



NETNOGRAPHY STUDY ON CONFORMING BEHAVIOR IN NEW MEDIA AND IDEOLOGICAL ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORK COMMUNITIESⁱ

Zaim Başaslan¹ⁱⁱ,
Bayram Oğuz Aydın²

¹Gaziantep University,
Turkey

²Süleyman Demirel University,
Turkey

Abstract:

Due to the spiral of human-technology-society-communication, today's society has experienced, perhaps, the fastest and most extreme change in human history in the last two hundred years. The phenomenon of technological life, so ingrained in the culture of living as a community, has come to affect the way we live, think and even die. In this study, the effect of technology has been specifically examined on the basis of the dominance of the concept of ideology on the phenomenon of community. Then, the effects of ideology on online social networking groups were studied. The state of harmony and opposition that emerged in society and human behavior with the effect of technology has been the aim parameters of this study. Its methodological structure was designed with the Netnographic research method, and online social networking groups on the Facebook platform created the specific study area of the research. In the Constitutional Amendment Referendum held in Turkey on April 16, 2017, it was observed that the votes of individuals active in social networks were determined by the famous names they identify with. Therefore, it has been seen that ideological conformity behavior occurs with identification in the context of elections.

Keywords: new media, ideology, social network, adaptation, Netnography

1. Introduction

New media has the ability to gather all known different media. This is called multimedia or multimedia. The combination of media such as text, still images, moving images and sound creates this feature (Dilmen, 2007:114-115). The concept of "new" is literally the

ⁱ This article was produced from the master's thesis of Zaim Başaslan with same title in Gaziantep University, Institute of Social Sciences, Department of Communication and Social Transformation.

ⁱⁱ Correspondence: email zaimbasaslan@gmail.com

state of an existing thing that has been developed, evolved, improved, not destroyed or created for the first time, from the moment it is encountered until it becomes familiar. Therefore, new media can be defined as the point where the basis of synchronization of traditional media and technology phenomenon is laid. Considering the media as new media is actually related to the technological developments in the communication and informatics sector. This technology is also called new communication technologies. One of the concepts that came into existence with natural selection through the components of the new media concept is the mainstream media. And structurally, the organic affinities and divergences encountered between mainstream mass media and new media have details that must be well-read to recognize the technicalities between different media forms. In other words, the mainstream mass media is artificial and exists with the constant change it has been affected by the governments, and this change organically connects the new media phenomenon and the mainstream media concept (Banerjee, 2008: 3-4).

If we consider the way that media content creates a small-scale roadmap of power relations in society, at the ideological level, the power holders in the society are looked at how power is maintained, especially through new media. It is assumed that ideas are related to interests and power and that the power to produce images is not just a neutral power. It is not correct to say that the news is only about power. Moreover, the news is structured in such a way that; information, which is one of the components that make up the news, is shaped by the positive distinction of the interests of the government. Glasgow University Media Group has produced very comprehensive documentation of media content in its study called *Kete News (Bad News)*. This study demonstrates how labor unions are blamed rather than company management in industrial disputes, and proves how easy it is to suppress a kind of crime and even to be right when wrong, thanks to the power of the new media (Irvan, 2002:131).

Whether political parties take place in the media, how they take place, how much they take place and how they are represented during election periods are important factors affecting voter behavior and decision parameters. It is seen that YouTube is used extensively for political purposes in this regard. YouTube-based videos contain mostly speeches of party leaders in the squares, specially prepared clips, election songs, promises, and images criticizing rival political parties and their leaders (Erdoğan, 2013:1-18). In this context, since the frightening power of the new media increases its appeal to dominate it compared to the traditional media, using the new media tools efficiently and in terms of reaching the target has become as important as shaping the ideology of their structures. At this point, social media as a new media tool seems to be at the top with the speed and impact it provides in terms of the prevalence of use and accessibility to the individual.

With forms of action such as marches, rallies, occupations and acts of violence, which are described as classics in the mass action repertoire; the organization of festive actions, which do not fall into this classification, is the work of individuals in communication who are organized through the new media. A global example of social

movements the internet can be the organization of anti-globalization actions. While these actions are parallel to the "globalization" opposition, they are actually "global" actions, and geographical limitations can only be overcome by organizing over the Internet. In addition, the rulers are free from time and space limitations; they use the Internet as a tool to establish various social forums and to organize through these social forums. Thus, the meetings of global capital institutions can be protested (Ertürk and Kaplan, 2012:10).

2. Method

Netnography method was used in this research. Netnography is a more comprehensive research management than Ethnography in order to better understand today's people, who are increasingly socializing in virtual environments. Since Netnography is a more comprehensive method than ethnography, it is a natural result that it produces similar results. Although these two concepts are similar, they differ from each other in certain areas. On the basis of this lies the fact that Netnography is a research method that is more comprehensive on the Internet (Dahan and Levi, 2012: 34).

During the data collection phase, only Facebook was used when determining the virtual communities where the data will be collected, and YouTube was used for additional support research on the specific subject. The advantage of Facebook in this respect is that not only members but also non-members can comment while observing the dialogues in the groups. In this way, there was an opportunity to examine the dialogues of a much larger number of participants. Both data collection methods of Netnography research method were used in data collection. In this context, some of the data of the research are based directly on the communication of community members, while some are based on the researcher's observations of the community and community members. While collecting the data of the research, all correspondences, opinions, thoughts and personal shares that can help the answers sought about the research subject in virtual communities were examined within their suitability and tried to be evaluated and examined with the help of keywords. The ideological Facebook communities identified and examined in this study are communities with active users, where research data can be easily obtained. In these communities, topics related to the research topic and user comments were examined. Research and analyzes took place between 5 June - 10 November 2017.

In this context, while determining the ideological online Facebook communities, three mainstream ideologies, as well as the personal community pages of the political parties, which are the current political counterparts of these ideologies, and the personal community pages of the leaders of the Republic of Turkey, Gazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey, and Ernesto Che Guevera, who is considered the intellectual representative of the left-wing ideology. The pages of the Ülkü Ocakları Education and Culture Foundation, which is accepted as the public-based civil organization of the political view of Turkish Nationalism, are taken as reference.

While analyzing the collected data, it was coded, compared, classified and interpreted in a way that could answer the basic questions of the research. By using social network analysis norms, every time a new piece of information is encountered, the meanings that have been created so far have been re-evaluated and classifications have been made again when necessary. In addition, the fact that the researcher can communicate and interact with other community members in the groups he is a member of has made the research even more interactive and rational. This parameter is also used to control the members.

3. Results

In this section, the analysis of the analyzes made in the research is presented through the process of questioning and answering from the perspective of the analyst.

Question 1: Who joins ideological online communities and why?

Answer 1.1: When the profiles of the members of the ideological online community are examined, it is observed that the members who are prone to politicization, are closely interested in politics, follow the agenda and news and share political content on their own Facebook walls.

Answer 1.2: It is possible to talk about a mini categorization among ideological Facebook community members. It is possible to categorize them as;

- Very Active Members: Seeing the posts of the community page by “opening the instant message notification reception” and giving feedback to the page immediately; can be defined as members who interact with the group through likes, comments, sharing or tagging.
 - Related members: Members who see the community's posts as they land on the home page with the "default notification setting", but interact with the group when there is a topic that interests them.
 - Followers: These are the members who review the posts shared by the community as they come across on their wall, just by following, reading the content without liking or commenting.
 - Disinterested/Passive Members: Members who join the community page as a member or like the page but do not want to see any content belonging to the community on their wall by deactivating the following tab of the page.
- When the activities of these member types are examined;
- When the shares and comments of active participants in ideological Facebook communities are examined, it can be mentioned that there is a general belief that the size of the group and the strength of their ideologies are only possible with more participants. And it has been observed that very active members feel that they are serving their ideology politically, by inviting their friend lists to the group and by sharing the group's posts in general on their walls.

- The reasons for joining the group could not be observed, except for the very active members and the relatively interested members.
- The majority of very active members spend time on social media almost every hour of the day, as can be seen from the hours of their comments and the frequency of their comments.

Question 2: What kind of difference or relationship can be mentioned between ideological Facebook group members and those who prefer not to be members of groups?

Answer 2.1: Within the scope of the research, in the dialogues between those who comment on the posts as members of ideological Facebook communities, those who are not members of the group and those who comment on the post, especially those with opposing ideologies; the comments made by those outside the group in a "marginalizing and negative" style to the group members attracted a lot of attention.

Question 3: Did the members of ideological Facebook groups show conformity behavior as in social communities?

Answer 3.1: Despite the fact that conformity is an element of social influence, it is not possible to say that the formation, development and display of conformity behaviors in ideological Facebook groups are exactly the same as the structural form in real-life social communities. The breaking point that leads to this result is the fact that the whole reality of social media, which is a new media product, is "virtual" on the one hand. In other words, all the data in ideological Facebook communities, no matter how real, is virtual and the only observable form of all inferences is the comments.

Answer 3.2: The inference supporting this situation can be easily observed in the dialogues between the ideological Facebook groups and the members of the groups.

Answer 3.3: As a matter of fact, the conclusion that conformity does not occur in the dialogues in the ideological Facebook groups examined within the scope of the research, or that even if it does, a very small percentage of the members reflect this in their comments supports the inference in question.

Answer 3.4: Therefore, it would not be wrong to say that it is not possible to say that conformity in social life and conformity in the social network occur under the same conditions and conditions.

Question 4: Did the members of ideological Facebook groups show obedience to the group or the group's manager?

Answer 4.1: As can be understood from the answers to the third question that guided the research, the behavior of obedience was not observed in social networks, virtual platforms and specifically among the members of ideological Facebook communities.

Answer 4.2: It has been observed that the authoritarian and able influence required for the formation of obedience-based compliance behavior is not present in the nature of the virtual platform or is very little. For this reason, no example of an individual

who determines his ideology according to his own way of thinking and then joins the community of his ideology on Facebook has been found in the framework of the research, exhibiting the behavior of obeying a different group or ideology.

Question 5: Have there been any members who exhibit conformity behavior by adopting the ideological Facebook group or the group's ideology?

Answer 5.1: The reason why the obedience-based conformity behavior cannot be observed in ideological Facebook communities is also the reason why the obedience behavior that occurs in online social networks is spontaneous and suitable for one's own mind, logic, or emotion.

Answer 5.2: Within the framework of this study, it was observed that the reason for the majority of conformity behaviors exhibited by group members within the framework of ideological Facebook communities is adoption.

Question 6: How did the purpose of developing conforming behavior based on identification affect the group posts and the attitudes of group members during the election period of ideological Facebook communities?

Answer 6.1: During the research process, conformity arising from identification, like obedience-based conformity in ideological Facebook groups, was not observed in the comments of the members in general.

Answer 6.2: However, at this point of the study, an important breaking point was noted. In the political elections that require public support for periodic decisions, especially in the Constitutional Amendment Referendum held on April 16, 2017, it has been observed that professional social media content is used in order to realize the behavior of conformity with identification references in order to influence the votes of the citizens.

Answer 6.3: It has been observed that amateur videos, in which famous names from cinema, music, football and the business world, announce their votes in the referendum, are actively used in the Facebook groups of political parties, especially in order to increase the yes vote in the referendum.

Answer 6.4: The point that ensures the observability of this situation is the sharp changes in the structure of the content shared on the Facebook pages of political parties during the referendum process.

It is seen that the first ideological Facebook group to use this strategy is the Cumhuriyetçi Hareket Party. The amateur videos, in which famous artists announced that they would vote no in the referendum, quickly attracted much more attention than the content of other anti-referendum pages content:

- When the Adalet ve Kalkınma Party compared the number of accesses of the content on what will change with the items to be voted in the referendum, and the access number of the video in which a popular famous name announced that he would vote yes in the referendum, all page content and almost all election strategy tended to shift in this direction. It has been seen that the curiosity of which

celebrity will say yes and which celebrity will say no rather than the items to be voted on in the referendum in a short time has caused such content to increase exponentially.

- Only in this context, a minimal scanning study was conducted on YouTube, another social network, seven months after the referendum, in order to clearly reveal the aforementioned determination (08.10.2017).
- Within the framework of this small additional work, three separate titles have been written on the YouTube search tab. A content search was made by typing “celebrities who said yes in the referendum” in the first search, “celebrities who said no to the referendum” in the second search, and “referendum items” in the third search.
- The results obtained as a result of the search fully supported the above inference.
- First of all, as a result of the search titled “celebrities who said yes to the referendum”, the number of views of the first three videos with the most views is 1 million 24 thousand 716, 688 thousand 932 and 124 thousand 861, reaching a total of 1 million 838 thousand 509 (08.10.2017).

Question 7: Did the size of the group affect conformity behavior in ideological Facebook groups?

Answer 7.1: It could not be observed whether the size of the group affects the conformity behavior of an individual who is a member of the ideological Facebook group. Just as obedience-based conformity can be observed in social life, not in Facebook groups, when an ideological Facebook group member joins the group, he has shown his reflex on the effect of the size factor of the group.

Answer 7.2: It was not possible to control the effect of the size of the group on the conformity behavior through the comments made by the members on the posts in the ideological Facebook groups.

Question 8: Has the unanimity of the group been effective in the formation of conformity behavior in ideological Facebook groups?

Answer 8.1: As shown in the example number two given in the fifth question that guides the research, it has been observed that in the dialogues where minority influence is seen, members with minority ideology can create an adoptive conformity behavior on the member they want to develop conforming behavior with if they achieve a consistent consensus among themselves.

Answer 8.2: On the other hand, from a more general perspective, sharing posts related to the agenda in ideological Facebook groups on their own walls and sharing the content directly as the group's post instead of copying it while doing this reveals that the individual desires to be in agreement with the group. In addition, it can be said that this desire is effective in choosing to comply at the decision stage before becoming a member of the group.

Question 9: Have members of ideological Facebook groups exhibited non-compliance behavior?

Answer 9.1: The easiest and most frequently observed behavior in ideological Facebook groups is non-compliance.

Answer 9.2: This situation also shows that among the members of ideological Facebook groups, conformity due to obedience, conformity influenced by group size, conformity affected by future planning factor, conformity affected by cultural difference factor, conformity affected by prestige / desire to have authority factor, and conformity affected by fear of loss of self. consistent with the fact that it cannot be observed.

Answer 9.3: In this context, it has been observed that the members of all Facebook groups examined within the framework of the research are mostly aware of the posts and the psychology of being self-confident is dominant.

Answer 9.4: The fact that ideology as a concept is one of the most difficult parameters to change between social and cultural preferences and ideas also reveals the behavior of non-compliance as a common form of behavior.

Question 10: Has the group members' face-to-face presence or absence been decisive in terms of conformity behavior in ideological Facebook groups?

Answer 10.1: Since the research area of the study is the ideological groups in Facebook, which is a social media tool, it is concluded that it is not possible to talk about the face-to-face factor in the interaction of the members who engage in dialogue and interaction with each other as conformity behavior through comments.

Answer 10.2: However, it has been observed that members who share group posts on their personal pages pay more attention to their style in the comments they make under the posts on their own pages, during the group member controls.

Answer 10.3: Thus, it has been observed that it is possible to say that the face-to-face factor is effective in the way people communicate their decisions or thoughts about not conforming to people with different opinions or conforming behaviors.

Question 11: Did the group loyalty factor result in conformity behavior in ideological Facebook groups?

Answer 11.1: The conformity behavior, for which the factor of commitment to the group in the form of social behavior lays the groundwork, was observed in ideological Facebook groups as the loyalty of individuals to their ideology.

Answer 11.2: This situation not only supports the loyalty of individuals to the Facebook groups they are members of, but also results in the fact that the efforts of users with different ideologies to develop compliance through the comments made under the posts are consistent with their non-compliance behavior.

Question 12: Did the minority factor cause conformity in ideological Facebook communities?

Answer 12.1: In the situation seen in the second example of the fifth question that guided the research, it was observed that the behavior of complying with different ideologies in ideological Facebook groups only paved the way for adoption-based compliance behavior if the influence of a minority combined with other side factors.

Answer 12.2: It has been observed that if a minority idea is nurtured in accordance with reason and logic and formed from a very different point of view, even with the support of a single person, the form of a minority turning into a majority can emerge.

Answer 12.3: In this context, the fact that the first state of every different thought is a minority, whether it belongs to a group or not, emerges.

Question 13: Has the behavior of conformity according to gender changed in ideological Facebook groups?

Answer 13.1: In the comments made to the ideological Facebook groups, it was seen that the gender difference was not determinant in the conformity behavior, but it was determinant in the style of the comments.

Answer 13.2: From the point of view of awakening, it was not found that female members exhibited conformity behavior.

Answer 13.3: It has been observed that all of the few ideological Facebook group members exhibiting conformity behavior are male users.

Answer 13.4: From the point of view of non-compliance, non-compliance behavior was observed in women, as seen in the eighth participant in the fourth example.

Question 14: Is the direction of ideologies effective on conformity behavior?

Answer 14.1: In each of the ideological Facebook groups examined within the scope of the research and as a result of the analyzes made separately, it was observed that the ideological aspect was not effective in the conformity behavior.

Answer 14.2: Although the ideological structures are effective in the style, style and content of the comments of the members and users, it has been concluded that this situation is not effective when it comes to the level of conformity behavior.

Answer 14.3: Members of the Facebook pages of the Milliyetçi Hareket Party, Ülkü Ocakları and Devlet Bahçeli approached the issues with shorter, clearer and similar expressions and defended their ideologies with much harsher expressions, especially on issues such as "treason, martyrs, terror, flag, territorial integrity" and did not adhere to any different ideas. The behavior was not observed.

Answer 14.4: On the Facebook pages of the Adalet ve Kalkınma Party and Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a form of ideology nurtured by belief and emotion is observed, with shorter comments instead of logical dialogues with ideological content. On the other hand, it has been observed that in the face of a high-level style in which rational findings are expressed, if the member conflicts with the realities he believes, he enters the process of questioning his conformity behavior or ideology.

Answer 14.5: On the ideological Facebook pages of the Cumhuriyetçi Hareket Party and Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, it has been observed that the members try to make the opposite opinion feel the high level of their intellectual level and make comments that try to adapt them to their own ideas in almost every condition. Because of this situation, the interpretations of conforming behavior rather than conforming behavior were more common in these groups.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Although two individuals arguing in real life may disagree with each other, there is a limit to the harsh words they can say to each other. However, in Ideological Facebook groups, it is possible to find users who have not even read their name carefully yet and who can make heavy insults to someone they don't know because they do not comply with their own opinion or are against it the very first sentence. It can be said that the behavior of the subjects in the role of the guard in Zimbardo's prison experiment and the fact that they are influenced by each other and act that they cannot do in real life is a norm that can be observed in all ideological Facebook groups.

4.1 Zimbardo's Prison Experiment

“The Stanford prison experiment was a study of the psychological effects of being a prisoner or guard. The experiment was conducted in 1971 by a group of researchers led by Philip Zimbardo, a psychologist at Stanford University. Twenty-four undergraduate students were selected from among seventy to play the roles of guards or inmates. Selected students were placed in a mock prison in the basement of the Stanford psychology building. Prisoners and guards adapted very quickly to their roles. The experiment went beyond the prescribed limits and became dangerous and psychologically damaging. While many inmates were emotionally traumatized, a third of the guards were tried for displaying “true” sadistic tendencies. Two of the prisoners had to be released at the very beginning of the experiment. After making sure that everyone, including himself, was immersed in the role, Zimbardo finished the experiment at the end of the sixth day.” (McWilliams, Nancy 2020).

“They can't find me anyway” or “who can harm me while I'm at my computer?” Users can engage in behaviors and discourses that will relieve themselves and relieve stress through internal dialogues in the user's inner world, such as it can be said that this situation is in a way similar to the tribune fanaticism, which goes to football matches and curses the referee at every opportunity with a large group of fans. As a result, in both, the individual can act and insult with the comfort that the addressee cannot reach him.

Contrary to the results of the studies of İbicioğlu et al., (2009), Şahin and Özyürek (2008) and Kaya et al., (2004) on social life, the above situation can be cited as a reason among the reasons why conformity behavior in ideological Facebook groups cannot be

observed due to obedience. In general, it has been observed that users do not take each other's opinions too seriously. It has been observed that if the user finds a piece of his real-life and appeals to his mind, logic or emotion in the interpretation made at the moments when a sincere and level dialogue environment is formed, the behavior of adopting and conforming is exhibited. It can be said that the number of dialogues in which this situation is observed is almost non-existent compared to the number of pages and posts scanned in the whole of the research.

The factor that causes the adoption of conformity behavior is seen as the minority effect. The minority effect is the only starting point for the adoption factor, which is hardly observed in ideological Facebook groups. Because a small sentence that appeals to the mind, logic and emotion of the individual can form the basis of being adopted in an instant.

The ideological differences of the ideological Facebook groups examined within the scope of the research did not determine the conformity behavior. Therefore, it is possible to say that the cultural effects of Karaoğlu (2007)'s study do not affect the conformity behavior in ideological Facebook groups.

At the point of exhibiting non-compliance behavior, all of the groups show common attitudes. However, differences were observed in the basis of developing non-compliance behaviors.

In each of the ideological Facebook groups examined within the scope of the research and as a result of the analyzes made separately, it was observed that the ideological aspect was not effective in the conformity behavior.

In general, it has been observed that the ideologies of the users are decisive in the way they comment on the posts.

It has been observed that in the Facebook communities of the Milliyetçi Hareket Party, Ülkü Ocakları and Devlet Bahçeli, comments containing insults and profanity are instantly made when it comes to certain taboo topics.

On the Facebook pages of the Adalet ve Kalkınma Party and Recep Tayyip Erdogan, shorter comments and many slogans are observed.

On the ideological Facebook pages of the Cumhuriyetçi Hareket Party and Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, it was observed that the users tried to adapt their ideas and made comments as offensive. Users who tend to conform instead of conforming behavior draw attention.

The Mustafa Kemal Atatürk page, on the other hand, does not represent Atatürk alone and there is no claim on this issue. It has been observed that there are hundreds of Facebook communities established separately for Atatürk, reaching a total of nearly 90 million users. And in general scans, comments of love and gratitude were observed rather than ideological debates and developing conformity behavior on Atatürk pages. As it is understood from the warning comments written by the page administrators, even if a sentence is written against Atatürk, the user is immediately blocked from the page and his comment is deleted. Therefore, no comments were found in the opposing view.

Ernesto Che Guevera's Facebook community page, on the other hand, was found to be the page with the least comment and interaction among the Ideological Facebook

communities researched. Although the number of users is high, it is possible to say that the majority of the user profile consists of follower members when we look at the number of post access and interaction.

Based on the findings obtained from social and real-life researches and experiments, it was concluded that obedience-based conformity behavior is not observed in virtual environments, especially when it comes to ideology. Adoption and identification-based conformity behaviors were observed to be almost non-existent. In other words, conformity behavior may not occur in ideological Facebook communities with the parameters it takes place in social life. It can be said that by developing a behavior of conforming to an ideological community, the individual takes place in ideological Facebook groups as a virtual reflection of his adaptation to the community of which he is a part, and therefore closes himself to a new secondary conformity behavior on this platform.

However, as a result of a striking reality found while searching for comments belonging to members of the ideological Facebook group who exhibit identification-induced conformity in the study, a specific additional research added to the research via the YouTube platform reveals that identification-induced conformity can be effective in individuals' decisions in political elections.

As a matter of fact, the subject of the CHP, which is one of the ideological Facebook groups scanned within the framework of the study, was investigated in a little more detail, based on the fact that a post was shared by much more people than other routine posts and attracted extraordinary attention during the Constitutional Amendment Referendum in 2017. In this context, it is observed that each political party tries to persuade the public from virtual platforms by explaining the referendum articles according to their own opinion, while sharing the posts regarding the amendments to be made regarding the Constitutional Amendment during the referendum process. However, the fact that a post titled "celebrities who said no to the referendum" on the CHP page broke the record for sharing, caused all other political parties to share similar content. It has been observed that similar posts have been shared on the CHP, MHP, AKP and even Atatürk and Ülkü Ocakları pages since the aforementioned days, and the reach numbers were much higher than the previous posts. In order to observe this interest from a single channel, when the results of the three search criteria made on YouTube, the video content sharing platform, are matched with the results of the referendum, almost a 100% match was observed. This result shows that individuals can shape their thoughts based on identification in political elections. In addition, this finding raises the question of how the behavior of conforming to ideologies occurs in the votes used in political elections. In this context, this study can suggest different netnographic studies that can be carried out within the framework of the concept of social psychology and ideology.

For example, before an upcoming general election, netnographic studies can be carried out in different online social networks in order to reveal the reasons why individuals behave in accordance with the ideology of the vote they plan to use. Thus, in real life, it can be revealed that in which ideology and in which form of conformity

ideological conformity behaviors emerge. Such studies may enable us to reach important findings in terms of the political communication discipline.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

About the Authors

Zaim Başaslan is a lecturer working at Gaziantep University, Turkey.

Bayram Oğuz Aydın is an associated professor doctor working at Süleyman Demirel University, Turkey.

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