Turkish Studies
Social Sciences

Volume 13/26, Fall 2018, p. 199-206
DOI: 10.7827/TurkishStudies.13928
ISSN: 1308-2140
Skopje/MACEDONIA-Ankara/TURKEY

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Research Article / Araştırma Makalesi

Article Info/Makale Bilgisi

Received/Geliş: *Temmuz 2018* ***Accepted/Kabul:*** *Aralık 2018*

This article was checked by iThenticate.

THE REPRESENTATION OF POVERTY AND WEALTHINESS ON TWITTER ACCOUNTS OF NEWS PORTALS*

*Berna BERKMAN KÖSELERLİ***

ABSTRACT

The propose of this study is to consider the representation of poverty and wealthiness on news portals of Twitter. Privileged upper class and disadvantaged lower class that framed in new media contents are investigated with a comparative view. The study seeks to reveal othering and stereotyping strategies against the people having disadvantage position in terms of economical and cultural capital. The role of new media on reproducing discrimination is handled with a quantitative method. The most following three news portals, reporting instant developments on Twitter at Turkey, are chosen as a research sample. Content analysis which comprises of two-weeks period is used to sort out the discourse on Twitter. Negative narratives against poors on new media build the public opinion, this development strengthen power relations and hierarchies. The usage of negative statements, implicit meanings or exclusions on 'text', evoke the inequalities, feed the cognitive perception based on stereotypes and thus, create the 'others'. The structural difference between upper class and lower class is hidden in new media sphere because of the exclusion of poor people on new media discourse. But inequalities between classes, and problems stem from this notable difference are prevailing in social life. Poor people lack in declaring their voice to the politicians and masses by new media. New media can support the discriminatory discourses besides conveying rapid information to huge masses. Consequently the class hierarchy is reproduced by new media, the structural dimensions of poverty are disregarded, wealthy is represented with incentive statements on new media contents.

*This study is presented in "International Congress On Social Sciences", Granada, Spain, September, 18-24, 2017.

** Arş. Gör., Erciyes Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi, E-posta: berna.koselerli@gmail.com

STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

Thepropose of this study is to consider the representation of poverty and wealthiness on news portals of Twitter. In this study, privileged upper class and disadvantaged lower class that framed in social media contents are investigated with a comparative view. The study seeks to reveal othering and stereotyping strategies against the people having disadvantage position in terms of economical and cultural capital.

The role of new media on reproducing discrimination is handled with a quantitative method. The most following three news portals (@ntv, @cnntürk, @Hurriyet), reporting instant developments on Twitter at Turkey, are chosen as a research sample. Content analysis which comprises of two-weeks period is used to sort out the discourse on Twitter. Tweets are examined from 1 th August to 15 th August, 2017 for two weeks period. In this context, the messages of selected Twitter accounts are counted in terms of their followers and total tweets.

Tweets on lower class and upper class are distinguished from each other to categorize the total tweets. The dispersal of contents on Twitter accounts are examined by this content analysis and the usage of negative statements, implicit meanings and exclusions against lower class are examined. In addition, the narratives on whealtiness are determined for a comparative analysis which is aim to reveal inequalities between upper class and lower class. Twitter accounts are chosen to analyze how discriminatory discourses against to the poor people are reproduced and legitimatized in new media. Findings show that the news accounts of Twitter support the inequalities and feed the discrimination against poor people. The people, who are workers, retired, farmers, workless and debtors, are assumed as lower class in this study scale because of their limited life conditions in Turkey.

While the class hierarchies are reproduced by new media, the structural inequalities are also prevailing between classes at the level of discourse. As it is analyzed in this study, the structural dimensions of poverty are disregarded on news accounts of Twitter. The disadvantaged lower classes are generally represented with negative narratives on new media and these contents are supporting discrimination toward poor people.

Besides, the upper classes are represented more often than the poors and whealty is represented with positive images and incentive statements on Twitter. For instance, the famous people (singers, models, actress & actors, artist etc.) are represented more often than the poor people in news accounts of Twitter. The events about famous people are represented instantly with live links and break news by Twitter messages. Famous people are represented with the life styles of wealthiness such as luxury expenditures, branded cars, yachts, holidays, expensive dresses. Briefly, wealthiness is represented along with positive images and incentive implies in popular news accounts of Twitter.

New media construction enables reproducing inequalities and power relations by othering and stereotyping strategies. Revealing the othering and stereotyping against the people having disadvantage position in terms of economical and cultural capital should be a priority issue to grasp the inequalities and power relations on new media. The

detrimental causes of poverty and social inequalities are multiplied by the reproduction of discrimination on new media discourses. Privileged upper class and disadvantaged lower class framed in new media contents are represented with a discriminatory manner.

In some arguments, new media frames highlight the lifestyles of the upper classes and lack in to demonstrate the class hierarchy. In the dominant ideological construct poverty accepted as a problem of individuals instead of a social and structural matter. In addition, news coverages controlled by a few powerful corporation cause to commercialisation of news contents. Therefore the less powerful groups are at risk of being devalued and stereotyped in news discourse. Class based power differences, and inequalities are maintained on new media and poor people portrayed with moral failings. Stories about low income people and the voice of poor are transmitted rarely on new media. Targeted welfare recipients are more represented with positive images, generally in headlines.

The structural difference between upper class and lower class is hidden in new media sphere because of the exclusion of poor people on new media discourse. But inequalities between classes, and problems stem from this notable difference are prevailing in social life. News coverage build the public opinion and framed contents on new media strengthen both dominant power relations and social hierarchies.

The usage of negative statements, implicit meanings or exclusions on 'text', evoke the inequalities, feed the cognitive perception based on stereotypes and thus, create the 'others'. New media may support the discriminatory discourses besides conveying rapid information to huge masses. Consequently the class hierarchy is reproduced by new media; the structural dimensions of poverty are disregarded, wealthy is represented with incentive statements on social media contents.

Keywords: The representation of news discourse, poverty & wealthiness, the class hierarchy, content analysis, Twitter.

YOKSULLUĞUN VE ZENGİNLİĞİN TWITTER'DAKİ HABER HESAPLARINDA TEMSİLİ

ÖZET

Çalışmanın amacı, Twitter'daki haber hesaplarında yoksulluğun ve zenginliğin temsilini değerlendirmektir. Çalışmada, yeni medya içeriklerinde çerçevelenen ayrıcalıklı üst sınıf ve dezavantajlı alt sınıfın temsili karşılaştırımalı bir biçimde incelenmiştir. Çalışma ekonomik ve kültürel sermaye açısından dejzavantajlı konumdaki kesime karşı ötekileştirme ve stereotipleştirme stratejilerini ortaya çıkarmaya çalışmaktadır. Yeni medyanın ayrımcılığı yeniden üretmedeki rolü niceliksel bir yöntemle ortaya çıkarılmak istenmektedir. Türkiye'deki Twitter hesapları içinde anlık gelişmeleri bildirerek en çok takip edilen üç haber hesabı, araştırma örneklemi olarak seçilmiştir. Twitter'daki söylemi çözümlemek için kullanılan içerik analizi iki haftalık bir dönemi kapsamaktadır. Yeni medyada yoksul kesimlere yönelik olumsuz kalıplarla biçimlenmiş haber anlatısı kamu algısını yönlendirmekte, bu

gelişme hakim güç ilişkilerini ve hiyerarşiyi pekiştirmektedir. Olumsuz ifadelerin kullanımı, imalı anlamlar ve metindeki dışlamalar eşitsizliklere sebep olmakta, stereotipler üzerine kurulu bilişsel algıyı beslemekte ve böylece 'öteki' yaratmaktadır. Üst sınıf ve alt sınıflar arasındaki yapısal fark yeni meda ortamında dezavantajlı kesimin söylem alanından dışlanmasıyla görünmez hale gelmektedir. Oysa sınıflar arası eşitsizlik ve bu belirgin farktan kaynaklanan sorunlar toplumsal yaşamda devam etmektedir. Yoksul kesimler seslerini yeni medya aracılığıyla yeterince karar alıcı mercilere ve kitlelere duyuramamaktadırlar. Yeni medya geniş kitlelere hızlı ileti yaymanın yanında ayrımcı söylemleri desteklemektedir. Sonuç olarak, sınıf hiyerarşisi sosyal medyada yeniden üretilmekte, yoksulluğun yapısal boyutları göz ardı edilmekte, yeni medya içeriklerinde ise zenginlik özendirici ifadelerle temsil edilmektedir.

Anahtar Kavramlar: Haber söyleminin temsili, yoksulluk & zenginlik, sınıf hiyerarşisi, içerik analizi, Twitter.

1. Introduction

New media construction enables reproducing inequalities and power relations by othering and stereotyping strategies. Privileged upper class and disadvantaged lower class framed in new media contents are represented with a discriminatory manner. This representation on poverty and wealthiness in news portals of Twitter is considered in this study in a comparative view. Releasing the othering and stereotyping against the people having disadvantage position in terms of economical and cultural capital should be a priority issue to grasp the inequalities and power relations on new media.

According to R.A. Clawson and R. Trice, the poor people are generally represented with stereotypical traits in negative stories (2000: 62). Clawson and Trice analyzed that the photographic images of the poor people in news magazines and reveals the media contents include negative beliefs toward the poors and have a lack of support for welfare programs.

In addition to this approach, D. Kendall (2011: 211) notes that some media frames glorify the material possessions and lifestyles of the upper classes. According to Kendall (2011: 215), the media show us little commonality between our lives and the experiences of people at the bottom of the class hierarchy. In the dominant ideological construct poverty accepted as a problem of individuals, and not of society as a whole.

H.E. Bullock, K.F. Wyche and W.R. Williams mention that the mainstream media outlets controlled by a few powerful corporations reflect the interests of dominant social groups. Therefore the less powerful groups are at risk of being devalued and stereotyped in the mainstream media (2001: 230-231). Class based power differences, and inequalities, the poor are rendered invisible and portrayed with moral failings (substance abuse, crime, sexual availability, violence). According to the authors, stories about low income people and the voice of poor are commonly rare on media. Targeted welfare recipients are more represented with positive images, generally in headlines (2001: 243). Similarly, popular news portals on Twitter also controlled by a few mass media corporations and such stereotypes against low income people are maintained also in new media outlets.

It is a fact that new media is supporting connectivity and many to many interactive communication. In an optimistic view new media provides new opportunities for people to produce and share material easily and rapidly. As F. Robinson, R. Else, M. Sherlock and I. Zass-Oglivie (Robinson et al., 2009: 6-7) note that new media is hosting the contributions of individuals and groups, including digital stories and debates, promoting access and develop better understanding and generating pressure

for change. But this view is disregarding othering strategies, ideological construction, digital exclusion and stereotypes against poors reproduced on new media discourse.

As K. Marx and F. Engels (1970: 32) points out in their working - Communist Manifesto - "the history of all the hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle." As it is understand from this view, the structural difference between the disadvantaged lower class suffering from poverty and the privileged upper class has been an ongoing phenomenon in all phases of the capitalist societies. This contradiction among classes are hidden in new media sphere because of the exclusion of poor people in new media sphere, for instance in the news accounts of Twitter. But the class conflicts and inequalities are prevailing in social life.

M. Gilens (1996: 516) mentions that media coverage of poverty shapes public perceptions and misperceptions of the poor. Consequently, as it is viewed in Gilens's approach, public misperceptions reinforce existing biases and stereotypes. In addition to this approach, framed news contents on new media including biases and stereotypes support the power relations and hierarchies.

2. Findings and Discussion

The role of new media on reproducing discrimination is handled with a quantitative method in this study. The most following three news accounts on Twitter (@ntv, @cnntürk, @Hurriyet), reporting instant developments in Turkey, are chosen as a research sample. Twitter messages are examined from 1 th August to 15 th August, 2017 for two weeks period. In this context, the messages of selected Twitter accounts are counted in terms of their followers and total tweets (see Table.1).

Table 1. Twitter Accounts as a Research Sample

	@ntv	**@cnnturk**	**@Hurriyet**
Followers	7 million	4,7 million	4.17 million
Total Tweets (two weeks period)	1681	6457	4545

Tweets on lower class and upper class are distinguished from each other (see Table.2). The dispersal of contents on Twitter accounts are also determined and by this content analysis, the usage of negative statements, implicit meanings and exclusions against lower class are detected. In addition, the depictions on whealtiness are handled for a comparative analysis which is aim to reveal inequalities between upper class and lower class. Twitter accounts are chosen to analyze how discriminatory discourses against to the poor people are reproduced and legitimatized in new media.

Table 2. Twitter Accounts

	@ntv	**@cnnturk**	**@Hurriyet**
Tweets on lower class	12	62	37
Tweets on upper class	234	521	507

Findings show that the news accounts of Twitter support the inequalities and feed the discrimination against poor people. The people, who are workers, retired, farmers, workless and debtors, are assumed as lower class in this study scale because of their limited life conditions in Turkey (see Table.2).

The structural reasons of poverty aren't displayed exactly in the most following news accounts of Twitter. The people having lower income are handled with simple economical statistics and dramatized with a brief frame of economical situations of their daily life. In NTV, which has the most follower on Twitter, the economical statistics about poverty are represented with only 4 news. The economical situations of the poor people are never mentioned in NTV in this two-weeks period. Economical statistics about poverty in the news account of CNNTurk are shown in 6 tweets, and the economical situations are also shown in 6 tweets. In Hurriyet, while the economical statistics about poor people are reported in 4 tweets, economical situations are reported in 5 tweets. The demandings of poor people accompanying with a social action (like strike, march etc.) are also represented with a very few frequency. In this regard, the demandings of them are represented in NTV with only 1 tweet, in CNNTurk with 7 tweet, in Hurriyet with 4 tweets (see Table.3).

Table 3. The Representation of Poverty in News Accounts of Twitter

Dispersal of issues	**@ntv**	**@cnnturk**	**@Hurriyet**
Economical Statistics	4	6	4
Economical Position	-	6	5
Demanding rights	1	7	4
Accused/ suspected	-	4	3
Aggressive	1	6	5
Successful	-	1	1
Helpful	-	1	-
Accidents, death & injuries	2	13	4
Patient & illness	1	2	-
Financial & social aids to the poor people	3	8	5
Mistreatments to the poor people	-	2	1
Displaying as Phenomena	-	4	3
At work with joyful action	-	1	-
Legislations about the people having lower-income	-	1	2
Total Tweets	12	62	37

The another category examined in this study is about the negative statements regarding the poor people. It is known that negative statements are strengthen the discrimination against the disadvantaged groups. The poors are represented with negative statements more than positive ones such as accused and aggressive in the news account of Twitter. The lower-classes are represented as accused persons in CNNTurk with 4 tweets, in Hurriyet with 3 tweets. Similarly, the lower-class are represented as aggressive persons in NTV with 1 tweet, in CNNTurk with 6 tweets, in Hurriyet with 5 tweets. However the news account of NTV is never represented the poor people with positive statements. In CNNTurk, positive statements for poor people such as successful and helpful are used in a very few amount (2 tweets). In Hurriyet, positive statements are mentioned only in 1 tweet (see Table.3).

The accident news are the another category which is examined in this study. The poor people are represented while occurring an accident, in the news account of NTV with 2 tweets, in CNNTurk with 13 tweets, in Hurriyet with 4 tweets. As it is seen, the lower class is usually shown with negative news instead of positive ones, especially in accident news (see Table.3).

Besides, financial aids to the lower-classes are represented in the news account of NTV with 3 tweets, in CNNTurk with 8 tweets, in Hurriyet with 5 tweets (see Table.3). This means, social media contents prefer to recommend disposing the structural inequalities only by financial supporting. But in Marxist view, for a permanent effort, the inequalities should be overcome with a class struggle in a hierarchical system. In other words, social equalities can not be grown without solving the power and dominant relations in the capitalist system.

The poor people are displayed in some of the news accounts as a phenomena. For instance, a herdsman is represented while singing in the mountains in the news accounts of CNNTurk and Hurriyet with a video attachment. On the other hand, the poor people are rarely displayed as if they are in amusement in spite of their hardworking and detrimental economic conditions. For instance, agricultural workers are represented with a joyful action while gathering the crops in the news account of CNNTurk (see Table.3).

The famous people (singers, models, actress & actors, artist etc.) are represented more often than the poor people in news accounts of Twitter. The events about famous people are sometimes represented with live links and break news in instant Twitter messages. Famous people are represented with 234 tweets in the news account of NTV, with 521 tweets in CNNTürk, with 507 tweets in Hurriyet. And 21 of them in NTV news, 36 of them in CNNTurk news, 21 of them in Hurriyet news are represented with the life styles of wealthy persons such as luxury expenditures, branded cars, yachts, holidays, expensive dresses. Hence, wealthiness is represented along with positive images and incentive implies in popular news accounts of Twitter.

4. Conclusion

The usage of negative statements, implicit meanings or exclusion on the 'text', evoke the inequalities, feed the stereotypes and thus, create the 'others'. New media may support the discriminatory discourses while conveying rapid information to huge masses. Consequently the class hierarchies are reproduced by new media. The structural dimensions of poverty are disregarded on news accounts of Twitter, while the lower classes are represented with negative statements. The detrimental causes of poverty and income inequality are multiplied by the reproduction of discrimination on new media discourses. On the other hand, wealthy is represented with positive images and incentive statements on Twitter and the upper class is represented more often than the poors. New media serves to legitimise the biases, stereotypes and inequalities. Framed news contents feed the ideological unjust structure and power relations.

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