

ONLINE HARASSMENT AGAINST WOMEN POLITICAL JOURNALISTS ON TWITTER

Enes BALOĞLU¹

Article Info

DOI: 10.35379/cusosbil.1324510

Makale Geçmişi:

Geliş 08.07.2023

Kabul 29.09.2023

Keywords:

Journalism,

Women Political Journalists,

Online Harassment,

Social Media,

Twitter.

ABSTRACT

Journalistic practices are negatively affected by digitalization and economic developments. In particular, digitalization both extends the working hours of journalists and makes them more accessible than ever before. The accessibility of journalists online exposes them not only to positive feedback but also to negative feedback. In this sense, one of the most important problems of journalists is online harassment. Therefore, this study analyzes the comments on political information, opinions or news shared by women journalists in Turkey on Twitter. In this context, the online harassment that political journalists in Turkey are exposed to on Twitter is analyzed. The study mainly aims to reveal the types of online harassment Turkish women political journalists face on Twitter. According to the results of the study, the majority (60.97%) of the comments made to women journalists consist of negative discourse. The most common negative discourse against women journalists (n=31,489) is swearing. The data obtained allows for the comparison of the types of online harassment faced by journalists in different countries and the identification of similarities and differences.

TWITTER'DA KADIN POLİTİKA GAZETECİLERİNE YÖNELİK ÇEVİRİM İÇİ TACİZ

Makale Bilgisi

DOI: 10.35379/cusosbil.1324510

Article History:

Received 08.07.2023

Accepted 29.09.2023

Anahtar Kelimeler:

Gazetecilik,

Kadın Politika Gazetecileri,

Çevrim İçi Taciz,

Sosyal Medya,

Twitter.

ÖZ

Gazetecilik pratikleri dijitalleşme ve ekonomik gelişmelerden dolayı olumsuz etkilenmektedir. Özellikle dijitalleşme gazetecilerin hem çalışma saatlerini uzatmakta hem de gazetecileri hiç olmadığı kadar erişilebilir kılmaktadır. Gazetecilerin çevrim içi ortamda erişilebilir olması sadece olumlu bildirimlere değil aynı zamanda olumsuz bildirimlere de maruz bırakmaktadır. Bu anlamda gazetecilerin en önemli sorunlarından bir tanesi çevrim içi tacizdir. Bu nedenle çalışmada Türkiye'deki kadın gazetecilerin Twitter'da paylaştığı politik bilgilere, görüşlere veya haberlere gelen yorumlar incelenmektedir. Bu bağlamda Türkiye'deki politika gazetecilerinin Twitter'da maruz kaldığı çevrim içi taciz ele alınmaktadır. Çalışmada temel olarak Türk kadın politika gazetecilerinin Twitter'da karşılaştığı çevrim içi taciz türlerinin ortaya çıkarılması amaçlanmaktadır. Çalışmanın sonuçlarına göre kadın gazetecilere yapılan yorumların çoğunluğu (%60,97) olumsuz söylemlerden oluşmaktadır. Kadın gazetecilere yönelik olumsuz söylemlerin başında (n=31.489) ise küfür gelmektedir. Elde edilen veriler, farklı ülkelerdeki gazetecilerin maruz kaldığı çevrim içi taciz türlerinin karşılaştırılmasına ve benzerlik ile farklılıkların tespit edilmesine imkân tanımaktadır.

¹Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Yozgat Bozok Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi, enes.baloglu@bozok.edu.tr, ORCID: 0009-0001-1960-1688

Alıntılanak için/Cite as: Baloğlu, E. (2023). Online Harassment against women political journalists on Twitter. *Çukurova Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 32 (2), 861-873.

INTRODUCTION

Amid the rise of social media platforms and financial pressures on the news industry, journalists display increasing frustration, anxiety and mental health issues related to their work. As with other information and creative industries that rely on the internet and digital media as a form of labor, journalists report an increase in work outside of professional hours, with a blending of personal and professional content on social platforms (Holton, et al., 2021, p. 859). For journalists, this has contributed to a deterioration in work-life balance due to the merging of public and private online spaces and increased multitasking expectations (Cohen, 2019; Molyneux, et al., 2018). On the other hand, journalists are more visible and accessible than ever before, and audiences have unprecedented opportunities to express their feelings to journalists, especially in an online context (Löfgren Nilsson & Örnebring, 2016, p. 881).

In the face of the increasing accessibility of journalists, female journalists are exposed to online harassment more than male journalists. Women journalists are frequently attacked for what they post and the questions they ask in digital environments. Therefore, women journalists continue their profession at the risk of online harassment and intimidation.

While extra-organizational harassment is a reality for all genders and types of work, the present article focuses on the experiences of women in political journalism because women experience harassment more frequently and the particular visibility of television makes such journalists more susceptible to threats, sexual advances, stalkers, and other forms of hostility (Finneman & Jenkins, 2018; Finneman, et al., 2019; Pain & Chen, 2019; Vickery & Everbach, 2018). Women journalists, especially those who write about controversial topics such as politics, are common targets of malicious attacks online (Lu & Luqiu, 2023, p. 3). This is because the intensifying political climate, coupled with the specific political positions that journalists represent, can create strong public sentiment and hostility towards them (Carlson & Witt, 2020; Koirala, 2020).

Specific data on the extent of violence, online harassment and intimidation faced by women journalists working in Turkey is lacking. Due to this lack of data, this study focuses on the online harassment faced by women political journalists in Turkey on Twitter. In this context, it is aimed to reveal the types of online harassment Turkish women political journalists face on Twitter. The data obtained allows for the comparison of the types of online harassment faced by journalists in different countries and the identification of similarities and differences.

Online Harassment and Journalism

Various studies have shown that women are exposed to different forms of online harassment, especially through social media (Chadha, et al., 2017; Ferrier & Garud-Patkar, 2018; Koirala, 2020; Lewis, et al., 2020). Women journalists are verbally attacked, marginalized, criticized, and even threatened on digital platforms because of their gender and perceived sexuality, affecting their routines and personal lives, often with long-term effects (Chen, et al., 2020; Cole, 2015; Kundu & Bhuiyan, 2021).

Journalists increasingly report that online harassment has become a common feature of their work life and contributes to their experience of fatigue, anxiety and disengagement from their profession as well as social media (Holton, et al., 2021, p. 859). Harassment and other uncivil behaviors are viewed as one of the ways journalists experience these gendered areas, leading to feelings of social media fatigue and burnout, and causing some journalists to leave the profession altogether (Karppi, 2011; Bossio & Holton, 2021).

In the study conducted by Holton et al., (2021), interviews with 31 American journalists revealed at least three different forms of harassment: Acute harassment, such as generalized verbal abuse; chronic harassment, which occurs over time and often from the same social media users; and escalatory harassment, which is more personalized and directly threatening. Women in particular reported being subjected to chronic and escalatory forms of harassment. Journalists also noted that news organizations do not make systematic efforts to address this type of harassment and that journalists are forced to seek preventative and palliative coping mechanisms on their own. Women journalists also face more inequality and harassment in news organizations compared to their men counterparts (North, 2016a; 2016b; Holton, et al., 2021; Lee & Park, 2023; Kantola & Harju, 2023).

Different studies in the literature show an increase in online and offline harassment against journalists by their audiences. Harassment is often based on group characteristics such as occupation, religion, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or politics, and is particularly prevalent among women journalists (Chen, et al., 2020; Edström, 2016; Koirala, 2020; Löfgren Nilsson & Örnebring, 2016; Miller & Lewis, 2022).

Studies show that journalists are subjected to online harassment in many parts of the world such as Zimbabwe (Ndlovu & Khupe, 2023), South Korea (Lee & Park, 2023), Southern Europe “Spain, Italy and Greece” (Blanco-

Herrero, et al., 2023), Costa Rica (Söderberg & Schumacher, 2023), Nepal (Koirala, 2020), United States (Holton, et al, 2021), Indonesia (Simorangkir, 2020), Lebanon (Melki & Mallat, 2016), and Finland (Celuch, et al., 2023).

Journalist Meny described what it's like to be a woman in local television news and how she deals with harassment from viewers and strangers. In an article for Vox, she wrote, “This facet of local news includes the guy who yells ‘F**k her right in the p***y’ behind your live feed. There are also examples like the local woman who sends you racial slurs because she doesn't like the way you look, and the man who repeatedly sends flowers to your office”. In this sense, there are thousands of harassment stories for hundreds of young women working in local broadcast news (Meny, 2017).

Studies in the literature show that online harassment can have detrimental effects on individuals' mental health (Stevens, et al., 2021; Chen, et al., 2018), physical safety (Ojanen, et al., 2015; Marshak, 2017; Williams, et al., 2020; Chen, et al., 2020), gender equality in journalism (Posetti, et al., 2020; Posetti & Storm, 2018) and freedom of press (Adams, 2018; Carlson & Witt, 2020).

In 2020, a record number of physical attacks on journalists were reported, as well as harassment and intimidation (Council of Europe Platform to Promote the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists, 2021). As in many parts of the world, women journalists in Turkey are also subjected to online harassment. Demirdağ (2019) points out that harassment towards women journalists has become a daily activity. For example, women journalists are forced to constantly protect themselves as they can be exposed to sexual harassment when they are ‘young and single’ (Dinç, 2019, p. 97), which occurs in the form of digital violence (Gökırmaklı, 2019), WhatsApp messages such as “your legs are beautiful” from organization administrators (Yüncüler, 2018), gender inequality, mobbing and verbal harassment (Yılmaz, 2020), cyberbullying (Aktaş Üstün & Ekin, 2021).

In Turkey, women journalists receive comments containing online harassment on Twitter. On these networks, women journalists are systematically subjected to profanity, mockery/ridicule (Demir & Ayhan, 2022), sexist discourse (Alpay & Orta, 2022) and emotionally harassing comments (Ayhan & Demir, 2022).

When the guests in the debate programs of news channels are analyzed in terms of gender representation, the deep gap between the representation of men and women stands out (Alp & Güzel, 2022, p.103). It was revealed that in the TV program “TarafsızBölge”, which is regularly broadcast on the channel CNN Türk, 91% of the guests were men and 9% were women (Alp, 2017). An analysis of 7 TV channels for a period of 1 month revealed that in news and discussion programs, including anchors, 667 men were on the screen as opposed to 135 women (DEMIS, 2018). Examining the participation of women as experts in TV programs on 13 TV channels, Gençer, et al., (2021) found that 90% of the guests were men (5532) and only 10% were women (582). Particularly in political debate programs, women are not seated, i.e., serve as hosts/moderators, while men sit in the guest seats. In these programs, the lower the ratio of women guests compared to men, the higher the ratio of women hosts/moderators. Women presented 20 of the 27 news discussion programs followed in this two-week period, while the remaining 7 programs were presented by men (Ertuna, 2018, p. 79). In general, the media is dominated by men. From behind the editorial desk to the front page, men dominate prestigious field assignments and overwhelmingly occupy the most powerful and high-profile positions (Ross, et al., 2018).

METHODOLOGY

In the present study, political messages shared by women political journalists on Twitter were analyzed through qualitative content analysis. The fact that politics in Turkey is dominated by “men” has naturally led to a dominance of male journalists. However, there are also women journalists who stand out and draw attention in this field. The present study analyzes the comments on political information, opinions or news content shared by women journalists in Turkey on Twitter. The study aims to identify the discourses that women journalists in Turkey are exposed to on Twitter. For this purpose, answers will be sought to the following questions: “Which negative discourses are women political journalists exposed to on Twitter?” (RQ1), “Are women political journalists threatened for sharing their views?” (RQ2), “Do women political journalists respond to positive or negative discourses on Twitter?” (RQ3), “Are women political journalists being pushed out of the political sphere because of their views?” (RQ4).

For the purpose of this study, content analysis was chosen as it is a study technique used to make replicable and valid inferences from texts (tweets) to contexts of use (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18). Content analysis is a highly flexible study method that is widely used in communication studies with a variety of research aims and objectives. The study method is applied in qualitative, quantitative and sometimes mixed research frameworks and utilizes a wide range of analytical techniques to generate and contextualize findings (White & Marsh, 2006). Magazine, book or newspaper content has a definite beginning and end and is limited in time and space. The complex and

fluid nature of digital media makes the concept of content self-contradictory and makes it difficult to analyze online content (Deuze, 2008). The spatial and temporal qualities of the medium challenge but also help researchers to sample, collect, measure and analyze content (Karlsson & Sjøvaag, 2016).

An important step in content analysis is sampling. In this study, the Twitter accounts of the journalists were strategically selected from various aspects (Mathisen, 2023). In the study, the Twitter accounts of 7 women political journalists were analyzed. The women journalists were selected from among those working in television (n=2), newspapers (n=2) and online/social media (n=3). The women journalists were included in the sample if they had at least 500.000 followers. The fact that Twitter is widely used by journalists in Turkey is reflected in the number of followers. The 500.000 quota was applied to analyze the size of the audience and the reaction and to make the results more generalizable.

The Twitter accounts of 7 women political journalists in the sample were analyzed for 1 month between March 10, 2023 and April 10, 2023, when the dates of presidential and general elections in Turkey were announced. With the announcement of the election dates in Turkey, political developments accelerated. In this respect, women political journalists use Twitter to share their views, gather supporters and announce their support. In this respect, the period between these dates was evaluated.

In the study, only the tweets shared by 7 women political journalists within a period of 1 month and the comments on these tweets were analyzed. Posts shared by women political journalists in the form of retweets and mentions were not included in the evaluation. 7 women journalists shared a total of 1.795 tweets during this period. Direct comments on the tweets shared by women journalists were analyzed. Comments consisting of emojis and quoted retweets were not analyzed. After applying these limitations, it was determined that 1484 tweets received a total of 172.915 comments. In order to systematize the comments obtained in the study, they were coded in MAXQDA program. MAXQDA is an important program that helps to qualitatively analyze electronically collected data. The data were divided into various categories based on previous studies on women journalists (Usher, Holcomb, & Littman, 2018; Meeks, 2013; Molyneux, 2019) and Turkey's social and cultural norms. These include two main categories: positive (67.478) and negative (105.437).

First, the positive category is divided into three categories: support (32.398), goodwill (prayer) (21.391) and approval (13.689). The support category includes comments expressing "support" for the situation or post. In the category of goodwill (prayer), there are expressions of well-intentioned support for journalists such as "good luck" and religious comments such as "God bless you". In the last category, approval, there are "approving" expressions about women journalists' posts and information. For example, statements such as "this is absolutely the right decision" and "this information is correct" were evaluated in this category.

The second category, the negative category, consists of 4 sub-categories including profanity (31.489), mockery (29.078), threat (23.759) and hegemonic (21.291) discourse. The profanity category includes expressions such as "fuck you, fuck off" in response to the posts of women journalists. The mockery category includes comments involving reactions towards the previous statements of the women journalists, their private lives and gaffes, whether relevant or irrelevant to the content. In this category, expressions that ridicule women journalists are used directly by users. In the threat category, expressions such as "you will be prosecuted", "you will be imprisoned", and "you will pay" are used as direct threats against women journalists. In the hegemonic/exclusionary category, expressions such as "go home", "take care of your children", and "you are not a journalist" are used against women journalists whose statements users disagree with.

Table 1 Quantitative Analysis of Tweets and General Comments

Journalist Name	Number of Followers	Number of Tweets	Number of Comments	Working Area
Journalist 1	651.085	245	64,860	Newspaper
Journalist 2	2.812.654	361	16,161	TV
Journalist 3	333.632	152	5,430	Newspaper
Journalist 4	391.039	325	22,157	Digital Media
Journalist 5	2.523.242	78	788	TV
Journalist 6	1.362.032	196	45,373	Digital Media
Journalist 7	724.537	127	18,146	Digital Media
Total	8.798.221	1,484	172,915	

Positive Comments

This category includes positive comments made on Twitter towards women political journalists (positive comments made on Twitter towards political journalists). The positive category is divided into three sub-categories: support (32.398), goodwill (prayer) (21.391) and approval (13.689).

Support

The 32.398 comments in this category consist of comments in which followers express their support against online and offline attacks against women journalists, as well as comments in which followers express that they watch their programs on television and in newspapers. In this category, the sentiment clearly expressed in the comments is that the followers have a special interest and admiration for the journalists and enjoy their journalistic activities.

Example 1. We will stand with you against the attacks of these trolls

Example 2. I will watch your program at 9 p.m.

The 3732 comments in this category express direct interest compared to other comments. This interest stems from gratuitous comments, opinions and longtime followers. As can be seen from the comments in this category, the fact that women political journalists have been at the forefront of mass media such as television and newspapers for many years has led to the establishment of online fan interaction and bonding through Twitter.

Goodwill (Prayer)

The 21.391 comments in this category consist of statements in which followers responded with sentences expressing goodwill when women political journalists conveyed their personal views. It is also observed that users responded to the objective or subjective information shared by women political journalists on political issues with religious reactions and prayers.

Example 1. May God help us. May it be for the best for our country

Example 2. God bless you and your family.

As seen above, comments in this category can be political or directly aimed at women journalists. This sub-category includes 348.732 comments in the positive category.

Approval

In addition to providing users with the opportunity to express their opinions, Twitter also creates behavioral patterns towards other users that are motivated by a need for approval. It was determined that users made comments expressing their "approval" of the information or subjective opinions shared by women political journalists on Twitter. Users view themselves as a decision-maker and make statements indicating their approval of statements that are in line with their views and that they support.

Example 1. I agree with this decision. It should have been done already for the security of our country.

Example 2. The perfect event after all the bad things that have happened recently. I stand by this decision

In the public spaces created on Twitter, users can engage in political debates, express their views and garner support. On the other hand, they can also express their approval of decisions or opinions. The 13.689 comments in this category show that a mechanism of approval has been created for the views of politicians or journalists to gain support.

Negative Comments

The second category, negative comments, consists of 4 categories including profanity (31.489), mockery (29.078), threat (23.759) and hegemonic (21.291) discourses.

Profanity

Given the historical legacy and current awareness of gender inequality in journalism and politics, as well as the growing importance of Twitter in political communication, the platform appears to sharpen existing gender biases against women in political journalism. Profanity is one of the most common discourses that women journalists encounter on Twitter. Profanity against women political journalists occurs as a result of women's positive or negative statements towards a political party or candidate (Usher, et al., 2018). In the face of situations such as statements, documents, and positive or negative comments towards the party or candidate they support, users use expletives against the personalities of women journalists. The fact that the vast majority of the comments

in the negative content category (n=31.489) contain profanity shows that women political journalists are frequently exposed to abusive discourse on Twitter (Koirala, 2020). In this context, online misogyny has also become widespread (Ging & Siapera, 2018).

Example 1. You are an idiot. Since you are an idiot, it is normal for you to write such things

Example 2. This coming from you? Ass-kissing bastard

As seen in the examples above, direct swearing is aimed at the personalities of women political journalists. The nature and extent of these swear words can vary, and it has been determined that the comments also extend to the families of women journalists.

Mockery

The 29.078 comments in the mockery category consist of users' reactions to news or information provided by women political journalists. The comments in this category may also include condescension and usually contain sarcastic expressions about the accuracy or inaccuracy of the information (Demir & Ayhan, 2022). It is generally intended to humiliate women journalists (Vitis & Gilmour, 2017).

Example 1. You think you are so smart? Is this as accurate as your previous news (!)

Example 2. hahaha for some reason only you know this information? this is also a lie

Example 3. It's not enough that you are humiliated on TV, you carry on here too aah

As can be seen in the examples above, mocking statements are made against women journalists based on the information they provide or their previous statements. It is observed that these examples also contain condescension and that journalists do not respond to these comments. An analysis of reader comments on the Guardian's online content found a similar result, with articles written by women journalists receiving a higher proportion of hateful and condescending comments (Gardiner, 2018). In another study, women journalists received offensive comments mocking their gender, profession and personal lives (Barão da Silva, et al., 2023). It is argued that online harassment has increased with the emergence of social media networks such as Twitter (Hackworth, 2018, p. 52).

Hegemonic

Although women journalists seem to have overcome the difficulties of finding employment in traditional mass media and being accepted in the profession in social media networks, they are unable to prevent hegemonic discourses against them. Social and cultural norms coalesce around hegemonic discourses against women in these networks. In patriarchal societies like Turkey, "politics" is considered a private sphere of masculinity (North, 2016c; Meeks, 2013; Stahel & Schoen, 2020). As a result, sexism is accepted as 'normal' and sexist behavior and comments persist in the digital world (Koirala, 2020, p. 51). As a matter of fact, only 100 out of 577 members of parliament in Turkey are women. In Turkey, women journalists are usually present on screen in roles such as moderators. The number of women journalists in socially hegemonic fields such as politics and sports is quite low. Women working in these fields are also exposed to hegemonic discourses on social media networks such as Twitter, just like in traditional mass media (Rao & Rodny-Gumede, 2020).

Example 1. You don't understand politics. Better go home and cook

Example 2. The man humiliated you on TV and you are talking. Quit this job.

Example 3. You're still talking nonsense. Also, Twitter should be banned for women.

As seen in the examples above, hegemonic discourses produced on Twitter consist of social and cultural discourses that emphasize women's domestic norms. Among such expressions, the statements that women's place is at home and that they should take care of their children come to the forefront. In male-dominated news media, online harassment against women journalists because of their gender appears to be widespread. Gender-based online hate is rooted in "old" misogynistic discourses that insist that women are inferior to men (Jane, 2014). Therefore, as in many parts of the world, women journalists in Turkey are subjected to gender-related threats, harassment and intimidation (Clark & Grech, 2017). In addition, hegemonic discourses also contain expressions that exclude women from the political sphere.

Threat

It has been determined that threatening expressions are frequently used against women journalists in discourses produced on Twitter (Sarikakis, et al., 2021). These contents are multidimensional. Women political journalists

are threatened because of their political views or the news they report, and expressions are used that there will be punishment for their views.

Example 1. You will be tried. Almost there

Example 2. You think you won't be held accountable for this? You'll go to jail like the others.

Example 3. I hate you. Aren't you ashamed of what you wrote? I know exactly what I'll do if I ever see you.

In the comments in this category, users threatened women political journalists with legal processes such as “imprisonment” and “trial” as well as “physical” threats. Therefore, these threatening posts pose a serious threat to women journalists' participation in social media networks. It was observed that accounts such as the “Police Department” and “Ministry of Justice” were also tagged in the threatening comments on tweets in which women political journalists expressed their statements. At the same time, officials of the Radio and Television Supreme Council were also tagged in the comments and threats were made to remove the programs. Women journalists expect support from their colleagues, organizations and the public to cope with their experiences (Tandoc, et al., 2023, p. 1198).

CONCLUSION

The present study examined online harassment against women political journalists on Twitter in Turkey. In patriarchal societies like Turkey, politics is recognized as a masculine domain (Meeks, 2013; Hopton & Langer, 2022). Factors such as the fact that there has been only one woman prime minister in the 100-year history of the modern Republic of Turkey and the very low rate of women parliamentarians show that women are excluded from politics. The majority of women in journalism in Turkey work as moderators. The number of women working as political journalists is quite low. Although there are very few women political journalists in Turkey, a certain number of women journalists are doing important work in this field (North, 2016).

Social media networks such as Twitter have led women journalists to gain visibility by going beyond traditional norms. In fact, the seven journalists analyzed in this study were followed by a total of 8.798.221 users on Twitter. This rather high rate shows that women journalists actively use Twitter and this is reflected in the number of followers (Bilgin, 2022). This rate also shows that women journalists use Twitter as an effective tool for “visibility” (Parmelee, 2013; Chen, et al., 2020).

Ahead of the presidential and parliamentary elections to be held on May 14, 2023, politics in Turkey is very active. This mobility is also reflected in the discourse of women journalists on Twitter. The 7 women political journalists analyzed in the study shared a total of 1.484 tweets in 1 month. This shows that women journalists frequently share their views on Twitter. In addition, a total of 172.915 comments were made on these posts shared by the journalists. The majority (60.97%) of the comments on women journalists consisted of negative discourse. The most common negative discourse against women journalists was profanity (n=31.489). Women journalists are subjected to profanity on Twitter because of the comments they make on political issues, news they share or comments they make in other forms of mass media (Usher, et al., 2018; Hussain, et al., 2022). The abusive comments are aimed directly at the personalities of women journalists and indirectly at their families (RQ1). While some women journalists who are harassed tolerate it by being “strong like a man”, many women journalists prefer to stay away from social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook to avoid harassment (Koirala, 2020).

One of the most important results of this study is that women political journalists are subjected to “threats” due to their statements shared on Twitter (Sarikakis, et al., 2021). A significant portion of the comments (n=23.759) consisted of threatening statements. Contrary to other studies, the majority of threatening messages here are focused on “prosecution” and “imprisonment”. Users threaten people whose political views they dislike with prosecution and imprisonment (Barão da Silva, et al., 2023). Furthermore, it was found that women journalists were also subjected to physically threatening comments (RQ2).

In addition to analyzing the comments, observations were also made in the study. During the observation of the comments made by users on Twitter, it was determined that women journalists responded to some of the positive comments they received and engaged in dialog with other journalists or close friends (Usher, et al., 2018). On the other hand, women journalists preferred not to respond to negative comments and restricted their comments section (Chen, et al., 2020). Journalists restrict the tweets that they know will get a reaction and users the phrase “Those who follow or mention @xxxxx can reply” are displayed to users (RQ3). This can be considered as a strategy developed by women journalists to protect themselves from negative comments (Koirala, 2020). Consequently, women journalists are forced to restrict their online activities or be more careful when posting/publishing on social media networks. Sometimes, due to the backlash, women journalists choose to delete

their articles. On the other hand, it was also found that women journalists share threatening messages against them and seek help from the authorities (Sarikakis, et al., 2021).

Profane, mocking, threatening and hegemonic discourses against women political journalists include expressions that involve the exclusion of women from politics. Especially in hegemonic comments, there are expressions that women do not belong to the field of politics and that they should take care of their “home”, “children”, “husband” and “cook”. Users who exclude women journalists with such expressions can also lead to the disconnection of women from the field of politics (Rao, & Rodny-Gumede, 2020; Park, 2013) (RQ4). In addition to existing barriers, personal attacks through online comments, threatening emails and social media posts also pose a serious threat to women journalists' participation. Therefore, online harassment due to such statements shows that there is a trend that online harassment is increasingly affecting women on a professional and emotional level (Koirala, 2020).

The present study found that in the run-up to the presidential and parliamentary elections in Turkey, there were online harassing comments against women political journalists on Twitter due to the increased tension in politics. It was found that women political journalists, who are followed by millions of people on Twitter, were subjected to more negative comments than positive ones. Thus, it was found that discrimination and abuse against women journalists on Twitter is widespread. In terms of its limitations, this study analyzed tweets shared by 7 women policy journalists on Twitter over a period of 1 month. In this respect, the study should be evaluated within its own limitations. In future studies, online discourse towards women political journalists in other countries can be compared with those in Turkey. Additionally, comments on the videos of women political journalists on YouTube can be analyzed.

REFERENCES

- Adams, C. (2018). ‘They go for the gender first’: The nature and effect of sexist abuse of female technology journalists. *Journalism Practice*, 12(7), 850-869. DOI:<https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2017.1350115>
- Aktaş Üstün, N., & Ekin, M. (2021). Görsel spor medyasında çalışan kadınların uğradıkları siber zorbalık hakkında görüşleri. *Spor veRekreasyonAraştırmalarıDergisi*, 3(Özel Sayı 1), 15-23. Doi: 10.52272/srad.972355
- Alp, H. (2017). Ahmet Hakan’ın Tarafsız Bölge Programı üzerinden medyada kadın temsili sorunu. *Karadeniz Teknik Üniversitesi İletişim Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 7(1), 65-78.
- Alp, H., & Güzel, M. (2022). Toplumsal rıza üretimi sürecinde televizyon tartışma programlarının etkisi ve “Fast Thinker” kavramı. *Aksaray İletişim Dergisi Journal Of Aksaray Communicaion*, 4(2), 88-106.
- Alpay, S., & Orta, L. (2022). Spor medyasında kadının cinsiyetçilik bağlamında incelenmesi. *İnönü Üniversitesi Beden Eğitimi ve Spor Bilimleri Dergisi*, 9(2), 1-14.
- Association for Development Migration and Social Policies (DEMIS), Rapor IV (2018).https://bianet.org/system/uploads/1/files/attachments/000/002/358/original/Prime_time_tart%C4%B1%C5%9Fma_programlar%C4%B1nda_kad%C4%B1nlar.pdf?1544168764. Erişim Tarihi: 03.05.2023. 1-16.
- Ayhan, B., & Demir, Y. (2022). Systematic sexism: Women’s sports news in a circle of gatekeepers and users on Twitter. *Communication & Sport*, 1-23.
- Barão da Silva, G., Sbaraini Fontes, G., & Marques, F. P. J. (2023). Risks and resilience in the case of Brazilian female journalists: How women perceive violence against media professionals and cope with its effects. *Journalism Studies*, 24(7), 956-975.
- Baykan, B. G., Kenan, İ. D., & Malak, C. (Ocak 2021). TV tartışmalarında cinsiyetler arası uçurum. https://bianet.org/system/uploads/1/files/attachments/000/003/355/original/TV_Tart%C4%B1s%CC%A7malar%C4%B1nda_Cinsiyetler_Aras%C4%B1_Uc%CC%A7urum_.pdf?1617792570. Accessed: 03.05.2023. 1-8.

- Bilgin, B. C. (2022, June 17). Gazeteciler Twitter’da medya kuruluşlarından 59 kat daha fazla etkileşim alıyor. Retrieved January 5, 2023, from Journo: <https://journo.com.tr/twitter-gazeteciler-medya-etkilesim>
- Blanco-Herrero, D., Splendore, S., & Alonso, M. O. (2023). Southern European journalists’ perceptions of discursive menaces in the Age of (online) delegitimization. *Politics and Governance, 11*(2), 1-11. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v11i2.6397>
- Bossio, D., and Holton, A. E. (2021). Burning out and turning off: Journalists’ disconnection strategies on social media. *Journalism, 22*(10), 2475-2492. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884919872076>
- Carlson, C. R., and Witt, H. (2020). Online harassment of US women journalists and its impact on press freedom. First Monday (2020).
- Celuch, M., Latikka, R., Oksa, R., & Oksanen, A. (2023). Online harassment and hate among media professionals: Reactions to one’s own and others’ victimization. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*.
- Chadha, K., Steiner, L., & Guha, P. (2017). Indian women journalists' responses to sexism and sexual harassment. *International Communication Research Journal, 52*(1), 1-29.
- Chen, G. M., Pain, P., Chen, V. Y., Mekelburg, M., Springer, N., & Troger, F. (2020). ‘You really have to have a thick skin’: A cross-cultural perspective on how online harassment influences female journalists. *Journalism, 21*(7), 877-895. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884918768500>
- Chen, G. M., Pain, P., & Zhang, J. (2018). #NastyWomen: Reclaiming the Twitterverse from misogyny. In J. R. Vickery & T. Everbach (Eds.), *Mediating misogyny: Gender, technology and harassment* (pp. 371–388). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Clark, M & Grech, A. (2017). Journalists under pressure: Unwarranted Interference, fear, and self-censorship in Europe. Council of Europe: <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168070ad5d>
- Cohen, N. S. (2019). At work in the digital newsroom. *Digital Journalism, 7*(5), 571–591. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2017.1419821>
- Cole, K. K. (2015). “It’s like she’s eager to be verbally abused”: Twitter, trolls, and (En) gendering disciplinary rhetoric. *Feminist Media Studies, 15*(2), 356-358.
- Demir, Y., & Ayhan, B. (2022). Being a female sports journalist on Twitter: Online harassment, sexualization, and hegemony. *International Journal of Sport Communication, 15*(3), 207-217.
- Demirdağ, D. (5 Ocak 2019). Kadın gazetecilere online taciz: Bizim utanç duvarımız. <https://journo.com.tr/kadin-gazetecilere-online-taciz>. Accessed: 03.05.2023.
- Deuze, M. (2008). The changing context of news work: Liquid journalism and monitorial citizenship. *International Journal of Communication, 2*(5), 848–865.
- Dinç, E. S. (2019). Türk spor medyasında kadın gazetecilere yönelik cinsiyet ayrımcılığı. *Spor Bilimleri Araştırmaları Dergisi, 4*(1), 97-112. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25307/jssr.529861>
- Edström, M. (2016). The trolls disappear in the light: Swedish experience of sexualized hate speech in the aftermath of Behring Breivik. *International Journal for Crime, Justice, and Social Democracy, 5*(2), 96–106.

- Ertuna, C. (2018). Türkiye’de televizyonlarda kanaat üretimi: haber kanallarındaki tartışma programları ve kanaat teknisyenleri. *Galatasaray Üniversitesi İletişim Dergisi*, (29), 57-81. DOI: 10.16878/gsuilet.496644
- Everbach, T., & Vickery, J. R. (2018). *Mediating misogyny: Gender, technology, and harassment*. Springer.
- Ferrier, M., & Garud-Patkar, N. (2018). “Troll Busters: Fighting Online Harassment of Women Journalists.” In J. R. Vickery & T. Everbach, (Eds.), *Mediating Misogyny: Gender, Technology, and Harassment*, (pp. 311-332). Springer International Publishing.
- Finneman, T, Thomas, R. J., & Jenkins, J. (2019). I always watched eyewitness news just to see your beautiful smile: Ethical implications of U.S. women TV anchors’ personal branding on social media. *Journal of Media Ethics*, 34(3), 146-159. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23736992.2019.1638260>
- Finneman, T., & Jenkins, J. (2018). Sexism on the set: Gendered expectations of TV broadcasters in a social media world. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 62(3), 479-494. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2018.1484292>
- Gardiner, B. (2018). “It’s a terrible way to go to work”: What 70 million readers’ comments on the Guardian revealed about hostility to women and minorities online. *Feminist Media Studies*, 18(4), 592-608. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2018.1447334>
- Ging, D., & Siapera, E. (2018). Special issue on online misogyny. *Feminist Media Studies*, 18(4), 515-524. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2018.1447345>
- Gökırmaklı, I. (26 Kasım 2019). Kadın gazeteciler dijital şiddeti anlattı: Şaşırmıyoruz ama mücadeleye devam!. <https://journocom.tr/kadin-dijital-siddet>. Accessed: 03.05.2023.
- Hackworth, L. (2018). “Limitations of “just gender”: The need for an intersectional reframing of online harassment discourse and research.” In J. R. Vickery & T. Everbach (Eds.), *Mediating Misogyny: Gender, Technology, and Harassment*, (pp. 51-70). Springer International Publishing.
- Holton, A. E., Bélair-Gagnon, V., Bossio, D., & Molyneux, L. (2021). “Not their fault, but their problem”: Organizational responses to the online harassment of journalists. *Journalism Practice*, 17(4), 859-874. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2021.1946417>
- Hopton, K., & Langer, S. (2022). “Kick the XX out of your life”: An analysis of the manosphere’s discursive constructions of gender on Twitter. *Feminism & Psychology*, 32(1), 3-22. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/09593535211033461>
- <https://rm.coe.int/final-version-annual-report-2021-en-wanted-real-action-for-media-freed/1680a2440e>. Accessed: 03.05. 2023.
- Hussain, S., Bostan, H., & Qaisarani, I. (2022). Trolling of female journalists on Twitter in Pakistan: an analysis. *Media International Australia*, 1329878X221145977.
- Jane, E. A. (2014). “You’re an ugly, whorish, slut.” *Feminist Media Studies*, 14, 531–546. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2012.741073>
- Kantola, A., & Harju, A. A. (2023). Tackling the emotional toll together: How journalists address harassment with connective practices. *Journalism*, 24(3), 494–512. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849211055293>
- Karlsson, M., & Sjøvaag, H. (2016). Content analysis and online news: Epistemologies of analysing the ephemeral Web. *Digital Journalism*, 4(1), 177-192. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2015.1096619>

- Karppi, T. (2011). "Digital Suicide and the Biopolitics of Leaving Facebook." *Transformations* (14443775), no. 20.
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&profile=ehost&scope=site&authtype=crawler&jrnl=14443775&asa=Y&AN=79363517&h=YEp6o9V5soNWZ%2F%2BgPOht1ETKBcvmSsy8zoOVOnhYwNFh50bK7roUJAlnTHqN2FGnw15mSI9j7MhzVsz1AIg%2BEA%3D%3D&crl=c>.
- Kiraz-Demir, S. (2022). Siber feminizm çerçevesinde yeni medyada kadın gazeteciler üzerine bir araştırma. *Kadın/Woman 2000*, 23(1), 133-154.
- Koirala, S. (2020). Female journalists' experience of online harassment: A case study of Nepal. *Media and Communication*, 8(1), 47-56. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v8i1.2541>
- Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. Sage Publications.
- Kundu, P., & Bhuiyan, M. M. H. (2021). "Online Harassment of Female Journalists in Bangladesh: Forms, Reactions, and Consequences." In *Handbook of Research on Discrimination, Gender Disparity, and Safety Risks in Journalism*, 143-166. IGI Global.
- Lee, N. Y., & Park, A. (2023). How online harassment affects Korean journalists? The effects of online harassment on the journalists' psychological problems and their intention to leave the profession. *Journalism*, 14648849231166511.
- Lewis, S. C., Zamith, R., & Coddington, M. (2020). Online Harassment and Its Implications for the Journalist–Audience Relationship. *Digital Journalism*, 8(8), 1047-1067.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2020.1811743>
- Löfgren Nilsson, M., & Örnebring, H. (2016). Journalism under threat: Intimidation and harassment of Swedish journalists. *Journalism Practice*, 10(7), 880–890. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2016.1164614>
- Lu, S., & Luqiu, L. R. (2023). When will one help? Understanding audience intervention in online harassment of women journalists. *Journalism Practice*, 1-19.
- Marshak, E. (2017). Online harassment: A legislative solution. *Harvard Journal on Legislation*, 54, 501-531.
- Mathisen, B. R. (2023). Sourcing practice in local media: Diversity and media shadows. *Journalism Practice*, 17(4), 647-663. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2021.1942147>
- Meeks, L. (2013). He wrote, she wrote: Journalist gender, political office, and campaign news. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 90(1), 58-74. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699012468695>
- Meny, E. (2017, December 6). Local TV news has a harassment problem – From people who watch the news. Vox. Available at: <https://www.vox.com/first-person/2017/12/6/16742228/local-tv-news-sexual-harassment>. Accessed: 20.04.2023.
- Miller, K. C., & Lewis, S. C. (2022). Journalists, harassment, and emotional labor: The case of women in on-air roles at US local television stations. *Journalism*, 23(1), 79-97. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884919899016>
- Molyneux, L. (2019). A personalized self-image: Gender and branding practices among journalists. *Social media + society*, 5(3), 2056305119872950. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305119872950>
- Molyneux, L., Holton, A., & Lewis, S. C. (2018). How Journalists Engage in Branding on Twitter: Individual, Organizational, and Institutional Levels. *Information, Communication and Society*, 21(10), 1386–1401.

- Ndlovu, M., & Khupe, N. A. (2023). Online Harassment of journalists in Zimbabwe: Experiences, Coping Strategies and Implications. In: Matsilele, T., Mpofu, S., Moyo, D. (eds) *New Journalism Ecologies in East and Southern Africa. Palgrave Studies in Journalism and the Global South*, (pp. 95-111). Palgrave Macmillan,
- North, L. (2016c). The Gender of “soft” and “hard” news: Female journalists' views on gendered story allocations. *Journalism Studies*, 17(3), 356-373. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2014.987551>
- North, L. (2016a). Damaging and daunting: Female journalists' experiences of sexual harassment in the newsroom. *Feminist Media Studies*, 16(3), 495-510. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2015.1105275>
- North, L. (2016b). Still a ‘Blokes Club’: The Motherhood Dilemma in Journalism. *Journalism: Theory, Practice & Criticism*, 17(3): 315-330. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884914560306>
- Ojanen, T. T., Boonmongkon, P., Samakkeekarom, R., Samoh, N., Cholratana, M., & Guadamuz, T. E. (2015). Connections between online harassment and offline violence among youth in Central Thailand. *Child abuse & neglect*, 44(2015), 159–169. DOI: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2015.04.001
- Pain, P., & Chen, V. (2019). This reporter is so ugly, how can she appear on TV? *Journalism Practice*, 13(2), 140–158. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2017.1423236>
- Park, C. S. (2013). Does Twitter motivate involvement in politics? Tweeting, opinion leadership, and political engagement. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(4), 1641-1648. DOI: 10.1016/j.chb.2013.01.044
- Parmelee, J. H. (2013). Political journalists and Twitter: Influences on norms and practices. *Journal of Media Practice*, 14(4), 291-305.
- Posetti, J., Aboulez, N., Bontheva, K., Harrison, J., & Waisbord, S. (2020). Online Violence Against Women Journalists: A Global Snapshot of Incidence and Impacts. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000375136>.
- Posetti, J., & Storm, H. (2018). Violence against women journalists-online and offline. *Setting the Gender Agenda for Communication Policy: New Proposals from the Global Alliance on Media and Gender*, 75-86.
- Rao, S., & Rodny-Gumede, Y. (2020). Gazing past the glass ceiling: Indian and South African female journalists' perceptions of their role and power in the newsroom. *Global Media and Communication*, 16(1), 57-74.
- Ross, K., Boyle, K., Carter, C. and Ging, D. (2018). Women, men and news. *Journalism Studies*, 19(6), 824-845, DOI: 10.1080/1461670X.2016.1222884.
- Sarikakis, K., Kassa, B. E., Fenz, N., Goldschmitt, S., Kasser, J., & Nowotarski, L. (2021). “My haters and I”: personal and political responses to hate speech against female journalists in Austria. *Feminist Media Studies*, 1-16.
- Söderberg, L., & Schumacher, A. (2023). The strategies and consequences for harassment: The effect on women journalists' work in Costa Rica. Retrieved from <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:lnu:diva-119038></div>. Erişim Tarihi: 15.04. 2023. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1733931/FULLTEXT01.pdf>.
- Stahel, L., & Schoen, C. (2020). Female journalists under attack? Explaining gender differences in reactions to audiences' attacks. *New Media & Society*, 22(10), 1849-1867.
- Tandoc, E. C., Sagun, K. K., & Alvarez, K. P. (2023). The digitization of harassment: Women journalists' experiences with online harassment in the Philippines. *Journalism Practice*, 17(6), 1198-1213.

- Tekvar, O. S. (2016). KadınGazeteciOlmak: Uçan Haber “Kadınve Medya” Özel Sayısının İncelenmesi. “Being a Woman Journalist: Analyzing Uçan Haber “Woman and Media” Special Issue”. *KarabükÜniversitesiSosyalBilimlerEnstitüsüDergisi*, 6(2), 435-445.
- Usher, N., Holcomb, J., & Littman, J. (2018). Twitter makes it worse: Political journalists, gendered echo chambers, and the amplification of gender bias. *The international journal of press/politics*, 23(3), 324-344.
- Vitis, L., & Gilmour, F. (2017). Dick pics on blast: A woman’s resistance to online sexual harassment using humour, art and Instagram. *Crime, Media, Culture*, 13(3), 335-355.
- White, M. D., & Marsh, E. E. (2006). Content analysis: A flexible methodology. *Library Trends*, 55(1), 22-45.
- Williams, L. M., Burnap, P., Javed, A., Liu, H., & Ozalp, S. (2020). Hate in the machine: Anti-Black and anti-Muslim social media posts as predictors of offline racially and religiously aggravated crime. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 60(1), 93–117.
- Yılmaz, E. (2020). Kadın foto muhabirler: ‘Sahada omuz atma, üste çıkma, sözlü taciz ve asılma ile karşılaşılıyor’. <https://journos.com.tr/8-mart-kadin-fotomuhabirler>. Accessed: 03.05.2023.
- Yüncüler, Z. (5 Mart 2018). Kadın gazeteciler anlatıyor: Yöneticim whatsapp’tan ‘bacakların güzel’ yazdı. <https://journos.com.tr/kadin-gazeteciler-tgs-8-mart-raporu>. Accessed: 03.05.2023.