A Psycho-Political Analysis of Voting Pscyhology "An Empirical Study on Political Psychology"[1]

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Abstract

Political researches assert that there are hundreds of factors that influence voter's preferences and decisions. This study is based on hypotheses which suggest that: (a) all factors influencing the voting behaviour build a joint and collective psychology in voters, in the last instance, on the elections day; (b) the collective feeling is an important political motivation that politicise the voters; (c) voters who have a collective feeling have joint political approaches and make similar decisions; (d) factors such as voters' sociodemographic characteristics; their prediction about the future of the country; their political knowledge and experience; the importance they attach to elections and their votes have a deep impact on the 'collective feeling', and; (e) elections are critical milestones that often relieve the voter who has been going through various emotions and fill him/her up with new emotions. To test these hypotheses, 478 voters in the Elazığ province of Turkey were surveyed during the Local Elections of 29 March 2009. The first stage of the survey, which consisted of a two-part form, was completed by voters before voting. The second stage, a follow up to the first form, was completed by the same voters straight after they had cast their votes. This way, the researcher was able to make a psycho-political analysis of the relationship between the factors that influenced voting behaviour and the 'collective psyche' voters develop immediately before and after voting. Based on some of the findings, 44.6% of the voters experienced negative feelings such as hesitation, anger, unhappiness, weariness, hate, guilt and fear immediately before they went to the ballot boxes. 29.8% said their mood changed straight after they had used their votes. The majority of the voters who harboured negative feelings before voting felt relieved afterwards. Although this means that using a vote has a somewhat relaxing side that relieves stress, it also indicates that voters cannot fully get out of the election psychology after voting. These and other findings confirmed all of the above hypotheses.

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Introduction

Do citizens vote because they are partisans of a political party or because of their ideological tendencies? Or do objective events in the economic structure such as unemployment and inflation which have a direct impact on society's material wellbeing have a significant influence on the direction of voting? And finally, do voters – with a pragmatist thinking as classical democracy theoreticians claim - make rational choices or, as some claim, should they be regarded as gullible individuals who are vulnerable to the manipulations of political campaigns and the media? (Gökçe et al, 2002:6-7). There is a direct and deep relation between how and based on what voters make their choices in a country and the psychological, historical, socio-economical and socio-cultural codes of that country. What needs to be taken into account at this point in terms of political sociology is that empirical studies on the psychological aspects of politics have been rather narrow. When talking about the psychological aspects of politics, individual oriented studies conducted to understand political motivations and behaviours should come to mind. One of the objectives of political psychology is to research the factors that may influence individuals' political positions, behaviours and decisions and to present the results in a way that is compatible with political science.

This study is a first in its field and no traces of another study was found in the political psychology literature, which examined the collective psyche that the voters develop on the day of the elections through an experimental method. This research claim that: all factors influencing the voting behaviour show up as a "collective feeling" in the voters in the last instance; this collective feeling is an important political energy that forces people to vote; voters that have a collective feeling vote for the same or a similar party even if they are not aware of each other's feelings, and; factors such as voters' socio-demographic characteristics, their political knowledge and experience and the importance they attach to elections and their vote create miscellaneous albeit same or similar feelings within the society. On the other hand, it must be noted that national and international agenda are factors that have a deep impact on the political atmosphere of the public and voters' collective feeling.

In this study, an empirical research has been conducted on the basis of these claims. As a result, some models and generalisations which can be regarded as a theory have been reached. The study aims to: (1) assist understanding of the voter's psychology; (2) allow political actors to get to know voters better from different angles; (3) make an original contribution to the literature, and; (4) introduce a new study area to the attention of interested parties. The information pool that will be created by repeating this study, which was conducted in Turkey, in other locations, with different variables, will in time allow the researchers to develop a more macro-sized "theory" on the "collective political feeling".

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Political Psychology

2.1.1. The Concept of Political Psychology and Areas of Interest for Political Psychology

Political psychology is an important field both in political sciences and in psychology which helps us explain many aspects of political decisions and actions (Özer, 2014: 1). This relationship between politics and psychology has been emphasised since ancient times. As Dorna expressed, "Aleteia" and "Politeia" are correlated because public action is often linked to the subject at a certain time and in a certain context (Bilgin, 2005: 22). On the other hand, what makes political psychology an authentic discipline is that it views the relationship between politics and character as an interrelation. According to this argument, just as our character influences our political behaviours, developments in the political arena can shape our personality (Eker, 2012: 161-162).

In fact, many people do not question the political, economic or social content of their actions. They often refrain from categorising their behaviours. For example, a person is against violence not as a political statement but for personal and moral reasons. However, there is no rule that says 'everybody who is against violence is also against war and military service'. Nobody becomes a solider just because they like violence or at least, we cannot develop such a deductive reasoning. Naturally, behaviour has many aspects (quoted from Cottam et al by Özer, 2014: 5): i.e. political, personal, cultural, economic, emotional, ideological, religious, etc…

With this perspective, it is possible to define political psychology which "enquires about the reasons of certain political behaviours" (Özer, 2014: 2) as a discipline that examines the psychological reasons and results of political behaviour, or as an interdisciplinary field that endeavours to explain political behaviour based on psychological principles (Özer, 2014: 1). Similarly, Kuklinski (quoted by Ersaydı, 2013: 40) defines political psychology as an area that researches the mental processes underlying political decisions and judgements. On the other hand, political psychology addresses the relations between large groups, masses and nations and assesses the psychological factors that play a role in them. Therefore, political psychology also studies the psychological dimensions of the relations between/among large groups and nations and their leaders (Çevik, 2009: 15). Eventually, as it stands today, this science, which covers a wide range of issues from personality studies to group dynamics, voting behaviour to neuro-politics, feeds from many different faculties such as psychology, psychiatry, sociology, history, communications, anthropology, theology and law.

Effects of personality on voter's preferences and voting behaviour (quoted from Ward by Eker, 2012: 160); leaders and their followers; social reflexes, perceptions, discrimination, prejudices, massacres, conflicts, violence, terrorism, neuro-political issues (Ersaydı, 2013: 41); passivity of the political class; relations between the elected and the voters; ways of coping with authoritarian and machiavellist individuals; socialisation; authoritarian tendencies in children; effects of TV, family and friends (Bilgin, 2005: 41) etc. are all areas that political psychology is interested in.

Apart from these, issues such as pressure groups, social traumas, civil wars, genocides, integration of migrants and the psychology of national/ethical identities (İnan, kamudiplomasisi.org: 4) are also recent areas of importance for political psychology.

However, the possibility that studies in political psychology, which has such a wide-ranging background and highly speculative subjects, may lose the equilibrium between ethical values and objectivity can lead to devastating effects for science and the society. Indeed, in this field intention is just as important as the level of intellectual knowledge. On this, Tetlock says:

"Scientists are not the masters but the servants of the society and they should remain so. When we secretly include our political values in the findings of our research (accidentally or deliberately), we serve neither science nor to the society".

Otherwise, political psychology would become politicised and that politicisation would bring the total collapse of our reliability in political psychology as a science (Sears, 1994: 548). So how can the political psychologist study/overcome issues that are full of political conflicts without appearing as the supporter of a political party? On this Sears (1994: 551) asserts that, as a start, we should compare two different situations: "The first is whether or not one's own political predispositions bias one's research. The second is whether we begin with strong theories that organize out empirical work or start with data and induce generalizations from them. In political psychology, these two issues tend not to be as distinct as they are in some other fields (though we are scarcely alone in the social sciences in facing this problem)". From another and different perspective, the reason behind the possibility of political psychology's suffering is not caused by those who research in this area but by the weakness of the critical standards of those who assess it (Sniderman, 1994: 541).

According to a general opinion that is politically recognised, order is as much a part of life as is disorder. Therefore, when building something that is right and ethical, politics is a necessity to be able to keep the order as is and to bring order to disorder. However, at this point, as a functional and an important part of politics, political psychology needs to be understood, practiced and interpreted correctly.

2.1.2. Emergence and Development of Political Psychology

Political Psychology, which has existed since the first ages of history, first emerged as a science in the USA during WWI and WWII. Individual and social effects/impacts of developments such as: the irrationally devastating consequences of WWI and II; the rise of totalitarian regimes; increased diversity and quantity of mass communications tools, above all else social media; post-modernism and the escalating debates on diversity and multi-culture that came along with it; terrorism; and national and global economic crises that seem to have become routine developments of our age, have made it a must to understand the relationship between "politics" and "psychology".

The scientific development of political psychology from past to present has many stages. These stages are respectively as follows: Psychodynamic Theory; Group Theory; Behavioural Learning Theory; Social Cognition Theory; Group Conflict Theory, and Bio-political Theory (quoted from Cottam et al by Ersaydı, 2013: 42). McGuire presents another perspective. According to him there are three major stages in the development of political psychology: *The period between 1940 and 1959:* During this period, when research focussed on studying personality and culture, political behaviours were explained by the effects of the social environment on the individual. The *period between 1960 and 1970:* During this period when the focus was on selection behaviours and approaches, political behaviours were explained by the social learning method. The *period between 1980 and 1990:* During these years, which can also be defined as the period of political ideology, cognitivist theories that aimed to describe complicated cognitive processes and systems were in the forefront (Bilgin, 2005: 25, Ersaydı, 2015: 43).

After the 1970's when the first political psychology handbook had been published, the International Society of Political Psychology was established and it has been organising periodical congresses in various countries since then (Bilgin, 2005: 42). In 1978, Professor of Psychiatry Jeanne N. Knutson founded the International Society for Political Psychology – ISPP) which provided an official quality to this field (Ersaydı, 2013: 55). Prof. Dr. Vamık Volkan from Turkey was the 4th president of ISPP. During his presidency, the Society wrote its Constitution (İnan, kamudiplomasisi.org: 8). Today with more than 500 members and its very own "Political Psychology Periodical", ISPP is a professional organisation (Sears, 1987: 229).

In the early 80's political psychology as a science and a research area was known to a very limited circle in Turkey. In 1992, during the coalition government of Süleyman Demirel and Erdal İnönü, the Political Psychology Centre, under State Minister Ekrem Ceyhun, was established with the approval of the Prime Minister of the time. The centre conducted its activities under the coordination of Prof. Dr. Abdülkadir Çevik and Prof. Dr. Birsen Ceyhun. The Prime Ministry Political Psychology Centre which had adopted a psychoanalytic methodology via an interdisciplinary board of advisors, studied fields such as terrorism, migration, identity, social mourning and settlement of social conflicts till 1997.

Although experts continued their individual studies in this area after the centre's closure, the second institutional attempt in this field took place only in 2002 with the foundation of the political psychology desk at the Eurasian Strategic Studies Centre (ASAM) under the leadership of Prof. Dr. Ümit Özdağ (Ersaydı, 2013: 55-56).

3. Hypotheses of the Research

[*Hypothesis 1*]   On the day of the elections, all factors that influence the voting behaviour appear as miscellaneous "collective feelings" in the voters at the ballot boxes in the last instance.

[*Hypothesis 2*]   This socio-political collective feeling that the voters, who are unaware of each other's feelings, have may make the voters share the same feelings and make similar decisions.

[*Hypothesis 3*]   Collective feeling does not only carry traces of the society's collective memory but is also an important political motivation and a political energy that forces the citizens to vote or make them apolitical individuals.

[*Hypothesis 4*]   Factors such as: (a) voters' sociodemographic characteristics; (b) their prediction about the future of the country; (c) their political knowledge and experience, and; (d) the importance they attach to elections and their votes have a deep impact on the 'collective feeling'.

[*Hypothesis 5*]   Political atmosphere turn people into political entities by filling and encompassing them with emotions. Elections are critical milestones that often relieve and de-stress the voter who has been going through various emotions and fill him/her up with new ones at every turn.

4. Empirical Study

4.1. Methodology of Research

This study was conducted by using the survey technique on 478 voters during the Local Elections of 29 March 2009 in Turkey. The survey was conducted in the province of Elazığ. The first stage of the survey, which consisted of a two-part form was completed by the voters before they used their votes. The second stage, a follow up to the first form, was conducted face-to-face with the same voters, straight after they had cast their votes.

Voters included in the research sampling had different socio-demographic characteristics such as their gender, age or education level and they were identified by simple random sampling. This sampling method was preferred because each item had equal probability of being included in the sampling (Yaşın, 2003: 151). A pilot study was conducted on ±5% of the sample group (40 people) to test the reliability and accuracy of the survey. Test subjects were asked to give written feedback, with explanation, on the questions in the survey that were not clear; areas of the survey that should be improved and particularly their mood immediately before and after casting their vote.

The SPSS 18.00 package programme was used in the analyses of the obtained data and the significance level between the variables was tested by Chi-square, ANOVA (F Test) and T-Tests.

4.2. Analysis and Interpretation of the Research Data

4.2.1. Socio-Demographic Data

Table 1: Sociodemographic Attributes

Gender	f	%	Marital Status	f	%	Occupation	f	%	Education	f	%
Female	173	36,3	Married	260	57,3	Private Sector	111	23,9	Illiterate	24	5,1
Male	304	63,7	Single	194	42,7	Public Servant	81	17,5	Primary School	85	18
Total	477	100	Total	454	100	Housewife	89	19,2	Secondary School	40	8,5
Age	f	%	Monthly Income3	f	%	Student	120	25,9	High School	120	25,4
			500 TL and below	166	36,6	Unemployed	25	5,4	University	190	40,2
18-25	163	34,5	501-1000 TL	146	32,2	Farmer	7	1,5	Postgraduate	14	3
26-35	124	26,2	1001-1500 TL	95	21	Retired	31	6,7	Total	473	100
36-55	139	29,4	1501-2000 TL	35	7,7	Total	464	100			
56 and over	47	9,9	2001 TL and above	11	2,4						
Total	473	100	Total	453	100						

4.2.2. Voters' Expectations and Views of the Future Immediately Before Voting

45.8% of the participants were optimistic about the future while 43.3% were pessimistic and 10.9% had no opinion on it. Although it is difficult to directly link the high percentage (54.2) of pessimistic and indecisive participants to political decisions and practices, it is clear that the psycho-political climate will deeply influence the political decisions and preferences of the voters and appear as a collective feeling *[Hypothesis 2 – Hypothesis 4b].*

-    3 At the time of this study, 1$ = 1.6682 TL; today (30 June 2015), 1$ = 2.6863 TL.
-    Source: www.mevzuatbankasi.com/portal/doviz_kurlari_liste.asp?doviz_id=1&doviz_yil=2009&doviz_ay=3

The Relations between the Socio-demographic Factors and the Voters' Expectations and Views of the Future of the Country

In terms of socio-demographic factors, women were more pessimistic and indecisive about the future. The research data demonstrate that women and men have different emotional poles about the future of the country. Men are more optimistic about the future while women are more pessimistic and uncertain. In terms of age, the older participants were more optimistic about the future of the country. This can be because the younger population and the older individuals have different ways of interpreting living conditions and real political developments. Meanwhile, as education level decreased, the percentage of pessimists increased.

This is an indication that education provides the individual with the ability to develop a vision about the future and read and interpret complicated political fields which require an expertise. On the other hand, as the level of income increased, the percentage of optimists increased. With the decisions it will take and the practices it will implement, politics is the only mechanism that can provide humanity with welfare and the opportunity to look at the future with hope. The number of poor, convicted, sick people and people without social security in a country is the direct consequence of that country's politics and a real manifestation of its decisions and practices. Indeed, the results of the survey indicated that voters with higher levels of income were more optimistic about the future while those with lower income levels felt more pessimistic and indecisive. *[Hypothesis 4a –4b]*

4.2.3. Changes in the Voters' Mood and Expectations about the Future of the Country Immediately after Voting

Table 2: Have your expectations for the future changed straight after voting?	f	%
They have not changed	314	70,2
They have changed	19	4,3
I am more optimistic	80	17,9
I am more worried	18	4,0
I am more pessimistic	4	,9
No idea	12	2,7
Total	447	100

70.2% of the voters said their mood did not change after voting while 29.8% said they felt a change. That is to say, 17.9% of the voters felt more optimistic, 4% felt more anxious and 0.9% felt more pessimistic straight after voting. Socio-demographically, the rate of change in the mood of men was higher than that of women. Straight after voting, men felt more optimistic than women, compared to how they felt before voting. On the other hand, women felt more anxious than men after voting. Also, as the income level increased, the number of those who felt more optimistic increased while the number of those who felt more anxious decreased. This means that voters with higher incomes experienced less shift in their mood after voting. Of those who experienced mood changes, ones with higher incomes shifted towards optimism while ones with lower incomes shifted toward anxiety. *[Hypothesis 4a –4bn- Hypothesis 5]*

Relationship between Sociodemographic Factors and the Anxiety Voters Feel Straight after Voting Regarding the Possibility of Their Candidate/Party Losing in the Elections

55.1% of the voters said they were worried about their candidate's not winning the elections; 55.9% said they felt anxious when they thought about the result of the elections. This means that the voters cannot get out of the elections psychology even after having completed the task of voting. The number of women who said they were worried about their candidate's not winning the elections was higher than that of men. Also, as the age range got narrower, the level of worry about candidate's winning the elections got higher. These data show that women and younger people feel more worry about the possibility of their candidate's losing in the elections. *[Hypothesis 2 – Hypothesis 4a –- Hypothesis 5]*

4.2.4. Collective Psyche Developed in Voters Immediately Before and After Voting

Table 3: How would you describe your mood immediately before voting?	f	%	Table 4: How would you describe your mood immediately after voting?	f	%
Happy	140	29,5	Relieved	246	54,7
Proud	123	25,9	Happy	57	12,7
Hesitant	103	21,7	Proud	45	10,0
Angry	42	8,9	Uneasy	30	6,7
Unhappy	23	4,9	Hesitant	24	5,3
Frustrated	32	6,8	Frustrated	20	4,4
Hateful	6	1,3	More uncomfortable	18	4,0
Guilty	3	,6	Unhappy	6	1,3
Scared	2	,4	Scared	4	,9
Total	474	100	Total	450	100

55.4% of the voters who were going to participate in the elections experienced two positive feelings, happiness and pride, whereas 44.6% said they were having seven different negative feelings such as hesitant, angry, unhappy, weary, hateful, guilty and scared. Although more than half of the voters who were about to vote felt happy and proud, it is interesting that almost half were experiencing negative feelings. It is possible that voters expressed positive moods because, for example: (a) they predicted that their candidate/party would win in the elections; (b) they were able to freely and democratically use their votes; (c) they were particularly content with their economic and social status; (d) they were proud to support their party / candidate, and; (e) they felt proud to contribute to an ideology even if they thought that ideology would not win. On the other hand, it is possible that they expressed their momentary feelings as negative feelings because, for example: (i) they believed their candidate/party would not win in the elections; (ii) they believed a candidate/party that they did not support or want would win in the elections; (iii) they were concerned and worried about the elections security; (iv) they were not content with their economic and social status; (v) they did not believe their vote would make a difference, or; (vi) they were weary of feeling this way constantly. All in all, the fact that almost half of the voters are going to the ballot boxes in negative feelings does not only indicate that there is no full consensus but is also an important collective feeling which will make it difficult for the politics to ensure social consensus [*Hypothesis 1 – Hypothesis 2 – Hypothesis 3*].

"To borrow Hahn and Kleinman's words; 'belief kills; belief heals'…As such, some cultural beliefs, values and practices may increase the number of stress factors that the individual is exposed to (İlbars, 1994: 177)." As a cultural fact, politics has a very extensive role and important in this context. Namely, to be and remain political is a process that emotionally charges and engulfs people. According to the research data, 54.7% of the voters said they felt relieved after casting their vote. In other words, while 77.4% of the voters experienced positive emotions straight after voting, 22% felt negative emotions. It is very meaningful that majority of the voters used the term "relieved" to describe how they felt straight after voting. In Turkish Language Institution's dictionary the term "relieved" means: 1- removal or mitigation of a worrying, problematic and distressing situation; 2 – calming down. This means that the responsibility of voting causes worry, stress and anxiety on the voters and straight after voting, majority of the voters feel themselves freed, relieved from that burden. On the other hand, it is also striking that out of every hundred voters approximately 7 felt uneasy, 5 felt hesitant and 4 felt weary and distressed after voting. [*Hypothesis 2 – Hypothesis 5*]

Relationship between the Collective Feeling Voters Felt Right Before and Straight after Voting

Table 5: Relationship between the collective feeling of voters who are about to use and who have just used their vote

			Relief	Unease	Unrest	Pride	Hesitation	Fear	Happiness	Unhappiness	Frustration	Total
			What was your strongest feeling straight after voting?									
What was your strongest feeling right before voting?	Rage	f	11	3	10	4	3	0	2	0	5	38
		%	28,9	7,9	26,3	10,5	7,9	,0	5,3	,0	13,2	100
	Pride	f	59	3	4	24	3	0	19	1	0	113
		%	52,2	2,7	3,5	21,2	2,7	,0	16,8	,9	,0	100
	Hesitation	f	53	4	6	6	12	1	6	1	8	97
		%	54,6	4,1	6,2	6,2	12,4	1,0	6,2	1,0	8,2	100
	Fear	f	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
		%	50,0	50,0	,0	,0	,0	,0	,0	,0	,0	100
	Happiness	f	86	2	5	9	3	1	28	1	0	135
		%	63,7	1,5	3,7	6,7	2,2	,7	20,7	,7	,0	100
	Unhappiness	f	14	2	4	0	0	0	1	1	1	23
		%	60,9	8,7	17,4	,0	,0	,0	4,3	4,3	4,3	100
	Hate	f	4	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	6
		%	66,7	16,7	,0	16,7	,0	,0	,0	,0	,0	100
	Guilt	f	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	3
		%	33,3	,0	,0	,0	,0	33,3	,0	,0	33,3	100
	Frustration	f	13	2	1	0	3	1	0	2	5	27
		%	48,1	7,4	3,7	,0	11,1	3,7	,0	7,4	18,5	100
Total			242	18	30	44	24	4	56	6	20	444
Total %			54,5	4,1	6,8	9,9	5,4	,9	12,6	1,4	4,5	100

Since (χ2) P: 0,00<0,05, there is a meaningful relationship between two variables.

44.7% of the voters who felt angry immediately before voting experienced positive emotions after having voted while 55.3% continued to have negative feelings. Of the weary voters who went to the ballot boxes to use their votes, 48.1% felt positive (relieved) and 51.9% felt negative after voting. Of those who felt hesitant before voting 67% experienced a positive change in their emotions after voting while 33% continued to have negative feelings. Of those who said they felt unhappy before voting 65.2% felt positive and 34.8% felt negative after voting. In the case of those who felt proud before voting, 90.2% felt positive and 9.8% felt negative after having used their votes. Of voters who were happy before voting, 91.1% maintained their positive mood after voting while 8.9% experienced negative emotions. It seems that those who were in a positive mood before voting felt even more relieved, proud and happy after having voted.

On the other hand those who were in a negative mood before voting felt more tensed, uneasy, hesitant, unhappy and weary after voting. Those who were negative before voting continued to have negative feelings after they voted as well while those who were positive before voting remained positive after they voted. However, this was applicable only for a majority of the participants. In other words, about 10% of the voters who were positive before they used their votes felt negative afterwards whereas those who were negative before voting said they felt positive after using their votes. This means that the act of voting does not only have an impact on the direction and nature of the voters' collective feeling but it also creates new emotions in voters. [*Hypothesis 1 – Hypothesis 5*].

Relationship between Sociodemographic Factors and the Collective Feeling Immediately Before and Straight After Voting
[*Hypothesis 2 – Hypothesis 3 – Hypothesis 4a – Hypothesis 5*]

Straight after voting, men felt more optimistic than women. On the other hand, survey data identified that women felt more hesitant than men immediately before voting. There may be a lot of reasons for this. Gençkaya (2011: 13) says "In Turkey, the language and rules of politics are determined by men; women are either left out or included in politics under the supervision of them (i.e, spouse, family, party leader)." Therefore, it is possible that their distancing themselves from politics (being apolitical) which is regarded as a man's job by women in particular and by the society in general and their lack of knowledge in it may have created anxiety in women who were going to use their votes. On the other hand, it is also possible that the fear the women, who feel more secure in their permanent settlements, mindscapes and practices, have about elections' probability of changing the customary world (even through a rational reform) may have made them feel hesitant.

As the age got older, the number of those who said they had felt relieved increased while the number of those who said they had felt uneasy and hesitant decreased. On the other hand, voters in 18-25 age group expressed that the most intense feeling they had immediately before voting was hesitation; it was happiness for those in age groups 26-55; those who were 55 and over felt proud. The fact that those who were going vote for the first time was mostly in 18-25 age group may have created a collective hesitation in this age group. Furthermore, according to the survey frustration increases with age whereas the negative mood gets more common as the age gets younger.

Today, elections are one of the strongest arguments of democracy. As a matter of fact, as an act election(s) have become an objective rather than an instrument. Additionally, "people have never organised as many elections as they do today and have never assessed others on the basis of what they elected them for as much as they do in this century (Vassaf, 1997: 55)". In Turkey, general elections are held in every four years and local elections are held in every five years. There are also elections for vocational chambers and civil society organisations. In all regimes, even in democracy, despite – relatively – so many and diversified elections, there will always be people who are not fully content. It is possible that this fact may have caused the routine but encircling politics create a collective feeling of frustration, particularly, among elder voters, making the voter 'elections-weary[4],[5]'.

As the education level decreased, the number of voters who felt relieved increased. As the level of education increased, the number of voters who were negative immediately before voting increased whereas the number of those who were positive decreased. Survey results indicate that while better educated individuals are more mindful of politics, they are more discontent, unsatisfied and worried.

Unease and hesitation straight after voting were higher among voters with lower income levels. On the other hand, as the income level increased, the number of those who expressed pride and frustration immediately before voting increased and as the income level decreased, the number of those who said they were angry, unhappy and feeling guilty before voting increased. People with high level of income feel more positively immediately before voting whereas negative collective feelings such as anger, unhappiness and guilt escalate among those with low income levels.

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[4] **Kurtbaş, İhsan (2013: 563-564):** A field study on this issue identified that voters were "elections-weary". A finding of the survery suggests that little social differences and similarities in the general elections in every four years, local elections in every five years and miscellaneous chamber, civil society organization, association and foundation elections done in the interim may be exaggerated and turned into an inner and outer-circle dichotomy. During this process politics and politicians may point to the outer-group as a potential threat, an existential problem, a competitor or an order-breaking factor for the inner-group in the fitful elections. This way, it has been easy for some cultural and collective groups to engage in certain ideologies and become the representative and carrier of certain ideological fractions. That is to say, as political mechanisms that produce and re-produce ethnocentrism, politicians and the politics itself have a deep impact on the political and social structural and disturb the voter.

[5] **Keyman, Fuat (2015), What does the Unhappy and Worried Voter Want?** On November 1, voters will go to the ballot box for the fourth time in eighteen months (Source: hcttp://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/fuat-keyman/mutsuz-ve-endiseli-secmen-ne-istiyor-1448399/)

The fact that the latter are not content, the rage they feel against the authorities, the guilt they bear for not being able to change the system and the feeling of inadequacy might have built a negative collective mood among them. On the other hand, those with high income levels mostly felt "proud" before voting and this may be because of the contribution they were going to make, by the act of voting, in the (re)construction of the regime that enabled their existence.

Relationship between Future Expectations and the Collective Feeling Before and After Voting (Pls See Table 6 – 7)

Of people who were optimistic about the future of the country, 80.4% said they felt happy and proud before voting while 19.4% said they experienced negative feelings. On the other hand, 69.1% of those who were pessimistic about the country's future were feeling negative emotions while 30.9% of them felt happy and proud. This shows that, immediately before voting, people who are optimistic about the future collectively feel more positive while the pessimists collectively go through negative emotions. Therefore, voters' predictions on country's future are determinant in their mood before voting. Indeed, if the voter is optimistic about country's future, s/he is mostly positive when going to the ballot boxes while it is the contrary for those who are pessimistic. A study on factors influencing the voters' behaviour specific to ethnocentrism (Kurtbaş, 2013: 484) identified that the individual's prediction of the elections results for the party s/he supports was highly influential of his/her vision of the future: "Supporters of a political party that is highly likely to win in the elections are positive (i.e. hopeful, optimist) while the collective feeling of the supporters of a party that is highly unlikely to win was mostly negative (i.e. panic, fear and pessimism)".

Collective feeling that emerges during the elections is like a thermometer of the political climate. For instance, a voters group who believes that a political party or an ideology which is the adversary of their political view will come to power feel more pessimistic, hopeless, panicky and even scared about the future both for themselves and for the country. This negative collective feeling is caused by the probability of the political party or ideology they dislike, or even hate, coming to power rather than by a mere desire for their party to win. Voters in this mood want the party and ideology they dislike, or even hate, to be unsuccessful rather than their party to be successful and they exert their political energy to that end.

This mood may directly influence the voting behaviour and have a deep impact on both the social psychology and political climate till the next elections *[Hypothesis 2 – Hypothesis 4b]*. 58.3 % of the voters who are optimistic and 50.8% of those who are pessimistic about country's future said they had felt relieved straight after voting. The optimists felt this relief more intensely than the pessimists did. Also, 6.3% of the pessimists and 2.8% of the optimists felt uneasy; 10.5% of the pessimists and 3.8% of the optimists felt nervous; 6.3% of the pessimists and 4.3% of the optimists felt hesitant; 8.5% of the pessimists and 0.5% of the optimists felt weary while 11.4% of the optimists and 9.4% of the pessimists felt proud and 17.5% of the optimists and 5.8% of the pessimists felt happy. This means that after the voting, voters who were optimists about the country's future entertained positive emotions such as happiness and pride while the pessimists went through negative emotions such as anger, hesitation, fear, unhappiness, hate, guilt and weariness *[Hypothesis 2 – Hypothesis 4b – Hyptohesis 5]*.

Relationship between the Tendency to Conduct Research before Elections and the Collective Mood of Voters Immediately before Elections (See Table 8)

Those who believe that they did not make enough research before the elections mostly have negative feelings such as anger, unhappiness and frustration whereas those who made some research feel happy and proud. "We learnt that decisions and choices and being on the right side played a critical role on our future, happiness, welfare and power. To choose can simply be very unhealthy, too. Particularly if we have to make a difficult choice, it can stress us out and even cause a physical sickness (Vassaf, 1997). Apparently, the act of choosing which is, by nature, already difficult and stressful caused a collective anger, unhappiness and frustration among those who did not conduct a research before voting. On the other hand, the act of voting which is politically an individual act also has a socio-cultural side as well. On this, Donnan and Wilson (2002:141) argue that culture also has the potential to separate and divide people although it brings them together.

Politically, voters who consider their life style, the interests of the group they relate to and the interests of their own identity are committed to groups which they believe are like them. This creates a dichotomy of 'inner circle' and 'outer circle' in the society which is based 'us' and 'the other' and leads to ethnocentrism which is defined as the universal phenomenon of our age.

In this context, voters will naturally want to be on the right side and make right decisions in order to protect and/or improve their personal interests and the future, happiness, welfare and power of the group they have a sense of belonging to. Lack of political knowledge and awareness of voters who do not conduct a research before the elections may make them question whether they are making the right choices and may create a collectively negative feeling among them [*Hypothesis 4c – Hypothesis 5*].

Relationship between Political Experience and the Collective Feeling Before and After Voting (See Table 9 – 10)

First time voters feel more hesitant and angry before voting whereas voters who voted more than once before feel wearier. Never having used a vote before, united with the fact that with their political decisions they will influence all levels of the society, may have made first time voters feel an extra responsibility and caused a collective hesitation among them. This means that first time voters felt more hesitant about their political decisions.

On the other hand, 71.9% of those who voted in the local elections for the first time, and 79.3% of those who voted twice or more in the past experienced positive emotions and felt proud and happy after voting but 28.1% of those who voted for the first time and 28.1% of those who voted more than once experienced negative emotions such as unease, tension, weariness and hesitation. Apparently level of negative feelings after voting is high among the first time voters when compared to those who voted more than once before. This shows that there is very little change in the collective feeling of voters before and after voting. Because those with little political experience were more negative than those with more political experience [*Hypothesis 2 – Hypothesis 3 – Hyptohesis 5*].

Relationship between the Importance Voters Attach to Elections and Voting and their Collective Mood Before and After Voting (See Tables 11-12-13-14)

Voters may tend to attach greater importance to general elections thinking that general elections concern country's general issues and it is where the body that will govern the country is elected, etc.

On the other hand those who believe that the elected parliamentarian do not have representation competence and function at the parliament; that local authorities have bigger contribution to the local area and its people; that it is easier to have a direct access to local authorities and therefore, who believe that people should claim responsibility for where they live may attach greater importance to local elections. Results of the survey show that those who believe local elections are more important and those who do not care for either elections mostly have negative feelings such as frustration and hesitation. None the less, those who care for general elections more mostly have positive feelings such as happiness and pride. This situation does not change after or before voting [*Hypothesis 2 – Hypothesis 4d and Hypothesis 5*].

On the other hand, those who care about the vote they use mostly feel proud and happy whereas those who do not care about their vote feel angry, hesitant, guilty and weary. The higher the importance voters attach to their vote, the more positive they feel after voting. Among those who expressed negative feelings after voting, the majority said "I have no idea". This means that even those who do not care about their vote feel more positive than the indecisive individuals. Furthermore, people who felt least relieved and most hesitant, doubtful and weary were those who 'had no idea about the importance of the vote they were about to use' [*Hypothesis 2 – Hypothesis 4d and Hypothesis 5*].

5. Conclusions

Society is a separate identity than the totality of the individuals that constitutes it (Kut, 1994: 180). And the human being "is much more than just the combination of results occurring in miscellaneous situations of intensity" (Çetin, 2012: XV). Eventually, since as a social entity the human being is an "entity" that must be regarded as a product of his/her past experiences, it is not possible to base his/her mood before and after voting entirely on political reasons but, since analyses are based on the discourse of the majority, results are still political. Under the light of the information obtained in this study, as Adorno said (2011: 115), the data which are widely apparent in the meeting of all subjects are in fact a tendency of the culture itself. Based on that fact, the following evaluations were made by the author:

Almost half of the voters who were about to cast a vote was feeling pessimistic and cynical about the future.

Men, the elderly and people with higher income levels were more optimistic about the future whereas women, the young and people with lower income levels were more pessimistic.

Of voters who were about to cast their vote 55.4% said they felt positive feelings such as happiness and pride while 44.6% said they collectively felt hesitation, anger, unhappiness, weariness, hate, guilt and fear. Immediately before voting women mostly felt hesitant while those who voted more than once before felt weary. As the age got older and level of income got higher, the number of people who said they were positive before voting increased as well; but as the education level increased and age and level of income decreased, the number of voters who felt negative before elections increased. Furthermore, those who were optimistic about the country's future, those who had political experience, those who valued their vote, those who researched before elections as well as those who thought general elections were more important experienced more positive feelings before voting whereas the pessimists about the country's future, first time voters, people who did not value their vote and people who did not make any researches on parties and candidates before elections experienced more negative feelings before voting.

70.2% of the voters said they did not experience any change in their moods after voting but among those who experienced a change, men and people with higher income levels felt more optimistic while women and people with lower income levels felt more anxious. While 55.1% of the voters expressed complete or partial worry over the possibility that their candidate/party may lose in the elections, 55.9% said they were distressed when they thought about the results of the elections. This means that voters cannot simply get out of the elections psychology even after they have voted. From a socio-demographical perspective, straight after voting, women and young people suffered high level of anxiety when confronted with the possibility that their candidate/party might lose in the elections.

77.4% of the voters experienced positive feelings after having voted, such as relief, happiness and pride but 22% said they felt negative emotions. While older people felt relieved after having voted, younger people felt uneasy and hesitant. Voters with higher education often felt weary whereas less educated voters felt relieved. As the level of income decreased, more voters felt distressed and hesitant but as the level of income increased, more voters felt tensioned.

On the other hand, people who valued their vote, who were optimistic about the country's future, who had voted more than once before and who thought general elections were more important experienced very positive feelings after using their vote however, those who considered their vote worthless, who were pessimistic about the country's future, who were first time voters and who cared about the elections often had negative feelings. This shows that people who felt negative before voting often felt worse after voting while those who were positive when voting felt even better afterwards.

Political climate fills and surrounds people with various emotions and thus, turns them into political entities. Political socialising is in a way a process where people build their political feeling codes. In this process, the act of voting has a soothing and de-stressing effect on people. However, this is an illusion. While the person believes that s/he was de-stressed, s/he is in fact surrounded with new emotions and therefore, is politicised. In other words, since a voter who is void of political feelings will have no enthusiasm, there will not be any reason left for him/her to be politically active. The results of the research demonstrate that majority of the voters who felt negative before voting, felt relieved after using their votes. Although this indicates that using a vote has a relieving and soothing effect, the study discovered that the voters cannot entirely get out of the elections psychology straight after voting.

On the other hand, the fact that majority of the people who were about to vote was in a negative mood before voting is a sign that the voters are at the verge of unhappiness and alienation. There may be many reasons for this, i.e. politicians' placing their personal and actual interests before the general benefits of the society; loss of confidence in the politics and the politicians or; failure of reconciliation and negotiation attempts, etc. Eventually, from a political psychology perspective, the identified psychology of current voters is in a determinist relationship with the dead-end of politics. As the negative and bad mood of the voter drags the politics to a stalemate, dead-end and dilemmas of the politics may have put the voter in such a negative mood. However, what must be noted here is that when people are emotionally charged, even with negative feelings, they become more politicised voters. In this perspective, the fuel of politics is emotionally charged and thus politically activated voter groups. It is difficult for politics to continue its argument with a voters group who has lost their enthusiasm and feels emotionally void and distant to politics.

As per the results of the research and our observations, all factors that influence voting behaviour build, in the last instance on the day of the voting, a joint and collective feeling among the voters at the ballot boxes. Since collective psyche (feeling) is a manifestation, it has codes which must be politically and psychologically deciphered. It has multi-dimensional and extremely complicated social realities. Deciphering these codes will enable us to understand many religious, cultural, historical, economic and psychologic codes of the society. Additionally, this collective feeling does not only have effects related to the social memory but is also a political motivation and a political energy that politicises the voters as a tractive and driving factor. Particularly during the elections period, a part of the society may be feeling positive while another part feels negative.

Like the weight on each side of the pendulum, these polarised feelings may fluctuate. Voters' collective identities such as sect, ethnicity and political ideology, their sociodemographic characteristics, predictions on the future of the country, political knowledge and experience and the importance they attach to elections and their vote are factors that have a deep impact on the collective psyche (feeling) among the voters. On the other hand, this socio-political collective psyche (feeling) the voters who are unaware of the other's feelings, have may have voters sharing common feelings make joint choices and vote for the same or similar parties.

This study is a first in its field. The information pool that will be created by repeating this study which was conducted in Turkey in other locations at different elections, particularly in the framework of an authoritarian character, political tendencies, identities and issues-problems will in time allow the researchers to develop a more macro-sized "theorisation" on "voters' collective psyche" in particular and "voter's psychology" in general.

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Attachments (Tables)

Table 6: The Relationship between Participants' Expectations for the Future and Their Mood Immediately Before Voting

			Angry	Proud	Hesitant	Afraid	Happy	Unhappy	Hateful	Guilty	Wary	Total
			How would you describe your mood immediately before voting?								
What are your expectations for the future of the country?	Pessimistic	f	6	74	25	0	98	5	1	0	5	214
		%	2,8	34,6	11,7	,0	45,8	2,3	,5	,0	2,3	100
	Optimistic	f	34	39	63	2	24	15	5	2	20	204
		%	16,7	19,1	30,9	1,0	11,8	7,4	2,5	1,0	9,8	100
	I have no idea	f	2	10	12	0	17	3	0	1	7	52
		%	3,8	19,2	23,1	,0	32,7	5,8	,0	1,9	13,5	100
f			42	123	100	2	139	23	6	3	32	470
%			8,9	26,2	21,3	,4	29,6	4,9	1,3	,6	6,8	100
Since (χ2) P: 0,00<0,05, there is a significant relation between the two variables.												

Table 7: Relationship between Future Expectations for the Country and Voters' Mood Straight after Voting

			Relieved	Uncomfortable	Tensed	Proud	Hesitant	Afraid	Happy	Unhappy	Wary	Total
			How would you describe your mood straight after voting?								
How do you feel about the future of the country?	Optimistic	f	123	6	8	24	9	1	37	2	1	211
		(%	58,3	2,8	3,8	11,4	4,3	,5	17,5	,9	,5	100
	Pessimistic	f	97	12	20	18	12	1	11	4	16	191
		%	50,8	6,3	10,5	9,4	6,3	,5	5,8	2,1	8,4	100
	Don't Know/No idea	f	26	0	0	3	3	2	8	0	3	45
		%	57,8	,0	,0	6,7	6,7	4,4	17,8	,0	6,7	100
f			246	18	28	45	24	4	56	6	20	447
%			55,0	4,0	6,3	10,1	5,4	,9	12,5	1,3	4,5	100
Since (χ2) P: 0,00<0,05 there is a significant relation between the two variables.												

Table 8: Relationship between the Tendency to Conduct Research before Elections and the Mood of Voters Immediately Before Elections

			Angry	Proud	Hesitant	Afraid	Happy	Unhappy	Hateful	Guilty	Wary	Total
			How would you describe your mood immediately before voting									
Do you believe that your research before the elections were enough?	Yes	f	20	82	66	1	90	14	4	0	18	295
		%	6,8	27,8	22,4	,3	30,5	4,7	1,4	,0	6,1	100
	No	f	17	19	15	0	27	5	1	2	8	94
		%	18,1	20,2	16,0	,0	28,7	5,3	1,1	2,1	8,5	100
	Partially	f	5	20	22	0	22	4	1	1	4	79
		%	6,3	25,3	27,8	,0	27,8	5,1	1,3	1,3	5,1	100
f			42	121	103	1	139	23	6	3	30	468
%			9,0	25,9	22,0	,2	29,7	4,9	1,3	,6	6,4	100
Since (χ2) P: 0,12>0,05 there is no significant relation between the two variables.												

Table 9: The Relationship between the Level of Participation in Local Elections and the Mood of Voters before Voting

			Angry	Proud	Hesitant	Afraid	Happy	Unhappy	Hateful	Guilty	Wary	Total
			How would you describe your mood immediately before voting?									
How many times did you vote for the Local Elections?	First time	f	18	37	36	0	29	7	4	1	7	139
		%	12,9	26,6	25,9	,0	20,9	5,0	2,9	,7	5,0	100
	More than once	f	23	86	65	2	110	16	2	2	25	331
		%	6,9	26,0	19,6	,6	33,2	4,8	,6	,6	7,6	100
f			41	123	101	2	139	23	6	3	32	470
%			8,7	26,2	21,5	,4	29,6	4,9	1,3	,6	6,8	100
Since (χ2) P: 0,03<0,05, there is a significant relation between the two variables.												

Table 10: Relationship between the Level of Participation in Local Elections and the Voters' Mood Straight after Voting

			How would you describe your mood straight after voting?
			Relieved	Uncomfortable	Tensed	Proud	Hesitant	Afraid	Happy	Unhappy	Wary	Total
How many times did you vote for the Local Elections?	First time	f	63	5	10	13	11	1	16	3	6	128
		%	49,2	3,9	7,8	10,2	8,6	,8	12,5	2,3	4,7	100
	More than once	f	181	13	20	31	13	3	41	3	14	319
		%	56,7	4,1	6,3	9,7	4,1	,9	12,9	,9	4,4	100
f			244	18	30	44	24	4	57	6	20	447
%			54,6	4,0	6,7	9,8	5,4	,9	12,8	1,3	4,5	100
Since (χ2) P: 0,62>0,05 there is no significant relation between them.

Table 11: Relationship between the Importance Attached to General and Local Elections and the Mood of Voters Immediately Before Voting

			How would you describe your mood immediately before voting?
			Angry	Proud	Hesitant	Afraid	Happy	Unhappy	Hateful	Guilty	Wary	Total
Can you compare the level of importance you attach to the general and local elections?	Local Elections are more important	f	8	15	19	0	18	2	1	1	7	71
		%	11,3	21,1	26,8	,0	25,4	2,8	1,4	1,4	9,9	100
	General Elections are more important	f	15	41	23	0	41	6	2	0	4	132
		%	11,4	31,1	17,4	,0	31,1	4,5	1,5	,0	3,0	100
	I do not care for either of them	f	5	0	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	11
		%	45,5	,0	27,3	9,1	18,2	,0	,0	,0	,0	100
	They are both equally important	f	13	63	55	1	76	13	2	2	17	242
		%	5,4	26,0	22,7	,4	31,4	5,4	,8	,8	7,0	100
	I have no idea	f	1	2	2	0	3	2	1	0	3	14
		%	7,1	14,3	14,3	,0	21,4	14,3	7,1	,0	21,4	100
f			42	121	102	2	140	23	6	3	31	470
%			8,9	25,7	21,7	,4	29,8	4,9	1,3	,6	6,6	100
Since (χ2) P: 0,00<0,05 there is a significant relation between the two variables.

Table 12: Relationship between the Importance Voters Attach to the Local and General Elections and Their Mood Straight after Voting

			How would you describe your mood straight after voting?									
			Relieved	Uncomfortable	Tensed	Proud	Hesitant	Afraid	Happy	Unhappy	Wary	Total
Could you please compare the level of importance you attach to general and local elections?	Local Elections are more important	f	43	1	7	4	4	0	8	0	1	68
		%	63,2	1,5	10,3	5,9	5,9	,0	11,8	,0	1,5	100
	General Elections are more important	f	63	1	11	20	3	0	21	3	3	125
		%	50,4	,8	8,8	16,0	2,4	,0	16,8	2,4	2,4	100
	I do not care for either of them	f	3	3	1	0	1	0	1	0	2	11
		%	27,3	27,3	9,1	,0	9,1	,0	9,1	,0	18,2	100
	They are both equally important	f	131	12	10	21	15	4	25	1	12	231
		%	56,7	5,2	4,3	9,1	6,5	1,7	10,8	,4	5,2	100
	No idea	f	4	1	1	0	0	0	2	2	2	12
		%	33,3	8,3	8,3	,0	,0	,0	16,7	16,7	16,7	100
f			244	18	30	45	23	4	57	6	20	447
%			54,6	4,0	6,7	10,1	5,1	,9	12,8	1,3	4,5	100
Since (χ2) P: 0,00<0,05 there is a significant relation between the two variables.												

Table 13: Relationship between the Importances Attached to Votes and the Mood of Voters Immediately Before Voting

			How would you describe your mood immediately before voting									
			Angry	Proud	Hesitant	Afraid	Happy	Unhappy	Hateful	Guilty	Wary	Total
My vote is important to me	Strongly Agree	f	15	86	59	0	107	17	3	1	13	301
		%	5,0	28,6	19,6	,0	35,5	5,6	1,0	,3	4,3	100
	Agree	f	12	27	25	2	23	1	3	0	6	99
		%	12,1	27,3	25,3	2,0	23,2	1,0	3,0	,0	6,1	100
	No idea	f	5	3	4	0	3	0	0	0	4	19
		%	26,3	15,8	21,1	,0	15,8	,0	,0	,0	21,1	100
	Disagree	f	4	2	4	0	2	3	0	1	2	18
		%	22,2	11,1	22,2	,0	11,1	16,7	,0	5,6	11,1	100
	Strongly Disagree	f	5	5	10	0	5	2	0	1	7	35
		%	14,3	14,3	28,6	,0	14,3	5,7	,0	2,9	20,0	100
f			41	123	102	2	140	23	6	3	32	472
%			8,7	26,1	21,6	,4	29,7	4,9	1,3	,6	6,8	100
Since (χ2) P: 0,00<0,05 there is a significant relation between the two variables.												

Table 14: Relationship between the Importances's attached to Voting and the Voters' Mood Straight after Voting

			How would you describe your mood straight after voting?									
			Relieved	Uncomfortable	Tensed	Proud	Hesitant	Afraid	Happy	Unhappy	Wary	Total
My vote is very important for me, my country and our future?	Strongly Agree	f	161	11	18	27	15	2	45	3	5	287
		%	56,1	3,8	6,3	9,4	5,2	,7	15,7	1,0	1,7	100
	Agree	f	53	5	8	11	5	1	8	3	1	95
		%	55,8	5,3	8,4	11,6	5,3	1,1	8,4	3,2	1,1	100
	No Idea	f	7	0	1	2	2	0	2	0	5	19
		%	36,8	,0	5,3	10,5	10,5	,0	10,5	,0	26,3	100
	Disagree	f	10	0	3	0	0	1	1	0	2	17
		%	58,8	,0	17,6	,0	,0	5,9	5,9	,0	11,8	100
	Strongly Disagree	f	15	1	0	5	2	0	1	0	7	31
		%	48,4	3,2	,0	16,1	6,5	,0	3,2	,0	22,6	100
f			246	17	30	45	24	4	57	6	20	449
%			54,8	3,8	6,7	10,0	5,3	,9	12,7	1,3	4,5	100
Since χ2) P: 0,00<0,05, there is a significant relation between the two variables.												