



A Study on Trust in God in Juvenile Delinquents*

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Abstract

Adolescence is a critical stage of life in the triangle of education, family, and peers for young people. During adolescence, young people might need to overcome many hassles and fluctuations. This study aimed to investigate the relationship between the levels of trust in God and some variables such as education levels, mother's literacy, family unity, drug addiction, having a close friend at the correctional facility, repetitive crime, and experience of running away from home in male juvenile delinquents. This study is an associational research and the population of the study was 500 male adolescents who were in the Ankara Sincan Youth Closed Prison and Correctional Center, Turkey. 389 male adolescents were selected from the research population through purposeful sampling as the sample. In this study, the attitudes of the sample were measured by the Scale of the Image of God. The questions were asked in a closed-ended way, and the data was analyzed by using the SPSS software (version 22). T-Test and ANOVA were utilized to compare the means. The data revealed that the levels of the trust in God of the adolescents differed depending on using addictive substances, repetitive crime, criminal peers, and education level. The male adolescents whose close friends were in prison, those who used drugs, those who were involved in repetitive crimes, and those who had a low education level had a lower level of trust in God than others. It has been deduced that the social environment of adolescents can be consequential in the development of religious perceptions, and that negative life experiences, as well as adverse social conditions, inhibit the development of trust in God.

Keywords: Trust in God, Adolescence, Crime, Juvenile Delinquents, Drug Addiction.

Suçla Karışmış Ergenlerde Tanrı'ya Güven Üzerine Bir Çalışma

Öz

Ergenlik dönemi, eğitim, aile ve akran grubu üçgeninde hayatın kritik bir aşamasıdır ve gençlerin bu dönemde birçok zorluk ve çalkantının üstesinden gelmesi gerekebilir. Bu çalışmada da suçla karışmış erkek ergenlerde, Tanrı'ya güven düzeyi ile eğitim düzeyleri,

annenin okuryazarlığı, aile birliği, uyuşturucu bağımlılığı, ceza infaz kurumunda yakın arkadaşı olması, tekrarlayan suçlar ve evden kaçma deneyimi gibi değişkenler arasındaki ilişkinin incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Bu çalışma ilişkisel modelde hazırlanmış bir araştırmadır ve araştırma evrenini Türkiye’de Ankara Sincan Çocuk Kapalı Ceza İnfaz Kurumu ve Eğitim Evi’nde bulunan 500 erkek ergen oluşturmaktadır. Araştırma evreninden amaçlı örnekleme yoluyla 389 erkek ergen örneklem olarak seçilmiştir. Bu çalışmada, örneklemin tutumları Tanrı İmgesi Ölçeği kullanılarak ölçülmüştür. Sorular, kapalı uçlu olarak sorulmuş ve veriler SPSS yazılımı (sürüm 22) kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Ortalamaları karşılaştırmak için t-Testi ve ANOVA kullanılmıştır. Veriler, ergenlerin Tanrı’ya güven puanlarının bağımlılık yapan madde kullanımına, mükerrer suçluluğa, suça karışmış akranları olmasına ve eğitim düzeylerine göre farklılık gösterdiğini ortaya koymuştur. Yakın arkadaşları cezaevinde olan, uyuşturucu kullanmış olan, tekrarlayan suçlara karışan ve eğitim düzeyi düşük olan erkek ergenlerin Tanrı’ya güven düzeyleri diğerlerinden düşük bulunmuştur. Ergenlerin sosyal ortamının dine ilişkin algılarının gelişmesinde etkili olduğu, olumsuz yaşam deneyimlerinin yanı sıra olumsuz sosyal koşulların da Tanrı’ya güven düzeyini etkilediği anlaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tanrıya Güven, Ergenlik, Suç, Çocuk Suçluluğu, Madde Bağımlılığı.

Introduction

Everyone under the age of 18 is defined as a child by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (OHCHR) and the Turkish Penal Code. The concept of juvenile delinquency in this context includes childhood and adolescence.¹ Juvenile delinquency emerges in the adolescence period which is defined as the transition phase in the developmental period of children.² Individuals may be more prone to delinquency in childhood and adolescence when their understanding, capacity to understand the truth, and sense of responsibility have not fully developed.³ While determining the criminal liability of children by the law, the juvenile’s perception level of reality is taken into account. The threshold age at which individuals and juveniles

* We wish to thank Patrick Barfoot for his contributions and suggestions.

¹ Leyla Baysan Arabacı and Gülsenay Taş, “Çocuklarda Suça Sürükleyen Faktörler, Ruhsal Problemler ve Hemşirelik Bakımı,” *Journal of Psychiatric Nursing* 8:2 (2017), pp.110–117; UN “Convention on the Rights of the Child,”

<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc.pdf> (02.12.2020); T.C.K. Kanun No: 5237 Kabul Tarihi: 26/09/2004, Madde 6, b Fıkrası

<https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.5.5237-20040926.pdf> (26.02.2021).

² Terrie E. Moffit, “Adolescence-Limited and Life-Course-Persistent Antisocial Behavior: A Developmental Taxonomy,” *Psychological Review* 100:4 (1993), pp.674-701.

³ Nadir Çeliköz, Zarife Seçer and Tuğba Durak, “Suç İşleyen ve İşlemeyen Çocukların Düşünme Becerileri ve Ahlaki Yargılarının İncelenmesi,” *Selçuk Üniversitesi Ahmet Keleşoğlu Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi* 25 (2008), pp.335-350; Daphna Oyserman and Eli Saltz, “Competence, Delinquency, and Attempts to Attain Possible Selves,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 65:2 (1993), pp.360–374; Daphna Oyserman and Hazel Rose Marcus, “Possible Selves in Balance: Implications for Delinquency,” *Journal of Social Issues* 46:2 (1990), pp.141-157; Daphna Oyserman and Hazel Rose Marcus, “Possible Selves and Delinquency,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 59 (1990), pp.112-125.

gain social rights and responsibilities, such as marriage and voting, also coincides with the age at which they are responsible for the behaviors defined as crime or fault.⁴

According to data of Directorate General of Security between 2003 and 2005, the vast majority of crimes such as theft, extortion, and pickpocketing were committed by juveniles under the age of 18 in Turkey.⁵ The updated TUIK (Turkish Statistical Institute) data revealed that 168,250 juveniles were brought to security units due to involvement in criminal activities in 2019. Since the number of juveniles involved in criminal activities was 134.000 in 2015, the increase in numbers can be easily noticeable. Analyzing the types of crimes committed by children brought to Police Units in 2019 in Turkey, it is seen that the following crimes come into prominence: theft (25.6%), opposition to passport law (8.1%), migrant smuggling (6.9%), and drug offense (4.9%).⁶ Depending on changes in social, political, and living conditions, not only the number of juveniles involved in crime increased but also the type of crimes have diversified.

1. The Relationship between Religious Belief and Delinquency

Many researchers in the field of criminology have tried to find answers to the question of why people commit a crime. Determining the real sources of crime is quite difficult, especially for adolescence criminals. Some studies have found the relationship between juvenile delinquency and variables such as gender, socio-economic status, parental attitudes, family history, fragmented family structure, cultural characteristics, personality traits, physical or psychological health, school environment, academic performance, and criminal peers.⁷

Religious belief has also been considered as a research subject as one of the factors explaining involvement in crime during adolescence. Often, acts that are illegal by law are also prohibited by religions. Hence, it has been

⁴ M. Yasin Aslan, "Çocuk Suçluluğu Hakkında Uluslararası ve Ulusal Hukuk Düzenlemeleri," *Ankara Barosu Dergisi* 66:4 (2008), pp.88-96.

⁵ Bekir Kocadaş, "Düşük Sosyo-Ekonomik Yapı Suç İlişkisi: Malatya'da Çocuk Suçluluğu," *Sosyoloji Araştırmaları Dergisi* 10:1 (2007), pp.157-186.

⁶ TUIK, "Güvenlik Birimine Gelen veya Getirilen Çocuk İstatistikleri, 2015-2019," <https://tuikweb.tuik.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=33632> (01.12.2020).

⁷ June M. Andrew, "Delinquency: Correlating Variables," *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology* 10:2 (1981), pp.136-140; Robert Emery et al., "Delinquent Behavior, Future Divorce, or Nonmarital Childbearing and Externalizing Behavior Among Offspring: A 14-Year Prospective Study," *Journal of Family Psychology* 13:4 (1999), pp.568-579; Melike N. Korkmaz and Gülsen Erden, "Çocukları Suç Davranışına Yönelten Olası Risk Faktörleri," *Türk Psikoloji Yazıları* 13:25 (2010), pp.76-87; Uğur Alacakaptan, *Suçun Unsurları* (Ankara: Sevinç Matbaası, 1975), pp.174.

wondered whether absence of religious belief can cause involvement in crime adolescence. Researchers have questioned the religious world of juvenile delinquents, their attitudes towards religion, and frequency of worship as possible factors to identify a relationship with crime.⁸ Some of the crime theories have even included religion as a factor in explaining criminal behavior.

The first of these crime theories is *the social control theory*, which spotlights why some people do not commit crimes while others commit crimes. The theory assumes that individuals do not commit crimes because of their existing ties, and crime occurs when these bonds are weakened, or when they are not established at all. Travis Hirschi, a pioneer of the theory, divides these bonds into four groups: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief.⁹ Within the framework of this theory, some researches on juvenile delinquency have focused on the crime-preventing effects of family, school, community, and religious ties.¹⁰ Second theory addressing the relationship of religiosity with crime and delinquency is *the social choice theory*. According to the theory, religion affects peer selection. That is, the devout youth choose peers with similar beliefs. With this positive reinforcement, the person does not interfere with criminal events.¹¹ Third theory is *the arousal theory*, a combination of the social theory and biological theory, explains criminal behavior by an individual's demand for neural stimulation. Criminals are allegedly bored individuals. Therefore, they seek risky behaviors to meet the demands of their biological stimulation. However, religion eliminates this need for most individuals.¹²

The hellfire hypothesis, put forward by Travis Hirschi and Rodney Stark, focuses on the direct relationship between crime and religious devotion.¹³ According to theory, involvement in a deviant act is contrarily related to

⁸ Travis Hirschi and Rodney Stark, "Hellfire and Delinquency," *Social Problems* 17: 2 (1969), pp.202-213.

⁹ Travis Hirschi, *Causes of Delinquency* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2002), pp.334

¹⁰ Natasha Madon, "Social Control and Self-Control Theories," in: Scot Wortley (ed.), *The Review of the Roots of Youth Violence: Literature Reviews*, vol.5. chapter 12 (Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2008).

<http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/english/documents/youthandthelaw/rootsofyouthviolence-vol5.pdf> (12.01.2021).

¹¹ Colin J. Baier and Bradley R.E. Wright, "'If You Love Me, Keep My Commandments': A Meta-Analysis of the Effect of Religion on Crime," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 38:1 (2001), pp.3-21.

¹² Baier and Wright, "If You Love Me, Keep," pp.3-21.

¹³ Hirschi and Stark, "Hellfire and Delinquency," pp.202-213.

religiosity and later theory has undergone different revisions.¹⁴ The original hellfire hypothesis assumes that religious education and commitment contribute to the development of moral values, acceptance of conventional authority, and beliefs in supernatural sanctions. Subsequently, people would refrain from forms of unethical conduct because of beliefs and religious attendances. Within the framework of this theory, the study by Hirschi and Starks had examined the relationship between delinquency and religiosity. Contrary to the hellfire hypothesis, they did not find a significant relationship between religious commitment and delinquency among young people.¹⁵ The findings of subsequent studies have found different results from Hirschi and Stark's first study.¹⁶

In addition to the different theoretical approaches, field studies have also yielded different results on the relationship between criminality and religiosity. For example, Kızmaz has classified the relationship between religion and crime into four groups.¹⁷ In the first group, studies determined a positive relationship between religiosity and delinquency. In this context, some researchers revealed that a decrease in religiosity corresponds to a decreasing tendency for delinquent actions.¹⁸ Studies in the second group were the majority that found a negative relationship between religious commitment and crime. Byron R. Johnson et al. evaluated the relationship between religiosity and criminality in his meta-analysis study which analyzed the results of 109 studies published between 1944 and 2007. According to the study, 89% (97/109) of the studies showed an inverse relationship between religious belief and delinquency, whereas only one study showed that religiosity increased delinquent events. In the remaining studies, there was either no relationship between religiosity and delinquency, or the relationship between them was rather complex.¹⁹

¹⁴ John K. Cochran, and Ronald L. Akers. "Beyond Hellfire: An Exploration of the Variable Effects of Religiosity on Adolescent Marijuana and Alcohol Use," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 26:3 (1989), pp.198-225.

¹⁵ Hirschi and Stark, "*Hellfire and Delinquency*," pp.202-213.

¹⁶ Rodney Stark et al., "Religion and Delinquency: The Ecology of a Lost Relationship," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 19 (1982), pp.4-24; Byron R. Johnson et al., "A Systematic Review of Religiosity and Delinquency Literature," *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 16:1 (2000), pp.32-52; Cochran, "Beyond Hellfire," pp.198-225.

¹⁷ Zahir Kızmaz, "Din ve Suçluluk: Suç Teorileri Açısından Kuramsal Bir Yaklaşım," *Fırat Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 15:1 (2005), pp.189-215.

¹⁸ Kızmaz, "Din ve Suçluluk," pp.189-215; Baier and Wright, "If You Love Me, Keep," pp.3-21.

¹⁹ Johnson et al., "A Systematic Review," pp.32-52; Byron R. Johnson, "Suç ve Suçluluğa Çözüm Üretmede Dini Kurumların Rolü," trans. into Turkish by Halide Aslan, in: Peter B. Clarke (ed.), *Din Sosyolojisi Çağdaş Gelişmeler* (Ankara: İmge, 2012), pp.401-424.

Another meta-analysis study was carried out by Colin J. Baier and Bradley R. E. Wright, who analyzed the results of 60 studies conducted between 1969 and 1998. According to their results, religiosity seemed to have a deterrent effect on delinquency. They also found that studies using larger and higher-power data were more likely to find a relationship between decreased delinquency and increased religiosity in comparison to studies with lower representative power.²⁰ The third group of studies found a complex relationship between religiosity and delinquency. The last group of studies revealed that the relationship between religious commitment and criminality varied based on the types of criminality. According to this argument, the relationship between religiosity and criminality should be handled according to the types of delinquency rather than general delinquency. Studies in this direction have revealed that the relationship between religious commitment and delinquency is related to the type of crimes such as drug use.²¹ For example, Thorleif Petterson stated that religiosity is effective on preventing crimes against property rather than violent crimes, and this is why religion is only preventive on certain types of delinquency.²²

Apparently, it is difficult to find an explicit or certain result in the studies focusing on the relationship between criminal tendency and religious belief. When the reason for this uncertainty is examined, some points draw attention.

Firstly, measuring religiosity by the frequency of worship might have caused an error. Delinquents could have many personal reasons for worshipping or for avoiding worship. For example, Maria Dominic ($N=155$) identified four different attitudes towards the church in juvenile delinquents: The gang delinquents who avoided church contact as much as they could, the hedonists who did not go to church because of their parents' negative attitude towards the church, the camouflagers who went to church to hide their crimes and the detesters who have hostile attitudes against the

²⁰ Baier and Wright, "If You Love Me, Keep," pp.3-21.

²¹ William Sims Bainbridge, "The Religious Ecology of Deviance," *American Sociological Review* 54:2 (1989), pp.288-295; Donald J. Shoemaker, *Theories of Delinquency: An Examination of Explanations of Delinquent Behavior* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Bruce A. Chadwick and Brent L. Top, "Religiosity and Delinquency among LDS: Adolescent," *Journal for Scientific the Study of Religion* 32:1 (1993), pp.51-67.

²² Thorleif Petterson, "Religion and Criminality: Structural Relationships Between Church Involvement and Crime Rates in Contemporary Sweden," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30:3 (1991), pp.279-291.

church because of overwhelming family pressure from childhood.²³ Therefore, the frequency of worship may not be a variable that can measure religiosity.

Secondly, adolescents might be changing their behavior to gain social approval from their peers. Therefore, peer pressure may be more effective than other psychological, sociological, and religious factors. Anthony P. S. Guerrero et al. thought that cultural adaptation could significantly change adolescent behavior and they searched risk factors for delinquency among Filipino youth using the Filipino Culture Scale. The data revealed that delinquent behavior was correlated positively with acculturative stress, low cultural identification, and peer influences. They did not find any relationship between delinquent behavior and low level of religiosity in this study.²⁴

Thirdly, it might be inmates' inconsistent religious attitudes about belief and practices. For example, Aphichat Chamratrithirong et al. studied the relationship of intergenerational transmission of family religion and juvenile delinquent behavior among Buddhist people in Thailand. The study revealed that parents' spiritual beliefs have indirect protective effects, but parents' spiritual practices have a direct protective effect from serious delinquency. Similarly, teenagers' spiritual beliefs have an indirect protective effect, but spiritual practices have a direct protective effect on serious delinquency. They found that the spiritual practices have a differential role on teenagers' behaviors.²⁵

Fourthly, it may have gone unnoticed that the family climate supports religious values. It was reported that transmission of religious values from parents may differentiate the tendency towards crime in 7th-12th-grade students ($N = 10.444$) and their families in the United States between 1993 and 1995. The result of the research also showed that there was an inverse relationship between tendencies to commit a crime and family values, as well as the common religious values of the mother and the child.²⁶

²³ Maria Dominic, "Religion and the Juvenile Delinquent," *The American Catholic Sociological Review* 15:3 (1954), pp.256-264.

²⁴Anthony P.S. Guerrero, et al., "Low Cultural Identification, Low Parental Involvement and Adverse Peer Influences as Risk Factors for Delinquent Behavior Among Filipino Youth in Hawaii," *International Journal of Social Psychiatry* 56:4 (2010), pp.371-388.

²⁵Aphichat Chamratrithirong et al., "Intergenerational Transmission of Religious Beliefs and Practices and The Reduction of Adolescent Delinquency in Urban Thailand," *Journal of Adolescence* 36 (2013), pp.79-89.

²⁶ Lisa D. Pearce and Dana L. Haynie, "Intergenerational Religious Dynamics and Adolescent Delinquency," *Social Forces* 82:4 (2004), pp.1553-1572.

Adolescents' religious values may not be understood without collecting information about their families. Firstly, getting to know the religious and social environment of adolescents can provide an accurate understanding of the research findings.

Researchers have tried to clarify the relationship between religiosity and criminality using variables such as types of religiosity, religiosity levels and the levels of religious education in Turkey. They have found that an inconsistency between religious belief and worship among inmates.²⁷ For example, Nimet Ferah's study revealed that 90% of juvenile delinquents believed in God and the afterlife, but they performed salat (7%) rarely. Ferah also drew attention to the low socio-economic level of the families of juvenile delinquents and highlighted causes of delinquency as the migration of families and low school achievement.²⁸ Studies on prisoners indicated that prisoners' religious education levels were low. On the other hand, Özdemir examined the religious education of prisoners and he found that the lack of religious education of the participants was not a variable that could explain their involvement in a crime. According to their study, lack of religious education (18%) was one of the least significant causes of delinquency.²⁹ Therefore, even if the level of religious education is low in adolescents involved in crime, there is no direct relationship between religious education and criminality.

Focusing on the religious attributions, and religious perceptions of inmates³⁰ might be more helpful than focusing on the frequency of worship to understand the religious life of inmates.

2. Trust in God in Adolescence

Despite the fact that individuals' belief in God and the epithets they

²⁷ Zahir Kızmaz, "Din ve Suç: Cezaevindeki Hükümlü Bulunan Bazı Suçluların Dindarlık Durumları," *Sosyal Bilimler Araştırma Dergisi* 8:18 (2010), pp.27-58; Adem Gürler, "Din ve Suç, Uygulamalı Bir Araştırma" (Yayımlanmamış Doktora Tezi, Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi, Isparta, 2010), pp.260; Muhammet Çevik, "Dindarlık Suç İlişkisi: Adıyaman Açık ve Kapalı Ceza İnfaz Kurumları Örneği" (Yayımlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Harran Üniversitesi, Şanlıurfa, 2010), pp.116; Fatma Kenevir, "Kadın Mahkumlarda Suç ve Din Anlayışı" (Yayımlanmamış Doktora Tezi, Ankara Üniversitesi Ankara, 2015), pp.315; Şuayip Özdemir, *Cezaevlerinde Din Eğitimi* (İstanbul: Arı Sanat, 2006), pp.136-149.

²⁸ Nimet Ferah, "Suça Sürüklenen 12-18 Yaşlar Arası Ergenlerde Şiddetin Din Psikolojik Tahlili (Sakarya Örneği)" (Yayımlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Sakarya Üniversitesi, Sakarya, 2013), pp.134.

²⁹ Özdemir, *Cezaevlerinde Din Eğitimi*, p.149.

³⁰ Jang, Sung Joon, Joshua Hays, Byron R. Johnson, Michael Hallett, Grant Duwe. "Four Gods" in Maximum Security Prison: Images of God, Religiousness, and Worldviews Among Inmates," *Review Religion Research* 60 (2018), pp.331-336.

attribute to God are directly related to a specific religion, trusting in God is more related to the ways and conditions of acquiring religious values.³¹ Trust in God is not acquired solely based on religious texts and statements of a particular religion about God. It also changes depending on the person's life experiences.³² Indeed, individuals form an image of God based on what they hear, feel, and learn about God from a very early age. Mental development, social environment and personal experiences are also decisive in creating an image of God.³³ The dominant religious beliefs of the society and religious texts in the social environment may also affect the image of God. The images of God in people's minds may also differ from each other, involving types of images such as protective and caring, forgiving, saving, punishing, and frightening images.³⁴

Early childhood experiences are dealt with to understand the trust relationship between individuals. Development of trust in God is also dependent on childhood experience. The first step of the eight-stage psychosocial development phase of the individual classified by Eric Ericson is also related to trust and insecurity. Meeting the baby's basic needs regularly by the person caring for the baby is the first step of healthy physical and biological development. Individuals who gain a basic sense of trust at an early age are expected to adapt to their environment and develop a sense of "hope" for the future.³⁵ Otherwise, babies who are neglected could not develop the basic sense of trust. According to Ericson, the acquisition of "religious feelings" is also associated with this period, and he had also argued that giving the baby the attention and peace that it needs from the mother will affect the individual's consistency in belief.³⁶

The attachment theory claims that the first attachment relationship established between the baby and the mother forms the basis of relations with others at later years.³⁷ John Bowlby discovered that the relationship

³¹ Mualla Selçuk, "Gençlik Çağı ve İnanç Olgusu: İnanç ve Davranış Bütünlüğü Açısından Bir Deneme," in: Mustafa Köylü (ed.), *Gençlik Dönemi ve Din Eğitimi* (İstanbul: İSAV, 2000), pp.333-358.

³² Özlem Güler, "Tanrı'ya Yönelik Atıflar, Benlik Algısı ve Günahkârlık Duygusu (Yetişkin Örnekleme)" (Basılmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara Üniversitesi, Ankara, 2007), pp.206.

³³ Hüseyin Peker, *Din Psikolojisi* (İstanbul: Çamlıca Yayınları, 2008), p.97; Ana Marie Rizzuto, *Birth of Living God A Psychoanalytic Study* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p.8.

³⁴ Fatma Nur Bedir, "Yetişkinlerin Çocukluk Anılarındaki Tanrı İmgisinin Analizi," *Hitit Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 16:32 (2017), pp.717-740.

³⁵ İbrahim Gürses ve M. Akif Kılavuz, "Erikson'un Psiko-Sosyal Gelişim Dönemleri Teorisi Açısından Kuşaklararası Din Eğitimi ve İletişiminin Önemi," *Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 20:2 (2011), pp.153-166.

³⁶ Gürses ve Kılavuz, "Erikson'un Psiko-Sosyal Gelişim," pp.153-166.

³⁷ Selçuk Budak, *Psikoloji Terimleri Sözlüğü* (Ankara: Bilim ve Sanat, 2000), p.106.

between the mother and the baby was more important than the mother's breast feeding the baby. Bowlby grouped this relationship as secure, anxious, or avoidant.³⁸ In addition to this, Lee A. Kirkpatrick developed the attachment theory to understand individuals' relationships with God. According to this, a person who is securely attached to God can trust in God and rely on support from their faith in difficult times.³⁹ The theory helps to understand the origin of individual differences in trust in God and emotional resilience from person to person. The relationship between attachment style and religious belief have been studied in many ways.⁴⁰ For example, it was found that parents attitudes are responsible for the development of the image of God in young adults ($N=132$) and that the mother's attitude is more effective than the fathers on creating the image of God.⁴¹

One of the most important variables that differentiate image of God is cognitive development. Cognitive developmental theorists claimed that infancy is very important in terms of the development of natural belief ability, but it is also expected that individuals need to reach an adequate cognitive capacity to understand an abstract concept like God. The cognitive development theory has been used for more than three decades in understanding religious development in childhood and adolescence.⁴² In Fowler's seven-stage faith development theory, the second and third stages include adolescence. At the second stage that includes early adolescence (synthetic-conventional faith), in combination with a consistent orientation, knowledge, and values, faith may lay the ground for a perspective identity for the adolescent. In this phase, trust in God may either lead to desperation or increase psychological resilience. In the third stage (individuated-reflective faith), which corresponds to the last phase of adolescence, some physical and moral responsibilities are expected from adolescents by society.⁴³ The adolescents might have to make a choice between the

³⁸John Bowlby, *A Secure Base: Parent-Child Attachment and Healthy Human Development* (1988), pp.21-27

³⁹ Lee A. Kirkpatrick, "An Attachment-Theory Approach to The Psychology of Religion," *International Journal for The Psychology of Religion* 2:1 (1992), pp.3-28; Bowlby, "A Secure Base," p.28.

⁴⁰ Faruk Karaca, *Dini Gelişim Teorileri* (İstanbul: Dem Publisher, 2007), pp.173-180.

⁴¹ Dickie, Jane R. Lindsey V. Ajega, Joy R. Kobylak, Kathryn M. Nixon. "Mother, Father, and Self: Sources of Young Adults God Concepts," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 45:1 (2006), pp.57-71.

⁴² John W. Santrock, *Adolescence* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2007), p.260.

⁴³ James M. Fowler, *Stages of Faith* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publisher, 1995), pp.173-182.

expectations of society and their hopes.⁴⁴

During adolescence, individuals need to overcome many hassles and fluctuations. While adolescents progress towards maturity, they deal with fluctuations in their hormones and problems related to social cohesion. This period is also critical in terms of religious development. Parental and social pressure on an adolescent's identity problems may also lead to weakening or even total loss of religious belief.⁴⁵ Conversely, praying in a difficult situation does not lead to the development of intense religious emotion, because mostly, the religious emotions of a praying person will disappear as soon as the danger fades away. In difficult periods of people's lives, both their desires and their religious consciousness are intense. Some people may turn to religion only in troublesome times. However, not everybody turns to religion under the same challenging conditions. The same difficulties may also drive some individuals away from religion.⁴⁶

Jang et al. had searched different images about God among inmates. They identified four different images which are Authoritative God, Benevolent God, Critical God, and Distant God. They collected data from (N=2249, all-male) inmates at Louisiana State Penitentiary. Images of God of inmates were associated with inmates' worldviews. Authoritative God (31,3%) is more popular than Benevolent God (21%), Critical God (16.5%), and Distant God (24.2%). Consequently, they have found a negative relationship between moral responsibility and Distant God.⁴⁷

In this case, examining trust in God, which is the most important religious value, may make it easier to understand the relationship between criminal behavior and religious values.

3. Research Problem

The focus of this study is to identify the variables that differentiate trust in God among juvenile delinquents at Ankara Sincan Youth Closed Prison and Correctional Center. This study investigates the relationship between the levels of trust in God and male juvenile delinquents' education levels, mother's literacy, family unity, drug addiction, having a close friend at the correctional house, repetitive crime, and experiences of running away from

⁴⁴ Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, pp.173-182.

⁴⁵ W. Gordon Allport, *The Individual and His Religion* (New York: McMillian Publisher, 1960), pp.57-58.

⁴⁶ Allport, *The Individual and His Religion*, p.56.

⁴⁷ Sung Joon Jang, "'Four Gods' in Maximum Security Prison: Images of God, Religiousness, and Worldviews among Inmates," *Review Religion Research* 60: (2018), pp.331-336.

home. In this direction, the hypotheses of the study are listed as follows:

H1. Maternal literacy will change the level of trust in God in participants.

H2. The marital status of the parents will change the level of trust in God in participants.

H3. To have a close friend in prison will change the level of trust in God in participants.

H4. To have experience of substance use or not will change the level of trust in God in participants.

H5. To have experience of running away will change the level of trust in God in participants.

H6. The education level will change the level of trust in God in participants.

H7. Being involved in repetitive criminal acts will change the levels of trust in God in participants.

4. Method

4.1. Sampling

The population of the study was 500 male adolescents who were in the Ankara Sincan Youth Closed Prison and Correctional Center. 389 male adolescents were selected from the research population through purposeful sampling as the sample. Homogeneous sampling was used in the selection of the sample, and voluntary participation was requested from the adolescents. Homogeneous sampling is one of the purposeful sampling types. Homogeneous sampling refers to the selection of a subgroup with similar characteristics concerning the research problem from the population. It is thought that by selecting people with similar social characteristics, the desired information will be obtained regarding the research questions about the target population.⁴⁸

This research is conducted with the permission of the Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee of the Ministry of Justice, the Republic of Turkey, decree no: B.30.0.CTE.0.00.10.203.02/827/155805. All participants were informed about the survey and their consents were taken before the survey application. The research outcome is cross-sectional. It is limited to delinquent boys who were involved in the research from January 2014 to June 2014. Gender was not included as a variable since all participants were male.

⁴⁸ Şener Büyüköztürk et al., *Bilimsel Araştırma Yöntemleri* (Ankara: Pegem Yayınevi, 2009), p.50.

- 15% of the participants were 18 years old, 55% were 17 years old, 21% were 16 years old, and 9% were 15 years old.

- As regards to the education levels, those who had gone to school for at least five years were coded as low level, those who had gone to school for 6-8 years were coded as intermediate level, and those who had gone to school for over 9 years were coded as high level. In this context, 20% ($N=79$) of the participants had low education levels, 47% ($N=181$) of the participants had intermediate education levels, and 33% ($N=129$) of the participants had high education levels.

- The mothers of 64% ($N=250$) of the participants were literate, whereas the mothers of 36% ($N=139$) were illiterate.

- 71% ($N=276$) of the parents of the participants were married or lived together, whilst 29% ($N=113$) of the parents of the participants were divorced or lived separately (apart).

- 63% ($N=247$) of the participants had a close friend in prison. On the other hand, 37% ($N=142$) of them did not have a close friend in prison.

- 53% ($N=206$) of the participants had the experience of running away from home at least once, but 47% ($N=183$) of the participants did not have a similar experience.

- 36% ($N=139$) of the participants had been at a penal institution before. On the contrary, 64% ($N=250$) of the participants did not have such an experience.

- 57% ($N=222$) of the participants had used addictive substances before, whereas 43% ($N=167$) of the participants had never used them.

4.2. Procedure

This study is an associational study as variables that differentiate the mean level of trust in God are examined. An associational study is more than just a description of a situation or event. It is also important to know the relationship networks for an associational study. Researchers can better explore a phenomenon by searching for possible relationships.⁴⁹

During the implementation of the surveys, support was received from the institution's preacher and execution protection officers. The questionnaires were applied to groups of 20 people in sessions. For the illiterate, the questions were read one by one and the answers were marked. Each session lasted half an hour.

⁴⁹ Büyüköztürk, et al., *Bilimsel Araştırma*, p.22.

4.3. Data-Collection Tools

Personal Information Form: Adolescents with a record of criminal behavior who participated in the study were asked to provide information regarding their education levels, mother's literacy, family unity, drug addiction and having a close friend at the correctional facility, previous occurrence of imprisonment and previous experiences of running away from home. Options regarding each of the aforementioned queries were provided, and it was requested to select the appropriate option.

Image of God Scale: Using the Image of God Scale, we tried to measure the mean value of trust in God. This is because trust has a more emotionally overwhelming side compared to acknowledging God's existence. Trust is associated with religious emotion, and this differentiates this study from other studies investigating the relationship between religious belief and delinquency. The scale used in this study is the short form of the scale developed by Yıldız and Arık.⁵⁰ The scale has two dimensions and 10 items. 7 items measure trust in God, and 3 items measure fear of God. Items related to fear of God were inversely scored, and the scale was used in one dimension. The levels that can be taken from the Image of God Scale vary between 10 and 50 points. The scale's Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was 0.83, and Bartlett's test sphericity value was found as $\bar{x} = 324.699$, and $p < 0.01$. Cronbach's alpha = 0.754, kurtosis = 1.393, skewness = 0.880, minimum value = 10 and maximum value = 50.⁵¹

The scale's short form was applied by Hoşrik⁵² to a group with similar characteristics.

4.4. Limitations

Since correction houses exist only for male adolescents in Turkey, this study is limited to male adolescents. The questions asked were allowed by the Ministry of Justice. During the implementation of the questionnaire, the hours chosen would not hinder the functioning of the penal institution. Only a limited number of questions were asked considering the education levels of the participants and the conditions of the institution.

⁵⁰ Mualla Yıldız and Recep Serkan Arık, "Measuring Image of God in Children," *Toplum Bilimleri Dergisi* 8:15 (2014), pp.349-364.

⁵¹ Yıldız and Arık, "Measuring Image of God," pp.349-364.

⁵² Muhammed Evren Hoşrik, "Çocuk Evlerindeki Ergenlerde Gevşeme Tekniği ve EFT'nin Tanrı İmgesi Affetme Eğilimi Öfke ve Kaygı Kontrolü Üzerindeki Rolü" (Yayımlanmamış Doktora Tezi, Ankara Üniversitesi, Ankara, 2017).

5. Findings

The levels of the 389 participants in the study ranged from 14 to 50 points. In the normality test, the mean score was 41.545, and the standard deviation was 5.747. The variables that differentiate the mean of levels of trust in God were as follows:

Table 1: Comparison of trust in God levels with respect to maternal literacy

Mother's literacy	N	\bar{x}	SD	SE	t-test		
					T	Df	P
Literate	250	41.47	5.997	.379	-.317	316.380	.751
Illiterate	139	41.66	5.286	.448			

When the mean value of trust in God was assessed based on whether the mother was literate or not (Table 1), no significant difference was observed ($t=-0.317$; $p>0.05$) between the mean levels of those with literate mothers ($\bar{X}=41.47$) and those with illiterate mothers ($\bar{X}=41.66$) and H_1 was not accepted. Since most participants' mothers had low education levels, and their latest completed educational degree was not known, only whether they were literate was asked instead. Additionally, it was determined that not all literate mothers were primary school graduates, and they learned to read and write through literacy courses given under the National Education system at an advanced age.

Table 2: Comparison of trust in God levels with respect to the marital status of parents

Parents	N	\bar{X}	SD	SE	t-test		
					T	Df	P
Married	276	41.73	5.794	.348	.11.002	213.790	.317
Divorced	113	41.08	5.630	.529			

No significant difference was observed ($t=11.002$; $p>0.05$) between the mean of trust in God levels of the adolescents whose parents were married and together ($\bar{X}=41.73$) and those of the adolescents whose parents were divorced ($\bar{X}=41.08$), and H_2 was not accepted. However, those whose parents were married and living together had a higher mean of trust in God score on average.

Table 3: Comparison of trust in God levels with respect to having a close friend in prison

Have a close friend in prison	N	\bar{X}	SD	SE	<i>t-test</i>		
					T	Df	P
Yes	247	41.23	6.068	.386	-1.491	335.558	.155
No	142	42.09	5.115	.429			

Table 3 compares the mean of trust in God levels of the adolescents with a close friend in prison to those of the adolescents without a close friend in prison. There was no significant difference ($t=-1.491$; $p>0.05$) between the mean score of the group with a close friend in prison ($\bar{X}=41.23$) and that of the group with no close friend in prison ($\bar{X}=42.09$). H_3 was not accepted, but those whose close friend was in prison had a lower mean of trust in God score on average.

Table 4: Comparison of trust in God levels with respect to addictive substance use

Addictive substance use	N	\bar{X}	SD	SE	<i>t-test</i>		
					T	Df	P
Yes	222	41.00	5.761	.386	2.148	360.760	.032*
No	167	42.26	5.665	.438			

* $p<0.05$

Another test was conducted to compare the mean of trust in God levels of the adolescents based on whether they used addictive substances or not (Table 4). There was a significant difference between the two groups ($p<0.05$). The mean of trust in God levels of the adolescents who used addictive substances ($\bar{X}=41.00$) were significantly lower than those who did not use addictive substances ($\bar{X}=42.26$). Those who did not use addictive drugs had a higher mean of trust in God, and H_4 was accepted.

Table 5: Comparison of trust in God levels with respect to running away from home

Running away from home	N	\bar{X}	SD	SE	t-test		
					T	Df	P
Yes	206	41.33	5.693	.396	-.764	379.609	.445
No	183	41.78	5.813	.429			

The mean of trust in God levels of the adolescents who had run away from home at least once was compared to the mean of trust in God levels of the adolescents who had never run away (Table 5). There was no significant difference ($t = -0.764$; $p > 0.05$) between the mean levels of those who had run away from home ($\bar{X} = 41.33$) and those who had not run away ($\bar{X} = 41.78$). H_5 was not accepted, but on average, those who had not run away from home had a slightly higher mean trust in God score than those who had run away.

Table 6: Comparison of trust in God levels with respect to the history of crime

Repeat offender	N	\bar{X}	SD	SE	t-test		
					T	Df	p
Yes	139	40.71	6.230	.528	-2.057	253.613	.033*
No	250	42.00	5.418	.342			

* $p < 0.05$

The mean of trust in God levels of the adolescents with a history of crime and those without a history of crime were compared (Table 6). The results revealed that there was a significant difference ($t = -2.057$; $p < 0.05$) between the mean levels of those who had previously been in prison ($\bar{X} = 40.71$) and those who had not been in prison before ($\bar{X} = 42.00$). The mean of trust in God levels of the adolescents that were in prison for the first time was higher than those who had been in prison multiple times, and H_6 was accepted.

Table 7: Comparison of trust in God levels with respect to education level

Education level	N	\bar{X}	SD
Low (0-5 years)	79	40.7	5.703
Middle (6-8 years)	181	41.27	5.801
Higher (9 and +)	129	42.45	5.622
Total	389	41.55	5.747

Finally, the means of trust in God levels of the adolescents with different education levels was compared (Table 7). The results revealed that there was a difference between the groups. ANOVA was used to apply the tests. The group with the lowest mean trust in God score was the one with the lowest level of education (0-5 years). Some members of this group never attended to school in their lives or could not continue their education for 5 complete years. Therefore, the members of this group were those who benefited the least from the religious education provided at school. Among the groups, those with the highest mean of trust in God score were those who could graduate from middle school or could attend middle school. Indeed, on average, the mean of trust in God levels increased with the years of education attained.

Table 8: Multiple Comparison of trust in God levels with respect to education level

Education level			MD	SE	P
LSD	Low (0-5 years)	6-8 years	-.57452	.77165	.457
		9 and +	-1.75341*	.81754	.033*
	Middle (6-8 years)	9 and +	-1.17889	.65938	.075

* $p < 0.05$

When the groups were compared 2 by 2 (i.e., 0-5 years vs. 6-8 years, 0-5 years vs. 9+ years, 6-8 years vs. 9+ years), the results revealed that there was a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the mean levels of those with 0 - 5 years of education ($\bar{X} = 40.7$) and those with at least 9 years of education ($\bar{X} = 42.45$), and H_7 was accepted.

6. Discussion

Many studies on the relationship between religiosity and crime in the literature have examined religious devotion by the way of accepting the existence of God and participating in religious activities. Unlike the previous studies, this study has analyzed the variables that change the levels of trust in God in a group of male adolescents at Ankara Sincan Youth Closed Prison and Correctional Center. Although attachment style in infancy and childhood has often been linked to the long-term development of maladaptive behavior in the literature, only a few researchers have examined the connection between attachment style and maladaptive

behaviors throughout adolescence.⁵³ It is also important to study with adolescents from different social backgrounds.

In this study, we searched the level of trust in God and whether it changes some variables such as education levels, mother's literacy, family unity, drug addiction, having a close friend at the correctional facility, repetitive crime, and experience of running away from home. We found that variables that are directly related to the family, such as the education level of the mother of the adolescent and the marital status of the parents, and running away from home, did not change the levels of trust in God. On the other side the social environment-related variables, such as having friends involved in crime, substance use, repeated commitment to crime, and education level, changed the levels of trust in God.

This study revealed that there is no significant relationship between levels of trust in God and familial variables such as the mother's literacy, family unity, and experiences of running away from home. Since the family is the first social circle of the individual, it is the first institution where they learn moral and social values.⁵⁴ It is expected that the family makes the individual gain the social values that must be followed in the transition from childhood to adolescence. However, the adolescent's being under extreme pressure or being raised in an undisciplined manner in the family may expose the adolescent to abuse. There are many risk factors related to family relationships such as poor parental supervision, punitive or erratic parental discipline, cold parental attitude, parental conflict, disrupted families, antisocial parents. For example, Öter found that 67% of the adolescents involved in crime ($N=100$) live with their parents and only 17% of their parents are divorced in Turkey. However, only 15.3% of adolescents have been found to communicate positively with both parents.⁵⁵ Based on this, it can be stated that family unity has no meaning to protect from negative behaviors or criminal risks for adolescents, if there is no intrafamily communication.

It was found that juvenile delinquency is dependent on the education

⁵³ Joseph P. Allen et al., "The Relation of Attachment Security to Adolescents' Paternal and Peer Relationships, Depression, and Externalizing Behavior," *Child Dev.* 78:4 (2007), pp.1222-1239; Didar Kantarcı and Telat Gül Şendil, "Bağlanma ve Aldatma," in: Tarık Solmuş (ed.), *Bağlanma, Evlilik ve Aile Psikolojisi* (İstanbul: Sistem Publisher, 2010), pp.287-292.

⁵⁴ Radiye Canan Bağış, "Çocukları Suça Sürükleyen Çevresel Nedenler: Sosyal Bağ ve Sosyal Öğrenme Teorileri Işığında Bir Değerlendirme," *Humanitas* 7:14 (2019), p.297.

⁵⁵ Adem Öter, "Çocuk Suçluluğunun Toplumsal Nedenlerine Sosyolojik Bir Bakış (Antalya Örneği)," *21. Yüzyılda Eğitim Ve Toplum Eğitim Bilimleri ve Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi* 7:21 (2018), p.759.

level of parents in many studies. In these studies, it was determined that the higher the education level of the parents of adolescents, the lower the risk of adolescents' involvement in crime. The education level of the parents of criminal adolescents is generally low and the education level of the mothers is lower than fathers'.⁵⁶ Akduman et al. determined that 71% of the juvenile delinquents' mothers were able to receive education until primary school at most. In addition, 81.6% of these juveniles committed the crime together with their friends, and only 7% committed a crime with their family members.⁵⁷ In this case, it can be considered that low-educated mothers cannot discipline the behavior of their children. However, we did not find any relationship between the mother's education and the image of God in adolescents involved in crime in this study. In this study the participants' education level of mothers was so low in most of the sample. This made it harder to compare the level of the image of God.

More than half of the participants in this study had run away from home at least once. A child running away from home may be a significant indicator that there is someone in the house who mistreated the child.⁵⁸ An adolescent who is exposed to violence in the family and takes shelter from his friends will become more open to the guidance of his friends as he trusts his friends more.

Studies revealed that friendship relations may be the source of this high risk of crime experienced by male adolescents.⁵⁹ Studies conducted with young people involved in crime indicate that having a friend who is involved in crime and using drugs has a high level of association with being involved in crime and using drugs.⁶⁰ The fact that the neglected children think that they are not worthwhile being loved⁶¹ not only might pave the way for their unhappiness but also might make them vulnerable to the abuse of strangers and peers.

⁵⁶ Fiğen Başar, "Ankara Kalaba İslahevinde Kalan 15-18 Yaş Grubu Ergenlerin Suça Yönelmelerinde Ailenin Etkisi Üzerine Karşılaştırmalı Bir Araştırma" (Yayımlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara Üniversitesi, Ankara, 1992), p.157; Aylın Ok, "Kurumlar ve Suçlu Çocuklar" (Yayımlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ege Üniversitesi, İzmir, 1989), p.103.

⁵⁷ Gülümser Gültekin Akduman, et al., "Ergen Suçluluğunda Bazı Kişisel ve Ailesel Özelliklerin İncelenmesi," *Türk Pediatri Arşivi* 42:4 (2007), pp.156-161.

⁵⁸ Sıddık Ekici, *Eyden Kaçan Çocuklar, Aile Dinamikleri ve Suç* (Bursa: Sentez Yayıncılık, 2015), p.19.

⁵⁹ Howard N. Snyder and Melissa Sickmund, *Juvenile Offenders and Victims National Report* (Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1999), pp.249.

⁶⁰ Linda A. Teplin, et al., "Psychiatric Disorders in Youth in Juvenile Detention," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 59:12 (2002), p. 1133.

⁶¹ Richard Beck, "God as a Secure Base: Attachment to God and Theological Exploration," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 34:2 (2006), p.45.

This study found that the trust in God levels of the adolescents who used addictive substances was significantly lower than those who did not use addictive substances. The low score of trust in God and the emergence of a significant relationship between drug uses can be explained by the occurrence of the same negative familial and social conditions. There are also studies showing that delinquency and substance use behavior are seen together.⁶² People may also be dragged into drug crimes as a way of economic survival due to economic hardships and a lack of skills and opportunities.⁶³ Peer victimization is also effective in drug use and drug crimes. Emotions can be a factor that initiates, sustains, and makes chronic substance addiction. Similarly, positive emotions such as family support also have an important place in individuals' recovery from drug addiction.⁶⁴ Therefore, there is a reciprocal relationship between these variables.

This study also revealed that the trust in God levels of the adolescents who repeatedly committed crime was significantly lower than adolescents who did not repeatedly commit crime. The studies on repetitive delinquency have investigated a large number of variables such as familial, demographic, social, mental, clinical, etc. as causes leading to repetitive delinquency.⁶⁵ Criminal activity at an early age is also an important factor that explains repetitive delinquency.⁶⁶ Thus, repetitive offensive behavior may be associated with the social environment of juvenile delinquents. Delinquent peers can lead to repetitive crime for juveniles with social learning mechanisms and group pressure.⁶⁷

A positive relationship has been found between education level of participants and the level of trust in God. Education has a determining role in the quality of life of the adolescent. Siennick and Staff have explained why delinquent juveniles have lower educational degree than their

⁶² Leyla Baysan Arabacı et al., "Çocuk ve Ergenlerde Madde Kullanımı, Suça Yönelme, Ruhsal Bozukluklar ve Hemşirelik Bakımı," *Bağımlılık Dergisi* 18:4 (2017), pp.135-144.

⁶³ Helene Raskin White and Dennis M. Gorman, "Dynamics of the Drug-Crime Relationship," *The Nature of Crime: Continuity and Change*, vol. 1: The Nature of Crime: Continuity and Change (Washington: U.S. Department of Justice, 2000), p.188.

⁶⁴ Emrah Tilim and Mehmet Murat, "Ergenlerde Madde Bağımlılığından Korunmaya İlişkin Özyeterlik ile Akran Baskısı, Kendini İfade Edebilme Becerisi ve Psikolojik Sağlık Arasındaki İlişki," *OPUS* 4:20 (2019), pp.929-955.

⁶⁵ Zahir Kızmaz, "Mükerrer Suçlulukla İlişkili Değişkenler," *Fırat Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 17:2 (2007), pp.227-249.

⁶⁶ David P. Farrington, "Age and Crime," *Crime and Justice*, 7 (1986), pp.189-250; Kızmaz, "Mükerrer Suçlulukla," pp.227-249.

⁶⁷ Mark Warr and Mark Stafford, "The Influence of Delinquent Peers: What They Think or What They Do?," *Criminology* 29 (1991), pp.851-866.

conventional peers with two reason: life goals and behavioral investments in the life goals shaped by peers.⁶⁸ Life goals learned from the criminal environment may distract adolescents from religious and social values.

Ericson described adolescence as a period in which one tries to establish relationships with peers and others. He stated that, if the adolescent successfully overcomes the identity crisis in this period, they can create a sense of “closeness” with others based on trust. In the opposite case, a feeling of “isolation and abandonment from society” may emerge in individuals.⁶⁹ In other words, it is quite normal for a person to care about their relationship with their peers during adolescence.

In fact, the search for identity and the need for independence in adolescence may lead to the adolescent’s resistance to the authority of the parents and his/her moving away from the family.⁷⁰ However, it is also a risky period considering the possibility of being misled by one’s peers. This study also reveals that the mean levels of trust in God were low among those whose close friends were in prison. As seen in the findings, their friends have a very important influence on the religious world of young people.

Conclusion

In this study, we found that having a close friend in prison, having used drugs, being involved in repeated crime has significantly associated the levels of trust in God for male juvenile delinquents. However, we did not identify any significant relationship between the mean of levels of trust in God and the mother’s literacy, parents being together, and experiences of running away from home. The male juvenile delinquents whose close friends were in prison, those who used drugs, and those who were involved in repetitive crimes had a low mean score of trust in God. We consider that these results may be related to the influence of close friends on the religious world of adolescents.

This study highlights two important issues: The first one is that friends are much more influential than the families in the spiritual world of juvenile delinquents. The second one is that adolescents’ sense of trust is hampered

⁶⁸ Sonja E. Siennick and Jeremy Staff, “Explaining the Educational Deficits of Delinquent Youths,” *Criminology* 46 (2008), pp.609-635.

⁶⁹ Erik H. Erikson, *İnsanın Sekiz Çağı* (İstanbul: Birey ve Toplum Yayınları, 1984), pp.26-30.

⁷⁰ Neriman Kazak Ekinci, “Suça Sürüklenmiş Çocukların Annelerinin Çocuklarına İlişkin Algısı: Siirt Örneği” (Yayımlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Başkent Üniversitesi, Ankara, 2016), pp.66-83.

by negative life experiences and social conditions, and trust in God is weakened.

Implication

With this study, it was determined that the effect of peers is very important in the formation of adolescents' religious values. Regarding potential future studies on the causes of delinquency in adolescents, we recommend focusing on the differences in religious values rather than frequency of worship or level of religiosity.

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