

**Research Article**

**Impact of Crime and Insecurity and Religiosity on Citizen Trust in Public Institutions: A Study in Türkiye**

*Suç ve Güvensizlik ve Dindarlığın Kamu Kurumlarına Olan Vatandaş Güveni Üzerindeki Etkisi: Türkiye'de Bir Araştırma*

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***Abstract***

*This study examines the impact of crime rates, insecurity perception, and religiosity on citizens' trust in public institutions in Türkiye. Trust in government is essential for social cohesion and the effective operation of administrative systems. However, increasing crime rates and a heightened sense of insecurity contribute to a decline in public confidence in state institutions, potentially weakening the social contract. Using data from the World Values Survey Wave 7, this research investigates the relationship between crime, insecurity, and trust, while also assessing the moderating role of religiosity. Findings indicate that higher crime rates and insecurity negatively affect trust in public institutions. However, religiosity presents a complex relationship, where individuals who engage in religious practices exhibit lower trust, while self-identified religious individuals show greater confidence in public institutions. Based on empirical findings specific to the Turkish context, this study identifies areas where public trust in the government and public administration has weakened, demonstrating that such a decline may adversely affect the effectiveness and legitimacy of public policies. The findings highlight the critical importance of strengthening transparency, accountability, and participatory mechanisms in the process of rebuilding public trust. In this regard, the study underscores the need to reconsider the current governance approach and adopt more inclusive and effective strategies.*

**Keywords:** Crime rate, insecurity, religiosity, trust in public institutions, Türkiye

***Öz***

*Bu çalışma, Türkiye’de suç oranları, güvensizlik algısı ve dindarlığın vatandaşların kamu kurumlarına olan güveni üzerindeki etkisini incelemektedir. Hükümete duyulan güven, toplumsal uyum ve kamu yönetim mekanizmalarının etkin işleyişi açısından kritik bir öneme sahiptir. Ancak artan suç oranları ve yükselen güvensizlik hissi, devlet kurumlarına olan kamu güveninin azalmasına neden olarak toplumsal sözleşmeyi zayıflatabilir. Bu çalışmada, Dünya Değerler Araştırması’nın 7. dalgasından elde edilen veriler kullanılarak suç, güvensizlik ve güven arasındaki ilişki analiz edilmiş, aynı zamanda dindarlığın bu ilişkideki düzenleyici rolü değerlendirilmiştir. Bulgular, yüksek suç oranları ve güvensizlik algısının kamu kurumlarına duyulan güveni olumsuz etkilediğini göstermektedir. Bununla birlikte, dindarlık karmaşık bir ilişki sergilemekte; dini pratiklere katılan bireyler kamu kurumlarına daha az güven duyarken, kendini dindar olarak tanımlayan bireylerin kamu kurumlarına daha fazla güven duyduğu tespit edilmiştir. Bu çalışma, Türkiye bağlamına özgü ampirik bulgulara dayanarak, vatandaşların hükümete ve kamu yönetimine duyduğu güvenin zayıfladığı alanları ortaya koymakta ve bu durumun, kamu politikalarının etkinliğini ve meşruiyetini olumsuz etkileyebileceğini göstermektedir. Elde edilen bulgular, kamu güveninin yeniden inşası sürecinde şeffaflık, hesap verebilirlik ve katılımcı mekanizmaların*

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*güçlendirilmesinin kritik bir öneme sahip olduğunu ortaya koymakta; bu bağlamda, mevcut yönetim anlayışının gözden geçirilerek daha kapsayıcı ve etkili stratejilere ihtiyaç duyulduğunu vurgulamaktadır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Suç oranı, güvensizlik, dindarlık, kamu kurumlarına güven, Türkiye

## 1. Giriş

Trust is a central issue in the sustainability of social, economic, and political structures of modern societies. Trust in governmental institutions strengthens the state's legitimacy and ensures a strong foundation for the relationship between citizens and the state. On the other hand, the increased ratio of crime rates and the insecurity perception in society dampens trust in government and the belief in the efficiency and the justice of the state (Blanco and Ruiz, 2013, p. 287). This situation can cause significant results not only for individual aspects but also for social integrity and how democratic mechanisms work. The concepts of crime and insecurity have shown more complex structures, especially in countries like Turkey, where economic, social, and cultural diversity is so high (Blanco and Ruiz, 2013, p. 287; Uddin, 2024, p. 9). Inequality of income and education in the society and the perception about the degeneration of public institutions increase the crime rates.

Furthermore, criticism and distrust towards public authority increases because of these circumstances. Ineffective investigation of committed crimes and punishment of perpetrators also weakens society's belief in the rule of law and the justice system. In other words, a healthy and sustainable relationship between the citizens and the state, the government, and the public institutions relies on the concept of citizens' trust in government. Trust in government directly impacts the perceptions and behaviors of citizens, which helps to develop a more positive approach towards the public institutions they have trust. Moreover, the operations of public administration have to have trust-based relations with the society because of their nature. In this regard, citizens expect public employees to act transparent and fair for the benefit of the public and to use public resources according to the law.

Trust in government is not significant only for the sustainability of social harmony and interactions but also important for the functionality of efficient administration mechanisms. Individuals' conformity with the law and rules is closely related to external sanctions, normative pressure, and trust in government. This trust in government is a reflection of citizens' perception of the legitimacy, impartiality, and efficiency of public institutions. If public administration follows the principles of transparency, accountability, and being citizen-oriented, individuals tend to admit the law sincerely. This also can strengthen their trust in the decision-making processes of public institutions and government authority (Tyler, 2006). However, trust in the government can be eroded in contexts where the crime rates are high and the security perception of individuals is low (Corbacho, Philipp and Ruiz-Vega, 2015). The perception that public institutions cannot fulfill or do not want to fulfill their main roles also impacts the acceptability of these institutions by the public negatively (Rothstein and Uslaner, 2005). In this context, the dynamics that are shaped by crime rates and insecurity have a double-sided effect on trust in government. On the one side, these dynamics would shape the perceptions about the capability of the state to protect the public and provide justice. On the other hand, they also determine the commitment level of the public to the authority of the public administration. When the insecurity perception is common, satisfaction with the democratic system and trust in public institutions would be lower in this context (Blanco and Ruiz, 2013; Blanco, 2013). As a result, the social contract between the state and the public would weaken, and a legitimacy crisis could occur. However, the dynamics of this relationship are too complex and cannot be explained by one variable. Factors like religion or income level are especially significant in forming the perceptions of people about crime and insecurity. Therefore, religion also has a pivotal role in determining trust in government. The individuals' predisposition to follow the rules and the moral responsibility could also be higher in societies where the religious faith and rules are strong. In this regard, the crime rates could decrease indirectly, and the security perception and trust in the government of the society could solidify. Besides, the unifying power of religion can strengthen the connections of solidarity and trust in society and impact the perceptions of individuals about public institutions positively. On the other hand, religion mostly impacts risk attitude and avoidance of autonomy of the individuals (Hsiung and Djupe, 2019, p. 626). Thus, their perception regarding external actors can easily be shifted from a logical base to laundering them for bad actions.

To sum up, citizens' trust in public institutions and government is in interaction with crime and security perceptions of them both directly and indirectly. The increase in crime rates and the feeling of insecurity negatively affect the perception of the efficiency and fairness of public authority and can weaken the social contract of citizens with the state. Moreover, the religiosity level in a society can help individuals to follow the rules and moral responsibilities, which will strengthen the trust in government. For these reasons in the literature, this study aims to investigate the impact of the crime rates and insecurity perception on trust in government and public institutions and their interaction with the religiosity of the society to determine the combined impact on trust in government in the Türkiye context. The data of World Values Survey Wave 7 with the Türkiye sample is used to investigate the relationships among crime and insecurity, religiosity, and trust in government concepts. Although previous studies in other country contexts (Mukherjee, 2022, p. 179; Uddin, 2024, p. 9) have investigated how crime and insecurity impact citizen trust in government, there are limited studies about the Türkiye context. The findings of this study could contribute to policy development to strengthen public trust and provide a solid ground for social harmony in Türkiye.

## **2. Literature Review and Hypotheses**

The literature about institutional trust puts forward two important views which are society-oriented and institution-oriented (Rothstein and Stolle 2008, pp. 442-443). Society-oriented view has been produced from the social capital concept and it argues that a long-time-oriented social interaction in a society would support general trust within it which also indicates its social capital level (Rothstein and Stolle 2008, p. 442). This proposition is related to the arguments of Putnam, Leonardi and Nonetti (1993) in regard to trust. On the other hand, the institutions-oriented view is based on the ideas of Rothstein and Teorell (2008) about the quality of government. According to this perspective, the presence of trustworthy, strong, impartial, untainted, and competent is a main factor that reinforces citizens' trust in government (Rothstein and Teorell, 2008). Institutions-oriented view argues that maintaining the legitimacy of public institutions and enhancing citizen trust are based on the capacity of these institutions to implement efficient and effective policies. In other words, strong, transparent, accountable, and efficient public institutions can increase the trust of citizens in the government but weak, inefficient, and inconsistent administration processes can deepen the skepticism and insecurity perceptions of the society (Uddin, 2024, p. 3). In this context, citizens' trust in public institutions is closely related to the efficiency and accountability of these institutions and their commitment to the principles of transparency, justice and good governance. For instance, security threats and the increase in crime rates diminish the perception in regard to public institutions' efficiency, transparency, and accountability. Moreover, this situation increases the suspicions about the capacity of public institutions to create a secure society and deepens the insecurity loop (Blanco and Ruiz, 2013). Efficient crime prevention policies have the potential to increase the security feeling of society and reinforce citizens' trust in public institutions. However, these policies can positively impact trust in government if they can both show that public institutions follow the principles of accountability, transparency, and neutrality and decrease crime rates (Kochel and Skogan, 2021). If the implications and policies become unsuccessful and inconsistent, they can cause a loss of trust and weaken the positive relationship between security perception and trust in government.

### **2.1. The Relationship Between Crime, Insecurity Perception, and Trust in Government**

The increase in crime rates significantly impacts the trust level of citizens in public institutions. This relationship occurs in two-fold. The first one is the direct and weakening effect of crime on trust in government. This happens when the public belief about security and the rule of law declines. The second one is the augmenting impact of lack of trust in the government on crime rates. Because the distrusting environment of a society can promote social disruption which can also lead an increase in crime rates (Malone, 2010). This interaction is important since it shows that crime and distrust in society can cause a loss of trust in government and belief in the efficiency of public institutions significantly.

The thoughts of citizens about ineffective combat with crime can disrupt the perceptions in regard to the efficiency of law enforcement and providing justice in a country. When the crime rates are high in a society, citizens question the reliability, transparency, and neutrality of public institutions. This may cause serious threats to the legitimacy of the state since the deterioration in the perception of public

security can also shake the general trust in the state. Furthermore, relevant literature provides evidence that there is a negative relationship between trust in government and crime rates (Malone, 2010; Blanco, 2013). Moreover, there would be serious suspicions about the incapacity of public institutions to fulfil their main functions when the perception regarding ineffective combat with crimes and insufficient fairness of public institutions expands (Cozzubo, Amaya and Cueto 2021). On the other hand, some studies claim that the perception of insecurity in society can trigger distrust in a wider way and this causes a deeper erosion of trust in public institutions. To sum up, crime and social disorder have a strong and negative effect directly on trust in public institutions and indirectly on trust in government (Alda, Bennett and Morabito 2017; Armbrorst, 2017).

In the context of Türkiye, limited statistical data about crime rates have shown that there has been a significant increase in every type of crime in recent years (Mercan, 2023: CXVI; Atak, 2020, p. 5). The criminal and justice system in Türkiye has distinct features for recording and tracking crime reports. According to criminal procedure law, crime reports can be done directly to the Public Prosecutor's Office or law enforcement. When crime reports are done to the Law enforcement department, they should be immediately shared with the Public Prosecutor's Office. The criminal justice process involves investigation, prosecution, and judgment steps. Firstly, the reported incident is investigated whether it carries the features of a crime. After collecting enough evidence that the crime incident is committed, the prosecution step starts and the incident file is sent to the court. However, only some of incident reports can go to prosecution process and fewer of them are forwarded to the court. In general, the court process ends with a prison sentence when the suspect is found guilty. After finalizing the sentence of conviction, the penalty execution process starts as the system's last step and it is finalized in penalty institutions. The related institutions- law enforcement (police, gendarme, except coast guard) , Public prosecutor's offices, courts, and prisons- record the files that are delivered to them according to their work procedures in all of the processes of the criminal justice system. These records are regularly published with the title of 'Statistics of Justice' by the General Directorate of Criminal Records and Statistics of the Ministry of Justice (Tepecik, 2020, p. 404; Mercan, 2023, p. CXIX).

According to Statistics of Justice, there has been a considerable increase in the crime categories of Türkiye. Firstly, in the category of Crime Against Property which includes robbery, fraud, plunder, damage to property, and abuse of trust that violate individuals' property rights, the number of files of crime incidents increased to 5.510.00 in 2023 from 4.673.00 in 2022. In the Category of Crime Against Liberty, the crimes that violate fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals like threatening, violating the inviolability of the residence, disturbing the peace and tranquility of individuals, and blackmail, the number of files raised to 2.046.000 in 2023 from 1.938.000 in 2022. Lastly, in the category of Crimes Against Physical Inviolability which includes crimes that involve intentional injury or wounding by negligence, the number of incidents has reached 1.399.000 in 2023 from 1.319.000 in 2022. As a result, the most dramatic increase is seen in the category of crimes against property.

The increasing crime trend can also be observed through the statistics of prisons. The number of individuals that are kept in prisons was 80.096 in 2011, 170.733 in 2014, 215.761 in 2017, 258.401 in 2020 and 314.502 in 2023 respectively. Moreover, Türkiye ranks seventh globally in terms of prison population size (Fair and Walmsley, 2021, p. 2). The prison population size in Türkiye has increased in recent years, especially after 2009. While the prison population per 100,000 people was approximately 161.4 in 2009, this rate showed a remarkable increase and reached 353 in 2019. On the contrary, the prison population has shown a more stable trend in West European countries like Germany, France, and the United Kingdom. The prison population per 100,000 people in these countries generally varies between 90 and 130 (Aytaç and Mercan, 2024, pp. 6-7). These statistics indicate that the prison population in Türkiye has had a constant increase in both absolute values and ratios in recent years.

On the other hand, some of the incident examples that erode public trust in the justice and punishment system in Türkiye have come to the fore in traditional and social media recently. There is an increase in these incidents that offend public conscience about the rule of law, judicial independence and impartiality, transparency, and accountability. The fact that decisions made in high-profile cases do not align with society's perception of justice in some cases, the inconsistencies seen in the sentencing processes for different types of crimes, and the perception that a culture of impunity has become widespread, especially for certain crimes, increase criticism of the justice system. In particular, low

penalties and penalty reductions for femicides and violence against women strengthen the thought that justice was not served and damage the public trust. Furthermore, the perception that justice mechanisms lack transparency and accountability further reduces trust in these institutions. For example, the fact that the investigation processes into the corruption allegations that have received widespread public attention are not carried out effectively reinforces the concern that justice is being applied in a biased and selective manner. Indeed, it has been argued that corruption and negative processes in policymaking have the potential to affect trust in public institutions (Rothstein and Uslaner, 2005), and the citizens in countries with higher levels of corruption make more negative evaluations of the performance of the political system and have lower levels of trust in public officials (Anderson and Tverdova, 2003). In other words, public institutions' deviation from the principles of impartiality, transparency, and accountability increases citizens' distrust of institutions. On the other hand, it is stated that corruption and abuse of public power negatively affect the functioning of public institutions and seriously undermine citizens' trust in these institutions while disrupting the normal functioning of them (Wang, 2016). The widespread perception of impunity, conflicting decisions, especially in publicly known cases, and misuse of public resources are creating a growing belief in society that public services are not being provided fairly, equally, and effectively. This situation undermines individuals' trust in the integrity and effectiveness of public institutions and raises serious doubts about the state's capacity to provide services in line with the principles of justice and equality. It also undermines belief in the rule of law and calls into question the legitimacy of the justice system.

As a result, it can be concluded that the increasing perception of crime and insecurity deeply affects citizens' perceptions of the effectiveness, impartiality, and reliability of public institutions and pose serious threats to the reliability of these institutions. In this context, examining the negative relationship between the perception of crime and insecurity and trust in public institutions in Türkiye stands out as an important issue to be investigated. In this context, the following hypothesis can be tested:

*H1: Citizens' perceptions of crime and insecurity negatively impact their trust in public institutions.*

## **2.2. The Effect of Religiosity on the Relationship Between Perception of Crime and Insecurity and Public Trust**

Religiosity is a powerful cultural and sociological factor that affects individuals' values, social trust, and perspectives on public institutions. An individual's religious beliefs and the reflection of these beliefs on their behavior can shape their perceptions of social events and public institutions. For these reasons, religiosity can be considered an important concept in the relationship between citizens' perception of crime and insecurity and their trust in public institutions.

Religiosity is a concept that is frequently associated with individuals' trust in authority and has been studied extensively in the literature so far. It can be argued that religious individuals show a higher sensitivity than other individuals in regard to the preservation of social order and compliance with rules. Therefore, they have a more positive approach towards the authority of public institutions. In this context, religiosity does not only consist of individual beliefs and practices but also plays a decisive role in the relationships that individuals establish with social and institutional structures. Especially, the contribution of religious beliefs to the formation of moral values and the encouraging effect on the establishment of social order can be considered as a factor that increases the trust of religious individuals in public institutions. This situation is consistent with research findings that show that trust in public authority is positively related to the level of religiosity (Becker and Dhingra, 2001; Wisneski, Lytle and Skitka, 2009). On the other hand, it can also be said that religiosity has a significant impact on individuals' perceptions and levels of trust in authority. It can be proposed that religiosity may be associated with higher trust in authority since religious beliefs promote values such as moral responsibility, the importance of social order, and adherence to norms in individuals. Indeed, the findings indicate that religiosity encourages greater trust in authority (Wisneski et al., 2009, p. 1061). Furthermore, religious individuals trust others, the government, and the legal system more and are also less willing to break the law (Guiso, Sapienza and Zingales, 2003: 227). Another finding indicates that “the importance given to religion significantly increases trust in the police, the army, the government, the parliament, political parties, the judiciary, other public institutions, and the government” (Şahin and Kara, 2016, p. 355).

Religious values and beliefs play a central role in shaping individuals' moral judgments and normative commitments. Thus, they significantly affect the attitudes and behaviors that individuals exhibit in social life. The high sensitivity of religious individuals to moral norms and social order (Sverdlik and Rechter, 2020) and the decisive influence of religious teachings on moral decision-making processes (Mohd Yusoff, Hamzah, Fajri, Za, and Yusuf, 2022) provide a critical basis for building and maintaining trust in public institutions. When public institutions act in accordance with moral values such as justice, honesty, and accountability, and if these values coincide with individual moral standards shaped by religious values, citizens' levels of trust in public institutions can increase. In addition, religion's support for behavioral expectations such as obedience, loyalty, and compliance with institutional structures may contribute to individuals' perception of authority as a more trustworthy mechanism. As a result, it can be said that religiosity is an important variable in the formation and reinforcement of trust in authority at both individual and societal levels. Thus, our next hypothesis proposes that:

*H2: Citizens' religiosity positively impacts their trust in public institutions.*

Individuals' religious beliefs and commitment levels can also play an important role in both the way citizens interpret their perceptions of crime and insecurity and the impact of these interpretations on trust in public institutions. Religious belief and commitment serve as a framing function in the processes by which individuals interpret social events and dynamics (Berger, 1967; Graham and Haidt, 2010; Pargament, 1997). Religion can effectively reduce anxiety caused by uncertainty by providing individuals with a sense of order, especially in the face of complex and chaotic events (Kay, Gaucher, McGregor and Nash 2010; Kay, Whitson, Gaucher and Galinsky, 2009).

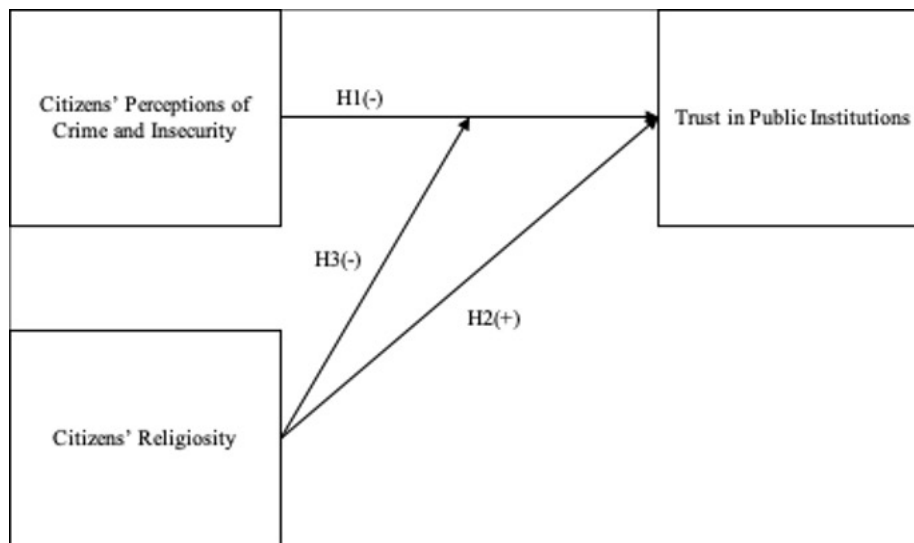
Belief in an all-controlling God may serve to preserve individuals' trust in public institutions when perceptions of crime and insecurity are increasing. Religion provides a powerful meaning system that regulates individuals' perceptions of uncertainty and threat by providing a psychological balance in the face of randomness and chaos (Kay et al. 2009, p. 266). Particularly in situations where crime rates are high or public order is weakened, individuals may need to believe that social problems are under control. At this point, the belief that God controls everything prevents individuals from seeing chaotic events as mere "coincidence" or "bad luck" and allows them to connect these events to a larger divine plan (Kay et al., 2010). For example, religious individuals tend to evaluate a criminal event as part of a fateful or divine test rather than as a result of individual or institutional deficiencies (Laurin, Kay and Fitzsimons, 2012; Pargament, 1997). Although this perception does not directly affect trust in the effectiveness of public institutions, it may reduce the extent to which negative events are associated with institutional inadequacies or failure to fully perform duties.

On the other hand, communities with complex relationships and large structures have a nature where individuals cannot constantly monitor each other and violations of rules cannot be completely prevented. In such societies, a more powerful, omnipotent, and omniscient God or religion is needed to ensure and maintain order. A powerful God figure plays an important role in maintaining social norms and moral values. Because individuals believe that such a powerful god is constantly watching over them and will punish wrong behavior. As a result, they tend to comply with social norms more strictly (Norenzayan and Shariff, 2008; Norenzayan, Shariff and Gervais, 2009). Such a belief may encourage individuals to act in accordance with moral values and reinforce their sense that crime is controlled not only by worldly authorities but also by an ultimate power. A God who is concerned with the moral aspects of human behavior can help to prevent social problems such as norm violation (Laurin et al. 2012, p. 14). Such a perception may lead individuals to reinforce feelings of patience and acceptance rather than reacting with anger, helplessness, or loss of institutional trust in negative situations such as crime, injustice, or social disorder. The processes of religious meaning make it easier for individuals to accept events that they cannot control and consider these events as part of a larger and ultimate divine plan rather than as personal or institutional deficiencies (Pargament, 1997). Although this perception which also points to a fatalistic understanding does not directly affect the trust in the effectiveness of public institutions, it can reduce the level of negative events that are associated with institutional deficiencies. In other words, belief in God or religiosity allows individuals to connect societal problems to a larger divine plan rather than explaining these problems solely in terms of individual or institutional deficiencies. This allows religious individuals to view social problems as a part of fate in conditions where crime rates are high or public order is weakened. Thus, they avoid associating public institutions with failure. In this context,

it can be said that religious beliefs have a moderating effect on individuals' attitudes towards public institutions. Doubts and perceptions of distrust regarding the effectiveness of public institutions can be alleviated through the framework of meaning that religion provides. Religiosity shapes the way how individuals interpret negative events and social problems such as rising crime rates and insecurity and the reasons for these problems. It also causes us to see these negative circumstances as part of a divine order rather than a failure of the state or public institutions. It may also enable individuals to be more patient and to develop less conflictual responses to such negative situations. Therefore, it can be argued that religiosity can act as a buffer that reduces the negative effects of crime and the perception of insecurity on trust in public institutions.

*H3: The level of religiosity negatively moderates the negative relationship between citizens' perceptions of crime and insecurity and their trust in public institutions.*

The research model that is based on these hypotheses is depicted in Figure 1:



**Figure 1: Research Model**

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Sample

The research universe of this study is the total population of Türkiye in the year 2018. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK), the population was 82,003,882 in 2018 (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2019). For a population size of 10,000,000, the minimum required sample size is 384 respondents (Shieh, 2009, p. 521). This study uses the sample of Türkiye from Wave 7 of the World Values Survey (WVS) to find out whether Turkish citizens' perception of crime and insecurity, and religiosity play a direct and interactive role in their trust in public institutions. These surveys involve data from 66 countries for the years between 2018-2022. WVS uses a random probability sampling method and applies surveys to the adult population in each country. WVS provides detailed information about how societies change over time by collecting data in regard to their values, social life, and political attitudes. The surveys are used by political scientists, sociologists, economists, and psychologists in many academic studies (Uddin, 2024; Catterberg, 2006; Minkov and Hofstede, 2012). Besides, the WVS sample covers many countries with diverse economic, political, and social backgrounds (Haerpfer et al., 2022).

Wave 7 of the World Values Survey (WVS) in Türkiye was applied by Bahçeşehir University in 2018. The data was collected from 2415 adults from all geographic regions over 18 years old. The data of WVS Türkiye is representative since they use a probability sampling approach (Uddin, 2024: 4) in every country and collaborate with the Turkish Statistical Institute to define geographic clusters. The sample size of WVS data is bigger than 384 and TÜİK support provides credibility to the study. The survey is applied in Turkish and published on the World Values Survey website. The responsible organization tried to minimize the non-response rate in the field study. The survey was applied by face to face

interviews and telephone. The average age of respondents in the sample is 38.83. The sample consists of 49,98% males and 50,02% females. For this reason, the sample of the study is representative and can provide significant findings for the study.

### 3.2. Measurement of Variables

All of the variables are gathered from specific questions in WVS Wave 7 Türkiye questionnaire. The dependent variable of the study is trust in public institutions and measured through a composite variable. This variable involves questions that are already in the questionnaire and asks the respondents about their confidence level of some institutions in the country like the military, police, government, unions, press, political parties, etc. (How much do you trust each of the institutions I will list below? Again, give an answer like “I trust completely”, “I trust a little”, “I don’t trust much”, “I don’t trust at all”.) Since the dependent variable of this study tries to measure the citizens' level of trust in main public institutions, we included five institutions in the list of the questionnaire. The questionnaire asked respondents for their confidence level with a scale that ranges from 1 (a great deal) to 4 (none at all). There are also alternative responses like –2 (no answer) and –1 (don’t know), but these answers were excluded from the sample and coded as empty to make proper statistical analyses. Only the questions about confidence in police, courts, national government, parliament, and civil service were included to measure the trust in public institutions in Türkiye. These institutions are mainly used by previous studies and are very common to refer to public trust in government (Uddin, 2024; Lee and Schacheter, 2019). A principal component analysis was also applied to Q69, Q70, Q71, Q73, and Q74 to see whether these questions could be used as a single variable for the study. The results of factor analysis can be seen in Table 1 for trust in public institutions variable. All of the selected questions are loaded into a single factor with high-factor loadings. As a consequence, trust in public institutions variable is measured through the mean value of five questions as a single construct. The Cronbach alpha value of the overall variable is 0.841 and high enough to use it in the study.

**Table 1: Principal Component Analysis of Trust in Public Institutions Variable**

Questions	Factor Loadings	Uniqueness
Q69 Confidence The Police	0.762	0.419
Q70 Confidence Justice System	0.813	0.338
Q71 Confidence The Government	0.831	0.309
Q73 Confidence Parliament	0.766	0.414
Q74 Confidence The Civil Service	0.743	0.448

*Note.* The applied rotation method is varimax.

The first independent variable of the study is citizens' perceptions of crime and insecurity. This variable is constructed by forming two sub-dimensions that were also used by Uddin (2024, p. 4) in a previous study. These sub-dimensions investigated the frequency of crimes committed in the neighborhood of the respondents and whether the respondents feel secure in their neighborhood these days. Crime in the neighborhood subdimension includes robbery, alcohol consumption in the streets, intervention of police or military in the private life of an individual, racist behavior, sale of drugs in the streets, violence and fights in the streets, and sexual harassment. Respondents indicated the frequency of these crimes they experienced in their environment with a four-point scale (1=very frequently and 4=not at all). A principal component analysis is also applied to these questions, and all the questions are loaded as a single factor with factor loadings with 0.7692 as a minimum value. The Cronbach alpha value of these seven questions is 0.901 which is a high and acceptable value for measurement. The second subdimension is the perception of insecurity and is measured through a single question (Q131- How safe do you feel in your neighborhood these days? Do you feel very safe, somewhat safe? Or do you feel not very safe or not at all safe in your neighborhood?) in the survey. The respondents answered the question with a 4-point scale (1=very safe and 4=not at all safe).

The second independent variable is the religiosity of citizens. This variable is measured with two different constructs. The questions in regards to the frequency of religious practices and visits to holy



places (Q17- a. For Muslims: How often do you go to the mosque these days, other than funerals? b. For non-Muslims: How often do you go to the synagogue/church these days, other than funerals, marriages, baptisms? and Q172- Other than funerals and weddings, how often do you pray?) of respondents are used to measure religiosity in the first place. Religiosity variable is computed through the mean value of these two questions which are measured through 7 point and 8 point Likert scales. An alternative variable is also used with a question (Q173) from the survey that asks, "Do you consider yourself a religious person regardless of whether you go to a mosque (synagogue/church) or not? Which of the following options is correct for you?". The respondents defined themselves as "religious", "not religious" and "atheist" according to this question.

The first control variable of the study respondents living place status, whether it is urban (1) or rural (2). This variable is a dummy-coded variable. Other control variables of the study are respondents' gender (1-male, 2-female), marital status (1-Married, 2-Living together as if married, 3-Divorced, 4-Married but living separately from spouse, 5-Widowed, 6-Single), perceived income level and age which are also used by previous studies (Lee and Schachter, 2019: 408). Logarithmic transformation of respondents' age is used to normalize the distribution of the variable.

### 3.3. Ethical Permissions for the Research

This study does not need any ethical permissions since secondary data is used for testing hypotheses. WVS data is public and accessible for all kinds of researches.

## 4. Results

The summary of the descriptive statistics of the continuous variables is in Table 2. The average level of trust in public institutions in the Türkiye sample is 2.14 which is average. However, crime in neighborhood variable has a lower mean value of 3.23. Similarly, respondents' insecurity perception seems to be distinctively low with an average value of 2.81. In general, the religiosity of respondents in Türkiye according to attending religious practices and visiting holy places is considerably low with a 5.37 mean value. In the Likert-scale measurements used for questions Q171 and Q172, which assess the religiosity variable, lower values correspond to higher levels of participation in religious practices. Therefore, a higher mean value for the religiosity variable indicates lower attendance at religious activities. The mean value for perceived income is 5.34, where values closer to 10 represent higher self-assessed income levels. This suggests that, on average, respondents do not consider themselves to be in a high-income group.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics**

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Trust in Public Institutions	2296	2.14	0.65	1	4
Crime in Neighborhood	2261	3.23	0.70	1	4
Perception of Insecurity	2370	2.81	0.61	1	4
Religiosity	2192	5.37	1.50	1	7.5
Age	2414	3.60	0.34	2.89	4.55
Perceived Income	2329	5.34	1.72	1	10

The frequency findings of the categorical variables are summarized in Table 3. Most of the respondents (72.15%) in the Türkiye sample define themselves as a religious person. However, as mentioned before, their attendance at the religious services is not very high. Similarly, a high proportion of the sample is married (62.06%) and lives in urban areas (73.62%) of the country. As mentioned before, the distribution of the sample according to gender is balanced. The differentiating number of observations in both Table 2 and Table 3 is due to non-responses in the survey.

**Table 3: Summary Statistics**

Religious Person	Freq.	Percent	Marital status	Freq.	Percent
1-Religious	1593	72.15	1-Married	1497	62.06
2-Not Religious	592	26.81	2-Living together as if married	6	0.25
3-Atheist	23	1.04	3-Divorced	62	2.57
Total	2208	100.00	4-Married but living separately from a spouse	4	0.17
Living Place Status	Freq.	Percent	5-Widowed	60	2.49
1-Urban	1778	73.62	6-Single	783	32.46
2-Rural	637	26.38	Total	2412	100.00
Total	2415	100.00			
Gender		Freq.		Percent	
1-Male		1207		49.98	
2-Female		1208		50.02	
Total		2415		100.00	

The correlation statistics among variables are depicted in Table 4. Most of the independent and control variables except gender, age and scale of income have significant relations with trust in public institutions in the study. The highest correlations are between age and marital status ( $r=0.59$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and crime in the neighborhood and perception of insecurity ( $r=0.44$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Although there is no high correlation between variables of the study, we checked for potential multicollinearity. All of the variance inflation factor (VIF) values are below 10 and this indicates that multicollinearity is not a problem for the study.

**Table 4: Pairwise Correlations**

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
(1) Trust in Public Institutions	1.00									
(2) Crime in Neighborhood	-0.09***	1.00								
(3) Perception of Insecurity	0.15***	-0.44***	1.00							
(4) Religiosity	-0.26***	0.06**	-0.09***	1.00						
(5) Religious Person	0.25***	-0.12***	0.00	-0.29***	1.00					
(6) Living Place Status (Urban)	0.05**	0.13***	-0.10***	-0.05**	-0.02	1.00				
(7) Gender	0.00	-0.02	0.05***	-0.24***	0.00	0.00	1.00			
(8) Marital Status	0.05**	-0.05**	0.01	-0.15***	0.14***	0.01	-0.11***	1.00		
(9) Age (Log)	-0.02	0.05**	-0.01	0.13***	-0.09***	-0.03	0.06***	-0.59***	1.00	
(10) Scale of Income	0.00	0.06***	-0.06***	-0.03	0.02	-0.04**	0.00	0.05**	-0.07***	1.00
*** $p<0.01$ , ** $p<0.05$ , * $p<0.1$										

All of the hypotheses of the study are tested through linear regression models. The findings for H1 and H2 hypotheses are summarized in Table 5. Control variables are tested in Model 1. According to Model 1, respondents who live in rural areas of the country have lower level of trust in public institutions ( $\beta = 0.05$ ,  $p < 0.1$ ). This finding is consistent with other models of the study. Similarly, respondents who have a marital status of being single ( $\beta = 0.08$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and living together as if married ( $\beta = 0.45$ ,  $p < 0.1$ ) have lower trust in public institutions in Model 1 since the dependent variable has its highest value at 1 and its lowest value at 4. The insignificant categories of control variables are not included in Table 5 due to space limitations.

Model 2 has tested H1 which proposes a negative relationship between citizens' perceptions of crime and insecurity and their trust in public institutions. The significant and negative coefficient value of crime in the neighborhood ( $\beta = -0.04$ ,  $p < 0.1$ ) shows that as the frequency of committed crimes increases, trust in public institutions decreases in the sample. On the other hand, the positive and significant coefficient of perception of insecurity ( $\beta = 0.14$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) indicates that as respondents feel more secure, their trust in public institutions increases. Thus, H1 is supported. H2 is tested through Model 3 and proposes a positive relationship between the religiosity of respondents and their trust in public institutions. The findings of two different measurement constructs are mixed with each other. While the frequency of attending religious services construct (Religiosity) has a significant and negative relationship ( $\beta = -0.10$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), the dummy variables of not religious ( $\beta = 0.22$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and atheist person ( $\beta = 0.46$ ,  $p < 0.1$ ) have significant and positive relationships with trust in public institutions. The findings indicate that as respondents' religious practices increase, they have a lower level of trust in public institutions. Also, the findings show that people who are not religious or do not believe in God have lower trust in public institutions. These findings provide partial support for H2.

**Table 5: Regression Findings of Independent Variables**

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Living Place Status (Rural)	0.05*	0.08**	0.09***
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Gender (Female)	0.01	-0.00	-0.06**
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Marital Status (Living together as if married)	0.45*	0.41	0.77***
	(0.26)	(0.26)	(0.30)
Marital Status (Single)	0.08**	0.08**	0.01
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Age(Log)	0.04	0.05	0.08
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Scale of Income	-0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Crime in Neighborhood(H1)		-0.04*	-0.03
		(0.02)	(0.02)
Perception of Insecurity(H1)		0.14***	0.11***
		(0.03)	(0.03)
Religiosity(H2)			-0.10***
			(0.01)
Religious Person (Not Religious)(H2)			0.22***

			(0.03)
Religious Person (Atheist)(H2)			0.46*
			(0.25)
Constant	1.98***	1.73***	2.13***
	(0.21)	(0.24)	(0.24)
Observations	2,227	2,120	1,873
R-squared	0.01	0.03	0.12
Standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1			

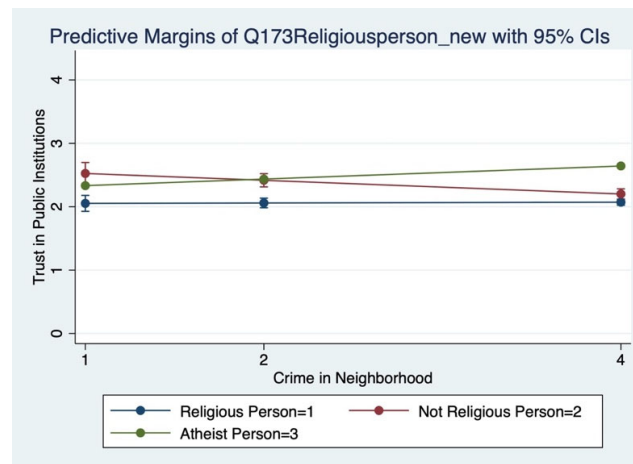
The last hypothesis (H3) predicts a diminishing role of religiosity on the negative relationship between crime and insecurity perception and trust in public institutions. Neither Model 4 and Model 5 did not provide a significant moderating influence of religiosity of respondents for the relationships between crime in neighborhood and trust in public institutions ( $\beta = -0.00$ ,  $p > 0.1$ ) and perception of insecurity and trust in public institutions ( $\beta = -0.00$ ,  $p > 0.1$ ). Moreover, only the coefficient of the interaction variable that involves being not religious person variable and crime in the neighborhood is significant and negative ( $\beta = -0.11$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) in Model 6.

**Table 6. Regression Findings of Moderating Variable**

Variables	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Living Place Status (Rural)	0.08***	0.09***	0.08***	0.08***
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Gender (Female)	-0.06**	-0.06**	-0.06**	-0.06**
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Marital Status (Living together as if married)	0.77***	0.78***	0.78***	0.78***
	(0.30)	(0.30)	(0.30)	(0.30)
Age(Log)	0.09	0.09	0.08	0.08
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Scale of Income	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Crime in Neighborhood(H1)	0.01	-0.03	0.01	-0.03
	(0.07)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Perception of Insecurity(H1)	0.11***	0.06	0.11***	0.09***
	(0.03)	(0.08)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Religiosity(H2)	-0.07	-0.12***	-0.09***	-0.10***
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Religious Person (Not Religious)(H2)	0.22***	0.22***	0.59***	0.03
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.15)	(0.12)
Religious Person (Atheist)(H2)	0.46*	0.45*	0.18	1.12
	(0.25)	(0.25)	(1.49)	(0.88)
Religiosity*Crime in Neighborhood(H3)	-0.01			

	(0.01)			
Religiosity* Perception of Insecurity(H3)		0.01		
		(0.01)		
Religious Person (Not Religious) * Crime in Neighborhood(H3)			-0.11**	
			(0.04)	
Religious Person (Atheist)* Crime in Neighborhood(H3)			0.10	
			(0.49)	
Religious Person (Not Religious) * Perception of Insecurity(H3)				0.09
				(0.06)
Religious Person (Atheist)* Perception of Insecurity(H3)				-0.33
				(0.42)
Constant	1.99***	2.24***	2.01***	2.17***
	(0.33)	(0.29)	(0.25)	(0.24)
Observations	1,873	1,873	1,873	1,873
R-squared	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12
Standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1				

As can be seen in Figure 2, there is a negative relationship between crime in neighborhood and trust in public institutions for the people that define themselves as not religious. When crime in the neighborhood decreases, only people who are not religious increase their trust level in public institutions. For this reason, there is no support for H3.



**Figure 2: Moderating Effect of Religious Person Dummy**

## 5. Discussion

Trust in government is not only crucial for the maintenance of social harmony and interpersonal interactions but also plays a pivotal role in ensuring the effective operation of administrative mechanisms. Thus, this study aimed to find the reciprocal relationships between crime, insecurity, religiosity, and trust in public institutions in the Türkiye context.

The first finding of this study shows that the increased crime rates around citizens and their direct experience could lessen their trust in public institutions in general. This finding strengthens the institutions-oriented view in institutional trust literature (Rothstein and Teorell 2008) by indicating how the efficiency of law enforcement can influence the trust of individuals in governmental or public institutions. The increased crime rates in citizens' environments are the main signs of the inefficiency of

the state and public institutions. This can also cause an increase in the perception of insecurity and strengthen the distrust loop in society. The finding of this study is partially consistent with the previous literature and provides additional insights from the Türkiye context (Blanco and Ruiz, 2013, p.287; Uddin, 2024, p. 9; Alda, Bennett and Morabito 2017; Armbrorst 2017). Our findings are also consistent with the increased crime rates in Türkiye for the previous years. Policy makers should re-evaluate the justice system with the law enforcement system to reduce crime rates and, to nurture public trust in the state, and expand this trust in society. Moreover, our second construct for the perception of insecurity has a positive relationship with trust in public institutions in our sample. This finding also points to the importance of security perception for building trust in citizens' minds. However, our insecurity perception measure involves only one question. The respondents may not comprehend their level of insecurity by one question. Future studies can endeavor more refined constructs to measure insecurity perception of citizens. This study confirms the importance of secure environments for shaping citizen perception in regards to develop trust in public institutions.

The second finding of this study shows that individuals who attend religious practices more have lower trust in government. However, our second construct to define the religiosity of the respondents has shown that non-religious and atheist individuals have lower trust in public institutions. Although previous studies indicate that religiosity is positively related to trust in the government or state (Becker and Dhingra, 2001; Wisneski et al., 2009), this study provides a different perspective on the literature. Firstly, this study shows that practicing religious activities does not always mean that individuals accept the authority of the state without questioning it. Highly religious people with more religious practices could question the government authority in regards to moral norms and social order (Sverdlik and Rechter, 2020). Their high-level focus on religious practices can also increase their critical view for the inefficiency of government authority. Moreover, the impact of religion and religious beliefs have been measured through practice and self-definition. This might cause the inadequate impact of religion on trust in public institutions in this study. Since religion mostly impacts risk attitude and avoidance of autonomy of the individuals (Hsiung and Djupe, 2019, p. 626), their perception in regards to external actors can easily be shifted from a logical base to laundering them for bad actions. Future studies can focus on the impact of religious values on trust in governmental institutions rather than self-defined impact of religion. Moreover, the impact of religious identity on attitudes toward public policies can be explored more thoroughly through qualitative studies. Focus group studies and in-depth interviews could provide deeper knowledge in regards to religious beliefs of individuals and their relation with trust in government.

The last finding of the study has shown that the negative relationship between increased crime rates and trust in public institutions weakens only for the group of non-religious people. This finding indicates that citizens are not impacted by religious practices or self-definition when evaluating the responsibilities of public institutions. Even if religious individuals tend to believe that God controls most of the things in their lives and bad or chaotic incidents are a part of destiny in general, security perception in Turkish society can be impacted by other concepts. This finding can also be highly related with increased crime rates in recent years. Citizens can rely on concrete events rather than spiritual explanations when they perceive higher chaos and disorder in their environment. Future studies can shed light on other explanations to explain the relationship between crime and insecurity and trust in public institutions.

This study has some limitations. Firstly, the constructs that are used in the study are not very detailed for every variable. Since WVS data did not aim to find the exact relationships in our research model, we are limited with their questions and scales for the most part of this study. Future studies with more refined constructs and up-to-date data can provide new insights into Türkiye context. Regional differences cannot be identified in the WVS data, as there are no questions indicating respondents' locations. Local dynamics and their impact on the relationship between religiosity and trust in government could be examined through contextual studies in the future. Moreover, WVS data is from 2018, and citizens in Türkiye have experienced so many incidents since that time. The perceptions of the citizens may have changed because of social incidents like earthquakes, political scandals, and increased crime rates since 2018. The future waves of WVS data can provide different findings about the Türkiye context for the same variables.

## Author Contributions

First author contributed to the article 100%.

## Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest among the authors.

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## Araştırma Makalesi

### **Impact of Crime and Insecurity and Religiosity on Citizen Trust in Public Institutions: A Study in Türkiye**

*Suç ve Güvensizlik ve Dindarlığın Kamu Kurumlarına Olan Vatandaş Güveni Üzerindeki Etkisi: Türkiye'de Bir Araştırma*

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### **Genişletilmiş Özet**

#### **Giriş**

Bu çalışma, Türkiye’de vatandaşların kamu kurumlarına duyduğu güvenin şekillenmesinde üç temel unsurun –suç oranları, güvensizlik algısı ve dindarlık düzeylerinin– rolünü incelemektedir. Modern kamu yönetimi sistemlerinde vatandaş-devlet ilişkilerinin temelini oluşturan “kurumsal güven”, hem yönetim kalitesi hem de demokratik meşruiyet açısından kritik bir öneme sahiptir (Tyler, 2006; Rothstein ve Teorell, 2008). Bu bağlamda, bireylerin çevresel koşulları, güvenlik deneyimleri ve dini inanç sistemlerinin bu güveni nasıl etkilediği, özellikle sosyal kutuplaşmanın ve kurumsal eleştirilerin arttığı ülkelerde daha da önem kazanmıştır.

Devletin temel görevlerinden biri vatandaşların güvenliğini temin etmek ve adaletin sağlanmasını garanti altına almaktır. Ancak bu görevlerdeki yetersizlikler vatandaşlarda güven erozyonuna neden olabilir. Türkiye örneğinde, son yıllarda artan suç oranları ve güvenlik zafiyetleri, kamu kurumlarının etkinliğine ve tarafsızlığına olan inancı zedelemiştir (Mercan, 2023; Tepecik, 2020). Kamu otoritesine olan güvenin zayıflaması, sosyal sözleşmenin temel taşlarını sarsmakta ve demokratik meşruiyeti tehdit etmektedir (Blanco ve Ruiz, 2013).

#### **Araştırmanın Gerekçesi ve Kuramsal Çerçeve**

Makalenin giriş bölümünde, toplumsal güvenin modern devlet yapılarının sürdürülebilirliği açısından taşıdığı yaşamsal öneme dikkat çekilmektedir. Toplumsal güven, yalnızca devletin meşruiyetinin ve otoritesinin dayanaklarından biri olmakla kalmayıp, aynı zamanda kamu politikalarının benimsenmesi, uygulanması ve vatandaşların kamusal kurumlara gönüllü uyumu açısından da merkezi bir rol oynamaktadır. Son yıllarda suç oranlarındaki artış, toplumsal eşitsizliklerin derinleşmesi ve bireylerin güvenlik algısının zayıflaması gibi gelişmeler, vatandaş ile devlet arasındaki ilişkide ciddi bir güven erozyonuna yol açmakta; bu da devletin adil, kapsayıcı ve etkili bir şekilde işleyebileceğine dair toplumsal beklentileri sarsmaktadır. Bu güven kaybı, uzun vadede demokratik katılımı azaltabileceği gibi, toplumsal dayanışmayı da zayıflatma potansiyeline sahiptir ve bu bağlamda sosyal sözleşmenin sürdürülebilirliğini tehdit eden bir unsur haline gelmektedir.

Kurumsal güvene ilişkin literatür, güvenin kaynaklarını açıklamak üzere iki temel kuramsal yaklaşım etrafında şekillenmektedir. İlki olan toplum odaklı yaklaşım, güvenin bireyler arası ilişkiler, sosyal sermaye, karşılıklılık normları ve ortak değerler aracılığıyla toplumsal düzeyde inşa edildiğini ileri sürmektedir (Putnam ve ark., 1993). Bu bakış açısı, güvenin bir kültürel yapı olarak toplumun dokusuna içkin olduğunu ve kurumlardan ziyade bireyler arası ilişkilerden beslendiğini savunur. Diğer yandan, kurum odaklı yaklaşım ise güvenin kaynağını kamu kurumlarının performansına, özellikle de etkinlik,

tarafsızlık, hukukun üstünlüğü ve şeffaflık gibi yönetim ilkelerine dayandırmaktadır (Rothstein ve Teorell, 2008). Bu perspektife göre, kurumlar adil ve öngörülebilir şekilde işlediğinde vatandaşların güven duygusu pekişir.

Bu çalışma, her iki yaklaşımı da teorik çerçevede ele almakla birlikte, özellikle Türkiye bağlamında kurumsal işleyişin vatandaşların kamu yönetimine ve devlete yönelik güven algısı üzerindeki belirleyici rolüne odaklanmaktadır. Türkiye’de yönetim yapılarında yaşanan dönüşümler, yolsuzluk algısı, hesap verebilirlik mekanizmalarının sınırlılığı ve bürokratik tarafsızlığın aşınması gibi faktörler, kurumsal güvenin dinamiklerini anlamada özel bir önem arz etmektedir. Bu çerçevede çalışma, yalnızca mevcut güven düzeylerini analiz etmekle kalmamakta, aynı zamanda kamu güveninin yeniden tesisi için hangi yapısal reformların gerekli olduğuna dair de ampirik veriler ışığında öneriler sunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

### **Hipotezler ve Araştırma Modeli**

Üç temel hipotez ileri sürülmüştür:

H1: Suç ve güvensizlik algısı ile kamu kurumlarına güven arasında negatif bir ilişki vardır.

H2: Dindarlık ile kamu kurumlarına güven arasında pozitif bir ilişki vardır.

H3: Dindarlık, suç ve güvensizlik algısının kamu kurumlarına güven üzerindeki olumsuz etkisini zayıflatır.

Bu hipotezler, suçun doğrudan kamu güvenini zedelediği, dindarlığın ise normlara bağlılık ve otoriteye saygıyı artırabileceği varsayımına dayanır. Ayrıca, dini inançların insanların toplumsal olaylara verdiği anlamı şekillendirdiği, bu nedenle dini bireylerin suç ve güvensizlik gibi olumsuzlukları kader planı içinde yorumlama eğiliminde oldukları ifade edilmiştir.

### **Yöntem**

Veri seti olarak Türkiye’den 2018 yılında toplanan Dünya Değerler Araştırması’nın 7. dalga verisi kullanılmıştır. 2415 katılımcı ile yapılan araştırma, kamu kurumlarına güven, suç ve güvensizlik algısı ve dindarlık gibi değişkenleri analiz etmektedir. Bu veri seti, bireylerin güven algıları, dini eğilimleri ve güvenlik deneyimlerine ilişkin zengin içerik sunmaktadır (Haerpfer ve ark., 2022). Bağımlı değişken olarak kamu kurumlarına duyulan güven, polis, adalet sistemi, hükümet, parlamento ve kamu hizmeti gibi beş kuruma duyulan güven puanlarının ortalaması ile ölçülmüştür.

Bağımsız değişkenlerden biri olan suç ve güvensizlik algısı, mahallede yaşanan suçların sıklığı ve bireyin kendini güvende hissedip hissetmediği sorularına verilen yanıtlarla ölçülmüştür. Dindarlık ise hem dini ritüellere katılım sıklığıyla hem de bireylerin kendilerini ne kadar dindar olarak tanımladıklarıyla değerlendirilmiştir. Ölçümler çok değişkenli regresyon analizleriyle değerlendirilmiştir.

### **Bulgular**

Araştırma bulguları genel olarak hipotezlerin bazılarını desteklemektedir:

H1: Suç oranlarının yüksek olduğu mahallelerde yaşayan bireylerin kamu kurumlarına güveni anlamlı biçimde daha düşüktür. Ayrıca, kendini güvende hisseden bireylerin kamuya olan güveni artmaktadır.

H2: Dindarlık karmaşık bir etki sergilemektedir. Dini ritüellere daha sık katılan bireylerin kamu kurumlarına güveni daha düşük çıkarken, kendini “dindar” olarak tanımlayan bireylerin güven düzeyinin daha yüksek olduğu görülmüştür. Bu bulgu, dini pratiklerin otoriteye güveni artırmadığı; ancak dini kimlik tanımının güveni artırabileceği fikrini desteklemektedir.

H3: Dindarlığın, suç ve güvensizlik ile kamu kurumlarına güven arasındaki olumsuz ilişkiyi zayıflattığına dair güçlü bir kanıt bulunamamıştır. Ancak, “dindar olmayan” bireyler için, suç oranı arttıkça kamu güveninin daha fazla düştüğü görülmektedir. Bu durum, dindarlığın sadece belirli gruplar için tamponlayıcı bir etkiye sahip olabileceğini göstermektedir.

### **Tartışma**

Çalışmanın en önemli çıktılarından biri, kamu güveninin özellikle suç ve güvenlik algısı üzerinden ciddi bir şekilde sarsıldığıdır. Bu bulgu, Türkiye’deki kamu kurumlarının güvenilirliğinin, vatandaşın günlük

yaşam deneyimleri ile doğrudan ilişkili olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Bu bağlamda, adalet sisteminin etkinliği, suçların soruşturulması ve adaletin sağlanması, kamu güveninin yeniden inşasında kilit rol oynamaktadır.

Dindarlık konusundaki bulgular ise daha karmaşıktır. Dini kimliğin kamu kurumlarına güveni artırıcı etkisi olabileceği görülmekle birlikte, dini ritüellere yoğun şekilde katılan bireylerin daha eleştirel bir bakış açısına sahip olabileceği ve bu durumun güveni düşürdüğü öne sürülmektedir.

Son olarak, dinin kader anlayışı üzerinden sağladığı anlamlandırma çerçevesi, bireylerin olumsuz sosyal olayları devletin başarısızlığı olarak değil, ilahi bir planın parçası olarak görmesine neden olabilmektedir. Ancak bu algının her durumda kamu güvenini artırmadığı, özellikle somut suç artışlarının olduğu dönemlerde dinin bu anlam çerçevesinin etkisinin sınırlı olduğu belirtilmiştir. Ayrıca, dindarlığın güven üzerindeki etkisinin çok boyutlu olması, bu konunun sadece inanç değil, aynı zamanda kültürel ve politik bağlamda ele alınmasını gerektirmektedir (Becker ve Dhingra, 2001; Guiso ve ark., 2003).

### **Politika Önerileri ve Gelecek Araştırmalar**

Araştırma bulguları, kamu güveninin yeniden inşası sürecinde yalnızca yapısal reformlara değil, aynı zamanda toplumsal algıların ve kurumsal performansın eşgüdümlü bir şekilde ele alınmasına ihtiyaç duyulduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Bu bağlamda, özellikle suçla mücadele politikalarının etkinliğinin artırılması ve bu politikaların daha bütüncül ve önleyici bir yaklaşımla yeniden yapılandırılması gerektiği vurgulanmaktadır. Suç oranlarındaki artışa karşı yalnızca cezalandırıcı değil, aynı zamanda rehabilite edici ve toplumsal kapsayıcılığı önceleyen stratejilerin benimsenmesi, kamu güveninin artırılmasında önemli bir rol oynayabilir. Bununla birlikte, adalet sisteminin tarafsız, hızlı ve erişilebilir bir yapıya kavuşturulması da vatandaşların devlete olan güvenini pekiştiren temel unsurlar arasında yer almaktadır.

Araştırmada ayrıca, bireylerin güvenlik algısının güçlendirilmesinde yönetim ilkelerinin taşıdığı önem açıkça ortaya konmuştur. Özellikle şeffaflık, hesap verebilirlik ve katılımcılık ilkelerine dayalı bir yönetim anlayışı, yalnızca kamu kurumlarının meşruiyetini artırmakla kalmamakta; aynı zamanda vatandaşların kamu otoriteleriyle kurduğu ilişkiyi daha güven temelli ve sürdürülebilir hale getirmektedir. Bu ilkelerin kurumsal pratiklerde içselleştirilmesi, kamu yönetiminin performansına yönelik algıları doğrudan etkilemekte ve güven inşasını desteklemektedir.

Araştırmada dikkat çekilen bir diğer önemli unsur ise, dindarlık düzeyinin kamu güveni üzerindeki etkisidir. Dini değerlerin bireylerin kamusal kurumlara yönelik algılarında nasıl bir rol oynadığı henüz tam olarak açıklığa kavuşmamış bir alandır ve bu nedenle daha derinlemesine analizlere ihtiyaç duyulmaktadır. Özellikle dini kimliğin kamu politikalarına yönelik tutumları ne ölçüde şekillendirdiğini anlamaya yönelik niteliksel çalışmalara ihtiyaç olduğu ifade edilmektedir. Dindarlığın güven düzeyleri üzerindeki etkisinin kültürel bağlamda farklılaşabileceği göz önünde bulundurularak, yerel dinamikleri dikkate alan daha bağlamsal araştırmaların önemi vurgulanmaktadır.

Son olarak, 2018 sonrası Türkiye’de yaşanan siyasi, ekonomik ve toplumsal gelişmelerin kamu güveni üzerindeki etkilerinin daha iyi anlaşılabilmesi için güncel ve temsiliyeti yüksek veri setlerine dayanan yeni araştırmalara duyulan ihtiyaç dile getirilmiştir. Özellikle ekonomik krizler, yönetim sistemindeki dönüşümler ve demokratik süreçlere ilişkin algıların değişimi gibi faktörlerin kamu güveni üzerindeki uzun vadeli etkilerini analiz edebilecek kapsamlı çalışmalara olan ihtiyaç, bu araştırmanın önerileri arasında yer almaktadır.