LOGGED-IN LOATHING:

EXPLORING THE TURKINCEL MOVEMENT

AS A VANGUARD OF MODERN MISOGYNY

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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- this thesis contains no material that has been submitted or accepted for a degree or diploma in any other educational institution;

- this is a true copy of the thesis approved by my advisor and thesis committee at Boğaziçi University, including final revisions required by them.

Signature…….....

Date …….....

ABSTRACT

Logged-in Loathing: Exploring the TurkIncel Movement as a Vanguard of Modern Misogyny

This thesis examines the Incel movement, particularly the TurkIncel community, as a novel expression of anti-women sentiment in the digital age. It argues that the Incel phenomenon represents a new phase of reactionary movements, characterized by its revanchist masculinist nature, digital proliferation, and unique justification of violence rooted in victimhood narratives. The study situates the movement within the context of the masculinity crisis and explores how digital platforms facilitate the spread of extreme beliefs.

Through digital ethnography, interviews, and discourse analysis, this research investigates the TurkIncel community's dynamics and ideologies within both the global Incel movement and Turkey's anti-feminist narratives. It highlights the movement's distinct features, including its digital nature, the role of anonymity, and its justification of violence.

This study contributes to understanding contemporary anti-women movements by documenting the TurkIncel community and analyzing its adaptation of global Incel ideology to the Turkish context. It explores the interplay between digital radicalization, gender politics, and societal structures, offering insights into the factors driving the spread of misogynistic ideologies and addressing a gap in literature on digital anti-women perspectives in Turkey.

ÖZET

Çevrimiçi Nefret: Modern Mizojininin Öncüsü Olarak Turkincel Hareketinin İncelenmesi

Bu tez, özellikle TurkIncel topluluğuna odaklanarak, Incel hareketini dijital çağda kadın karşıtı duyguların yeni bir ifadesi olarak incelemektedir. Çalışma, Incel olgusunun, rövanşist erkeksi yapısı, dijital yayılımı ve mağduriyet anlatılarına dayanan kendine özgü şiddet meşrulaştırması ile karakterize edilen yeni bir tepkisel hareket aşamasını temsil ettiğini savunmaktadır. Araştırma, hareketi erkeklik krizi bağlamında konumlandırmakta ve dijital platformların aşırı inançların yayılmasını nasıl olanak sunduğunu incelemektedir.

Dijital etnografi, yarı-yapılandırılmış mülakatlar ve söylem analizi yoluyla, bu araştırma TurkIncel topluluğunun dinamiklerini ve düşünce sistemini hem küresel Incel hareketi hem de Türkiye'deki kadın düşmanı anlatılar içinde incelemektedir. Çalışma, hareketin dijital doğası, anonimliğin rolü ve şiddetin meşrulaştırılması gibi ayırt edici özelliklerini vurgulamaktadır.

Bu proje, TurkIncel topluluğunu belgeleyerek ve küresel Incel ideolojisinin Türkiye bağlamına adaptasyonunu analiz ederek çağdaş kadın karşıtı hareketlerin anlaşılmasına katkıda bulunmaktadır. Dijital radikalleşme, toplumsal cinsiyet politikaları ve toplumsal yapılar arasındaki etkileşimi araştırarak, mizojinist ideolojilerin yayılmasını etkileyen faktörlere dair içgörüler sunmakta ve Türkiye'deki dijital kadın karşıtı perspektiflere ilişkin literatürdeki boşluğu doldurmaktadır.

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This thesis stands as a testament to the collective support, wisdom, and love of all these individuals. Any merits in this work are a reflection of their contributions, while any shortcomings remain entirely my own.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> "At the beginning of the winter break, I decided to quit playing World of Warcraft entirely. On my last day on the game, I had a long, emotional conversation with James where I opened up about all of my troubles. I told him about all my newfound views of the world, and my belief that sex must be abolished. He seemed to be supportive of my stance, and I was glad that he understood me. It was a very memorable day."
>
> (Rodger, 2014)

1.1 Introduction and context

On May 23, 2014, Elliot Rodger killed six people and injured 14 others before committing suicide. The aforementioned quotation is extracted from his manifesto, titled "My Twisted World" (Rodger, 2014). My initial encounter with the term 'Incel', a neologism signifying 'involuntarily celibate', transpired on Twitter[1], where excerpts from this manifesto were juxtaposed with images of Rodger in his car, swiftly evolving into internet memes. Memes have a hyper-accelerated life cycle, yet these had sticking power. Over time, I started encountering their demands and vision of an ideal world. It soon became evident that the issue was more than just a collection of internet trolls sharing memes; it was a movement with deeper, more concerning implications.

The Incel phenomenon stands at the intersection of male entitlement, a narrative of victimhood, and a conspiratorial, reactionary view of the feminist movement, while also encompassing post-ironic racism and an interest in self-help

[1] Formerly known as Twitter, the company is now known as X. Throughout this thesis, the two names are used interchangeably depending on the time period being referenced.

and self-improvement tactics. The term has become directly associated with gender-based violence, ranging from digital harassment to mass killings.

The anti-gender movement, rooted in the belief that advances in gender equality are detrimental to cultural and religious codes and disrupt the traditional family (Kancı et al., 2021, p.882), has gained significant momentum globally over the past decade. This movement predominantly features anti-feminist, anti-LGBT, and anti-trans discourses (Obst & Ablett, 2024, p.238), which have similarly seen a rise in prominence. Additionally, there is a long and complex history of men-centered movements, such as the Men's Rights Movements of the 1990s and the current community of Men's Rights Activists. These movements often formed in reaction to feminism and propose an answer to ongoing masculinity in crisis[2].

The masculinity crisis, or masculinity in crisis, has evolved significantly over the past 40 years, mirroring broader shifts in gender relations and societal expectations. Early discussions on this issue frequently drew on Raewyn Connell's (2005) framework of hegemonic masculinity, which examines the dominance of traditional masculine ideals and their influence on individual identities and power structures. As gender relations have evolved, both the definitions of masculinity and traditional masculine roles have become more challenging to attain, leading to a perceived sense of fear and uncertainty (Lenders, 2018.). For some, including the Incel movement, these feelings are compounded by anger and frustration,

[2] The concept of "masculinity in crisis" presents differing concerns from both feminist and men's rights perspectives. Additionally, while there is extensive work on defining the crisis and the reasons behind it (Horrocks, 1994; Yang, 2010; Çarpar & Yaylacı, 2021), the mere existence of a "crisis" is also a topic of discussion, with some researchers referring to it as a myth (Pinar, 2001; Husain & Millimet, 2009) and others questioning the reality of it (Lang AG, 2015; Jordan & Chandler, 2018). In my view, this is a complex issue that deserves careful examination from multiple angles, which I will seek to provide in the upcoming chapters.

culminating in a new phase of anti-women sentiment driven by a perceived need for retribution.

While its origins lie in the North American digital world, the Incel discourse has resonated globally, including in Turkey, where it has manifested as the TurkIncel community. The community primarily exists on the internet, initially thriving on platforms like 4Chan, Reddit, Discord, and various other forums that offered anonymity. Their presence, however, shifted to mainstream social media following Reddit's ban on several Incel-related subreddits. Most notably, Twitter emerged as a prominent platform, leading to the wider dissemination of extreme beliefs and ideas.

Given this context, the Incel phenomenon has become a focal point at the intersection of gender relations, digital communities, and violence. This focus offers valuable scholarly opportunities to explore masculinity, entitlement, and power dynamics in the digital age. Moreover, it raises significant concerns due to its profound links with gender-based violence, its transnational reach, and the potential consequences that stem from this impact.

In Incel ideology, a sexual and intimate relationship with a woman is perceived as an entitlement. Incels believe they deserve and have the right to partners, and they feel deprived of this right, perceiving that society "has failed to provide men with what they are entitled to (access to women's bodies)" (Zimmerman et al., 2018). Consequently, they view themselves as victims of oppressive feminism, an ideology they believe must be overthrown, often through violent means.

The proposed ideology perceives society through the lens of a hierarchy of attractiveness. At the top of this hierarchical structure are the Chads, estimated by Incels to make up only the 20% of the male population; conventionally attractive males typically described as white, muscular, and affluent. They possess a strong

physical appearance, excel in sports, and earn significant incomes. However, according to Incels, they are intellectually inferior. At the bottom of the attractiveness tier are the Incels themselves. In between, there are other groups such as "betas," "cucks," or "normies" (Beauchamp, 2019).

Women are also categorized into groups by Incels. The female counterpart of Chad is referred to as Stacy, while Becky is considered relatively attractive but not to the same extent as Stacy. Incels adhere to the 80/20 rule, arguing that the reason they cannot find romantic partners is that 80% of women only consent to Chads, who comprise the top 20% of men. They attribute this imbalance to the feminist movement, which they believe disrupted the social order of simpler times before the 1960s when every man had access to a female partner (Zimmerman et al., 2018, p. 1).

Participants in the subcultures typically adopt specific skill sets, moral codes, inside jokes, or community-specific jargon. These symbols of movement membership offer opportunities to assess individuals' in-group reputations or status, their alignment with the community's causes or values, while also serving as a means of identifying and gatekeeping outsiders.

Community-specific jargon is pivotal in both gatekeeping and fostering a sense of belonging within the Incel community. Incels have developed their own versions of common terms and frequently use specific abbreviations, which will be illustrated throughout the chapters. These linguistic nuances help members distinguish between "genuine" participants and those they perceive as "fakecels."

For Incels, the relationships they cultivate on these sites often serve as their primary point of contact. This is due to their self-described outsider status and the lack of connections to radical movements in their real-world social networks. Incels

turn to social media to find allies, seek comfort, or find a sense of belonging. Members of these platforms, aided by anonymity and a strong invocation of libertarian principles of free speech, enjoy significant freedom to discuss a wide range of topics. However, this freedom has also facilitated a notable increase in the dissemination of antifeminist ideas and information across various groups, platforms, and geographical boundaries.

The demographics of the Incel community remain vague due to its digital and predominantly anonymous nature. Despite being primarily based in North America, its membership spans the globe. While age isn't a defining factor, the community largely consists of young heterosexual men. Class isn't decisive either, though wealth may sometimes provoke resentment. Race or ethnicity does not preclude individuals from participating; in fact, variants such as currycels, Muslimcels, and TurkIncels exist within the community, although the term "incel" is often associated with white men, necessitating adaptation by those from different racial or ethnic backgrounds.

Most of these characteristics also apply to the TurkIncel community, particularly the lack of demographic data due to the community's anonymous nature. Ideologically, there is a blend of localization and adaptation; while some perspectives and jargon are directly adapted, others are localized into the Turkish context, aligning with pre-existing anti-women narratives – a topic that will be discussed throughout the chapters.

Regarding its history, tracking the exact chronology of this digital entity is challenging for two main reasons. First, although recent years have seen this ideology spread into the mainstream—with the term "incel" even becoming an insult among Turkish youth—the community likely emerged in private, closed groups. Second, much of the community's content violates social media platforms'

guidelines, leading to the frequent deletion of their digital activity and the suspension of their accounts.

The earliest recorded evidence of the TurkIncel community as a distinct entity dates back to November 2018. At that time, a post was made on the popular Turkish forum "donanımhaber", announcing the launch of the TurkIncel Discord channel. The language used in this post suggests it predated the establishment of the TurkIncel subreddit, as the author expressed hope that additional Incel communities would emerge on other platforms. While the exact timeline is unclear, a TurkIncel subreddit was eventually created in the following years. However, this subreddit was banned by Reddit in November 2020 due to content that violated the platform's community guidelines.

As of 2024, the primary and most visible hub for the TurkIncel community is X, where members interact with each other and with other reactionary individuals who share interests in misogyny, racism, anti-immigration rhetoric, and anti-LGBTQI+ sentiments, which became popular topics of discussion within X circles in the last couple of years. They also target women, whom they view as central to their grievances, primarily through cyber harassment. This method of targeting and antagonizing women is consistent with the broader tactics employed by the Incel movement globally.

1.2 Research objectives and justification

In a broad sense, this project seeks to contribute to our understanding of the current state of anti-women movements. My overarching research question is: How does the Incel movement as an anti-women movement differentiate from its former counterparts? To address this, additional questions are explored: How does such a

movement that is so violent can spread globally while championing for the loss of rights of a group of individuals? How can the Incel movement be understood within the narrative of masculinity crisis? Although the primary focus is on the TurkIncel movement in Turkey, the global nature of this phenomenon and its adaptation to the Turkish context necessitate shifting perspectives throughout the analysis.

While the Incel community is a reactionary, anti-women movement, it is not unique in its general characteristics. The global Men's Rights Movements have been active since the 1960s, and contemporary right-wing social movements often carry anti-feminist sentiments. Additionally, the Incel phenomenon is part of a broader digital movement landscape, with other movements either using the internet as a tool or originating within the digital realm. However, the Incel movement has distinct features that set it apart.

I argue that the Incel movement represents a new phase of anti-women, reactionary movements, characterized by its revanchist masculinist nature as a response to the masculinity crisis; its digital nature, which, through anonymity, dismantles social boundaries and facilitates the global spread of extreme beliefs; and its unique justification of violence, rooted in a narrative of victimhood that emerges from the same masculinity crisis. This analysis will particularly focus on the TurkIncel community.

Despite extensive literature on Inceldom[3], the Turkish context remains largely unexplored. No comprehensive academic studies have addressed the TurkIncel community. Existing research on gender dynamics in Turkey has mostly focused on women's studies, masculinity studies, and broader anti-women narratives, with

[3] "Inceldom" is a portmanteau of "involuntary celibate" with the suffix "-dom," denoting a state or condition. The term refers to the perceived state or life situation of self-identified incels. For early usage and etymology, see Ging, D. (2019). Alphas, Betas, and Incels: Theorizing the Masculinities of the Manosphere. Men and Masculinities, 22(4), 638-657.

minimal attention to the digital manifestations of these anti-women perspectives. This project seeks to document this emerging digital community and contribute to the literature on anti-women movements.

My primary objective is to investigate the TurkIncel community within both the global Incel movement and the broader anti-women narratives in Turkey. While researching such a profoundly misogynistic phenomenon—one that poses potential threats to my safety through harassment or violence—might seem unconventional for a female researcher, it is crucial to recognize that social movements exist on a spectrum. The Incel phenomenon, with its clear misogynistic, racist, homophobic, and xenophobic elements, represents what might appear as the extreme fringe. However, it stems from the same sources as more commonplace forms of misogyny and racism. The belief that women should be submissive to their husbands and confined to traditional roles is not fundamentally different from the view that women exist solely for male romantic and sexual gratification. Both perspectives are rooted in the same misogynistic ideology, with one often perceived as more socially acceptable while the other is labeled as extreme.

Furthermore, as a Turkish woman who shares physical spaces and experiences with TurkIncel individuals, my research aims to extend beyond merely contributing to existing literature. It seeks to uncover how the underlying assumptions of extremist views also permeate mainstream thought and how these views interact continuously. Essentially, the TurkIncel community consists of young men who, feeling deeply disillusioned and enraged, seek to exact revenge on both the world and the source of their perceived victimhood—women.

By deeply exploring this community and its role within the broader masculinity crisis, this thesis goes beyond just developing an academic

understanding. It strives to identify concrete policy interventions and social responses that can effectively address the rise of such extremist ideologies and prevent the further escalation of violence, as seen in the global counterparts of this movement. The ultimate objective is to support the well-being and equal treatment of all members of society, including both men and women. This thesis, therefore, is not merely an intellectual exercise, but an attempt to craft tangible, evidence-based solutions that can be implemented by relevant stakeholders and decision-makers. It serves as a blueprint for action to combat the dangerous rhetoric and behaviors propagated by the TurkIncel community, with the aim of promoting a more inclusive, equitable, and non-violent society.

1.3 Methodology

This research aims to explore the TurkIncel community within the digital landscape they inhabit, using a variety of research methods. I employ three main approaches to delve deeper into the community, observing their characteristics and the interplay between them and the existing anti-feminist movements and tendencies in Turkish society.

The initial phase involves a digital ethnographic approach. Anthropology, traditionally defined by its focus on physical presence and in-person observation, seeks to provide a holistic depiction of cultural membership within a community (Dean, 2023; Singer, 2009). However, as the digital realm has become an integral part of human social life—enabling the emergence of digital communities and interactions beyond physical boundaries—there has been an urgent need to understand, explore, and analyze this new landscape. Consequently, traditional ethnographic methods have been adapted to the digital environment, giving rise to

digital ethnography (Dean, 2023). A popular definition describes digital ethnography as "representing real-life cultures through combining the characteristic features of digital media with the elements of story" (Underberg & Zorn, 2013, p. 10). In practice, however, this view is less common, with many digital ethnographers preferring to refer to it as the "ethnographic study of digital cultures" (Tolbert & Johnson, 2019, p. 336).

In digital ethnography, researchers analyze texts and images shared on digital platforms to interpret meanings and gain insights into online behaviors (Kaur-Gill & Dutta, 2017, p. 2). This approach focuses on how individuals construct, express, and perceive their self-identity through their online content (p. 3). Unlike traditional ethnography, which often emphasizes spoken interactions, digital ethnography centers on textual and visual entries available online. This method allows researchers to delve deeply into the digital spaces where communities interact, providing valuable insights into their communication, language, and behaviors. Instead of relying on direct physical presence, digital ethnography typically involves mediated interactions with participants, enabling the observation of naturally occurring online activities (Pink et al., 2016, p. 3). By shifting from physical observation to digital engagement, this approach captures the nuances of individuals' online lives and the dynamic nature of digital communities.

David Hakken (1999) recommends a multi-level approach for studying digital landscapes: the micro-level, focusing on network-oriented online interactions; the meso-level, examining the dynamics within digital communities; and the macro-level, addressing political and economic power structures and their reproduction in digital mediums (Kaur-Gill & Dutta, 2017, p. 3). Following this advice, I emphasized a macro-level perspective to explore the interplay between the TurkIncel community

and the broader social and political manifestations of misogyny within Turkish society. This approach led to a refinement of the thesis focus and title.[4]

Moving on with the actual field, the decision by popular platforms like Reddit to ban Incel forums has significantly altered the community's trajectory. While some members have retreated into closed, exclusive communities on platforms like Discord, where entry requires explicit identification as an Incel, others have migrated their discussions to mainstream social media platforms, notably X. Due to ethical concerns, I refrain from direct involvement in closed communities. Therefore, the digital observation stage of this research primarily focuses on tracking the tweets of the TurkIncel community and was conducted between April and May 2024 – the reasoning behind this timeline will be discussed in the next section.

The Incel identity is rooted in self-identification. An individual's inability to form romantic relationships or their adherence to misogynistic beliefs alone is not sufficient to categorize them as Incels; self-declaration is essential. Therefore, the accounts selected for digital observation are those of individuals who explicitly identify as Incels. X has become a hub for various communities to interact, and TurkIncels frequently engage with others who use the platform to promote agendas like anti-immigration, "traditional family" values, and support for Islamic rule. Although the boundaries between these groups and TurkIncels can sometimes blur, the digital observation and data collection have been confined to individuals who have explicitly identified with the Incel identity.

[4]The initial title of this thesis, as stated in the ethics committee approval, was "An Anthropological Study of Political Radicalization in the Digital World: with a Focus on Inceldom". Following the first defense and subsequent feedback, I made the executive decision to refine both the central perspectives and focus of this thesis. This resulted in the current title, which better reflects the evolved scope and emphasis of the research. The change in title was accompanied by corresponding adjustments in the research approach and methodology to align with the refined focus on the interplay between the TurkIncel community and broader societal issues..

To be precise, although I am able to observe their interactions with each other and outsiders, their habits such as the tweets they choose to attack, the prominent figures they respect, or the fractures and polarization between them; again, for the same ethical concerns, I am unable to conduct participant observation. Participating within this digital atmosphere as a female researcher would have been a highly-beneficiary choice if it did not result in my immediate ban from the community. Therefore, this phase mostly consists of digital observation. Additionally, I rely heavily on secondary sources of data, again digital ones, such as YouTube videos featuring individuals who identify as Incels and interviews they have given to journalists and the manifestos Incel individuals published online, to gain a better understanding of their personal experiences, narratives and reasons for identifying as Incels.

Secondly, I conducted three semi-structured online interviews. Interviews are among the most dynamic and widely used methods in qualitative research (Cibangu, 2012; Dunne et al., 2005). Choosing semi-structured interviews over structured ones facilitated more fluid and in-depth conversations with the participants, resulting in a richer understanding of their experiences and identities. Since interviewing TurkIncel community members directly was not an option, I interviewed three women who had interacted with the TurkIncel community online. These interviews provided valuable insights into the practices and perspectives of the TurkIncel community and offered an understanding of how the community is perceived by others within the same digital space.

Lastly, I employed critical discourse analysis to the tweets, entries and personal accounts I have gathered during my digital observation and interviews. Across the manifold of social movements that inhabit the internet, a shared language

and narrative prevail, transcending linguistic barriers. This language is characterized by themes of anger, entitlement, victimhood, and a quest for retribution. By analyzing this discourse, valuable insights into the community and its underlying social dynamics can be gleaned.

As highlighted by Fatih Ceran (2019), "Discourse analysis is a sine qua non for any political study because language plays a crucial role in the establishment and transformation of social and political structures" (p.185). Thus, employing discourse analysis was instrumental in uncovering underlying themes, patterns, and ideologies within TurkIncel discourse. This approach not only revealed the community's social dynamics and belief systems but also provided insights into the differences and adaptations of the community compared to its North American counterpart.

In addition to utilizing these methodologies, this research integrates an intersectional analysis to deepen the understanding of the Incel phenomenon. Beyond its nature as an anti-feminist movement, the Incel phenomenon is also a digital entity with the potential for extreme violence. Similar to other contemporary digital movements born from internet culture, it is intricately linked with various discriminatory belief systems. Consequently, throughout the chapters, the research engages with existing literature on related topics, including social movements, the history of feminist and anti-feminist movements, gender-based violence, and the justification of violence. This approach aims to enrich the methodology and provide a comprehensive analysis.

1.4 Data set and case selection

The digital observation primarily took place on X, where I have created an anonymous account on the site solely for the purpose of data collection. Throughout,

I maintained strict neutrality regarding my own identity, refraining from any interaction with identified X users, including likes, retweets, or mentions, to maintain ethical standards. Defining the exact timeline of the data collection process is challenging for two main reasons.

First, my scholarly interest in the Incel phenomenon dates back to 2021, when I began an undergraduate paper on the subject and later decided to focus my thesis on it. Consequently, research on this topic has been intermittent over the past three years. During this period, I identified and followed key TurkIncel figures on my personal account, noting that their profiles frequently faced suspension due to the content they posted. These individuals often returned with similar or entirely new usernames, or sometimes did not return at all with the same Incel identity. Although I could not utilize the direct data collected from three years ago, my ongoing observation over the years has provided substantial insights into the community, its narratives, and activities.

The second challenge arises from the fluid nature of the field. As someone who grew up during the rise of social media and started using Twitter at the age of 11, I have been a daily user of the platform for various purposes, from staying informed to leisure activities and connecting with others. This constant engagement means that while I may be actively conducting research, I also frequently encounter valuable insights casually through my personal account. This fluidity in data collection complicates the establishment of clear research timelines.

Although the observation phase extended intermittently over three years, I concentrated the data collection on a specific period between April and May 2024. This timeframe coincided with an incident that brought the TurkIncel community into mainstream discussions—an event detailed in the third chapter. While this

occurrence was unplanned, it proved to be fruitful, allowing me to observe both their daily interactions and struggles, including discussions on topics such as “height or looks,” as well as the heated debates they engage in to provoke others and defend their beliefs. Although it might have been beneficial to collect data during periods of heightened anti-feminist discourse, such as March (International Women’s Day) or November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women), the timing of my research and thesis writing did not align with these dates. Nonetheless, studying the community during a more typical period provided valuable insights into its everyday dynamics.

In the actual process, I initially identified an individual named P., who frequently appeared on my personal timeline due to his controversial tweets involving Incel ideology and rhetoric. By tracking and observing his publicly available interactions on X—such as the tweets he likes, the accounts he follows, his retweets, and mentions—I used a snowball sampling technique to discover additional accounts for observation. Ultimately, I followed 25 Turkish X users who self-identify as Incels.

Additionally, I frequently conducted advanced searches using keywords related to recent incidents that might pique the interest of TurkIncel communities, or the names of prominent figures within the community. This allowed me to capture a comprehensive view of ongoing discussions and emerging trends. As mentioned earlier, these individuals are highly active on X, often generating 20-30 tweets daily, which include interactions among themselves or mentions targeting specific individuals.

Through my observations, I discovered additional platforms frequented by the TurkIncel community. One such platform is CuriousCat, which allows users to

receive anonymous questions. This site offered further insights into how TurkIncels interact both with each other and with outsiders, whether these interactions were hostile or merely curious inquiries. Additionally, I came across a manifesto that provided incredible insight into the mindset of a TurkIncel individual and observed how North American concepts were translated and adapted within the Turkish context.

Lastly, due to safety concerns stemming from the generally hostile nature of the Incel community towards outsiders, especially women, direct interviews with Incels were not viable given my female identity. Acknowledging the limitations of accessing Incels directly, I opted to interview individuals with digital interactions with the community. Using the snowballing technique, I identified these 3 female X users who had been previously targeted by the community, who offered diverse perspectives that enriched my understanding of community dynamics.

These interviews provided insight into various aspects, including the methods employed by Incels when targeting women, the common characteristics of their targets, and the perspectives of other members within the digital communal space, particularly on X, towards the TurkIncel community. This approach allowed me to gather valuable firsthand accounts while mitigating potential safety risks associated with direct engagement with the Incel community. This concluded my data collection process.

1.5 Chapter overview

Neither the global Incel phenomenon nor the TurkIncel community is widely known. Therefore, the first chapter serves as an introduction to both Incel ideology and the TurkIncel community, functioning as a handbook that establishes the basics,

including the ideology, worldview, and characteristics of these closely interrelated communities. After laying the groundwork, the second chapter examines the issue through the lens of gender. It situates the phenomenon within the broader context of the masculinity crisis, drawing heavily on existing literature. Additionally, it categorizes the Incel movement as a revanchist masculinist movement rather than merely a reactionary anti-feminist one. To make this distinction, the chapter explores Turkey's existing anti-feminist and anti-women narratives and structures. This chapter also incorporates interview data to provide a deeper understanding of the TurkIncel community and their methods.

The third chapter delves into the digital aspects of the phenomenon, emphasizing the significance of its online presence. The digital nature of this movement is crucial, as it creates an environment unattainable in individuals' physical social circles, largely due to anonymity and the global flow of extremist ideas. This chapter explores these dynamics through both the existing literature and data collected from digital observations on X.

The fourth chapter focuses on the relationship between Incel ideology and justice. It explores existing literature on gender-based violence, with a particular focus on femicide in Turkey, to differentiate these issues from the specific violence perpetrated by TurkIncels. The study finds that TurkIncel violence is distinct in terms of the medium through which it is carried out, the process of target selection, and the narratives used to justify their actions. These distinctions are thoroughly examined in this chapter.

Finally, the concluding chapter summarizes the findings, reviewing the steps that lead to the central argument. It discusses the project's limitations and suggests

possibilities for future research. The argument is also reconsidered in light of the current political status quo in Turkish society.

CHAPTER 2

GENDER ASPECT – CRISIS OF MASCULINITY: THE INCEL MOVEMENT AS A REVANCHIST RESPONSE TO SHIFTING GENDER DYNAMICS

The 21st century has been profoundly shaped by various crises, encompassing economic, political, and social dimensions[5]. Among these, one particularly significant example is found within the evolving discourse on gender issues. While the women's rights movements and LGBTQI+ activism were central to gender theory during the 2000s and 2010s, recent years have seen a reactionary backlash from certain men-centered movements. This backlash has brought renewed focus on an updated version of the 1990s masculinity crisis, a concept extensively explored by Ronald F. Levant in his 1997 article. Levant's analysis highlights several key issues related to this crisis. He examines the decreasing relevance of traditional provider roles, the challenges of redefining familial responsibilities, and the persistent impact of gender stereotypes in relationships. Furthermore, Levant addresses the complexities of divorce dynamics, the portrayal of men in media, the rise of the "angry white male" phenomenon, and the growth of large-scale men's rallies (p. 222).

Initially, the focus of the masculinity crisis was primarily on fathers or, at times, on boys. However, with the rise of modern men's rights movements, the definition has evolved and broadened. The changing dating landscape and the

[5] The 21st century has seen a number of significant global crises, including the Global Financial Crisis (2008), the Arab Spring (2010s), the European migration crisis (2015), the COVID-19 pandemic (2020), the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Palestine, among others. While these events have had profound social implications worldwide, an in-depth analysis of each one falls outside the scope of this thesis. Future work exploring the relationship between global radicalization and the rise of the Incel movement may benefit from a more comprehensive consideration of these 21st century crises.

struggles contemporary men face have become central aspects of the current masculinity crisis. This updated definition encompasses a widespread fear, uncertainty, and hysteria regarding the perceived decline of traditional manhood (Lenders, 2018). This anxiety is often linked to women's emancipation and the emergence of "new" forms of masculinity, which are frequently associated with LGBTQI+ activism by those who advocate the crisis narrative. This perspective on gender equality has become a driving force behind the emergence of various men-centric social movements, including the Incel community.

To comprehend the crisis and the subsequent social movements revolving around it, it is imperative to grasp the concept of masculinity and its implications for all members of society. Throughout the history of gender theory, there have been numerous attempts to establish a definitive and universally applicable definition of masculinity. However, such efforts are often futile due to the inherently relational nature of the concept. As Raewyn W. Connell (2005) notes, "'Masculinity' does not exist except in contrast with 'femininity'" (p. 68). Similarly, Michael S. Kimmel's (1987) significant contribution to manhood theory underscores that "while both masculinity and femininity are socially constructed within the historical context of gender relations, definitions of masculinity are historically reactive to changing definitions of femininity" (p. 123). Therefore, the most appropriate perspective is understanding masculinity as a socially constructed concept that undergoes continuous change and transformation alongside the evolving dynamics of society.

This understanding naturally leads to the recognition of diverse masculinities—multiple ways of embodying and expressing manhood. Masculinity emerges not as a monolithic concept, but as a multifaceted and dynamic construct, varying across cultures, time periods, and social contexts. Kimmel and Messner

(2010) compellingly argue that factors such as race, class, sexuality, and nationality intersect with gender, producing a rich tapestry of masculine experiences and expressions. For instance, the 'crisis' might be experienced differently by working-class men compared to middle-class men, or by men of color compared to white men. Coston and Kimmel (2012) argue that privileged men may feel a greater sense of crisis as they perceive a loss of status, while marginalized men might have developed more resilient masculinities due to long-standing challenges to their male privilege.

Despite this diversity, a common thread running through the spectrum of masculinities is the existence of a hegemonic form. Connell's (1995) influential theory of "hegemonic masculinity" provides a robust framework for understanding the hierarchical nature of masculinities within societies. This theory posits the existence of a dominant form of masculinity, culturally exalted and serving to maintain patriarchal power structures, while simultaneously subordinating both women and alternative expressions of masculinity Such a form of masculinity serves a dual purpose: it upholds patriarchal power dynamics while simultaneously marginalizing both women and non-conforming expressions of masculinity. However, this hegemonic masculinity is not immutable; challenges to the patriarchal system can lead to its destabilization, potentially exacerbating the aforementioned crisis of masculinity.

This crisis became particularly evident with the rise of feminism as a mass political movement, which brought about unprecedented changes in gender politics (Connell, 2005, p. 191). The advancements of feminist movements introduced new possibilities for defining femininity, prompting a corresponding repositioning of masculinity. Traditional gender roles had long imposed that men were the sole

providers and breadwinners of the household, a core characterization of masculinity. However, women's increased participation in the workforce, an achievement of second-wave feminism, undoubtedly disrupted this long-standing order, creating a sense of confusion and challenge, especially for men.

Similarly, another realm previously reserved exclusively for men—the political arena—has started to witness increased involvement by women. Despite this shift, "politics-as-usual is men's politics" in most parts of the world (Connell, 2005, p. 204), maintaining a predominantly male presence. However, women breaking through barriers, such as challenging stereotypes about their emotional nature affecting judgment or the prioritization of their roles as mothers over other societal contributions that hold them in the confines of their homes, has significantly altered the political landscape. This transformation, above all, signifies that men are no longer the sole decision-makers in society.

Moreover, similar to Levant, Michael Kaufman (1994), like many scholars before and after him, also points out the sense of entitlement that is directly associated with the "virtue of being male" (p. 59). In a world structured by and for men, numerous privileges, especially related to exercising power and control, stem from this entitlement; and their loss, for some, equates to losing the world as they know it. Therefore, most of the men's rights movements focus on societal changes, i.e., the changing world. This focus is often accompanied by various emotions, including disappointment, exhaustion, sadness, but predominantly anger (Allan, 2016, p. 24) and frustration.

The Incel movement, briefly discussed in the introductory chapter, stands as one of the most extreme examples among contemporary digital men-centered movements. To fully comprehend this phenomenon, it is essential to delineate its

defining characteristics. Primarily, as a social phenomenon, the term “Incel” aligns with the concept of a digital community, marked by its unique jargon, strong sense of identity, and membership within closed groups. However, it is equally important to recognize the Incel phenomenon as a social movement.

Furthermore, as a social movement, the Incel phenomenon exhibits a reactionary nature. In *Gaga Feminism*, J. Jack Halberstam examines the essence of reactive politics, characterizing them as "weak and defensive," defined by opposition and prone to retreating into justifications rather than advancing through provocations (2012, p. 169). Similar to other movements[6] that share space with the Incel community, the Incel movement emerges as a response to the current social status quo, a dynamic that will be explored in greater detail in the subsequent sections. However, I contend that it is more than merely reactionary; rather, it should be identified as “revanchist masculinist” and therefore, far from being “weak.”

This chapter seeks to elucidate what differentiates the Incel movement and, more broadly, contemporary anti-woman men’s movements from their historical counterparts. Misogyny is not a product of the 21st century, nor did men’s rights movements emerge recently. Yet, what we observe today is undeniably a novel phenomenon. Incel movement presents a new and unique response to the perceived masculinity crisis—one that is notably more violent compared to earlier movements that typically pursued their goals through legal channels and academic discourse. This distinctiveness is further amplified by the movement's global reach and the

[6] These men-centered movements, like the Incel community, have emerged as reactionary responses to the perceived threats posed by feminism and gender equality. MRAs (Men’s Rights Activism) typically advocate for restoring traditional male power and privilege, MGTOW (Men Going Their Own Way) espouses complete withdrawal from relationships with women, while PUAs (Pick-up Artistry) focus on developing techniques to manipulate and control women. All of these movements, including Incels, share an underlying goal of reasserting masculine dominance in the face of social progress towards gender equity.

anonymity afforded by the digital world, which fosters a no-name-no-consequences mentality.

Furthermore, this chapter will focus on the Turkish context, investigating the interplay between the entrenched misogynistic traits of the community and the emergent TurkIncel movement. The critical discourse analysis applied to in-depth interview data with members of the Turkish Incel community provides a deeper understanding of their views regarding women and the combat strategies they use to fight against the perceived masculinity crisis. This approach allows me to situate the TurkIncel movement within the broader cultural and sociopolitical landscape of Turkey and highlight the revanchist nature of the phenomenon.

2.1 Incel phenomenon as a social movement

The Incel phenomenon, at first glance, may appear to be just another online community united by a shared identity. However, a closer examination reveals a complex sociological landscape that extends far beyond the digital realm. This movement represents a significant shift in how discursive and behavioral patterns diffuse through digital communities, illustrating the evolution of extremist ideologies in the age of social media.

Today, social media sites and internet forums are the primary platforms for the emergence of internet communities, where people come together around certain beliefs and identities, providing emotional support through a sense of belonging. The Incel community is one such subcommunity.

One important characteristic of these subcultures is that participants often embrace distinct skill sets, moral codes, inside jokes, and community-specific jargon. These markers of group membership serve to assess individuals' reputations or status

within the group, their alignment with the community's values, and act as tools for identifying and excluding outsiders. Notably, community-specific jargon plays a crucial role in the gatekeeping process. For example, Incels utilize their own variations of common words and frequently employ specific abbreviations to distinguish genuine participants from "fakecels."

Social movements are typically defined in social theory as "groups of people organizing to bring about—or resist—social change, using, at least in part, non-institutional strategy and tactics" (Peoples, 2019, p. 17). Furthermore, Charles Tilly, drawing from an extensive analysis spanning movements from 1768 to 2004, identifies three core elements of social movements: the "social movement campaign," the "social movement repertoire," and "WUNC displays" (2004, p. 4). The campaign denotes a concerted public effort to voice collective claims, while the repertoire encompasses the variety of political actions employed in this pursuit. WUNC displays, an acronym for "worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment," encapsulate the symbolic representation of these collective attributes. Although the nature of campaigns, political actions, and manifestations of WUNC have evolved over the past 250 years, Tilly argues that their synthesis remains a constant.

Another constant in social movements is their capacity for evolution. From the era of the French Revolution to the mid-20th century, the labor movement and ensuing class struggles predominated as primary expressions of social conflict. Initially, early theories of social movements emphasized the working class's quest for consciousness and agency. However, as the late 19th century unfolded, political analysts began recognizing a diverse array of collective actors, including women, farmers, and ethnic groups (Heberle, 1951, pp. 2–11). What distinguishes contemporary social movements from their historical antecedents is their global

character (Berger & Nehring, 2017, p. 2). In today's interconnected world, individuals transcend national boundaries, embodying a global citizenship. Consequently, modern movements operate beyond traditional geographical confines, with the internet playing a crucial role in this global connectivity.

When considering social movements, there is often a tendency to focus on emancipatory efforts such as the feminist movement, LGBTQI+ activism, and environmental activism. However, the desire for change should not be viewed as unidirectional. Returning to Peoples' definition, the Incel community organizes around resisting societal change, particularly what they perceive as a "new world order" where traditional gender roles are being dismantled by leftist propaganda. They employ non-institutional strategies, including cyber-attacks and indoctrination through social media and internet forums. Drawing on Tilly's framework, their active use of social media platforms symbolizes their campaign, and their actions align with their repertoire.

Taking all of this into account, the Incel phenomenon extends beyond merely being a social support group, a pastime activity for men, or a digital community. They adhere to an ideology, have demands, and take action, sometimes violently. When analyzed within the context of the current masculinity crisis, they represent a group actively resisting social change, feeling robbed of their rights and entitlements. Furthermore, categorizing the Incel phenomenon as a social movement allows for a deeper examination within the history of men-centered social movements. Reactionary men's movements are not a product of the last decade; they have existed in a continuous relationship with feminism and its advances. Understanding the Incel phenomenon as part of this lineage provides valuable context and leads to a more insightful analysis of its complexities.

2.2 Historical roots and current manifestations of men-centered movements

To present the unique manifestations of contemporary anti-women, men-centered movements – such as Inceldom, it is essential to understand their historical precedents. The global political landscape of the 20th century was significantly shaped by feminist movements. However, women and LGBTQI+ activists were not the sole actors in gender-related social movements. Three distinct branches of men's movements also emerged: the mythopoetic men's movement, the pro-feminist men's movement, and the men's rights movement. These branches, representing pro-male, pro-feminist, and anti-feminist perspectives respectively, shared a common understanding of masculinity and manhood as relational concepts intertwined with broader gender dynamics (Kimmel, 1987, p. 153).

The pro-feminist men's movement aimed to acknowledge and address male privilege within a society largely dominated by men. (Kaufman, 1994, p. 73). It emerged as part of the feminist movement and mainly focused on issues such as "domestic violence, rape and pornography" (Fox et al., 2004, p. 104). In contrast, mythopoetic men's movement focused more on the struggles of ordinary men who had not undergone proper initiation into manhood (p. 106). Although these movements still hold relevance, to some degree, in today's social landscape, the Men's Liberation Movement, originating in the 1960s in response to second-wave feminism, forms the foundation for many current men-centered movements (ADL, 2024, p. 2).

This movement aimed to challenge the traditional understanding of masculinity and gender roles perceived as harmful not only to women but also to men. The societal norms that confined women to domestic roles, kept the men outside, implying men should be, before anything else, the breadwinners. The

emphasis on valuing a woman's worth primarily through motherhood, reinforced the notion that a man's success was measured by his ability to be a provider. However, while this dualistic approach worked for many men in the activist scene, another branch began to form. Herb Goldberg's (1987) publication of *The Hazard of Being Male: Surviving the Myth of Male Privilege*, along with similar discourse voiced by other pioneers of the movement, gave rise to the emergence of numerous men's rights social organizations (Fox et al., 2004, p. 105) that assigned the men as the real victims.

The divergence from broader men's advocacy led to the emergence of the Men's Rights Movement, a movement that has regained popularity, particularly over the past decade. Since the mid-1990s, MRAs have argued that men face social and economic disadvantages similar to, or greater than, those faced by women. They claim that men are unfairly targeted by laws addressing sexual harassment and child molestation, and that cultural movements aimed at addressing sexual assault, such as MeToo, restrict men's freedoms and make it challenging to safely approach women (ADL, 2024, p. 3). Additionally, issues like alimony and men's suicide rates have become prominent talking points within the MRM.

The masculinity crisis, as a social phenomenon, and men's rights activism predate current male-centered movements. While some movements, like the pro-feminist men's movement, have continued with little change, other parts of the broader coalition have undergone significant transformations, leading to the rise of today's digital male-centered movements—such as the Incel community. Two primary factors have driven this transformation. First, a new, more violent response to the masculinity crisis has emerged, offering a different solution than improving men's legal rights or working conditions. Second, the integration of the internet and

particularly of social media into social movements' repertoires have created an environment unfettered from geographical boundaries. This shift has facilitated the global spread of these movements, providing them with greater opportunities for organization and mobilization.

Starting with the first factor, the history of the masculinity crisis was briefly touched upon earlier in this chapter. While the primary discourses around this issue have been largely shaped by fatherhood and boys' activism, a new crisis has emerged, defined by actors within men-centered movements as a response to the changing world. Jeanne Lenders offers an updated, though partial, definition of this crisis. She describes it as "a widely perceived fear, uncertainty, and hysteria about the alleged decline of traditional Western manhood, threatened by women's emancipation and other 'new' forms of masculinity" (Lenders, 2018).

Lenders also presents a perspective from the men's rights side, quoting Walter Hollstein, a sociologist and advocate of men's rights. According to Hollstein:

> "Men used to be the rulers of the world for centuries, hunted in the wild, protected women and children, and made fields arable. Men were considered the creators of culture. Nowadays, everything has changed. Men are stigmatized as oppressors. They are accused of abusing women and children."

These definitions encapsulate two mainstream perspectives on the crisis. The feminist perspective often dismisses the crisis as an overblown reaction to men's perceived loss of privilege. In contrast, the men's rights perspective attributes the crisis to the influence of 4th wave feminism, which they argue has contributed to the marginalization and stigmatization of men.

When exploring the connection between the masculinity crisis and 4th wave feminism, the #MeToo movement plays a crucial role. Coined by Tarana Burke in 2006 to give marginalized women, especially women of color, a platform to share their experiences of sexual violence, the term gained prominence following

allegations against Harvey Weinstein (Gordon, 2019). Alyssa Milano's October 15, 2017 tweet encouraged women to post "Me Too," leading to a widespread outpouring of personal stories and support.

Despite its impact, #MeToo faced significant backlash. Susan Faludi (2006) suggests that antifeminist reactions often intensify when feminist goals appear achievable. As #MeToo began to drive change, it was increasingly criticized as a witch hunt and a symbol of cancel culture. This backlash gave rise to movements like #HimToo and #MenToo, where men expressed concerns about false accusations and reputational harm. The sentiment "No man is safe" became prevalent.

This reaction was further fueled by the Amber Heard vs. Johnny Depp trial, where Heard was vilified and Depp portrayed as a sympathetic victim. The trial overshadowed the reality of the abuse, instead becoming proof of the perceived dangers posed by feminists and the potential victimization of men. Amber Heard became the embodiment of the "women who lie" stereotype (Crispin, 2022). Michelle Goldberg (2022) of The New York Times described the trial as "the Death of #MeToo," while The Guardian referred to it as "an orgy of misogyny" (Donegan, 2022).

A similar backlash occurred in “ifşa culture”[7] which might be explained as Turkey’s version of the #MeToo, following the suicide of İbrahim Çolak, an author popular within conservative circles. Çolak took his life a day after being accused of abuse by a woman on Twitter (Euronews, 2020). In what appeared to be his final

[7] "İfşa" is a Turkish word meaning "disclosure" or "exposure." In the context of social media and digital activism in Turkey, "ifşa culture" refers to the practice of publicly exposing or calling out individuals for alleged misconduct, particularly related to sexual harassment or abuse. This phenomenon gained prominence as a grassroots alternative to formal legal channels, which are often perceived as inadequate in addressing such issues. For further discussion, see Sayan, P. (2019). Digitalized Vigilantism and Gendered Violence in Turkey. Feminist Media Studies, 19(8), 1195-1197.

tweet, he bid farewell to his family and partially acknowledged the allegations, expressing regret that he had failed in his aspiration to be a good person.

This incident sparked significant backlash and mixed reactions on Twitter. Many users stood by the women, emphasizing that the act of abuse, not its exposure, was the real cause of Çolak's suicide. Meanwhile, some blamed the "ifşa" culture for encouraging false accusations, while others supported abuse victims but argued that legal channels, rather than public exposure, should be pursued (Sheida, 2020).

Although this case was extreme and rare, responses to abuse allegations in Turkey often align with the three reactions mentioned above. The latter perspective, in particular, has gained traction among men-centered movements and anti-feminist narratives, being used as an argument in discussions of the masculinity crisis and, more broadly, the challenges of being a man in 21st-century Turkey. This argument is frequently coupled with discussions about the dating scene, especially the problematization of 'consent,' as well as earlier narratives about the masculinity crisis, such as the perception that men are subjected to worse working conditions in dangerous or physically demanding jobs compared to women.

Returning to the main issue of this section, the concept of a masculinity crisis has been a recognized social phenomenon since the 1990s, with various men-centered movements offering different responses to this perceived problem. For example, Men's Rights Activists (MRAs) have chosen to engage within the legal system, focusing on issues such as false rape accusations and biases in family court systems (Lilly, 2016, p.38). In contrast, the emergence of the Incel movement can be seen as another response to this crisis, albeit one that proposes a far more violent and radical solution. Revisiting Connell's (2005) theory on masculinities, one concept becomes central for understanding the Incel movement, i.e. "protest masculinity".

This concept, originally analyzed in the context of local working-class settings, describes a pattern of masculinity constructed by ethnically marginalized men. It embodies a claim to power typical of regional hegemonic masculinities in Western countries, but lacks the economic resources and institutional authority that underpin these regional and global patterns.

In the case of Incels, however, this protest masculinity takes on a digital form. Men who feel marginalized by societal standards of masculinity construct an alternative masculinity within online spaces. This digital protest masculinity is often characterized by hyper-aggressive and misogynistic attitudes, serving as a means to claim power in a world where these men feel powerless. This digital manifestation of protest masculinity not only reflects the perceived crisis of traditional masculinity but also represents a new, technologically mediated response to it.

Secondly, the integration of the internet into the social movements' scene changed the landscape completely. Zeynep Tüfekçi (2017) explains, regarding the Tahrir Square uprising that resulted in the overthrow of President Hosni Mubarak: "Rising in opposition to crumbling, stifling regimes that tried to control the public discourse, activists were able to overcome censorship, coordinate protests, organize logistics, and spread humor and dissent with an ease that would have seemed miraculous to earlier generations." (p. 22). Drawing inspiration from the Arab Spring, the Occupy movement employed a variety of online platforms, including IRC, Facebook, Twitter, and Meetup, to disseminate information and rally support for the causes advocating on behalf of the 99% (Roy, 2021).

Tüfekçi (2014) posits that the integration of social media into social movements has resulted in 3 positive outcomes for the protestors: "public attention, evading censorship and coordination or logistics" (p. 2). The flow of information not

only circulates within the protest circles but also amplifies their voices to a global audience. Presently, in 2024, most of the coverage regarding the Gaza Strip comes from the TikTok videos of young Palestinian journalists. As Tüfekçi asserts, “Digital technologies provide a means by which many people can reach information that governments would rather deny them.” (p.2).

The internet undeniably plays a crucial and unprecedented role in facilitating social movements, often driving progressive societal change. However, this potential for progress does not apply universally. The typical association of social movements with emancipatory ideologies overlooks reactionary movements, which, in some cases, seek not to advance civil rights but to revert to traditional ideals. For example, terrorist organizations utilize the internet and encrypted communication services not only for organizational purposes but also for spreading their ideological beliefs.

However, the dynamics are not always as clear-cut as "feminism vs. ISIS." The internet, and social media in particular, also serve as hubs for traditionalist, right-leaning, and, in some instances, radical movements such as the Incel community. The erosion of geographical borders, enabled by the collective environment of social media, has facilitated the spread of ideologies across nations. Additionally, the anonymity provided by these platforms has diminished many moral boundaries, creating an environment where actions often have no real-life consequences. This issue will be analyzed in detail in the next chapter.

2.3 The digital nexus of misogyny: Manosphere

Especially in the last decade, with the integration of the internet into social movements, the movement has attracted new members. MRAs, formerly visible on the streets, have largely shifted their focus to social media platforms for

organizational purposes, and the manosphere has become a pivotal space for disseminating these ideas. The manosphere is "an informal cyberspace network of blogs, websites, and forums that concentrate on issues concerning men and masculinity" (Lilly, 2016, p.1). It encompasses various groups such as Pick-Up Artists (PUAs), Men's Rights Activists (MRAs), Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW), and, of course, Incel community.

However, the manosphere transcends its role of a community where men engage with certain ideas or spread them to others; it has evolved into a space that involves direct death threats to certain women, often characterized as 'feminists,' regardless of whether they are public figures or private individuals. Additionally, discussions within the manosphere extend to questioning the legitimacy of rape allegations and engaging in slut-shaming practices. For instance, women who have active sexual lives are derogatorily referred to as 'roasties,' with their vaginas being compared to roast beef. Moreover, there are instances where discussions revolve around the notion that Incels should adopt what they term 'the rape-pill.' This concept entails treating women, referred to as 'femoids,' as subhuman objects whose sole purpose is to obey and bear the children of so-called 'supreme gentlemen' like themselves (Beauchamp, 2019).

Manosphere, and especially Inceldom is very vocal about their crusade against feminism. Needless to say, it is a predominantly male-oriented space, that is unwelcoming to women. They do not have an explicit rule of being a man to be a part of these groups, however, it is stated that: "Those who continuously claim there are as many female incels in the same situation as male incels will receive a warning and then a ban. Most can agree that women can be incel in some rare situations such

as extreme disfigurement, but their numbers do not come close to male incels." (Solon, 2017).

Incels commonly refer to women as 'femoids' and express intense hatred towards them, particularly those perceived to have high standards. Instances of condoning or advocating rape, or dismissing it as a fabricated concept, have been observed within Incel communities. "All women are sluts"; "proof that girls are nothing but trash that use men" and "reasons why women are the embodiment of evil" can also be given as examples to popular posts from Incel subreddits (Solon, 2017).

The manosphere is inherently anti-feminist, characterized either by the perspective that feminism is detrimental to women or by a direct anti-women stance. The former perspective often intertwines with discussions on women's nurturing role, their perceived fragility, and their susceptibility to feminist propaganda; thus, implying that they lack self-awareness and require male guidance in their lives. I argue that this dynamic bears resemblance to the White Savior narrative, echoing similar power dynamics. While the second one is a more overt hostility towards the "woman race".

The first perspective, the anti-feminist one, feeds off the belief that is adopted by many that suggests biologically and consequently, socially, women and men are distinct social entities that serve different societal roles. Men are portrayed as decision-makers, breadwinners, and rational thinkers, responsible for guiding and shepherding women, who are often depicted as emotional nurturers. This perspective sometimes leads to men making decisions on behalf of women, diminishing their agency purportedly for the women's and society's benefit rather than selfish reasons.

These beliefs are not new; they have been around for a long time. However, there is an attempt to reshape them to align to an extent with contemporary societal shifts and current status quo. Within these groups, as homogeneous as they may appear, their perspectives vary along a spectrum. At one end of this spectrum lies the traditionalist viewpoint, which adheres to the older way of thinking: that women should primarily reside in the private sphere, serving society solely as wives and mothers. On the other hand, more moderate views acknowledge women's participation in the workforce, allowing for diverse occupations such as teaching, hospitality, and caregiving which are often associated with nurturing qualities traditionally attributed to women by these individuals.

There is a video interview on YouTube, titled “I’m an Incel. Ask Me Anything.” produced by Jubilee Media, a digital media company that describes itself as a platform that believes discomfort and conflict are essential in fostering human connection, and they are unafraid to explore challenging topics. As of April 2024, this video interview has garnered 6.2 million views and serves as a prominent introduction for many individuals to the Incel phenomenon. In this video that was uploaded in November of 2019, the self-prescribed Incel, Derrick, answers a question about the female leadership positions. He concludes: “… men should be the leaders and women should be the caregivers and the, you know, the loving, the supporting and the teachers in some cases.”. Later, when asked why his method of thought would be the solution to today’s problems, explained as the oppression of disadvantaged groups; he concludes:

> *“*I probably wouldn’t view the things you might view as oppression, as oppression . . . I would view it more as how we treat children that we love. We control them, but we control them lovingly. Not as a slave, not as we’re forcing them to do things against their will. I would view it more as a loving domestic thing in the past. And I would say that if we were to do it in a civilized way, maybe in a more, even a Christian way, even though I’m not

> advocating for a certain religion or ideology, I would assume that women would probably be happier." (Jubilee, 2019)

This perspective is among the more moderate views adopted by the Incel community towards women. Rather than a straightforwardly hateful approach, it infantilizes women by suggesting they need guidance and control, with men assuming a dominant role. It is almost as if it is the "Men's Burden" to save women from their own shortcomings.

However, interestingly, this viewpoint contradicts the perceived victimhood narrative often embraced within the Incel community. I argue that this kind of contradiction is quite common within the subcommunities of the manosphere. Incel individuals fantasize about occupying a higher position in society where they lead, especially women. Simultaneously, they express frustration and discontent about the attributes they perceive themselves to lack, whether physical or social. Similarly, individuals who embrace the ideology of the Blackpill accept that they will never achieve the life they desire and wholeheartedly believe they deserve, all while emphasizing and dwelling on their perceived flaws. This sense of entitlement directly relates to the concept Kaufman (1994) explains, where individuals feel deserving of certain privileges simply by virtue of being born male (p. 59).

The other prevailing perspective within the circles of the manosphere is a direct anti-woman stance, representing a more extreme view compared to others. Rather than operating under the guise of women's savior, this perspective harbors feelings of hatred and seeks retribution. Elliot Rodger's (2014) 137-page manifesto meticulously details his 22 years of life and the ideological path he followed, serving as a precise example of the rabbit holes into which individuals like him fall on the internet. In these pages, he uses the word 'hate' 91 times. This emotion is mostly directed at either beautiful girls or men who are able to have sexual intercourse with

them. He sometimes resented his roommate for witnessing the lonely and unsuccessful life Elliot lived; he envied his little brother, who, even at a young age, was more socially successful and had better physical appearance qualities that girls usually go for. He harbored resentment towards his mother because she didn't marry up to give him the wealth, he believed he deserved. But more than anything, he harbored deep-seated hatred towards women:

> "The only time I did care was when a group of popular Seventh Grade girls started teasing me, which hurt a lot. One of these girls was Monette Moio, a pretty blonde girl who was Ashton's younger sister. She must have thought I was the ultimate loser. I hated her so much, and I will never forget her. I started to hate all girls because of this. I saw them as mean, cruel, and heartless creatures that took pleasure from my suffering." (p. 41)

In his mind, this hatred was reciprocal between him and girls, and eventually extended to women. He harbored intense animosity towards even a young girl like Monette Moio at age 10, despite her father later explaining that she barely remembered Elliot. This hatred persisted even after 10 years. In his eyes, he saw himself as the "intelligent gentleman" (p. 82); however, he believed that society failed to provide him with what he deserved and desired the most: a woman. Ultimately, his conclusion was that women must have had something inherently wrong with them:

> "The ultimate evil behind sexuality is the human female. They are the main instigators of sex. They control which men get it and which men don't. Women are flawed creatures, and my mistreatment at their hands has made me realize this sad truth. There is something very twisted and wrong with the way their brains are wired. They think like beasts, and in truth, they are beasts. Women are incapable of having morals or thinking rationally. They are completely controlled by their depraved emotions and vile sexual impulses. Because of this, the men who do get to experience the pleasures of sex and the privilege of breeding are the men who women are sexually attracted to... the stupid, degenerate, obnoxious men. I have observed this all my life. The most beautiful of women choose to mate with the most brutal of men, instead of magnificent gentlemen like myself.
> Women should not have the right to choose who to mate and breed with. That decision should be made for them by rational men of intelligence. If women continue to have rights, they will only hinder the advancement of the human

> race by breeding with degenerate men and creating stupid, degenerate offspring. This will cause humanity to become even more depraved with each generation. Women have more power in human society than they deserve, all because of sex. There is no creature more evil and depraved than the human female.
> Women are like a plague. They don't deserve to have any rights. Their wickedness must be contained in order prevent future generations from falling to degeneracy. Women are vicious, evil, barbaric animals, and they need to be treated as such." (p. 136).

Although lengthy, this quote is of significant importance. Unlike the first perspective, which views women as weak and in need of rescue, Rodger perceived them as holding all the power in the world. He believed women controlled everything that mattered and had the ability to make his life a living hell. In his view, women, due to the way their brains were "wired" and their inherent corruption, used this power to perpetrate injustice and create feelings of loneliness and anger in individuals like himself. Furthermore, he desired a return to a social order reminiscent of older days in which women's agency was restricted.

Before the infamous 2014 Isla Vista Shooting, Elliot Rodger began to descend into violent behavior by targeting couples he couldn't bear to see together. He would express his frustration by throwing liquids like iced tea at these couples, particularly those consisting of a non-White, athletic, handsome man paired with a beautiful, blond, White woman. One day, unable to control himself, he poured his drink on a happy couple and then fled the scene. This incident, combined with his realization that he could act out in this manner and experience a sense of revenge, marked the beginning of his slide into violent acts and became a pivotal moment leading up to what he referred to as his masterful plan: The Day of Retribution.

Combined with tendencies towards violence, an overtly more hateful stance, and a desire to return to old ways, this particular perspective is more prevalent among the politically extreme circles of the manosphere and the pioneers of such

movements who engage in violent acts like mass shootings, rape threats and doxing – “the release of personal information such as their (victims’) home addresses and phone numbers” (Hawley, 2015, p.105)

Having examined the history of men-related social movements, their common grounds, and the contemporary landscape they inhabit, a comprehensive picture of the status quo emerges. The Incel movement and its broader sociopolitical culture have evolved primarily as a reaction to feminism. However, this explanation alone does not capture the unique nature of the current state of affairs. Reactionary men’s movements in the US date back to the 1960s, yet today's phenomena, both in the severity of their threats and the number of individuals they influence, are unprecedented. This chapter's latter part will focus on this “new phase” of the anti-feminist movement, driven by the perceived "masculinity crisis," which has escalated both in its scope and impact.

2.4 New phase of anti-feminist movement: through the case of Turkey

When studying anonymous digital communities, the lack of demographic data presents a significant challenge, particularly in establishing the context and focus of the research. Thus far, the emphasis has been on the global context, with particular attention to the US. This focus is justified, as the Incel identity, while not bound by racial or national restrictions, originates from American culture. This is evident in both the language used and the individuals who are often regarded as leaders or heroes of the movement, such as Elliot Rodger and Alek Minassian, who took real-life actions.

The Incel phenomenon is a direct product of the internet, and the global interconnectedness fostered by internet culture results in this phenomenon echoing

throughout the entire digital ecosystem, including the Turkish internet scene. For the purpose of this thesis, to be able to detect and analyze this “new phase” of the anti-feminist movements, it is now beneficial to shift our perspective to the Turkish context, where unique cultural and societal dynamics shape the manifestation of these movements.

To analyze the social implications of being a woman in Turkey, it's essential to address two distinct currents. First, there is a deep-rooted misogynistic or, at the very least, anti-feminist discourse embedded within the culture. Second, an emerging wave of anti-women rhetoric has surfaced, particularly on social media platforms. This section will explore both aspects, highlighting the differences between these newer forms of anti-women discourse and the traditionalist views on women's issues. While the role of political narratives is also significant, that topic will be addressed within the context of gender-based violence in Chapter 4.

Masculine and feminine gender stereotypes encompass wide-ranging cultural norms that dictate the expected characteristics, traits, and behaviors of men and women. These stereotypes function to explain, justify, and rationalize the sex-based divisions of labor within society (Hoffman & Hurst, 1990). There are categories to these stereotypes that lead to different societal outcomes. Descriptive stereotypes function as "cognitive-organizational divisions" that outline the characteristics each gender is believed to possess, while prescriptive stereotypes define the roles and behaviors that each gender is expected to follow (Burgess & Borgida, 1999, p.667).

Numerous gender stereotypes are deeply embedded in Turkish culture, evident in everyday practices, language, social codes, and various other aspects of life. As a woman who grew up within this culture and does not typically conform to

gender stereotypes, I still find myself unconsciously adhering to certain beliefs and standards.

A core social concept in the Turkish community is “namus.” While it roughly translates to "honor," it also has distinct sexual implications tied directly to female virginity and sexual purity (Sakallı-Uğurlu & Akbaş, 2013, p.78). In the hands of an oppressor, it can become a tool for control, oppression, and even violation of a woman. It can dictate how a woman should walk, talk, and laugh; what she can wear, who she can talk to, where she can go, and many other decisions that should originally be up to the individual herself.

Consequently, marriage plays a significant role in defining a woman’s honor, or "namus" (Sakallı-Uğurlu et al., 2021, p. 214) and grants her status in society, often as a wife or, more preferably, as a mother; in a sense, the responsibility of a woman’s honor transfers from her father to her husband. Therefore, a distinct dynamic is at play when it comes to women’s sexual life and freedom in Turkish culture compared to the North American culture that gave rise to the Incel community. While premarital sex can be viewed acceptable for men, for most women, it can be stigmatizing (Sakallı-Uğurlu & Glick, 2003, p. 296). Therefore, a distinct dynamic is at play when it comes to women’s sexual life and freedom in Turkish culture compared to the North American culture that gave rise to the Incel community.

Moving on to the second aspect, there is a rising wave of anti-gender and anti-feminist sentiment in Turkey, particularly noticeable on social media. The Anti-Gender Movement (AGM) is a transnational, discourse-driven movement that contests the concept of gender as a social, academic, and political construct (Kancı et al., 2023, p. 882). The movement argues that gender equality and its activism are detrimental to cultural and religious codes. In addition to its anti-feminist stance, it is

also a homophobic and transphobic movement, portraying feminist and LGBTQI+ activism as threats to the unity of the family.

This movement resonates both in official statements from the government and within reactionary circles of Turkish society. “This nation's family structure is strong; there will be no LGBT individuals from this nation” (BBC, 2023) and “You know these feminists and all. You (they) have no connection to our civilization, our beliefs, or our religion” (Bianet, 2015) are among the official statements made by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Additionally, he accused the participants of the 2019 Women’s March of deliberately planning the event to coincide with the call to prayer, framing it as an attack on religion, the nation, and the flag (BBC, 2019).

As for the discourses within reactionary circles, predominantly conveyed on social media, they closely mirror the official narratives, drawing heavily on traditional values rooted in Turkish culture. These narratives are further fueled by “the rise of nationalism, economic and social insecurities caused by neoliberal economic policies, polarization through far-right ideologies, and patriarchal biopolitics” (Kancı et al., 2023, p.884). Undoubtedly, these factors play a significant role in facilitating various reactionary movements, both in Turkey and globally. However, when focusing on the Incel movement and its manifestation in Turkey, specifically the TurkIncel community, the definition of a reactionary movement falls short; consequently, a more detailed explanation is required beyond the listed factors.

2.5 A revanchist masculinist movement: TurkIncel community

To understand the TurkIncel movement, looking at how it came to be is a necessary step. However, tracking the exact chronology of this digital entity is challenging for two main reasons. First, although recent years have seen this ideology spread into the

mainstream— with the term "incel" even becoming an insult among Turkish youth— the community likely emerged in private, closed groups. Second, much of the community's content violates social media platforms' guidelines, leading to the frequent deletion of their digital activity and suspension of their accounts. For example, their subreddit, r/TurkIncel, was banned by Reddit in November 2020.

The early days of the TurkIncel community can be traced back to November 2018, through a post on the popular Turkish forum "donanımhaber," which announced the opening of the TurkIncel Discord channel. This post received 40 comments, was favorited by 3 people, and had 14,139 views as of the writing of this thesis. The post reads much like an advertisement, beginning with:

> "Are you unattractive? Have you reached your 20s or 30s and still haven't been able to form a proper relationship with a girl? Has there not been a single girl who liked you? Then this is the place for you."

The text suggests that this post was made before the TurkIncel subreddit was even established, as indicated by the author's hope that more communities would be created on other platforms to "fight for such injustice." The post continues with a short test to assess whether the reader belongs in the community, followed by a discussion of the "big lies" and arguments told to Incels by women and men who are successful at dating. At this stage, the content was a direct translation rather than an adaptation, explaining terms such as "coping" or "rotting."

In July 2020, a TurkIncel forum was established on turkincel.boards.net, branding itself as "the place where everything about being an Incel and Inceldom is shared." Like the Discord channel, this forum is a closed community with strict rules, including a zero-tolerance policy against "women/girls" and "LGBT+" individuals. The forum explicitly warns that if such individuals are detected, they will face an immediate IP ban. In November 2020, the popular subreddit r/TurkIncel was banned

by Reddit for violating community guidelines, marking a pivotal moment in the spread of the TurkIncel ideology. As a result, a significant portion of the community migrated to X, leading to the mainstream dissemination of this thought system—an issue that will be explored in the next chapter.

In terms of their other characteristics, similar to other global manifestations of the Incel movement, there is no demographic data available for the TurkIncel community, aside from their self-declared male identity. Through my digital observation, I categorize two types of TurkIncel identity: the support-seekers and the retribution-seekers.

The support-seekers' digital activity focuses more on the actual struggle of dating, their inability to find romantic partners, and seeking or giving advice. Common topics include discussions like "looks or height?" The hope of eventually leaving this community can often be observed, with interactions within the group mostly revolving around self-help, camaraderie, 'looksmaxxing' (efforts to improve one's appearance), and 'moneymaxxing' (efforts to improve one's financial status).

The retribution-seekers, on the other hand, are more ideologically driven, often identifying more strongly with the movement's core beliefs. Their content frequently includes racist, anti-immigrant, and aggressive sentiments. This group is more difficult to observe in the digital landscape due to frequent account suspensions. Although both groups are rooted in the same misoginistic worldview, this categorization mainly reflects the varying levels of extremity within the TurkIncel community, and more importantly represents one aspect of the community that differentiates itself from the already existing anti-women tendencies.

Deniz Kandiyoti (2016) in her examination of the politics of gender in Turkey, investigates the initiative to enforce conservative family values, which

effectively defines women primarily through their roles as mothers and wives (p.105). She notes that as the secure position and authority of patriarchy face challenges, the state has responded by increasing coercion and employing various ideological mechanisms to maintain its dominance (p.210). Kandiyoti labels this phenomenon as “masculinist restoration” (p.209). She further asserts that heightened violence does not stem from the unquestioned subordination of women and an entrenched patriarchy, but rather from a masculinity in crisis that takes extreme measures to reinforce male prerogatives (p.209). This observation is particularly noteworthy, as it was made in 2016 in reference to the policies of the AKP government, yet it remains highly relevant to the current surge of anti-gender, anti-feminist, and, anti-women movements, especially within the digital realm.

At this point it is crucial to clarify the distinction made at the beginning of this section between reactionary and revanchist movements. Rory McVeigh (2009) defines right-wing movements as “a social movement that acts on behalf of relatively advantaged groups with the goal of preserving, restoring, and expanding the rights and privileges of its members and constituents” (p.32). With a few adjustments, this definition fits well with reactionary-right movements. Additionally, these movements are “defined by opposition” and “tend to retreat into justifications instead of moving forward through provocations” (Halberstam, 2012, p.167). Such movements are typically fueled by emotions such as resentment, frustration, and grievances.

Although this definition suffices to explain some part of the ideological motivation of the Incel community, it falls short in capturing the full extent of its sentiment and action capacity. Neil Smith (1998) while examining urban space, employs the concept of revanchism as a social description. “Revanche,” the French word for revenge, was a fundamental sentiment of a social movement in late-19th

century France. The revanchists organized out of a sense of revenge and reacted strongly against both the working class and the discredited loyalty (p. 43). He further continues: “It was a right-wing movement built on populist nationalism and devoted to a vengeful and reactionary retaking of the country.” (p. 43).

While defining the Incel movement, the emphasis on the "need for retribution" is crucial. The anti-feminist movement in Turkey is indeed a reactionary-right movement that opposes gender equality, using the sacred family discourse as a justification for protecting against feminism, and it organizes and takes action both online and offline. One of the most fundamental differences between the TurkIncel movement and the already existing anti-gender cultural structures or anti-feminist movements stems from this need for retribution and revenge. They not only react to the advances of feminism and the current status quo but are also angry about it, seeking revenge against those they deem responsible, usually women.

Elliot Rodger, the hERo of the Incel movement, executed the “Day of Retribution” with the same sentiments with the TurkIncels who uses organized cyber-attacks on women on X, to take revenge. One of the interviews I have conducted that focused on the methods of the TurkIncel movement was with Helin (a nickname for privacy reasons). Helin, in her 30s, has been living abroad for a couple of years, where she has built a successful career. She describes her use of the X platform as a form of activism. By sharing her experiences related to her career, education, and even her regular gym visits, she aims to inspire her younger followers, who often express that her tweets motivate them to strive for more. Recently, for example, Helin has focused on raising awareness about the HPV vaccination. She aims to clarify misconceptions and encourages younger girls to consider getting vaccinated.

During our interview, she discussed the prevalence of "slut-shaming" she observes on X. She noted that members of the TurkIncel community employ specific tactics to undermine women's confidence. These tactics include attributing women's behaviors to a lack of a father figure or, when no other avenue for attack is available, making derogatory comments about women's sexual organs. These speculations are intended to make young women feel insecure about their bodies. Helin emphasized the detrimental impact such behavior can have on young girls, contributing to their insecurities and perpetuating harmful stereotypes.

She explains that sharing details about her daily life and making assumptions about men or women, combined with her efforts to correct the problematic views of certain men's groups, made her a target. The responses she received often involved insults about her appearance, clothing, and any other personal details she posted. She described these insults as "brutal," distinct from the everyday misogyny she faces as a woman in the workplace or on the street.

A significant turning point occurred, in January of 2023, when she quoted a tweet from an account she describes as "a real Incel lord" and "the leader of these communities," an anonymous user named Bekir Şükrü Kılınç, who is no longer active on X. His online persona was built around advising men to become successful, wealthy, and strong in order to oppress women. Helin quoted one of his tweets, threatening to expose his hypocrisy, which ultimately led to him deactivating his account. This backlash, she notes, stemmed from their inability to accept their leader's departure from the platform, particularly "because of a woman." Helin asserts that this was perceived by them as a "loss against women."

Through the little details she shared on X over the years, such as her name, country of residence, and profession, they were able to locate her LinkedIn profile

and began sending messages to her employer. Unfortunately, she was forced to deactivate her LinkedIn account due to the harassment. Later, Helin discovered that the community, through their Discord chats, was attempting to identify a member living in the same country as her, possibly with the intent to cause her physical harm. When asked about the TurkIncel movement specifically, Helin concluded:

> “Normally, we certainly encounter misogyny and mansplaining in work environments, but I have to say that I saw such brutally aggressive and unrestrained attacks on the internet.”

Helin further explained that, at first, she tried to understand these men, hoping they might eventually abandon these beliefs. However, after the attacks she endured and the hatred she observed on X, her perspective changed:

> “I no longer ask questions like, "Are these people unloved?" or "Do these people need help?" I'm no longer at a point where I can empathize with them, truly. Because this extreme, radical hatred is something I can neither empathize with nor want to try to understand.”

Helin's experience exemplifies the severe and targeted nature of harassment faced by women who engage in online discourse, particularly when challenging misogynistic viewpoints. Her story underscores the real-world consequences of online harassment, from professional disruptions to genuine fears for personal safety. Moreover, it highlights the radicalization process within these online communities, where perceived challenges to their ideology – especially from women – are met with coordinated and escalating attacks. This pattern of behavior not only aims to silence women's voices but also reinforces the echo chamber effect within these communities, further entrenching their extremist views. As we move forward in our analysis, it becomes clear that addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach, considering both the digital landscape and the broader societal contexts that enable such behaviors.

2.6 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I examined the Incel phenomenon, with a particular focus on the TurkIncel movement, within the broader context of gender relations and the masculinity crisis. Connell (2005) posits that gender, as a social structure, is both shaped by history and a shaper of history (p. 81). As feminist activism and gender equality efforts have progressed, societal norms and power dynamics have shifted, leading to tangible consequences. These shifts have not only redefined gender roles but also ignited new social tensions. During periods of crisis, especially when there is a "historic collapse of the legitimacy of patriarchal power" through movements advocating for women's emancipation, masculinity often reacts defensively (p. 85).

Historically, men-related movements have offered various responses to the perceived crisis of masculinity. For instance, Men's Rights Activism has sought to address perceived social and economic disadvantages faced by men through legal channels (ADL, 2024). Similarly, the mythopoetic men's movement focused on guiding men through initiation into manhood, emphasizing personal growth and education (Fox et al., 2004, p.106). In stark contrast, the Incel movement has adopted a more adversarial approach, rooted not in improving men's circumstances but in retaliating against women, who are viewed as the primary cause of their grievances.

The TurkIncel movement, drawing from the broader Incel ideology, incorporates not only the specific jargon, memes, and humor of the Incel subculture but also the reactionary response that the global Incel movement has articulated in response to the masculinity crisis. While misogynistic beliefs and attitudes towards women are ingrained in many patriarchal societies, including Turkish culture, the TurkIncel movement distinguishes itself through its revanchist masculinist stance. This stance is particularly evident in the movement's proposed solutions to the

perceived masculinity crisis. The TurkIncel community's digital presence and its ties to violence further underscore this revanchist nature, themes that will be explored in greater detail in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 3

DIGITAL ASPECT – DIGITAL BREEDING GROUNDS: HOW ONLINE PLATFORMS FOSTER THE GLOBAL SPREAD OF INCEL IDEOLOGY

The internet has become a staple of modern life, an extension of ourselves, a fundamental appendage. It is where we connect with others, stay informed, do shopping, work remotely, earn money, lose money, earn new identities, lose parts of ourselves, do almost everything a social being is capable of. As a product of human society, the internet exerts a profound influence on its borders, perpetually shaping and reshaping both its fabric and in return, the societal dynamics.

With the popularization of the internet, especially since the 2000s, people started to use it to seek companionship, a sense of belonging or emotional support in places other than the physical world, i.e., social media, or social websites. These digital domains serve as hubs for the emergence of micro-communities and subcultures, defined as groups possessing distinct values, norms, traditions, and rituals that diverge from those prevalent in the overarching cultural milieu (Holt et al., 2017). Their emergence often represents a response to or divergence from the normative values adopted by broader segments of society.

Furthermore, the internet not only fosters individual connections but also acts as a powerful catalyst for collective action, giving rise to various social movements. The Incel movement is a prime example of a movement that would not exist without the internet. The anonymity and global interconnectivity provided by social media enable the dissemination of extreme beliefs. For many Incels, the relationships formed through online platforms often serve as their primary means of connection, particularly due to their self-described outsider status. This situation is further

compounded by the fact that their real-world social networks may not facilitate connections to radical movements (Holt et al., 2017). Incels themselves express that they utilize social media platforms to find allies, seek comfort, and establish a sense of belonging (Byerly, 2020).

Moreover, anonymity supports a no-face, no-consequences principle, allowing users to voice extreme beliefs and harass others without facing real-world repercussions. Given the anger fueled by the masculinity crisis explored in the previous chapter, social media sites become an outlet for Incel individuals to vent their frustrations, often targeting women without facing real-life consequences.

In the previous chapter, I analyzed the Incel Movement within the broader context of gender discussions. Inceldom, as a social phenomenon, comprises various components. While gender plays a dominant role, its existence as a digital entity is equally fundamental. Therefore, this chapter will focus on the digital environment from which the Incel Movement emerged and continues to thrive. Over the last decade, the digital public sphere has undergone significant transformations, creating a space that enables the rapid spread of extreme beliefs, unhindered by geographical boundaries, while simultaneously fueling a trend of digital radicalization.

This chapter will begin by identifying these changes, providing a summary of how we arrived at the current state, and then proceed to identify the digital factors that differentiate the Incel Movement from traditional anti-feminist movements. The analysis in this chapter draws upon data collected through digital ethnographic observation, primarily conducted on X (formerly Twitter). Employing discourse analysis on this dataset, this research provides an in-depth examination of the TurkIncel community, situating it within the broader context of Turkish society and the country's digital landscape. This methodological approach allows for a nuanced

understanding of how the digital environment shapes and perpetuates Incel ideology in the Turkish context.

3.1 A broad overview of how we got where we got

Over the past decade, the internet has undergone profound transformations, with the 2016 U.S. elections serving as a pivotal moment in recognizing the real-world influence of social media on political and social dynamics (Hendricks & Schill, 2017; Kenski & Conway, 2016; Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Groshek & Koc-Michalska, 2017). The Cambridge Analytica scandal, where a consulting firm illicitly collected millions of Facebook profiles to manipulate voting behavior, highlighted the potential of social media to shape political outcomes (CAO, 2018). This period was also marked by intense discussions about disinformation and fake news—defined by Bovet and Makse (2019) as "fabricated information that disseminates deceptive content, or grossly distorts actual news reports, shared on social media platforms" (p. 2). These developments raised critical questions about the governance of social media, the responsibilities of platform owners, and the tangible impacts of social media control on society.

This transformation of the digital landscape has cultivated an environment that not only shapes social and political discourse but also facilitates the spread of extreme beliefs. Within this context, two pivotal developments in the last decade have further impacted the nature of digital spaces. The first is the forced departure of extreme groups from platforms like Reddit and 4chan, which were originally primary hubs for such movements. The second is Elon Musk's acquisition of Twitter and the subsequent changes he implemented, which have altered the dynamics of the platform, creating a more fertile ground for these movements to grow.

Following a chronological approach, I will begin by discussing the forced departure of these groups from Reddit and 4chan, which played a crucial role in driving their migration to other platforms. As of February 2024, Reddit stands as the 7th most visited website globally with over 7 billion monthly visitors. Operating on a principle of inclusivity, the site hosts thousands of subreddits which are topical communities centered around diverse topics ranging from relationship advice to sports, to politics. Within these communities, users have the freedom to share a plethora of content including text, photographs, videos, and memes, or simply observe without active participation. Additionally, they can express their opinions by upvoting or downvoting content posted by other fellow Redditors.

However, it also became one of the most popular platforms amongst the alt-right community. The alt-right, also known as Alternative Right, is defined by the Southern Poverty Law Center as follows: "is a set of far-right ideologies, groups and individuals whose core belief is that "white identity" is under attack by multicultural forces using "political correctness" and "social justice" to undermine white people and "their" civilization."

As evident in this description, the ideology revolves around white identity and is often associated with Christianism, antisemitism, and politically conservative beliefs. As both a community and a movement, its aim is to return to traditional values and the traditional Western civilization. The alt-right is actively involved in the US political scene, with many of its policy demands and action plans focusing on issues of immigration, borders, and affirmative action.

The alt-right ideology extends beyond U.S. politics, deeply intertwining with internet culture, where it influences and is influenced by online communities. This movement is not merely a political or ideological stance but functions as a social

movement with its own lifestyle, philosophies, and guiding principles. A central element of the alt-right's online presence is its use of meme culture, which serves as a powerful tool for spreading its ideas and recruiting new members. The creation and dissemination of memes allow the alt-right to package its messages in ways that are accessible and appealing, especially to younger, internet-savvy audiences.

Inceldom, as part of the broader alt-right movement, reflects this dynamic, interacting with other extreme groups that share racist, homophobic, misogynistic, and generally anti-emancipatory stances. These groups often collaborate or overlap in their beliefs and strategies, reinforcing one another's narratives and contributing to a more cohesive and dangerous subculture. The shared use of internet platforms for organizing, disseminating propaganda, and recruiting highlights the deeply ingrained nature of these ideologies within the digital landscape.

Until 2017, r/Incels was one of the primary online forums where men gathered to express anger and resentment towards women and so-called "alphas." However, in 2017, Reddit updated its policies to prohibit content that "encourages, glorifies, incites or calls for violence or physical harm against any individual or group of people" (Solon, 2017). As a result, r/Incels was among the subreddits that were banned under these new regulations. This move marked a significant effort by Reddit to curb the spread of hate speech and violent ideologies on its platform.

Similarly, in 2020, r/TurkIncels, a subreddit dedicated to the Turkish Incel community, faced the same fate as r/Incels and was banned from Reddit. Today, only Incel-related subreddits promoting a departure from the ideology or dedicated to critiquing or mocking Incel content, such as r/IncelExit, r/IncelTears, and r/IncelSolutions, are permitted. As of 2024, when you visit r/TheRedPill, you are

welcomed by a system note that states the community is quarantined due to offensive content.

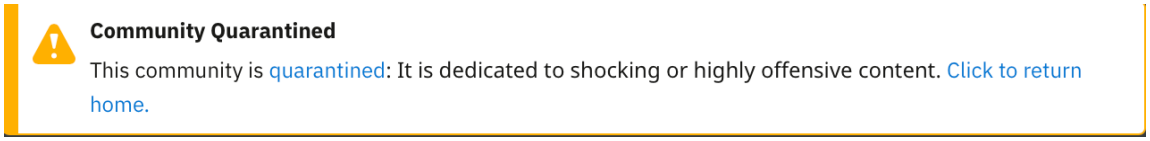


Figure 1. Reddit's community quarantine notice

Following the crackdown, the Incel community exhibited two distinct reactions. Some members retreated into closed, exclusive communities, requiring an Incel identity statement for entry, often with referrals from existing members. These communities predominantly rely on Discord, a social platform enabling communication via text, video, and voice calls. Conversely, others shifted their content to X, establishing it as the primary platform for disseminating and showcasing Incel-related content.

As memes and other online communication methods gained traction, the lexicon of Incels permeated mainstream discourse, attracting increased attention to the community. Despite the typically anonymous nature of Incel users, several accounts with substantial followings have emerged on X, dedicated to propagating Incel ideology.

This brings us to the second event: the acquisition of Twitter by Elon Musk. While subject to ridicule by left-leaning internet users, Musk remains a central figure in right leaning communities, and especially popular with a young male audience. His familiarity with internet culture and ability to speak the language of these subcommunities have undoubtedly contributed to his widespread appeal.

However, the incident that truly cemented his status among the broader internet communities was the acquisition of Twitter. The first indication of his interest in Twitter came coupled with his desire of a reduced moderation on the platform, with particular emphasis on the principles of free speech. In a letter addressed to the chairman of Twitter, Bret Taylor, Musk explained: “I invested in Twitter as I believe in its potential to be the platform for free speech around the globe, and I believe free speech is a societal imperative for a functioning democracy.” From that point onward, and even prior to it, Musk consistently engaged in discussions and used his Twitter platform to address the topic of free speech.

His dedication, and perhaps even fixation[8], on free speech has garnered significant support and respect from right-wing circles, particularly by highlighting instances where Twitter and/or Facebook have made executive decisions to suspend accounts or remove content. On January 8, 2021, after the January 6 Capitol Riots, Twitter indefinitely suspended the account of former United States President Donald Trump, citing "the risk of further incitement of violence." Trump retaliated with a statement denouncing Twitter as "an enemy of free speech" (Arbel, 2021). Subsequently, after his acquisition of Twitter in November 2022, Musk conducted an online poll querying the public's opinion on whether Trump's account should be reinstated. With a participation of 15 million votes and a 51.8% in favor rate, the executive decision was made.

Shifting the focus to Turkey, in August 2024, the Turkish Information and Communication Technologies Authority announced the blocking of Instagram, a

[8] While the concept of free speech is often invoked as a fundamental democratic principle, scholars argue that the obsession with absolute free speech, particularly in online spaces, can be problematic. This fixation often overlooks the complex relationship between free speech and hate speech, and how unmoderated platforms can become breeding grounds for extremism and discrimination (Gelber, 2019; Gorwa, 2019).

widely used social media platform in Turkey. The blockage was officially justified as a protest against the “double standard applied by social media service providers” (Ergocun, 2024). This decision followed Instagram’s removal of a post by Turkish Communications Director Fahrettin Altun, which expressed condolences for the passing of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh—an action Altun claimed was taken “without citing any policy violations.”

The official narrative portrayed the blockage as a defense of freedom of speech and a stance against censorship. However, the nine-day interruption led to an estimated economic loss of around 57 million U.S. dollars, primarily due to disruptions in e-commerce (Sellars, 2024). The timing of the ban also coincided with heated debates over a controversial proposal to amend the animal protection law, which had ignited significant public outcry regarding the roundup of stray animals. Since Instagram is a major platform for animal rights activism in Turkey, this ban likely impeded these advocacy efforts. Moreover, without a clear justification, the ban infringed upon rights to freedom of expression and access to information (Brown, 2024).

In fact, this was not the first instance of the Turkish government exercising control over access to digital platforms. In 2007, the Turkish parliament passed a law allowing courts to block websites if there was "sufficient suspicion" that certain crimes had been committed, including child pornography, gambling, prostitution, and "crimes against Atatürk" (BBC News, 2010).

One of the most prominent applications of this law occurred when YouTube was blocked in 2007, a ban that lasted two years after a video was posted that was deemed insulting to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (Letsch, 2014). Although the ban was lifted, a similar situation arose in 2014 when YouTube was again blocked for two

months, coinciding with a ban on Twitter. This action followed then-Prime Minister Erdoğan's threat to "root out" Twitter after users posted voice recordings and documents purportedly exposing corruption within his inner circle (Rawlinson, 2014).

In 2017, Wikipedia became the next target, with access to the site being blocked after the online encyclopedia refused to remove articles alleging that Turkey's government had cooperated with the so-called Islamic State (IS) and al-Qaeda in Syria (BBC News, 2020). This ban continued for almost three years, further demonstrating the Turkish government's willingness to control access to digital information that challenges its narrative or authority.

In today's social landscape, platforms such as Twitter, Instagram and other social media sites serve as virtual public squares, where individuals gather, share information, organize, persuade others, shape opinions, and engage in a multitude of social and political activities. Therefore, the moderation of these platforms and the control over them holds immense importance, akin to the governance of physical public spaces. As much as the internet becomes a tool at the hands of the ordinary people, it is also a tool for controlling and governing the public.

First articulated by Michel Foucault, the notion of "governmentality" encompasses a combination of "institutions, procedures, analyses, and reflections, the calculations and tactics" that aim to exercise a "specific albeit complex form of power" with the population as its target (2006, p. 142). This framework extends beyond traditional state structures, incorporating broader mechanisms as “modes of action”. Simply put, governance entails "structuring the potential field of action of others" (Foucault, 1983, p. 221). However, in the contemporary era, with the advent

of digital technologies, we may have transcended the traditional mechanisms of governmentality into a new epoch characterized by 'digital governmentality'.

Digital governmentality refers to the application of digital technologies, data analytics, and algorithmic governance to oversee, regulate, and shape the behaviors of individuals and populations (Badouard et al., 2016). This modern governance framework expands governmental authority into the digital domain through various platforms, surveillance mechanisms, and data-driven decision-making processes. A significant illustration of its influence on political behavior is the Cambridge Analytica scandal, in which a consulting firm collected millions of Facebook profiles to exploit individual vulnerabilities and manipulate voting preferences (Cao, 2018).

Moreover, similar, but rather subtle, forms of influence can be observed on platforms like X and Instagram, where the governance of content dissemination plays a pivotal role in determining which ideas and beliefs align with Community Guidelines and which do not. The accessibility of knowledge and information is essential to the formation of individuals' ideologies, and the control over this access can lead to substantial real-world consequences. This issue is likely to become a focal point for academic inquiry in the coming decade, particularly in discussions about prevention strategies for radical digital communities, including the Incel community.

3.2 Digital radicalization of youth

Before delving deeper into the digital landscape of Turkey, it is important to revisit a topic briefly discussed in the previous chapter: the integration of the internet into social movements' repertoires. The previous chapter focused on how the internet became a tool for social movements and how they benefited from new strategies

made possible by the internet, drawing primarily from literature on emancipatory movements. However, there is also extensive literature on the role the internet plays in the radicalization of individuals, particularly youth (Geeraerts, 2012; Koehler, 2014; Engelkes, 2017; Holt, et al., 2017; Muxel, 2020).

The digital radicalization of youth has become a growing concern for researchers, policymakers, and societies worldwide. As young people spend more time online, they become increasingly susceptible to extremist ideologies and recruitment strategies that proliferate in digital spaces. This phenomenon is particularly alarming given that adolescents and young adults are often in a crucial stage of identity formation, making them more vulnerable to radical influences (Pauwels et al., 2014, p.52).

Social media platforms play a significant role in this process. These digital environments create echo chambers—spaces where individuals find their ideas supported and echoed by like-minded people (Koehler, p.124). Within these echo chambers, youth can easily connect with peers who share similar beliefs, reinforcing their views and gradually isolating them from alternative perspectives. Moreover, certain beliefs that might be considered more moderate, such as everyday misogyny, homophobia and transphobia can serve as gateways to more extreme ideologies. This phenomenon has been specifically studied in relation to the overlap between the manosphere and the alt-right (Mamié et al., 2021, p.145).

The deliberate tailoring of extremist groups' messaging and recruitment strategies to specifically appeal to youth has also been a significant factor in the digital radicalization of the younger generation (Bhui & Ibrahim, 2013, p. 223). These groups often exploit common adolescent struggles such as feelings of alienation, the search for identity, and the desire for purpose. By offering simplistic

explanations for complex social issues and a strong sense of belonging, they can attract vulnerable young people seeking answers and community, presenting a solution to the outsider status common among individuals who inhabit digital platforms such as Reddit and 4Chan.

Moreover, the internet's ability to provide anonymity and distance from real-world consequences can also contribute to the radicalization process. Young people may feel more emboldened to express extreme views or engage with radical content online than they would in face-to-face interactions. This digital “disinhibition effect” can accelerate the adoption of extremist ideologies (Suler, 2004, p.321).

Additionally, the vast array of multimedia content available online—including professionally produced videos, meme culture, and online games with extremist themes—can make radical ideologies more engaging and accessible to young audiences (Valentini, et al., 2020, p.9). This content often glorifies violence or presents biased historical narratives, shaping young people's perceptions of social and political issues.

While the internet facilitates radicalization, it is rarely the sole cause. Offline factors such as personal experiences, socioeconomic conditions, and real-world social networks still play crucial roles. The internet often acts as a catalyst, accelerating and intensifying radicalization processes that may have roots in offline experiences (Gill et al., 2017, p.114).

As we turn our attention to the Turkish context, it becomes crucial to consider how these global trends in youth radicalization manifest within the country's unique social, political, and cultural landscape. Turkey's large youth population, coupled with its complex political history and position at the crossroads of diverse ideologies, makes it a particularly interesting case study in the exploration of digital

radicalization processes and their implications for social movements and political discourse.

3.3 Digital landscape of Turkey

After exploring the current state of the digital landscape as it pertains to digital governmentality and radicalization, we can now delve deeper into the Turkish digital scene, particularly social media platforms, which have been significantly impacted by the two key events discussed in the previous section. Following the ban of the r/TurkIncels subreddit, a considerable portion of that community migrated their content to Twitter. This transition marked my initial exposure to the Incel phenomenon four years ago. Although I limited my data collection for this thesis, I developed several hypotheses and perspectives about the community during that time. Consequently, I observed a notable increase in the spread of Incel ideology and similar rhetoric, especially after Twitter's rebranding as X..

Particularly in recent years, anti-immigration rhetoric has gained momentum among Turkish X users, especially in the aftermath of the earthquake that struck the South-Eastern region in February 2023. Figures like Ümit Özdağ, the founder and leader of the Victory Party, who can be described as right-wing to far-right, particularly with an emphasis on ultranationalist agendas such as the immigration issue, played a prominent role in fueling this sentiment. Through provocative tweets and public statements, these figures helped popularize the anti-immigration stance.

The Turkish digital reactionary community reflects the broader global reactionary right-wing movement, although with distinctive adaptations. Its members espouse anti-feminist and anti-immigration views, often accompanied by daily instances of sexism and racism. While the Christian rhetoric prevalent in the global

alt-right transforms into a Muslim rhetoric within the Turkish context, it's important to note the presence of agnostic or non-Muslim TurkIncels, similar to their counterparts in the USA. Nevertheless, a significant fraction of the Turkish Red Pill community either advocates for or exhibits alignment with Sharia rule.

There is a growing trend of reposting content primarily from TikTok and Instagram reels onto X[9]. While the apparent goal is to garner attention, likes, and retweets, there appears to be an underlying agenda to provoke others to attack the original content creator. This practice typically targets women leading secular lives or individuals labeled as "woke" or “Western wannabes”. Although the rhetoric may vary, the latest trend as of 2024 involves commenting on such content with the phrase "I'm going back to my cave," implying a rejection of modernity in favor of traditional beliefs. However, other than the implicit nod to conservative moral values, all of these contribute to the normalization of targeting individuals and make it easier for more radical views to blend in within the wider discourse.

An influential figure in the reactionary-right digital circles is a Twitch streamer known as Jahrein. As of May 2024, he boasts 650 thousand subscribers on YouTube and 840 thousand followers on X. His audience primarily comprises teenagers and young men in their early twenties. While his earlier content focused on gaming, in recent years, he has expanded his persona beyond gaming and begun sharing his beliefs and opinions on political and social matters. He is a highly

[9] A prevalent hypothesis within certain segments of Turkish society posits that these social media tactics are strategically employed by government officials to manipulate public discourse, either to divert attention from critical issues or as a deliberate maneuver in the ongoing cultural hegemony struggle characterizing Turkish society over the past two decades. This perception is particularly pronounced on X, where liberal users frequently deploy memes featuring Fahrettin Altun, the Head of Communications of the Republic of Türkiye, in response to posts expressing traditional viewpoints. These memes serve as a form of political commentary, implying a nonorganic and deliberate migration of content from other social media platforms to X.

controversial figure, evident from the extensive 990-page entries about him on eksisozluk, a long running local online forum.

Notably, his political commentary during the 2023 and 2024 elections in Turkey garnered significant attention. He faces ridicule online for both his opinions and his physical appearance. However, despite the criticism, he holds sway over thousands of younger men, serving as a mentor on social issues such as religion, gender, romantic relationships, and political beliefs. While he is married and does not advocate for Incel ideology, he aligns more closely with Men's Rights Activists (MRAs) than Incels. Nevertheless, given the limited number of influential figures in the Turkish scene, he is generally embraced by Turkish alt-right circles[10].

During my field research, I unexpectedly encountered another significant topic that resonates within these reactionary circles: the issue of stray dogs. The term "it tapar," which translates to "dog worshipper," is primarily used to describe animal activists advocating for improved shelter conditions or harsher sentencing for crimes against animals. However, it also includes individuals who express their affection for stray animals through social media posts. These individuals often become targets of cyber-attacks and harassment.

The correlation between anti-immigration and anti-women sentiments and attitudes toward stray animals is indeed a fascinating area of inquiry.[11] However, as

[10] During the editing phase of this thesis, Jahrein was taken into custody by Turkish security forces after a viral video excerpt from one of his live streams on X circulated, in which he expressed sexual attraction towards the concept of the 'sister-in-law' (referred to as 'baldız' in Turkish, meaning the sister of a man's wife). The authorities deemed the content obscene. This incident sparked mixed reactions; while many were enthusiastic about it, his digital clique—known for organizing online harassment campaigns against his critics—remained supportive, condemning the authorities' actions and encouraging others to protest.

[11] While beyond this thesis's scope, the correlation between anti-immigration sentiments, misogynistic attitudes, and hostility towards stray animals warrants further scholarly attention. An ecofeminist perspective, as developed by Shiva (1988) and Warren (1990), could offer valuable insights into these interconnected forms of oppression. This framework, which posits that the domination of nature and women are rooted in patriarchal structures, could be extended to examine attitudes towards immigrants and animals. Future research might explore how these power dynamics reveal common

of August 2024, a recent bill resolution passed through parliament allows for the collection and the massacre of stray animals. This emphasizes the tangible real-world consequences that can arise from the commotion generated in the digital sphere.

3.4 Findings of field research: tweets of the TurkIncel

The first account I encountered and chose to base my research around belonged to a self-described Incel, who I will refer to as "P." for security concerns. He is a prominent figure in the community due to his active use of X. However, as of May 2024, his account has been suspended. This is a recurring issue I faced during my research; TurkIncel accounts are frequently suspended, restricted, or permanently banned. Finding their new usernames is often challenging and typically requires searching for variations of their original usernames or tracking interactions with other users. Yet, I managed to find P.'s new account.

P.'s latest suspension was due to a tweet he posted about the murder of a young delivery man who was brutally killed by an ex-convict. This tragic incident brought together people from various ideologies, especially after the victim's parents released a heartfelt video demanding justice. However, another video of the young man resurfaced and was widely shared by news outlets. In this video, he is seen playing the guitar and singing a song with his girlfriend.

ideological underpinnings, drawing on works such as Gaard's "Ecofeminism and Animal Rights" (1993) to investigate intersections of speciesism with other forms of discrimination.

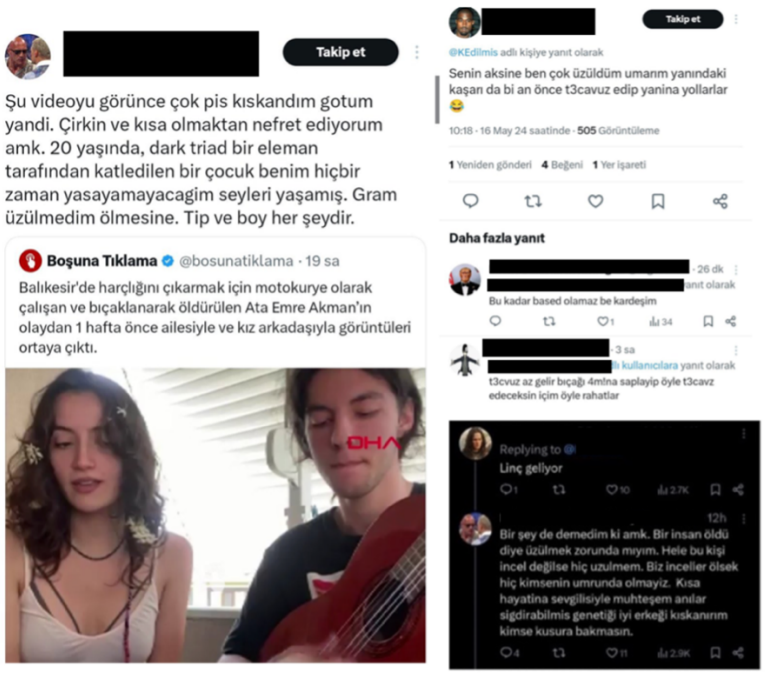


Figure 2. Controversial TurkIncel tweets on a recent incident

Members of the TurkIncel community, including P., commented on this video, expressing a complete lack of empathy for the victim[12]. They argued that, in his short life, he had everything Incels desired but could not attain, even suggesting that he deserved to be murdered. Their tweets conveyed emotions such as envy, hatred, and even happiness at his demise. They speculated about the girlfriend, suggesting she would move on quickly because she is a girl. The community also debated the young man's height, using his murder to fuel a discussion about “tip mi boy mu?”, meaning

[12] While this incident was one of the early introductions of the TurkIncel community to mainstream X users, a more widespread circulation occurred during the editing period of this thesis. This was due to the dissemination of an excerpt from an X Space room hosted by TurkIncel individuals. In the video, P. expressed pedophilic desires, stating that if he were to father a daughter, he would first rape her and then invite others to do the same. Other TurkIncel members voiced support for this idea in the excerpt. After the video went viral, numerous news accounts shared it and called for authorities to take action. As a result, P. was taken into custody on the same night as Jahrein. To date, it has been reported that the Discord server of the TurkIncel community has been deactivated by its administrators. However, only time will tell if these measures are sufficient to suppress the spread of these radical beliefs. Regardless of the outcome, this marks the first time the Turkish government has officially acknowledged the TurkIncel community.

“Is it appearance or height that matters more to girls?”—a very popular topic among the support-seeker TurkIncel community.

This recent incident has sparked considerable controversy and came up twice in the interviews, by “Helin” and “Tuğba”. Similar to Helin, Tuğba is also a woman in her early 30s, who gathered approximately 30,000 followers on X during the COVID period. Taking precautions, Tuğba always maintained her Instagram account as private and refrained from posting photos on Twitter that could potentially disclose personal information. Despite these measures, her Instagram photos were leaked. One photo she posted of her dog and cat on her balcony inadvertently revealed a corner of a café's nameplate. Someone in the Discord community, likely residing nearby, identified the café and subsequently Tuğba's home address.

Tuğba discovered the breach through an individual who initially entered the Turk Incel Discord community out of curiosity but became alarmed by the levels of violent beliefs. This breach resulted in Tuğba being doxed, with the statement "Katli vaciptir," roughly translating to "Her massacre is obligatory" or simply "She must be killed." She explained they even tried to dox her other personal and medical information but because she had a very common name combination, she got lucky. All of these, similar to other two women I have interviewed, led Tuğba to use a private and anonymous X account, limited to her close circle of friends, for the past 2 and a half years.

When asked to compare her pre-attack views with her current views regarding the community, similar to Helin, Tuğba explained that she previously attempted to engage with these individuals privately, hoping to boost their confidence and encourage them to leave the community. However, upon witnessing their blind dedication to the Incel cause and recognizing their capabilities, she found

herself losing empathy towards them. As a result, she now views the appropriate social response as ignoring them and refraining from giving them the attention they crave.

Considering the limits of the discourses of TurkIncel movement, or the lack thereof; this shift in perspective becomes quite understandable. During my digital observations, I encountered several usernames that mock femicide victims, like "@ozgecanaslan31," referencing Özgecan Aslan, a 20-year-old woman tragically murdered in 2015 for resisting a rape attempt (BBC, 2015). Her story deeply affected many women of my generation, solidifying her as a symbol in discussions about femicides. Another troubling example involves Leyla Aydemir, a 4-year-old girl whose body was found 18 days after her disappearance, with signs of sexual abuse discovered three years later, indicating a potential cover-up (Sözcü, 2021). Using her image, members of the TurkIncel community speculated that had she survived, she would have become a "foid", who judges men based on their appearance and height. There are even more graphic takes that I will not include out of respect.

Figure 3. Controversial TurkIncel tweet about the murder of Leyla Aydemir

Considering the timing of the tweet, which coincides with the incident leading to suspensions and widespread attention for the TurkIncel community, its intent appears to be provocative. Ridiculing femicides is unfortunately not uncommon among Incels, who often blame the murdered women for their choice of partners, preferring so-called aggressive "Chads" over them, the self-proclaimed "supreme gentlemen". This argument is frequently employed within the TurkIncel community, where recent femicides are often discussed, with members arguing that the women knowingly choose "bad guys" and thus bear responsibility for their own deaths.

This narrative also intersects with their anti-immigration stance, portraying women who choose immigrant partners as complicit in their own victimization. However, including a child's death in such discussions seems designed to garner attention by deliberately upsetting people. The user who posted this tweet, at the time of writing this thesis, has only 30 tweets, most of which are replies. These replies are directed towards tweets discussing women's deaths, abuses, or similar topics, and all of them are, to say the least, provocative and upsetting.

There are certain occasions when the TurkIncel community gains attention, often through provocative actions. However, it is important to note that they regularly tweet about these topics. Through my observation, I discovered that the community utilizes the website "CuriousCat," a platform that allows users to ask questions anonymously. The frequent questions range from comments on popular discussions within the community, to sharing reading recommendations on the Incel worldview. Undoubtedly, many men and women also write questions to express their dislike towards the community.

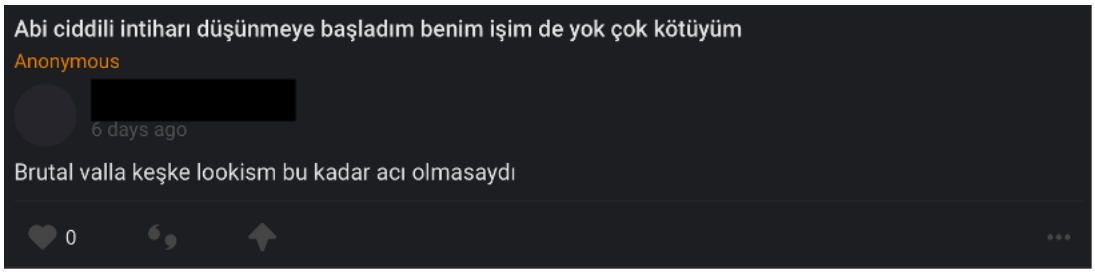


Figure 4. A TurkIncel question entry

This website is also used a lot by support-seekers part of the TurkIncel community, to discuss about their struggles, or even suicidal thoughts. For example, one popular X user within the community is among those to whom others turn for advice. Recently, he explained on his CuriousCat account that he is taking a break from X due to health problems. He was also an active user of X's "Spaces" feature, which allows participants to have live audio conversations with listeners. One of the questions he received on his CuriousCat account is seen above.

A person expressed that they are starting to consider committing suicide because, in addition to other characteristics that supposedly make them undesirable, they also have no occupation. He responded by saying, “It’s brutal, really, I wish lookism wasn’t this painful.” This response might seem a bit insensitive to outsiders; however, the use of "brutal" comes from Incel jargon and is used to convey the shared understanding of their perception of life’s harshness. When he was later criticized by another anonymous question regarding his answer, he concludes: “Only the Incels would understand that word”.

Another key observation is the distinction between adaptations and localizations of the North American Incel community's concepts. As previously discussed, the Incel phenomenon originated in North America but has since spread across numerous countries. When embraced by other cultures, such as in Turkey, two

approaches have emerged in dealing with the existing jargon, thought system, and methods: adaptation and localization.

While the general ideology remains the same, some concepts are tailored to fit the Turkish context. It's noteworthy that the characterization of Chad in the Turkish context is quite similar to the original one. Chad is depicted as blond, tall (specifically above 185 centimeters), with blue eyes and a muscular physique, traits that supposedly make him attractive to women. Interestingly, these characteristics are often associated with being a "Balkan migrant," carrying racial connotations rooted in whiteness.

While Turkincels have directly adopted Incel jargon, certain concepts already existed in Turkish culture, unrelated to the Turkincel movement, that parallel English terms. One such concept is the characterization of 'Meriç'. Meriç originates from a caricature of Umut Sarıkaya and serves as the equivalent of the Incel term "beta-orbiter". Meriç represents non-alpha men who "orbit" around attractive women as friends and emotional supporters, harboring a hope of eventually dating them.

Another concept in Turkish culture, although not completely embraced by the TurkIncel community, bears resemblance to the characterization of Chad. This concept is known as Berkcan or Berkay. Berkcan is described as handsome, tall, and notably affluent, making him desirable to women. Therefore, Berkcan is often perceived as someone whom women consistently like and desire, as shown in the screenshot of the TurkIncel tweet.

Figure 5. A TurkIncel tweet showing the adaptations of the concepts

In the Turkincel community, the hate-focused counterpart of femoids emerges as the 'purple-haired feminist'. However, this characterization is more specific than the general notion of femoids. Here, the hatred is directed not towards any woman but towards an intellectual woman, often a college student in the humanities, who openly discusses her sexuality, engages in casual dating and hookups, likely identifies as LGBTQ+, dyes her hair unnatural colors, may have piercings and tattoos, and typically adheres to a vegan or vegetarian diet. Additionally, she is sensitive about minority and animal rights and is politically correct. Turkincels believe that these characteristics are often accompanied by a portrayal of being disingenuous and deceptive, with the implication that these women lead a double life, concealing their lifestyle from their families, particularly their fathers. Furthermore, it is suggested that many of these women originate from rural areas and adopt these characteristics upon moving to urban centers like Istanbul, diverging from their 'traditional' upbringing in Anatolia.

Like their global counterparts, TurkIncels show a keen interest in biology and evolutionary racial determinism. An example of this is a post shared by a TurkIncel

user on X, which included a screenshot from a Facebook account named “Physical Anthropology” (Fiziksel Antropoloji). The post purportedly describes the “Armenoid” phenotype: having a broader nose and face, dark pigmentation, strong beard and body hair growth, among other features.

Figure 6. A controversial TurkIncel tweet about racial determinism

The user who posted this on X commented that he possesses the majority of these physical attributes, concluding that he has an Armenian genotype. He further speculated that many in the TurkIncel community likely share these genes, which he believes are responsible for making their lives a living hell. P. made similar comments from his now-suspended account, asserting that with his height of 173 cm and his physical appearance, if he were to take a DNA test, he would likely be at least 50% Armenian. He stated, "The dominant 'Armenian gene' in the Anatolian lands has made the nations and races that migrated here uglier. This place has become a haven for Incels.".

It is intriguing to observe the racial hierarchy constructed by the Turkish community, particularly given the Turks' complex identity in terms of race. Turkish ethnicity is widely acknowledged as a blend of European, Middle Eastern, South Asian, and Central Asian ancestries (Hodoğlugil & Mahley, 2012). This diverse background creates uncertainty about whether Turks should align themselves with the category of White. Within the TurkIncel community, it's common for members to perceive themselves as inferior to those with "White genes," often associating the Chad archetype with Balkan immigrants. Nevertheless, as evidenced in P.'s tweets, they still favor the imagined Turkish phenotype over the imagined Armenian one.

The TurkIncel community's adoption of foreign concepts often leads to internal contradictions. While they express a preference for Whiteness, they also oppose "Western Modernism." This contradictory stance often aligns them with advocates of Sharia Law, reflecting a broader desire to return to traditional values and restrict women's rights. This adaptation in the Turkish context involves the localization of support of Christian values into Islamic ones, with some members advocating for Sharia Law. While some individuals genuinely embrace Islam, Sharia Law is frequently invoked as a means to target women, often through ridicule.

Figure 7. TurkIncel tweets regarding the use of Sharia Laws as a threat

P.'s recent tweets from his new account illustrate how Islam is utilized as a tool in this context. The first tweet suggests a vision of enforcing Sharia law, advocating for strict dress codes for women, including burkas and veils, to conceal their appearance entirely. It roughly translates to: “If God permits, when Sharia law comes, we will make women wear burkas and veils. Even while wearing pants, they dress provocatively; this will be lifted, and women will cover themselves in such a way that even their eyes will not be visible, wearing a full veil. Forget about pants; in the future, we won't even allow women to remove their burkas.” The second tweet echoes this sentiment, expressing a desire for Turkey to be governed by Sharia law and criticizing the perceived immodesty of women's clothing: “I wish Turkey was governed by Sharia law. We don't want to see girls dressed like they're almost in bikinis. Go practice your secularism at home; this is a Muslim country.”

Another notable adaptation within the TurkIncel community is their choice of heroes. Globally, Elliot Rodger, the self-described "supreme gentleman," is one of

the most significant figures in the Incel movement. He is often commemorated with the stylized term hERo, highlighting his initials. While the Turkish community embraces these North American figures, they have also appointed certain local individuals as their heroes. Fortunately, there have been no serious crimes committed by members of the Turkish Incel community with the intention of retribution. However, the rising number of femicides in the country has brought various men into the public eye. One such individual is Ümitcan Uygun, who is currently serving a 10-year prison sentence for the murder of Esra Hankulu, having been convicted of causing her death by beating her, though the court found no evidence of premeditated intent to murder. Hence, the court did not accept the life imprisonment sentencing proposed by the prosecutor, opting instead for a 10-year prison term (BBC, 2022).

However, this is not the first time the public has heard Ümitcan Uygun's name in connection with a femicide. He was the prime suspect in the murder case of Sema Esen, known as Aleyna Çakır, who was found dead in her apartment in 2020. During the investigation, videos emerged of a livestream that Uygun broadcasted from Aleyna’s account, showing her lying unconscious on the floor after he had beaten her. In the livestream, Uygun continued to threaten her and display her unconscious body to her followers. Despite the disturbing nature of these videos, there was insufficient evidence to directly tie her death to Uygun. Consequently, he was convicted of violating the inviolability of domicile, unauthorized access to an information system, and unlawful dissemination of personal data.

Figure 8. An X profile of a TurkIncel user

Ümitcan Uygun's criminal history, coupled with his active online presence, has made him an important figure within the broader Turkish Red Pill communities. The TurkIncel community, in particular, frequently uses his image as profile pictures, posts excerpts from his videos in replies to women online and includes him in their personal lists of heroes. While some of this behavior appears to be rage bait, aimed at provoking others online to gain internet traffic, the deliberate choice of a man convicted of harming two women who are no longer alive speaks volumes about the community's perception of women.

3.5 Concluding remarks

As the internet has become an inseparable part of our daily lives, the social and political spheres are not only manifested in the digital realm but are also reproduced and shaped by digital culture. This chapter has analyzed two crucial transformations within the digital realm, particularly on social media platforms, that have significantly impacted the emergence and development of digital communities and movements like the Incel movement.

Firstly, platforms like Reddit and 4Chan have been central hubs for digital communities with extreme beliefs, such as Inceldom. In 2017, Reddit took the executive step of banning the r/Incels subreddit, citing its policy against content that "encourages, glorifies, incites, or calls for violence or physical harm against any individual or group of people" (Solon, 2017). A similar action was taken in 2020 against the r/TurkIncel subreddit. This led to a migration of a significant portion of the community to X, which in turn allowed beliefs that glorify or even advocate violence to spread to mainstream social media, thereby exponentially increasing their reach.

Secondly, Elon Musk's acquisition of Twitter has altered the dynamics of the platform, especially given his political leanings and emphasis on "free speech." Musk's popularity among right-wing digital circles has made X an attractive platform for digital communities to advocate for their causes and indoctrinate others, including the broader Incel movement and the TurkIncel community specifically.

Moreover, as social media sites become breeding grounds for radical and extreme beliefs, their governance holds immense importance. However, as discussed in relation to digital governmentality, control over social media sites manifests in ambivalent ways. While it can be used to create a safe environment, the definition of safety can be quite arbitrary, as demonstrated by the Turkish government’s control over digital platforms over the past two decades.

In the second half of this chapter, the digital presence of the TurkIncel community is analyzed within the context of the evolving digital landscape. Findings from digital observations show that the strong emphasis on libertarian free speech principles, combined with the anonymity offered by social media platforms, has enabled the spread of violent content within the TurkIncel community. This content,

often characterized by misogyny, racism, and xenophobia, has occasionally infiltrated mainstream discourse, escalating tensions between Turkish society and the TurkIncel community. These tensions have led to frequent account suspensions and crackdowns on their online activities, which have, in turn, reinforced the community's sense of persecution and victimhood.

Additionally, this chapter explores how the TurkIncel community engages with the existing Incel ideology, worldview, and jargon by identifying two distinct approaches: adaptation and localization. Furthermore, by examining the current digital landscape of Turkey and prevalent online tendencies and debates, this chapter illustrates how the TurkIncel community's extreme beliefs and cyber harassment methods differentiate it from existing forms of misogyny online.

CHAPTER 4

VIOLENCE ASPECT – FROM VICTIMHOOD TO VIOLENCE: EXAMINING THE UNIQUE PATTERNS OF INCEL-DRIVEN AGGRESSION

On a beautiful May morning in 2014, after years of meticulous planning and repeated postponements to ensure the perfect day, Elliot Rodger set out to commit a horrific act of violence. After fatally stabbing his three roommates, he drove to Isla Vista, California, with the intent to kill as many people as possible. Although he failed to break into the sorority house as he had planned, he took the lives of three other individuals and injured fourteen more.

This was not a spontaneous act nor a momentary lapse of reason; it was the result of years of planning and was meticulously documented in a 137-page manifesto. Rodger purchased his first handgun in December 2012, one and a half years before the mass shooting (Rodger, 2014, p.113). He practiced at shooting ranges to hone his skills (p. 109). His manifesto, filled with anger and frustration, details every significant event from his life in an effort to justify his rage and to explain to himself and future readers why he believed his actions were warranted on his self-declared "day of retribution."

This tragic incident, known as the Isla Vista attacks, stands as one of the most fatal acts of violence perpetrated by an individual identifying with the Incel movement, explicitly executed to further the Incel cause. However, it was not the last. Four years later, in 2018, a Canadian man named Alek Minassian followed in Rodger's footsteps by driving his van into pedestrians, killing ten people (BBC, 2021). Before executing his plan, he posted a status update on his Facebook profile

declaring, “The Incel Rebellion has already begun! We will overthrow all the Chads and Stacys! All hail the Supreme Gentleman Elliot Rodger!” (Mezzofiore, 2018).

When analyzing Incel violence, it's crucial to recognize that it extends beyond the most extreme and fatal incidents. While some acts of violence are directly committed in the name of the Incel movement, many other instances of aggression are less overt but equally concerning. For instance, numerous school shooters in the US have been found to self-identify as Incels, a fact often uncovered through their online activities post-attack (Lindner, 2023, p.218).

However, the Incel community's most pervasive form of violence is cyber harassment, which includes doxing, rape threats, and general online bullying. This method of digital aggression is widespread and particularly embraced by the TurkIncel community, as evidenced by field observations and interviews. Unlike the US, where mass shootings by self-identified Incels are more common, the Turkish context shows a strong inclination towards digital harassment as a primary method of expressing Incel hostility.

This chapter will explore the relationship between violence and the Incel phenomenon, with a particular focus on its digital manifestations. It will also analyze the Turkish context, distinguishing TurkIncel violence from the broader landscape of gendered violence in Turkey—a pressing issue that has gained significant urgency over the past 15 years. Incel violence distinguishes itself from other forms of gender-based violence in several key aspects: the medium through which it is perpetrated, the process of target selection, and the narratives employed by the community to rationalize its actions.

Moreover, this relationship is further analyzed through the data collected via-semi-structured, in-depth interviews with three women who were direct targets of TurkIncel violence. These interviewees, having experienced firsthand online interactions with the Incel community, provide crucial insights into the nature and impact of this specific form of gender-based aggression. Their accounts offer a unique perspective on the manifestation of Incel ideology in real-world interactions, illuminating the mechanisms and consequences of TurkIncel violence in the digital sphere.

4.1 Understanding gender-based violence

Violence against women (VAW) emerged as a significant social issue during the feminist movements of the 1960s and 70s, drawing attention to a wide range of violent acts, including intimate partner violence, rape, trafficking, and honor killings (Htun & Jensenius, 2020, p.144). However, gender-based violence has often been left out of purview of the judicial system.

Historically, the recognition of gender-based violence as a criminal issue has lagged, especially when it comes to the protection of women and marginalized groups. Since the 1970s, feminist organizations and advocates have actively campaigned both legally and socially to criminalize these acts and emphasize the urgent need for systemic change (Htun & Jensenius, 2020, p.144). Through these efforts, gender-based violence (GBV) has come to be defined internationally as "any type of harm that is perpetrated against a person or group of people because of their actual or perceived sex, gender, sexual orientation, and/or gender identity" (*Glossary – gender matters – www.coe.int,* 2020). However, due to the disproportionate number

of victims, the term is most commonly associated with violence against women and LGBTI+ individuals, often being used interchangeably with VAW.

It is crucial to comprehend the extent of gender-based violence. According to the World Health Organization (2024), approximately 1 in 3 (30%) women globally have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. In Turkey, this figure rises to 32%, based on recorded cases, as reported by the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development).

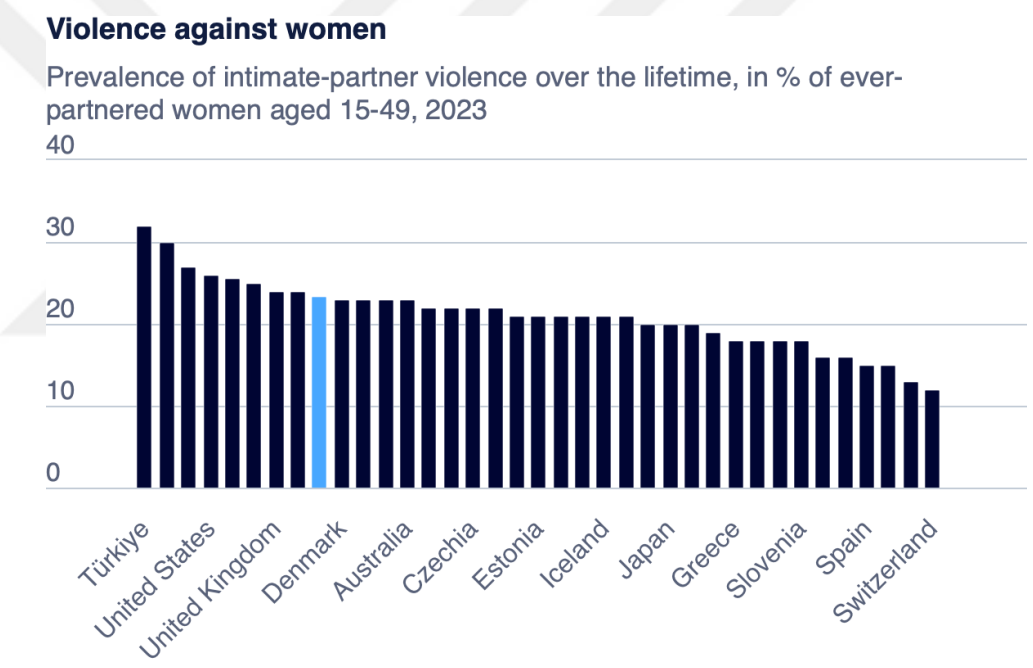


Figure 9. OECD data on violence against women

However, intimate partner violence is just one facet of the broader spectrum of gender-based violence. A critical distinction in the related literature is the legality of the violence. Intimate partner violence, like domestic violence, rape, and sexual or physical harassment, falls under what can be categorized as illegal violence. Conversely, women around the world also face legal gender-based violence, which

includes forms of control over women's bodily autonomy and the lack of criminal consequences for crimes against them.

Understanding violence, particularly in the context of gender dynamics, requires distinguishing between its different forms and how they operate. Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power is a crucial contribution to this discourse. Bourdieu defines symbolic violence as “the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.167), further characterizing it as “gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victim” (Bourdieu, 2001, p.1). Though these descriptions might seem to downplay symbolic violence, they reveal its subtle yet pervasive nature. Despite lacking the immediate physical consequences of overt violence, symbolic violence is equally potent and insidious.

Symbolic violence permeates various societal channels, including language, media, education, and cultural products, shaping perceptions and social norms. Bourdieu describes this influence as the operation of “schemes of perception, appreciation, and action” (p.5). Given that gender relations are among the most fundamental power dynamics within society, symbolic violence is deeply relevant to understanding how gendered power structures are maintained and reproduced.

Bourdieu and subsequent scholars have established a strong link between gender and symbolic violence. Bourdieu, for example, notes that even the most well-intentioned men can perform discriminatory acts without conscious awareness, excluding women from positions of authority due to ingrained societal norms (p. 59). However, this explanation risks minimizing men's agency by portraying gender inequality as an unconscious process, deeply embedded and nearly impossible to challenge.

Simone de Beauvoir's (1989) work, although preceding Bourdieu's, assigns more agency to men in the construction of women as the 'other' (p. xxiii), yet still carries a similarly pessimistic perspective. In contrast, Judith Butler offers a more intersectional and hopeful approach. In a 2019 interview, Butler highlights men's active role in perpetuating violence against women:

> "…one reason that men feel free to dispose of women's life as they see fit is because they are bound to one another through a silent (or not-so-silent) pact of brotherhood. They look the other way; they give each other permission and grant each other impunity. In so many places, the violence done to women, including murder, is not even conceptualized as crimes. They are 'the way of the world' or 'acts of passion,' and these phrases disclose deep-seated attitudes that have naturalized violence against women, that is, made it seem as if this violence is a natural or normal part of ordinary life." (Yancy, 2019)

Butler's perspective, emphasizing men's complicity and the cultural normalization of gendered violence, aligns more closely with the thesis's viewpoint, offering a more critical and actionable understanding of gender violence.

Moreover, as seen in cases of Incel violence, the integration of the internet and social media into our everyday lives has allowed violence to permeate the digital world as well. The principal manifestation of this violence in the digital landscape is cyberbullying, defined as "an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot defend him or herself" (Smith et al., 2008, p.376). Often used interchangeably with cyber harassment, cyberbullying is a common tactic within the Incel movement, extending all the way to the broader manosphere and alt-right.

While some literature suggests that cyberbullying perpetrators are more likely to engage in traditional face-to-face bullying (Giumetti & Kowalski, 2022, p.1), this correlation may not hold true for Incels. Given their self-perceived outsider status in society, Incels are less likely to be real-life bullies. Instead, they may leverage digital platforms and the anonymity they provide to channel their real-life frustrations onto

victims. It's plausible that Incels oscillate between victim and perpetrator roles as they move between physical and digital spaces.

The infamous GamerGate controversy of 2014 stands as a seminal example of an extreme cyber harassment campaign, influencing many subsequent online movements. It rapidly evolved into a digital harassment campaign targeting women in the video game industry and those criticizing sexism within it (Lyons, 2017). Initially claiming to advocate for free speech and journalistic ethics, it became a platform for expressing anti-feminist sentiments.

Central to this controversy was Zoe Quinn, a game developer whose work sparked allegations of impropriety. This incident catalyzed a broader campaign engulfing other female figures like Anita Sarkeesian and Brianna Wu. These women faced severe gendered harassment including rape threats, death threats, doxing, and cyberbullying. Quinn reported having to leave her home due to threats, including disturbing incidents like dead animals in her mailbox (Stuart, 2014).

This campaign highlighted toxic elements within gaming culture and its intersection with manosphere and alt-right ideologies. It exposed women's vulnerability in digital spaces, particularly when challenging norms in male-dominated industries. The incident revealed how online communities can rapidly mobilize harassment campaigns, leveraging digital platforms to intimidate and silence women's voices (Carlisle, 2020; Henley, 2022; Sowerby, 2024).

Gender-based violence manifests across multiple domains - symbolic, physical, and digital - necessitating a comprehensive awareness of its diverse expressions. The remainder of this chapter will examine how these aforementioned forms of gender-based violence are evident within Turkish society and analyze how

the TurkIncel movement distinguishes itself from pre-existing patterns of gender-based violence.

4.2 Gender-based violence in Turkey

To truly understand Turkey's political and social landscape, one must delve into its historical roots, tracing back to the waning years of the Ottoman Empire and the subsequent establishment of the Turkish Republic. However, for the purpose of this thesis, I will narrow the focus primarily to the rule of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) to provide a contemporary analysis. Nonetheless, a brief examination of the women's movement will establish a more solid foundation.

Fresia Sabeti and Mohsen Moheimany (2022) provided an analysis of the women's movements in Turkey, beginning from the late Ottoman era and extending to contemporary times. The movement can be traced back to the "Adjustment period (1839-1876)" of the Ottoman Empire, heavily influenced by the "waves of women's uprisings in the West" (p. 57). During this period, women made certain strides in political participation and education, albeit to a limited extent. In the Republican era, after enduring significant struggles, women achieved more substantial progress, particularly within the legal system. This included the formalization of gender equality in court testimony, inheritance, and divorce laws, and most crucially, the right to vote and enter the parliament in 1934.

During the 1940s and 1950s, the women's movement continued to achieve progress, though these accomplishments were often presented as "gifts of the Republic." The state's and society's perspectives toward women remained limited, confining them within the boundaries of home and private life and emphasizing motherhood and chastity. It was not until the 1980s that the women's movement

adopted a more rebellious form of feminism, influenced by the second wave feminism, albeit with a slight delay (p. 58). Women's movement started to spread to streets and the focus shifted from the nation's interest to women's interest and with the next decade, the discourse began spreading to the masses (p.59).

In the 2002 elections, the current ruling party, AKP rose to power. The party's ascent to power marked the realization of one of its objectives: to unite individuals who had previously supported different parties under a common worldview (Ceran, 2019, p. 182). In his victory speech after the 2002 elections, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan emphasized national identity and inclusivity across various lifestyles, rather than foregrounding Islamist political ideologies (p. 181).

However, this approach underwent a significant transformation, particularly in the aftermath of the Gezi Protests. While the AKP identifies itself as a center-right party, Erdoğan's Islamic heritage heavily influences his discourse. This became apparent during and after the Gezi Protests, where his rhetoric was shaped by both center-right and Islamist traditions. Fatih Ceran describes Erdoğan's political discourse during this period as a strategic amalgamation of conservative and nationalist elements, effectively radicalizing segments of Turkish society without compromising the party's popularity (p. 185).

The language became notably harsher after the unsuccessful coup attempt in 2016, employing tactics such as "demonization, emotional appeal, name-calling, patriotic appeal, half-truths, catchy slogans, evocative visual symbols, and humor" (Handziuk, 2016). This shift in discourse played a pivotal role in intensifying nationalist and conservative ideologies, thereby deepening the polarization of public discourse and societal divisions. Within this landscape of polarizing rhetoric, a distinct nationalistic tone emerges, delineating two opposing camps: one

characterized by the "pious, conservative, pristine laymen," and the other by the "elitist minority" that proudly embraces "Western immorality." (Zengin & Ongur, 2020).

In addition to these factors, the AKP's approach to women's issues and the rhetoric employed by key figures within the party and the council of ministers had profound implications for the social structure of the country. Particularly noteworthy were the repeated bans on the 8th of March Women's Marches in Taksim and the general tone from those in power, exemplified by statements from the then prime minister, such as "women should not laugh out loud" (Izadi, 2014). The emphasis again was put on family and the role of motherhood rather than women as individuals. These actions not only antagonized the Turkish women's movement and but also contributed to the proliferation of the anti-feminist movement.

The incidence of femicides has been steadily increasing in Turkey, particularly since 2011, when the Istanbul Convention was signed. Diana Russell coined the term femicide in 1970s to highlight a severe and pervasive issue— “the killing of one or more females by one or more males because they are female” (Russell, 2012, p.2). While femicides are a global crisis, Turkey ranks among the countries with the highest rates. In 2010, following the brutal femicide of Münevver Karabulut, the “We Will Stop Femicides” platform was founded by women for women. This platform is dedicated to raising awareness about femicide, humanizing the victims, and holding perpetrators accountable for their crimes. Another initiative, the Monument Counter (Anıt Sayaç), is dedicated to commemorating women who have lost their lives due to domestic violence. As of August 2024, the counter shows the number 248, representing the lives lost in just the first 7.5 months of the year.

Figure 10. Anıt Sayaç (Monument Counter) data

The data provided by the We Will Stop Femicides platform also makes efforts to identify the cause of murdering, to take another step to solve this crisis. Their data shows: “Among the femicide cases for which the pretext is known, approximately 70% of women were killed on the pretext of the women wanting to make decisions about their own lives.”. These decisions are reported to be mostly consist of break up or divorce – women exercising their own free will.

The second chapter introduced the social concept of “namus,” a term deeply embedded in Turkish culture, signifying a complex mix of honor, virtue, and social standing, particularly in relation to women's behavior. In discussions about femicides in Turkey, the term “honor killings” has long been used by the media, the state, and society at large. This phrase implies that men murder women to protect their honor, or "namus."

However, framing these acts as honor killings is profoundly problematic because it reinforces the very system that perpetuates femicides. This narrative acts almost as a justification, obscuring the broader institutional structures that enable these crimes (Koğacıoğlu, p.119), such as lenient legal penalties for perpetrators, the problematic practice of granting reduced sentences for "good behavior," and the

pervasive narrative of “adequate women” echoed through official policies and statements.

For instance, after the murder of Münevver Karabulut, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan remarked, “If you let your daughter have her own way, she will end up with [someone who is not fit for her],” placing the blame on the victim and her family, rather than on the actual perpetrator of the gruesome crime (“Erdoğan'dan Şoke Eden 'Münevver' Yorumu!”, 2009). By focusing solely on the notion of honor, the urgency to address and dismantle the systemic issues contributing to gender-based violence risks being overlooked. Moreover, the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention in 2021, despite widespread public outcry, marked a significant turning point that further exacerbated this alarming trend (Direk, 2023). Following this withdrawal, online death threats against women escalated, with messages such as 'there is no more convention that can protect you.'

At this juncture, the masculinity crisis requires reexamination with a special focus on Turkey, a country where traditional gender roles have long been deeply entrenched. Femicide, as previously discussed, often functions as a mechanism to maintain women's subordinate position and restrict their autonomy, even in the most mundane aspects of life (Berktay, p.96). Women's increasing self-assertion and exercise of agency provoke this violence, fundamentally challenging the dominance of hegemonic masculinity, which presupposes women's unquestioning adherence to prescribed traditional roles. The clash between evolving societal norms and deeply rooted patriarchal expectations creates a volatile environment where some men resort to violence as a means of reasserting control.

Marriage plays a pivotal role in defining both hegemonic masculinity and idealized femininity in Turkish society. It serves as a microcosm of broader gender

dynamics, reflecting and reinforcing societal expectations. Most men traditionally defined their masculinity through public success: career achievements, earning power, being the family provider, and gaining respect from other men (Boratav, et al., 2014, p.314).

Challenges to the traditional married couple paradigm can therefore lead to contestations of traditional masculinity itself, as the institution of marriage has long been a cornerstone of male authority and identity. Several factors contribute to this phenomenon: rising divorce rates, which challenge the notion of marriage as an inviolable institution; women's rejection of traditional wifely roles, including subservience and unquestioning obedience; and women's growing presence in the workforce, which challenges the male breadwinner model. These changes subsequently alter the traditional definition of motherhood, as women increasingly balance career aspirations with family responsibilities.

Furthermore, there has been a noticeable trend towards delayed marriage and an increase in premarital relationships. The mean age at first marriage for women in Turkey increased from 22.7 years in 2001 to 25.7 in 2023, indicating a shift in priorities and life choices for young Turkish women (TUIK, 2024). This delay in marriage has been accompanied by a growing acceptance of premarital dating and cohabitation, particularly in urban areas and among more educated segments of society (Sakallı-Uğurlu & Glick, 2003).

A study by Gul Ozyegin (2015) found that educated, middle-income Turkish young women living in big cities have more control over their freedom in premarital relationships (p.43). This shift in dating dynamics is further amplified by the increasing prevalence of online dating platforms and apps, which have gained popularity among urban Turkish youth over the last decade (Sunam Audry, et al.,

2023). These digital spaces have provided women with greater agency in partner selection and expanded their dating options beyond traditional family-arranged introductions, fundamentally altering the landscape of romantic relationships in contemporary Turkey.

All of these developments combined catalyze challenges to hegemonic masculinity, ultimately precipitating a masculinity crisis. Men who have built their identities around traditional notions of masculinity find themselves struggling to adapt to a rapidly changing social landscape. As Berktay aptly notes, "Thus, while violence is used as a means to assert dominance, in reality it indicates a loss of dominance" (p.96). This paradox underscores the complex dynamics at play in the evolving landscape of gender roles and power structures in Turkish society.

The ongoing struggle between feminist forces pushing for gender equality and conservative elements seeking to maintain traditional power structures creates a tension that permeates all levels of Turkish society, from individual relationships to national politics. Within this context, the TurkIncel community has emerged over the last decade, coinciding with the rise in femicide rates and the broader masculinity crisis in Turkey. This community, while not native to Turkey, has found fertile ground in the country's socio-political environment, particularly in the wake of events such as Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention and the proliferation of state rhetoric prescribing women's behavior and societal roles.

4.3 TurkIncel violence

Having established the various manifestations of gender-based violence in Turkish society, we can now delve deeper into the specific nature of TurkIncel violence. As discussed throughout this thesis, the TurkIncel phenomenon, as a social movement,

distinguishes itself from existing reactionary anti-woman movements. One crucial aspect of this distinction lies in its unique relationship with violence.

As a 26-year-old woman who has lived in Istanbul her entire life, I have a profound understanding of gender-based violence. I've been catcalled countless times and followed home on multiple occasions—the first time when I was just 11 years old and in elementary school. I have feared, and still fear, going out late at night and using public transportation alone after witnessing the details of Özgecan Aslan's gruesome murder on national television when I was just 17. I have felt the eyes of thousands of men scrutinizing my body. On a systemic level, I've faced barriers such as being banned from attending the Feminist March in Taksim and witnessing Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention. So did Ayşe, Helin and Tuğba, the 3 women I have interviewed and countless others who have experienced gender-based violence firsthand. Yet, the TurkIncel violence separates our experiences with the 3 interviewees on 3 grounds as stated above: the nature of the medium it is carried out, the process of target selection, and the narratives through which it is justified by the community. This section will explore these differences.

As discussed throughout the chapters, the digital world serves as the primary medium for this new form of violence, alongside more traditional violent incidents such as mass shootings. Cyber harassment, defined as "any behavior performed through electronic or digital media by individuals or groups that repeatedly communicates hostile or aggressive messages intended to inflict harm or discomfort on others" (Tokunaga, 2010, p. 278), is not exclusive to the Incel community. As the internet has become increasingly integrated into daily life, bullying and harassment have naturally adapted to digital formats, particularly on social media platforms. But

a major enabler of the Incel community's extreme and pervasive violence is the anonymity afforded by social media.

I have conducted interviews with 3 women who were the victims of digital harassment by the TurkIncel community. Ayşe, a 26-year-old woman, had a highly active Twitter presence with approximately 18,000 followers at the time of the attacks, was one of them. Her account was a satire-driven platform where she discussed a wide range of topics, including politics, daily events, personal experiences in romantic relationships, and family interactions. She often mixed in "trolling tweets" to maintain engagement and add a layer of humor.

Throughout her time on this account, Ayşe had grown accustomed to receiving numerous messages, mentions, and quote retweets that mocked her or criticized her beliefs and appearance. She even occasionally posted provocative statements intentionally to provoke such reactions. However, what ultimately led her to deactivate her account was the sustained harassment campaign initiated by the TurkIncel community. This campaign escalated far beyond online ridicule, involving death and rape threats, as well as malicious speculation about her upbringing and family, particularly regarding her father, who was critically ill and in intensive care at the time. One of the most hurtful messages she received stated, "I would rather die than have a daughter like this," leaving a lasting impression on her. The final straw came when the community attempted to identify her location through the photos she posted using the GeoTag feature. Disturbingly, they managed to pinpoint her location within 2 kilometers of her home, forcing Ayşe to deactivate her account and switch to a private one, which she now uses exclusively with her close circle. A story that is very similar to those of Helin and Tuğba.

What enables this level of hatred and violence to spread so easily is the protection provided by anonymity. Although it is an early work in the area, well before the emergence of current social media sites, Susan Herring's (2001) research shows that reduced social accountability increases the likelihood of engaging in hostile and aggressive behavior online (p. 13). This is also true for TurkIncels, who can easily express their resentment over a young man who was murdered simply because he had the opportunity to have a girlfriend, while they did not (see: p. 61).

Although this anonymity is not absolute—Helin was able to identify some users using the same tactics they employed against her—the difficulty and specialized tools required for this process suggest that many perpetrators can act with little fear of consequences. Helin describes an instance where an individual she tracked down was publicly posting women-supportive content on LinkedIn while simultaneously sending brutal messages and death threats to her through an anonymous Twitter account. As Christopher P. Barlett (2015, p. 71) notes, the lack of face-to-face interaction with victims, combined with minimal real-life repercussions for most perpetrators, fosters an environment where individuals feel empowered to engage in extreme behaviors, such as tweeting, "Her massacre is obligatory," with impunity.

To understand the second distinction, we must first revisit broader trends in gender-based violence. Data on violence against women indicates that intimate partner violence (IPV) is one of the most prevalent forms (WHO, 2012). Research by UNFPA (2023) Türkiye reveals that the majority of violence perpetrators are spouses (63%), followed by family members (21%), such as fathers or siblings. This suggests that a personal relationship often exists between the victim and the perpetrator. However, this does not imply that such violence is unrelated to gender-based issues

or that it is not fueled by a misogynistic, patriarchal order—it certainly is. Instead, it underscores how the process of victim selection differs in the context of TurkIncel violence.

Victims of Incel violence typically do not know their perpetrators, and there is no prior relationship between them. While a parasocial relationship may occasionally exist, most interactions begin and end with the harassment itself. The primary target of the community's hatred is, first and foremost, women. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, men who are perceived by Incels to be in more favorable situations—particularly those who have romantic interactions with women—can also become targets. Additionally, other disadvantaged groups, such as the LGBTQI+ community or refugees, sometimes receive hostility from the TurkIncel community, although these groups are not the primary focus of their aggression.

When we look at Ayşe, Helin, and Tuğba, the only common denominator is that they are women who voice their opinions online. They do not share political alignments: Helin identifies as left-leaning, while Tuğba and Ayşe identify as right-wing. Their use of social media also varies greatly. As Helin describes her use of the X platform as a form of activism, while Ayşe used her platform primarily for trolling and engagement.

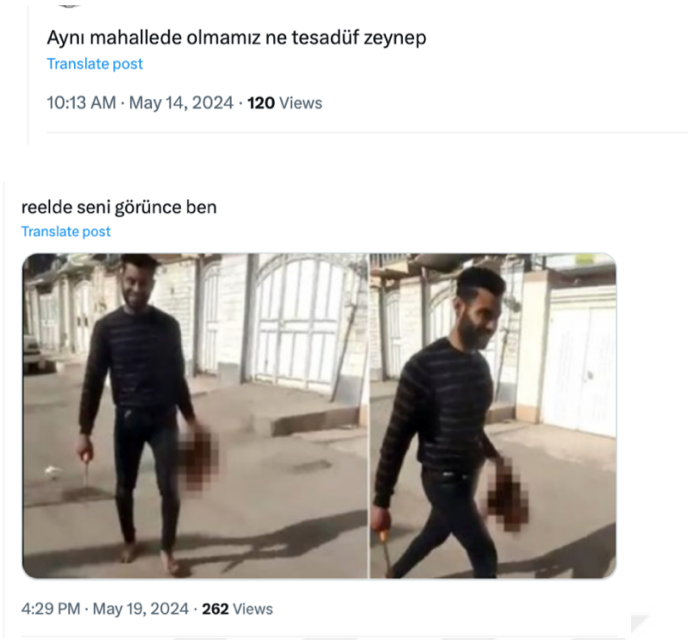


Figure 11. Tweets of TurkIncel community sending threats to women

Recounting Helin's experience, direct engagement with the TurkIncel community appears to significantly escalate the risk. The most severe attack she faced from the community occurred after she directly quoted a tweet from a prominent individual within the group. However, direct engagement is not always necessary to become a target. As the screenshots illustrate, women who catch the attention of the TurkIncel community often receive direct threats of death and doxing, even without prior interaction. It's important to note that the screenshots in Figure 11 do not depict interactions involving Ayşe, Helin, or Tuğba. Instead, these images serve as representative examples of the broader pattern of harassment that women face from the TurkIncel community. These screenshots illustrate how women, often unrelated to any specific controversy or interaction, can become targets of threats, including death threats and doxing attempts. This underscores the severe and pervasive nature of TurkIncel violence, where the process of becoming a target can be almost arbitrary, with the primary precondition being that the target is a woman.

The final aspect of this distinction involves examining how such extreme violence is justified within the Incel community. Central to Incel ideology is the belief that every man has a right to romantic and sexual relationships with women—indeed, they feel entitled to such relationships. Research has shown that hegemonic masculinity can foster a sense of aggrieved entitlement, a phenomenon described as "a gendered emotion, a fusion of that humiliating loss of manhood and the moral obligation and entitlement to get it back" (Kalish & Kimmel, 2020).

This sense of aggrieved entitlement is closely tied to the concept of victimhood, which plays a crucial role in Incel ideology. Victimhood theory, as proposed by scholars like Sykes (1992), suggests that individuals or groups may adopt a victim status as a means of gaining moral leverage or justifying their actions. Sykes further explains: "The new culture reflects a readiness not merely to feel sorry for oneself but to wield one's resentments as weapons of social advantage and to regard deficiencies as entitlements to society's deference" (p.12). In the context of the Incel community, this manifests as a pervasive narrative of victimization at the hands of societal changes, particularly those related to gender dynamics and dating norms.

The politics of victimhood further amplifies this narrative within Incel circles. As Jacoby (2015) notes, victimhood can become a powerful political identity, offering a sense of moral superiority and a justification for grievances. Incels have effectively weaponized this concept, positioning themselves as victims of a societal structure they perceive as inherently unfair and oppressive to certain groups of men. This victimhood narrative serves multiple purposes within the community: it provides a sense of shared identity, justifies feelings of anger and resentment, and especially is used to rationalize extreme ideologies or actions.

The masculinity crisis, extensively discussed in the second chapter, significantly contributes to the Incel community's assertation of their victimhood status. Incels, both globally and in Turkey, perceive the world as having unjustly deprived them of their supposed right to intimacy. They believe that while all men face challenges, Incels face even greater difficulties. This belief aligns with certain ideologies prevalent in the digital culture of right-wing circles, particularly those embraced by the TurkIncel community: the Redpill and Blackpill.

The Red Pill philosophy, derived from the Matrix franchise, occupies a central position within many Alt-Right communities. It represents the choice between enlightenment (the red pill) and blissful ignorance (the blue pill). In the narrative, the protagonist, Neo, chooses the Red Pill and gains a clear understanding of the world's true nature, recognizing that 'the world in which he lives is designed to deceive and enslave him' (Dignam & Rohlinger, 2019, p. 595). Similarly, adherents of the Red Pill philosophy believe they see through the true nature of feminism and advocate for reclaiming power to dismantle the system they see as oppressive to men.

However, some men adopt a more pessimistic view, represented by the Blackpill. This perspective goes beyond the Red Pill's awareness by accepting the harsh reality that they believe genetically inferior men—referred to as 'betas'—will always be at a disadvantage in attracting female attention compared to those perceived as 'alphas,' who are considered genetically superior.

In October 2023, a woman on X reported that a student from METU (Middle East Technical University) in Ankara had shared a link to a manifesto in the department's WhatsApp group. It was later revealed that he had left QR codes on cafeteria tables, leading to a 66-page document titled "The Blackpill Manifesto." Interestingly, the manifesto included his full name, personal information, and even

the results of an online IQ test, complete with standard deviation rates. He summarizes the Blackpill with the statement: “Everything you experience in life is entirely dependent on your genetics and environment. Life is, in a way, a matter of luck" (Özdemir, 2023).

The manifesto includes a detailed analysis of Turkish society, suggesting that economic conditions might give 'betas' in Turkey a higher chance of success compared to their American counterparts, provided they have the financial means. He attributes the root of the problem to third-wave feminism, claiming that feminist trends on social media are funded by foreign powers or that terms like “fatphobia” are created to benefit the food industry.

In the text, he compares statistics—calculated by himself—regarding femicide rates among women and occupational accidents among men, emphasizing the suffering of men according to his own figures. As he nears the end of his manifesto, he addresses the question: “Why do Incels commit massacres?” He responds: “Society has failed these people. To society, these people are monsters. If society declares war on you, you declare war on society, and this is the result” (p. 40).

This is how the TurkIncel community rationalizes the extremity of their violence. It is crucial to understand that these violent acts—mass shootings, rape threats, and harassment—are not perceived as arbitrary by the Incels. Instead, they view violence as an important and strategic means to achieve their goals. Through their lens, they position themselves as "victims," claiming to be deprived of their perceived entitlements. In interviews with three women who experienced digital harassment from the TurkIncel community, the dominant sentiment used to describe their attackers was "anger." Incels, viewing themselves as wronged, as victims, are

driven by a desire to make others suffer. The perceived unjust treatment they receive from women, in their view, justifies their need to express their anger and resentment in ways that force the world to take notice[13].

4.4 Concluding remarks

Anti-gender and anti-women movements are often closely linked to violence. The former typically employs symbolic violence and leverages political and legal mechanisms to undermine women's rights, while the latter more directly engages in physical and digital violence. In Turkey, as in other patriarchal societies, misogyny and gender-based violence are deeply woven into the social fabric. This entrenched misogyny is reflected in the state's approach to women, particularly in its handling of intimate partner violence, and is evident in society through the rising number of femicides, as described in this chapter.

Building on the discussion of the masculinity crisis in the second chapter, this chapter delves into its specific manifestations within the Turkish context. In Turkey, hegemonic masculinity is deeply intertwined with the institutions of marriage and the role of the 'breadwinner.' However, evolving societal norms have begun to challenge these traditional paradigms. Rising divorce rates, women's increasing presence in the workforce, and shifting expectations in marital relationships all contribute to a profound destabilization of long-held notions of masculinity. And as traditional

[13] Victimhood narratives have historically played a significant role in Turkish political discourse, particularly in recent years (Morieson, Yilmaz & Kenes, 2024; Al-Ghazzi, 2021; Yılmaz & Albayrak, 2021). These narratives often frame certain groups, particularly conservative Muslims, as victims of secular elites and Western influences. While this type of victimhood discourse has been extensively studied in the context of Turkish politics, the emergence of new forms of victimhood narratives, such as those propagated by the TurkIncel community, demands scholarly attention. Although a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between these different victimhood narratives lies beyond the scope of this thesis, future research exploring the intersections and divergences between politically motivated victimhood discourses and those of online subcultures like TurkIncel could yield valuable insights into the evolving landscape of Turkish social and political dynamics.

avenues for asserting male dominance erode, some men resort to violence as a means of reasserting control. This is evidenced by the alarming rise in femicide rates and the intensification of gender-based violence in recent years, particularly following events such as Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention.

While this broader landscape of gender-based violence has undoubtedly provided fertile ground for the Incel phenomenon to take root in Turkey, the TurkIncel movement's relationship with violence is distinct in several crucial ways. Unlike the more generalized patterns of gender-based violence prevalent in Turkish society, TurkIncel violence manifests with unique characteristics that set it apart. These distinctions can be observed in three key areas: the medium through which the violence is carried out, the process of target selection, and the narratives used to justify these acts of aggression.

First, the medium through which TurkIncel violence is perpetrated is distinct: it primarily occurs in the digital realm, particularly on social media platforms. This chapter presents data from women who have experienced cyber harassment through interactions with the TurkIncel community, offering a glimpse into the community's digital actions in pursuit of their cause.

Second, the process of target selection within the TurkIncel community differs significantly. Most recorded cases of gender-based violence in Turkey involve intimate partners—husbands, fathers, and siblings—indicating a personal relationship between victim and perpetrator (UNFPA, 2023). In contrast, TurkIncel violence targets women who are strangers to the perpetrators. While online anonymity conceals the perpetrators' real identities, the relationship between victim and attacker is often parasocial from the outset. TurkIncel members seek out women

they view as enemies and launch attacks against them, driven by their distorted perception of these women as the cause of their grievances.

Lastly, the TurkIncel community has a distinct way of justifying their violence. These acts are not viewed as arbitrary; rather, the violence is a strategic tool used to achieve their objectives. Central to this justification is the narrative of victimhood, which is fueled by the perceived crisis of masculinity—particularly in the context of the dating scene, according to Incel ideology. This narrative drives their relationship with violence, which is seen as a means of exacting revenge on women, making them suffer in retaliation for the perceived suffering of Incels.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

"I hesitated a long time before writing a book on woman. The subject is irritating, especially for women; and it is not new."

(Butler, 2019)

My scholarly interest in the Incel community began in 2020 when I undertook a paper for an anthropology course. Initially, the topic piqued my interest due to its intriguing nature—a digital community of frustrated and lonely men. However, as I delved deeper into the subject, I realized that my engagement with this topic would extend well beyond the confines of that semester. As I briefly mentioned in the introductory chapter, I was born during a time of rapid technological change. Growing up in Turkey, I experienced a unique blend of traditional and modern influences, witnessing firsthand the transition from a largely analog world to an increasingly digital one. I was fortunate to have early access to computers and the internet, largely due to my older brother. In 2009, at the age of 11, I created my first social media account on Facebook, albeit by lying about my age. Two years later, I opened my current Twitter account and have been actively using social media ever since, amounting to 15 years of my 26-year life spent on these platforms.

This extensive engagement with social media platforms has provided me with a unique perspective on the evolution of digital communities and the emergence of movements like Inceldom. As I delved deeper into my research, I realized that the Incel phenomenon, particularly its manifestation in Turkey as the TurkIncel movement, represents a complex intersection of gender dynamics, digital culture, and societal tensions.

At this point, I believe following the order of the chapters is beneficial for building the argument step by step from the beginning. The introductory chapter lays the groundwork for both Incel ideology and the TurkIncel movement. The second chapter then approaches the issue from a gender perspective. As explained throughout the chapters, misogyny is not a 21st-century invention, nor did reactionary men's movements emerge only recently. Much like a natural progression, as the feminist movement advances, masculinity responds, often defensively (Connell, 2005). The tangible achievements of feminism in the 20th century, followed by the groundbreaking #MeToo movement of 4th-wave feminism, resulted in an updated version of masculinity in crisis. However, as mentioned above, this is not an unusual trajectory.

What is intriguing about the Incel movement lies in its response to this masculinity crisis. Over time, various groups and movements of men have generated their own responses and solutions to the struggles of being a man. Some have fought through legal channels, others focused on raising new generations of boys, and some even stood by feminists to fight for gender equality for all. However, the Incel movement has come up with a completely unique answer and solution to the crisis—one that diverges from other anti-women movements and sentiments both globally and in the Turkish context.

This response, unlike others, is not directed at improving men's life standards, fighting against prejudices, or finding a way to exist as a man in the 21st century. Rather, it feeds off a desire for retribution. As the Incel community believes they have been robbed of their entitlement to intimacy and romance with women, they seek to make the women who 'stole' from them pay. I categorize this aspect of the Incel response as the revanchist masculinist nature of the movement. This

characteristic became particularly evident through the experiences of the three women I interviewed, who were targeted, harassed, and forced to deactivate their X accounts for their safety by TurkIncel individuals.

Continuing with the digital aspect of the issue, it is crucial to outline the dynamics of the current digital landscape that not only enables the flow of extreme beliefs within the TurkIncel movement but also serves as the environment where these attacks take place. Reflecting on my personal connection to this research, even when setting aside my role as a researcher, I have witnessed a significant transformation on Twitter over the past few years, having essentially grown up on the platform. Ideas that would have once led to social backlash or forced users to deactivate their accounts now garner thousands of retweets and favorites. Based on my observations and research, I attribute this transformation to two key factors: Elon Musk's acquisition of Twitter, marking a new era of X, and the decision by forums to ban violent content and communities, which led to their migration to X.

While the first factor prepared the environment, the second resulted in the spread of more extreme beliefs into the mainstream. Coupled with Musk’s, hence X’s, emphasis on 'free speech' and the anonymity offered by the platform, the Incel worldview found a space where it could flourish. The TurkIncel community's engagement with global Incel ideology through adaptation and localization further demonstrates how digital spaces facilitate the transnational spread of such movements. Ultimately, this transformed digital landscape gave the TurkIncel community a different way to experience their misogynist sentiments and take action for their cause—leading to a differentiation from existing anti-women tendencies.

The fourth chapter, which focuses on the TurkIncel movement's relationship with violence, ties together the two aspects mentioned earlier. It explores both how

this revanchist nature manifests itself and how the anonymity and current state of the digital landscape enable the community's violent actions. These actions are again justified by the same response to the masculinity crisis, through a narrative of victimhood.

However, one additional discovery in this chapter is the arbitrary nature of their target selection process, which underscores the depth of the movement's misogyny. As highlighted through the experiences of interviewees and the community's tweets, the only prerequisite for becoming a target of their attacks is being a woman—whether an acquaintance, friend, or family is irrelevant. Their targets are seen as enemies, and simply being a woman whom they can see but cannot have, even without an actual rejection, is enough to make someone an enemy of the TurkIncel community. Bringing all of this together, the nature of the medium through which the violence is carried out, the process of target selection, and the narratives that justify this violence by the community represent the unique relationship the TurkIncel community has with violence compared to other forms of gender-based violence in Turkish society.

Rebuilding it step by step, we finally arrive at the main argument of this thesis. I argue that the Incel movement represents a new phase of anti-women, reactionary movements, characterized by its revanchist masculinist nature as a response to the masculinity crisis; its digital nature, which, through anonymity, dismantles social boundaries and facilitates the global spread of extreme beliefs; and its unique justification of violence, rooted in a narrative of victimhood that emerges from the same masculinity crisis.

As we approach the core argument, fundamental questions arise: "What are the implications?" and "What significance does this difference hold?" or a simple

“But then what?" Before addressing these, I must acknowledge how my identity as a researcher influences these inquiries.

In studying the Incel phenomenon, my identity as a woman is an unavoidable factor. This project has been an intriguing experience as I attempt to understand a community that vehemently opposes everything I embody. Moreover, as an openly feminist woman, it has been challenging because the community embodies everything I vehemently oppose. I imagine many researchers, especially those early in their careers, struggle with whether to incorporate their own thoughts and judgments—a dilemma I deeply empathized with during this study.

Despite the valuable insights gained from this research, it's important to acknowledge its limitations. My identity as a woman researcher created barriers to directly accessing the TurkIncel community. This limitation potentially impacts the depth of understanding we can achieve about the internal dynamics and personal motivations of TurkIncel members. Future research could benefit from male researchers or mixed-gender teams who might gain more direct access to these communities.

Additionally, the rapidly evolving nature of online communities poses a challenge to this type of research. The digital landscape can change dramatically in a short time, potentially altering the dynamics and expressions of the TurkIncel movement. This study provides a snapshot of the community at a specific point in time, but ongoing research will be necessary to track its evolution.

Another limitation lies in the scope of the study. While it focuses on the Turkish context, a more comprehensive understanding could be gained through comparative studies with Incel communities in other countries or cultures. This could

further help identify which aspects of the TurkIncel movement are unique to the Turkish context and which are part of broader global trends.

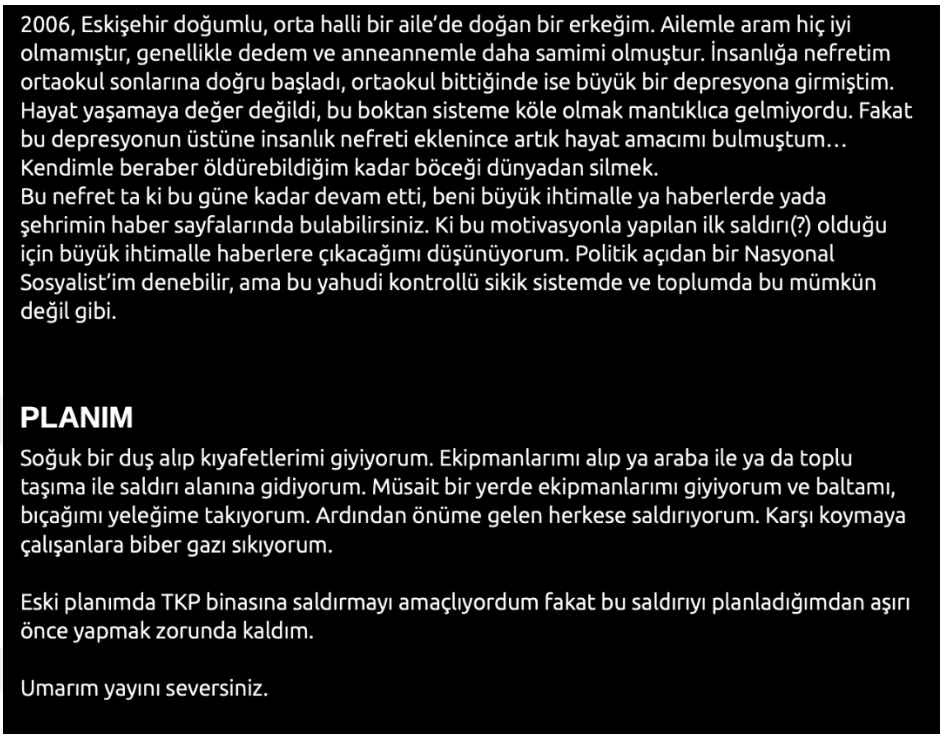
However, while my women identity created barriers to accessing the community, it also provided invaluable insight into the experiences of those targeted by Incel hostility. Moreover, my immersion in digital and social media platforms proved advantageous, facilitating a deeper understanding of the subject matter through familiarity with relevant concepts and jargon. However, distinguishing between field research and personal digital engagement presented its own challenges.

Despite the occasional disadvantages of my identity in accessing the community, I firmly believe in the value of studying issues that directly affect oneself. As a woman living in Turkey and active on social media, TurkIncel violence is a direct concern—I am a potential target. This personal stake drives a level of concern and worry that fuels passionate analysis. I do share the concerns of potential readers who might ask, "What are the next steps?"

At the time of writing this thesis, the violent actions of the TurkIncel community have remained confined to the digital sphere, unlike those of its U.S. counterparts. However, August 2024 witnessed an incident that could significantly impact the trajectory of violence within digital communities. An 18-year-old man, Arda K., armed with a knife, attacked people in a cafeteria. He wore a helmet, an axe on his belt, a mask covering his face, and an assault vest, managing to injure five individuals. Prior to the attack, he published a manifesto titled “The Handbook of the Mass Cleaner,” in which he explained his motivations.

The manifesto is filled with racist, antisemitic, homophobic, and Nazi-adjacent statements that I choose not to quote due to their extreme bigotry. Arda K. categorizes potential attack locations by their level of difficulty—schools, mosques,

and libraries being the easiest, while airports, police stations, and stadiums are considered the hardest. He also outlines a scoring system for “kills” and injuries, with pregnant women earning the highest points.



2006, Eskişehir doğumlu, orta halli bir aile'de doğan bir erkeğim. Ailemle aram hiç iyi olmamıştır, genellikle dedem ve anneannemle daha samimi olmuştur. İnsanlığa nefretim ortaokul sonlarına doğru başladı, ortaokul bittiğinde ise büyük bir depresyona girmiştim. Hayat yaşamaya değer değildi, bu boktan sisteme köle olmak mantıklıca gelmiyordu. Fakat bu depresyonun üstüne insanlık nefreti eklenince artık hayat amacımı bulmuştum… Kendimle beraber öldürebildiğim kadar böceği dünyadan silmek.
Bu nefret ta ki bu güne kadar devam etti, beni büyük ihtimalle ya haberlerde yada şehrimin haber sayfalarında bulabilirsiniz. Ki bu motivasyonla yapılan ilk saldırı(?) olduğu için büyük ihtimalle haberlere çıkacağımı düşünüyorum. Politik açıdan bir Nasyonal Sosyalist'im denebilir, ama bu yahudi kontrollü sikik sistemde ve toplumda bu mümkün değil gibi.

PLANIM

Soğuk bir duş alıp kıyafetlerimi giyiyorum. Ekipmanlarımı alıp ya araba ile ya da toplu taşıma ile saldırı alanına gidiyorum. Müsait bir yerde ekipmanlarımı giyiyorum ve baltamı, bıçağımı yeleğime takıyorum. Ardından önüme gelen herkese saldırıyorum. Karşı koymaya çalışanlara biber gazı sıkıyorum.

Eski planımda TKP binasına saldırmayı amaçlıyordum fakat bu saldırıyı planladığımdan aşırı önce yapmak zorunda kaldım.

Umarım yayını seversiniz.

Figure 12. Excerpt from the manifesto, titled "Handbook of Mass Cleaner"

The remainder of the manifesto largely serves as a guide on how to commit mass attacks, before shifting to his personal story, worldview, and the individuals he admires—among them Anders Breivik, a self-identified neo-Nazi who killed 77 people in a bombing and shooting spree in 2011 (Al Jazeera, 2024), and Timothy McVeigh, the perpetrator of the deadliest act of homegrown terrorism in U.S. history (“Oklahoma City Bombing”).

The internet is the sole facilitator enabling an 18-year-old man in Turkey to develop Nazi-adjacent beliefs and view foreign mass attackers as heroes, leading to a level of commitment where he can plan and attempt an attack on civilians. It's

important to note that this individual does not identify as an Incel, nor does his manifesto display specific elements of Incel ideology. However, as is common among reactionary digital communities, they not only exist and evolve within the same online landscape but also converge on many issues, particularly in their opposition to emancipatory movements.

This individual was influenced by the worldview he encountered and interacted with online. By publishing his manifesto, he not only absorbed these extreme beliefs but also contributed to the same content ecosystem that once influenced him, holding the potential to impact many others. The connection between this incident and the TurkIncel movement can be understood through three key aspects.

First, both phenomena demonstrate the power of the internet and, more broadly, the digital world in spreading extreme beliefs on a transnational scale, whether they are predominantly misogynistic or, as in Arda's case, misanthropic. Secondly, both are fueled by anger and hatred—TurkIncel individuals and this particular individual share a deep-seated resentment toward the state of the world and the society they live in. Finally, both propose action plans involving physical violence as a means to create the world they desire.

This, hopefully, isolated incident highlights the extreme potential of digital communities and and opens up a broader discussion on the governance of the digital world. In this context, the TurkIncel community requires urgent scholarly and political attention as one of the most extreme online communities within Turkey. While this project contributes to the academic understanding of the broader Incel phenomenon, it also marks the first step in documenting the TurkIncel movement. Despite certain limitations—primarily due to my inability to access the TurkIncel

community directly because of my gender identity—initiating this documentation is a valuable endeavor given the substantial gap in existing literature. Given the community is relatively new and smaller compared to its global counterparts, I believe, my dataset and findings offer valuable insights into its current state and dynamics.

Moving forward, there are several crucial directions for future research and action. First, longitudinal studies tracking the development of the TurkIncel community over time would provide valuable insights into how these ideologies evolve and spread. This could help in developing early intervention strategies to prevent radicalization.

Secondly, interdisciplinary research combining perspectives from psychology, sociology, gender studies, and digital media studies could offer a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon. This could involve exploring the psychological factors that draw individuals to these communities, the societal conditions that facilitate their growth, and the role of digital platforms in their spread.

From a policy perspective, there's a need for research that can inform digital platform governance. This could involve studying the effectiveness of different moderation strategies in curbing extremist content while balancing concerns about free speech. Moreover, there's a critical need for research on prevention strategies. This could include studies on education programs that promote healthy masculinity, and/or digital literacy that could make young men less susceptible to extremist ideologies online.

The internet and its communities are constantly evolving, leaving room for continuous improvement in scholarly work focused on these topics. While this study marks an important first step in documenting and understanding the TurkIncel

movement, it also highlights the urgent need for continued research and action. As online communities continue to shape real-world behaviors and ideologies, understanding and addressing phenomena like the TurkIncel movement becomes crucial for promoting a more equitable and less violent society. The path forward requires collaborative efforts from researchers, policymakers, educators, and digital platforms to address this complex and evolving challenge.

APPENDIX A

ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL

T.C.
BOĞAZİÇİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ
Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (Sbinarek)

Sayı : E-84391427-050.04-177704 30.04.2024
Konu : 2024-03T Kayıt Numaralı Başvurunuz Hakkında

Sayın Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Sinan ERENSÜ

Tez danışmanlığını yürüttüğünüz öğrenciniz Miraç Nil Zor'un "Dijital Dünyada Politik Radikalleşme: İnceller üzerine bir İnceleme" başlıklı projesi ile Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (SBİNAREK)'e yaptığınız 2024-03T kayıt numaralı başvuru 18.04.2024 tarih ve 2024/03 sayılı kurul toplantısında incelenmiş ve projeye etik onay verilmesi uygun bulunmuştur.

Bu karar tüm üyelerin toplantıya on-line olarak katılımıyla ve oybirliği ile alınmıştır. Onay mektubu tüm üyeler adına Komisyon Başkanı tarafından e-imzalanmıştır. Bilgilerinizi rica ederiz.

Saygılarımızla,

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Işıl ERDUYAN
Kurul Başkanı

Bu belge, güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.
Belge Doğrulama Kodu : 0EDV-ZYZ3-07Z0 Belge Doğrulama Adresi : https://www.turkiye.gov.tr/bogazici-universitesi-ebys

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APPENDIX B

LONG QUOTE

Translation of the Excerpt from the “Handbook of Mass Cleaner”

WHO AM I?

I am a male born in 2006 in Eskişehir to a middle-class family. I've never had a good relationship with my family and have generally been closer to my grandfather and grandmother. My hatred for humanity began around the end of middle school, and by the time middle school ended, I had fallen into a deep depression. Life didn't seem worth living; being a slave to this crappy system didn't make sense. But when this hatred for humanity was added to my depression, I finally found my purpose in life... To wipe out as many insects (people) from the world as I can, along with myself. This hatred has persisted to this day, and you will most likely find me in the news or on the news pages of my city. Since this is likely the first attack(?) carried out with this motivation, I think I'll probably make it to the news. Politically, you could call me a National Socialist, but in this Jewish-controlled fucked-up system and society, that doesn't seem possible.

MY PLAN

I take a cold shower and get dressed. I grab my equipment and head to the attack location, either by car or public transportation. I find a suitable spot to put on my gear and attach my axe and knife to my vest. Then, I attack everyone in front of me. I use pepper spray on anyone who tries to resist.

My original plan was to attack the TKP (Communist Party of Turkey) building, but I had to carry out this attack much earlier than planned.

I hope you enjoy the broadcast.

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