When and why does political trust predict well-being in authoritarian contexts? Examining the role of political efficacy and collective action among opposition voters


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When and why does political trust predict well-being in authoritarian contexts?

Examining the role of political efficacy and collective action among opposition voters

Previous research indicates that trust in the political system increases well-being. Drawing from prior collective action research, we posit that a) the relationship between political trust and well-being would be mediated by collective action participation (mediation hypothesis) and b) political efficacy would moderate the indirect effect of political trust on well-being through collective action participation (moderated mediation hypothesis). In two studies (N = 704), we tested these relationships among opposition voters in Turkey before two highly contested elections. The findings of Study 1 showed a significant indirect effect of political trust on well-being through collective action participation and supported our mediation hypothesis. However, unlike democratic contexts, the relationship between collective action and well-being was negative. In addition, we did not find support for our moderated mediation hypothesis. In Study 2, we used more nuanced measures of political efficacy (voting efficacy and online/offline protest efficacy) and collective action (both offline and online collective action). In addition to replicating the findings of Study 1 with respect to the mediatory role of collective action participation (but only for online collective action participation), Study 2 again did not support our moderated mediation hypotheses with respect to the four moderators. Results highlight the importance of online and offline collective action among ideologically marginalized people with low trust in the political system in maintaining well-being.

Keywords: political trust, political efficacy, collective action, well-being, Turkey
When and why does political trust predict well-being in authoritarian contexts?

Examining the role of political efficacy and collective action among opposition voters

Well-being is a fundamental construct in any context and is of vital importance in our social, political, and personal lives. It may be especially important, however, in undemocratic contexts, and living in one of these contexts, one may need to find ways to bolster well-being. Well-being is heavily influenced by the social environment as well as the system and institutions on which you rely. If people feel unable to rely on those institutions, they will have to look elsewhere for social support. In previous research, one way to achieve well-being has been through seeking social change. In some cases, engagement in collective action for social change has been shown to lead to positive outcomes for individuals (Uluğ & Acar, 2018), and has been shown to lead to a sense of accomplishment and ability (Drury & Reicher, 2009).

Trust in systems, or political trust, refers to trust in basic political ideas, institutions, performance, and representatives (Lindstrom & Mohseni, 2009). Political trust has been shown to have an important effect on well-being. It has the ability to buffer against negative outcomes in health, discrimination, employment, income, and personal social supports. However, the relationship between political trust and well-being has mainly been examined in democratic contexts (e.g., Helliwell, Huang, Wang, & Norton, 2020). With various authoritarian and quasi-authoritarian regimes appearing across the globe, we wonder how political trust may be reflected in these different contexts.

One such context of authoritarianism is Turkey. In the last few years, scholars have begun to see Turkey as a competitive authoritarian regime, meaning that while elections are free they are by no means fair, as the incumbent only goes to elections with the expectation that they will win and maintain office (Castaldo, 2018; Sika, 2020). Therefore, we argue that
it is likely the opposition in Turkey question the political system and state institutions, which they may feel does not represent them.

Turkey went through a highly contested constitutional referendum in 2017, and a year later, the first election in the newly implemented executive presidential system. In both cases, the elections were met with criticism and allegations of voter tampering, leading to both online and offline protests. Participation in protests is especially surprising as both elections occurred during an ongoing state of emergency, which included restrictions on freedom of speech, movement, and assembly. A recent report indicates that there have been growing restrictions on meetings and demonstrations in Turkey (Human Rights Association, 2020). Statistics show how costly even the sharing of content on social media can be: in 2016, the Turkish government investigated approximately 10,000 social media users. Legal action was taken against 3,710 people and 1,656 formally arrested (AP News, 2016). Clearly, it is risky and costly to participate in both online and offline protests in Turkey.

Previous research (e.g., Acar, 2018; Drury & Reicher, 2009; Uluğ & Acar, 2018) has indicated that collective action can lead to positive outcomes for individuals and a sense of accomplishment and ability, suggesting that political engagement may have the ability to buffer the potential negative outcomes of low political trust. Through this paper, we aim to examine the referendum and the 2018 election in Turkey, as well as the viral campaigns and protests that bridged them, in line with the theoretical factors that influence individual outcomes as they relate to political trust, political engagement, and well-being. While participation in collective action has previously been associated with well-being (Dwyer, Chang, Hannay, & Algoe, 2019; Vestergren, Drury, & Chiriac, 2017), to our knowledge, no previous study has investigated how collective action may mediate the relationship between political trust and well-being in authoritarian contexts. In addition, political trust has mostly been measured in democratic contexts (e.g., Helliwell et al., 2020), with some research in
emerging democracies (see, e.g., Carlin, 2011; Catterberg & Moreno, 2006) but little to no research that we know of in authoritarian contexts (but see Cinar & Kose, 2020 and Sika, 2020 for some exceptions).

We have three aims in the present research. We aim to examine whether 1) political trust is related to well-being in an authoritarian context, 2) political trust predicts well-being indirectly via collective action participation, and 3) political efficacy moderates the indirect effect of political trust on well-being through collective action participation.

Political Trust and Well-being

The idea that social context influences well-being is by no means new (see Durkheim, 1951). There are innumerable factors related to social status, economics, and geography that all play a role in how a person copes. Social capital, conceptualized as the values or norms, social networks, activities, mutual concern, and trust among members of a group, is one such factor that has been shown to facilitate well-being (Ekici & Soydemir, 2014). Notably, social capital has been discussed in many different ways and is said to have culturally constructed meaning, such that its contents and value can be understood differently across contexts (Coleman, 1988). Our focus is on political trust as an aspect of social capital and its particular influence on well-being.

Political trust refers to trust in the political system. People voting for the winning party generally show higher trust in the government, regardless of political ideology, and countries with coalition governments also tend to have higher levels of political trust in their populations (Lindstrom & Mohseni, 2009). Previous research in the U.S. has indicated that high political trust in the system is associated with higher reported well-being, and that political trust is often concentrated in those who are most rewarded by the existing system (Erikson, Luttbeg, & Tedin, 1988). Similarly, a study in Sweden investigated the relationship between political trust in Sweden’s national parliament and self-reported psychological
health. Among 27,757 respondents, those with low levels of political trust reported poor psychological health (Lindstrom & Mohseni, 2009). They note, however, that political trust has generally been measured in (Western) democratic contexts. We are interested, therefore, in understanding political trust in less democratic contexts.

Political trust across the globe has decreased in the past decade, while both online and offline collective action participation have increased (see Sika, 2020). In Turkey, political trust, and social capital in general, is quite low, as is well-being (Ekici & Soydemir, 2014). Turkey is among the lowest ranking countries in terms of social trust, and the rate of civic participation in the form of volunteering and membership in organizations is low compared to other countries (Erdoğan, 2008). Previous research in Turkey has also indicated that interest in politics has a negative effect on political trust, as does left-wing ideology (Cinar & Kose, 2020).

Previous work in social psychology has not often focused on political trust (or lack of trust) as a precursor to collective action. However, some recent research has suggested that there may be a relationship between political distrust and engaging in protest voting, that is, voting for antiestablishment parties (Otjes, Stroebe, & Postmes, 2020), as well as contentious political engagement (Sika, 2020). In particular, Sika’s (2020) work indicates that contentious political engagement is likely to increase where there is low political trust. Through their work in Tunisia, Morocco, and Turkey, Sika (2020) consistently found that lower levels of political trust were indicative of higher levels of protest participation, and suggested that this was especially the case because of the authoritarian nature of the governments in these countries.

We focus therefore on opposition voters, as they are less likely to benefit from the status quo and more likely to engage in collective action and protest voting. As previously noted, opposition voters in Turkey have been feeling increasingly hopeless and
disenfranchised, especially after the coup attempt in 2016 (Uluğ & Acar, 2018). By focusing in particular on opposition voters, we can better understand how political trust (or lack thereof) works to motivate people to take action, whether it be through protest voting, online campaigns, or in more traditional collective action through street protests. With this group in particular we also wonder to what extent their political engagement can predict their well-being. While previous work in Turkey did show that protest participation had positive well-being outcomes for participants, this was generally in the context of the Gezi Park protests in 2013, before Turkey fell below the democratic threshold (Castaldo, 2018). The political and economic environment of Turkey has changed a great deal since then; in a newly authoritarian context, would collective action in Turkey continue to positively predict well-being?

With the expectation that low political trust has a negative impact on well-being, we aim to understand whether opposition voters’ political engagement predicted their well-being in this context. In particular, we believe that two mechanisms are important: 1) participation in collective action to protest the political system and 2) political efficacy related to the system.

**Collective Action, Efficacy, and Well-being**

Both collective action participation and efficacy have been associated with empowerment and positive emotions (Bandura, 1997; Reicher, 2017). Previous research shows that collective action has profound impacts on individuals and groups. Collective action has the ability to create a sense of accomplishment and ability, as when protesters are able to meet their goals, or come in contact with, and overcome, representatives of the system (e.g., the police) that they are protesting against (Drury & Reicher, 2009). In addition, collective action can lead to people having fewer personal worries and experiencing greater happiness in life (see Foster, 2019 Vestergren et al., 2016). For example, participation in political protest demonstrations predicts empowerment (Drury, Cocking, Beale, Hanson &
Rapley, 2005; Evripidou & Drury, 2013), and activists report greater happiness (Boehnke & Wong, 2011) and psychological well-being (Klar & Klasser, 2009). Some additional research has shown a mutual influence between well-being and protest, but was unable to determine the causality of that relationship (Lindholm, 2020).

Political efficacy can increase engagement in traditional politics (e.g., voting) but can also lead to protest behaviour, depending on perceptions of the ability to effect change (Otjes et al., 2020). Some previous research has found that high efficacy and high political trust are connected to conventional political participation such as voting, while high efficacy and low trust are associated with unconventional political participation toward social change such as engagement in protest (see Crosby, 1976). On the other hand, Ayanian et al.’s (2021) research found that different types of efficacy had different outcomes for political participation in Turkey. In their study, political efficacy did not predict future collective action participation, though their focus was on offline engagement, and did not consider different types of collective action. Pirralha’s (2017) research suggests that political efficacy is a better predictor of political participation than the perceived openness of the system, suggesting that an individual’s sense that they have the ability to participate should be more important than if they think their political institutions can experience a change. Pirralha’s (2017) research suggests that political efficacy is a better predictor of political participation than the perceived openness of the system, suggesting that an individual’s sense that they have the ability to participate should be more important than if they think their political institutions can experience a change.

Where opposition voters have little trust in political institutions, they would likely seek social change. One way to do this is to engage in collective action, particularly against the government, which represents these institutions. Even if the collective action itself does not bring about immediate social change, it allows for individuals to come together, re-
establish their connections and clearly identify as opposition groups. We aim to test whether collective action may play an important role in the relationship between political trust and well-being among opposition voters in an authoritarian context, as argued in democratic contexts. We also aim to test the role of political efficacy by focusing on whether political efficacy moderates the indirect effect of political trust on well-being through collective action participation. We argue that the indirect effect of political trust on well-being through collective action participation would be strongest among people who have high political efficacy.

**Turkey’s Recent Political History**

Taking into account the events of the past few years in Turkish politics may be a useful way to frame the collective action around the recent elections. Starting with the Gezi Park protests in June 2013, opposition voters gained a sense of hope that change was on the horizon (see Acar & Uluğ, 2016; Uluğ & Acar, 2018). Along with the newfound support they received after the Gezi Park protests, the newly founded pro-Kurdish People’s Democratic Party (HDP, Halkların Demokratik Partisi) sought to be the first pro-Kurdish party to gain more than 10% of the vote necessary to pass the threshold and make it into parliament. Their ability to pass the threshold with 13% of the vote in the 2015 general elections was seen as a major victory not just for the party but for the opposition in general, and an event that added to the hope and expectation for change that the Gezi protests had created (Uluğ & Acar, 2018).

With the end of the peace process later in 2015 and the attempted coup on July 15th, 2016, this hope, however, seemed mostly lost. The coup attempt brought with it a state of emergency, which the ruling AKP used to consolidate power and maintain its hold on the government. The state of emergency allowed the government to suspend part of the European Convention on Human Rights, as well as issue decrees that had the force of law.
The referendum vote took place on April 16th, 2017 and consisted of a set of constitutional amendments that would replace the existing parliamentary system with an executive presidency. The AKP formed an alliance with the National Action Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP) and campaigned for the “Yes” vote, while the main opposition Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP), and HDP, together with smaller groups and parties, were in the “No” camp. The referendum was held during the declared state of emergency, which lasted until July of 2018. The referendum was therefore held in a context wherein local leaders and security forces were able to restrict freedom of speech, movement, and assembly (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2017). The decision to hold an election under such conditions was internationally criticized as a means to hold on to power.

Despite its disadvantages, the “No” campaign carried a renewed energy among the opposition voters that had not been seen in recent years. Following the Gezi Park protests in 2013, opposition voters felt a loss of initial positive outcomes and had once again begun to feel hopeless and passive (Uluğ & Acar, 2018). With the “No” campaign, however, people were again campaigning, protesting, and engaging in political activity. Despite its efforts, the “No” campaign was not successful, though results were quite close, with the referendum passing with only 51.4% of the vote for yes, 48.6% voting no.

The following year was the first election to implement the new executive presidential system voted in by the referendum the previous year, and presidential and parliamentary snap elections were held together on June 24th, 2018. During a rally in May, President Erdoğan told his audience, “If our people one day say ‘enough,’ then we will step aside.” The phrase went viral, and the hashtag #TAMAM (enough) became a top trend on Twitter with over a million tweets, leading to both an online and offline #TAMAM campaign, with opposition candidates and their supporters using the phrase in protest until the election in June. Despite the protests and efforts of the opposition, Erdoğan became the first executive president in Turkey with
52.5% voting in favour, and 47.5% voting against; the AKP also remained in power in the parliament. In contrast with the referendum, while there were still allegations of voter tampering, the election had very little protest and collective action in its aftermath. It is still not clear how opposition voters may find ways to cope with the loss of hope they experienced over the last few years of Turkish politics when their trust in the political system and life satisfaction have declined. As reported by the Turkish Statistical Institute (2019), self-reported life satisfaction in Turkey has been in decline since 2016.

Overview of Studies

It has been shown that low levels of political trust is associated with poor psychological health (Lindstrom & Mohseni, 2009), though this relationship has rarely been tested outside of democratic contexts. If the impact of political trust on opposition voters holds, they should experience low levels of political trust and well-being. Building on previous research on political trust, collective action and well-being (e.g., Ekici & Soydemir, 2014; Helliwell et al., 2020; Lindstrom & Mohseni, 2009; Vestergren et al., 2017), we argue that lower political trust would be directly associated with poor well-being among opposition members in Turkey (Hypothesis 1; direct association hypothesis). We further suggested that the link between political trust and well-being would be mediated by individuals’ collective action participation in the protests against the government (Hypothesis 2; mediation hypothesis). However, we thought that, unlike democratic contexts, the relationship between collective action participation and well-being may be negative. Last, we hypothesized that political efficacy would moderate the indirect effect of political trust on well-being through collective action participation. Specifically, we hypothesized that the indirect effect of political trust on well-being through collective action participation would be higher for opposition voters who have higher political efficacy than lower political efficacy (Hypothesis 3; moderated mediation hypothesis; see Figure 1 for the theoretical model).
Study 1

Method

Participants and Procedure

We received ethical approval for this research from Özyeğin University. The anonymized raw data and all questions used to collect data in Turkish are publicly available via the Open Society Framework (OSF) web-page: https://osf.io/vjtyw/?view_only=5ec0229f55dd48de911efc3a3f9cd35e

We examined the perspectives of opposition voters in Turkey just prior to the 2017 Referendum. We distributed the link to the survey on a variety of Facebook groups and Twitter. At the beginning of the survey, we asked a categorical question: Which political party do you feel close to? We kept participants who only chose opposition political parties and dropped the ones who chose either AKP or political parties that were part of the “Yes” alliance.

A total of 381 participants completed the survey online. Two hundred and ten were women, 129 were men, 42 either identified themselves as “other” or did not (want to) respond to this question. Participants’ age ranged from 18 to 71 years \( (M = 31.21; SD = 10.55) \). One hundred and five participants held a Master’s, 163 a Bachelor’s degree, 75 a high school degree, one a primary school degree, and 37 did not respond to this question.

Measures

Participants completed the measures described below related to political trust, political efficacy, collective action participation, and well-being.

Political trust. We used eleven items adapted from Çoymak (2009) to assess participants’ political trust in relation to the members of the parliament (AKP). Sample items included “They do everything we need to better our lives,” “They behave fairly toward
different political, cultural and social groups,” and “They keep the promises they made before the elections.” Responses to these items ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree; α = .70). Higher scores indicate greater political trust.

**Political efficacy.** We used three items adapted from Craig and Maggiotto (1982) to assess participants’ political efficacy: 1) I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics, 2) I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country and 3) I think that I am as well-informed about politics and government as most people. Responses to these items ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree; α = .72). Higher scores indicate higher political efficacy.

**Collective action participation.** We constructed one item to measure how often participants have participated in the protests against the policies of the current government in the last five years (1 = never; 2 = 1-2 times; 3 = 3-4 times; 4 = 5-6 times; 5 = 7-8 times; 6 = 9-10 times; 7 = 11 or more times). Higher scores indicate more collective action participation.

**Well-being.** We assessed well-being using the General Health Questionnaire (Goldberg & Hillier, 1979; see also Kılıç, 1996 for the Turkish adaptation). We used five items: During the past six months, have you 1) had any difficulties in making decisions, 2) been able to deal with your problems, 3) generally speaking, felt happy, 4) felt able to deal with your own personal problems, and 5) felt unhappy and depressed? Responses to these items ranged from 1 (very frequently/much less than ever) to 4 (not at all/more than ever; α = .83). Higher scores mean higher well-being.

**Results**

Preliminary analyses examined relations between the variables (see Table 1). Without taking political efficacy into account, we first conducted a mediation analysis by using PROCESS Model 4 (see Hayes, 2013) in order to test whether collective action participation
mediates the relationship between political trust and well-being.\(^1\) Results indicated that the association between political trust and well-being was significant, \(b = .160, SE = .067, p = .002\), supporting our first hypothesis. In addition, political trust was a significant negative predictor of collective action participation, \(b = -.226, SE = .216, p < .001\), and collective action participation was a significant negative predictor of well-being, \(b = -.107, SE = .017, p = .049\).

[Insert Table 1]

The indirect effect was tested using a bootstrap estimation approach with 5,000 samples. These results indicated a significant indirect effect of political trust on well-being through collective action participation, \(b = .024, SE = .014, 95\% \text{ CI} [.00, .05]\), thus supported our second hypothesis. Using G*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007), a sensitivity power analysis also showed we had 95\% power to detect an effect size of Cohen’s \(d = .04\) (multiple regression; \(R^2\) increase; two predictors with the available sample size: \(N = 381\)).

We also conducted a moderated mediation analysis using PROCESS Model 7 with 5,000 bootstrapped samples (see Hayes, 2013).\(^2\) Specifically, we investigated whether political efficacy would moderate the indirect effect of political trust on well-being through collective action participation. Both the interaction between political trust and political efficacy, \(b = .037, SE = .169, p = .828\) (see Figure 2) and an index of moderated mediation which was used to examine the conditional indirect effects were not significant, \(b = -.001, SE\)

\(^1\) We also tested alternative models in which a) political trust mediated the relationship between collective action participation and well-being, and b) political efficacy mediated the relationship between political trust and well-being (see Online Supplementary Materials).

\(^2\) We also tested an alternative model to test whether collective action participation would moderate the indirect effect of political trust on well-being through political efficacy. In addition, we also tested an alternative model by using PROCESS Model 14 (IV: political trust; Mediator: collective action participation; Moderator: political efficacy; DV: well-being; see Online Supplementary Materials).
=.005, 95% CI [-.01, .01], suggesting that indirect effect does not depend on the level of the moderator. Thus, the results did not support our moderated mediation hypothesis.

[Insert Figure 2]

Discussion

Study 1 examined how political trust may predict well-being (direct association hypothesis) in an authoritarian context through the pathway of collective action participation (mediation hypothesis). Results indicated that, in line with previous research (Lindstrom & Mohseni, 2009; Mattila & Rapeli, 2018), lower political trust predicted poor well-being. Collective action participation also mediated this relationship, supporting our mediation hypothesis. However, our results showed that unlike previous studies (see Vestergren et al., 2017), collective action participation was negatively related to well-being in an authoritarian context like Turkey.

Study 1 also examined how political efficacy would moderate the indirect effect of political trust on well-being through collective action participation (moderated mediation hypothesis). The results showed that, contrary to our expectations (Otjes et al., 2020), the indirect effect of political trust on well-being through collective action participation does not depend on the level of political efficacy. Thus, our moderated mediation hypothesis was not confirmed.

Study 1 had some limitations. In examining our model, we considered whether our measure for political efficacy measured the reality of the election and protest cycle. Our measure based on Craig and Maggiotto’s (1982) work focused more on an individual’s mental capacity or knowledge to participate in electoral politics. We considered whether our focus should be more specifically on the power of the vote, as well as non-traditional political engagement in the form of collective action. Efficacy beliefs are necessary for one to be effective in some action, and can also encourage them to engage in the same or similar actions.
in the future (Cocking & Drury, 2004). Cocking and Drury (2004) further this notion by stating that efficacy exists on a continuum—some efficacy is required to act in the first place, but collective action also serves to further augment feelings of efficacy. Especially considering Turkey’s political atmosphere at the time, with “No” campaigners and opposition voters being forcefully repressed as they canvassed, we decided to follow up the first study with another study that would provide a more nuanced measure of political efficacy, including both voting efficacy and protest efficacy. Therefore, in Study 2, we created a more nuanced measure of political efficacy, which included both voting and different types of protest efficacy.

We also considered the relevance of a single-item measure for collective action participation based on street protests. In authoritarian contexts, participating in street protests or other forms of offline collective action can be especially risky (Uluğ, Odağ, & Solak, 2020). Online collective action may be the more viable option, though importantly, in repressive political contexts, even sharing on social media has potential risk; as mentioned above, the Turkish government investigated social media users and arrested many of them for their posts online (AP News, 2016). In Study 2, we addressed these limitations in Study 1 and improved collective action items to reflect different forms of protests: online and offline protest. In Study 2, we sought to test our model again before the election in 2018, just over a year after the referendum.

**Study 2**

In Study 2, we first aimed to replicate with respect to the direct association between political trust and well-being (*Hypothesis 1*) as well as the role of collective action participation in the relationship between political trust and well-being (*Hypothesis 2*). As we distinguished online and offline collective action participation, we also hypothesized that both
online collective action (Hypothesis 2a) and offline collective action participation (Hypothesis 2b) would mediate the relationship between political trust and well-being.

As the findings of the first study did not support our moderated mediation hypothesis, we also aimed to test how different types of efficacy may moderate the indirect effect of political trust on well-being through both online and offline collective action participation (Hypothesis 3; moderated mediation hypothesis). We argued that the indirect effect of political trust on well-being through both online and offline collective action participation would be strongest among people who have high political, voting, and online/offline protest efficacy (see Figure 3 for the theoretical model).

Method

Participants and Procedure

We, again, distributed the link to the survey on a variety of Facebook groups and Twitter. The same categorical question was used to make sure that only opposition members participated in the study. A total of 317 participants completed the survey online. Two hundred twenty-two were women, 83 were men, 12 either identified themselves as “other” or did not (want to) respond to this question. Participants’ age ranged from 17 to 66 years ($M = 28.89; SD = 8.76$). Ninety-seven participants held a Master’s, 159 a Bachelor’s degree, 58 a high school degree, and three did not respond to this question.

Measures

Participants completed the same measures as in Study 1 (see Table 2): Political trust ($\alpha = .72$), political efficacy ($\alpha = .71$) and well-being ($\alpha = .83$). In addition, they completed more nuanced efficacy and collective action participation measures.

Types of efficacy.
**Voting efficacy.** We constructed two items to measure the efficacy of voting in the presidential elections: As an individual through my vote in the presidential election, “I can prevent President Erdoğan from being elected president again,” and “I can stand against President Erdoğan’s re-election” (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree; r = .79). Higher scores mean higher voting efficacy.

**Online protest efficacy.** We constructed two items to measure the efficacy of online protests: As an individual, I can affect the current government’s policies by 1) participating in a social media campaign/sharing something on social media and 2) participating in an online signature campaign (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree; r = .70). Higher scores mean higher online protest efficacy.

**Offline protest efficacy.** We constructed two items to measure the efficacy of offline protests: As an individual, I can affect the current government’s policies by participating 1) in protests on the streets and 2) in the forums and/or meetings (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree; r = .70). Higher scores mean higher offline protest efficacy.

**Types of collective action.**

**Online collective action participation.** Participants were asked to indicate how often they became engaged in the online protests against the policies of the current government in the last five years by means of two items adapted from Odağ, Uluğ, and Solak (2016): To protest against the policies of the current government, I have “participated in an online-signature campaign” and “participated in social media campaigns (e.g., hashtag on Twitter) or shared something on social media” in the last five years (1 = never; 7 = 11 or more times; r = .58). Higher scores indicate more online collective action participation.

**Offline collective action participation.** Participants were also asked to indicate how often they became engaged in the offline protests against the policies of the current government in the last five years by means of two items adapted from Odağ et al. (2016): To
protest against the policies of the current government, I have “protested on the streets” and “participated in the forums and/or meetings” in the last five years (1 = never; 7 = 11 or more times; r = .84). Higher scores indicate more offline collective action participation.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

As in Study 1, preliminary analyses examined relations between the variables and were reported in Table 2. We again conducted a mediation analysis by using PROCESS Model 4 (see Hayes, 2013) without taking political efficacy into account in order to test whether different types of collective action participation mediates the relationship between political trust and well-being. Results indicated that the association between political trust and well-being was significant, $b = .162, SE = .077, p = .004$, supporting our first hypothesis. In addition, political trust was a significant negative predictor of both online collective action participation, $b = -.197, SE = .217, p < .001$, and, as in Study 1, offline collective action participation, $b = -.156, SE = .230, p = .006$. Online collective action participation was a significant negative predictor of well-being, $b = -.127, SE = .020, p = .026$, whereas, unlike Study 1, offline collective action participation was not, $b = -.087, SE = .019, p = .124$. The indirect effect was tested using a bootstrap estimation approach with 5,000 samples only for online collective action participation. These results indicated a significant indirect effect of political trust on well-being through online collective action participation, $b = .025, SE = .015, 95\% \text{ CI} [.00, .06]$, thus supporting our second hypothesis only with respect to online collective action (Hypothesis 2a). Using G*Power (Faul et al., 2007), a sensitivity power analysis also showed we had 95% power to detect an effect size of Cohen's $d = .05$ (multiple regression; $R^2$ increase; three predictors with the available sample size: $N = 317$).

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3 As in Study 1, we also tested alternative models in which a) political trust mediated the relationship between different types of collective action participation and well-being, and b) types of efficacy mediated the relationship between political trust and well-being (see Online Supplementary Materials).
We again conducted a moderated mediation analysis\textsuperscript{4} using PROCESS Model 7 with 5,000 bootstrapped samples (see Hayes, 2013). Specifically, we investigated whether different types of efficacy (i.e., political efficacy, voting efficacy, online protest efficacy, and offline protest efficacy) would moderate the indirect effect of political trust on well-being through both online and offline collective action participation. Below, we present the findings for each moderator.

**Political efficacy.** The results showed that, on the one hand, the association between political trust and online collective action participation depended on political efficacy as the interaction between political trust and political efficacy was significant, \(b = -.382, SE = .164, p = .021\) (see Figure 4). Political trust was not significant at \(-1SD\) of political efficacy \((b = -.346, t(314) = -1.27, p = .206)\), but was significant at \(+1SD\) of political efficacy \((b = -1.25, t(314) = -4.11, p < .001)\). On the other hand, the association between political trust and offline collective action participation did not depend on political efficacy, \(b = -.108, SE = .172, p = .530\) (see Figure 5). The indexes of moderated mediation with respect to online collective action participation \((b = .015, SE = .011, 95\% \text{ CI} [-.00, .04])\) and offline collective action participation \((b = .001, SE = .004, 95\% \text{ CI} [-.01, .01])\) were not significant, thus did not support our moderated mediation hypothesis.

\[\text{[Insert Figure 4]}\]

\[\text{[Insert Figure 5]}\]

**Voting efficacy.** The results indicated that the interactions between political trust and voting efficacy with respect to online collective action participation, \(b = .005, SE = .125, p = \]

\textsuperscript{4} As in Study 1, we also tested an alternative model to test whether online & offline collective action participation would moderate the indirect effect of political trust on well-being through different types of efficacy. Last, we tested an alternative model by using PROCESS Model 14 (IV: political trust; Mediator: online/offline collective action participation; Moderator: types of efficacy; DV: well-being; see Online Supplementary Materials).
.966, and offline collective action participation, b = .096, SE = .132, p = .469, were not significant (see Figures 6 and 7).

[Insert Figure 6]
[Insert Figure 7]

**Online protest efficacy.** The results indicated that the interactions between political trust and online protest efficacy with respect to online collective action participation, b = -.165, SE = .128, p = .196, and offline collective action participation, b = .035, SE = .138, p = .801, were not significant (see Figures 8 and 9).

[Insert Figure 8]
[Insert Figure 9]

**Offline protest efficacy.** The results indicated that the interaction between political trust and offline protest efficacy with respect to online collective action participation, b = .089, SE = .115, p = .438, and offline collective action participation, b = .118, SE = .122, p = .335, were not significant (see Figures 10 and 11).

[Insert Figure 10]
[Insert Figure 11]

**Discussion**

As in Study 1, Study 2 examined how political trust may predict well-being (Hypothesis 1; direct association hypothesis) through the pathways of different types of collective action participation (Hypotheses 2a & 2b; mediation hypotheses). In addition to replicating the findings of Study 1 with respect to offline collective action, in Study 2, we also aimed to examine the role of online collective action participation in the relationship between political trust and well-being.

Results indicated that, in line with previous research (Lindstrom & Mohseni, 2009; Mattila & Rapeli, 2018) and in line with the findings of Study 1, lower political trust
predicted poor well-being. When examined together, the results showed a significant indirect effect of political trust on well-being through online collective action but not through offline collective action. As in Study 1, we also found that the relation between online collective action participation and well-being was negative. Thus, our results supported our mediation hypothesis only for online collective action participation in Study 2 (Hypothesis 2a), but unlike Study 1, not for offline collective action participation (Hypothesis 2b).

Study 2 also examined how a) political efficacy, b) voting efficacy, c) online protest efficacy, and d) offline protest efficacy may moderate the indirect effect of political trust on well-being through both online and offline collective action participation (moderated mediation hypotheses). The results showed that voting efficacy, online protest efficacy, and offline protest efficacy do not moderate the indirect effects of political trust on well-being through both online and offline collective action participation. Even though political efficacy did moderate the relationship between political trust and online collective action participation and the relationship between political trust and online collective action participation was strongest among people who have high political efficacy, we did not find support for any of our moderated mediation hypotheses. In addition to replicating the findings of Study 1 with respect to the mediatory role of collective action participation (but only for online collective action participation), Study 2 additionally showed that even when political efficacy was examined in more detail by looking at voting and protest efficacy separately and in a more nuanced way, they were still unrelated to political trust, collective action participation, and well-being.

**General Discussion**

Through this study, we aimed to examine the potential effect of collective action on individuals’ well-being who question their government’s policies in the authoritarian context of Turkey. We focused on two important elections: a referendum in 2017 that changed the
structure of Turkey’s system from a parliamentary system to a presidential one, and in 2018, with the first election under this new system. In the last few years, Turkey has become a competitive authoritarian regime, meaning that elections only go forward with the expectation that the incumbent will maintain office (Castaldo, 2018).

Building on previous research on political trust, collective action and well-being (e.g., Ekici & Soydemir, 2014; Helliwell et al., 2020; Lindstrom & Mohseni, 2009; Vestergren et al., 2017), we argued that lack of political trust would be directly associated with poor well-being among opposition members in Turkey. Results indicated that lower political trust did correlate with poor well-being, thus confirming our first hypothesis. Previous research indicated that low political trust is associated with poor well-being (Erikson et al., 1988; Lindstrom & Mohseni, 2009; Mattila & Rapeli, 2018). However, this relationship has usually been tested in Europe such as in Sweden and the Netherlands. Our findings replicate and extend the findings in the literature by showing that this relationship is also observed in non-democratic contexts such as Turkey.

We further suggested that the link between political trust and well-being would be mediated by individuals’ collective action participation in the protests against the government. While previous studies in other contexts (Drury & Reicher, 2009; Vestergren et al., 2017) and even in Turkey in previous years (Acar & Uluğ, 2016; Uluğ & Acar, 2018) have indicated positive effects of collective action participation on well-being, we expected that these findings may not carry over to non-democratic contexts, where the real and perceived costs of collective action are considerably high, including a variety of existential constraints and sanctions related to social exclusion and stigma (Odağ et al., 2021).

In Study 1, offline collective action participation mediated this relationship, supporting our mediation hypothesis. In Study 2, we distinguished online and offline collective action participation and hypothesized that both online collective action (Hypothesis
2a) and offline collective action participation (Hypothesis 2b) would mediate the relationship between political trust and well-being. The results of Study 2 supported our mediation hypothesis only for online collective action participation in Study 2, but not for offline collective action participation. Online collective action did function as a significant predictor of well-being, indicating the mediatory role of online collective action in the relationship between political trust and well-being.

Previous research has found a positive relationship between collective action participation and well-being (e.g., Dwyer et al., 2019; Vestergren et al., 2017). However, our results show that lower political trust in the system is associated with lower levels of self-reported well-being through their more engagement in offline (Study 1) and online (Study 2) collective action. This seems in line with our expectations, as engaging in street protests in Turkey has become increasingly difficult over the past few years, and even online political engagement is still somewhat risky (AP News, 2016; Uluğ et al., 2020).

We also argued that the indirect effect of political trust on well-being through both online and offline collective action participation would be strongest among people who have high political (Studies 1 & 2), voting, and online/offline protest efficacy (Study 2; Hypothesis 3; moderated mediation hypothesis). The results of Study 1 did not support this hypothesis with respect to political efficacy. Even though political efficacy moderated the relationship between political trust and online collective action participation among people who have high political efficacy in Study 2, we did not find support for any of our moderated mediation hypotheses with respect to all four moderators. As our data collection was restricted to opposition voters, and this may have restricted the range of political trust in both studies. This restricted variance may explain some of the non-significant findings in relation to political efficacy in our studies. Therefore, future studies should test our hypotheses with samples from different political backgrounds (e.g., government supporters).
Limitations and Future Directions

The set of studies has a few limitations. First, our measures of political efficacy proved to have little effect on any of the models we tested (except political efficacy in Study 2). In Study 1, we utilized items from Craig and Maggiotto’s (1982) study of political efficacy and found that the measure did not capture exactly what we hoped it would. In Study 2, we created a political efficacy scale that focused more specifically on voting and protest efficacy. It could be that political efficacy needs to be re-evaluated in repressive contexts. What constitutes efficacious behaviour may be different; for example, we asked about the efficacy of the vote, but it could be prudent to specify the power of the vote itself, as compared to the power of strategic voting. Qualitative work on understanding efficacy in repressive contexts could be useful in order to elaborate on its contents.

In a similar vein, we believe there has been little focus on the outcomes of online protests (but see Foster, 2015; Foster, Tassone, & Matheson, 2021 for some exceptions). As online protest is more accessible for people in repressive contexts (Odağ et al., 2016; Tufekci & Wilson, 2012), it would be worth further investigating what online protest means for protesters and how it may be used to bring about social change yet maintain well-being in a repressive context.

Political trust tends to be higher in those who most benefit from the existing system (Erikson et al., 1988; but also see Jost, Pelham, Sheldon, & Sullivan, 2003). It seems unsurprising, then, that previous research has indicated a positive relationship between political trust and well-being (Lindstrom & Mohseni, 2009), though it has been shown only in democratic contexts. It could be that in more authoritarian contexts, the way we frame or define political trust needs to change – are we referring to trust as it relates to maintaining institutions, infrastructure, social support? Or are we referring in particular to trust in government officials not to interfere in elections? One further limitation is the way well-being
is conceptualized and measured. There are numerous ways to understand well-being, and there is some discussion as to what types of well-being (e.g., social well-being in the form of social integration, contribution, or acceptance) may be considered more appropriate as they relate to collective phenomena. Other critical perspectives of well-being may be kept in mind and even utilized in further research on the relationship between collective action and well-being (e.g., Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2007).

Future research should focus on understanding political engagement beyond voting and protest. For example, how do people understand organization, mobilization, and online activism as parts of political engagement? We also believe the reduced effect of efficacy in authoritarian contexts should be further studied. It could be that efficacy is not a primary catalyst for collective action in repressive contexts as in democratic contexts (see van Bezouw et al., 2019 for a discussion). Rather, other factors may be at play. It could, for example, be more of an identity issue. People may engage in protest because it is expected of their social identity as activists (Odağ et al., 2021), rather than because they believe it has any effect on political change. We suggest further research should take place with activists in repressive contexts to understand their perspectives on the issue.

Lastly, our results indicated that collective action is only part of the story that can explain variability in well-being. We wonder if further research should continue to look into further group-based factors and the way they may affect people’s well-being in authoritarian contexts. The social cure literature (e.g., Jetten, Haslam, & Haslam, 2012; McNamara, Stevenson, & Muldoon, 2013), which utilizes a social identity model to understand health, may be of use here. It may be, for example, that people who are heavily involved in politics and consistently focused on elections and political behaviour may be more impacted by participating in collective action and having political efficacy, while others who are less
involved might be focused more on social relationships and activities outside of the realm of politics. If this is indeed the case, future research should look into these types of distinctions.

**Conclusion**

Research on the impact of trust in institutions and systems on the individual is by no means new. While individuals in democratic contexts have the option to vote, knowing that this may have some influence, it may not be efficacious in less democratic contexts. Finding ways to engage in collective action may keep people engaged and hopeful about their civic futures, however, context matters, as collective action participation may also put a burden on people’s well-being in authoritarian contexts. Understanding the outcomes of collective action in authoritarian contexts will help researchers and activists to better understand how collective action continues even when social change is difficult to achieve.
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Table 1

*Means, standard deviations, and correlations between variables in Study 1.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>M (SD)</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>1. Political trust</td>
<td>1.48 (.53)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Political efficacy</td>
<td>4.87 (1.25)</td>
<td>-.19***</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Collective action</td>
<td>4.36 (2.24)</td>
<td>-.22***</td>
<td>.22***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Well-being</td>
<td>2.15 (.69)</td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.14**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* ***p < .001, **p < .01
Table 2

*Means, standard deviations, and correlations between variables in Study 2.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>M (SD)</th>
<th>1</th>
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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Political trust</td>
<td>1.44 (.55)</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Political efficacy</td>
<td>4.67 (1.18)</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Online protest efficacy</td>
<td>3.01 (1.70)</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Offline protest efficacy</td>
<td>3.52 (1.73)</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.12*</td>
<td>.66***</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Voting efficacy</td>
<td>5.05 (1.69)</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.31***</td>
<td>.29***</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Online CA participation</td>
<td>4.50 (1.89)</td>
<td>-.22***</td>
<td>.19**</td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td>.19**</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Offline CA participation</td>
<td>3.13 (1.99)</td>
<td>-.18**</td>
<td>.25***</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.55***</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Well-being</td>
<td>2.31 (.67)</td>
<td>.15**</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.16**</td>
<td>-.11</td>
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</table>

*Note.* ***p < .001, **p < .01, *p < .05
Figure 1. Path diagram of the theoretical model among opposition members in Study 1.
Figure 2. Political Trust X Political Efficacy on Offline Collective Action (Study 1)
Figure 3. Path diagram of the theoretical model among opposition members in Study 2.
Figure 4. Political Trust X Political Efficacy on Offline Collective Action (Study 2)
Figure 5. Political Trust X Political Efficacy on Online Collective Action (Study 2)
Figure 6. Political Trust X Voting Efficacy on Offline Collective Action (Study 2)
Figure 7. Political Trust X Voting Efficacy on Online Collective Action (Study 2)
Figure 8. Political Trust X Online Protest Efficacy on Offline Collective Action (Study 2)
Figure 9. Political Trust X Online Protest Efficacy on Online Collective Action (Study 2)
Figure 10. Political Trust X Offline Protest Efficacy on Offline Collective Action (Study 2)
Figure 11. Political Trust X Offline Protest Efficacy on Online Collective Action (Study 2)