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Framing displaced persons: An analysis of Turkish media's use of migration metaphors on Twitter

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Abstract

In recent years, social media has been recognized as instrumental in shaping the discourse around displaced persons, particularly through the power of metaphorical framing. Given that online communication can lead to real-world consequences for individuals, X (formerly known as Twitter) now stands out as a crucial platform for discussing migration issues in Turkey. However, while Twitter holds significant sway over public discourse in Turkey, there remains a research gap concerning its role in migration-related metaphorical framing. This study, employing critical metaphor analysis (CMA), delves into the metaphorical representations associated with the terms *göçmen* ('migrant'), *sığınmacı* ('asylum-seeker'), and *mülteci* ('refugee') in the tweets of four major Turkish media outlets: *Hürriyet*, *Haber Türk*, *Sözcü*, and *Cumhuriyet*. The findings reveal a predominant negative framing of all three terms, with *göçmen* and *sığınmacı* often equated with crime and *mülteci* with objectification. Also, the political inclination of the media outlets played a role, with those aligned closer to the Turkish government showcasing fewer negative frames. In conclusion, the study highlights the profound impact of media's metaphorical framing, revealing its capacity to color public perceptions about displaced populations, a phenomenon accentuated by the specific terms chosen and the media's political leanings.

Keywords: migration; Turkey; metaphor; framing; displaced persons; discourse

1 Introduction

Due to conflicts and human rights violations, notably the Syrian Civil War that began in 2011, there has been a significant surge in migration and asylum-seeking, with Turkey emerging as a pivotal transit point (Hasdemir & Çetin, 2018; Nurdoğan & Öztürk, 2018). As these numbers grow, the media's role in shaping discourse on asylum seekers becomes increasingly crucial (Livberber, 2021). Media discourse is influenced by 'frames' – structures that shape how information is presented and understood (Gitlin, 2003). According to

Benczes and Szabó (2020), frames have emerged in various fields such as artificial intelligence (Minsky, 1975), psychology (Kahneman & Tversky, 1984), semantics (Fillmore, 1976), and cognitive linguistics (Lakoff, 1986). Although the exact definition of a frame varies among these disciplines, they commonly view frames as 'means for structuring and understanding our surroundings through stable cognitive models' (Benczes & Szabó, 2020). Furthermore, the idea of a frame is known by many names, including script, scenario, and scene, but fundamentally represents a coherent organization of 'human experience' (Kövecses, 2006).

This paper specifically concentrates on metaphorical framing, as metaphors are often regarded as fundamental triggers of framing, a concept highlighted by Krippendorff (2017), and profoundly impact public opinion by organizing information using metaphors (Burgers et al., 2016). According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980; 2003), a metaphor is a way of understanding one kind of thing in terms of another, involving a conceptual mapping between two different domains. In this context, the 'source domain' is the domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions, and the 'target domain' is the domain that we seek to understand or describe. For example, in the metaphor 'time is money,' 'money' is the source domain from which we borrow concepts to understand and express ideas about 'time,' the target domain. This conceptual framework highlights how metaphors shape our perception and understanding of the world. In other words, metaphors bridge the familiar with the unfamiliar, offering both simple and complex comparisons, such as viewing socio-political issues through relatable terms (Charteris-Black, 2004; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). For instance, the phrase 'tax relief' embodies the metaphor 'taxation is a burden,' framing taxes as a heavy load on taxpayers, creating negative sentiment (Lakoff, 1996). This interpretation not only casts taxes in a negative light despite their role in funding public services but also implies that politicians should aim to lessen this burden by reducing taxes. Frequent media usage embeds these metaphors in public thought, eventually making them indistinguishable from the concepts they illustrate (Burgers et al., 2016). This shows metaphors' role in shaping and constructing reality, highlighting their significance in power dynamics and the media's influential role in shaping societal perspectives (Kövecses, 2020; Musolff, 2007).

2 The framing of migration

Numerous studies have demonstrated the negative impact of metaphorical framing on public opinion about migration and migrants (Arcimaviciene & Baglama, 2018; Baider & Kopytowska, 2017; Benczes & Ságvári, 2021; Charteris-Black, 2006; Musolff, 2015; Taylor, 2021)2006; Musolff, 2015; Taylor, 2021. For example, in recent years, Hungary has been at the center of controversy over migration, with the highest rate of refusal of migrants from poorer non-European countries, which began in 2015 when the migration crisis started (Messing & Ságvári, 2019). This negative attitude toward migrants was also detected in Benczes and Ságvári (2021), who analyzed the metaphorical framing of three Hungarian keywords used to refer to displaced people, namely *bevándorló* ('immigrant'), *migráns* ('migrant'), and *menekült* ('refugee'), in both pro-government and non-government media

outlets from 2015 to April 2018. Their study found that media outlets commonly used war- and flood-related metaphors to frame migrants negatively, with pro-government outlets employing more hostile source domains than non-government news portals.

Hungary is not the only country in Europe where migrants are framed negatively in the media. Another piece of research concerning the framing of refugees through metaphor in the Austrian media showed that refugees were mostly framed in connection with security and economic problems (Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017). Similarly, Farris and Silber Mohamed (2018) demonstrate that immigrants are frequently characterized as unauthorized groups of people trying to break into the US. Furthermore, Harris and Gruenewald (2020) uncovered that the framing of immigrants as criminals increased significantly between 1990–2013, and immigrants were framed as responsible for increasing crime rates in the US. Many other studies found that migration is framed negatively in different countries and regions (Ana, 1999; Arcimaviciene & Baglama, 2018; Baider & Kopytowska, 2017; Catalano & Mitchell-McCollough, 2019; Charteris-Black, 2006; Hart, 2021; Montagut, 2020). Metaphors are essential in this regard as they compete with each other to dominate the common narrative and establish realities (Miller, 1979).

While countries like Hungary host a minuscule number of people who have fled, as of 2023, Turkey has become the global epicenter for people, hosting a staggering 3.9 million people (*Türkiye Fact Sheet*, 2023). This influx, mainly from Syria, has created linguistic challenges, with media frequently blurring distinctions between terms such as 'migrant,' 'asylum-seeker,' and 'refugee' (Fansa, 2021). As a result, Turkey has implemented legal nuances by issuing the Law on Foreigners and International Protection and the Temporary Protection Regulation. This reflects recognition of the unique situation of Syrian people living in Turkey, leading to the adoption of the term 'temporary protection' (Fansa, 2021, p. 300). Consequently, it is increasingly considered appropriate to define Syrian individuals residing in Turkey as 'Persons under Temporary Protection' rather than using conventional terms such as refugee, asylum seeker, foreigner, or stateless. Furthermore, the discourse around migration in Turkey is intricate and influenced by various factors. Aydemir (2022) illustrates how different political ideologies and affiliations interpret the presence of Syrian refugees. Notably, the governing Justice and Development Party's (JDP) initial openness to Muslim populations, rooted in Neo-Ottoman inclinations, underwent a transformation post-2016. Similarly, the alignment of Turkish nationalists with the JDP in 2018 brought about a moderation in their views. The broader conversation oscillates, with some narratives echoing Western European concerns of Syrians as a 'threat,' while others, influenced by the JDP's civilizationist populism, emphasize humanitarian aspects interwoven with security and economic considerations (Memisoglu & Ilgit, 2017; Yanaşmayan, 2019).

Against this backdrop, it is important to briefly mention the state of media ownership in Turkey. Since the economic liberalization of the 1980s, Turkey's media ownership landscape has undergone significant transformation. Research by Akser (2018) underscores the industry's consolidation, leading to growing concerns about censorship and the pronounced political influence of media entities. Highlighting the threat to pluralism, Gül (2011) delves into the challenges posed by media monopolization. In the contemporary landscape, three major media groups – Demirören, Kalyon/Turkuvaz, and Doğuş – command a staggering 95.04 per cent of the audience across various media platforms (Media

Ownership Monitor Turkey, 2021). Their close alignment with the JDP critically influences news representation and public discourse (Digital News Report 2021, 2021). Amidst this media landscape, Twitter emerged as an essential platform, offering an alternative space for the public voice and diverse perspectives.[1]

Building on the context of media ownership in Turkey, it is imperative to recognize the role of online platforms. Given that online communication can lead to real-world consequences for individuals (Goodman et al., 2017), Twitter, the second most popular platform after YouTube (Digital News Report 2021, 2021), stands out as a crucial platform for discussing migration issues in Turkey. According to Ozduzen et al. (2021), there is a shared sentiment among the Turkish community on Twitter about the perceived threats posed by immigrants, especially Syrians, present in their daily lives and their perceived roles not only in Turkey but also in Western nations. These prevalent narratives intertwine with decision-making strategies regarding Turkey's existential challenges, and the solutions they imply – taking back control from groups like the JDP, Arabs, and Kurds – reflect an underlying racialization of Syrians within Turkey (Ozduzen et al., 2021, p. 3365).

Numerous studies address Turkey's migration and refugee situations, yet few explore metaphorical framing – only two, to my knowledge. Notably, Çoban Keneş (2016) identified metaphors like 'flood' and 'wave' for displaced Syrians and depicted them as an 'economic burden' or 'cheap and illegal labor.' Another study by Çakir & Köseliören (2022) highlighted negative migrant metaphors in mainstream newspapers, mirroring rising anti-migrant sentiments. While their focus was online news, this research shifts the lens to metaphorical framing on social media concerning displaced persons because, despite Twitter's influence, there is a notable gap in research that addresses metaphorical framing on Twitter. This study seeks to bridge literature gaps regarding Turkey's metaphorical framing of displaced individuals, employing the specialized critical metaphor analysis (CMA) approach pioneered by Charteris-Black (2004; 2018). CMA integrates corpus linguistics, cognitive linguistics, and critical discourse analysis to unearth underlying intentions in language use. Specifically, the focus is on the metaphorical portrayal of displaced individuals by prominent Turkish media on Twitter and how political biases influence these metaphor choices.

Three prevalent terms for displaced individuals – *göçmen* (migrant/immigrant), *mülteci* (refugee), and *sığınmacı* (asylum-seeker) – were chosen for this study. Meanwhile, the corpus is sourced from four leading Turkish digital newspapers on Twitter: *Habertürk*, *Hürriyet*, *Sözcü*, and *Cumhuriyet* (BoomSocial, 2023). The study is based on two research questions:

RQ1 What kinds of metaphorical conceptualization emerge depending on the keyword (*göçmen, sığınmacı, mülteci*)?

RQ2 How does the political leaning of the four Turkish media outlets (*Hürriyet, Haber Türk, Sözcü, and Cumhuriyet*) affect the choice of metaphorical framing of displaced persons on Twitter?

As mentioned, Twitter serves as the primary medium for this study due to its pivotal role in influencing public discourse, exhibiting both direct and mediated impacts on public

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[1] X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, is referred to by its historical name, Twitter, throughout this paper.

opinion (Gaisbauer et al., 2021). Furthermore, in Turkey, Twitter's prominence is evident; it is a leading platform that fosters transparency, enhances public services, promotes civic engagement, and upholds democratic ideals (Sobaci & Karkin, 2013). The platform's significance was further heightened due to its pivotal role during the 2023 Turkey-Syria earthquake, aiding search and rescue missions and facilitating public debate on the disaster response (Susarla, 2023). Second, despite its influence, there remains a notable gap in research addressing metaphorical framing on Twitter, especially concerning migration narratives.

3 Methodology

3.1 Corpus building

The corpus of this study is comprised of four media outlets from Turkey, containing 600 tweets, covering the period of 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2022. In the last five years, Turkey has experienced a further influx of asylum-seekers, compounded by significant economic crises, such as a declining currency and inflation (Rogalewicz, 2022). Simultaneously, diplomatic tensions with the U.S. and EU escalated due to divergent stances on Turkey's actions in Syria, the handling of refugees, and border confrontations with Greece involving asylum-seekers (Cook, 2018; van Heukelingen & Püttmann, 2023). In addition to the challenges Turkey confronts, public and media perceptions further emphasize the perceived migration burden, shaping the national discourse on the issue. These intertwined socio-political events make this period essential in any scrutiny of how the media depicts and influences public views on displaced people. The four most widely-followed newspapers among Turkish Twitter users are *Habertürk* (@Haberturk) with 4.8 million followers, *Hürriyet* (@Hurriyet) with 4.3 million, *Sözcü* (@gazetesozcu) with 3.6 million, and *Cumhuriyet* (@cumhuriyetgzt) with 3.5 million (BoomSocial, 2023). *Hürriyet*, once the most prominent newspaper in Turkey, was bought by the pro-government conglomerate Demirören Group in 2018, resulting in a significant shift in its editorial policy and political leaning (Kızılkaya & Ütücü, 2021). *Habertürk* still has some critical journalists but is also known for its pro-government bias (Kızılkaya & Ütücü, 2021). On the other side, *Sözcü* is one of Turkey's most popular publications and is renowned for its strident, Kemalist criticism of the incumbent president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and the governing Justice and Development Party (Bianet, 2016; Eurotopics, 2023).[2] Finally, one of the oldest newspapers in Turkey, *Cumhuriyet*, was categorized as an established, independent, and secularist newspaper (p. 11).

The tweets were collected using Twint (a Twitter intelligence tool) and Apify (a data extraction platform). The process was automated from the very beginning by extracting the tweets based on the three keywords, time frame, and Twitter profiles of each media outlet. After collecting the tweets, duplications and tweets that included the keywords but

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[2] The term 'Kemalism' refers to the ideas and beliefs of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who established the Republic of Turkey (Heper & Sayari, 2013).

in a different context other than human migration (such as tweets that refer to routes of migratory birds) were removed. Then, tweets were randomized, and 50 tweets from each account were selected and compiled. Thus, a corpus with 600 tweets was created. The following table, Table 1, summarizes the distribution of the analyzed tweets.

Table 1 Number of tweets, media outlets, and keywords

Hürriyet	**Habertürk**	**Sözcü**	**Cumhuriyet**
Göçmen (50 tweets)	Göçmen (50 tweets)	Göçmen (50 tweets)	Göçmen (50 tweets)
Sığınmacı (50 tweets)	Sığınmacı (50 tweets)	Sığınmacı (50 tweets)	Sığınmacı (50 tweets)
Mülteci (50 tweets)	Mülteci 50 (50 tweets)	Mülteci (50 tweets)	Mülteci (50 tweets)
Total: 150 tweets	**Total: 150 tweets**	**Total: 150 tweets**	**Total: 150 tweets**
600 tweets, four subcorpora			

3.2 Critical Metaphor Analysis

Critical metaphor analysis (CMA) is a method that combines corpus linguistics, cognitive linguistics, and critical discourse analysis to uncover the hidden intentions of language users (Charteris-Black, 2004; 2018). CMA focuses on analyzing metaphors and their sources to understand how they persuade people by provoking emotional reactions (Charteris-Black, 2004, p. 41). As a tool for studying metaphors, CMA sheds light on metaphor use associated with sociopolitical issues and raises awareness of powerful groups' metaphorical language, prompting language users to approach metaphors with caution. The methodology hinges on comprehensive corpus-based studies. This inherently systematic approach does not stipulate the number of researchers required for its effective implementation. Given its structured nature, it is feasible for a single researcher to navigate the CMA, as shown by Felder (2022), Martin (2020), Mavrodieva (2020), and Zibin (2020). Nevertheless, while a solo endeavor is justifiable, collaborative efforts might add depth, especially when dissecting expansive corpora. Therefore, having only one analyst associated with this study can be viewed as a limitation.

While there are alternative metaphor identification methods like the metaphor identification procedure (MIP) and the discourse dynamics framework (DDF), CMA was chosen due to its depth in socio-political contexts within news discourse. CMA provides a holistic view of societal narratives and power dynamics; these dimensions are not present in MIP (as it focuses on language) or DDF (which highlights metaphor evolution). The frequent use of CMA in migration discourse research further validates its efficacy in unraveling intricate societal interpretations (Çakir & Köseliören, 2022; Martin, 2020; Zibin, 2020).

3.3 Stages of Critical Metaphor Analysis

1) **Contextual analysis**: The first stage of CMA requires generating research questions based on the awareness of the potential influence of metaphors on society (Charteris-Black, 2018, p. 217).

2) **Metaphor identification**: The second stage of CMA, metaphor identification, focuses on 'what to count as a metaphor' (Charteris-Black, 2018, p. 18). This stage requires an intense reading of a sample corpus – in this case, 600 tweets collected from the Twitter accounts of the four Turkish media outlets. Furthermore, it entails carefully reading the tweets to spot words that exhibit semantic tension due to domain shifting, which are marked as initial candidates for metaphorical expressions. In this context, domain shift denotes a word's transition from its literal meaning to a different, often more abstract, domain, indicating its potential metaphorical use. For instance, when one says 'time is flying,' 'flying' shifts from its literal meaning of moving through the air to represent the swift passage of time. At this stage, further qualitative analysis is then conducted on each candidate metaphor using *Türk Dil Kurumu Sözlüğü* (*TDKS*, the dictionary of the Turkish Language Association), the official regulatory body for the Turkish language. This dictionary was chosen as a guide because of the Turkish Language Association's authority in regulating the Turkish language. If domain shifting is confirmed after this second stage, the candidate metaphor is identified as a metaphorical expression. According to Charteris-Black, counting is done at the phrase level, as metaphors typically occur in phrases or collocations. For instance, the phrase 'refugee invasion' would be counted as one metaphorical expression. This stage is crucial in the CMA process as it determines the presence of metaphorical framing in the sample corpus, contributing to understanding metaphorical language use on Twitter in the context of migration discourse.

3) **Metaphor interpretation**: The third stage concentrates on categorizing metaphors. At this stage, metaphors are classified and organized based on either source or target domains (Charteris-Black, 2018, p. 218). While the source domain refers to the literal meaning of a word we map onto the target domain, the target domain is what we understand in terms of the source domain (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). In this study, metaphors were categorized based on their source domains as they are used to understand displaced persons (target domain). Also, categorization based on source domains is common in CMA-based studies. The online version of *TDKS* was used as a point of reference to identify a word's literal meaning and contextual meaning. For example, in the case of *mülteci akını* ('refugee influx'), the literal meaning of the word *akın* ('influx') refers to the 'unceasing coming or arrival of something crowded.' Therefore, refugees are conceptualized as 'an uncontrolled natural disaster/movement' that is trying to break into Turkish land, and the collocation was identified as an example of the natural disaster metaphor.

4) **Metaphor explanation**: The fourth stage of CMA determines the discourse function, social agency, and ideological/rhetorical motives of metaphors (Charteris-Black, 2004, p. 39; 2018, p. 2019). This stage was crucial for answering the second research question on how the political leaning of Turkish media outlets affects the choice of metaphorical framing of displaced people. Moving from stage three to stage four, metaphors were systematically linked to broader ideological frameworks. This linkage was informed by media monitoring reports on Turkey, which illuminated both media ownership dynamics and their ideological orientations. Thus, metaphors were contextualized against these findings, revealing their alignment with prevalent ideological alignments and narratives in the Turkish media.

Critical metaphor analysis is not without limitations. There is inherent subjectivity in metaphor interpretation, even with literature checks and peer consultations. Metaphor meanings can change with context, posing interpretation risks. A focus on dominant metaphors might also overlook subtle ones. These issues are further discussed in the limitations section.

4 Results and discussion

To avoid redundancy, I first introduce the most prevalent metaphorical source domains identified in the corpus. Subsequently, I display the frequency of these metaphors alongside the associated keywords and discuss their potential implications. Finally, I present the metaphors and keywords in context with the news outlets and their respective political affiliations. Since some source domains – terror, animal, war – appeared at very low frequency, a detailed analysis of them is not provided.[3]

As seen in Table 2, the crime metaphor emerged as the most dominant, accounting for 44 percent of the total, framing migrants predominantly in a negative light. Following this, the object domain, which dehumanizes migrants by likening them to inanimate entities, constituted 24 per cent. The natural phenomena metaphor, which portrays migrants as uncontrollable forces of nature, such as a flood, made up 11 per cent. The pressure/burden metaphor, indicating migrants as a strain or liability, represented 9 per cent, whereas the victim domain, emphasizing the vulnerability and plight of migrants, accounted for 7 per cent. Last, terror, animal, and war domains appeared at very low frequency, occurring at only 1 and 2 per cent. These percentages reflect how migrants are metaphorically conceptualized in the given corpus.

Table 2. Source domains and their occurrence with keywords

Source Domain	göçmen		sığınmacı		mülteci		Total (Occ.)	Total (%)
	Occ.*	%	Occ.	%	Occ.	%		
animal			1	3%	1	3%	2	2%
crime	34	67%	16	40%	6	17%	56	44%
natural phenomena	2	4%	5	13%	7	19%	14	11%
object	9	18%	7	18%	14	39%	30	24%
pressure/burden			6	15%	6	17%	12	9%
terror			1	3%			1	1%
victim	6	12%	3	8%			9	7%
war			1	3%	2	6%	3	2%
Total (by keyword)	51	100%	40	100%	36	100%	127	100%

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[3] Conventionally, metaphor domains such as war and crime are written in lower case in metaphor research.
* Occ. refers to the number of source domain occurrences in the corpus, while % refers to frequency percentage.

4.1 Metaphorical conceptualization of keywords

Across the four media outlets, *göçmen* was the most popular keyword used to address displaced persons, with *Hürriyet* using it the most at 59.3 per cent. *M*ülteci was the dominant term in *Sözcü* at 43.3 percent. Meanwhile, *sığınmacı* was almost equally preferred by *Habertürk* and *Cumhuriyet*, at 32.4 per cent and 36.1 per cent, respectively. Overall, *göçmen* was used most, at 40.2 percent.

In the comprehensive analysis presented in Table 2, distinct metaphorical source domains emerged for the terms *göçmen* ('migrant'), *sığınmacı* ('asylum-seeker'), and *mülteci* ('refugee'). Specifically, for *göçmen*, a significant 67 per cent of the corpus associated it with the crime domain, suggesting a pronounced inclination toward criminalizing this group. This was subsequently followed by OBJECT at 18 per cent, VICTIM at 12 per cent, and NATURAL PHENOMENA at a minimal 4 per cent. In the context of *sığınmacı*, the data showcased a notable pattern, with CRIME again taking the lead at 40 per cent. This was closely trailed by OBJECT at 18 per cent, PRESSURE/BURDEN at 15 per cent, NATURAL PHENOMENA at 13 per cent, and VICTIM at 8 per cent. It is worth noting that metaphors rooted in WAR, ANIMAL, and TERROR domains were rare, each accounting for a single occurrence in the corpus for this term. On the other hand, the metaphorical landscape for *mülteci* was slightly different. OBJECT was the most dominant domain, distinguishing it from the other two terms. This was followed in frequency by NATURAL PHENOMENA, PRESSURE/BURDEN, CRIME, WAR, and ANIMAL. Below, an example for each domain is provided, accompanied by a contextual analysis.[4]

4.2 The most common metaphorical domains

a) Crime

1) #SONDAKİKA | *İzmir'de şok operasyon! Gemide 276 sığınmacı yakalandı.*
   #BREAKING | Shocking operation in Izmir! 276 asylum seekers caught on shipboard.
   (Hürriyet, 2020)

For example, *yakalandı* ('caught') was identified as an occurrence of the crime metaphor because it associates people seeking protection with criminals. This framing was strengthened with şok *operasyon* ('shocking operation'). The word operation refers to the action security forces took to capture those involved; thus, it implies that those caught were criminals. Additionally, the word 'shocking' further dramatizes the effect of that 'operation.' Considering the meaning of *sığınmacı*, which refers to a person who has left their country and is seeking protection, the use of the metaphors mentioned above with *sığınmacı* frames them as a threat. As Arcimaviciene and Baglama claim (2018, p. 10), the use of the crime metaphor generates an unfavorable view of migration and displaced people because it strengthens sentiments of uneasiness and anxiety toward them. Moreover, it encourages and legitimizes any measures undertaken against migrants. The crime metaphor has

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[4] Translations provided by the author.

already been identified in numerous works (Arcimaviciene & Baglama, 2018; Harris & Gruenewald, 2020; Benczes & Ságvári, 2021). However, this metaphor did not occur as frequently in the previous studies as in my findings.

b) Object

2) *Türkiye Batı'nın sığınmacı deposu değildir.*
   Turkey is not a storehouse of refugees for the West. (Cumhuriyet, 2021a)

The second common source domain was object. In the example, *sığınmacı deposu* was marked as a metaphorical expression because refugees were likened to objects that can be stored for use, as *TDKS* (n.d.) defines *depo* ('storehouse') as the following: 'a place where something is placed to be protected, stored or used when necessary, warehouse.' Specifically, while Turkey was likened to a storehouse, refugees were referred to as inanimate beings that do not belong to this storehouse. Therefore, this expression was coded as an object metaphor. In this example, the object metaphor can be interpreted as a negative framing because it dehumanizes asylum-seekers by referring to them as lifeless objects without any sentiment or will to decide for themselves. Therefore, it removes the need for social responsibility toward asylum-seekers. Unlike the crime metaphor, which 'heightens negative emotions' and 'legitimizes moral authority' against refugees (Arcimaviciene & Baglama, 2018, p. 6), the object metaphor dehumanizes refugees by suppressing positive emotions about them. In other words, metaphorical framing caused by the object metaphor objectifies humans; therefore, it prevents any kind of empathy for refugees.

c) Natural phenomena

3) *'Geçişler yüzde 150 arttı': Türkiye'ye yaklaşan büyük mülteci dalgası.*
   'Crossings increased by 150 per cent': a big wave of refugees approaching Turkey. (Cumhuriyet, 2021b)

The third common domain was natural phenomena, one of the most common ones in the literature about migration. For example, *büyük mülteci dalgası* ('the great refugee wave') was identified as an occurrence of natural phenomena because the basic meaning of the word *dalga* ('wave') means 'curled movement, usually caused by wind, earthquake, etc., on large water surfaces,' (*TDKS*, n.d.). In this example, the meaning of *dalga* was mapped onto refugees; therefore, refugees were framed as an uncontrolled natural force possessed by water. The framing was strengthened with *büyük* ('big'). This is a type of metaphor that uses natural events or processes to describe social or political situations (Charteris-Black, 2006). Furthermore, it can frame migration as a natural and inevitable phenomenon that cannot be controlled or stopped by human intervention. According to Arcimaviciene and Baglama (2018, p. 9), the use of such a metaphor while referring to refugees strengthens the unfavorable opinion about refugees because it signifies refugees as a fierce and unpredictable natural phenomenon that causes fear. In addition, one feature of flood metaphors

is that they are frequently employed to depict a rise in migration by framing migration as an inflow of water (Charteris-Black, 2006, p. 571). This claim also complies with the example provided because there is a reference to migration rates before using the flood metaphor.

d) Burden

4) *Dışişleri Bakanı Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu: İlave bir mülteci yükü kaldırmamız söz konusu değil.*
Foreign Affairs Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu: It's out of the question for us to carry an additional refugee burden. (Hürriyet, 2021)

The fourth common source domain was pressure/burden. In the example, *mülteci yükü* ('refugee burden') was identified as a metaphorical expression because refugees were referred to as an additional *yük* ('burden') that cannot be carried by Turkey. The basic meaning of *yük* is 'all things carried by cars, animals, etc.' (*TDKS*, n.d.). In this context, refugees were metaphorically framed as a burden that puts pressure on Turkey; therefore, this expression was categorized as a pressure/burden source domain. It implies that refugees are a problem or a liability for the host country, and it is often used to represent migration as a negative or undesirable phenomenon that causes stress, strain, or hardship for the host society (Taylor, 2021).

e) Victim

5) *Onlarca göçmen ölümün kıyısından kurtarıldı.*
Many migrants were rescued from the brink of death. (Cumhuriyet, 2021c)

The fifth common source domain was the victim domain. In example five, ölümün *kıyısından kurtarıldı* ('rescued from the brink of death') was identified as a metaphorical expression because it refers to an extremely dangerous situation in which migrants were about to die. More specifically, the expression addresses the severity of the situation in which migrants were victims. Therefore, this can be interpreted as an instance of the victim metaphor. According to Taylor (2021), the victim metaphor portrays migrants as vulnerable people who suffer from oppression, violence, or poverty in their countries of origin or destination. It often implies that migrants need protection and sympathy from others. Uniquely, this metaphorical framing – though rare – evokes migration in empathetic and compassionate terms, emphasizing migrants' vulnerability. Finally, the following section presents the metaphorical domains the media outlets used to frame displaced persons.

4.3 Choices of media outlets

Table 3 Frequency of metaphor domains according to news outlets and keywords

	animal	crime	natural phenomena	object	pressure/ burden	terror	victim	war	Total
Hürriyet		52%	11%	19%	7%		11%		100%
göçmen		75%		19%			6%		100%
mülteci			43%	29%	29%				100%
sığınmacı		50%					50%		100%
Habertürk		59%	12%	12%	9%		9%		100%
göçmen		80%		7%			13%		100%
mülteci		25%	13%	25%	38%				100%
sığınmacı		55%	27%	9%			9%		100%
Cumhuriyet	3%	36%	8%	33%	3%	3%	6%	8%	100%
göçmen		60%		27%			13%		100%
mülteci	13%		13%	50%				25%	100%
sığınmacı		31%	15%	31%	8%	8%		8%	100%
Sözcü	3%	30%	13%	30%	20%		3%		100%
göçmen		20%	40%	20%			20%		100%
mülteci		31%	15%	46%	8%				100%
sığınmacı	8%	33%		17%	42%				100%

1) *Hürriyet*

Table 3 indicates that more than half of the metaphors identified in *Hürriyet*'s tweets were based on crıme, whereas 19 per cent were based on object domain. On the other hand, natural phenomena and vıctım domains followed object with 11 percent. Overall, *Hürriyet* framed displaced persons negatively because apart from the vıctım domain, all the remaining domains (89 per cent in total) convey a negative framing of them. Since these domains and their indications were explained in the previous sections, further explanation is not provided.

What can be understood from these results regarding the political leaning of *Hürriyet* and metaphor choice? As mentioned, *Hürriyet*'s news discourse is closely linked to JDP (Kızılkaya & Ütücü, 2021, pp. 12–13; Media Monitoring Report, 2020). JDP's migration policy towards displaced people was characterized by an 'open border' approach (Goularas &

Sunata, 2015). JDP considered them as part of its *ummah* ('Muslim community'); therefore, particularly Syrians were an integral part of the JDP's new understanding of the nation rather than considered refugees or migrants under temporary protection (Saraçoğlu & Demirkol, 2015 as cited in Balkılıç & Teke Lloyd, 2020, p. 560). In this regard, Turkey was illustrated as a crucial actor in protecting Muslims from persecution. This welcoming attitude towards displaced people is reflected in the Turkish media. For example, one study finds that most of the news articles use positive or balanced language toward displaced people in the first five years of the Syrian Civil War (Paksoy & Şentöregil, 2018). Furthermore, the idea of Turkey as a protector of the ummah was closely linked to the discourse around 'the downfall of the Western civilization and the rise of Islamic ideals' as a solution to the worldwide humanitarian crisis. Although this Islamic discourse legitimized the open border policy, it referred to displaced people as temporary guests rather than refugees (Abdelaaty, 2021; Balkılıç & Teke Lloyd, 2021). Therefore, this Islamic discourse and policy of JDP created a fragile group of displaced people who were part of the *ummah* as guests without giving them refugee status. In addition, the attitude towards displaced people in Turkey changed over the years, and anti-migrant sentiments increased gradually in the country (Doğanay & Keneş, 2016; Onay-Coker, 2019). Regarding the metaphorical framing of displaced people, the results indicate that the recent anti-migrant sentiments that have been growing in Turkey are reflected in *Hürriyet's* conceptualization of displaced people. As the numbers show, 89 per cent of the expressions refer to displaced people negatively, whereas only 11 per cent can be considered positive or neutral framing.

2) *Habertürk*

Habertürk also primarily used metaphors based on crıme while reporting on displaced persons. However, the percentage of the crıme source domain was slightly higher in *Habertürk*'s tweets (59 per cent), as demonstrated in Table 3. The natural phenomena and object domains followed the crıme domain with 12 per cent. On the other hand, vıctım and pressure/burden made up 9 per cent. Therefore, the results indicate that the negative conceptualization (91 per cent) of displaced people – including the crıme, natural phenomena, object, and pressure/burden domains – outweighed the positive conceptualization (9 per cent) – using vıctım.

What are the implications of these findings regarding the political leaning of *Habertürk*? Kızılkaya and Ütücü (2021, p. 13) suggest *Habertürk* has a small number of critical journalists on staff; however, it still exhibits a significant pro-government bias while covering important issues. Therefore, it is expected that *Habertürk* shows pro-government bias regarding the issue of migration. As explained, the migration policy and discourse of the JDP involve contradictory elements. On the one hand, displaced people are part of the *ummah* who were accepted by the open-border policy; on the other hand, they are also guests who are expected to leave; thus, they are not refugees (Balkılıç & Teke Lloyd, 2021, p. 560). Furthermore, the welcoming attitude has significantly shifted in recent years, and negative attitudes have dominated the discourse about displaced people in pro-government media outlets as well. Thus, the results show that the recent shift and increase in anti-migrant sentiment manifested in the coverage of *Habertürk*. Hence, it could be anticipated that *Habertürk* would be similar to *Hürriyet* regarding the framing of displaced people.

3) *Cumhuriyet*

Regarding *Cumhuriyet*, the findings in Table 3 indicate that crime (36 per cent) and object (33 per cent) domains dominated the corpus. The remaining domains are as follows: natural phenomena and war (8 per cent), victim (6 per cent), pressure/burden, terror, and animal (3 per cent). Thus, the negative conceptualization (94 per cent) was even greater than in *Hürriyet* (89 per cent) and *Habertürk* (91 per cent). This can be considered an unexpected result because *Cumhuriyet* is categorized as a left-wing independent media outlet (Kızılkaya & Ütücü, 2021). It is widely assumed that left-wing organizations tend to be pro-immigration (Natter et al., 2020) because left-wing politics are known to favor progressive policies that generate socioeconomic equality for everyone. Thus, the frequent occurrence of the crime metaphor – which heightens negative emotions via moral authority – or the object metaphor – which suppresses positive emotions via dehumanization – seems contradictory to *Cumhuriyet*'s political position.

Despite its left-leaning nature, *Cumhuriyet*'s strong opposition to JDP may be a reason for framing displaced people negatively. More specifically, *Cumhuriyet* is described as a secularist, independent media outlet that opposes the JDP (Kızılkaya & Ütücü, 2021; Media Monitoring Report, 2020). *Cumhuriyet*'s opposition to JDP's policies and discourse explains why it framed displaced people negatively. In connection to this, Efe (2015, p. 65) notes that *Cumhuriyet* often criticized the government's migration policies and focused on the economic problems 'caused' by the Syrians. Another study by Yaylacı and Karakuş (2015, p. 245) states that 'Cumhuriyet takes problems concerning Syrian refugees as a means of criticizing the government.' This criticism includes concerns that refugees will become Turkish citizens and obtain the right to vote in elections. Therefore, the negative metaphorical framing by *Cumhuriyet* might be linked to its position against the JDP.

4) *Sözcü*

Regarding *Sözcü,* 30 metaphorical expressions were identified. The results show that *Sözcü* mainly employed object (30 per cent) and crıme (30 per cent) domains about displaced persons. These were followed by pressure/burden (20 per cent) and natural phenomena (13 per cent), while vıctım and anımal occurred once, as shown in Table 3. Thus, *Sözcü*, among the four outlets, employed the greatest number of negative metaphorical expressions, at 97 per cent.

Overall, the numbers imply that the majority of the metaphors used by *Sözcü* (97 per cent) framed displaced people negatively. This positions *Sözcü* as the most anti-migrant outlet among the four in the given period. The anti-migrant sentiment that *Sözcü* displays is not unexpected because the outlet exhibits a very critical stance vis-à-vis the government's migration policy. One possible explanation is that similar to *Cumhuriyet*, *Sözcü* uses the issue of Syrian refugees to criticize the administration. For example, one study contends that *Sözcü* reflects an extremely critical position toward the JDP (Onay-Coker, 2019). Those who adhere to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's principles of a secular, modern, and democratic Turkish Republic make up the majority of its audience, and through its Kemalist philosophy, it symbolizes the secular Turkish worldview (p. 373). As a Kemalist newspaper, *Sözcü*'s framing of displaced people might be even more negative than other media

outlets because one of the core elements of Kemalist ideology is Turkish nationalism (Hanioğlu, 2017). Since the majority of the displaced people in Turkey are Syrian Arabs, the rise of Kemalism along with Turkish nationalism in the twentieth century is important because the history of anti-Arabism has a special place within Kemalism. While Atatürk himself did not exhibit anti-Arab sentiments, the Kemalist ideology following his demise evolved to encompass elements of anti-Arabism. For example, one study suggests that Turkish historiography depicted Arabs and their culture in a negative way to legitimize Turkish reforms (Akturk, 2010). These depictions were not just about the Arabs but reflected and justified the secular modernizing reforms of the new Turkish Republic, which was reflected in Turkish school textbooks that uniformly depicted Arabs as traitors in the same unfavorable light despite changing relations and periods (al-Daquqi, 1996, as cited in Bengio & Özcan, 2001). Additionally, the study implies that misleading Western conceptions about Arabs as ignorant, disloyal, womanizing, and obedient people impacted Turkish public opinion, especially that of journalists. Consequently, Turkey developed a long-standing anti-Arab discourse that might be influencing the lives of Arab refugees in Turkey. This long-standing anti-Arab discourse might be reflected in *Sözcü*'s conceptualization of displaced people.

5 Conclusions

This study has explored how the words *göçmen*, *sığınmacı*, and *mülteci* are framed on the Twitter accounts of four Turkish newspapers: *Hürriyet*, *Cumhuriyet*, *Sözcü*, and *Habertürk*. The main goal was to understand the common metaphorical conceptualizations linked to these words. The findings identify mainly negative associations: *göçmen* and *sığınmacı* were often linked to the crime metaphor, while *mülteci* was likened to the object metaphor. Additionally, media outlets' political leaning influenced metaphor choices and frequency. Closer alignment with the ruling JDP resulted in fewer negative frames.

Compared with the literature on migration, it is evident that the metaphorical framing in Turkish media resonates with broader global trends. The implications of these representations are profound, as they not only shape public perceptions but also inform policy directives. Furthermore, as media narratives continue to evolve in response to the changing political landscape in Turkey, the interplay between politics and media representation requires deeper exploration. For example, migration and its portrayal emerged as a significant concern in the 2023 Turkish elections, with voters ranking it as the second most critical issue after the economic crisis. Future research endeavors could further dissect the nuanced shifts in metaphorical framing over time, especially given the transformative power of media in shaping societal discourses on migration.

6 Limitations

This study is subject to at least three limitations. First, although the methodology is rooted in comprehensive corpus-based studies, having a single analyst might limit its depth and reliability, especially when applied to extensive corpora. Collaborative efforts can poten-

tially enhance both of the latter. Second, critical metaphor analysis is inherently subjective. While literature checks and peer consultations were employed, metaphor meanings can shift with context, and there is a risk of misinterpretation. Additionally, focusing on dominant metaphors might lead to missing subtler ones. Third, the random sampling used in this study complicates the identification of specific year-by-year trends. However, it is crucial to recognize that the broader socio-political shifts between 2018–2023 could have impacted media portrayals, even if this is not explicitly evident in the data.

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