

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Reflecting on research: Researcher identity in conflict studies from the perspectives of participants

Özden Melis Uluğ^{1,2}  | Yasemin Gülsüm Acar³ | Betül Kanık⁴

¹ Department of Psychology, Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts, USA

² School of Psychology, University of Sussex, Brighton, UK

³ Department of Psychology, University of Dundee, Dundee, UK

⁴ Department of Psychology, Hacettepe University, Ankara, Ankara, Turkey

Correspondence

Özden Melis Uluğ, School of Psychology, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton BN1 9QH, UK.

Email: omu20@sussex.ac.uk

Abstract

While researchers have long discussed the impact that ingroup–outgroup identities may have on participant–researcher dynamics, no previous study that we know of has investigated how these identities impact participants' decisions to participate in research in conflict contexts. In this study, we aimed to examine participants' perspectives on their decisions to participate in research and how those decisions may be related to both their and the researchers' identities as well as other important dynamics, such as political ideology. We used the Turkish–Kurdish conflict as a case and examined participants' perspectives on Turkish researchers in this conflict context. More specifically, we investigated (1) opinions and feelings about Turkish researchers; (2) reasons for (not) participating in research by Turkish researchers; (3) the ways Turkish researchers affect participants' decisions; and (4) attitudes toward Kurdish researchers. We used a survey with open-ended questions to explore participants' perspectives and analysed the data from 137 participants who identify as Kurdish using qualitative content analysis. Results highlighted the important opinions and feelings about Turkish researchers such as researchers' ideological positions, objectivity, and sincerity, as well as how researchers' other identities may affect participants' evaluations of their research and how Kurdish researchers are perceived by Kurdish participants. We discuss the ingroup–outgroup dynamics together with other identities in relation to existing identity literature, as well as practical implications of our research for participant recruitment.

KEYWORDS

conflict settings, insider, Kurdish conflict, outsider, reflexivity, research participants

1 | INTRODUCTION

Intractable intergroup conflicts are a global phenomenon that influences the lives of everyone involved, even those who observe the conflicts. They last a long time and are not receptive to resolution, despite efforts to do so. Within social psychology, research on conflict and post-conflict societies is growing, making the need to better understand how to conduct rigorous research in difficult contexts all the more important (see Acar et al., 2020; Moss et al., 2019). Rigorous research,

though, also means making sure that researchers are conscious of the way they and their research is perceived by the populations they target for data collection.

The rationale for this study began with the experiences of the three authors' research on the Turkish–Kurdish conflict in the last decade. Each of the authors, sometimes independently and sometimes together, encountered difficulties while conducting field research. The first author, an ethnically Turkish researcher, went to Mersin and Diyarbakır in 2012 to collect data from Kurds on conflict perceptions

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in the context of the Turkish–Kurdish conflict. She faced many challenges in recruitment, as potential participants were suspicious about her and her research, even asking whether she was working for the National Intelligence Agency in Turkey (*Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı*). The second author was involved in two field studies in 2014 and 2015 on the perspectives of Kurdish Alevis and of village guards on the conflict. In both cases, the targeted populations were marginalized even within Kurdish communities and distrustful of outsiders. As a Turkish–American, the second author was outside both the researched communities as well as sometimes perceived as a ‘foreigner’. The third author, who is Turkish on her father’s side and Kurdish on her mother’s side, felt she had to negotiate her ethnic identity according to participants’ ethnic identities during data collection in 2019. Even though she had a mixed identity, the participants’ responses to the researcher as well as the research project differed according to their ethnic identities. In our projects in the Turkish–Kurdish conflict context, data were generally collected in Turkish, though in some cases, the second author collected data in Kurdish. The first and third authors never worked with translators, but we have all worked with research assistants in some instances.

What started for us with personal experience, however, has led us to reflect on research in conflict zones more generally, as well as on the particular experiences of ‘target’ populations in this kind of work (see, e.g., Acar & Uluğ, 2019; Acar et al., 2020; Moss et al., 2019). As we, as researchers, have begun to critically reflect on our own identities and positions when conducting fieldwork in conflict, we have also started to explore the way in which our identities as researchers, and in particular Turkish researchers, are viewed by the populations that are targeted for participation in this work, and their own critical evaluations of the research and whether or not to participate.

It was only after years of conducting our own research in conflict contexts that we were faced with self-reflective questions *about* our participation in this research. Why is it that we started researching the Kurdish issue and Turkish–Kurdish conflict in the first place? And are we really the best placed to do this research? There are a number of thoughts and perspectives we had when approaching these questions. For one, there is a sense of responsibility as Turkish researchers to speak on these issues. After all, the Turkish–Kurdish conflict disproportionately affects the Kurdish population, and this is due to Turkish hegemony. Is it not then our responsibility, as researchers with a sincere desire for peace, to contribute to the discussion of these issues? What is the role of Turkish researchers, as opposed to say, European researchers? Do we, as relative insiders who, due to our ethnic identities, benefit from the relative power structures, have a different sort of responsibility than outsider researchers?

At the same time, do we, as Turkish researchers, take up space that should belong to Kurdish researchers? Many others before us have asked these questions (e.g., Milner, 2007), and it is important to consider the reasons why we take part in research on this conflict. In thinking about these issues, we see our roles as Turkish researchers with a responsibility to provide space for narratives that counter the Turkish hegemonic perspective on the Turkish–Kurdish conflict. We cannot take the place of Kurdish researchers, nor do we believe our research

can be of more or less inherent value than theirs. We also cannot answer the question, finally, as to who should do research, if the fluctuations of relative outsider or insider identity matter in these answers. The role of Turkish researchers in studying the Kurdish issue goes far beyond the question of insider-outsider validity or objectivity.

Maybe as a means to address the questions in our own minds, we sought to get some answers from Kurdish participants. We asked questions of Kurdish participants by drawing on our own experiences in the field, both positive and negative, and sought to gain perspective from participants on the role of Turkish researchers as relative insiders or outsiders. In this way, we are gaining knowledge on how our identities as researchers shape the motivations of Kurdish participants in participating in research on the Turkish–Kurdish conflict, particularly when the researcher is *Turkish*. Our aim with this article is to understand how the identity of the researcher can inform the participants’ decision to participate and how it encourages or discourages them from participation.

1.1 | Different dynamics while studying conflict in difficult contexts

Social psychological research into ongoing and intractable conflict has focused quite often on the factors that continue conflict (e.g., intergroup prejudice, competitive victimhood; see, e.g., Noor et al., 2012; Paluck, 2009; Sullivan et al., 2012), and the ways that conflict can be assuaged (e.g., intergroup contact, superordinate goals/categories; see, e.g., Al Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013; Gaertner et al., 2000). Whether a conflict is chosen to test particular theories or a theory is chosen for its potential to improve intergroup relations as they relate to a particular conflict, researchers seek participation from individuals who are directly or indirectly affected by the conflict.

While it is relevant to think about participants’ perspectives in any type of research setting, there are a number of particular considerations when the participation comes from a conflict context. Potential participants presumably pay attention to such issues as their interest in the research, the inherent value they believe it has, and of course, whether or not they feel their participation has any value. Beyond these concerns, reaching less accessible populations—including those in conflict contexts—can involve official and unofficial gatekeepers, such as stakeholders (Hanson et al., 2015), who may determine whom the researchers can access. Although the gatekeepers are beneficial in protecting the rights of the participants in sensitive contexts, research has also shown that the participants are usually glad to participate in such studies, as there are some personal benefits for them. For example, a review study has shown that participants, in general, find participating in studies helpful for them because they have the opportunity to gain different perspectives, and it feels good to have someone listen to their stories (Alexander et al., 2018). In addition to these personal benefits, participants who agree to participate in studies seem to consider social benefits. For these participants, altruism and the motivation to be beneficial to society are also reasons to participate in different studies (Carrera et al., 2018; Christopher et al., 2017).

Within social psychology, social identity related to gender, age, ethnicity, and nationality have traditionally been discussed in the social identity perspective (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1982), which sees the self as multiple and part of a complex system, as well as hierarchically organized, context-specific, and variable (Subašić et al., 2008). Depending on the context, people may describe themselves in terms of personal or social identities, as part of a group within a larger category, or as part of a superordinate identity. Conflict is a particularly sensitive context. While racial, ethnic, religious, and other identities may exist in hierarchies in any context, conflict brings these hierarchies to the fore. More recent work in social psychology (e.g., Kerr et al., 2017) has pushed against the more sterile dichotomous approaches to intergroup conflicts. Such approaches ignore contexts of colonization and oppression, not to mention that social relations occur on multiple fronts. As such, knowing who is a member of the minority and who is a member of the majority before divulging a perspective on the conflict may be important for potential research participants. In many cases, participants may then look for researchers they consider to be ingroup members, especially ethnically or politically similar to themselves, when they decide whether to participate in research.

Researchers have long been discussing the impact that ingroup-outgroup identities may have on participant–researcher dynamics (see Levy, 2013; Weiner-Levy, 2009; Weiner-Levy & Queder, 2012; Wood, 2006). Turkish researchers studying the Turkish–Kurdish context can be considered relative insiders or outsiders; outsiders in that they are not Kurdish, relative insiders as they are also affected by the conflict. At the same time, Turkish researchers may be viewed as representing the relative power of the Turkish state and Turkish identity when they conduct research on the Turkish–Kurdish conflict. Therefore, there could be various responses from potential research participants as they decide whether or not to take part in research. In this study, we aim to examine participants' perspectives on their decisions to participate in research and how those decisions may be related to both their and the researchers' identities. We use the Turkish–Kurdish conflict as a case and examine Kurdish participants' perspectives in this conflict context. Even though participants' perspectives on their decisions to participate in research will depend on context, we believe that examining one specific case will generate useful general input relevant beyond that case. Below, we first provide historical background on the Turkish–Kurdish conflict to contextualize our research.

1.2 | The Turkish–Kurdish conflict

With the foundation of the modern Republic of Turkey in 1923, non-Turkish identities and cultural expressions were denied and repressed as a means to encourage a central national identity (Kirişçi & Winrow, 1997). People in Turkey were to be homogenized under the umbrella of 'Turkishness,' leaving little room for other identities (Yavuz & Özcan, 2006). One group in particular that rebelled against this homogenization was the Kurds, the largest ethnic minority group in Turkey. After the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, Kurds rebelled multiple times, though all of the uprisings of the Kurdish movements were sup-

pressed, and the Kurdish language and expressions of identity were banned (Olson, 1996). Though there were no uprisings between 1938 and 1984 (Heper, 2008), the 1980 military coup of General Kenan Evren and its aftermath was especially oppressive toward the Kurdish population. The military leaders adopted policies that were inspired by Turk-Islam Synthesis (Jongerden, 2003) and left no room for Kurds to express their Kurdishness.

The post-coup regime saw egregious violence and human rights violations against the Kurds, in addition to the banning of political parties in the Kurdish region. Especially in Diyarbakır prison after the coup, Kurdish activists were exposed to serious torture, degradation, and 'Turkification' practices (Zeydanlıoğlu, 2009). The expression of Kurdish identity was banned by the Turkish state and Kurdish cultural activities were restricted as well. The oppression and violence allowed the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK, *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*) to grow and gain support in this period (Barkey & Fuller, 1998), and under the leadership of Abdullah Öcalan, the PKK began its insurgency in 1984. Clashes between the PKK and the Turkish State continued until Öcalan was captured in 1999; he has remained imprisoned ever since with long periods of isolation. Though clashes resumed in 2004, it was not until 2013 that the formal peace process started between Öcalan and the Turkish government. The meetings of then pro-Kurdish Peace and Development Party's (BDP, *Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi*) parliamentarians and Öcalan took place as the BDP played the main mediator role in this process. The peace process started falling apart from April 2015 onward. One of the many reasons behind this failed peace process can be explained by the disagreement over the conditions of disarmament and the Kobane crisis beforehand, the declaration of Dolmabahçe Consensus by the Kurdish side, followed by its rejection by AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi; Justice and Development Party) and the isolation of Öcalan (Aktoprak, 2018; Gunes, 2020). In addition, the unprecedented popularity of the Kurdish political party undermined the government's Kurdish electoral base, and because of this, AKP did not want to return to the resolution process (O'Connor, 2017; see also Rumelili & Çelik, 2017).

By the end of 2015, the conflict had extended into cities and urban centres. Turkish security forces used tanks and heavy artillery against Kurdish-majority cities and established round-the-clock curfews. The United National High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) documented serious human rights violations against Kurds and reported that up to half a million people, including people from different ethnic backgrounds who happened to live in those regions, were displaced due to the clashes (OHCHR Report, 2017).

The conflict has expectedly impacted relationships between Turks and Kurds. Intergroup contact in terms of cross-group friendship is reportedly high among both Turks and Kurds (Uluğ & Cohrs, 2017), though importantly, levels of outgroup trust (van der Linden et al., 2017) are quite low among both Turks and Kurds (see Çelebi et al., 2014). Low levels of trust among Kurds may be related to Turks' lack of acknowledgment of Kurds' political claims; a substantial majority of Turks see the conflict as a terrorism problem (see also Uluğ & Cohrs, 2016; 2019). On the other hand, low levels of trust among Turks may be related to perceiving Kurds' political demands as a threat to the unitary

state structure of Turkey. A recent report indicates that Kurds trust people they meet less than Turks and feel less secure in those interactions because of their ethnic Kurdish identity (KONDA, 2015). At the same time, the report shows that Kurds' trust in the government has decreased compared to previous years. However, both Turks' and Kurds' perspectives on the Turkish–Kurdish conflict are quite diverse. These perspectives revolve around a number of narratives: (1) terrorism narrative, (2) economic narrative, (3) democracy and Islam narrative, (4) democracy and rights narrative, as well as (5) independence narrative (Uluğ & Cohrs, 2016; 2017).

1.3 | The present study

While we, as researchers, often focus on our ability to find participants in sensitive contexts and reflect on how we are viewed by participants (see, e.g., Moss et al., 2019), we rarely openly ask the question of individuals within the conflict how our identities impact their decision to participate in research on these issues. After reflecting on our experiences in our previous work, and the way our identities as Turkish researchers have influenced that work, we became interested in understanding how participants viewed the impact of our identities as Turkish researchers as well. The reflexivity of the researcher is mirrored by that of the participant—rather than seeing our participants as one-dimensional (e.g., 'I am looking for Kurdish participants for my research project'), it is important to realize that individuals within Kurdish communities critically evaluate and decide the value of the research, especially when it comes from Turkish researchers. They, therefore, have the option to take part or not—and this decision very often affects the outcomes of our own work. The current study focuses on how Kurds in Turkey decide if they will participate in research about the Turkish–Kurdish conflict. The study describes their perspectives based on the importance and relevance of the identity of the researcher in their decision to participate.

2 | METHOD

2.1 | Participants

We collected data from 146 participants. Two participants self-identified as Turkish, and seven participants chose 'other' to self-identify; they were therefore excluded from the analyses. The final sample comprised 137 participants who self-identified as Kurdish. One hundred five participants self-identified as men, 29 as women, and three either did not want to respond to this question or self-identified as *other*. Ages of participants ranged from 18 to 62 ($M = 32.76$; $SD = 8.72$). Thirty-three participants completed an MSc degree, 77 a university degree, 22 high school, three secondary school, and two primary school. Participants' average political orientation on a scale from 1 (*left*) to 7 (*right*) was 1.93 ($SD = 1.44$), indicating a left-leaning sample. Out of 137 participants, 25 participants had previously participated in any research on the Kurdish issue that was conducted by Turkish

researcher(s), 18 participants had been asked to participate, but had turned such invitations down, and 94 participants had not come across any Turkish researchers researching the Kurdish issue (see Table 1 for participants' past participation in research conducted by Turkish researchers).

2.2 | Procedure

We received IRB approval for this research from the University of Dundee. The anonymized raw data, coding frame, and all questions used to collect data in Turkish are publicly available via the Open Society Framework (OSF) webpage: https://osf.io/qgk82/?view_only=deb231fc7cad437aa3beec7ce8331cd6

Survey questionnaires were distributed through social media such as Facebook and Twitter. The announcement we used on social media was in Turkish: 'We would like to get the views of the Kurds about the studies on the Kurdish issue. For this purpose, we are conducting a short qualitative study that lasts 8 minutes. We would be delighted if you could share our research with your Kurdish friends and/or acquaintances.'

All open-ended questions were asked in Turkish. At the beginning of the study, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, told that they could withdraw from the study at any time during data collection without having to give a reason, their taking part in the study would be kept confidential, and there is no potential risk to participants. After participants gave their informed consent prior to their inclusion in the study, one question was used to categorize participants: Have you ever participated in any research on the Kurdish issue that was conducted by Turkish researcher(s)? Based on their responses (i.e., [a] yes, I have participated, [b] no, I did not want to participate, and [c] no, I have not been approached by any Turkish researchers researching the Kurdish issue), the following questions were presented: (1) In general, what do you think or feel when Turkish researchers work on the Kurdish issue?; (2) How did/do you decide (not) to participate in a study on the Kurdish issue carried out by any Turkish researcher?; (3) Did/does the fact that the researcher is Turkish affect your decision when participating in this research? If yes, in what way?; (4) If the same research were conducted by a Kurdish researcher, what would your approach to this research be? We should note that we asked the same questions to all participants in the same order to maintain consistency. Even though these different questions were asked in different blocks and were slightly modified based on the filter question (e.g., how did you decide in the past vs. how do you decide in the future?), during the analysis, these different columns were merged. We should also note that participants based their answers on different sets of experiences, such as actual experiences with turning the invitation to the study down, actual experiences with accepting the invitation to participate in research, and thinking hypothetically as to what one would do in such a situation. Therefore, we invite the reader to evaluate the participants' responses based on these experiences. After the study was over, participants were debriefed and thanked for their participation.

TABLE 1 Past participation of participants in research on the Kurdish issue

Participant no.	Past participation	Participant no.	Past participation	Participant no.	Past participation
1	3	47	2	93	3
2	1	48	3	94	2
3	3	49	3	95	3
4	3	50	3	96	3
5	3	51	3	97	3
6	3	52	3	98	3
7	3	53	1	99	3
8	3	54	3	100	3
9	3	55	3	101	3
10	3	56	3	102	3
11	3	57	3	103	3
12	3	58	2	104	1
13	1	59	3	105	1
14	2	60	3	106	3
15	3	61	2	107	3
16	3	62	3	108	3
17	3	63	3	109	3
18	1	64	3	110	1
19	3	65	3	111	1
20	3	66	3	112	3
21	3	67	1	113	3
22	3	68	1	114	3
23	1	69	1	115	3
24	2	70	2	116	3
25	3	71	3	117	3
26	3	72	3	118	3
27	3	73	3	119	3
28	3	74	3	120	1
29	3	75	3	121	1
30	3	76	3	122	1
31	3	77	1	123	3
32	1	78	1	124	2
33	1	79	1	125	2
34	2	80	3	126	3
35	2	81	3	127	3
36	3	82	3	128	2
37	3	83	3	129	1
38	3	84	3	130	3
39	2	85	1	131	3
40	2	86	1	132	3
41	3	87	3	133	2
42	3	88	2	134	3
43	3	89	3	135	3

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Participant no.	Past participation	Participant no.	Past participation	Participant no.	Past participation
44	3	90	3	136	2
45	1	91	3	137	3
46	1	92	2		

Note. 1 = Yes, I have participated; 2 = No, I did not want to participate; 3 = No, I have not been approached by any Turkish researchers.

2.3 | Analysis

We analysed our data by using Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA; Schreier, 2012). QCA is typically used to help researchers reduce qualitative data and focus on selected content aspects of the data (Schreier, 2012). QCA has the following eight steps: (1) selecting the material, (2) building a coding frame, (3) dividing the material into units of coding, (4) trying out the coding frame with a second coder, (5) evaluating the coding frame, (6) modifying the coding frame, (7) carrying out the main analysis, and (8) interpreting and presenting the findings. In QCA, the research question (e.g., the aim of the study) usually drives the selection of content aspects (e.g., selecting relevant responses such as a word or paragraph related to the answers to the research question). After selecting the content aspects of the data, the data are systematically described. In our study, the main angle (i.e., main categories) for the data analysis, which was developed deductively, was: (a) opinions and feelings about Turkish researchers, (b) reasons for (not) participating in research by Turkish researchers, (c) the ways Turkish researchers affect Kurdish participants' decisions, and (d) attitudes toward Kurdish researchers.

After reading all of the responses, a coding framework was created based on the subcategories mentioned at least twice. We examined what was said in relation to the four main categories and created subcategories inductively. We first decided to differentiate each subcategory as long as they were mentioned at least twice by two different participants (thus becoming a socially shared perspective). As we divided the material into units of coding, we made sure that each unit belonged to only one subcategory in the coding framework. Second, we included decision rules to explain the conditions for which (sub-)subcategory to choose when two (sub)subcategories were similar. In other words, during this process, we labelled, defined, and illustrated by means of examples from the raw data and included decision rules to explain the conditions for which (sub)subcategory to choose when two (sub)subcategories were similar (Schreier, 2012). Later, the responses of the participants were coded under these subcategories. We should note that a participant's response was coded under a particular subcategory only once. If a participant's response mentioned more than one topic, then their responses were coded under two different subcategories, separately. In the final stage, we used frequency analysis to find out how many times each subcategory was mentioned by different participants. For example, if the frequency of a subcategory is 50, it means that 50 different participants mentioned that subcategory.

TABLE 2 Frequencies for the first main category's subcategories (opinions and feelings about Turkish researchers)

#	Subcategories	Frequency	Percent
1	They are not objective, sincere and trustworthy	67	33.8
2	They are prejudiced and ignorant	28	14.1
3	I like/I find positive/I'm proud/I'm happy	27	13.6
4	Hopeful if it will contribute to the solution/goodwill	19	9.6
5	Researchers' identity	18	9.1
6	Necessary/important/valuable	9	4.5
7	This kind of research should be run by the Kurdish people	6	3.0
8	"This is not a Kurdish issue, it's a Turkish issue"	5	2.5
9	Miscellaneous	19	9.6
	Total	198	100.0

3 | RESULTS

We highlighted in particular two angles in the data: (a) descriptive frequency counts in each subcategory of the coding scheme and (b) the most prominent subcategories mentioned by the participants together with examples. Even though there were more subcategories than we discussed in the text, we believe we are reflecting the main indicators of that particular question (main category) at hand.

3.1 | Main category 1: Opinions and feelings about Turkish researchers

In the first main category (opinions and feelings about Turkish researchers), when asked about what participants think or feel when Turkish researchers work on the Kurdish issue, many participants mentioned that Turkish researchers, in general, are not objective, sincere, or trustworthy (subcategory 1; frequency 67; see Table 2). Five different participants stated that they 'do not see Turkish researchers as sincere' (participants 22, 40, 50, 89, & 117). Even if they wanted to believe Turkish researchers' sincerity, the objectivity of the researcher remained an important problem for them. Participant 93, who had not been approached by any Turkish researchers (see Table 1), explained:

'Although I want to believe in their sincerity, at the end of the research, I feel like they will not publish research results objectively.' Similarly, other participants argued that the questions asked in research conducted by Turkish researchers reflect this problem plainly. According to participant 137, who had not been approached by any Turkish researchers, for example:

[Their research is conducted] in order to prove the official ideology of the [Turkish] state... it is clear from the questions they ask, from the questions they choose; they want to find the result they want. Until now, I have not come across objective research [conducted by] any of the public universities in Turkey. I do not think I ever will.

This quote is particularly interesting because participant 137 had not been approached by any Turkish researchers. Participant 137's statements represent more a generalization of research conducted by Turkish researchers. The participant talks about the research they have seen put out by universities, and this is enough to put them off participation.

Another reflection of not believing that researchers are objective is confidentiality and trust issues. These participants generally believe that Turkish researchers who conduct studies on the Turkish–Kurdish conflict work either for the government or the Turkish state. They do not trust these researchers, and their worries affect their responses as well if they participate. For example, participant 40, who did not want to participate in research, stated his suspicion as: 'I think [Turkish researchers] identify the weak points of the Kurds [through research] and use them [against Kurds] in different areas.' Similarly, participant 112, who had not been approached by any Turkish researchers, shared his belief about Turkish researchers by saying that Turkish researchers leak information about Kurds to the government. Participant 115, who had not been approached by any Turkish researchers, voiced this concern as well:

[If I participated], while answering questions, I would try not to give any answers against the [Turkish] state. I would worry that the responses I gave may cause my dismissal from employment [whenever discovered] in the future, and even worse, may cost my freedom.

Moreover, three participants who had not been approached by any Turkish researchers specifically stated that they would not trust research conducted by Turkish researchers (participants 60, 99, & 102).

These examples clearly showed how the Kurdish participants perceive Turkish researchers and the research they conduct. Participants paid attention to objectivity, the aim of the research, and the questions that are asked in the study and voiced their concerns regarding how the researchers would publish the findings of the research. Trust issues were also very prominent in this category; participants claimed that they did not trust Turkish researchers because they caused them to be

blacklisted or leaked information to the government, so they could censor their answers in such research.

Apart from the objectivity and trust issues, many participants mentioned the negative attitudes and behaviours of Turkish researchers towards Kurds and their ignorance of the Kurdish issue (subcategory two; frequency 28). The most expressed attitudes by the participants were that Turkish researchers were prejudiced (participants 12, 92, & 134), hostile (participants 1, 45, & 123), and arrogant (participants 18, 30, & 48). Besides, some of the participants stated that the researchers who study the Kurdish issue do not understand the Kurds and approach the problems merely as an object of research, without any real understanding of what Kurds have experienced. For example, participant 74, who had not been approached by any Turkish researchers, shared his opinions as: '[I see that] they have never lived in Kurdish regions and I immediately understand that they do not have a grip on Kurdish culture.'

Even though some participants did not consider Turkish researchers or their research sincere, there were other participants who found Turkish researchers' work on the Turkish–Kurdish conflict positive (subcategory 3; frequency 27). Some participants stated that they find it quite positive when Turkish researchers—but not European researchers (participant 85)—conduct research on the Turkish–Kurdish conflict (e.g., participants 11, 46, & 110). As 'the solution of the conflict lies in increasing the number of Turkish people who have common sense' (participant 57), some participants felt it was a good thing for Turkish researchers to do research on this conflict. Similarly, participant 19, who had not been approached by any Turkish researchers, stated that they feel they are not alone when Turkish researchers are interested in this conflict even though there are not many Turkish researchers: 'I am glad to see that people other than Kurds are not insensitive to the Kurdish liberation struggle. I feel like we are not alone. But I also think that the number of these [Turkish] people is very small.' These comments showed that some Kurdish participants expect the Turkish researchers to conduct research on the conflict because they are party to the conflict, and they need to understand what the 'other' demands and be sensitive to the problem.

There are also participants who stated that they were hopeful if such research would contribute to the problem and they thought the researchers were well-intentioned (subcategory 4; frequency 19). Participant 105, who participated in this kind of research, clarifies these thoughts as: 'I think their interest in the Kurdish issue has a positive function to break certain prejudices, to understand, to try to learn - which means better communication and finding solutions to each other.' Some of the participants mentioned that they think these types of research are useful because they would help other people understand Kurds better (participants 77, 116, & 121).

3.2 | Main category 2: Reasons for (not) participating in research by Turkish researchers

In the second main category (reasons for [not] participating in research by Turkish researchers), when asked about how they decide to

TABLE 3 Frequencies for the second main category's subcategories (reasons for [not] participating in research by Turkish researchers)

#	Subcategories	Frequency	Percent
1	Reasons for participating	277	93.6
2	Reasons for not participating	19	6.4
	Total	296	100.0

TABLE 4 Frequencies for the second main category's first subcategory's subsubcategories (reasons for participating in research by Turkish researchers)

#	Sub-subcategories	Frequency	Percent
1	Objectivity/scientificness/trustworthiness	131	47.3
2	Usefulness and (academic) contribution to the solution	47	17.0
3	About researchers	39	14.1
4	Self-expression/speaking out	15	5.4
5	Depends on the current political situation	9	3.2
6	Ethnic identity is not important	5	1.8
7	Time and money	3	1.1
8	Knowledge about Kurds and Kurdistan	3	1.1
9	Disapproval of Turkish academy	3	1.1
10	Miscellaneous	22	7.9
	Total	277	100.0

participate in the research conducted by Turkish researchers, participants mentioned their reasons why (1) they participate or (2) do not participate in research conducted by Turkish researchers. Therefore, we created two subcategories under this main category (see Table 3): (1) reasons for participating in research and (2) reasons for not participating in research.

3.2.1 | Subcategory 1: Reasons for participating in research

Participants mentioned different reasons and factors that play an important role in shaping their decision to participate in research conducted by Turkish researchers. These reasons included but were not limited to objectivity and trustworthiness (sub-subcategory 1; frequency 131), usefulness and contribution to the solution of the conflict (sub-subcategory 2; frequency 47), characteristics of the researcher (sub-subcategory 3; frequency 39), self-expression (sub-subcategory 4; frequency 15), and current political situation in the country (sub-subcategory 5; frequency 9; see Table 4).

Some participants argued that they participate in research conducted by Turkish researchers as long as they are convinced that the research is objective (e.g., participants 26 & 75; sub-subcategory 1). For example, participant 29 stated that *'the objectivity of the research is*

TABLE 5 Frequencies for the second main category's second subcategory's subsubcategories (reasons for not participating in research by Turkish researchers)

#	Sub-subcategories	Frequency	Percent
1	Objectivity/neutrality/scientificness	6	31.6
2	Not interested	3	15.8
3	The political conditions of Turkey	2	10.5
4	They are malevolent and not sincere	2	10.5
5	Dissatisfaction about research	2	10.5
6	Miscellaneous	4	21.1
	Total	19	100.0

very important; objectivity is important. A study should make [its objectivity] felt. This would make me participate [in the study].' Similarly, another participant (participant 51) mentioned it is not the ethnic identity of the researcher but the objectivity that matters.

In addition to the objectivity of the research, another important factor was related to usefulness and (academic) contribution to the solution (sub-subcategory 2). Participants stated that they participated in such studies with the desire to solve the problem, or at least to make an academic contribution. For example, participant 57, who had not been approached by any Turkish researchers, simply stated that *'I participate in all research that I am convinced will contribute to understanding and solving the Kurdish issue.'* The desire to produce scientific and academic knowledge about the Kurdish issue was also important for the participants, as they stated that more research should be done on this subject. As participant 32, who has participated in research, mentioned: *'Since I find it very important to reach the right sources and to see diversity in the production of scientific knowledge, I accept it when such [research] suggestions come.'* As can be seen from these quotes, the main motivations of the participants to participate in research on the Kurdish issue are whether the research really serves a scientific, objective purpose or whether it will be useful in solving the Kurdish issue.

3.2.2 | Subcategory 2: Reasons for not participating in research

Participants also mentioned different reasons and factors that play a crucial role in shaping their decision not to participate in research conducted by Turkish researchers. These reasons included objectivity (sub-subcategory 1; frequency 6), not being interested in the study (sub-subcategory 2; frequency 3), the political conditions of Turkey (sub-subcategory 3; frequency 2), Turkish researchers' insincerity (sub-subcategory 4; frequency 2), and dissatisfaction about research in general (sub-subcategory 5; frequency 2; see Table 5).

Objectivity (sub-subcategory 1) was also an important factor for participants not to participate in research. Some participants (e.g., participants 70, 92, & 136) did not believe that Turkish researchers are objective or independent; therefore, they did not participate in their studies. Sometimes they would initially agree to participate, but when

they saw the questions the Turkish researchers asked, they decided not to continue (participant 24).

Whereas some participants were, in general, not interested in research on the Kurdish issue (sub-subcategory 2), other participants did not want to participate in research conducted by Turkish researchers due to the current political conditions of Turkey (sub-subcategory 3). To give an example, participant 73 did not want to participate in today's conditions as he thought there is no freedom of thought in Turkey now.

Some participants questioned the sincerity of Turkish researchers (sub-subcategory 4). They mentioned that when the researcher is not an ingroup member (i.e., Kurdish) and makes judgments without hesitation about an identity that they are not a member of, their sincerity is questioned. According to participant 136, who did not want to participate in research, this is a crucial reason not to participate in research:

Making judgments without hesitation about an identity, which [the researcher] is not a member of, is not sincere. This situation is even more frustrating in Turkey. [For example], the issue is about women, yet men talk about it on [TV] programs. As everyone has an opinion on the Kurdish issue, which is a sensitive issue, and voices it, therefore, it is not sincere.

As can be seen in the above example, Turkish researchers are criticized for their insincerity and making a judgment about Kurdish identity even though they do not belong to that ethnic category. In general, participants' quotes showed that they have different reasons not to participate in research, which revolve around researchers' not being objective and not being sincere as well as the political conditions in the country.

3.3 | Main category 3: The ways Turkish researchers affect Kurdish participants' decisions

In the third main category, when asked in what ways the researcher being Turkish affects participants' decisions in research, participants mentioned different ways (see Table 6). Approximately one-third of the participants stated that the identity of the researcher does not affect their decision to participate (subcategory 1; frequency 65). Some participants only mentioned that the identity of the researcher does not affect their decisions without giving an explanation, whereas others explained why they think that is the case. They stated that the identity of the researcher does not affect their decision, as either they know the researcher well (participant 77), or participants are not nationalist or racist (participants 61 & 62). As long as the researcher was respectful (participant 44) and a 'human being' (participant 84), it was enough for them to participate in their research.

Similarly, other participants mentioned that rather than ethnicity, it was other characteristics of the researcher that affects their decision (subcategory 2; frequency 41). If the researcher was objective (participant 127), approached the Kurdish issue from a scientific perspec-

TABLE 6 Frequencies for the third main category's subcategories (the ways Turkish researchers affect Kurdish participants' decisions)

#	Subcategories	Frequency	Percent
1	It does not/did not affect	65	40.4
2	Not the ethnic identity but the characteristics of the researcher	41	25.5
3	It affects negatively	20	12.4
4	It affects positively	17	10.6
5	Trust and worry	6	3.7
6	It depends on the nature of research	6	3.7
7	Miscellaneous	6	3.7
	Total	161	100.0

tive (participants 29 & 51) or from a class perspective (participant 36) as well as supported an independent Kurdistan idea (participant 30), the identity of the researcher would not influence their participation. These responses showed that the participants take the position of the researcher on the Turkish–Kurdish conflict into account before they participate in research.

Some participants argued that the Turkish identity of the researcher affects their decision positively (subcategory 4; frequency 17), whereas others stated that the Turkish identity of the researcher affects their decision negatively (subcategory 3; frequency 20). For example, some participants mentioned that participating in research conducted by a Turkish researcher means that their voices would be heard by a different population, and maybe at a larger scale than if they participated in research conducted by Kurds. According to participant 97, who had not been approached by any Turkish researchers:

A researcher whose ethnic background is Turkish and who is conducting a study [on the Kurdish issue] would positively affect my decision [to participate in that research]. As I believe that the [Kurdish] issue is actually a "Turkish issue," it would be easier for the problem to be publicized.

However, for others, the ethnic identity of the researcher affected their decision negatively. Some participants were more cautious when participating in research conducted by Turks (e.g., participant 53, who has participated in research) because Turkish researchers are prejudiced in general. One participant (participant 16 who had not been approached by any Turkish researchers) even suggested that:

Studies based on ethnic identities such as the Kurdish [issue] should only be investigated by people who have experienced these difficulties. A Turk can approach this issue very sincerely. However, [that researcher] will never continue one's research as someone who has experienced these difficulties, and [therefore] one's research will remain as an encyclopedic knowledge.

TABLE 7 Frequencies for the fourth main category's subcategories (attitudes toward Kurdish researchers)

#	Subcategories	Frequency	Percent
1	Objectivity/neutrality/scientificness	49	30.8
2	Same/it does not matter	46	28.9
3	Positive attitude	30	18.9
4	Reference on identity/identity is important	11	6.9
5	Negative attitude	7	4.4
6	Usefulness	5	3.1
7	Trust	4	2.5
8	Miscellaneous	7	4.4
	Total	159	100.0

This quote highlights the difficulty of conducting research as an outsider from the perspectives of insiders because outsiders would never understand the issue in-depth due to lack of first-hand experience.

The ethnic identity issue was also related to the prejudice of the Turkish researcher. Some participants claimed that, just as Turks are prejudiced against Kurds, Kurdish participants are prejudiced against Turkish researchers as well: 'Turks are Kurdophobic. Turks cannot overcome this [prejudice]. That's why we [Kurds] are prejudiced against them. I do not see a Turk who is well-intentioned' (participant 102). It is fair to argue that in a context where there are mistrust, prejudice, and discrimination, participants' decisions to participate in research are affected by these intergroup dynamics.

We also noticed that very similar points were raised under different main categories (e.g., Main Categories 1 and 3). Even though participants responded to different questions (e.g., what you think or feel when Turkish researchers work on the Kurdish issue; in what ways the researcher being Turkish affects your decisions in research), participants' responses overlapped. These overlaps showed how ethnic identities of researchers might affect participants' decisions positively (e.g., solution to the conflict), negatively (e.g., trust issues), and neutrally (e.g., not the ethnic identity but the characteristics of the researcher).

3.4 | Main category 4: Attitudes toward Kurdish researchers

In the fourth main category, most of the participants again voiced the objectivity of the research as one of the important factors that affect their attitudes towards Kurdish researchers (subcategory 1; frequency 49; Table 7). If the researcher approached the research scientifically, the identity of the researcher would not matter (participant 51, who had not experienced being approached by any Turkish researchers). However, as participant 6, who had not experienced being approached by any Turkish researchers, explained, Kurdish identity might also pose a barrier to objectivity:

The fact that the researcher was Kurdish would make it seem like they wouldn't look at the research objec-

tively. I would have been more curious about the research if there were political problems in the life of the researcher in the past due to this [Kurdish] issue. I would have been more curious to learn whether the researcher has been affected by their past experiences while doing this research.

When asked about what their approach would be to the same research if it was conducted by a Kurdish researcher, many participants (subcategory 2; frequency 46) mentioned that their attitude would be the same, or the Kurdish identity of the researcher would not matter. However, other participants stated that their attitude would be more positive (subcategory 3; frequency 30). A study conducted by a Kurdish researcher would make Kurdish participants happy (participant 32). Kurdish participants would be more comfortable with a Kurdish researcher (e.g., participants 67, 93, & 134) as their prejudice would be less (e.g., participants 102, 119, & 136). The relationship between the researcher and the participant would be warmer (e.g., participants 100 & 130) and more sincere (e.g., participants 22, 63, & 89). As they shared the same culture and language, a Kurdish researcher would understand what participants want to say (participant 130).

Related to the positive attitudes above, participants also clarify why identity is important for such research (subcategory 4; frequency 11). Here, participants stated that Kurdish researchers are advantageous in such studies because they know and understand both Kurds and their problems better (participants 11 & 105). They also indicated that they would support the Kurdish researchers more because they knew they were fighting for their own people (participants 112 & 121). However, two participants mentioned that these types of research should be done especially by the Turks. For example, participant 25, who had not been approached by any Turkish researchers, explained the importance of this point of view as: '*Even though [my attitude towards the Kurdish researcher] is positive, it is the Turkish side who needs to understand the source of the problem and it is the Turks who need to empathize [with Kurds] to solve the problem.*'

Overall, the results highlighted that being an insider (i.e., Kurdish) has its own advantages and disadvantages in research contexts. For some participants, these advantages of researchers affect their decisions to participate in research positively, whereas, for others, these disadvantages may become barriers and cause them not to participate.

4 | DISCUSSION

While previous studies have shown that ingroup-outgroup identities may affect participant-researcher dynamics (see Levy, 2013; Weiner-Levy, 2009; Weiner-Levy & Queder, 2012; Wood, 2006), the focus is often on the role of the researcher, rather than how participants decide to participate in research (Milner, 2007), as well as how those decisions may be related to both their and researchers' identities. While ethnic identities are by no means the only consideration when participants participate in research, even within the context of the Turkish-Kurdish

conflict (see, e.g., Mutlu, 2019), since this conflict is often framed in this manner, we choose to start from ethnic identity and expand from there.

Specifically, we investigated (1) opinions and feelings about Turkish researchers, (2) reasons for (not) participating in research by Turkish researchers, (3) the ways Turkish researchers affect participants' decisions, and (4) attitudes toward Kurdish researchers by employing a qualitative approach to understand these dynamics in greater detail. Even though participants' perspectives on their decisions to participate in research will depend on context, we believe that examining one specific case, here, the Turkish–Kurdish conflict context, can generate useful general input relevant beyond this case.

The results highlight the important opinions and feelings about Turkish researchers. More than one-fourth of the participants emphasized that they do not perceive Turkish researchers as realistic, objective, or sincere in conflict contexts. In such cases, it makes sense that Kurdish participants would seek ingroup researchers to speak to about their experiences of the conflict (Acar & Uluğ, 2019). Kurds may prefer working with Kurdish researchers as they can understand the motivations of a Kurdish researcher in understanding their own community and sharing their stories. A Turkish researcher, in their view, may have ulterior motives, as illustrated in participant responses about the potential link Turkish researchers may have with the Turkish government. It has been argued that conflict settings are more often characterized by distrust (Acar et al., 2020; Moss et al., 2019); therefore, it is more difficult to access what participants really think of the conflict (i.e., conflict narratives; Lundy & McGovern, 2006; see also Norman, 2009). As some participants may not believe in the sincerity of the researchers, rather than giving their honest opinions on the topic at hand, they may choose not to participate in the research in the first place.

On the other hand, some participants found Turkish researchers' work on the Turkish–Kurdish conflict quite positive and mentioned that more studies by Turkish researchers would make them happy. However, we should also note that some of these participants believe that Turks, as members of an advantaged group, are actually the ones who need to conduct research on the conflict, since they are the ones who need to change and educate themselves, rather than Kurds (Case, 2012 for a similar discussion on White identity). In brief, even though these participants find Turkish researchers' work on the Turkish–Kurdish conflict quite positive, their reasons may vary quite a bit.

The results also show that researchers' other identities may affect how participants evaluate their research. These identities include but are not limited to their ideological identity (e.g., to what extent the researcher is seen as left-wing or right-wing; see Cohrs, 2012 for a discussion on ideological beliefs) as well as their identity as an ally (i.e., to what extent the researcher is seen as an ally to their ingroup by participants; see Case, 2012 for ally identity). It seems that it is not researchers' ethnic identity, but their ideological or ally identity that comes to the fore for some participants. Researchers whose ideological positions are easily recognized (e.g., by their media presence) should take this into account when conducting fieldwork in difficult contexts.

There were other participants who brought up the issue of usefulness and contribution to the solution of the conflict. For those

participants, as long as they believe that these studies conducted by Turkish researchers contribute to the solution of the conflict, they will participate in these types of research. Even though not every type of research has practical implications, we argue that researchers who conduct studies in conflict contexts may easily inform media, policy-makers as well as politicians by sharing their findings (see, e.g., Uluğ & Cohrs, 2017).

Last, the results related to attitudes towards research by Kurdish researchers indicate that more than one-fourth of the participants stated they would not change their attitudes (i.e., their attitudes would be the same) toward the researcher if the researcher was Kurdish rather than Turkish. Similarly, approximately one-fourth of the participants also argue that their attitude would be positive toward the Kurdish researchers if they were conducting the same research. There are also other participants who decide to participate in research depending on the researcher's objectivity and political stance (e.g., being pro-government or not). The findings indicate that even though some participants find ingroup researchers' scientific efforts quite positive, other participants still take different issues into account when participating in research. These results highlight how different dynamics related to the research may still come into play even if the researcher is an ingroup member.

Overall, our results point to the diversity of approaches for participating or not in a research study among Kurdish participants and contribute to the discussions on what *potential* participants pay attention to before (and after) they participate in research (see, e.g., Alexander et al., 2018; Carrera et al., 2018; Christopher et al., 2017). The results also provide some responses to our self-reflective questions on whether and why we should conduct research on the Kurdish issue and the Turkish–Kurdish conflict. On the one hand, the sense that Turkish researchers have their own motivations, and may only be interested in perpetuating state narratives was prevalent in the results, as was the relative trust that would come from working with Kurdish researchers. At the same time, the idea that Turkish researchers have a responsibility to take part in this research and to counter state narratives was stated by participants.

The findings highlight that even in a polarizing topic such as the conflict, the ethnonational minority group will have heterogeneous perspectives in terms of contributing (or not) to a research study. Given that social psychological research on intergroup conflict has tended to focus on the two parties to a conflict as if they were two homogeneous groups (Kerr et al., 2017; Uluğ & Cohrs, 2019), and has rarely if ever reflected on researchers' roles in conflict research in social psychology, our results highlight the need to approach groups in conflicts not as dichotomous categories in order to be able to uncover the heterogeneity of perspectives within a group.

4.1 | Practical implications and suggestions for researchers

Our findings can usefully contribute to the discussions on the role of Turkish researchers in researching Kurdish issues. In addition to the

identity of a researcher, our findings indicate that many participants also take *research quality* into consideration by looking for realistic, objective, and sincere research. For this reason, researchers may look for solutions on how their studies may be perceived by participants as realistic, objective, and sincere. However, how does a researcher achieve this? According to Resnik (2015), objective research is: (a) unbiased or impartial (e.g., like a judge who attempts to give a fair hearing to both sides of a legal dispute), (b) value-free (i.e., research that is unaffected by moral, economic, social, political, or religious values), (c) reliable or trustworthy (e.g., like a thermometer that reliably reports the temperature), or (d) factual or real (i.e., correctly depict facts or real phenomena). Even though the authors of this article question the notion of objective research (see, e.g., Aslıtürk, 2010; Uluğ & Çoymak, 2017 for a discussion on objective research), based on this definition, we recommend that researchers make sure their aims in conducting research are clear, as well as highlight how they are planning to reliably and correctly report their findings.

As some participants do not trust how their responses may be used or fear they may be misplaced or come into the wrong hands, another suggestion, especially for qualitative researchers, is allowing participants to see the transcript of the conversation or notes that were taken after the interview. Participants may be given the opportunity to edit the transcript as they wish after they participate in research (see Moss et al., 2019). This allows the participant to feel not only that they are part of the research process, but that they maintain some level of efficacy over how their information is used. This editing process may also help researchers not only analyse the data of the study more clearly by clarifying inconsistencies and incomprehensible points in the transcript but also interpret the findings more transparently. In addition, this process may help participants increase their trust in the researcher(s).

Our results may also have other implications. The results highlight that when it comes to research, other contextual or identity-based factors such as the political ideology of the researcher, or that the researcher is known and trusted by the participant may influence participants' attitudes toward participation (see also Taylor et al., 2020). For these participants, being sincere in one's political position, the aim of the study, and coming up with a detailed research plan (e.g., what to do after research ends) may help researchers convince *potential* participants (see, e.g., Karasu & Uluğ, 2020). However, for participants who pay more attention to the ethnic identities of researchers, highlighting the ethnic identity of researchers may be another suggestion, especially when the research team includes researchers from different ethnic backgrounds (see, e.g., Uluğ & Cohrs, 2017).

Even untethered from the Turkish–Kurdish context, researchers have a history of seeking out communities for the sake of taking information, even to the detriment of the population, including retraumatization (Cowles, 1988; Dickson-Swift et al., 2008; Pitman et al., 1996). This research also suggests that beyond the importance of ethical considerations in sensitive contexts, there is an added component of trust and legitimacy that Turkish researchers working on the Kurdish issue must keep in mind when preparing and conducting research. They should be aware, therefore, that there is not just the potential problem of seeking out and taking information, but that this is perpetuating

ongoing power structures of which narrative is heard when it comes to the Turkish–Kurdish conflict.

Overall, researchers need to accept that (1) no social group membership exists in isolation, (2) both participants and researchers are multidimensional, and (3) approaching participants by using an intersectional framing may reduce psychology's default tendencies (i.e., focusing on a single dimension; McCormick-Huhn et al., 2019). This approach will help researchers rely on the intersectionality between their own positionalities and that of participants, especially in conflict contexts.

4.2 | Limitations and future directions

There are a few limitations of the study. First, we collected data in during a period of escalation in the Turkish–Kurdish conflict, and tension between Turks and Kurds was especially high. We do not know to what extent our findings were affected by the nature of the conflict and its escalation phase. Previous research has indicated that negative attitudes and attributions towards outgroup members may increase during the escalation periods of conflicts (see, e.g., Bilali et al., 2014; Uluğ et al., 2017). However, given that we found such heterogeneous responses in our data, we believe we could still reflect a variety of responses even during the escalation of the conflict.

Second, out of 137 participants, a large majority of participants (approximately 70%) had not been approached by Turkish researchers researching the Kurdish issue. Most of the responses reported here represent participants who have never participated in research conducted by Turkish researchers before (except our current study). Even though this is the case, we believe they can speak to their potential future participation even if they have not participated in the past. We believe the responses we present in this article represent a broad range of views; however, there may still be some factors that have not yet been captured that contribute to the barriers to participants' participation in research. Although our study is the first step in this endeavour, more research is needed to be able to examine how participants decide (not) to participate in research, especially in conflict contexts.

Third, our study highlights the specific dynamics in the Turkish–Kurdish conflict, and some of those topics may not be common in other conflict contexts. For example, some participants argued that Turkish researchers who conduct research on the Turkish–Kurdish conflict might be doing so on behalf of the Turkish state. They also stated that their participation depends on the political situation in the country regarding the escalation of the conflict. These topics may be less relevant in other contexts. However, we believe that, in contexts where authoritarianism is high and trust is low between groups, research conducted by advantaged group members may be perceived similarly by disadvantaged group members.

We should also note that in this study, out of 137 participants, only 29 were women. As we employed convenience and snowball sampling strategies in the study, this may have contributed to the unbalanced gender distribution. Given that women's voices are systematically excluded from conflict resolution and peace processes (Üstündağ,

2014), future studies need to take into account the gender of participants for equal representation.

Another limitation of the study is that we conducted the study in Turkish. We should note that some Kurdish participants may refrain from participating in the studies, especially if they are conducted in Turkish (i.e., the language of the advantaged group). Conducting studies in Turkish may be seen as assimilative practices by Kurds, and the lack of choice for survey language itself can become an identity threat for Kurds and, therefore, can influence their response regarding participation (e.g., Laganà et al., 2013). Conducting the survey in Turkish may have signalled that 'this is another typical study conducted by Turks without taking the Kurdish language into account.' Given that some participants also decide (not) to participate in research conducted by Turkish researchers based on Turkish researchers' knowledge about Kurds and Kurdistan (Table 4), we should note this as a limitation as well.

Moreover, we should note that revealing researcher positionality and identity is very different in fieldwork versus online surveys. As the researcher and participant are face to face during fieldwork, this brings the researcher's positionality and identity to the fore (see, e.g., Bilgen et al., 2021). In online surveys, on the other hand, this is less prominent because researcher's positionality and identity may not be immediately seen or recognized by the participants. Therefore, future studies should also take the type of research into account when examining participants' motivations to participate in research. However, there are some cases where the researcher's identity can easily be recognized from their names or surnames, even in online surveys. For example, in Turkey, the name 'Devrim [Revolution]' is usually a leftist name. A Kurdish participant can effortlessly recognize the name and its association with leftist ideology. Thus, the participant may (not) trust the researcher depending on their shared ideology. Future studies should also pay attention to how certain names and phrases can signal the ideological positions of researchers and how these may affect potential participants' decisions to participate or not in research.

Lastly, we see this research as just one side to the coin. Our future research will focus on the perspective and motivation of Turkish researchers, and ask how and why they decide to conduct research on the Kurdish issue or Turkish–Kurdish conflict. While our own self-reflection has led us to ask participants about how they view our role in conducting research on the Turkish–Kurdish conflict, it is also important to understand how Turkish researchers view their participation and their particular responsibilities in conducting this work.

5 | CONCLUSION

The current contribution allowed us to examine what factors participants take into consideration when deciding to participate in research. Hearing such accounts from research participants—particularly in the context of the Turkish–Kurdish conflict—is valuable to unpack participants' motivations when approached by Turkish researchers to participate in studies. The study builds on the social identity literature and extends it by showing how both ingroup and outgroup identities, other

ideological identities as well as research-related qualities may affect participants' decisions to participate in research. Even though participants' perspectives on their decisions to participate in research will depend on context, we believe our results speak to the key aspects of researcher–participant dynamics in general and ingroup–outgroup dynamics in particular.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare. The authors confirm that the manuscript adheres to ethical guidelines specified in the APA Code of Conduct as well as authors' national ethics guidelines.

ORCID

Özden Melis Uluğ  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7364-362X>

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How to cite this article: Uluğ, Ö. M., Acar, Y. G., & Kanık, B. Reflecting on research: Researcher identity in conflict studies from the perspectives of participants. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 2021;51:847–861. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2776>