used. The current literature was scanned based on the themes of family, marriage, youth, religion, city, education, status, modernization, secularization and personalization. To statistically represent the increased marriage age among the youngsters, the statistics in the Turkish Family Structure Research conducted regularly by TÜİK were utilized. Based on relevant evaluations, the themes that will guide the researcher were determined, and the research questions were formed accordingly. Three main themes were determined: "Concept of Family and Marriage", "Religion-Religiousness-Change", "Advanced Marriage Age". The main themes were divided into sub-themes, and interview items were prepared to access the information in these themes. In the stage of applied research, the purposive sampling method was used. Interviews were conducted by the researcher. The data obtained in the interviews were analyzed through discourse analysis.

4.1. Results and Discussion

4.1.1. Demographic Data

After deciding to use the sample suiting the purpose, the aim was to access the age groups in line with the main and sub-themes considering the statistics of TÜİK in regard to the mean marriage age for females and males between 2001 and 2018. As the latest relevant study dated 2018 during the period the study was conducted, the mean first marriage age of the males in Turkey was found to be 27.8, while it was 24.8. These figures were accepted as the threshold, and contacting people over these ages was the aim. The Table 1 regarding participants' age, gender, occupation and education is provided below:

Table 1: Demographic Data

Serial No.	Gender	Age	Educational Status	Occupation	Place of Residence
I1	Female	28	Doctoral	Teacher	City

³⁴ M. Zeki Ilgar-Semra Coşkun Ilgar, "Nitel Bir Araştırma Deseni Olarak Gömülü Teori (Temellendirilmiş Kuram)", *İZU Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 2/3 (2013), 201.

A Study on the Advanced Marriage Age Among Youngsters from the Perspective of Religious Sociology

I2	Female	34	Master's Degree	Psychologist	City
I3	Female	42	Doctoral	Academic	City
I4	Female	29	Master's Degree	Physiotherapist	City
I5	Female	30	Master's Degree	Civil servant	City
I6	Female	28	Bachelor's Degree	Lawyer	City
I7	Female	36	Master's Degree	Teacher	City
I8	Male	30	Doctoral	Academic	City
I9	Male	34	Doctoral	Academic	City
I10	Male	30	Bachelor's Degree	Artist	City
I11	Male	34	Master's Degree	Civil servant	City
I12	Male	34	Doctoral	Civil servant	City
I13	Male	36	Master's Degree	Computer Engineer	City
I14	Male	31	Bachelor's Degree	Foreign Trade Specialist	City
I15	Male	46	Bachelor's Degree	Civil servant	City

4.2. Form of Approaching Marriage and Perception of Ideal Marriage Age

In the first section of the study aiming to examine the factors behind the advanced marriage age, efforts were made to assess participants' approach to the concepts of family and marriage, and the study was initiated with the question of what the concepts of family and marriage meant for them. Based on the results, the following phrases were used to reflect the family: "a safe shelter", "a warm home", "a field for self-realization", "belonging". Regarding the concept of marriage, the following phrases caught attention: "an obligatory reaction", "intersection between two different universes". It was observed that interviewees highlighted the known definitions of family and marriage, and stressed the often-experienced transformations and changes, functional traits, and new family types:

When the concept of family is mentioned, I think about where our roots are based on, where we belong to, and where we should be committed to. Regarding the marriage, coexistence of two different universes in a single intersection, and the efforts to push two different worlds forward. I believe this is the definition of marriage. (I10, Undergraduate, Artist, M, 30).

Family is the smallest social unit where people feel safe, act as themselves, and trust in other people. Family is where you can be like who you are, where you can reveal and realize yourself. Marriage, on the other hand, is the establishment of a relationship with a person who reflects the same or similar traits with the other party and who succeeds in getting along with that party... (I2, Postgraduate, Psychologists, F, 34).

Family is essential in a healthy society and the smallest building stone of the social solidarity. Naturally, marriage is the obligatory reaction for the formation of this stone. In terms of what marriage indicates, although the transformation and deformation of the concept of family has been attacking my thoughts, family is still a shelter for me where I can avoid the war in the external world. (I12, Doctorate, Civil Servant, M, 34).

Family is an institution in which people are born and which has particular meaning and importance for people. Definitions regarding this structure with which people interact from birth to adulthood are not considered as independent from the physical, psychological and economic relationships people establish with their families, and even differences may be seen owing to the social conjuncture. Considering the result that interviewees consisted of conservative, single, educated and urban people, it was understood that the marital thoughts and imaginations did not emerge independently from the reality of society. Certain participants stated that marriage is an institution to be established after a certain age and stage and that they were not that interested toward marriage as they were accustomed to the comfort of living alone, which supports the aforementioned point:

Marriage is the name of the institution one establishes after a certain age. (I5, Civil Servant, Postgraduate, F, 30)

Family and marriage seem quite relevant to me since I live alone and in a different country due to my university education, but it is still something that I cannot clearly and distinctively plan and foresee. (I8, Academic, Doctorate, M, 30).

After determining how the interviewees assessed the institution of family and marriage, they were asked about the ideal marriage age and how they interpreted early and delayed marriage was analyzed. Results from the field study indicated significant figures in terms of the marriage age based on the gender factor and they assessed the ideal age of marriage in accordance with the concept of "maturation".

The ideal marriage age varies by person, but people make effort to live along upon the perception of free life imposed over the world. The Ideal age is 28 years for me. I think maturation takes place after 28. (I14, Undergraduate, Foreign Trade Specialist, M, 31).

I think setting an ideal age is wrong. It is important for people to feel ready for the responsibilities that will arise from marriage. If they feel ready at 25, then the ideal marriage age is 25 for those people; if it is 30, then it is 30, and if it is 20, then it is 20. I think the most important thing is: feeling ready and being able to take responsibility. From my perspective, I believe I am a bit late. (I1, Doctorate, Teacher, F, 28).

A male person aged 35-40 years generally has no military or employment problems. Immaturity of the youth is generally over during those years, and people happen to have financial opportunities and life experiences. Owing to the age and life experiences, people's responsibility increase and they reach those ages with most of the mortal pleasures already experienced by them. The old life pace and desires are replaced by the emotions and plans of establishing a family and having a child. (I15, Undergraduate, Civil Servant, M, 46).

The reason marriage is believed to be associated with maturity is related to the responsibility and feeling of readiness. The ideas age intervals mentioned for males and females were reflected through periodical categorical segregations. Most of the participants said the ages between 22 and 30 years are suitable for women, while this range covered 25 and 35 years for men, and as the reason for this suitable age detail, they noted that people start to look at the life from the perspective of logic rather than emotions, and therefore their tolerance increases against the challenges at advanced ages. Moreover, the marriages which are established before people perceive themselves and their environments fully or without reaching the awareness of being an individual will be a burden for both parties and a non-solid family for the children to be born, which is another reason why the ages between 25 and 35 years are reflected as the ideal marriage age. Statements of the participants jointly indicate that marrying at an earlier age provides an advantage in terms of having parental roles at earlier ages and that marriages performed without parties becoming mature increases the probability of divorcement. With the maturation between the ages of 25 and 35, people's distinctive and strict characteristics become milder. Additionally, their capability of assuming a humble attitude develops and thus they can achieve marital harmony better, as reflected by the interviewee:

Your chance of selecting the correct person may increase when you marry at an advanced age. You can also define the world better as you can define your desires better. You can choose the profile that is close to you among these probabilities. Maybe you can easily undertake the domestic responsibilities as well as the liability of being a human and marital responsibilities. (I3, Doctorate, Academic, F, 42).

The relevant literature indicates that reaching the sexual maturity is the main criterion for the marriage age despite not being the only factor, and that people need to have the financial capability of maintaining their marriages from social and economic perspectives. Results of the field study show that modern youngsters do not make the decision of marriage without achieving social and financial sufficiency even if they achieve sexual maturity. Adulthood is the general name of the process which can be defined as having a job and undertaking the responsibility of a family. However, presenting the youth and adulthood periods with different numbers indicates that there is a conceptual complexity in terms of the ages corresponding to these periods.

4.3. Reasons for Older Mean Marriage Age in Metropolises

Older mean marriage age in metropolises can be assessed from the point that these cities create their own living conditions. Cities are the places that contain multiple social classes and come to the forefront with their heterogeneous structure. Within this heterogeneity, people become obligated to re-define their identities. The answer to be given to the question "Who am I?" varies in the cities, and therefore the status of readiness to marriage is shaped according to that answer. The hypothesis

that living in the city increases the marriage age is based on the spatial impact on the attitudes and behaviors of people as noted above and the idea that spaces assign an area of identity and reference to people. Therefore, participants who preferred and experienced living in the city were asked the following question to understand how the urban life affected delaying the marriage: "What are the reasons for older mean marriage ages in metropolises?"

The fact that cities are the large, cosmopolitan and chaotic spaces that host different sections of the society direct people to give obligatory reactions as understood from the following statement by a participant. (I7, Postgraduate, Teacher, F, 36): "*People of the traditional or rural societies used to be born among the people like them. The socio-economic level of the entire village was quite the same. Thus, they did not look further in terms of finding a partner; they could find the man or woman they would marry in their own village or neighboring villages. However, the situation is totally different in the modern cities.*" According to Simmel, modern society affects people with its pace, pleasures and habits. People are exposed to so many stimulants in the daily life that they become insensitive from a certain point. They become alienated to the people around as much as their environment.³⁵ In this case, they get into the social flow of the cities and do not think about getting married; instead, they prefer more introverted and personal lives, and they can delay marriage. The same participant reflects the impact of the urban social flow and consumption culture on people's decision of marriage as follows: "*There is a rapid social flow in the city, based on continuous consumption. A lifestyle where you think you get happier as you consume is dictated to you. Having multiple things often overshadows the reality that we need to have a family. You get into the social flow and forget that you need to have a family.*"

Another important topic arising from coexisting in the city is the daily life that is different than the rural life. Living in the urban area is a reality of the modern world, and modernity generates its own meaning of world. Therefore, the urban priorities are different than those of the rural ones, and urban people do not primarily focus on marriage. The possibilities presented by the city to people as well as the type and variety of the socio-cultural opportunities, easy structure of socialization, and environmental factors are among the indicators suggested as the reasons for delaying marriage:

People living in metropolises are those who generally live individually. Those living in smaller cities feel the pressure of their families on their lives. In metropolises, people are away from their families and environments. They see their friends and relatives do not often get married, and not getting married sounds ordinary to them. Environmental factors are important. All of the people around me are single. But, I realized in Çankırı that all my peers are married. (I4, Postgraduate, Physiotherapist, F, 29).

³⁵ Melike Akbıyık, *Sosyolojide Gündelik Hayat: Mekân ve Reklam* (Istanbul University, Institute of Social Sciences, Doctoral Thesis, 2018), 184-185.

A Study on the Advanced Marriage Age Among Youngsters from the Perspective of Religious Sociology

Everybody is minding their own business... Career and money is the priority. We want marriage as it is sunnah. Other than that, marriage seems irrational. You get into the family of a foreign person and undertake their problems. From that perspective, marriage is irrational. As most modern people approach to marriage from this perspective, they delay it as much as possible. My religious arguments direct me to marriage, or else why should I marry? I can do most of the things that marriage adds to me without getting married. (I6, Undergraduate, Lawyer, F, 28).

Becoming more visible in the metropolitan life in parallel to the increased urbanization, individualization is another topic of discussion where we can observe the transformation causing the advanced marriage age. The concepts of *individual* and *individuality* are derived from the Latin concept of *individius*. Meaning “undivided” or “indivisible”, these terms joined English from French and were first used during early 17th century.³⁶ The concept “me” that is used for numerous times in the daily life constitutes the focal point of the social analyses and discussions from the late 19th century. Accordingly, “me” or “selfhood” can be regarded as the main problems of modern and postmodern culture.³⁷ The following question was asked to the interviewees to understand the impact of personality on delaying the idea of marriage: “Does living in the city make you those who are more liberal, individual and rational?” Results indicated that the efforts to realize the self as a liberal urban dweller changed the perception of the institution of family. Some of the examples from the participants who claimed that a broader freedom in the urban area is an element supporting the individualism are as follows:

Urban life directs you to be more individualist and rational, even if you do not wish so. No matter how much efforts you make to resist, you just get involved in the flow. (I14, Undergraduate, Foreign Trade Specialist, M, 31).

Greater desires in having the culture of being an individual and having freedom as well as weaker social ties, economic freedoms, career efforts and complexity of the city restricting people’s living spaces play key roles. Furthermore, the age maturity increases in the modern world, and staying away from traditions, which is more distinctive for the cities even if it also reflects on the rural areas, changes the perspective toward the concept of marriage. (I12, Doctorate, Civil Servant, M, 34).

You do not look at the life solely from the perspective of the marriage when you live in the city. People used to say “Do your military service, complete your higher education, and marry right after your graduation.” There is also no limit in terms of studying; you can undergo a doctorate program or associate professorship. But now there are many things to do. There are social activities, associations, organizations, or various opportunities. Thus, marriage does not look like the only action to be performed. (I2, Postgraduate, Psychologist, F, 34).

³⁶ Ian Watt, *Modern Bireyciliğin Mitleri*, trans. Mehmet Doğan (Istanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2016), 159.

³⁷ Nick Mansfield, *Öznellik: Freud'dan Haraway'a Kendilik Kuramları*, trans. Hüsamettin Çetinkaya & Rahmi Durmaz (Izmir: Aralık Yayınları, 2006), 11.

Internalization of the modernization period by the Turkish society included challenges from many perspectives and covered a long period. The reason is that Islam and capitalism are two different social systems based on ontological, epistemological and ethical priorities and that integrating these two systems into the Turkish society contain many conflicts, paradoxes and tensions. There are pure, colorful and ironic combinations arising from the integration.³⁸ Defining the reflection of the transformation as “Islam’s new public faces”,³⁹ Göle notes that the religious Muslim identity that distinctively and culturally separates itself from the secular sections demands that it is visible in the public area. This new identity proves its visibility with active activities in many fields of the social life, and it requires no collective Islam identity when defining itself. Therefore, it is safe to state that the new religiousness identity is actually an Islamic identity.⁴⁰ A similar point is present in the issue of delaying marriage by the participants. Materialization of the urban visibility through the concept of socialization by a participant and the statement “marriage does not seem like the only thing to be done” represents the changing aspect of Islamic family and marriage. The myth of individualism that is firmly present in the modern era feeds loneliness and narcissism, which prevents the youngsters from integrating themselves to the society and results in them conflicting with the society. The fondness of freedom directs youngsters to make the decision of performing marriage and establishing a family more meticulously and causes new attitudes and behaviors to emerge both in terms of religious and social perspectives. One of the indicators of attitudes and behaviors arising from the secular personality myth is that people prioritize their own comfort with the increased wealth and that this issue affects the perception of the marriage. The following statement by an interviewee is an example in this regard: (I1, Doctorate, Teacher, F, 28) “If I receive a salary of 2000 liras, I spend this for my own expenses, pleasure and hobby. Getting into the control of other people when I am accustomed to this comfort may be too much, which is valid for both genders. I believe the increase in income level and obtaining personal income makes people more individualist.”

4.4. Following the Trace of Secularization in the City: Secular Orientations in Marriage-Related Preferences

The Turkish term “*dindar*”, formed by combining the Arabic term “*din*” and Persian suffix “*dar*” lexically means the person “who believes in and is connected to Allah”. The concept of “*dindarlık*” formed by adding “*lık*” to the concept of “*dindar*” means “*devotion to the religion*”. The concept of religiousness is a dynamic and even dialectic phenomenon that has significant changes and differences from personal,

³⁸ Bahattin Akşit et al., *Türkiye’de Dindarlık: Sosyal Gerilimler Ekseninde İnanç ve Yaşam Biçimleri* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2012), 280.

³⁹For more details, see Nilüfer Göle, *İslam’ın Yeni Kamusal Yüzleri* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2000).

⁴⁰ Özbolet, *Kapitalizme Eklemlenme, Dindar Orta Sınıfta Tüketim Kültürü*, 98.

A Study on the Advanced Marriage Age Among Youngsters from the Perspective of Religious Sociology

social and time-wise perspective.⁴¹ Therefore, in terms of “religiousness”, every person makes a different definition and assesses religiousness based on different criteria. As noted in the theoretical frame above, religion is a source of motivation for social behaviors. While shaping the social behavior, it does not become independent from certain differentiations. Severe changes occur in the traditional religiousness forms during the period of urbanization and modernization when important transformations such as rationalization, specialization, cooperation and institutionalization occur.⁴² It is known that religion-religiousness criteria are assigned a primary position by the conservatives in terms of marriage-related preferences. The changes that occurred in the forms of religion-religiousness also reflect on people’s attitudes and behaviors. In this section of the study, participants were informed that secularization is the “*general name of preferring what is mortal over what is religious*” to understand how living in the city affected participants’ intelligent and actual worlds, and the question of whether the religious or mortal preferences are important in terms of marriage was asked to them. The answers given provided certain tips in terms of analyzing the relationship between the ideological transformation and religion.

Another point stressed by religious sociologists in the definitions of secularization is as follows: “*The religion gaining a marginal structure for the operation of the social system and main functions becoming rational to terminate the control of supernatural factors*”.⁴³ The aforementioned point also reflects the period when institutions have declared autonomy in the complicated and economically developed societies.⁴⁴ The period of secularization can be considered as the religious impact disappearing in certain fields such as art, literature and philosophy, and as the scientific perspective dominating in place of religion. Secularization is not only limited to the cultural or ideological disciplines. Similarly, the secularization of awareness can also be mentioned ⁴⁵in this context. This also means that the modern western world created increasing number of figures who interpret the world and their lives with no relation to the religious formation.⁴⁶ Accordingly, the issue of whether the conservative youngsters prioritized religious factors or mortal expectations while selecting a partner will provide contributions in terms of observing the reflections of secularization on the institution of family.

⁴¹ Ünver Günay & Celaleddin Çelik (ed.), “Dindarlığın Sosyolojisi”, *Dindarlığın Sosyo-Psikolojisi* (Adana: Karahan Kitabevi, 2006), 8.

⁴² Kemaleddin Taş, “Dindarlığın Tipolojileri Üzerine Tipolojik Bir Araştırma”; Günay & Çelik, *Dindarlığın Sosyo-Psikolojisi*, 186-187.

⁴³ M. Ali Kirman & İhsan Çapcıoğlu, *Sekülerleşme Klasik ve Çağdaş Yaklaşımlar* (Ankara: Otto Yayınları, 2015), 12.

⁴⁴ Michale Dillon (ed.), *Din Sosyolojisi El Kitabı* (İstanbul: Paradigma Yayınları, 2014), 31.

⁴⁵ Peter L Berger, *Kutsal Şemsiye: Dinin Sosyolojik Teorisinin Ana Unsurları*, trans. Ali Coşkun (İstanbul: Rağbet Yayınları, 2015), 197.

⁴⁶ Ali Coşkun, *Sevgi Sosyolojisi* (İstanbul: Rağbet Yayınları, 2012), 110-111.

One of the steps taken in the path to marriage is undoubtedly the selection of spouse. Selecting a partner and the characteristics a partner should have differ by the sociocultural level between the countries, but it is known that there are common differences arising from the genders. According to Akkaya, what females expect from males is a good financial status, being hardworking, a good social status, and being older than them. However, men expect women to be healthy in terms of sexual desires and reproduction.⁴⁷ During the interviews, women highlighted the factors of education, career and financial power, while men stressed the concepts of physical appearance and visibility. The emphasis over the concept of “beauty” by I10 and over “power” by I2 seems to match certain mortal concepts and actions prioritized with the religious motivation in terms of selecting a partner discussed in the theoretical frame in the first section and investigated in the field study as presented in this section. Statement of I2 “... I need to maintain what I have; if I fail to do so, I will be unhappy.” seems to imply that the spiritual pleasures and happiness to arise from marriage can be achieved by meeting the financial expectations. The examples stressing the secularization of awareness in terms of the orientation of profanation being dominant in marriage-related preferences are as follows:

We make mortal preferences at a rate of 80%. I can mention this rate clearly. May height as well as beauty, career and education be subject to me? Do these serve for my domestic fields? Do these serve for my appetite? Do these serve for my sexuality? Do these serve for my pleasures and family? Do these help me realize myself? Do these contribute to that process? These questions are generally in intellectual minds. (I3, Doctorate, Academic, F, 42).

I believe there is an orientation toward secularization every passing day, and this gap is getting greater in my eyes. What do the religious obligations require in terms of people’s relationships? Establishing a family... Okay, this is fine. But if religious obligations are to be fulfilled, then all mortal actions and habits need to be avoided. Right? What is the cost of organizing a marriage? This is quite flexible. People buy goods and stuff, for instance... I heard something from a friend of mine. He left his fiancée. She said she wanted all white appliances to be a Bosch product. She actually laid this down as a condition. I think there is no better example. This is the greatest indication of profanation. (I8, Doctorate, Academic, M, 30).

The process of urbanization that continued in a growing form after 1950s resulted in certain changes in terms of religiousness. These changes catch attention as the macro processes feeding industrialization, rationalism, urbanization and secularization, which resulted in dissolution and differentiation of the traditional religious culture. Secularism reflects the dissolution and differentiation of the social processes in the Turkish society. According to Aydınalp, “*religion was the ‘subject’ in the traditional society, but it turned into the ‘object’ in modern societies and ‘meta’ in post-modern societies,*” which was interpreted as follows: “*verse was the meaning in the*

⁴⁷ Nurşen Adak (ed.), *Eş seçimi ve Evlilik (Değişen Toplumda Değişen Aile)*, (Ankara: Siyasal Kitabevi, 2016), 155.

A Study on the Advanced Marriage Age Among Youngsters from the Perspective of Religious Sociology

traditional era, but it turned into a slogan in the modern era, and it is on the path to becoming an advertisement in the post modern era".⁴⁸ Çapcıoğlu states that the secularization in the Islamic world has been examined in line with the changes in the religious life, and with the change of visibility in the religiousness, consciousness and religious values as well as public visibility of the people. According to Çapcıoğlu, in terms of the secularization orientations in the Turkish society, traditional values are occasionally replaced by the secular values, and sometimes the contrary becomes the case and a hybrid design exists in a modern and conservative manner.⁴⁹ This is also reflected in the following statements of participants: *"I watched something the other day. Quran normally descended but we have hung the book on the wall. When we can get the book from the wall and position it into our hearts, then what we accept as normal will take place."* In regard to the institution of marriage, the results of the field study that the process turned into a form where secular orientations. When compared with the previous times, the idea *"we want happiness even if we have a one-room house"* was replaced by the idea *"we want a 3+1 house, a living room furniture of this brand, or this gram of gold"*. Conservatives acting in the motivations of wasting and luxury rather than meeting the needs were often mentioned in the interviews. One participant explains the topic as follows:

I may talk in a bit harsh manner. I want to make it clear that there are no religious people in Istanbul. I can even explain this to the person who considers themselves as the most religious one.... How religious are you? When you already have money in your pocket... I went to a wedding the other day. They spent 170,000 liras for the wedding. I could have wandered around the world with my wife. Believe me. İlber Ortaylı says *"instead of visiting a furniture shop, you should visit other countries"*. He actually says open your eyes, see what is happening in the world and get your heads out of the sand. (I10, Undergraduate, Artist, M, 34).

The literature reviews the urban life as a form of living where the urban transformations are reviewed in people's behavioral patterns and where social transformations take place. According to L. Wirth, who gained popularity with his book *Urbanism as a Way of Life*, *urban life is a space that cause people to deviate from their nature*. Accordingly, the urban lifestyle is a structure where face-to-face relationships are replaced by indirect relationships, where kinship ties and family lost their importance, and where the neighborhood ties got lost. Similarly, Simmel focuses on the impact of the phenomenon of urban specialization on people's relationship. According to Simmel, urban people are rational, accountable and punctual persons who act in line with their intelligence rather than their emotions.⁵⁰ In terms of

⁴⁸ Halil Aydınalp, *'Özerk Dünyevileşmeler' Ekseninde Din ve Dünyevileşme* (Istanbul: Çamlıca Yayınları, 2018), 210-211.

⁴⁹ İhsan Çapcıoğlu, *"Sekülerleşen Toplumda Bireyselleşen Aile"*, *Turkish Studies* 13/2 (2018), 24.

⁵⁰ Celaleddin Çelik, *Geleneksel Şehir Dindarlığından Modern Kent Dindarlığına*, (Istanbul: Hikmetevi Yayınları, 2013), 50-53.

marriage-related preferences, the intellectual worlds of people shaped by the cities can be considered in this regard.

Conclusion

This study focused on the sociocultural and religious factors behind the advanced marriage age of youth, and it aimed to examine the relationship between modernization parameters and delaying the marriage through the qualitative research method. Based on the literature review performed for the concepts of family, marriage, youth, religion, urbanization and secularization, results of the field study were assessed collectively. The results of the Turkish Family Structure Researches conducted regularly by TÜİK statistically indicate that the marriage age is oriented to increase constantly in Turkey. The modern world has destroyed the ideological and meaning aspects of the traditional world with its own meaning and value system. The institution of family and marriage are among the fields where we can observe this damage clearly. Marriage has structurally and lexically changed in the modern times. Decrease in the need for marriage in society resulted in older marriage age. The changes and transformations religion and religiousness have undergone in time necessitate reviewing these two topics in an interconnected manner, which of course suggests that modernization cannot be assessed independently from its own dynamics.

Processes such as urbanization, personalization and secularization that come to the forefront with the modern ideology changed youngsters' perceptions and thoughts in the topics of family, marriage, and religion. In parallel to this ideology, participants indicated that modern marriages are shaped by mortal desires and expectations. An opinion by a participant explains the aforementioned point: The idea "fewer goods, more peace" was replaced by the idea "more goods, less peace", and "a peaceful house with small rooms" lost its validity in the modern times. Despite the higher number of wishes and desires in the earlier ages, expectations are kept low in the advanced ages. Nevertheless, the importance of family and marriage was stressed by the interviewees, and they were assessed using the phrases of "a warm home", "trust", "fellowship", "a safe harbor".

It was determined that urban life and metropolitan life result in a different type of awareness among the youth, and the heterogeneous environment of the city generates its own conditions and urges individuals to act in line with the possibilities it provides. The social context enabling the rapid social flow occurring in the city as well as the freedom and individualization, and the comfort arising from living alone and being solely responsible for the self cause young people to be hesitant in terms of marriage. Statements like "Marriage is not the only thing one must do in their life" and "You do not live your life in a marriage-oriented manner in the city" are quite important as they reflect how much urban life affects the opinions and actions of individuals who are constantly exposed to new images and virtual realities in the

A Study on the Advanced Marriage Age Among Youngsters from the Perspective of Religious Sociology

city. The share of the thought of freedom in delaying the marriage is one of the results found at the end of interviews. A limitless freedom ideology is reflected to the people of the modern societies, and the idea that the path to happiness is associated with being free affects both the secular and conservative classes. Youngsters shape their marriage plans following the targets of a good job, education, career, world tour and new horizons. Most of the participants delayed marriage as they were accustomed to the comfort of living alone.

Another interesting point is related to the context of religiousness. Stating that assessing religiousness only from its literal and formal dimensions is wrong, participants reported that the habit of praying is not so important in terms of selecting a partner and that religiousness should come to forefront in an essential form. Accordingly, the concept of religiousness should be re-assessed by the modern religious sociologists. There is a need for the new religiousness typologies and concepts that can correspond to the modern conditions. As the educational status, practice of being an urban dweller, and age increases, marriage-related preferences change significantly, which indicate that religiousness should be considered in new contexts.

In conclusion, understanding as well as explaining and separating the religious experiences in different social layers becomes a reality when religiousness is accepted as a sociological element. Based on people's age, social environment, and cultural and intellectual development, attitude-based differences can be seen in people's understanding of religiousness. The weaker social representation of religion on the institutional scale is a topic to be assessed in the context of secularization discussions. From the perspective of family and marriage, delaying marriage became a trend among the "conservative, urban, educated" people, and secular bias started to dominate people's awareness level.

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A Study on the Advanced Marriage Age Among Youngsters from the Perspective
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