

**Exploring the Factors Influencing Protest Motivations of Turkish Youth: A Qualitative  
Study Among Gezi Park Participants**

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### **Abstract**

This qualitative research discovers the factors affecting protests motivations of Turkish youth protests since the 2013 Gezi Park protests. Employing Jack Brehm's (1966) Reactance Theory, the study focuses on how perceived threats to freedom, government legitimacy, and the perceived effectiveness of protests affect protest willingness. Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted with former Gezi Park supporters aged 20-30 during the protests to uncover the factors influencing their current protest engagement. The narratives show that initial protest motivations were driven by perceived government illegitimacy and threats to personal freedoms. Yet, discussions revealed increased repression, individual risks, and the perceived ineffectiveness of protests also affect further participation. Socio-economic factors, such as employment risks, financial independence, and familial and social influences, were also reported to impact protest motivations. Conversations highlight the complexity of protest motivations: while reactance to perceived threats is present, it is moderated by the fear of repercussions and the perceived futility of efforts. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of individual responses to collective actions under repressive regimes. By applying reactance theory, traditionally rooted in psychology and health communication, to social movements, this study broadens its use and highlights the necessity of further studies about the dynamics of protest behavior and motivations for youth activism across various contexts.

**Keywords:** Youth Activism, Gezi Park Protests, Reactance Theory, Turkish Politics, Protest Motivations

## **Exploring the Factors Influencing Protest Motivations of Turkish Youth: A Qualitative Study Among Gezi Park Participants**

Lately, there has been a decline in youth activism in Turkey, particularly in their engagement with societal and political matters (Baser, 2020; Bee & Chrona, 2017). The largest instance of activism was the Gezi Park protests in 2013, which commenced as an environmental protest and evolved into a democracy and rights protest after a police crackdown (Taştan, 2013). The motives behind the Gezi Park protests are explained by scholars from several perspectives. Carothers and Youngs (2015) argue that the demonstrations emerged in response to the authoritarianism of the AKP-led government and its breach of democratic values and norms held by many Turks (p. 11). According to Kaya and Ural (2017), young people were protesting the ruling party's imposition of an ideal social and political order by counter-conduct (p. 201). The goals of the protests were to uphold the rule of law, oppose authoritarianism, and demand greater freedom (Aydin, 2014). On the other hand, Kulak (2023) argues that the motivations for participation included the relative poverty of the participants, the perceived efficacy of the protests, self-identification with the political cause, not to mention a variety of identity-based and affective qualities like emotions, values, and feelings of persecution (pp. 165-166). Lastly, Erdoğan (2015) demonstrates the importance of anger by noting that people are more inclined to demonstrate when they believe their group is being victimized (p. 40). Consequently, it can be understood that the Gezi Protests were both a response to recent political restrictions and a manifestation of broader social unrest over the curtailment of liberties (Kongar & Kucukkaya, 2013). KONDA's (2014) findings support this opinion as 58.1% of demonstrators participated in protests in opposition to the limitations on their freedom (p. 20).

The Turkish youth were heavily involved in the protests because of their power over the beginning and course of the protests (Cansun, 2014). This is because there has been a notable rise in the politicization of Turkish youth, particularly among those who feared that Turkey would become more Islamic and thus citizens would lose their civil liberties under protection by the secular order (Gençoğlu & Yarkin, 2018). Despite the increasing repression and authoritarian policies observed in Turkey (Arslanalp & Erkmen, 2024), there has been a decline in youth activism since the Gezi Park (Başer, 2022). Protests in Turkey persisted even after the failed coup attempt, albeit they were less large-scale, less coordinated, and less violent (Arslanalp & Erkmen, 2024). Demonstrators found other ways to voice their dissatisfaction despite the promulgation of laws prohibiting protests in public areas, though the breadth and volume of these were restricted (Arslanalp & Erkmen, 2024). This raises key contradictions:

why have recent freedom restrictions not resulted in large-scale and effective protests as seen during the Gezi Park protests? What factors influence the motivations of demonstrators? This study aims to understand what kind of motivations were there during the 2013 Gezi Park protests and how they may have changed by focusing on the perception of legitimacy, threat and efficacy of the past protests through the lens of Brehm's (1966) Reactance Theory. According to the theory, people react behaviourally to perceived threats to their freedoms in an attempt to regain these threatened or restricted freedoms (Brehm & Brehm, 2013, p. 35). The occurrence and the level of the reactance can be affected by several factors such as; threat perception, perceived legitimacy, and the likelihood of reclaiming restricted freedoms (Dillard & Shen, 2005; Sittenthaler et al., 2015). By applying this theory, the present thesis aims to discover changes in the protest willingness over time.

Consequently, my main research question is: 'What factors play a role in the motivations of Turkish youth who engaged in the 2013 Gezi Park protests to engage in or refrain from current demonstration events?' This main research question is supported by four sub-questions, including i) perceptions of government legitimacy, ii) perceived threats to freedom, iii) the perceived effectiveness of Gezi Park protests, and lastly, iv) other factors influencing motivations of Turkish citizens to engage in or refrain from further protests. To get a better insight into former Gezi Park protest participants, this qualitative research offers semi-structured in-depth interviews to illuminate the motivators of protest participation and the absence of participation motivation in contemporary Turkey. Understanding the reasons for this decline in the size of youth activism is important because the ability of groups to protest is an indicator of the robustness of a democracy (Martin, 1986). In the countries where youth have spearheaded movements that ousted authoritarian regimes, their exclusion from subsequent decision-making processes can lead to significant frustration, this frustration can destabilize democratization and accelerate conflict dynamics (Goudie, 2018). In the context of Turkey, where young adults led the Gezi Park protests, the apparent reduction in their engagement could have long-term implications for the country's political stability and democratisation process.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Social movement studies have transitioned from psychological interpretations to more comprehensive sociological analyses (Della Porta & Diani, 2009). As the field expanded, the focus shifted toward understanding the structured nature of collective behaviours (Mantu, 2023). With the rise of studies on collective behavior in sociology, the definition of collective action—which concentrated on issues within the social order—began to lose its relevance

(Della Porta & Diani, 2009). The new studies shifted the focus from collective psychology to collective behaviour, defining it as “behaviour concerned with change, and social movements as both an integral part of the normal functioning of society and the expression of a wider process of transformation” (Della Porta & Diani, 2009, p. 12).

The power and ability of actors to influence the political sphere, the success and failure of people's collective action, and the shifting forms of social conflict from class to identity and symbolic power have all been prominent themes in social movement research (Mantu, 2023, p. 37). But the study of social movements has long overlooked the significance of emotions (Mantu, 2023). Emotions like anger, humiliation, fear, and anxiety stem from social inequalities, unemployment, and oppression under neoliberal conditions, leading to increased participation in protests (Castells, 2012; Benski & Langman, 2013, as cited in Mantu, 2023). Castells highlights the individual's role in collective action, emphasizing how emotions influence participation in social movements, as they are fundamentally emotional at the individual level (Castells, 2012, p. 13, as cited in Mantu, 2023).

Van Zomeren et al. (2011) investigate how breaches of moral convictions act as a catalyst for collective actions. They find that such violations spur collective action against social inequality by enhancing identification with its victims. Therefore, moral convictions can drive collective action by fostering identification with either the disadvantaged group or a politicized protest group (Van Zomeren et al., 2011, pp. 736-738). Efficacy, identity, emotion, and morality are the four main drivers of collective action (Klandermans, 1997; Simon et al., 1998, as cited in Van Zomeren, 2013, p. 309). Van Zomeren (2013) further discusses the four primary motivations for engaging in collective action are individuals' beliefs in their group's efficacy, their sense of identification with the group, their feelings of group-based anger due to perceived injustice, and their sense of violated moral standards (pp. 379-382).

Reactance theory, meanwhile, originates from psychology and focuses on individual responses to perceived threats to freedom. It is useful for this study as it addresses how personal experiences of threat, freedom, and legitimacy can influence collective behaviour. Applying reactance theory in Turkey helps to understand how Turkish youth from the 2013 Gezi Park protests perceive and react to current political dynamics, filling a gap in the literature on individual motivations within social movements. This study benefits the field of communication sciences as it explores a persuasive communication theory, reactance theory, in the context of social movements. Understanding the factors that trigger reactance in society and how these factors lead to changes in protest willingness might give insights into the behaviour of groups such as Gezi Participants in social movements.

## **Reactance Theory**

While being aware of the foundational theories of collective action and social movements, the core theoretical framework guiding this study is reactance theory, which is chosen to highlight the individual psychological responses to perceived threats to freedom and how these responses can influence collective action. The theory suggests that when individuals perceive their freedoms are being threatened by any means of repression, they experience motivational arousal known as reactance, which drives them to reclaim the lost or threatened freedoms (Brehm & Brehm, 2013, p. 35). The perception of a threat to freedom, the legitimacy of the authority imposing those restrictions, and the perceived efficacy of regaining threatened freedom are some of the factors that affect reactance (Steindl et al., 2015, pp. 205-214). It is important to note that, depending on the feasibility of direct restoration, reactance can occur either as direct opposition to the restrictions or through more subtle forms of resistance (Brehm, 1966; Brehm & Brehm, 2013).

I find applying Reactance Theory to the Turkish context is relevant due to the significant number of freedom restrictions (Human Progress, 2023). This is because while the social movements literature mostly focuses on the motivations of collective action for groups (Pinard, 2011), reactance theory reflects on individual perceptions (Brehm, 1966). This reflection on individual perception allows the researcher to understand how personal experiences of freedom, threat, and legitimacy can influence collective behaviour. Despite social movement theories, the theory addresses the perception that individual freedoms are threatened rather than general threats (Brehm, 1966). Given that the research will proceed along with semi-structured interviews, the available data can best be analysed through a theoretical lens at the individual level of analysis.

The reactance theory has been applied in persuasive health communication studies by Dillard and Shen (2005). The focus of their study was to understand the failures in persuasive health communication through the lens of theory. They offer a measurement system that proves reactance may reasonably be conceived of as an amalgam of anger and negative conditions (Dillard & Shen, 2005). One key finding of Dillard and Shen (2015) was that a combination of anger and negative thoughts fully mediated the impact of the perceived threat to freedom on attitudes and intentions. This means that these emotional and cognitive reactions influence how individuals respond to threats to their freedom. By applying this theory, I examine how the Turkish youth, who participated in the 2013 Gezi Park protests, perceive and react to the ongoing political dynamics and restrictions. To this end, I conducted qualitative interviews, to explore how the reactance theory relates to the lived experiences of the respondents.

## **Perceived Legitimacy**

The concept of system justification, where individuals support the legitimacy of prevailing social, economic, and political systems, significantly influences participation in collective action. This tendency to uphold the status quo correlates with a reduced likelihood of engaging in protests against the system and endorsing the legitimacy of the status quo is linked to a reluctance to participate in system-challenging protests and other efforts to address injustice (Solak et al., 2022). Hence, it is associated with a willingness to engage in system-supporting collective action (Osborne et al., 2019). In Turkey, the AKP's approach to the Gezi Protests jeopardized its democratic legitimacy due to increased polarization (Çınar, 2015). As an individual's willingness to participate in protests can be affected by the perceived legitimacy of the government (Brehm, 1966), the reflection of this phenomena can be further explored through discovering personal experiences. For the context of Turkey and young adults, more insights are needed to understand the perceived legitimacy of the government about protest participation. Therefore, I propose the following sub-question:

Sub Question 1: 'What role does the perceived legitimacy of the government play in motivations to participate in demonstrations?'

## **Threat to Freedom**

Studies on reactance show that people who feel free to engage in a given behaviour will experience psychological reactance if that freedom is removed or threatened (Brehm, 1966). When people recognize that a certain freedom is at risk of being restricted, they enter a motivational state aimed at re-establishing that freedom (Brehm, 1966). Over the past thirty years, research on protest behaviour has generally emphasized the significance of resources (Jenkins, 1983; McCarthy & Zald, 1977) and opportunities (McAdam, 1982; Meyer et al., 1993; Tarrow, 1988) in explaining the emergence of movements. However, the influence of threats in promoting protest and mobilization has not been researched enough (Buechler, 2007).

Three principal threats apply to authoritarian states: state-attributed economic problems, erosion of rights, and state repression (Tilly, 1978; Walton & Seddon, 1994; Goldstone & Tilly, 2001; Goodwin et al., 2001; Almeida, 2003). These forms of threat increase the costs of collective action and thereby deter protestors (Tilly, 1978; Jasper, 1997). In the context of Turkey, the perceived threat to freedom becomes a critical factor influencing individuals' motivations to engage in or refrain from protest activities. Research on this context has unfortunately received limited interest. Until recently, very little was known about the



dynamics of protest activity in severely repressive contexts like Turkey, where participation in protests involves considerable personal sacrifice (Mantu, 2023). Hence, considering the limited knowledge about protest dynamics in Turkey, it is important to ask the second sub-question to better understand the role of perceived threat on demonstration motivations:

Sub Question 2: ‘What role does the perceived threat to freedom related to government policies play in motivations to participate in demonstrations?’

### **Perceived Effectiveness/Outcomes**

Previous studies identify two main factors influencing initial participation in movements: identification with the movement’s cause (Bernstein, 1997, pp. 533-539) and perceived effectiveness of protest participation (Passy & Giugni, 2001, p. 137). The studies show that the stories and narratives as rhetorical devices can transform potential protestors’ perceptions and encourage participation (Jasper, 1997; Meyer & Gamson, 1996; Polletta & Chen, 2012). Ataman et al. (2012) conducted interviews with young people about the Gezi Park protests. Their findings offer limited but important insights into the perceived effectiveness of participation. They revealed some participants saw participation as a useless effort due to the belief that “nothing will change” (Ataman et al., 2012, pp. 428-429). One Turkish participant aged 20-26 believed demonstrations were ineffective and disturbed many people (Ataman et al., 2012, pp. 428-429). The same participant also mentioned that police violence was a significant demotivator. The difference between the groups was not in their negative perceptions of participation's effectiveness but in the underlying reasons for not participating (Ataman et al., 2012).

It is known that identification and perception of effectiveness play crucial roles in protest participation (Bernstein, 1997; Passy & Giugni, 2001). However, other findings show perceptions of effectiveness do not predict intentions to participate in collective action beyond the influence of individuals' identification as activists (Kelly & Breinlinger, 1995b; Sturmer & Simon, 2004; Sturmer et al., 2003). These findings are important, but the results are contradictory. I aim to explore the role of the perceived effectiveness in protest participation within the Turkish context, particularly among former Gezi Protest demonstrators aged 20-30. Understanding these perceptions is important for applying reactance theory, which posits that the cost of reclaiming threatened or restricted freedoms influences the likelihood of reactance (Brehm & Brehm, 2013, pp. 99). In this case, the perceived effectiveness or potential outcomes

of protesting may deter protestors. Since this consideration can be better understood in the context of Gezi, I propose the following sub-question:

Sub question 3: ‘What role does the perceived effectiveness of the Gezi Park protests play in motivations to participate in demonstrations?’

### **Other Factors**

I acknowledge that there may be other factors influencing the protest willingness of young Turks. Scholars like Ataman et al. (2012) have presented important findings about other factors that may affect protest participation. Their target group was Turkish and Roma youths aged i) 16-18, and ii) 18-26. Their interviews with Turkish interviewees revealed that concerns about being labelled as a proponent of a particular ideology or political party, the fear of losing one’s job; and a perceived lack of efficacy are predictors of willingness to engage in demonstrations (Ataman et al., 2012, p. 425). Interestingly, another finding of their research was that participants aged between 20-26 were more cautious concerning civic and political participation. They displayed a more cautious engagement, often expressing stronger disapproval of various activist methods like marches, demonstrations, and graffiti. They typically viewed these actions as deviant behaviours and highlighted their ineffectiveness and the disturbances they cause (Ataman et al., 2012, p. 425). The findings are enlightening but fall short of a comprehensive answer. In acknowledgement that other factors may play a role and interact in complex ways with the three aspects of reactance theory, that is perception of threat, perceived legitimacy, and perceived effectiveness, I accordingly, propose my last sub-question:

Sub question 4: ‘What other factors play a role in motivations to participate in demonstrations?’

All research in this field provides valuable information regarding the willingness of protest participation. However, what the literature lacks and needs more research is a qualitative and in-depth inquiry that discovers how factors may relate or change and play a role in protest participation motivations among Turkish young adults and potential changes after the Gezi Park protests. This research takes a closer look at this issue through the lens of reactance theory, which provides a new perspective on the field by applying a theory used in communication science to understand the dynamics of groups and society. Overall this thesis' main research question is: ‘What factors play a role in the motivations of Turkish young adults

who engaged in the 2013 Gezi Park protests, to engage or refrain from current demonstration events?’

### **Methodology**

This study aims to discover what kind of motivations were there during the 2013 Gezi Park protests and how they may have changed among the former Turkish youth. The theory chosen to explain why protests have not taken place is the Reactance Theory by Brehm (1966). For this study, protest is viewed as a type of reactance and its absence as a lack of reactance. In Turkey, according to the Human Freedom Index (2023), all the factors that led to the protests in Gezi Park seem to be more evident today due to governmental initiatives and actions.

Why nationwide protests such as the Gezi Protests do not occur anymore and how have the motivations changed with all the people between the ages of 20 and 30 who initially drove Gezi is still a puzzle. This study explores the shifting dynamics of protest motivations among Turkish young adults through semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted using a qualitative research design. This method captures complex understandings of social events as well as in-depth personal experiences (Gray, 2009). By conducting these interviews, I hope to discover whether Brehm's thesis explains changing motivations and provides explanations for the apparent lack of reaction.

### **Research Approach**

#### ***Case Description***

In this section, I examine how the landscape of individual and social freedoms in Turkey has evolved since the 2013 Gezi protests, focusing on Turkish young adults aged 20-30. I discuss; spin dictators, academic repression, media repression, and various freedom-restricting events that have been implemented since the 2013 Gezi protests until 2023. They are mostly legal limitations affecting personal life, social activities, and the broader impact on academic and press freedoms. I then explain the role played by young adults in the Gezi Park protests. Lastly, I consider the current state of youth activism in Turkey. I question the decline in nationwide protests despite increased repressive measures.

Since the Gezi Park protests in 2013, restrictions on individual and social freedoms in Turkey have intensified with laws such as Law No. 6487 (Nazif-Munoz et al., 2022) and other regulations on alcohol sales and social events showing increased government intervention in lifestyle choices (T24 News, 2023; Akkaş, 2023). This trend of repression of freedom extends to the academic and press fields. The Academic Freedom Index 2023 Report, ranks Turkey 166th out of 179 countries, placing it in the bottom 10% with countries like North Korea and Belarus (Euronews, 2023; Kinzelbach et al., 2023). The World Press Freedom Index 2023

Report shows Turkey falling 16 places, now categorized as “grave” (Reporters Without Borders, 2023). The Human Freedom Index highlights a dramatic decline in Turkey's overall freedom. In 2013, Turkey's score was 7.10, but by 2023, it ranked 128th among 165 countries with a score of 5.63, trailing behind nations like Haiti and Angola (Human Progress, 2023). A KONDA (2014) survey shows that 30.8% of participants were aged 21-25, and 20.3% were aged 26-30, accounting for over half of the protestors (p. 8). These young individuals drove the mobilization and spread of the protests, organizing through digital platforms without central leadership (Cansun, 2014). This effort led to anti-government demonstrations nationwide (Zihnioglu, 2019). However, large-scale protests have not recurred in Turkey since Gezi Park, suggesting a potential decline or shift in the forms of engagement and protest among young adults (Cansun, 2014; Lukuslu, 2005; Zihnioglu, 2019). Further research should explore the willingness of previous Gezi Protestors to participate in protests today and the factors influencing their participation in demonstrations.

### **Research Design**

This research uses a qualitative approach that is based on in-depth, semi-structured interviews that give space for the interviewees to freely share their stories, personal interpretations of events, and perspectives in one-on-one conversations (Jamshed, 2014). These interviews constitute the primary data for this research. Semi-structured interviews involve a series of open-ended questions based on the topic areas which are; the perceived legitimacy of the government, perceived threats due to government policies, and perceived effectiveness of Gezi Park protests.

The open-ended questions allow the researcher to conduct a more detailed interview to uncover the motivations of protests. This method also provides a natural conversation setting that helps to elaborate specific issues more in detail together (Gray, 2009). Lastly, the open-ended nature of the questions produces rich qualitative data by fostering a conversational nature where the participants can go into in-depth exploration and convey the intricacies of their experiences and points of view (Adams, 2015).

### **Sampling Strategy**

I used a snowball sampling strategy to find supporters of the Gezi Park protests because it is effective in reaching people who share past group connections and common experiences (Kirchherr & Charles, 2018). Snowball sampling is practical for examining the complex web of social connections among a demographic that is otherwise challenging to reach (Bhat, 2023). This approach helped to overcome potential limitations related to time and accessibility.

Participants for the interview were chosen from among supporters of the Gezi Park protests. The process started by contacting people I knew who participated in the Gezi protests. The reach was extended by asking these participants to refer others, who supported the Gezi cause and were aged 20 to 30. Participants needed to meet two conditions: they had to be former supporters of the Gezi Park protests, either through direct street demonstrations or social media support, and they had to be aged 20-30 during the protests. The reasons for choosing this age group are; that they played a crucial role in the initiation and spread of the Gezi Park protests, the largest and most comprehensive protest in the history of the Republic of Turkey, and they constituted more than 50% of the participants (Cansun, 2014; Lukuslu, 2005; Zihnioglu, 2019). To ensure these prerequisites, I conducted a preliminary questionnaire with two questions: “Did you support the Gezi Park protests?” and “Were you between 20 and 30 during the Gezi Park protests?” Participants answering “yes” to both questions were eligible for the interview. The opinions of participants who previously attended such demonstrations are beneficial for understanding the motivations for protest and their current engagement. The final number of participants was ten, providing a varied set of interview responses for in-depth examination. The sample consisted of 80% males and 20% females, with an average age of 34. Lastly, 70% of participants had moved from Turkey, which is discussed in more detail in the discussion section below.

### **Data Collection**

The initial phase of interview interaction with prospective respondents was reaching them via email, WhatsApp, social media direct messages, or telephone calls. The communication proceeded in the following way: I introduced myself to them. Explain how I reached them, and from whom I got their contact addresses. I asked two prerequisite questions in my preliminary questionnaire to detect whether eligible to proceed or not. Details about the project, privacy protocol, and consent forms are shared with those who are eligible and selected for the interview. These documents clarify the purpose of the research, the reasons and methods for collecting personal data, the exclusive use of these data for this research, and details about data access. Given the potentially challenging and vulnerable context, where answering sensitive political questions could expose them to risk, stringent precautions were implemented to mitigate these dangers.

The data collection process is carried out by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). During the interviews, I anonymized the names of all participants by referring to them with numbers; 'Participant 1', and 'Participant 2'. The consent form with their names and signatures is stored in Tilburg University's database, only I with my password can access this

database. Within the researchers' graduation, all personal data related to this research will be deleted. If I ever face any data breach, I will immediately notify my supervisor and take necessary cautious actions. Transcribing and analysis of the interviews are completed via Atlas.ti software. The interviews lasted for 50 to 60 minutes, depending on the dynamics of the dialogue. Throughout the whole process of this study, I ensured the confidentiality of the data, taking into account ethical and privacy concerns. Participation remains anonymous from beginning to end. My positionality as a Turkish young adult who experienced the events may be beneficial; as I could understand respondents' points better, helping respondents to remember events and ask more comprehensive follow-up questions. Yet there may be some disadvantages for me as well, considering Turkey is facing suppressive measures and this research touches upon a sensitive issue for the current Turkish Government. Yet, I am dedicated to understanding changes in Turkey.

### **Data Analysis**

The main purpose of this study is to understand how the motivations of Turkish youth to demonstrate changed after the Gezi Park protests. For a better understanding of this change in participation motivations, I conducted a thematic analysis of the in-depth interviews with former Gezi Park Protests supporters aged 20-30 during the protests. I followed the steps and guidelines offered by Braun and Clarke (2016), starting with transcribing all interviews word for word to ensure I accurately captured every detail and information in the participants' responses. By doing this I ensured I maintain the accuracy of the data. This maintenance of the accuracy provided a basis for future analysis. When the transcriptions were done, I examined the data by reading through the transcripts repeatedly. As I reviewed the interviews multiple times, it deepened my understanding of the collected data.

Then, I proceeded to the preliminary coding phase. In this phase, I took notes of first impressions, potential patterns, and interesting points that might lead me to further discoveries. I began the detailed coding process using ATLAS.ti software. Coding with ATLAS.ti involves dissecting each transcript line by line to identify and label significant portions of text. These labels, or codes, are derived from the research objectives and theoretical framework, ensuring they are relevant and aligned with the study's goals. In the next step, I created potential themes from these labels and codes. I transformed these codes into potential themes. This involves an iterative process of refining and grouping codes into broader categories that reflect underlying patterns in the data. There were pre-defined codes before moving to open coding.

These pre-defined codes were; a threat to freedom, perceived legitimacy, perceived effectiveness, and other factors. Some codes were combined or enhanced to ensure that they

contribute meaningfully to the development of coherent themes. Thanks to this categorization, specific instances allowed me to have a more broad idea about the data set. Once I identified the potential themes, I reviewed them to ensure they reflected the coded extracts and aligned with the entire data set. Here I split, merged, or discarded the themes depending on how well they represent the data and address my research questions. After I finalised the themes that emerged, I grouped them according to the topics they are related to. Then, I explain in detail the relevance of these themes to each other and their compatibility with the theoretical framework. By applying the thematic analysis steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), I aim to provide an interpretation of the motivations behind the decline in conflicts.

### **Operationalization**

Reactance theory outlines the conditions of reactance occurrence. However, there are also conditions in which reactions may not occur, such as when authority imposing restrictions is perceived as legitimate or efforts to restore freedom are viewed as costly-ineffective (Brehm & Brehm, 2013). I operationalize reactance theory by examining how motivations for protest participation of Turkish adults, 2013 Gezi Park protesters aged 20-30 back then. Motivations could change due to several factors: perceived legitimacy of authority, perceived threats to their freedom, perceived effectiveness of past protests, and other additional factors. According to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, democracy is based on the free expression of the will of the people and the right to freely determine their economic, social, political, and cultural systems and free participation in all aspects of their lives (World Conference on Human Rights, 1993).

Within the reactance theory, “having freedom” is theoretically equivalent to “having control,” since “having freedom” implies that one has control over a behavioral outcome. In other words, if you have a choice, you have the freedom to choose and reject an object or behavior, and you have control over whether you end up with it or not (Brehm & Brehm, 2013, p. 61). Questions in this section will discover to what extent participants can exercise freedom in democratic forms, in other words to what extent they feel their freedom is threatened – their right to exercise elements of freedom is restricted.

The term legitimacy can refer to many things and which factors make people recognize as legitimate is not so clear (Mazepus, 2013). She expands the notion of legitimacy and explains that apart from elections, the perception of legitimacy is associated with the fair distribution of goods and services and fair and legal treatment of citizens. In this section, questions will aim to discover the perception of legitimacy from the participant's point of view.

If the reclaiming of threatened or restricted freedom is costly, reactance may not occur (Brehm & Brehm, 2013, pp. 99). In this case, the perceived effectiveness or potential outcomes of protesting may deter protestors. Building on this, in this section, I will try to discover how the perception of effectiveness/efficacy has changed and to what extent the outcomes of the Gezi Protests affect the current perception of effectiveness. By concluding from the perception of effectiveness I aim to understand whether reactance has diminished, or not. Analysis of the participants' responses will help me answer my main research question: 'In what ways did the motivations of Turkish young adults, who engaged in the 2013 Gezi Park protests, develop, impacting the extent to which they refrain or engage in current demonstration events?'

In Section 1, my questions explore the perceived legitimacy of the government as a first theme that causes reactance or not. Brehm and Brehm (2013) suggest the legitimacy of the authority is one of the key factors that affect the likelihood of the reaction. I explore participants' perceptions and opinions about the current government's policies and behaviour, whether they see them as authoritarian or legitimate, and whether these observations cause them to react. Section 2 relates to the second subtheme, the perceived threat to freedoms. According to Reactance Theory, perceived threats to freedom can cause reactance and motivate individuals to take back these freedoms (Brehm and Brehm, 2013). Here I asked participants which government policies they perceive as threats to freedom. Understanding the perceptions of threat helps reveal perceived threats to freedom, both during the Gezi protests and in today's context, and will facilitate comparisons. This direct relationship between perceived threats and reactance helps to analyze the core components of the theory. Section 3 researches the third sub-theme, the perceived effectiveness of protest. Reactance theory implies that the likelihood of success of the reactant behaviour may encourage or discourage efforts to restore threatened freedoms (Brehm & Brehm, 2013). Here, I asked participants about the Gezi Park protests and how effective they perceived the outcomes to be. After listening to their evaluations, I explored how the results of the Gezi Park protests have influenced their current willingness to participate in protests.

Finally, in Section 4, I acknowledge that reactance may occur for a variety of other reasons. Regarding that, I also have questions about personal and social factors, economic conditions, and the impact of social media on protest behaviour and provide space for respondents to voice alternative motivations. I designed my interview questions to find answers to these three main themes and assumptions. The flow of questions is from general to specific. It starts with background questions and moves on to core questions.



## **Results**

Ten in-depth interviews were conducted to explore which factors played a role in Turkish young adults' motivations in the 2013 Gezi Park protests. Following the transcriptions, a thematic analysis was performed to find patterns and related subthemes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Overall the four themes were; perceived legitimacy, perceived threat, perceived effectiveness, and other factors. Exploring those allows me to answer the main research question, *'What factors play a role in the motivations of Turkish young adults who engaged in the 2013 Gezi Park protests, to engage or refrain from current demonstration events?'*. In the first section, the perception of legitimacy and its role in participating in demonstrations will be discussed (SQ1). After that, a threat to freedom section will analyse the perception of threat and its relationship with reactance (SQ2). The third section will discuss perceived effectiveness regarding later protest participation willingness (SQ3). In the fourth section, other factors will be discussed that could be in interplay with protest participation motivations (SQ4). Lastly, I will go over the other findings that were discovered throughout the interviews and go beyond the pre-determined topics of the sub-questions.

### **Perceived Legitimacy**

This first section discusses sub-question 1: *'What role does the perceived legitimacy of the government play in motivations to participate in demonstrations?'*. The first theme, *'perceived legitimacy'* is important as the perception of the legitimacy of authorities imposing restrictions influences the occurrence of reactance (Brehm, 1966). Understanding the perceptions about legitimacy is important as it will help me discover the relationship between perceived legitimacy and demonstration willingness. It is therefore important to analyze how interviewees describe political legitimacy as it may impact their threat perceptions and motivations to protest. I asked participants about their views on the legitimacy of the government, policies, and events in Turkey. Respondents' descriptions of how they perceive an ideal legitimate government are varied. In their answers, the necessity of *'to be elected'* and *'elections'* were most stated as essential for political legitimacy views. In addition, following the constitutional rules and laws and ensuring access to justice are highlighted. Lastly, other factors like, *'serving for the benefits of the citizens'*, *'being fair to the citizens'*, and *'hearing the voice of opposition and youth'* are described in legitimate government perception.

When I asked people about political legitimacy rather than what a legitimate government entails, all participants emphasized the foundational role of democratic rules and electoral systems. Participants highlighted many situations and actions they consider to be illegitimate, which reinforced an authoritarian perception of the government. Policies such as;

interest rate policies applied by Finance Minister Nebati (Daily Sabah, 2023), new constitution discussions (Duran, 2023), some court decisions (Reuters, 2023), alcohol consumption restrictions, and withdrawal from Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe, 2021) were all perceived as illegitimate. Events like; brutal police force, cancellation of festivals, the imprisonment of Osman Kavala, a wealthy philanthropist disliked by the AKP government due to his support for the Gezi Park protests, and Erdogan's presidential candidacy for the latest elections were all perceived as illegitimate, as well. These illegitimate policies and actions are related to the government being 'authoritarian'. One of the most mentioned topics in this section was the interviewee's perception that the government is perceived to act in an authoritarian way. Participants emphasized the government becoming more authoritarian and noted that the system of checks and balances has been damaged after the Gezi Park protests. They defined this change as a perception of increased oppression, repression, and restriction, which will be examined in more detail in the next theme, a threat to freedom. Two of the participants explained this authoritarian shift as follows:

'... the government wants to oppress more. They are afraid of having Gezi again. The political and social situation in Turkey is much worse' (P7, personal communication, May 30, 2024).

'After the Gezi Park, the president concentrated more authority. Today, the government has become more oppressive' (P2, personal communication, May 25, 2024).

Following that, I asked participants about their current perceived legitimacy of the government. Some participants stated they perceive the current government to be illegitimate. It is discovered this was due to the government's policies and actions. One of the participant statements supports this as follows:

'I don't think they have legitimacy. I perceive policies and actions illegitimate' (P9, personal communication, June 3, 2024).

Concerns about electoral integrity also emerged, with participants expressing scepticism about the legitimacy of election results due to rumours of potential fraud:

‘...there was information that there might be some stolen votes. So, for me, the government is not that legitimate’ (P5, personal communication, May 28, 2024).

After reflecting on their views on perceived legitimacy, I asked participants about their willingness to demonstrate by applying Brehm’s (1966) Reactance Theory. People tend to react against illegitimate power that is imposed on them (Brehm, 1966). However, when I asked about their feelings and willingness, all participants except one stated they felt discouraged. They explained their discouragement because of the increased risks they perceive currently:

‘I feel more discouraged because the government always answer as being more brutal to the public’ (P8, personal communication, May 20, 2024).

‘I got more into my shell instead of getting out and protesting because I value my life. I will get locked up. I will get to prison. So, it discouraged me’ (P6, personal communication, May 28, 2024).

Moreover, one of the participants made a comment that relates to increased government authority and decreased protest willingness:

‘Actually, the number of protests got lower, which is a sign of the government got powerful, restricting people's lives’ (P6, personal communication, May 28, 2024).

Even though people are disturbed by illegitimate events and policies, and they perceive the government as illegitimate, they refrain from demonstrating due to the increased risks of participation. This environment in Turkey is related to authoritarian government by some participants. It was discovered that the government and its repressive tools in every aspect of life deterred people from protesting. As a result, even though people perceive government and policies to be illegitimate, they are afraid to be a part of protests due to the increased risks and threats. This suggests that people consider possible risks and outcomes of the protests before their safety. When individuals perceive danger to their well-being and fear possible consequences, they refrain from demonstration even though there is perceived illegitimacy. Interviews helped to discover illegitimate authority trigger reactance. However, the high risks and potential outcomes complicate this decision-making process. This shows that while reactance is present, it is moderated by the fear of repercussions. This finding can be related to

the theory, that if people believe their efforts are futile, reactance may not occur (Brehm & Brehm, 2013).

### **Perceived Threat to Freedom**

The second section discusses sub-question 2: ‘What role does the perceived threat to freedom related to government policies play in motivations to participate in demonstrations?’. The second theme, ‘threat to freedom’ is important for this research as reactance occurs when people experience or perceive a threat to freedom. Since the perceived threats and fear of repercussion emerged as an important factor, understanding the perception of threats and actual threats facilitates a deeper understanding of the topic. Although the loss of freedom ought to elicit some reactance, the current interpretation of reactance theory highlights that an individual will relinquish freedom when it becomes evident that it cannot be regained. Presumably, and consequently, the reactance resulting from the loss vanishes after the freedom has been relinquished (Brehm & Brehm, 2013, pp. 394-395). Hence, in this section, I asked participants about their perception of freedom. Initially, the participants provided the following perspective of freedom; the freedom to operate within the constitution and its laws without violating the rights of others. For example, one participant stated:

‘Freedom means I can behave as much as I like as long as I'm not interfering with anyone else's freedom; I'm free to do free to think about’ (P4, personal communication, May 27, 2024).

‘Being able to do whatever you want as long as you don't violate other person's right’ (P1, personal communication, June 5, 2024).

After understanding how they perceive freedom, I asked about what they perceive as a threat to their freedom. Discovering the potential threats allows me to better understand how they relate to the occurrence of the reactance. Answers to this question varied in terms of factors people react against. However, their feeling of freedom restrictions and the urge to act free were common in their answers. It was discovered, that actions against the public were the main force that drove people to protest as the government's actions against the public provoked a feeling of reactance. A participant's statement supported this:

‘When I see something I don't want, I have the right to defend what I'm thinking about and also the right to protest that’ (P4, personal communication, May 27, 2024).

As I asked more questions about factors they perceive as a threat to freedom I discovered other aspects such as police violence, control on freedom of speech, censorship of media, restrictions on protest freedom, a threat to secular lifestyle, and conservative applications in the country. People were especially deeply concerned with the restrictions and limitations on secular lifestyle activities. These included cancellation of festivals and events, a ban on alcohol consumption in public spaces, and restriction of the sale of alcoholic beverages. Almost all participants touched upon this issue:

‘It was like a reaction against how the government was using its power. Against using his power to suppress and dominate against our existing freedoms. Even the idea of drinking outside. We feel like we cannot anymore’ (P10, personal communication, June 5, 2024).

‘I cannot go out late at night anymore. I cannot attend the festivals I want anymore. I cannot tweet the way I want anymore’ (P2, personal communication, May 25, 2024).

‘The sale of alcohol after 10 PM has been banned in our country for a long time. This is a direct intervention in my lifestyle’ (P3, personal communication, May 27, 2024).

Their answers aligned with the theory as it suggests people tend to react as they face freedom restriction (Brehm, 1966). To explore the source of this threat, I asked people which entities they perceive as a threat to their freedom. All ten participants stated that they perceive ‘current’ government and government-related apparatuses as threats to their freedom. After reflecting on the perceived threat to freedom and current conditions, people mostly paid attention to worsening conditions in Turkey. They stated risks and threats have increased in terms of frequency. Due to that, they were hesitant to demonstrate again. One of the participants described the situation in Turkey as ‘ten times worse’ compared to the Gezi protests (P2, personal communication, May 25, 2024). This perception was common as other participants also declared they perceived an increased frequency of freedom-restrictive and authoritarian events. They are described in the following quotes:

‘The frequency has increased every year. Nowadays, it's more frequent. They developed measures to prevent this from happening again (P3, personal communication, May 27, 2024).

‘It increased disturbingly. The government did this increase by using the tools we just talked about. (P6, personal communication, May 28, 2024).

‘The events that simulated Gezi Protests have been happening for a long time and more frequently. The government got crazy after the Gezi. They were much suppressive’ (P10, personal communication, June 5, 2024).

Lastly, I asked questions about their willingness to participate in demonstrations after reflecting on perceived threats. The answers I received showed that people are less willing to participate in demonstrations. The perceived number of risks and threats discouraged people from demonstrating. Participants describe this situation as follows:

‘I'm not free to do what I like, even in a peaceful way, so I can't even imagine myself participating in a protest’ (P4, personal communication, May 27, 2024).

Other participants emphasized the risk of imprisonment and decreased likelihood to protest again, as following words:

‘I think it decreased because they jail all their opponents (P1, personal communication, June 5, 2024).

‘Even though people want to raise their voices, they are not. They are afraid to go out and make a protest because many people get jailed’ (P2, personal communication, May 25, 2024).

‘I believe that if people protest something like Gezi, many people can be arrested more than before. Government is more brutal, and the police power is more brutal’ (P8, personal communication, May 20, 2024).

As can be seen in the context of Turkey, protest motivations were negatively affected by increased risks and threats. The main factor that caused a decrease in motivation again appeared as fear and increased risks of participation. This shows that the ‘perceived threats’ indeed create a reactance in the people. However negative consequences of participating in demonstrations are viewed as more costly than perceived threats that cause the reactance at the beginning. These risks and benefits considerations end up in deciding not engaging and this causes a decreased protest motivation. Therefore, qualitative interviews show that protest participation motivations are more complex than the theory, it is about the relative threat to freedom (comparing before and current perceived threat), that it is not the threat from the government measure alone but the fear of the response of the government.

### **Perceived Effectiveness**

The third section discusses sub-question 3: ‘What role does the perceived effectiveness play in motivations to participate in demonstrations?’. The third theme ‘perceived effectiveness, is important because it allows me to understand how participants perceive the likelihood of achieving their goals if they are willing to engage in protest again and to what extent this perception is affected by previous experiences Direct reestablishment of freedom may be restricted even in circumstances where direct restorative attempts are likely (i.e., where freedom is threatened but not eliminated). One constraining factor will be the costs associated with any direct attempt at reestablishment; even in the case that success is likely, the costs to the individual may be high enough to discourage direct restoration (Brehm & Brehm, 2013, p. 99). With the lens of this theory, understanding the perceived effectiveness helps to discover whether the perceived futility or the success of protests impacts current motivations.

To discover these aspects, I first asked about the expected outcomes of the Gezi Protests. Their expectations highlighted aspects like raising a voice, showing a presence, making a difference, pushing the government to resign, and stopping the demolition of Gezi Park. Conversely, when I asked participants about whether their expected outcome was achieved or not, one participant mentioned that ‘raising a voice’ was a success but the rest was a failure (P9, personal communication, June 3, 2024). As for all the other nine participants, the common view was that Gezi failed to achieve the expected outcomes, which were gaining freedom again partially or even forcing the government to resign. So when I asked people about their expected outcome and actual outcomes of the Gezi Park protests, I discovered that some participants believed the Gezi protests caused the government to be more oppressive and repressive. This view is explained as follows:

‘My expectation in terms of raising our voice was achieved. My expectation of triggering a change, sparking a change achieved. But the actual change I expected didn't happen. In the long run, it changed in the wrong way. It changed to a much more authoritarian regime’ (P2, personal communication, May 25, 2024).

Perceiving Gezi Park as failure and ineffective was a common idea. But to understand their motivations more, I asked about their satisfaction with participating in protests. The answers provided here were surprising, as eight out of ten participants declared they were satisfied with their participation. This showed the important findings about their motivations. I discovered the ‘sense of unity’ for that time being was an effective factor in determining satisfaction with their participation. As discussed in social movements literature (Van Zomeren et al., 2011), fostering identification can increase protest motivations. Relating to that, one participant explained this:

‘Nothing changed after my participation. But it felt good to walk along with many people who have the same thoughts as you do. So it felt good to unite and it made me feel that I wasn't alone in this’ (P2, personal communication, May 25, 2024).

‘I'm just satisfied because we witnessed that we can just be together, and we can just be united on a single wish. I was satisfied with this outcome’ (P7, personal communication, May 20, 2024).

One of the two participants who answered they were not satisfied with their participation explained the actual outcomes were more influential on his decision to feel dissatisfied even though the feeling of unity was presented in his words:

‘The feeling of unity felt good at first, but later, seeing that it didn't become an achievement left me dissatisfied.’ (P3, personal communication, May 27, 2024).

As observed, when it comes to satisfaction people were mostly satisfied with raising a voice together and fighting for a common cause. It can be concluded that the sense of unity shaped a positive and fulfilling experience. However, the lack of achievements led to overall dissatisfaction. One of the participants was satisfied with his participation. He touched upon an interesting point and said ‘I believe this is going to be told to future generations. I'm satisfied’



(P9, personal communication, June 3, 2024). These findings about the wish to act together against the power figure align with social movement literature, fostering identification with either the disadvantaged group or a politicized group can drive protest motivations (Van Zomeren et al., 2011). It also shows the difference between short-term and long-term perceived outcomes and how this may shape future willingness to protest.

In addition, I questioned the social and governmental outcomes of the Gezi Protests aiming to understand their relationship with the perceived effectiveness of protests. Answers here were similar to the findings of the threat to freedom section. Participants emphasized increased risks of protest participation. Social outcomes such as the imprisonment of journalists, difficulty in finding jobs, and diminished hope for success appeared as important demotivators. These were reflected as follows:

‘Many people were hurt, taken into custody, thrown to jail. or jails. Many lives were affected for the worse’ (P2, personal communication, 2024).

‘If you participated in the events, we saw that you could not find the job’ (P5, personal communication, 2024).

These answers highlight the deterrents to demonstrating again. Regarding the views on the effectiveness of Gezi Park protests, I asked how their willingness to engage in protests has changed. After their reflection, participants stated they are less willing to protest because they do not believe in the success of such a movement under the current regime. The reasons for this perspective included a climate of fear, loss of hope, increased measures, violence, and police force as potential repression. Not even one participant stated they felt their motivation to protest increased since reflecting on social and governmental outcomes. Participants described this as:

‘It's not about seeking your rights, but about perhaps resisting the police or drawing attention to yourself by raising your voice too much. This created a climate of fear. This significantly reduced my motivation to participate in protests. I fear something might happen to me’ (P3, personal communication, May 27, 2024).

‘I had never even thought about it because we have seen, miserable things happening to people’ (P4, personal communication, May 27, 2024).

‘I have lost my hope. There will never be this much of a crowded group. Even this couldn't get anything [done].’ (P10, personal communication, June 5, 2024).

After reflecting on previous protests, participants felt less motivated to protest. The perception of failure of the Gezi Protests greatly contributed to this decline in motivation, as the Gezi movement was perceived as causing increased repression. Moreover, casualties during the protests, potential risks in social life, and all risks created by state apparatuses cause fear among people. This shows the emotional response participants gave and the vulnerability of talking about this topic with respondents. As a result, the perceived failure of the Gezi Protests and the negative consequences in the aftermath caused a decrease in future protest motivations. Findings here align with findings from other sections suggesting, that increased government measures cause fear among people. This prevents people from demonstrating.

### **Other Factors**

Considering there may be other factors in interplay with protest willingness, I asked questions about employment status, financial position, and role of family, friends, and relationships. In addition, the interviewees were able to share insights relevant to this research. Understanding these additional aspects helped the researcher to obtain a more complete picture of factors influencing protest willingness. When I asked about the effects of financial position and employment status, the answers seemed to point to a common consensus on fear of losing one's job. This means that all participants agreed participation could not be welcomed by the employers, resulting in job termination. Because of this, some participants declared they would be afraid of losing their jobs and hence would not protest. This is explained as:

‘If they were recognized to be protesting there by their employers, they could easily lose their jobs and be replaced’ (P1, personal communication, June 5, 2024).

When examined further, being financially dependent or independent appeared as a determining factor for many participants. While the threat of losing a job is a deterring factor, being financially dependent is also found to have dual effects:

‘It had a direct effect because I was financially independent. If I was not, I would think twice’ (P2, personal communication, May 25, 2024).

However, there was also a participant who claimed financial position or employment status would not have any effect. He explained that the cause must be supported regardless of the financial position by saying that the cause could not be affected by financial issues and would be supported anyway (P4, personal communication, May 27, 2024).

To understand the role of relationships in terms of protest motivation I asked about the role of family, friendships, and a romantic relationship play in people's motivations to protest. The findings reveal relationships as a constraining factor for protests. In the context of a romantic relationship, having a child or a wife appeared to be a main constraining factor. The responsibility of taking care of the family appears to take priority compared to demonstrating. Their concerns regarding the risks of participation are stated as:

'If I have a family at home waiting for me, it would affect my decision to go protest' (P6, personal communication, May 28, 2024).

'You can be paralyzed, jailed, anything. When you have a child, you just cannot think about just yourself. You need to think about the future of that kid. Of course, it would prevent me' (P7, personal communication, May 30, 2024).

'You can easily be jailed, lose your livelihoods, lose your family, your loved ones, so you have many things to lose' (P1, personal communication, May 25, 2024).

Some participants stated they would still protest if they had children but they qualified that they would do so 'more cautiously' (P2, personal communication, May 25, 2024; P4, personal communication, May 27, 2024; P10, personal communication, June 5, 2024). While discussing the effects of their parents, the participants stated that their parents were also supporters of the cause and were thus undeterred (P10, personal communication, June 5, 2024). Or they claimed they did not have any effect at all (P5, personal communication, May 28, 2024; P6, personal communication, May 28, 2024). When I asked about friendships and their relative effect on their protest willingness, participants claimed that their friendship environment and the decisions of their peers have a direct effect on their engagement. This is explained as:

'I would say that I shape maybe around 50% of my decisions with my friends' (P4, personal communication, May 27, 2024).

‘All my friends at that time were already participating in these protests. I wanted people who shared the same opinion as me to see that I also shared their opinions.’ (P3, personal communication, May 27, 2024).

The participants mentioned social media as a motivator for protest. This is because they were encouraged by witnessing other people participate in demonstrations and their effective communication online (P1, personal communication, June 5, 2024; P2, personal communication, May 25, 2024; P3, personal communication, May 27, 2024; P6, personal communication, May 28, 2024; P8 personal communication, May 30, 2024; P9 personal communication, June 3, 2024). However, regardless of its motivating role, the participants revealed that they feel afraid to criticize the government on social media. They emphasized increased risks and threats in different possible aspects due to their posts. This is explained as follows:

‘I did not put anything on social media back then because I was reluctant to do so. Because it would hurt your CV, and this hurt your prospects’ (P1, personal communication, June 5, 2024).

It can be concluded that other elements like relationships, financial position, social media, and fear of losing one’s job play a role in the demonstration of willingness. Reactance theory (1966) makes observations related to perceived threats, legitimacy of authority, and effectiveness of protests. However, social and economic contexts also appeared to affect protest willingness. The in-depth interviews conducted in this research suggest there is a complex interplay between other factors and demonstration willingness. Hence, reactance is not only related to the three core themes of reactance theory but should be expanded to capture the multifaceted nature of individuals’ decision-making processes.

### **Other Findings**

During the interviews, it was discovered that there were additional considerations not related to the pre-determined codes and categories relating to the sub-questions. One common belief that seemed to cause the decrease in protest motivations was the ‘loss of hope’. People stated they did not believe they could reclaim their rights anymore (P4, personal communication, May 27, 2024; P7, personal communication, May 30, 2024; P8, personal communication, May 30, 2024; P9, personal communication, June 3, 2024; P10, personal

communication, June 5, 2024). This feeling of being helpless/hopeless seemed to fuel the decrease in willingness to participate in protest:

‘Unfortunately, I lost my hope for the impacts of the protests (P10, personal communication, June 5, 2024).

This hopelessness might be an even stronger demotivator than the perceived threat to freedom or perfection of the government restrictions or legitimacy. This shows us motivational arousal may not occur if people believe their efforts are futile, confirming reactance theory. Following this, many participants stated their participation would not make any difference. The lack of belief in their contribution was another factor that decreased protest willingness (P1, personal communication, June 5, 2024; P3, personal communication, May 27, 2024; P4, personal communication, May 27, 2024; P8, personal communication, May 30, 2024). One participant said that he is ‘angry with his people’ and hence ‘doesn’t feel like protesting together with them again’ (P7, personal communication, May 30, 2024). The findings of the interviews show us that a lack of belief in the efficacy of individual contributions and feelings of hopelessness or powerlessness greatly contribute to a decreased willingness to participate in protests.

### **Conclusion**

This study aims to understand what kind of motivations were present during the 2013 Gezi Park protests and how they may have changed. The study focuses on participants’ views on the government’s legitimacy, threats to their freedom, the effectiveness of past demonstrations, and other factors in determining their current protest activities. Concerning the government’s legitimacy, the narratives suggest repressive measures imposed were recognized as illegitimate and reinforced participants’ perception of the authoritarian state. According to Brehm’s Reactance Theory (1966), these perceptions should cause a reaction to reclaim threatened freedoms but the discussions show that the reality is complex. Although there is a tendency to react against repressive measures, participants report this is mitigated by the perceived risks associated with such reaction. According to the participants, these risks included the potential of losing their jobs, exposure to police brutality, and other social repercussions, all of which cumulatively elevated the cost of participation.

The perceived threat to freedom was the initial factor affecting protest willingness. Threats to secular lifestyle, restrictions on civic freedoms, and censorship of press and media freedoms were stated as the main motivators for participation in the Gezi protests. These threats

and measures were perceived as illegitimate. It is discovered this perception contributed to the occurrence of the reactance. However, participants indicate that the increased government repression in response to such protests now acts as a strong deterrent. The narratives illustrate a shift from an initial response to a more calculated avoidance of protest due to increased risks. This demonstrates the serious penal consequences of reactance as theorized by Brehm (1966).

The efficacy of past protests also plays a critical role in shaping current protest behavior. Some participants believed the protests raised awareness and ignited a change. Yet, there is a consensus among the participants that the Gezi Park protest was a failure, which did not bring significant political change, and conversely resulted in more oppressive actions from the government. This perception appears to play a major role in their current lack of protest due to doubts that new protests cannot bring a change and fear that such action might bring negative repercussions.

The loss of hope in achieving success was another point commonly stated by the participants as a reason for a decline in their protest willingness. Participants' answers reflected fear and lack of belief in their self-efficacy. Furthermore, economic instability and the influence of social media, along with family and social networks, appeared as additional factors impacting protest motivations. Narratives highlight economic factors affecting protest willingness, especially the possibility of unemployment. They share that the fear of losing their job creates a fear environment that discourages them from demonstrating. While facilitating organization and mobilization, social media also poses a risk of government surveillance, thereby complicating the decision to protest. Conversations suggest political conditions, personal security concerns, wider social networks and economic conditions also play role in protest motivations.

To conclude, this study explores the factors that affect the protest motivations of Turkish young adults in this study. Interviews reveal that indeed the perceived legitimacy, threat to freedom, and efficacy of the past protests affect protest willingness. These elements seemed to have played a role in the Gezi Park protests. According to the interviews, however, the situation in Turkey is now more complex. This is because although the psychological desire to challenge perceived threats to freedom persists in all participants, their motivations are largely restrained by considerations of personal safety, economic stability, and scepticism regarding the efficacy of protest actions.

### **Discussion**

This study contributes to communication science by enriching our understanding of individual-level responses to collective actions in repressive environments. In doing so, this

research extends the use of reactance theory by applying it to the field of social movements, which is originally rooted in psychology but is also utilized in health communication.

Aspects of reactance theory indeed help explain changes, but they appear to be in a complex relationship with other factors. Narratives from this study align with the theory; participants felt their freedom was threatened, and the illegitimate perception of the government initially reinforced the occurrence of the Gezi protests. However, the manifestation of reactance can be mitigated by potential risks of protest activities (Brehm, 1966). In this study, potential job loss, police violence, and social repercussions were reported to elevate the cost of engagement. Consistent with the theory, the high cost of participation seems to affect protest willingness, suggesting that the initial reactance transforms into a calculated withdrawal from protest activity due to heightened risks. The interviews suggest that, while reactance provides a framework for understanding resistance to oppression; protest behavior seems to be negatively affected by practical considerations of safety.

Van Zomeren (2013) identifies individuals' beliefs in their group's efficacy as one of the primary motivations for engaging in collective action (pp. 379-382). Observations in the 'perceived effectiveness' section align with Van Zomeren's (2013) findings, as participants perceived Gezi Protests as a failure and lost hope for a change. Narratives suggest this perception significantly affects protest willingness. Regarding the cost of collective action, previous works suggest forms of threat such as erosion of rights and state repression could increase the cost of participation (Tilly, 1978; Jasper, 1997). Narratives of this study also align with this view, as participants mentioned the increased risks as a primary source of demotivation. The underlying reasons for this demotivation discovered in this research also align with Ataman's (2012) suggestions, as the fear of losing one's job and perceived lack of efficacy are predictors of willingness to engage in demonstrations (p. 425).

One of the most common views was perceiving the government itself as a 'threat'. All respondents stated they saw the government as a threat to their freedom. However, the setup of the interview, the predefined themes, or the character of the respondents selected and recruited may have influenced this perception. Moreover, seven out of the ten participants had moved abroad, which may also influence their views and perceptions. As they no longer live in Turkey, their views on the issue may not accurately reflect the current environment. The interviews did not explore why these individuals moved abroad. Their thoughts about returning to Turkey or the reasons why they moved in the first place could be further explored. As for the advantages of the sample, all participants except two stated they had protested in the streets, allowing me to capture detailed and varied nuances from their narratives.

Scholars like Mantu (2023) point out that, social movements studies have overlooked the significance of emotions. Castells emphasizes the importance of individuals in collective action, pointing out how emotions impact involvement in social movements, as they are primarily emotional at the individual level (Castells, 2012, p. 13, as cited in Mantu, 2023). The narratives of this study align with the other works, suggesting emotions play a role in protest motivations. Although illegitimacy or threats to freedom can trigger reactance, the fear of potential harm to oneself appears to have an important role in determining participation. Similarly, feelings of hopelessness seem to influence protest motivations. While this study mainly does not focus on the role of emotions, it would be interesting to further explore how the decision-making processes are influenced by the role of fear and hopelessness in motivating protest participation.

The coding of the data was fundamentally shaped by the core elements of reactance theory, which included legitimacy, threat to freedom, and efficacy of past protests. Below these main themes, initial subcodes such as ‘illegitimate event’, ‘illegitimate policy’, and ‘legitimate government’ were created to capture narratives for each related section. As the interviews progressed, new subcodes like ‘loss of hope’ and ‘fear’ emerged.

This study addresses a sensitive subject concerning respondents under repressive regimes. Addressing their concerns, I assured participants of their full anonymity. Background questions were effective for easing into discussions, given the sensitive nature of the topic. Besides that, participants were quite comfortable during the interviews. I observed their level of excitement increased during the questions about the core themes. When I asked participants about their advice or tips, many of the participants stated the order of the questions and the follow-up questions were well-designed and allowed them to share their insights. Besides that, some participants did not have anything to say and left the interview by thanking.

I used the Snowball Sampling Method in this research, focusing on a targeted demographic, Gezi Protestors in Turkey aged 20-30. The generalizability of the study could be limited due to the limited number of participants and the specific age demographics of the participants. Also, this study focuses on the Turkish social movements context, and the narratives may not resonate with other countries and demographics. Perceptions of legitimacy, threat, and efficacy may differ across cultures. Moreover, protest dynamics could vary in different cultural settings. Having a broader sample and focusing on different age groups within the Gezi Protests could provide a more comprehensive understanding. More extensive research, being aware of factors that affect protest motivations, could contribute to a better analysis of the decline in youth activism in Turkey.



While this study provides insights into the factors affecting changing protest motivations, these insights must be examined by policymakers, considering ethical implications. Due to the sensitivity of the subject, its use should be taken into consideration by governments. Especially in a context like Turkey, where the intense presence of oppression is expressed, it is necessary to ensure that these insights are used constructively in cases that will negatively affect the participation motivations of the protesters and can be used to suppress the opposition. If used correctly, insights can encourage better dialogue and contribute to understanding the underlying causes of unrest. Future studies could further focus on only one gender or different age group regarding protest motivations. Studies focusing on singular gender may deepen our knowledge about gender-specific motivations. Moreover, conducting the same research within the scope of different age groups such as adults aged 30-40, could also enrich our knowledge about the protest motivations of former Gezi Park participants. For future studies, I offer new research questions like: ‘What factors play a role in the motivations of Turkish adults who engaged in the 2013 Gezi Park protests, to engage or refrain from current demonstration events?’ and ‘How do motivations of Turkish young man and women differ, within the scope of Gezi Park protests to engage or refrain from current demonstrations events?’.

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## Appendix

### Appendix A: Interview Guide

#### 1) Introduction

First and foremost, I appreciate your time and participation in this interview. My name is Ibrahim Kiper, and I am a Master's student enrolled in the Communication and Information Sciences at Tilburg University. I am a student at Tilburg University in the Netherlands. This qualitative study is part of my master's thesis supervised by Dagmar Punter. Thank you for your willingness to participate in my thesis study.

The primary objective of this study is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the effects of underlying factors and personal experiences on protest demonstration motivations among former young adults who were aged 20-30 during and participated in Gezi Park protests and how they perceive their motivations for protest now. During this conversation, I would like to ask you several questions to hear what your thoughts and experiences are regarding this. The expected duration of our interview is approximately 45 to 60 minutes, and participation is completely voluntary.

Many of my questions will ask you to give your opinion or to provide examples. Please know that there are no right or wrong answers. If a question is unclear, please let me know. You are not obliged to answer any of the questions, and if you feel uncomfortable, you may skip the question(s) or stop the interview without any consequences at any point.

Any information you provide is anonymous and cannot be traced back to you. This information will not be used for any other purpose than for this research. If you decide that you do not wish to participate at any point, we will erase any information you provide.

I would like to record this conversation to transcribe for research purposes. Is this okay with you? If you do feel uncomfortable at any time, please let me know and I will stop recording.

#### 2) Informed Consent (Appendix C)

#### 3) Background Questions

1. Can you please tell me a bit about yourself?
2. How old are you?
3. What do you do in your daily life?
4. Can you share your experiences and significant memories about the Gezi Park protests?
5. Why did you protest back then?
6. Can you tell me:
  - a. In which way did you participate in protests, on the streets, through social media, or both?
  - b. And when particularly did you participate in protests?

#### 4) Core Questions

##### *Section 1: Other Factors*

This section acknowledges other factors that can influence protest participation motivations. These may include changes in personal life, economic conditions, and the influence of media and social networks. Here I will try to understand other factors that may determine protest demonstration motivations.

1. What factors played a role in your decision to participate in demonstrations?
2. To what extent do social factors such as friendship or family environment influence your decision to participate in demonstrations?

3. To what extent does financial position or employment status affect your decision on participating to demonstrations?
4. How do social media channels like (Facebook and X) influence your decisions to participate in a demonstration?
  - a. Could you explain how this has changed?
5. To what extent does your situation such as relationship status or even having children influence your decision to participate in demonstrations?
6. Are there any other aspects that played a role that we didn't touch upon?

### *Section 2: Perceived legitimacy of the government*

These questions aim to discover how participants evaluate the government's use of power and authority. Touching upon, assessments of whether government actions are justified, legal, and comply with democratic norms and principles of the citizens.

1. What does political legitimacy mean to you?
2. Can you please explain your perception of the legitimacy of the government?
3. Can you give an example of a policy or event that you think is illegitimate?
4. How should a legitimate government be acting from your perspective?
5. How do you currently perceive the actions and policies of the government in terms of legitimacy?
  - a. Could you please describe your feelings and experiences related to this?
6. How would you compare your perception of government today to the 2013 Gezi Park protests?
  - a. Which factors caused a change in your perception of government?
  - b. To what extent do these changes affect the motivations of demonstrators in terms of taking action?
  - c. Does this change also impact your willingness to protest?
7. Can you discuss any recent actions or policies of the government or president, that have led you to question their legitimacy?
8. What changes (policies or actions) caused you to make this comparison?
  - a. How would you explain this change?
9. After reflecting on the legitimacy of the government, did you feel more encouraged or discouraged to participate in demonstrations?
  - a. What influenced your decision?

### *Section 3: A perceived threat to freedom*

This section refers to participants' views on how certain government policies or actions are potentially perceived as a threat to their freedoms. This includes governmental measures that are perceived as a threat to act within societal and legal norms. This will help us understand the relevance of perceived threats to demonstrations.

1. What does freedom mean to you?
2. To what extent do you perceive certain policies to be restricting freedom?
  - a. Who could represent a threat to your freedom?
3. Can you recall specific instances in the past when you felt your freedom was threatened or restricted?
  - a. Could you give examples of this?
4. How did these perceived threats influence your willingness to participate in protests?
  - a. Could you elaborate on how these instances affected you?
  - b. Did you end up participating in protests at that time?
5. Recently, have there been any government actions or policies that you viewed as threatening to your freedoms?

- a. Can you talk about why did you find these as threatening?
  - b. How did you respond to those perceived threats?
6. How would you compare the frequency of freedom-restrictive events/policies now to the time of the 2013 Gezi Park protests?

#### *Section 4: Perceived effectiveness/outcomes*

This section refers to participants' evaluations of how effectively the Gezi Park protests concluded. My aim here is to evaluate the participants' views on the Gezi Park protests in terms of their results. Whether it caused a change socially or politically and its effectiveness in this context will be asked. I aim to uncover thoughts on the consequences of these protests by reflecting on them today.

1. How do you look back at the success of the Gezi Park protests, in terms of whether they achieved your expected goals?
  - a. What did you want to achieve by participating in the protests?
  - b. What were your expectations at the start of the protest?
  - c. To what extent did your expectations become reality?
2. Considering the perceived outcomes of Gezi Park, how satisfied were you with the outcome of your participation?
3. Considering the social and governmental outcomes of the protests, how did this affect your decision on demonstrating in protest or not later?
  - a. Can you tell me more about that?
4. In today's Turkey, how likely do you think it is that protests like the Gezi Park protests could occur again?
  - a. What factors might have caused this change?
5. How do you believe the current government's policies have influenced the likelihood of such protests occurring?

#### 5) Wrapping Up

1. Overall, how do you feel about participating in protests in Turkey?
2. Is there anything else you would like to share?
3. Do you have any advice or tips on what is important to include in interviews when I ask people about this?

Thank you for participating in this interview. Your insights are invaluable in contributing to our research.

## Appendix B: Information Letter

Dear participant,

Thank you for your interest in my study. This study is part of a small-scale scientific study commissioned by Tilburg University about protest demonstration motivations among former young adults that were aged 20-30 during and participated in Gezi Park protests led by Dagmar Punter. It is about discovering underlying factors and personal experiences on protest demonstration motivations among former young adults who were aged 20-30 during and participated in Gezi Park protests and how they perceive their motivations for protest. I will try to discover this by interviewing with you. During this interview, we will examine whether your protest demonstration choices have changed about the perceived legitimacy of the government, perceived threat to freedom related to government policies, perceived effectiveness/outcomes of the Gezi Park protest, and other factors.

During the interview, I will ask you questions about your perceptions and experiences regarding political protests and government actions. I will examine topics such as your views on the legitimacy of the government, how your experiences and reactions to government policies are perceived as threats to personal freedoms, and the effectiveness of past protests, particularly the Gezi Park protests. Additionally, we will discuss other factors that influence your decision to attend demonstrations, including personal situations such as relationship status, and having children and social influences such as family and friendship environments.

Your views will help to have insights about underlying factors and personal experiences that influence protest demonstration motivations among former young adults (18 – 30 years old). There are no wrong and correct answers. The interview will last approximately 45 to 60 minutes.

Please take enough time to consider the information in this letter. If you have any questions about the research now or later, you can always ask me a question. It is important that you fully understand the questions during the interview. So don't hesitate to ask additional questions if something is insufficiently clear.

During the interview, you will be asked to sign a form to give your consent to participate in the interview. However, you may stop at any time if you wish. You also have the right to inspect the data collected about you and you can ask the researcher for any adjustments.

Your answers will only reach the researcher and thesis advisor and will therefore not be passed on to other persons. If I write a report on the study, I will never disclose identity information and I will ensure anonymity in reporting/using elements of the interview. If you wish, you can obtain a report of the investigation.

If you agree to participate in this study, this means that you also consent to the use of your data for the study. You may at any time review the information that we will request from you and make any necessary adjustments. If you have any doubts about your participation afterwards, you can always contact me, also to view the data or to request changes. You will find the contact details below.

Thank you very much for your participation!

Researcher: Ibrahim Kiper

Mail for this research: [i.kiper@tilburguniversity.com](mailto:i.kiper@tilburguniversity.com)

Mail personal: [ibrahimkiper@gmail.com](mailto:ibrahimkiper@gmail.com)

Mobile: +31 6 81 81 42 12

Address: Warandelaan 2, 5037 AB Tilburg, Netherlands

## Appendix C: Informed Consent Agreement

**Description of research:** You are being asked to participate in an interview study conducted by a student researcher from Tilburg University, the Netherlands. This research is taking place in the Netherlands but I will conduct my interviews with people in Turkey. I am interested in understanding the underlying factors and personal experiences on protest demonstration motivations among former young adults that were aged 20-30 during and participated in Gezi Park protests,

**Your participation:** You are being asked to participate in an interview, which will last no more than sixty minutes. In this interview, you will be asked a series of questions that you may or may not answer. At any time, you may notify me that you would like to skip the question or stop the interview and your participation in the study. If you choose to stop, I will erase any information you provided.

**Procedure:** With your permission, I will audiotape the interview and take notes. Transcripts of the recording will only be used to record the information you provide. If you do not wish to be audiotaped, I will take notes instead. If you agree to be audiotaped but feel uncomfortable at any time, please ask me to turn off the recorder.

**Privacy and confidentiality:** The information that is collected from you will be kept private. Any information about you will have a number on it instead of your name. Only I will know what your number is. Your personal information will not be shared with or given to anyone. Your anonymous data will be stored on a password-protected computer for one academic year.

**Questions:** Please read this consent form carefully and discuss any questions you may have or words you do not understand with the researcher. You may take your time to make your decision about participating in this study. If any questions come up after the study, contact the researcher: at [ibrahimkipper@gmail.com](mailto:ibrahimkipper@gmail.com)

Only sign this consent form after you have a chance to ask questions and you are happy with the answers to all of your questions.

### Consent

I have read this consent form and have the research study explained. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I agree to participate in the research described above and give consent for this interview to be recorded. I will receive a copy of this consent form after I sign it.

If you wish to participate in this study, please sign and date below:

Participant's First Name \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher' Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



### **Appendix D: Preliminary Questionnaire**

Hello dear participant, thank you for answering my call / replying to my mail-message. I am Ibrahim Kiper from the Tilburg University. I'm reaching out to you to share some information about my master's thesis. So, I'm looking for participants aged 20-30 during the protests who participated in Gezi Protests on the street or through social media channels. If you'd like to hear more, I can share more information about my study. If not, I appreciate your time for getting back to me / answering my call.

I'm researching to understand how protest participation motivations changed after the Gezi Park protests. I aim to uncover what factors may have caused any potential change. I assure you every information you give will be unrelatable to you and your answers will be kept secure. I'm supervised in this research by my supervisor from Tilburg University. More detailed information about the research will be shared with you If you are interested and eligible to participate. As I mentioned above, I want to ask two questions to decide whether you can participate or not.

Q1: How old are you?

Q2: Did you support Gezi Protests on the streets or on social media?

### Appendix E: Codebook - Final Coding Scheme

CODE	MEANING	SUB-CODE	EXAMPLE
<b>PERCEIVED LEGITIMACY</b>	This code discovers participants' evaluation of government's use of power and authority.	Authoritarian Current Perceived Legitimacy of the Government Current Perception of the Government Illegitimate Event Illegitimate Policy Legitimate Government Negative Feelings Political Legitimacy Presidential System Change in Turkey Questioning Legitimacy	"The political system has changed and it became more illegitimate from a democratic point of view. That hurts my perception of the government."
<b>PERCEIVED THREAT TO FREEDOM</b>	This code discovers potential threat to freedoms within government measures.	Entities Represent Threat Examples of Repressive Measures Increased Risks & Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Business Risks</li> <li>○ In a Worse Condition in Terms of Freedom Restricting Events</li> </ul>	"I'm not even talking about all the alcohol restrictions, smoking restrictions happening in all the country countrywide, there are a lot to discuss.... but with the recent developments in the municipality now that park is banned from drinking not even a cola. So, this kind of feels like I have my freedom restricted".

- Increased Online Tracking
- Increased Risks
- Negative Consequences of Gezi Protest

Against the Public Will

Censorship of Comic Books

Censorship of Media

Decreased Number of Protests

Freedom Description

Freedom Restricting Policies

Heavy Police Force

Increased Frequency of Freedom Restricting Policies

Leaving the Country

Oppressive Repressive Measures

- Threat to Secular Lifestyle
- Terrorist Label
- Threat to Freedom
- Turkey Becoming Conservative

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Violence Emergence</li> </ul>	
<b>PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS</b>	This code discovers Gezi Park protests' effectiveness and it's relation to perception of likelihood to demonstrate again.	<p>Perceived Effectiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Expected Outcome</li> <li>○ Achieved Expected Outcome</li> <li>○ Expected Outcome of Gezi Protest</li> <li>○ Failed to Achieve Expected Outcome</li> </ul> <p>Likelihood of Protest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Decreased Likelihood of Protest</li> <li>○ Increased Likelihood of Protest</li> <li>○ People have nothing to loose</li> </ul> <p>Perceived Effectiveness of Gezi Protest</p> <p>Satisfaction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Not Satisfied with the Participation</li> <li>○ Satisfaction with the Participation</li> </ul>	“And the second reason is that the protests didn't achieve any results.”

	Social and Governmental Outcomes of the Gezi Protests
<b>OTHER FACTORS</b>	<p>This code discovers how other factors are in complex interplay with four themes above.</p> <p>Employment Status</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Fear of Losing Job</li> <li>○ Go Against Company Policies</li> </ul> <p>Financial Position</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Financial Position Does Affect</li> <li>○ Financial Position Doesn't Affect</li> </ul> <p>External Factors</p> <p>Personal Situation</p> <p>Role of Family</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Constraining Role of Family</li> <li>○ Family Has No Effect</li> <li>○ Motivating Role of Family</li> <li>○ Opposite Side in Family</li> <li>○ Would Protest but More Cautiously</li> </ul> <p>Role of Friendships</p> <p>Role of Relationship</p>

- Constraining Role of Relationship

#### Role of the Social Media

- Afraid to Share on Social Media
- Decreased Effectiveness of Social Media
- Disinformation on Social Media
- Motivating Role of Social Media
- Protested on the Social Media
- Quits Using Social Media
- Social Media More Influential Today

#### **OTHER FINDINGS**

This section contains other findings that is related to the protest motivations that appeared during the interviews.

Angry to His People  
 Living Abroad  
 Loss of Sense of Unity  
 Loss of Hope  
 More Fearless When Young  
 People are Afraid

“Angry to my people because not realizing”.

People Are More  
Polarized

Personal Participation  
Have No Effect

## Appendix F: Codebook - Open Coding

- Other Factors
  - Employment Status
    - Employment Status
    - Fear of Losing Job
    - Go Against Company Policies
  - Financial Position
    - Financial Position Does Affect
    - Financial Position Doesn't Affect
  - Other Factors
  - Personal Situation
  - Role of Family
    - Constraining Role of Family
    - Family
    - Family Has No Effect
    - Motivating Role of Family
    - Motivating Role of Relationship
    - Opposite Side in Family
    - Would Protest but More Cautiously
  - Role of Friendships
  - Role Of Relationships
    - Constraining Role of Relationship
    - Role of Relationship
  - Role of Social Media
    - Afraid to Share on Social Media
    - Decreased Effectiveness of Social Media
    - Disinformation on Social Media
    - Motivating Role of Social Media
    - Protested on the Social Media
    - Quits Using Social Media
    - Role of Social Media
    - Social Media More Influential
  - Student
- Other Findings
  - Angry to His People
  - Living Abroad
  - Loss of Sense of Unity
  - Lost of Hope
  - More Fearless When Young
  - People are Afraid
  - People Are More Polarized
  - Personal Participation Have No Effect
- Perceived Effectiveness
  - Expected Outcome
    - Achieved Expected Outcome
    - Expected Outcome of Gezi Protest
    - Failed to Achieve Expected Outcome
  - Likelihood of Protest
    - Decreased Likelihood of Protest



- Increased Likelihood of Protest
  - People have nothing to lose
- Perceived Effectiveness of Gezi Protest
- Satisfaction
  - Not Satisfied with the Participation
  - Satisfaction with the Participation
- Social and Governmental Outcomes of the Gezi Protests
- Perceived Legitimacy
  - Legitimacy
    - After Questioning Legitimacy Less Motivated
    - After Questioning legitimacy More Motivated
    - Authoritarian
    - Current Perceived Legitimacy of the Government
    - Current Perception of the Government
    - Illegitimate Event
    - Illegitimate Policy
    - Legitimate Government
    - Negative Feelings
    - Political Legitimacy
    - Presidential System Change in Turkey
    - Questioning Legitimacy
  - Legitimate Protest
- Perceived Threat
  - Entities Represent Threat
  - Examples of Repressive Measures
  - Increased Risks & Threats
    - Business Risks
    - In a Worse Condition in Terms of Freedom Restricting Events
    - Increased Online Tracking
    - Increased Risks
    - Negative Consequences of Gezi Protest
  - Against the Public Will
  - Censorship of Comic Books
  - Censorship of Media
  - Decreased Number of Protests
  - Freedom Description
  - Freedom Restricting Policies
  - Heavy Police Force
  - Increased Frequency of Freedom Restricting Policies
  - Leaving the Country
  - Oppressive Repressive Measures
    - Threat to Secular Lifestyle
    - Terrorist Label
    - Threat to Freedom
    - Turkey Becoming Conservative
    - Violence Emerges
- Protest Motivations
  - Basic Human Rights
  - Collective Action
  - Concerns of Youth

- Freedom of Protest
- Freedom of Speech Restriction
- Gathering Place
- Igniting Movement
- Movement Against AKP
- Protest Motivations
  - Decreased Willingness / Motivation to Protest
  - Increased Willingness / Motivation to Protest
  - Protest Motivation
  - Protested on the Street
  - The Woman In Red
- Raising a Voice / Showing a Presence
- Reactance as a Psychological Response
- Sense of Unity
- Sparkles of the Change
- Symbolic Movement
- Unviolent Side of Protests