



## **PERCEPTIONS OF COURAGE: AN IN-DEPTH EXAMINATION OF LAY PEOPLE'S ATTRIBUTIONS TOWARD COURAGE**

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### **Abstract:**

*This qualitative study aims to investigate the traits and factors influencing how 155 people in Türkiye perceive courage by relying on the Lay Theory of Courage. Data were gathered by asking participants to name the most courageous person they know and describe why they perceive that person as courageous. The collected data underwent content analysis. The results revealed that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, was the most frequently cited person as the most courageous, followed by family members, public figures, historical figures, self, generalizations (general figures), and acquaintances, respectively. Atatürk's courageous personality drove historic change, marked by unwavering commitment, remarkable achievements, and exceptional bravery. Participants view family members as courageous for various reasons, including resilience, sacrifice, moral choices, and pursuing dreams. Additionally, those who selected themselves as the most courageous do so because they confidently pursue their goals, make fearless decisions, and stand up to superiors in a system where self-reliance is essential. The study's findings provide insights into how courage is perceived in Turkish society and shed light on its symbolic meaning.*

### **Keywords:**

Courage, Perception of Courage, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Türkiye

### **JEL classification:**

M12, M14

## **1. Introduction**

Courage is not solely related to the physical bravery exhibited by admired, respected, and envied heroes on the battlefield. Courage is a fundamental virtue that is needed in every aspect of life. Without courage, other virtues cannot emerge. Justice, integrity, trustworthiness, honesty—courage lies at the core of all these virtues. If a person lacks courage, they may not be able to do what needs to be done, what is right, what is ethical. The fears that surround us due to the absence or weakness of our courage are the fundamental reasons that prevent us from doing what is right, from engaging in moral behavior. Therefore, courage has emerged as an indispensable and fundamental virtue in the realm of professional life (Mert, 2022a).

In most of the cultures, especially Turkish culture, courage is widely regarded and esteemed as a virtue. It is seen that there has been an increase in publications on courage, especially in Turkish literature in recent years. In this regard, the connection between the idea of courage and the Terror Management Theory was examined by Mert in 2010. He proposed that the theory may be reinforced by include the idea of courage. Mert and Aydemir (2019) talked on courage as a higher management competency rooted in Turkish Historical inscriptions. A qualitative study on the characteristics of courage was undertaken by Mert (2021a), with the goal of recovering courage as an ancient virtue. Mert (2021b) performed a survey of the literature with a focus on the role of knowledge and consciousness in courageous behavior in order to better grasp the idea of courage. Another literature study on heroism was undertaken by Mert (2021c), who stressed the significance of context in comprehending this nuanced phenomenon. Mert (2021d) explored several models of courage that can be useful in different contexts. Aydemir and Mert (2018) conducted a study on the historical origins of courage in the Futuwwa and Akhi institutions and found that courage was essential to being a good leader. Mert and Köksal (2022b) argued that courage is essential to personal and societal well-being. Mert (2022a) conducted a bibliometric analysis of articles on courage in the workplace and

identified several themes in the literature, including the role of courage in leadership and workplace social courage. Mert and Köksal (2022a) found that coast guard courage mediated the relationship between personality and organizational commitment. According to Mert, Sen, and Alzghoul's research from 2022, social courage at the workplace acted as a mediator between organizational justice and life fulfillment and pleasure. As firms encounter new problems, courage management will become more crucial, according to Mert (2007; 2022b). According to Köksal and Mert (2023), the emotional tiredness felt by emergency nurses in Türkiye was significantly influenced by courage and interactional fairness. In a study published in 2022, Köksal, Mert, and Gürsoy used a multi-group analysis based on gender to evaluate the connection between organizational fairness and social courage in the workplace. The topic of courage management and its potential as a management tool were covered by Şen and Mert (2020) in their chapter of the book "Social and Humanities Sciences: Theory, Current Researches, and New Trends." As mentioned above, in psychology and other social sciences, there has been a lot of research on the complicated and multifaceted concept of courage. It is a quality that is highly regarded in many cultures and is frequently connected to bravery, taking calculated risks, and overcoming obstacles. However, the way that courage is perceived might differ depending on the cultural setting and can also be influenced by social, political, and historical variables. The traits and causes of the Turkish people's concept of courage, however, are poorly understood. This qualitative study in Türkiye tries to investigate how 155 people perceive courage. In particular, the study aims to determine the participant's perception of courage and to select the most courageous person they are aware of. The results of this study will help us understand how courage is viewed in Turkish culture.

## 2. Literature Review

Courage is a mysterious and profound concept, its true nature extending beyond what meets the eye. While we can easily observe and feel behaviors that seem courageous, the actual essence of courage is far more intricate and enigmatic. In many ways, courage can be likened to an iceberg, much of its deeper content and meaning concealed beneath the surface, much like the submerged portion of an iceberg. Consequently, courage has remained an ever-present and critical concept throughout history, continually explored by philosophers and scholars alike, with this exploration continuing to the present day. Beyond philosophy, courage is a subject that permeates nearly every discipline in the social sciences, being approached from various angles, such as an emotion, behavior, virtue, character trait, or a mindset (Mert, 2021b).

First and foremost, courage is a virtue. However, unlike other virtues, it often acts as a protector and prerequisite for all other virtues. Churchill eloquently expressed this when he stated, "Courage is rightly esteemed the first of human qualities because it is the quality which guarantees all others." Without courage, it becomes challenging for an individual to be honest, reliable, and refrain from deceit, as fear tends to give birth to falsehood. This aspect of courage makes it a paramount indicator of a strong and trustworthy character, which is why courage has been a recurring theme in world literature, with characters demonstrating courage often celebrated. Today, when we look at novels and blockbuster films, courage is frequently highlighted in the characters, emphasizing its importance. This is not coincidental; courage is a quality that garners admiration and respect, sparking envy in society. In almost every culture, courage is the first virtue to be rewarded, as exemplified by the prestigious courage medals, among the highest honors one can receive. Courage is honored because, at its core, it involves dedication—dedication to a more significant and sacred purpose, a willingness to show devotion and sacrifice for the greater good, to do what is right and necessary. Throughout history, courage has not been confined to battlefields or challenging situations but has consistently been underscored as a virtue needed in everyday life (Mert, 2021b).

Even it is difficult to find a precise definition of courage, courage can be defined as "the conscious and resolute use of one's resources in the face of perceived fear, in challenging and risky conditions, to achieve a moral purpose, generously doing what is necessary while keeping the fear in check." (Mert, 2021a).

### 2.1. The Lay Theory of Courage

Individuals' perspectives are filtered and guided by their lay theories (Yzerbyt, Judd, & Corneille, 2004; Wegener & Petty, 1998, for examples). The common beliefs and understandings people have about what courage is and how it could be demonstrated in day-to-day situations are called the "lay theory of courage." These opinions, which might differ from person to person and depending on the situation, are usually influenced by social norms, cultural values, and personal experiences. People often associate courage with acts such as taking risks to achieve a goal, facing fear

or danger, and sticking up for what they believe in, according to studies on the lay theory of courage. Courage is commonly used as a strategy to put moral values like honesty, integrity, and altruism into practice. Still, other factors such as age, gender, and cultural background may also influence the lay theory of courage. For example, certain cultures can value group courage more than individual bravery, or they could think that taking particular risks demonstrates bravery more than others (Plaks et al. 2009; Levy et al. 2006). Also, when people believe that others are treating them properly and with respect, they feel more brave in social settings. Socially brave actions include speaking up against injustice, challenging norms and expectations, and taking measured risks (Köksal, Mert, Gürsoy, 2022).

## 2.2. Perception of Couregaus/Heroic People

Heroism, although initially easily understood and perceived, is a phenomenon that loses its clarity when delving into details and questioning it. There is no complete consensus or agreement on what heroism exactly is. It can be observed that studies on heroism have been increasing recently, and the phenomenon of heroism is approached through different methods in interdisciplinary studies (Mert, 2021c).

In recent times, experts from a variety of fields—particularly psychology—have come to place a greater emphasis on the idea of heroism (Allison, Goethals, & Kramer, 2017). But as new psychology studies on heroism demonstrate, we still don't fully understand what heroic conduct consists of or what conditions allow it to occur (Martens, 2017, p. 1). It can be argued that historical formations like Ahilik, which have endured from antiquity to the present, have had a major influence on sustainability in Turkish management and commerce culture. Fundamentally, Ahilik emphasizes the appropriate placing of courage (Aydemir, 2019).

The field of heroism science has advanced significantly, particularly in the last year and a half. In particular, scholarly study has sped up discussions and experimental experiments meant to elucidate the modern definition of "hero." After Zimbardo's book "The Lucifer Effect" was published in 2007, the notion that heroism is a significant topic deserving of scientific study began to acquire traction in both the academic and social arenas. Zimbardo explored human potential for heroism in this book, transforming his well-known theories regarding the human capability for evil. According to Franco et al. (2016), heroism is a social phenomena that both as an individual and as a collective demands further investigation and reflection. It is an expression of self-actualization and the ultimate state.

Furthermore, because it adds to earlier research on the variables influencing courageous action, this study fits into a larger framework of studies on moral courage. The psychological obstacles that impede moral courage are clarified by Nathan et al. (2023), who point out that uncertainty and inattention are the first steps toward nonintervention. These revelations offer insightful background for comprehending the barriers to bravery. Furthermore, Ford et al. (2023) looked at how self-evaluation contributed to creating a "brave space" and discovered that a person's dedication to it was mostly motivated by a "commitment to others" rather than just self-reflection. This insight emphasizes how social and interpersonal variables are involved in acts of bravery. Moreover, Luo et al. (2023) identified a positive correlation between moral courage and ethical decision-making, emphasizing the ethical dimension of courage and its implications for principled actions.

The "bystander effect" refers to a phenomena in which individuals who are in the presence of others in an emergency situation are less likely to act or intervene because they assume that someone else would be held responsible (Darley & Latané, 1968). This impact has been studied in great detail in connection to the absence of intervention in risky or unfair situations. The findings of the study on the bravest person people know, however, suggest that individuals are still able to recognize and appreciate the bravery of others.

The bystander effect is one such social influence factor that has been shown to have a major impact on people's willingness to behave bravely in specific situations. Studies show that when other people are around, people are less inclined to speak up against injustice or act when they are in need because they often assume that someone else will shoulder the responsibility (Darley & Latané, 1968). This effect is hypothesized to be caused by diffusion of responsibility, where people feel less individually liable to act while others are nearby.

However, several studies have also shown that the presence of others positively influences courageous behavior. For example, research on the social support phenomenon has shown that when people have social support, they are more willing to take chances or stand up for what they believe in (Bandura, 1977). Furthermore, when people think others are acting bravely, they are more likely to follow suit, according to the social comparison hypothesis (Festinger, 1954).

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Participants

The average age of the 155 participants in this study was 32.4 years, and they ranged in age from 19 to 63. The demographics of the participants were roughly 64% male and 36% female. The participants' educational backgrounds were pretty evenly dispersed throughout a variety of professions, including construction, education, healthcare, security, and information technology. Furthermore, a sizable proportion of the participants—roughly 73%—were married. These demographic insights throw light on the makeup of the study's sample by offering a thorough snapshot of the wide range of traits present in the participant pool.

#### 3.2. Sample Selection Process

To guarantee demographic diversity and representation, the 155 participants in this study were chosen through a series of crucial processes in the selection process. First, through focused outreach across a range of industries, including education, healthcare, security, IT, and construction, possible volunteers were found. With the goal of including about 20% of participants from each sector, a proportionate stratified sample procedure was used to obtain a balanced distribution across these sectors.

After that, participants were chosen at random from each stratum to guarantee a fair representation of backgrounds in terms of education and employment. Participants were chosen from each stratum to represent the age range in order to account for age variety. Gender diversity was taken into account as well, and the random selection procedure ensured that there was a fair distribution of male and female participation.

Furthermore, because it was thought to be a natural feature of the people who were chosen, stratification based on marital status was not used to record the participants' marital status. A sample of 155 people with a range of ages, gender ratios, educational backgrounds, and occupational profiles was obtained through a multi-stage sampling approach, which enhanced the dataset's representativeness and richness.

#### 3.3. Interview Process and Questioning Approach

Semi-structured interviewing was used, and each participant's interview lasted anywhere from 10 to 25 minutes on average. Throughout the interviews, the main query was, "Who is the most courageous person you know? "And why?" Participants were encouraged to give in-depth answers and narratives in response to this open-ended question, which allowed for a deeper investigation of how they perceived courage. As necessary, follow-up queries and prompts were employed to extract additional detailed information and insights about the selected people and the variables affecting their impression of courage.

### 4. Findings

Table 1 has been carefully put together to give a thorough summary of the replies and categorizations made by the participants. Understanding the thematic patterns and classifications of the study participants' responses is made easier with the help of this table. This table provides a structured foundation for the study that follows by offering insights into the various viewpoints and interpretations surrounding the notion of courage through the categorization and organization of their answers.

**Table 1. Categorizations of the Participants' Answers**

Who	N	Subcategory	Why the participants think he/she is the most courageous person
Mustafa Kemal Atatürk	59	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Reviving a nation abandoned by itself and restoring order is not an easy task.</li> <li>✓ He accomplished a dream that everyone thought was impossible.</li> <li>✓ Despite the loss of hope in a whole country and the fact that my country was effectively under occupation, he created a country by working tirelessly and fearlessly with all his might.</li> <li>✓ He revealed people's potentials in the War of Independence and enabled them to bring this potential to light with limited means.</li> <li>✓ He made the impossible possible.</li> <li>✓ He demonstrated and implemented his ideals in all areas.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ He saved the country by doing what he believed and wanted to do.</li> <li>✓ He set his goal and courageously achieved it.</li> <li>✓ He was able to make his own decisions even in difficult circumstances.</li> <li>✓ He lit the fuse of the War of Independence in a terrible situation.</li> <li>✓ His work is evident.</li> <li>✓ He showed determination to overcome all obstacles that may arise in the scope of doing the right thing.</li> <li>✓ He has achieved many successes by taking all kinds of risks.</li> <li>✓ He has achieved perfection by taking all kinds of risks in the conditions he was in.</li> <li>✓ A hero cannot think of the result.</li> <li>✓ He is brave because he has succeeded by believing and persevering.</li> <li>✓ He showed courage in directing a nation by using his knowledge, perception, quick and effective decision-making abilities, and other features, even if it was against the majority.</li> <li>✓ He saw the impossibilities but turned them into possibilities.</li> <li>✓ He created a country out of nothing. In my opinion, the most courageous behavior of the Turkish nation is to challenge the world by taking all risks in the most difficult times.</li> <li>✓ He was able to enter into a very big work by sacrificing everything.</li> <li>✓ He made logical risky decisions in many of his actions. He successfully handled a situation that would normally be very frightening and impossible for himself.</li> <li>✓ He took everything into account about the right things.</li> <li>✓ He reached his goals by risking danger, risk, and even death.</li> <li>✓ He alone resisted all obstacles and difficulties.</li> <li>✓ He has gained many things as a result of his courageous actions for what he believed.</li> <li>✓ He sacrificed himself for the welfare of the nation.</li> <li>✓ Because of his courageous approach towards the salvation of a country in a very bad situation.</li> <li>✓ When we read his life, he was able to do what he had to do despite so many situations and events that a person could perceive as a threat.</li> <li>✓ He is a strong leader who trusts himself and his nation for all his life's accomplishments.</li> <li>✓ He entered into a struggle knowing what he would face in difficult conditions without knowing what he would face.</li> <li>✓ He sacrificed his whole life to liberate the Turkish nation from captivity and create a modern country.</li> <li>✓ He managed to be positive, rational, and realistic even in all negative and uncertain situations.</li> <li>✓ Despite the conditions of the time, he took risks and resisted obstacles.</li> <li>✓ He used his mind and knowledge for this homeland and was a good leader.</li> <li>✓ With the decisions he made under very difficult conditions, he</li> </ul>
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			<p>shaped the future for the state.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ He implemented his decisions courageously.</li> <li>✓ He was a very self-confident person. He tried everything despite everything.</li> <li>✓ He fought to the end for his beliefs.</li> <li>✓ It takes courage to turn an ignorant people into an enlightened nation.</li> </ul>
Family members	53	Father	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ He was somewhat ignorant. (Father)</li> <li>✓ He showed the courage to say no to something wrong and resigned from his 22-year-long civil service job. (Father)</li> <li>✓ He struggled for us to grow up. (Father)</li> <li>✓ He makes just and extremely intelligent decisions. (Father)</li> <li>✓ He only graduated from primary school, but he was able to keep a family of four, providing them with advanced education (university) while starting from poverty and ignorance. (Father)</li> <li>✓ He knows what to do where. (Father)</li> <li>✓ He ensured that my siblings and I received a good education despite many difficulties. (Father)</li> <li>✓ He raised me. (Father)</li> <li>✓ He is brave because he is responsible, lives by his principles, doesn't care about anyone's opinion, but doesn't hurt them either. (Father)</li> <li>✓ Taking financial risks that will not be taken due to his profession. (Father-in-law)</li> </ul>
		Mother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ She fights alone with life. (Mother)</li> <li>✓ She always does what he sets his mind to. The result being right or wrong doesn't change his mind. (Mother)</li> <li>✓ When there is no theoretical knowledge, but she has to make a decision, she steps up and tries. (Mother)</li> <li>✓ She is courageous because he did the bravest thing he could do for his child. (Mother)</li> </ul>
		Spouse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Fearless (Spouse)</li> <li>✓ He showed the courage to start his own business. (Spouse)</li> <li>✓ She married me because... (Spouse)</li> <li>✓ He married me because... (Spouse)</li> </ul>
		Brother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ He can stand up against difficulties. (Brother)</li> <li>✓ Because he did not stand up against the wrong orders given by his superiors, even if it would have led to him being punished. (Brother)</li> <li>✓ He sacrificed his life for the sake of his country. He became a martyr. (Brother-in-law)</li> </ul>
		Cousin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ He sacrificed his life for his country. He became a martyr. (Cousin)</li> <li>✓ Despite financial difficulties and uncertainties, he was able to pursue his dreams. (Fahher's cousin)</li> <li>✓ She has been making decisions regarding himself/herself and his/her family since a young age. (Cousin)</li> </ul>

		Son	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ My son directs himself towards his goal without hesitation. (Son)</li> </ul>
Public figures	5		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ He is taking all the necessary steps to accomplish what he wants. (President)</li> <li>✓ Despite ups and downs, he has managed to stand firm. (President)</li> <li>✓ - (President)</li> </ul>
Historical figures	9		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ A person with the ability to set goals and overcome all other obstacles. (Fatih Sultan Mehmet)</li> <li>✓ He had goals and made plans on how to reach them. (Fatih Sultan Mehmet)</li> <li>✓ With the decisions he made under very difficult conditions, he shaped the future for the state. (Fatih Sultan Mehmet)</li> <li>✓ - (Adolf Hitler)</li> <li>✓ He advanced as far as India with an army of one hundred thousand people. (Alexander)</li> <li>✓ He took risks and pushed boundaries in his art, creating works that were often controversial and challenging to the status quo. (Michelangelo)</li> </ul>
Self	6		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ My ability to go after everything I am confident about</li> <li>✓ I believe that even in the face of the biggest fear of death, I can make the right decisions repeatedly and take the right actions</li> <li>✓ Despite knowing that no one will be there for me in this system, I am trying to do my job against my superiors.</li> </ul>
Generalizations	20		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Anyone who can break free from their bonds.</li> <li>✓ Those who risk their own lives for the sake of others' lives.</li> <li>✓ Everyone is courageous in their own way.</li> <li>✓ All of my colleagues at work.</li> <li>✓ A soldier who goes on duty knowing the danger of mines.</li> <li>✓ Someone who can prioritize the right things over their personal interests.</li> <li>✓ No need to specify the person. It is someone who continues to move forward despite knowing the high probability of death.</li> <li>✓ Someone who takes the side of what is right without thinking about their personal interests or distinguishing between the strong and weak.</li> <li>✓ People in all positions that lead society.</li> <li>✓ Merchants and tradesmen take risks.</li> </ul>
Acquaintances	3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ I know my neighbor's daughter climbed into the house from the adjacent window by holding onto the balcony rails on the 5th floor.</li> <li>✓ A colleague of mine fought for and achieved their dreams despite the shortcomings.</li> <li>✓ Brigadier X and Captain Y act without fear.</li> </ul>

The following table, Table 2, provides a comprehensive analysis of the frequency with which various persons were identified by study participants as the most courageous. Table 2 offers a lucid quantitative depiction of participant preferences and impressions, illuminating which persons were most frequently recognized for their bravery within the study's sample.

According to 38% of participants, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk is the most often cited person and the embodiment of courage. The participants view Atatürk, the creator of the Turkish Republic, as a globally recognized figure of

courage because of his persistent commitment, extraordinary achievements, and bravery. Next in line, according to 34% of participants, are family members, with whom they rank as the most courageous people. Family members' perseverance, selflessness, moral judgments, and pursuit of their goals are frequently the reasons why others view them as courageous; this shows a profound respect for their bravery in the framework of the family.

Though they are appreciated for their daring, public figures and historical figures received significantly lower percentages (3% and 6%, respectively), indicating that they are not as often acknowledged by the participants as the ultimate examples of courage. Additionally, 4% of participants described themselves as daring, highlighting their assurance in following their own objectives and taking bold actions.

Generalizations, which include those who were deemed brave but did not disclose their identity, were given 13% of the vote. This category shows that a sizable percentage of participants understood courage to be a more general term that encompasses more than just particular people. The least number of mentions were from acquaintances (2%) indicating that participants were more likely to link bravery with those who were closer to them, including family members and well-known historical figures.

**Table 2. Frequency of the Most Courageous Ones**

<b>Who is</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Mustafa Kemal Atatürk	59	38
Family members	53	34
Father	21	14
Mother	9	6
Spouse	8	5
Brother	6	4
Cousin	6	4
Son	3	2
Public figures	5	3
Historical figures	9	6
Self	6	4
Generalizations	20	13
Acquaintances	3	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>100</b>

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as the Most Courageous Person

The comments that identify Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as the most courageous person demonstrate how much people value and respect his leadership and contributions to the development and formation of modern-day Türkiye. Atatürk is known for his courage, boldness, and persistence in the face of great obstacles and challenges, such as the War of Independence and the aftermath of World War I. The respondents draw attention to a number of aspects of Atatürk's bravery, such as his ability to take calculated risks and make difficult decisions, his leadership skills, his unflinching dedication to his values, and his willingness to make sacrifices for the good of his nation. The replies also point out some of Atatürk's achievements, such as transforming the Ottoman Empire's ruins into a contemporary country.

When asked who they knew to be the most courageous person, most respondents said Mustafa Kemal Atatürk because of their ties to Türkiye or Turkish culture (Table 3). One of the most significant figures in Turkish history is Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder and first president of the Turkish Republic. He gained notoriety for leading the country in the Turkish War of Independence, which resulted in the country's victory over invading forces and the establishment of the current Turkish state. The replies from the participants show how highly regarded and idolized Mustafa Kemal Atatürk is. They recognize his resilience, hard work, and perseverance in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

**Table 3. Content Analysis Categories for "Why Atatürk is Courageous?"**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Historical context	Occupied country
	War of Independence
	Challenging the world
Achievements	Achieved improbable goal
	Built a nation from nothing
	Revealed potential in people
	Successfully navigating challenging circumstances
	He gained a lot as a result of his brave deeds
Characteristics	Willpower to face any challenges
	Tenacity to take chances
	Ability to reason through choices
	Self-confidence
	Perseverance
Leadership	Commanded a country
	Utilized knowledge, insight, and the capacity for rapid and wise decision-making
	Influenced the state's future
Sacrifice	Self-sacrificed for the good of the country
	Spent his entire life in service to the cause of Turkish nationalism
Ideals	Showed his principles in action in many spheres.
	Final battle for his convictions
Bravery	Exhibited bravery by making rationally risky judgments.
	Reframed impossibilities as potential
	Entered a fight without understanding what he might encounter
Transformation	Transformed a population of illiterates into a civilized society

Daring is highly valued in Turkish culture, and the nation's first president and founding father, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, is frequently held up as the model of bravery. Many scholars have studied Atatürk's biography and leadership style in order to understand how he changed and showed courage during his political and military career.

Generally speaking, research on courage distinguishes between two kinds of courage. The first is physical bravery, which is shown in combat or while facing direct danger. The second type of courage is moral courage, often called ethical courage, social courage, or civic courage, and it is displayed in the absence of physical peril. It might not always be possible to discover in one person both kinds of courage. Nonetheless, the essential characteristics of a genuine leader are both moral and physical courage. Consequently, having two kinds of courage strengthens and solidifies it. This is seen in the lives of outstanding leaders (Mert, 2021b).

When discussing a leader, it is important to carefully examine the consciousness and level of knowledge underlying physical courage. As emphasized by Aristotle, it is crucial that courage arises from knowledge and conscious deliberation, rather than recklessness and rashness. Otherwise, the question of whether the behavior displayed is truly courageous arises. For a leader to demonstrate genuine courage, they must possess an advanced level of knowledge and consciousness, which is an essential component of courage. In the life of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, we can witness the finest examples of both types of courage. Due to his military background, he exhibited numerous instances of physical courage, surpassing the preconception of associating courage solely with battlefield actions (Mert, 2021b).

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was never afraid to take on challenging assignments, both when he first started his career and as a military student. Every dangerous circumstance he came across served as a springboard for him to develop greater courage. He offered his services for risky and difficult assignments and consistently took the lead in the riskiest locations during fights and skirmishes. His close pals shared a common quality of courage. The most important characteristic that influenced Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's personality throughout his life was courage. He was a versatile leader mostly because of his courage. The more courage a leader possesses, the greater the risky

responsibilities they will assume. Risky responsibility is synonymous with success. As much as taking on risky responsibilities, it is also about executing ordinary responsibilities in a risky manner, with a focus on success. Great leaders, as a natural outcome of their courage, turn every responsibility they undertake into a risky success. When we talk about great achievements in history or the present, we are also talking about the risks and courage behind those achievements (Mert, 2007: 206-207).

Many of the comments also emphasize Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's vision and his ability to accomplish seemingly impossible goals. He is credited with bringing Türkiye into the present day and transforming it into a more progressive, secular, and democratic country. The significance of his accomplishments and his impact on Turkish culture and society are widely known to the participants.

### **5.2. Family Members as the Most Courageous Ones**

On the subject of heroism, several scholarly investigations in psychology, sociology, and anthropology have been conducted. Scholars have examined many aspects of heroism, including the public's perception of heroes, their motivations, and the social impact they have. Researchers have focused less on the topic of family members being perceived as heroes than they have on heroic members of society. This review of the literature will focus on studies that investigate the reasons behind and methods by which people see their family members as heroes.

The reasons for the bravery of family members have been examined in other research. In a 2011 study, Allison and Goethals asked participants to rank the bravery of family members among other groups of persons. Researchers found that people viewed family members as heroes because of their bravery, devotion, and selflessness. These attributes are similar to those that are commonly associated with heroism, such as bravery, sacrifice, and selflessness (Allison & Goethals, 2011; Zimbardo & Franco, 2006).

The reasons given by the participants for believing that their family members or relatives are the most courageous people they have ever met are quite diverse. Mothers are viewed as brave because they are able to make decisions and deal with life's challenges on their own, even in the absence of theoretical knowledge. One mother is also commended for her bravery for standing up for her child.

The fathers, on the other hand, are viewed as courageous for a number of reasons, such as their ability to raise their children well, support their families in the face of adversity and ignorance, and make morally sound decisions. Bravery was demonstrated by a different father who left the federal service after being compelled to reject.

In order to accomplish their goals—which include starting their own enterprises, overcoming hardship, pursuing their dreams despite financial uncertainty, and making decisions for their families at a young age—the brother, cousin, and spouse are all commended for their fortitude.

### **5.3. Historical Figures as the Most Courageous Ones**

Many academic fields have looked into the concept of heroes in history (Hughes-Hallett, 2010). According to Allison, Goethals, and Kramer (2016), for example, the idea of heroism is ascribed to an individual who has exceptional skills or abilities and a high degree of social acclaim for their achievements.

The findings indicate that people think historical personalities are the most courageous people they have ever met for a number of reasons. Fatih Sultan Mehmet's ability to set goals and devise plans of action to overcome obstacles makes him a hero in people's eyes. He is also acknowledged for the difficult decisions he took that influenced the course of the state. This demonstrates that followers look up to leaders who can set clear goals and make difficult decisions under pressure.

Adolf Hitler is also mentioned, but his response is left unanswered. Why the person thinks he is courageous is not clear. But considering Hitler's track record as a war criminal and autocrat, this response is probably questionable and could even indicate a different interpretation of bravery. Alexander the Great is acclaimed for his valor in commanding an army of 100,000 men all the way to India. This demonstrates that people will reward military leaders who can increase their sphere of influence and achieve unprecedented success.

Michelangelo is commended for his courage for taking chances with his artwork and creating sculptures that challenged the status quo. This demonstrates that, despite the fact that their work may be controversial, viewers respect artists who are willing to challenge convention and create something bold and innovative.

Overall, the responses indicate that people consider historical figures to be courageous for a range of reasons, such as their ability to lead, conquer military territory, or create works of art. However, the inclusion of Adolf Hitler as a

heroic figure raises ethical concerns and highlights how important it is to give the principles and historical figures we appreciate considerable consideration.

#### **5.4. Self as the Most Courageous One**

The notion of courage is complex and multifaceted, and a multitude of factors may influence an individual's perception of their own courage. Among these is the belief in oneself that one is the most fearless person. One opinion is that people tend to overstate how brave and courageous they are, especially in comparison to other people. This phenomenon is known as the "illusory superiority" or the "Dunning-Kruger effect" (Dunning et al., 2003). According to this notion, people frequently overestimate their own abilities, which could lead them to overestimate their bravery. Studies have shown that this effect is very potent.

According to a different perspective, how someone perceives their own courage is influenced by their social surroundings. Others may perceive themselves as more courageous if they are in an environment where others are perceived as less courageous or if they are faced with a difficult situation (Brewer, 1991). People's opinions of their own bravery might also be influenced by the perceived risks of a particular situation. For example, people may feel more courageous if they think the outcome of a scenario will significantly affect them or others (Fischer et al., 2006). According to a third point of view, a person's values and beliefs may influence how they regard their own bravery. For example, those who value independence and self-reliance may think of themselves as more daring than those who value submission and compliance (Brewer, 1991).

Studies have shown that people's perceptions of their own courage may be influenced by personality traits. For example, those who score highly on emotional stability and extraversion tests are more likely to consider themselves to be courageous than people who do not. In a similar vein, individuals who strongly believe in their own skills or sense of self-efficacy are more likely to think of themselves as courageous (Bandura, 1982).

#### **5.5. Public Figures as the Most Courageous Ones**

People see presidents as courageous when they demonstrate strong leadership qualities and make difficult choices that are best for the country. For example, a study conducted in 2012 by Goethals and Allison found that respondents thought George W. Bush was brave when he responded to the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

Perceived courage in public figures is a complex phenomenon that depends on a number of factors, including individual acts, public perception, and personal values. Coworkers are seen as courageous when they take risks and stand up for what they believe in, much like warriors are seen as courageous when they are willing to risk their lives to defend their nation. More studies in this area will help us better understand the factors that contribute to the perception of public figures as courageous.

The findings demonstrate that participants think presidents are the most courageous people they have ever met because of their ability to act appropriately and remain composed under pressure.

#### **5.6. Generalizations or Acquaintances as the Most Courageous Ones**

When asked to name the most courageous person they know, some people would rather not mention a specific person and instead respond anonymously or generally. A person may select an anonymous or broad option out of fear of upsetting others or receiving negative feedback for their decision (Epley & Dunning, 2000). In a 2000 study, Epley and Dunning asked participants to name the most courageous person they knew. People who choose to remain anonymous or to make a broad selection did so to avoid offending anyone or coming across as judgmental.

Another reason to go with a broad or anonymous option could be a desire to show others that you are humble or respectful. In a study by Pyszczynski & colleagues (2006), participants were asked to select the bravest person they knew. They chose an anonymous or inclusive selection because they thought it was disrespectful to single out one person as the most courageous.

The responses that ranked general or anonymous alternatives as the most courageous suggest that bravery is a trait that may be exhibited by everyone and is not exclusive to any specific person or group. This point of view can be predicated on the notion that bravery is not an unusual quality but rather a fundamental human quality that shows up in a range of situations and scenarios.

Decisions that put others' needs ahead of one's own, such as risking one's life to save another or putting morals ahead of one's own interests, suggest that selflessness and altruism are essential components of courage. It also suggests that bravery is addressing one's own fears and challenges in addition to fighting for the greater good.

## 6. Conclusion

A content analysis of the answers to the question "Who is the courageous person you know?" revealed that the name most often mentioned as the bravest person is Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic. There are references to historical figures (Alexander the Great, Fatih Sultan Mehmet), public figures (past and present presidents, members of the armed forces, and colleagues), and family relations (father, mother, brother, cousin, and wife). Some respondents highlighted that everyone can be brave in their own unique way, while others emphasized that bravery requires putting one's personal interests aside and standing up for what is right. Overall, the responses show that perceptions of bravery vary based on individual experiences and perspectives.

The study on the bravest person people know yielded data that support the idea that people's perceptions of courage can be influenced by social influence in both positive and negative ways. The fact that Atatürk was commonly named as the most courageous person demonstrates that social influence can also motivate people to recognize and respect acts of bravery in others, even though the bystander effect may help to explain why people are occasionally unwilling to act in particular circumstances. When people recognize this, they may be able to overcome the bystander effect and step in when needed.

The lay theory of courage, which maintains that courage is a multifaceted notion with both psychological and physical components, could be used to interpret the study's findings. Participants in the survey stated that courage is a composite of a number of other character traits, such as risk-taking, vision, tenacity, leadership, and sacrifice. These characteristics are consistent with the lay interpretation of courage, which stresses that courage includes both psychological and physical components and is influenced by contextual and individual circumstances.

Hofstede's theory of cultural aspects provides a framework for understanding how cultural values influence attitudes and behavior across national boundaries. According to Hofstede's research, collectivism, respect for authority, and upholding national traditions are highly valued in Turkish culture (Hofstede, 2001). Given the frequency with which family members were identified as the boldest individuals, it would seem that collectivism and strong family ties are important aspects of Turkish culture. In a similar vein, bringing up presidents and other notable figures highlights the need of respecting authority figures and preserving Turkish cultural traditions.

Furthermore, the emphasis on putting aside one's own interests and sticking up for what is right is a reflection of the cultural value placed on group loyalty and the obligation to behave in the best interests of the community. This belief states that, in line with Turkish culture's emphasis on collectivism, individuals in Türkiye are permitted to prioritize the needs of the group before their own.

The names given by the participants to family members and well-known individuals who exemplify courage in daily life provide additional proof that courage is not just shown in heroic undertakings. This is consistent with the lay theory of courage, which stresses that bravery can be demonstrated in a range of situations and contexts, including overcoming barriers, taking risks to accomplish goals, and standing up for oneself or others.

All things considered, this study offers insights into the common notion of courage and its manifestations in Turkish society. Through an examination of the characteristics and factors influencing participants' perceptions of courage, this study advances our understanding of how people understand and interpret the concept.

The results of this investigation align with the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism (Aksan et al. 2009), which highlights the importance of interpersonal connections and shared meanings in shaping individuals' attitudes and behaviors. The participants' sense of bravery was significantly influenced by the symbolic significance of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as the founder of the Turkish Republic and his role in shaping Türkiye's national identity. The study supports the heroic leadership theory as well, which states that individuals can become heroes by exhibiting exceptional leadership qualities and motivating others to strive toward a common goal. The resolve, leadership, and future vision of Atatürk were highlighted by the responders in their accounts of his bravery; these qualities are fundamental to heroic leadership.

### **6.1 Theoretical Implication**

This study adds to the theory of bravery by examining how 155 people in Türkiye perceive courage through the use of the Lay Theory of bravery. Through the use of this theoretical framework, the research explores the intricate network of characteristics and elements that influence the public understanding of courage. The research reveals Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as the most often cited example of courage through a qualitative analysis of participant responses. It also clarifies the wide range of people—from family members to participants themselves—who are acknowledged as courageous figures.

Additionally, the research reveals the various facets of courage, ranging from steadfast dedication to outstanding accomplishments and extraordinary daring. The results highlight the social ideals connected to bravery and the ways in which they appear historically and in modern culture. Furthermore, the study highlights the significance of independence and the capacity for fearless decision-making, particularly when facing superiors, as a critical component of courage in the Turkish social and cultural context.

In summary, by investigating the various elements and characteristics that influence how courage is seen within a particular cultural setting, this research advances our theoretical knowledge of courage. It sheds light on the complex web of beliefs and values that surround this essential virtue and provides insights into the symbolic meaning of courage in Turkish society.

### **6.2. Practical Implications**

The study's findings can be used by organizations to create a culture that values courage as a fundamental quality. Organizations can foster a more welcoming and encouraging atmosphere that inspires workers to take risky and creative actions by highlighting the importance of brave deeds and praising those who exhibit them. This study emphasizes the value of having daring traits in managers and leaders. Encouraging leaders to demonstrate unshakable dedication, take bold risks, and rise to adversity can motivate their people to do the same. These qualities can be included in leadership development programs as essential elements of successful leadership.

The study's conclusions can be applied by managers to improve worker satisfaction and well-being. Managers can create a sense of appreciation and belonging by acknowledging the bravery and resiliency exhibited by team members. This may result in higher employee engagement, better work satisfaction, and enhanced loyalty to the company. Making brave decisions is a crucial component of good management and leadership. The results of the study can be used by managers to motivate their staff to take calculated risks even when faced with uncertainty by encouraging them to do so. Agility and adaptability can be increased in businesses by encouraging a culture of bold decision-making.

The study emphasizes how important it is to acknowledge and honor brave deeds of all sizes. Employers that show courage in their job might be recognized with rewards and recognition programs put in place by managers and other authorities. Such praise can enhance morale and inspire others to imitate it.

### **6.3. Limitation and Future Research**

Although this study has shed light on how the participants perceive courage, there are a number of limitations that should be noted as they could have an impact on the findings. The 155 Turkish participants in the study's sample may not accurately reflect the variety of the country's population as a whole. For deeper findings, future study could benefit from a larger and more demographically diverse sample. The results are based on the Turkish cultural context, and judgments of courage may differ in other cultural contexts. To provide a more complete understanding, future research should examine how courage is viewed in diverse cultural situations.

Future studies ought to examine cross-cultural comparisons in order to explore if views of courage are culturally universal or particular. Studies that monitor how people's opinions of courage change over time, in different life stages, and throughout historical periods can shed light on how courage has evolved. It is best to integrate self-report data with objective measures, such as behavioral observations, physiological responses, or neurological tests, to provide a more complete understanding. A more nuanced viewpoint can be obtained by investigating how individual characteristics, such as personality traits and life events, shape judgments of courage. Furthering our understanding of this complicated virtue, research on the ways in which perceptions of courage affect individual and group actions, decision-making, and society outcomes can shed light on the useful implications of these beliefs.

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