The Struggle for Disability Rights in social media:
The Case of Turkey

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Abstract

The image of disability in social perception has long been overshadowed by a definition inspired by medical science. This approach, which is based on the assumption of a healthy/normal/complete body, has also influenced how disability is labelled; one of the main efforts of the disability movements has been to turn this labelling into a field of struggle. Considering the strength of the disability movements in the USA and the UK, it will not be surprising that the first concept discussion was held in English. Today, two different terms are used in the English literature to describe the physical and social aspects of disability: Accordingly, 'impairment' refers to the partial or total absence or dysfunction of one or more limbs, while 'disability' refers to the limitations and/or negativities arising from the fact that common social and spatial practices ignore these bodily differences. This conceptualisation is important in that it emphasises the social aspect of disability and seeks the disability not in the disabled person's body but in the social organisation that surrounds and frames it.

It is necessary to recognise that the failure of a disability movement with a rights discourse to emerge in Turkey is also based on many negativities that exist at the grassroots level. For example, a significant portion of disabled people think that they should be 'content' with their situation; resignation is important; one should be grateful. Thinking that they are being punished or tested prevents many people from demanding a freer, more equal and better life, or even from taking the risk to fight for it. In addition, disabled people are in many respects the least vocal section of society. Their participation in education and labour is very low. According to 2020 data, approximately 36 per cent are illiterate.

The barriers/limitations faced by disabled people in utilising information and communication technologies and their needs on this basis differ. It is pointed out by individuals and organisations working for disabled people to benefit from the ICT sector that there are 'serious problems in terms of accessibility and usability in terms of accessibility and usability in the use of ICT services by disabled people' and it is stated that although there have been serious studies in recent years, especially in state institutions, NGOs, universities and private sector, these studies have not yet reached the desired level.

Disability is handled and discussed together with many factors such as socio-economic status, culture, lifestyle, education and class differences. For this reason, the struggle for disability

rights is a struggle that must be waged in many fields at the same time. However, the real problem lies in the political economy of the issue of disability and especially critical disability studies deal with this fundamental problem. The equal inclusion of disabled people in all areas of social life without any discrimination is fundamentally related to how the issue of disability and disabled individuals are perceived and defined. For this reason, the issue of how disability is defined has an important place in the discursive struggle in critical disability studies and disability rights movements.

Digital technology offers an effective technological infrastructure for collecting and publishing information. A website can also become a meeting place for developing or discussing dialogue and lobbying or financial support for an organisation. The general concepts of digital activism, known as virtual activism, online activism, net protest, haktivism and cyberjamming, are also considered to be a rapidly developing and evolving field. "In the rise of the social media age, activists have become less dependent on traditional media such as newspapers or television. Some researchers have argued that new media offer opportunities for 'non-elite' actors and marginalised or disadvantaged groups to gain visibility in the public sphere" (Chadwick, 2013). One of these disadvantaged groups is the disabled. Disability rights advocacy has the capacity to play a key role in challenging discrimination and social pressures against disabled people. We are in a period when social media is widely used in our country and in the world. It is important to investigate whether the new possibilities offered to disabled internet users have an impact on the structure and strategies of disability advocacy individuals and groups, as well as on their ability to connect with other disabled people and others, to increase their level of political participation online.

The role of media in disability studies and the struggle for disability rights has changed significantly with the transition from traditional media to new media. Social media also harbours various potentials in terms of social struggles due to its qualities. With the transition from traditional media to new media, where disabled people are represented in a highly problematic way and problematic discourses are reconstructed, although problematic representations and discourses still exist, disabled people have gained the opportunity to express themselves and continue their struggle with their own words. In this study, the role of social media in the struggle for the rights of the disabled will be analysed by considering the historical transformation of the movement. In this context, discussions on the role, potentials and effects of social media in the struggle for rights will be discussed and debated within the framework of new trends in critical disability studies, which have developed with contributions from different disciplines in social sciences. The aim of the study is to examine how disabled people construct their discursive struggles on disability and disability rights through social media within the framework of the approaches put forward by critical disability studies. In this framework, the discursive struggle on how disabled people, disability, disabled individuals and disabled rights

should be perceived through various examples selected from social media will be analysed and discussed within the framework of the basic arguments of critical disability studies.

Keywords: Civil society organisation, Digital technollogy, Disabilty, Human Right, social media