



# The communication strategies of ideologically polarized civil society organizations on Twitter: the case of Turkey

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## Abstract

We investigated how ideologically polarized civil society organizations (CSOs) in Turkey use Twitter. We analyzed tweets from 20 CSOs in Turkey for a period of 7 months by using the Information-Community-Action framework. For all types of CSOs, the number of information tweets was higher than the number of action tweets, which, in turn, was higher in number than the community tweets. Religious/conservative and anti-government CSOs posted significantly more tweets than secular and pro-government CSOs, respectively. Religious/conservative and pro-government CSOs posted more information and community tweets than secular and anti-government CSOs, respectively. The number of anti-government CSOs' action tweets was higher than that of pro-government CSOs. We, therefore, propose that the ideological stance of a CSO is a factor affecting the content of its tweets in societies where CSOs are politically polarized.

**Keywords** Turkey · Civil society organizations · Twitter · Polarization

## Introduction

Civil society organizations (CSOs) are expected to interact with the public to realize their goals. Social media, which is “inherently interactive, communicative, and social” (Avery et al. 2010), provides CSOs with numerous opportunities to communicate with the public (Nah and Saxton 2013). CSOs use social media more frequently than other sectors (Barnes 2014) such that 90% of CSOs worldwide

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regularly use it to interact with the public (2019 NGO Technology Report). CSOs' interactions with the public through social media may be influenced by their relationships with and attitudes towards the government. Especially in politically polarized contexts where CSOs are more likely to be affiliated with one of the opposite sides of the polarization (Özler and Obach 2018), CSOs' relationship with the state becomes more important for the nature of their interactions with the public through social media. This research explores how ideologically different CSOs use social media in Turkey, which is a politically polarized country (Sommer 2019; Erdoğan and Uyan-Semerci 2018).

Although previous research showed that various factors influence the content of CSOs' social media messages (Nah and Saxton 2013; Kim et al. 2014; Campbell and Lambright 2020), the impact of political polarization has not been considered. Political polarization is an issue, which has been recently receiving scholarly attention. However, little is known about how CSOs interact with the public when they carry a clear ideology in a politically polarized context. Turkey, which is a highly ideologically polarized country (Sommer 2019; Erdoğan and Uyan-Semerci 2018) and where CSOs extensively use social media to influence the public (Öztürk and Şardağı 2018), is a very good case to investigate this issue. Depending on the social and political contexts, the Turkish state has supported certain types of CSOs while it has repressed others. Indeed, the State of Civil Society Report 2020 by CIVICUS classified Turkey as "repressed" (CIVICUS 2020). Consequently, CSOs did not avoid allying themselves with political ideologies, which caused polarization of CSOs in Turkey (Özler and Obach 2018). A large number of CSOs in Turkey have, therefore, aimed to shape public opinion around the official state ideology or other ideological agendas (Doyle 2016).

Social media is also a politically polarized space in Turkey (Andı et al. 2019; Hatipoğlu et al. 2019). The presentation of CSOs on social media is not exempt from this polarization. Recent research on Twitter posts about CSOs also indicated such a polarization (Akboğa and Arik 2020a). Therefore, Turkey, where the relationship between the state and CSOs has always been contentious, is an important case to study the use of social media by CSOs. To do so, we used the Information-Community-Action framework developed by Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) for the use of Twitter by CSOs: CSOs send three different types of social media messages –information, community, and action, each of which has a different function for the organization and creates a different reaction in the public. As the ideologically polarized CSOs tend to spread certain types of messages and differentiate from each other in terms of their needs on social media, we expect that their ideology influences the content and the number of their tweets. To test this expectation, we analyzed the tweets of 20 ideologically polarized CSOs for a period of 7 months, using the Information-Community-Action framework. We selected these CSOs because research showed that they had clear and unquestionable political stances or affiliations, and they are the most frequently mentioned organizations on Twitter and newspapers (Akboğa and Arik 2018, 2020a). Focusing on the impact of the CSOs' ideology on their use of Twitter in a polarized social and political context of Turkey, this research greatly contributes to the literature that studies the factors affecting how, why, and to what extent CSOs use social media. In other words, our research contributes

to the understanding of the complex relationship between politics and the use of social media by CSOs in a non-Western polarized context by exploring based on rich empirical data whether the content and the number of a polarized CSO's tweets are affected by its ideological stance. We showed that religious/conservative CSOs use Twitter more than secular CSOs because they want to inform the public about their activities while anti-government CSOs use Twitter more than pro-government CSOs because they want to call for action against the government. Furthermore, as opposed to previous research showing that CSOs post more community tweets than actions tweets, we found that ideologically polarized CSOs are more likely to post action tweets than community tweets.

This study proceeds as follows: The first two sections summarize the literature on CSOs and social media, and the details of Information-Community-Action framework. These are followed by two sections that describe the polarization of CSOs and the social media in Turkey and the hypotheses. We conclude the study with the analysis of Twitter data and the discussion of the results.

## CSOs and social media

Social media offers various advantages for CSOs. Social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, and online forums allow CSOs to easily share opinions, dispense their knowledge, and create awareness (Young 2017). Social media enhances CSOs' image and improves their donations (Seoa et al. 2009). It also helps CSOs gain legitimacy and improve their advocacy campaigns (Young 2017). Social media is an even better way for CSOs to establish online and instant communication with the public than website entries, reports, and newsletters (Kim et al. 2014). Moreover, social media is an inexpensive, if not free, way to raise issues ignored by printed or visual media (Bortree and Seltzer 2009; Lovejoy et al. 2012). Therefore, social media is especially useful for CSOs that have limited monetary and human resources (Waters et al. 2009) and that are less likely to invest in communication technologies (Finn et al. 2006).

Many factors, such as the organization's size, age, and financial resources, have an impact on the extent to which CSOs use social media (Bortree and Seltzer 2009; Chalmers and Shotton 2016; Gao 2016; Kim et al. 2014; Lam and Nie 2020; Nah and Saxton 2013). Lobbying expenditures, fundraising, web capabilities, membership structure, board size, perceived usefulness of social media, number of staff with know-how, type of the organization, and existence of a public relations department are some other factors that affect CSOs' social media use (Nah and Saxton 2013; Adjei et al. 2015, 2016; Guo and Saxton 2014, 2018; Saxton et al. 2015). The importance that CSOs attach to shaping lobbying debate has a positive impact on their social media use (Chalmers and Shotton 2016). CSOs that receive government subvention are less likely to use social media (Lam and Nie 2020) while grassroots organizations that are small and marginalized are more likely to use social media to increase their visibility (Zhou and Pan 2016).

CSOs use social media for various purposes. The 2019 NGO Technology Report indicated that 77.4% of CSOs use social media for information exchange, 53.6% for

collective action, 47.6% for community building, 34.5% for reputation and legitimacy, 33% for connection and relationships, 29.8% for conversation and interaction, and 27.4% for co-creation and innovation. According to the pyramid model (Guo and Saxton 2014), on Twitter a CSO first reaches out to people, then keeps the flame alive by deepening people's knowledge and interest, and then finally motivates people to act. Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) developed a model for the content of social media messages of CSOs that was subsequently used by much other research (Campbell et al. 2014; Saxton and Waters 2014). Because we use this framework in the present study, we explain it further in the following section.

### **Information, community, and action framework for the use social media by CSOs**

Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) divided CSOs' tweets into three types: information, community, and action. Information tweets contain information about the organization's events, or any other reports, facts, or information relevant to the organization's stakeholders. Community tweets help CSOs interact or strengthen ties with the online community. Action tweets enable CSOs to ask the public to make donations, participate in the events they organize, and take part in advocacy campaigns. According to this classification, information tweets are the most basic form of engagement with people, while community and action tweets represent a higher level of engagement (Campbell and Lambright 2020). Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) also created subcategories for community and action tweets: "giving recognition and thanks," "acknowledgment of a current event," "responses to reply messages," and "response solicitation" from community tweets and "promoting an event," "donation appeal," "selling a product," "call for volunteers and employees," "lobbying and advocacy," "join another site or vote for organization," and "learn how to help" for action tweets.

Subsequent research rendered Lovejoy and Saxton's framework for the analysis of social media messages of CSOs important. Accordingly, the content of a CSO's social media message is one of the determinants of the extent and form of the public's reaction to the organization. For example, the public is more likely to engage with CSOs when they use community-building messages (Saxton and Waters 2014). Similarly, messages that involve conversations have a positive impact on public attention (Guo and Saxton 2018). Information posts receive attention in the form of "likes" while action posts receive attention in the form of "shares" (Lam and Nie 2020; Zhang and Skoric 2020). People are more likely to pay attention to posts that aim for communication and mobilization, and these messages attract more attention in the form of likes and comments than do informational messages (Saxton and Waters 2014).

Community and action messages are especially important for CSOs in conducting campaigns for social and political change. As demonstrated by various protests in different parts of the world, such as the Gezi Park protests in Turkey and the Arab Spring, social media has a great power to mobilize citizens (Odabaş and Reynolds-Stenson 2018; Tufekci and Wilsoin 2012). Although CSOs initially adopted social

media to engage with the community, promoting CSOs' programs and services became more important in the following years (Young 2017) and, therefore, most of the messages of CSOs on social media became informational rather than dialogical or action oriented in different parts of the world (Guo and Saxton 2014; Lam and Nie 2020; Lovejoy et al. 2012; Lovejoy and Saxton 2012; Zhou and Pan 2016). Previous research revealed that the proportion of community and action-related messages ranged between 13–26 and 12–36%, respectively (Campbell and Lambright 2020). For example, in China, the U.S., and Sudan, CSOs post mostly information messages, followed by community and action messages (Zhou and Pan 2016; Guo and Saxton 2014; Bashri 2021). As these numbers indicate, CSOs appear to use one-way communication more often than dialogical communication, which is considered the most common inhibitor of the productive use of social media by CSOs (Nami-sango et al. 2019). However, a limited number of research showed that action messages might be more than community or information messages for certain types of CSOs (Anagnostopoulos et al. 2016; Campbell and Lambright 2020).

Previous research identified various factors that have an impact on the content of CSOs' social media messages. Membership, board size, fundraising, and financial capacity affect how frequently CSOs engage in dialogic communication on social media (Nah and Saxton 2013; Kim et al. 2014). CSOs that are dependent on program service fees and fundraising use more action messages than information messages (Campbell and Lambright 2020). CSOs with high organizational capacity are more likely to use community and action messages than CSOs with low organizational capacity (Anagnostopoulos et al. 2016). CSOs with closer ties to their communities are more likely to use action posts, as they have a higher level of trust in and connection to their stakeholders (Campbell and Lambright 2020). CSOs that receive private funding are more likely to send information and community messages than are government-supported CSOs (Lam and Nie 2020). GONGOs share more community messages than student groups and grassroots organizations, whereas student groups and grassroots organizations share more action messages than GONGOs (Zhou and Pan 2016).

## **Ideological polarization of CSOs in Turkey and the role of the state**

Because the state can obstruct or facilitate CSOs' activities, the relationship between the state and CSOs is critical to understanding the context in which CSOs function (Chandhoke 2003). The state creates the legal and regulatory framework that allows CSOs to operate (Edwards 2004). The state supports either directly or indirectly many CSO projects through public grants and contracts (Anheier et al. 2005). The state can also establish agendas for CSOs (Chandhoke 2003), which might cause CSOs to fulfill the state's ideological requirements. Gramsci's arguments are theoretically important in this sense. Gramsci criticizes the liberal democratic conception of civil society, which strictly distinguishes between political and civil society (Nielsen 1995), and suggests a more complicated relationship between the state and civil society. Accordingly, whereas civil society might be a place of counter-hegemonic forces opposed to the hegemonic ideology, it may function as a

tool of hegemonic powers (Katz 2005). There is no separation between the state and civil society in the latter case and civil society transmits the dominant class' ideas, resulting in widespread consent (Gramsci 1971). Rather than creating a sphere that opposes the state, dominant organizations in civil society may preserve and extend state power (Chandhoke 2003). The hegemony produced by the organic interaction between civil society and political society allows some classes to perpetuate their power (Katz 2005).

The relationship between the state and civil society in Turkey is a good example of how the state can shape the functioning of CSOs. The relationship between the Turkish state and CSOs has been contentious since the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923. The state has supported some CSOs while suppressing others, which resulted in the politicization, and therefore polarization, of CSOs in Turkey. In particular, the years following the 1980 military coup witnessed the foundation of many CSOs with clearly defined political ideologies. Many religious CSOs were founded primarily to defend the right to follow certain religious rules that the state had restricted, as well as to deal with human rights violations. Meanwhile, the number of pro-state CSOs, which are loyal to secularism and, therefore, are very critical of the rising power of Islamist politics, increased (Cevik and Tas 2013). In other words, the tension between secular and religious conservative politics shaped the development of CSOs during these years. The most important consequence of this process was that CSOs in Turkey have functioned to shape public opinion around the official state ideology or other ideological agendas (Doyle 2016). Furthermore, CSOs remained close to the political parties that shared their ideologies (Özler and Sarkissian 2011).

The Justice and Development Party (JDP), which has a conservative religious identity, has been ruling Turkey since 2002. The JDP has made legal changes along with the EU's requirements and, therefore, created a more liberal environment for CSOs in Turkey (Doyle 2016). However, the JDP has established close connections to certain CSOs, especially Islamic organizations, and politically and financially supported them (Atalay 2019; Çelik and İşeri 2018; Doyle 2016, 2018; Özler and Sarkissian 2011). Sharing the same ideological values as the JDP (Atalay 2019; Çelik and İşeri 2018), Islamic CSOs have formulated their stances on certain issues, such as religious freedom in education and identity politics, along the JDP's ideology (Sarkissian and Özler 2013). Some of the JDP representatives are members and founders of religious CSOs and participate in their activities, and they openly state that the party prefers to have close relationships with Islamist CSOs rather than with secular ones (Doyle 2018; Özler and Sarkissian 2011). Furthermore, the JDP has had a negative or distant attitude towards other organizations that are too vocal and critical of the government's policies, or that deal with highly securitized issues (Özler and Obach 2018; Yabancı 2019). For example, the JDP systematically supports Islamic women's organizations and includes them more often in policy-making processes while it does not provide such support for non-Islamic women's organizations and excludes them from policy-making processes (Doyle 2018). This selective attitude of the government towards CSOs has deepened the existing polarization between ideologically different CSOs, especially between conservative/religious and

secular organizations or between pro-government and anti-government organizations in Turkey.

## Polarization of social media in Turkey

Social media is highly polarized along political lines in Turkey. Since the Gezi Park protests of summer 2013, during which oppositional groups relied on social media for organizing and producing content as the mainstream media were no longer trustworthy (Bulut and Yörük 2017), Twitter has been increasingly politically polarized (Bulut and Yörük 2017). The Turkish public is polarized even over mundane events on Twitter by invoking deep macro political tensions while talking about them (Ozduzen and Korkut 2020) and both sides share information that justify their beliefs (Baloglu 2021). Research showed that in Turkey sixty percent of social media users connect to other people who have similar views (Erdoğan and Uyan-Semerci 2018) and over half of them ignore other people's opposite views (Şener et al. 2015). This makes it easy to misinform and manipulate people on social media (Andı et al. 2019).

Previous research provided further support for the effects of polarization on the content of Twitter messages. Accordingly, people's ideological stances such as being a supporter of the pro-Kurdish movement or the current Islamist government, affects their attitudes toward foreign policy on Twitter (Hatipoğlu et al. 2016). Research also demonstrated that press-party parallelism, which is defined as "the degree to which the structure of the media system parallels that of the party system" (Hallin and Mancini 2004, p. 27) and a feature of the newspapers in Turkey (Panayırıcı et al. 2016; Çarkoğlu et al. 2014), exists on Twitter as well (Dogu and Mat 2019). Accordingly, "issues tend to form bundles in line with the amount of attention paid by political factions and media groups." While the members of the government and pro-government mainstream media focus on the dominant issues inherent in governmental policies, politicians of opposition parties and non-mainstream media accounts focus on oppositional issues (Dogu and Mat 2019).

## Research rationale and hypotheses

Based on the findings of previous research on the content of CSOs' Twitter messages (Lovejoy and Saxton 2012; Zhou and Pan 2016), we expect that for all types of CSOs, the number of information tweets will be the highest, followed by community and action tweets, respectively.

**Hypothesis 1** The number of information, community, and action tweets is not equally distributed regardless of the type of CSO. (information > community > action)



Drawing on the existing ideological polarization of CSOs in Turkey as summarized above, we explore whether the ideological stance or the relationship of a CSO with the government has an impact on the type of tweets that the organization posts on Twitter. Currently, while the JDP has close connections to religious/conservative CSOs (Atalay 2019; Çelik and İşeri 2018; Sarkissian and Özler 2013), opposition parties have close connections to secular CSOs (Özler and Sarkissian 2011). This polarization shapes media visibility of CSOs. For example, research showed that pro-government newspapers, which heavily dominate the mainstream media (Irak 2016) and, therefore, shape public opinion, cover more news about religious/conservative CSOs (Akboga and Arik 2020b), thereby increasing the public visibility of religious/conservative CSOs. This puts secular CSOs in a more disadvantaged position in terms of public visibility and legitimacy in the mainstream media. However, Twitter might be an alternative space for secular CSOs to express themselves. In Gramscian terms, Twitter might be a counter-hegemonic space for these organizations where they can express their criticism and resistance to the government. Social media offers opportunities for CSOs to establish networks and initiate collective actions that classical media do not, especially in repressive political environments (Bashri 2021). Indeed, social media is still an important venue for opposition groups in Turkey (Dogu and Mat 2019). We, therefore, expect secular CSOs to use Twitter more than religious/conservative CSOs.

**Hypothesis 2a** Secular CSOs tweet more than religious/conservative CSOs. (information/community/action<sub>Secular</sub> > information/community/action<sub>Conservative/religious</sub>)

For the same reasons, Twitter might be an alternative space for anti-government CSOs to express their opposition to the government more freely. We, therefore, expect anti-government CSOs to use Twitter more than pro-government CSOs.

**Hypothesis 2b** Anti-government CSOs tweet more than pro-government CSOs. (information/community/action<sub>Anti-government</sub> > information/community/action<sub>Pro-government</sub>)

We further expect that the ideological stance of a CSO may have an impact on the number of its information, community, and action tweets. We expect differences in the number of action tweets of religious/conservative and secular CSOs, as well as those of pro-government and anti-government CSOs. Drawing on the idea that resource dependency increases the use of social media by CSOs (Lam and Nie 2020; Nah and Saxton 2013), Campbell and Lambright (2020) suggest that CSOs, which are dependent on individuals or institutions for their survival, are more likely to ask their stakeholders to take actions that help them acquire certain resources. Since secular and anti-government CSOs have limited resources to mobilize people, as compared to religious/conservative and pro-government CSOs backed by the government, they are more likely to use Twitter for action purposes.



**Hypothesis 3a** Secular CSOs send more action tweets than religious/conservative CSOs.

**Hypothesis 3b** Anti-government CSOs send more action tweets than pro-government CSOs.

## Methods

### Data collection

There is no official list of CSOs in Turkey similar to The NonProfit Times, which represents the largest CSOs in the U.S. Nor is there extensive scientific research showing highly respected or the largest CSOs in Turkey. Therefore, we relied on our previous works (Akboga and Arik 2018, 2020a, b). In one of our research, we collected all of the online news about CSOs published in 17 newspapers in Turkey in 2017. We then identified the most frequently mentioned 40 CSOs in the news. Among those 16 were clearly secular while 12 were clearly religious/conservative CSOs. In another research, we collected all of the tweets in Turkish for a month in 2019 that mention the name of any CSO. We then identified the most frequently mentioned 41 CSOs, making up 50.17% of all of the tweets mentioning the name of a CSO. Among those 20 CSOs were clearly secular while 21 CSOs were clearly religious/conservative.

In the present research we chose 20 organizations (10 religious/conservative and 10 secular) based on the findings of these two research we previously conducted. That is, we chose CSOs with a clear political orientation (either religious/conservative vs. secular or pro-government vs. anti-government) that are frequently mentioned both in newspapers and tweets. We excluded those without an official Twitter account. Below we provide more detailed information about CSOs in our sample such as their field of operation and number of followers. This list also includes information about these CSOs' order of frequency in the data of our previous research on the mention of CSOs in the newspapers and on Twitter ('dernek': association, 'vakıf': foundation).

*Anadolu Gençlik Derneği (AGD*, no. 31 on Twitter and no. 1 association in the newspapers): A youth organization founded in 2002. Its Twitter account was opened in November 2011, currently with 73,700 followers. AGD defines itself as an organization that strives to raise a knowledgeable, faithful, and hardworking generation whose members are aware of its responsibilities towards the universe and people; are sensitive to their history and future; and strive for the dissemination of compassion, goodness, and justice.

*Ensar Vakfı (Ensar*, no. 1 foundation on Twitter and in the newspapers): A socio-cultural and education organization founded in 1979. Its Twitter account was opened in March 2013, currently with 44,200 followers. Ensar aims to enrich people's spiritual dynamics in Turkey and to contribute to their scientific, intellectual, and moral development. It provides services to all social layers of society, especially the youth, through educational activities, and develops qualified

academic projects, especially in the field of religion and values education, in order to raise a generation devoted to human values.

*Necmettin Erbakan Vakfı (Erbakan, no. 16 foundation in the newspapers)*: A socio-cultural and advocacy organization founded in 2013. Its Twitter account was opened in February 2015, currently with 36,000 followers. It aims to transfer Necmettin Erbakan's ideas, which have been a foundation of several Islamic political parties in Turkey since the 1960s, to the new generations. It carries out educational and cultural activities to raise conscious Muslims. It engages in joint activities with Islamic countries to ensure the unity in thought, discourse, and action of the Islamic world.

*Furkan Vakfı (Furkan, no. 5 on Twitter and no. 9 foundation in the newspapers)*: A community-based education organization founded in 1994. Its Twitter account was opened in August 2009, currently with 91,900 followers. Furkan's main purpose is to create a generation which has a true faith and morals, and fights legitimately for Allah's domination on earth. It regularly conducts tafsir lessons, organizes conferences, trips, article-poetry competitions, and other cultural events, and works for the formation of an authentic Islamic understanding.

*İHH İnsani Yardım Vakfı (İHH, no. 36 on Twitter and no. 2 foundation in the newspapers)*: A charity organization founded in 1995, its Twitter account was opened in February 2010, currently with 439,800 followers. İHH aims to deliver aid to all people who are in need, who are victims of wars and natural disasters, and who are wounded, crippled, starved, or homeless. It is an active foundation especially in Islamic countries.

*İhlas Vakfı (İhlas, no. 12 foundation in the newspapers)*: A socio-cultural education organization founded in 1975. Its Twitter account was opened in September 2010, currently with 8,476 followers. İhlas opens dormitories, schools, and hospitals; provides food and clothing to those in need; and gives scholarships to students from the Turkic Republics in Central Asia. It also has Turkey's scientific, literary, and religious works translated into various languages, and distributes them abroad to promote Turkish-Islamic culture in the world.

*İlim Yayma Vakfı (İlim Yayma, no. 37 on Twitter and no. 19 association in the newspapers)*: A community-based education organization founded in 1973. Its Twitter account was opened in June 2012, currently with 51,600 followers. İlim Yayma aims to raise quality scientists who direct the society by using all opportunities provided by science and technology.

*Kadın ve Demokrasi Derneği (KADEM, no. 11 association in the newspapers)*: A women's organization founded in 2013. Its Twitter account was opened in June 2013, currently with 59,400 followers. KADEM aims to improve women's rights. It conducts projects to raise concerns for democratic reforms on women's issues and to produce solutions that will eliminate the barriers inhibiting women's rights and freedoms.

*Mirasımız Derneği (Mirasımız, no. 5 association in the newspapers)*: A socio-cultural organization founded in 2008. Its Twitter account was opened in February 2011, currently with 9066 followers. Mirasımız aims to protect Jerusalem, Masjid al-Aqsa, and the historical and cultural heritage of the Ottoman State in the region, and to raise Turkish people's awareness about the importance of this heritage. It

repairs the Masjid al-Aqsa as well as other mosques, houses, fountains, and many other structures belonging to the Ottoman period around Jerusalem. It also supports the poor Muslims in the region.

*MÜSİAD* (no. 23 on Twitter and no. 4 association in the newspapers): A business organization founded in 1990. Its Twitter account was opened in January 2010, currently with 69,300 followers. MÜSİAD aims to improve the skills of business people and their employees, and helps the development of business and operating systems of small, medium, and large-sized enterprises. It also conducts research on the development of domestic and foreign markets as well as other regional and international issues, and shares them with the public.

*Ali İsmail Korkmaz Vakfı (ALIKEV)*, no. 10 foundation in the newspapers): A youth organization founded in 2014. Its Twitter account was opened in February 2014, currently with 56,200 followers. ALIKEV aims to keep Ali İsmail Korkmaz (who was killed by the police force during the Gezi Protests in 2013) and his memory alive by realizing his dream of "youth for society". It works to raise young people who are more egalitarian and unprejudiced by enabling them to take part in activities that produce social benefits. ALIKEV also aims to be a foundation that is regarded as a reference in the youth field by political decision makers.

*Atatürkçü Düşünce Derneği (ADD)*, no. 8 on Twitter and no. 6 association in the newspapers): An advocacy organization founded in 1989. Its Twitter account was opened in June 2014, currently with 66,300 followers. ADD is a secularist organization that follows the ideas of Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey. It aims to establish Atatürk's secularism ideas in everyday life including law, science, technology, and sports.

*Çağdaş Hukukçular Derneği (CHD)*, no. 8 association in the newspapers): A vocational advocacy organization founded in 1974. Its Twitter account was opened in January 2012, currently with 77,200 followers. CHD works for the establishment of a legal system based on democracy and the prevention of all kinds of attacks on fundamental rights, especially the right to life, and human dignity. It conducts research on anti-democratic laws and practices, monitors the developments in these fields, and prepares alternative proposals. It also provides legal assistance to those whose fundamental rights and freedoms are threatened.

*Çağdaş Gazeteciler Derneği (CGD)*, no. 7 association in the newspapers): A journalism organization founded in 1978. Its Twitter account was opened in January 2012, currently with 11,700 followers. CGD works for the realization of freedoms of thought, expression and press, the use of the right to receive information without any restriction, the protection of professional rights and interests of journalists, and their unionization. It also aims to improve its members' economic and social welfare.

*Çağdaş Yaşamı Destekleme Derneği (CYDD)*, no. 29 association on Twitter): An education organization founded in 1989. Its Twitter account was opened in April 2014, currently with 89,600 followers. With the goal of protecting Atatürk's principles and revolutions as well as the Republic's achievements, CYDD works to create public opinion for a modern life and education that respects human rights, develops scientific thinking, and analytical skills.

*İnsan Hakları Derneği (İHD, no. 27 on Twitter and no. 3 association in the newspapers):* A human rights organization founded in 1986. Its Twitter account was opened in July 2010, currently with 136,100 followers. İHD aims to protect human rights in Turkey. It observes human rights violations, shares them with the public, and applies to relevant national and international organizations for these violations. It prepares annual reports about human rights violations, carries out orientation programs, prepares brochures and posters to raise human rights consciousness in society, and works to realize legal reforms.

*İstanbul Kültür Sanat Vakfı (IKSV, no. 7 foundation in the newspapers):* A culture and arts organization founded in 1973. Its Twitter account was opened in March 2011, currently with 2,500,000 followers. İKSV offers the Turkish public opportunities to experience the finest examples of cultural and artistic production from around the world. It aims to introduce Turkey's cultural and artistic assets to the world and transform Istanbul into a major international center for culture and arts. It also works to create continuous interaction between national and universal values via culture and arts and contributes to the development of cultural policies.

*Küba Dostluk Derneği (KUBA, no. 18 association in the newspapers):* A cultural dialog organization founded in 2002. Its Twitter account was opened in April 2012, currently with 20,300 followers. KUBA's main purpose is to develop friendship and solidarity between the peoples of Turkey and Cuba, strengthen social, economic, scientific, and professional relations between the two countries, and introduce Cuba's social, historical, cultural, and artistic values to the Turkish public. It organizes cultural and professional trips to Cuba, dance workshops, Spanish seminars, Latin nights, film and music festivals, and panels.

*ODTÜ Mezunları Derneği (ODTUMD, no. 12 association in the newspapers):* An alumni organization founded in 1965. Its Twitter account was opened in April 2017, currently with 1479 followers. ODTUMD aims to create a center where METU graduates can express themselves and form solidarity with each other. It also works for the enlightenment of society by publicly presenting the information produced by its panels/seminars/interviews/meetings, and supports the METU and its students on various issues.

*TEMA Vakfı (TEMA, no. 10 on Twitter and no. 20 foundation in the newspapers):* An environmental organization founded in 1992. Its Twitter account was opened in May 2011, currently with 487,100 followers. TEMA aims to draw attention to the danger of erosion and desertification threatening Turkey's lands and make the struggle with erosion a state policy. It works to protect all natural assets such as water, forest, and biodiversity as well as to create policies and social awareness regarding human-induced climate change. TEMA also aims to protect the natural forests and tries to instill a love of trees in society by its afforestation works.

We collected data from these organizations' official Twitter accounts using a Twitter API between August 1, 2019 and February 28, 2020 (7 months). As our previous research showed, CSOs in Turkey are highly affected by the political changes. To minimize the effects of a major political event, we selected the starting date in the summer when most of the institutions such as the Grand

Assembly and the Higher Judiciary institutions are officially closed. We stopped collecting data from the months after February because of the widespread COVID-19 pandemic, which was officially announced on March 10, 2020 in Turkey and affected people's daily lives, including CSOs' activities.

## Design and procedure

We had two groups of CSOs: (1) religious/conservative vs. secular and (2) pro-government vs. anti-government. Our (non-parametric) measure was whether the tweets were action, community, or information. Therefore, we had two research designs:

- (1) (religious/conservative vs. secular) X 3 (information vs. community vs. action).
- (2) (pro-government vs. anti-government) X 3 (information vs. community vs. action).

We categorized these CSOs in two different ways and ran separate analyses for the resulting two groups. *First*, we identified 10 CSOs as religious/conservative and the other 10 as secular. We categorized organizations as religious/conservative if they (1) emphasized religious values in their discourse and activities and/or (2) referred to traditional values with respect to family, education, gender relations, and nation in their discourse. We categorized organizations as secular if they did not have the features in (1) and/or (2) or considered themselves to be defenders of secular principles.

*Second*, we categorized organizations as pro-government if they openly support the (JDP) government's ideology and policies or receive money or goods from the government. We categorized organizations as anti-government if they criticize the (JDP) government's policies. Because not all CSOs in our sample could be easily identified as pro-government or anti-government, we categorized 7 CSOs as pro-government and 7 CSOs as anti-government. The remaining 6 CSOs in our sample were not classified as either pro-government or anti-government. For example, although Furkan is a religious/conservative CSO, it is very critical of the JDP, and prominent people affiliated with it were arrested and imprisoned. Therefore, we categorized it as anti-government as well. However, we did not categorize religious/conservative Erbakan Vakfı and Mirasımız Derneği as either pro-government or anti-government because they either have an ambiguous attitude towards the JDP or do not particularly deal with internal politics. Similarly, not all secular CSOs can be clearly categorized as pro-government or anti-government. For example, TEMA is a secular environmentalist organization while IKSİV is a secular culture organization, and neither of them deals with internal politics. ODTÜMD and Küba, which are secular organizations, are not explicitly critical of the government.

We coded each tweet according to its type using the framework developed by Lovejoy and Saxton (2012). We first examined the tweets and created a coding manual specifying the coding criteria for each type of tweet: Information,

Community, and Action. We coded the tweets separately. For reliability, we then compared the 30% of the codes and found that we used the same code for about 80% of the data, ensuring the reliability of the coding system.

A tweet was classified as information if it informed the public about the organization's activities (without giving their dates and locations) or shared the organization's publications or any other news.

Genel Başkanımız, Şube Ortaokullar Komisyon Başkanları Toplantısına katıldı (AGD) Our President participated in the Meeting of Section Middle School Commission Heads.

A tweet was classified as community if it established a dialog with the public, recognized and thanked donors and other supporters, greeted the important religious or national days, or commemorated the deaths of prominent people.

Bütün Öğretmenlerimizin, Öğretmenler Günü Kutlu Olsun (AGD)  
'Happy Teachers' Day for Our Teachers!'

A tweet was classified as action if it asked for donations, informed the public about the organization's activities (with giving their dates and locations), called for volunteers or employees, or encouraged followers to engage in advocacy campaigns.

Bir Hayalimiz Var! #AGDMekkeninFethi (AGD)  
'We have a dream! #AGDTheConquestofMecca'

Lovejoy and Saxton's framework has subcategories for each category. However, as the goal of the current research is to unravel the overall communication strategies of the organizations in the sample, these subcategories were not included.

## Results

We obtained a total of 10,584 tweets sent by 20 CSOs. In total, 7,279 of them (68.77%) were sent by religious/conservative CSOs and the remaining 3,305 tweets (31.23%) were sent by secular CSOs. Moreover, 4573 of them (43.21%) were sent by pro-government CSOs, 5,032 (47.54%) were sent by anti-government CSOs, and the remainder were sent by CSOs that could not be categorized either pro-government or anti-government CSOs. 112 tweets were excluded from the analysis because those tweets did not contain written materials, consisted of pictures or emojis, were empty, or were written in a language other than Turkish or English. We provide the descriptive statistics below (overall in Table 1 and by group in Tables 2, 3). Please note that all of the CSOs in our sample were classified as either Religious/Conservative or Secular but only 14 of them were classified as either Pro-government or Anti-government because the rest of them did not have a clear political attitude towards the government.

To test Hypothesis 1, we first ran a non-parametric repeated measures ANOVA test (a Friedman test). The results showed a significant difference  $\chi^2(2)=2491$ ,  $p<0.001$ . Durbin–Conover pairwise comparisons indicated that there were

**Table 1** Descriptive statistics

Name	Type 1	Type 2	The number of tweets			
			Information	Action	Community	Total
AGD	Religious/conservative	Pro-government	389 ( <b>54.10%</b> )	195 (27.12%)	132 (18.36%)	716
Ensar	Religious/conservative	Pro-government	891 ( <b>61.53%</b> )	367 (25.35%)	190 (13.12%)	1448
Erbakan	Religious/conservative	n/a	3 (15.79%)	3 (15.79%)	11 ( <b>57.89%</b> )	17
Furkan	Religious/conservative	Anti-government	1228 ( <b>49.86%</b> )	1150 (46.69%)	83 (3.37%)	2461
İHH	Religious/conservative	Pro-government	885 ( <b>74.18%</b> )	241 (20.20%)	67 (5.62%)	1193
Ihlas	Religious/conservative	Pro-government	45 ( <b>46.39%</b> )	28 (28.87%)	16 (16.49%)	89
IlimYayma	Religious/conservative	Pro-government	53 (36.05%)	24 (16.33%)	68 ( <b>46.26%</b> )	145
KADEM	Religious/conservative	Pro-government	439 ( <b>53.67%</b> )	216 (26.41%)	163 (19.93%)	818
Mirasımız	Religious/conservative	n/a	89 ( <b>39.73%</b> )	80 (35.71%)	45 (20.09%)	214
MUSIAD	Religious/conservative	Pro-government	94 ( <b>62.25%</b> )	17 (11.26%)	40 (26.49%)	151
Total			4022 ( <b>55.25%</b> )	2304 (31.65%)	775 (10.65%)	7252
ALİSMAIL	Secular	Anti-government	17 (24.28%)	37 ( <b>52.86%</b> )	16 (22.86%)	70
ADD	Secular	Anti-government	55 (24.25%)	56 (25%)	86 ( <b>38.39%</b> )	197
CHD	Secular	Anti-government	122 ( <b>48.03%</b> )	95 (37.4%)	24 (9.45%)	241
CGD	Secular	Anti-government	22 (27.85%)	43 ( <b>54.43%</b> )	14 (17.72%)	79
CYDD	Secular	Anti-government	88 (21.00%)	139 (33.17%)	192 ( <b>45.82%</b> )	419
IHD	Secular	Anti-government	900 ( <b>60.81%</b> )	379 (25.61%)	169 (11.42%)	1448
IKSV	Secular	n/a	106 ( <b>47.75%</b> )	82 (36.94%)	34 (15.32%)	222
Kuba	Secular	n/a	42 (31.82%)	57 ( <b>43.18%</b> )	21 (15.91%)	120
ODTUMD	Secular	n/a	9 (20.93%)	26 ( <b>60.47%</b> )	8 (18.6%)	43
TEMA	Secular	n/a	138 (36.13%)	175 ( <b>45.81%</b> )	68 (17.8%)	381
Total			1499 ( <b>45.36%</b> )	1089 (32.95%)	632 (19.2%)	3220
Total			5521	3393	1407	10,472

The numbers in bold in parenthesis indicate the percentage of the type of tweet that each organization most frequently posted



**Table 2** Frequencies of information, action, and community tweets by religious/conservative and secular CSOs

	Information <i>N</i>	Action <i>N</i>	Community <i>N</i>	Total (%)
Religious/con- servative	4116 (56.76%)	2321 (32%)	815 (11.24%)	100
Secular	1499 (46.55%)	1089 (33.82%)	632 (19.63%)	100
TOTAL	5615	3410	1447	10,472

**Table 3** Frequencies of information, action, and community tweets by pro-government and anti-government CSOs

	Information <i>N</i>	Action <i>N</i>	Community <i>N</i>	Total (%)
Pro-government	2796 (61.32%)	1088 (23.8%)	676 (14.82%)	100
Anti-government	2432 (49.48%)	1899 (38.64%)	584 (11.88%)	100

significantly more Information ( $N=5615$ , 53.6%) tweets than Action ( $N=3410$ , 32.6%) tweets ( $p<0.001$ ) and Community ( $N=1447$ , 13.8%) tweets ( $p<0.001$ ); also, there were more Action tweets than Community tweets ( $p<0.001$ ) (*Overall: Information > Action > Community*).

To further test Hypothesis 1, we investigated within-group differences. We first analyzed the data from religious/conservative CSOs. A non-parametric repeated measures ANOVA test (a Friedman test) showed a significant difference  $\chi^2(2)=2201$ ,  $p<0.001$ . Durbin–Conover pairwise comparisons indicated that there were significantly more Information tweets ( $N=4070$ , 56.5%) than Action tweets ( $N=2321$ , 32.2%),  $p<0.001$ , and Community tweets ( $N=815$ , 11.3%),  $p<0.001$ ; meanwhile, there were more Action tweets than Community tweets (*religious/conservative CSOs: Information > Action > Community*).<sup>1</sup>

Second, the same test on the data from the Secular CSOs showed a significant difference  $\chi^2(2)=392$ ,  $p<0.001$ . Durbin–Conover pairwise comparisons indicated that there were significantly more Information tweets ( $N=1498$ , 47.2%) than Action tweets ( $N=1089$ , 34.3%),  $p<0.001$ , and Community tweets ( $N=589$ , 18.5%),  $p<0.001$ , and that there were more Action tweets than Community tweets (*secular CSOs: Information > Action > Community*).

Third, the same test showed a significant difference  $\chi^2(2)=1636$ ,  $p<0.001$ . Durbin–Conover pairwise comparisons indicated that there were significantly

<sup>1</sup> As all the religious/conservative CSOs were pro-government in our sample except for Furkan, which was a conservative/religious but also anti-government CSO and sent almost as many action tweets (46.69%) as information tweets (49.86%), we ran the same analysis excluding Furkan from the group of religious/conservative CSOs and found  $\chi^2(2)=3158$ ,  $p<0.001$ . Pairwise comparisons indicated that there were significantly more Information tweets than Action tweets,  $p<0.001$ , and Community tweets,  $p<0.001$ , and that there were more Action tweets than Community tweets,  $p<0.001$ .

more Information tweets ( $N=2776$ , 61.1%) than Action tweets ( $N=1088$ , 24.0%),  $p<0.001$ , and Community tweets ( $N=676$ , 14.9%),  $p<0.001$ , and that there were more Action tweets than Community tweets (*pro-government CSOs: Information > Action > Community*).

Fourth, the same test showed a significant difference among the tweets from the anti-government CSOs,  $\chi^2(2)=1091$ ,  $p<0.001$ . Durbin–Conover pairwise comparisons indicated that there were significantly more Information tweets ( $N=2406$ , 49.3%) than Action tweets ( $N=1899$ , 38.9%),  $p<0.001$ , and Community tweets ( $N=580$ , 11.9%),  $p<0.001$ , and that there were more Action tweets than Community tweets (*anti-government CSOs: Information > Action > Community*). Therefore, our findings partially supported Hypothesis 1: CSOs' Information, Community, and Action tweets are not equally distributed regardless of the type of CSO. However, although most of the tweets were information tweets, in contrast to our expectation, there were more action tweets than community tweets for all types of CSOs.

To test Hypotheses 2a and 2b, we ran  $\chi^2$  Goodness of fit tests. The results showed a significant difference between the number of tweets sent by the religious/conservative CSOs ( $N=7,252$ , 69.3%) and those sent by the secular CSOs ( $N=3220$ , 30.7%),  $\chi^2(1)=1553$ ,  $p<0.001$ .<sup>2</sup> Moreover, there was a significant difference between the number of tweets sent by the anti-government CSOs ( $N=4915$ , 51.9%) and the number of tweets sent by the pro-government CSOs ( $N=4560$ , 48.1%),  $\chi^2(1)=13.2$ ,  $p<0.001$ .<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, religious/conservative CSOs tweet more than secular CSOs whereas anti-government CSOs tweet more than pro-government CSOs. Thus, our findings supported Hypothesis 2b but not Hypothesis 2a.

To test Hypotheses 3a and 3b, we ran Kruskal–Wallis tests. The results showed that, in comparing the religious/conservative CSOs and the secular CSOs (Hypothesis 3a), there were significant differences in the number of Community tweets,  $\chi^2(1)=131.77$ ,  $p<0.001$  and Information tweets,  $\chi^2(1)=93.55$ ,  $p<0.001$ , but not Action tweets  $\chi^2(1)=3.34$ ,  $p=0.067$ . Dwass–Steel–Critchlow–Fligner (DSCF) pairwise comparisons showed a significant difference between the religious/conservative Information tweets and the secular Information tweets,  $W=-13.7$ ,  $p<0.001$ , as well as a significant difference between the religious/conservative Community tweets and the secular Community tweets,  $W=16.2$ ,  $p<0.001$  (*Information<sub>Religious/conservative</sub> > Information<sub>Secular</sub>* and *Community<sub>Religious/conservative</sub> > Community<sub>Secular</sub>*). Therefore, Hypothesis 3a was not supported because the secular CSOs did not send more action tweets than the religious/conservative CSOs.

A comparison of the anti-government and pro-government CSOs revealed significant differences in the number of Action tweets,  $\chi^2(1)=239.3$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Community tweets,  $\chi^2(1)=17.8$ ,  $p<0.001$ , and Information tweets,  $\chi^2(1)=133.9$ ,  $p<0.001$ . DSCF pairwise comparisons showed a significant difference between the pro-government Information tweets ( $N=2796$ ) and the anti-government Information tweets ( $N=2432$ ),  $W=-16.4$ ,  $p<0.001$ ; a significant difference between the pro-government Community tweets ( $N=676$ ) and the anti-government

<sup>2</sup> Without Furkan, a similar result was obtained,  $\chi^2(1)=892$ ,  $p<0.001$ .

<sup>3</sup> Without Furkan, a similar result was obtained,  $\chi^2(1)=75.7$ ,  $p<0.001$ .

Community tweets ( $N=584$ ),  $W=-5.96$ ,  $p<0.001$ ; and a significant difference between the pro-government Action tweets ( $N=1088$ ) and the anti-government Action tweets ( $N=1899$ )  $W=21.9$ ,  $p<0.001$  ( $Information_{Pro-government} > Information_{Anti-government}$ ;  $Community_{Pro-government} > Community_{Anti-government}$ ;  $Action_{Anti-government} > Action_{Pro-government}$ ). The results supported Hypothesis 3b because the anti-government CSOs sent more action tweets than the pro-government CSOs.

## Discussion and conclusion

Turkey is a highly politically polarized country. Neither CSOs nor social media has been exempted from this polarization. Using the Information-Community-Action framework (Lovejoy and Saxton 2012), we investigated how a group of ideologically polarized CSOs in Turkey use Twitter. The main findings of our analyses are as follows. *First*, regardless of the ideological stance of the CSOs, the number of information tweets was significantly higher than the number of action tweets which, in turn, was significantly higher than the number of community tweets. This finding partially supports Hypothesis 1. *Second*, anti-government CSOs posted significantly more tweets than did pro-government CSOs. However, in contrast to our expectation, religious/conservative CSOs posted significantly more tweets than did secular CSOs. These findings support Hypothesis 2b but do not support Hypothesis 2a. *Third*, the number of information, community, and action tweets was not equally distributed across different types of CSOs. The number of both information and community tweets of religious/conservative and pro-government CSO was higher than that of secular and anti-government CSOs, respectively. While there was no difference between the number of action tweets of religious/conservative CSOs and that of secular CSOs, the number of action tweets of anti-government CSOs was higher than that of pro-government CSOs. These findings support Hypothesis 3b but do not support Hypothesis 3a.

Previous research pointed out that most of the tweets posted by CSOs are information tweets, followed by community and action tweets (Guo and Saxton 2014; Zhou and Pan 2016). However, our analysis showed that information tweets (45.36%) were followed by action (32.95%) and community tweets (19.12%). One possible reason is that for ideologically polarized CSOs, which propagate their ideologies through their activities, asking their followers to participate in these activities and encouraging them to join lobbying and advocacy campaigns (through action tweets) are more important than having a dialog or strengthening ties with the online community (through community tweets). Because of their ideologies, these CSOs might have already consolidated their online community, which is committed to and trusts the organization. This enables the organization to easily ask this community to do something for the organization rather than focusing on establishing a dialog. This finding is in line with previous research indicating that CSOs that already have strong connections to their stakeholders post action tweets more often than community tweets (Anagnostopoulos et al. 2016; Campbell and Lambright 2020). Indeed, research showed that people's tweets about ideologically polarized CSOs in Turkey reflect the tension between various political ideologies (Akboga and Arik 2020a).

Therefore, it is not unexpected for CSOs to prioritize mobilizing their already consolidated and polarized community.

Previous research showed that religious/conservative CSOs are covered more often by pro-government newspapers while secular CSOs are covered more often by anti-government newspapers (Akboga and Arik 2020b). The domination of public opinion by pro-government newspapers in Turkey (Irak 2016) restricts secular CSOs' visibility in the mainstream media. We, therefore, expected that Twitter, free and easy to use, would be used more extensively by secular CSOs to express themselves. However, we found that religious/conservative CSOs use Twitter more extensively. This might be because religious/conservative CSOs write significantly more information and community tweets than do secular CSOs. As for the information tweets, it means that religious/conservative CSOs have more activities about which to inform their followers than do secular CSOs. Another reason for the higher number of information tweets of religious/conservative CSOs is that these organizations frequently posted tweets quoting holy passages from the Quran which we coded as information tweets. As for the community tweets, religious/conservative CSOs tend to strengthen their ties with their followers more than do secular CSOs. Religious/conservative CSOs did so by frequently writing tweets that celebrated the sacred days, such as Fridays, Eid Al-Fitr, and Eid Al-Adha, which we coded as community tweets.

Religious/conservative CSOs posted more tweets than secular CSOs. Therefore, the finding that anti-government CSOs posted more tweets than did pro-government CSOs implies that being opposed to the government is a more important factor in increasing the use of Twitter than is having a conservative/religious ideology. The number of information and community tweets of pro-government CSOs is higher than that of anti-government CSOs. However, the number of action tweets of anti-government CSOs is higher than that of pro-government CSOs, making the total number of tweets of anti-government CSOs higher than that of pro-government CSOs. We argue that anti-government CSOs rely on Twitter to mobilize their followers more than do pro-government CSOs, as their communication channels are more limited due to their critical stance towards the government. Furthermore, as the action tweets are more likely to receive attention in the form of "shares" (Zhang and Skoric 2020), these messages help anti-government CSOs spread their campaigns for sociopolitical change. In Gramscian sense, Twitter is a more fertile ground for anti-government CSOs than it is for pro-government CSOs that enables them to voice their counter-hegemonic attitude towards the government and to call their followers to take action on certain issues.

In addition to their political ideology, CSOs may have other characteristics that have an impact on the number and content of their tweets such as the organization's date of establishment, the opening date of the organization's Twitter account, and the number of Twitter followers. For example, the oldest CSOs in our sample was the ODTUMD, a secular CSO and an alumni organization established in 1965 with an active Twitter account since 2017. However, it sent only 43 tweets during the 7-month period, the least number of the tweets the CSOs sent in our sample. The number of the Twitter followers may not be associated with the number and content of the tweets the CSOs sent either. For example, IKSIV, a secular culture and arts

CSO established in 1973 with an active Twitter account since 2011, had 2,5 million followers, the highest among the CSOs in our sample, but sent only 222 tweets. However, Furkan, a religious/conservative, anti-government, community-based education CSO founded in 1994 with an active Twitter account since 2009, currently with 91,900 followers, sent the highest number of tweets (2461). Nonetheless, future studies may consider these factors to further examine CSOs' communication strategies with the public.

The findings come with some limitations. First, the data come from the CSOs in Turkey so that the results may not be generalizable to other highly polarized societies with different historical and political dynamics. Therefore, future research should be conducted in other polarized countries such as Venezuela and Hungary (McCoy et al. 2018). Second, the present study focused on the Twitter messages of a number of highly polarized and most frequently mentioned CSOs in newspapers and on Twitter. Future research should focus on a greater variety of CSOs to examine how the political stance of a CSO affects its social media usage. Third, future research should investigate the impact that CSOs' tweets have on the public by analyzing how frequently they are shared, liked, or commented on. Last but not the least, in democratic countries such as Turkey, governments are elected for a period of time. Although the same party, JDP, has been ruling Turkey for about 20 years, another party or a coalition of parties may win the next election so that the relationship between the state and CSOs can transform. Therefore, there is a need for future research to understand how the use of Twitter by ideologically polarized CSOs is influenced by the change in the government.

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**Data availability** The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

## Declarations

**Conflict of interest** On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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