

“University Students as Climate Stakeholders: Insights on Local Policy Participation in Türkiye”

Dr. Fatih YAMAN

Political Science and Public Administration

Manisa Celal Bayar University- Türkiye

fatih.yaman@cbu.edu.tr

Research Topic / Problem

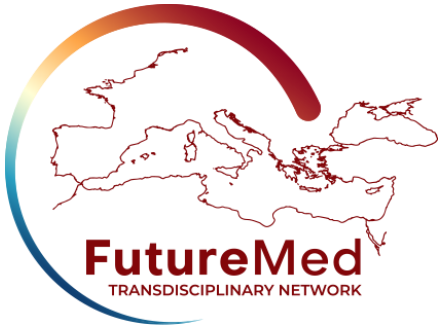
- 🌿 Climate change presents growing threats to Mediterranean societies.
- 🌿 Youth participation in local climate governance remains limited and understudied.
- 🌿 University students, despite being future policy actors, are often overlooked in local adaptation processes.

Literature Gap and Contribution

- 🌱 Existing literature focuses heavily on top-down policy or international negotiations.
- 🌱 Youth voices in climate decision-making, especially at the local level, are not sufficiently included.
- 🌱 This study contributes by exploring students' perceptions, everyday practices, and policy expectations through direct qualitative engagement.

Relevance and Importance

- 🌱 **Focus on youth** aligns with **SDG 13.b**, which calls for mechanisms to enhance planning capacity of youth and local actors on climate.
- 🌱 Findings can support more inclusive, participatory, and localized climate action strategies.
- 🌱 Highlights university students not only as future voters or decision makers but also as *present stakeholders* in sustainability transitions.



Research Objective

“To understand how university students in Türkiye perceive climate risks, engage with local institutions, and envision their role in climate action.”

Methodology

- 🌿 **Qualitative research approach**

- 🌿 **Phenomenological design**

- 🌿 **2 focus group discussions:**

 - 9 Social Work students (Faculty of Health Sciences)

 - 14 Political Science and Public Administration students (Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences)

- 🌿 **Total participants: 23**

- 🌿 **Data Collection Tool:** Semi-structured focus group protocols

Focus Group Questions

- 🌿 How do students perceive climate change in their local environment?
- 🌿 What are the visible effects of climate change on their daily lives?
- 🌿 How do they evaluate the role of local institutions and policies?
- 🌿 What are the main barriers and motivations for youth participation?
- 🌿 What roles do young people envision for themselves in achieving climate justice?
- 🌿 What suggestions do they have for strengthening youth engagement?

Data Analysis

- 🌿 Transcripts analyzed with **MAXQDA-24**
- 🌿 **Inductive coding** used to identify recurring ideas
- 🌿 Themes and categories were created systematically based on participant narratives












Findings

Theme 1: Local Climate Awareness

Code System	ALL PARTICIPANTS	SUM
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AS CLIMATE STAKEHOLDERS IN TÜRKİYE		0
Theme 1: Local Climate Awareness		0
Category 1.1: Observed Climatic Changes		0
Extreme temperature increase	5	5
Seasonal irregularities and transition problems	8	8
Drought and precipitation imbalance	7	7
Agricultural impacts	2	2
Category 1.2: Impacts of Observed Changes on Daily Life		0
Impacts on social life	3	3
Impacts on education and transportation	3	3
Impacts on health	7	7
Climate-related stress and emotional burden	3	3
SUM	38	38










Findings

Theme 2: Perceptions on Local Institutions and Policies

Code System	ALL PARTICIPANTS	SUM
▼  UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AS CLIMATE STAKEHOLDERS IN TÜRKİYE		0
▼  Theme 2: Perceptions on Local Institutions and Policies		0
▼  Category 2.1: Sources of Information and Awareness		0
 Digital and media-based sources	5	5
 Everyday and social interactions	6	6
 International organizations	1	1
▼  Category 2.2: Evaluation of Local Practices		0
 Known practices and initiatives	7	7
 Criticism of inadequacy and formalism	11	11
 Lack of awareness and education	4	4
 SUM	34	34

Findings

Theme 3: Participation Dynamics and Barriers

Code System	ALL PARTICIPANTS	SUM
▼  UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AS CLIMATE STAKEHOLDERS IN TÜRKİYE		0
▼  Theme 3: Participation Dynamics and Barriers		0
▼  Category 3.1: Participation Experience and Volunteering Tendencies		0
 Initial interest, declining participation over time	3	3
 Voluntary effort and limited motivation	3	3
▼  Category 3.2: Factors Hindering Participation		0
 Social perceptions and exclusionary reactions	2	2
 Issues of access and diversity in participation opportunities	4	4
 Lack of educational infrastructure and awareness	5	5
Σ SUM	17	17










Findings

Theme 4: Youth Roles and Approaches on Climate Justice

Code System	ALL PARTICIPANTS	SUM
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AS CLIMATE STAKEHOLDERS IN TÜRKİYE		0
Theme 4: Youth Roles and Approaches to Climate Justice		0
Category 4.1: Youth's Potential Contribution to Local Climate Action		0
Contribution through daily life practices	2	2
Power of social media and digital dissemination	3	3
Incentive systems and interactive campaign suggestions	4	4
Raising awareness among children and role modeling	2	2
Category 4.2: Approach to Climate Justice in the Turkish Context		0
Awareness of balance, consumption, and responsibility	2	2
Criticism of wasteful and unconscious usage	4	4
Criticism of unpreparedness and disaster management	2	2
Category 4.3: Perceptions of Vulnerable Groups		0
New generations and children	4	4
Older people	2	2
Low-income and disadvantaged groups	5	5
Σ SUM	30	30

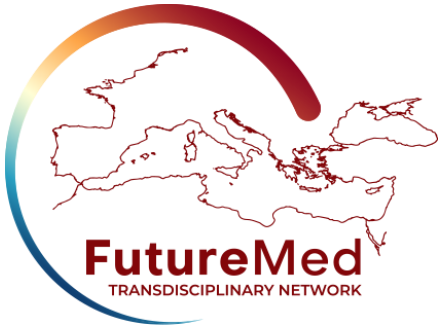
Findings

Theme 5: Enhancing Youth Participation

Code System	ALL PARTICIPANTS	SUM
▼  UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AS CLIMATE STAKEHOLDERS IN TÜRKİYE		0
▼  Theme 5: Enhancing Youth Participation		0
▼  Category 5.1: Suggestions for Increasing Participation		0
 Instilling and disseminating climate awareness at an early age	5	5
 Contribution through public awareness and policymaking	9	9
 Strategic use of social and visual media	4	4
 Youth as catalysts and inclusion in decision-making processes	4	4
 Supporting participation through structural and sectoral transformation	2	2
 SUM	24	24

Key Takeaways / Conclusion

- 🌱 University students are aware of the visible impacts of climate change in their cities, especially seasonal and extreme weather disruptions.
- 🌱 While students recognize the importance of local policies, they find current efforts insufficient and lacking engagement opportunities.
- 🌱 Participation barriers include limited awareness, accessibility issues, and lack of institutional support.
- 🌱 Youth envision themselves as both communicators and change agents, emphasizing the role of digital platforms and early education.
- 🌱 Structural and sectoral reforms are essential to increase meaningful youth participation in climate action.



Thank you for your time and attention 🌿

-Fatih YAMAN-

Research Assistant, Ph.D

Manisa Celal Bayar University - Türkiye

✉ fatih.yaman@cbu.edu.tr