

# REPORT ON HATE SPEECH IN SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC PERIOD

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## PREFACE

The Covid-19 pandemic, which has affected the whole world, has carried with it many questions and problem areas to the agenda. Some of these problem areas are the rising concern about the protection of personal data with the transfer of all communication activities to digital media and the increase in hate speech produced in the digital media. As the Alternative Informatics Association, we believe that monitoring, reporting and sharing these problem areas is an important effort in terms of creating awareness about and contributing to the fight against these problems that became apparent with the pandemic. With such a responsibility, we undertook the production of webinar materials to develop monitoring, reporting and digital literacy on two subjects within the scope of the "Things That Bind Us" support given to non-governmental organizations during the Covid-19 pandemic process by the European Union Sivil Düşün Programme. In this context, Faruk Çayır, the President of our Association, prepared the **Pandemic Tracking Apps and Monitoring of Personal Data Report**, and İlden Dirini and Gökçe Özsu prepared the **Report on Hate Speech in Social Media in the Covid-19 Pandemic Period** under the editorship of Assoc. Prof. Zeynep Özarslan, member of our association.

The pandemic tracing applications that were developed in almost all countries and became a part of daily life during the Covid-19 pandemic period, should be monitored and evaluated in the context of protection of personal data. Therefore, the first report evaluates the “Life Fits Home (HES)” application, specific to Turkey, on the basis of protection of personal data. Ministry of Health in Turkey implemented data surveillance based HES in order to prevent the spread of the pandemic. Technological solutions such as HES must be implemented by the public authority in a fair, transparent and accountable manner. As set out in our monitoring report, technological solutions such as HES are an outcome of political decision/will and contact tracing applications “will ensure that governments have a great oversight power; since sensitive data of individuals such as health, gender, age, language, religion, race, ethnic origin, nationality, immigration status or disability are processed, there is a serious risk of creating prejudice and discrimination in the society.”

Another fact that attracts attention in the pandemic period is the increase in and intermingling of various types of hate speech in the social media platforms in Turkey. Therefore, our second report deals with hate speech on social media platforms of YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, the types of hate speech, and the mechanisms of processing/legitimizing and naturalizing them as a discourse. The report demonstrates with examples how the increasing hate speech against particularly Chinese people, people over the age of 65 and LGBTI+ individuals is produced and circulated with user-generated content.

Finally, we prepared a webinar series by having talks with experts and academics on the issues of societies that became data, data surveillance, surveillance capitalism, digital security, personal data, protection of personal data, and pandemic tracing applications. In particular, we aimed to answer the question of what we can do about “protection of personal data” as non-governmental organizations and citizens, with these webinars uploaded to our Association's YouTube channel.

With these works, we aim to raise awareness about the right to data, protection of personal data and hate speech in social media, among citizens and all non-governmental organizations working on right-based issues. These reports are shared free of charge in Turkish and English on the website of our Association within the scope of open access and open science policy.

We wish that the **Pandemic Tracking Apps and Monitoring of Personal Data Report** and the **Report on Hate Speech in Social Media in the Covid-19 Pandemic Period** shall reach their readers, and the awareness of freedom of expression, right to data, transparency, accountability, access to information, open source and free software that we care about as the Association shall be implemented.

**Prof. Dr. Mutlu Binark and Dr. Yeliz Dede Özdemir**  
**Project Coordinators**  
**Ankara 26 September 2020**

## **Introduction**

Hate speech in Turkey is a phenomenon produced and circulated frequently both in traditional media channels and in social media platforms. Due to the structure of social media platforms that allow interaction between users, the generated hate speech becomes widespread and commonplace in a more effective way, thus, it can become accustomed and turn into hate crimes over time.

The association of the COVID-19 pandemic with the sale of exotic species in an animal market in Wuhan, China, without observing hygiene standards has turned the attention to the species sold there (Briggs, 2020). The relationship established between the pandemic and the exotic species, which are said to have no place in daily nutrition culture, although they are consumed from time to time in China, caused a new type of hate speech to be produced through the food cultures of the Chinese and Asians. According to the analysis of Teyit.org, one of the most prejudiced claims about the COVID-19 outbreak on social media is that the food made with these species in China caused the epidemic, and the hate speech was based on that prejudice and produced through cursing (Yilmaz & Keskin, 2020).

This kind of hate speech, which has been frequently produced since the first days of the pandemic, has run in parallel with the spread of fake news. The *infodemic* concept, introduced by the World Health Organization to draw attention to the widespread fake news, has emerged as a phenomenon that differentiates the COVID-19 pandemic from other pandemic types such as SARS and MERS. “Social media has enabled disinformation to spread and flourish at an unprecedented pace, creating an environment of uncertainty that fuels anxiety and racism at the personal and online level” (Hao & Basu, 2020).

On this basis, Alternatif Bilişim Derneği (Alternative Informatics Association) has closely kept track of the hate speech produced on social media since the first days of the pandemic. This monitoring act has revealed that the hatred speech produced and circulated in social media platforms was not directed only to the culinary culture of the Chinese and Asians, but also to the LGBTI + individuals and people over 65 years of age. Depending on developments in Turkey's social and political agenda, hate speech was seen to be directed to three clusters of social groups (Chinese people, elderly people, LGBTI + individuals) in the pandemic process. This report is for the content analysis of the hate speech produced with user-generated content on social media against these three groups during the pandemic process.

## Hate Speech and Hate Crime

Hate speech is a concept whose definition and scope is ambiguous. Fuat Keyman argues that the power of hate speech is based on these ambiguities (2013). Those who produce and spread hate speech can fully benefit from the legal and discursive protection arising from these ambiguities (Keyman, 2013, p.9). According to Ruth Wodak, this state of ambiguity appears as a strategy frequently used especially by far-right politicians in the production of hate speech (Wodak, 2015). Therefore, the struggle against hate speech should also include resolving the ambiguity of the concept.

Despite the conceptual ambiguities, it is seen that the use of official definitions brought by many international organizations at the legal level is increasingly established in practice and in literature. One of the most frequently cited is the official definition of the Committee of Ministers (CM). CM defines hate speech as: "Racial hatred, xenophobia, Antisemitism, or expressions that spread, encourage and justify all forms of expression that include other types of hatred based on intolerance" (as cited in Özarslan, 2013, p. 354). In addition to these expressions, aggressive nationalist, ethnocentric, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, speciesist expressions, as well as anti-minority and anti-immigrant expressions, and Holocaust denial are also considered within the scope of hate speech. Hate speech is a hate crime because it has a hate motive, and therefore it should be subject to criminal law.

In a report<sup>1</sup> on combating hate crimes, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) defined hate crime as: "Any criminal offence including offences against persons or property, where the victim, premises, or target of the offence are selected because of their real or perceived connection, attachment, affiliation, support or membership of a group that may be based upon a characteristic common to its members, such as real or perceived race, national or ethnic origin, language, color, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, or other similar factor." (as cited in Binark, 2010). According to Mutlu Binark, this definition has two features: The occurrence of a crime defined according to the penal code and committing this crime with a hate motive (2010, p.13). Because hate crime is not defined independently from discrimination in the Turkish Penal Code (TPC), there is no effective legislation to combat hate crimes in Turkey, but there are legal regulations to prevent discrimination. If these regulations are fully implemented, they can make an important contribution to the fight against hate

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<sup>1</sup> 2005 dated report Combating Hate Crimes in the OSCE Region: An Overview of Statistics, Legislation, and National Initiatives.

crimes (Kaymak, 2010, p.263). However, hate crimes differ from discrimination in that the characteristics of the victims of crime, whom should be protected by law, are targeted and the crime is directed towards the group to which the person belongs (Kaymak, 2010, p.271). In this respect, an effective legal regulation that will enable the determination of the hate motive is of vital importance in combating hate crimes (İnce, 2020).

Hate crimes are regarded as the precursors of hate speech. When hate speech is produced and circulated in a common public space that concerns the whole society, it causes the hate motive to become ordinary, naturalized and internalized. Precisely for this reason, hate speech, which is included in the category of hate crimes, may have different strategies depending on the developments in the political and social agenda of the society. In this respect, combating hate speech is a dynamic process that requires awareness about different discursive strategies in which hate speech is produced. This dynamism should be sensitive not only to the changes in the agenda of the society that concern the general public, but also to the differences in the media in which the discourse is produced.

Hate speech is shaped within the common social and political agenda of societies. Changes in the agenda lead to changes in the types and categories of hate speech and production of new discursive strategies of hate speech. In this respect, social and political developments concerning the common public are formed discursively. For example, hostility towards Chinese-Asian identity and hate speech against Chinese culture / Chinese people encountered during the course of the COVID-19 pandemic were not frequently encountered before. However, with the sensational spread of news linking the pandemic with exotic species sold in a live animal market in Wuhan, China, hate speech targeting Chinese food culture has been produced and circulated. According to Sevilay Çelenk, “the news that provokes hate speech is often the news that suddenly enters the agenda of the country and has a sensational aspect” (as cited in Binark, 2010, p. 26). While the news in traditional media naturalizes hate speech, social media makes this naturalization more common. There are sufficient methodological tools for the detection and analysis of hate speech produced in traditional media, but it is of great importance to develop new methods for the analysis of hate speech produced in Web 2.0 and social media platforms based on the interactivity of users, since it contains a large amount of data that cannot be analyzed (Özarslan, 2014).

Hate speech produced in traditional media can be reproduced by social media users with different discursive strategies and spread with the opportunities provided by the interactional structure of new media spaces. According to Binark, instead of regulations such as restricting the access of users or filtering related content, more

effective ways of struggle should be developed in the fight against hate speech produced in social networks (2010). In the 10-year period after this proposal of Binark<sup>2</sup>, re-arrangement of the law has come to the agenda after numerous changes made to the field of Internet in Turkey. According to the new regulation that entered into force after promulgation in the Official Gazette on 31 July 2020, social media platforms that have over a million access will have a representative office in Turkey and will store the users' data in Turkey. Providers that do not implement decisions such as content removal and access blocking will face sanctions such as traffic restrictions and fines. According to Yaman Akdeniz, "if social media networks open an office in Turkey, they will become a part, an extended arm of the Turkish judiciary and will have to implement all the access blocking decisions that they do not currently implement" ("AKP's social media proposal is ready", 2020). In addition to blocking the content for reasons such as attack on the personal rights of individuals, slander and insult, removing the content that contains name and surname of people would be possible within the scope of the right to be forgotten. However, there are concerns regarding the legal framework of the right to be forgotten. According to Zeynep Özarslan, due to the fact that the legal framework of the right to be forgotten is left unclear, it may also be possible to abuse the regulation by aiming to make people forget the discourses of public figures or an event with social consequences ("Social media law: How will the new regulation be?", 2020). Faruk Çayır shares a similar concern: "There is no criterion with regards to the right to be forgotten such as whether the content is newsworthy, whether the person making the request is a politician or a celebrity, or whether the news reflects the truth. Past political events, news of corruption, news of violence against women, crimes committed by different politicians will be removed from search engines when the judge of peace says that the person's right to personality has been violated. The past will be completely cleared. Since the content will be completely removed, it will not make sense to use different ways and methods such as DNS settings or VPN settings, and that news will not be reached again" ("New era in social media: Why are network providers silent?", 2020). Therefore, although the right to be forgotten, introduced with the new regulation, has the opportunity to provide a good tool to combat hate speech, it is obvious that the abuse of this right should be prevented.

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<sup>2</sup> Some legal regulations and changes have been made for the regulation of the internet. For example; Law No. 5651 on Regulating Broadcasts on the Internet and Combating Crimes Committed Through These Broadcasts was enacted on 4/5/2007. New regulations have also been made with the Law No. 7253 on Regulating Broadcasts on the Internet and Combating Crimes Committed Through These Broadcasts, which was published in the Official Gazette on 31 July 2020.

## Virus Spreading Faster Than COVID-19: Hate Speech

The COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected the whole world, continues to spread further while this study is being prepared for broadcast. The disease, which was reported as a “pneumonia-like disease in 41 people in Wuhan” by the Chinese authorities on December 31, 2019, and later determined to be caused by a new virus, started to spread rapidly. On January 7, 2020, Chinese officials announced the name of this virus, which directly affects the respiratory tract, as “2019-nCoV”. The virus, known as COVID-19 or coronavirus, spread rapidly around the world, causing at least 729,000 deaths as of August 9, 2020, according to the statistics platform Worldometer<sup>3</sup>. With the virus that caused countries to close their borders and stopped life, 'hatred' spread rapidly primarily against the Chinese people and then against the disadvantaged sections of societies.

Numerous campaigns were organized on social media. In South Korea, more than 760 thousand signatures were collected in the petition initiated to prevent admittance of people from China to the country<sup>4</sup>. More than 439 thousand people participated in the signature campaign held in Malaysia with similar demands. Hate speech against individuals of Asian origin has turned into hate crimes on the street.

The footage recorded by the security camera of a grocery store in Vancouver, Canada on March 13th terrified the viewers. A 92-year-old Asian man, whom the press reported as having dementia after the incident, was subjected to racist attack by another customer who entered the shop. The person named Jamie Bezanson<sup>5</sup>, a dock worker, spoke against China and the moments when he took the 92-year-old man out of the store by holding his arm were captured. The lion statues in Chinatown have been repeatedly damaged by graffiti about COVID-19. Deputy Commissioner Howard Chow of the Vancouver Police Department stated that the increase in hate crimes was “surprising”, saying that 29 anti-Asian cases were seen this year, which was 4 at the same time as of May 22 last year (Young, 2020).

US President Donald Trump's description of the new type of coronavirus as the “Chinese virus” and the US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's description of it as the “Wuhan virus” contributed to racism and the increase of xenophobia. Some social media users in Turkey also preferred to use the term “Chinese virus”. The posts

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<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>

<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2020-01-31/chinese-tourists-were-a-welcome-source-of-cash-across-asia-now-theyre-a-source-of-panic>

<sup>5</sup> See. <https://bc.ctvnews.ca/suspect-in-despicable-east-vancouver-attack-on-92-year-old-identified-1.4909788>

targeting the Chinese and Asian people were also featured in *Ekşi Sözlük* (*Ekşi Sözlük* is a public dictionary of daily events and issues on the agenda of Turkey). In the posts shared under the title of “the mysterious relationship between the Wuhan virus and the Uyghurs”, which is still broadcast in the *Ekşi Sözlük*, all Chinese people were labeled as ‘infidels’ and ‘tyrants who tortured the Uyghur people’. In the posts having elements of exaggeration and targeting, the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic process were interpreted as “divine justice”.

The incident of a Taiwanese tourist writing with LED lights on his backpack, “I am not Chinese. I am from Taiwan. I die for you, Turkey”, was spoken for days in Turkey<sup>6</sup>. This interesting “measure” of the Taiwanese tourist took its place among the most striking examples in terms of summarizing the pressure faced by people of Asian origin.

Hate speech has turned into hate crime in many parts of the world. Prof. Dr. Yasemin Giritli İnceoğlu presented examples of hate crimes experienced during the pandemic period in her article titled “The Most Dangerous Virus: Hate” written for *Bianet*<sup>7</sup>. Some of the examples given by İnceoğlu (2020), who pointed out that people of Asian origin are the target, are as follows:

- A passenger on the Brooklyn subway sprayed Febreze air freshener on another Asian passenger in public.
- In Los Angeles, a 16-year-old Asian boy was accused of carrying the corona virus and was shoved by students.
- A young man kicked and knocked a 59-year-old Asian from behind while walking on Madison Avenue in New York and shouted at him, “Chinese coronavirus! Return to your country”.
- An Asian woman said she was attacked while walking on Manhattan by someone who accused her of carrying the coronavirus, spit on her and pulled her hair out. While doing so, he was shouting, “You are the reason why the coronavirus is here!”.
- 23-year-old Singaporean Jonathan Mok, who has been studying at the University of London for two years, was walking along London's Oxford Street when he was attacked. The words of the attacker who kicked and punched him were as follows: “I don't want your coronavirus in my country”.

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<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.haberturk.com/video/haber/izle/koronavirüs-olmadığını-boyle-anlattı-cinli-degilim-olurum-turkiyem/673142>

<sup>7</sup> <https://bianet.org/bianet/yasam/221878-en-tehlikeli-virus-nefret>

Due to the increasing offensive rhetoric, the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the World Health Organization issued a message on May 8, 2020, drawing attention to the fact that hate speech and xenophobia are growing like a tsunami during the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>8</sup>. Stating that xenophobia is increasing both online and on the streets, anti-Jewish conspiracy theories are spreading, and there are attacks against Muslims in connection with COVID-19, Guterres said, “Immigrants and refugees are denigrated as if they were the source of the virus. Then they are not allowed to get medical help”. Guterres reminded that disgraceful content has emerged that showed the elderly, who are among the most vulnerable group, as if they were the most sacrificable segment, and said, “Journalists, informants, health workers, aid workers and human rights defenders are targeted just for doing their job,” and revealed the global pattern of hate.

## Hate Speech and Hate Crimes during the Pandemic Period

Hate speech was also produced in Turkey during the COVID-19 pandemic period. Discourses targeting and marginalizing Chinese people, citizens over 65, LGBTI+ individuals were produced on social media. Discriminatory language was not limited to social media. The language used by some media organs and political figures determined the agenda of social media and the direction of the discourse. President of Religious Affairs Prof. Dr. Ali Erbaş's targeting of LGBTI+ individuals on April 24, 2020, the 45th day of the pandemic, caused hate speech to escalate. People and organizations that reacted to Erbaş's words that “homosexuals are cursed, adultery and homosexuality are accompanied by illness” were also targeted by hatred<sup>9</sup>. Bar associations condemning Erbaş's statements were targeted on social media, and subsequently investigations were initiated against the bar associations<sup>10</sup>.

The coronavirus that emerged in Wuhan, China fueled the spread of racist rhetoric against the Chinese people because of the sensitivity towards Uygur Autonomous Region among public in Turkey. In this regard, Prof. Dr. Mutlu Binark's (2020)

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<sup>8</sup> See <https://turkey.un.org/tr/45114-guterres-koronavirüs-bağlantılı-nefret-soyleminin-sonlandırılması-icin-kuresel-eylem-cagrisi> also see <https://turkey.un.org/tr/45106-covid-19-ve-nefret-soylemi>

<sup>9</sup> Intense hate speech was directed against Ankara Bar Association, which declared the first statement criticizing Erbaş. The investigation launched against Ankara Bar Association remains on the agenda and this may have an effect on this. See: <https://www.ahaber.com.tr/gundem/2020/06/08/ali-erbas-ve-islami-hedef-alan-ankara-barosunun-11-yoneticisinden-savunma-istendi>

<sup>10</sup> See: <https://www.kaosgl.org/haber/nefrete-karsi-cikan-ankara-barosu-hakkinda-sorusturma-baslatildi>

analysis about the social media users in Turkey following Wuhan's quarantine is important<sup>11</sup>. Examining the comments shared under the #WuhanCoronavirus tag, Binark stated, "We see that people have developed a discourse of curse about a nation over an epidemic problem on a global scale without making any distinction between the ethnic and religious minority management policy of Chinese party-state and the Chinese nation itself." Binark draws attention to the dimensions of xenophobia: "These comments turn the Chinese people into inhuman, 'disgusting'. Moreover, by establishing a meronymy relationship between these habits and the virus, the event / situation itself is naturalized as a 'divine punishment' that happened to the Chinese due to the practices in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of the Chinese state." This evaluation of Binark coincides with the findings of our study.

Drawing attention to the rhetoric of anger, Binark makes the following statement which is important in terms of indicating the sources that hate is directed to: "Moreover, the hate speech against the Chinese people is immediately attached to another object of hate: Syrians. This discourse also includes a reference link to the opposition parties and media organizations to the current political power. Thus, xenophobia is endured, the power/claim of discourse seeking legitimacy is reinforced." It is seen that the hate speech against Asian people or LGBTI + individuals that exists in the content examined within the scope of the study, has also targeted Syrians and opposition actors.

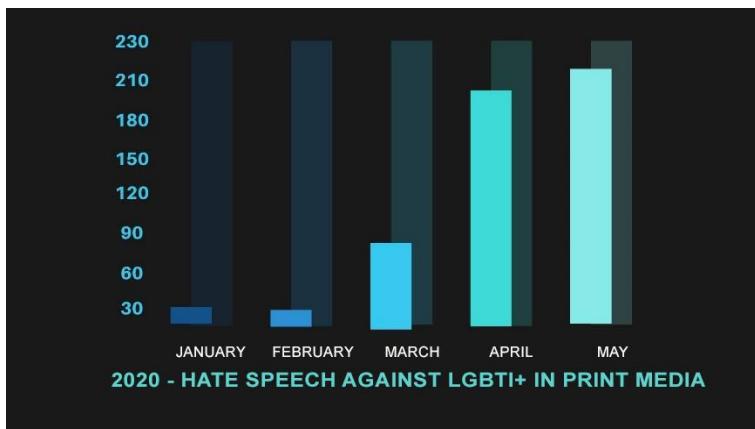
### **"Hate speech increased 8 times after sermon"**

Yıldız Tar, Media and Communications Coordinator of Kaos GL, said the following in a statement to Deutsche Welle Turkey: "In the last nine days of April, 149 news having discriminatory-hate speech against LGBTI + appeared in newspapers. Following the hate sermon of Diyanet (Religious Affairs), hate speech against LGBTI + individuals in the newspapers increased approximately eight times". Tar drew attention to the increased violations of rights against LGBTI + individuals during the pandemic period: "Even the kindergarten students' drawing rainbows on the windows of their houses became an incident. We were attacked on Netflix TV series, and we were completely targeted during this period with Diyanet's hate sermon."

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<sup>11</sup> See: <https://venimedya.wordpress.com/2020/01/25/twitterda-wuhancoronavirus-etiketi-ve-cinlilere-yonelik-nefret-soylemi/>

Discriminatory discourse reports against LGBTI+ individuals regularly published by KaosGL documented the rapid increase in discriminatory and hate speech content during the pandemic period. According to the study, the media published 212 news articles and columns containing discriminatory and hate speech only in May (Alpar, 2020). The study also revealed the significant increase in the number of news and articles containing hate and discriminatory speech (see Image 1).



**Image 1: Hate speech against LGBTI+ in print media in 2020**  
(Source: Alpar, 2020)

The impact of hate speech on the focus group was also reflected in the field. In the “Pandemic Report: LGBTI+ in Three Months of COVID-19” report published by the Social Policies, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Studies Association (SPOD), attention was drawn to the increase in the number of people calling the SPOD Hotline. According to the report, “The Hotline, which received a total of 214 applications in the first 45 days of the pandemic (11 March 2020 - 24 April 2020), received 244 applications in 45 days after Ali Erbaş's statement. In the 45 days following the said announcement (25 April 2020 - 8 June 2020), there was a 100% increase in the applications regarding discrimination and violence based on gender identity and sexual orientation (Öztürk et al., 2020). This process, in which violence cases increased after hate speech, caused the clients to feel more and more insecure”.

### **'Shame videos' targeting people over 65 years of age**

Unfortunately, the media could not give a successful test concerning also individuals over the age of 65. After the World Health Organization's statement that more than 95 percent of those who died in the COVID-19 epidemic were patients

over the age of 60<sup>12</sup>, elderly individuals were presented as a threat. Those with chronic diseases or elderly individuals in the risk group were pictured as 'coronavirus carriers'.

In the press and social media, individuals over the age of 65 were portrayed as a single persona and age was presented synonymously with sickness and decay. Individuals over the age 65 were portrayed as an unemployed, uneducated, homogeneous social segment in need of assistance. According to Senex-Aging Studies Association President Assoc. Dr. Özgür Arun, age discrimination, which was around 15 percent before the COVID-19 epidemic, has risen with the epidemic<sup>13</sup>.

In her article, "Hate Speech against the Elderly and the Media" (2020) written for Bianet, Şadiye Dönümçü, writer for [yasliyimhakliyim.com](http://yasliyimhakliyim.com), drew attention to the "news article" explosion that occurred after the declaration of lockdown. In her article published on March 29, Dönümçü wrote, "In the last 10 days - especially after the curfew imposed on citizens over 65 years old - this number has exceeded six thousand, even if there are duplicates. For example, while writing this article as of March 26, 2020, 183 news articles appeared in the print media and 559 in the internet media (369 of them were local)". The discriminatory discourse that targeted elderly people was transferred to headlines with wordings such as "Grandfather warning from the police and municipal police", "Police warning to the elderly who do not obey the curfew", "Elderly control on the street", "Elderly people went to the markets despite the ban" and so on.

A "chase" for citizens over 65 years of age has been initiated in written, visual and social media. The media used the argument that despite all warnings, citizens over the age of 65 continued to go out on the streets. Municipalities, on the other hand, removed the benches in the parks and canceled the regulations that allowed citizens over 65 to use free transportation. Nevşehir Municipality announced that it has put into service the "Elderly Notice Line ALO 153...". In the tweet that the municipality later deleted upon the reactions, they made a call to the citizens: "If you see people over 65 on the street, call us." The sharing made from the municipality's Twitter account was shared thousands of times in half an hour (See Image 2).

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<sup>12</sup> See: <https://tr.euronews.com/2020/04/02/dso-avrupada-covid-19-olumlerinin-yuzde-95-i-60-vas-ustu-ancak-gencler-yenilmez-degil>

<sup>13</sup> <https://journo.com.tr/koronavirus-yaslilar-ayrimcilik>



**Image 2: The content shared and later deleted upon reactions by Nevşehir Municipality in their official Twitter account**

Following the “Circular on the Curfew for People over 65 and with Chronic Illnesses” issued by the Ministry of Interior, there was an increase in discriminatory discourses against citizens within the vulnerable group. In the circular, the definition of citizens aged 65 and over as a risk to public health and the claim that they disturb public order was among the examples of discriminatory language. The circular read as, “However, our citizens aged 65 and over, and those with chronic diseases mentioned above are at great risk, but still they are involved in social mobility. They come together in public areas and parks, and although there is no requirement, they continue to pose a risk to both themselves and the public health by using public transport. The continuation of this situation would pose a serious risk to the lives of our citizens aged 65 and over and our citizens with chronic diseases, and to the public health, thus lead to spread of the epidemic. Increasing the number of cases and the need for treatment, it will cause serious deterioration of public health and public order with the risk of loss of our citizens’ lives.”

In an environment where citizens over the age of 65 are labeled as 'potential disease spreaders' and targeted, discourse has turned into a hate crime. A.İ.Y. aged 65+ who left his house to go to the hospital in Ankara Keçiören, was subjected to insult by M.T.E., a young person with a telephone in his hand, and his friend, who introduced themselves as police officers. M.T.E. shouted at the old man, “Quickly get out of here. Otherwise, we will write you a penalty” and shared the video of the harassment to A.İ.Y on his social media account. M.T.E, who was detained upon the reactions, was sentenced to visiting a nursing home.

In Zonguldak, the reaction of a woman over 65 when she was not allowed to get on the bus, was served by the media with the words, “The old woman insisted to get on the bus despite the ban.” The video of the woman who reproached saying

“Young people can also be carriers” was spread with the words of the video shooters, “Stay away, you have corona”. In the same period, another video of shame came from Istanbul. A person stopped a citizen, who was later learned to have schizophrenia, saying “We found someone with the virus.” He shared the video, where he forcibly withheld the citizen who wanted to go, on social media accounts. O.K. forced the citizen to wear a mask and poured cologne on his head. He was detained upon the reactions. It was observed that the video content that arose reactions diminished by the effect of the detentions.

## **The Purpose, Scope and Limitation of the Research**

This report analyzes hate speech produced by user-generated content on social media platforms in Turkey during the pandemic period by dividing into discursive categories. The main purpose of the report is to raise awareness to new linguistic and discursive types and categories of hate speech produced in the pandemic period in Turkey, and by this way to contribute to formation of scientific data to be presented for the development of complaints against social media companies when needed. For this purpose, the linguistic practices and categories of hate speech produced on social media during the COVID-19 pandemic period are identified and analyzed.

The types of hate speech included in this report are ethnic-based, ageism/age discrimination and sexual identity/orientation-based hate speech. Ethnic identity-based hate speech is frequently produced in Turkey. During the COVID-19 period, we have witnessed for the first time that Chinese people and Asians have been subjected to hate speech in Turkey. In a similar manner, age-based hate speech has for the first been mass-produced in Turkey during the pandemic. Ageism, which entered the social sciences literature in the 1960s, is one of the types of discrimination such as racism and sexism, which is defined as the exposure of people to discriminatory attitudes, behaviors and practices only because of their biological age (Kayacan, 2020). Ageism includes negative attitudes based on prejudices and stereotypes, such as being ignored or disregarded, as well as implicit and explicit practices such as isolation/segregation, abuse, harassment and physical violence. Robert Nail Butler, one of the psychiatrists of Columbia University who first used the concept, defined the fact that most young people in American society do not want to

live close to the homes where the elderly live as ageism (ageism-discrimination against the elderly).<sup>14</sup>

The following socio-political developments took place during the period covered by the report. Based on these developments, the scope of the report has been determined as February 1, 2020 - June 1, 2020.

- a) 1 February 2020: Turkish citizens in China were brought to Turkey by an evacuation flight and put in quarantine for 2 weeks. Pandemic outbreak settled in Turkey's social and political agenda with the implementation of measures against the pandemic though the first COVID-19 case was officially disclosed on March 11. On June 1, 2020, there has been a passage from strict quarantine measures against the pandemic to a controlled social life.
- b) March 21, 2020: Individuals over the age of 65 and citizens with chronic illnesses were banned from leaving their residences and going out with a circular from the Ministry of Interior<sup>15</sup>. Elderly people and people with chronic diseases being more affected by the virus and high rate of virus-related mortality with the increase of the age was indicated as the justification for the ban. After the ban was declared, there were news articles in the media claiming that the elderly people in many provinces did not obey the curfew. In these news articles, the elderly people were associated with issues such as spreading the virus and vulnerability to the disease. At the same time, the images of elderly people being bullied were shared on social media, and the circulation of those images began to produce hate speech against the elderly. When the bullying incidents became subject to the forensic investigation, the images of bullying were removed by court decision. While many social media users supported elderly people against bullying images and hate speech, it has been observed in many support messages that old age is associated with the need for protection and is reduced to late childhood.
- c) April 24, 2020: President of Religious Affairs Prof. Dr. Ali Erbaş claimed in his Friday sermon on April 24 that the religion of Islam condemned

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<sup>14</sup> See. [https://t24.com.tr/yazarlar/gulay-kayacan/koronavirüs-günlerinde-yasçılık-yükseliyor-mu\\_26024](https://t24.com.tr/yazarlar/gulay-kayacan/koronavirüs-günlerinde-yasçılık-yükseliyor-mu_26024)

<sup>15</sup> See: Circular of Ministry of Interior <https://www.icsisleri.gov.tr/65-yas-ve-ustu-ile-kronik-rahatsızlığı-olanlara-sokaga-cıkma-yasagi-genelgesi>

adultery and homosexuality on the grounds that it spread disease specifically with the HIV virus<sup>16</sup>. Ankara Bar Association criticized Erbaş because of the sermon and stated that Erbaş insulted and targeted a section of the people with hate<sup>17</sup>. On April 27, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan made a statement of support to Ali Erbaş after the meeting of the Council of Ministers and said that the attack on the Religious Affairs would be deemed to have been made to the state<sup>18</sup>. Thereupon, #AliErbaşYalnızDegildir (Ali Erbaş is not alone) tag was opened on social media platforms. The tag #LGBTHaklariİnsanHaklaridır (LGBT rights are human rights) was also opened in response to the said tag.

The social media platforms included in the analysis of this report are limited to YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. This limitation is based on the quantitative majority of the number of daily active users in the most used social network in Turkey as stated in 2019 report of WeAreSocial<sup>19</sup>.

The contents included in the analysis were obtained by searching the tags determined separately for each social network on different dates and pulling them from the interface on different dates. Therefore, content produced with other tags to which predetermined tags are associated are excluded. In addition, the content filtered by commercial concerns by free software, which was used to extract content data from the interface, has been excluded.

All the user-generated content data included in the analysis are anonymized in order to eliminate the connection with the user who created and/or shared the content. Based on a similar ethical concern, the content of the texts were explained in different words without interfering with the meaning and context; spelling mistakes were corrected; and punctuation marks other than apostrophe were cleared

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<sup>16</sup> For the full text of the sermon dated April 24, 2020 read out in all official mosques in Turkey by the Department of Religious Affairs see <https://www2.diyonet.gov.tr/DinHizmetleriGenelMudurlugu/HutbelerListesi/Ramazan%20Sabir%20ve%20İrade%20Eğitimi.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> See <https://twitter.com/ankarabaro/status/1254372752678694912>

<sup>18</sup> See <https://www.haberler.com/son-dakika-cumhurbaskani-erdogan-diyanet-isleri-13167006-haberi/>

<sup>19</sup> The ranking in question only covers social networks. However, according to the same report, when instant messaging applications such as WhatsApp are added, the order shall be as YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter. Since this report only covers social networking platforms, instant messaging apps such as WhatsApp are not included. For the report see: <https://wearesocial.com/global-digital-report-2019>

in order to prevent the user from being found when the content was copied and searched. Emojis are left untouched. Visual contents are depicted by text.

## Method and Data Collection Procedure

Within the scope of the report, the contents accessed by searching the tags produced on each social network platform for Chinese people, individuals over 65 and LGBTI+ individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic period were primarily monitored, and the discursive and interactional practices produced were examined. In the evaluation made as a result of the monitoring, the labels with which the data to be included in the analysis were produced were determined (See Table 1).

	Chinese	Individuals over 65	LGBTI+ Individuals
YouTube	#yarasaçorbasi (#batsoup)	#yaşlılar (#elderly)	#AliErbaşYalnızDeğildir (#AliErbaşisNotAlone)
Instagram	#yarasaçorbasi (#batsoup)	#yaşlılar (#elderly)	#AliErbaşYalnızDeğildir (#AliErbaşisNotAlone)
Facebook	#yarasaçorbasi (#Batsoup)	#65yaşıüstü (#over65yearsofage)	
Twitter	#yarasa (#bat)  #yarasaçorbasi (#batsoup)  #Çinvirüsü (#Chinesevirus)	#65yaşıüstü (#over65yearsofage)	#YallahHollandaya (#GoToHolland)

**Table 1: Tags by which the content included in the analysis for groups targeted for hate speech are searched in social networks**

Both traditional coding and the following free tools were used to extract data with the specified tags<sup>20</sup>: YouTube, Instagram and Facebook content was manually coded without using digital tools. Coberry was used for YouTube comments and Spatulah-Instagram Comment Scrapper for Instagram comments. Twitter content was collected by pulling data through tags with the Workbench tool.

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<sup>20</sup> As required by the Alternative Informatics Association's policy to support free software for free movement of information, no fee-paying digital tool was used in the data collection process.

The obtained contents were separated into previously defined hate speech categories, then the frequency of these categories was quantitatively calculated and visualized with tables. For this process, techniques of content analysis that are frequently used in communication and media studies were used. Content analysis is “a research technique for defining the clear and explicit content of communication objectively, systematically and quantitatively” (Berelson, 1952) and in this regard, it is a functional method for categorizing the contents. The difference of the categorization process made with content analysis from simple classification is the claim of objectivity and systematicity (Bilgin, 2006: 2). To ensure this, the contents included in the analysis were collected in a common coding table (See Table 2). The visual contents are textualized and included in the coding table. The interaction data of the content and/or comments are not included in the coding table. The coding was done and compared separately by the authors of the study, and the editor's opinion was sought for the disputed content. Thus, a consensus was reached in the context of categorization criteria on all contents included in the analysis. Different social networks have different network architecture and therefore different content units.

Categorization Units		
Platform	Content / Comment with Hate Speech	Hate Speech Category
YouTube contents		
YouTube comments		
Instagram contents		
Instagram comments		
Twitter		
Facebook		

**Table 2: Common coding table used for the study**

The content and comments subjected to analysis are classified according to the hate speech categories defined below. The first four of the categories have been chosen as used in the Media Hate Speech Monitoring Reports prepared by the International Hrant Dink Foundation since April 2009<sup>21</sup>. The abjection category is adapted from the analysis of Mutlu Binark (2020) in the early stages of the pandemic. Scapegoating is a frequently used concept in populism studies and is borrowed from Ruth Wodak (2015).

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<sup>21</sup> The definitions and examples of the first four categories are used as given in the Media Hate Speech Monitoring Report: May-August 2019 (Sup.: İdil Engindeniz).

- a) Exaggeration/attribution/distortion: Any discourse that features negative generalization, distortion, exaggeration or negative attribution targeting a community as a whole, based on a specific individual or event (e.g. “Enough with Syrians”).
- b) Swearing/insult/defamation: Any discourse that contains swearing, insult or defamation about a community (e.g. “treacherous”, “traitor”, “immoral”).
- c) Enmity/war discourse: Any discourse that includes hostile, war-mongering expressions about a community (e.g. “Greek atrocity”). It will also be referred to as ‘building enmity’ within the scope of this report.
- d) Symbolization: Any discourse that uses various aspects of one’s inherent identity as a basis of hate, humiliation or symbolization (e.g. “Will a Jew represent us in Eurovision?”) Another example is, “Chinese virus is spreading.”
- e) Abjection: While exhibiting negative labeling, especially on the food culture, dehumanizing the other as barbarian, removing their eating and drinking habits from being the object of desire (Binark, 2020) (Eg. How do they eat these filthy things?). This category can also be considered as a form of humiliation. But unlike humiliation, there is the de-humanization of a symbolic element of a community (for example, eating and drinking culture) through a sense of disgust. Moving from the concept of abjection, which Julia Kristeva uses in the psychoanalytic context and means the feeling of disgust that keeps the individual away from contamination and filth, a symbolic element associated with filth is coded as non-human. The distinction between us and them is established between human and inhuman (Kristeva, 1982)<sup>22</sup>
- f) Scapegoating: Blaming only a certain group for all the negative developments and turning them into an object of fear (eg the pandemic was due to the food consumed by the Chinese). Although the report accepts this category as a kind of symbolization, unlike symbolization, scapegoating identifies the social group it is directed to with conspiracy. Sym-

<sup>22</sup> For a study where this concept was used as a hate speech category See: Baider, F. (2018). “Go to Hell Fucking Faggots, May You Die!”: Framing the LGBT Subject in Online Comments. *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics*. 14(1). 69-92.

bolization is used as an element of labeling identities, while scapegoating holds a single identity responsible for all past and future negativities and presents it as an element of crime and an object of fear.

It is seen that a significant part of the content and comments can be included in more than one category. However, the content and comments obtained within the scope of this report were coded to be classified under a single category. Priority in categorization was given to the most emphasized category. For example;

“F\*\*\*ng Chinese, a slue virus came from you, and you sent it to us; may you die, you eat whatever f\*\* you find; trash-eating people of the world” (Instagram). This content can be included in both swearing/insult/defamation, exaggeration/attribution/distortion, and scapegoating, but as the category of swearing/insult/defamation had a stronger emphasis, it is only included in this category. In the content of “Grandfather terror came up to the street :)” (YouTube user comment), symbolization, exaggeration/attribution/distortion and enmity coexist. However, considering that the emphasis in this content is in the category of exaggeration/attribution/distortion, it was included in this category.

In the content of Instagram and YouTube, short descriptions written by the content producer were quoted as description for YouTube and caption for Instagram, and the texts / articles in the visual content as “description”; the visual parts in the content where the text is not included are also quoted as “depictions”. The voice-over (DSF or VO), dialogues / monologues (talking head or selfie video) in the video content are deciphered and quoted as “narrator”. Attention was paid to the number of likes of the photo content and the number of views of the video content.

For ethical reasons, the quoted content and comments were included in the report by correcting spelling errors, censoring swearwords and removing punctuation marks so that they could not be found if a search was made. Emojis are left untouched.

A search was conducted on YouTube and Instagram interfaces on June 26, 2020, with the tags shown in Table 1. The number of content obtained through the interfaces as a result of the search is given in Table 3. Only the contents obtained from the #elderly and #AliErbaşYalnızDeğidir tags on Instagram have been subjected to a 1-month limitation.

	#batsoup	#elderly	#AliErbaşIsNotAlone
<b>YouTube content</b>	171	36	56
<b>YouTube comment</b>	11461	3077	4549
<b>Instagram content</b>	89	190	101
<b>Instagram comment</b>	1317	6755	28838

Table 3: Number of content accessed from YouTube and Instagram interfaces

Twitter content received from the Twitter interface from the end of April 2020 to the end of June 2020 with the tags “#chinesevirus” and “#batsoup” were included in the analysis. Table 4 shows the number of Twitter content collected at two-week intervals by accumulation method. Tweets with the tag “#Yallah-Hollandaya” (Go to Holland) were derived between 27 April and 30 June and with the tag “+ 65yearsold” between 17 May and 30 June with the Workbench tool.

	#batsoup	#chinesevirus	#yallahhollandaya	#over65yearsold
<b>Twitter content</b>	1124	1170	1943	610

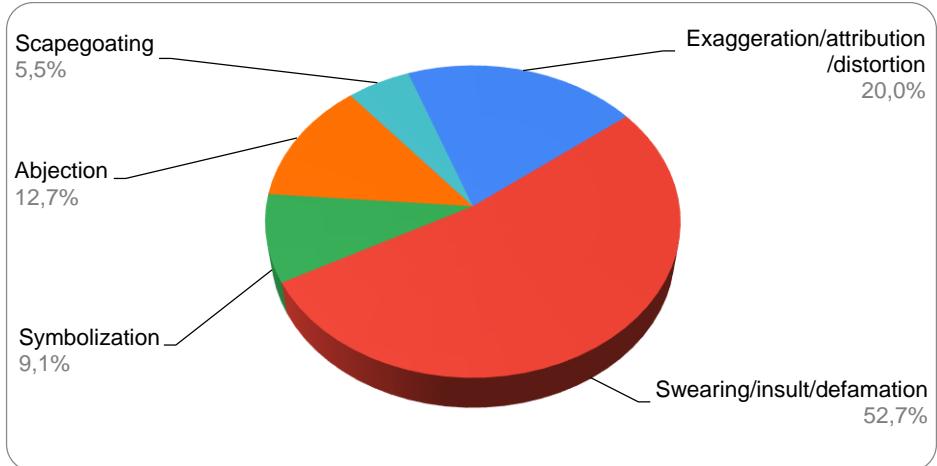
Table 4: Content numbers accessed through the Twitter interface

On Facebook, a search was made through the application interface with the keywords “bat soup” and “65 years old”. In the search for “bat soup” made on April 20, 10 most watched videos and the 4431 comments made to the videos were examined. As a result of the search for “+ 65 years old”, the solidarity groups and pages opened by individuals over the age of 65 were reached.

## A. Hate Speech Produced Against the Chinese People

### a. Hate Speech Against the Chinese People in YouTube Content

Hate speech was encountered in 55 (32%) of the 171 videos included in the analysis. Hate speech was produced in five categories in YouTube videos: Exaggeration/attribution/distortion, abjection, scapegoating, symbolization and swearing/insult/defamation. The category that produced the highest amount of hate speech was swearing/insult/defamation with 52.7%.



**Figure 1: Hate Speech on YouTube Content against the Chinese People by Category**

**a.1. Exaggeration/attribution/distortion category:** Some users have the pre-acceptance that meals made with wild animals are a natural and daily part of the food culture of the Chinese people. They consider that the Chinese people eat “everything” that would not be included in “our” category of food. According to such content, it is natural for the Chinese to get sick due to their food culture that includes “everything.” Some examples analyzed are given below:

[Narrator] *“If you eat such nonsense things, of course you will get corona. What kind of person you are eating everything that comes before you”.*

[Narrator] *“What the hell is this, they are eating all kind of s\*\*\*t, come and eat us f\*\*\*”.*

[Narrator] *“These Chinese eat whatever they find”.*

[Narrator] *“The corona virus epidemic that spread from China to our world, claimingly transmitted from a bat. I cannot know how true it is but an animal had brought it to a bat, and the bat to people; but we already know that those Chinese eat bat, pig, snake, dog meat, any nonsense thing they find.”*

**a.2. The scapegoating category:** In the contents of the scapegoating category, the Chinese people are coded as responsible for all epidemics, especially the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the hate speech in this category, the food and beverage culture of the Chinese people has brought about and spread a new type of corona virus to the world. Therefore, the whole world hates the Chinese people. Some examples analyzed are given below.

[Narrator] “We can't go out because of the Chinese, and the Chinese deserve this video. Turn around and look at what you eat. The whole world hates you. I hate the Chinese. If I see some Chinese people in the street, I will lay into them.”

**a.3. Abjection category:** According to the contents in the abjection category, the Chinese food culture is depicted as filthy, inferior, inhumane apart from being object of desire. Not only the Chinese food and beverage culture, but the entire Asian identity has its share from abjection. Both moral panic and hate speech is produced in the videos that included abjection through the eating practices exhibited in Mukbang videos. Some examples analyzed are given below:

[Narrator 1] “Today we're going to watch some disgusting Japanese food videos with you.

[Narrator 2] Let's not say disgusting, you cannot call the food disgusting

[Narrator 1] But can the octopus be considered as food, as a blessing? The octopus is a being, you may eat like a human, and wait you will see it now.

[Narrator 2] But at least this one has cooked it and he doesn't eat without cooking it like that one

[Narrator 1] And they had colored it purple, if you eat the ink like that, you get the virus infection and who knows what \*\* infection; let me not speak bad”.

[Narrator] “Guys you see, these Chinese are eating disgusting things, eating very dirty things, how do they eat like that.”

**a.4. The swearing/insult/defamation category** has been the most common category in the contents. The users, who assume that the bat soup image is a part of the Chinese daily eating and drinking culture, insult all Asians, especially the Chinese people. Accordingly, they developed a view of Asianness based on the physical appearance of the Chinese people, and they directly humiliate Asianness with this view. Some analyzed examples of such content are given below.

[Narrator] “I f\*\* the Chinese and f\*\* who drinks f\*\* who doesn't. My recommendation to those who drank that f\*\*\* soup is that they should not deal with the slaneyed people for 14-15 days.” (The most frequently shared content in this category).

[The narrator re-phrases the lyrics of Bella Ciao] “A \*\*\* ate the bat in China, why you ate bat, ate bat, ate bat? You should have eaten beans, you should have eaten pasta, how can you eat the bat.”

[Narrator] “*I am the corona virus* [while dishes cooked with exotic animals pass by] *I came f\*\* if you say I eat this, I eat that, in the end you eat the f\*\*.*”

[Narrator] “*Because I am not s\*\* of a b\*\*\* I drink lentil soup; if I were s\*\* of a b\*\*\* I would drink bat soup*”.

**a.5. Symbolization category:** According to the hate speech produced in the symbolization category, the COVID-19 virus, encoded as the “Chinese virus”, has been accepted as a divine punishment in response to China's policies towards ethnic Uighurs. Some examples analyzed are given below.

[Description] “No matter how sorry we are for them humanitarianly, the Chinese virus is desperate in the face of the torture they inflicted on our descendants in East Turkistan. May God take the life of whoever harms the Turk, and protect the great Turkish nation “.

[Narrator] “*The Chinese tyrannized the Turkish people a lot, plus they eat any sh\*\*, they deserve it.*”

**b. Hate Speech Produced in YouTube Comments**

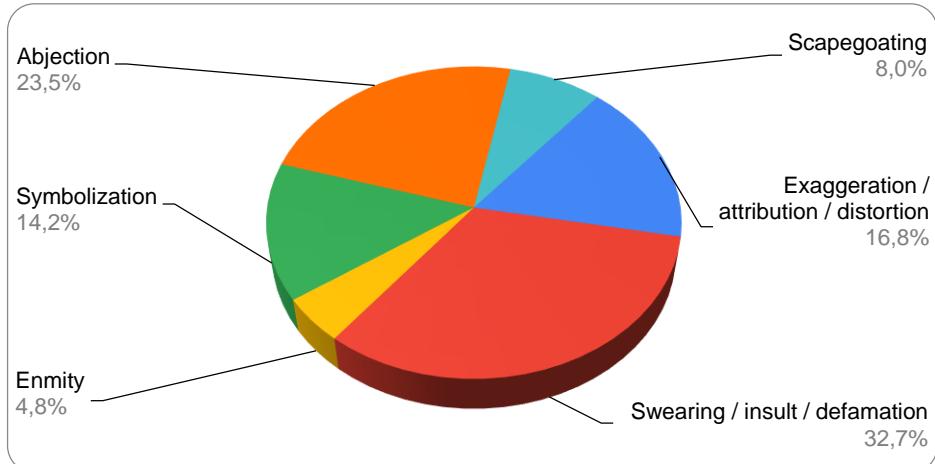
It was seen that 65 of 171 videos included in the analysis either did not include any comment or were closed to user comments. In order to include user comments in the analysis, user comments of 48 videos that received 10 or more comments were taken from the interface. Hate speech was noticed in the comments of 32 of the 48 videos. Hate speech was detected in 1198 comments, which corresponds to 10.6 of the 11260 comments obtained. The category of hate speech that was produced most by these contents was swearing/insult/defamation with 32.7% (see Figure 2).

**b.1. Exaggeration/attribution/distortion:** In the category of exaggeration/attribution /distortion, a causal relationship is established between Chinese food culture and the spread of epidemics in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic. A similar discourse is produced regarding the news articles about the Hanta virus. Just like the YouTube content, the YouTube comments also establish a connection between the Chinese food culture and epidemics, and in this way, the association of Chinese food culture with the disease is naturalized. Some samples analyzed are given below:

*“People living on the streets in China are very lucky to find and eat their own food”.*

*“They started eating every s\*\*t again, then why did the corona virus rise? Why did it rise? You released it all over the world, then you recovered yourselves 🚑😡🤮🤮”.*

*“Chinese child: mom, I'm hungry. Mother: there is a bug on the floor, eat it”.*



**Figure 2: Hate Speech Produced in YouTube Comments according to Category**

*“When you find a bug in the house*

*Turk: There is a bug here, let me kill it. Chinese: Free meal: D”.*

*“They eat whatever they find and then get the corona virus. God, you protect us 🌟”.*

*“The Chinese will soon eat sh\*t and sh\*t virii will cover everywhere.”*

**b.2. In the scapegoating category**, just as in the previous category, Chinese food culture is shown to be responsible for the COVID-19 epidemic, and the pandemic is presented not as a public health problem, but an evil caused by Chinese culture. According to this discourse, individuals and communities belonging to the Chinese culture (also people of Asian identity through Chinese people) are asked to “pay” the price of the pandemic. The desire to make them pay a price also produces the discourse of enmity. In this category, the distinction between “us” and “them” is also produced over the distinction between the guilty and innocent. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“Die b\*\*\* we got f\*\*\* because of you.”*

*“I will find a disease I will go to China and I will give it to the Chinese.”*

*“Whatever happened to us is because of them, tasteless, disgusting people God damn you 😣 😣 ”.*

*“Do you know why China got corona virus because they eat everything if we put s\*\*\* in front of them they eat s\*\*\*\* the second is because they eat everything raw and the third is because they drink bat soup 🐾 🐾 🍲 🍲 🍲 🍲 😳 😳 😳 😳 😳 ”.*

*“God knows well so that gives this trouble to you the whole world is shaken because of you innocent people are dying. Enough is enough, God shall eliminate you, you shall burn in the fire of hell, God willing.”*

**b.3. In the abjection category,** Chinese food and beverage culture is not seen as an object of desire, as is the case for YouTube content. In this regard, there is a parallel between YouTube content and YouTube user comments. The category of abjection has been encountered in the comments made on the videos that are usually montaged randomly, one after the other and shared. The eating performance featured in the Mukbang videos is attributed to the whole Asian food culture through the Chinese people. What is excluded from the object of desire is not only the animals used in the food consumed, but also the consumption pattern of the animals that are eaten. The object of desire is also described as blessing. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“Brother what the Chinese eat is disgusting don’t shoot any more it turns my stomach.”*

*“Those who say that what the Chinese eat is very disgusting shall send +1 like”.*

*“Friends, unfortunately there is a bitter truth that we are relatives with the Chinese 😢 😢 😢 ”.*

*“While there is so much food they eat especially dirty animals they eat anything that’s walking, at least they do not eat each other and they put the bat as a decoration on the edge of the soup. God damned sickness is with you now, eat again if it was a good thing we would eat bat as well you scum”.*

**b.4. In the swearing/insult/defamation category,** the Chinese people are cited as responsible for the pandemic, so they are directly exposed to insult and humiliation. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“I hope you burn in hell”.*

*“God damn you 1000 times, Chinese”.*

*“They would even eat a solid f\*\* if you put in front of them.”*

*“Die, get to the bottom of the ground, the Chinese are idiots. If I were a virus, I wouldn't infect them f\*\*\*.”*

**b.5. Symbolization category:** In the symbolization category, Chinese and Asian identities are associated with the disease, and the corona virus is symbolized as being Chinese. A link of divine justice is established between the Chinese government's policy on ethnic Uyghurs and the pandemic. The pandemic is regarded as a divine punishment due to the Chinese policies towards the Uyghurs. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“They feed on worm, they do not know what they eat, they very much like grasshopper and frog, the corona virus has occurred. Chinese, do not eat the bat soup, do not eat what you do not know, the Chinese caught the plague God gave the trouble and the Chinese suffer from corona virus”.*

*“Now it is clear why the corona virus came from China, they eat everything.”*

*“If they are eating these, it is normal for them to get corona virus”.*

*“A pinch of Chinese, a pinch of bat and here is corona for you 😂😂”.*

*“After so much cruelty against East Turkistan, it is even not enough that their hands and arms are tied.”*

**b.6. In the enmity category**, a discourse of hostility towards Asians is produced through the Chinese people in particular. The distinction between us and them, which produces the discourse of hostility, is established culturally, ethno-religiously and politically-ideologically. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“It is required to turn the Asians into Muslims by force”.*

*“The best Chinese is the dead one.”*

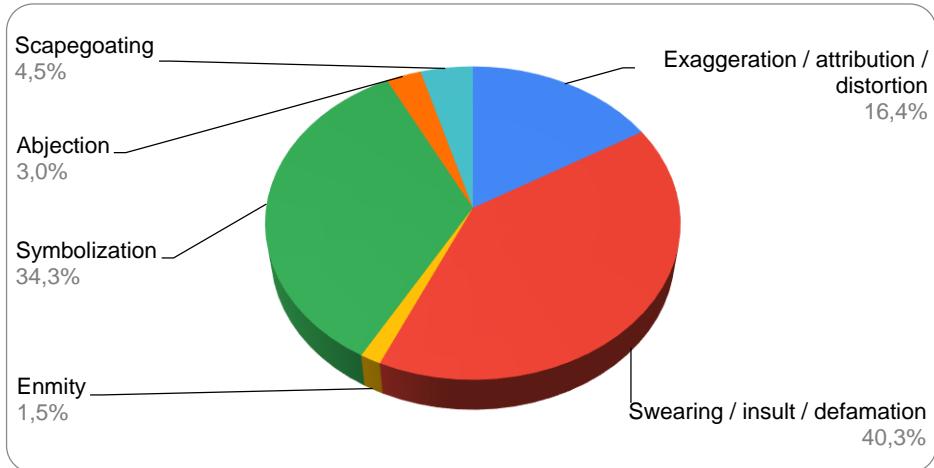
*“These f\*\* Chinese persecute the ancient Turks in their countries, each like is a bomb for China.”*

*“I celebrate the news of death from China at the raki table”.*

*“A war must be waged against these s\*\* right away” (YouTube user comment).*

### c. Hate Speech Against the Chinese People in Instagram Posts

It was seen that 68 items (76.4%) of 89 items analyzed included hate speech. In these contents, all categories of hate speech were encountered (see Figure 3 for hate speech by category).



**Figure 3: Hate Speech Produced Against the Chinese in Instagram Content by Category**

**c.1. Exaggeration/attribution/distortion:** The diversity of animal species deemed to be consumable in everyday Chinese food culture is distorted. Frequently, not only the diversity of the animal species that are displayed and cooked in mukbang videos, but also the cooking and consumption styles are attributed to the everyday Chinese food culture and associated with the disease. Some examples analyzed are given below:

[Description] “*The corona virus is now the problem of Europe in China, again, all four-legged except a table, floating except ships, and flying except aircraft will be defeated*”.

[Description] “*These Chinese don't mind*”.

[Description] In the video, a little boy is seen eating a raw octopus. [Description] “*Welcome to the corona bro*” (2539 likes).

[Description] “*The corona virus is now the problem of Europe in China, again, all four-legged except a table, floating things except ships, and flying things except aircraft will be eaten*”.

[Description] “*These Chinese don't come to senses*”.

[Depiction] In the video, a little boy is seen eating a raw octopus. [Description] “Welcome to the corona bro” (2539 likes).

**c.2. In the category of enmity**, the discourse of war against the Chinese people was produced with the call of genocide. Some examples analyzed are given below:

[Description] “*Genghis Khan: For each Chinese I haven't killed, one day you will curse me*” (83 likes).

**c.3. In the scapegoating category**, the Chinese people and Chinese food culture are presented to be responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic, just like YouTube content and comments do.

[Description] “*China ate the bat and the World paid the bill*” (209 likes).

[Video description] “*The undignified people who alone darkened the lives of 90 percent of the world*”.

**c.4. In the abjection category**, Chinese food and beverage culture is not seen as an object of desire. Some examples analyzed are given below:

[Description] “*Disgusting Chinese food*” (2047 likes).

[Description] “*10 disgusting dishes the Chinese eat*”.

**c.5. The swearing/insult/defamation category;** Enmity speech is produced towards all the Asians, the Chinese in particular. The distinction between us and them, which produces the discourse of enmity, is established culturally, ethno-religiously and politically-ideologically.

[Description] “*F\*\* Chinese people, you caused virus beyond measure, you let us die. You die f\*\*\* you eat whatever you find, trash-eating people of the world*” (it is remarkable that it gets 5 comments for 2630 likes).

[Description] “*The slanting eyes, communism is the show, that makes us sick. F\*\* Chinese, you eat bats and snakes, then you say the virus has spread. You f\*\* the world b\*\*\* Chinese*” (2634 likes, 24 comments).

[Description] “*Don't say Chinese, they come immediately when they are called like the other 3-letter ones*” (1110 likes, 1 comment).

**c.6. In the symbolization category**, the daily Chinese food culture is symbolized by both the wild animal consumption and epidemics. Some examples analyzed are given below:

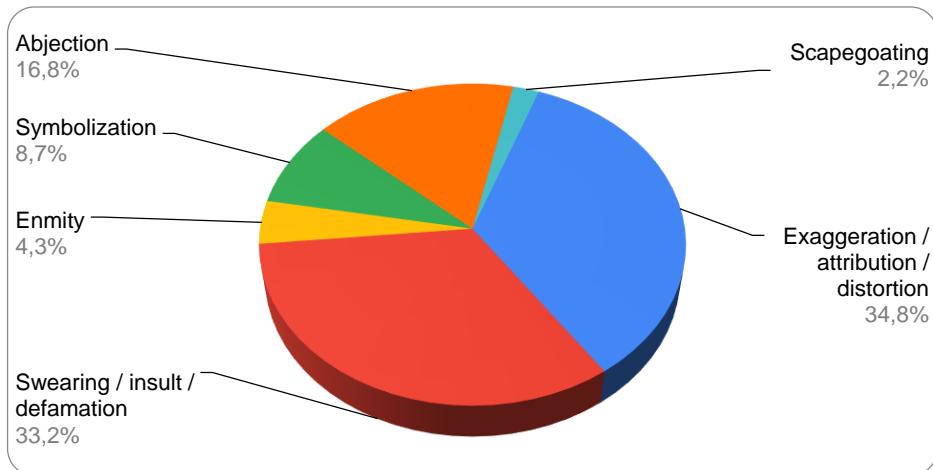
[Description] “*If they drink bat soup, there will definitely be viruses and disease*” (78864 traces, 306 comments).

[Description] *The figure depicted with the Chinese flag says “show me a real meal”. He doesn't like hamburger and meatball inside bread. Seeing the picture of bat soup, he says “here is the real meal.”*

[Depiction] *Dishes from Turkish, Greek and Chinese cuisine are compared in the image. While Turkish and Greek cuisine is depicted with traditionally served dishes, Chinese cuisine is depicted with images of zoo sign and wild animals*

d. Hate Speech against the Chinese People in Instagram Comments

Hate speech has been observed in 369 comments, which corresponds to 44.7% of 824 comments in 5 contents that received 100 or more comments. Hate speech was found in all six categories. The distribution of Instagram comments according to hate speech categories is given in Figure 4. Accordingly, the category of hate speech produced the most is exaggeration/attribution/distortion category with 34.8%.



**Figure 4: Hate Speech by Category against Chinese People in Instagram Comments**

**d.1. In the exaggeration/attribution/distortion category**, the diversity of animals in foods considered to be included in the Chinese food culture is distorted just like YouTube content and comments. Wild animal consumption is reduced to general. According to this discourse, there is no object that is not worth consuming in the food culture attributed to China. In this regard, the emergence of diseases from the Chinese food culture is considered to be a natural condition. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“It is only the sh\*\* that the Chinese don’t eat.”*

*“The s\*\*b\*\*\* eat snake, centipede, bug, mouse, whatever they find. This amount of disease is even less*

*“If you eat this and that, this is inevitable.”*

**d.2. In the scapegoating category**, the Chinese people and Chinese food culture are cited as responsible for the COVID-19 outbreak. Therefore, the Chinese people have been seen as the natural responsible for the loss of life due to the pandemic. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“They should immediately stop the comings and goings from China, they are the ones to spread this virus to the world”.*

*“I’m reading the comments but don’t be fooled, thousands of people are dying and have died because of you 😡”.*

**d.3. In the swearing/insult/defamation category**, the Chinese are directly insulted because they are considered to be responsible for the pandemic. Insults and defamation consist of racist and sexist curses against Asian people. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“The s\*\* çang çings 😡 😂 they eat all the dirt that is against the stomach of a person like cat, dog, bat, snake, f\*\*\* 😡 If anyone gets married from China, \*\*\* his stomach.”*

*“What a filthy stomach these beings have, they do not resemble human beings, they are a different race”.*

**d.4. In the enmity category**, a discourse of hostility towards Asians is produced through the Chinese people in particular. The distinction between us and them,

which produces the discourse of enmity, is established culturally, ethno-religiously and politically-ideologically. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“If you torture and persecute so many Muslims, there will be a punishment of course. I hope your lineage dries, you unbeliever, faithless pagans.”*

**d.5. In the abjection category**, Chinese food and beverage culture is not seen as an object of desire. Generally, we can include user comments on mukbang content in this category. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“The stomach also has an honor”.*

*“Wow s\*\*t what are they eating”.*

*“Do you repent, bismillah, what is bat soup 😊 thousands of thanks to our state”.*

**d.6. Symbolization category:** In the symbolization category, the daily Chinese food culture is symbolized by both wild animal consumption and epidemics. In this category, the distinction between “us” and “them” is produced between the religion of Islam and Chineseness over the food culture. This separation is symbolized through food culture. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“One eats bat, the other eats pig, eats frog, cat, thank God we Muslims”.*

e. Hate Speech Against the Chinese People in Twitter Posts

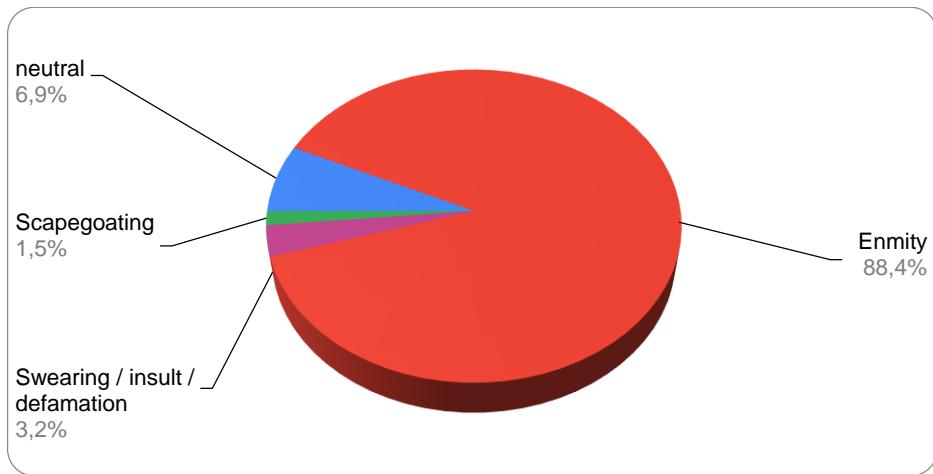
Tweets with the tags “#chinesevirus” and “#batsoup” that were derived by Workbench from the end of April to the end of June were included in the analysis. Tweets derived at two-week intervals and collected by accumulation method indicated continuity in discourse. Some examples analyzed are given below:

The “#Chinesevirus” preferred in the posts coincides with the discourse that US President Donald Trump persistently tries to spread. However, the increase in hate speech against Chinese people in Turkey is triggered by some accounts considered to be the 'opinion leaders' rather than the statements of politicians. The “Chinesevirus” label matches the Chinese people with the COVID-19 pandemic, and plays the role of spreading and normalizing the hate speech that produces racism and xenophobia.

### e.1. "#Chinesevirus"

Hate speech was encountered in 1134 of the 1215 tweets included in the analysis. As in other social media platforms, it has been observed that the Chinese people are marginalized through their eating and drinking habits in the discourse practice produced on Twitter. All Asian people, through the Chinese people, have been accused of not being "human" due to their eating and drinking habits, which was described as "disgusting" and matched with the virus. In the posts, the Chinese people were held responsible for the practices of the Chinese state in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, and the "COVID-19 pandemic" was defined as a "divine punishment".

Hate speech was encountered in 93 percent of the 1215 tweets included in the analysis. Retweets have also been accepted as a discourse practice. It was observed that hate speech was produced in 3 categories in the posts made with the tag "#Chinesevirus": enmity, scapegoating and swearing/insult/defamation. The category of "enmity" stood out with 84 percent. Tweets that did not generate hate speech within the scope of the study were coded as "neutral" (See Figure 5).



**Figure 5: Hate Speech Produced Against Chinese People with #Chinesevirus hashtag in Twitter content by Category**

**e.1.1. Enmity:** Comments shared with #Chinesevirus tag mainly contain hostile and symbolization elements. The category of 'enmity' has been preferred because the discourse labels the Chinese people as 'enemy', 'deserving of punishment'. The majority of the posts made with the #Chinesevirus tag are retweets of the tweets of an anonymous account that is considered to be belonging to an "opinion leader". It

has been determined that the “Chinese Cruelty” tag is frequently circulated along with the #Chinesevirus tag. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“Hundreds of thousands of people died due to the #Chinesevirus, millions are suffering and the worse is #Chinesecruelty, thousands of people have been killed, millions have been tortured in prison and concentration camps for being Turk is considered to be a crime, and Muslim a disease, a nation is being destroyed.”*

*In the posts, the arguments suggesting that China is the cause of the COVID-19 pandemic and should be asked to account for it came to the forefront.*

*“China lied, people died, now it's time to call to account and boycott”*

*“It is a war crime made by China. China is responsible for the spread of the #ChineseVirus all over the world and deaths of hundreds of thousands of people”*

*Mosques in #East\_Turkistan are being turned into chicken farms by Chinese immigrants. Muslims are still silent”*

**e.1.2. Scapegoating:** The Chinese people and the Chinese state have been shown as the cause of the COVID-19 pandemic in the contents in this category. In their posts, individuals have presented the Chinese state and the Chinese people as the reason for their unemployment, not being able to go out and not meeting with their relatives. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“Not Covid19, you produced the #ChineseVirus yourself and hurt millions of people, why are you preventing me from seeing my family”*

*“We are 6 million unemployed people #chinesevirus why did you imprison my mother and uncle innocently? Why are you committing genocide against Uyghurs?”*

**e.1.3. Swearing/insult/defamation** In this category, mainly the Chinese state was targeted. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“#ÇinHesapVer You cannot deceive anyone by celebrating Ramadan on the Twitter accounts of the Embassy and Consulate.”*

*“You have no rival when it comes to lying. You pissed on the world with the #chinesevirus and your lies.”*

## e.2. "#BatSoup"

In the search made with the Workbench tool on Twitter between April 28 - May 28 with the tag of "bat soup", 2665 tweets were reached. Hate speech was encountered in 2264 of the 2665 tweets analyzed for discourse. The tweets including the words "bat soup" and "bat" contained swearing/insult/defamation with 31.5%, being the highest category. This category was followed by "scapegoating" with 27.2%, exaggeration/attribution/distortion with 21.3%, symbolization with 13.2%, "abjection" with 1%. The rate of tweets where scientific data or objective comments were shared was 5.8%.

### e.2.1. Swearing/insult/defamation:

Considering bat soup and eating bats as part of the daily habits of the Chinese people, the users preferred to directly insult and humiliate the Chinese people in their posts. In tweets posted during Ramadan, "bat soup" was labeled as a food that cannot be eaten even when one is hungry, and the Chinese were insulted. Chinese people were asked to question their eating habits, and they were humiliated by implying that they could not even think about it. Eating bats was directly associated with COVID-19, and swearing words were used in these tweets, including the symbolization category. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*"We didn't eat bat despite all the hunger, we would if we were s\*\*o\*b\*\*\*"*

*"We go hungry for 16 hours but we do not eat bats, dishonest Chinese"*

*"I wonder what these Chinese think now, do they tell each other not to eat bats any more?"*

*"Look my dear brother, the bat is not eatable, learn this first."*

*"F\*\*\* the imam of a bat-eater"*

**e.2.2. Scapegoating:** Those who eat "Bat" and "Bat soup" are labeled as responsible for all the disruptions of daily life. According to the discourse in this category, the Chinese people caused the pandemic by eating bats, and the flow of life was disrupted due to the pandemic. Users charge the Chinese for what they could not do in a wide range, from the defeat of the football derby to the running out of the vehicle battery, from not being able to play the okey game and not going on vacation. The Chinese are often insulted in the posts. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*"We can't play 101 on X just because a \*\*\* ate bat in China."*

*"What is distance education f\*\*\*, we cannot study. Look at our situation just because a \*\*\*\* ate a bat "*

*"We can't go to high school, because a \*\*\* ate a bat in China."*

*"You impudent who drank the bat soup; how will you account for the 3 kilos I put on"*

**e.2.3. Exaggeration/attribution/distortion:** Social media users have produced the practice of "us" and "them" discourse in this category as well. According to social media users, while the Chinese are described as 'they' who eat everything and therefore cause diseases, the eating habits of 'us', which they define as 'Muslim' and 'Turkish', are glorified. Conspiracy theories arguing that China produced COVID-19 in the laboratory are also included in this category.

The following comment made to a tweet sharing the video of an Asian woman cooking stuffed aubergine is striking: "When the camera is turned off, she must have thrown in a bat or something. Her face does not suggest any safety."

The experience shared with the tweet, "We ordered noodles from a Chinese restaurant for lunch and we are despised as if we ordered corona; people will think we ate a bat" is important in terms of explaining the meaning of the discourse in life. It is seen that bat soup and bat were also used as an element of 'humor' in the tweets posted.

The students who wanted YKS (university exam) to be postponed expressed their reactions with posts such as "Let's cut and eat a bat, only then they may postpone the exam", "If you postpone the exam to June, I will eat a bat as well" #tarihinide-gistirme.

Some of the prominent posts within the category are as follows;

*"Oh China, why would you eat bats while there are potatoes and beans"*

*"Today, a bat passed very close to my head, I ignored it. I did not catch it, bring it home and tell my mom to make soup of it, like some \*\*\* do."*

*"1500 new viruses are waiting in a ready-made state made by human hand in the laboratory in Wuhan. Don't tell me about the bats, even China does it willingly."*

**e.2.4. Symbolization:** In the symbolization category, it was observed that all Chinese were labeled as bat eaters, and the bat was mentioned in connection with

COVID-19. Discursive practices were developed by reference to “Chen” character in the cartoon titled Cedric, which was once shown in Turkey. The “#AhÇenÜzümlüKekim” label was used together with bat and bat soup labels referring to the lines in the cartoon. Users have stated that they would think of COVID-19 and bat soup when they saw people of Asian origin. In this category, insult has been the most used form of discourse. Another interesting issue is that the bat, a mammal, is also labeled in the same way. The bat was declared a scapegoat, described as 'flying coronavirus'. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“Oh Chen my Raisin Pie, my roasted bat. You f\*\*\* the country b\*\*\*”*

*“Oh Chen my Chinese \*\*\* what the world has become because of your nationality”*

*“Wherever I see them, I will think of this Corona and bat soup f\*\*\*.”*

*“What a bat did to me when I was on the rise of my academic career at the peak of my profession in the most productive time of my youth.”*

*“A bat has entered the house, corona will you come like this?”*

**e.2.5. Abjection:** Unlike Youtube and Instagram, it is remarkable that there is less “abjection” theme in Twitter, as it reflects the effects of videos and images on the user. In the comments made on Twitter, users mainly stated that the eating habits of Asian people are disgusting.

*“I saw bat soup on the news, gonna throw up, gonna throw up”*

*“Disgusting, how do you eat such things”*

*“How could this nation’s stomach accept that disgusting thing while drinking the bat?”*

*f. Hate speech produced against the Chinese people on Facebook posts*

Searches for “bat soup” and “65 years old” were made through the application interface on Facebook. In the search for “Bat Soup” made on April 20, the 10 most watched videos and 4431 comments made for videos were examined. Thanks to the studies conducted on hate speech and in-practice complaint mechanisms, it is a pleasing fact that hate groups and pages, which were frequently encountered in previous years, were not encountered. Here, we would like to point out that the study was done with certain search words.

92 percent of the 4,431 comments we reached searching for “Bat Soup” on Facebook contained hate speech. The most common categories in video content and

comments were “Abjection” and “Enmity”. There were also contents that belonged to the categories of “Swearing, insulting, insulting” and “Exaggeration, uploading, distortion”. Some examples analyzed are given below:

“They eat dogs, eat bats, eat all the sh\*\*\*”

“Believe me even the garbage warehouse wouldn’t accept what their stomachs accept.”

“God damn you, you eat everything you spread disease to the world, disgusting people”

“What a dirty nation they are, in our country even animals do not eat what they eat.”

“May Allah not separate you from the insects on earth, you persecute the people of East Turkestan, Allah will keep the scourge of the earth and sky on you”

“God damn you gooks! Never take them into Turkey, they may eat humans, as well.”

“God damn all the foreigners, they finished Turkey saying this human, that human and now we do not know whether it is Syria or China here.”

“All countries should unite and throw an atom bomb on China, there shall no more be China, countries will always get virus because of them.”

“God damn you, I can’t calm down, we should step on the throat of a Chinese to feel fine.”

“They became viruses themselves.”

“Eat poison disgusting people”

“These are neither human nor cannibals, but what kind of creature they are, I can’t find a word to say. Inhuman”

## B. Hate Speech Produced Against the Elderly

### a. Hate Speech against the Elderly on YouTube Content

Five of the 36 videos included in the analysis included hate speech. Four of them belonged to the exaggeration/attribution/distortion category and one was an example for symbolization category.

In addition to the hate speech produced, there are problems with representation of the elderly and the discourse produced regarding old age in the videos. Although it is not considered within the scope of the hate speech, the quantitative abundance of sarcastic expressions about old age is striking. Observably, the content containing sarcasm, produced for elderly individuals who are depicted as not obeying the curfew, are mostly shared with “funny” or similar names. Although the representation

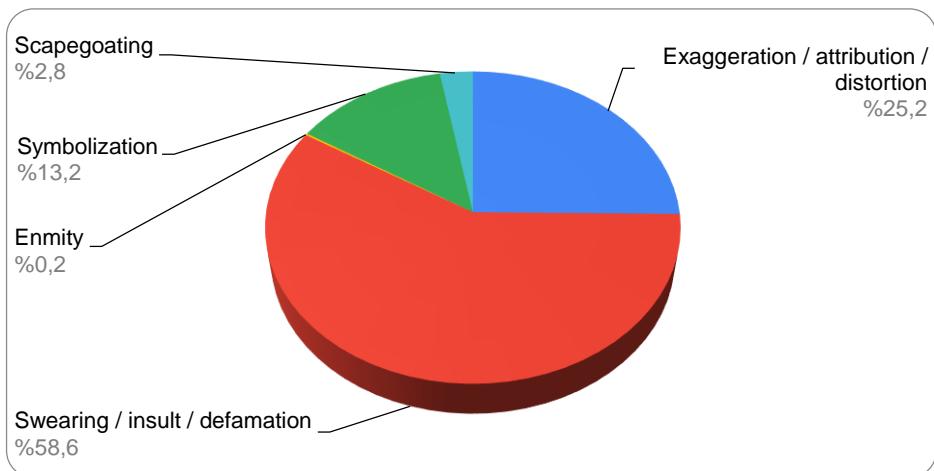
of old age as a comedy element may not be regarded as hate speech, it is possible to consider it under discrimination. The discourse of sarcasm will not be analyzed within the scope of this report. Some examples analyzed are given below:

[Description] “*The old people didn't pay attention to the curfew again*” (YouTube content, example for exaggeration/attribution/distortion category).

[Description] “*My father is old, too. God willing that he did not go out today. Dad please don't be a boomer*” (YouTube content, example for symbolization category).

b. Hate Speech against the Elderly People in YouTube Comments

A total of 1688 comments of 10 videos that received 100 or more comments were included in the analysis. It was seen that hate speech was produced in all categories except for abjection (see Figure 6).



**Figure 6: Hate speech by category produced in YouTube comments for the Elderly,**

**b.1. The category of exaggeration/attribution/distortion**, generalized the citizens who violated the ban to all elderly individuals. Generalization in this category attributes individuals who do not comply with quarantine measures to the elderly as a social group. Distortion was carried out by attributing negative feelings such as selfishness and thoughtlessness to elderly people who were attributed social irresponsibility by not taking quarantine measures. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“If you tell them to get out, they wouldn’t.”*

*“I never think of those who do not think of themselves, let them die but they will infect children at hospital, they endanger people like the doctor, I’ve been rough but you can’t be thid idiot.”*

*“Let the geezers free, you’re obsessed with them; the opportunity is at their feet, they want to die”.*

**b.2. In the scapegoating category,** the elderly people are held responsible for the increase in the spreading rate of the virus in Turkey on the argument that the elderly do not take the quarantine measures. In this way, the elderly are labeled as virus spreaders and asked to be cleared from the society. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“Well, uncle, you are not afraid because you lived what you lived, you have nothing to lose anymore, but we have and I do not want to get infected because of people like you and if I get caught, my hands will be on you in both worlds and even your faith cannot save you”* (YouTube content comment).

*“Other people die because of you, you shall die.”*

*“Shoot them, kill those old people, they are of no use to the country, but they do a huge damage to the economy and at the same time the epidemic will spread because of them.”*

**b.3. In the swearing/insult/defamation category,** individuals who do not comply with quarantine measures are exposed to direct insult and humiliation due to their old age. This category is produced with reference to negative features attributed to elderliness in society such as forgetfulness, inability to keep up with new developments, and selfishness, which are generally attributed to old age. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“Age is seventy but still not done”.*

*“Our elders are ignorant, hope they pass on to the hereafter without infecting anyone”.*

*“They show that they are ignorant, old, and seniled oh, I’m relieved”.*

*“They are demented but are not aware of it. While the world is shaking, they are worried about where to sit, if you are going to die, die but do not infect others.”*

**b.4. Symbolization category:** The elderly are coded as religious and conservative on the political-ideological plane. Since a significant portion of the elderly population has retirement income, the elderly people are accused of earning money without labor. Based on the assumption that elderly individuals do not comply with the curfew as a whole, a part-whole relation is established between all negative assumptions attributed to old age. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“They all talk much, elderly of the old times had an understanding, enlightenment, nobility. The elderly of today are wise apple reactionists.”*

*“There you go, then they say you don’t give seat in the bus, metro and make face.”*

*“Cut their pensions and then let’s see if they can get out, here in our neighborhood there are neither old nor young people around. Why do they have so much stubborn desire to go out in the streets, isn’t it a pity for our gendarme, police”?*

**c. Hate Speech Against the Elderly on Instagram Posts**

189 Instagram content was analyzed and no hate speech was encountered. Despite the fact that content containing hate speech against the elderly was encountered on Instagram in the early stage of this study, these content was inaccessible during the data collection phase. It is considered that some of the said content could be removed by court order following the judicial sanction faced by the perpetrators who produced and shared videos containing insult and physical attack against elderly people, and some could be deleted by the users.

**d. Hate Speech against the Elderly in Instagram Comments**

Within the scope of the analysis, a total of 4425 comments were examined from 13 content that received 100 or more comments, and it was seen that 73 comments with a ratio of 16 per thousand contained hate speech. There were four categories of hate speech: exaggeration, enemy, symbolization, swearing.

**d.1. Exaggeration/attribution/distortion category** includes a total of 14 items. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“These types walk around during the day and in the evening they write they want curfew to be announced under the posts of the health minister”.*

*“The five-year-old kids understand the seriousness of the incident, but they don’t 😞”.*

**d.2. Enmity category** includes one comment. The example of aggressive nationalism given below is included in order to show with which other discourses the resentment towards the elderly is articulated on the discursive plane.

*“I also wish to drop an atomic bomb on Greece, but \*\* there is a rule, you will follow it”* (Instagram content).

**d.3. Symbolization category** includes 4 comments. Although it is not aimed at elderly individuals, in the comments made to a news video about the punishment imposed on a citizen who violated the curfew, it was observed that a sexist symbolization was made over the gender discrimination against the individual who was sentenced. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“Certainly wants to get married 🤵”.*

*“It is obvious what the mattress is looking for but I cannot write it here.”*

*“Has a roving eye 😏”.*

**d.4. The swearing/insult/defamation category** includes 54 comments in total. In this category, expressions of swearing, insult and humiliation have been produced with regards to age discrimination against individuals who do not comply with curfew measures. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“He doesn’t say I am a conehead, but says he gets bored at home 🤦‍♂️🤦‍♂️🤦‍♂️”.*

*“Are we idiots because we sit at home, we are depressed as well, we are bored, we will sit more if ignorant people like you go out more”.*

*“May God give advice, how do we stand, these people do not deserve treatment even if they are sick.”*

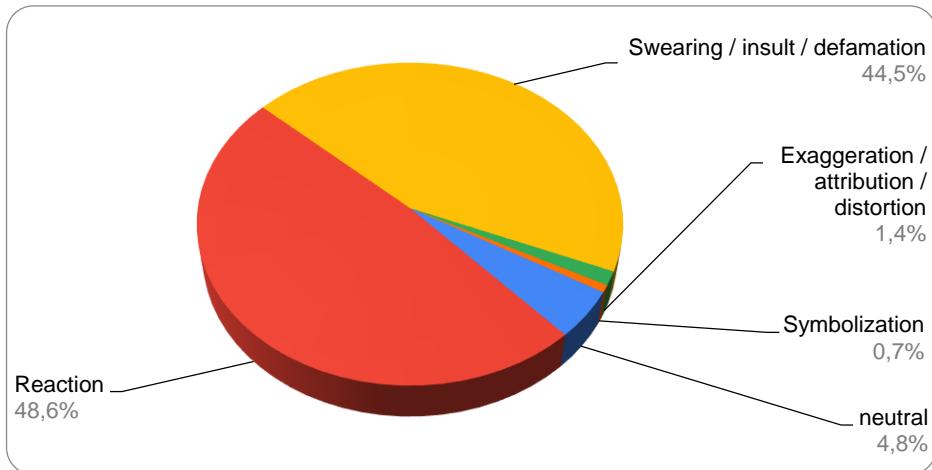
*“Hope it’s the last time you go out, you bird-brained”* (Instagram content).

**e. Hate Speech Produced Against Individuals Over 65 Years of Age on Twitter**

Videos humiliating citizens over the age of 65, which were put into circulation on channels such as Youtube, Tiktok, and Instagram, quickly spread on Twitter, as well. The reaction of the society suppressed the hate speech on social media platforms and prompted the authorities to take quick action against those who shot

such videos. However, the reflections of the understanding depicting people over 65 years of age as “fond”, “inconsiderate” and “insensitive” continued.

A search was made with the Workbench tool between 17 May and 30 June with the label “65yearsofage”. News content was excluded from the search. Accordingly, 610 shares were reached as a result of the search with the tag “#65yearsofage”. Hate speech was encountered in 46.6 percent of these posts. The swearing/insult/defamation category was the most common type among hate speech categories (see Figure 7) with a ratio of 44.5%. In the search over 65 years of age, the reactions against the curfew came to the fore, unlike other searches. This category was followed by “Exaggeration/attribution/distortion” with 1.4 percent and “Symbolization” with 7 per thousand. Citizens over the age of 65 have also expressed their reactions to the curfew and that it wasn’t completely abolished via Twitter.



**Figure 7: Hate Speech Produced Against Individuals Over 65 Years Old on Twitter by Category**

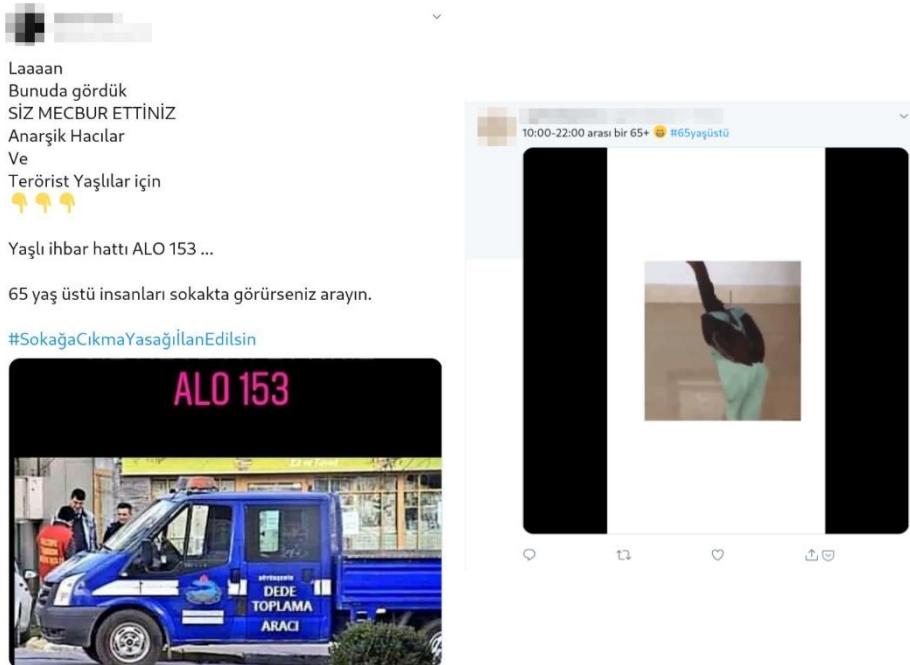
**e.1. The swearing/insult/defamation:** In this category, posts that perceive people over 65 years of age as an “entertainment tool” and try to use them as an element of humor stand out. The understanding that depicts people over 65 years of age as “disobedient” and “irresponsible of their own health” has produced discourses with hate speech around the idea of “We young people” protect “you old people”. Images of citizens over the age of 65 with their hands and feet tied were circulated by different Twitter users, and these images were liked and shared by many users. The old people’s going out on the streets was presented as a favor of the young people, and videos of old people dancing found on the internet were shared with emojis of ‘laughter’. The videos of some animals were shared with the words “#over65yearsofage, who came out after a long time”.



“Sorry Grandma, these are all for your health”

**Image 3: An example of swearing/insult/defamation against elderly people on Twitter**

Following the announcement of the curfew for people over the age of 65, visual intervention was made to the municipal vehicles and various posts that changed the writings on them into “Grandfather collection vehicle” were put into circulation.



**Image 4 and 5: An example of swearing/insult/defamation against elderly people on Twitter**

Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“We have seen this as well, you forced it, the crime line for the anarchic pilgrims and terrorist pilgrims”.*

*“The grandfathers and grandmothers over #65 who came for shopping were not allowed in the market because they were without masks, although I did not approve them, I gave them some spare masks with me, and the grumpy old people were going to make a scene, and they even asked me whether it was clean or beautiful ☺☺”.*

*“Someone said he died, tell them the kings are back #over65” (posted with the photo of people over 65 on the street)*

*“Dear elders, enjoy the weather”*

**e.2. Exaggeration/attribution/distortion:** The posts in this category cover themes that people over the age of 65 do not protect themselves and do not wear a mask. Following the government's decision to keep the curfew within certain hours, posts describing citizens over 65 as an obstacle were made.

*“#over65yearsofage, what would happen if you gave the right to go out on the streets between 09: 00-18: 00. We cannot get on the metrobus from the crowd. The majority are families with children and the elderly.”*

*“We cannot get on the bus, we cannot enter the market #over65yearsofage”*

**e.3. Symbolization:** The argument that individuals over the age of 65 travel without a mask and 'loot' the markets is one of the cases that we also encounter in this category. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“#over65yearsold, they had taken their walk yesterday in the market and bought whatever is there.”*

*“#over65yearsold and without a mask”*

**f. Facebook Solidarity Groups of Individuals Over 65**

In the search we made on Facebook with the keyword “over 65 years old”, we came across solidarity groups established in May 2020. In the solidarity groups, the government's policies for people over 65 years of age, the latest developments regarding COVID-19, as well as experience sharing on the effects of the curfew were

discussed. In addition, it was seen that petitions and signature campaigns regarding the lifting of bans and restrictions were shared through these groups.

Standing out among the groups is the “over 65” Facebook group with more than 20 thousand members and a daily traffic of 625 posts. The posts shared in the group mainly consisted of the reactions to the ban, the effect of not doing sports on health due to the weather temperature, daily greetings and news sharing. Group members are active in posting and commenting. The majority of the posts consists of greeting messages, news and columns under various topics. The only rule set by the group for sharing is “No Hate Speech or Bullying is Allowed”. An overview of the posts and comments revealed that the group complied with these rules.

It is noteworthy that in some posts, members use the term 'friend of fate'. Group members react to being seen as useless and try to create public opinion so that the bans are lifted the soonest possible. The complaint about the increase in health problems was predominantly seen in the posts. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“Hello to our friends of fate over the age of 65, I at least want the permission to start at six in the morning because I want to take a morning walk”*

*“They see us as deadly discard who cannot protect themselves. I think many of the people I talked, those with joint problems suffer from the progress of the disease.”*

*“Those wandering around the streets irresponsibly will continue to spread germs and we will continue the house arrest. How is that possible?”*

*“We have been silent sodown far while there were the prohibitions, we have been closed at home for about three months, but we need to move and walk in fresh air, I wonder if there will be a doctor who claims otherwise, doctor friends”*

The other groups on Facebook established with similar objectives are the “over 65 solidarity group” (Open) with 3500 members, the “over 65 staying at home” (Private) with 240 members, and the “friends over 60” (Open) with 250 members.

### **C. Hate Speech Produced Against LGBTI+ Individuals**

#### **a. Hate Speech Against LGBTI+ Individuals on YouTube Content**

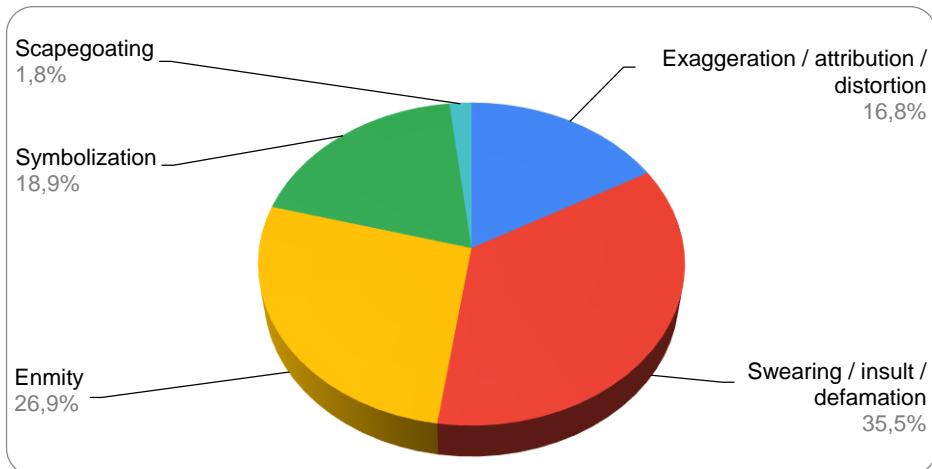
The vast majority of the 56 videos obtained in this section is composed of television news content about the sermon of Religious Affairs President Prof. Dr. Ali Erbaş, quoted above, the statements of the bar associations criticizing the sermon and the comments made by political figures on the issue. Analysis of these contents

is beyond the scope of this study. 7 out of 56 content are not television content, but content produced directly by ordinary users, and all except for two contain hate speech. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“Advocating gender equality means fighting God and spreading homosexuality”.*

*“The Istanbul convention is the basis of LGBT and all kinds of immorality”.*

b. Hate Speech Against LGBTI + Individuals in YouTube Comments



**Figure 8: Hate speech produced against LGBTI + individuals in YouTube comments by categories**

It was observed that 11 video content, which corresponds to more than 19% of the 56 videos included in the analysis, was closed to comments, and hate speech was encountered in all of these contents. The same situation is 46 per thousand for the Chinese and 27 per thousand for the elderly.

There was hate speech in 812 comments, which corresponds to 21.8% of 3718 comments made on 10 videos that received 100 or more comments. It is observed that hate speech is produced in all categories except for abjection (see Figure 8). In addition, it is possible to argue that the categories containing hate speech towards LGBTI + individuals actually intertwine. Although the swearing/insult/defamation category was the most frequently produced category with 35.5%, it was observed that the hate speech produced in other categories also contained swearing/insult/defamation.

**b.1. In the category of exaggeration/attribution/distortion**, basing on the statement of Ankara Bar Association criticising President of Religious Affairs Prof. Dr. Ali Erbaş's words, it was claimed that LGBTI + rights defenders criticized the religion and social order and in this way the basic teachings of the religion of Islam were humiliated by LGBTI + rights defenders. Since LGBTI + rights advocates do not criticize the teachings of any religion, it is evaluated that the following quotations may be examples of distortion.

*“Say come on, the Lord of the bandit kingdom told us that it is haram what if everybody does what they want what if I want to break up the country because how nice I am free”.*

*“What next, God’s orders cannot be read in mosques? Where are we? Where do they get this courage? We cannot defend our religion? What do they say for that, shoo.”*

*“As long as the Muslims remain silent, the infidels will continue to bark. Yes, the words belong to Allah, but yes, it is our duty to stamp his words”.*

**b.2. The category of enmity** includes the warmongering against the LGBTI + individuals and rights defenders on the assumption that they wage war against the religion of Islam while defending their LGBTI + rights. In addition, the expression of expulsion against LGBTI + individuals and rights defenders is a similar hostility discourse. The distinction between us and them is established between Muslims who adopt the extreme interpretations of the religion of Islam and LGBTI + rights defenders. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“They are hostile to religion, non-Muslims are reserved”.*

*“Those who oppose this sermon are trying to sell refrigerators to the eskimos, but they will hit the wall because those who fight against the God have no chance of winning”.*

*“For those who believe, this issue is clear and explicit, there is just one problem regarding God’s and that is the enemies of Islam”.*

*“You will not ever be able to alienate this nation from its religion.”*

*“It is obvious that these dogs are to die, they urinate in the mosque’s yard.”*

*“Brother, just say this, if there’s anyone who does not like Ali Erbaş Hoca, our Qur'an, our call to prayer, they is permission in the Netherlands and other EU countries, the door is open they can shove off, we are enough for ourselves.”*

**b.3. In the scapegoating category**, the responsibility of epidemic diseases is attributed to LGBTI + individuals. Since the hate speech in question was produced during the pandemic process, it is considered that the responsibility for the COVID-19 pandemic was similarly placed on LGBTI + individuals and rights defenders. In addition, there are examples where the virus is seen as a metaphor for the lack of social order. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“It fits you to support LGBT people who spread dozens of viruses such as AIDS, HIV, syphilis in the society, Faik [CHP spokesman Faik Öztrak] would become a good transvestite, huh”.*

**b.4. In the swearing/insult/defamation category**, humiliation is produced directly with swearing and insulting expressions. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“My brother, Quran is open to everyone, write CHP and it would mean ba\*\*\*\*”*

*“If Turkey is said to be a Muslim country rather than a secular country, these rabid unbelievers could not attack like mad.”*

*“The scumbag, dishonorable people who are enemies of Islam hide themselves under various guises and insult the spirituality of the Turkish society. Turkey does not belong to former renegade people, remove them from the state sector. Enough, our state, they have been attacking for centuries should not forgive those corrupt lineage people, they should serve their penalty by law.”*

*“Let the associates of Ankara Bar Association be taken to rabies quarantine, if there is no improvement, they shall be killed”.*

*“It is a lifestyle, huh; yes, alienation, a human being lives like a human being, not dishonestly”.*

**b.5. In the symbolization category**, it is seen that the narrative of “the people of the Prophet Lut” is used to symbolize LGBTI + individuals and rights defenders. The definition of the natural identity elements of LGBTI + individuals as “adultery and lust” in the sermon read by the Head of Religious Affairs Ali Erbaş caused the hate speech produced against LGBTI + individuals and rights defenders to be symbolized through the narrative of the Prophet Lut (as) and his people. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“Those who mean ages before, should read the people of Lut”.*

*“The administration of the Ankara Bar Association must have come from the people of Lut, are they representing the defense authority, the despicable structure immediately resign the bar”.*

*“Pompeii, which is the symbol of the degeneration of the Roman Empire, is in Italy. The city of Pompeii has collapsed by sexual perversion just like the people of Lut”.*

c. Hate Speech Produced in Instagram Content against the LGBTI + Individuals

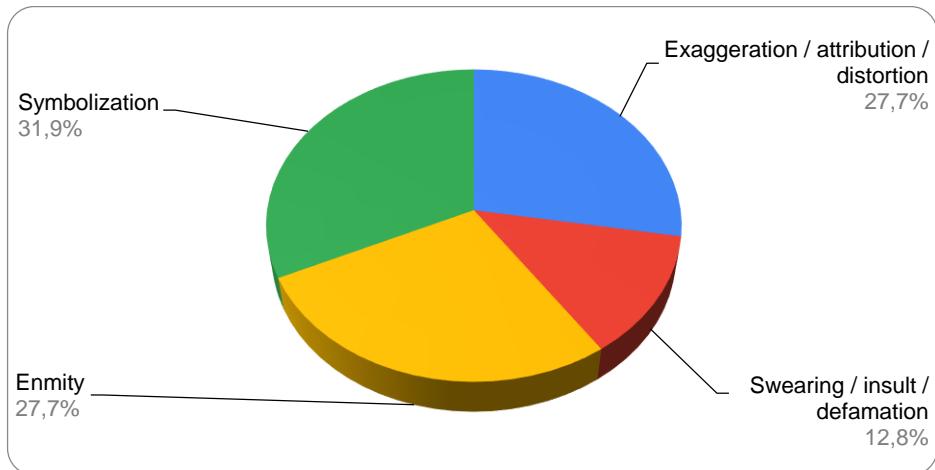
In this section, there are 47 items of hate speech, corresponding to 46.5 percent of 101 items included in the analysis. All categories except abjection and scapegoating could be observed in this section (see Figure 9).

**c.1. In the category of exaggeration /attribution/distortion,** it was claimed that LGBTI + rights advocates criticize religion and social order, as claimed in the YouTube comments, and thus humiliate the basic teachings of Islam. It is seen that this category is mostly built on the assumption that the entire society will have an LGBTI + identity if the rights of LGBTI + individuals and rights defenders are secured.

[Depiction] *The content shows the wedding photo of a male couple's. [Description] If you don't want to see hundreds of such photos posts around you, soon. If you don't want your son to say I will marry my boyfriend, or your daughter, I am marrying my girlfriend, if you do not want them to make strange statements like we are the third gender, #Giinsahipçikmagünüdüir [] (It's the day to protect)”.*

[Description] *“If this is enacted in Turkey and is legitimized, be sure you cannot stop it. At the moment, there is a tolerant mentality that makes 3rd gender literature, they will toss this society so strong that every part of us [] will become so “tolerant” []. You will not know where you can find your children, God forbid ☹”.*

[Description] *“Otherwise, they would get married continuously, God forbid ☹ The LGBTs were given the right to adopt abroad and they are now trying to do the same in Turkey []”.*



**Figure 9: Hate speech produced against LGBTI + individuals in Instagram content by categories**

**c.2. In the swearing/insult/defamation category**, humiliation is produced with direct swearing and insulting expressions. Some examples analyzed are given below:

[Description] “*May the curse of Allah, his angels and all people be upon those who do all kinds of perversion and those who see and defend it as a right. Those who say Amen to my prayer shall be one of servants God's pleased with*” (21200 likes, 806 comments).

[Narrator] “*They will come tomorrow, they will take from your homes, these perverts, these are the ones who put high-heeled shoes on 9-year-old children and put them on the street, fear God*” (144919 views, 473 comments).

**c.3. The category of enmity**, just like the YouTube comments, includes the warmongering against the LGBTI + individuals and rights defenders on the assumption that they wage war against the religion of Islam while defending their LGBTI + rights.

[Description] “*Ali Erbaş touched upon the greatest disgrace of today that nobody dared to speak, adultery, homosexuality, unmarried relations, so those who attack him are actually attacking Islam because these are the provisions of Islam, let's support Ali Erbaş*” (24349 view, 163 comments).

[Description] Ankara Bar Association humiliated the Qur'an by saying "whose voice comes from ages ago"! You may not have a holy book, but you will respect people who believe in a holy book, as required by law. If you can't respect, you will account for that" (14213 likes, 292 comments).

[Description] "The sentences that disturb you are not the sentences of Ali Erbaş, but those words are the words of God and therefore, your hostility is towards the God. Allah is the Mighty and the Ultimate." (9766 likes, 133 comments).

**c.4. Symbolization category:** In the symbolization category, the criticism made for the purpose of defense of rights has been used as an element of humiliation. On the other hand, the hate speech produced was directed towards the humiliation of the Istanbul Convention and feminism. Some examples analyzed are given below:

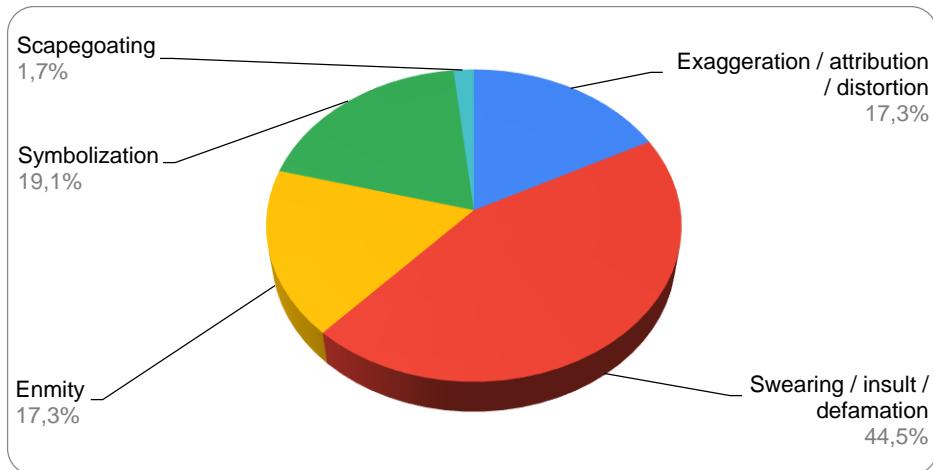
[Description] Those who call the religion of Allah as dogma do not have the right to speak, and it should be kept in mind that the veiled feminists, spoiled by them, issued the Istanbul Convention. That's the way it is, God forbid from worse (36658 likes, 646 comments).

[Description] "We are the spokesmen of God, not pleasure" (14966 likes, 298 comments).

[Description] "We want the Istanbul Convention, which paved the way for this heresy to be annulled ¶".

*d. Hate Speech Produced Against LGBTI + Individuals in Instagram Comments*

Within the scope of the analysis, 5165 comments were examined, and 483 comments corresponding to 84 per thousand were evaluated within the scope of hate speech. It has been observed that hate speech is produced in all categories except abjection.



**Figure 10: Hate speech produced in Instagram user comments for LGBTI + individuals by category**

**d.1. In the exaggeration/attribution/distortion category**, just like YouTube comments and Instagram content, basing on Ankara Bar Association's statement criticizing President of Religious Affairs Prof. Dr. Ali Erbaş's his words, it has been claimed that LGBTI + rights defenders criticize the religion and social order and in this way the basic teachings of the religion of Islam are humiliated by LGBTI + rights defenders. There is an example of distortion that defending the rights of LGBTI + individuals means to lynch members of the religion of Islam. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“All they do is to cause trouble, collapse the economy and sell the country to whom ever. CHP mentality is a rotten mentality” (Instagram user comment).*

*“The opposition is never at ease, there is no subject, but they attack the clergy who talk about the subjects written in our book, which has been told for centuries, and they attack our book, and even Islam, their purpose is obvious” (Instagram user comment).*

*“What days, oh my God, those who say the order of the Quran are trying to be lynched”.*

**d.2. In the scapegoating category**, the responsibility of the COVID-19 epidemic just like other epidemics is attributed to LGBTI + individuals. In addition, there are examples where the virus is seen as a metaphor for the lack of social order,

as in YouTube comments and Instagram content. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“How far could we keep quiet, God bless my Hoca, we are with you until the end, nobody can say it is my preference after corona, look, the bat virus that somebody ate in China has surrounded the whole world.”*

*“It is true that the world is like this because of those people”.*

*“We are in this state saying one’s life binds him/herself, unfortunately certain things bind and affect the society, everyone suffers the consequences because we remain silent.”*

**d.3. In the swearing/insult/defamation category**, humiliation is produced directly with swearing and insulting expressions. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“God damn you, the remnants of the people of Lut, we are a Muslim country, we do not want renegade \*\*\* in our country”.*

*“CHP = ba\*\*\* that it is a clear and obvious point God forbid that these and others like these shall not be in the administration.”*

**d.4. The enmity category**, includes the call for massacre produced against this group based on the assumption that LGBTI + individuals and rights defenders wage war against Islam while defending their LGBTI + rights. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“After Israel, another tribe that God cursed is LGBT and its supporters”.*

*“Take off their heads, those who do it and who support them”.*

*“Their slaughter is obligatory”.*

*“Oh my God, for the sake of these blessed days, destroy the Armenian CHP and its supporters, my God, amen”.*

**d.5. Symbolization category:** In the symbolization category, criticism made for the purpose of defending rights was used as an element of humiliation. The elements of symbolizing regarding opposition in this category are the CHP, LGBTI + rights advocacy and feminism. LGBTI + identity is also symbolized by the virus. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“Most of the CHP members are gay, fathers \*\* each other mothers \*\* each other”.*

*“This filthy opposition and their friends are contagious as a virus.”.*

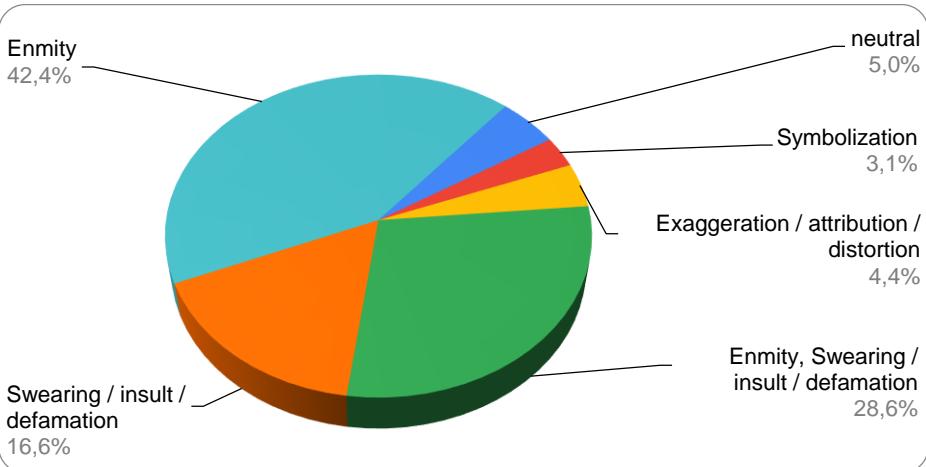
*“Allah is one, Hz. Muhammad is his servant and messenger, our guide and leader, I say that everything he has made forbidden is forbidden. God shall discipline who argues the otherwise, the virus could not correct some of them, 99% in this country complain about the people of Lut who defend this filth”.*

*“My God has given these to Turkey as a calamity, it easier to deal with the virus than dealing with them, we are on your side Mr. Erbaş.”*

e. Hate speech produced on Twitter against LGBTI + Individuals

Following the Friday sermon in which the President of Religious Affairs Ali Erbas labeled LGBTI + individuals as “carriers of disease” and “those who carry the generation to disaster”, people sent support and reaction tweets. Upon the opening of a tag with the title #YallahHollandaya (Go to Holland) on Twitter to support Erbas's statements, Dutch Ambassador to Ankara Marjanne de Kwaastneit showed her reaction with a tweet labeled #LGBTHaklarıİnsanHaklarıdır (LGBT rigths are human rights).

The study focused on the label “#YallahHollandaya”, which itself carries hate speech. The tags “#LGBTFaaliyetleriYasaklılsın (LGBT activities shall be prohibited)” and “#İstanbulozlesmesiFeshEdilsin (Istanbul Convention shall be annulled” were seen to accompany “#YallahHollandaya”. The tweets derived at various time intervals with the Workbench tool between April 27 and June 30 indicated the continuity of the discourse. Hate speech was detected in 95 percent of the 1943 tweets posted. In the tweets where the element of enmity predominates, swearing/insult/defamation elements were observed in addition to “enmity”. Discourses are included in both categories because both types of discourse are dominant (See Figure 11).



**Figure 11: Hate speech produced on Twitter against LGBTI+ individuals by category**

According to this, 71 percent of the tweets included “enmity”, 45.2 percent “swearing/insult/defamation”, 4.4 percent “exaggeration/attribution/distortion”, and 3.1 percent “symbolization”.

In the discourses, criticising the political opponent using LGBTI+ rights and discrimination against those who are not believers of Islam came to the fore as a remarkable phenomenon. The abundance of discourse that attacks the right to life and right to organization is also striking.

**e.1. Enmity:** LGBTI+ individuals are marked as the enemy of the state that belongs to “us”. LGBTI+ individuals, alleged to threaten the social structure, were labeled as “enemies of Islam” and were asked to be punished. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“You will see the power of this state, this country will be banned to LGBT ba\*\* and their supporters, sooner or later you will be eradicated and Islam will win #Yallah-Hollandaya”*

*“Since we cannot join the EU, we cannot bear this, every order that is against Islam must be destroyed. One cannot be Muslim and at the same time tolerate LGBT. In order to respect LGBT people, they must deny the verses that inform the people of Lut, and those who deny the verses will not be a Muslim.” #LGBTFaaliyetleriYasaklansin #Yallah-Hollandaya”*

*“You go to France from whom you got secularism, go to Switzerland, where you got the murder law, go to Switzerland, go wherever you got the civil law, these lands are the lands of Islam, they belong to Muslims #YallahHollandaya”*

*“They turned what I know and love as rainbow for 30 years into a\*\*\* God damn you, you made me hate you #YallahHollandaya”*

*“You told all the conservative, religious people for years to go to Arabia, now I tell all b\*\* and t\*\* #YallahHollandaya #alierbasyalnizdeğildir”*

*“No ifs and buts, Turkey is the land of Islam, we do not want to see these perverts #yallahhollandaya #lgbtfaaliyetleridurdurulsun”*

*“Dear Minister @suleymansoylu, why are these Lgbt associations not closed? How long will we turn a blind eye to the attack on our moral values, please do what is necessary, dear minister, please support with a chain, please #YallahHollandaya”*

**e.2. Swearing/insult/defamation:** Insults such as “ba\*\*\*”, “deviant”, “infidel” were detected in the majority of the tweets posted. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“I'm a Turk and a Muslim, I'm not ba\*\* #YallahHollandaya (Go to Holland) now”*

*“Beware, the majority of those who support the #LGBTHaklarInsanHaklaridir (LGBT rights are human rights) tag have infidel names, the Muslim and Turkish names are cryptos, so let them go to Holland, the home of infidel. #YallahHollandaya”*

*“If you prefer ba\*\* to a virtuous and honorable life, #YallahHollandaya.”*

*“You say ‘even if we are ba\*\*\*’ what ‘even if’, you are pure ba\*\*\* “*

*“I am calling out to the opposition. You can never be in power in this country by leaning on the LGBT. Do not be ba\*\*\* if you are very curious about it, you all goto Holland #YallahHollandaya”*

**e.3. Exaggeration/attribution/distortion:** In the tweets analyzed in this context, it was claimed that LGBTI+ individuals are sick, and they are prone to pedophilia and zoophilia. The Istanbul Convention, on the other hand, has been distorted by detaching it from its context. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“Yes, those who say homosexuality is a preference and support it, they want freedom for domestic perversion, continue to support them, their next request will be sexual intercourse with animals #YallahHollandaya”*

*“It is the Istanbul Convention that leaves open door to LGBT and approves their immoral walk. This convention should be terminated immediately”*

*“The cure for corona will definitely be found , but I am not sure if there is a cure for perverted spirits who want homosexual marriage, nobody should try to sell snails in the Muslim neighborhood. Is Asim's generation here?”*

*“The remnants of the Lut people are carefully given a ghusl ablution by our TOMA #AliErbaşanızdeğildir #YallahHollandaya #MüslümanAvukatlarGöreve”*

*“How the CHP municipalities love perverted \*\* transvestite lesbians, the only person they dislike is religious ones #YallahHollandaya”*

*“How you dare to respect what God has cursed, Muslim #YallahHollandaya #LGBTFaaliyetleriYasaklansın #LGBTsapıklıkltır”*

*“If you say we want to get married, #YallahHollandaya (Go to Holland) sorry, you cannot poison our children, it is our most natural right to ask for it.”*

**e.4. Symbolization:** In the tweets evaluated within the scope of symbolization, those who criticized Ali Erbaş, the President of Religious Affairs, were accused of being “enemy of Islam”. It has been observed that the Istanbul Convention is trying to be symbolized as an agreement that threatens the family structure and defends only LGBTI + rights. Some examples analyzed are given below:

*“Do you want to respond to those who attack the President of Religious Affairs Ali Erbaş? Do you want to slap those who attack Islam? The Istanbul Convention shall be abolished.”*

*“The Feminism Terrorist Organization, which is the most insidious and even the most dangerous terrorist organization of Zionism, wants the father away from home, the family is left headless, the woman is incited against the man and a generation of vagrants and rebellious people grow. #YallahHollandaya”*

*“Is it a coincidence that those who defend gay rights use Mustafa Kemal as their profile photo, then can we say that all Kemalists are gays and all gays are Kemalists #YallahHollandaya”*

## **Conclusion**

During the COVID-19 pandemic period, hate speech was produced against Asian people, especially the Chinese people, and elderly people besides the LGBTI+ individuals, women, Kurds, Jews, Greeks and Armenians who are continuously exposed to hate speech in Turkey. It is possible to interpret this fact as that the number of social groups subject to hate speech has increased in Turkey. Chinese/Asians and 65+ individuals have been included in the social groups exposed to hate speech produced in Turkey. It was observed that the Chinese / Asians were exposed to abjection category of hate speech while the elderly were more exposed to swearing/insult/defamation.

It is a known fact that the LGBTI+ individuals are always exposed to hate speech in Turkey. However, according to the analysis made within the scope of this report, hate speech was produced by treating opposition, CHP membership and LGBTI+ identities together. The relationship between us/the other established in this way produces an ordinary scapegoat. Hate speech directed towards one also targets the others, so more identity elements are exposed to hate speech. Hate speech is multiplied, different categories of hate speech are intertwined. Multiple items of hate are produced. This is precisely the context in which abjection and scapegoating, which are featured as new categories in this report, separate from humiliation and symbolization.

It has been noticed that the hate speech in the category of swearing/insult/defamation against all groups considered within the scope of this report contains many different sub-categories, both quantitatively and qualitatively. A special emphasis should be given to the discursive practices that the hate speech produced by defamation is realized. The discursive practices establishing I and the other, we and they may be an important problematic for future hate speech studies.

The strong religious emphasis contained in the examples of hate speech revealed by this report is striking. It means that the us/others relation of religious references contained in all categories of hate speech are established in the context of religion. We are concerned that the effect of hate speech produced with religious references is stronger.

It has been observed that the target of hate speech against LGBTI+ individuals is not limited to LGBTI+ individuals, but is also directed to LGBTI+ rights defenders and all political opponents. In all categories of hate speech, the “us-them” distinction has been established between those who accept and do not accept the religious provisions of the Islamic religion. In the discourse, the emphasis that those who do not accept these provisions “cannot be Muslims” came to the fore. In this

respect, it is recommended that rights defenders should be included in the focus of hate speech studies in future.

Findings related to representation of elderliness and perception of elderliness should be evaluated from a sociological and gerontological perspective. The reason for the absence of hate speech against the elderly in Instagram and YouTube content, while it exists in YouTube comments is considered to be the judicial proceedings mentioned above. This proposition is based on pre-data collection observation and needs to be empirically tested. Apart from that, quantitatively, the most common category of hate speech made in YouTube comments against the elderly is swearing/insult/defamation. It was observed that the contents were removed after the court decision. The dominance of this category in YouTube comments is thought provoking. It is recommended that hate speech studies focus more on YouTube comments.

There is a need for studies that would focus on the discursive practices that would produce hate speech against Chinese/Asian people and the elderly in the future. In this regard, it is suggested that the focus of hate speech studies should be expanded to include hate speech produced against Asians and the elderly. Keeping in mind that hate speech is produced and widespread not only on social networks/platforms included in this report, but in all kinds of media where user-generated content can be produced (blogs, user comments, dictionaries, webinars, live broadcasts, streaming lists, stories, etc.) we would like to note that it is essential to focus on these channels in future studies.

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