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DARE TO SHARE?

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DARE TO SHARE? HOW ANTI-DISINFORMATION
POLICIES AFFECT ONLINE NEWS-SHARING
BEHAVIOR IN TÜRKİYE

A Master's Thesis

by
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To those silenced and censored, whose truths were suppressed

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BEHAVIOR IN TÜRKİYE

The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
of
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By Selin Küçükoruç

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Media and Visual Studies.

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ABSTRACT

DARE TO SHARE? HOW ANTI-DISINFORMATION POLICIES AFFECT ONLINE NEWS-SHARING BEHAVIOR IN TÜRKİYE

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M.A. in Media and Visual Studies

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For the past decades, governments and social media companies have attempted to combat the spread of misinformation online by developing new regulations around online technologies. While these attempts have successfully curbed the spread of misinformation in many instances, there have also been cases where such regulations have violated the freedom of expression due to the uncertainty surrounding the definition of misinformation (Cipers et al., 2023). This thesis aims to explore how these strategies to combat misinformation affect the way ordinary citizens engage with news online in an authoritarian-leaning context. In doing so, it investigates the impact of recent counter-misinformation regulation in Türkiye, publicly known as the disinformation or censorship law, on news-sharing behavior. Employing a 2x2 between-subjects online survey experiment among 228 Turkish college student, the

study seeks to understand whether exposure to information about the law and the mode of online identity (anonymous vs. real) affects individuals' news-sharing tendencies. Although the salience of the law and the different modes of online identity does not significantly affect news-sharing attitudes as a model, the salience of the law alone has a significant negative relationship with sharing likelihood when all control variables were included in the analysis. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of striking a balance between countering misinformation and protecting freedom of expression online.

Keywords: Disinformation, News-Sharing, Online Anonymity, Social Media.

ÖZET

TÜRKİYE’DE DEZENFORMASYONLA MÜCADELE POLİTİKALARININ ÇEVİRİMİÇİ HABER PAYLAŞMA DAVRANIŞINA ETKİLERİ

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Hükümetler ve sosyal medya şirketleri, çevrimiçi aktivitelerle ilgili yeni düzenlemeler geliştirerek yanlış bilginin yayılmasını engellemeye çalışmaktadır. Bu girişimler birçok durumda yanlış bilgilerin yayılmasını başarılı bir şekilde engellemiş olsa da yanlış bilgiyle alakalı farklı kavram tanımlarını çevreleyen belirsizlik nedeniyle bu tür düzenlemelerin ifade özgürlüğünü ihlal ettiği durumlar da olmuştur (Cipers vd., 2023). Bu tez, devletler tarafından uygulanan yanlış bilgiyle mücadele stratejilerinin, otoriteye eğilimli devletlerde sıradan vatandaşların çevrimiçi haberlerle etkileşim biçimini nasıl etkilediğini araştırmayı amaçlamıştır. Bunu yaparken, Türkiye’deki dezenformasyon veya sansür yasası olarak da bilinen yeni dezenformasyonla mücadele düzenlemesinin haber paylaşma davranışı üzerindeki etkisini incelemiştir. 228 üniversite öğrencisi arasında 2x2 denekler arası çevrimiçi anket deneyi yöntemini kullanan çalışma, yasanın hatırlatılmasının ve çevrimiçi kimlik formlarının (anonim veya gerçek) bireylerin haber paylaşma eğilimlerini etkileyip etkilemediğini anlamayı amaçlamıştır. Yasanın hatırlatılması ve farklı çevrimiçi kimlik formlarının kullanımı bir model olarak haber paylaşımını anlamlı şekilde etkilememesine rağmen, tüm

kontrol deęiřkenleri analize dahil edildięinde, yasanın hatırlatılmasının haber paylařımı ile anlamlı bir negatif iliřkisi olduęu bulunmuřtur. Genel olarak alıřmanın bulguları yanlış bilgiyle mcadelede atılan yasal adımlar ve evrimii ifade zgrlęn koruma arasında bir denge kurmanın nemini vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dezenformasyon, Haber Paylařımı, evrimii Anonimlik, Sosyal Medya.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
ÖZET	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	ix
LIST OF TABLES.....	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
CHAPTER I.....	1
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER II	6
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	6
2.1. Defining Misinformation, Disinformation, and Fake News	7
2.2. Understanding the Dynamics of Dissemination of Misinformation.....	10
2.3. Exploring Motivations Behind News-Sharing.....	12
2.4. Motivations for Sharing Misinformation	14
2.5. Perceptions of Misinformation	16
2.6. (Perceived) Exposure to Misinformation.....	19
2.7. Multifaceted Consequences of Sharing Misinformation	24
2.8. Cross-Cultural Differences in Attitudes Toward Misinformation.....	25
2.9. Government Efforts Against the Spread of Misinformation	27
2.10. The Turkish Context	31
2.10.1. Social Media Policies in Türkiye between 2007-2022	32
2.10.2. Legislative Measures Against Disinformation in Türkiye	36
2.11. Online Anonymity	39
2.12. Current Study	44
CHAPTER III	46
METHODOLOGY	46
3.1. Data Collection & Survey Sample	47
3.2. Design	48

3.3. Survey Measures.....	52
CHAPTER IV	64
FINDINGS.....	64
4.1. Descriptives of Survey Measures	64
4.2. Statistical Analyses and Results	68
CHAPTER V	74
DISCUSSION.....	74
5.1. Overview of Key Findings.....	75
5.1.1. The Effect of Salience of Disinformation Law on Sharing Likelihood....	75
5.1.2. Online Anonymity and News-Sharing.....	78
5.1.3. Additional Findings	80
5.2. Limitations & Methodological Considerations.....	81
5.3. Directions for Future Studies.....	85
5.4. Concluding Remarks.....	87
REFERENCES	89
APPENDICES	120
APPENDIX A. ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL PAGE	121
APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT	122
APPENDIX C: SURVEY QUESTIONS.....	124

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Table of terms related to information disorders.....	9
Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Demographic Variables.....	48
Table 3. Survey Statements for Motivations for Using Social Media.....	55
Table 4. Survey Statements for Motivations for News-Sharing.....	57
Table 5. Statements for Perceived Social Media Literacy.....	58
Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of Key and Control Variables.....	62
Table 7. Group Descriptive Statistics.....	70
Table 8. Sharing Behavior by Key and Control Variables	72

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Conditions of the experimental design.....49

Figure 2. Study stimulus.....51

Figure 3. Distribution of Preferred Platforms66

Figure 4. Frequency of Trust Features67

Figure 5. Average Sharing Likelihood across Conditions.....69



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In February 2024, the internet was filled with speculations about the mysterious disappearance of Kate Middleton, the Princess of Wales, and the situation escalated when the Royal Family shared a photo of Kate celebrating Mother's Day with her children on social media. Public skepticism quickly arose, with many alleging the image was either AI-generated or heavily edited. This suspicion was confirmed when major photo agencies like AP and Reuters issued a "picture kill" alert, acknowledging that the photo was manipulated, further fueling the controversy theories (Melley, 2024). Around the same time, numerous social media posts circulated false ideas of a "human-made earthquake" about the devastating 2024 Noto earthquake in Japan (NHK World-Japan, 2024). In response to this incident, Japan's Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication warned the public through social media and government channels to be cautious against such misleading and false information circulating online (Khaliq & Guldogan, 2024).

Beyond such examples, there has been a concerning trend of AI-generated false and misleading information regarding the upcoming elections worldwide (Swenson & Chan, 2024). Relevant incidents include the deep fake video of the former Turkish opposition party leader Kilicdaroglu supporting PKK terrorist organization (Ülker, 2023), the AI-generated audio clip of Slovakia's liberal party leader saying they are planning to rig the vote and raise the price of beer (Devine et al., 2024), and the fabricated videos showing Moldova's pro-Western president criticizing Moldovan citizens' life styles as well as announcing her resignation (Necsutu, 2023).

As social media gradually became more and more integrated into our everyday life, the spread of misinformation and how it affects people on both social and individual-level has become a widely studied topic in communication studies. News media have also started to use the term disinformation, which is used to refer to false information shared with an intention to mislead, frequently in order to raise awareness and draw attention to this emerging problem (Egelhofer, 2020). As a result, more people have become aware of various terms and concepts related to misinformation.

According to the Global Risks Report 2024, misinformation and disinformation are identified as the most significant short-term risks for the following years (World Economic Forum, 2024). The report highlights the upcoming election cycles in 2024, where many countries will hold national polls, and suggests that the risk associated with misinformation and disinformation is likely to increase rapidly. Accordingly, governments worldwide have adopted several social media policies to combat the spread of disinformation, which are usually referred to as counter-disinformation or anti-disinformation policies. However, some states and key political figures also

contribute to the creation and dissemination of disinformation to expand their reach or to strengthen their arguments. One of the most prominent examples of this is disinformation campaigns carried out by Russia in other countries, which dates back to the Soviet Union (Bechis, 2020). Russian disinformation campaigns are often designed to negatively influence the domestic policies of European countries with the aim of strengthening Russia's political position. Under the guise of counter-disinformation policies, authoritarian countries might introduce social media regulations limiting ordinary citizens' online freedom of expression (Alyukav & Zavadskaya, 2024). In such cases, citizens might develop different mechanisms as they are unsure of the legal consequences they may face after sharing information on social media.

People have different motivations for sharing information with each other. This motivation can be simply to inform others or to maintain their social reputation. If the shared information turns out to be false or misleading, the sharer risks getting negative reactions from their social circle and higher authority, such as the social media platform or the government. These negative reactions range from the social circle judging the user for posting false information, social media platform deleting the user's post or restricting their social media account as a warning, or the government launching an investigation into the person's post. Simply put, no matter if the information shared is true or false, the act of sharing information leads to various consequences. In this master's thesis, I aim to understand the individual-level factors that affect news-sharing behavior in light of the recent legal amendments aiming to prevent sharing disinformation in Türkiye.

Given the legal and social consequences of sharing misinformation or information that later turns out to be false, people might develop strategies to regulate their online activities. One such strategy could be the use of different modes of online identity, such as anonymity or pseudonymity. For instance, in highly repressive regimes, citizens resort to online anonymity to express themselves more freely, to avoid censorship and access information more easily (Jardine, 2016). In contrast, in more democratic societies, people may use online anonymity to be completely free from digital surveillance (Jardine, 2016). As literature on online anonymity lacks a common view on the impact of anonymity on news-sharing behavior, this topic becomes even more intriguing for research. Thus, in this master's thesis, I also try to observe whether there is a relationship between these two concepts by examining the use of different modes of online identity's impact on online news experience. This study's theoretical framework is based on political communication literature, drawing on research in misinformation, political information-processing, and political psychology. Considering how the Turkish government is often criticized for abusing values like media freedom and freedom of expression, and implementing strict social media policies, a study in the context of Türkiye is relevant in terms of contributing a diverse perspective to misinformation literature.

Thus, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

RQ1: How does the salience of the disinformation law affect news-sharing behavior in Türkiye?

RQ2: How do different modes of online identity (i.e., anonymity vs. using one's real identity) affect one's tendency to share news in Türkiye?

Finding answers to these questions is essential not only for future research but also for understanding the current case of Türkiye, which has been partially overlooked in previous research on misinformation (Murphy et al., 2023). Chapter 2 will illustrate the broad literature on misinformation, news-sharing behavior and online anonymity. Specifically, it will delve deeper into various aspects of misinformation like how it is defined, perceived, and spread through social media networks. Chapter 3 will provide an overview of the study's methodology in detail, including a description of the experimental design and the statistical analyses used to analyze the data. Lastly, Chapter 4 will present the findings obtained in detail and connect them to the current literature. Limitations of the study and insights into future research will also be discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

With each passing day, the line between truth and lie online blurs further. AI-powered misinformation campaigns manipulate ordinary citizens' perceptions, and even public figures sometimes resort to misinformation to maintain their influence. This constant exposure to misinformation has pushed governments and several social media platforms to develop counter-misinformation policies, though the effectiveness of these interventions remains unclear. As misinformation continues to be a part of our everyday lives, scholars across diverse disciplines are actively analyzing the different mechanisms that lead to the presence of misinformation online (Del Vicario et al., 2016; Shin et al., 2018) and how to overcome this problem (Lazer et al., 2017; Collins et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2023).

This chapter is will serve as an overview of the existing misinformation literature by discussing the definitions of related key terms, as well as the dynamics of

misinformation spread online and associated sharing behaviors. I will also delve deeper into the effect of misinformation exposure on people's judgments and information-sharing behavior. In addition, motivations for sharing misinformation, along with perceived consequences of sharing misinformation, will be discussed. Considering whether there is an impact of anti-disinformation policies on online news-sharing experience, I will briefly discuss recent social media regulations against the spread of disinformation in both Türkiye and global contexts. Lastly, to clarify my case, I will describe the rationale behind the current study, explaining its motives and the frameworks employed.

2.1. Defining Misinformation, Disinformation, and Fake News

There are various approaches that can be followed while defining the multidimensional concept of misinformation. Some experts suggest the differences between terms related to information disorders should be carefully clarified (Wardle, 2018), while others prefer to use the broad definition of misinformation, which is false and misleading information (Altay et al., 2023). There are also disagreements in the literature on whether related concepts, including rumor, propaganda, and conspiracy theories, should be considered as part of this phenomenon (Tandoc Jr. et al., 2017). This lack of shared understanding of misinformation in literature might negatively affect counter-misinformation steps and people's trust in information, and make basic human rights like freedom of expression, vulnerable to strategic abuse by governments, policymakers, and social media platforms (Kapantai et al., 2020).

Starting from the earlier literature, misinformation and disinformation are often defined as false information, and the distinction between these terms result from either an intention of deception or an honest mistake (Fox, 1983; Hernon, 1995). Disinformation refers to false information intentionally created to cause public harm or profit, while misinformation refers to any kind of false information shared with or without any intention (Bakir & McStay, 2017; Wu et al., 2019; Freelon & Wells, 2020). Malinformation distinguishes itself from these terms and refers to information based on truth but shared with an intention to cause harm to individuals, organizations, or countries. Fake news refers to information that gives the look of real news but has other purposes beyond just informing, and it was first defined as “news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false and could mislead readers” (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017, p. 213). Propaganda, on the other hand, is considered a type of communication, and it is defined as a “deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist.” (Jowett & O’Donnell, 2014, p. 7). Rumors are defined as “claims of fact about people, groups, events, and institutions that have not been shown to be true, but that move from one person to another, and hence have credibility not because direct evidence is known to support them, but because other people seem to believe them.” (Sunstein, 2009, p. 4), and they tend to diffuse more in authoritarian countries due to their repressive attitude towards news media (Huang, 2015). Lastly, conspiracy theories refers to “attempts to explain the ultimate causes of significant social and political events and circumstances with claims of secret plots by two or more powerful actors.” (Douglas et al., 2019, p. 4). All explained terms related to information disorders, their brief definitions and how

literature refers to the distinctive intention behind these concepts can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Terms related to information disorders

Term	Definition	Intent	
False information	Verifiably false information.	-	Aïmeur et al. (2023)
Misinformation	False information shared without an intention to mislead.	Not to mislead	
Disinformation	False information shared with an intention to mislead or to cause harm.	To mislead	
Malinformation	Accurate information that is shared to cause harm.	To mislead	
Fake news	Fabricated or distorted stories presented as real news.	To mislead	
Propaganda	Biased or misleading information shared to promote a political cause or standpoint.	To influence	Jowett & O'Donnell (2014)
Rumor	Unverified information shared by social networks.	Various reasons	Sunstein (2009)
Conspiracy theory	An explanation of an event or situation that invokes a conspiracy.	Various reasons	Douglas et al. (2019)

In this master's thesis, I refer to "misinformation" as an umbrella term to incorporate many definitions of false information in order to provide a holistic understanding of its effects without becoming mired down in semantic distinctions.

2.2. Understanding the Dynamics of Dissemination of Misinformation

Digital technologies have not only made it easier for us to access reliable information but have also contributed to the increased dissemination of misinformation. To understand the impact of misinformation on our beliefs and attitudes, it is important to examine co-occurring mechanisms that play a role in its spread. Misinformation spreads both through social and algorithmic curations. Social curation refers to information exposure due to social contacts (Thorson & Wells, 2016), and it deals with the influential role of social networks in spreading information. Algorithmic curation, on the other hand, refers to information exposure due to algorithms of social media platforms with the ultimate goal of receiving user engagement and advertising profits (Barnidge, 2021; Rieder, 2016). While the curating actor is shaped by the distribution of our social networks in social curation, the curating actor of algorithmic curation is algorithms that collect the digital traces of our online activities, then use it to define our interests and apply collected information to maximize online engagement (Barnidge, 2021, p. 127).

As an example of a curation algorithm, Bandy and Diakopolous (2021) found that X's (formerly Twitter) algorithmic timeline impacts exposure to different forms of news media by exposing users to external news agents and "junk news" sources as they scroll through, meaning that users can be easily exposed to misinformation without realizing it. According to the curated flows framework, both our own choices and the algorithms that personalize our feeds affect the flow of information we are exposed to. This interaction influences which news we see and how we react to it, which in turn could affect the spread of misinformation (Barnidge, 2021).

Besides algorithms, software-driven accounts also contribute to the spread of misinformation online. Bot accounts are designed to mimic human interaction, and they can be programmed to share information rapidly, often promoting misleading content and potentially making it go viral (Himelein-Wachowiak et al., 2021). Some bots perform helpful tasks, like the Twitter account *@threadreaderapp*, which helps to read long threads more efficiently. Some bots provide entertainment, such as the Twitter account *@MakeItAQuote*, which turns unrelated tweets into profound quotes. More importantly, some bot accounts are specifically designed to spread misinformation. Many features of bots enable them to be “super-spreaders” of misinformation online, and many people have a hard time detecting whether an account is bot or genuine.

In addition to bot accounts, there are users who contribute to the spread of misinformation by sharing such content. Although previous research suggests that only a minority of users share misinformation (Guess et al., 2019), the consequences of their posts could have a profound impact on society. For instance, exposure to misinformation can impact individuals’ trust levels in news media and public institutions (Stubenvoll et al., 2021), manipulate public opinion on controversial topics (Nyhan & Reifler, 2010), and may even trigger violent tendencies in some people (Taylor, 2020). Thus, it is important to examine and understand the underlying motivations for sharing misinformation, whether deliberately or accidentally, in order to protect our information ecosystem and democratic values. However, to fully grasp the complexities of this problem, it is critical to first look into broader motivations for sharing information online.

2.3. Exploring Motivations Behind News-Sharing

There are many different underlying motivations for an individual to share news on social media. Some share news to inform others, some to feel connected to like-minded people, and some for entertainment purposes only (Wong & Burkell, 2017). One may also engage in news-sharing behavior as a means of self-presentation (Ihm & Kim, 2024). Previous studies observed that people who share news online more frequently are more actively engaged with news outside of social media as well than those who use social media for other purposes (Kalogeropoulos et al., 2017).

According to Ceylan et al. (2023), people who spend a lot of time on social media tend to share information almost habitually, with little concern for its accuracy due to the reward-based form of social media platforms. This reward-based nature of social media platforms could influence some people to share attention-grabbing content to gain approval of their social circle, even opting for misinformation (Rahmanian & Esfidani, 2022).

Picone et al. (2016) categorized news sharers into four different categories: social sharers, reflective sharers, uncaring sharers, and moderate sharers. Social sharers are those with high online activity and a motivation to exchange ideas and stay in touch with others while sharing news (Picone et al., 2016, p. 927). Reflective sharers refer to also those with high online activity, but unlike social sharers, they prioritize their self-representation. Thus, this type of users care about their social reputation while they share news to stay in touch with others. Uncaring sharers rarely share news and their need for self-presentation and social connection are less influential motivations

compared to social and reflective sharers. Moderate sharers, on the other hand, have more average levels across all motivations observed in previous sharing forms. Such sharers usually consider their close social circle, such as their family and friends, as their intended audience while they share news online (Picone et al., 2016, p. 928). People's motivations for news-sharing also vary depending on the topic of the news story. For instance, previous studies discovered that people prefer to share soft news (e.g., entertainment news) than hard news (e.g., serious news about politics, economics, etc.) (Ma et al., 2012). In addition, news characteristics, such as news article being in line with traditional news values, arousing curiosity, having an emotional language, containing visuals, or sometimes having a humorous aspect, are considered as "engagement enhancers" for news stories (Tenenboim, 2022).

There is also extensive literature on refraining from sharing news, which is often referred to as "news-avoidance" behavior. Skovsgaard and Andersen (2019) suggest that there are two kinds of news avoiders: intentional avoiders and unintentional avoiders. Intentional news avoiding occurs due to the news' negative effect on mood, lack of trust in news media and overwhelmingly increased amount of available news online. For instance, during COVID-19, one study found that users reported intentionally avoiding news because the news often made them experience negative emotions (de Bruin et al., 2021). This is in line with a previous finding, which suggest that people are often reluctant to share "bad news" with both their close circle and strangers due to the minimizing unpleasant message effect (Dibble & Levine, 2013). Unintentional news avoiding, on the other hand, happens because of

more complex reasons, such as algorithms, increasing media supply, and low political interest (Skovgaard & Andersen, 2019).

Previous research identified trust in media as one of the important indicators of news-sharing behavior. And this begs the question of what factors contribute to our trust (or distrust) in different media outlets and how this trust (or lack of it) affects our online experience, from the news we read to the content that we share. Wagner and Boczkowski (2019) found that people are generally fearful, anxious, and have a negative view of news. Similarly, trust in a news source has a negative relationship with authenticating news before sharing, indicating that individuals with higher trust levels are less likely to verify the accuracy of information before sharing it (Talwar et al., 2019). Therefore, the level of trust individuals place in news sources play a significant role in shaping their motivations for sharing misinformation. In essence, both high and low levels of trust in news media can impact the spread of misinformation, albeit through different mechanisms. While high trust can induce the unnoticed spread of misinformation from seemingly credible sources, low trust can contribute to the spread of misinformation through alternative news sources and echo chambers.

2.4. Motivations for Sharing Misinformation

People often share misinformation without full awareness of its accuracy (Pennycook et al., 2021; Scheufele & Krause, 2019; Zhou et al., 2022). This may be due to truth bias, which refers to the tendency to believe information is true by default. However,

there are also instances where individuals who are aware of such misleading information decide to share it regardless of different underlying motivations. These underlying motivations for deliberately sharing misinformation are varied, such as ideological alignment with misinformation, a desire to influence others' opinions or even malicious intent. In an empirical study that aimed to understand the motivations of those who share political misinformation online, Littrell et al. (2023) found that such individuals were more prone to political violence, had a desire to run for office, and felt closer to radical politicians. They had greater levels of psychological urge for chaos, had characteristics of a dark tetrad personality, and were more likely to experience paranoia (Littrell et al., 2023).

Perach et al. (2023) delved deeper into the motivations behind intentional misinformation sharing and identified six distinct motivations: engagement in prosocial activism, attacking or manipulating others, entertainment purposes, raising awareness, political self-expression, and, interestingly, fighting misinformation. While some people may indeed share false information to harm and manipulate others, the authors revealed a spectrum of motivations, including those motivated by a desire to promote the common good or to correct misinformation. To sum up, contrary to common belief, deliberately sharing misinformation is not always motivated by ulterior motives.

Arin et al. (2023) found that accidental misinformation sharing is often linked to low media literacy, being younger, and having more right-leaning political views. Their findings also showed that accidentally sharing misinformation was much more

common and frequent than deliberately sharing misinformation. This result is consistent with the previous studies suggesting that users who knowingly share misinformation constitute a very small portion of social media users. Overall, their study highlight the importance of focusing on trainings like media literacy and misinformation detection, which could be helpful in preventing the harmful effects of accidental sharing.

Sharing misinformation is often triggered by similar psychological impulses that encourage partisan behavior (Osmundsen et al., 2021), with political orientation being a strong predictor for the intention to share misinformation (Morosoli et al., 2022). For instance, individuals who claim to hate their political rivals are more likely to participate in the dissemination of political misinformation by selectively sharing content aimed at derogating them (Osmundsen et al., 2021). Additionally, sharing potentially false information seems more prevalent among individuals strongly attached to a political ideology, particularly when the information touches upon issues deeply rooted in their moral values (Pretus et al., 2022).

2.5. Perceptions of Misinformation

Previous studies indicate that people are more likely to perceive simple and coherent statements that are consistent with their pre-existing beliefs as more credible (Lewandowsky et al., 2012; Kim & Dennis, 2019). These findings partially explain why specific social media posts and news with “click-bait” headlines, which are often short and emotionally charged, can easily influence individuals’ perceptions of information. For instance, if an audience with negative feelings towards the

opposition party is exposed to negative misinformation about the opposition party due to motivated reasoning, this exposure may trigger their existing mental modes and cause them to perceive misinformation as true. In contrast, when people are exposed to misinformation that does not match their existing beliefs, they are more likely to question the statement, seek confirmation from alternative sources, or engage in critical thinking to evaluate its validity.

According to Lazer et al. (2018), there are three key biases that shape how people perceive and react to misinformation: selective exposure, confirmation bias, and desirability bias. Selective exposure suggests that individuals are more likely to prefer information confirming their existing stand, while confirmation bias indicates that people are more likely to ignore information that is incompatible with their existing beliefs. Desirability bias, on the other hand, implies that users prefer to accept information that pleases them. These biases often interact with each other and reinforce one another, affecting individuals' perceptions of information in various ways.

Another significant factor that influences individuals' perception of misinformation is their political orientation. Turel and Osatuyi (2021) suggest that when the content of misinformation aligns with a person's political orientation, they are more likely to believe in it. This is in line with the motivated reasoning mechanisms that may shape individuals' perceptions when it comes to processing misinformation. Motivated reasoning is a cognitive phenomenon that suggests that people are more likely to

accept information that supports their existing beliefs and dismiss information that contradicts them (Kunda, 1990).

The source of information also play a critical role in both shaping the perceived trustworthiness of an information and perceptions of misinformation. For instance, people are more likely to perceive an information as more trustworthy when obtained from someone they share a strong interpersonal connection with (Turcotte et al., 2015; Tandoc Jr, 2018). Accordingly, higher levels of trust in familiar sources translates into greater receptiveness to feedback and correction to misinformation. This is why peer corrections are often more effective than algorithmic corrections, regardless of the source's initial credibility (Zeng et al., 2023). Another important social aspect that lead people to perceive information is presence of a photo or a headline in a news article, as well as high social metrics (Avram et al., 2020; Calvillo & Smelter, 2020). These findings highlight the role of social influence in shaping people's perceptions of information, as well as their acceptance of information. Previous studies examining how people perceive the effects of misinformation on themselves and others found that most people perceive others as more likely to be negatively affected by misinformation rather than themselves (Altay & Acarbi, 2023; Cheng & Chen, 2020; Wagner & Bockowski, 2019). This finding aligns with a well-established phenomenon in media studies called the third-person effect. Introduced by Davison (1983), TPE posits that individuals perceive a greater effect of mass media on others than themselves. Relatedly, in the context of misinformation, third-person perception (TPP) implies that individuals are more likely to perceive that others are more affected by misleading information than they

personally are. In line with TPP, Baek et al. (2019) found that individuals' support for state-implemented measures against disinformation was stronger if they believed that fake news harmed both others and themselves. Similarly, individuals who feel more capable of identifying and verifying fake news online often perceive its impact on others to be greater (Cheng & Chen, 2020; Wagner & Boczkowski, 2019). Eventually, TPP can influence the intention to share misinformation online (Chung & Kim, 2021) because individuals may not acknowledge the influence of misinformation on themselves, leading them to decide against promoting it.

The tendency to focus on others' vulnerability to misinformation, while neglecting one's own, can interfere efforts against the "continued-influence effect of misinformation" (Johnson & Seifert, 1994). This effect describes how repeated exposure to misinformation, even if later corrected, can leave a lasting impact on beliefs due to familiarity and alignment with pre-existing biases. By underestimating their own susceptibility to misinformation, individuals may be less likely to critically evaluate information or update their beliefs after corrections. Accordingly, a recent study by Susmann and Wegener (2021) found that "retractions of misinformation elicit psychological discomfort, and this discomfort predicts continued belief in and use of misinformation" (Susmann & Wegener, 2021, p. 435).

2.6. (Perceived) Exposure to Misinformation

Every day on social media, individuals scroll through various information and news posts. According to Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2023, social media is the dominant news source for about 75% of Turkish adults, with television following at

56% (Newman et al., 2023). This trend is particularly concerning given the country's low overall trust in news (around 35% in 2023) and the public perception that most Turkish media outlets are under government control. Notably, in another study by Reuters Institute in 2018, respondents from Türkiye indicated highest levels of exposure to "stories that are completely made up for political or commercial reasons" (Yanatma, 2018). All these findings highlight a need to investigate various factors that may lead to misinformation exposure as well as how it affects people's online behavior.

People's views of the world are shaped by the media they consume. As previously mentioned, the content to which users are exposed is determined by social and algorithmic curations and personalization systems on social media platforms. Over time, these platform features have led people to exhibit more selective exposure behaviors and to continue their online activities within a filter bubble. The filter bubble suggests that the content one is exposed to necessarily echoes one's own opinions and prevents one from being exposed to different opinions (Pariser, 2011). Unless one actively seeks to be exposed to different opinions, most users are part of a filter bubble in their social media feed. Unlike filter bubbles, echo chambers are a phenomenon in which individuals choose to interact within an (online) community, not through an algorithm but through their own social preferences (Sunstein, 2017). Both filter bubbles and echo chambers can take place in both offline and online settings (Talamanca & Arfini, 2022).

Previous research indicated that platforms specifically dedicated to creating and disseminating misinformation have limited reach, which suggests that mainstream media play a significant role when it comes to misinformation exposure (Tsftati et al., 2020). For instance, some journalists feel obligated to cover fake news stories to create awareness, but their attempt might backlash due to causing exposure to such misinformation. Especially, this certain coverage employed by mainstream media to maintain and diversify their audience, such as reporting fake news to promote the truth and the use of catchy language, can negatively influence individuals' trust level in mainstream media. People might start seeing mainstream reporting as biased and turn to alternative sources like social media (Fletcher & Park, 2017). This decline trend in mainstream media trust is often associated with fake news exposure (Ognyanova et al., 2020), although the alienation from mainstream media does not guarantee a healthy news diet. While alternative media platforms may provide easier access to accurate information, the same platforms may create an environment suitable for spreading of misinformation as well.

It is important to note that simply being exposed to misinformation does not automatically lead to acceptance or dissemination of it. Thus, it is important to understand the nuanced relationship between misinformation exposure and sharing misinformation. In terms of misinformation exposure, the literature suggests that exposure to misinformation is often linked to different demographic characteristics. For instance, Zhou et al. (2023) suggest that exposure to misinformation is more common among better informed. This is explained by the fact that better informed users keep up with a more ideologically diverse range of news sources than those

low informed. Hence, better-informed people are inevitably exposed to more reliable news. In contrast, Hwang and Jeong (2023) argue that information avoidance is a positive significant predictor of exposure to misinformation. Such contradictory findings could be explained by differences in the sample of the studies and the research questions they focus on.

A person's prior knowledge can provide a kind of shield against exposure to misinformation. For instance, someone with detailed knowledge of a specific topic may notice and dismiss false information when encountered. However, repetitive misinformation exposure can impact an individual's perceptions by generating confusion, doubt, and dependence, thus making it more challenging for individuals to identify what is true or not (Rapp & Salovich, 2018).

Perceived misinformation exposure (PME) is another much-studied concept in the misinformation literature, which seeks to understand how people's perceived exposure to misinformation affects their online behavior. Early research on PME assumed that the more people felt they were exposed to misinformation, the less they would trust the media and other institutions. However, Martin and Hassan (2020) argue that the relationship between media credibility and PME is quite complex and that no consensus can be maintained as in previous studies. Later studies suggested that PME negatively affects trust in media, specifically among individuals with low political knowledge (Stubenvoll et al., 2021).

Chan et al. (2023) examined individual-level and country-level factors affecting PME and found that at the individual-level, accidentally coming across news online increases PME, while at the country-level, excessive news sharing behavior increases PME and high trust levels in media decreases PME. In addition, they found that people's trust in renowned public service media like British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) also reduced PME. Consistent with this finding, Boulianne and Humphrecht (2024) found that PME did not cause any change in the sense of trust in institutions and this is due to the fact that people do not easily change their opinions about long-standing institutions.

So far, I have explored which factors play a role in misinformation exposure, who is more likely to be exposed to it and how it is perceived. All these discussions lead us to ask the following question: How vulnerable are people to misinformation? Studies show that older people, people with low trust in mainstream media and people with high digital media literacy are the groups most affected by misinformation exposure (Anspach & Carlson, 2022). However, even among those less susceptible, repetitive misinformation exposure was also found to create a sense of familiarity, which make misinformation to be mistakenly remembered or believed (Wahleim et al., 2020). To prevent this, researchers suggest informing and reminding users frequently about misinformation to improve their short-term memory. Additionally, not all misinformation exposure results with misinformed beliefs because some groups are prone to misperceptions regardless. The population more prone to misperception includes young people, people with low information literacy and people with high trust in the government (Anspach & Carlson, 2022). Nevertheless, regardless of

one's tendency to believe in misinformation, the act of sharing it, whether intentionally or not, carries multifaceted consequences.

2.7. Multifaceted Consequences of Sharing Misinformation

Sharing misinformation, whether consciously or unconsciously, exposes individuals to multifaceted consequences (Malik et al., 2023; Kumar et al., 2023). While deliberately sharing false information has different motivations and results, discovering later that the shared content is incorrect also poses various consequences to the sharer. Ultimately, these consequences affect both individuals' sharing tendencies and their approach to the content they encounter on social media.

People generally adapt their attitudes after realizing the information they shared is false, but the extent to which they revise their judgments varies depending on their cognitive abilities (De keersmaecker & Roets, 2017). Presumably, people with higher cognitive abilities (e.g., critical thinking skills, reasoning ability) are more likely to fully correct their assessments after discovering what they share turns out to be misinformation (Ecker et al., 2022).

Individuals often refrain from sharing misinformation to avoid damaging their personal reputation (Altay et al., 2020). In order to avoid this negative effect to their social reputation due to sharing false information, one might refrain from sharing any content they are not sure about (Asher et al., 2023). This is because if the information shared is later identified as misinformation, it can lead to feelings of embarrassment

and anger, causing a decline in trust in news media (Andi & Akesson, 2020). This fear of long-term social consequences, such as damage to one's reputation or social standing, may discourage them from sharing certain opinions (Fox & Holt, 2018). This, in turn, may result in individuals resorting to self-censorship in their online activities. In contrast, sharing misinformation can also work as a means of self-expression or act as a form of political humor for some individuals (Madrid-Morales et al., 2021). On the one hand, all the negative consequences mentioned can lead to moral distress, discouraging individuals from sharing misinformation online. On the other hand, there are instances where sharing false information can result in positive outcomes such as social acceptance and popularity, and a sense of attachment to a group (Traberg et al., 2024).

To sum up, while sharing disinformation could provide *temporary strategic benefits* to some, it exposes *reputational costs* to sharers in the long term. Still, some people, organizations, and even some governments continue sharing disinformation even though they are aware of its consequences. Understanding this phenomenon requires recognizing that the perceived consequences of and attitudes toward misinformation are not universal. They are shaped by individual beliefs, cultural norms, and the specific socio-political context in which the information is shared.

2.8. Cross-Cultural Differences in Attitudes Toward Misinformation

Majority of internet users are concerned about the presence of misinformation online. Thus, identifying key differences and similarities of people's experiences with misinformation is critical for understanding how existing socio-political patterns influence their perceived misinformation. Previous research indicate that people

living in liberal democratic governments are more worried about the availability of misinformation (Knuutila et al., 2022). Geographic differences also influence how misinformation is perceived. For example, Knuutila et al. (2022) found that people from Latin America and the Caribbean exhibit the highest levels of anxiety about misinformation, while individuals from South Asia and Central Asia show the least concern. Additionally, “countries with relatively high prevalence of misinformation tend to have low concerns about misinformation” (Knuutila et al., 2022, p.3), which emphasizes the importance of counter-misinformation steps taken to create awareness of misinformation online on perceptions of misinformation.

In terms of people’s understanding of key concepts regarding misinformation, majority of people from European countries were capable of telling the difference between misinformation and disinformation (Hameleers et al., 2021). In Germany, younger and more educated people were more likely to be informed about misinformation, and individuals who identified themselves as leftist had tendency to be critical of such content (Reuter et al., 2019). In a more recent study by van der meer and Hameleers (2024) across seven countries, including France, Germany, India, Netherlands, Poland, United Kingdom and United States, people recognized misinformation as one of the factors affecting their perceptions of news and reported perceiving misinformation as a more threatful to information ecosystem than bad news. Their finding was consistent even in countries where “negative news” was perceived as a more common issue (van der Meer & Hameleers, 2024, p. 6).

In China, most people had different ideas about what misinformation is and how it impacts their news engagement (Lu et al., 2020). To deal with misinformation exposure, individuals reported adopting different mechanisms like checking multiple sources to understand information accuracy or relying on their trusted contacts (Lu et al., 2020). Across six Sub-Saharan African countries, including Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, people reported perceiving misinformation as a “problem” if it had potential negative consequences (Tully et al., 2021). In Bangladesh, people who perceived misinformation on social media to be less severe were better informed about government measures (Islam et al., 2021).

In the context of Türkiye, Bozdağ and Koçer (2022) found that people are often aware that their political affiliation affect how they perceive misinformation and engage with news. They propose the concept of “skeptical inertia” to refer to this “position of passivity despite doubt in the face of political news” (Bozdağ & Koçer, 2022, p. 170). Their findings highlight the need for further research on factors that contribute to “skeptical inertia” and possible attempts to encourage more critical engagement with news at the citizen-centric level.

2.9. Government Efforts Against the Spread of Misinformation

After the 2016 presidential elections of the United States and the Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom, there has been an increase in the regulation of social media policies worldwide to counter disinformation. Numerous case studies have observed that governments proposed or adopted different kinds of initiatives to combat the spread of disinformation. For instance, Cipers et al. (2023) analyzed government

responses to online disinformation and found that democracies with higher media freedom tend to adopt a more holistic approach to online disinformation, while authoritarian countries enact broader laws. In line with previous studies, their findings indicate a significant difference between democratic and authoritarian regimes, suggesting a potential tendency for authoritarian states to formulate such counter-disinformation policies to maintain a state-imposed narrative and control ordinary citizens' online activities (Henley, 2018). According to Ünver and Arhan (2023), governments could use disinformation campaigns to their advantage for a variety of reasons, which are grouped into four categories: different cost-benefit assessments, confidence in avoiding exposure, belief in the inability to counteract, and prioritizing short-term advantages, which could be observed in recent legal amendments against disinformation in Türkiye.

Governments, experts, and policymakers express their concern about disinformation due to its potential to weaken national security and manipulate public opinion.

However, framing disinformation as a matter of national security can also potentially create democratic risks. For instance, the use of vague disinformation definitions, as well as unclear charges on sharing disinformation and the implementation of broad counter-disinformation legislations could empower governments to potentially abuse their authority, suppressing opposing viewpoints or using those regulations for political gain.

Tenove (2020) categorized the policy responses to the spread of disinformation in following governance sectors: self-determination, accountable representation, and

media regulation. On the one hand, there are policies with provisions that protect the freedom of expression and avoid capture by the government agencies. On the other hand, there are controversial policies that trigger concerns regarding press freedom and jeopardizing of democracy.

When discussing such legislations with significant attempts in curbing disinformation online, European Commission (EC) and its steps to deal with this issue should be discussed. The 2013-2014 Ukraine crisis put disinformation on Europe's political agenda when Russia was accused of triggering an "information war" (Saurwein & Spencer-Smith, 2020). As part of an action plan, EC and European External Action Service (EEAS) established the East Stratcom Task Force with team of experts against Russian disinformation in 2015. On their website called "EU vs. Disinfo," they identify, analyze, and raise awareness about Russian disinformation.

In 2018, EC established a Code of Practice on Disinformation in 2018, first self-regulatory piece that encouraged companies to collaborate with EC to find solutions for the spread of disinformation, with a focus on improving advertising sector. The code's primary goal was to ensure better transparency and accountability of online platforms. Big social media companies, such as Facebook and Google, agreed to commit to this code and developed new features, such as Ad Libraries to improve research on political advertising and developing social media literacy programs to expand their fact-checking tools (Tanner, 2022). During the coronavirus pandemic, EC decided to revise the code and started the revision process on June 2021 with 34

signatories, including TikTok and Twitch. The Strengthened Code of Practice on disinformation, described as “the new stronger and comprehensive Code of Practice on disinformation,” was launched in 2022 (European Commission, 2022).

The new code included a broader regulatory framework with the hope that it would empower users, researchers, and fact-checking communities. It contains 44 commitments; however, the signatories have a chance to decide which commitments they sign up to and they are responsible for ensuring the effectiveness of their implementation of the commitments. Following the new code, Transparency Center was established by the signatories in 2023. The signatories use this platform to publish reports that summarize their contribution to the European Democracy Action Plan and their application of subscribed commitments to public.

Despite such joint and comprehensive steps taken by the EC, there is no common policy implemented at the national level among the member countries of the European Union (EU). According to the Media Pluralism Monitor 2022 (MPM2022), which documents the health of media ecosystems and other related threats to media pluralism in EU member states and some candidate countries, only 15 of the 32 countries introduced some forms of counter-misinformation regulatory frameworks. While these regulations were efficient in some countries, such as France, Germany, and Lithuania, they were perceived as a source of risk to freedom of speech in other countries like Greece, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia, Slovakia, Spain, and Türkiye.

Turning to specific instances of these measures, in 2017, “NetzDG” law was enacted in Germany that required social media platforms to strictly regulate content that potentially violates Germany’s existing laws on illegal communication, such as false allegations equal to hate speech. In 2018, “Operating Protocol for the Fight Against the Diffusion of Fake News through the Web on the Occasion of the Election Campaign for the 2018 Political Elections” was enacted in Italy which gave the postal police the authority to both identify and charge instances of online disinformation (Verza, 2018).

While I have highlighted some measures taken by EU member countries, it is important to note that governments beyond the EU are also taking action in this regard. For instance, the Canadian government established a nonpartisan panel dedicated to informing the public about disinformation (Colomina et al., 2021). Similarly, in the United States, the introduction of the bill called Educating Against Misinformation and Disinformation Act in 2022 aims to support media literacy education as a means of preventing disinformation (H.R.6971- Educating Against Misinformation and Disinformation Act, 2022).

2.10. The Turkish Context

Since coming into power in 2002, AKP (Justice and Development Party) has implemented a number of regulations regarding news media and social media, which have quickly evolved into policies aimed at controlling media. Perhaps the main reason leading to this change is the regime transition that the AKP government has experienced over time into a competitive authoritarian regime (Esen & Gümüşçü,

2016). The Turkish government's surveillance of social networks is also an example of MacKinnon's (2011) concept of "networked authoritarianism," which refers to governments that are "increasingly embracing and adjusting to the inevitable changes brought by digital communications" to monitor their citizens' online activities (p. 33). AKP's implementation of repressive and restrictive social media policies has become more evident to ordinary citizens after major socio-political events, such as the Gezi Park protests in 2013 and the failed coup d'état of 2016.

2.10.1. Social Media Policies in Türkiye between 2007-2022

A number of different social media restrictions and regulation policies have been introduced in Türkiye over the years. In 2007, one of the major social media platforms, YouTube, was banned for 18 months over a video purportedly disparaging the founding father of modern Türkiye (Crampton, 2007; Watson & Comert, 2010).

A few years later, in 2011, Law No. 6112 on the Establishment of Radio and Television Enterprises was enacted to fulfill EU candidate country requirements in the accession process. Article 8 of this law was criticized by news media for being vaguely-worded, which would allow for media censorship and restriction of freedom of expression. Indeed, with this law, the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) has increased its scope of surveillance of online media service providers. Ever since this law was enacted, censorship and penalties against different forms of media are often been imposed under Article 8.

In 2013, a few environmental activists gathered at Gezi Park to held a sit-in against the Taksim Project, which was an urban renewal project of Istanbul that included plans to remove Gezi Park. Their protest was suppressed with disproportionate use of police powers, which drew the attention of ordinary citizens and soon after, thousands of people gathered and started camping against police brutality and the AKP's repressive stance. Throughout the Gezi Park protests, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan maintained hostile rhetoric against the protesters, and he often referred to them as *çapulcu* (e.g., looters) (Harding, 2013). Gezi Park protests have dramatically changed not only the ways citizens used social media, but also their perceptions of mainstream news media in Türkiye. People turned to social media, particularly to X (formerly Twitter), to access information since news media was not properly reporting what was happening. A well-known example of censorship in Turkish news media during protests is that on the evening of May 31, 2013, while CNN International channel was broadcasting the Gezi Park protests, CNN TURK channel was airing a documentary about penguins (Hintz, 2013).

Considering the fact that approximated 3,000 tweets per minute were being sent about Gezi Park protests (Barbera et al., 2013), this was also a time period where disinformation was spread a lot. During an interview, Erdoğan said, "Now we have a menace that is called Twitter. The best example of lies can be found there. To me, social media is the worst menace to society." (Arsu, 2013). Soon after this interview, twenty-four people were taken into custody for spreading false information on social media (Pearson & Tuysuz, 2013). The government was accusing protesters for spreading disinformation online, however, some state officials were also sharing

disinformation targeting the protesters. During this period, the term “troll account” became frequently used by political figures in Türkiye, which refer to partisan accounts that spread disinformation in order to harm their opponents, often under anonymous identities. To this day, several troll accounts disguised under digital media outlets continue to undermine citizens’ access to accurate information.

After the protests, President Erdogan introduced a series of reforms known as the “democratization package” on September 2013. This step was considered by many as an attempt to restore the government’s damaged reputation following the Gezi Park protests (Özbudun, 2013). However, this step was not enough to make a positive contribution to freedom of expression in Turkey (Pukallus et al., 2020). One year later, in 2014, new amendments were added to the Internet Law that allowed authorities to block websites and monitor citizens’ Internet activities for up to two years (Letsch, 2014).

As part of its 2015 election campaigns, AKP established the “New Turkey Digital Office” to address negative consequences of troll networks (Yesil, 2021). Alongside AKP’s increasing restrictions on social media, another significant event in 2015 was the targeted attacks on Hürriyet Daily by group of AKP supporters. These attacks were triggered by Erdogan’s disapproval of the newspaper’s critical reporting of his words (BBC News Türkiye, 2015).

On 15 July 2016, an attempted coup d’état occurred in Türkiye, and it went down in modern Turkish history as a major sociopolitical event that also affected citizens’

perceptions about social media and journalism. Shortly after news of the coup broke, access to major social media platforms was temporarily limited by the Turkish government. Pukallus et al. (2020) examined the changes in Turkish news media after the failed coup d'état of 2016 and they categorized the repression of Turkish news media into two categories before and after this incident. They argue that since 2016, political parallelism and media ownership has been increasing in Turkish news media, and a major reason for this was Turkish government's sensitivity to media criticism and continued stance of approving pro-government journalists while declaring oppositional journalists as enemies (Pukallus et al., 2020).

During their interviews with Turkish journalists, most reported having “feelings of fear due to indirect and direct threats by the government” (Pukallus et al., 2020, p. 1450). They also indicated their observation of how people on social media are “afraid of using their own names in Türkiye due to the threat of someone showing up on their doorstep” (Pukallus et al., 2020, p. 1457). Overall, their findings indicate that Turkish government's repressive attitudes towards news media created an atmosphere where any form of civil resistance is perceived as too dangerous to attempt. When individuals feel their ability to access media is threatened or that their online activities are being monitored, they become less likely to engage in online information seeking behavior (Behrouzian et al., 2016). In the context of Türkiye, this translates to citizens that are cautious about exploring alternative ideas or contradicting the official narrative due to fear of legal consequences.

2.10.2. Legislative Measures Against Disinformation in Türkiye

Recent counter-misinformation initiatives and laws imposed by the Turkish government include the disinformation law and the establishment of the Center for Countering Disinformation under the Presidency's Directorate of Communications, which is an unit dedicated to addressing false news and is part of the broader efforts to counter misinformation in Türkiye. Following the disinformation bill, enacted on 13 October 2022, there have been numerous concerns about online freedom of expression in Türkiye. Article 29 of this law, which is the trigger for most of the controversies, states that anyone who publicly disseminates false information online about Türkiye's security will face a prison sentence of one to three years. Moreover, if the perpetrator hides their identity through anonymous accounts or organizations, the punishment will increase by half (Law No. 7418 on Amendments to the Press Law and Some Laws, 2022).

These recent social media legislations raise some of the following questions: is it a genuine effort to combat misinformation or a disguised attempt by a networked authoritarian government to control its citizens' online activity? Turkish journalists and experts worry that the bill, which fails to be specific about the content that will be considered a crime by authorities, might threaten the freedom of the press and the right to anonymity (Aydıntaşbaş, 2022; Coşkun, 2022; Görgülü, 2022). Taking into account that the only journalists arrested under this law since its enactment were affiliated with opposition news agencies, their concern becomes more understandable (Jones, 2023). Most importantly, the uncertain jurisdiction of the bill can stress ordinary citizens regarding how they will perform on social media platforms and

affect their decision-making mechanisms regarding their news-sharing. Moreover, the government's constant reminding of the legal consequences of sharing false information, alongside perceived risks by citizens affiliated with such online activities, can result in self-censorship (Dal & Nisbet, 2020).

The first journalist to be subject to charges under the disinformation law was journalist Sinan Aygöl for tweeting about alleged harassment and child abuse (Hayatsever & Kucukgocmen, 2022). Although Aygöl publicly apologized and deleted his tweet shortly after realizing it was inaccurate, the local court ruled in favor of his arrest under the disinformation law. Only recently, the court ruled in favor of Aygöl, and he referred to his experience as the following: "The process was very unfair for me. I reported on an allegation of child abuse in order to alert the judiciary and law enforcement. My aim was to report news, alert the relevant authorities and prevent victimization. By pushing the boundaries of this article of the disinformation law, I was taken into custody and arrested in the middle of the night. I was kept in solitary confinement for 10 days." (Adal, 2024).

Another journalist to be subject to charges under the disinformation law was Tolga Şardan for his article titled "What's in the 'judicial report' submitted by MIT to the Presidency?" (T24, 2023). Following the news of Şardan's arrest, 18 international media organizations working on media freedom and freedom of expression, including Freedom House and the Committee to Protect Journalists, issued a public statement calling for Şardan's immediate release (Human Rights Watch, 2023). After the court decided immediate release of Şardan, he made the following statement

regarding his experience: “I only performed my role as a journalist, I tried to inform the public. I stand by what I wrote.” (Gazete Oksijen, 2023). Such incidents reveal the increasingly repressive attitudes of the government towards the news media and the creation of a highly polarized media landscape in which reporting in a slightly critical voice is being punished.

A few months after the law came into force, on February 23, 2023, one of Türkiye’s most popular anonymous social media platforms, ekşisözlük.com, was banned from access and the ban was lifted by the court after the platform appealed the ban (Michaelson, 2023). Following this incident, two more access bans were imposed on ekşisözlük.com a few months apart. The fact that this platform, where users can express themselves freely without worrying about exposing their identities, is frequently on the agenda due to access restrictions, reveals the current negative situation regarding freedom of expression on the internet in Türkiye.

However, the struggle for freedom of expression in Türkiye is not a new phenomenon. In fact, the Freedom of the Net reports on online freedom of expression in Türkiye show a steep decline, with its recent report giving Türkiye a score of 30 out of 100, meaning it is considered “not free,” which signals the continuation of a pattern of decline since 2017 (Freedom House, 2023). Their findings also show a gradual increase in the Turkish government’s legislative measures and surveillance on social media platforms after the Internet-mobilized movement Gezi Park protests occurred in 2013. According to Akdeniz and Güven (2019), access to total of 347,445 websites were blocked and 18,376 social media account users were subject

to legal sanctions for varying reasons in 2018. By the end of 2022, the number of blocked websites has reached to 712,558 and 78,837 social media users were subject to investigations (Akdeniz & Güven, 2022). Almost all of these legal sanctions were “imposed on social media accounts that posted provocative and disinformation posts.” (Akdeniz & Güven, 2022, p.139). Thus, not only are legislative measures being taken to combat disinformation, but the Turkish government continue to suppress citizens’ online expression through these legal sanctions. As a result of all these undemocratic steps, citizens in Türkiye are no longer able to express themselves freely, and this might have an impact on their social media activities, specifically the way they engage with news online. In this context, the question of how ordinary citizens’ online news experiences is being affected stands out as an important question that needs to be addressed.

Having examined the Turkish government’s efforts to combat disinformation, I now turn to the concept of online anonymity, a crucial element within online communities. The disinformation law in Türkiye, which includes a clause that suggests a fifty percent harsher penalty on anonymous accounts for sharing false information, raises important questions about the role and implications of online anonymity in this context.

2.11. Online Anonymity

The development of information technology have significantly impacted both our privacy environment experience and how we manage it. Starting from the earlier literature, research on online information privacy shows that people are often

concerned about their privacy but they do not know how to achieve it (Turow, 2003). This phenomena is defined as “privacy paradox” in scholarship on online privacy, which refers to people’s inconsistent online behavior that does not reflect their concerns about their privacy (Acquisti, 2004; Barnes, 2006).

People might resort to online anonymity as a tool to manage their privacy. However, understanding online anonymity is not easy since it has both valuable and harmful consequences (Froomkin, 1996). The discourse surrounding online anonymity has two sides due to the dual nature of anonymity (Sardá et al., 2019). On the one hand, scholars criticize online anonymity for empowering uninhibited expression, such as cyberbullying and harassing users due to being encouraged by not facing reputational consequences. On the other hand, supporters of online anonymity argue that anonymity is a form of privacy enabler as well as a modifier of social presence online, and their findings show a positive relationship between anonymity and tendency to express opinion, which makes anonymity a significant aspect of online freedom of expression (Jardine, 2016).

Decisions regarding online privacy are no longer made by users, as companies gained more rights and how to exercise them (Zuboff, 2019). And since decisional privacy is almost impossible to achieve, some users tend to use anonymity to protect themselves from unfair consequences. Especially in highly repressive and highly liberal political environments, citizens often resort to using anonymity-granting technologies with different goals. In repressive contexts, anonymity is a matter of

survival and a way out of censorship, while in liberal counterparts, it is often a tool to protect privacy and resist surveillance capitalism.

Some scholars argue that traditional ways of defining anonymity are insufficient today, considering the ongoing controls on legal aspects of online anonymity (Froomkin, 2017). Anonymity is a fluid concept that can be defined and understood differently by many people. Thus, anonymity could be considered as a process along different aspects, such as factual, social, and physical lines shaped by various structures rather than a state (Eklund et al., 2021).

Despite the traditional view of anonymity, being anonymous is actually harder online than offline. Every day, while using the internet, people leave traces of their IP addresses that can be used to determine their identities. By using anonymity-granting technologies, such as Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) and The Onion Router (Tor), people attempt to avoid leaving such traces. Sardá et al. (2019) discuss this complex issue of online anonymity, questioning whether full anonymity is truly achievable and, if so, under what conditions.

According to Hayne and Rice (1997), anonymity can be categorized into two main forms: technical and social. Technical anonymity means being unidentifiable through the use of external tools like anonymity-granting technologies, and social anonymity refers to social dimension of anonymity. Social media platforms offer its users specific affordances that allow for varying degrees of anonymity, such as full anonymity, pseudonymity, and visual anonymity (Christopherson, 2007).

Pseudonymity means using nicknames and avatars created for a social purpose, and visual anonymity refers to not being identifiable visually. Full anonymity is often confused with other degrees of anonymity, but it refers to being fully unidentifiable with interactions resulting in no reputation effect. In some instances, social media platforms can too encourage online anonymity by their design. For instance, social media platforms like Reddit, 4chan, and Yik Yak are specifically designed for anonymous communication, where all users are expected to use anonymous identities. These anonymous environments are known for increasing self-disclosure and heightening self-awareness while reducing public awareness (Joinson, 2001). They also offer more self-representation possibilities since anonymity allows for custom self-representation. Given this potential for anonymity in reshaping online behavior, it is crucial to understand who exactly seeks to be anonymous online.

Keipi et al.'s (2014) research on online identity preferences found that users with stronger anonymity preferences are more likely to be younger, highly trusting, have a greater connection to online communities, and have few offline friends. They also found that favoring anonymity had a positive relationship with snobbery, narcissistic tendencies and low self-esteem. However, in a recent study by Nitschinsk et al. (2022), anonymity was negatively correlated with being narcissistic. These findings show that personal characteristics of those who value anonymous aspects of online self-expression is not clear, and users might strategically use anonymity to reach their social goals (Ellison et al., 2016).

As noted by Nitschinsk et al. (2022), anonymity can enable people to “pursue self- or other-related goals that are otherwise more difficult or costly to pursue when identifiable” (p. 1). This complex interplay of motivations raise a fundamental question about the nature of online identity: Does online anonymity create an online community in which people can be their “true selves,” free of social limitations and judgment? Or does it promote an online environment in which destructive behaviors thrive, free of accountability?

In the context of Türkiye, using anonymous accounts were found to be connected with thoughts of “breaking social rules without reputational consequences” , “testing relationships” and “personal struggles regarding self-confidence.” (Çimşir et al., 2024). This finding aligns with Altay et al.’s (2020) study, which revealed that while sharing real news did not differ across different modes of online identity, sharing fake news was more commonly preferred in anonymous accounts due to the desire to protect one’s social reputation. In line with this connection between anonymity and potentially harmful behavior, Arıca (2009) discovered a link between anonymity and cyberbullying, with males being more prone to using anonymity as a tactic for cyberbullying in Türkiye. Despite all of these findings suggesting a link between online anonymity and harmful behavior on the Internet, the political climate in Türkiye, as well as the government’s ongoing restrictive social media policies, could be one of the main reasons why citizens turn to anonymity in Türkiye.

Overall, since anonymity allows for custom self-expression, this feature of anonymity links it to online freedom of expression (Keipi & Oksanen, 2014). For instance, people often find it easier to discuss personal issues anonymously than with

their real identity because anonymity provides them a sense of control over their privacy. Therefore, anonymity can not simply be defined as harmful or useful, and there must be an appropriate balance between protecting anonymity and introducing various consequences to protect online anonymity from being abused (Pew Research Center, 2017).

2.12. Current Study

In light of this theoretical framework, this study aims to contribute to the current literature by examining the effects of the recent disinformation law implemented by the Turkish government on ordinary citizens' news-sharing behavior. Given the constant flow of information online and the growing number of state-implemented laws aimed at online activities, the impact of these legislative measures needs further investigation. In this context, ordinary citizens may not be aware of the legal regulations, but even if they are, it is unclear whether the authoritarian attitude of Türkiye will cause any change in their behavior. And in this regard, it is also an important question to ask whether anonymity would trigger a difference in news sharing when faced with legal consequences.

Thus, this study posits the following hypotheses:

H1: Exposure to the disinformation law will lead to a significant decrease in self-reported likelihood of sharing news compared to no exposure to the law.

H2: The self-reported likelihood of sharing news will differ significantly among different modes of online identity.

To understand whether anonymity has an increasing or decreasing effect on sharing likelihood, I propose the following alternating hypotheses:

H2a: Being anonymous will lead to a significant increase in self-reported likelihood of sharing news.

H2b: Being anonymous will lead to a significant decrease in self-reported likelihood of sharing news.

As I discussed earlier, the term “misinformation” was used in this study to encompass a wide range of inaccurate or misleading information, regardless of the intent behind its dissemination. However, recognizing the significant policy and societal implications of intentionally false or misleading information (i.e., disinformation), the following sections will primarily concentrate on this specific aspect of misinformation.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The primary goal of this study is to observe how counter-misinformation measures implemented in authoritarian states like Türkiye affect ordinary citizens' online news experience. More specifically, the study looks at the perceived consequences of sharing misinformation online in order to understand how the threat of government sanctions affect individuals' news-sharing behavior. In doing so, the study uses the recent disinformation law in Türkiye as part of an experimental study, aiming to determine whether the salience of such law affects individuals' act of sharing news. Additionally, by offering an option to share the news story anonymously, I aim to determine whether the salience of the law influences individuals' news-sharing tendencies –not motivations–, even under the protection of online anonymity. In sum, this study proposes a causal model that investigates the effect of exposure to an actual disinformation law and the use of different online identities on news-sharing behavior in the context of Türkiye.

3.1. Data Collection & Survey Sample

The study's data was collected through a self-administered web survey on Qualtrics in April 2024. Participants were Turkish-speaking individuals over 18 living in Türkiye, and they were informed about the study via the Bilkent University Administrative Information System (BAIS). After completing the survey, eligible undergraduate students who were asked to write their university ID numbers received course credits for Collegiate Activities Program I and II. All respondents self-volunteered to participate in the study, consisting of individuals interested in the study's topic and those seeking to earn extra credits for mentioned courses.

The informed consent at the beginning of the survey highlighted specific requirements and information regarding the study, including that the participants must be over the age of 18, they should be native Turkish speakers, and they should not be currently taking a course from Dr. Ayşenur Dal. Additionally, participants were informed that all aspects of the study, including the results, will be kept confidential and accessible only to the researchers themselves, and the findings of the study would be used entirely anonymously. Participants were also informed that their participation in the study was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without needing to provide a reason or facing any consequences. Lastly, participants were instructed to promptly inform the researchers if they wished for their data not to be included in the study for any reason after their participation.

A total of 250 respondents participated in the study. However, after certain adjustments—such as excluding those who did not complete the survey or gave the

same answers to many of the survey items—the final number of respondents with valid participation was down to 228. Participants who provided the same responses to numerous survey items were identified and removed to ensure the integrity of the data. In terms of sample characteristics, the mean age was 21.93 years.

Approximately 67% of the participants were women, 29% were men, and 4% identified as other. The most common education level among participants was undergraduate education, suggesting that most participants have completed or are currently pursuing undergraduate studies. Descriptive statistics of demographic variables can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Demographic Variables

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Demographic Variables					
Age	228	21.93	5.83	19	60
Sex	228	1.37	0.59	1	3
Education	228	3.92	0.70	2	6

3.2. Design

The study employed a 2x2 between-subjects factorial experiment through an online survey. In the survey introduction, participants were informed that the study was about their news-sharing behavior and what factors affect their everyday news experiences. However, in order not to affect the experiment, they were not given the information regarding the misinformation aspect of the study. Upon providing consent, participants were randomly assigned to one of the following four

experimental conditions: 2 (Exposure to disinformation law: law, no law) x 2 (Sharing identity: anonymous, real identity). Qualtrics' randomizer feature was used to randomize the conditions in the survey flow, so all participants were randomly assigned to each condition.

Figure 1. Conditions of the experimental design

Disinformation Law Salience	Sharing Identity	
	Exposure to law, Anonymous sharing	Exposure to law, Real identity sharing
	No exposure to law, Anonymous sharing	No exposure to law, Real identity sharing

These conditions were presented after each participant was exposed to the same existing news story about the Iliç gold mine disaster (see Figure 2), which occurred on the 13th of February 2024 due to the collapse of a cyanide-laden soil heap (Çaklı, 2024). Following the incident, nine miners were trapped underground, and the rescue efforts in the region were closely followed and reported as breaking news by the Turkish news media. The nine miners trapped under the rubble remained unreachable for an extended period, and one of the miners' bodies was found on April 5, 2024, 53 days after the disaster.

The news story was about the mining company that owns the Iliç gold mine posting a job advertisement through LinkedIn just a few days after the incident while miners were still trapped underground. After this news story was published, the mining company received a public backlash, leading them to delete the job posting (Gazete Duvar, 2024). This specific news story about a natural disaster was chosen for its contemporary relevance during the data collection period, as well as to avoid any political bias affecting participants' reported news-sharing tendencies. Additionally, it was a deliberate decision not to highlight or emphasize the news source logo to isolate the effects of other factors on news-sharing tendencies.

After seeing the news story, participants were asked whether they would share this news article on their social media accounts. Unlike the no-exposure condition, participants in the exposure condition were informed about the disinformation law enacted in Türkiye in October 2022 right after seeing the news story. The aim was to observe whether exposure to the law would have any effect on participants' news-sharing tendencies.

Figure 2. The study stimulus



Sharing identity conditions were ensured by randomly assigning survey participants into two conditions. Respondents in the anonymous condition were directly asked whether they would hypothetically share the news story using an anonymous social media account. In contrast, respondents in the real identity condition were asked whether they would share the story using their actual social media account, where their personal information (e.g., name, profile picture) would be visible. By examining these conditions, the study aimed to observe whether the use of an anonymous account partially provides individuals with a freer news-sharing

experience. These conditions were also used to investigate the potential impact of the clause in the disinformation law, which states that an individual sharing the same disinformation content with an anonymous identity would get double the penalty. In brief, these additional conditions allowed for a deeper exploration of how the mode of online identity (anonymous vs. real) interacts with exposure to the disinformation law in shaping news-sharing tendencies.

3.3. Survey Measures

This section outlines the survey measures used in this study, including dependent, independent, and control variables. The key variables refer to those in the proposed hypotheses, such as sharing likelihood (DV), the salience of the disinformation law (IV), and sharing behavior under different online identity conditions (IV). Control variables refer to additional measures in the study that may influence news-sharing behavior.

Sharing likelihood. Sharing likelihood was measured by asking respondents to report how likely they would share the study stimulus on a five-point scale (*1 = Definitely would not share, 2 = Would not share, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Would share, 5 = Definitely would share*). Originally, sharing likelihood was measured with two separate items for different identity conditions. These measures were then combined into a single variable representing sharing likelihood for analysis. Respondents who indicated they would share the news story were asked a follow-up question about their intended audience. Response options included “family,” “friends,” “only people I know online,” and “all my followers online.”

Disinformation law salience. As explained previously, the salience of disinformation law was achieved by randomly assigning respondents to two different conditions. Respondents in the exposure to law condition saw a piece of information about the recent disinformation law, while respondents in the no exposure to law condition were asked to report their sharing likelihood right after seeing the study stimulus. The aim was to observe whether the salience of actual law would trigger a difference in reported news-sharing likelihood. In terms of the dataset, respondents who were exposed to the law were coded as 1, and respondents who were not exposed to the law were coded as 0.

Sharing identity. Sharing identity conditions were created by randomly assigning respondents to two different conditions (sharing anonymously vs. sharing with real identity). Respondents in the anonymous condition were asked to report their sharing likelihood of the study stimulus while using an anonymous identity online. In contrast, respondents in the real condition were asked to report their sharing likelihood of the news story while using a real identity online. While social media platforms may differ when it comes to affordances for online anonymity, this study focused on the general tendency to share news content under different identity conditions, regardless of the specific platform used. In terms of the dataset, respondents who were in the anonymous condition were coded as 1, and respondents who were in the real identity condition were coded as 0.

Social media use. Social media use was measured with two questions, including participants' self-reported frequency of using social media and their motivations to

use social media. Respondents were asked to answer a question asking how much time they spend on social media on a typical day, and the responses were collected on a five-point scale (*1 = Never/Almost never, 2 = Less than 30 mins, 3 = Less than one hour, 4 = Two hours, 5 = More than two hours*). The average for social media use was 4.43, indicating that most participants spend more than two hours on social media.

Additionally, to assess participants' motivations for using social media in general, a motivation scale adapted from Masciantonio and Bourguignon (2023)'s study was employed. Respondents were asked, "*Thinking about your motivations for using social media in general, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?*" and asked to indicate their level of agreement for given eight items on a five-point Likert scale (*1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree*). Two items from this scale were used to create new variables for reputational motivations for using social media and informational motivations for using social media. Only these two items were included in the data analyses to focus on specific motivations for using social media.

Table 3. Survey Statements for Motivations for Using Social Media

"I use social media to meet with new people."	Johnson & Yang (2009)
"I use social media to participate in discussions."	
"I use social media to express myself freely."	Masciantonio & Bourguignon (2023)
"I use social media to follow the news and get information."	
"I use social media to record what I do in life."	Alhabash & McAlister (2015)
"I use social media to build a professional network."	Qualitative Study
"I use social media to be entertained."	Cheung et al. (2011)

News consumption and preferences. To assess their news consumption, respondents were asked to answer a question asking how much time they spend reading news on social media on a typical day, and the responses were collected on a five-point scale (*1 = Never/Almost never, 5 = More than two hours*). In addition, to assess the news consumption across platforms, participants were asked a multiple-choice question, "*Which of the following platforms do you prefer to get your news on?*" and their responses were collected on a five-point scale (*1 = Never/Almost never, 5 = Always*). Respondents could choose from five options: news websites, social media platforms, TV channels, podcasts, or Google or similar search engines. Respondents who reported using social media platforms for news more than rarely were asked to follow up on their preferred platforms and presented with, "*You mentioned using social media for news. How often do you use the following social media platforms for this purpose?*" They were then asked to indicate the frequency of use for eight different social media platforms, including Facebook, X, Instagram,

YouTube, TikTok, Reddit, WhatsApp, and Twitch. Although not included in the data analysis, these measures were helpful to observe the survey sample characteristics.

News-sharing behavior. News-sharing behavior was measured with three questions, including participants' self-reported frequency of news-sharing online and their motivations related to news-sharing. First, participants were asked to answer, "*How often do you share news on social media or other platforms?*" and the responses were collected on a four-point scale (*1 = "I almost never share news online," 5 = "I frequently share news online"*). Second, in order to understand the news-sharing preferences of the respondents, they were asked to specify the frequency of their engagement with nine distinct categories of news, including politics, entertainment, local news, technology, health, sports, economy, science, and the environment. New variables for interest in news about politics and economics, as well as the frequency of sharing this kind of news, were created and included in the data analysis.

Additionally, a new variable for interest in environmental news was created and used in the statistical analysis. Other items were not included in the data analysis, but they were used to understand survey sample habits in both sharing and reading content related to different themes.

Lastly, to assess motivations for sharing news on social media, participants were asked to answer, "*When you share news on social media, how important are these different goals to you?*" and the responses were collected on a five-point scale (*1 = not at all important, 5 = extremely important*). Previous studies identified four main objectives in this context: information-seeking, socializing, entertainment, and status-

seeking. To illustrate these different objectives, the study employed six statements adapted from prior research (Chadwick & Vaccari, 2019; Herrero-Diz et al., 2020; Apuke & Omar, 2020). The statements used are “To inform others,” “To communicate with others,” “To feel like I belong to a group,” “To establish an online reputation,” “To entertain others,” and “To start a discussion regarding the news topic.”

Table 4. Survey Statements for Motivations for News-Sharing

“I share news to inform others.”	Chadwick & Vaccari (2019); Herrero-Diz et al., (2020)
“I share news to feel like I belong to a group.”	
“I share news to provoke discussions.”	
“I share news to entertain others.”	Apuke & Omar (2020)
“I share news to communicate with others.”	
“I share news to start a discussion.”	
“I share news to establish an online reputation.”	Qualitative Study

Perceived social media literacy. For this measure, a perceived social media literacy (PSML) scale was adapted from a study by Tandoc Jr et al. (2021). Tandoc Jr et al. (2021) identified five thematic dimensions for PSML through focus group discussions, and this study used their informational and social PSML scales. The informational dimension of PSML included five statements: “Not everything I read on social media is correct,” “I know how to search for information on social media,” “I know how to verify whether what is shared on social media is correct,” “I know how to use different sources of information to verify the information I see on social media,” and “I can tell whether information on social media is true or false.” A

composite measure of informational perceived social media literacy was created by averaging responses across five items, where higher average scores on this measure were interpreted as indicating greater literacy ($\alpha = 0.7$, $M = 4.25$, $sd = 0.56$).

Regarding the social dimension of PSML, participants were presented with two statements: “My posts can be interpreted wrongly by others,” and “What I consider harmless remarks might offend other social media users.” Responses to two questions were averaged into a single metric and higher values corresponded with a greater social perceived social media literacy ($\alpha = 0.82$, $M = 3.99$, $sd = 0.93$).

Table 5. Survey Statements for Perceived Social Media Literacy

Perceived Social Media Literacy Scale (Social)	Tandoc Jr. et al. (2021)
“My posts can be interpreted wrongly by others.”	
“What I consider harmless remarks might offend other social media users.”	
Perceived Social Media Literacy Scale (Informational)	Tandoc Jr. et al. (2021)
“Not everything I read on social media is correct.”	
“I know how to search for information on social media.”	
“I know how to verify whether what is shared on social media is correct.”	
“I know how to use different sources of information to verify the information I see on social media.”	
“I can tell whether information on social media is true or false.”	

Trust in media. For trust in news media, three measures were adapted from previous studies, including the 2023 Reuters Institute Digital News Report and Pew Research Center’s 2021 survey on social media use. To understand the critical characteristics

of news that affect trust levels, respondents were asked to answer how important the different features of news, such as the “The news organization that publishes the study” and “The person, if any, who shared the story with me,” are to them personally on a five-point scale ranging from “Not at all important” and “Extremely important.” The level of trust in Turkish news media was assessed through participants’ responses to four statements on a five-point scale ranging from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree.” The responses to the four items were averaged to construct a single measure of trust in Turkish news media with higher scores indicative of higher trust levels ($\alpha = 0.88$, $M = 1.69$, $sd = 0.66$). This measure was not included in further data analysis steps but was used to explore the sample’s level of trust in Turkish news media.

For trust in social media, respondents self-reported their agreement or disagreement with following statements: “I think you can trust online news most of the time,” and “I think I can trust most of the news I consume most of the time,” on a five-point Likert scale. ($1 = \text{“Strongly disagree”}$, $5 = \text{“Strongly agree”}$). Only the first item from the trust in social media measure was used in the statistical analysis to observe the effect of trust levels in social media on news-sharing tendencies.

Perceived consequences of sharing misinformation. Adapted from previous studies (Luo et al., 2023; Hoyos et al., 2015), the respondents were asked how much they agreed with the following statements regarding sharing misinformation’s consequences: “The fear of damaging my reputation or relationships prevents me from sharing information that I suspect may be incorrect,” “I am afraid of being

labeled as ‘ignorant’ or ‘irresponsible’ if I accidentally share misinformation on the internet,” and “I believe that misinformation on social media can mislead people about their political beliefs” on a five-point scale ranging from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree.” While earlier studies mostly explored the perceived consequences of the spread of misinformation, this study aimed to narrow its focus to the perceived consequences of sharing misinformation. Accordingly, the statements were adapted and categorized into three overarching themes: impact on interpersonal relationships, reputation, and public opinion. To examine how reputational costs influence sharing behavior, two items were averaged to construct a single measure for perceived consequences of sharing misinformation ($\alpha = 0.65$, $M = 3.67$, $sd = 0.99$).

Awareness and acceptance of misinformation. To understand the public perception surrounding misinformation the survey also asked a question regarding the awareness and acceptance of misinformation online. Adapted from a study by Majerczak and Strzelecki (2022), the respondents were asked how much they agreed with the following five statements: “I am aware of the existence of fake news and the social consequences it entails,” “I am concerned about the phenomenon of fake news,” “I am aware that I may come across fake news when using social media,” “I have sufficient knowledge about fake news and its negative impact on society” on a five-point scale ranging from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree.” All six items were averaged into a five-point scale (1 = Low awareness, 5 = High awareness), with higher scores suggesting a higher awareness of misinformation online ($\alpha = 0.71$, $M = 4.40$, $sd = 0.54$). Additionally, they were asked how often they encounter news or

information on social media that they believe distorts reality or is completely false on a five-point scale ranging from “Never/Almost never” to “Always.”

Accidental fake news sharing. Adapted from previous studies (Arin et al., 2023; Barthel et al., 2016), respondents were asked, “Have you ever shared a news story online that you later found out was made up?” If they answered yes, they were asked to answer a follow-up question adapted from a study by Wang and Fussell (2020) on what they did after they realized what they shared turned out to be false or made up. They were asked to choose from four answers, including “I deleted my post,” “I added a correction to my post,” “I apologized for sharing it,” and “I did not do anything.” Although not included in the data analysis, this measure was helpful in understanding the survey sample’s attitudes toward fake news. Descriptive statistics of key and control variables can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of Key and Control Variables

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	α
Key Variables						
Sharing Likelihood	228	2.20	1.10	1	5	
Exposure to Law	228	0.49	0.50	0	1	
Anonymous Condition	228	0.51	0.50	0	1	
Control Variables						
Social Media use	228	4.43	0.86	1	5	
News Consumption	228	2.64	0.91	1	5	
PSML (Social)	228	4.02	0.94	1	6	0.80
PSML (Informational)	228	4.23	0.56	2.7	5	0.69
Trust in Social Media	228	2.20	0.80	1	4	
Awareness of Misinformation	228	4.33	0.50	2.6	5	0.71
Motivations for News-Sharing	228	3.10	0.97	1	5	0.71

Socio-demographics. The analyses accounted for respondents' age, sex, and education level. Age was measured by asking how old the respondents were currently, and sex was measured by asking respondents which gender identity they felt closer to. Respondents were asked to indicate their highest level of education completed or currently in progress, with six choices ranging from "Elementary

education” to “Doctoral-level studies.” Although not included in the analysis, respondents were also asked about the political party they felt more closer to. This measure was excluded from the analysis due to a significant majority of respondents expressing a strong preference for the Republican People’s Party (CHP), resulting in an unreliable distribution across other parties.



CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

4.1. Descriptives of Survey Measures

Respondents reported an average news consumption of 2.63, indicating less than one hour per day dedicated to news reading. Social media emerged as the predominant channel for news consumption, followed by Google or similar search engines and news websites (Figure 3). In terms of social media platforms, Instagram, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter) were identified as the most popular platforms to keep up with news. Respondents reported the highest interest level in entertainment news, followed by news about science and nature topics. While entertainment and political news were most frequently shared, the overall frequency of news sharing remained low.

Respondents' primary motivations for sharing news online were their desire to connect with like-minded individuals, followed by the amusement or entertainment value of the news itself. Respondents' news-sharing motivations aligned with their motivations for using social media, which revealed that respondents mainly use

social media for entertainment purposes and to maintain their connection with their family and friends. The least frequent motivations for the use of social media were meeting new people and engaging in online discussions. Accordingly, respondents perceived themselves as more skilled in using social media for finding information (average = 4.22) compared to social interaction (average = 3.99).

Regarding the specific characteristics of news that affect their trust levels, respondents indicated that the sources mentioned in the news was the most important factor, followed by the news organization and the person who shared it (Figure 4). Respondents were asked about how often do they come across with false or misleading information online and 55% reported being often exposed to misinformation. When asked if they had shared a news story that turned out to be false, 34% of respondents reported they had, 40% reported they had not, while 24% were unsure. Respondents who admitted sharing such news answered the following question about what they did upon learning that the news story they shared was false and 51% respondents reported that they deleted the post, and 22% percent of the respondents stated that they have added correction to their post. In terms of awareness and acceptance of misinformation, the average awareness was 4.31 out of 5, which suggests that most respondents have high awareness levels.

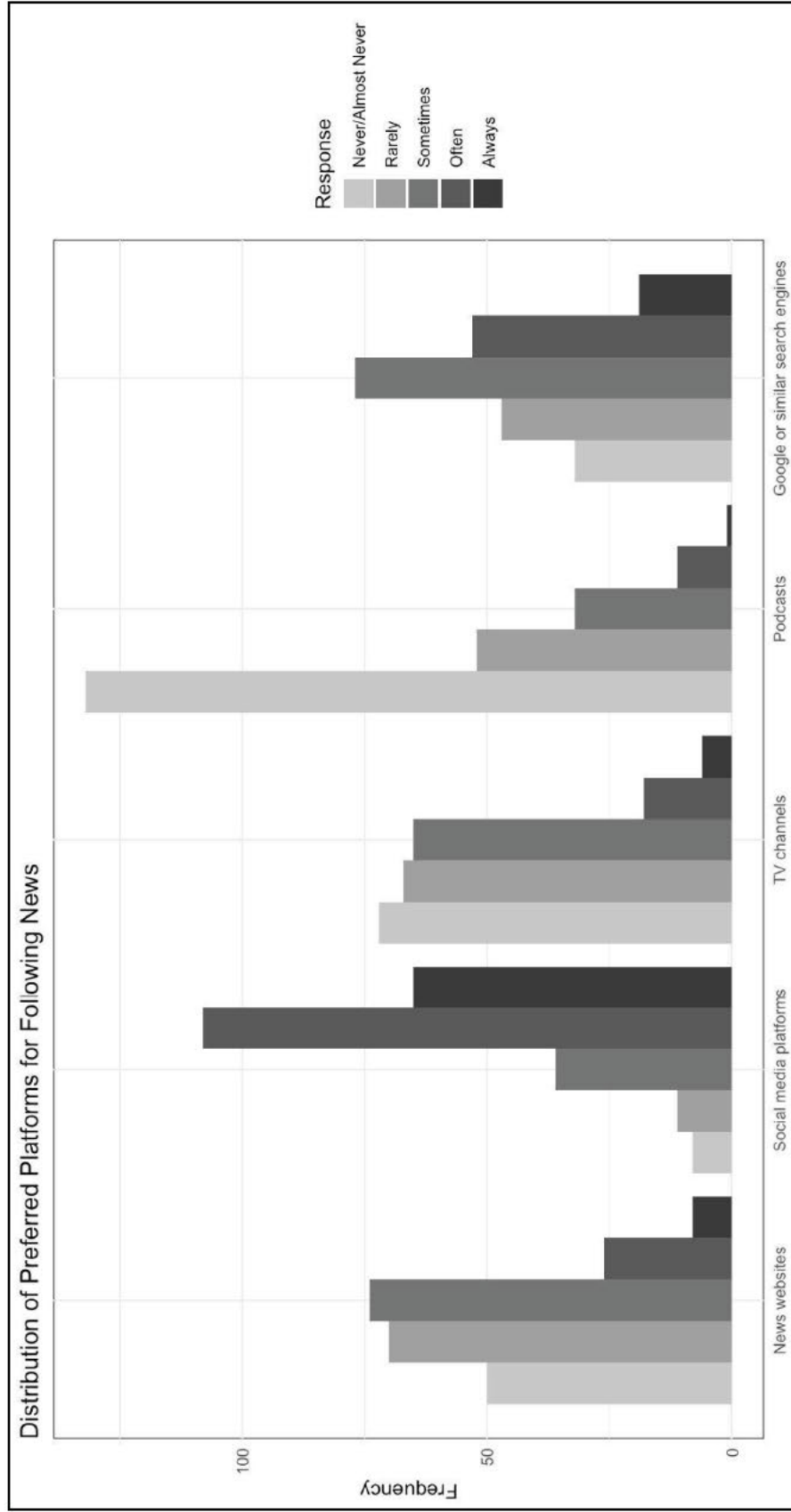


Figure 3. Distribution of Preferred Platforms for Following News

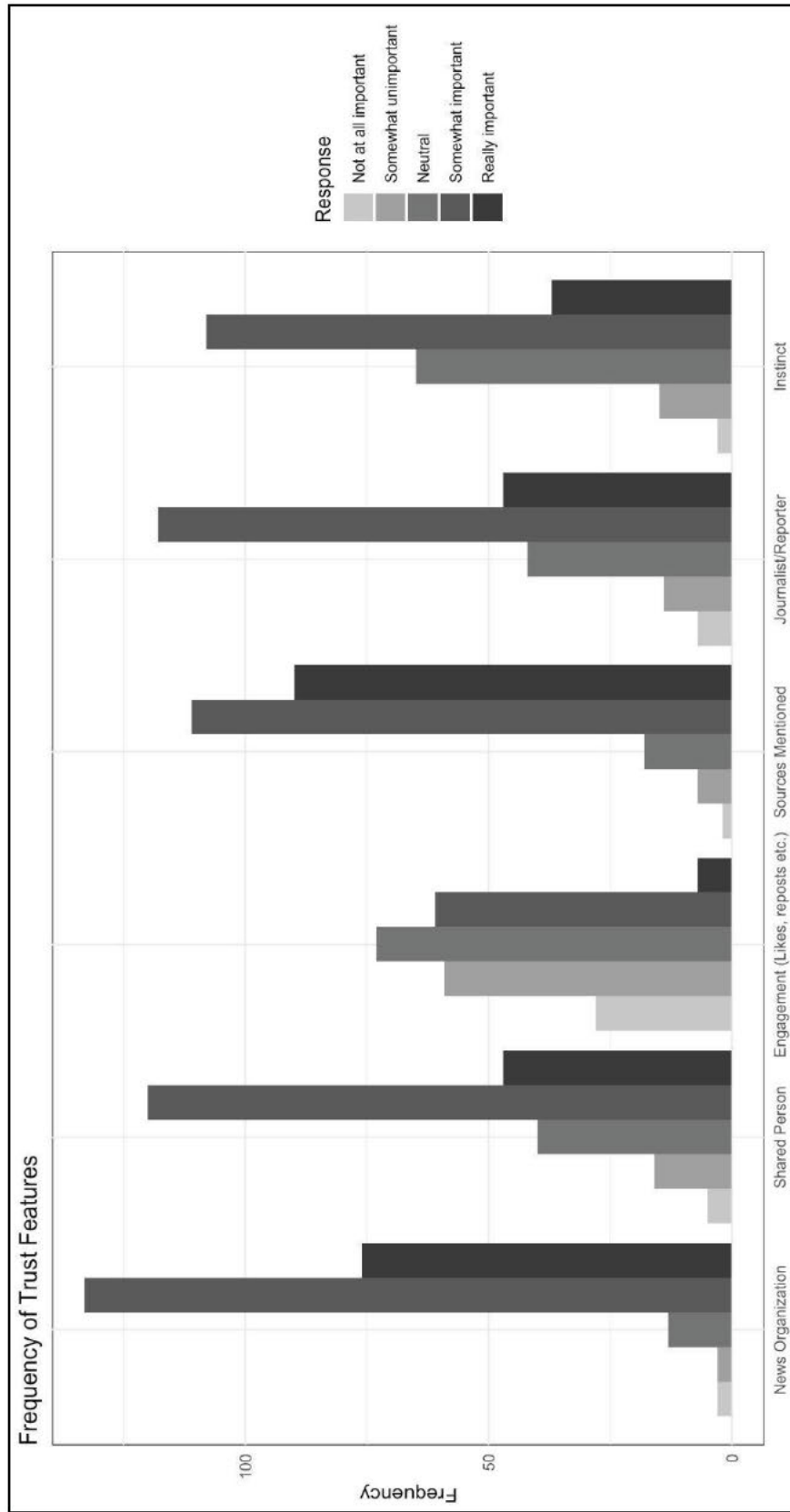


Figure 4. Frequency of Trust Features

Respondents who indicated they would share the news story (41) were asked a follow-up question about who they would share it with. Among those in anonymous condition (22), nearly all (19) stated they would share it with friends, followed by people they know online (17). Similarly, respondents in the real identity condition (19) also primarily indicated they would share it with friends (18) and family (17).

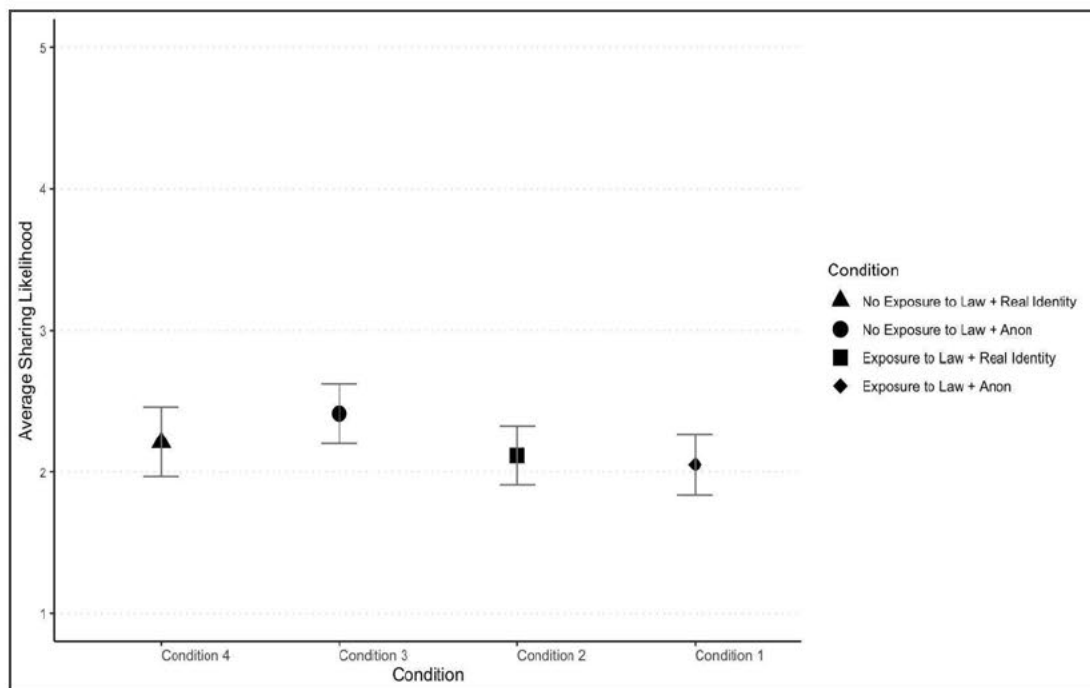
When asked about their perceived consequences of sharing misinformation, most of the respondents' had higher levels of agreement with the statements. %64 percent of the respondents agreed that they have a fear of sharing misinformation online because of the possibility of damaging their reputation, and similarly, %66 percent of the respondents indicated that they think others will perceive them as ignorant or irresponsible if they accidentally share misinformation. More than %75 percent of the respondents agreed that the spread of misinformation affect others' political tendencies.

4.2. Statistical Analyses and Results

Respondents were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions and were asked to indicate their likelihood of sharing the news story anonymously (n = 54) or with their real identity (n = 59) after being exposed to the law, or their likelihood of sharing the news story anonymously (n = 63) or with their real identity (n = 52) without being exposed to the law. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to see the overall differences in sharing behavior across four conditions. There was no significant difference found in sharing likelihood across all four conditions, suggesting that the study's

experimental manipulation did not have the intended effect on respondents' willingness to share study stimulus (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Average Sharing Likelihood across all four conditions.



To investigate whether exposure to the law and the act of sharing anonymously had an influence on sharing behavior, a two-way factorial ANOVA was conducted.

H1 predicted that news-sharing behavior would significantly differ in response to a different framing of the news story (exposure to the law versus no exposure).

Specifically, it was predicted that exposure to the disinformation law would lead to a decrease in the frequency of news-sharing behavior. The average sharing likelihood

of those who were not exposed to the law was slightly higher than those exposed (see Table 7).

Table 7. Group Descriptive Statistics by sharing likelihood

Group Statistics	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Exposure to Law	113	2.08	1.05	1	5
No Exposure to Law	115	2.32	1.14	1	5
Sharing Anonymously	117	2.24	1.09	1	5
Sharing with Real Identity	111	2.16	1.11	1	5
Cond. 1 (Exposure + Anonymous)	54	2.05	1.05	1	5
Cond. 2 (No Exposure + Anonymous)	59	2.11	1.06	1	5
Cond. 3 (Exposure + Real Identity)	63	2.41	1.11	1	5
Cond. 4 (No Exposure + Real Identity)	52	2.21	1.17	1	5

The Welch Two Sample t-test and two-way factorial ANOVA results indicated no significant effect of exposure to the law on sharing likelihood ($t(225.16) = 1.59, p > 0.05$), suggesting insufficient evidence to support H1. Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analysis, which included all key variables, revealed a significant negative effect of exposure to the law on sharing behavior ($\beta = -.32, SE = .14, p < .05$). This discrepancy in results highlights the potential influence of additional variables in the analysis and the importance of considering the statistical methods' assumptions.

Despite the non-significant result of the t-test and a two-way ANOVA, the significant effect observed in the OLS regression suggests that exposure to the law

may indeed play a role in shaping individuals' sharing behavior when accounting for other relevant factors. The results of the OLS regressions can be seen in Table 8.

H2 suggested that different modes of online identities (anonymous versus real identity) will result in varying levels of news-sharing behavior. A Welch Two Sample t-test was conducted and showed no significant effect of the mode of online identity on sharing likelihood, failing to support H2 ($t(224.91) = -0.58, p > .05$). The mean sharing likelihood for the real identity condition was 2.16, while the mean for the anonymous condition was 2.24. However, this difference was not reliable or meaningful from a statistical standpoint. OLS regression results for online identities were also in line with t-test findings ($\beta = .001, SE = .14, p > .05$) and indicated that the mode of online identity did not have a significant effect on news-sharing behavior. Regarding the alternative hypotheses, **H2a** suggested that anonymity would increase the likelihood of sharing misinformation compared to using a real identity and **H2b** suggested that anonymity would decrease the likelihood of sharing misinformation compared to using a real identity. The findings did not support either of these alternative hypotheses. OLS regression results aligned with t-test findings, further indicating that the mode of online identity did not significantly impact news-sharing likelihood of respondents.

Table 8. OLS Sharing behavior

	Model 1 <i>b (SE)</i>	Model 2 <i>b (SE)</i>
Exposure to law	0.120 (0.146)	-0.019** (0.140)
Anonymous	0.165 (0.146)	0.993 (0.140)
PSML (Social)		0.615 (0.082)
PSML (Informational)		0.510 (0.150)
Social media use		0.264 (0.090)
Trust in social media		0.466 (0.092)
Using social media for news		0.502 (0.086)
Sharing news to inform others		0.938 (0.068)
Sharing news to maintain credibility		0.400 (0.062)
Sharing hard news		0.001*** (0.073)
Interest in hard news		0.184 (0.073)
Interest in nature news		0.450 (0.055)
Awareness of misinformation		0.474 (0.150)
Age		0.663 (0.012)
Gender		0.455 (0.158)
Education		0.025** (0.126)
Constant	0.001*** (0.130)	0.944 (0.980)
Observation	228	228
R2	0.011	0.032

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. (* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.001$)

According to OLS regression analysis, the overall model was significant but only some of the variables significantly affected sharing likelihood (Model 2). For instance, social media use ($\beta = .10$, $SE = .09$, $p > .05$), trust in social media ($\beta = -.06$, $SE = .09$, $p > .05$) and awareness of misinformation ($\beta = .10$, $SE = .15$, $p > .05$) did not have a significant effect on news-sharing. Additionally, using social media for news, as well as sharing news to inform others ($\beta = -.005$, $SE = .06$, $p > .05$) and maintain credibility did not have a significant impact on sharing likelihood ($\beta = .05$, $SE = .06$, $p > .05$). Individuals who frequently share hard news reported higher sharing likelihood of the news story than those with other news-sharing preferences ($\beta = .09$, $SE = .07$, $p < .05$). In contrast, simply being *interested* in hard news did not directly translate into higher sharing likelihood ($p > .05$). This result is a bit surprising, as previous research by Kalogeropoulos et al. (2017) found a positive link between interest in hard news and news engagement. Perceived social media literacy was categorized into two groups for social and informational dimensions of PSML. OLS Regression results also could not find any significant of those on sharing likelihood. In terms of demographic measures, while age and gender did not have a significant impact on sharing likelihood, level of education had a positive significant effect on sharing likelihood ($\beta = .28$, $SE = .12$, $p < .05$).

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

As artificial intelligence has become increasingly advanced and accessible, the spread of disinformation on social media has also increased. As a result, governments and social media platforms have been introducing more comprehensive anti-disinformation policies. Though disinformation is a widely studied topic in political communication literature, we still have limited knowledge about the impact of anti-disinformation policies on news experiences at citizen-centric level. This is partly due to the fact that these specific policies to combat disinformation have not been in practice for a very long time. Based on this, this study aimed to observe the impact of state-implemented counter-disinformation policies on news-sharing behavior in the context of Türkiye. It is important to note that this study was not designed to understand various motivations for news-sharing or sharing disinformation. Instead, this study attempted to understand the act of sharing itself and how it might be influenced by anti-disinformation policies in Türkiye. This distinction is important because the underlying factors associated with sharing disinformation or expressing oneself may differ significantly from those related to sharing news.

Although the hypotheses proposed was not supported by the data obtained, some findings were found to be partially consistent with current literature on attitudes of young people regarding news. In this chapter, I will discuss the study findings, its methodological considerations and limitations, and recommended steps for future research in detail.

5.1. Overview of Key Findings

5.1.1. The Effect of Salience of Disinformation Law on Sharing Likelihood

The study findings indicated that the salience of disinformation law had a significant effect on the whole sample's sharing tendencies when all control variables were included in the analysis. Respondents who were exposed to the disinformation law after seeing the news story showed less sharing tendency compared to those who were not exposed to the law. This finding is consistent with prior research that found anti-misinformation policies implemented by governments and social media platforms had a negative effect on news sharing behavior (Carson & Gibbons, 2021).

Social media policy experts indicate that state-implemented social media regulations with the aim of protecting national security against disinformation can easily end up being irrelevant. Governments highly sensitive to media criticism, like Türkiye, are often accused of using such regulation to silence freedom of expression and opposition groups (i.e. chilling effect). Consequently, even accurate information can seem risky to disseminate, leading to widespread self-censorship among opposition groups. Although not included in the data analysis to prevent political bias, %55

percent of the study sample reported feeling closer to the Republican People's Party (CHP), the main opposition party in Türkiye. Thus, the study sample can be considered as the opposition group in the eyes of the Turkish government. This characteristic of the study sample might have contributed to the findings by highlighting the high levels of self-censorship and caution among opposition when sharing news online due to their fear of legal consequences under repressive government regulations.

Since its enactment, the law has been frequently criticized for its vaguely-worded content by independent news media outlets and opposition journalists in Türkiye. There are several reasons for this criticism. First, as I mentioned earlier, the law does not clearly define what constitutes disinformation, leaving citizens uncertain about the boundaries of "acceptable" online expression. Secondly, Turkish government is often criticized for its tendency to use its role as "watchdog" of democracy for implementing repressive restrictions which could trigger a chilling effect on ordinary citizens' online news experiences. In authoritarian regimes where digital surveillance by the government is severe, citizens tend to be more cautious and hesitant in their online activities. This chilling effect, arising from both the disinformation law's ambiguous content and the Turkish government's attitude towards freedom of expression, might be another factor that contributed to decreased sharing likelihood observed in the study.

However, one thing to consider here is that news item presented to the respondents in the current study was an existing news story with accurate information and the

reminder of the law still negatively affected their tendency to share. This is contrary to previous studies that found that people's tendency to share accurate information did not change after the salience of anti-disinformation policies (Guriev et al., 2023). This result may have several possible explanations. First of all, Guriev et al. (2023) showed 2 true and 2 false political information tweets and assigned their respondents to four different treatment groups: no policy, requiring extra click before sharing, offering fact checking, reminding about the presence of fake news online, and asking to assess tweet. They found that sharing tendency for tweets with political misinformation decreased in all treatment groups except no policy, while sharing tendency of tweets with correct information showed a decrease in only offering fact-checking condition. In the present study, although the news story shown to respondents did not have a risky political content, respondents might have hesitated to share it anyway knowing the Turkish authorities attitude towards freedom of expression.

Furthermore, this study is different from prior studies investigating the effect of anti-disinformation policies on news-sharing behavior, which were mainly carried out in more democratic contexts (Murphy et al., 2023). In terms of the Türkiye context, people may be hesitant to share news because they might feel under strict digital surveillance by the state. Such an interpretation of the result is in line with previous studies which found that news engagement decreases when perceived digital surveillance is high. Considering how different societies have distinctive perceptions of disinformation, this findings contributed to the existing literature on misinformation by examining the unintended consequences of anti-misinformation

policies on news experiences in an networked authoritarian environment. The findings of the study highlighted the importance of encouraging information sharing and protecting freedom of expression in the design and implementation of anti-disinformation laws by policymakers.

5.1.2. Online Anonymity and News-Sharing

This study found that use of different online identity modes had no significant effect on news sharing tendency. On one hand, this finding contrasts with previous studies suggesting people are more likely to share and comment on news with an anonymous account (Zhang & Kizilcec, 2014; Wu & Atkin, 2018). However, we should note that previous studies have often examined the effect of content controversiality on news engagement and found that people resort to anonymity when expressing their opinions on controversial issues like abortion. In terms of this study, the participant pool consisted exclusively of undergraduate students from Bilkent University, and the news story presented to participants was about a natural disaster. It is possible that the content of the news story may not have been perceived as controversial or sensitive to trigger strong reactions. In other words, the content of the news story itself might have affected this finding. Therefore, if a more polarizing or controversial news story had been presented, the interaction between the mode of online identity and sharing likelihood might have been observed more directly. In line with previous findings regarding the effect of anonymity on engaging with news on controversial topics, 44 percent of the respondents reported that they felt more comfortable expressing themselves on controversial and sensitive topics by using an anonymous account on social media.

Another factor that might have led to this finding could be related to perceptions of online anonymity. There are degrees of anonymity online, ranging from simply not using one's real name on social media to being fully unidentifiable through anonymity-granting technologies. The survey presented the concept of online anonymity as not providing personal information on social media accounts. This definition, however, may not fully encompass the thought of being fully unidentifiable online. Thus, respondents might have been aware that their actions would not be entirely hidden from authorities, which could have made them more picky when it comes to sharing the presented news story. Moreover, in the context of Türkiye, where the government has the authority to access personal information from social media platforms, even for anonymous accounts, online anonymity might not offer a freer online experience and thus might not be perceived as a benefit. This lack of perceived benefit could explain why different modes of online identity did not significantly affect sharing likelihood.

Lastly, this finding is in line with a previous study by Altay et al. (2020), where they found no significant difference in sharing real news through an anonymous and personal social media accounts. In their study, they showed participants both real and fake news, and tried to understand the effect of different modes of online identity on perceived reputational consequences of sharing fake news. They asked respondents how much money they would accept to share both fake and real news through an anonymous or their personal social media accounts. While participants asked for more money to share fake news on their personal accounts than on an anonymous

account, there was no significant difference in sharing real news on personal and anonymous accounts.

5.1.3. Additional Findings

The findings revealed that only the level of education had a significant positive effect on news sharing tendency when all control variables (including other social demographic variables) were included in data analysis. This finding is reasonable, as previous research also illustrated that individuals with higher education levels are more likely to have greater interest and ability to engage with news content (Chen et al., 2015; Hwang & Jeong, 2022). However, 77 percent of the respondents had an undergraduate level of education, which suggests this finding can not be directly generalizable to a broader population. Accordingly, respondents' age did not have a significant effect on sharing likelihood, further suggesting that the study sample could not be interpreted into a larger population and other factors had played a more prominent role in respondents' sharing likelihood.

The findings also did not provide sufficient evidence regarding the relationship between respondents' gender and their news-sharing likelihood. This is in line with former studies with larger samples that did not find a notable connection between gender and news sharing behavior (Apuke & Omar, 2020; Rampersad & Althiyabi, 2020). Lastly, even though the survey asked respondents about their political affiliation, it was not included in the data analysis to prevent potentially biased results due to the overrepresentation of individuals identifying with the Republican People's Party (CHP). Future research could aim for a more homogeneous sample in

terms of political affiliation to appropriately explore the potential influence of political views on news-sharing behavior.

Participants in the survey reported their news interests, as well as how often they share news on those topics, where they could select from nine categories: politics, entertainment, local news, technology, health, sports, economy, science, and nature. Adapted from previous studies, politics and economy news were combined to create a new variable for hard news. The findings suggested that frequency of sharing hard news had a positive effect on news sharing likelihood. This aligns with existing literature, as hard news often covers impactful topics that resonate with people's lives and encourage them to share information with others. In contrast, interest in hard news did not effect their sharing likelihood. One explanation for this could be the perceived importance of hard news. For instance, people might decide to share hard news because they perceive it as more relevant to their social circles, even if they do not personally have a strong interest in the topic.

5.2. Limitations & Methodological Considerations

This study has several methodological limitations regarding its research design and survey sample. First of all, respondents voluntarily participated in the online survey experiment rather than being chosen through a random selection process. This non-probability sampling method used in the study made it impossible to calculate sampling error estimates. Consequently, the generalizability of the findings to the broader population is limited. Additionally, news stimulus may not have been an attention grabber for the participant pool, which in turn might have affected their

sharing likelihood. Perhaps different findings could have been obtained if a specific detail like changing the news story shown to respondents depending on their news interests had been applied. Since the news story was specifically chosen about a non-controversial topic for not to disturb respondents and make them feel at risk, it might have also lacked emotional impact and personal connection that could have influenced their news engagement. This could have also limited the study's ability to capture varied forms individuals engage with news online. If a news article on topics on which the Turkish society has a common opinion, such as violence against women, violence against doctors, or the draft law on putting stray animals to "sleep", which has recently caused serious public debate, were used as a study stimulus, it is most likely that there would be significant differences in the findings obtained in the study.

Another study limitation is that there was no additional measure on whether the respondents had prior knowledge of the disinformation law. Even if they were not exposed to the law, respondents with prior knowledge about the law may have strategically taken a slightly more cautious approach when they were asked if they would share the news story. Furthermore, the lack of knowledge on how respondents perceive anonymous accounts might have influenced the study outcome. For instance, respondents who already had negative feelings towards online anonymity prior to this study might have perceived sharing news through an anonymous account as putting them into a more risky position. Accordingly, this study did not check for respondents' prior experience about using different modes of online identity. Thus, it is possible that respondents who regularly use anonymous accounts may not fully

believe in the “protective power” of anonymity against government digital surveillance or other threats to their freedom of expression.

An additional key factor that might have contributed to study findings is the possibility of respondents having a news-avoidance attitude. Although the study did not use a measure on news-avoidance, most of the respondents indicated having lower trust levels in Turkish news media and reported dedicating less than an hour to read news on social media on a typical day. Since news avoidance is more observed in highly polarized media environments, respondents’ low tendency to share news can be interpreted as consistent with previous literature on news avoidance (Villi et al., 2021). Thus, using a measure to observe news-avoidance tendencies could have significantly affected the study findings. Accordingly, respondents’ views and attitudes toward “non-sharing” could be useful to understand which factors contribute to their decision-making processes on news-sharing.

Apart from other limitations, the fact that the news item shown was taken from the independent internet newspaper, Gazete Duvar, may have also influenced the participants’ choices. Although the news source logo was included in the study stimulus, it was not highlighted or emphasized to avoid the effects of other factors on news-sharing tendencies. However, it is important to acknowledge that prior research has established a link between trust in news sources and sharing behavior (Fletcher & Park, 2017). Regarding this study’s context, respondents could only see the logo of the news source and this may have caused some participants, who were not familiar with Gazete Duvar, to perceive the displayed news story as coming from an

untrustworthy source. Likewise, no social cues were included in the presented news story. Social cues of a news story, such as the number of likes, shares, and comments it received, affect sharing behavior and they can be quite effective in news-sharing behavior as well as misinformation susceptibility (Traberg et al., 2024). Since social engagement metrics were not visible in the news stimulus, some respondents might not have been sure about the credibility of the news story, which could have had a negative effect on their sharing tendencies.

The most critical limitation of this study is use of university students as its participant pool. Therefore, findings are not representative of the Turkish population in terms of their demographics, news-sharing behavior, and attitudes toward online anonymity and they can not be generalized to a broader population. In addition, the results for the news consumption item indicate that most respondents spend less than one hour per day dedicated to news reading. This relatively low news consumption raises questions about the study sample's overall interest in current events and its potential impact on the study's findings. This finding, while differing from research suggesting high news consumption in Türkiye (Kızılkaya et al., 2022), is consistent with studies observing a broader global trend of decreasing interest in news (Altay et al., 2024). Future research could explore whether this limited news consumption reflects a broader recent trend in the population or is specific to the demographics of this particular sample.

Lastly, the initial idea was to ask respondents whether they engage in interactions such as liking and commenting in addition to sharing the news, but in order to avoid

extending the duration of the survey and losing the interest of the respondents, the study focused directly on the tendency to share. People have distinctive tendencies for different forms of news engagement depending on certain content characteristics (Tenenboim, 2022). While liking a post is often related to “supporting” (Sumner et al., 2017), commenting or sharing is often related to “expression” motives (Tenenboim, 2022). Thus, including additional questions for other engagement modes could have contributed to findings differently.

5.3. Directions for Future Studies

Future studies should consider the limitations and methodological considerations of the study and address this issue in a broader scope. Rather than the self-reported sharing likelihood measured through an online survey experiment, conducting an experiment in a laboratory setting may presents results closer to real news-sharing behavior. Additionally, for a better understanding of the reasons behind users’ sharing tendencies, using a longitudinal study design to examine the long-term effects of legal interventions on behavior or conducting a follow-up face-to-face interviews could also provide a better observation.

There are several adjustments regarding the study stimulus that future studies could employ. First of all, future studies could examine how the truthfulness of news (fake vs. real) interact with the salience of anti-misinformation policies and different modes of online identity by including fake news into their study stimulus. This would also add a valuable aspect to Altay et al.’s (2020) study, which focused on the

perceived reputational consequences of sharing fake news but did not explicitly examine the effect of legal consequences. Moreover, as suggested earlier, future research could employ a study stimulus sampling by tailoring news to participants' individual news interests and preferences. For instance, using a news story with more personal connection to the selected sample could cause more interest among participants, which could affect their sharing likelihood. This aspect of the study can also be improved through a study design where individuals can engage in an "actual" news-sharing behavior rather than reporting their sharing likelihood. This could be done through creating a simulated social media platform and enabling individuals to engage with news. The design could also include experiment manipulations, such as giving participants an option to choose from different modes of online identity and including reminders of the disinformation law on their feeds.

Besides the state-implemented social media policies, there are also several active fact-checking organizations in Türkiye which are also members of the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN), such as Teyit, Doğruluk Payı, Doğrula, and Verify Media Platform. Further studies could also include the fact-checking statements provided by such organizations' effect on people's news sharing behavior. By including this aspect in the study design, the salience of state-implemented disinformation policies on news-sharing attitudes might be observed more clearly.

Considering people's perceptions of the availability of news online from a more comprehensive approach could make it possible to observe their "news-find-me" tendencies. By observing this tendency, it would be possible to observe the factors

that lead to avoidance of sharing news online more accurately. Thus, including an additional measure for news-avoidance tendencies could have contributed to different findings.

Political affiliation can also be included in future studies as a moderating effect to examine the effect of political bias on news sharing likelihood. In highly polarized political climates like Türkiye, people may be more likely to share news that aligns with their existing beliefs. Thus, exposure to anti-misinformation policies could further reinforce these biases, leading to selective sharing of information that confirms pre-existing views.

5.4. Concluding Remarks

People are under the risk of being exposed to disinformation in their everyday lives, whether they are aware of it or not. Governments and several social media platforms have been taking various steps to control this increasingly pressing problem for our information ecosystem. One such action is social media regulations against the spread of disinformation enacted by governments. While the necessity of such regulation is certainly obvious, intended goals of governments for introducing such regulations may differ. Thus, the impact of anti-disinformation policies on ordinary citizens' online experiences may also vary depending on their country's regimes. This study contributes to the existing body of literature by examining the impact of an existing anti-disinformation policy and the use of different modes of online identity on news-sharing behavior in the context of Türkiye.

While efforts to combat disinformation are crucial for protecting the integrity of our information ecosystem, it's equally important to acknowledge the potential trade-offs involved. For instance, restrictive regulations on online anonymity, while aimed at curbing harmful behaviors, may negatively affect freedom of expression and limit the positive contributions of anonymous interactions to online communities. Future research should explore the potential unintended consequences of such regulations, particularly in how they might affect the benefits of anonymity for self-expression, marginalized communities, and "whistleblowing". By understanding these complex interactions, governments work towards developing balanced policies that effectively combat disinformation while preserving the positive aspects of online anonymity.

Although the study's primary hypothesis could not be supported, largely due to methodological limitations, findings regarding the effect of the salience of anti-disinformation law on news-sharing behavior provided valuable insights for future research focusing on networked authoritarian governments' attempts to counter disinformation. These insights can further illuminate the nuanced ways in which different societies perceive the risks associated with sharing potentially false information online. Furthermore, by illustrating how vaguely worded laws against disinformation might negatively affect ordinary citizens' online news experience, the findings of the study give valuable insights for policymakers and highlight the importance of more precise and targeted social media regulations against the spread of disinformation without affecting freedom of expression and news engagement at the citizen-centric level.

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APPENDICES



APPENDIX A. ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL PAGE



Bilkent Üniversitesi

Akademik İşler Rektör Yardımcılığı

Tarih : 1 Şubat 2024
Gönderilen : Selin Küçükoruç
Danışman : Ayşenur Dal Tokdemir
Gönderen : H. Altay Güvenir
İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başkanı
Konu : "The Impact of ..." çalışması etik kurul onay

Üniversitemiz İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu, 1 Şubat 2024 tarihli görüşme sonucu, "The Impact of Perceptions and Attitudes Toward Misinformation on News-Sharing Behaviour on Social Media" isimli çalışmanız kapsamında yapmayı önerdiğiniz etkinlik için etik onay vermiş bulunmaktadır. Onay, ekte verilmiş olan çalışma önerisi, çalışma yürütücüler ve bilgilendirme formu için geçerlidir.

Bu onay, yapmayı önerdiğiniz çalışmanın genel bilim etiği açısından bir değerlendirmedir. Çalışmanızda, kurumumuzun değerlendirmesi dışında kalabilen özel etik ve yasal sınırlamalara uymakla ayrıca yükümlüsünüz.

Kovid-19 salgını nedeniyle konulmuş olan kısıtlamaların yürürlükte olduğu süre içinde, tüm komite toplantıları elektronik ortamda yapılmaktadır; aşağıda isimleri bulunan Bilkent Üniversitesi Etik Kurulu Üyeleri adına bu yazıyı imzalama yetkisi kurul başkanındadır.

Etik Kurul Üyeleri:

Ünvan / İsim	Bölüm / Uzmanlık	
Prof.Dr. H. Altay Güvenir	Bilgisayar Mühendisliği	Başkan
Prof.Dr. Haldun Özaktaş	Elektrik ve Elektronik Müh.	Üye
Doç.Dr. Işık Yuluğ	Moleküler Biyoloji ve Genetik	Üye
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Burcu Ayşen Ürgen	Psikoloji	Üye
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi A.Bariş Öz bilen	Hukuk	Üye
Prof. Dr. Özgür Ulusoy	Bilgisayar Mühendisliği	Yedek Üye
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi A.Bariş Özçelik	Hukuk	Yedek Üye

Kurul karar/toplantı No: 2024_02_01_02

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT

Değerli katılımcımız, Bilkent Üniversitesi İletişim ve Tasarım Bölümü'nde yürütülen bir araştırma projesi kapsamında Selin Küçükoruç tarafından yürütülen bir araştırmaya davetlisiniz.

Sosyal medya, günümüzde haber alma ve haber paylaşma için en yaygın kullanılan platformlardan biri haline gelmiştir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, kişilerin haber paylaşım davranışlarını araştırmaktır.

Çalışma boyunca sizden bir anket cevaplamanız beklenmektedir. Bu çalışma için anket sorularınızı yanıtlamanız yaklaşık 10-15 dakikanızı alacaktır.

Çalışma size doğrudan bir fayda sağlamayacak, ancak bize haber paylaşım alışkanlıklarını şekillendiren faktörleri daha iyi anlamamızı sağlayacaktır. Ek olarak bilgi yayılımına dair görüşleri ve tutumları gözlemlememizi sağlayarak dolaylı olarak politika yapıcılara öneri sunmamız için yardımcı olacaktır.

Sonuçlar da dahil olmak üzere çalışmanın tüm yönleri gizli olacak ve sadece araştırmacılar katılımcılar hakkındaki bilgilere erişebileceklerdir. Çalışmanın sonuçları tamamen anonim bir şekilde Medya ve Görsel Çalışmalar Yüksek Lisans Programı (Bilkent Üniversitesi) tez projesi kapsamında kullanılacaktır.

Tanımlanmayan veriler daha sonra yeni analiz teknikleri veya hipotezleri test etmek için tekrar kullanılabilir. Hiçbir bireysel sonuç bildirilmeyecektir. Bireysel yanıtlar, her katılımcıya benzersiz kimlik numaraları atayarak ve yanıtlarını yalnızca bu numarayla ilişkilendirerek gizli tutulacaktır. Hiçbir kişisel olarak tanımlanabilir bilgi, katılımcı yanıtlarının herhangi biriyle ilişkilendirilmeyecektir.

Araştırmaya katılım tamamen gönüllülük esasına dayalıdır. Katılmak zorunda değilsiniz ve katılmanız halinde herhangi bir sebep sunmadan ve özellikle Bilkent Üniversitesi ile olan ilişkinize karşı herhangi bir sonuçla karşılaşmadan herhangi bir zamanda araştırmadan geri çekilebilirsiniz.

Bu bilgileri okuduktan sonra araştırmacıya dilediğiniz soruları yöneltebilirsiniz. Bu araştırma ile ilgili herhangi bir şikayetiniz veya çekinceniz varsa, araştırmacı Selin Küçükoruç ile [redacted] mail adresinden veya araştırma sorumlusu Dr. Ayşenur Dal Tokdemir ile [redacted] adresinden e-posta ile iletişime geçebilirsiniz.

Dile getirdiğiniz tüm sorunlar gizlilik içinde ele alınacak, eksiksiz bir şekilde araştırılacak ve sonuçtan size bilgi verilecektir.

Lütfen herhangi bir nedenle, verilerinizin çalışmaya dahil edilmemesini isterseniz, araştırmacılara hemen bildiriniz.

Bu bilgi ve onay formunun bir kopyası, saklamanız için size verilecektir. Bu araştırmanın etik olarak yürütülmesine ilişkin herhangi bir endişeniz varsa [REDACTED] adresinden Bilkent Üniversitesi Etik Kurulu ile iletişime geçebilirsiniz.

Sosyal Medyada Haber Paylaşma Pratikleri isimli çalışmaya katılmamın istenmesi üzerine üzerine alttaki kutucuğu işaretleyerek rıza gösteriyor ve aşağıdaki maddeleri kabul ediyorum:

1. Araştırma projesi yukarıda açıklandığı gibi gerçekleştirilecektir. Tarafıma sağlanan bilgileri okudum ve anladım. Projeye bilgi ve katılım sürecimi araştırmacı ile tartışma fırsatım oldu.
2. Katılımım gizlidir ve çalışma sırasında kazanılan bilgiler yayınlanabilir, ancak kimliğimi ortayan çıkaran hiçbir kişisel bilgi kullanılmayacaktır.
3. Katılımım rızam doğrultusunda gerçekleşecektir. Bilkent Üniversitesi ile olan ilişkiyi etkilemeden herhangi bir zamanda çalışmadan çekilebilirim. Rızamın geri çekilmesi için bir sebep sunmak zorunda değilim.
4. 18 yaşın üzerindeyim ve şu anda Dr. Ayşenur Dal Tokdemir'den herhangi bir ders almıyorum.

- ☐ Bu çalışmaya katılmak için rızam vardır.
- ☐ Bu çalışmaya katılmak için rızam yoktur.

APPENDIX C: SURVEY QUESTIONS

TEMEL DEMOGRAFİ SORULARI

yas. Kaç yaşındasınız? (Lütfen cevabınızı yazınız)

cins. Cinsiyetiniz nedir?

- (1) Kadın
- (2) Erkek
- (3) Diğer
- (4) Belirtmek istemiyorum

edu. Eğitim durumunuz nedir?

- (1) İlköğretim
- (2) Lise
- (3) Önlisans
- (4) Lisans
- (5) Yüksek lisans
- (6) Doktora

pol. Kendinizi hangi partiye daha yakın hissediyorsunuz?

- (1) Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP/AK PARTİ)
- (2) Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP)
- (3) Halkların Demokratik Partisi (HDP, HEDEP, YSP, DEM)
- (4) Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP)
- (5) İYİ Parti
- (6) Saadet Partisi (SP)
- (7) Diğer
- (8) Belirtmek istemiyorum

hane. Aylık hane geliriniz ne kadardır?

- (1) 25.000 TL'den az
- (2) 25.000 TL - 49.999 TL
- (3) 50.000 TL - 74.999 TL
- (4) 75.000 TL ve üzeri
- (5) Belirtmek istemiyorum

BÖLÜM A: SOSYAL MEDYA KULLANIMI

A01. Tipik bir günde sosyal medya platformlarında (Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter) vb.) ne kadar zaman harcıyorsunuz?

- (1) Hiç/Neredeyse Hiç
- (2) 30 Dakikadan Az
- (3) Bir Saatten Az
- (4) 2 Saat
- (5) 2 Saatten Fazla

A02. Genel olarak sosyal medyayı kullanım amaçlarınızı düşündüğünüzde, aşağıdaki ifadelere katılıyor musunuz yoksa katılmıyor musunuz?

(1 = Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum, 5 = Kesinlikle Katılıyorum)

1	Sosyal medyayı yeni insanlarla tanışmak için kullanıyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
2	Sosyal medyayı tartışma başlatmak veya ilgimi çeken tartışmalara katılmak için kullanıyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
3	Sosyal medyayı kendimi daha rahat ifade etmek ve fikirlerimi belirtmek için kullanıyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
4	Sosyal medyayı bilgi edinmek ve gündemi takip etmek için kullanıyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
5	Sosyal medyayı hayatımdaki gelişmeleri paylaşmak amacıyla kullanıyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
6	Sosyal medyayı profesyonel ağımı genişletmek için kullanıyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
7	Sosyal medyayı eğlence içeriklerini tüketmek için kullanıyorum.	1	2	3	4	5

A03. Tipik bir günde sosyal medyada haber okumaya ne kadar zaman harcıyorsunuz?

- (1) Hiç/Neredeyse Hiç
- (2) 30 Dakikadan Az
- (3) Bir Saatten Az
- (4) 2 Saat
- (5) 2 Saatten Fazla

BÖLÜM B: HABER PAYLAŞIM DAVRANIŞI

A04. Ülke gündemini genellikle hangi bilgi ve haber kaynakları üzerinden takip ediyorsunuz?

(1 = Hiç/Neredeyse Hiç, 5 = Her zaman)

1	Haber web siteleri	1	2	3	4	5
2	Sosyal medya platformları (<i>Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter) vb.</i>)	1	2	3	4	5
3	Televizyon kanalları	1	2	3	4	5
4	Podcastler	1	2	3	4	5
5	Google veya başka bir arama motoru üzerinden	1	2	3	4	5

A05. Biraz önce gündemi takip etmek için sosyal medya platformlarını kullandığınızı belirttiniz. Aşağıdaki farklı sosyal medya platformlarını ne sıklıkta bu amaç için kullanıyorsunuz?

(1 = Hiç/Neredeyse Hiç, 5 = Her zaman)

1	Facebook	1	2	3	4	5
2	X (Twitter)	1	2	3	4	5
3	Instagram	1	2	3	4	5
4	YouTube	1	2	3	4	5
5	TikTok	1	2	3	4	5
6	Reddit	1	2	3	4	5
7	WhatsApp	1	2	3	4	5
8	Twitch	1	2	3	4	5

A06. Lütfen aşağıdaki farklı haber türlerine ne kadar ilgi duyduğunuzu belirtiniz.
(1 = Hiç/Neredeyse Hiç İlgilenmiyorum, 5 = Çok İlgileniyorum)

1	Siyaset	1	2	3	4	5
2	Eğlence	1	2	3	4	5
3	Yerel Haberler	1	2	3	4	5
4	Teknoloji	1	2	3	4	5
5	Sağlık	1	2	3	4	5
6	Spor	1	2	3	4	5
7	Ekonomi	1	2	3	4	5
8	Bilim	1	2	3	4	5
9	Çevre	1	2	3	4	5

A07. Lütfen aşağıdaki haber türlerinden hangilerini ne sıklıkta paylaştığınızı belirtiniz.
(1 = Hiç/Neredeyse Hiç, 5 = Her zaman)

1	Siyaset	1	2	3	4	5
2	Eğlence	1	2	3	4	5
3	Yerel Haberler	1	2	3	4	5
4	Teknoloji	1	2	3	4	5
5	Sağlık	1	2	3	4	5
6	Spor	1	2	3	4	5
7	Ekonomi	1	2	3	4	5
8	Bilim	1	2	3	4	5
9	Çevre	1	2	3	4	5

A08. Sosyal medyada haber paylaşıırken, aşağıdaki farklı hedefler sizin için ne kadar önemlidir?

(1 = Hiç/Neredeyse Hiç Önemli Değil, 5 = Çok Önemli)

1	Başkalarına bilgi vermek	1	2	3	4	5
2	Başkalarıyla iletişim kurmak	1	2	3	4	5
3	Benimle benzer düşüncelere sahip insanlarla bağlantıda olduğumu hissetmek	1	2	3	4	5
4	Kendi çevrimiçi itibarımı veya etkimi oluşturmak	1	2	3	4	5
5	Haberin içeriğini komik ve eğlenceli bulmak	1	2	3	4	5
6	Haber hakkında tartışma başlatmak	1	2	3	4	5

BÖLÜM C: ÇALIŞMA DENEYİ

A09. HABER GÖSTERİMİ

İnsanlar, sosyal medya platformları ve diğer iletişim araçları aracılığıyla farklı konularda bilgi ve fikir paylaşımı yapabilmektedir. Bu durum, güncel olaylardan kişisel deneyimlere kadar geniş bir yelpazeyi kapsar. Örneğin, ülkemizde bir doğal afet gerçekleştiğinde, pek çok kullanıcı yaşanan olay hakkında haber, fotoğraf veya video paylaşarak farkındalık yaratmaya çalışabilir veya konu hakkında fikirlerini paylaşabilir.

Bu durumu göz önünde bulundurarak bir sonraki sayfada göreceğiniz haberi dikkatle incelemenizi rica ediyoruz.

(HABER GÖRSELİ)

A10. YASA BİLGİSİ (EXPOSURE CONDITION)

Bildiğiniz üzere son yıllarda, yanlış veya çarpıtılmış bilgi yayılımı hem bireyler hem de toplumlar için önemli bir tehdit haline gelmiştir. Bu nedenle, birçok sosyal medya platformu, devletler ve çeşitli kurumlar, vatandaşları korumak için çeşitli politikalar ve eğitimler geliştirmektedir.

Anketimize devam etmeden önce Ekim 2022’de Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi (TBMM) tarafından kabul edilen 40 maddelik Basın Kanunu ile Bazı Kanunlarda Değişiklik Yapılmasına Dair Kanun hakkında sizleri bilgilendirmek isteriz.

Bu kanunla birlikte Türk Ceza Kanunu'na (TCK) "Halkı Yanıltıcı Bilgiyi Alenen Yayma" (217/A) adında yeni bir madde eklendi. Bu madde, "dezenformasyon" olarak da bilinen, gerçeğe aykırı bilgileri alenen yayarak halk arasında endişe, korku veya panik yaratmayı suç olarak nitelendirmektedir. Bu suçu işleyenlere 1 yıldan 3 yıla kadar hapis cezası öngörülmektedir.

Halkı yanıltıcı bilgiyi alenen yayma (217/A) maddesi şu şekildedir:

- “(1) Sırf halk arasında endişe, korku veya panik yaratmak saikiyle, ülkenin iç ve dış güvenliği, kamu düzeni ve genel sağlığı ile ilgili gerçeğe aykırı bir bilgiyi, kamu barışını bozmaya elverişli şekilde alenen yayan kimse, bir yıldan üç yıla kadar hapis cezasıyla cezalandırılır.
- (2) Fail, suçu gerçek kimliğini gizleyerek veya bir örgütün faaliyeti çerçevesinde işlemesi hâlinde, birinci fıkraya göre verilen ceza yarı oranında artırılır.”

A11. Şimdi size kendi sosyal medya paylaşımlarınız ile ilgili sorular sormak istiyoruz. Bir önceki sayfada gördüğünüz haberi gerçek isminizin gözüktüğü kişisel sosyal medya hesabınızda paylaşıyor muydunuz? (REAL IDENTITY CONDITION)

- (1) Kesinlikle paylaşmazdım
- (2) Muhtemelen paylaşmazdım
- (3) Kararsızım
- (4) Muhtemelen paylaşırdım
- (5) Kesinlikle paylaşırdım

A12. Şimdi size kendi sosyal medya paylaşımlarınız ile ilgili sorular sormak istiyoruz. Bir önceki sayfada gördüğünüz haberi rumuz veya takma isimle kullandığınız bir sosyal medya hesabında paylaşıyor muydunuz? (ANONYMITY CONDITION)

- (1) Kesinlikle paylaşmazdım
- (2) Muhtemelen paylaşmazdım
- (3) Kararsızım
- (4) Muhtemelen paylaşırdım
- (5) Kesinlikle paylaşırdım

A13. Biraz önce bu haberi paylaşmayı düşündüğünüzü belirttiniz. Buna göre, bu haberi paylaşacaksanız kimlerle paylaştınız?

(1 = Kesinlikle Hayır, 2 = Muhtemelen Hayır, 3 = Emin değilim, 4 = Muhtemelen Evet, 5 = Kesinlikle Evet)

- (1) Ailemle paylaştım
- (2) Arkadaşlarımla paylaştım
- (3) Sadece çevrimiçi olarak tanıdığım kullanıcılarla paylaştım
- (4) Tüm takipçilerimle paylaştım

BÖLÜM D: SOSYAL MEDYA KULLANIM MOTİVASYONLARI

A14. Sosyal medya kullanımıyla ilgili aşağıdaki ifadelere katılıyor musunuz yoksa katılmıyor musunuz?

(1 = Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum, 5 = Kesinlikle Katılıyorum)

1	Sosyal medyada okuduğum her şey doğru değil.	1	2	3	4	5
2	Sosyal medyada bir bilginin doğruluğunu nasıl kontrol edeceğimi biliyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
3	Sosyal medyada bir bilginin doğruluğunu ölçmek için farklı kaynakları kullanmayı ve karşılaştırma yapmayı biliyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
4	Sosyal medyada karşılaştığım bir bilginin doğru ya da yanlış olduğunu anlayabiliyorum.	1	2	3	4	5

BÖLÜM E: MEDYAYA DUYULAN GÜVEN

A15. Şimdi de ülkemizdeki haber medyası hakkındaki düşüncelerinizi öğrenmek istiyoruz. Türkiye'deki haber medyasını ve medyadan beklentilerinizi göz önüne aldığınızda, aşağıdaki ifadelere katılıyor musunuz yoksa katılmıyor musunuz?

(1 = Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum, 5 = Kesinlikle Katılıyorum)

1	Türkiye'deki medya kuruluşları haberleri objektif bir şekilde sunar.	1	2	3	4	5
2	Türkiye'deki medya kuruluşları haberleri tüm yönleriyle ele alır.	1	2	3	4	5
3	Türkiye'deki medya kuruluşları haberleri doğru bir şekilde aktarır.	1	2	3	4	5
4	Türkiye'deki medya kuruluşları haberleri sunarken gerçekleri yorumlardan ayırır.	1	2	3	4	5

A16. Bir haberi okuduğunuzda, izlediğinizde veya dinlediğinizde, içeriğinin güvenilir olup olmadığına karar vermenizde aşağıdaki özelliklerden her biri sizin için ne kadar önemlidir?

(1 = Hiç/Neredeyse Hiç Önemli Değil, 5 = Çok Önemli)

1	Haberi yayınlayan haber kuruluşu	1	2	3	4	5
2	Varsa haberi paylaşan kişi	1	2	3	4	5
3	Haberin sosyal medyada çok sayıda paylaşımı, yorumu veya beğenisi olması	1	2	3	4	5
4	Haberde belirtilen kaynaklar	1	2	3	4	5
5	Haberi aktaran spesifik gazeteci	1	2	3	4	5
6	Haberin güvenilirliği hakkındaki içgüdüm	1	2	3	4	5

A17. Sosyal medyada karşılaştığınız çevrimiçi haber kaynaklarını düşündüğünüzde, aşağıdaki ifadelere katılıyor musunuz yoksa katılmıyor musunuz?

(1 = Kesinlikle Katılıyorum, 5 = Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum)

1	Çoğu zaman sosyal medyada ilk defa karşılaştığım bilgi ve haberlere güvenilebileceğini düşünüyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
2	Çoğu zaman sosyal medyada kendim seçip takip ettiğim sayfaların paylaştığı bilgi ve haberlere güvenilebileceğimi düşünüyorum.	1	2	3	4	5

A18. Sosyal medyada gerçekliği çarpıttığına veya tamamen yanlış olduğuna inandığınız haberlere veya bilgilere ne sıklıkla rastlıyorsunuz?

- (1) Hiç / Neredeyse Hiç
- (2) Nadiren
- (3) Bazen
- (4) Sıklıkla
- (5) Her zaman

BÖLÜM E: YANLIŞ BİLGİ PAYLAŞMANIN ALGILANAN SONUÇLARI

A19. Bildiğiniz gibi günlük hayatta sosyal medyada farkında olarak ya da olmadan birçok yanlış bilgiyle karşılaşabiliyoruz. Siz ya da çevrenizdeki insanlar da zaman zaman bu yanlış bilgileri paylaşabiliyor olabilir. Aşağıdaki yanlış bilgi paylaşmanın olası sonuçlarına yönelik ifadelere ne kadar katılıyorsunuz?

(1 = Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum, 5 = Kesinlikle Katılıyorum)

1	İtibarıma veya ilişkilerime zarar verme korkusu, yanlış olabileceğinden şüphelendiğim bilgileri paylaşmamı engelliyor.	1	2	3	4	5
2	Yanlışlıkla internette yanlış bilgi paylaşırsam “bilgisiz” veya “sorumsuz” olarak etiketlenmekten korkuyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
3	Sosyal medyadaki haberlerin insanları siyasi düşünceleri konusunda doğru veya yanlış yönlendirdiğine inanıyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
4	Sosyal medyada kendi ismimi kullanmadan (rumuz, takma isim vb.), potansiyel olarak tartışmalı veya hassas konularda çevrimiçi etkileşimde bulunma konusunda daha rahat hissediyorum.	1	2	3	4	5

BÖLÜM F: YANLIŞ BİLGİ VE YALAN HABERLERE DAİR ALGILAR

A20. Son zamanlarda sıkça gündem olan “yalan haberler” ve sosyal medyada karşılaştığınız bu tarz içerikler hakkında düşündüğünüzde, aşağıdaki ifadelere katılıyor musunuz yoksa katılmıyor musunuz?

(1 = Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum, 5 = Kesinlikle Katılıyorum)

1	Sosyal medyayı kullanırken yalan haberlerle karşılaşma ihtimalinin farkındayım.	1	2	3	4	5
2	Yalan haberler, toplumun güncel konular ve olayların doğruluğu konusunda kafa karışıklığı yaşamasına neden oluyor.	1	2	3	4	5
3	Yalan haberler ve toplum üzerindeki olumsuz etkileri hakkındaki endişeleri anlıyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
4	Yalan haberler ve toplumsal etkileri hakkında yeterli bilgiye sahibim.	1	2	3	4	5
5	Yalan haberler olgusu bende endişe uyandırıyor.	1	2	3	4	5

BÖLÜM G: YANLIŞ BİLGİ PAYLAŞIM DAVRANIŞI

A21. Daha önce sosyal medyada paylaştığınız bir haberin sonradan gerçekliği çarpıttığını veya tamamen yanlış olduğunu öğrendiğiniz oldu mu?

- (1) Evet
- (2) Hayır
- (3) Bilmiyorum / Emin değilim

A22. Eğer cevabınız evetse, paylaştığınız haberin doğru olmadığını fark ettiğinizde ne yaptınız?

- (1) Gönderiyi sildim
- (2) Paylaşımına düzeltme ekledim
- (3) Hiçbir şey yapmadım
- (4) Bilmiyorum