

Crystallization of Anti-Immigration Discourse in Times of Crises: Rising Toxic Narratives About Syrians in Turkey*

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Abstract

This study explores topics of anti-immigration discourse against Syrians on Twitter, as well as the accounts and hashtags, and mentions in which negative sentiments are most frequently processed. We provide quantitative evidence on some of the key points that contain various wordings that would directly relate to Syrians including "Suriyeli, Suriye etc." and some others indirectly related in "mülteci, mülteciler, etc." Data included various intersections of the derivative words used together or separately, posted from March 1, 2019, to March 31, 2020, on Twitter. The search revealed five key points representing an agenda of high-profile events related to Syrians. Next, these threads were compared with the same timelines on the Twitter Turkey agenda. Social Media data analysis was made by compiling Twitter data about the interactions related to the Twitter Syrian agenda. The tweets sent in line with the keywords and date limits were collected and placed in the excel sheet, and these data were loaded into the SPSS program and quantitative content analyses were generated. The word phrases in the cluster were developed in accordance with the algorithms of Brand Watch, which is a software that can analyze content using artificial intelligence. Even on the busiest days, data revealed Twitter's Syrian agenda accounted for only 2.02 percent of the Turkish agenda. Significant events were found indicative of the key points of the Syrian agenda and negative sentiments against Syrians. Finally, evidence shows that high-activity hashtags and accounts hold the power to dominate the Twitter Syrian agenda. The current study reveals how negative sentiments on social media represents a very small part of the agenda in volume, yet to our awe, a certain segment is effective enough to set the agenda using significant events.

Keywords: Anti-Immigration Discourse; Syrians; Immigrants; Twitter Agenda, Hate Speech

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Kriz Zamanlarında Göçmen Karşıtı Söylemin Kristalleşmesi: Türkiye'deki Suriyeliler Hakkında Yükselen Zehirli Dil*

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öz

Bu araştırma ile Twitter'da, Suriyeli göçmenlere yönelik göçmen karşıtı söylem içeriklerinin Twitter Türkiye gündemine oranı, yaşanan yüksek profilli olaylarla birlikte olumsuz söylemlerin ne yönde seyrettiği, Suriyelilere karşı kullanılan dilin tonunun nasıl olduğu, nefret söyleminin en sık üretildiği hashtag ve hesapların özellikleri hakkında nicel kanıtlar sunulmaktadır. Bu amaçla, 1 Mart 2019 ile 31 Mart 2020 arasında Twitter Suriye gündemini oluşturan anahtar kelimeler türevleri en çok kullanıldığı zaman aralıkları incelenmiş ve Suriyeli gündeminin en yoğun olduğu beş kilit nokta tespit edilmiştir. Aynı zamanda önemli olayların gerçekleştiği bu kilit noktalarda, Twitter Türkiye gündemi, Twitter Suriyeli gündemiyle karşılaştırılmıştır. Son olarak Twitter Suriyeli gündemini en çok belirleyen hashtag ve hesaplar incelenmiştir. Suriye gündemine ilişkin Twitter verileri derlenerek, anahtar kelimeler ve tarih sınırları doğrultusunda gönderilen Tweetler toplanmış ve excel sayfasına yerleştirilmiştir. Veriler SPSS programına yüklenerek ve nicel içerik analizi verileri oluşturulmuştur. Anahtar kelimeler, yapay zeka kullanarak içeriği analiz edebilen bir yazılım olan Brand Watch'un algoritmalarına uygun olarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Belirlenen kilit noktalardan Suriyeli gündeminin en yoğun konuşulduğu tarihlerde bile Twitter Türkiye gündeminin yalnızca %2.02'sine tekabül ettiği tespit edilmiştir. Yaşanan önemli olayların Suriyeli gündeminin en yoğun olduğu bu kilit noktaları ve bu noktalardaki olumsuz söylemi de belirlediği ortaya çıkarılmıştır. Son olarak Twitter'da Suriyeli gündemini, büyük oranda etkinliği yüksek hashtag ve hesapların belirlediği bulunmuştur. Bu çalışma ile sosyal medyada olumsuz söylemin hacim olarak gündemin çok küçük bir kısmını temsil etmesine rağmen belirli bir kesimin, önemli olayları kullanarak gündemi belirleyebilecek kadar etkili oldukları tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Göçmen Karşıtı Söylem, Suriyeliler, Göçmenler, Twitter Gündemi, Nefret Söylemi

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1. Introduction

All around the world, there are powerful narratives aimed to demonize refugees and turn them into objects of fear (Wodak, 2015). This is frequently the outcome of narratives and attitudes rooted in a fear of the outsider based on “otherness” indicators such as ethnicity, color, religion, etc. This divisive situation has the potential to escalate to violence and persecution.

In a general negative sense, refugees and immigrants are frequently represented as a particularly mobile and predatory subgroup of “foreigners” as outsiders who pose a threat to values, culture, religion, jobs, health care, and other public services, as well as a source of terrorism and criminality (Phuong, 2005). While some people are vehemently opposed to refugees, immigrants, and asylum seekers, the majority are divided between the two. They are empathetic to refugees, but they also have legitimate concerns about job security, public services, cultural change, and terrorism. The middle group reacts to emotional appeals more than statistics, and populist leaders use the fears of “the other” and the threat of losing national/cultural identity to get votes (Nai, 2018).

Aggressive and humiliating attitudes conducted on social media sites can take many forms, from excessive profanity to open hate speech. It’s most commonly seen in the context of online interactions among people of all ages, cultures, and interests. While social media provide a forum for people to discuss and express their ideas, the sheer volume of postings, comments, and messages makes it nearly impossible to maintain control over the content (Tufekci, 2018). Furthermore, because of their diverse backgrounds, many people use violent and abusive discourse while conversing with those from different backgrounds. According to King and Sutton (2013), nearly five hundred hate crimes against Muslims were committed in the year following 9/11, 58 percent of them occurring within two weeks of the incident. However, as social network sites have grown in popularity, more conflicts have arisen as a result of significant events which attract a lot of attention or publicity (King, 2013).

For the past ten years, Syrians who fled the Syrian civil war and sought refuge in Turkey have attracted conflicting discussions in Turkey. Syrians fleeing the conflict sought refuge in neighboring Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and Turkey. Turkey is appealing to immigrants due to factors such as the length of its land border to Syria, its proximity to Europe, and its proximity to religion, history, and culture. According to the data provided by the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs and spokesperson of the ministry, as of 2022, the number of Syrians under temporary protection status in Turkey is 3.763.565.

As the civil war and humanitarian crisis in Syria worsened and the conditions would allow Syrians who sought refuge in Turkey. Turkey granted Syrian immigrants temporary protection status without conditions (Bostancı, 2017, pp. 197). Turkish citizens have begun to express their dissatisfaction with the Syrian immigrants for a variety of reasons, most notably economic and security concerns. This situation has prompted both the ruling party and the opposition to seek to consolidate their respective political objectives. While the opposition parties used anti-Syrian rhetoric, the government used more conciliatory language toward Syrians.

Minorities are mostly portrayed and expressed negatively and inherently problematic and stereotypical (Dijk, 1993, pp. 248-249). Studies show that, newspapers in Turkey influence social awareness about Syrian refugees and foster an anti-immigrant sentiment. In their study, Doğanay and Keneş identified four major issues concerning Syrian refugees in the newspapers. First and foremost, the existence of Syrian refugees is presented as a “threat”; secondly, the money spent on refugees emphasizes the amount of aid given and the number of refugees is “objectified”; thirdly, reactions to their “visibility” are “emotionalized,” with no reference to the social-political causes or consequences of the problems. Fourth, they contend that it reproduces a discriminatory discourse that includes negative labels directed at refugees (2016, pp. 177-78). Kolukırık contends that news about refugees in the media is presented using “ordinary or dramatization methods,” and that images of refugees are presented as “other” and “foreigner.” These representations, he claims, form a social barrier between Syrian refugees and Turkish society (2009: 14).

In terms of Syrian immigrants, Turkey’s discourse has always emphasized the religious concept of Ansar-Muhajir, which represents Islamic brotherhood. However, as the civil war dragged on and Syrian immigrants began to disperse and live in cities, they became more visible, and the temporary residence began to give the signal to begin to leave its place to permanence. The vast majority of Syrians from ghettos in city suburbs, create their own ecosystems, and live their lives without ever meeting the locals (Ankara, Altındağ District, Önder Mah. Example)¹. The fact that Syrian immigrants began to be viewed as a problem in society, as well as statements made by politicians, began to create a reaction against Syrian immigrants in society.

Terrorist organizations have harassed the Turkey-Syria border, and cross-border

¹<https://www.milliyet.com.tr/pazar/altindag-da-bir-suriye-mahallesi-2386604> (24.11.2021)

operations have been carried out in accordance with domestic policy. Operation Zeytindali, which began on January 20, 2018, brought a safe zone policy that will allow Syrians to return to their homes, as well as in the fight against terrorism, and for the first time, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan raised the issue of Syrian's return at the highest level. The operation, a significant shift in Turkish official discourse toward Syrians was brought to light.

Among other things, economic reasons, and the use of Syrian representation in traditional media in a way that creates negative feelings, have fueled hate speech against Syrian immigrants. Hate crimes, defined as the ideology of systematic exclusion, devaluation, and hostility, have taken on a new dimension in terms of prevalence and speed, with each individual becoming a content producer on social media. The reactions of Turkish citizens, particularly on Twitter, give the impression that all Turkish citizens are hostile to Syrian immigrants. The purpose of this research is to determine how much of this perception corresponds to the data available. It has been narrowed down so that the study area can be examined using measurable criteria. The study delves into the ambiguities of online negative sentiment expression and seeks to understand the challenges it poses for societies. It examines online negative sentiments against immigrants in all of their forms, crystallizing the social and political dimensions of a representation crisis framed as a public problem.

2. Theoretical Framework

The new communication structure that emerged as a result of Web 2.0's two-way and simultaneous information sharing opportunity is the structure that turns anyone with internet access into a potential mass media tool. The passive viewer/listener who cannot produce content in traditional media has been replaced by an active viewer who produces and interprets content in social media. The content created by traditional media while taking into account both interest groups and economic concerns has been replaced by content created by individuals who are anxious about being followed, shared, and liked.

Anxiety is frequently associated with overstimulation caused by a stressful environment or threat, as well as an inability to deal with that threat. When people are afraid or worried about something, they often choose anger unconsciously as a way to feel in control of their anxiety. Hate speech, as a means of expressing anger or disgust, is fundamentally shaped by our relationship with the other. The concept of "the other" is formed as a result of being shaped in the social context, which can be defined as a system formed by people living in a specific context (Eagleton, 2011).

According to Çayır, quoting from Van Dijk, generalizations are one of the main factors contributing to the formation of prejudices and people form their own prejudiced mental models based on their discourse. At this point, people not only form preconceived mental models, but they can also exhibit biased attitudes even when there is no other knowledge or ideology (2012, pp. 5-16). We use ideologies to determine how we will behave in social situations and to position ourselves, which are stereotypes/rules. Ideology represents the imaginary relationship that exists between individuals' real lives and their existential conditions (Althusser, 2010). Stereotypes are generalized and categorized images formed in our minds for the individual or group that determine the other or one of the steps in recognizing the other (Öztürk, 2021, pp. 144). The other is what we do not know and the risk that arises due to the unknown of the other has the potential to turn into fear and fear into hatred.

The first step in discriminatory approaches is the "othering" process, which establishes the construction of the other by emphasizing differences. Hate crimes, which have emerged as possibly the most severe form of discrimination, and hate speech, which forms the mental and ideological background of these behavioral acts, but is essentially an ideology of exclusion, devaluation, and enmity that points to a systematic hierarchy among groups (Göregenli, 2012, pp. 178). Hate speech manifests itself primarily in three situations: inciting racial hatred, promoting hatred with religious motivations, and inciting nationalism, including lynching culture and intolerance based on ethnicity (Weber, 2009). While prejudice, far-right nationalism, xenophobia, polarization, marginalization, and homophobia fuel hate speech, cultural identity codes and group characteristics, particularly extreme nationalism and lack of tolerance for others, can elevate hate speech to the level of a serious social event (Göregenli M. , 2013). Immigrant discourse frequently emphasizes ethnic and cultural qualities, portraying them as "foreign" to native people and potentially disrupting a country's or society's political and cultural order by threatening its "purity" and "authenticity" (Triandafyllidou, 2000). Ter Wal (1996) characterized the "threat" framing as a hazard to public health. The media commonly uses the "enemy" concept, portraying immigrants as competitors stealing natives' jobs (Grobet, 2014). Lakoff and Ferguson (2006) identified an "otherness" frame, in which immigrants are viewed as threats to society's culture, language, and values, and found that it is widely used by the media (Lakoff, 2006). Milioni et al. (2015) distinguish between a "victim frame" (e.g. exploited/helpless), a "threat" frame (e.g. criminal, alien, burden, etc.), and an "active agent" frame (e.g. worker, investor, member of society) (Milioni, 2015).

Negative sentiments are frequently reinforced by stereotypes in order to gain political and social support. It is used as a vote storage mechanism and a means of consolidating supporters for both opposition and ruling parties. When negative sentiments are used in this manner, it has the potential to turn into hate speech and hate crimes when it is broadcast to the public. (Alğan & Şensever, 2010, pp. 10). The media is also important in spreading and distributing the values to be conveyed within social structures (Yanikkaya, 2009, pp. 11). Social media has accelerated the production and spread of hate speech at incredible speeds. Despite the fact that hate speech on the internet is not a new phenomenon, there is a clear correlation between internet technology and the visibility and spread of hate speech on social media (Karaman & Işıklı, 2016, pp. 137-140).

Social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, digital games, etc. generate hate speech; the discourse generated in these channels is perceived as natural; the perceived natural discourse is internalized; and internalized hate speech can organize hate crimes. All hate speech spreads on social media, gains power, and is carried into the streets. According to research on the content produced by social media users, fanatical comments and content provide more interaction (Çomu & Binark, 2013, pp. 199-219).

3. Twitter and Hate Speech

First launched in July 2006, inspired by SMS technologies and able to write posts called “tweets” for short messages limited to 140 characters, Twitter shortly became a forum for public discussions. The central mechanism that enables organization and mobilization on Twitter is the hashtag to indicate a topic on Twitter, to allow other users to more easily search for relevant information, and to classify the tweet as cohesive. As a communicative indicator, hashtags have a very strong effect on social participation on Twitter (Yang, 2016, pp. 14).

While the ideas spread on Twitter manifest themselves in the form of support mechanisms such as charity, philanthropy and success stories, they can sometimes be published with hostile statements confirming false, humiliating and prejudiced feelings/tensions about a person, group or community. Especially with the emergence of social networks, the spread of extremist narratives targeting minority groups and emerging hate speech has become easier (Williams, 2016, pp. 212). The rate of encountering hate speech based on race, belief and, gender on Twitter is more, common than in the mainstream media (Karaman & Işıklı, 2016, pp. 11). With the asynchronous and anonymous nature that its users reveal their narcissistic self-confidence.

Due to the increase of political extremism, social media be considered as both a source of knowledge one of the greatest threats to democracy. Because the established institutions, particularly political organizations and mainstream media had lost much of their authority around the world (Persily, 2017). Especially the economic, social, and political issues raised by the covid-19 pandemic, politicians and political parties of different countries, took advantage of a great social dissatisfaction and the fall of these institutions. Given the importance of social media in almost every aspect of modern life, it's no surprise that modern hate speech makes use of it to reach its targeted audience.

4. The Aim of This Study

The goal of this paper is to understand the characteristics of refugee-related messages on Twitter in the context of a significant event, as well as to identify anti-immigration discourse and the role of significant events in creating a toxic narrative about refugees. This will allow us to fill a knowledge gap on the Turkish population's attitudes toward refugees and immigrants, not only in the context of this specific significant event, but also in the context of anti-immigration discourse becoming more prominent in Turkish political discourse. We present quantitative evidence from Twitter about toxic narrative conversations, as well as the accounts and sentiments of hashtags and mentions where anti-immigration discourse is most commonly produced. The dates between March 1, 2019 and March 31, 2020 were analyzed to, see if the word Syrian and its derivatives were used together or separately. The main reason for choosing these dates is that a series of important events in which Syrians were on the agenda took place at the beginning of this period. These are the local elections of 31 March 2019, Turkey's military operations abroad, the opening of the European border gates for immigrants and so on. Between March 1, 2019 ,and March 31, 2020, each key point where significant events occurred, as well as the Twitter Turkey agenda, are compared to the Twitter Syrian agenda.

It is clear how messages spread by specialized or organized groups on the Internet serve as a means of transportation for hate, increasing the presence of anti-immigration discourse in public discourse (Bartlett & et al, 2014, pp. 1-51). However, online hate speech can be amplified in social media following significant events, such as terrorist attacks or news involving disadvantaged or denigrated groups of people, and can serve as a springboard for incidents and targeted attacks with similar characteristics (Burnap & Williams, 2015) (Awan, 2014). Furthermore, previous research has found that certain events can influence and

change public perception of refugees and immigrants (Zhang & Hellmueller, 2017)(Brodersen & et al, 2015) from the situation before a significant event to the response afterward. This study will basically seek answers to the questions in the context of the above-mentioned problem statement:

What is the proportion of negative sentiments against Syrians on Twitter Turkey agenda?

What is the relationship between negative sentiments and significant events?

What is the sentiment of the content directed at Syrians?

Which hashtags and accounts are most frequently used to spread anti-immigration discourse?

5. Method

The purpose of this study is highlight the issue of anti-immigration discourse on Twitter directed at Syrian immigrants in Turkey. Qualitative and quantitative methods complement one another by combining information with standardized procedures for measuring the properties of social media platforms, their actors, and changes in their positions and structures. The use of mixed methodology in social media analysis is relevant in a variety of designs where qualitative and quantitative methods may be combined to study the structure of the platforms, the meaning of the relationships, and their dynamics and evolution, as well as the intersection of these objects of study. The topics of anti-immigration discourse directed at Syrian immigrants, as well s the accounts and sentiments of hashtags and mentions in which negative sentiments are most frequently processed, were investigated. From March 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020, the five key points together with the most intense Syrian agenda were chosen. Each key point in which significant events occurred is labeled A, B, C, D, and E, and in those key points, the Twitter Turkey agenda is compared to the Twitter Syrian agenda.

Analysis of social media data focusing solely on the Twitter social media channel of interactions related to the Syrian agenda. Getting interaction on Twitter means that all the posts shared on Twitter are seen, liked or shared by the followers. The Twitter, data were examined in order to find the word Syrian is "Suriyeli, Suriye etc." and other similar words with "mülteci, mülteciler, etc." There were also included intersections of the derivatives words used together or separately, which are "Suriye, Suriyeli, Suriyelilerin, suriyeden, suriyenin, and suriyeye". We also included related words and their derivatives: "mülteci, mülteciler, sığınmacılar, göç, sığınmacı, muhacir, muhacirler, mültecinin, mültecinin, mülteciden, göçmen, göçmenler, multeci, multeciler, sığınmacılar, goc, sığınmacı, muhacir, muhacirler, multecinin, multecisinin, multeciden, gocmen ve göçmenler."

In the study, the rate of impact of the interactions on the Syrian Refugee agenda

on the Twitter Turkey agenda was also included in the research. Social Media data analysis was made by compiling Twitter data about the interactions related to the Syrian agenda. The tweets sent in line with the keywords and date limits were collected and placed in the excel sheet, and these data were loaded into the SPSS program and quantitative content analysis data were generated. The word phrases in the cluster were developed in accordance with the algorithms of Brand Watch, which is a software that can analyze content using artificial intelligence.

The study’s main limitation is that it was conducted by collecting quantitative data for all interactions on Twitter between March 1, 2019 and March 31, 2020. As a result, there is a periodic limitation. Another limitation is that only anti-immigration discourse directed at Syrians on Twitter is investigated in Turkiye and in Turkish. Only the effects of anti-immigration discourse and negative sentiments against Syrians in Turkish society have been intended to be measured.

6. Findings

6.1. Comparison of Twitter Turkey Agenda and Twitter Syrians Agenda

Social media, particularly Twitter, has been widely used to study a variety of social phenomena. For this study, we gathered nearly 4.629.269 Twitter conversations about Syrian immigrants living in Turkey over a one-year period, from March 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020. One year comprehensive collection of Twitter activities in Turkey. The 5.642 million messages were shared by 1.012 million individual users, resulting in more than 40 billion views and 35 billion accesses to information about Syrian immigrants in Turkey. While these figures seem so high in terms of views and accesses, the comparison of Twitter Syrian and Twitter Turkey Agenda daily average volume can reach as much as 2.02% even on the days when twitter is at its highest, volume of conversation about Syrians.

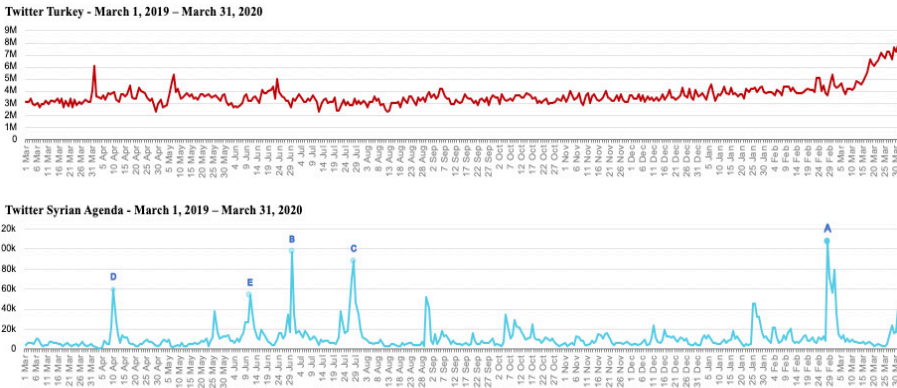
Twitter. Twitter Turkey and the Twitter Syrian Agenda Comparison (March 1, 2019-March 31, 2020)

Dates with Most Intense Interaction	Twitter Turkey Agenda Daily Average Volume	Twitter Syrian Agenda Daily Average Volume	Twitter Syrian/ Turkey Agenda Daily Average Volume ratio (%)
Point A: February 28, 2020 March 2, 2020	4.525.673	78.523	1.73%
Point B: June 30, 2019 July 1, 2019	3.270.833	66.201	2.02%

<p>Point C: July 26, 2019</p> <p>July 30, 2019</p>	2.875.002	56.163	1.95%
<p>Point D: April 10, 2019</p> <p>April 11, 2019</p>	3.611.111	43.625	1.21%
<p>Point E: June 7, 2019</p> <p>June 13, 2019</p>	3.358.796	27.685	0.82%

Within the specified dates study period (March 1, 2019-March 31, 2020), the volume date Twitter shares in Türkiye are 1 billion 443 million. The daily average for these posts is approximately 3.446.000. 11.574 is the daily volume of the Syrian Agenda, where discussions about Syrian immigrants take place. One of the most influential dates of the Syrian agenda on Twitter has been the period from February 28 to March 2, 2020, when the Turkish European borders were opened. By receiving 78.000 shares per day, this interaction contributed approximately 1.7 percent to the volume of Twitter Turkey. In terms of the agenda where conversations about Syrian immigrants were held, the effective dates throughout the year had a 1.73 percent impact on the Twitter Turkey agenda. Twitter Syrian/Turkey Agenda Daily Average Volume ratio from highest to lowest trend, as shown in Figure 1 at Point B: 2.02 %, at Point C: 1.95 %, at Point D: 1.21 %, and at Point E: 0.82 %.

Figure 1. Twitter Turkey and Twitter Syrian Agenda Comparison Rates



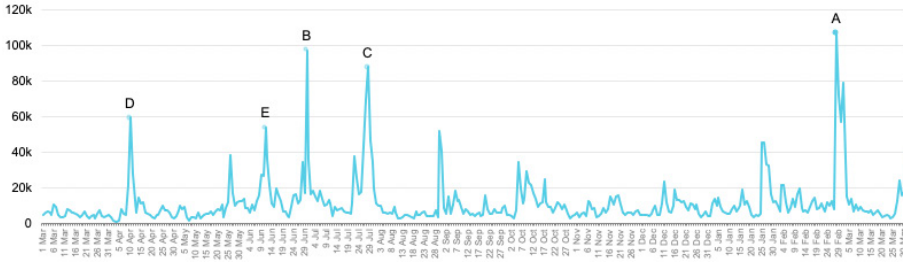
Another significant issue in this study is that the agenda in Twitter Turkey is not effected by Twitter Syrian agenda and that the Syrian agenda on Twitter has a very small percentage, approximately 0.33 percent on average, which shows that it is constantly on the Twitter Turkey agenda. Even on days when the Syrian

agenda is heavily discussed, it amounts to 2.02 percent. These findings suggest that the Syrian agenda on Twitter is much less than it thought but its effect is amplified with other factors on the agenda of the Turkish people.

Looking at Figure 1 for Twitter agenda change rates; we can see that the daily average value of the conversations made on Twitter Turkey between the specified dates is 3 million. The chart shows that the volume increase in Turkey associated with the opening of European border gates increased at the same rate as the Twitter Turkey agenda. The contribution of the Syria issue to Twitter's daily average was calculated to be 2%. In conversations about the Syria issue, the average value formed after the opening of the borders is 823 percent. We can see that after the opening of the European border gates, the ratio of the Twitter Syrian agenda within itself increased by approximately 823 percent, while the Twitter Syrian agenda corresponds to only 2% of the entire agenda within the Twitter Turkey Agenda. In this case, after the opening of the European border gates, 98 percent of the Twitter agenda consists of issues other than the Syrian agenda, and we can easily argue that the Syrian agenda is not at the center of the Turkish people's Twitter agenda.

6.2. Analysis of Significant Events And Twitter Syrian Agenda

Figure 2 depicts the temporal volume distribution of shares about Syrians, the date that reached the highest volume in Twitter at February 28, 2020, which we labeled Point A, indicating the most intense agenda regarding Syrians, immediately following the opening of Turkish European borders and the Idlib attack, in which 33 Turkish soldiers were killed. Other points (B, C, D, and E) indicate the days with the most interactions that coincide with significant events. At point B, accusations of child abuse in Istanbul's İkitelli neighborhood escalated into a lynching attempt against Syrians. In the safe zone plan in Syria, the return of Syrians who had gone to Syria for Eid, and the return of unregistered Syrians to camps, the Syrians were the main agenda in traditional media at point C. The significant event at point D was primarily associated with the March 31, 2019 local elections and the elected mayor of Bolu Province's discriminatory position against Syrians and other refugees. The significant events at point E were the rescheduled June 23, 2019 Istanbul election and new waves of migration to Turkey.

Figure 2. Temporal Volume Distribution of Twitter Syrian Agenda

At point A, the news, comments, and expressions on Twitter and in the traditional media about the Idlib attacks and the opening of the European border gates to Syrians were evaluated together. As a result, it is clear that the tweets posted contain anti-immigration discourse with nationalistic motivations against Syrians, and the idea that our soldiers were martyred because of Syrians living in Turkey outweighs. A thirteen-fold increase in volume is primarily due to the hashtag #suriyelil iteriistemiyoruz as Figure 2 depicts the following sources of increase. Appendix 2 contains a complete list of tweets, retweets and links of significant events.

At point B, it is clear from the news, comments, and opinions in the traditional media that allegations of child abuse in the İkitelli neighborhood of Istanbul Küçükçekmece turned into a lynching attempt against the Syrians who live there. When we look at the interaction in the tweets, we can see that there is a significant number of tweets containing nationalist motives and negative sentiments under the various hashtags listed in Figure 2. Aside from the allegations of child abuse, there are other factors influencing the volume increase, such as the announcement of the final results of the June 23 Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality election and Turkey's proposal for a safe zone for 3 million Syrians. Appendix 2 contains a complete list of tweets, retweets and links of significant events.

At point C, it is clear that almost all of the news, comments, and thoughts in the traditional media are about Syrians. Possible operations for Turkey's planned safe zone in northern Syria, such as returning Syrians who went to Syria for Eid, transferring unregistered Syrians to camps in Istanbul, and so on. Appendix 1 contains a complete list of significant events. Appendix 2 contains a complete list of tweets, retweets and links to significant Events.

At point D, significant events were associated with primarily local election results and the discriminatory position of Tanju Özcan, the elected mayor of Bolu Pro-

vince. At point E, the focus is primarily on traditional media news and commentary, as well as the rescheduled June 23, 2019 Istanbul election. The existence of an agenda concerning Syrians is also notable. Millions of Syrians are expected to flock to the Turkish border, particularly following the attack by Russian-backed regime forces. Appendix 1 contains a list of significant events. Appendix 2 contains a complete list of tweets, retweets and links of significant events.

As we can see from the effects of significant events on Twitter’s Syrian agenda, we can conclude that there is a strong association between significant events and volume increases on Twitter’s Syrian agenda on the specified points, with the most affected by mentions and retweets from March 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020. As shown in Table 2, hashtags and mentions with very high volume increases at specific points tend to have anti-immigrant content. This tendency shows that toning at certain points has a negative effect (Figure 3). Appendix 2 contains a complete list of tweets, retweets and links of significant events.

Table 2. Twitter Syrian Agenda Volume Increase and Most Influential Mentions and Retweets

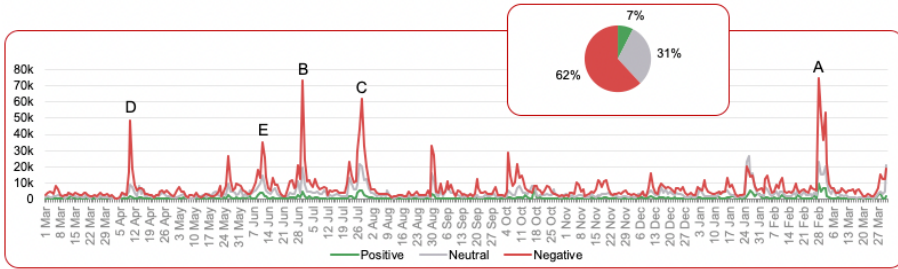
* *Tweet/link numbers provide links to the content of actual tweet/link, and are outlined in the Appendix 2*

Point A	Poin B	Point C	Point D	Point E
1300% vol. increase with	1171% vol. increase with	1048% vol. increase with	680% vol. increase with	540% vol. increase with
- 29017 #suriyelileri-istemiyoruz - 13439 #sehitlerimizvar - 12358 #sehidi-mizvar - 5636 reTweet1* - 4751 #baharkalkanı - 4317 in a link1 - 4254 reTweet2 - 4131 #mehmetci-ğın-yandıyız	- 34188 #suriyelileryal-nız-değildir - 10663 #ikitelli - 2265 #suriyelileri-istemiyoruz - 1910 in a link2	- 31337 #suriyelileri-istemiyoruz - 21142 #suriyeliyim - 20141 #suriyelilerkarde-simizdir - 13409 #doğru-yanlış - 4584 reTweet3 - 4569 in a link3	13158 reTweet4 6952 reTweet5 3311 reTweet6 2350 reTweet7 2063 reTweet8 2063 reTweet9 1415 reTweet10 1258 reTweet11	7808 #suriyeliler 6625 in a link4 5562 reTweet12 4145 reTweet13 3246 in a link5 3063 reTweet14 2765 in a link6

6.3. Analysis of Significant Events and Sentiments Against Syrians

Figure 3 depicts the overall sentiment distribution for all interactions and it can be seen that anti-immigration discourse directed at Syrians has a more negative sentiment in the general. When we look at the content analysis of word groups, 62% are negative, 31% neutral, (announcement and news texts) and 7% are positive on Twitter Syrian agenda. However, when looking at Figure 3, it is clear that the the most negative sentiments are shared at 5 same points where there are significant events, as described above. In general, interactions with the Syrian agenda weigh no more than 2% of the Turkish agenda, but the sentiments it carries is overwhelmingly negative. The positive sentiments loses its visibility under the magnitude of the overwhelmingly negative sentiments..

Figure 3. Temporal Sentiment Distribution



When the conversations at all five points are examined, it is possible to conclude that majority of social media users in Turkey have negative feelings toward Syrian immigrants. When negative messages are examined, it is revealed that Turkey provides to Syrian citizens more opportunities than its own citizens. Another significant negative issue is the advocacy Syrians of military age to fight in their own country. Users argue that Turkish soldiers should not fight in Syria and that Syrian youth should be sent there to fight for their country.

6.4. Analysis of The Most Shared Hashtags

One of the most popular hashtags, #suriyelileriistemiyoruz, appears to have become an instrument of anti-immigration discourse against Syrians. Even if Syrians relocate to Europe or another country, this hashtag has almost become a campaign slogan for nationalist and sometimes racist groups that continue to use concentrated anti-immigration discourse in the echo chamber. In fact, the hashtag of #suriyelileriistemiyoruz is justified to be used by these groups as a means of self-expression and legitimation of their thesis

Table 3. The Most Shared Hashtags

Most Influential hashtags	Tweets	Retweets	All Tweets ▼	Impressions
#suriyelileriistemiyoruz	51.877	96.073	147.952	247.738.973
#suriyeli	22.188	64.855	87.045	295.057.306
#suriyelileryalnızdeğildir	11.845	25.442	37.289	71.252.413
#sehitlerimizvar	8.395	22.280	30.676	66029395
#suriyeliler	10.819	19.252	30.072	105.420.655
#sehidimizvar	5.694	20.275	25.969	54.463.419
#suriye	6.986	16.589	23.578	111.281.024
#barışpınarharekatı	806	21.292	22.098	144.445.906
#suriyeliyim	7.799	13.977	21.777	52.522.252
#suriyelilerkardesimizdir	6.568	14.815	21.384	43.456.058
#ülkemdesuriyeliistemiyorum	2.395	7.782	10.178	18.121.581
#suriyelilerdefoluyor	3.550	4.654	8.205	12.339.746
#vaka5698	354	4.926	5.280	4.808.053
#baharkalkanı	319	4.520	4.839	12.232.258
#evindekaltürkiyem	35	4.541	4.576	4.282.874
#mehmetciğinyanıındayız	410	3.725	4.136	12.551.772
#weareallturkishsoldiers	389	2.701	3.091	7.196.855

We can see from the analysis of the most mentioned accounts, which received the most interaction, that these Twitter accounts are associated with hashtags containing negative sentiments directed at Syrians. Looking at a few accounts, it is clear that these accounts are frequently mentioned on anti-Syrian accounts and lead social media groups that generate political or ideological discourse against Syrians. The accounts that produce anti-Syrian and anti-immigrant toxic narratives, which somehow crystallize and act as concentrated for the same purpose, find twitter users who are ready and able to direct them, and pursue their political goals. To justify themselves, these accounts always keep security policies on the agenda.

7. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings suggest that the Syrian agenda in Twitter corresponds to a very small percentage, approximately 0.33% on average through the study periods, within the Twitter Turkey agenda. Even on the busiest days, data revealed Twitter’s Syrian agenda accounted for only 2.02 percent of the Turkish agenda. While it corresponds only to 2.02% on the dates of the Idlib attack and the Afrin operation,

its effect is amplified with other factors on the agenda of the Turkish people. Significant events were found to be indicative of key points on the Syrian agenda, as well as negative sentiments directed at Syrians.

Since the findings suggest that the Syrian agenda on Twitter is much smaller than it thought, but its impact is amplified by high-activity hashtags and accounts hold the power to dominate the Twitter Syrian agenda. The most popular hashtags and accounts are also indicators of the crystallization of anti-immigration discourse against Syrian immigrants in Turkey. One of the most popular hashtags, #suriyellileriistemiyoruz, appears to have become a tool for anti-Syrian toxic narrative. When we look at the most popular accounts in terms of anti-immigrant campaigns, we can see that they are associated with hashtags containing hate speech directed at Syrians. Looking at a few accounts reveals that these accounts are frequently mentioned in the study period. These accounts are generally anti-Syrian and lead social media groups that generate political or ideological hate speech against Syrians.

So, why does the Syrian Agenda, as revealed by its Twitter findings, occupy only 2.02%, but why does it maintain both the traditional media and social media agendas, and thus the Turkish political agenda? Social movements that emerged in modern times have a liquidity structure as a result of social media, which means they have a fluid structure and no official leadership structure. They are not in an anarchic structure, and leaderless, and they are open to interaction thanks to their characteristic fluid structures, and they are choreographically shaped in this way (Gerbaudo, 2012, pp. 134-135). Twitter serves as the focal point for groups that crystallize, concentrate, and organize toward a common goal. One reason for this crystallization is that the sentiments of the conversations in the Twitter interactions is extremely negative. It is also contagious to have negative emotions, which is a type of social influence that describes how behaviors, norms, and information spread through social networks. One example is emotional contagion, a phenomenon in which our own mood is influenced by the moods of those around us. Another example group norms, which are the behaviors that are considered normal or acceptable within a specific group (Shen & et al, 2020). This toxic narrative against Syrian immigrants is heavily influenced by both emotional contagion and group norms. In social media, where people are frequently allowed to engage in toxic behavior with no real consequences. In fact, in some contexts, this behavior is actually rewarded, making it appear desirable and thus encouraging more people to engage in it. It provides a vicious cycle in many ways.

Çıkar Çatışması Beyanı

Makale yazarları herhangi bir çıkar çatışması olmadığını beyan etmiştir.

Araştırmacıların Katkı Oranı Beyan Özeti

Yazarlar makaleye %50 (1.Yazar), %50 (2.Yazar) oranında katkı sağlamış olduklarını beyan ederler.

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Appendix 1- List of Traditional Media Agenda Topics

Point A:

- Operation Spring Shield or Operation Idlib launched by the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) and the Syrian National Army (SMO) on February 27, 2020².
- Idlib attack; 33 Turkish soldiers were killed in an airstrike in Syria's Idlib province on, February 27, 2020. Reuters news agency reported that 54 Turkish soldiers lost their lives in Syria within a month with the latest attack³. (28.02.2020)

²https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bahar_Kalkan%C4%B1_Harek%C3%A2t%C4%B1 (Date of Access: 20.02.2022)

³<https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-51669820> (Date of Access: 02.03.2022)

Last minute... Doors were opened to Syrian refugees! They flock to Europe⁴. (28.02.2022)
Last minuteB:

Announcement of the final results of the 23 June Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality election results by the Supreme Election Board (YSK)⁵ (27.06.2019).

S400 missile defense system tension with the USA, the arrival of the first batch of S-400s to Turkey⁶(12.07.2019).

The allegations that a child was abused in the İkitelli neighborhood of Istanbul Küçükçekmece turned into a lynching attempt against Syrians.⁷ (30.06.2019).

Turkey proposed a safe zone for 3 million Syrians⁸ (25.09.2019).

Point C:

Turkish Central Bank's rate cut by 425 basis points⁹ (25.07.2019)

Discussing the possible operation to the east of the Euphrates for the Safe Zone¹⁰ (29.07.2019)

Discussions on the Readmission Agreement on Refugees that Turkey signed with the EU in 2016¹¹(22.07.2019)

Statement from Istanbul Governor Yerlikaya on unregistered Syrians: "There will be no unregistered Syrians in Istanbul"¹²(30.07.2019).

The return of Syrians to their countries during the Eid is again a polemical issue¹³(19.08.2019).

D Point:

In the local elections of March 31, 2019, the debate about the Istanbul elections continues and the issue of the cancellation of the election is on the agenda. The government and the opposition are mutually blaming each other¹⁴(10.04.2019).

The first action of the newly elected Bolu mayor of the Chp, Tanju Özcan, was to cut the aid given to refugees¹⁵ (10.04.2019).

⁴ [ahaber.com.tr/gundem/2020/02/27/suriyeli-multecilere-avrupa-kapilari-acildi](https://www.ahaber.com.tr/gundem/2020/02/27/suriyeli-multecilere-avrupa-kapilari-acildi) (Date of Access: 13.02.2022)

⁵ <https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2019/gundem/il-secim-kurulu-resmi-olmayan-sonuclari-acikladi-5194371/> (Date of Access: 28.02.2022)

⁶ <https://www.amerikaninsesi.com/a/msb-s400ler-ankaraya-geliyor/4997374.html> (Date of Access: 20.02.2022)

⁷ <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/turkiye/2019/06/30/ikitellide-suriyelilere-saldiri> (Date of Access: 14.02.2022)

⁸ <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/turkiye-3-milyon-suriyeli-icin-guvenli-bolge-onerdi/1593760> (Date of Access: 30.03.2022)

⁹ <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-49134096> (Date of Access: 25.01.2022)

¹⁰ <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/mit-ve-tdskdan-irakin-kuzeyinde-iki-nokta-operasyon-424435.html> (Date of Access: 28.02.2022)

¹¹ <https://www.dw.com/tr/%C3%A7avu%C5%9Fo%C4%9Flu-geri-kabul-anla%C5%9Fmas%C4%B1n%C4%B1-ask%C4%B1ya-ald%C4%B1k/a-49699277> (Date of Access: 17.03.2022)

¹² <https://t24.com.tr/haber/istanbul-valisi-nden-kayitli-olmayan-suriyelilere-iliskin-aciklama,832772> (Date of Access: 09.02.2022)

¹³ <https://tr.euronews.com/kurban-bayram-icin-ulkelerine-giden-suriyelilerin-turkiyeye-donusleri-basladi> (Date of Access: 19.08.2019)

¹⁴ <https://www.haberler.com/aksam-gazetesi/> (Date of Access: 10.04.2019)

¹⁵ <https://tr.euronews.com/bolu-nun-yeni-chp-li-belediye-baskani-ozcan-dan-ilk-icraat-suriyeli-multecilere-yardim-yok> (Date of Access: 10.04.2019)

President Erdoğan said: “We will not allow the establishment of a terrorist state in the north of Syria”, emphasizing that a terror corridor will never be allowed in the south of Turkey, and that the necessary steps will be taken soon 16(13.10.2019).

The economy package as announced by the Minister of Economy, Berat Albayrak 17(10.04.2019).

E Point:

F-35 Desk without Turkey 18 (09.06.2019)

Election polemics before the 23 June 2019 Istanbul election 19(11.06.2019)

The new migration wave is at the door, the Russian-backed regime forces attacking Idlib by violating the Sochi agreement, causing 2 million people to pile up on the Turkish border 20(09.09.2019)

Appendix 2- List of Tweets, retweets and links of Significant Events

Point A:

Retweet 1: <http://twitter.com/ismailsaym,az/statuses/1233357798962089985>

Link 1: https://video.twimg.com/ext_tw_video/1234372752024461313/pu/video/1280x684/5vak9FyYTGHQpToA.mp4?tag=10

Retweet 2: <http://twitter.com/ismailsaymaz/statuses/1234240124428439553>

Point B:

Link 1: https://video.twimg.com/ext_tw_video/1145233612016689152/pu/video/640x360/ZMBCc2Jjsw9x9rOy.mp4?tag=10

Point C:

Retweet 1: <http://twitter.com/DrSinanOgan/statuses/1155931412647645184>

Link 1: https://video.twimg.com/ext_tw_video/1154660287653535745/pu/video/1280x720/H3CjalXGUGT9q6cL.mp4?tag=10

Point D:

Retweet 1: <http://twitter.com/TolgaCevik/statuses/111696726751567873>

Retweet 2: <http://twitter.com/tanjuozcanchp/statuses/1115731532818284544>

Retweet 3: <http://twitter.com/tanjuozcanchp/statuses/1115725277819224065>

Retweet 4: <http://twitter.com/06melihgokcek/statuses/1115830074752819200>

Retweet 5: <http://twitter.com/SavciSayan/statuses/1116039566585151488>

Retweet 6: <http://twitter.com/ismailsaymaz/statuses/1116246425342550016>

¹⁶ <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/111067/-suriye-nin-kuzeyinde-bir-teror-devletinin-kurulmasina-musaade-etmeyecegiz-> (Date of Access: 13.10.2019)

¹⁷ <https://www.haberturk.com/son-dakika-ekonomi-reform-paketi-aciklaniyor-2428990-ekonomi> (Date of Access: 10.04.2019)

¹⁸ <https://www.karar.com/turkiyesiz-f-35-masasi-1234351> (Date of Access: 09.06.2019)

¹⁹ <https://www.setav.org/duygusal-polemikler-uzerinden-devam-eden-tartismalar-secim-yaklastikca-yerini-projelere-rakacak/> (Date of Access: 11.06.2019)

²⁰ <https://www.dw.com/tr/ankarada-idlib-endi%C5%9Fesi-500-bin-sivil-yolda/a-50357645> (Date of Access: 09.09.2019)

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