

An analysis of social media content shared by right-wing extremist groups in the United States, the Great Britain and Australia

ABD, Büyük Britanya ve Avustralya'daki aşırı sağcı grupların sosyal medya paylaşımlarının içerik analizi

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Abstract

The extreme right movements have increasingly appeared on social media, especially on Twitter and Facebook, coinciding with the 2019 New Zealand attack, the 2019 El Paso incident, and Britain's exit from the European Union in 2020. This study examines the content and the form of extreme right-wing activities on Facebook and Twitter to promote their ideologies. A qualitative content analysis was conducted on posts shared by extreme-right groups on public Facebook and Twitter accounts in Great Britain, the United States and Australia. The sample spans from March 15, 2019 to February 5, 2020. The posts were coded according to a coding instrument developed based on the existing literature spreading extremist ideologies on social media. The coding instrument consisted of categories and subcategories such as 'the protection of western values', 'anti-LGBT activism', 'anti-feminism', 'anti-Islam', 'anti-immigrant sentiments', 'fostering the white race', and 'anti-elitist populism'. Findings suggest that the most prevalent extremist ideologies on Facebook and Twitter posts were 'anti-elitist populism' and 'the protection of western values'. Also, extremist groups heavily shared posts that combined texts and images to spread their ideologies on social media.

Keywords: Twitter, Facebook, Right Extremist Groups, Content Analysis

Öz

Aşırı sağ hareketler, özellikle Facebook ve Twitter olmak üzere sosyal medya platformlarında, aktif bir şekilde varlık göstermeye başlamıştır. Bu varlık 2019 Yeni Zelanda saldırısı, 2019 El Paso olayı ve İngiltere'nin 2020'de Avrupa Birliği'nden çıkması gibi olaylarla aynı zamana denk düşer. Bu araştırma, aşırı sağ grupların ideolojilerini yaymak için Facebook ve Twitter platformlarındaki paylaşımlarını içerik ve biçim yönlerinden incelemektedir. ABD, Avustralya ve İngiltere'deki aşırı sağ grupların 15 Mart 2019-5 Şubat 2020 tarihleri arasında Facebook ve Twitter'da kamuya açık gruplarda ve hesaplarda yaptıkları paylaşımlar nitel bir içerik analizine tabi tutulmuştur. Kodlama cetveli, aşırı sağ grupların sosyal

medya kullanımları üzerine yapılmış akademik çalışmaları temel alınarak oluşturulmuştur ve ana ideoloji kategorileri ile bunların alt kategorileri belirlenmiştir. Facebook ve Twitter'da aşırı sağ grupların yaptığı paylaşımlarda en yaygın aşırı sağ ideolojilerin 'anti-elitist popülizm' ve 'Batı değerlerinin korunması' olduğu saptanmıştır. Ayrıca, bu

grupların ideolojilerini geniş kitlelere yaymak amacıyla sosyal medyada görseller ve metinlerin birlikte bulunduğu paylaşımlar yaptıkları ortaya konulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Facebook, Twitter, Aşırı Sağcı Gruplar, İdeoloji, İçerik Analizi

Introduction

Social media platforms have significantly influenced the concepts of freedom of publication, expression, democratic thought, human rights, and the political, social, and commercial ideas published. However, some groups have exploited these platforms, taking advantage of their global reach without the need for significant resources or technical expertise. Moreover, these platforms have carried out an unlimited flow of information heavily used by right-wing extremist groups to spread their ideas and recruit youth to carry out terrorist operations (Correra, 2019).

Extremist groups have fed violence, hatred, rumors, and psychological warfare and misled public opinion through social media platforms. They have created groups and individuals working to produce and exchange information among a broad segment of the public, intending to mobilize the youth to carry out extremist ideas and encourage them to commit terrorist acts and aggressive behaviors. These activities have resulted in the loss of lives and destroyed the infrastructure of secure and stable societies (Hassan, 2019).

Recent incidents such as the extreme-right attacks in New Zealand in 2019, Britain in 2017, France in 2015, the US in 2019, and Norway in 2011, can be shown as evidence of the terrorism of extremist right ideologies, whether against immigrants, Muslims or minority ethnicities (Makhlouf, 2019). The New Zealand terrorist attack points out the role of terrorists using social media to spread extremist content and also the mechanism these platforms use to monitor the content which has provided a service to them to complete their operations against the security and safety of civilized people and societies.

The HOPE not Hate's (2017) report confirmed a rise in the followers of anti-Muslim activists in the United States and the United Kingdom on social media, especially on

Twitter, making it a strategic location for the extreme right in communicating and disseminating information, in a continuous movement between Europe and the United States.

The extreme right tends towards conservative religious traditions, defending their bias against minorities and building an ethnic society based on white racial politics in the US, linking to the variables of cultural, religious, and national diversity, and focusing on building a United States national and cultural identity by focusing on the unifying theme of the race (Gallaher, 2020).

Benafi (2017) states that some political scientists argue that far-right extremism represents Nazism and fascism or an ideology but “political block” is the closest explanation, which unifies different extremist movements.

The study implies the concept of the ‘extreme right’ as formulated by Richard Spence, who called for the ethnic cleansing of the United States (Ford, 2017), defining it as a white national movement based on hating women, ending immigration, hostility towards Muslims, and awakening the policy of national identity. The characteristics are excessive nationalism and rejecting all forms of regional integration under the pretext of protecting national sovereignty (Benafi, 2017). It is a return to a past time in which there was no diversity, and the white man’s culture, strength, and control were the reality that no one doubted (Asmar, 2019). Lyons (2017) believes that the extreme right focuses on ending the feminist movement and re-implementing men’s dominance over women via the Internet.

Much research has suggested that the Internet and social media platforms have been influential in terrorist organizations planning their attacks involving Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube as fertile grounds (Knaus, 2019) attracting the users of conspiracy theories and extreme right propaganda via their algorithms. The extreme right groups are taking advantage of the Internet in America and Europe to organize and mobilize political campaigns attacking politicians opposed to the ideas of extremism, such as parties embracing democratic ideals and multiculturalism (Caiani & Parenti, 2013, p. 12).

In the studies of Rothenberger (2012), we found that terrorists have a good strategic communication policy because they can manage communication between terrorist organizations and individuals. Bertram’s (2016) research reveals the prominent strategic

aspects of Twitter and Facebook in how terrorist organizations work, and their reliance on effective communication, feedback from the 'public response' and to spread fear among the masses, given individuals' widespread use of these platforms.

Reposting or retweeting is one of the most successful strategies for increasing the followers of extreme right-wing parties on social media networks. For example, Donald Trump's strategy of retweeting the deputy leader of the Britain First group made it one of the most successful groups on social media. This made the group have many followers, far superior to the Labor Party and the Conservatives. On the other hand, an analysis conducted by BBC Trending on Facebook showed that the admiration for the extreme right groups in Britain reached 44%. The largest share of these likes was from the United States, Australia and Canada (Wendling, 2019). This indicates the existence of solid links between extremist groups in different countries.

Incidents of right-wing terrorism, according to the concept of hate crime, work to incite terror and fear in the target group (Koehler, 2016, p. 87). The right-wing refers to a conservative party characterized by duty, hierarchy, and concern for tradition and nationalism which support free and patriotic projects and the traditional moral system in which violence is not considered a target, while the extreme right-wing movements focus on race and strong nationalism while supporting criminal action, which distinguishes the extreme right from other rightists (Blee & Creasap, 2010).

A report by CTED (2020), which refers to transnational extreme right terrorism in 31 countries, including the United States, Britain, and Australia, related to hatred, Islamophobia, racism towards minorities, xenophobia, and anti-Semitism, by using non-mainstream platforms such as Gab, Voat, and Chan, exploiting the allure of counterculture resistance to target new audiences. Extreme-right groups also collaborate online to provide financial support across national borders, collected through trade, event fees, and donations (CTED, 2020).

The Center for Resilient and Inclusive Societies (CRIS) research has shown that Australian extreme right groups, including Fraser Anning, Kim Vuga, and Love Australia or Leave Political Party, often refer to incidents from other countries to support their ideological message (Davey et al., 2022). Richard Spencer and Lana Lokteff of the American extreme right groups that advocate white supremacy had a role in attracting foreign extremists to international meetings of the extreme right held in Sweden,

Finland and Norway, in addition to the fact that American white supremacists were speakers at about 12 conferences between 2013 and 2019 (ADL, 2019).

UKIP was able to record a series of successes between 2010 and 2016; where in 2014, it was ahead of the main parties in the European Parliament elections and played an essential role in the referendum on Britain's exit from the European Union (Goodwin & Dennison, 2018), which made it the front and representative of the radical right in the UK. On the other hand, Nick Griffin, head of the BNP party, knew how to take advantage of the international context and events to promote his party. For example, race riots occurred between Muslim youth and white youth in Oldham, so Nick took advantage of his party's position on opposing Islam and dangerous immigration, reinforcing the strategy of the National Party as well as world news (Braouezec, 2012).

The main characteristic of the extreme right in contemporary society is that they are political organizations that participate in elections for public office to obtain parliamentary seats (Heinisch & Mazzoleni, 2016, p. 224) and tend to be more centralized and less democratic but more radical. This is through party politics and elections (Heinisch & Mazzoleni, 2016, p. 229) impacting political decision-making directly (e.g., the League has been in office since the 2000s in Italy) or indirectly (e.g., the UK Independence Party has not been in any position but won the referendum for Britain to leave the European Union).

The Institute for Strategic Dialogue ISD (2021) reported that extreme-right groups in America had exploited the Facebook platform to incite rebellion and violence against the democratically elected government, and groups such as Tea Party Patriots, Oath Keepers, Tomi Lahren, and InfoWars promoted conspiracies throughout the 2020 election campaign. They often retweeted Donald Trump's tweets to support allegations of election fraud and mobilize the pro-Trump community (Scaminaci, 2020).

In Britain, the extreme right BNP party is one of the most successful political parties because it is based on being less radical and more respectful. Still, at the same time, it is considered one of the most dangerous British parties because it always tries to recruit young people in schools, in addition to the presence of secret and violent groups affiliated with the party ready to commit terrorist crimes (Goodwin & Dennison, 2018). The political agenda of the extreme right party UKIP showed that it is an anti-immigration, anti-Islam, and pro-Brexit party, which defines itself as populist and nationalist, and

has earned the party members positions in the European Parliament and as local councilors (Braouezec, 2012).

The founder of the Love Australia or Leave Political Party is Kim Vuga, who is used to provoking controversy on issues of anti-Islam and immigration and sought to register the party in the Australian elections (Palin, 2016). Fraser Anning espouses the views of white nationalism, Islamophobia, and political elitism. Anning also led the One Nation Party, which succeeded in electing two members to the Australian Senate (Farzan, 2019). There is the emergence of new national groups such as Nationalist Alternative Australia, decisive crystallization and mobilization point for extreme right-wing groups, whether local or international, and the increase in online activity (Peucker & Smith, 2019).

As mentioned above the ideologies of the extreme right are based on racism, ethnic origins, white replacement, etc. shared via social media, for which a systematic investigation of the social media content shared by extreme-right groups is necessary. The research reported here aims to analyze the social media posts shared by the extreme-right group on their public Facebook, and Twitter accounts to assess the extent to which the online activities of these groups promote terrorism and their ideologies. Specifically, the most prevalent ideological categories and subcategories contained in the posts, along with the forms of the content shared, are manually coded. The downside of this method is that sometimes there may be a misunderstanding of the intended meaning of a post when analyzing it. Also, due to privacy restrictions on some pages, only public pages are analyzed, and private groups are eliminated from the analysis which may not represent the viewpoint and opinion of all supporters of the extreme right.

Aim and Methodology

This study examines the incitement of the extreme right, based on racial discrimination in all forms, on two leading platforms: Facebook and Twitter. Three countries have been identified that have suffered and are still suffering from extreme right crimes: Britain, Australia, and the United States, as the social media posts made by users living in these countries are in English, making the process simpler. Also in recent years, these countries have seen many incidents involving people who belong to the extreme right, especially in 2019, there were many killings of foreigners and immigrants, based on extremist ideology.

Aim

The content posted on Facebook and Twitter has played an essential role in spreading the ideology of the extreme right that glorifies its role in protecting the homeland from external terrorism and in improving the conditions of social, economic, and political life to reach the largest segment of society, and pushing them to commit crimes leading them to so-called cyber terrorism (Paul, 2017). There is not enough research examining the content of these messages in an in-depth and holistic manner by taking both image and text components into account. To fill this gap, this exploratory study identifies the extremist ideologies in the posts shared by extreme-right public Facebook groups and Twitter accounts, also how textual content, images and videos are being shared in extreme right groups' social media content and the user engagement they receive are also examined. Therefore, two research questions (RQ) are posed:

RQ1: What do extreme right-wing groups focus on when they publish their extremist ideologies on their public accounts on Facebook and Twitter?

RQ2: What types of content do extremist groups rely on to attract the highest engagement on their Facebook and Twitter posts?

Method

Qualitative content analysis is considered the appropriate methodology to study this research. This approach is relied upon by researchers for accurate and systematic observation of social media content (Dang-Anh, Einspänner & Thimm, 2014). The qualitative analysis process delves into the collection of audio, visual and written data for the study community (Bailey, 2008) and is based on the development of interpretive and analytical efforts. Therefore, it reaches different levels of content "themes, main ideas and text information" (Mayring, 2000, p. 28). The rationale for this study is based on the ideological examination of the posts shared by public accounts of the extreme right groups on Facebook and Twitter.

In this context, this study uses deductive content analysis to test the concepts, categories and symbols developed by the coder, based on using a classification matrix to construct concepts and encode data according to categories, in which case it is possible to rely on the existing research literature, theories or models to develop the

classification matrix (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). In content analysis, this document looks at latent content in the analysis process. In latent analysis, the researcher dives deeper into the basic meaning of the text to define the hidden meanings in the text: What is the text talking about? Thus, the latent approach allows the study of abstract and contextual data (Snider & Cash, 2014).

The encodings previously extracted from the sample of identified posts are examined (Hsieh & Shannon 2005). In this step, a qualitative analysis approach is followed to include an analysis of the latent content so that each post can fall under the direct or indirect category.

Sample

It is difficult to determine the actual dimension of the population because the Internet is constantly changing (Blee, 2009). A snowball technique was applied to identify the groups and codify their content, whereby the names of the pages of the extreme right were collected based on various sources (literary articles, official reports, etc.). Accordingly, the first thing is to identify the most important extreme-right organizations (for example, the political groups). The active pages on Facebook and Twitter were checked, whereby groups for which it was impossible to find an address were excluded, either because they are no longer active or are private sites. This way, a final sample of 18 pages was obtained for the extreme right as a basis for the analysis process.

The names of these Facebook groups belonging to the extreme right were obtained from studies that have previously analyzed some of these groups (Klein & Muis, 2018) (Peucker, Smith, & Iqbal, 2019) and from news websites, especially The Guardian News and BBC News. As for Twitter accounts, these accounts were accessed from studies that dealt with the category of the extreme right on Twitter, such as Gallaher (2020) and Campana, Crosset and Tanner (2018). In addition, some of the names of the extreme-right groups on Facebook that appeared in some studies are ineffective. These same names were examined on Twitter and approved in this study and from this research (Iqbal, Peucker, & Smith, 2019; Klein & Muis, 2018).

These groups were selected based on previous research, reports and news on the topics and events of extremism for these groups, whether on Facebook, Twitter, or in reality. For example, the results of Klein and Muis' (2018) research indicate that the BNP and UKIP parties

focused their Facebook posts on “deem nativism” rather than anti-elitism. In another study, the extreme right Nationalist Alternative Australia party in Australia showed that it is the most racially superior party on Facebook in confronting liberal democracy and advocating white supremacy and anti-Semitism (Peucker, Smith, & Iqbal, 2019).

The sample from 3 countries was chosen by a non-probability sampling method called purposive sampling. Three Facebook groups and three Twitter accounts were identified for each country. The groups and accounts selected in this study belong to the extreme right, as they were identified based on articles and news websites that specifically dealt with the categories of the extreme right in these countries. Although, the existence of groups and accounts famous for the extreme right was not approved in this study because some of them are ineffective, or the account has been suspended or contains all the links that are not included.

Once the data was gathered in a spreadsheet, the sample selection was made by a systematic manual selection. Table 1 states the sample size of Facebook posts constituted (n) 5% of the population, which totals: $0.05 \times 3426 = 171$ posts, and 2% of tweets, which totaled: $0.02 \times 8589 = 172$ tweets.

Table 1: Number of posts and sample size for Facebook and Twitter

Platform	N. of posts	Sample size
Facebook	3426	171
Twitter	8589	172

In the systematic manual selection of posts, all posts are counted for each account. The original number of posts is divided by the sample size required, so a specific number is produced that separates each post. Then each post is given a serial number, and then a number is chosen from among the serial numbers set in the previous step so that this number is the prefix in the selected posts to be analyzed. So that the chosen posts are the owners of the serial numbers that separate the chosen number and the order that follows it. For example: In the Info Wars Media account, there are 701 posts, and the sample size required of them is 14, which is $701/14 = 50$, which is the separator number, and therefore the start of the second post of the account was chosen so that it is 2, 52, 104, 154 This method has been applied to other accounts.

Quota sampling is used from specific population groups to fill the required portions of non-probability sampling (Black, 2010). After collecting data from Facebook groups and Twitter accounts and determining the size of the community, the sample size was divided into quotas in proportion to the volume of data available for each Facebook group and Twitter account in which the weight of each group and account in the sample was known. Tables 2 and 3 document the sample size for each Facebook group and Twitter account. Excel files were created to include the posts of public Facebook groups and Twitter accounts and the links to the posts to facilitate the coding process.

Table 2: Sample size for each account on Twitter

	Account of name	N. of tweet	Sample size
United States	Info Wars Media	701	14
	Richard Spencer	3077	62
	Lana Lokteff	2114	42
Britain	London BNP	252	5
	British National Party	56	1
	English National Party	2029	41
Australia	Fraser Anning Official	102	2
	Aussie League	57	1
	Kim Vuga	201	4
Total		8589	172

Table 3: Sample size for each group on Facebook

	Page name	N. of post	Sample size
	Oath Keepers	503	25
United States	Tomi Lahren	112	6
	Tea Party Patriots	568	28
	British Unionist Party	151	8
Britain	UK Independence Party (UKIP)	734	36
	I am Proud to Be British	102	5
	Nationalist Alternative	107	5
Australia	Australia		
	Reclaim Australia Rally 2	692	35
	Love Australia or Leave Political Party	457	23
Total		3426	171

Data collection tool

Facepager, an automated data retrieval application, was used in this study to collect data from the identified extreme right groups on Facebook, depending on each account's ID number and twDocs for Twitter accounts, which relies on on-screen name or URL to collect data. Data were retrieved in a spreadsheet format for both Twitter accounts and Facebook groups, based on the time specified in this study from March 15, 2019 to February 5, 2020.

Posts were collected from Facebook and Twitter from March 15, 2019 to February 5, 2020, meanwhile, a global event occurred: Britain's exit from the European Union. A report by The Independent indicates that the Brexit project has worked to attract extreme-right views of loyalty, elitism, and patriotism, which in turn led to an increase in the number of followers of the extreme-right pages (Dearden, 2020). Research published by Hope Not Hate found that the language and discourse used were offensive to immigrants, refugees and some politicians, such as the mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, and the emergence of concepts such as culture war (2020).

Operation

A coding instrument based on the existing studies which dealt with the categories of extreme right ideologies (Klein & Muis, 2018; David & Fernández, 2016; Iqbal, Peucker & Smith, 2019) was created in this study for the analysis process for all Facebook posts and tweets. It addressed the following categories used in coding: Protection of western values, anti-LGBT activism, anti-feminism, anti-Islam, anti-immigrant, fostering white race, and anti-elitist populism. These categories all had subcategories underneath. These categories and subcategories were used to analyze the social media content, which can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4: Codebook: Categories and subcategories of extreme right ideologies on Facebook and Twitter

Categories	Subcategories
Protection of western values	protecting the national identity, anti-multiculturalism, independence and sovereignty of the state
Anti-LGBT activism	destroys traditional social values, homosexuality as a sin against human nature
Anti-feminism	men possessing women, hostility for modern liberal feminism
Anti-Islam	criticism of Islam, anti-Islamization, counter-jihad, Muslims by occupation
Anti-immigrant	xenophobia, the scarcity of welfare, illegal immigration, economic impact of immigration
Fostering white race	white pride, white supremacy, white race is persecuted
Anti-elitist populism	claims against the political elite, the elites took care of themselves and reception of immigrants, they appear unsuccessful in political administration

Most researchers have shifted content analysis from traditional (paper) encryption models to electronic coding models such as an Excel file, which helps in greater ease and speed of encryption than what is done on paper (Neuendorf, 2017, p. 227). The coded data is created on an Excel file to facilitate the process of data analysis, and thus, come up with the results and conclusions of the research. The modality and the form of the social media posts shared by the extremist groups were also analyzed.

The extremist groups call for national identity and the preservation of Western national values based on anti-multiculturalism from the sub-categories (Duyvendak, 2011, p. 99). The extreme right considers even homosexuals as destroyers of traditional social values. According to right-wing Christian groups, homosexuality is a sin against human nature as they have created multiculturalism and violated men's rights (Pilkington, 2017).

In our study, the identified categories and variables help in answering the research questions. Creating symbols facilitates the identification of concepts in which data can be collected around it to analyze and interpret the data, and to develop and coordinate it with the previously identified categories.

The first research question examines the extremist ideology focused on posts that contain discrimination and hatred. Regarding the second research question, the extent of user interaction with extremist content shared is measured. Therefore, the number of likes, comments, reposts, and retweets is coded, and only the number of comments, which helped evaluate the posts in terms of the extent to which users respond to the ideologies of the extreme right.

A total of 343 posts were compiled and coded on the Facebook and Twitter platforms, in which the analysis was performed based on 23 subcategories in seven different categories. The results were analyzed based on research questions on the categories of extreme-right propaganda on Facebook and Twitter.

Some subcategories on Facebook and Twitter were not included in the reporting of the results because no results were found for these deleted subcategories. Omitted subcategories on Facebook are: the spread of the AIDS epidemic, Men Possessing Women, women existing for sex, protection the rights of men and boys and against male sexual violence, and hostility toward modern liberal feminism.

Findings

The first research question examined different types of subcategories that the extreme right groups shared posts on in Facebook and Twitter based on the subcategories that fall under the main ideology categories, and the percentages for each subcategory for each social media platform were identified separately (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).

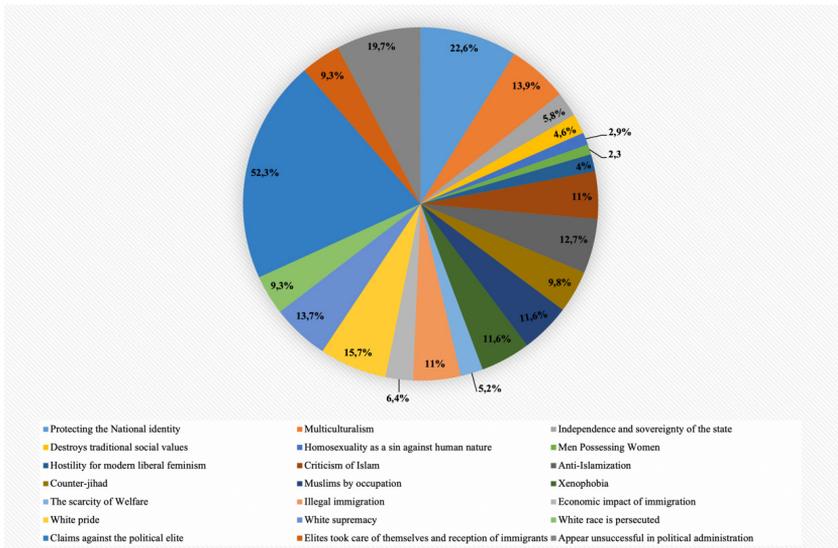


Figure 1: The distribution of subcategories of extreme right ideologies in the Tweets shared by extreme right groups

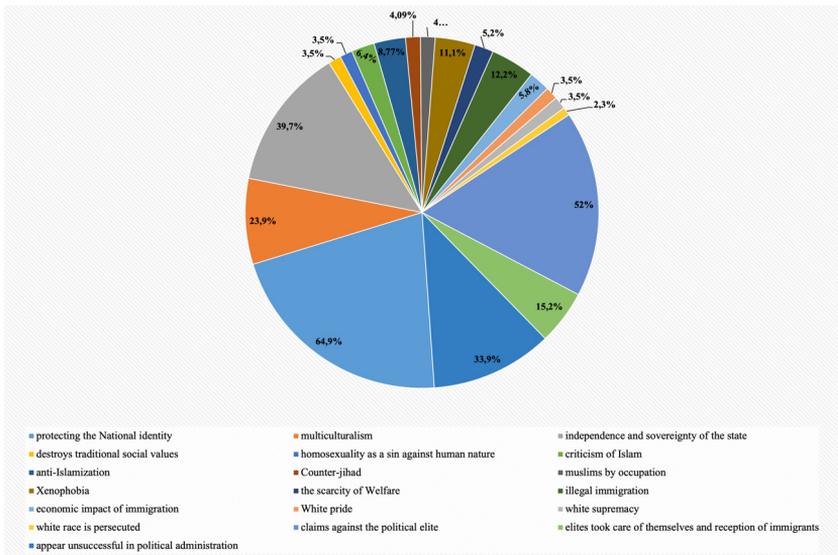


Figure 2: The distribution of subcategories of extreme right ideologies in the Facebook posts shared by extreme right groups

Facebook

In the analysis of the subcategories of the content of the extremist right-wing posts on Facebook, it was found that the category of 'protection of Western values' had the highest rates in the spread of extremist ideologies. The percentage for each subcategory of this category was as follows: the protection of national identity by 64.9%, anti-multiculturalism by 23.9%, and the independence and sovereignty of the state by 39.7%.

On the other hand, the category of 'anti-elitist populism' received a slightly lower percentage than the 'protection of western values' in the prevalence of subcategories. The subcategory of claims against the political elite got 52%, the elites took care of themselves and reception of immigrants by 15.2%, and they appeared unsuccessful in political administration by 33.9%.

The category of 'anti-immigration' got 34.5% among the other categories. At the same time, the 'anti-Islam' category accounted for only 23.3%.

The categories of 'fostering white race' and 'anti-LGBT activism' are among the least prevalent categories among Facebook posts with scores of 9.3% and 7% respectively. In contrast, there was no significant percentage of the anti-feminist category on Facebook.

Twitter

As for the content of the accounts of extremist right-wing groups on Twitter, the results concluded that the 'anti-elitist populism' category got the highest rates of extremist groups' interest in the issues of the political elites, which was 81.4%.

Here the 'anti-Islam' category scored 45.3%, while the 'western values protection' scored 42.4%. The categories of 'fostering white race', 'anti-immigrant', 'anti-LGBT activities', and 'anti-feminism' got variable scores of 38.3%, 34.3%, 7.5%, and 6.4% respectively among the categories.

The most prevalent extreme right sub-categories across the United States, Britain, and Australia

This section analyzes country-based differences and similarities of the subcategories of extreme right ideologies as manifested in Facebook and Twitter accounts. Specifically, the most prevalent extreme-right ideologies, the ‘protection of Western values’, and ‘populist anti-elitism’ are analyzed on a country basis.

On Twitter, the extreme right-wing movements in Britain showed a higher interaction around the categories of ‘protection of Western values’ and ‘populist anti-elitism’. In the ‘protection of Western values’, for example, the subcategory of the ‘ideology of protecting national identity’ appeared at 31.9%, which is the highest percentage among other ideologies. In contrast, the subcategory of the ‘ideology of independence and sovereignty of the state’ got a tiny portion in the United States, which is 1.6%; in Australia, there was a no mention rate of 0.0% (see Figure 3).

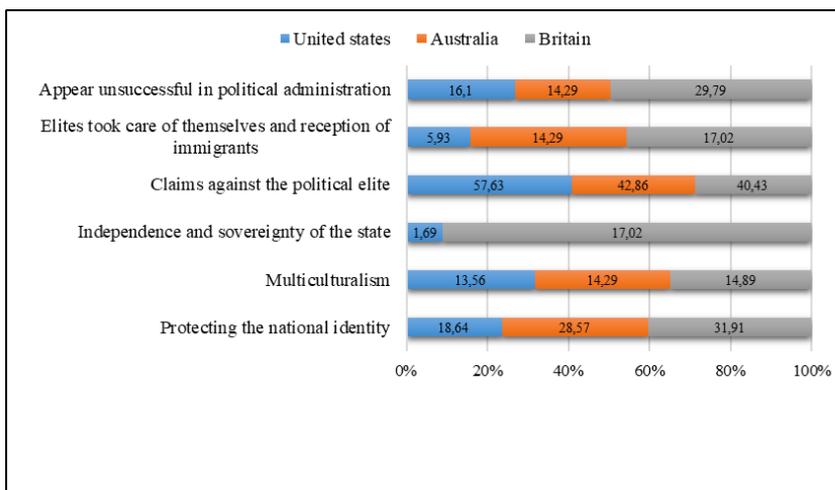


Figure 3: The prevalence rate of extreme right ideologies of subcategories around Western culture and political elites in the Tweets shared by extreme right groups in the United States, Britain and Australia

On the other hand, in the anti-elitist populist category on Twitter, the interaction of extremist groups in Britain was more on the ideology of elites who took care of themselves and reception of immigrants, which got 17%, and 29.7% for the ideology that appeared unsuccessful in political administration. While the ideology of claims against the political elite, which was more active in the United States, reached 57.6%.

It is noted that extremist groups in Britain have a high prevalence on Twitter in spreading extremist ideologies. The reason for this is the extreme right view that is based on the importance of the country's independence and its liberation from the restrictions and laws of the European Union, especially in light of the vote to leave the European Union and even get rid of the politically failed elites and the opposition to the Brexit project. In contrast, extremist groups in the United States and Australia show a high interest in claiming against the political elites that they are corrupt and failed in the political and economic fields.

In the analysis of the extreme right ideologies on Facebook in the United States, Britain, and Australia, there is a difference between the proportions of these extremist ideologies in each country, as shown in Figure 4. In the category of protection of Western values, extremist groups in Britain get the highest percentage in the subcategory of the ideology of protecting national identity, at a rate of 77.5%. On the other hand, the extremist groups in Australia had the highest percentage in the subcategory of the ideology of anti-multiculturalism, which was at a rate of 33.3% (see Figure 4).

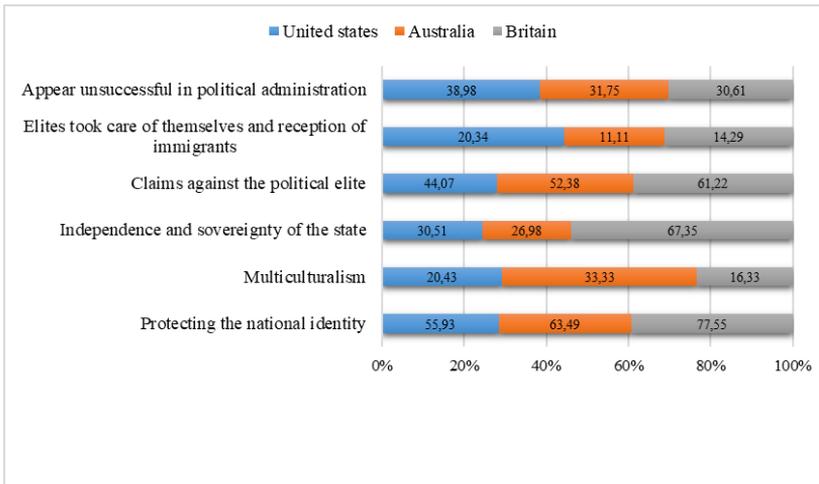


Figure 4: The prevalence rate of extreme right ideologies of subcategories around Western culture and political elites in the Facebook posts by extreme right groups in the United States, Britain and Australia

In the analysis of the anti-elitist populist category of the extreme-right Facebook posts, Figure 4 shows that the ideology of claims against the political elite was high in Britain, constituting about 61.2%. In the United States, the subcategory of the ideology that the elites took care of themselves, and the reception of immigrants accounted for

20.3%. The subcategory of the ideology that the elites appear unsuccessful in political administration constituted 38.9% in the United States.

Analysis of the forms of social media posts

The second research question assesses the modality of posts that the extreme right groups share on Facebook and Twitter. The types of posts were encoded in Excel, and the percentage of using the image, text, video, text and video combined, text and image combined for each subcategory were determined. Then, these subcategories were combined under the original category specified in this study. In evaluating the categories at the level of the posts on Facebook and Twitter, the analysis process was done separately because some categories were not included on Facebook, such as anti-feminist, and this category was included on Twitter.

Figure 5 in the Facebook analysis shows that the highest percentage in the use of text and image combined in the category ‘protection of Western culture’, was 50.8%, followed by that use in the category of ‘anti-immigrants’, which was 50.1% and then in the ‘anti-elitist populist’ category, which was also 43.8%. The use of the image shows the second-largest percentage in terms of use in all categories, but its ratio is equal to the text in the ‘anti-Islam’ category, which is 5.2%. The text, video, image, text and video combined, are also similar in the ‘LGBT’ category of 1.1%.

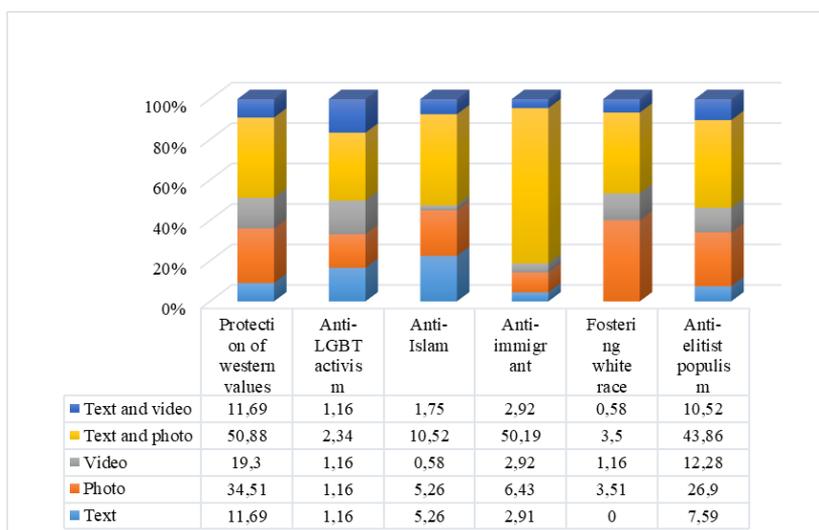


Figure 5: Type of posts and user engagement across all Facebook group pages, 2019-2020

The use of video constituted the third highest use rate for groups. Still, it was equal to use the text in two categories: 'fighting immigrants', which accounted for 2.9%, but the video was of little use in 'combating Islam', which was 0.5%. As for the use of text and video combined, the percentage of its use was higher than the text in the categories but was equal to the text in the category of 'Western values protection', which was 11.6%. In 'promoting the white race', extremist groups did not focus on using the text, which was 0.0%.

In the analysis of tweets, Figure 6 shows that the percentage of using the text is the highest in the categories, as it reached 49.4% in the 'anti-elitist populist' category and 23% in the 'white race promotion' class, while the use of text is equal to the text and image combined tweets in the 'anti-feminism' category, which reached 2.3%. It comes second in terms of using the type of participation in all categories of text and image combined. It was the highest percentage in the 'anti-elitist populist' category, with a share of 16.8%.

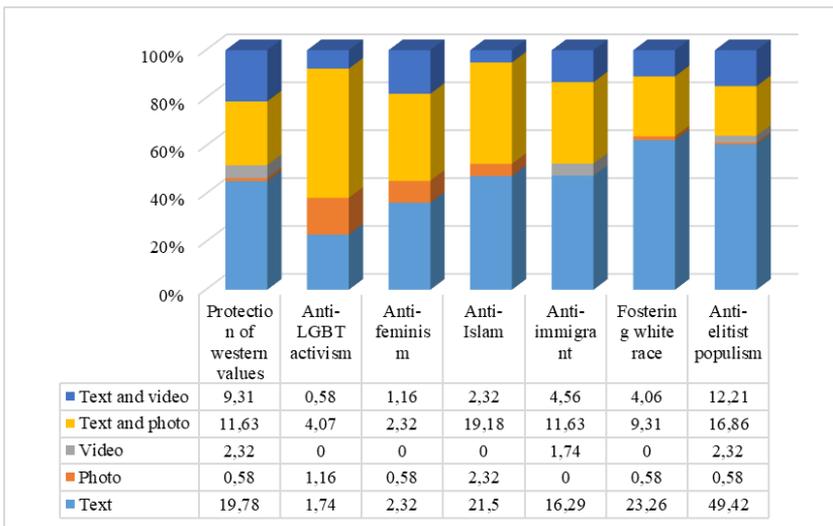


Figure 6: Type of posts and user engagement across all Twitter accounts, 2019 - 2020

Extremist groups have used text, and video combined on Twitter ranked third in terms of use. Still, most of its uses are in the 'anti-populist elite' category, which is 49.4%, while text and video combined use are equal to the use of images in the 'anti-Islam' category, which is 2.3%. Figure 6 shows that the image is more than the video in some categories, but the focus was not on using the image on how to 'fight immigrants',

which accounted for 0.0%. As for the use of video in tweets, it was not widely used in the 'anti-feminism', 'anti-LGBT', and 'anti-Islam' categories, and in the 'white race promotion' category, which was 0.0%.

User engagement the social media posts received

An assessment of the extent to which users interact with the Facebook posts and tweets of extremist groups showed that it generated an uproar over every ideology the extremists are trying to foster on Facebook and Twitter. This evaluation included the number of likes, comments, posts, and retweets of the data collected and analyzed. Although the Twitter interface differs from the Facebook interface, the analyses were conducted based on the subcategories of the categories identified in this study.

The number of likes 'promoting the white race' on Twitter shows that it is one of the categories that the users are most interested in. As for the category of 'combating feminism', it is one of the least interactive categories, as shown in Figure 7. As for the 'anti-elite populist' category, it appears that it is one of the second most interactive categories on Twitter against the elite and parties hostile to the extreme right. In contrast, the categories of 'anti-Islam' and 'anti-immigration' show a similarity in interaction regarding the number of likes. Still, they differ in terms of the number of retweets and comments.

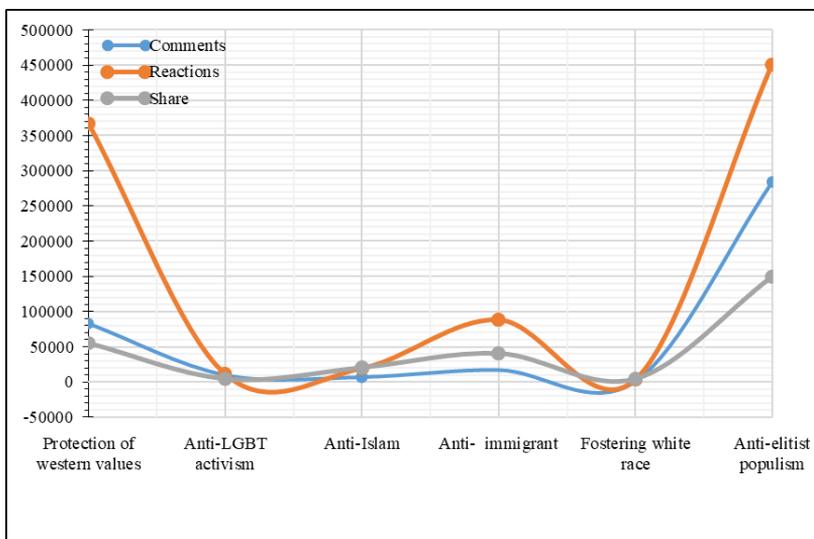


Figure 7: Posts and user engagement across Twitter accounts

As shown in Figure 7, the category of the 'LGBT fight' represents moderate to low user interactions on Twitter, as it has emerged more in the Twitter retweeting of transgender activities in public libraries and participation in Democrat celebrations. As for the subcategory of 'protecting Western values', which comes in its penultimate place in terms of total interactions on Twitter, it has emerged in retweeting subcategories of 'anti-multiculturalism' and 'independence from international agreements'.

The 'anti-elitist populist' category got the most significant number of user interactions on Facebook posts, as it shows the highest level of interactions that exceeded 450 thousand, as shown in Figure 8. On the other hand, the category of 'protecting Western values' comes at the second level in terms of users' interest in this category, as for the category of 'anti-immigrants', comes at the third level in terms of the number of users' interactions with this category.

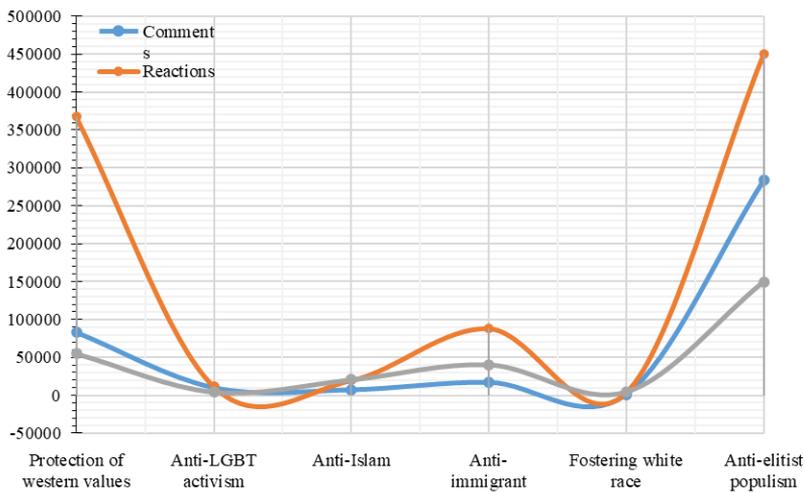


Figure 8: Posts and user engagement across Facebook group pages

The 'anti-Islam category' was the fourth most interacted with in terms of user interest and interactions. In comparison, the category of 'anti-LGBT activism' activity comes at the penultimate level regarding user responses to transsexual activities. In contrast, the category of 'fostering the white race' comes at the last level by users' interest in this category on Facebook.

Conclusion and Discussion

Extremist groups exploit social media to enhance their ideologies for all groups of society, and the posts of these groups carry various meanings, either implicitly or explicitly. This study examined the existence of the ideologies of the extreme-right in the posts of public Facebook groups, and Twitter accounts shared in the United States, Britain, and Australia.

The data were categorized and coded under seven major categories developed. These categories were divided into the subcategories mentioned above, which were used in the analyses to answer the research questions posed. In the first research question, we explored the extent of the interest of the extremist groups posting their ideologies on Facebook and Twitter. The extremist ideologies mostly shared on Facebook are the 'protection of Western values' and 'anti-elitist populism' where the former constituted rankings of 65.9%+23.9%+39.7, making it the highest category and the latter having 52%+15.2%+33.9%, as lower rank, in the subcategories respectively, while 'anti-immigration' was average.

The interest of extremist groups in publishing ideologies differed on Twitter and Facebook. The results showed that most extremist groups focus on Twitter on the anti-elitist populist category in their tweets, most of which were addressed to politicians, not indigenous people who came to the country and got government positions, such as Ilhan Omar and Sadiq Khan. As for the category of anti-Islam and the protection of Western values, they come in close proportions in the degree of interest, but they remain with less focus and attention than anti-elites.

Extremist groups tend to reinforce the white race in their tweets, but this category has less attention together with anti-immigrants than anti-Islam categories and the protection of western values. Given the categories of anti-LGBT and anti-feminism activities, they come at the last level in posting tweets, indicating the lack of interest of extremist groups in these two categories.

The nature of extreme right groups' publications differs considerably according to their ideological associations, thereby spreading extreme right-wing propaganda. Our study revealed that the most extreme ideologies shared by the extreme right groups on Twitter are the categories of 'anti-elitist populism' and 'protection of Western values',

which suggests that the extreme right is expressed as a defense of the pride of the white race, offering them protection.

In the studies of Bonacchi et al., (2018), the extreme right's views on immigrants, which also reflect their opinion of the political elites who deceived the public by allowing refugees to enter the country, promote violent crimes which can be initiated via Facebook, reflecting the importance of preserving the white race by stopping immigration due to its impact on the white population, while also focusing on the importance of building civilization, cultural integration, border control, and original isolationism from external interference, which are in line with their positions on Brexit.

The analysis on Twitter showed that the extreme-right groups in Britain work primarily on all extremist ideologies. In the analysis of Facebook posts, it was noted that there is a discrepancy between the percentages of these ideologies for each country, which indicates that extremist groups have different ideologies and beliefs in each country that they are working to spread through the Facebook platform.

The second research question evaluated the forms of posts and the engagement levels they received from the users in the extreme-right categories on Facebook and Twitter. The results showed that extremist groups tend to publish the most significant number of text and image combined posts on Facebook (39.1%), as the use of the image, comes-second (27.4%). The use of the video ranks third, and text and video combined second last, implying the text is of little use on Facebook. On Twitter, text is one of the most popular types of posts used to spread the ideologies of the extreme right (56.9%), while text and image combined came at the second level (25.5%), text and video combined came third, still, the use of images and video came at the lowest levels.

In Britain, the extreme right groups, including the English National Party, the UK Independence Party, and the BNP claim to represent the British people. Thus, these groups try to dominate social issues, including Brexit, immigration, and the existence of Islam. In addition, right-wing groups in Britain urge people to defend and fight for their culture and religion by force. Therefore, extremist groups see immigrants, especially Muslims, as a growing and violent threat to British culture.

In the United States, the extreme right tends towards conservative religious traditions, defending their bias against minorities and building an ethnic society based on white

race politics, which was the most promoted by InfoWars Media and Richard Spencer. Nevertheless, hate activities in the United States are linked to the variables of ethnic, cultural, religious, and national diversity aiming at building the US national and cultural identity by focusing on the unifying theme of race. In some of Richard Spencer's tweets, extremists emphasize the importance of white culture not mixing with other cultures, and they were even opposed to government policies or elites that violated white culture.

The analysis shows a new concept used by neoliberals from the Australian extreme right, 'the new class' which attacks the opposing voices of the elites and the left seeing the left elites as a group of haters. Left-wingers are considered supporters of ancient traditions that reflect the cultural diversity of the existence of gays, Muslims, and immigrants. Likewise, the favorite accusation of the extreme right against the elites is that they only care about advancing their self-interest and are unqualified to manage politics, which was most concerned by the Love Australia or Leave.

The study found that the extreme right escalated sharply in the use of different modalities of posts, on Facebook and Twitter. Thus, the highest use of text and images combined was on the Facebook platform, while Twitter had the highest use of text, which indicates that the extremist right-wing groups have a different method of using the type of post for each social platform separately to communicate their ideas.

Based on the results of this study, it becomes apparent that the categories of 'anti-political elites', 'protection of Western values', and 'the anti-immigrant sentiment' come at the highest interactions on Facebook, as shown in Figure 5. Twitter showed that users are increasingly interacting with categories related to the white race and political elites, as shown in Figure 6. The New Zealand attack, the El Paso incident, and their association with Muslim and foreign immigrants have made users interact closely on immigration issues, and it is the cause of terrorist incidents and even criticism of Muslim immigration and their religious beliefs.

It is clear from the results summarized above that extremist right-wing ideologies still exist on Facebook and Twitter, and retweeting and reposting are generating a greater interaction and an increasing user interest. Moreover, the analysis of the form of social media content revealed that extremist groups use illustrated images and videos in addition to text to reach a broad global audience. Hence, it can be concluded

that social media remains a vibrant platform full of content that fuels racism and hatred. The findings of the study, therefore, provide a holistic understanding of how extremist groups across three different Western countries utilize different social media platforms to foster their ideologies.

Through a policy of content type design, this study showed that textual content, and text and image combined, are the most used types of content by extremist groups on Facebook and Twitter. For instance, extreme groups frequently share URLs endorsed by images, which indicates that user involvement is higher in the text content of posts that include particular terms (such as immigrants or Islam). Twitter provides an ideal environment for the expansion of extreme right ideas through the reliance on extremist groups retweeting practices which leads to a more heated discussion among Twitter users (Crosset, et al., 2018). A space for debate and discussion among users has been fostered by social media's interactive features, which benefit the extreme right's ability to build digressive chances. Therefore, our study provides an in-depth analysis of how different social media platforms afford extremist groups varying recruitment-related activities based on the modalities.

By examining the ideological character and the formal features of messages extremist groups share on two popular social media platforms concurrently, this study contributes to the research theory on extremist ideologies online. Importantly, the ideology of 'preserving the issues and rights of the homeland and the citizen' was shown to be a common one in each of the three countries, an important theme derived recurrently in the existing research literature. By conducting a study crossing national boundaries, we contribute to the theory on extremist right activities online.

The mobilization methods for extreme-right groups differ between online platforms due to each platform's legal regulations on harmful speech. Future research could focus on a comparative study of cross-border extremist groups on other platforms, such as 8chan, Instagram, and TikTok. Moreover, future research could focus on how terrorists use social media content to spread extremist ideology, focusing on the individual experience on the Internet. Regarding defining the framework of the study, future studies could combine content analysis with user comments on posts by extremist groups.

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