RESEARCH ARTICLE / ARAŞTIRMA YAZISI

Examining the Relationship Between Identity Dimensions of Individuals and Political Consent

Bireylerin Kimlik Boyutları ile Siyasal Rızaları arasındaki İlişkinin İncelenmesi

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Abstract:

This study aims to examine the predictive role of individuals' identity dimensions on the dimensions of political consent. The study, conducted in 2024, included 49 men (16.5%) and 248 women (83.5%) aged between 18 and 25. The data collection tools used in the study were the Personal Information Form (PIF), the Dimensions of Identity Development Scale (DIDS), and the Political Consent Scale (PCS). Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationships between the variables in the study. Subsequently, the predictive role of identity dimensions on political consent dimensions was examined through path analysis. The results of the path analysis revealed that the identification with commitment (IWC) and exploration in breadth (EIB) dimensions of identity development significantly predicted the responsibility dimension of political consent, accounting for 20% of the variance in this variable. Furthermore, the exploration in breadth and ruminative exploration (RE) dimensions significantly predicted the truth dimension of political consent, accounting for 94% of the variance. Another finding indicated that the IWC, commitment making (CM), and RE dimensions of identity development significantly predicted the competence dimension of political consent, explaining 82% of the variance in this variable. Finally, IWC, CM, exploration in depth (EID), and RE dimensions significantly predicted the freewill dimension of political consent, also explaining 82% of the variance. The findings were discussed in light of the existing literature, and various recommendations are provided.

Keywords: Identity Dimensions, Political Consent, Path Analysis.

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Öz:

Bu çalışmanın amacı, bireylerin kimlik boyutlarının siyasal rıza boyutları üzerindeki yordayıcı rolünü incelemektir. Çalışmaya, 2024 yılında yaşları 18 ile 25 arasında değişen 49 erkek (%16.5) ve 248 kadın (%83.5) katılmıştır. Veri toplama araçları olarak Kişisel Bilgi Formu (KBF), Kimlik Gelişimi Boyutları Ölçeği (KGBÖ) ve Siyasal Rıza Ölçeği (SRÖ) kullanılmıştır. Çalışmadaki değişkenler arasındaki ilişkiyi belirlemek için Pearson korelasyon analizi yapılmıştır. Analizlerin devamında kimlik boyutlarının siyasal rıza boyutları üzerindeki yordayıcı rolü yol analizi ile incelenmiştir. Yürütülen yol analizi sonucunda kimlik gelişim boyutlarından içsel yatırımla özdeşleşme (İYÖ) ve seçeneklerin genişlemesine araştırılması (SDA) boyutlarının siyasal rıza boyutlarından sorumluluk boyutunu anlamlı olarak yordadıkları ve bu değişkende meydana gelen değişimin %20'sini açıkladıkları bulunmuştur. Kimlik gelişim boyutlarından seçeneklerin genişleme araştırılması (SGA) ve seçeneklerin saplantılı araştırılması boyutları (SSA) da siyasal rıza boyutlarından doğruluk boyutunu anlamlı olarak yordadıkları ve bu boyutta meydana gelen değişimin %94'ünü açıkladıkları belirlenmiştir. Diğer bir bulguda ise kimlik gelişim boyutlarından içsel yatırımla özdeşleşme (İYÖ) ile içsel yatırımda bulunma (İYB) ve seçeneklerin saplantılı araştırılması (SSA) boyutlarının siyasal rıza boyutlarından yetkinlik boyutunu anlamlı olarak yordadıkları ve bu değişkende meydana gelen değişimin %82'sini açıkladıkları tespit edilmiştir. Son olarak kimlik gelişim boyutlarından içsel yatırımda bulunma (İYB) ile içsel yatırımla özdeşleşme (İYÖ), seçeneklerin derinlemesine araştırılması (SDA) ve seçeneklerin saplantılı araştırılması (SSA) boyutlarının siyasal rıza boyutlarından özgür irade boyutunu anlamlı olarak yordadıkları ve bu değişkende meydana gelen değişimin %82'sini açıkladıkları görülmüştür. Elde edilen bulgular literatür ışığında tartışılıp çeşitli önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kimlik Boyutları, Siyasal Rıza, Yol Analizi.

Introduction

People live in communities due to their social nature. Since ancient times, human gatherings have led to the formation of political communities. Different forms of governance have emerged within societies, evolving. One of these governance models, democracy, has been considered the most ideal structure for a civilized society in modern times. Today, this view remains widely accepted. Societies that adopt this perspective strive to develop democratic principles further to achieve progress. Unlike other systems, democracy places greater emphasis on political participation. In representative democracies, voting plays a decisive role in governance. Many factors influence this process, and identity is one of the most significant. First, the concept of democracy will be discussed, followed by the notion of identity, and finally, the effects of identity on political participation will be addressed.

Democracy is a form of governance in which political power originates from the people (Chapman, Hanson, Dzutsati, & DeBell, 2024). Citizens have the right to elect and replace their leaders. With this understanding, the legitimacy of a government depends on the will of the people (König, Siewert & Ackermann, 2022). Principles such as equality, voting rights, and freedom of speech are fundamental elements of democracy (Leemann & Stadelmann-Steffen, 2022). A democratic system requires representation of all segments of society and the conduct of free and fair elections. In such a structure, both majority and minority views are represented, and the opposition plays a crucial role in checking the power of the ruling party (Öztekin, 2003). Political parties, which aim to gain or share political power, are essential components of democracy. Ideological, social, and cultural groups within parliaments have evolved into political parties over time. These structures contribute to the political representation of diverse identities (König et al., 2022). In addition to a national culture, societies also consist of various subcultures. These differences may enrich society but can also lead to conflict. Political culture must maintain a balance and support the participation of diverse identities and perspectives. In this regard, democracy highlights the significance of identity-based political participation (Chance, 2024).

Identity is the result of humanity's effort to define itself throughout history (Van Der Gaag, Gmelin & De Ruiter, 2025). In general terms, it can be seen as an individual's answer to the question of who they are (Demir Kaya & Çok, 2021). Identity is characterized by recognition, continuity, and adaptation. It involves self-awareness, a sense of belonging, and a degree of stability (McAdams, Trzesniewski, Lilgendahl, Benet-Martinez & Robins, 2021). It is a dynamic structure that brings together a person's values, beliefs, goals, and roles (Erikson, 1968). According to Erikson's psychosocial development theory, identity formation involves discovering who a person is, what they aim to achieve, and which social roles they adopt (Kroger, 2007). Factors such as gender roles, ideology, and profession shape identity. Based on these elements, individuals make decisions about their identity and set personal boundaries (Demir Kaya & Çok, 2021).

Identity defines qualities that determine a person's place in life. It consists of various personal, social, political, religious, cultural, and gender-based characteristics (Phinney, 2000). Belonging to certain groups, aspirations, desires, self-expression, lifestyle, and communication patterns all contribute to one's identity (Anderson, 2009). Since identity gives meaning to a person's life, different identity formation processes have emerged throughout history. Thus, identity can be understood as a historical, social, cultural, and political construct (Van Der Gaag et al., 2025).

Identity development influences not only personal and social life, but also political attitudes and voting behavior. Identity shapes an individual's values and beliefs, which play a crucial role in political preferences (Erikson, 1968). Ideologies and social culture significantly impact political orientations and attitudes, ultimately shaping political behavior (Chance, 2024). A review of the literature reveals that a study conducted with a Turkish sample found that

individuals' political identities—such as conservative, secular, and nationalist—are closely related to their political party preferences (Doğan & Batar, 2019). Similarly, another study observed that individuals' religious identities play a determining role in their political preferences and party affiliations (Piacentini, Molteni & Maraffi 2024). Findings from a study conducted with an Egyptian sample also show similarities. In that study, the development of social and personal identity increased the sense of political efficacy (Abou Hashish & Kamel, 2014). In another recent study, individuals with a strong sense of political identity were found to have higher levels of participation in political activities (Jöst, Krönke, Lockwood & Lust, 2024). People participate in politics based on their identities. Key identity development dimensions, such as identity exploration and commitment, help explain the consistency or variability in political choices (Luyckx, Goossens, Soenens & Beyers, 2006). Identity exploration refers to the process of evaluating and discovering different options in identity formation. Commitment reflects how strongly individuals adhere to their chosen identity (Luyckx et al., 2006). Luyckx et al. (2008) examined identity development in more detail, distinguishing between two components: commitment making and identity reconsideration. Commitment making refers to selecting and adhering to a specific identity, while identity reconsideration involves re-evaluating existing commitments.

Their model also introduces ruminative exploration (RE), a negative form of identity exploration. Individuals in this stage continuously question their identity without forming a clear commitment, which is often linked to anxiety and depression (Luyckx et al., 2008). This model provides a more comprehensive perspective on identity development by considering both positive aspects and potential risks.

Identity exploration involves assessing and considering different political alternatives, whereas identity commitment reflects strong attachment to specific political views and values (Marcia, 1966). Individuals in the identity development process may show more flexible and adaptable political attitudes. In contrast, those with high identity commitment tend to remain loyal to a particular political party or ideology (Luyckx et al., 2008). RE can explain uncertainty and indecisiveness in political choices. People in this stage continuously question their political views but struggle to develop a stable political commitment. This often leads to voter indecision or shifts in electoral behavior. Particularly during election periods, identity development processes may strongly influence political preferences (Collins, Mandel & Schywiola, 2021).

The literature includes limited research about the relationship between identity development dimensions and political approval. Further studies on how identity exploration and commitment shape political consistency and preferences will contribute significantly to both political psychology and identity development research.

Research Questions
1. Is there a significant relationship between identity development dimensions of individuals and political approval dimensions?

2. Do individuals' identity development dimensions significantly predict political approval dimensions?

Method

Research Design
This study follows a correlational survey approach, a quantitative research method used to examine changes between two or more variables and determine the level of these changes (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012).

Research Sample
Before initiating the research, the required sample size was estimated through power analysis. An a priori power analysis was performed using the G*Power 3.1 software for a multiple regression model involving five predictor variables. With a significance level of .05, a statistical power of .95, and a medium effect size, the analysis indicated that at least 138 participants were needed (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner & Lang, 2009). The inclusion of 297 participants in this study demonstrates that the research possesses high statistical power. In the study, participants were selected in accordance with the convenience sampling method. The study sample includes 248 women (83.5%). In terms of socioeconomic status, 253 participants (85.2%) belong to the middle class. Regarding marital status, 287 participants (96.6%) were single. Concerning employment status, 291 participants (91.2%) were unemployed. In terms of education level, 221 participants (74.4%) were university students. The participants' ages range from 18 to 25, with a mean age of 21.26 years (SD = 1.87).

Table 1. *Demographic data of participants included in the study*

Variable	Group	n	%
Gender	Female	248	83.5
	Male	49	16.5
Socio-Economic Level	Low	28	9.4
	Middle	253	85.2
	High	16	5.4
Marital Status	Single	287	96.6
	Married	10	3.4
Working Status	Yes	26	8.8
	No	271	91.2
Education Level	High School Graduate	38	12.8
	Undergraduate	221	74.4
	Masters/PhD student	38	12.8

Data Collection Tools
In this study, the PIF was used to collect demographic data. To assess individuals' identity-related characteristics, the DIDS was employed, while the PCS was utilized to evaluate their political consent. Detailed information regarding these instruments is provided below.

Personal Information Form (PIF)
The form, developed by the researchers, aimed to collect demographic information about individuals. The form included questions about gender, age, socioeconomic status, marital status, employment status, and education level.

Dimensions of Identity Development Scale (DIDS)
This scale, originally developed by Luyckx et al. (2008), aims to measure various aspects of individuals' identity development. The scale comprises 25 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale. Its adaptation to the Turkish context was carried out by Morsünbül and Çok (2014). The instrument includes five subdimensions: exploration in breadth (EIB), exploration in depth (EID), ruminative exploration (RE), commitment making (CM) and identification with commitment (IWC). In the original study, Cronbach alpha for the subscales were as follows: CM: 0.86, IWC: 0.86, EIB: 0.81, EID: 0.79, and RE: 0.86. For the Turkish version, Morsünbül and Çok (2014) reported the following reliability coefficients: EIB: 0.84, EID: 0.78, RE: 0.79, CM: 0.88, and IWC: 0.87. In the current study, the Cronbach alpha values were: CM: 0.89, IWC: 0.87, EIB: 0.88, EID: 0.71, and RE: 0.84.

Political Consent Scale (PCS)
This scale was developed by Ceylan, İspir, and Özpolat (2019) to assess the levels of political consent of individuals regarding their votes. It consists of 22 items and is scored using a 5-point Likert scale. Factor analysis identified four subdimensions: responsibility, accuracy, competence, and free will. The Cronbach alpha was reported as $\alpha = 0.82$ (Ceylan et al., 2019). In the current study, the Cronbach's alpha values were: responsibility, 0.88; accuracy, 0.81; competence, 0.85; free will, 0.90; and overall scale, 0.90.

Ethical Approval
Ethical approval was obtained from the university's ethical committee (E.88656144-000-2400348180). After obtaining consent and completing the adaptation, the questionnaires were made available to students online along with the informed consent form.

Data Analysis
Before conducting advanced statistical analyses, the dataset was examined for outliers and normal distribution (Field, 2013). Outliers were checked using standardized z-scores, and all values were between -3 and +3, indicating no extreme outliers (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014).

Normality was assessed using skewness and kurtosis values, which ranged between -2 and +2, confirming normal distribution (George & Mallery, 2019). After verifying data assumptions, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between identity development dimensions and political consent dimensions. Additionally, path analysis was performed to determine whether identity development dimensions predict political consent dimensions. Fit indices were examined based on the following criteria: χ^2/df: ≤5 is considered an acceptable model fit (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014); NFI and CFI: ≥0.90 indicates good model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2016; Schermelleh-Engel, Moosbrugger & Müller, 2003); and SRMR and RMSEA: values between 0.05 and 0.08 are acceptable (Schermelleh-Engel, Moosbrugger & Müller, 2003; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014).

Procedure
After obtaining ethical committee approval for the research, the study forms were converted into an online format. This form included an informed consent document providing information about the study, demographic questions, questions about identity dimensions, and inquiries about political participation. For participant recruitment, a convenience sampling method was employed. This method was chosen based on considerations of time, effort, and accessibility, and selects individuals who are most readily available. The online form was distributed to participants via various social media platforms. Once the target number of participants was reached, the form was closed to responses.

Results

Correlation Analysis Results
To test the relationship between individuals' identity development dimensions and political consent dimensions, the correlation values were first examined. Descriptive statistics for the measurement tools and the relationships between variables are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. *Descriptive statistics for measurement tools and relationships between variables.*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. CM	1								
2. IWC	.72**	1							
3. EIB	.67**	.65**	1						
4. EID	.43**	.47**	.55**	1					
5. RE	-.29**	-.22**	-.09	.16**	1				
6. Responsibility	.37**	.37**	.42**	.27**	.03	1			
7. Truth	-.07	-.01	.26**	.32**	.91**	.14*	1		
8. Competence	.49**	.84**	.52**	.47**	.16**	.35**	.25**	1	
9. Freewill	.69**	.81**	.63**	.71**	-.16**	.33**	.03	.60**	1
Mean	18.98	18.58	19.48	18.38	15.74	34.20	20.21	14.57	14.74
SD	3.79	3.77	3.45	3.07	4.59	5.47	4.10	2.63	2.69
Skewness	-.66	-.36	-.47	-.19	.01	-1.21	.27	-.13	-.38
Kurtosis	1.03	.27	.62	1.02	-.44	1.50	-.05	.16	.66

*Note: *p<.05, **p<.01*

In the Pearson correlation analysis conducted as part of the study, positive and statistically significant relationships were found between the identity development dimension CM and the political consent dimensions of responsibility ($r = 0.37$, $p < .001$), competence ($r = 0.49$, $p < .001$), and freewill ($r = 0.69$, $p < .001$). Another identity development dimension, IWC, showed positive and statistically significant relationships with the political consent dimensions of responsibility ($r = 0.37$, $p < .001$), competence ($r = 0.84$, $p < .001$), and freewill ($r = 0.81$, $p < .001$). EIB had positive and statistically significant relationships with the political consent dimensions of responsibility ($r = 0.42$, $p < .001$), truth ($r = 0.26$, $p < .001$), competence ($r = 0.52$, $p < .001$), and freewill ($r = 0.63$, $p < .001$). EID also showed positive and statistically significant relationships with the political consent dimensions of responsibility ($r = 0.27$, $p < .001$), truth ($r = 0.32$, $p < .001$), competence ($r = 0.47$, $p < .001$), and freewill ($r = 0.71$, $p < .001$). RE was positively and statistically significantly related to the political consent dimensions of truth ($r = 0.91$, $p < .001$) and competence ($r = 0.16$, $p < .001$). Negative relationships were found between RE and freewill ($r = -0.16$, $p < .001$), between CM and truth ($r = -0.07$, $p = .249$), and between IWC and truth ($r = -0.01$, $p = .621$), but these were not statistically significant. Lastly, an insignificant positive relationship was found between RE and responsibility ($r = 0.03$, $p = .249$).

Path Analysis Results

A path model was tested to examine the predictive role of identity development dimensions on political consent dimensions. Some paths in the model were found to be statistically insignificant. The model's fit indices were examined, and the model had acceptable fit indices ($\chi^2_{(df = 12, N = 297)} = 21.17$, p = .048; $\chi^2/df = 1.77$, CFI = .99, NFI = .99; RMSEA = .051 and SRMR = .021). The path analysis results indicated that CM predicted the political consent dimensions of competence ($\beta = .16$, $p < .001$) and freewill ($\beta = .10$, $p = .006$); IWC predicted competence ($\beta = .69$, $p < .001$), freewill ($\beta = .51$, $p < .001$), and responsibility ($\beta = .17$, $p < .001$); EIB predicted truth ($\beta = .34$, p $< .001$) and responsibility ($\beta = .31$, $p < .001$); EID predicted only freewill ($\beta = .45$, $p < .001$); and RE predicted competence ($\beta = .34$, $p < .001$) and truth ($\beta = .94$, $p < .001$) positively and significantly. Additionally, RE negatively predicted freewill ($\beta = -0.10$, $p < .001$).

In terms of the variance explained by the predictor variables, the dimensions of IWC and EIB jointly explained 20% of the variance observed in responsibility. The combination of EIB and RE accounted for 94% of the variance in truth. Competence was predicted with an explained variance of 82% by the dimensions of CM, IWC, and RE. Similarly, the combined influence of CM, IWC, EID, and RE explained 82% of the variance in freewill. These findings are visually presented in Figure 1.
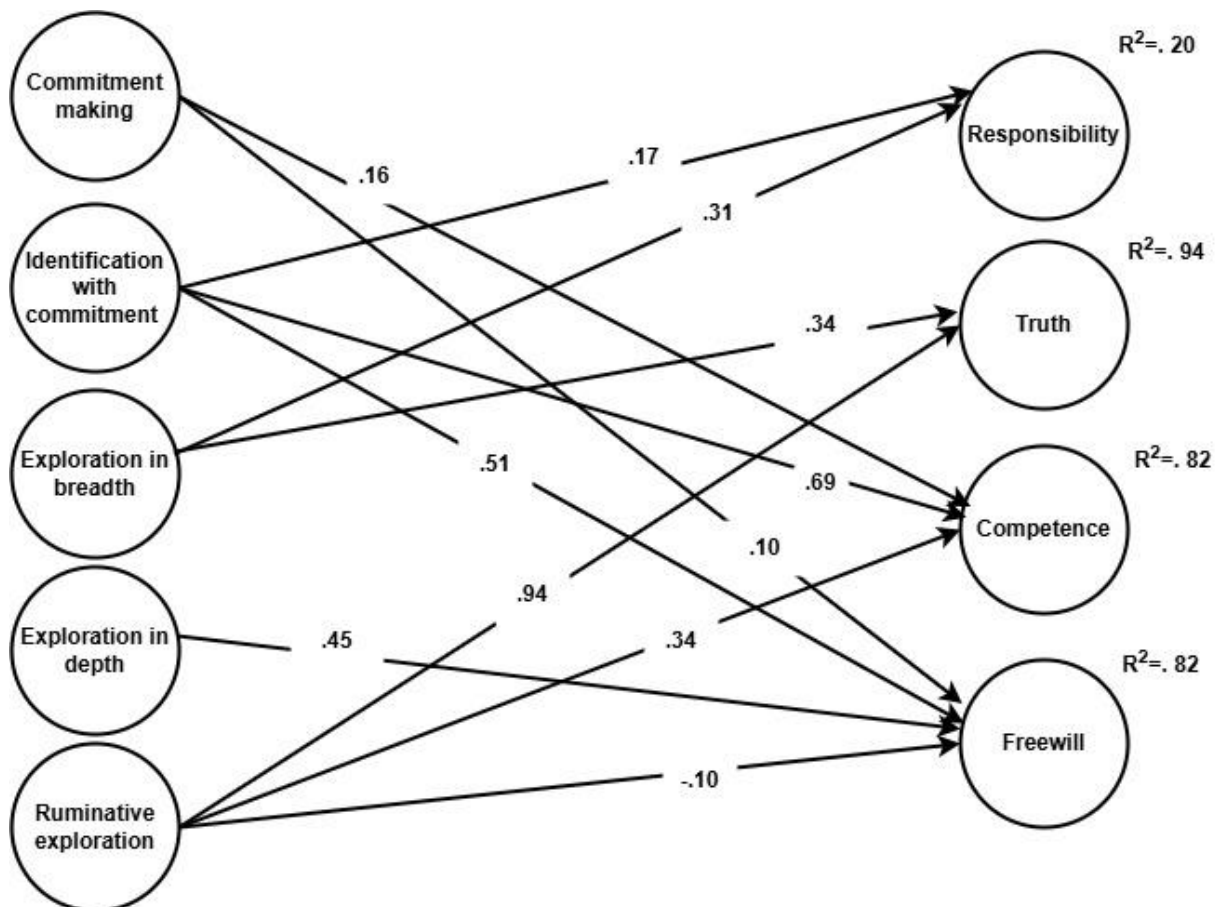

Figure 1. *Predictive role of identity development dimensions on the political consent dimensions of responsibility, truth, competence, and free will*

Discussion

The five dimensions of identity formation model created by Luyckx et al. (2008) are: IWC, CM, EIB, EID and RE. According to this model, these dimensions contain factors and degrees that directly affect identity formation. They describe processes related to how individuals feel about themselves, how they define themselves, how they internalize their choices, how much they assimilate internal investments, and how they explore options based on goals, values, and beliefs. They also refer to in-depth exploration of how well internal investments align with values. However, during identity formation, negative emotions can affect the process of exploring options, leading to difficulties in developing a sense of identity and the inability to make internal investments (Demir Kaya & Çok, 2023). Each of these dimensions plays a role in identity formation and impacts an individual's feelings and orientations toward their identity.

In our study, significant positive relationships were found between key elements of political consent and identity formation dimensions. Specifically, there were positive and significant relationships between the political consent dimension of responsibility and the dimensions of commitment making, identification with commitment, exploration in breadth, and exploration in depth. As the characteristics of these identity formation dimensions increase, so does the expression of responsibility within political consent. Additionally, as characteristics related to exploration in breadth, exploration in depth, and obsessive exploration increase, there are also increases in the dimension of truth within political consent. Similarly, there were positive and significant relationships between the political consent dimension of competence and all five dimensions of identity formation. As the dimensions of identity formation increased, competence also increased. Moreover, positive and significant relationships were observed between the political consent dimension of freewill and all identity formation dimensions, except for ruminative exploration. As these dimensions increased, so did the expression of freewill. No significant relationship was found between responsibility and obsessive exploration, or between truth and internal investment and identification with internal investment. Thus, these dimensions do not appear to be effective factors on these political consent dimensions. A negative relationship was observed between obsessive exploration and freewill: as ruminative exploration increased, the characteristics of freewill decreased. Upon reviewing the literature, no direct findings identical to our results were found. However, several studies indicated that political identity, partisan identity, and age-group identity influence political participation of individuals (Bankert, 2020; Collins et al., 2021; Trachtman, Anzia & Hill, 2023).

Based on the analysis, a significant positive relationship was found between the dimensions of identity formation and the elements of political consent. Given the strong impact of identity formation on identity development, we can conclude that identity significantly affects political consent. Therefore, individuals' identities are one of the key factors guiding behaviors such as political participation and voting.

Conclusion

The findings of the present study highlight the significant predictive roles of various dimensions of identity development in shaping different facets of political consent. Specifically, identity dimensions such as CM, IWC, EIB, EID, and RE were found to differentially contribute to the political consent dimensions of competence, freewill, responsibility, and truth. Among these, IWC emerged as a particularly strong predictor, especially in relation to competence and freewill, suggesting that a well-established sense of personal identity is critical for individuals to perceive themselves as capable and autonomous participants in political life. Additionally, RE—often considered a less adaptive form of identity processing—positively predicted competence and truth, yet negatively predicted freewill. This duality suggests that while reflective thinking may enhance individuals' awareness and critical understanding of political realities, it may also be associated with diminished perception of agency.

This study provides important insights into understanding the effects of identity development processes on political attitudes and voter behavior. Future research that explores the impact of identity exploration and commitment on political consistency and preferences in greater depth may offer significant contributions to the fields of political psychology and identity development. The study was completed using cross-sectional data. To make stronger causal inferences, future research should test the relationships between identity processes and political participation longitudinally. This approach will provide more detailed information on causality, allowing for a deeper understanding of the relationship between these two variables.

Declarations

Ethics Committee Approval
Ethical approval was obtained from Atatürk University Social Sciences Publication Ethics Committee (dated October 22, 2024; 18th session, decision number 261; protocol number E.88656144-000-2400348180).

Consent for Publication
Not applicable

Availability for Data and Materials
Not applicable

Competing Interests
The authors state that there are no conflicts of interest related to this manuscript.

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Author Contributions
AI and FK jointly proposed the main idea of the research. AI contributed to the data collection process. AI and FK conducted the analyses and contributed to the interpretation of the findings. They also made significant contributions to the writing of the introduction and discussion sections of the manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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