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Discourses of exclusion on Twitter in the Turkish Context: #ülkemdesuriyeliistemiyorum *(#idontwantsyriansinmycountry)*

Yasemin Erdogan-Ozturk [a,b,*], Hale Isik-Guler [b,1]

[a] *Karabuk University, Turkey*
[b] *Middle East Technical University, Turkey*

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ABSTRACT

The new communicative affordances of online spaces have transformed the ways and domains we build and negotiate meaning. At the same time, they have introduced diverse channels to produce and disseminate animosity. This article explores online discourses as new communicative environments characterized by their unique textual and semiotic features to unfold the discursive constructions of hate and hostility towards Syrian refugees in Turkey. Building on the principles of the Social Media Critical Discourse Studies (SM-CDS) framework proposed by KhosraviNik (2018) and the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) by Reisigl and Wodak (2001), the study analyzes a subset of tweets that includes the hashtag *#ülkemdesuriyeliistemiyorum (#idontwantsyriansinmycountry)* to understand its functions in constructing and proliferating an exclusionary discourse against refugees. The study focuses on referential, argumentation and intensification strategies used in tweets as well as their wider socio-political implications. The results reveal that refugees in Turkey are delineated as threats, invaders, criminals and potential dangers by the users of online media. It is further observed that a sharper rhetoric and a more intense negative-other representation emerge in Twitter as an online public space compared to print media discourses. While scrutinizing the (re)construction and representation of refugees, our analysis has also uncovered that hate and hostility discourses towards refugees constantly operate to build a collective nationalist identity. This interlocking relationship between constructing refugees through stereotypical attributes as a homogeneously dangerous group and forming a collective Turkish identity is manifested at each level of our analysis.

1. Introduction

A video posted on Twitter during the night of the new year celebrations in İstanbul Taksim Square has sparked a countrywide debate revolving around the status of refugees in Turkey and initiated the circulation of a Twitter trending topic hashtag, *#ülkemdesuriyeliistemiyorum (#idontwantsyriansinmycountry)*. Shot and broadcasted by a Turkish man on Twitter in the first minutes of the year 2019, the footage included a large group of young Syrian men dancing, chanting the name of Syria and waving the flag of the Free Syrian Army, accompanied by the narration of the scene in Turkish by the same person broadcasting the video: "İstiklal caddesindeyiz. Ve bir tane Türk yok. İstanbul'un kalbi burası" (*We are in İstiklal Street. And there is not a single Turk here. This is the heart of Istanbul).* As the video spread, the hashtag *#ülkemdesuriyeliistemiyorum* became a trending topic within hours in Turkey and worldwide. Within the first 15 days following the use of the hashtag, the tweets including the hashtag reached a total number of 150.343.

The recent hashtag activity summarized above signals a larger ongoing controversy and debate around Syrian refugees and policymaking on migration in Turkey, starting from the onset of the civil war in Syria in 2011, which has led to a major mass forced-migration flow mainly to Turkey. As reported in the official records of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Turkish Directorate General of Migration Management, the total number of Syrian refugees who resettled in Turkey is 3.587.266 (UNHCR, 2020a, UNHCR, 2020b; Turkish Directorate General of Migration Management, 2020). As the latest figures reveal, the largest Syrian refugee population in the world currently lives in Turkey. While less than 10 percent of Syrian refugees live in camps in the borderlands, the majority have settled in cities

* Corresponding author at: Karabuk University, Faculty of Arts, Department of Western Languages and Literatures 78050 Karabuk, Turkey.
E-mail addresses: yaseminerdogan@karabuk.edu.tr, ysmnerdgn@gmail.com (Y. Erdogan-Ozturk), hisik@metu.edu.tr (H. Isik-Guler).
[1] Middle East Technical University, Faculty of Education, Department of Foreign Language Education, 06800, Ankara, Turkey.

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(Bélanger & Saraçoğlu, 2018, p. 4). The unprecedented, rapidly growing rate of refugee resettlement within the last decade has resulted in an escalated tension in the policymaking processes, public perceptions, and refugees' welfare. Turkey has announced an 'open door policy' in 2011 by making explicit references to the narratives of 'generosity', 'humanitarian responsibility' and 'religious solidarity' (Gökalp-Aras and Şahin-Mencütek, 2020).

Syrian refugees were introduced to the public as 'guests' and were taken under temporary protection with the initial expectation that those who crossed the border would return to Syria when the conflict in the region ended. However, Turkey's attitude of hosting Syrians as 'guests' and the emphasis on the temporality had significant implications at policymaking and discursive levels. First, temporary protection status did not grant refugees the institutionalized legal rights of the refugee status (İçduygu & Şimşek, 2016, p. 60); second, it created a public expectation of a temporary stay. Although state institutions and non-governmental organizations have increasingly developed reformative actions, rights, and aids in the recent years, research reports pinpoint that Syrian refugees still have a precarious status and are likely to encounter barriers to shelter, employment, education, and health services (İçduygu, 2015). In addition to the precarity and vulnerabilities that refugees are faced with, an alarming anti-refugee public discourse which appears to be in stark contrast with the earlier welcoming political and media discourses has emerged and spread vastly, particularly through social media. This shift in the public discourse is achieved through discriminatory narratives revolving around stereotypical attributions in which refugees are identified as burdens, criminals, terrorists, and threats (Kirişçi, 2014).

With the aim of gaining insight into the rapid dissemination of the anti-refugee sentiments and discourses in the online sphere, we aim to investigate one of today's most prominent online environments, *Twitter,* to understand how the exclusion, racialization, and marginalization of Syrian refugees in Turkey are accomplished and perpetuated by the use of multiple linguistic, discursive and semiotic resources. Following the traces of linguistic, semiotic and discursive manifestations of online hostility towards Syrian refugees, the main concerns of our study are (re)production and legitimization of anti-refugee sentiments and ideologies in the new media. In particular, adopting the framework of critical discourse analysis (CDA), the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How were refugees named, described and characterized in the tweets tagged with the hashtag *#ülkemdesuriyeliistemiyorum*?
2. What discursive arguments were systematically (re)constructed to reinforce the online hostility towards Syrian refugees in Turkey?
3. What are the unique properties of digitally-mediated discourses compared to traditional media discourses in the case of refugee representation?

The present study contributes to the existing literature with respect to its particular focus on (i) the Turkish context in which immigration has become a major socio-political issue for the last decade, and (ii) the public discourse appearing on an online platform where personal and grassroot voices are possible to trace, rather than the analysis of traditional forms of media discourses on refugees (e.g. print media, tv news, political speeches and so on).

2. Theoretical framework and literature review

2.1. Reconfiguring social media and critical discourse analysis

CDA primarily concentrates on the construction, naturalization, institutionalization, and transformation of power and ideology through and within discourse as well as the control of or access to discourse. van Dijk (2001) identifies CDA as "a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context" (p. 352). The definition highlights that language use and linguistic structures are surrounded by ideology/power relations.

Yet, the field of critical discourse studies still predominantly keeps its attention on the traditional and unidirectional texts produced by powerful institutions and/or elites (e.g. newspaper texts, political speeches, official policy documents). However, compared to such forms of top-down and stable *elite* discourses, participatory social media texts differ significantly in that they tend to be "fluid, changeable and non-static" (KhosraviNik, 2018, p. 582). The biggest challenge that CDA has faced in the last decade, in this senseis the necessity to redirect its focus to the contexts of online communicative environments and reconfigure its analytical processes accordingly, since social media and internet identify how people communicate, express themselves and regulate their lives in the current era. The traditional, unidirectional and top-down mass media communication which typically imposes on the *ordinary* is now being replaced with a dynamic, multi-directional and simultaneous form of digitally mediated communication characterized by the very agency of the *ordinary*. The strict boundaries disconnecting the author, authority or controlling power from the target audience become blurred or completely disappear.

This substantial shift is reflected in the formal characteristics of the texts as well, since the online communicative environment affords new communicative resources that are uniquely used in social media such as tagging, likes, annotation, sharing, etc. (KhosraviNik and Esposito, 2018). Such unique resources offer a new type of multimodal communication including "varying combinations of oral, written, pictorial modes" (Blommaert and Rampton, 2011, p.6). As opposed to traditional texts, social media texts incline to be formed of highly multimodal elements such as images, graphics, videos; shorter chunks instead of larger bodies (Bouvier & Machin, 2018). To handle this new, creative and unpredictable use of linguistic and semiotic elements, multiple scholars have voiced a need for a *horizontal* contextualization of discourse in CDA through an ethnographic insight and a contextually-bound, user-centered approach (Blommaert, 2005; Herring, 2004). Despite agreeing with the need for the horizontal contextualization of discourse practices, KhosraviNik (2018), in his proposed framework of Social Media Critical Discourse Studies (SM-CDS), reminds us that the horizontal investigation of discursive practices needs to be "complemented by a vertical contextualization level which embeds both the text and the medium" (p. 585). Put it another way, macro-contextual accounts of power relations and asymmetries should continue to remain within the scope of critical discourse studies for the new media. In KhosraviNik's model of SM-CDS, the power of CDS lies in its endeavor and critical engagement to figure out how discourse in any medium shape and are shaped by social and political domains. Therefore, CDA can methodologically maintain its attention on the content, meaning, processes and broader socio-political impact and can be used as a relevant, efficient framework for the online environment (p. 587). What has inspired and motivated us for our present study is the proposition that CDA might accommodate significant possibilities of analysis in a new medium of communicative environment. Therefore, our paper suggests that CDA, an approach originally developed for the analysis of traditional mediums of communication, might serve as a fruitful tool for investigating the online space —despite potential challenges/differences— to understand how language is strategically used by social media users, both as authors and targets of the texts.

2.2. Online practices: Constructing hate, hostility and collective national identities

Social media platforms have the potential to open up a new path of research since (i) they create new forms of interaction and socialities, and (ii) allow the researcher to have access to bottom-up, personal discourses which is usually more difficult to reach. After Zappavigna, (2011, 2012, 2015) introduced Twitter hashtags as social metadata and as a semiotic resource initiating *searchable talk,* research on Twitter hashtags has started to gain momentum in recent years. Scott (2018) for instance, underscores hashtags' key role in "facilitating content searches and aggregating content" (p. 58). However, hashtags achieve much more than just ensuring searchability and findability of online real-time utterances. They have the potential power to constitute, reflect on and represent multilayered and multimodal online actions that function to produce or disseminate politically loaded meanings. Such functions of Twitter hashtags as a form of communicative and discursive action well exemplify the radical transformation in the ways and domains we create, explore or negotiate meaning.

In a related discussion of hashtags as a possible field site in ethnographic research, Bonilla and Rosa, (2015) emphasize such a function that enables users to "indicate a meaning that might not be otherwise apparent" (p.5). Hashtags, in this sense, might work as a platform for "collectively identifying, articulating, and contesting racial injustices from the in-group perspectives of racialized populations" (p. 6). Bonilla and Rosa underscore that hashtags might become useful tools to raise awareness and give voice to the dominated and discriminated, which is usually not possible in mainstream media. Other anthropological, sociolinguistic and CDS studies also draw our attention to how digitally-mediated online communication might operate to form emancipatory social movements or revolutions. To exemplify, Idle and Nunns, (2011) remind us that during the Egyptian revolution, Twitter become both the only alternative press and "a site for emancipating bursts of self-expression" (as cited in Chiluwa, 2012, p. 218). Similarly, Chiluwa (2012), in his study exploring Biafra online campaign groups, argues that social media networks have become sites to defend, support and mobilize online social protests and resistance.

Nonetheless, it is not possible to claim that hashtags or other online practices are constantly used to express support, solidarity, and cooperation in favor of the disadvantaged groups or individuals. On the contrary, counter-motivations are commonly encountered as observed in case of the hashtag under scrutiny in this paper: *#ülkemdesuriyeliistemiyorum (#idontwantsyriansinmycountry)*. Xenophobic and racist comments are easily disseminated through social media sites. In their study on Persion nationalism and anti-Arab discourses, KhosraviNik and Zia, (2014) affirm this reverse role of social media by discussing that a Persian nationalist identity is (re)-constructed with respect to an opposition to a "perceived cultural invasion of the Arabic Other" through Facebook posts (p. 755). In a more recent study, KhosraviNik and Esposito, (2018) argue how communicative affordances of the participatory web have opened up new possibilities for spreading hate due to the factors of anonymity followed by disinhibition, de-individuation, group salience and polarization in the case of gender-based hostility and online misogyny (p. 47–48). Similarly, in her study, Kreis (2017) closely looks into online discourses of refugees and immigrants in Europe to understand the dynamics of the proliferation of hate towards refugees on Twitter. By employing a CDA approach, she examines tweets including the hashtag *#refugeesnotwelcome* and seeks answers to the questions of how refugees in Europe are represented and how the racist and discriminatory discourses are built against them. Her findings show that a negative-other representation of refugees has been established through the systematic use of several nomination, argumentation, perspectivization, and intensification strategies. The arguments of the online users mainly include the depiction of refugees as criminals and threats (p. 511). By circulating stories, images or news about immigrants in which immigrants are described as criminals or threats, online users create a national(ist) ingroup against an outgroup who does not belong to Europe, and present themselves as legitimized agents who claim the right to discriminate (p. 511).

2.3. Representation of Syrian refugees in the Turkish context

A vast literature within the paradigm of CDA on the discursive constructions of migrants and refugees have primarily focused on European contexts and the print media (Baker et al., 2008; Baker & McEnery, 2005; KhosraviNik, 2009; KhosraviNik et al., 2012; van Dijk, 2002). Compared to the Global Northern contexts, studies of discourse and migration are still rare in Turkey although they gained momentum within the last decade after the outbreak in Syria in 2011, followed by the most drastic forced migration movement of our age. Existing studies concentrating on Syrian refugees in Turkey have centered around refugee representations in the newsprint media (i.e. news and newspapers). In Efe's (2019) study, the representations of asylum seekers were investigated by using a corpus-based approach. The data retrieved from five newspapers during a four-year period has revealed that conflicting discourses on asylum seekers co-exist in the newspaper texts. While humanitarian and aid discourses have been observed as the most common topics in the corpus, Syrian people were treated as passive and victimized actors in the news texts to construct a positive self-image of Turkey as the host-country (p. 16). Syrian asylum seekers were portrayed either as a needy group of people or potential threats to the economy, culture and security in the country (p.16). Similarly, Pandır et al. (2015) have found that in the Turkish press, stereotypical representations of asylum seekers are reproduced; asylum seekers are described as either poor/helpless victims or threats to Turkey (p. 21). In Göker and Keskin's (2015) study, representation of refugees and asylum seekers were surrounded by the theme of 'problem' (p. 254). Refugees were identified as economic burdens, problems, victims, passive agents, and scapegoats. All the studies above further underlined that the perspectives adopted and presented by the newspapers were in parallel to the political and ideological positionings of the newspapers or news agencies and their political proximity to the government. Doğanay and Çoban-Keneş, (2016) have encountered a more negative evaluation of refugees in the news. The problematization of Syrian refugees emerged on three discursive domains as threats, reasons of economic problems and their excessive visibility (p. 144). Narlı et al. (2019) have uncovered a gendered discrimination towards Syrian women in Turkish newspapers, where a dilemma on the representation level of refugee women was apparent. Syrian women were framed as victims of violence and abuse on the one hand, and pictured as criminal elements and threats to Turkish families and national demography.

3. Data collection and analytical framework

Eliciting data from social media for qualitative research purposes requires a careful sampling process. For an elaborated analysis of narrower research questions, collecting a small size of data rather than larger samples is encouraged (Page et al., 2014). Herring (2004) and Androutsopoulos (2013) propose several sampling techniques for online data: random sampling, sampling by theme, sampling by time, sampling by phenomenon, sampling by group and sampling by convenience. Following Page et al. (2014), Herring (2004) and Androutsopoulos (2013), we have confined our dataset to the number of one-hundred.

We have first limited our dataset with the hashtag *#ülkemdesuriyeliistemiyorum*. However, since the hashtag pool was extremely large, we have applied a time filter and chose tweets posted in a single day, January 1, 2019. Since the above-mentioned video broadcasted on Twitter within the very first minutes of 2019 initiated and elevated the hashtag activity, the same day was thought to be the most appropriate timespan to observe growing reactions. To further narrow down and randomize the dataset, we have only collected the first one hundred tweets posted on January 1, 2019. Tweets posted in languages other than Turkish, tweets containing only the #hashtag with no other post elements, tweets including advertisements, retweets without any comments and tweets not viewed by the public but a private audience have been eliminated from the dataset. The users have been anonymized but their tweets, links of the tweets and screenshots have been collected and saved by the researchers.

The sampling method has its own limitations. First, the interactions between the tweets (i.e. responses to one tweet) have not been selected for analysis. Second, discourses of resistance using the same hashtag have not been covered in the study since they have not appeared within our timespan. Third, the small dataset sorted by date and hour does not allow a longitudinal investigation of the hashtag to observe its evolution and transformation. However, the research at hand has a specified purpose of understanding the underlying discursive dynamics of the discourses of exclusion, hate, and discrimination within the online sphere. Therefore, our sampling was still useful to provide us with a comprehensive understanding of how the discourses of animosity have been initially built and justified by online media users and how those add to the broader operating of discriminatory socio-political engagements.

Informed by the Social Media Critical Discourse Studies framework, this study follows and adopts the analytical framework of the Discourse-Historical Approach proposed by Reisigl and Wodak (2001) particularly for the investigation of social discrimination, institutional racism, xenophobia, and antisemitism. DHA allows us to trace the construction and operation of online hate towards refugees at the textual, discursive and extralinguistic social/political levels and discuss the connections of *horizontal* and *vertical* discourses. The data was first investigated at the level of surface structure. Nomination and predication strategies are explored in the tweets with the hashtag *#ülkemdesuriyeliistemiyorum*. At this stage, the focus was kept on the linguistic structures of naming and references to social actors as well as the characteristics attributed to refugees. Following the predication and nomination analysis, an in-depth analysis dealing with argumentative features (uses of topoi) and the intensification/mitigation strategies have been carried out. At this level, (i) the arguments that are employed in the discourses and (ii) whether the utterances are intensified or mitigated have been sought. Lastly, the findings have been contextualized within a wider discussion of nationalism and discrimination in the discussion section.

4. Analysis and findings

4.1. Nomination and predication

With regard to referential/nomination and predication strategies, Reisigl and Wodak (2001) ask two main analytical questions to focus on: (i) "How are persons named and referred to linguistically?" (ii) "What traits, characteristics, qualities, and features are attributed to them?" (p. 44). In this respect, the hashtag *#ülkemdesuriyeliistemiyorum (#idontwantsyriansinmycountry)* suggests a very straightforward idea about the discursive construction of '*us*' and '*them*' as main "fundaments of discourses of identity and difference" (Wodak, 2001, p. 73). The hashtag itself is formed in such a way that Syrians are characterized as the obvious outgroup (*them)* against the Turkish people who are positioned as the active agents of the sentence and as the owners of the country (***i** don't want Syrians **in my country***). In line with their grammatical agency, individual Turks are also built as the legitimized group who have the right to decide on the status of refugees in the country. Table 1 illustrates the nomination/referential and predication strategies used by Twitter users to define and characterize Syrian refugees:

An overwhelming number of tweets including the hashtag *#ülkemdesuriyeliistemiyorum* consist of at least one of the lexical items of nomination and predication listed in the table. The most obvious strategy concerning nomination and predication is building a strong contrast between *'us'* and *'them'* by using deictic pronouns (*they, them, these, those* against *we, us, I*) to create the ingroup and outgroup as well as to define Syrians as people who are different, who do not belong in Turkey:

(1) Hepsinden nefret ediyoru**m**. Ülkedeki dertler bitmiyor bir de **bu sığıntıları** neden çekiyoru**z** anlamıyorum! Ölse**ler** gram üzülme**m**. Bir de sanki kendi ülkelerindelermiş gibi rahat ve utanmazlar #ÜlkemdeSuriyeliİstemiyorum

(***I** hate **them** all! We have enough problems in the country, why do **we** have to put up with **those parasites**, **I** don't understand! **I** wouldn't be sad at all if **they** died. And **they** are so comfortable and shameless as if **they** live in **their** own country #idontwantsyriansinmycountry)*

(2) Bunlar mağdur değil, **bunlar** muhacir değil, **bunlar** mülteci değil, **bunlar bizim** din kardeşimiz değil, **bunlar** şerefsiz! #ÜlkemdeSuriyeliİstemiyorum

*(**These** are not victims, **these** are not muhajirun, **these** are not refugees, **these** are not **our** coreligionists, **these** are scumbags! #idontwantsyriansinmycountry)*

(3) Bunlardan biri ajan da olabilir, **bunlardan** biri elkaide, Işid üyesi olabilir, **bunlardan** biri iyi silah eğitimi almış terörist olabilir, Araştırmadan **bunları Ülkeme** getirip, **bizlerin** can güvenliğini nasıl hiçe saydınız aklım almıyor. #ÜlkemdeSuriyeliİstemiyorum

*(One of **these** might be an agent, one of **these** might be the member of El-kaide, Isis, one of **these** might be a terrorist with an advanced weapon training. Without any background search, how did you bring **these** into **my** country and disregard **our** security? I can't wrap my head around it #idontwantsyriansinmycountry)*

Deictic expressions are heavily relied on in the three examples above to clearly draw the boundaries of the group memberships and define who the insiders and outsiders are. Excerpts 1, 2 and

Table 1
Nomination and predication strategies.

Nomination	Predication
Naming:	**Negative Qualities Atrributed:**
Suriyeliler (Syrians)	**işgalci, istilacı** (invaders)
onlar (they)	**asalak, bedavacı, sığıntı, parazit** (parasites, freeloaders)
bunlar (these)	**tacizci, tecavüzcü**, **sapık** (harassers, rapists, perverts)
bu adamlar (these men)	**hırsız** (thieves)
Araplar (Arabs)	**vatan haini** (traitors)
sözde mülteci (so-called refugees)	**korkak** (cowards)
sözde/güya misafir (so-called guests)	**terrorist** (terrorists)
sözde mağdur/mazlum (so-called victims)	**düşman** (enemies)
	yük (burden)
	tehdit, potansiyel tehdit (threats, potential threats)

3 demonstrate that deictic expressions work in the very same way in the discourses of online environments as they do in offline domains. An exclusionary discourse is generated through a number of deictic pronouns that make direct references to a national community and to a space that belongs to that particular nation. Personal pronouns '*we*', '*us*' '*our*', '*my*' function as ideological devices which assume and mark a particular country, Turkey, as the homeland of a certain group and exclude others from the referred place. The uses of '*they*', '*them*', '*these*' and '*those*' complementarily frame the discourse of exclusion by defining Syrian refugees as the different who do not belong. As Kreis (2017) also points out, deictic forms "point to the context and center of the speaker" (p. 502). In this way, they effectively construct the ingroup/outgroup and the included/excluded dichotomies. While personal pronouns are primarily used by the authors for self-definition, demonstrative pronouns are overused to refer to the Syrian refugees, which puts categorical and ideological distance between the two groups of communities.

Another strategy within the framework of nomination/reference is the indication of irony and sarcasm while referring to Syrians as refugees:

(4) Bizim Mehmedimiz Suriye topraklarında şehit olurken, bu **sözde** mülteciler Taksim'de Suriye sloganları ile yılbaşı kutlaması yapıyor.. Nargile içip, kadınları taciz eden, Taksim barlarından çıkmayan tosunlar defolup gidin, ülkenizi savunun #ÜlkemdeSuriyeliİstemiyorum!!

*(While our Mehmed[1] dies a martyr in Syrian lands, these **so-called refugees** celebrate new year in Taksim and chant slogans of Syria. You hookah smoking, women harrasing overfeds who never leave Taksim pubs, piss off and defend your country #idontwantsyriansinmycountry!!)*

(5) Valla hocam eğer Suriyeli **'mülteciler'** benim ülkemde, benden çok daha iyi şartlar altında yaşıyorsa, zuppeler sağda solda hır gür çıkarıyorsa, elalemin karısına kızına çok gevsekce laf atabiliyorsa ve ben #ÜlkemdeSuriyeliİstemiyorum diyip faşist oluyorsam, evet ben bir Faşistim!

*(Well hocam[2], if Syrian **'refugees'** live in much better conditions than I do in my own country, if these snobs provoke fights here and there, make passes at others' wives and daughters and if I become a fascist when I say #idontwantsyriansinmycountry, yes then I am a fascist!)*

The ironic and disbelieving tone is particularly signaled by means of the word '*so-called*' in excerpt 4 and by the use of the quotation marks in excerpt 5. The quotation marks and the word '*so-called*' create a sarcastic, ironic effect insinuating that the word refugee does not actually apply to Syrians. To be more precise, the linguistic tools used to show irony imply that the positive meaning of the word refugee does not match the community it refers to and therefore Syrians' refugee status is not interpreted as a valid argument for the author of the text. Kreis (2017) has also presented similar examples in which '*refugees*' and '*(im)migrants*' were used with quotation marks to incorporate the ironic tone to the tweets with the hashtag *#refugeesnotwelcome* in the European context. These two linguistic tools voice a distinction between real vs. bogus refugees, as discussed in Baker et al. (2008). Such a comparison argues that bogus refugees arrived in Turkey to abuse the rights given to a idealized group of real refugees who had to flee their country due to the war.

The excerpts above successfully illustrate how nomination can contribute to the discursive construction of exclusion. The traits and qualities attributed to Syrian refugees residing in Turkey also deserve closer attention. As Table 1 demonstrates, characteristics attributed to refuges by online media users are intensely negative. They are mainly characterized as (i) criminals who steal, kill, rape and harass; (ii) as traitors and cowards who fled their own countries and betrayed their homelands; (iii) as invaders and parasites who invaded Turkey, take advantage of Turkey's economic-social sources, live comfortably by means of state aids without the obligation to work to make a living; (iv) as enemies and threats who are possibly terrorists and have the potential to kill Turkish citizens; (v) as fake refugees, fake coreligionists and muhajirun. The use of the word *muhajurin* with its religious-hostility-hospitality embedded connotations is especially interesting. The word can refer to either the (a) first group of Muslims who emigrated from Mecca to Medinah with the prophet Muhammad in the year 622, or (b) the 10 million Ottoman Muslim citizens (including Turks, Albanians, Bosniaks, Circassians, Crimean Tatars, and Pomaks) who emigrated 'back' to the 'motherland' Anatolia from hostile regions during the fall of the empire in the late 18th century until the end of the 20th century.

The previous studies on the Syrian refugees in the Turkish press have emphasized a dilemma portraying refugees and asylum seekers both as victims, sufferers or the aggrieved and potential threats (Efe, 2019; Pandır et al., 2015; Göker and Keskin, 2015). However, unlike the print press, a more hateful and discriminatory discourse is consistently perpetuated by the users on Twitter. Example 3, for instance, pictures refugees as terrorists who entered the country by taking advantage of the migration policy of Turkey towards refugees and who pose a threat to the Turkish community What is distinctive in the naming practices in our study is the objection to an assumed brotherhood based on religion. Most of the governmental campaigns of the refugee policies involve references to the shared religion and brotherhood on the basis of Islam. Although these discourses have intensively relied on the argument that Turkey holds the responsibility to help suffering Muslims as a country who also has a by majority Muslim population, the public discourses reverse the discourse of the Islamic brotherhood by naming refugees as *fake muhajirunsor fake coreligionists*. The emphasis on religious solidarity and responsibility seems to have provoked these hostile attitudes and verbalizations.

The examples below show more predication strategies used in other tweets:

(6) Vatanı için ölmeyen ülkemde taciz hırsızlık, tecavüz gibi suçları işleyen ülkeme gelip birde nankörce laf eden şeref yoksunu arap müsvettelerini ülkemde istemiyorum #ÜlkemdeSuriyeliİstemiyorum

(I don't want in my country honourless Arabs who do not die for their own countries; commit crimes of theft, harassment, rape and behave ungratefully in my country #idontwantsyriansinmycountry)

(7) Kendi ülkemde parka suriye ismini taktılar istila ettiniz koca ülkeyi defolun #ülkemdesuriyeliistemiyorum

(They named a park as Syria in my own country, you invaded the whole country, get out #idontwantsyriansinmycountry)

(8) Sapık subyancı arap kulturunun Türk topraklarında nefes almaya bile hakkı yoktur #ÜlkemdeSuriyeliİstemiyorum

(Perverted, pedophilic Arab culture does not even have the right to breathe on Turkish land #idontwantsyriansinmycountry)

[1] a metaphorical use of a proper male name to refer to Turkish soldiers.

[2] a term which originally connoted a religious educator, currently stripped from its original meaning and is colloquially used to address one another.

Similar to the previous examples, refugees in excerpts 6, 7 and 8 are only associated with extremely negative, exclusionary and stereotypical traits. In excerpt 6, the negative attributions are listed as committing crimes of theft, harassment or rape as well as cowardice for running from the war. In excerpt 7, Syrian refugees are blamed for invading the country. In excerpt 8, they are identified as perverts and pedophiles. What is striking about example 8 is that the exclusion of the Syrians overtly operates at the level of nations. Turkish nation's superiority is emphasized through the extreme-negative attributions of Arab communities by assigning them the role of sexual perverts who molest children. The nomination and predication strategies establish and circulate the negative-other representation of Syrian refugees, and exclude them from the in-group who is discursively qualified as the only legitimate national community to live in Turkey. Self-positive presentation is achieved through victimizing the Turkish community who are claimed to suffer from the acts of refugee populations in Turkey, while the negative-other presentation is accomplished by marginalizing the refugees through relating them with serious crimes and invalidating their refugee status.

The dataset analyzed in our study so far strongly confirms an alarming rate of Anti-Arab and anti-refugee sentiments and growing racism towards Syrian refugees in the Turkish context, surrounded by several arguments which will be problematized in the next section.

4.2. Argumentation strategies

Social exclusion and discrimination occur through multiple implicit and explicit arguments. Wodak (2001) offers an analytical framework of arguments by providing a number of *topoi*. Topoi can be defined in her own words as "parts of argumentation which belong to the obligatory, either explicit or inferable premises" (p. 74) and serve as means to connect the arguments with the claims and conclusion. The most common topos observed among selected tweets is the *topos of danger and threat*. Wodak (2001) formulates the topos of danger and threat as follows: When an action !poses dangerous or threatening consequences, someone either "should not perform it" or "one should do something against them" (p. 75):

(9) Hükümetin ülkeye doldurmakla övündüğü, her birisi askerlik çağında Suriyeli kaçkınlar bunlar. Önlem alınmazsa çok ciddi sorunlar açacaklar başımıza. #ÜlkemdeSuriyeliİstemiyorum

(These are fugitives at military draft age whom the government brags about filling up the country with. Unless necessary precautions are taken, they will cause very serious problems for us #idontwantsyriansinmycountry)

(10) Çocukları eğitemiyoruz. Çöp toplayan, gece yarısı kavşaklarda dilenen çocuklar bu ülkeye düşman olarak büyüyorlar. Potansiyel tehlike! #ÜlkemdeSuriyeliİstemiyorum

(We cannot educate (their) children. Those children collecting garbage, begging for money at the crossroads are growing up as enemies of this country. Potential danger! #idontwantsyriansinmycountry)

(11) Ülkemin her yerinde bu sevimsizleri görmek zorunda deg ılim! Hırsızlık bunlarda, taciz bunlarda, tecavüz bunlarda, pişkinlik bunlarda! Yakında bizi kendi memleketimizde mülteci hissetirecekler ya bu ne! YETER! #ÜlkemdeSuriyeliİstemiyorum

(I don't have to see these repulsive people! They steal, harass, rape, they are shameless! Soon, they will make us feel like refugees in our own home, what is this! ENOUGH! #idontwantsyriansinmycountry)

The tweets above manifest a discriminatory attitude towards refugees by a topos of threat and danger. In examples 9 and 10, Turkish people and authorities are warned and called for duty against a potential danger because of the refugees' existence in Turkey. The topos of danger and threat in example 9 is further formed as a tool of political opposition to criticize the government for the refugee policies. Example 11 displays "a reversal of victim-victimizer" as noted by Wodak (2001, p. 74) by claiming that the refugees who are depicted as the actors of multiple types of crimes overwhelm and pose a threat to Turkish society. The argument in example 11 leads to the assumption that Turks face the danger of losing their majority, comfort, and safety in the country and that they will eventually become refugees in their own land, all of which operate to legitimize the hostility. Refugees are therefore held responsible for causing chaos and claiming rights belonging to the legitimate ingroup. The arguments suggest that the local population cannot deal with the refugees entering the country and they inevitably grow a hostile attitude.

(12) Ben işsiz evde oturuyor geleceğimi düşünürken adamlar yılbaşı kutluyor yazıklar olsun... #ÜlkemdeSuriyeliİstemiyorum

(While I sit at home unemployed and think of my future, those men celebrate new year, shame on them... #idontwantsyriansinmycountry)

(13) Bizim vergilerimizle yapılan evlerde oturuyorlar asgari ucretlinin hakkini yiyolar bide yetmezmis gibi benim ülkemde suriye bayragi acip egleniyorlar bizim kahraman askerlerimiz orda savasirken artik yeter. #ÜlkemdeSuriyeliİstemiyorum

(They live in houses built with the taxes we paid, exploit the rights of the minimum wage workers. On top of that, they wave the Syrian flag in my country and have fun while our hero soldiers fight in Syria, enough already. #idontwantsyriansinmycountry)

(14) #ÜlkemdeSuriyeliİstemiyorum Milyonlarca işsiz varken Suriyelilere maaş veriliyor

(#idontwantsyriansinmycountry While there are millions of unemployed people, Syrians get salaries)

The main argumentation in excerpts 12, 13 and 14 is framed around the ideas that (i) the local population becomes deprived of better life conditions or the welfare policies they deserve and (ii) refugees abuse the opportunities presented to them by the Turkish state. Such an argumentation framework is in line with *the topos of abuse* which proposes that if a right or help is abused by the foreigners, those rights need to be changed or withdrawn (Wodak, 2001). Syrian refugees, in this sense, are portrayed as a unified lazy and coward group of people who can afford to live in Turkey without the need to work via the aid and reform packages kept from the local community and offered to them. Most of the arguments and reactions produced against Syrian refugees mention dissatisfaction or rage for their leisure time spent for fun and the new year celebrations. The reactions imply that the tolerance towards refugees becomes possible only when they suffer and act as aggrieved. Enjoying any type of activity is interpreted in a way of demanding equal rights and life, which only increases the existing hostility. In parallel with the topos of abuse, *topos of burdening* suggests that if people are experiencing several problems, one should act in order to diminish these burdens (Wodak, 2001). Within the frame of the topos of burdening, the arguments claiming that Syrians exploit the economic and social sources of

the country and take advantage of extra aids which were abstained from Turkish citizens implicitly demand that officials (i.e. the government) need to take precautionary actions to apply several restrictions on the rights of refugees.

(15) #ÜlkemdeSuriyeliİstemiyorum misafirlik de bir yere kadar bence herkes kendi toprağında mutludur ev sahibi olarak arkalarından itmek bize yakışmayacağı için herkes evine.

(#idontwantsyriansinmycountry being a guest is only OK for a certain time period, I think everyone is happier in his/her own land, it would be indecent for us as their host to push them out forcefully. So, everyone should go home.)

(16) Mağdurlar dedik mazlumlar dedik misafir dedik ama misafirlik bitsin artık #ÜlkemdeSuriyeliİstemiyorum

(We said they were victims, we said they were aggrieved, we said they were guests but this visit should endnow#idontwantsyriansinmycountry)

Excerpts 15 and 16 present a clear example of the use of the *topos of name-interpretation*. Wodak (2001) explains topos of name-interpretation/definition with respect to the following rule: If a person is named or characterized as something, that same person should carry the literal meaning of that name or characteristics (p.74). Syrian refugees were first introduced to the public by the press and the political discourses as 'short-term guests' while Turkey was presented as the benevolent host helping a Muslim community. Although the refugees did not return to their country within the last ten years and their number vastly increased, the discourses of *guest-host* and *tolerance towards the guest* are still prevalent in both the media and political discourses. The topos of name-interpretation is employed in order to build the argument that if refugees are accepted to the country as guests, they need to return to their home eventually, the sooner being the better.

Apart from the topoi listed by Wodak (2001), the most unique and common argumentation framework unraveled in our dataset to racialize and illegalize the refugees is the construction of a causal link between the Syrian community and the Turkish soldiers serving at the Syrian borderland or in Syria:

(17) Türk evlatları Suriye'de 5′er 5′er Şehit olurken, Suriyeliler Türkiye'de 5′er 5′er doğuruyor.. #ÜlkemdeSuriyeliİstemiyorum

(While sons of the Turks die martyrs in Syria by fives, Syrians give birth by fives in Turkey #idontwantsyriansinmycountry)

(18) Biz savaşa girelim, onları kurtaralım müslüman kardeşimizdir diyelim, onların sınırları içinde onlarca asker şehit verelim, onlar için evimizin ocağı sönsün. Onlar bizden daha iyi yararlansın bizim ülkemizde, onlarda coşarak yılbaşı kutlasın #ÜlkemdeSuriyeliİstemiyorum

(We go to the war for them, save them, consider them as our muslim brothers, dozens of our soldiers die martyrs within their borders, our families perish for them. They live better than us in our country, celebrate new year all enthused. #idontwantsyriansinmycountry)

Example 17 puts forward the argument that Turkish soldiers die to protect the Syrians in Syria while Syrians reproduce in enormous numbers in a safe environment provided to them by Turkish soldiers, which might result in Syrians' outnumbering the Turkish population eventually. In example 18, Syrian refugees are pointed out as the primary reason why Turkish soldiers joined the war in Syria. While the Turkish society is glorified for its noble aim to rescue and take care of the civilians in Syria, Syrian refugees who have resettled in Turkey are presented as the main reason for the death of Turkish soldiers in masses.

4.3. Intensification vs. mitigation

In the process of the discursive production of an exclusionary, discriminatory and racist rhetoric, the utterances might undergo a process of mitigation or intensification in accordance with the context, genre, language users and so forth. van Dijk (1993), for instance, states that in a context model where uttering personal opinions about minorities or refugees is not appropriate, disclaimers such as *'I have nothing against refugees, but…'* or '*there are also intelligent Blacks, but…'* might be used to mitigate the illocutionary force of the utterance to avoid the voicing of opinions (p. 99). The use of such disclaimers is observed among the selection of tweets in the present study as well:

(19) Ben ırkçı değilim Yılbaşı kutlaman da dert değil Ama benim ülkemde başka bayrak açamazsın #ÜlkemdeSuriyeliİstemiyorum

(I am not a racist, and I don't mind if you celebrate the new year. But you cannot wave another flag in my country #idontwantsyriansinmycountry)

(20) Ben ırkçı değilim, hakkımızı arıyorum. Benim ülkemin vatandaşı, benim ülkemde 2. Sınıf insan muamelesi görüyorsa sesimi çıkarırım #ÜlkemdeSuriyeliİstemiyorum

(I am not a racist, I am standing up for our rights. If the citizensof my countryaretreated likesecond-classpeople, I will speak up #idontwantsyriansinmycountry)

The disclaimers followed by different argumentation strategies above work to mitigate the negative meaning of the utterance by the speaker or writer. However, apart from a small number of examples, two of which were presented above, it is not possible to evaluate mitigation strategies as common discursive strategies in the case of the hashtag *#ülkemdesuriyeliistemiyorum*. Rather, several intensification strategies which are used to intensify the negative associations are commonly encountered and outnumber mitigation strategies. The foremost and unique intensification strategy in our study is found to be the use of the intensifier formulated as the following: '*if x is racism, then I am racist*'.

(21) Bunun adı ırkçılık ise ben de ırkçıyım ülkemde misafir olarak gelene kapım açık ama ülkede sorun olan yabancı istemiyorum #ÜlkemdeSuriyeliİstemiyorum

(If this is called racism, yes I am a racist too. My doors are wide open to those arriving as a guest in my country but I don't want foreigners who cause trouble in the country #idontwantsyriansinmycountry)

(22) Hain, soysuz köpeklerin savaştan kaçıp, vatanlarını satıp benim ülkemde bayrak açmasını hazzedemiyorum eğer bu ırkçılık ise Yaşasın Irkçı Türkiye! #UElkemdeSuriyeliİstemiyorum

(I can't stand that these traitorous, degenerate dogs run from the war, betray their countries and wave flags in my country. If this is racism, Long Live Racist Turkey!)

As van Dijk (1993) underlines, some situations and contexts require mitigation strategies to hide the personal voice, which beomes the case particularly for institutional settings. The

informal, online public settings, on the contrary, might provide multiple users to explicitly construct an exclusionary discourse strengthened with intensifiers and circulate it freely as exemplified in excerpts 21 and 22.

(23) Bütün Suriyeliler orospu çocuğudur. #ÜlkemdeSuriyeliİstemiyorum

(All Syrians are sons of bitches #idontwantsyriansinmycountry)

(24) Aq kendi ülkemde mülteci gibi oldum gönderin artık şu vatansız ibneleri #ÜlkemdeSuriyeliİstemiyorum

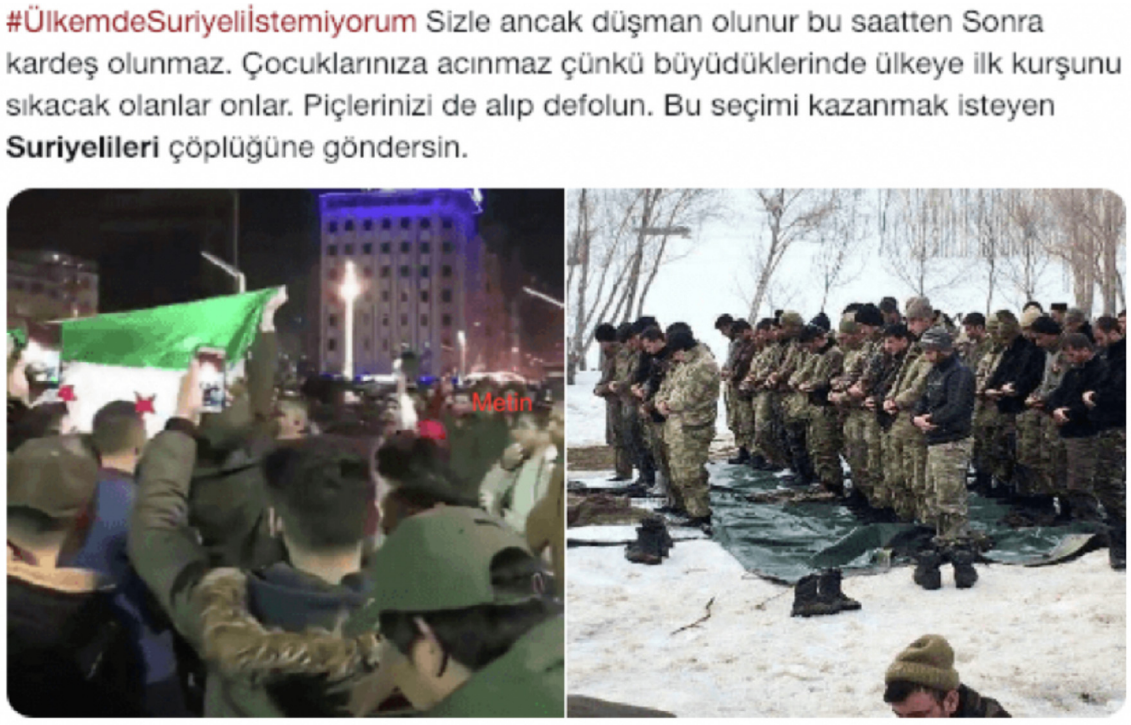
(Fy (fuck you) I became a refugee in my own country, send those nationless faggots back #idontwantsyriansinmycountry)

Another strategy of intensification is 'bad' language (i.e. using swear words, curses, insults). Excerpts 23 and 24 provide solid examples of impolite/aggressive language including insulting words to intensify the negative-other representation of the Syrian refugees. Other examples include insulting refugees by calling them animals (e.g. dogs, bullocks, donkeys and so on) and swearing at them (e.g. fuck them, sons of bitches, faggots, etc.). Bad language creates a strong effect which intensifies negative emotions against refugees and construct '*us*' as the legitimized group members who hold the power to dehumanize and humiliate '*them*'.

As noted by Kreis (2017) as well, a considerable number of tweets in our dataset are observed to be multimodal, consisting of visuals such as videos, pictures, screenshots of old news published in the press about the crimes conducted by refugees and slogans or quotes designed in the form of images as exemplified in Fig. 1.

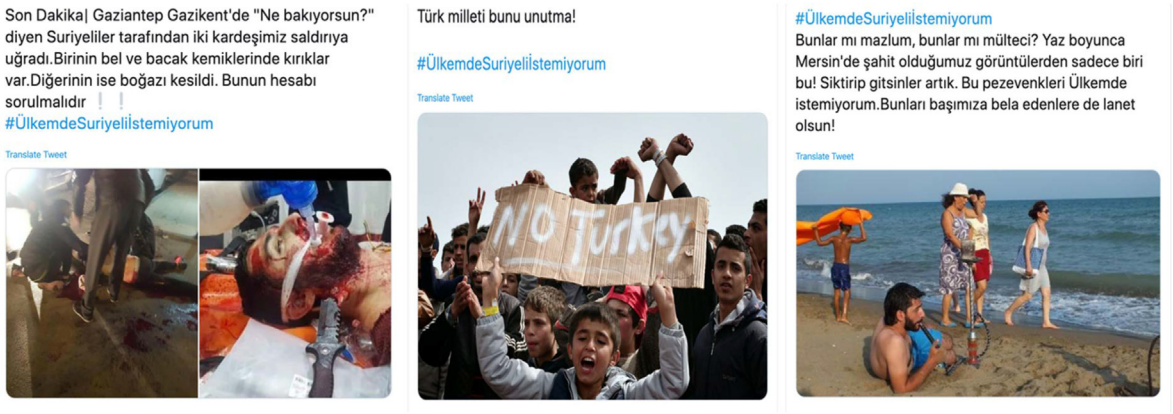
For managing the discursive construction of ingroups and outgroups to build a negative-other and positive-self representation, a sharp contrast has been repeatedly built through the visuals (both pictures and videos) in the form of a divided image comparing refugees who dance and chant slogans with a flag at the new year celebrations in Istanbul in contrast to the Turkish soldiers who are on duty at the Syrian border or in Syria. In the figure above, while the first half of the visual shows a scene from the new year celebrations of Syrians in Taksim, the second half includes a picture showing Turkish soldiers who are performing the prayer during their service. The function of the multimedia is twofold: (i) Syrian refugees are once again represented stereotypically as cowards who ran from the responsibility of defending their countries; (ii) their Muslim identity is questioned and the discourse of Islamic brotherhood is questioned by showing Turkish soldiers who perform the prayer on duty against Syrian men celebrating the new year. Similar formats of comparison and contrast were frequently observed among the tweets. While the first part of the pictures/videos included scenes from the new year celebration, the second part mostly consisted of Turkish soldiers who are keeping watch, helping Syrians in the region and performing prayer; or scenes depicting the funeral ceremonies of the martyrs as illustrated in Fig. 2.

The first picture demonstrates two Turkish men who are allegedly attacked by Syrian people and severely injured. The second picture portrays a group of children who are allegedly Syrian and protesting against Turkey with a banner displaying the slogan "*No Turkey*". The last picture involves an allegedly Syrian man sunbathing on a beach in Turkey and smoking hookah. The use of multimodal elements accompanying the hashtag



(#idontwantsyriansinmycountry at this point it is only possible to become enemies of yours, let alone being brothers/sisters. Your children won't be pitied because they are the ones who will fire the first bullet to the country when they grow up. Take your bastards and get out. Those who want to win this election, send the Syrians to their dump.)

Fig. 1.



Last Minute! In Gaziantep, Gazikent, our two brothers have been attacked by Syrians who rounded on them by saying "Why are you looking?" One has broken bones in his waist and legs. The other's throat has been slit. They should be made to pay for this ! ! #idontwantsyriansinmycountry

Turkish nation, don't forget this! #idontwantsyriansinmycountry

#idontwantsyriansinmycountry Are they victims, are they refugees? This is only one of many scenes we have witnessed in Mersin during the whole summer. They should fuck off. I don't want these pimps. Damn the ones who made them our trouble too!)

Fig. 2.

#ülkemdesuriyeliistemiyorum serves as a strong intensification strategy that aims to arouse emotion to feed the hate discourse.

5. Discussion

Our study has attempted to investigate the exclusionary and discriminatory discourses towards Syrian refugees currently residing in Turkey by a group of social media (i.e. Twitter) users. The analysis of the selected tweets involving the hashtag *#ülkemdesuriyeliistemiyorum* aimed to provide an overall understanding of the ways refugees are delineated in online public discourses. The findings have unfolded that there are manifest differences between refugee representation in the traditional press as opposed to digitally-mediated, user-generated discourses. Compared to the newspaper and political discourses, online public discourses employ a sharper rhetorical tone and an intense negative portrayal of the refugees in Turkey. The use of the hashtag *#ülkemdesuriyeliistemiyorum* allows a huge number of online users to center around a shared nationalist agenda as well as to mark their group identity and belonging with an emphasis on national and moral superiority. The same hashtag also serves as a tool to create a unified, homogenous, harmful group of refugees. Compared to the findings of Kreis's (2017) study analyzing the hashtag *#refugeesnotwelcome*, the present study offers parallel results in terms of nomination, predication, perspectivization, and intensification strategies. Yet, attributions of refugees, use of bad language and culture-specific or socio-political connotations and argumentations (e.g. arguments around Islam or soldiers) come forward as distinct findings involving more hostile sentiments and reactions in the Turkish context.

The focal point of the digitally-mediated discourses of hostility and racism is found to be based on building dichotomies of *similarity* vs. *difference*, *in-group* vs. *out-group*, *Self* vs. *Other*. While scrutinizing the (re)construction and representation of refugees, our dataset has yielded that hate and hostility discourses towards refugees are constantly in operation to build a collective nationalist Turkish identity. This complementary and interlocking relationship between the hatred towards refugees and forming a collective identity is manifested at each category of our analysis (i.e. referential, argumentation, perspectivization). It should not come as a surprise to see how nationalism was reiterated through online discriminatory discourses since establishing a sense of *natural* belonging to a community necessitates the *unfamiliar* who does not belong. Uses of linguistic and discursive strategies illustrated in the study contribute to the reproduction of a 'banal nationalism' (as coined by Billig, 1995) which refers to the everyday renderings of nationalism to build a sense of shared collective identity in the form of continuous reminding of and references to national identity, which are integrated into politics, media and physical environment (e.g. national flags). What our study and others motivated by SM-CDS framework have uncovered is that such references to national identity are not only imposed upon through institutional ideological apparatus to a presumed passive audience but actively constituted and disseminated in more direct and intensified forms by the members of the society through new mediums of communication, adding to the existing historical, social and political context of nationalism. Therefore, our study contributes to KhosraviNik's (2018) argument in favor of a critically engaged discourse analysis of social media. Communicative actions in the online sphere differ significantly in the forms and manifestations of linguistic and semiotic resources. Yet, hierarchically built power relations continue to be (re)formulated through such different forms and manifestations.

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