



Emotional Digital Labor Among Young People Within the Context of Lumpencybertariat

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Abstract

Türkiye ranks among the countries with the highest rates of social media usage. Especially among the young population, the prevalence of social media usage reaches the highest rates. This article focuses on the formation of hate within the cultural production processes on social media among young population. The monopolization of social media platforms fosters an economic logic where hateful interactions gain exchange value within algorithmic distribution systems. The online activities of social media users are at risk of being drawn into a “discursive spiral of hate”. Algorithms direct social media activities towards emotional escalation and transform online interactions into the “emotional digital labor”. Thus, the digital cultural production is tended to be dominated by the “lumpencybertariat”. This lumpenization process poses a direct risk to young social media users. This article aims to outline the conceptual framework of the position of lumpencybertariat as the producer of emotional digital labor in the digital capitalism. The possibility of “emotional sustainability” as a potential tool to counter the risk of lumpenization in digital cultural production is discussed.

Keywords: Emotional Digital Labor, Lumpencybertariat, Emotional Sustainability, Discursive Spiral of Hate

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Özet

Türkiye sosyal medya kullanımının en yaygın olduğu ülkelerden biridir. Sosyal medya, özellikle genç nüfus arasında daha fazla şekilde kullanılmaktadır. Bu makale sosyal medyadaki kültürel üretim sürecinde nefret söyleminin oluşumuna odaklanmaktadır. Sosyal medya platformlarının tekelleşmesi nefret içeren etkileşimlerin algoritmik sistem içerisinde değişim değeri kazandığı bir ekonomik mantık geliştirmektedir. Sosyal medya kullanıcılarının çevrimiçi etkinlikleri bu şekilde söylemsel nefret sarmalı içerisine çekilme riski taşımaktadır. Algoritmalar sosyal medya etkinliklerini etkileşim süreci içerisinde şiddetlendirmekte ve çevrimiçi etkileşimleri değişim değeri taşıyan “duygusal dijital emeğe” dönüştürmektedir. Bu nedenle, dijital kültürel üretim süreci “lumpensibertarya” tarafından yönetilme eğilimine girmektedir. Bu lumpenleşme süreci genç sosyal medya kullanıcıları için doğrudan risk oluşturmaktadır. Bu makale, dijital kapitalizmde duygusal dijital emeğin üreticisi olarak lumpensibertarya konumunun kavramsal çerçevesini çizmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bunun ardından dijital kültürel üretim sürecindeki lumpenleşme riskiyle başa çıkmak üzere kullanılabilir bir araç olarak karşı “duygusal sürdürülebilirliğin” imkânları tartışılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Duygusal Dijital Emek, Lumpensibertarya, Duygusal Sürdürülebilirlik, Söylemsel Nefret Sarmalı

Introduction

Social media is highly popular in Türkiye. 95.4 percent of the population is active social media users (Datareportal, 2023). With an average of 7.29 hours, Türkiye is also one of the countries with the longest time spent using the Internet (We Are Social, 2020). Just like in the rest of the world, in Türkiye the highest social media usage rates are among the young population (World Economic Forum, 2022). Studies indicate that the more time youth spent online, the more likely they are to be exposed to hate in the online space (Harriman et al., 2020).

The prevalence of social media use among young people has some significant outcomes. For example, this prevalence causes young people to prioritize social media channels for receiving the news. A large portion of young people use social media channels like Facebook for news and information gathering (Middaugh, 2021, p. 44).

The new algorithmic structuring of the social media platforms provides a convenient digital ecology for the popular/controversial discourses with reactive nature to thrive better. The vulgarization of the social media content was also a controversial success as Hindman (2018, p. 162) quotes the Facebook vice president’s words: “The best products don’t win. The ones everyone use[s] win.” In an era that the grand narratives were announced dead, the shifting digital ecologies gave rise to alt-right movements, trolls, bot activities, and even the “cringe” posts.

Studies indicate that social media can be a source for the spread of hateful ideas (Daniels, 2018; Lim, 2017; Mathew et al., 2019; Müller & Schwarts, 2021; Walther, 2022). The problem has diverse implications; thus, studies focus on emotional, behavioral, technical and economic sides of the issue. For example; a part of the studies focuses on the technical ways of classifying, detecting, and eliminating hate via

regulations and algorithms (Alkiviadou, 2019; Awan, 2014; Ben-David & Fernández, 2016; Modha et al., 2020; Vidgen & Yasseri, 2020; Yuan et al., 2023).

Hateful messages maneuver to escape the algorithmic control and once they do so, they instantly become influential. Although more effective algorithmic control tools are developed each day, it is argued that technical tools alone are destined to be ineffective against radical discourses “with no homeland, no territory or property to seize, and few recognizable faces to monitor or confront” (Hodge & Hallgrimsdottir, 2020, p. 575). Thus, there is a deeper mechanism regarding escalation of hate in social media; the culture of hate.

Another body of studies focuses on the cultural roots of hate on the social media (Ganesh, 2018; Hari, 2022; Hodge and Hallgrimsdottir, 2020) in order to explain this deeper mechanism. It is indicated that “the content generated by the hateful users tend to spread faster, farther and reach a much wider audience” (Mathew et al., 2019, p. 173). Hari (2022, p. 126) indicates the same point: “If it’s more enraging, it’s more engaging”; in other words, algorithms that prioritize keeping users’ attention, inevitably prioritize hateful messages. Thus, medium has the potential to flourish “hate culture”.

Yet beyond technical and cultural aspects, there is a material logic of the circulation of cyber culture (Nakamura, 2012; Terranova, 2004). Within the context of social media, the field of the cultural impacts and economic functions of hate is a relatively understudied subtheme. The reception of hateful discourses by the digital media platforms which is exemplified by the return of Tate to new “X” with a status symbol “blue tick”, draws the attention to the questions of how hate could be “useful” for the digital media platforms in an economic sense and how this usefulness influences social media users.

In the present study it is argued that users’ emotional digital behaviors are absorbed into a vulgarization process in the digital social media, turning emotional interactions into a productive source of emotional surplus. Based on the literature review, the study aims to deem light on the process that social media users are interpellated into the lumpencybertariat positions within the commercial logic of the digital world and what kind of role hate has in this process.

Hate as an Emotion

In the global north, there is a new trend indicating that the happiness levels of younger generations tend to be comparatively lower than those of their elder counterparts. It is indicated that the well-being of adolescents in most advanced countries was falling, especially among girls. This fall has been attributed partly to social media (Helliwell et al., 2023, p. 22).

The review of the studies on social media use clearly shows that youth violence such as bullying, gang violence, or self-directed violence is increasing in the online space (Patton, et al., 2014). Although engaging in social media has shown to benefit children and adolescents by enhancing communication, social connection, and even technical skills, it is also indicated to bear the risks of cyberbullying, privacy issues, and a phenomenon called “Facebook depression” (O’Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011, p. 800). These findings prompt a critical consideration of the emotional engagement of young people with social media.

Ahmed (2004, p. 9) suggests that emotions should not be regarded as psychological states, but as social and cultural practices. Emotions are not simply the irrational responses to the world; they are tools for dealing with, making sense of and organizing the world around us and ourselves in it. Although it has a lower rank in the hierarchy of our normative scheme of emotions; hate also serves these purposes.

Psychologically hate is not categorized as our basic emotions such as love or anger, it is “built on a complex mix of cognitions and emotions” (Navarro et al., 2013, p. 10). By directing our frustration to a vaguely defined object, it provides a temporary escape from rationally confronting the source of the frustration, which would be destructive because we are not mentally ready at the time. If we manage to recollect our resources to confront the problems, hate evolves into other emotional states such as sadness, grief, or the sense of accomplishment.

When we do not have the resources to confront the real sources of our frustrations, we tend to take solace in the comfort of the secondary benefits that hate provides and even make hate as our main reference point in making sense of the world. Hate is bilateral; it is directed towards an object and reconstructs it as the ultimate other; paving the way for the “other” to do the same. As Nietzsche (2009, p. 81) warns the other to be sure that he does not in the process become a monster himself, because “when you look for long time into an abyss, the abyss also looks into you”.

As an intense feeling, hate interpellates the “other” to the abyss of signifiers. Though it is crystallized in the form of hate speech or hate crime and then targeted by the policies and control strategies, hate is a process of identification ranging from micro levels of fear and anger to “the sense that we are justified in acting against the object of our hate” (Navarro et al., 2013, p. 11). Hate in the digital media ranges from micro forms of exclusionary practices such as “cringe” and “trolling” to cyber bullying to macro forms of the more overt acts of political discourses against the imagined other.

Whether it is on political opinions or on make-up styles, in the “discursive spiral of hate” (Kopytowska et al., 2017, p. 68), every debate is rendered to this digestible form of the binary oppositions. In the digital assembly line, the content and the emotions that are embedded in it undergo many different sub-processes such as flaming and trolling (Castaño-Pulgarín, 2021, p. 4).

Ahmed indicates that hate is economic; it circulates between signifiers in relationships of difference and displacement. Based on Marx’s argument that value originally increases in magnitude and adds itself a surplus-value, he argues that passion triggered by hate drives accumulation of capital (Ahmed, 2004, p. 45). Discursive spirals of hate very effectively function in this way in the social media platforms. By means of deep emotional engagement in hate discourses, users’ online activities may easily divert to “feeding the troll”. Yet, this diversion can generate capital.

Hate can create exchange value; therefore, it can easily be commercialized. Although in the hierarchy of emotions, hate seems to be the most unlikely kind of emotions to be productive, it is rendered productive in the digital context. It turns into a certain kind of reverse kind of emotional labor. Hochschild (2012, p. 7) uses the term emotional labor to mean the management of -inducing or suppressing- feeling and

indicates that it is exchanged for a wage, therefore it has exchange value. From trolls' paid activities in favor of a political figure to unpaid labor of a social media user's response to a misogynistic speech, online activities accumulate surplus in the spiraling effect. It is the hate as an emotional digital labor that accumulates capital in the social media.

In a sense, due to its negative nature and the diversity of scope from unpaid to paid digital labor, hate can be considered the reverse of the affective emotional labor. Yet, Hochschild's (2014) explanation regarding the distribution and fetishization of care in the global care chains in the Marxist sense is also applicable to hate in the digital social media. Due to its redistribution and fetishized character in the social media platforms, hate might as well generate "emotional surplus". While "time and energy available for mothers" are diverted to customers from family members in global care chains, hate is diverted towards an "imagined other" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 43). As this effort is recreated in the assembly line of the "digital factory", digital activities that engage in hateful content become a part of the "hate work".

Hate in the Digital Capitalism

Research indicates that roughly one in three of young people report feeling excluded by their peers (31%) or feeling pressured to post content that will receive a large number of comments or likes (29%) (Pew Research Centre, 2022). Although studies focus on individual tendencies for clique-forming in social media, the social and structural dynamics that social media afford based on these tendencies are argued to be ignored (Walther, 2022). However, in the process of commercialization, social media platforms rely, to some extent, on the perpetuation of clique-formation and polarization among new generations.

In the literature on the digital cultures, emotion and labor are tended to be regarded as separate aspects. Terranova (2004, p. 89) claims that the speed of the digital economy depends on the ephemerality of "immaterial" products. This tendency changes the status of commodities whose essence was said to be meaning (or lack of) rather than labor as if the two could be separable. With meaning, emotions are separated from the production. Except few examples that link emotions to labor within the contexts of fandom (De Kosnik, 2012) and gaming (Nakamura, 2012) and social movements such as QAnon (Kamola, 2021) and "hashtag" activism (Nakamura, 2015), labor is studied with its relation to the digital production processes whereas emotional aspects are analyzed within the cultural patterns. The economic logic of the distribution of emotions in the social media platforms such as Facebook or the X is not thoroughly centered upon. However, emotions are becoming an increasingly critical element of labor in the digital capitalism.

The digital economy is mainly based on the interlinkages of value and free cultural and affective labor. The labor in online activities is hard to be recognized immediately as labor, Terranova (2000) argues that these activities are rendered productive "in relation to the expansion of the digital culture industries and are part of a process of economic experimentation with the creation of monetary value out of knowledge/culture/affect" (Terranova, 2000, p. 38).

Zuboff (2019) suggests that we are in the second age of capitalism, the surveillance capitalism, as of the early twenty-first century. The digital behaviors are of central importance in the new organization of the value creation processes. The system is now depending on the behavioral surplus. The data are extracted from online behaviors of social media users. What remains implicit in this process is the emotional motivations that trigger these online behaviors. Beyond the exchange value of the data on consumption patterns, the free labor in the generation of content has an exchange value in itself as social media platforms become monopolies.

It has been long known that free labor is a fundamental moment in the creation of value in the digital economies and “the Internet is animated by cultural as well as technical labor through and through (Terranova, 2000, p. 34-36). Considering that “commercial surveillance conducted by companies like Google and Facebook represents capital’s totalizing aspiration to not just know reality, but to ‘make’ and ‘own’ reality” (Charitsis et al., 2018, p. 822), emotional digital labor is the main determining factor of this new digital world.

The digital cultural production process is fueled by the attention of the free labor. Digital survival depends on firms’ ability to attract users, to get them stay longer, and make sure they return again and again (Hindman, 2018, p. 4). What makes this system contradictory is that it is based on attention as a scarce source. At that point, as argued by Hochschild (2014), love and attention as scarce sources are distributed unequally in the global care chains to create emotional surplus and hate is distributed unequally in the digital cultural production process as well.

What makes hate more convenient is its compatibility with the discursive spiraling effect. As the social media platforms are owned by hyperscale firms and these firms become emblematic of modern digital capitalism (Zuboff, 2019, p. 468); capitalism reinvents hate as the new “productive” force. Within this economic logic, it is not surprising that the digital economy really only cares an abundance of production, an immediate interface with cultural and technical labor whose result is a diffuse, nondialectical contradiction and thus it cares only tangentially about morality. Eventually, it comes to a point that anything is tolerated (Terranova, 2000, p. 53-54).

Considering that the medium is the message (McLuhan, 1964), the social media platforms are inclined to create a particular digital ecology in which the ephemeral content that appeals to sensations and “flaming” in nature flourishes rapidly, while complex, commonsensical content struggles to keep up and eventually withers away. In a sense, digitalization has expanded the logic of urban ecologies of physical space to cyberspace. This ecology relies to some extent on “feeding the troll”. The troll may take the form of the discourses of the red pill, the flat Earth, or anti-vaccination. Whether opposing or supporting; every online activity serves to promote the algorithms to distribute this content to a wider population.

As Ahmed (2004, p. 43) underlines, “the passion of negative attachments to others is redefined simultaneously as a positive attachment to the imagined subjects brought together through the capitalization of the signifier”, in other words, “hate is what brings us together”. This is the exact process

of the formation of movements such as “anti-vaxxers”, “flat Earthers”. In the extreme form, hate also produces the subject positions within the new “grand anti-narratives” while producing emotional surplus. Terranova foresees the coming of post-truth era arguing that the Internet contributes to the disappearance of reality. According to her, hyperreality triggers the nightmare of a society without humanity (Terranova, 2000, p. 41). In this era, the crowds who are overwhelmed by the diminishing social mobility opportunities, lowered wages, global risks such as pandemics or immigration crises are interpellated by these subject positions. Ideology embedded in these discourses “interpellates individuals as subjects” (Althusser, 2014, p. 227). Social media users are presented with popular discourses as substitutes of real reasons and their disappointments are “cultivated” in the digital platforms. What is more, once they answer the call, they not only consume but further recreate these discourses. What this new media accomplishes is the reunion of the consumption and production within the digital culture industry. The digital culture industry has brought the production process to the cyber world while commercializing the entire human interaction in it. As interactions increasingly concentrated on individual platforms, the monetization of these interactions has led to a strong concentration of capital at the platform providers (Reiberg, 2022, p. 168). By this way, the interaction between content producers and content consumers becomes so intertwined that the whole process turns into “presumption”.

Hate as Labor in the Digital Economy

Toffler (1981, p. 13) offered that the Third Wave civilization begun to heal the historic breach between producer and consumer, giving rise to the “prosumer” economics. This new economy would pave the way to the more democratic societies than the previous societies. While the democratic trend is under the threat of the post-truth and the monopolization of media platforms; the free labor in the social media is manifesting in the form of consumerism. There is a bulk of studies that focus on the conceptualization of this kind of digital free labor in which non-work and work is united (Goggin, 2011; Fuchs, 2014, 2015a; Kamola, 2021; Terranova, 2000).

Fuchs (2015a, p. 112) indicates that users are productive consumers who produce commodities and profit but their user labor is exploited. In the social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, the role of users is conceptualized as “playbour”, “produserism” as well as presumption. Fuchs (2015b, p. 119) argues that while there is an argument that the user activities do not create value, they are unproductive, not labor at all; he claims that there is actually a value generation process, given that the capitalist nature of the social media.

In line with Fuch’s perspective, the hate in the digital labor creates exchange value in this new surveillance capitalism. It serves the algorithmically extractable surplus as it promotes the profits for the commercial platforms by every single activity notwithstanding its offensive, or even destructive use. As in Waring’s example (1995), a soldier testing the missiles is counted as economically productive; the formation of the exchange value is not independent of the configuration of the actors in a particular economic system, in other words the one “who is counting”.

Labor in the cyber world has many faces. Huws (2014, p. 155) examines labor in digital capitalism under four categories based on paid/unpaid and productive/unproductive dichotomies. On the paid side,

there is the category of reproductive labor which includes public administration, public service work, and individually provided private services. The directly productive paid labor includes commodity production. The unpaid labor on the other hand; includes reproductive domestic labor as well as cultural activities while productive unpaid labor is composed of consumption work.

Huws (2014, p. 172) considers the unpaid digital work as free labor that built the Internet as unpaid reproductive labor. Online unpaid labor cannot be considered productive labor because it occurs outside the exploitative production relations. Huws does not consider social media use as labor in the same way as programming, device manufacturing, bug fixing, and community management (Nakamura, 2015, p. 110). The social media use is unproductive, can be even destructive in particular. Yet, the users' unpaid production is articulated in the capitalist system and creates emotional exchange surplus. At this point, the social media users' role in this system can be a special form of the "lumpenproletariat".

From Lumpenproletariat to Lumpencybertariat

According to Huws (2014), 'cybertariat' is the term for productive labor in the digital economy. It describes the digital workers who work within exploitative digital production relations and by nature share the fate of precarious existence of the proletariat while producing exchange value. The unpaid social media users who engage in the hateful content differ from the cybertariat in terms of not being a part of this exploitative relationship. By nature, the emotional engagement of lumpencybertariat produces the exchange value coming from the transformation of their hate into the content. However, although there are exceptional examples such as paid trolls who are employed for social media campaigns for political figures; the emotional engagement is provided mostly by free labor.

In summary, while this class is outside of the exploitative production relations, it produces emotional digital exchange value in the social media platforms that are increasingly owned by capitalist enterprises. In the spiral of social media, emotional digital work is thus not situated directly within but on the periphery of Huws's schematic typology of class in the digital age. This idiosyncratic position of the hate-inducing content producers in the social media can be addressed as the lumpenproletariat of the new digital economy.

Although Marx and Engels use the term lumpenproletariat in various writings, they do not specify the term. However, it is clear that the lumpenproletariat is a pejorative term for the degenerate subcategory of the proletariat. In the Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, Marx (1987, p. 54) mentions "vagabonds, dismissed soldiers, discharged convicts, runaway galley slaves, sharpers, jugglers, lazzaroni, pickpockets, sleight-of-hand performers, gamblers, procurers, keepers of disorderly houses, porters, literati, organ grinders, rag pickers, scissors grinders, tinkers, beggars", in summary, "a whole undefined, dissolute, kicked-about mass" as the degenerate segment of the proletariat; the lumpenproletariat.

Barrow (2020, p. 37) defines lumpenproletariat with their economic, cultural and social characteristics. Economically, the lumpenproletariat functions as the relative surplus population. It creates space in the labor market for the emergence of new industries and secondly, due to the unstable nature of its growth, capitalism depends on the constant social and cultural reproduction of this class. Culturally, the lumpenproletariat is also a status group with a corrupt lifestyle that not only diverts from but also

opposes to proletariat. Rather than sharing a common class-based culture, the lumpenproletariat lives without class solidarities despite the desperation experienced by its members (Kamola, 2021, p. 231). In connection with its economic and cultural formation, the political position of this class is a “mercenary” role, aligning itself with the bourgeoisie (Barrow, 2020, p. 70). With its economic, social and cultural formations, the lumpenproletariat is “the ‘dangerous class’, the social scum, that passively rotting mass” whose conditions of life prepare it far more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue.” (Marx & Engels, 2008, p. 49).

With the rise of the digital capitalism, this tool of reactionary intrigue has been carried in part into the social media. Social media has a growing role in providing the fertile ground for the activities of the new lumpenproletariat. In a sense, the term lumpencybertariat is the synonym of what Kamola (2021) describes as the “digital lumpenproletariat”. The digital lumpenproletariat is the new lumpenproletariat of the digital world. According to Kamola (2021, p. 232), this class functions as channeling popular feelings of economic deprivations into political movements such as QAnon.

Frustrations arising from Covid-19 lockdowns as well as economic turmoil contribute to the reappearance of hate discourses on social media. In a broader sense, in the age of the second modernity, there is a global backlash in the welfare of masses for the sake of market freedom. Zuboff (2019, p. 47-48) points out the unbearable economic and social inequalities that reverted to almost preindustrial feudal pattern in this second age of capitalism. What makes this welfare crisis more dramatic is that “we are not illiterate peasants, serfs, or slaves” but “second-modernity people whom history has freed both from the once-immutable facts of a destiny told at birth and from the conditions of mass society”. Zuboff (2019) indicates that we are active subjects of our destiny. While we construct our identities more independently, we also seek new ways of dealing with the frustration. The digital tools are playing an increasingly prominent role in both processes and as one of the results, pave the way to lumpencybertariat as a functional class.

In this article, the term lumpencybertariat refers to the transformation of the lumpenproletariat into a new dangerous class in the new digital capitalism. This term aims to theoretically integrate the digital lumpenproletariat into the labor scheme of cyberproletariat in order to better specify its position in the Huws’s Marxist formulation of cybertariat.

The idiosyncrasy of the lumpencybertariat is based on their particular function not only as the “reserve army” but also their renewed role within the “reactionary intrigue”. They play a critical part in it as the creators of exchange value for the social media cartels. Capitalism succeeds not only through the systematic exploitation of productive labor but also by increasing amounts by expanding the areas where it can create and extract surplus.

It is indicated that by the expansion of the conspiracist discourses and movements, social media platforms attract and become popular among “otherwise apolitical young people” (Bleakley, 2023, p. 510). This way, young people become a major source of the production and reproduction of emotional digital labor; becoming the leading component of lumpencybertariat.

Digital Cultural Production and the New Spectacle

According to Patel and Moore (2017, p. 25); ruling classes tried not just to restore the surplus but to expand it throughout history. Nature, care and even human life are some of the seven areas where capitalism relies on for its permanence. The emotional digital labor which is fueled by hate stemming from frustrations of masses may be added to this list. The digital cultural production is thus rendered productive just like any other item. The digital capitalism transforms what is destructive into economically productive by the cultivation of discourses within the frustration-hate cycle. In this way, monopolized social media platforms constitute a fertile ground for the “interpellation” of social media users into the lumpencybertariat position.

The success of the new digitized capitalism is based not only on the creation of new ways of diverting the feelings of frustrations but also on making this diversion economically profitable. The only part unique to the digital capitalism in this process is the trivialization of the mass formation of the lumpencybertariat. In everyday digital interactions, not only the marginalized or corrupt groups in society but every user has the potential to be a part of this formation in the anonymity of the platforms. The culture industry synthesizes the high and popular culture for the profit, it “includes moments of conflict, rebellion, opposition and the drive for emancipations and utopia” (Adorno, 1991, p. 21). Masses are involved in this industry as a consumer. In the digital culture industry, masses are involved in it as both users and content producers. Every emotion in the digital culture industry “counts”; in other words, are recreated for the profit. As the digital content; every aspect of life, every conflict, every drive for emancipation has the potential to be vacuumed by a hateful discourse.

In the age of digital culture industry, the lumpencybertariat rewrites grand narratives in backwards. The postmodern skepticism towards grand narratives reached its peak by the post-truth era. Given the misinformation, disinformation and manipulation that can spread online rapidly; there is a deepening crisis of the narratives. In this post-truth era, the lumpencybertariat erases the narratives of arts, humanity, science and rewrites them as the death of the author, the scandalous fall of the megastar and conspiracy theories on the vaccines.

The digital economy transforms leisure time of masses into algorithmic construction of the spectacle. Debord (2005, p. 7) suggests that in the society of the spectacle representations are detached from every aspect of life. They are then merged into a common stream in which the unity of that life is reproduced by the regrouping of fragmented views of life into a “separate pseudo-world that can only be looked at”. Debord has indicated that due to the unilateralism of the means of communication, the spectacle was only to be looked at. In the digital capitalism however, the spectacle is multilateral. The production of spectacle is outsourced to free “crowdwork”.

The spectacle comes in the form of irreconcilable antagonisms. According to Debord (2005), this is because they are all based on real contradictions of capitalism that are repressed. The spectacle is “nothing more than an image of happy harmony surrounded by desolation and horror at the calm

center of misery” (Debord, 2005, p. 31). In the digital capitalism, emotional labor provides algorithms with multitude of alternative imagined opposites which surround that happy harmony of the imagined digital communities.

Conclusion

The data indicate an increasingly widespread use of social media among young people. For young individuals, social media serves not only as a source of entertainment and sharing everyday life experiences but also as a means of receiving news and shaping their lifestyles. Throughout this process, many young people feel pressure to make posts that receive more interaction, in order to avoid exclusion. This pressure triggers the 'discursive spiral of hate' process within social media, leading young people towards increasingly radicalized discourses. Consequently, young people may develop more emotionally engaged interactions with social media. At this point, the structural risk of lumpenization of social media communication and the tendency of young people towards lumpenlibertarianism arises. Although this risk is not unique to the youth alone, young people are thought to be more vulnerable to it due to long hours of social media engagement.

The impact of the internet in facilitating access to information and self-expression for the societies is undoubtedly ground-breaking. We are not only presented with instantaneous access to information through the internet but also with an unlimited proliferation of avenues for identity construction and self-expression through social media platforms.

Zuboff argues that we are in the age of surveillance capitalism, a second era after the industrial capitalism. Dealing with this issue without falling into the trap of technological determinism or a kind of digital Luddism requires focusing more on how these technologies are integrated into the digital capitalism. The internet and social media were initially heralded as a breakthrough that would contribute to the democratization of communication and information exchange processes; “a mighty democratizing force that exponentially realizes Gutenberg’s revolution in the lives of billions of individuals” (Zuboff, 2019, p. 184). While still possessing this power, monopolization poses significant risk of undermining the democratic aspects of social media.

Zuboff (2019, p. 184) believes that the division of learning in society is hijacked by surveillance capitalism. In the absence of democratic institutions and civil society, we are thrown back on the market form of the surveillance capitalist companies. Under the shadow of the deepening economic and social inequalities, the democratic participation gives way to the cultural productions of the lumpencybertariat.

In the time when large content firms control significant portion of media revenue, mechanism of control and influence over media are shifting from public to private spheres (Hindman, 2018). This shift reduces the ability of the public to influence it through democratically determined policy (Hindman, 2018, p. 170). With the lumpenization of the digital cultural production, antidemocratization of the media becomes a neat and consented process.

Although the lumpenization of the social media paints a dark picture, there are many suggestions including a stricter internet governance, net neutrality and antitrust laws. Yet, as mentioned above, the lumpenization cannot be considered as a problem solely of formal regulations; the social media embodies this tendency. Thus, in addition to macro-level, formal and legal measures against hate acts in the social media platforms, micro-level and user-based measures are required.

One way that can be suggested as a measure against the lumpenization of the social media content is the emotional sustainability awareness. The term emotional sustainability has a limited academic background. One of the uses of the term refers to the management of emotions in the human services sector as a part of the work relations (Kim & Williams, 2022). It can be defined as the sustainability of the emotional interaction in various contexts. In the social media context, it refers to the extent to which the digital cultural production is sustained without escalating into extreme situations such as hate acts. When it is considered that all interactions on social media can be tracked and measured, it can be suggested that emotional sustainability of the specific topics in specific social media platforms may also be measured based on techniques such as content analysis.

Acquiring emotional sustainability-based digital literacy among youth can be beneficial for social media users as the micro-level measure against the digital lumpenization; against “feeding the troll”. This literacy can lead to an activism against hate culture itself in the social media. If a platform has a low emotional sustainability and polluted by trolling, flaming, hate acts, misinformation or disinformation etc., it is a warning for the users to abandon the platform. At this stage, a new form of “net activism” may have a crucial role in the creation of new yet non-commercialized alternatives to old, monopolized platforms and in organizing the collective transition from old platforms to the new ones. Of course, this transition is only the beginning of a long process towards monopolization.

Internet as a fluid space indicates that democratization is not an end but an ongoing process. Digital capitalism always tends to transform the form of the digital cultural production into the assembly line. Emotional digital literacy and net activism can be used to counteract this trend.



Lümpensibertarya Bağlamında Gençler Arasında Duygusal Dijital Emek

*Sevgi Çoban**

Türkiye sosyal medya kullanımının en yaygın olduğu ülkelerden biridir. Nüfusun yüzde 95,4'ü sosyal medya kullanmaktadır. Buna ek olarak Türkiye gençlerin en uzun süre İnternet'te bulunduğu ülke konumundadır. Bu yaygınlaşma gençlerin iletişim ve haber alma gibi amaçlarla dünyayı anlamak için sosyal medya araçlarını ağırlıklı olarak kullanmaları sonucunu da doğurmaktadır. Bu noktada sosyal medyanın bir araç olarak taşıdığı özellikle önem kazanmaktadır. Zira, araç, mesaj halini almakta; sosyal medyanın işleyiş mantığı nüfusun, özellikle de genç nüfusun dünyayı anlama biçimini etkilemektedir. İki bin onlu yıllarla birlikte sosyal medya platformlarının giderek ticari araçlara dönüşmeleri ve ticari bir mantık içeren algoritmik yapılanmaları bu platformlarda popüler ve tartışmalı söylemlerin hararetli bir biçimde takip edilmesine dayanan bir dijital ekolojiyi şekillendirmiştir. Bu ekoloji içerisinde sosyal medya platformları nefret içeren söylemlerin hızla yayılabildiği araçlar olarak işleme riskine daha açık hale gelmiştir. Bu teknik ve hukuki yönleri olan bir risk olmakla birlikte bu platformlara yönelik düzenleme girişimlerine karşın nefret söylemlerinin çeşitli taktiklerle bu platformlarda yeniden dolaşıma girebilmesi her şeyden önce bu platformların dayandığı algoritmik mantığın ürettiği nefret kültürü olduğuna işaret etmektedir. Sosyal medyada oluşan nefret söylemlerinin ürettiği lümpen kültür yalnızca teknik değil aynı zamanda bir ekonomik mantık sorunu olarak da ele alınabilir. Nitekim nefret içeren mesajların internette daha hızlı yayıldığı ve bu mesajları yayan sosyal medya araçlarının daha çok kullanıldığı bilinmektedir. Bu bağlamda öfke ve buna bağlı olarak oluşan nefret bir duygu olarak kültür politikalarının ayrılmaz bir parçası olmakla kalmamakta, algoritmaların yaydığı ticari bir varlık olarak dijital ekonominin ticarileşen mantığına eklenmekte ve nefret üretimi, lümpenleşen sosyal medya araçlarının kullanımı için gerekli olan olumsuz enerjiyi ve kutuplaşmayı sürdüren bir tür duygusal emeğe dönüşmektedir.

Nefret, duyguların kültürel politikasında olumsuz deneyimlerin yarattığı hayal kırıklıklarının bir kaynağa aktarımı olarak şekillenmektedir. Önceki kuşaklarla karşılaştırıldığında yeni kuşakların görece

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düşük mutluluk düzeyleri ve yaşadıkları çatışmalar, nefretin yaygınlaşmasının yapısal temellerine işaret etmektedir. Bu hayal kırıklıklarını aşmak mümkün olmadığında olumsuzlukların kaynağı yaratılan bir “öteki”ye kanalize edilme eğilime girmektedir. Bu, nefret kültürünün dijital bir ekoloji oluşturması için gereken koşulları şekillendirmektedir. Bu noktada iletişimin gittikçe yaygınlaşan araçları olarak sosyal medya platformları devreye girmektedir.

Duygular, dijital kapitalizmde emeğin önemi giderek artan unsuru haline gelmektedir. Zira, ticari mantık içerisinde işleyen belirli sosyal medya kanalları, varlıklarını kutuplaşmaya, aşırılaşan içeriklere, diğer bir deyişle söylemsel nefret girdabına dayandırabilmektedir. Bu girdap içerisinde aşırı mesajlar, sağduyulu kullanıcıları da aşırı uçlara çekebilme ve böylece nefret girdabı kullanıcıları içine çekebildiği ölçüde bu kanallar ticari başarı göstermiş görülebilmektedir. Bu mantık, nefretin yıkıcı içeriğinin sosyal medyanın “montaj hattı”nda ticari olarak üretken kılındığı bir mekanizmayı yapılandırmaktadır. Bu ticari mantık; aşırılıkların, çatışmanın ve dışlamanın baskın olduğu bir lümpen kültür üretmektedir. Bu lümpen kültürün üreticileri, söylemsel nefret girdabına kapılan sıradan sosyal medya kullanıcılarıdır. Kullanıcılar, sağduyu mesajlarının algoritmalar içerisinde kaybolduğu bu araç içerisinde giderek şiddete yönelen bir dile sahip mesajların tüketicileri oldukları kadar onları üreten lümpensibertarya haline de gelmektedirler. Lümpensibertarya, yeni tür bir nefret “gösteri”sinin yaratıcısıdır. Bu gösteri, dijital nefret gösterisidir.

Sosyal medya, bilgi toplumlarının ayrılmaz bir parçasıdır. Bu nedenle bu alanın nefret ve lümpenleşme gibi çeşitli şekillerde kirlenmesi riskine karşı tarafsızlık, antitröst düzenlemeleri gibi resmi önlemler alınmaktadır. Ancak görülmektedir ki mesele yalnızca formel ve teknik değil, kültürel ve sosyolojik olarak ele alınmayı gerektiren bir meseledir. Bu bağlamda oluşabilecek söylemsel nefret girdaplarına karşı platformların işleyiş mantığına yönelik dijital okur-yazarlık, platformlardaki diyalogların nefrete ve ötekileştirmeye dönüşmeden sürdürülebilmesine yönelik duygusal sürdürülebilirlik göstergelerine yönelik çalışmalar yapılması gibi çözüm önerileri ile sosyal medyanın demokratik kullanımı yönünde kapsamlı adımlar atılması önerilmektedir.

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