



Araştırma Makalesi • Research Article

Siyasal Partilerin Kriz Dönemlerinde Sosyal Medya Kullanımı: COVID-19 Pandemi Dönemi Örneği

The Social Media Use by Political Parties in the Times of Crisis: The Case of the COVID-19 Pandemic Period

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Öz: Toplumlar, tarihsel süreç içerisinde çeşitli dönüm noktaları yaşamaktadırlar. Bu dönüm noktaları çoğu zaman krizler şeklinde ortaya çıkmaktadır. Krizler her zaman ekonomik boyutta olmamakla beraber her kriz toplumlari sosyo-ekonomik boyutta etkilemektedir. Günümüzde yaşanan en büyük kriz ise COVID-19 olmuştur. 2020 Mart ayından bu yana devam eden koronavirüs salgını tüm dünyayı etkisi altına aldığı gibi Türkiye'yi de doğrudan etkilemiştir. Bu zorlu süreçte hükümet, diğer tüm ülkelerde olduğu gibi Türkiye'de de halk sağlığını kontrol altında tutmak için önlemler aldı. Türkiye'de hükümetin yanı sıra siyasi partiler de etkili kanaat önderleri olarak Pandemi sürecinde aktif rol almış ve hitap ettikleri halk kesimlerine fayda sağlamaya çalışmışlardır. Bu çalışmada Türkiye'deki siyasi partilerin bir kriz dönemi olan COVID-19 sürecinde sosyal medya ve web sitelerini kullanımları karşılaştırılmalı analiz yöntemiyle değerlendirilmiş ayrıca paylaşılan içerikler söylem analizi yöntemine tabi tutulmuştur. AKP ve MHP'nin oluşturulan stratejileri halka duyurma çabası içinde oldukları; diğer partilerin ise iktidar partisine karşı eleştirel bir tavır sergiledikleri ve vatandaşların pandemi sürecinde yaşadığı sorunları ön plana çıkardığı sonucuna varıldı.

Anahtar Kelimeler: COVID-19, Koronavirüs, Sağlık, Siyasi Partiler, Sosyal Medya, Web Sitesi.

Abstract: Societies experience various turning points in the historical process. These turning points often emerge as crises. Although crises are not always financial, each crisis affects populations in socio-economic terms. The COVID-19 pandemic is the biggest crisis experienced today. The ongoing coronavirus pandemic has directly affected Turkey as well as the entire world since March 2020. In this arduous process, the government has taken precautions to keep public health under control in Turkey, like in all other countries. Besides the government in Turkey, political parties as influential opinion leaders have also taken an active role in the pandemic process and tried to benefit the people segments they address. In this study, the use of social media and websites by political parties in Turkey during COVID-19, which is a crisis period, was evaluated by comparative analysis method, and also the shared contents were subjected to discourse analysis method. The study has concluded that AK Parti and MHP exert an effort to announce the strategies created to the public and other parties represent a critical attitude towards the ruling party, bringing the issues that citizens suffer during the pandemic to the fore.

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Introduction

In the historical process, societies have experienced various changes and transformations. This situation accelerated after the industrial revolution and gained speed with technological developments in the 20th century. While technological developments have changed the traditional communication forms, they have also caused a transformation of traditional media. Today, with the mobile phones that everyone has, mass communication has vaulted into a different dimension. Institutions and organizations have reached the opportunity to interact directly with individuals, and individuals have conveyed their ideas and views to the masses through new media tools.

The communication tools are social media platforms in this form of communication identified as the new media. Although social media platforms differ in their own way depending on their use and content, this study indiscriminately preferred social media tools that could be accessed by each individual and have a comparatively higher number of users.

This study deals with the social media use by political parties in the COVID-19 pandemic, which is a turning point for the world. Even though governments play an active role in the social order, political parties also act as opinion leaders for their supporters. In this period, all institutions undeniably strive to fulfill their part in society's public health. In this context, this study has evaluated the method followed by political parties during the pandemic process in terms of social media tools.

The study primarily evaluated crisis management depending on the pandemic crisis. In addition, in order to comprehend the political parties' social media activities, a literature review was conducted on social media and social media tools. Finally, the study comparatively evaluated the pandemic-related social media and websites shares of the largest political parties serving in the Turkish Grand National Assembly.

Social media is increasingly becoming a preferred communication tool by both individuals and politicians. (Morozov, 2011, 182-3). Social media, which removes barriers in terms of time and space, is a platform that offers participants instant access to a larger network compared to other platforms (Wohn & Bove, 2014). Various opinions suggest that social media is not only a communication tool but also assumes a political function. Yeşildal (2019) advocates that while the social media communication between individuals and the political decision-makers facilitates the political participation of the individuals, this situation also offers important strategies for policy development and planning practices. Apart from this, social media is observed to be preferred more intensely to communicate in times of social crisis. For example, 2011 August Events in England, 2013 Boston Marathon Explosion (Altunbaş, 2014:5), California Earthquake in 2016 (Ayan, 2016: 340), Northern Forests Defense (Algül, 2014), and Arab Spring (Folley, 2013) are important examples of the widespread use of social media.

Likewise, social media use has increased with the Covid-19 pandemic that emerged in Wuhan, China, since the end of 2019. The January 2020 report prepared by We Are Social & Hootsuite showed that 49% of the world population (3.8 billion) had social media accounts, while this number increased to 51% of the world population (3.96 billion) in July 2020. The reason for this increase in six months has been attributed to the global health crisis.

1. Political Parties' Social Media Account Use in Crisis Periods

1.1. Crisis Management

Effective crisis management that successfully establishes responsibility areas and necessary principles in the organization is crucial to overcome crises. Crisis management planning comprises the list of potential crises, preparing prevention strategies, and developing methods and tactics to deal with the potential impacts. In order to minimize the damages, it is necessary to communicate effectively with those affected by the crisis (Regester et al., 1997; Mitroff et al., 1987).

Crisis management is a process the organization has to manage and coordinate the major events that threaten to harm itself and its social partners. It is crucial to determine the risks and the types of crises these risks may create in this process because solving the crises that may pose various risks will require different strategies (Coombs et al., 2006). Based on this situation, the first steps at the crisis and post-crisis stages come to the fore. However, another critical step in the crisis management process is the pre-crisis stage, including necessary preparations.

Augustine (1995) defines the crisis management process in six stages, avoiding, preparing for crisis management, recognition, freezing, fixing, and benefiting from the crisis. These steps can be summarized as follows:

Avoiding the crisis: The easiest and effective way to control a potential crisis is to take action. Managers may see crises as inevitable everyday situations, but it is possible to prevent some crises by taking precautions. An overlooked or ignored condition can suddenly turn into a problematic situation for the organization. This stage requires organizations' attention.

Preparing for crisis management: When a crisis prevention activity does not work, the organization should prepare for the crisis. Preparation activities are of great importance. Every person assigned to a crisis management position should also comprehend the inevitability of a crisis.

Recognition of the crisis: Organizations can sometimes focus on technical aspects and ignore perception. However, the primary thing leading to a crisis is usually social perception, and this opinion can turn into reality after a while. Organizations that accept the existence of the crisis can carry out the following stages more effectively and quickly.

Freezing the crisis: In crisis times, hard decisions must be immediately made.

Fixing the crisis: A crisis comes on suddenly, and it doesn't wait. So it's vital to be quick. Immediate action must be taken to resolve the crisis.

Benefiting from the Crisis: All organizations should investigate and study crises after they have returned to their routine situations. This action can increase experience and knowledge of how to deal with such a situation in the future.

1.2. Social Media and Crisis Management

Social media is a communication form that allows anyone to instantly communicate with other people anywhere in the world without the limitation of time and place. According to Kaplan and Haenlein's definition, social media is the name given to the whole of internet-based applications that allow the production and development of ideological and technological content on web 2.0 in a user-centered manner (Kaplan et al., 2010). Safko defined social media as the practice of sharing information and ideas through web-based and interactive media applications that enable the creating and sharing of words, images, videos, and sounds among online groups (Safko, 2010).

Blogs are the most popular platforms in the social media areas of the internet. Blogs, a well-known social media platform, allow people to share content via online media and follow the award-winning bloggers' sharings. Blogs and social networking websites can provide insights to online communities on any subject, especially in communities with young populations (Mayfield, 2008).

Another impressive platform in social media areas is forums. The discussion website Usenet, founded in 1979 by Tom Truscott and Jim Ellis at Duke University, is considered the first electronic forum. Forums can be defined as modern versions of bulletin boards. Today, there are thousands of forum sites focusing on many topics (Baser, 2014). Forum sites generally work with a membership system and are grouped according to their interests (Nusair et al., 2012).

Today, social media platforms, mostly known by the names of their communities, are actively used. While individuals produce and share content, institutions and organizations can actively establish one-to-one contact with people in these highly effective and attractive areas of the information age.

The primary purpose of social content communities is to allow the users to share content, such as text, images, videos, PowerPoint presentations. (Kaplan et al., 2009).

Content communities allowing multimedia to be shared and stored are among the fastest-growing areas of social media. People can easily access inexpensive content collections with no technical knowledge. Media content can be shared with users on different social networking profiles, blogs, and websites. Communities run the risk of sharing copyrighted content (Dağıtmaç, 2015). The social media applications existing among the content communities are as follows:

Youtube: YouTube is a platform for users to watch and share videos. It was founded by a former PayPal employee on 15 February 2005 and was later acquired by Google on 9 October 2006. The users can share amateur and professional video clips, movies, TV program fragments, and music files on this platform. This platform enables users to rate and comment on videos. Videos not complying with the terms of use can be reported, reviewed, and deleted by YouTube officials. It has the world's broadest video sharing, where millions of videos are uploaded every day (Nusair et al., 2012).

Instagram: Instagram was founded in October 2010 as a photo-sharing site. It allows people to use various professional filters and then share the images with followers. The popularity of Instagram increased with Facebook's purchase on 21 April 2012. In this application, users can make their accounts public or only for followers. Public posts are open to search under different hashtags (Benli, 2014).

Twitter: Twitter was founded in March 2006 by Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams, and Biz Stone. Twitter has made 'instant messaging' popular among millions of people. 'Tweet,' which is a text message of up to 140 characters, allows another person to share this tweet with their own followers by making a 'Retweet' and allowing other users to follow. Users can also quote content from other users (Özkaşıkçı, 2012).

In Twitter, the system listing the number of messages according to the frequency is also called 'Trend Topics.' This system constantly lists the most updated topics on Twitter (Güçdemir, 2012). When a hashtag (#) is used in front of a phrase intended to be highlighted, other users can search for and follow other tweets associated with that hashtag. Twitter allows peer-to-peer communication.

1.2.1. The Use of Social Media in Crisis Management Applications

In the crisis management process divided into three stages as preparation, recovery, and intervention, social media can be used for information dissemination, disaster planning and education, joint problem solving and decision making (Augustine, 1995).

Information Dissemination: Using social media is an effective way for organizations to disseminate information owned and can be used to provide fast, reliable information. Thus, organizations can use this system to prepare for any crisis and respond quickly. Immediately informing relevant persons is an application area of the information dissemination function (Karaca et al., 2018).

Disaster Planning and Education: Disaster education is as essential as planning disaster scenarios. Training courses with seminars, disaster drills, information programs on TV or social media are provided to raise awareness about disasters. In recent years, technology tools have become popular in disaster planning, and training courses, including multiple technologies such as game applications (gamification), have begun to provide the necessary disaster and crisis training (Demiröz, 2020).

Joint Problem Solving and Decision Making: As stated by Jeff Howe, problem-solving and decision-making can be achieved with organizations using "crowdsourcing" (Özkan, 2007). The utilization of social media (using crowdsourcing) enables institutions to collect the crisis management information needed. Information exchange and collaboration help solve problems and make decisions (Howe, 2006).

The increasing influence of the internet -especially social media- in social life has started to put crisis managers under pressure to adapt to this new environment. Because the tactics and practices specific to traditional media regarding crisis communication are not always effective in the social media environment. The most important reason for the said ineffectiveness or weak effect is the interactivity,

dialogue-centered and fast features of the internet environment. A story, a gossip, or a scrap of information can become a reality with anyone hitting the "send" button. In such an environment, it became imperative to control the news and keep up with this fast-paced world. Therefore, the media in general and the social media in particular have an important role that cannot be ignored at every moment of the crisis. This role can be one of the tools to manage or control the crisis, depending on its place, or it can sometimes turn into a catalyst that triggers the crisis and even a leading role that reveals itself (Bekiroğlu & Balcı, 2014, p. 155). The rapid development of social networks and the increasing interest in this field have caused social media to be seen as a tracking tool and an opportunity for measurement, and good results have been achieved especially by politicians and public followers. In this context, the follow-up of social media has turned into an active interaction; It has turned into a very important structure in terms of monitoring, measurement and evaluation activities, to comprehend every social event with all its dimensions (Aytekin and Valued, 2013: 5-14).

2. COVID-19 Combat Strategy in Turkey

COVID-19, the novel coronavirus, is also called Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, Coronavirus-2 (Du et al., 2020: 123; Wu et al., 2020: 44-48). Symptoms of the disease are fever, cough, and chest tightness (Chan et al., 2020: 514-523; Huang et al., 2020: 497-506). At the outset, COVID-19 was not recognized as a permanent community-level epidemic, but The World Health Organization soon declared a Pandemic globally depending on its symptoms and transmission level.

With the first case of COVID-19 was officially identified in Turkey, the combat started on 10 March 2020 (Elbek 2020: 215-216). In line with the requirements, Turkish authorities have taken strict measures to fight COVID-19. After the first case, Turkish public authorities have determined their security strategies on the conditions and aimed at both medical staff's and public's health. In this combat, the focus of the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey has been hospital-based control strategies rather than a public health approach to disease control. At the first stage, the treatment capabilities of hospitals and laboratory equipment have been immediately put into service (Aykaç 2020: 291-292).

Turkey's strategy to combat COVID-19 has been associated with the National Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Plan developed in 2019 based on experiences drawn from the problems experienced during the H1N1 pandemic in 2009. In this context, deficiencies in inpatient management, capacity building in the laboratory and human resources, improvement in financial resources, organizational structures, and communication strategy were overcome. During the fight against the pandemic, the government has followed this strategy at six different alarm levels and under the headings of planning, monitoring and situation assessment, coordination, protection and control, medical applications, and communication (Ministry of Health, 2019). Under this plan, on 10 January 2020, the Coronavirus Scientific Advisory Board consisting of 31 experts was established to discuss all kinds of measures to prevent COVID-19 in the Republic of Turkey, while the number of infected people in other countries was increasing. The expanded COVID-19 Scientific Committee consisted of infection, microbiology, virology, internal medicine, intensive care, and pulmonology experts. In this way, Turkish public authorities have designed the COVID-19 national security strategy based on nationwide scientific cooperation. The Coronavirus Scientific Advisory Board is an organization established by the Ministry of Health to control and destroy COVID-19. Its mission is to provide the citizens with correct and proven scientific information and advice (Bayram et al. 2020: 463-464).

The COVID-19 disease-related information and cases were uninterruptedly transmitted to the entire public through different communication channels such as radio, television, and social media. In this context, the Minister of Health Fahrettin Koca informed the Turkish society with up-to-date information such as the total number of COVID-19 cases, daily and total death rates, daily and total healing patients. COVID-19 disease observations and some precautions against pandemics were carried out using the internet in Turkey. The public has been informed about the current situation of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic with the website <https://covid19.saglik.gov.tr/>

In their study, Bilgiç and Akyüz (2020) examined the Twitter posts of Health Minister Fahrettin Koca in the period from the time the first case was seen to the two-day street restrictions. Tan and Bayram (2021) conducted a social media content analysis respecting political participation in the COVID-19 period. In his paper, Doğmuş (2021) examined Turkish government ministries' official Twitter accounts considering corporate governance and public relations in the Covid-19 Pandemic. On the other hand, Gönül (2020) discussed the digital transformation of politics during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Compared to previous similar studies, the current research has analyzed the social media accounts of political parties in detail during the Coronavirus Pandemic and revealed a different research content.

3. Research Method

3.1. Research Subject

Institutions and organizations of the state have a significant influence on the provision of social order. In addition, the political parties, which are the representatives of the people in the parliament, are also opinion leaders, and their contribution to the social order is undeniably significant. This study comparatively analyzed the communication types developed by Turkish political parties in their social media and websites in the changing social life with the COVID-19 pandemic, which started in March 2020.

3.2. Purpose and Importance of the Research

The study aimed to compare and analyze the communication styles of political parties representing a large group of citizens in Turkey on their websites and social media accounts during the COVID-19 process. In line with this purpose, the study prominently contributes to the literature by shedding light on how the political parties' communication methods during the COVID-19 period may create differences in social media and websites.

3.3. Data Collection Tools Used in the Research

The study comparatively examined the ways of Turkish political parties' social media and websites discourses during the COVID-19 pandemic. This analysis is called discourse analysis (Çelik and Ekşi, 2008; Oğuz, 2008).

In this direction, the study scanned the websites of the particular political parties using the keywords "COVID-19, COVID, coronavirus, vaccine." In addition, in social media, which is the other variable of the comparison, the posts of political parties about COVID-19 on Twitter, Youtube, and Instagram pages were investigated. The study carried out a digital-based data collection process.

Table 1. Social Media Accounts of Political Parties

Political Parties	Web Sites	Social Media Accounts (Twitter/Instagram/Youtube)
Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AK Parti)	https://www.akparti.org.tr/	@Akp @akparti Ak Parti
Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP)	https://www.chp.org.tr/	@herkesicinCHP @chp CHP- Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi
Halkların Demokratik Partisi (HDP)	https://hdp.org.tr/	@HDPgenelmerkezi @hdpgenelmerkezi Halkların Demokratik Partisi – HDP
Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP)	https://www.mhp.org.tr/mhp_index.php	@MHP_Bilgi @milliyetcihareketpartisi Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP)
İyi Parti	https://iyiparti.org.tr/	@iyiparti

3.4. Scope and Limitations of the Research

The study examined the Turkish political parties' posts on their websites and social media accounts during the COVID-19 process. There are 15 political parties in the Turkish Grand National Assembly. The study analyzed considering the first five largest parties that have constituted the majority in the parliament. These parties are "Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi" (AK Parti), "Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi" (CHP), "Halkların Demokratik Partisi" (HDP), "Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi" (MHP), and "İYİ Parti" (İYİ Parti).

4. Findings

4.1. Findings Regarding the Websites of Political Parties

The study findings from the webpage scannings performed by using the keywords COVID, COVID-19, coronavirus, and vaccine are below, according to the political party websites.

Findings on the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AK Parti) website

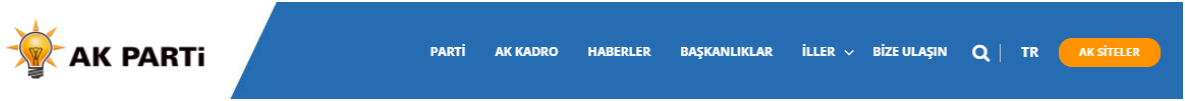


Figure 1. The AK Parti Website

Source: <https://www.akparti.org.tr/>

AK Parti is currently the ruling party in Turkey and has 287 deputies in the parliament.



Figure 2. The Official Twitter Account of AK Parti

Source: <https://twitter.com/Akparti>



Figure 3. The Official Instagram Account of AK Parti

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/akparti/?hl=tr>

By observing the posts during the pandemic period, the study has revealed that the AK Parti has posted the most on social media compared to other parties. The posts usually cover President's speeches and Health Minister's pandemic-related messages. It is noteworthy that they have shared the governmental news rather than the coronavirus combat studies.

A few statements shared on the AK Parti website regarding the measures taken within the scope of coronavirus are as follows (<https://www.akparti.org.tr/>)

- Measures taken regarding education were announced. Education in schools was suspended for two weeks as of 16-22 March 2020. The dates 16-22 March 2020 were determined as an interim holiday. Remote teaching courses will be held at home via eba.gov.tr and TRT between 23-29 March.
- Public employees going abroad are subject to special permission.
- The Turkish Football Federation has announced that all sports competitions until the end of April will be played without spectators, under the measures taken by the state against the Coronavirus (COVID-19).



Figure 4. COVID-19 News from the AK Parti Website

Source: <https://www.akparti.org.tr/>

Findings on the Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP) Website

With the second-largest number of seats in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, CHP is the main opposition party. The number of deputies of CHP in the parliament is 135.



Figure 5. The CHP Website

Source: <https://www.chp.org.tr/>



Figure 6. The Official Twitter Account of CHP

Source: <https://twitter.com/herkesicinCHP>



Figure 7. The Official Instagram Account of CHP

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/chp/?hl=tr>

During the COVID-19 period, CHP has been observed as the second-most-posting political party on their official website. As the main opposition party, the news contents on their website harshly criticize the people's problems during the pandemic.

Some of the studies handled by the CHP deputies are below:



Figure 8. COVID-19 related news from the Website of CHP

Source: <https://www.chp.org.tr/>

Findings on the Halkın Demokratik Partisi (HDP) Website

HDP is the third-largest party with 56 deputies in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. Although it has few seats against the ruling party and the main opposition party, it has an active place among the opposition parties.



Figure 9. The HDP Website

Source: <https://hdp.org.tr/>



Figure 10. The Official Twitter Account of HDP

Source: <https://twitter.com/HDPgenelmerkezi>



Figure 11. The Official Instagram Account of HDP

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/hdpgenelmerkezi/?hl=tr>

During the pandemic period, HDP has shared fewer posts on its website than AK Parti and CHP. Similar to CHP, they, in their social sharings, have criticized the ruling AK Parti and responded to the strategies followed during the pandemic. In addition, research on the problems experienced in the social field during the pandemic period and the works done by HDP deputies are also published on the HDP website.



Figure 12. COVID-19 related News from the HDP Website

Source: <https://hdp.org.tr/>

Findings on the Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP) website

MHP, which is in alliance with the ruling AK Parti, has 48 deputies in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey.



Figure 13. The Website of MHP

Source: https://www.mhp.org.tr/mhp_index.php



Figure 14. The Official Twitter Account of MHP

Source: https://twitter.com/MHP_Bilgi



Figure 15. The Official Instagram Account of MHP

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/milliyetcihareketpartisi/?hl=tr>

There is no news posted about the pandemic period on MHP's website. The website usually includes the speeches of the MHP leader and the party statements.

Findings on the İYİ Parti website

İYİ Parti is in the Opposition wing and has 36 deputies in the parliament.



Figure 16. The Website of İYİ Parti

Source: <https://iyiparti.org.tr/>



Figure 17. The Official Twitter Account of İYİ Parti

Source: <https://twitter.com/iyiparti>



Figure 18. The Official Instagram Account of İYİ Parti

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/iyiparti/?hl=tr>

In the searches carried out using keywords on the İYİ Parti website, no posts related to the pandemic were available. The website generally covers the political speeches of party leader Meral

Akşener. However, in these conversations, pandemic-related issues have never been mentioned. Besides, the scant number of announcements published is noteworthy as well.

4.2. Findings Regarding Social Media Accounts of Political Parties

There are many political parties in Turkey. Since the number of parties in the parliament is relatively high, this study examined the social sharings of the first five parties that made up the majority in the parliament during the pandemic period. The study primarily examined the content sharing of political parties on their social media accounts.

Findings on The Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AK Party) social media accounts

AKP has 82,100 subscribers on its YouTube channel. The number of shared videos is 4,293.

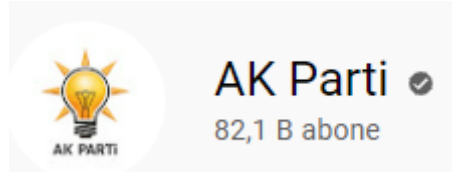


Figure 9. AK Parti Youtube Channel

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/c/akparti/videos>

In the posts made since the pandemic started, the AK Parti's Youtube page usually includes the statements of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who is both the party chairman and the President. In addition, there are videos where strategies are shared in the context of combating the coronavirus. These videos were made by transferring the speeches published in the traditional media to the Youtube platform.



Figure 10. Shares about Pandemic on the AK Parti YouTube Channel

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/c/akparti/videos>

Findings on the social media accounts of the Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP)

As mentioned before, the CHP is the main opposition party that ranks second in the parliament. CHP has 89,700 subscribers on its Youtube channel. The total number of videos is 3,397.

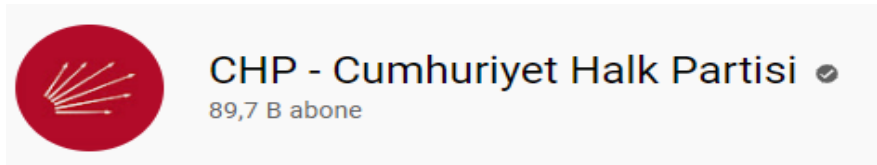


Figure 11. CHP YouTube Channel

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/c/chpgenelmerkezi>

In the posts made during the pandemic period on the YouTube channel, the CHP primarily included the speeches of party chairman Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu. In addition, he shared the speeches of

CHP deputies. However, there are no video shares directly related to the pandemic or coronavirus. Although there is some content about the pandemic period in the videos, the video headings do not include them remarkably.



Figure 12. An Example of Sharing About Pandemic on CHP YouTube Channel

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/c/chpgenelmerkezi>

Findings on the Halkların Demokratik Partisi (HDP) social media accounts

HDP Youtube channel has 154,000 subscribers and has posted 3,252 videos.

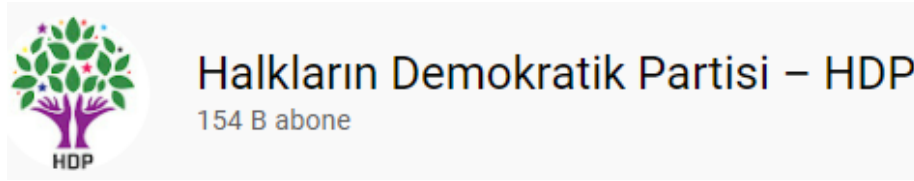


Figure 13. HDP YouTube Channel

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/c/HDPgenelmerkezi>

During the pandemic period, the HDP YouTube channel has generally included the party's press statements and messages about the agenda. Although they share the pandemic issue inside the video contents, the names of the pandemic or coronavirus are rarely included in the video headings. The examples below show the video images where HDP criticizes the government's strategies and shares its views on the pandemic period in an oppositional language during the pandemic period.



Figure 14. Examples of the Sharings posted on the HDP Youtube Channel in the Pandemic Period

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/c/HDPgenelmerkezi>

Findings on the social media accounts of the Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP)

MHP YouTube channel has 99,300 subscribers and has shared 6,815 videos.

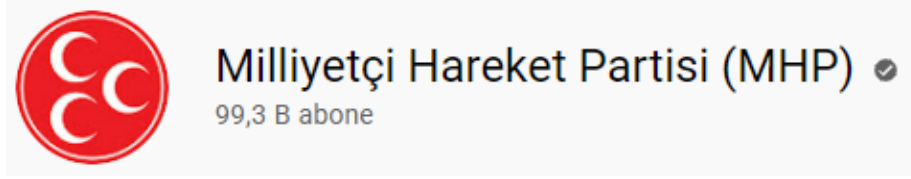


Figure 15. MHP Youtube Channel

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/mhp>

During the pandemic period, the MHP's YouTube channel videos have heavily been regarding the party leader's and deputies' press statements and political speeches, as in other parties. Although there are videos for raising public awareness of the pandemic, these videos have been in a limited number. The examples below are videos of this party posted to speed up vaccine efforts and encourage the public so that pandemic restrictions will not happen again.



Figure 16. MHP Youtube Kanalında Pandemi Dönemine İlişkin Video Paylaşım Örnekleri

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/mhp>

Findings on the İYİ Parti social media accounts

İYİ Parti Youtube channel has 43,000 subscribers and 351 videos.

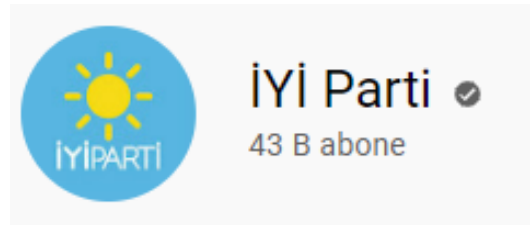


Figure 17. İYİ Parti Youtube Channel

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/c/iyiparti/videos>

The İYİ Parti Youtube channel has usually included the speeches of the party leader and deputies in its posts during the pandemic period. Apart from this, they have also transferred live broadcasts to YouTube channels. There are also videos to raise public awareness about the pandemic.



Figure 18. The Pandemic-related Video-Sharing Examples on the İYİ Parti Youtube Channel

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/c/iyiparti/videos>

The Youtube, Twitter, and Instagram pages of the five largest parties' social media accounts have been examined within the scope of the study. However, it has been observed that the political parties use the same sharings both on the Youtube channel and in other social channels. The parties have generally shared the speeches or press statements performed in the traditional media using their Instagram and Twitter addresses and then directed them to Youtube channels.

Result

The first expectation of societies in times of crisis is the help of their states because they believe that this support will ensure the social order and the continuity of social life. This study focuses on the posts made by political parties on their websites and social media accounts during the coronavirus pandemic period, which has globally been declared since March 2020.

Political parties seek to use communication tools for direct interaction with the citizens following them. However, since they cannot always find this opportunity in traditional media tools, now they utilize new communication areas through websites and social media accounts.

The current study has observed that the five largest parties in Turkey actively use their social media accounts and their websites. The fact that the political party print documents, such as official study reports, can be accessed from their websites, and, additionally, including the audio-visual news, like press statements, make the political parties' websites richer in content.

The current study has analyzed social media accounts of political parties, especially YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram pages. These pages contain video footage produced in traditional media. It has been observed that the number of these videos has increased during the pandemic, and most video content belongs to the AK Parti. This situation probably stems from that this party represents the government as well. Other than MHP, which is in alliance with the government, the opposition parties have made social postings approaching the strategies implemented by the ruling party during the pandemic with harsh critical attitudes.

In order to raise public awareness, it has been observed that İYİ Parti has created video series, then released them on Instagram and Twitter pages, finally posted them to their YouTube channels, and sought to contact large masses in this way.

As a result, it has been seen that the ruling AK Parti and its ally MHP are in an effort to express the created pandemic strategies to the public while the opposing parties, however, have usually displayed a critical attitude towards the ruling party, emphasizing the social issues from which the citizens suffer during the pandemic period.

This study recommends that the opposition parties too should post constructive social media sharings to bolster the citizens' morale in this situation, alongside criticizing the ruling party because of the measures taken during the Pandemic period affecting the entire world globally. In addition, so many people who are in difficulty can be reached through social media. The current study also proposes that

political parties should include social, psychological, and economic cooperation and aid sharings for individuals who experience these various difficulties during the pandemic period.

Conducting research aimed at determining the opinions, opinions and interaction behaviors of users that will be a complement to this study conducted to measure how social media is used by public authorities during a crisis period and the interest of users will contribute to further elucidation of the issue.

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