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Religion and Religious Life in Turkey

Vera in versko življenje v Turčiji

Abstract: Shortly after the transition to the Republican regime in Turkey, the millet system was abolished in the Ottoman Empire. While certain rights were given to non-Muslims in religious matters, not all of them were included in the framework of civil law. For Muslims, the place of religion in society and state institutions has always been a matter of debate. While religious and state affairs were separated according to the principle of secularism, the state's control over religion continued. However, some restrictions on religious matters created discomfort in the society, therefore, after the Second World War, more flexible policies were followed in the field of religion. In addition, the social reflection of religion has become more visible. Since the 2000s, the social visibility of religion in Turkey has expanded considerably and the number of respective studies has increased compared to previous years. However, studies on religious life in Turkey are obviously very late, compared to studies in the West. The Religious Life in Turkey Survey conducted by the Directorate of Religious Affairs in 2013 is the most comprehensive to date. In this study, religious affiliation, belief, religious knowledge, daily life and religion and religiosity in Turkey were examined. In some places, evaluations were made by comparison with other surveys and studies.

Keywords: Turkey, religion, life, identity, faith, practice, education

Izleček: *Kmalu po prehodu na republikanski režim v Turčiji je bil sistem verske avtonomije millet v Otomanskem cesarstvu ukinjen. Medtem ko so bile v verskih zadevah nemuslimanom podeljene določene pravice, so bile le nekatere od njih vključene v okvir civilnega prava. Za muslimane je bil položaj vere v družbi in državnih institucijah vedno predmet razprave. Verske in državne zadeve so bile po načelu sekularizma ločene, kljub temu pa se je nadzor države nad vero nadaljeval. Nekatere omejitve v verskih zadevah so v družbi vzbujale negotovanje, zato je po drugi svetovni vojni politika na verskem področju postala prožnejša. Poleg tega je družbena refleksija vere postala vidnejša. Od leta 2000 se je družbena prepoznavnost vere v Turčiji močno povečala, prav tako pa – v primerjavi s prejšnjimi leti – tudi število študij o tem. Razvidno pa je, da so študije o verskem življenju v Turčiji zelo nove v primerjavi s študijami na Zahodu. Raziskava o verskem življenju v Turčiji, ki jo je leta 2013 izvedel Direktorat za verske zadeve, je najboljše doslej. V njej so preučevali versko pripadnost, prepričanje, versko znanje, vsakdanje življenje ter vero in religioznost v Turčiji. Ponekod so ocene izdelali s primerjavo z drugimi raziskavami in študijami.*

Ključne besede: *Turčija, vera, življenje, identiteta, vera, praksa, izobraževanje*

Introduction

In order to understand deeply the religious life of today in Turkey, it is necessary to go two centuries in the past. The process called »Tanzimat« in the Ottoman Empire was an important turning point for Turkey's modernization. In this process, which started with the reading of *Gülhane Hatt-ı Hümayun* in 1839, there were many changes compared to previous years. Sultan Mahmut II had made radical changes in many areas, including changing the costumes that people wore. However, Tanzimat was not a period easily accepted by many groups in the Ottoman Empire. While the innovations were tried to be harmonized with a legal basis, various political and philosophical movements from the West entered the Ottoman Empire and these caused many discussions inside (Bolay 2007, 162-165).

The defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War brought about a regime change in Turkey (Lewis 2008, 348-352; Smith 1957, 177-178). Although secularism, as the basic characteristic of the Republic of Turkey, was included in the constitution in 1937, the reforms have always been in line with the principle of secularism since the first years of the Republic. Therefore, religious life began to take shape within the framework of secularism (Ulutin 2014, 389).

While the Ottoman institutions, which were accepted as the reason for the backwardness, were removed, the religion factor was excluded from political life and the lack of religious sensitivity in some practices brought emotional hurt to the people. Therefore, with Turkey's transition to a multi-party system, its strict secular practices have been softened and the religious sensitivity of the people has been satisfied in some respects (Hizmetli 2003, 399).

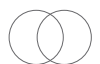
With the Democratic Party coming to power in 1950 and along with the removal of some religious restrictions, the visibility of religion in social life increased (Turan 2019, 275; Kırkpınar 2018, 354). With the AK Party coming to power in 2003, religion gained an important appearance in the public sphere with its visibility in social life. Therefore, besides the beliefs and practices of the people living in Turkey, research has been carried out that examines many subjects such as religiosity, religious feelings, religious identity, modernism and secularism. The most important of these is the



Religious Life in Turkey research conducted by the Presidency of Religious Affairs together with the Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK) in 2013. This research is very important as it is the first such a comprehensive research in Turkey. Necdet Subaşı, the coordinator of the research, states that although religious life studies are widespread in the West, they are newer in Turkey, so this study, which is presented without comment, fills an important gap (TDHA 2014, XVII).

In this comprehensive study consisting of 259 pages, the participants were asked many questions regarding religious belonging, faith, worship, religious knowledge, daily life and religion, and religiousness. The President of Religious Affairs, Mehmet Gormez, states that the survey was conducted in accordance with the responsibility given to the presidency by the constitution. According to Gormez, the Presidency of Religious Affairs puts maximum efforts into ensuring that Muslims reach accurate information while serving them both inside and outside the country. However, in order to carry out these services in accordance with their purpose, first of all, it is necessary to get real information from the field (TDHA 2014, XVII).

Considering the study conducted by the Presidency of Religious Affairs, it is evident that an important gap has been filled with the survey. Many religiosity surveys were conducted prior to this survey, which was carried out with the institutional support of TUIK, but previous survey studies were either locally based or covered a narrow scope. Therefore, this survey conducted by the Presidency of Religious Affairs throughout the country provided holistic data on religiosity and religious life in Turkey. *Research on Religious Life in Turkey* is a very comprehensive study conducted on a total of 37,624 households in Turkey, 26,600 of which are in the city centre and 11024 in rural areas. Within the scope of the study, Turkey was statistically divided into 12 regions and all settlements within the borders of the Republic of Turkey were included in the scope. The research was carried out in three stages. In the first stage, clusters were formed from different regions of Turkey. 1330 of these clusters are from urban areas and 689 are from rural settlements. In the second stage, households were created from each selected cluster. 20 of these households are from urban areas and 16 are from rural settlements. The last stage is about age and gender. People aged 18 and over were included in the scope of the research, and these people were determined equally as men and women.



1 Religious identity

According to the results of the survey conducted by the Presidency of Religious Affairs, 99.2% of the people living in Turkey declare that they are Muslims, while 0.4% state that they belong to religions other than Islam or that they do not belong to any religion. In terms of sectarian distribution, Muslims in Turkey are 77.5% Hanafi, 11.1% Shafi, 0.1% Hanbali, 0.003% Maliki and 1% Caferi. In addition to these, there are those who do not belong to any sect, as well as those who do not know what their sect is (TDHA 2014, XXIX). While the members of the Shafi sect are mostly found in the east of Turkey, the members of the Hanafi sect are found in all regions of Turkey. In this context, Hanafi sect has the highest density in all regions except eastern Turkey (7). As can be seen from the statistics, more than three quarters of the Muslims in Turkey belong to the Hanafi sect.

In the survey conducted by the Presidency of Religious Affairs, there is no information about the proportion of members other than Muslims in Turkey. In general, there are citizens in Turkey who belong to the Armenian, Greek Orthodox, Jewish, Syriac, Yezidi and Baha'i religions apart from Muslims. The largest population – 60,000 people – belongs to Armenians and they mostly live in cities such as Istanbul, Iskenderun and Hatay. The population of Assyrians is around 20,000 and they mostly live in cities such as Mardin, Istanbul, Mersin and Diyarbakır. There are around 50,000 Yazidis living in Siirt, Batman, Mardin, Urfa and Diyarbakır. The number of followers of the Greek Orthodox Church and the Turkish Orthodox Church, whose followers are mostly in Istanbul, is less than ten thousand. In Istanbul, Sivas, Iskenderun and Hatay, there are around 10,000 members of the Baha'i faith (Kurt and Aykıt 2018, 126–137). Most of the Jews in Turkey live in Istanbul and their population is around 15,000 (Basalel 2014). There are also around 35,000 Catholics affiliated with both the Latin and Uniate Churches in Turkey (Coppen 2021). 15,000 of them belong to Latin Catholics (Marmara 2006, 202).

2 Faith of religion

The overwhelming majority of people living in Turkey are believers. There has been an increase in the influence of religion on social life in Turkey



for the last two decades. This is proven by the increasing rate of religiosity and the fact that a party that defines itself as a conservative democrat is in power. The increase in religiosity is seen numerically in the religiosity survey conducted in Turkey in 2009 within the scope of the International Social Survey Program (ISSP - which 45 countries are members of) (Semerci 2019, 34). According to this survey conducted in 53 provinces of Turkey between November 2008 and March 2009, 92% of the participants state that the meaning of life is strengthened by the presence of Allah (God). 93% of the participants state that they accept the existence of Allah as a fact and have no doubt about his existence. 2% of the participants consider themselves as atheists. 95% of the participants stated that they acquired their belief in God at a very young age and they carried this belief throughout their lives without any change (Çarkoğlu and Kalaycıoğlu 2009, 8). Therefore, this data reveals the importance of education in the family in shaping religious belief.

According to the report, when these data on belief in God in Turkey are compared with ISSP 1998 World data, even if the answers in Turkey are somewhat similar to countries with a dense Catholic population such as the Philippines, Chile and Poland, there is a belief in God to a greater extent than any other country (Çarkoğlu and Kalaycıoğlu 2009, 4.7).

In the survey conducted by the PEW Research Center in 2019, 75% of Turkish people say that religion is important in their lives. On the other hand, Turkey has the highest rate among European countries with 75% of the answers given to the question »It is necessary to believe in God in order to be moral and have good values« (Tamir, Connaughton and Monique Salazar 2020).

In the comprehensive survey of the Presidency of Religious Affairs in 2014, it is noteworthy that there are high rates of religious belief in Turkey. 98.7% of the citizens living in Turkey believe in the existence of Allah without any doubt. There is no extreme difference between rural-urban, male-female, and over the age of 18–65 in believing in the existence of Allah. While the rate of illiterate people who do not doubt the existence of Allah is 99.7%, this rate is 94.8% for undergraduate and graduate students. The rate of those who believe that the Qur'an is true and valid for all times is 96.5%. 1% state that they do not agree with this, 1.6% say that they do not



have an opinion. The number of people who believe in the hereafter is also quite high in Turkey. The rate of those who believe that people will be resurrected after death and that they will give an account for their actions is 96.2% (TDHA 2014, XXIX).

When the belief in the existence of God is evaluated according to the sense of religiosity, 99.7% of those who feel very religious say that they believe that God really exists and is one, and that they have no doubt about it. This rate is 80.8% for those who do not feel religious at all (TDHA 2014, 12).

When we look at the different survey data on religious belief, it is noteworthy that the belief in God and the lifestyle shaped around this belief have increased at an advanced level for a quarter of a century.

3 Religious Practices

Prayer, fasting, obligatory alms (zakah) and pilgrimage are very important acts of worship in the eyes of Muslims. In line with a word of the Prophet Muhammad, these worships have also come to be known as »five pillars of Islam«. The Prophet Muhammad said in one of his words on the subject: »Islam has been built on five [pillars]: testifying that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, performing the prayers, paying the zakah, making the pilgrimage to the House, and fasting in Ramadan.« (Bukhari, İman, 8) The Presidency of Religious Affairs examined the perception of religiosity in Turkey in line with these basic worships with a survey.

3.1 Prayer (salah)

Praying five times a day is obligatory for Muslims who have reached the age of puberty and are of sound mind. In addition, the Friday prayer performed in congregation is one of the obligatory prayers. While the rate of Muslims in Turkey performing the Friday prayer is high, it is lower in the five daily prayers. The rate of those who always pray five times a day is 42.5%, and this rate is even higher in women. As the age increases, the rate of those who pray five times a day also increases; the highest level is over 65 years old. On the other hand, as the level of education increases,



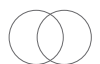
the proportion of those who always perform the five daily prayers decreases (TDHA 2014, XXX). Considering the sectarian distribution of those who perform the five daily prayers, 64.2% of those who belong to the Shafi sect and 42.6% of those who belong to the Hanafi sect perform their daily prayers (TDHA 2014, 47).

Muslims in Turkey attach great importance to the Friday prayer performed in congregation, and the rate of participation is quite high compared to the five daily prayers. In general, men go to Friday prayers, and 57.4% of men throughout the country always perform Friday prayers. As the level of education increases, the rate of performing the Friday prayer decreases, but this difference is not as big as in the five daily prayers. On the other hand, 7.2% of men and 92.3% of women say that they never perform the Friday prayer (TDHA 2014, XXX).

Another striking situation in the survey is the different approach of the educated people to the five daily prayers and Friday prayer. For example, while the rate of illiterate people who always perform their daily prayers is 69.3%, this rate drops to 27.4% for undergraduate and higher graduates. In the Friday prayer, the difference is considerably smaller. 62.5% of illiterate men and 57.7% of undergraduate and higher graduates state that they always perform the Friday prayer (TDHA 2014, 51).

Although both the five daily prayers and Friday prayers are accepted as obligatory prayers in Islam, it can be questioned why the Friday prayer is more prominent. It is possible that besides the advices about Friday in the Qur'an and hadiths, it is a group worship that makes it different from the others. This day is called »Friday« because it is a meeting day (Karaman 1993, 85). In the Qur'an, when a call to prayer is made on Friday, that is an order to go to pray immediately and stop trading (Q 62:9). In the hadith, it is stated that the best day when the sun rises is Friday (Muslim, Cuma, 18).

On the other hand, there are some traditions about Friday prayer that are not found in the authentic sources of Islam but come from in folk beliefs. In this context, the rumors among the public that those who do not attend the Friday prayer three times in a row will leave the religion or that the marriage will be broken, may have affected the participation in the



Friday prayer. Although we do not have any concrete data on this, the Presidency of Religious Affairs has given a fatwa pointing to this situation. Accordingly, the hadiths containing threatening expressions towards those who leave the Friday prayer aim to emphasize the importance of Friday and to inform that those who leave without an excuse will deserve punishment. In some of these hadiths, the Messenger of Allah said: »Some people either stop abandoning the Friday prayer or Allah seals their hearts and they become heedless.« (Muslim, Cuma, 40) »Whoever abandons three Fridays because he does not care, Allah will seal his heart.« (Abu Dawud, Salat, 212) Therefore, a Muslim who abandons the Friday prayer without an excuse commits a major sin. But as long as Friday's obligatory worship is not denied and taken lightly, abandoning Friday three times does not invalidate the marriage (Din İşleri Yüksek Kurulu, 2017).

Although there is an obligation in Islam to perform the Friday prayer in congregation, there is no such obligation in the five daily prayers. However, performing the five daily prayers in congregation is 27 times more rewarding than the prayer performed alone (Bukhari, Salat, 87). Therefore, praying in congregation in the mosque, apart from the Friday prayer, has a special importance in Islam. According to ISSP 2009 data, when asked whether and how often they went to the mosque to pray in the last year, 36.5% of the respondents answered more than once a week. 22.6% of them state that they went to the mosque at least once a week (Çarkoğlu and Kalaycıoğlu 2009, 24). In the survey of the Presidency of Religious Affairs in 2013, the question about the mosque was slightly different, and more intentions were also questioned. In the survey, the percentages of those who want to perform their prayers in the mosque were examined. Accordingly, 58.3% of the participants state that they want to perform the prayer in the mosque (TDHA 2014, 70).

3.2 Fasting (sawm)

One of the important worships in Islam is fasting. Fasting in Ramadan is compulsory (fard) for a Muslim who can afford it, and is fixed by the Qur'an, sunnah and consensus (ijma) (Dönmez 2007, 417). Although it is



difficult to fast – give up all eating and drinking between *imsak*¹ and *iftar*² times – the interest in fasting is bigger than in praying five times a day. In Turkey, the rate of those who say that they fast during Ramadan is 83.4%. While this rate is 80.7% for men, it is 86% for women. Unlike prayer, the rate of people who say they fast in Ramadan decreases as age increases. While this rate is 85.1% in the 18–24 age group, it is 74.4% over the age of 65 (TDHA 2014, XXX). The influential factor in this regard is probably the physical difficulty of performing fasting in old age. It is stated in the Qur'an that fasting is obligatory for those who are healthy, and that those who cannot afford it must pay *fidyah* (religious payment) (Q 2:286).

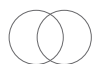
3.3 Obligatory alms (*zakah*)

Helping the poor and needy is encouraged in all religions. In some religions, it is important to help those who are economically weak, while in some religions it is considered virtuous to help individuals who do not care about the world and aim for spiritual ascent (Salihoğlu 2013, 207). In Islam, in addition to bodily worship such as prayer and fasting, there are financially important worships, the foremost of which is *zakah* (obligatory alms). *Zakah* in Islam is the giving of a certain percentage of their wealth to the poor by Muslims who are considered to be rich in religion. In Islamic sources, it is explained in detail who can give *zakah*, the rate of *zakah* goods and who can receive *zakah*. In addition to being an individual worship, *zakah* also has a social dimension in terms of taking care of the poor (Erkal 2013, 197–207).

When we look at the *zakah* practices of Muslims in Turkey, it is understood that the rate of those who give *zakah* every year is 71%. Of course, this rate is realized when the financial situation of the people is good. A portion of 1.1% states that they do not give *zakah* even if their financial situation is good. The age group with the highest *zakah* payers is 55–64 years old (TDHA 2014, XXXI).

1 The beginning of the day's fast in Ramadan.

2 The evening meal during Ramadan.



Another important issue related to zakah is whether the tax given to the state will replace zakah. This issue has also been discussed by the theologians on the subject (Eskicioglu, 1989, 225–250). The Supreme Council of Religious Affairs, affiliated to the Presidency of Religious Affairs, which is an important authority in the solution of religious problems in Turkey, made a statement on the subject and stated that tax is a civic duty, while zakah is a religious obligation. Accordingly, there are differences between zakah and tax in terms of liability, purpose, amount and places of expenditure. Therefore, taxes paid to the state do not replace zakah (High Council of Religious Affairs, 2017).

While 67.1% of Muslims in Turkey do not agree with the opinion that »tax given to the state replaces zakah«, 11.8% of them give a positive answer. 15% of them say that they do not have any idea about the subject (TDHA 2014, 154).

3.4 Pilgrimage (Hajj)

The concept of holy places and the visit of such places have existed in all faiths throughout history. Sacred places were visited for different purposes such as obtaining material, spiritual and moral benefits from the holiness of that place (Harman 1996, 382). A religious person in any culture may sometimes go beyond their own temple to a place of religious significance to reinvigorate their faith. Benares for the Hindu, Mecca for the Muslim, and Saikoku for the Japanese are places of pilgrimage. On the other hand, Jerusalem is a common important holy place for Jews, Christians and Muslims (Turner 2005, 7145).

The status of holy places in Islam is detailed in the Qur'an and hadiths. In the Qur'an, Allah asked Muslims to visit the Kaaba and perform pilgrimage; he also said that this is his right over people (Q 3:97). On the other hand, the Prophet Muhammad also stated that the first of the three mosques to be traveled to is the Masjid al-Haram (Kaaba) (Bukhari, Fazlu's-salât, 1).

In the religion of Islam, the idea of sacred place and time is united in pilgrimage (Hajj). Hajj is not only physical but also financial worship. Because, in order to fulfill this worship, it is necessary to have a certain



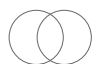
amount of property. A Muslim who makes a pilgrimage once in his/her life fulfills this obligatory worship (Öğüt 1996, 389). On the other hand, pilgrimage is not only fulfilling Allah's command, but also reviving the religious experience of the Prophet Abraham. In this sense, Mecca (Kaaba) is distinguished from other cities as an area where religious experiences accumulate (Tatar 2017, 19).

In addition to being a worship commanded by Allah, Hajj has had a social visibility among Muslims in Turkey from the Ottoman period to the present. During the Ottoman Period, pilgrimages were made with a large convoy carrying aid to the people living in the holy cities; this journey took place in difficult and arduous conditions incomparable with today's. For this reason, the adjective »el Hac«, which means pilgrim, is one of the most important titles expressing respectability in Ottoman society (Erkan 2019, 446; Buzpınar 2009, 567–569; Wasti 2005, 193–200).

The coordinatorship of pilgrimage services in Turkey is carried out by the General Directorate of Hajj and Umrah, a unit under the Presidency of Religious Affairs. The relevant general directorate takes the necessary measures inside and outside of Turkey and cooperates with stakeholder organizations for the efficient conduct of Hajj and Umrah (Hac ve Umre Hizmetleri Genel Müdürlüğü 2014).

Previously, anyone who registered for pilgrimage in Turkey could perform this worship in that year. However, since the number of Muslims who apply for pilgrimage has increased each year, the pilgrimages after 2009 were determined by lottery. Due to the limited capacity of the places of pilgrimage, Saudi Arabia allocates quota to countries at the rate of one thousandth of their population. The number of quotas allocated to Turkey is around 83,000 annually, and the number of applicants for pilgrimage is many times higher. Therefore, there are those who have the chance to go on pilgrimage within a year or two with this practice, as well as those who wait up to ten years (Şahin, 2020).

According to the survey conducted by the Presidency of Religious Affairs, the rate of pilgrims in Turkey is 6.6%. Those who want to go on pilgrimage when they have the opportunity are 84.9%. People living in rural areas have a higher rate of pilgrimage than those living in urban areas. As age



increases, the rate of pilgrims increases. On the other hand, the rate of men who have gone on pilgrimage is higher than women, but the desire to go on a pilgrimage is higher for women – 87% than men – 82.9%. Although the proportion of women who have gone on pilgrimage in the current situation is lower than men, their desire to go in the future is higher than men (TDHA 2014, XXXI).

When the subject of worship in Turkey is reviewed in general, it is understood that women are more sensitive. Especially in daily prayers and fasting, women's sensitivity is significantly higher than men. Although the rate of pilgrim men is higher than women, more women want to become pilgrims than men. This may be due to the necessity of accompanying women with their husbands or relatives to go on pilgrimage, in line with the principles of the Hanafi school (Akyol 2020, 175–176).

3.5 Religious knowledge and education

An important aspect of Turkey's modernization project is the Law of Unity in Education, which was adopted in 1924, and the establishment of the Directorate of Religious Affairs. With this law, the state planned to eliminate the influence of religious structures in education and to implement centralism. The Presidency of Religious Affairs, on the other hand, became a religious institution operating under the control of the state (Akşit, Şentürk, Küçükkural and Cengiz 2020, 101). The appointment of the President of Religious Affairs by the state and the functioning of this presidency like other institutions affiliated to the state seem to be contrary to secularism. According to Ali Fuat Başgil, an important lawyer, politician and thinker in Turkey, with the establishment of the Presidency of Religious Affairs, instead of an autonomous structuring of religion, religious services were provided by the state (Ulutin 2014, 393; Hizmetli 2008, 403).

In today's Turkey, in more than 80 thousand mosques, religious officials explain the religion of Islam and perform prayers (Akşit, Şentürk, Küçükkural and Cengiz 2020, 101). In addition, studies in many fields such as Quran courses, pilgrimages and religious services abroad are carried out by the Presidency of Religious Affairs. In this context, the Presidency of Religious Affairs performs an important task in acquiring religious knowledge from the top to the lower unit. In addition, important information about Islam



and other religions is taught in compulsory and optional religion courses in primary, secondary and high schools in Turkey (Kaymakcan 2006, 24).

The native language of people in Turkey is Turkish. People who know Arabic, the language of the Qur'an, are more specialized in religious sciences. On the other hand, people of Arab origin living in Turkey can speak and write Arabic. Although the vast majority of Muslims in Turkey do not know Arabic grammatically, half of the people can read the Qur'an in Arabic letters. The rate of young people to read the Qur'an is higher than the elderly (TDHA 2014, XXXII). 20.8% of respondents say that they read the Arabic of the Qur'an every day of the week, 22.6% say they read it a few days a week, and 16.3% read it once a week. The rate of those who read the Turkish translation and interpretation of the Qur'an is even lower (90.96).

In Turkey, official Qur'an education is carried out in units under the Presidency of Religious Affairs and in schools under the Ministry of National Education. While this education is compulsory in Imam Hatip Schools, it is optional in schools other than it. (Yorulmaz 2014, 301-324) However, those living in Turkey get their first religious knowledge mostly from their close circle and family, and this rate is 91.8%. The rate of those who obtained religious knowledge from the religious officer in the mosque is 43%. On the other hand, 10.4% of religious knowledge is obtained from the Qur'an Courses affiliated to the Presidency of Religious Affairs. The rate of those who obtain religious information from the Internet is low – only 4.8% (TDHA 2014, 113). Although the Internet and social media are highly developed today, it is an important indicator that Muslims in Turkey acquired their first religious information face-to-face rather than digitally. The rate of those who obtained religious knowledge from Imam Hatip High School and Theology Faculties, which are important official institutions that provide religious education in Turkey, is 2.7%. Another remarkable point in the survey is that only 0.2% of respondents stated that they do not need religious knowledge (TDHA 2014, 114). Therefore, it can be said that a wide range of people are interested in religious knowledge in Turkey, both in theory and in practice.

When it comes to the second source of the religious information of Muslims living in Turkey, there are significant differences compared to the previous one. In the first, family is at the forefront of the source



of religious knowledge, while in the second, religious officials in the mosque, formal education institutions, and Qur'an Courses affiliated to the Presidency of Religious Affairs come to the fore (TDHA 2014, 118). As it can be understood from this, individuals who receive the basic core religious education in the family benefit from official religious institutions as the second source of religious education. When we look at the source from which people develop their religious knowledge, another difference draws attention. While Muslims in Turkey get their first religious knowledge from their families, they develop their religious knowledge mostly through the people around them who have religious knowledge. The second area in which religious knowledge is developed is television and radio programs with religious content. The officials of the Presidency of Religious Affairs are in the third place in the development of people's religious knowledge (TDHA 2014, 124).

Religious knowledge is mostly learned under the age of 16; the least learned age group is over 60 years old. Access to religious knowledge is mostly through those around them who have religious knowledge. In this sense, a significant amount of religious information is obtained from the people working in the Presidency of Religious Affairs and from programs such as television and radio (TDHA 2014, XXXII).

The number of those who say that they shape their lives according to religious orders in Turkey is quite high. The number of those who say that they have never shaped their lives according to religious orders is only around 4%. When a comparison is made between rural and urban areas, those in rural areas have more religious priorities. On the other hand, as the age increases, the number of those who say that their life has always been shaped in line with the orders of religion also increases (TDHA 2014, XXXIII).

In the acquisition of religious knowledge, there are sometimes differences between the sacred text and daily practice. For example, some people state that subjects such as interest (*riba*) and getting loans are actually forbidden in Islam, but they currently have no other choice. On the other hand, there are people who refuse to do business with interest despite the economic conditions and continue their trade according to the Islamic method (Akşit, Şentürk, Küçükkural and Cengiz 2020, 195.215). Accordingly, nearly

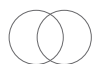


half of Muslims in Turkey say that things that are free (halal) and forbidden (haram) should be reconsidered by taking into account today's conditions (TDHA 2014, 150).

4 Headscarf Issue

As mentioned in the Qur'an and hadiths, women are ordered by Allah to cover their heads (Q 4:131; Tirmidhi, Rada, 18). However, the headscarf (turban) issue, especially for women working or studying in public institutions, has become a problem for a while in Turkey. The ban on the subject was implemented in a large part of Turkey after the post-modern coup in 1997. Over time, there were basically two differences of opinion on the headscarf issue. A group in Turkey said that the headscarf (turban) should be separated from the traditional veiling styles, that it is a political symbol, that the issue was brought to Turkey's agenda by Islamist parties, and that this issue coincides with the aspirations of sharia in political Islam. On the other hand, another part, who had a more liberal approach, argued that the headscarf was linked to one's religious belief or identity, was not used as a political symbol, that the headscarved students not being able to attend the university constituted a violation of their rights, and that the solution of this issue was among the most important issues in Turkey (Çarkoğlu-Toprak 2006, 23). The fact that women both serving and receiving services in the public sector could not wear a headscarf caused great reactions in the country over time, and the headscarf ban was lifted with the new regulation in 2013 (Resmi Gazete 2013, 287-289). Thus, the problem of both the headscarved female students receiving education and the female civil servants providing public service was eliminated and the headscarf problem in Turkey was solved.

According to the comprehensive survey of the Presidency of Religious Affairs in 2013, 71.6% of women in Turkey cover their heads. While this rate is 65% in urban areas, it is 88.9% in rural areas. When we look at the age groups, the rate of covering the head over 65 is very high, while the 18-24 age range is lower. Therefore, it can be said that in Turkish society, women's head covering increases even more in later ages. On the other hand, as the level of education increases, the rate of covering one's head while going out decreases. While the rate of women who say they cover



their heads among illiterate people is 95%, this rate is 20.5% for undergraduate and graduate graduates (TDHA 2014, 102–105).

Another parameter that can be evaluated regarding the headscarf is related to marital status. While 79.3% of married women cover their heads outside, this rate drops to half for single women (TDHA 2014, 105).

Another issue that can be examined regarding the headscarf is whether women wear it because of their religious belief or tradition. A large proportion of women who wear headscarves in Turkey, 91.8%, say that they cover their heads due to their religious beliefs (TDHA 2014, 105). The priority in the reason for wearing the headscarf was also confirmed in the surveys conducted before the study of the Presidency of Religious Affairs. For example, in the survey conducted by TESEV in 2006, the rate of those who say they wear the headscarf as a requirement of Islam is 79% (Çarkoğlu-Toprak 2006, 63). However, over time, the proportion of women who wear headscarves due to their religious beliefs has increased. Those who say that they cover it because of tradition are 5.9%, those who say that they cover their heads because of their family/husband's request are 1.8%, and those who say that they cover their heads for reasons such as environmental pressure, work, looking beautiful and health are 0.1% (TDHA 2014, 105). Considering these rates, the vast majority of women in Turkey cover their heads due to their religious beliefs.

5 Daily Life

Religiosity is a relative concept, and it cannot be handled independently of the phenomenon of religion and the dimension of religious behavior. Because, religiosity changes not only according to the essence of religion and the subject who perceives it, but also according to the point of view of the religious. In addition to the individual dimension of religiosity, it also has a social aspect. The relationship that the individual establishes with the sacred also affects his/her beliefs and practices in social life. This situation creates mutual interaction between the individual and society (Gulec and Bilgin 2008, 104). In the comprehensive research of the Presidency of Religious Affairs, it has been discussed what the individual encounters in his/her life, starting from his/her private world and



extending to the public. The social equivalent of the religious feeling in the individual has been examined and the authentic and superstitions have been discussed. Accordingly, three-quarters of Muslims in Turkey always consider whether Allah will be pleased with their decisions in their daily lives. The rate of those who never consider whether God will be pleased with their decision is 2.7%. People living in rural areas seek the pleasure of Allah more than those living in urban areas (TDHA 2014, 178). However, although 64.9% seems to be high in shaping his life according to the commands of religion, it is noteworthy that there is a decrease when compared to whether God is always pleased or not (180).

It is noteworthy that there are different data on the Muslims in Turkey performing their prayers such as prayer (salah), fasting, pilgrimage and zakah. Another remarkable point is how Muslims feel when some basic prayers are not performed. 77.4% of Muslims in Turkey feel restless when they cannot pray. While 18% say they are occasionally restless, 3.2% say they are never restless. On the other hand, nine out of ten Muslims in Turkey say that they always feel remorse when they commit a sin (TDHA 2014, 185.188).

Conclusion

In today's Turkey, the concept of religion has an important place in the social sphere, and religion has also become visible in many parts of life. The fact that a conservative party came to power in 2003 after religious restrictions in 1997 contributed significantly to the increase of this visibility. However, it is noteworthy that the language of religion has also changed in Turkish society. When we look at the comprehensive survey conducted by the Presidency of Religious Affairs in detail, these occurrences seem even more intertwined.

Considering the religious life in Turkey, the comprehensive research conducted by the Presidency of Religious Affairs in 2013 is an important data source on this subject. According to this research, the overwhelming majority of Turkish society, 99.2% of whom are Muslims, state that religion has an important place in their lives. On the other hand, although worship such as prayer, fasting, pilgrimage and zakah are given importance,



the degrees of each are different from the other. In addition, the view of worship also varies in criteria such as age, education level, living in the countryside or in the city. As the age increases, the tendency to worship increases, in addition, women are fonder of worship than men. In the context of education level, religiosity decreases in master's and doctorate. But education does not reduce religiosity in general. As a result, although there were variables due to different factors regarding the position of religion in society from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic, the religious life and the management of religious institutions in general continued their activities under the supervision and control of the state. On the other hand, although there are theories that religion cannot continue to exist in the social sphere in the process of Turkish modernization, it has an important place in today's Turkey, both in the individual and social spheres. As a result, in today's Turkey, the concept of religion not only has an important place in the public sphere, but also has a visibility in every part of life. However, different evaluations within the concepts such as belief, worship and religious identity draw attention.

Abbreviation

TDHA Türkiye'de Dini Hayat Araştırması



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