

Twitter as a Polarized Space for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Turkey

Sema Akboğa
Engin Arık

Abstract: Research on the coverage of CSOs on social media and the use of social media by CSOs has been gaining momentum. To contribute to this line of research, this study investigates the coverage of civil society organizations (CSO) on Twitter in Turkey by focusing on the most frequently mentioned organizations. It examines the characteristics of these CSOs as well as the effect that social and political developments in Turkey have on their coverage on Twitter. The data were collected from Twitter for the period between August 18, 2019 and September 17, 2019. We found that CSOs were not equally mentioned on Twitter; a total of 29,387 tweets mentioned 4,941 different CSOs, representing only 3.98% of all CSOs in Turkey. We also found that, with a few exceptions, tweets were not equally distributed in number across the CSOs or over time. Furthermore, the content of the tweets about the most frequently mentioned CSOs was strongly related to the political developments in Turkey, thereby reflecting the politically polarized views about the organizations in Turkey. Therefore, we concluded that ideological divisions in politically polarized countries such as Turkey shape the coverage of CSOs on Twitter.


Keywords: Turkey, CSOs, Twitter, polarization, democracy.


Öz: Sosyal medyada sivil toplum kuruluşlarının (STK) ne kadar yer aldığı ve sosyal medyanın sivil toplum kuruluşları tarafından kullanılması üzerine araştırmaların sayısı artmaktadır. Bu alandaki çalışmalara katkı vermek amacıyla, bu araştırma, Türkiye’de Twitter’da en çok adı geçen STK’ları inceleyerek bu STK’lardan ne kadar bahsedildiğini ve bahsedilen STK’ların özelliklerini ortaya çıkarmayı hedeflemektedir. Bunu yaparken, STK’lardan bahsedilme sıklığının Türkiye’deki sosyal ve siyasi gelişmelerden ne kadar etkilendiğini araştırmaktadır. Bu amaçla, 18 Ağustos 2019 ve 17 Eylül 2019 tarihleri arasında yazılmış tweetler incelenmiştir. Analizler, Türkiye’de STK’lardan Twitter’da sayısal olarak eşit bir şekilde bahsedilmediğini göstermiştir. Dernek ya da vakıflardan bahseden toplam 29.387 tweet vardır ve bu tweetlerde 4.941 dernek ya da vakıftan bahsedilmiştir. Bu da Türkiye’de bulunan STK’ların sadece %3,98’inden Twitter’da bahsedildiğine işaret etmektedir. Buna ek olarak, birkaç istisna dışında, STK’lar ile ilgili yazılmış tweetler zaman içinde eşit dağılmamıştır. Ayrıca, bu araştırma STK’lar ile ilgili yazılan tweetlerin Türkiye’deki siyasi gelişmelerle ilişkili olduğunu ve dolayısıyla Türkiye’deki bu kuruluşlarla ilgili siyasi açıdan kutuplaşmış görüşleri yansıttığını göstermiştir. Bu nedenle, Türkiye gibi siyasi kutuplaşmanın yüksek olduğu ülkelerde ideolojik ayrımların Twitter’da STK’lardan bahsedilmesi üstünde belirleyici bir etkisi olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır.


Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye, STK, Twitter, kutuplaşma, demokrasi.

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 Assist. Prof., İstanbul Medipol University. semaakboga@gmail.com
Assoc. Prof., Nuh Naci Yazgan University. enginarik@enginarik.com

 <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0937-9961>
<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0981-257X>

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Introduction

The relationship between civil society organizations (CSOs) and democracy has been well-established (Diamond, 1994; Putnam, 2000; Paxton, 2002). A variety of social institutions and actors enable CSOs to make democratic contributions to society. One of them is the media, including both traditional and social media. Media coverage of CSOs plays an important role in helping them realize their goals, such as by affecting public opinion and the state's policies. The literature on various issues regarding the coverage of CSOs by traditional media such as newspapers is well-developed (Hale, 2007; Marberg et al., 2016; Waisbord, 2011; Greenberg & Walters, 2004). Recently, research on the coverage of CSOs on social media and the use of social media by CSOs has been gaining momentum. To contribute to this line of research, in this study we explore the coverage of CSOs on Twitter in Turkey by focusing on the most frequently mentioned CSOs and their characteristics. We investigate how social and political developments taking place in Turkey at the time of writing of these tweets about CSOs influence what Twitter users say about these organizations. In doing so, it reveals how and to what extent CSOs in politically polarized countries such as Turkey, in which CSOs are also politically divided, are mentioned on Twitter. This research therefore contributes to the existing literature on CSOs, social media, and politics.

CSOs and the Media

CSOs make many contributions to democracy (Diamond, 1994; Putnam, 2000; Paxton, 2002; Dodge, 2015; Foa & Ekiert, 2017) and the media helps CSOs contribute to democracy in various ways (Andrews & Caren, 2010; Waisbord, 2011; Waters & Tindall, 2011; Thornton 2006; Helmig et al., 2012; Marberg et al., 2016). The well-developed literature on the relationship between CSOs and traditional media looks mainly at the publicity that CSOs receive, especially in newspapers. A group of research explores the factors affecting the visibility of CSOs in newspapers (Andrews & Caren, 2010; Helmig et al., 2012), while other research examines how newspapers frame and present CSOs (Waisbord, 2011; Marberg et al., 2016). The literature on the relationship between CSOs and social media has also been growing recently. Social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, and online forums offer many advantages for CSOs such as the ability to quickly share opinions, dispense knowledge, and create awareness of issues (Young, 2017). Social media supports the image of CSOs and increases their donations (Seoa, Kim, & Yang, 2009), as well as facilitates CSOs' advocacy, accountability, and information delivery (Lee,

Chen, & Zhang, 2001). Social media is also a low-cost way of mobilizing supporters, initiating interactions with a large group of people, and drawing attention to issues that may not interest traditional media (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Lovejoy et al., 2012). Unlike with reports, websites, and e-newsletters, CSOs can use social media to engage in two-way communication with their stakeholders (Walker et al., 2010). Through social media, CSOs engage in real conversations with stakeholders and acquire real-time feedback (Kim et al., 2014). However, research showed that CSOs use mostly one-way communication on social media (Waters & Jamal, 2011; Waters & Williams, 2011), indicating that CSOs do not use social media effectively (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Greenberg & MacAulay, 2009).

There are mainly three issues that research on the relationship between CSOs and social media explores: (1) the extent to which CSOs use social media in their work; (2) CSOs' goals in using social media; and (3) the effectiveness of the use of social media by CSOs in terms of achieving their goals (Lam & Nie, 2020). A line of research investigates the effect that various factors, such as the organization's size, age, financial resources, and dependence on government or private funding, have on the extent to which CSOs use social media (Lam & Nie, 2020; Chalmers & Shotton, 2016; Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Zornet et al., 2013; Nah & Saxton, 2012; Gao, 2016; Miller, 2011). Other research is interested in why CSOs use social media (Greenberg & MacAulay, 2009; Obar, Zube, & Lampe, 2012; Zhou & Pan, 2016).

Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) found that social media has three main functions for CSOs: information, community, and action. Tweets that contain information about the organization's activities, event highlights, or any other news, facts, or reports fulfill the *information function* of Twitter. Tweets that enable CSOs to interact, share, and converse with stakeholders and, therefore, create more opportunities for the two-way exchange of information and public and open dialogue fulfill the *community function* of Twitter. Tweets that aim to get followers to do something for the organization, such as donating money, attending events, and engaging in advocacy campaigns, fulfill the *action function* of Twitter (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). The action function of social media is especially important for the role played by CSOs in digital activism which is defined as the use of social media and other web-based technologies in campaigns for social and political change (Joyce, 2010). Research however showed that CSOs do not use the action function of Twitter as much as its other functions (Lam and Nie, 2020), which means that CSOs do not effectively use Twitter for digital activism. Organizational capacity has an effect on whether a CSO uses tweets with predominantly informational or action content (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2017).

Media Publicity of CSOs in Turkey

The number of research on media publicity of CSOs in Turkey has been recently increasing. Previous research revealed that, in Turkey, not all types of CSOs are equally visible in the media (Deren Van Het Hof, 2014; TÜSEV, 2013). Tunç (2005) found that printed media was more likely than visual media to cover CSOs. According to the same research, of the printed media, Cumhuriyet made more news about CSOs than Hürriyet (Tunç, 2005). Some research on the media publicity of CSOs in Turkey examined news about CSOs in local and national newspapers (Güran Yiğitbaşı, 2016), while others have investigated the language used in the presentation of CSOs in newspapers (Depeli, 2014). Another research showed that among the six news portal, Zaman had the highest number of news about CSOs (Deren Van Het Hof, 2014). Most of the news in Zaman and Bianet were about the vocational and advocacy organizations, respectively (Deren Van Het Hof, 2014). Yet other research demonstrated the political polarization in the media in terms of the coverage of CSOs by newspapers in Turkey (Akboğa and Arık, 2019). Accordingly, anti-government newspapers in Turkey contain more news about secular CSOs than do pro-government newspapers, while pro-government newspapers contain more news about religious/conservative CSOs than do anti-government newspapers (Akboğa and Arık, 2018; Akboğa and Arık, 2019).

Another line of research investigated how CSOs in Turkey use social media to increase their publicity (Onat, 2010; Saatçioğlu, 2017; Dondurucu, 2014). Şardağı (2017) showed that, in Turkey, 57.9% of CSOs actively use their Twitter accounts, while only 10% of CSOs have dialogic interactions with their followers. The same research found that CSOs in the fields of education, research, social services, and health actively use Twitter in Turkey. Saatçioğlu (2017) examined the most frequently created content on the Facebook page of Greenpeace Turkey as well as the topic with which the users most frequently engaged. Öztürk and Şardağı (2018) found that CSOs in Turkey use their Facebook pages for corporate communication and design purposes. Other research examined the content of Facebook and Twitter accounts of Green Crescent (Yeşilay) and Red Crescent (Kızılay) (Bozkanat, 2020; Gümüş ve Ağaçcı, 2018). However, there is no research on how people talk about CSOs on Twitter in Turkey. The present study is the first one on this topic.

Social and Political Polarization on Social Media in Turkey

Twitter is a public space in which people can freely express their ideas in short messages called tweets. These tweets can be accessed by anyone unless the account holder disables this function. Some features of Twitter, such as the ability to directly contact the user, share hyperlinks, and start discussions through hashtags, have made it one of the most important social media platforms (Bruns, 2011), especially for political participation. Indeed, some scholars argue that social media allows for more participatory democracy by facilitating people's participation in politics (Bekafigo & McBride, 2013). Social media is also a place in which democratic or anti-democratic actors contest for power and influence (Tucker et al., 2018). Thus, as Sunstein (2001) argued, contemporary media and the internet also promote a culture of polarization in which individuals are more interested in opinions that they support. The polarization, however, produces the "camp-mentality" that weakens independent public opinion and produces disinformation because people with strong political views are more likely to follow news that are compatible with their political beliefs while ignoring the other news (Körösényi, 2013). Most social media users in the U.S. for example think that interactions on social media with people they disagree with are stressful and frustrating because these people are disrespectful and angry (Duggan & Smith, 2016). Research also revealed that especially political exchanges on social media are generally negative and uncivil, contributing to the polarization (Tucker et al., 2018).

Although social media might be a space of polarization, it is important to highlight the larger context in which polarization is generated. There are different sources and types of political polarization (Körösényi, 2013; McCoy et al., 2018). Most of the research showed that political polarization is a top-down phenomenon directed by political elites (Fiorina et al., 2008; Levendusky, 2010; Körösényi, 2013). Elite polarization can increase mass political polarization (Hetherington, 2002; Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008). In other words, parties and political elites cause divisions and political polarization among people (Körösényi, 2013). In Turkey as well, political polarization at both mass and elite level is very high (Aydın-Düzgüt & Balta, 2019; Somer, 2019; Yardımcı-Geyikçi, 2014) and it is mostly created and maintained by political elites such as party leaders (McCoy et al., 2018). This polarization is observed in various issues, including people's opinions about state institutions (Örselli, 2016; Sahin & Akboga, 2019) and representation of CSOs by newspapers (Akboga and Arik, 2019).

Social media in Turkey is not exempt from political polarization. As of October 2019, Turkey had about 8.33 million Twitter users—the sixth-highest number among all countries in the world (Clement, 2019). Furthermore, in 2018, 39% of adults in Turkey indicated that social media was their primary source of news (Andı et al., 2019). Twitter became especially popular after the 2013 Gezi protests (during which the mainstream media was silent), as it served as a platform for the spread of news and information (Barberá & Metzger, 2013). Although social media is frequently used for organizing for social and political purposes (Çetinkaya et al., 2014), it is a polarized platform in Turkey (Bulut & Yörük, 2017; Erdoğan & Uyan-Semerçi, 2018). Over half of social media users in Turkey ignore opinions that are in opposition to theirs (Şener et al., 2015) while sixty percent of Twitter users in Turkey follow people who hold opinions similar to their own (Erdoğan & Uyan-Semerçi, 2018). However, interaction between like-minded individuals on Twitter strengthens group identity while interaction between different-minded people reinforces in-group and out-group affiliation (Yardi & Boyd, 2010).

Previous research showed that Twitter has become a space of political polarization in Turkey. For example, starting in 2014, Twitter became a space where the conflict between the JDP and the FETÖ, which later attempted a coup in July 2016, could be easily observed (Doğu et al., 2014). Çobanoğlu (2019) cross-matched the use of words/terms on Twitter which are widely accepted as common political ideas in Turkey (such as “Islamism”, “leftism”, “socialist”, and “nationalism”) with public demands (such as “democracy”, “rights”, “freedom”, “faith”, “private life”, “ownership”, “security”, “law”, and “Constitution”). He found that, in these tweets, people accused others who held opposing views of being insincere and invited them to be more sincere. Additionally, he found that most of the tweets contained content demonstrating grudges, intolerance, and anger. Hatipoğlu et al. (2019) showed that, on Twitter, people’s foreign policy attitudes are shaped by their political parties/ideological stances, such as being pro-government, nationalist, or a supporter of the pro-Kurdish movement. Other research revealed that, on Twitter, people were polarized over the issue of Syrian refugees in Turkey (Hatipoğlu et al., 2016). This polarization creates more segregated communities on social media, thereby enabling the distribution of misinformation (Andı et al., 2019). Indeed, research found that, in Turkey, those who use social media are more likely to be misinformed but are more confident about their knowledge (Andı et al., 2019), further increasing the polarization.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research showed that, in Turkey, newspaper coverage of CSOs is low and newspapers cover some CSOs more frequently than they do others (Akboğa and Arık, 2018; Akboga and Arık, 2019). Therefore, we expect that social media coverage of CSOs in Turkey is also low and that CSOs are not equally presented on social media. Our first two hypotheses are as follows:

Hypothesis 1: In Turkey, a small number of CSOs are mentioned on Twitter.

Hypothesis 2: Tweets about CSOs are not equally distributed in number a) across the CSOs and b) over time.

In addition, both traditional and social media in Turkey have been increasingly politically polarized (Çağlar et al., 2018; Panayırıcı et al., 2016). The coverage of CSOs by newspapers in Turkey reflects this polarization. For example, anti-government newspapers in Turkey cover more news about secular CSOs than do pro-government newspapers, whereas pro-government newspapers cover more news about religious CSOs than do anti-government newspapers (Akboğa and Arık, 2018; Akboga and Arık, 2019). Twitter has been a politically polarized space in Turkey and reflects the discourses produced in politics (Doğu, 2017; Doğu & Mat, 2019). Therefore, we expect that tweets about CSOs are also politically polarized. Thus, our third hypothesis is as follows:

Hypothesis 3: Tweets about CSOs include politically polarized views about organizations in Turkey.

Methods

We used an application program interface (API) to collect data from Twitter for 31 days, between 11:59 am on August 18, 2019 and 11:59 am on September 17, 2019. The start date (August 18, 2019) of the data collection was randomly selected and the tweets were retrieved online from this date on as they appeared on Twitter. In other words, it was not a backward data collection process. We collected all of the tweets containing either *derneği* (“association” in the accusative form in Turkish) or *vakfı* (“foundation” in the accusative form in Turkish). The data were filtered according to language (Turkish). We then removed duplicates, tweets with RT (retweets), and conversations (replies) so that each tweet/usage had an equal opportunity to contribute to the data. In addition, we excluded tweets containing these words but not referring to real CSOs, such as Ölü Ozanlar Derneği (Dead

Poets Society) and Sabah Uyanamayanlar Derneği (Association of People Who Cannot Wake Up Early) (metaphoric, fictional, or sarcastic uses of these words).

The data were then converted into xlsx and txt formats for analysis. To test our hypotheses, we coded the data according to the dates of the tweets, the names of the CSOs, the types of CSOs (association vs. foundation), and the headquarter of the CSOs (in Turkey or not). We also examined the content of the tweets to determine whether they included polarized views about CSOs. During the coding of data, we counted all types of the words and common phrase-like word sequences (n-grams) in the tweets to explore the topics and themes. For reliability, some portion of the data was also coded by two more coders who had no training on this topic and inter-coder reliability was very high on the names of the CSOs (98.7% agreement on the 1% of the data), the types of the CSOs (100% agreement on the 15% of the data), and the headquarter of the CSOs (99% agreement on the 6% of the data).

We calculated descriptive statistics for the number of tweets according to the types of CSOs, the origin of the CSOs, the most frequently mentioned CSOs, and the dates of the tweets with the help of a corpus linguistic software program called Antconc (Anthony, 2018) and office tools. When necessary, we also computed relative entropies (H_{rel}) to examine the distribution of the data, i.e., how evenly the number of occurrences was distributed across observations (Gries, 2015). H_{rel} values could be between 0 (uneven/random distribution) and 1.0 (even/smooth distribution). We then computed the frequencies of the word types and the word sequences (n-grams) to investigate common topics and co-occurrences of the CSOs in the tweets, if any.

In this study, we closely followed the ethical guidelines of the British Psychological Society (2017) and Williams, Burnap, and Sloan (2017). Therefore, although we obtained data containing personal information such as names, phone numbers, and locations, we omitted such information in this article unless it was crucial to the analysis (e.g., the name of the CSO's president, the CSO's political affiliations, or the headquarter of the CSO).

Results

To test Hypothesis 1, we analyzed all the tweets between August 18 - September 17, 2019. We found a total of 29,387 tweets mentioning 4,941 different CSOs ($M = 5.95$, $SD = 62.70$, $Range = 1-3,342$). Of them, 3,951 (79.9%) were associations and 990 (20.1%) were foundations. This finding is not surprising because, in Turkey, there

are more associations (119,008 as of December 28, 2019) than foundations (5,268 as of August 7, 2019) (General Directorate of Civil Society Relations, 2019; General Directorate of Foundations, 2019). Therefore, the number of CSOs mentioned in the tweets constituted 3.32% of associations and 18.79% of foundations in Turkey. These results confirmed Hypothesis 1 – that, in Turkey, a small number of CSOs are mentioned on Twitter.

We also found that 4,736 of the CSOs (95.85%) mentioned in the tweets were located in Turkey. The remaining 205 CSOs were located outside Turkey. There was a total of 592 tweets (2.01%) about those CSOs outside Turkey (M = 2.85, SD = 2.58, Range = 1-42). Of them, 125 were associations (61%) and the rest were foundations (80, 39%). Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (42) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (35) were the most frequently mentioned CSOs. Moreover, 39 of those CSOs were established by the Turkish population living abroad (e.g., Belçika Denizliler Derneği [Association of People from Denizli in Belgium]) or Cyprus (e.g., Lefkoşa Gençlik Derneği [Lefkoşa/Nicosia Youth Association]). These findings suggest that, not surprisingly, people in Turkey write tweets almost exclusively about CSOs related to people living in Turkey.

To test Hypotheses 2a and 2b, we examined the distribution of the tweets about the CSOs. We found that the tweets about the CSOs were not equally distributed in number across the CSOs, which supported Hypothesis 2a. A closer examination of the data showed that 57.66% of the CSOs were mentioned only once (Median = 1, n(1) = 2,849). This suggests that although 4,941 CSOs were mentioned on Twitter, a small number of them were mentioned much more frequently than others. As Table 1 shows, half of the tweets in our data (50.17%) were about 41 CSOs out of a total of 4,941 ((%o8) (Table 1).

Table 1

The 41 Most Frequently Mentioned Associations/Foundations (50.17% of the Entire Data) (R/C = Religious/Conservative)

Name	Type	N	%
Ensar Vakfı (Ensar)	Foundation	3,342	11.37
Ülkü Ocakları Eğitim ve Kültür Vakfı (Ülkü)	Foundation	1,806	6.15
Türkiye Gençlik Vakfı (TÜGVA)	Foundation	1,154	3.93

Türkiye Gençlik ve Eğitime Hizmet Vakfı (TÜRGEV)	Foundation	1,042	3.55
Furkan Vakfı (Furkan)	Foundation	735	2.50
Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi Vakfı (Hüdayi)	Foundation	704	2.40
Fıkıh Derneği (Fıkıh)	Association	684	2.33
Atatürkçü Düşünce Derneği (ADD)	Association	362	1.23
Hoca Ahmed Yesevi Vakfı (Yesevi)	Foundation	356	1.21
TEMA	Foundation	320	1.09
Okçular Vakfı	Foundation	310	1.05
Kulüpler Birliği Vakfı	Foundation	308	1.05
Boşanmış Mağdur Babalar Derneği	Association	256	0.87
Emeklilikte Yaşa Takılanlar Derneği (EYT)	Association	183	0.62
Arama Kurtarma Derneği (AKUT)	Association	179	0.61
Darül-Fünun İlahiyat Vakfı	Foundation	171	0.58
Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Derneği	Association	163	0.55
Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı	Foundation	159	0.54
Birlik Vakfı	Foundation	151	0.51
Radio ve Televizyon Gazetecileri Derneği	Association	151	0.51
Düz Dünya Derneği	Association	149	0.51
TÜRKEN Vakfı	Foundation	146	0.50
Müstakil Sanayi ve İşadamları Derneği (MÜSİAD)	Association	141	0.48
Kızılay Derneği	Association	140	0.48
Türk Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Derneği	Association	130	0.44
İsrafı Önleme Vakfı	Foundation	126	0.43
İnsan Hakları Derneği (İHD)	Association	125	0.43
Hacı Bektaş Veli Anadolu Kültür Vakfı	Foundation	114	0.39
Çağdaş Yaşam Destekleme Derneği (ÇYDD)	Association	105	0.36
ÖNDER İmam Hatipliler Derneği	Association	104	0.35
Anadolu Gençlik Derneği (AGD)	Association	96	0.33
Beşir Derneği	Association	93	0.32
Ege Orman Vakfı	Foundation	88	0.30

Türkiye Faal Futbol Hakemleri ve Gözlemcileri Derneği	Association	88	0.30
Cumhuriyet Kadınları Derneği	Association	85	0.29
İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri İnsani Yardım Vakfı (İHH)	Foundation	83	0.28
İlim Yayma Vakfı	Foundation	79	0.27
Türk Eğitim Vakfı	Foundation	79	0.27
Türkiye Gazi ve Şehit Aileleri Vakfı	Foundation	79	0.27
Türkiye Maarif Vakfı	Foundation	79	0.27
İzmir Turizm Tanıtım Vakfı	Foundation	78	0.27
TOTAL		14,743	50.19

We then tested Hypothesis 2b. As Figure 1 shows, the overall distribution of the data appeared to be relatively even ($H_{rel} = .92$). However, there was an apparent outlier on August 27, 2019, which consisted of 21.1% of the entire data. When we excluded this date, the distribution of the data appeared to be much more even (from $M = 942.22$, $SD = 998.5$, $H_{rel} = .92$ to $M = 767.03$, $SD = 217.05$, $H_{rel} = .99$), which failed to support Hypothesis 2b.

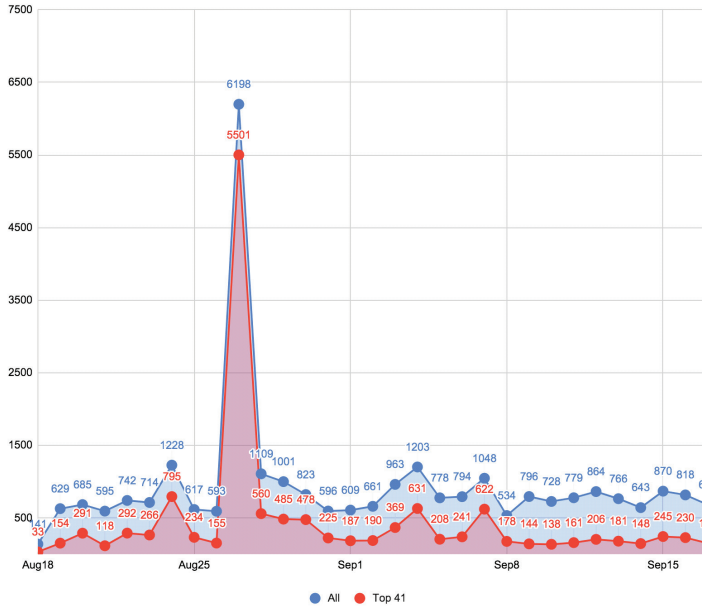


Figure 1. The distribution of tweets mentioning all CSOs ($H_{rel} = .92$) and the 41 most frequently mentioned CSOs ($H_{rel} = .79$) by Date.

We further tested Hypothesis 2b using the data from the 41 most frequently mentioned CSOs. As Figure 1 shows, the distribution of the data over time was still relatively even ($H_{rel} = .79$) but was less even compared to the overall data ($H_{rel} = .92$). Yet, the outlier was more apparent because 88.71% of the tweets about the 41 most frequently mentioned CSOs were written on August 27, 2019. When we excluded this date, similar to what we observed in the findings about the entire data, the distribution of the data from these 41 CSOs appeared to be much more even (from $M = 475.61$, $SD = 952.44$, $H_{rel} = .79$ to $M = 307.43$, $SD = 177.15$, $H_{rel} = .95$). Thus, the results for the 41 most frequently mentioned CSOs did not support Hypothesis 2b because the data were distributed relatively evenly (with the exception of outliers).

As mentioned above, half of the tweets in our data (50.17%) were about 41 out of 4,941 CSOs, indicating that most of the CSOs were rarely mentioned in tweets. Therefore, to categorize the organizations, we focused on these 41 CSOs. We defined organizations as religious/conservative if they (1) referred to religious values in their discourse and activities and/or (2) used a discourse that supported traditional values with respect to family, education, gender relations, and nation. We defined organizations as secular if they did not have the features in (1) and/or (2) or if they considered themselves to be defenders of secular principles. According to our categorization, almost half of the 41 CSOs in our data were religious/conservative while the rest were secular.

To test Hypothesis 3, we examined the 10 most frequently mentioned CSOs on Twitter between August 18 and September 17, 2019. Nine of the 10 most frequently mentioned CSOs were religious/conservative. Below, we closely examine the tweets about these 10 organizations, which constitute 35.76% of the entire data (Table 2, Figure 2). Using words and n-grams, we analyzed the content of these tweets.

Table 2

The Number of Tweets About the 10 Most frequently mentioned CSOs by Date

Date	Ensar	Ülkü	TÜGVA	TÜRGEV	Furkan	Hüdayi	Fıkh	ADD	Yesevi	TEMA
Aug18	14	0	1	0	2	2	0	0	0	5
Aug19	44	33	5	4	13	1	1	3	1	1
Aug20	35	137	1	1	66	0	0	0	3	8
Aug21	27	2	1	1	29	1	2	3	0	7
Aug22	23	4	1	0	105	1	2	1	3	47
Aug23	58	4	4	2	3	0	1	2	0	23
Aug24	43	398	33	0	2	2	0	43	0	18
Aug25	50	57	10	5	1	0	0	3	0	13
Aug26	45	6	3	10	1	0	3	4	0	22
Aug27	2028	460	932	785	3	597	3	35	286	20
Aug28	150	25	49	91	7	31	3	18	23	11
Aug29	38	5	9	19	7	4	1	13	10	11
Aug30	44	220	6	15	43	2	1	57	3	12
Aug31	29	20	6	3	3	2	0	24	0	5
Sep1	66	0	4	2	10	1	0	14	6	11
Sep2	33	0	4	11	23	18	2	6	12	8
Sep3	45	19	7	5	11	14	168	10	3	5
Sep4	44	4	5	15	28	2	435	15	2	4
Sep5	48	5	4	13	5	8	29	7	0	14
Sep6	35	4	2	1	121	1	12	8	1	2
Sep7	47	271	2	3	180	2	7	12	1	3
Sep8	36	5	3	7	15	2	3	6	0	5
Sep9	42	1	10	8	29	4	3	5	1	8
Sep10	35	11	13	5	2	0	3	4	0	6
Sep11	29	7	6	2	4	0	1	23	0	18
Sep12	29	9	13	2	2	3	1	10	1	3
Sep13	28	40	8	2	9	2	1	10	0	6
Sep14	28	11	4	3	3	1	0	4	0	2
Sep15	82	5	1	6	2	0	1	14	0	5
Sep16	65	36	5	20	2	1	1	5	0	11
Sep17	22	7	2	1	4	2	0	3	0	6
TOTAL	3,342	1,806	1,154	1,042	735	704	684	362	356	320

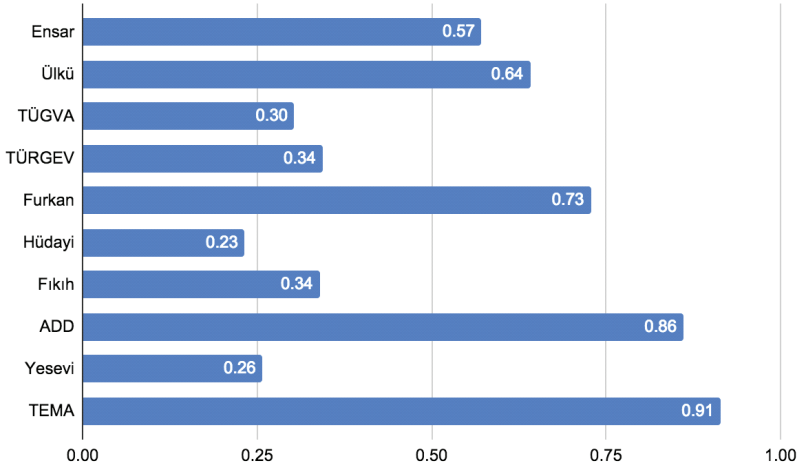


Figure 2. Relative entropies (H_{rel}) of the 10 most frequently mentioned CSOs.

As Table 1 shows, the Ensar Foundation, which is a religious/conservative organization, was the most frequently mentioned CSO on Twitter ($n = 3,342$). Tweets about this organization accounted for 11.37% of the overall data. The fact that 4,941 CSOs were mentioned in tweets and that 11.37% of them came from a single foundation further supported Hypothesis 1. Yet, as Table 2 and Figure 2 show, the distribution of the tweets about Ensar over time was moderately even ($H_{rel} = .57$). Thus, this finding about the Ensar Foundation did not support Hypothesis 2b. We found that the most frequently used nouns in tweets about the Ensar Foundation were Ensar ($n = 3,484$), followed by *TÜRGEV* (972), *TÜGVA* (752), *milyon* “million” (739), *Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi* (509), *İBB* (418), *Ekrem* (391), *İstanbul* (384), and *iptal* “cancel” (377). The longest and most frequent n-gram was *vakfi türgev aziz mahmud hüdayi vakfı* (389), followed by various combinations of other CSOs, including *TÜGVA*, *TÜRGEV*, *Hüdayi*, *Yesevi*, and *Dar’ül Fünun*.

When we closely analyzed the tweets about the Ensar Foundation, we found that on August 27, the day on which the highest number of tweets was written, Twitter users discussed the cancellation of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality’s (*İBB*) agreements with the Ensar Foundation alongside *TÜGVA*, *TÜRGEV*, *Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi Vakfı*, *Hoca Ahmed Yesevi Vakfı*, and *Dar’ül-Fünun İlahiyat Vakfı* and by the newly elected mayor, *Ekrem İmamoğlu*. These CSOs are religious/conservative organizations known for their close affiliation with the current Justice and Development Party (JDP, hereafter) government. *İBB*, which had been

governed by a mayor from the JDP for the last 17 years, financially supported these organizations through the agreements mentioned in tweets. The new mayor, who was from the non-conservative Republican People's Party (CHP) and was supported by other main opposition parties such as İyi Party and People's Democratic Party (HDP), canceled all of these agreements in response to the increasing power of these organizations, attained through İBB's financial support. The reason why the tweets about the Ensar Foundation were written on this single day was that some of the Twitter users expressed their satisfaction with the decision of the new mayor. Conversely, those who were critical about the decision wrote tweets, thereby increasing the number of tweets about the Ensar Foundation. For example, the longest n-gram was followed by almost identical tweets from 238 different users, sent on the same day: August 27. The main argument of these tweets, as opposed to those supporting the decision, was that the cancellation of the agreement by the new mayor was targeting Islam and Muslims.

A more detailed analysis of the data from the TÜGVA, TÜRGEV, Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi Vakfı, Hoca Ahmed Yesevi Vakfı, and Dar'ül-Fünun İlahiyat Vakfı showed that the content of the tweets about these CSOs was similar to those about the Ensar Foundation. Türkiye Gençlik Vakfı (The Turkey Youth Foundation, TÜGVA) was the third most frequently mentioned CSO, appearing in 3.93% of the data (n = 1,154), which supported Hypothesis 1. As Table 2 and Figure 2 show, the distribution of the tweets about TÜGVA over time was uneven ($H_{rel} = .30$), which strongly supports Hypothesis 2b. The most frequently used nouns and phrases in tweets about TÜGVA were *vakfı* "foundation" (2,453), *Ensar* (983), *TÜGVA* (883), *TÜRGEV* (762), *Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi* (502), *milyon tl* "million Turkish liras" (375), *Hoca Ahmed Yesevi* (357), *Dar'ül Fünun* (338), and İBB (291), with the longest and most frequent n-gram being *ensar vakfı türgev aziz mahmud hüdayi vakfı tügva darul fünun* (265).

Türkiye Gençlik ve Eğitime Hizmet Vakfı (Turkey Youth and Education Service Foundation, TÜRGEV) was the fourth most frequently mentioned organization (n = 1,042). The tweets about TÜRGEV constituted 3.55% of the data and were unevenly distributed over time (Table 2, Figure 2, $H_{rel} = .34$), which supported Hypotheses 1 and 2b. The most frequently used nouns and phrases in the tweets about TÜGVA were *vakfı* "foundation" (2,322), *Ensar* (1,044), *TÜRGEV* (1,027), *TÜGVA* (678), *Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi* (509), *milyon tl* "million Turkish liras" (425), *Hoca Ahmed Yesevi* (352), *Dar'ül Fünun* (339), and İBB (332), with the longest and most frequent n-gram being *ensar vakfı türgev aziz mahmud hüdayi vakfı tügva darul* (266).

Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi Vakfı was the sixth most frequently mentioned organization ($n = 704$). The tweets about Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi Vakfı constituted 2.4% of the data and were unevenly distributed over time (Table 2, Figure 2, $H_{rel} = .23$), which supported Hypotheses 1 and 2b. The most frequently used nouns and phrases in the tweets about TÜGVA were vakfı “foundation” (2,031), *Ensar* (681), *TÜRGEV* (643), *Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi* (538), *TÜGVA* (541), *Hoca Ahmed Yesevi* (349), *milyon tl* “million Turkish liras” (320), *Dar’ül Fünun* (338), and İBB (262), with the longest and most frequent n-gram being *ensar vakfı türgev aziz mahmud hüdayi vakfı tügva darul* (266).

Hoca Ahmed Yesevi Vakfı was the ninth most frequently mentioned CSO ($n = 356$). The tweets about Hoca Ahmed Yesevi Vakfı constituted 1.21% of the data and were unevenly distributed over time (Table 2, Figure 2, $H_{rel} = .26$), which supported Hypotheses 1 and 2b. The most frequently used nouns and phrases in the tweets about this CSO were *vakfı* “foundation” (1,411), *Hoca Ahmed Yesevi* (371), *Ensar* (370), *TÜRGEV* (353), *TÜGVA* (344), *Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi* (340), *Dar’ül Fünun* (334), and *milyon tl* “million Turkish liras” (220), with the longest and most frequent n-gram being *ensar vakfı türgev aziz mahmud hüdayi vakfı tügva darul* (266).

There were five more organizations among the 10 most frequently mentioned CSOs but were not related to the above five. Of them, Ülkü Ocakları Eğitim ve Kültür Vakfı (the Idealist Clubs Educational and Cultural Foundation, Ülkü) was the second most frequently mentioned CSO ($n = 1,806$). Ülkü Ocakları Eğitim ve Kültür Vakfı, which has a very close relationship to the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), which itself strongly supports the JDP government, is a religious/conservative organization. The tweets about this CSO accounted for 6.15% of the overall data, which supported Hypothesis 1. Moreover, as Table 2 and Figure 2 show, the distribution of the tweets about Ülkü Ocakları Eğitim ve Kültür Vakfı over time was even ($H_{rel} = .64$), which did not support Hypothesis 2b. The most frequently used nouns and phrases were *ülkü ocakları eğitim ve kültür* (1,848), *genel* “general” (1,736), *sayın* “Mr.” (1,325), *yeni* “new” (1,231), *binasının* “of its building” (1,140), *merkez* “center” (1,033), and the head of the Nationalist Movement Party *Devlet Bahçeli* (922), which together created the longest and most frequent n-gram, *devlet bahçelinin teşrifleriyle gerçekleştireceğimiz ülkü ocakları eğitim ve kültür vakfının yeni genel merkez binasının* “the new center of the Idealist Clubs Educational and Cultural Foundation would be [opened] by Devlet Bahçeli” (893). This was followed by *Bilgetürk* (567), a journal of the organization. Although the highest number of tweets about Ülkü Ocakları

Eğitim ve Kültür Vakfı was written on August 27, these tweets were about the opening of the organization's new head office (the longest n-gram above). All of the tweets about this organization were related to the organization's activities and publications, such as courses, books, and journals (e.g., Bilgetürk (567)). In other words, tweets about this organization were not particularly political, unlike tweets about the other most frequently mentioned organizations, such as Ensar, TÜGVA, and TÜRGEV.

Furkan Vakfı, which is a religious/conservative organization but is critical of the JDP government, was the fifth most frequently mentioned CSO (n = 735). Tweets about this organization constituted 2.5% of the data and were relatively evenly distributed over time (Table 2, Figure 2, $H_{rel} = .73$), which supported Hypothesis 1 but not Hypothesis 2b. The most frequently used nouns and phrases in tweets about Furkan Vakfı were *Furkan* (751) and *Vakfı* (673), followed by *Alparslan Kuytul* (273), *tahliye* "release" (221), and *başkanı* "its president" (214). The longest and the most frequent n-gram was *alagözü tahliye ederek sanki adalet varmış gibi yapanlar bilsinler ki bu dava sus davasıdır* "those who released Alagözü from the prison should know that this trial is a 'shut-up' trial" (37). Furkan Vakfı was disbanded in 2018 as a result of various allegations, such as that it had supported the coup attempt on June 15, 2016. The organization's president, Ali Alagöz, and one of the most important figures in the organization, Alparslan Kuytul, were in prison during the data collection process. Our close reading of the tweets about this organization revealed that all of the tweets were about the court process involving these people.

Fıkıh Araştırmaları Derneği (the Association for the Islamic Law Studies, Fıkıh-Der), which is a religious/conservative organization, was the seventh most frequently mentioned CSO (n = 684). Tweets about Fıkıh Derneği constituted 2.33% of the data and were unevenly distributed over time (Table 2, Figure 2, $H_{rel} = .34$), which supported Hypotheses 1 and 2b. The most frequently used nouns and phrases in the tweets about Fıkıh-Der were *Fıkıh* (707), *derneği* "association" (2,031), *tecavüz* "rape" (596), *erkek* "man" (580), and *#gazetesozcü* "Sözcü newspaper" (568). The longest and most frequent n-gram was *erkek çocuklarına tecavüz edilen fıkıh derneği neden 2013 yılında kuruldu biliyor musunuz* "Did you know why the Fıkıh-Der where boys were raped was founded in 2013?" (537), which was the title of a column written in the Sözcü newspaper by Yılmaz Özdil, a journalist who is very critical of the JDP government. In his column, Özdil strongly criticized the JDP's policies regarding religious education in Turkey.

A great majority of tweets mentioning Fıkıh-Der were written on September 3 (168) and September 4 (434). The reason for the increase in the number of tweets about this organization on those two days, as the longest and most frequent n-gram also reveals, was the spread of the news about the sexual harassment of children by teachers in one of the Quran courses of this organization. Not surprisingly, almost all of the tweets were critical of the organization. As the most frequent n-gram indicates, these critical views turned into criticisms of the JDP government.

Fıkıh-Der was followed by Atatürkçü Düşünce Derneği (The Atatürkist Thought Association, ADD), which is a secular and Kemalist organization ($n = 362$). A total of 1.23% of the tweets in the data mentioned ADD, which supported Hypothesis 1. However, as Table 2 and Figure 2 show, the data were distributed relatively evenly over time ($H_{rel} = .86$), which did not support Hypothesis 2b. The most frequently used nouns and phrases in the tweets about ADD were *Atatürkçü Düşünce Derneği* (343) and *ADD* (87). The longest and most frequent n-grams were *#diyanetkapatılsın [...] asıl atatürkçü düşünce derneği kapatılsın* “ADD should be shut down instead of Diyanet” (21) and *traş olması cilt hastalığımı tetikliyor raporu yoksa sakal* “If he has a medical excuse that shaving causes skin problems...” (21). A closer examination of the data revealed that, in addition to the tweets about ADD’s activities, there were tweets including negative views about ADD, as evidenced by the longest n-grams. A group of Twitter users, who were critical of ADD, wrote that ADD should be shut down instead of the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet* for short). These users criticized the ideology represented by ADD, which supports the closing of religious organizations, such as Diyanet, in Turkey, which is a constitutionally secular country. Another group of Twitter users, who were critical of ADD, argued against ADD’s suggestion that as beards symbolize Islamic fanaticism, bearded city bus drivers should not work for the IBB.

Türkiye Erozyonla Mücadele Vakfı (The Turkish Foundation for Combating Soil Erosion, for Reforestation and the Protection of Natural Habitats, TEMA) was the tenth most frequently mentioned CSO ($n = 320$). A total of 1.09% of the tweets mentioning CSOs were about TEMA, which supported Hypothesis 1. However, as Table 2 and Figure 2 show, the data were distributed relatively evenly over time ($H_{rel} = .91$), which did not support Hypothesis 2b. The most frequently used nouns were *TEMA* (379), *vakfı* “foundation” (249), *fidan* “young tree/plant” (145), *destek* “support” (55), *Izmir* (47), and *orman* “forest” (30). The longest and most frequent n-grams were *tema vakfı izmir için fidan bağışlarınızı bekliyoruz* “We [TEMA] are

waiting for your donations for plantation in Izmir (after the forest fires)” (15) and *tema vakfı 27 yıl önce bugün kuruldu* “TEMA was founded 27 years ago today” (10). These findings indicate that, unlike tweets about Islamic/conservative or secular organizations such as TUGVA, TURGEV, and ADD, those about TEMA aimed mainly to inform people about the organization’s activities.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, we investigated the coverage of CSOs on Twitter by focusing on the most frequently mentioned organizations and their characteristics. We also examined the effects that social and political developments in Turkey had on the coverage of CSOs. The major findings of this research can be summarized as follows: *First*, a small number of CSOs were mentioned on Twitter, supporting Hypothesis 1. *Second*, tweets about the CSOs were not equally distributed in number across the CSOs, supporting Hypothesis 2a. *Third*, tweets about some of the CSOs were not equally distributed in number over time, partially supporting Hypothesis 2b. Among the 10 most frequently mentioned CSOs, tweets about TUGVA, TURGEV, Hüdayi, Fıkıh-Der, and Yesevi were unevenly distributed over time, supporting Hypothesis 2b. However, the number of tweets about Ensar, Ülkü, Furkan, ADD, and TEMA was relatively evenly distributed over time, not supporting Hypothesis 2b. *Fourth*, most of the tweets about CSOs included politically polarized views about the organizations in Turkey, supporting Hypothesis 3. Having summarized the findings, we now discuss them below.

CSOs are important agents of democracy and the media helps them carry out their democratic functions. In countries such as Turkey, where CSOs cannot participate in decision-making processes at the political level (YADA, 2014), the media is important, especially with regard to the digital activism as well as the formation of public opinion on certain issues. Social media gives CSOs a significant opportunity to fulfill their democratic functions, as it allows them to quickly share knowledge and create awareness. It also provides them with a means of engaging in two-way communication with people. The present study showed that a small number of CSOs were mentioned on social media in Turkey, indicating that social media is not yet a fertile ground on which CSOs can fulfill their democratic functions.

As mentioned previously, Twitter is a highly polarized media tool in Turkey, one on which political divisions can easily be observed (Bulut & Yörük, 2017;

Hatipoğlu et al., 2016). Although the present research did not aim to identify the ideological stances of Twitter users, the characteristics of the most frequently mentioned CSOs indicate that Twitter is polarized in terms of CSOs. Eight of the 10 most frequently mentioned organizations—Ensar, Ülkü, TÜGVA, TÜRGEV, Furkan, Hüdayi, Fıkıh, and Yesevi—were strictly religious/conservative, while ADD was the only organization with a clearly strict secular and Kemalist ideology. TEMA, while secular, was the only one among the 10 most frequently mentioned CSOs which did not have an open political ideology. Moreover, five of the 10 most frequently mentioned CSOs—Ensar, TÜGVA, TÜRGEV, Hüdayi, and Yesevi—were religious/conservative organizations with close relations to the governing JDP, while ADD is known for its strictly critical attitude toward the JDP. Additionally, the finding that the distribution of the tweets about most of these CSOs was not even over time indicated that political developments in Turkey, especially tensions between the JDP, and opposition parties and groups, shaped the tweets about these CSOs. In other words, most of the tweets mentioning these CSOs reflected the opinions of either supporters or opponents of the ideologies that these CSOs represented, which in turn makes Twitter a polarized space for CSOs in Turkey.

However, not all the tweets about CSOs with clear ideologies were polarized in the same manner. While Furkan is a religious/conservative organization but anti-JDP at the same time, most of the tweets about this organization included information about the court processes involving the organization's important figures, who had been imprisoned for a while. Still, the tone of tweets about this organization implied that the decision to shut down Furkan was political and unfair. Similarly, all the tweets about Ülkü Ocakları Eğitim ve Kültür Vakfı, which is a religious/conservative organization, were about the organization's activities and publications.

The findings of this research are in line with the previous research on the relationship among social media, political polarization, and CSOs. Twitter is a democratic space which enables different voices to be heard without any restrictions (Bekafigo & McBride, 2013). However, Twitter is also a space in which people both reflect and reproduce existing polarization by refraining from opinions with which they disagree (Şener et al., 2015) and by writing in a disrespectful and angry manner (Tucker et al., 2018; Andı et al., 2019). Furthermore, what people write about certain issues on Twitter is strongly linked to what happens at the political level. This is because polarization among the political elites is very likely to shape

individuals' opinions, which in turn increases the polarization among the masses (Körösényi, 2013). Turkey, is a country that is highly polarized along certain political and cultural ideologies (Erdoğan & Semerci-Uyan, 2018; Somer, 2019). For example, newspapers in Turkey are polarized in terms of their representations of the news about CSOs (Akboga and Arik, 2019). Other research also showed that in Turkey the tensions between the political camps to which people belong strongly influence what they write on Twitter (Hatipoğlu et al., 2016). Our findings indicate that political developments in Turkey, especially tensions between the JDP and opposition parties and groups, shaped the tweets about the CSOs that are considered as the advocates of the ideologies represented by these parties. This finding indicates that similar to the tweets about many issues in Turkey, those about CSOs, which are expected to reduce the tensions in society, are not exempt from political polarization.

In this study, we showed that Twitter is a polarized space in terms of the ways in which people talk about CSOs in Turkey. Future research may look at other social media tools such as Facebook and Instagram to further examine this topic. Here we used the keywords *derneği* "association" and *vakfı* "foundation" in accusative forms to investigate which CSOs were mentioned on Twitter in Turkey. However, there could have been other tweets that used abbreviations instead of these keywords. Although it would be time-consuming, a future study may use the full names, shortened names, and abbreviations of all the CSOs as keywords to further examine the representations of CSOs on social media. Additionally, we collected data for only 31 days and observed that the number of tweets per day and per CSO could be influenced by social and political developments. For example, in our data, Twitter users reacted to the IBB's decision to not fund a group of religious/conservative CSOs on August 27, 2019. Therefore, there is a need to collect data for a longer period of time and thereby investigate whether similar types of social and political developments always have an impact on the coverage of CSOs on Twitter. This is one line of research that we are currently pursuing. Furthermore, in this study, we collected data in which Twitter users mentioned any kind of CSO. However, CSOs themselves use social media to make connections with their supporters and to inform the public about their activities. Therefore, another line of research we are currently pursuing will focus on tweets written by CSOs.

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