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‘Meaningful, ambiguous or meaningless?': Communicative disruption, cynicism and hate in Turkish *Instagram* shitposts

‘Anlamlı mı, muğlak mı yoksa anlamsız mı?': Türk *Instagram* toksik paylaşımlarında iletişimsel bozulma, sinizm ve nefret



Buğrahan Demirci¹

¹ Ankara University, Graduate School of Social Sciences, The Department of Journalism, Ankara, Türkiye

Abstract ‘Shitposts’ are low-quality online content that deliberately adopts a hostile and ambiguous tone. This study examined 1.025 posts shared between 2023 and 2025 on 20 popular shitpost *Instagram* accounts in Türkiye using qualitative thematic analysis and quantitative content analysis based on ‘meaningfulness’ and ‘topic.’ This research aims to evaluate the constitutive characteristics of these posts, their potential for political criticism, and their possible links to extreme right and incel ideologies. The findings suggest that, although the content is not entirely meaningless, it exhibits weak and distorted semantic and formal density and contains strong violent stimuli. Although their potential for political critique remains limited, they exhibit frivolity and aggression rather than a coherent ideology or clear purpose. Various forms of discrimination were identified in 46% of the analyzed posts. These hostile discourses targeting groups such as women, LGBTQ individuals, and ethnic communities suggest potential links to extreme right and incel ideologies, likely fueled by a misanthropic, nihilistic worldview.

Öz ‘Toksik paylaşımlar’ (shitposts), kasıtlı olarak düşmanca ve belirsiz bir üslup benimseyen düşük kaliteli internet içerikleridir. Bu çalışmada, Türkiye’deki 20 popüler *Instagram* toksik paylaşım hesabında 2023-2025 yılları arasında paylaşılan 1.025 gönderi, ‘anlamlılık’ ve ‘konu’ temelinde nitel tematik analiz ve nicel içerik analiziyle incelenmiştir. Araştırmanın amacı, bu paylaşımların kurucu niteliklerini, siyasi eleştiri potansiyellerini ve aşırı sağ ile incel ideolojileriyle olası bağlantılarını değerlendirmektir. Bulgular, içeriklerin tamamen anlamsız olmamakla birlikte zayıf ve çarpık bir anlamsal-biçimsel yoğunluk ve güçlü şiddet uyarımları barındırdığını göstermektedir. Siyasi eleştiri potansiyelleri bulunsu da bu yönleri sınırlı kalmakta, tutarlı bir ideolojiden ziyade ciddiyetsizlik ve saldırganlık sergileyerek açık bir amaçtan yoksun görünmektedirler. İncelenen paylaşımların %46’sında çeşitli ayrımcılık biçimleri tespit edilmiştir. Kadınlar, LGBTQ bireyler ve etnik topluluklar gibi grupları hedef alan bu düşmanca söylemler, içeriklerin aşırı sağ ve incel ideolojileriyle potansiyel bağları olabileceğini düşündürmekte ve mizantropik nihilist bir dünya görüşünden besleniyor olabileceğine işaret etmektedir.

Keywords Shitpost • meme • caps • incel • extreme right

Anahtar Kelimeler Toksik paylaşım • meme • caps • incel • aşırı sağ



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✉ Corresponding author | Sorumlu Yazar: Buğrahan Demirci bugra_dmrc@msn.com



'Meaningful, ambiguous or meaningless?': Communicative disruption, cynicism and hate in Turkish *Instagram* shitposts

There have been discussions about the proliferation of toxic techno-cultures based on negative online behaviour of a provocative, aggressive, and destructive nature among Internet communities (Daly & Nichols, 2023, p. 5). Particularly towards the end of the first quarter of the twenty-first century, content referred to as 'shitposts' by both producers and researchers in the new media environment came to the fore. Mike Watson (2023, p. 248) defines shitposts as "a deliberate post of poor quality images and/or texts with often deliberately antagonistic intentions, or a deliberate embrace of obscurity." Highlighting the catastrophic nature of this content, Miguel Palomo García (2022, p. 226) suggests that "the shitpost seeks to disrupt and impede online conversations through inflammatory statements, usually about political, social and ideological issues, although at other times they simply try to spread irrelevant or meaningless information." It can be argued that shitposts are created for entertainment, have political agendas, are motivated by 'nihilistic' motives, or are designed to hurt the oppressed in society (it is also possible to say that these are intertwined). In this study, shitposts, which can be traced back to 'memes' (as they are called in Türkiye and partly similar to 'caps') and 'trolling,' which can be read in relation to them and which can be emphasized to have their unique aspects, are the subject of research. *Instagram* was chosen as the platform on which these were located and analyzed due to its popularity. With the suggestion of the *Instagram* algorithm, it can be assumed that most people have encountered a shitpost at least once in their lives, whether they can name it or not, and have experienced emotions such as confusion, disgust, sadness, and laughter as a result. It can be stated that some of the shitposts are completely devoid of meaning or have an ambiguous appearance, while others are open to intertextuality with specific references. The problematic of the study is to comprehend the semantic (whether there is semantic signification or not), formal (difference from genres such as caps-meme), and contextual (themes and related ideological codes) structure of shitposts produced in Türkiye.

Although there have been many studies on meme-related caps culture and trolling in Türkiye¹, there is no study that directly analyses the shitpost. This study, the first in the Turkish literature on the phenomenon, is important in terms of trying to grasp the constitutive elements of shitposts, to show what the theme of shitposts shared in Türkiye corresponds to, and to reveal its ideological perspective and its 'semantic' mechanism. The analysis in this study places particular emphasis on examining the relationship between

¹ Meme describes the spread of items such as "jokes, rumors, videos, and websites" in virtual environments (Shifman, 2013, pp. 1–2). Caps is "a way of interpreting what is happening in a sarcastic and entertaining way" on online platforms (Aktaş, 2016). Trolling, on the other hand, is "used for people and their speech acts that disrupt communication and negotiation between participants and spread manipulative information on the Internet" (Binark et al., 2015, p. 92). It is understood that research on trolling in Türkiye describes the concept, argues the criticality and destructiveness of trolling, and discusses measures that can be taken against trolls (Mercimek et al., 2016; Binark et al., 2015, 2016; Özdemir, 2019; Kayaduman, 2020; Aytekin et al., 2023). At the same time, fieldwork (Özdemir, 2019) and textual analysis (Yılmaz & Işıkdöğün 2017; Kayaduman, 2020; Aytekin et al., 2023) were conducted and a "troll behavior scale" was developed to understand the motivations and strategies of trolls (Kızıltepe & Seferoğlu, 2023). In the context of studies on caps in Türkiye, it can be stated that most of them emphasize the political activism potential of caps (Ünsay, 2014; Barlas Bozkuş, 2016; Kırık & Saltık, 2017; Keçe, 2019; Yıldız Efe, 2020; Irak, 2021; Genel & Özdemir, 2022; Kırgız Polat, 2023). In addition to these, studies on caps with specific topics such as sports, health, occupational groups, and the elderly (Kahya, 2018; Yıldırım, 2020; Kızılçı, 2021; Bayrakçı, 2021; Kutlu, 2021; Korkmaz Aslan, 2022; Balcı Aydoğan & Abuşoğlu, 2022) stand out. There are also studies that deal with caps on *Instagram* (Esen Özyay, 2018; Sezer, 2022; Tekrin, 2021, 2023), associate them with postmodernity (Fırat, 2018; Çallı, 2022), examine them in the context of copyright (Karaaslan, 2020), and measure literacy towards them (Akçay Balcı & Karaman, 2022). Some studies have touched upon the communicative nature of caps, their similarities/differences with traditional media, and the context of humor (Aktaş, 2016; Arslan, 2017; Doğan Topçu & Önürmen, 2018). This study attempts to explore the structure, meaning, and ideology of a specific content type in the Turkish context. The analysis aims to reveal a structure that includes all types of authoritarian forms, where racist, sexist, and other violent content is not associated with humor.

shitposts and the ideology of the extreme right and incels (Hoffman et al., 2020), who channel romantic frustration into misogyny and violence online, in the Turkish context. As research has shown, there is a significant relationship between shitposting and extreme right (Daviess, 2019; García, 2022) and incel (Daly & Nichols, 2023) ideologies. The issue of incel communities has been in the spotlight in Türkiye since 4 October 2024, when 19-year-old Semih Çelik killed two women at his age and then took his own life. Citizens exposed incel messages on platforms such as X, revealing the misogynistic structure in question. However, despite the interest that incel related ideologies mentioned in this study arouse in young people and their potential to turn into acts of violence, they have been discussed by a limited public through new media at a late date and have not found a place in politics. In recent years, however, the concept has increasingly become the subject of academic inquiry in Türkiye. In addition to this growing scholarly attention, related incidents have also attracted the attention of the security bureaucracy (Zengin & Koca, 2024). However, the incel phenomenon should not be addressed solely within a security framework. While security measures may be necessary, they remain short-term responses to social symptoms. Therefore, it is crucial to strengthen interdisciplinary academic research on the subject in Türkiye. It is thought that this study, which examines the ideology of such violent structures, may support struggles for justice and equality, including the women's movement.

The study aims to analyze the distinctive constitutive elements and semantic structure of shitposts, as well as their political and entertainment elements. It will also examine whether these may be related to extreme right and incel ideology, as suggested by some international studies (Daviess, 2019; García, 2022; Daly & Nichols, 2023). This study employed thematic analysis to examine 1.025 posts shared between 2023 and 2025 across 20 prominent *Instagram* shitpost accounts in Türkiye. The quantitative content analysis method was also used by counting how many posts were included in which theme within the scope of headings and subheadings. The limitations of this research are that the producers of the shitposts were not directly interviewed and no study was conducted on how these contents were received. This means that, based on the data analyzed in this study, only possible interpretations can be suggested, rather than definitive conclusions.

Discussions about shitpost content based on incel and extreme right ideology

Although shitposts have not yet been studied in Türkiye, there are examples around the world. In Sean McEwan's (2017, p. 19) definition, shitposting is described as "a form of Internet interaction predicated upon thwarting established norms of discourse in favour of seemingly anarchic, poor quality contributions." Related to these emphases, Watson (2023, p. 247) has argued that the tendency to produce shitposts reflects the kind of nihilism that Nietzsche condemned. Sarah E. Daly & Annie Laurie Nichols (2023, p. 4) state that the concepts of trolling and shitposting are used interchangeably in the literature, but trolling has been the subject of more academic discussion. According to the authors, shitposts can be considered under the umbrella concept of trolling, which defines many negative online behaviors including cyberbullying, harassment, racism, or deliberate denigration of a product. On the other hand, Samuel Alejandro and Urbina Blanco (2021) conceive of shitposts as "pan-contextual and hypernihilistic trans-humorism" and interpret them as a sub-genre of meme culture. In a similar vein, Carlos Henrique da Costa Barreto et al. (2025, p. 2) also position shitposts as a subtype of memes, but highlight their mimetic dynamics, as both forms rely on the reproduction and reworking of pre-existing visual and discursive materials embedded in online cultural environments. However, according to the authors, the concept possesses a distinct and specific character: "[Shitposts] produce humor through the deliberate absence of meaning, through visual and textual chaos, through breaks in expectation and through the interruption of communicative flow, diverting attention from context and rendering the creator's intent opaque to the interlocutor." García (2022, pp. 225–226) argues that memes have a humorous aspect but shitposts differ from this culture in that they have a strong subversive

quality. Attempting to disrupt online interaction with meaninglessness, shitposts are inherently ideological in that they present a distorted representation of reality through irony. In some research (Davies, 2019; García, 2022), shitposting has been associated with racist/xenophobic ideology and extreme right terrorist acts. Xumeng Xie et al. (2022) argued that shitposts troll with instant, reactive, offensive content, especially in the context of gender, and aim to limit feminist discourse in the digital public sphere. It can be stated that the aspects of shitposts that differ from the other concepts in question are that they frequently resort to the element of meaninglessness and/or hate speech. In this context, it is considered significant to argue that shitposts are associated with extreme right ideology, which has a blatantly anti-democratic tendency and directly opposes the principle of popular sovereignty (Mudde, 2007, p. 31).

A significant body of research on shitposts has associated their content with conservative or extreme right tendencies. McEwan (2017), in relation to former farmer turned singer Shannon Noll, highlighted that through Noll, shitpost producers mock the working class, thereby celebrating their own cultural capital and, paradoxically, protecting Australia's traditional values by embracing the "battler" character associated with "ordinary Australianness." Beth Davies (2019) examined the alt-right subculture operating on platforms such as *Reddit*, *4chan*, *8chan*, where most of the users are thought to be anonymous young people, and found that users on these platforms make productive use of meme and shitpost culture. García (2022) studied shitpost content produced in the context of events such as "George Floyd" and the "Christchurch" massacres, and found that it encouraged an ideological radicalization that supported racism and xenophobia. Xie et al. (2022) discussed shitposts in the context of gender and found that they promote an anti-feminist discourse. Watson (2023), who specifically addressed the nihilistic problematic of shitposts, argued that they "signify an embrace of meaninglessness and senselessness that refuses any kind of reversal into life-affirmation." Analyzing shitposts in relation to incels, Daly & Nichols (2023) conducted interviews with incels and aimed to understand why they engage in negative online behaviors such as shitposting. Barreto et al. (2025) examined the structural and communicative features of memes and shitposts, proposing a theoretically grounded distinction that conceptualizes shitposts as "noise-utterances" characterized by deliberate meaninglessness and disruption of dialogic coherence.²

McEwan's (2017) study offers a case-specific and culturally interpretive analysis of "Nollposting," whereas the present research moves beyond a single ironic phenomenon or identity discourse by conducting a systematic empirical examination of a broad corpus of shitposts in Türkiye. Unlike Davies (2019), García (2022) and Xie et al. (2022), this study did not directly analyze shitpost accounts or content that contained sexist or racist rhetoric. However, these studies were considered valuable because the analyzed posts contained this rhetoric. Watson (2023) provides a related conceptual discussion on shitposting as digital nihilism, while Barreto et al. (2025) articulate a theory-based differentiation between memes and shitposts. What distinguishes this study from these works is that an empirical analysis was conducted. Also, like Daly & Nichols (2023), shitpost producers were not interviewed. However, since incel studies are related to shitposts, this research can be utilized.

Incel is a term used to describe people who want a sexual and/or romantic relationship but are unable to find one because of factors such as 'physical appearance.' They are characterized by using the language of violence in the digital environment and sharing posts with content such as racism and misogyny (Daly & Nichols, 2023, p. 2). Alev Özkazanç (2020) stressed that incel ideology is linked to the crisis of masculinity resulting from social and economic change, and that this approach is articulated with right wing populism and creates a basis for extreme right terrorist acts. Elliot Rodger, who carried out an attack at the University

²In addition to the negative nihilism of shitposts, there have also been studies (Silvestri, 2020; Alejandro & Blanco, 2021; Nordstrom, 2022; Gesoff, 2023; Woods, 2023; Coker & Funk, 2025; Krogh et al., 2026; Southern, 2026, pp. 85–122; Khan & Thibaud, 2026) that argue that they may also contain certain potentials.

of California in 2014, is referred to as the 'incel hero.' In addition, Alek Minassian, who drove his car into women in Toronto in 2018, killing them, posted the following on *Facebook*: "The Incel Rebellion has already begun! We will overthrow all the Chads and Stacys! All hail the Supreme Gentleman Elliot Rodger!" (Öztürk, 2022, p. 68). It is also argued that "existential anger, frustration and depression" in incels who are dissatisfied with situations such as "the arrival of foreigners in their country or the rise of feminist movements" are channeled into shitposts (García, 2022, p. 229). Prior to the attack, the Christchurch perpetrator anonymously posted the following on *8chan*: "Well lads, it's time to stop shitposting and time to make a real life effort post." In this sense, incels and shitposts are associated with misogyny and extreme right tendencies (Davies, 2019, pp. 2, 8).

The incel community is esoteric in nature, with an intense use of jargon and terms. One of the most important of these, 'redpilling' is based on a 'philosophy' that expresses an embrace of biological determinism and the rejection of gender equality. Representing an "awakening" with reference to "The Matrix," redpilling points to the defense of masculinity (Öztürk, 2022, pp. 65–66). 'Blackpilling,' on the other hand, has the characteristics of redpilling, but involves much more intense nihilism (in the negative sense), despair, and hopelessness. This term is used for the tendency to "reject society and its ethical parameters as a means of processing perceived rejections from the labor market and the female gender" (Watson, 2023, p. 245). As Özkazanç (2020) points out, it is important to understand that at the root of incel hatred is a generalized hatred of humanity, which is directed at both men and women in a self-destructive way. As a result, a 'radical nihilism' manifests itself in society, which is prone to committing acts of terrorism.

In addition to these 'core' terms, there are certain stereotypes that are prominent in incel terminology: "Alpha" males are endowed with masculine qualities, entrepreneurial, athletic, disciplined, and adopt a "masculine lifestyle," while "beta" males are "weak," live with one woman, are shy, emotional, and docile (Elgün, 2020). "Stacys" define the women that incels consider "unattainable," while "chads" are "men who have relationships with any woman they want," and incels hate both groups (Öztürk, 2022, pp. 66–67). In addition, the incel universe includes "sigma" male, who are close to the position of the alpha male, but are "introverted," as well as many typifications such as "becky" and "normie" (Temelli, 2022).

It has been noted that incels have developed a certain formation in Türkiye, with accounts such as "Turkish Incel," "Red Pill Türkiye," and "Masculine Awakening" operating on various websites and social media platforms (Öztürk, 2022, p. 69). Among these communities, Turkish incels active on *YouTube* draw heavily on Western-centered incel terminology, reproduce narratives of hegemonic masculinity, and frame themselves as 'victims of women.' In doing so, they articulate misogynistic discourses through references to Turkish cultural codes and religious beliefs (Uzun & Tiryaki, 2024, p. 428). It can also be argued that a literature on incel and redpilling has developed in Türkiye.³ These debates have rightly been conducted mostly on sexism, as the concept in question is particularly associated with misogyny. However, this study takes into account the various leaps of 'incel ideology,' such as 'racism' and its articulation with the 'extreme right.'

Aim and methodology

This study investigates the constitutive elements of shitpost content produced in Türkiye, their possible political orientations, and whether they seemed to be related to authoritarian ideologies against equality.

³For studies on incel and redpilling in Türkiye, see: Kırmızısakal, 2019; Elgün, 2020; Öztürk, 2021, 2022; Temelli, 2022; İşler Sevinç & Akalın, 2022, 2025; Uzun & Tiryaki, 2024; İyigüngör, 2024; Çakmak, 2025; Duyguner & Yalçın Sarıbey, 2025; Faraji & Çıvgın, 2025; Erk et al., 2025; Kaplan & Avşar, 2025; Akpınar, 2025; Öztürk et al., 2025; Şentürk Kara & Kocabaş, 2026.

Aim

This study aims to understand the semantic-formal-contextual structure and ideological orientations of shitposts shared on the *Instagram* platform in Türkiye. In this context, four research questions will be addressed:

1. What are the distinctive characteristics of shitposts in the Turkish context?
2. How can shitposts be compared to 'caps' in terms of their formal and contextual features?
3. Which tendency appears more prominent in political shitposts: explicit ideological critique through humor or ambiguous cynical humor?
4. What ideological themes are reflected in Turkish shitposts, and to what extent do they include elements of extreme right radicalization and/or incel ideology?

Method

This study takes a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative analyses to examine shitposting within the complex and often chaotic language landscape of social media. The methodological framework is designed to capture the depth and breadth of the data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the semantic and ideological dimensions embedded in such content. Specifically, it systematically investigates the possible underlying structural, thematic and ideological patterns of shitposts that may initially appear meaningless or absurd.

Research model

The research model takes a phased, holistic approach to reveal the possible meaning structure of social media content. First, data was collected from identified accounts, and then the nature of the content was analyzed thematically. The qualitative data obtained through this analysis were then categorized and structured systematically for quantitative analysis.

Sample and data collection

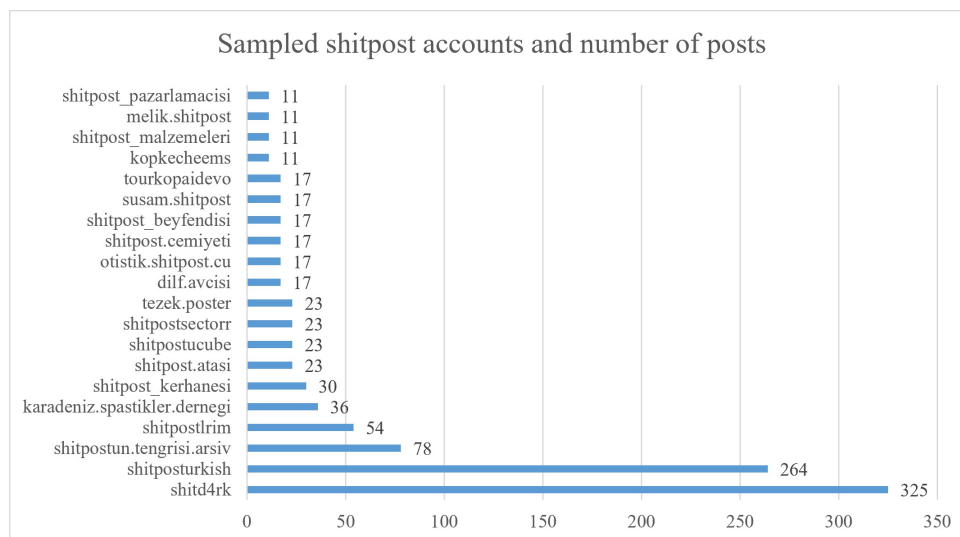
This research analyzes new media content collected from social media through document-based data collection in line with the research questions. *Instagram* was searched using the keyword 'shitpost' to identify relevant accounts. 20 accounts identified through this search and subsequent browsing formed the sample. Their follower counts ranged from 2.388 to 104.000 and post counts from 49 to 2.400. Two criteria guided the selection. First, accounts were required to have 'at least 1.000 followers' to ensure that the analyzed posts reached a wider audience and allowed for more reliable conclusions about the general characteristics of shitposting on *Instagram*. Although shitpost accounts are not necessarily influencers, follower-based classifications provide a useful reference for understanding account reach and impact. Previous studies categorize accounts with 1.000–10.000 followers as micro-influencers, 10.001–100.000 as meso-influencers, and over 100.001 as macro-influencers; accounts below 1.000 are often excluded from empirical analyses (Kishore & Errmann, 2024). Accordingly, 1.025 posts were sampled, distributed across accounts approximately in proportion to their follower counts (Figure 1).

The second criterion concerned the accounts' overall 'content profile.' Since accounts strictly adhering to the core features of the shitpost genre often have limited reach, the sample also included smaller accounts (above the 1.000–follower threshold) with a high density of shitposts. This approach prioritized posts reflecting the genre's aesthetic characteristics—such as fragmented visual-textual compositions, absurd or self-referential humor, and a disruptive tone—rather than popularity alone. Accounts dominated by conventional meme or caps formats were less likely to be included. At the same time, accounts focused

on a single theme, such as soccer, accounts with very few posts or followers, and accounts mainly sharing content in languages other than Turkish were excluded. All selection decisions were made with the assistance of a secondary researcher, and accounts were only included once full consensus was reached. This ensured that the final sample consistently reflected the defined selection criteria. In total, 1,025 shitposts posted between 2023 and 2025 were sampled. Posts were selected systematically according to a predefined numerical allocation. Side-scrolling posts with semantic continuity were counted as one post; otherwise they were treated separately.

Figure 1

Sampled shitpost accounts and number of posts



Operation

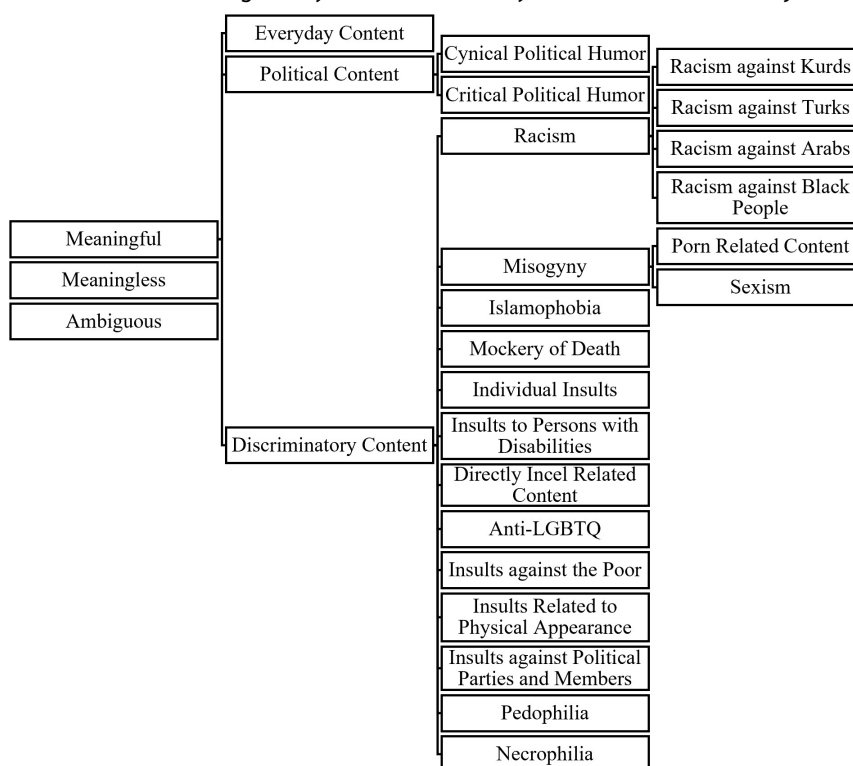
Thematic analysis was conducted manually through a coding process grounded in qualitative research principles. Since the dataset consisted largely of textual and symbolic ‘soft’ data, qualitative strategies were prioritized over purely quantitative tools. Instead of software, the researcher systematically read, coded, and categorized posts using spreadsheets to track themes and subthemes. This process enabled continuous refinement of the thematic framework. A quantitative count of posts per theme was also conducted to indicate theme prevalence while maintaining a qualitative research design. The analysis followed the iterative and reflexive “practical logic” typical of qualitative research (Neuman, 2022, pp. 294–304). Themes were developed both inductively from the data and deductively from relevant theoretical frameworks. To strengthen reflexivity, the dataset was revisited three times over several months. During this process, the secondary researcher who assisted in sample selection also reviewed the emerging themes, helping refine definitions and reach consensus before final coding.

The thematic framework is illustrated in Figure 2. Three main themes were identified: ‘meaningful,’ ‘ambiguous’ and ‘meaningless.’ Many posts employed techniques such as absurdism, parody, pastiche, and montage, which often produce a deliberate loss of meaning and require contextual interpretation. Two criteria were used to assess meaning: ‘context’ and ‘producer intention.’ Lack of contextual knowledge may lead a post to appear ‘meaningless’ or ‘ambiguous;’ therefore, the text, comments, and relevant online sources were examined to understand context. Content that initially appears nonsensical—such as surreal or impossible scenarios—was not classified as ‘meaningless,’ as it most likely seeks to provoke surprise and/or humor. Similarly, posts containing sexism or racism were categorized as ‘meaningful’ because they express hostile intentions grounded in social prejudices. Posts were coded as ‘ambiguous’ when they

contained both 'meaningful' and 'meaningless' elements, were highly 'open to interpretation,' or when the absurd implication was difficult to understand. Posts were considered 'meaningless' when almost no 'indirect' relationship between 'signifier' and 'signified' could be established. This framework enabled the construction of a semantic overview of shitpost content.

Figure 2

Horizontal hierarchical diagram of the themes identified in the thematic analysis



Within the 'meaningful' category, three subcategories were identified: 'everyday content,' 'political content' and 'discriminatory content.' 'Everyday content' refers broadly to cultural and daily-life practices such as television series, games, and family relations and therefore was not subdivided further. Although sometimes similar to caps, posts in this category more frequently employ harsh language, ambiguity, and elements such as absurdity, parody, and irony. As shitposts is a 'fluid' genre that overlaps with formats such as caps, not all sampled posts represent 'pure' shitposts; however, the analyzed accounts identify themselves as 'shitpost accounts.' 'Political content' includes posts directly or indirectly related to politics and is divided into 'cynical political humor' and 'critical political humor.' 'Cynical political humor' avoids taking a clear political stance and relies primarily on humor, sometimes bordering on meaninglessness, whereas 'critical political humor' expresses more explicit ideological criticism.

The 'discriminatory content' category includes posts targeting specific individuals or groups with degrading, insulting, or marginalizing messages. Thirteen subcategories were identified. 'Misogyny' was divided into 'porn related content' and 'sexism,' the former involves explicit or implied pornographic material circulated from a masculine perspective, while the latter includes rhetoric that degrades women. 'Racism' refers to stereotyping or hostile representations of Kurds, Turks, Arabs, and Black people. 'Islamophobia' includes insults against Islam, Muslims, or religious figures. 'Mockery of death' refers to content trivializing death or disrespecting the deceased. 'Individual insults' involve personal attacks on public figures, while 'insults to persons with disabilities' target individuals with physical or mental disabilities. 'Directly incel related content' includes discourse linked to incel communities. 'Anti-LGBTQ' (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-

gender, and queer) content produces exclusionary or antagonistic discourse toward LGBTQ individuals. 'Insults against the poor' ridicule socio-economically vulnerable groups, while 'insults related to physical appearance' target bodily traits such as weight, height, or facial features. 'Insults against political parties and members' involve personalized attacks on certain political views or parties beyond rational criticism. Finally, 'pedophilia' refers to posts normalizing or humorizing sexual abuse of children, while 'necrophilia' includes sexualized references to dead bodies.

The aim of this thematization was to provide a general overview of shitpost content. In particular, the 'political content' category was used to examine whether political humor in the sample conveyed ideological critique or leaned more toward cynicism and absurdity. The 'discriminatory content' category enabled identify ideological tendencies in Turkish shitposts and relate them to debates on the extreme right and incel cultures. The categories 'meaningless' and 'ambiguous' were not subdivided because meaning in these posts was either minimal or unclear. Overall, this framework helped identify the defining characteristics of shitpost communication.

Following thematic analysis, a quantitative content analysis was conducted. Each sampled account and theme received a unique code, such as 'f' for the account 'shitpost.atasi' and '32' for the theme 'misogyny.' Posts were organized in a structured dataset by account and annotated with their corresponding thematic codes. These annotations transformed the qualitative coding into a quantitative dataset, which was then analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 27. Chi-square analysis was applied to the theme groups ('main themes,' 'meaningful,' 'political content,' 'discriminatory content,' 'misogyny,' and 'racism') to compare observed and expected distributions. The results indicated uneven distributions in the 'main themes,' 'meaningful,' 'discriminatory content' and 'racism' categories, whereas 'misogyny' and 'political content' showed no statistically significant differences. This may reflect the inherently ambiguous and layered nature of shitposts, where sexist expressions and pornographic references, as well as political cynicism and critique, often overlap, complicating clear categorization rather than indicating a methodological weakness.

Reliability was strengthened by involving a second coder who assisted in sample selection and thematic development. However, traditional inter-coder reliability measures such as Cohen's Kappa have limited interpretive value in this dataset. Kappa assumes fixed and mutually exclusive categories (Rau & Shih, 2021, p. 6), yet the themes in this study are hierarchical and not fully independent. Moreover, content items in media datasets, such as images, often relate to multiple categories rather than a single predefined one (Kirilenko & Stepchenkova, 2016, p.1). Since individual posts could be associated with several themes, the strict one-to-one coding assumption required by Kappa does not fully apply. Coding by the two researchers was organized in a binary dataset (1/0) across 54 themes (27 per coder). For each post, the relevant theme was coded as 'present' (1), while other themes were recorded either as 'absent' (0) or as 'missing' values. These alternatives affect agreement statistics. Systematically coding absences produces many 0-0 matches, which can artificially inflate Kappa values, whereas treating absences as missing removes such matches and lowers the score. Additionally, rare themes such as 'pedophilia' contain very few present codes, while most other posts are recorded as absent or missing, complicating statistical interpretation. For these reasons, Cohen's Kappa has limited explanatory value for this dataset.

Despite the structural limitations of traditional inter-coder reliability metrics such as Cohen's Kappa, the second coder's results were reported directly and supported by chi-square tests. These indicated uneven distributions in the 'main themes,' 'meaningful,' 'political content,' 'discriminatory content,' and 'racism' categories, while 'misogyny' showed no significant difference. According to the second coder, 90.9% of posts were classified as 'meaningful,' 6.2% as 'ambiguous' and 2.8% as 'meaningless.' Within 'meaningful' content, 47.3% was 'discriminatory,' 39.5% 'everyday,' and 13.2% 'political,' 'political' posts were predominantly coded as

'cynical political humor' (87.0%) rather than 'critical political humor' (13.0%). Among 'discriminatory' themes, the most frequent were 'misogyny' (23.4%)—including 'porn related content' (53.4%) and 'sexism' (46.6%)—and 'racism' (22.2%), followed by 'Islamophobia' (9.1%), 'insults to persons with disabilities' (8.4%), 'mockery of death' (8.2%), 'anti-LGBTQ' content (6.6%), 'insults against the poor' (5.2%), 'directly incel related content' (4.5%), 'insults related to physical appearance' (4.5%), 'individual insults' (3.9%), 'insults against political parties and members' (2.3%), 'pedophilia' (1.4%) and 'necrophilia' (0.5%). Within the 'racism' category, posts targeted Kurds (35.7%), Black people (30.6%), Turks (18.4%), and Arabs (15.3%). The second coder's analysis shows that 'cynical political humor' predominates. This reflects the challenges of categorizing political humor that often blends irony, sarcasm, and critique. 'Racism' appeared more prevalent and 'misogyny' less frequent, partly because negative sexual stereotypes about Black individuals were coded under 'racism.' These differences indicate slight variations between the second coder's results and the primary analysis.

This study interpreted shitpost content within a framework that considers both 'context' and 'producer intent.' Nevertheless, the fluid and often esoteric nature of some posts complicates precise thematic classification. Certain references—such as those derived from children's games or popular culture—may remain unrecognized and appear meaningless. Likewise, cynical humor may contain implicit political critique, and insults targeting the poor may indirectly reflect power relations. While shitposts are inherently polysemic, nevertheless, treating them as infinitely open to interpretation risks overlooking their ideological structure and their embeddedness in social discourse (Stevenson, 2015; Turner, 2016).

Findings

This section addresses the four research questions under three main headings. Thematic analysis was applied to the sample, and key findings were evaluated. Analysis of the main themes revealed that the majority of posts were categorized as 'meaningful' (n = 909; 89%), followed by 'ambiguous' (n = 61; 6%) and 'meaningless' (n = 55; 5%). Table 1 presents quantitative data on posts per account under the three sub-themes of 'meaningful' content: 'discriminatory content' (n = 475; 52%), 'everyday content' (n = 308; 34%) and 'political content' (n = 126; 14%). 'Political content' was divided into 'cynical political humor' (n = 69; 55%) and 'critical political humor' (n = 57; 45%). Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of sub-themes within 'discriminatory content,' where 'misogyny' and 'racism' emerged as the most prominent categories. Detailed analysis showed that 'misogyny' consisted of 'porn related content' (n = 86; 57%) and 'sexism' (n = 65; 43%). Similarly, racist content was primarily directed against Kurds (n = 34; 51%), followed by Turks (n = 13; 20%), Arabs (n = 12; 18%), and Black people (n = 7; 11%).

Table 1

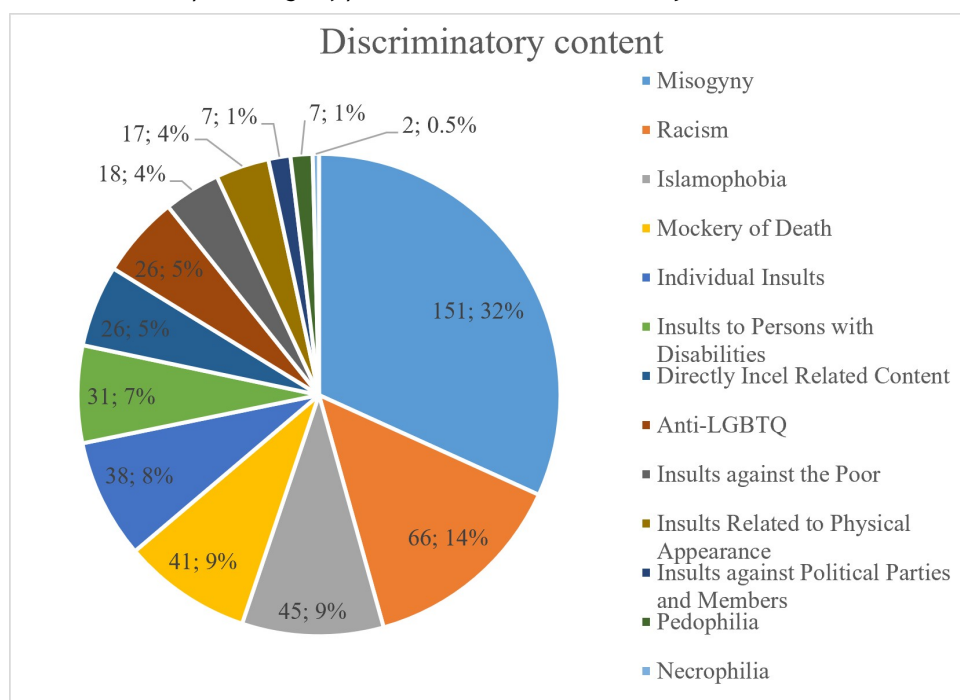
Data related to the sub-titles of the 'meaningful' theme

Account name	Everyday content	Political content	Discriminatory content	Total
shitd4rk	96 (30.3%)	65 (20.5%)	156 (49.2%)	317
shitposturkish	65 (28.4%)	28 (12.2%)	136 (59.4%)	229
shitpostun.tengrisi.arsiv	29 (47.5%)	14 (23.0%)	18 (29.5%)	61
shitpostlrin	17 (38.6%)	7 (15.9%)	20 (45.5%)	44
karadeniz.spastikler.dernegi	10 (37.0%)	0 (0%)	17 (63.0%)	27
shitpost_kerhanesi	11 (44.0%)	1 (4.0%)	13 (52.0%)	25
shitpost.atasi	7 (30.4%)	1 (4.3%)	15 (65.3%)	23
shitpostucube	6 (31.6%)	0 (0%)	13 (68.4%)	19
shitpostsectorr	6 (30.0%)	2 (10.0%)	12 (60.0%)	20
tezek.poster	7 (36.8%)	3 (15.8%)	9 (47.4%)	19

Account name	Everyday content	Political content	Discriminatory content	Total
dilf.avcisi	9 (75.0%)	1 (8.3%)	2 (16.7%)	12
otistik.shitpost.cu	7 (43.8%)	1 (6.2%)	8 (50.0%)	16
shitpost.cemiyeti	8 (50.0%)	2 (12.5%)	6 (37.5%)	16
shitpost_beyfendisi	9 (64.3%)	0 (0%)	5 (35.7%)	14
susam.shitpost	4 (28.6%)	0 (0%)	10 (71.4%)	14
tourkopaidevo	3 (18.8%)	1 (6.2%)	12 (75.0%)	16
kopkecheems	2 (28.6%)	0 (0%)	5 (71.4%)	7
shitpost_malzemeleri	5 (55.6%)	0 (0%)	4 (44.4%)	9
melik.shitpost	4 (40.0%)	0 (0%)	6 (60.0%)	10
shitpost_pazarlamacisi	3 (27.3%)	0 (0%)	8 (72.7%)	11

Figure 3

The number and percentage of posts within the 'discriminatory content' theme



The structure of shitposts

This section, which aims to identify what distinguishes shitposts, is based on an analysis of 1.025 posts. It suggests that shitposts should contain at least one or more or all of the following four characteristics: 'semantic loss-distortion,' 'formal loss-distortion,' 'disturbing content' and 'disturbing form.'

'Semantic loss-distortion' describes when content has a certain form but does not have a strong semantic intensity. For example, it seems unlikely to extract sufficient meaning from an image of a crying emoji face (Figure 4). Or the strawberry-shaped elephant (Figure 5) has some form but weak semantic implication. Although some meaning can still be inferred from shitposts with the feature of 'formal loss-distortion,' a formal distortion is prominent in these. For example, the content with the text 'my page will be closed' and a highly blurred image of 'SpongeBob' behind it (Figure 6) is characterized by formal loss and distortion. Although the text refers to the frequent closure of shitpost accounts due to their objectionable content, the background image is vague and ambiguous. In shitposts with 'disturbing content,' the receiver is directly

disturbed by racist, sexist, etc. content or other emphases that imply the language of violence. For example, the content in which the image of ‘smurf with a cat face’ is chained with the text “let’s see if you can appear on my ‘explore’ again” (Figure 7) can be evaluated in this context. The ‘disturbing form’ refers to the loss and disturbances in elements such as image and sound. For example, in the text ‘heart attack speedrun’ and the video on how to make an unhealthy dessert (Figure 8), sounds such as high-decibel horns and cartoon effects were used in the background. It should be noted, however, that these features are often used together: The video (Figure 9), in which the image of the sinking ship ‘Titanic’ is shared with the text “look at the sounds coming from near the Titanic, I’m devastated -crying face emoji-” and strange, meaningless sounds, contains all four features. It can be understood that this shitpost has a weak density of meaning, some elements of its form (sound) remain ambiguous, it refers to a disturbing content related to the deceased passengers, and it has an ‘eerie’ form with strange sounds in the background. It was found that the shitposts in the context of the sample analyzed had at least one of these characteristics. Although it may be difficult to assume these distinctive features for shitposts shared in other countries without further research, it is thought that they may be valid to a certain extent for the versions in Türkiye.

Figure 4-9

Illustrated shitposts to grasp the constituent elements of shitposts



Everyday content and political critique

As a result of the analysis, 89% of shitposts were categorized as ‘meaningful,’ while 11% were classified as ‘meaningless’ or ‘ambiguous.’ Contrary to some assumptions (Alejandro & Blanco, 2021; Barreto et al., 2025, p. 27), most shitposts in the sample contain discernible meaning or intent, although ambiguity or irony may still appear within seemingly meaningful posts. ‘Everyday content’ constitutes 30% of the analyzed shitposts and includes references to popular culture such as TV series, movies, games, music, internet phenomena, and celebrities (Figure 10: A shitpost about a superhero series). Posts also address everyday issues, current events, sports, and problems faced by high school students preparing for university (Figure 11: A shitpost complaining about overcrowded buses). Many examples display humorous, ironic, or absurd elements—such as accidents, pets, puns, and self-criticism—and resemble the stylistic features of caps. Figures 12 and 13 (An analogy of a face with a musical note and a reminder to drink water) illustrate this tendency toward semantic

disconnection or playful ambiguity, consistent with definitions of shitposts in the literature (McEwan, 2017; Alejandro & Blanco, 2021). Some posts also contain elements of social critique (Figure 14: A criticism of the education system's inability to train 'painters').

Figure 10-14

Examples of 'everyday content' shitposts



'Political content' accounts for 14% of the 'meaningful' category, suggesting that politics may not be the primary focus of shitpost production in this sample. Nevertheless, similar to caps, some shitposts incorporate humorous elements and occasionally adopt the caps format. However, some posts also employ aggressive language and insults; such content was coded under 'discriminatory content' rather than 'political content.' Within 'political content,' 'cynical political humor' includes posts mocking politicians such as Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Devlet Bahçeli, Sinan Oğan, Mehmet Şimşek, and Besim Tibuk, as well as political parties or opinions, often through sarcastic, absurd, or ironic language (Figure 15: A shitpost about Sinan Oğan forgetting his password in a computer game). Similar sarcastic content also targets Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (Figure 16: A shitpost in which Atatürk asks a shopkeeper why his shop is closed and receives the reply "my (founding) father, we follow your footsteps," implicitly criticizing his stance toward the 'free market,' but it is still quite cynical).

Figure 15-16

Examples of 'cynical political humor' shitposts



Shitposts categorized as 'critical political humor,' which rely on satire based on political positioning, reflect a relatively complex ideological landscape. They mainly criticize former opposition leader Kılıçdaroğlu's failure to resign, his electoral defeat, and his alleged alliances with parties linked to terrorism, as well as President Erdoğan and the government's interventions in the earthquake, the economy, and foreign policy (Figures 17 and 18: Shitposts criticizing Kılıçdaroğlu's ambition to remain party chairman and the inadequacy of the government's subsidies for young people to buy technological devices). Within the 'political content' category, 'cynical political humor' accounted for 55%, while 'critical political humor' accounted for 45%, meaning that about one in every two political posts can be categorized as 'cynical.' Overall, while some shitposts contain elements of critique, many lack a clear ideological stance and express politics in cynical or ambiguous tones. From the perspective of Habermas's theory of communicative action, meaningful political discourse requires validity claims such as truthfulness and rationality (Scannell, 2016, pp. 280–283). Given the prevalence of cynicism and ambiguity, political argumentation in these posts may remain fragmented or weakly structured. However, this interpretation remains tentative and would benefit from reception studies examining how audiences interpret such content.

Figure 17-18

Examples of 'critical political humor' shitposts



Reproduction of extreme right ideology

In the analyzed sample, 'discriminatory content' constitutes 52% of posts within the 'meaningful' category and 46% of all analyzed shitposts, suggesting that roughly one in two *Instagram* shitposts may contain elements of discriminatory ideology. 'Misogyny' accounts for 32% of 'discriminatory content.' The categories 'porn-related content' and 'sexism' appear in similar proportions. The former includes pornographic shitposts presented from a masculine perspective through text and images, while the latter contains posts emphasizing masculinity, objectifying women, belittling the women's movement, and glorifying perpetrators of femicides while mocking the victims. Within the 'racism' category, which accounts for 14% of 'discriminatory content,' the majority of posts were about Kurds, followed by Turks, Arabs, and Black people. Kurdish culture is often ridiculed and sometimes associated with terrorism, zoophilia, and inbreeding, indicating explicit racism. Posts categorized as 'racism against Turks' largely rely on stereotypes about physical appearance, although many consist of regional insults directed at people from Konya rather than Turks in general. 'Racism against Arabs' mostly reflects concerns about the 'Arabization of Turks' and Syrian refugees in Türkiye. Finally, 'racism against Black people' includes posts referencing slavery, while pornographic content involving Black men was also frequently observed, although not coded under this category.

In order to show how the link between extreme right ideology and violence is manifested in the shitposts analyzed, it is necessary to concretize this with specific examples from the empirical study. In one content, which was designed as an imaginary conversation between two lovers (Figure 19), in response to the phrase “my love, I am Kurdish and you[?]”, ‘edited’ images of an actor portraying Esat Oktay Yıldırım, the commander who served as the ‘internal security chief’ in Diyarbakır Prison during the 1980 Turkish coup, were included in a movie accompanied by ‘exciting’ music. It is stated that Yıldırım managed this prison, where mostly Kurdish political prisoners were held, with the logic of a military school and committed ethnic-based human rights violations (Fırat & Topaloğlu, 2012). In a content taken from an X account shared in Japanese, expressions of violence directly against Kurds were included (Figure 20: Shitpost with a message about beating Kurds). Another example of a shitpost features Saul Goodman, the lawyer protagonist of the TV series *Better Call Saul* (Figure 21). In the image where he is tired and sloppily dressed, the phrases “when the divorce case comes” are included, while in the photo where he is dressed in a suit and well-groomed, the phrases “defending the man who beat two Afghan refugees” are included. Such discourses reflect the hate ideology of extreme right groups in Türkiye that use symbols associated with Turkish mythology, Turkish-Islamic tradition, and National Socialism, resort to hate speech, especially against refugees and Kurds, engage in acts of violence, arm their followers and emulate neo-Nazi organizations (Gerçek Gündem, 2022; Öncü, 2024).

Figure 19-21

Examples of racist-xenophobic shitposts



Within the analyzed sample, another prominent theme after racism is ‘Islamophobia,’ with posts containing direct or indirect insults targeting Islam, Prophet Muhammad, Sunni Muslims, Prophet Ali, Alevis, and religious individuals. Another theme, ‘mockery of death,’ includes posts ridiculing deaths caused by wars, terrorist incidents, accidents, natural disasters, and the deaths of celebrities, as well as murders that provoked public reaction in Türkiye or globally. Under ‘individual insults,’ politicians, internet influencers, ‘opinion leaders,’ athletes, and musicians were targeted. The analyzed shitposts also included insults against disabled people—sometimes even through account names—and hate speech directed at physically or mentally disabled individuals and Spinal Muscular Atrophy patients. In ‘insults related to physical appearance,’ individuals whose clothing or appearance were perceived as not meeting certain ‘standards’ were ridiculed. Under ‘Anti-LGBTQ,’ gays, transgender individuals, and bisexuals were mocked and subjected to hate speech equated with pornographic content, while the LGBTQ movement was denigrated. In ‘insults against the poor,’ posts mocked poor people’s salaries and their relation to popular culture or politics. Under ‘insulting political parties and their members,’ posts targeted the ‘Justice and Development Party,’ the ‘Free Cause Party,’ and their voters. Finally, although limited in number, some posts referenced ‘necrophilia’ and ‘pedophilia’ in mocking or indirectly approving ways.

In the sample analyzed in the study, under the title of ‘discriminatory content,’ shitposts directly related to incel discussions were found with a rate of 5% (Figure 3). It is understood that the posts often emphasize characters such as Patrick Bateman, Travis Bickle, and Arthur Fleck, who are associated with sigma or

incel in movies such as *American Psycho*, *Taxi Driver*, and *Joker*. The posts often shared imagery or videos highlighting these characters' 'cool attitudes' or violent acts, connecting them to themes of masculinity and misogyny aligned with redpill discourse. It was found that meme characters such as 'incel' and 'chad' were utilized and words such as 'normie' and discourses such as 'normies don't understand' related to these debates were used in posts and comments. People who are considered to be in line with social norms or those who fight for social justice are referred to as 'normies' or 'liberals.' At the same time, the analyzed examples revealed a 'challenge' to No Nut November that could be related to incels. Hate speech directed at women, feminists, refugees, 'Sharia followers,' LGBTQ individuals, and environmentalists was observed in some posts using incel-associated characters. Additionally, references connecting Kemalism⁴ to totalitarianism appeared across multiple topics. In posts with militarist content, it is understood that posts containing coup commanders were also made. For example, in one post (Figure 22), a meme featuring an image of former politician Besim Tibuk with a text implying that he defends 'European liberalism' and a meme featuring an image of a 'social justice warrior' with a text criticizing the 'free market,' totalitarianism and the military were associated with "lifeless liberal normie memes." In the same meme, the image of the face of the leader of the 1980 Turkish coup, mounted on a work of art with the text "I denaturalized Kadir Mısıroğlu [Anti-Kemalist Islamist]" was called "Divine Kemalist memes." This shitpost can be considered similar to the image in which the heads of three 'incel heroes' known as Elliot Rodger, "blackops2cel" and "Catfishman" are mounted on a work of art with religious content (Figure 23, Daviess, 2019, p. 8).

Figure 22-23

Examples of shitpost-meme with incel content



An empirical example (Figure 24) can be used to show the reflections of the violent orientation of the incel ideology and its structure evolving into misanthropic nihilism in shitposts. While the quantitative findings indicate that incel-evoking content accounts for about 5% of 'discriminatory content,' this qualitative analysis reveals that shitposts are not merely about numerical presence but contain complex ideological and psychological layers. In this context, the distorted state of mind of an imaginary individual is presented, accompanied by images of Bateman, the main character of the movie *American Psycho*, who is often

⁴Kemalism is the founding philosophy of the Republic of Türkiye, which was established in 1923 under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. A 'national ideology of modernization,' Kemalism emerged after the Turkish War of Independence (1919–1923) with the aim of transforming society into a modern, secular, and fully independent nation-state by freeing it from theocratic and imperialist influences. It is based on six fundamental principles: republicanism, nationalism, populism, secularism, etatism, and revolutionism. In Turkish history, military coups, such as those in 1960, 1971, and 1980, were carried out directly by the army in the name of "protecting Kemalism" because civilian governments were deemed to have deviated from Atatürk's reforms (Kili, 1980). This practice of 'historical legitimization' may be one factor underlying the tendency to equate Kemalism with militarism and totalitarianism in some authoritarian-leaning shitposts.

associated with the incel-sigma stereotype, having hysterical attacks and making 'narcissistic gestures.' The main messages are that this fictitious person is lonely, unsuccessful, mentally unhealthy, and has attempted suicide several times. In relation to this, exclusion, depression, misanthropy and suicidal tendencies are consistent with the characteristics of incels (Hoffman et al., 2020, p. 568; Witt, 2020, p. 681; Engholm, 2021, pp. 55–56; Cotte, 2021, p. 97). This is followed by 'numerical data' on the number of times the fictional person in question has tortured and murdered refugees, feminists, 'Sharia followers,' and LGBTQ people. In addition, the message was also given about how many cases of 'premeditated murder' the person in question had. In fact, even if one is lonely, unsuccessful, unmotivated, and suicidal, the idea that incel ideology offers a distorted solace is emphasized. In other words, it is possible to hold on to the ideology of hate even if one is living a problematic life from top to bottom, and internalizing these values is 'meaningful' in a world surrounded by 'unhappiness.' This kind of misanthropic nihilism, associated with blackpilling, involves the acceptance that happiness can never be achieved in today's society, the embrace of self-destruction, and the darkness of violent acts that reject the parameters of society altogether. This approach is supported by many other shitpost content that glorifies and encourages the violent actions of movie characters who are positioned as incel-sigmas with their social exclusion and 'edited' with 'glamorous' music.

Figure 24

An example of a shitpost showing the extent of incel violence



The shitposts analyzed under the heading of “discriminatory content” reflect a broader ideological structure linked to totalitarian extreme right movements that reject democratic principles and promote violence and illegal means (Bjørge & Ravndal, 2019, pp. 3–4), often veiled under ironic humor. While the quantitative data reveal the prevalence of hate speech related to race, gender, and sexual orientation, a qualitative examination shows that these posts do not merely reproduce isolated prejudices but actively operate to disseminate and normalize such hateful ideologies. Importantly, the articulation of this approach with incel ideology indicates an evolution toward misanthropic nihilism, where hatred expands to encompass society as a whole, directing death and violence toward nearly every group and value, while simultaneously glorifying self-destruction.

Discussion and conclusion

The study aims to understand the unique aspects of shitposts, including their level of meaning, political and ideological orientations. In relation to the first research question four core characteristics were identified: 'semantic loss-distortion,' 'formal loss-distortion,' 'disturbing content' and 'disturbing form.' Each post exhibited at least one feature, closely reflecting semantic and stylistic losses or disturbing elements. The

interplay of formal distortion and semiotic fragmentation highlights the multidimensional distinctiveness of Turkish shitposts, offering a framework for understanding how meaning, form, and affective impact interact, and helping to better define their unique features (McEwan, 2017; García, 2022; Watson, 2023; Barreto et al., 2025).

Continuing the discussion on the first research question, Barreto et al. (2025) focus on “pure” shitposts, which are entirely noise-driven or meaningless. However, this approach seems to be normative and could obscure the broader phenomenon. The present study examined the wide range of content produced by Turkish *Instagram* shitpost accounts, showing that only a small portion of posts (11%) resemble those described by Barreto et al. Although memes or caps may be present in the sample, these should not be interpreted as a mere misclassification; rather, the focus is on content produced and experienced as shitposting by both accounts and their followers. Additionally, the majority (89%) retain discernible meaning—including posts with hostile or provocative intent—while still displaying the visual and stylistic hallmarks of shitposting, often in multimodal formats such as videos, indicating that the Turkish shitpost landscape cannot be reduced to a ‘nonsense-only’ definition. Restricting the definition to purely meaningless ‘brain rot’ examples overlooks the ways in which shitposts are experienced by broader audiences: they are not always fixed, nonsensical artifacts, but combine meaning, formal or semantic disruption, and affective impact. While a chaotic or meaningless dimension exists, understanding Turkish shitposting requires acknowledging its variability and the coexistence of meaningful and disruptive elements, rather than reducing it to a narrow, prescriptive category.

As a final step in addressing the first research question, this fourfold categorization of shitposts may also open up a discussion regarding the potential communicative logic of these digital contents. Previous studies (Alejandro & Blanco, 2021; Nordstrom, 2022) describe shitposts as anti-aesthetic and purposeless content that paradoxically “mocks” and “transcends” the search for meaning, negative emotions, and maladaptive social realities shaped by the commodification and uncertainty of contemporary society. However, the findings of this study suggest that most shitposts contain some degree of meaning rather than representing pure meaninglessness. The idea of meaninglessness seems applicable mainly to the limited ‘meaningless’ or ‘ambiguous’ categories and to some highly absurd examples of ‘everyday content.’ Moreover, the relatively strong presence of ‘discriminatory content’ indicates that some shitposts may reproduce ideologies grounded in hostile impulses. Rather than functioning only as a ‘critique of instrumental reason,’ shitposts may also reflect forms of alienation and anxiety associated with contemporary capitalism.

Regarding the second research question comparing shitposts and caps, the findings indicate both continuity and divergence. Similar to caps, the ‘everyday content’ category includes humorous elements linked to meme and troll culture. In the political domain, some shitposts also display elements of critique, partially aligning with studies highlighting the political potential of caps (Ünsay, 2014; Barlas Bozkuş, 2016; Kırık & Saltık, 2017; Keçe, 2019; Yıldız Efe, 2020; İrak, 2021; Genel & Özdemir, 2022; Kırgız Polat, 2023). However, consistent with García (2022), the analyzed sample shows stronger semantic ambiguity, formal distortion, and aggressive language. Compared to caps, shitposts therefore appear to intensify these destabilizing elements in both everyday and political contexts.

Concerning the third research question on political shitposts, the findings reveal two nearly equal tendencies. About half of the posts were coded as ‘critical,’ employing satire to comment on political events, figures, or policies from identifiable positions. The other half were categorized as ‘cynical,’ relying on sarcasm, irony, or absurdity without a clear ideological stance and often incorporating insults, aggressive language, and formal distortions. While critical posts demonstrate some potential for ideological critique,

the prevalence of cynical ones and the broader presence of absurdity and aggression suggest that political argumentation in shitposts is often fragmented and non-linear.

Turning to the fourth research question on ideological themes, 46% of the analyzed shitposts contained elements of extreme right ideology based on discrimination or hate speech. Among 'discriminatory content,' 32% involved 'misogyny,' while the remainder reproduced other social inequalities, particularly racist rhetoric. Turkish shitposts display a complex pattern of criticizing, insulting, and ridiculing different political parties and their supporters, often reflecting ethnic nationalist, xenophobic, anti-feminist, and anti-religious tendencies. Some posts also referenced Kemalism in ways that appeared to sanctify militarism and authoritarianism. Others mocked deaths, targeted people for their physical appearance, and insulted the disabled, the poor, and certain public figures, occasionally referencing 'pedophilia' and 'necrophilia.' Furthermore, posts directly related to incel ideology were identified, and the overall intensity of misogynistic content in the analyzed shitposts can also be associated with incel-related discourse. As noted by Uzun and Tiryaki (2024), Turkish incel rhetoric often draws on global terminology while partially incorporating local cultural codes, a pattern also observed in the present study. Unlike the authors, the findings indicate that incel discourse intersects with authoritarian narratives. Western-centered incel-related elements, combined with Turkish political codes, actors, and domestically perceived adversaries, are edited together through visual and textual manipulations. For example, an incel-related term like 'divine' placed next to the word 'Kemalist' to create the expression 'Divine Kemalist memes.' Similarly, the face of a former coup leader is placed within an incel meme, and anti-Syrian or anti-Afghan refugee sentiments are integrated with a 'sigma' movie character. Moreover, the discriminatory content examined may reflect a form of misanthropic nihilism directed broadly against various social groups and values. An important finding is that *Instagram*—often perceived as safer than platforms such as *Telegram*—also hosts uncensored violent and hateful content. Overall, these results suggest that some authoritarian ideological elements noted in previous studies on shitposts internationally (McEwan, 2017; Daviess, 2019; García, 2022; Xie et al., 2022; Daly & Nichols, 2023) may also be present in shitposts produced in Türkiye.

Taken together, these findings highlight the need for further research with larger and more diverse samples, combining content analysis and reception-based approaches. Such studies could clarify the characteristics, potential intentions, divergences from other genres, styles of political humor, and ideological orientations of shitposts. Although preliminary observations suggest that many producers and followers are high school-aged individuals, this assumption should be tested through empirical research. Future socio-psychological studies could also examine how discriminatory ideologies circulating among young people in Türkiye are constructed and received in new media environments. Educational initiatives and social support may help address discriminatory attitudes,⁵ but confronting these prejudices likely requires broader social transformation supported by political initiatives and civil society engagement.



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⁵Hoffman et al. (2020, pp. 578–581), İyigüngör (2024, pp. 165–167), Erk et al. (2025, pp. 286–287), Faraji & Çıvgın (2025, pp. 215–217), and Kaplan & Aşar (2025, pp. 118–119) have made many useful policy recommendations to combat such violence.



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