

**Selective and Performative Religiosity: Secularization of the Devout Bourgeoisie in
Türkiye**

By

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July 24, 2025

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Secularization of the Devout Bourgeoisie in Türkiye**

Koç University
Graduate School of Social Sciences and Humanities
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ABSTRACT

Selective and Performative Religiosity: Secularization of the Devout Bourgeoisie in Türkiye

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Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology
July 24, 2025

This thesis examines the secularization of the devout bourgeoisie in Türkiye, who have historically identified as anti-modern, anti-secular, and anti-consumerist, but have subsequently experienced a notable transformation, embracing hybrid identities characterized by conspicuous consumption and leisure practices. Using qualitative methods, including non-participant observation and in-depth interviews, this study argues that secularization is evident within the devout bourgeoisie; yet, it is not a decline in religiosity but a transformation of religious practices. The study introduces the concepts of ‘selective and performative religiosity’, wherein individuals engage in visible and ritualistic expressions of devotion while minimizing the certain imperatives traditionally associated with Islam. The secularization process is framed as ‘instrumental and contextual,’ reflecting a pragmatic and context-dependent engagement with religion. This thesis further explores the role of embourgeoisement in reshaping religious subjectivities, illustrating how wealth, embourgeoisement and mobility influence the transformation of religiosity. By emphasizing the significance of the consequential dimension of religiosity, particularly in relation to leisure and consumption culture, this research contributes to the understanding of secularization as a dynamic, context-dependent phenomenon, with implications for elite religiosity and the broader discourse on modernity, identity, and faith in Muslim-majority societies.

ÖZETÇE

Seçici ve Performatif Dindarlık: Türkiye'de Dindar Burjuvazinin Sekülerleşmesi

Sezai Doruk Soyata

Sosyoloji, Doktora

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Bu tez, tarihsel olarak modernite, sekülerlik ve tüketimcilik karşıtı bir kimlik benimseyen, ancak sonrasında gösterişli tüketim ve boş zaman pratikleriyle karakterize edilen melez kimlikleri benimseyerek dikkate değer bir dönüşüm yaşayan Türkiye'deki dindar burjuvazinin sekülerleşmesini incelemektedir. Katılımcı olmayan gözlem ve derinlemesine mülakatlar gibi nitel yöntemlerin kullanıldığı bu çalışmada, dindar burjuvazi içerisinde sekülerleşmenin gözlemlendiği; ancak bunun dindarlıkta bir azalma değil, dini pratiklerin dönüşümü olduğu savunulmaktadır. Çalışma, bireylerin İslam'ın geleneksel olarak ilişkilendirildiği bazı zorunlulukları asgari düzeye indirirken, görünür ve ritüelistik ibadet biçimlerine yönelmesini ifade eden 'seçici ve performatif dindarlık' kavramını ortaya koymaktadır. Sekülerleşme süreci, dine pragmatik bir yaklaşımı işaret eden 'araçsal ve bağlamsal' bir çerçevede ele alınmaktadır. Tez ayrıca, dindarlığın dönüşümünde burjuvalaşmanın rolünü inceleyerek, servet, burjuvalaşma ve hareketliliğin dindarlığın dönüşümünü nasıl etkilediğini göstermektedir. Özellikle boş zaman ve tüketim kültürü bağlamında dindarlığın sonuçsal boyutuna vurgu yaparak, bu araştırma sekülerleşmeyi dinamik ve bağlama özgü bir olgu olarak anlamaya katkıda bulunmakta; Müslüman çoğunluklu toplumlarda elit dindarlığı ile modernite, kimlik ve inanç üzerine yürütülen daha geniş tartışmalara ışık tutmaktadır.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AKP: Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi / Justice and Development Party
ANAP: Anavatan Partisi / Motherland Party
AP: Adalet Partisi / Justice Party
ASKON: Anadolu Aslanları İşadamları Derneği / Anatolian Lions Businessmen Association
BAUKEM: Bahçeşehir Üniversitesi Kreatif Endüstri Araştırmaları Merkez / Bahçeşehir University Creative Industries Center
CHP: Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi / Republican People's Party
CST: Classical Secularization Theory / Klasik Sekülerleşme Teorisi
DP: Demokrat Parti / Democrat Party
DRA: The Directorate of Religious Affairs / Diyanet İşleri Reisliği
FP: Fazilet Partisi / Virtue Party
IFB: Interest-Free Banking / Faizsiz Bankacılık
IMF: International Monetary Fund / Uluslararası Para Fonu
IYC: İlim Yayma Cemiyeti
MNP: Milli Nizam Partisi / National Order Party
MSP: Milli Selamet Partisi / National Salvation Party
MTTB: Milli Türk Talebe Birliği / Turkish National Student Union
MÜSİAD: Müstakil Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği / Independent Industrialists and Businessmen Association
RP: Rehaf Partisi / Welfare Party
SMLEs: Küçük, Orta ve Büyük İşletmeler / Small, Medium and Large Enterprises
TÜSİAD: Türkiye Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği / Turkish Industry and Business Association

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

The secularization thesis has long occupied a central position in the sociology of religion, positing that modernization, along with its components, inevitably leads to the decline of religious belief, authority, and practice. While classical theorists such as Weber (1930/2005), Durkheim (1912/1995), and Marx (1844/1975) anticipated that the forces of modernization, rationalization and industrialization, would displace religion from the public sphere and reduce its grip on individual lives, the empirical validity of this thesis has been increasingly contested, particularly outside Western contexts. The resurgence of religious movements (Casanova, 1994), the entanglement of religion with neoliberal politics (Mahmood, 2005), and the complex reconfigurations of religiosity in modern life (Taylor, 2007; Ammerman, 2007) and many other factors have all prompted scholars to rethink the straightforward narratives of religious decline. As a result, many now argue that both secularization and desecularization are occurring simultaneously, but in different forms and with varying causes depending on context (Berger, 1999; Davie, 2007; Künkler et al., 2019).

Using qualitative research methods, this thesis engages with these debates by examining the secularization of Türkiye's devout¹ bourgeoisie, which has undergone significant transformations over the past four decades, initially identified as anti-modern, anti-secular, and anti-consumerist in the late 1970s² (Çınar, 2005; Tuğal, 2009; Turner, 1994). However, during their embourgeoisement³, particularly accelerated during the AKP era due to the party's nepotistic and clientelist strategies that benefited this class with government and municipal contracts (Buğra, 1998; Atasoy, 2009; Çeviker-Gürakar 2018), they developed hybrid identities and embraced diverse practices of consumption and leisure (Göle, 1997; 2000; Navaro-Yashin, 2002; Yankaya, 2014).

¹ Although numerous terminologies are employed to delineate this particular class or capital (such as Islamist, Islamic, pious, conservative, devout, green, Anatolian tiger), for this specific class, I will use the notions of devout, pious and conservative interchangeably. For more information see chapter III.

² Similarly, Islam and Islamic social movements are frequently associated with an attitude that is anti-modern, anti-secular, anti-consumption, anti-capitalist, and anti-Western (Turner, 1994).

³ Embourgeoisement refers to the upward social, cultural and economic mobility. In my case, it is the formerly peripheral, devout Muslim and Islamist groups into the upper-middle and upper classes, marked by increased wealth, elite consumption and leisure, and integration into mainstream secular bourgeois social fields. In my case, embourgeoisement operates as the driver force which leads to secularization that is the outcome of this class transformation.

Turkish secularism has long been intertwined with class and distinction (Büyükokutan, 2021), and my research extends this tradition by examining secularization of devout bourgeoisie, with a focus on class mobility, embourgeoisement, consumerism, and leisure culture. Rather than approaching religiosity as a fixed or static attribute, it views religious life as a lived, embodied, and socially situated phenomenon (Ammerman, 2007; Orsi, 2005). It locates this inquiry within the shifting political economy and cultural landscape, where pious actors have become increasingly influential, not only in the economic but also in the social and political domains (White, 2002; Yavuz, 2003).

As this group has gained economic capital, visibility as well as social and political influence, their lifestyles have come to resemble those of their secular counterparts, particularly in terms of aesthetic preferences, leisure habits, and everyday consumption. This raises questions about whether and how secularization is taking place. In this context, secularization is not treated solely as a decline in belief or ritual participation, but as a multifaceted transformation involving transformation, differentiation, and the reshaping of religious expression within modern capitalist context.

One of the key contributions of this thesis lies in the examination of interplay between class and religion, particularly focusing on embourgeoisement as a pivotal factor and its relationship with religiosity. It seeks to reconceptualize secularization beyond binary oppositions such as religious/secular or traditional/modern, and highlights how ‘selective’ and ‘performative’ forms of religiosity, are enacted in elite context for certain reasons, and can coexist with, and even be reinforced by, bourgeois lifestyles, luxury consumption, and neoliberal values.

The pious bourgeoisie may (perhaps increasingly) continue to engage in religious rituals such as daily prayer and fasting, while simultaneously downplaying certain imperatives traditionally associated with Islamic teachings. In this sense, secularization emerges not as a rupture, but as a reconfiguration of religious life under conditions of wealth, visibility, and status. Moreover, by focusing on an elite group in a majority-Muslim society, the study contributes to a growing body of literature that seeks to provincialize the secularization thesis and attend to its contextual specificities (Asad, 2003), and examining the demise of the ‘alternativity’ literature of the devout class (especially by Göle, 2000, and her students) in contrast to the secular counterpart in the

Turkish context , as pious bourgeoisie becomes increasingly integrated into secular ‘lifestyle’.

Ultimately, the aim of this thesis is to determine the presence of secularization within this class and to identify the specific type of secularization involved. Moreover, this research seeks to answer central questions of what kind of relationship exists between embourgeoisement and religiosity? What type of religion and religiosity is observed throughout the process of embourgeoisement? What happens to religious subjectivity when pious individuals become wealthy, urban, and socially mobile? Can we discuss the secularization of the pious bourgeoisie in the Turkish context? If so, what form does this secularization take, what are its underlying reasons, and does the concept of an ‘alternativity’ still persist?

The findings suggest that there is a secularization of the devout class; nevertheless, the secularization of the devout bourgeoisie is less about religious decline but more about the transformation and differentiation of religion/religiosity itself. In mapping these shifts, the thesis offers a nuanced account of how secularization operates through embourgeoisement, not necessarily in opposition to religion, but often through its ritualization, selective appropriation, instrumentalization and contextualization.

1.1 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into eight chapters, each building upon the other to analyze the transformation of the pious bourgeoisie in Türkiye.

After providing introductory information on the subject in chapter one, in the second chapter, I examine the key social, political, and economic turning points that contributed to the emergence and consolidation of the pious bourgeoisie. The focus is on tracing the formation of ‘devout’ capital, alongside the processes of embourgeoisement that have shaped Türkiye’s pious middle and upper classes. This chapter lays the groundwork for understanding the structural and ideological foundations of religiously oriented capital accumulation and mobility.

In the third chapter, I explore the contested definitions and uses of the terms Islamism, Islamist, conservatism, and conservative both in global and Turkish contexts. This terminological clarification is essential for accurately describing the group under

study and for situating the thesis within broader political and intellectual debates. By examining these labels, their historical evolution, and their current usage in Turkish and global contexts, I aim to establish a more nuanced conceptual framework.

The fourth chapter investigates the evolution of leisure and consumption culture in Türkiye, with particular emphasis on how these domains have been experienced and redefined by the pious bourgeoisie. As leisure and consumption are closely linked to the consequential dimension of religiosity, referring to how religious beliefs influence daily behavior and lifestyle choices, this chapter highlights how new forms of religious subjectivity are negotiated through participation in modern consumer and leisure practices.

The fifth chapter turns to the theoretical foundations of the research. It introduces the secularization thesis and reviews classical and contemporary debates around it. It then defines the concepts of religion and religiosity, and discusses how these terms are operationalized in the context of this study. The chapter also introduces the revised version of Glock and Stark's (1965, 1968) religiosity scale, adapted for the Turkish and elite context. Thus, particular attention is given to multidimensional approaches to religiosity, including the ritual, experiential, intellectual, and consequential dimensions, which inform the analytical framework of the thesis.

The sixth chapter outlines the methodological approach of the study. It discusses the rationale for choosing qualitative methods, specifically ethnographic fieldwork that includes in-depth interviews and non-participant observation as well as the concepts of reflexivity, positionality, academic motivation, rapport establishment, and challenges in conducting elite research on sensitive topics.

The seventh chapter delineates non-participant observation and in-depth interviews to elucidate the principal findings and conclusions of the thesis by analyzing the manifestation of secularization among the devout bourgeoisie and its potential causes. Drawing on empirical data, it delineates the dimensions of religiosity of devout bourgeoisie and the principal patterns of selective and performative religiosity, alongside instrumental and contextual secularization, while analyzing how these are influenced by wealth, social mobility, and current secular lives.

Finally, the chapter eight concludes the thesis by summarizing the main arguments and findings. It reflects on the broader implications of the study for debates on secularization, the relationship between embourgeoisement, religiosity and secularization, religious dimensions, elite religiosity, and class in Muslim-majority societies, and suggests avenues for future research.



Chapter 2: INHERITED ABSENCES AND THE SEARCH FOR A NATIONAL CLASS: CAPITAL, CLASS, AND THE MAKING OF THE MUSLIM ENTREPRENEUR

This thesis begins by tracing the emergence and development of the devout bourgeoisie in Türkiye, as this historical and sociological background is essential for understanding the broader dynamics explored in the thesis. By examining how this class was formed, mobilized, and gradually integrated into the political and economic structures of the country, the chapter reveals the foundational social, political and economic conditions that have shaped its engagement with modernity, religiosity, and secularization. Situating the pious bourgeoisie within its historical context enables a more nuanced analysis of the transformations in their moral dispositions, consumption habits, and religious practices. This approach ensures that the study of secularization is grounded in the ‘lived experiences’ and structural conditions of a specific and influential social group.

The Ottoman Empire functioned as a pre-capitalist state (Zurcher, 2015, p. 35), with agriculture as the primary mode of production (Pamuk, 2014, p. 51; Zurcher 2015, p. 35). Private ownership was restricted to specific types of courtyards farms and gardens, and the proprietor of the extensive agricultural lands was the state, while further substantial portions were designated as ‘*vakıf*’ (Zurcher, 2015, p. 35 – 39). Due to the ‘*timar*’ system, which prohibited capital accumulation, agricultural surplus did not result in the emergence of a powerful aristocracy (Demir et al., 2004, p. 166).

Building on this agrarian structure, the state's economic model relied heavily on taxation, as the primary sources of income for the Ottoman state were agricultural taxes, which were collected through the ‘*iltizam*’ system. Non-agricultural output was regulated by guilds and confined to small urban firms, while commerce was local, occurring between villages and bazaars or adjacent areas (Zurcher, 2015, pp. 35-39). Occupations were determined by religious affiliations, with the two predominant economic activities for Muslims in the Ottoman Empire being agriculture and military service, the latter being seen as the most esteemed and prestigious for many years (Demir et al., 2004, p. 166).

Other occupations were predominantly assigned to non-Muslims. For example, engineering services were often provided by Ottoman subjects of Hungarian descent, financial services by Jews, commercial operations by French, British, and Italian 'Levantines', and artisanship and jewellery by individuals of Armenian descent. Consequently, artisanship and commerce, which formed the foundation for industrial revolution, were governed by non-Muslims. Muslim Turks started economic endeavours following the Tanzimat period, although they were unable to achieve a substantial accumulation of capital through this means (Demir et al., 2004, p. 166).

However, the stability of this socio-economic structure began to unravel in the 18th century, marking a significant turning point for the Ottoman Empire, characterized by political and economic disintegration, weakening central authority, and escalating external challenges. The primary factor in this decline was the decentralization of government and the Ottoman Empire's diminished ability to govern its provinces (Cleveland & Bunton, 2009, p. 57). By the conclusion of the 18th century, the Ottoman Empire was not only characterized by a feeble military but was also experiencing financial distress. War, formerly a substantial source of revenue, began to exert a deleterious impact, resulting in an increased tax burden on the Ottoman populace (Zurcher, 2015, pp. 35-39).

The weakening of the central state, combined with the demographic and political shifts of the early 20th century, provided fertile ground for economic nationalism. Following the Balkan Wars, the period of '*Milli ekonomi*' (national economy) commenced, and this era presented an opportunity that the members of '*İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*' (Committee of Union and Progress) would not overlook, as they implemented an economic strategy aimed at creating a loyal national elite of Muslim entrepreneurs, prioritizing Anatolia and the Turkish populace. Capitulations were also annulled, and the '*Duyun-u Umumiye*' (Ottoman Public Debt Administration) was halted. Foreign enterprises were seized and some were even 'nationalized.' Trade operations were assigned to the authority of the Muslim Turks, derived from the 'other' millets (Toprak, 1995, pp. 1-9).

These policies intensified during World War I, when the exigencies of war further justified state intervention in the economy. The state was directly engaged in economic

activities, with statism emerging as the primary focus of the national economy (Toprak, 1995, pp. 1-9). Keyder asserts that prior to World conflict I, one in five individuals in Türkiye were non-Muslim; but, during the conflict, this ratio diminished to one in forty. This significant transformation resulted in Türkiye losing the majority of its trading population, thereby undermining the bourgeois class (Keyder, 2017, pp. 102-103).

As the Turkish Republic emerged from the remnants of the Ottoman Empire, it inherited a deeply fragile economic base. Over 80 percent of the population were villagers and unskilled laborers who lacked economically productive capacities. The skilled labor force had been severely depleted due to wars, natural disasters, and demographic changes caused by the population exchange. The private sector had almost no entrepreneurs. The economy suffered from insufficient capital accumulation and underdeveloped financial institutions. Additionally, the country faced a heavy debt burden resulting from failed economic policies and wars. Finally, the production structure was dependent on external forces due to the dominance of non-Muslims and the existence of capitulations (Demir et al., 2004, p. 167).

2.1 Forging a Nation: Secularism, Statism, and the Making of a New Elite

Building on the fragmented socioeconomic inheritance of the late Ottoman period, marked by weakened capital structures and a diminished non-Muslim entrepreneurial class, the early Republican era launched a radical reimagining of society. In line with its nationalist and modernist aspirations, the Kemalist leadership sought not only to Westernize Türkiye's institutions but also to engineer a new class of loyal, secular citizens capable of advancing the state's vision of progress.

The objective of the newly established Republic (1923) was to modernize and secularize the state and society, as well as to enlighten the populace to attain '*muassır medeniyetler seviyesi*' (the level of contemporary civilizations) through a top-down reform initiative (Heper, 1985, p. 51). Kemalists characterized modernization via a universalist and Western-centric lens, intending to transform Islamic culture in Türkiye (Göle, 2011, p. 66).

In the cultural and political sphere, concerning the role of religion, although Turkish secularism is influenced by the French notion of *laïcité*, the founders of the

Republic did not want to completely eliminate the religious institution inside Turkish territory. The aim is not to reject religion, but to examine it from a novel viewpoint and thereafter recontextualize it. The objective is to build a national religion devoid of superstitions that conforms to the parameters of the newly established nation-state. They attempted to institutionalize a kind of Islam under governmental oversight, confining it to the private domain and excluding it from political engagement as a personal conviction. The sole similarity between French and Turkish secularism lies in their mutual exclusion of religion from the public sphere, which Ernest Gellner termed 'didactic secularism,' highlighting its focus on moral education and the imposition of a modern lifestyle. Furthermore, the state does not afford equal treatment to all religious groups, since Sunni Islam continues to be implicitly acknowledged as the national religion. Consequently, the objective of Republican elites was to create a unique kind of Islam in Türkiye, rather than conforming to traditional Islam (Atay, 2004; Göle, 1997).

This vision of a redefined Islam and secularization process was swiftly institutionalized through a series of sweeping reforms by the government (Buğra & Savaşkan, 2014). In 1924, the new administration implemented extensive changes that abolished the Caliphate, Islamic educational institutions, Şeriat courts, and the Ministries of Şeria and Evkaf. In 1925, religious institutions were banned, and monasteries were closed. In the same two-year timeframe, a centralized educational system was established under a secular Ministry of Public Instruction. The Directorate of Religious Affairs (DRA) was established inside the Premier's office to supplant the aforementioned ministries. The Swiss Civil Code was enacted in 1926, and the constitutional clause establishing Islam as the official religion of the Turkish state was repealed in 1928. The introduction of the new legal system was marked by significant reforms, such as the enfranchisement of women in 1926, the substitution of the Arabic alphabet with the Latin alphabet in 1928, the prohibition of traditional and religious garments, and the adoption of the metric system and the Gregorian calendar (Ayata, 1996).

The secularization of daily life was most visibly expressed through the presence of women in public and professional spaces. Kemalist secularism promoted women's emancipation from religious dress and roles. Women were cast as symbols of modernity, portrayed in state-sponsored imagery as professionals, pilots, and athletes, engaged in social life alongside men, unveiled, and dressed in Western clothing. Public venues such

as theaters, restaurants, tea houses, and streets featured women participating equally in civic life. Ironically, women would also play a central role in the Islamic revival of the 1980s, as the return of veiling came to signify a reclaiming of religious identity in personal and public spheres (Göle, 1997).

While the visibility of unveiled, professional women in public life symbolized the triumph of the secular project, this transformation was far from universal. These reforms affected only about one-fifth of the population, mostly urban and educated, while the broader society remained resistant to such top-down changes (Keyder, 1993, p. 123). Despite the Kemalist agenda to curb the influence of religion in politics, Islam persisted⁴ as a cultural force and was periodically leveraged as a political tool by both ruling and opposition actors (Buğra & Savaşkan, 2014).

These ideological and cultural reforms were paralleled by significant economic restructuring, beginning with the İzmir Economic Congress of 1923. Here, Turkish policymakers debated between liberal and statist approaches. The congress resolved to protect domestic industry without alienating foreign capital. Despite this ambivalence, the state gradually asserted control over key economic sectors, nationalizing or acquiring foreign enterprises (Zürcher, 2015, pp. 287–295). President İsmet İnönü continued the statist model initiated by Atatürk, reinforcing the government's central role in economic development. Through social engineering, urban landscapes in Istanbul, Ankara, and İzmir were transformed, giving rise to a new secular, Westernized elite. This group replaced the Ottoman aristocracy and the non-Muslim bourgeoisie who had been marginalized or expelled after 1923 (Demiralp, 2009, p. 318).

Yet this new economic vision coincided with radical demographic transformations. Policies like the Wealth Tax and the Istanbul Pogrom accelerated the elimination of the non-Muslim commercial classes, creating space for Muslim Turks, many of whom were small traders and state employees with limited entrepreneurial

⁴ By the 1940s, conservative periodicals advocating for a Sharia-based state resurfaced. Necip Fazıl's '*Büyük Doğu*' exalted Ottoman moral superiority and condemned the West's moral degradation, while '*Sebilürreşad*', revived in 1948, continued to challenge the secular regime until its closure in 1963 (Jenkins, 2010).

experience, to assume control of key sectors. These new actors often received state-backed capital and favorable market conditions (Buğra & Savaşkan, 2014).

Consequently, a new semi-private bourgeois class arose under state protection, symbolizing the fusion of modernization and state patronage (Demiralp, 2009, p. 318), as the departure of Greek and Armenian business actors during and after World War I left a vacuum that the Kemalist regime filled with handpicked Muslim entrepreneurs⁵ (Keyder, 1994, pp. 44–45). As Keyder (1994, p. 44) notes, “the Turkish bourgeoisie is a creation of the Turkish state—a product of a slow and ambivalent process.”

2.2 The Demise of the Single-Party Regime and the Rise of Political Islam

In the 1950s, the single-party regime, referred to as the 'period of dormancy' by Islamists⁶, concluded, and the Demokrat Parti (Democrat Party - DP), which positioned itself as the representative of the ordinary Turk, secured victory in the elections and obtained a majority in parliament. Adnan Menderes, a founder of the DP and Prime Minister at that time, was dedicated to diminishing the state's role and expanding opportunities for private enterprise and market forces (Cleveland & Bunton, 2009), as the DP emerged as the principal advocate of the liberal market economy (Zurcher, 2015, p. 327). Thus, the end of Türkiye's single-party regime and the transition to multi-party politics in the 1950s opened a new path for various social and economic actors.

The DP government facilitated the establishment of private industrial firms that manufactured consumer products domestically by implementing import restrictions on such commodities. An investigation performed in 1960 on the historical context of 126 private industrial enterprises in Türkiye reveals that around sixty percent of these firms were founded between 1946 and 1960. Additionally, it was established that several founders of these firms had prior connections to the state bureaucracy (Atasoy, 2009, p. 95).

⁵ Moreover, the transition toward a liberal market economy began when the İnönü government endorsed the Marshall Plan in the late 1940s, opening the door for greater private sector autonomy (Zürcher, 2015, p. 327). This moment marked the first significant shift away from a purely statist economy, as Türkiye's fledgling bourgeoisie sought greater independence and entrepreneurial freedom.

⁶ For further details, see Kara 2004.

Keyder asserts that the 1950s signified a rupture in the development of the Turkish bourgeoisie. The accumulation was orchestrated by emerging groupings and novel categories of entrepreneurs. The businesses of the 1950s exhibited greater independence from the state, with their accumulation sources more firmly linked to the provincial economy and foreign financing, in contrast to the previous republican bourgeoisie (Keyder, 1994, p. 61). Additionally, with the shift to a multi-party system, entrepreneurs discovered that politics might serve as a mechanism for safeguarding their interests (Demir et al., 2004, p. 166).

While the DP did not embrace a radical religious agenda, it nonetheless redefined the role of religion in public life. Beginning in the early 1950s, they progressively diminished the state's control on religious activities and allowed the incorporation of religious symbols, language, and rituals into a novel form of political communication and propaganda. The funding for the Diyanet was augmented, the prohibition on the religious program was rescinded, radio studios in Istanbul and Ankara were permitted to broadcast brief readings from the Quran in Arabic, İmam Hatip courses were converted into schools, the ban on the recitation of the adhan in Arabic was lifted, and a mosque construction initiative was launched (Jenkins, 2010). Consequently, the dissatisfied conservative faction with loosely affiliated networks began to establish itself as a legitimate political identity, and despite some disruptions, this relatively legitimate conservatism has broadened its scope and persisted steadily in the political, cultural, and economic spheres (Kasaba & Bozdoğan, 2000). It is essential to note that DP upheld the primary principles of secularism established by the previous government, while also incorporating Islam as a dynamic cultural legacy into the essence of Turkish politics. From this perspective, religion functioned as a crucial social glue for preserving societal cohesion (Ayata, 1996).

In the 1960s, the Adalet Partisi – AP (Justice Party - JP), successor to the DP, established direct and lasting affiliations with many Islamic groups, communities, and leaders. This was a process of exchanging votes and political support for the right to access public resources and protection from threats from governmental and secular organizations (Ayata, 1996). Moreover, AP pledged to provide the advantages of industrial advancement without the apprehension of incurring substantial foreign debt, while the party's populist agenda portrayed it as a representative of the populace, asserting

its inclusion of all sectors of private capital, small-scale farmers, and the working class within a national framework (Ayata, 2005).

Although DP and primarily AP adopted a more lenient approach towards Islam and certain Islamic organizations such as '*Milli Türk Talebe Birliği*'⁷ - MTTB (Turkish National Student Union) and '*İlim Yayıma Cemiyeti*'⁸ - İYC along with a few smaller ones tried to give a new forms of identity to Islamists, they generally had loosely affiliated networks and sense of solidarity. Yet, this started to change during the 1970's with the establishment and entry of the '*Milli Görüş*' – MG (National View) movement to the legitimate political arena.

In 1967, a small group of members of parliament (MPs) and a senator from the Justice Party initiated a quest for a new political party that would have a prominent Islamic identity. Participating in this endeavor were Senator Tevfik Paksu from Kahramanmaraş, Deputy Hasan Aksay from Adana, Deputy Arif Hikmet Güner from Rize, and Prof. Necmettin Erbakan, the Head of the Industry Department of the Union of Chambers. In 1968, Erbakan was chosen as the president of the Union of Chambers, representing small and medium-sized businesspeople who were seeing a decline in their influence and effectiveness compared to wealthy capitalists (Çakır, 2002).

Nevertheless, due to the responses of the Izmir and Istanbul chambers of business, the Minister of Commerce from the Justice Party administration terminated Erbakan's position. Due to the inability to form an Islamic party in time for the 1969 general elections, a decision was made to nominate individuals from right-wing parties or as independent candidates. As an instance, Erbakan submitted an application to the Justice Party in order to become a candidate for Konya, but his candidacy was rejected. Subsequently, he pursued a campaign as an independent candidate in Konya and was victorious. Several candidates affiliated with the same Islamic group ran as independent

⁷ The MTTB was a youth organization founded in 1916 and dissolved in 1936 by the ruling CHP. It was reestablished in 1946 and operated until the military coup d'état in the 1980s. It significantly contributed to the political education of conservative youth, including several AKP members such as Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Abdullah Gül (Atacan 2005).

⁸ The IYC is an association established in Istanbul in 1951 by Cemallettin Ökten and 68 associates, inaugurated Türkiye's first Imam-Hatip school in Istanbul and currently operates over 100 dorms and educational institutions.

candidates in these elections, but none of them were successful in securing a seat in parliament (Çakır, 2002).

In the 1970, the Republic's first Islamist party called Milli Nizam Partisi - MNP (National Order Party) was established by Necmettin Erbakan and among the founders of the party was Zahit Kotku, the leader of the Naqshbandi Iskender Pasha community (Çakır, 2002; Mardin, 2006). MNP may be characterized as a collective alliance of rural-born religious individuals who have received education in the secular educational institutions of the republic, as well as religious businesspeople who are involved in trade and industry in the provinces. While theologians may be attempting to establish connections between these two factions inside the party, it might be argued that there are no significant gaps that necessitate the construction of any bridges (Çakır, 2002).

Unlike other conservative parties of DP and AP, MNP distanced itself from secularism, were critical of parliamentary democracy and interest and opposed to Türkiye's membership in the EU and want to have an 'order' in economy. It also represent the interests of small and medium-sized enterprises - SMEs in Anatolian cities, and party with its ideology of '*Milli Görüş*' have its own distinct features, such as '*Ağır Sanayi Hamlesi*' (heavy industry move) and 'national moral economy' program which was later on formed as '*Adil Düzen*'⁹ (Just Order), and saw other parties as part of the collapsed

⁹ In the booklet titled '*Adil Ekonomik Düzen*' (The Fair Economic Order), written by Professor Necmettin Erbakan (1991), the economic system of today, which is called the slave system, is discussed as follows: "Today's economic system, that is, the slave system, condemns millions of people to livelihood difficulties, hunger, misery, unemployment and underdevelopment, and unfairly deprives them of their rights...takes these rights from their hands and transfers it to imperialism, world zionism and their collaborators, a small happy minority. As a result, the vast majority is getting poorer and the small minority is getting richer. This situation leads countries to social explosions and eliminates peace and security on earth (pp. 11 - 12)...There are 5 basic microbes of the slave system: interest microbe, unfair tax microbe, mint microbe, foreign exchange microbe and credit system microbe. National Outlook, on the other hand, will eliminate the slave system, which is contrary to today's constitution, in order to establish a great Türkiye again. In the new order of the national outlook, which brings prosperity to everyone, gives everyone their rights and provides equal opportunity to everyone, as mentioned in the Constitution, there will be no interest, unfair taxes will be abolished, the value of money will be accepted as the measure of rights, sound money will be introduced, money will not be printed for free, the value of money will not be considered and loans will be within fair limits. It will be given to everyone who does useful work. Thus, everyone will have the opportunity to buy 3 loaves of bread for the money they buy one loaf of bread under today's system. With the same working capital, it will be possible to produce 3 times more than today and employ 3 times more people than today. The price of everything will drop by a third. Everyone will have 3 times more purchasing power. The cheapest production will be in Türkiye. Exports will increase and a common market will be established with Muslim countries and their needs will be met in Türkiye. Thus, Türkiye will become one of the most powerful countries in the world in a very short time" (pp. 13 - 14). Thus, the Adil Düzen system appears to be a form of utopia, encompassing several uncertainties regarding its execution. It elicited several critiques concerning its ambiguity, not just from Islamists but also from secular intellectuals.

political and social order and introduced itself as the only ‘national’ party in Türkiye (Çakır, 2002). So, ‘*Adil Düzen*’ considered itself as a third path against capitalism and communism, and offers to put justice to the center of the society.

Nevertheless, the movement and its political party were unable to avoid scrutiny. The Milli Nizam Party quickly became a victim of its own inexperience, the enthusiasm of its base, and the unpreparedness of the state apparatus for a strong Islamic party (Çakır, 2002). In 1971, the Chief Public Prosecutor's Office initiated legal proceedings against the MNP, alleging that it engaged in activities that went against the principles of secularism. Subsequently, in the same year, the Constitutional Court made the decision to dissolve the party, citing its violation of the principles of upholding the secular nature of the state and Atatürk's revolutions. Following the closure of the party, the leader Necmettin Erbakan migrated (an act his followers framed as ‘hijra’) to Switzerland. Yet, this closure did not halt the establishment of other Islamist parties. Following the relaxation of the March 12 period, Erbakan's associates and the military, who desired to weaken the Justice Party, convinced him to go back home. Consequently, Mili Selamet Partisi – MSP (National Salvation Party) was founded on October 11, 1972 (Çakır, 2002).

Similar to MNP, it likewise advocated for the interests of SME capital. Furthermore, MSP contended that moral growth was the essential precursor and cornerstone for material advancement, aligning with the views of other developmental theorists of that period. The MSP maintained that the attainment of living standards comparable to those of industrialized nations could alone be realized through industrialization, namely heavy industries. MSP endorsed the enhancement of relations with Muslim countries, advocated for education focused on modesty, morality, and virtue, opposed population control policies, supported initiatives to increase population growth, and sought equitable distribution of industrialization throughout the nation (Atacan, 2005). Following the military intervention in 1980, the MSP, along with other political parties, were banned in 1981 (Özdalga, 2007).

2.3 The 1980s and the Institutional Consolidation of the Devout Bourgeoisie

The 1980s were a significant era in Türkiye; subsequent to the 1980 military coup d'état, the military regime instituted a new official ideology termed Türk - İslam Sentezi (Turkish - Islam synthesis) to address societal political conflicts and curtail the escalating influence of the Turkish leftist movement that had been gaining traction since the 1960s. The military leadership believed that religion might act as a unifying instrument, although exercised caution in framing Islam within the parameters of Turkish nationalism. In this context, several Islamic factions were originally supported by the military authority and then by the center-right political parties of the post-1980 era. The execution of this program conferred political legitimacy upon Islamic groups, including various Sufi orders, something they had not before attained (Atacan, 2005).

The 1980s were a pivotal era for Türkiye economically as well, as the transition process accelerated due to external influences, initiating Türkiye's integration into the global market economy (Buğra & Savaşkan 2014). Neoliberal policies were implemented and were integrated into Türkiye's political-economic agenda. On January 24, 1980, the administration endeavored to execute the 'structural adjustment and stabilization program' endorsed by the IMF and the World Bank, and to resolve the accumulation issue in Türkiye, the program was formulated to effectuate a substantial transformation in the nation's industrialization strategy, namely shifting from import substitution to export-oriented industrialization (Şen, 2010).

Furthermore, in the early 1980s, policies of openness facilitated economic restructuring and shifts in the societal economic center, contributing to the emergence of Anatolian capital (Demir et al., 2004, p. 168), which initiated the formation of a 'counter public' in the Frasian sense (Göle, 2013, p. 24). Özal's economic liberalization measures cultivated a new constituency, serving as the fundamental basis for a pro-reform coalition: small, export-oriented Islamic firms in the Anatolian cities (Jang, 2006, p. 96). As a result, the 'Anatolian capital' began to thrive as its economy integrated with the external world throughout this period. In this period, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have created an innovative business community locally by enhancing their business models, exploring new markets, and obtaining technological expertise. Consequently, the

advantages of openness have sparked a process of production and capital accumulation in Anatolia (Demir et al., 2004, p. 169).

Additionally, remittances from Turkish residents employed in Europe represented a significant source for the accumulation of capital in Anatolia. Initially, workers' foreign cash was allocated to real estate investments, subsequently diversifying into other investment sectors. The substantial corporations¹⁰ that expanded swiftly in Anatolia, including Kombassan, Buyuk Anadolu Holding, Yimpas, Endustri, Sayha, Ittifak, and Jet-Pa, were mostly established using the remittances from Turkish expatriates. Several of these enterprises exploited their employees' confidence and then declared bankruptcy (Demir et al., 2004, p. 170). Moreover, some Turkish expatriate workers refrained from depositing their funds in banks owing to their religious aversion to interest. Consequently, they were frequently drawn to Islamic-oriented firms in Türkiye that offer investors profit-sharing rather than interest¹¹ (Jang, 2006, p. 99).

In the political landscape of the 1980s, following the dissolution of the MSP, another Islamist party, namely Refah Parti - RP (Welfare Party), was founded in 1983. The RP viewed democracy as a method to achieve a pragmatic state of '*saadet nizami*' (harmonious order) and advocated for an economic framework known as '*Adil Düzen*'. Despite the party's assertion of support for a free market economy, it condemned capitalism (Atacan, 2005). Furthermore, RP broadened its following, especially among business and professional professionals who publicly accepted doing their operations

¹⁰ The initial representation of Islamic firms was via a semi-official entity, the Union of Chambers (Türkiye Odalar Birliği). The extensive divisions of the notable company functioned autonomously from the Union, with their demands articulated by powerful enterprises. The important businesspeople maintained robust connections with government officials and thus disregarded the involvement of the Union of Chambers. Consequently, the multinationals marginalized the small Anatolian enterprises that had before dominated the Union due to their greater numerical strength. The intensifying animosity between commercial and industrial interests exacerbated internal conflict within the Union, significantly contributing to the formation of the Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen Association (Türk Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği - TÜSİAD) in 1971, which represents leading secular conglomerates (Jang, 2006, p. 99).

¹¹ The majority of Islamic scholars concur that Islam prohibits any transactions including the payment of interest and the religious prohibition on interest has resulted in the creation of new institutions, such as interest-free Islamic banks, which function on profit-and-loss sharing models. Interest-free banking (IFBs) has been permitted under Turkish legislation since 1983. These IFBs serve as crucial instruments to attract domestic deposits that are averse to interest-based transactions. Initially, IFBs were established as foreign-owned investments (Al Baraka, Kuveyt Türk); subsequently, Anatolian capital began to express interest in the sector (Demir et al., p. 169). Certain businesses successfully mobilized the savings of devout individuals through a comparable profit-and-loss sharing structure. The global mobilization of savings facilitated Islamic entrepreneurs in establishing large Islamic enterprises in Türkiye throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Adas, 2003, p. 121).

within an Islamic framework. These business and professional persons established educational institutions, dormitories, supported humanitarian organizations, and granted scholarships, all in alignment with the economic and ethical principles of the '*Milli Görüş*' movement (Özdalga, 2007).

Moreover, by utilizing religion, Islamists have effectively consolidated various ideological factions into a unified political agenda, thereby securing support from a broad spectrum of social demographics, including young Turks and Kurds, both genders, educated and uneducated individuals, urban and rural populations, as well as the affluent and the impoverished, employers and workers (Özdalga, 2007). The burgeoning Islamic movement effectively established a robust economic foundation, culminating in the success of the RP in the 1994 municipal elections. This success was partially ascribed to the corruption and incompetence inside other political parties. The party attained dominance over fifty percent of the metropolitan municipalities, encompassing six of Türkiye's fifteen principal cities. The RP's political success exemplified the increasing influence of Islam in Turkish politics, evidenced by the proliferation of Islamic educational institutions, financial institutions, and enterprises, alongside the rise of a political Islamic movement characterized by unique attire and publications (Özdalga, 2007; White, 2012).

Throughout the process, Erbakan diligently sought chances to enhance his exposure and guarantee that his name was frequently mentioned. Erbakan opposed secularism and westernization, criticizing Türkiye's military cooperation agreements with Israel. He committed to extricating Türkiye from NATO and the European Customs Union Agreement, while promoting economic and political cooperation with other Muslim countries. He articulated his objective to establish the Muslim Brotherhood on a worldwide scale and to dissolve Türkiye's ties with Western nations, therefore diminishing its need on them (White, 2012).

Subsequent to the 1994 elections, complaints emerged concerning the attack of several women dressed in Western clothes in Istanbul. Initiatives have been implemented to separate males and females on public buses. Numerous wealthy mayors have removed 'nude' statues from public parks and sought to impose restrictions on the selling of alcohol in restaurants and nightclubs. Party proponents were overtly disregarding the established

tenets of Kemalist secularism by proposing the erection of a substantial mosque in Taksim Square, near to the contemporary Atatürk Cultural Center in Istanbul, which featured Western-style opera, ballet, and symphonies (White, 2012).

In the 1990s, the mayor associated with the RP modified Ankara's official emblem, replacing the Hittite sun with a new symbol that is a dome and a mosque minaret. The symbol of Istanbul, previously adorned with flowers, was replaced by one depicting four minarets. These emblems were publicly shown in public institutions, on urban walls, and around the city. Moreover, the RP was banishing several secular judges to rural areas and replacing them with justices who would challenge the limits of Türkiye's secular legal codes, especially concerning family law. They enacted the shutdown of many public libraries and educational institutions designated solely for women, while concurrently instituting alternate courses at those sites (White, 2012).

Ultimately, all of these sequential events, among others, culminated in the 1997 Turkish Military Memorandum¹² (also referred to as the 28 Şubat Süreci or Post-modern Darbe), wherein the memorandum issued by the Turkish military instigated a series of occurrences that resulted in the resignation of Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan and the dissolution of his coalition government. Like other Milli Görüş parties, the Refah Party saw a comparable fate. In 1998, the Constitutional Court dissolved the Refah Partisi for its involvement in acts that undermined secularism.

Another Islamist party of Fazilet Partisi - FP (Virtue Party) was established in December 1998 during the continuing trial of its predecessor, the RP. During this period, Erbakan used his power from behind the scenes. The movement's persecution prompted the Fazilet Partisi to develop a rhetoric focused on democracy, human rights, political freedom, and pluralism. Unlike the MSP and RP, the FP maintained a favorable position towards the European Union and the United States (Atacan, 2005). FP characterized itself as a moderate and modern meritocracy. However, Kemalists expressed skepticism over the party's rapid embrace of democratic principles and, considering its precarious legal status, viewed its commitment to democracy as primarily self-serving. They

¹² The 1997 Turkish Military Memorandum was marked by a crackdown of political Islam by the secular authorities. The Constitutional Court dissolved the Refah Party and prohibited numerous politicians, including its leader Erbakan, from participating in politics (Gümüşçü & Sert, 2009, p. 954).

regarded this as a method of obscuring the genuine intention until the end aim of establishing an Islamic state was achieved (White, 2012), and the party was also been banned in 2001.

2.4 The Institutionalization of Islamic Capital: The Establishment of MÜSİAD

An event of significant importance occurred in the 1990s: the establishment of MÜSİAD. Thus, it is essential to provide a detailed account of this key organization within the Islamist community that facilitated the institutionalization of conservative SMEs and the devout bourgeoisie in Türkiye, as Islamist enterprises sustained their expansion and established their own voluntary business association, MÜSİAD (Müstakil Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği¹³ / Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association), in 1990 in Istanbul, initiated by a group of young Muslim entrepreneurs (Adas, 2006, p. 115).

MÜSİAD is regarded as a representation of conservative entrepreneurs in the Anatolian heartland, serving as a counterweight to the secular-oriented TÜSİAD (Jang, 2006, p. 100) and has emerged as the largest voluntary business association in Türkiye based on membership count. It has also been a crucial economic platform that articulates the political, economic, and cultural concerns of Islamically-oriented SMEs in opposition to established secular large commercial entities, while striving to promote Islamic business principles and solidarity among these businesses (Adas, 2006, p. 115).

The emergence of Islamic entrepreneurs across several contemporary economic sectors, including manufacturing, services, commerce, and financial markets, has made the foundation of MÜSİAD crucial for the advancement and dissemination of Islamic economic discourse in Türkiye. It has effectively united Islamic entrepreneurs across Türkiye and has been instrumental in disseminating the principles of the Islamic economy and entrepreneurship through its weekly meetings, publications, international fairs, and conferences (Adas, 2006, p. 123).

¹³ The acronym's initial "M" is predominantly interpreted as representing "Muslim" due to its apparent Islamic inclination, rather than "müstakil," which means "independent" in Turkish (Adas, 2006, p. 115).

MÜSİAD's transnational affiliations with Muslim nations have significantly influenced its members' capacity to formulate an Islamic economic discourse and have affirmed their belief in the feasibility of an Islamic economic system. Similarly, the increasing prominence of Islamic entrepreneurs have drawn the attention of certain Islamic intellectuals, who perceive a novel synergy within MÜSİAD between Islamic principles and economic activity. This has reinforced their assertions for an Islamic order, deemed not only morally superior but also economically viable through Islamic capital (Adas, 2006, p. 123).

2.5 The '*Homo Islamicus*': Business Ethics and Identity within MÜSİAD

MÜSİAD delineates its organizational structure in various ways, and its business model has been articulated by researchers, like Sabahattin Zaim¹⁴ in their writings. In 1994, MÜSİAD released a paper titled ‘‘The Muslim Person in Working Life: Way of Organizational Behaviour in the Firms Governed in the Direction of Islamic Principles’’, which indicates that the concept of 'homo Islamicus' not only aligns Muslim identity with contemporary interpretations of the modern capitalist economy but also proposes an alternative to 'homo economicus,' which is critiqued for its selfish nature.

Moreover, they criticize not only the Turkish secular businesses but also '*esnaf*' (traditional businessmen) for being pious Muslim but seeking only personal salvation. They claim that '*homo Islamicus*' should acquire wealth freely, provided it stems from productive activities (rather than destructive competition, etc.) and is not used solely for individual consumption or hedonistic purposes. Therefore hedonistic lifestyle which is based on conspicuous consumption¹⁵, is criticized (Hoşgör, 2011, p. 349). Hence, according to their definition, '*homo Islamicus*' is a self-maximizing, rational, calculating, competitive, innovative, and utilitarian person but one who also considers the well-being of society at large (Hoşgör, 2011, p. 349), such as by giving *zakat*. Thus, the greater good of Islam is a *sine qua non* of the '*homo Islamicus*' in theory.

¹⁴ For further details, see Şencan, H. (1994). ‘‘İş hayatında İslam insanı: İslami duyarlılıkla yönetilen firmalarda örgütsel davranış biçimleri’’. İstanbul: MÜSİAD.

¹⁵ For further details, see Zaim, S. (1994). Ekonomik Hayatta Müslüman İnsanın Tutum ve Davranışları. In H. Şencan, ‘‘İş hayatında İslam insanı: İslami duyarlılıkla yönetilen firmalarda örgütsel davranış biçimleri’’. İstanbul: MÜSİAD. p. 107

2.6 Distinctiveness of Islamic Enterprises in the Turkish Economy

It is essential to highlight specific significant attributes of this association as well. Islamic entrepreneurs¹⁶ engage in competition in nearly all areas of the Turkish economy¹⁷, and organizational structure, production, and distribution models of Islamic enterprises resemble those of non-Islamic firms, with the exception of Islamic holding corporations and banks. Furthermore, Islamic entrepreneurs may not differ from other businesspeople regarding their aspirations to grow their enterprises and optimize their profits. What is significant and sets them apart from other secular enterprises is their profound connection to an Islamic identity, which imbues their economic actions with significance, while simultaneously redefining their Islamic identity in relation to these activities (Adas, 2006, p. 124).

Furthermore, the shared Islamic principles and trust, along with the networks and solidarity among Islamic enterprises, are more advanced than those of other entities. They encompass collaborative investments, mutual borrowing, and joint acquisition of machinery, industrial inputs, and other commodities to minimize expenses and endure in a fiercely competitive global market (Adas, 2006, p. 122 - 123). Moreover, the majority of these Islamic enterprises is family-operated. Family control in enterprises is a

¹⁶ The dynamic between employees and employers is also significant in these Islamic enterprises. Workers have a religious need to labor diligently, eschew idleness, and ensure they do not jeopardize the means of production; conversely, bosses are required to act justly and equitably towards their employees. Consequently, a reciprocal link exists between employees and employers, with workers' religiosity serving as a significant determinant for employment. Given that mutual trust and social responsibility will guarantee harmony between capital and labor, there is no necessity for labor rules and trade unions to facilitate this connection according to this rationale. Labour strikes are condemned for undermining harmony and productivity (Hoşgör, 2011, pp. 349-350), while trade unions are perceived as 'Western creations' incompatible with Islamic industrial relations (Adas, 2006, p. 124). Although the concept of 'Islamic brotherhood' suggests that all Muslims, including employers and employees, are united as brothers, the reality is that most workers in Islamic enterprises receive inadequate compensation and endure extended and inconsistent working hours without social security benefits. Thus, the concept of Islamic brotherhood effectively disregards the imbalanced power dynamics between laborers and bosses, serving instead as a mechanism for workforce control (See Durak, 2013) (Adas, 2006, p. 124). Furthermore, entrepreneurs often leverage the prophet's involvement in commerce to mitigate negative perceptions toward profit-oriented activities. These ethical principles require philanthropic efforts to avoid wastefulness and excessive consumption, and to return a portion of their amassed wealth to society (Buğra & Savaşkan, 2014), as Kuran states that religion/religiosity have an important effect to ease the guilt feelings because of capital accumulation, particularly for entrepreneurs who are based in Anatolian cities of Türkiye (Kuran, 2002, p. 94).

¹⁷ Critical approach to market economy and globalization is largely absent within Islamist thinking with the exception of a few Muslim intellectuals Ali Bulaç and İsmet Özel are two of the exceptions who are critical of capitalism (Atasoy, 2005).

prominent aspect of Türkiye's economic landscape, with Islam significantly reinforcing familial authority and values in the corporate sphere (Adas, 2006, p.123).

To further unpack the significance of these features, it is helpful to turn to the dominant academic approaches that explain the rise of Islamic capital. There are three main approaches that explain the formation of conservative or Islamist business groups. The initial approach¹⁸ describes the rise of conservative economic entities within the broader context of the Muslim majority's victory over authoritarian secular elites. It is contended that Muslim entrepreneurs were suppressed by the secular Kemalist state until the neoliberal policies of the post-1980 period and that the neoliberal restructuring enacted by the ANAP government facilitated the emergence and growth of the Anatolian-origin counter-cultural bourgeoisie. It is further asserted that Özal substituted the statist and corporatist Kemalist growth plan with a novel populist coalition underpinned by new free-market ideas. The accomplishments and prospects attained by several MÜSİAD members are ascribed to this neoliberal change. The focus is on neoliberal change rather than governmental assistance. This narrative depicts conservative commercial groups as the 'genuine' representatives of a Muslim community, framing their monopolization of economic resources as a 'natural' and democratic entitlement (Lord, 2023, pp. 224 - 225).

The second approach¹⁹ underscores the Islamic identity and the narrative of historical exclusion, offering valuable discursive resources for conservative business organizations to enhance their access by integrating with political and economic resources, such as directing state funds to Anatolia or leveraging clientelist networks employed by large corporations. Buğra and Savaşkan contend that rather than interpreting the Muslim bourgeoisie as bolstered by neoliberalism, a novel bourgeoisie model has arisen, dictated by new legal and administrative frameworks and dependent on cultural resources influenced by the central government's religious identity. The focus is mostly on the clientelist and nepotistic connection between the organization and the state. The final approach²⁰ focuses on the tensions and fragmentation of capital in the Turkish context, leading to a competition for dominance over various strategic and tactical aims, with assessments rooted in the Marxist tradition (Lord, 2023, pp. 224 - 225).

¹⁸ Produced mainly by Demir et al., 2004, Gümüşçü, 2008, Yavuz, 2003, 2004 and 2006.

¹⁹ Produced mainly by Buğra & Savaşkan, 2014, Yankaya, 2014

²⁰ Produced mainly by Balkan et al. 2015

Moreover, in analyzing the rise of the so-called Islamic, Islamist, conservative, or Anatolian capital, it is crucial to consider not only the impacts of neoliberalism but also the clientelist interaction between the state and corporations. Cengiz (2013, p. 16) contends that the 'new liberal canon,' also recognized by Özuğurlu (2008), is frequently shaped by conservative liberal scholars. He asserts that prior to the 1980s in Türkiye, the state repressed Muslim entrepreneurs in Anatolia, as though capitalist production did not exist, and that Özal emancipated these entrepreneurs from state subjugation. It is posited that when religious institutions are let to function with considerable autonomy, Anatolia swiftly advances by using the profound spiritual impetus of religion and conventional social connections, independent of official backing. This results in a religion-driven industry and capital accumulation, subsequently fostering moderation and liberalism in Türkiye. This perspective posits, on one side, authentic proponents and executors of free market ideas, and on the other side, the Western secular, extravagant capital of Istanbul that flourishes by governmental assistance. This document contains erroneous claims and contradictions with several historical facts.

2.7 MÜSİAD's Discontent with Adil Düzen and the Constraints on Islamic Capital in the 1990s

Despite Erbakan, the founder of the 'Milli Görüş' movement, significantly contributing to the institutionalization of Islamic capital, his advocacy for an extensive state role in the economy was incongruent²¹ with the aspirations of the emerging Islamic bourgeoisie. The 'Adil Düzen' of the 'Milli Görüş' ideology, which prioritized social justice, redistribution, and substantial state intervention, estranged the Islamic

²¹ Bellin (2000) argues that the attitudes of business elites in late-developing countries are shaped by two key variables: "state dependence" and "fear." In these contexts, industrialization often occurs through state sponsorship, meaning the economic success of business elites is closely tied to their relationship with the state, particularly in authoritarian regimes. However, as business elites' dependence on the state diminishes, they tend to support democratization, as observed in post-1980 South Korea and Brazil. The second variable, "fear," refers to the anxiety that business elites feel regarding mass empowerment in societies where poverty is widespread. For these elites, democratization often appears as a threat to their interests due to the potential for social upheaval and redistribution. As the perceived threat of mass inclusion wanes, however, elites become more supportive of democratization, as seen in South Korea and Brazil. Based on these two factors, Bellin concludes that business elites in late-developing countries are "contingent" democrats—they support democratization primarily when it aligns with their material interests (Baskan, 2012, p. 400). This dynamic can also be observed in the Turkish context, particularly in the 1990s, when MÜSİAD's support shifted from the Milli Görüş movement to the Yenilikçiler, who later formed the AKP.

bourgeoisie (Gümüşçü & Sert, 2009, p. 963). As Erol Yazar, the founding president of MÜSİAD, expressed that the organization was significantly doubtful of Erbakan's 'Just Order Economic Program' and favored a political leadership capable of providing an efficient free market. Additionally, the Refah Party's tenuous relationship with the secular elite significantly contributed to this estrangement. The strained connections with state institutions heightened economic risks for Islamic entrepreneurs seeking to minimize political expenses (Gümüşçü & Sert, 2009, p. 963).

Furthermore, the Turkish military memorandum of 1997 severely restricted the organizational and financial resources of Islamic capital. Diverse techniques were implemented, encompassing the criminalization of wealth accumulation processes via legal measures, police inquiries, systematic public exposure of illicit activities by Islamic enterprises, and media-supported boycotts (Hoşgör, 2011, p. 352). The military asserted that the Islamic enterprises were funneling funds to Islamist organizations and decided to initiate investigations. The National Security Council accused MÜSİAD of contravening association regulations and released a blacklist of hundreds of member firms (Jang, 2006, p. 100).

The official bias was also manifested through citizens' calls for a boycott of items from Islamic enterprises. To offset their home market losses, several Islamic enterprises have sought to offer their products in transnational markets throughout Europe, the Far East, and the United States. To sever their international connections, several adverts were disseminated in Turkish media and circulated in Europe, warning immigrants against entrusting their funds to these firms (Hoşgör, 2011, p. 352 – 353).

This issue obstructed their primary sources of finance, resulting in a growing number of Islamic holdings declaring bankruptcy during the economic crisis of the 2000s²². Jet-Pa, Ihlas, Kombassan, and others divested part of their stakes, while several survivors choose to remain inconspicuous (Hoşgör, 2011, p. 352 – 353). Furthermore, following economic liberalization and the establishment of the Customs Union in 1996, the devout bourgeoisie forged strong commercial ties with EU nations and increasingly

²² Despite experiencing this occurrence, MÜSİAD and its members have enhanced their market-oriented philosophy and organizational capacity, thereby broadening their market and membership (Jang, 2006, p. 100).

distanced themselves from the Refah Party. Faced with both internal dissatisfaction and external pressure, Islamic capital began to seek a new political partner, one that would better reflect their market-oriented values.

2.8 From Milli Görüş to Conservative Democracy: The Emergence of the AKP

The ‘*Yenilikçiler*’²³ saw that a transition was occurring inside the ‘*Milli Görüş*’ movement, and in 1998, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan noted this shift and asserted that the movement had progressively alienated itself from its base and inadequately addressed their needs (Gümüşçü & Sert, 2009, p. 963). Thus, a contract between the pious bourgeoisie and ‘*Yenilikçiler*’, within the ‘*Milli Görüş*’ movement began to emerge mostly after 1997 for various aforementioned reasons. The Islamic bourgeoisie provided the ‘*Yenilikçiler*’ with financial²⁴, personal, and political resources, significantly contributing²⁵ to the formation of a new political party (Gümüşçü & Sert, 2009, p. 964). Subsequent to the dissolution of the *Fazilet Partisi*, traditionalists associated with the *Milli Görüş* ideology founded the Saadet Party (Felicity Party), while the *Yenilikçiler*, in an effort to terminate the adverse cycle of Islamist party closures, relinquished their ‘*Milli Görüş shirt*,’ as articulated by Erdoğan, and established the *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* - AKP²⁶ (Justice and Development Party - JDP) (Gümüşçü & Sert, 2009, p. 964). They

²³ The ‘*Yenilikçiler*’ (reformists) were a faction within the ‘*Milli Görüş*’ movement that emerged during the late 1990s, primarily within the ranks of the ‘*Fazilet Partisi*’ (Virtue Party). Unlike the ‘*Gelenekçiler*’ (traditionalists), who adhered closely to the ideological foundations laid by Necmettin Erbakan, including a critique of Westernization, secularism, and global capitalism—the Reformists advocated for a more pragmatic and moderate approach. Influenced by global trends and the changing political landscape in Türkiye, they sought to reposition political Islam within a democratic, pro-European Union, and economically liberal framework. This internal tension culminated in a formal split after the FP was banned in 2001. The Reformists, led by figures such as Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Abdullah Gül, went on to establish the ‘*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*’ – AKP (Justice and Development Party), marking a significant ideological and strategic departure from the traditional Milli Görüş doctrine (Çakır, 2002; Yavuz, 2003; White, 2012).

²⁴ Regarding financial assistance, Albayrak Group, a member of MÜSİAD, emerged as a significant financier of the *Yenilikçiler* (Gümüşçü & Sert, 2009).

²⁵ MÜSİAD vigorously advocated for *Yenilikçiler* via its daily publication, leading to disappointment and frustration among traditionalists inside the movement, due to MÜSİAD's endorsement of *Yenilikçiler*. In response, Erbakan endorsed the formation of an alternative business association, ASKON (Anadolu Aslanları İşadamları Derneği / Anatolian Lions Businessmen Association) (Gümüşçü & Sert, 2009).

²⁶ The AKP's affiliation with Islamism generates significant controversy. Eligur (2006) characterizes the AKP as an Islamist party that is vehemently opposed to democracy. Hale and Ozbudun (2009) characterize the AKP as a secular, conservative-democratic party that overtly rejects Islamism as a political ideology. In his study, Yavuz (2003) employed the words "Islamist" and "Islamic" synonymously in reference to the AKP. Nonetheless, he argues that the AKP should not be considered really Islamic (pp. 115-16). Atasoy (2009) does not expressly categorize the AKP as secular; rather, she contends that it is unequivocally not an anti-secular party (p. 9).

characterized their novel political stance as 'conservative democracy,' which Recep Tayyip Erdoğan encapsulated in his inaugural address at a 2004 symposium, outlining it with the principles of ‘‘a modernity that does not exclude tradition, a universalism that accepts locality, a rationality that does not reject meaning, a change that is not radical.’’ (Bora, 2016).

The AKP originated from the amalgamation of Islamic capital with neoliberalism. Nonetheless, it had considerable support among the working classes adversely affected by the crisis resulting from neoliberal policies (Ataay, 2008). It has also modified or discontinued some political initiatives of Milli Görüş. The hostility to the capitalist market economy was entirely relinquished, secularism was reinterpreted as freedom of faith and conscience, and stringent critique of contemporary life was moderated (Ataay, 2008).

In the 2002 general election, the AKP secured over one-third of the vote and over two-thirds of the parliamentary seats by adeptly capitalizing on the vulnerabilities of the center-right parties. Moreover, they exploited the political void created by internal divisions and intense competition among the center-right factions. As a result, a political party based on Islamic doctrine attained control of the legislative branch and established a government characterized by single-party dominance, an unprecedented occurrence in Turkish history (Şen, 2010).

The following day's headline of a leading Turkish daily stated ‘Anadolu İhtilali’ (Anatolian Revolution). The headline depicted the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) as the electoral victor, symbolizing Anatolia as the origin of 'authentic', 'humble', and 'unblemished' Turkish-Muslim folk. These folks are purportedly dominated and subjugated by secular and modernist (military-civil) elites that not only have minimal cultural commonality with the rest of the populace but also exhibit antagonism to the populace's demands and democratic principles (Şen, 2010).

As Tuğal (2009) claims, Islamists integrated with the capitalist order, and with the AKP, Islamism did not die as Islamists assimilated into the capitalist framework, and Islamism did not perish; rather, it transformed from an oppositional, solidaristic, and

revolutionary conservatism into a conservatism that coexists harmoniously with both capitalist and market economies as well as the political establishment.

2.9 Islamic Capital and Political Realignment: The AKP–MÜSİAD Nexus

It is crucial to acknowledge the inherent connection between the AKP and MÜSİAD both prior to and after the election. The AKP aligned the economic interests of the petty-bourgeoisie with those of the emerging medium-sized business groupings from Anatolia (Hoşgör, 2011, p. 354), and MÜSİAD significantly contributed at the organizational level as several association members affiliated with the AKP to establish local party offices in Anatolian cities.

Additionally, several MÜSİAD members participated in the 2002 elections on the AKP lists, resulting in the election of 20 MÜSİAD members as AKP MPs. The assistance of MÜSİAD to the AKP extended beyond mere financial or human resource support; the association's policy proposals provided the AKP with fresh ideas and were the foundation of its policies, as stated by a MÜSİAD member. Thus, the AKP's party program has significant parallels with MÜSİAD's economic and political reports (Gümüşçü & Sert, 2009, p. 964).

In exchange for MÜSİAD's endorsement, the AKP has prioritized small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by dedicating a specific segment of its party platform to them, recognizing their substantial role in fostering production and employment, thereby establishing themselves as the new cornerstone of Türkiye's economic and social framework. Furthermore, the party platform delineates various measures to safeguard the interests of SMEs, including financial assistance and protection against unfair competition from larger corporations (Başkan, 2012, p. 412).

The AKP's preferential treatment of specific bourgeois segments altered the anticipated allocation of total surplus value. The wealth of Islamic capital has been said to have increased in tandem with the AKP's tenure. Notwithstanding their ongoing disadvantages compared to major conglomerates, the conservative Anatolian enterprises discovered substantial prospects throughout the AKP administrations. Additionally, there

has been an increase in governmental contracts²⁷ awarded to pious bourgeoisie by municipalities governed by the AKP (Hoşgör, 2011, p. 354). Thus, it is evident that a significant reciprocal connection exists between the AKP and MÜSİAD, with Yankaya asserting that MÜSİAD has become the bourgeoisie of the AKP (Yankaya, 2014, p. 16).

These economic ties had broader sociocultural implications, gradually reshaping the identity and practices of the pious bourgeoisie. Thus, the establishment of the AKP transformed not only the political and economic life but also the social and cultural life as well. Evidence of transformation was observable among those who formerly supported Islamist groups prior to the formation of the AKP. The conventional unity, ascetic-oriented demeanor, and strict Islamist position were diminishing, while the divergence towards more secular lifestyles was intensifying and becoming increasingly apparent. This significantly influences the purchasing and leisure culture of the newly established religious bourgeoisie.

²⁷ For further details, see Çeviker-Gürakar, (2018). Kayırma Ekonomisi: AKP Döneminde Kamu İhaleleri.

Chapter 3. DEFINING THE CLASS: ISLAMISM AND CONSERVATISM

Following the analysis of the formation and evolution of the pious bourgeoisie, it is now essential to address a significant term debate, as there has been substantial contention over the definition of Islamism and the identification of Islamists, both globally and within the Turkish context, as well as whether the group I study qualifies as Islamic, Islamist, conservative, devout and/or pious as academic research and journalistic accounts employ diverse terminology to characterize this specific bourgeoisie class. The terms mostly include ‘Islamic’, ‘Islamist’, ‘Anatolian tigers’²⁸, ‘green’²⁹, ‘religious’, ‘pious’, ‘devout’ and ‘conservative’³⁰ bourgeoisie. However, this problem results in a collection of phrases that are ambiguous and do not accurately convey their intended meaning. For this reason, this chapter will very briefly analyse these phrases in global and then Turkish context, particularly the terms of Islamism and conservatism respectively, and thereafter define and employ the most suitable one for this thesis, to better illustrate the secularization of this class in the subsequent chapters.

By mapping the distinctions in both global and Turkish contexts, this chapter seeks to clarify the ideological frameworks and historical trajectories that shaped this class. This terminological and ideological clarification is essential, as the thesis focuses on the secularization of a segment of this group, specifically, those who identified with Islamist politics in the 1980s but gradually transformed through processes of *embourgeoisement*, neoliberal integration, and cultural hybridization. Understanding how Islamism and conservatism have been conceptualized is thus a prerequisite for analyzing how these actors redefined their political, cultural, and religious identities while becoming part of Türkiye’s economic elite.

²⁸ The designation "Tiger" in "Four Asian Tigers" and/or ‘Anatolian Tiger’ represents power, agility, and swift economic expansion. These economies shown significant advancement and industrialization, akin to the perception of a tiger as a formidable and active creature. The designation signifies their capacity to advance rapidly in economic performance, evolving from emerging to developed countries within a brief timeframe. This metaphor underscores their tenacity and competitiveness in the global marketplace.

²⁹ Green is widely associated with Islam due to its Qur’anic symbolism of paradise, its connection to the Prophet Muhammad, and its historical use in Islamic art, flags, and religious institutions (Schimmel, 1992).

³⁰ Currently, individuals or groups who exhibit sensitivity towards religious matters are labeled as conservative or religious; however, this was not the case in the 1980s and 1990s. The ‘mutaaasip’ (bigot) and its moderate counterpart, the conservative, as well as the Islamist and its moderate variant, the ‘mütedeyyin’ devout, represent two distinct phenomena with divergent inclinations (Karaca, 2011).

3.1 Conceptualizing Islamism: Origins and Intellectual Foundations

Defining Islamism with precision is a challenging task, particularly because few individuals or movements self-identify explicitly as Islamist (Aktay, 2004). The term is often applied analytically by scholars, encompassing a range of intellectual and political responses to modernity, colonialism, and Western dominance. Despite its fluidity, certain core features can still be identified.

In a general sense, Islamism is a multifaceted movement that emerged as contemporary political philosophy and a struggle for emancipation (Mert, 2004), in the 19th century in the Ottoman Empire and other Islamic nations (Kara, 1986, p. 48). It encompasses various activist, modernist, and eclectic endeavors in the realms of politics, intellect and science (Tuğal, 2009). The primary goal of this movement is to reclaim and revitalize all aspects of life, including faith, worship, morality, philosophy, politics, law, and education. Its aim is to ‘liberate’ Muslims and the Islamic world from ‘Western exploitation’, oppressive rulers, slavery, ‘blind’ imitation, and superstitions. This is to be achieved through ‘rational methods’, with the ultimate objective of ‘civilizing’, unifying, and ‘advancing’ society (Kara, 2011). Thus, it refers to the collective endeavours of cultural, political and social leaders to create a global society that aligns with the religious, moral, cultural, and social principles of Islam, and these efforts span across several domains and levels (Bulaç, 2004). Hence in short, Islamism refers to a modern ideological and political movement that seeks to reintroduce Islam as a comprehensive framework for organizing society—including governance, law, education, and moral values (Mert, 2004; Kara, 1986; Bulaç, 2004).

The roots of Islamism are often traced to the late Ottoman period, particularly as a reaction to the empire’s political and territorial decline. It emerged alongside other ideological responses, namely Turkism and Westernism, as an attempt to rescue the empire from disintegration. The Tanzimat reforms, though intended to modernize and centralize the state, ultimately failed to reconcile Muslim and non-Muslim populations under a shared civic identity. The failure of Ottomanism gave way to new identity-based ideologies, including Islamism and Turkism (Çavdar, 2019).

During this period, Western encroachment was perceived not just as a political threat but as a civilizational defeat of the Islamic world by the Christian West.

Intellectuals debated whether the root cause of this decline was internal degeneration or religious deviation. Some advocated for secularization, while others called for the revitalization of Islam. Islamism emerged from this context, as both a political critique and a reformist project aimed at reasserting Islam's relevance in the modern world.

3.1.1 Islamism as a Modern Ideological Movement

Islamism, in this sense, is not merely a return to religious orthodoxy. Rather, it is a modernist and activist project that seeks to reinterpret Islamic tradition in light of contemporary political and social challenges. The movement aims to ‘liberate’ the Muslim world from colonialism, internal despotism, intellectual stagnation, and moral decay through rational and structured methods. It promotes an alternative modernity rooted in Islamic values while engaging with modern technologies, institutions, and discourses (Tuğal, 2009; Kara, 2011).

Importantly, Islamism does not necessarily oppose modernization itself. Instead, it often attempts to develop a localized or ‘authentic’ version of modernity that integrates Islamic principles with contemporary governance, science, and social organization (Yavuz, 2003). Thus, Islamist movements often display a paradox: they critique Western influence while simultaneously borrowing from its ideological and organizational models.

Moreover, Islamism’s intellectual orientation distinguishes it from both traditional religious movements and Western political ideologies. It does not compete with other religions per se, but rather with secular philosophies such as positivism, materialism, or liberalism (Türküne, 1991). Unlike socialist or revolutionary ideologies that look forward to a utopian future, Islamism idealizes *asr-ı saadet*³¹ as a societal model worthy of emulation (Göle, 2000).

3.1.2 Who Are the Islamists? Identity, Agency, and Historical Role

When studying Islamism, it is essential to distinguish between Islam as a faith and Islamism as a political and intellectual phenomenon. Islamists are those who interpret Islamic tenets through a political lens, advocating for their application to statecraft and

³¹ In Islamic literature, it is the period during which Muhammad was alive.

public life. This is not synonymous with being Muslim; Islamism implies an ideological commitment to using Islam as a political framework (Bulaç, 2004; Göle, 1997). Islamists³² are thus best understood as modern political actors who reinterpret religious texts and practices in light of national and global concerns. Their emergence has been shaped by the democratization of education, the expansion of communication technologies, and the rise of mass political movements across the Muslim world (White, 2002).

3.1.3 Islamism in Practice: Political and Cultural Dimensions

Scholars frequently differentiate between various strands of Islamism, particularly political Islam and cultural Islamism, each representing different strategies for religious and social transformation. Asef Bayat (2007) defines political Islam as efforts to establish governance structures based on Islamic law and moral codes. Political Islam seeks to gain state power to implement the Islamic principle of '*al-amru bi-l-ma'rūf wa-n-nahyu 'ani-l-munkar*'³³ (promoting right and preventing wrong). For Bayat, this form of Islamism is primarily concerned with institutional power, with social justice as a secondary aim.

Bulaç (1992), however, views political Islam as a subset of a broader religious vision. It is a strategic, top-down approach that sees the state as the primary tool for social transformation. Similarly, Göle interprets political Islam as a revolutionary movement that seeks to reshape the state and society from above, often in opposition to Western imperialism and cultural dominance. However, she also notes a transition: Islamism, especially in urban and globalized contexts, increasingly adopts cultural forms. Islamists

³² Bulaç claims that Islamist movements may be seen as an intellectual, political, and social movement based on their inception and subsequent development, which can be analyzed at three distinct levels. By examining these three levels throughout three distinct periods of time, we may identify and discuss three successive generations of Islamists (Bulaç, 2004). In this sense, the first generation of Islamists emerged in the context of the Ottoman Empire's transformation. Figures like Yusuf Akçura articulated Islamism as one of three potential paths forward for the collapsing empire, alongside Ottomanism and Turkism. His essay *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset* (1904) examined these ideological alternatives as possible foundations for a new political order (Mert, 2004). Following the founding of the secular Turkish Republic in 1924, Islamist institutions and actors were largely excluded from public life, leading to the marginalization of Islamism as a political force for several decades (Bulaç, 2004).

³³ This is an important duties imposed by God in Islam revealed by Quran (Q.3:104, Q.3:110, Q.9:71, Q.9:112, Q.31:17, Q.5:105) and sahih Hadith.

have engaged with consumerism, public debates, and digital platforms, transforming themselves into cultural actors rather than merely political revolutionaries (Göle, 2000).

Cultural Islamism emphasizes personal piety, lifestyle choices, and the defense of religious identity against secularization. It prioritizes individual ethical reform over systemic change and resists the instrumentalization of religion by the state. This form of Islamism engages with modernity not by seizing political power, but by creating spaces of religious authenticity within modern life. Cultural Islamism thus reflects a shift from state-centered ideologies to more decentralized, socially embedded forms of religious expression (Göle, 1997). This evolving distinction underscores the flexibility and adaptability of Islamist thought and practice. It also complicates simplistic binaries between secular and religious, traditional and modern, or political and apolitical forms of Muslim identity.

3.1.4 From Islamism to Post-Islamism: Continuity and Transformation

In recent decades, a growing body of scholarship has identified a shift in Islamist movements and ideologies toward what is now called post-Islamism. Originally conceptualized by Asef Bayat in the 1990s, post-Islamism refers to a phase where the ideological momentum of Islamism diminishes. Rather than rejecting Islam, post-Islamism attempts to reconcile Islamic principles with pluralism, individual freedoms, and democratic values (Bayat, 2013). It represents an intellectual and political transformation: a movement beyond the state-centric, doctrinaire impulses of earlier Islamist thought.

Bayat introduced the concept while analyzing Iran, arguing that Islamism had lost its revolutionary energy and popular appeal. Post-Islamism, in this context, became a framework for integrating religiosity with modern civic values—democracy, rights, diversity, and personal autonomy. It prioritizes individual choice over religious obligation, context over dogma, and future-oriented pragmatism over idealized historical models. Far from being anti-religious, post-Islamism seeks to sustain Islam's ethical and spiritual dimensions within an open and pluralistic public sphere.

Subsequent scholars have extended the concept beyond Iran. Giles Kepel (2007) interpreted post-Islamism as the abandonment of violent jihadist strategies and the move

toward political participation and civil engagement. Similarly, Oliver Roy (2006) emphasized the privatization of religious belief and the decoupling of Islamism from state-building. These reinterpretations suggest that post-Islamism is not a coherent ideology but rather a set of diverse and context-specific transformations, strategic, discursive, and institutional, within Muslim societies. Importantly, post-Islamism does not necessarily signal the end of Islamist aspirations. Rather, it reflects a diversification in strategies and goals. Certain movements³⁴ in Muslim and Muslim-majority states have adopted more pragmatic, hybrid approaches. As such, post-Islamism embodies a tension between ideological continuity and adaptation to changing political realities.

3.2 The Genealogy of Conservatism: Between Restoration and Modernity

Though often linked with Islamism in contemporary discourse, conservatism warrants independent conceptualization. It is not merely an ideology but a multifaceted disposition—expressed as belief, practice, policy, or tradition—rooted in the desire to preserve and transmit an inherited social order. While its philosophical undercurrents can be traced to antiquity, conservatism³⁵ as a modern political ideology emerged as a reaction to the French Revolution and Enlightenment rationalism (Özipek, 2003; Çiğdem, 2003).

Pioneers like Edmund Burke in Britain, Joseph de Maistre and Louis de Bonald in France, and Friedrich Gentz in Germany articulated a critique of revolutionary politics that emphasized the value of historical continuity, institutional stability, and organic social order. For these thinkers, the Enlightenment's radical individualism and

³⁴ There is a question of whether we see post-Islamist stance in Turkish case as the AKP coined the term 'conservative democracy' to describe its new program and explicitly denouncing Islamism as an undesirable concept. Tuğal believes that the AKP does not signify a shift towards post-Islamism, but rather a disintegration of Turkish conservatism. This conservatism encompasses ideas of progress, democracy, Turkish nationalism, as well as the limitations of both people and administrators. He argues that Islamism in Türkiye has been influenced by both the state's industrial strategies and the ideology of small businesses in the countryside who are against labor power and he further highlights the authoritarian influence exerted by the party. Hence, rather than the emergence of post-Islamism, according to him Islamism has been absorbed into a conservative project (Tuğal, 2013). On the other hand, Dağı claims that the AKP has effectively implemented democracy and post-Islamism inside Turkish Islamism. Yet, both instances from Türkiye unequivocally demonstrate a profound shift in Islamism and even a divergence from Islamism (Dağı, 2013).

³⁵ It is argued that the concept that conservatism is only a disposition or, more simply, a manifestation of the self-interest of those who gain from the status quo, is further compounded by its deficiency of suitable theoretical classical sources. Liberalism, for example, is represented by Locke's 'Treatises of Government' and Mill's 'On Liberty'; socialism is represented by 'The Communist Manifesto'; elitism is encapsulated in Plato's 'Republic'. The closest approximation to a classic text that it possesses is Burke's 'Reflections on the Revolution in France.' However, as to all of Burke's political works, this is an infrequent piece, prompted by and primarily focused on the specific incident referenced in its title (Quinton, 2017).

universalist rationalism undermined traditional sources of authority and social cohesion, hastening moral and institutional decay (Beneton, 1991; Nisbet, 1952).

3.2.1 Adaptive Resistance: Conservatism in Historical Evolution

Conservatism is not monolithic; it has historically responded to different manifestations of modernity. In the 19th century, it defended social hierarchy and opposed universalist citizenship. In the 20th, revolutionary conservatism emerged as a critique of both liberalism and socialism, while post-Cold War liberal conservatism navigated globalization and cultural liberalization (Heywood, 1992; Bora, 1998). Despite these variations, the core of conservatism lies not in nostalgia but in its capacity to maintain continuity amid transformation—preserving the sacred, the customary, and the inherited within modern political contexts (Bora, 2017).

3.2.2 Anchoring the Present: Conservatism and Institutions

Institutional preservation is central to conservative thought. Rather than endorsing radical change, conservatism favors gradual reform grounded in historical experience. Institutions such as religion, the family, and the nation are not only seen as stabilizing forces but also as carriers of collective wisdom (Özipek, 2003; Çiğdem, 2003). Religion, in particular, is instrumentalized not for spiritual fulfillment but as a vehicle of social authority and cohesion (Beneton, 1991). The church, in this sense, is less a theological entity than a civic institution that binds the moral order of society.

Conservatives valorize property ownership and family continuity, viewing both as bulwarks against atomization. The nation-state, meanwhile, emerges not as an aggressive force but as a historically bounded moral community requiring loyalty and respect. Law, to conservatives, is less a product of abstract reason than the codification of inherited custom (Quinton, 2017).

3.2.3 Society as Organism: Conservative Epistemologies

Conservative epistemology rejects the notion of society as a sum of individuals; instead, it views society as an organic whole composed of intertwined traditions, institutions, and communities. As Burke and Bonald emphasized, this holistic view affirms the precedence of society over the individual, in history, logic, and morality

(Nisbet, 1952). Individual identity and freedom are seen as emerging from, not prior to, the social fabric.

This ontological vision entails skepticism toward abstract egalitarianism. Conservatives argue that hierarchy and inherited distinction are necessary to maintain continuity, transmit values, and avoid the leveling effects of revolutionary change. Equality, in this reading, risks disrupting the delicate interplay of obligations, affiliations, and norms that hold society together (Mollaer, 2016).

3.2.4 Architects of Prudence: Burke, Quinton, and Kirk

Edmund Burke remains the canonical figure in conservative thought. His “*Reflections on the Revolution in France*” (1790) articulates a critique not just of revolutionary politics, but of their underlying epistemic arrogance. Burke condemned the revolutionaries’ disregard for tradition and warned that rationalist reform would yield unintended consequences. His six core principles—including the primacy of religion, protection of property, and the notion of society as an organism—have become staples of conservative doctrine (Burke, 1955).

Building on Burke, British philosopher Anthony Quinton outlined three foundational doctrines of conservatism: traditionalism³⁶, skepticism toward political knowledge, and belief in social organicism. For Quinton, change is not anathema, but it must emerge from within tradition rather than be imposed from above (Mollaer, 2016).

In the American context, Russell Kirk (1953) expanded the conservative repertoire with six canons of thought: belief in a transcendent moral order, acceptance of human fallibility, resistance to egalitarianism, commitment to social hierarchy, and the indispensability of tradition. Kirk viewed conservatism not as a policy platform but as a disposition grounded in reverence for inherited wisdom and the mysteries of social life.

³⁶ Karl Mannheim (1924) also demonstrated that conservatism is traditionalism that has attained self-awareness and rationality. It advocates for the preservation of the pre-existing 'natural' condition of the universe and humanity against the 'hubris' of Enlightenment rationalism, which seeks to alter and mold reality via reason and theory. However, in a world altered by modernity, it must confront the need of defining the adequate or modified 'natural' in conjunction with the pre-existing theory (Bora 2017).

3.2.5 *Toward a Contextual Understanding*

Conservatism, as this chapter has shown, is not merely an ideological relic of pre-modern hierarchies but an adaptive, multifaceted response to the dislocations of modernity. Its critique of rationalism, emphasis on institutional continuity, and organic view of society remain relevant to contemporary political and cultural debates. Yet conservatism also manifests differently across historical and geographic contexts. As the thesis progresses, we turn to the Turkish case, where conservatism—often intertwined with Islamism—follows unique trajectories shaped by local traditions, secularist reforms, and global currents.

3.2.6 *Conservatism in Türkiye*

The roots of Turkish conservatism can be traced to Ottoman reformism in the 17th century. Thinkers such as Koçi Bey used the term ‘*ıslah*’ (rectification), which implies restoration rather than transformation, akin to the term ‘restore’ in Western conservatism. This vocabulary already signals a conservative orientation. Figures such as Tarhuncu Ahmet Pasha, Katip Çelebi, and Naima expressed a nostalgic yearning for a lost moral order (Belge, 2003).

Despite this intellectual heritage, a coherent conservative political ideology did not fully emerge until the late 20th century (Zürcher, 2003). The defining moment for

Turkish conservatism³⁷ was the Republican revolution³⁸, which not only changed political governance but also aimed to completely restructure social, cultural, and intellectual life. Conservatism in Türkiye thus defines itself in relation to this radical break with the Ottoman past (Çiğdem, 2003).

During the single-party period, conservative responses were informal and structured around religious practices and traditional norms in daily life, marriage, gender roles, and public morality, rather than theological doctrine. Religious networks, families, and local leaders played crucial roles in preserving conservative values (Akçaoğlu, 2018). With the advent of multi-party democracy in the 1950s, this informal conservatism became politically recognizable. As socio-economic changes led to increased dissatisfaction, formerly marginalized conservative groups began to form a cohesive political identity (Akçaoğlu, 2018).

³⁷ In Türkiye, it is possible to delineate rather broad avenues where conservatism transcends mere stylistic and adjectival characteristics, while simultaneously distinguishing itself from a political agenda (Bora, 1998). The first aspect is the conservatism of the early Republic era; a conservatism characterized by a cultural lexicon that is cultural conservatism, embodying a style of tranquillity that seeks to reconcile with Kemalism. The prominent individuals of this era are Yahya Kemal, Peyami Safa, and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar (Mollaer, 2016). This line exhibits a significant sensitivity and artistic quality that transcends mere sorrow and nostalgia (Bora, 1998). The second phase of conservatism refers to the Cold War era, characterized by a departure from its previously measured and cautious rhetoric, evolving into a fervent and forceful anti-communist discourse. During this phase, we observe Necip Fazıl and Peyami Safa, who was also present in the first period. The third period is a phase in which the technological manifestations of conservatism are evident (Mollaer, 2016). Moreover, Mardin (1991) posits that early conservatism manifests in two nearly antithetical forms: firstly, intellectual conservatism, which founded the political and cultural institutions of conservatism and established the basis for contemporary conservative discourse; and secondly, conservatism as a 'collective consciousness' influenced by the social functions of religion beyond mere theology. Conservatism, reflecting the perspectives of ordinary persons lacking religious competence, has been constructed around prevalent notions such as halal-haram, gender roles, private-public domains, and sectarian differences. The impact of imams, madrasah educators, religious authorities, and familial structures is substantial in its development. In contrast to intellectual conservatism, it responds to the societal changes generated by political reform and modernization (Akçaoğlu, 2018).

³⁸ It is possible to say that radical modernist effort was carried out during the time of single-party rule as Kemalism encompasses various ideological elements and political tendencies influenced by the French Revolution and the Enlightenment. As a result, it stands in opposition to conservative political thought (Gökmen, 2004). Moreover, the Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi – CHP (Republican People's Party), the founder of the republican regime and the bearer of Kemalism, the dominant paradigm of a modernization project specific to Türkiye, never perceived itself as conservative. On the contrary, it was revolutionary, progressive, developmental, and modernist (Zurcher, 2003). Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that diverse and even conflicting political ideologies may coexist together. The delayed political structure and democratization processes in non-Western nations, such as Türkiye, have raised complicated ideological challenges that are conducive to this unity (Toprak, 1995: 39). The salient features of the single-party CHP conservatism are to its conceptions of culture and populism. Due to the significant connection between the concepts of culture and populism and the key ideas of conservative political thinking (Gökmen, 2004). Statist conservatism is a fundamental term in the discourse of Turkish modernization and Kemalist modernization. This position and philosophy, closely aligned with nationalism, is perpetuated by organizations that embody state ideology, particularly the military (Bora, 1998).

3.2.7 Nationalism and Islam in Turkish Conservatism

Turkish conservatism is best understood as a synthesis of nationalism, religious values, and capitalism. According to Bora (1998), the boundaries between nationalism, conservatism, and Islamism are fluid, with these ideologies operating as interconnected elements within Turkish right-wing politics. Islam, in this framework, is typically subordinate to Turkish nationalism.

Turkish conservatism acknowledges modernity but resists its top-down imposition by secular elites. The state is viewed as a guardian of authentic Turkish and Islamic³⁹ values. Minorities and secular elites are often portrayed as threats to this authentic order. Religion is treated as a source of personal morality and national cohesion, rather than as a basis for institutional change. Turkish conservatism, like its Western counterparts, supports private property and is opposed to socialism (Tuğal, 2003).

Notably, Turkish conservatism has not sought to restore monarchy or Islamic rule. There has been no substantial movement to reestablish the Ottoman order. Instead, Turkish conservatism is revivalist rather than restorationist—focused on reforming the present in light of the past, not returning to it (Çiğdem, 2003).

Consequently, Turkish conservatism⁴⁰ is primarily cultural. It translates political and social demands into cultural ones and is rooted in collective memory and moral order rather than political Islamism. Islam is treated as a moral and cultural resource rather than a blueprint for governance (Çiğdem, 2003; Atacan, 2003). In this sense, it reinforces national identity while stopping short of advocating for an Islamic state.

³⁹ Religion is fundamental to Türkiye's political environment and identity. Islam has persistently shaped the vernacularization of Turkish nationalism; in turn, Turkish nationalists have redefined Islam as an essential element of national identity. Turkish nationalism primarily originates from the cosmology of Islam and its concept of community (Yavuz, 2003).

⁴⁰ Mollaer (2016) describe 'techno-conservatism' that is politically and economically aligned with the capitalist world order, and is presently manifesting in Türkiye as in AKP era. Techno-conservatism has seamlessly transitioned from a prior emphasis on technological output and ideological cohesion to the consumerist paradigm of the contemporary world order.

3.3 *Islamism and Conservatism in Türkiye*

When we come to Islamism in Türkiye, it requires a unique interpretation. Unlike its intellectual predecessors of the late Ottoman constitutional period, Islamism in the republican era was not primarily shaped by reformist constitutional debates. Following the establishment of the Republic, Islamism shifted from reformist conservatism to reactionary conservatism. The initial moderate regenerationist discourse quickly gave way to a negative critique of the new regime (Akçaoğlu, 2018). Therefore, despite sharing common origins and features, distinct variants of Islamism emerged. Turkish Islamism, in particular, was shaped by efforts to reform the newly established Republic and must be understood as a reaction to the Republican revolution (Mert, 2004).

Moreover, in the Turkish context, Islamism can be broadly categorized into three strands. The first is cultural Islam, led by figures such as Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, Mehmet Akif Ersoy, and Sezai Karakoç. This strand centers on epistemology and has a theoretical interest in politics, aiming to propose a new global vision. It may be characterized as an intellectual project. The second is social Islam, which focuses on Islamizing society through cultural transformation, education, and preaching. This form is typically associated with religious orders such as ‘*Nurculuk*’⁴¹ and ‘*Süleymancılık*’⁴². The third strand is Political Islam, influenced by the ‘*Milli Görüş*’ movement, which adopts political means to pursue explicitly political objectives (Bulaç, 2004).

3.3.1 *The Period of Dormancy*

If we look at the historical trajectory of Islamism in the Turkish context, the early Republican era, from 1924 to the transition to a multi-party system in 1950, often termed the single-party era, was marked by ‘didactic secularism’⁴³ (Gellner, 1981). This period is characterized as an interregnum or ‘period of dormancy’⁴⁴ for Islamism, in which state-led reforms drastically curtailed religion’s public role. However, Islamic organizations adopted adaptive strategies to preserve their identity and reach. The Süleyman movement

⁴¹ A religious movement inspired by the writings of Said Nursi (1878–1960), particularly the Risale-i Nur collection. It emphasizes spiritual renewal, Quranic study, and personal piety (Mardin, 1989).

⁴² A Sunni Islamic community based on the teachings of Süleyman Hilmi Tunahan (1888–1959), focused on Quranic education, traditional religious practices, and loyalty to hierarchical leadership structures (Çakır, 2002).

⁴³ Didactic secularism, as articulated by Ernest Gellner, is a paradigm wherein secularism transcends mere religious absence to actively advocate for a secular perspective.

⁴⁴ For more information, see Kara (2011) and Bulaç (2004).

focused on home-based activities (*ışık evleri*), the Nur movement developed private teaching institutes (*dersaneler*), and the İskenderpaşa Jamia⁴⁵ used mosques as key sites of activity (Yavuz, 2003).

3.3.2 *The Resurgence of Islamism*

The end of the single-party period in the 1950s marked a turning point in the relationship between religion and state. Internal migration, with over 18% of the population moving, predominantly from rural to urban areas, played a significant role in transforming religious and social dynamics (Yavuz, 2003). Additionally, the Democrat Party opened political space for Islamic discourses to reemerge and reorganize.

In this environment, Islamism, whose legal framework had been dismantled, found conservatism to be the only legitimate ideological pathway for public expression. The state, in effect, established the distinction between Islamism and conservatism, categorizing the former as illegitimate and the latter as a permissible form of religious expression (Akçaoğlu, 2018). This state-sanctioned conservatism aligned with the Republic's founding principles, whereas Islamism was marginalized.

From the 1950s⁴⁶ onward, conservative and Islamist discourses together laid the intellectual foundations of the Turkish right. They promoted an alternative national identity infused with religious symbolism, which in turn shaped subsequent nationalist and conservative ideologies. Although divisions later emerged between center-right parties, nationalist factions, and religious conservatives, a broader nationalist-conservative synthesis continued to define right-wing politics in Türkiye (Mert, 2004).

Until the late 1970s, Islamism remained a peripheral discourse that refrained from adopting political language or connecting with broader Islamic movements globally (Çiğdem, 2004). The emergence of Necmettin Erbakan and the '*Milli Görüş*' movement

⁴⁵ A Sufi network rooted in the Naqshbandi order, historically led by Mehmet Zahid Kotku and Mahmud Esad Coşan, influential in Islamic-conservative circles in Türkiye, especially through its ties to political and business elites (Yavuz, 2003).

⁴⁶ The term between 1950 – 2000 also considered as the second generation of Islamism by Bulaç, emerged in Türkiye, characterized by its establishment, development of a new societal and state structure, and its aim to promote Islamization. The migration movement in Türkiye led to an internal restructuring of the social structure. The primary assertions of this contemporary cohort of Islamists encompass not only the state's endeavor to imbue official society with Islamic principles, but also the concerted effort to infuse Islamic values into culture and all societal frameworks, in conjunction with the state and its institutions (Bulaç, 2004).

fundamentally altered this landscape. Conceptualized in 1967 and initiated through Erbakan's independent candidacy in the 1969 elections, '*Milli Görüş*' articulated a distinctly Islamic political agenda. It positioned itself as representing the '*milli*' (national) vision in contrast to the '*gayri-milli*' (non-national) perspectives of other parties. Here, 'national' signified a commitment to religious and *ummah*-based values rather than secular nationalism. The movement subsequently founded a series of Islamic political parties including the '*Milli Nizam Partisi*' (National Order Party), '*Milli Selamet Partisi*' (National Salvation Party), '*Refah Partisi*' (Welfare Party), '*Fazilet Partisi*' (Virtue Party), and '*Saadet Partisi*' (Felicity Party) (Çakır, 2002).

3.3.3 *From Margins to Mainstream: Islamism in the 1980s*

The 1980s marked a period of rapid growth for Islamism. Triggered in part by the 1980 military coup⁴⁷, Turkish nationalism was reconfigured to accommodate Islamic references. Initially, the emerging bourgeoisie and artisan classes used Islamic idioms to challenge the dominance of established industrial elites and bureaucrats. As Islamist movements grew in strength, the Welfare Party capitalized on the state's ethnoreligious nationalism to mobilize mass support around identity and social justice issues. Sufi networks and cultural foundations provided parallel structures through which Islamist actors could influence public discourse and policy (Yavuz, 1997).

This period also witnessed the emergence of a new Islamist elite drawn from recently urbanized and educated classes. Exposed to Islamist thinkers such as Mawdudi (Pakistan), Qutb (Egypt), Shariati (Iran), and Turkish writers like Ali Bulaç and İsmet Özel, these individuals pursued an Islamic modernity that rejected Western paradigms without mimicking them (Göle, 2000). These Islamist counter-elites challenged the secular Republican elite, yet mirrored them in education, organization, and technocratic competence (Göle, 1997).

⁴⁷ The 1980s constituted a significant era in Türkiye; subsequent to the 1980 military coup d'état, the military regime instituted a novel official ideology termed Türk - İslam Sentezi (Turkish - Islam synthesis) to address societal political conflicts and curtail the escalating influence of the Turkish leftist movement, which had been gaining traction since the 1960s. The military leadership believed that religion might act as a unifying instrument, although exercised caution in framing Islam within the parameters of Turkish nationalism. In this context, several Islamic factions were originally supported by the military authority and then by the center-right political parties of the post-1980 era. The adoption of this program conferred political legitimacy upon Islamic groups, including various Sufi orders, something they had not before attained (Atacan, 2005).

3.3.4 The Period of Absorption

While radical Islamists had previously eschewed political participation, the moderate success of Islamist parties in the 1991 elections led to a significant shift. Many Islamists began to engage with the state apparatus they had once rejected (Tuğal, 2009). According to Tuğal, this transition from opposition to integration marked the beginning of a ‘passive revolution⁴⁸,’ in which Islamists, gradually aligned themselves with neoliberal, secular, and pro-Western discourses.

This transformation culminated in the post-2000⁴⁹ rise of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), founded by former ‘*Milli Görüş*’ members who rebranded themselves as ‘conservative democrats.’ The AKP fused elements of Islamism, nationalism, and Western-friendly liberalism. While maintaining ties to its Islamist base, the AKP ultimately absorbed and neutralized the radical opposition (Tuğal, 2009).

Following this shift, many former Islamists reduced their visible religious practices. Daily expressions of religiosity, use of Islamic terminology, and political mobilization on religious grounds declined. Although Islamic networks, such as mosques, schools, and cultural centers, remained active, their focus shifted toward pragmatic engagement with commerce, development, and state-building under AKP leadership. Middle-class Islamists, in particular, became more secular in practice, though working-class communities retained stronger religious observance (Tuğal, 2009).

In sum, as evidenced by the trajectory, following the 1990s, particularly in the 2000s, radical Islamists or Islamism, in general, were absorbed and included into the

⁴⁸ This case was not only applicable in Türkiye. Islamic politics in many regions of the Muslim world first emerged with a form of radicalism, but gradually transformed into a market-oriented, and occasionally even pro-Western position. Certain academics have acknowledged and classified this alternative movement as ‘moderate’ Islam and typically perceive the shift from radical movements to pro-establishment movements as a positive metamorphosis characterized by learning, adaptability, rationality, collaboration, secularization, and democratization (Çavdar, 2006, Nasr, 2010, Turam, 2007).

⁴⁹ Bulaç (2004) defines this term (2000’s and present) as third generations of Islamism and the defining features of the period are the culmination of the urbanization process and the influence of a global reevaluation on the Islamists’ interpretation of religion and the world. The main argument revolves around the significance and requirement of political and institutional structures, as well as individual preferences, in establishing new and voluntary community frameworks. This includes promoting a pluralistic public sphere that allows for the expression and representation of diverse identities, encouraging civil initiatives, and simultaneously fostering a grassroots Islamization process that emphasizes religious life as an intrinsic objective. The third generation of Islamists distinguishes itself significantly from the preceding two generations in terms of their language, discourse, analytical tools, and overall approach to interpreting and comprehending religion and the world. Nevertheless, it is challenging to assert that this is a drastic departure.

system. Moreover, former Islamists no longer identify as such, and the AKP has also proclaimed itself as 'conservative democrats'. Islamism transitioned to a liberal and pro-capitalist stance throughout the AKP era, subsequently devolving into conservatism. Furthermore, Tuğal also claims that Islamism was integrated into a conservative agenda rather than the advent of post-Islamism. Consequently, discourse about Islamism is no longer feasible. Indeed, İsmail Kara also corroborates this assertion as this may apply to a limited intellectual cohort only. Thus, it may be asserted that it originated with 'Milli Görüş' and thereafter either ceased to exist or transformed its nature.

3.4 Naming the Class: Pious, Devout, or Conservative

After delineating the historical trajectory of these terms in global and Turkish context, it is imperative to briefly discuss its use in literature and my own usage of it for this thesis. In general, the term 'Islamist', was commonly used in the literature in the 90's such as by Navaro-Yashin (2002) and mainly stemmed from the formation of the Islamist 'counter public' against the 'secular' with the goal of politically reformulating the public sphere, as formed by Göle (1997). Yet, after 2000, the term 'Islamic', rather than 'Islamist', started to be used with the estrangement of Islamists' political project and their amalgamation with the capitalist system (Tuğal, 2009), and this process has been accelerated with the rise of AKP, as Islamist identities shifted their political aim, and adopted more of economically liberal system (Yankaya, 2014).

However, these terms of 'Islamic' and 'Islamist' (versus 'secular' or 'secularist') may lead to binaries that may blur the identities, as not all Muslims are Islamists as stated by scholars such as Çavdar (2015). Moreover mainly after the 2000s, the terms of *Anadolu kaplanları*⁵⁰ (Anatolian tigers), *İslami girişimciler*⁵¹ (Islamic entrepreneurs), *İslami burjuvazi*⁵² (Islamic bourgeoisie), *Yeni sanayi odakları*⁵³ (New industrial focuses) and *İslami/yeşil sermaye*⁵⁴ (Islamic/green capital) was also used in order to describe the

⁵⁰ Demir et al., 2004, Buğra & Savaşkan, 2014, Köse & Öncü, 1998

⁵¹ Adas, 2003, Demiralp, 2009

⁵² Yankaya, 2014

⁵³ Eraydın, 2002

⁵⁴ Demiralp, 2009, Özel, 2010, Demir et al., 2004, Jang, 2005,

devout or Islamists who went through embourgeoisement process after 1980's during the Özal period and mainly after the 2000's during the AKP era.

In this study, I avoid using politically charged or laden terminologies such as '*Yeşil sermaye*', or economically oriented expressions like '*Anadolu kaplanları*' and '*Yeni sanayi odakları*', as this thesis's subject is not about the establishment of this bourgeoisie class. I also refrain from using the phrases of '*İslami burjuvazi*' or '*İslami girişimciler*' due to the contentious and ambiguous nature of what qualifies these classes as 'Islamic.'

Instead, I will use pious, devout or conservative bourgeoisie⁵⁵⁵⁶ interchangeably as these terms are the most suitable adjectives to define this specific class, as evidenced by the trajectory. It is crucial to recognize that using these phrases interchangeably does not imply neglecting the historical developments associated with each term. When using these terms, it is suggested that this class consists of subjects who are Islamist or not, are self-identified pious, devout, Muslim, conservative, women or men, in any ages, upper middle or upper class and owner of small, medium and large enterprises, with or without affiliation to MÜSİAD, in Türkiye.

⁵⁵ This class represent an elite fraction of the devout Muslim population and consolidated during the embourgeoisement of the late 1970s–1980s and institutionalized through business associations (e.g., MÜSİAD) and clientelist state networks during the AKP era. They are concentrated in capital intensive sectors (construction, energy, logistics) and heavily shape the Islamic branded leisure and consumption infrastructures I document. Though much smaller than the broader devout middle and lower middle classes, they wield disproportionate social, economic and political influence. Thus, it is this analytical significance, not numerical size, that motivates the focus of this study.

⁵⁶ Although I treat the devout bourgeoisie as a coherent analytical category and socially identifiable formation, I acknowledge that they are not a homogeneous group as there may be clear variations in certain aspects, especially in their affiliation to business organizations and regional social norms. What unites them is their shared class position, political affiliations, religiosity, and participation in Islamic-branded infrastructures, consumption-oriented and status-seeking environments. The pattern of selective and performative religiosity identified in this study represents a dominant tendency, but it coexists with variation, tensions, and alternative modes.

Chapter 4: LEISURE AND CONSUMPTION IN THE TURKISH CONTEXT: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Following the delineation of the emergence and institutionalization of the pious bourgeoisie and the term debate, it is now essential to elucidate their consumption and leisure culture, since it is crucial for our analysis to investigate the secularization process they are undergoing.

Leisure and consumption are not merely personal or economic acts, they are deeply embedded in social, cultural, and religious contexts⁵⁷. To grasp how these practices shape and are shaped, especially within the pious bourgeoisie in Türkiye, it is essential to first unpack their conceptual foundations and historical evolution. In order to do this, this chapter will initially discuss the concepts of leisure⁵⁸ and consumption in general, as we will examine these notions in relation to the consequential dimensions of religiosity in detail. Subsequently, it will explore the historical trajectory within the Turkish context, highlighting its evolution over time, beginning with the Ottomans, to provide a clearer understanding of the historical development of leisure from Byzantium and Constantinople to Istanbul. This evolution reveals distinct phases: the Byzantine Empire; the classical Ottoman Empire until the 19th century; Istanbul during the Ottoman reform period; the early Republic era; the Republic from 1950 to 1980; and finally, the primary focus will be the 1980s era (Aytar, 2011), and the AKP era.

Including this chapter is crucial to situating the secularization of the devout bourgeoisie within a broader socio-historical framework. By unpacking the evolving

⁵⁷ The shifts in the sociology of religion have emphasized the importance of attending to how religion is experienced, enacted, and embedded in everyday life. Nancy Ammerman's concept of 'lived religion' offers a particularly valuable lens through which to analyze contemporary religious subjectivities that defy rigid institutional or doctrinal categorizations. Rather than treating religion as a bounded set of beliefs or formal rituals, Ammerman (2007; 2016) argues that religiosity must be understood as something that people do in the context of their daily lives, through habits, emotions, spatial practices, moral decisions, and material engagements. This perspective is especially relevant in contexts where religious actors engage with certain lifestyles, markets, and institutions without entirely abandoning religious practices.

⁵⁸ It is important to note that leisure and consumption research in the Turkish context predominantly focus on Istanbul and a few other major cities. Consequently, our understanding of the leisure activities in '*taşra*' (rural or county areas) is constrained. However, it is widely acknowledged that '*taşra*' is typically perceived as a locale of monotony and boredom, a sentiment that became more pronounced with the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye. The leisure life in '*taşra*' (apart from big cities such as Ankara and İzmir) are about non-acholic cafés and '*lokanta*', for males sometimes pavyon's which are located mostly outside of the city, and '*oturmalar*' (home gatherings) which mainly takes place gender segregated. For more information, see Özarslan, 2016.

meanings and practices of leisure and consumption in Türkiye, the chapter provides the conceptual and historical groundwork necessary to understand how these practices have become sites of negotiation between piety, modernity and secularity. Rather than treating consumption as merely economic or leisure as apolitical, the chapter reveals their embeddedness in cultural, political, and religious shifts, thus offering essential context for analyzing how the devout bourgeoisie navigates secularization through everyday life and lifestyle choices. Without this background, the specificity of their current modes of leisure and consumption would remain analytically shallow and historically decontextualized.

Leisure⁵⁹, as a social institution, refers to time free from work or other responsibilities, which can be utilized for relaxation, social interaction, enjoyment, intellectual growth, skill enhancement, or community involvement, after the fulfilment of professional, family, and social duties. Leisure offers relaxation, diversion, knowledge, spontaneous social interaction, entertainment, and alleviation from daily stress and monotony (Parker, 2021). Thus, leisure is traditionally described as the activities that persons freely engage in during their free time, driven by intrinsic motivations and personal satisfaction (Shaw, 1985). However, it is crucial to acknowledge that unemployed or retired individuals with limited financial resources may possess plenty time, but they are improbable to engage in 'authentic' leisure (Parker, 2021).

Within an Islamic framework, the western style of leisure has no equivalence (Ibrahim, 1982), and the guidance provided by Islam about social behavior and conduct significantly influences the leisure and recreational preferences of its adherents (Yousaf, 2022). The Quran, hadiths, and fatwas influence public leisure activities, as Islam affects the daily lives of its followers, including their leisure and

⁵⁹ The ancient Greeks, particularly the Athenians, defined leisure using the term '*scholē*', contrasting it with '*ascholē*', which signifies nonleisure or activity. Furthermore, the Romans designated it as '*otium*', in contrast to '*negotium*', which signifies the lack of leisure or occupation. Nonetheless, the viewpoint of the Greeks contrasted with that of the Romans as the Greek viewpoint was profoundly shaped by Aristotle and this viewpoint asserts that authentic leisure is found in reflection and music. In contrast, the Romans demonstrated a pragmatic perspective, allowing a wider array of ordinary activities to be classified as leisure (Ibrahim, 1982).

consumption practices, resulting in the establishment of halal⁶⁰ 'spheres' as there is an expanding body of literature on halal leisure, consumption, and tourism⁶¹.

Moreover, in the Islamic tradition, Martin and Mason (2003) determined in their analysis of leisure that Islamic teachings do not reject leisure as rest or enjoyment. Mainly sports and certain other hobbies that improve physical and mental health are deemed halal, while Western habits like drinking and gambling are not. Thus, various entertainment forms fall between halal and haram, depending on the region's prevalent interpretation of Islam and the relationship between Islamic principles and local cultural traditions (Walsethe & Amara, 2017).

When we come to the issue of consumption, we can see that both terms of leisure and consumption are intertwined with each other and, the study of consumption has a long history⁶² and has been segmented into various subfields, with intersections between

⁶⁰ Halal, a term designating permitted or allowed lifestyle choices for Muslims, is mostly associated with food and beverages (Jallad, 2008). Yet, contrary to popular belief, halal governs all aspects of a Muslim's life, including diet, consumption, social interactions, communication, clothing, conduct, and etiquette (Yousaf, 2022). It also encompasses leisure and recreational activities. The concept of Halal emphasizes cleanliness, safety, hygiene, nutrition, morality, production, pre-production processes, trustworthiness, integrity, and the management of food and other financial and social activities based on Islamic principles (Billah et al., 2020).

⁶¹ The most of the halal consumption studies are centralized in the halal fashion consumption, although there is a growing literature on halal tourism and other areas as well. Hence, the concept of halal consumption extends beyond food and beverage to encompass various sectors, including fashion, tourism, finance, and beauty, reflecting a broader Islamic lifestyle. In recent years, halal fashion has gained significant traction, with designers and brands producing clothing that aligns with Islamic principles, such as modesty and ethical production (Karim, 2020). Similarly, halal tourism, or "Muslim-friendly tourism," has emerged as a growing market segment, characterized by services that cater to the religious needs of Muslim travelers, including halal dining, prayer facilities, and gender-segregated accommodations (Henderson, 2009). This shift in consumer preferences underscores a larger trend toward the development of a "halal lifestyle," which incorporates religious values into diverse aspects of daily life. Scholars suggest that this expansion is not only driven by the growing global Muslim population but also by a rising awareness and demand for ethical, sustainable, and socially responsible products and services (Eid, 2019). As such, halal consumption is becoming a significant economic force that transcends traditional boundaries and presents opportunities for businesses across various industries. In Türkiye, halal consumption has become an increasingly important area of study, with scholars examining its implications in sectors such as tourism, fashion, and food. Though halal or Islamic fashion is the major area of study, Halal tourism in Türkiye has also garnered significant attention, especially in the last couple of years, as the country positions itself as a key destination for Muslim and Arab travellers, offering specialized services such as halal-friendly hotels, prayer facilities, and halal dining options (Çelik & Öztürk, 2019). Halal fashion in Türkiye is also a growing market, with both domestic and international brands catering to the demand for modest and 'stylish' clothing. Studies indicate that Turkish consumers are increasingly seeking fashion that aligns with Islamic values, leading to the emergence of local modest fashion designers and the integration of halal principles into mainstream fashion retail (Koç & Yılmaz, 2020).

⁶² In examining the classical theoretical heritage related to consumption, one primarily recalls the contributions of Veblen and Simmel, and to a lesser extent, those of Marx and Weber. The principal contributions include Veblen on conspicuous consumption (1899/1994), Simmel on fashion and money (1957, 1978), Malinowski on the Kula (1922), Boas on the potlatch (1944), Mauss on the gift (1976), Marx

consumption and diverse domains being examined independently. In sociological literature, consumption encompasses activities of selection, acquisition, use, maintenance, repair, and disposal of goods and services and as a multi-disciplinary research field, and it can be described as the “social, cultural and economic process of choosing goods” (Zukin et al., 2004, p. 173).

According to Williams, ‘to consume’ something is “to destroy, to use up, to waste, to exhaust” something and goes back to the 14th century (Williams, 1988, pp. 78–79). Warde defines consumption as “a process whereby agents engage in appropriation and appreciation, whether for utilitarian, expressive or contemplative purposes, of goods, services, performances, information or ambience, whether purchased or not, over which the agent has some discretion” (Warde, 2010, p. 137). Consuming certain things can satisfy needs and desires, compensate for feelings of inferiority, insecurity or loss, symbolise achievement, success or power, communicate social distinctions, reinforce superiority and inferiority, express feelings or moods, send messages, or develop a sense of self or personal identity (Campbell, 1999; Miller, 1995).

In terms of consumption in Islamic milieu, it is asserted that the Western interpretation of Islam has led to the marginalization of Islam as an ideology deemed incompatible with consumerism, as it is conventionally linked to anti-consumption, anti-capitalism, anti-Western sentiment, and anti-consumerism (Ahmed & Akbar, 2004; Gellner, 1992; Turner, 1994). Nevertheless, sociological and anthropological studies indicate the contrary. In the Turkish context⁶³, Sandıkçı and Ger (2010) discovered that Turkish women who embrace Islamist ideals incorporate Islamist politics into consumer culture, transforming it into a religious and contemporary consuming style. Studies indicate that the growing affluent Muslim middle classes frequently delineate their identities through commodities and consumption patterns (Fealy and White, 2008; Fischer, 2008; Pink, 2009), utilizing diverse resources such as lifestyle magazines, halal markets and restaurants, vacation resorts, and upscale gated communities (Gökarıksel and

on commodity fetishism, use and exchange value (1973), Sombart on luxury (1967), and Weber on status groups and the Protestant ethic (1958, 1978).

⁶³ In Türkiye, the emergence of the Islam-compliant market and the 'halal' sector, has occurred within the context of neoliberal economic restructuring and the revival of Islamic identities. A prominent new Islamic culture of consumerism has evolved from this amalgamation of economic, political, and cultural realignments, (Gökarıksel & Secor 2009), and a diverse array of halal platforms already exists, encompassing fashion, dating applications, tourism, and banking.

McLarney, 2010), especially in Türkiye (Yeniaras 2016). Having briefly mentioned consumption and leisure terms in general, it is now significant to talk about its historical trajectory in the Turkish context.

4.1 Historical Trajectory of the Leisure and Consumption in the Turkish Context

Unlike the Byzantine Empire, the Ottoman Empire allowed cultural variation across provinces and encouraged local leisure practices outside the palace's direct control (Spracklen, 2011), and leisure varied across regions but was particularly vibrant in Istanbul. Additionally, Ottoman society embraced outdoor leisure as people from all religions gathered in cemeteries, gardens, and coffeehouses (Behar, 2003). Entertainment included 'Karagöz', 'orta oyunu'⁶⁴, and storytelling by 'meddah'. Yet, religious and gender norms deeply shaped leisure: music and dance were often condemned as sinful (Öztürkmen, 2003), and public leisure was male-dominated, and women's access was limited to hammams, cemeteries and house gatherings. When we come to the leisure venues, coffeehouses⁶⁵ occupied a significant role as male-dominated political and cultural spaces, whereas alcohol⁶⁶-serving taverns (later on 'baloz' and 'kafeşantan'⁶⁷), usually owned by non-Muslims, were frequented by both Muslims⁶⁸ and non-Muslims, reflecting a pluralistic but stratified leisure culture (Behar, 2003; Ortaylı, 1995).

⁶⁴ Many of these performances were held in front of large crowds during Ramadan and 'Donanma' events.

⁶⁵ For the Muslim majority, coffee consumption quickly became equivalent to alcohol consumption, leading to the creation of nighttime coffee cafés where men could chat and play backgammon (Spracklen, 2011).

⁶⁶ Alcohol usage in the ottoman empire is largely misrepresented. Non-Muslims could drink alcohol in the Ottoman Empire, except during Ramadan. Moreover, Muslims went to taverns and drank alcohol as well and they were seldom punished harshly. Travelers' experiences also indicate Muslims attitude and drinking habits. Dernschwam (1992) claims Muslims drink at taverns, secretly like prisoners. Habesci (1784) says Greeks and Turks drink differently in taverns. Greeks are spontaneous, happy, wild, and loud, whereas drunk Turks are timid, bashful, and frightened to converse. Some travellers' accounts exaggerate, but many prove that Ottoman Muslims, especially Janissaries, drank alcohol. Yet, it is important to mention that few local sources from before the 19th century exist to compare the discourses or completely prejudiced descriptions of orientalist viewpoints. Therefore, the finest resources for comprehending Istanbul's social and cultural life from the viewpoint of its residents are publications written for Western travellers. Overall, although alcohol consumption was more prevalent than expected in social life, it is important to avoid generalizing about society (Çilli, 2023).

⁶⁷ Taverns were updated during the Tanzimat, with classical design and staff most noticeable. So post-Tanzimat produced 'baloz' and 'kaşefantan', and these new taverns employed women. In Beyoğlu area, 'kafeşantan', an aristocratic alternative to 'baloz', was popular, and 'kanto', a performance featuring overweight girls dancing and singing, were also popular entertainment offerings (Çilli, 2023).

⁶⁸ Although non-Muslims were the only regulars, Muslims occasionally frequented taverns and these taverns shuttered every Ramadan and forbade alcohol, yet customers drank it (Çilli, 2023).

There exists a distinction among various ‘*millet*s’ regarding their leisure culture. Muslims were depicted as overly static, indifferent, and unused to exercising or playing sports, lacking an emphasis on entertainment culture. Thus, travellers⁶⁹ were ‘shocked’ that they mostly watched dance and musical acts and avoided public amusement, as they regarded dancing, singing, imitating, and joking immoral and sinful⁷⁰. Non-Muslims, on the other hand, dominated Ottoman entertainment (‘*taverns*’, ‘*kafesant*’, etc.) until the late 19th century, and their amusement culture occasionally went too far. According to travellers, Greeks were constantly joyful despite being under another state, whereas Armenians and Jews enjoyed more predictable amusement (Çilli, 2023).

4.2 Early Republic Period: Modern, Institutionalized and Disciplinary Leisure

The early Republic viewed leisure as a tool for secular modernization. Hence, after the establishment of the Turkish Republic, it is observed that of a more institutionalizing and disciplinary conception of entertainment in the early years, as the founding cadres of the early Republic sought to reform and transform entertainment and distance the new state, society, and citizens from images, insinuations, and acts that reminded them of the *ancien regime*. The approach adopted was to accuse their predecessors of liking entertainment and dismiss anything entertainment-related (Kendirci, 2022). In this sense, the entertainment genres that referenced the past (‘*Çengi*’, ‘*Hacivat – Karagöz*’, ‘*Zenne*’, ‘*Orta Oyunu*’) were regarded as trivial, lacked support, and were allowed to fade into obscurity (Özarslan, 2016).

The goal is to make entertainment life ‘disciplined and orderly’ in a ‘modern’ manner that is appropriate for the emerging ‘new Türkiye’ (Kendirci, 2022). In this regard, events like balls, tangos and waltzes, seen as the Turkish counterparts to Western entertainment, emerged as the official mode of amusement and initiatives were

⁶⁹ Since local sources are insufficient, these views are generally based on the orientalist views of European travelers.

⁷⁰ In Islam, especially in hadith, leisure activities like as drinking, gambling, fighting, chariot racing, and extramarital sexual relations, as well as other actions that incited emotion or exploited the goodwill of others, are seen ethically unacceptable. Music occupied an equivocal role in Islam, with some asserting music is acceptable, while others contended that it was unacceptable. Reports indicated that physical activities, sports, and games were significant in the appropriate leisure life of free Muslim males (Spracklen, 2011).

undertaken to reform the rural landscape, particularly through Halk evleri⁷¹, Köy enstitüleri⁷², and CHP balls, and the establishment of art groups for this purpose (Özarslan, 2016). Nonetheless, despite these endeavors, mainly non-urban populace exhibited covert resistance, and the amusement and leisure structure of the early republic was not embraced (Özarslan, 2016) and additionally, the palace-escaped *alaturka* became the popular one and gazino's opened up and gained prominence.

4.3 The End of the Single Party Regime and The Commodification of Leisure Until The 1980s

After the single party regime, the transition to a multi-party system and the DP years made the entertainment sector, like everything else in Türkiye, a market commodity (Özarslan, 2016, p. 55). The emergence of pop music started in the 1960s, characterized by the adaptation of renowned foreign songs into Turkish lyrics. While the youth frequented the nightclubs on this occasion, the elder demographic adhered to tradition and maintained a cautious approach to their gazino (Meriç, 2011).

During the latter part of the 1970s, the enjoyment of music was overshadowed by the country's developing instability, characterized by right-left disputes, widening class disparities, and widespread economic hardship. Thus, arabesque⁷³ capitalized on this negative atmosphere while also focusing on the populations residing in Istanbul's slums and the immigrants (Meriç, 2011). Moreover, some restaurants⁷⁴ appeared in 1970s Istanbul's nightlife scene, but their number was small (Eder & Öz, 2014). When we come to cities except Istanbul and Ankara, the perception of these cities as a 'site of boredom' emerged during the second constitutional era and was further solidified throughout the Republican period (Özarslan, 2016).

⁷¹ Halkevleri (people's houses or community centres) is a Turkish community enlightenment project.

⁷² Köy enstitüleri (village institutes) were a rural schools in order to train teacher.

⁷³ These cultural products, often marginalized by elites, became dominant in gecekondu neighborhoods and contributed to a cultural dualism between the secular, Westernized elite and the traditional, religious lower classes.

⁷⁴ Şamdan, opened in 1975 in Etiler district of Istanbul, was the first high-society restaurant, followed by Ulus 29. In the 1970s, entrepreneurial figures Ahmet Çapa, Mehmet Fadiloğlu, and Tevfik Dölen contributed to the shift and created Istanbul's first high-end disco and dance clubs (Eder & Öz, 2014).

4.4 The 1980s – 1990s and the Rise of Leisure and Consumption Culture

The 1980 coup and subsequent neoliberal reforms under Özal marked a turning point as consumption became central to identity, nightlife diversified, and ‘arabesque’ music moved from taverns into mainstream venues (Mutlu, 1991). A new upper-middle class emerged, centered around luxury housing complexes like Kemer Country⁷⁵, which offered hotel-like leisure services (Keyder, 1999; Gülöksüz, 1998). Leisure became privatized and gendered, access was tied to income and social class. The yuppie lifestyle⁷⁶ embraced global commodities, from sushi to imported wines, as symbols of status (Bartu 1999).

The 1990s brought a boom in shopping malls, such as Galleria, Akmerkez, and Capitol, turning consumption into a primary leisure activity⁷⁷ (Öncü, 2000). Malls were designed as controlled, modern spaces reflecting American suburban ideals. Social class defined not only what people consumed but also where they consumed it—whether in elite sushi restaurants, *türkü* bars, or rock venues⁷⁸. This decade saw increasing tension between the old secular bourgeoisie and the rising conservative elite, each expressing identity through differentiated consumption patterns (Bartu, 1999). When we come to the 2000’s, entertainment got more international and social clubs established near inexpensive taverns where young people hung around. As demand for old songs and performers rose, ensembles incorporated them to their repertoire. Summer festivals and big concerts thrilled tens of thousands of people. (Meriç, 2011).

⁷⁵ Luxury destinations and gated-communities, frequently designated by titles concluding with ‘country’ or ‘city’, have become associated with Istanbul. Kemer Country was among the most renowned and initial locations of that era to feature this construction. Additionally, a different theme that attracts the urban elite, who became acquainted with villa and site living in the 1990s, is ‘Rezidans’ with secretarial support, concierge, meals and drinks, in-apartment cleaning, and laundry services, akin to those offered at a luxury hotel (Bali, 2002).

⁷⁶ For yuppies seeking to minimize lunch duration, McDonald’s serves as the quintessential and ubiquitous representation of the American lifestyle they have observed in films, and modern and exclusive gained prominence too, such as The Şamdan Restaurant, Ece Bar, and Safran (Bali, 2002).

⁷⁷ A notable transformation in the lifestyle of the 1990s was the remarkable proliferation and widespread consensus over the use of champagne and cigars, which represent the peak of indulgence, particularly among businessmen, managers, and bankers. The liberalization of cigar and alcoholic beverage imports has rendered champagne and cigars, symbols of luxury and affluence, essential components of invites, bars, and restaurants. Likewise, wine experienced its renaissance years during that period as well (Bali, 2002).

⁷⁸ It is evident that entertainment has evolved along three distinct trajectories over these years. The closure of gazino and the affluent’s fondness for taverns, redirected young individuals into other pursuits, including rock clubs, folk music venues, and pop music establishments. Rock bars beneath the Galata Bridge, folk music establishments in the alleys of Beyoğlu, and nightclubs featuring pop music like Laila and Reina in the affluent areas of Etiler and Tarabya have proliferated (Meriç, 2011).

4.5 Urban Modernity and the Transformation of Leisure and Consumption in Post-2000s Türkiye

After the 2000s, Türkiye witnessed a significant expansion and diversification of leisure and consumption practices, driven by economic growth, increased disposable incomes, and integration into global consumer culture (Bartu-Candan & Kolluoğlu, 2008). Urban centers, especially Istanbul, became hubs of commercial and cultural activity, marked by the proliferation of shopping malls, cafes, entertainment complexes, and festival culture. Consumption increasingly became a marker of lifestyle and identity, particularly among the urban middle and upper classes, who embraced global brands, fine dining, boutique fitness, and international travel as part of their everyday routines (Öncü, 2011; Erkip, 2003; 2005). The emergence of creative industries and gentrified urban neighborhoods, such as Cihangir, Karaköy, and Moda, offered new leisure spaces that blended art, design, and cosmopolitanism, reinforcing the symbolic role of consumption in producing new urban subjectivities (Türeli, 2010; Gümüş, 2007). These transformations reflected broader shifts toward individualization, aestheticization of everyday life, and a reconfiguration of public space in line with neoliberal urban policies.

4.6 Old Money vs. Nouveau Riche: Class Distinctions, Cultural Capital, and Urban Exclusion in Post-Özal Türkiye

It is significant to note that there were also a kind of a competition between the ‘old money’ and ‘nouveau riche’ as ‘the January 24 Decisions’ prompted Anatolian firms, previously subordinate to Istanbul capital, to abruptly engage with the global market, compete with Istanbul industrialists, and relocate their headquarters to Istanbul. Consequently, the elite started self-classification; the established families with longstanding wealth on the one side and emerging fortunes that is ‘new comers’ on the other side (Bali, 2002). A newly affluent section, the ‘new comer’, emerging after Özal, on the other hand, sought to embrace a Western lifestyle, focusing mostly on its symbolic dimensions. This section rapidly embraced social status symbols, including luxury automobiles, branded apparel, frequent international travel, and high-end watches and jewellery.

Nevertheless, journalists commenced a vehement critique of these nouveau riche individuals. Simultaneously, they condemned not only the nouveau riche but also those individuals who relocated from rural regions to the city and failed to acclimate to urban existence. The terms '*maganda*'⁷⁹ and '*zonta*'⁸⁰ that they created in popular humour periodicals proved to be beneficial for the urban elite. The two terms emerged to characterize the affluent, shown with handlebar moustaches and gold tags, as well as people who travelled to and settled in Istanbul, including those unable to assimilate as Istanbulites. The entrances of several entertainment venues remained inaccessible to these peoples (Bali, 2002).

In sum, it is possible to observe that the leisure life and consumption culture in the Turkish context have undergone significant transformations, prohibitions, regulations, and encouragements, with a variety of players, places, and tastes coming into existence. This can be observed beginning with the Ottomans and continuing on until the establishment of the Turkish republic and up until the present day. Thus, from the Ottoman era to the late 20th century, Türkiye's leisure practices transformed from inclusive communal activities to stratified, consumer-driven experiences. Political shifts, modernization efforts, and economic liberalization all played roles in reshaping leisure. These practices have long served as sites for expressing, and contesting, class, gender, and cultural identity, marking Türkiye's uneven journey through modernization and globalization (Keyder 1999).

4.7 Building a New Devout Habitus: The Consumption and Leisure Culture of the Devout Bourgeoisie

The pious leisure and consumption culture, in general, necessitates distinct examination, not only due to the subject of this thesis but also because it originated inside the 'alternative' milieu in the Turkish setting.

⁷⁹ According to Turkish Language Association, it means an uncouth, rude, ill-mannered and aggressive person

⁸⁰ According to Turkish Language Association, it means an extremely uncouth and rude man.

Islamists, along with their leisure and consumption patterns, oppose Westernization and its secular portrayal of daily life, although they also critique traditional forms of entertainment either (Karaca, 2011), and in Anatolia, they marginalized entertainment, seeing it an artificial forced by Western-style of modernization, whereas a more adaptable perspective prevailed in Istanbul and other major cities. In contrast to conservatives⁸¹ who adopt a lenient view towards traditional entertainment that reflects local culture, Islamists deem it shameful to allow their daughters to participate in folklore groups, eschew music entirely, and may destroy instruments reminiscent of their youth without displaying any emotion.

Moreover, they can also react vehemently to the presence of Western music in their homes, and their engagement with television is typically restricted to news agencies, particularly Channel 7. Henna nights exclusively featuring Quranic recitations throughout the 1980s and the early 1990s, as well as weddings where neighbours lament, questioning whether it is a house of mourning. The Islamist, who conducted marriages that did not manifest as a personal attitude despite the segregation of men and women, primarily advocated for a rigorous and uniform approach rooted in Anatolian tradition. Their formation by preachers who wept, evoked tears in others, and proposed that the youth engaging in revelry cultivate mujahideen while honoring our martyrs from Palestine, Chechnya, and Bosnia during weddings exemplified a unique aspiration of Anatolian Islamism (Karaca, 2011).

Thus, Islamists expressed anti-consumerist attitudes. However, this tendency began to change from the late 1980s and especially in 1990s, when political and economic reforms in Türkiye created new opportunities for upward mobility within conservative factions (White, 2002). The rise and increasing significance of a 'conservative' middle class during this period prompted urban lifestyles to adjust to the requirements of a new

⁸¹ The conservative identity, along with their leisure and consumption habits, was different in the past, despite the fact that it might currently be deemed to be the same, as conservatives represent a kind of bigots who might sporadically, albeit infrequently, 'indulge themselves' and permit a little exposure to worldliness. This group, which refrained from criticizing the system, remained receptive to the pleasures sanctioned by conventional, customary, and ethical norms in daily life. They could immerse themselves in a folk song and draw inspiration from traditional Turkish art music. Women would narrate tales about saints and perform a melodious song during their gatherings. The splendid offering provided by the host would encompass both spiritual and secular themes. The circumstances were analogous for males. This group saw the generation of ideas in philosophical discourse as detrimental to religion, exercised caution in their worship, led more comfortable everyday lives, and shown disinterest in ideological matters (Karaca, 2011).

phenomenon known as 'Islamic capital' (Genel & Karaosmanoğlu, 2006), which enabled the emergence of 'alternative' social, economic, and cultural forms that shifted from secular norms, a trend that became more pronounced after the RP's electoral victory in the late 1990s.

Thus, the notion of 'alternatives of everything' emerged in the 1990s and has been heavily contested since 2010. This is mostly attributable to the growing impact of neoliberalism, the ascendant strength of MUSİAD, and the significant benefits that the devout bourgeoisie have garnered from the AKP's nepotistic economic strategies. As a result, their opulent consumerism and culture of leisure have flourished, and the affluent urban Islamist elite progressively adopted a more 'mainstream' lifestyle^{82,83} while highlighting their distinctions from the secular as well as conservative rural factions, and traditional fundamentalist Islamists. Furthermore, the conservative bourgeoisie has embraced a lifestyle defined by habitation in gated communities within affluent neighborhoods, ownership of four-wheel drive vehicles, acquisition of luxury apparel and accessories⁸⁴, accommodation in opulent five-star hotels, travel to 'exotic' islands, patronage of cafes, restaurants, and clubs, engagement in educational seminars, and attendance at theatrical performances, films, talk shows, and various similar activities.

Alternative consumption and leisure spaces encompass a diverse array of elements. Television stations that transmit Quran recitations and programs on Islamic lifestyles, educational institutions offering courses in fiqh, tafsir, kalam, and hadith in

⁸² As Karaca (2011) claims, for Islamists, in 2000s, who have moved beyond the past and embraced a more celebratory lifestyle, it is seen with shame by some and recalled by others. Currently, there exist ex-Islamist conservative hybrid weddings in which the bride and groom are introduced and most attendees wear headscarves, while the background music ranges from Rodrigo to Celine Dion, adapting to the occasion. The setting features unusual lighting, and the ritual of kissing the bride is observed and when we come to 2010, restaurants which serves alcohol such as The Marmara Kitchenette, Beyoğlu Midpoint, and The House Cafe in Tophane surpass the 'dry bean' establishments around the Süleymaniye Mosque.

⁸³ Volkan Aytar, deputy director of Bahçeşehir University Creative Industries Center (BAUKEM), mentioned that, "While there used to be a harsh polarization, now people are trying more to understand each other's lifestyles."

⁸⁴ It is essential to note the omission of the link between Islam and consumerism. This exclusion or omission stemmed partially from the marginalization of Muslims, regarded as low-income and uneducated, and hence not considered a significant buyer demographic for branded products. In this context, Muslims had parallels with the worldwide marginalized population. Although some Kuwaitis, Saudis, and other Muslims engaged in extravagant expenditures and investments in places such as New York, London, or Paris, they were not seen as authentic consumers. The absence was also partially due to the classification of Muslims as traditional, uncivilized, and potentially rough, as articulated by Edward Said (1978). Moreover, in the economic sphere, these orientalist depictions contributed to the perception that Islam is incompatible with capitalist consumer ideology, resulting in the categorization of Muslims as external to the values and customs of Western consumer culture (Sandıkçı & Ger, 2011).

gender-segregated settings, establishments such as hotels, restaurants, and cafes⁸⁵ that refrain from serving alcohol, fulla dolls, burqinis, fashion brands that design and promote 'Islamically appropriate' attire in various fabrics, publications such as magazines and newspapers, gated communities for conservative families, and interest-free banks were included⁸⁶. Thus, the 'Islamic capital' has created new consumption zones, allowing individuals to emphasize their 'distinction' from those who follow secular lives, while also engaging with the 'modern' (Şen, 2010).

A significant and one of the first illustrative example of this phenomena transpired in 1994, during the wedding ceremony of Erbakan's daughter. Prominent Muslim families, nicely dressed, attended the marriage ceremony of Necmettin Erbakan's daughter, the head of the RP. The event took place in the Ankara Sheraton hotel, with people arriving in leased limos, attracting considerable media attention (Göle, 2000). Additionally, Erbakan began to make media appearances in stylish suits, highlighting his Versace ties, which quickly became his signature, and utilized his physique to cultivate an image as a modern Islamist statesman (Çınar, 2005), leaders of this movement. It also conveyed that he possessed a profound comprehension of Islam and the capacity to accept modernity. Furthermore, it significantly contributed to contesting the dominant view of Islamism as antiquated, uncivilized, fundamentalist, incompetent, and lacking in elegance and sophistication. Consequently, the concurrent rise in income and influence of Islamic

⁸⁵ In his 1992 publication, Habermas provides an overview of the "public sphere" as a domain for discourse and debate, where individuals from diverse backgrounds convene to discuss issues of shared concern. He argues that the British coffeehouse in the 18th century epitomizes the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere. The initial occurrences of coffeehouses in the Middle East may be traced to the 1510s in Mecca and Cairo. Nonetheless, their popularity rose considerably during the Ottoman takeover of Arab territories. This was especially apparent when two entrepreneurs from Aleppo and Damascus founded two coffeehouses in Istanbul in the early 1550s (Cohen, 2004; Hattox, 1996). Coffeehouses swiftly expanded across Istanbul and reached even the most little settlements in Anatolia (Arendonk, 2009; Faroghi, 1986). Coffeehouses were commonly visited for gambling and engaging in leisure and competitive pursuits like chess and backgammon (Hattox, 1996; Şeker, 1997). Additionally, the Ottoman coffeehouse served as a venue for individuals from many socioeconomic strata to convene and partake in intellectual discourse (Baykal, 1981). Coffeehouse arguments significantly influenced the development of essential public opinion, in the seventeenth century, janissaries not only scrutinized the government but also actively instigated rebellions while convening at coffeehouses (Öztürk, 2005). The authorities saw coffeehouses as centers of dissent (Ünver, 1963).

⁸⁶ The rise of Islam is sometimes viewed as a reaction against Western materialism (Barber 1996; Boccock 1993; Ray 1993; Witkowski 1999). Western consumerism is posited to offer many lifestyles that contest and frequently oppose the cohesive lifestyle mandated by Islamic fundamentalism. Sandıkçı and Ger assert that in the Turkish context, certain pious and traditional Islamists prefer to limit their consumption and avoid purchasing things or brands perceived as linked to Western culture. Nonetheless, the majority of Islamists do not reject consumption, since they participate in it in accordance with Islamic principles (Sandıkçı & Ger 2010).

groups has resulted in the formation of a new middle class characterized as “conservative in values but avant-garde in consumption practices” (Sandıkçı & Ger, 2002, p.467).

4.8 Fashioning the New Islamic Identity

This novel style is predominantly observed in 'tesettür' (veil) fashion⁸⁷, which serves as a significant symbol of a new Islamic identity. The style of elongated coats and oversized silk headscarves indicated the rise of a new urban 'Islamic chic'. The large scarves worn by 'tesettürlü' (veiled) women are often crafted from silk and feature intricate hand-printed and painted flower designs. This new Islamic dress style has become a sign of status more than a marker of personal devotion but less than a political statement (White, 2002).

The new veil style⁸⁸, contrasts with the traditional headscarf worn by women in rural regions. This emerging tendency in Türkiye highlights the significance of the contemporary Islamic capital in shaping a Muslim identity that is neither characterized by a 'rural and traditional' viewpoint or associated with 'fanatically radical' ideologies. This novel tesettür trend "...helps to dilute and fracture the political message [of Islam], setting the lure of Islamic chic and its interest in wealth and consumption, against Islamic principles of anti-consumerism and social justice..." (Genel & Karaosmanoğlu, 2006).

Over time, the clothing choices of urban middle and upper-class tesettürlü women have transformed to exhibit greater elegance and refinement. Hermes and Burberry scarves are worn in a contemporary, athletic, or elegant asymmetric fashion, harmonized with attire and footwear. They are secured with Italian brooches, contingent upon the occasion. Translucent blouses layered over tailored shirts, trendy designer handbags,

⁸⁷ Previous research mostly focused on the transformation of the veil fashion and its impact on women's subjectivity from 1980 to the present. From 2010 to 2022, a total of 143 articles were written on the topic of veil fashion, indicating its significant popularity (Pranada et al., 2023).

⁸⁸ Research by Gökarıksel and Secor (2009) suggests that women's veiling may be perceived as a symptom of Islamicization, as posited by proponents of the veiling-fashion industry. The promotion of the veil as a fashionable accessory obscures its intended significance as a symbol of Muslim women. Wearing a specific type of veil can function as a disciplinary practice essential for the cultivation of religious piety (Mahmood 2005; Gökarıksel 2009) and as a means to exhibit social status related to class, taste, urbanity (Navaro-Yashin 2002; Gökarıksel and Secor 2009), and ethnicity or race (Dwyer 1999 cited in Sandıkçı and Ger 2002).

pointed stiletto heels, and accessories emerged as markers of social status and taste (Sandıkçı & Ger, 2007).

4.9 Reinventing Public Spaces: The Islamist Transformation of Urban Leisure

In addition to fashion, there has been a transformation in the leisure and consumption spaces and practices. Çınar's study (2005) illustrates an early and significant instance of how Milli Görüş parties, inside the municipal government, tried to transform recreational spaces in Istanbul⁸⁹ beginning in the 1980s. She analyzes many locations where Islamist interventions in the public domain, facilitated by the resources of Istanbul's municipal government, led to the establishment and propagation of an alternative Islamist modernization initiative and a novel national identity. The most significant alteration was Istanbul's Çamlıca Restaurant, which she asserts exemplifies the meticulous building and presentation of a national identity as Ottoman-Islamic, facilitated by this expansive establishment operated by the municipal authorities.

The restaurant's premises comprise a restaurant, a coffee house, an expansive tea garden, and miniature flower gardens, all offering excellent views of the Bosphorus Strait. The clientele mostly comprised residents of Istanbul, while a significant segment included tourists from other global locations. The RP refurbished and redecorated the restaurant premises with ornaments, paintings, and inscriptions with Ottoman calligraphy and other decorations designed to evoke a 19th-century Ottoman ambiance (Çınar, 2005).

The menu was revised to feature an array of notable dishes from Ottoman cuisine, and all alcoholic beverages were replaced with traditional soft drinks, teas, 'şerbets', and Turkish coffees. Additionally, the music in the gardens was transitioned from Western classical to classical Turkish music. The administration established a rural Anatolian

⁸⁹ In the dominant historical narratives of political Islam and Turkish nationalism, Istanbul is perceived as a 'promised land', said to be coveted by God and fated to be seized by the prophet. Although Prophet Mohammed did not personally take the city, he foretold that a formidable leader and his troops would ultimately capture it for Islam. Istanbul attains holiness owing to the prophesy regarding its conquest by the prophet and its historical importance as the capital of the Ottoman Empire. Nonetheless, Istanbul is sometimes regarded as having forfeited its genuine character as a result of westernization. Since 1994, the Istanbul municipality, governed by an Islamist party, has endeavored to comprehensively execute Istanbul's political concessions by regaining social and cultural dimensions, with the objective of restoring Istanbul into an emblem of Islamic nostalgia (Bora 1999).

exhibit in the park, where women in traditional attire prepared '*gözleme*' on sheet metal known as '*sac*,' therefore situating authenticity within a notion of rural primitivism. Prices were decreased by about one-third to draw larger audiences and cater mostly to lower-income clients, the most prominent representation of Islam (Çınar, 2005).

Çınar (2005) also discusses the peculiar fusion, or rather hybridization, of authenticity at this establishment. While fizzy beverages were effectively eliminated from the menu, a '*neskafe*' stand and '*self-servis*' signage remained in the restaurant. Additionally, the café included an image of a genuine coffee house with divan-style seating arrangements, where cushioned benches were aligned against the wall, allowing every customer to face the middle of the room while conversing and enjoying their Turkish coffee. The actual furnishings of the coffee house bore no resemblance to the representation, as the chairs and tables were of 19th-century French design, arranged in an orderly manner that allowed guests to sit separately, in stark contrast to the Ottoman seating style, which aimed to maintain the unity of the social space to promote communal interactions.

Çınar (2005) also illustrates another notable modification that transpired in Cemal Reşit Rey Concert Hall (CRR), a spacious performance hall, adequately suited to accommodate symphony orchestras and other performers of Western classical music. It is regarded as a significant emblem of Turkish modernism and secular elite culture, CRR served as a crucial resource for the municipal government to implement its initiatives. Shortly after the RP assumed power, the concert hall director resigned in indignation, unwilling to collaborate with an Islamic administration, as they feared it would progressively diminish the quality and quantity of Western classical music concerts in favor of Islamic rituals and chanting. The RP administration implemented significant alterations at the concert hall, many of which were unprecedented in venues associated with the secular elite culture. Suitable rooms were converted into a mosque, alcohol was prohibited, and the repertoire was modified from exclusive Western classical music to encompass Turkish classical and folk music concerts. The party presented these modifications as 'natural' and 'necessary' to make such locations accessible to 'the public' rather than reserving them for the exclusive usage of privileged secular Westernized elites (Çınar, 2005).

Another significant research, in terms of 'alternative spaces', is Bilici's (2000) study, entitled as 'The Bronzed Face of Islam,' highlights the novel consumption habits and lifestyles that have arisen alongside the emergence of the Islamic middle class. It contends that the Islamic identity has evolved from a narrative of oppression and victimization, marked by feelings of exclusion in the 1980s, to a more engaged and empathetic identity that embraces consumption. The study was carried out at Caprice Palace Hotel in Didim, Aydın, a prominent example of a 'alternative' leisure establishment that promotes novel social interactions and cultivates a new class of affluent individuals. In other words, it establishes an environment that enables the Islamist middle classes, in pursuit of new social distinctions with their rising income levels, to engage in the status-oriented social hierarchy (Bilici 2000).

The hotel serves as a venue for the emerging religious middle class, providing a summer retreat that adheres to Islamic principles, observes prayer times, and exclusively offers non-alcoholic beverages in the bar, along with segregated beaches and swimming pools for men and women. A public beach is accessible to anyone; however, it is suggested that this beach is designated for families only, and specialized swimwear for men and women is available for purchase in the hotel's shop (Bilici 2000).

Bilici demonstrates that Islamists are not immune to the alluring influence of cultural and local consumption habits, preferences, products, and ownership of goods and property recognized by the market economy. This hotel exemplifies the uncertainty around the borders of principles such as decency, modesty, and privacy, as well as the aesthetics that foster its individualistic identity, enjoyment, and ostentation (Bilici 2000).

Moreover, he further asserts that the feeling of belatedness among middle-class Islamists and their focus on bridging the divide with the Republican elite is evident. The Caprice Palace Hotel, as a novel public place, facilitates the establishment of a status that serves as a filter for the crystallization of an Islamic conservative (upper) middle class, providing indicators of the evolving trajectory of Islamic identity within Turkish society (Bilici 2000).

Consequently, a succession of events beginning in the mid-1990s has enabled Islamist subjectivities in urban Türkiye to liberate themselves from the idea of being a

‘minority’. This identity has acquired strength and self-confidence, freely manifesting itself in the contemporary and prosperous areas of the city. The transition in urban perspectives from the insular Islamic identity of the 1970s and early 1980s to a more consumer-oriented understanding of Islam was prompted by the emergence of new economic demands among urban Muslims. The principal impetus for this transition was the emergence of a new conservative bourgeoisie that actively participated in consumerism (Genel & Karaosmanoğlu, 2006). Göle also (2000) denotes the evolution of the previous conception of minority inside the city into a novel identity defined by being Muslim, urban, and feminist, which she terms the ‘new Islamic self’.

Secular individuals in the city, on the other hand, associated any expression of Islam with political Islam, which suggested a prohibition on alcoholic beverages, the segregation of genders in public spaces, the repression of artistic expression, mandatory five daily prayers, complete veiling of women, and various restrictions that contradicted the tenets of the Kemalist republic. The secular elites are encountering challenges in categorizing university students who wear headscarves and self-identify as ‘Islamist-but-modern.’ These pupils, with refined metropolitan accents, do not conform to the classifications of ‘uneducated,’ ‘ignorant traditionalists,’ or ‘brainwashed youngsters,’ despite the elites’ persistent apprehension over fundamentalist Islam. The rising visibility of the Islamic lifestyle in urban Türkiye raises apprehension among a certain demographic of individuals who identify as secular and modern Turks (Genel and Karaosmanoğlu, 2006).

So, since the 2000s, the emerging Muslim elite has not only posed a significant political and economic ‘threat’ to the secularists, but has also formulated a conservative understanding of the national identity and a nation that is shaped by a post-Ottoman framework rather than a republic. This new Muslim nationalism mostly stems from cultural Turkism rather than being only tied to Turkish ethnicity based on bloodlines. It envisions the nation with more adaptable borders like those of the Ottoman Empire⁹⁰,

⁹⁰ Tokdoğan's (2018) recent research on neo-Ottomanism aimed to elucidate and transform the aspirations, objectives, and frustrations of the domestic social basis, as well as to systematize them. It enabled a transition to a new phase in the emotional understanding of national identity and historical consciousness among the populace, who embraced this narrative and ignited the development of a national mood that markedly differed from the prior one. This study illustrates the cathartic manifestation of shame, jealousy, contempt, hatred, fear, and fury at the grassroots level through Erdogan's symbolic gestures and rhetoric.

rather than being limited to the historical borders of the republic. This perspective enables the pursuit of economic goals without being constrained by numerous obligations (White, 2012).

4.10 Ethnographies of Transformation: Changing Islamism and Islamists Across Urban Türkiye

In addition to the aforementioned study by Çınar and Bilici, there are few more major studies on the transformation of Islamism and Islamists, as well as their lifestyle within the Turkish context. One of the most prominent study on the transformation of Islamism was conducted by Tuğal (2009) in the Sultanbeyli district of Istanbul, a district known for its Islamist roots and working-class background, which experienced a significant shift in the late 1990s and early 2000s due to the socio-political and economic changes instigated by AKP. Tuğal's ethnographic research offers essential insights into the manner in which Islamic opposition groups, once defined by their antagonism to the prevailing secular capitalist framework, have progressively aligned themselves with the forces of neoliberalism, secularism, Western hegemony and urban development.

Thus, he examines the integration of Islamist opposition into capitalism by analyzing the quotidian experiences of Islamists, and argued that the integration of the Islamic working class into society stemmed from the convergence of political and civil society, evidenced by the influence of the AKP's establishments on their daily life. Through his analysis of local Islamist movements, Tuğal argues that Islamist groups in Türkiye have shifted from being radical challengers of capitalism to becoming active participants within it (Tuğal, 2009).

He further claims that cultural centers, social circles, mosques, religious communities, private television channels, and Islamic schools have inadvertently contributed to diminishing the influence of religion in everyday life. Although workers mostly maintained this pattern, the frequency of prayer among middle-class Islamists has decreased. Under the AKP's leadership, these civil society forces have advocated for a more practical and logical approach to religion, particularly in relation to commerce, personal interests, and the revitalization of the Turkish state (Tuğal, 2009). Overall, his

work delves into how Islamism, particularly in urban settings like Istanbul, has redefined its identity, blending religious values with the economic and cultural imperatives of global capitalism.

Furthermore, three further extensive studies investigate the development of Islamists and their lifestyle. The first of these studies, conducted by Çavdar (2015) in the Başakşehir neighborhood of Istanbul, a swiftly evolving region with a substantial demographic of conservative Muslims, offers a distinctive context to examine the convergence of religiosity, politics, and consumption. She examines the evolution of Muslim families in Türkiye as they transition from traditional working-class neighbourhoods to more affluent gated communities, and explores the changing dynamics of religious identity, modesty and traditional values. Çavdar contends that this transition signifies not just a geographical change but also a cultural metamorphosis, wherein the distinctions between religious principles and material ambitions become progressively indistinct. Her ethnographic research also elucidates the interplay between the pursuit of social mobility and enhanced living standards with the changing concepts of piety, class, and modernity in urban Turkish culture.

Akçaoğlu (2018) conducted another study in the Çukurambar district of Ankara, asserting that the shift in conservative lifestyles experienced in Türkiye over the past years, which has intensified recently, is a symbolic transformation instigated by political rather than economic changes. The AKP's modifications extend beyond merely incorporating an external political movement into the capitalist market system. A vital element of the transition is the full integration of conservative individuals into the capitalist market of symbolic commodities. The conservative middle class accepted the advantages of capitalism and the allure of materialism, which eclipsed former criticisms of capitalism as a source of immoral behavior. Living in luxurious homes, driving lavish cars, wearing stylish and ostentatious clothing, and socializing in exclusive circles have become widely expected standards among the conservative middle classes.

Lastly, Özet's research (2019) provides a comprehensive analysis of the transformation of conservative neighborhoods in Istanbul, focusing on the Fatih and Başakşehir districts. He explores how the growing conservative bloc in urban environments reshapes local habitus and redefines notions of power, particularly in areas

where conservative Islam increasingly influences politics, culture, and daily life. Analyzing these shifts through iconic sites of conservatism, Özet reveals how the development of these neighborhoods reflects broader changes in Türkiye's political and cultural landscape. His study highlights the tension between preserving traditional values and adapting to the imperatives of urban modernization, offering a nuanced understanding of how power, religion, and social class interact in shaping local identities. Overall, these ethnographic investigations which were carried out in a specific region of Türkiye, represent snapshots of the transformation that the Islamists, along with their consumption and leisure culture, have undergone.



Chapter 5: MAPPING SECULARIZATION PUZZLE: THEORIES AND DEBATES

Having provided the foundational context of the group and its essential elements, it is now imperative to discuss the theoretical framework, methodology, and analysis. The role and significance of religion as a foundational social institution, and its broader effects on society, have long been central concerns in sociological inquiry, particularly within the subfield of the sociology of religion. Among the various debates in this area, the issue of secularization stands out as perhaps the most enduring and contested. Since the 1960s, secularization has gained prominence as a key theme, attracting widespread scholarly attention, and the concept of secularization was later developed and popularized by classical sociological theorists like Comte, Marx, Weber, and Durkheim who, albeit in differing ways, shared the general expectation that the importance of religion would decline in modern societies (Giddens, 1997, p. 441).

Nevertheless, these early thinkers did not systematically focus on secularization as a distinct topic. It was only later that the theme became a major point of debate. Early proponents like Berger (1967) argued for the diminishing influence of religion in modern life, a view that would eventually come under intense criticism. This critique gained strength particularly in response to the global resurgence of religious movements. As Casanova (1994) has argued, four significant developments challenged the secularization thesis: the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, the emergence of Solidarity in Poland, the political mobilization of Catholicism in Latin America, and the rise of the Christian Right in the United States (p. 3).

Despite decades of scholarly debate, a clear and universally accepted definition of secularization remains elusive. Disagreements persist not only over its meaning but also regarding its occurrence, duration, causes, and geographic scope. A wide array of scholars, including Berger (1967, 1999), Luckmann (1967), Casanova (1994), Davie (1994, 2006), Bruce (2002, 2011), Dobbelaere (1981), Martin (1965, 1978, 2005), Taylor (2007), and Asad (1993, 2003), have proposed divergent interpretations of the concept. As Casanova has aptly noted, the terms ‘secular,’ ‘secularism,’ and ‘secularization’ are historically and conceptually multifaceted, burdened with varying meanings across different contexts. This semantic complexity renders the concept of secularization

difficult to apply in empirical research. In response, Casanova (2009, 2011) argues for the importance of analytically distinguishing among these terms to better understand their respective dimensions and implications.

Amid these ongoing ambiguities, a multitude of definitions and interpretations of secularization has emerged, yet no definitive consensus has been reached. Despite such divergences, one widely accepted component within the secularization debate is the concept of ‘differentiation’, the idea that religious and non-religious institutions are differentiated over time (Gorski, 2000, p. 140). Building on this brief introduction, this chapter will first outline the theoretical framework of secularization, then clarify the concepts of religion and religiosity, and finally propose a working operationalization of religiosity as an indicator of secularization within the context of this thesis.

5.1 Classical Secularization Theory: Origins and Evolution

There are competing theoretical explanations or frameworks for understanding why secularization happens or does not, and the first one is Classical Secularization Theory (CST), which can be traced back to the early 19th century, particularly in the works of Saint-Simon and Comte. Despite their differences, both thinkers argued that the role of religion diminishes in the face of the rise of state power, scientific progress, and modernity, which they viewed as fundamentally incompatible with religious institutions (Saint-Simon, 1969; Comte, 1830–42/1969). This perspective was later reflected in the work of the ‘founding fathers’ of sociology, albeit with some variations. While they acknowledged a decline in the influence of religion, the theory was notably less uniform. With the exception of Parsons, the idea that religion would wane became a central tenet among Anglo-American sociologists. Although Marx, Durkheim, and Weber all constructed a metanarrative in which modernity acted as a secularizing force, their views on the relationship between religion and modernity diverged. Marxists, for instance, envisioned the ultimate abolition of religion as an inevitable consequence of modernization, whereas Weber and Durkheim saw a less definitive transition, anticipating reforms but not necessarily the complete eradication of faith (Roberts and Yamane, 2016, p. 2).

5.2 The Religious Pluralism Thesis: Secularization and the Rise of Competing Worldviews

Following the contributions of the ‘founding fathers,’ the secularization thesis was integrated into the framework of modernization theory during the 1960s. This theory posited that, as societies modernized, they became more rationalized, complex, and individualistic, which resulted in a decline in religiosity (Gorski, 2000). One of the most prominent figures in the sociology of religion, and certainly the most influential within the secularization debate, is Peter Berger. His seminal work, *The Sacred Canopy* (1967), represents a critical moment in the theory of secularization. Berger's perspective on secularization can be seen as a middle ground between the ‘privatization’ and ‘transformation’ theses (Gorski, 2000, p. 141). He conceptualized religion's societal role as a ‘canopy,’ a protective social structure that shields individuals from the uncertainties of existence and functions as a unifying and stabilizing force in society (Roberts and Yamane, 2016, p. 514). However, with modernization, this protective canopy began to diminish, placing secularization in direct tension with pluralism. According to Berger, secularization leads to pluralization, privatization, and individualization at various societal stages, ultimately resulting in religion becoming just one of many competing worldviews (Cipriani, 2015, p. 191).

Berger's views on secularization are somewhat linear, and he notes that the term ‘secularization’ was originally used after the Wars of Religion to describe the transfer of land or property from the control of ecclesiastical authorities to secular institutions (Berger, 1967, p. 106). In *The Sacred Canopy*, Berger identifies the ‘modern economic process,’ specifically the dynamics of industrial capitalism, as the primary driver of secularization (Berger, 1967, p. 109). He also asserts that secularization is not a recent phenomenon but has a long historical trajectory, stretching back to ancient Israel (Berger, 1967, p. 113).

However, in his later work *The De-secularization of the World* (1999), Berger revisited his earlier assertions. In this text, he summarizes the secularization theory and reflects on how the events of the 1950s and 60s, which led to the popular belief in the decline of religion due to modernization, may have been incorrect. He points to the

resurgence of conservative religious movements, such as Islamism, Evangelicalism, the Pentecostal movement, and Orthodox Judaism, as evidence of the limits of secularization (Berger, 1999, p. 2-3). He acknowledges that while modernity does have secularizing effects, it has also fueled a counter-secularization movement. Berger argues that secularization should not be solely linked to individual consciousness, and highlights two key exceptions to the theory: first, Western Europe, where traditional secularization seems to hold, and second, a global subculture of Western-educated individuals who bear progressive ideals (Berger, 1999, p. 3–4).

5.3 The Decline Thesis: Unraveling the Long-Term Decline of Religion in the West

Unsurprisingly, there are certain scholars who continue to support traditional secularization theory, overlooking the concepts of ‘multiple modernities’ and ‘multiple secularities.’ Steve Bruce is one of the most prominent proponents of this view, particularly in his studies of secularization in Northern European nations, including Scotland. In his book “*God is Dead*” (2002), Bruce argues that religion is in decline in Britain, most Western nations, and the United States (Bruce, 2002). He challenges the notion that secular societies are re-sacralizing, criticizing those who use examples from countries that have not undergone full secularization or who overstate the role of migrant minorities. He also contends that religious groups can only exert significant influence in the public sphere if they can present secular arguments for their positions (Bruce, 2011).

Bruce makes several key observations about the United States. First, he argues that there is considerable evidence of Christianity losing influence and appeal in the country. Second, he suggests that American Christianity is secularizing. Finally, he points out that while the Christian Right has gained prominence in public life, it has not changed the fundamental role of religion as peripheral to the social order (Bruce, 2011, p. 157–158). Bruce's stance on secularization is framed within a unilinear trajectory, asserting that the decline of religion over time is a defining characteristic of secularization.

5.4 Transformation, Differentiation, and Privatization: Reconceiving Religion's Role in Modern Societies

Within secularization theory, there is a moderate perspective that argues that religion or religiosity is not necessarily diminishing, but rather evolving, transforming and differentiating over time. This viewpoint has been articulated in various forms. One early iteration of this thesis was proposed by Thomas Luckmann in his work ‘*The Invisible Religion*’ (1967), where he followed Durkheim’s functionalist perspective. Luckmann emphasized the concept of privatization, arguing that while established religions might experience a decline, individuals would appropriate elements of religion and create their own ‘invisible religions.’

Talcott Parsons (1971), a proponent of the transformation thesis, also discussed how religion serves to help individuals cope with unpredictable and uncontrollable circumstances, providing a mechanism for social stability. Parsons criticized the notion of secularization, arguing that religious influence did not vanish in Western societies following the changes of the late 18th century. He believed that religion would remain an essential force, even in secularized societies, because it contributes to societal survival (Furseth & Repstad, 2006, p. 46).

Grace Davie, another significant scholar in this field, argued that while organized religion in the United Kingdom was in decline, individual religiosity persisted. Davie (1994) noted that many people who stopped attending religious services or participating in church groups were still ‘believing without belonging.’ She suggested that while cultural changes in the United Kingdom led to a decline in identification with organized religion, individuals continued to embrace religious beliefs. Additionally, Davie introduced the concept of ‘vicarious religion,’ where nonreligious individuals appreciated the religious practices of others, indicating that religiosity had not diminished but had instead evolved (Davie, 2006, p. 22–23).

José Casanova, a prominent figure in secularization theory, presented a significant shift in understanding religion’s role in modern society in his influential book ‘*Public Religion in the Modern World*’ (1994). Casanova argued that in the 1980s, religion ‘went

public' and moved beyond its traditionally privatized status. He introduced the concept of 'deprivatization,' suggesting that religion was no longer confined to the private sphere but had reemerged as a public force. This shift allowed religion to participate in the mechanisms of contestation and legitimization in civil society. However, Casanova noted that the process of deprivatization took different forms across various contexts and time periods. He discussed several case studies, including Catholicism in Spain, Portugal, Brazil, and the United States, and Evangelical Protestantism in the United States.

Years after the publication of *Public Religion in the Modern World*, Casanova revisited his arguments and identified three key shortcomings in his analysis: Western-centrism, a limited focus on civil society, and a state-centered analytical framework (Casanova, 2008, p. 102). Despite these critiques, he maintained that secularization involves multiple processes, each of which needs to be examined independently. He outlined three main propositions: secularization as religious decline (evident in Western European societies but not universally applicable); secularization as the institutionalization of modern secular domains such as science, technology, and the market economy; and secularization as privatization, where religion's influence is marginalized in the public sphere. Casanova argued that these propositions should be understood analytically and separately, rather than as a singular, overarching process (Casanova, 1994, p. 20–39).

Casanova recognized the critiques of classical secularization theory, especially the notion that religion would eventually disappear altogether. However, he contended that the differentiation thesis and the liberation of spheres from religious institutions remained valid aspects of secularization. He also emphasized that classical European secularization theory works well for Europe but not for America, and vice versa, and that religious contexts and patterns varied widely across Europe. To address these challenges, Casanova suggested the need to historicize and contextualize secularization theories, moving beyond Western models and recognizing that the experiences of secularization in different regions are unique (Casanova, 2009b, p. 206–207; Casanova, 2003b, p. 17–18).

Hence, while there are notable disparities across scholars, three outcomes are widely recognized. First, Christian adherence in Western Europe has significantly declined compared to past levels. Second, the degree of this decline, as well as the

associated trends and patterns, varies significantly across different countries and regions. Third, the role of church institutions and elites in the West has diminished in terms of their social functions when compared to earlier periods (Gorski and Altınordu, 2008, p. 62). Despite the diversity of theories surrounding secularization, it is generally accepted that religion has become increasingly distinct and detached from other dominant institutions in most nations over the past two centuries. This aspect of secularization has been extensively studied and historically documented, making it the least contentious element of secularization theory and a topic that prompts relatively little debate (Kasselstrand et al., 2024).

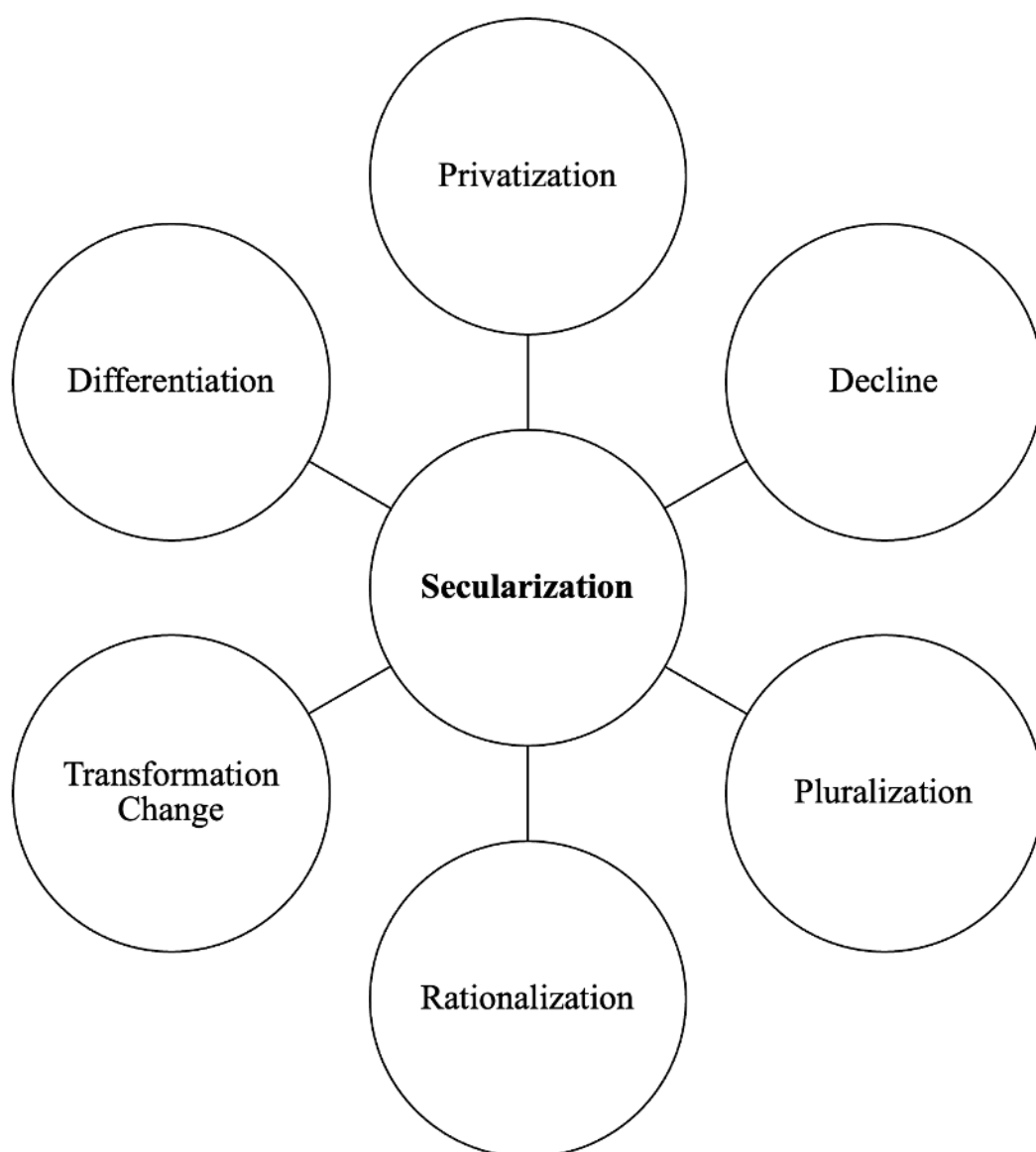


Figure 5.1: Key Dimensions of Secularization

5.5 The Religious Economies Approach: Rethinking Secularization through Competition and Innovation

Apart from the CST, one of the most debated theoretical explanations and a notable counterpoint to many forms of secularization theory is the ‘religious economies - supply-side approach’, advocated by Stark and his associates (Stark & Iannaccone, 1994; Stark, 1999; Stark & Finke, 2000). This model challenges the dominant secularization frameworks by offering a simplified view of religion’s role in society. Proponents of this theory argue that the demand for religion remains constant over time. They conceptualize religion as operating within a competitive ‘marketplace,’ where various religious groups vie for followers. According to this perspective, religiosity experiences cyclical fluctuations driven by the dynamics of religious competition. In this marketplace, certain religions may rise to prominence, attracting the majority of believers. Once a religion gains dominance, it tends to become complacent, much like an economic monopoly, which diminishes its competitive drive. The lack of innovation within dominant religions creates opportunities for smaller, more innovative faiths, which can gain followers if government restrictions do not impede their growth. Over time, these smaller religions may surpass the larger, complacent ones, initiating a new cycle of competition for followers (Gorski and Altinordu 2008, pp. 57 - 58).

Advocates of this theory argue that, despite the United States being a modern, industrialized nation, it is not secular. They point to high levels of religious activity, membership, and belief in God as evidence that secularization has not taken hold. Similarly, they contend that Europe’s lower levels of religiosity are not indicative of secularization, but rather the result of restricted religious supply within the religious ‘market.’ They argue that European societies have significant state control over religious institutions, and in many cases, religious monopolies, which limits competition and diminishes religious vitality. Consequently, they claim that Europe’s religious landscape reflects a lack of diversity and competition rather than a decline in religious demand (Gorski and Altinordu 2008, pp. 57 - 58).

In this framework, religious plurality is viewed as positively correlated with religious vitality, while religious control is seen as negatively correlated with

engagement. That is, a greater number of competing religious groups and less governmental interference are believed to foster increased religious participation. Consequently, proponents of the religious economies approach reject the concept of secularization (Gorski 2000, p. 142–143). They argue that secularization has not occurred, and the term should be removed from theoretical discussions. They further suggest that the focus should be on understanding religious change through the dynamics of competition and innovation within religious markets.

5.6 Existential Security and Secularization: Exploring the Role of Human Security in Religious Practices

Another important contribution to secularization theory in recent decades is the work of Norris and Inglehart, whose theory of existential security has sparked considerable attention in the academic community. Their research, grounded in analyses of multiple datasets such as the Gallup International Polls, International Social Survey, Eurobarometer, and World Values Survey (Norris & Inglehart, 2004), offers a novel perspective on secularization in the 21st century.

The theory of existential security proposed by Norris and Inglehart is based on two key axioms that explain much of the variation in global religious practices. The first axiom, the ‘axiom of security,’ asserts that disparities in human security and living standards between industrialized and emerging nations influence the degree of religiosity. In industrialized nations, which provide more stable and secure living conditions, religiosity tends to be lower. In contrast, developing nations, where individuals face greater challenges and uncertainties, tend to place higher importance on religion. According to this view, human security is crucial for well-being, and it significantly affects religious practices. The second axiom, the ‘axiom of cultural traditions,’ posits that the cultural traditions tied to religious worldviews shape a nation's overall culture. These religious values are passed down through generations, influencing individuals even if they do not regularly attend religious services (Norris & Inglehart, 2004, p. 13–18).

Norris and Inglehart argue that over the past five decades, individuals in developed nations have become increasingly secular, a shift attributed to a growing sense

of existential security rather than rationalization or differentiation. However, this trend is less pronounced in the United States, where the secularization process is obscured by the influx of individuals with more conservative ideologies, higher fertility rates among Hispanic populations, and significant economic inequality (Norris & Inglehart, 2004). They emphasize that the distinction between Europe and the United States lies in the strength of the welfare state in Europe, which provides higher security, compared to the United States., where laissez-faire liberalism leads to lower levels of security. In developing countries, where existential security is more precarious, religion plays a more central role in people's lives. In contrast, in industrialized nations, where security is more prevalent due to economic stability and human development, religion holds less significance. Furthermore, Norris and Inglehart note that religiosity tends to vary by age, with younger individuals being less religious than older generations, and by socioeconomic status, with the poor tending to be more religious than the wealthy. While traditional religion continues to grow with the world population, secularization leads to reduced reproduction rates, meaning the global population is becoming increasingly religious, albeit at different rates depending on regional and cultural contexts (Norris & Inglehart, 2004, p. 24–27).

5.7 Post secularism Debate

I would like to incorporate two more discussions, the first being the post-secularism debate. It challenges the once-dominant assumption that modernization necessarily leads to the decline of religion. Scholars such as José Casanova (1994), Charles Taylor (2007), and Jürgen Habermas (2006) argue that religion continues to play a significant role in the public sphere, even in highly modernized societies. Post secularism does not simply signal a return to pre-secular religiosity, but rather a reconfiguration of religion's role within pluralistic, democratic, and globalized contexts. Casanova introduces the concept of 'deprivatization,' whereby religion re-enters public discourse on moral and political issues. Habermas emphasizes that religious reasoning can contribute to the deliberative process in democratic societies, while Taylor's work highlights the persistence of 'multiple modernities,' allowing for varied relationships between modernity and religion. Overall, the post secular perspective refutes the linear,

universalist trajectory of classical secularization theories by highlighting the ongoing visibility, relevance, and transformation of religion in the modern world.

5.8 Postcolonial Critique of Secularization

The last debate I would like to include is the postcolonial critique of secularization, most notably developed by Talal Asad (2003) and Saba Mahmood (2015), argues that secularism is not a neutral or universal outcome of modernity, but rather a historically contingent and politically charged project. This perspective critiques the Western-centric assumptions embedded in classical secularization theory, which presents the separation of religion and politics as a normative and inevitable feature of modern development. Talal Asad contends that secularism is itself a form of power that redefines and regulates religion through state institutions, legal regimes, and public norms. Saba Mahmood extends this critique by showing how secularism, often under the guise of religious freedom or gender emancipation, imposes specific configurations of religiosity and subjectivity, particularly in non-Western and Islamic contexts. From this viewpoint, secularization is not a mere decline of religion, but a transformation shaped by colonial histories, cultural hierarchies, and geopolitical agendas.

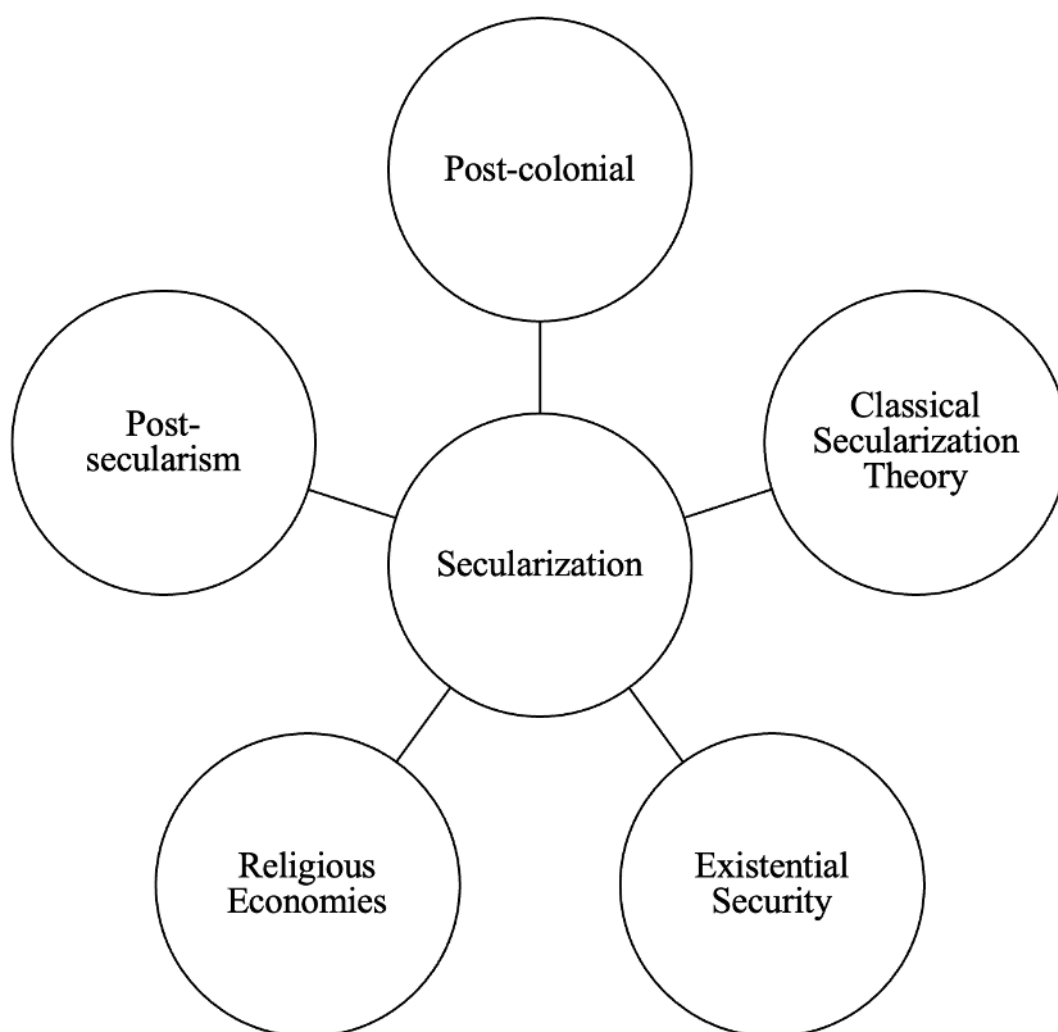


Figure 5.2: Theoretical Approaches to Secularization

5.9 Conceptualizing Secularization and Scholarly Definitions

After detailing secularization theory, it is crucial to clarify how secularization is defined within the context of this thesis. As previously discussed, there is a significant academic debate regarding the nature and scope of secularization, leading to a variety of definitions. Several key scholars have contributed their own definitions, which provide useful frameworks for understanding the concept.

Bryan Wilson, for instance, defines secularization as “the process whereby religious thinking, practice, and institutions lose social significance” (Wilson, 1966). In

a later work, he elaborates further, describing secularization as “a process of transfer of property, power, activities, and both manifest and latent functions, from institutions with a supernaturalist frame of reference to (often new) institutions operating according to empirical, rational, pragmatic criteria” (Wilson, 1985).

Peter Berger, a prominent scholar in the field, offers two significant definitions of secularization: first, as “the process by which sectors in society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols,” and second, as “an increasing number of individuals... look upon the world and their own lives without the benefit of religious interpretations” (Berger, 1967).

José Casanova defines secularization as “actual or alleged empirical-historical patterns of transformation and differentiation of the institutional spheres of ‘the religious’ (ecclesiastical institutions and churches) and ‘the secular’ (state, economy, science, art, entertainment, health and welfare, etc.) from early modern to contemporary societies” (Casanova, 2009). Additionally, he breaks secularization down into three main components: 1) “the decline of religious beliefs and practices in modern societies,” 2) “the privatization of religion,” and 3) “the differentiation of the secular spheres (state, economy, science), usually understood as ‘emancipation’ from religious institutions and norms” (Casanova, 2006).

Mark Chaves defines secularization more succinctly as “the declining scope of religious authority” (Chaves, 1994), while Dobbelaere highlights the loss of religious authority in modern societies, describing secularization as “a process by which the overarching and transcendent religious system of old is reduced in modern functionally differentiated societies to a sub-system alongside other sub-systems, losing in this process its overarching claims over them” (Dobbelaere, 2007).

Steve Bruce describes secularization as “the decay of religious institutions... the displacement, in matters of behaviour, of religious rules... by demands that accord with strictly technical criteria... the sequestration by political powers of the property and facilities of religious agencies... the replacement of a specifically religious consciousness... by an empirical, rational, instrumental orientation... the shift from religious to secular control of a variety of social activities... the decline in the proportion

of their time, energy, and resources that people devote to supernatural concerns” (Bruce, 2011).

These definitions, while varying in their focus and approach, all point to a general consensus: secularization involves some form of change/transformation in the societal role of religion over time. This includes processes such as weakening, differentiation, diminishment, decline, or loss of religious influence. The discourse surrounding the separation of religion from various societal institutions, such as government and education, highlights this trend, encompassing the diminishing authority of religious institutions and the decline in religious participation and interpretation among individuals

Thus, in this thesis, secularization is defined primarily as a process of transformation and differentiation, whereby religious beliefs, practices, and institutions, particularly those associated with Muslim religiosity transformed in the nature, expression, or meaning of religion itself. This includes how religion adapts or reconfigured to suit new cultural or modern conditions or is reinterpreted in secular contexts. Additionally, it becomes increasingly distinct, and separate from other spheres of life, such as everyday practices and economy. This process entails the retraction of religious authority from the public domain and the disembedding of religious values from collective norms, resulting in a weakening of the social significance of Islamic traditions and modes of interpretation in shaping both individual behaviors and institutional practices.

Rather than assuming a whole decline or disappearance of religion⁹¹, this definition emphasizes how Muslim religiosity changes/transforms and loses integrative power over domains of life. Secularization here refers not only to a potential decline in personal religious belief or observance but also to the restructuring or transformation of religiosity/religion’s role, from a comprehensive source of meaning and regulation toward a more compartmentalized, and at times, marginalized, domain.

⁹¹ As Büyükokutan (2021) argues in his study of Turkish literary fields, secularization can be understood as the reconfiguration of institutional fields around secular ideals of autonomy and distinction. My study similarly approaches secularization not as decline of faith, but as a transformation of religious subjectivity under class and market pressures.

It is important to acknowledge that individuals may exhibit varying levels of religiosity, which may be expressed in different dimensions. Regardless of the specific dimensions of religiosity, it is crucial to examine their differentiating structure and transformation over time as evidence of secularization.

5.10 Secularization: Descriptive and Explanatory Claims

Following the elucidation of the overarching framework of secularization theory and its definition(s), it is now imperative to discuss its assertions. Secularization theory encompasses two primary types of claims: descriptive and explanatory. Descriptive claims assert that religion has undergone processes of differentiation, transformation, diminishment, or decline within a given society or community. Explanatory claims, on the other hand, seek to account for the reasons behind such transformations (Kasselstrand et al., 2024). This thesis engages with both dimensions. While it addresses the transformations in religiosity in devout bourgeoisie, it also ventures into explanatory analysis, exploring both direct and indirect causes of these changes.

In terms of explanatory focus, this study specifically examines the impact of embourgeoisement on religiosity. It centers on the devout bourgeoisie, a group that has traditionally positioned themselves as anti-modern and anti-secular. However, throughout their process of embourgeoisement, they have come to embody hybrid subjectivities, increasingly participating in practices of conspicuous consumption and modern leisure. Thus, the thesis posits that the acquisition of wealth and upward mobility may influence religiosity and secularization processes both directly and indirectly.

5.11 Religion and Religiosity: Conceptual Foundations and Operational Strategies

In order to examine the secularization of the pious bourgeoisie, it is essential to define and operationalize the concepts of ‘religion’ and ‘religiosity’. Religion is frequently characterized as a synthesis of beliefs, rituals, practices, symbols, identities, and institutions that are socially constructed around a shared belief in the supernatural (Kasselstrand et al., 2024). It serves as a system of ideas and actions that shapes individual responses to, and interpretations of, the supernatural and the sacred. Religion influences

a person's aspirations, decisions, motivations, intentions, and sense of fulfillment (Mukhtar & Butt, 2012). While religion also encompasses cultural, emotional, ritualistic, and institutional elements, these components are ultimately grounded in well-established supernatural beliefs (Kasselstrand et al., 2024).

However, the question of what constitutes 'religion' in general lies beyond the scope of this thesis, as I do not examine the secularization of the general population or broader religious or religion-like systems. My focus is on a specific group identified as religious, conservative, and Muslim. Thus, the operationalization of religion in this study is relatively straightforward. Here, religion refers to Islam, an Abrahamic monotheistic faith centered on the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. Muslims, the adherents of Islam, constitute the second-largest religious group globally.

Following this definition, it is also essential to delineate and operationalize religiosity, which serves as a key indicator of secularization. Religiosity⁹² refers to the degree of religious belief and involvement, encompassing dimensions such as belief, practice, knowledge, experience, and the influence of these elements on everyday life. It functions as a measure of religious commitment and can be assessed through various methodologies (Khan et al., 2017).

Since the late 1950s, the conceptualization of religiosity has become a central topic in the sociology of religion, particularly with debates over whether religiosity is unidimensional or multidimensional. Initially, religiosity was treated as a unidimensional construct, often measured by church attendance or monetary contributions to religious institutions. However, subsequent research demonstrated that this approach is inadequate. Scholars have emphasized the multidimensional nature of religiosity, arguing that no single metric sufficiently captures its complexity (Mukhtar & Butt, 2012).

Indeed, the multidimensionality of religion has been widely recognized (Glock & Stark, 1965, 1968; King & Hunt, 1975; Faulkner and DeJong, 1966), although a minority

⁹² From a sociological standpoint, individuals acquire religious identity through socialization processes, during which they internalize the values, norms, expectations, and practices associated with religion. While the family is the primary agent of religious transmission, religious institutions play a crucial role in sustaining and reinforcing religious doctrine and practice (Kasselstrand et al., 2024, p. 54).

of scholars have defended unidimensional approaches (e.g., Clayton and Gladden, 1974). Even among proponents of multidimensionality, the number and types of dimensions identified vary (Cornwall, 1989, pp. 573–578). Consequently, operationalizing religiosity remains a complex task, as it is not a binary category but exists along a continuum.

Two of the most influential and widely used religiosity scales are Allport and Ross's Religious Orientation Scale (1967) and Glock and Stark's Dimensions of Religiosity Scale (1965, 1968). These frameworks, grounded more in psychological and sociological theory than theology, were developed from a Western-Christian perspective (Mahudin, et al., 2016).

Allport (2004, p. 46), one of the earliest scholars of religiosity, emphasized the subjective diversity of religious experience, noting that there are as many religious expressions as there are religious individuals. Along with Ross and Fichter, Allport pioneered the study of religiosity as a multidimensional construct. In their seminal 1967 study, Allport and Ross distinguished between intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity. Their scale uses Likert-style items to assess each orientation. Intrinsic religiosity includes statements such as "I try hard to live my life according to my religious beliefs," reflecting a sincere, faith-driven engagement with religion. In contrast, extrinsic religiosity, measured with items like "I go to religious services because it helps me to make friends," reflects instrumental uses of religion for social or personal benefit (Mukhtar and Butt, 2012). While intrinsic religiosity prioritizes spiritual motivation, extrinsic religiosity is aligned with utilitarian and social functions of religion (Allport and Ross, 1967, pp. 434–436).

More relevant to this thesis, however, is the Glock and Stark multidimensional model, which has become foundational in the field. Glock and Stark (1965, 1968), argued that religiosity cannot be reduced to church attendance or belief in God. They proposed five dimensions of religiosity intended to capture universal religious phenomena across traditions:

1. **Ideological (Belief):** Refers to core religious beliefs expected of adherents, such as belief in God.

2. **Ritual (Practice and Devotion):** Includes both formal religious rituals (e.g., prayer, fasting, worship) and informal, private devotional acts.
3. **Experiential (Feeling and Emotion):** Captures emotional or transcendent experiences believed to result from divine interaction.
4. **Theological (Intellectual and Knowledge):** Measures awareness and understanding of religious texts, doctrines, and traditions.
5. **Consequential (Impact on Daily Life):** Assesses how religion influences moral behavior and decision-making in non-religious contexts.

These dimensions are relatively independent, and together they aim to cover the full range of religious expression. While the first four dimensions are internal to religion, the fifth, the consequential dimension, has sparked debate. Critics argue that it measures outcomes influenced by religion rather than religion itself (Fichter, 1969; Payne and Elifson, 1976; Duke et al., 1998). For instance, Faulkner and DeJong (1966) excluded this dimension due to its low correlation with the others. However, this dimension is an important and integral one in measuring Islamic religiosity as El-Menouar (2014) claims, as Islam is generally regarded as a religion of orthopraxy. Rather than viewing the consequential dimension as external or insignificant, I argue that this dimension is important not only for measuring Islamic religiosity but also measuring (Muslim) elite religiosity and in areas where religion is politicized too as elaborated in the methodology and analysis chapter in detail.

Moreover, most scales used to assess religiosity across different regions, including Jewish and Islamic contexts, are adaptations of those initially designed for evaluating Christian religiosity. Translating the Christian scale poses certain challenges due to the complexities inherent in religious, cultural, and linguistic differences (Khan et al., 2017). The level of commitment to Islam among traditional and contemporary Muslims varies from deeply devout to minimally nominal. This is contingent upon the ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status of the individuals under investigation (Porter & Schwab, 2008). Additionally, the Quran is open to multiple interpretations and applications, resulting in diverse Islamic practices globally and the various interpretations of Shari'ah have led to the emergence of multiple denominations within Islam (Sedgwick, 2006, Porter & Schwab, 2008). Yet still, several surveys have been conducted among Muslims globally

utilizing a Christian-based model with specific variations (such as Hassan 2008; El-Menouar 2014⁹³).

Hence, notwithstanding considerable concerns over Glock and Stark's (1968) religiosity scales, it continues to be a prevalent, examined, and verified tool, relevant not just to Christian religiosity but also to Muslim religiosity, highlighting its multidimensional nature. It is important to modify approaches according to the religion, sect, denomination, and geographical region, considering their histories, cultures, and interpretations of the faith. In other words, given its extensive use and versatility⁹⁴, I developed a religiosity scale influenced by the Glock-Stark framework, incorporating specific changes for qualitative research purposes, as outlined in the methodology chapter, to facilitate the assessment of religiosity in this thesis.

⁹³ El-Menouar (2014), in her study of Muslim religiosity in Germany, employed Glock and Stark's (1965, 1968) five-dimensional model of religiosity and noted a multidimensional approach is essential to address various aspects of Muslim religiosity. She (2014) acknowledges the certain problematic sides (mainly the problems that stems from the doctrinal issues between Islam and Christianity) in terms of the Glock and Stark's five dimensional model of religiosity and these main problems are "(A) a conception of Islamic piety as a one-dimensional construct, (B) a one-to-one translation of Christian measures into Islamic terminology, (C) interpretation of research results within a framework of Western or Christian concepts of religiosity, (D) use of indicators measuring more than religiosity, and (E) a lack of statistical estimates of reliability and validity" (El-Menouar 2014, pp. 54 - 56). She further states that although Glock and Stark state that their five dimensional mode of religiosity cover all major religions in the world , they did not consider the doctrinal and theological differences between Christianity and Islam (El-Menouar, 2014, pp. 57 - 60).

⁹⁴ Statistical study indicates that the scales possess reliability and internal validity, while the findings of the principal component analysis support the multidimensional framework of Muslim religiosity (El-Menouar, 2014, pp. 54 - 64). Faulkner and DeJong reassessed Glock and Stark's five-dimensional model. They confirmed the presence of scaling coefficients, demonstrating positive correlations among the dimensions, but with differing degrees of linkage across the various dimensions. The most robust correlation was connected to the ideological dimension, whilst the least robust was associated with the consequential dimension (Faulkner & DeJong, 1966).

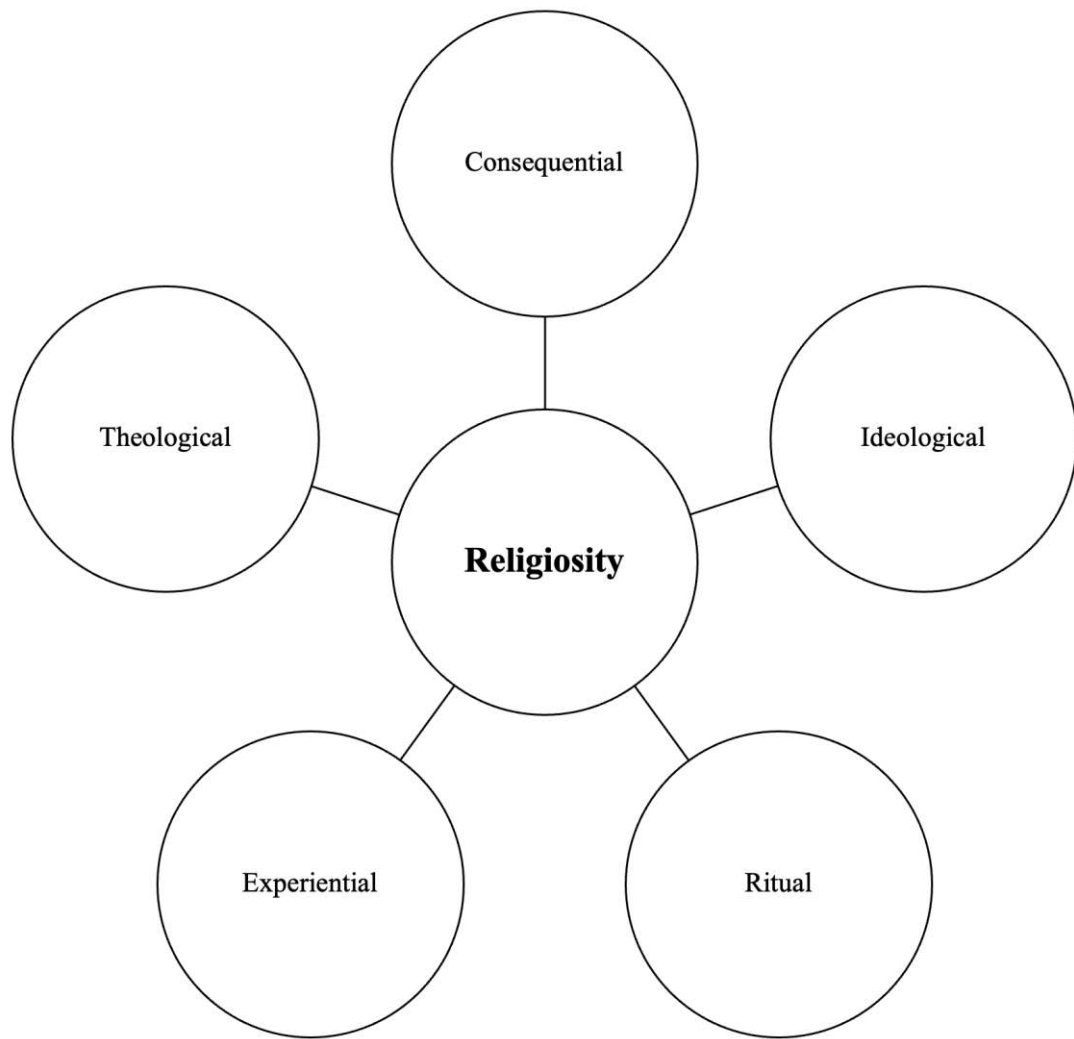


Figure 5.3: Dimensions of Religiosity

5.12 Operationalizing Religiosity: Toward a Context-Sensitive Scale of Secularization in Turkish Islamic Elite Settings

To assess the secularization of the devout bourgeoisie, I developed a tailored set of questions aligned with the objectives of this thesis. These questions are inspired by a modified version of Glock and Stark's (1968) multidimensional religiosity scale, which remains one of the most established and empirically validated instruments in the sociology of religion. However, several adjustments were necessary to account for the specific Islamic and Turkish context, the diversity of existing scale versions, and the qualitative nature of this research, which is based on in-depth interviews with participants who already identify as Muslim, conservative, and religious.

Moreover, while my study draws on the widely used Glock and Stark multidimensional model of religiosity, which categorizes religious commitment into dimensions such as belief, ritual, experience, knowledge, and consequences, it also recognizes the limitations of this framework when applied to qualitative, context-sensitive fieldwork. The Glock-Stark model (1968) was developed in a quantitative sociological tradition and is most effective when measuring levels of religiosity within institutional or survey-based settings.

Nancy Ammerman's (2007; 2016) 'lived religion' framework, on the other hand, offers a more fluid, interpretive, and ethnographic approach, emphasizing how religion is woven into the fabric of daily life, in embodied habits, relationships, moral choices, and even in seemingly secular activities. This approach moves beyond traditional metrics of religiosity, such as mosque attendance or theological orthodoxy, and instead examines how individuals integrate religious meaning into ordinary spaces and activities, including leisure venues, consumption patterns, family life, and interpersonal relationships. As Ammerman (2007) suggests, 'lived religion' can be observed in practices that are not always explicitly labeled as religious but are nonetheless infused with spiritual or ethical significance.

Thus, this study combines these two approaches by using an revised and extended version of Glock and Stark's model (1968) to structure interview questions and thematic analysis, while interpreting findings through the lens of 'lived religion' to better understand the ambiguous, negotiated, and embodied religiosity of the devout bourgeoisie. This dual framework allows for both conceptual clarity and interpretive richness in analyzing the secularization processes and transformations of religious life in the context of class mobility and modernity.

5.12.1 Belief Dimension and Its Exclusion

In Glock and Stark's (1968) model, the belief dimension refers to acceptance of core religious tenets. In Islam, this corresponds to '*īmān*', or faith, which is defined through the six pillars of belief (*arkān al-īmān*): belief in the existence and oneness of God (*tawḥīd*), angels (e.g., *Jibrā'īl*/Gabriel, *Mīkā'īl*/Michael, *Isrāfīl*), divine scriptures

(such as the Qur'an, Injeel, Torah), the prophets (from Adam to Muhammad), the Day of Judgment, and divine predestination (*qadar*). These tenets are considered foundational to all Islamic sects and are universally accepted by pious Muslims.

Given that my research participants are self-identified conservative and religious Muslims, questioning them about these beliefs would be both redundant and potentially inappropriate. One who rejects any of these tenets would, by Islamic definition, not be considered a Muslim. Therefore, the belief dimension was excluded from the interview guide, as it would not provide meaningful variation or insight into degrees of religiosity within this group.

5.12.2 Ritual Dimension

According to Waardenburg (2002), the fundamental religious ceremonies outlined by the five pillars of Islam are the principal symbols of Islam, universally acknowledged by Muslims, regardless of their performance. Thus, the ritual dimension in Islam is centered around the Five Pillars: the declaration of faith (*shahāda*⁹⁵), the five daily prayers (*ṣalāt*), fasting during Ramadan (*ṣawm*), almsgiving (*zakāt*⁹⁶), and pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*). These practices are central expressions of religious observance and are generally upheld among devout Muslims.

In addition to these core obligations, this study also considers other everyday ritual practices as indicators of religiosity, such as the frequency of personal supplication (*du'ā*), the recitation of '*bismillāh*' (the *basmala*⁹⁷) before important activities, and regular verbal affirmations of faith. As these behaviors reflect both structured and spontaneous acts of devotion, a series of questions were developed to assess the ritual dimension in participants' daily lives.

⁹⁵ "In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful" (bi-smi llāhi r-rahmāni r-rahīmi). This statement holds significant importance in Islam and is predominantly utilized by Muslims before to doing "good deeds," such as during daily prayers, as well as at the start of various daily activities.

⁹⁶ It is one of the five pillars of Islam and the Arabic term for "charitable giving" or "almsgiving."

⁹⁷ "I bear witness that there is no deity but God, and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of God" (Ash-hadu an la ilaha illa Allah, Wa ash-hadu anna Muhammadan Rasulu-Allah). This is an Islamic declaration of faith, integral to the Five Pillars of Islam.

5.12.3 *Experiential Dimension*

Stark and Glock (1968) underscores that the perception of communion with a supernatural being is a defining feature of religious experience and an individual with religious beliefs will eventually encounter a religious emotion. In this sense, the experiential dimension refers to the emotional and spiritual experiences associated with religion, including perceived connections with the divine. In Islamic practice, particularly within expressions of popular Islam, people often attribute personal misfortunes or blessings to Allah's will, seeing them as signs of divine reward or punishment (Waardenburg 2002). Positive or negative events are frequently attributed to Allah, who is seen to bestow rewards or impose punishments based on human conduct in this life. This perspective tends to emphasize immediate, worldly manifestations of divine justice.

This dimension can also reveal distinctions in religious orientation. For example, followers of more traditional or popular interpretations of Islam may expect time-bound, tangible consequences for their actions, while younger or more orthodox individuals often adopt a more rational or systematic understanding of divine justice (El-Menouar, 2014). To capture such nuances, a set of questions addressing participants' experiential engagement with their faith was included.

5.12.4 *Theological (Knowledge) Dimension*

In Islamic tradition, religious knowledge is derived primarily from the Qur'an and the Sunnah⁹⁸ (Waardenburg 2002). While it is generally expected that believers possess at least a basic understanding of these sources, the actual content and depth of religious knowledge vary considerably among individuals.

This dimension explores how participants evaluate their own knowledge of Islam, the Qur'an, and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. Since religious literacy is not uniform, even among devout Muslims, it is important to assess the perceived depth and confidence of participants' theological understanding. Accordingly, a group of questions was formulated to address this dimension.

⁹⁸ The practices and traditions of prophet Mohammad.

5.12.5 Revisiting the Consequential Dimension in the Elite, Turkish, and Islamic Context: Leisure and Consumption

In the literature, the last component of religiosity, known as the consequential dimension, is typically undervalued, mostly due to its overall statistical incongruity with other dimensions, especially in Western and Christian context. Nevertheless, I contend that the consequential component is particularly significant, especially within the Islamic context, in elite religiosity, or in regions where religion and/or religiosity is politicized, such as Türkiye, since it may provide crucial and distinct insights into religiosity. Consequently, this last feature of religiosity requires a distinct subtitle.

First of all, Islam as a religion of orthopraxy in general and Islamic religious law in particular plays a pivotal role, providing guidance not only for the proper execution of religious rituals but also governing the daily lives of adherents (Hallaq 2022). Thus, compliance with these norms should not be viewed merely as a byproduct of religiosity, even when they pertain to ‘everyday activities’. Instead, such adherence should be regarded as an act of religious practice itself, which is a significant distinction. Therefore, the dimension of consequences must be understood as an essential component of religiosity in Islam in this sense. Second reason lies in the discrepancies regarding behavioural and attitudinal consistency among elites, and in less liberal contexts and in contexts where religion and religiosity are politicized as this politicization facilitates access to various influential social, political and economic sources and networks, which can convey a divergent narrative in this regard.

Hence, inquiries regarding the consequential dimension, especially questions on leisure and consumption culture are essential for assessing religiosity to look beyond the rituals, experience and knowledge, as these leisure and consumption practices reveal significant aspects of daily life performances related to religion and religious obligations, thereby illuminating other facets of religiosity, such as ethical adherence. Consequently, it is vital to include supplementary questions that examine religiosity by including the questions on consumption and leisure culture of the population. Thus, I contend that a profound understanding of religiosity, and in my case, secularization, can be achieved by examining their leisure and consumption culture, particularly within elite formations, in

Islamic context, and contexts where religion is politicized. For this reason, in relation to leisure and consumption, a series of questions were posed under the consequential dimension.



Chapter 6: METHODOLOGY

This study investigates the process of secularization of the devout bourgeoisie in Türkiye, and aiming to comprehend it through their religiosity as neoliberal economic policies, globalization, as well as clientelist public procurement of the current AKP government, and the influences of modern capitalism have changed religiosity and the general ‘lifestyle’ of the devout class those who had classified themselves as anti-modern and anti-secular in the late 1970s, but later evolved hybrid subjectivities.

To address the research, I employed qualitative research methods, specifically multi-sited non-participant observation in different locations such as restaurants, cafes, lounges frequented by pious bourgeoisie, and in-depth, individual, semi-structured interviews with members of the pious bourgeoisie.

There are several reasons why I chose qualitative research method. First and foremost, I argue that studying religion, religiosity, and secularization in authoritarian and less liberal settings, and in a context where religion is politicized and strategically used for both political and, more significantly, economic aims presents a range of challenges. In this environment, religion as an institution, religiosity as an adjective and religious networks can all function as vital tools for social, political and economic mobility, where ties between individuals are often forged for practical, rather than purely spiritual purposes. Hence, this dynamic complicates the research process, as the intersection of religion with power structures can obscure the genuine motivations and beliefs of individuals. In such a setting, the most effective approach to understanding these phenomena is through qualitative research methods with an *solid rapport*.

Additionally, the majority of research on secularization and religiosity, have utilized various quantitative scales, as mentioned in fifth chapter, and religion has been perceived as a static and quantifiable phenomena. As a result, the possible qualitative differences in individual religiosity have been neglected, and it has been seen as a fixed trait existing in varied intensities. Yet, this provides restricted insights, as individuals may articulate their religious perspectives in several dimensions, shaped by their own engagement with religion and the values and goals of their specific group or class.

Consequently, it is imperative to emphasize the necessity of qualitative research, especially in elite studies and in contexts where religion and religiosity have become politicized.

Furthermore, an in-depth comprehension of the research issues that encompass the perspectives of the study population and the context in which they live is typically achieved through the use of qualitative methods, and it is advantageous for the following purposes as well: the investigation of novel subjects or the comprehension of intricate issues; the elucidation of individuals' beliefs and conduct; and the identification of the social or cultural norms of a particular group or society (Creswell, 2014). Hence the basic objective of qualitative research is to gain insight into behavior, perceptions, or experiences.

Hence, qualitative research is the most appropriate method for addressing ‘why’ questions that seek to elucidate and comprehend issues, as well as ‘how’ questions that describe processes or behavior. Additionally, qualitative methodologies are particularly well-suited for doing elite research, as the establishment of rapport fosters an environment that is conducive to participant disclosure (Hennink et al., 2020, p. 30).

Lastly, in preparation for my fieldwork, I conducted a comprehensive historical analysis tracing the emergence and transformation of the devout bourgeoisie in Türkiye. This historical inquiry, enabled me to contextualize the contemporary religious and class subjectivities I encountered during fieldwork. It provided a crucial backdrop for understanding how past struggles have shaped the current expressions of religiosity, identity, and lifestyle among this group. By mapping the *longue durée* of Islamic capital, religiosity, conservatism, and middle-class formation, I was able to enter the field with a more informed lens and situate my observations within broader socio-historical continuities and ruptures.

6.1 From Personal Experience to Academic Inquiry: Positionality and Motivation in Context

It is essential to begin with my background as a researcher, as my personal experiences have significantly shaped my academic interests. My curiosity about religion,

particularly the processes of secularization, stems from my upbringing in Kayseri, a city widely recognized for its conservative and religious values, while I was raised in a secular household. This positioning has provided me with firsthand exposure to the intersections of religiosity and secularism in urban life, fostering a sustained engagement with the topic. Over time, I have become particularly intrigued by the emotional connections and disconnections that individuals experience in relation to Islam, as well as the role of specific religious orders in shaping personal and collective religious identities.

Additionally, I am interested in exploring how religion influences daily political, social, and particularly economic practices within urban settings. This curiosity emerged through observing shifts in the religious beliefs and practices within my social circles over time, prompting a deeper inquiry into the mechanisms underlying such transformations. Thus, During my undergraduate and master's studies, I focused on the sociology of religion, with a particular emphasis on secularization, aiming to understand the factors that drive fluctuations in Islamic religiosity across individuals' life courses.

In the latter years of my undergraduate education and the early stages of my master's degree, public discourse increasingly turned to the emergence of a new socio-economic class, often referred to as the 'Islamic bourgeoisie.' News coverage highlighted their extravagant consumption patterns and engagement in leisure activities, particularly in fashion, where novel veiling styles signaled shifting lifestyles. Notably, these discussions were not limited to secular media but also surfaced in conservative newspapers, indicating an internal debate within religious circles. This phenomenon captured my attention, as it suggested a potential reconfiguration of the relationship between Islamic values and modern consumer culture.

A key dimension of my research interests thus involves the concept of embourgeoisement and its intersection with religiosity, specifically Islam. I aim to explore the relationship between economic class and religious devotion, investigating how the acquisition of wealth may influence religious commitment. These issues are central to my research as they offer valuable insights into the broader dynamics of religious adaptation in contemporary urban contexts.

As a researcher, I am aware of my positionality as someone who is both an insider and outsider to the communities I study. While I share a cultural and linguistic background with many of my participants, my secular upbringing and academic stance may position me differently in terms of worldview and lived experience. For this reason, I seek to critically examine how my own social location and academic habitus shape the production of knowledge. This involves remaining aware of the symbolic power dynamics embedded in the research encounter and striving to decenter my own interpretive authority. I acknowledge that all knowledge is partial, located, and shaped by the perspective of the knower. Rather than striving for an impossible neutrality, I aim to be transparent about my standpoint and the ways it informs the questions I ask, the interpretations I make, and the relationships I form during fieldwork.

My academic journey is not only intellectually driven but also shaped by a desire to understand the complex transformations taking place in contemporary Muslim societies, particularly in Türkiye. By situating my work at the intersection of religion, class, and modernity, I aim to contribute to broader debates in the sociology of religion, sociology of elites, Islamic studies, sociology of leisure and consumption and urban sociology. My research challenges binary frameworks that oppose tradition to modernity or religiosity to secularism by highlighting how Islamic piety, economic aspiration, and modern lifestyles are negotiated in dynamic and sometimes contradictory ways.

6.2 Situating the Self in the Field: Reflexivity

As a researcher, our primary objective is to comprehend and get a deep understanding of the subject being researched, which is known as 'Verstehen'⁹⁹. However, this understanding is never produced in a vacuum as the comprehension aspect may be influenced by several factors which we need to be aware of as researcher. In other

⁹⁹ Understanding can be examined from two separate angles: the researcher's standpoint, in which they analyze the issues using their own frame of reference, referred to as understanding; and the viewpoint of the study population, where their perspectives on the research issues are identified, known as Verstehen. The idea of Verstehen is a crucial aspect of qualitative research and was extensively employed by Weber, who derived it from Wilhelm Dilthey. Verstehen is the cognitive process of understanding and examining the personal experiences of individuals within a certain historical and social context. Therefore, the goal is not merely to understand social phenomena, but to delve deeper and achieve Verstehen. It involves understanding the existence of the persons you see from their distinct perspective, under their own circumstances, and expressing this comprehension using their own language and concepts (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p.7).

words, it is shaped by the researcher's positionality—their prior experiences, assumptions, values, and beliefs—which inevitably influence the research process. For example, researchers can facilitate the audience's comprehension of their viewpoint and the possible impact it could have on the study outcomes. For this reason, Recognizing that the researcher is part of the research itself, reflexivity becomes an essential practice. It enhances the credibility and trustworthiness of the study while also bringing to light the power dynamics embedded in research encounters.

Reflexivity encompasses both personal and interpersonal aspects, requiring individuals to possess a keen sense of self-awareness and engage in conscious self-reflection. This enables researchers to openly acknowledge and address their possible impact and influence on the study process as it plays a role in every stage, from the framing of questions to data collection, interpretation, and representation. As Finlay and Gough (2003) note, qualitative researchers must reflect on their own subjectivity and how their social background, assumptions, and behaviors impact the research process. Similarly, Mason (1996) argues that researchers should evaluate their actions and roles with the same critical rigor applied to their data, recognizing themselves as integral parts of the social world they study.

Moreover, it is crucial to maintain an equilibrium between practicing reflexivity and avoiding excessive self-indulgence, as this might possibly hinder the research process. With this mind, I questioned how my own background, including my secular habitus and beliefs, gender, political views, and social and economic class, might impact the research itself. My position as a researcher is embedded within a specific cultural, social, and ideological framework that inevitably informs my interactions with participants, the questions I choose to ask, and the way I interpret findings. Being aware of my own positionality has allowed me to remain conscious of potential biases and actively work toward minimizing their impact. By acknowledging these influences and engaging in ongoing self-reflection, I aimed to conduct this study with transparency and intellectual honesty. Rather than attempting to erase my positionality, I sought to use reflexivity as a tool to critically engage with my role in the research process, ensuring that my interpretations remained as grounded and rigorous as possible.

6.3 Observation: Navigating Secularization and Religious Identity in Urban Leisure Spaces

Although observation is rarely used in secularization studies, I employed non-participant observation methods in specific locations where individuals congregate, such as social spaces, as it enables researchers to observe firsthand the subtle ways in which secularism manifests and interacts with practices and identities.

Observation is a research method that allows researchers to systematically observe and document the actions, behaviors, and interactions of individuals. The method also enables researchers to acquire a comprehensive description of social settings or events, which is necessary to contextualize individuals' behavior within their own socio-cultural context (Hennink et al., 2020).

Using observation, researchers are able to obtain a Geertzen (1973) way of 'thick description' of the social setting, the activities and the people studied as Geertz emphasized the need to situate people's behaviours and actions within local frameworks in order to understand culture not by searching for universal laws, but by examining interpretations and looking for meanings (Hennink et al., 2020).

I used my observations as a means to triangulate the data gathered through interviews, enhancing my understanding of the behaviors and attitudes of the devout bourgeoisie. The observations served to confirm or challenge themes emerging from the interview data, such as the role of leisure in religious practice or the tension between modern consumerism and religious values. Additionally, the observations allowed me to document spatial patterns and interactions that were not immediately evident in the interviews, providing deeper insight into how participants negotiate their religious and social identities in urban leisure spaces.

In my case, I utilized non-participant observation which is the act of undertaking an observation without engaging in the activities that are being observed. In order to accomplish this, researcher frequently observe place, individuals, activities, or events from a distance, ensuring that you are not a part of the observed situation (Hennink et al.,

2020). For my case, this method is one of the best way to comprehend the secularization of the pious bourgeoisie, as by immersing myself in the research environment, the method allowed me to personally witness and analyze social actions, behaviors, relationships, and interactions, as well as the physical, spatial, and temporal aspects of the venues I visited (Mason, 1996, p. 84).

By using this approach, I was able to provide insightful descriptions of the locations I visited and established a connection between the data gathered from interviews and the specific areas being visited. I have conducted non-participant one as I am dealing with an 'elite' formation and participant observation could jeopardize the research itself. This was due to the challenge of interrupting individuals who frequent these establishments to relax and enjoy, which may potentially result in rejection or other complications that would hinder my study.

The scope of 'the field' has expanded to encompass all locations where human beings exist, and every conceivable human group and situation has become a tangible or possible area for investigation (Sluka & Robben, 2012, p. 2) and my place was leisure and consumption places such as restaurants, cafes and lounges. I aimed to analyze the behaviours and actions of the visitors as well as the physical locations of these venues and explore their parallels, contrasts, and cohabitation with non-religious recreational areas by documenting my observations in the restaurants/cafes/lounges frequented by the devout bourgeoisie.

The non-participant observations took place between March 2024 to January 2025 at restaurants/cafes/lounges, and I frequented a total of 21 locations, 11 in Istanbul, 6 in Ankara, and 4 in Kayseri. I selected these places as the subject of my observation for three primary justifications. Firstly, it is one of the most ideal locations for observing study subjects in a relaxed and free environment, and for investigating the fifth dimension of religiosity which include leisure and consumption patterns. Secondly, restaurants and cafés are primary locations where study participants typically spend a significant amount of their leisure time. Finally, unlike some dedicated sports venues, event places or other leisure activities like '*oturmalar*' (home visits), these leisure establishments are easily accessible and conducive to note-taking.

As mentioned, the places where I conducted observations are situated in Istanbul, Ankara, and Kayseri. The reasons for selecting these cities are two-fold. Primarily, I have specifically selected these cities as my gatekeepers, who possess the necessary access to this class, are located there. Therefore, it was more convenient for me to obtain access to them in order to conduct observations and also interviews. Second and most importantly, these cities are especially suitable for my study because of the social, cultural, and political outlooks of their inhabitants. Ankara, being the capital, is primarily inhabited by a conservative bourgeoisie who frequently visit for official meetings with government officials. Kayseri, located in Anatolia, has a historically conservative, religious and entrepreneurial background. Lastly, Istanbul, the most populous city in Türkiye, offers significant economic opportunities and is home to the majority of my research subjects.

The establishments I frequented mostly (but not exclusively) cater to the devout bourgeoisie, abstain from serving alcohol, and have masjids within their premises. These locations were once limited in number, but today they are dispersed around the cities. Due to the impracticality of visiting all of them for my research, I selected certain ones. When deciding which café/restaurant/lounge to attend, I sought for hype¹⁰⁰ ones that cater to the pious bourgeoisie, using platforms like Instagram, TikTok, blogs, and also asked for recommendations of my gatekeepers. In addition, I wandered around many establishments that offer alcoholic beverages in Istanbul and Ankara as well. As it is now rather commonplace to observe that pious members of the upper middle and upper class patronize not just venues that abstain from serving alcohol, but also those that sell alcohol, mainly in Istanbul.

During my research, I have recorded observations, taking jotted (Emerson et al., 2011) or condensed fieldnotes. These kinds of fieldnotes are the shorter version of what actually occurred as it is not possible to write down everything that I observed. At the end of the observation, I wrote an expanded fieldnotes with elaborate descriptions of the location, social activities, behaviors, and interactions and fill out the details (Spradley, 1979, p.75). Once the comprehensive field notes were finished, a thorough analysis and introspective examination of the fieldwork was carried out (Mason, 1996, p. 149).

¹⁰⁰ Popular cafes and restaurants. This can change as one specific cafe can be popular in certain months but its popularity may decrease in upcoming months.

6.3.1 Challenges and Adaptations: Limitations and Strategic Approaches in Observational Research

While the observation method is a valuable tool in my research, several limitations arose during its implementation in the selected locations. Although these venues are public spaces frequented by people from diverse backgrounds, gaining access to and fully observing all dimensions of these settings proved to be challenging (Mason, 1996). As a researcher, I had to negotiate access to these spaces differently than a typical café-goer, which introduced various obstacles.

One significant limitation was my initial desire to spend extensive time in these locations to observe not only the physical environment but also the social dynamics of interactions over different times of day and days of the week. For instance, I aimed to observe the social interactions at a specific café on Friday across various times—morning, midday, afternoon, and evening, given that these moments carried potential significance. However, my prolonged presence at smaller establishments, particularly in Ankara and Kayseri where I had spent considerable time, often drew unwanted attention from proprietors and staff, which hindered my ability to unobtrusively observe.

To address this, I adapted my strategy by varying my visit times and days. For example, I spent two hours observing at noon on one day and returned to the same location at different times and on alternate days. This change in approach helped minimize attention from staff and allowed me to gather more accurate and natural observations.

Additionally, I found that observations were more effective during the evenings, when the venues were busier, while mornings tended to be sparsely populated, making it less productive for my research. Despite the initial difficulties, I developed strategies to observe the spaces and participants without causing disruptions. Over time, I became more adept at blending into the environment, which greatly improved my ability to observe both the social dynamics and the physical spaces without interference.

Overall, while observation presented its challenges, I was able to complete this component of the research effectively. Compared to the interview process, which presented its own set of complexities, observation was relatively less difficult, allowing me to gain valuable insights into the behavior and interactions within the chosen venues.

6.4 In-depth Interviews: A Qualitative Exploration of the Secularization

The method of observation can be combined with other qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, to provide fruitful data, thereby enabling a comprehensive understanding of issues from numerous perspectives. Thus, as mentioned above, apart from non-participant observation, I also used in-depth interview for my study as it allows researchers and participants to engage in candid discussions in a safe and trusting environment, fostering openness and authenticity, and are one of the most important method that is used in qualitative methodologies that entails a one-on-one conversation between an interviewer and an interviewee, during which interviewer and interviewee discuss specific topics in depth. This type of interview may be characterized as a conversation with a purpose as researcher's objective is to acquire a deeper understanding of specific issues by employing an interview guide (Hennink et al., 2020).

For my research, I specifically employed semi-structured interviews, a common method in qualitative research that provides precise insights into the norms and values experienced by participants. The literature extensively explores the advantages and challenges of this method (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; 2005; Warren, 2002). The reason for my use of semi-structured interviews is that they offer an opportunity to gain a thorough grasp of the interviewee's values and experiences in a personally meaningful way. The researcher prepares an agenda for each interview to ensure that all pertinent topics are addressed, while also allowing interviewees the flexibility to raise issues they deem important (Stephens, 2007).

This semi-structured in-depth interview style is well-suited for my study due to its special advantages. Firstly, a face-to-face discussion allows both the participant and interviewer to interact in a more adaptable and immediate manner. Secondly, individuals have the freedom to respond to questions in a way that suits them personally (May, 2001,

p. 123). Thirdly, in contrast to structured interviews, semi-structured interviews are mostly open-ended and stem from the researcher's curiosity and examination of relevant literature. Fourthly, semi-structured interview aims to comprehend the topics of the interviewees' ordinary experiences from their own viewpoints (Brinkman & Kvale, 2018, p. 31), and to optimize the generation of information during talks, it is important to provide sufficient opportunity for delving into the interviewee's main viewpoints (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 1002). Lastly, this research method is the most used and suggested one for studying elites as well.

As a result, my research encompassed the execution of semi-structured in-depth interviews between March 2024 and January 2025 with the devout bourgeoisie. The respondents are devout Muslims, men and women, range in age of 21 to 72 and possess firms of varying sizes, including small, medium and large, and dwelling in Istanbul, Kayseri, and Ankara. The interviews and non-participant observation were done concurrently (but not simultaneously), as they mutually influenced each other in several ways. For instance, the comments of the respondents influenced my observation of social interactions and structural elements inside those locations. The purpose of these interviews in general was to gather in-depth data and gain a better understanding of the religiosity and secularization of the pious bourgeoisie, and aimed to explore their thoughts, actions, behaviours and influence within the context of secularism. I did two pilot interviews to evaluate the effectiveness and clarity of the questions, thereafter initiating the interview process.

Prior to the interviews, the prospective participants were presented with comprehensive information on all parts of the research, solicited for their voluntary involvement, and provided with a consent form to acquire their consent. In addition, apart from the interviews, since all interviews were recorded via voice recording, their consent was also sought. However, since 7 interviewees did not provide their authorization for audio recording, their replies were written on a paper and then manually entered into the computer. At the end of the each interview, I took personal notes regarding the interviewee and all the social components of the encounter in order to provide a more detailed account of the interview. I transcribed the interviews verbatim, and carefully examined the transcriptions and fieldnotes, discerning the prevailing themes and

subthemes. As soon as I transcribed the voice records, I deleted them, and I used pseudonyms for all the interviewees for their safety and privacy.

The duration of interviews often ranges from 1 hour to 3 hour and some of them conducted in different time periods. Some of the interviews were brief due to the participants' concise and straightforward replies, indicating their reluctance to elaborate. However, the bulk of interviews lasted over one hour.

6.5 Recruitment and Sampling in Fieldwork

Fieldwork may provide significant challenges, particularly when examining topics that are considered sensitive or attempting to access exclusive groups and doing elite interview. In my situation, I had several challenges, particularly throughout the recruiting process, as well as before and after the interviews. Fortunately, I discovered certain mitigating factors and a solution that allowed me to get access, conduct interviews, and extract valuable information from the interviewees.

For my study, I used purposive sampling method that is employed in qualitative research, which entails the deliberate selection of participants who possess specific characteristics that are pertinent to the investigation. Purposive sampling is the process of actively recruiting participants who are 'information-rich' (Patton, 2002) on the study issues in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of these issues. This method is also adaptable, as it permits the sample to develop as the investigation advances, rather than adhering to a predetermined methodology from the inception (Hennink et al., 2020, p. 125).

Interacting with elite, an exclusive and hard-to-reach group, as well as conducting an interview vis-a-vis a 'touchy' or sensitive subject, posed significant challenges for me in terms of location and communication. That's why I rely on my gatekeepers for assistance. The gatekeeper is a person, as described by Butera (2006), plays a crucial role in promoting the study, establishing trust and participation. Interacting with gatekeepers is a common strategy for recruiting participants to take part in research investigations as

they occupy a prominent and recognized role within the community being investigated as they have knowledge of the characteristics of community members (Hennink et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, there are inherent disadvantages associated with relying on gatekeepers for help, including the potential for their bias in choosing individuals to participate in the research. In order to avoid this situation, I conducted a thorough analysis of potential selection biases and put out alternative methods for certain scenarios. Additionally, I have requested my gatekeepers to refrain from using coercion or exerting excessive pressure to secure interviews, so as to ensure that participants do not feel required or pressured to take part in the research (Hennink et al., 2020).

The significance of the matter lies in both ethical considerations and the valuable information obtained from the interview. Hence, the initial cohort of interviewees was chosen by my gatekeepers who possess strong connections within this specific community due to their familial ties. My gatekeepers initially reached out to the potential respondents, and upon their agreement, I subsequently called them by phone to deliver a succinct outline of the study issue (Certain individuals sought to hear potential questions) and set a time and location, since they were already familiar with it prior to my approach. The interviewee selected the interview location, acknowledging the significance of choosing a setting where they feel at ease.

The remaining participants were identified through snowball sampling which entails soliciting study participant or key informant for referrals of individuals who meet the study criteria. This was the sole viable method in my case due to the relatively limited size and the frequent inaccessibility of the subjects for my study as snowball sampling is especially well-suited for locating research participants that possess highly specialized qualities, unconventional experiences, or belong to 'hidden' demographic groupings that may be challenging to discover using alternative recruiting approaches. Another advantage of snowball sampling is that participants are connected to the study through a known and trusted individual who can explain the nature of involvement and address any concerns, potentially leading to higher participation rates in the study. Thus, this strategy is efficient in finding people who are difficult to access (Hennink et al., 2020, p. 146).

6.6 Sample Size and Saturation in Qualitative Research

Determining the appropriate sample size for qualitative research is challenging. Qualitative studies typically involve smaller sample sizes that are intentionally selected to offer in-depth insights into the research topic. The focus is on the quality and depth of the data rather than the number of participants. A key concept in qualitative research is saturation, which occurs when data collection yields no new insights and further interviews become redundant. Saturation is an essential criterion in determining when data collection should stop (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Hennink et al., 2020, p. 151). Saturation is achieved through an iterative process of recruiting participants, collecting data, and analyzing it to determine when no new themes or information emerge. This approach allows the researcher to refine their focus and adapt the study's direction as needed.

There is sometimes a question about the appropriate sample size needed to achieve saturation in qualitative research. It is stated that attaining saturation is impacted by several factors, such as the purpose of the study, the population being studied, the nature of the data, and the aims of saturation. Various methodological tests utilizing comprehensive interviews have demonstrated that saturation was achieved between 9 interviews (Hennink et al., 2016) and 17 interviews (Francis et al., 2010). These trials illustrate that saturation may be achieved with a limited sample size, namely less than 20 interviews. (Hennink et al., 2016, p. 153).

Initially, my goal for the interview was to carry out interviews with around 40 participants, mostly to observe and analyze generational differences. However, after doing several interviews, I see the extensive duration required, as elite interviews significantly differ from non-elite ones, demanding much time and effort. For example, in order to complete certain interviews, it was necessary for me to meet with the interviewee on two or sometimes four separate occasions. At the end, I interviewed a total of 34 persons, with 1 expressing a desire to withdraw from the research. I transcribed the data to facilitate the calculation of the saturation process and consequently, I thought that I had gathered enough material to answer my research questions, thereby finished the interview phase.

6.7 Navigating Researcher Identity and Rapport Building in Interviews

Building rapport is significant in qualitative research (Dibartolo & McCrone, 2003; Steinke, 2004), as interviewing encompasses two separate yet interrelated processes: establishing a positive rapport and in return collecting relevant and valuable information. Additionally, it is particularly crucial when interviewing elites or discussing sensitive topics, as it signifies the establishment of a fundamental level of confidence that enables unrestricted exchange of information, and fosters a conducive environment for informants to discuss the issue that is studied and denotes a state of concordance and mutual understanding between a researcher and an informant.

Nevertheless, rapport does not inherently imply a close connection or intimate closeness between two individuals (Spradley, 1979, p. 28). Hence, the success of fieldwork is largely dependent on the capacity to create a strong rapport and cultivate meaningful relationships with study participants. The primary reason for the failure of fieldwork is typically attributed to the inability to effectively create and sustain rapport and positive relationships (Sluka & Robben, 2012). Consequently, I diligently cultivate rapport by maintaining transparency about the research, elucidating my function as an unbiased researcher, emphasizing the significance of this endeavor for social sciences, and assuring the confidentiality of their information. I also engaged in ordinary daily conversations before to and throughout the interview. I also made a conscious effort to strike a balance in the connection, avoiding both excessive friendliness and detachment, since either extreme may disrupt the interview process.

However, there were challenges related to my identity as a researcher, including my secular background, my affiliation with Koç University, and my position as a male researcher conducting interviews with devout, conservative individuals, particularly women. Nevertheless, I was aware of the fact that my options for alleviating this constraint are limited but in certain ways possible as well, as I have devised specific contingency plans for the interview, in order to mitigate the aforementioned potential problem. While these problems did not reach the level of severity that was anticipated, they did occur in certain interviews.

The primary obstacle I faced was my status as a researcher from Koc University, which presented specific challenges because to the institution's generally secular reputation and my affiliation with it. Yet, I believe that I have overcome this issue in a sense thanks to my gatekeepers. If the gatekeeper is a close to the interviewee and is considered trustworthy, then this issue generally is often not a significant concern. Moreover, in many instances, the university's overall academic reputation also had a significant role in enhancing the gravity of the interview.

Secondly, prior to the study, I had the belief that my religiosity may potentially hinder my study and its progress. Although male religiosity in Islam is less commonly noticed than female religiosity, it can nevertheless lead to specific concerns, especially when questioned. That opinion was generally false for most of the interviewees. The reason might be attributed to the connection I established with the individuals. I conducted the interview without disclosing my religious views, and this did not lead to me being seen as a 'outsider', at least from my own perspective.

Thirdly, before the project, I believed that my gender as a male researcher may potentially provide a significant obstacle, particularly when doing interviews with women. Engaging in conversation with a woman who characterized herself as devout or conservative presented challenges for me as a male researcher. However, contrary to my expectations, I did not encounter significant discomforting situations that prevented me from asking certain questions. Yet, it was the fact that during the interviews with male participants, my male gender as a researcher was advantageous in obtaining more valuable data.

6.8 Studying the Elite and The Issue of Sensitivity

Conducting field research, particularly through in-depth interviews with an elite group, proved to be a challenging and demanding endeavour. When the research focus intersects with a sensitive subject such as religion, the difficulty increases considerably. Despite having access to influential gatekeepers and employing referral-based and snowball sampling methods after establishing the core framework, engaging participants was still laborious and required persistent effort.

It is essential to recognize that a body of research addresses the methodology of interviewing hard-to-reach groups, such as wealthy, powerful, the elite (Adler & Adler, 2003; Anthony & Danaher, 2016; Barratt & Maddox, 2016), and Ostrander (1993) notably argues that interviewing elite individuals differs markedly from interviewing non-elite subjects due to disparities in power, status, and cultural capital. As the literature suggests, researchers must adopt specific strategies to gain access, build rapport, and conduct meaningful interviews with elites, strategies that I incorporated throughout all stages of my fieldwork.

It is recommended that researchers exercise prudence and ethical sensitivity when studying elites, particularly concerning questions of authenticity and the researcher's positionality. Disparities in social standing between researchers and elite participants can lead to power asymmetries that impact the interview dynamic (Ostrander, 1993). Researchers are also advised to be flexible when scheduling interviews with individuals who have demanding schedules (Morrissey, 1970), and to anticipate gatekeeping challenges, given that elites often rely on social reputation and information control (Cassell, 1988; Dexter, 1970; Hunter, 1993).

Beyond the challenges of studying elites, the sensitive nature of my research topic, religion and the examination of a devout bourgeoisie, adds another layer of complexity. The subject of religion, due to its sensitive nature, poses issues for both researchers and participants regarding the access, gathering, storage, and sharing of research data (Lee & Renzetti, 1993, p. 5). In my case, the examination of the pious bourgeoisie and their recreational and consumerist habits are being scrutinized by both secular and conservative factions, garnering significant media coverage.

This sensitivity could result in hesitancy and reluctance to participate and speak freely, which may arise from worries about group's reputation. Thus, hesitation may arise from specific worries around the possibility of exploitation, either through others capitalizing on their personal story or making use of their time. This is a common behaviour as demonstrated in Ostrander's (1993) investigation on interviewing influential individuals, and also in Crowley's (2007) study on interviewing advocacy groups for fathers' rights.

To address these concerns, I remained reflexive about both my positionality and the participants' potential hesitations, as suggested by Adler & Adler (2003). In situations where participants were cautious or ambivalent, the presence and endorsement of a trusted gatekeeper proved to be instrumental in enhancing my credibility and gaining trust. As Emerson (1988) notes, a gatekeeper can help researchers avoid the delicate balancing act between sincerity and flattery by lending legitimacy to their presence in the field. In my study, gatekeepers played a central role before, during, and after the interviews, facilitating access and providing crucial referrals.

Given both the elite status of my participants and the sensitivity of the topic, I followed rigorous ethical procedures to minimize potential harm and ensure transparency. This included assessing potential risks to participants and adjusting my methods accordingly. I received ethical clearance from the relevant committee and strictly adhered to ethical research standards. Prior to each interview, I provided detailed and clear information about the research aims and procedures. This allowed participants to make an informed and voluntary decision about their involvement. I also emphasized that there were no 'right' or 'wrong' answers, as each participant brings their own unique experience and worldview to the study.

To further mitigate risk, I consistently differentiated my research from journalistic inquiries and emphasized the scholarly purpose of the study. I assured participants of the confidentiality of their data and explained that all materials would be securely stored and accessed only by me. I removed any identifying information to safeguard their anonymity. Informed consent was obtained in writing, and participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from the interview at any time, without consequence, either during the session or afterward. These measures were critical not only for ethical compliance but also for building trust and encouraging openness during interviews.

In sum, navigating the dual challenges of elite access and topic sensitivity required careful ethical planning, strategic relationship-building, and sustained reflexivity, all of which were essential for generating trust, ensuring participant safety, and producing rich, meaningful data.

Overall, the methodological choices made throughout this research reflect a careful balancing of theoretical insight, practical strategy, and ethical responsibility. From

designing the study, making observation and selecting participants to conducting interviews, each step was guided by a commitment to reflexivity, transparency, and academic rigor. Special attention was paid to the complexities of studying elite actors within a politically and culturally sensitive context, where issues of access, trust, and representation are deeply entangled. By critically engaging with these methodological challenges and drawing on established scholarly practices, this research aims not only to contribute empirically to the study of secularization of devout bourgeoisie, but also to offer methodological reflections relevant to future qualitative research on elites and sensitive topics.



Chapter 7: SACRED AND SECULAR ENTANGLEMENTS: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF CLASS, RELIGIOSITY IN TRANSITION AND EVERYDAY DYNAMICS OF SECULARIZATION

This chapter initiates the examination of the secularization of the devout bourgeoisie in Türkiye, and argues that while devout bourgeoisie in Türkiye maintains high levels of religiosity in the ritualistic, experiential, and theological dimensions of religiosity, they exhibit significantly lower religiosity and secularization trend in the consequential dimension of religiosity. This pattern reflects the exhaustion of the ‘alternativity’ discourse within this particular class, and reveals a transformation and differentiation within, and a narrowing of, the definition of religiosity, one that centers primarily on ritualistic expressions of faith. I term this phenomenon ‘selective and performative religiosity’: a form of religiosity characterized by visible, practical, and public displays of devotion, such as performing rituals like the Umrah pilgrimage, regular mosque attendance, or participation in charitable activities. In this model, individuals choose forms of worship that conveniently align with their daily lives and needs.

Furthermore, this trend of pronounced ‘selective,’ and ‘performative’ religiosity, alongside ‘differentiation’, ‘transformation’ and other significant elements of secularism, indicates a phenomenon I refer to as ‘instrumental and contextual secularization’ which entails a reinterpretation, reconfiguration, and adaptable interaction with religion and its principles. In this process, personal interpretations of religiosity gain importance, becoming adaptable and often favoring individual belief and ritualistic practices over a deeper and coherent commitment to the religion's comprehensive doctrines. Individuals selectively modify their religiosity in response to evolving personal, societal, or situational influences.

To demonstrate this, the chapter will commence with a comprehensive description of the non-participant observations undertaken in social settings frequented by the devout bourgeoisie. These observations are essential for comprehending the nuanced indicators of secularization, since they offer real-time glimpse and snapshots of behaviours, relationships, and practices inside these contexts, together with the characteristics of the place.

I will then evaluate the interview data, concentrating on the participants' self-reports and reflections about their religiosity across four distinct dimensions namely

ritualistic, theological, experiential and most importantly consequential. By integrating these two data forms, the observational and the interview-based, I will investigate secularization within this group. Ultimately, I will engage in an interpretive argument to clarify the fundamental reasons that embourgeoisement and wealth serve as significant components contributing to secularization in this context. By integrating these perspectives, I aim to offer a more thorough comprehension of the secularization process among the pious bourgeoisie.

7.1 Observing Religiosity and Secularization

It was a Tuesday noon time, around 1 o'clock when I arrived at one of Istanbul's most renowned non-alcoholic, near-Bosporus, all-in-one restaurant-cafe-lounge venue, nestled in the picturesque Beykoz district. After travelling along a winding road shaded by towering trees, I approached the venue. The venue, with its white-washed façade and expansive windows, stands out among the surrounding greenery, like a beacon of modern luxury against the backdrop of nature.

Upon arrival, I saw valet attendant dressed in crisp uniforms, taking cars into a designated parking spot. At the entrance, two towering palm trees, incongruously placed in the middle of an otherwise verdant setting, stood as a symbol of the venue's probable aim to blending diverse influences. The trees, exotic yet out of place in the Istanbul's landscape, stood against a bold backdrop of the venue's name, which was illuminated in large, white letters above the door, a stark contrast to the surrounding trees and the natural hues of the area.

The entrance itself was grand, framed by black double doors adorned with gold-colored knobs. These doors, heavy and imposing, were framed by a white arch and as I stepped through the threshold, a red robes stretched out, guiding me further into the building. The space, with its high ceilings and expansive design, gave off the initial impression of a nightclub, sleek and almost theatrical in its execution, rather than the Islamic-compliant, family-friendly venue it purports to be.

Inside, the venue's design shifts from stark modernity to a blend of classic luxury. The entrance area is furnished with plush, red velvet chairs that lend the space a touch of old-world glamour. Tall, leafy plants add a burst of greenery, and the floor is covered in

large, striped black-and-white tiles. White wooden paneling along the walls contrasts with the sumptuous velvet curtains that hang from the walls.

A large, antique-style table stands near the center, adorned with fresh flowers, ornate candleholders, and delicate ornaments, contributing to the venue's ambiance. Above, a striking, long chandelier that resembles a reverse pine tree stretches across the space. The glass ceiling, letting in natural light, creates an open, airy feel. The space feels almost like a hybrid between two worlds, part indoor venue, part outdoor garden.

In the *entrée*, I was greeted by a door person who accompanied me to an available table and have noticed that the venue is divided into distinct sections, each separated by wooden match boarding that gives the space a sense of intimacy and privacy. In these sections, marble tables and plush sofas are arranged in combinations of black, white, and gold, colours that reinforce the venue's bold aesthetic. The chairs and tables, though modern in style, are designed to evoke comfort as well as elegance, creating a space that encourages long meals, socializing, and leisure. There is also a terrace, which wraps around the building, offers an exceptional vantage point of the Bosphorus. Outdoor tables are arranged for guests to enjoy the view and smoke cigarettes. Moreover, I saw on their website and also notice in the venue a VIP area, with a selection of long sofas, a fireplace, and a small terrace that offers a view of the Bosphorus, a setting for private gatherings or celebrations.

Moreover, during my time at the venue, I explored various areas and searched for a masjid, which was a distinguishing feature of these locations, as they were alcohol-free and included a masjid. I discovered one within the venue and entered on three separate occasions, observing a couple of individuals praying inside the men's masjid. The staff at the venue are predominantly men, typically dressed in white shirts, dark trousers and an apron. In addition to the male staff, women also contribute to the daily workings of the space, primarily work at the door for greeting guests.

I also take the opportunity to examine the extensive menu, which offers an array of dishes from traditional Turkish favourites like '*mıhlama*' (a cheesy cornmeal dish), kebabs and '*kokoreç*' (grilled lamb intestine) to international offerings like quesadillas, pizza and calamari. There's a nod to fusion cuisine as well, with dishes like noodle, vegan

bowls and modern takes on Turkish '*pide*'. The popular and well-discussed offerings is the wide selection of mocktails, vibrant non-alcoholic cocktails designed to mimic the flavors of traditional cocktails without alcohol. These drinks, alongside a variety of shisha flavors, are a testament to the venue's appeal to a diverse clientele who prefer a night out without the consumption of alcohol.

I visited the location twice on a weekday, once at midday and once in the evening, and furthermore on the weekend throughout the identical time intervals. I sought to stay as long as possible to notice the overall dynamic shift, as well as the visitor profile, their behavior, and interactions in particular. During the early hours of weekdays, when the venue is less crowded, the customer predominantly consists of young couples, seated on a sumptuous velvet sofa, their focus divided between one another and their phones, '*Khaaliji*' families with their children and women groups in modest clothing, and groups of women in their forties, attired in sophisticated and modest apparel, are positioned at one of the marble tables adjacent to the entryway. Their dialogue is gentle yet lively, interspersed with occasional laughing. I have observed groups of men, women, and mixed-gender assemblies. Men typically attire themselves in fashionable, predominantly modern styles, button-up shirts, cardigans, designer jeans or chinos, and shoes or boots. Women, whether veiled or not, wear contemporary, vibrant attire, frequently complemented by luxury handbags or jewellery. During weekends, the dynamic shifts dramatically as the venue begins to feel more like a social hub, bustling with groups of young people, couples, large families, friends, and tourists, allowing for the presence of all groups.

These frequenters do not merely occupy the space; they perform their presence in ways that signal belonging to a specific moral and aesthetic order. The subtle checking of smartphones while maintaining eye contact, the ritualized gestures of ordering food, and the careful, almost choreographed arrangement of handbags on the table become part of a broader performative repertoire. In particular, veiled women in elegant attire exhibit a calculated navigation of visibility, remaining stylish while maintaining a new ways of modesty, which itself becomes a performative act that negotiates piety and privilege. At times, small, observable gestures, such as adjusting a headscarf before taking a selfie, reveal an acute awareness of how ritualistic religiosity and modern aesthetics are mediated through social media performances.

As the venue becomes more crowded in the evenings and weekends, interpersonal dynamics become more visible. Tables of friends interact across spaces, groups of men occasionally gesturing toward another table in greeting, while women exchange compliments on accessories or outfits. Couples and mixed groups navigate intimacy through performative restraint: rather than overt displays of affection, synchronized phone browsing, or mirroring body postures mark subtle social bonding. These behaviors, while seemingly casual, constitute certain relational acts.

More importantly, the venue attracts not only pious bourgeoisie but also secular bourgeoisie as well in of a varying ages, some dressed in the latest fashion trends. This eclectic blend of style and attitude creates a space that feels dynamic in a sense. Groups interact with the venue in different ways: some relax into the cozy corners, sipping on Turkish tea or smoking shisha, eating meals, while others engage in lively debates or discussions. The last but not least, it is also important to mention the venue's ownership as well, as it is closely tied to high-profile political connections, with the owner reportedly having ties to influential figures within Türkiye's ruling circles. This connection and their stance is perhaps reflected in the venue's refusal to use certain brands and products, in line with prevailing political sentiments.

Another venue I visited, located in Florya, Istanbul, one of the oldest and famous one, among the devout bourgeoisie class, stands as a bold, stand-alone establishment, strikingly different from the typical chain restaurants that populate the area as the venue is housed in a building enveloped in rustic red bricks, which, at first glance, seems industrial. As you step in, you're greeted by a space that feels like a cozy hangar. The venue has an 'industrial chic' vibe, with its raw materials, rustic brick walls, and polished floors. The design manages to strike a balance between the sleek, contemporary atmosphere of a high-end restaurant and slightly eclectic charm of a traditional butcher shop. There's something about the mix of modern comfort and old-world sensibility.

In the heart of the venue, several deli vitrines display an impressive array of dairy and meat products, cured sausages, hanging sujuk and artisanal cheeses, which seem to beckon passersby to take a closer look. The venue's design nods to the popularity of places like Nusret, with its emphasis bold presentation, but here there's an effort to remain alcohol-free. Although venue's interior is spacious, the thoughtful division of the dining areas creates a sense of privacy without feeling isolated.

I visited the venue twice, once on Wednesday evening and once in Saturday evening, and the venue was crowded in general sense, and I observed male groups, female groups, families, couples and tourists were coming in and out. I once more grasp the chance to look over the menu, which is mainly focused on meat and its diverse variants. Moreover, the venue's ownership is also closely tied to high-profile political connections, with the owner reportedly having ties to influential figures within Türkiye's ruling circles as well just like the previous one.

The above-mentioned vignettes illustrate typical days at one of the few significant and most established restaurant/lounge/café that serve the mainly the devout bourgeoisie and also secular one as well, and these establishments function as a laboratory that exemplifies various evolving characteristics of conspicuous and secular leisure and consumption cultures of the devout bourgeoisie class. Through the process of observation, I have been to a total of 11 different venues in Istanbul, 6 different venues in Ankara, and 4 different venues in Kayseri¹⁰¹. There are significant commonalities that I have seen in each of these areas, and I am able to elaborate on those connections and snapshots in detail in terms of secularization of this specific class.

First of all, the venues are typically situated in wealthy neighbourhoods in the region, for instance, generally close to the Bosphorus if in Istanbul, or in affluent districts, and when it comes to the décor of these spaces, they often evoke a striking sense of uniformity, almost as if they have been drawn from the same interior design blueprint. It recalls the ambiance of high-end lounges, night-clubs, restaurants/café/bistros. The floors are usually covered with neutral, well-chosen tiles that complement the overall aesthetic. Faux plants and ivy are often used to add a bit of greenery without the need for maintenance. In terms of layout, majority of these establishments (17 out of 21) include a masjid within the building, in order to customers to pray and then continue their leisure

¹⁰¹ Compared to Istanbul and Ankara, Kayseri presented a somewhat different ecology. Leisure and consumption venues were fewer in number and less global in aesthetic and culinary scope. While Istanbul and Ankara venues often emphasized cosmopolitan interiors, international cuisines, and Instagram-driven branding, Kayseri's venues were more explicitly family-oriented, all alcohol-free and have masjids by default, and community-embedded. Moreover, in interviews, respondents from Kayseri articulated stronger communal oversight and a higher sensitivity to reputation. These dynamics created a different affective atmosphere: people were more cautious in their interactions and less likely to "test boundaries" in the way some respondents from Istanbul described. While the same religiosity and secularization was evident, its expression in Kayseri was more tightly regulated and less enabled by cosmopolitan leisure infrastructures.

practices. Overall, the design tends to strike a balance between functionality and luxury, but with a recognizable consistency across different locations.

The menu itself is one of the most essential aspects, and throughout the course of this observation process, I have noticed that the establishments I have visited often provide a wide range of cuisines from all over the world. Italian cuisine, Mexican cuisine, Japanese cuisine, Spanish cuisine, and other cuisines are among the goods that are included, but are not limited to, these categories. A selection of classic Turkish dishes, including '*hünkâr beğendi*', '*pide*', '*çöktürme kebabı*', and '*lahmacun*', are also included on the menu among other dishes. In addition, with regard to the beverages, there are a variety of beverages available, including Turkish tea, herbal tea, juices, smoothies, '*ayran*', hot chocolate, Turkish coffee in a variety of flavours, lemonades, and Italian coffee in a variety of styles, including espresso, latte, cortado, americano, and so on. They also offer cola, however the majority of customers prefer Turkish brands of cola. In addition, despite the fact that none of the businesses that I have visited provide alcoholic beverages, a significant number of them provide mocktails, which are beverages that do not include any alcohol. These mocktails are typically served in attractive cocktail glasses and come in a variety of colours and flavours. It is interesting to note that 3 of the establishments that I have visited offer a distinct non-alcoholic mojito menu as well. When we come to the shisha, I have also seen that majority of the places offer wide selection of shisha flavours.

The clients at these establishments come from a wide variety of backgrounds, mainly pious but also secular bourgeoisie, and I have witnessed girl groups, guy groups, families with children, couples, and mixed groups conversing, mingling and joking with one another. Occasionally, men wear dresses, smart casual dresses and women both veiled and unveiled, wear a broad selection of sophisticated dresses that are paired with jewellery and designer handbags.

When I compare these places with its overall features, I was unable to identify significant distinctions between these establishments and those that serve alcohol in secular leisure settings. They appear to be very identical in almost every other aspect, including the interior design, the services, the menus, and the customers as well. The only difference is that majority of the venues have masjid inside and serve only non-alcoholic

beverages. So, devout members of the bourgeoisie can enjoy secular leisure and consumption practices, enjoy their mocktails, sushi or other cuisines from around the world, listen to a wide variety of western music, mingle with their flirts in the establishments, and take in the view of the Bosphorus from a modern building.

Across these visits, it became evident that the spaces themselves are structured in a way that encourages certain types of relational performances¹⁰². Hierarchies are subtly established, not just through attire or consumption habits, but through spatial arrangements. Regulars are greeted more warmly by staff and sometimes directed to favored tables or VIP sections. There are also visible differences in the degree of social interaction among groups: families tend to be more self-contained, while young adults are visibly networked across tables. In many cases, status is asserted not only through consumption but through association, who one is seen with, where one is seated, and how comfortably one engages with both staff and other patrons.

More importantly, I came to the understanding that these venues not only cater to the devout bourgeoisie, but they also cater to all elements of the upper middle, upper class, regardless of whether they are devout or secular¹⁰³. This is a very important revelation. Because a significant number of young people and members of the secular youth go to those establishments before heading to nightclubs for shisha or to eat there. Furthermore, this is also valid for the devout bourgeoisie as well. In order to make this point clear, what I mean is that members of the pious bourgeoisie also frequent venues

¹⁰² This resonates with Büyükokutan's (2021) findings on how Turkish literary elites construct cultural legitimacy through secular symbolic boundaries. In my case, the devout bourgeoisie similarly reconstructs religiosity through aestheticized forms of distinction, often implicitly contrasting themselves with more rigid or unsophisticated expressions.

¹⁰³ While the devout bourgeoisie once defined themselves through a strong moral opposition to secular elites, framing the latter as Westernized, inauthentic, and ethically compromised, this vertical distinction has softened significantly in the context of embourgeoisement. As their lifestyles increasingly converge with those of the secular bourgeoisie in terms of consumption habits, aesthetic preferences, and leisure practices, overt critique of secularism has largely faded from everyday discourse. However, symbolic boundaries are still occasionally drawn, often in subtler and less moralistic terms. Rather than denouncing secular lifestyles as unethical, many respondents instead framed their own religiosity as "balanced," "moderate," or "grounded," implicitly contrasting themselves with what they perceived as excessive liberalism, individualism, or superficiality in secular spaces. At the same time, a new axis of distinction has become more prominent, within the devout field itself. Several respondents differentiated themselves from what they described as "rigid," or "vulgar" expressions of religiosity, often associated with more traditionalist, lower class, rural devout Muslims. These remarks were rarely hostile, but they reflected a classed and aestheticized logic of differentiation. In this reconfigured landscape, the pursuit of distinction unfolds less through oppositional critique of secularism, and more through nuanced positioning along a spectrum of religious style, taste, and moderation. Thus, symbolic boundaries are now drawn both horizontally within the devout community and residually toward secular others, though in less confrontational and more lifestyle-oriented terms.

like restaurants, cafés, and lounges that provide alcoholic beverages and pork. As a result, members of the devout bourgeoisie not only attend ‘alternative’ places of leisure, but they also frequent secular venues that provide alcoholic drinks and pork. One may wonder why they would choose to eat over one another. In this respect, conservative venues are an option among others or a ‘safe choice’, and more crucially, they are a direct choice for the elderly conservative bourgeoisie and a recreational arena for family gatherings too.

It is also important to note that the aforementioned vignettes and interpretations pertain specifically to the pious bourgeoisie, encompassing the upper middle and upper classes, which is the focus of my study, and these venues, I mentioned about, are predominantly intended for this particular demographic. I wish to emphasize this due to the existence of leisure and consumption venues that predominantly serve the middle or lower middle class of devout and conservative individuals, as the notable differences¹⁰⁴ between these establishments are readily apparent¹⁰⁵. In the venues that are frequented by for middle class and lower middle class conservative and religious people, music is typically absent or, if it is present, it is commonly Turkish art or folklore music; the decor is usually nostalgic; intimacy is usually prohibited and is sometimes even stated on the walls; there are no mocktails or anything that evokes alcohol; the cuisine is typically Turkish; there is no fusion of cuisines from around the world (with the exception of cuisine from the Middle East or cuisine from countries with a Muslim majority); the establishments are primarily located in the conservative district of the city; and some of these establishments are typically closed during Friday praying times.

¹⁰⁴ While my ethnographic focus is on the devout bourgeoisie, these comparative insights are based on my informal experiences, observations and prior familiarity with religious venues catering to lower-income groups, as well as the relevant literatures, but they do not form part of the formal fieldwork conducted for this study. Therefore, these contrasts are offered as tentative and contextual, not definitive generalizations. These groups tend to favor more functional, modest, and price-conscious consumption styles, and often operate in community settings where piety is morally surveilled and less aestheticized. This contrast is not based on systematic fieldwork but serves to highlight the class specificity of the religiosity observed among the bourgeoisie.

¹⁰⁵ While this study focuses on the devout bourgeoisie, it does not assume that other devout social classes, such as the middle or working classes, necessarily maintain a more comprehensive or less performative religiosity. Rather than idealizing these groups, my aim is to highlight how embourgeoisement has given rise to a distinctive, selective and performative form of religiosity that is publicly performed and class-contingent. Existing research, such as Durak’s (2011) study of working-class religiosity, suggests that there are indeed class-based differences in how Islam is practiced and understood. However, such studies remain limited in number.

Overall, it is evident that the devout bourgeoisie exhibit signs of secularization in general and transformation in particular as observed in these locations in terms of their venue selection, the characteristics of the venues, as well as their conspicuous and secular leisure and consumption practices. Hence, Islamic subjectivities, which established their identities as anti-secular and anti-modern in the late 1970s, have become intertwined with conspicuous and secular consumption and leisure culture due to the economic restructuring during the Özal period, and accelerated due to the acquisition of tenders and contracts in the AKP era, resulting in their secularization throughout their embourgeoisement process. This phenomenon is especially apparent among those who have went through this embourgeoisement process, since the middle class or lower middle class adherents still maintain a more restrained and an ‘alternative’ lifestyle.

7.2 Listening Religiosity and Secularization Narratives: Demographics and Insights from the Interviewees

As mentioned in detail in the methodology chapter, religion, as a significant institution, has the potential to be politicized, particularly in contexts where it intersects with issues of power, network, identity, and social structure. In such politicized environments, religious beliefs and rituals can be used to form social and economic networks, influencing individual and collective behavior in complex ways. Given the nuanced role that religion plays in these contexts, a purely quantitative approach in general and surveys in particular may fail to capture the religiosity. Therefore, a qualitative and in-depth interview become essential in order to get reliable data, as it allows for a deeper and comprehensive exploration and snapshot of how individuals perceive and navigate the intersection of religion, religiosity and social identity. Hence, in order to investigate the secularization of the devout bourgeoisie and the relationship between embourgeoisement and secularization more comprehensively, it was necessary to form a rapport and conduct in-depth interviews with respondents. The qualitative data gathered provides valuable insights into the transformation of religiosity in relation to socioeconomic status and the process of secularization as well.

In this part, I will initially discuss the demographics of the respondents, followed by an examination of the consequential dimension of religiosity that is mainly the leisure

and consumption culture and its implications for this specific class, as well as three other dimensions (ritualistic, experiential and theological dimensions) subsequently.

It is important to start with the demographic information of the participants. The interviewees in this study range in age from 21 to 72 years old, providing a diverse cross-section of perspectives from both younger and older generations. The majority of participants are university graduates, with the exception of four middle school graduates and five high school graduates, ensuring that they have a certain level of educational attainment that allows for a nuanced understanding of their social, cultural and economic circumstances. The respondents predominantly reside in affluent neighbourhoods such as Beykoz and Sarıyer, and gated communities, which are indicative of their higher socioeconomic status, and these residential areas further reflect their economic standing and social networks. Additionally, the interviewees are primarily owners, or the spouses and children of owners, of small, medium, and large enterprises (SMLEs). This diverse representation of business owners provides a rich insight into the socioeconomic class of the pious bourgeoisie, reflecting a range of entrepreneurial experiences, from smaller to family-run businesses to more established enterprises. By including individuals from different segments of the business ownership spectrum, the study is able to capture a wide variety of experiences, challenges, and perspectives related to secularization, embourgeoisement, and the intersection of religiosity and socio-economic status.

The interviewees primarily operate within the construction sector, a field that is known being central to the establishment and the institutionalization of the devout bourgeoisie, and a key driver of their economic success. However, their entrepreneurial involvement extends beyond construction, also engaged in industries such as furniture manufacturing, logistics, hospitality, and multi-industry firms. This diverse range of sectors reflects the adaptability and ‘entrepreneurial spirit’ of the devout bourgeoisie, as they navigate both traditional industries and newer profitable markets.

7.2.1 Comfort, Elegance, Modernity, and World Cuisine: The Remnants of Post-secularism

In this study, as discussed in fifth chapter in detail, the respondents were asked about the consequential dimension, which explores how their beliefs and practices manifest in daily life and behaviour. In this section, as I mentioned above, I will first start with the consequential dimension of religiosity, and assess religiosity and secularization of this class.

It is argued that religion greatly influences individuals' attitudes and actions about material things, consumption and services (Fam et al., 2004), as religious self-identity affects behavior, shaped by the role expectations dictated by religion¹⁰⁶ (Vitell et al., 2005). Religion and religiosity also substantially impact the formation of attitudes (Hirschman, 1981), value judgments (Keng & Yang, 1993), and are intricately linked to the incentives driving consumer behaviour (Hirschman, 1983). Thus, in order to understand the dynamics of secularization within the pious bourgeoisie, it is crucial to examine the social habits, practices and decision-making criteria they apply when engaging in leisure and consumption activities, whether solo or with family, friends, or in more extensive social settings.

Historically in the Turkish context, the lack of alcohol service at a venue has been regarded as a significant factor for devout and conservative communities in their selection of spaces for socialization and social gatherings. Thus, the consumption of alcohol, or the lack thereof in venues, was (and still is, for mainly middle and lower class pious and conservative people) an important moral rubric, often seen as an indicator of religious propriety, shaping their social interactions and choices. However, I witnessed a noticeable shift when examining the perspectives of the devout bourgeoisie in this study. With the

¹⁰⁶ In the Turkish setting, a negative correlation between Islamic religiosity and materialism has been established, consistent with current literature on this issue. Nonetheless, not all dimensions of Islamic religiosity have a detrimental influence on consumerism (İlter, Bayraktaroglu, İpek, 2017). Moreover, although some argue that the correlation between materialism and religion is ambiguous, Islamic faith underscores the cultivation of ethics and the primacy of elevated ideals, and this contradicts the traits associated with materialism, including envy, lack of generosity, greed, and jealousy (Adib & El-Bassiouny, 2012, cited in İlter, Bayraktaroglu, İpek, 2017). So, religious people would view opulent possessions as a materialistic worldview, so violating divine values. Moreover, in the Quranic verses Al Isra':26-27, Allah admonishes Muslims against prodigal consumption and expenditure, encouraging them to allocate resources in the service of Allah (Shah et al., 2011, cited in İlter, Bayraktaroglu, İpek, 2017).

exception of 12 (out of 33) participants aged 40 and above, the majority of respondents express a marked indifference to whether a venue serves alcohol, as one of the respondents claim that “I don’t care much if someone drinks a glass of wine near me as long as I don’t drink it” (Enes). Similarly another interviewee claimed “I don’t care about this issue as much anymore as I used to. (Ali)” This suggests a transformation in the way these individuals approach leisure spaces and social interactions. Furthermore, especially middle age respondents stated that their views on this matter had evolved over time. Despite previously holding a stricter stance on avoiding establishments that served alcohol, they now assert that the presence of alcohol is no longer a determining factor in their social engagements, provided they themselves are not consuming it. This shift in attitude highlights a significant change in their social habits and reflects broader tendencies of secularization. Thus, this change in behaviour and attitude suggests that the pious bourgeoisie, particularly in the context of leisure activities, are embracing more secular and flexible religious and social norms.

While alcohol was an important consideration, it is not the sole factor in shaping the habits of the devout class. The presence of a masjid at a venue is regarded as another significant criterion for devout individuals as in the past, the availability of a masjid on-site was considered essential for maintaining religious practices¹⁰⁷, that is performing prayers. However, when asked about the importance of a masjid's presence at a venue, 20 out of 33 respondents indicated a notable shift in perspective as well. Although they asserted that they are now largely indifferent to the presence of a masjid within the building, they simultaneously acknowledged that having one on the premises is still considered beneficial for convenience and religious observance. In the absence of a masjid, some expressed possibility to attend a nearby mosque, demonstrating a flexibility in their religious practices that was previously less common. For example, one of the respondents mentioned that “Of course it is better to have masjid inside a venue, but it is not a must, as there are mosques in every corner”(Nisa). This evolution mirrors the

¹⁰⁷ Muslims are obliged to perform salah (prayer) five times a day, at specific times that vary based on the position of the sun. These prayers are considered one of the Five Pillars of Islam, and the time frames for each prayer are generally strict, with prayers requiring performance within a defined window. For instance, the Maghrib prayer occurs just after sunset. Due to the strict timing, having access to a masjid or mosque for devout Muslims is important, as it provides a place to fulfil this religious duty in accordance with Islamic guidelines (Sardar, 2006). Yet, there is also ‘*qada*’ prayer (missed prayer) that is not executed within its designated time frame. It is intended to rectify a missed or improperly executed prayer.

changes seen in their attitudes towards alcohol. What was once a defining requirement for social gatherings has gradually shifted, reflecting broader trends of secularization within this group. This shift is indicative of a broader tendency among the pious bourgeoisie to adapt their religious observances in ways that align with modern and secular values and personal convenience, moving away from strict religious dictates toward a more individualized and pragmatic approach to religious practice.

In addition to the evolving attitudes towards alcohol and the presence of a masjid, another noteworthy shift is observed in the criteria for selecting venues. With the exception of 9 interviewees, none of the respondents highlighted the presence of conservative or devout individuals as a significant factor when choosing a venue or location for social gatherings. One respondent claimed that “As long as it is a ‘*nezih*’ (chaste) one, with its location, cuisine, staff, clients and so on, whether the clients are conservative or devout Muslims do not matter” (Merve). In a similar sense, another respondent claimed that “Regardless of their religious or conservative beliefs, I have no problem with it as long as nice and decent people show there” (Emre). This represents a departure from traditional norms, where the religious composition of a gathering or the venue's clientele would have been an important consideration. Instead, the majority of participants now prioritize factors that align more with secular values.

For example, they emphasize the importance of contemporary and appealing venues that offer a high-quality experience. Among the most valued aspects are a comfortable and elegant venue, secure atmosphere, and a wide variety of cuisines. These elements are seen as integral to the overall socializing or leisure experience, reflecting a shift towards global, cosmopolitan tastes and preferences. The ability to sample foods from different cuisines, combined with an environment that caters to comfort and aesthetic enjoyment, has become more important than the religious or ideological identity of those present. This trend indicates a broader move towards secularization, where the cultural, religious and social values that shape individuals' choices in leisure activities have expanded to include global, inclusive, and eclectic tastes. As a result, the religious or conservative affiliations of fellow patrons are increasingly viewed as irrelevant, replaced instead by a focus on personal comfort, the quality of the dining experience, and the modern amenities that venues provide. This shift suggests that the devout bourgeoisie

are increasingly adopting secularized social practices, where religious considerations take a backseat to lifestyle preferences that reflect broader societal changes.

More importantly, among the young and mostly middle-aged respondents, while justifying these practices, there was a tendency to express a belief that secular and religious practices could coexist together, with not viewing their evolving behaviours as morally wrong. As one of the respondent claimed ‘‘I don't understand why these habits are differentiated so much, can't they go together?’’ (Betül). This more accommodating attitude reflects a pragmatic shift in their worldview, where secularization is seen as compatible with personal faith or moral values. Therefore, this may reflect, and perhaps fit in, the remnants of post-secularism. Post secularism has emerged as a response to the decline of secularism thesis and the assumption that modern societies would inevitably become secular, as secularization theory in general predicted that religion would gradually decline in societies (Habermas, 2008). Post secularism, on the other hand, recognizes that religion is not disappearing as once anticipated; rather, it is reasserting itself in new forms and contexts, particularly within the public and political spheres (Taylor, 2007). In this sense, post secularism acknowledges the persistence, and even resurgence, of religious practices and beliefs in the modern world. In this regard, post secularism does not reject secularism but instead acknowledges that modernity has not led to the complete disappearance of religion (Habermas, 2008). Hence, in contrast to fading away, religion has undergone a transformation, adapting to and reemerging in contemporary societies in different ways (Casanova, 1994), and in political terms, post secularism represents an attempt to find a more balanced way of accommodating religion in a pluralistic society that respects both secular and religious perspectives (Habermas, 2008). In this way, rather than viewing religion and secularism as mutually exclusive, post secularism suggests that they can coexist, influence each other, and even be interdependent (Casanova, 1994). It also advocates for recognizing the pluralistic nature of modern societies, where both secular and religious elements are visible and impactful, stressing the importance of dialogue between religious and secular perspectives, encouraging respectful engagement to address shared social, ethical, and political issues (Habermas, 2008).

Apart from above-mentioned subjects of alcohol, masjid and presence of like-minded people in the venues, when we come to the vacation practices of this class in

general, it becomes evident that across all age groups, there is a clear trend of frequenting luxury and secular restaurants, cafés, and hotels as a mark of social status and a desire for comfort and exclusivity. Moreover, both the younger and older generations engage in international vacations, with summer and winter trips abroad being common. The younger generation typically prefers to travel with friends, seeking a lively experience, while the older generation is more likely to travel with family, often prioritizing relaxation.

When they go vacation, the accommodation preferences¹⁰⁸ of these groups reflect these differences: the younger generation tends to favor hotels that offer some sort of entertainment and modern amenities, while the older generation favors more serene and secluded retreats for privacy, such as villas, where they can enjoy peace and privacy. Interestingly, apart from 16 respondents, none indicated a preference for venues that do not serve alcohol or those that feature gender-segregated pools (such as in Islam-compliant hotels), suggesting a significant secular patterns in their leisure choices. This trend further supports the notion that, in terms of leisure preferences, there is a marked shift away from traditional religious or conservative values toward more secular preferences.

Hence, until the past 10 to 15 years, the devout bourgeoisie adhered to specific rules regarding leisure and consumption, often avoiding alcohol-serving establishments and venues without masjids. These guidelines were rooted in religious and political values, which shaped their social activities. However, recent trends indicate a noticeable shift towards secularization. Many now frequent alcohol-serving venues and visit places that lack religious facilities, reflecting a growing acceptance of secular leisure and consumption practices.

¹⁰⁸ One thinks that conservative or religious people and families prefer to spend their time in conservative hotels (also known as ‘*muhafaazkar oteller*’, ‘*Islami oteller*’, ‘*helal oteller*’) as the primary motivations for individuals choosing halal hotels are the availability of gender-segregated facilities, a family-oriented atmosphere, halal foods and the prohibition of alcohol (Dal & Topay, 2018). Yet, for the class I studied it was not generally the case, and Dal & Topay’s (2018) study also shows that some conservative patrons express dissatisfaction with the gender segregation of amenities, as this division hindered their ability to spend adequate time with their families.

7.2.2 Location, location, location: *The Choice of Secular Neighbourhood*

After talking about the selection criterion for the devout bourgeoisie, analysing the districts or neighbourhoods frequented by them according to their selection habits, is essential for understanding the broader patterns of religiosity and secularization within urban settings. Upon examining the recreational venues frequented by the pious bourgeoisie class, it becomes evident that these spaces are predominantly located in secular neighbourhoods of major urban centres, particularly in Istanbul. Notably, many of these venues are situated in districts such as Sarıyer, Beşiktaş, Beyoğlu, Bakırköy, Üsküdar, and Beykoz, all of which lie in proximity to the iconic Bosphorus Strait and these districts, known for their vibrant urban and night life¹⁰⁹. The location of these recreational venues in such secular districts is particularly significant, as these areas are not only popular for leisure and consumption but also serve as political barometers of the city's secular orientation.

Statistical data further supports this dynamic, as these districts are consistently strongholds for Türkiye's secular party, the Republican People's Party (CHP), with notable voting percentages in recent elections. For example, districts like Sarıyer and Beşiktaş reported support levels of 51.50% and 64.12% for the CHP, while other neighbourhoods like Bakırköy, Üsküdar, and Beykoz show similar tendencies with vote shares of 49.22%, 49.90%, and 45.87%, respectively. These voting patterns reflect the broader ideological landscape of these neighbourhoods, where secular values are deeply ingrained in the cultural fabric. Within these areas, leisure and consumption are also dominated by venues catering to secular lifestyles, such as bars, pubs, nightclubs, and retail establishments.

In addition to the strategic placement of Islam-compliant establishments within secular neighbourhoods, the responses from the interviewees further confirm this trend. When asked about their preferred locations for leisure and social activities, the participants generally identified Beşiktaş, Sarıyer, Üsküdar, and Beykoz as their primary

¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, the spaces where middle-class or lower middle class, devout Muslims choose to socialize, dwell, shop, or dine tend to be positioned in conservative neighbourhoods such as Fatih, Başakşehir, and Zeytinburnu in Istanbul, which are home to large populations of conservative religious individuals, serve as both residential and commercial hubs for them as well.

destinations. These neighbourhoods are not only known for their vibrant social scenes but also serve as hubs for shopping and consumption. Interviewees highlighted their frequent visits to boutiques, high-end stores, and malls situated within these areas, indicating a clear preference for spaces that blend both leisure and retail experiences. Moreover, these neighbourhoods also play a significant role in shaping the daily lives of the interviewees, as they mainly reside in Beykoz, Üsküdar, Bakırköy and Sarıyer. This dual connection to both their living and leisure spaces underscores the importance of these secular districts in their social and economic routines and the fact that they live and spend time in secular neighbourhoods is itself a sign of secularization.

Similar patterns can also be observed in Ankara, the capital of Türkiye as well. Despite the existence of more conservative neighbourhoods in Ankara, the district of Çukurambar¹¹⁰ in Çankaya, where my respondents from Ankara reside, stands out as a prominent area for the devout bourgeoisie. Notably, Çankaya is a politically secular stronghold, having delivered a decisive victory for the secular party CHP, with 65.26% of the vote, while Çukurambar itself inside Çankaya, also mirrored this sentiment with a 61% CHP vote share. In Çukurambar, the pious bourgeoisie dwell and navigate their social lives within a predominantly secular environment, where they engage in shopping and leisure activities in establishments.

7.2.3 Hobbies Without Boundaries: The Secular Turn in Hobby Pursuits

I also inquired about the respondents' hobbies, recognizing that leisure activities, particularly hobbies, play a crucial role in shaping how individuals spend their free time and express their identities, and show signs of secularization for our study. Given the evolving nature of leisure practices, it is reasonable to argue that, since the 1980s, the hobbies of the devout bourgeoisie have undergone a significant transformations. This shift contrasts with the more traditional hobbies of the pious middle or lower middle class, whose leisure pursuits have largely remained influenced by religious and traditional norms. The increasing variety of secular activities that devout bourgeoisie now engage in highlights this change, offering a clear reflection of broader societal trends and the process of secularization.

¹¹⁰ For more information, see Akçaoğlu 2018.

When asked about their hobbies, men from the younger generation mentioned a wide range of activities, many of which reflect a blend of social, cultural, and recreational interests. Common pastimes included going to the movies¹¹¹, attending concerts¹¹², participating in festivals¹¹³, activities that provide both entertainment and social interaction. Sports also featured prominently, with a particular emphasis on fitness and gym activities, suggesting an interest in physical health and self-improvement. Travel¹¹⁴ was another frequent mention, expressing a desire to explore other countries. Beyond these, they also enjoy more social and relaxed activities, such as hanging out with friends and playing traditional tile-based games like ‘okey’ and the classic board game backgammon. Additionally, home-based activities like playing on the PlayStation with friends further demonstrate the importance of both social connections and digital entertainment in their leisure time. When we come to young women, I witnessed a rather restricted leisure time activities, they asserted that they socialize with friends, occasionally convene at home for conversation, go to cinemas, and engage in sports either at home or at the gym.

Middle-aged adults, regardless of gender, exhibited a broader variety of hobbies that reflect a mix of cultural engagement, personal development, and socializing. One of the most common activities across this age group was watching films or series, particularly on Turkish television channels, as well as using subscription-based streaming platforms like Netflix¹¹⁵, which offer a diverse range of content. Moreover, socializing with friends was another key activity, often involving casual meetups or outings. Travel, too, remains a significant interest, preferring to visit other countries. In addition to these more recreational activities, a notable portion of middle-aged respondents also dedicated time to reading, focusing primarily on business, self-development, and occasionally fiction. Finally, while participation in sports remains common, it often centers around

¹¹¹ Diverse selection of both Turkish and foreign-produced films.

¹¹² Primarily the performances of Turkish pop and arabesque singers.

¹¹³ IKSÖ organized fests (film, music, jazz, biennial), Contemporary Istanbul, Alaçatı Ot festivali, Istanbul Kahve Festivali, and so on.

¹¹⁴ Besides going to Saudi Arabia for umrah, they say they've been to Austria, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Egypt, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Lebanon, Maldives (The Maldives), Mauritius, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Netherlands (The Netherlands), Oman, Qatar, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Tanzania, UAE (The UAE), UK (The UK), Ukraine, USA (The USA).

¹¹⁵ They claim that they watch both Turkish and foreign-produced movies and series.

team-based activities, with football (*‘‘haftalık halı saha maçları’’*) standing out as a frequent choice among men, who enjoy playing the sport with their friends.

When we come to the elderly, older women in the study shared that their leisure activities tend to revolve around home-centered experiences and social gatherings. They expressed a preference for spending time in the comfort of their homes, where they enjoy inviting friends over for coffee and casual conversation, a practice that fosters social bonds and a sense of community. Shopping was also a common pastime, not just as a necessity but as a form of enjoyment and self-expression. Cooking, particularly preparing traditional meals, emerged as another key activity, often tied to cultural identity and family traditions. Additionally, older women frequently mentioned watching programs on Turkish television channels, preferring shows that offer a mix of entertainment, drama, and local content. Physical activity, though typically low-impact, plays a role in their routines, with walking being a popular way to stay active. Traveling with their husbands, whether for leisure or family visits, was another significant activity. They also claimed to participate in charitable endeavors, whether through volunteering or supporting community-based initiatives. Above all, spending quality time with family whether through shared meals, outings, or simply being together was consistently identified as one of the most fulfilling aspects of their leisure time. On the other hand, older men in the study highlighted hobbies that were more centered around nature and personal reflection. Gardening emerged as a favorite pastime for them, along with walking and trekking were also mentioned frequently, often as means to maintain physical health and enjoy the outdoors. Traveling was also of interest, though it appeared more often as a means of relaxation or exploration, whether domestically or abroad.

Hence, regarding the hobbies, respondents indicated certain hobbies that might be seen as more transgressive in a religious context. For instance, attending concerts and festivals, activities that often feature music, dancing, and other forms of entertainment, and traveling internationally, participating in digital gaming and so on, were mentioned especially by several younger generation respondents as common leisure pursuits. These activities, while increasingly popular, challenge more conservative interpretations of Islamic teachings, as they are seen by some as straying from traditional religious values. Their engagement in these secular hobbies signals a departure from traditional and religiously-bound leisure pursuits. These activities, often centered around individual

pleasure, entertainment, and global consumer culture, reflect a broader shift toward more secular and globally influenced forms of recreation. The embrace of such pastimes suggests that leisure, once more closely aligned with religious and traditional norms, is increasingly being shaped by the forces of modernity and cultural globalization. The growing acceptance of such secular hobbies among the devout bourgeoisie shows a larger trend of secularization in leisure practices, where personal enjoyment and social trends begin to take precedence over religious constraints.

7.2.4 Conspicuous and Secular Consumption: Evolution of Practices of the Devout Bourgeoisie

After reviewing the selection criterion for leisure, their location, hobbies and socialization, it is now vital to have a look at the issue of consumption. When we come to the consumption culture, I asked questions focusing on various aspects of their shopping behavior, including frequency, location, types of products purchased, and methods of acquisition. A predominant theme that emerged from the interviews was that the participants identified their purchasing habits as being primarily driven by the acquisition of quality and necessary goods. The brands they frequently mentioned were overwhelmingly high-fashion¹¹⁶, reflecting a clear alignment with trends in luxury and status-driven consumption. Similarly, Sandikci and Ger's (2010) research demonstrates that urban Turkish covered women possess wardrobes filled with brand-name handbags and shoes, providing empirical evidence that the emerging elite may be personifying a 'Western lifestyle myth' which reflects an idealized Turkish viewpoint on 'middle class consumption in the West' to substantiate their newly attained status (Üstüner & Holt, 2010, 52, Cited in Yeniaras). Moreover, the rule of AKP, deeply rooted in consumer culture, is reinforced by the ex-periphery and the authority it bestows upon the emerging economic elite, thereby de-stigmatizing consumption among the religious new elite through the political power (Yeniaras 2016).

When asked about their shopping frequency, the respondents reported shopping on a daily, weekly or biweekly basis, making purchases that aligned with personal needs. Moreover, while they occasionally engaged in online grocery shopping, they generally

¹¹⁶ The brands mentioned are as follows Berluti, Boss, Brioni, Burberry, Chanel, Dior, Gucci, Hermès, Loro Piana, Louis Vuitton, Louboutin, Moncler, Polo Ralph Lauren, Prada, Vakko, Zegna

prefer certain high-end shopping centres but those centres also sell alcohol and pork, showing indifference towards the availability of these products in the shopping venues.

Furthermore, after inquiring about their average monthly expenses, I followed up with a more specific question regarding whether they believed their consumption habits were excessive or ostentatious. Mainly the elderly respondents rejected this idea, maintaining that their purchases were essential and justified by the ‘quality’, ‘aesthetic’ and ‘durability’ of the products. They also framed their material choices as compensatory, rooted in the challenges and deprivations they had endured during the pre-2000 era. For this group, their consumption was not an expression of social position, it is a form of self-justification, marking a kind of hard-won material success in a world that had previously constrained their desires. In addition, they expressed their views passionately, even defensively, arguing that those who accuse them of indulging in luxury or ostentatious consumption misunderstand the situation. According to them, such spending cannot be classified as ‘*israf*’ (waste), and they contended that those who label their expenditures as *israf* are, in fact, trying to impose a restrictive view, suggesting that people should not dress well or live comfortably. As one of the respondent fiercely claimed that ‘‘We have been subjected to ill-treatment for years...They do not want Muslims to live well, dress well, or live in good places, and they try to justify this with waste...I look for bad intentions behind this’’ (Mustafa).

This retrospective of justifying current luxury consumption and leisure patterns, by referring to the deprivations they experienced prior to the 2000s, allows them to present their conspicuous consumption not as excess, but as ‘earned’ and ‘deserved’. This dynamic resembles what has been described in the literature as ‘revenge buying’, where consumption after deprivation carries affective, moral, and political meaning (Lins et al., 2022). It also mirrors global patterns, such as those identified by Sherman (2017), in which affluent individuals morally rationalize their privilege by invoking narratives of responsibility, restraint, and familial care. Moreover, this logic of ‘revenge buying’ bears a striking resemblance to the broader populist narrative promoted by the AKP, in which religious-conservative groups are portrayed as historically victimized and now entitled to material and cultural recognition. As Tokdoğan (2020) argues, after the AKP’s consolidation of power, this sense of victimhood was often supplemented with a symbolic agenda of vengeance and reclamation. The consumption practices of the devout

bourgeoisie, in this light, may be seen as part of a broader cultural-political shift in which material ascent becomes a form of symbolic justice. Thus, among Türkiye's devout bourgeoisie, these rationalizations are further shaped by a political discourse of religious-conservative victimhood, amplified during the AKP era and transformed into a sense of rightful entitlement. Their conspicuous yet morally framed consumption thus reflects both global and localized logics of post-deprivation affluence.

On the other hand, the younger generation offered a more nuanced and rather liberal perspective, and explain the situation by giving examples from their friends. For instance, one responder elucidates how friends rationalize their costly purchases as though they were gifts from others. They attempt to justify it as a present from one individual. Additionally, while they acknowledged that their consumption sometimes exceeds reasonable limits, they expressed a sense of internal conflict. They admitted that they felt overwhelmed by their desires and, at times, were unable to control their impulses. As one of the respondents claimed "of course there are times when I feel renewed in my soul due to the areas, places and positions I find myself ... The important thing is to be aware of this and think about how we can fix it" (Amine). Thus, despite these struggles, they were also searching for a more 'authentic path', striving to find a balance between fulfilling their desires and maintaining control over their impulses, which they attributed to the challenges of dealing with their '*nafs*'¹¹⁷.

I also inquired about their perspective on the criticism aimed at the pious bourgeoisie and their lifestyle of leisure and consumption, as propagated in the media. Answers were similar as above, the middle-aged and older generations tend to be more protective, frequently stressing "whose Islam is it," due to the diverse interpretations of

¹¹⁷ The concept of '*nafs*' (the lower or inner self) emerged frequently in participants' narratives, particularly through the expression "*nefsime yenik düştüm*" ("I succumbed to my desires"), which often marked the beginning of their justification for actions considered religiously transgressive. In Islamic and especially Sufi thought, '*nafs*' is viewed as one of the components of the self, alongside '*kalp*' (heart) and '*ruh*' (spirit), and is associated with material desires, ego, and the disruption of spiritual connection with God (Renard 2009; Shaikh 2009, cited in Gökarısel & Secor 2014). For many devout individuals, referencing *nafs* provides a culturally and theologically grounded way to rationalize morally ambiguous behaviors while maintaining a religious identity. These transgressions are frequently followed by compensatory good deeds—such as charity, *zakat*, or acts of piety—intended to restore moral balance and resist spiritual decline. This process not only mitigates internal conflict or cognitive dissonance but also exemplifies how individuals reconcile the demands of modern secular life with their ongoing commitment to religious values. Rather than abandoning one for the other, they craft a hybrid moral framework that accommodates both religious obligations and secular practices, shedding light on the complex, lived experience of secularization among the devout bourgeoisie.

Islam they assert. A respondent attribute this position to a belief that “...they do not wish for us to thrive” (Zehra). Conversely, the replies of the younger generation tend to be more reticent.

Hence, in examining the consumption culture of the devout bourgeoisie, I identified patterns of consumption and secular practices, which echo Thorstein Veblen’s (1899, 1994) theory of ‘conspicuous consumption’¹¹⁸. In this context, material goods served as primary means for individuals to publicly display their social status, prestige, and distinctiveness.

Thus, the embourgeoisement of the pious bourgeoisie has intensified consumerism, lifestyle-driven identities, and market-based distinction and these materialist orientations are signs of secularization. As market and status logics become dominant, the consequential dimensions of Islam are increasingly bracketed, allowing consumption and mobility to proceed with minimal friction. In this sense, materialization is not a separate phenomenon but one pathway through which secularization manifests, as organizing power over everyday life is weakened and subordinated to class-coded consumerist practices.

Taken together, these overall patterns suggest a significant degree of secularization in their consumption and leisure culture as the focus on high-end brands, and secular hotels, coupled with an uncritical acceptance of secular retail environments, points to a consumption ethos that is less informed by religious, conservative or moral imperatives and more shaped by global consumerist trends and individual desires for social distinction. This shift away from religiously guided or conservative consumption and leisure practices underscores the broader transformation in consumer culture, where aesthetic considerations increasingly supersede ethical or religious concerns.

¹¹⁸ Veblen (1899, 1994) argues that the affluent engage in conspicuous consumption as a means of signaling social status. These behaviors are not driven by utility or need, but by the desire to display wealth and distinguish themselves from lower classes. Status consumption, in this regard, is the motivational mechanism through which individuals endeavor to enhance their social rank by engaging in conspicuous consumption of goods that signify and confer status for both themselves and their significant others (Eastman et al., 1997). Status consumers prioritize products they believe possess status-related attributes and this status consumption theory, known as trickle-down theory, was established by Veblen (1899/1994) and Simmel (1904/1957) and asserts that the wealthy depend on the acquisition of luxury goods and services as financial indicators.

7.2.5 Exploring the Consequential Dimensions of Religiosity Beyond Leisure and Consumption

When addressing the consequential dimension, I also wanted to explore certain views and opinion of the devout bourgeoisie, that are important for understanding religiosity and secularization, excluding leisure and consumption culture. I inquired about certain views such as their view on interactions with the opposite sex, and 17 respondents, mostly male, claimed they do not avoid shaking hands with the opposite sex, while 6 of the respondents admitted to doing so occasionally. Moreover, there was partial support for gender-segregated events, such as weddings, with of 12 the respondents, mostly from the younger generation, expressing opposition to such practices, and 9 of the respondents supporting them fully.

On the issue of music, 22 of the respondents believed that listening to music does not pose a significant problem, though 11 of the respondents expressed a cautious attitude, suggesting that one should be careful in selecting what to listen to. When it comes to financial matters, 23 of the respondents stated that they actively avoid engaging in Riba (usury), while the rest expressed a more flexible attitude toward interest rates but still try to avoid them when possible, and even some of them claiming that they get ratification from an imam they know well.

Furthermore, all of them also shared a common sentiment of happiness, in varying degrees, when they saw others adhering to Islamic teachings, and conversely, sadness when they witnessed actions that went against their religious principles. All of the respondents expressed a sense of sadness, to varying degrees, about the suffering of Muslims around the world. They also reported feeling uneasy when engaging in actions deemed haram, and most of them mentioned that they explain their religious beliefs to non-Muslims, seeking to do good to others and avoid sinful behaviour (*'al-amru bi-l-ma'rūfi wa-n-nahyu 'ani-l-munkari'*). Lastly, when it comes to dietary practices, all participants claimed to eat only halal food, and the majority (except for 6 younger respondents) stated they do not consume alcohol.

Table 7.1: Consequential Dimension of Religiosity Summary - Additional Part

Dimension	Topic	Practice / View / Belief	Response Summary
Consequential	Gender Interaction	Shaking hands with the opposite sex	17 respondents indicated that they do not refrain from shaking hands, 6 of them occasionally avoid it, while the remainder always avoids the gesture.
Consequential	Gender Interaction	Gender-segregated events	9 respondents (mostly elderly) expressed support for gender-segregated gatherings; 12 respondents, (predominantly younger) individuals, expressed opposition to gender-segregated events, while the remainder neither supported nor opposed.
Consequential	Music	Listening to music	22 respondents contended that listening to music does not pose a substantial issue, whereas 11 expressed reservations over the content.
Consequential	Finance	Riba (usury)	23 respondents claimed actively avoiding Riba; rest is more flexible but cautious
Consequential	Moral Sentiment	Happiness at others' adherence to Islam	All participants claimed to feel happy at others' adherence to Islam in varying degrees
Consequential	Moral Sentiment	Sadness at witnessing irreligious actions	All participants claimed to feel sad at witnessing irreligious actions in varying degrees
Consequential	Moral Sentiment	Sadness about suffering of Muslims	All participants claimed to feel sad about suffering of Muslim in varying degrees
Consequential	Moral Sentiment	Discomfort with haram actions	All participants claimed to feel discomfort with haram actions in varying degrees
Consequential	Self-regulation	Seeking to do good to others and avoid sinful behaviour (<i>al-amru bi-l-ma'rūfi</i>)	All participants claimed seeking to do good to others and avoid sinful behaviour

		<i>wa-n-nahyu 'ani-l-munkari</i>	
Consequential	Self-regulation	Explaining beliefs to non-Muslims	24 out of 33 respondents claimed yes in explaining belief to non-Muslims
Consequential	Dietary Practice	Halal food	All participants claimed to eat only halal food ¹¹⁹
Consequential	Dietary Practice	Alcohol	Apart from 6 younger respondents, all claimed to avoid alcohol

Consequently, it becomes apparent that, beyond the adherence to strongly traditional, commonsensical, easy-to-do, and relatively straightforward religious practices, such as consuming halal food, maintaining a general ethical orientation by striving to do good and avoiding sin, all of which can also be observed among secular individuals, there is a noticeable shift in the approach to more contested or sensitive behaviors. Practices such as listening to music, joining mixed-gender events, engaging in financial transactions involving interest (usury), which is widespread in the practical economic life of Türkiye, and interacting with women through gestures like handshaking, once avoided by more devout individuals, are now increasingly normalized and accepted, particularly among the devout bourgeoisie. This emerging pattern, where previously discouraged behaviors are integrated into the daily lives of religiously observant individuals, reflects a significant trend of secularization. It suggests that religious commitment is becoming more individualized and flexible, accommodating the demands of modern life and socioeconomic pragmatism, rather than adhering strictly to doctrinal prescriptions or traditional moral boundaries.

¹¹⁹ It is important to note that in the Turkish context, the relationship between religious identity and everyday practices often reveals complex and sometimes paradoxical patterns. While all of the participants, regardless of their level of personal piety, claimed to consume only halal food and strictly avoid pork, a minority, particularly among younger respondents, admitted to drinking alcohol occasionally. This selective interpretation of religious norms illustrates a compartmentalization of religiosity, where certain practices (e.g., dietary restrictions) are seen as non-negotiable markers of Muslim identity, while others (e.g., alcohol consumption) are rationalized, downplayed, or treated as personal matters. Such distinctions may reflect broader processes of individualization and secularization, as well as the influence of cultural norms and peer environments, particularly in urban and upper class settings.

7.2.6 Embracing Modernity and Piety: Compartmentalized Conservativity and Modern Self-Identification

Along with self-awareness and identification, I also aimed to understand how respondents interpret modernity and whether they see themselves as modern individuals. To explore this, I first asked them to define modernity. Regardless of their age, the respondents characterized it using terms such as ‘renewal,’ ‘forward-thinking,’ ‘development,’ ‘harmony with the era,’ and ‘keeping pace with the times.’ These descriptors suggest that modernity, in their view, is tied to progress, adaptability, and alignment with contemporary changes in society. When I then asked whether they considered themselves modern, again the majority (24 out of 33) responded affirmatively, indicating a clear alignment with these notions of progress and change.

Next, I turned to conservatism, asking how they would define it and respondents described conservatism as an ‘adherence to traditional and religious values’, ‘loyalty to customs and long-established practices’, and ‘resistance to innovation’. When I asked whether they identified as conservative, I observed a notable compartmentalization in their responses, with individuals considering conservatism differently across various issues. Age appeared to play a significant role in shaping these responses as respondents, especially those in older age groups, expressed conservative views on various certain matters, particularly with regard to traditions, family customs, religion, and societal values. People over the age of 30 were more likely to self-identify as conservative, particularly when discussing issues related to tradition, religion, or cultural practices. This group often felt a sense of loyalty to longstanding values, while also recognizing the need for adaptation in some areas. Conversely, individuals under the age of 30, who were more exposed to global influences, predominantly identified as non-conservative, expressing more liberal views on a range of issues. This age and generational based distinction highlights how age and generational factors influence self-identification, with younger individuals more likely to embrace change and innovation, while older generations tend to hold on to established traditions and norms.

7.2.7 Gendered Secularization

I would like to pay attention to another important factor in studying the secularization of the devout bourgeoisie, and that is gender, as it plays a significant role in the devout bourgeoisie's secularization process. Generally, males exhibit a higher degree of secularization than women; however, this does not imply that secularization is non-existent among women as well. Women, regardless of age, are generally more likely than men to socialize less or gather with friends at home rather than engaging in outdoor or public activities, and tend to give themselves to religious activities more. However, there are noticeable generational differences in this tendency as well. Women from older generations are more inclined to stay at home and prioritize domestic leisure activities, such as hosting gatherings or engaging in family-oriented pastimes. In contrast, younger women have shown a greater openness to outdoor socialization and more public forms of leisure, reflecting broader societal shifts and the increasing mobility and independence of younger generations. These gendered differences are crucial when studying secularization, as they reveal how secularization processes unfold differently for men and women. Gender not only shapes the types of leisure activities individuals engage in but also influences how these activities contribute to the broader cultural shifts associated with secularization. This evidence also aligns with the other studies in literature as well which suggest that men tend to be more secular than women, particularly in Western countries where secularization has been most pronounced. This trend is discussed in various studies, including those by Zuckerman (2009), Inglehart & Baker (2000), Bruce (2011), Barrett & Davie (2000), Baker & Ecklund (2016), Cotter et al. (2015) and Pew Research Center, 2018, among others.

7.2.8 Age and Generational Differences in Secularization and Religious Transmission: Contentious Secularization of Devout Families and their Secular Children

Apart from gender as discussed above, in the context of secularization, another important factor are age and generational differences, as they also play a critical role, and in this study, the divide between the religiosity and secularization of the families of the pious bourgeoisie and that of their children is striking. That is, the younger generation within this group demonstrated a marked shift towards secular attitudes than the older

generation. This disparity underscores the evolving nature of religiosity, where younger individuals, despite coming from a devout background, exhibit behaviours and beliefs that reflect broader secular trends in society.

The findings in this study align with theoretical frameworks on secularization in term of age, as various studies suggest that secularization is closely tied to age, with a positive correlation between religiosity and age, meaning that as people grow older, they tend to become more religious (Bengtson & Schaie, 1999; Davie, 2007, Hout & Fischer, 2002; Meyer & de Lint, 2012), and older individuals hold onto traditional religious practices more strongly, while younger distance themselves from such observances.

On this issue, which aims to explore age and generational differences in religious practices and duties, and religious transmission, I first asked whether there had been any noticeable changes in their worship from the past to the present. The majority of the respondents aged between 20 and 30 confirmed that their worship practices had somewhat changed, citing a reduction in the frequency and intensity of their religious duties and attributed this change to a lack of time, often due to the demands of their busy lives, which they felt made it difficult to engage in religious practices as consistently as they once did¹²⁰. Some also mentioned that ‘the current hectic pace of life’ is another obstacle, and some admitted that they sometimes struggle with the influence of their ‘*nafs*’, which can lead to moments of spiritual complacency. As one of the young respondent claimed ‘In the past, when I had more time, I used to perform my religious duties much more strictly, but today this may not be possible, there is always work to be done or to be finished on time. However, I still try to fulfill my religious duties as much as I can’ (Furkan). On the other hand, the majority of the respondents aged 40 and above, largely denied any significant change in their religious practices over time. However, some did reflect on certain periods or minor fluctuations in their youth or in certain life stages when they were less religious, although they were often hesitant to discuss these times in detail.

¹²⁰ Until their university years, youngsters may have experienced direct supervision to ensure compliance with Islamic principles and/or many other factor. Consequently, prior to their university years, they exhibited far greater religiosity than they do presently.

To further explore cross-generational identification, I also asked elderly respondents who has child(ren) whether they had observed any changes in their children's worship practices and the respondents acknowledged that there had indeed been significant changes in their children's religious practices, particularly since their university years. Parents pointed out that their children's commitment to worship seemed to have diminished or shifted as they entered higher education, contrasting sharply with the more religiously devout habits they had during their early childhood years. This change was often attributed to the influence of groups that they are in, peer pressure, exposure to diverse worldviews, or the environment of leisure and university life in general. The respondents expressed a sense of concern or disappointment about this shift as well.

Thus, my case shows a counter-trend on religious transmission theory. The concept of 'religious transmission' elucidates the process by which religious beliefs, practices, and values are conveyed throughout generations, including influences from parents, socialization mechanisms, and cultural continuity (Bengtson & Putney, 2009). It indicates a pronounced inclination for children to embrace the religious ideas and practices of their parents, particularly when families are actively engaged in religious activities (Sherkat, 2001) as families serve as the principal agents of religious socialization, leading children to acquire the religious identities and practices prevalent in their home environment (Fowler, 1981). Thus, in religiously engaged households, children acquire and assimilate these ideas through direct instruction, involvement in rituals, and the comprehensive lifestyle exemplified by their parents (Cohen, 1999).

However, it recognizes that this is not a straightforward and one-to-one correspondence. A multitude of societal and individual variables can influence whether the subsequent generation upholds the same religious practices or beliefs (Stark & Finke, 2000). Autonomy, for example, is a significant reasons for de-transmission, since there is a tendency towards granting children a greater agency and autonomy (Stoltz et al, 2016), and if children are granted the autonomy to determine their own religious beliefs, they may not embrace the same religious behaviours as their parents (Bengtson & Putney, 2009). Additional aspects include the effect of social groups, cultural impact, education, personal experiences, and the intensity of parental religious devotion (Sherkat, 2001).

In the case of devout bourgeoisie families and their children, we observe that religious transmission is weak. The children of these devout parents tend to be more secular, particularly in their younger years. When we come to the reasons, as mentioned above in the literature, the given autonomy cannot be the reason for my case. Because neither the parents nor the children cite autonomy as a factor, and it's intuitive to assume that a pious upbringing would result in religious continuation. Furthermore, research indicates that the intensity of parental religiosity is another important key factor in religious transmission (Bengtson & Putney, 2009; Chaves, 1994; De Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003; Sherkat, 2001; Zuckerman, 2009), in other words, if the religious intensity is low, religious transmission cannot not happen, and if the religious intensity is high, religious transmission may happen. Yet, my case presents a counter-trend, that is children of religious parents tend to be less religious. This suggests that high parental religiosity may actually discourage religious continuity because of certain factor such as familial pressure or others. Hence, this 'de-transmission' in devout bourgeoisie may be explained by other significant external, direct and indirect factors such as social groups, education, and personal experiences, leading them to adopt a more secular worldview than their parents. Thus, while parental religiosity is important, broader social, cultural and educational contexts appear to be more influential in fostering de-transmission and secularization.

7.2.9 Selective and Performative Religiosity: Well-accepted Dimensions and Religious Subjects

Above, I described consequential dimensions of religiosity, focusing on leisure and consumption practices, including self-identification, and certain factors of gender and age, and we see a form of secularization¹²¹ among devout bourgeoisie class, and it is now essential to talk about other three dimensions of religiosity which is more straightforward than the previous one, and provide markedly different outcomes compared to the consequential dimension.

¹²¹ I refer here to a loosening of the Islamic moral constraints that once strongly structured everyday life, particularly in finance, leisure, consumption and gendered interaction. This is to claim that consequential dimension in general has become less binding for this class.

As discussed in fifth chapter, as part of the interview, apart from consequential dimension, participants were also asked questions covering three key dimensions¹²² of religious experience: the ritualistic dimension, which relates to the practices outlined by the Five Pillars of Islam; the experiential dimension, which concerns the individual's personal connection with the divine; and the theological dimension, which addresses the core beliefs of Islam as found in the Quran and Sunnah. In examining responses, I observe that with regard to the three dimensions, ritualistic, experiential, and theological, there is a predominant display of highly committed religiosity, suggesting a deep adherence to the religious tenets and practices of Islam.

If we look at the figures of the all dimensions except consequential one, I asked certain question of how often they do certain Islamic rituals. A majority of the respondents reported performing Salah five times a day, and all male respondents claimed to attend Friday prayers. All participants asserted that they fast throughout the month of Ramadan, whereas responses about fasting outside of Ramadan were varied. Eight respondents reported always fasting outside of Ramadan, whilst three respondents indicated they never fast during this period. Majority of the respondents reported that they always make Dua (supplication), and every participant mentioned that they always reciting 'Bismillah', and nearly all of the respondents noted that they always celebrate the Eid festivals. Furthermore, all of the elderly respondents had undertaken Hajj as part of their religious duty, and all respondents had completed Umrah as well. Lastly, all confirmed that they give Zakat once a year, in addition to engaging in charity works regularly.

Regarding the theological dimension¹²³, I asked whether they have strong knowledge of Quran, Prophet's life and Islamic belief in general, and 22 of the respondents claimed to have a strong knowledge of the Quran, 20 of the respondents claimed to have a strong knowledge of Prophet's life, and 19 of the respondents claimed to have a strong knowledge of Islam in general. Finally, regarding the experiential dimension I inquired if they have a sense of feeling of Allah's presence and whether they

¹²² The first component, the belief dimension, was eliminated as detailed in fifth chapter as respondents are already identified as Muslims.

¹²³ Despite the potential shortcomings of the theological dimension in measuring Islamic religiosity, as elaborated in fifth chapter, I still posed three inquiries pertaining to this dimension and incorporated them into my research.

believe in divine reward and punishment from Allah for their activities. All responders conveyed a perception of Allah's presence and thought they were both rewarded and punished by Allah for their activities.

Table 7.2: Ritualistic Dimension of Religiosity Summary I (n = 33)

Dimension	Religious Practice / Belief	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Ritualistic	Perform Salah	23 respondents	3 respondents	7 respondents	0 respondent	0 respondent
Ritualistic	Fast during Ramadan	33 respondents	0 respondent	0 respondent	0 respondent	0 respondent
Ritualistic	Fast outside of Ramadan	8 respondents	4 respondents	11 respondents	7 respondents	3 respondents
Ritualistic	Make Dua (supplication, except salah)	26 respondents	5 respondent	2 respondents	0 respondent	0 respondent
Ritualistic	Recite 'Bismillah'	33 respondents	0 respondent	0 respondent	0 respondent	0 respondent
Ritualistic	Engage in charity work	33 respondents	0 respondent	0 respondent	0 respondent	0 respondent
Ritualistic	Celebrate Eid	31 respondents	2 respondent	0 respondent	0 respondent	0 respondent

Table 7.3: Ritualistic Dimension of Religiosity Summary II (n = 21)

Dimension	Religious Practice / Belief	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Ritualistic	Attend Friday prayers (Male respondents only)	21 respondents	0 respondent	0 respondent	0 respondent	0 respondent

Table 7.4: Ritualistic Dimension of Religiosity Summary III (n = 33)

Dimension	Religious Practice / Belief	Yes	No
Ritualistic	Performed Hajj	12 respondents	21 respondents
Ritualistic	Performed Umrah	33 respondents	0 respondent
Ritualistic	Give Zakat (annually)	33 respondents	0 respondent

Table 7.5: Theological Dimension of Religiosity Summary (n = 33)

Dimension	Religious Practice - Belief	Yes	Partially	No
Theological	Strong knowledge of Quran,	22 respondents	11 respondents	0 respondent
Theological	Strong knowledge of Prophet's life	20 respondents	13 respondents	0 respondent
Theological	Strong knowledge of Islamic Belief	19 respondents	14 respondents	0 respondent

Table 7.6: Experiential Dimension of Religiosity Summary (n = 33)

Dimension	Religious Practice - Belief	Yes	Partially	No
Experiential	Feel Allah's presence	33 respondents	0 respondent	0 respondent
Experiential	Believe in divine reward	33 respondents	0 respondent	0 respondent
Experiential	Believe in divine punishment	33 respondents	0 respondent	0 respondent

As a result, it becomes evident that the participants demonstrate a notably high level of religiosity, particularly in terms of their active engagement with religious practices and rituals, and theological concepts central to their faith tradition. Their commitment is reflected in consistent participation in religious duties, adherence to doctrinal beliefs, and the integration of spiritual practices into their daily lives. However, when examining the consequential dimension of religiosity, which pertains to how religious beliefs influence behavior in broader social, ethical, and interpersonal domains, a contrasting trend emerges. In this area, participants appear to display a less pronounced religious influence, suggesting that while their ritualistic observance are strong, this does not always translate into outward behaviors or choices in the public and moral spheres in ways typically associated with high religiosity.

Moreover, in fifth chapter, I provided a definition of religion and religiosity within the Islamic framework tailored to this specific research, recognizing that these concepts can be interpreted in various ways. For instance, certain perspectives might consider yoga as a form of religion, and its practice as a religiosity, highlighting the fluidity and diversity of how religious concepts can be understood. However, irrespective of the academic definitions to study religion and religiosity, a critical element of this research lies in how respondents themselves interpret and engage with the concept of religiosity. This distinction is essential because, in practical terms, it is not merely the researcher's

definition that shapes the study but also how individuals understand and identify with religiosity in their own lives. As such, I do not aim to impose a singular definition but rather seeks to capture the nuanced ways in which respondents perceive and practice religiosity. To explore this further, I posed a similar inquiry to the participants, asking them how they interpret religiosity and how it informs their personal identity, which will provide valuable insights into how religiosity is experienced and self-identified across generations and contexts.

Just like their rituals that they claimed to perform as mentioned above, in the Islamic context, they emphasize the ritualistic sides and define religiosity as adhering to the tenets of Islam, which include doing the five daily prayers, fasting during Ramadan, undertaking the pilgrimage to Hajj, and contributing zakat. However, with the exception of the 9 interviewees, none of the participants referenced other significant aspects of Islamic observance, such as avoiding '*israf*', '*tabdhir*' (ostentatious consumption), or other ethical and moral guidelines regarding consumption, finance and so on that may be considered integral to a holistic Islamic lifestyle.

Subsequently, I asked the interviewees whether they identified as religious. The respondents in the younger age group were generally hesitant to classify themselves as religious and some expressed their reluctance on this issue, claiming that it would be unjust to label themselves as such, given their perceived indulgence in worldly desires. When asked about changes in their practice of *Ibaadat* (acts of worship), the younger generation asserted that they engage in less *Ibaadat* than they did in their youth. Thus, this suggests that, while secularization is evident in the younger generation, particularly in their reduced commitment to the comprehensive aspects of Islamic practice, it does not necessarily indicate a complete abandonment of religiosity. On the other hand, the middle-aged group maintained that they continue to practice their *Ibaadat* in similar ways and the interviewees aged 40 and above similarly reported a consistent adherence to their religious duties. The middle-aged and older groups also emphasized their commitment to the core practices of *Ibaadat* and the foundational tenets of Islam, positioning themselves as more steadfast in their religious observance.

All this, that is less religiosity and secularization trends in consequential dimension on the one hand, and high religiosity on the three dimensions and self-

identification as religious according their definition of religiosity on the other hand, indicate a new form of and a narrowing of the definition of religiosity¹²⁴, which focus primarily on the more ritualistic aspects of their faith, this phenomenon is what I term is 'selective and performative'¹²⁵ religiosity,' a form of religiosity where ritualistic, practical, visible and outward expressions, public displays of devotion and frameworks, such as performing religious rituals like the Umrah pilgrimage, regular mosque attendance or attending charities, take on greater significance. Within this mode, religious practices are class-shaped and socially visible, aligning flexibly with the rhythms of daily life and the infrastructures that accompany embourgeoisement. These visible practices simultaneously affirm self-perception as religious while situating piety within broader social and class circuits of recognition, without requiring that all dimensions be fully enacted.

This form of religiosity¹²⁶ that I traced in devout bourgeoisie is 'selective'¹²⁷, because some religious rituals are believed and 'selected' to be more important than the

¹²⁴ This type of religiosity may also resemble Samuli Schielke's (2009) ethnographic work, which explores the complex, ambivalent, fragmented, and contradictory religious lives of young Muslims in a northern Egyptian village during Ramadan. Schielke challenges the prevalent notion of Muslims as consistently pious and disciplined, instead highlighting the everyday moral ambiguities and tensions his interlocutors experience. These young Egyptians frequently grapple with competing desires and obligations, resulting in a fragmented moral self that oscillates between spiritual aspirations and worldly pursuits. He further demonstrates how Muslims interpret and practice their faith in diverse ways, moving beyond monolithic representations of Islamic piety. For Schielke, such ambivalence is not indicative of moral failure, but rather reflects the dynamic, contextual, and situational nature of moral subjectivity in contemporary Muslim societies. While Schielke (2009) interprets these contradictory, and fragmented expressions of religiosity as evidence of how individuals navigate multiple moral registers, I argue that, in the case of Türkiye's devout bourgeoisie, such patterns signify a broader transformation that can be understood as a form of secularization. This class, once characterized by its anti-secular and anti-consumerist ethos, has undergone a marked shift during the process of embourgeoisement. Although ritual observance remains intact, and in some cases even heightened, the ethical and moral dimensions of religiosity are increasingly marginalized. What emerges instead is a mode of religiosity that is selective, instrumental, performative, and often oriented toward social distinction and status. In this context, ambivalence is not merely a lived tension; it is part of a structural process of moral decoupling and differentiation, emblematic of contextual and class-based secularization.

¹²⁵ The term 'performative' in this context does not have negative implications, functioning primarily as a 'signal' rather than an act of ostentation.

¹²⁶ This type of religiosity also resonates with Ammerman's 'lived religion', religion is woven into life, but not always in traditional or institutional ways.

¹²⁷ It is important to acknowledge that all religion entails some degree of selectivity. Believers everywhere navigate competing demands and prioritize certain practices over others (Ammerman 2016; McGuire 2008). Yet, my use of the term selective and performative religiosity does not refer to this universal fact. Thus, unlike the ordinary, ad hoc selectivity that all believers display in navigating daily life, the selective and performative religiosity I describe is historically specific, class inflected mode of selectivity that has emerged among the devout bourgeoisie under conditions of embourgeoisement. This mode is (i) routinized and publicly visible, (ii) embedded in Islamic branded leisure infrastructures, and (iii) oriented toward accruing distinction and respectability. In this sense, selectivity is not simply a by-product of busy lives but a strategic, aestheticized and institutionalized pattern that reorganizes religiosity around a narrow set of

others, and religious commitment is often narrowed to a core set of ritual practices. This selectivity allows for greater flexibility in navigating moral expectations, and reflects a redefinition of what it means to be religious in everyday life. Thus this type of religiosity forms a pragmatic relationship between the subject, religion and religiosity. It also illustrates how religious engagement is increasingly shaped by lifestyle compatibility, infrastructural availability, and class-specific pressures.

It is also ‘performative’¹²⁸, not in the sense of being inauthentic, but in that religious acts often take on a public, expressive, and aestheticized character. These performances of piety are embedded in social spaces where being visibly religious accrues recognition, status, or symbolic capital. In such contexts, religiosity becomes not only a matter of internal belief or coherence, but also a form of performance, calibrated to particular classed settings. This form of religiosity reflects a broader shift in the relationship between the individual, religious practice, and public life, where the external display of devotion takes on increasing significance alongside, and sometimes in place of, comprehensive integration.

ritual markers while downplaying its consequential dimensions. Moreover, this point becomes even more analytically significant in the Islamic context. While all lived religion entails some pragmatic selectivity, Islam is a historically configured as an orthopractic and totalizing tradition in which correct acts, dispositions, and norms are expected to extend across worship, commerce, kinship, comportment, ‘ibādāt and mu‘āmalāt alike (Bowen 2012; Hallaq 2022). Against this backdrop, the form I identify, selective and performative religiosity, is not mere everyday inconsistency but a classed, publicly staged, and market-mediated reorganization of Islamic life that foregrounds visible ritual markers while systematically attenuating the consequential demands in daily conduct.

¹²⁸ One might initially conflate this form of performative religiosity with Saba Mahmood’s (2005) analysis of the women’s mosque movement in Egypt. Yet, this is not precisely the situation in my case. Mahmood critiques secular-liberal assumptions that frame religion primarily as a matter of private belief or internal conviction. Drawing on Aristotelian ethics and Foucault’s notion of subject formation, she argues that religious subjects actively cultivate piety through disciplined bodily and emotional practices, such as prayer, modest dress, and self-restraint. For Mahmood’s interlocutors, piety is not performed for public display but enacted as an ethical practice, wherein ritual is not merely an outward expression of belief but the very condition for its emergence. In contrast, I argue that in the context of Türkiye’s devout bourgeoisie, religious rituals and performances are selective, often instrumental, and shaped by class-based aspirations. While ritual observance remains high, these practices frequently decouple from broader ethical imperatives, reflecting a narrowed and context-dependent form of religiosity that prioritizes visibility over ethical striving. In this regard, it diverges significantly from Mahmood’s ideal-type of embodied piety. Moreover, Mahmood illustrates how religious subjects actively shape their ethical selves through ritual engagement, rather than simply conforming to external religious authority. In this light, the coexistence of high ritual observance with secularized lifestyles may not indicate a decline in religiosity, but rather a reconfiguration of belief within new ethical, social, and economic frameworks, particularly in non-Western contexts. However, while this interpretation complicates linear secularization narratives, it may also risk overlooking how the process of embourgeoisement, with its material, cultural, and ideological transformations, can exert a secularizing influence on both individual subjectivities and broader religious formations, especially within the Muslim and Turkish contexts. Moreover, the religiosity observed here occupies a middle ground, wherein specific religious acts are first ‘selected’ for their social or symbolic value, then imbued with belief, and ultimately enacted in ways that reinforce bourgeois subjectivity and class identity.

Apart from that, this new type of religiosity, also forms a new type of elite religion/religiosity, or elite Islam as well. One may be mixed up with Mardin's (2006) elite Islam that is in contrasts with the traditional or popular Islam practiced by poorer classes, which may emphasize communal religious practices and adherence to orthodox religious principles. Yet, Mardin's theory of '*halk İslamı*' (popular Islam) versus '*seçkinlerin İslamı*' (elite Islam) is not exactly the case here¹²⁹. This class does neither fully embody nor engage in Mardin's elite Islam. It is because of the fact that this class participates in many ritualistic religious, local, and communal practices, placing significant emphasis on collective and religious devotion that is main feature of popular Islam. That's why, I argue that this is a novel manifestation of elite Islam, arising from the previous Islamist middle class that underwent embourgeoisement, so establishing a distinct kind of religiosity as discussed above, carrying mixed features of the two.

7.2.10 The Instrumental and Contextual Secularization

This overall prevailing trend¹³⁰, in one way challenges binary frameworks, and highlighting how Islamic piety, economic aspiration, and modern and secular lifestyles are negotiated in dynamic and sometimes contradictory ways. It can also be classified as a type of secularization in general and secularization of religion, religiosity and the class itself, through transformation on the one hand and differentiation on the other hand.

¹²⁹ Mardin's (2006) argued that different social classes in Türkiye engage with Islam in fundamentally different ways. '*Halk İslamı*' (popular İslam) refers to a type of Islam that is deeply connected with popular culture, often characterized by a focus on local, communal, and ritualistic practices that have evolved over time. This form of Islam is seen as more traditional, conservative, and institutional in its practices, often connected to rural or working-class communities. It places a heavy emphasis on collective religious observance, family traditions, and rituals, such as prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage, without necessarily delving into the deeper philosophical or theological underpinnings of Islam. On the other hand, elite Islam is typically associated with educated, urban elites who are often exposed to modernity, globalization, and intellectual discourse. This form of Islam tends to be theologically sophisticated, rationalist, and individualistic.

¹³⁰ The case of Türkiye's devout bourgeoisie bears significant resemblance to the transformation of American evangelicals in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Much like the Islamic bourgeoisie, evangelicals in the United States were long positioned as culturally subordinate and politically marginal, often associated with rural life, anti-modern values, and lower socio-economic status. However, as they gained economic capital, political influence, and institutional presence, particularly through media, education, and think tanks, they underwent a process of embourgeoisement that reshaped their religious identity. This trajectory often included greater engagement with consumer culture, professionalization, and partial accommodation to liberal-capitalist norms. As scholars like Christian Smith (1998) and James Davison Hunter (1991) have shown, this transformation led to internal tensions between maintaining religious authenticity and adapting to secular modernity.

Nevertheless, this process does not entail the abandonment of religion or religious rituals, akin to Davie's concept¹³¹ of 'believing without belonging'. In 'Believing without Belonging', individuals may possess religious beliefs yet opt not to engage with religious institutions and practices, thus, although personal faith continues to hold significance for many, frequent engagement in religious behaviors has declined. But, in my case, the reverse is true; we observe fervent religious rituals among individuals, however the consequential dimension is predominantly neglected, resulting in a 'selective' and 'performative' kind of religion in many ways.

Moreover, although their religious life becomes differentiated and compartmentalized, faith remains, but no longer fully structures all aspects of life or no longer the organizing principle of all life domains. In other words, they may retain ritualistic practices (e.g., fasting, prayer), but operate in increasingly in selective and ritualistic sense. Yet, this type of secularization cannot also be explained solely by differentiation or transformation lens, as it is part of the story, but insufficient on its own. Additionally, the Turkish context involves political Islam's deep involvement with the state, blurring the line between religion and politics. Hence, it is important to understand what kind of differentiation and transformation is it in this particular context.

For this reason, this trend with strong ritualistic, 'selective' and 'performative' religiosity, and strong traces of class-based secularisms in consequential dimension, points to a process of what I term 'instrumental and contextual secularization', a dynamic in which religiosity is redefined and reconfigured rather than abandoned, and it involves a flexible engagement with religion and its tenets¹³².

¹³¹ Davie's (1994, 2007) concepts of 'Believing without Belonging' and 'Vicarious Religion' provide insight into contemporary religious practice. Believing without Belonging describes a trend where individuals may hold religious beliefs but choose not to participate in formal religious institutions. While personal faith remains important for many, institutional affiliation and regular participation in religious practices have diminished, reflecting a shift towards more individualized forms of belief. Vicarious Religion, on the other hand, refers to a situation where a small group of active religious practitioners, such as churchgoers, maintain religious practices on behalf of a larger group who do not engage in religious activities themselves. This allows religion to continue playing a social and cultural role, even if the majority of people are not actively involved. Both concepts highlight the changing landscape of religion in modern, especially European societies, where belief persists but institutional engagement has declined.

¹³² Certain scholars contend that, due to the religious and conservative policies of the AKP government in Türkiye with its state institutions, it is inappropriate to discuss a secularization process in this context, primarily supposing that all these religious policies and measures are effective in every sphere. However, it is unequivocally erroneous, since surveys indicate that an increasing number of individuals are secularizing in Türkiye, and the former (and current) Islamists are also included into this process. Moreover, in his early 2000s research in Sultanbeyli, Tuğal (2009) defined '*ihtilaflı sekülerleşme*' as the

This process is ‘contextual’, because it emphasizes that secularization is fluid, varying according to context as religious practice and ethical enactment vary across social and situational settings, with individuals adjusting their religiosity based on personal or societal circumstances. The process of secularization¹³³, in this sense, is not a static but dynamic and an ongoing negotiation, where individuals maintain certain religious practices while modifying others. The process is also ‘instrumental’, because participation in visible rituals is often embedded in class logics that confer recognition, legitimacy, or convenience. It posits that secularization transpires through the pragmatic application of religion, rather than as an element of a coherent religious identity. In this framework, secularization is not a simple linear decline of faith, but a reorganization of religious life toward visible, routinized practices and a more flexible engagement with the consequential dimension.

This form of secularization also intersects with the broader notion of post-secularism as discussed above in detail, where religion and secularism are seen as potentially coexisting, influencing each other, and even being interdependent. In a post-secular framework, religion is not understood as a relic of the past or something to be entirely set aside in favor of secularization. Rather, both secular and religious perspectives are acknowledged as having relevance and power in modern societies, often in dialogue with one another. This pluralistic nature of contemporary society allows for both religious and secular elements to coexist, interact, and shape each other, reflecting a more nuanced, complex relationship between the two domains. The coexistence of these elements suggests that the boundaries between the secular and the religious are becoming increasingly porous, with both shaping the moral, cultural, and social fabric of modern life (Habermas, 2008; Taylor, 2007; Beckford, 2003).

Islamization of significant institutions while simultaneously de-Islamization of quotidian life and peripheral institutions. We are presently seeing a same scenario in which several significant governmental bodies are undergoing Islamization and endeavouring to impose Islamic policies, notwithstanding their ineffectiveness. Conversely, we see an increasing secularization among people, even within their own cadre.

¹³³ It is important to clarify that secularization, as used in this study, is not a moral judgment about individuals nor is it equated with materialism or specific lifestyle practices. One may live modestly, avoid alcohol, or be non-materialistic and still be part of a secularizing context if religion’s authority over social and ethical life has narrowed. Likewise, consumerism or affluence are not inherently secularizing; they matter analytically only when they displace or subordinate religious moral constraints. My approach thus examines changes in the scope and structuring power of religion, not the presence or absence of personal virtue.

7.3 *The End of the Alternativity and Its Discourse*

We have seen an evolving attitudes and behaviours, as most importantly visible in consequential dimension in general and the leisure and consumption in particular, which suggest that the pious bourgeoisie are increasingly embracing secular and ‘flexible’ social norms, forming a new form of religiosity and secularization, as witnessed and observed in both interviews and observation.

This marks a significant departure from their previous stance starting from the late 1970s, when the devout class and the newly emerging devout bourgeoisie strongly identified as anti-modern and anti-secular, particularly before or at the beginning of the process of embourgeoisement. At that time, they resisted the forces of secularization, especially in areas like conspicuous consumption and leisure, which they viewed as morally compromising and contrary to their religious and ethical values.

Their resistance to these secularizing trends was rooted in a desire to maintain a distinct and ‘alternative’ religious and social identity and reject the perceived moral decay associated with modern, secular and consumerist lifestyles¹³⁴. Hence, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the newly emerging pious bourgeoisie created their own ‘alternatives of everything’ in most of the sector, positioning themselves in opposition to the secular mainstream bourgeoisie as mentioned in various scholars, particularly Göle and her students. This habitus was rooted in a distinction, where religious practices, cultural expressions, and lifestyles were reimagined as counterpoints to the secular norms that dominated bourgeois society. In this context, ‘alternativity’ flourished as forms of resistance and as expressions of a distinct identity.

¹³⁴ Devout Muslims' lifestyle and ‘alternativity’ are well-documented and in the ‘alternativity literature’, Despite middle class study, Saktanber's research is notable. Saktanber studies a group of devout Muslims called ‘şuurlu Müslüman’ in an Ankara apartment complex to show that the political effort to make Islam a ‘living social practice’ is rooted in a civilizational ambition that differs from the secular paradigm. Saktanber claims that this group's routines resemble urban and secular middle and lower-middle class families in Türkiye, although she points out substantial differences. She believes that the residents' lifestyles and methods try to abandon modern luxuries and question the ethical cost a Muslim must pay to get them. Their lifestyle, including house design, cooking, women's clothing, and guest hospitality, mirrors urban and secular middle and lower-middle class Turkish families. Their volunteer societies and intellectual organization, as shown by conferences, seminars, and charity gatherings, resemble metropolitan elite intellectual life. There are also differences. They watch TV selectively as only watch religious movies at the movies. They holiday at in private areas. Brides can wear white modern wedding dresses if they cover their heads. Weddings, circumcisions, and henna nights seldom include dancing. They celebrate children's birthdays and anniversaries as opportunities to thank Allah rather than just have fun. Thus, they want to protect young and family from the seduction of modern city life (Saktanber, 2005).

However, this stance began to shift after the late 1980s, but dramatically during the era of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and this situation, where Islamic values and capitalist consumerism intersected, has led the devout bourgeoisie to increasingly engage in secular leisure and consumption activities, such as dining out in alcohol serving restaurants, shopping contentiously, and so on, while simultaneously striving to maintain their ambiguous and mostly ritualistic religious identity. The tension between their participation in secular practices and their adherence to ritualistic Islamic principles has resulted in a complex negotiation of identity, where they embrace conspicuous and secular consumerism and leisure for social and personal benefits, while attempting to reconcile these choices with their religious convictions.

Thus, I argue that this dynamic has shifted, and we now observe an abolishment in both ‘alternativity’ that was coined by the scholars, (semi-)hybridity as well as the literature on issue that once characterized these devout bourgeoisie groups as a distinct and alternative category. Instead, many of these alternative practices and ideas have been absorbed into the broader secular bourgeoisie culture, losing their distinctiveness. As a result, what was once a separate and ‘rebellious’ cultural force is increasingly integrated into the secular mainstream, contributing to the consolidation of a more homogenous secular bourgeoisie identity.

7.4 The Path to Secularity and Religiosity in Transition: Exploring the Reasons Behind Devout Bourgeois Religious Disengagement

The secularization theory encompasses two distinct types of claims: descriptive claims and explanatory claims, as outlined in fifth chapter in detail. The descriptive claim posits that religion has either differentiated, diminished, declined or whatever it is within a society. The explanatory claim, on the other hand, focuses on elucidating the underlying causes or factors responsible for this result. Tracing secularization, therefore, involves answering the fundamental question of whether it has occurred, while examining the causes behind this phenomenon requires another deeper understanding of the ‘why’.

In addition to my analysis of secularization’s explanatory claims, I sought to get their perspective on this process as well. Thus, following the elucidation of the discourse surrounding the potential emergence (or absence) of a new form of secularization

concerning this demographic, I inquired how they define secularization and whether they perceive these developments as a manifestation of secularization. If yes, then why this occurred and why they believe these changes have transpired in their social behaviors and attitudes, and if no, then why and how they define this process.

Yet, this element was one of the most problematic sides of the interview procedure, especially with the elder generation. Because, when asked, interviewees exhibit hesitation, cautious, reluctance, and sometimes even defensiveness. The majority appeared either reserved or, at times, bewildered when asked to articulate their thoughts on these questions and changes. They were reluctant to fully engage with the more nuanced aspects of this transformation, possibly due to a lingering sense of discomfort with openly discussing such socially and morally charged topics. This reluctance could also stem from a variety of factors, including a sense of discomfort in discussing deeply ingrained cultural and religious practices that are now being questioned or altered.

These responses are not just signs of discomfort with the topic, but can also provide us with deeper insights. It's noteworthy that reluctance and hesitation to discuss these issues can be just as revealing as explicit statements, offering indirect hints about the internal conflicts and unease they feel about their own secularization. This resistance suggests that secularization, especially for the elderly, is a difficult and ambiguous process. This phenomenon points to a shift that challenges deeply ingrained values and self-perceptions. Hesitation and reticence regarding the causes of secularization reflect, perhaps, an underlying tension between the traditional and religious identity and the new, secular persona they have developed.

The majority of interviewees, when posed with abovementioned questions, typically elucidate the concept of secularization through the lens of 'change,' with some characterizing it as non-religious or in a similar context. Concerning whether they categorize this process as secularization, most respondents affirmed in various ways, recognizing that change is an intrinsic aspect of life, and the majority (22 out of 33) also confirmed that secularization has been increasing in recent years¹³⁵. For example,

¹³⁵ It is important to note that this self-ascription also shows a symbolic marker of upward mobility and economic capital. In this sense, "secularization" was framed not (only) as a 'change' but as a signifier of refinement, cosmopolitanism, or integration into a modern, high-status lifestyle. This suggests that for

activities once frowned upon, such as visiting alcohol-serving establishments, are now commonplace. As one of the respondents claimed “There is no need to even look carefully, everything is out in the open, I mean we see it on the screens, we hear it from around us, we even witness it...This is a very clear situation” (Enes). This acknowledgment denotes both recognition of secularization and an active understanding of its existence and impact.

As one interviewee put it, certain practices once deemed immoral or inappropriate are now seen as normal in current times. This reflects how secularization process with its factors can reshape individual and collective values, especially among the bourgeoisie class. In addition, interviewees often point to other much common factors that they perceive as leading to this process of secularization: Western influence, wealth, social and media networks, technological advancements¹³⁶, generational shifts, cultural assimilation. These factors cannot be neatly separated, as they interact and compound one another, shaping the evolution of religious identity and practice.

The emotional reactions to this understanding differed markedly across the subjects. Individuals, particularly from the younger demographic, had a neutral and straight-path perspective on the changes, whilst older participants seemed more uneasy and critical in their discussions. For the elderly, secularization elicited feelings of loss and unease, indicating a profound emotional connection to the diminishing religious practices within their families. For example, one elderly respondents claimed that “It is a very sad situation, although we have been trying to instill religious and moral teachings for years, unfortunately the situation is going in a different direction. Of course, we are trying to do the best we can” (Hüseyin). Thus, although they recognize the occurrence of secularization, they express a discernible sense of sorrow or dissatisfaction, linking it to a moral deterioration. This disparity in generational responses underscores the intricate nature of secularization, whereas younger individuals perceive it as an unavoidable, older

some, the discourse of secularization functions as a status claim, akin to adopting globally recognized markers of modern identity, rather than simply signaling a decline in religiosity.

¹³⁶ Wealthier individuals are often more exposed to technological and scientific advancements, which can profoundly shape their worldview. As individuals in the bourgeoisie class expose to cutting-edge technology, they tend to prioritize evidence-based reasoning, logic, and material progress over traditional religious beliefs. These advancements, which emphasize empirical data, scientific inquiry, and technological innovation, often conflict with religious interpretations that are rooted in faith-based or supernatural explanations (Kuhn, 1962; Scott, 2007; Toffler, 1970; Berger, 1967; Pinker, 2018; Inglehart, 1997).

individuals frequently regard it as a formidable change that compels them to face a sense of cultural and religious dislocation.

Despite the broadening acceptance of these kinds of practices, some individuals, mainly elderly, still hold onto traditional values and continue to view these behaviours negatively. But overall, this ‘change’ is still not only framed as a generational shift but also linked to the broader expansion of globalized and secular lifestyles, which have become more homogenized in the process.

In addition to the respondents' replies, I will assert some statements regarding the potential reasons of this secularization trend among the devout bourgeoisie, derived from the literature, observations and insights gathered from the interviews.

7.4.1 Embourgeoisement and the Secular Shift: Wealth, Autonomy, and the Decline of Religious Practice

I argue that for this specific class, at the heart of this process of secularization lies embourgeoisement, a socio-economic transition in which individuals or groups move from lower or middle economic strata to the upper middle and upper class. This transition involves not only rising material wealth but also profound changes in lifestyle, values, and cultural practices. For the pious bourgeoisie of Türkiye, this shift from religious conservatism to more secular persona with its values and practices can be understood as both a socioeconomic and cultural transformation.

However, it is crucial to recognize that wealth alone does not automatically lead to secularization. In certain regions of the world, such as parts of the Middle East, substantial economic growth, especially through oil wealth, has not necessarily resulted in a decline in religiosity. In fact, religion remains a central force in both social and political life in these regions¹³⁷ (Arab Monitor, 2023). In other words, this highlights the complexity of the relationship between wealth and secularization as wealth may offer greater material security, opportunities for higher education, and exposure to new cultural

¹³⁷ Researching religiosity in authoritarian states may have flaws in validity and reliability, especially when using a questionnaire, but this is beyond the scope of this thesis.

practices, which might lead to secularization. Yet, wealth alone does not guarantee a shift toward secularism. In many cases, the cultural and political contexts play a decisive role in determining whether economic prosperity will lead to secularization.

That being said, a growing body of evidence suggests that in wealthier societies, people tend to be less religious, mainly in terms of formal religious practices, such as attending religious services (Martin, 2005; Norris & Inglehart, 2004). In other words, religion helps address existential concerns, providing solace in the face of suffering, uncertainty, and mortality. However, when these basic concerns are mitigated by financial security, individuals may feel less need to turn to religion for answers or emotional support (Martin, 2005; Finke & Stark, 2005; Barrett et al., 2001; Bell & Green, 2016; Norris & Inglehart, 2004; Inglehart & Baker, 2000). Thus, wealthier individuals often experience less existential anxiety due to the security that comes with material prosperity. As people accumulate wealth, their basic survival needs are secured, which reduces their reliance on religion as a source of comfort and meaning. This process of secularization reflects a broader shift in values as well, such as individual autonomy.

Hence, wealth often brings greater individual autonomy and personal freedom, which can lead individuals to feel less constrained by the strictures of religion. With greater freedom, individuals may begin to prioritize personal choice and happiness. These values often contrast with the collective responsibilities emphasized in more traditional religious frameworks. This shift in priorities can make individuals less inclined to adhere to religious prescriptions that may require sacrifices or communal duties, especially if those practices seem restrictive or incompatible with their newfound, more comfortable, and individualized lifestyle. This growing sense of entitlement to individual freedom often results in the loosening of religious adherence, as people embrace a more secular or individualized worldview that aligns better with their social and material reality. Over time, this shift can contribute to secularization, especially in wealthier classes, where personal autonomy often takes precedence over communal religious values (Davie, 2007; Tomanlin, 2013; Norris & Inglehart, 2004; Crockett & Voas, 2006; Putnam & Campbell, 2010; Bruce, 2002). Thus, in tandem with increasing wealth, secularization tends to relegate religion to the margins of life. It is therefore crucial to explore the direct and indirect mechanisms by which economic affluence contributes to this shift.

7.4.2 Exposure to Liberal Interpretations of Islam and The Emergence of a New Type of Elite Islam

As wealth increases, so does exposure to different interpretations of Islam. Wealthier individuals often encounter modernist or liberal readings of Islamic teachings that are more compatible with their secular, modern and globalized lifestyles. This shift in religious interpretation aligns with the idea of Islamic modernism, where religious teachings are reinterpreted in ways that harmonize with modern values like individual autonomy, gender equality, and personal freedom (Bayat, 2007; Cole, 2003; Mir-Hosseini, 2000; Ramadan, 2001; Klausen, 2005; Hefner, 2000). As certain elder respondents claim they get ratifications from their 'personal' imams, or sometimes their imams give *cevaz* (permission) on certain critical issues as well. One can inquire about the degree of autonomy possessed by such 'personal' imams about specific issues, which raises another point.

7.4.3 Globalization, Media and Western Influence

Western influence and globalization have played a crucial role in shaping the secularization of wealthier individuals. As globalization spreads, it brings with it Western ideas, values, and cultural norms that often challenge traditional and religious frameworks. Westernization, with its emphasis on secularism, liberalism, and individualism, increasingly becomes more embedded in societies as wealth grows. As individuals become wealthier, they also become more cosmopolitan, interacting with diverse cultures, ideas, and values, particularly those that promote liberal social norms. These values can undermine traditional religious norms, especially when they are seen as incompatible with the new, more affluent and globalized lifestyle (Shannon, 2015; Norris & Inglehart, 2004; Inglehart, 1997).

Moreover, wealthier individuals are often more exposed to international experiences through travel, engagement with global media, and participation in cosmopolitan networks. This exposure to diverse cultures, ideas, and values, many of which are secular and liberal, plays a significant role in their shifting worldviews. As societies become wealthier, they tend to become more integrated into the global economy, which facilitates the exchange of ideas that challenge traditional norms. This constant exposure to new perspectives, especially those rooted in secularism and liberalism,

gradually influences their views on religion, making them more open to questioning traditional beliefs and practices (Shannon, 2015; Milligan, 2009; Martin & Bruce 2003; Inglehart, 2018; Castells 1996; Sassen 1991; Robertson 1991).

As these individuals travel, consume global media, and network with cosmopolitan peers, they are more likely to adopt values that emphasize individualism, personal freedom, and the questioning of authority, values often at odds with traditional religious frameworks. This exposure can lead to a shift in priorities, where material success, personal fulfillment, and global citizenship take precedence over religious devotion. Additionally, the increased accessibility of secular ideas through the internet and social media further accelerates this transformation, allowing individuals to engage with a wide range of perspectives that support secular and liberal worldviews. As a result, wealth, in conjunction with globalization, significantly contributes to the secularization process among this bourgeoisie class.

7.4.4 Consumer Culture and Materialism: Undermining Religious Practices

As wealth increases, consumer culture becomes a dominant force in shaping individual desires and identities, often overshadowing religious values. Materialism, the pursuit of goods, experiences, and status, becomes central to the lives of wealthier individuals, leading them to prioritize immediate gratification over long-term spiritual or communal goals, as seen in interviews with devout bourgeoisie class on their consumption and leisure practices. In a consumer-driven society, the emphasis is placed on the acquisition of material wealth and luxury, which can ultimately make religious practices, especially those requiring sacrifice and asceticism seem less relevant, compared to the comforts and pleasures that wealth can afford. This shift can be particularly evident in societies where religious teachings seem to conflict with the ethos of consumer culture, which often encourages indulgence, individualism, and the pursuit of personal happiness.

As consumer culture is built on the concept of immediate satisfaction, wealth enables individuals to access the pleasures of life more easily, whether through luxury goods, travel or leisure. In this context, secularism aligns more closely with the lifestyles of the affluent. People who are able to fulfil their material desires without the constraints of economic hardship may feel less of a need for spiritual fulfilment or communal

connection that religion traditionally provides. The pursuit of wealth, comfort, and luxury often displaces religious devotion, as individuals increasingly find their sense of purpose and satisfaction in consumption rather than in faith-based practices (Schwartz 2004; Wuthnow 1998; Campbell 1987; Bauman 2007; Baudrillard 1970). In the case of the devout bourgeoisie in Türkiye, this trend is equally valid, as the increasing wealth and globalized consumption patterns reshape their relationship with religion, pushing them toward secularization in line with broader consumption-centred cultural shifts.

7.4.5 The Erosion of Religious Solidarity and Cohesion in Wealthier Classes

In poorer communities, religion often plays a central role in fostering social cohesion and solidarity, and it provides a sense of collective identity and offers practical services, such as communal worship, social aid, and emotional support. Thus, religion becomes a crucial mechanism for social integration and mutual dependence, helping individuals navigate life's challenges. On the other hand, wealth enables individuals to focus more on personal goals and material success, which can reduce the need for the social solidarity that religion traditionally offers. As a result, wealthier individuals may become more individualistic, prioritizing personal achievement over collective religious obligations (Norris & Inglehart 2004; Inglehart & Welzel 2005; Chaves 1994; Davidman 2000).

This example is valid and pronounced in the experiences of former Islamists, devout bourgeoisie class in Türkiye. The older generation, who lived through 'tough times', and times of more religiously defined and Islamicly-aligned political and social structures, may have initially resisted modern and secular influences. However, over time, their anxieties surrounding religious norms and practices have softened as their political power strongly formed. This process suggests a form of adaptation in which the older generation, though perhaps reluctantly, integrates secular elements into their lives. This phenomenon that includes embourgeoisement process is not unique to Türkiye as discussed above, but can be observed in other contexts as well.

Similarly, Tuğal (2009) argues that under the AKP, Islamists have moved from an oppositional, solidaristic, and revolutionary conservatism to a form that is more compatible with capitalist and market economies. This shift allowed them to gain power and integrate into the existing political and economic system, further illustrating the

growing acceptance of secular frameworks within previously more conservative or religiously defined sectors of society. He also add that cultural centres, social circles, mosques, religious communities and private television channels, have inadvertently contributed to diminishing the influence of religion in everyday life, and under AKP leadership, these civil society components have fostered a more pragmatic, nationalist, and logical interpretation of religion in relation to business, personal interests, and the resurgence of the Turkish state. Thus, former Islamists exhibited reduced prayer frequency, refrained from extensive religious discourse, and significantly diminished their utilization of Islamic terminology in everyday interactions. In this process, numerous individuals also acknowledged their uncertainty over the appropriateness of identifying themselves as Islamists, and Tuğal also addresses class disparities among them, stating that middle-class Islamists prayed less frequently than previously, although the Islamist workers mostly maintained their habitual practices.

7.4.6 The Rule of The 'Established' and Adoption of Secular Values in the Elite Class

The role of the 'established' and 'institutionalized' bourgeoisie, that is the secular one, and their role in various areas in Türkiye may also matters as the established wealthier and more cosmopolitan members of society often set trends. If the institutionalized elite class is more secular or liberal, there may be a social pressure to conform to those values that social status has been attributed. People may distance themselves from traditional and religious practices if they associate them with less modern, more 'backward' segments of society. Peer pressure to be seen as sophisticated, educated, and progressive can push individuals further away from traditional religiosity (Geertz 1963; Buaman 2000; Martin 2005; Inglehart 1997). In Türkiye, this trend is evident among the pious bourgeoisie as well, particularly as secular consumption and leisure habits became mainstream starting in the 1980s or even earlier. The secular class, which institutionalized its lifestyle, set a cultural standard that the devout bourgeoisie, especially the younger generation, gradually adopted. As they integrated into this secular social sphere, they began to embrace secular values tied to modern and consumer-driven identities. The result was a shift in both personal and collective identities, with parts of religiosity becoming less central in their lives.

7.4.7 The Causes of Secularization in Relation to Age and Gender

One of the most profound aspects of secularization both around the world, and in the pious bourgeoisie class in Türkiye, is the role of generational shifts and gender. As discussed above, in this class, males and younger members of this class exhibit a higher degree of secularization than women and elderly. It may be because of the persistent societal constraints on women within devout bourgeois communities, and regarding the age, younger members of this class, grow up in a more globalized and materialistic environment, often display significantly less interest in traditional and religious practices. Their upbringing in schools, exposure to international media, and participation in global consumer culture create a worldview that is increasingly skeptical of religious authority and more open to liberal ideologies. Moreover, as younger generations inherit the wealth and social status of their parents, they develop a new relationship with religion, one that is more distant and less rooted in the economic hardship or social pressure that influenced the previous generations. For these younger individuals, religion may no longer provide the same sense of comfort, social coherence, or existential meaning that it did for their parents or grandparents (Crockett & Voas, 2006; Pew Research Center, 2015; Hunter, 2010; Campbell & Tsuria, 2020). This generational shift is particularly striking in societies where traditional religious values were once closely tied to economic necessity or political repression.

Chapter 8: CONCLUSION

This thesis has investigated the secularization of the devout bourgeoisie in Türkiye by examining the transformation of religiosity in the context of neoliberal restructuring, global economic integration, and the entrenchment of clientelist and nepotist networks under the AKP. Focusing on a group that once positioned itself against secularism, modernity, and consumerism in the late 1970s, this study has traced their gradual adoption of hybrid lifestyles and religious practices that align with, rather than resist, the logics of capitalist modernity during their embourgeoisement. Through in-depth interviews and multi-sited non-participant observation, I have demonstrated that the devout bourgeoisie exhibit an a type of secularization and an ambivalent religiosity, strong in ritualistic, experiential, and theological dimensions, yet increasingly attenuated in its ethical dimension and social enactments, particularly in spheres shaped by leisure and consumption.

Rather than approaching this transformation as a case of religious persistence or decline, I argue that it constitutes a distinct form of secularization, what I term instrumental and contextual secularization. It is 'contextual' as it emphasizes that secularization is dynamic and varies according to context, and 'instrumental' as it suggests that secularization occurs through the pragmatic use of religion, rather than as part of a comprehensive and cohesive religious identity.

This form is marked not by the outright decline of religion, but by its recalibration in line with new class positions, cultural aspirations, and political-economic constraints. The religiosity emerging from this process are characterized by selective and performative religiosity: a type of religiosity marked by visible, practical, and public expressions of devotion, including the execution of rituals such as the Umrah pilgrimage, consistent mosque attendance, or involvement in charitable activities. In this concept, individuals select modes of worship that readily correspond with their everyday lives and requirements.

A core analytical claim of this study is that embourgeoisement, the transition into upper-middle and upper class, has reformatted the very contours of what it means to be religious. This reformatting is particularly evident in how religious commitments are

made compatible with modern and secular aspirations, such as entrepreneurial success, global mobility, and cosmopolitan consumer tastes and leisure.

This thesis contributes to ongoing debates in secularization theory by illustrating that secularization, particularly in non-Western and less liberal contexts, cannot be reduced to the binary of belief and non-belief. Instead, it unfolds through the reconfiguration and compartmentalization of religious meaning. In this regard, the case of the Turkish pious bourgeoisie complicates classical accounts that presuppose either religious decline or revitalization. It reveals instead a transformation in the grammar of religiosity, a shift from holistic, oppositional, and politically charged religious identities to fragmented, individualized, and pragmatically navigated religious expressions. Such expressions are often shaped by class mobility, global consumption and leisure practices, and the gendered and generational negotiations of modern piety.

Methodologically, this study has contributed to the field by demonstrating the value of qualitative research, especially observation and in-depth interview in examining secularization, elite settings and sensitive topics, where access, rapport, reflexivity and cultural nuances are essential. Perhaps more importantly, the employment of revised religiosity scales emphasizing the significance of the consequential dimension, particularly vis-a-vis leisure and consumption culture, facilitates the measurement of this dimension in elite religiosity and less liberal contexts. This approach, combined with observations in secularization studies and thick description, enables a more nuanced understanding of the lived, felt, and performed aspects of religion in everyday life.

This research offers a class-specific analysis of religiosity and secularization among Türkiye's devout bourgeoisie during their process of embourgeoisement and it does not claim that selective and performative religiosity or instrumental and contextual secularization are unique to this setting. Rather, the study identifies mechanisms that may emerge in other contexts where embourgeoisement unfolds and religion intersects with market and lifestyle infrastructures. Looking forward, future studies might examine whether similar processes of selective and performative religiosity and instrumental and contextual secularization are observable among bourgeois religious actors in other Muslim-majority contexts, or even in Christian or Jewish-majority contexts as well.

Additionally, the employment of a revised version of the consequential dimension in elite studies and in less liberal settings, along with a closer engagement with intergenerational dynamics and gender could further enrich our understanding of the shifting relationship between faith, identity, and modernity in contexts marked by both economic liberalization and religious conservatism. Finally, exploring elite religiosity and the role of politicized religion in shaping these dynamics would be crucial for comprehending how religion functions as a dimension of power and identity within contemporary societies.



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Appendix A

A.1 LIST OF INFORMANTS

Name	City	Age	Profession	Education
Abdullah	Ankara	58	Business Owner	High School
Adem	Kayseri	62	Business Owner	Middle School
Ali	İstanbul	34	Business Owner	University
Amine	İstanbul	23	Student	University Student
Bekir	İstanbul	56	Business Owner	Middle School
Betül	İstanbul	27	Business Owner	University
Bilal	Ankara	28	Business Owner	University
Büşra	Kayseri	21	Student	University Student
Beyza	Kayseri	29	Housewife	University
Ebrar	İstanbul	38	Housewife	University
Elif	İstanbul	49	Housewife	High School
Emre	İstanbul	35	Business Owner	University
Ebubekir	İstanbul	45	Business Owner	University
Enes	İstanbul	28	Business Owner	University
Fatih	İstanbul	55	Business Owner	University
Feyyaz	Kayseri	37	Business Owner	University
Furkan	İstanbul	33	Business Owner	University
Hatice	İstanbul	53	Business Owner	University
Hilal	Ankara	42	Housewife	University
Hüseyin	İstanbul	68	Business Owner	High School
Mehmet	Ankara	61	Business Owner	Middle School
Merve	İstanbul	44	Business Owner	University
Muhammed	Kayseri	29	Business Owner	University
Murat	İstanbul	41	Business Owner	University
Mustafa	Ankara	72	Business Owner	High school
Nisa	İstanbul	22	Student	University Student
Nur	İstanbul	38	Housewife	Middle School
Reyyan	Kayseri	33	Business Owner	University
Selim	İstanbul	52	Business Owner	University
Şükrü	Ankara	62	Business Owner	University
Taha	Kayseri	22	Student	University Student
Yusuf	İstanbul	54	Business Owner	University
Zehra	Kayseri	57	Housewife	High school

A.2 LIST OF SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Kendinizden bahseder misiniz?
 - a. Nerede doğdunuz?
 - b. Nerede oturuyoruz?
 - c. Kaç yaşındasınız?
 - d. Eğitim durumunuz nedir?
 - e. Mesleğiniz nedir?
 - f. Bu mesleği ne zamandan beri yapıyorsunuz?
 - g. Evli misiniz?
 - h. Çocuğunuz var mı?
2. Sosyalleşmek için neler yaparsınız?
3. Arkadaşlarınızla bir araya gelmek için dışarı çıkar mısınız?
4. Akrabalarınızla bir araya gelmek için dışarı çıkar mısınız? Ya da kendi başınıza?
5. Genellikle sosyalleşmek için dışarı çıktığınız hangi semtleri tercih edersiniz? (İstanbul'da ikamet edenler için)
6. Genellikle sosyalleşmek için dışarı çıktığınız hangi mekanları tercih edersiniz ve nerelere gidersiniz?
7. Sizin için bu mekanlarda nelerin olması veya olmaması önemli?
 - a. (Cevap gelmezse) Alkol servisi edilmemesi sizin için önemli bir kıstas mı?
 - b. (Cevap gelmezse) Mekanda mescit olması sizin için önemli bir kıstas mı?
8. Ne tür mekanları hiçbir şekilde tercih etmezsiniz?
9. Genellikle kimlerle gidersiniz bu mekanlara?
10. Gittiğiniz mekanlarda, ortamı etkileyen özellikler veya insanlar hakkında belirli tercihleriniz var mı?
 - a. Kimlerin olduğu mekanları tercih ediyorsunuz?
 - b. Kimlerin olmadığı mekanları tercih ediyorsunuz?
11. Sizin tercih ettiğiniz mekanlara giden kişileri nasıl tanımlarsınız? Kimler ziyaret ediyor bu mekanları?
12. Bu gittiğiniz mekanların, diğer mekanlardan farklı olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz?
 - a. Evet ise, neden?
 - b. Hayır ise, neden?
13. Bu mekanlara ne sıklıkta gidersiniz?
14. Bu mekanlar için aylık olarak ortalama ne kadar harcama yaparsınız?
15. Bu mekanlara hangi ulaşım aracıyla gidersiniz?
16. Genelde gittiğiniz mekanlarda ne tarz yemekler ve içecekler tercih edersiniz?
17. Yukarıda belirttiğiniz tarz mekanların, ikamet ettiğiniz yerde yeterli sayıda olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz?
18. Geçmişten günümüze sosyalleşme alışkanlıklarınızda/pratiklerinizde veya gittiğiniz mekanlarda bir değişiklik oldu mu?
 - a. Olduysa, nedir?
19. Genellikle giyim ve kozmetik alış veriş için nerelere gidersiniz?
20. Ne sıklıkta alış veriş yaparsınız?
21. Online alış veriş yapar mısınız?
 - a. Hangi platformları tercih edersiniz?
22. Hangi markalara tercih edersiniz?

- a. Bu markaları tercih etmenizin sebebi nedir?
23. Bu tercihlerinize (giyim – kozmetik vb.) nasıl karar veriyorsunuz?
 - a. Nerelerden duyuyorsunuz?
24. Giyim ve kozmetik alışverişine aylık ortalama ne kadar harcama yaparsınız?
25. Gıda alış veriş için nereye gidiyorsunuz?
 - a. Burayı seçmenizin bir nedeni var mı?
26. Sosyal medya kullanıyor musunuz?
 - a. Takip ettiğiniz influecerlar var mı?
 - b. Evet ise, bu kişilerin görüşleri veya tavsiyeleri sizin için ne kadar önemli/değerli?
27. Aile büyükleriniz ve sizin eğlence ve tüketim pratiklerinde farklılıklar olduğunuz düşünüyor musunuz?
 - a. Evet ise, bu farklılıklar nelerdir?
 - b. (Eğer çocuğu varsa) Çocuğunuzun ve sizin eğlence ve tüketim pratiklerinde farklılıklar olduğunuz düşünüyor musunuz? Evet ise, bu farklılıklar nelerdir?
28. Arkadaşlarınızla buluşmak istediğinizde ne sıklıkta evde toplanmayı tercih edersiniz?
29. Evde toplandığınızda neler yaparsınız?
30. Hobileriniz nelerdir?
31. Boş zamanlarınızda nelere yapmaktan hoşlanırsınız?
32. Evde boş zamanlarınızı nasıl değerlendirirsiniz?
33. Tiyatroya gider misiniz?
 - a. Evet ise, ne sıklıkta gidersiniz?
 - b. Hayır ise, neden?
34. Sinemaya ne sıklıkta gidersiniz?
 - a. Hayır ise, neden?
 - b. Evet ise, ne tarz filmlerden hoşlanırsınız?
 - c. Evet ise, en son hangi filme gittiniz?
35. Dizi izler misiniz?
 - a. Ne tarz dizi izlersiniz?
 - b. En son hangi diziyi izlediniz veya izliyorsunuz?
36. Müzik dinleme hakkındaki görüşleriniz nelerdir?
 - a. Müzik dinler misiniz?
 - b. Evet ise, ne tarz müzik dinlerseniz?
37. Konserlere veya festivallere gider misiniz?
 - a. Hayır ise, neden?
 - b. Evet ise, ne tarz festivallere gidersiniz?
 - c. Evet ise, sevdiğimiz sanatçı ve gruplar var mı?
38. Spor müsabakasına gider misiniz?
 - a. Hayır ise, neden?
 - b. Evet ise, ne sıklıkta?
 - c. Evet ise, hangileri?
39. Spor yapar mısınız?
 - a. Hayır ise, neden?
 - b. Evet ise, hangi spor dalları ile ilgileniyorsunuz?
40. Kitap okur musunuz?
 - a. Evet ise, ne sıklıkta kitap okursunuz?
 - b. Evet ise, ne tarz kitap okursunuz?
 - c. Evet, ise hangi yazarların kitaplarını okursunuz?

- d. Evet ise, özellikle takip ettiğiniz bir dergi veya yayın evi var mı?
- e. Evet ise, dini kitap veya dergi okur musunuz?
- 41. Yaz tatili yapar mısınız?
 - a. Hayır ise, neden?
 - b. Evet ise, yaparsanız hangi bölgeye gidersiniz?
 - c. Evet ise, kimlerle gidersiniz (Aile – akraba gibi)?
 - d. Evet ise, tatil yeri veya otel seçerken nelere öncelik verirsiniz?
- 42. Kış tatili yapar mısınız, kayak için mesela?
- 43. Kamp yapar mısınız?
- 44. Yurt dışına seyahat eder misiniz?
 - a. Evet ise, ne sıklıkta?
 - b. Ne amaçlı?
- 45. Genel olarak eğlence ve tüketim alışkanlıklarınızda eskiden yapmadığınız belli sebeplerden ötürü ama artık yaptığınız şeyler var mı?
 - a. Evet ise, nedir bunlar?
 - b. Sizce neden ve ne zaman değişti?
- 46. Modernlik ne demek biraz anlatır mısınız?
 - a. Kendinizi modern olarak tanımlar mısınız?
- 47. Muhafazakar ne demek biraz anlatır mısınız?
 - a. Kendinizi muhafazakar olarak tanımlar mısınız?
- 48. Dindar ne demek biraz anlatır mısınız?
 - a. Kendinizi dindar olarak tanımlar mısınız?
- 49. Sekülerleşme veya dünyevileşme nedir ve nasıl tanımlarsınız?
 - a. Sizce sekülerleşiyor veya dünyevileşiyor muyuz?
 - b. Evet ise, neden?
 - c. Hayır ise, neden?
- 50. Sizce genel olarak muhafazakar - dindar kesimde bir dünyevileşme söz konusu mu?
 - a. Evet ise, neden?
 - b. Hayır ise, neden?
- 51. Geçmişten günümüze gerçekleştirdiğiniz ibadetlerinizde bir değişiklik oldu mu? Bu belli dönemlerde azalma veya artma olarak da düşünebilirsiniz.
 - a. Evet ise, bunun sebebinin ne olduğunu düşünüyorsunuz?
- 52. Çocuğunuzun geçmişten günümüze gerçekleştirdiğiniz ibadetlerinizde bir değişiklik oldu mu? (Çocuğu varsa)
 - a. Evet ise, bunun sebebinin ne olduğunu düşünüyorsunuz?
- 53. Çeşitli medya organlarında dindar – muhafazakar zenginlerin lüks tüketim ve eğlence anlayışlarıyla ilgili eleştirel nitelikte yapılan haberlere oluyor. Yeteri kadar 'İslami' bulunmuyor veya 'İslam'ın belirlediği çerçevenin' dışında olduğu iddia ediliyor. Bu konu hakkındaki düşünceniz nedir?
 - a. Tüketim ve eğlence pratiklerinizde kimi zaman bu belirtilen 'İslam'ın belirlediği çerçevenin' dışında olduğunuzu düşünüyor musunuz?
 - b. Evet ise, böyle durumlarda nasıl hissediyorsunuz?
 - c. Alışverişlerinizin lüks olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz?
 - d. Abartılı olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz?
 - e. Gösterişçi olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz?
- 54. Sizin aktif rol aldığınız, gönüllü veya üyesi olduğunuz bir parti veya topluluk var mı?
 - a. Evet ise, nedir?
 - b. Evet ise, Ne kadar zamandır?

55. Karşı cinsle el sıkışma konusunda nasıl bir tutum sergiliyorsunuz?
56. Etkinliklerin cinsiyetlere göre ayrılması konusundaki görüşleriniz nedir?
57. Faiz konusundaki görüşleriniz nelerdir?
 - a. Faizli işlem yapar mısınız?
58. Başkalarının İslam adına yaptığı iyiliklerden mutlu olur musunuz?
59. Başkalarının İslami değerleri ve ritüelleri uyguladığını veya bunlara bağlı kaldığını gördüğünüzde nasıl hissediyorsunuz?
60. Din dışı veya inançlarınıza aykırı olduğunu düşündüğünüz davranışlara tanık olduğunuzda nasıl hissediyorsunuz?
61. Dünya çapında Müslümanların yaşadığı acıları veya zulümleri duyduğunuzda nasıl hissediyorsunuz?
62. İslam'da haram sayılan davranışlara şahit olduğunuzda neler hissediyorsunuz?
63. Başkalarına iyilik yapma ve günahkar davranışlardan kaçınma konusunda nasıl bir tutum sergiliyorsunuz?
64. Çevrenizdeki Müslüman olmayan kişilere inancınızı açıklama konusunda nasıl bir tutum sergiliyorsunuz?
 - a. Dini öğretileri ve değerleri tavsiye eder misiniz?
65. Yiyeceklerin helal olmasına ne kadar dikkat edersiniz?
66. Alkol tüketir misiniz?
 - a. Evet ise, ne sıklıkla?
67. Namaz kılariken karşılaştığınız herhangi bir zorluk veya engel var mı?
 - a. Varsa, nelerdir?
68. Dini sorumluluklarınızı yerine getirirken karşılaştığınız herhangi bir zorluk veya engel var mı?
 - a. Varsa, nelerdir?
69. Benimsediğiniz inanç ile uyumlu olmayan eylemler gerçekleştirdiğiniz durumlar oluyor mu?
 - a. Evet ise, bu eylemler neler?
 - b. Bu eylemleri yaptığınız zaman ve sonrasında ne hissediyorsunuz?
 - c. İçinizde bir müzakere süreciniz var mı?
 - d. Varsa, bu süreçten biraz bahseder misiniz?

Lütfen aşağıdaki soruları 'her zaman', 'sıklıkla', 'bazen', 'nadiren' veya 'hiçbir zaman' seçeneklerinden biriyle yanıtlayınız.

1. Ne sıklıkla namaz kılarıyorsunuz?
2. Ne sıklıkla cuma namazına gidersiniz? (Yalnızca erkek bireyler için)
3. Ramazan ayında ne sıklıkla oruç tutarsınız?
4. Ramazan ayı dışında ne sıklıkla oruç tutarsınız?
5. Ne sıklıkla Ramazan bayramlarını kurlarsınız?
6. Namaz harici ne sıklıkla dua edersiniz?
7. Ne sıklıkla besmele çekersiniz?
8. Ne sıklıkla hayır işleri yaparsınız?

Lütfen aşağıdaki soruları 'evet' veya 'hayır' seçeneklerinden biriyle yanıtlayınız.

1. Hacca gittiniz mi?
2. Umreye gittiniz mi?
3. Her yıl zekat verir misiniz?

Lütfen aşağıdaki soruları ‘evet’, ‘kısmen’ veya ‘hayır’ seçeneklerinden biriyle yanıtlayınız.

1. Kuran hakkında güçlü bilgi birikimine sahip misiniz?
2. Hz. Muhammed hakkında güçlü bilgi birikimine sahip misiniz?
3. İslam dini hakkında güçlü bilgi birikimine sahip misiniz?
4. Allah’ın varlığını hisseder misiniz?
5. İlahi mükafatlara inanır mısınız?
6. İlahi cezalara inanır mısınız?

