



ISSN: 2146-4901  
e-ISSN: 2667-6575

## Change of Identities and Religiosities of Muslim Young People across Time and Space: Resilient Youth

*Gençlerin Kimlik ve Dindarlıklarının Zaman ve Mekâna göre Değişimi: Direnen Gençlik*

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### Article Information / Makale Bilgisi

**Citation / Atıf:** Altıntaş, Mustafa Cabir. "Change of Identities and Religiosities of Muslim Young People across Time and Space: Resilient Youth". *Şırnak Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 31 (Haziran 2023), 22-46. <https://doi.org/10.35415/sirnakifd.1257267>

Date of Submission ( <i>Geliş Tarihi</i> )	28. 02. 2023
Date of Acceptance ( <i>Kabul Tarihi</i> )	11. 04. 2023
Date of Publication ( <i>Yayın Tarihi</i> )	15. 06. 2023
Article Type ( <i>Makale Türü</i> )	Research Article ( <i>Araştırma Makalesi</i> )
Peer-Review ( <i>Değerlendirme</i> )	Double anonymized - Two External ( <i>İki Dış Hakem / Çift Taraflı Körleme</i> ).
Ethical Statement ( <i>Etik Beyan</i> )	It is declared that scientific and ethical principles have been followed while carrying out and writing this study and that all the sources used have been properly cited. ( <i>Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde bilimsel ve etik ilkelere uyulduğu ve yararlanılan tüm çalışmaların kaynakçada belirtildiği beyan olunur.</i> )
Plagiarism Checks ( <i>Benzerlik Taraması</i> )	Yes ( <i>Evet</i> ) – Turnitin.
Conflicts of Interest ( <i>Çıkar Çatışması</i> )	The author(s) has no conflict of interest to declare ( <i>Çıkar çatışması beyan edilmemiştir.</i> )
Complaints ( <i>Etik Beyan Adresi</i> )	<a href="mailto:suifdergi@gmail.com">suifdergi@gmail.com</a>
Grant Support ( <i>Finansman</i> )	The author(s) acknowledge that they received no external funding in support of this research. ( <i>Bu araştırmayı desteklemek için dış fon kullanılmamıştır.</i> )
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## **Abstract**

Modern people have cut themselves off from the sacred and imaginative realities and live in secular and measurable time. They live in a world described by Max Weber in terms of disenchantment. In Muslim society, many Muslims are not detached from reality; rather, they live in an enchanted world, a world of spirits and forces. This creates tensions between secular liberal and traditional views of life. In this sense, the young people strives to take a certain place and role in that society; they try to know themselves in society, to determine their personalities' limits, to find out 'who they are, what they believe, what they value and connect, what their aim should be, in short, what their place in society is'. In this research, the identity, religious life and behavior of Muslim young people, religious resilience, and accordingly religious changes and transformations have been examined along with religious potential. To be resilient, a person must be able to change, and to adapt to new circumstances. Thus, the paper explores that the Turkish youth may have new religious perceptions and different identity structures depending on the color of the time. The effect of different cultures and social changes and the new social manifestations that develop depending on this situation can be effective on the way to the transformation of religious identities. In the first step, this paper is exploring the questions: 'how does religion affect young people's recognition and evaluation of themselves and life? The next step is to research how Muslim youth can help people experiencing resilience to be strengthened, and how they can be strengthened as they exercise a religiosity and their identity. The paper could help to find out how religious faith can have in enabling people to overcome difficulty by giving them faith to hold on to life and find meaning and purpose, as well as by providing a supportive network of people. The data were obtained from semi-structured interviews which were conducted with 30 students of Şırnak University in Turkey. It includes participants' accounts of their process of making meaning of the world, their evolving understanding, perceptions, experiences and identity situations. Nevertheless, literature survey method has chosen to support and enhance the quality of the research. The qualitative research method was adopted as an interpretative paradigm. The data shows that; the relationship between the individual and religious belief and identity motivation is related to inhomogeneous results and factors. Young people create their own identity, which is mixed, and bricolage. Each individual has different conceptions and different motivations regarding religious identity. In this sense, religiosity and identity is fed by different social and psychological dynamics; in general, it seems to be related to time, space and socialization processes.

**Keywords:** Religion and Resilience, Identity Changes and Resilience, Hybrid Identity, Resilient Muslim Youth, New forms of Religiosity.

## Özet

Modernite ile birlikte insanlar Max Weber tarafından hayal kırıklığı olarak tanımlanan, kendilerini kutsal ve manevi gerçeklerden arındırılmış, dünyevi ve ölçülebilir bir zamanda ve dünyada yaşamaya başladılar. Müslüman toplumlarda ise pek çok Müslüman gerçeklikten kopuk değildir; daha ziyade manevi bir dünyada, ruhların ve kutsalların dünyasında yaşarlar. Bu, seküler liberal ve geleneksel yaşam görüşleri arasında gerilim oluşturmaktadır. Bu anlamda gençler o toplumda belli bir yer ve rol almak için çaba harcarlar; toplum içinde kendilerini tanımaya, kişiliklerinin sınırlarını belirlemeye, 'kim olduklarını, neye inandıklarını, neye değer verdiklerini ve bağ kurduklarını, amaçlarının ne olması gerektiğini, kısacası toplumdaki yerlerinin ne olduğunu' bulmaya çalışırlar. Bu araştırmada, müslüman gençlerin kimliği, dini yaşam ve davranışları, dini dayanıklılıkları ve buna bağlı olarak dini değişim ve dönüşümleri, dini potansiyelleri ile birlikte incelenmiştir. Dirençli olmak için, bir kişinin değişebilmesi ve yeni koşullara uyum sağlayabilmesi gerekir. Bu nedenle makale, Türkiye'de gençliğin zamanın rengine bağlı olarak yeni dini algılara ve farklı kimlik yapılarına karşı değişimini araştırmaktadır. Farklı kültürlerin ve toplumsal değişmelerin etkisi ve bu duruma bağlı olarak gelişen yeni toplumsal tezahürler, dini kimliklerin dönüşmesinde etkili olabilmektedir. Buna bağlı olarak makale öncelikle şu soruları araştırıyor: 'Din, gençlerin kendilerini ve yaşamı tanıma ve değerlendirmelerini nasıl etkiler ve bu etki nasıl olur? Bir sonraki adımda ise, Müslüman gençliğin değişime dayanıklılığı kimliklerinin güçlenmesine nasıl yardımcı olabileceğini ve dindarlıklarını uygularken nasıl güçlenebileceklerini araştırmaktır. Makale, dini inancın insanlara hayata tutunmaları, anlam ve amaç bulmaları için inanç vererek ve aynı zamanda destekleyici bir insan ağı sağlayarak insanlara zorlukların üstesinden gelmelerini sağlamada nasıl yardımcı olabileceğini ortaya koymada yardımcı olabilir. Veriler Türkiye'de Şırnak Üniversitesi'nde öğrenim gören 30 öğrenci ile yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerden elde edilmiştir. Veriler, katılımcıların dünyayı anlamlandırma süreçlerine, gelişen anlayışlarına, algılarına, deneyimlerine ve kimlik durumlarına ilişkin açıklamalarını içerir. Bununla birlikte, literatür tarama yöntemi de araştırmanın kalitesini desteklemek ve artırmak için seçilmiştir. Elde edilen veriler gösteriyor ki; bireysel ve dini inanç ve kimlik motivasyonu arasındaki ilişki homojen olmayan sonuçlar ve faktörlerle ilgilidir. Her bireyin dini kimliğe ilişkin farklı kavramları ve farklı motivasyonları vardır. Müslüman gençler de karma ve melez bir kimlik oluşturmaktadırlar. Bu anlamda dindarlık ve kimlik, farklı sosyal ve psikolojik dinamiklerden beslenir; genel olarak zaman, mekan ve sosyalleşme süreçleri ile ilgili görünmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Din ve Dirençlilik, Değişen Kimlikler ve Dayanıklılık, Hibrit Kimlikler, Direnen Müslüman Gençlik, Yeni Dindarlık Biçimleri.

## **Introduction**

Young individuals nowadays confront an assortment of special challenges from quickened social change, fast globalization, and postmodern culture. They are looking for how their personal lives can end up entire and complete.<sup>1</sup> Included in this journey is the method of finding their put in a complex world, looking for fulfilling ways of picking up a sense of meaning and having a place, while managing with the numerous instabilities of the world.

In the face of the rapidly globalizing world, young people can feel helpless and powerless. In this sense, it is known that religious beliefs give clues about the meaning and value of life and provide motivation in the face of life difficulties.<sup>2</sup> Each individual's inclination to religion or having a religious belief motivation may differ. However, religious beliefs can be seen as a source of positive motivation. Argyle argues that religion has seven psychological resources: meeting needs, eliminating anxiety/fear, eliminating guilt, protecting, gaining identity, and relaxing in the face of the unknown.<sup>3</sup> The meaning of having religious belief; at the same time the benefit and harm to the individual; it may be related to the motivation it creates at the psychological level and its contribution to well-being.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, Turkish Muslim youth have been influenced by the social and social values of Western culture and the worldwide and postmodern world. With the effect of the quickly globalizing world, young people's likes and choices, convictions and feelings, interface and concerns are beneath the control of the postmodern world. As a result, numerous Turkish Muslim youth confront a struggle of personality occasioned by Turkey's "Islamic, Eastern, cosmopolitan, traditional Ottoman past and socially engineered Western, secular, positivist, and modern future".<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Schweitzer, *The postmodern life cycle*. (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004), 5-12.

<sup>2</sup> Steven Stack, "A Comparative Analysis of Suicide and Religiosity", *Journal of Social Psychology* 119/2 (1983), 285-286.

<sup>3</sup> Marry Argyle, "Dinin Yedi Psikolojik Temeli." Çev: Mehmet Dağ, *Eğitim Hareketleri Dergisi* 23 (1978), 272-273.

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth I. Pargament, "The Bitter and the Sweet: An Evaluation of the Costs and Benefits of Religiousness." *Psychological inquiry* 13/3 (2002), 170-172.

<sup>5</sup> Margaret Fitzpatrick vd., *Globalization and Education Policy in Turkey: Education of Women, Religious Education and Higher Education* (University of Illinois: Urbana-Champaign, 2009), 63.

## 1. Aims and Significance of the Study

Turkish youths want to either adopt a strict Islamic faith structure or entirely secularize themselves. Tensions between the secular liberal and traditional perspectives of life are what give rise to this conundrum. Through an inevitable contact with both the wider secular/liberal and Western society and traditional Islamic culture, they develop their sense of identity and worldviews.<sup>6</sup> As a member of the society, the young people strives to take a certain place and role in that society; they try to know themselves in society, to determine their personalities' limits, to find out 'who they are, what they believe, what they value and connect, what their aim should be, in short, what their place in society is'.<sup>7</sup> The first step, this paper is exploring the questions: 'how does religion affect young people's recognition and evaluation of themselves and life, and how does this happen? At this stage, is there a relationship between religion and the search for identity, which is described as the youth's effort to know himself?'

On the other hand, religious youth may need to know how they can help, how to enable people experiencing resilient to come through it well, and be able to guide community who want to offer religious care to one another and want to know how to help rather than hinder. Resilience research makes room for a consideration of the role of religion and faith and gives attention to the spiritual and the theological. There is a need to research how Muslim youth can help people experiencing resilience to be strengthened, and how they can be strengthened as they exercise a religiosity and their identity. The paper could help to find out how religious faith can have in enabling people to overcome difficulty by giving them faith to hold on to life and find meaning and purpose, as well as by providing a supportive network of people.

A long-suppressed crisis in Muslim culture has now come to the surface in response to some of the difficulties of contemporary secular life.<sup>8</sup> Islam has nonetheless presented a significant challenge to the secularism that Western liberal society takes for granted by insisting on religiously regulating the social lives of its members.<sup>9</sup> Young people's worldview

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<sup>6</sup> Mustafa Cabir Altıntaş, *The Role of Religious Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Worldviews and Identity Discernment of Muslim Youth* (Ankara: Nobel Yayıncılık, 2021), 3.

<sup>7</sup> Orhan Öztürk, *Ruhsağlığı ve Bozuklukları* (Ankara: Nobel Akademi, 16. Basım, 2020),13.

<sup>8</sup> Bassam Tibi, *Islam between culture and politics* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

<sup>9</sup> Altıntaş, *The Role of Religious Education*, 8.

may be challenged by a necessary contrast between these value systems and religious tradition, which could hinder their spiritual or religious growth by making them aware of the inconsistency between these ideals. In these conditions, the study is concerned to be one of the few attempts to discuss a need for professional care in dealing with development of youth's religiosity and identity. The importance of this study is enhanced by the fact that in Turkish society most of the challenges in the life of religious individuals have usually been confronted with formal religious considerations such as whether they conform to Islamic proclamations or not. As a result, the study's findings may help create new methods of instruction and curricula for religious education of young people as well as fresh insights into the sociology of religion, particularly in the context of Islam.

## **2. Research Methods**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 students of Şırnak University in Turkey. Simple Random sampling method is used for obtaining information from participants regarding the university population. With 15% of the population between the ages of 18 and 24, these young students represent one of Turkey's most active and social communities.<sup>10</sup> Future religious worldviews dominating in the nation will influence and inform their attitudes, values, and sense of self. Participants' accounts of their attempts to make sense of the world, as well as their changing understanding, perceptions, experiences, and identification circumstances, are included in the data. Nevertheless, literature survey method has been chosen to support and enhance the quality of the research. In short, qualitative research method was adopted as an interpretative paradigm. By using literature analysis, semi-structured interview form was prepared and interviews were conducted.

## **3. Resilience, Religion and to be Resilient Youth and Community**

Resilience literature is wide in scope, identifying many factors as contributing to the resilience of individuals, families and communities. Factors which can be influenced by the work of religion and emerge from the literature focus on struggle, the self and relationship.<sup>11</sup> These three factors are essential to building resilience and present challenges to religion and education.

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<sup>10</sup> *Turkey's Statistical Year Book* (Ankara: MEB yayımları, 2020).

<sup>11</sup> Justine Allain Chapman, *Resilient Pastors: The Role of Adversity in Healing and Growth* (SPCK publishing: UK, 2012), 11.

In psychology, resilience is the positive capacity developed by people who are open and motivated to change in the face of adversity. The research into resilience represents a shift from overemphasizing pathology in the past, to recognizing the strengths in human character. The resilient take up the struggle of dealing with the circumstances of their lives in such a way as to be strengthened personally by their experience. Resilient people are those who have coped with adversity, been constant in resisting destruction, and been able to construct a new sense of themselves and their lives.<sup>12</sup>

The list of characteristics that define the resilient, compiled via study on a variety of topics and contexts, has remained relatively steady through time and includes traits related to children, families, relationships, and the environment. It includes "characteristics having to do with physical and mental well-being, cognitive ability, safe relationships, self-regulation and self-direction, motivation and a positive outlook on life, spiritual and religious systems of beliefs and meaning, as well as family, peer, school, and cultural systems. The resilient children grew up to be adults who possessed greater social maturity, nurturance, empathy, sense of responsibility and independence.<sup>13</sup>

Research on resilience allows for the discussion of the function of faith and religion and emphasizes the spiritual and theological. This is made feasible by the understanding that resilience involves more than just paying attention to the actions and conditions of others.<sup>14</sup> It involves motivation and self-perception, for example, which are shaped by religion and spirituality for good or ill. The ability to use religious resources to cope when faced with misfortune is referred to as spiritual resilience. This entails fending against attempts to destroy one's spiritual traits and creating something constructive in keeping with more overarching theological objectives. Studies exploring spiritual resilience have not been confined to the kind of spirituality that is expressed and experiences in traditional religious practices; the spirituality studied encompasses interpersonal and societal intersections, relationships to self, and the ability to go beyond the limits of self-interest, one's own experience, and horizon of meaning. It also includes openness to spirit, understood variously as God, the divine, energy, source of life, mystery and what is beyond understanding.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Chapman, *Resilient Pastors*, 15.

<sup>13</sup> Chapman, *Resilient Pastors*, 16.

<sup>14</sup> Chapman, *Resilient Pastors*, 19.

<sup>15</sup> Chapman, *Resilient Pastors*, 19.

Literature on resilience demonstrates the significance of religious faith in helping people overcome adversity by giving them the hope they need to cling on to life and find meaning and purpose as well as by offering a network of people who can assist them.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, religion provides the young person with the opportunity to present certain values, to be in a community that integrates around the same values and practices, and to participate in them, making them feel confident that they have a place in the society they live in and that it will help them determine their status in the society. In addition, the sense of trust and resilience gained by the positive contributions of religion will help the young person to see himself as an independent individual. Young people will gain the ability to make conscious decisions and behave on their own, to take responsibility and to perceive themselves as a separate individual with the sense of confidence they have gained. For this reason, we can say that the sense of independence, which is formed and developed with a sense of trust and resilience, religion, and therefore Islam, will also contribute positively to the young person's ability to act on his own and gain his responsibility by presenting an understanding of life and stating that he has a responsibility since puberty.<sup>17</sup>

Studies in resilience emphasize the importance of knowing oneself to be of value, of having a future and being self-disciplines in order to deal with adversity and come through strengthened. The studies also recognize that the need for self-reliance in many of the resilient when they were in difficult circumstances can be hard to shed and makes it difficult for them to trust and form intimate relationships.<sup>18</sup> Today, religion has largely lost its authority of forming the basis of social life and human relations. For this reason, young people may have difficulty in comprehending the religious understanding of life, the values related to the arrangement of daily life and determining their place in social life. However, presence of religious beliefs; it can also be perceived as important and necessary in terms of gaining psychological resilience in the face of socioeconomic problems, individual losses and traumas and negative life events experienced on an individual and social basis.<sup>19</sup> Healthy, mutually beneficial relationships are the foundation for resilience. Teaching, preaching, and one-on-one counselling need to be carefully considered so that people can decide when to

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<sup>16</sup> Chapman, *Resilient Pastors*, 28.

<sup>17</sup> Naci Kula, *Gençlik Döneminde Kimlik ve Din. Gençlik, Din ve Değerler Psikolojisi*. Hayati Hökelekli (İstanbul: DEM Yayınları, 3. Basım, 2015), 65.

<sup>18</sup> Chapman, *Resilient Pastors*, 89.

<sup>19</sup> Mustafa Cabir Altıntaş, "Worldview Theory and its relation to Islam and Muslim Identity." *ULLUM* 4/1 (2021)



accept in problematic or violent situations and move toward a higher quality of life. Teaching humility, self-denial, and self-sacrifice requires tact since these qualities must be displayed from a place of understanding oneself to be significant and valued by God, and capable of making room for another.<sup>20</sup>

Religion has lost its power and influence in modern society. It has become a personal, private and subjective living space, and a matter of preference and attitude, which is mostly kept alive in individual consciences or in closed religious communities and groups.<sup>21</sup> However, communion or group event is an integral part of social life. Religious life naturally leads to communion, because some of the religious activities also take place as community activities. However, in modern society, traditional communion either tended to break down or gained some new functions while losing some of its functions. Today, religious communities are not only religious; it has many psychological, social, cultural and economic functions. In addition to the religious confusion and uncertainty in our society, the inadequacy of religious education and training is an important factor that increases the interest in religious communities. The social meaning of religious communities depends on the construction of an identity on their members. The concept of identity, on the other hand, is a symbol that is visualized in the mind with all its features and expresses belonging in the definition and interpretation of a phenomenon under investigation. Identity is not a concrete entity that can be defined or constructed on its own. Social communities come to the fore in the identity gaining a meaning. These social communities, on the other hand, build their identities on their members, base their wealthy and reproduce their social identities. Social identity, on the other hand, can be defined as collective identities formed by individuals adopting the rules, rituals and symbols of the social communities of which they are members.<sup>22</sup>

Religion is one of the most important components of Turkish society. In the society, religious communities have an important position and function in terms of better living and

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<sup>20</sup> Chapman, *Resilient Pastors*, 126.

<sup>21</sup> Hayati Hökelekli, *Gençlik, Din ve Değerler Psikolojisi* (İstanbul: DEM Yayınları, 3. Basım, 2015).

<sup>22</sup> Bhikhu Parekh, *Kimliğin Mantiği*. çev. Suat Aksoy. Haz. Fırat Mollaer (Ankara: Doğu Batı Yayınları, 2014), 53

understanding the application area of religion. What religious communities mean are communities that are solidarity, as defined by Durkheim in sociological terms.<sup>23</sup>

Every religious, cultural, and social event has an impact on the individual, as we can tell from the participant. Events where religious teachings or points of view are discussed in ways that go beyond ceremonial devotion serve to strengthen a religious worldview. Social gatherings frequently help people connect Islam as a way of life and a vision of life, bringing to light important challenges and inspiring individuals and groups of people to reconsider their beliefs. Community events add another building stone to the process of forming and influencing a religious worldview.<sup>24</sup> In this sense, resilient religious communities are become important, because they are able to feel and convey people's sadness about a situation and show compassion. They are able to share in the joy and sorrow of others, and have the wisdom and maturity to lay down burdens for times of rest and renewal. Good religious people are resilient. They continue to grow in wisdom and compassion through the struggles of their own lives in the difficulties they encounter in their ministry.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, the religious community represents a direct aid for young people who are faltering in search of identity, overwhelmed by uncertainty and confusion, find it difficult to determine their place and duty in society, and seek a way to realize their spirituality and morality.

#### **4. Findings and Discussion**

##### **4.1. Identity Issues: Changes, Crises and Resilience**

The concept of identity can be defined as a phenomenon that gives a sense of self-expression, identification, finding meaning in the existing objective world, meaning and belonging. It is the individual's separating what belongs to him/her from what is not and giving himself/herself a different value from the others.<sup>26</sup> Identity appears everywhere, with many definitions; but although it is a difficult term to define, it is a new term that seems to be an old concept and is constantly innovating.<sup>27</sup>

When an individual is asked the question 'who are you?', it leads that person

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<sup>23</sup> Emile Durkheim, *Dini Hayatın İlk Biçimleri*. Haz. Esen Aksu. çev. Yasin Aktay ve Kenan Çapık (İstanbul: Ataç Yayınları, 2019), 557.

<sup>24</sup> John Valk vd. *An Islamic Worldview from Turkey* (CA: USA, Palgrave, 2017), 62.

<sup>25</sup> Chapman, *Resilient Pastors*, 1.

<sup>26</sup> Seden P. Meral, *Kurumsal Kimlik ve Marka* (Ankara: Detay Yayıncılık, 2011), 3.

<sup>27</sup> Philip Gleason, *Kimliği Tanımlamak: Semantik Bir Tarih*, çev. Fırat Mollaer, Haz. Fırat Mollaer (Ankara: Doğu Batı Yayınları, 2014), 22.

to believe that s/he can be someone else for a moment.<sup>28</sup> Identity does not have a static fact. In other words, as the individual interacts in his/her daily life, the process of identity formation begins and the coming of identity continues. Individuals are both affected and continue to be affected in the interaction process. Therefore, individuals develop by being influenced by other individuals in interactions and therefore they build their own identity.

My participants answer the question of human nature; and their sense of world, identity or selfhood, by asking: 'Who are we?' General questions that we want to answer are: 'what does it mean to be human? Who are we as human beings? Or, what is the nature, task and purpose of human being?'<sup>29</sup> All humans embrace some notion of what it is to be human, whether consciously or unconsciously. Although we may not be able to express what we think we are, we operate with an implicit understanding of an identity, a picture of who we are as human beings.<sup>30</sup> Hence their answers might incorporate a secular western worldview such 'a highly complex machine, a naked ape, evolved biologically'<sup>31</sup> or an Islamic worldview such 'a pinnacle of God's creation and not biologically evolved'. For instance, a 18 years old female student gives meaning of what humans really are by referencing some verses, and consisting her identity:

Human is vicegerent (Khalifah) of God on earth. In other words, a creature that represents Allah and carries out God's light and revelation. I would say, they are superior to other creatures. Humans are the most honourable of the created, whose soul has been taken from God, whose body had been taken from earth, who has his/her own mind and will (Iradah), and who is the caliph of God in the world. (Student 8).

Walsh & Middleton gives an example answer for a person who lives in North America:

I am me, an individual, the free and independent master of my own destiny. I stand in a world full of natural potential, and my task is to utilize that potential to economic good. While I am hindered in this task by ignorance of nature and lack of tools for controlling it, nevertheless my hope rests in the good life of progress wherein nature

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<sup>28</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Kimlik*. çev. Mesut Hazır (Ankara: Heretik Yayınları, 2017), 29.

<sup>29</sup> Walsh, Brian J. - Middleton, J. Richard, *The Transforming Vision. Shaping a Christian World View* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity, 1984), 51.

<sup>30</sup> Walsh, *The Transforming Vision*, 52.

<sup>31</sup> James William Sire, *The Universe Next Door* (Downers Grove: IVP. 2009), 22.

yields its bounty for human benefit. Only then will all find happiness in a life of material affluence, with no needs and no dependence.<sup>32</sup>

Accordingly, a Muslim young person may assert:

I am the pinnacle of God's creation, who believes Him and obeys what He orders and dependent on His wise and loving rule. I am God's representative on earth, higher than any other living creatures. My entire life is in submission to Him. This is intrinsic to our creature hood. I am not autonomous. God has placed me in a position of authority over the earth to cultivate and develop it. Servant hood is central to my humanness.<sup>33</sup>

The relationship between religion and identity covers a very large literature. A person's unique religious characteristics are called religious personality. A person's religious beliefs, feelings, thoughts and doubts, his religious attitudes and behaviours, his approach to religion and his way of evaluating religious principles form his religious identity.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, parents play a very important role in the establishment of religious identity, values, practices and norms of behavior in their children.<sup>35</sup> Some of my participants claim that *"nature of humanity is unique for everyone, however according to Islamic culture all children are born with a good nature and in a state of innocence; and their parents' guide them to follow a way which is religious or without spirituality during their life"*. One of them (20 years old male) said:

All babies come into the world as religious, but their families decide for their religion, so it could change during the life. We born in this world, and we live in Islam with other people. We might be varied, there are leftist, rightist, covered people or uncovered, Christians and Jews, or atheists... all kinds of people are...(Student 13)  
In general, there is a reciprocal relationship between faith and identity.

Maturity and full attitude faith is a factor that can encompass everything that makes up identity. Adopted religious beliefs have the power to create integration in the personality structure. For example, religion leads to a sense of responsibility and personal integrity. In a sense, religion contributes to personal development by offering a coherent pattern of identity and way of life. The most important function of religion is to create a fully integrated, stable and solid human personality and identity.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Walsh, *The Transforming Vision*, 36.

<sup>33</sup> Altıntaş, *Worldview Theory*, 146.

<sup>34</sup> L.B. Brown, "Toward the Psychology of Religion". *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 5/2 (1986), 13-18.

<sup>35</sup> Judith Kearins, *Child-rearing practices in Australia: Variation with life-style* (Perth: Education Dept. of Western Australia, 1984).

<sup>36</sup> Hayati Hökekleli, *Din Psikolojisi* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 16. Basım, 2021).

There have been radical social and cultural changes in Turkey in the last century. These changes brought discord and conflicts. Young people, who were forced to change in parallel with different role expectations and change in the changing social order, had to continue their search for identity in an environment of mental tension. Young people either become a type of person who does not believe in any value, lacks ideals and goals, is distracted by daily pursuits and material pleasures, becomes alienated from himself and his environment, or joins some religious and ideological groups and enters into an attachment that reaches the point of loss of identity.<sup>37</sup> It is difficult to prevent our young people, who are faced with contradictory religious understandings, interpretations and practices, from drifting to extremes or developing an attitude of religious indifference and distrust. As can be seen, religious beliefs and values constitute the main axis of the identity development process in society. A female participant explains her thoughts by saying:

If religion lived in full of meaning, I am sure that all people were in peace. I think, there would be no pressure, because Turkey is a multicultural and multi-national country, I mean there are many different religions, sects, ethnicities, and cultures. Everyone has places to worship; there are temples in everywhere. If everyone else practice comfortably what they believe, if they are free to what they want to believe, that time if we invite them to search Islam and its culture rather than to insult them or to fight them, then Turkey would become a real Islamic state (Student 19).

For the young person who is looking for a meaning and purpose in life, religion is great importance as it creates a self-identity and provides mental clarity by satisfying the need to understand the world. Even if they do not fulfill their traditional religious duties, the number of young people who benefit from their religious references in terms of their worldview and outlook on life is not small. Although there is no significant difference in fulfilling the requirements of the secular social order and lifestyle, it is common to encounter young people who are religious at the discursive level.

In the face of the multifaceted conditions and difficulties of internalizing and experiencing religious values as a whole, the fact that young people maintain their interest in religion, at least at an intellectual level, reveals the existential importance of religion for them. Therefore, it is a common situation in our society that people, who define themselves with identities such as secular, modern, etc., sometimes resort to religious references. The

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<sup>37</sup> Hökelekli, *Gençlik, Din*, 13.

number of people who benefit from religion at the level of meaning is always higher than those who regularly practice religion.<sup>38</sup> Even though the number of those who give primary importance to religious beliefs and values in their lives and do what is necessary, religious institutions continued to be active in the social and political field. On the other hand, it is clear that modernization has given birth to many powerful anti-secularization movements. A visible religious activity and revival is strongly felt in both the Christian and Islamic worlds. The most important reason for this is; modernism damages what people firmly believe, all old beliefs, and makes them doubt their beliefs and values.<sup>39</sup>

Religion provides a mental clarity for young people who are in search of understanding the world and finding a purpose in life, and as a holistic worldview, it encompasses all knowledge and understanding and creates a structure related to the reality they face. Therefore, religious youth are able to become more 'optimistic' and feel that they have taken control of their situation with the help of God.<sup>40</sup> Young people who falter in identity confusion find an opportunity to gain an identity in religion. Thus, they can get away from the tensions between change and the need for balance or integration, in conflicts between contradictory identities, and attain a consistent and balanced self. This leads to a positive outlook on life and people.

Depending on the changing time and space relations of religious identities, the construction process continues. This process is gradually increasing its impact according to the course of political and social events. The fact that the phenomenon of religion makes its presence felt as a political ideology or approach in addition to the theological approach also affects the perceptions of religiosity. Therefore, as religiosity increases its visibility in different geographies and on different ideological grounds, it can be expected that different perceptions of religiosity of individuals belonging to the same religion will emerge.

When we think in the context of Turkey; it can be said that different styles of religious identity are based on differences in interpretation in Islamic references and religious values.

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<sup>38</sup> Günter Seufert, *Türk Gençleri Arasında Din ve Milliyetçilik: Türkiye ve Avrupa'da Gençlik* (Ankara: Konrad Adenauer Vakfı, 2000), 78.

<sup>39</sup> Hökelekli, *Gençlik, Din*, 11.

<sup>40</sup> Edwin Hyde, *Religion in Childhood and Adolescence: A Comprehensive Review of the Research* (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1990), 220.

The discourses of different religious authorities, especially at the point of interpreting the holy book and fulfilling the worship, offer a perspective that religious identity can be experienced differently. According to our data, my participants are experienced the religion in different way, for examples: there are young people who fast but do not perform prayers in Ramadan; read the Quran but do not worship; do not consume alcoholic beverages only in Ramadan; believe in God but do not perform their prayers; remembering some religious nights as special; regardless of their level of piety, Islamic belief variable interpretations are seen in religious living practices according to time and conditions, as well as those who are not or relatively low emphasize the importance of sharing in the feast of sacrifice. This may be related to individuals' giving place to a ranking or priority in their religious values and orientations. Moreover, the impact of post-modernity and the rapid change in consumption habits; religious values of individuals have also enabled them to live on a slippery ground or on a more personal level. In this sense, the religious values that build religious identity can also be shaped according to the wishes and desires of individuals.

#### **4.2. Conservatism as a Resilience Orientation in Youth Religiosity**

Conservatism is one of the issues that should be discussed on the basis of the necessities of social life or the values that the individual-society needs. For this reason, the discussion of what established social values mean in terms of conservatism and where conservatism is positioned on the basis of traditional values can also pave the way for a resilient religious perspective.

The concept of conservatism; it means preserving the traditional values and norms that give life to the existing structure or opposing the break with the traditions with rapid change.<sup>41</sup>Conservatism is generally associated with religiosity or a lifestyle in which religious attitudes predominate. As in the world, "conservatism" in Turkey is not a concept with clear boundaries theoretically and can be confused with different definitions. Conservative person is often used for traditional religious people or people who prioritize their religious life. It points out that conservatism is above all religious, and conservatism is mostly defined through religiosity. In Turkey, the concept of conservatism is generally read and perceived as religiosity. For instance:

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<sup>41</sup> Ömer Demir -Mustafa Acar, *Sosyal Bilimler Sözlüğü* (İstanbul: Adres Yayınları, 6. Basım, 2005), 129.

"If someone says, "I am Muslim", she must follow what Islam requires. She must act its system. Especially a woman who has hijab, must be careful than others, she will properly cover her body, not make up or wear shiny clothes. She could not engage with men, and hanging out with them. Today's generation like this kind of relations, however, this is not a kind of Muslim what Islam wants. (Student, 18)"

From this point of view, conservatism indicates the progress of people in the life cycle without the need for any other relationship of belonging, leaning on themselves and their own values - preserving the traditional structure on which they are based. Most Turkish youth believe that Islam is the only religion that matters in the eyes of God, which gives the impression to them that Western religions and ideologies are not Islamic. For instance, being a Jew or a Christian is not considered acceptable by the majority of people when it comes to religion. One participant (student 17) explains what she thinks about West by claiming:

West is Non-Muslim part of the world, Islam is out of its context.

According to Genç and Coşkun, conservatism is a concept that can be reconstructed, even if it is perceived as being closed in the religious sense or not being willing to change.<sup>42</sup> We can see conservatism as a determining factor in creating/maintaining a thought or lifestyle within both the religious segment and the value system. Being conservative requires having a stance and attitude and is based on the continuation of traditionalism or the weight of religious beliefs. In this regard some of participants advocate for a Turkish Islam. However, it is pertinent to ask, "Is there a distinct Turkish Islam? What has been the impact of globalization and modernity on the Turkish youth?". A female (student 6) asserts that:

Turkey is a secular state, which means to accept the separation between Islam and secular. I cannot think a separation of Islam and state. In fact, Islam is at every stage of our life, and we must believe and live in Islam in every field of our life such as eating, sleeping, law, and government.

Islam still has an impact on all facets of life in Turkey, despite its secularism and modernity. Islam is not the only religion involved. According to Yavuz, "religion is an essential component of human society and is an expression of humankind's almost visceral

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<sup>42</sup> Ernur Genç - Tuba Coşkun, "Muhafazakârlık ve Türkiye Muhafazakârlıklarının Bazı Halleri." *Niğde Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi* 8/1 (2015), 29.



drive to search for meaning; furthermore, religion can provide people a sense of identity."<sup>43</sup> Every area of Muslim life is being shaped by globalization processes. In light of this, Muslims may have a variety of understandings.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, the perception of conservatism, which is tried to be interpreted in the context of temporal, spatial and consumption relations, seems worth examining.

Conservatives move forward by needing the approval of tradition and the traditional religiosity in the modernization process and act as a social communication mechanism within the normatively accepted innovations.<sup>45</sup> Although the perception of conservatism changes with modernity and the continuous industrialization process; with the effect of postmodernity, it has become easy to rebuild. In other words, "conservatism is based on the reaction against the capitalist modernization process, in the name of the continuity of the political, social and cultural structures, perhaps more precisely the meanings and values attributed to those structures".<sup>46</sup>

This study deals with the discourse that Turkey is becoming increasingly religious or conservative. It includes rapid secularization, the new generation's moderate bond with religion, the sharia-secularization debate, the increasing number of women wearing headscarves, the constant consumption of alcohol, and the general perception of conservatism; based on the discourse that Turkey is rapidly becoming conservative, it actually includes observations on why it has not become conservative, contrary to this discourse. Along with technological progress, in the 2000s, it is seen that Turkish religiosity was under the influence of a time period that emerged as a result of the Turkish modernization experience and modern-secular tendencies also transformed religiosity typologies.<sup>47</sup>

On the other hand, in today's generation, the idea of individualism and the adage "Religion is individual" are becoming increasingly popular. Accepting individuality and our own choices plays an effective role in shaping our way of life. A male (student, 16) gives a

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<sup>43</sup> M. Hakan Yavuz, "Is there a distinct Turkish Islam?". *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 24/2, (October 2004), 214.

<sup>44</sup> Altıntaş, *The Role of Religious Education*, 141.

<sup>45</sup> Gabriel A. Almond vd. *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalisms Around the World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

<sup>46</sup> Tanıl Bora, *Türk Sağının Üç Hali* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003), 6.

<sup>47</sup> Necdet Subaşı, "Türkiye Dindarlığı: Yeni Tipolojiler". *İslamiyat* 5/4 (2012), 17-40.

voice who thinks like him by saying:

I am what I am. They do not understand me because they look through a single aspect. 'It is not like that, you should do like...' people just give advice to us. I am still on my own way; I can say 'this is me, as an individual.'

But, we must free the young people, they should make their own decision, they live a modern life, they find their own way. For example, they do not overwhelm themselves, like wearing burqa, frocks... I do not accept them. A Muslim can live an individual way.

This understanding has resulted with 'religion becomes a matter of personal choice' which clearly explained by Grace Davie. Davie states that religion becomes instead a matter of personal choice could understood:

I go to church (or to another religious organization) because I want to, maybe for a short period or maybe for longer, to fulfill a particular rather than a general need in my life and where I will continue my attachment so long as it provides what I want, but I have no obligation either to attend in the first place or to continue if I don't want to.<sup>48</sup>

As we see, there are three main groups according to our data: tough modernists/secularists, religious conservatives and liberals. We can state that conservatism and religiosity are interpreted differently by different segments of society depending on changing times and political developments, different definitions of religiosity have emerged, and intergroup relations are open to change depending on psychological or political foundations. Therefore, considering being religious and being secular in one-sided and opposite positions in Turkey may lead to a shallow approach.<sup>49</sup> According to the data, the majority of participants are aware of secular modern culture and its key elements, including individuality, modernism, liberal and democratic values, civilization, and technology. They all agree that Islam and the West's culture get along well. The notion that "Turkish Muslim youth should protect their religious side while westernization process is going on" is held by some individuals with more conventional worldviews. The westernization process is considered as a threat to Islam and its impact since it is seen as a denial of authentic Islamic principles, traditions, and institutions. The opinion is also that more contemporary and individualized forms of belief have taken the place of traditional dogmatic beliefs. It is a resilience of religion toward secularism.

In this situation, despite the fact that some young people have very rigid

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<sup>48</sup> Grace Davie, *The Sociology or Religion* (Atlanta, GA: Sage, 2007), 281.

<sup>49</sup> Kamile Paker – Sevim Cesur, "Laiklik Konusunda Ayrışan Gruplar ve Belirli Psiko-Sosyal Değişkenlerin Dış-Grup Değerlendirmelerinde Rolü." *Akademik Araştırma Dergisi* 57 (2013), 63.

understanding and reject compromise with secular modern culture, they can accept and respect any type of hybrid identities and worldviews by building positive relationships with people, upholding their rights, not deceiving others, etc. Those conservative young Muslims value ethical standards above everything else in order to keep religious values apart from all other aspects of life, even while they are surrounded by western secular principles. We learned from the participants that Islamic ethical norms are still in force and have a significant influence on many facets of society, even in societies where a secular culture predominates.<sup>50</sup> Islam actually seeks to maintain a healthy balance between this world and the afterlife; it serves as a constant reminder that the afterlife is the primary motivation behind conservative Muslims' acts in the here and now. In order to avoid dualities that are likely to arise in a Muslim's life, such as World-Afterlife, Material-Immaterial, and Religious-Secular, this is fundamental to Islam.

#### **4.3. Changing Religious Identities and New Forms of Religiosity in the Context of Resilience**

The Turkish case is one of the particular in that it combines a majority-Muslim population and history with a secularist vision of the state and modernity.<sup>51</sup> The religious and secular individuals' experiences in these settings reveal both Islamic and Western cultures. The story of the Turkish Muslim youth serves as an example of how religious traditions may take in and reframe the secular and modern discourse that permeates the world. The mutable nature of religious traditions prompts a reevaluation of religion's place in society and in day-to-day affairs. Young Turkish Muslims occasionally appropriate concepts, behaviors, and institutions from Western and other cultures, whether consciously or unconsciously. Nevertheless, this appropriation occurs in a setting that challenges identity by applying a lens made up of their Islamic cultural tradition.<sup>52</sup>

The study puts forward that the young religious segment may also have different-new religious perceptions or different identity structures as religious people, depending on the color of the time. The effect of different cultures and social changes and the new social manifestations that develop depending on this situation can be effective on the way to the

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<sup>50</sup> Altıntaş, *The Role of Religious Education*, 177.

<sup>51</sup> Altıntaş, *The Role of Religious Education*, 2.

<sup>52</sup> Altıntaş, *The Role of Religious Education*, 178.

transformation of religious identities. To be resilient, a person must be able to change, and to adapt to new circumstances. Motivation for change is necessary, as is the capacity to maintain the demands the change places on one's self-esteem and self-image. Self-awareness, of the challenge being confronted and the emotional suffering of its impact, is the first step toward change. A sufficient level of self-worth is essential for motivation to take charge and get through, and empowerment makes it possible to develop resilience. A person can make decisions and choose a new course of action with the aid of self-control or discipline as well as a rich inner life.<sup>53</sup>

Increased visibility of the Islamic style; as a religious identity, it points to both the traditional life based on belief and worship, and to determine the boundaries of traditionalism with "new" forms. In this context, secularization and Islamization can coexist. For example, by modernizing Islamic lifestyles, Islamic belongings and identities are transforming; at the same time, religious people continue to insist on preserving Islamic forms.<sup>54</sup> My data refutes the claim that Islam and the West are intrinsically incompatible; rather, it demonstrates how they interact and influence one another's cultures. Young Turkish Muslims are empowered and transformed by new forms of identity that are compatible with Western culture, and they also assist in the process of balancing modernity and Islam, secular and religious behaviors. As a result of the formation of hybridization, young people create their own identity, which is mixed, and bricolage. Islam may change and take on new forms, as well as new channels through which to spread; secularization and Islamization coexist. Young people look for solutions to the question: 'Is it possible to build a bridge between secular and religious discourse and worldviews?' Islamic identities are changing as a result of the modernization of Islamic lives.

Today's Turkish youth may tend to exhibit new religious codes and behavioral patterns in order to dissolve the dilemmas faced by Islamic values in the process of commodification and not to be caught between two different conceptions of thought. They appear to be a kind of identity in which they are articulated rather than choosing between some extremes; which can be summarized as "there is not only black or white, there are grey areas". This implies that individuals have personally undergone a transformation from a

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<sup>53</sup> Chapman, *Resilient Pastors*, 25.

<sup>54</sup> Altıntaş, *Worldview Theory*, 150-152.

"grey world from a black and white world" in that clear distinctions between the two cultures have vanished in their thinking and daily lives, and conflicting conceptions and mental structures can coexist.<sup>55</sup>

Postmodernity, including modernity, produces new forms specific to each phenomenon, and these new forms also include the reconstruction of belief styles. Accordingly, with the increasing emphasis on individuality from the past to the present, it can be said that religions are lived in individual-specific styles rather than in an organized or institutional way. Therefore, it can be said that with the integration of religious practices into modernity and technological progress, different visibility models have emerged. As can be seen in this style of religiosity, which is experienced as "compatible" with modernity, we can say that religious people perform religious worship or activities on a more performative level rather than collectively. This situation may show that the religious people are in the process of subjectivities by giving a subjective appearance of religiosity-religiousness with their unique religious clothing, speaking and shopping styles. It can be thought that this process has created "legitimate" grounds that allow the religious segment to integrate itself into modernity and this integration creates new appearances of religiosity and new religious discourses. It appears that several of the commandments of Islam that were previously regarded as untouchable were opened to discussion and became "touchable" during postmodern times, when it was acceptable to question everything.<sup>56</sup> The experiences that are fueled by discourses like "I can pray and drink wine" and "the place of prayers is different from the place of entertainment" have secular ramifications. Similarly, as a result of a related view, religion has been privatized and subjectified in postmodern times. Thus, religion is a phenomenon belonging to the private sphere.

### **Conclusion**

In this research, which we have done to understand the identity, religious life and behavior of young people, religious resilience, religious culture and accordingly religious changes and transformations have been examined along with religious potential. The data shows that; the relationship between the individual and religious belief and identity

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<sup>55</sup> Altıntaş, *The Role of Religious Education*, 198.

<sup>56</sup> Altıntaş, *The Role of Religious Education*, 193.

motivation is related to inhomogeneous results and factors. Each individual has different conceptions and different motivations regarding religious identity. In this sense, religiosity is fed by different social and psychological dynamics; in general, it seems to be related to time, space and socialization processes.

When we think in terms of religious/Islamic identity, stereotypes about the religion of Islam and a homogeneous religious group come to mind. However, with the effect of the changing world and popular culture, it can be difficult to talk about a homogeneous religiosity or religious identity. With which other social identities the individual lives his/her religious identity in the socialization process and the relations of his/her multiple identities with each other may also indicate that there will not be a homogeneous perception of religiosity. Therefore, religiosity and identity; it ceases to be a concept that will be limited to categorizing certain stereotypes and a way of life based on certain religious beliefs.<sup>57</sup> This feature makes it easy to rebuild. Therefore, changes in the concept of religiosity due to the relational nature of the discourse prevent religious people from being evaluated with a specific and limited perspective.

The attitudes, values and beliefs acquired by young people can change over time depending on different variables and in different time periods. Therefore, this change includes tendencies such as religious attitudes leaving the institutional area and open to individual inquiries, and the individualization process of religion.<sup>58</sup> While some participants live their religiosity or practices of religious living more closed, to the extent determined by their inner spirituality; some may prefer to live in a way that makes their worship more visible (religious practices in public, collective prayers, Friday prayers, direct participation in the activities of religious groups-congregations). People who believe that religion has unchangeable and rigid sides can be expected to lead a "secluded" or communal lifestyle, depending on the values they acquire in life. With the effect of changing conditions and postmodern discourses, ideologies and trans-boundary perceptions come into play; new religious practices-discourses, which we thought did not match their religious attitudes and behaviours, came to light. Anti-capitalist Muslims, secular religious people, especially in the

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<sup>57</sup> Hüseyin Certel, "Dini Yaşantıda Kalite Sorunu." *SDÜ İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 24 (2010), 33-59.

<sup>58</sup> Kamile Parker – Selda Akçalı "Dinin Bireyselleşmesi: Üniversite Gençliği ile bir Ölçek Çalışması." *Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences* 11/4 (2012), 1440-1459.

last ten years, the daily life practices of religious women have become more visible and thus the emergence of changes that determine the phenomenon of identity has strengthened the bond with the public sphere and the segments that bring the different together have become evident.

This change of manifestations of religiosity over time constitutes one of the main points of the study. Religious roles attributed to men and women in daily life practices, changes in the understanding of haram-halal, the theme of popular culture from an Islamic point of view (Islamic fashion industry), luxury mawlid organizations, and the discourses of "Islam is misinterpreted, this is not the real Islam" that are frequently heard in daily conversations are different. It may also indicate a changing understanding of religious identity. This observed change may be related to the fact that the Islamic identity, which is a strong social identity, moves away from the rigid/traditional stereotypes that categorize it or is reproduced through new discourses.

In the modern society we live in, ensuring the harmony between religion and the world constitutes a serious problem area. Secular contemporary ideologies tried to overcome this problem by completely isolating religion from social life, but they were unsuccessful in their plans. However, the practice of modern life continues to affect and determine individual lives with all its institutions and rules. In a secular world, maintaining traditional religiosity has many difficulties. Being both modern and being Muslim seems possible only by transforming and transforming at a hybridized level within borders.<sup>59</sup> In this process, it is possible for religious young people to make choices according to some alternatives in order to continue their lives without entering into a long-term conflict with the social order. Some young people try to adapt to the environment they live in by developing multiple identities that are intertwined. As a matter of fact, while some young people are trying to find a place in social life within 'Muslim-nationalist, Muslim-modern, Muslim-secular' identities at the same time, some young people who define themselves mainly with a non-religious identity need to apply to religious references from time to time. In all these cases, there is a defensive and resilient identity processed with a mental and cultural effort.

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<sup>59</sup> Nilüfer Göle, *İslam'ın Yeni Kamusal Yüzleri* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2000), 19-40.

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