# The relationship between "consumerism" and "religiosity" among Kurdistan Region youth: A field study in the Kurdistan Region

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## ABSTRACT

The current research aims to explore the relationship between "Consumerism" and "Religiosity" among the youth of the Kurdistan region and examine how they influence each other. The research adopts a "quantitative" approach, and relies on an "online survey method" along with a "questionnaire" as data collection instruments. To achieve that, "multi-chain referral sampling" and "raking weighting" were utilized to recruit the participants. After weighting, the sample was modified and adjusted from 3,201 to 984 people aged 18 to 30 in four provinces of Kurdistan Region. Data analysis was carried out using SPSS and SmartPLS software. The findings of the research highlighted a lower mean [2.52] of "consumerism" for the participants, whereas "religiosity" revealed a considerably higher mean [4.41]. The analytical path model indicates that there is an inverse relationship between consumerism and religiosity, and that "religiosity" ($\beta$=-0.617) reduces consumption by about -62%. Approximately 38% of the variance and change in "consumerism" were predicted and explained by "religiosity". Consequently, it is concluded that the level of religiosity and cultural values in the Kurdistan region, despite the rapid material changes and the existence of the free market, is still strong enough to regulate and direct its economic system.
KEY WORDS: Consumerism, Religiosity, Goods, Youth, Kurdistan Region.

## 1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

At the end of the 20th century, consumerism became a multidimensional phenomenon that, in addition to economic causes and effects, also has psychological and social dimensions that need to be investigated. Consumption, in the form and conditions it has taken today, cannot be considered only as a utilitarian economic process, but also as a social and cultural process that includes cultural signs and symbols. Therefore, social and cultural aspects should also be considered. However, the importance of economic factors should not be neglected. For example, in determining consumer groups with their specific consumption patterns, their economic status is decisive rather than their social and cultural factors (Bockoc, 1993: 2).

Given the fact that consumption, in addition to money, time, energy and many other things, is spent and has many psychological and social consequences and effects, it must be considered as a social problem and phenomenon; Especially since sociology studies social phenomena that are the result of human behavior and actions, and human behavior follows the goals, motives, and values that guide people. When we talk about values and the purposefulness of behavior, we are actually talking about the meaningfulness of behavior; human behavior is meaningful, and the meaningfulness of behavior is related to its validity. To understand the meaning and justification of a behavior, one must understand the purpose and values behind it; understanding goals, motives, objectives, norms, and cultural values is a precursor to fully understanding the behavior and analyzing it. Religion is one of the cultural values that guides human behavior.

Religion and consumerism are forms of meaning-making and society-building, and both

are active in identity formation and reform of the individual and society. The relationship of religion not only to the political sphere, but also to the economic sphere has been of interest to many sociologists. On the relationship between religion and the economy, Marx, Weber, and those who followed their path focused on labor and production. However, subsequent theorists, such as the Frankfurt School, Bourdieu, and Baudrillard, have placed more emphasis on consumption and consumer's culture. The influence of the ideology of market liberalism, which is reflected in neoliberal forms and ideas, has influenced religion and religiosity and affected various aspects of the economic life of modern societies.

We live in a society of consumerism. Signs of consumerism are evident in modern and even developing societies, since consumerism is the constituent material of today's global society (Gauthier & Martikainen, 2013: 2).

In recent decades, shopping has increased as a leisure activity (e.g., six hours a week in the United States), the growth of advertising in everyday life, the ubiquity of brands, malls and supermarket chains, easy access to goods, online shopping, and the commodification of social and cultural life, the emergence of a new way of life such as the status of identity, democracy and freedom to shop and choose goods, all of which are evidence of the profound impact of consumerism in everyday life. Consumption as morality and consumerism as a cultural background are certainly distinctive features of our societies (Slater, 2005: 174). However, far from the background and starting point of social, political, and cultural analysis, consumption in the social sciences - especially in relation to religion - has been relatively under-defined and addressed.

The present study focuses on an under-researched topic. What are the synergistic effects between religiosity and consumerism? Consumerism, which is the driving force of globalization and affects the culture of societies and has profound consequences on beliefs, practices and even religious institutions around the world, what effect has it brought about on the traditional and religious society like the Kurdistan region, especially among the Kurdish youth? To what extent has Islam, whose beliefs and actions are based on the limits and frameworks of halal and haram, controlled consumerism or extravagance among the youth of the Kurdistan region, especially conspicuous consumerism, which is very unacceptable and reprehensible in Islam?

## 2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the study are:
1. To identify the type of relationship between "consumerism" and "religiosity" among the youth of the Kurdistan Region.
2. To determine the impact of "religiosity" on "consumerism" among the youth of the Kurdistan Region.
3. To investigate the impact of "demographic variables" on "consumerism" among the youth of the Kurdistan Region.

## 3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The Kurdistan region has experienced a surge of consumer culture, particularly after the economic improvement and free market, which led to the opening of dozens of shopping centers, chain supermarkets and shops. This consumer culture is constantly promoted by direct and indirect advertising, and affects all classes of people, especially the youth. On the other hand, Islam, which has deep roots in Kurdish society, imposes a challenge to this consumer culture. Therefore, it is important to scientifically examine and interpret the relationship between consumerism and religion as two competing ideologies. The conduct of such research can open new horizons in sociology and research methods in the social sciences of Kurdistan. There is not much scientific work and research in the field of "Sociology of Consumption" that provides a sociological interpretation of the phenomenon of consumption and religiosity in the Kurdistan Region. Thus, this study could enrich the scientific literature in this area.

## 4. CONSUMERISM IN SOCIAL THEORIES

A review of the existing theories in the field of consumption reveals that it is difficult to present a clear and solid framework and theory that has a consensus among all theorists, and that there are many problems in this area. The theories and views that have been proposed so far offer

various, similar and sometimes contradictory theoretical suggestions about consumption and consumer culture. This indicates that theorizing in this area is still in a constant process of development. This complexity becomes more evident when dealing with the younger generation of the society (Cook, 2005). The three founding fathers of modern sociology laid the foundation for the "sociology of consumption". Karl Marx introduced the concept of "commodity fetishism", which is still widely used. According to this concept, the economic relations of production and exchange of commodities are regarded as social relations between material things (money and commodities), not between human beings. Marx argues that the social relations of labor are obscured by material products and consumer goods that carry other kinds of symbolic value for their consumers. In other words, economic value becomes the intrinsic value and price of goods, rather than a value derived from the labor and human relationships that produces the good or service in-question (Rubin, 1972: 10-17). Marx believed that the economic foundation is the infrastructure of society and the creator of social class. In Marx's view, culture, norms, values, and even religion are formed by the foundation. Therefore, from Marx's perspective, consumerism, as a part of ideology and culture, is determined by the foundation of society. Emile Durkheim's writings on the symbolic and cultural meaning of material things in a religious context are invaluable for sociology of consumption. They can be used to examine the relationship between identity and consumption, as well as the role of consumer goods in the religions, traditions and rituals of societies. Durkheim considered religion as a social phenomenon in which individuals can practically create and reproduce social relationships over time and communicate with each other mentally and cognitively. From this perspective, consumer activities can be seen as a form of religion. They perform a similar function to religion, as they provide tangible centers (infrastructure, activity plans, and branded products) that enable individuals to get to know others, interact with one another, and build social and cultural relationships. Consequently, consumer goods and traditional religious products compete with each other in the marketplace for social centers that individuals demand and use to fulfill and organize social relations (Hirschle, 2014: 1427).

George Simmel, a contemporary founder among those mentioned earlier, can be regarded as the first sociologist to discuss the "world of entertainment" and "consumerism" as concepts. In his essay, "Fashion", he explores the psychological motives and individual factors that influence the formation of consumption and production patterns. He also looks for the reasons for the various changes in fashion that occur in the phenomena and signs of modern culture, such as clothing, art, architecture, cooking, music, and so forth. Simmel describes the modern world as a "nervous" era where, unlike in the past, there is a lot of choice and diversity in goods and products. This leads people to distinguish themselves from others by their consumption preferences (Kivisto, 2011: 154-155). Simmel's idea, that fashion acceptance is a means by which one wants to have a different individual identity and distinguish it from others (Simmel, 1971: 206), later became a reference for many sociologists who developed their own theories of consumerism, lifestyle, and leisure. Torstein Veblen, an American sociologist and economist, breaks the tradition by making the subject of "consumption" the starting point of his theory. His 1899 book, "The Theory of the Leisure Class", is considered the first serious attempt at consumption literature. Veblen examines the rest of the issues from the perspective of consumption and begins with the question of what is the basis of human social status. He proves that this status is related to human wealth. If a person has wealth and wants to have a high social status, he should show his wealth. Veblen then presents two ways to display wealth to attract attention: one is "false entertainment" and the other is "false consumption" (Veblen, 2007). Veblen argues that the rich and prosperous class is the product of industrial society and makes a living through industrial society (Kivisto, 2011: 38). He uses his analysis of consumption behavior as a tool for social criticism. Veblen's fascinating yet bizarre theory of individuals' main motivations for consumption behavior starts with "self-esteem". He believes that each person's self-esteem reflects the respect others have for them (Veblen, 2007: 62). Gaining respect is the primary motivation for engaging in competitive behavior. The fear of loss of prestige, respect, and greatness also leads to the individual's continued effort on self-esteem and hence the emergence of a competitive culture (Coser, 1971: 268). In describing the "Leisure Class", Veblen introduced a concept that was later widely used: "Conspicuous Consumption". Conspicuous consumerism means that the leisure

class consumes, not out of necessity but to gain social prestige and attract attention (Veblen, 2007: 49). The way of consumption of the wealth is based on waste. This means that these acts of consumption not only do not bring comfort to the consumer, but also cause a waste of labor, time and goods (Ibid, 58). It is the means by which one tries to show oneself to one's neighbors and people around one and to appear noble and glorious in their eyes. According to Veblen, if a lot of leisure time was a sign of respect and high status in small societies, in large and modern societies, it is the use of self-display that gives identity to people's rank through the display of wealth and luxury (Coser, 1971: 320).

The Frankfurt School and European critical theorists, who were very active in the mid-twentieth century, provided valuable perspectives for the sociology of consumption. Among them, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, in their famous work, The Dialectic of Enlightenment, examined the new developments of the capitalist era and its various consequences. They wrote a paper on the culture industry, which offered important methods and insights for understanding the ideological, political, and economic implications of mass production and mass consumption. These two thinkers saw the situation as the result of the positivist and quantitative approach of the capitalist system, which imposed itself on different societies in the form of enlightenment. In their view, anything that cannot be quantified is an illusion (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2002: 23). Thus, the media and advertising, as an important part of this culture industry, have contributed to this situation, which has manifested itself in the form of consumerism and the creation of false and fake needs. Herbert Marcuse in his book, "One-Dimensional Man", described radio and television as meaningless tools that are part of a system whose task is to distort culture and opinions of opponents. He analyzed the issue of producing thoughts and behaviors necessary to create the new cultural commodity in contemporary capitalist societies (Kellner, 1989: 137). In other words, he argued that the creation of false needs and modern commodity culture in the modern capitalist system leads to the creation of a one-dimensional society; a commodified society whose false needs are transformed into basic needs and instilled into the minds of the masses by extensive and continuous advertising. Therefore, advertising and competition to advertise and brand goods are an important aspect of the post-industrial capitalist system that emphasizes consumption instead of production (Bocock , 1995: 144). Pierre Bourdieu studied the relationship between social class and consumer behavior in detail through his empirical research in the 1960s and 1970s. In Distinction (1984), Bourdieu views consumerism as the cause of change in social classes; because consumption carries signs, symbols, ideas and values that become a means of distinguishing one social class from another. Bourdieu believes that there are three main types of capital in the sphere of social life that are interchangeable; cultural capital increases economic and social capital, and vice versa, material and economic capital increases the amount of cultural and social capital. Thus, according to Bourdieu, all consumer behavior creates social differences between individuals; the use of certain goods is considered a sign of difference, while the use of other goods indicates the absence of social difference (Bourdieu, 1984: 228).

The French philosopher Jean Baudrillard proposed a concept called "meta-reality" that, in his view, has replaced "reality" in the contemporary world. These meta-realities are the result of technology and the media age in which we live. They include cinema, television and other media, as well as all the current technologies that, according to Baudrillard, have given us a view of real things that are actually meta-real and unreal, and have substituted reality. Baudrillard believes that the whole world is disconnected from reality in the present era and that only meta-realities play a role in human life. He also argues that after the Industrial Revolution, with the advancement of technology, the speed of production of goods increased greatly to the point that the production of goods based on need and demand was not sustainable. Instead, all kinds of goods were mass produced, not to meet needs, but to create needs so that goods can be consumed. In other words, as consumerism spreads, false needs are produced in society, and goods that may not be necessary become urgent needs. At this stage, the main issue was no longer production itself, but "demand creation" or need creation in society. That is, "producing the sense of need" was more important than "producing goods". Therefore, society became a consumer society. Baudrillard

believes that the media and advertising are a key element in promoting and strengthening this consumerism. According to Baudrillard, even today "identity" is defined by commodities. Having certain goods or even eating food implies a class-specific identity and lifestyle. Therefore, consumption in a consumer society is not limited to meeting needs, but because of meta-realities, consumption even determines people's identities (Baudrillard, 1998).
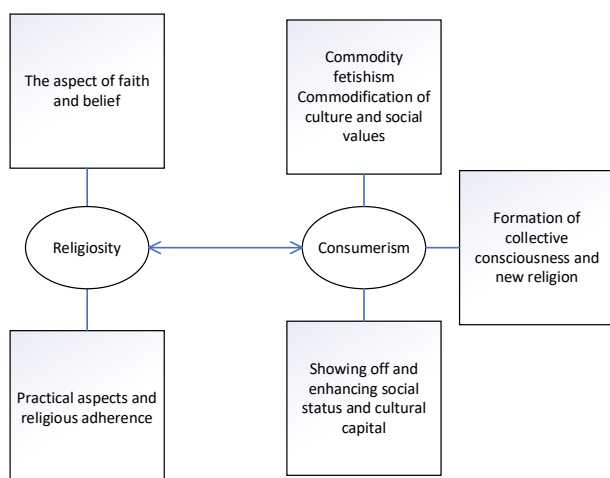


Model 1: Research theoretical analysis model

## 5. METHODOLOGY

### 5.1. Research methods and data collection tools

This research is a quantitative study using the "Online Survey" method. This method is mostly used for data collection on a large scale. This sort of collection has its own tool that is "Online Questionnaire". The characteristic of online surveys is that they can collect as much information as possible from a large sample in a short period of time at low cost (Callegaro, 2014).

The questionnaire used in this study was prepared in two parts after a review of the theoretical literature by the researcher. The first part concerns the respondent's primary information; e.g., their age, gender, economic, social and occupational status. The second part is prepared using the Likert scale; Likert's pentagram scale requires individuals to answer questions or items by choosing one of the options "strongly agree", "agree", "neither agree nor disagree", "disagree", and "strongly disagree"

(Likert, 1932: 5-55).

### 5.2. Research population, sample, and unit of analysis

The population of this study is the youth of the Kurdistan Region. According to the statistics of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the proportion of youth aged 15-30 years living in all four provinces of the Kurdistan Region is 28.4% (14.5% boys and 13.9%). girl); In other words, the number of young people aged 15-30 reaches 1,704,000 (IOM, 2018: 18).

The unit of analysis in this study is the youth aged 18-30 years living in Erbil, Sulaimani, Duhok and Halabja provinces. The unit of analysis is the people or things whose characteristics are measured and from whom the researcher collects the data (Yurdusev, 1993: 78).

The "Multi-chain Referral Sampling Method" was deployed throughout the study. It is a new method used in online surveys. It is relied upon the time when the research community is very large and fragmented and when access to sample individuals is difficult and time-consuming and expensive to obtain information from.

The online questionnaire was intentionally sent only to individuals aged 18-30 through the "Shikar" application, a professional platform for online surveys that has been installed and subscribed to by about 80,000 people on smartphones.

### 5.3. Balancing the statistical sample and weighting method

The questionnaire was completely answered by 3,201 young people aged 18 to 30 living in all four provinces of the Kurdistan region. In order to turn the statistical sample of the survey into an acceptable statistical sample that represents the entire statistical population, we resorted to the Raking Weighting method, which is the most reliable method of balancing online surveys and survey samples.

To produce a statistical sample representative of the statistical population, the refined sample of this survey was weighted based on three demographic variables of gender, age group, and provincial population. The variables used for this process were interlocking variables. To extract the population profile, the official results of the IOM report published by the Statistics Office of the Ministry of Planning of the Kurdistan Regional

Government in 2018 were used. After performing the weighting calculations according to the above variables, the "effective sample size" was equal to 984 people, which is very suitable for the credibility level 95% and credibility interval 5% of the sample size.

## 5.4. Validity and Reliability of questionnaire

To demonstrate the "validity and Reliability" of the questionnaire, the researcher first confirms the "Face validity" and "content validity" through the consensus of experts on the appropriateness of the questions or items. In other words, it shows the extent to which the form and appearance of the paragraphs or questions are relevant to the research topic and the purpose of the research. As for the content validity, it focuses on the extent to which the meaning of questions or items corresponds to the dimensions of concepts or variables (Babbie & Roberts, 2018: 132-133).

The most important type of validity is "Construct validity", which indicates the level of consistency of the results of the items with the theories being experienced. It also identifies whether the measurement of the items reflects the concepts and variables derived from the theories (Neuman, 2014: 144). To demonstrate "Construct validity", the experience of "Factor Analysis" of the Exploratory and Confirmatory type was used. In the first phase, before publishing the questionnaire with SHIKAR platform, we took a small sample of 100 people and used it in factor analysis of the type of Exploratory through SPSS. According to the results of the experiment, in order to ensure its validity, we had to delete 2 items in the Consumerism variable and one item in the religiosity variable. Table (1) displays the results of factor analysis with sufficient sample size.

Table 1: Exploratory factor analysis shows the constructs of consumerism and religiosity.

| KMO and Bartlett's Test | | Consumerism | Religiosity |
|---|---|---|---|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. | | .884 | .799 |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | Approx. Chi-Square | 2618.269 | 3618.975 |
| | df | 45 | 45 |
| | Sig. | .000 | .000 |

To assess the Reliability rate, several detailed experiments are used, the most famous of which is Cronbach's alpha (Creswell, 2009: 152). "Reliability", refers to whether the questionnaire ensures the same or very close results if we repeat them at different times among a given community. It is important to know to what extent the measurement tool yields equal results under equal conditions (Babbie, 2014: 153).

Table (2) represents the Cronbach alpha coefficients of the variables. Because the percentage of the coefficients surpassed 60%, its reliability is considered good and we can certainly include them in the analytical tests.

Table 2: Cronbach's alpha coefficient shows the variables of consumerism and religiosity.

| Reliability Statistics | Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
|---|---|---|
| Consumerism | .821 | 10 |
| Religiosity | 791 | 10 |

## 5.5. Data analysis method

As the current research is a quantitative study, the researcher used SPSS program to import the questionnaire data followed by organizing and coding them to finally

demonstrate the validity and reliability. Consumerism and religiosity as variables and constructs were created by evaluating specific items in the questionnaire. Subsequently, the normality and linearity of the data were confirmed to pave the way to apply parametric

statistics.

The "analytical statistics" employed to prove/disprove hypotheses include Pearson correlation test, linear regression, and path analysis. Path analysis and model fit were performed using the SmartPls software.

## 5.6. Research variables

From the total items of the questionnaire, we created the following two variables:

### 5.6.1. Consumerism

Consumption as a word means spending and consumerism refers to giving originality to consumption and targeting prosperity and material assets. Consumerism is a socio-economic concept that encourages the purchase of goods and services as much as possible. Sociologically, consumerism is a powerful ideology that revolves around values, perceptions, interpersonal relationships, and actions. Consumerism can be briefly explained as the belief that one's health and happiness are, to a large extent, dependent on the amount of personal consumption, especially of material things. The philosophy behind this idea revolves around the belief that happiness can be achieved somewhere through the endless consumption of material goods. Considering the consumer culture, it can be understood that it motivates people to find pleasure and satisfaction from seemingly endless consumption (Stearns, 2001: ix).

The operational definition of this concept in this study is: excessive purchase of material goods and products to satisfy mental pleasures and increase the status of the individual in society.

### 5.6.2. Religiosity

Religiosity means faith in a set of religious and sacred beliefs and practical adherence to those beliefs and laws that have their source in religion. Obviously, in order to be considered religious, a person must acknowledge that religiosity, and reveal his beliefs and commitments by his language, behavior and appearance (Holdcroft, 2006: 89).

In the operational definition of this concept, we have considered the two dimensions of "faith and belief" and "commitment and action". In the religious aspect, we have measured the signs of faith in Allah, the Hereafter, the Qur'an, the hadiths of the Prophet (PBUH) and its halal (permitted) and haram (prohibited), and in the practical aspect, the signs of prayer, fasting, and avoiding the forbidden and extravagance.

## 5.7. Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated in the study:

1. There is an inverse correlation between "consumerism" and "religiosity".
2. "Religiosity" has an effect on lowering the rate of "consumerism".
3. Demographic variables affect "consumption".

# 6. RESULTS

## 6.1. Demographic statistics and general items

In this section, we describe the demographic variables of the study's sample. We present the average frequency and percentage of each variable, along with the median value from the largest to the smallest number:

- **Gender:** 51.3% male and 48.7% female.
- **Age:** all are young. The oldest was 30 years old and the youngest was 18 years old. Their Mean age is 23.45 years, with a standard deviation of 3.292.
- **Place of residence:** 35.2% of the population lives in Sulaimani, 35.1% in Erbil, 27.3% in Duhok and 2.4% in Halabja.
- **Literacy:** 35.5% university graduates, 25.6% high school, 12.5% secondary school, 10.9% college, 9.3% primary school, 4.8% read and write and 1.4% higher education.
- **Social status:** 64.5% are single, 32.2% are married, 2.2% are engaged and 1% are widowed.
- **Economic status:** 68.2% average economic status, 16.9% poor and 14.9% good.
- **Occupation:** 21% students, 18% unemployed, 17% housewives, 13.7% workers, 10.8% private sector employees, 5.8% government employees, 5.4% business owners, 2.4% soldiers, 1.3% farmers and 3.9% other jobs.
- **Family type:** 42.9% open religious, 27.2% traditional religious, 16.9% tribal traditional, 7.1% closed religious, 5.9% open modern.
- **Daily engagement in certain activities:** Sample individuals, as shown in Table (3), devote daily time as much as possible to each of the activities of "reading", "social media and watching television":

Table 3: It demonstrates the percentage of the duration of study activities, watching TV and social media and exercising daily in the youth of the Kurdistan region.

| Type of activity | Less than 15 mins % | 15-30 mins % | 30-60 mins % | 1-2 hours % | More than 2 hours % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reading | ٥٩,٦ | ١٥,٣ | ١٤,٨ | ٦,٣ | ٤ |
| TV & Social media | ٧,٢ | ٩ | ١٥ | ٢٥,٩ | ٤٢,٨ |
| Exercise | 58.9 | 17.5 | 12.7 | 7.6 | 3.3 |

## 6.2. Descriptive statistics of the variables and items of the questionnaire:

In this section, we present separately the responses to all items of the questionnaire by the individuals in the sample, as well as the descriptive statistics of the constructs and variables created from the computation of the items.

"Descriptive statistics" refers to a set of methods for organizing, and summarizing data and information such as creating tables, displaying pictures and diagrams, presenting multiples, percentages, mean, variances, skewness, kurtosis, and standard deviations. The role of descriptive statistics is crucial in the statistical process, because these statistics allow us to summarize all the characteristics of the sample taken from the research community and see how representative the sample we have chosen is for the whole community (De Vaus, 2002: 207).

Here are the descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage and mean) of the items according to their ranking number in the questionnaire. It should be noted here how individual responses were coded and scored according to the Likert pentagon scale; as follows:

for affirmative statements the option "Strongly agree" a score of 5, for "agree" a score of 4, for "neither agree nor disagree" a score of 3, for "disagree" a score of 2 and for "Strongly disagree" a score of 1. For the negative items, we gave them the opposite of the positive items. The total score is 15 and the mean value is 3; thus, any item with a mean coefficient greater than 3 indicates a high value of that variable. In contrast, if it is below 3, it indicates a low value of the variable.

### 6.2.1. Items of consumerism

Table (4) depicts the frequency, percentage and mean of each item of the 10-item "Consumerism" variable, in which item C8 meaning "the quality of the product is more important than its price", has

the highest mean value (3.4). On the other hand, item C10 "Buy and buy according to your financial ability" had the lowest mean (1.77). The mean consumption variable is 2.52, which is slightly lower than the average and indicates that the youth of the Kurdistan region have not reached a dangerous level in terms of consumption and productivity.

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Table 4: displays the frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations of the items of the consumerism variable.

| Code | Items of consumerism Variable | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Neither agree nor disagree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | | Mean | |
|------|-------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | | |
| C1 | Using branded things raises my status in society. | 79 | 8 | 157 | 16 | 246 | 25 | 291 | 30 | 211 | 21 | 2.6 | |
| C2 | I like to buy my things in malls rather than regular markets. | 50 | 5.1 | 93 | 9.5 | 267 | 27 | 320 | 33 | 254 | 26 | 2.35 | |
| C3 | One should change clothes, mobile phone, accessories and household items. Regularly. | 40 | 4.1 | 93 | 9.5 | 222 | 23 | 344 | 35 | 285 | 29 | 2.25 | Std .Dev=.693 |
| C4 | Because people buy expensive branded things, I like to buy things like them. | 53 | 5.4 | 81 | 8.2 | 211 | 21 | 324 | 33 | 315 | 32 | 2.22 | |
| C5 | I enjoy buying and using new and expensive goods. | 82 | 8.3 | 163 | 17 | 263 | 27 | 250 | 25 | 226 | 23 | 2.62 | |
| C6 | If I had a good financial situation, I would buy whatever I wanted. | 186 | 19 | 253 | 26 | 238 | 24 | 198 | 20 | 109 | 11 | 3.21 | |
| C7 | It doesn't matter how much you use what you have, The important thing is that you have that new item. | 118 | 12 | 207 | 21 | 248 | 25 | 256 | 26 | 155 | 16 | 2.88 | Mean=2.52 |
| C8 | The quality of the goods is more important to me than the price. | 199 | 20 | 330 | 34 | 218 | 22 | 135 | 14 | 102 | 10 | 3.4 | |
| C9 | If I want something and I don't have money, I borrow money for it. | 32 | 3.3 | 61 | 6.2 | 146 | 15 | 331 | 34 | 414 | 42 | 1.95 | |
| C10 | I buy things according my means and I don't look for beautiful and expensive things that I can't afford. | 528 | 54 | 262 | 27 | 120 | 12 | 42 | 4.3 | 32 | 3.3 | 1.77 | |

### 6.2.2. Items of Religiosity variable

Table (5) illustrates the frequency, percentage and mean of the items of the "Religiosity" variable, which also includes 10 items, in which R9 meaning "I avoid drinking beer and liquor" had the highest mean (4.86). On the other hand, item R4, "Accepting and submitting to religion even if it is against the will of society" had the lowest average (mean=3.53). The Mean score of the religious variable was 4.41, which is close to 5, and it indicates that the youth of the Kurdistan Region are at a very high level in terms of belief and religiosity.

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Table 5: displays the frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations of the items of the Religiosity variable.

| Code | Items of Religiosity Variable | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Neither agree nor disagree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | | Mean | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | | |
| R1 | I believe in God and the hereafter. | 884 | 90 | 34 | 3.5 | 36 | 3.7 | 16 | 1.6 | 14 | 1.4 | 4.79 | |
| R2 | I believe in the Quran. | 894 | 91 | 27 | 2.7 | 36 | 3.7 | 14 | 1.4 | 13 | 1.3 | 4.8 | |
| R3 | I believe in the Prophet and his hadiths. | 893 | 91 | 36 | 3.7 | 33 | 3.4 | 9 | 9 | 13 | 1.3 | 4.82 | Std .Dev=.492 |
| R4 | If my religious beliefs forbid something, but society approves of it, I take the religion's side. | 275 | 28 | 260 | 26 | 253 | 26 | 100 | 10 | 96 | 9.8 | 3.53 | |
| R5 | For me ,it is very normal for girls and boys to mix and communicate with each other ,and religion should not be an obstacle for it. | 450 | 46 | 239 | 24 | 189 | 19 | 54 | 5.5 | 52 | 5.3 | 4 | |
| R6 | If I had the power, I would never use Islamic law as a source of legislation. | 77 | 7.8 | 68 | 6.9 | 170 | 17 | 171 | 17 | 498 | 51 | 3.96 | |
| R7 | I do whatever I like and I have no fear of being held accountable for my actions on the Day of Judgment. | 16 | 1.6 | 21 | 2.1 | 57 | 5.8 | 95 | 9.7 | 795 | 81 | 4.66 | Mean=4.41 |
| R8 | I do religious obligations (prayer and fasting. | 753 | 77 | 76 | 7.7 | 74 | 7.5 | 40 | 4.1 | 41 | 4.2 | 4.48 | |
| R9 | I consider beer and wine forbidden and therefore I do not drink. | 918 | 93 | 28 | 2.8 | 15 | 1.5 | 13 | 1.3 | 10 | 1 | 4.86 | |
| R10 | Islam forbids extravagance and therefore I avoid it. | 718 | 73 | 21 | 2.1 | 60 | 6.1 | 80 | 8.1 | 105 | 11 | 4.18 | |

### 6.2.3. Effects of "Religiosity" and "Demographic variables" on "Consumerism"

Here we test the hypotheses of our study. Because some of our demographic variables are nonparametric and not normal, instead of using the linear regression experiment in SPSS, which is only efficient for numeric and parametric variables, we use SmartPls, which accepts all parametric and nonparametric variables unconditionally.

We first describe a structural equation model of all variables and then analyze their path from the independent variable to the dependent.

The following model (No. 2) summarizes the paths of the independent and predictor variables: religiosity (main independent variable) and gender, age, education level, occupation, socio-economic status, family type, place of residence, daily reading duration and watching TV and social media, and exercise (secondary independent variables) to the "consumerism" variable (as a post hoc and predictor variable) along with their significant value (P-Value).

First, we look at the significant value of the routes. Items that are significant (P-Value<0.05) are kept in the model, and items that are not significant (P-Value>0.05) are removed and are shown in dark color which are economic status (0.138), social status (0.634), age (0.325), occupation (0.213), place of residence (0.957), daily exercise (0.150) and daily reading (0.457), also items R5 (0.852) and C8 (0.084).
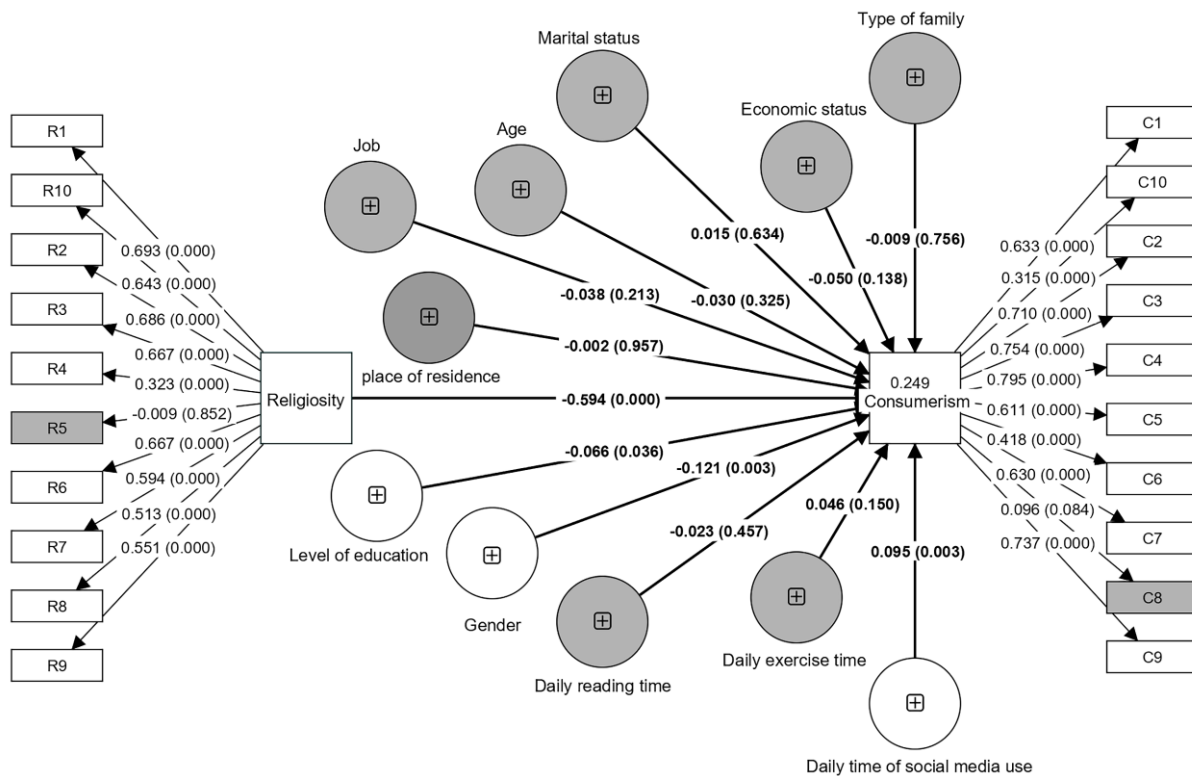
Model 2: represents the structural equation model and path analysis of all variables.

Lack of significance means that these variables, regardless of their beta value, are ignored because their influence or relationship is accidental, not credible and real. Therefore, we should remove them from the model and redraw those whose relationship and influence on the consumerism variable is meaningful and real in a new model and put them in another path analysis test.

Model (3), a modified structural equation model that this time has four paths:

– The first and main path: Religiosity <-> Consumerism with β (Beta) coefficient and factor loading of items and their significance value.
– Path 2: Gender <-> Consumerism with Beta and significance value.
– Path 3: Duration of daily interaction with social media <-> Consumerism with Beta coefficient and significant value.
– Path 4: Literacy <-> Consumerism with Beta coefficient and significance value.

The beta coefficient of the first path (β) was found to be (-0.589) along with a p-value of (0.000). This is a significant sign of the equation; so the results can be generalized to all the youth of the Kurdistan region. In the analysis of this path, it is clear that the relationship between religiosity and consumerism is inverse; that is, the amount of religiosity can reduce the amount of consumption among the youth of the Kurdistan Region by about 59%. On the contrary, an increase in the consumption unit leads to a decrease of about 59% in the religiosity of young people, and a unit decrease in the consumption variable increases their level of religiosity by approximately 59%.

The coefficient value of the second Beta path is -0.164 (P-value=0.006). That is, gender has a 16.5% effect on consumerism. But the effect of girls is the opposite. It means that girls are more consumers than boys; because the coefficient was negative and during scoring and coding, we put number 1 for girls and number 2 for boys. To determine whether the difference between boys and girls is documented or not, we use the independent sample T-test in SPSS, which according to Tables 6 and 7, this difference between boys and girls in consumerism is significant and documented (both in the Levene's test and t-test) and p-value was less than 0.05. This means that this difference is not random and can be generalized to the entire young population of the Kurdistan Region.

Table 6: displays the mean and standard deviation for both groups of girls and boys in the consumerism variable.

**Group Statistics**

| | Gander | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Consumerism | Female | 479 | 2.61 | .731 | .033 |
| | Male | 505 | 2.44 | .645 | .029 |

Table 7: displays the significant level of difference between boys and girls in the variable of consumerism.

**Independent Samples Test**

| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | Lower | Upper |
| Consumerism | Equal variances assumed | 4.787 | .029 | 3.711 | 982 | .000 | .163 | .044 | .077 | .249 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | 3.699 | 952.12 | .000 | .163 | .044 | .076 | .249 |

If we look at the coefficient of the third path in model 3, it indicates that the beta is 0.096% and it is significant (P-value=0.003). This means that spending more time on social media leads to an increase of 9.6% in consumerism.

The lowest path coefficient belongs to the fourth path with a beta of -0.058, which is also significant (P-value=0.002). Therefore, the higher the literacy level of young people, the lower the amount of their consumption by a decrease about 6%.

The $R^2$ adjusted predictor coefficient for all four paths was 0.296. In other words, the independent variables of religiosity, gender, length of social media engagement, and education level, on average, were able to explain up to about 30% of the variance and changes in the consumerism variable.
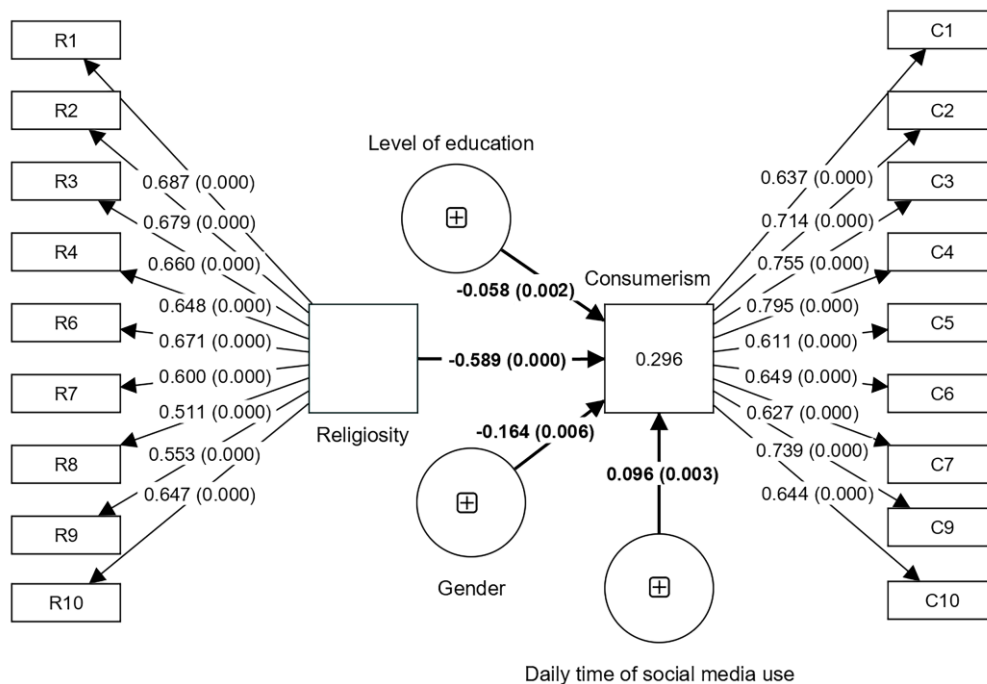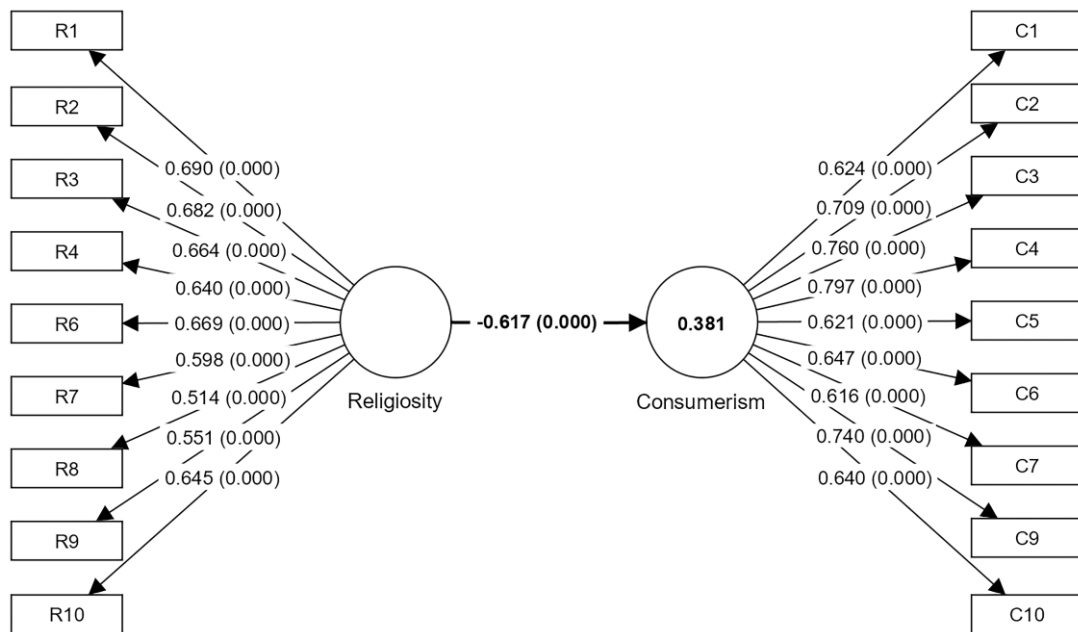


Model 3: illustrates the structural equation model and the path analysis of the significant variables.

In the third step, we elaborate on the other structural equation models of the main variables of religiosity and consumerism. As we can see in model (4), the religiosity variable -0.617 has an inverse effect on the consumerism of young people in the Kurdistan region. That is, for each unit increase in the level of religiosity and adherence to religion, about 62% of the level of

consumerism decreases. The R2 adjusted coefficient of prediction indicates that 0.381 of the consumption variance is predicted by religiosity. That is, the share of religiosity in explaining and predicting changes in consumerism is only about 38%. Obviously, other stocks are due to other factors and variables that need to be explained by one or more other studies.



Model 4: illustrates the structural equation model and path analysis of the religiosity-consumerism variable.

After analyzing the above model, we must ensure the fit of the model, its reliability and validity, as the results of these models will be reliable once they meet these prerequisites. When SmartPls presents the results of each structural model, it also provides an attached report containing several parameters listed in the table. Cronbach's alpha coefficients, rho_a and rho_c are all greater than 0.7, which confirms the reliability of the model. AVE variable is a construct validity that is done by confirmatory factor analysis. AVE is an index of "convergent validity" that indicates the degree of correlation of variables with their items. According to the sources, the AVE index should be greater than 0.5. (Henseler et al., 2012: 127).

Table 8: displays the level of reliability and Convergent Validity for the consumerism and religiosity variable in the structural model.

|  | Cronbach's alpha | Composite reliability (rho_a) | Composite reliability (rho_c) | Average variance extracted (AVE) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Consumerism | 0.812 | 0.837 | 0.856 | 0.612 |
| Religiosity | 0.786 | 0.791 | 0.832 | 0.564 |

Table 9 represents the HTMT, which indicates "discriminant validity" between the items of the two religiosity-consumerism variables and should be less than 0.5, unlike the AVE. Discriminant validity is the same as divergent validity, the second type of construct validity, which is performed by factor analysis of confirmation and is opposed to convergent validity (Brown, 2015: 2).

Table 9: displays the discriminant validity among the items of the consumerism-religiosity variable in the structural model.

| Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) | |
|---|---|
| Religiosity <-> Consumerism | 0.432 |

Since all the above coefficients have been confirmed, we can ensure the validity and goodness of fit of the model and generalize the obtained results to all the youth of the Kurdistan region.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The primary purpose of this study was to analyze the sociological relationship between consumerism and religiosity among young people in Kurdistan Region, which is regarded as a modern social phenomenon under the title of sociology of consumption. To achieve this goal, several theories were discussed including those of Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Simmel, Veblen, the Frankfurt School, Bourdieu, and Baudrillard. Based on the analysis, we reached the following conclusions:

There is an inverse correlation between consumerism and religiosity [β= -0.617]. This means that the religiosity of the Kurdistan region's youth, both boys and girls, reduces consumerism. Conversely, each unit decrease in religiosity increases the rate of consumerism among young people by about 62%. Therefore, religiosity and adherence to Islam in Kurdistan Region are restraining and controlling factors for young people so that they are less attracted to consumerism. The religiosity of the Kurdistan Region's youth explains up to 38% of consumerism changes. The remaining contribution is due to other variables and factors that need more research. This underscores that a traditional and religious society like Kurdistan, despite having a free economic system, a large consumer market and easy access to goods and services, still has religion and cultural values dominating its consumption behavior and purchases. The mean values of consumerism (2.52) and religiosity (4.41) also approve this fact.

None of the classic and modern theories that we have relied on in this research are appropriate for analyzing and interpreting the phenomenon of consumption in the Kurdistan Region. This is because the Kurdistan region, unlike western industrial societies, is a completely traditional society and its economic system is closely associated with the cultural system, religious and moral values. For example, Islam encourages believers to stay away from the prohibited; to protect their property from waste; to help and give to the poor and needy; to avoid boasting and arrogance caused by wealth and material goods; to know that respect and dignity are not measured by money, but by faith and adherence to religious guidelines; and that an active and constructive person is better than a parasitic, lazy and prosperous person.

Among the demographic variables, the ones that had a significant relationship with consumerism were the "gender" variable [β= -0.164], the "duration of daily use of social media" variable [β= 0.096 percent] and the "literacy level" variable [β= -0.058]. Therefore, it is clear that gender affects the level of consumerism and it has a negative effect on girls, assuming that girls are more likely to engage in consumerism than boys. The daily involvement of young people with social media also encourages them to turn more towards consumerism. However, the higher the literacy levels of young people, the lower the amount of their consumption, a decrease by about 6%. The importance of the Frankfurt School and Baudrillard's theory in analyzing the effect of advertising in the media and social media is evident here. Although the amount of influence in Kurdistan society is low, it is a sign that if online shopping becomes popular in Kurdistan region like developed and industrialized countries, this amount will surely increase.

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**پوختە**

ئەم توێژینەوەیە، مەبەستیەتی لە پەیوەندیی نێوان "بەکاربەری" و "دینداری" لای گەنجانی هەرێمی کوردستان بکۆڵێتەوە و چۆنیەتیی کاریگەرییان لەسەر یەکتر شرۆڤە بکات. لەبەر ئەوەی جۆری توێژینەوەکە "چەندایەتی"ـە، پشت بە "میتۆدی رووپێوی ئانلاین" و "ئامرازی پرسیارنامە" بەستراوە. شێوازی نموونەگرتی توێژینەوەکەش بریتی بووە "نموونەگرتی رەوانەکردنی فرەنجیرەیی" و "سەنگاندنی رێککردن"؛ دوای سەنگاندن، نموونەکە هەموار کرا لە 3,201 گەنجەوە بۆ ٩٨٤ گەنجی تەمەن ١٨-٣٠ ساڵان لە چوار پارێزگای هەرێمی کوردستان. بۆ شیکردنەوەی داتاکانیش سوود لە بەرنامەی SPSS و SmartPLS وەرگیراوە. ئەنجامەکانی توێژینەوە وا دەردەخەن کە بەهای ناوەندیی "بەکاربەری" لە نێوان گەنجانی هەرێمی کوردستان لە ئاستێکی نزمدایە (Mean: 2.52) و بە پێچەوانەوە "دینداری" بەهایەکی زۆر بەرزی هەیە (Mean: 4.41)؛ لە مودێلی رێرەوی شیکارییشدا، دەرکەوت کە پەیوەندیی نێوان بەکاربەری و دینداری، لە جۆری پێچەوانەیە و گۆراوی "دینداری" ($\beta= -0.617$) بە رێژەی نزیکەی %62- کار دەکاتە سەر دابەزاندنی رێژەی "بەکاربەری"؛ رێژەی نزیکەی %38ی ڤاریانس و گۆرانکارییەکانی "بەکاربەری" بەهۆی "دینداری"ـیەوە پێشبینی کراوە؛ ئەمەیش نیشانەی ئەوەیە کە ئاستی دینداری و بەها کولتوورییەکان لە هەرێمی کوردستان سەرەرای گۆرانی ماددیی خێرا و هەبوونی بازاری ئازاد، هێشتا لە رادەیەکی وا بەهێزدایە کە سیستمە ئابوورییەکەی کۆنترۆڵ و ئاراستە دەکات.

**وشە کلیلییەکان:** بەکاربەری، کاڵا، دینداری، گەنجان، هەرێمی کوردستان.