



KADIR HAS UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES

**CONCEPTUALIZATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA LYNCHING
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF YOUTH IN TURKEY**

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SUPERVISOR: ASST. PROF. İREM İNCEOĞLU

MASTER'S DEGREE THESIS

ISTANBUL, JULY, 2021

Büşra Sağlam

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ISTANBUL, JULY, 2021

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This study, titled **CONCEPTUALIZATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA LYNCHING FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF YOUTH IN TURKEY**, prepared by the **BÜŞRA SAĞLAM**, was deemed successful with the **UNANIMOUS** as a result of the thesis defense examination held on the **30th of July 2021** and approved as a **MASTER'S DEGREE THESIS** by our jury.

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APPROVAL DATE: Day/Month/Year

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LIST of ABBREVIATIONS

- ADN: Adana
AKP: Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi
ANK: Ankara
COVID-19: Coronavirus Disease of 2019
DHA: Discourse-Historical Analysis
DYB: Diyarbakır
ERZ: Erzurum
FG: Focus Group
HDP: Halkların Demokratik Partisi
IST: İstanbul
IZM: İzmir
LGBTI+: Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Intersex
Ph.D.: Doctor of Philosophy
Pos.: Position
SM-CDS: Social Media Critical Discourse Studies
SOBAG: Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Araştırma Destek Grubu
TRB: Trabzon
TÜBİTAK: Türkiye Bilimsel ve Teknolojik Araştırma Kurumu

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA LYNCHING FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF YOUTH IN TURKEY

ABSTRACT

Though it is a recent social phenomenon, social media lynching is a prevalent social media practice. It is possible to encounter a lynching incident on social media almost on a daily basis. Almost every day, some people claim that they have been lynched on social media. Yet, it is not definite what these people really mean by being lynched on social media. In this sense, this thesis tries to shed light on social media lynching and aims to conceptualize it. While doing that, it reflects on how young adults between the ages of 18 and 30 in Turkey respond to the phenomenon as they are the age group that is exposed to social media lynching the most, as well as having the potential of being a lyncher. Considering the time they spend on social media, the thesis analyzes the results of in-depth interviews with 183 young adults and a focus group conducted with four of them. Besides, it also studies the case of MasterChef Türkiye lynching since it was one of the most commented-on lynching cases among the participants due to the time period that the case took place. Accordingly, social media lynching is conceptualized as a collective form of violence with individual liability, that is unorganized, spontaneous, and non-permanent; that occurs on social media because of any alleged offense; that takes place online or offline; takes its power from visibility and anonymity features of social media. Moreover, it is affected by the social polarization in society, and it can be used as a tool of power struggle and social control by the lynchers, which potentially causes the spread of the spiral of silence among users. Considering the limited number of studies both on lynchings and social media lynchings, this thesis intends to fill the gap in the existing literature.

Keywords: lynch, social media, social media lynching, collective violence, social polarization, visibility, anonymity, MasterChef Türkiye

TÜRKİYE'DEKİ GENÇLERİN GÖZÜNDEN SOSYAL MEDYA LİNÇLERİNİN KAVRAMSALLAŞTIRILMASI

ÖZET

Oldukça yeni bir fenomen olmasına rağmen sosyal medya linçleri oldukça yaygın bir hal almış durumdadır. Hemen hemen her gün birileri sosyal medyada linç edildiğini iddia etmekte, ancak linç edilmek ile neyin kastedildiği belli olmamaktadır. Bu anlamda bu tez, sosyal medya linçi mefhumuna ışık tutulmasını ve bu yeni fenomenin kavramsallaştırılmasını amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaçla bu tezde sosyal medyada geçirdikleri vakit göz önünde bulundurulduğunda linçe maruz kalma ve bir linç eden olma potansiyelini en çok taşıyan 183 genç yetişkinle yapılan derinlemesine mülakatların ve bu gençler arasından dördü ile gerçekleştirilen odak grup çalışmasının sonuçları analiz edilmektedir. Yanı sıra, görüşmelerin gerçekleştirildiği dönemde gerçekleşmiş olması sebebiyle katılımcılar arasında üzerine en çok yorum yapılan vaka olarak MasterChef Türkiye linçi ele alınmaktadır. Buna göre sosyal medya linçi online veya offline ortamlarda gerçekleşen bir suç nedeniyle bireyin anlık, organize olmayan ve geçici bir süreliğine kolektif biçimde şiddete maruz kalması olarak kavramsallaştırılmıştır. Ayrıca sosyal medya linçleri toplumdaki kutuplaşmadan doğrudan etkilenmekle birlikte linç edenler tarafından iktidar savaşı ve sosyal kontrol amacıyla da kullanılabilmekte ve kullanıcılar arasında sessizlik sarmalının yayılmasına neden olabilmektedir. Linç ve sosyal medya linçi üzerine yapılan çalışmaların kısıtlı sayıda olduğu göz önünde bulundurularak bu çalışmanın literatürde önemli bir boşluğu doldurduğu düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Linç, Sosyal medya, Sosyal medya linçi, Kolektif şiddet, Sosyal kutuplaşma, Görünürlük, Anonimlik, MasterChef Türkiye

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DEDICATION



To My Dearest Family...

1. INTRODUCTION

While generating new practices distinctive to itself, the Internet, and especially social media, has also transformed many other practices that already exist before it. It has created new forms for these practices by combining them with its own dynamics. Lynching, at this point, is one of these practices that takes on a new meaning by adding the words “digital”, “online”, or “social media” before it. In recent years, it has been a way of collective reaction for the masses on various social media platforms. Though it is not a phenomenon specific to Turkey, Turkey is one of the countries that social media lynchings often occur and occupy the agenda.

While lynchings in the classical sense are defined as killing a person by a mob for an alleged crime with or without any legal trial (Lexico, 2021), lynching on social media has a different meaning. Social media lynching simply refers to the situation in which individuals are exposed to collective violence on social media platforms because of what they do, say, or post online or in offline environments. In recent years, lynching has been a considerably popular word. Yet, what is meant by lynch here is not the lynch as we know so far. Lately, when one says, “I have been lynched.”, it probably does not mean that they were assaulted by a group of people physically. Instead, they mean being lynched on the Internet. What is more, there is even a new expression used in daily language, which is “linç yemek” in Turkish, a combination of getting punched and being lynched. Though it is not in the official dictionary, especially for the digital culture, it means a lot. There are numerous terms for it: virtual lynching, digital lynching, Internet lynching, online lynching, cyber-lynching, and so on. Here, I use the term social media lynching since the lynchings that the users in Turkey refer take place, especially on social media. Besides, the term social media lynching is specific enough to bring focus onto social media, while the other most used terms, such as digital lynching, Internet lynching, online lynching, etc., are broader terms although they often mean the same actions with social media lynchings.

It is possible to see lynchings of public characters such as traditional media celebrities, politicians, journalists, influencers, as well as ordinary people on social media. In social

media lynchings, the lynch mob spontaneously shows up and resorts to collective violence for what they consider as wrongdoing. What is more, though in rare cases, these social media lynchings do not solely remain on social media but also turn into physical lynchings. Even when they only take place on social media, the impacts of the collective violence used in social media lynchings endure in the forms of distress and/or reputational loss for the victim of the lynching. The easiness of starting a lynch mob on social media makes each user and even each citizen a potential victim of social media lynch mobs. In ordinary language, it is possible to hear the term so often that it has become a part of social media jargon.

In such an atmosphere, we started our research project titled “An Investigation of New Media and Cultural Experience Practices of Youth in Turkey” in April 2019.¹ It was a research project in which the research team that I was a part of made in-depth interviews with young people around Turkey on their cultural experiences and their practices on the Internet. One of the topics that we talked about with our interviewees was lynchings. What was interesting was that even though our question on lynch culture did not directly refer to the social media lynch mobs, most of them gave answers related to social media lynch mobs. It was probably because while we were doing our interviews, there were many examples of social media lynch mobs continuing to take place. At this point, the commonality in the answers we got about the lynch culture made understanding the phenomenon of social media lynching necessary to investigate in an academic manner.

This study aims to conceptualize social media lynching as a phenomenon and reflect on how young adults in Turkey respond to it since they are the age group who spend their time on social media the most and therefore are at the risk of being exposed to social media lynchings more than any other age group as well as having the potential of being a social media lyncher. While conceptualizing social media lynching, I visit several concepts and theories since it is a complex phenomenon that requires delving into them at once. While I conceptualize social media lynching in context of how young adults in

¹ This dissertation is based on the research titled “An Investigation of New Media and Cultural Experience Practices of Youth in Turkey” that is conducted between 2019-2021 and funded by TÜBİTAK SOBAG with project number 218K136. We are grateful to TÜBİTAK SOBAG for their support.

Turkey responds to it, I refer the works of Donald Black (Black and Baumgartner, 1987; Black, 1993) and Roberta Senechal de la Roche (1996; 2001) for collective violence, Postmes and Turner, (2015) for collective behavior, Daniel Trottier (2017) for visibility on social media, Noelle-Neumann (1974) for non-visibility on social media, and Suler (2004) for anonymity. Then, I will use the case of MasterChef Türkiye lynching with reference to my conceptualization to demonstrate how a social media lynching takes place.

Based on the reviewed literature, I conceptualize the phenomenon of social media lynching as a collective form of violence with individual liability, unorganized, spontaneous, and non-permanent; occurs on social media because of any alleged offense takes place online or offline; takes its power from anonymity and visibility features of social media. Besides, I argue that:

- (1) social media lynchings are not understood in the same way by everyone who uses the term as there is not a consensus on the definition of the phenomenon and how it is considered depends on one's own relationship with social media and the society;
- (2) social media lynchings are used as a way of social control;
- (3) social media catalyzes social media lynchings as it gives the lynchers the opportunity to be anonymous;
- (4) social media lynchings work by making the alleged wrongdoers visible on social media to punish them collectively in front of other users via naming and shaming;
- (5) social media lynch mobs create a climate of fear and lead the users to a spiral of silence by making themselves invisible.

The literature on lynch culture is mostly on the lynching incidents in the United States of America in accordance with the geographical area that lynching as a social phenomenon first emerged. The literature on lynch culture in Turkish, on the other side, is quite limited both in terms of lynching in its classical form and lynching in digital form. Yet recently, there has been an interest among researchers in Turkey towards lynching. In recent years, the number of studies on lynching both in classical and digital forms has increased.

Lynching is studied in various studies in Turkish context. In the studies that focus particularly focus on physical lynching, how different socio-economic groups react to lynching is investigated (Özgür 2017; Ağbaba 2014), how the physical lynchings are reported as news is analyzed, and the discriminative tone of the news associated with lynching incidents (Arı 2019; Yılmaz 2018). Besides it is detected that there is absence in the penalty code regarding lynching in classical sense (Yılmaz 2012; Düzgün & Özkan 2017). Speaking of social media lynchings, the study of Bulut and Yörük (2017) is one of the first works in the Turkish literature that calls attention to the digital culture of lynching. In their study that analyzes political trolling on Twitter in the context of digital populism, they conclude that one of the outcomes of trolling on Twitter is the lynch culture and censorship it produces. Aloğlu (2018) studies lynching from a sociological perspective within the frameworks of symbolic violence by Pierre Bourdieu and the tunnel of violence by Randall Collins. In their study, Aloğlu categorizes lynchings into two as physical and virtual lynching, for which they analyze two physical and two virtual lynching incidents as case studies. The virtual lynching category Aloğlu proposes corresponds to social media lynchings conceptualization in this study. The researcher, who does descriptive analysis on the cases, reaches the conclusion that lynching is a phenomenon that can occur anytime, anywhere, and for any reason, regardless of society or culture, and that each lynching action takes place as a result of its own unique dynamics, similar to what I propose for social media lynching. Aksöz (2019) analyses lynch culture on social media from the perspective of narcissism. In their study that Aksöz uses content and discourse analysis methods to analyze six examples of social media lynchings, they reveal that narcissism is one of the triggering factors of lynching on social media, while it also conduces to hate speech. Similarly, Okur (2020) discusses social media lynch mobs by looking at the tweets about a Gucci model, Armin Harutyunyan. In the study, Okur makes qualitative content analysis and critical discourse analysis on them and finds out that most of the tweets about Harutyunyan are hateful and libelous. In the master's thesis titled *Dystopic Analysis of Hate Speech and Lynch Culture in Social Media*, Ercan (2020) looks into the social media lynch mobs from a dystopian perspective. Ercan focuses on how the hate speech and lynching incidents on social media affect these platforms. In order to find out whether the hate speech and lynch mobs on social media depend on the surveillance and control in the society, Ercan conducts a quantitative

survey on 400 students in Firat University. The results of the survey put forward the following: The participants mostly think that hate speech and lynch mobs take place in the context of gender apartheid. They believe that there is a penal sanction for hate speech and lynch mobs on social media in Turkey. They have never been a part of any hate speech or lynch mobs on social media, yet they have witnessed one so far and feel disturbed about them. In case that the hate speech and social media lynch mobs continue to exist, they may consider closing their social media accounts. Finally, the participants have the opinion that the surveillance and social control in the society and by the state causes hate speech and lynch mobs on social media. All in all, there have been a limited number of studies on social media lynchings. The studies that have been made so far approaches social media lynchings from different perspectives, yet none of them neither conceptualize it nor looks into the phenomenon from the perspective of youth in Turkey.

In this study, social media lynch mobs will be conceptualized from the perspective of youth in Turkey. In this way, the phenomenon of social media lynching, which is now a part of the quotidian, will be introduced to the academic literature. Within this study, I aim to fill a gap in the literature by being one of the first studies that examine the phenomenon of lynching in the context of new media and youth and carry out in-depth interviews with up to 200 young people all around Turkey on social media lynchings.

2. METHODOLOGY

In this study, the transformation that lynching, as a social phenomenon, goes through as it takes place on social media will be examined from the perspective of youth in Turkey in a qualitative manner. The research questions of this study are:

- How is social media lynching conceptualized as a contemporary social phenomenon?
- How do young adults between the ages of 18-30 from different regions in Turkey respond to social media lynchings?

Starting with these questions, I used both primary and secondary sources to acquire data. The methods of data gathering and analysis used in this study are qualitative. As a part of the research project titled "An Investigation of New Media and Cultural Experience Practices of Youth in Turkey" funded by TUBITAK, the research team which I was a member of, conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with up to 200 young people aged between 18 and 30 from eight cities in Turkey, including Istanbul, Izmir, Ankara, Adana, Erzurum, Çanakkale, Diyarbakır, and Trabzon. Out of the interviews done by the research team, I only used the parts that interviewees talked about lynching culture. Then, I ran a focus group on lynch culture with a group of participants we interviewed before, under the supervision of my advisor. In addition to the data acquired from the focus group on lynch culture, I also used the data on social media lynchings gathered from the focus groups we ran as a team within our research project on the topic of social media and everyday life. I also studied the case of the MasterChef Türkiye lynching on social media while I conceptualize the social media lynching phenomenon. While discussing the data, I employed Discourse-Historical Analysis (DHA) by Wodak (2001; 2015) for the primary data, which consists of the data from semi-structured in-depth interviews and the focus groups, and Social Media Critical Discourse Studies (SM-CDS) by Unger, Wodak, and KhosraviNik (2016) for the secondary data, which is the data from the case of MasterChef Türkiye Lynching.

2.1 Data Collection: Semi-Structured In-Depth Interviews and Focus Groups

Within the research project mentioned in the previous section, we conducted interviews and focus groups with young adults between the ages of 18 and 30. This particular age range was selected for the research considering that different age groups had been defined as youth with the purpose of going beyond the categorization of youth based on merely biological factors excluding the physiological and sociological aspects of the issue. In this sense, we focused on the young adults between the ages of 18-30 since it enabled us to conduct interviews with our participants by getting their consent as individuals, instead of their parents or legal guardians; and this age group constituted the digital natives² in Turkey. Speaking for this study on lynch culture on social media, the age range between 18 and 30 is particularly significant in terms of being the age group that spends their time on social media the most in Turkey (Johnson, 2020; Kemp, 2021a). In addition, the research project focused on eight cities, each from different regions in Turkey, as mentioned above. Thanks to the diverse distribution of the cities and the participants, the research and this study had the chance of giving voice to young people from various backgrounds.

In total, we conducted 183 semi-structured in-depth interviews and eleven focus groups between September 2019 and March 2021. The average length of the interview was 1 hour and 32 minutes for in-depth interviews and 2 hours and 9 minutes for focus groups. Before each interview and focus group, we contacted our participants via phone calls or WhatsApp conversations to arrange our meetings. Before starting the interviews, we asked our participants to sign a consent form in which we informed them about our research and the procedure of the interviews and focus groups. Each interview and focus group were audio-recorded with our participants' consent. Due to the COVID-19 precautions in Turkey, we had to conduct some of the interviews and all the focus groups online after March 2020. The online interviews were video calls made on Jitsi Meet or Zoom at the preference of the participants.

² As introduced by Prensky (2001), the term digital natives refer to the individuals who are born into the digital age, and therefore are naturally adapted to the complexities of the digital world. Digital natives are used to being surrounded by various digital technologies, as well as being already accustomed to the computers and the Internet as a part of their life (Dingli and Seychell, 2015).

Out of all the interviews and focus groups made on diverse topics related to cultural experiences and new media in a broad sense, I only used the parts on lynch culture. In 138 interviews out of 183, the participants answered the question, “What do you think of lynching culture?”. The distribution of the participants who answered the question on lynch culture according to their age groups and cities they live is as below:

	Female			Male			Total
	18-21	22-26	27-30	18-21	22-26	27-30	
Adana (ADN)	1	2	2	2	5	1	13
Ankara (ANK)	3	7	1	1	3	1	16
Çanakkale (CNK)	4	1	0	4	1	0	10
Diyarbakır (DYB)	2	3	2	1	2	0	10
Erzurum (ERZ)	2	2	0	5	7	4	20
İstanbul (IST)	4	12	6	3	8	1	34
İzmir (IZM)	7	5	2	4	6	2	26
Trabzon (TRB)	1	2	0	3	3	0	9
Total	24	34	13	23	35	9	138

Table 2.1: The in-depth interview participants

Following the interviews, I also conducted a focus group on lynch culture on social media under the supervision of my advisor. The length of the focus group was 2 hours and 3 minutes. In addition to the data I gathered from the focus group on lynch culture, I also used the parts on lynch culture from the focus groups on social media and cultural practices in İstanbul and Ankara, and on TikTok. The distribution of the participants of the focus group on lynch culture on social media as follows:

Participant	Sex	Age	Education	Work	Role
İrem İnceoğlu	-	-	-	-	Moderator
Büşra Sağlam	-	-	-	-	Moderator
ANK1	Male	27-30	Ph.D. Student	Not working	Participant
IST14	Female	27-30	Bachelor's degree	Working	Participant
IST20	Female	22-26	Bachelor's degree	Working	Participant
IZM30	Male	18-21	Undergraduate	Not working	Participant

Table 2.2: The focus group participants

2.2 Data Collection: The Case of MasterChef Türkiye Lynching

The case of MasterChef Türkiye lynching was one of the social media lynchings that took place while we were conducting interviews in the last week of November and the first week of December 2020. The echoes of the lynching lasted even until we run our focus group on social media lynchings so that it was one of the most commented-on lynching cases by the participants both during the interviews and the focus groups. Since it took place during the time we were continuing in-depth interviews and focus groups, it was a prominent case that we discussed with our participants. Sometimes we asked what they thought about the case, but most of the time they already gave it as an example of social media lynching. As being one of the well-known social media lynching examples among youth in Turkey and demonstrating the features of a typical social media lynching, I chose it as the case in this study to conceptualize the phenomenon of a social media lynching. The tweets I used while studying the case were selected with the help of Twitter's searching tool. I searched for the tweets in Turkish, which use the hashtag

#uguryilmazdeniz between the dates of 20-22 November 2020³ and 29-30 November 2020⁴ since these dates were the peak days in terms of the number of tweets sent about Uğur Yılmaz Deniz.

2.3 Data Analysis

For the analysis of the data I gathered, I followed the principles of Discourse-Historical Analysis (DHA) and Social Media Critical Discourse Studies (SM-CDS). DHA is an approach to critical discourse analysis that “integrate[s] a large quantity of available knowledge about the historical sources and the background of the social and political fields in which discursive ‘events’ are embedded” (Wodak, 2001). It is an interdisciplinary, problem-oriented, and eclectic approach both in theory and practice. It combines methods and theories, which will be helpful to comprehend the problem it investigates. While interpreting the texts and discourses, it always integrates the historical context of the problem (ibid.). SM-CDS, on the other side, is a model that is based on DHA and focuses on social media data in particular. While following the eight methodological steps of DHA, SM-CDS practitioners consider the Web as a part of media; therefore, it cannot be regarded as virtual, but it is a part of reality. Besides, they also admit that social media data has unique features which should be taken into consideration while analyzing it (Unger, Wodak, and KhosraviNik, 2016). In this study, I employed DHA for the data I collected from interviews and focus groups; and SM-CDS for the data I gathered from Twitter for the case of MasterChef Türkiye lynching.

Following the eight-stage program of DHA (Wodak, 2015) and SM-CDS (Unger, Wodak and KhosraviNik, 2016), I employed the methodological eight steps as follows:

³ Search results between 20-22 November 2020:
[https://twitter.com/search?q=\(%23uguryilmazdeniz\)%20lang%3Atr%20until%3A2020-11-22%20since%3A2020-11-20](https://twitter.com/search?q=(%23uguryilmazdeniz)%20lang%3Atr%20until%3A2020-11-22%20since%3A2020-11-20)

⁴ Search results between 29-30 November 2020:
[https://twitter.com/search?q=\(%23uguryilmazdeniz\)%20lang%3Atr%20until%3A2020-11-30%20since%3A2020-11-29&src=typed_query](https://twitter.com/search?q=(%23uguryilmazdeniz)%20lang%3Atr%20until%3A2020-11-30%20since%3A2020-11-29&src=typed_query)

(1)	<i>Activation and consultation of preceding theoretical knowledge</i>	I reviewed the existing literature on lynching and social media lynching.
(2)	<i>Systematic collection of data and context information</i>	(1) I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews and focus groups with youth in Turkey (2) I scraped tweets about the lynching of MasterChef Türkiye.
(3)	<i>Selection and preparation of data for specific analyses</i>	(1) I transcribed the interviews and focus groups, created a new text with the parts on lynching. I created two new texts derived from the parts on lynching in the interviews and focus group transcriptions on MAXQDA software. I named the text derived from the interviews as <i>Lynch</i> and from the focus groups as <i>Focus Group</i> . (2) I selected the top tweets sent between the dates 20-22 November 2020 and 29-30 November 2020 with the hashtag #uguryilmazdeniz.
(4)	<i>Specification of the research question and formulation of assumptions</i>	Based on the literature I reviewed and the data I collected, I specified my research questions and formulated my assumptions
(5)	<i>Qualitative pilot analysis</i>	1) I created a codebook on MAXQDA to conduct qualitative analysis on the texts titled <i>Lynch</i> and <i>Focus Group</i> . I tested the codebook during the first reading and then added new codes when necessary. (2) I conducted a pilot analysis on the tweets and categorized them.
(6)	<i>Detailed case studies</i>	(1) Based on the codebook I created, I analyzed the segments I coded on MAXQDA in detail. There were 200 segments coded from 138 documents. (2) Based on the categories I created, I analyzed the tweets in detail. There were 40 tweets I categorized and analyzed.
(7)	<i>Formulation of critique</i>	I interpreted the results by taking into the historical context of the discourses.
(8)	<i>Application of the detailed analytical results</i>	The results of this study are planned to be made publicly available soon enough.

Table 2.3: Methodological eight steps of DHA

While interpreting the data of in-depth interviews and focus groups, I replaced the names of the participants with the codes of their documents along with the positions of the segments in the texts *Lynch* and *Focus Group* I created previously so as to conceal the identities of the participants. When I used a quote, I gave reference to them as (*Text name*, *Pos. Segment Position*). (*Lynch*, *Pos. 108*), for instance, it corresponds to the 108th segment in the text named *Lynch*.

3. CONCEPTUALIZING SOCIAL MEDIA LYNCHINGS

Considering that young adults are the ones who spend their time on social media most, they are also the ones who are exposed to social media lynchings more than any other age group. Besides, they are the ones who are both at risk of being a victim of a social media lynching and can potentially be the lyncher. In this sense, how they respond to social media lynchings, how they make sense of them, and how their relationship with social media take form in relation to social media lynchings matter a lot. Hence, in this chapter, how the young adults in Turkey respond to lynch mobs on social media will be discussed by looking at the answers our participants gave to the question “What do you think of lynch culture?” in the semi-structured in-depth interviews and the discussions on lynch culture in the focus groups.

3.1 The Ambiguity of Defining Social Media Lynch Mobs

Social media lynchings are hard to define. Although the characteristic of a classical lynching is more or less the same for anyone, social media lynchings is confusing in nature. What the in-depth interviews and the focus group show that social media lynchings are definitely different from their classical versions, yet it is not easy to meet on a common ground about how to define or describe a social media lynching, or what to consider as a social media lynching and what to exclude. Still, there are certain ‘clear’ points about its characteristics. These clear points are as follows: (1) There might be various motivations behind a social media meeting. (2) It is a collective action in which people come together towards a certain problem or problematic individual. (3) The collective characteristics of social media lynchings brings in the in-group anonymity that could be explained with the social identity model of deindividuation effects (Postmes and Turner, 2015).

Among the 183 participants we interviewed, only five of them talk about classical lynching. Three of them compare classical lynching with social media lynchings. While there are many social media related questions asked during the interviews, the low frequency of mentioning classical lynchings is an indicator of how our understanding of

lynching has been altered with the emergence social media lynch mobs and rapid increase in them. After attending the focus group on lynch mobs, IST20 (female, 22-26) confesses having a flash of insight about their perception on lynching after the mention of classical lynchings during the focus group.

Firstly, I realize that I haven't used the word lynching in relation to the real world that much. I want to confess that. I was defining the ones in the real world as assaults, violent behaviors, or like conspiracy theories. I realize that I use the word lynching through social media. I don't know why. But when we talked about the lynching incidents in Turkish history, it opened a new door for me. I can't say anything. Because I was defining it by visibility on social media and people expressing their ideas without suppressing themselves before. At least, I was thinking so. (Focus Group Pos. 326)

While DYB5 (male, 22-26) associates lynching with brutally executing someone because of a mistake that person does (Lynching Pos. 63), DYB4 (male, 22-26) distinguishes lynching into two. According to DYB4, the expression of lynching makes them remember, first, the stone to death incidents in Iran, second, the ones on social media giving an example over Haluk Levent, who is a celebrity also known with the charity he and the organization he leads do.

The reason why Iran comes to my mind is that there were two women and two men they stoned to death. That's what comes to my mind first when you say lynch culture. Secondly, for instance, a community doesn't like the attitude of a person. For example, Haluk Levent has become popular thanks to the aids he made. God forbid, (laughs), if that man, for instance, is seen behaving badly to someone or a disabled person or any misunderstanding happens, in which he doesn't behave badly but reflected so, he will be denigrated without any investigation by certain people immediately. So, when everybody denigrates him all together, a social lynching will occur eventually (Lynch Pos. 62).

What is emergent both in the interviews and in the focus group is the ambiguity and vagueness of the phenomenon. The majority of the participants cannot define what lynching is without hesitation. Most of them contradict themselves after giving a first definition and change their mind instantly yet still cannot be sure on a final definition or description. Especially in the focus group, the participants constantly refer back to their previous definitions of lynching to recorrect them. The focus group proceeds on defining and describing the phenomena in relation to its motivations and whether it is a necessary or dangerous behavior. The focus group starts with discussing recent lynching incidents on social media. From the first case they come up, participants discuss whether the case is an example of social media lynching. The case is the lynching of a person who gets in line to buy a Luppo, which is a junk food, just in the night of COVID-19 lockdown announcement in Turkey in 2020. Particularly on Twitter, many people got furious with

the man, also known as “the Luppo man” on social media, because of acting recklessly and going outside just to buy junk food while there was a high risk of getting infected. There were numerous tweets on the incident which were mostly aiming to poke fun (Onedio, 2020). While discussing the Luppo case in the focus group, the participants cannot agree on whether it was a lynching or not. Considering the humor factor in social media lynchings, as it is at the forefront in the Luppo case, there are hesitations about calling it as a lynching example. For instance, while ANK1 (male, 27-30) does not see the Luppo case as a social media lynching, IST20 (female, 22-26) is already ready to call it as a social media lynching and comment on it accordingly. The criteria for ANK1 to call such an incident as lynching are the purpose behind the incident, the number of the individuals participating in, and whether there was an assault or an attack or not to a person directly (Focus Group Pos. 243). Since ANK1 does not think there was a direct attack or assault against the Luppo man, both physically or emotionally, it is more of a performance of humor over the man with the aim of making oneself visible among Twitter users. Instead, ANK1 considers the Luppo incident as a lynching against a certain social class that the Luppo man represents.

It's like, hmmm, with the lynching, you are trying to debunk, speaking for the assaults against individuals. On the other side, there is humor over the incident. I think it is not even lynching. It is just the intensity of information. Spontaneous messages against an object, either including that object or towards that object. So, I suppose, I don't consider the Luppo incident as a lynching. Or it could be assault to the class that man belongs to, or to a phenomenon, to an anonymous group of people, indicating that “Only you do it. My country is so ignorant”. Can we call it lynching too? I'm not sure (ANK1, Focus Group Pos. 72-81).

After discussing various lynching cases in detail with other participants, ANK1 revises their opinion on how to define lynching. Instead of attacking a person directly, for ANK1, lynching is always against an idea and a social group. Accordingly, the lynched individual becomes just a symbol of that worthy-of-lynch idea or a member of a worthy-of-lynch social group.

I was saying that at the beginning, but I suppose I need to revise it. I changed my mind on about that lynching is against an individual. I mean, in my mind semantically... I suppose lynching occurs against a phenomenon all the time. Against a symbol... For instance, in the ‘real’ lynching, when I lynch a rapist, indeed we attack that person in order to punish them in the name of the Turkish nation, Turkish state. Similarly, when we lynch on the Internet, we punish the social group they represent. For example, when we lynch a Twitcher, there is a premise something like that “We are working from the morning till the evening.

That guy earn money while sitting there.” We conclude that it is something worthy of lynching and we attack them carelessly (ANK1, Focus Group Pos. 328).

3.2 The Motivations of Social Media Lynch Mobs

Similar to its ambiguous definition, the motivations behind a lynch mob are also complicated according to the participants of the focus group. IST20 claims that it is not possible to speak of one single motivation for social media lynch mobs but many. Jealousy, disagreement, and being popular among other social media users are some of the motivations for social media lynch mobs, according to IST20. One of the interviewees, IZM6 (female, 22-26), who identifies themselves a feminist activist, states that social media lynchings could lead to achievements on certain issues as well. For instance, the disclosure letters of feminists, such as the #metoo movement, may cause huge social media lynchings, especially on Twitter. IZM6 suggests that bringing certain issues up to the agenda is one of the motivations behind social media lynchings. Hence, the motivation of a social media lynching does not have to be an evil motivation after all. Yet, it is still a matter of question whether or not such actions should be considered as lynching or not when it does not have any malicious motivations (Lynching Pos. 174). Apart from this comment, there are three emergent themes regarding the motivations of social media lynch mobs, which are belonging to a social group, using social media lynching as a way of social control, and the social polarization in society.

3.2.1 Belonging to a Social Group

One of the significant motivations to join a social media lynch mob is the sense of belonging to a certain social group. Even though the assault is against an individual, the lynch mobs demonstrate the social group they belong to by taking side on the lynching. In this sense, social media lynchings have the potential of turning into social violence (Grimshaw, 1970). As IST14 (female, 27-30) puts it, social media lynch mobs serve to feel a sense of belonging not with a physical partnership but on an ideological level (Focus Group Pos. 321). Agreeing with certain social groups through particular social media lynchings is an indicator of which social group an individual belongs to and conflicts with. Out of partisanship, separate individuals come together to attack another individual,

whom they see as a representative of another social group those individuals contradict. Senechal de la Roche (2001) reflects on Donald Black's theory of partisanship (1993) and suggests that the collectivity of violence is derived from high partisanship as both sides of a conflict target a third party to join them to form a bigger group which will allow them to exercise power collectively, and hence more dominantly. In that regard, collective violence is an issue of power. The partisanship factor what makes social media lynching a collective action. Out of the urge of belonging to a social group in society and confirming one's place in that group, individuals become part of social media lynch mobs that form a collective action against another individual. In order to relieve their feelings and aggression towards the opposite social group that their victim represents, social media lynch mobs are an easy option.

To me, being a part of a group is a great motivation. (...) I mean, I think it is the greatest part of the total motivation. There is a group you can completely belong to. Besides, there is a place for you to exorcise. You can canalize all your distress to one place... I mean, I'm sure it is more like an exorcise in physical lynchings. Still, similarly, you can transfer all your emotions, your high emotions to a certain place and that person faces the same from all other people, too. Is it like you aren't responsible for what you are doing that much? Because you're just a little part of a bigger group after all (IST14, Focus Group. Pos. 197-202).

While ANK4 (female, 22-26) (Lynching Pos. 289) finds the urge of belonging to a social group as understandable, IST28 (female, 22-26) suggests that the lynch culture on social media creates an obligation for other people who have not joined the lynch at first. Giving the example of Cem Yılmaz, who is a famous comedian in Turkey and also often lynched on social media because of not reacting to any incident that causes lynching. IST28 concludes lynching on social media functions as a way of taking side with a certain social group. When one supports one party of a lynching and attacks the other party, they are accepted as a member of the social group that they take side with.

For me, it's like this: I don't know the parties to the issue. I mean, it's not possible for me to internalize the issue genuinely. Because I don't know. If I didn't hear of it via social media, I wouldn't know. When someone tells me about it, I'll say 'Oh, so bad.', and that's it. But when it explodes on social media, when a few people criticize the issue, the ones who don't criticize seem like not discharging their responsibility. You know the joke about Cem Yılmaz. 'He didn't comment on it.'. For instance, on Ekşi Sözlük, they always lynch Cem Yılmaz. They lynch because he doesn't lynch. Why? 'Because you have to. You have to lynch them. We have to react.' Social reaction is not something like that. (...) For me, lynch is all about choosing sides (...) (IST18, Lynch Pos. 181).

Group mentality and being anonymous within the group in lynch mobs, both in the classical sense and on social media, can be understood with the help of collective behavior theories. Postmes and Turner's (2015) the social identity model of deindividuation effects approach explains the identity change in collective action as a shift of identity, rather than as a loss of individual identity as argued by Zimbardo (1969). The lynchers on social media get anonymous within the lynch mob apart from the anonymity they can gain as a feature of computer mediated communication. In each lynching incident, there are leaders of the group who cast the first stone. On social media, however, it is not always possible to detect that individual, or in other terms, the mob leader, as social media gives them the ability of making themselves invisible, either simply by deleting their 'stones', which could be either a comment, tweet, or any other form of censure. Hence, once the social media lynching starts, all the lynchers act with a collective mind by getting anonymous in the lynch mob. IZM22 (female, 22-26) attracts attention to the mysterious leaders of social media lynch mobs and states that the lynchers follow that leader on whatever or whomever the leader points at to attack (Lynching Pos. 542). ANK1, on the other side, emphasizes that the attack in social media lynch mobs is not a personal matter. None of the lynchers individually have an issue with the lynched person. Instead, each attack is anonymized in the collective nature of the lynch mob (Focus Group Pos. 157; Focus Group Pos. 172). The number of the people attending a lynch mob also determines the anonymity of a social media lynch mob. According to ANK1, partisanship factor and collectivity are important elements of anonymity in social media lynch mobs. In order to be fully anonymous in the mob, the number of the attackers should be more than identifiable.

There's also this, the snowball effect, for instance, seems logical because the lyncher wants more people to lynch. But, when the number remains stable... Indeed yes, the snowball effect is important. I mean, it's important for the lynch mob to grow. Because it decreases personality. For instance, if we say 'We are five people who came together, we'll lynch you.', we are identifiable five people. But with some people come and go, it becomes an attack of a collective group, which cannot be demarcated. That seems to me closer to lynching (ANK1, Focus Group Pos. 164).

ANK1 also suggests that the anonymity in a group is kind of a trance, a state of meeting a new self (Focus Group Pos. 306-309), just as Postmes and Turner (2015) suggest. Especially on social media, even though being completely anonymous is not possible,

individuals get anonymous even to themselves with the effect of being a part of a collective identity. They become *anonymous to* the out-group members, so that their behaviors that could normally be punishable for the outgroup seems not punishable for them. The members of a social media lynch mob no longer care whether their behaviors are punishable or not as long as those actions are in accordance with the group dynamics, or in other terms, with the collective identity (Spears, 2017).

3.2.2 Social Media Lynching as a Way of Social Control

Where there is violence, there is conflict. Black and Baumgartner (1987) call the process of dealing with conflict social control; and speaks of two distinct types of social control: law and self-help. According to Black and Baumgartner, the law is governmental social control, whereas self-help is “any response to deviant behavior in which an offended party takes action on his or her own behalf, with or without the assistance of third parties other than those who are specialized agents of social control” (p. 41). For Black (1983), committing crime and violence for self-help is usually the only way for socially disadvantaged individuals and groups. According to him, most of the violent incidents are indeed self-help and perpetrated with the aim of securing justice when the law, the governmental social control cannot manage to do so. From their point of view, much crime is moralistic and should not be considered a violation of the law. In this sense, lynching as a form of collective violence is also a type of social control. Whether in classical form or on social media, it is a spontaneous reaction to any kind of alleged wrongdoing in which the offending side of the conflict take justice into their own hands either instead of the governmental social control or to actuate it or just to spill out their hatred and aggression against the wrongdoer (Black and Baumgartner, 1987). On social media, it is easier to get frustrated with anything and express that anger through these platforms as a result of the online disinhibition effect (Suler, 2004). Among the participants we interviewed and ran a focus group, there were conflicting and also mixed responses about whether or not lynchings are necessary for society. Out of 103 segments coded in relation to this question, while only ten coded segments were in favor of social media lynching clearly, 41.7% of them, which corresponds to 43 coded segments, were reflecting mixed thoughts on social media lynching in terms of how the participants

express their thoughts and feelings about social media lynchings. Those who have mixed thoughts about lynching often stated that it is unnecessary, yet there are certain exceptions that lynching on social media becomes necessary. With the ones who clearly state that social media lynchings are necessary, the rate goes up to 51.4%, which shows that the participants consider social media lynchings as a way of establishing social control.

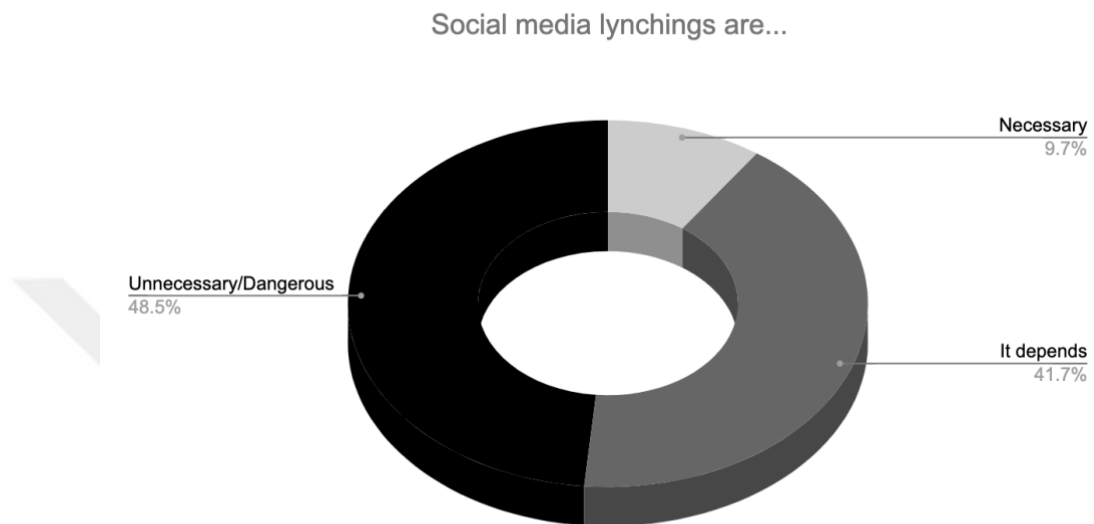


Figure 3.1: Responses to the question on the necessity of social media lynchings.

What attracts attention in the responses of the participants on whether or not social media lynching is necessary is that they regard it as normal and required in order to punish the alleged wrongdoers who ‘deserve’ to be punished. IZM19 (female, 22-26), for instance, uses the phrase ‘something that puts everyone right’ for social media lynchings and declares that it is definitely a requisite when the wrongdoer deserves it. However, IZM19 does not clarify the situations that a person deserves to be lynched on social media (Lynch Pos. 154). ANK15 (female, 18-21), on the other hand, explains these situations as ‘unconscionable’ situations such as causing harm to a living being (Lynch Pos. 27). Both TRB6 (male, 22-26) and IST21 (male, 22-26) condemn executing with extreme prejudice, and they look for a valid ground to justify social media lynchings. IST21 illustrates social media lynching with the valid ground as excessively posting in a collective manner so as to stop the power elites who damage Mound Ida and Lake Salda (Lynch Pos. 127). Another valid ground for social media lynchings for the participants TRB1 (male, 18-21)

and IZM5 (male, 18-21) are social values. While IZM5 gives respecting Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as an example of social value, for TRB1 it is respecting the national and local values of Trabzon, such as not being disrespectful to the Turkish flag and Trabzonspor:

Lynch culture... For what would I be lynched? If I violate a social value, I'd be lynched. For instance, I'll shoot a video for YouTube. If I wear a boxer with a Turkish flag and walk on the street, I'd be lynched. If I don't respect sacred values, I can't emphasize them. If I have such an opinion, I have to keep it in. Because the place you are in does not let you do so. For example, what happened the other day... Two fans of Fenerbahçe were shooting videos while they were wearing Fenerbahçe's team jersey. While they were taking photos, suddenly two cars stopped nearby. They came out of the car and took off their jerseys. Those fans of Fenerbahçe, for instance, would be lynched in Trabzon. They weren't fans of Fenerbahçe, in fact, but they wanted to shoot a video about it. I mean, the local community in Trabzon wouldn't let you do so. I wouldn't say anything, but the fans of Trabzonspor would lynch them (Lynch Pos. 103).

Discrimination based on race and gender is another issue that the participants consider as a valid ground for social media lynching. In case of someone discriminating against another person or group for their race, ethnicity, or gender, social media lynchings are used as a tool to lead the wrongdoer to the right path. From this point of view, ANK5 (male, 18-21) suggests that social media lynchings are effective in terms of its collective power of pointing out what is right and what is wrong:

There are people who deserve to be lynched. I don't know... What do they deserve lynching for? I think racism, sexism, and discrimination... (...) Because they need to realize that the negativity they reflect on the people is wrong. I mean, if someone says, 'Women can't be funny', or 'Women can't pee standing up', then a thousand people must tell that person, 'No, you are an idiot'. So, that person would say, 'If 2500 people say so, maybe they are right' (Lynch Pos. 35).

In addition to discrimination based on gender, violence against women, children, and animals are also regarded as a valid reason for social media lynchings. Indeed, most of the participants, who have mixed opinions about whether social media lynching is necessary or not, are clear that the perpetrators of violence against women, children, and animals should be lynched on social media. For them, lynching those people on social media is a way of indicating their reaction to unacceptable wrongdoing. While for ANK15 (female, 18-21) and CNK9 (female, 18-21), violence against animals is definitely intolerable wrongdoing and should be punished by being lynched on social media accordingly, for ERZ12 (male, 27-30) abusing children sexually is a crime that lynching the perpetrator is not enough; instead, there must be a death penalty for such actions (Lynch Pos. 78). What is common among the participants who respond positively to

social media lynching for certain cases, including violence and sexual abuse against women, children, and animals, is that most of the time, they express their opinion by giving an example of ‘unnecessary lynching’ and then follow it by a ‘necessary case’ for which social media lynching should be used as a correction mechanism. According to IST15 (female, 27-30), for instance, while lynching people for their personal values are not acceptable, social media lynching is a way of creating pressure on the perpetrators so that the perpetrator understands what they have done wrong:

For example, I’ve just seen it this morning; some of the hijabi influences were lynched because of the way they veil. This seems to be disgusting. Because this is not a moral value, it’s a personal value. Here, you don’t have the right to lynch them. People become the social pressure itself, which they suggest they are against. But did a minister make a nonsensical explanation about child abuse? You’ll lynch them all the way. There are certain values; they cannot be touched. For these certain values, lynch culture is extremely right. There’s violence in it. Yes, it must be. The lynched person must be ashamed of what they’ve done. They must see how unacceptable it is. But, personal values... (...) It’s not necessary to lynch for personal values. However, yes, murder, pressure, rape... Yes, for these, lynching is an acceptable action because you need to intimidate the perpetrators. At this point, there must be pressure on them. They must think what they’ve done is abnormal (Lynch Pos. 121).

The reason why especially violence and sexual abuse against women, children, and animals are the most prominent cases that the participants consider lynching is acceptable is that they think these cases are also the ones that there is a lack of justice. IST5 (female, 27-30), for instance, thinks that social media lynchings are effective in cases in which the authority fails to satisfy the sense of justice among the citizens (Lynch Pos. 93). Similarly, ADN19 (male, 22-26) states that since there is not an alternative for it, social media lynchings are important in terms of forming a public opinion to secure justice (Lynch Pos. 11). While CNK11 (female, 18-21), on the other side, finds the penalties for violence against women and femicide insufficient (Lynch Pos. 42), IZM9 (female, 18-21) gives the example of Şule Çet, who is a victim of femicide and whose perpetrators were lynched on social media from time to time, so that the pressure of the public opinion against the perpetrators directed the course of the case in favor of the victim:

When we look at it, in Turkey, 70% of the cases of violence against women or femicide do not serve right. We don’t know the names of most of those women. But the ones we know their name get what’s coming to them. Şule Çet, for instance... If we didn’t know Şule Çet’s name, would the perpetrators serve a life sentence? No, I don’t believe so. This is why lynch culture is important. It’s one of the examples of using social media lynchings for good (Lynch Pos. 117).

Speaking of securing justice with the help of social media lynchings during the focus group on social media lynching, ANK1 (male, 27-30) asks whether or not lynchings on social media pave the way for positive changes:

I reckon lynching is evil. I see that it's evil because, in the end, it has injustice and causes psychological harm. But I also think that maybe it's necessary. Maybe if you don't lynch people, it doesn't work in this country. Maybe it's because we lynch people, and we have minority rights. People speak much more cautiously. They cause less harm to the others [out of the fear of being lynched] (Focus Group Pos. 367).

Even though most of the participants believes that social media lynching of an alleged perpetrator of a violence or sexual assault case is effective and therefore necessary, ADN4 (male, 22-26) and CNK5 (female, 22-26) does not believe in the power of social media lynchings, both emphasizing that it is useless unless the judicial system is functional and objective enough. ADN4, for instance, gives the example of Emine Bulut, who is another victim of femicide, which was made visible on social media by dissemination of the moment she was dying and got a strong reaction on social media. According to ADN4, since social media is based on popularity and forgetfulness, lynching someone for a period of time does not solve the problem:

You lynch a person. Let's take Emine Bulut's case as an example. You lynch that guy on social media. Okay. But if your judicial system is not functional, it doesn't mean anything for me that you lynch or not that person. (...) In this sense, social media is just a tool in the hands of the people in Turkey. It's like popular culture. Emine Bulut is murdered. Her video was disseminated. We lynch the murderer. The next day, everyone moves on. (...) That's why it seems absurd to me. Don't get me wrong. It's the same for me. I can move on after 24 hours when something happens. It's not okay indeed, but I don't dissemble and join lynch campaigns. I don't do it (Lynch Pos. 16).

3.2.3 Social Polarization and Social Media Lynching

Although it is possible to see social media lynching as a form of social control and social control as a way of resolving conflicts, an important question arises here: How do we define the 'wrongdoing' that causes conflict and requires to respond with social media lynching? There are many examples of numerous wrongdoings which have been lynched on social media in Turkey so far. The social media lynchings against Pınar Fidan, who is a comedian, for insulting Alawites on Turkey in one of their shows, Emre Günsal, who is again another comedian, for insulting Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on one of their shows,

Ceyda Düvenci, who is a performer, for celebrating her daughter's first menstruation via an Instagram post, Duygu Özaslan, who is a well-known YouTuber, for her overweight and stretch marks on her body, Murat Kaya, who was an ordinary citizen before, for sexually assaulting a woman are some of the recent examples of social media lynchings our participants referred, and we discussed during our in-depth interviews and focus groups. All these social media lynchings have their own reasons, which are enough to start a lynching on social media. Yet, none of them shares a common point that could be regarded as specific wrongdoing. These examples demonstrate that there are diversified reasons, diversified wrongdoings, and diversified offenses for social media lynchings. As a result of the lynch culture on social media, it becomes possible to speak of ongoing peer surveillance in order to detect any wrong one may do, make that wrongdoing visible, and lynch the wrongdoer on social media so that they suffer the consequences of what they have done (Trottier, 2017). From a similar point of view, ANK1 (male, 27-30) draws a parallel between the individuals in society and CCTVs in terms of the way they function against any faulty behavior:

First of all, we are all functioning like CCTVs. We are walking around like a surveillance camera. Just to detect any indecent behavior so we go and inform Big Brother... This Big Brother could be a person or CIMER [to inform the President] or the angry mob. It could be a greater phenomenon that could beat up these indecent people (Focus Group Pos. 235-2).

Another participant, IST4 (female, 27-30), emphasizes the banality of social media lynchings stating that everyone is a potential victim for it for any reason:

It's like what Andy Warhol once said: 'In the future, everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes.' Everyone can be lynched; anyone can be lynched. It's so easy to be a victim of a lynching. When you wake up in the morning, you can find yourself being lynched. Anything you did may take you there. It's out of control. I don't know, I've never lynched before, but I think it's horrifying (Lynch Pos. 92-1).

These responses of the participants draw attention to the abruptness of social media lynching. Anything can be evaluated as an offense and accordingly lynched on social media. What affects the labeling of behavior as indecent, unacceptable, offensive, and therefore lynchable is social polarization in society (Senechal de la Roche, 1996).

Several researches show that social polarization is an existing problem in Turkey (Konda, 2019; TurkuazLab, 2020; Aydin et al., 2021). Indeed, social polarization is an integral part of the history of the Republic of Turkey. There is an ongoing and always appreciable

polarization between secularist republicans and religious conservatives, between Turks and Kurds, and between Sunnis and Alawites throughout the country's history (Altıntaş, 2003; Aydın-Duzgit, 2019). However, in recent years, social polarization has become a major issue in Turkey and it is one of the most polarized countries around the world (Lauka, McCoy and Firat, 2018; Esmer, 2019). Especially after the mid-2000s, the populist and polarizing rhetoric that the ruling party, the Justice and Development Party (AKP), adopted added a new dimension to the already existing polarization in society. Since the 2007 elections, this polarizing rhetoric has become more and more evident throughout the following constitutional referendum and elections (Aydın-Duzgit, 2019). The political conflict in the election of the new president in 2007, the closure case for the AKP and the Ergenekon trials in 2008, the constitutional referendum in 2010, and finally the anti-government Gezi Park Protests in 2013 were the main political events that brought the transformation from micro-textual polarization to macro-textual level in Turkey (Somer, 2019). The Gezi Park Protests, in particular, were a breaking point in the polarization of the society (Yardımcı-Geyikçi, 2014). After 2014, as a result of macro-textual polarization, the society was divided into two parts as pro-governments and anti-governments, and it intensified even more following the failed coup attempt in 2016 (Somer, 2019). At this point, the constitutional referendum in 2017 that proposes a political system change is a significant example of the polarization in Turkey. Even though a small percentage of the voters did grasp the difference the proposed constitution would bring, most of the citizens vote according to their already existing party preferences. The polarizing rhetoric of the AKP is sloganized with a statement of the president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who says, “those who did not want to take sides were indeed left behind” (ibid., pp. 54-55). Accordingly, the growing tension between the polarized parties in society is not only prevalent in the rhetoric of political elites but also among ordinary citizens. In an environment where social polarization is so high, conflicts between individuals cannot be expected to be solved in peace and commonsense. Instead, alleged wrongdoings are regarded as offenses to a certain party of the polarized society, and therefore, are treated collectively by the offended party. Social media, at this point, is one of the places where polarization and conflict among ordinary citizens become apparent. Studies show that social media is not independent of the tension in society and is highly influenced by the polarizing discourse employed by the power elites (Kutlu et

al., 2019; Ozduzen and McGarry, 2020). Besides, the literature on social media and polarization reveals that social polarization is an integral part of social media (Barberá, 2020). Hence, it is not surprising that social media lynchings have become a way of handling conflicts and reacting to alleged offenses in the polarized society in Turkey. Even the Internet users in Turkey believe that social media has increased polarization, according to the statistics of 2019 (Tankovska, 2021). Accordingly, social polarization is another emergent theme in the responses of the participants while expressing their ideas on why social media lynchings occur and why they occur in Turkey.

Thinking it with the four parameters Senechal de la Roche (1996) proposes for social polarization, social media works in two ways in terms of the relational distance, which is defined as intimacy, or in other words, how much people are concerned with each other's life. On the one hand, it minimizes the relational distance between users by enabling them to establish regularized, frequent and enduring relationships between certain people in their networks. On the other hand, it also makes them encounter too many other users whom they come across for a short span of time; and form unstable and unregularized connections. As a result, social media increases the relational distance between users more than it decreases. Once the increased relational distance unites with the already existing and growing cultural distance in society, social polarization gets stronger. In return, social media lynchings become inevitable. ANK7 (female, 22-26) expresses the increasing relational distance on social media as a lack of communication. Moreover, ANK7 emphasizes the growing aggression on social media as a result of social polarization. For ANK7, the relational distance between the users on social media and their aggression is the reason why social media lynchings increase and get more and more violent.

I think that people are too aggressive on social media. It's not about the influencers; I mean the lynchings. They have started because of exposing others and decreased sense of privacy [on social media]. Once people get aggressive to each other, these kinds of incidents start to happen, and they have hardened. The more there is a lack of communication between them, the more lynchings increase and become more serious (ANK7, Lynch Pos. 37).

Similarly, IZM13 (female, 18-21) puts stress on growing aggression in society. According to IZM13 everyone is so ready to attack another person that even inconsequential details become a matter of conflict between people.

Everyone is lynching everyone in the country. When one says A, the other says, 'Why did you say A? Why did it sound like that? You should say it in this way.' and lynch that person. Everyone is on the alert these days. It's like everyone is offensive; everyone wants to attack each other (IZM13, Lynch Pos. 149).

In addition to the growing tension in society, partiality is another reason why social media lynchings take place, according to the participants. During the interview, IST13 (female, 18-21) tells how they first witness a lynching caused by partiality in high school in which all the students thought the same about a particular political event in the country's agenda those days as follows:

There was an event those days. It was a political event, and all the school was of one mind about that event. All of us... None of us had a different view. There were 2 or 3 students only, and we were so sure everyone was of one mind that (...) we started hashtag campaigns. We started certain hashtags during that political period. Then, when I saw that 2-3 people didn't agree with us, I was shocked. We went to the school by saying 'How come they think so? How could they think in this way? How could they write their opinion? How come they don't support us? How come they don't stand behind us? They can't get along together here.' Indeed, I wanted to talk to those people, but my friends were much stricter about it. It turned into a physical fight. I broke up that fight. That moment, I realized that it was a lynching. When I think about that incident these days, I say, 'How did I do that horrible thing?' (IST13, Lynch Pos. 118).

Speaking of partiality, IZM30 (male, 18-21) mentions how users on social media evaluate any information they get according to the party they feel closer to. Instead of ascertaining, they prefer to take action by looking at which party a person belongs to and decide on whether to lynch or not lynch that person. IZM30 reminds of Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu, who is a former member of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey for the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), stating that on social media, Gergerlioğlu was lynched several times just because of being a member of HDP:

There's a member of the parliament, for instance, Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu, if I'm not mistaken, tables motion about illegal strip searches and talks about the problems in the parliament. But on Twitter, people say, 'Oh, this is a member of PDP, this is a terrorist. He doesn't tell the truth. What he says is wrong. So, let's lynch him.' and they start lynch campaigns against him. I don't know why (Laughs). Probably, we get carried away so easily. I mean, we lose our ability to distinguish who is telling the truth. We just say, 'The other party is opponent. They don't tell the truth.' or 'They support the ruling party. They don't reflect my views. So, I have the right to lynch them.' (IZM30, Focus Group Pos. 327).

While participant ADN17 (male, 22-26) considers social media lynching as a performance of predominating over opposing groups by suppressing them on social

media (Lynch Pos. 9), TRB5 (female, 18-21) explains why people are prone to lynching on social media as being closed-minded to differences:

As I said before, I support that people share whatever they want. It's free will. 'Why did you share this? Why didn't you share that?' It doesn't bother me. But why are people interested in it? I don't get it. Everyone wants others to be on the same side with them. We are close-minded to differences as a country... I mean, Trabzon is so close-minded. Our country is close-minded, too (TRB5, Lynch Pos. 114).

In addition to relational distance and cultural distance, inequality as a component of social polarization (Senechal de la Roche, 1996) is worthy of discussion. Being a member of a disadvantaged social group or being the subordinate in a lynching incident makes it worse when the lynchers are members of a dominant group in society. Besides, if the gap is great and there is a high level of inequality between a potential lyncher group and a potential wrongdoer, lynching is more likely to occur. Compared to lynching an individual from the same status, people tend to get triggered more easily when the alleged wrongdoer is from a subordinate status. As IZM30 (male, 18-21) states in our interview, people are mostly lynched because of their social status (Lynch Pos. 169). Speaking for the Turkish context, women, LGBTI+ people, Kurds, and Syrians are some of the groups that are frequently lynched because of their status in society. While speaking about lynching in physical form, ADN13 (female, 27-30) talks about a lynching they witnessed against a Syrian living in their neighborhood, which then turned into a riot against the Syrian community living there. The incident shows that the already existing aggression against Syrian people living in the neighborhood can easily be triggered and transformed into lynching and even a riot.

There was a sexual harassment incident here. The kid was from a neighborhood nearby. (...) Then, suddenly all hell broke loose. They said the harasser was a Syrian. Because it was a neighborhood Syrian people living in mostly. Indeed, there is repulsiveness against the Syrian people here. People are looking for even the smallest excuse to attack them. Maybe, the harassment incident was a great excuse for them. Because then they had a valid argument, which is the sexual harassment for that case. Then, they said the harasser was a Syrian. They vandalized all the cars, houses, and workplaces of the Syrian community. We investigated it later on. The harasser wasn't indeed a Syrian, but a 15 years-old citizen of Turkey with criminal records over 30. It's a shame (ADN13, Lynch Pos. 6).

The aggression against Syrian people living in Turkey is discussed during the focus group on lynching as well. IZM30 (male, 18-21) stresses that the state of being triggered against Syrian people can also be observed on social media. According to IZM30, the reason for

the high aggression towards the Syrian people is closely related to the fake news disseminated on social media purposefully, which then paves the way for lynchings both on social media and in physical forms.

And there's this... Purposefully submitting people to lynch. I don't know. The politicians, the refugees... I see a lot of speculative news about them. There is a state of ongoing lynching against Syrian Twitter. They say, 'They get social aid. They can get accepted to any school they want.' and lynch them. Suddenly, the agenda becomes Syrian people and the news about them. But it's not true. No one needs to verify the news they hear about them (IZM30, Focus Group Pos. 322).

According to IST39 (male, 22-26) (Lynch Pos. 141) and IST30 (female, 27-30), women and LGBTI+ individuals are other easy targets for lynchers on social media. As far as IST30 is concerned, women are more likely to get lynched compared to men on social media as a result of the gender roles they are expected to fit in. For IST30, It is more observable among the influencers and YouTubers on social media.

Especially, I witness the ones against women more. In Turkey, there are gender-based roles assigned to women, such as their posts on social media, what they wear, how they talk... It's by men especially, but I also see it by women as well. But, regarding this, I think women are lynched more than men. I don't know why but men are not lynched. For instance, when you say lynching, I have 3-4 names in my mind, and they're all women. Başak Kavla, Danla Bilic... What else? Oh, there are also LGBT people. Unfortunately, they are lynched too. Kerimcan [Durmaz] is probably one of the most lynched people on social media (IST30, Lynch Pos. 133-1)

While in its physical form, lynching mostly occurs against the subordinate and deepens the inequality between the subordinate and the dominant groups, social media could become a tool to react against the dominant group so that it balances the inequality to an extent. IST33 (18-21), who is an LGBTI+ tells how social media lynchings are used as a way to counterattack against anti-LGBTI+ individuals as follows:

For instance, we have a special kind of lynching. If someone makes gross accusations against us, if they continue to stick up for the idea that homosexuality is sickness, and they are not open to discussion, we share stories about them and ask our community to lynch them. Suddenly, their posts are inundated with comments; most of them are rainbows (IST33, Lynch Pos. 136).

While IST39 (male, 22-26) believes that social polarization in society triggers the lynchings on social media, DYB14 (female, 27-30) thinks that none of these lynchings are independent of political power. Similarly, ERZ19 (male, 18-21), sees a correlation between lynch culture on social media and the attitude of the political power. According to ERZ19, the canceling and punishing attitude of the government in power against

certain thoughts gives the lynchers, which constitutes the majority, the power to silence any thought they dislike by simply lynching people on social media:

The biggest problem is that since the political power does it, we expect it from the public, too, as if it's a natural reaction. For instance, even for an opposing view, they start lynching. The next day, you see that man gets arrested. What is his offense? Making a sentence, sending a message, writing something... I don't say anything when there's a swear word, but people get arrested or are punished just because of their thoughts. This is why people make lynching a culture (ERZ19, Lynch Pos. 179).

3.3 The Concerns About Social Media Lynch Mobs

Although 51.4% of the participants favor and justify social media lynchings to an extent, %48.5 of them still find social media lynchings dangerous and unnecessary, as shown in Figure 3.1. There are several reasons for these participants to be against social media lynchings. First of all, they consider them as a sign of backwardness and ignorance. According to ERZ11 (male, 22-26), for instance, social media lynchings are irrational and inhuman. Even though there are certain issues such as child sexual abuse and pedicide, social media lynching is not a solution since it will not help the perpetrator of such crimes to understand what has been done is wrong. Instead, ERZ11 suggests, the punishment must be meted out by the law (Lynch Pos. 77). Similarly, ANK15 (female, 18-21) is against social media lynching, considering that it is not a convenient way to solve conflicts as it is merely based on attacking the perpetrator with extreme prejudice (Lynch Pos. 27). ANK1 (male, 27-30), on the other side, reckons social media lynching as evil since it is inherently violent. ANK1 compares social media lynching with classical lynching in physical form and suggests that being physically harmed is not always more detrimental than social media lynchings, which mostly cause psychological harm. ANK1 gives the example of Pınar Fidan, who was a comedian lynched because of one of their show in which they joke about Alawite people:

To me, being lynched by a group physically in a curable way does not always have to be worse than psychological lynching. I don't want to handle my conflicts in this way. Therefore, the word 'lynch' sounds evil to me. This is why I don't want to lynch anyone. When I lynch Pınar Fidan, they won't have told that joke. But they will probably have a psychological wound about Alawism that they won't ever forget. It doesn't serve me. It doesn't make me a better person to lynch Pınar Fidan for making a joke about Alawite people (Focus Group Pos. 235-1).

From a similar perspective, IST28 (male, 18-21) attracts attention to cyberviolence in social media lynchings while explaining why they do not support lynching people on social media (Lynch Pos. 131). While DYB3 (female, 22-26) and DYB18 (female, 18-21) both express their concern about cyberharassment in social media lynchings, DYB3 mentions a victim of cyberharassment on social media, who then committed suicide (Lynch Pos. 58). IST20 (female, 22-26), who is a participant of the focus group on social media lynchings, states that they are afraid of the violence they witness in social media lynchings (Focus Group Pos. 347). To give an example about one of the social media lynchings in which both physical violence and cyberviolence was used, IST20 mentions the case of Murat Kaya, who sexually abused a woman and caused the woman to commit suicide; and was lynched on social media, then was lynched physically by an unknown group, who got Murat Kaya's personal information from social media since Kaya was doxed during the social media lynching:

I think it's frightening. Yes, what that man has done is horrible. But, if securing justice is at the hands of a person in society and they punish him in the middle of the street recklessly, everyone should be afraid. Yes, in Turkey, justice doesn't serve. It's one of the most problematic issues in Turkey. But to me, it is horrible, too, that an ordinary person on the street inflicts punishment on the wrongdoer. When I heard about Murat Kaya's lynching, I was really scared. Especially the doxxing... (Focus Group Pos. 107)

The second reason why the participants consider social media lynchings dangerous and unnecessary is false alarms. ERZ5 (male, 27-30), who states that the reason for social media lynchings is the ignorance and quick temperedness in Turkish society, points out the possibility of punishing the wrong person with social media lynchings (Lynch Pos. 69). While CNK5 (female, 22-26) and CNK6 (male, 18-21) both put emphasis on molding the public opinion with social media lynchings, they are also concerned about molding the public opinion for inaccurate targets. CNK5, who is a law student, suggests that if the laws are implemented fittingly, securing justice will not be up to the public opinion and, therefore, there will not be a need for social media lynchings (Lynch Pos. 50). CNK6, on the other side, finds forming public opinion through social media beneficial, however not for lynching purposes. For CNK6, social media lynchings have invisible, psychological effects on their targets; hence it is risky to lynch people on social media since it is not possible to be sure without a doubt that the target of a social media lynching is the right person all the time (Lynch Pos. 51). For ADN1 (male, 22-26), social media

lynchings are irremediable. Once a person is accused of certain wrongdoing and lynched on social media for that accusation, that person will not have the chance to speak up for themselves to correct the misunderstanding for most of the cases. Once a social media lynching is done, the accusation will stick to the wrong target even if the lynched person turns out to be right later on (Lynch Pos. 1). In a similar way, ANK17 (male, 22-26) compares social media lynchings with the death penalty in terms of both being irreversible punishments (Lynch Pos. 28). ADN8 (female, 18-21) and ANK7 (female, 22-26) both give the example of different disclosures of sexual harassment incidents by two women that create misunderstandings about the actual wrongdoers. In both cases, innocent people are targeted by the lynchers and get seriously affected by the lynchings on social media (Lynch Pos. 20; Lynch Pos. 38). In connection with possible misunderstandings on social media, IZM11 (male, 27-30) mentions fake news. According to IZM11, it is not easy to identify who is telling the truth about a conflict just by looking at unilateral declarations (Lynch Pos. 145). IZM15 (male, 22-26), likewise, draw attention to the fake news, especially on Twitter, that cause social media lynchings arising out of misinformation:

What we call fake news is especially prevalent on Twitter. People immediately reach for this news from there. Organizing on social media is so easy and I, indeed, support it. (...) However, sudden reactions without knowing the main point are possible. Especially for political news... There are serious smear campaigns either with government support or by the opposition. For both sides, there are serious smear campaigns. Because people don't investigate the content of the news, they just see what's been shared on Twitter; they just get what's written in 140 characters and don't read the rest of the news. Once they see the headline, they start lynching. People tend to misinformation. In fact, this is a serious problem (Lynch Pos. 151).

Freedom of expression is another concern in relation to social media lynch mobs among the participants. Since social media lynchings silence individuals by accusing them of thinking in the 'wrong' way, they are regarded as dangerous. CNK2 (female, 18-21) states that they are afraid of being lynched and getting arrested as a result of the public opinion shaped by social media lynch mobs when they express their opinions, especially political ones on social media. CNK2 compares the level of freedom of expression in Turkey and abroad. According to CNK2, being lynched and getting arrested because of one's thoughts is just a sign of backwardness:

To me, as long as it doesn't include swear or invective, everyone has the right to express themselves. Because there's what we call freedom of thought. At least, I believe so. But honestly, I refrain from expressing my political view or my opinion on a particular issue on social media. Because you can get arrested for it even though you don't insult anyone. We've seen several examples. I don't know

why people are so obsessed with this. (...) Because I don't think it's right, but people swear at Trump, yet nothing happens. I don't say, let's swear at all the politicians, but just don't lynch people when we express our thoughts. We should be able to say, 'Oh, maybe that's what's right for them'. It's 2020 now (Lynch Pos. 46).

While ERZ6 (male, 27-30) and IZM5 (male, 18-21) both in favor of freedom of expression and clearly condemn social media lynchings that attacks personal values and opinions (Lynch Pos. 71; Lynch Pos. 171), ANK13 (male, 22-26) approaches social media lynchings from the perspective of freedom of thought and its limits. ANK13 states lynching can be considered as a way of expressing one's thought and social reaction, yet it has limitations. For ANK13, social media lynchings include insults and labeling; they go over the limits of freedom of expression (Lynch Pos. 25). Correspondingly, IST16 (female, 22-26) associates social media lynchings with cancel culture and draws a parallel between the lynchers on social media and primitive tribes that throw arrows to airplanes out of their fear of unfamiliarity:

I'm definitely against cancel culture. What's more, I see it as barbarism. I think freedom of expression is sacred, and it's the most important thing for development. Expressing thoughts freely and opening discussion platforms... That's why I believe it must be limitless and always free. That's why I don't join when someone calls for spam. To me, spamming someone and making their account closed just looks like a primitive tribe is throwing arrows when they see an airplane (Laughs). Attacking or trying to block thought that you don't know... I see it this way (IST FG1 Pos. 319).

Finally, according to the majority of the participants, both of whom consider social media lynchings totally unnecessary and necessary to an extent, the lynchings against social media influencers and traditional media celebrities are the most unjust ones. They all agree that lynchings against influencers, YouTubers, and celebrities are totally useless and unnecessary. While IST17 (female, 22-26), IST20 (female, 22-26), and IST38 (female, 18-21) all advise to the lynchers not to follow the influencers and celebrities they find lynchable, they all give women influencers, YouTubers, and celebrities as examples of victims of a social media lynching. The participants who mention social media lynchings against them point out that when the target is a woman, they are more likely to be lynched. The reasons why they are lynched are their appearance in terms of whether or not they meet the expectations of standardized sense of beauty. IZM29 (female, 18-21), for instance, gives the example of Armine Harutyunyan, who is a Gucci model lynched on social media because of being 'too ugly to be a model' (Lynch Pos. 166). In

addition to that, IZM26 (male, 22-26), ERZ18 (male, 22-26), and ERZ21 (female, 22-26) reckon fame as an inevitable cause of social media lynchings. According to them, since celebrities, influencers, and YouTubers are famous and always in the limelight, they are in danger of being lynched more than anyone else. Social media lynching, in this sense, is like a curse of being famous:

Lynching on social media is really an effective way. Let's say, who cares if they lynch me on social media? But when they lynch famous people, they make their life miserable. (...) That's how I see lynch culture. When famous people do the wrongs we do, we lynch them without hesitation (Lynch Pos. 82).

3.4 Social Media Effect on Social Media Lynch Mobs

3.4.1 The Visibility Effect

Visibility is an essential feature of social media. Either anonymous or not, having a social media profile is enough to be visible on social media to an extent. Although visibility is one of the main reasons of having a profile and existing on social media for the purposes of self-expression, self-presentation, and self-promotion (van Dijck, 2013), it is not always a favorable outcome. When the issue is visibility, there is the other side of the coin. Though visibility seems to be something that users want to achieve regardless of what, there are also certain situations in that visibility might be a curse. Being made visible by other users, especially by furious lynch mobs, is probably one of the worst that could happen to a user on social media. It is the most important weapon to be used against alleged offenders in social media lynch mobs. The visibility algorithms of social media platforms, either intentionally or unintentionally, are used against the victim. Being shared by the members of a social media lynch mob, being commented on by each member, even being disliked too much makes the victim visible in front of all other users. However, this time visibility does not serve the victim's online self-presentation. Instead, the wrongdoer is mortified through being too visible (Meikle, 2016). At this point, ERZ24 (male, 18-20), for instance, gives the example of a man who was lynched because of kicking a stray dog and then being made visible on Instagram by another user who witnessed his wrongdoing (Lynch Pos. 88). In this sense, anyone could be lynched, and everyone is a potential victim of a lynching. Besides, it does not always have to be related

to commonly accepted wrongdoings, such as it was so in the case of kicking a stray dog. Since there is not a certain list of ‘don’ts’, it is not possible to foresee whether lynching is coming or not. From this point of view, DYB19 (female, 22-26) finds social media lynching is an unfortunate incident that would happen to a human being:

I don’t exactly know as I’ve never experienced it, but I bet it would be a bad thing to happen. There’s always a lynching on Twitter. There’s always trouble. In fact, one single word that you write can make you famous in a bad sense because of being lynched. For instance, you have an account with 100 followers. You just write something, and then you get lynched. It’s really bad (Lynch Pos. 59).

ANK3 (female, 22-26) mentions two comedians who were lynched on Twitter because of certain scenes from their shows in which one of them, Pınar Fidan, made a joke about Alawite people and the other, Emre Günsal, made fun of Atatürk and Mevlana. According to ANK3, if someone did not make those scenes visible on Twitter and let other people know about it, no one would notice any wrongdoing in those scenes and would not lynch the comedians (Lynch Pos. 33). IST4, on the other side, suggests that it is a part of social media lynching is as easy as winking due to the algorithms of social media platforms. Once a certain number of users posts about the same topic, the algorithm of social media platforms makes that topic/user more popular, and therefore more visible, than others. More and more users send posts about that topic or user since it is more visible and attracts attention. While a user expresses their thoughts on that popular topic/user individually, they suddenly become a part of a growing lynch mob. As IST4 (female, 27-30) asserts, a lyncher would not even notice that they are a member of a lynch mob:

In the meantime, I see that I’ve definitely already lynched some people. Because at the moment you tweeted about someone on Twitter and mentioned a subject, several people just like you might have mentioned that subject, too, and that’s what we call lynching exactly. It’s so easy to fall into this, and of course, it is horrible (Lynch Pos. 92-2).

Apart from being made visible on social media and getting lynched for various reasons, there is also another side of visibility, which is based on trying not to be visible on social media in order not to attract attention and not to be lynched. In an environment of instantaneous false alarms and being a potential victim of a lynch mob on social media push social media users to renounce visibility and look for ways to make themselves invisible. In order to protect themselves from social media lynch mobs, users go into isolation. Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann (1974) explains the social isolation individuals go into with their theory of the spiral of silence. According to the theory, individuals tend to

remain silent in situations when they come up against a counter-viewed group of people due to the fear of being excluded from the social group. Although Noelle-Neumann theorizes face to face interactions, there are several studies that interpret similar situations on social media with the spiral of silence theory (Porten-Che  and Eilders, 2015; Gearhart and Zhang, 2015; Luo et al., 2016; Ting, Zhang and Wang, 2016; Hoffmann and Luts, 2017; Duncan et al., 2020; Hakobyan, 2020). In contrast to the views that consider social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and so on as the new public sphere, researches show that these platforms indeed do not provide an open discussion for their users. Users do not prefer to reveal their opinions publicly when they think their opinions, especially political ones, are likely to be disagreed by other users compared to face-to-face communication (Hampton et al., 2014). The case is not different for the Turkish context. The study of Muratođlu Pehlivan (2014) suggests that the spiral of silence is active on social media platforms in Turkey. According to Muratođlu Pehlivan's study, social media users aged between 26 and 35 are the group that feels the social restrictions of daily life on social media the most. Accordingly, they are the ones who hesitate the most in sharing their opinion on controversial issues via social media platforms. In an environment that is based on visibility, people seek invisibility by remaining silent as they fear being made visible by counter-viewed groups who are the dominant ones on social media. The fear of being lynched simply reverses the operating logic of social media.

In a similar sense, IST7 (male, 22-26), IST9 (male, 22-26), and IZ19 (female, 22-26) all state that they are afraid of being lynched because of their opinions; therefore, they prefer not sharing them on social media. According to IST7, for instance, sharing a post on social media always carries risk, which they would not want to take (Lynch 94). Likewise, IST30 (female, 27-30), who is a content creator on their own YouTube channel about their life, expresses that they cannot share a vlog about their families everyday life during Ramadan, thinking that it would not fit into the expectations of certain people and cause being lynched:

We're in Ramadan, and my father drinks while my mother breaks fast at the same table. I'm concerned about the possible reactions I could get if I tell it on my YouTube channel in the current atmosphere in Turkey. It makes me think what could happen to me, to my mother and father, what would people accuse of us (Lynch Pos. 133-2).

While ANK14 (female, 18-21) states that they stopped tweeting about their thoughts on Twitter after witnessing that their friends were lynched on Twitter (Lynch Pos. 180), ANK3 (female, 22-26) tells that they used to write long posts on Facebook about philosophy and politics, but now they cogitate before even writing a single word in their posts, thinking that otherwise they could be lynched due to being misunderstood (Lynch Pos. 33). Similarly, ANK2 (female, 22-26), who closed their Twitter account after being targeted by a politician and lynched because of expressing their political view on a TV program, says that they use their new Twitter account just to retweet the tweets they like after realizing even though they really want to write about current issues in Turkey. Moreover, ANK2 adds that sending tweets that could be retweeted is always risky for the current polarized atmosphere of the country (Lynch Pos. 31).

The participants who keep themselves in the spiral of silence out of the fear of being lynched on social media either completely stop sharing their opinions on social media or prefer sharing them in a closed circle. IST32 (female, 22-26), who aims to be an academician, expresses their extreme fear of being lynched on social media. IST32 also states that they realized their fear earlier than lynch culture became widespread as today and quitted tweeting. Nowadays, they prefer using the story feature of Instagram to express their thoughts on political matters as they find the story feature much securer thanks to its temporariness and being sent from a private account that is available for a limited number of 'reliable' followers:

I'm extremely afraid of lynch culture. I'm terrified. I've seen so many bad lynchings. I mean, I'm really afraid of saying something wrong and being lynched. I've realized my fear of being lynched very early. I've realized it before lynch culture became prevalent. In fact, that's why I quitted tweeting (...) You can be blown to smithereens just because of a sentence in seconds. I've seen it so many times; that's the reason why I'm afraid of tweeting. Maybe that's why I like sending stories. It's the only place where I'm active in my micro circle and able to say 'I'm here, too' (Lynch Pos. 135).

While IST13 (female, 18-21) keeps their accounts private on social media to prevent themselves from being lynched after being a victim of a lynch mob while they were in high school (Lynch Pos. 120), ERZ6 (male, 27-30), who was imprisoned because of thought crime, tends to keep their thoughts to themselves after being insulted, labeled as terrorist and lynched even in WhatsApp groups (Lynch Pos. 70). According to CNK5

(female, 22-26), the fear of being lynched is so pervasive that we all feel it has changed even the way we think:

I think we are all afraid. We post photos accordingly. I mean, 'Do they say something about my appearance? Do I look ugly?'. This is also the pressure of lynching. Maybe they won't write it in public there. They can't write 'Oh, you're so ugly' since you don't have such a profile. But you think about the probability of people thinking in that way and stop posting your photos. I have friends who say, 'I'll post landscape photos. I won't post myself'. It doesn't have to be confessed. The way people think has changed drastically. 'Let's not post this; people may think in this way', this is the lynching itself. This is psychological lynching. That's why it doesn't have to be written. It's the pressure. The pressure is so bad (Lynch Pos. 50).

IST20 (female, 22-26), on the other hand, considers the lynchers as the people who break the spiral of silence. Once the silenced individuals realize that there are so many people on social media who think in the same way as they do, they feel capable of expressing their thoughts without being afraid of getting lynched. With the power of being the crowd, they feel themselves belonging to a certain social group that cannot be lynched thanks to their crowdedness:

I mean, I'm an individual who remains silent in order not to be marginalized. When I see people just like me on social media, I spill out my hatred. So, I break my spiral of silence and feel like belonging to a social group. I remember that I read it somewhere, 'Everyone is a child to an extent, and they want to be approved just like children.' We want our thoughts to be approved, too. We find ourselves supporters, and we support lynch culture more and more altogether (Focus Group Pos. 168).

3.4.2 The Anonymity Effect

The features of social media have a direct impact on the nature of social media lynchings. The ability to be anonymous on social media is especially important in terms of setting the tone for the lynch mobs on social media. The simplest definition that can be made for anonymity is "being without a name", which is when one cannot be known by their identity (Chauhan and Panda, 2015). However, thinking anonymity in relation to having or not having a name leaves out many situations. Based on this premise, Wallace (1999) defines anonymity as "noncoordinatability of traits in a given respect". According to Wallace's definition, when one is anonymous, "others are unable to relate a given feature of the person to other characteristics". The anonymous individual is not unknown but known for particular traits that cannot be traced back, or in other words, not coordinable to their other traits and, therefore, real identity. On social media, there are different levels

of anonymity. The lowest level of being anonymous is visual anonymity, which is when users are known to each other, but their physical characteristics are concealed. Pseudonymity, on the middle level, is when users use a username, which is not the real name of the user, accompanied by a profile picture or an avatar. Full anonymity, on the highest level, occurs when a user is identifiable neither with their names nor with their full profiles (Keipi, 2018). However, on the Internet, full anonymity is not possible easily. While surfing the Internet, users constantly leave clues about their identities, even though they do not reveal their physical appearances or their real names (Akdeniz, 2000). Their identities can be revealed through their IP addresses unless they use certain software or techniques to hide them (Akdeniz, 2000; Chauhan and Panda, 2015; Teaching Privacy Project, n.d.). Therefore, even though most of the users perceive themselves as anonymous, they are indeed pseudonymous technically. Though they believe that they are anonymous and aim to protect their real identity, third parties reveal their identities in case of any misbehavior (Fischer-Hübner, 2009). Statistics show that most of the users on the Internet believe that the online environments make users more anonymous (Duggan, 2014). Being anonymous, or believing so, encourages users to behave in ways they would not do if they knew that their behaviors will be linked to their offline identities. Anonymity creates the illusion of shame-free zones that users feel unrestrained (Ponessa, 2013).

According to the participants, anonymity is one of the main reasons for social media lynchings. IZM5 (male, 18-21), for instance, says that they would not join in any lynch mob since their accounts on social media are linkable to their offline identity. As far as IZM5 is concerned, the lynchers are mostly anonymous users (Lynch Pos. 171). IZM21 (male, 18-21), on the other side, thinks that lynchings take place on social media almost entirely; and lynching in the classical sense is much rarer. The reason why lynchings happen on social media is the fake accounts that people create for themselves to bluster about other people, as IZM21 reckons as incapableness (Lynch Pos. 158). In a similar way, ADN18 (female, 22-26) associates lynching people on social media by using fake accounts with the fear of showing one's face (Lynch Pos. 10). To ERZ20 (male, 22-26), social media lynchers engorge themselves with the comfort of being in front of a screen instead of facing the person they are lynching:

There's this thing in our society. When someone posts something good or bad, there are only one or two proper comments for it. The rest of them just lynch that person while they are sitting and holding their mobile phones and their keyboards. Even if there's nothing to lynch, they lynch people seriously thanks to the comfort of sitting behind a keyboard; and I think it's not nice behavior. People share something on social media by showing courage. The lynchers, on the other side, lynch them recklessly and intrepidly without coming face to face with that person (Lynch Pos. 85).

As Suler (2004) suggests, anonymity is one of the main factors that create the online disinhibition effect. From a similar perspective, IZM30 (male, 18-21) conveys that being anonymous on social media paves the way for social media lynchings (Focus Group Pos. 324). IZM2 (male, 22-26) calls the social media lynchers 'maroon keyboards' referencing maroon berets, implying that the lynchers are as courageous as maroon berets when it comes to lynching people, yet they get their courage from hiding behind their keyboards which is simply a sign of cowardice:

Not everyone deserves to be lynched. They give people a hard time because of nугae. We call these people maroon keyboards. They rely on their keyboards. The people who don't have the courage to face you offline can bluster about you on social media. They say whatever they want to say since no one knows who they are. (...) They are anonymous users. They use silly names; use a random profile picture and judge you without giving their real names (Lynch Pos. 155).

IST29 (female, 22-26), who has their own channel on YouTube comments about lynching culture on social media based on a cyberharassment incident they experienced that people on social media can be so relentless while they make comments and act like a different person than they are in real life (Lynch 138). Even though IST29 was not affected that much by the cyberharassment they experienced, there are people who are harmed psychologically in an irreversible way. DYB17 (female, 22-26) gives the example of a young woman who committed suicide after receiving too many harmful comments because of her appearance on a Q&A platform based on the anonymity of the questioners. According to DYB17, even though the lynchers on social media lynch people virtually, it does not make the harm they give not existing.

I think lynch culture on social media is a serious problem, and it shocks me that people are so relentless. I mean, yes, it's social media. It's based on virtuality. But the person in front of the screen is still a human being. A real human being... It doesn't make anything virtual just because you write it on social media or in cyberspace. The feelings it awakens are real. People don't think... I mean, if they came face to face with that woman, they wouldn't make those comments, but they just write whatever they want by hiding themselves. They lynch (Lynch Pos. 57).

While CNK11 (female, 18-21) declares that they approve any decision taken by the government about banning the use of anonymous accounts on social media (Lynch Pos. 42), ERZ6 (male, 27-30) draw attention to the fear of being arrested because of a post one sends on social media. According to ERZ6, it is the main reason why people prefer using anonymous accounts in Turkey, yet it leaves the door open for malevolent people so that it becomes impossible to know the identities of lynchers on social media (Lynch Pos. 72).

Speaking of anonymity, ADN8 (female, 18-21) associates Twitter with social media lynch mobs. For ADN8, Twitter is the most convenient platform for social media lynchings since it is possible to create fake accounts and attack people anonymously on Twitter:

Social media lynching is prevalent on Twitter. Because people don't know each other there, you can use a different name. For instance, I can use a photo of an actor as my profile photo. I give a totally silly name and write whatever I want. Because you are invisible there, you create a new identity for yourself on Twitter, and you can say anything you want with that identity (Lynch Pos. 21).

While IST31 (male, 22-26) states that Twitter is a platform of splitting out hatred against people and lynching them (TikTok FG Pos. 147), similar to ADN8, another participant in the focus group we run on TikTok compares Twitter with TikTok conveying that Twitter is a place where people express their opinion with impunity and lynch people just to criticize even a tiny detail (TikTok FG Pos. 144). Besides, ANK10 (female, 27-30) makes a comparison between Twitter and Clubhouse in terms of the feasibility of the platforms for social media lynchings. In this sense, ANK10 expects that Clubhouse will not be a platform where social media lynchings are widespread as it is since the platform does not allow anonymous users, and the real identities and networks of the users are the source of prestige on Clubhouse (ANK FG Pos. 267). Generally speaking, Twitter is the most mentioned platform by far, along with social media lynchings during the interviews and focus groups. After Twitter, Instagram is the second most mentioned platform, followed by YouTube and Facebook. In addition to the internationally used platforms, Ekşi Sözlük is also a frequently mentioned social media platform from Turkey, as shown in the graph below.

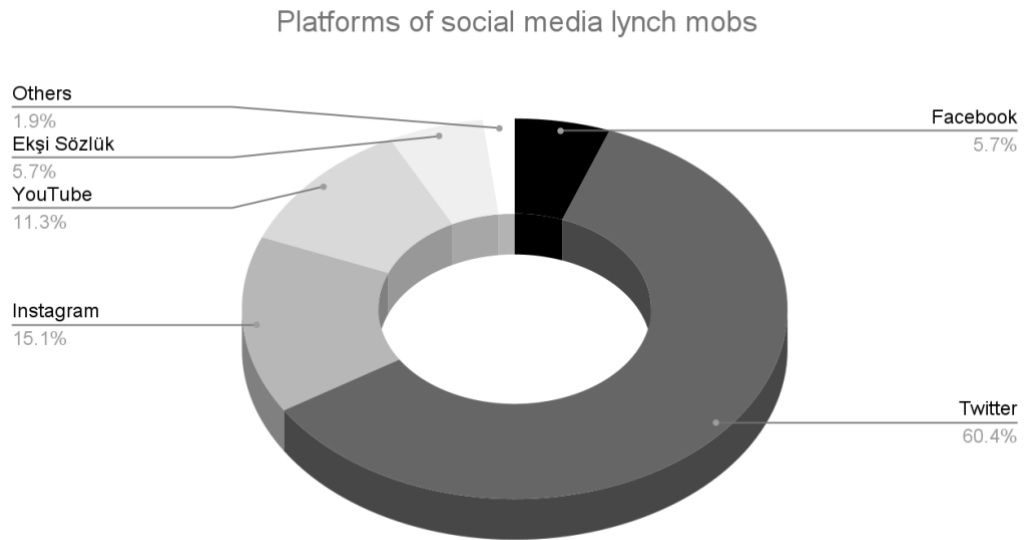


Figure 3.2: Platforms of social media lynch mobs mentioned by the participants

3.5 From Classical Lynching to Social Media Lynching

Here, by looking at the responses of the participants and following the conceptualization of Trottier (2017) and the categorization of Senechal de la Roche (1996), I conceptualize the phenomenon of social media lynching as a collective form of violence with individual liability, unorganized, spontaneous, and non-permanent; occurs on social media because of any alleged offense takes place online or offline; affected by the already existing social polarization in society; and takes its power from anonymity and visibility features of social media.

The concept of digital vigilantism by Trottier (2017) opens a new way to think about the different forms of collective violence in a digitized world. Trottier discusses vigilantism in the context of the Internet and defines it as a form of repetitive and organized collective violence that citizens resort to violence with the aim of taking justice into their own hands. With the conceptualization they make, Trottier sees digital vigilantism as a different form of collective violence that is different from vigilantism, though it is founded on the conventional version. While speaking of digital vigilantism, Trottier considers lynching as a method of vigilante activities. However, based on the categorization of collective

violence by Senechal de la Roche (1996), I propose that lynching on the Internet is a distinct categorization from digital vigilantism. Even though digital vigilantes often resort to lynchings to punish alleged wrongdoers, there is also one time only lynchings, which we cannot discuss under the umbrella of digital vigilantism. For the social media lynchings, I suggest updating the concept of lynching based on the parameters Senechal de la Roche uses as below:

Classical lynchings (Senechal de la Roche, 1996)	Social media lynchings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Unorganized ● Spontaneous ● One time only, non-permanent ● Individual liability ● Social polarization ● Occurs in physical space ● Use of physical violence mostly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Unorganized ● Spontaneous ● One time only, non-permanent ● Individual liability ● Occurs in cyberspace ● Use of psychological violence mostly ● Affected by the social polarization in society ● Based on visibility ● Powered by anonymity

Table 3.1: Classical lynching vs. Social media lynching

According to this updated version of Senechal de la Roche’s categorization, social media lynching is the collective violence by citizens responding to any deviant behavior of another citizen by taking action on digital platforms, especially on social media. The aim can be to ensure that the legal process is carried out on the wrongdoer who is thought to have committed a crime, or it can also include the use of unlawful justice practices. Though it is moralistic, it displays various types of cybercrime such as online harassment, threats, cyber stalking, etc. The cyber culture here makes it easier to share the proof for alleged offenses. Once the offense is proven, the wrongdoer is punished by making the action and the wrongdoer visible and open to criticism, which is most of the time in the form of shaming. The visibility earned because of a social media lynching campaign is not favorable visibility that people could seek to have on digital platforms. The social media lynchings, who make the wrongdoer visible via naming and shaming on different online platforms take their victim in the middle of a circle to do ‘what is necessary’ in front of all other lynchings and witnesses, just like they would do in a classical lynching. As a result of lynch culture on social media, each user is now responsible for looking about, detecting deviant behaviors, and fine it by making the deviant behavior and the wrongdoer visible through user-generated content shared on digital platforms. It works in

accordance with the neoliberal trend of responsible citizens (Favarel-Garrigues, Tanner, and Trottier, 2020). In this sense, social media provides an excellent environment for lynching as it enables interpersonal communication as well as acting as a community, removing time and space boundaries among the community's participants, providing the opportunity to act spontaneously, and preparing the ground for using anonymity as a shield and visibility as a weapon. Social media has transformed every user into a potential lyncher for the purpose of securing the status quo, the continuation of the social order, and the opportunity to fend off potential threats in an instant, timeless and spaceless way.

So far, I reflected on how social media lynching is conceptualized by the youth in Turkey and how this conceptualization is understood in regard to the polarization in the society. In the next chapter, I will scrutinize how polarization in society is instrumentalized in terms of class and power positions in Turkey by studying a recent social media lynching case.

4. UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL MEDIA LYNCHING

Following my conceptualization based on the responds of the participants and the literature, I will study the case of MasterChef Türkiye in this chapter to demonstrate how a social media lynching proceeds. The reason why this specific case is chosen to understand social media lynching is that it was one of the most commented-on social media lynching case during the time we conducted in-depth interviews and focus groups with our participants. It represents an example of social media lynching in terms of the social polarization in society that established the ground for such a lynching, visibility feature of social media that functioned as the trigger of the case, and anonymity both in-crowd and on social media that increased the severity of the lynching. Moreover, it shows how social media lynchings can be used as a tool of power struggle and social control by the lynchers.

4.1 The Case: The Lynching of Masterchef Türkiye

As the case of MasterChef Türkiye demonstrates Twitter is one of the platforms that social media lynchings occur the most. MasterChef Türkiye is the Turkish adaptation of the competitive cooking show of the British series Masterchef. The show is aired on TV8, which was bought by the media proprietor and entrepreneur Acun Ilıcalı in 2013 (Ilıcalı, 2013). In the 2020 season, the show was aired between July 2020 and January 2021. On the week of 21st of November, Ilıcalı tweeted about the disqualification of a contestant, Uğur Yılmaz Deniz, because of the contestant's libelous and abusive tweets that they tweeted almost eight years ago (Ilıcalı, 2020). This one of the most striking case of social media lynch mobs in Turkey demonstrates that the ways in which the subject of the lynch could swing as Uğur Yılmaz Deniz, the disqualified contestant, Acun Ilıcalı, the owner of the channel, and the chefs in the show were simultaneously lynched on various social media platforms.

The tweets of Deniz were targeting various groups such as such women, Kurds, LGBTI+ people, religious people, the AKP government, the supporters of the football teams Fenerbahçe and Galatasaray as well as Acun Ilıcalı himself (uğur yılmaz deniz, 2020), which are already polarized groups in Turkish society. The tweets were made visible by

an unknown Twitter user(s), engaged the attention of the TV crew, and resulted in the disqualification of Deniz. However, the disqualification was not the only consequence of the eight-year-old tweets. A lynch mob had already started before Ilıcalı tweeted about the disqualification. Deniz was accused of using vulgarities and insulting the mentioned social groups above. Most of the top tweets tweeted between the dates of 20th of November and 22nd of November were targeting Deniz, including tweets that insulted him, provoked others to insult and harm him, and used dark humor to humiliate him (Twitter, 2020a). While attacking Deniz, they often disseminated the tweets they were angry about and caused the lynch mob to get more and more crowded. For instance, @Kara15059 is a user who disseminates the tweets of Deniz. While doing that, the user clearly insults Deniz and the ones who support him and accuse them of having no dignity.

Tweet 1 - @Kara15059 November 21, 2020: “He swore at everyone somehow we have a common point, there is no human dignity in who supports him.



Screenshot 1 Tweet by @Kara15059

After the first outrage against Uğur Yılmaz Deniz, concentrated after the tweet of Acun Ilıcalı announcing the disqualification of the contestant, the second lynch mob was against Acun Ilıcalı himself because of the next episode of MasterChef Türkiye on November 29, 2020. As the show was recorded broadcasting, the episode right after Ilıcalı’s tweet was a regular episode and did not mention anything about Deniz’s tweets. In the episode on November 29, on the other hand, there was a scene in which three chefs of the show were putting pressure on Uğur Yılmaz Deniz emotionally in front of all the MasterChef Türkiye

contestants and audience on TV (MasterChef Türkiye, 2020). In the scene, the chefs call for Deniz to explain himself. Deniz defends himself as being too young and naive, having family issues, and, therefore, being stressed out during the time that he tweeted those controversial tweets causing social media to lynch against him. He cries and apologizes to the chefs, to the crew of the show, and to the audience of the show who were watching him on TV. He was shown for minutes while crying. After this highly dramatized (with music, repetitions and slow motions) scene, the lynch against Uğur Yılmaz Deniz turns against Acun Ilıcalı and the chefs of the show, accusing them of using Deniz's disadvantage for the sake of getting more ratings. Most of the top tweets tweeted between the dates of 29th of November and 30th of November were targeting Acun Ilıcalı this time (Twitter, 2020b). Apart from the tweets reacting to the use of Deniz's emotional state to get ratings, there are several examples of supporting Uğur Yılmaz Deniz and suggesting that he was too young while doing wrong, insulting and humiliating Acun Ilıcalı for being a greedy media proprietor and for his former relationships, as well as calling out for canceling the show. The user @turkanackk declares that they will boycott the show and will not watch it anymore because of the wrong Acun Ilıcalı did. According to the user, Deniz is innocent and should not drop his head even though he sent those tweets years ago. On the other side, Ilıcalı and the chefs of the show must be ashamed of what they did to Deniz in front of the audience. They are accused of using Deniz's wrong on behalf of their interests.

Tweet 2 - @turkanackk
November 30, 2020:
“MasterChef Türkiye is over for us from now on! Don't drop your head, Uğur, you are not the one who is supposed to be ashamed. They are the ones who used you as bait.”



Screenshot 2 Tweet by @turkanackk

The users @Kubra76574413 and @tuzruhy both use Deniz's public apology he posted on Instagram while conveying their tweets. Both users consider Deniz as a child who is innocent and not responsible for his actions. Instead, they both find Acun Ilıcalı and the chefs of the show guilty, suggesting that they are the ones who let people lynch Deniz on social media. The potential anger against Deniz turns into compassion thanks to the tears he shed on the TV show as a man. It was Ilıcalı who let all the audience, the 80 million Turkish audiences as it is stated so, watch a man crying in contrast to the gendered discourse of 'men do not cry'. Hence, it was Ilıcalı and his crew who must be punished because of using a man's tears in exchange for more ratings, according to the users.

Tweet 3 - @Kubra76574413 November 30, 2020: You were a child, but the ones who did this to you are ratfink!"

Tweet 4 - @tuzruhy November 30, 2020: everyone who puts this child in front of the public this way is much more guilty than Uğur, who sent these tweets."



Screenshot 3 Tweets by @Kubra76574413 and @tuzruhy

In addition to being one of the most tweeted lynching incidents on Twitter, the case of MasterChef Türkiye was also a popular example of social media lynching among our participants both during in-depth interviews and focus groups. The focus group we run with the participants from Istanbul, whom we had also interviewed before, was on 6 December 2020, which was the next week after the episode in which Uğur Yılmaz Deniz was disqualified. One of the participants of the focus group, IST4 (female, 27-30), finds the disqualification of Uğur Yılmaz Deniz and the lynching against him absurd and unacceptable for freedom of expression, considering the tweets the participant sent years ago just like Deniz did. What is more unacceptable for IST4 is the action Ilıcalı took on the issue. For IST4, making Deniz's tweets visible by announcing his disqualification on

Twitter first and making it even more visible by televising it is not just against freedom of expression, but also dangerous in terms of siccing the furious people on Deniz.

I don't know what Uğur wrote exactly. I didn't see his tweets that much; I just came across some. Just like you said right before, they were tweets that Uğur swore at women, at an ethnic group, at almost 60 or 70 million of the whole Turkey. Yet, there is the issue of freedom of expression. It's his right and if I looked at the tweets I wrote ten years ago, I'd be in shame, too. Yes, we should have freedom of expression always, however it's really a gray zone. I don't know. Uğur shouldn't be judged with his tweets, of course, especially on TV and in front of millions of people. It is unacceptable to make explicit his tweets, that may even go unnoticed otherwise, on the TV once more and throwing him to the hands of the angry mob (IST4, IST FG1 Pos. 320).

As shown in the table below, the outrage against Uğur Yılmaz Deniz and Acun Ilıcalı on Twitter fit into the category of social media lynching:

Classical lynchings (Senechal de la Roche, 1996)	Social media lynchings	The lynchings of Uğur Yılmaz Deniz and Acun Ilıcalı
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unorganized • Spontaneous • One time only, non-permanent • Individual liability • Social polarization • Occurs in physical space • Use of physical violence mostly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unorganized • Spontaneous • One time only, non-permanent • Individual liability • Occurs in cyberspace • Use of psychological and cyberviolence mostly • Based on visibility • Powered by anonymity • Affected by the social polarization in society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Unorganized ✓ Spontaneous ✓ One time only, not permanent ✓ Individual liability ✓ Occurs in cyberspace ✓ Use of psychological and cyber violence only ✓ Affected by the social polarization in society ✓ Based on visibility ✓ Powered by anonymity

Table 4.1: Categorization of The MasterChef Türkiye Case

The reason why Uğur Yılmaz Deniz was lynched is strictly related to the social polarization in Turkish society. Each social group that Deniz attacked with his tweets are different poles of a controversial issue in Turkey. First, Deniz insults the supporters of Fenerbahçe, Galatasaray, and Bursaspor. Considering the fact that football is a matter of controversy and polarization, the reaction against Deniz's tweets is understandable. Second, Deniz targets the Kurds racistly. The Turk-Kurd conflict is not a new problem in the Turkish context. The racist tweets of Deniz are lynched not only by the Kurds but also

by the antiracist Twitter users. Finally, Deniz insults women explicitly. He uses gendered discourse in almost all of his revealed tweets. All the vulgarities he uses include gendered expressions. His insults against women can be regarded as another matter of polarization in Turkey. To give an example, The user @shekirinthorunu uses the picture of a bastinado in their first tweet depicting each drubber as one of the social groups that Uğur Yılmaz Deniz insulted in his old tweets. Kurds, the supporters of Fenerbahçe football club, the supporters of the Justice and Development Party, women, the supporters of Galatasaray football club, and women in hijab are the social groups depicted in the first picture. The second photo the user uses is much more significant in terms of how the outrage against Uğur Yılmaz Deniz is perceived by the other Twitter users. @shekirinthorunu uses the photo of a classical lynch incident in a martyr funeral, the one against Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, who is the party leader of Republican People’s Party. The tweet depicts Uğur Yılmaz Deniz as Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, and the lynchers as the social groups Uğur Yılmaz Deniz tweeted about, implying that the list of the groups is very long. As it is so in the photo of Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, Uğur Yılmaz Deniz is encircled by the lynchers and attacked relentlessly, too. The user-generated content of @shekirinthorunu shows how social media lynchings can be linked with classical, physical lynchings and how they are perceived as the cyber version of classical lynchings.



Screenshot 4 Tweet by @shekirinthorunu

Tweet 5 - @shekirinthorunu

November 22, 2020: “Turkey against #uguryilmazdeniz”

Tweet 6 - @shekirinthorunu November 22, 2020: “Updated the list, it is very crowded.”

The social polarization that results in the lynching of Acun Ilıcalı is more of a class-based one. Acun Ilıcalı, as being a wealthy entrepreneur and media proprietor, who holds power and has relationships with power elites thanks to his position, is lynched by the ‘not as powerful as him’ crowd. In most of the tweets, there is a clear reference to his wealth and greed for more ratings, and therefore, more money. One of the elements of social polarization is inequality. The more the sides of a lynching incident are unequal, the more severe it is expected to be (Senechal de la Roche, 1996). Similarly, in the cases of Uğur Yılmaz Deniz and Acun Ilıcalı when there is a huge class difference between the lynchers and the victim, the lynch gets more and more violent. While the lynchers attack Deniz with only his old tweets, they attack Acun Ilıcalı not only because he disqualified and used the disadvantage of Deniz for his own interest but also with his family and private life. The reaction against Ilıcalı is much more severe than the one against Deniz. While the inequality principle of Senechal de la Roche suits well for the lynching of Deniz, when the aggression is directed at Acun Ilıcalı, who is not a member of a subordinated group and class, it simply does not work. Both in terms of the labor and management relationship between Deniz and Ilıcalı, and the class he represents, Ilıcalı is in the position of superior. While in such a case it is very possible to physically lynch Uğur Yılmaz Deniz, it is almost not even a matter of discussion to physically lynch Acun Ilıcalı because of his wrongdoing against Deniz. Yet, on social media, they are equal in terms of being lynched. In addition to that, the aggression against Ilıcalı is much more severe, and the lynching of him lasts much longer than Deniz, whom the lynchers consider as one of them. For instance, the user @oguzerrr approaches the issue from a class-based point of view. He puts Ilıcalı in the position of the rich and Deniz in the position of the poor. According to the user, even though what both Deniz and Ilıcalı did is immoral, people lynch Deniz while they do not say anything for the immoral behaviors of Ilıcalı.



Screenshot 5 Tweet by @oguzerrr

Tweet 7 - @oguzerrr November 30, 2020: “Acun victimized the child for rating.” (On the picture, the user posts: “If the poor have an illegitimate child, it will be called baseborn while the illegitimate child of the rich is called the fruit of a forbidden union. If the poor run after women, he will be called a pervert, while the rich doing the same are called womanizers. If the poor gather, they will be considered as a gang, while the rich do the same, it will be called a meeting. If the poor steal, it will be considered theft; while the rich do the same, it will be named corruption. Even the terms change according to the money one got in their pocket.”)

4.2 The Visibility Effect on The Case of MasterChef Türkiye

Social media lynchings start with visibility. It is used as a weapon in social media lynch mobs (Trottier, 2017). The tweets that Uğur Yılmaz Deniz sent eight years ago, even the ones that he, himself, forgot, made visible on social media. Once his controversial tweets became visible, social media lynchings gathered around Deniz. They were retweeted again and again. Even when they became unavailable, screenshots of his tweets were disseminated so that Deniz got more and more visible than ever. While he was only one of the contestants in MasterChef Türkiye, he suddenly became one of the trending topics in the country. Retweets, comments, the use of hashtags for the incident made Uğur Yılmaz Deniz not just an ordinary contestant on TV, but a trending topic in the country for almost two weeks. Even though it is not the very first tweet that made Uğur Yılmaz Deniz’s alleged wrongdoings visible on Twitter, there are several tweets that contains screenshots of Deniz’s old tweets which are still available even though Uğur Yılmaz Deniz deleted those tweets and the first ‘stone-thrower’ disappeared.



Screenshot 6 Tweet by @Darkwebhaber

The tweet of @Darkwebhaber, for instance, preserves Deniz’s tweets by sharing their screenshots.

Tweet 8 - @Darkwebhaber: “The tweets of Uğur that drew a rebuff”

Becoming made visible on Twitter is such a malady that it becomes subjected to dark humor. The tweet by @SRKNCFTC indicates in a witty way that the other contestants in MasterChef Türkiye started to check their old tweets to see if there is anything that could be lynched just after the lynching of Uğur Yılmaz Deniz.



Screenshot 7 Tweet by @SRKNCFTC

Tweet 9 - @SRKNCFTC: “The rest of the contestants are checking their old tweets.”

For Acun Ilıcalı, the visibility principle does not work in the same way as it was so with Deniz. Ilıcalı, as being one of the well-known figures in Turkish TV, is a person who was already visible. The reason why Acun Ilıcalı was lynched is the way he made the alleged wrongdoing of Uğur Yılmaz Deniz visible. First, Ilıcalı announced that Uğur Yılmaz Deniz was disqualified via the tweet he sent from his account which has millions of followers, so that anyone who was following him got curious about the reason. By this means and the other users on Twitter who already started to lynch Deniz, the old tweets of Deniz became more and more visible. Second, the broadcasting of the long and agitating disqualification scene of Uğur Yılmaz Deniz on TV made the issue



Screenshot 8 Tweets by @bluespace1

visible to the ones who even did not hear it on social media. Hence, Acun Ilıcalı was accused of scapegoating Deniz and making him a direct target for the lynchers on social media. The tweets of @bluespace1 and the comment on their tweets demonstrates how the visibility factor in social media lynching worked for Acun Ilıcalı.

Tweet 10 - @bluespace1: “Hope you are happy Acun for throwing such a young child to the hands of the public so that he gets lynched.”

Tweet 11 - @bluespace1: “Of course I don’t stick up for Uğur’s tweets, but I don’t either approve him getting stigmatized.”

4.3 The Anonymity Effect on The Case of MasterChef Türkiye

Anonymity works in two ways in social media lynchings, as it is so in the case of MasterChef Türkiye. On the one hand, social media lynchings provides in-group anonymity since it is a form of collective behavior. On the other hand, as it occurs on social media, the lynchers benefit from the anonymity feature of social media while they resort to violence. It both ways, anonymity is a factor that makes lynchings more severe and lynchers more reckless while attacking the alleged wrongdoer.

4.3.1 Anonymity in Crowd

The lynchers in the case of MasterChef Türkiye lynching forms two different groups, or in other terms two different crowds. First, there is the lyncher group against Uğur Yılmaz Deniz, who are furious at Deniz because of the vulgar and racist tweets he sent eight years ago. Members of various social groups, such as women, Kurds, supporters of Fenerbahçe and Galatasaray football clubs, etc., unites against Deniz and aggroup ‘the ones against Uğur Yılmaz Deniz’ on Twitter and on other social media platforms. On the other side, there are people who are not in favor of the lynching action and considers Deniz’s tweets in terms of freedom of expression. Yet the ones against Deniz are much more furious, outnumber, visible, and therefore, feel more powerful than the other group. They consider themselves as being the members of the lynch mob. Thanks to the anonymity they gain as being a member of a crowd, they shift their individual identities with their collective identity in the lynch mob. They do not feel accountable for their hateful and harmful

tweets individually. This new pattern of behavior is not regarded as antisocial by the members of the crowd, but as normal for the new circumstances (Postmes and Turner, 2015; Vilanova et. al, 2017). According to them, if there is someone to blame for their actions in the lynch mob, it is the collective, not individual members of the crowd. Their action would be punishable if they were not members of such groups yet being in the group and the context makes them think that their actions are in the right, and therefore, must not be subjected to any punishment (Postmes and Turner, 2015). Whether or not they are ‘really’ anonymous on the social media platform they use, they do not find it risky to send vehement and harmful tweets about Uğur Yılmaz Deniz since they are anonymous to the out-group thanks to their collective identity (Spears, 2017). The tweets below are some examples of how members of the lynch mob against Uğur Yılmaz Deniz shifts their individual identity and become anonymous to the out-group, though they are not anonymous on Twitter in technical term.

On the tweet that @PltSelma, who is a non-anonymous user, disseminates one of the tweets Deniz insults the football team Galatasaray, the user clearly provokes other users to pay Deniz back for his insulting tweets to various social groups in Turkey. Moreover, the user explicitly swears back at Deniz, even though they are angry at him because of his abusive tweets.

Tweet 12 - @PltSelma November 22, 2020: “You are the biggest son of a b.tch!!! There is nothing left that ribald sweat at!!! He swears at sports, art, politics, race, gender, and all, yet he is on TV recklessly!!! Disqualification is not enough; these swear words must be paid back!!!”



Screenshot 9 Tweet by @PltSelma

Even though the user @NevafSen uses gives clear clues about their real identity on Twitter, the anonymity and identity shift in the collective attack to Uğur Yılmaz Deniz gives them the power and courage to clearly insult Deniz; and also provoke other users, indicating that Deniz should already be murdered.



Tweet 13 - @NevafSen November 22, 2020: “Here another social media

Screenshot 10 Tweet by @NevafSen

influencer on social media. If you make these baseborn heroes on TV, we will continue getting in trouble. It is an insult to the world that such a person still takes breath...”

After the episode in which Uğur Yılmaz Deniz is disqualified airs on TV, the lynching turns against Acun Ilıcalı and the chefs in the show. This time round, the lynch mob against Uğur Yılmaz Deniz dissolves and there emerges the lynch mob against Acun Ilıcalı, who supports Uğur Yılmaz Deniz, who were lynched one week ago. Even though it is not for sure and requires further attention that they are the same people who lynches Uğur Yılmaz Deniz and then Acun Ilıcalı, it is for sure that the latter group shares a similar collective identity and the same behavior pattern with the former. What is different from the previous lynching is that the lynch mob attacks Acun Ilıcalı, who is a powerful media boss and a member of a superior class that Uğur Yılmaz Deniz is not. In contrary to what Senechal de la Roche (1996) suggests, members of subordinate groups come together to lynch a member of a superior group thanks to the power they get from lynching him on social media. Besides, being anonymous in the collective identity makes them tweet their feelings and thoughts they would not tell direct to Acun Ilıcalı in person. They rely on the decreased accountability in the social media lynch mob they belong to (Spears, 2017). The tweets below are some examples of how members of the lynch mob against Acun Ilıcalı and the chefs in the TV show shift their individual identity and become anonymous to the out-group, though they are not anonymous on social media.

The tweet by @halukmollaosman, who another non-anonymous user on Twitter, calls for boycott for the TV show with the same reason of using Deniz's wrongdoing as an advantage for getting more ratings. @halukmollaosman accuses Ilıcalı and the chefs of the TV show of being greedy people who want more and more money so that they can use even the tears of an innocent 'child'. Another non-anonymous user, @m_turhan78, agrees with the user and comments that Acun Ilıcalı is the one who must shame himself. Unlike the tweets attacking Deniz for his wrongdoing before the TV episode, Deniz is now considered an innocent and frustrated child. While Ilıcalı was recognized as a fair producer who disqualified a contestant who crossed the line with his misbehavior, now he is the one who is accused of misbehaving against an innocent person.

Tweet 14 -
@halukmollaosman
November 30, 2020:
"#uguryilmazdeniz
will be disqualified.
He earns ratings
thanks to the child for
one week. To make
matters worse, he will
precede his reputation
by shaming the child
in front of millions of
people. Shame on you.
This TV show
shouldn't be watched
anymore. Greedy so-
called chefs."



Screenshot 11 Tweet by @halukmollaosman

The user @duygnfb who can be traced back to their offline identities, insult Ilıcalı by referring his former and current relationships. They remind of his former relationship with

Şeyma Subaşı, who was under 20 when Acun Ilıcalı was in a relationship while he was married to Zeynep Yılmaz before 2016. They also accuse him of dating women under 20, although he is a man over 50. Even though his relationships are not related to what Deniz did on Twitter, they approach it as it is a moral issue, and, according to them, Ilıcalı does not have the right to judge a person as immoral since he is already one due to the immorality in his former and current relationships.

Tweets 15 - @duygncfb November 30, 2020: “You can impregnate your contestant while you are married, but if you swear on social media while you are adolescent, it’ll find you 10 YEARS. Because it’s MORAL :))))))”



Screenshot 12 Tweet by @duygncfb

4.3.1 Anonymity on Social Media

In the case of MasterChef Türkiye lynching, the anonymous and pseudonymous users resorted to toxic disinhibition and recklessly tweeted about both victims. They got their courage from their dissociative anonymity, believing that they were not responsible for their behaviors online, and it was not possible to link their hostile revelations with their personal identity. They felt certain that their online persona was not who they are indeed. As they were not face to face with their target, were invisible and communicating in texts, they had the courage to express the feelings or thoughts that they would not do when they were offline and they were much more comfortable with sending hateful tweets (Suler, 2004). The tweet of @XatunaKurdan, who is an anonymous user on Twitter, contains the same swearwords with the tweet of Uğur Yılmaz Deniz in which he swears at Kurds. By quoting Deniz’s tweet, @XatunaKurdan swears back at Deniz without hesitation thanks to being anonymous on Twitter.



Screenshot 13 Tweet by @XatunaKurdan

Similarly, @ulkecegerginiz tweets in an insulting way about Acun Ilıcalı regarding his private life under auspices of being anonymous on Twitter. @ulkecegerginiz reminds Ilıcalı of his ex-relationships and utter their wish Ilıcalı to be disqualified just like Deniz was from the TV show. From their anonymous accounts, @ulkecegerginiz expresses their thoughts in a way that they would not do so if they were in direct conversation with Acun Ilıcalı or if they were on Twitter with a real name that could be associated with their offline identity.

Tweets 17 - @ulkecegerginiz November 30, 2020: “When we look at Acun who tries to give a moral lesson, impregnate your mistress while you are married, become lovers with girls under 20. Who will disqualify you from the country”



Screenshot 14 Tweet by @ulkecegerginiz

5. CONCLUSION

Social media lynching is a recent phenomenon, yet we are already familiar with it. It is so common that each user, and even nonusers, are at the risk of being a victim of social media lynch mobs. Accordingly, in this study, social media lynchings are studied from the perspective of collective violence, collective behavior, and social media theories. Social media lynchings are conceptualized with the collective violence theories of Black (Baumgartner and Black, 1987; Black, 1993) and Senechal de la Roche (1996; 2001); collective behavior theories of Postmes and Turner (2015); online disinhibition theory of Suler (2004); and digital vigilantism concept by Trottier (2017); and spiral of silence theory by Noelle-Neumann (1974). Based on the literature, I studied the lynching of MasterChef Türkiye took place in 2020 in Turkey as a case so as to illustrate how a typical social media lynching occurs. The case shows that social media lynching is a form of spontaneous collective violence with individual liability that involves various types of cyberviolence and takes its power from the social media itself, with its features related to participation, anonymity, and visibility. It is fueled by the social polarization in society. In a society where social polarization is high, it is more likely for social media lynchings to be widespread and internalized. The internalization of social media lynchings is so high that it is favored and justified by the majority of the young people we interviewed. Although some of the interviewees find social media lynching as unnecessary and pointless when it is directed to certain people such as celebrities and social media influencers, they also find it acceptable when it comes to issues related to social justice and social control.

In order to find out how youth in Turkey perceives lynch culture and social media lynchings, I used certain parts of semi-structured in-depth interviews with 183 young people between the ages of 18 and 30 from eight different cities in Turkey, which are Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Adana, Çanakkale, Diyarbakır, Erzurum, and Trabzon, which I conducted as a member of research team for the project titled “An Investigation of New Media and Cultural Experience Practices of Youth in Turkey”. In addition to that, I did a focus group on lynching culture on social media with four young people between the ages of 22 and 30 from Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir. While the interviews were more inclusive

and lynched culture was a part of them, the focus group was all about lynchings on social media.

After transcribing the in-depth interviews and the focus group, I conducted discourse analysis on them. The results of the discourse analysis show that:

(1) Making a definition for social media lynching is not that possible for the young. Social media lynchings are ambiguous and understood in accordance with one's own relationship with social media and with society.

(2) Social media lynchings arise in societies where social polarization is observable. They are used as a way of sustaining social control. Belonging to a social group by taking a side in a social media lynch mob is an important motivation for social media lynchings. In addition to that, they are mostly associated with the lack of justice. When one believes that the existing juridical system will not help to solve a certain social problem, it is more likely that social media lynching is considered as a solution to secure justice. Hence, social media lynch mobs show similarities with classical lynchings in terms of giving justice to the hands of the public. Last but not least, assaults against women, children, and animals are the main problem the youth consider social media lynchings as necessary, although they state that they are not supportive of any kind of lynching.

(3) Main concerns about social media lynchings are violence in social media lynchings, the false alarms and freedom of expression. The youth in Turkey considers social media lynchings as unnecessary and/or dangerous in terms of any possible false alarms that the wrong individual is victimized. Plus, freedom of expression is another concern in relation to social media lynch mobs. Since they silence individuals by accusing them of thinking in the 'wrong' way, they are regarded as dangerous.

(4) Influencers on social media and traditional media celebrities are the most unjustly lynched people, according to the participants. They regard the lynchings against influencers and celebrities as totally useless and unnecessary.

(5) Twitter is regarded as the platform of social media lynchings by far. Though it is not the only platform where social media lynchings attack alleged wrongdoers, Twitter is the most mentioned one. Following Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and Ekşi Sözlük are the other platforms the participants associate with social media lynchings.

(6) Anonymity is considered as a prominent catalyzer of lynchings on social media. When users have the ability of hiding their identity, they tend to join on social media lynch mobs and attack the victim more intemperately.

(7) Social media lynch mobs make the users turn to micro-social networking and lead them to a spiral of silence. Instead of expressing their thoughts and revealing themselves on social media, they either share themselves on their 'safe' micro-networks such as on WhatsApp or private accounts on Twitter and Instagram or go into silence totally out of the fear of being lynched on social media.

Another significant point to discuss about social media lynchings is how they are used as a way of power struggle between its parties. In any lynching case there are two parties: a victim and the lynchers. When the lynchers attack the victim, they exert power on an alleged wrongdoer. In this sense, social media lynching turns into a matter of power relation. The collective identity of the lynchers aims to overcome the individual identity of the victim by taking its power from being crowded on social media. The power of the crowd is used to bring into line any potential offender and correct any potential wrongdoer. For most of the cases of social media lynching, the alleged wrongdoer is a member of already disadvantaged or unprivileged groups in society in terms of the existing power relations since it is easier to target them. However, as analyzed in the case of MasterChef Türkiye in this study, there is also an empowering aspect of social media lynchings for the benefit of the subordinates. While the subordinates are easy targets when they are on their own social media, they turn into temporary-powerholders when they come together to lynch a powerholder of the already existing power relations in society. In other words, even though social media lynchings trap social media users into a spiral of silence, it can also serve as a space of breaking the spiral for already-silenced people whether they are silenced by force or of their own will. From this point of view, it is possible to speak of a democratizing aspect of social media lynchings. Women who lynch the exposed abusers (IZM9, Lynch. Pos. 277), LGBTI+ groups who lynch insulters (IST33, Lynch Pos. 136) are some of the examples who enjoy the empowering and amplifying aspect of social media lynchings. Speaking of the MasterChef Türkiye case to instantiate the situation, while Acun Ilıcalı was a powerholder in society with his position as the owner of a TV channel against Uğur Yılmaz Deniz, who was an ordinary contestant

whose career was at the risk of being ruined because of being lynched, the lynching against Acun Ilıcalı worked as a resistance in the name of Uğur Yılmaz Deniz, who was seen as a subordinate to be backed up by the lynchers of Acun Ilıcalı. From another perspective, the lynchers of Acun Ilıcalı were the subordinates, too, due to their position when they were compared with Acun Ilıcalı within the already existing power relations of Turkish society. In addition to backing up a subordinate, Uğur Yılmaz Deniz, who was one of them, they, as the subordinates, had the chance of exerting power onto a powerholder. The collective identity of lynchers on social media became more powerful than the individual power of Acun Ilıcalı. In line with the collective power of lynchers, the power position Acun Ilıcalı occupied was shaken and possibly reverted for the time being. The agency of the lynchers, in this case, served to challenge the existing power relations that Acun Ilıcalı was accustomed and created a new power relation.

Even though this study fills a serious gap in the literature by conceptualizing a relatively new-sprung phenomenon and by revealing how youth perceives it, it also has its own limitations. First, the study focuses only on the context in Turkey. Second, it only deals with how young people between the ages of 18 and 30 make sense of social media lynch mobs. Yet, lynching and social media lynch mobs concern individuals of all ages, and therefore a further examination is needed. Moreover, I did not concentrate on any specific social media platform in relation to social media lynch mobs, even though Twitter is mostly associated with them. Therefore, further studies should pay attention to different social media platforms and their place in terms of social media lynchings specifically.

With this study, I aimed to introduce the phenomenon of social media lynchings to the academic literature. My intent was to understand how youth in Turkey make sense of social media lynch mobs, what are their motivations, how we evaluate the violence factor in social media lynchings, how social media impacts and transforms lynchings, and how young social media users are affected by the social media lynch mobs while using different the social media platforms. With the outcomes it reveals, this study will not only contribute to knowledge but also serve the social media users and all other potential victims of social media lynch mobs.

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ANNEX A

A.1 Ethics Committee Approval

Evrak Tarih ve Sayısı: 23.03.2021-4046



T.C.
KADIR HAS ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ
İnsan Kaynakları Direktörlüğü

Sayı : E-82741295-300-4046
Konu : Büşra Sağlam'ın Etik Kurul Raporu

LİSANSÜSTÜ EĞİTİM ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜNE

İlgi : 09.03.2021 tarihli ve E-20562626-300-3397 sayılı yazınız.

Enstitünüz İletişim Bilimleri Tezli Yüksek Lisans Programı öğrencisi Büşra Sağlam'ın, Doç.Dr. İrem İnceoğlu danışmanlığında yapacağı "Türkiye'de Gençlerin Linç Algısı ve Sosyal Medyada Linç Kültürü" konulu tez araştırma projesi Üniversitemiz İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından değerlendirilmiştir.

Çalışmanın Kadir Has Üniversitesi Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Yönergesi kapsamında bilimsel araştırma etik ilkelerine uygun bulunduğuna ilişkin İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurul kararı ekte gönderilmiştir.

Bilgilerinizi rica ederim.

Prof. Dr. Sondan DURUKANOĞLU
FEYİZ
Rektör

Ek:Büşra Sağlam'ın İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurul Raporu (2 sayfa)

Bu belge, güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.

Belge Doğrulama Kodu :BE5UAD6L
Adres:Cibali Mah. Hisaraltı Cad. No:17 Fatih / İSTANBUL 34083
Telefon:0 (212) 533 65 32 Faks:0 (212) 533 65 15
İnternet Adresi:www.khas.edu.tr
Kep Adresi: khas@hs01.kep.tr

Belge Takip Adresi : https://ebys.khas.edu.tr/enVision/Validate_doc.aspx

Bilgi için: İpek PEHLİVAN
Unvan: İnsan Kaynakları Görevlisi



Tel No: 2125336532-1136

Bu belge, güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır..

Evrak Tarih ve Sayısı: 19.03.2021-3962



T.C.
KADIR HAS ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ
İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu

Sayı : E-17446481-050.06.04-3962
Konu : Büşra Sağlam'ın İnsan Araştırmaları
Etik Kurul Raporu

REKTÖRLÜK MAKAMINA

İlgi : Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü Müdürlüğü' nün 09.03.2021 tarih ve E-20562626-300- 3397 sayılı yazısı ve ekleri

Üniversitemiz, Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü, İletişim Bilimleri Tezli Yüksek Lisans Programı öğrencilerinden Büşra Sağlam'ın, Doç.Dr.İrem İnceoğlu'nun danışmanlığında hazırlamakta olduğu "Türkiye'de Gençlerin Linç Algısı ve Sosyal Medyada Linç Kültürü" isimli tez araştırma projesine ilişkin İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu raporu ekte sunulmuştur.

Gereğini bilgilerinize arz ederim.

Saygılarımla.

Prof. Dr. Ömer Lütfi GEBİZLİOĞLU
Başkan

Ek:Büşra Sağlam'ın İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurul Raporu

Bu belge, güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.

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Bilgi için: İpek PEHLİVAN
Unvanı: İdari İşler Görevlisi



Tel No: 2125336532-1136

Bu belge, güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır..

Evrak Tarih ve Sayısı: 19.03.2021-3962

Kadir Has Üniversitesi
İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Raporu
(16.03.2021)

Kadir Has Üniversitesi, Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü, İletişim Bilimleri Tezli Yüksek Lisans Programı öğrencilerinden Büşra Sağlam'ın, Doç.Dr.İrem İnceoğlu'nun danışmanlığında hazırlamakta olduğu "Türkiye'de Gençlerin Linç Algısı ve Sosyal Medyada Linç Kültürü" isimli tez araştırma projesi amaç, kapsam, veri sağlama ve koruma yöntemi bakımından incelenmiş ve insan araştırmaları etik ilkelerine uygun bulunmuştur.

e-imzalıdır

Prof.Dr. Ömer L. Gebizlioğlu
Başkan

e-imzalıdır

Prof.Dr. G. Deniz Bayrakdar
Üye

e-imzalıdır

Prof.Dr. Ayşe H. Bilge
Üye

e-imzalıdır

Prof. Dr. Ali Güzel
Üye

e-imzalıdır

Prof.Dr. Kemal Yelekcı
Üye

e-imzalıdır

Doç. Dr. Ebru Demet Akdoğan
Üye

e-imzalıdır

Doç. Dr. Aslı Çarkoğlu
Üye

e-imzalıdır

Doç. Dr. Ayşe Nur Erek
Üye

e-imzalıdır

Necmiye Kıcıroğlu
Üye

e-imzalıdır

Ebru Koç
Üye

Bu belge, güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır..

ANNEX B

B.1 Original Quotes in Turkish

Reference	Interview Date	Quote in Turkish
Focus Group Pos. 107	23 January 2021	“Bence korkutucu bir şey şahsen yani. Evet, adamın yaptığı çok kötü. Ama adaleti sağlamak toplumun herhangi bir kesimindeki insana kalmışsa ve bu sokaka ortasında ulu orta yapıyorsa bence herkesin korkması gereken şeyler var. Hani, adalet yerini bulamıyor, evet. Türkiye’de aksayan şeylerin başında geliyor, ama sokaktaki herhangi bir insanın da kendi adalet ölçüsüyle birini cezalandırması bence korkutucu ülke adına. Yani, ben ilk duyduğumda bayağı bir korktum açıkçası. Hele de özel bilgilerinin paylaşılması falan... Adam adına...”
Focus Group Pos. 164	23 January 2021	“Bir de şey, mesela kartopu etkisi için de şey, hem mantıklı çünkü linç eden kişiyi daha fazla kişinin linç etmesini ister. Ama mesela o sayı sabit kaldığında, yani biz... Aslında evet, kartopu önemli. Yani, biraz büyümesi önemli. Çünkü bu da şahsiliği azaltıyor. Biz mesela “Beş kişi bir araya geldik, sizi linç edeceğiz.” desek biz ayrıştırılabilir bir beş kişiyiz. Ama arada birileri girer çıkar, lincin başında aynı fikirdedir, lincin sonunda değildir ve artık tam sınırları çizilemez bir grubun, eee, bir saldırısı olur. Bu bana lince daha yakın geldi.”
Focus Group Pos. 168	23 January 2021	“Yani ben bir insanın, yani benim düşüncemi ötekileştirmemesi için susuyorum toplumda ve sosyal medyada bir azınlık olarak kendim gibi düşünen insanları gördüğüm zaman da tamamen bütün o nefretimi kusuyorum sosyal medyada. Bunu herhangi bir olay üzerinden değil, tamamen genel şey üzerinden söylüyorum. E, o zaman da suskunluk sarmalımı kendim kırıyorum bir şekilde ve kendimi bir topluma ait hissediyorum ki bir yerde okuduğumda da şey diyordu yani, ‘Her insan bir şekilde çocuktur ve çocuklar gibi onaylanmak ister.’ Biz de düşüncelerimizi onaylatmak istiyoruz. Kendimize destekçilerimizi buluyoruz ve linç kültürünü hep birlikte daha da fazla destekliyoruz.”
Focus Group Pos. 235-1	23 January 2021	“Yani, ya kalkıp hatta şey, yani bir grup tarafından fiziksel lince uğrayıp, yani iyileştirilebilir fiziksel lince uğramak bence psikolojik linçten her zaman daha kötü olmak zorunda değil. Ben işlerimi böyle çözmek istemiyorum. Ee, dolayısıyla, işte hani geleneksel olarak linç sözü, linç etmek bana kötülükmiş gibi geliyor. O yüzden yapmak istemiyorum. Kimseye de yapmak istemiyorum. He, benim söylemimle, ben işte Pınar Fidan’ı linç edince o sözü söylememiş olmayacak. Muhtemelen hayatı boyunca Alevilikle ilgili unutmadığı psikolojik bir yarası olacak belki. İşime gelmez. Beni daha iyi biri yapmaz.”
Focus Group Pos. 235-2	23 January 2021	“Birincisi, şu anda hepimiz zaten CCTV gibi işliyoruz. Surveillance kamerası gibi dolaşıyoruz yani. Aman toplumda uygun olmayan bir şey söylese de bunu Big Brother’a şikayet etsek bir şey yapsak... Bu Big Brother isterse bir kişi oluyor. CİMER, mimer falan oluyor. İsterse angry mob oluyor yani. O kişileri dövebilecek daha büyük bir olgu oluyor.”
Focus Group Pos. 322		“Ve şey var böyle, eee, bilerek insanları lince maruz bırakmak. İşte, ne bileyim, bu siyasiler, işte, mülteci grupları... Ben onlarla ilgili çok spekülasyon haberler görüyorum ve işte, Suriyelilerle ilgili sürekli bir linç hali var işte Twitter üstünde. İşte, yok sosyal yardım alıyorlar, yok istediği gibi okullara girebiliyor diye insanlar hani lince şey yapıyorlar. Hani

	23 January 2021	birden bire o gün gündem o oluyor. Ama şey değil hani, doğrusu o değil. Kimse bunu teyit etmiyor.”
Focus Group Pos. 326	23 January 2021	“Yani, ben öncelikle şey mesela, linç konusunu gerçek hayatta çok ilişkilendirerek kullanmadığımı fark ettim. Bunu öncelikle söylemek isterim. Daha çok diğer olan, gerçek hayatta olan bu saldırdır, şeydir daha çok hani şiddet davranışı, işte komplo teorileri gibi kelimelerle tanımlardım. Daha çok sosyal medya üzerinden linci kullandığımı fark ettim şu an. Hani, onun da bilmiyorum neden, ama geçmişe doğru bu işte, Türk şeyindeki ilk ayaklanmalara falan gidince değişik bir kapı araladı benim için. Hani, şu an bir şey diyemedim. Tamamen sosyal medyada görünmezlik üzerinden, insanların tamamen kendilerini bastırmanın fikirlerini beyan etmesi üzerinden çünkü tanımlıyordum. En azından öyle düşünüyordum.”
Focus Group Pos. 327	23 January 2021	“Ya mesela şey var, ee, Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu diye yanlış hatırlamıyorsam soyadını milletvekili, işte çıplak aramayla ilgili sürekli mecliste şey yapıyor, eee, yönerge okuyor. Sorunlardan bahsediyor. Ama işte, Twitter’deki insanlar şey diyor, “Aaa, bu HDP’li, bu terörist. Doğruyu söyleyemez. Söylediği şeyler yanlış. O yüzden bunu lince uğratalım.” gibi işte altında linç kampanyaları başlıyor. Ee, sebebini bilmiyorum (Gülüyor). Sadece çok çabuk gaza geliyoruz herhalde. Yani, şey özelliğimizi yitirdik mesela hani kim doğruyu söylüyor ya da doğru ne, ee, işte “Karşısı muhalif yanlış söylüyor ya da iktidar benim fikrim değil. O zaman onu linçleme hakkına sahibim.” gibi...”
Focus Group Pos. 328	23 January 2021	"Ben başta şey demiştim aslında bu, birkaç şeyden sonra onu da sanırım revize etmem gerekiyor. Linç bir kişiye karşı yapıldığı fikrini değiştirdim. Yani, kendi kafamda semantik olarak... Linç sanırım her zaman bir olguya karşı yapılıyor. Bir sembole karşı yapılıyor. Şimdi, gerçek linçte mesela bir tecavüzcüyü linçlediğimde aslında Türk ulusu, Türkiye milleti, devleti adına bütün tecavüzcüleri cezalandırmak için o kişiye saldırıyoruz. Keza, internette de mesela bir kişiyi linç ederken onu değil, onun, kafamızda onun temsil ettiği grubu cezalandırıyoruz. Mesela bir Twitch yayıncısını şey yaparken, cezalandırırken “Biz sabah akşam çalışıyoruz. Adamlar oturduğu yerden para kazanıyor.” gibi bir öncül oluyor. Eee, ve onun cezalandırılabilceği gibi bir sonuç çıkıyor ve umursamadan pat pat şey yapmaya başlıyoruz."
Focus Group Pos. 72-81	23 January 2021	"Şey gibi, eee, bir tanesinde işte, orada sallıyorum putu yıkmaya çalışıyorsun. Bibloyu devirmeye çalışıyorsun gibi bir şey olabilir. Yine kişiye yönelik saldırıdan gidiyorum. Eee, diğerinde ise onun üzerinden, yani espri yapılıyor. Linç bile olmayabilir bence bu. Sadece enformasyon yoğunluğu var. Bir anda bir objeye dönük bir sürü mesaj. Ya o objeyi içeren ya o objeye yönelik bir sürü mesaj oldu. Sanırım ben şeyi linç olarak nitelendirmem o açıdan, Luppoo olayını linç olarak nitelendirmem ya da o adama yönelik değil de o adamın oluşturduğu bir sınıfa yönelik, işte, “Siz anca bunu yaparsınız. Ülkem işte bu kadar cahil.” falan gibi belki bir olguya yönelik bir, olguya ya da işte, anonim insan grubuna yönelik bir saldırı olabilir belki. O da, ona da linç diyebilir miyiz? Bilmiyorum."
Focus Group. Pos. 197-202	23 January 2021	“Bence bir gruba dahil olma çok büyük bir motivasyon... (...) Yani, o çok büyük bir güdünün büyük bir kısmını onun sağladığını düşünüyorum. Tamamen bir ait olabileceğin bir farklı grup var. Bir yandan da bir boşaltım sağlayabileceğin bir yer var. Bütün derdini, tasanı bir yere kanalize edebilirsin ve bütün bir... Yani, fiziksel linçte eminim bu daha büyük bir boşaltımdır. Ama şey sosyal medyada da benzer bir şekilde bütün hislerini, o yüksek hislerini bir yere aktarabiliyorsun ve o kişi zaten bunu bir sürü kişiden görüyor. Çok da yaptığın şeyin sorumluluğu da o kadar yok mu sanki? Çünkü sen büyük bir kümenin bir parçasısın sadece.”

Focus Group Pos. 367	23 January 2021	“Eee, linç bir kötülük olarak görüyorum. Kötücül bir şey olduğunu görüyorum. Çünkü nihayetinde adaletsizlikler barındırdığını, karşı tarafa psikolojik zarar verdiğini düşünüyorum. Ama şunu da düşünüyorum: Belki bazen gereklidir. Belki bazen siz linç etmediğinizde ülkede bir şeyler yürümüyordur. Olmuyordur. Belki gerçekten biz linç ettiğimiz için birçok azınlık haklarını şu anda savunduk bir noktada. Ortaya çıkardık. İnsanlar daha dikkatli konuşuyor. Başkalarına daha az zarar veriyor.”
IST FG1 Pos. 319	6 December 2020	“Ya cancel kültürü dediğimiz bir şeye kesinlikle karşıyım ya. Hatta barbarlık olarak bakıyorum yani. Bence ifade özgürlüğü kutsaldır ve gelişimin önündeki en önemli şeydir. Fikirlerin özgürce ifade edilebilmesi ve tartışma ortamına açılması. O yüzden sınırsız olması gerektiğine ve her zaman özgür bırakılması gerektiğine inanıyorum. Sosyal medyada yazdığımız, şey yaptığımız. O yüzden ben mesela birine spam çağrısı yapıldığında falan da katılmam yani buna. Birinin yazdıkları yüzünden hesabını kapatmak da bence yani ilkel kabilenin uçak gördüğü zaman mızrak fırlatmasına benziyor yani (Gülüyor). Tanımadığın, bilmediğin, görmediğin bir fikre yani saldırmaya çalışmak, ya da onu engellemeye çalışmak. Ben böyle bakıyorum olaya.”
IST FG1 Pos. 320	6 December 2020	“Uğur sanıyorum yarışmacının adı, Uğur’un söylediklerini ya da yazdıklarını ben çok derinlemesine bilmiyorum. Çok fazla görmedim. Sadece önüme çıktıkça tweetler gördüm ama. Az önce söylediğiniz gibi işte çok böyle geniş bir etnik gruba, işte ne bileyim kadınlara, yani neredeyse Türkiye’nin eğer 70 milyonsak, 80 milyonsak bir 60 milyonuna küfür etmiş gibi bir şey var ortada galiba öyle bir tablo var. Ama bir yandan da evet ifade özgürlüğü her türlü onun hakkı ve ben de yani bundan 10 yıl önce yazdığım, attığım tweetlere falan baksam herhalde utanç içinde ayrılırim aynen [IST22’nin] söylediği gibi. ya böyle hakkımız her türlü olmalı, o ayrı bir şey ama bir yandan da şeyi de düşünüyorum yani çok gerçekten çok gri bir alan, şeyi bilemiyorum, ee, yani Uğur karakterinin Uğur kişisinin tabii ki de bununla yargılanmaması gerekiyor. Hele ki televizyon önünde, bir sürü insanın önüne çıkartılıp... Hani belki de kimsenin görmeyeceği tweetleri bir de televizyondan tekrar duyurup, hani “sen böyle böyle şeyler söylemişsin. Biz bunları kabul edemeyiz” deyip tekrar o insanların önüne neredeyse yem gibi atılması zaten kabul edilebilir bir şey değil.”
Lynch Pos. 6	16 November 2019	“Mesela burada bir taciz vakası oldu. Bir mahalledeydi çocuk. (...) Sonra bir kıyamet koptu, bunu taciz eden Suriyeli. Suriyelilerin yoğun olduğu bir mahalleydi. Aslında, sürekli zaten Suriyelilere karşı bir iticilik var insanlarda. Küçük bir şey arıyorlar bu insanlara söz söylemek için. Belki de bu güzel bir bahane oldu bunlar için. Çünkü artık onlara söz söylemenin çok güzel bir argümanı oluştu onlar yönünden; taciz. Yani ondan sonra bu Suriyeli demeye başladı birileri. Sonra tüm Suriyelilerin evleri, arabaları, dükkanları yakılıp yıkılmaya başlandı. Suriyelilerin herhalde araçlarının plakaları farklı oluyormuş. Bunları da tespit edebilmişler. Dükkanlarını yakıp yıkmışlar. Kaç tane dükkan tarumar olmuş. Ondan sonra araştırdık ettik, çocuk Suriyeli çıkmamış. Taciz eden çocuk 15 yaşında, Türkiye vatandaşı ve 30’dan fazla suç kaydı çıkmış. Yazık oldu.”
Lynch Pos. 16	15 November 2019	“Şimdi bu atıyorum bir şey oluyor, linç ediyorsun. Emine Bulut davası olabilir mesela. O adamı linç ediyorsun sosyal medya üzerinden bilmem ne. Tamam ediyorsun, okay ama senin adalet sistemin yani ee... Şey olmadığı sürece senin onu linç etmen benim açımdan açıkça söylemek gerekirse kişisel anlamda bir şey ifade etmiyor. (...) Sosyal medya o anlamda Türkiye’deki insanların sadece oyuncağı. Hani popüler kültür gibi. Emine Bulut öldürülüyor, video çıkıyor, bir şey oluyor; hadi bunu linç edelim oluyor. Herkes orada şey oluyor, ertesi gün hayatına devam edebiliyor. Bunun (duraklıyor) saçmalığı buradan geliyor. (...) O yüzden

		bana şey geliyor... Yanlış anlamayın; bu bende, kendi hayatımda da öyle. Bir şey oluyor, 24 saat sonra ben onu unutup normal hayatıma devam edebiliyorum. Doğru bir şey değil ama ben bunu ikiyüzlülük yapıp işte linç etme politikasına katılmıyorum. Yani bunu yapmıyorum.”
Lynch Pos. 21	15 November 2019	“Twitter’da bu çok fazla var. Çünkü insanlar orada birbirini tanımıyor. Farklı isimlerle de koyabiliyorsun. Mesela ben işte gidiyorum, hiç, bir aktörün resmini alıyorum. Profil yapıyorum. Çok saçma bir isim giriyorum oraya. İsteddiğini yazıyorsun. Çünkü görünmüyorsun ve orada kendin yeni bir kimlik yaratıyorsun Twitter’da ve o kimliğin altından istediğini söyleyebiliyorsun.”
Lynch Pos. 25	5 September 2020	“Öncelikle linçi nasıl tanımladığınıza bağlı yani. Mesela karşı tarafa, linç olunan tarafı sosyal medyadan engellemek veya işte şikayet etmek, spam şikayetiyle, şu veya bu şekilde engellemek... bence bunda bir sıkıntı yok. Bu bir toplumsal tepkidir. Eyvallah. Hakaret boyutuna ulaştığına zaman bazı endişelerim olur. Orada da dediğim gibi hak çatışmalarına giriyoruz. Sonuçta bu kişi de ifade hürriyeti, kendi ifadesini o şekilde ifade etmiş. Sen de hakaret etmeden bunun yanlış olduğunu kendin kalkıp başka bir şekilde ifade ettin. Böyle. Yani.”
Lynch Pos. 35	15 May 2020	“Linç kültürünü hak edenler oluyor bazen. Yani bilmiyorum. Nedir peki o hak edenlerin hak ettiği şey? Irkçılık, cinsiyetçilik, ayrımcılık bence. (...) Çünkü hani, onların birazcık böyle nefreti, başkalarına yansıttıkları negativitenin yanlış olduğunun farkına varmaları... Yani bir kişi, komik olmak ve ayakta işemek gibi kadınlar yapamaz, diyorsa bin kişi de ona, hayır, tam bir gerizekalisın, desin ki; çocuk desin ki ‘Ne? 2500 kişi böyle dediyse demek belki de haklı.’”
Lynch Pos. 37	7 July 2020	“Bunun dışında diğeri de bence insanlar çok agresifleştiler sosyal medyada. Yani influencerlar olarak değil diğer, o linç etme durumu. İşte yine mesela teşhir etme, mahremiyet duygusunun zedelenmesiyle ilgili şeylerden ötürü başladı bunlar. İnsanlar agresifleştikçe, birbirine karşı bu tarz durumlar olmaya başladı ve çok acımasızlaştı bence. İnsanların birbirleriyle olan iletişimleri ne kadar kopuklaşıyorsa, o linçler de o kadar fazlalaşiyor ve daha ağırlaşıyor bence.”
Lynch Pos. 46	28 July 2020	“Hani küfür ya da böyle ağır hakaret içermediği sürece bence herkes fikrini olumlu-olumsuz belirtmekte hakkı var diye düşünüyorum. Çünkü fikir özgürlüğü denen bir şey var. Hani var olduğuna inanıyorum en azından. Ama mesela ben açıkçası açık olarak siyasi görüşümü ya da atıyorum bir olayla ilgili açık açık fikrimi sosyal medyada konuşmaya çekiniyorum maalesef. Çünkü hani tutuklanabiliyorsun yani hani. En şeyi bu, ötesi yok yani. Dediğin bir laftan hani hakaret dahi etmemiş olsan ve çok da bunun örneklerini gördük. Hani bunlara çok takılmıyor neden bilmiyorum. (...) Hani çünkü insanlar mesela o yanlış bana göre hani küfür filan ediyorlar Trump’a filan ama hiçbir şey olmuyor. Hani burada gelelim hadi bütün siyasetçilere küfür edelim demiyorum ama fikrimizi belli ettiğimizde de hani bu en basitinden linçlenme olmasın yani. Aa belki doğrusu ona göre böyledir diyebilmeliyiz artık yani, yıl 2020 yani.”
Lynch Pos. 50	13 August 2020	“Ya bence hepimiz korkuyoruz. Artık ona göre fotoğraflar koyuyoruz. Yani, böyle hani ‘Burama bir şey derler mi? Şurama bir şey derler mi? Öyle çıkmışım, böyle çıkmışım.’... Aslında bir, bu da bir linç baskısı yani. Hani, belki onu aleni olarak biri sana yazamayacak orada. Hani, ‘Senin şuran, diyelim, ne kadar çirkinsin.’ yazamayacak yani. Hani senin öyle bir profilin yok. Ama, ama yani insanların bunu düşünecek olmasını düşünüp hani, öyle şeyleri artık koymamaya başlıyorsun. Her koyduğun şeyi, ‘Yok, aman. Artık manzara koyacağım. Ben kendimi koymayacağım.’ falan diyen arkadaşlarımız da var yani. Hani, illa bunun aleni olması gerekmiyor da insanların o düşüncesi artık çok değişti yani. Hani, ‘Bunu insanlar böyle düşünür zaten. O yüzden koymayayım.’, aslında bu da bir linç yani.”

		Psikolojik linç bence bu da. O yüzden illa bir şeylerin yazılmasına gerek yok da. O baskı... Baskı çok kötü bir şey.”
Lynch Pos. 57	24 January 2020	“Gerçekten çok ciddi boyutlara vardığını düşünüyorum ve insanların bu kadar acımasız olması beni şaşırtıyor. Yani, tamam orası sosyal medya. Sanal bir şey ama yani ekranın karşısındaki insan da bir insan yani. Gerçek bir insan. Sen onu, orada yazıyorsun diye sosyal medyada, sanal alemde yazıyorsun diye hiçbir şey sanal olmuyor. Yarattığı duygular gerçek yani. İnsanlar bunu hiç düşünmeden... Yani, normalde mesela aynı şey olsa, o kadın karşılarında olsa bunu söyleyemezler belki rahatlıkla ama orada bir şeylerin arkasına sığınıp pat pat pat pat yazıyorlar. Linç ediyorlar.”
Lynch Pos. 59	24 January 2020	“Yani çok yaşamadığım için bilmiyorum. Ama yaşanması kötüdür. Twitter'da çok çünkü, her gün biri oluyor. Her gün bir olay oluyor. Böyle, işte spontan, o an hiç düşünmeden yazdığım küçük bir kelime de seni o linçle meşhur edebiliyor aslında. Kötü anlamda şey olabiliyor. Mesela 100 kişilik bir hesabın vardır. Bir yanına bir şey yazıyorsun ve böyle linç yiyorsun. Kötü bir şey kesinlikle.”
Lynch Pos. 62	22 January 2020	“İran'ın gelme sebebi hani ilk hani mesela bazı bir iki tane kadını bir iki tane erkeği falan böyle taş ile falan öldürmüş...Recm olayı, hani atılmışlıkları var... Hani linç kültürü deyince aklıma ilk gelen somut kelime o oldu. İkinci olarak da hani mesela biri mesela örnek veriyorum, bir topluluk bir şahsın bir durumunu beğenmedi... Örnek veriyorum mesela Haluk Levent şu an Türkiye'de popüler bir insan oldu hani yaptığı yardımlar sayesinde... O adamın mesela Allah etmesin (Gülüyor)... O adamın mesela bir tane adama veya bir tane engelliye ters bir davranışı görülürse veya bir yanlış anlaşılma olursa hani ders davranmamış da öyle yansıtılırsa hani tüm insanların gözünde bir anda araştırmadan, sormadan bazı insanlar direkt onu kötüleyecektir... Eeee bu da hani herkes birlikte kötüleyince sosyal bir linç ortaya çıkacaktır...”
Lynch Pos. 82	30 October 2019	“Ya şimdi sosyal medyada linç edilme gerçekten çok etkili de bir yöntem. Atıyorum beni sosyal medyada linç etmeye kalksalar kimin umurunda? Ama şimdi ünlüleri linç etmeye kalksalar, hayatlarını karartabiliyorsun. (...) Yani bu linç kültüründe genelde bahsettiğim, gördüğüm. Bizim yaptığımız şeyleri, ünlüler yaptı mı linç etmeye kalkıyoruz. ”
Lynch Pos. 85	31 October 2019	“Bizim toplumda da şöyle bir şey var, iyi ya da kötü bir insan birşey paylaştığı an altındaki yorumlar arasında belki bir iki tane belki böyle tereyağından kıl çeker gibi bir tane yada iki tane çıkar yani bir yorum yapan. Diğerlerinin hepsi oturduğu yerden telefonlarıyla, klavyeleriyle çok rahat bir şekilde iğnelemeler, linçler yapıyorlar. Linç yapılacak bir şey olmasa bile o andaki o klavyenin arkasındaki rahatlık ile çok ciddi derecede linçler gerçekleştiriyor ve bence bu çok hoş bir durum değil. Yapılmaması gereken birşey. Bazı insanlar bir şeylere cesaretlenip bir şeyler paylaşıyorlar, bir şeyleri yollayıp yayınlıyorlar ve diğer şahıslar klavyenin arkasından çok rahat bir şekilde, çok cesur bir şekilde çıkıp yüz yüze olmadıkları insanları çok rahat bir şekilde linç ediyorlar.”
Lynch Pos. 92-1	17 October 2019	“Linç kültürü hakkında herkes, eee, şey gibi Andy Warhol'un söylediği işte "Herkes bir gün on beş dakikalığına ünlü olacak." Herkes linç edilebilir, herkes linç edebilir. Eee, bu içine düşülmesi inanılmaz kolay bir şey. Yani bir sabah uyandırdığımızda kendinizi, çok pardon, linç içinde, yani linç ediliyor bulabilirsiniz. Yani yaptığımız herhangi bir şey, ee, sizi bir anda ona şey yapabilir, götürebilir. Yani hiç, kontrolsüz bir şey olduğunu düşünüyorum. Eee, bilmiyorum hiç daha önce linçe uğramadım ama bence korkunç bir şey.”
Lynch Pos. 92-2	17 October 2019	“Ama bir yandan da şeyi de görüyorum, yani ben bile mutlaka birilerini linç etmişimdir. Çünkü sürekli, Twitter'dan bir şey paylaştığımız anda aslında bir öznenen bahsettiğiniz anda sizin gibi bir sürü insan o öznenen

		bahsediyor olabilir ve bu linç işte tam olarak. Ya onun içine düşmek çok kolay ve korkutucu tabii ki.”
Lynch Pos. 103	5 February 2020	“Linç kültürü şöyle, neden linç edilirim? Toplumsal bir değeri zedelemişsem linç edilebilirim. (...) Mesela diyelim ki ben şöyle bir video çekeceğim. Mesela Türk bayraklı boxer giyip sokakta dolaştım. Ben bunu çektiğim zaman linç edilirim. Videonun pek mantığı yok burada. Kutsal değerleri bir kere saygı duymuyorsam da bunu saygı duyanların gözüne sokmayız. (...) Sen, benim görüşüm var. Ama bunu kendi içinde yaşamak zorundasın. Çünkü bulunduğun coğrafya buna el vermez. Bunu kendisi de bilir mutlaka. Mesela geçen şey oldu, iyi denk geldi. İki tane Fenerbahçeli, Trabzon tabelası önünde Fenerbahçe forması giyip fotoğraf çekirtme videosu yapıyor. Böyle fotoğraf çekilirken hemen birkaç dakika içerisinde iki tane araba duruyor tabelanın ilerisinde. Gelip bunların yanına, formalarını falan çıkarttırıyor. Alıp gidiyor mesela. O adamlar mesela Trabzon'da linç edilir. Kendi Fenerbahçeli değilmiş ama bunu videoya çekmek istemişler. Hani Trabzon'da dediğim o yerel kitle var ya, onlara bu el vermez. Ben görsem bir şey yapmam ama Trabzon taraftar grubuna bunlar el vermez, linç edilirler. Öyle.”
Lynch Pos. 114	6 February 2020	“Yani, ben zaten dediğim gibi her zaman insanların her istediğini paylaşması taraftarıyım ya da paylaşmaması taraftarıyım. İnsanın özgür iradesi. “Sen neden bunu paylaşmadın? Neden paylaştın?”, hiç beni alakadar etmiyor açıkçası. Ama insanları neden alakadar ediyor? Bunu anlayamıyorum. Sürekli sorguluyorum. Herkes kendinden olsun, benden olsun istiyor. Farklılığa, ülke olarak, hani Trabzon hani hiç açık değil. Ülke de hiç açık değil.”
Lynch Pos. 117	6 February 2020	“Yani şu an baktığımızda Türkiye'de yaşanan kadın şiddeti olayları da, kadın cinayeti olan olaylarda yani zanlıların %70'inden fazlası hak eden cezayı almıyor ve biz neredeyse birçoğunun ismini bilmiyoruz ama ismini bildiklerimizin hepsi nasıl bir artık olaysa bu hepsi gereken cezayı alıyor... İşte Şule Çet, Şule Çet davasında mühebbet yedi zanlı ama biz Şule Çeti bilmeseydik, o zanlı mühebbet yiyecek miydi? Hayır, inanmıyorum. Bu yüzden de linç kültür önemli bir şey, bu yüzden bu işte mesela yararlı kullanımına örnek.”
Lynch Pos. 118	14 April 2020	“Bir olay vardı o zamanlarda. Eee, siyasi bir olaydı ve bütün okul yine aynı fikirdeydi. Hepimiz yani. Hiç, farklı fikirde olan hiç kimse yoktu. İki üç tane kişi vardı sadece ve biz herkesin aynı fikirde olduğuna o kadar emindik ki (...) hashtagler oluşturuyorduk kendimize. O siyasi dönemde de belli hashtagler oluşturmuştuk. Sonrasında, o kişilerin, 2-3 kişinin bu fikirde olmadığını görünce şoka uğradım. “Nasıl böyle bir şey düşünebilir ya? Farklı, nasıl, bu düşüncede nasıl olabilir? Nasıl bunu yazabilir? Nasıl bize destek göstermez? Nasıl arkamızda durmaz? Böyle bir insan burada barınamaz.” diyerek okula gittiğimizde 3-5 kişi o insanların yanına gidip, eee, onlarla... Ben aslında konuşmak istemişim ama mesela arkadaşlarım daha da bu konuda sertlerdi. Bayağı kavgaya dönüşmüştü. Orada ayırmıştım. O an biraz aydınlanma geldi. Gerçekten bunun bir linç olduğunu fark ettim. Ama yine de ben de o düşüncenin içindeydim ya. O olaya dönüp baktığım zaman gerçekten “Bu korkunç şeyi nasıl yapmışım?” diyorum.”
Lynch Pos. 121	15 April 2020	“Linç kültürü hakkında... Ya, hep aynı yere varıyoruz aslında. Hani, ben fanatiktikten çok rahatsız olan bir insanım. Baktığımda, ben de uçlarda yaşamışım, bilmiyorum ama, o yüzden linç kültüründe de eğer ahlaki, işte bazı, bazı değerler vardır. Mesela, şimdi şey, daha yeni sabah gördüğüm için diyorum. Tesettürlü birkaç işte fenomen arkadaşın makyajı, bonesi vs. konuşulmuş. Linç edilmiş vs. Bu bana çok çirkin geliyor. Çünkü bu ahlaki bir değer değil, kişisel bir değer. Burada linç etmeyeceksin, hakkın değil. Karışmayacaksın yani. İnsanlar, karşı durduklarını söylediği

		sosyal baskını tam olarak kendisi oluyor linç ederken bu noktada. Ama bir çocuğa tecavüz hakkında bir bakan saçma bir şey mi söyledi? Sonuna kadar linçleyeceksiniz. Bazı değerler vardır, oraya dokunulmaz. O noktada linç kültürü çok haklı. Şiddet boyutu, evet olabilir. Olmalı çünkü. Utanmalı yani, yaptığının ne kadar büyük bir şey olduğunu görmeli. Ama kişisel alan... (...) Bunlar için gerek yok linç, bir şekilde linçlemeye. Ama evet, cinayet, işte, baskı, tecavüz... Evet, bunlar için linçleme kabul edilebilir bir şey, çünkü karşıdakini sindirmek gerekiyor. Yani, gerçekten o noktada bir baskı gerekiyor o insanın üzerinde. Yaptığının çok anormal olduğunu düşünmesi gerek.”
Lynch Pos. 127	17 April 2020	“Bazı konularda linç gerekiyor. Örnek veriyorum... Ya linçten kastım, yoğun bir paylaşım ve onu işte atıyorum, kötülecek ise evet gerekiyor. Atıyorum Kazdağları, Salda Gölü. Bu konuyu linç edeceksek edelim. Çünkü biz haklıyız”
Lynch Pos. 133-1	7 May 2020	“Ben bunu özellikle kadınların üzerinde çok görüyorum. Yani şimdi Türkiye genelinde kadına yüklenen roller var bu roller işte kadının yaptığı paylaşımlar, giydiği kıyafet, konuştuğu tavır... Özellikle erkekler tarafından bence hem kadınlar tarafından da çok gelen bir şey bu arada ama bu konuda kadınların daha fazla linçe uğradığını düşünüyorum ben. Erkekler nedense çok fazla uğramıyor. Mesela benim şu an düşündüğümde aklıma gelen hani linç dediğinizde aklıma gelen 3-4 isim var ve bu 3-4 isim de kadın. İşte Başak Kavla, YouTube üstünden konuşacağım, Danla Bilic var çok fazla linç yiyor. Başka, ha belki hani LGBT yine en fazla buna uğrayanlar yani linç uğrayanlar onlar ne yazık ki LGBT bireyleri. İşte bir de Kerimcan herhalde en bu ara yani linç uğrayan insan olarak aklıma o geliyor benim.”
Lynch Pos. 133-2	7 May 2020	“Ama şu var, şimdi ben bir içerik üretici olarak mesela şunu düşünüyorum mesela benim babam Ramazan ayındayız, benim babam içki içiyor şu an. Masada annem oruç açarken babam içkisini içiyor. Ben bunu mesela YouTube kanalında şu an söyleyebilir miyim, söylersem o radikal taraftan nasıl bir şey yerim, yani başıma ne gelir şu anki Türkiye’de ya da annemin babamın başına ne gelir, nasıl bir şeyle itham edilir bu beni mesela düşündürüyor.”
Lynch Pos. 135	13 May 2020	“Linç kültürü hakkında da çok korkuyorum. Çok korkuyorum. Yani o kadar kötü linçler gördüm ki... Yani bir gün bir yerde yanlış bir şey söylerim de linç edilirim, bir şeylerim ifşa edilir diye inanılmaz korkuyorum. Ve bunu çok erken fark etmeye başladım ben. Bu linç kültürü çok böyle hızlanmadan önce de fark etmeye başladım ve bu nedenle ben tweet atmayı bıraktım aslında. (...) Yani bir anlık, bir anlık bir cümlele yerle bir olabiliyorsun. Bunu çok gördüm ve bu beni çok ürkütüyor ve bu nedenle tweet atmaktan çok korkuyorum. Belki de sosyal medyada story atmayı bu nedenle seviyorum. Küçük çevremde aktif olduğum ‘ben buradayım’ dediğim tek küçük alan.”
Lynch Pos. 136	14 May 2020	“Mesela bizim bir linç şeyimiz var. Biri çok ağır ithamlarla, eşcinselliğin hastalık olduğunu savunmaya devam ediyorsa, konuşmaya da gelemiyorsa, storyde paylaşıyoruz. Linç aşkolar, yazıyoruz. Bir anda yorumun altı, en son 6 bin oldu. Çoğu gökkuşağı bayrağıydı.”
Lynch Pos. 149	5 December 2019	“Herkes herkesi linç ediyor sanki şu ülkede yani. Biri A dese, sen neden A dedin? A'nın tınısı neden böyleydi? A'yı şu şekilde söylemeliydin diye bile linç eder. Yani herkes şu an çok tetikte. Sanki herkes saldırgan, herkes birbirini saldırmak istiyor.”
Lynch Pos. 151	6 December 2019	“Yalan haber dediğimiz olay Twitter'da özellikle çok fazla. İnsanlar bir anda oradan ulaşabiliyorlar. Sosyal medya örgütlenmesi çok kolay olan bir şey ve desteklediğim de bir durum aslında. (...) Ama şey, bilmeden de çoğu habere çok sert tepkiler bir anda olabiliyor. Özellikle siyasi haberlerde,

		şeylerde. Çok ciddi bir karalama kampanyaları, şeyler dönebiliyor. Burada herhangi bir şey belirtip yapmıyorum hani. Hükümet kanallı olabilir, diğer muhalif kesimden. İki tarafı da çok ciddi, bazı olayları hiç bilmeden şey yapıp karalama kampanyaları çok ciddi bir şekilde dönebiliyor. Çünkü insanlar haberin içeriğini araştırmıyorlar. Orada paylaşılan kısmını görüp, orada 140 karakterle sınırlandırılmış kısmı görüp haberin detayını okumuyorlar. Orada gördüğünü, bu böyleymiş deyip pat linç başlıyor yani. İnsanlar da biraz bilgiyi eksik topluyor. Bu çok ciddi bir problem aslında.”
Lynch Pos. 154	6 December 2019	“Linç kültürü acayip şekilde herkesi doğru yola sokan bir şey diye düşünüyorum. Twitter’da bunun örneklerini çok gördük. O yüzden hani bazı insanlara eğer hak ediyorsa cidden yapılması gerekiyor diye düşünüyorum.”
Lynch Pos. 155	4 December 2019	“Herkes hak etmiyor bu şeyi. Kimi, ufacak şeylerden, insanların üzerine çok gidebiliyorlar. Şimdi, şu anki sosyal medyada, aktif olarak kullananlara biz bordo klavyeli diyoruz. Klavyelerine güveniyorlar. Dışarıda gelip yüzünüze bir şey söyleyemeyecek insanlar, sosyal medyada hakkınızda yapıyorlar. Ne söylemek gelirse söylüyorlar. Kimse, nasıl olsa kim olduğunu bilmeyecek diye. (...) Anonim kullanıcılar. İsimlerini saçma sapan yapıyorlar. Herhangi bir fotoğraf koyuyorlar. Kendi isimlerini belirtmeden sizi yargılayabiliyorlar.”
Lynch Pos. 179	31 October 2019	“Hani şu anki durumumuzun en büyük sıkıntısı da şu, bizim ülkemizde bunu siyasi iktidarlar da yaptığı için halkımızdan da çok doğal bir şey gibi bunu bekliyoruz. Hani mesela en basitinden karşı bir görüş oldu mu hemen haydi linç başlıyorlar işte. Bir sonraki gün bakıyorsun işte adam gözaltına alınmış. İşte nedir suçu? Cümle kurmak, mesaj atmak, yazmak... Hani küfür falan tamam, ona bir şey demem ama mesela sırf insan düşüncelerinden dolayı içeride yatıyor ya da ceza alıyor ya da işte en kötü gözaltına alınıyor. Bu yüzden işte başımızdakilerin hatalarından dolayı, insanlarımız da zaten bunu kültür haline getirmişler zaten.”
Lynch Pos. 181	16 April 2020	“Yani şöyle bakıyorum olaya ben. Olayın taraflarını hiç tanımıyorum. Yani olayı o derece içselleştirmem mümkün değil samimi olarak. Çünkü tanımıyorum. Duymasam belki sosyal medya aracılığıyla hiç haberim olmayacak. Biri anlatsa da ya evet kötü olmuş deyip geçeceğim. Ama sosyal medyada bu patladığı zaman 3-5 kişi eleştiri yaptığı zaman sanki onu eleştirmeyen kişi toplumun ona yüklediği sorumluluğu yerine getirmemiş gibi oluyor. Mesela hani var ya geyik, Cem Yılmaz bu konuyla ilgili yorum yapmadı, diye. Mesela Ekşi’de hep Cem Yılmaz’ı linç ediyorlar. Adam linç etmiyor diye adamı linç ediyorlar. Çünkü, niye? Zorundasın. Onu linç etmelisin. Sosyal tepki oluşturmalyız. Sosyal tepki hakikaten böyle bir şey değil. Sosyal tepki olsa yani sokağa çıkılsa veya bunula ilgili projeler yapılırsa, ciddi projeler vesaire, halkın bu yöndeki eğilimi değişir. Bu olaylar artmaz azalır. Yani eğer bir faydadan söz edeceksek. Bir sosyal hareketin amacı bu değil midir? O durumu düzeltmek, daha iyiye götürmek. Bunu hangi linç olayı daha iyi bir yere götürür? Hiçbiri. Benim için o yüzden linç tamamen bu konudaki safım belli olsun, (...)”

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