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# The political psychology of participation in Turkey: civic engagement, basic values, political sophistication and the young

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## ABSTRACT

This article aims to understand the recent heightened levels of mobilization and unconventional political participation in Turkey. We use a political psychology model that highlights the impact of civic engagement, political sophistication, and values on conventional and unconventional participation. We argue that these factors will be significant predictors of unconventional participation setting it apart from conventional political behaviour, which will be driven by simpler considerations. We expect these qualitative differences in the drivers of conventional and unconventional participation to go beyond age and gender differences and highlight the complexity of political decision-making in Turkey's electoral authoritarian system. We use the 2012 World Value Survey to test our hypotheses, with a nationally representative sample of Turkish citizens. We find significant variations in the role of values, sophistication and levels of civic engagement for conventional and unconventional participation when controlling for age, gender and left–right ideological orientations. Our findings confirm the complex considerations that drive citizens' engagement with politics and can be useful to explaining recent political developments in Turkey involving youth, public mobilization and protests, but also mainstream voting choices.

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Values; political participation; civic engagement; political sophistication; age; political psychology; Turkey; youth; Gezi Park

## Introduction

Our article seeks to understand the psychological determinants that underlie recent spikes in unconventional political participation in Turkey. In 2013, citizens gathered in Gezi Park as well as the country's big cities and abroad to demonstrate in support of individual freedoms and rights against government repression. Extant research shows that participants in Gezi came from diverse backgrounds and political orientations<sup>1</sup> (Acar and Uluğ 2016; Chrona and Bee, *forthcoming*; Damar 2016). The Gezi events were marked by high levels of youth participation in street protests between May and July 2013, which come in sharp contrast with the low levels of political participation traditionally reported for the country (Bozkurt, Çok and Sener 2015; Cankurtaran, Buz and Hatiboğlu 2013). As Göle puts it, 'The Gezi Park Movement [...]

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provided a home for democratic imaginaries growing and resonating from Istanbul, Turkey. [...] The Gezi movement marked a new threshold for democracy...’ (2013, 7, 8).

Three years later, and at the aftermath of the *coup d’état* attempt on 15 July 2016, tens of thousands of citizens came to the streets again, to express opposition to the military’s intervention in public life, support democracy and promote public sovereignty. On 24 July 2016, mass cross-party mobilizations at the centre of Istanbul in Taksim square brought together individuals from a variety of political camps (BBC 2016, 24 June). Initially, these were opponents of the government celebrating democracy and the secular-republican state; and they were joined by those in support of the government and president Erdogan’s actions that led to the failure of the coup. These two groups joined forces sharing their opposition to the military coup that they saw as a danger to the country’s freedom and democracy. Following up on 7 August 2016, a massive public rally in Istanbul united over a million people from diverse political camps, marching against the failed coup and advocating the democratic settlement of the country against any intervention (CNN 2016, 8 August).

Our research investigates the psychological mechanisms that bind these diverse groups of people together and inspire unconventional political participation as we saw in the case of Gezi movement or the protests against the military coup.<sup>2</sup> We also seek to examine what sets those individuals apart from those more likely to engage in conventional participation acts. We draw insights from studies that highlight the role of sophistication and values to understand variation in political participation (Capelos and Chrona 2012; Çarkoğlu and Kalaycioğlu 2007; Inglehart 1977, 1990; Kentmen-Çin 2015; Özbudun 1977). Our study engages in an empirical investigation of unconventional participation alongside its conventional expressions to see whether they are guided by similar principles.

Turkey’s culture and political system provide a timely test for our political psychological models of participation and engagement. Turkey is recently characterized as an electoral authoritarianism regime, with the antithetical elements of electoral processes and increasing authoritarianism coexisting in the socio-political environment (Arbatli 2014; Esen and Gumuscu 2016; Herzog 2015; Iğsız 2014; Karakatsanis 2016). These shape a complex political mosaic within which public expression originates and develops. Voting in national elections has been mandatory since 1982, and electoral turnout is high<sup>3</sup> (Croucher et al. 2013; International IDEA 2016). At the same time, Turkey’s ratings on freedom and civil liberties have worsened since 2013 (Freedom House 2016) with citizens witnessing a number of powerful state-led repressive tactics, civil liberties and political rights restrictions, and personal integrity violations (Abbas and Yiğit 2015; Amnesty International 2013). In this context, it is important to investigate the determinants of participation, keeping two considerations in mind: (a) is the Turkish political environment with its electoral authoritarian characteristics determining a different kind of engagement with conventional and unconventional participation compared to western democracies, and (b) are there systematic differences in the predictors of conventional and unconventional participation in this context. Traditionally, those engaging in non-conventional political behaviours are the young. Below, we explain why we expect unconventional political engagement to be driven by more complex psychological considerations than traditional participation channels. We test this hypothesis by using nationally representative data from the 6th wave of World Value Survey (WVS) conducted in Turkey in 2012.<sup>4</sup> We find that focusing on citizens’ values, levels of sophistication and records of civic engagement provides us with valuable insights about their participation preferences.

Unlocking the black box of conventional and unconventional political participation in Turkey is timely and important. The recently witnessed public mobilizations are not easy to understand unless we consider the qualitative differences in citizens' drivers of political engagement. Çarkoğlu and Kalaycioğlu (2007) found that older individuals tend to engage with conventional participation, whereas young individuals prefer to engage with unconventional forms of participation. Our study contributes to this discussion in three ways: (1) we extend the analysis of unconventional participation beyond age, to account for the psychological factors that are significant predictors in western contexts: sophistication and value preferences; (2) we draw parallels with mobilization phenomena in western democracies, and understand potential differences in the Turkish case; (3) the engagement of citizens in political affairs represents a central point in the good functioning of democratic systems. Uncovering the determinants of conventional and unconventional participation can help us gain appreciation for the type of politics citizens aspire to and support in electoral authoritarian contexts.

In the sections that follow, we review the conceptualization of unconventional and conventional political participation, their neighbouring term civic engagement, and highlight the role of core values, political sophistication and age as their potential determinants. This leads to our hypotheses that unconventional participation in Turkey is driven by more complex considerations compared to conventional participation. We then present the sample design and variable operationalizations of the WVS data-set, and the variable scales we use in our study. Our analysis outlines the significant role of values, sophistication and civic engagement above and beyond the effects of age for unconventional participation, and a simple model accounting for conventional items. In closing, we discuss the significance of our empirical findings for understanding political participation in Turkey but also other non-Western electoral authoritarian contexts.

## **The political psychology of participation: sophistication, values and civic engagement**

Political participation is one of the necessary conditions for democracy (Barrett and Zani 2015; Norris 2002; Verba, Scholzman, and Brady H 1995). By *political participation* we refer to the spectrum of behaviours aiming to influence 'political institutions, processes and decision-making at either the local, regional, national or supranational level' (Barrett and Zani 2015, 4). Following Inglehart (1977), we distinguish between conventional and unconventional participation and ask whether each has qualitatively different drivers in the context of Turkey.

Conventional participation maps the spectrum of activities that aim to have a socio-political impact through traditional electoral processes such as voting (Barrett and Smith 2014; Verba and Nie 1972). Conversely, unconventional participation aims to bring change outside the formal electoral processes and includes more direct means of participation such as petitioning, taking part in demonstrations and the like (Barnes and Kaase 1979; Barrett and Smith 2014). This distinction provides a significant differentiation among participatory behaviours in terms of directness and also in terms of the means employed, the two modes are not mutually exclusive; an individual can engage with both conventional and unconventional means or one of the two (Barnes and Kaase 1979; Grasso 2012; Mannarini, Legittimo, and Talò 2008). In other words, although the terms of conventional and unconventional

participation refer to different modalities of participation, individual engagement with these modalities can vary. For instance, one can engage with both conventional and unconventional channels of participation thinking that the more intense their participation, the better the outcome in terms of political impact. Equally, an individual may decide to engage with only conventional forms of participation, assuming that traditional channels, i.e., voting, is the only way that can have an actual and direct impact on the social and political life. Alternatively, one may select to abstain from conventional channels and engage only with unconventional forms of participation as the only way real change can take place against governing institutions.<sup>5</sup>

Regardless of how one decides to engage or not with conventional modes of participation, existing literature suggests that engagement with unconventional participation in several occasions reflects an expression of discontent with conventional forms of participation and disaffection with the political environment and governing institutions (Gurr 1970; Stockemer 2014). Gurr (1970) in his seminal study suggested that unconventional acts of participation (including both violent and non-violent channels) demonstrate discontent with the conventional channels of democratic governance.

In terms of conventional participation, voting in Turkey has been reportedly high.<sup>6</sup> High levels of electoral participation show that making voting mandatory in Turkey was successful. Interestingly as Çarkoğlu and Kalaycioğlu point out, unconventional participation is chosen by those segments of the population that feel they do not have any other opportunities to make their voices heard by the authorities (2007, 103). Looking at the recent events, unconventional participation, and in particular public rallies, has been on the rise. This brings us to the interesting observation that Turkish citizens appreciate both conventional and unconventional means of participation; we argue that the individual drivers for each are expected to be different.

Age is an important variable in analyses of political participation as several scholars have been raising attention to young people's abstention from formal political processes (Henn and Foard 2012; Norris 2011). Some studies show that young generations have developed a discontent with politics and stay alienated from the political processes (Marsh, O'Toole, and Jones 2007). Other studies argue that young people hold an interest in political affairs, believe in democratic processes, but engage with *alternative and unconventional* forms of political action (Dalton 2009; Norris 2003; O'Toole et al. 2003; Phelps 2012; Quintelier 2007). Çarkoğlu and Kalaycioğlu (2007) find that age is a decisive factor of participatory behaviour in Turkey. They show that older citizens favour conventional participation whereas younger individuals prefer to engage with direct means of participation because they perceive conventional means to be ineffective in generating change.

On the basis of the above, there is ground to expect that older age will be associated with conventional participation, and younger age will be associated with its unconventional expressions. In addition, we expect participation to be a function of a psychological process of connecting with politics more broadly, namely civic engagement, political sophistication and values.

### ***From civic engagement to participation: what inspires political engagement***

Civic engagement is an individuals' voluntary engagement 'with the goals, concerns and common good of a [geographical, social and cultural] community' and it takes the form of

holding an interest, beliefs, attitudes or feelings towards an issue of certain civic or political importance (Barrett and Zani 2015, 4). It is often seen as the natural predecessor of political participation and a significant determinant for the empowerment of social capital (Ekman and Amnå 2012). Civic engagement does not necessarily imply participatory behaviour. Having an interest in a political matter does not automatically mean that one is willing to engage with political action. Also, political participation does not require civic engagement. Individuals can participate in political acts they consider important, even when they do not have a history of political engagement. Civic engagement results from the cognitive or affective engagement one develops towards one or more issues, whereas political participation encompasses the passage to behavioural engagement that translates into active involvement and participatory behaviours (Bee, *forthcoming*).

The empirical examination of the relationship between political participation and civic engagement in Turkey has been limited. Extant studies of political behaviour mainly focus on electoral preferences and voting outcomes (Akarca and Tansel 2007; Başlevent, Kirmanoğlu, and Şenatalar 2004, 2009; Çarkoğlu 2008, 2012; Esmer 2002, 1995; Kalaycıoğlu 1994, 2008; Çarkoğlu and Hinich 2006).<sup>7</sup> We expect civic engagement to be a significant predictor of unconventional participation as it captures commitment and engagement with political affairs. We do not expect civic engagement to be a significant determinant of conventional voting acts, since voting is mandatory in Turkey and should take place across all levels of engagement.

### ***Attitudinal determinants of participation: sophistication and values***

Civic engagement and political participation denote behavioural involvement in politics since they entail action. We now turn to individual-level attitudinal determinants of participatory behaviours like political knowledge, efficacy, interest, religiosity and satisfaction with life, which have been shown to affect conventional and unconventional political participation in Turkey (Çarkoğlu and Kalaycıoğlu 2007; Kentmen-Çin 2015). We use political sophistication and personal values to provide a comprehensive and parsimonious empirical model. Political sophistication captures several of the above factors in a multi-dimensional concept that refers to the amount and structure of citizens' political cognitions (Luskin 1987). Personal values are of particular significance because they function as trans-situational guides that formulate and motivate all aspects of political behaviour, from decision-making to attitudinal responses, regardless of political sophistication (Goren, Schoen, and Reifler 2016).

When citizens are politically sophisticated, their system of beliefs is large, wide-ranging and highly associated (Luskin 1987, 1990). High sophisticates hold more information and can formulate closer associations between the various considerations stored in their cognitive and affective memory. They are often more educated, and their cognitive schemas are complex, with incoming information passing through those cognitive routes before formulating an opinion. Their reasoning is internally consistent and motivated. High sophisticates hold higher level political cognition and their issue preferences are consistent with their ideological inclinations and party identification (Krosnick 1988; Rahn et al. 1990; Zaller 1992). Conversely, low sophisticates (alternatively labelled as novices) mainly reach political decisions by relying on stored cues that are easily accessible and simpler (Conover and Feldman 1984; Pierce 1993). These individuals form issue-based preferences on the basis of their personal values and beliefs.

Political sophistication is a more reliable measure of citizens' cognitive engagement with politics than proxy measures that rest on its components, for example, political knowledge, interest and education (Pierce 1993; Rivers 1988). Current models of political participation in Turkey do not account for citizens' level of sophistication although they provide evidence about the significance of its components. Çarkoğlu and Kalaycioğlu (2007) show that political interest, knowledge and length of secular formal education are significant predictors of conventional participation such as voting and campaigning, and unconventional participation such as petitioning, taking part in a boycott, legal demonstration or strike, or occupying a building or place of work (2007, 93–96). Kentmen-Çin also found that education has a significant effect in explaining citizens' engagement with unconventional modes of participation such as signing a petition, taking part in boycotts, attending legal demonstrations, joining unofficial strikes and occupying buildings or factories (2015, 228). In line with the above, we expect political sophistication to be a significant predictor of conventional and unconventional participation in Turkey.

Social and political preferences, orientations and behaviours find their origins in personal values. Values are abstract and enduring beliefs that illustrate desired outcomes (Schwartz and Bilsky 1987). They form systems that provide organizational structure to our beliefs, and go beyond situation-specific contexts while their importance varies across individuals (Rokeach 1973). Values also have a motivational function; they can set in motion behaviours and underlie political decisions (Schwartz and Bilsky 1987, 1990). Values allow us to move from the individual to the collective level; every action (or decision for inaction) that results from the willingness to satisfy the motivational nature of a value has socio-political consequences. Interestingly, these motivational desires are in line with the overall value system of an individual, but they can also result in a conflictual existence of values within the same individual (Schwartz 1992).

According to Schwartz (1992, 1994), there are four high-order basic values (openness to change, self-enhancement, self-transcendence and conservation) that consist of 10 subordinate values (self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence and universalism), which relate to the motivational goals an individual may hold. These general categories of values are organized on two superordinate bipolar dimensions: openness to change vs. conservation, and self-enhancement vs. self-transcendence (Schwartz and Bilsky 1987, 1990). Self-transcendence and conservation values relate to the individual position in the societal context belonging in the society-oriented goals, whereas self enhancement and openness to change values emphasize what is desired for the individual life (Schwartz 1992).<sup>8</sup>

When we study values, we note variation across individuals and also within individuals, over time. That is because every individual possesses a number of values of varying importance (Bardi and Schwartz 2003). In addition, individual needs, beliefs, social attitudes and the role of values in one's life change across our lifespan. Several scholars have reported that as age increases, individuals become more collectivist, conservative and religious (Feather 1979; Mishra 1994; Realo, Allik, and Vadi 1997). The effects of values are also not constrained by political sophistication. Individuals use values as heuristics in making political choices, and novices are equally adept in using them as sophisticates.

In Turkey, Karakitapoğlu and Imamoğlu (2002) identified five significant value domains: self-enhancement, tradition–religiosity, universalism, benevolence and normative patterning. The domain of self-enhancement touches upon social power and status in the society

along with achievement and hedonism. Tradition–religiosity refers to norms generated by traditions and religion. Universalism touches upon an interest and active concern for the environment nature and all people, whereas benevolence refers to harmonic relationships within the society. Finally, normative patterning refers to adjustment of oneself on the basis of social expectations and socially constructed patterns as opposed to individual-based interests (Karakitapoğlu and Imamoğlu 2002, 340).

Our study applies the typology of Karakitapoğlu and Imamoğlu (2002) to measure systematically the effect of basic personal values on conventional and unconventional participation in Turkey. Preliminary evidence supports that values are relevant. Çarkoğlu and Kalaycioğlu (2007) show that life satisfaction has an inverse relationship with levels of conventional political participation. Kentmen-Çin (2015) finds that higher satisfaction with levels of democracy increases the likelihood of engaging with unconventional forms of participation. In addition, educational and social psychologists have examined the political values of university students (Başaran 1992; Hyman, Payaslıoğlu, and Frey 1958; Karakitapoğlu and Imamoğlu 2002; Yahşi and Özbek 2015) and their life orientations (Gündoğdu 2010). Arikan (2013) examined the impact of values such as conservation, openness to change, self-transcendence and self-enhancement and religiosity on attitudes towards distribution and social policies.

### ***Our hypotheses: a complex model of sophistication, values and civic engagement***

Our model accounts for the effects of sophistication, personal values and civic engagement in addition to age differences in predicting political participation. We expect a positive relationship between unconventional participation, civic engagement and political sophistication. As engagement, interest and understanding increase, so should unconventional participation. This combination of characteristics points to deliberative participation. We also expect higher levels of unconventional participation among younger people. We contrast this type of unconventional engagement with the more conventional voting practices. We expect that participation in the conventional sense might not always be motivated by strong political preferences. It might be, for example, part of habitual engagement particularly among older voters. We also expect that political participation, especially unconventional, would be more incidental and related to values. Because Turkey is characterized as traditionally collectivist (Hofstede 1997), we expect a high prominence of values related to tradition and religiosity as well as normative patterning in predicting conventional participation.

## **Methodology**

To test the role of civic engagement, sophistication, values and age on political participation, we use data from the 2012 WVS 6th wave. The survey was conducted in Turkish, by Bahçeşehir University with Principal Investigator Prof. Yılmaz Esmer between 30 June 2012 and 25 August 2012 and involves a national representative sample ( $N = 1605$ ). Overall our sample leans towards middle age ( $M = 38.45$ ,  $SD = 14.54$ ). For our analysis we adopted the WVS split of age in three groups: the young, from 18 to 29 years old (32% of the sample,  $n_{\text{young}} = 511$ ), the middle aged, from 30 to 49 years old (46% of the sample,  $n_{\text{middleaged}} = 733$ ) and the old, from 50 years onwards (22%,  $n_{\text{old}} = 361$ ) (World Values Survey, Turkey 2011, Codebook, 3–5).



Our measure of *conventional participation* includes voting behaviour in national and local elections where participants are asked whether they vote or not (never, usually, never). Scale reliability for conventional participation is  $\alpha = .93$ . Our *unconventional participation* measure is a five-item scale capturing action, potential action and non-action of signing a petition, joining boycotts, attending peaceful demonstrations, joining strikes, any other act of protest. The scale reliability for unconventional political participation is  $\alpha = .93$ . For *civic engagement* we use Inglehart and Norris<sup>9</sup> (2004) measure of civic activism that contains 11 items on membership in a number of organizations such as: voluntary, religious, sport or recreational, art, music or educational, environmental, professional, humanitarian or charitable, consumer organizations, self-help or mutual aid groups, labour unions, political parties or other groups. The reliability of our civic engagement scale is  $\alpha = .72$ . To measure political *sophistication*, we use an 11-item scale measuring interest in politics, importance of politics in life, usage of sources of political information (i.e., newspapers, magazines, televised news, radio, email, internet, talk with friends and colleagues) as well as education. The scale reliability for sophistication is  $\alpha = .81$ , and it ranges from 0 to 10 where 0 is low and 10 is high sophistication (mode = 4.55, median = 5.38, mean = 5.24). On the basis of the distribution of the sophistication variable, we identified two groups, high (from 5.6 to 10) and low sophistication (from 0 to 5.5).<sup>10</sup>

For values, we followed the Karakitapoğlu and Imamoğlu (2002) adaptation of Schwartz's models (Tables 1 and 2), and we included the items that were conceptually close from the WVS: *Tradition-religiosity* (tradition is important to this person; follow the customs handed by religion and family); *Self-enhancement* (importance of being rich; living in secure surroundings; able to have a good time and spoil oneself; importance of being successful and be recognized for achievements; take risks and have an exciting life); *Benevolence* (importance of being able to do something good for the society); *Normative patterning* (importance of behaving properly and avoiding doing anything that might be considered as wrong by the society) and *Universalism* (importance of looking after the environment; care for the nature and save life resources).

First we tested the relationship of each of our predictor variables with the two types of participation, examining parsimonious but partial models including age, civic engagement, sophistication or values on their own. We examined the relationship between conventional and unconventional participation and age by testing for significantly different participation means across the three age groups. We explored the relationship between civic engagement and unconventional and conventional participation by testing for significant correlations between these variables. We also run mean comparisons and test for statistically significant differences among sophistication levels. To examine whether there is a link between age, sophistication and values, we test for significant correlations among these variables. Finally, we aim to predict differential impact of civic engagement, age, sophistication, value-based attachments, gender, age and ideological placement, on the two political participation types. We run regressions with conventional and unconventional participation as dependent variables, and the remaining variables as predictors. We also include gender, income and ideology as control variables. Ideological self-placement is measured on a 0–10 scale where 0 is left and 10 is right and income is measured on a 0–10 scale where 0 is the lowest step and 10 is the highest.

**Table 1.** Results of principal component analysis.

Factors	Variance explained (%)	Eigenvalues	Scale reliability ( $\alpha$ )
1. Self-enhancement	18.3	8.80	.82
2. Tradition–religiosity	10.5	5.04	.84
3. Universalism	7.1	3.41	.78
4. Benevolence	4.1	1.99	.75
5. Normative patterning	3.9	1.90	.66

Source: Karakitapoğlu and Imamoğlu (2002), 339, 340.

**Table 2.** Factor loadings and communalities for value domains by Karakitapoğlu and Imamoğlu (2002), 339, 340.

Factors	Loading	Communality
<i>Factor 1: Self-Enhancement</i>		
Wealth	.56	.55
Enjoying life	.46	.33
Ability to express my difference from others	.49	.34
Successful	.44	.45
Influential (unavailable in WVS)	.69	.51
A comfortable life (unavailable in WVS)	.65	.51
Social recognition (unavailable in WVS)	.65	.49
Social Power (unavailable in WVS)	.60	.42
Ambitious (unavailable in WVS)	.60	.47
A sense of belonging (unavailable in WVS)	.44	.32
Cheerful (unavailable in WVS)	.52	.43
Authority (unavailable in WVS)	.49	.44
Capable (unavailable in WVS)	.45	.39
Preserving public Image (unavailable in WVS)	.41	.35
<i>Factor 2: Tradition Religiosity</i>		
Religiosity	.74	.61
Respect for tradition	.68	.62
Honouring of parents and elders	.56	.54
Devout (unavailable in WVS)	.77	.66
Responsible (unavailable in WVS)	.47	.55
Creativity (unavailable in WVS)	–.43	.40
Adherence to social expectations (unavailable in WVS)	.55	.59
Obedient (unavailable in WVS)	.54	.41
National Security (unavailable in WVS)	.52	.50
Polite (unavailable in WVS)	.48	.40
<i>Factor 3: Universalism</i>		
A world of beauty	.80	.65
Protecting the environment	.63	.49
Unity with nature	.57	.37
A world at peace (unavailable in WVS)	.68	.51
Social justice (unavailable in WVS)	.64	.59
Equality (unavailable in WVS)	.52	.31
A personality unique to myself (unavailable in WVS)	.52	.31
<i>Factor 4: Benevolence</i>		
Helpful	.69	.65
Loyal (unavailable in WVS)	.63	.52
Loving (unavailable in WVS)	.59	.43
Humble (unavailable in WVS)	.52	.39
Strong emotional bonds (unavailable in WVS)	.47	.26
Forgiving (unavailable in WVS)	.46	.36
Wisdom (unavailable in WVS)	.45	.37
<i>Factor 5: Normative Patterning</i>		
Behaviour in accordance with the expectations of my close social network even if they don't coincide with my own wishes	.52	.42
Not being different from others (unavailable in WVS)	.62	.40
Choosing own goals (unavailable in WVS)	–.57	.52
Adherence to normative patterns (unavailable in WVS)	.55	.60
Accepting my portion in life (unavailable in WVS)	.40	.35

## Analysis and findings

First, we examine the role of age, and whether unconventional participation is more likely to occur among young people. The preliminary analysis in Table 3 shows that age is significantly and positively associated with conventional participation ( $r = .15$ ), and has a significant negative relationship with unconventional participation ( $r = -.21$ ). In addition, there is no significant relationship between age and civic engagement ( $r = -.03$ ,  $p = .24$ ), showing that engagement is equally likely among older and younger citizens.

Next we examined the strength of the relationship between conventional and unconventional participation and civic engagement to see how related the two concepts are in practice. The correlation between conventional participation and engagement is not significant ( $r = -.04$ ,  $p = .14$ ), but there is a positive and significant relationship between engagement and unconventional forms of participation ( $r = .29$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The above show that conventional and unconventional political participation does not share the same relationship with civic engagement.

Turning to the relationship between sophistication, political participation and civic engagement, we find significant correlations across the three. Sophistication shares a negative significant relationship with conventional participation ( $r = -.08$ ), but a positive significant relationship with unconventional participation ( $r = .41$ ) and civic engagement ( $r = .22$ ). As sophistication increases, the likelihood of engaging in conventional participation activities declines, but the probability of engaging with unconventional forms of participation and civic engagement increases.

We then investigate further the relationship between age, sophistication and political participation by comparing the average scores on unconventional and conventional participation among our three age groups and high and low sophisticates. Table 4 reports the mean comparisons of the three age groups and levels of sophistication with statically significant

**Table 3.** Correlations between types of political participation and civic engagement, age and political sophistication.

	Political participation		Civic engagement
	Conventional participation	Unconventional participation	
Civic engagement	-.04	.29**	-
Age	.15**	-.21**	-.03
Political sophistication	-.08**	.41**	.22**

Note: Data from 2012 WVS, 6th Wave, Turkish sample. Values are Pearson's correlation coefficients ( $r$ ), \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .00$ .

**Table 4.** Comparison of mean values for age and sophistication on political participation.

Political Participation	Age groups			Political sophistication	
	Young ( $n = 511$ )	Middle ( $n = 733$ )	Old ( $n = 361$ )	High ( $n = 750$ )	Low ( $n = 855$ )
Conventional	8.29 <sup>a</sup> (2.96)	8.93 <sup>b</sup> (2.19)	9.24 <sup>b</sup> (1.77)	8.60 <sup>a</sup> (2.64)	8.97 <sup>b</sup> (2.17)
Unconventional	2.59 <sup>a</sup> (2.86)	1.89 <sup>b</sup> (2.54)	1.28 <sup>c</sup> (2.12)	2.94 <sup>a</sup> (2.87)	1.13 <sup>b</sup> (1.99)

Note: Data from 2012 WVS, 6th Wave, Turkish sample. Values are means with standard deviations in parenthesis. Age and sophistication variables are dummy variables. Young is 18–29 years old, Middle aged is 30–49 years old and old is 50+. High sophisticates are those scoring 5.6–10, and low sophisticates are those scoring 0–5.5 on the political sophistication scale. Values in the same row with different superscript (a, b and c) are significantly different at  $p < .05$ . For the mean differences we used the Bonferonni post-hoc analysis. Participation variables range from 0 to 10, with 10 indicating high rates of participation.

differences (at  $p < .05$ ) marked with a, b, c superscripts. We see again that young individuals engage more with unconventional forms of participation in comparison to middle-aged ( $M_{\text{young}} = 2.59$ ,  $M_{\text{middle}} = 1.89$ ) and older citizens who tend to prefer formal channels of participation ( $M_{\text{older}} = 1.28$ ). In addition, low sophisticates score statistically significantly higher than high sophisticates ( $M_{\text{low soph}} = 8.97$ ,  $M_{\text{high soph}} = 8.60$ ) on conventional forms of participation ( $p < .05$ ). In contrast, for unconventional participation, high sophisticates have scores statistically significantly higher than low sophisticates ( $M_{\text{high soph}} = 2.94$ ,  $M_{\text{low soph}} = 1.13$ ).

Next, we turn to the relationship between personal values, age and sophistication. In Table 5, we present the mean comparisons on values across the three age groups. We expected that attachment to tradition and religiosity and normative patterning should be more prominent among older citizens while self-enhancement, benevolence and universalism should be more pronounced among the young (Başaran 1992). In line with Karakitapoğlu and Imamoğlu (2002), we expect the sophisticates and the young to favour universal over conservative values. We also expected that interpersonal values and collectivist concerns will matter among the less sophisticated, while self-enhancement and egocentric values would matter more for political sophisticates, in line with Karakitapoğlu and Imamoğlu (2002) who find that level of education is inversely related to tradition–religiosity and normative patterning values orientations.

First, we note the statistically significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) on self-enhancement scores between young and old ( $M_{\text{young}} = 6.85$ ,  $M_{\text{older}} = 6.31$ ). Young individuals score significantly higher on self-enhancement compared to older citizens. Middle-aged individuals also score significantly higher than old citizens ( $M_{\text{middle}} = 6.65$ ) on the self-enhancement scale. We do not find statistically significant differences in the other four value domains across age groups.

Turning to value scores across sophistication levels, we see differentiation in four of the five dimensions. In Table 6 we see that sophisticates score significantly higher than novices ( $p < .05$ ) on self-enhancement ( $M_{\text{high soph}} = 6.99$ ,  $M_{\text{low soph}} = 6.33$ ), universalism ( $M_{\text{high soph}} = 7.72$ ,  $M_{\text{low soph}} = 7.34$ ) and benevolence ( $M_{\text{high soph}} = 7.73$ ,  $M_{\text{low soph}} = 7.48$ ) and novices score higher than sophisticates on tradition and religiosity ( $M_{\text{low soph}} = 7.89$ ,  $M_{\text{high soph}} = 7.64$ ). Scores on normative patterning, universalism and benevolence were not statistically different between the two sophistication groups.

### Multinomial analysis

The above analyses provide a fragmented examination of the determinants of conventional and unconventional participation. To account for the complex relationship between age,

**Table 5.** Mean comparisons for value domains by age groups.

	Young (n = 511)		Middle age (n = 733)		Old (n = 361)		Sample overall (N = 1605)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Self-enhancement	6.85 <sup>a</sup>	(1.45)	6.65 <sup>a</sup>	(1.46)	6.31 <sup>b</sup>	(1.41)	6.64	(1.46)
Tradition–religiosity	7.67 <sup>a</sup>	(2.19)	7.81 <sup>a</sup>	(2.04)	7.84 <sup>a</sup>	(1.87)	7.77	(2.05)
Universalism	7.64 <sup>a</sup>	(1.98)	7.45 <sup>a</sup>	(2.07)	7.49 <sup>a</sup>	(1.99)	7.51	(2.03)
Benevolence	7.61 <sup>a</sup>	(2.16)	7.64 <sup>a</sup>	(1.96)	7.47 <sup>a</sup>	(2.11)	7.60	(2.06)
Normative patterning	6.99 <sup>a</sup>	(2.30)	6.96 <sup>a</sup>	(2.36)	7.22 <sup>a</sup>	(2.04)	7.03	(2.27)

Note: Data from 2012 WVS, 6th Wave, Turkish sample. Values are means (M) with standard deviations (SD) in parenthesis. Young is 18–29 years, middle - aged is 30–49 years, and old is 50+ years. Values are generated using ANOVA. Significant differences in value scores for different age groups at  $p < .05$  are marked with different superscripts (a, b). Value variables in the first column range from 0 to 10, with 10 indicating high scores on each variable.

**Table 6.** Mean comparisons for value domains and sophistication.

Value domains	High sophistication ( $n = 750$ )		Low sophistication ( $n = 855$ )	
	<i>M</i>	SD	<i>M</i>	SD
Self-enhancement	6.99 <sup>a</sup>	1.48	6.33 <sup>b</sup>	1.37
Tradition–religiosity	7.64 <sup>a</sup>	2.20	7.89 <sup>b</sup>	1.91
Universalism	7.72 <sup>a</sup>	2.05	7.34 <sup>b</sup>	1.99
Benevolence	7.73 <sup>a</sup>	2.10	7.48 <sup>b</sup>	2.01
Normative patterning	7.04 <sup>a</sup>	2.37	7.01 <sup>a</sup>	2.19

Notes: Data from 2012 WVVS, 6th Wave, Turkish sample. Values are means with standard deviations in parenthesis. High sophisticates are those scoring 5.6–10, and low sophisticates are those scoring 0–5.5 on the political sophistication scale. Values are generated by independent samples t-test. Significant differences in value scores for different sophistication groups at  $p < .05$  are marked with different superscripts (a, b). Value variables in the first column range from 0 to 10, with 10 indicating high scores on each variable.

civic engagement, sophistication and personal values we run a set of Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regressions that predict increase or decrease in engaging in conventional and unconventional participation, controlling for ideological self-placement, income and gender. The results of the regressions are available in Table 7.

First, we notice that age plays a significant role in predicting conventional and unconventional participation, but in heterogeneous ways. Age has a positive relationship with conventional participation, and a negative relationship with unconventional participation so that as age increases, engaging with unconventional participation actions declines. The results pertaining to age are not surprising but the model we tested here shows that participation determinants can be complex. We also see that in the Turkish context civic engagement is a significant predictor of more formal forms of participation but instead increases involvement with unconventional forms of political participation. We think this is because in Turkey, where voting is mandatory and the high majority of the population traditionally casts their vote in electoral processes, the act of voting is more likely to be perceived as a ‘traditional’ civic and political responsibility one holds, rather than requiring particular effort or investment. Participating, however in unconventional acts requires commitment across a wider range of political activities, many of which fall into the civic engagement bracket.

We also see that unconventional participation is driven by complex combinations of values. It increases when values of traditionalism–religiosity and normative patterning decline ( $b_{\text{traditionalism}} = -.07$ ,  $b_{\text{norm.pat}} = -.07$ ) and when benevolence and civic engagement increase ( $b_{\text{benevolence}} = .11$ ,  $b_{\text{civiceng}} = .72$ ). Conventional participation scores increase as traditionalism–religiosity scores increase ( $b_{\text{traditionalism}} = .10$ ). This opposite effect of traditionalism/religiosity for conventional and unconventional participation is in line with our expectations. Citizens who are attached to traditional and religious norms are expected to act within the formal channels of participation rather than overcoming them. Those who do not value tradition and religion are prone to overcome the barriers of formal participation and engage with non-conventional forms. Normative patterning is also negatively related to unconventional participation. The more people are likely to follow socially imposed constraints, the less likely they are to engage with unconventional types of participation. The effect of benevolence is also intuitively clear: individuals that have a collective attitude towards society and are keen to help others are also likely to engage with unconventional forms of participation.

Sophistication is also a significant and positive predictor of unconventional participation ( $b_{\text{sophistication}} = .34$ ) but has no significant effect on conventional participation. We think this is because high sophisticates are more likely to perceive unconventional types of participation

**Table 7.** Predictors of conventional and unconventional participation: OLS regression models.

	Types of political participation			
	Conventional		Unconventional	
Age	.02***	(.00)	-.011*	(.00)
Civic engagement	-.09	(.10)	.72***	(.09)
Political sophistication	-.04	(.03)	.34***	(.03)
Value factor 1: Self-enhancement	.03	(.05)	.06	(.04)
Value factor 2: Tradition–religiosity	.10***	(.03)	-.07*	(.03)
Value factor 3: Universalism	-.00	(.03)	.05	(.03)
Value factor 4: Benevolence	.04	(.03)	.11***	(.03)
Value factor 5: Normative patterning	.06	(.03)	-.07*	(.03)
Income	.08***	(.03)	-.07**	(.03)
Ideology (L–R)	.03	(.02)	-.18***	(.02)
Gender	-.04	(.12)	.03	(.12)
Constant	6.11***	(.52)	1.17*	(.50)
$R^2$	.05		.26	
Adj. $R^2$	.04		.26	
Sample size (N)	1597		1597	

Notes: Data from 2012 WVS, 6th Wave, Turkish sample. Analyses are OLS Regressions. Values are unstandardized regression coefficients, standard errors in parenthesis. Independent variables (civic engagement, sophistication, values, ideology, income) are continuous and have been rescaled on 0 to 1 range with all values in between, to allow comparisons of coefficient sizes. Gender is 0 for male, 1 for female. Statistical significance at \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .00$ .

**Table 8.** Summary of linear regression results.

	Types of political participation	
	Conventional	Unconventional
Age	Age (+)	Age (–)
Income	Income (+)	Income (–)
Civic engagement	–	Civic engagement (+)
Political sophistication	–	Sophistication (+)
Value domains	Tradition–religiosity (+)	Tradition–religiosity (–) Normative patterning (–) Benevolence (+)
Ideological self-placement (L–R)	–	Ideological self-placement (–)

Note: Data from 2012 WVS, 6th Wave, Turkish sample. Results summarise Table 7.

as agents of direct impact on the socio-political arena. In Table 8 we also see that as ideology becomes more left leaning, citizens are more keen to engage with unconventional channels of participation ( $b_{\text{ideology}} = -.18$ ), but ideology has no statistically significant effect on conventional participation. Income patterns are similar to age: unconventional participation decreases as income increases ( $b_{\text{income}} = -.07$ ) and conventional participation increases as income goes higher ( $b_{\text{income}} = .08$ ).

## Conclusions

Our article uses data from the 2012 WVS to provide an empirical analysis of conventional and unconventional participation. We examine the effects of civic engagement, political sophistication and personal values, while controlling for the effects of age, income and ideology. Our study puts our political psychological model to test in the non-western, electoral authoritarianism environment of Turkish politics. We find complex psychological mechanisms behind unconventional participation, and simpler processes operating behind conventional participation. Characteristically, civic engagement, often considered a

prerequisite for political participation, is mainly relevant for unconventional participation. Political sophistication, accounting for citizens' cognitive capacity to process political news and information, is relevant for non-conventional politics. In addition, values function as heuristics allowing people to shape political decisions and positions and their role is more complex for unconventional participation. As we expected, conventional participation is explained by a simple model that accounts for values of religiosity and tradition and higher income.

Our data show that in Turkey political decision-making of the unconventional kind seems to rest on complex psychological drivers, similar to those that explain participation in western contexts. Political sophistication and civic engagement, left-leaning ideology, low income, benevolent values and opposition to tradition are significant indicators of unconventional forms of political participation in this electoral authoritarian regime. This finding is an invitation to investigate this beyond our analysis of participation, taking into account citizens' opinions towards political values like freedom of speech and individual rights, to provide an in-depth comparison between Turkey and the advanced democracies of the Western world.

Turning to the variation of the psychological mechanisms of conventional and unconventional behaviours, we find this finding particularly interesting. Conventional voting behaviours are decided on the basis of traditional considerations, but the engagement with unconventional acts that break the rigid, and perhaps often restrained, boundaries of political engagement, require more complex psychological engagement. Interestingly, once one accounts for the psychological mechanism of political decision-making, the effects of age become non-significant.

Our findings allow us to profile the characteristics of the individuals likely to have joined the 2015 Gezi mobilizations three years after the WVS data were collected, or the anti-coup demonstrations in 2016 in Turkey. We conclude that massive public mobilizations often described as actions of 'young passionate men' can be better understood on the basis of considerations more complex and psychologically rich than age or gender. The application of our political psychological model naturally extends beyond the Turkish context, to other electoral authoritarian regimes. When conventional participation may seem the only way forward in state-repressive contexts, unconventional participation opens up channels for the expression of complex political engagement that is driven by complex psychological considerations that are worth a closer look.

## Notes

1. According to the survey results conducted by KONDA during the first days of Gezi, the average age of participants was 28 years, and approximately 80% were not affiliated with a political party or non-governmental organization. In addition, about 56% had participated in other mobilizations before Gezi whereas the remaining 44.4% had no past engagement. Their common denominator was environmental concerns opposing the AK Party's urbanization plans for Istanbul (KONDA 2014). The excessive use of force and violence by the police against protesters (Amnesty International 2013) transformed public demands and sparked a significant response by large segments of the population (Chrona and Bee, *forthcoming*). Marches in support of Gezi were organized across Turkey calling for basic human rights and individual freedoms (*ibid*).
2. For a comprehensive discussion on unconventional participation and a detailed list of recent examples in Turkey please see Kentmen-Çin (2015) and Çarkoğlu and Kalaycıoğlu (2007).

3. Voter turnout in the Turkish 2015 elections was 85.18%, which is significantly higher than the 42.5% in USA, 2014; 66% in the UK, 2014; 71% in Germany, 2013; 75% in Italy, 2013; 55% in France, 2012 (International IDEA 2016).
4. More information about the WVS 6th wave in Turkey are available here: <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV6.jsp>.
5. Evidence of the different participatory modalities referring to conventional and unconventional participation can be found in the findings of Saunders (2014), Dalton (2008), Norris (2002) just to name a few.
6. According to the official reports and data files issued by the Republic of Turkey's Supreme Election Council (T.C. Yüksek Seçim Kurulu, 2016), the voting percentage of the general elections in June 2015 was 8523%, in November 2015 was 8392%, in June 2011 was 83.16%, in July 2007 was 8425%, in November 2002 was 7914% and in April 1999 was 87.14%.
7. Some exemptions are the quantitative analysis of unconventional participation among women and youth (Sener 2014), minority participation such as Alevi and Kurds (Grigoriadis 2006); youth participation in Southeastern Anatolia (Özdemir 2010).
8. Recently, Goren, Schoen, and Reifler (2016) demonstrated variation in the functional capability of basic personal values. Self-transcendence and conservation values drive attitudes on the role of government in the public life, while self-enhancement and openness to change play a less important role in regards to public life (2016, 2).
9. Inglehart and Norris use those items in their index of civic activism (2002, 249). We use the same items for our civic engagement scale.
10. The distribution of our scale on political sophistication can be found in Chart 1 in the Appendix 1.

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## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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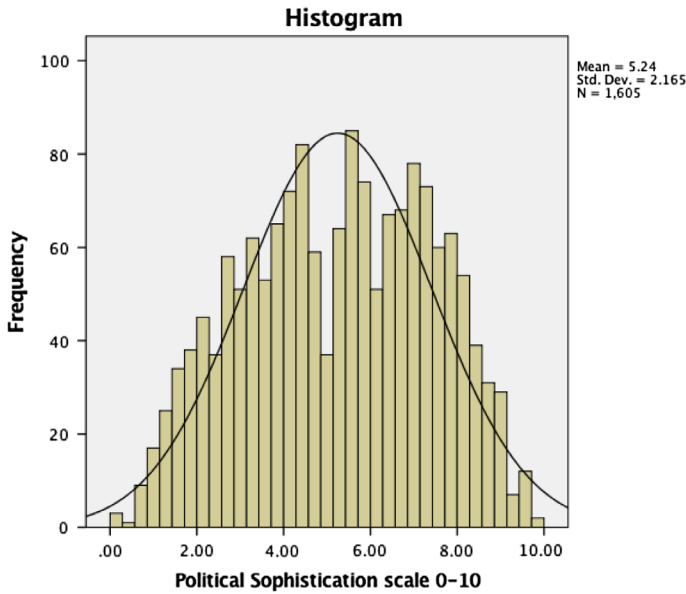
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## Appendix 1.

Chart 1. Histogram of the distribution of political sophistication.



Note: Data from 2012 WVS, 6th Wave, Turkish sample.