

Fine Margin Between Free Speech and Hate Speech at New Media: A Case-Study on Twitter

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Abstract

This research aimed to examine the dimensions and contents of hate speech shared on the official Twitter accounts of clubs in the fiercely competitive derbies of world football. In the scope of the research, competitors with intense competition in world football and the competitions with the highest competition rate were determined, and the Twitter reflections of the matches played by these clubs with each other in 2019 were examined on the official Twitter accounts of the clubs. Clubs under examination in the Turkish Super League were Fenerbahçe and Galatasaray, Manchester United and Liverpool from England, Inter and Milan from Italy, Barcelona and Real Madrid from Spain, Schalke 04 and Borussia Dortmund from Germany, Celtic and Rangers from Scotland, Boca Juniors from Argentina and River Plate teams' official Twitter accounts were investigated. When total of 18249 tweets were examined the obtained results were examined, the intensity of sharing profanity-insulting content did not differ according to the countries, but there were differences when the people or teams in which these posts were directly considered. While insulting and profanity messages towards the opposing team came to the fore in the Turkish Super League, Spanish La Liga, Argentine Primera Division, Italian Serie A and Scottish Premier League, the messages of the fans in this category in the English Premier League and the German Bundesliga came to the fore because of the hate speech directed to their teams. In humiliating or othering the opponent, the Turkish Super League was at the top, and the results in this league were similar to Spanish La Liga.

Keywords: Hate Speech, Soccer, Derby, Twitter, New Media

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Yeni Medyada İfade Özgürlüğü ile Nefret Söylemi Arasındaki İnce Çizgi: Twitter Örneği

Öz

Araştırmada dünya futbolunun yoğun rekabet yaşanan ateşli derbilerinde kulüplerin resmi Twitter hesapları üzerinde paylaşılan nefret söylemlerinin boyutları ve içeriklerinin incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Araştırma kapsamında; dünya futbolunda rekabeti yoğun yaşayan rakipler ve rekabet oranı en yüksek müsabakalar belirlenmiş, bu kulüplerin birbirleriyle 2019 yılı içinde yapmış oldukları maçların Twitter yansımaları, kulüplerin resmi Twitter hesapları üzerinden incelemeye alınmıştır. Türkiye Süper Ligi'nde incelemeye alınan kulüpler; Fenerbahçe ve Galatasaray olarak belirlenirken, İngiltere'den Manchester United ve Liverpool, İtalya'dan İnter ve Milan, İspanya'dan Barcelona ve Real Madrid, Almanya'dan Schalke 04 ve Borussia Dortmund, İskoçya'dan Celtic ve Rangers, Arjantin'den Boca Juniors ve River Plate takımlarının resmi Twitter hesapları araştırılmaya tabi tutulmuştur. Toplamda 18249 tweet incelenmiş, yazılı ifade içeren paylaşımlar, içerisindeki söylemlere göre sınıflandırılmış ve bu sınıflandırmaların toplam paylaşımlarına oranı hesaplanmıştır. Elde edilen sonuçlara bakıldığında küfür-hakaret içerikli yapılan paylaşım yoğunluğunun ülkelere göre farklılık göstermediği ancak bu paylaşımların yöneltildiği kişi ya da takımlar hesaba katıldığında farklılıkların olduğu görülmektedir. Türkiye Süper Ligi, İspanya La Liga, Arjantin Ligi, İtalya Serie A ve İskoçya Premier Lig'de rakip takıma yönelik hakaret-küfür içerikli mesajlar ön plana çıkarken, İngiltere Premier Lig'inde ve Almanya Bunesliga'da taraftarların bu kategorideki mesajları kötü sonuçlardan ötürü kendi takımlarına yönelttikleri saptanmıştır. Rakibi aşağılama ya da ötekileştirmede ise Türkiye Süper Ligi zirvede yer almakta, bu ligdeki sonuçlar İspanya La Liga'yla benzerlik göstermektedir. Kötü sonuçlardan ötürü taraftarların hedef gösterdikleri kişiler de ülkelere göre farklılaşmakta, Türkiye Süper Ligi, Almanya Bundesliga ve İskoçya Premier Lig'de antrenörler hedef gösterilirken, İngiltere Premier Lig ve İspanya La Liga'da takım oyuncularını suçlanmaktadır. Hakemlerin en çok hedef gösterildiği lig ise Türkiye Süper Ligi olarak tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Nefret Söylemi, Derbi, Futbol, Twitter, Yeni Medya

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Introduction

Nowadays, social media directly affects the way of thinking of societies and is considered one of the most effective communication tools for responding to their problems. In the current century, not only sports federations but also sports clubs, football players and even fan groups have realized the importance of social media usage and have started to invest heavily to increase their interactions (Vale and Fernandes, 2017). As of 2019, the number of Instagram followers of the Spanish Real Madrid football club has exceeded 67 million and Twitter followers exceeded 31 million. The world-famous Portuguese football player Cristiano Ronaldo has 149 million Instagram followers and 75 million Twitter followers. On the other hand, since users have the opportunity to react by becoming participants in many social media sites, fans reflect their feelings of belonging to the teams they support, putting the stamp of "other" on people who do not agree with them and using hate language (Akin, 2010).

According to the Turkish Language Institution, hatred is defined as “the disgust and feeling towards wishing someone's unhappiness and evil.” Those who use hate speech see the members of the target group as enemies and degrade the dignity of the members of the target group by denying or belittling their individuality and differences. (Herz & Molnar, 2012) In the past, hate speech was performed through text messages (SMS), yet today song lyrics or interpersonal communication is mostly encountered on social media networks such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc. Considering that there are 2.27 million Facebook and 326 million Twitter users as of 2019, it should not be surprising to see the spread of each post. However, the struggle of social media sites against hate speech is insufficient. The main reason for this is each social media application makes its definitions of hate speech. For example, Facebook and Twitter define hate speech as “directly attacking people because of their race, ethnicity, national origin, religious belief, sexual orientation, social class, gender, sexual identity, serious illness or disability” (<http://facebook.com>, 2019). In both applications, it is concluded that hate speech is limited only in terms of race, origin, religious belief and gender, and sharing is not objectionable as long as personal rights and freedoms are not attacked on these issues. For example, while it is strictly forbidden to make a post that insults the nationality or race to which a football player is affiliated, there is no restriction on posts made directly to the same football player due to his performance and which can be considered insulting-derogatory in daily life.

Hate speech, which emerges as a natural reflection of violence and hooliganism in sports fans, also shows its effect on social media and increases the conflict between fans. It is not a coincidence that hate speech is on the rise, especially in derby matches where teams of the same city play against each other with high competitive intensity. Considering all these reasons, concerning hate speech, which contributes greatly to violence and hooliganism in sports, first of all, a legal definition of hate

crime and hate speech and its negative effects in new media environments should be discussed and questioned in detail.

Although the definition of hate speech was made with legal regulations after the Second World War, the regulations made in this field only aimed to prevent racist, religious hate crimes and xenophobia among European countries (<http://www.legal-project.org>). , 2019). Today, one of the most important reasons why such discourses cannot be prevented is that people see posts with hateful content as freedom of expression. According to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, freedom of expression is stated as a fundamental right that all people can enjoy. However, hate speech is defined as verbal attempts that violate the personal rights of other individuals. This results in the inability to make a sharp distinction between freedom of expression and hate speech in the virtual internet world (Erik Bleich, ‘The Rise of Hate Speech and Hate Crimes in Liberal Democracies’ (2011) 37 (6) Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 917).

This research aimed to examine the dimensions and content of hate speech shared on the official Twitter accounts of clubs in the fiercely competitive derbies of world football. Another aim of the study was to determine the similarities between the size of hate speech and the type of hate speech used between the clubs and countries examined.






















Research Model

Following the aim of the study, Qualitative research was performed by applying the content analysis method, which was a research model that “allows the examination of verbal, written and other materials in an objective and systematic way” (Tavşancıl & Aslan, 2001). Content analysis was thought to be a suitable method for examining social media in different sectors, especially in sports environments (Parganas, Anagnostopoulos and Chadwick, 2015).

Universe Sample

The most competitive derby competitions and clubs in world football were identified (<https://bleacherreport.com>, 2019). The sample consisted of 14 teams with more than 500 thousand Twitter followers and the condition of being considered the biggest derby in their league.

Table 1
Identified Clubs and Twitter Followers

Club Name and Twitter Address	Followers	League	Selected Competitor and Twitter Address	Followers
Barcelona  @FCBarcelona	31.459.000	Spanish La Liga 	Real Madrid  @realmadrid	33.379.000
Boca Juniors  @BocaJrsOficial	3.703.000	Argentine Primera Division 	River Plate  @RiverPlate	3.240.000
Borussia Dortmund  @BVB	3.431.000	German Bundesliga 	Schalke04  @s04	712.403
Celtic  @CelticFC	662.262	Scottish Premier League 	Rangers  @RangersFC	517.643
Fenerbahçe  @Fenerbahce	6.932.000	Turkish Super League 	Galatasaray  @GalatasaraySK	8.924.000
Inter  @Inter	2.052.000	Italian Serie A 	Milan  @acmilan	7.161.000
Liverpool  @LFC	13.173.000	English Premier Lig 	Manchester United  @ManUtd	20.730.000

Reference: <https://www.socialbakers.com/statistics/twitter/profiles/sport>

In the study, while examining the matches in which the above mentioned clubs faced each other, it was taken into account that they had met at least 2 times in 2019. The aim of this is to think that the examination and evaluation to be made over a single match and a single score will not give an accurate determination. In the competitions in which the clubs determined in 2019 played against each other, the replies to the posts made about derby matches on the relevant official Twitter accounts of the relevant clubs were examined, and the addresses to which the hateful posts were directed were recorded

Data Collection Tools

The Twitter accounts of the clubs were examined by taking into account the dates of the away competitions in 2019, when the league processes continued. The hate speech posts of the fans in the accounts of the clubs were pre-examined and classified as the type of hate speech and the team, athlete, referee and coach. Hate speech was formed in six different types and presented to the opinion of three experts who were competent in the field. As a result of the evaluation, hate speech was grouped under four different headings.

Table 2
Classification of Examined Posts by Categories

Type of Hate Speech		→	Addressee
1	Insulting Discourse (Swearing, offensive words, etc.)		➤ To the Supported Team
2	Targeting (holding accountability and openly blaming)		➤ To the Opponent Team
3	Othering (Humiliation, separation, humiliation, etc.)		➤ To the coaches
4	Violence (Threatening, using violent elements, etc.)		➤ To the Referees

Data collection was performed by the researcher himself. The official Twitter accounts of the football clubs included in the research were collected by the researcher following the content of insulting discourse, targeting, othering and violence between the dates specified. Tweets were grouped and separated according to categories via MS Excel program. A consensus was reached between the researcher and the expert about the category and the targets directed

Data Analysis

For the aim of the research, the Twitter accounts of the football clubs included in the study sample were carefully screened, and Tweets were grouped and separated according to categories via the MS Excel program. Determining the categories of the research, which category the data will be added to, and determining the limits of the data are defined as category reliability. Thanks to the category reliability, a consensus was achieved between the researcher and the expert. The reliability of the study was determined as 87%.

In this section, the content shared by the football clubs and social media practitioners included in the research on their Twitter accounts on the specified dates; insulting speech, targeting, othering and violence were grouped according to their categories and expressed as percentages and numbers.

Findings

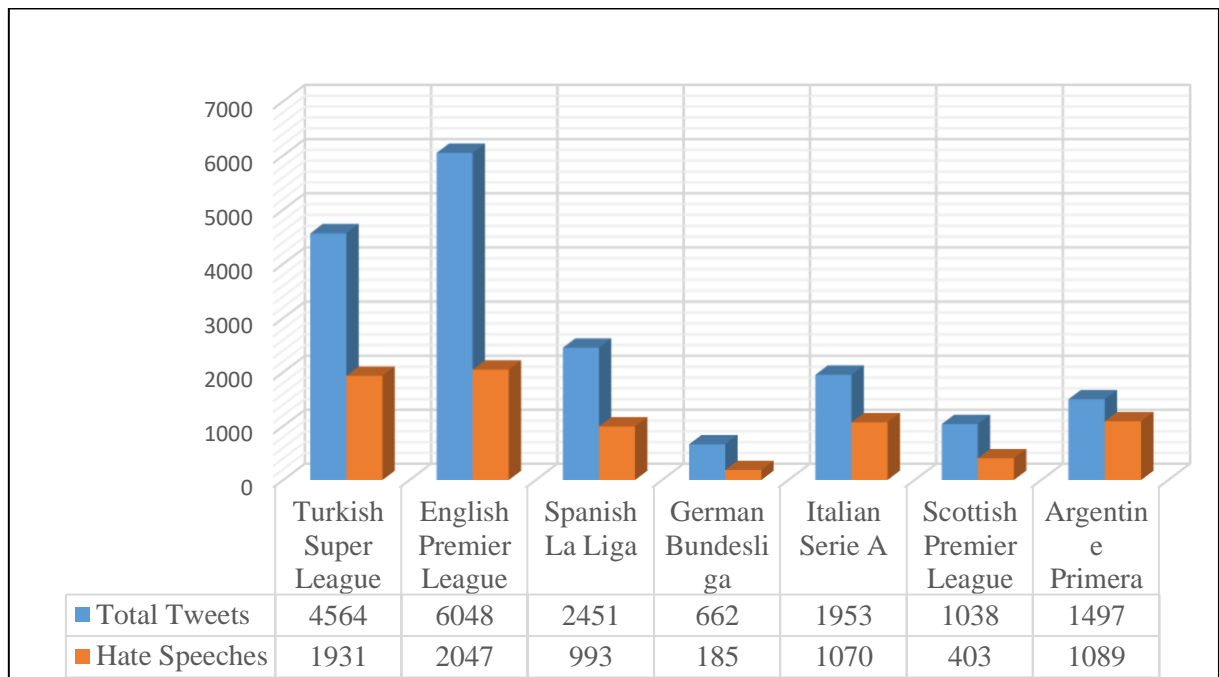


Chart 1. Total Number of Tweets and Tweets Containing Hate Speech in Derbies

In the review phase of the study, a total of 18249 tweets were subjected to content analysis, and it was determined that a total of 7718 tweets containing hate speech were sent. When the distribution of tweets containing hate speech among a total of 18249 tweets was analyzed, the football league with the highest rate was found as the Argentine Primera Division with 72.7% (1089/1497). The second high rate was determined as the Italian Serie A League with 54.7% (1070/1953), third was determined as the Turkish Super League with 42% (1931/4564), fourth was Spanish La Liga with 40.5% (993/2451), the Scottish League was in the fifth place with 38.82% (403/1038) and the English Premier League was in the sixth place with a rate of 33.64% (2047/6084). Among the countries examined, the country with the lowest rate of tweets containing hate speech was the German Bundesliga with a rate of 27.94% (185-662).

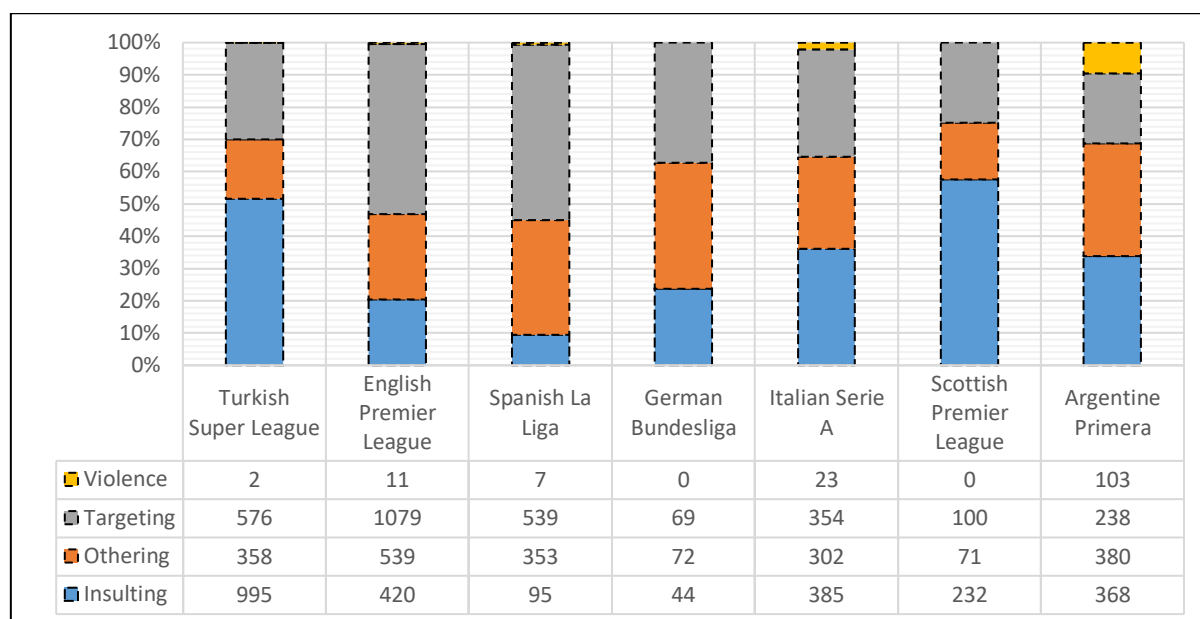
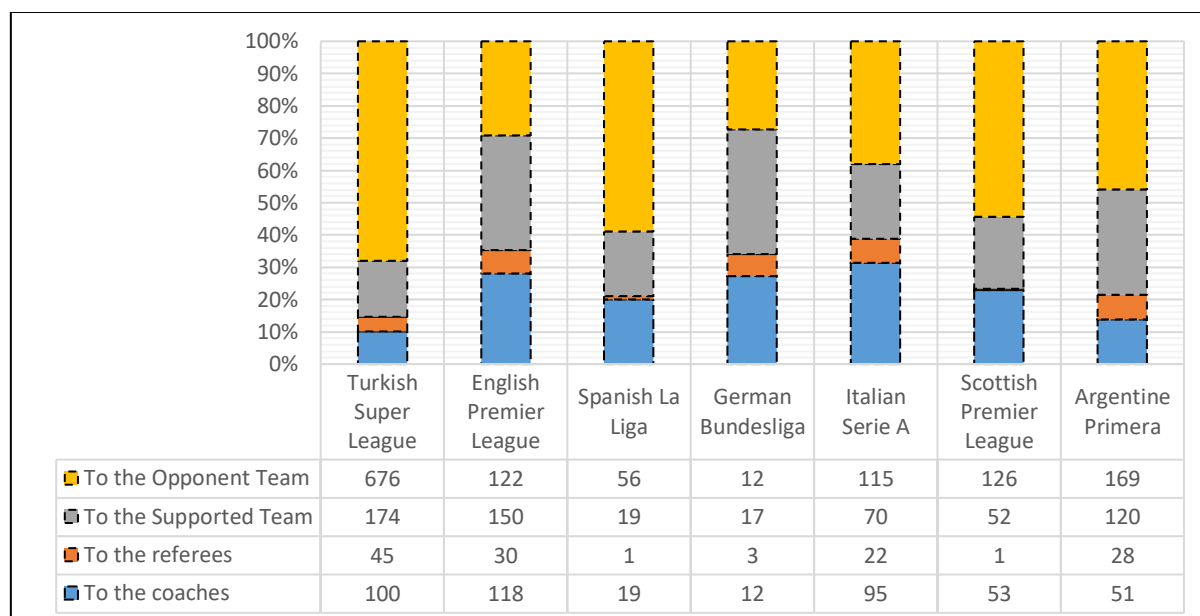


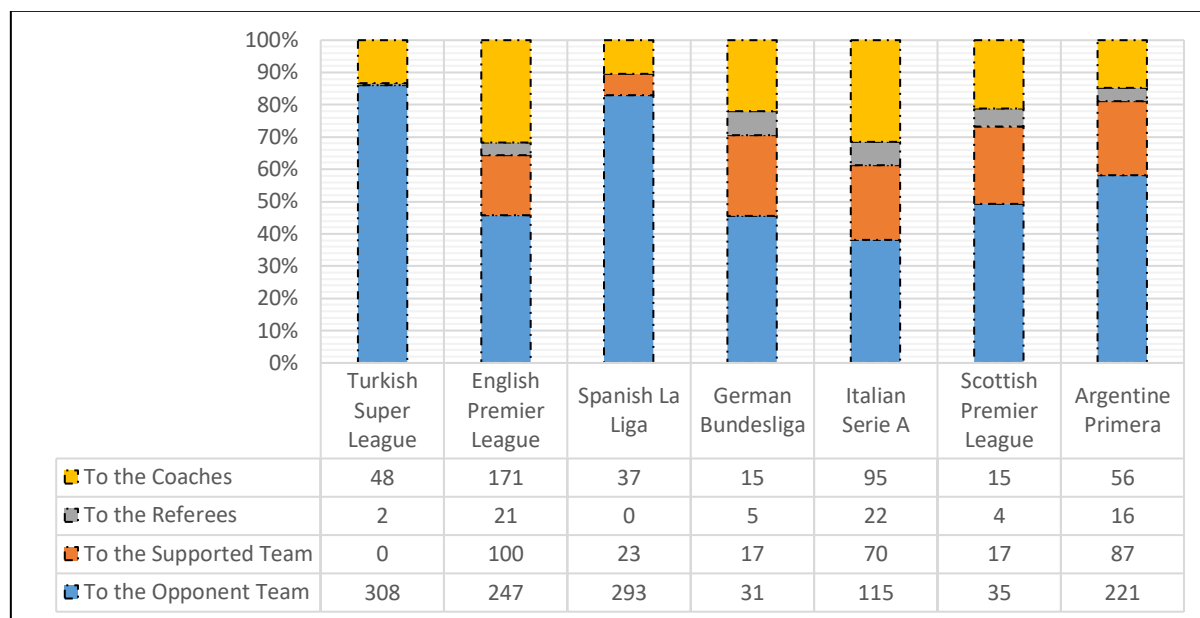
Chart 2. Number and Proportional Distribution of Types of Hate Speech Used in Derbies

It was determined that 38.33% (2959/7718) "Targeting" the most among the 7718 tweets that were found to contain hate speech. The second preferred method of the supporters who used hate speech was determined as "Insulting Discourse" with a rate of 32.89% (2539/7718) and "Othering" with a rate of 26.83% (2071/7718). The content of violent content of the fans was limited at 1.93% (149/7718).



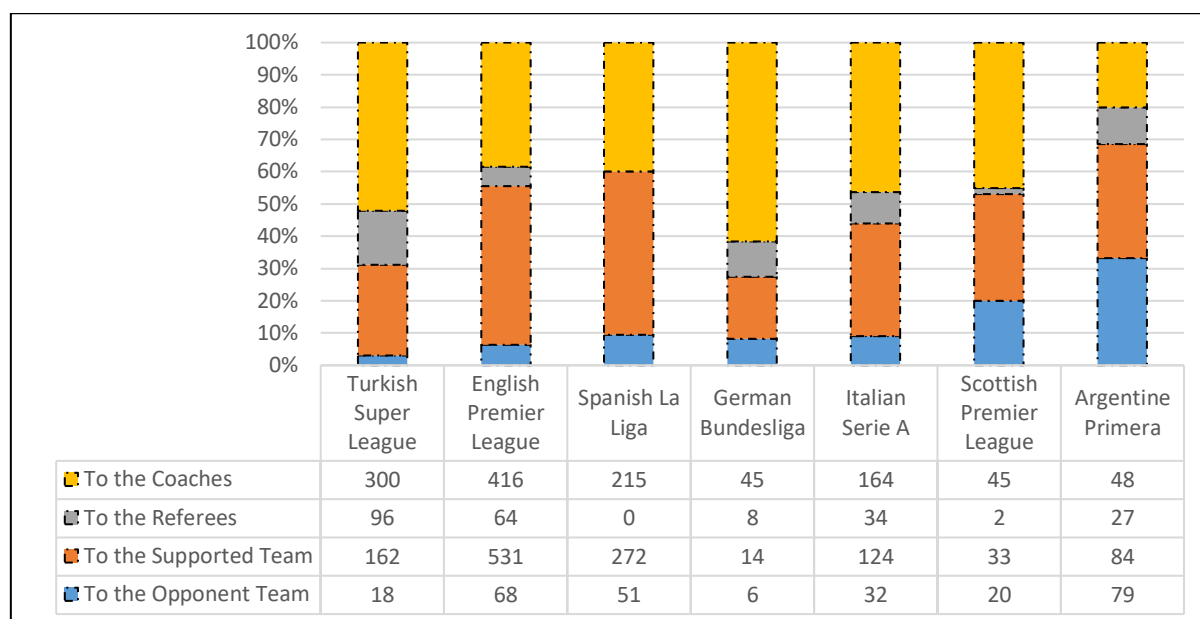
Graph 3. Distribution of Insulting Discourses and Addresses by Leagues

Super League with 67.9% (676/995) in the sub-dimension of "Insult Against the Opponent" of the category of sharing with swearing and insulting content, and the highest rate with 38.6% (17/44) in the "Insult Against Own Team" sub-dimension. In the German Bundesliga, "Insult Against Referees" sub-dimension, the highest rate was 7.6% (28/368) from the Argentine Primera Division, and in the "Insult Against Coaches" sub-dimension, determined as the Premier League with the rate of 28.1% (118-420).



Graph 4. Distribution of Discourses Containing Othering and Addresses by Leagues

In the sub-dimension of "Othering", the highest rate of posts containing 2071 tweets of "Othering Against the Opponent" in our study was identified in the Turkish Super League with 86.1%, the highest rate in the sub-dimension of "Othering Against the Team" was in the German Bundesliga with 25%, and the German Bundesliga ranks first with 7.3% in "Othering Against the Referee", and the English Premier League with 31.7% in the sub-dimension "Othering towards Coaches".



Graph 5. Distribution of Discourses Containing Targeting and Addresses by Leagues

In the investigation phase, 2959 messages originating from "Targeting" were detected in the tweets. The highest rate in the sub-dimension of "Targeting to the Opponent" of the sharing category containing Pointing items, the Argentine Primera Division with 33.1%, the highest ratio of La Liga with 50.4% in the sub-dimension of "Targeting for the Team", "Targeting the Referee" Super League with 16.6% in the sub-dimension, and Bundesliga with 61.6% in the sub-dimension "Targeting Goals for Coaches".

Discussion

The common feature of the derby matches examined within the scope of the research in terms of hate speech was that messages containing hate speech about all derby matches were shared on Twitter. In the distribution of tweets containing hate speech among 18249 tweets recorded in this direction and it was determined that the football league with the highest hate speech tweets rate was the Argentine Primera Division with 72.7%. Contrary to other derbies, messages about the Boca-River derby contain a high rate of violence at 9.4%. In the past, many fans lost their lives in the struggle between the two teams, which went down in history as a class struggle (Korstanje, 2014). The most striking example of this; After the 2 rival fans were killed because of the 2-0 defeat to River Plate, the fans of Boca made a "2-2" sign on the TV camera (Galeano, 1997). In our study, it was also seen that the supporters of the two teams insult each other at a rate of 58.1% in their messages. The most well-known reason for this is the fact that rich River Plate fans stamped poor Boca Juniors fans, who call themselves "cowardly chickens", as "skunks" (<https://www.hurriyet.com.tr>, 2019)

In our study, it was determined that the competition with the highest rate (57.5%) shared in the category of "Insulting Speech", which is one of the most common hate speech elements after

derby competitions, was the derby between two Scottish teams Celtic-Rangers. There were political and sectarian differences between the teams in Glasgow, Scotland's second-largest city, which has been in intense competition for 150 years (Clancy, 2010). The Rangers, which were loyal to Protestant traditions, have great support from Northern Ireland, while Celtic, being a club with Irish Catholic traditions, has great support from the Republic of Ireland (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2007). The most prominent hate speech in this derby was the posts containing insults and profanity directed at the opponent with 54.3%. Nevertheless, Scottish supporters seem to stay behind in othering their opponents and resorting to violence, despite political and sectarian differences. Baş and Göral (2018) conducted a study on the football fans of both clubs and concluded that the teams expressed an opinion that they should not provoke the fans with religious explanations. This result was like the result of our study. However, contrary to the research we compiled on Twitter, it was a matter of debate to what extent hate crimes and discourses can be prevented in this derby. Scottish fans were known to hang banners and cheer in stadiums, which would certainly be considered hate speech. Because of their loyalty to the United Kingdom and their opposition to Scotland's departure from the union, banners that read "Scotland's disgrace" were unfurled in Celtic stands and pointed to Rangers stands (<http://www.thecelticwiki.com>, 2017). In addition, humiliating banners against the Protestant identity of the Rangers continue to be unfurled from these stands. Bulut and Dever (2019) also drew attention to the banners of Celtic supporters in the Celtic-Rangers competitions with the phrase "Root in Hell". Rangers also carry banners that insult the Pope and the Vatican, to which the Catholic world was connected. This result: It can be interpreted that Scottish fans, unlike in the stands, did not have any derogatory expressions or othering against their opponents on social media, but prefer to show their reactions by insulting them.

In the derby competitions investigated in our study, hate speech was determined that the Real Madrid-Barcelona derby was the derby struggle with the highest share, with 54.2% in the "Targeting" category and 50.4% in the sub-dimension of "Targeting your own team". The reason for this can be shown in the comments made because of the struggles that ended with the victory of 3-0 and 1-0 Barcelona, as Real Madrid fans blame the players in their team for the bad score. Apart from this, a high rate of 83% was found in the sub-dimension of "othering the Rival" of the "othering" category. Among the reasons for this was the use of demeaning statements by the Barcelona fans on social media due to their victory and the discriminatory posts by the Real Madrid fans on the other side. In addition, it was seen that the posts were generally based on the political conflict between Spain and Catalonia, and both sides marginalize each other because of this rivalry.

As the main reason for this result detected in our study; In El Clasico, which was the scene of intense political competition, Barcelona can be defined as the representative of Catalonia and Real Madrid as the team of the Spanish royal family (Burns vd. 2008). Bulut and Dever (2019) also emphasize that Barcelona fans saw themselves as Catalans, not as Spanish citizens and that they open banners that "Catalonia is not Spain" and carry Catalonian flags in the stadiums. Gonzalez and Sole (2014) also analyzed the comments made on the Spanish sports newspaper Marca's website and detected more than 4,000 hate speeches in 10 days, in these comments, Barcelona fans accused Marca of being a "Real Madrid" supporter and Real Madrid fans accused Marca. Then fans concluded that they did not find the broadcasting approach of the Marca not aggressive enough against Barcelona.

Within the scope of the research, it was determined that 33.6% of the fans used hate speech in the Manchester United - Liverpool fight, which was selected from the English Premier League and described as a derby without political contention. When the shares made after the derby matches that resulted in 0-0 and 1-1 draws were examined, it was seen that the least amount of hate speech after the German Bundesliga in the general ranking is in the English Premier League derby struggle. Despite this, the Premier League was in the second rank among all leagues with 52.7% in the category of "Targeting". It was determined that club manager Ole Gunnar Solskjær and club players of the Manchester United team, who could not beat Liverpool on their own field in both competitions, were held responsible for bad football and were targeted.

According to Elgujja and Arimoro (2019), who obtained data parallel to the result in our study, this targeting was sometimes done due to the general appearance of the team or a play that directly affects the match. For example, in Chelsea, which had a bad image in the 2018-19 season, football player Jorginho was targeted on social media by the fans. In the related study, it was also stated that Crystal Palace player Wilfried Zaha, who gave his team a penalty in the last minute of the Crystal Palace - Arsenal match, was targeted on Twitter by Arsenal fans, despite the defence of Granit Xhaka, who gave him a penalty after the match.

The most striking result in the analysis we made about the posts used in the Manchester United - Liverpool derby was that the derby, where the most insulting/cursing coaches (28.1%) was in the Premier League, compared to other leagues. The direct addresses of 118 of the 420 insults/cursing content written in total were coaches. In addition, it was seen that the fans also direct such posts to the players they support. This result is in parallel with the results of Byrne and Corney's (2014) study. In the study, which examined the comments made on Twitter about the matches of league clubs, it

was concluded that English fans cursed their teams, players or coaches, instead of swearing at the opposing team.

Contrary to the English Premier League, in the Fenerbahçe-Galatasaray matches selected for hate speech in the Turkish Super League, the sharing of insults/cursing against the opponent ranks first among all derbies with 67.9%. Of the 995 abusive posts in total, 676 were directed to the opposing team and their fans. In addition, this derby took the lead as a derby with 86.1% of posts containing othering elements towards the opponent. In his study in 2013, Ulus noted that after the match between Fenerbahçe and Galatasaray, which Fenerbahçe won 2-1, the fans, even the players, cursed each other, which was also covered in many media organs, and that one fan was killed in the events that broke out.

Similarly, Özsoy and Yıldız (2013) stated that there were tense environments in social media, there were discourses that can provoke the fans, and hate speeches spread more easily and quickly in the pre-match and post-match posts in the uncontrolled environment of social media. In addition, Mil and Şanlı (2015) expressed the opinion that mutual communication in the form of a verbal duel in social media increased the competition, tension, and fanaticism among the fans. Ekmekçi and Sönmezoğlu (2019) also state that club presidents cause hostility among the fans by using discriminatory and othering expressions.

According to Oran (2012: 44), hate speech was a prerequisite for committing a hate crime. One of the biggest incidents in which hate speech, which was frequently used by fans, media, football players and sports managers, turned into a hate crime was the murder of Fenerbahçe supporter Burak Yıldırım by stabbing in Istanbul after the Fenerbahçe-Galatasaray derby match played in 2013. In the statements made in the newspapers after the incident, the media was among the many accused as the instigator of the murder. On the first page of the May 14, 2013, issue of the Fanatik Newspaper, the article titled "Who will lift this coffin", a self-criticism was made as follows: "The players who terrorize the pitch... Irresponsible managers who agitate the fans... Bullshit programs, hooligans with commentaries written under them... The so-called journalists who sow the seeds of hatred... And the state, which was turning a blind eye to them for years... From the minister to the media, we are all guilty..." (Özsoy and Yıldız, 2013).

Results

Hate speech, which constitutes a major problem in the field of social communication, was perceived to be limited only to issues such as race, religion, and sexual identity in the countries

examined in our study, and it was seen that fans often target football teams, football players, coaches, or referees with abusive, humiliating, othering or accusatory comments on social media. When we look at the derbies of the countries within the scope of the study, partially close results were found in the use of hate speech, but it was seen that the differentiation between derbies has increased in the sub-dimensions of hate speech. Excluding the Argentine Primera Division, where derby competition was intense and the scene of bloody events from time to time, it was understood that the violent elements in other derby competitions were not reflected by the fans on social media, and the hate speech used was not at a low level.

When we look at the results obtained because of the research, it was seen that the intensity of sharing profanity-insulting content did not differ according to the countries, but there were differences when the people or teams to which these posts were directed were considered. While insulting and profanity messages towards the opposing team came to the fore in the Turkish Super League, Spanish La Liga, Argentine Primera Division, Italian Serie A and Scottish Premier League, the messages of the fans in this category in the English Premier League and the German Bundesliga came to the fore because of the bad results, and it was determined that they directed these messages towards their teams. In humiliating or othering the opponent, the Turkish Super League was at the top, and the results in this league were like Spanish La Liga. The people targeted by the fans also differ according to the countries due to bad results. While coaches were targeted in the Turkish Super League, German Bundesliga and Scottish Premier League, team players were blamed in the English Premier League and Spanish La Liga. The league in which the referees were targeted the most was determined as the Turkish Super League.

In conclusion, it was known that such posts, which can be easily encountered by football players and family members from every country and their feelings were hurt, also fed violence and hooliganism in sports. To end such posts, which increase the polarization between the parties, violate the spirit of Fair-Play in sports, and attack individual rights and freedoms, it was necessary to define hate speech in social media clearly, to impose restrictions or penalties on users who make such posts, and to enact appropriate laws. In addition, it was seen as an important step in the prevention of hate speech that athletes and managers put an end to their polarizing statements and that the media did not use provocative messages in the comments and headlines.

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