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# **"Enough is Enough!"**

Political Engagement on Twitter in the Case of  
Turkey's Withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention

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## ABSTRACT

This research analyzes the political engagement of Turkish citizens on Twitter, in which underrepresented groups and individuals search for democratic public space to mobilize against injustice. With this in mind, the study focuses on the civic engagement of Turkish citizens on Twitter with the hashtag *#istanbulsözleşmesiyaşatır*, which translates to 'istanbulconventionsaveslives'. The hashtag is a claim of an online protest against Turkey's withdrawal from the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, known better as the *Istanbul Convention*. This study gains a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of civic engagement, social movements, deliberative democracy, and counter-democracy in the digital age. I apply critical and interpretivism perspectives alongside standpoint theory to comprehend these processes. Building this research project as a case study, I utilize the method of text analysis on Twitter postings with the hashtag *#istanbulsözleşmesiyaşatır* to analyze the civic engagement at the Istanbul Convention.

This case raises questions on how citizens participate in a civic debate on social media about social concerns, and how they reflect on democracy and political authority in this digital space. The finding shows that people's effectiveness and emotional responses were closely related to their social experiences and challenges. It illustrated how protest participation elevated awareness, and brought invisible issues to light. The primary motivation for the protest is the government's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, although it was not the only vulnerable issue that concerned citizens. Their participation provided a space for them to discuss and draw attention to various concerns, including the government's inability to maintain democracy, limit public involvement in decision-making, and protect individual rights and liberties. This highlights the need for citizen engagement as a counter-power in maintaining a functioning democracy, demanding accountability and justice, and fostering a deliberative process. Turkish citizens exhibited urgency, frustration with the present quo, and a desire for change. Furthermore, the protest underlined the importance of social media, notably Twitter, in mobilizing and strengthening civic agency in Turkey in response to the country's leaving the Istanbul Convention.

**Keywords:** *civic engagement, political engagement, censorship, social movements, violence against women, woman rights, counter democracy, social media, hashtag, #istanbulsözleşmesiyaşatır, #istanbulconventionsaveslives*

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## INTRODUCTION

*“The artificial agenda is over. Let's continue to seek **justice on Twitter**” (29.03.2021)*

In the last decade, the rise of digital networks has provided activists with novel opportunities to communicate and mobilize during political protests in order to advance democratization processes. This development has been particularly significant in countries where democracy faces challenges and obstacles. In such contexts, the failure of governments to address pressing social issues has become more apparent, prompting activists to seek new civic space and advocacy (Dahlgren, 2009). Social media platforms are the latest in a long line of sociotechnical advances aimed at fostering and improving civic engagement, political involvement, and advocacy (Robertson, 2018; Tufekci, 2017).

Recent social and political movements have demonstrated the effectiveness of "hashtag activism" in mobilizing both online and offline participation (Castells, 2015; Papacharissi, 2014; Simpson, 2018). Furthermore, the use of "hashtag activism" has been crucial in raising public awareness and maintaining the visibility and presence of social movements in public discourse. Hashtags like #metoo, #takeaknee, and #blacklivesmatter have become associated with social movements. These hashtags are not only used to gather related debates together but also to express support and shared experiences of victimization. Users often use these hashtags in their tweets to demonstrate solidarity with the respective movements (Simpson, 2018).

Turkey has been among the nations where social media has played a significant role in political engagement and protesting government decisions. Notably, the most extensive social movement supported by social media in the history of the country occurred during the Gezi Park protests in 2013, where citizens sought to challenge the government's redevelopment plans of the Gezi Park at Taksim Square in central Istanbul (Tufekci, 2017; Odağ, Melis Uluğ, & Solak, 2016). Twitter emerged as a dedicated channel to mobilize online and offline participants during this protest. Although the government restricted access to social media during the protest, it was not able to stop participants from mobilizing and gathering offline in Gezi Park. Despite the significant role that social media has played in mobilizing people and raising voices against the government's decisions in Turkey, the

country has been experiencing limitations on human rights and freedom of speech (Repucci, 2020; RSF, 2023).

The subject of violence against women and femicide has been extensively debated by feminist scholars for many years, highlighting its significance as a critical social issue (Kardam, 2005). One of the most pervasive and destructive human rights violations is violence against women, with over one-third of women worldwide experiencing physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives (UN, 2019; WHO 2021). Gender inequality and men's violence against women remain significant challenges in many societies, especially those where democracy is under threat. In recent years, Turkey has struggled to address this issue and deliver justice.

Yet, in the early morning of Saturday, March 20, 2021, Turkey's president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan made a sudden and shocking announcement. He declared that Turkey would be withdrawing from the Istanbul Convention (*The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence*), without any parliamentary or societal debates (Çali, 2021). A treaty designed to combat violence against women and promote gender equality. This is the convention better known, most ironically, as the Istanbul Convention due to Turkey's leading role in its creation. This shocking decision sparked offline and online protests against the government's actions, which gained significant media coverage (UN, 2021). When the protests started against the government's decisions, both online and offline platforms were filled with the news.

### **The Case**

The purpose of this research is to analyze engagement on Twitter to understand how social media plays a role in civic engagement, deliberative democracy, and counter-democracy (Rosanvallon, 2008; Dahlgren, 2009; Castells, 2015). To achieve this goal, I selected the case of Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention online protest movements on Twitter and their eventual mobilization.

Firstly, I would like to present the background of the case. After years of consistent efforts by the Council of Europe to prevent violence against women and domestic violence dating back to the 1990s, a European legal instrument was ultimately negotiated by all 47 member states. This convention was adopted on April 7, 2011, by the Committee of Ministers

and is commonly referred to as the Istanbul Convention due to its opening for signature in Istanbul on May 11, 2011. Subsequent to its 10th ratification, the Istanbul Convention officially came into effect on August 1, 2014; three years after its adoption. Those governments that have ratified the treaty are legally obligated to abide by its provisions. Additionally, twelve member states of the Council of Europe, as well as the European Union, have signed the convention. It is important to note that this convention is the sole international agreement that focuses exclusively on the issue of violence against women (Human Right Centre, 2021; Council of Europe, n.d.).

Notably, Turkey notified its withdrawal from the Convention on March 20, 2021, citing the following argument: “The Istanbul Convention was hijacked by a group of people attempting to normalize homosexuality – which is incompatible with Turkey’s social and family values.” (Directorate of Communication Turkey, 2021), and the withdrawal request was accepted by the Council of Europe on July 1, 2021 (Council of Europe, n.d.; UN, 2023; Seker, & Sönmezocak, 2021). Turkey, which was the first country to sign the Convention, was also the first to withdraw.

The Turkish government's decision sparked numerous protests and social media debates, both within Turkey and internationally. Critics both domestically and internationally have condemned the decision, arguing that the Istanbul Convention did not, ‘*threaten the family*’, but rather that the decision to withdraw from the convention has ‘*threatened the democracy*’.

### **Motivation and Contribution to Research**

As an orphan and a woman growing up in this society, I know what it is like to feel vulnerable and afraid. I know the constant need to carry pepper spray at night and to look over my shoulder with fear in my heart, as well as others like me. Therefore, the case also holds immense emotional value for me.

While there has been a significant amount of research conducted on social movements and online protests around the world such as #BlackLivesMatter, #OccupyMovement, and #MeToo (Castells, 2015; Tufekci, 2017; Papacharissi, 2014), also, in Turkey, considerable research has been conducted on the Gezi Park protests (Tufekci, 2017). However, there is a noticeable lack of research about #istanbulsözleşmesiyaşatır. Especially when considering

that the Istanbul Convention is a European Council agreement, that has a wider geographic coverage and addresses a human rights issue. Additionally, this study avoids the dichotomous categorizations of Turkey as either Western or non-Western and instead recognizes it as a country that faces challenges with its regime despite its democratic foundations. In light of this, the study aims to address this gap in the literature by examining Turkish citizens' engagement with the online protest movement and its impact on democratic struggle and civic space in society at large.

It is crucial to note that this study does not solely focus on the feminist movement but instead adopts a broader conceptual framework that encompasses democratic struggles and civic space in general (Dahlgren, 2009). Particularly where citizens have a hard time finding free spaces without any censorship, they can be heard. Social media can help citizens circumvent censorship, whereas mass media tends to favor the government (Tufekci, 2017). Also, the research directs its attention not only toward enabling citizens to identify civic space for expressing their opinions and engagement but also toward highlighting the critical role that such civic spaces play as a counterbalance to democratic systems, particularly in instances where authoritarian regimes struggle to provide a democratic process that is accessible to the public. These civic spaces assume an important role in scrutinizing and overseeing government actions (Rosanvallon, 2008). Moreover, the research explores the strong emotional engagement of Turkish citizens and the ways in which this engagement generates awareness and visibility. Finally, by applying the qualitative methodology to analyze the case study of online protest movements in Turkey, this case makes an academic contribution to theories of social movements, counter-power, and civic engagement in the digital age.

### **Aims and Research Questions**

This case was driven by the motivation of analyzing political engagement on social media by individuals who needed to be heard and lacked other spaces to do so. Turkish citizens search for democratic public spaces to voice their opinions against injustice. Within this aim, research focuses on social media as a 'networked sphere' (Tufekci, 2017), in this light, this thesis seeks to research the engagement of Turkish citizens with online protest movements on Twitter posts created by a hashtag called *#istanbulsözleşmesiyasatur* which means in English: *#istanbulconventionsaveslives* and their subsequent mobilization offline, with a specific focus on their role as counter-power.



To accomplish the purpose of the study, I pose the following two research questions that will be answered by applying qualitative research methods and text analysis:

1. How do Turkish citizens engage with the withdrawal of the Istanbul Convention on Twitter to fight for women's rights?
2. How does their engagement create civic space for democracy and challenge political authority in Turkey?

### **The Structure**

This thesis is structured into three main chapters, each addressing a key aspect of the topic. Chapter 1 is a **Literature Review** divided into two main categories. The first section introduces the *contextual background* of the political case and the situation of women in Turkey, I reflect on the patriarchal norms and their challenges. Following that, the mass media landscape, the online media freedom of speech in Turkey and its relationship with the government will be explored. The chapter then moves to the second section to explore a *framework* through which I approach the internet and democracy to explore counter-democracy theory and civic engagement, as well as their relationship with the internet. The final section of the literature review will reflect on digital networks, and social movements to better understand online protest and social media's role. Chapter 2 is dedicated to the **Methodology and Method** section, which introduces the method used in the study. This section covers topics such as method choice, sampling, limitations, ethics, and data analysis. Finally, Chapter 3 presents the final **Analysis**, which is divided into three main sections. The first section reflects on *being a woman in Turkey*; their engagement, experiences, and emotions. The second section offers *criticism of the government*, while the third section explores *online-to-offline mobilization*. Following the final concluding remarks, the research project **Conclusion** with a discussion of the findings and their implications for the research questions.

# CHAPTER 1

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## LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review will be divided into two sections. To begin, I will consider the context, which includes Turkey and women, media and censorship, and Turkey's political regime. Following that, in the second section, more details on existing research around the theoretical framework of the internet, deliberative democracy, and civic engagement will be unpacked. The final part will concentrate on the internet, the platform Twitter as well as global social movements and social media activism.

### Contextual Background

#### *Women in Turkey*

According to Walby, “men dominate, oppress, and exploit women in a patriarchal social structure and practice” (Walby, 1990:20). She also emphasizes social structures as an important concept in patriarchy, in which every man is dominant and every woman is subordinate. She identifies six patriarchal structures, including paid work, housework, sexuality, culture, violence, and the state, and demonstrates how these structures interact to produce various forms that show the depth of women's subordination. (Walby, 1990). Kate Millett (2000), in her Theory of Sexual Politics chapter, further discusses patriarchal society and how patriarchy also affects social politics. According to Millett, power imbalances in the household and family structure also affect the decision-making process in politics (2000:33).

In Turkish society, patriarchal norms and ideologies are still very strong, especially in the family. This has a big effect on the relationships between husbands and wives. We find this idea at times reflected in common local proverbs or sayings, such as the phrase: "He's your husband, so he has the right to both love and beat you." Patriarchal values are embedded in Turkish society, determining women's subordinate position there (Ökten, 2017). The Authoritarian Justice and Development Party (AKP) views women's primary role in society as wives and mothers, with a status unequal to men (Bas, Ogan, & Varol, 2022).

After the Ottoman Empire fell apart in 1923, the Turkish Republic made secularism and a focus on the West the main parts of its social policy (Akgül & Kırıldoğ, 2015; Arat,

2010). In the process of becoming a member of the European Union, Turkey has made many legal arrangements for human rights (Arat, & Pamuk, 2019). Despite the fact that legal regulations have been made, research has taken these laws into consideration, especially at the point of violence against women and in many other areas, from employment to politics (Scotti, 2021). This shows that, in fact, the country is quite far from equality between women and men. While Turkey has made strides in legal arrangements regarding human rights in their pursuit of EU membership, there is still a significant disparity, particularly in regard to gender equality (Scotti, 2021). Violence against women and inequalities in employment and politics are just a few areas where these gaps persist. This underscores the need for continued efforts toward achieving true equality.

The situation of women in Turkey is one of the most devastating in the world. Because of the lack of legal protection in society, NGO work has increased since 2000 in Turkey. As femicide and other forms of violence against women have increased in the country, feminist movements and awareness campaigns have grown as a form of protest and a means to fight for women's rights and safety (Kardam, 2005). These groups have been working tirelessly to raise awareness about the issue and push for legal reforms that would provide greater protection for women. The ever-first campaign about gender inequality took place in Turkey in 1987, when a judicial decree rejected the application of a woman for divorce on the grounds of domestic violence in Çankırı. She cited a Turkish proverb that *'a woman must always have a baby growing in her womb and a stick on her back'*, meaning that women are supposed to make babies and accept beatings from their husbands. It was striking that this proverb was used to justify an ostensibly objective decision by a judge who is trained to uphold and defend Turkey's legal system, which holds women and men equal (Kardam, 2005:111-112).

Moreover, in March 2021, the Turkish government announced that it was withdrawing from the Istanbul Convention, i.e., the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, without debate in parliament and in society at large (UN, 2021). Since the government lacks protection for women's rights, after the notification of the withdrawal, a lot of protests were organized by non-profit organizations on the street and on social media against the government's decision. The withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention has sparked concerns about the safety and well-being of women in Turkey, as it was seen as a crucial tool in protecting their rights and

preventing violence against them. The decision has also raised questions about Turkey's commitment to gender equality and human rights one more time.

Nahide Opuz case from Turkey in the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) was another striking example of the Istanbul Convention. The *Opuz v. Turkey* case was a watershed moment for the ECHR when it came to gender-based violence and states' obligations to prevent and react to it. Nahide Opuz, a survivor of domestic violence who had been subjected to repeated acts of violence by her husband over the course of several years, filed the case. Despite her attempts to obtain legal protection, including a restraining order, her husband continued to abuse her and ultimately killed her mother. In its 2009 decision, the ECHR ruled that the Turkish government violated Ms. Opuz's right to life—her right to be free from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment—and her right to an effective right to justice. The *Opuz* case influenced the creation of international and regional legal frameworks to address violence against women. It was particularly influential in redeveloping and approving the Istanbul Convention (ECHR, 2009; Choudhary, 2012).

Moreover, domestic violence is a prevalent issue in Turkey, and women who report abuse often face stigma and barriers to accessing justice. Honor killings and forced marriages are also issues in some parts of the country (Kardam, 2005). According to the We Will Stop Femicides Platform (2023), in 2022 alone, 334 women were killed and 245 were found suspiciously dead in Turkey. There were 914 deaths of women by men between 2020 and 2022. According to Anit Sayac, which keeps track of femicide in Turkey (2023), 44 women have died at the hands of men this year alone (n.d.). In each brutal case, women try to protest online and offline.

A video that surfaced online showed Emine Karabulut, the victim of a brutal murder, covered in blood after being repeatedly stabbed by her ex-husband in front of their daughter. The graphic footage caused a public outcry in Turkey, leading to demands for stronger legislation to address domestic violence. In the video, Karabulut's chest is visibly soaked in blood from the multiple stab wounds, and she can be heard crying out: "I don't want to die." Following her death, NGOs staged protests under the banner "We don't want to die" to create awareness and protest the government's lack of protection (Kakissis, 2019). Patriarchal systems contribute to a wide range of social and economic problems, including gender-based violence (Walby, 1990). The inequality of power between men and women, the structure of

society, and the lack of substantial state measures increase violence against women from day to day in Turkey. The aforementioned examples showcase the historical legacy of women in Turkey engaged in the protracted struggle for their rights. Notably, this fight has expanded to encompass online spaces, wherein women utilize online platforms as a medium to express their demands for justice and equitable treatment.

### ***Censoring the Freedom***

The freedom of the press is the backbone of any democratic society. The media has been at the heart of the struggle for democratic societies since the invention of the book. Also, along with the executive, legislative, and judicial departments, the media and press are frequently referred to as the fourth estate or fourth branch of government (Eldem, 2018). This is because the media plays an important role in shaping public opinion and providing citizens with information, both of which are essential for a functioning democracy. The media provide a necessary condition for democracy by allowing ideas to clash freely (Öztunc & Pierre, 2021:1). Reporters Without Borders (RSF, 2022) emphasizes that press freedom is practiced in a limited number of countries. The countries are mostly from Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and North America. Turkey currently ranks 149th out of 180 countries in terms of media freedom. There is a lot of political polarization in Turkey, which can make it hard to talk and debate in a constructive way due to the censorship in mass media and the most control over the government (Wilson & Hahn, 2021). People have criticized the government for putting limits on free speech, making it harder to get information, and silencing people who don't agree with them.

Power dynamics between antagonistic forces pose a global threat to press freedom (Öztunc & Pierre, 2021). Hardy (2014), who conducted the first scientific study on critical political economy, stresses that the critical political economy of communication creates political power relations that make up social hierarchies. In the same vein, Turkey has a serious problem with power relations, especially between media owners and the regime. Government control of the media is even more intense in countries where the political regime holds more power than the state itself (Öztunc & Pierre, 2021). Turkey has a Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralist Media model characterized by an elite-oriented press with a focus on political life, external pluralism, and commentary-oriented journalism (Hallin & Mancini, 2004:73). In this section, I will provide a brief overview of the last 20 years that paved the way for the new AKP (Justice Development Party) regime, as well as how the media system

has evolved. The AKP government has made it harder for media actors to do their jobs and carry out ethical and transparent journalism. This has made the media in Turkey less free. The media landscape has shifted to a more pro-government stance, limiting the diversity of information available to the public (Coşkun, 2020).

Turkey has a complex political history, with a long period of military junta rule followed by a transition to a more democratic system in the 1980s and 1990s. The growing violence, combined with the country's economic problems and political standstill, was a major source of discontent for the military. On September 12, 1980, the military staged a complete takeover of the government after waiting for the right moment (Şensönmez, 2022). After the 1980 successful coup, the Turkish military took charge of making a new constitution, which went into effect in 1982. Article 28 of the newly enacted constitution pertains to the regulation of the freedom of the press and explicitly declares that "the press is free, and shall not be subject to censorship" (Coşkun, 2020). However, the section is followed by a line stating that if it is necessary, the state can ban and take action under certain conditions.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the media landscape was characterized by mostly Kurdish journalists and defenders of human rights, who were censored. During the early 1980s, the act of censorship involved a purposeful disregard of the Kurds' appeals for justice (Coşkun, 2020). It is a clear example of an oppressive regime suppressing the rights and freedoms of ethnic minorities. During this time, the Kurds were subjected to violent repression and displacement.

Media freedom has never fully existed in Turkey (Coşkun, 2020; Wilson & Hahn, 2021). AKP (Justice and Development Party) won the 2002 elections, and its leader, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, was elected president. Despite AKP's official pledge to follow secular policy, the growing role of religion under its rule has sparked widespread concern among secular segments of society (Akgül & Kırılıdoğ, 2015:2). After AKP came to power, this media-state relationship changed from its level in the 1990s. A few sizable holding groups, whose businesses were dominant in the media stream as well as other industries like construction, owned Turkish media outlets in the 1990s. The 2001 economic crisis caused significant changes in the media industry. This situation changed drastically, and one of the powerful media groups, Uzan and Bilgin The Savings Deposit Insurance Fund (TMSF), disclosed their media assets (Coşkun, 2020; Öztunc & Pierre, 2021). Following that, AKP

started to change the media owners, and most of the mass media nowadays are owned by AKP followers (Öztunc & Pierre, 2021). This allowed Erdoğan, President of the Turkish Republic, to control the media and make his own party propaganda much easier. In brief, nowadays, the AKP has almost completely changed the ownership of the mainstream media. As a result, media outlets are now mostly aligned with Erdoğan's political agenda, leaving little room for dissenting voices. This has raised concerns about the state of press freedom and democracy in Turkey.

Presently, the AKP government, and more specifically, President Erdoğan, exercises direct control over 90% of the mainstream media in Turkey (Coşkun, 2020; Wilson & Hahn, 2021). Opposition media outlets try to stand up against state-controlled media. On this point also, a more direct financial fine applies over the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK). Under Turkish law, RTÜK has the power to impose broadcasting bans or impose significant fines on broadcasters, with the reasons for such penalties being rather vaguely defined. The government has not shied away from exploiting these institutions to further its own interests. As a result of these changes, journalists in Turkey have been left in a vulnerable position with little recourse against the actions of the Erdoğan regime. Whoever covered the news negatively contributed to the pain. Most of the news comes from the government. The public started to question the transparency of the mass media and started to follow which one they believed the most (Tufekci, 2017).

In recent years, there have been concerns about the erosion of democratic institutions and practices, including limitations on the freedom of the press, the use of anti-terrorism laws to silence opposition voices, and the dismissal of thousands of civil servants, academics, and journalists who are perceived to be critical of the government. After a major failure of transparency in the mass media, Turkish citizens started to use more and more digital news sources, especially social media platforms, to reach transparent news. Turkey is also one of the fastest-growing internet users countries, especially in terms of getting news and current events: According to the Data Portal's January 2023 report, Turkey has a total of 62.55 million social media users and 18.55 million Twitter users. Turkey is also ranked seventh in the world in terms of population density on Twitter (Data Portal, 2023).

As previously mentioned, The Gezi Park protest in 2013 was a point of change for social media use and activism. It caused more people to pay attention to the power of the internet, which had previously been overlooked. In many countries, authorities have said that

the internet and digital technology were "virtual" and, therefore, not important (Tufekci, 2017). However, with social media movements around the world and, as I previously mentioned, the high level of censorship in the mainstream media, the public has started to find alternative news outlets to seek out transparency and share their opinions freely. Despite the negative rhetoric of social media, Twitter became one of the most popular news portals in Turkey (Tufekci, 2017). The Gezi Protest in 2013 made significant changes where social media was used for news feeds and citizen journalism became more popular.

Twitter and Facebook, in particular, play big roles in getting people to protest and spreading information all over the country and also in the diaspora (Duru, Favell & Varela, 2019). Specifically, Twitter was one of the key social media platforms in the Gezi Park protest for getting information and connective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). In 2011, Twitter's CEO at the time, Dick Costolo, called Twitter an "information network" rather than a "social networking service", to signal the company's move toward the connectivity approach (Dijck, 2013:79).

Digital media, such as Twitter, have opened new doors for journalists' freedom of speech. This is not just for journalists, but for all kinds of people to express their political opinions. Many independent journalists started using Twitter as a news feed and gained millions of followers. As people use Twitter to communicate, the concept of civic engagement becomes important as ideas are exchanged with the ability to influence public opinion and perception. As a result of the limited mainstream media landscape in Turkey, activists, and citizens have been able to turn to Twitter. The use of the Internet and social media platforms for political expression and mobilization has enabled the Turkish public to engage in meaningful dialogue, discuss and debate issues, and ultimately drive change. By creating a space for citizens to express their opinions, social media has become an integral part of civic engagement in Turkey (Dahlgren, 2009).

On the other hand, the government started to take some action against internet content and websites. In 2007, Turkey took a drastic step to rid the internet of inappropriate content, resulting in the blocking of websites. The blocked websites included child and adult pornographic sites as well as widely utilized platforms such as YouTube, Blogger, and Alibaba.com. As of 2017, Wikipedia has been banned in Turkey until January 15, 2020 (Uzun, 2020; Arvas, 2019). The Turkish government blocked access to the online encyclopedia on April 29, 2017, citing concerns over the site's content and national security.



In May 2008, YouTube was banned for almost 2.5 years in Turkey at the DNS and IP levels (Arvas, 2019). Following all of these steps Reporters Without Borders placed Turkey on its list of 'countries under surveillance' on March 11, 2010 (Eldem, 2018:106).

Nevertheless, following the Gezi Protest and corruption scandals of 2013, an unsuccessful coup attempt occurred in Turkey in July 2016, with far-reaching repercussions. In the aftermath, a referendum was held in April 2017 that transformed Turkey's government into what has been called an "executive presidency à la Turca." (Sahin, 2021). This new governance system concentrated power in the hands of President Erdoğan, giving him nearly limitless authority to shape the country's direction. Following that media autocracy has reached a new level (Akgül & Kırılıdoğ, 2015; Wilson & Hahn, 2021). Erdoğan regime never saw the internet as a threat to his regime that way before. The notion of the internet's rising relevance became a driving force behind the acceleration of internet censorship in Turkey. During the Gezi Protest, the government temporarily slowed down Twitter. Whoever shared posts against the government during the protest, the government opened an investigation. In Turkey, the government has taken severe efforts to limit the content and distribution available on the worldwide internet and communication via social media, thereby restricting both in-person and online criticism and dissent (Bas, Ogan, & Varol, 2022). Government blocks found evidence of the throttling of social media and other services during politically sensitive times (Wilson & Hahn, 2021).

Recently, on February 6, 2023, after the devastating earthquake, Twitter was throttled for several hours due to an increase in criticism of the government. This shows how the government is actively trying to limit dissent and control the narrative, even going so far as to investigate those who share opposing views. It raises concerns about freedom of speech and the right to express oneself freely without fear of retaliation or punishment from the authorities. On the other hand, attempts at censorship always backfire and bring much more attention to the information that was supposed to be suppressed (Tufekci, 2017:228). Especially VPNs are widely used in the country to circumvent internet censorship.

According to the Freedom House report Freedom on the Net 2022, Turkey is not a media and internet-free country. In Turkey, internet freedom is deteriorating (Freedomhouse, 2022). In the same vein, *İfade Özgürlüğü Derneği* (Freedom of Expression Association) 2020 report, illustrates that 58,809 websites were banned. In addition, 7,500 Twitter accounts, 50,000 tweets, 12,000 YouTube postings, 8,000 Facebook postings, and 6,800 Instagram

postings were blocked by the end of 2020 following Law 5651 and other provisions. In 2020, 15,832 news articles were removed from websites under government order (İFÖD, 2020). Recently, self-censorship has increased in the country. Moreover, according to a Human Rights Watch report, Turkish users are now thinking twice before posting something on Twitter. Although the media is frequently viewed as the fourth democratic power, it is nonetheless susceptible to its political and economic counterparts (Öztunc & Pierre, 2021). This figure is alarming as it points towards a potential threat to freedom of speech and expression.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This section addresses key theoretical concepts that will be used in the analysis chapter. To fully grasp the phenomenon of media for democracy and political engagement, it is necessary to approach these concepts through the lens of a set of theoretical concepts. These theories will be based on previous research on deliberative democracy, civic engagement, media, networked society, and social movement theory.

### ***Internet and Democracy***

Political communication and civic engagement theories are intended to apply to and come from democratic societies where citizens have the right to participate in the political process, and where their voices are heard and considered by those in power. However, as previously mentioned, the situation of democracy in Turkey is quite vulnerable and has encountered challenges in recent years, with increasing restrictions on freedom of speech, the media, and civil society, as well as concerns about the rule of law and political polarization. Drawing from this perspective, I will first look at Western societies to see how democracy, *counter-democracy*, and *deliberative democracy* are conceptualized in Western contexts while keeping in mind that they can not be fully applicable to this case study. Then, I will discuss the challenges of applying such concepts to Turkey.

First of all, to understand democratic societies, this section draws attention to Rosanvallon, Coleman, and Dahlgren's perspectives on deliberative and counter-democracy and critically reflects on them. Dahlgren states that *deliberative democracy* is characterized by the norms of 'equality' and 'symmetry' where everyone has an equal chance of participation (Dahlgren, 2009:87). Following Dahlgren, Elster describes deliberative democracy as "collective decision-making with the participation of all who will be affected

by the decision or their representatives” (1998:8, cited in Carpentier, 2011:35). Deliberative democracy strives to create a public-spirited attitude in politics while simultaneously supporting the legitimacy of decisions that are made (Dahlgren, 2009:87). Citizens in Turkey have recently struggled to receive equal responses from governments.

Pierre Rosanvallon (2008) discusses in “*Counter-Democracy, Politics in an Age of Distrust*” that the “right to resist” was formulated way before the “right to vote” (2008:13). Counter-democracy is electoral-representative democracy where citizens involve themselves more in larger legal democratic institutions. Rosanvallon emphasizes the gradual evolution of changes in democratic systems and tends to emphasize transformation rather than decline. He analyzes counter-democracy under three main mechanisms; (1) *oversight*, (2) *prevention*, and (3) *judgment* (2008:32). *Oversight* refers to the way in which power is monitored and regulated in modern societies. This includes institutions such as the media, civil society organizations, and other watchdog groups that hold those in power accountable. *Prevention* mechanisms are intended to limit the power of those in authority and to protect the interests of citizens. *Judgment* mechanisms are intended to ensure that those in power are responsive to the needs and desires of citizens and that they are held accountable for their actions. The concept of counter-democracy challenges the traditional view of democracy as a static and unchanging system. Instead, it highlights the need for ongoing evolution and transformation to ensure that democratic institutions remain responsive to the needs and aspirations of citizens (Rosanvallon, 2008:39-52). Some societies fail to recognize that democracy must also evolve.

In Turkey, deliberative democracy has faced various challenges over the years. When taking this into account, the definitions of democracy and laws might not be applied well because of the authoritarian regime in Turkey. However, this does not mean that Turkey is an undemocratic country, as there are a lot of people and grassroots movements that are trying to challenge that. Hence, it is difficult to locate Turkey as either a Western or non-Western country, but I do locate Turkey in this ambiguous space, which actually makes us think about these theories of civic engagement and political communication. My aim is not to have a clear-cut separation between Western and non-Western democratic countries. Especially in countries like Turkey, which have democracy but struggle with the regime, this does not mean that it will never change. These theories may try to differentiate between Western and non-Western societies. What I want to try to do by approaching it in this thesis is use it as a

bridge between Western and non-Western societies. That can also make scholars think about making a clear-cut separation between Western and non-Western societies when theorizing, especially in countries like Turkey where democracy coexists with authoritarianism.

Furthermore, Rosanvallon (2008) goes on to explore and present the manifestations of mistrust as elements of a political system. Keeping this in mind, he divides distrust into two categories: liberal and democratic distrust. Especially in democratic distrust, its mission is to ensure that elected officials uphold their pledges and to identify ways to keep pressure on the government to promote the common good. "Democratic distrust can be expressed and organized in a variety of ways, of which I shall emphasize three main types: powers of oversight, forms of prevention, and testing of judgments" (Rosanvallon, 2008:8). These three approaches are crucial to challenging the dysfunction of democracy and who is in power.

In "*The Internet and Democratic Citizenship: Theory, Practice, and Policy*", Coleman and Blumler (2009) argue that the internet has the potential to transform the way in which citizens engage with politics, by providing new opportunities for participation, deliberation, and mobilization. One of the essential characteristics of democratic deliberation is "freedom to speak, assemble, and publish, and for opposition to the government of the day to organize without fear of intimidation" (Coleman & Blumler, 2009:15). According to Rosanvallon, voting is citizenship's most obvious and formalized manifestation (2008). It has long been a symbol of civic equality and political involvement. On the other hand, political participation is multifaceted, with three aspects of contact between the people and the political sphere: *expression*, *involvement*, and *intervention*. Democracy of *expression* entails giving society a voice, articulating collective thoughts, forming judgments about the government and its activities, and issuing requests. Democracy of *involvement* refers to how citizens can band together and coordinate their efforts to create a better society. Democracy of *intervention* refers to any type of collective action that can be used to achieve a desired goal (Rosanvallon, 2008:20).

In Turkey, the mainstream media and civics struggle to raise their voices without fear of opening court cases about them. Dahlgren (2009) analyzes the notion of democracy and media relationships through three media traditions. The first is *political communication*, derived from political science, which he finds to be mostly one-way communication, overly formalistic, state-centered, and unresponsive to critics. It clearly benefits political institutions and actors. Political institutions and actors in Turkey have recently profited from democracy.

Habermas' public sphere theory, which incorporates communicative rationality, deliberative democracy, and civil society, is the second. The third theory is the culturist theory, which provides perspectives on key topics such as meaning, identity, and belonging, as well as activities that rely on sense-making in concentrated contexts and how this affects participation and modes of engagement (Dahlgren, 2009). Moreover, he argues that these three traditions affect politics from different angles of politics, citizenship, deliberation, and even democracy. Being against one another or in defense, it is important to compare how it can work better for us to make progress (Dahlgren, 2009:5). I concur that if we want to achieve a best practice in deliberative democracy, all of these components must work in tandem. In this instance, it is essential to reassess Habermas' "public sphere" as well.

There have been various critical perspectives on Habermas' public sphere. Since Habermas's book was published, the public sphere has shifted dramatically to accommodate both altered historical perspectives and altered social realities in light of social and political developments around the world. Especially with communication's ever-expanding worldwide reach and growing diversity in both individual societies and in general globally (Emden & Midgley, 2012: 5). According to Fraser (1990), Habermas' public sphere consists of a body of "private persons" assembled to discuss matters of "public concern" (Fraser, 1990:56). Fraser argues further that his public sphere excluded gender, supported more masculinist ideologies, and drew a clear separation between social classes. She poses this as a threat to democratic deliberation. In addition, it focuses exclusively on the liberal public sphere and disregards the non-liberal and non-bourgeois public spheres (Fraser, 1990:60–62). Her theory highlights the need to recognize and include diverse voices and perspectives in public discourse to ensure truly democratic deliberation. Neglecting to uphold these principles may result in the alienation and under-representation of specific groups, which contradicts the fundamental values of democracy. In the Istanbul Convention case, Turkey has recently struggled to give more room to women's rights.

Uldam & Vestegaard (2015) analyze civic engagement under two modes of engagement: formal and informal. Formal ways of involvement are utilized in institutional environments such as unions or formal NGO. Informal modes, on the other hand, are used to refer to "resistances" outside of politics, and non-organized acts (Böhm et al., 2008, cited Uldam & Vestergaard, 2015:3), and these two types of civic involvement frequently overlap. Uldam and Vetegaards go on to suggest that civic engagement extends beyond participation in

protests. They argue this claim in three ways: 1) as *public involvement* after the protest event, (2) as *alternative enactment*, and (3) as *collaboration with institutional actors*. (Uldam & Vestergaard, 2015:9). In this vein, Turkey is greatly increasing its informal modes of engagement due to the censorship of mainstream media and the limited allowances for street protests. It is worth noting that Uldam and Vestergaard's study emphasizes the significance of acknowledging both formal and informal ways of civic engagement. In the case of Turkey, the restrictions on mainstream media and street protests are driving citizens towards alternative ways of expressing their civic engagement.

Based on this, we can look at Dahlgren's (2009) overview of civic cultures as a six-dimensional circuit: knowledge, values, trust, practices, identities, and space. The dimensions of "space" makes it clear how important it is to be able to communicate. As Dahlgren states, space is one of the crucial ways to involve democracy. Democracy requires citizens to engage in dialogue and exchange ideas with one another, communicate with their representatives, and participate in public discourse where policy-making and decision-making processes are discussed (Dahlgren, 2009:107-122). In Turkey, expressing ideas is becoming more restrictive because of censorship and authoritarian situations. It forces communicative spaces to become smaller. However, in the meantime, through the use of social media, alternative media, and protests, people are trying to create a bigger space. Here I would like to refer to Wael Ghonim's (2012) book "*Revolution 2.0: The power of the people is greater than the people in power*" where he writes about the Egyptian revolutionary movement. In Turkey, people always try to find ways to overcome censorship and express their opinions in public spaces.

Moreover, according to Dahlgren, changes in the media landscape have significant implications for our understanding of democracy (2009:161). The internet has provided a new forum for political engagement, creating a communicative space that promotes "civic" engagement in public affairs. Dahlgren views civic engagement as a crucial element of democracy (2009:58). Especially where governments are struggling to deliver ideal democracy to citizens, civic engagement becomes more vital to having space to engage civically. In order for individuals to actively participate in democracy, it is essential that they perceive themselves as members of a civic culture, which can either facilitate or impede civic engagement (Dahlgren, 2009:102-4). Castells (2015) writes that power relationships are what makes society. If there is power, there is also "counter-power." This is where social actors

challenge the power that is built into institutions in order to get their own values and interests represented. The internet is an open public space for societies where they can share their hopes and criticisms, connect with each other, overcome fear, and stand together in solidarity.

It is important to remember that democratic institutions and practices can be resilient. Civil society organizations, independent media outlets, and grassroots movements can play a vital role in promoting political communication and civic engagement, even in challenging circumstances. By working together and advocating for their rights, citizens can help to ensure that democracy in Turkey and around the world continues to evolve and strengthen. In the next section, where I dive deeper into social media and social movements.

### ***Social Media and Social Movements***

In “*The Culture of Connectivity*”, Van Dijck (2013) investigates the emergence of social media from the first decade of the twenty-first century until 2012, providing both a historical trajectory and a critical view of the establishment of significant platforms in the context of a rapidly changing ecosystem of connective media. Personalized communication networks offered by technology entail more than merely exchanging information or messages. Because of the recombinant, adaptable character of digital network action, these web spheres and their offline expansions are more than just communication networks. Such networks are flexible organizations in and of themselves, often allowing for coordinated modifications and quick action aimed at shifting political objectives, often crossing geographic and temporal barriers in the process (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). It is important to highlight that in this section I do not investigate social media as network and platform analysis, but rather explore how social media enables to create of new free communicative spaces for civic and has facilitated the emergence of new forms of civic engagement and participation, which are essential for democratic processes. This highlights the need to explore the role of social media in promoting political engagement and deliberation in contemporary democracies.

In recent decades, social media have become an essential subject of research from both theoretical and practical perspectives due to their influence on society. Social media platforms are the latest in a long line of technological advances that aim to make it easier for people to get involved in politics and take action. Many studies have been dedicated to the relationship between social media and social movements (Gerbaudo, 2012; Papacharissi, 2014; Castells, 2015; Tufekci, 2017). Naturally, social movements and protests were around

long before social media existed. However, digital technologies are important at every stage of a protest, but they are especially important when social movements are just starting out to separate the information for mobilization (Tufekci, 2017:22). Alongside that, some scholars are concerned about social media activism being not far from 'slacktivism'. Especially, labels such as "slacktivism" (Morozov, 2009), "armchair activism" (Gladwell, 2010), and "hashtag activism" (Augenbraun, 2011) reflect early criticisms of social media activism. Gladwell (2010) and Morozov (2009) are pessimistic about social media and its effect on contemporary social movements.

Nevertheless, despite other scholars' pessimistic views of social media activism and civic engagement, Tufekci (2017) has a more optimistic perspective on digital media. "Digital tools have changed the ecology of the public sphere and have profoundly reshaped the architecture of connectivity. Social movements were quick to adopt these tools and to use them to challenge power." (Tufekci, 2017:225). She further argues and uses the term "networked public sphere" to explain that in the twenty-first century, the public sphere is digitally networked and includes mainstream media and public spaces as well. She further explains "digitally networked public sphere" does not only mean online or primarily online. Rather, it is a recognition that the digital has changed the way movements work and the way the public sphere works as a whole.

According to her, the digitally networked public sphere has created new opportunities for people to engage in political discourse and activism, transcending geographical boundaries (Tufekci, 2017:21). This has led to the emergence of new forms of collective action and social movements that challenge traditional power structures. Tufekci's (2017) optimistic perspective on digital media and its impact on civic engagement and social movements is grounded in the recognition of the transformative power of digital tools in reshaping the public sphere. She argues that the digitally networked public sphere has expanded the possibilities for political discourse, collective action, and activism beyond the traditional channels of mainstream media and public spaces. The networked public sphere can enable movements to shape their own narratives of traditional media opposition and government suppression (Tufekci, 2017:220-232).

Focusing on network society and social movements as part of democratization and democratic society, social media has been a big part of how social movements have grown and spread around the world. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram,



and others provide a powerful tool for social activists to connect, mobilize, and share information with a global audience.

Moreover, social media has evolved into an effective tool for civic engagement, allowing individuals and groups to express their concerns and advocate for change. Social media campaigns can raise awareness about specific issues, increase civic participation, and foster a sense of community and collective action. Bennett and Segerberg (2012) point out that social media is a more personalized platform, which encourages people to connect and engage with the cause. They write that, unlike traditional activism, social media provides users with the ability to tailor messages to their own needs and interests. Social movements are typically incited by emotions derived from some significant event (Castells, 2015:2-219). Castells analyzes different social movements from the Middle East and North America with different cases to illustrate how digital networks allow them to stand together to create more democratic environments. He argues that the use of digital networks has become a crucial tool for social movements to connect and mobilize people across borders, which challenges traditional power structures and creates new forms of collective action. Additionally, Castells highlights the importance of understanding the role of technology in shaping contemporary social movements and their impact on society.

Furthermore, Papacharissi states that “networked platforms support affective processes” (Papacharissi, 2014:27). These processes produce affective statements with opinions, emotions, and how we politically react in our everyday lives. Also, Papacharissi mentions the Occupy movement and Twitter use in contemporary democracies. She states that “Twitter's expressive affordances of the platform support identity formation and affinity among like-minded individuals” (Papacharissi, 2014:67). Twitter allowed them to share their opinion and create awareness under the created hashtag. She specifically focuses on Twitter to understand affective processes. Because Twitter is a contemporary medium for storytelling, it enables co-creating and collaborative filtering that sustains ambient and affective engagement for the public it interconnects (Papacharissi, 2014:27). Following her notion, the *#istanbulsözleşmesi* movement utilized hashtags to raise awareness of the importance of the treaty and to create a space for people to share their experiences and stories related to gender-based violence. The movement gained momentum and spread across social media platforms, leading to nationwide protests and demonstrations.

## CHAPTER 2

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### **METHODOLOGY AND METHOD**

In this section, I clarify my methodological framework, how I constructed my qualitative case study, how I chose the methods I used, and how I sampled and analyzed the data. This detailed, in-depth information will help readers understand the part about the analysis and results that comes next. Finally, I discuss my methodology, its limits, and research ethics.

#### **The Framework**

I adopt different approaches to building the methodological framework. Specifically, the research paradigm adopted in the case study of Twitter and political engagement in Turkey combines interpretivism and critical research paradigms. This methodological approach aims to comprehend how meaning is generated within society concerning tweets and civic engagement, while also scrutinizing the power dynamics that underlie political engagement.

Interpretivism is a research approach that endeavors to comprehend and interpret social phenomena by exploring how individuals comprehend and construct their reality based on their experiences. Interpretivism is often combined with social constructivism, in this sense, it also influences constructivists (Creswell, 2009:8). In the interpretivism paradigm, the researcher assumes an active role in gathering and examining data, and the research questions can be adjusted or redefined as the study progresses. Conversely, the critical paradigm is a research methodology that seeks to identify and challenge power imbalances and social inequalities in society. It is concerned with understanding how power operates in social relationships and how it can be used to maintain or challenge dominant social structures (Creswell, 2009; Bryman, 2012).

Adopting an interpretive research perspective, the study aims to explore how individuals engage with discussions and tweets pertinent to their social context, and how they construct meaning from these interactions. This approach underscores the active role played by the researcher in collecting and analyzing data. In tandem, the critical research paradigm enables an examination of the power dynamics inherent in political engagement on Twitter, and how they may impact the formation of meaning. This paradigmatic approach thus

facilitates the identification and contestation of dominant social structures and power imbalances that could potentially influence the interpretation of tweets and civic engagement.

The incorporation of both interpretivism and critical research paradigms in this study enables a comprehensive exploration of the complexities surrounding Twitter and political engagement in Turkey, emphasizing the need for an inclusive and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under examination.

This study is underpinned by theoretical perspectives drawn from Harding's "Science from Below" (2008). It employs an epistemological analysis and standpoint theory that aims to focus on science *for* women rather than simply *about* them. This approach provides valuable insight into the details of women's lives, struggles, resistance, stories, and perspectives, which is the best way for social science to meet their needs. Standpoint theory, therefore, provides the groundwork for a case study to explore how social media enables civic engagement for Turkish citizens to make their voices heard democratically. Gender is not just about women, but also about men and, most importantly, the social relations between them (Harding, 2008:110): "Standpoint theory produces the kind of philosophy of science/epistemology and research methodology necessary to provide both empirically and theoretically more competent sciences, which can thereby serve to help bring into existence and maintain a radically inclusive democratic social order"(2008:114). As a Turkish woman, I have lived in this gendered society where men and women are unequal. From this point of view, I believe that it is imperative to adopt a research perspective that aligns with Harding's standpoint theory.

### **Selecting the Case and Method**

To get a detailed understanding of the topic at hand, this thesis is designed as a qualitative case study (Creswell, 2009; Bryman, 2012). Therefore, the knowledge generated by this research is distinctive and context-dependent (Flyvbjerg, 2001:72). Furthermore, context is critical in qualitative case studies; from this point of view, it is important to choose a context that concentrates on a specific case (Flyvbjerg, 2001). The concept of case studies has been criticized because it can not be generalized in the way that, for example, quantitative cases can be generalized (Bryman, 2012). However, despite case studies lacking the element of quantitative generalization, they still generate knowledge that can be applied conceptually

and theoretically. In this sense, this case study takes a qualitative approach, focusing on the case itself and gaining a deeper understanding of the specific case being studied.

The subject of this case is the debate and protest about the Istanbul Convention withdrawal under specific hashtags on Twitter. The core objective of the case study is to critically research the engagement of the Istanbul Convention withdrawal and how citizens participate in a civic debate on social media about social issues. Due to the high censorship of mass media, social media has emerged as a crucial platform for critical debates and for raising awareness about the government's decision to withdraw from the convention. Since the government withdrew from the agreement, social media has become an essential channel for debate about the decision. The discussions around social injustice against women and the often emotional, nature of this online engagement create a rich “critical case” (Flyvbjerg, 2001:79) study environment.

Furthermore, social media has also provided a platform for women to share their personal experiences and stories of discrimination, harassment, and violence, which has helped to amplify their voices and bring attention to these issues. In the case study, the goal is to understand the selected case or cases in-depth (Bryman, 2012), so context matters (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Flyvbjerg points out that for researchers, “the closeness of the case study to real-life situations and its multiple wealth of details is essential” (Flyvbjerg, 2001:72). With this in mind, violence against women is a phenomenon that I personally care about as a woman and activist in this society. I have been participating in civic engagement in this violence against women’s movement and engaging with the debate on social media.

In order to fully answer the research questions, I approached this case using the qualitative text analysis method. I also took Bazeley's advice “be informed by methodology, but not a slave to it” (Bazeley, 2013:10) therefore I used my own toolkit. The reason to choose qualitative analysis is to understand the general topics and discourse they have been engaging in on Twitter. Using text analysis as my main method, I adopted Kuckartz’s (2014) approach. Where I combined qualitative text analysis with hermeneutic interpretation and open coding, the coding came from grounded theory. The approach helped me work through the text as a whole, setting any unclear passages aside until I got a better understanding of the entire text, which may shed light on the unclear passages (Kuckartz, 2014:20-21). Qualitative text analysis gives the possibility to “explore voices and experiences that they believe have

been ignored, misinterpreted, or suppressed in the past” (Byrne 2012: 209-10). Indeed, the voices of Turkish women are not being heard enough, and they have recently faced numerous challenges.

### **Sampling Strategy**

In terms of sampling, I took an approach to purposive theoretical sampling (Creswell, 2009; Bryman, 2012) with a focus on Twitter, selecting posts about the protest to analyze how citizens reflect on the government's formal decision on social issues and also debate about it. According to the chosen method, I sampled posts in which the posts are tagged *#istanbulsözleşmesiyaşatır* in English as *'istanbulconventionsaveslives'* with hashtags. The focus was only on the main post, which did not include retweets or replies. Additionally, as the debate and protests were dispersed throughout the country, the sampling process did not target specific accounts. Furthermore, determining the age and gender of Twitter users can be challenging, which is why the study did not take gender into consideration and instead focused on a general sample.

Case studies have time and activity constraints (Creswell, 2009: 227). Since the debate and protest started at a specific time, and in order to have a rich sample to research, I focused on the day of the announcement of withdrawal and the following 20 days (*20 March -10 April 2021*) and the last 20 days until the one day later of the final court decision (*12 June-2 July 2021*). The tweets covered topics such as violence against women, criticism of the government, and solidarity, highlighting the main concerns of the protesters. Especially, I wanted to include the following court decision day to get a better picture of the whole debate. Furthermore, since hashtags were still active, it was important to focus on a specific time frame to have concentrated data: “Concrete experiences can be achieved via continued proximity to the studied reality and via feedback from those under study” (Flyvbjerg, 2001:72).

Moreover, the utilization of emojis has become a significant aspect of online culture, particularly on Twitter, where the restriction on character count makes them a crucial tool for expressing emotions. In light of this, I have included the interpretation of emojis as a legitimate element of the text. The utilization of emojis in online communication has assumed a fundamental role in expressing an individual's ideas and emotions (Arafah & Muhammad, 2020:560), and as such, cannot be merely disregarded due to their deviation from

conventional linguistic textual analysis. This is especially true when conducting research within the field of digital media analysis.

Twitter is a public social media network, however, it was still necessary to use digital tools to access a large number of tweets, especially historical tweets. I had access to Twitter's API (*application programming interface*) and used a coding program to download the data as a CVS file. The total number was 10,000. Also, the size of the sample is determined by the number of posts necessary to create enough material for qualitative analysis. After downloading the data, I went data and manually removed unrelated data, especially for those who used hashtags to get followers, just sharing the hashtag itself, who shared the same content over and over, and who shared unrelated content under the same hashtag. It is significant to sample according to the chosen case study to relate the data (Byrne,2012:216). “Qualitative research can be defined as a research approach that emphasizes words rather than numbers in data collection and analysis” (Bryman, 2012:36) When choosing the posts, I did not focus on quantitative data but rather on meaningful and reach data to draw an insightful reflective analysis (Bazeley, 2013). Within the purposive sampling, I ended up with 1100 tweets to analyze.

### **Being an Insider**

As a Turkish citizen and a woman who grew up in the same patriarchal culture and faced similar challenges, it is difficult for me to take a neutral position in this research. Returning to Harding's standpoint theory (2008) it is important to take a stand in this research study. However, it is undeniable that it has advantages and disadvantages, and this has also been discussed widely in academia (Unluer, 2012). Qualitative research “interprets phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:3). As an insider, I have a profound understanding of the culture, norms, shared languages, and contextual factors that influence society. This helped me interpret and analyze the data in a more nuanced way and led to a richer and more contextualized understanding of the research topic. Especially, when I think one of my motivations for choosing this case study was that I faced similar challenges in Turkish society.

### **Ethical Considerations and Limitations**

Violence against women, women's rights, and censorship of sensual topics. Also, they are political/social, and individual contexts that require a more sensitive approach. Twitter posts

are publicly available, but for ethical considerations, identities and confidentiality are protected (Creswell, 2009; Brennen, 2007).

In terms of data collection, it should be noted that the data used in this study was obtained digitally, necessitating access to the Twitter API. However, the recent change in ownership of Twitter has affected API access, resulting in delays in the review process for access requests (Wanjala, 2023). Additionally, obtaining the appropriate level of access from the various levels provided by the Twitter API posed challenges, as the researcher required a specific level of access. Nonetheless, I took a proactive approach to overcome these challenges, and access was ultimately granted, allowing for data analysis to proceed. An additional challenge was the need to acquire basic coding knowledge to extract data from the API.

Another limitation was that I had to handle what I got since I did not prepare the questions to direct them. Therefore, I collected the data by anonymizing the user name carefully (Creswell, 2009). Purposeful data sampling was critical to take into account which enabled quality enough data for a deeper analysis. It is important to highlight one of the limitations, in terms of intercoder reliability, as a single researcher is coded by one coder. (Kuckartz 2014:47). It also recognizes that a single method has been used. Furthermore, since I translated the tweets myself, it is crucial to acknowledge that something might be lost in translation.

### **Treating the Data: Coding and Analyzing**

I analyzed the data through qualitative text analysis. One of the advantages of analyzing tweets and collecting data in the form of documents that represent thoughtful data is that participants have given attention to compiling them (Creswell, 2009:181). In this vein, data contributed greatly to an in-depth analysis as users used Twitter hashtags to express their immediate feeling and emotions in various settings and days without being asked any leading questions.

Since data is collected purposefully to answer the research questions in the best way possible, some themes started emerging after the first round of data sampling in the Excel file. The data gave me a general understanding of the debate. After constructing the main data in an Excel file, I conducted the coding in NVivo. NVivo is a software that promises only to provide you with a set of tools that assist you in undertaking an analysis of qualitative data

(Bazeley & Jackson 2013:2). I value NVivo as it gave me more space to back and forward steps between codes and move them around much easier. Also, it creates a transparent workspace to track each code and is able to check inter-coder results (Bazeley, 2013:151).

Prior to analyzing qualitative data, it is crucial to take into account certain general ideas concerning comprehension, particularly understanding and interpreting textual material. This is frequently denoted as hermeneutics, which pertains to the art of interpretation and the techniques employed in understanding written texts (Kuckartz, 2014:17-18). I started with descriptive coding. I worked on a multi-step process that starts with simple 'open coding' and ends up with the discovery of 'core categories' and then finding my themes, which led me to my final analysis (Kuckartz, 2014:16). The process of data analysis involves making sense out of text or image data (Kuckartz, 2014). Diving deeper and deeper into understanding the data is like peeling back the layers of an onion and making an interpretation of the larger meanings of the data (Creswell, 2009:183). I ended up with three main themes that emerged from the data over and over again; first, "*Being a woman in Turkey*" when protesters shared their struggle, in society and feelings about the decision. The second is "*Criticism of the government*" where citizens question government decisions, justice, and the legitimacy of democracy in the country. The third "*Online-to-offline movement*" was one where mobilization drove a collective action on the street.

After the final stage of coding, I used NVivo graphics to visualize and see the patterns better. I coded in Turkish, and only the quotes used in the main analyses were translated word for word by me. As I have not used usernames and anonymized for ethical considerations (Creswell, 2009), tweets have been quoted in the analysis with the date they were posted. These tweet dates also gave transparent patterns of how users in different time frames shared the same emotions. Another noteworthy aspect to consider in the analysis is the challenge of determining the gender of Twitter users. However, at times it can be assumed that the writers are female when they state their own identity by saying "us women", "me and other women", and "I as a woman/wife/girlfriend". On this point, I referred to using 'she' in the analysis as well. Finally, in the analysis, some words have been highlighted by me to emphasize the analysis.



## CHAPTER 3

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### ANALYSIS

The central focus of this analysis is Turkish citizen engagement with the Istanbul Convention withdrawal on Twitter. In this part, the following themes are presented for a better understanding of engagement and how this debate on Twitter creates civic space and awareness for Turkish citizens. The analysis revealed three fundamental themes employed in the tweets to advance the objectives of the demonstrators. The first part will explore being a woman in Turkey and the fight for rights and solidarity. The second part critically reflects on government decisions, democratic discourse, and democratic deliberation. This section highlights counter-power's importance in the deliberation of democracy. Then the final section relates to the dual functionality of the tweets in promoting social activism through the dissemination of critical thought, and mobilizing individuals towards offline protest activities, thereby transforming online participation into tangible real-world action. The tweets served as a tool for fostering a heightened level of civic awareness and political consciousness among the populace. The engagement on Twitter provides social activism by raising awareness, and visibility and preparing the ground for offline collective action (Nartey, 2022).

#### **Being a Woman in Turkey**

*“Being a woman in this country has become a heart palpitation! Therefore; #Revokedecisionenforcetheconvention” (10.04.2021)*

The recent decision to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention has exacerbated social tension in Turkey, where women's rights face numerous challenges. In addition to struggling to find a common communicative civic space (Dahlgren, 2009) where their voices can be heard and their worth recognized, women in Turkey contend with gender inequality and patriarchal structures. Social media has helped to facilitate the protests by offering a open forum for talking about and bringing attention to unspoken and underrepresented issues affecting women. This section delves into the engagement, experiences, sentiments, solidarity, and challenges that women face in Turkish society. It is important to bring out Harding's (2008) perspective, where their social position and the power structures that exist in society. Based on their experiences in society, and the struggles they have encountered due to gender

inequality, women recognize the criticality of safeguarding their rights for their future well-being. They have witnessed firsthand the implications of being silenced and lacking representation in various spheres, including but not limited to domestic life, employment, relationships, and political representation. As a result, they place great emphasis on the need for protection and recognition of their voice and agency (Dahlgren, 2009).

***“The Country Where Women Have No Name!” (01.04.2021)***

One of the major issues in a democracy is when citizens do not feel valued or that their demands are not being met. This causes citizens to suffer from a crisis of living conditions, which makes most people's everyday life unbearable. They are motivated by a deep distrust of the political structures that govern society (Castells, 2015). *#istanbulsözleşmesiyaşatır* protest engagement shows that women are concerned for their lives, and the resulting decision made them look for more protection, safety, and justice for the violence they have been facing:

*“As women, **we are very afraid**, we are harassed even while walking on the road because of the sons of bitches we don't even know. After the decision to abolish the Istanbul Convention, they have become even more emboldened, how long will you turn a blind eye to them?”(10.04.2021)*

As Dahlgren argues (2009:75), we need to comprehend participation through reflections on lived own experiences and circumstances. This person states how they experience fear and harassment, even when conducting mundane activities such as walking on the street, owing to the actions of unknown perpetrators. The decision of the Convention has emboldened these individuals to act with even greater impunity. This shows the urgency of taking action and protecting women. By writing: “How long will you turn a blind eye to them?” they beg the question on how long the authorities will continue to overlook and disregard these issues. This is not only about the violence but also about how justice does not favor women in this society.

*“We, women, cannot breathe in this country. I am only 20 years old and countless murders of women and **child abuse** have been engraved in my mind. **Enough already.**” (29.06.2021)*

This tweet, when highlighting “*child abuse*” suggests that violence against women is not limited to adults but also affects young girls, which underscores the importance of protecting human rights. She also reflects on this violence and has a long history in the

country where she refers to her age. Another fear is how these criminal activities affect mental health. It is essential to note that the protest already transcends violence against women. It evolved into a struggle for human rights. As I am writing this research report as of April 2023, there have already been 78 women murdered by men in the year 2023 (Anit Sayac, n.d.).

*“We want to live without worries, not with despair. Being afraid to go out alone at night is not our weakness but the result of a **rotten mentality and a justice system** that does not work.” (30.06.2021)*

The tweet highlights how women's fear of going out alone at night is not a personal weakness but rather a symptom of a societal problem, which is the normalization of violence against women, particularly in situations where the legal system does not function to women's advantage.

*“You take the streets on July 1st for the Istanbul Convention, demand your rights, and get **harassed on the metro** on your way home in the evening, we will expose your asshole behavior until the end [...]” (01.07.2021)*

Strong emotions, using social media as a tool for public exposure, and shaming can be a form of punishment for such behavior and a way to feel justice. At the individual level, social movements are emotional movements (Dahlgren, 2009), and they do not start or come from a programmed strategy; they come more from emotion, sharing the same challenges and facing the same difficulties (Castells, 2015). This networked public sphere (Tufekci, 2017) enables them to come together and share their emotions and experiences to support each other as well as affective processes (Papacharissi, 2014).

*“In this country, our name will be on the Twitter timeline one day, our murderer will be taken into custody but released without arrest, and you **search for our justice on social media**, but you cannot find it. We want to be valued. We want to go out and live at night without any problems.” (03.04.2021)*

The lack of adequate justice systems is a big criticism of this tweet as well, voices to advocate for themselves and others, and they are looking for justice on social media since the government is failing to protect the citizens. “The internet is in the process of doing something to the political order, namely, creating an open space for oversight and evaluation” (Rosanvallon, 2008:70). This also shows that social media is no longer an entertaining

communicative space but a space for people to voice their opinions and seek a democratic end (Tufekci, 2017).

Another area of intense engagement and criticism is the gender inequality and patriarchal society in the country. Especially with the Istanbul Convention withdrawal, the main argument was that it threatened family structures and the norms of Turkish society. Hiding behind the ‘word of the family’ to protect family values, but at the same time, not valuing women and delivering justice in society.

*“I am sickened to see you patting the perpetrators on the head and back. You cannot hide behind the **word of the family**. It is not the family that needs to be protected.” (02.07.2021)*

In this part, another criticism shows that since the AKP’s (*Justice Development Party*) ideology is close to the conservative and religious sides, they argue that the family structure is affected by this Convention. Particularly “the threat to the family” and “normalize homosexuality” underscores how this convention affects not only women but also other marginalized groups such as the LGBTQ community, who are not accepted within the Turkish family structure. Moreover, some have expressed concern that Erdoğan may be using the "word of the family" as a cover for his true motives, which may include reinvigorating his conservative voter base, which has been disenchanted with the recent economic downturn, and enhancing his image as a strong-willed leader. Another claim is; as part of his efforts, Erdoğan has ramped up repression and suppressed civil society organizations that challenge his rule, including women's rights advocates who have criticized the government for failing to implement the protective measures of the Istanbul Convention (Aksoy, 2021).

*You can't be a human being in this country, you're either **a woman or a man**... that's where the real tragedy begins! (04.04.2021)*

This tweet also illustrates their challenges in society since they were born. ‘A woman or a man’ is a strong expression and reflects situation of the gender equality in society. As I mentioned earlier in the previous chapter, patriarchal norms (Walby, 1990) and ideologies are still very strong in Turkey. The honor of the family and the respect of the man as a ruler of the family are values that assume primary positioning in social norms.

*“Those who do not know what it means to be a woman in Turkey think they can stop women with barricades. They take those tests at a **very young age**. You couldn't educate your "Tosun Pashas", at least leave their convention alone.” (01.07.2021)*

This post was tweeted on the day of the court protest. Due to the high participation of the protesters in front of the court, the police were ready with their barricades (See Appendix). However, some of the protesters go over the barricades towards the court. Strong passion shows here their motivation toward the goal (Dahlgren, 2009). This is also a way to highlight that sharing the same challenges and struggles in life from a very young age brings them together and helps them fight for their rights (Castells, 2015). Another highlight in the tweet is "Tosun Pashas" referred to as ‘man’ and male-dominant family structure. In Turkish society in the family dynamics man is always privileged.

*“I think the saying "Either you are mine or you are black soil" **comes from our country**. As long as this country does not educate and develop, these murders of women will increase.” (02.04.2021)*

Gender inequality in society has a profound impact on intimate relationships. The use of proverbs and phrases that normalize violence against women and reinforce misogyny (Weiser and Miltner, 2016) and perpetuated by cultural norms, such as "**your husband beats you and loves you**" (06.04.2021) perpetuates patriarchal attitudes (Walby, 1990) that encourage partner violence. This poses a significant threat to human rights and gender equality. Unfortunately, in rural areas, especially male-dominant Anatolia, this kind of violence is more accepted. Women may not report it to the police even if they face it, because they think it has been like that which social norms normalize violence against women. Another example of this patriarchal family structure appears in this tweet;

*“Her daughter is strangled by a man who is her **son-in-law** and a man in the role of a father says that we did not interfere because it was a **family matter**, because he probably **strangles his wife too**. His father-in-law also did not intervene in order not to interfere with the family.” (26.06.2021).*

One of the favors of patriarchal society is saying “family matter” where this “matter” gives privileges to men, it poses a significant danger, as patriarchy refers to a social system characterized by the dominance, oppression, and exploitation of women by men (Walby, 1990). Recent femicide statistics reveal that the perpetrator is most often someone close to or an intimate partner of the victim. Honor killing (Kardam, 2005; Kandiyoti, 1991) and the refusal to accept divorce are some of the significant issues that contribute to femicide.

This highlights the pressing need for society to address toxic masculinity (Walby, 1990) and patriarchal attitudes that perpetuate violence against women.

### ***Violence Against Women: Femicide***

Another significant aspect of the analysis is the sharing of information about violence against women especially femicide cases and the justice system's response to these crimes. Due to limited space and censorship in the mass media, not all femicide events receive media coverage. However, women share different stories to draw attention to these crimes and make the invisible visible during protests. Activist media serve as journalistic sources (Dahlgren, 2009:193). Using social media, especially Twitter, as a news source and becoming a citizen journalist (Nip, 2006 cited in Dahlgren, 2009:177), to share more untold stories has become commonplace in the country. This creates awareness and highlights how the justice system works against women's rights cases in the country. These stories shed light on the systematic oppression and discrimination faced by women in the country and how it affects their daily lives. Also, this networked public sphere empowers movements to create their own narrative and broadcast them in a decentralized fashion, avoiding traditional media and government restrictions (Tufekci, 2017:231).

*“Istanbul convention is **Pınar's convention**, who was murdered by her ex-boyfriend and whose body was put in a garbage barrel and burned.” (20.06.2021)*

This tweet is about another victim, Pınar, who was killed horribly. Unfortunately, femicide (Titterington, 2006) is one of the major problems in Turkey. Sharing this story with others brings more attention to how important this convention is. Especially sharing this, which has not gained enough attention or been shared as third-page news in the mass media. It is one surprising aspect of this movement how the protesters use hashtags as news channels. This shows that the chaotic world of the digitally networked public sphere, where ordinary citizens or activists can produce ideas, document and share news of events, and reply to mass media, is a new, profoundly different method of information and attention flow (Tufekci, 2017). Another aspect of sharing different stories as Papacharissi (2014) states, the media assists us in telling stories about ourselves, other people, and the world around us. It is important to note that these stories when collaboratively networked together through platforms such as Twitter, can form our feelings and structures. This is because it is these stories that connect people in ways that make them *feel* as though their opinions matter. It is

precisely these pliable feelings that have the potential to both maintain and mediate the democratic way of life.

*“While we were looking for our rights, a woman was murdered again today in the middle of the street, amidst her daughter's cries of "We complained 50 times"! The decision to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention is null and void! **Femicide and all sexual abuses are political.**” (01.07.2021)*

The perpetration of violent acts against women serves as evidence of the significance of conventions that aim to safeguard their well-being. The statement *"we complained 50 times"* implies that despite reporting incidents of domestic violence to law enforcement authorities, their concerns were disregarded. The phrase *"femicides and all sexual abuses are political"* implies that these forms of violence are not only individual offenses but also indicative of broader societal and political predicaments. The usage of the term "political" implies the necessity of implementing structural reforms to address these issues, which demands action from policymakers and society as a whole.

*“**Just because we are women**, we are likely to be attacked and killed by any asshole while walking on the street. I can't even call it a possibility just because we are women because these possibilities are now becoming certain. That's why #IstanbulSozlesmesiYasatir” (03.04.2021)*

In here she reflects a feminist perspective on gender-based violence, which recognizes the ways in which patriarchal norms and attitudes perpetuate violence and discrimination against women and other marginalized groups. This also brings us to Diana Russell's (2001 in Widyono, 2008: 7), the definition of femicide term as: “the murder of females because they are females”. Russell's definition of femicide refers to the killing of women specifically because of their gender. This is important because it emphasizes the ways in which gender inequality can lead to violence against women, including murder. Especially in this tweet about how she feels gender inequality and the social-cultural norms affected daily life.

*“The revocation of the Istanbul Convention encourages perpetrators: A man named Ekrem Aydın **tortured the woman he was in the process of divorcing.** The woman, who suffered burns on her body, is being treated in intensive care.” (10.04.2021)*

These tweets illustrate a justice call for all women, as well as for the unspoken news that has been neglected by the mainstream media. A lack of trust in institutions makes citizens search

for new spaces to voice their opinions. Dahlgren (2009) contends that the media provides communicative platforms that empower women to shed light on previously hidden issues. Through these tools, women can effectively make the invisible visible. Twitter is a modern medium for storytelling; it allows for co-creation and collaborative filtering, which sustains ambient and affective engagement for the public it connects to (Papacharissi, 2014). Also, Tufekci (2017) states that the Twitter hashtag contributes as a bridge to allow many-to-many coordination. In this regard, the utilization of the hashtag simplifies the process of connecting protesters and fosters solidarity among them. This is due to the hashtag's ability to streamline the dissemination of information and make it more accessible to a broader audience, which can then engage in connective action (Bennett and Segerberg, 2012).

### ***#WeareStrongTogether: Solidarity***



One more noticeable and substantial part of the protest is “*solidarity*”. Coming together around the same concern and the same goal despite the circumstances shows how this online networked sphere (Tufekci, 2017) allows them to show solidarity with each other. Of course, it is not deniable that this solidarity shows motivation and hope to challenge the decisions made about the convention. The core practices of civic engagement include not only the abstract development or joining of networks but also the ability to use networks to relate to specific issues and come together (Dahlgren, 2009).

*“We are resisting **shoulder to shoulder** so that we don't lose one more person so that we don't lose one more sister. We resist with the colors of the rainbow, with the audacity of hope!”*  
(30.06.2021)

*“Women who **share each other's pain** without knowing each other ❤️ #you will never walk alone 🙌❤️ I feel stronger when I see this crowd. 🙌🙌❤️❤️❤️ #We are not giving up”*  
(02.07.2021)

In these two tweets, ‘*shoulder to shoulder*’ and ‘*share each other's pain*’ show intense emotional connections to each other for support. Twitter's expressive features provide a conducive environment for individuals to shape their identities and foster a sense of belonging with those who share similar beliefs (Papacharissi, 2014:67). Notably, the tweet also employs an emoji as an expressive element. Due to Twitter's character limit, emojis have become a common means of conveying emotions in tweets. In the context of this particular protest, it is noteworthy that emojis were predominantly used in tweets expressing solidarity




(comp. Arafah & Muhammad, 2020) Among the most frequently used emojis in such tweets were the heart  and  symbols of support.

Through the free and open public space of the internet, people can come together to share their sorrows, hopes, and fears (Castells, 2015:2). They can connect with others who have had similar experiences and support each other in overcoming their fears. Another highlight is passion and believing in the same goal. Active engagement indicates cognitive attention, a normative stance, but also emotional commitment. Being politically engaged entails having some degree of passion. The civic agency requires motivation; engagement and participation must have an affective drive. No passion, no participation (Dahlgren, 2009:83-85).

*“It is such a struggle that even if mountains are lined up in front of us, it will not help. Dear women, none of us will **EVER WALK ALONE!**” (03.04.2021)*

This statement of solidarity and determination in the face of a common struggle or threat. The phrase "resisting shoulder to shoulder" implies a united front against a common enemy, which is the current government, as we can refer to “us versus them” (Castells, 2015), with individuals standing side by side in a show of support and strength. This civic sphere (Dahlgren, 2009) and trust in each other create a strong identity to resist collectively. The trust and affinity that are at the heart of these civic cultures are emphasized through the emphasis placed on networking, information sharing, and alliance building (Dahlgren, 2009:198).

Shared values only put people within a common communicative culture; they do not prevent antagonism (Dahlgren, 2009:111). Solidarity also appeared as “being proud of them”. It is one way to show support for the same cause. especially in the form of connective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012:739), where protesters only share their support and emotions on social media to connect with the rest of them.

*“I am reading my homepage crying with pride, **I am glad** that you all exist, my beautiful women, and I am glad that you all defend our rights ” (01.07.2021)*

A noteworthy part of solidarity is calling others to action. Calling them not to be silent against this undemocratic decision and calling them to support the online action via porting

under the same hashtag. The space of civic culture provides communicative access to others for civic encounters (Dahlgren, 2009:124) to create a more united community together. They also use different hashtags here as well different hashtags to strengthen their solidarity, such as 'we are not silent'. This can be another way to gain more visibility to protest via hashtags. Even if they don't see *#istanbulsözleşmesiyaşatır* they might come through with this solidarity hashtag to share online civic space.

*“So don't be silent, please don't be silent in the face of any injustice, any evil. Don't be afraid to speak out when you see something wrong so that those who are afraid will not die because you are silent **#WearenotSilent**” (01.07.2021)*

*“Friends!!!! *#istanbulsözleşmesiyaşatır* hashtag has fallen off the spotlight, **we need to raise these hashtag again, come on**” (09.04.2021)*

Another sign of solidarity was shown by keeping the hashtag alive. The aim is to draw attention to the Istanbul convention. The statement emphasizes the importance of social media activism and the use of hashtags to spread messages and support causes. Hashtag is one of the identical affordances of Twitter to help activists connect and coordinate protests faster (Tufekci, 2017:76). Another facet of this protest is that it will not be over in a short time. As a result of the lengthy period of time involved, the protesters want to keep the issue alive and bring more attention to it.

### **Criticism of the Government**

Women assert their rights and demand safety through emotional experiences and the creation of solidarity by using online civic spaces to share their sorrows and hold the government accountable (Dahlgren, 2009). The Gezi Park environmentalist movement, which challenged the Turkish government's decisions, exemplifies the effectiveness of social media as a tool for mobilization and circumventing censorship (Tufekci, 2017). According to Castells (2015) and Papacharissi (2014), social movements are driven by emotions and their ultimate goals.

The ongoing Istanbul Convention Twitter debate surrounding the government's actions reveals the intense feelings of its critics toward undemocratic outcomes that put citizens on alert. This sensitive topic illustrates users' emotions and feelings transparently. The concept of the 'right to resist' (Rosanvallon, 2008) is particularly relevant here, as Turkish citizens have the right to demand accountability from their government. Twitter has

thus become a civic space for them to challenge the government's decision to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention. Under the criticism of the government, citizens demand justice, shed light on previously invisible issues, and engage in deliberation (Coleman & Blumler, 2009:15).

### ***Silencing Democracy***

“The public will not support decisions unless they feel that they have been properly consulted and involved in the making of them” (Gordon Brown in an interview with Andrew Marr, BBC1, 13 May 2007 cited in Coleman & Blumler, 2009:14). One of the key elements of democracy is having the public's opinion on any matter of decision that the public is deeply affected by. This should be included in the crucial decision-making process. Lively (1975: 30) cited in Carpentier. Citizens want their opinions and interests to be taken into account more concretely and persistently. Enhancing political legitimacy requires ongoing communication and engagement between those in power and the public they serve. This communication channel lately is stronger in the networked public sphere (Tufekci, 2017) which is Twitter in Turkey. Especially when the government started to lose accountability.

*“I will never forget this day. Imagine a government that ignored its own people and **killed democracy**. We will not be silenced, and you will not silence us!”(20.03.2021)*

“This day” refers to the Istanbul Convention withdrawal announcement made by the government. It shows that since day one citizens started to engage in the debate on Twitter and share their opinions about it. There is an unforgettable sense of outrage toward a government that has failed to preserve democracy and has silenced its own people in the decision-making process. This represents the belief that people have the right to freely express themselves and participate in the democratic process and that any attempt to limit these rights is unjustifiable. Democratic governments are formed to serve their citizens' interests and assure their welfare through policies that reflect their needs and preferences. To do this, democratic regimes necessitate citizens' active engagement in decision-making via free and fair elections, free speech, and preserving individual rights and freedoms (Rosanvallon, 2008). However in this protest, the government fails to uphold these principles, and citizens feel disenfranchised and express their displeasure in a variety of ways. The tweet also demonstrates that the people who have suffered harm as a result of this government's actions will not remain silent and will fight for their rights and the restoration of democracy.

This highlights the significance of citizen engagement and individuals' ability to impact political outcomes through collective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012).

*“Bravo! You have achieved something incredible! In the history of the world, there is no example of such a **fascist destruction of vested rights** by trying (!) to fit them into the law.”*  
(10.04.2021)

*“The lives and rights of millions of women cannot be left to the decision and survival of **one man!**”* (01.07.2021)

Another big controversy is about the government's latest changes. Since Turkey changed from a democratic parliamentary system to a presidential system that gives more power to the authoritarian regime. As I addressed earlier, Erdoğan's presidency has been characterized by increasing authoritarianism, and he has been accused of consolidating power by limiting political opposition and the freedom of the press (Akgül & Kırılıdoğ, 2015; Wilson & Hahn, 2021). The quote *“President Erdoğan canceled the convention signed by Prime Minister Erdoğan...”* (02.07.2021) alluded to President Erdoğan's cancellation of a convention that he had previously signed. Because the government was so confident when they signed the convention, they also opened the country's door for the signing of the convention. This also questioned Erdoğan against his own will, and he withdrew from the convention without consulting with the broader public or parliament. Citizens direct most criticism against Erdoğan since he is the highest chair in the decision-making process.

*“You did the **right thing for the first time** in forty years, but when the government got in trouble, you abolished the #Istanbulsozlesmesi to curry favor with this freak mentality that targets women.”* (30.06.2021)

Democracy faces a crisis of legitimacy as citizens become increasingly skeptical of political institutions and the ability of elected officials to represent their interests. To shore up their own legitimacy, the powers that be should look for new ways to exchange views and consult with their constituents (Rosanvallon, 2008:298).

*“It is true that it is not easy to **govern this country!** But admit it, you are not only failing to govern the country, but you are also letting it sink to the bottom. #Wewantjustice”*  
(31.03.2021)

This tweet highlights the failure of the government to provide effective governance and justice to its citizens. Justice is a fundamental principle of democracy, and it requires

impartiality, equality, and due process. When governments fail to provide justice, citizens become disillusioned with the political system and demand change. This demand for change with counter-power to function in democracy and make the invisible visible is important. Counter-power is to denote a complementary form of sovereignty that was seen as essential to achieving the ideal of a government embodying the “general will”: surveillance (Rosanvallon, 2008:13) Surveillance is a critical function of the media, which has been impeded in Turkey, particularly when the government's efforts to deliver justice are inadequate and minority groups' freedom of expression is limited.

*“Convention revoked when the President cannot issue a decree on fundamental **rights and freedoms**?”(02.07.2021)*

Similarly, these tweets also see the government as failing to foster democracy and human rights. This diligent oversight is important as the main remedy for dysfunctional institutions and, in particular, as the cure for what might be called “representative entropy” which Rosanvallon means; is the disruption of voters' relationships with their representatives (Rosanvallon, 2008:13). Oversight is important to enhance the power of society to influence the actions of the government. (Rosanvallon, 2008).

*“The state that did this!! Another woman is looking for a **remedy for her life on social media**! We all live with such people. Those who say we don't need the Istanbul Convention are traveling with 100 protection vehicles! Enforce the contract!”(01.04.2021)*

This tweet expresses again another story who is looking for help and not received justice and asked to be heard on Twitter. This predicament is not unique and many others face similar situations. The mention of the individual is referring to ‘President Erdoğan’ who usually travels with many security guards and this implies a disconnect between the actions of those in power and the plight of ordinary citizens.

In recent years, civil society in the civic culture has become more active, better informed, and empowered to participate in political decisions, resulting in greater transparency and accountability in governance. (Rosanvallon, 2008:306; Dahlgren, 2009). However, in situations where decisions are made that violate human rights without proper consultation or consideration of public opinion, such progress can be quickly reversed. Such decisions pose a threat not only to the rights of women but also to the wider democratic system and political stability. Despite this challenge, civic engagement and

counter-democratic activity are undeniable signs of the political vitality of direct citizen involvement to ensure democracy functions (Rosanvallon, 2008:252).

### ***The Battle on Freedom of Speech***

As previously mentioned, freedom of speech is also stated to be a big concern in democracy-challenged societies. Especially in Turkey's history, as referred to earlier which has been subject to censorship in various forms, such as internet mass media controls, limiting opposition voices, slowdowns, limitations on access to social media, and legal action against users who express dissent (Wilson & Hahn, 2021; Tufekci, 2017).

*“Imagine a nation that knows that if it **opens its mouth**, it will go to jail, keeps quiet, and knows that those who rape, murder women, and torture animals will not go to jail and are not afraid, what kind of irony is this, we are really fed up!!!” (02.07.2021)*

As this person criticizes, you can be jailed because of your opinion; he refers to “open its mouth”, but the person who is the criminal threat to human life has not been sentenced as it should be. The use of the term "irony" underscores the apparent disconnect between the laws and their enforcement in such a society, where those who should be held accountable for their actions are not, while others are unjustly punished for expressing their opinions. The implications of such censorship are evident in the cases of individuals facing legal consequences for expressing their opinions on social media platforms, which is a violation of their right to free speech. The government's political agenda leaves little room for dissenting voices in mass media, and citizens go to alternative media ‘Twitter’ as in this person's tweets to share their opinions.

An essential feature of democratic deliberation is the entitlement of individuals to exercise their rights to freedom of speech, assembly, and publication, and the assurance of protection for opposition groups against any potential intimidation tactics employed by the ruling government (Coleman & Blumler, 2009). “In a repressive country, tweeting may be a very brave act, while marching on the streets may present few difficulties in a more advanced democracy” (Tufekci, 2017:15) As Tufekci mentions, even tweeting became a brave move to share your opinion about the government.

*While the "justice" of the country continues to send intellectuals, artists, members of parliament to prison, those who ask questions, and those who **question the justice system** but people like these assholes continue to spread terror... (01.04:2021)*

In this tweet, they also describe how freedom of speech is limited, rather than acting on it. There is one saying in Turkey criticizing justice and democracy: “Lately, Turkish prisons are more educated than the outside world” since, as mentioned in the quote, it highlights the severity of the situation where there are a lot of politicians and journalists who have been prisoned because of their words and news. However, even though there is censorship in mass media, citizens continue to share their opinion on Twitter as in this example, and can circumvent censorship.

Moreover, when confronted with challenges to their authority, states tend to react in accordance with the established institutional norms and rules, regardless of whether they adhere to democratic principles or are characterized by authoritarianism, or a combination of both (Castells, 2015). On the other hand, it is also important to highlight here, within the strong censorship and court cases about citizen tweets against the government and Erdoğan that citizens do not hold them back and accept everything. The role of the media in a democracy is as a watchdog - ensuring that democratic values are observed. Therefore, threats to freedom of speech are direct threats to democracy.

### ***The Pursuit of Justice***

When criticizing the government, ‘justice’ is another major concern of the citizens. They question the transparency and accountability of the justice system. Rosanvallon (2008) argues that the questioning of government actions is fundamental to democratic politics and that civic conversation is essential to enable individuals to find their place and voice within the community. This highlights the importance of civic space, where citizens seek justice in a networked public sphere (Dahlgren, 2009; Tufekci, 2017).

*“We have become **tweeting for the arrest** of a different pervert every day. A concrete indicator of how necessary #istanbulsoezlesmesiis!” (25.06.2021)*

This tweet reflects their perception of an inadequate justice system, and their attempt to seek justice in an alternative public sphere. In this regard, the ‘tweeting for the arrest’ statement illustrates the use of Twitter as a platform to share feelings and criticisms about the justice

system. We can bring back here the idea of the "right to resist" (Rosanvallon, 2008) also emerges, as citizens demand justice and challenge government decisions through online civic spaces. Coleman and Blumler (2009) further argue that social media platforms can enable citizens to make the invisible visible, demand justice, and practice deliberation, thus enhancing the potential for democratic engagement and participation.

*“Within the presidential government system, we live in an amorphous system where there is no legislative-executive-judicial balance. The deputies of the ruling party in the Turkish Grand National Assembly are **“approval officers”** (29.03.2021)*

In this tweet criticism is the justice system and the overcontrol by the government / ruling party and it does not exercise independent legislative power but instead acts as "approval officers," indicating their subservience to the executive branch. This observation underscores the precarious state of checks and balances within the government and the consequent potential for executive overreach or abuse of power. Here, they also refer to the Istanbul Convention withdrawal without any debate in the parliament and only decisions made only by the ruling party.

*“The prosecutor and the judge have delivered their **robes to the palace.**”(02.07.2021)*

Here referring to “robes to the palace” illustrates that the justice system no longer favors the citizen but the palace. We can see ‘robes’ as a metaphor for their justice decision on the crimes. This statement criticizes the justice system and feels controlled by the palace (government) prosecutor should defend justice be independent. This creates distrust (Rosanvallon, 2008) in the justice system making citizens worried about their rights and the transparency of the judges. Many Turkish citizens have lately lost faith in the democratic institutions and processes that govern their society: these democratic expectations and perceived low performance are what Norris (2011) calls a “democratic deficit”. Democratic distrust has important implications for the functioning of democracy. When citizens do not trust their government or democratic institutions, they may be less likely to participate in democratic processes such as voting or engaging in public debate. However, in this specific case, the citizens challenge the government and the ineffective democracy and look for justice for women. Distrust of the political system or the government was the driving force behind the debate and protest on Twitter. Trust in institutions and representatives is essential for civic culture and democratic function (Dahlgren, 2009).



From here, we can return to the ‘values’ as one of the civic culture dimensions that play a role for protesters in Turkey (Dahlgren, 2009). Citizens perceive that their interests or values are not being adequately represented in the political process. On the other hand, they try to find alternative civic space to challenge the government and demand change. Here, Twitter has become a domain for public deliberation for Turkish civic actors where they can bring attention to issues:

*“Why do so-called independent courts exist if criminals can determine the punishment for their crimes? How many more women need to be killed for justice to be served? **Enough is enough**, we can't take such news anymore!” (30.06.2021)*

The person expresses criticism of the criminal justice system, citing its failure to deliver adequate punishment for offenders. The reference to an "independent court" suggests a lack of separation between the government and the judicial system, which could lead to a lack of impartiality and the erosion of trust in the justice system (Rosanvallon, 2008). This distrust of citizens leaves them dissatisfied with the current state of affairs, and they are calling for greater democratic participation in the justice system to address these issues. This resistance implies a sense of urgency and a desire for action to address the perceived injustices of the current system.

“Another factor in the constitution of counter-democracy is the advent of the people as judges. The judicialization of politics is the most obvious manifestation of this. It is as though citizens hope to obtain from a judicial process of some sort what they despair of obtaining from the ballot box. Judicialization should be seen against the background of declining government responsiveness to citizen demands. As responsiveness declines, the desire for accountability increases”(Rosanvallon, 2008:16)

*“I'm sorry to everyone, but those who revoked the Istanbul Convention and the country are shit!!! We tried to explain something by saying, #istanbulsoezlesmesiyasatır but **YOU DID NOT UNDERSTAND AS ALWAYS**” (02.07.2021)*

Through tweets like these, we can see how citizens are frustrated by a lack of democratic progress and this frustration may stem from a perception that democratic institutions or leaders are not responsive to the needs or concerns of citizens, or that the

principles of democracy are being undermined or eroded in some way. The statement ‘YOU DID NOT UNDERSTAND AS ALWAYS’ addresses President Erdoğan since he is the one who revoked the Convention without debate in the parliament. Also, not the first time that citizens is disappointed by the president.

*“Today, those **who govern this country** have chosen to support the murderers instead of preventing the murders, it is a pity.” (01.07.2021)*

This post was made shortly after a court decision where an appeal did not positively conclude for the women's side. The strong criticism of the convention's withdrawal and the lack of feeling understood, and listening in the way they need shows how the deliberation of democracy is struggling. And here citizens try to voice up in this networked public sphere and are able to challenge and influence those who govern them (Coleman & Blumler, 2009:8).

*“The public is defending themselves, **there is no state!!!**” (01.07.2021)*

This post was tweeted on the day of the court decision and a physical protest was held in front of the court. After the decision where citizens feel there is no state that does not protect their rights so they try to defend themselves. The statement also shows that people have a broader role in politics beyond simply casting their votes during elections. They now act as watchdogs, veto-wielders, and judges, implying that they are actively engaged in monitoring and holding politicians accountable for their actions. This shift is consistent with the idea of a more participatory and active citizenry in a democracy (Rosanvallon, 2008:17).

### **From Passion to Action: *Mobilization***

The online protest resulted in mobilization through the use of hashtags, which is one of the outcomes of the networked public sphere. As mentioned by Castells (2015) and Papacharissi (2014), social movements are often driven by emotions and the goals they seek to achieve. The fight for women's rights and justice demonstrates the use of the networked public sphere to seek democratic deliberation, mobilization, and transformation of their passion into action on the street. Hence, Dahlgren (2009) also claims that we live in a highly mediated society and that the media bears some responsibility for our political participation. When citizens utilize the internet for political reasons, the media can sometimes assist not only engagement but also participation.

“Rebellion expresses a demand, a rejection of the world's injustice” (Rosanvallon, 2008:160). In the wake of the announcement of convention withdrawal notifications, there has been a surge of protests both online and offline. Numerous NGOs, of varying sizes, have organized street protests throughout the country. A striking aspect of these protests is the high level of participation both online and offline, which has been fueled primarily by Twitter.

*“We are **determined to be on the streets**, to take back our rights, and to enforce the contract!” (01.04.2021)*

This tweet reflects a strong resolve to mobilize and reclaim rights through physical demonstration, demonstrating a robust sense of civic agency and assertiveness. Also, it highlights a willingness to take action when faced with perceived injustices or neglect of obligations. To actualize civic agency through engagement, there needs to be a connection to practical activities that enable citizens to feel empowered and become involved in meaningful participation (Dahlgren, 2009:80-81).

Political engagement is often driven by a sense of political efficacy - the belief that one's actions can make a difference in the political process. In order to politically involve people, they must care about an issue, they must have hope that some progress can be made. The motivation of a desire for a better world is thus crucial to the ability to challenge existing political arrangements and politics (Hall, 2005:215-216 cited in Dahlgren, 2009:85).

*“We are meeting today at 19:00 in front of **Şişli** Cevahir Shopping Mall to say “The Istanbul Convention is Ours”. We are on the streets until the contract is implemented!” (30.03.2021)*

*“Our protests will continue until we get our rights... Today we shouted from our #Etimesgut and #**Sincan districts**.” (05.04.2021)*

Through tweets like these, people can share the locations and times of physical protest, and they can express their solidarity to draw attention to the withdrawal. ‘Şişli’ is a district in Istanbul, ‘Sincan’ district is in Ankara. In the data, I found various different locations where people have been able to mobilize and protest on the street (See Appendix B). It clearly illustrates that under the same hashtag, citizens mobilized and took collective action through social media. Therefore, civic engagement on Twitter is multifaceted and enables them to mobilize and create civic agency on Twitter to overcome censorship (Bennett

& Segerberg, 2012; Castells, 2015; Tufekci, 2017). One notable aspect is the utilization of various hashtags to facilitate the organization of physical protests. Given the occurrence of numerous demonstrations across different parts of Turkey at different points in time, the use of the *#Sincan* hashtag in this tweet served to unite individuals residing in that area for the purpose of protesting. The internet gives expression to public opinion in an immediately perceptible, almost physical form (Rosanvallon, 2008:67-68).

*“We weren't going to give up our lives with the signature of 'one man.' Today in Taksim Tunnel Square, women who came together saying #İstanbulSözleşmesiYaşatır” (01.07.2021)*

*‘Taksim Square’* is a common meetup location and popular gathering destination for street protests in Istanbul. The tweet also draws attention to the fact that the decision to withdraw from the convention should not be made by one person alone but rather be subject to democratic processes and public debate. Moreover, the use of hashtags such as *#İstanbulSözleşmesiYaşatır* has been a powerful way for protesters to convey their message and raise awareness about the importance of the convention. Protesters are able to connect with a broader audience on social media and demonstrate their solidarity with women's rights activists nationwide and globally who are fighting for similar causes. Antonakis-Nashif (2015) argues that hashtags can make the invisible visible. Also, it is important to highlight here that the hashtag has not been limited to social media but has also been used as a slogan by protesters on the street which is the mechanism for connective action from online to offline (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). By using the slogan as a chant or on banners, the protesters are emphasizing the importance of the convention and its potential impact on women's lives in Turkey (see Appendix B).

Another highlight of online-offline engagement is how offline affects online expression and solidarity, even if they were not in the physical protest. For Turkish citizens to see protests from a distance, these stories maintain a *feeling of being there*, which helps them to feel connected. This is related to how stories are told and shared through the media. Ultimately, looking at the stories told with or in media permits us to come full circle and return to questions of impact, and this proves beyond simplistic and linear relationships (Papacharissi, 2014:32).

*“Looking at similar photos and **videos shared since yesterday**, the rhythm of my heart has changed, I am very hopeful, I looked at you all with so much love, and I love you all so much.” (02.07.2021)*

This emotional online movement's transformation of emotion into action is the turning point of mobilization and collective action. Emotions that are most relevant to social mobilization and political behavior are fear, (negative) and enthusiasm (positive) (Castells, 2015:14). Hope and enthusiasm are two positive emotions for mobilizing and goal-seeking actions that foster strong ties with the public. Another tweet shows how powerful emotions and motivation are in this collective action.

*“We will be **on the streets on July 1st** for each other, for breathing, for the withdrawal of the annulment of the Istanbul Convention, which is one of our guarantees against abuse, violence, and inequality, and for the implementation of the Convention.” (30.06.2021)*

One example of the motivation in this tweet implies that the demonstration is taking place in an effort to defend women's rights and stop gender-based violence. Furthermore, the reference to "breathing" is a symbolic gesture toward the idea of freedom and human rights. Also, using this kind of metaphor, grand emotional engagement with heartfelt and passionate writing. Bennett and Segerberg (2012) assert that social media is a more personalized platform, that enables users to customize their messages according to their individual needs and interests.

Turkish citizens emphasize the gravity of the situation and the need for collective action to protect the rights of women and marginalized communities. The Internet dramatically promotes the ability of nations to cooperate with each other (Coleman & Blumler, 2009:8).

*“I've been writing my thesis since I woke up because **tomorrow is the protest day** for the Istanbul convention, we can say that the detentions, arrests, pressures, and papers could not discourage us. We don't give up on the convention.” (30.06.2021)*

Another tweet reflects hope and a deep commitment to the cause of protecting women's rights. The reference to "detentions, arrests, pressures, and papers" also refers to the various obstacles faced by activists and supporters of the convention in Turkey, where the government has faced criticism for cracking down on dissent and limiting freedom of

expression. Despite the obstacles, the commitment to protecting women's rights remains strong among those who believe in gender equality.

The utilization of a common hashtag has played a crucial role in mobilizing individuals and facilitating their transition from online engagement to physical presence at these protests. Notably, online space can facilitate offline activity, by organizing political interventions in “real-life” places (Dahlgren, 2009:117). The critical point is that this new civic space, the networked border between the digital and urban realms, is a location of independent civic communication. The autonomy of communication is at the heart of social movements since it permits the movement to form and allows it to relate to society at large beyond the control of those who wield power over communication (Castells, 2015).

## **CONCLUSION**

The aim of this thesis was to conduct an analysis of Turkey’s withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention protests on Twitter. The Convention, while being designed as an EU-wide convention, was especially relevant for women in Turkey to offer them protection from violence. Within this analysis, I approached text-based tweets being shared under specific hashtags that protesters used called *#istanbulsözleşmesiyatır*. Analyzing the online engagement in relation to this specific protest on Twitter showed that in a country like Turkey where political authorities fail to address and protect women's rights, having a digital civic space to voice concerns and share their needs is more important than ever. The Istanbul Convention took the bleeding wound of society one step forward and paved the way for women who are fighting for rights and justice in Turkish society to express their feelings and opinions and engage with it. The protest goes beyond the case itself and questions government democratic deliberation and justice in the system in society.

The rise of digital networks and social media platforms has greatly impacted the landscape of social and political activism (Tufekci, 2017; Castells, 2015), particularly in countries where democratic processes face substantial challenges. The efficacy of "hashtag activism" in facilitating offline mobilization, generating consciousness, and maintaining the sustainability and prominence of social movements has been convincingly demonstrated in the case of the Istanbul Convention hashtag protest.

In the following, I will return to the initial research questions that I posed in the beginning and relate them to the findings of my analysis. Finally, the conclusion mark will touch upon further research ideas and contributions.

### **How do Turkish citizens engage with the withdrawal of the Istanbul Convention on Twitter to fight for women's rights?**

This study shows that citizens' engagement was affective and emotional (Castells, 2015; Dahlgren, 2009; Papacharissi, 2014) and sheds light on their experiences, feelings, solidarity, and challenges in Turkish society. This efficiency and emotion were inextricably linked to their social experiences and struggles. It shows how this engagement raised awareness and made the invisible visible. Also, it increased the plurality of voices. Most importantly, this online space assisted them in creating a civic space where citizens could connect and share.

This intense engagement varies from citizen to citizen. Gender inequality and patriarchal structures (Walby, 1990), for example, limit women's representation and voice in a variety of contexts, including domestic life, relationships, and political representation. Some of them emphasize the importance of solidarity, which brought women together despite their circumstances to share a common concern and goal. The protest demonstrated the significance of identity formation and belonging in shaping political activism. Individuals with similar beliefs and concerns frequently form a sense of community and solidarity, as Dahlgren (2009) states, this sense of civic culture provides emotional support and motivation to fight for their democratic rights. This sense of belonging allowed them to connect which led them to collective action (Bennett and Segerberg, 2012).

A highlight of the protest was shedding light on the justice system's shortcomings in dealing with gender-based violence and harassment. The lack of adequate justice systems is a major criticism of the protests, this distrust (Rosanvallon, 2008) and democracy deficit (Norris, 2011) have forced them to look for alternative forms of advocacy and resistance, especially given how frequently the government censors or controls traditional media. Twitter has provided a platform for citizens to share their stories and raise awareness about their struggles, but it has also highlighted the need for legal reforms to protect women's rights. Another noteworthy and surprising insight is how some of them used this activist media as a news channel, particularly in cases that had gone unnoticed by the mainstream media; they frequently shared the details of the case as well as how the justice system did not favor

women but protected predators. As mentioned earlier journalism and journalists also have challenges in Turkey where they are censored and lacking to report transparent news. As a result, this fight for women's rights on Twitter created civic space for them to enhance and participate in democracy.

### **How does their engagement create civic space for democracy and challenge political authority in Turkey?**

One of the main reasons for the protest was criticism of the government about the Istanbul Convention withdrawal. However, the protest was beyond only one issue that citizens were having. Their engagement created a civic space (Dahlgren, 2009) for them to share and connect beyond. This civic space enabled them to bring up different issues to light. The criticism of the government brought up various topics and challenged the political authority.

The citizens expressed outrage at the government's failure to preserve democracy, limit citizen participation in decision-making, and protect individual rights and freedoms. There is also criticism of President Erdoğan's increasing authoritarianism and consolidation of power and the withdrawal from a convention that provided more rights for women and protections against violence. Some of them highlight the importance of citizen engagement and connective action in maintaining a functioning democracy and demand justice and accountability from the government. This oversight helped the counter-power to ensure a deliberation process taking place (Rosanvallon, 2008).

The citizens' attention was also drawn to the threat to Turkey's freedom of speech posed by various censorship measures, such as restrictions on access to social media and legal action against those who express disapproval. In a democratic society, it is important for people to be able to exercise their right to free speech, assembly, and publication. Turkish citizens continue to express their opinions on the networked public sphere (Tufekci, 2017) like Twitter, which acts as an alternative to traditional media, despite the country's severe restrictions on free speech. The media's role in a democracy is to serve as a watchdog and ensure that democratic values are upheld. Where such a function faces obstacles, an alternative mode of communication emerges, in this case, Twitter has been placed as a watchdog. Another highlight points out that threats to freedom of speech are direct threats to democracy.



The pursuit of justice in Turkey, particularly in relation to the alleged shortcomings of the legal system and the degradation of democratic values and procedures, is the overarching theme that Turkish citizens tweeted about and is presented in the text. The citizens address problems like the imbalance between the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government, governmental control over the legal system, public mistrust of the legal system, Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, the inadequate severity of offenders' punishments, the government's decreasing responsiveness, and the demand for greater democratic participation and accountability. In general, Turkish citizens exhibit a sense of urgency, a frustration with the way things are now, and a desire for improvement. They want to be heard, they want to be valued in society.

Moreover, it demonstrated how social media, particularly Twitter, had a significant impact on mobilizing and fostering civic agency in Turkey in relation to the country's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention. Social media helped to coordinate actual protests, facilitate the development of hashtags that brought people together for a common cause, and amplify voices to foster a sense of community around common causes. The analysis also emphasizes how crucial emotions are to inspiring and energizing collective action.

Finally, the study highlights the role of social media in shaping political activism and identity formation among citizens in Turkey. It also underscores the inadequacies of the justice system in addressing gender-based violence and harassment, which has led to alternative forms of advocacy and resistance. These findings have important implications for policymakers, activists, and scholars who seek to promote gender equality and political participation. These networked civic spheres help citizens to overcome censorship, bring out the light of the invisible, and be the voice of the underrepresented.

Furthermore, the *#istanbulsözleşmesiyaşatır* protest has had a notable impact on political authority by taking into account, the statements made by the main opposition party, the Republican People's Party (CHP), and its chairman, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu. Kılıçdaroğlu, who is also a presidential candidate in the ongoing election, declared in an interview: "I have a promise to this nation. When we come to power, it will be with the permission of God, and the appreciation of the people. We will put the Istanbul Convention into effect within the first week, even within 24 hours" (Yazıcıoğlu, 2022). This statement indicates the influence that counter-power can wield over those in positions of authority. It is worth noting that while I am finishing my thesis, an election campaign is going on in Turkey on May 14th, 2023, with

citizens, particularly women, holding high hopes for a change in the political system after 22 years of the AKP's rule.

In conclusion, though, as I mentioned earlier, civic engagement (Dahlgren, 2009) and counter-democracy concepts (Rosanvallon, 2008) are primarily focused on Western democracies. However, the underlying dynamics of counter-democracy can apply to other contexts as well. Rosanvallon's theory of counter-democracy refers to the various mechanisms and practices that exist outside of formal democratic institutions. This non-formal counter-power can be an effective process in countries like Turkey when citizens need an effective civic space to challenge dysfunctioning democracy and political authority. If democracy functions well without any problems, counter-power will not be as visible as it is in Turkey. That being said, this oversight of the state is highly crucial in Turkey, especially when civic spaces are getting smaller due to censorship. In this part, I would like to bring up social media, especially Twitter in Turkey, where it functions as a free civic space to practice oversight and permit democracy's core feature - public deliberation. Nonetheless, the idea of counter-democracy as a challenge to democratic governance could potentially apply in a wide range of Non-Western contexts.

This research endeavored to comprehensively analyze the *#istanbulsozlemsiyasatir* movement, which has not received sufficient attention in academic and media circles. By shedding more light on the struggles faced by Turkish citizens in society, this study seeks to make a meaningful contribution to the discourse surrounding this ongoing issue. Especially contribution to the pieces of literature on civic engagement through Twitter and democratic theories such as deliberative democracy and counter-democracy applying to the democratic challenging country like Turkey.

Despite the lack of mainstream media coverage, the hashtag remains active, with citizens using it to draw attention to their plight. It is also important to highlight that Turkey is not the only country with a major concern regarding the Istanbul Convention. One of the EU member countries - Hungary, did not ratify at all and, similarly, Poland took steps to withdraw from the Convention (Çali, 2021). Consequently, this also brings up the question of how counter-democracy is important for countries that have struggled to deliver deliberative democracy to citizens.

Last but not least, for further research, to better understand online activism related to women's rights issues and civic engagement, it would be beneficial to take the research one step forward and conduct cross-country comparisons. For example, a comparison of the impact of digital activism in democratic versus authoritarian contexts. This could help to identify potential best practices or strategies for maximizing the impact of online activism. Additionally, exploring the impact of cultural differences on emotional social movements could provide valuable insights into how different cultural norms and values impact the ways in which citizens engage with online activism.

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## APPENDIX A

### Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention)

“Article 1 – Purposes of the Convention

**1** The purposes of this Convention are to:

**a** protect women against all forms of violence, and prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence against women and domestic violence;

**b** contribute to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and promote substantive equality between women and men, including by empowering women;

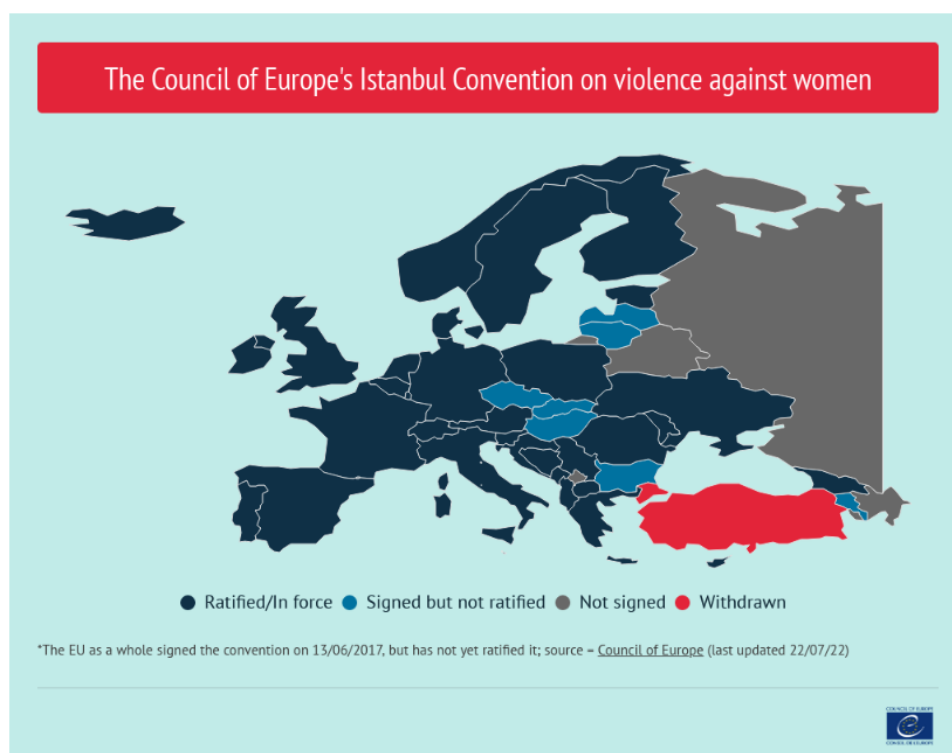
**c** design a comprehensive framework, policies and measures for the protection of and assistance to all victims of violence against women and domestic violence;

**d** promote international co-operation with a view to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence;

**e** provide support and assistance to organisations and law enforcement agencies to effectively co-operate in order to adopt an integrated approach to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence.

**2** In order to ensure effective implementation of its provisions by the Parties, this Convention establishes a specific monitoring mechanism.”

(COE, 2021) see full scope: <https://rm.coe.int/168008482e> [Accessed 12 May 2023]



*Screenshot of Istanbul Convention country scope (COE, 2022)*

reference: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/text-of-the-convention> [Accessed 12 May 2023]

## Step-by-Step Sampling Data and Coding Progress

### Sampling Data

Here I will be walking through the sampling and coding progress. The data was downloaded with the specific date and just focused on the main post excluding retweets and comments. As I mentioned earlier hashtags have been used for unrelated topics. That's why strategic sampling was necessary. As an example here hashtags have been used for promoting different channels.

A	B
10/04/2021, 23:15:29	arkadaşımın başına böyle bir şey gelmesi... YARIN BİR GÜN SİZİN, SİZİN ÇEVRENİZİN BAŞINA GELEBİLİR #azizseyitutuklansin #istanbulsozlesmesiyasatir <a href="https://t.co/rLlySpJFik">https://t.co/rLlySpJFik</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/muhendisyenn/status/1380916537259855873">https://twitter.com/muhendisyenn/status/1380916537259855873</a>
10/04/2021, 23:11:06	İnsan gibi ya, sokakta yürümek tacize uğrayacak mıym diye korkmadan evimden çıkıp evime yürümek istiyorum ya, bu andaval ruhların arasında birazcık nefes almak istiyorum artık. #istanbulsozlesmesiyasatir
10/04/2021, 23:11:04	Ben bu videoyu her izlediğimde ordaki kız kardeşimle aynı şeyleri yaşıyorum. Ülkede kendimi güvende istemiyorum. ARTIK BANA YAKIN OLAN ERKEKLERİN BEN SENİ BIRAKAYIM DEMESİNİ DE İSTEMİYORUM SADECE İNSAN GİBİ YAŞAMAK İSTİYORUM AŞIRI YORULDUM ARTIK #istanbulsozlesmesiyasatir
10/04/2021, 23:04:33	O kadının korkmamasını kim geri sağlayacak? Nasıl artık rahat gezebileceğ ya da o an oluşan psikolojik travmasını nasıl atlatacak? #CihangirSapığıTutuklansin #istanbulSozlesmesindenVazgecmiyoruz ! #istanbulSozlesmesiYasatir #istanbulSozlesmesiBizim <a href="https://t.co/nxpa5F5UBn">https://t.co/nxpa5F5UBn</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/solcugazete/status/1380637644015726595">https://twitter.com/solcugazete/status/1380637644015726595</a>
10/04/2021, 22:49:37	#istanbulsozlesmesiyasatir <a href="https://t.co/PRUr2p5xgl">https://t.co/PRUr2p5xgl</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/solcugazete/status/1380637644015726595">https://twitter.com/solcugazete/status/1380637644015726595</a>
10/04/2021, 22:16:15	#istanbulSözleşmesiBizim #istanbulSözleşmesiYaşatir 🙏💜 <a href="https://t.co/L5TmyvVnN2">https://t.co/L5TmyvVnN2</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/kadinkoalisyonu/status/1380988835211976707">https://twitter.com/kadinkoalisyonu/status/1380988835211976707</a>
10/04/2021, 22:14:56	#Netflix #movie #Bitcoin #ETH #sinema #teskilat #anime #MenajerimiAra #masumiyet #friends #Sadakatsiz #NetflixTurkiye #istanbulSözleşmesi #istanbulsozlesmesiyasatir #Holocoïn #Holochain #BitTorrent <a href="https://t.co/1pFjhQYUQO">https://t.co/1pFjhQYUQO</a>
10/04/2021, 22:03:09	Bu ülkede hiç tanımadığın bir insanın sadece canı istediği için seni öldürme hakkına sahip olduğunu düşünmesi bile korkunçken, biz bu aqmun ülkesinde her gün bu düşüncelerin gerçekleşmiş hallerini görüyoruz. Etimle kemiğimle nefret ediyorum. #istanbulsozlesmesiyasatir
10/04/2021, 22:02:10	#istanbulSözleşmesiYaşatir <a href="https://t.co/pDzX34yu7J">https://t.co/pDzX34yu7J</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/lemandergisi/status/1380932110798716930">https://twitter.com/lemandergisi/status/1380932110798716930</a> Bu kadar mı güzel anlatılır 🙌🙌 Bayıldık 💜👉👉 @lemandergisi 💜 Anlat dedem 🙌🙌

*Screenshot from the raw database*

After that, I filtered out unrelated data manually and quality sample data was ready for coding.

02/07/2021	Ne hukuk takları, Ne de oldu bittiler bizi yıldıramaz. Kadınların mücadelesi benim mücadelemdir.  Kadınların mücadelesi İyi Parti'nin mücadelesidir.  Bu mücadeleden asla vazgeçmeyeceğiz... Sonuna kadar #İstanbulSözleşmesiYaşatır diyeceğiz...
02/07/2021	#AkşenerHaberTürkte 🇹🇷🔥 <a href="https://t.co/uGWejxV75d">https://t.co/uGWejxV75d</a>
02/07/2021	İnancımız, hincımız, kararlılığımız ve mücadelemiz sizden korkmadığımızın, size itaat etmediğimiz en büyük kanıtı olsun!!! #İstanbulSözleşmesiYaşatır
02/07/2021	#İstanbulSözleşmesiYaşatır <a href="https://t.co/B14ySboQ2b">https://t.co/B14ySboQ2b</a>
02/07/2021	İstanbul Sözleşmesinin feshiyle kadına şiddet ve tehditler cinayete dönüşmediği sürece polis tarafından korunamayacak #İstanbulSözleşmesiYaşatır
02/07/2021	Halkın %52'si İstanbul Sözleşmesinin feshedilmesini onaylamazken neden feshedildi? Zaten yürürlükteyken de uygulanmadığı için mi kaldırıldı? Cumhurbaşkanı temel hak ve özgürlükler hakkında karar çıkarmazken neden İstanbul Sözleşmesi feshedildi? #İstanbulSözleşmesiYaşatır
02/07/2021	Faillerin kafasını, sırtını okşadığınızı görmekten midem kalktı.  Aile sözcüğünün arkasına saklanamayacaksınız. Korunması gereken aile değil.
02/07/2021	#İstanbulSözleşmesiYaşatır #İstanbulSözleşmesindenvazgeçmiyoruz <a href="https://t.co/Huv2jtyR">https://t.co/Huv2jtyR</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/evrenbarışyavuz/status/1410485313726734336">https://twitter.com/evrenbarışyavuz/status/1410485313726734336</a>
02/07/2021	Kadın cinayetlerinin AKlandı. Çocuk istismarlarının korunduğu bir kereden bir şey olmaz denilen zihniyette serbest kalan zanlıların AKlandı Ülkemde.  SAVCISI HAKIMI Cübbelerini saraya teslim etmiştir.  #İstanbulSözleşmesiYaşatır
02/07/2021	#İstanbulSözleşmesiYaşatır <a href="https://t.co/1QWwmlcNFU">https://t.co/1QWwmlcNFU</a>
02/07/2021	Hem İstanbul Sözleşmesini feshedip hem de ekranda kadın cinayetleri dursun diye çalışmalar yapıyoruz diyolar bu ne yaman çelişki #İstanbulSözleşmesiYaşatır
02/07/2021	Artık bir şey mi yaparsanız hani elektronik kelepçe falan çözüm değil sonuçta bir kadının daha hayatı tehlikede #İstanbulSözleşmesiYaşatır <a href="https://t.co/1CrpapejuH">https://t.co/1CrpapejuH</a>
02/07/2021	Bu ülkede, polis kendi kurduğu barikatını yıkıp yine kendi halkını -kadınlarını- linç etmek için koşturdu. #İstanbulSözleşmesiYaşatır #İstanbulSözleşmesiYaşatır
02/07/2021	Kadına şiddete dur demiyor, gelde inan. İstanbul sözleşmesi protestosunda kadınlara şiddetle baktık. #neyapalım mı her seferinde daha yüksek sesle #İstanbulSözleşmesiYaşatır diyelim
02/07/2021	Taksimde kendi parikatını yıkıp ülkemizin kadınlarına düşmana koşar gibi koğan polisler meslekleriyle gurur duyuyor musunuz sadece bir merak... #İstanbulSözleşmesiYaşatır #İstanbulSözleşmesiYaşatır #neyapalım
02/07/2021	Erdoğan istediği kadar kısın İstanbul sözleşmesinden, kadınlar çıkmıyor. Ayrıca İstanbul sözleşmesinden çıkarlar İstanbul'dan da çıkacaktır!  #İstanbulSözleşmesiYaşatır

*Screenshot from after manual sample database*

## Coding Progress

After preparing the final sample data I switched to NVivo for the first round of open coding. NVivo was very useful seeing all the codes all at once and moving them around and creating categories. Also, I was able to get a general idea of what they are talking about most with the NVivo *word frequency query* feature. When I saw some of the codes emerging again and again I started to make categories simultaneously. After completing the first round of open coding, I made the first categorization and themes.

VO++  
ts.nvpx (Edited)

Home Edit Import Create Explore Share Modules Log In

Clipboard Item Organize Visualize Code Autocode Uncode Code In Vivo Spread Coding Case Classification File Classification Workspace

PORT  
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Files  
File Classifications  
Externals

GANIZE  
Coding  
Codes  
Cases  
Notes  
Sets

PLORE  
Queries  
Visualizations

Name  
Final Sample...  
Final Sample Data  
Selection Mode T Zoom 100% Recognize Text

02/07/2021	Kadına şiddete dur demişler, gelde inan. İstanbul sözleşmesi protestosunda kadınlara şiddeti gördük. #neyapalım mı her seferinde daha yüksek sesle #istanbulsozlesmesiyasatir diyelim
02/07/2021	Taksimde kendi parikatını yıkıp ülkemizin kadınlara düşmana koşar gibi koşan polisler mesleklerinize gurur duyuyorum musunuz sadece bir merak...#istanbulsozlesmesihemimizin #istanbulsozlesmesiyasatir #neyapalım Erdogan istediği kadar çıksın İstanbul sözleşmesinden, kadınlar çıkmıyor. Ayrıca İstanbul sözleşmesinden çıkanlar İstanbul'dan da çıkacaktır! #İstanbulSözleşmesiYaşatır "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, Başbakan Erdoğan'ın imzaladığı sözleşmeyi iptal etti..." #İstanbulSözleşmesiYaşatır
02/07/2021	Türkiye'deki mücadele eden yoldaşlarımız için yaptığımız eylem ve bir kaç dayanışma sözü #istanbulsozlesmesiyasatir #istanbulsozlesmesinden vazgeçmiyoruz <a href="https://t.co/Qfcek1Wizg">https://t.co/Qfcek1Wizg</a> <a href="https://t.co/6pwHfw4sAZ">https://t.co/6pwHfw4sAZ</a> <a href="https://sykproquat.noblogs.org/post/2021/07/02/%cf84urkiyedeki-mucadele-eden-yoldaşlarımız-icin-yaptigimiz-eylem-ve-bir-kac-dayanisma-sozu/">https://sykproquat.noblogs.org/post/2021/07/02/%cf84urkiyedeki-mucadele-eden-yoldaşlarımız-icin-yaptigimiz-eylem-ve-bir-kac-dayanisma-sozu/</a>
02/07/2021	17 yaşındaki Ebru Erdem'in şüpheli ölümü; Tutuklu sanığa tahliye <a href="https://t.co/0cx7QN6KYD">https://t.co/0cx7QN6KYD</a>

VO++  
ts.nvpx (Edited)

Home Edit Import Create Explore Share Modules Log In

Last Run Query Text Search Word Frequency Matrix Coding Query Queries Chart Hierarchy Chart Maps Diagrams

PORT  
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File Classifications  
Externals

GANIZE  
Coding  
Codes  
Cases  
Notes  
Sets

PLORE  
Queries  
Visualizations

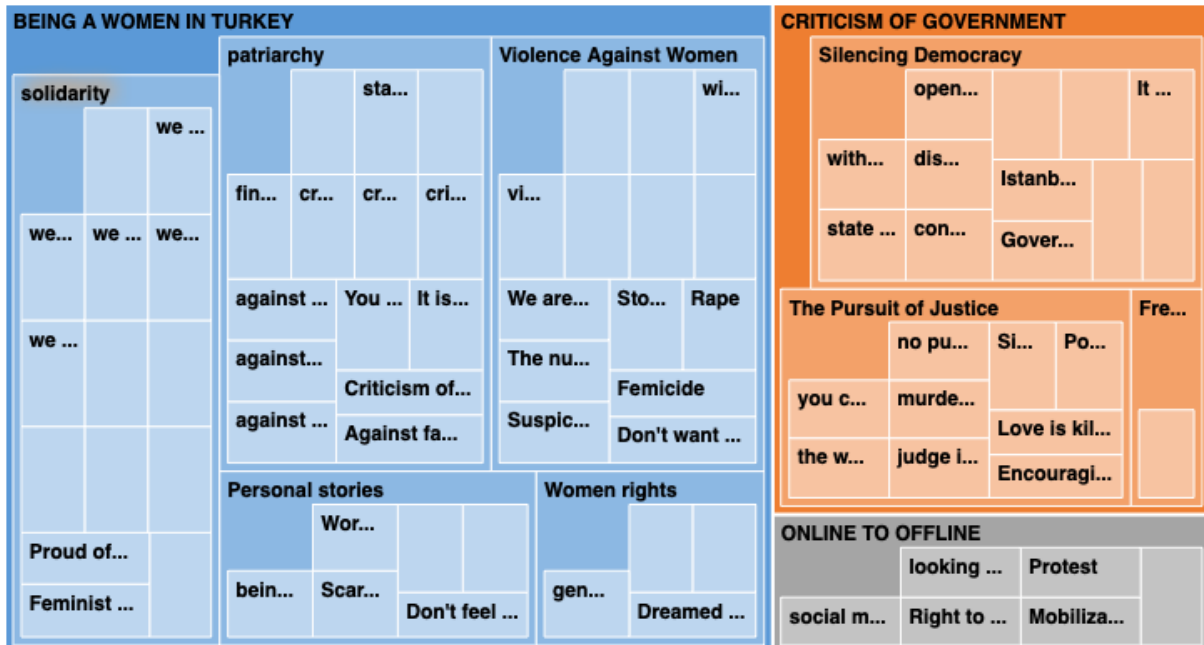
Name  
Final Sample...  
Final Sample Data  
Selection Mode T Zoom %100 Recognize Text  
Q- küçük

10/04/2021	Hepimiz güvende olana kadar hiçbirimiz güvende değiliz #istanbulsozlesmesiyasatir Unutmayınız ki Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız Platformu Kadın Meclisleri olarak İstanbul Sözleşmesi etkin uygulananana,Toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliğine son verilene kadar mücadelemize sonuna kadar devam edeceğiz. Hiçbir fesih kararını kabul etmiyoruz.
10/04/2021	#İstanbulSözleşmesiYaşatır
10/04/2021	Az önce görsel tacize uğradım şaka gibi ben neden sürekli böyle korkuyla bir yere gidiyorum yeter ben artık yoldaki erkeklerden korkmak istemiyorum ben artık arkama bakarak yürümek istemiyorum artık duyun sesimizi #istanbulsozlesmesiyasatir
10/04/2021	Alanları, meydanları boş bırakmayacağız, vazgeçmeyeceğiz demiştik. 09.04.2021/Bursa #İstanbulSözleşmesiYaşatır #karangeriçeksözleşmeyiyugula <a href="https://t.co/lJeDw7BUmW">https://t.co/lJeDw7BUmW</a>
10/04/2021	Kadına : taciz, tecavüz, şiddet, cinayet. Biktik usandık bu vahşet bitsin artık. Lanet olsun böyle insanlara !!! #İstanbulsozlesmesiyasatir
10/04/2021	İstanbul Sözleşmesini de diğer bütün kazanımlarımızı da sokaklarda mücadele ile kazandı, sokaklarda mücadele ile savunacağız. Bankatlarınıza kadınlara değil katillere kurun. #İstanbulSözleşmesiYaşatır @dersimdag21 @TJAMerkez @HDPAMED21 <a href="https://t.co/dUpQHxYk6F">https://t.co/dUpQHxYk6F</a>
10/04/2021	"Sokakta öpüşüyorlar rahatsız oluyoruz" Hetero bireyler olarak bizde yapıyoruz bunu, heterolukta mı yasaklansın o zaman...

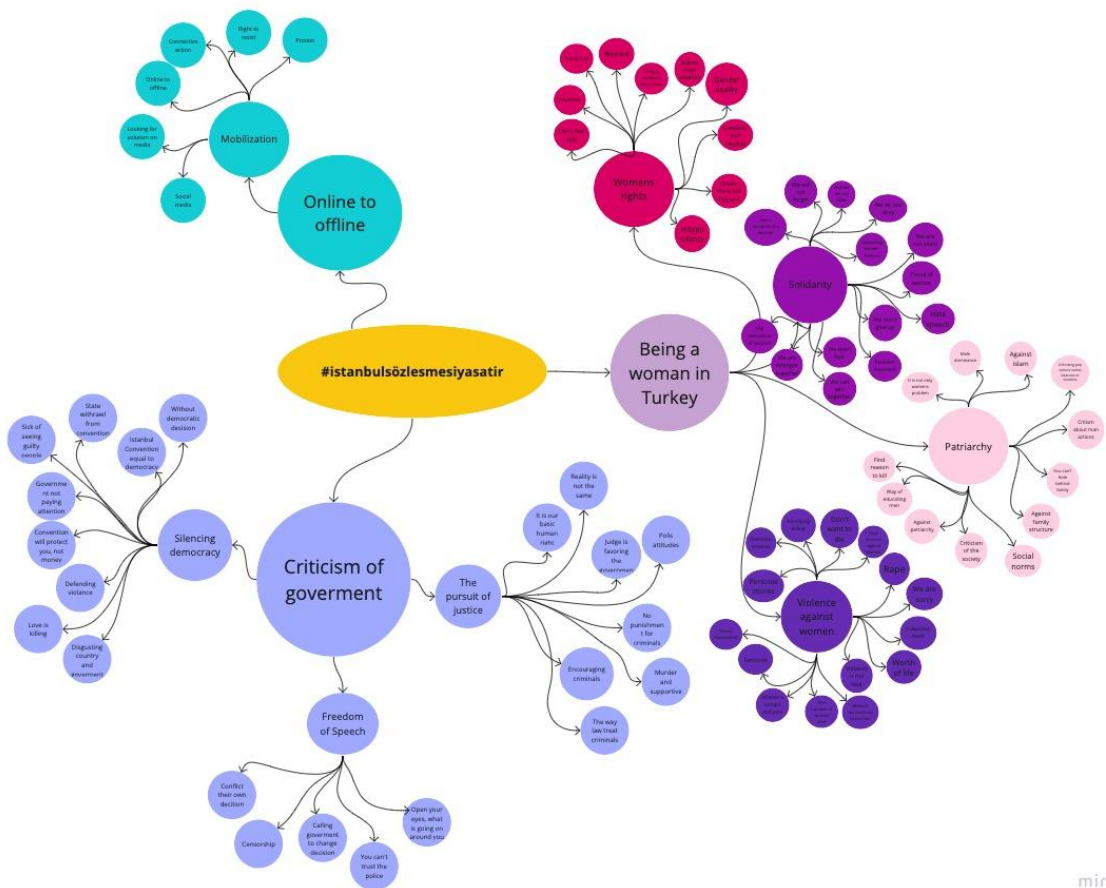
Screenshot from NVivo: Open coding



Screenshot from NVivo: Word Frequency Query



Screenshot from NVivo: Most coded code hierarchy



Screenshot from the mind map

mirr



After the Nvivo coding process, I made a code book in Excel to see the full picture of the codes.

THEMES	CATEGORIES	SUB-CATEGORIES	DESCRIPTIVE CODES	Example Tweets
Criticism of the Government	Justice	Justice system transparency	Encouraging Criminals, murderer and supportive, murderer and supportive, no punishment for criminals, you can't negotiate our life, we want out right	'In this country, one day our name appears on the Twitter timeline, and our murderer is <b>taken into custody but not arrested</b> , and you <b>look for our justice on social media</b> , but you cannot find it. We want to be valued. We want to go out and live at night without any problems." (05.04.2021)
		judge is favoring the government	Polis attitudes, Sick of to see guilty people protected, you can't trust even the police, looking for justice on twitter,	
	Democracy	Distrust	discuting country and government, conflict their own decisions, defending violenc, you can't trust the government,	In this country, it is horrible to think that a person you don't even know has the right to kill you just because he wants to, but we see these thoughts <b>come true every day in this fucking country</b> . I hate it with my flesh and bones. (10.04.2021)
		Accountability	it is our basic life, Istanbul convention equal to democracy, Government not paying attention, without democratic decision, Turkey sets the clock back 10 years on women's rights	'Why was the Istanbul Convention revoked <b>when 52% of the public disapproved of its revocation</b> ? Was it revoked because it was already in force but was not implemented? You expect someone who says women and men are not equal to say #istanbulsözlesmesiyasatur ... We are in revolt on July 1st" (30.06.2021)
		Authoritarian regime	one man decisions, without public opinion, there is no state, women's enemies, dictatorship, silencing minorities, we want democracy,	'We will not leave the Istanbul Convention, which we have been fighting for more than a decade for its enforcement, Law No. 6284, which was opened to discussion after the Convention, and our lives to the decision, <b>mercy and conscience of a single man</b> ' (02.07.2021)
	Freedom of speech	Censorship	jailing the people for their opinion, limiting opposition voice, internet censorship, mass media censorship, mass media favor to government,	'Imagine a nation that knows that if it <b>opens its mouth, it will go to jail</b> , keeps quiet, and knows that those who rape, murder women, and torture animals will not go to jail and are not afraid, what kind of irony is this, we are really fed up!!!' (02.07.2021)

Being a woman in Turkey	Violence Against Women	Femicide, Sexual harrasment Abuse, Domestic violence	domestic violence, rape, don't want to die, violence is not love, dream life is not this one, suspicious death, personal stories, right to live, we want to live without fear, protection, worried, anger, emotions	'Every time when I enter this app, I'm tired of seeing a <b>new femicide, a new harassment, a new rape</b> , arrest the asshole. Whenever enter I say "What happened to who this time? ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!!! #Arrest Alihan the Pervert" (04.04.2021)
	Gender inequality / Patriarchy	Social norms, Family Structure, Religion	against convention, against Islam, You can't hide behind family, way of educating the man, criticism of women, It is not only women's problem, male dominance, criticizing pop culture series because of violence, gender inequality, way of education men, toxic masculinity	'We will destroy your <b>masculine order</b> . Enough is enough! # Rebellion on 1 July #We will not give up" (01.07.2021)
	Solidarity	We are stong together	hate speech, The resistance of women, Proud of with the women, together, we can win together, We will not forget, We don't give up	'Women who <b>share each other's pain</b> without knowing each other 💜 #you will never walk alone 🍷💜💜 I feel stronger when I see this crowd. 🍷🍷💜💜💜 #We are not giving up" (02.07.2021)
Online to Offline action	Mobilization	Collective action	Right to resist, street is liberating, hanging poster to workplace, meeting points	'We <b>shouted once again from Amed Street</b> , we are not giving up on our rights yesterday, today, tomorrow, or any of our rights." (10.04.2021)
		Connective action	using hashatag as slogan on the street, sharing location for the protest, sharing form for signature against decision, online to offline	'We are not giving up our gains and rights! We will be in the streets again tomorrow. Thursday, April 1st <b>Let's meet at 17:30 at the Clock Tower</b> 🍷 #ReverseDecision" (31.03.2021)

*Screenshot from the code book*

## APPENDIX B

### Figures



*Figure 1: İstanbul Sözleşmesi Yaşatır banner from protest*



*Figure 2: Police barricade from protest*



*Figure 3: Protest in Istanbul Taksim Square*



*Figure 4: Protest in Istanbul Taksim Square*



*Figure 5: Social media profile picture frame*