RESEARCH ARTICLE/ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ

"Stop cyberhate speech, e-friendship is possible" project as an awareness study on combating cyber hate speech in Istanbul and Izmir

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Abstract

Cyber hate speech has been increasing rapidly in Turkey, as in the rest of the world, the devastating effects of the cyber hate speech on youth is irrefutable. It has been seen that the rate of cyber hate speech among youth is relatively higher in Istanbul and Izmir. Stop Cyber Hate Speech, E-friendship is possible project aims to inform and raise awareness among youth aged 18-30 from vairous backgrounds about cyber hate speech. The project was implemented in Izmir and Istanbul,with twenty youth from the host community and twenty youth from different backgrounds. Throughout the project, online and in-person trainings focused on cyber hate speech were implemented in these chosen cities. Education workshops from guest speakers along with the interactive activities were part of the training program. A dissemination stage of the project included daily informative instagram posts, online live sessions with experts on cyber hate speech and online workshops to increase the sustainability of the project. The main highlight of the participants feedback is that they feel more secure and aware of the threats related to identification and protection from cyber hate speech. In this article, the details of the project Stop Cyber Hate Speech,E-friendship is possible will be examined in the context of raising awareness and combating cyber hate speech among youth.

Keywords: Cyber Hate Speech, E-friendship , Awareness,Youth, Online

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Hate Speech and Cyber Hate

Systemic problems, political choices and the spread of digitalization and the increase in social tension as a result of these, bring about polarization between immigrant/refugee groups and Turkish society, and even witnessing violent events that are likely to have dangerous and radical consequences from time to time (Özbey, 2022). Deepening poverty, increasing economic depression and unstable situation (inflation, unemployment, etc.), the use of immigration as a political tool and the political parties to determine their own positions through the anti-immigrant/refugee opposition, and the increase in the conscious and/or unconscious use of digital tools bring along certain problems. One of the most important of these is the hostile discourse and expressions in the digital space, which also have the capacity to physically mobilize individuals or groups (Deniz, 2014). Although there is no universally accepted definition of hate speech, the 1997 Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Recommendation on Hate Speech defined hate speech as follows: "Promoting, advocating and disseminating evidence-based discourses such as racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia (Vardal, 2015, page. 135). In addition to the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers definition, the Canadian Court of Human Rights identified 11 indicators for messages containing hate speech. First, hate speech is a powerful threat. Generalization by telling a true story about the target audience of hate speech. Target groups are the elderly, children and vulnerable people. This indicates that the message is destructive. The Turkish Language Association (2020) defines the word hate as wishing someone's evil, unhappiness, disgust.

Hate speech is the expression of hatred and hostility towards a person or a group to which the person belongs, based on characteristics such as race, ethnic identity, religion, belief, sect, color, gender or sexual orientation (Öztekin, 2015). It is stated that prejudices and fears such as xenophobia, homophobia, racism, marginalization and sexism underlie hate speech; In addition, intense feelings of nationalism, intolerance to those who are not like themselves, and intolerance also trigger hatred. The increase in hate speech across media channels necessitated activities in this regard (Mullah and Zainon, 2022). These discourses, which are also expressed as cyber hate, cause polarization and hostility between groups and pose a danger to social cohesion. Cyberhate is hate speech that takes place on the internet. Hate speech can occur intentionally or unintentionally (Yıldız, 2020). The term cyberhate is often used to describe hateful, hurtful or malicious comments that appear in comment sections, forums, blogs, other websites or social media (Vardal, 2015).

Cyber hate refers to hate speech expressed on the Internet or through information and communication technologies, according to EU Kids Online. This hatred includes intolerant hatred, discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of hatred. According to the Additional Protocol on Cybercrime of the Council of Europe, it may contain various types of content, both textual and audiovisual, that express hostile attitudes towards individuals and certain groups of people on the basis of their ethnic or national origin, religion, presumed race or colour. Therefore, cyberhate refers to a form of violence that takes place in the digital environment and has the possibility of transitioning from virtual to physical life. Hate speech consists of two stages. The first step is to use hate speech to humiliate a person or group and make them feel inferior. The second stage is the total material and moral damage caused by this situation.

We may encounter hate speech in different environments. Hate speech reaches large audiences through sites such as forum sites hosting discriminatory groups, news portals containing hate speech, online games, chat rooms, and blogs. Websites containing digital violence and hate speech aim to reach young people in order to influence them (Bulunmaz, 2015). Hate speech is one of the biggest threats to social cohesion and continuity. Especially due to the diversity of the internet such as interaction, diffusion, virtuality, anonymity and multimedia formatting, it causes hate speech to be made more normal, more frequent, easily accessible and productive compared to traditional media (Özbey, 2022).

According to Parekh (2006:214), hate speech has three basic features. The first is the isolation of individuals or groups of people based on certain characteristics. Secondly, it condemns the issue of hate speech as an undesirable quality for the majority. Third, the target group is excluded from normal social relations. When the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombuds Report (2015:13) written by Likestillings-og discriminatingsoumbudet is examined, the concept and characteristics of hate speech emerge. The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombudsman Report (2015:13) reveals the characteristic features of hate speech as follows: "Whatever the reason (race, gender, disability, etc.), hate speech has a lot in common. It often creates negative stereotypes and prejudices. This affects the honor and dignity of individuals and groups. Those who practice hate speech tend to unnecessarily arouse fear, disparage the existence of differences and natural hierarchies, and use exclusionary discourse. Derogatory speech, harassment, and conspiracy theories against individuals and groups are common. In the most extreme cases, hate speech can lead to threatening speech, glorification of violence, incitement to violence and death threats, and in some cases a combination of violence and murder.'' Hate speech is one of the forms of discrimination that remains on the agenda of societies with situations such as ethnic cleansing, genocide, forced migration or systematic sexual violence.

Since hate speech and hate crimes are a devastating problem for almost every society in the world, the international community and organizations are trying to create binding decisions and policies in this regard. National resolutions on hate speech and definitions of prohibitions vary from society to society. The lack of a clear definition of the term and the absence of social media scrutiny means that hate speech should be carefully examined (Bulunmaz2015, p. 80).

There are three different actors in cyber hate, namely perpetrator, victim and spectator, but it is possible for a person to be both a victim and a perpetrator due to the speed and fluidity of the digital environment (Öztekin, 2015). individuals and groups that practice hate speech see themselves as superior, freer and stronger than other groups; They also claim that there is a hierarchy among them.

The main tools in the emergence of hate speech are as follows; stigma, stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination. Cyber hate speech can occur with the use of only one of these tools, or with the simultaneous use of more than one. (Binark and Bayraktutan, 2013: 86).

There are some factors that affect the behavior of people in the virtual environment (Varış and Avşar, 2022). These factors are: anonymity, invisibility, parsing and fast response. These factors are in a position to trigger cyberhate.

Anonymity allows users to "differentiate/identify themselves from their real-life personal lifestyles and identities in their behavior in virtual environments", in this case, the person in action can act without thinking because it is difficult to disclose (Kalav and Fırat, 2017).

Invisibility pushes the opponent to objectify by separating them from the physical context due to the physical removal of the aggressors from the victims (Özdemir, 2021). In this case, the aggressor is not seeing how negatively the behavior and attitudes of the other person are affected, just being aware of the signals is not enough to stop the aggressive behavior. This triggers behaviors that can result in hatred.

Segregation, users can distinguish between virtual and real environments, and different personalities can form identities. As technology becomes a part of our lives and permeates our daily practices, there is a constant transition between online (perceived as unreal) and offline (realistic) interactions (Castaño-Pulgarín et al., 2021). We use completely different identities in the virtual environment, but we can assume completely different identities in the real environment.

The media landscape has changed and websites, online content and social media act as primary broadcast, "second screens" via television and can be used by fans simultaneously (Gagliardone et al., 2015). This can lead to posts that exhibit automatic bias and instant stereotyping, while derogatory language is used without awareness and thought.

Especially in a period when anonymity can be easily achieved without considering the problems it may cause, being a victim and a perpetrator can be instantaneous. Because in the online world, a place of global relations characterized by the dilution of space-time constraints, anyone with online access can present their ideas, contribute to the dialogue and present their knowledge and perceptions for the formation of modern culture or "cyberculture". These features of the worldwide web have fostered a (non-restrictive) understanding of the phenomenon of cyberhate to emerge (Assimakopoulos et al. 2017).

Cyberhate consists of five stages (Castaño-Pulgarín et al., 2021):

1.Impact: This is the stage where hate speech begins. Making a statement about an event that happened or didn't happen.

2.Mediation: This is the stage where hate speech becomes widespread. At this stage, there is an increase in content production.

3.Reaction: This is the stage where the reaction against hate speech is seen.

4.End: Ending hate speech.

5.Restarting: After the end of the hate speech, it may come up again in the short-long term.

1.2. Types of Hate Speech

Due to the increasing use of social media, many types of hate have started to appear on online platforms. Some of the types of hate speech frequently encountered on social media are posts targeting minorities, women, children, immigrants and people with disabilities. Binark et al. (2012), on the other hand, consider hate speech under 6 main categories.

1.2.1. Political Online Hate: Discourse that targets a particular political ideology and its supporters. In some cases, they target entire ideologies, one or a few political parties, or much smaller groups (Wich et al., 2020).

1.2.2. Online Hatred Against Women: Basically, they are discourses that contain sexist language and derogatory statements about the status of women (Kennedy et al., 2020).

1.2.3. Ethnicity and Racism-Based Online Hate Speech: It is a type of discourse directed against ethnic identity, race and color in a society where nationalism is exaggerated. It is seen as the concept of "us" and "others", especially in countries that accept immigrants (Rodriguez and Saynova, 2020).

1.2.4. Online Hate Speech Based on Sexual Orientation: The exclusion, mocking and suppression of LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex) people in society because of their sexual orientation is hate speech based on their sexual identity (Shruthi, 2020).

1.2.5. Online Faith and Sectarian Hate Speech: It is hate speech that includes mutual insults and discussions about religion and sect.

1.2.6. Online Hate Speech Based on Disabilities, Children and Various Diseases: It is the discourse made for people with physical or mental disabilities or certain diseases (Miok et al., 2019). People who make hate speech try to provide power satisfaction by implying that there is a hierarchy among them because they see the person in front of them as weak and powerless. In addition, the use of various nicknames and sarcastic expressions is one of the factors that lead to increased hatred (Sherry, 2019).

1.3. Cyber Hate Behaviour in Society

It aims to humiliate, dictate that it is weak and defenseless, to try to exclude and separate from society by implying that it harms public health with unfounded accusations against the person(s) (Varış and Avşar,2022).

A large proportion of people who engage in cyber hate behavior have low self-esteem, social anxiety and family conflicts. Many of the people who engage in cyber hate behavior have been exposed to hate behavior before. That is, they have experienced cyberhate behavior; The person who is affected by the behavior and feels powerless thinks that he is strong against someone else by applying the cyberhate behavior to prove that he is strong. The fact that the risk of being caught in the virtual environment is less, the lack of face-to-face communication with the victim, anonymity, and the ability to perform

aggressive behaviors that cannot be applied in real life in the virtual environment help the perpetrators to take action to implement cyber-hate behaviors.

People who are victims of cyber hate may exhibit behaviors such as anger after using technological devices, overprotective behaviors about their digital lives, isolation from their social environment, low performance in fulfilling their job responsibilities if they are a student or an academic employee, constantly exhibiting aggressive, nervous and agitated behaviors, disturbances in sleep and nutrition patterns, mental problems, avoiding or addiction to technological devices (Taş, 2017).

1.4. Psychological effects of cyber hate speech

People who are victims of cyber hate may exhibit behaviors such as anger after using technological devices, overprotective behaviors about their digital lives, isolation from their social environment, low performance in fulfilling their job responsibilities if they are a student or an academic employee, constantly exhibiting aggressive, nervous and agitated behaviors, disturbances in sleep and nutrition patterns, mental problems, avoiding or addiction to technological devices (Taş, 2017).

Even if the cyber hate behavior occurs in cyberspace, a person may feel attacked even at home. Cyber hate behavior can have individual, social/societal, physical and psychological effects on the victim (Taş, 2017). Those effects are listed as following:

Individual Effects: Individuals sharing their own information without realizing it causes them to experience financial or moral problems in the internet environment (Kuş, 2016).

Social Effects: Cyber hate behavior mostly targets the dignity of individuals in society (Varış and Avşar, 2022).

1.5. Determinants Factors of Cyber Hate Speech in Turkey

Hate speech incites violence and intolerance. The devastating effect of hatred is sadly nothing new. A study done by Cöltekin (2020) highlights the common usage of offensive language in social media platforms in Turkey. Cöltekin's study reveals that %19 of tweets contain offensive language.

On the other hand, the ability of mass media to affect the culture,communication and the dynamics of the society is irrefutable.Media plays a critical role in shaping public opinions and therefore reframe the image of refugees in public's opinion .

Turkish media's approach to foreigners and presentation of foreigners in the media might cause a conceptual change and generalization about foreigners in public's mind (Sunata & Yıldız,2018). Similarly,study done by Bozdag (2019) highlights that social media becomes a key communication space where citizens voice their opinions. According to findings, social media contributes to the normalization of hatred and discrimination against refugees in Turkey. Additionally, social media also enables more implicit forms of discrimination through "rationalized" arguments that are used to justify discrimination and to increase disinformation (Bozdag,2019).

1.6. Rationale of the Project

Council of Europe Commission Against Racism states that immigrants in France, Blacks in France and the Netherlands, Turks and Moroccans in the Netherlands, Russians in Latvia, Roma and Romanians in Italy are the focus of cyberhate (EC, 2015). Today, there is an increasing amount of hate speech towards Afghans and Syrians, and towards immigrants and refugees in general. The discriminatory discourses expressed on digital platforms, the claim that they are the main responsible for economic problems, the discourses produced by different actors on the political plane to set the agenda and take a political position have the risk of activating them cumulatively, if not individually. Attacks against Syrian in Altındağ district of Ankara can be shown as an example of this (Washington Post,2022).

The risk of mobilizing people in physical life, especially in digital environments, blended with hate speech, is an important issue that needs to be addressed. For this reason, the subject that the project wants to address is cyberhate, its types,

stages and actors, and methods of combating and coping with it.

In this way, it may be possible to contribute to the existence of a cyber culture that is free of hate, and it may be possible to minimize the dangerous possibilities for refugees and immigrants that pose the risk of being physically mobilized. This is also a contribution to the "development of a culture of peace and non-violence" stated in the 7th sub-article of Quality Education, which is the 4th Title of the Sustainable Development Goals, and moreover, the fact that the project includes people from different backgrounds is also a part of 10.2 of the same objectives. It is also compatible with the sentence "By 2030, empowering everyone regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, economic or other status".

1.7. Purpose and Objectives of the Project

The aim of the E-Friendship is Possible Project; To inform 40 young people between the ages of 18-30 about the definition, stages and actors of cyberhate,and to raise awareness about combating cyberhate.

In this context, the objectives of the project are;

Objective 1 To raise the awareness of 40 young people by making them aware of what cyber hate is, its stages and its actors

Objective 2 To contribute to increasing the capacity of 40 young people to fight against cyber hate by learning methods of combating cyber hate

Objective 3 To contribute to the spread of hate-free cyber culture among young people from different backgrounds in general through dissemination activities

To summarize, this project aims to make 40 young people (gender, refugee/citizen, etc.) in Istanbul and Izmir aware of what cyber hate is and to increase their capacity to combat cyber hate.

2. PROJECT'S METHOD

With the Stop Cyber Hate project , we wanted to draw attention to the issue of cyber hate speech, which has become widespread among young

people today and causes various short and long-term problems as well as discrimination and grouping among youth .

In the online informative workshops,interactive activities held within the scope of the project,interview technique is used to collect data in the question-answer sessions to receive feedback. Besides, in the face-to-face part of the program, the written and verbal feedback method is used along with the interview technique. The setting of the project is Izmir and Istanbul,two cities where the rates of cyber hate speech are relatively high . Additionally, zoom as an online meeting platform is used during the implementation stage. In total, feedback sessions conducted in two online trainings, and two face-to-face feedback sessions were held. The number of participants are listed as the following: 29 participants interviewed during trainings in Izmir and Istanbul , 43 participants during trainings in Istanbul. Semi structured interview forms were used in the interviews.The open-ended questions asked to interviewees are:

1. What are your thoughts on addressing the factors that cause cyber hate speech ?

2. What are your fears and concerns on cyber hate speech?

3.What are the key factors to combat cyber hate speech?

2.1. Description of the Project Activities

In the project activities determination stage, the main focus was on activities for young people between 18-30 from different backgrounds in order to contribute to the existence of a cyber culture free from hate. For this reason,importance and priority has been given to regular participation of youth to both online and in-person activities to achieve projects' goals and objectives. Additionally, the clarity and accuracy of the terms and explanations during activites were paid attention throughout the project.

Underlining the basic information about cyber hate speech and the steps that can be taken in the fight against cyber hate speech,it is possible with the activities of this project to raise awareness of

the youth in a way that they can cleary distinguish the cyber hate speech and take the necessary precautions against cyber hate speech.Before the implementation of the activities, the project team held meetings with the necessary experts on the subject of cyber hate speech and received online training on youth-oriented social project planning and implementation provided by the funding organization .

Although the online and face-to-face program structure of Stop Cyber Hate project is the same in both cities, the difficulty levels of the activities in the program were assessed according to the demographic characteristics of the participant group.The necessary adaptations were made in the consultation with the experts of the subject.In addition,easy to understand and clear explanations were used in the activities so that the chosen activities could be easily understood by foreign participants.Translator support was received during the online and in-person programs. It was prioritized to select topics which would be interesting and memorable for young people and they would enjoy expressing their views on the subject. In addition to information based interactive activities,it was tried to create discussion environments where young people can freely express their views,and to choose activities where they can show their creativity and various talents.Activities that allow the participants to work together as a team and get the chance to get to know each other by breaking the prejudices that may exist were preferred for team work.

Throughout the project, awareness-raising activities were carried out on information about cyber hate speech and effective methods to combat cyber hate speech.

1. Online Training (Izmir and Istanbul)

2. In-person Training (Izmir and Istanbul)

3. Dissemination Stage

2.2. Online Training (Izmir and Istanbul)

On the first online training for a group in Izmir, after the brief program and project team introduction, participants get to know each other with a warm-up session . Following that, an information session on the Cyber Threat was held. On the second day of the online training, we held sessions on the stages and actors of cyberhate. Then, the effect of information disorder and cyberhate were discussed with a short lecture by a lawyer who is an expert in regulation cyber security as a guest lecturer .Afterwards, another guest speaker, a PhD expert on immigration , informed the group about what steps one should follow when he/she is a victim of cyberhate ,and additionally, an Q &A session was held .In the final part of the session was focused on the psychological dimensions of cyberhate and methods of combating cyberhate. Feedback sessions were held at the end of each training day. The same online training program was followed in both cities.

As a result of online trainings,it is aimed that youth have basic information about cyber hate speech. The participants stated that they feel more secured about using online social platforms and will pay more attention to their reactions to cyber hate speech.

The main themes of online trainings were:

•The definition of Cyber Hate Speech

•The stages of Cyber Hate Speech

•The actors of Cyber Hate Speech

•Disinformation

•Psychological and Legal Aspects of Cyber Hate Speech

•Alternative Methods to Combat Cyber Hate Speech

2.3. In-person Training (Izmir and Istanbul)

An interactive activity program has been planned in order to consolidate the knowledge learned in these training workshops.

On the first day of the in-person training, after the opening with the introductory speech of a guest speaker, a professor who is expert in child rights ,and ice breaker game is conducted.The first activity of the program was the expectation-fear-contribution activity.After completion of coffee break, a short energizer was completed. The pros and cons of digitalization with the deba-

te event,and the types,stages,and actors of cyber hate with the News Center event.As a part of the news center event, a guest speaker ,a PhD expert on immigration, joined the group and informed participants about the speed and consequences of the disinformation as a cybersecurity thread. Following that, Boxes We Share game was played. The game aims to create awareness about discrimination and hate speech while encouraging participants to empathize with each other. On the second of the training , the letter activity is implemented to have a reflection moment by asking participants to write a letter which contains their cyber hate speech experiences if there is any or their reflections about this current issue. Following that, rating game is played to raise awareness on the devastating effect of cyber hate speech. The Tree game and Tabu game aim to support participants' learning process and help them to get familiar with the terminology related to cyber hate speech. Last training of the day, aquarium, is a mindfulness based activity to relax and calm down the mind, was practiced.

On the final day of in-person training, starting the day with an energizer activity, change the sentences and fill in the blanks activity is completed to practice what participants learned in the program. In these game, participants were asked to complete the missing part of the sentences with the information about cyber hate speech terminology while testing their knowledge on cyber hate speech. Following that, participants challenged their imagination and knowledge on alternative methods to combat cyber hate speech with the future projection activity. Before finalizing the program with an expectation-fear-contribution activity to receive feedback , participants were encouraged to use their imagination as a tool for write a story about combatting cyber hate speech with Story telling activity.

With the interactive activities that are part of the face-to-face program, it is ensured that the participants got to know each other,and thus necessary steps were taken to create an environment based on mutual respect and understanding among the youth. In addition to these,the participants are encouraged to share the information they gained during the project with their envi-

ronment in order to ensure the sustainability of the project.

The list of in-person activities:

a)Information Based

• Tabu

• Fill the Blank

• Change the sentence

b)Team Work

• Boxes We Share

• News Center Event

c) Creativity

• Storytelling

• Letter

• Aquarium

d)Feedback

• Expectation-Fear-Contribution

• Discussion

It is important to note that this list is classified according to the main purpose of the acitivities. However,an acitivity can serve multiple purposes.To give an example,although storytelling mainly reveals the creativity of the participants,it also develops the ability of the participants to use the concepts they learned about cyber hate speech during the online training phase of the project.

2.4. Dissemination Stage

For the project's dissemination,in total, two live instagram chats were held with experts working on cyber hate speech, and two online live sessions on methods of combating cyber hate speech. In addition,social media posts for the purpose of informing and raising awareness about cyber hate speech were made on daily basis. It was aimed to raise awareness about the negative effects of cyber hate speech,which has increased especially among young people,on society and the necessity of combating cyber hate speech. The main purpose of the dissemination stage is

to increase the sustainability of the project by actively engaging with participants through online platforms and social media.

3. RESULT

3.1. Descriptive Analyzes

The first field study of the project was carried out in Izmir. 29 participants participated in the activities. In terms of gender, participants in the Izmir district consists of 16 women and 4 men. The nationality of participants can be classified as 13 Turkish and 16 foreign nationals. The second step of the project was carried out in Istanbul. Activities included 43 participants. Participants in the Istanbul district were 40 women and 3 men. Among those, 24 of them were Turkish and 19 of them were foreign nationals.

The answers given to the question "Have you experienced cyberhate yourself or around you at some point in your life?" directed to participants (n=72) are as follows: 45 participants stated that they have been exposed to cyberhate (%62,5), 7 participants witnessed cyberhate (%9,72) 20 participants have not experienced cyberhate either in myself or in my environment (%27,7). 52 (%72,2) of participants have experienced cyberhate at some point in their lives.

The answers given to the question "What are your attitudes and actions towards combating cyber hate?" directed to the participants (n=72); 40 participants do not want to combat against cyberhate (%55,5), 32 participants want to combat against cyberhate (%44,4). When the answers of 32 participants who think they can combat cyber hate; 4 of them 'prefer to initiate a legal process' (%12,5), 8 of them stated that 'will follow the complaint procedures in social media applications (%25), and 20 of them 'will combat by blocking the person who makes hate speech' (%62,5).

The expressions of our participants who said they do not want to combat cyber hate (n=40) were examined. It has been determined that the basis of the thoughts of not choosing to combat is pessimism.

The answers obtained from some of the interviewees regarding the question are as follows:

"Cyberhate will always exist. I don't want to deal with complaining." (Istanbul)

"Cyberhate will not end. We will always experience this." (İzmir)

"People will always want to do harm, this has become normal now." (İzmir)

Table 1. Education and Participant Information

Date	Name and Purpose	Participant (n=103)		Nationality	
		W	M	T	F
Online 21.07.22- 23.07.22 Face-to-Face 27.07.22 29.007.22	*Stop Cyber Hate* Project Trianing (Online and face to face) -Izmir province	25	4	13	16
14.08.22- 16.08.22 19.08.22- 21.08.22	*Stop Cyber Hate* Project Training (Online and face to face) -Istanbul province	40	3	24	19
	Total	65	7	37	35
	Total	72			

W:Women, M:Men, F:Foreigner, T:Turkish

"Prejudices cannot be broken. That's why there will always be hate speech." (İzmir)

"Hate speech will continue as long as there is discrimination" (İstanbul)

"People like that will always do this, I just ignore it. I don't deal with complaints.'' (İstanbul)

3.2. Open-Ended Questions Examination

Open-ended questions were asked to our participants about the cyber hate experiences they have been exposed to and witnessed online.

Based on the data obtained, the questioned topics regarding cyber hate victimization were collected. (The answers of the foreign participants were analyzed in the presence of an translator .) These headings are:

1. Attitudes and thoughts of the participants towards the factors that cause cyberhate.

2. Participants' fears and concerns about cyberhate.

3. Attitudes and thoughts of the participants in the combat against cyberhate.

3.2.1. Attitudes and Thoughts of the Participants Towards the Factors that Cause Cyberhate.

The main topics that lead individuals to cyberhate are mass movements, media, social media practices and abuses, negative/wrong attitudes of TV programs and news organs, disinformation, malenformation, and lack of empathy of individuals.

Cyberhate against the masses has stages of beginning, development, rise and fall. Individual factors are important in the spread of cyberhate. Mass cyberhate can be took under control by preventing the spread of misinformation with the awareness of individuals. People from all walks of life should support this combat whole-

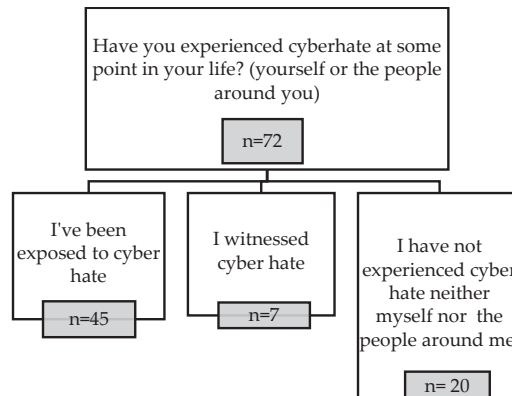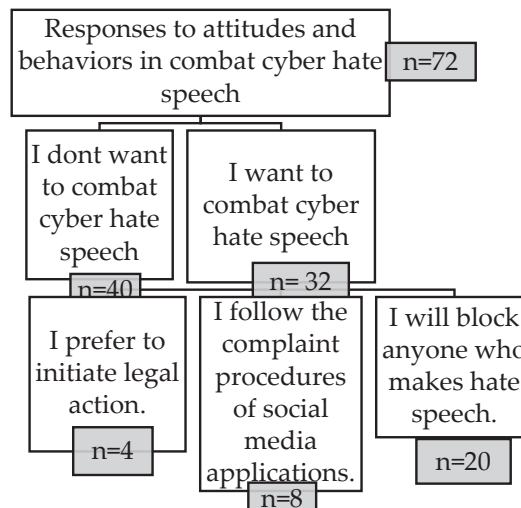**Table 2.** Responses of the Participants on their Experıences of 'Cyber Hate Speech'

Table 3. Responses of Participants on Coping With Cyberhate, Attitudes and Behaviors

heartedly and selflessly. This seems to be possible with the spreading of awareness studies.

The answers obtained from some of the interviewees regarding the question are as follows:

"Sometimes the news is fake. False news is spreading and people can be insulted because of this" (İzmir Province)

"The use of anonymous accounts by people who comment on social media and the inability to know who they are" (Istanbul Province)

"Any negative behavior of one person is reflected on everyone. For example, when a Syrian citizen does something bad, it is reflected on all Syrians." (İzmir Province)

"The media exaggerates some things. It affects people negatively." (İzmir Province)

"Not everyone in a nation discriminates. There are good people and bad people in every society." (İzmir Province)

"Social media is very different from real life. There was both support and hate speech." (İzmir Province)

3.2.2. Participants' Fears and Concerns About Cyberhate

When the answers of the participants are examined, it is seen that they have different dimensions of fear and anxiety. These;

• That cyber hate cannot be controlled,

• That they may be victims,

• For those who witness cyber hate

• To protect the victim

• They not only expressed their fears and concerns about their grievances, but also expressed that they were concerned about whether their actions included an aggressive attitude.

The answers obtained from some of the interviewees regarding the question are as follows:

"Not being able to express my beliefs comfortably." (İzmir Province)

"To be discriminated against." (İzmir Province)

"The uncontrollability of cyber hate scares me." (İzmir Province)

"There is fear of discrimination. There is discrimination not only in relations with Turks, but also between Sudan, Afghanistan and Syria." (İzmir Province)

"Such statements have been around for a long time. Prejudices have increased. I feel it's too late to prevent this. This worries me." (İzmir Province)

The combat against cyberhate goes beyond individualism. We have no idea how to solve it. This situation worries me." (İzmir Province)

"Exposure to cyber hate worries me" (Istanbul Province)

"I am worried about not being able to cope when I am cyberhated" (Istanbul Province)

"Stealing of my shared photos and content" (Istanbul Province)

"Prejudices do not change" (Istanbul Province)

"I fear that cyberhate is perpetrated by more than one person." (Istanbul Province)

"I am worried that cyber hate is getting out of control." (Istanbul Province)

"I'm worried about hurting someone when I'm talking on social media. Being involved in cyberhate without knowing it scares me" (İzmir Province)

"I am worried about hurting someone unintentionally and using the wrong word while exchanging ideas" (İzmir Province)

"Normalization of cyber hate worries me" (İzmir Province)

"My fear is that the new generation will learn about discrimination." (İzmir Province)

3.2.3. Attitudes And Thoughts Of The Participants In The Combat Against Cyberhate

The basis of an individual's self-protection against any aggression comes from having knowledge of the situation he/she is exposed to. The high level of awareness of the individual enables her/him to realize the aggressive atittude she is exposed to,analyze the situation and take action.

With the Stop Cyber Hate project, it is aimed to make people aware of what cyber hate is. The first steps have been taken to cope with cyberhate by developing educational content to increase the capacity of individuals to cope with cyberhate.

These steps can be summarized as "personal threat assessment and minimizing the damage in case of being a victim of cybercriminals". Based on this purpose, the strategies used by the participants in coping were examined.

Strategies that used to combat cyber hate speech by participants are demonstrated in the Table 2.

The answers obtained from some of the interviewees regarding the question are as follows:

"I want to spread what I know about cyber hate" (Istanbul Province)

"Private photos and private conversations should not be sent to anyone else" (Istanbul Province)

"When my friends are exposed to or practice cyberhate, I want them to stay away from this type of behavior" (Istanbul Province)

"As someone who experiences cyberhate, it is important to feel that I am not alone" (Istanbul Province)

"We can cope with being open to listening to new ideas" (İzmir Province)

"We must show that we are together (different nations) against cyber-hatred" (İzmir Province)

4. DISCUSSION

In this study, the impact of the Stop Cyberhate project on 72 young people aged 18-30 to raise awareness and learn alternative methods to combat cyber hate speech is investigated. The socio-demographic characteristics of participants, participants' thoughts on determinants factors of cyber hate speech,and key factors to combat cyber hate speech according to participants are investigated. Responses of participants on coping with cyberhate,attitudes and behaviours, participants' fears an concerns about cyberhate and attitudes & thoughts of participants in combat against cyber hate speech is analyzed. Detection of cyber hate speech in online platforms,

acknowledge the stages of cyber hate speech and its actors, psychological effects of cyber hate speech and regulation of cyber hate speech and enforcement were found to be important factors in combatting cyber hate speech.

One of the major negative effects of cyber hate speech is the devastating psychological consequences of cyber hate speech. According to Obermaier and Schumck (2022), significant amount of adolescents and young adults are targeted by online hate speech.Therefore, many of them effected by cyber hate speech. Many of youth experience being insulted online due to their gender,-migration background,religion,or commitment to various communities. Stop Cyber Hate Project findings indicate that participants exposed different forms of cyber hate speech and utilised different methods to combat cyber hate speech and to minimize the negative consequences of cyberhate. Participants highlighted the important role of social support provided by friends and family as a part of the coping strategy with cyberhate speech. Similarly, Obermaier and Schmuck (2022) emphasize the importance of social support from peers and its impact on youth's exposure to online hate speech.

Additionally, study done by Wachs et al. (2022) shows that victims of cyber hate speech were less likely to report depressive symptoms when they reported average or high level of resiliency. Similarly, Saha et al. (2020) showed that the university students who have a high level of endurance tend to be less reactive to challenges that comes along with cyberhate. Main factors that increase the resiliency can be listed as social competence,person competence, structured style, social resources and family cohesion (Wachs et al.,2022).

Results of Stop Cyber hate speech project reveals that young people from different backgrounds in Turkey were exposed to cyber hate speech at various stages of their lives. Cyber hate speech is starting to become a normal part of young people's daily life. Regardless of their gender,-social status,ethnicity and religious background, project participants highlighted their fear to encounter a cyber hate speech. Cyber hate speech undermines individuals' well being. The societal and pscyhological damage is even more impact

on youths who are in the stage of forming their identity.

Besides its individual damage, online cyber hate speech ,it also leads to social tension and disorder beyond cyberspace. Overt discriminatory online speech would possibly lead into more structural discrimination (i.e. exclusion from educational and employment opportunities), which could then lead into community-based acts of physical violence.

There should be "public campaigns to raise awareness among population that online hate speech. Another recommendation by participants was that government institutions and representatives lead others by example by refraining from making hateful or discriminatory remarks on or off social media. They also suggested that policy and lawmakers clearly define what hate speech means and what the legislations and boundaries are and that social media providers as well as users are held responsible for the issue.

The results of our project highlight that there is an urgent need for the development of intervention programs and the relevance of focusing on internal and external developmental assets to mitigate the negative outcomes for victims of online hate speech.

5. CONCLUSION & SUGGESTION

Hostile,rhetoric expressions in digital space, which also has the capacity to physically mobilize individuals or groups,continue to exert their influence in Turkey as it does all over the world. These discourses, which are also expressed as a cyber hate speech ,cause polarization and hostility between groups and pose a danger to social cohesion. Therefore, there is a growing need for projects that will provide solutions to this problem,which poses a threat to social cohesion.

Additionally, The negative effects of cyber hate speech on young people have started to show themselves clearly in society. One of the biggest indicators of this is the grouping among youth.

Stop Cyberhate project focused on raise awareness and the capacity development of youth from refugee and host community aged 18-30

in Izmir and Istanbul. The aim of the project is to raise attention to the cyber hate speech and its harmful effects on youth while providing capacity development workshop sessions to combat cyber hate speech as a form of cyber violence and provide a non-judgemental space for youth to share their experiences and build a strong connection to form a supportive community.

The most important step to be taken to combat cyber hate speech is to be able to detect cyber hate speech and to raise awareness as well as take the necessary measures in a timely manner in order to be protective from its destructive impact . With this awareness, Stop Cyberhate Project implemented its both online and in-person activities in the cities of Istanbul and İzmir in Turkey. During the project, it was ensured that young people from various backgrounds living in Istanbul and Izmir were brought together to raise awareness about creating a cyber environment free from cyberhate.

As a result of the project, the following suggestions can be made for its solution:

Participants of Stop Cyberhate project stated that they have developed various temporary methods to combat cyberhate speech,but these methods are effective up to a certain point.Youth should be provided with more information resources to combat cyberhate.

• More control should be provided to combat the widespread disinformation on the internet, which is considered as one of the causes of cyber hate speech

• The accessibility and effectiveness of the authorized institutions where youth who either target or witness of cyber hate speech can submit their complaints when he/she faced with cyber hate speech should be increased.

• The psycho-social support resources for victims of cyber hate speech should increase.

• There is a need for non-judgemental social platforms where youth can share their experiences as online platform users.

• Parents often lack knowledge on how to protect children from cyber hate speech when children

are exposed to or use cyber hate speech as a violation tool .They also should be more informed about communicating with their children who has either been a perpetrator or targets of cyberhate.

• Although cyberhate speech seems to be only contain words, its short-term and long-term effects,especially on the well-being of the person,are seen in individuals.For this reason,the general public ,especially the youth,who are the most active group in the cyber environment,should be made aware of dealing with cyber hate speech.

• Various regulations on communication on social media platforms,especially in the use of social media,should be increased.

• Additionally,the role of the media in forming the point of view about foreigners is undeniable. Unfortunately, the use of certain forms of expressions in news increases with the uncontrol dissemination of the news,and creates an environment for the spread of the hate speech.For this reason,it is necessary to increase the control of the language used during the editing and dissemination of news sources in order to reduce cyberhate speech against foreigners.

• It is necessary to take steps to create an environment free from cyberhate where youth from different backgrounds can come together and support each other .

The Stop Cyberhate Project has reached a number of participants (n=72) that will almost twice the number of target participants (n=40).

It has been shown that the Stop Cyberhate project has achieved the expected outcomes in Istanbul and Izmir.However, considering cyber environment where supervision is limited and online access to platforms is possible by youth at any time,it will be beneficial to ensure the sustainability fo similar projects to draw attention to the issue when necessary instead of one-time projects. Participants indicated their content to be part of this project while highlighting the need for similar projects which focuses on combating cyberhate speech and capacity development for youth in Turkey.

6. LIMITATIONS

The findings of this study is subject to some limitations. First of all, the limitation of the study, the results merely based on the sampling of projects' participants. Because, adolescents and young adults who does not belong to any of the ethnicity which is not included in the project's sampling group might also be confronted with cyber hate speech, subsequent studies need representative samples.

Secondly,another limitation of the study is the unequal gender distribution of participants. In total, %9,7 of the participants were male whereas %90,3 of the participants were female. The main reason for that is many foreigners male were considered as bread winner of the family therefore, they were required to work during the time period which is the same time as project implementation period.

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