From Disinformation to Political Crises: The Destination of Structured Knowledge

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ABSTRACT

Today, information is recognized as the main factor of production. Humanity is living in the era of information society with the developments in information and communication technologies, and therefore the processing, preservation and dissemination of information is of utmost importance. Another concept that has come to the forefront with technological developments and digitalization is the concept of "war without borders", which also includes hybrid wars. As a matter of fact, the wars of the information society continue beyond the notions of border and distance. All activities that can harm social integrity, polarize societies and create insecurity, conflict and instability are important components of war without borders. Due to the many features and conveniences it provides, public discourse in a digitalized society is now shaped on social and other internet platforms. Therefore, these platforms have become a target for both states and other interest groups. "Structured information", which corresponds to disinformation, misinformation, and fake news concepts, is circulated on these platforms instead of traditional methods to reach its targets and has serious consequences, including crises. Essentially, the study seeks to answer the question "Why and how does structured knowledge shape human behaviour in practice? After providing the necessary definitions, the article aims to show the relationship between structured knowledge and social psychology, political psychology and political crises. The study uses a qualitative research method, a literature review technique and a descriptive analysis. In terms of theoretical foundations, it discusses why and how disinformation processes can have critical consequences with current examples from Türkiye and the world. In conclusion, the role and importance of social and political psychology in the combat against structured information has been demonstrated, and it has been assessed that the journey of structured information, which can turn into political crises, passes through these fields.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Structured Knowledge, Disinformation, Social Psychology, Political Psychology, Political Crisis

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Research Article

Dezenformasyondan Siyasi Krizlere: Yapılandırılmış Bilginin Destinasyonu

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ÖZ

Günümüzde bilgi temel üretim faktörü olarak kabul edilmektedir. İnsanlık bilgi ve iletişim teknolojilerindeki gelişmelerle bilgi toplumu çağını yaşamakta, dolayısıyla bilginin işlenmesi, muhafaza edilmesi ve yayılması azami önem arz etmektedir. Teknolojik gelişmeler ve dijitalleşmeyle ön plana çıkmış olan bir diğer kavram ise hibrit savaşları da bünyesinde barındıran "sınırsız savaş" kavramıdır. Nitekim bilgi toplumunun savaşları sınır ve mesafe mefhumlarının ötesinde devam etmektedir. Sosyal bütünlüğe zarar verecek, toplumları kutuplaştırarak güvensizlik, çatışma ve istikrarsızlık yaratabilecek bütün faaliyetler de sınırları olmayan savaşın önemli bileşenleridir. Sağladığı birçok özellik ve kolaylıklar nedeniyle, dijitalleşen toplumda kamu söylemi artık sosyal platformlar ve diğer internet platformlarında şekillenmektedir. Dolayısıyla bu platformlar hem ülkeler hem de diğer çıkar gruplarının hedef tahtasındadır. Dezenformasyon, mezenformasyon, sahte haber gibi kavramlara karşılık gelen "yapılandırılmış bilgiler" hedeflerine ulaştırılmak üzere geleneksel yöntemler yerine özellikle bu platformlarda dolaşıma sokulmakta ve krizler de dâhil olmak üzere ciddi sonuçlar doğurmaktadır. Çalışmada, temel olarak "Yapılandırılmış bilgi pratikte insan davranışlarını neden ve nasıl şekillendirmektedir?" sorusuna cevap aranmaktadır. Makalede gerekli tanımlamalar yapıldıktan sonra sırasıyla, yapılandırılmış bilginin sosyal psikoloji, politik psikoloji ve siyasi krizlerle olan ilişkisini ortaya koymak amaçlanmaktadır. Çalışmada nitel araştırma yöntemi kullanılarak literatür taraması tekniğinden istifade edilmekte ve betimsel bir analiz gerçekleştirilmektedir. Teorik dayanak açısından dezenformasyon süreçlerinin Türkiye'den ve dünyadan güncel örneklerle neden ve nasıl kritik sonuçlar doğurabileceği tartışılmıştır. Sonuç olarak, yapılandırılmış bilgiyle mücadelede sosyal ve politik psikolojinin rolü ve önemi ortaya konulmuş, yapılandırılmış bilginin siyasi krizlere dönüşebilen yolculuğunda istikametinin bu alanlardan geçtiği değerlendirilmiştir.

Keywords: Yapılandırılmış Bilgi, Dezenformasyon, Sosyal Psikoloji, Politik Psikoloji, Siyasi Kriz

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INTRODUCTION

In today's world, where interstate wars have become rare phenomena, the concepts of "hybrid warfare" and its "potential form," which can be described as "hybrid threat," were first used in a master's thesis in 2002. In 2007, the concept gained popularity when Hoffman used it to describe the unconventional warfare methods Hezbollah employed against Israel in 2006 (Hoffman, 2007). The concept of 'hybrid' has been subordinated to the concept of 'unrestricted warfare,' which is considered a more inclusive concept semantically (Gezer & Kösen, n.d.). Disinformation and its derivative concepts, influenced by technological advancements in today's world, have emerged as significant elements within the broad spectrum of unrestricted warfare. On the other hand, as social media and other internet platforms have increasingly adapted to the communication culture, changes have also occurred in the routine of communication and journalism. These platforms have become widespread tools for circulating structured information due to the advantages they offer in terms of ease of access, speed, low cost, and two-way interaction. Since social media users are often unaware that online content is deliberately manipulated (structured) and are easily deceived by unverifiable information, social media has played a significant role in the emergence and spread of such deceptive communication (Ray & George, 2019, p. 2742).

On the other hand, the term "post-truth," was first used by Steve Tesich in 1992 in an article titled "A Government of Lies" in The Nation to refer to earlier political events and scandals such as Watergate, the Iran-Contra affair, and the First Gulf War (McDermott, 2019, p. 18). In the article some of the defining characteristics of the post-truth era were described as: 'approaching issues based on self-interest or personal beliefs instead of objective truth, and making the selection of truth a matter of choice' (Oruç, 2020, p. 142). This phenomenon still contributes to the success of disinformation activities. Today represents a period that Wardle and Derakhshan refer to as "information disorder," where the spread of false, decontextualized, distorted, and fabricated information has reached alarming levels (Chaves & Braga, 2019, p. 478). The concept of "disinformation," which points to information disorder, is parallel to its derivatives, misinformation and malinformation; the term "information" remains constant at the root, with only the prefix changing. Every information disorder can have harmful consequences. However, the distinguishing factor is whether there is "intent to deceive." This is the

reason why the term "structured information" has been chosen instead of "disinformation" in this study. Deception, aimed at a specific purpose, is possible through the structuring of an event that may carry the characteristics of information or news, whether it is real or not. People may accept this information as true due to various social, political and psychological reasons and motivations. Moreover, by sharing it, they may contribute to the spread of this information, thereby contributing to the serious consequences that structured information can cause, including crises.

Indeed, it is evident that the chaos triggered by socio-psychological and political-psychological reasons and effects can have political consequences. The destination of structured information, as a result of these effects, may culminate in political crises (Dutucu, 2022, p. 68), which encompass all types of crises and thus have a broad spectrum. While studies on the psychological reasons that lead structured information to success continue to increase in global literature, research in our country's literature remains limited. This study aims to contribute to the literature.

After providing the necessary definitions, the article aims to show the relationship of structured knowledge to social psychology, political psychology and political crises. In line with this purpose, the question "Why and how does structured knowledge shape human behaviour in practice? The study uses a qualitative research method, a literature review technique and a descriptive analysis. In terms of the theoretical basis, the study discusses why and how disinformation processes can have critical consequences with current examples from Türkiye and the world. The lack of a publication that examines the relationship between structured information and social psychology, political psychology and political crises in both Turkish and foreign literature makes this article important. In this context, the research questions to be answered can be listed as follows:

RQ1) Where do constructed knowledge and social psychology intersect?

RQ2) How can the intersection of constructed knowledge and political psychology be defined?

RQ3) How can the role and impact of structured knowledge in political crises be described?

THE GENERAL FRAMEWORK OF STRUCTURED KNOWLEDGE

The concept of "hybrid warfare" was first introduced by William J. Nemeth in 2002 in his master's thesis titled Future Wars and Chechnya: A Case Study for Hybrid Warfare; the concept was defined as an

advanced version of guerrilla warfare (Nemeth, 2002, p. 29). Thus, the concept, which would later gain popularity through Hoffman, was initially defined in the context of security, terrorism, and military strategy. It was later expanded in NATO sources to include corruption, migration, and other security issues within a broader spectrum. Today, studies on "hybrid wars" and their potential form, "hybrid threats," now also encompass cyber-security.

Currently, hybrid warfare refers to actions carried out with the intent to weaken or harm the target and involves the use of elements such as disinformation, cyberattacks, economic pressure, the deployment of irregular armed groups, and the use of regular forces—often in combination (Dupuy, Nussbaum, Butrimas & Granitsas, 2021). Hybrid warfare, which can be conducted by non-state actors in addition to nation-states, covers all modes of warfare, including conventional military capabilities, tactics, and combat units; unconventional terrorist actions fueled by chaos; all forms of discrimination and violent activities; cyber-warfare; and financial and media wars (Josan & Voicu, 2015, p. 50).

The hybrid structure, unlike traditional approaches, defines the changing nature of conflict. Thus, it is a discussion on what future priorities will be, how forces will be positioned, and where investments will be directed (Özer, 2018, p. 29).

Hybrid conflict is defined as "full-spectrum warfare with both physical and conceptual dimensions." The first dimension is combat against an armed enemy, while the second involves the struggle for control and support of the local population in the broader war zone, which also highlights the need for legislation to define what constitutes an "attack" or a "war zone" (Iskandarov & Gawliczek, 2020, p. 4). Therefore, this structure holds critical importance. Because it:

- Defines the changing character of conflict better than counterinsurgency;
- Challenges the current "traditional" thinking and the dual intellectual framework that shapes the debate;
- Highlights the true level of detail or spectrum breadth of human conflict;
- Raises awareness of the potential risks and opportunity costs presented by various options in the ongoing threat/force posture debate (Hoffman, 2009, p. 6).

Hoffman states that the concept of hybrid warfare is rooted in a combination of theories such as unrestricted warfare, combined warfare, and fourth-generation warfare (Özer, 2018, p. 35).

Moreover, in this broad spectrum filled with conflicts where the motivations of the participants are not always clear, the physical boundaries of wars in the cyber world have disappeared. Today, it is stated that the concept of "unrestricted warfare" encompasses hybrid or asymmetric wars as well (Gezer & Kösen, n.d.). In this study, it has been assessed that this expression is semantically acceptable. The concept was first introduced into the literature through the work Unrestricted War by Chinese officers Quiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui (Liang & Xiangsui, 2002). Major Van Messel, who mentions numerous examples such as a 16-year-old hacker accessing the Pentagon's secure internet system and a global investor causing economic instability in the Malaysian market, argue that unconventional warfare elements and non-state actors pose a greater threat to sovereign nations. These elements and actors have become more serious adversaries for every professional army. They state that "non-military war operations" better reflect the reality that people will use "any means imaginable" to achieve their objectives (Van Messel, 2005, p. 3).

Since the political and economic costs of military operations in the modern world are high, it has become increasingly attractive to turn to influence operations by utilizing advancements in communication technologies. Shea divides hybrid wars into three groups, with the second group involving activities that weaken social cohesion, polarize societies, and create an environment of insecurity and fear—often through illegal means (Shea, 2018, p. 6). Activities aimed at intentionally damaging critical infrastructures like cyber security and the accuracy of "information" in circulation, volume of which continues to grow daily thanks to advancements in news and communication technologies, fall within this second group. Indeed, those who control these activities can analyze individual and mass tendencies and attitudes toward events by examining the data spread and followed on internet-based social media platforms. With this information, they can reach various statistics, create desired agendas through posts from influential accounts, and manage perception (Aslantaş, 2022, p. 181).

The era we live in is referred to as the "post-truth" era. In 2016, the term "post-truth" was chosen as the word of the year by Oxford University, and it was defined as "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief" (Oxford Languages, 2016). In a 2018 report by the Rand Corporation that

examined the "declining role of facts and analysis," four key factors contributing to the erosion of truth were highlighted (Kavanagh & Rich, 2018, p. 79). These are:

- Cognitive processes and biases;
- Changes in the information system, including the rise of social media and the transformation of the media industry;
- Competition in the demands placed on the education system;
- Political and socio-demographic polarization.

Structured information can be directed towards military, political, or economic (commercial) fields, and this is not a new phenomenon for humans. For instance, in 1835, The Sun newspaper published six fictional articles about the claim of "life on the moon," later known as the 'Great Moon Hoax,' to boost its sales with a sensational story (Thornton, 2000, p. 1).

In today's digital world, the platforms where information is shared have caused significant changes in the information consumption habits of individuals and societies. This is because the vast volume and speed of data have made the environment more conducive to the spread of false or misleading information (Jayakumar, Anwar & Ang, 2021, p. 8). As a result, disinformation and fake news research has focused on the digital distribution of information. In 2019 alone, Facebook shut down 5.4 billion fake accounts, and it is estimated that hundreds of millions of fake accounts still persist (CNN Business, 2019).

In the literature, there are many concepts used to refer to false, misleading, or semi-true information. These include "disinformation," "fake news," "false news," "misinformation," "malinformation," "rumor," and similar terms (Kapantai, Peristeras, Christopoulou & Berberidis, 2020, p. 2). Shu et al. added to this terminology the concepts of "hoaxes" and "conspiracy theories," defined as "messages created mostly to convince or manipulate others to perform or refrain from predetermined actions using a threat or deception" (Vukovic, Pripuzic & Belani, 2009, p. 1; Shu, Bhattacharjee, Alatawi, Nazer, Ding, Karami & Liu, 2020, p. 2). On the other hand, Wardle describes seven types of misinformation (Wardle, 2018, cited in Heuer & Glassman, 2023, p. 1). These are:

- Misleading content,
- False connection,

- False context,

- Manipulated content,

- Completely fabricated content,

- Fake content mimicking real sources,

- Satire.

It is clear that these aforementioned concepts have social effects and political consequences. With the elimination of physical boundaries in warfare in the cyber world, interstate conflicts have shifted to different platforms, leading to the emergence of unconventional methods. In the post-truth era, where people increasingly form opinions based on emotions rather than information, disinformation and its related concepts continue to emerge as crucial components of these "unconventional" methods.

The terms "disinformation," "misinformation," and even "black propaganda" are sometimes used interchangeably, and their definitions may overlap, as all three involve the presence of false or misleading messages in their informative content (Guess & Lyons, 2020, p. 10). However, the connections between information, misinformation, and disinformation seem to revolve around the concepts of meaning, truth, and intent (Søe, 2019, p. 3). n this study, the term "disinformation," defined as "any kind of false, erroneous, or misleading information intentionally designed, presented, and promoted to cause harm or benefit the public" (Hleg, 2018, cited in Kapantai, Christopoulou, Berberidis & Peristeras, 2021, p. 1302), is the focus.   The term "structured information" has been used to emphasize disinformation as a tool of manipulation, highlighting the element of intent, which distinguishes it from similar concepts and makes it an overarching "umbrella term." Indeed, the report prepared by the the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications Center for Countering Disinformation also describes disinformation as an "umbrella term" that encompasses false news and information (Dezenformasyonla Mücadele Rehberi, 2023, p. 12).

Misinformation is typically an action generated by a specific person with false or misleading information, but without malicious intent. In contrast, disinformation involves the intentional, consistent, and systematic dissemination of false, misleading, or distorted information through multiple channels to influence a targeted audience. Therefore, misinformation is 'false' information produced without the intent to harm, whereas disinformation can be defined as 'false information' deliberately

created to harm an individual, a segment of society, an organization, or a country" (Jayakumar, Ang & Anwar, 2021, p. 25). Another derivative of structured information, the term "fake news," gained popularity following the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign (Spicer, 2018, p. 5). Fake news is a form of disinformation, consisting of false information deliberately crafted to mislead people while presenting itself as credible news (Jayakumar et al., 2021, p. 37).

Combating structured information has become a priority for today's leaders. This is because such activities are often chosen for influence campaigns due to the convenience they offer, such as gaining financial or political advantage. Developments like deepfake technology, the better utilization of neuroscience discoveries, advancements in big data analytics, and deep learning make it possible to use more powerful tools for influencing society.

While fifty out of a hundred news stories produced in Türkiye and related to Türkiye are not true, the rate of fake news in question is 15 percent in the UK, 12 percent in France and 9 percent in Germany (Dezenformasyonla Mücadele Rehberi, 2023, p. 8). Therefore, understanding the nature of structured information and identifying solutions to the issue is of particular importance for Türkiye. In this context, the report published by the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications in 2023 outlines a series of methods for combating structured information, both for individuals and the state (Dezenformasyonla Mücadele Rehberi, 2023, pp. 90-110). The report provides recommendations for individuals on how to perform fact-checking, identify false news, and verify visuals. Report suggests:

- Focusing on the source of the information,
- Questioning, follow, and verify sources,
- Being aware of verification platforms and methods.

On the institutional level, the state's measures and policy decisions constitute the official response to structured information. In this context, Türkiye passed a comprehensive legislation known as the "Law Amending the Press Law and Some Laws", known as the "Countering Disinformation Regulation"on October 18, 2022 (Oymak, 2022, p. 504).

In addition to state institutions, academic studies are ongoing in the fight against structured information. For example, Jayakumar et al. outlined four layers of actions that state institutions can take to combat influence activities and agents (Jayakumar et al., 2021, p. 30). According to this:

- In today's complex information environment, it is essential to have a clear and accurate understanding of the information landscape and society's relationship with its information networks. Echo chambers, inorganic factors (if any), troll networks, bot networks, and micro-targeting campaigns that are not aimed at sales should be analyzed, and the owners of these factors and networks must be identified.

- Having experts with technical capabilities to combat influence in the information field is important for all public institutions and other sectors.

- The "Lisa Case" in Germany proved that exposing influence operations to the public increases society's resistance to such operations (NATO Review, 2016). Therefore, opening disinformation activities to public debate, strengthening media literacy, and particularly enhancing logical reasoning education within the digital information environment will contribute to societal resilience. The government should be urged to create programs that track organized disinformation campaigns and make the findings available to the public.

- Cooperation with digital media platforms should be established. Platforms hold key data. It is important to have transparent rules that help control inorganic information and organized disinformation—i.e., structured information—without limiting individual rights and freedoms.

On the other hand, Stengel proposed five solutions for combating structured information, listing them as Section 230, Privacy and Elections, Algorithms/Rating Systems/Artificial Intelligence, Media, and Advertising (Stengel, 2019, p. 290). According to this:

Laws should encourage platform companies to take proactive steps and responsibility in combating disinformation. Information that contains clear falsehoods should be removed from platforms. The mentioned Section 230 is part of the 1996 Communications Decency Act in the United States, stating that online platforms or their users are not classified as publishers and are therefore immune from lawsuits regarding the content they post (Communications Decency Act, 1996). This article viewed platforms as mere 'tools,' failing to hold them accountable for the content and actions of their users. The consequences of this perspective continue to negatively affect many countries, including the U.S. today. For example, Instagram, after the assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, removed condolence posts at its own discretion, which resulted in the platform being shut down for nine days in

Türkiye. It was reopened after meetings between platform representatives and the Turkish government under the social media law (Maslak, 2024).

In January 2023, U.S. President Joe Biden, like his predecessor Trump, expressed disapproval of Section 230, stating in an interview with the Wall Street Journal that he opposes "big-tech abuses" and proposed revisiting Section 230 of the 1996 Communications Decency Act, among other issues (The Economist, 2023).

Additionally, the more popular a post is, the more valuable it becomes for the algorithm. This also encourages people to create emotional and deceptive stories, as these types of content generate higher advertising revenue. Platforms should be transparent about how their algorithms work. In recent years, rating systems have been developed that enable users to evaluate the credibility of specific stories and news sources. Credibility criteria can help readers become more discerning when navigating environments that may contain false information. As a news rating tool flags a site as trustworthy, readers' confidence in the accuracy of its news increases, whereas in the case of negative ratings, this belief decreases (Stengel, 2019, pp. 296-297).

Artificial intelligence and machine learning have great potential to detect and remove online structured information and fake news.

- Content analysis employs keywords to find suspicious material.
- Pattern recognition can identify clusters or patterns of suspicious content.
- Data-driven network analysis can differentiate between online networks created by real people and those artificially created by bots.

Scientists from the American Psychological Association offer eight specific recommendations for scientists, politicians, media, and the public to address the persistent threat of misinformation in the health field (APA, 2024a, p. 28). These are:

- Avoid repeating misinformation if no corrections can be added.
- Collaborate with social media companies to comprehend and mitigate the spread of misinformation.
- Misinformation correction strategies should be used alongside tools that have been shown to encourage healthy behaviors.
- Utilize reliable sources to counter misinformation and deliver accurate health information.

- Frequently and repeatedly debunk misinformation using evidence-based approaches.

- Preemptively debunk misinformation to protect vulnerable audiences by fostering skills and resilience from an early age.

- Call for social media companies to provide data access and transparency to facilitate scientific studies on misinformation.

- Invest in groundbreaking research on the psychology behind misinformation, particularly in developing strategies to counteract inaccurate health information.

Psychological science makes important contributions to understanding the origins and spread of structured information and how to effectively combat it. However, while studies related to the psychological dimension of structured information are increasing worldwide, they have not yet achieved the same momentum in Türkiye.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STRUCTURED KNOWLEDGE AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

It is estimated that the amount of misinformation people encounter constitutes between 0.2% and 29% of overall information consumption, though this rate may be higher for particular groups or subjects like health (APA, 2024b). The "gullibility" exhibited by people continues to harm the peace of the public sphere and polarize individuals. We live in the "post-truth" era, a term first used by Ralph Keyes in 2004 and later named Oxford Dictionary's word of the year in 2016 (Güven, 2020, p. 20). One of the features of this era is that people create a "truth" based on emotions rather than grounding it in facts, believing that their personal truth is more important than the real truth (Pala & İşlek, 2021, p. 375). In this context, as the influence of structured information expands, the recovery of the damaged perception of reality becomes almost impossible, and truth itself is no longer as attractive as manipulation (Dezenformasyonla Mücadele Rehberi 2023, p. 5). On the other hand, Collins Dictionary also continued the trend by selecting "fake news"—misinformation spread under the guise of news—as the word of the year in 2017, and Rand Corporation presented a 326-page report examining the "diminishing role of facts and analysis" (Kavanagh & Rich, 2018).

The seriousness of the situation was highlighted in the same source with the following quote:

"This is not an issue between Republicans and Democrats," said Harold Varmus, former director of the National Institutes of Health (2017). "This is about a more fundamental divide between those who believe in

evidence and those who insist on dogma." According to British historian Simon Schama (2017), this divide is extremely significant: "Indifference to the distinction between truth and lies is a precondition of fascism." (Varmus, 2017, p. 3).

The concept of "fascism" mentioned here can be evaluated in an ideological context, as well as providing an explanation for the "my truth" mentality. Due to confirmation bias or other cognitive or psychological reasons behind the phenomenon, some people are more likely to fall for disinformation than others, and these individuals tend to create echo chambers (Shu, Bhattacharjee, Alatawi, Nazer, Ding, Karami & Liu, 2020, p. 24). Therefore, it is necessary to examine structured information from a psychological perspective. Studies on the psychology of structured information has increased lately; however, discussions persist about the mechanisms behind the spread of misinformation, its impact on behavior, and the most effective methods for combating it (APA, 2024c, p. 12).

Ecker and others state that two driving forces, cognitive and socio-emotional, lead to believing in misinformation (Ecker, Lewandowsky, Cook, Schmid, Fazio, Brashier, Kendeou, Vraga & Amazeen, 2022, p. 15). The mentioned cognitive factors include intuitive thinking, cognitive failures, and misleading facts. According to this, intuitive thinking involves a lack of analytical thinking and/or deliberation; cognitive failures involve neglecting source cues or information, forgetting the source or contradictory evidence; and misleading facts are shaped by factors like familiarity, fluency, and consistency. On the other hand, socio-emotional factors include source cues, emotions, and worldviews. Thus, source cues involve elites, in-group factors, and the appeal of the situation; emotion includes emotional information and mood; and worldviews consist of personal opinions and elements of partisanship. In the post-truth era, the tendency to believe in information that appeals to emotions, personal interests, and beliefs rather than in objectively accepted facts highlights the importance of socio-emotional factors. Indeed, research shows that emotional or sensational stories—likely containing misinformation—are shared much more widely than less emotional, less sensational stories. (Stengel, 2019, p.296) Accordingly, the algorithms that organize the stories flowing into today's digital news world operate based on how viral a story is and its sharing rate. These narratives, which appeal to emotions and cause cognitive illusions, reduce access to real and accurate news and diminish their impact. This implies that structured information appealing to emotions will spread more rapidly. Therefore, effective interventions against

misinformation rely on understanding the underlying psychology (Greifeneder, Jaffé, Newman, & Schwarz, 2021, p. 1).

The high-paced flow of information, especially driven by smartphones today, forces consumers to reduce the amount of time spent on any news to just a few seconds. People are increasingly consuming only the headline of an article and, if available, the accompanying visual, paying little attention to the source and often not bothering to read the full text of the story. As a result, the emotional processing of news items are increasing significantly, leading to a rise in the number of 'highly emotional' stories (Jayakumar et al., 2021, p. 24-25).

In general, psychological research on countering misinformation has introduced several "interventions." However, more research is needed to clarify the combination of these interventions in real-world environments across countries and cultures. Psychology researchers have suggested two types of interventions to reduce the spread and growth of misinformation (APA, 2024d).

Accordingly, system-level strategies, such as laws and tech regulations, concentrate on wide-ranging structural changes, whereas individual-level methods seek to modify personal attitudes Approaches that focus on individual behavior interventions include debunking, prebunking, literacy training, and nudging. Accordingly:

"Debunking" is effective when people have encountered misinformation and works best when it provides a thorough explanation that disproves the false claims and presents the correct facts. Debunking interventions can be most effective in specific situations. "Prebunking" aims to avert individuals from believing misinformation before it takes hold. Recent studies show that prebunking can be applied in mass real-world environments as is social media. Nevertheless, it is still unclear whether prebunking works in all conditions and across different cultures. Thus, studying this issue in a cultural context is particularly important. The primary technique is psychological inoculation, in which being exposed to a mild form of falsehood helps strengthen resistance to later persuasion efforts. As in all areas, "literacy training" is crucial for the phenomenon of structured information. Further research is required to identify the most effective literacy interventions for combating misinformation; however, these interventions can be particularly impactful when combined with other anti-misinformation strategies, like debunking. Finally, "nudges" are subtle changes in the environment that aim to change

behaviors in consistent and beneficial ways. Researchers have employed different forms of nudges to discourage individuals from spreading misinformation (APA, 2024c):

- Accuracy nudges encourage individuals to evaluate the accuracy of information before sharing it,

- Social norms nudges emphasize community behavior standards in reporting information,

- Motivational nudges incentivize individuals to prioritize accuracy in their sharing.

Among the psychological reasons behind the spread of structured information, "biases" are prominent. Some biases, which play a large role in the development of both individual and broader group identities, disappear with the transmission of information, while certain biases, especially those assumed to have an emotional connection to the individual, persist indefinitely (İlhan & Çevik, 2013, p. 63). Intuitive biases are tendencies for individuals to confide in simple patterns to decrease critical thinking efforts, and people often accept information as true because of these intuitive biases (Ackland & Gwynn, 2021, p. 28). People rely on their prior beliefs and views. In many real-world conditions, individuals will have a motivation to believe one version of an event over another; thus, people often have an internal motivation not to back down (Ecker, Lewandowsky, Fenton & Martin, 2014, p. 293). When information supports these biases, it has a higher chance of being believed. (confirmation bias) and, therefore, more likely to be spread. In their work examining how the accuracy of information is evaluated and what causes people to believe in some things and not others, Lewandowsky, Ecker, Seifert, Schwarz, and Cook identified four factors that influence whether a person believes in information (Lewandowsky, Ecker, Seifert, Schwarz & Cook, 2012, p. 112). These factors are: the consistency of the message with the recipient's beliefs and views, the coherence and plausibility of the message itself, the credibility of the source, the general acceptability of the information by others. Another reason for the spread of misinformation relates to normative pressures, where people spread false information to seek social approval and acceptance. This is connected to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2001, 2004, cited in Ackland & Gwynn 2021, p. 29).

Individuals define, evaluate, and classify themselves within the framework of the social groups to which they belong (Ata & Ataman, 2020, p. 257). Building on this point, Henri Tajfel and colleagues developed Social Identity Theory to better understand the nature and reasons for intergroup relations (Devine, 2015, p. 6). Social identity theory, which suggests that individuals have a social identity that

includes membership in a social organization in addition to their personal identity, rests on three basic assumptions (Tajfel, 1978 cited in Sierra & Mcquitty, 2007, p. 104). According to these assumptions:

- Individuals define and assess themselves based on the social groups to which they belong,

- People's social identities are shaped by the perceived standing of the social group they belong to, influencing whether it is viewed favorably or unfavorably.

- Out-group members are conditioned to use a reference framework to evaluate the prestige of another group.

When individuals categorize themselves and feel "the same" as other members within the group they belong to, they begin to see themselves as interchangeable with the group's members. Consequently, cognitive representation shifts from the personal self to the collective self (Ulutaş, 2020, p. 101). Due to the emotional perception of "unity" and "belonging," it is clear that the dominant norms of the group will influence the individual who receives the message, driven by the "us and them" distinction. In the real world, the laboratory equivalent of ethnocentrism is in-group bias, which refers to the tendency to prefer the in-group over the out-group in evaluations and behaviors. This is because "social categorization," one of the processes that define social identity, creates boundaries between groups by producing group-specific perceptions and preferences, leading to in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination (Tajfel and Turner, 1986, pp. 281-282). For example, a person who identifies as a socialist may tend to emphasize the cruelty and aggression of capitalism in an exaggerated way, viewing others who consider this system acceptable as less fair compared to other socialists. As a result, structured information highlighting the unjust attitudes and behaviors of capitalism may be accepted as true without the need for verification due to these tendencies, biases, and classifications. By sharing this information or news again, individuals may contribute to its spread on social media platforms.

THE INTERSECTION OF STRUCTURED KNOWLEDGE AND POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY

There is a strong relationship between psychology and political science. The history of political psychology, can be traced back to Greek philosophers who suggested that human nature, which forms the basis of political philosophy, is fundamentally "political." As a scientific field, political psychology deals with examining political processes from a psychological perspective. At the broadest level, political psychology is concerned with the political thoughts and behaviors of individuals within politically

organized communities. It examines political behavior both on the individual level (e.g., decision-making) and on the collective level (e.g., collective action) (Staerkle, 2015, p. 427). Political psychology, which can be described as the application of findings from psychology to political science, also explores the social psychological and cultural variables that determine individuals' political attitudes and behaviors. It studies the interaction between selected policies and public preferences, the influence of elitist approaches on public policies, political leaders, and decision-making behaviors (Çalışkan, 2021, pp. 179-180).

The convergence of structured information and political psychology is not new. For example, Roman emperors used messages on coins as a form of mass communication to assist their power, while Nazi propaganda was largely carried out through print media, radio, and cinema (Ecker et al., 2022, p.13). However, the 2016 U.S. Presidential Elections and the subsequent Brexit process drew attention to a different form of fake news—misleading political narratives centered on social media. A study conducted in the U.K. revealed that, before the 2016 elections, about a quarter of American adults (27%) visited fake news sites, each reading an average of 5.5 articles during that period. The study found that "fake news sites accounted for an average of 2.6% of all articles Americans read on news-focused sites" (Guess & Lyons, 2020, p. 18).

Today, in the digital ecosystem, which is continually rebuilt by the digital infrastructure providing countless benefits to misinformation efforts, virtual-network societies have emerged.

"In this system created by network society, the circulation of misinformation is also shaped by the network, with different characteristics emerging in various communities or platforms. Therefore, we first address the misinformation problem within the context of social media and then in virtual communities formed on messaging applications" (Perdahcı & Koçer, 2023, p.13).

Internet platforms, through the flows they offer, play a dominant role in shaping the preferences and activities of their members and the network society to which they belong, based on the information they acquire about users' consumption routines. As a result, the organic spread of structured information online can be triggered by interest groups pursuing political or financial rewards, leading vulnerable individuals to further spread misinformation (Bastick, 2021, p. 1). These "flows," which shape the elements and routines of culture, have given rise to the phenomenon of "algorithmic culture" (Striphas,

2015, cited in Bilgici, 2023, p. 221). However, the number of users capable of critically evaluating this influence remains a topic of debate. In their study, Flaxman, Goel, and Rao found that social networks and search engines increase the average ideological distance between individuals. Their research revealed that these platform algorithms enable filter bubbles that distort reality, suppress opposing views, and fragment the public sphere, ultimately reinforcing ideological polarization and political division (Pariser, 2011, cited in Flaxman, Goel, and Rao, 2016, p. 2).

Social media platforms and many other internet-based applications reach billions of individuals, allowing senders to tailor persuasive messages to individual users' specific psychological profiles. An example of this was the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica scandal during the 2016 U.S. Presidential election. It was revealed that Cambridge Analytica, a data analysis and political consulting firm that contributed to Brexit campaigns in the U.K. and the Presidential Elections in the U.S., used the personal data of 87 million Facebook users for political purposes (Güden, 2019, p. 212). Following various structured information activities, a survey conducted nationwide after the 2018 midterm elections in the U.S. revealed a significant decline in trust in the election system, particularly among Republican voters, after unfounded rumors about the elections spread on internet platforms. Despite efforts to debunk these rumors, voters were driven away from politics (Pratelli, Petrocchi, Saracco & de Nicola, 2024, p. 2). Indeed, once an individual believes in structured information, it is difficult to change this belief (Lewandowsky et al., 2012). Efforts to correct misinformation can, in some cases, perpetuate its spread, especially within ideological groups (Nyhan and Reifler, 2010, p. 1).

People routinely prefer to consume content that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs, often finding themselves in echo chambers—a concept frequently discussed in the literature. Controlled experiments have shown that participants tend to follow the news from outlets that align with their political views (Munson and Resnick, 2010, p. 1). On the other hand, a study conducted on social media users found that "the majority of users assess individuals or accounts they believe share misinformation or fake news based on whether they know them or not, or whether they share political alignment. They tend to be more tolerant of people and accounts they feel close to and engage in behaviors such as ignoring or blocking messages from users with whom they feel personally or politically distant" (Akyüz & Akpınar, 2023, p. 158). This situation reflects both political psychological polarization and the concept of social belonging mentioned in social identity theory, manifesting as "political belonging."

The chaotic environment created by structured information has grown exponentially, especially during the 2019 COVID-19 pandemic and the misinformation activities carried out on social media during the 2020 U.S. Presidential Elections. The aim of these activities is to change the perceptions of target audiences, resulting in mass behavior changes, creating public outrage, undermining trust in central authority, altering the value systems of target societies, and fostering a sense of vulnerability (Jayakumar et al., 2021, p. 24). It is clear that structured information activities have political psychological effects and consequences that need to be considered regarding individuals as political beings, their political attitudes, behaviors, and decisions, and the groups and networks to which they feel politically affiliated. This underscores the importance of awareness in combating structured information. Indeed, the intentional circulation of structured information, and thus the attacks on minorities, press freedom, and the rule of law, challenges the fundamental norms and values upon which institutional legitimacy and political stability are built (Bennett & Livingston, 2020, p. XV). Echo chambers reverberating with fake news can render democracies ungovernable (Yochai, Robert, & Hal, 2018, p. 5).

THE INTERACTION BETWEEN STRUCTURED KNOWLEDGE AND POLITICAL CRISES

Crises are extraordinary situations that can arise from a variety of causes, ranging from natural disasters to human error, economic problems to socio-cultural changes, scandals to inadequate sources of information and communication, all within societal, economic, political, and military contexts. Although "political crisis" may evoke a narrower concept of crisis, it is an overarching term that includes all types of crises, whether they originate outside the political sphere but become politicized, as every crisis ultimately has political implications and affects political agendas (Dutucu, 2022, pp. 95-96).

Especially in the digital age, crises are increasingly accompanied by "infodemics" and the spread of misinformation, making it more difficult for citizens and crisis response institutions to achieve Shared Situational Awareness (Shahbazi & Bunker, 2023, p. 1). This is because crises are events with social and political psychological factors and consequences. According to Hermann, crises have three common characteristics: they cause perceptions of threat, create time pressure, and are unexpected (Hermann, 1963, p. 64). According to Habermas, moments of crisis represent a failure in which beliefs in leadership, social order, and traditional values are questioned; as a result, the masses can become ungovernable, making it more difficult to control and prevent social conflict (O'Connor, 1987, p. 3). From a socio-political

perspective, whether the event is a mining accident, an oil spill, or a scandal—regarded as a crisis—all crises are perceived as "a breakdown in the social construction of reality." In other words, a crisis is the product of a disruption in collective meaning-making (Turner, 1976 cited in Pearson & Clair, 1998, p. 7). Indeed, an event becomes a crisis when a sufficient number of people perceive it as such, and as a result, social order, unity, and shared values and beliefs may fade, leading to increased individualism, disobedience, and violence.

On the other hand, the harms caused by structured information are drawing increasing attention with each passing day. While the world faces interconnected crises such as war, climate change, and pandemics, the explosion of misinformation and disinformation has weakened public deliberations and shaken confidence in science (Nobel Prize Summit, 2023). Additionally, during times of crisis, the flow of information accelerates, and there is greater exposure to structured information (Dezenformasyonla Mücadele Rehberi, 2023, p. 66). The major earthquake that occurred on February 6, 2023, in Türkiye, affecting many provinces, and the manipulation activities experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic serve as examples of this situation. During the pandemic, there was widespread disinformation globally, and the World Health Organization labeled this situation as an "infodemic," thus underscoring that structured information is as dangerous as the pandemic itself (Aydın, 2023, p. 2603). In this study, the relationship between structured information and political crises has been evaluated as two-dimensional. The first dimension is that structured information carries the momentum to deepen an existing crisis situation. The examples mentioned above are instances of the first dimension. During moments of crisis, structured information activities not only harm the flow of information but can also directly and negatively affect crisis intervention processes. The structured information circulated aims to deepen the crisis (Dezenformasyonla Mücadele Rehberi, 2023, pp. 67-68). These aims are:

▪ To steer individuals' decisions by preventing access to accurate information regarding the extent and scope of the crisis,

▪ to create a perception that the state is not capable of successfully intervening in the crisis, thus fostering a sense of distrust among the public,

▪ to exploit fears and anxieties arising from chaos, thereby breaking societal resilience.

Thus, today, combating structured information has become part of crisis management processes.

The second dimension of the link between crises and structured information is that structured information can directly play a source role. The events initially sparked in Kayseri and later spreading to other cities, following the circulation of structured information about an incident that occurred on June 30, 2024—referred to as the "Kayseri Events" in the media—serve as an example of this situation (Korkmaz, 2024). The alteration (structuring) of real information is one of the most successful disinformation activities, as the most effective disinformation contains a certain degree of truth (Dezenformasyonla Mücadele Rehberi, 2023, p. 18). According to a statement by the Turkish Ministry of Interior, approximately 343,000 posts related to the incident were made from around 79,000 accounts on the social media platform X. It was determined that 37% of these accounts were bots, and 68% of the posts were made for provocative purposes. Investigations were initiated for 63 accounts, and 10 individuals were referred to the prosecutor's office (CNN Türk, 2024).

On the other hand, like citizens, leaders can also be targets of structured information and may be influenced by the psychological biases inherent in human nature. The lack of accurate information and the inability to distinguish between truth and falsehood can have a decisive impact on decision-making in general, and in crisis situations accompanied by time pressure, it can lead to dangerous outcomes. In such cases, even though public discussions may focus on so-called fake news, the political and social difficulty in distinguishing truth from structured information and correcting misinformation stems from natural psychological biases (McDermott, 2019, p. 18).

CONCLUSION

Due to the intertwined nature of the definitions of disinformation and related concepts, and their occasional interchangeability, this study refers to deliberately fabricated, decontextualized, or distorted information used as a tool for manipulation as "structured information," which is considered a more inclusive umbrella term. Structured information continues to be a significant component of the great struggle in the information society and the battle without borders. Therefore, countering structured information is among the priorities of states. Due to the many conveniences, it offers, social media is the most critical source through which structured information is circulated.

In recent years, the field of psychology has become central in studies aimed at understanding why and how structured information spreads. In Türkiye, however, studies focusing on the psychological aspect of the issue are limited. This study also aims to contribute to this limitation. In the study, structured information was evaluated from a socio-psychological and political psychological perspective. The interaction of the concept with political crises, which are similarly socio-psychological and political psychological phenomena, was also discussed.

In addition to the social psychological ripple effect of disinformative content, it should also be focused on deforming the trust in the truth with the audience it affects. The fact that structured information that appeals to emotions is more popular than rational content is based on the fact that the masses do not accept to be on the wrong/incorrect/incomplete/flawed side. It can be said that the most determining psychological factor behind the dissemination of structured information is prejudices. In the context of political psychology, it can be said that users/viewers/listeners are politically and ideologically distant from structures with which they disagree and prefer structured information against these structures. In chaotic environments caused by political crises, individuals do not operate confirmation mechanisms with emergency effect and accordingly tend to lynch and harm different political views and actors.

Although both state institutions and academics continue to develop various methods, including the use of artificial intelligence, to combat structured information, the problem remains serious and continues to harm societies. Of course, the biggest duty and responsibility for combating structured information falls on the user/viewer/listener. The efforts of individuals to access the truth will organically block structured information.

On the other hand, one of the features of the post-truth era is that people tend to choose their own truth over objective realities. This situation, which reflects the distinctive reality of the post-truth era, facilitated by developments in communication technologies, continues to be one of the factors that help structured information achieve its goal. Including this situation, the failure to resolve the problem globally highlights the need for a better understanding of its reality.

Both governments and users have critical responsibilities in combating disinformation on all media platforms. In this process, all stakeholders should build a unity of discourse and action with the

support of civil society organisations, associations, think tanks and trade unions. In order to combat structured information disseminated through mass media, attention should be paid to the following issues: Users should increase their knowledge and practice of technology and media literacy. In particular, users should have a septic attitude towards the content on social media. In order to understand whether the news, content, photos and videos on social media have a structured content or not, it is necessary to check the source first and look at who shared that information/content. After the title of the news, it is important to examine the details underneath and read the subheadings. The author of the news/content and its reliability should be questioned. The date of all content should be checked. Care should be taken as an old dated post/photo/video can be presented as if it is up-to-date. It should be investigated whether there is evidence, statistics or data supporting the content. Users should be self-critical while following the news and get rid of their prejudices and stereotypes. They should put aside their prejudices towards some media organisations, online news sites and social media phenomena. Social media users should follow verification organisations, follow national and international verification mechanisms and check the news and content disseminated especially in times of crisis from different sources. In addition, images in news and content on critical issues should be verified. Images should be tested by searching in search engines and their dates should be examined. Finally, parody and sponsored advertisements produced by accounts with high followers for entertainment and interaction purposes should not be taken seriously and content and news that are not absolutely sure of their accuracy should not be shared on social media.

States should update their anti-disinformation legislation and take legal measures against the production and dissemination of fake news and manipulative content and images. States should also hold social media platforms accountable and take measures to restrict and, if necessary, close accounts that produce and disseminate disinformation. In addition, states should prevent this issue from becoming widespread through deterrent penalties for disinformative content. In order to curb disinformation, the public authority should make a statement as soon as possible through the correct communication channel. Uncertainty should never be allowed to occur in the crisis environment created by fake news and structured information. Otherwise, erroneous content will spread very quickly. Public institutions should raise awareness of young people through reputable and recognised social media influencers and provide awareness training on social media literacy. All these measures and the level of

awareness will prevent the spread of structured information in times of political crisis and contribute to the resilience of the fragile psychology of the masses.

Structured information can both cause a crisis on its own and be used to deepen the effects of an existing crisis, leading to polarization and fractures in society, making societies more exposed to structured information during times of crisis. This situation holds an important place within the broad spectrum of political crises. It is considered that this study, along with future studies in the same context, will help raise awareness in society, including among those in leadership, and contribute to the development of methods to combat structured information.

GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

21. yüzyılın enformasyon, iletişim ve medya ekosisteminde "hibrit savaş" ve onun potansiyel hali olarak ifade edilebilecek "hibrit tehdit" kavramları ilk kez 2002 yılında bir yüksek lisans tezinde kullanılmış, 2007 yılında ise Hoffman tarafından, 2006 yılında Hizbullah'ın İsrail'e karşı kullandığı –konvansiyonel olandan farklı- savaş yöntemlerini betimlemek için kullanılmasıyla popülerlik kazanmıştır (Hoffman, 2007). Hibrit kavramı 2024 yılı itibarıyla semantik olarak daha kapsayıcı bir kavram olarak kabul edilen sınırsız savaş kavramıyla ifade edilmektedir (Gezer & Kösen, t.y). Dezenformasyon ve türevi diğer kavramlar ise günümüz dünyasındaki teknolojik gelişmelerle, sınırsız savaşların geniş spektrumunda önemli bir unsur olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır.

Dezenformasyon ve türevi kavram ve tanımların iç içe geçmiş olmaları ve zaman zaman birbirlerinin yerine kullanılabiliyor olmaları nedeniyle bu çalışmada, manipülasyon amacıyla bir araç olarak kullanılan, kasıtlı olarak uydurulmuş, bağlamından koparılmış veya tahrif edilmiş bilgilerden, kapsayıcı bir çatı kavram olacağı değerlendirilen "yapılandırılmış bilgi" olarak bahsedilmiştir. Yapılandırılmış bilgiler bilgi toplumunun büyük mücadelesi ve sınırları olmayan savaşın önemli bir bileşeni olmaya devam etmektedir. Dolayısıyla yapılandırılmış bilgiyle mücadele devletlerin öncelikleri arasındadır. Yapılandırılmış bilgiyle mücadelede hem devlet kurumları hem de akademisyenler yapay zekâ dâhil olmak üzere teknolojik imkânları da kullanarak çeşitli yöntemler geliştirmeye devam etse de sorun ciddiyetini korumaya ve toplumlara zarar vermeye devam etmektedir. Çalışmada değinildiği üzere, sorundan istatistiki olarak daha fazla etkilenen ülkeler söz konusudur. 2023 yılında, Cumhurbaşkanlığı İletişim Başkanlığı tarafından yayımlanan Dezenformasyonla Mücadele Rehberi'ne göre Türkiye bu

ülkelerden biridir. Dolayısıyla Türkiye yapılandırılmış bilgiyle mücadele için yapılan çalışmaların özenle sürdürülmesi gereken ülkelerdendir.

Yapılandırılmış bilginin çok hızlı şekilde yayılmasını ve kabul edilmesinin arkasındaki psikolojik nedenlere yönelik çalışmalar dünya literatüründe artmaya devam ederken, Türkçe literatürdeki çalışmalar sınırlıdır. Bu çalışma ile bu sınırlılığa bir katkıda bulunmak amaçlanmıştır. Çalışma, yapılandırılmış bilginin insan davranışını nasıl etkilediği ve neden/nasıl yayıldığını tartışmaktadır. Bu nedenle çalışmada yapılandırılmış bilginin hedef kitledeki karşılığını anlamak için sosyal psikolojik ve politik psikolojik nedenler irdelenmiştir. Ayrıca bu nedenlerle, yapılandırılmış bilginin siyasi krizler de dâhil olmak üzere ciddi sonuçları olabileceği tartışılmıştır.

Makalede gerekli tanımlamalar yapıldıktan sonra sırasıyla, yapılandırılmış bilginin sosyal psikoloji, politik psikoloji ve siyasi krizlerle olan ilişkisini ortaya koymak amaçlanmaktadır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda "Yapılandırılmış bilgi pratikte insan davranışlarını neden ve nasıl şekillendirmektedir?" sorusuna cevap aranmaktadır. Çalışmada nitel araştırma yöntemi kullanılarak literatür taraması tekniğinden istifade edilmekte ve betimsel bir analiz gerçekleştirilmektedir. Teorik dayanak açısından dezenformasyon süreçlerinin Türkiye'den ve dünyadan güncel örneklerle neden ve nasıl kritik sonuçlar doğurabileceği tartışılmıştır. Hem Türkçe hem de yabancı literatürde yapılandırılmış bilginin sosyal psikoloji, politik psikoloji ve siyasi krizlerle ilişkisini inceleyen bir yayın olmaması bu makaleyi önemli kılmaktadır. Bu bağlamda cevap üretilmesi hedeflenen araştırma sorularını şu şekilde sıralamak mümkündür:

AS 1) Yapılandırılmış bilgi ile sosyal psikoloji hangi çerçevede buluşmaktadır?

AS 2) Yapılandırılmış bilgi ile politik psikolojinin kesişim noktası nasıl tanımlanabilir?

AS 3) Yapılandırılmış bilginin siyasi krizlerdeki rolü ve etkisi nasıl betimlenebilir?

Günümüzde hibrit savaş, hedefi zayıflatmak veya zarar vermek amacıyla yürütülen eylemleri ifade etmekte ve yanıltıcı bilgilendirme, siber saldırı, ekonomik baskı, düzensiz silahlı grupların konuşlandırılması ve düzenli kuvvetlerin kullanılması gibi unsurları –genellikle bir arada kullanılmasını- ifade etmektedir (Dupuy, Nussbaum, Butrimas & Granitsas, 2021).

Yaşadığımız çağ hakikat ötesi olarak adlandırılmaktadır. 2016 yılında Oxford Üniversitesi tarafından yılın kelimesi seçilen hakikat ötesi, nesnel gerçeklerin, kamuoyunu şekillendirmede duygulara ve kişisel inanca hitap etmekten daha az etkili olduğu durumlarla ilgili veya bunları ifade eden bir kavram olarak tanımlanmıştır (Oxford Languages, 2016). Rand Corporation tarafından 2018 yılında yayımlanan gerçeklerin ve analizin azalan rolünün incelendiği bir raporda hakikatin çürümesine katkıda bulunan dört temel etkenden bahsedilmektedir (Kavanagh & Rich, 2018, s. 79). Bunlar;

- Bilişsel işlem ve önyargılar
- Sosyal medyanın yükselişi ve medya endüstrisinin dönüşümü de dâhil olmak üzere bilgi sistemindeki değişiklikler
- Eğitim sistemine yönelik taleplerdeki rekabet
- Siyasi ve sosyodemografik kutuplaşma olarak sıralanmıştır.

Yapılandırılmış bilgi, askeri, siyasi veya ekonomi alanlarına yönelik olabilir ve bu durum insanlar için yeni bir olgu değildir. Örneğin, 1835 yılında The Sun gazetesi, satışlarını artıracak sansasyonel bir hikâye olan "Ay'da yaşam olduğu" iddiasıyla ilgili, sonrasında "Büyük Ay Aldatmacası" olarak anılan, hayal ürünü 6 makale yayınlamıştır (Thornton, 2000, s. 1).

Ecker ve diğerleri, bilişsel ve sosyo-duygusal olmak üzere iki itici gücün yanlış bilgiye inanmaya neden olacağını ifade eder (Ecker, Lewandowsky, Cook, Schmid, Fazio, Brashier, Kendeou, Vraga & Amazeen, 2022, s. 15). Bahsi geçen bilişsel etkenler; sezgisel düşünme, bilişsel başarısızlıklar ve yanıltıcı gerçeklerdir. Buna göre sezgisel düşünme: Analitik düşünme ve/veya müzakere eksikliği; bilişsel başarısızlıklar: Kaynak ipuçlarını veya bilgileri ihmal etmek, kaynağı veya karşıt kanıtları unutmak; yanıltıcı gerçek: Aşinalık, akıcılık ve tutarlılık etkenlerinden oluşur. Diğer yandan sosyo-duygusal etkenler ise kaynak ipuçları, duygu ve dünya görüşlerinden oluşmaktadır. Buna göre kaynak ipuçları: elitler, grup içi etkenler ve albeni durumu; duygu: duygusal bilgi ve duygu durumu ve dünya görüşleri ise: kişisel görüşler ve partizanlık öğelerinden oluşmaktadır. Hakikat ötesi çağda objektif olarak kabul edilen bilgiler yerine, duygularına, kişisel çıkar ve inançlarına hitap eden bilgilere inanma durumu sosyo-duygusal etmenlerin önemini ortaya koymaktadır. Nitekim araştırmalar, duygusal veya sansasyonel olan hikâyelerin – muhtemelen mezenformasyon içeren hikâyelerin- daha az duygusal, daha az sansasyonel hikayelere göre çok daha geniş bir şekilde paylaşıldığını göstermektedir (Stengel, 2019, s. 296). Buna göre, günümüz

dünyasının özellikle dijital haber akışına düşecek hikâyeleri düzenleyen algoritmalar hikâyenin ne ölçüde viral olduğuna ve paylaşılma oranına göre çalışmaktadır. Duygulara hitap ederek bilişsel yanılsamalara neden olan bu anlatılar, gerçek ve doğru haberlere erişimi ve bunların etkisini azaltmaktadır. Bu durum da duygulara hitap eden yapılandırılmış bilginin daha güçlü bir ivmeyle yayılacağı anlamına gelecektir. Bu nedenle yanlış bilgilendirmeye karşı etkili müdahaleler geliştirmek altta yatan psikolojiyi anlamaya bağlıdır (Greifeneder, Jaffé, Newman & Schwarz, 2021, s. 1).

Bireyler rutin olarak önceden sahip oldukları inançlara uygun içerikleri tüketmeyi tercih etmekte ve böylece literatürde sıklıkla kullanılan yankı odalarına dâhil olmaktadırlar. Yapılan kontrollü deneylerde katılımcıların gündemi kendi siyasi görüşleriyle uyumlu yayın organlarından takip etme eğiliminde olduğu tespit edilmiştir (Munson & Resnick, 2010, s. 1). Diğer yandan sosyal medya kullanıcıları üzerinde yapılan bir araştırma; "...kullanıcıların çoğunluğunun yanlış bilgi ya da yalan haber paylaştığını düşündüğü kişi ya da hesapları, tanıdığı/tanımadığı veya politik yakınlığı olan/olmayan şeklinde bir ayrıma göre değerlendirdiğini, yakınlık duyduğu kişi ve hesaplara daha toleranslı davrandığını, kişisel ya da politik olarak uzak olduğu kullanıcılardan gelen mesajları görmezden gelmeye ve engellemeye yönelik eylemlerde bulunduğunu" ortaya koymuştur (Akyüz & Akpınar, 2023, s.158). Bu durum hem politik psikolojik kutuplaşmanın hem de sosyal kimlik teorisinde bahsi geçen sosyal aidiyetin "politik aidiyet" olarak tezahürüdür.

Özellikle dijital çağda, krizlere giderek daha fazla yanlış bilginin yayılması eşlik etmekte, bu da vatandaşlar ve krize müdahale eden kurumlar arasında ortak durumsal farkındalık elde etme çabalarını zorlaştırmaktadır (Shahbazi & Bunker, 2023, s. 1). Çünkü krizler sosyal ve politik psikolojik etken ve sonuçları olan olaylardır. Krizlerin stres, korku gibi psikolojik etkilerine değinen Hermann'a göre krizlerin ortak üç özelliği, tehdit algısına ve zaman baskısına neden olmaları ve beklenmedik olmalarıdır (Hermann, 1963, s. 64). Habermas'a göre ise kriz anları liderliğe, toplumsal düzene ve geleneksel değerlere olan inançların sorgulandığı bir başarısızlık durumudur; bu nedenle kitleler yönetilemez hale gelebilmekte ve sosyal çatışmanın kontrolü ve önlenmesi zorlaşmaktadır (O'Connor, 1987, s. 3). Sosyo-politik perspektife göre bir maden kazası, petrol sızıntısı ya da bir skandal -kriz olarak değerlendirilen olay ne olursa olsun- tüm krizler gerçekliğin sosyal inşasında bir çöküş olarak algılanmaktadır, yani aslında kriz kolektif anlamlandırmadaki bu bozulmanın bir ürünüdür (Turner, 1976 akt. Pearson & Judith, 1998, s. 7).

Diğer yandan yapılandırılmış bilginin zararları her geçen gün daha çok dikkat çekmektedir. Dünya savaş, iklim değişikliği, pandemi gibi birbiriyle bağlantılı krizlerle karşı karşıyayken, yanlış bilgi ve dezenformasyon patlaması kamu müzakerelerini zayıflatmış ve bilime olan güveni sarsmıştır (Nobel Ödül Zirvesi, 2023). Ayrıca kriz dönemlerinde, bilgi akışı hızlanmakta ve yapılandırılmış bilgiye daha fazla maruz kalınmaktadır (Dezenformasyonla Mücadele Rehberi, 2023, s. 66). 6 Şubat 2023 tarihinde Türkiye'de gerçekleşen, 11 ili etkileyen büyük deprem ve Covid-19 salgını sürecinde tecrübe edilen manipülasyon faaliyetleri bu duruma örnek teşkil etmektedir. Pandemi sürecinde dünya genelinde bir dezenformasyon yaşanmış, Dünya Sağlık Örgütü bu durumu infodemi olarak isimlendirmiş, böylece yapılandırılmış bilginin salgının kendisi kadar tehlikeli olduğunun altını çizmiştir (Aydın, 2023, s. 2603). Bu çalışmada yapılandırılmış bilgi ve siyasi krizler arasındaki ilişkinin iki boyutlu olduğu değerlendirilmiştir. Bunlardan ilki yapılandırılmış bilginin hâlihazırda ortaya çıkmış olan kriz durumunu derinleştirebilecek bir ivmeyi bünyesinde barındırmasıdır. Yukarıda bahsedilen örnekler birinci boyutun örnekleridir. Kriz anlarında yapılandırılmış bilgi faaliyetleri bilgi akışına zarar vermekle kalmayıp krize müdahale süreçlerini doğrudan ve olumsuz yönde etkileyebilmektedir. Dolaşıma sokulan yapılandırılmış bilgi, krizi derinleştirmeyi amaçlamaktadır (Dezenformasyonla Mücadele Rehberi, 2023, ss. 67-68). Bu amaçlar:

- Krizin boyutu ve kapsamı hakkında doğru bilgiye erişilmesini engelleyerek bireylerin kararlarını yönlendirmek.

- Devletin krize müdahalede başarılı olabilecek kapasitede olmadığı algısını oluşturarak, kamuoyunda güvensizlik hissiyatı oluşturmak.

- Kaostan faydalanarak korku ve endişeleri sömürmek, böylece toplumsal direnci kırmak.

Dolayısıyla günümüzde, krizlerle mücadele süreçlerine yapılandırılmış bilgi ile mücadele süreçleri de eklenmiş durumdadır. Diğer yandan hakikat ötesi çağın özelliklerinden biri insanların objektif gerçeklikler yerine kendi doğrusunu seçme eğiliminde olmasıdır. İletişim teknolojilerindeki gelişmelerle hakikat ötesi çağın belirgin gerçekliğini yansıtan bu durum, yapılandırılmış bilginin amacına ulaşmasında kolaylaştırıcı etkenlerden olmayı sürdürmektedir. Bu durum dâhil olmak üzere, sorunun evrensel çapta çözüme kavuşturulamamış olması, gerçekliğinin daha iyi kavranmasının gerekliliğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu bağlamda son yıllarda yapılandırılmış bilginin neden ve nasıl yayıldığını anlamaya yönelik çalışmalarda psikoloji alanı odağa oturmaktadır. Bu çalışma ve ileride aynı bağlamda yapılabilecek diğer çalışmaların,

yönetenler dâhil olmak üzere toplumdaki farkındalığın artmasına fayda sağlayacağı, ayrıca yapılandırılmış bilgiyle mücadele yöntemlerinin geliştirilmesine katkıda bulunacağı değerlendirilmektedir.

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