

The Role of Facebook and Twitter in Social Movements: A Study on the July 15 Coup Attempt in Turkey

Toplumsal Hareketlerde Facebook ve Twitter'ın Rolü: Türkiye'de 15 Temmuz Darbe
Girişimi Üzerine Bir Çalışma

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Abstract

There is currently a considerable degree of discussion focusing on the relationship between social movements and digital platforms. This paper investigates the role played by several social media platforms (Twitter and Facebook) in the coup attempt in Turkey on July 15th, 2016. It includes an analysis of web content to establish ways to understand the usage of social and digital media by Turkish citizens on the July 15 coup. The research uses qualitative content analysis, including: (1) an examination of tweets and trending hashtags on Twitter; and (2) an examination of Facebook pages and groups, including photographs, videos and comments. This study indicates that Twitter and Facebook played a vital role in the resistance of citizens against the coup attempt, which was organised by the Gulenist terrorist organisation, through the provision of effective communication between activists, along with their effective mobilisation and the process of establishing a common identity. The study also demonstrates how photographs and videos shared on social websites became positive motivators both during and following the 15th of July coup attempt.

Keywords: Social Movements, Social Media, Coup Attempt, Turkey, Resistance and Mobilisation

Öz

Günümüzde sosyal hareketler ve dijital platformlar arasındaki ilişkiye odaklanan önemli bir tartışma vardır. Bu çalışmada, 15 Temmuz 2016'da Türkiye'de gerçekleşen darbe girişimindeki bazı sosyal medya platformlarının (Twitter ve Facebook) oynamış oldukları roller analiz edilmiştir. Bununla birlikte, 15 Temmuz darbe girişimi sırasında Türkiye Cumhuriyeti vatandaşlarının sosyal ve dijital medyayı nasıl kullandıklarını anlatan web analizi yer almaktadır. Bu araştırmada nitel içerik analizi kullanılmaktadır ve bu analizde: (1) Twitter'da yer alan tweetlerin ve trend hashtaglerin incelenmesi; (2) Facebook sayfalarının ve gruplarının fotoğraflar, videolar ve yorumlar dahil edilerek incelenmesi yer almaktadır. Bu çalışma,

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Facebook ve Twitter'ın eylem yapan darbe karşıtları arasında; etkin bir iletişimin sağlanması, etkili seferberlik ve ortak bir kimlik oluşturma süreci ile vatandaşların Fethullahçı Terör Örgütü tarafından organize edilen darbe girişimine direnişinde hayati bir rol oynadığını göstermektedir. Çalışma ayrıca, sosyal web sitelerinde paylaşılan fotoğrafların ve videoların, 15 Temmuz darbe girişimi sırasında ve sonrasında nasıl motive edici role sahip olduklarını gösteriyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Toplumsal Hareketler, Sosyal Medya, Darbe Girişimi, Türkiye, Direniş ve Harekete Geçirme.

Introduction

Following the Arab Spring Revolution in Tunisia and Egypt during the early 2010s, many newspapers identified the rise of a new phenomenon, i.e. the 'Twitter Revolution' or 'Facebook Revolution'. On February 25th, 2011, an article in the UK newspaper, The Guardian, Beaumont focused on the social media revolution in Tunisia and Egypt, highlighting how social media platforms (e.g. Twitter and Facebook) increased the speed of the Arab Spring by mobilising the revolutionaries, and delivering their message to the wider world. As Manuel Castells (2015) notes, "social movements throughout history, are the producers of new values and goals, around which the institutions of society are transformed to represent these values by creating new norms to organise social life" (p. 9). He also added that social movements are spread in a networked world by means of the Internet, including the phenomenon of information 'going viral', i.e. a rapid and widespread diffusion of ideas and images (Castells, 2015, p. 2).

The use of social media in Turkey increased rapidly during the Gezi Park Protests in 2013, including the use of social media, whose platforms were used to mobilise protestors and acquire information (Bozkurt, 2013). On the 15th of July 2016, Turkish citizens learned from President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of an attempted coup when he contacted a television station by means of the video chat application known as FaceTime, as well as tweeting to his ten million followers on Twitter. He used social media to call upon citizens to resist the attempted coup by taking to the streets and protecting the airports. For example, "I urge the Turkish people to take to the streets of our cities, and to convene at our public squares and our airports," he tweeted (see Figure 1). This was significant, in that such mass action required the use of the instant messaging service WhatsApp, along with some other internet platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Thus, social media platforms played a significant role in the failure of the Gulenist coup attempt.



Figure 1. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's tweet on the Gulenist Coup attempt.

Background

By 10 pm on the evening of July 15, rumours of unusual events taking place in army bases in Ankara and Istanbul were spreading rapidly, primarily through social media websites like Twitter, Facebook, Periscope and WhatsApp (Akin, 2017, p. 519). The circulation of videos and photographs of Gulenist soldiers blocking the Bosphorus Bridge in Istanbul (which connects Asia to Europe) led to many Turks turning to television channels to learn whether these were authentic. These channels confirmed this information, followed by the declaration by Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım of an ongoing revolt among the military, leading to concerns that a coup might have been in progress (Esen & Gumuscu, 2017).

By that midnight, TRT channels, the national public broadcaster was off air and broadcasting only a video officially announcing the military takeover of the government, along with a curfew (Akin, 2017, p. 519). Moreover, a number of television channels were attacked by the Gulenist coup plotters, including an invasion of the CNNTurk building in an attempt to stop television broadcasts, and an attack on Turksat (Turkish communication satellites) with a helicopter, leading to the death of two Turksat employees (Daily Sabah Centre for Policy Studies, 2016).

However, a number of other television channels, along with social networks, revealed that the coup was not complete, and the government party, the Justice and Development Party (AKP), appealed for citizens to ignore the TRT broadcast and defy the plotters (Akin, 2017, p. 519). As Karagöz and Kandemir (2016) states, following the TRT broadcast, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan addressed the Turkish public by means of the video chat application FaceTime, calling for citizens to go out into the streets and protest against the coup, stating: “there is no power higher than the power of people. Let them do what they will at public squares and airports. I will join the nation there” (“Erdogan: Milletimi meydanlara”, 2016). Furthermore, Akin (2017) asserted that this message demonstrated that Erdogan was alive and able to resist rumours of a military coup (p. 520). Erdogan’s communication team managed the distribution of Erdogan’s messages by means of two official Twitter accounts.

The government exploited various types of media, both traditional and digital, in particular a number of social networks during the first hours of the attempted coup (Akin, 2017, p. 520). Twitter was widely used by Turkish citizens during the coup attempt, with the most popular hashtags being #TurkeyCoup, #NoCoupInTurkey, #TurkeyCoupAttempt (Karagoz & Kandemir, 2016). The photographs and videos were the strongest motivators for the popular struggle against the coup attempt, while the most widely used applications consisted of social media websites, i.e. YouTube, Facebook and Periscope (Karagoz & Kandemir, 2016). It is also notable that the use of traditional media (i.e. newspapers, radio and television) lagged that of social media platforms. Unver and Alassad (2016) argues that due to the rise of digital media and new analytical tools, the attempted coup generated the most successful hybrid and religious-political mobilisations in Turkish history. Furthermore, they claimed that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan played a late role in motivating the Turkish population to defend him (p. 1). In addition, Cagaptay and Jeffrey (2016) asserts that the coup plan failed as a result of the forces supporting Erdogan being too powerful, and his ability to

communicate with, and mobilise, the public from different worldviews as a whole was vital. Thus, when TRT was taken over by the plotters, Erdogan was able to overcome this by using FaceTime to call on his supporters to take to the streets. Social media websites were alive with anti-coup information, while the mobilisation of many democracy supporters demonstrated the victory of the digital age over an analogue coup (Cagaptay & Jeffrey, 2016, p. 2).

Politics and the Internet

There has recently been an increased focus on the relationship between politics and the Internet. When it first appeared, the Internet was generally viewed as being of less importance than the press and television. When the use of Internet became widespread, several scholars have considered the Internet as a significant platform for political purposes.¹ Scholars tended to dismiss the impact of the Internet on politics, i.e. voter turnout, campaigning, and the formation of public opinion (Chadwick & Howard, 2009). The political role of the Internet was first recognised in 2002, as a result of an increase in blogging. Chadwick and Howard (2009) viewed this increase as leading to the invention of Web 2.0, leading to the use of the Internet for political purposes (p. 4). A number of scholars have analysed the reason the Internet proved a significant political platform. Moreover, a number of researchers have argued that new technologies have the potential to revolutionise society. In contemporary networked societies, a considerable amount of political, economic and cultural power has been transferred from the state to media technologies, with considerable implications for political, economic and cultural life (Howard, 2011, p. 73). The use of mobile phones and the Internet has now accelerated the dissemination of news and developed the availability of resources for investigative journalists and citizens (Howard, 2011, p. 86). This new space, free at the point of use, has implications for media politics. As Polat (2005) mentions, the Internet provides high volume of information for citizens thus potentially the use of Internet contributes to the increased political participation. There is a close link between the levels of information and such participation. Citizens who have information about the recent events on politics might potentially participate because they can notice the implications for their lives. The Internet can lead to more acts of political participation because the Internet makes communication easier, faster, cheaper and more convenient (Polat, 2005, p. 442).

On the other hand, the debate about the use of social media in social movements has shifted to some negative directions. A major negative side is the rise of fake news which is highlighting the erosion of long-standing institutional bulwarks caused by misinformation in the internet era. Lazer and his colleagues (2018) define fake news as fabricated information that is mimicking news media contents in form. The lack of editorial norms and processes to ensure the accuracy and reliability of news media is what results in fake news. Other information disorders such as disinformation and misinformation also overlap with “fake news” (p. 1194). Vosoughi, Roy and Aral (2018) find that false information on Twitter is often re-tweeted by more people compared to true information, and much faster, especially when it comes to political topics (p. 1150). Moreover, after the failed coup

1 See Bimber (1999), Hacker and van Dijk (2000) and Ellison, Lampe and Steinfield (1999).

attempt, the pictures of protesters that cut the throat of a soldier were spread via Twitter. After the coup attempt, it was understood that the picture did not reflect the reality because picture of the beheaded soldier taken 10 years ago in a car accident (Foca, 2016, p. 7). Besides, during the Gezi Park Protests in 2013, the Twitter users shared fake news on Twitter by adding some pictures. For instance, the picture of young boy crushed by a panzer was among the most reacted pictures on the social media platform. However, the essence of this incident is that this boy was injured by a boat engine in a foreign country and had nothing with the protests in the country (“Gezi parkı olaylarındaki”, 2013). It is understood that social media is not always used in a positive way, but there are also some negative aspects like fake news, misinformation and disinformation in social movements.

Networked Social Movements

The Internet has enabled networked social movements to spread rapidly. Castells (2015) argued that such movements have travelled from South to North, to both Iceland and Tunisia, prompted a number of issues, including poverty and a lack of democracy. These movements commenced in Arab countries, but also emerged in response to the economic depression in the United States and Europe (particularly in Greece, Spain, Italy, Portugal and the UK), whose governments have supported financial elites at the expense of citizens. He maintains that this was also the largest grassroots mobilisation in Israel history. Castells also claims that the availability of limitless networks in the information age empowers social change, empowering citizens with new ways of sharing fears, hopes, dreams and suffering (Castells, 2009, p. 431). A number of scholars have focussed on the importance of Facebook and Twitter for the creativity and coordination of social movements. Some scholars view ‘Web 2.0’ and social media sites as offering new and creative political democratic engagement, resulting in individual autonomy alongside mass collaboration (Castells, 2009; Erkul & Kes-Erkul, 2009; Ellison, Lampe & Steinfield, 2009). Bennett and Segerberg (2012) highlights that digital media have been used to exchange messages in sustained and large-scale protests (i.e. the Arab Spring, Occupy Movement and the Los Indignados movement in the Spain), and that while some of these movements are informal, others contain well-structured advocacy organisations, through hybrid connections with other organisations. Thus, the use of technologies can become a form of personalised public engagement (p. 739). Howard and Parks (2012), argues that digital media played a key role in protests in North Africa and the Middle East, commencing with political uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, then spreading to other regions, including Yemen, Syria and Libya (p. 360). Gerbaudo (2018) focuses on the role of social media in popular movements in 2011, establishing its importance in the Egyptian Uprising and the Occupy movement. For him, social media platforms now assist with the mobilisation of contemporary movements (p. 4). Gerbaudo and Trere (2015) asserts that the slogan of the Occupy Movement of ‘We are the 99%’ has been adopted by a considerable number of Internet users, while the image of the woman in a red dress in Gezi Park became a riot icon in Istanbul (p. 2). These examples demonstrate that social movements can define citizens’ collective sense of who they are through social media activism, i.e. social networks such as Twitter and Facebook.

Networked Social Movements in Turkey

In Turkey, the first popular movement coordinated by means of social network sites was the ‘Do not touch my Internet’ movement in 2011, which opposed the censorship of, and ban on, the Internet by the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (BTK) (Ozyasar & Aydin, 2014, p. 93). This movement objected to a proposed Internet filter, with thousands of Internet users organising online groups on Twitter and Facebook, alongside street protests. Simultaneous demonstrations were organised in twenty-eight provinces in Turkey, followed by Austria, Germany and the Netherlands. The most successful hashtag was ‘#22agustos’, which referred to the date the new filter was due to be implemented (Ozyasar & Aydin, 2014, p. 95). Individuals of all age groups joined in the movement, which was particularly popular amongst those aged fifteen to thirty-five, i.e. those who made the most frequent use of the Internet. Information was shared on social media websites, including the participants’ feelings, experiences and images. The “Do not Touch my Internet” movement was significant in that it gained global attention as a result of the Internet itself. Moreover, this protest was resumed on January 18, 2014, again organised by means of social media platforms. The movement was coordinated in a number of different cities, in order to oppose Internet censorship in Turkey, using the hashtag ‘#18Ocak18DeSokaklara’ (Baban & Guzel, 2015, pp.17-18).

Gezi Park Protests

The series of protest known as “the Gezi Park Protests”, “the June Uprising”, “Gezi Events” or shortly “Gezi”, originated on 31st May 2013, when a small group of environmentalists led a local protest to fight against the demolition of the public park and the felling of numerous trees in Taksim, central Istanbul. This movement spread rapidly, with hundreds of citizens taking to the streets in protest (Banko & Babaoglan, 2013). Furthermore, the following two weeks led to a rapid increase in the number of individuals attending demonstrations. Such spontaneous collective and persistent protests were unprecedented in the history of modern Turkey. During the Gezi Park movement, Twitter became a broadly accepted source of news by the Turkish public. As Tunc (2014) maintains, the protesters actively used social media platforms to gather and disseminate information, with the Gezi park volunteers being alerted through their laptops, smartphones and 3G modems. A popular slogan supporting civic journalism stated: “There is no media, we are all journalists” (p. 14). Citizen-generated information through these social media platforms played a significant role in mobilising and raising awareness in the Gezi Park Protests, as well as in wider protests. Gerbaudo (2017) further points out that social media platforms placed a considerable amount of emphasis on digital activities through the use of visual materials, i.e. Internet memes, livestreams of protest events, and propaganda videos on YouTube. The “Lady in Red” meme (an image of a woman in a red dress being assaulted by police) became a symbol of the Gezi Park movement. Based on the literature regarding mobilization, coordination, the effects of Internet specifically social media on social movements, and network social movements, this study seek answer to the question, “What is the role of social media in 15th of July coup attempt in Turkey?”

Methodology

In order to answer the research question of this current study, a web content analysis was undertaken. Zhang and Wildemuth (2016) claims that a content analysis is the most widely used analytical tool and has been effectively employed in a diversity of research applications. The research analysis commenced with the researcher examining, and then selecting, the most relevant hashtags, keywords and key social media users through the information provided by the SETA report (Miş, Gülen, Coşkun, Duran & Ayyaz, 2016). These hashtags and keywords generally referred to significant events during the attempted coup. Hashtags play a significant role for Twitter users, allowing them to more easily detect and track important topics.

The research process consisted of studying tweets (including the pictures and videos attached to tweets) by Twitter users, tweeted during each event that occurred throughout the July 15 Coup attempt. The event's timelines were analysed and then start, and end times noted. The first fifty tweets from the starting events time, and the last fifty tweets before the end of the events hours were selected using keywords and hashtags and analysed to attain a better understanding of the context and purpose of using Twitter. In order to achieve this, Twitter advanced search function was used, and keywords typed in relating to specific selected times. For example, the bridges were closed by the Gulenist coup plotters at 10 p.m. and re-opened 8 a.m., and so tweets related to closure of bridges event were analysed in order; there were 50 tweets between 10 p.m. and 8 p.m. While conducting the research, valid tweets related to answering the research question were noted. Facebook was also selected for analysis, due to their popularity and the potential for easy access to posts, groups and pages on Facebook. Qualitative content analysis was undertaken on Facebook groups by a manual search of keywords.

The study examined a purposive sample of two Facebook pages in particular which was created in support of the coup attempt. In order to identify the pages, a Facebook search was conducted, by first typing in keywords and then verifying the page. The Facebook page selection phase chose pages created after the attempted coup, and the most followed Facebook page with the highest number of likes focused on the events of the July 15. The research stage involved studying number of shares (including pictures, videos, and comments) by Facebook users, of posts on the selected page after the 15 July Coup attempt. The first fifty shares after the coup attempt and the most recent fifty shares in between January and August 2017 were identified as a basis with which to analyse the groups to better understand the context and purpose of the page.

Findings

In this section, the findings from the study will be reported by social media platforms.

Twitter Findings

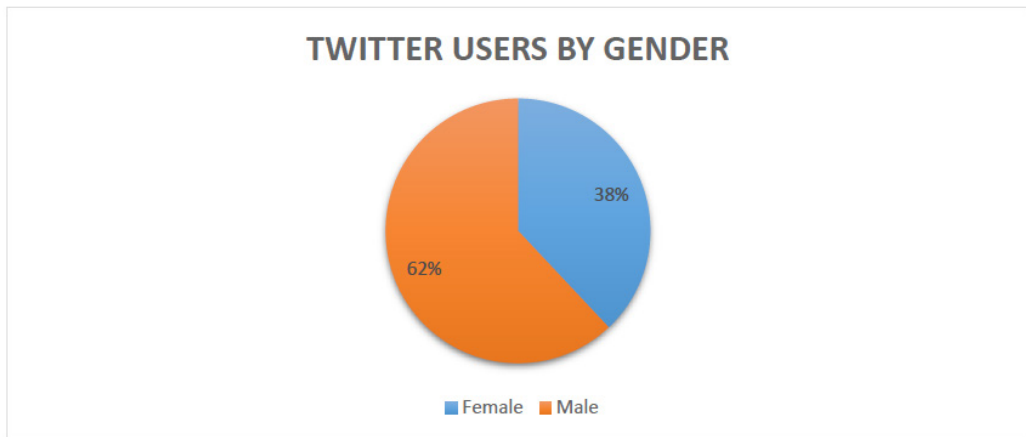


Figure 2. The proportion of twitter users by gender.

From July 15 to July 17, approximately thirty-five million tweets were sent, which were accessed by approximately fifteen billion individuals. According to Figure 2, the gender of twitter users represented 62% female participation and 38% male.

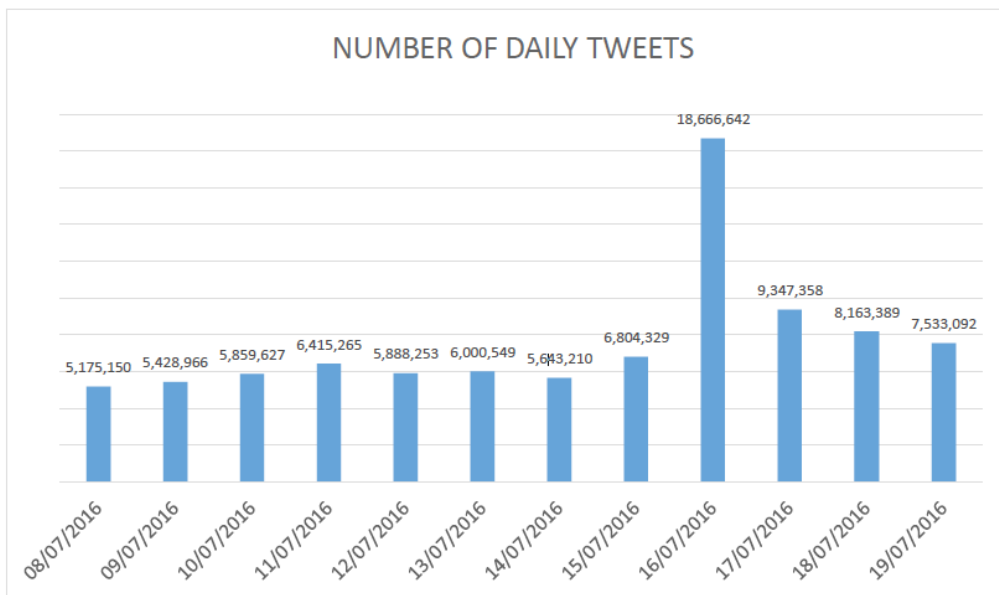


Figure 3. The number of daily tweets between July 8 and July 16, 2016 (Miş, Gülener, Coşkun, Duran & Ayvaz, 2016).

Social media platforms increased in importance when they were subsequently used by both citizens and several statesmen in order to resist the attempted coup. Figure 3 shows that prior to the attempted coup, the daily average number of daily tweets was approximately 5,643,210, which increased to 6,804,329 on the 15th of July. This was then followed by a rapid increase in the number of tweets, which rose to approximately 18,666,642 on the 16th of July. In addition, there were approximately 9,347,358 tweets on the 17th of July, with the number then returning to the previous average of daily tweets during the following few days. After 10:00 pm on the night of the 15th of July, the number of tweets rapidly increased reaching a height of approximately about 223% on the 16th July.



Figure 4. The official Twitter account of the presidency’s tweets on the 15th of July.

The highest level of tweets appeared following President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s appearance on CNN Turk TV via FaceTime. The president’s FaceTime meeting was also the subject of the most tweets relating to the attempted coup. In addition, the most interactive tweet on the 15th of July, was made from the official Twitter account of the presidency (2016), stating: “No matter what stage this uprising is, we must continue to take care of the streets this evening. Because there can be a new activity at any moment.” (Figure 4). Following President Erdoğan’s call to action, many non-governmental organisations used social media platforms to urge citizens to resist the coup, i.e., the largest mobile networks provider, Turkcell (2016), shared a message on Twitter to support the government and urge resistance to the attempted coup (see Figure 5).

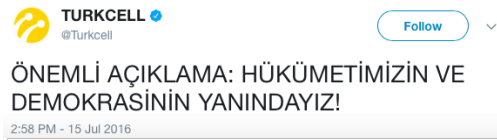


Figure 5. A sample tweet from Turkcell (2016).

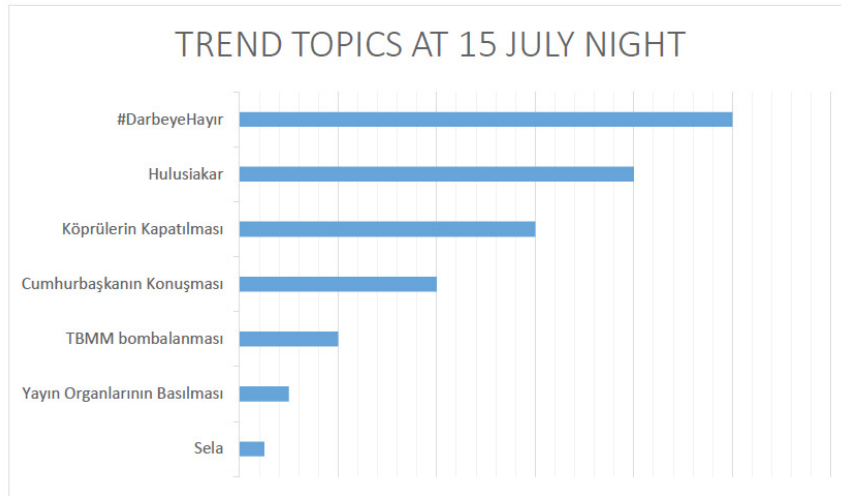


Figure 6. Trend topics at 15 July night.

The events marking the night of the coup attempt were the subjects most frequently discussed on Twitter (Figure 6). Turks were mobilised to protest using the following hashtags, as well as tweeting about them.

- #DarbeyeHayır (NoCoup): This was the first hashtag used following the closure of the bridges. At the same time, the Gulenist coup plotters closed Ataturk Airport, with individuals learning of this and becoming mobilised through the hashtag #AtaturkHavalimani (Ataturk Airport).
- Koprulerin kapatilmasi' (closure of bridges): this referred to the circulation of tweets, videos and photographs of Gulenist soldiers blocking the Bosphorus Bridge in Istanbul, which forms the connection between Asia and Europe.
- 'Cumhurbaskan'in konusmasi' (President's speech): this referred to the address to the Turkish public by President Erdogan by means of FaceTime, including a call to citizens to go onto the streets and protest against the coup plotters.
- 'TBMM'nin bombalanmasi' (The bombing of Grand National Assembly of Turkey): this referred to the bombing of the Turkish parliament by the military during the attempted coup.
- 'Yayin organlarinin basilmasi' (raid on the media): this referred to the raids on CNN Turk and TRT, with Gulenist soldiers entering the studios.
- 'Selalarin verilmesi' (Salah prayers): these were broadcast in mosques across Turkey to call for resistance, mobilisation and protest against the attempted coup.
- 'Hulusi Akar': this referred to the Turkish Chief of the General Staff. Individuals tweeted and shared information after he was taken hostage.

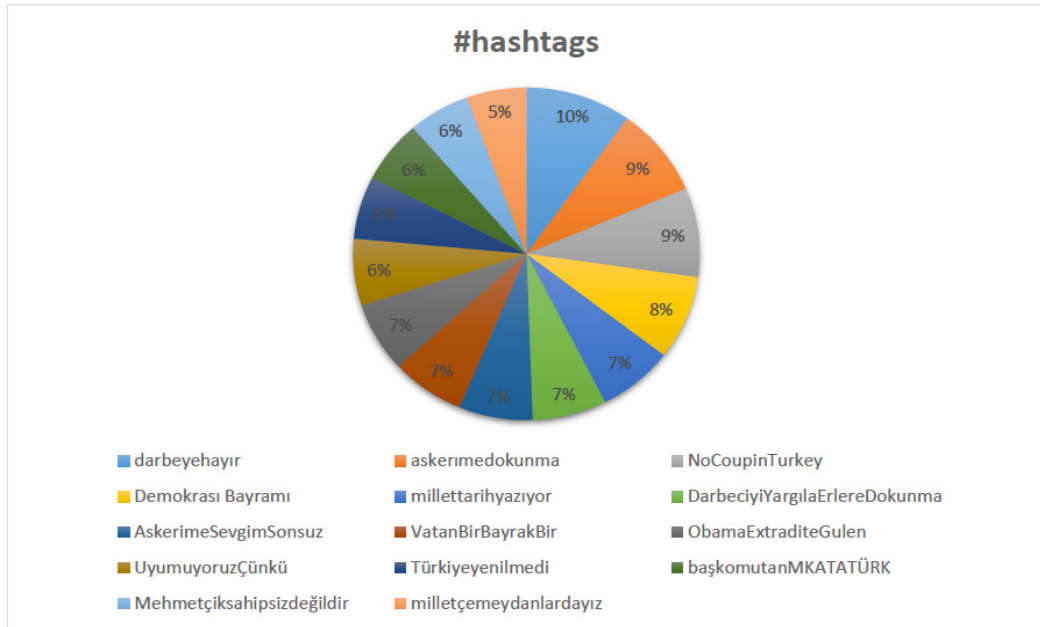


Figure 7. Examples of trending hashtags used by the Turkish population (Miş, Güleler, Coşkun, Duran & Ayvaz, 2016).

Examples of trending hashtags used by the Turkish population to resist the attempted coup were #MilletceMeydanlardayız (We are on the streets as a nation) and #DarbeyeHayir (No to coup). At the same time, the most retweeted issues and labels between the 15th to the 19th of July included: #nedarbenediktatorluk (neither coup nor dictatorship); #darbeyehayir (no coup); #askerimedokunma (do not touch our soldier); #NoCoupinTurkey; #DemokrasiBayrami (festival of democracy); #millettarihyaziyor (the people are writing history); #DarbeciYargiErlereDokunma (judge putschist do not touch soldiers); #AskerimeSevgimSonsuz (I love our soldiers infinitely); #UyumayizCunku (we do not sleep because); #VatanBirBayrakBir (one nation one flag); #KahramanMilletinSerefliNobeti (Heroic nation's honourable watch); and #Turkiyeyenilmedi (Turkey is not defeated).

On the other hand, some users on Twitter tried to spread fake news. Such news was understood to be a lie only after the end of events by mass audiences. For example, a picture of a soldier was tagged with “beheaded soldier” by a twitter user during the 15th July case. This tweet was shared about 140,762 times on Twitter. After a while, this soldier gave an explanation and shared this on Instagram that “This is a lie. I have had my military service for years” (Foca, 2016, p. 5). Another example of Fake news on Twitter is a photo which showed a group of bearded, turbaned citizens, vests and glasses under the leadership of a citizen in the morning carrying a soldier after he was lynched. This photo was tagged with “arrest these killers along with the coup plotters” by a twitter

user on the platform. The reality was that these people tried to save this soldier and raise him to the hospital (“Askeri linç ettiği”, 2016).

Facebook Findings

After Twitter, Facebook proved to be the most highly significant social platform, both during, and in the days following, the attempted coup. During the attempted coup, Facebook was used by those who wished to manipulate information about the coup, spreading rumours and information to create virtual turmoil.

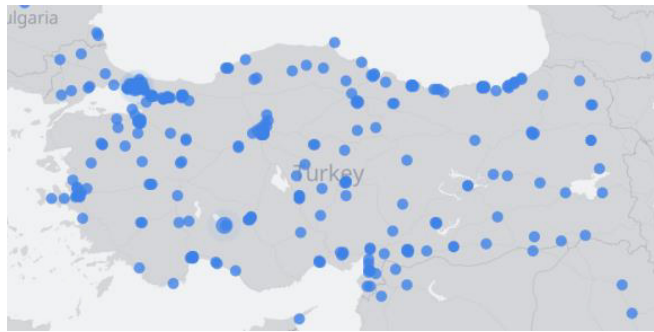


Figure 8. Facebook Live map during coup attempt in Turkey (Statt, 2016).

A number of Turkish citizens went onto the streets in the early hours of Saturday morning to continue with their resistance, and to protest against the coup, all of which was played out in real time on Facebook Live (Figure 8). Hundreds of Turkish citizens launched Facebook Live videos showing the widespread demonstrations and including the views of those who considered the country on the edge of chaos. Facebook therefore played significant role in the attempted coup. A number of Facebook pages and groups were created by Turkish citizens to share images, videos and experiences. The majority of these events were covered by Facebook groups, which also shared videos and images. These groups subsequently published several photographs and videos on Facebook and invited their friends to attend the meetings.

An examination of data related to Facebook revealed approximately nineteen Facebook pages, generally called ‘darbeye hayir’ (no coup), and thirty-two Facebook pages and ninety-seven Facebook groups called ‘15 temmuz’ (July 15). Later pages and groups have names such as “15 Temmuz Şehitleri” (15th of July Martyrs), “15 Temmuz 2016” (15th of July 2016) and ‘15 Temmuz Destanı’ (July 15 Legend). In addition, there are also a number of single Facebook pages established under different names, including: ‘Milletce Meydanlardayız’ (We are on the streets as a nation); ‘Darbe karsitlari’ (Anti-coup); ‘Darbe notlari’ (Coup notes); ‘Darbe girisimi haberleri’ (Coup attempt news); and ‘Darbe 15.07.2016’ (the coup 15.07.2016).

Table 1. The ‘15 Temmuz’ (July 15) Facebook page information.

Facebook page name	@15temmuzresmi (15julyofficial)
Page information	Community, Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) and Nonprofit Organisation
Page details	41,035 people like and 42,240 people follow
Website connection	http://15temmuzetkinlikleri.com/

This section examines the ‘15 Temmuz’ (15th of July) Facebook page, including general information about the page and an examination of photographs, videos and news. This page was created following the attempted coup, and is one of the most-liked Facebook page focused on the events of the 15th of July, as well as having the highest number of ‘likes.’ The page has attracted approximately 41,021 ‘likes’ and has approximately 42,228 followers. This page terms itself a community, and a non-governmental and non-profit organisation. Furthermore, approximately eighty-three individuals have evaluated this page and left comments related to the attempted coup.

**Figure 9.** “The opening of the July 15 martyrs monument will be in the presidential complex.”

An examination of the videos reveals that there are approximately seventy-four videos featuring celebrities, including Turkish singers, footballers and actors, and which focus on explanations, emotional reactions and ideas concerning the attempted coup. Moreover, there are several photographs of events, including the 15th of July opening of the memorial to the martyrs (Figure 9), including the playing of the national anthem and the ceremony demonstrating respect for the coup martyrs and reading 250 of their names, while also burning memorial lights.

Table 2. The ‘15 Temmuz (July 15) Facebook page information.

Facebook page name	@15TemmuzCuma (15JulyFriday)
Page information	Community
Page details	198.447 people liked and 225.138 people follow
Website connection	https://www.facebook.com/15TemmuzCuma/

This section analyses the ‘July15’ (@15TemmuzCuma) Facebook page which was created after the 15th of July coup case. The page is one of the most followed and liked Facebook pages created for the July 15 coup case. In the society section, there are 198,447 people who liked the page and 225,138 people are following it. The page terms itself as a community that was established against the July 15 coup attempt which planned by Gulenist Terrorist organization. In the photographs section, there are approximately 4,000 photographs and increasing after the July 15 coup case. After the coup attempt, the members of page shared different types of photographs including Turkish flags, the 15th of July martyrs, people who protest in the streets, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan and some religious images. Furthermore, there are about 1653 videos in the videos section and these videos are mostly taken for sharing updates and information related to 15th of July coup and following events. The videos also contain recordings of people protesting in the streets in Turkey as well as different countries such as Germany.

In general, most Facebook pages under the label of “15 Temmuz” (July 15) and “Darbeye hayır” (No coup) were created following the case of 15th of July coup. Most pages were initially created to share news, photographs and videos related to the coup attempt. Then, the members of the pages started sharing photographs, news and updates for political purposes like photographs of Justice and Development Party (AKP) and Republican People’s Party (CHP). On the one hand, some Facebook pages that were established created a group among the families and friends of the 15th of July martyrs such as “15 Temmuz” (15th of July) page. Similarly, most Facebook pages shared photos of Turkish flag, people protesting in the streets, 15th of July martyrs and of the Turkish president Erdogan to provide solidarity among Turkish citizens, contribute to an increase on the number of people attending protests in the streets and demonstrate that the integrity of Turkish country is not destroyed.

Discussion and Conclusion

The above examples of the use of social media have established the important role played in protecting democracy during the attempted coup of 15th of July by Turkish social media. In addition, it is significant that the number of those in Turkey making use of social media has since continued to increase.

Current political movements are significant examples of the mobility of the new system in the cycle ideas and technologies. Howard and Parks (2012) argued that digital media has proved an important factor in recent protests (p. 360). The findings of this study accord with the views of Howard and Parks, demonstrating that digital platforms, and in particular Twitter and Facebook,

played a significant role in protests against the attempted coup in Turkey, as well as disseminating information.

Social media websites tend to contribute to the process of mobilisation in contemporary movements (Gerbaudo, 2018, p. 19). The analysis of the results of this study have revealed the important role of Twitter both during, and immediately following, the attempted coup of 15th of July, in mobilising the resistance of the population. This is demonstrated by the fact that approximately thirty-five million tweets were sent by Turkish citizens between 15th of July to the 17th of July 2016, in particular in response to the tweet of President Erdogan calling for citizens to take to the streets and protect democracy, when the number of tweets increased rapidly, with many reacting to this tweet by sending a tweet of their own or by retweeting. Moreover, between the 15th of July and the 19th of July, there were a considerable number of trending hashtags related to the attempted coup, such as #darbeyehayir (no coup), #NocoupinTurkey and #Vatanbirbayrakbir (one nation one flag). These hashtags demonstrate that both on the day of, and the days immediately following the attempted coup, Twitter became a platform that enabled Turkish citizens to take action to protect their nation and democracy.

Furthermore, digital communication serves to pass messages between many individuals, while also connecting them to a limitless number of networks carrying digitised information, both within the immediate neighbourhood and to the wider world (Castells, 2015). This ensured that, when the plotters of the coup attempted to block all communication networks, channels and social media platforms, such networks offered an alternative method of communication, i.e. enabling President Erdogan to use FaceTime to phone into a Turkish television network that evening, in order to urge the population to take to the streets to protest against the coup.

Moreover, the strongest and positive motivators to resisting the coup were photographs and video sharing on social media platforms during the coup attempt (Karagoz & Kandemir, 2016). The findings demonstrate that following the coup attempt, many Turkish citizens took to the streets to continue protesting and resisting the coup, and these events were shared by Facebook Live. In addition, many posted videos showing widespread demonstrations via Facebook Live. Furthermore, Facebook became an important platform during the coup attempt, with citizens sharing several thousand photographs and videos expressing their emotions about the attempted coup. Following the failure of the coup, a large number of Facebook pages were created to publish different photographs and videos to show the world their experiences, both on the night of coup attempt and during the following day. In addition, the role of social movements is mentioned in defining the collective sense of individuals (i.e. who they are and why they stand), including through social media activism using social networks such as Twitter and Facebook (Gerbaudo & Treere, 2015, p. 2). Thus, such social media platforms play a significant role in the process of identity, i.e. activists' use of social media platforms including tweets of protest, along with sharing collective names, hashtags, slogans, Facebook pages and groups, and exchanging messages by means of instant messaging channels. This current study found that both during, and in the days following, the attempted coup, Turkish citizens used social media platforms to come together under: (1) common hashtags on Twitter; and (2) pages and groups on Facebook. A number of the trending hashtags on Twitter, including #vatanbirbayrakbir

(one nation one flag) and #Turkiyeyenilmedi (Turkey is not defeated) refer to Turkish identity, with many Turkish citizens experiencing themselves as part of this collective sense through their tweets. Moreover, in the days following the attempted coup, many Facebook pages were created to share photographs and videos, including photographs of the martyrs of the coup and Turkish soldiers, along with videos of the Turkish national anthem. These pages enabled Turkish citizens to express their ideas and emotions concerning the attempted coup, as well as sharing information concerning related events. In addition, a number of celebrities also shared videos and photographs, primarily of the Turkish flag and soldiers, with labels such as 'Biz birlikte Turkiyeyiz' (We are together Turkish) and 'Bu vatani bölemeyeceksiniz' (You cannot break up this nation).

On the other hand, social and political events such as the 15th July case have been marked by a growing number of fake news examples shared on the social media platforms, especially on Twitter. In the case of 15th July, citizens shared false images to manipulate some issues by using social media like image of lynched soldier on Twitter that we previously discussed. Sources suggested by a friend are likely to be taken as a real reference compared to journalistic sources. The fake news are rapidly liked or re-tweeted as seen in the example of the fake "lynched soldier" news that was shared by thousands on Twitter.

This study concludes that the new media gave rise to different opportunities for resistance and the social media played an important role in the resistance against the attempted coup that took place in Turkey on 15th of July 2016. Furthermore, following the failure of the coup, several million Turkish citizens continued to gather on the streets every night for approximately a month in order to guard democracy. In addition, they published many photographs on Twitter and Facebook and urged their friends to join them in their protest, while cyber activists launched several blogs to explain what had taken place and share photographs and videos online, along with news articles. This demonstrates that the social media played a crucial role on both the night of attempt coup and during its aftermath.

This study suggests that social media platforms, which are Twitter and Facebook, now have the ability to mobilise activists in movements, riots and protests. This research has also demonstrated that the use of social media can provide a limitless network for communication between activists. During the coup of July 15, successful communication was able to continue between the Turkish government and citizens. Moreover, social media websites played an important role in defining the collective sense and a sense of identity of Turkish citizens. Activists created several tweets of protest, along with developing hashtags and slogans and the creation of many Facebook groups and pages (Gerbaudo & Trere, 2015) that may not have taken place without the active use of the tools of digital media. On one side, this study highlights the reality of fake news spread on social media platforms with a specific focus on Twitter during the 15th July case. The study has investigated the phenomena of fake news, disinformation and misinformation over the online platforms, especially on Twitter. This investigation suggests that social influence and confirmation bias in social media causes the rapid spread of unsubstantiated claims. In addition, the diffusion of false news on Twitter is characterized by a rapid and broader spread than true news because of the attraction of fake news.

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