

**PERCEPTIONS ON SOCIAL ASSISTANCE DEPENDENCY AND  
VOTING BEHAVIOR**

by  
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Submitted to the Graduate School of Social Sciences  
in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Sabancı University  
July 2023

**PERCEPTIONS ON SOCIAL ASSISTANCE DEPENDENCY AND  
VOTING BEHAVIOR**

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Date of Approval: July 24, 2023

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## ABSTRACT

### PERCEPTIONS ON SOCIAL ASSISTANCE DEPENDENCY AND VOTING BEHAVIOR

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TURKISH STUDIES M.A. THESIS, JULY 2023

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Keywords: social assistance, voting behavior, policy expectation, social policy,  
Turkey

This thesis examines the relationship between voters' perceptions of social dependency and their policy expectations. The distribution of state resources does not always follow universalist principles, and voters may not perceive social assistance as a right for all citizens. Instead, voters might believe that the benefits they receive depend on the incumbent's survival. When this is the case, voters may develop a perception of dependency that affects their political behaviors and attitudes. Using survey data before the Turkish Presidential and Parliamentary Elections, this research aims to examine this relationship. Using the General Full ML Estimator, this research provides empirical evidence on the effect of perceived dependency on the policy expectation. Empirical findings suggest that social assistance beneficiaries consider the continuity of their assistance in their voting decision and update their policy position in the same direction as the incumbent when the incumbent's policy position is presented. Moreover, perceived dependency increases responsiveness to the policy promises of both the incumbent and the opposition elites. Voters who perceive themselves as dependent on social assistance are more likely to adjust their policy position in the same direction as the political elites.

## ÖZET

### SOSYAL YARDIMLARA OLAN BAĞIMLILIK VE SEÇMEN DAVRANIŞI ÜZERİNE ALGILAR

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TÜRKİYE ÇALIŞMALARI YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ, TEMMUZ 2023

Tez Danışmanı: Doç. Dr. ÖZGE KEMAHLIOĞLU

Anahtar Kelimeler: sosyal yardım, seçmen davranışı, politika beklentileri, sosyal politika, Türkiye

Bu tez, seçmenlerin sosyal yardımlara dair geliştirdikleri bağımlı olma algısı ile politika beklentileri arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemektedir. Devlet kaynaklarının dağılımı her zaman evrensel ilkeler ışığında geliştirilmemekte ve bu sebeple seçmenler aldıkları sosyal yardımı bir vatandaşlık hakkı olarak değerlendirmemektedirler. Seçmenler aldıkları sosyal yardımların ancak o hükümet iktidarda kaldığı sürece devam edeceğini düşünmekte, bu sebeple de siyasi davranış ve tutumlarını etkileyen bir bağımlılık algısı geliştirebilmektedirler. 2023 Türkiye Cumhurbaşkanlığı ve Milletvekilliği seçimleri öncesinde yapılan anket verilerini kullanan bu araştırma, sosyal yardımlara bağımlılık algısı ve politika beklentileri arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. General Full ML Estimator kullanarak yapılan analizler, sosyal yardımlara karşı geliştirilen bağımlılık algısının oy verme davranışı ve politika beklentileri üzerindeki etkilerine dair ampirik kanıtlar sunmaktadır. Araştırmanın bulguları, kendilerini aldıkları sosyal yardımlara bağımlı gören seçmenlerin, politika beklentilerini hem iktidarın hem de muhalefetin politika vaatlerine uygun olarak güncellediklerini göstermektedir. Öte yandan, iktidarın politika vaatlerinin seçmenler üzerinde daha etkili olduğu görülmektedir.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the people who supported me throughout the process. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my thesis advisor, Professor Özge Kemahlıoğlu, for her support, encouragement, patience, and inspiration she gives me. This thesis was one of the biggest challenges of my life, and I could not imagine writing these sentences without her support.

I am grateful to Professor Mert Moral for his red pen that teaches me more than I can ever imagine and for the motivation to survive in academia.

I would also like to thank Professor Elif Erişen for accepting to be on my thesis committee and for her time and encouragement. I am incredibly grateful for the invaluable feedback and assistance these inspiring academics provide, which I consider a true privilege.

I am profoundly grateful for the unwavering presence and support of İrem and Sena, who have been by my side through the brightest and darkest moments of these times. I also thank Berk for his company and support every day, starting with good morning commander. Suffering together is always better than suffering alone.

I am grateful to Beyza and Şule for everything; the precious support you provide and your humor that never fails to brighten even the most challenging moments.

Last, but not least, my family and my chosen family in Istanbul, thank you for always making me feel really at home and safe in this chaotic world.

With the utmost gratitude, I dedicate this thesis to my incredible parents. They've been my rock, their unwavering belief in me has been a driving force, pushing me forward even when faced with the toughest challenges. Their resilience in conquering every obstacle with an unyielding spirit has truly shaped who I am. Since my childhood, they nurtured my curiosity, allowing me to explore the world as a wide-eyed child. This foundation has been has shaped my intellectual growth and my present self. To my dear mom and dad, I extend heartfelt thanks for being my partners on this quest of self-discovery. Your constant presence has been a source of strength, lifting me up every time I stumbled. With profound affection and appreciation, I dedicate this thesis to both of you.

*To my father Mesut Edeer,  
and to my mother Ferah Edeer...*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The effect of social assistance programs on the political behaviors and attitudes of individuals has long been discussed among political science scholars, and the existing literature provides the examination of many aspects of this effect under different conditions. The redistributive politics of governments form and shape the linkage between the citizens and the political parties. Social assistance programs are indicators of government responsiveness towards the citizens, and this responsiveness affects the political attitudes and behaviors of citizens who receive social assistance. The voting behavior of social assistance beneficiaries is one of the most discussed aspects of these programs. This thesis focuses on a specific attitude that shapes voting behavior, which is the policy expectations of social assistance beneficiaries.

Social assistance programs shape citizens' perception of the state responsiveness (Garay, Palmer-Rubin, and Poertner 2020; Layton and Smith 2015), their trust and attitudes towards the authorities (Gervasoni 2023). Moreover, scholars often describe social assistance as a political learning process where individual experiences shape their political perception, attitudes, and participation (Soss 1999). Yet, there is no consensus regarding how social assistance affects political participation. Some scholars argue that there is a positive relationship between social assistance and political participation (Campbell 2002, 2012; Mettler 2005; Olson 1965), whereas others argue that there is a negative one because of the incapability of beneficiaries due to lack of financial resources and education (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995), or because of the demobilization effect of being beneficiaries (Cloward and Piven 1971). While there is an ongoing discussion on the effect of social assistance, existing literature shows that the effect is highly dependent on social program design and implementation (Mettler and Soss 2004; Soss 1999; Watson 2015).

The design of social assistance programs might be institutionalized, programmatic, and appeal to the broad part of the public. However, as distributive politics can be used for electoral success (Cox and McCubbins 1986; Layton and Smith 2015), social assistance programs are not excluded from being a tool for political

parties. Thus, clientelistic and partisan-bias implementations of social assistance programs are not rare. Such implementations may create reciprocity among the beneficiaries (Lawson and Greene 2014) thereby affecting their political behavior.

The effect of reciprocity is most visible in voting behavior. Voters may reward incumbents if the social assistance program is well-implemented and increases their well-being (De La O 2013; Zucco 2008, 2013). However, voters may support the incumbent for other reasons, such as maintaining the status quo for the continuity of the assistance they receive. They may believe that the continuation of the social assistance they receive is dependent on the incumbent's survival (Özel and Yıldırım 2019; Soss 1999), the opposition is incompetent to provide such assistance (Keefer 2007), or they might have a fear of punishment mechanism if they opt-out from (if the benefit they receive is contingent) the clientelist relationship (Stokes 2005; Stokes, Dunning, and Nazareno 2013).

Yet, despite the extensive research on the relationship between social assistance and political behavior, the effects of social assistance on the political decision-making processes of individuals are not fully examined. Moreover, how such a sensitive issue affects individuals' cognitive and psychological processes before their voting behavior demonstrates a gap in the political science literature. This thesis aims to fill this gap by focusing on the policy expectations of social assistance beneficiaries, which is a crucial step in voting decisions (Downs 1957).

The main explanatory variable of this research is voters' perceived dependency on the social assistance they receive. Hence, this research contributes to the existing literature by examining how voters' policy expectation is affected by the social assistance they receive if they consider the continuity of their social assistance in their vote decision. The research question, thus, is the following: How does social assistance dependency affect voters' policy expectations?

We argue that when voters perceive themselves as dependent on the social assistance they receive, they are more likely to change their policy expectations in the same direction as the incumbent. Likewise, we argue that they are more likely to change their policy expectation in the opposite direction as the opposition. This relationship between the perceived dependency on social assistance and the policy expectation can be explained by cognitive dissonance theory. When the voters perceive themselves as dependent, they are more likely to align with the incumbent's policy position in order to avoid any conflict between their policy position and the incumbent's, which will cause cognitive dissonance with their voting decision. Moreover, voters who perceive themselves as dependent are more likely to reject the policy position of the opposition, again, in order to avoid any cognitive dissonance.

In order to address these hypotheses, we used survey data conducted before the 14 May 2023 Turkish Parliamentary and Presidential Elections.

Since social assistance is a sensitive issue, we did not directly ask the concerning question to the respondents. Rather, we designed a list experiment in order to reduce desirability bias. To test our hypotheses, we employ the General Full ML Estimator developed by Imai and their colleagues (2015). General Full ML estimator is one one-step estimator that uses predicted responses from the list experiment as the independent variable in another regression model.

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first research that provides evidence for the effect of social assistance on the voters' policy expectations. To the best of our knowledge, the psychological effects of the perception of social assistance dependency in the cognitive dissonance perspective are yet to be examined in the literature.

In the next chapter, we provide a literature review on distributive politics and social assistance with a specific focus on social assistance dependency in competitive authoritarian regimes, alongside its effects on voting behavior. Then we provide a literature review on the policy expectations of voters. Before presenting a theoretical framework, a review of the social assistance programs in Turkey, especially during the AKP government, will be provided. The empirical findings section provides a detailed explanation for the tested hypotheses. The findings suggest that perceived dependency increases voters' responsiveness to the policy promises of both the incumbent and the opposition. Voters who perceive themselves as dependent on the social assistance they receive are more likely to support incumbents' policies. Contrary to our expectations, the effect of perceived dependency is also positive when the opposition's policy promise is presented. However, the effect is more pronounced when the policy promise of the incumbent is presented to the voters.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Distributive Politics and Social Assistance

Distributive politics refers to the government's choices regarding how resources are distributed among different social groups through taxes and transfers. These decisions have a significant effect on the redistribution of resources within a population, thereby influencing the disparities among various segments of society (Golden and Min 2013). The outcomes of this redistribution are attained through the transfer of tax revenues to provide public services such as education, healthcare, and social protection for vulnerable groups such as the elderly, children, and the poor (Stokes, Dunning, and Nazareno 2013). The process of resource allocation to overcome inequalities with redistributive politics creates a linkage between citizens and political parties. Yet, distributive politics are not only driven by the principles of equality. Governments often allocate resources in a particularistic manner to maintain and increase their electoral support.

Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007) define two types of linkage regarding their designs, political aims, and implementations. Clientelistic linkage consists of conditionality as voters access benefits in exchange for their votes, and this exchange continues until one part of the exchange decides on an opportunistic defection. To avoid such consequences, clientelistic linkage requires predictability for both actors as well as a monitoring mechanism to control voter behavior, whereas programmatic linkage is less costly as it does not require targeting and monitoring mechanisms (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). Redistribution is programmatic if it is “public, formalized, and shaping the actual distribution of benefits or resources (Stokes, Dunning, and Nazareno 2013).” The second requirement refers to the differences between program design and implementation since redistribution policies often provide formal, clear, and transparent selection criteria while the implementation is discretionary due to institutional gaps. Mexico's Conditional Cash Transfer Program, *Progresa* is



an example of programmatic redistribution, with its high compatibility between selection criteria and actual beneficiaries (De La O 2013). Nevertheless, recent research shows that these two categories are not mutually exclusive, and variations of redistribution strategies often incorporate elements of clientelistic linkages and programmatic policy designs. Non-programmatic redistribution strategies also differ in the existence of contingency and targeting strategies of the political parties.

Social policy programs are shaped by the governments' redistributive politics and are considered one of the essential components of welfare regimes in democratic regimes. Even though there is a lack of consensus on the "universalist" principle of social policy programs, a democratic welfare state must design those programs with a strong emphasis on responsiveness and accountability principles. Hence, social policy programs are often designed "formal and public," compatible with Stokes and their colleagues' (2013) programmatic redistribution criteria. Nonetheless, the institutions might manipulate the implementation towards a clientelist redistribution strategy by endangering democracy and welfare regime (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007).

Social policy programs are one of the important determinants of the relationship between citizens and the state. The institutional structure in which social programs are developed and implemented shapes the social policy linkage between citizens and the state and citizens' perceptions of the state responsiveness (Garay, Palmer-Rubin, and Poertner 2020; Layton and Smith 2015). Nonetheless, social policy programs provide broader perceptions of the state and the welfare policy that is implemented. Accessibility and selection criteria of social programs reveal to what extent principles of universalism and equity guide the allocation of resources. Hence, the design and policy-making processes of social programs provide citizens with a better understanding of the rationale behind program structures and rules. The presence of discretion in the implementation of social policy programs is a significant factor in determining whether the state possesses the freedom to exercise arbitrary discretion or if specific legal or regulatory frameworks constrain its power. In this regard, social policy programs have far-reaching implications for citizens' perceptions of the state within a broader context.

Social assistance programs affect individuals' political attitudes and behavior in multiple aspects. Social assistance programs might increase civic and political participation by creating reciprocity between the beneficiaries and the society (Mettler 2005). Moreover, as social assistance programs aim to improve the well-being of the citizens, it is expected to increase their political participation as a result of providing prosperity (Campbell 2012). However, the positive effects of social assistance

programs often depend on the program design. The design of social assistance programs might increase or decrease the demand-making processes (Mettler and Soss 2004) and political participation (Watson 2015). Hence social assistance programs affect democratic processes and outcomes by shaping the political behavior of beneficiaries as well as their political attitudes. Beneficiaries may develop group and party identification (Campbell 2012), higher trust, and positive attitudes toward authorities (Gervasoni 2023). Reciprocity among social beneficiaries is not always directed toward society's benefit. This reciprocity often is directed to political elites (Lawson and Greene 2014).

The direction and the magnitude of the effect of social assistance on political participation are still subjects of debate among scholars of political science. Olson (1965) argues that social assistance beneficiaries possess a greater incentive to organize themselves and actively engage in political decision-making processes to advocate for and improve the provision of those services due to their greater reliance on public services compared to the average citizen. Campbell (2002) examines the political participation of senior social program beneficiaries and suggests that as the income of seniors decreases, their political participation increases. As the beneficiaries' dependency on social assistance increases, their political interest, political participation, and turnout rates increase. Moreover, implemented social policy programs might affect retrospective voting decisions of voters in favor of the incumbent (Bechtel and Hainmueller 2011).

Nonetheless, not all scholars agreed with the positive effect of social assistance on citizens' political participation. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) argue that because of the characteristics that make beneficiaries compatible with social assistance, they do not have sufficient capabilities for political participation. Lack of education and low income are among the most important selection criteria of non-discretionary social programs, and they affect political sophistication in a negative direction as well (Converse 1964). Therefore, it is not the social assistance itself that causes low political participation but the group characteristics.

Contrary to Olson's (1965) argument on the positive effect of social assistance on political participation, Cloward and Piven (1971) argue that social assistance, instead, demobilizes beneficiaries and decreases their political participation. Hence, literature on social policy programs shows that the effect of social assistance on political participation varies by multiple factors.

Garay, Palmer-Rubin, and Poertner (2020) focus on the social assistance organizations in Mexico and find that the type of broker organization, whether empowering organizational brokerage or partisan organizational brokerage, affects perceptions

of the conditionality of social programs for both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. Citizens are informed about the targeting strategies, and the process is publicly transparent when the social policy is non-discretionary (programmatic). Hence it empowers citizens' self-worth and strengthens trust in the state. On the other hand, in discretionary (non-programmatic) social programs, selection criteria are not transparent, and even beneficiaries may not be informed about why they are eligible for social assistance. The perceptions of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries are expected to be different in non-programmatic programs due to unclear policy implementations (Garay, Palmer-Rubin, and Poertner 2020).

Soss (1999) takes this argument one step further and defines social policy programs as a political learning process:

“As clients participate in welfare programs, they learn lessons about how citizens and governments relate, and these lessons have political consequences beyond the domain of welfare agencies. Program designs structure clients' experiences in ways that shape their beliefs about the effectiveness of asserting themselves at the welfare agency. Because clients associate the agency with the government as a whole, these program-specific beliefs, in turn, become the basis for broader orientations toward government and political action. (Soss 1999)(p.364)”

Soss (1999) examine two different social policy programs and their learning outcomes in terms of the political participation of citizens. The first program puts beneficiaries in a vulnerable position and makes them feel the hierarchy between them and social program agents. The second program does not require frequent interactions between beneficiaries and the program agent; instead, the second program has a well-institutionalized bureaucratic process. Soss (1999) suggests that political participation is significantly lower for the first group beneficiaries as the program determines their perception of the state and eventually undermines beneficiaries' demand-making attempts.

Above mentioned studies show that as the social policy programs are more institutionalized, they become less discretionary. When institutions are weak, the distribution of resources is less transparent, targeting criteria is less clear, and universalist principles of welfare regimes are more likely to be undermined by the institutions.

## 2.2 Social Assistance Dependency in Competitive Authoritarian Regimes

The effect of the regime type on the implementation of social policy programs is often explained through economic development. Nevertheless, relying solely upon economic development as the explanation is inadequate in comprehensively accounting for the social program variations. The significant allocation of resources towards social spending in democratic countries might be explained by other factors, such as intense party competition and the active involvement of civil society in policy-making processes (Mares and Carnes 2009).

Despite their institutional strength, democratic regimes with strong institutions are not fully immune to clientelism. Political parties often develop tactics to overcome institutional arrangements and link social policy programs with clientelistic linkages (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). Hence, redistributive politics of democratic regimes is often considered as an electoral game where political elites allocate resources strategically to obtain electoral support (Cox and McCubbins 1986).

Nevertheless, clientelistic and discretionary social policy programs are mostly associated with weak institutions and non-democratic regime types. In competitive authoritarian regimes, the incumbent controls political institutions without any substantive check-balance mechanism, which makes political institutions “*uneven playing field*” for the incumbent (Levitsky and Way 2010). Discretionary programs are more likely to be implemented in competitive authoritarian regimes (Garay, Palmer-Rubin, and Poertner 2020) where the dominant party has captured political institutions, thereby distributing public resources asymmetrically and excluding opponents from all public resources as much as possible (Greene 2010). Social policy programs in competitive authoritarian regimes are expected to be less universal (Knutsen and Rasmussen 2018) and more clientelistic (Garay, Palmer-Rubin, and Poertner 2020). Moreover, social beneficiaries are more likely to believe that the continuity of their social assistance depends on the incumbent’s survival in competitive authoritarian regimes (Garay, Palmer-Rubin, and Poertner 2020; Hinnebusch 2006; Özel and Yıldırım 2019; Soss 1999).

This dependency between autocratic leaders and social assistance beneficiaries is not unidirectional (Esen and Gumuscu 2021). Authoritarian leaders are dependent on voters’ support as well in order to prevent regime breakdown, especially during economic crises. Incumbents in authoritarian regimes might strengthen social welfare programs to moderate the effects of the crisis, as their survival depends on

popular support during an economic hardship (Han 2021). If the opposition is unable to make credible promises to voters, the dependency between the beneficiaries and incumbent increases (Keefer 2007)

In competitive authoritarian regimes where institutions are weak, rule and law is abolished, and redistribution allocation is discretionary (Levitsky and Way 2010), welfare benefits are not implemented with universal principles but turn into the incumbent’s electoral strategy. Citizens do not perceive social assistance as a right in such a political context, but they are more likely to believe that the assistance they receive depends on their support for the incumbent (Garay, Palmer-Rubin, and Poertner 2020), since there is no powerful alternative to replace the incumbent due to unfair political competition.

### 2.3 Social Assistance Dependency and Voting Behavior

Social policy programs can mobilize voters who are beneficiaries of social assistance in favor of the incumbent. Targeted programs like “*Progresa*” in Mexico, when they are programmatic, increase electoral participation and support for the incumbent in the short term (De La O 2013). Another example is “*Bolsa Familia*” program of Brazil, which is a programmatic and universal massive cash transfer program. Zucco (2008) shows that “*Bolsa Familia*” had a substantive effect on the re-election of Lula. Moreover, the effect of the program on Lula’s support is more pronounced in the less developed regions of Brazil. Both examples show that social policy programs with a programmatic design and universalist approach might increase support for the incumbent without any targeting or contingency strategy being required. Programmatic social policy programs may increase voters’ satisfaction with the policy and lead to issue voting. Nonetheless, the social assistance they receive may cause a dependency on the incumbent and voters’ support of the incumbent in order to maintain the status quo and the assistance they receive.

Gervasoni (2023) examines the effect of state dependency <sup>1</sup> on the pro-authority attitudes in 18 Latin American countries and suggests that state-dependent citizens are more likely to develop pro-authoritarian attitudes whether the redistribution allocation is particularistic or not. State-dependent citizens do not only develop positive attitudes toward the incumbent but toward any level of bureaucracy, and they have a higher degree of satisfaction with public services. Regarding incumbent

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<sup>1</sup>Their definition of the state-dependent concept includes “public employees, pensioners, welfare beneficiaries, and Conditional Cash Transfer recipients” (Gervasoni 2023)(p.7).

support, Gervasoni’s findings (2023) align with the established body of knowledge, suggesting that state-dependent citizens are more likely to vote for the incumbent in the next election cycle. This tendency might be partly explained by retrospective voting, as voters are more likely to decide based on the incumbent’s past performance, as they believe it’s their duty to support politicians who have previously acted in their best interests, regardless of potential future benefits (Lawson and Greene 2014).

Özel and Yıldırım (2019) explain increasing support for the incumbent with credit claim and risk aversion mechanisms in the Turkish context. Özel and Yıldırım (2019) argue that even though beneficiaries do not support the incumbent, they are more likely to support the Turkish Presidential System in the 2017 referendum due to its conceptualization as the status-quo solidifier. Social beneficiaries believe that the continuity of their assistance depends on maintaining the status quo, which is the main promise of the Turkish presidential System. As Kahneman, Knetsch, and Thaler (1991) argue, individuals are more likely to maintain status-quo, as the change might come with greater cost. However, risk aversion might not always be the case for incumbent supporters because of their partisan ties. Instead, they might support the presidential system because of the credit attribution mechanism. Partisans who have social assistance might reward the incumbent for their social policy program and develop more positive political evaluations (Özel and Yıldırım 2019).

Social assistance beneficiaries might support the incumbent if the social policy program is implemented in a programmatic manner as in the case of “*Progres*a” (De La O 2013; Zucco 2013), and “*Bolsa Familia*” (Zucco 2008). On the other hand, if the social policy program is implemented in a discretionary manner, voters might support the incumbent with risk aversion mechanisms, as in the case of support for the presidential system in Turkey (Özel and Yıldırım 2019), or believing that the benefits they receive depend on the incumbent survival (Garay, Palmer-Rubin, and Poertner 2020; Hinnebusch 2006; Soss 1999). Another possible mechanism behind incumbent support might be trusting in the government for poverty alleviation as well as the development of the national economy while considering the opposition is incompetent to solve those issues. Hence the lack of credible opposition promises in economic development and social assistance programs might increase the trust in the government and make the government the only credible actor for the voters.

When the institutions are weak, but the elections are competitive, as in the case of competitive authoritarianism, incumbents might allocate social spending in a clientelist manner (Penfold-Becerra 2007). In such a context, citizens are unable

to reject clientelist exchanges on the principles of the rule of law or democratic institutions, which are required to opt out from clientelism (Lawson and Greene 2014). Therefore, social assistance functions as the reward in return for incumbent support rather than universal citizen rights of welfare regimes.

Despite extensive empirical studies examining the effect of social assistance on incumbent support, there is a limited body of research concerning the effect of social assistance on different political evaluations of individuals beyond the ballot box. When the social policy program is programmatic, support for the incumbent is often associated with the program's success. However, voters' support for the incumbent when the policy program is discretionary mostly consists of the belief that the benefits they receive depend on the incumbent's survival. Since the voting decision is a cognitive process, examining the effect of social assistance on the pre-voting process would fill an important gap in both social policy and voting behavior literature.

In the next section, I present a review of the policy expectation with a specific focus on the political psychology literature.

## 2.4 Policy Expectation

Political parties' effect on individuals' policy opinion formation has long been discussed in the political science literature. Most scholars agree that citizens follow party cues in their political decision-making processes (Kam 2005; Leeper and Slothuus 2014). By following the party cues, citizens might be able to minimize the cognitive costs of opinion formation through the activation of heuristic processes or motivational reasoning processes (Petersen et al. 2013).

The heuristic process argument suggests that if the party that citizens like or support endorses a novel policy issue, citizens tend to adopt the same position as the party they like. In contrast, if the party they dislike supports the issue, citizens tend to adopt the opposite position, thereby relying on the cues provided by their respective parties. Bullock (2011) argues that citizens are responsive to the policy information as much as they are responsive to the party cues if the information is provided. Nevertheless, recent research supports that citizens' opinion formation is more likely to be partisan-biased (Bartels 2002; Colombo and Kriesi 2017).

On the other hand, motivational reasoning does not aim to minimize the cognitive cost of opinion formation. Instead, it requires a higher degree of cognitive effort

in order to evaluate policy positions by their group identity, commitments, and values. Peterson and their colleagues (2013) suggest that party cues do not always function to reduce the cognitive cost of opinion formation. Instead, party cues activate the motivational reasoning process. Citizens use party cues and their group identification in order to prevent any cognitive dissonance between the position of the party they support and their own position.

Hence, when citizens are presented with a new issue, they follow party cues. However, they do not always activate heuristic processes and initiate motivational reasoning as well. When the citizen's policy position conflicts with the position of the party they like, citizens initiate motivational reasoning in order to adjust their position with the position of the party they like. Otherwise, citizens are more likely to experience a cognitive dissonance between their policy position and the party they support due to this conflict.

Social policy programs have far-reaching implications for citizens' perceptions of the state, their political participation, and voting behavior. The effects of social assistance on political participation and voting behavior vary depending on factors like program implementation (programmatic or non-programmatic), selection criteria, and the level of institutionalization and democratization and the country's economic development. Recent studies show that social assistance might be used as a tool for clientelistic ties and to reinforce dependency on the incumbent both in democratic and hybrid regimes. However, due to a lack of strong institutions, this effect is more pronounced in competitive authoritarian regimes. Therefore, in competitive authoritarian regimes, the voting decision affected by social assistance might have different root motivations. In non-discretionary social assistance programs, beneficiaries are more likely to reward incumbents for their well-being as citizens. However, when social assistance is perceived as the conditional favor of the government, voting for the incumbent in the ballot box might be caused by different and more reciprocal motivations, such as their perceived dependency on social assistance. When social assistance beneficiaries perceive themselves as dependent on the incumbent, to what extent do they follow the party cues in their policy opinion formation?

In this research, we aim to contribute both social assistance and competitive authoritarianism literature. We argue that in competitive authoritarian regimes where redistribution policies are often shaped by incumbents' interests, the effect of social policy linkage would be different for electorates. When social policy linkage is affiliated with the incumbent rather than the welfare regime, electorates are more likely to perceive social benefits continuity conditional on the incumbent's survival.



To what extent does social assistance dependency affect voters' behavior in and beyond the ballot box? Does social assistance dependency affect voters' policy expectations on behalf of the incumbent more than non-beneficiaries?

## 2.5 Transition to Welfare State in Turkey

After the Second World War, the importance of the welfare state increased, and it is seen as the buffer for the differences between capitalist and communist states (Buğra 2016). However, welfare reforms implemented in the developed and developing countries had many differences (Mares and Carnes 2009), and Turkey was not an exception as a developing country with many economic, political, and social challenges.

From the early stages of this transition, the charity culture of Turkey has been influential in overshadowing the state's responsibility for the welfare of citizens. Indeed, the discussions on the state's role in welfare did not emerge until the 1960s and the state is not seen as fully responsible for the welfare, even in today's political context (Buğra and Keyder 2006; Öniş 2012). This perception not only decreases the state's responsibility towards welfare but also affects the perception of social assistance and puts social beneficiaries in a more vulnerable position. As Buğra (2016) states, the perception of social assistance as "*sadaka*" (charity aid) rather than the responsibility of social state makes citizens "*duaci*" (grateful) even for any inconsistent assistance, while preventing to expect alleviation of poverty as state's responsibility.

The very first welfare reforms of Turkey are described as exclusionary, corporatist, and unequal (Buğra 2016). Initially, this policy proved sustainable as urban poverty was not a pressing concern, given that most of the population resided in rural areas and relied on informal solidarity networks. However, with the state's shift in economic policy from agriculture to the industry and service sectors, most rural populations migrated to urban areas by losing their informal support systems. The consequent rapid industrialization has resulted in a decline in the income of artisans and small business owners and increased urban poverty to the extent that can no longer be surpassed since the 1960s. The changing socio-economic structure of the Turkish population, coupled with the influence of neoliberalism, has required a more responsive state on welfare. In response to these developments, a series of social protection reforms, particularly in housing and health services, have been implemented.

Social protection as a fundamental right of citizens began to be discussed in the 1960s. In the 1961 Constitution, the state is described as a welfare regime, and social security reforms are improved over time (Öktem and Erdogan 2020). However, the AKP was the first government that had a tendency to change the corporatist welfare

regime of Turkey into a more inclusive welfare regime (Bugra and Candaş 2011). Alongside the AKP's policy position on welfare, the international context of the time was permissive to develop such a policy program. The 2001 economic crisis shows how citizens depend on the neoliberal market and how neoliberalism makes citizens more vulnerable. Therefore, welfare reforms had to be improved in the first years of the AKP government. The AKP government developed a welfare program that is compatible with both their conservative Islamist values and neoliberalism. Hence, AKP's welfare program has seemed to be shaped by two contradictory tendencies: Traditional solidarity networks and citizen-oriented welfare regime (Buğra 2016; Bugra and Candaş 2011). On the one hand, social programs are centralized and well-institutionalized within the Ministry of Family and Social Services. On the other hand, as the social policy resources are allocated to Social Aid and Solidarity Foundations and the programs are implemented by those foundations, discretionary policy implementations are very likely (Öktem and Erdogan 2020). The cooperation between the Ministry of Family and Social Services and Social Aid and Solidarity Foundations illustrates the AKP's welfare policy paradigm that embodies citizen-based welfare policy and charity tradition. The existence of Social Aid and Solidarity Foundations are considered as the institution to overcome the bureaucracy and fully transparent egalitarian welfare regime (Öktem and Erdogan 2020).

Social policy programs are considered as the material sources of AKP's "neoliberal populism" that combines populist and neoliberal economic policies (Özdemir 2020). The success of the AKP government during the first decade of their government is often explained with "social neoliberalism," characterized by the combination of regulatory neoliberalism and controlled neopopulism in order to maintain and increase electoral support (Dorlach 2015; Öniş 2012). On the one hand, AKP's social neoliberalism is based on providing public services such as public health care and free education services to make them accessible to the poor. On the other hand, rapid privatization has not excluded those sectors that are provided to the public by the state. As a result, while public health services and free education became more accessible during the AKP government, the privatization of healthcare and education transformed the origins of inequality from occupation status to income level (Yılmaz 2013). The duality between increasing public services and a high level of privatization created a gap in terms of service quality between public and private providers. Dorlach (2015) defines this duality as the replacement of old corporatist duality with equal access to fundamental public services but unequal access to higher-quality private services.

Another characteristic of the social neoliberalism policy of the AKP is the particularistic allocation of social spending (Ark-Yıldırım 2017; Eder 2010; Öniş 2012). For

instance, Aytaç (2014) shows that the incumbent disproportionately allocates Conditional Cash Transfer program resources in order to maximize its electoral support. Yörük (2012) examines the redistribution of green cards, which provide free health services by the central government for those without social protection, and presents an ethnic disparity among Kurdish citizens. Yörük (2012) argues that this disparity is not solely because of the high poverty among Kurds but the historical context of the Kurdish population. Yörük's (2012) findings indicate that distribution politics in Turkey is used to control the Kurdish population and prevent ethnic conflicts. Moreover, the likelihood of holding a green card is higher when the electoral competition is intense where the Kurdish ethnic party is involved (Kemahlioglu 2022). Hence these findings provide strong evidence of the particularistic distribution strategies of incumbents in order to control ethnic conflict and obtain electoral success in Kurdish regions. This particularistic allocation of social spending in Turkey is explained by its discretionary design and its extra-budget financial structure (Eder 2010).

Eder (2010) describes Turkey's welfare regime as a new form of institutional "welfare mix" where the state is not the main provider but the regulatory power between private sectors and welfare recipients. On the other hand, the state has more controlling power and opens room for particularistic redistribution relationships. This relationship between the state, private actors, and citizens is considered as the triangular dependency of the regime (Esen and Gumuscu 2021).

Another actor that became important during the AKP government is local governments and municipalities. On the one hand, municipalities have become social assistance providers with non-state budgets that come from NGOs and private actors (Eder 2010). Municipalities reach the people who need assistance more easily with their local networks as well as reach to make collaborations with local private actors for social spending funds. Ark-Yıldırım (2017) shows that the AKP uses local party ties in order to target voters while allocating resources and how local actors claim credit for the developments at the local level. Local governments are more likely to access redistribution resources with their party ties and allocate resources disproportionately to maintain and gain the incumbent's electoral success (Kemahlioğlu and Özdemir 2018). For instance, Kemahlioğlu and Bayer (2021) show that green card redistribution is linked with party ties by the local governments controlled by the incumbent, despite the fact that the central government distributes the green card program. Hence, municipalities have become important actors in welfare redistribution during the AKP government with several advantages. Local governments and municipalities controlled by the AKP government increase the efficiency of targeting and allocation of resources while strengthening collaborations with non-state actors to reach extra-budget financial resources alongside the government's financial

resources.

While AKP's welfare policy is more inclusive than its precedents, the use of particularistic redistribution increased, especially after the end of EU membership negotiations (Buğra and Keyder 2006). As Onis (2012) states, receiving social assistance during the AKP era is not perceived as a citizen right but a privilege that is accessible by the AKP networks even when the design is programmatic. Hence, the implementation of welfare programs is often discretionary and relies on the subjective evaluations of the responsible actors.

The non-programmatic implementations of welfare programs produce a criterion called "*deserving poor*" (Eder 2010). The redistribution of the social assistance benefits Social Aid and Solidarity Foundations (Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Vakıfları) strengthened the discretionary characteristics of welfare programs with their own selection criteria for the "*deserving poor*". Thus, the welfare regime of Turkey still relies on charity rather than citizenship and is only accessible to "*deserving poor*". Nevertheless, the state's control over the welfare programs does not decrease with the participation of private actors but increases (Eder 2010). For instance, the shift in AKP's policy in Kurdish regions from region-based development to individual-based development caused an increase in social assistance programs. However, programs were designed as benevolent instruments to control the politicized Kurdish population with clientelist networks (Yörük and Özsoy 2013).

Hence social assistance beneficiaries are in a vulnerable position due to the charity's unreliable nature, and they cannot actively participate in political demand-making processes. On the other hand, the discretionary nature of welfare programs creates a dependent relationship between the beneficiaries and the state. Even though the selection criteria for the social program beneficiaries are mostly programmatic, the implementation often depends on the non-programmatic decisions of intermediate actors. Therefore, one can argue that Turkey has not been able to develop a universalist welfare regime where all citizens are able to benefit from social assistance provided by the state in a programmatic manner, without any requirement rather than their socio-economic positions.

## 2.6 Social Assistance Programs in Turkey

The previous section presents a brief history of the development and characteristics of the welfare regime in Turkey with a specific focus on the AKP era. This section presents public data regarding AKP's social welfare system, which support the above-discussed arguments.

In the context of Turkey's recent economic indicators compared to 2006, the Gini coefficient, which presents economic inequalities, has decreased from 0.428 in 2006 to 0.401 in 2021. The ratio of the highest quintile's income share to the lowest quintile's has declined from 9.6 in 2006 to 7.6 in 2021. The relative poverty rate<sup>2</sup> has decreased from 25.4% in 2006 to 21.3% in 2021 (Cumhurbaşkanlığı Strateji ve Bütçe Başkanlığı 2023).

According to the 2023 Annual Presidential Program, the percentage of GDP allocated to social assistance expenditures has only risen 0.27% from 2006 to 2021. The number of households that benefit from social assistance is 5,903,515 in 2021 (6,630,682 in 2020 and 3,282,975 in 2019). The Ministry of Family and Social Services directly budgets for the elderly and disability benefits, social and economic support for families in need with children, general social health insurance contributions, and home healthcare; the rest of the Ministry's budget is used for funding the Social Aid and Solidarity Foundations (SYDV). The share of the budget used for the Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations to the total budget of the Ministry<sup>3</sup> is 33% in 2021.

Considering the budget share of SYDV, presenting information about its structure will be insightful to understanding the welfare regime of Turkey. According to the Ministry of Family and Social Services, The Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations are described as a private legal entity that exists both at the regional and the district level. Hence, each unique foundation is defined as an independent institution with its own decision-making body. The board members of SYDV are appointed and elected local actors of their region or district<sup>4</sup>. The income of SYDV

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<sup>2</sup>Relative poverty rate is calculated by median-tested calculations with 60% threshold, according to the report.

<sup>3</sup>Note: The general social health insurance contribution is excluded from the total budget.

<sup>4</sup>Local governors are the administrators of the SYDV. In the provinces, these administrators include the mayor of the district center, chief financial officer, provincial director of national education, provincial health director, provincial agriculture and forestry director, director of the family and social services, and "müftü". In the districts, the members of the executive board (Mütevelli Heyeti) consist of the mayor, property manager, district director of national education, health group leader, district agriculture and forestry director, and district "müftü". Additionally, the Board of Trustees includes "muhtarlar", NGO executives, and philanthropic citizens. Each SYDV makes its decisions through this mentioned board (Aile

consists of “The Fund for the Promotion of Social Assistance and Solidarity,” as above-mentioned, alongside subsidiaries and other kinds of income as well (Aile ve Sosyal Hizmetler Bakanlığı 2023*b*).

Ministry of Family and Social Services provides social assistance in five of the following fields: Family with 13 different social programs, residency and food aid with 10 different programs, disability and elderly benefits with 5 different programs, education with 12 different programs, and health with 6 different programs (Aile ve Sosyal Hizmetler Bakanlığı 2023*a*).

Table 2.1 shows the social programs of the Ministry of Family and Social Services by their provider. The table presents that half of the social programs are operated by the Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations. Their role, however, may change depending on the program structure. For most social programs, the executive board of the SYDV decides program beneficiaries, whereas, for some programs, such as general social health repayment, SYDV is only responsible for the transfer process. Nevertheless, when SYDV is the main provider of social SYDV, citizens should apply them in order to benefit from the social program, and in most cases, beneficiaries are selected by the SYDV. Formally, selection criteria for each program are described on the Ministry’s website; however, it is also noted that the executive board of the SYDV is responsible for selecting beneficiaries and, in some cases determining the benefits budget for each applicant.

Table 2.1 Classification of social assistance programs by their funding source

| Program Field          | Number of Programs | State Provided | SVDV Provided |
|------------------------|--------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Family                 | 13                 | 7              | 6             |
| Residency and food aid | 10                 | 4              | 6             |
| Disability and Elderly | 5                  | 1              | 4             |
| Education              | 12                 | 7              | 5             |
| Health                 | 6                  | 4              | 2             |
| Total                  | 46                 | 23             | 23            |

According to the 2023 Annual Presidential Program, social spending of municipalities increased 4,135,268 TL from 2019 to 2021. The total social spending of municipalities in 2019 was 7,141,703 TL, whereas in 2021, it was 11,276,971 TL. Nonetheless, these statistics should be evaluated considering the currency crisis in Turkey, which started in 2018. In order to reveal the real change in social spending of municipalities, we standardized the social spending of municipalities according to Consumer Index Data published by the TUIK, considering 2019 as the base year. Af-

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ve Sosyal Hizmetler Bakanlığı 2023*b*)”.

ter the standardization, the social spending of municipalities decreased to 4,600,122 TL in 2021.

Social spending statistics of Turkey support the arguments on the characteristics of the Turkish welfare regime during the AKP government. Despite the increasing spending, the GDP allocated to social spending has not increased much over the years. On the other hand, the role of the Social Aid and Solidarity Foundations is significant in Turkey's welfare regime, as it is responsible for half of the Ministry programs. SYDV's organic linkage with the local governments, municipalities, private sectors, and NGOs puts them at the center of Turkey's welfare regime. Hence, the probability of particularistic redistribution is more likely in the existence of such institutions. The redistribution of social benefits depending on the SYDV is a crucial challenge for the programmatic social program implementations.



### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research aims to contribute to the existing literature in two key aspects: (1) Psychological effects of social assistance dependency on the policy expectations of citizens have not been examined in the literature, (2) this is the first research on Turkey, on a competitive authoritarian regime (Esen and Gumuscu 2016), that examines not only the relationship between social assistance dependency and voting behavior but policy expectations of citizens.

A weak institutional structure, lack of rule of law, and arbitrary redistribution allocations of the incumbent are the prominent characteristics of competitive authoritarian regimes (Esen and Gumuscu 2016, 2021; Levitsky and Way 2010) and those have important effects on the social policy programs. As Mares and Carnes (2009) argue, variations of social policy programs are not fully explained yet, especially in developing countries. This research aims to examine the effect of social policy programs on the processes of citizens' voting behavior in Turkey, which has been described as a competitive authoritarian regime by scholars (Esen and Gumuscu 2016). How does social assistance affect the processes of citizens' voting behavior when they perceive their survival depends on the incumbent? When citizens vote with the fear of losing their benefits, how does this affect their policy expectations?

Do social assistance beneficiaries always support incumbents for rewarding their economic prosperity, or might there be other mechanisms? Under the non-discretionary program implications, citizens may mobilize and vote for the incumbent (De La O 2013; Gervasoni 2023; Zucco 2013). Nevertheless, when social assistance resources are allocated in a clientelist manner, it creates a dependency between citizens and the incumbent (Garay, Palmer-Rubin, and Poertner 2020; Soss 1999). Hence, we expect that the design and implication of social assistance programs have different effects on the citizens' cognitive processes. When citizens consider that their economic survival depends on the social program they benefit (Soss 1999), and the survival of the incumbent (Özel and Yildirim 2019), this dependency may affect their voting behavior without any machine politics (Stokes 2005) requirement.

In this research, I argue that when citizens believe that maintaining the status quo is the best option for them, they are more likely to vote for the incumbent. Social assistance dependency does not need to function as the actual vote-buying mechanism that controls citizens' voting behavior by various monitoring mechanisms. Instead, citizens might also believe that their survival depends on the incumbent survival regardless of their support for the incumbent. Moreover, when their dependency affects their vote decision, in order to avoid any cognitive dissonance, dependent citizens are more likely to change their policy expectations in the same direction as the incumbent.

Political psychology literature has long examined the mechanisms that prevent individuals from cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance is experienced when individuals have opposite actions or/and attitudes confronted with each other (Festinger 1954). Such confrontation is undesirable for individuals and requires a costly effort to solve dissonance. Hence, individuals develop cognitive mechanisms in order to prevent cognitive dissonance. This paper does not delve into those mechanisms and test them but aims to reveal the effect of dependency on individuals' political attitudes.

As above mentioned, dependency may cause status-quo bias, and individuals support the incumbent to maintain status-quo with the loss aversion perspective (Kahneman, Knetsch, and Thaler 1991; Samuelson and Zeckhauser 1988). In young democracies, when the opposition is incapable of making credible promises (Keefer 2007), the status quo seems the citizens' best option, and we expect that they are more likely to vote for the incumbent. Yet, the effect of dependency on political behaviors other than voting is not fully explained in the literature. If the beneficiaries vote for the incumbent with the fear of losing their assistance, would this decision affect other attitudes that are related to voting?

We argue that social assistance dependency affects the policy expectations of voters. Voters motivated to maintain the status quo and vote for the incumbent would be more responsive to the incumbent's policy promises and adopt their policy positions accordingly. The lighthouse that explains this behavior is the cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger 1954). We argue that individuals who perceive themselves as dependent on social assistance and vote for the incumbent are more likely to change their political attitudes that affect their voting decision in favor of the incumbent. Policy expectation is one of the fundamental steps of voting decisions as the voters evaluate political parties' policy positions with the information they have and decide who to vote for accordingly (Downs 1957). Hence, when this process is reversed, and individuals first decide which candidate they support, it requires

an adjustment for the previous steps in order to experience a conflict between their expectations and the incumbent's policy position.

Therefore, as the individuals have to vote for the incumbent due to their perceived dependency, they will be more responsive to their promises by activating heuristic mechanisms and adopting the incumbent's position. By activating a heuristic mechanism, individuals prevent any dissonance between their voting decision and policy positioning. This tendency might be explained by the system justification mechanism (Jost, Banaji, and Nosek 2004). System justification theory suggests that individuals are more likely to support the existing social order by accepting the system; therefore, they do not have to face the cost of being opposed to the system's forces.

*Hypothesis 1:* Individuals who perceive themselves as dependent on social assistance are more likely to update their policy expectations in the same direction after the incumbent's policy position is presented.

On the other hand, while individuals become more responsive to the incumbent promises, I argue that individuals would become more responsive to the opposition's promises as well. However, the effect would be the opposite of the opposition's promises. When individuals are presented with the opposition's promises, they are more likely to reject their position, no matter their policy position. As it is costly for individuals who perceive themselves as dependent on social assistance to not agree with the incumbent's position, it is costly to agree with the opposition's position due to cognitive dissonance. Moreover, as individuals who perceive themselves as dependent on social assistance are more likely to believe that the opposition would cut their assistance, they are more likely to reject the opposition's policy position. Especially when the polarization is high, as in the case of Turkey, individuals are more likely to perceive opposition as a threat to their social assistance continuity. Hence, they reject the opposition's policy position to avoid any cognitive dissonance between their policy expectation and voting behavior.

*Hypothesis 2:* Individuals who perceive themselves as dependent on social assistance are more likely to update their policy expectations in the opposite direction after the opposition's policy position is presented.

#### 4. DATA AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This research uses survey data which was conducted before the 14 May 2023 Turkish Parliamentary and Presidential Elections. The unit of analysis is individuals, the main dependent variable is the change in voters' policy expectations, and the main independent variable is the perceived economic dependency on social assistance. The survey questionnaire is designed with a list experiment in order to measure the perception of dependency on social assistance.

The survey sampling method has drawn upon the studies on voting behavior that have representative samples of eligible Turkish voters (Çarkoğlu and Kalaycıoğlu 2021*a,b*). According to TUIK (Turkish National Statistics Institute), 59,367,469 voters registered in the 2018 General Elections. In order for the sample to be representative at a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 2%, the sample size needs to consist of at least 2,401 voters. As there will not be a replacement, the sample size consists of 4800 addresses.

The second-tier statistical subdivisions of Turkey were used as the basis for choosing a sample. TUIK established a classification known as IBBS (Statistical Regional Unit Classification) for these second-level subregions, defining them as “provinces with shared issues, similar socio-economic and cultural characteristics, and geographical proximity (Şengül, Shiraz, and Miraç 2013).” The sample was drawn to include a total of 26 of these second-level subregions (NUTS 2), with the representation proportional to their respective populations. The selection process involved randomly choosing blocks of 400 households from each group, followed by the random selection of clusters of 20 households from within each block of 400 households.

Our sample size includes 2436 observations with a 50% response rate, and we did not weigh the sample. Among the overall sample, two groups have been chosen randomly for this thesis, with 1229 observations in total. The research design includes two groups, i.e., control and treatment groups; therefore, to check randomization balance, t-tests are employed between two groups alongside the Benferroni-Correction

test, which is stated below. T-test scores show that except for the treatment variable, there is no statistically significant difference between the control and treatment groups; detailed statistics can be found in the appendix section.

The main dependent variable is the shift in voters' policy expectations following the information about where political parties/actors stand on this issue. The survey design is as follows to measure the shift in policy expectation: We first asked respondents' opinions on a specific policy issue. Then, we presented political actors' statements on the same policy issue. Lastly, we asked respondents to what extent they agreed with the political actor's statement.

If explained in more detail, we first asked about their policy position on earthquake and environmental issues and provided information about the prospective policy positions of the incumbent and the opposition. This information is given to all respondents. We provided relevant policy promises of political actors to the respondents and asked them to what extent they agreed on political actors' policy premises. For the earthquake issue, the opposition's promises are shared with respondents, and for the environment issue, the promises of the incumbent are shared with the respondents. The difference between the pre-policy position and the position after the policy promises shows the shift in voters' policy expectations following political actors' policy premises. Since we presented the first policy promises of the incumbent on the environment issue and one of the second policy promises of the opposition on the earthquake issue, we are able to explore how different political actors affect voters' policy expectations.

The main independent variable is the perceived dependency of voters on the social assistance they receive. However, measuring sensitive questions is challenging when asked directly due to social desirability bias. Social desirability bias suggests that survey respondents are likely to change their answers when they are asked sensitive questions in order to present themselves as socially desirable. Therefore, respondents are more likely to over-report good behaviors and are more likely to under-report bad behaviors (Fisher and Katz 2000; Gonzalez-Ocantos et al. 2012; Holbrook and Krosnick 2010). Nevertheless, rather than asking sensitive questions directly, indirect questioning methods like the list experiment method or item count technique reduce social desirability bias and draw out more approximate estimations for the outcome of interests (Blair and Imai 2012; Corstange 2009; Imai 2011; Imai, Park, and Greene 2015).

The list experiment employs a difference-in-means test for the control and treatment groups, and the difference between groups reveals population estimates for the sensitive question. For instance, recent research that employs a list experi-

ment suggests that turnout is overestimated when it is asked directly (Imai, Park, and Greene 2015). In contrast, vote-buying is underestimated when asked directly (Çarkoğlu and Aytaç 2015; Gonzalez-Ocantos et al. 2012; Imai, Park, and Greene 2015).

We employ a list experiment to measure the perceived dependency of voters on the social assistance they receive. Respondents are randomly assigned to treatment and control groups to employ the list experiment. We asked about the factors that affect their voting decision in the upcoming elections.

#### 4.1 Dependent Variable

The outcome of interest is the shift in voters' policy expectations when they receive policy premises from political actors. We first asked respondents their policy preferences, then asked whether they voted and their vote choice. Then, they are given statements from political actors, and they are asked again about their policy positions. The question first provided a statement on the incumbent's policy promises on environmental policy, and we asked to what extent they agreed with the statement. Secondly, the next question provided the opposition's policy promises on earthquake policy, and we asked to what extent they agreed with the statement. The difference between the pre-policy preferences and their preferences after the political actor's statement presents the change in policy expectations of voters after policy promises on the issue. We asked respondents to what extent they agreed on the following statements to measure their policy positions respectively:

“I think the strengthening method is an effective solution against earthquakes.”

“I believe that nuclear power plants will protect the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.”

Then, we show the following statements and ask to what extent respondents agree with the following statements:

“The Energy and Natural Resources Minister, appointed by the incumbent AKP government, stated that the nuclear power plants that will be established will have great importance for the environment in reduc-

ing greenhouse gas emissions. To what extent do you agree with the idea that nuclear power plants will help to protect the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions?”

“Imamoglu, who is proposed by the Nation Alliance as the Vice President, has stated that the strengthening/reinforcement method offers an economical and fast option for earthquake preparedness. How much do you agree with the idea that the strengthening/reinforcement method is an effective solution as an earthquake countermeasure?”

## 4.2 Independent Variables

Our main independent variable is the perceived dependency of voters on the social assistance they receive. Since economic dependency is undesirable for respondents, we designed a list experiment rather than direct questioning to reduce the social desirability bias.

In the list experiment design, respondents are never directly asked to share their opinion about sensitive questions. Instead, respondents are given a list of statements to evaluate and asked how many of them they agree with. The control group evaluates  $J$  number of non-sensitive items, whereas the treatment group evaluates  $J + 1$  sensitive item.

If the randomization of the control and treatment groups is successful, we assume there is no design effect; thus, the number of affirmative responses to non-sensitive items would be the same for the control and treatment groups, and the difference indicates the proportion of affirmative responses to the sensitive item (Blair and Imai 2012; Glynn 2013).

**Assumption 1:** No Design Effect

$$(4.1) \quad \sum_{j=1}^J Z_{ij}(0) = \sum_{j=1}^J Z_{ij}(1)$$

In this formula, for each  $i = 1, \dots, N$ , and for each  $j$  represents each non-sensitive item.  $Z_{ij}(0)$  represents number of non affirmative answer of respondent  $i$  for item  $j$ , and  $Z_{ij}(1)$  represents number of affirmative answer of respondent  $i$  for item  $j$ . The total number of affirmative and non-affirmative responses is assumed equal.

Secondly, we assume that all respondents give the correct number of affirmative responses; therefore, there is no liar.

**Assumption 2: No Liars**

$$(4.2) \quad Z_{i,J+1}(1) = Z_{i,J+1}^*$$

In this formula, for each respondent  $i$ , number of affirmative answer  $Z_{i,J+1}(1)$  to the sensitive  $j + 1$  item is equal to the honest response of sensitive item  $Z_{i,j+1}^*$

Under no design effect and no liars assumptions, the standard difference-in-means test provides the proportion of affirmative responses to the sensitive item, which is the perceived dependency of voters on social assistance in our case (Blair and Imai 2012).

In order to measure economic dependency on social assistance, we presented the following question to the control group:

“Voters decide which party to vote for based on several different reasons. Now I am going to read you a list listing these different reasons. Please do not tell me which of these influences your vote decision. Just say how many reasons on this list are effective for your decision to vote.  
-I like the party leader.  
-I find the policies advocated by the party close to me.  
-I think the party I really like will not win.  
None of them are effective / 1 of them is effective / 2 of them are effective / 3 of them (all) are effective.”

In the treatment group, respondents were presented with the same question, but an additional sensitive item related to economic dependency on social assistance was included in the list:

“Voters decide which party to vote for based on several different reasons. Now I am going to read you a list listing these different reasons. Please do not tell me which of these influences your vote decision. Just say how many reasons on this list are effective for your decision to vote.  
-I like the party leader.  
-I find the policies advocated by the party close to me.  
-I am afraid that if another party wins, my social aid will be cut off.  
-I think the party I really like will not win.  
None of them are effective / 1 of them is effective / 2 of them are effective / 3 of them are effective / 4 of them (all) effective.”

List experiment provides the proportion of affirmative responses in a given pop-



ulation. Recent methodological developments in employing multivariate regression analysis enable us to explore the characteristics of respondents who give affirmative responses to the sensitive item (Blair and Imai 2012; Corstange 2009; Imai 2011). Nevertheless, the effects of sensitive answers as an independent variable have not yet been studied much in political science literature. In this research, we aim to explore how a sensitive issue like economic dependency on social assistance affects voters' policy expectations by using the General Full ML Estimator developed by Imai and their colleagues (2015).

Despite the substantial contribution of the General Full ML Estimator to the existing literature (Imai, Park, and Greene 2015), it presents computational challenges. Therefore, our research methodology incorporates cautious approaches to address computational risks and ensure efficiency. The control variables will be used to predict sensitive item questions and the regression estimates on policy expectation change. To capture the complexity of the phenomenon under examination, we have included demographic variables such as age, gender, education, unemployment, and residency (metropolitan or not) alongside the ideological position of respondents, religiosity, political sophistication, affective polarization, and partisanship. In order to account for potential non-linear relationships between age and both policy expectations and perceived dependency, we have incorporated the squared term ( $age^2$ ) into our model. For political sophistication, we ask the following question to the respondents and those who give the right answer coded as politically sophisticated:

“In presidential systems, the parliament makes the laws. Do you think this statement is correct or wrong?”

As questions that directly ask about the income of the respondents often go unanswered in the surveys, rather we generated an unemployment variable which is coded 1 for those who are unemployed and searching for a job and 0 for the others.

In order to capture the effect of polarization, we used perceived and affective polarization. Following Moral's (2017) measurement, perceived polarization is calculated by the standard deviation of each respondent's placement of political parties on the left-right ideological spectrum. This approach focuses on the voters' perception of party dispersion rather than actual party polarization, shedding light on the extent to which voters perceive political parties as being widely spread apart (Ezrow 2007).

For affective polarization, the same operation is employed by the like-dislike scores

of each respondent for the political parties, following Iyengar and their colleagues' (2012) thermometer approach. Perceived polarization focuses on the ideological dispersion of political parties, while affective polarization focuses on voters' feelings about their supported and other political parties. The fear of losing social assistance might cause other negative feelings toward other political parties rather than ideological dispersion. Hence, the main model uses affective polarization, but models with perceived polarization can be found in the appendix section. AKP partisanship is coded 1 for those who support the AKP and 0 for others.

General Full ML Estimator is a one-step estimator that uses predicted responses of list experiment as the independent variable of the outcome model, employing Maximum Likelihood and Expectation Maximization algorithm (Imai, Park, and Greene 2015). Therefore, the General Full ML Estimator predicts three different models in one step: The probability of the affirmative responses to the sensitive item, the probability of the affirmative responses to control items, and the outcome prediction that uses predictions from the list experiment as the independent variable. For the sensitive item prediction, the General Full ML Estimator employs logistic regression and ordinal regression for the control items prediction; for the outcome model estimator employs linear regression as the dependent variable is continuous. Descriptive statistics for the dependent and independent variables can be found in the appendix section.

The model equation for the sensitive item prediction is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \Pr(\text{Sensitive Item} = 1) = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Age} + \beta_2 \text{Age}^2 + \beta_3 \text{Gender} + \beta_4 \text{Ideology} + \\ & \beta_5 \text{Religiosity} + \beta_6 \text{Unemployment} + \beta_7 \text{Political Sophistication} + \beta_8 \text{Affective Polarization} + \\ & \beta_9 \text{AKP Partisanship} + \beta_{10} \text{Metropol} + \epsilon \end{aligned}$$

The model equation for the control items prediction is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \Pr(\text{Control Items}) = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Age} + \beta_2 \text{Age}^2 + \beta_3 \text{Gender} + \beta_4 \text{Ideology} + \\ & \beta_5 \text{Religiosity} + \beta_6 \text{Unemployment} + \beta_7 \text{Political Sophistication} + \beta_8 \text{Affective Polarization} + \\ & \beta_9 \text{AKP Partisanship} + \beta_{10} \text{Metropol} + \epsilon \end{aligned}$$

The model equation for the outcome model is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \Delta \text{Policy Expectation} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Age} + \beta_2 \text{Age}^2 + \beta_3 \text{Gender} + \beta_4 \text{Ideology} + \beta_5 \text{Religiosity} + \\ & \beta_6 \text{Unemployment} + \beta_7 \text{Political Sophistication} + \beta_8 \text{Affective Polarization} + \\ & \beta_9 \text{AKP Partisanship} + \beta_{10} \text{Metropol} + \beta_{11} \text{Sensitive Item} + \epsilon \end{aligned}$$

## 5. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

### 5.1 Multivariate Regression Analysis on Perceived Dependency

Table 5.1 Observed data from the list experiment on factors that affect vote choice

|                | Control Group |            | Treatment Group |            |
|----------------|---------------|------------|-----------------|------------|
| Response Value | Frequency     | Proportion | Frequency       | Proportion |
| 0              | 47            | 0.08       | 50              | 0.09       |
| 1              | 158           | 0.28       | 106             | 0.19       |
| 2              | 345           | 0.60       | 354             | 0.62       |
| 3              | 21            | 0.04       | 42              | 0.07       |
| 4              |               |            | 18              | 0.03       |
| Total          | 571           |            | 570             |            |

Only non-missing observations are included in the table. The number of non-responses is 41 for the control group and 47 for the treatment group.

Table 5.1 shows the number of affirmative responses for the list experiment items. The control group only answered 3 control items and the treatment group answered 3 + 1 sensitive items. The sample size is 1229, and the sample size of the control and treatment groups are 612 and 617, respectively. After excluding non-responses, the sample size of the control group is 571, and the sample size of the treatment group is 570. The most frequent outcome, i.e., the number of affirmative responses of the list experiment, is 2 for both groups, which is above 0.6, followed by 1 item by 0.28 and 0.19 for control and treatment groups, respectively. 0.03 of the treatment group respondents answered affirmatively all items, which is 3 control items and the sensitive item.

In order to check the No Design Effect Assumption, we performed the Bonferroni Correction test to control whether respondents' answers depend on their treatment status. If Bonferroni Corrected  $p$ -value is below alpha, we reject the null hypothesis that there is no design effect. For the sensitive item, Bonferroni Corrected  $p$ -value is 0.80; hence we fail to reject the null hypothesis that there is no design effect, and

No Design Assumption is held.

Table 5.2 shows the estimated proportion of affirmative responses to the sensitive item, i.e., “I am afraid that if another party wins, my social assistance will be cut.” Population proportion is calculated by the difference-in-means test between control and treatment groups. Predicted estimates suggest that 0.18 of eligible voters consider the continuity of social assistance they receive when casting a ballot. This finding suggests that 0.18 of eligible voters consider social assistance not as a citizen right but as conditional on the incumbent’s survival. The standard error of the estimate is 0.045; hence we are confident that the true population estimate is between 0.10 and 0.26.

Table 5.2 List experiment prediction for perceived dependency

|   | Est. | S.E.  |
|---|------|-------|
| The proportion of affirmative responses | 0.18 | 0.045 |

Table 5.3 presents the estimated coefficients derived from a logistic regression analysis with 5000 iterations. The focus of the analysis is the estimated proportions of individuals affirming the sensitive item, specifically the likelihood of voting out of fear of losing social assistance. The model incorporates several demographic variables, including age and its squared term, to examine potential non-linear effects, gender, level of education, employment status, and residency as a metropolitan area variable. The model included religiosity, political sophistication, ideology, partisanship, and affective polarization since we aim to explore voters’ own perceptions of their economic dependency.

Alternatively, we employ models that include the estimated coefficients for the AKP vote in the 2019 local elections and the probability of voting for the AKP in the upcoming election as well. For the sake of model fit, we compare the log-likelihoods of those three models, which are -755.327 for the model with AKP partisanship, -825.300 for the model with the past AKP vote in the local elections, and -861.073 for the model with the probability of voting for the AKP in the upcoming elections. All models can be found in the appendix.

Table 5.3 shows that age has a significant effect at a 99% confidence level. One unit increase in age decreases the probability of an affirmative answer to the sensitive item.  $Age^2$  variable is significant at the 99% confidence level as well; hence we should expect that age has a non-linear effect on the probability of voters’ perceived dependence on social assistance. Affective polarization increases the probability of

perceived dependency; however, the effect is only significant at the 90% level. Nevertheless, other control variables have no significant effect on perceived dependency.

Table 5.3 Estimated coefficients for individuals affirming “I am afraid that if another party wins, my social assistance will be cut”

| Variables                | <i>Sensitive Item</i> |       | <i>Control Items</i> |       |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|
|                          | Est.                  | S.E.  | Est.                 | S.E.  |
| (Intercept)              | 1.323                 | 4.627 | -1.575***            | 0.492 |
| Age                      | 0.309                 | 0.040 | 0.04***              | 0.005 |
| $Age^2$                  | 0.004***              | 0.001 | 0.000                | 0.000 |
| Gender                   | 0.156                 | 0.825 | 0.069                | 0.105 |
| Education                | -0.242                | 0.314 | 0.093                | 0.038 |
| Ideology                 | 0.227                 | 0.195 | -0.033               | 0.025 |
| Religiosity              | -0.092                | 0.188 | 0.044                | 0.027 |
| Unemployment             | 0.512                 | 1.694 | 0.411                | 0.260 |
| Political Sophistication | -0.06                 | 1.089 | 0.104                | 0.132 |
| Affective Polarization   | 1.014*                | 0.614 | 0.071                | 0.074 |
| AKP Partisans            | -1.279                | 1.968 | 0.191                | 0.203 |
| Metropol                 | 0.806                 | 0.835 | -0.160               | 0.111 |

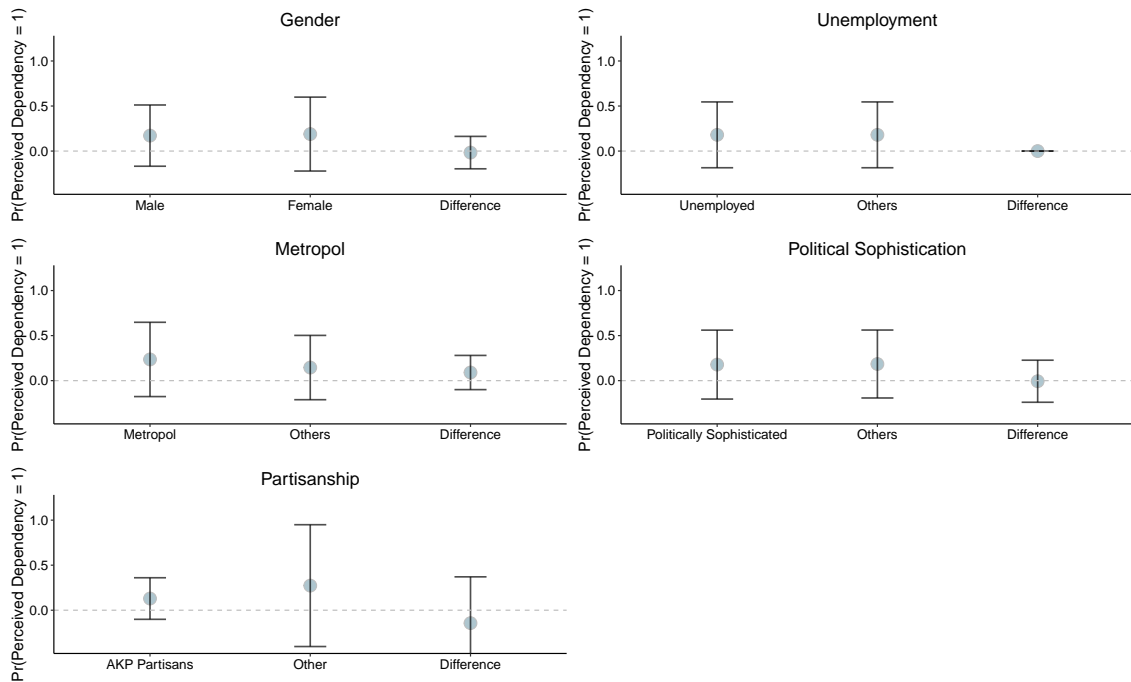
Two-tailed tests. \* $p < 0.1$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

Figure 5.1 presents the estimated proportion of perceived dependence by gender, unemployment status, residency, and political sophistication, respectively. The difference shows the effect of each variable with their confidence intervals at 95% level.

Estimated proportion of perceived dependency is slightly higher for men than for women, with coefficients 0.1717 (s.e. = 0.1731) and 0.1886 (s.e. = 0.209), respectively. The predicted difference between men and women is -0.0169, but the lower boundary includes 0. Therefore, we can not reject the null hypothesis that the probability of perceived dependency is not significantly different by gender. This effect is not surprising since social programs in Turkey are often designed considering households (Buğra and Keyder 2006). Unemployment status has no effect on the probability of perceived dependency. Nevertheless, for the sake of clarity, the unemployment variable is coded 1 only if the individual is looking for a job but is unable to find one. Therefore, this category only covers the estimated proportion of those individuals.

Estimated proportion of perceived dependency is higher for those who live in metropolitan areas. The probability of perceived dependency is 0.2355 (s.e. = 0.21)

Figure 5.1 Estimated proportions of perceived dependency by gender, unemployment, residency, and political sophistication



$\Pr(\text{Perceived Dependency})$  is an affirmative response to the sensitive item predicted by multivariate regression analysis with Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimation with the Expectation-Maximization algorithm (Blair and Imai 2012)

Error lines are calculated at 95% confidence level.

for those who live in metropolitan areas, whereas the probability is 0.1454 (s.e. = 0.1818) for those who live outside the metropolitan areas, including suburban, small towns, and villages. The predicted difference is 0.0901 (s.e. = 0.0967), and confidence intervals include zero. Thus, even though the probability of perceived dependency is slightly higher in metropolitan areas, there is no significant difference between metropolitan areas and other residencies. Lastly, the probability of perceived dependency for politically sophisticated individuals is 0.1781 (s.e. = 0.1948) and 0.1846 (s.e. = 0.192) for politically unsophisticated individuals. The predicted difference is -0.0065 (s.e. = 0.1189), which indicates a little difference between the two groups, and confidence intervals include zero; therefore, there is no statistical difference between groups.

Estimated proportion of perceived dependency is 0.1297 (s.e. = 0.1175) for the AKP partisans and -0.1433 (s.e. = 0.2617) for the others. The predicted difference between partisans and others is -0.1433 (s.e. = 0.2617), suggesting that there is no statistically significant difference between the two groups as the confidence intervals include zero. Predicted estimates show that the perception of social assistance dependency is not significantly associated with partisanship. Nevertheless, the esti-

mated proportion of perceived dependency is slightly lower for the AKP partisans. This finding might be explained by different causal mechanisms. First, voters might already support the incumbent for various reasons, except for the social assistance they receive. Hence, as they already support the party, they do not have to fear losing their assistance if the party loses. Secondly, the AKP partisans might have less fear of losing their social assistance even if the party loses the election, as they are already a part of the inner-party linkages.

Figure 5.2 presents the estimated proportion of perceived dependency by different age groups. Due to methodological challenges, despite the existence of the continuous age variable, we generated 10 different age groups by their quintiles for the presentation of Figure 5.2. Each data point represents the mean value of each quintile. Nonetheless, all regression models are estimated by using the original age variable.

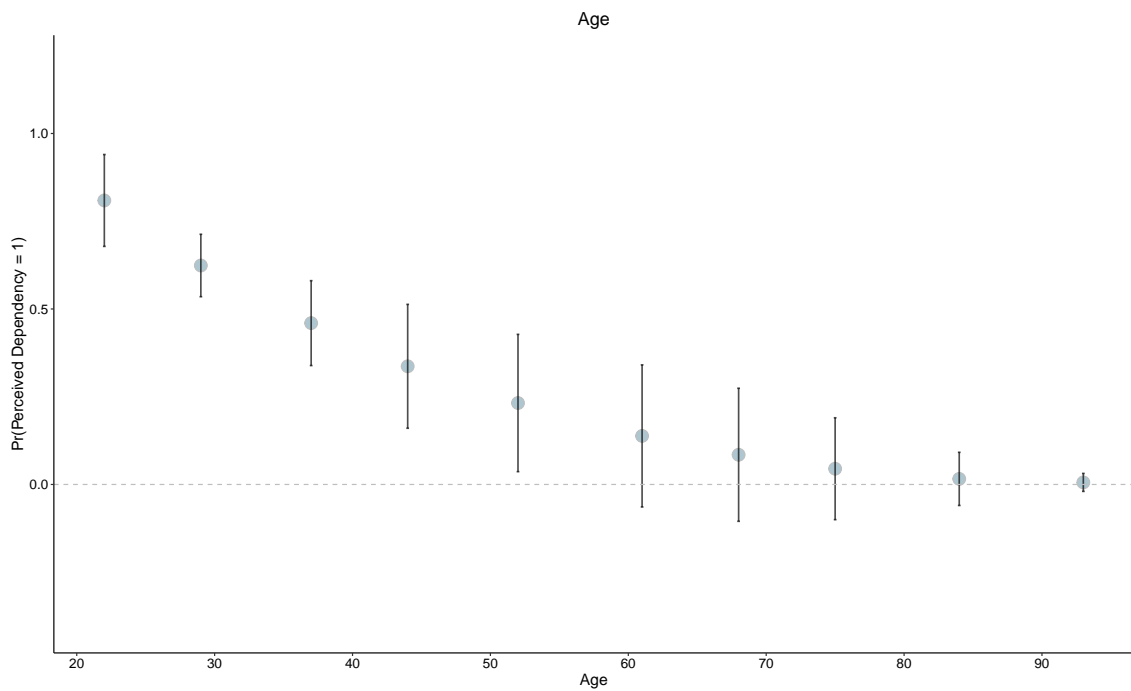
Figure 5.2 shows that the estimated proportion of perceived dependency decreases as age increases. When different age groups are close to each other, confidence intervals are not mutually exclusive; hence there is no significant difference between subsequent age groups. Yet, Figure 2 shows the estimated proportion of perceived dependency for the youngest group (mean value is 22), has both statistically and substantively higher compared to other age groups except the second (mean value is 29). As it is suggested in the regression estimates in Table 5.3, the effect of age on the probability of perceived dependency is not linear. The magnitude of the effect on perceived dependency decreases as age increases.

The estimated proportion of perceived dependency is different than zero at the 95% confidence level until the early 50s (mean value is 52 for the fifth quintile). However, confidence intervals include zero after the sixth quintile (mean age is 61). These findings show that the likelihood of perceived dependency is at its lowest for the elderly. Given the fact that groups with higher dependency constitute the working-age population, these findings might indicate the existence of working poverty. Nonetheless, we do not have data to test this argument.

Figures with the estimated coefficients for different education and religiosity levels are presented in the appendix section, as the estimated proportion of perceived dependency is almost identical for each level of education and religiosity.

Figure 5.3 presents the estimated proportion of perceived dependency by ideological positions of individuals. We asked individuals their ideological position between 1 (extreme left) and 10 (extreme right). The estimated proportion of perceived dependency is at its lowest as the individuals are most leftist. As individuals move to the

Figure 5.2 Estimated proportion of perceived dependency by age groups



right ideology, the estimated proportion of perceived dependency slightly increases. However, Figure 5.3 shows that the effect of ideology on perceived dependency is statistically insignificant.

Figure 5.3 Estimated proportion of perceived dependency by ideological position

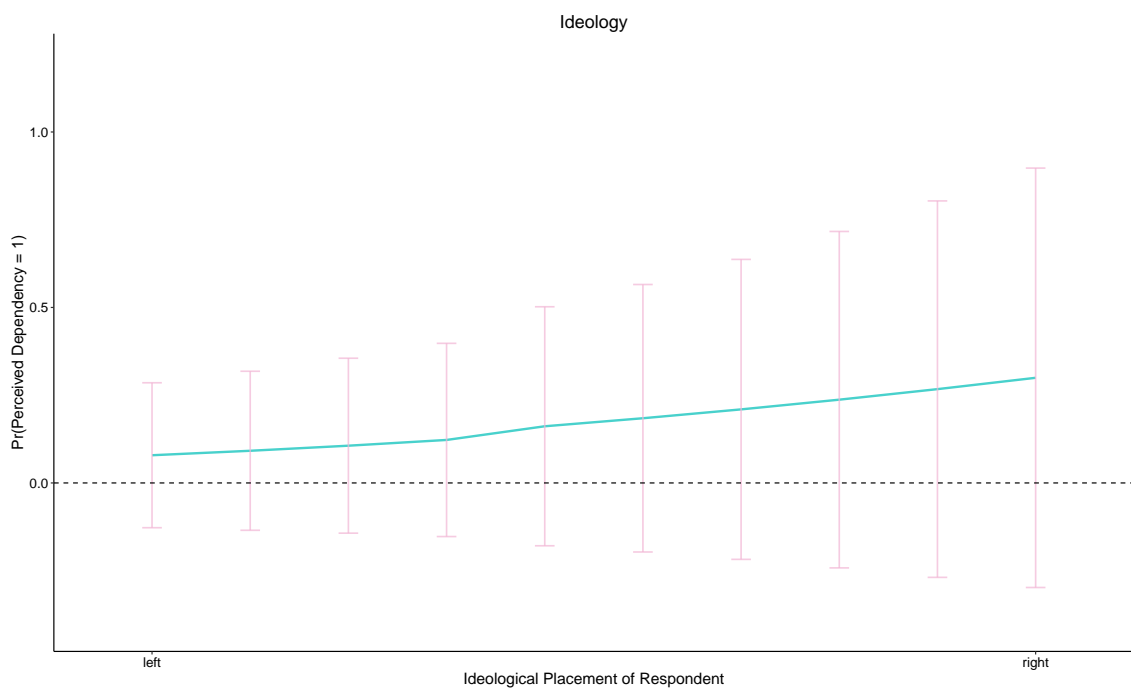
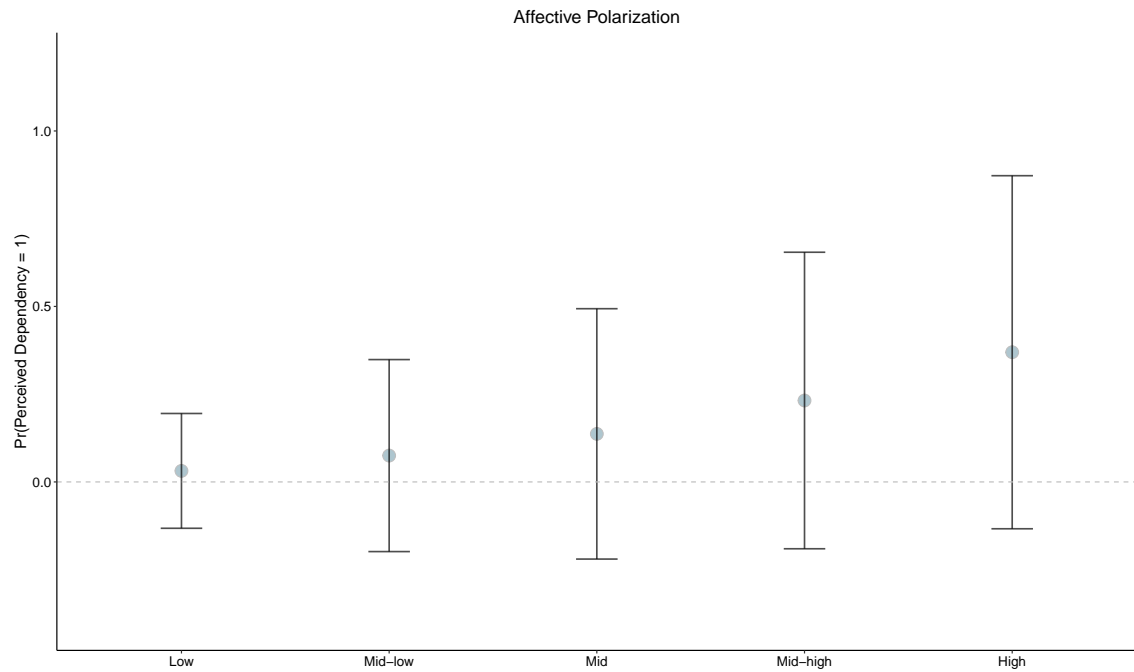




Figure 5.4 presents the estimated proportions of perceived dependency by affective polarization. In order to capture the effect of affective polarization, we generated five groups by their quintile, with the same reasons for the age variable. Figure 4 shows that when the affective polarization is low, the predicted probability of perceived dependency on social assistance is less likely. As the affective polarization increases, the likelihood of perceived dependency increases as well. Yet, the effect of affective polarization on perceived dependency is not statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Estimated proportions of perceived dependency

Figure 5.4 Estimated proportion of perceived dependency by affective polarization



by different group characteristics suggest that fear of losing social assistance has an effect on voting behavior. Demographic variables such as gender, unemployment, residency, education, and religiosity have no direct effect on such fear sentiment. Considering the targeting and selection strategies of the incumbent in terms of redistribution (Çarkoğlu and Aytaç 2015), one can expect that these strategies might have confounding effects on the relationship between demographic characteristics and the perceived dependency of individuals. The effect of age on the probability of perceived dependency is statistically and substantively significant. As the age increases, the probability of perceived dependency decreases. Nevertheless, this effect is non-linear, and its magnitude decreases as age increases.

The effect of partisanship is not statistically significant. Nevertheless, the AKP partisans are less likely to perceive themselves as dependent on the social assistance they receive. Multiple factors might be the reason for this difference between

AKP partisans and others, as above-discussed. Examining this causal relationship between partisanship and social assistance would contribute to the clientelism and redistribution literature.

Ideological position of voters has no significant effect on the probability of perceived dependency, but findings show that as voters are moved to the right ideology, they are more likely to perceive themselves as dependent on social assistance. Affective polarization has no statistically significant effect at the 95% confidence level, and we are not able to differentiate the predicted probability at different levels of affective polarization as confidence intervals overlap. Yet, fitted values show that as the affective polarization increases, the likelihood of perceived dependency increases as well. Soss (1999) argue that individuals' social assistance experiences affect their political evaluations and actions, and those experiences are highly affected by institutional structure. These findings suggest that individuals' political evaluations might affect their social assistance experience as well.

## **5.2 The Effect of Perceived Dependency on Policy Expectations**

The primary objective of this section is to explore the relationship between the perceived dependency of social beneficiaries and the policy expectations change following exposure to policy promises made by political elites. The main dependent variable in this section is Policy Expectation Change which represents the difference between respondents' pre-policy positions on a particular issue and their updated positions following exposure to policy promises by political elites.

To ascertain the pre-policy position of respondents, we asked participants to indicate the extent of their agreement with a specific policy statement on a scale ranging from 1 (indicating total disagreement) to 5 (indicating total agreement). In subsequent sections of the survey, the same policy statement is presented with the name of the political elite who promises. Following the statement, respondents are asked to indicate the extent of their agreement one more time. The difference between their pre-policy position and their agreement level after the experiment question reveals their update level on the specific policy issue.

We examined the relationship between perceived dependency on social assistance and the change in policy expectations of individuals for two different political actors. In the first subsection, we examine the effect of perceived dependency on policy expectation change when the policy is promised by the incumbent. We asked respon-

dents' pre-policy positions on the environmental issue, specifically on the nuclear power plant. In the second subsection, we examine the effect of perceived dependency on policy expectation change when the policy is promised by the opposition actor. We asked respondents' pre-policy position on the earthquake issue.

In order to employ perceived dependency as the independent variable, we performed General Full ML Estimator developed by Imai and their colleagues (2015). General Full ML Estimator uses predictions from list experiment as the independent variable of another regression model, as it is discussed in the method section.

### **5.2.1 The Effect of Perceived Dependency on the Policy Expectation when the Policy Promise is Presented by the Incumbent**

In order to perform the General Full ML Estimator (Imai, Park, and Greene 2015), missing observations of environmental policy position questions are excluded from the sample. Since the General Full ML Estimator is a one-step estimator, we predict the population proportion of perceived dependency for the new sample with non-missing values. The estimated proportion of affirmative answers to the sensitive item is 0.23 (s.e. = 0.06) for those who answered the environmental policy questions. The confidence intervals are 0.10 and 0.36 at the 95% confidence level. Nevertheless, there is no statistically significant difference between the estimated proportions of the overall sample and the sample with non-missing environmental policy questions observations.

Table 5.4 shows the linear regression estimates on policy expectation change following a policy promise of the incumbent. The perceived dependency coefficient is predicted from the list experiment responses. Sensitive item and control item estimates of the one-step ML estimator are presented in the appendix section.

Table 5.4 suggests that ideological position, AKP partisanship, and perceived dependency are statistically significant at the 99% confidence level. As the ideological position moves one unit to the right, policy expectation changes by 0.135 to the opposite of the incumbent. This finding might seem conflicting, considering that the incumbent is a conservative Islamist party. Yet, even though the effect is statistically significant, a 0.135 change in policy expectation does not have a substantive effect. The highest and lowest value of policy expectation is 4 and -4, respectively. Therefore one unit change in ideological position has no substantive effect on changing voters' policy expectations on the ordinal scale. In other words, in order to get one unit change in the ordinal scale of policy expectation, the ideological position

should move between its extreme values. Hence, the effect of ideological position has a significant but not substantive effect on the policy expectation change.

Being an AKP partisan changes policy expectation 1.307 units in the same direction as the incumbent policy position. Hence, partisanship changes policy expectations of voters more than one unit in the ordinal scale. Hence, partisanship has both statistical and substantive effects on policy expectation change. This finding is noteworthy as no information is provided to respondents except the incumbent's policy position. The effect of partisanship on the policy expectation change is congruent with the existent body of literature, partisans are more likely to follow partisan cues in their decision-making processes (Kam 2005; Leeper and Slothuus 2014; Petersen et al. 2013).

Table 5.4 Regression estimates on policy expectation change (incumbent)

| Variables                | Est.      | S.E.  |
|--------------------------|-----------|-------|
| (Intercept)              | -1.068    | 0.930 |
| Perceived Dependency     | 1.583***  | 0.380 |
| Age                      | 0.045     | 0.030 |
| <i>Age</i> <sub>2</sub>  | -0.001*** | 0.000 |
| Gender                   | 0.060     | 0.180 |
| Education                | 0.092     | 0.060 |
| Ideological Position     | -0.135*** | 0.040 |
| Religiosity              | 0.086*    | 0.050 |
| Unemployment             | -0.577    | 0.570 |
| Political Sophistication | -0.261    | 0.250 |
| Affective Polarization   | -0.205    | 0.130 |
| AKP Partisanship         | 1.307***  | 0.340 |
| Metropol                 | 0.012     | 0.180 |

Two-tailed tests. \* $p < 0.1$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

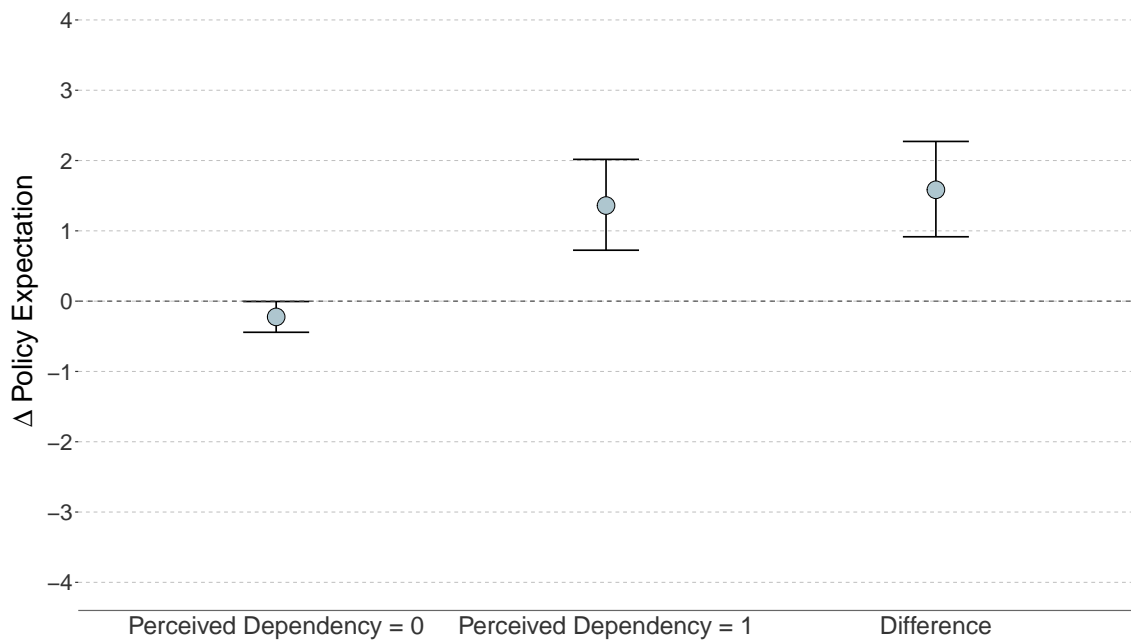
Perceived dependency has both statistical and substantive effects on the policy expectation change. When voters perceive themselves as dependent on social assistance, policy expectation changes by 1.583 units. The effect of perceived dependency is even higher than the effect of partisanship. This finding shows that voters who perceive themselves as dependent on social assistance are more responsive to the incumbent's policy promises.

Figure 5.5 presents the estimated change in policy expectation after the policy promises of the incumbent. The estimated effect of perceived dependency is 1.583,

ceteris paribus. Confidence intervals are 0.915 and 2.271 at the 95% confidence level. Hence, we can reject the null hypothesis that perceived dependency has no effect on policy expectation change. Individuals who perceive themselves as dependent on social assistance are more likely to change their policy position by 1.359 units when the policy promise is presented by the incumbent. On the other hand, the change for those who do not perceive themselves as dependent is -0.224. Hence, perceived dependency has a statistically and substantively significant effect on the dependency in terms of direction and magnitude.

These results support our first hypothesis that "individuals who perceived themselves as dependent on social assistance are more likely to update their policy expectations in the same direction after the incumbent's policy position is presented."

Figure 5.5 Estimated effect of dependency on policy expectation change (incumbent)



95% Confidence level

The following pre-policy statement and policy promises are presented respectively:

*"I believe that nuclear power plants will protect the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions."*

*"The Energy and Natural Resources Minister, appointed by the incumbent AKP government, stated that the nuclear power plants that will be established will have great importance for the environment in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.' To what extent do you agree with the idea that nuclear power plants will help to protect the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions?"*

### 5.2.2 The Effect of Perceived Dependency on the Policy Expectation when the Policy Promise is Presented by the Opposition

In order to perform the General Full ML Estimator, we excluded missing observations of the independent variable, which are respondents' earthquake policy positions before and after the experiment. The estimated proportion of perceived dependency with non-missing observations on earthquake policy is 0.23 (s.e. = 0.05) within 0.11 and 0.34 confidence intervals at 95% level. There is no statistically significant difference between the overall sample, environmental policy sample, and earthquake policy sample.

Table 5.5 shows the linear regression estimates on policy expectation change following a policy promise of the opposition. Perceived dependency is predicted from the list experiment responses. Sensitive item and control item estimates of the one-step ML estimator are presented in the appendix section.

The effect of age on the policy expectation change is 0.073 and statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.  $Age^2$  is also statistically significant; thus, the effect may not be linear. The ideological position is statistically significant at the 99% confidence level, but its effect is quite similar to the policy expectation change with the incumbent's policy position. The ideological position has a statistically significant effect as one unit change in ideological position changes the policy expectation to the opposite direction of the opposition's policy position. In order to get one unit change in the ordinal scale of policy expectation, the ideological position should move between its extreme values. Hence, the effect of ideological position has a significant but not substantive effect on the policy expectation change.

Table 5.5 Regression estimates on policy expectation change (opposition)

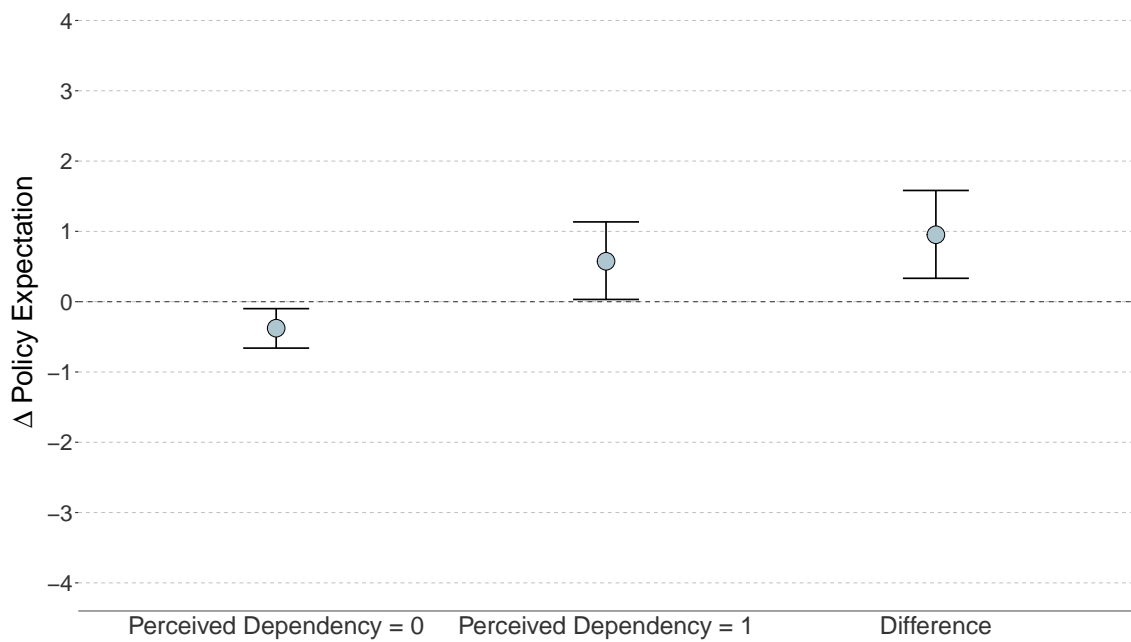
| Variables                | Est.      | S.E.  |
|--------------------------|-----------|-------|
| (Intercept)              | -0.470    | 0.950 |
| Perceived Dependency     | 0.955**   | 0.389 |
| Age                      | 0.073**   | 0.030 |
| <i>Age</i> <sub>2</sub>  | -0.001*** | 0.000 |
| Gender                   | -0.236    | 0.190 |
| Education                | 0.004     | 0.060 |
| Ideological Position     | -0.136*** | 0.040 |
| Religiosity              | 0.077*    | 0.050 |
| Unemployment             | -0.337    | 0.340 |
| Political Sophistication | -0.273    | 0.230 |
| Affective Polarization   | -0.256*   | 0.133 |
| AKP Partisanship         | -0.084    | 0.330 |
| Metropol                 | 0.004     | 0.190 |

Two-tailed tests. \* $p < 0.1$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

Religiosity and affective polarization have statistically significant effects on the policy expectation change at the 90% confidence level. The effect of religiosity is positive, whereas the effect of affective polarization is negative. Perceived dependency affects policy expectation change by 0.955. The effect is lower compared to the policy expectation change when the policy promise of the incumbent is presented to the voters. However, the direction of the change is opposite to our expectations. Voters who perceive themselves as dependent on social assistance are more responsive to the policy promise of the opposition as well.

Figure 5.5 shows the estimated change in policy expectations of individuals after the policy promise of the opposition is presented. The estimated effect of perceived dependency is positive, and its coefficient is 0.951 within the intervals of 0.332 and 1.581 at the 95% confidence level, *ceteris paribus*. The change in policy expectation for those who do not perceive themselves as dependent is similar to the incumbent case, whereas the change in policy expectation for those who perceive themselves as dependent is lower than the incumbent case. For those who perceive themselves as dependent, the estimated change in policy expectation is 0.574 when the policy promise of opposition is presented. The estimated change is 1.359. Therefore, we can not reject the null hypothesis that “Individuals who perceived themselves as dependent on social assistance are not more likely to update their policy expectations in the opposite direction after the opposition’s policy position is presented.”

Figure 5.6 Estimated effect of dependency on policy expectation change (opposition)



95% Confidence level

The following pre-policy statement, and policy promises are presented respectively:

*“I think the strengthening method is an effective solution against earthquakes.”,*

*“Imamoglu, who is proposed by the Nation Alliance as the Vice President, has stated that the strengthening/reinforcement method offers an economic and fast option for earthquake preparedness.’ To what extent do you agree with the idea that the strengthening/reinforcement method is an effective solution as an earthquake countermeasure?”*

This section aims to understand the effect of perceived dependency on policy expectation change in two different scenarios: When policy promise is presented by the incumbent and when policy promise is presented by the opposition. When the policy promise is presented by the incumbent, the effect of perceived dependency is both statistically and substantively significant. Individuals who perceive themselves as dependent on social assistance are more likely to adjust their policy positions in the same direction as the incumbent. Those who do not perceive themselves as dependent are less responsive to the policy promises of the incumbent. This finding highlights the pivotal role played by perceived dependency in shaping policy expectations when the promises originate from the incumbent.

Contrary to our expectations, a similar effect is observed when the policy promise is presented by the opposition. As in the case of the incumbent’s promises, those who perceive themselves as dependent on social assistance are more likely to adjust their policy expectation in the same direction as the opposition’s policy promises, but the estimated effect is lower than the estimated change after the incumbent’s



policy promise is presented.

Empirical findings suggest that social assistance programs affect individuals' political decision-making processes in a significant manner. Social beneficiaries consider the continuity of their social assistance while casting a ballot. Even if they do not support the incumbent, they are more likely to vote for the incumbent in order to maintain the status quo both for the incumbent and for themselves (Özel and Yıldırım 2019). This research provides a shred of substantive empirical evidence to show that the effect of perceived dependency might go beyond the ballot box.

Individuals who perceive themselves as dependent on the social assistance they receive might have more positive evaluations toward the incumbent and the state (Gervasoni 2023). The institutional structure might also shape individuals' perceptions and political decision-making processes as the social assistance programs are the interaction space for beneficiaries and the state (Garay, Palmer-Rubin, and Poertner 2020; Soss 1999). These findings suggest that perceived dependency on social assistance might also affect individuals' cognitive processes when they face political actors' policy positions. The higher responsiveness of voters with perceived dependency might be explained by Gervasoni's (2023) argument that economic dependency increases trust and positive attitudes toward authority.

On the one hand, individuals who perceive themselves as dependent on social assistance are more likely to update their policy expectations when the incumbent shares their policy position, compared to the voters with no perceived dependency. The difference in policy expectation changes between the incumbent's and the opposition's policy promises might be explained by the cognitive dissonance theory. Policy position is one of the essential steps of the voting decision (Downs 1957). Hence, voters who consider the continuity of benefits they receive while voting are more likely to adjust their policy position in the same direction as the incumbent in order to avoid any cognitive dissonance.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This research aims to deepen our understanding of voters' perceptions of social assistance dependency and its effect on policy expectations. In order to examine this relationship, we designed a list experiment, which allowed us to reduce social desirability bias and estimate the population proportion of voters who consider the continuity of social assistance in their voting decisions. The empirical findings present that approximately 18% of voters affirm that fear of losing their social assistance has an effect on their voting decisions. Among the factors examined, affective polarization and age demonstrated a statistically significant effect on perceived dependency. The higher affective polarization increases the probability of perceived dependency at the 90% confidence level. The effect of age is non-linear, but as the age increases, the probability of perceived dependency decreases. Unemployment status, residency, political sophistication, and partisanship did not have a statistically significant effect on the probability of perceived dependency. Although AKP partisans were less likely to perceive themselves as dependent on social assistance, this finding did not reach statistical significance. With regards to the existing literature, this finding might require further attention to explore the relationship between social assistance and political behavior. Notably, the probability of perceived dependency was higher among the working-age population, which may signal the prevalence of working poverty. As age increases, the probability of perceived dependency decreases.

This study delved into the effect of perceived dependency on policy expectation change in two scenarios: when the policy promise was presented by the incumbent and when it was presented by the opposition. The results show that perceived dependency has a significant and substantive effect on voters' policy expectations. When the policy promise is made by the incumbent, individuals who perceive themselves as dependent on social assistance are more likely to adjust their policy positions in the same direction as the incumbent. This effect was both statistically and substantively significant, underscoring the effect of perceived dependency on policy expectations. Surprisingly, a similar effect was observed when the policy promise was presented

by the opposition, while our hypothesis on the opposition was expecting an effect in the opposite direction. Individuals who perceive themselves as dependent on social assistance are also more likely to align their policy expectations with the opposition's promises. However, the magnitude of this effect was comparatively lower than in the case of the incumbent.

These findings contribute to the existing literature on social assistance and political decision-making by highlighting that the effect of perceived dependency extends beyond the ballot box. Perceived dependency not only shapes voters' behavior but also influences their cognitive processes and policy expectations when they encounter new political information. The high responsiveness of voters with perceived dependency can partially be attributed to the effect of social assistance on trust and positive attitudes toward authority (Gervasoni 2023), as well as the activation of heuristic process (Kam 2005; Petersen et al. 2013). Yet, we argue that individuals who rely on social assistance are more likely to align their policy positions with the incumbent in order to maintain the continuity of their benefits when casting their votes, thereby reducing any potential cognitive dissonance arising from conflicting policy positions with the party they support.

This research sheds light on the relationship between perceived dependency, social assistance, and political decision-making processes. The findings emphasize the importance of perceived dependency in shaping voters' policy expectations and highlight that the relationship between social assistance programs and voting behavior might be more complicated and involve changes in policy expectations. Further exploration of the underlying mechanisms and implications of perceived dependency in political processes can provide valuable insights into the dynamics of welfare policies, voter behavior, and democratic governance.

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## APPENDIX

### Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 Descriptive statistics

| Variable                             | Mean   | St. Dev. | Min   | Max   | N   |
|--------------------------------------|--------|----------|-------|-------|-----|
| Treatment                            | 1.811  | 0.701    | 0     | 4     | 687 |
| Age                                  | 45.406 | 15.386   | 18    | 95    | 687 |
| Gender                               | 0.527  | 0.500    | 0     | 1     | 687 |
| Education                            | 4.408  | 1.535    | 1     | 8     | 687 |
| Ideology                             | 5.987  | 3.902    | 0     | 10    | 687 |
| Religiosity                          | 7.517  | 2.083    | 0     | 10    | 687 |
| Unemployment                         | 0.047  | 0.211    | 0     | 1     | 687 |
| Political Sophistication             | 0.635  | 0.482    | 0     | 1     | 687 |
| Affective Polarization               | 3.137  | 0.705    | 0.289 | 5.222 | 687 |
| Metropol                             | 0.390  | 0.488    | 0     | 1     | 687 |
| AKP Partisanship                     | 0.504  | 0.500    | 0     | 1     | 687 |
| $\Delta$ Policy Change (Environment) | 0.061  | 1.466    | -4    | 4     | 457 |
| $\Delta$ Policy Change (Earthquake)  | -0.108 | 1.723    | -4    | 4     | 581 |

Table 2 Descriptive statistics for regression estimates (incumbent)

| Variable                             | Mean   | St. Dev. | Min   | Max   | N   |
|--------------------------------------|--------|----------|-------|-------|-----|
| Treatment                            | 1.832  | 0.701    | 0     | 4     | 457 |
| Age                                  | 44.204 | 15.863   | 18    | 95    | 457 |
| Gender                               | 0.486  | 0.500    | 0     | 1     | 457 |
| Education                            | 4.619  | 1.570    | 1     | 8     | 457 |
| Ideology                             | 5.919  | 3.736    | 0     | 10    | 457 |
| Religiosity                          | 7.184  | 2.142    | 0     | 10    | 457 |
| Unemployment                         | 0.057  | 0.232    | 0     | 1     | 457 |
| Political Sophistication             | 0.637  | 0.481    | 0     | 1     | 457 |
| Affective Polarization               | 3.095  | 0.691    | 0.515 | 5.222 | 457 |
| Metropol                             | 0.451  | 0.498    | 0     | 1     | 457 |
| AKP Partisanship                     | 0.479  | 0.500    | 0     | 1     | 457 |
| $\Delta$ Policy Change (Environment) | 0.061  | 1.466    | -4    | 4     | 457 |

Table 3 Descriptive statistics for regression estimates (opposition)

| Variable                            | Mean   | St. Dev. | Min   | Max   | N   |
|-------------------------------------|--------|----------|-------|-------|-----|
| Treatment                           | 1.824  | 0.702    | 0     | 4     | 581 |
| Age                                 | 45.296 | 15.711   | 18    | 95    | 581 |
| Gender                              | 0.504  | 0.500    | 0     | 1     | 581 |
| Education                           | 4.468  | 1.546    | 1     | 8     | 581 |
| Ideology                            | 5.849  | 3.806    | 0     | 10    | 581 |
| Religiosity                         | 7.396  | 2.118    | 0     | 10    | 581 |
| Unemployment                        | 0.052  | 0.221    | 0     | 1     | 581 |
| Political Sophistication            | 0.630  | 0.483    | 0     | 1     | 581 |
| Affective Polarization              | 3.101  | 0.723    | 0.289 | 5.222 | 581 |
| Metropol                            | 0.406  | 0.492    | 0     | 1     | 581 |
| AKP Partisanship                    | 0.482  | 0.500    | 0     | 1     | 581 |
| $\Delta$ Policy Change (Earthquake) | -0.108 | 1.723    | -4    | 4     | 581 |

## T-test results for the control and treatment groups

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|                          | N-Control | Mean-Control | N-Treatment | Mean-Treatment | T-value | Std. Errors | p-value |
|--------------------------|-----------|--------------|-------------|----------------|---------|-------------|---------|
| List Experiment          | 354       | 1.70         | 333         | 1.93           | -4.30   | 0.05        | 0.00    |
| Age                      | 354       | 45.04        | 333         | 45.80          | -0.64   | 1.18        | 0.52    |
| Gender                   | 354       | 0.55         | 333         | 0.50           | 1.29    | 0.04        | 0.20    |
| Education                | 354       | 4.50         | 333         | 4.31           | 1.58    | 0.12        | 0.11    |
| Ideology                 | 354       | 5.92         | 333         | 6.05           | -0.44   | 0.30        | 0.66    |
| Religiosity              | 354       | 7.46         | 333         | 7.58           | -0.73   | 0.16        | 0.47    |
| Unemployment             | 354       | 0.05         | 333         | 0.04           | 0.55    | 0.02        | 0.58    |
| Political Sophistication | 354       | 0.63         | 333         | 0.64           | -0.11   | 0.04        | 0.92    |
| Affective Polarization   | 354       | 3.17         | 333         | 3.10           | 1.43    | 0.05        | 0.15    |
| Metropol                 | 354       | 0.39         | 333         | 0.39           | -0.17   | 0.04        | 0.86    |
| AKP Partisans            | 354       | 0.49         | 333         | 0.51           | -0.50   | 0.04        | 0.62    |

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## Probability of Perceived Dependency by Education and Religion

Figure 1 Estimated proportion of perceived dependency by education

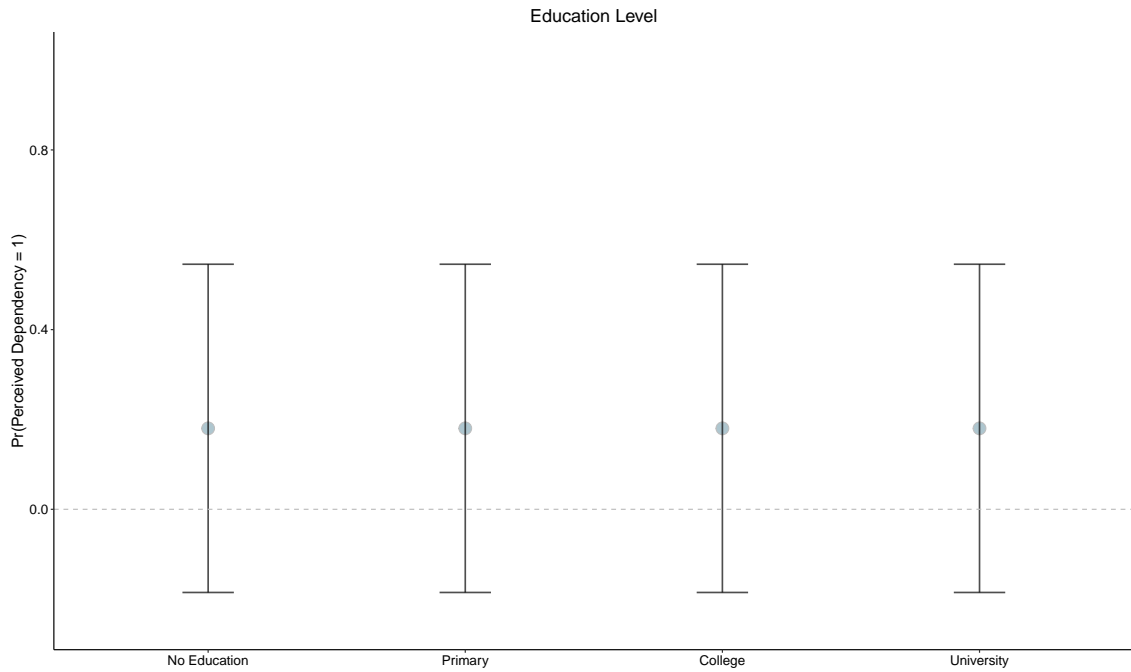
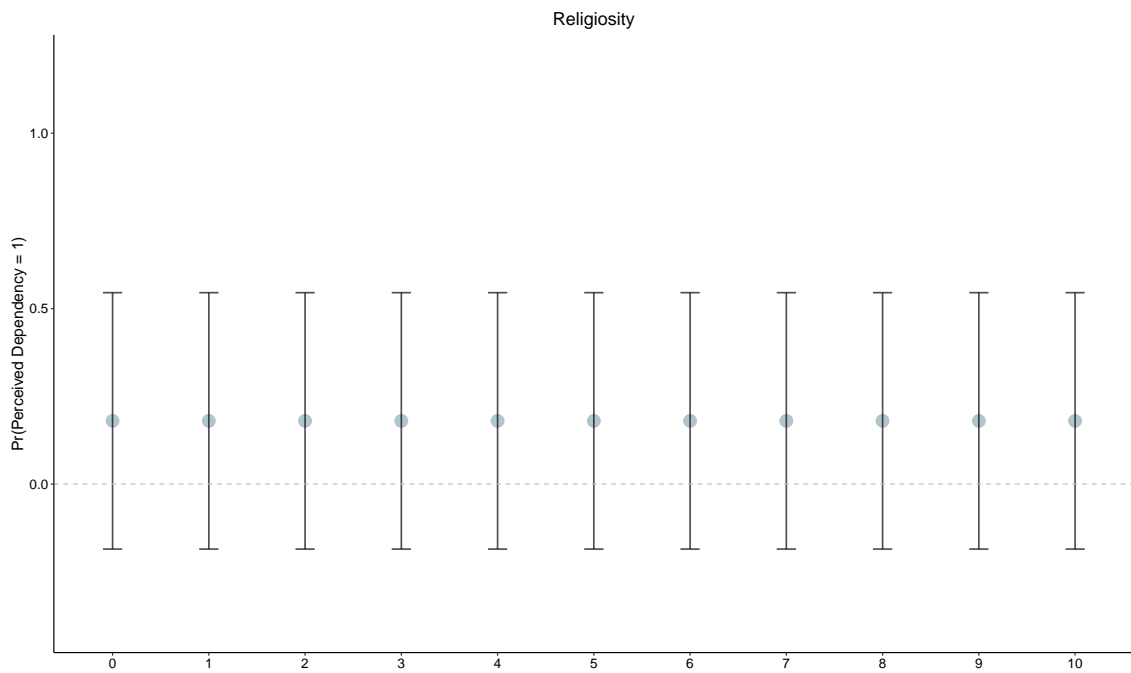


Figure 2 Estimated proportion of perceived dependency by religion



## Direct Questions

Table 4 Observed data: “Do you think that social assistance you benefit will continue next year?” (percentage)

| Provider                    | Yes  | No   | Total |
|-----------------------------|------|------|-------|
| Central Government          | 0.66 | 0.33 | 42    |
| Metropolitan Municipalities | 0.90 | 0.10 | 22    |
| District Municipalities     | 0.58 | 0.42 | 12    |
| Total                       | 0.72 | 0.28 | 76    |

Table 5 Observed data: from the list experiment on factors that affects vote choice

| Response Value | Control Group |            | Treatment Group |            |
|----------------|---------------|------------|-----------------|------------|
|                | Frequency     | Proportion | Frequency       | Proportion |
| 0              | 47            | 0.08       | 50              | 0.09       |
| 1              | 158           | 0.28       | 106             | 0.19       |
| 2              | 345           | 0.60       | 354             | 0.62       |
| 3              | 21            | 0.04       | 42              | 0.07       |
| 4              |               |            | 18              | 0.03       |
| Total          | 571           |            | 570             |            |

## Regression Estimates

Table 6 Estimated coefficients for individuals affirming “I am afraid that if another party wins, my social assistance will be cut”, with perceived polarization

| Variables                | <i>Sensitive Item</i> |       | <i>Control Items</i> |       |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|
|                          | Est.                  | S.E.  | Est.                 | S.E.  |
| (Intercept)              | 0.436                 | 6.145 | -1.467               | 0.553 |
| Age                      | -0.302***             | 0.046 | 0.040                | 0.006 |
| <i>Age</i> <sup>2</sup>  | 0.003***              | 0.001 | 0.000                | 0.000 |
| Gender                   | -0.012                | 0.784 | 0.075                | 0.106 |
| Education                | -0.210                | 0.310 | 0.098                | 0.037 |
| Ideology                 | 0.216                 | 0.239 | -0.030               | 0.027 |
| Religiosity              | -0.065                | 0.204 | 0.040                | 0.027 |
| Unemployment             | -0.006                | 1.871 | 0.455                | 0.264 |
| Political Sophistication | 0.172                 | 0.954 | 0.105                | 0.130 |
| Perceived Polarization   | 0.893**               | 0.544 | 0.019                | 0.053 |
| AKP Partisanship         | -1.330                | 2.176 | 0.165                | 0.213 |
| Metropol                 | 0.489                 | 0.765 | -0.149               | 0.109 |

Log-likelihood: -753.193.

Two-tailed tests. \* $p < 0.1$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

Table 7 Estimated coefficients for individuals affirming “I am afraid that if another party wins, my social assistance will be cut”, with past AKP vote in the local elections

| Variables                | <i>Sensitive Item</i> |       | <i>Control Items</i> |       |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|
|                          | Est.                  | S.E.  | Est.                 | S.E.  |
| (Intercept)              | 4.192                 | 4.961 | -1.610               | 0.461 |
| Age                      | -0.455***             | 0.036 | 0.035                | 0.004 |
| $Age^2$                  | 0.005***              | 0.001 | 0.000                | 0.000 |
| Gender                   | -0.554                | 0.934 | 0.219                | 0.111 |
| Education                | -0.254                | 0.550 | 0.067                | 0.039 |
| Ideology                 | 0.128                 | 0.171 | -0.008               | 0.020 |
| Religiosity              | 0.018                 | 0.227 | 0.048                | 0.025 |
| Unemployment             | 0.505                 | 1.644 | 0.426                | 0.252 |
| Political Sophistication | -0.644                | 1.443 | 0.188                | 0.137 |
| Affective Polarization   | 1.122                 | 0.745 | 0.089                | 0.072 |
| Past AKP Vote            | 0.317                 | 1.650 | -0.130               | 0.152 |
| Metropol                 | 1.450                 | 0.928 | -0.212               | 0.115 |

Log-likelihood: -825.3.

Two-tailed tests. \* $p < 0.1$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .



Table 8 Estimated coefficients for individuals affirming “I am afraid that if another party wins, my social assistance will be cut”, with AKP vote in the upcoming elections

| Variables                  | <i>Sensitive Item</i> |       | <i>Control Items</i> |       |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|
|                            | Est.                  | S.E.  | Est.                 | S.E.  |
| (Intercept)                | 2.814                 | 3.583 | -1.440               | 0.414 |
| Age                        | -0.381***             | 0.027 | 0.033                | 0.004 |
| $Age^2$                    | 0.004***              | 0.000 | -0.000               | 0.000 |
| Gender                     | -0.420                | 0.772 | 0.138                | 0.102 |
| Education                  | -0.112                | 0.328 | 0.056                | 0.036 |
| Ideology                   | 0.213                 | 0.151 | -0.017               | 0.021 |
| Religiosity                | -0.167                | 0.166 | 0.045                | 0.024 |
| Unemployment               | 0.397                 | 1.726 | 0.418                | 0.237 |
| Political Sophistication   | -0.261                | 0.968 | 0.084                | 0.117 |
| Affective Polarization     | 1.054*                | 0.615 | 0.084                | 0.069 |
| AKP Vote Upcoming Election | -0.339                | 1.198 | 0.068                | 0.160 |
| Metropol                   | 1.070                 | 0.750 | -0.189               | 0.104 |

Log-likelihood: -861.073.

Two-tailed tests. \* $p < 0.1$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

Table 9 General Full ML Estimates on policy expectation change (incumbent)

|                           | Est.      | S.E   |
|---------------------------|-----------|-------|
| <b>Sensitive Item</b>     |           |       |
| (Intercept)               | -0.684    | 5.360 |
| Age                       | -0.213    | 0.182 |
| <i>Age</i> <sup>2</sup>   | 0.003     | 0.002 |
| Gender                    | -0.143    | 0.825 |
| Education                 | -0.342    | 0.327 |
| Ideology                  | 0.332**   | 0.164 |
| Religiosity               | 0.075     | 0.164 |
| Unemployment              | 3.590*    | 2.114 |
| Political Sophistication  | -0.23     | 1.08  |
| Affective Polarization    | 0.590     | 0.728 |
| AKP Partisanship          | -2.981**  | 1.408 |
| Metropol                  | 0.745     | 0.796 |
| <b>Control Items</b>      |           |       |
| (Intercept)               | -1.779    | 1.044 |
| Age                       | 0.050     | 0.032 |
| <i>Age</i> <sup>2</sup>   | 0.000     | 0.000 |
| Gender                    | -0.008    | 0.178 |
| Education                 | 0.109**   | 0.056 |
| Ideology                  | -0.030    | 0.037 |
| Religiosity               | 0.014     | 0.046 |
| Unemployment              | 0.037     | 0.351 |
| Political Sophistication  | 0.122     | 0.211 |
| Affective Polarization    | 0.135     | 0.130 |
| AKP Partisanship          | 0.355     | 0.276 |
| Metropol                  | -0.271    | 0.185 |
| <b>Outcome Regression</b> |           |       |
| (Intercept)               | -1.067    | 0.928 |
| Perceived Dependency      | 1.583***  | 0.378 |
| Age                       | 0.045     | 0.028 |
| <i>Age</i> <sup>2</sup>   | -0.001*** | 0.000 |
| Gender                    | 0.059     | 0.176 |
| Education                 | 0.092     | 0.058 |
| Ideology                  | -0.135*** | 0.042 |
| Religiosity               | 0.086*    | 0.048 |
| Unemployment              | -0.579    | 0.574 |
| Political Sophistication  | -0.262    | 0.249 |
| Affective Polarization    | -0.205    | 0.132 |
| AKP Partisanship          | 1.308***  | 0.341 |
| Metropol                  | 0.012     | 0.178 |

Two-tailed tests. \* $p < 0.1$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

Table 10 General Full ML Estimates on policy expectation change (opposition)

|                           | Est.      | S.E   |
|---------------------------|-----------|-------|
| <b>Sensitive Item</b>     |           |       |
| (Intercept)               | 4.008     | 5.839 |
| Age                       | -0.451**  | 0.189 |
| <i>Age</i> <sup>2</sup>   | 0.005**   | 0.002 |
| Gender                    | -0.477    | 0.416 |
| Education                 | -0.477    | 0.416 |
| Ideology                  | 0.471*    | 0.240 |
| Religiosity               | -0.372*   | 0.194 |
| Unemployment              | 0.767     | 1.751 |
| Political Sophistication  | 0.488     | 1.368 |
| Affective Polarization    | 1.494*    | 0.902 |
| AKP Partisanship          | -3.161    | 2.177 |
| Metropol                  | 1.753     | 1.179 |
| <b>Control Items</b>      |           |       |
| (Intercept)               | -1.875    | 0.858 |
| Age                       | 0.052*    | 0.027 |
| <i>Age</i> <sup>2</sup>   | 0.000     | 0.000 |
| Gender                    | -0.071    | 0.158 |
| Education                 | 0.115**   | 0.054 |
| Ideology                  | -0.048    | 0.034 |
| Religiosity               | 0.056     | 0.041 |
| Unemployment              | 0.293     | 0.349 |
| Political Sophistication  | 0.038     | 0.196 |
| Affective Polarization    | 0.050     | 0.116 |
| AKP Partisanship          | 0.344     | 0.239 |
| Metropol                  | -0.246    | 0.166 |
| <b>Outcome Regression</b> |           |       |
| (Intercept)               | -0.471    | 0.953 |
| Perceived Dependency      | 0.955**   | 0.389 |
| Age                       | 0.073**   | 0.035 |
| <i>Age</i> <sup>2</sup>   | -0.001*** | 0.000 |
| Gender                    | -0.236    | 0.188 |
| Education                 | 0.004     | 0.060 |
| Ideology                  | -0.136*** | 0.044 |
| Religiosity               | 0.077*    | 0.046 |
| Unemployment              | -0.338    | 0.343 |
| Political Sophistication  | -0.273    | 0.231 |
| Affective Polarization    | -0.256*   | 0.133 |
| AKP Partisanship          | -0.084    | 0.330 |
| Metropol                  | 0.004     | 0.191 |

Two-tailed tests. \* $p < 0.1$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

## Survey Questions in Turkish

### List experiment question for the control group

Seçmenler hangi parti için oy vereceklerine birkaç farklı neden temelinde karar verirler. Şimdi size bu farklı nedenleri sıralayan bir liste okuyacağım. Bana lütfen bunların hangilerinin sizin oy kararınız üzerinde etkili olduğunu söylemeyin. Sadece bu listedeki nedenlerden kaç tanesinin oy verme kararınızı etkilediğini söyleyin.

- Parti liderini beğeniyorum.
- Partinin savunduğu politikaları kendime yakın buluyorum.
- Asıl beğendiğim partinin kazanamayacağını düşünüyorum.

### List experiment question for the treatment group

Seçmenler hangi parti için oy vereceklerine birkaç farklı neden temelinde karar verirler. Şimdi size bu farklı nedenleri sıralayan bir liste okuyacağım. Bana lütfen bunların hangilerinin sizin oy kararınız üzerinde etkili olduğunu söylemeyin. Sadece bu listedeki nedenlerden kaç tanesinin oy verme kararınızı etkilediğini söyleyin.

- Parti liderini beğeniyorum.
- Partinin savunduğu politikaları kendime yakın buluyorum.
- Başka parti kazanırsa aldığım sosyal yardımların kesileceğinden korkuyorum.
- Asıl beğendiğim partinin kazanamayacağını düşünüyorum.

### Pre-policy preferences questions

- Güçlendirme yönteminin depreme karşı etkili bir çözüm olduğunu düşünüyorum.
- Nükleer santrallerin sera gazı emisyonunu azaltarak çevreyi koruyacağını düşünüyorum.

### Political actors policy statements

#### Incumbent

Şimdi size çevreyle ilgili bir ifade okuyacağım.  
AK Parti hükümetinin atadığı Enerji ve Tabii Kaynaklar Bakanı kuru-

lacak nkleer santrallerin sera gazı emisyonunun azaltılması aısından evre iin byk bir neme sahip olacađını belirtmiřtir.

Siz nkleer santrallerin sera gazı emisyonunu azaltarak evreyi koruyacađı fikrine ne kadar katılıyorsunuz?

1. Hi katılmıyorum
2. Katılmama eđilimindeyim
3. Ne katılırım ne katılmam / Ortadayım
4. Katılma eđilimindeyim
5. Tamamen katılırım

## **Opposition**

Bu sefer size depremle ilgili bir ifade okuyacađım.

Millet İttifakının Cumhurbaşkanı yardımcısı olarak ngrdđ Ekrem İmamođlu glendirme yntemiyle depreme hazırlık konusunda ekonomik ve hızlı bir seenek sunduklarını belirtmiřtir.

Siz glendirme ynteminin depreme karřı etkili bir zm olduđu fikrine ne kadar katılıyorsunuz?

1. Hi katılmıyorum
2. Katılmama eđilimindeyim
3. Ne katılırım ne katılmam / Ortadayım
4. Katılma eđilimindeyim
5. Tamamen katılırım