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## RURAL CITIZENSHIP: DETERMINANTS OF ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP SELF-EFFICACY AMONG TURKISH RURAL RESIDENTS

### Ruralno građanstvo: determinante aktivne građanske samoefikasnosti među turskim ruralnim stanovnicima

**ABSTRACT:** *Despite its rare usage in the literature to date, rural citizenship has the potential to serve as a theoretical framework for understanding social behaviors and movements in rural communities. This study investigates the civic self-efficacy level of 531 adult participants living in rural Turkey. The results demonstrate that civic competence reflects the socioeconomic disadvantages of rural regions, including low-level income, gender, education, and undifferentiated economic activities and occupations. Participants had the lowest level of self-efficacy in political literacy (PL) compared to the other two dimensions: community engagement (CE), and demonstrations, protests, and the pursuit of rights (DPPR). Gender difference is the highest determinant of active citizenship self-efficacy, followed by education, time spent in the village, marital status, and monthly income. Findings suggest that interacting with the city appears to be enhancing rural residents' civic efficacy. These can provide evidence of rural regions exhibiting a unique pattern of citizenship. In the discussion section, we have interpreted the potential implications of the results.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Rural citizenship, rural sociology, active citizenship, civic self-efficacy, gender*

**APSTRAKT:** *I pored toga što se u literaturi do sada retko koristilo, ruralno građanstvo ima potencijal da posluži kao teorijski okvir za razumevanje društvenih ponašanja i pokreta u ruralnim zajednicama. Ova studija istražuje nivo građanske samoefikasnosti kod 531 odraslog učesnika koji žive u ruralnoj Turskoj. Rezultati pokazuju da građanska kompetencija odražava socio-ekonomske nedostatke ruralnih regiona, uključujući niske prihode, pol, obrazovanje i nediferencirane*

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*ekonomske aktivnosti i zanimanja. Učesnici su imali najniži nivo samoeфикаsnosti u političkoj pismenosti u poređenju sa ostale dve dimenzije: angažovanjem u zajednici i angažovanjem u demonstracijama, protestima i potragom za pravima. Polna razlika je najznačajniji faktor aktivne građanske samoeфикаsnosti, nakon čega slede obrazovanje, vreme provedeno u selu, bračni status i mesečni prihod. Nalazi sugerišu da interakcija sa gradom povećava građansku ефикаsnost ruralnih stanovnika. Ovo može pružiti dokaze da ruralni regioni pokazuju jedinstven obrazac građanstva. U odeljku diskusije interpretirali smo potencijalne implikacije rezultata.*

KLJUČNE REČI: *Ruralno građanstvo, ruralna sociologija, aktivno građanstvo, građanska samoeфикаsnost, pol*

## 1. Introduction

Despite the varieties of citizenship forms in current research, the geographical significance of citizenship, originally referring to membership in a political city-state, remains intact. Though rarely used, rural citizenship seems to have the potential for academic studies along with other forms of territorial citizenship, such as national, EU, and urban citizenship.

Citizenship competencies and behaviors are affected by several material and socio-cultural factors. Even in democratic countries, not every citizen has the same opportunity to participate in conventional and unconventional citizenship activities. Insensitivity, gender barriers, time limitations, legal restrictions, lack of education and financial resources, unavailability of social media tools, and geographic remoteness significantly hamper citizenship involvement. Social groups experiencing diverse disadvantages, including individuals with disabilities, those living in poverty, those experiencing homelessness, the elderly, women, those without sufficient education, immigrants, and those residing distant from decision-making hubs, are less likely to show active citizenship behaviors and less participation in decision-making processes (Casciano, 2007; Puumalainen, 2011; Ugur-Rizzi, 2023).

Rural residents struggle with various issues, including limited income, insufficient education, aging, depopulation, and physical isolation from local, national, or international decision-making centers. More importantly, implementing neo-liberal economic policies has resulted in severe environmental problems, expropriation of agricultural lands by state and private companies, and poverty in rural communities. Although the widespread use of social media technologies has contributed to a certain degree of equality for civic engagement, rural regions continue to face substantial disadvantages in this respect.

Rural citizenship has drawn special public attention due to the rise in environmental and agricultural disputes between rural communities and governmental and commercial organizations worldwide. Rural demonstrations sometimes have a distinctive pattern depending on economic and non-economic reasons (Wenzel, 2023). For example, Gospodarczyk (2024) shows that Polish farmers involved in the rural political movement Agrounia embody a certain

kind of rural masculinity that challenges the dominant paradigm of metropolitan, political masculinities. However, examining rural people's citizenship skills and behaviors is a neglected topic (Kelly & Yarwood, 2018). Residents of rural and urban areas are likely to exhibit distinct patterns of civic behaviors (Thananithichot, 2012). Given empirical evidence that civic self-efficacy is a critical factor in active citizenship behaviors along with civic values, knowledge, and participation (Schulz vd., 2010; Steenkamp & Loubser, 2016; Hoskins vd., 2015), we investigate this citizenship trait in different cultural and group setting. Self-efficacy is a domain-specific skill linked to behaviors (Bandura, 1997). Putnam (1994) argues that civic skills are social capital. He states that rural development studies "have shown that a vigorous network of indigenous grassroots associations can be as essential to growth as physical investment, appropriate technology" (p.11). Civic competencies may support rural inhabitants in advocating against public and private policy implementations that conflict with their interests and managing issues specific to their community. Given this significant effect, this study examines the prevalence of variables that influence active citizenship self-efficacy among individuals residing in rural areas.

Our main question therefore is this: What are the primary factors influencing rural residents' self-efficacy in active citizenship, and, given the findings obtained from other studies, how are these characteristics different from those of other populations? In order to pursue our question, we analysed data collected from 531 adult participants residing in 17 villages located in Uşak, a city situated in the Aegean area of Turkey. The convenience sampling method was preferred since the study aimed to test the model and hypotheses rather than generalize the results to the population.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. *Citizenship and active citizenship*

Although the idea of citizenship has been significant since Ancient Greece, it was T. H. Marshall who brought the notion of citizenship into sharp focus, contextualized it historically, and revived the citizenship debates. Marshall, confining his analysis to Britain, examined how citizenship has evolved in the contemporary era via the advancement of civil, political, and social rights (Marshall, 1992). However, as several scholars have argued, his approach does not seem to fit the contemporary conditions of citizenship (Bottomore, 1992; Kymlicka, 1995). According to Turner (2001), economic transformations, technological advancements, and globalization have overshadowed the Marshallian paradigm.

Active citizenship comprises various components, including cognitive dimensions, an attitude encompassing positive and negative attributional styles, and a manner of responding to, evaluating, and reacting to global, national, and community issues (Hoskins et al., 2012; Yazıcı, 2017; Arslan et al., 2017). Citizenship status provides individuals with legal and political safeguards

against oppressive authorities, regardless of origin (Janoski & Gran, 2002: 13). Citizenship encompasses the passive rights of individuals to live within a legal system and their active ability to influence politics. Active citizenship is a viable choice for responsible individuals in the face of the pressures imposed by political and legal institutions in contemporary democracies. The absence of active citizens' collective involvement hinders legislation's effectiveness (Crick, 2003: 12). In this context, looking at active citizenship as institutional practice and active citizenship as demand can uncover participation motives and internal dynamics of citizenship behaviors (Bee & Kaya (2017a). This distinction is crucial in countries wherein perceived participation hinders practices and political polarization and discontent are relatively high. Active citizenship as demand goes beyond official participation channels and includes community engagement and demonstrations, protests, rallies, and marches towards unjust practices (Bee & Kaya, 2017b; Janoski & Compion, 2020).

## *2.2. Rural citizenship*

Citizenship is a multi-layered concept referring to more than simply membership in a nation-state as a homogeneous population residing in a particular territory. The literature has different kinds of citizenship, including dual, environmental, European, cosmopolitan, multicultural, and rural (Isin & Turner, 2002; Bika, 2011; Bustos-Gallardo, 2021). Although the notion of rural citizenship has occasionally appeared in international literature (Kelly & Yarwood, 2018), it is not frequently used to refer to particular types of citizenship (Etrane-Duran & Diaz, 2004; Bustos-Gallardo, 2021). Rural citizenship is not limited to rural citizens' exercise of their social and political rights; it encompasses several issues beyond rural areas' borders, including food crisis, food security, natural environment destruction, and ecological balance deterioration. (Horn, 2023; Arslan, 2023). Hence, while rural citizenship is occasionally regarded as a membership at the local or regional level, its implications extend beyond the confines of national boundaries.

According to Woods (2006), as a research topic, rural citizenship is both a normative approach and an interpretative model. In practice, it is also utilized as an empowerment and exclusion mechanism. Woods argues that „the new critical politics of citizenship are already reshaping the political relations of rural societies, both in terms of internal power structures and systems of governance, and in terms of external relations with the state, corporations, and urban society“ (2006: 465). Rural protests against the destruction of the environment and public interests are everywhere globally (O'Brien, 2023). Accordingly, researchers studying environmental conflicts in rural areas should focus on citizenship formation and reformation and these conflicts' underlying interests, strategies, opportunities, and risks (Karambiri & Brockhaus, 2019).

Today, the decisions made by several national and international organizations over which rural residents have no voice significantly impact their daily lives. These people, being at the end of the decision-making process, are subject to several threats, including reductions in water supplies, residential area

growth, mining operations, and environmental harm from industrial activities (Tomashuk, 2017; Heffner & Twardzik, 2022). In rural China, for example, Brandtstadter (2011) reported that land-related issues were among the most prevalent problems faced by citizens and the government. Most public protests and rallies in rural Turkey within the last two decades were about gold extraction with cyanide, tourist road construction in the plateaus, hydroelectric power plants on rivers, and lignite coal-based energy production (Eryılmaz & Akman, 2016; Öztürk, 2017).

In this context, rural citizenship highlights a distinct perspective from the neoliberal conception of citizenship, which emphasizes the individual's engagement in economic activities rather than their attachment to a specific location. The potential inequality experienced by those lacking the necessary skills and resources required by neoliberalism may impede their ability to access networks and natural resources, perhaps resulting in the displacement of rural inhabitants. From this standpoint, Bustos-Gallardo (2021) argues that rural citizenship enables us to comprehend the democratic practices in rural regions. According to Wittman (2009), rural actors may effectively articulate their political demands, take appropriate actions, and get improved access to material and ecological resources in the metabolic rift environment caused by agro-industries.

### *2.3. Active citizenship self-efficacy*

The focus of this study is active citizenship self-efficacy. Gallagher (2012: 314) defines self-efficacy as “people’s domain-specific perceptions of their ability to perform the actions necessary to achieve desired outcomes.” Albert Bandura (1977), one of the pioneers of self-efficacy theory, emphasizes a causal connection between individuals’ self-efficacy levels and their behaviors. Self-efficacy perceptions significantly impact personal decision-making, behavior initiation and maintenance, persistence and determination, and associated affective states (Sherer & Adams, 1983; Schunk & Pajares, 2009; Yeung et al., 2012; Schulz et al., 2016).

Civic self-efficacy is the belief in one’s capacity to use political action to address specific circumstances and achieve desired results in particular political systems. Civic self-efficacy positively influences individuals’ engagement within society in political activities (Madsen, 1987; Yeung et al., 2012; Vecchione et al., 2014). As such, it determines how much people believe they can engage in political activities such as voting, participating in political campaigns, submitting a petition on an issue, and taking on responsibilities in a political process (Weber et al., 2004; Solhaug, 2006).

Recent research indicates that political self-efficacy has two aspects that should be considered distinct components in citizenship studies (Sohl, 2011; Eidhof & Ruyter, 2022). Internal political self-efficacy characterizes the belief that one can conduct political activities and influence processes, whereas external political self-efficacy is predicated on the idea that the political system is responsive to citizen demands (Balch, 1974; Bromme et al., 2020). These two

kinds of civic self-efficacy have a direct and mediating effect on citizenship behaviors (Arslan et al., 2023). While a deficiency in external civic self-efficacy might cause institutional discontent and distrust, a deficiency in internal self-efficacy is more likely to result in passive citizenship and a lack of interest in public affairs. People with a higher level of civic self-efficacy are likely to participate in conventional and unconventional citizenship (Yeich & Levine, 1994). The ability of individuals to participate in civic affairs does not necessarily imply that they have a tangible impact because the political, legal, and administrative factors in a particular nation also play a significant role. However, self-efficacy is a prerequisite skill for effective civic engagement.

#### *2.4. Gender, active citizenship, and self-efficacy*

Walby (1994) argues that access to citizenship is a profoundly gendered process, and women's caring responsibilities in the home are a significant barrier to their complete social citizenship. The participation of women in political processes is hindered by many other factors, including traditional, cultural, ideological, administrative, and financial barriers. These obstacles have a detrimental impact on women's civic engagement across multiple dimensions. Research shows that women have a lower level of self-efficacy than men (Shortall, 2006; Yazdanpanah et al., 2019) and less participation rate. In many societies, sexist discourses and practices are more prevalent in rural regions of many countries than in urban ones (Tyler & Fairbrother, 2013).

Rural residents may indicate different patterns of citizenship behaviors. The political participation of rural women is constrained by several factors, including the status of women in rural society, conventional gender ideology, the predominant focus on agriculture and economy in rural development narratives, and the absence of structural and cultural transformations in new management models (Bock & Derksen, 2008). Given the empirical evidence that education is positively associated with civic self-efficacy, the disadvantaged factors in rural areas are likely to affect rural citizens' self-efficacy. Studies reveal that women perceive their self-efficacy at a lesser level than men (Solhaug, 2006; Carpara et al., 2009), influencing women's participation behaviors (Madsen, 1987; Arslan et al., 2023). In his study on Chinese elderly individuals, Chai (2023) discovered that self-efficacy was impacted by differences in place of residence, with city dwellers having greater levels than rural residents. Kulbo et al. (2019) observed the same pattern, finding that teachers in Ghana's rural districts had lower levels of self-efficacy than those working in urban areas. According to the study conducted by Ubels et al. (2020) in the North Netherlands, the primary factors determining the non-engagement of rural residents were the presence of other priorities, lack of competence to engage, and the tendency to delegate the resolution of community issues to the local government.

Several factors are likely to affect conventional and unconventional citizenship behaviors: political knowledge (Boulianne & Theocharis, 2020), civic talk (Stattin & Russo, 2022), previous experience (Zlobina et al., 2024). Because self-efficacy beliefs have causative effects on citizenship behaviors and play

direct, mediating, and moderating effects (Myoung & Liou, 2022), we limited the research question in this study to that major variable.

### 3. The research model and hypothesis

The present study involves a descriptive research design grounded in the relational model. We identify the levels of active citizenship self-efficacy among rural residents in connection to the demographic variables that predict these traits. We first compare group differences in scores using data from the Active Citizenship Self-Efficacy Scale (ACSES) and its sub-dimensions. Second, the significance and degree to which the selected demographic factors affect active citizenship self-efficacy will be identified.

Accordingly, based on the literature review, our first hypothesis asks whether there are differences between the subcategories of the groups; the second one tests the effect of the variables on the total scores of active citizenship self-efficacy:

H1. There are statistically significant differences between rural participants' active citizenship self-efficacy scores and their gender, education level, occupation, marital status, time spent in the village, and monthly income.

H2. Gender, education level, occupation, marital status, time spent in the village, and monthly income significantly predict participants' active citizenship self-efficacy.

## 4. Method

### 4.1. Participants and data collection procedure

Data used in this study was recruited from 531 adult participants living in 17 villages in Uşak, a city in the Aegean region of Turkey. The city of Uşak is appropriate for the study purpose because it has comparable features to other medium-sized cities, such as job prospects in industry and agriculture, and because it is home to a specific population that lives in traditional rural communities and agricultural regions. The distance of the villages to the central city is between 4 and 23 km. The population of these villages varies between 104 and 1449. Their economic activity mainly includes animal husbandry (60.1%) and agricultural products such as wheat, oats, clover, corn, sugar beet, chickpeas, poppy, watermelon, and melon. Participants aged 18–87 years, with a 51,49 mean score. As shown in Table 1, the three largest categories are those involved in farming and livestock, retirees, and housewives. As the study's primary objective was to test the hypotheses rather than generalize the findings to the Turkish population, the convenience sampling approach was used to choose the sample. Convenience sampling is a technique for gathering samples that involves selecting samples that are easily placed in and around an area (Stratton, 2021). This method is utilized at times when the purpose of the study is to test an instrument or a new phenomenon rather than to a new phenomenon and the

results to a wider population. In our case, participants' residence in the village and being over 18 years of age were considered sufficient criteria for participation in the study. The data were obtained via in-person interviews from October to December 2018. We used only survey questions. The interviewers marked answers on the data-collecting instrument after asking each question orally one at a time. The completion of the survey took approximately 15 minutes.

**Table 1.** *Sociodemographic characteristics of participants*

Gender	N	%	Marital Status	N	%
Female	187	35.2	Married	465	87.6
Male	344	64.8	Single	66	12.4
Total	531	100.0	Total	531	100.0
Education level	N	%	Time spent in the village	N	%
No schooling	56	10.5	Whole year	431	81.2
Primary school graduate	302	56.9	Certain period of the year	100	18.8
Secondary and High School Graduate	157	29.6	Total	531	100.0
University graduate	16	3.0	Occupation	N	%
Total	531	100.0	Farming and Livestock	193	36,3
Monthly Income	N	%	Workers and Civil Servants	60	11,3
0–1000	37	7.1	Business, Self-Employment	27	5,1
1001–1600	138	26.4	Housewife	109	20,5
1601–3000	207	39.7	Retired	121	22,8
3001–4999	75	14.4	Other	15	2,8
5000–30000	65	12.5	Unemployed	6	1,1
Total	522	100.0	Total	531	100,0

#### 4.2. Data collection tool

The data collection tool used in the research consists of two main parts. The first part includes questions about the participants' demographic characteristics, such as gender, age, education, occupation, marital status, income, place of birth, and time spent in the village. The second contains the Active Citizenship Self-Efficacy Scale (ACSES) developed by Arslan et al. (2017). The ACSES consists of 18 questions with a 5-point Likert type (1=Never can do, 5= Always can do). Given that the ACSES was applied exclusively to the rural area group for the first time, it was determined to do the exploratory factor analysis using the acquired data. Based on the results of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) sampling adequacy (0.925) and Bartlett Sphericity test ( $p < .01$ ), the data was considered to have a normal distribution. The principal component analysis was applied using the direct oblimin rotation technique and the oblique rotation approach.

Three items were dropped from the original scale because of cross-loading items. The remaining 15 items showed the emergence of a 3-factor structure, as in the original: community engagement (CE), political literacy (PL), demonstration, protest, and pursuit of rights (DPPR) sub-domains. These three factors explained 66.364 percent of the total variance, with the first accounting for 25.25%, the second for 22.214%, and the third for 18.935%. Item wordings and factor loadings are presented in Table 2. The scale showed good reliability



scores, with Cronbach’s alpha score of .904 for all items and .861, .922, and .811 for CE, PL, and DPPR sub-domains, respectively.

**Table 2.** *Item wordings, factor loadings, means, and standard deviations of Active Citizenship Self-Efficacy Scale (ACSES).*

		Factor loadings			Means	SD
		1	2	3		
Community engagement (CE)	I can easily participate in activities that will improve my community (village/ neighborhood).	,812	,083	,211	3,74	1,318
	I can deal with problems in my environment or in the society I live in.	<b>,784</b>	,157	,178	3,56	1,308
	I can contribute to social problems in my environment or in the society I live in.	<b>,780</b>	,183	,255	3,63	1,281
	I can easily participate in activities organized by an association, foundation, or others.	<b>,693</b>	,213	,058	3,03	1,478
	I can lead a joint activity that benefits society or other people.	<b>,633</b>	,162	,335	3,37	1,436
	I am confident in my ability to help others.	<b>,572</b>	,188	,325	4,00	1,161
Political literacy (PL)	I can develop my thoughts on political issues	,186	<b>,896</b>	,149	2,97	1,455
	I can understand what is going on in politics.	,117	<b>,892</b>	,077	2,95	1,427
	I can say the general thoughts of political parties.	,223	<b>,856</b>	,098	3,09	1,484
	I can confidently interpret the events taking place in the world and Turkey.	,186	<b>,837</b>	,199	3,18	1,403
Demonstration, protest, and pursuit of rights (DPPR)	When I go to a government office, I can easily explain my demand.	,115	,150	<b>,818</b>	4,10	1,210
	I can claim my rights when I have been wronged.	,150	,086	<b>,813</b>	4,34	1,025
	I can oppose when the natural environment of where I live is harmed.	,459	,058	<b>,662</b>	4,18	1,103
	I can protest something that I see as unfair	,462	,105	<b>,613</b>	3,71	1,388
	I may contact a politician, government official, or local government official to express my opinion.	,319	,289	<b>,506</b>	3,14	1,588

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.  
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Ethical permission was received from the Çankırı Karatekin University Ethic Committee (grand number: 01.09.2014–07).

### 4.3. Data analysis

The skewness and kurtosis values were examined to ascertain the presence of a normal distribution in the data. Some researchers suggest that the data’s normal distribution criteria should fall between –1 and 1, whereas others claim that –2 to +2 is an acceptable range (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014). In this study, the

skewness and the kurtosis values were found to be  $-.578$  and  $-.172$ , respectively. These values show that the data is normally distributed and appropriate for parametric testing. As a result, using SPSS 23, the data were analyzed using the t-test, ANOVA, correlation, and hierarchical regression. Analyses were conducted for each sub-dimension of the scale separately and for the whole scale that was employed. The hierarchical regression model involves the researcher's sequential inclusion of predictive factors (Pallant, 2007). Hence, it is possible to determine the extent to which the explanatory factors incorporated into the model predict the dependent variable separately and together.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1. Results about active citizenship self-efficacy

Based on the findings of the t-test, there were statistically significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) in favor of men between the active citizenship self-efficacy scale scores of men and women ( $t_{(529)} = -6.26$ ). The marital status variable reveals that the mean of married individuals is notably higher than that of single individuals ( $t_{(529)} = -3.13$ ). Similarly, the mean of those who partially reside in the village is substantially higher than that of those who spend the entire year in the village ( $t_{(529)} = -4.14$ ).

**Table 3.** t-Test results of gender, marital status, and time spent in the village variables in terms of the ACSES scores

		N	$\bar{x}$	Std. Dev.	df	t	p	Hypothesis
Gender	Female	187	3.21	.902	529	-6.26	.000	Validated
	Male	344	3.70	.818				
Marital Status	Single	66	3.16	1.02	529	-3.130	.002	Validated
	Married	465	3.58	.844				
Time spent in the village	Whole year	431	3.45	.873	529	-4.149	.000	Validated
	Part of the year	100	3.85	.830				

In consideration of the Levene test results that guided the selection of Post Hoc tests, the Games Howell tests were selected for the education level variable ( $p = .016$ ), and Hochberg's GT2 tests were chosen for the monthly income level variable ( $p = .526$ ). According to the average total scores obtained from the ACSES, there is a statistically significant difference between individuals who have completed elementary school ( $p = .004$ ), middle school-high school ( $p = .000$ ), and university ( $p = .000$ ), all with  $p < .05$ . There was a difference between primary school graduates and secondary school graduates ( $p = .026$ ). The averages of university graduates are significantly different from those of primary school graduates ( $p = .019$ ) and those with no schooling. Although the total scores of university graduates from the scale are higher than all groups, there is no significant difference between secondary and high school graduates. Table 3 shows the t-test results for gender, marital status, and time spent in the village with two categories. In comparison, Table 4 presents the one-way ANOVA results for the variables education level and monthly income level with more than two categories.

**Table 4.** ANOVA results of education and monthly income variables regarding the ACSES scores.

		N	M	SD	Source	Sum of squares	Mean square	F	P	Group differences
Educational level	A-No schooling	56	2.99	1.02	Between groups	27.485	9.162	12.650	.000	Validated (A-B, A-C, A-D, B-C, B-D)
	B-Primary school graduate	302	3.50	.854	Within groups	381.684	.724			
	C-Secondary and High School Graduate	157	3.72	.789	Total	409.168				
	D-University graduate	16	4.08	.678						
	Total	531	3.53	.878						
Monthly income (TL)	A-0-1000	37	3.04	.845	Between groups	18.077	4.519	6.130	.000	Validated (A-C, A-D, A-E)
	B-1001-1600	138	3.36	.863	Within groups	381.115	.737			
	C-1601-3000	207	3.59	.896	Total	399.192				
	D-3001-4999	75	3.71	.831						
	E-5000-30000	65	3.72	.756						
	Total	522	3.53	.875						

There is a difference in the ACSES total score averages between the groups, as determined by Hochberg’s GT2 test results about the monthly income level variable, with the lowest income level (1000 TL and below), 1601–3000 TL ( $p = .004$ ), 3001–4999 TL ( $p = .001$ ) and 5000 and above ( $p = .001$ ). The ACSES total score did not differ significantly ( $p = .363$ ) between the groups whose income ranged from 1000 TL and below and those whose income ranged from 1001–1600 TL.

We also calculated participants’ active citizenship self-efficacy in three sub-dimensions: CE, PL, and DPPR. Males, married individuals, and those who reside in the village for specific periods of the year exhibit higher mean scores. The t-test results indicate that there are statistically significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) between the scores obtained by men and women on the CE, PL, and DPPR subscales ( $t_{(529)} = -4.29$ ;  $t_{(529)} = -7.21$ ;  $t_{(529)} = -3.39$ , respectively). Except for the variables of marital status and time spent in the village within the DPPR sub-dimension, all other variables in the three sub-dimensions exhibited a significant relationship.

*5.2. Variables predicting active citizenship self-efficacy*

Our second hypothesis states that gender, education level, occupation, marital status, time spent in the village, and monthly income significantly predict participants’ active citizenship self-efficacy. A hierarchical regression model was implemented to examine this hypothesis. The statistical procedures ensured that the results satisfied the assumptions of normality, sample size, and absence of autocorrelation. The Dubrin-Watson autocorrelation coefficient was

determined to have a value of 1.649, which falls within the accepted range of 1.5 to 2.5, as reported in the literature (Field, 2005). This finding suggests that the variables do not correlate with two consecutive time intervals represented in the data. Multicollinearity does not exist because the tolerance value exceeds 0.2, spanning from 877 to 996, and the VIF value falls within the range of 1.004 to 1.140. Table 5 shows the correlation levels between the study’s dependent and independent variables.

**Table 5.** *Correlation of predictor and predicted variables with each other*

Variables		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Gender	Pearson Correlation	1								
	Sig. (2-tailed)									
	N	531								
2. Educational level	Pearson Correlation	,209**	1							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000								
	N	531	531							
3. Marital status	Pearson Correlation	,057	,013	1						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,191	,767							
	N	531	531	531						
4. Time spent in the village	Pearson Correlation	,083	,199**	,035	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,056	,000	,415						
	N	531	531	531	531					
5. Monthly income	Pearson Correlation	,068	,237**	,049	,087*	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,120	,000	,268	,048					
	N	522	522	522	522	522				
6. ACSES Total mean score	Pearson Correlation	,263**	,249**	,156**	,178**	,195**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000				
	N	531	531	531	531	522	531			
7. Community Engagement	Pearson Correlation	,191**	,169**	,179**	,114**	,122**	,875**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,008	,005	,000			
	N	531	531	531	531	522	531	531		
8. Political Literacy	Pearson Correlation	,299**	,267**	,089*	,243**	,236**	,736**	,430**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,040	,000	,000	,000	,000		
	N	531	531	531	531	522	531	531	531	
9. Demonstration, Protest, and Oursuit of Rights	Pearson Correlation	,153**	,177**	,102**	,078**	,122**	,824**	,654**	,388**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,019	,072	,005	,000	,000	,000	
	N	531	531	531	531	522	531	531	531	531

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results obtained from the Pearson Correlation analysis indicated that the CE sub-dimension exhibited the strongest correlation with the entire scale ( $r = .875, p < .01$ ). The results indicated that the PL subscale yielded a value of .736 ( $p < .01$ ), while the DPPR subscale produced 0.824, ( $p < .01$ ).

Using hierarchical regression, five models were produced measuring the effect of independent variables on active citizenship self-efficacy. Each model is built with a new variable added to the previous model. The Adjusted  $R^2$  ( $R^2_{(adj)}$ ) column in Table 6 shows how much the models explain active citizenship self-efficacy. Accordingly, the gender (being male) variable included alone in Model 1 has a significant effect on the ACSES total score ( $R^2 = .071, R^2_{(adj)} = .070, \Delta R^2 = .071$ ). The effect rate increased to 11.2% when education level and gender were included in Model 2 ( $R^2 = .116, R^2_{(adj)} = .112, \Delta R^2 = .044$ ). In other models, marital status ( $R^2 = .132, R^2_{(adj)} = .127, \Delta R^2 = .016$ ), time spent in the village ( $R^2 = .146, R^2_{(adj)} = .140, \Delta R^2 = .014$ ) and monthly income were added ( $R^2 = .161, R^2_{(adj)} = .153, \Delta R^2 = .015$ ), respectively. Model 5, in which five independent variables are considered, predicts 15.3% of the variance in the dependent variable. In addition, the effect of the occupation variable was also examined in the regression analysis. However, it was observed that the occupation variable had not a significant effect and even reduced the explanation rate (15.2%). Therefore, regression analysis is limited to 5 models.

**Table 6.** Model summary

Model	R	$R^2$	Adjusted $R^2$	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					$R^2$ Change ( $\Delta R^2$ )	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1.	.267 <sup>a</sup>	.071	.070	.84428	.071	40.031	1	520	.000	
2.	.340 <sup>b</sup>	.116	.112	.82470	.044	25.985	1	519	.000	
3.	.364 <sup>c</sup>	.132	.127	.81781	.016	9.781	1	518	.002	
4.	.382 <sup>d</sup>	.146	.140	.81198	.014	8.465	1	517	.004	
5.	.401 <sup>e</sup>	.161	.153	.80556	.015	9.273	1	516	.002	1.649

- a. Predictive variables: (Constant), gender (male)
- b. Predictive variables: (Constant), gender (male), education level
- c. Predictive variables: (Constant), gender (male), education level, marital status (married)
- d. Predictive variables: (Constant), gender (male), education level, marital status (married), time spent in the village (part of the year)
- e. Predictive variables: (Constant), gender (male), education level, marital status (married), time spent in the village (part of the year), monthly income

The statistical analysis reveals that the five predictor variables exhibit a significant ( $p < .01$ ) correlation with ACSES across all models. The gender variable demonstrates the highest Beta value ( $\beta = .207$ ) across all models, followed by the variables education level ( $\beta = .163$ ), monthly income ( $\beta = .127$ ), marital status ( $\beta = .120$ ), and time spent in the village ( $\beta = .116$ ). The regression equation created according to Model 5 is as follows:

Active citizenship self-efficacy = (2.185) + (0.380 x gender) + (0.209 x education level) + (0.317 x marital status) + (0.259 x time spent in the village) + (0.102 x monthly income)

Accordingly, H2 was validated. Predictor variables exhibit a statistically significant impact across all models in which they are incorporated.

**Table 7.** Hierarchical regression analysis results for predicting active citizenship self-efficacy

Model	Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	p	Zero-order	Partial	Hypothesis (H2)
1	(Constant)	3.214	.062		51.634	.000			Validated
	Gender	.489	.077	.267	6.327	.000	.267	.267	
2	(Constant)	2.646	.127		20.842	.000			
	Gender	.405	.077	.221	5.243	.000	.267	.224	
	Educational level	.277	.054	.215	5.098	.000	.263	.218	
3	(Constant)	2.360	.156		15.173	.000			
	Gender	.391	.077	.214	5.093	.000	.267	.218	
	Educational level	.275	.054	.214	5.119	.000	.263	.219	
	Marital status	.340	.109	.128	3.127	.002	.146	.136	
4	(Constant)	2.390	.155		15.441	.000			
	Gender	.383	.076	.209	5.017	.000	.267	.215	
	Educational level	.245	.054	.191	4.511	.000	.263	.195	
	Marital status	.331	.108	.125	3.065	.002	.146	.134	
	Time spent in the village	.270	.093	.121	2.909	.004	.181	.127	
5	(Constant)	2.185	.168		13.043	.000			
	Gender	.380	.076	.207	5.012	.000	.267	.215	
	Educational level	.209	.055	.163	3.777	.000	.263	.164	
	Marital status	.317	.107	.120	2.955	.003	.146	.129	
	Time spent in the village	.259	.092	.116	2.812	.005	.181	.123	
	Monthly income	.102	.033	.127	3.045	.002	.195	.133	

## 6. Discussion and conclusion

Recent academic research has significantly focused on civic self-efficacy as a crucial determinant of active citizenship behavior (Caprara et al., 2009). This study is the first investigation on the efficacy of active citizenship in a rural setting. A general finding is that participants showed the most significant rate of self-efficacy in the sub-domain of DPPR (M=3,89), followed by CE (M=3,55) and PL (M=3.04). The fact that more than half of those surveyed had only completed primary school (% 56, 9) and had no formal schooling (10.5%) may explain why the behavioral competence-related DPPR and CE dimensions are greater than the knowledge-related PL dimension.

The findings of this study highlight the significance of the gender variable as the most influential factor in assessing active citizenship self-efficacy. Several

studies on civic participation demonstrate that women continue to participate at lower rates than males in conventional and unconventional activities (Iezzi & Derio, 2014). According to Bock and Derkzen's (2008) study, traditional gender ideology has a significant role in explaining why women in rural regions do not participate in politics. Researchers also reported evidence of gender differences in self-efficacy skills in different groups (Solhaug, 2006; Carpara et al., 2009). However, what is unique about this study is that, out of all the variables, the gender variable had the highest determining factor. This phenomenon can likely be attributed to the high level of gender disparity that is prevalent in rural areas, as well as the fact that women bear the most significant burden of domestic responsibilities and simultaneously work in the agriculture business. Our finding that married individuals have significantly higher active citizenship self-efficacy ratings than single individuals is correlated with existing research (Fakih & Sleiman, 2024). This finding may be related to the social bond and support provided by the individual's relationship with her immediate environment (Yeung et al., 2012).

Findings on the impact of educational levels are in line with research done in many contexts and cultures (Hurenkamp et al., 2011). Research shows that education is essential in equalizing gender inequalities and is the most crucial element influencing active citizenship behavior. In our study, participants' self-efficacy scores increased with education level, with university graduates having the highest scores.

The connection between citizenship behavior and competencies results from an interaction of social context and individual characteristics (Yeung et al., 2012). As a social space, although villages are often isolated locations, there are certain transitional links between urban and rural areas. Many who still live in cities in Turkey were born in rural areas or their parents. Despite intense urbanization after the 1950s, Turkey is not a country that has completely severed its ties with the peasantry (Hobsbawm, 1995). Because family and kinship relations are high in Turkey, some employees working in the city reside in nearby villages, and most people visit the villages where they were born in the summer months. These contextual factors may explain transitional factors between rural and urban areas. To ascertain the impact of this variable on citizenship self-efficacy, we sought to explain if the participants' lifetime residence in the village made a difference. Our hypothesis was verified by the collected data, indicating a difference in active citizenship self-efficacy and sub-dimensions of the scale between those who spend the whole year in the village and those who spend part of the year in the village.

In this study, we did not compare urban and rural areas. Nevertheless, by comparing our findings with research conducted in the Turkish setting (Arslan et al., 2023), it can be inferred that urban residents exhibit higher civic self-efficacy than their rural counterparts. This conclusion is inconsistent with findings obtained by Thananithichot (2012) in Thailand. The author found that rural voters exhibit higher political engagement levels than their urban counterparts. Despite being economically disadvantaged and having lower

educational attainment, rural citizens in Thananithichot's study demonstrate comparable interest, knowledge, and political efficacy in politics. However, the disparity between our results and Thananithichot's may be attributed to the type of self-efficacy employed in both studies. Thananithichot employed an external self-efficacy scale in contrast to our measurement of internal self-efficacy. One possible explanation for this disparity might be that external self-efficacy is more susceptible to the effect of socio-political factors, whereas internal self-efficacy is more likely to be influenced by demographic characteristics such as education and gender. This contrast is interesting, and further investigation is needed to determine the worldwide nature of rural citizenship characteristics.

The scores for income variables in active citizenship self-efficacy also showed significant differences across groups, with higher income levels indicating higher levels of self-efficacy. This conclusion aligns with previous research findings (Fakih & Sleiman, 2024). The occupation variable does not seem to determine the civic skills of village residents. This may be because the economic activities of the participants are intertwined, and social relations do not differ depending on their professions. For example, women responding housewives also primarily work in agricultural jobs in the village. Retiree participants also continue to work in agricultural and livestock activities.

The findings and implications of this research are significant for several reasons. Although the rural population is decreasing in many countries, those living in rural areas continue to produce a significant proportion of global food production. Global food crises arise as a result of the depletion of natural resources and the degradation of the environment due to flawed practices and political choices. Currently, food security is a worldwide issue. Despite the growing public awareness of this matter, the magnitude and variety of dangers continuously expand daily. In several regions around the globe, some protests specifically pertain to rural inhabitants and are spearheaded by them. However, even though environmental impact assessment procedures in the planning, execution, and monitoring of the effects of development projects must involve the public effectively by sustainable development standards and principles, interest and involvement in these processes have been reported to be relatively low in many countries (Crotty & Hall, 2012). In this regard, creating systems that bolster civic engagement and civic competencies concerning rural development issues and procedures would be beneficial. The general civic behavior of rural residents—primarily at the center of the agricultural production process—and their capacity to handle the particular circumstances and procedures they encounter are closely associated with their citizenship competency. Developing ways to enhance civic skills and engagement would likely oppose unjust and destructive implementations and thus lead to institutional trust and fairness.

Finally, it is necessary to point out some limitations of the study. While the study's sample size was enough to detect the impact of the factors, it is essential to note that our findings cannot be generalized to Turkey or other countries. The research findings are derived from data collected from 17 villages geographically linked to a city. Still, we believe that these kinds of research, conducted in many



rural locations, will be significant in identifying the factors that influence active citizenship in rural areas. A second limitation is that even though each of the five demographic factors under investigation had a unique impact on self-efficacy in active citizenship, these variables only had a very low (15.3%) prediction rate on the dependent variable. This low level of predictive power is likely because of the homogeneity of the group investigated. Conducting both qualitative and quantitative research with more variables might be beneficial in future studies to uncover the underlying causes behind this phenomenon.

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