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Legitimizing Mediated Islamophobic Actions: Example "X"

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Abstract

The media plays an active role in spreading Islamophobia, with an increase in Islamophobic content and discourses in new media in recent years leading academic studies to focus on this issue. New media tools offer free and unlimited sharing opportunities to their users, becoming platforms where hate speech against religious groups is developed and spread. One such platform where freedom of speech is violated is X, formerly known as Twitter. It is crucial to determine the approach of content on social media platforms towards Islam, Muslims, and their sacred values. This study discusses posts made through burning/tearing actions on the X platform, covering the first 9 months of 2023. The findings, based on posts from 23 X accounts analyzed using qualitative-oriented content analysis, reveal that concepts related to Islam and Muslims with negative connotations were frequently used. The posts framed a narrative portraying Islam and Muslims as pro-violence, intolerant, and hostile. Acts of burning and tearing the Holy Quran were largely justified as freedom of speech, with a narrative of exclusion, accusation, distortion, and disdain towards Muslims who disagreed.

Keywords: Islamophobia, Anti-Islamism, Social Media, Platform X

Medyatik İslamofobik Eylemlerin Meşrulaştırılması: "X" Örneği

Öz

İslamofobi'nin yaygınlık kazanmasında medya aktif olarak rol oynamaktadır. Son yıllarda yeni medyada artan İslamofobik içerikler ve söylemler akademik çalışmaların yönünü bu ilişkiselliğe odaklamıştır. Kullanıcılarına özgür ve sınırsız paylaşım yapma imkanı sağlayan yeni medya, bazı çevrelerin dinî inanç gruplarına yönelik nefret söylemini yeniden inşa ettiği mecra haline dönüşmüştür. İfade özgürlüğünün ihlal edildiği bu alanlardan biri X eski adıyla Twitter'dır. Sosyal medya platformlarından yapılmış olan içeriklerin de bu noktada İslam'a, Müslümanlara ve kutsal değerlerine yaklaşımının tespit edilmesi büyük önem arz etmektedir. Bu çalışmada X platformu üzerinden 2023 yılının ilk 9 ayını kapsayacak şekilde kuran yakma/yırtma eylemleri ile yapılmış olan paylaşımlar ele alınmıştır. Nitel yönelimli içerik analizi tekniği ile incelenen 23 X hesabından yapılmış olan paylaşımlar araştırmanın verilerini oluşturmuştur. Araştırma sonucunda İslam ve Müslümanlarla bağlantılı ve olumsuz anlamlar taşıyan kavramların sıklıkla kullanıldığı tespit edilmiş, paylaşımlarda İslam ve Müslümanların şiddet taraftarı yanlısı, hoşgörüsüz ve düşman olduğu anlatımının çerçevelendiği görülmüştür. Kur'an-ı Kerim yakma ve yırtma eylemlerinin büyük oranda ifade özgürlüğü çerçevesinde değerlendirildiği ve bunu bu şekilde kabul etmeyen Müslümanlara karşı bir dışlama, suçlama, çarpıtma ve küçümseme anlatımının var olduğu gözlemlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İslamofobi, İslam Karşıtlığı, Sosyal Medya, X Platformu

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Introduction

The concept of Islamophobia is defined as an irrational fear and phobia seen in the Western world, which includes holding grudges, hatred and hostility towards Islam, excluding Muslims and disliking them (Maussen, 2006, p. 6; Temel, 2019, p. 276-277). Islamophobia, which emerges from the combination of the words "Islam and Phobia", means "Fear of Islam" and characterizes the fear of Islam. Throughout history, the West has constantly confronted Islam and Muslims. As Huntington predicted, there is a polarization in the form of "The West and The Rest (Huntington, 1995). The West has developed an Orientalist perspective. Anti-Islamic attitudes and behaviors that we have started to hear frequently in recent years, especially in Western countries, cause the issue of Islamophobia to constantly come to the fore and cause the concept to rapidly circulate and become institutionalized on a global scale.

Although Islamophobia seems to be a popular concept in recent years, anti-Islamism, hatred and grudge against Muslims is an issue that has historical depth and includes many political, economic, religious and historical factors. The church claimed that the Christian religion was in danger due to factors such as the emergence of Islam and its rapid spread in the West, and the increase in the Muslim population, and fueled the hostility towards Islam with the policies and public opinion it created, and ensured that Muslims were perceived as a threat to themselves (Temel, 2019, p. 277-279). Forces that had this mentality in the past tend to maintain the same attitudes and behaviors today, with newly developed arguments and policies.

Media has an important role in the rise of Islamophobia. Since the 20th and 21st centuries, mass media have had a significant impact on the increase of anti-Islamic sentiment and reaching a certain level. Global print media, audiovisual media, social media, also known as new media, carry out racist activities aimed at marginalizing Islam and Muslims (Çınar, 2021, p. 290-291). While the media has always served as an important propaganda tool in the circulation of the concept of Islamophobia, events such as violence, terrorism and perversion have been presented to the public on television, magazines, newspapers and social media by trying to associate them with the Islam religion and Muslims.

With the spread of new communication technologies and their widespread use in society, Islamophobic expressions have become widespread by being transformed into new forms, and the content produced through these communication channels has begun to be served and delivered to large audiences. The negative perspective towards Islam has begun to be legitimized and sustained under the name of free thought through these new media tools.

The fact that the media plays an active role in the spread of Islamophobia has caused academic studies to focus on this relationship. In this context, academic studies have been conducted in different departments on Islamophobia and media issues, especially in Western countries, and these have partially affected scientific studies in Türkiye (Temel, 2023, p. 94). The free and unlimited sharing opportunities offered by new media tools to their users have become places where hate speech against religious belief groups is developed and spread by some circles. One of these areas where freedom of expression is violated is X, formerly known as Twitter. At this point, it is of great importance to determine the approach of the contents of social media platforms, which are new media tools, to Islam, Muslims and their sacred values. Within the scope of this study, the posts about the Quran burning/tearing actions that took place in the first 9 months of 2023 on X, a social media application, were discussed. While the content shared from 23 X accounts constituted the findings of the research, a qualitative-oriented content analysis method was preferred to determine with which concepts and expressions the shares were framed.

1. A Statistical Look at the Increasing Islamophobic Acts in Europe

Underlying Westerners' fears, Islamophobic behaviors and hate speeches towards Islam and Muslims are political and religious reasons brought about by historical contradictions and recent immigration to Europe and terrorist incidents. As seen in the historical timeline, Europe has created various enemies for itself in certain periods. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the threat of Marxism and Communism, which were perceived as enemies, began to decrease, which increased the need to create a new ideological enemy in the Western World. This time the new enemy was Islam and Muslims. The prejudice against Islam and Muslims, which started especially after the terrorist incident of September 11, 2001, increased and became radical with the terrorist acts that took place in Istanbul in 2003, Madrid in 2004, London in 2005 and finally Paris in 2015 (Kedikli and Akça, 2017, p. 59).

Another important problem in the increase of Islamophobic actions in Europe is the immigration issue. The number of immigrants is increasing day by day in Europe, as well as throughout the world. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) 2022 World Migration Report, there are 281 million immigrants worldwide as of 2020. The number of immigrants in Europe is 87 million. The number of international immigrants has increased by approximately 78% in the last thirty years (McAuliffe and Triandafyllidou, 2022).

Increases in the number of immigrants have revealed some problems. People living in European countries receiving immigrants and far-right parties see immigrants as a security threat. As a result of the surveys conducted by the Council of Europe, it has been observed that Europeans have thoughts such as immigrants living in their countries greatly increase crime rates, cause unemployment, disrupt the social order, reduce the level of education, and exclude women (Council Of Europe, 2022). The West perceives the migration of Muslims to Europe as a threat, and the public is driven to discrimination by using mass media. A significant portion of those who immigrated to Europe are Muslims. Showing that Muslim immigrants are largely responsible for the social and economic problems in Europe has led to the formation of a group that sees Islam and Muslims as a threat. This mass, created by the media, carries out both physical and verbal attacks against Muslims. It is possible to see the findings of these increasing attacks in the reports published recently.

According to the European Islamophobia Report (EIR) 2022, 67% of attacks against faith in the Netherlands were committed against Muslims. 49% of the 792 hate crimes committed in Denmark between 2017 and 2021 were committed against Muslims. It was stated that between March 2021 and March 2022, 3,459 of the 8,730 faith-related crimes in England and Galler were against Muslims. According to the report, it was determined that 20% of the hate speech on social media in Spain was anti-Islamic (Bayraklı & Hafez, 2023).

According to the 2022 report of the Brussels-based Collective Against Islamophobia in Europe (CCIE), CCIE received 787 applications last year and found that 527 of them were cases of Islamophobia. These cases included actions such as discrimination, incitement, hate crime, insult, physical attack and moral harassment. Although there are various places where Islamophobia occurs, schools are recorded as places where such cases are frequently seen. The 115 cases took place in schools of varying degrees, and 83 of them were found to be discrimination against girls' clothing choices (CCIE, 2022).

The Anti-Discrimination Office (ADS) affiliated with the Turkish-Islamic Union of Religious Affairs (DİTİB) recorded that 35 mosque attacks were carried out in Germany in 2022 in its report on mosque attacks. According to ADS's data, this number was determined to be 44 in 2021 (Kaya, 2023).

Another important report that thoroughly examines hostility towards Islam in Germany was published by the German Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs and Homeland (Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat) in 2023. The report, completed after a 2-year study by the "Independent Group of Experts on Anti-Muslim Hostility" created by the Federal Government, was published in 2023. The report is 400 pages and based on 16 new studies. The report, which approaches hostility towards Islam in Germany from multiple perspectives and offers solutions, is important in showing that racism and specifically hostility towards Islam have become a serious problem in Germany and European countries. According to the report, the media portrays a negative image of Islam and Muslims. According to the analysis of more than 20,000 content, 89% of TV programs and 57% of printed news contain negativity such as war, terrorism and crime. On the social media side, more than half a million posts and comments about Islam on channels such as Facebook, Telegram, and X evaluate Islam and Muslims negatively (Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat, 2023).

The most obvious and radical Islamophobic actions in Europe in recent years can be shown as the burning and tearing of the Quran, the holy book of Muslims. These actions, which are evaluated in the context of freedom of thought on the European side, have been frequently experienced in Sweden recently. Actions of burning and tearing the Holy Quran, which also find support in other European countries, continue to increase. As seen in Table 1, 8 different actions reflected in the media took place between January 2023 and September 2023.

Table 1. Actions of Burning/Tearing the Holy Quran

Year	Country	Incident
2020 (August)	Norway (Oslo)	Action of Tearing the Holy Quran
2022 (July)	Norway (Oslo)	Action of Burning the Holy Quran
2023 (January)	Sweden (Stockholm)	Action of Burning the Holy Quran
2023 (January)	Denmark (Kopenhag)	Action of Burning the Holy Quran
2023 (February)	Netherlands (Utrecht)	Action of Tearing the Holy Quran
2023 (June)	Sweden (Stockholm)	Action of Burning the Holy Quran
2023 (July)	Germany (Baden-Württemberg)	Action of Burning the Holy Quran
2023 (August)	Netherlands (Lahey)	Action of Tearing the Holy Quran
2023 (September)	Netherlands (Lahey)	Action of Tearing the Holy Quran
2023 (September)	Sweden (Malmö)	Action of Burning the Holy Quran

Sources: (Euronews, 2020; Karadağ, 2023; Wagensveld, 2023; Emirler, 2023).

2. New Media and Islamophobia

Media is a guiding power tool over societies. Media has always had the ability to influence the perception, attitude and behavior of societies from past to present. The media has always been successful in making the masses believe in the reality it has created and creating a perception to legitimize it (Çınar, 2021, p. 296). Mass media are used in the process of manipulating information, creating perception and directing for ideological/economic reasons. Media has a significant power in conveying events, ideas and thoughts and presenting them from the window they want. In addition to traditional media tools, the tools we call new media today also have a high potential to create perception and image on large audiences, or to change existing perceptions and opinions (Arslan, 2019, p. 6).

Since the 20th and 21st centuries, mass media have played an active role in the development of anti-Islamic sentiment. Violence and terrorist incidents were tried to be shown in a negative framework by trying to associate them with Islam and Muslims through traditional media tools. Barbarian, lustful, reactionary, violent Muslim images have been produced through cinema productions, and with the opportunities offered by new media tools, these Islamophobic contents have been transformed into forms that appeal to everyone (Temel, 2023, p .94).

Developments in information and communication technologies provide new media users with a number of new opportunities and conveniences. New media is easily accessible and offers its users the opportunity to be consumers, producers and distributors at the same time (Öztürk, 2015, p.294). The free structure of new media provides opportunities for some groups and individuals for Islamophobic productions. Nowadays, there are groups and individuals who contain hate speech based on religion, race and gender and spread this content through various social networks and different sources. There is no control mechanism or editorial oversight in this matter, which turns users into producers. In this case, messages seen as hate speech can easily circulate and reach large audiences (Somuncu, 2023).

Social media networks, defined as new media environments such as Facebook, X, YouTube, Instagram, etc., are seen as platforms where hate language against Muslims and Islam can be easily developed and disseminated all over the world, especially in Europe. With the spread of the internet, as well as traditional mass media, and the increasing prevalence of Islamophobic elements in new media environments, the fight against Islamohobia has moved to these areas. International reports and studies on social media show how new media is an effective tool in producing Islamophobic content (Koç, 2018, p. 212). Contrary to traditional media, the right to freedom is shown as a legal basis in Islamophobic actions carried out in new media environments. The best example of this was the statement of Facebook's CEO, Mark Zuckerberg. Zuckerberg said that no negative criticism is made against Islam and Muslims on social media channels and that every network user is free to express their opinions (Kılıç and Acar, 2022, p. 802).

As the number of users of social media platforms increases in society, Islamophobic content produced by individuals and institutions that are prejudiced against Islam and Muslims has increased. Compared to this aspect, social media makes anti-Islamic attitudes and actions visible and reaches large audiences more effectively than traditional media (Tam, 2021, p. 292-293).

When the literature is examined, there are many studies showing the dominance of new media in creating Islamophobic actions and the perception of Islamophobia. In a study conducted by Carnerero and Azeez (2016), the content of more than 10,000 posts was examined. It was determined that in 10,025 posts under the hashtag #jihad, the words attack 364 times, kill 354 times, hate 150 times, fight 104 times, rape 59 times, shoot 49 times and kill 46 times were used. In another research conducted by Koçer and Yazıcı (2018), it is seen that they reached conclusions that humiliate and marginalize Islam and Muslims on cartoons shared on the Twitter account of Charlie Hebdo Magazine. According to Koçer and Yazıcı, the magazine's Twitter account tried to keep the fear of Islamophobia alive with negative discourses such as hatred, discrimination, and racism. In his study Koç (2018), investigated how Islamophobic discourse was produced on Facebook. Koç also examined the posts of two groups on the Facebook platform with critical discourse analysis. Koç has determined that users in the groups who are prejudiced against Islam and Muslims, do not know the Islamic religion correctly, and behave aggressively and do not tolerate Muslims in other groups on Facebook. In their research conducted in Germany, they examined user comments on videos on the YouTube platform. The findings revealed that user comments produced prejudices against Islam and Muslims, that Christianity and Islam were recreated as two opposites, and that there were explicit and implicit discriminatory expressions (Ernst et al., 2017) In his examination of the "Karikateist" page, an Instagram account, Somuncu and Uslu (2023) found that in the shared content, Islam was positioned as a reactionary, perverted religion, and Muslims were positioned as

bigots, liars, uneducated, perverted, and people with pedophile attitudes In his study on Twitter, a social media platform, Evolvi (2018) analyzed 1329 posts that he found to contain Islamophobic content. Analysis of tweets has revealed that online Islamophobia includes narratives that frame Muslims as violent, backward, and unable to adapt to Western values.

Social media channels are important in the production and publication of Islamophobic content. In particular, the platform, now known as X, formerly known as Twitter, plays an important role in allowing individuals or institutions to express their thoughts freely and to large audiences.

3. Research: Legitimizing Islamophobic Actions

3.1. Purpose and Importance of the Research

The spread of new communication technologies and the emergence of new media channels play an important role in producing, disseminating and legitimizing Islamophobic discourses. At this point, it is of great importance to determine the approach of the contents of social media platforms, which are new media tools, to Islam, Muslims and their sacred values.

In this study, posts related to the actions of burning and tearing the Quran that took place in various European countries on X, a social media platform, in 2023 were examined. Determining with which concepts and expressions the contents of the study are framed will provide an important framework for the relationship between social media and Islamophobia.

In addition, the fact that new media tools, which have the effect of shaping daily life and the power to create public opinion by bringing people together, pave the way for a platform that can create Islamophobic language, and the fact that new media tools are uncontrolled against content that triggers anti-Islamism, makes this issue even more debatable.

3.2. Design and Method of the Research

Qualitative-oriented content analysis was preferred in order to determine the contents of the X posts examined within the scope of the research with quantitative and qualitative data and to reveal the dominant meaning in the posts.

Content analysis provides a systematic opportunity for people doing research in the field of social sciences to gain meaning from various documents and all kinds of recorded documents and archives (Demirci and Köseli, 2014). Content analysis focuses on the message carried by the text and the meaning along with the information it conveys, based on the analysis of texts recorded in a certain way (Yıldırım, 2015). Content analysis, which is an analysis method rather than an observation method, prepares content by considering concrete communication materials rather than asking questions. Thus, data hidden in communication tools is revealed (Yengin, 2017). Content analysis not only reveals the quantitative elements in the written text, but also focuses on meanings with the help of codes and themes (Bekiroğlu and Bal, 2013, p181). It aims to reveal the messages conveyed to the public through messages/data (especially media messages) and the ideologies that are tried to be dominated (Yaylagül, 2016, p. 8). Unlike quantitative content analysis, qualitative-oriented content analysis uses qualitative or interpretive types along with numerical data and sees the elements to be examined as a cultural object with cultural meaning (Neuman, 2014, p. 466-467). and investigates the contexts between the data.

In the study, firstly, the media contents shared on the X platform were examined. Then, the words/concepts used in association with the actions of burning/tearing the Holy Quran were categorized according to their meanings. Categories were examined by qualitatively oriented content analysis method within the framework of the research questions.

3.3. Scope and Limitations of the Research

Within the scope of the research, a general search was made between January 1 and September 30, 2023, using the advanced search feature on the X platform, by entering the #quranburn and #burnquran tags, also known as hashtags (#), and the phrase "Acts of burning/destroying the Quran".

As a result of the search results, 23 contents that were public (anonymous) and had an appearance appropriate to the subject of the study, among the most popular and most interacted posts, were included in the scope of the research. These posts remain up-to-date and are accessible to everyone. While 20 of the posts consisted of text only, 3 of them were data used together with text and visuals and were included in the evaluation.

3.4. Research Questions

The research questions prepared within the scope of the study and used to test the subject of the research / test the hypotheses are as follows:

1- What are the concepts used regarding the actions of burning/tearing the Holy Quran?

2- In what contexts the actions of tearing/burning Holy Quran were framed?

3- What is the type of the posts? (Image, Text)

4. Results

The findings obtained within the scope of the research are as follows:

Table 2. Examined Accounts and Number of Followers[*]

No	Name of the Account	Number of Followers
1	@ExMuslimBlogger	8.934
2	@PontusHallden	914
3	@TallDarkGru	906
4	@be_A_looser	603
5	@YasMohammedxx	146.900
6	@Hardley76	1.488
7	@yesihavereadit	329
8	@arnold_rik	3.135
9	@Tweet_Marietje	266
10	@CNDNPT	54
11	@NotSilentIndian	225
12	@glarb_glorb	34
13	@LesterPaul58	284
14	@MarkSPfeiffer1	44
15	@AertgeertsRoger	822
16	@yellowdaiisy	1.168
17	@jean_yc8	66
18	@marpl39185450	52
19	@WilfredQuadros1	11.600
20	@marjanpodlogar	987
21	@Surfshark123	89
22	@world18288658	75
23	@peratviter	465

According to the data in Table 2, it was determined that the number of followers varied. It can be seen that there are 2 accounts with more than 10 thousand followers, 2 accounts with 5 thousand to 10 thousand followers, and 3 accounts with 1 thousand or more followers. There are 7 accounts with less than 100 followers.

Table 3. Statistical Information on Shares and Comments on Quran Burning/Tearing Actions

No	Name of the Account	Type of Content	Likes	Retweets	Views	Comments	Type of Post
1	@ExMuslimBlogger	Original Content/ Production	188	74	4.351	9	Text
2	@PontusHallden	Original Content/ Production	85	10	5.010	13	Text
3	@TallDarkGru	Comment	-	-	850	-	Text / Image
4	@be_A_looser	Original Content/ Production	441	71	44.700	71	Text / Image
5	@YasMohammedxx	Comment	62	2	1865	-	Text / Image
6	@Hardley76	Comment	-	-	3.476	-	Text
7	@yesihavereadit	Comment	20	-	712	-	Text
8	@arnold_rik	Comment	-	-	304	-	Text
9	@Tweet_Marietje	Comment			855		Text
10	@CNDNPT	Comment	4	-	561	1	Text
11	@NotSilentIndian	Comment	9	-	413	-	Text
12	@glarb_glorb	Comment	1	-	17	-	Text
13	@LesterPaul58	Comment	-	-	206	-	Text
14	@MarkSPfeiffer1	Comment	-	-	77	-	Text
15	@AertgeertsRoger	Comment	6	-	270	1	Text
16	@yellowdaiisy	Comment	3	1	553	-	Text
17	@jean_yc8	Comment	-	-	14	-	Text
18	@marpl39185450	Comment	-	-	16	-	Text
19	@WilfredQuadros1	Comment	-	-	144	-	Text
20	@marjanpodlogar	Comment	-	-	31	-	Text
21	@Surfshark123	Comment	-	-	74	-	Text
22	@world18288658	Comment	-	-	74	-	Text
23	@peratviter	Comment	1	-	21	-	Text

When the statistical information in Table 3 is examined, it has been determined that the accounts mostly share by commenting on the pages, while some accounts share by producing original content regarding the actions of burning/tearing the Holy Quran. Of the 23 posts examined, 3 were used together with text and visuals. 20 of them consist only of texts.

Table 4. Words Used in Posts About Burning/Tearing the Holy Quran

Terms	Number
Enemy/Hate/Violent/Intolerant/Aggressive	12
Freedom/Freedom of Speech/Right	11
Burn/Tear/Burning a Book/Tearing a Book	10
Terrorism/Terrorist/Islamic Terrorism/Gang/Arsonist/Bandit	4
Middle Ages/Danger/Trouble/Chaos/Uncivilized	4
Immigration/Immigrant/Refugee/Occupier/Deport	3
Islamist/Radical Islamist	3
Other Terms	20
Total:	66

According to the findings in Table 4, the number of words and concepts featured in the posts is quite high. Therefore, words/concepts with similar content were grouped in order to make sense of the obtained data. In terms of other concepts, non-Islamophobic words such as religion, Muslim, book, sect, Quran, mosque, worship, belief and Islam are grouped.
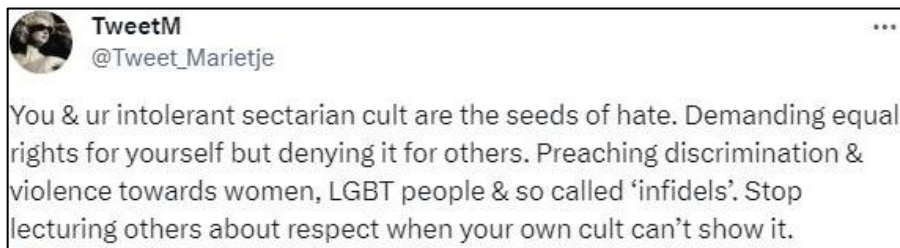
As seen in Table 4, when we look at the word groups that appeared 10 or more times in the posts, the word group "Enemy/Hate/Violent/ Intolerant/Aggressive", which appeared 12 times, attracts attention. In this context, it has been determined that there are many expressions in the content of the posts that emphasize violence and enemy expressions and portray Islam and Muslims as violent, intolerant and aggressive. It was determined that the word group "Freedom/Freedom of Speech/Right" was used 10 times, and another word group, "Burn/Tear/Burning a Book/Tearing a Book", was also included in the content 10 times. It has been determined that the use of these words in the coded sharing contents attempts to legitimize the acts of burning and tearing the Holy Quran, and that there are many expressions emphasizing that this is a form of freedom of expression.

Table 5. Prominent Themes in Posts about Burning/Tearing the Holy Quran

Terms	Number
Burning/tearing the Holy Quran is seen as freedom of expression.	9
The Holy Quran is defined as a normal book, not a holy book.	4
There is no problem in damaging holy books (Quran, etc.).	4
There is exclusion/contempt and blame for Islam and Muslims.	14
Total:	31

According to the findings in Table 5, 31 themes were identified. In determining the themes, word usage and sentence expression were taken into consideration. In this context, 14 themes were identified in which Islam and Muslims were depicted as excluded, blamed and belittled. The number of themes in which acts of burning/tearing the Holy Quran are seen and evaluated as freedom of expression has been determined as 9. It has been determined that there are four themes that build the meaning that the Holy Quran is an ordinary book. The number of themes stating that there is no problem in damaging any book was found to be 4. It is possible to give the following examples of posts used regarding concepts that exclude, belittle and blame Islam and Muslims:

Image 1. Examples of posts that exclude, belittle and accuse Islam and Muslims

TweetM
@Tweet_Marietje

You & ur intolerant sectarian cult are the seeds of hate. Demanding equal rights for yourself but denying it for others. Preaching discrimination & violence towards women, LGBT people & so called 'infidels'. Stop lecturing others about respect when your own cult can't show it.

Source: TweetM (nd) and Carter

Image 2. Examples of posts that exclude, belittle and accuse Islam and Muslims

mar pl
@marpl39185450

Time to deport all muslims from Sweden. Europe for Europeans, not for invaders from 3rd world countries.

Source: Marpl (nd) and Carter

Examples of posts where acts of burning/tearing the Holy Quran are seen and evaluated as freedom of speech are as follows:

Image 3. Posts in which the burning/tearing of the Holy Quran is seen as freedom of expression

Rik Arnold 🇳🇱
@arnold_rik

It's called freedom of speech.

Get used to it and if not, go somewhere els👋

Source: Arnold (nd) and Carter (nd)

Image 4. Posts in which the burning/tearing of the Holy Quran is seen as freedom of expression

Michael j Hunt
@yesihavereadit

If you don't like free speech, simple, try shutting YOUR gob!

Source: Hunt (nd) and Carter (nd)

Examples of posts that indicate that the Holy Quran is an ordinary book are as follows:

Image 5. Posts that construct the meaning that the Holy Qur'an is an ordinary book

🇨🇦**Tarulata Tasnim**
@ExMuslimBlogger

Scriptures need to be burnt, torn or flushed in toilet to break taboos. A book can say I deserve to burn in hell,i could be punished to death for leaving my faith. But I'm not allowed to burn or insult such a book?when i purchase it i have right to destroy or pee on it #BurnQuran
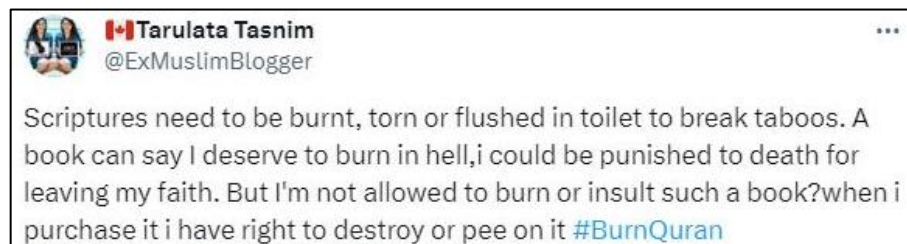
Source: Tansim (nd) and Navabi (nd)

Image 6. Posts that construct the meaning that the Holy Qur'an is an ordinary book
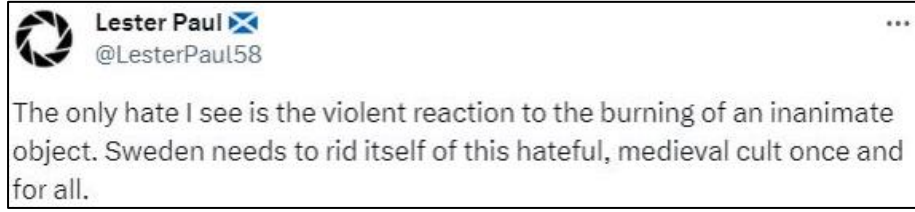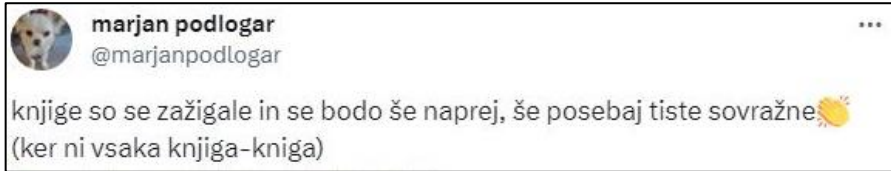

Source: Paul (nd) and Carter (nd)

Examples of themes that indicate that it is okay to damage any book include:

Image 7. Posts expressing that it is okay to damage a book
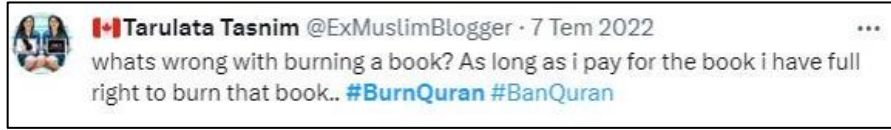
Source: Tansim (nd) and Navabi (nd)

Image 8. Posts expressing that it is okay to damage a book

Source: Podlogar (2023)

Quran Burning/Tearing Actions and Text Sharing with Images:

Image 9. Sharing the actions of burning/tearing the Holy Quran with visuals

Source: Mohammed (nd) and Mohamed

In the photo sharing in Image-9, the Holy Quran book is seen being burned on a barbecue. As stated in the text in the post, the burning of the Holy Quran has been removed from its semantic context and compared to a food/fried meal prepared on fire.

Image 10. An example of a post mocking Islam and Muslims
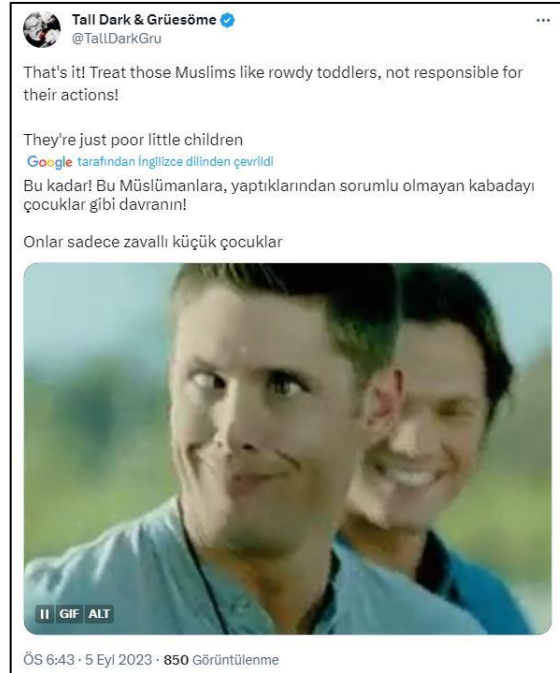
Source: Dark (nd) and Carter (nd)

In the post in Image-10, a photo of an adult man with two squinted eyes and smiling in the background was shared in order to make fun of Muslims who react to the actions of burning/tearing the Holy Quran. It seems that they want to ridicule Muslims whose holy books have been burned by comparing them to poor little children.

Image 11. The post emphasizing that the Holy Quran is a book of hate

Source: Loneranger (2023)

In the post in Image 11, two different photographs of Swedish far-right politician Rasmus Paludan are given side by side, and it is emphasized that Paludan is a hero against Islamic terrorism. The text in the post also emphasizes that the Holy Quran is a book of hatred.

5. General Evaluation and Conclusion

New media tools play an important role in the production and publication of Islamophobic content. In particular, features such as anonymity, interaction, ease of use and fast access that social media tools have offer their users the opportunity to be both producers and distributors at the same time. This environment of freedom provided to users can often lead to contents of unknown producers being circulated. While this free structure of the new media provides opportunities for some groups and individuals for Islamophobic productions, today groups and individuals may emerge that contain religion, race and gender-themed hate speech and spread this content through various social networks and different sources. It has been observed that content without any editorial control is produced and circulated on the social media platform X, and that marginalizing language against Islam and Muslims is used, causing Islamophobic events and attitudes to occur and circulate.

In this study, in which qualitatively oriented content analysis was used, the following findings were reached based on the research questions:

1. On the X platform, which is also a social media channel, it was found out that users had used concepts with negative meanings about Islam and Muslims in their posts.

2. It has been determined that the posts frame the narrative that Islam and Muslims are pro-violent, intolerant and hostile.

3. It has been observed in the posts that the acts of burning and tearing the Holy Quran are largely evaluated within the framework of freedom of expression, and that there is a narrative of exclusion, accusation, distortion and disdain towards Muslims who do not accept this in this way.

Within the scope of the research, it was determined that negative expressions against Islam and Muslims were used in the posts made within the framework of burning/tearing the Holy Quran on X, a social media platform. Considering the prevalence of social media tools and the high number of users today, the impact that Islamophobic productions produced here will have on individuals and society is important. As a result of the investigations, hostility towards Islam and Muslims continues to rise on social media platform X, which is a new media tool. In posts where the limits of freedom of thought and expression are exceeded, attempts are made to portray Muslims as terrorists, enemies, attackers, intolerants, pro-violence, and Islam as a pro-terrorism religion. It has also been seen in this study that social media plays a significant role in the formation of negative perceptions against Islam.

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Notes

* The data in the examined accounts was constantly updated and took its final form on 09.10.2023. Data taken via X (Twitter) platform.

Legitimizing Mediated Islamophobic Actions: Example "X"

Burak SOMUNCU*

Genişletilmiş Özet

"İslam ve Fobi" kelimelerinin birleşmesiyle ortaya çıkan İslamofobi "İslam Korkusu" anlamına gelmektedir ve İslam'a duyulan korkuyu nitelendirmektedir. Tarih boyunca Batı, İslam ve Müslümanlar ile sürekli karşı karşıya gelmiştir. Huntington'un da öngördüğü üzere "The West and The Rest" yani Batı ve diğerleri şeklinde bir kutuplaşma mevcuttur. İslamofobi son yıllarda akademik çalışmalarda sıklıkla araştırma konusu olmaya başlasa da İslam karşıtlığı, Müslümanlardan nefret ve kin duyma konusu tarihsel derinliği olan temelinde siyasi, ekonomik, dini, tarihsel birçok faktörü içinde barındıran bir meseledir. Hristiyanların Müslümanları kendileri için bir tehdit unsuru olarak algılamalarıyla beraber başlayan süreç bugün de Batı'nın yeni geliştirmiş oldukları argümanlar–ve politikalar ile İslam karşıtı davranışlarını sürdürmektedirler. Avrupa tarihsel süreçte belirli dönemlerde kendisine düşmanlar yaratma çabası içerisinde olmuştur. Bu düşmanlardan biri de İslam dini olmuştur. İslam ve Müslümanları hedef alan batı bu konuda propaganda yapmak için kitle iletişim araçlarını aktif bir şekilde kullanmıştır. Özellikle 11 Eylül 2001 terör olayından sonra İslam ve Müslümanlara karşı başlayan ön yargı sırasıyla 2003 İstanbul, 2004 Madrid, 2005 Londra ve son olarak 2015'te Paris'te gerçekleşen terör eylemleri ile artmış ve radikal bir hal almıştır (Kedikli & Akça, 2017, s. 59).

Medya toplumlar üzerinde yönlendirici bir güce sahiptir. Medya, her dönem toplumların algı, tutum ve davranışlarını etkileyebilme kabiliyetine sahip olmuştur. Medya kitleleri kendi yeniden inşa ettiği gerçekliğe inandırma ve bunu meşru kılmak için algı oluşturma konusunda her zaman başarılı olmuştur (Çınar, 2021, s. 296). İslamofobi'nin yükselmesinde önemli araçlardan biri de medyadır. İslam karşıtlığının artmasında ve belirli bir düzeye çıkmasında 20. ve 21. yüzyıldan itibaren kitle iletişim araçlarının önemli etkisi olmuştur. Yazılı medya başta olmak üzere görsel işitsel medya, yeni medya olarak adlandırılan sosyal medya İslam dini ve Müslümanların ötekileştirilmesine yönelik ırkçı faaliyetler yürütmektedir (Çınar, 2021, s. 290-291). Yeni iletişim teknolojilerinin yaygınlaşması ve toplumda geniş kullanım imkânları bulmasıyla İslamofobik anlatımlar yeni formlara dönüştürülerek yaygınlaşmış ve bu iletişim kanalları üzerinden üretilen içerikler servis edilerek geniş kitlelere ulaştırılamaya başlamıştır. Literatür incelendiğinde İslamofobik eylemlerin ve İslamofobi algısının oluşturulmasında yeni medyanın ne derecede baskın olduğunu gösteren birçok çalışma olduğu görülmektedir.

Avrupa'da son dönemlerde artan İslamofobik olayların ardında yatan önemli sorunlardan biri göçmen sorunudur. Batı Müslümanların Avrupa'ya göç etmesini bir tehdit olarak algılamaktadır. Avrupa'ya göç edenlerin önemli bir kesimi Müslümanlardan oluşmaktadır. Batı bu sözde tehdit

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unsurunu işleyerek kitle iletişim araçları vasıtasıyla halk ayrımcılığa sürüklenmektedir. Avrupa'da oluşan toplumsal, ekonomik sorunlardan büyük ölçüde Müslüman göçmenlerin sorumlu gösterilmesi İslam'ı ve Müslümanları tehdit gören bir kitlenin oluşmasına neden olmaktadır. Avrupa'da yer alan Council of Europe, Avrupa İslamofobi Raporu (EIR), İslamofobi'yle Mücadele Kolektifi (CCIE), Ayrımcılıkla Mücadele Bürosu (ADS) gibi kurum ve kuruluşların hazırlamış oldukları 2022 yılı raporlarında belirtildiği üzere İslam ve Müslümanlara karşı yapılmış çok sayıda sözlü ve fiziki saldırı, dışlama ve İslamofobik tutumların olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Kuşkusuz son yıllarda Avrupa'da İslamofobik eylemlerin en barizi ve en radikali Müslümanların kutsal kitabı olan Kur'an-ı Kerim yakma ve yırtma eylemleri olarak gösterilebilir. Avrupa tarafında düşünce özgürlüğü bağlamında değerlendiren bu eylemler İsveç'te son dönemlerde sıklıkla yaşanmaktadır.

İslam karşıtlığının yaygınlaşmasında 20. ve 21. yüzyıldan itibaren, kitle iletişim araçları etkin bir şekilde rol almıştır. Geleneksel medya araçları ile şiddet ve terör olayları İslam ve Müslümanlarla ilişkilendirilmeye çalışılarak olumsuz bir çerçevede kurgulanmak istenmiştir. Sinema yapımları ile barbar, şehvet düşkünü, gerici, şiddet taraftarı Müslüman imajları üretilmiş, yeni medya araçlarının sunmuş olduğu olanaklarla da bu İslamofobik içerikler herkese hitap eden formlara dönüştürülmüştür (Temel, 2023, s. 94). Son 10 yılda yeni iletişim teknolojilerinin yaygınlaşması ve yeni medya kanallarının ortaya çıkması İslamofobik söylemlerin üretilip yaygınlaştırılmasında ve meşrulaştırılmasında önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Yeni medya ortamları olarak tanımlanan sosyal medya ağları, Facebook, X, YouTube, Instagram vb. platformlar tüm dünyada özellikle de Avrupa'da Müslümanlara ve İslam'a karşı nefret dilinin kolayca geliştirilip yaygınlaştırılabildiği platformlar olarak görülmektedir. Geleneksel medya araçlarını yansıra internetin yaygınlaşması ile yeni medya ortamlarında İslamofobik unsurların artarak yaygınlaşmasıyla İslamofobi konusundaki mücadele bu alanlara taşınmıştır.

Yeni medya aracı olan sosyal medya platformlarının içeriklerinin de bu noktada İslam'a, Müslümanlara ve kutsal değerlerine yaklaşımının tespit edilmesi büyük önem arz etmektedir. Bu çalışma ile 2023 yılında bir sosyal medya platformu olan X üzerinden Avrupa'nın çeşitli ülkelerinde gerçekleşen Kur'an yakma ve yırtma eylemleriyle ilişkili paylaşımlar incelenmiştir. Çalışmaya konu olan içeriklerin hangi kavramlarla ve hangi anlatımlarla çerçevelendiğinin tespiti sosyal medya ve İslamofobi ilişkiselliği açısından önemli bir çerçeve sunmaktadır. Ayrıca, gündelik hayatı şekillendirme etkisi olan ve insanları bir araya getirerek kamuoyu oluşturma gücü olan yeni medya araçlarının İslamofobik dil oluşturabilecek bir platforma zemin hazırlaması, yeni medya araçlarının İslam karşıtlığını tetikleyici içeriklere karşı kontrolsüz olması, bu meseleyi daha da tartışılır hale getirmektedir.

Araştırma kapsamında incelenen X paylaşımlarında yer alan içerikleri nicel ve nitel verilerle belirlemek, paylaşımlardaki hâkim anlamı ortaya çıkarabilmek amacıyla nitel yönelimli içerik analizi tekniği tercih edilmiştir. Çalışmada öncelikle X platformunda paylaşılan içerikleri incelenmiştir. Ardından Kur'an-ı Kerim yakma/yırtma eylemleri ile ilişkilendirilerek kullanılan kelimeler/kavramlar, anlamlarına göre kategorilendirilmiştir. Kategoriler, araştırma soruları çerçevesinde nitel yönelimli içerik analizi tekniğiyle incelenmiştir. Araştırmanın bulgularına göre sosyal medya platformu olan X üzerinden etik değerler açısından sorunlu içerikler üretilerek dolaşıma sokulduğu, İslam ve Müslümanlara karşı ötekileştirici dil kullanılarak İslamofobik olay ve tutumların meydan gelmesine ve dolaşıma girmesine yol açtığı tesbit edilmiştir. Sosyal medyadaki İslam düşmanı içeriklerin üretilmesinin "İslamofobik olay ve tutumların meydana gelmesine yol açtığı tespit edilmiştir.

Nitel yönelimli içerik analizi tekniğinin kullanıldığı bu çalışmada araştırma sorularından hareketle şu bulgulara ulaşılmıştır:

1. Yeni medya mecrası olan X sosyal medya platformunda yapılan paylaşımlarda İslam ve Müslümanlarla bağlantılı olumsuz anlamlar taşıyan kavramların kullanıldığı tespit edilmiştir.

2. Paylaşımlarda İslam ve Müslümanların şiddet taraftarı yanlısı, hoşgörüsüz ve düşman olduğu anlatımının çerçevelendiği tespit edilmiştir.

3. Paylaşımlarda Kur'an-ı Kerim yakma ve yırtma eylemlerinin büyük oranda ifade özgürlüğü çerçevesinde değerlendirildiği ve bunu bu şekilde kabul etmeyen Müslümanlara karşı bir dışlama, suçlama, çarpıtma ve küçümseme anlatımının var olduğu gözlemlenmiştir.

Araştırma kapsamında bir sosyal medya platformu olan X üzerinden Kur'an-ı Kerim yakma/yırtma eylemleri çerçevesinde yapılan paylaşımlarda İslam'a ve Müslümanlara karşı olumsuz ifadelerin sıkça kullanıldığı belirlenmiştir. Günümüzde sosyal medya araçlarının yaygınlığı ve kullanıcı sayısının oldukça fazla olduğu düşünüldüğünde burada üretilen İslamofobik üretimlerin bireyler ve toplum üzerinde yaratacağı etki önemlidir. Yapılan incelemeler sonucunda bir yeni medya aracı olan sosyal medya platformu olan X'de İslam ve Müslüman düşmanlığı varlığını sürdürmektedir. Düşünce ve ifade özgürlüğünün sınırlarının aşıldığı paylaşımlarda Müslümanlar terörist, düşman, saldırgan, hoşgörüsüz, şiddet yanlısı, İslam ise terör yanlısı bir din olarak gösterilmeye çalışılmaktadır. İslam'a karşı olumsuz algıların oluşmasında sosyal medyanın azımsanmayacak bir rolü olduğu bu çalışmada da görülmüştür.