

# When Society Deteriorates: Political Intolerance, Perceived Anomic Threat and Participation in Anti-system Collective Actions in the Context of Authoritarian Democracy

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**Abstract:** The literature reports that individuals living in repressive environments tend to avoid participating in collective actions, in particular because of the risks of confrontation with intimidation, arbitrary arrests, violence, and even death. However, some researches has begun to document the psychosocial mechanisms that could motivate them to overcome these risks: feeling of outrage generated by state repression, identification with civil society and moral obligation to resist, for example. The present study, conducted in the context of authoritarian democracy, is situated in this line of research by proposing anomic threat, considered as the perceived disintegration and deregulation of society, as an incentive variable of the propensity to protest against the system in a repressive environment. It suggests that when individuals perceive the degradation of society from the points of view of its leadership and values, they may realize that inaction is likely to accentuate it and may be inclined to participate in collective actions with a view to restore the fractured social structure and leadership, despite the risks of repression from the governing system. In this logic, the hypothesis tested predicts that perceived anomic threat reinforces the relationship between perceived political intolerance and participation in anti-system collective actions in the context of authoritarian democracy. 275 Cameroonians, aged between 17 and 47 years ( $M. = 24.24$ ;  $S.D. = 5.71$ ) agreed to participate in the research. Measures focused on perceived political intolerance, perceived anomic threat, perceived efficacy of collective actions, participation in anti-system collective actions, distrust and grievances towards political authority. The results show that when participants are experimentally confronted with the degrading character of society, their perception of anomic threat reinforces the relationship between political intolerance and participation in anti-system collective actions, due to the activation of negative emotions and the perceived efficacy of the said actions. The theoretical implications of these results are discussed.

**Keywords:** Political Intolerance, Anomic Threat, Anti-system Collective Actions, Authoritarian Democracy, Cameroon

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## 1. Introduction

Individuals participate in collective movements to seek social change. This is all the more true in democratic contexts where protest actions are considered legitimate political behavior to challenge the governing system. It is in these contexts that the specialized literature on collective actions has mainly been formed. In doing so, it paid little attention to repressive contexts, thus making its conclusions difficult to apply outside their sphere of validation, where democratization is a questioned reality in the discourses and

practices of the authorities. Indeed, one of the main shortcomings of the existing psychosocial literature on collective action is that it tends to focus its attention on individuals, whom it considers to be autonomous political actors [54], thus abandoning the systemic logics of undemocratic contexts which are characterized by a locking of the political system and a systematic recourse to coercive tactics (official intimidation, arbitrary arrests, imprisonment, police violence) likely to negatively impact on the tendency to participate in anti-system collective actions.

The idea that contextual factors such as political

intolerance of dissenting ideas or restrictions on civil liberties could play a role in individuals' propensity to protest is not new, since it dates back to the work of sociologists and political scientists of the 1970s [54]. The contribution of the social psychology of collective action in this debate could be to analyze the interplay of individual tendencies and systemic logics, starting from the idea that protest behaviors are individual acts carried out in a social context which can whether or not tolerate its expression. The current study is conducted in the context of authoritarian democracy, a political system characterized by intolerance towards the public expression of dissenting opinions. Its aim is to test the idea that political intolerance, generally known as an inhibitor of collective actions in a repressive context, is also likely to impact on the perception, by citizens, of the deregulation of leadership and the disintegration of the social structure and, as a consequence, on their participation in anti-system collective actions despite the risks involved [53].

### ***1.1. Authoritarian Democracy: An Intolerant Political Context***

Societies that have adopted democracy as a system of governance can be classified into four main categories: (1) full democracies; (2) imperfect democracies; (3) hybrid regimes; and (4) authoritarian regimes [19]. This categorization suggests that the progress of democracy in the world is experiencing many difficulties, in particular because of the social context in which it is apprehended. In concrete terms, a large number of societies are increasingly resistant to respecting democratic rules and principles; preferring to turn to authoritarian practices. They are what we refer to when we talk about authoritarian democracies; hybrid regimes that attempt to combine political competition, participation, right to vote and desire to build personal power through the control of different access to political and economic resources [28]. In other words, they are political regimes that are characterized by a tendency to rely either on the apathy and demobilization of the population, or on controlled mobilizations. They are characterized by the denial of the various political freedoms, as well as submission to the state and its administrative apparatuses [45]; hence the fact that they are considered as disguised dictatorships.

From a certain point of view, authoritarian democracies are regimes incapable of establishing a political system centered on individuals' participation in political affairs, inclusion and citizens' viability. In other words, democracy is only a shadow of itself [16]. Political exclusion is a constitutive principle, because it informs about both political processes and interactions and explains the political content that a certain number of economic or social questions take on in authoritarian regimes. Following this logic, hybrid systems are defined as regimes that operate through the political exclusion of individuals who do not swear allegiance to them or who challenge the established system [46]. In another sense, they are political systems where heads of state are not only the absolute and quasi-eternal holders of political power, but they are also the keystone of institutions. Thus, state

power and institutions are embodied in their person, to the point that they merge with the political system itself [21]. They are also systems where alternation in power through the ballot box is a utopia; hence the resurgence of coups in recent years in some of the countries that have adopted them: Burkina Faso, Guinea or Mali.

In the context of authoritarian democracy, to ensure the perpetual control of power, the governing regimes constantly adopt brutal mechanisms of police surveillance of the opposition, influence on certain business circles dependent on public order and systematic control of institutions [36]. They are particularly allergic to the public expression of dissenting ideas; anything that constitutes political intolerance. This is observed in the conditions where an individual or a group does not allow others the possibility of expressing themselves, thinking or acting differently from the thoughts or behaviors considered politically acceptable [23, 24]. However, freedom of expression and association are considered pillars of democratic systems whose role is to ensure that the diversity of opinions is possible in democratic debate. In this context, political tolerance, conceived as the desire to extend civil liberties to individuals and groups to which one opposes, appears as an important democratic norm. It protects the right to the expression of an unpopular opinion, which is crucial not only to guarantee individual autonomy and equal rights, but also to allow the free expression of ideas in the political field. In fact, empirical research reveals that tolerance is positively correlated with individual freedom and facilitates dissent [7]. However, public opinion researchers observe that some individuals and groups are reluctant to accept these principles when confronted with specific groups with whom they disagree [26]. These observations form the basis of research on political intolerance [22].

The literature reveals that there is an association between political intolerance, conceived as the rejection of people and groups expressing a dissenting opinion, psychological insecurity and the perception of a threat [23]. This means that intolerance is linked to the emotional reactions elicited by the groups that are its targets. Research identifies three in particular: fear, anger and hatred. Fear is usually associated with withdrawal or avoidance rather than confrontation with the target group which would be denied permission to engage in political activities. In contrast, anger produces a confrontational tendency that may manifest as an increased desire to act aggressively against the dissident political outgroup. This aggressiveness can manifest itself directly, through concrete actions against the said group, or indirectly, by supporting an entity (police forces, for example) that takes punitive actions against it. Hate, on the other hand, has a stronger correlation with intolerance than the other two emotions. It is even considered the key to understanding it. Concretely, this is observed in cases where individuals have lost power or perceive that this power is threatened or when they are dogmatic and ignorant about the values governing the true principles of democracy [23, 26]. These factors then limit the possibilities of participating in collective actions

against social injustices or the acceptance of the involvement of third parties in these actions, as is often the case in contexts of authoritarian democracy where the governing systems make recourse to political repression because they consider that protest movements against the regime in place are unacceptable [41].

### ***1.2. Political Intolerance and Reluctance to Participate in Collective Action in the Context of Authoritarian Democracy***

In general, individuals support collective actions when they feel that societal treatment is unfair and needs to be changed [27]. An abundant literature has focused on the motivational mechanisms that are at the origin of these behaviors. Three fundamental mechanisms are generally identified: identity, which concerns the degree of identification of the individual with his group; emotions, which are related to the perception that the group is the victim of an injustice in society; and efficacy, which is associated with the belief in the ability of the group to achieve its goals [60, 62]. These mechanisms are very often applied to various forms of collective behavior, including non-violent/violent, non-normative/normative or online/offline forms [1, 55, 58, 59, 61].

In authoritarian democracies, participating in collective actions is a perilous activity, as individuals face the risk of arrest, beatings, and death, especially in cases where protests take place offline [3, 4, 5, 6, 15]. In Cameroon, for example, the possibility of demonstrating in the streets, which is a constitutional right, is however a privilege granted only to individuals who support the political system in place and its actors. On the other hand, those who question it are violently repressed by law enforcement [41]. Through this repressive strategy towards anti-system collective actions, the Cameroonian political system has succeeded in generating fear among the populations. This is distilled through his speech, which over time has become a veritable means of subjection and political coercion, the purpose of which is to dissuade people who intend to join in possible protest actions against the existing socio-political order, by making them aware of the very high costs of this political strategy. This is the reason why, to circumvent the harshness of the intolerance of the governing system towards difference, they prefer to resort to digital platforms to express their frustrations [35, 56]. In this context, these platforms are a palliative accessory to preserve one's life and above all to seek gratifications at the level of identity [9, 10]. Faced with collective movements, the political intolerance that is observed through the repressive arsenal deployed by the authorities is part of all the mechanisms that break the fundamental societal values that individuals hold so as to allow conditions favorable to societal anomie to emerge and feed collective frustrations.

### ***1.3. Societal Anomie and Collective Frustrations***

Originally, researchers attributed the degradation of society to the effective lack of social regulation [17, 40].

Nowadays, this is more attributed to anomie, conceived as disintegration/deregulation [52, 53]. This term refers to the perception of the fracture of society through two dimensions: the perceived fracture of the social structure, which reflects the perception of the disintegration of the social fabric (the decline of trust in society for example) and the perceived fracture of leadership, which refers to the perception that political leaders or governing authorities are ineffective and illegitimate [14]. Thus, societal anomie reflects the macro-social character of the perception that the society in which one lives is deteriorating considerably. It therefore differs from the objective nature of the indicators of society concerning its economic and social stability [30, 52].

The perception that society is deteriorating is related to negative thoughts and emotions about observed and experienced reality. The literature reports that these negative thoughts fuel social conflict, especially since the risk of societal breakdown is striking [53]. Indeed, the perceived collapse of leadership is closely linked to the collapse of social structure. When individuals live in a society where it becomes more and more difficult or even impossible to express themselves, whatever the framework, the consequence is that they will develop frustrations, in particular because their well-being, pride or satisfaction of life will continuously deteriorate, thus affecting the cohesion in the social environment; hence the fact that they are likely to become pessimistic about their own society [32, 50], which will accentuate negative emotions relating to frustration and nostalgia [32, 49]. Thus, perceiving the anomic character of society increases the feeling of discomfort [52]; and in a highly intolerant society, this perception could reinforce the motivation to support social mobilizations with the aim of restoring an acceptable and desirable social order.

### ***1.4. The Present Research: Political Intolerance, Perceived Anomic Threat and Participation in Anti-system Collective Actions in Authoritarian Democracy***

The specialized literature reports that within a society, when social fabric and leadership break down, individuals tend to embark on social conflicts [14, 31]. This means that a failing system generates favorable conditions for approval and participation in collective actions. The reason is that the perception of the anomic threat allows them to realize the break, not only between the current state of society and the past [49], but also between the current state of society and a future that probably could not or never change [14]. Furthermore, there is empirical evidence that perceived societal deterioration is related to negative political attitudes [53]. These attitudes arise because individuals are desperate and feel helpless when they imagine that their efforts will not guarantee the improvement of their situation in the future [20].

The perception of social deregulation and disintegration considerably diminishes social trust [34, 53], creating divisions between individuals and, consequently, ideological polarizations likely to motivate the increase in collective conflicts [32]. Indeed, the perceived break in society has a

negative impact on citizens' trust in the governing system [33, 57]. The reason for this is that they have apprehensions about their future, hence the pessimism and despair they feel and which could motivate them to adopt hostile behavior towards the governing authorities, considered to be responsible for the deterioration of the social fabric [14]. Based on these considerations, the present study proposes the perception of the fracture of society as a factor likely to reinforce the positive link between political intolerance (perceived as an instigator) and participation in anti-system collective actions, even in a repressive context like that of authoritarian democracies. In doing so, it intends to contribute to the literature on resistance in repressive contexts which has already documented feelings of outrage in the face of state repression, identification with civil society, and sense of moral obligation to resist as factors likely to push individuals to take the risk of participating in anti-system collective actions [5].

### 1.5. Hypothesis

In a repressive context, it is hypothetically expected that political intolerance will generate reluctance to participate in collective actions hostile to the governing system, known for the brutality with which it reacts to individuals and groups that oppose it [41]. It considers, in fact, the mechanisms of externalization of freedom of opinion and expression in force in democracies as behaviors of mistrust towards it, hence the repressive arsenal that it deploys to prevent its public expression [36, 38]. However, in line with researches that has documented the drivers of resistance in high-risk contexts [5], the present research tests the idea that perceived anomic threat will reinforce the relationship between perceived political intolerance and participation in anti-system collective actions in repressive contexts such as authoritarian democracies. Thus, it is expected that despite the political intolerance that characterizes them and one of the concrete manifestations of which is the repression of anti-system collective actions, anomie is likely to incline individuals to participate in collective actions, despite the risks incurred, because the consequences of the perception of social deregulation and disintegration are the loss of confidence in the authorities and the ideological polarizations likely to motivate collective conflicts.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

Two hundred and seventy-five (275) students of both sexes, attending various faculties of the University of Dschang (Cameroon), agreed to participate in this research. Their age varies between 17 and 47 years ( $M. = 24.24$ ;  $SD = 5.71$ ). They were randomly divided into two groups, according to the conditions of the study (149 for the experimental condition,  $M. = 24.85$ ,  $S.D. = 6.19$ ; and 126 for the control condition,  $M. = 23.53$ ,  $S.D. = 5.01$ ). Assurances of anonymity and confidentiality were given to them to

guarantee the ethics of the research.

### 2.2. The Context of the Study

The data were collected in Cameroon, a central African country, which occupies the 141st position out of 167 States in the ranking of democracies in the world [19]. This classification, which places it in the category of authoritarian regimes, is based on the abuses of the governing system towards the political opposition and citizens on a daily basis. In fact, the apparent stability of this system, which has been in power for about forty years, has its foundations in its strategy centered on violence, since its actors do not hesitate to resort to repressive policies to put an end to the claims or indignation of certain citizens in the face of its abuses or its political, economic or social failures [38]. These policies refer to all the tactics of the state or the actors of the system, aimed at destroying collective actions by increasing their physical, psychological and social costs [18].

In Cameroon, anti-system demonstrations are generally, even systematically prohibited, with the aim of hiding dissent towards the governing system [2, 29]. The resurgence of acts of violent repression on the part of the regime in place, which is actively arresting, locking up and torturing individuals who publicly demonstrate against its logic of governance, marks the highly intolerant nature of this system and its rejection of fundamental values that govern democratic societies. Despite this, some political and social protest movements manage to manifest themselves in this country, like the demonstrations of the Cameroon Renaissance Movement [25] or the movement with unionist hints launched in the education sector by the collective *On a Trop Supporté* [63], thus revealing that certain political and union actors are ready to confront the repressive arsenal of the governing system to obtain changes in a society whose degradation of leadership and values they denounce.

### 2.3. Experimental Procedure

To test the hypothesis of the present research, an experiment is conducted following the logic that the concrete presentation of a situation to individuals can impact on their collective attitude [64]. Studies that have used this procedure have demonstrated its effectiveness in activating social behaviors [31, 37]. The aim is to experimentally present to participants the fracture of society to verify its effect on the perception of the anomic threat and the strengthening of the relationship between political intolerance and participation in anti-system collective actions.

Participants in the experimental condition were given a text presented as an extract from a scientific article, to make them believe in the veracity of the information it reported. This one focused on the degradation of Cameroonian society both in terms of its social structure and leadership. It is worded as follows:

Cameroonian society faces several crisis situations. These arise at the same time on the security, economic, political, legal, educational and social levels. One of the sources of

these crises concerns the decline or even the disappearance of morality which at least prevented people from engaging in reprehensible conduct such as corruption, delinquency or the misappropriation of public property. The other source concerns the decline of leadership, because people tend to believe that the authorities of the country only serve their interests and have lost all the confidence of the population. Faced with these various problems, the sole objective of most young people is to leave this country.

Participants in the control condition did not experience manipulation. They were simply informed that a set of information will be presented to them and that they had to give their opinion on each of them.

## 2.4. Measures

In both conditions, participants were asked to give their opinions on a 7-points likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), on measures assessing the main and control variables of the study.

### 2.4.1. Measurements of the Main Variables

#### (i). Perceived Political Intolerance

This measure is inspired by the work of Crawford [12]. The participants expressed their perception of the intolerant character of the Cameroonian governing system through 4 items ( $\alpha = .65$ ).

#### (ii). Perceived Anomic Threat

The participants expressed their perception of the decline of Cameroonian society through 8 items ( $\alpha = .69$ ) inspired by the literature [53]. This measure includes 4 items relating to

the perception of the fracture of the social structure ( $\alpha = .71$ ) and 4 relating to the perception of the fracture of leadership ( $\alpha = .67$ ).

#### (iii). Participation in Anti-system Collective Actions

The participants revealed to what extent they would agree to participate in anti-system collective actions based on 8 items ( $\alpha = .70$ ) inspired by the specialized literature [47]. 4 items assess participation in collective actions offline ( $\alpha = .71$ ) and the 4 others participation in these actions online ( $\alpha = .68$ ).

### 2.4.2. Measurements of Control Variables

#### (i). Distrust of Political Authority

Participants revealed their distrust of political authority using 4 items ( $\alpha = .72$ ) adapted from the literature [48].

#### (ii). Grievances Against Political Authority

This measure was adapted from the literature [51]. Participants revealed their grievances towards the political authority based on 2 items ( $\alpha = .77$ ).

#### (iii). Perceived Efficacy of Collective Actions

Participants revealed their perception of the efficacy of collective actions based on 3 items ( $\alpha = .66$ ) [5].

## 3. Results

To test the hypothesis of the study, three categories of processing were performed on the data collected: descriptive analyzes and comparison of means, correlation and regression analyses.

**Table 1.** Analyses of means, standard deviations and comparison of means between variables.

Variables	Conditions	M	S.D.	t	Sig.
1. PPI	exp	17.93	3.879	-.112	.911
	cont	17.94	3.758		
2. PFSS	exp	19.89	4.575	.409	.683
	cont	19.91	5.386		
3. PFL	exp	19.64	4.854	3.749	.000
	cont	17.58	5.292		
4. PAT	exp	39.52	6.675	2.083	.039
	cont	37.49	8.689		
5. DPA	exp	20.74	5.616	2.513	.013
	cont	18.94	5.400		
6. GAPA	exp	10.82	3.170	2.580	.011
	cont	9.95	3.422		
7. PECA	exp	15.26	3.775	4.801	.000
	cont	13.33	3.180		
8. CARE	exp	14.64	5.470	5.109	.000
	cont	12.16	4.023		
9. CAVE	exp	16.43	5.592	2.783	.006
	cont	14.87	5.367		
10. ASCA	exp	31.07	7.944	5.177	.000
	cont	27.02	7.766		

Note: N\_cond\_exp = 149; N\_cond\_cont = 126; PPI = Perceived Political Intolerance; PFSS = Perceived Fracture of the Social Structure; PFL = Perceived Fracture of Leadership; PAT = Perceived Anomic Threat; DPA = Distrust of Political Authority; GAPA = Grievances Against Political Authority; PECA = Perceived Efficacy of Collective Actions; CARE = Collective Actions in Real Environment; CAVE = Collective Actions in Virtual Environment; ASCA = Anti-system Collective Actions.

The data in Table 1 reveal the degree of difference in the mean scores of the participants on the different measures.

They show that participants' perceptions of political intolerance in the experimental ( $M = 17.93$ ,  $S.D. = 3.879$ ) and control conditions ( $M = 17.94$ ,  $S.D. = 3.758$ ) are high and do not differ significantly from each other ( $t(275) = -.112$ ,  $p > .05$ ). The same is true for the perceived fracture of the social structure, since the participants in the experimental condition ( $M = 19.89$ ,  $S.D. = 4.575$ ) and those in the control condition ( $M = 19.91$ ,  $S.D. = 5.386$ ) have high perceptions that do not differ significantly ( $t(275) = .409$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Regarding the other measures, the participants show significant differences from one group to another. Concretely, the perception of the anomic threat is higher among participants in the experimental condition ( $M = 39.52$ ,  $S.D. = 6.675$ ) than among those in the control condition ( $M = 37.49$ ,  $S.D. = 8.689$ ). This difference is significant ( $t(275) = 2.083$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The trend is the same for the perceived fracture of leadership (experimental condition:  $M = 19.64$ ,  $S.D. = 4.854$ ; control condition:  $M = 17.58$ ,  $S.D. = 5.292$ ;  $t(275) = 3.749$ ,  $p < .01$ ), distrust of political authority (experimental condition:  $M = 20.74$ ,  $S.D. = 5.616$ ; control condition:  $M = 18.94$ ,  $S.D. = 5.400$ ;  $t(275) = 2.513$ ,  $p < .05$ ), grievances against political authority (experimental condition:  $M = 10.82$ ,  $S.D. = 3.170$ ; control condition:  $M = 9.95$ ,  $S.D. = 3.422$ ;  $t(275) = 2.580$ ,  $p$

$< .05$ ); perceived efficacy of collective actions (experimental condition:  $M = 15.26$ ,  $S.D. = 3.775$ ; control condition:  $M = 13.33$ ,  $S.D. = 3.180$ ;  $t(275) = 4.801$ ,  $p < .01$ ); and participation in anti-system collective actions (experimental condition:  $M = 31.07$ ,  $S.D. = 7.944$ ; control condition:  $M = 27.02$ ,  $S.D. = 7.766$ ;  $t(275) = 5.177$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Participants expressed a greater inclination for engagement in collective actions in virtual environment than in real environment. Concerning collective actions in real environment, participants' engagement differs significantly ( $t(275) = 5.109$ ,  $p < .01$ ) between the experimental ( $M = 14.64$ ,  $S.D. = 5.470$ ) and control conditions ( $M = 12.16$ ,  $S.D. = 4.023$ ), although it is relatively low. It is much higher in virtual environment and it differs significantly ( $t(275) = 2.783$ ,  $p < .01$ ) between the experimental ( $M = 16.43$ ,  $S.D. = 5.592$ ) and control conditions ( $M = 14.87$ ,  $S.D. = 5.367$ ). The fact that the measures reveal stronger tendencies in the participants of the experimental condition than in those of the control condition lends support to the idea that the highlighting of societal anomie through the text extract motivates the manifestation of anti-system behaviors. The analyses below provide support for this trend from the relationships between the variables.

**Table 2.** Analysis of the correlations between the variables according to the conditions of the study.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Experimental condition (N = 149)										
1. PPI	1									
2. PFSS	.396**	1								
3. PFL	.017	.002	1							
4. PAT	.284**	.687**	.728**	1						
5. DPA	.064	.343**	.236**	.406**	1					
6. GAPA	.041	.194*	.178*	.262**	.743**	1				
7. PECA	.193*	.201*	-.163*	.019	.314**	.384**	1			
8. CARE	.099	-.101	-.093	-.137	-.032	.057	.364**	1		
9. CAVE	.158	.297**	.231**	.371**	.502**	.469**	.006	.031	1	
10. ASCA	.180*	.139	.099	.168*	.331**	.368**	.255**	.711**	.725**	1
Control condition (N = 126)										
1. PPI	1									
2. PFSS	.218*	1								
3. PFL	.078	.324**	1							
4. PAT	.183*	.817**	.810**	1						
5. DPA	.216*	.565**	.284**	.523**	1					
6. GAPA	.211*	.304**	.189*	.303**	.436**	1				
7. PECA	-.043	.107	-.092	.010	.210*	.412**	1			
8. CARE	.105	-.089	.112	.013	.121	.114	-.045	1		
9. CAVE	.006	-.139	.140	-.001	.133	.139	.213*	.355**	1	
10. ASCA	.058	-.142	.155	.006	.155	.155	.124	.763**	.875**	1

Note: \*\*. The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-sided). \*. The correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-sided); PPI = Perceived Political Intolerance; PFSS = Perceived Fracture of the Social Structure; PFL = Perceived Fracture of Leadership; PAT = Perceived Anomic Threat; DPA = Distrust of Political Authority; GAPA = Grievances Against Political Authority; PECA = Perceived Efficacy of Collective Actions; CARE = Collective Actions in Real Environment; CAVE = Collective Actions in Virtual Environment; ASCA = Anti-system Collective Actions.

Table 2 reveals the existence of positive links between the variables of the study; more so among participants in the experimental condition than among their counterparts in the control condition. It indicates that the relationship between political intolerance and perceived anomic threat is stronger

in the condition where anomie was manipulated ( $r = .284$ ,  $p < .01$ ) than in the condition where it was not manipulated ( $r = .183$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This tendency is probably related to the fact that political intolerance is more strongly correlated with the perceived fracture of the social structure in the condition

where anomie was manipulated ( $r = .396, p < .01$ ) than in the condition of no manipulation ( $r = .218, p < .05$ ). We also observe a positive relationship between perceived anomic threat and negative emotions, both in experimental (distrust of political authority:  $r = .406, p < .01$ ; grievances against political authority:  $r = .262, p < .01$ ) and control conditions (distrust of political authority:  $r = .523, p < .01$ ; grievances against political authority:  $r = .303, p < .01$ ). Thus, in the experimental condition, perceived anomic threat is positively and significantly correlated with participation in anti-system collective actions in general ( $r = .168, p < .05$ ) and in a virtual environment in particular ( $r = .371, p < .01$ ), unlike the control condition where it is weakly correlated with anti-system protest in general ( $r = .006, p > .05$ ) and negatively with collective actions in a virtual environment in particular ( $r = -.001, p > .05$ ). Similarly, in the experimental condition, political

intolerance is positively correlated with anti-system protest in general ( $r = .180, p < .05$ ) and collective actions in a virtual environment in particular ( $r = .158, p < .05$ ), contrary to the control condition where it is hardly correlated either with anti-system collective actions in general ( $r = .056, p > .05$ ) or with protest in a virtual environment ( $r = .006, p > .05$ ). These positive links with collective actions, when anomie is manipulated, are accentuated by the perceived efficacy of collective actions. This disposition has a stronger positive and significant link with participation in collective actions in the experimental ( $r = .255, p < .01$ ) than in the control conditions ( $r = .124, p > .05$ ). These results provide empirical support for the idea that when individuals are confronted with deteriorating conditions in society, they are inclined to engage in anti-system collective actions, even in a repressive context. The regression analyzes performed below point in this direction.

**Table 3.** Results of the prediction and moderation analyses of the different variables according to the conditions of the study.

variable	Effects	Experimental condition					Control condition				
		95%CI					95%CI				
		$\beta$	BICI	BSCI	T	Sig	$\beta$	BICI	BSCI	t	Sig
CARE	Direct effect of political intolerance	.140	-.088	.369	1.212	.227	.112	-.077	.302	1.175	.242
CAVE		.228	-.004	.460	1.940	.054	.008	-.245	.262	.066	.948
ASCA		.368	.040	.696	2.215	.028	.121	-.246	.487	.652	.516
PFSS		.467	.290	.643	5.227	.000	.313	.064	.561	2.491	.014
PFL	Indirect effect of political intolerance	.021	-.183	.225	.206	.837	.110	-.140	.359	.870	.386
PAT		.488	.219	.757	3.587	.000	.423	.018	.827	2.070	.041
DPA		.093	-.142	.329	.782	.436	.311	.061	.560	2.466	.015
GAPA		.034	-.100	.167	.497	.620	.192	.034	.350	2.399	.018
PECA	Moderation of anomie and control measures	.188	.032	.344	2.387	.018	-.036	-.187	.114	-.481	.632
PFSS		.242	-.038	.522	1.708	.090	-.205	-.459	.049	-1.600	.112
PFL		.162	-.104	.427	1.206	.230	.227	-.031	.485	1.743	.084
PAT		.199	.008	.391	2.060	.041	.005	-.154	.164	.067	.947
DPA		.468	.251	.686	4.255	.000	.223	-.030	.475	1.744	.084
GAPA		.927	.542	1.312	4.759	.000	.352	-.047	.750	1.748	.083
PECA		.537	.205	.869	3.200	.002	.303	-.128	.734	1.393	.166
R2		.179***					.156***				

Note: Predicted variable: anti-system collective actions; PPI = Perceived Political Intolerance; PFSS = Perceived Fracture of the Social Structure; PFL = Perceived Fracture of Leadership; PAT = Perceived Anomic Threat; DPA = Distrust of Political Authority; GAPA = Grievances Against Political Authority; PECA = Perceived Efficacy of Collective Actions; CARE = Collective Actions in Real Environment; CAVE = Collective Actions in Virtual Environment; ASCA = Anti-system Collective Actions.

Table 3 reveals the predictive nature of the different variables of the study on participation in collective actions according to the conditions to which the participants were assigned. It indicates that in the condition where societal anomie is manipulated, political intolerance positively and significantly predicts participation in anti-system collective actions ( $\beta = .368, t = 2.215, p < .05, \text{Ci} [.042, .696]$ ), mainly in virtual ( $\beta = .228, t = 1.940, p = .05, \text{Ci} [-.004, .460]$ ) rather than in real environments ( $\beta = .140, t = 1.212, p > .05, \text{Ci} [-.088, .369]$ ). On the other hand, in the condition where the anomic threat is not manipulated, this prediction is not significant neither for anti-system protest ( $\beta = .121, t = .652, p > .05, \text{Ci} [-.246, .487]$ ), nor for participation in collective actions in virtual ( $\beta = .008, t = .066, p > .05, \text{Ci} [-.245, .262]$ ) or in real environments ( $\beta = .112, t = 1.175, p > .05, \text{Ci} [-.077, .302]$ ). The tested indirect effect of political intolerance

on perceived anomic threat shows a relatively higher and significant prediction in the experimental ( $\beta = .488, t = 3.587, p < .01, \text{Ci} [.219, .757]$ ) than in the control conditions ( $\beta = .423, t = 2.070, p < .05, \text{Ci} [.018, .827]$ ).

The moderation analyzed indicates that perceived anomic threat positively and significantly predicts participation in anti-system collective actions in the experimental condition ( $\beta = .199, t = 2.060, p < .05, \text{Ci} [.008, .391]$ ), accentuated by distrust of political authority ( $\beta = .468, t = 4.255, p < .01, \text{Ci} [.251, .686]$ ), grievances against political authority ( $\beta = .927, t = 4.759, p < .01, \text{Ci} [.542, 1.312]$ ), and the perceived efficacy of collective actions ( $\beta = .537, t = 3.200, p < .01, \text{Ci} [.205, .869]$ ), contrary to the control condition (perceived anomic threat:  $\beta = .005, t = .067, p > .05, \text{Ci} [-.154, .164]$ ; distrust of political authority:  $\beta = .223, t = 1.744, p > .05, \text{Ci} [-.030, .475]$ ; grievances against political

authority:  $\beta = .352$ ,  $t = 1.748$ ,  $p > .05$ , Ci [-.047, .750]; and perceived efficacy of collective actions:  $\beta = .303$ ,  $t = 1.393$ ,  $p > .05$ , Ci [-.128, .734]). These results provide empirical support for the hypothesis of the study, revealing that

perceived anomic threat positively moderates the relationship between political intolerance and anti-system protest in the repressive context of authoritarian democracies.

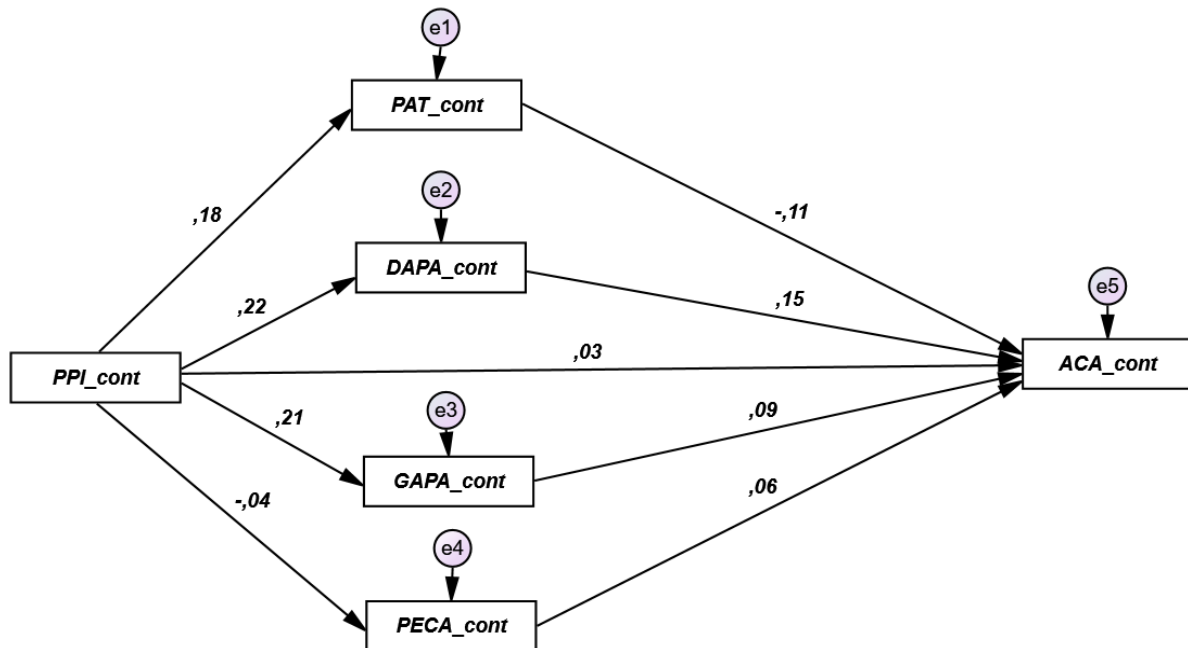


Figure 1. Model fit of the predicting and moderation effect between variables of the control condition.

Note: PPI\_Cont = Perceived Political Intolerance; PAT\_Cont = Perceived Anomic Threat; DAPA\_Cont = Distrust Against Political Authority; GAPA\_Cont = Grievances Against Political Authority; PECA\_Cont = Perceived Efficacy of Collective Actions; ACA\_Cont = Anti-System Collective Actions.

In the control condition, the analysis of the structural model putting into perspective the relationships between the variables of the study reveals a positive and non-significant direct effect of political intolerance on anti-system protest ( $\beta = .03$ , S.E. = .192,  $p > .05$ ). The analysis of the indirect relationship between these two variables is ensured by perceived anomic threat. This is positively and significantly predicted by perceived political intolerance ( $\beta = .18$ , S.E. = .203,  $p < .05$ ). However, in turn, it negatively and non-significantly predicts participation in anti-system collective actions ( $\beta = -.11$ , S.E. = .079,  $p > .05$ ). Moderation analysis reveals a negative effect of anomic threat on the link between perceived political intolerance and participation in anti-system collective actions ( $\beta = -.019$ ). These results indicate that in the condition where societal anomie is not manipulated, it does not moderate the relationship between perceived political intolerance and participation in anti-system collective actions.

This model also analyzes the effects of the control variables on the relationship between perceived political

intolerance and participation in anti-system collective actions. It shows that distrust of political authority does not moderate the relationship between perceived political intolerance and participation in anti-system collective actions, because the moderation index of this relationship is equal to the index of the direct relationship between the main variables ( $\beta = -.03$ ). This moderation is negative for the perceived efficacy of collective actions ( $\beta = -.002$ ), unlike that of grievances against political authority which positively moderates the relationship between the main variables of the study ( $\beta = .018$ ). These results show that in the condition where societal anomie is not highlighted, the analysis of the relationship between perceived political intolerance and participation in anti-system collective actions must take grievances against political authority and perceived efficacy into account. The adjustment of all these variables makes it possible to validate the model of prediction of the participation in anti-system protest by the perception of political intolerance, as shown in the following table.

Table 4. Model fit index of predicting effect of the control condition.

CMIN/DF	P	NFI	RFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	PCLOSE
15,037	,000	,197	-1,811	,208	-2,228	,078	,226	,000

The fit indices of this model are not satisfactory according to the standards required in this area [39]. Indeed, the standardized (NFI = .197), relative (RFI = -1.811), incremental

(IFI = .208), Turkey Lewis (TLI = -2.228) and comparative (CFI = .078) adjustment indices are away from 1. The CMIN/DF ratio (or  $X^2/DF = 15.037$ ) is greater than 5 and the



Root-Mean-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = .226 or 22.6%) is greater than 10%. These indices do not meet the

recommended standards [8, 11, 42]. Thus, these results do not provide support for the variable adjustment model.

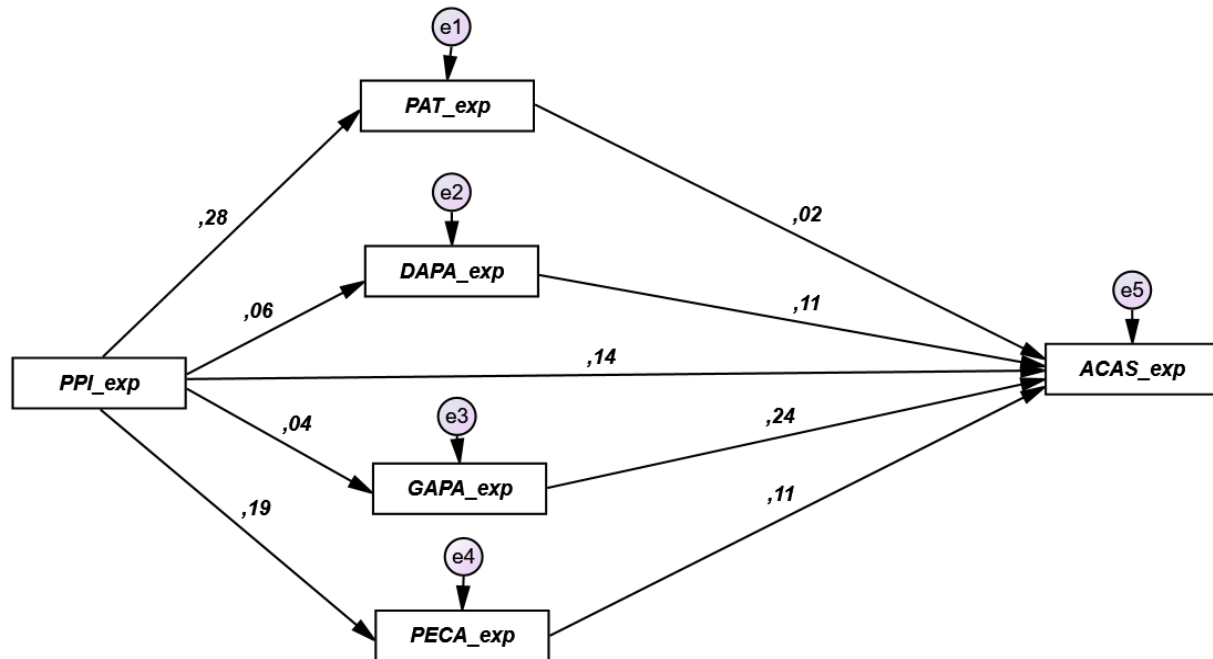


Figure 2. Model fit of the predicting and moderation effect between variables of the experimental condition.

Note: PPI\_Exp = Perceived Political Intolerance; PAT\_Exp = Perceived Anomic Threat; DAPA\_Exp = Distrust Against Political Authority; GAPA\_Exp = Grievances Against Political Authority; PECA\_Exp = Perceived Efficacy of Collective Actions; ACA\_Exp = Anti-System Collective Actions.

In the experimental condition, the analysis of the structural model in Figure 2, which highlights the relationships between the variables of the study, reveals that the direct effect of the perception of political intolerance on the participation in anti-system collective actions is positive, but not significant ( $\beta = .14$  S.E. = .162,  $p > .05$ ). The evaluation of the indirect relationship between these two variables is ensured by the perceived anomic threat. This is positively and significantly predicted by the perception of political intolerance ( $\beta = .28$ , S.E. = .135,  $p < .01$ ). This provision in turn predicts a positive but non-significant effect on the participation in anti-system collective actions ( $\beta = .02$ , S.E. = .092,  $p > .05$ ). Moderation analysis reveals a positive effect of perceived anomic threat on the link between perceived political intolerance and participation in anti-system collective actions ( $\beta = -.005$ ). These results thus reveal that in the condition where societal anomie is salient, the perception of its threatening character positively moderates the relationship between political intolerance and engagement in anti-system collective actions. They provide empirical

support for the hypothesis of the study.

In this model, we also analyze the effects of the control variables on the relationship between the perception of political intolerance and the participation in anti-system protest. We observe that, like perceived anomie, distrust of political authority moderates the relationship between perceived political intolerance and participation in anti-system collective actions ( $\beta = .006$ ). The same is true of the moderating effects of the perceived efficacy of collective actions ( $\beta = .020$ ) and grievances against political authority ( $\beta = .009$ ) on the relationship between the two main variables of the study. These results show that in the condition where societal anomie is salient, the analysis of the relationship between perceived political intolerance and participation in collective actions must take into account not only distrust and grievances against political authority, but also the perceived efficacy of collective actions. The adjustment of the variables of the model for predicting participation in anti-system collective actions by the perception of political intolerance is evaluated in Table 5.

Table 5. Model fit index of predicting effect of the control condition.

CMIN/DF	P	NFI	RFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	PCLOSE
28,750	.000	.217	-1,741	.223	-1,924	.164	.318	.000

Table 5 reports that the fit indices of the above model are not satisfactory according to the required standards [39]. Indeed, the standardized (NFI = .217), relative (RFI = -1.741), incremental (IFI = .223), Turkey Lewis (TLI = -

1.924), and comparative (CFI = .164) fit indices away from 1. The CMIN/DF ratio (or  $X^2/DF = 28.750$ ) is greater than 5 and the Root-Mean-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = .318 or 31.8%) is greater than 10%. These indices do not

meet the recommended standards [8, 11, 42]. Thus, these results do not provide support for the variable adjustment model. However, overall, when societal anomie is salient, the perception of the threat it represents positively moderates the relationship between political intolerance and participation in anti-system collective actions; which confirms the thesis defended in this study.

## 4. Discussion

The current research tested the hypothesis that anomic threat positively moderates the relationship between political intolerance and participation in anti-system collective actions in contexts of authoritarian democracy. Empirical observations confirmed this prediction. They show that in these contexts, perceived political intolerance generates participation in anti-system collective actions when societal anomie is experimentally manipulated. The experimental manipulation of this variable was motivated by the idea that the concrete presentation of a phenomenon to individuals can have an effect on their attitudes and behaviors [64]. This method has shown its effectiveness both in previous works and in this study [37]. Indeed, when a phenomenon is presented in a concrete way to individuals, as is the case here with societal anomie, this can lead them to reflect on the threat it can represent for their survival [64]. In this work, the manipulation of anomie as a consequence of the dysfunction of society inclined the participants to perceive the threatening nature of this phenomenon. As a result, they have developed negative emotions (mistrust and grievances) against political authorities. These results thus contribute to the literature on the link between societal anomie and the expression of negative emotions [13, 31, 32, 49, 52, 53].

This study provides empirical support for the idea that in a sociopolitical context characterized by intolerance towards the public expression of dissenting ideas, such as in authoritarian democracies, perceived societal anomie is a psychosocial mechanism allowing to understand the inclination of individuals to protest, because it is likely to generate the adoption of hostile intergroup attitudes [14]. This psychosocial disposition facilitates extremist polarizations and pessimism about the future of society. Indeed, when individuals realize that society is continually deteriorating, they may consider that even the future, to which they could cling to in order to believe that they are safe, risks being even more degraded, or even non-existent; hence their propensity to engage in collective actions in the present. These actions are then intended to seek immediate or distant change [58, 59, 61].

In this research, participation in anti-system collective actions in real and virtual environments were concurrently assessed. Participants expressed a stronger preference for protest in virtual than in real environment. These results go in the same direction as the data reported by the specialized literature which reveal that in a repressive context, individuals are more inclined to protest against the governing system online rather than offline [1, 55]. One of the

foundations of this preference lies in the security and identity benefits of the first form of collective actions [43, 47, 54]. Indeed, it has the advantage of being difficult to control by the governing authorities, in particular because individuals can maintain relative anonymity there, since they can register on digital platforms with pseudonyms and therefore escape the repression of the system which is especially effective in cases of public expression of dissenting ideas offline [54]. As a result, protests on these platforms are often more extremist and robust against the repression and unwillingness to negotiate exhibited by political authorities [44], which are likely to further societal dysfunction, letting the anomie emerge.

## 5. Conclusion and Future Direction

The results of this study show that anomic threat reinforces the relationship between political intolerance and participation in anti-system collective actions in the context of authoritarian democracy. An experimental manipulation made it possible to make societal anomie salient. The main reserve of this work comes from this procedure which consisted of the presentation of societal anomie in a block through its aspects relating to the perceived fracture of both social structure and leadership, to boost the psychosocial dispositions assessed. However, in a recent study, the authors proceeded with a differentiated presentation of the two forms of societal anomie, by creating an experimental condition where the perceived fracture of the social structure is manipulated and another where it is the perceived fracture of leadership which is highlighted [31]. In this logic, the present research cannot therefore attest that there is indeed a causal link between the dimensions of societal anomie taken separately and the participation in anti-system collective actions. In this study, as in previous researches, the results show that individuals perceive the disintegration of the social structure more than the deregulation of leadership [53]. Future studies could examine the reasons for this trend and their impact on participation in anti-system collective actions in both democratic and authoritarian contexts.

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