

Adapting The Faith Development Model to Muslim Populations: A New Framework

İnanç Gelişimi Modelinin Müslüman Popülasyon İçin Modifiye Edilmesi: Yeni Bir Çerçeve

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Abstract

Changes in religiosity have profound effects on human behavior. Developing a comprehensive theory, along with instruments to test it, to explain the diversity in religiosity has been a critical goal in the history of the psychology of religion. The theory of faith development, primarily based on the cognitive development model, has made significant contributions to understanding religiosity. However, it has been widely criticized for its normative stance, lack of clarity in the definition of faith, insufficient empirical evidence, neglect of the content of faith, and failure to account for elements of other culture-specific religions. The aim of this study is to introduce a culturally sensitive, modified theoretical model of faith development tailored to Muslim religiosity styles. This model encompasses dimensions of both religious and non-religious content, intersecting with a spectrum of cognitive styles ranging from less sophisticated to highly sophisticated. Based on empirical findings, the autobiographies of leading Muslim historical figures, and the discourses of contemporary religious individuals, a revised version of the faith development model is proposed. The study argues that both secular and religious styles should be integrated into the model and introduces four main dimensions: Objectors (antagonistic and dissenting), Conservers (particularistic and conforming), Seekers (dialectical and enlightened), and Unifiers (apologetic and compassionate), each with two sub-dimensions. While retaining elements of the original Fowlerian faith development model presented by Fowler 1981, the new model incorporates critical and antagonistic approaches to religiosity, advanced forms of religious expression, and more nuanced variations within each religiosity style. An empirical study has been conducted to support this new model, and its findings will be published in a separate paper due to space constraints.

Keywords: Faith Development, Muslim, Stage, Adaptation, Secular.

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Öz

Dindarlıkta meydana gelen değişimler, insan davranışları üzerinde derin etkiler yaratır. Dindarlık çeşitliliğini açıklamak amacıyla kapsamlı bir teori geliştirmek ve bunu test edebilecek araçlar oluşturmak, din psikolojisi tarihinin önemli hedeflerinden biri olmuştur. Bilişsel gelişim modeline dayanan iman gelişim teorisi, dindarlığı anlamada önemli katkılar sağlamıştır. Ancak bu teori, normatif bir bakış açısı sunduğu, iman tanımının belirsiz olduğu, yeterince ampirik kanıta dayanmadığı, iman içeriğini ihmal ettiği ve diğer kültüre özgü dinlerin unsurlarını yansıtmadığı gerekçeleriyle geniş çapta eleştirilmiştir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Müslüman dindarlık tarzlarına uyarlanmış, kültürel hassasiyeti olan, değiştirilmiş bir iman gelişim modelini tanıtmaktır. Bu model, hem dini hem de dinsiz içerikleri kapsayarak, daha az sofistike ile yüksek derecede sofistike bilişsel tarzlar arasında kesişen boyutları içerir. Ampirik bulgular, önde gelen Müslüman tarihsel figürlerin otobiyografileri ve modern dini bireylerin söylemlerine dayalı olarak, değiştirilmiş bir iman gelişim modeli önerilmektedir. Çalışma, hem seküler hem de dini tarzların modelde yer alması gerektiğini savunarak, dört ana boyut önermektedir: İtirazcılar (antagonist ve muhalif), Muhafazakârlar (özelci ve uyumlu), Arayışçılar (diyalektik ve aydınlanmış) ve Birleştiriciler (apologetik ve şefkatli), her biri iki alt boyutla birlikte. Orijinal iman gelişim modelinin unsurlarını korurken, yeni model dindarlığa yönelik eleştirel ve antagonist yaklaşımları, gelişmiş dindarlık biçimlerini ve her dindarlık tarzının daha ayrıntılı versiyonlarını da kapsamaktadır. Bu yeni modeli desteklemek amacıyla bir ampirik çalışma gerçekleştirilmiş olup, bulguları yer darlığı nedeniyle başka bir çalışmada yayımlanacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İnanç Gelişimi, Müslüman, Aşama, Uyarlama, Seküler.

Introduction

Religiosity is often measured in research using one-dimensional scales, such as attitudes toward religiosity¹ or the importance of religion in one's life. However, despite individual differences in personality characteristics, religiosity manifests in multiple forms. An alternative trend in research seeks to measure religiosity in its diverse manifestations as comprehensively as possible, employing theories such as post-critical belief, centrality of religiosity, value orientation, and faith development.

The post-critical belief scale, originally based on Wulff's ideas,² proposes four types of religiosity represented along two bipolar dimensional axes: literal vs. symbolic interpretation of religion (vertical axis) and inclusion vs. exclusion of transcendence (horizontal axis).³ However, although the theoretical framework of the post-critical belief scale is circumplex, it remains limited to four dimensions.

Although the theory of value orientation⁴ is rather comprehensive, it does not directly address religiosity but instead covers it indirectly. Values such as conformity, tradition, and benevolence are closely associated with traditional religiosity. Open forms of religiosity, including spirituality, religious reflexivity, and religious syncretism, are linked to self-universalism and self-direction values. Conversely, atheism and a low centrality of religion are associated with values such as stimulation, hedonism, and achievement⁵. However, since religion is not directly integrated into the theory and is treated only as a correlate of certain value preferences, the theory cannot be used as a tool to measure religiosity.

In contrast, Huber's concept of the centrality of religiosity⁶ identifies five core dimensions of religiosity: public practice, private practice, religious experience, ideology, and intellectual dimensions. The theory claims to be inclusive of the diversity in religious expression and "representative of the totality of religious life." Accordingly, Huber asserts in his "Structure-of-Religiosity Test" that religiosity, independent of its centrality, can manifest through various patterns of content (e.g., religious dualism, social strength of religiosity, religious exclusivism, religious pluralism, religious reflexivity, interest in religion, atheism, or even different emotions toward God).⁷

However, Huber's model lacks a circumplex nature. As a result, the diverse measures of the content of religiosity are not integrated into broader theoretical dimensions. Additionally, it has been observed that the centrality of religiosity scale, similar to the religious attitude scale, predominantly measures strong attitudes toward Christianity and orthodoxy.⁸

Ultimately, all three approaches claim to encompass the entire spectrum of possibilities within the domain of religion or to unify all measurements of religiosity. However, each approach is limited in its own way.

In its current form, the theory of faith development,⁹ which is based on Piaget's cognitive development tradition, suggests that religiosity evolves and differentiates in line with developments in cognitive capacity, progressing from lower-level sophistication (mythic-literal religiosity) to higher levels.

¹ Leslie J. Francis, "Understanding the Attitudinal Dimension of Religion and Spirituality." *International Handbook of Education for Spirituality, Care and Wellbeing*, ed. Marian de Souza vd., (Berlin: Springer, 2009), 147-167.

² David M. Wulff, *Psychology of Religion: Classic and Contemporary Views* (New York: John Wiley & Sons), 1991.

³ Dirk Hutsebaut, "Post-Critical Belief: A New Approach to the Religious Attitude Problem." *Journal of Empirical Theology* 9/2 (1996), 48-66; Bart Duriez vd., "Introducing the Shortened Post-Critical Belief Scale." *Personality and Individual Differences* 38/4 (2005), 851-857.

⁴ Shalom H. Schwartz, "Universals in the Content and Structure of Values: Theoretical Advances and Empirical Tests in 20 Countries", *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, ed. M. P. Zanna (Orlando: Academic Press, 1992), 1-65.

⁵ Carsten Gennerich - Stefan Huber, "On the Relationship of Value Priorities with the Centrality of Religiosity and a Variety of Religious Orientations and motions", *Religions* 12 / 157 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12030157>.

⁶ Stefan Huber - Odilo W. Huber, "The Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRS)", *Religions* 3/3 (2012), 710-724.

⁷ Stefan Huber, "Religion Monitor 2008: Structuring principles, operational constructs, interpretive strategies", *What the World Believes: Analyses and Commentary on the Religion Monitor*, ed. Bertelsmann Stiftung, (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2009), 17-51; Huber - Odilo W. Huber. "The Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRS)", 710-724; Stefan Huber - Matthias Richard, "The Inventory of Emotions towards God (EtG): Psychological valences and theological issues." *Review of Religious Research* 52 (2010), 21-40.

⁸ Ulrich Riegel, "Centrality of Religiosity, Attitude Towards Christianity and Post-Critical Belief: Comparing Three Measures of Religiosity", *Religions* 11/46 (2020), 2-15.

⁹ James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981).

The development of faith is observable at both the *schematic* and *stylistic* levels. It is assumed that, at the cognitive level, religiosity—and thus faith—is represented partially by a constellation of religious *schemas*,¹⁰ which often occur together in a cognitively organized way at certain periods of life. These schemas, together, constitute what is called a *religious style*.¹¹ Religious styles evolve and take different forms over time.

The *religious style perspective* offers a relatively unifying and comprehensive view of religiosity by framing it in terms of various cognitive styles. It distinguishes between the content domain (the teachings of religion) and the cognitive structures (e.g., mythic-literal, conventional, etc.) through which this content is processed, focusing particularly on one-dimensional cognitive development. According to this perspective, holding faith or religiosity develops and varies across the lifespan, manifesting in the form of coherent styles—unified, holistic cognitive patterns. Initially, each style was considered qualitatively distinct from the others.¹² However, studies indicate that schemas, and consequently styles, may overlap to some extent. Empirical evidence suggests the existence of at least four distinct styles.¹³ The characteristics of each faith style are detailed in the *Manual*.¹⁴ Below, a brief summary of their main features is provided.

People, particularly children before puberty, with a *mythic-literal religious style* are often unaware that they adhere to a set of interconnected values called religion. For them, religious practices and discourses are performed as habits or imitations acquired through acculturation. They replicate what they observe from their parents, interpret narratives (including religious ones) in a *literal* and *mythical* manner,¹⁵ and identify their family as their primary reference point. Consequently, they tend to classify people as either "like us" or "not like us." Their moral judgments are typically based on instrumental reciprocity. While the mythic-literal style is most common among children, it can also accompany conventional religiosity (see below) in adults.

In contrast, individuals with a *synthetic-conventional religious style* exhibit varying degrees of emotional attachment and commitment to religion. However, their faith is largely *synthetic*—adopted from societal conventions rather than developed through personal reflection. While they are aware of their beliefs, they are often unaware of how these beliefs might be perceived from an external perspective, as they are deeply *embedded* in their faith. Their thinking tends to lack higher-order reflection (i.e., *tacit*) and is characterized by limited abstraction. They are predominantly emotional rather than reflective about their beliefs and often adopt an exclusive "us vs. them" mindset toward other faith groups.

With the onset of questioning, and its intense form "doubt syndrome," regarding traditional values—perhaps due to an overemphasis on rationality, especially during the university years—conventional religious precepts are often shaken and *demythologized*. This process can lead to the adoption of an *individuating-reflective style*. Young individuals with this style seek to establish boundaries through a selected, explicit, individualized, and rationally defended system of religious beliefs, often displaying a systematic approach. They are capable of viewing their faith from the perspective of outgroups and demonstrate the courage to distance themselves from religious conventions, enabling them to act

¹⁰ A cognitive structure is an abstraction and a collection of basic knowledge about a concept or entity which represents an individual's knowledge about some entity or situation (APA Dictionary of Psychology, "schema" (Erişim 6 Aralık 2024)).

¹¹ Heinz Streib, "Faith Development Theory Revisited: The Religious Styles Perspective." *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 11 (2001), 143-158; Heinz Streib vd., "The Religious Schema Scale: Construction and Initial Validation of a Quantitative Measure for Religious Styles", *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 20 (2010), 151-172.

¹² See James W Fowler vd., *Manual for Faith Development Research* (Bielefeld, Atlanta: Research Center for Biographical Studies in Contemporary Religion, Bielefeld; Center for Research in Faith and Moral Development, Emory University, 2004). <http://www.homes.uni-bielefeld.de/religionsforschung/>.

¹³ Styles are evaluated according to one's relation to self (ways of reasoning, perspective taking, seeing the world in coherence), other people (drawing the boundary of one's group & moral thinking), and transcendence (interpreting the symbol, and the locus of authority).

¹⁴ Fowler vd., *Manual for Faith Development Research*.

¹⁵ Bart Duriez vd., "Introducing the Shortened Post-Critical Belief Scale", *Personality and Individual Differences* 38/4 (2005), 851-857; James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith*; Heinz Streib, "Faith Development Theory Revisited: The Religious Styles Perspective", *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 11 (2001), 143-158.

independently. No longer embedded within their faith, they treat religion as an object of thought, subjecting it to their conscience, rational argument, and inner autonomy.¹⁶

In the *conjunctive* religiosity style, individuals—often educated, middle-aged people—demonstrate the ability to consider multiple perspectives, influenced by an emerging sense of relativity. They interpret religious texts primarily in a *symbolic* (rather than *literal*) manner¹⁷ and tend to be more flexible, tolerant, sophisticated, and open to diversity, complexity, and ambiguity in religious matters compared to those with a non-symbolic religiosity style.

Such individuals adopt an analytical approach, maintaining a critical distance when evaluating religious issues. They show a heightened interest in the historical roots of their faith and display openness to diverse hermeneutical interpretations, whether coherent or seemingly incoherent. They acknowledge the relativity of symbols and their interpretations, enabling them to appreciate the perspectives of entirely different religions or ideologies, which they view as enriching contributions to humanity. Furthermore, they develop the capacity to reconcile seemingly contradictory arguments about faith without experiencing discomfort, thereby fostering a nuanced and integrative approach to religious understanding.¹⁸

The strengths and limitations of the theory of faith development were discussed in another paper.¹⁹ It was noted that the theory should simultaneously address both content and cognitive structure, particularly when studying specific forms of religiosity. Moreover, "advanced" forms of religiosity, such as conjunctive religiosity, should be subjected to empirical scrutiny—a dimension often overlooked in previous studies, as observed in the literature.

Additionally, the theory should account for not only affirmative forms of religiosity but also negative, critical, and anti-religious dimensions. It was further argued that the instruments used to measure faith styles need improvement.

Specifically, these scales should be more *comprehensive*, incorporating the dimensions identified as missing, and should demonstrate content validity by accurately reflecting the 'religious' styles in a distinctive way they aim to measure. Moreover, they should clearly differentiate between various religiosity schemas to provide a direct and precise representation of faith styles.

Finally, framing faith development along a single trajectory of cognitive structural growth tends to remain utopian, normative, and detached from the complexities of societal development. To address these gaps, a proposal is presented, informed by findings from the Turkish context, to better explain Muslim religiosity.

1. Extending the modal of faith styles

Given that faith is not religion-specific, evaluating faith development theory from a Muslim perspective could make a meaningful contribution to the theory. The first author of this paper has conducted extensive research on faith development theory within the Muslim population of Turkey, including over 90 qualitative case studies as well as quantitative studies. The findings of these studies, published to date in Turkish, have confirmed four styles of religiosity, ranging from mythic-literal to conjunctive faith.²⁰ The theoretical model presented in this paper is primarily based on observations from these empirical studies—both qualitative and quantitative—as well as the biographies of prominent Muslim figures.

¹⁶ Robert Kegan, *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

¹⁷ Bart Duriez vd., "A Further Elaboration of the Post-Critical Belief Scale: Evidence for the Existence of Four Different Approaches to Religion in Flanders-Belgium." *Psychologica Belgica* 40/3 (2000), 153-181.

¹⁸ Fowler vd., *Manual for Faith Development Research*

¹⁹ Üzeyir Ok vd., "Critiquing Faith Development Theory and its Measurements from an Islamic Perspective", (Yayın Aşamasında). *Türkiye Din Eğitimi Araştırmaları Dergisi*.

²⁰ Üzeyir Ok, "Dini Tutum Ölçeği: Ölçek Geliştirme ve Geçerlik Çalışması", *Uluslararası İnsan Bilimleri Dergisi* 8/2 (2011), 528-549; a.mlf., "Dini Şemalar Ölçeğinden İnanç Veya Dünya Görüşü Şemaları Ölçeğine", *C.Ü. Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 33/2 (2009), 149-155; a.mlf., "Biyografik Anlatıya Dayalı İnanç Gelişim Biçimleri ve Nicel Ölçümler", *Çukurova Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 12/2 (2012), 121-155.

The theory and its measurement can be expanded by incorporating dimensions of *faith content* (e.g., commitment and non-commitment) and addressing gaps identified in previous studies. These include integrating *transitional religiosity* (characterized by cognitive dissonance and questioning), *conjunctive and individuative "religious" styles* (in contrast to conjunctive and individuative secularized faith or religious styles), as well as non-religiosity and anti-religiosity into the model.

Integrating Commitment and Non-commitment Continuum into the Theory:

One of the limitations of previous studies is the neglect of the full spectrum of religiosity, specifically the varying levels of commitment and non-commitment. This includes negative and aggressive reactions toward religious symbols or the orthodox teachings of a particular religion²¹. We propose that any reaction to religion, whether positive or negative, should be incorporated into the theory and its measurements, as these responses indicate some form of connection to religion.

Integrating this second dimension into the theoretical framework significantly enhances the typology of religiosity. The model proposed by the authors is illustrated in Figure 1. When plotted on a bipolar, two-dimensional orthogonal circumplex framework, these dimensions can be represented in the theoretical model as follows:

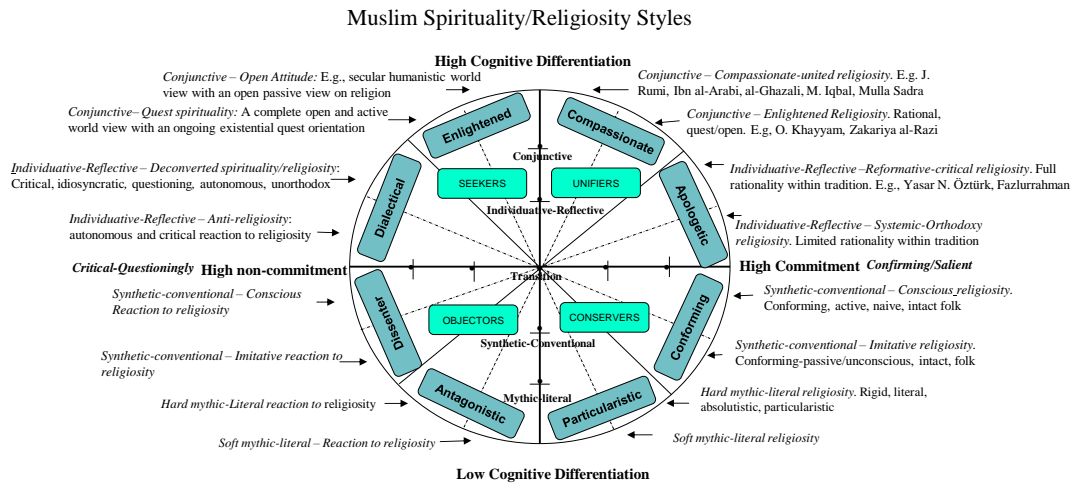


Figure 1: Theoretical View of Religious Schemas in their Expanded Form

2. Major Quadrants of Religiosity and their Components

The model demonstrates that religiosity, consistent with Fowler's original framework, can be classified vertically in terms of cognitive styles (structurally) into four levels, ranging from lower styles characterized by rigidity to higher styles marked by flexibility. Additionally, a horizontal axis represents the degree of commitment to conventional religiosity, varying from full commitment to non-commitment. This approach creates four theoretical quadrants or regions, each encompassing two primary styles: *Unifiers*, which include compassionate and apologetic styles; *Seekers*, encompassing enlightened and dialectical styles; *Conservers*, containing conforming and particularistic styles; and finally, *Objectors*, which include dissenting and antagonistic styles.

Regarding the elements of the main quadrants, the term *Compassionate* refers to a blend of wisdom (*hikmah*) and Gnosticism (*irfan* or prophecy-based intuition) as the foundation of an idiosyncratic epistemology nourished by nearly all religious traditions in some form. Individuals in this category embody traditional religiosity while also embracing universal compassion for all humanity.

²¹ Heinz Streib vd., "Categorising People by Their Preference for Religious Styles: Four Types Derived from Evaluation of Faith Development Interviews", *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 30/2 (2020), 112-127.

The term *Enlightened*, inspired by the "Enlightenment period" in philosophy, signifies the wisdom and sophistication attained through an extended intellectual journey rooted in rationalism and dialecticism. *Dialectical* refers to the unrestricted freedom employed in pure reasoning and debates with individuals from diverse worldviews. Finally, *Apologetic* denotes the defense and safeguarding of one's religion through reasoning, albeit reasoning that is constrained and influenced by a commitment to upholding and protecting the teachings of one's faith or worldview.

By *conforming*, we mean adhering to the public or traditional methods of practicing religiosity in an unquestioned and unaltered manner. A conforming person habitually accepts and follows the established faith values and practices of their society without critical examination. In contrast, *dissent* refers to non-conformity and, as defined in the dictionary, denotes a "refusal to accept the doctrines of an established or orthodox Church." In a dissenting state, individuals are assumed to hold their own preferred ideology or worldview, often as a minority within a majority group. To feel safe, they tend to challenge, reject, or refuse to conform to the dominant religiosities or worldviews in their social context.

Particularism refers to a strong belief that truth is monopolized by a specific group. By definition, it involves an "exclusive attachment to one's own group" and its worldview. The underlying motivation for this belief often lies in safeguarding social security.

Antagonism, on the other hand, refers to an identity rooted in "active hostility or opposition to conventional groups" or their religions. The key difference between particularism and antagonism is their motivation. People with *particularistic* views seek to protect their inherited faith framework, typically passed down from their parents, by attacking alternative viewpoints. In contrast, those driven by *antagonism* aim to establish their own identity by opposing established, often traditional, faith frameworks.

It is assumed that each style theoretically has two versions, as briefly explained below. However, it is anticipated that these two levels of each style were not differentiated in the measurement (see the third paper on findings, *in print*; the names of the authors will be disclosed after the review process is completed).

3. Mythic-Literal Faith

3.1. Two Versions of Mythic-Literal Particularistic Religiosity

The mythic-literal version of religiosity is often characterized in measurements by rigid, literal, absolutist, and fundamentalist views. However, it originally represents a naïve, mythic, non-aggressive, literal, and instrumental form of religiosity,²² such as an anthropomorphic view of God. Therefore, it is important to distinguish between two forms of mythic-literal faith: the soft and hard versions. This study focuses on the religiosity of adolescents and older individuals; hence, the soft mythic-literal thinking typically associated with children is not considered here, as it falls outside the scope of the measurements used. It could also be argued that the synthetic-conventional religiosity style is closely associated with the mythic-literal religiosity style.

Soft Mythic-Literal Religiosity: Individuals who adopt a soft mythic-literal religiosity style believe in events that defy conventional reasoning. For example, they may believe that prayer can cause rain or interpret the following narration literally: "I saw water flowing from the Prophet's fingers like a fountain. Then, three hundred people who were present performed wudu (ablution) and used that water for their needs." They justify such beliefs by referencing sources like *al-Bukhari*, a collection compiled by a scholar reputed for extraordinary memory and regarded as immune to errors of recollection.

Hard Mythic-Literal Religiosity (right-wing aggression): A particular case of hard mythic-literal faith is fundamentalism.²³ Fundamentalists are absolutists—people who believe they are divinely or inherently

²² Heinz Streib - Barbara Keller, *Manual for the Assessment of Religious Styles in Faith Development Interviews*. (Bielefeld: Bielefeld University Yayınları 2018). DOI:10.4119/unibi/2920987

²³ Heinz Streib, "Is There a Way Beyond Fundamentalism? Challenges for Faith Development and Religious Education", *The Fourth R for the Third Millennium: Education in Religions and Values for the Global Future*, der. L. J. Francis vd., (Dublin: Lindisfarne Books, 2001), 177-199.

appointed as custodians of a sacred text (which could include religious scriptures or even secular texts like a constitution). They are unwavering in their conviction that they are unequivocally correct and are often described as "true believers."

For fundamentalists, the sacred text serves as the ultimate source of truth: absolute, clear, and immutable. They approach these texts as originalists and literalists.²⁴ According to Conkle, the fundamentalist "regards its sacred text (or other religious authority) as a source of truth that is absolute (which cannot be questioned on the basis of external evidence or arguments), plain (requiring little if any interpretation), and unchangeable (not needing adaptation to contemporary circumstances)." To protect itself from competing claims of truth, religious fundamentalism exists within an epistemic universe largely disconnected from alternative ways of thinking. This worldview strictly limits the role of reason, confining it within a narrowly defined and self-contained epistemic framework.

The following constructs, developed and validated through exploratory factor analyses, are assumed to represent different aspects of particularistic religiosity: *absolutism (rigidity)*, *literalism*, *mythic thinking*, *closed-mindedness (or need for closure)*, *proselytizing tendencies*, and *particularism*.²⁵ Additionally, concepts such as dogmatism, closed-mindedness, authoritarianism, and radical conservatism²⁶ may also be associated with this style.

3.2. Two Types of Mythic-Literal Antagonistic Anti-Religiosity

Soft Mythic-Literal Anti-Religiosity: Individuals in this category reject religion based on the belief that God does not respond to prayers, is not observable, or fails to intervene in adverse societal events.

Hard Mythic-Literal Anti-Religiosity (Left-Wing Aggression): Research on religiosity should not only focus on rigid forms of religious belief but also account for rigid forms of anti-religiosity. It is hypothesized that individuals exhibiting mythic-literal anti-religiosity may develop a rigid and inflexible negative attitude toward religion, characterized by unquestioning adherence to secular ideologies without engaging in critical or rational reflection. These individuals may become passionate and zealous defenders of their ideology,²⁷ opposing religion and acting in alignment with the conventional reasoning of their belief system.

This phenomenon has been described as *secular fundamentalism* by Conkle,²⁸ who argued that "secular thinking could take on fundamentalist characteristics." According to Conkle, secular fundamentalists resolve questions of truth exclusively through modern science and secular rationalism, while dismissing other potential sources of truth—particularly religion. Shielded and isolated from alternative understandings of truth, *reason* is elevated as an ultimate value: absolute, plain, and unchangeable. Secular fundamentalists view reason as an exclusive and exclusionary source of truth, closing their minds to religious insights and thereby rejecting the possibility of religious truth or meaning. The newly developed *Left-Wing Authoritarianism-Aggression Scale*²⁹ was designed to measure this form of rigid anti-religiosity.

²⁴ Daniel O. Conkle, "Secular Fundamentalism, Religious Fundamentalism, and the Search for Truth in Contemporary America", *Articles by Maurer Faculty* 2105 (1996), 339. <https://www.repository.law.indiana.edu/facpub/2105>.

²⁵ Ok, "Dini Şemalar Ölçeğinden", 153; Ok, "Dini Tutum Ölçeği", 537; Ok, "Biyografik Anlatıya Dayalı", 143; Üzeyir Ok, "The Ok-Religious Attitude Scale (Islam): Introducing an Instrument Originated in Turkish for International Use", *Journal of Beliefs and Values* 37/1 (2016), 55-67. Zafer Cırhınoğlu vd., *Modernite, Dindarlık ve Ruh Sağlığı (Individual Modernity, Religiosity and Mental Health)* (İstanbul: Nobel Yayınları, 2013), 147.

²⁶ Arie W Kruglanski vd., "Groups as Epistemic Providers: Need for Closure and the Unfolding of Groupcentrism", *Psychological Review* 113 (2006), 84-100; Michael A Hogg vd., *Social Psychology* (Londra: Pearson, 2014), 84.

²⁷ Jane Kroger, *Identity in Adolescence: The Balance Between Self and Other* (Londra: Routledge, 2004).

²⁸ Conkle, "Secular Fundamentalism, Religious Fundamentalism, and the Search for Truth in Contemporary America". 340

²⁹ Üzeyir Ok - Ayşe Burcu Gören, "The Impact of Religion on Human Rights Among Adolescents", *6th Conference on Religion and Human Rights*, (Bari, İtalya: 2018).

4. Synthetic-Conventional Religiosity

4.1. Two Types of Synthetic-Conventional Religiosity

Synthetic-conventional religiosity is the most common type of religiosity found in communities. Research conducted in Turkey has identified two types of conventional religiosity, distinct from the rigid form of mythic-literal religiosity mentioned earlier.

Synthetic-Conventional Imitative Religiosity: Conventional religiosity is characterized by practicing religion without a deep understanding of the meaning behind religious practices or symbols. It involves observing religion as it has been inherited from family traditions, often with limited conscious awareness of the spirit of the religion or its foundational sources. Religious rules are followed habitually and in an imitative manner. In the Islamic tradition, this is referred to as *imitative faith (iman al-taqlidi)*

Synthetic-Conventional Conscious Religiosity: The second version is characterized by a conscious awareness about the mission of religion. People in this group show an emotional commitment to religiosity. However, the person has no concern regarding the justification of religiosity rationally. People with conscious commitment refer to the religious sources of the practices, i.e. verses from the Qur'an or Tradition with limited use of reasoning, and act in a proselytizing way, but do not have an outsider view of their faith. They are not able to see that their faith is only one among many others. The constructs of *conservatism*, as one dimension of value orientation,³⁰ and *conventionalism* as one of the sub-dimensions of authoritarianism could be representative schemas of this style.

4.2. Two Types of Synthetic-Conventional Anti-Religiosity

Synthetic-Conventional Imitative Reaction to Religiosity: Although this has not yet been extensively researched, we must anticipate the characteristics of the synthetic-conventional reaction to religiosity. It is hypothesized that this style ranges from active or passive disinterest in religion to a more negative attitude toward conventional religiosity. It is assumed that individuals in these categories react to religion or negate it in ways that align with the authorities or conventions of their social group.

Synthetic-Conventional Conscious Reaction to Religiosity: Others actively and consciously react to the symbols of religion, promoting their 'conventional' secular worldview and attempting to proselytize others into adopting their ideology.

5. Transitional Period vs Salient Faith

Although *religious conflict* and *questioning* are central to the theoretical framework of faith development (e.g., transitions between stages) and play a significant role in the lives of college students³¹ and adults,³² they have been underrepresented in both the theory itself and in quantitative measures of faith development. Furthermore, the question of whether religious development from conventional levels to post-conventional styles can occur without a period of inner religious struggle³³ remains unexplored. This possibility is particularly plausible when considering the religious (as opposed to secular) version of the individuative-reflective religiosity style observed in committed individuals (see below). Ultimately, the transition from conventional religiosity to individuative-reflective apologetic religiosity may occur either with significant religious conflict or without it.

During periods of religious struggle, many previously firmly held conventional religious schemas are seriously shaken, if not entirely abandoned. In this process, some forms of religious tension may be temporary, lasting for a transitional period³⁴ ranging from months to as long as seven years.³⁵ For others,

³⁰ Schwartz, "Universals in the Content and Structure of Values: Theoretical Advances and Empirical Tests in 20 Countries", 1-65.

³¹ Sharon Daloz Parks, *The Critical Years: The Young Adult Search for a Faith to Live By* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), 18.

³² C. Daniel Batson vd., *Religion and the Individual: A Social-Psychological Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 171.

³³ Julie J. Exline - E. D. Rose, "Religious and Spiritual Struggles", *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, ed. Raymond F. Paloutzian - Crystal L. Park (New York; London: The Guilford Press, 2005), 315-330.

³⁴ Parks vd., *The Critical Years: The Young Adult Search for a Faith to Live By*, 195.

³⁵ Fowler, *Stages of Faith*.

however, these tensions may develop into a lasting disposition, as seen in cases of Quest³⁶ orientation or deconversion. Consequently, periods of inner cognitive conflict can extend longer than anticipated and play a crucial role in faith development. This dynamic should be adequately represented in measures of faith development. It would therefore be highly valuable to determine whether it is possible to achieve conjunctive faith without undergoing such periods of inner struggle.

The scales of religious attitude³⁷ and religious saliency are assumed to measure a general positive disposition toward religiosity in an overarching manner. This perspective aligns with styles represented on the right hemisphere of the model and stands in contrast to religious uncertainty. Conversely, questioning, reacting to, or protesting against conventional public religiosity is reflected in empirical measurements by constructs such as (cognitive) uncertainty, deconversion, atheism, and questioning. These constructs can be viewed as indicators—at least at the onset—of an individuative-reflective faith style.

6. Individuative-Reflective Religiosity

6.1. Two Types of Individuative-Reflective Apologetic Religiosity

Individuative-Reflective Apologetic Religiosity: This concept reflects a "formal defense or justification of" the Islamic worldview. Individuals with this type of religiosity engage in the formation, revision, or reconfiguration of their beliefs in an apologetic manner. This process is influenced not only by changes in the interpretation of religious texts but also by the demands of contemporary societal practices and interactions with various nonreligious ideas.

In striving to maintain a belief system that they perceive as logically coherent, they balance faith and reason within the boundaries of their religious framework. They are generally open to rational dialogue, both within their religious community and with individuals outside it.³⁸

The apologetic approach is most prominently represented by committed theologians who advocate their faith using the principles of logic. However, their use of logic is constrained by the premises of their faith, treating it as a tool to support and defend their beliefs rather than to challenge or transcend them.

Individuative-Reflective Reformative-Critical Religiosity: People within the second version of this style employ a similar method of limited reasoning in their thinking, wherein they "decorate" theological premises with the rules of reasoning. However, they differ from the first version in that they are more critical of mythical interpretations and the abuses or misuses of faith. They exhibit reformative and liberating tendencies while maintaining a commitment to the fundamental teachings of their faith, understood on their own terms. The concepts of *autonomous religiosity* and historicity in *hermeneutics*³⁹ may represent this type of religiosity.

6.2. Two Types of Individuative-Reflective Dialectical Religiosity

Individuative-Reflective Anti-Religiosity: The uncommitted version of the individuative-reflective style can manifest in two forms. One form, associated with *secular ideology*, occurs when individuals with a secular background at the synthetic-conventional stage of their ideological development become increasingly critical of conventional religion as they transition to this new stage. These individuals often exhibit poor acculturation in matters of faith and view religion as "other."

With a secular outlook and life orientation, they allocate little space for religious symbols in their lives. Their criticism is primarily directed at, and fueled by, the mythic and superstitious aspects of religion. This critique serves as a protective mechanism against the perceived threats posed by religious conservatism. They recognize and respect the autonomy of other faiths or worldviews. Guided by a strict

³⁶ C. Daniel Batson - Patricia Schoenrade. "Measuring Religion as Quest: 1) Validity Concerns", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30 (1991), 416-429.

³⁷ Ok, "The Ok-Religious Attitude Scale (Islam)", 549.

³⁸ Conkle, "Secular Fundamentalism, Religious Fundamentalism, and the Search for Truth in Contemporary America", 340.

³⁹ Ok, "Dini Şemalar Ölçeğinden", 153.

adherence to reason, they maintain a critical stance toward religion while occasionally fostering an open or intellectual approach to religiosity.⁴⁰

Individuative-Reflective Deconverted Religiosity: This phenomenon is often observed in individuals who deconvert from a committed synthetic-conventional religiosity to adopt a new life orientation and religious interpretation. This transition typically follows a period of deep questioning and conflict regarding their traditional faith. These individuals feel entirely spiritually autonomous, developing their own idiosyncratic understanding of established religiosity without concern for whether their perceptions align with the teachings of their conventional religion.

When measuring what is referred to as the *individuative-reflective religious style*, studies have shown that it is challenging to assess schemas associated with this style of faith or religiosity. Furthermore, it has proven difficult to distinguish it from conjunctive faith. However, it is assumed that this schema begins with a period of questioning, followed by attempts at rational cognitive reconfiguration of one's religiosity. In other words, since questioning inherently requires a high level of reflectiveness, a strong need for cognition, and rationality, it can be argued that questioning or doubt constitutes one of the schemas of the individuative-reflective faith style. The *Deconversion Scale* measures aspects of deconverted religiosity, but no specific test currently exists to assess the anti-religiosity component of the individuative-reflective faith style.

7. Conjunctive Faith

Similarly, conjunctive faith has both religious and nonreligious versions, each with two subdivisions:

7.1. Two Types of Conjunctive Enlightened Faith

Conjunctive Open Faith: Conjunctive faith, as illustrated by the theory of faith development, represents a liberal and open-minded approach to religious matters. It emphasizes values such as equality, justice, and freedom, which are considered essential for fostering harmony among individuals in society. These values are upheld as independent of any specific ideology. Conjunctive faith is characterized by openness to complexity, the "multivalent nature of symbols," and engagement with "depth phenomena."

Despite these ideals, constructs developed to represent this form of religiosity—such as *open religiosity* or *interreligious dialogue*—have not shown a positive relationship with religious commitment in empirical studies conducted in Muslim contexts. In some cases, these constructs of religious openness or interreligious dialogue have even demonstrated negative correlations with religious attitudes.⁴¹ Therefore, it can be argued that the description of conjunctive faith leans toward a secular framework in its definition.

Conjunctive Enlightened Faith: The second version of this secular faith aligns with the concept of *Quest Religious Orientation* developed by Batson and Schoenrade.⁴² It is characterized by individuals who, despite relatively limited acculturation in religion, are highly educated and exhibit an active and ongoing search for meaning. These individuals often feel a profound "hunger" to learn about religion or engage with existential questions, such as the physical laws of the universe, the possibility of life after death, and the ultimate purpose of existence.

As the concept of Quest suggests, people with enlightened faith are open to changes in their understanding of religiosity. They value doubt, questioning, and intellectual exploration, constantly seeking explanations for existential matters, including the reasons behind the universe's operations and its meaning.

This style has been measured through several constructs, including *openness in religiosity*, *acknowledgment of religious autonomy*, *historical reduction*, *historical hermeneutics*, *religious pluralism*,

⁴⁰ Conkle, "Secular Fundamentalism, Religious Fundamentalism, and the Search for Truth in Contemporary America", 342.

⁴¹ Ok, "Biyografik Anlatiya Dayalı", 143.

⁴² C. Daniel Batson vd., *Religion and the Individual: A Social-Psychological Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). 169.

religious relativism, and *Quest*.⁴³ Additionally, this group of traits can be explored through related concepts such as openness to change or experience,⁴⁴ personal growth,⁴⁵ and open-mindedness.⁴⁶

7.2. Two Types of Conjunctive Compassionate Faith

Conjunctive compassionate/united religiosity: Although there is no empirical evidence yet, based on biographical studies, it is hypothesized that a 'religious' version of conjunctive faith may exist. Historical examples suggest that sophisticated faith styles have emerged in religious contexts over time. For instance, as revealed in his autobiography, the prominent Muslim scholar al-Ghazali (d. 1111) transitioned from an apologetic-philosophical stage of religiosity to a more sophisticated form of faith, represented by an advanced Sufi religiosity, after experiencing a period of inner spiritual turbulence.⁴⁷

This transition suggests that individuals may maintain a religious orientation with conventional content while undergoing structural changes in their thinking, evolving from individuating and conventional thought to post-reflective thinking. However, this dimension of religiosity is scarcely addressed in the theory and measurement of faith development.

One potential example of a religious expression of conjunctive faith in the Islamic tradition might be a committed and cognitively advanced form of Sufism, distinct from popular Sufi practices. This form of religiosity could be conceptualized as *compassionate faith*, a topic deserving further investigation. Jalal al-Din Rumi (d. 1207), another significant historical Muslim figure, may exemplify such a committed form of conjunctive faith. This is evident in the symbolic and universal language he employed in his works.

Individuals with this faith style embody compassion for all humanity, irrespective of faith or background, viewing all people as beloved creations of God. They experience an inner sense of unity and seek to 'unite' humanity under a forgiving and compassionate vision of God, in line with the Islamic principle of *tawhid* (divine oneness).

Conjunctive enlightened religiosity: The second version of this 'religious' conjunctive faith is characterized by individuals who are sophisticated in their religiosity, typically after going through a period of questioning their faith. They resemble the first group in this category but are less traditionally committed and highly flexible in interpreting religious symbols. A committed form of *conjunctive* faith in the Islamic tradition could be symbolized by historical figures such as Omar Khayyam (d. 1131) and Abu Bakr Zakariya al-Razi (d. 925), as seen in their writings. These individuals are similar to those with a quest orientation in the secular version of conjunctive faith, the primary difference being their deeper familiarity with Islamic culture and their use of Islamic symbols in discourse. Although no specific instrument has been developed to measure this dimension, the scale presented in an ongoing study aims to assess both the symbolic features of compassionate/united religiosity and enlightened religiosity.

Conclusion

Discussions in the literature to date indicate that religious thinking: (a) Operates as a dynamic cognitive entity that can be dissected into its components in the form of schemas, which individual minds work to integrate into a cognitively organized, sensible whole—a style; (b) May develop or differentiate as a cognitive style along with life experiences, evolving from a less sophisticated, less "adequate," or less differentiated level of reasoning, with a limited range of differentiation and integration,⁴⁸ to a more

⁴³ Üzeyir Ok, "Biyografik Anlatıya Dayalı", 141; Ok, Üzeyir, "Dini Şemalar Ölçeğinden", 153.

⁴⁴ Paul T. Costa - Robert R. McCrae, *Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R) and NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI): Professional Manual* (Odessa: Psychological Assessment Resources, 1985).

⁴⁵ Carol D Ryff - Burton H Singer, "Psychological Well-Being: Meaning, Measurement, and Implications for Psychotherapy Research", *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics* 65/1 (1996), 14-23.

⁴⁶ Milton Rokeach, *The Open and Closed Mind; Investigations into the Nature of Belief Systems and Personality Systems* (New York: Basic Books, 1960).

⁴⁷ Üzeyir Ok, "Faith Development and Perception of Diversity Among Muslims in Turkey: Construction and Initial Test of a Measure for Religious Diversity in Islam", *Din Bilimleri* 6/3 (2007), 199-225.

⁴⁸ C. Daniel Batson - Lynn Raynor-Prince, "Religious Orientation and Complexity of Thought About Existential Concerns", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 22 (1983), 38-50.

sophisticated and differentiated stage; (c) Displays, depending on the level of religious acculturation, different levels of commitment and valuation (ranging from high commitment to no commitment, or even aggression) toward the relevant content of religion or domain of thinking; (d) The styles, together with schemas, constitute quadrants—wider realms of religiosity; (e) Can undergo a period of cognitive discord and turmoil, notably when transitioning from conventional religiosity to post-conventional religiosity, although such inner tensions may not be necessary for all forms of transition.

Theoretically, it is possible to integrate the content (i.e., the continuum of commitment and non-commitment versions) of religiosity with the dimension of cognitive styles, both within the theory itself and its empirical research. It is assumed, therefore, that any reaction to religion—whether positive or negative—can be incorporated into the theory and its measurements, as these individuals maintain some form of link to religion. In this way, it becomes possible to address both religious (committed) and non-religious (non-committed) versions of the same faith style, such as individuative-reflective religiosity and individuative-reflective anti-religiosity. This perspective opens the possibility of identifying examples of a mature form of conjunctive religious style (in comparison with a conjunctive non-religious style). It may also pave the way for explaining the religiosity of pioneering historical righteous and pious figures, such as Jalal al-Din Rumi in the Islamic tradition or the final period of al-Ghazali, using the terminology of conjunctive faith.

The second suggestion is that the component of religious doubt (dissonance, uncertainty, questioning) could be added to the instruments measuring religious styles, particularly as it pertains to the transition from conventional faith to individuative-reflective faith. It is hypothesized that doubt and questioning may play a crucial role in the onset of the individuative-reflective religiosity style.

Additionally, it is proposed that anti-religious fundamentalism (as opposed to fundamentalist religiosities) — particularly the aggression toward religious symbols — should be incorporated into the theory of faith development.

In its current form, the theory of faith development could be expanded to better understand the diversity within a religious tradition, such as Islam, by including the *commitment* dimension in the model. This broadening of the theory could enhance its applicability and provide greater capacity for practical use.

The theory of faith development and its associated measurements may assist clinical psychologists in assessing their clients. It can serve as a valuable tool for recognizing individual differences and identifying defense mechanisms in therapy. The next step involves demonstrating the validity of these theoretical concepts by developing and introducing instruments to measure them.

Declaration

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 - 2. Conflict of Interest:** The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in the study.
 - 3. Ethical Statement:** The authors declare that research and publication ethics were followed in this article.
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