

## The Paradox of Secularization and the Search for Meaning in the Modern Way of Life: A Qualitative Study of Individual Religious Commitment

Zeynep Beyaz |  0009-0004-7126-2427 |  zeynepmahitapoglu@gmail.com

Ankara University, Faculty of Divinity, Department of Sociology of Religion, Ankara, Türkiye

 <https://ror.org/01wntqw50>

İhsan Toker |  0000-0001-9033-9910 |  itoker@ankara.edu.tr

Ankara University, Faculty of Divinity, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies,

Ankara, Türkiye

 <https://ror.org/01wntqw50>

### Abstract

This study aims to examine the processes of becoming more religious among adults who were raised in families with varying levels of religious knowledge and practice, whether secular or traditional, and who consciously choose to embrace religiosity in adulthood. Based on data obtained from semi-structured interviews conducted with 26 participants (8 men and 18 women) using qualitative methods, the study addresses the crises that lead individuals toward religion (death, feelings of emptiness), their intellectual quests, and the conflicts they experience within their social environments. Modernization refers to a social process characterized by rapid cultural, economic, and scientific change and development, differing significantly from the traditional structure of society. Secularization denotes the distancing of society from its religious structure, reflected in the diminishing visibility of religious practices and the reduced role of religion in everyday life. The study reveals that individuals whose lives have changed with the new way of life brought about by modernization, or who have grown up within it or are trying to adapt to it, show a tendency toward becoming more religious, contrary to the secularization tendency commonly regarded as an outcome of modernization. The findings indicate that participants experienced the process of becoming more religious as a “sense of fulfillment” and a “search for meaning,” while simultaneously confronting familial and social pressures throughout this process.

### Keywords

Modernity, Tradition, Secularization, Search for Meaning, Becoming More Religious

### Citation

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| Ethical Statement              | This study is based on the doctoral thesis entitled “A Sociological Study on the Experiences of Individuals Becoming Religious” which is ongoing under the supervision of Prof. Dr. İhsan Toker. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Ankara University Ethics Committee with the meeting and decision number 07/82 dated 13.03.2023. It is declared that scientific and ethical principles were adhered to in the preparation of this study and that all studies used are cited in the bibliography. |                                 |
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