

How risk perceptions related to climate crisis and repression influence climate activism

Leah Hermsdorf, Tamar Lomidze, Miral Salah
Leitung: Dr. Mete Sefa Uysal

INTRODUCTION

Climate change is the biggest threat to humanity and the planet and the biggest challenge we had to face. To mitigate its harmful effects, mass political action and activism on a large scale, or better known as collective action, is needed. Research has shown us that the variables social identity, collective and participative efficacy and perceived justice have an impact on the willingness of people to participate in collective action (van Zomeren et. al, 2008). In this research we aim to investigate the effect of those factors in addition to the perception of protest risk and climate risk as well as the role that emotions play into it. Moreover, we wanted to explore the effects of collective impatience and activist identity on this willingness.

METHODS

Study design:

2x2 between subject factorial experiment
→ 4 conditions:

1. High Climate Risk and High Protest Risk
2. High Climate Risk and Low Protest Risk
3. Low Climate Risk and High Protest Risk
4. Low Climate Risk and Low Protest Risk



figure 1: manipulated article condition

→ Depending on the condition, the participants received a manipulated newspaper article and had to answer various items on the topic of climate activism.

Data collection:

We launched an online survey in May and June, 2023. Participants were recruited by sending an online link via the university's email distribution list and by sending this link via messenger to our private contacts. Participants who study Psychology at the Friedrich-Schiller-University received 0,25 test subject hours as reward. Prerequisite for participation was an age over 18 years and sufficient knowledge of German (C2).

Sample:

- n = 182
- age: 18-61 years (M = 24.4., SD = 8.45)
- gender: 130 women, 46 men, 5 non-binaries
- political orientation (1 as "left-wing" and 10 as "right-wing"):
M = 3.79, SD = 1.73

HYPOTHESES

1. Participants who are assigned to **high climate risk conditions** will show **greater willingness to participate in climate collective action** than those in low climate risk conditions.
2. Participants who are assigned to **high protest risk conditions** will show **greater willingness to participate in climate collective action** than those in low protest risk conditions.
3. **Higher activist identification** will be associated with a greater willingness to participate in climate collective action.
- 4a. **Higher group efficacy** will be associated with a greater willingness to participate in climate collective action.
- 4b. **Higher participative efficacy** will be associated with a greater willingness to participate in climate collective action.
5. **Greater emotion** (*incl. anger, hope, fear, guilt*) will be associated with a greater willingness to participate in climate collective action.

RESULTS

Hypotheses 1-2: ANOVA

Dependent variable: willingness to participate in climate collective action depending on:

- climate risk perception (High vs. Low): $F(1, 176) = 0.21, p = 0.648$ → **not significant**
- protest risk perception (High vs. Low): $F(1, 177) = 0.01, p = 0.939$ → **not significant**

Hypotheses 3-5: Correlation matrix → linear regression

predictors/covariates: Climate Activist Identification, Group Efficacy, Participative Efficacy, Collective Impatience & Emotions

Correlation matrix:

- **Activist identification** = the most positively correlated with collective action
(nonnormative collective action ($r = 0.760, p < .001$); normative collective action ($r = 0.706, p < .001$))
- Positive correlation between **Collective Impatience** and normative collective action ($r = 0.685, p < .001$)
- Positive correlations between **anger, fear, guilt** with both – normative and nonnormative – collective action

Note: Collective action was split into 2 factors using principal component analysis: normative & nonnormative collective action.

Linear regression to test the predictive value of the relevant variables as predictors for collective action:

Nonnormative collective action – significant effects ($R^2 = 0,70$):

Activist identification → collective action ($\beta = 0.593, p < .001$)

Collective Impatience → collective action ($\beta = 0.298, p < .001$)

Protest risk → collective action ($\beta = 0.370, p < .001$)

Normative collective action – significant effects ($R^2 = 0,64$):

Activist identification → collective action ($\beta = 0.368, p < .001$)

Collective Impatience → collective action ($\beta = 0.311, p < .001$)

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to investigate whether perceived low vs. high climate risk and low vs. high protest risk have an influence on the willingness to participate in collective action in the case of Germany.

Our findings highlight that among the variables the examined activist identification had the highest influence on collective action tendencies. The more participants identified as an activist, the higher were their collective action intentions. Furthermore, the greater the participants collective impatience, the more they are willing to act. If participants perceived higher protest risk, they were more likely to show nonnormative collective action tendencies. Contrary to our assumption we did not find this effect for climate risk too. This may be due to various reasons.

First, participation in any protest is affected by many factors such as activist identification, self-efficacy, group-efficacy, political orientation, and the direct effect of climate change. Moreover, to conduct this study we have done an online survey with an informative text about climate change and protest. Text-based manipulation was not influencing enough for the participants to perceive all the consequences and risks of climate change. It would be more efficient to manipulate these two variables via Videos so that the partakers can recognize the severe impact of climate change on different sectors and its average ramifications. Furthermore, the fact that participants could fill out the survey online, from home, at university, or in a neutral environment has affected our outcome.

REFERENCES

Mummendey, A., Kessler, T., Klink, A., & Mielke, R. (1999). Strategies to cope with negative social identity: predictions by social identity theory and relative deprivation theory. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 76(2), 229.

Uysal, M. S., Acar, Y. G., Sabucedo, J. M., & Cakal, H. (2022). 'To participate or not participate, that's the question': The role of moral obligation and different risk perceptions on collective action. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, 10(2), 445-459.

Van Zomeren, M. (2013). Four core social-psychological motivations to undertake collective action. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 7(6), 378-388.

Figure 1: Mete Sefa Uysal