

Article

Xenophobia and Hate Speech towards Refugees on Social Media: Reinforcing Causes, Negative Effects, Defense and Response Mechanisms against That Speech

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Abstract: This study aims to recognize the possible role of social media in forming xenophobia and hate speech against Syrian refugees and to understand the reinforcing causes and negative effects of that speech on the refugees, as well as the refugees' response mechanisms against that speech. A mixed approach was used in this study. In addition to a questionnaire tool that was used to collect data, focus group discussions were conducted to support the obtained data. The study used a statistically representative sample of Syrian refugees who live in Turkey and Jordan. The participants see the negative representation of their image via social media as leading to hatred towards them. The findings showed that there are some causes that reinforce xenophobic speech, such as otherization and demonization of refugees, by the negative representation and spreading of fake news on social media, which are published continuously. Moreover, gatekeepers have a role in promoting negative representation by approving xenophobic speech transmission without filtering or ethical control. The results also showed that the negative representation containing hate speech contributes to more negative effects on the refugees, such as psychological effects, as a sense of hatred towards refugees is created in the host country, and the effect of changing the feelings of the public from empathy to compassion fatigue concluding to hatred towards those refugees. Furthermore, the results showed that the Syrian refugees follow different defense mechanisms against xenophobia and hate speech against them published and circulated through social media platforms. The participants were divided into two main categories; the first one is those who prefer replying, not being silent, and defending the refugees, and the second category is those who prefer keeping silent. The first category of refugees stated that they do not accept keeping silent and they prefer to reply using logical, emotional, or defensive and offensive ways to bad comments against Syrian refugees in general. While the second category claimed that either they do not have time to reply or they sometimes agree that it was only a reaction to the behavior of some individual refugees. Some of them explained that they are afraid of being subjected to more bad comments and negative reactions against them. When they encounter aggressive comments and see that such views represent the majority, they prefer to keep silent to avoid being attacked. This is understood within the framework of the spiral of silence theory, where refugees hide their opinions, views, and preferences when they think that they fall within a minority group. They fear social isolation through social media.

Keywords: social media; xenophobia; hate speech; Syrian refugees; defense mechanisms; spiral of silence; gatekeepers; otherization; demonization; Syrian crisis; migration



Citation: Aldamen, Y. Xenophobia and Hate Speech towards Refugees on Social Media: Reinforcing Causes, Negative Effects, Defense and Response Mechanisms against That Speech. *Societies* **2023**, *13*, 83. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc13040083>

Academic Editor: Concha Pérez Curiel

Received: 16 January 2023

Revised: 2 March 2023

Accepted: 21 March 2023

Published: 29 March 2023



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1. Introduction

The Syrian civil war has displaced millions of Syrians and brought about the biggest wave of refugees since World War II. In March 2013, the number of refugees reached a total of 1 million, and later 2 million in September 2013. The relief situation in Syria has become even more dire. There were one million refugees in Lebanon, and in April 2014, a new refugee camp in Jordan, Camp Azraq, was opened. By June 2014, the number of Syrian

refugees in Syria's neighboring countries had reached more than 3 million, with 100,000 refugees reaching Europe. In 2015, the flow of Syrian refugees continued. Furthermore, thousands of Syrian refugees arrived in Greece every day and about one million refugees in Europe [1].

The Syrian civil war was analyzed in a 2021 CRU Report, tracing its evolution from 2011 to 2020. The report indicated that from early 2011 to 2012, the civil war had started as a peaceful protest, where civilians protested the Syrian regime. The internal conflict and power struggle in Syria then became more difficult because of the involvement of external forces such as Russia, Iran, China, and the West [2]. The Syrian civil war continues to claim many lives and displace many people. Thousands of Syrians have crossed the border and fled to neighboring countries to escape the war [3].

Since its beginning, the civil war in Syria has sparked a massive wave of refugeehood, especially in neighboring countries. Millions of Syrians have been forced from their homes as refugees in countries such as Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan, or as internally displaced persons inside Syria in search of safety [4]. The UNHCR, in its updated statistics of registered Syrian refugees in neighboring countries, reported that there are 5,526,887 Syrian refugees. A total of 3,577,714 Syrian refugees, representing 64.7%, live in Turkey; 825,081, representing 14.9%, live in Lebanon; 676,621, representing 12.2%, live in Jordan; 261,046, representing 4.7%, live in Iraq; 144,683, representing 2.6%, live in Egypt; and 41,742, representing 0.8%, live in other North African countries [5]. This situation is now seen as a humanitarian crisis.

Refugee settlement in cities and participation in economic life increased state spending in these countries, which led to animosity and even hatred of refugees among citizens of different ideologies [6]. According to the Former Chancellor Angela Merkel during an interview with German public broadcaster ZDF on 16 August 2015, *"the issue of asylum could be the next major European project"*, one that would *"preoccupy Europe much more than the issue of Greece and the stability of the euro"*. [7] A significant increase in the number of refugees and migrants trying to enter the European Union since the beginning of 2014 prompted Merkel's remarks.

According to UNHCR statistics, in the first six months of 2015, 137,000 migrants and refugees attempted to enter the EU. There was an 83% increase compared to the same period in 2014 [8]. The series of events that followed led to the global refugee crisis. The Syrian refugee crisis contributed to other problems, including racism, anti-Muslim trends, and rising xenophobia [9].

Due to rising immigration, more countries became or are becoming multi-ethnic and now face the problem of integrating persons from different ethnicities, cultures, faiths, and languages. To meet the reality of increasing diversity, there is a need to find legal, political, economic, and social systems that ensure an understanding and mutual respect and mediation in relationships transcend these differences. However, racism and xenophobia are also evident in some societies that have granted entry to a significant number of immigrants as asylum seekers or workers. Further, in some countries, infighting over national identity targets immigrants [10].

UNHCR's new international policy against xenophobic discrimination is considered insufficient since it does not take into account the full spectrum of xenophobic discrimination, because there are two forms of xenophobic discrimination. The first form is xenophobic discrimination based on overt prejudice, which includes the harm suffered by refugees and foreigners because of blatant xenophobic prejudice. While the second is structural xenophobic discrimination. This shows the harm to foreigners and refugees that results from the various effects of different procedures on refugees and foreigners, even without explicit prejudices [11].

Although there is no global consensus on the legal definition of xenophobia, it could be concluded from the above that xenophobia in the media falls under the second form of xenophobic discrimination and involves provoking anti-immigrant discourse. The UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of xenophobia, racism, racial discrimination,

and related intolerance describes xenophobia as: “attitudes, prejudices and behavior that reject, exclude and often vilify persons, based on the perception that they are outsiders or foreigners to the community, society or national identity” [12].

For 11 years, Turkey, which has the longest continental border with Syria, has remained the first destination for Syrian refugees, and it is among the countries that have been the hardest hit by the Syrian refugee crisis [13]. Between 2002 and 2011, approximately 4 million Syrians arrived in Turkey after the government’s policy of opening up to Syrians [14]. When the Syrian revolution first began, both the Turkish government and the Turkish public anticipated that Syrian refugees would only stay in Turkey for a brief period before returning home [15]. These assumptions were debunked by the ongoing war in Syria and the persistence of Syrian refugees in Turkey. These pressures have a noticeable impact on Turkey’s social, political, economic, psychological, and security concerns [14]. Turkey has faced the Syrian refugee influx, particularly in border regions and major cities including Istanbul [6].

When Turkey followed the open-door policy for the Syrians in 2011, about 4 million Syrians came to Turkey. It was noticed that when Syrians settled, opened shops and businesses, and obtained Turkish citizenship, the digital attacks emerged and climaxed in 2018 and 2019. Intercommunal–communal tensions, sporadic attacks, and mob lynching against Syrians are common in both urban and rural Turkey [13]. Having conducted interviews with Turkish citizens, researchers suggested that a perceived loss is what causes Turkish people to have negative sentiments. This manifests as a decrease in economic progress, national unity, and urban space.

Some media platforms occasionally stir up hostility over the presence of Syrians in public, using provocative language, for example, that Turkish beaches are “crowded” with Syrians and that “makes Turks feel like foreigners” (*Türkler’in kendini yabancı hissettiği Soli halk plajını dolduran Suriyeliler*) [16]. Furthermore, the dissemination of hateful messages in society by creating fake news, for example, that Syrians enjoy hookah “shisha” on beaches [16]. However, the person who was photographed on the beach drinking hookah was Turkish and not Syrian, as described in the mentioned report [17]. Such provocative and fake news, besides the negative representation, have contributed to the shift in the behavior and attitudes of citizens towards Syrians.

The influence of xenophobia in the media will ultimately affect public opinion and contemporary lawmakers. The use of derogatory terms, the emphasis on refugees’ criminality, and the fostering of anti-refugee stereotypes are some real examples of how xenophobic discrimination is used by the media [18]. It is easy to understand that people tend to scapegoat refugees and accuse them of “stealing” their opportunities, especially in times of economic weakness. People perceive immigrants as ‘others’ and as potential threats to the existing social order [19]. Furthermore, social media has created an environment in which false information about refugees spreads widely and many of the portrayals of Syrians are negative. Facebook’s algorithm has fostered prejudice against refugees and made it difficult to personalize them in the media.

Information about national and international events is available to people through the media. The media not only tells the people about numerous issues and events occurring around, but it is also “a communicative bridge between political and social actors” [20]. Purposefully or inadvertently, media representations influence attitudes, feelings, and public opinion regarding refugees [21]. Some people hide behind the anonymity of social media to launch hate and xenophobic speeches. The global nature of the Internet, including its immediacy and anonymity, makes the media an ideal tool for radicals to spread hatred [22]. The media in general has a great responsibility when it comes to highlighting society’s most important issues. However, audiences find online media far more effective in this regard [23]. As a result, it bears the responsibility of representing refugees in societies. It plays an important role in how these refugees are portrayed and seen as victims or terrorists in both host countries and non-host countries [24]. The prevalent and clichéd depictions of refugees still have an impact on the rise in prejudice and unfavorable views toward them,

which lead to social exclusion and conflict in societies. Refugees, despite being victims, are still being presented as a danger and threat to the citizens of the host countries [25].

Social media is also employed in promoting hate speech and xenophobia against refugees through using aggressive hashtags. In a previous study [13], over 100,000 tweets were collected from hashtags relating to Syrian refugees in Turkey. The first trending topic against Syrians was the response to an alleged sexual assault committed by a Syrian man in the Kale district in Denizli, located in western Turkey. The hashtag *#SuriyelilerDefoluyor* (*#Syriangetout*) [26] was trending on 31 December 2019, referring to the consequence of the celebrations of the New Year in Taksim. Such collective portrayals of Syrian refugees foster dehumanization and the “denial of humanity” of the group [13]. Another consequence of negative stereotypes of refugees in the media is exclusion [25].

The growth of the spread of “fake news” over the Internet by depending on information from false sources [27,28] has also had a negative impact on the perception of the Syrian crisis, in addition to the lack of accurate information on the crisis-related events. The media often shapes the way people perceive global events. For example, if YouTube videos about the Syrian war are examined, it will be seen that they have a huge impact on how viewers see Syrian refugees and whether they describe the conflict as a civil war or a crisis [29]. The contents of the videos shape the way viewers discuss the problem and can be a tool to spread negative propaganda. This is largely attributable to the fact that fake news has changed the narrative surrounding individuals. Many sources have shown the number of refugees entering Europe to be high, while others have focused on violence and have shown refugees as violence-producing factors [30]. Some media outlets in Germany included images emphasizing cultural and religious differences, creating a sense of anxiety and making it almost impossible for refugees to cope [31].

Many studies show how the negative representation of refugees contributes to making the host countries’ people become less sympathetic to Syrian refugees than at the beginning of the war. This is largely attributable to the fact that fake news has changed the narrative surrounding individuals. The spread of fake news on social media has been a determining factor in the negative perception of the public about the Syrian crisis. While studying the manner in which some media covers the issue of Syrian refugees, three major implications of xenophobia can be distinguished. The first is the focus on the impossibility of the employment of Syrian refugees within host countries such as Jordan and, thus, the impossibility of their integration into the host country’s society. Furthermore, the potential threats of increased competition in the local job market as described in the article “*Can Jordan get a million Syrians into work?*” [32], and the article “*Companies, Syrian Refugees Come Together at Jordan Job Fair*” [33].

Another example of the negative representation of Syrian refugees is the emphasis that it places on the emotional discomfort that the locals experience due to the increased immigrant flows. Thus, for instance, the article published by the Jordan Times Newspaper mentions “*a higher feeling of worry*” that Jordanians experience contrasting it to the feeling of security and comfort that Syrians experience in Jordan (“*Jordanians feel less safe since the Syrian refugee crisis started in 2017*”) [34]. Thus, such articles and reports imply that Syrian refugees are subject to discrimination by focusing on hinting that Syrians are comfortable in the host country at the expense of the local population.

The continual discussion of the costs that host countries bear because of the refugees is also another example of media content that contains xenophobia against Syrian Refugees. Needless to explain, the local population will develop a negative attitude towards the refugees when they read about ten billion dollars that their state pays to cover the refugee program (“*Hosting Syrian refugees cost Jordan \$10 in 2017*”) [35]. Xenophobia in some media outlets manifests itself through the emphasis on the large costs of the refugee programs, increased competition in the job market, and the general discomfort that refugees bring to the locals.

The examination of some Turkish media shows that though xenophobia against Syrian refugees likewise exists there, the themes through which it is induced are different. Thus,

a number of Turkish media emphasize the overpopulation caused by the unprecedented numbers of hosted refugees. Some articles that mention half a million refugees hosted in Istanbul and millions of refugees across the country cause a feeling of anxiety in the local population as described in the articles: *“Istanbul is home to 538,000 Syrians, the highest number in Turkey in 2018”* [36] and *“The Syrian population in Turkey to exceed 5 million after 10 years”* [37].

Another theme that some Turkish media actively discuss is that Syrian refugees are a temporary phenomenon that are not supposed to stay in the host country for a long period. Though such claims do not look xenophobic initially, they still convey a message for the locals implying that there is no need to try to understand the refugees or their needs and problems as are generally alien and should not belong to the local environment. The media points to the discomfort and “resentment” that the locals experience towards the refugees, implicitly stimulating the aggression towards the refugees among the people (*Resentment rising against Syrian refugees in Turkey’s urban centres: International Crisis Group report 2018*) [38].

The opposition mainstream media in Turkey and some column writers increase the concerns about Syrian refugees living in the cities. Opposition media and their social media channels show stereotypes about refugees and how refugees “hang out” in Turkey benefiting more from Turkish citizens’ taxes than Turkish citizens themselves do. It also features hate speech, racism, and discrimination against refugees [39]. This kind of representation contributed to increasing tension in Turkey among Turkish people who do not want Syrian refugees and use social media platforms to express that. After the Turkish opposition announced in June 2019, the victory of its candidate in the run-off elections as the mayor of Greater Istanbul and the ruling party’s acknowledgement of this victory, social media platforms in Turkey had a wave of messages calling for Syrians to leave the country. Thousands of comments swiftly rolled under the hashtags #SuriyelilerDefoluyor [40], which become one of the most prominent emerging topics on Twitter in Turkey on that day. As well as this, other hashtags such as #Suriyelilerİstemiyoruz [41], #Suriyelilerdefol-sun [42,43], #ülkemesuriyeliistemiyorum [44] and #SuriyelilerSuriyeye [45] appeared calling for the same thing. Many Turks complain that Turkish soldiers die on Syrian soil while Syrian refugees are relaxing and collecting aid [46]. This prompted a number of activists to issue #SuriyelilerYalnızDeğildir [43] hashtag to call for the spreading of hatred in the society to be stopped, and to say that they stand with the Syrian refugees against xenophobic campaigns towards the Syrian refugees. Moreover, other hashtags such as #BizKardesiz [47], #KardesimeDokunma [48,49] #KıyıyaVuranİnsanlık [50], and #AylanKurdi, [51] which were made to remember the death of Aylan Kurdi, appeared to call for hate speech against the refugees to be stopped.

Those examples of hashtags showed that the citizens used derogatory terms in social media, which drives xenophobia and resorts to scapegoating and blaming refugees for ‘stealing’ their opportunities. It was seen that the government’s policies were responsible for the hatred toward Syrian refugees and make them the scapegoat [52]. People perceive refugees as ‘others’ and as a potential threat to the existing social order [19]. The otherization, which includes not accepting and excluding those considered different, manifests itself when the media is employed to blame others, including refugees, for society’s downfalls.

2. Data Collection Methods and Procedures

After the observation of certain published media articles and hashtags, and reviewing the literature, the study aimed to investigate more on the study’s problem. For this aim, it explored the viewpoints of a sample of Syrian refugees in host countries regarding the negative image of Syrian refugees in media, which is reflected also in social media. Furthermore, it aims to explore how they feel when they face xenophobic and hate speech or abuse of Syrian refugees by photos, news, and comments on social media, and if they have response or defense mechanisms against that speech.

To ensure transparency, the study aims and purposes were provided to the respondents. Informed consent was obtained from all Syrian refugees involved in the study. Data security and privacy were considered, and the names of the participants were not used in this study for ethical considerations, as their desire was to stay anonymous.

2.1. Quantitative Approach

To reach its aims and answer its questions, the study followed a mixed research approach (1): the quantitative approach used is based on a questionnaire designed to address the perspectives of Syrian refugees living in Jordan on the effects of social media on Syrian refugees. The population of the questionnaire consists of all Syrian refugees both inside and outside of the camps in Jordan and Turkey. The sample size from the population was selected using a non-probability sampling technique; this technique is used to select respondents based on accessibility and reach [53]. As an approximate general rule, at least 200 responses statistically provide good survey accuracy under most assumptions and parameters of a questionnaire. Therefore, it was decided to collect at least 300 responses from each country. After finishing the distribution, the valid questionnaires were chosen from each country. The sample included 303 questionnaires from Jordan and 303 from Turkey. The participants participated voluntarily, and they were over the age of 18 and social media users. The snowball technique was used to encourage participation. Because of the crisis, vulnerable groups such as refugees fear being exploited and do not trust participating in activities of which they are unaware. Systematic bombing, arbitrary detention, murder, theft, and kidnapping were important factors contributing to a widespread sense of insecurity. The crisis also reduced mutual trust between individuals by 31% [54]. Thus, the snowball technique provides participants with a level of trust by using the Facebook groups of which they were members. As well as this, the snowball technique helped in making participants volunteer to post the link on their accounts or send it to other families and friends whom they trust. This technique helps also to identify participants, which were somewhat difficult to locate, or due to some unusual causes do not want to share or express their negative war memories [55].

The validity of the questionnaire content showed to what extent the scale measures were prepared to measure in a certain context through logical analysis of the scale content. It confirmed the validity of the study content. As one of the ways to verify the reliability of the questionnaire is to repeat the questionnaire and reach similar results. The test used for the reliability of the questionnaire was test–retest. The consistency of a test or scale has been determined by the similarity of the measurement results made at different times. A number of 33 questionnaires were taken as a pilot sample (10%) from outside the study's sample. In addition, the scale was applied to the same group after 7 days (second application). A correlation between the results of the first and second applications was calculated. When calculating the correlation between the first application and the second application, the Correlation Coefficient (Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient "R") showed a value of 0.906. Since this value is close to 1.00, it showed the coefficient for the reliability of the questionnaire.

Questionnaire data was collected using telephone interviews, face-to-face meetings, and a standard online survey designed via Google forms. The link to the questionnaire was distributed using e-mails, WhatsApp, and Facebook via smartphones where participants could log in and respond to the questions. To increase the response rate of respondents and to ensure neutrality the link also was posted to 10 Facebook groups representing Syrian refugees from various educational and social backgrounds and different areas in Jordan and Turkey as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Facebook Groups to which the Questionnaire Link was Circulated.

#	Description	Link
1	Community of Syrians in Turkey	https://www.facebook.com/syrian.tr/
2	Kahramanmaraş Sutcu Imam University Union	https://www.facebook.com/KSU.Birliqi/
3	Kirikhan Syrians Community	https://www.facebook.com/syria.kirikhan/
4	Bu Ne?	https://www.facebook.com/groups/452659511553316/
5	Tagamo Syria	https://www.facebook.com/groups/tagamo3syria/
6	Syrian Jordanian Aid	https://www.facebook.com/groups/348669608913195/
7	Syrians gathered in Jordan	https://www.facebook.com/Syrians.gathered.in.Jordan/
8	Zaa'tari Refugee Camp	https://www.facebook.com/ZaatariCamp/
9	Student Community in Turkey	https://www.facebook.com/groups/turkiyedekiogrencitoplulugu/
10	International Students Community in Kahramanmaraş	https://www.facebook.com/groups/1429901697319612/

As an approximate general rule, at least 200 responses statistically provide good survey accuracy under most assumptions and parameters of a questionnaire. Therefore, it was decided to collect at least 300 responses from each country. After finishing distribution, the valid questionnaires were chosen from each country. The questionnaire was conducted within four months. In Jordan, it was from 8 October 2018–7 December 2018 while in Turkey, it was from 12 October 2018–31 January 2019. A total of 305 questionnaires were collected from Turkey, and 307 from Jordan. After reviewing and checking, it was decided to remove questionnaires that were not suitable for statistical analysis. Finally, 303 questionnaires were accepted for analysis from Turkey and 303 from Jordan.

The participants participated voluntarily, and they were over the age of 18 and social media users. Table 2 shows the characteristics of the participants in the quantitative method.

Table 2. Demographic Data and Living Characteristics of the Questionnaire Participants.

	Jordan		Turkey		
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Gender					
Male	182	60.10%	157	51.80%	
Female	121	39.90%	146	48.20%	
Marital Status					
Single	80	26.4%	149	49.2%	
Married	193	63.7%	138	45.5%	
Widow	18	5.9%	11	3.6%	
Divorced	12	4.0%	5	1.7%	
Age					
18 to 22 years	42	13.9%	89	29.4%	
23 to 29 years	90	29.7%	106	35.0%	
30 to 39 years	86	28.4%	76	25.1%	
40 to 49 years	59	19.5%	18	5.9%	
50 to 59 years	21	6.9%	11	3.6%	
60 and above	5	1.7%	3	1.0%	
Educational Status					
Less than High School	94	31%	32	10.6%	
High School	66	21.8%	80	26.4%	
Vocational Diploma *	37	12.2%	32	10.6%	
Bachelor's degree	94	31%	121	39.9%	
Higher Diploma **	3	1%	6	2.0%	
Master's degree	5	1.7%	12	4.0%	
Doctorate	4	1.3%	20	6.6%	
* Vocational Diploma (Intermediate Institute Certificate): a degree obtained before the Bachelor's degree					
** Higher Diploma: a degree obtained After the Bachelor's degree					

Table 2. Cont.

	Jordan		Turkey		
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Living Status					
Together with the Family	279	92.1%	230	75.9%	
With friends	5	1.7%	42	13.9%	
Alone	19	6.3%	31	10.2%	
Type of Residence					
Homeowner	7	2.3%	15	5.0%	
Rent	154	50.8%	242	79.9%	
Caravan at the camp	142	46.9%	46	15.2%	
Work Status					
Yes	174	57.4%	127	41.9%	
No	129	42.6%	176	58.1%	
Monthly income					
Less than 150 JD	9	3.0%	Less than 500 TL	11	3.6%
150–199 JD	31	10.2%	500–999 TL	17	5.6%
200–299 JD	66	21.8%	1000–1499 TL	13	4.3%
300–399 JD	28	9.2%	1500–1999 TL	43	14.2%
400–499 JD	9	3.0%	2000–2499 TL	20	6.6%
500–599 JD	1	0.3%	2500–2999 TL	4	1.3%
600–699 JD	2	0.7%	3000–4999 TL	7	2.3%
900–999 JD	1	0.3%	5000–9999 TL	1	0.3%
More than 1000 JD	4	1.3%	More than 10,000 TL	1	0.3%
Not Available	152 (including 129 non-employed)	50.2%	Not Available	186 (including 176 Non-employed people included)	61.4%
1 TRY = 0.168362 USD1 JOD = 1.41044 USD					
Provinces					
Mafrq	117	38.6%	Istanbul	11	38.6%
Amman	65	21.5%	Hatay	53	17.5%
Irbid	65	21.5%	Kilis	38	12.5%
Zarqa	54	17.8%	Gaziantep	26	8.6%
Others	2	0.7%	Konya	9	3.0%
			Adana	7	2.3%
			Şanlıurfa	7	2.3%
			Bursa	6	2.0%
			Mersin	5	1.7%
			Karabük	5	1.7%
			Antalya	5	1.7%
			Others	25	8.3%
Inside or Outside the Camp					
Inside the camp	142	46.9%	46	15.2%	
Outside the camp	161	53.1%	257	84.8%	

Table 2. Cont.

Camp Name	Jordan		Turkey		
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Zaatari	105	73.9%	Boynuyöğün (Hatay Refugee Camp)	27	8.9%
Azraq	37	26.1%	Öncüpınar (Kilis Refugee Camp)	10	3.3%
			Sarıçam Çadır kenti (Adana Refugee Camp)	5	1.7%
			Suruç Çadır kenti (Şanlıurfa Refugee Camp)	3	1.0%
			İslâhiye Çadır kenti (Gaziantep Refugee Camp)	1	0.3%

2.2. Qualitative Approach

Data were gathered from two separate focus group discussions conducted in the Arabic language with a sample of 15 Syrian participants of different education backgrounds and ages, who live in Turkey and Jordan. One focus group discussion was held in Amman on March 2018. The other focus group discussion was held in Istanbul on April 2018. The purpose of employing data from the focus group discussions is to have more understanding of some thoughts, opinions, and attitudes regarding the study's questions, and to obtain supporting data to the numbers and statistics, which were collected via the questionnaires.

3. Descriptions and Characteristics of the Samples

3.1. Quantitative Tool Characteristics

The majority of the questionnaire participants in both samples were male. In Jordan, males made up more than half of the sample (60.1%), while females represented 39.9% of the sample. The number of males in the sample of Turkey reached 51.8%, while they represented 48.2% of the sample in Turkey. The highest rate of the samples was married (63.7%) in Jordan and 45.5% in Turkey. The age group (23–29 years) was the largest participating age group in the two countries. For Jordan's sample, the percentage was 29.7%, while it was 35.0% for Turkey's sample. A percentage of 31% of the respondents from Jordan had less than a high school education, as well as 31% of them having a Bachelor's degree, while 39.9% of the sample in Turkey had a Bachelor's degree and 26.4% had a high school certificate. Percentages vary among holders of other certificates, such as vocational diplomas, higher diploma, and Master's and Doctorate degrees. Regarding living status, the highest proportion of respondents live with their families. Their percentage in Jordan was 92.1% of Jordan's sample and 75.9% of Turkey's sample. Those who lived with friends were 1.7% of Jordan's sample and 13.9% of Turkey's sample, while those who were living alone were 6.3% of Jordan's sample and 10.2% of Turkey's sample. A total of 2.3% of the sample in Jordan and 5.0% of the sample in Turkey were living in their own homes. Renters were 50.8% of Jordan's sample and 79.9% of Turkey's sample. The proportion of the participants who were living in camps was 46.9% of Jordan's sample and 15.2% of Turkey's sample. Additionally, 57.4% of the sample in Jordan and 41.9% of the sample in Turkey were working, while 42.6% of the sample in Jordan and 58.1% of the sample in Turkey said that they do not work. Furthermore, the largest percentage of Jordan's sample (21.8%) have a monthly income of 200–299 Jordanian Dinars, while the largest percentage

in Turkey (14.2%) of the sample stated that they receive a monthly income of 1500–1999 TL. The rest of the sample have income ranges as shown in Table 2.

Regarding the provinces, the largest percentage of the sample in Jordan (38.6%) was from the province of Mafraq in northern Jordan. The rationale for this is that the Zaatarî refugee camp, the largest refugee camp in Jordan, which contains 78,410 Syrian refugees according to UNHCR October 2018 statistics [56] is located there. Amman and Irbid provinces were at the same rate of 21.5% for each. Zarqa province came in third place with 17.8% of the sample, while 0.7% of the sample was from other provinces such as Madaba and Ma'an. In the sample of Turkey, 38.6% of the participants were from Istanbul, followed by Hatay at 17.5%, Kilis at 12.5%, Gaziantep at 8.6%, Konya at 3.0%, Adana and Şanlıurfa 2.3% for each, Bursa at 2.0%, and Mersin, Karabuk, Antalya at 1.7% for each. While 8.3% of the sample in Turkey was from different provinces such as Eskişehir, Kastamonu, Van, Kayseri, Malatya, Kahramanmaraş, Kocaeli, Denizli, Isparta, Siirt, Sakarya, Düzce, Elazığ, Ankara, Aydın, and Çorum. A total of 73.9% of Jordan's sample was living in Zaatarî Camp and 26.1% in the Azraq refugee camp. While in Turkey's sample, 8.9% in Boynuyöğün refugee camp, 3.3% in Kilis Öncüpınar camp, while 1.7% in Sarıçam Çadırkenti / Adana camp, 0.3% in İslâhiye 1 Çadırkenti camp in Gaziantep and 1.0% in Suruç Çadırkenti refugee camp in Şanlıurfa.

3.2. Qualitative Tool Characteristics

The characteristics of the focus group participants in Istanbul were (N = 15), the age group (21–43), marital status (married and single), education level (from Less than high school graduate to PhD student), and work status (Working and Not Working). While the characteristics of the sample in Amman were (N = 15), the age group (22–48), marital status (married and single), education level (from less than high school graduate to PhD), and work status (working and not working).

4. Findings

4.1. The Findings from the Quantitative Tool

4.1.1. Perspectives to the Representation of the Syrian Refugees on Social Media

As shown in Table 3, 54.1% of the sample from Jordan and 32.0% of the sample from Turkey find the image of the Syrian refugees projected on social media positive, while 9.2% of the sample in Jordan and 17.2% of the sample in Turkey find it negative. A percentage of 26.1% of each sample find it neutral, while 10.6% of the sample in Jordan and 24.8% of the sample in Turkey said they do not know and do not have an answer to the question.

Table 3. The Participants Opinions on The Image Projected On Social Media About Syrian Refugees.

Answer	Number and Percentage in Jordan		Number and Percentage in Turkey	
Positive	164	54.1%	97	32.0%
Negative	28	9.2%	52	17.2%
Neutral	79	26.1%	79	26.1%
I do not know	32	10.6%	75	24.8%
Total	303	100%	303	100%

The participants expressed their opinions on the effects of social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) in conveying the image of Syrian refugees. As Table 4 shows that 8.3% of the sample in Jordan and 8.9% of the sample in Turkey said social media had increased hatred and hostility towards the refugees. A total of 30.0% of the sample of Jordan and 21.8% of the sample of Turkey said it reduced hatred and hostility toward Syrian refugees. While 41.3% of the sample of Jordan and 40.3% of the sample of Turkey see that it was neutral and clarified the truth.

Table 4. The Participants Opinions on the Effects of Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) in Conveying the Image of Syrian Refugees.

Answer	Number and Percentage in Jordan		Number and Percentage in Turkey	
Increasing hatred and hostility towards Syrian refugees	25	8.3%	27	8.9%
Declining hatred and hostility towards Syrian refugees	91	30.0%	66	21.8%
It was impartial and explained the truth	125	41.3%	122	40.3%
I do not know	62	20.5%	88	29.0%
Total	303	100%	303	100%

4.1.2. How The Participants Feel When They See Syrian Refugees' Abuse in Photos, News and Comments on Social Media

The data showed how the participants feel when they see Syrian refugees' abuse in photos, news, and comments on social media in general. As shown in Table 5 that 76.2% of the sample in Jordan and 88.8% of the sample in Turkey feel discontent/dissatisfied when they see mistreatment and abuse of Syrian refugees through news, posts, or comments on social media. Additionally, 13.2% of the sample in Jordan and 11.2% of the sample in Turkey said they do not care about that. The reply was rejected by 10.6% of the sample in Jordan and 8.9% of the sample in Turkey.

Table 5. The Participants Feeling when they see Syrian Refugees' Abuse in News, Photos and Comments in Social Media in General.

Answer	Number and Percentage in Jordan		Number and Percentage in Turkey	
Discontent/dissatisfied	231	76.2%	242	79.9%
I do not care	40	13.2%	34	11.2%
Refused to answer	32	10.6%	27	8.9%
Total	303	100%	303	100%

4.1.3. The Response or Defense Mechanisms of the Refugees to Bad Comments or Negative Representation against Them in Social Media

The answers also showed that the participants who came or would come across posts, news, comments, or images through social media platforms, that contain aggressive or derogatory statements against Syrian refugees, were divided into two groups regarding their reaction and response. As shown in Table 6, the lowest percentage of the respondents in both samples was 14.5% of the sample in Jordan and 23.1% of the sample in Turkey who said that they respond to abusive comments about Syrian refugees they encounter on social media. The rest of the 85.5% of the sample of Jordan and 76.9% of the sample of Turkey said they do not respond to such comments. Those were divided into two groups: The first group who said that they do not respond to avoid being subjected to more bad comments about them, their family, or other Syrians, in general, consisted 47.5% of the sample of Jordan and 40.3% of the sample of Turkey. While the second group said that they do not have enough time to respond to such negative comments, and they consisted of 38.0% of the sample Jordan and 36.6% of the sample Turkey.

Table 6. If the Respondents when Encountered or would Encounter Offensive or Derogatory Statements, Photos, News, or Comments Towards Syrian Refugees in General on Social Media will Respond, Defend or Make Comments.

Answer	Number and Percentage in Jordan		Number and Percentage in Turkey	
Yes	44	14.5%	70	23.1%
No, to avoid further offensive comments towards me and my family or other Syrians	144	47.5%	122	40.3%
No, because I find it a waste of time to answer	115	38.0%	111	36.6%
Total	303	100%	303	100%

4.2. The Findings from the Qualitative Tool

The focus group discussions intended to investigate the positive and negative effects of social media on Syrian refugees, and the perspectives of how the participants see their representation through social media. Furthermore, how they feel when they see Syrian refugees' abuse in photos, news, and comments on social media, which contain abusive or insulting content about Syrian refugees as well as if they responded or would respond to bad comments or negative representations against them in social media. The data from the focus group discussions were analyzed, coded, and organized into main themes as shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Main Extracted Insights from the Participants in the FGDs and their Main Themes.

Extract	Codes	Main Theme
"I feel sorry because there are success stories of Syrians that are often buried." (Extract 1, Istanbul Participant 10, Male, 33, Master's degree/Engineer/is working)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many success stories of Syrians are not covered in social media. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Filtering appears in social media by focusing on some stories and ignoring others.
"I feel my heartburn because we don't deserve this humiliation and negative representation in social media." (Extract 2, Istanbul Participant 15, Male, 19, undergraduate student)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humiliation-based content against refugees in social media content. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social media enhances the humiliation of refugees, which leads to anger, and feelings of injustice.
"When I see published abuse on one of these platforms, I defend them and stand by them, and I do not accept the humiliation of any Syrian in social media, I immediately become angry and rush to deter the injustice of the people of the country. (Extract 3, Istanbul Participant 5, Female, 33, High school graduate/not working)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humiliation of refugees in social media. Becoming angry and upset about that humiliation and injustice. 	
"Writing badly of Syrian refugees or describing them in a degrading way causes them psychological pain" (Extract 4, Istanbul, Participant 3, female, 35, Master's degree/not working)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bad representation of refugees causes them psychological suffering. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social media abuses refugees and reflects negative representations of refugees, which leads to psychological effects.
"I am very angry because there is a lot of written content that shows all Syrians are bad and we have no right to defend ourselves." (Extract 5, Istanbul Participant 8, Male, 21, Undergraduate/working)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A lot of written material on social media shows that all Syrians are bad. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negative representation of refugees in social media reinforces racism and makes them sad, upset, and angry.
"When I face abuse of Syrian refugees in social media, I feel sad, upset, and depressed because one day I could be in the same place because I am a refugee too! I am one of them and suffer the same and I do not agree to post a negative image of my people on social media." (Extract 6, Amman, Participant 3, male, 34, Higher diploma/not working)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abuse of Syrian refugees Feeling sad, upset, and depressed. A negative image of Syrians on social media. 	
"How long will the racism representation of Syrians openly shown in the media last?" (Extract 7, Istanbul Participant 2, female, 21, Undergraduate student)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social media shows racism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Racism against Syrian refugees shown in social media

Table 7. Cont.

Extract	Codes	Main Theme
<i>"I am angry because abusing a refugee on social media reduces the chance of empathy for all other refugees! It negatively affects the overall perception of refugees in society, and the abuse contributes to incitement against all refugees."</i> (Extract 8, Amman, Participant 4, Female, 29, Undergraduate graduate/not working)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reducing the chance of empathy. Negatively affects the overall perception of refugees in society. Incitement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abusing refugees in social media leads to reducing the chance of empathising with them. It affects the overall perception of refugees in society. Contributing to incitement against all refugees.
<i>"There is a criticism on social media that the Syrians caused an economic burden when they came to Jordan. I do not deny the fact that this is true, and some studies prove this, but sometimes it showed that the Syrians are the cause of all economic problems in Jordan."</i> (Extract 9, Amman Participant 5, Male, 45, Secondary School/working)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic burden. Cause of all economic problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic burden in host countries.
<i>"In many contexts, they were not presented in a compassionate manner . . . When a Syrian woman's queue to receive the monthly salary is shown, the media addresses this situation as we have left our country and fled and came here to sit down and take aid and live dependent on others."</i> (Extract 10, Istanbul Participant 11, Female, 43, Secondary School)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not presented in a compassionate manner Taking aid and live dependently on others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The way social media represents refugees is not compassionate but contemptuous.
<i>"Many of the people who write on social media did not live the experience of the affected refugee and overlooked many bad facts and saw the other side from another angle, and when the discussion takes place on social media, they blame the victim, and express that with opinions according to their environment and culture. In addition to this disastrous and harsh experience, these negative opinions affect the refugee psychologically."</i> (Extract 11, Amman Participant 8, Male, 31, BA/Work).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other people did not live the same experience. Blame the victim. Disastrous and harsh experience. Affect the refugee psychologically. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other people speaking negatively about refugees without living the same situation and this speech affects the refugees' psychologically
<i>"I just tell them to imagine for a moment that they are living in the same situation as Syrian refugees and that they put themselves where the refugees are"</i> (Extract 12, Istanbul Participant 12, Male, 22, College graduate/not working)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Imagine that they are living in the same situation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Calling for thinking of being in the same situation.
<i>"When I come across comments from Jordanians and Iraqis that all scholarships are given to Syrians, I explain to them that we are going through difficult conditions and we have to take advantage of any opportunity."</i> (Extract 13, Amman Participant 1, Female, 30, Graduate student)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All scholarships are dedicated to Syrian people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Citizens of local countries or even other refugees even think that Syrians take more than them.
<i>"Our answer represents our culture and ethics. If necessary, I respond logically and rationally, using evidence and clues politely. Each one expresses their views which shows the level of their culture."</i> (Extract 14, Amman Participant 10, Female, 48, PhD/working)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I respond logically and rationally. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following a rational mechanism during their response to hate speech.

Table 7. Cont.

Extract	Codes	Main Theme
<i>"I will respond by objectively providing scientific facts that prove the opposite and explain the problem and its causes. Instead of being abusive or aggressive, I use advice and the ethics of discussion."</i> (Extract 15, Amman Participant 2, Male, 33, Bachelor's degree/working)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing scientific facts. • Not being abusive or aggressive. • Using advice and ethical dialogue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following a rational mechanism during their response to hate speech.
<i>"I write without racism and make it clear to people that refugees are also human beings and have nothing to do with their disasters and misfortunes. Other people have the right to live without terror, hunger, fear and homelessness. Since every refugee has lost a sibling or son, or even their entire family and home, they have left their country, their parents, and their homes."</i> (Extract 16, Amman Participant 15, Male, 32, Graduate student)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The right to live without terror, hunger, fear and homelessness. • Loosing of sibling or son, or even their entire family and home. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following a rational mechanism during their response to hate speech.
<i>"Don't judge people who have lived through injustice without being exposed to it. Thank you, I am Syrian before I became a refugee and you have nothing to do with the principles of humanity!"</i> (Extract 17, Amman Participant 11, Male, 19, Undergraduate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living through injustice • You have nothing to do with humanity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following an aggressive response in opposition to the hate speech as a defense mechanism.
<i>"Every vessel including exudes! Everyone expresses their origins and reveals their ethics; I occasionally write and remind people of the role of Syrians years ago in embracing other refugees and protecting their rights and dignity."</i> (Extract 18, Amman Participant 14, Male, 27, College graduate/working)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone expresses their origins and reveals their morals. • The role of Syrians years ago in embracing other refugees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following an aggressive response in opposition to the hate speech as a defense mechanism.
<i>"If I reply and the reply is spread and read by many browsers, that will not prevent abuse, so my comment or answer is nonsense"</i> (Extract 19, Istanbul Participant 14, Female, 20, Less than High School Graduate/Studying)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My comment or answer is nonsense. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferring not to reply.
<i>"I don't respond to anyone who expresses what they want. Unfortunately, some people are unaware of what is going on and are walking in droves."</i> (Extract 20, Amman Participant 5, Male, 45, High school graduate/working)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I do not respond. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferring not to reply.
<i>"I don't comment, but I post a report on Facebook and it's usually deleted."</i> (Extract 21, Istanbul Participant 7, Female, 33, Bachelor's degree/working)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I do not comment. • I post a report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferring not to reply.
<i>"I do not answer because a person who expresses a bad and ignorant opinion will not change his mind because of his ignorance. If I feel my answer or comment will be helpful, I will comment and reply, but those who are giving these answers are low-educated people and there is no need to respond to them."</i> (Extract 22, Amman Participant 7, Female, 32, Bachelor's degree/working)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I do not answer. • Will not change his mind. • No need to respond to them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferring not to reply.
<i>"There are Syrians refugees who do faults, but these are individual mistakes and the comment should be directed to those who deserve it not to include all Syrians"</i> (Extract 23, Amman Participant 11, Male, 19, Undergraduate student)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are Syrian refugees at fault. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admitting some faults of some refugees and calling for them to not be treated collectively.

Table 7. Cont.

Extract	Codes	Main Theme
<i>"There are indeed a number of Syrian refugees who make mistakes, but some sites have focused on issues that magnify the false image of Syrians"</i> (Extract 23, Amman Participant 11, Male, 19, Undergraduate student)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A number of Syrian refugees who make mistakes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admitting some faults of some refugees and calling for them to not be treated collectively.
<i>"I am afraid to answer because I am a girl and they may insult me with further abusive comments"</i> (Extract 24, Istanbul Participant 2, Female, 21, Undergraduate student)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Afraid to answer. Because I am a girl. May offend me with abusive comments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preferring to keep silent because of fear.
<i>"I don't comment. I fear for myself because I am a refugee. I do not want to be a target. I am in a foreign country and I do not like problems"</i> (Extract 25, Amman Participant 4, Female, 29, Bachelor's degree/not working)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I do not comment. A refugee and do not want to be a target. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preferring to keep silent because of fear.
<i>"I stay silent because I don't know the details of what the person is writing about and to avoid arguing, inciting strife and conflict and spreading discord"</i> (Extract 26, Amman Participant 6, male, 22, High school/working)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I stay silent. Avoid inciting strife. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preferring to keep silent to avoid problems.
<i>"I don't reply and comment because I know the degree of discontent and cruelty of the people who write such comments; therefore, it is difficult to change their mind by replying to an answer, but on the contrary, it could be more provoked and cause significant problems for me."</i> (Extract 27, Amman Participant 9, Male, 39, Bachelor's degree/working)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I do not reply. difficult to change one's mind. Will be more provoked and can cause significant problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preferring to keep silent to avoid problems.
<i>"There are social media pages that try to promote hate, but there are also pages that are neutral towards the other side."</i> (Extract 28, Amman, Participant 10, Female, 48, PhD/working)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some pages promote hate. Some pages are neutral. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some pages promote positive views of refugees and others promote negative view.
<i>"The media presents us (refugees) as people who earn living from others and even steal."</i> (Extract 29, Istanbul, Participant 1, Female, 31, PhD student)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Earn a living and even steal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bad representation of refugees.
<i>"There are ignorant racist groups that increase intolerance and encourage people to revenge through social media."</i> (Extract 30, Istanbul Participant 8, Male, 21, Bachelor's degree/working).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Racist groups. Intolerance. Revenge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social media are exploited by racist groups to spread hate speech.
<i>"People see events from their perspectives. We must take care of our future and build ourselves instead of responding to anyone who speaks badly about us. The world will see our achievements and our image will be changed in their eyes"</i> (Extract 31, Istanbul, Participant 6, Male, 27, High school graduate/not working)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care of our future and build ourselves. After achievements, our image will change in their eyes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preferring not to answer and instead focusing on work and achievements.
<i>"This is normal, not all humans are angels. At the end, Allah does what he wants."</i> (Extract 32, Istanbul Participant 9, Male, 24, Less than high school graduate/working)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not all humans are angels. It is Normal. God sees and does 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preferring not to reply because God determines what will happen.

Table 7. Cont.

Extract	Codes	Main Theme
<i>"Syrians have more criticism than others, so it's normal to see this on social media"</i> (Extract 33, Amman Participant 7, Female, 32, Bachelor's degree/working)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal. • Syrians are more criticized than others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is normal because Syrian refugees receive more criticism than other nationalities.
<i>"There are two sides of the Turkish media: the governmental media, which stands with the refugees and the opposition media which stands against the refugees and each one uses social media channels to confirm its view."</i> (Extract 34, Istanbul, Participant 10, Male, 33, Master's degree/Engineer is working)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two sides of the Turkish media. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptance and refusal of the refugees are represented in social media accounts of each different part of Turkey.
<i>"Opposition parties, many of whom use refugees to tarnish the government's image, do not constitute a majority of the population."</i> (Extract 35, Istanbul, Participant 3, Female, 35, Master's degree/not working)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use refugees to tarnish the government's image. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugees are exploited and represented negatively for certain aims of some opposite party.
<i>"Some websites sometimes politicize and misrepresent the news and images of the refugees."</i> (Extract 36, Amman, Participant 14, Male, 27, College graduate/working)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politicize and misrepresent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politicizing and misrepresenting the refugee images.
<i>"I don't care because; that doesn't reflect the real image of the Syrians. That negative opinion is written by one person, and there are others who are good"</i> (Extract 37, Amman Participant 6, Male, 22, High school/working)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not care. • Individual opinion. • There are good opinions of other people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferring not to answer because it is just an individual opinion.
<i>"I am angry because abusing a refugee on social media reduces the chance of empathy with all other refugees! It negatively affects the overall perception of refugees in the society, and this abuse contributes to incitement against all refugees."</i> (Extract 38, Amman, Participant 4, Female, 29, Undergraduate graduate/not working)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing the chance of empathy. • Negatively affects the overall perception of refugees in society. • Incitement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abusing refugees in social media leads to reducing the chance of empathy with them. • It affects the overall perception of refugees in society. • Contributing to incitement against all refugees.

5. Discussion and Analysis of the Data

5.1. Reinforcing Causes of Xenophobia and Hate Speech towards Refugees on Social Media

5.1.1. Otherization and Demonization of the Syrian Refugees through Social Media

Depending on the data collected from the qualitative and quantitative methods, the study answered the question of the perspectives and evaluation of Syrian refugees of their representation through social media. Table 3 shows that 9.2% of the sample in Jordan and 17.2% of the sample in Turkey find the image projected on social media about Syrian refugees negative. A percentage of 26.1% of each sample find it neutral. As well as this, some participants in the focus group discussions see that some media and social media platforms show that the existence of Syrian refugees in some host countries will destroy the economy of the country in which they live (Extract 9). As well as some see that they are represented in a contemptuous manner while they receive the aid (Extract 10). They also think that some of the social media activity is a type of racist representation and some of them wondered when it would finish (Extract 7).

Depending on the opinions of the participants, it is concluded that social media contributed to the otherization and demonization of Syrian refugees through a bad representation such as quantitating the Syrian refugees as a batch of people that implies a threat, portraying them as helpless victims, and drawing parallels between refugees and insecurity or between refugees and economic burdens. The results in Table 4 show that 8.3% of the sample in Jordan, and 8.9% of the sample in Turkey think the representation and coverage

issues of refugees in social media increased hatred and hostility towards the refugees. As some participants in the focus group discussion said, the negative representation of some refugees on social media reduces the chance of empathy with all other refugees and negatively affects the overall perception of refugees in society and that abuse contributes also to incitement against all refugees (Extract 8). Other participants in the focus group discussions confirmed the previous idea revealing that they see that some use social media for negative purposes such as promoting otherization and demonization, spreading hatred and insults, abusing Syrians, spreading negative individual actions, exaggerating and generalizing individual mistakes, and disseminating false images about refugees due to certain ideological positioning (Extract 11).

The participants in Istanbul's focus group discussion also think that social media plays a role in spreading false information about refugees and contributes to portraying Syrians as people who steal and take money without work. Many citizens have bad impressions of Syrians because of the exaggeration in describing some refugees' mistakes and their negative effects that increase the problems and hatred. According to some participants, some media outlets in Turkey had portrayed refugees as taking Turkish people's money, and they claimed that Syrian refugees receive more aid and financial help than Turkish citizens do. This situation created the perception that all aid was given to the Syrian refugees and as a result, it planted the seeds of hatred towards them. Some participants also see that negative news about Syrian refugees was spread on some social media accounts and those accounts served to feed the negative image of the Syrian refugees.

5.1.2. Gatekeeping Process That Serves Certain Policies and Specific Goals More Than Revealing the Truth

Some participants see that social media accounts filter the stories of refugees instead of simply reflecting (Extract 1). In addition, the media and some social media accounts worked to turn some minor problems into big problems by spreading false ideas, rumors, and lies for propaganda (Extract 10). As a result, xenophobia and hatred towards refugees spread (Extract 11).

Social media's negative effects on Syrian refugees are also attributed to the fact that some news pages and accounts have certain agendas, policies, and priorities protected by persons who manage those pages with what matches their agendas, so they work to achieve their agenda's goals by applying a filter to the content to make what is published suit their agendas. If a media article, reportage, news item, etc., which contains a xenophobic speech, is accepted to be published, then who admitted or approved its publishing? We can say that the owners or editors of those websites or accounts who accepted the content approved the publishing. Those owners or editors, who are considered gatekeepers [57], control publishing and determine the final decision of whether the content should be accepted and published or be filtered. As a result, accepting publishing content that includes hatred and xenophobic speech against refugees, clearly states that the gatekeepers have a role in promoting hatred and xenophobia against refugees through their news websites or social media accounts.

As gatekeepers approve the transmission of media messages, which contain xenophobic speech, from their primary source to the public even though after going through certain stages. This approval without filtering shows how news and media content editors select stories to be published based on their publishing policies and criteria or in some cases they could be under the control of the governing parties or authorities reflecting their opinion if they control or are the owners of those news websites and their affiliated social media accounts. According to gatekeeping process, media content is created, formulated, and subsequently, published by gatekeepers who affect how the audience understands situations by providing certain images, stereotypes, and messages [58].

As a result, the media content that is published to the public passes through several points or gates, where many decisions are made about it and how to formulate it, so the more time it takes for the media to emerge, the more power the individual has in

formulating them and introducing many variables on them. The role of gatekeepers, or those who are primarily involved in media intervention by screening the news, is allowing some news to be published, withholding, or modifying others, and thus have the power to decide whether to pass, withhold, or be modify this information before it reaches the audience.

The gatekeepers determine what information should and should not be sent to groups or individuals [59]. Here, it is concluded that social media did not lose the gatekeepers' role because many news channels account on social media commensurate their policy with their main policy, and as a result those who manage those accounts direct waves of colliding publishing and give direction to make it suit their policy regardless of whether they do not tell the truth. This gatekeeping role is done according to the owners, parties or groups, etc., who manage the pages which prefer to focus more on the bad side of the refugees such as the laws and rules violation of some refugees and bad behaviors or others to put pressure on their governments to get rid of those refugees. Those gatekeepers control publishing the media content by evaluating the news, allowing some news, photos, videos, or comments to be circulated, and preventing or changing some, thus their power over information transmission affects the media audience.

On the other hand, the role of the gatekeepers is illustrated by approving the dissemination of abuses and anti-refugee messages sent by some people as comments through social media platforms. Some posts lack control over what the audience comments on their posts as an open space where all people can comment and repost due to the difficulty of taking control of a huge number of comments on some posts. In other words, this lack of control over the negative representation of refugees on social media also increases hate speech towards refugees. The participants consider that hostile use of social media leads to a negative impact on their image in society.

5.2. *Negative Effects of Xenophobia and Hate Speech towards Refugees on Social Media*

5.2.1. *Shifting from Sympathy and Euphoria to Compassion Fatigue, Hatred, and Xenophobia against the Refugees*

As the discussion revealed, the participants feel that the Syrian refugees are exploited in social media when they are represented that they are mainly taking funds and constituting a burden or threat to the host country's economy. They also see that negative representation affects their image and their acceptance in the host countries and changes the public's feelings towards them from empathy into hatred, and it contributed to making citizens less sympathetic, increasing hatred and xenophobic speech, and creating tension between them and the citizens.

After the Syrian refugees received sympathy and were welcomed with euphoria and a desire to be assisted, especially after the publishing of the Aylan Kurdi photo, negative representation started to appear in some host countries' media and circulated in social media. The repeated publishing of negative representations of the Syrian refugees contributed to making compassion less towards refugees and thus forming compassion fatigue towards those refugees in host countries [60]. As a result, it contributes to incitement against the refugees and calls to expel them. It is concluded from the discussion, e.g., (Extract 38), that the participants see that negative representation could be a reason for converting the citizens' feelings towards the refugees from sympathy into xenophobia passing by apathy and compassion fatigue towards the refugees as is concluded in Figure 1 below.

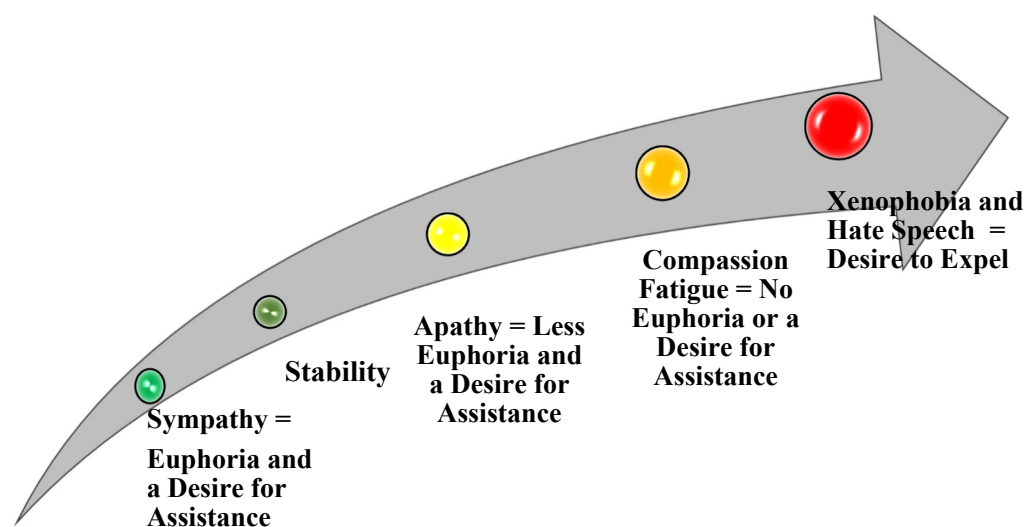


Figure 1. Stages of forming xenophobia against Syrian refugees on social media.

5.2.2. The Psychological Effects and Feeling of Resentment Due to the Distortion of the Image and the Lack of Acceptance in the Society

The participants see that the negative representation affected their acceptance in the host country's societies. Furthermore, posting and publishing negative offensive content against refugees, for example, that they are causing economic and social problems in the societies have negative psychological effects on the refugees, their relatives, and friends, etc. (Extracts 4, 11), especially on those individuals who refrain from responding or remain silent because they fear further abuse.

The data showed how the participants feel when they see other Syrian refugees' abuse through photos, news, and comments on social media. Table 5 shows that 76.2% of the sample from Jordan and 88.8% of the sample from Turkey feel dissatisfied when they see the mistreatment and abuse of Syrian refugees through posts or comments on social media. This negative representation of refugees in social media creates a status of mutual hatred against refugees in host countries and enforces refugees to feel uncomfortable and dissatisfied. The dissemination of abuses and anti-refugee messages through the means of social media affects the refugees. In other words, it increases hate speech towards refugees. The participants expressed their feelings towards that clearly in Extracts 2, 4, 5, 6, and 8. Those who feel angry and resentful think that this discrediting puts Syrian refugees at risk, when they are treated inhumanely in a negative image through social media.

Posting negative photos or posts consistently on social media increases their heart-breaking and pain. When they were asked about their feelings, the participants mentioned a series of words that express their feelings at that moment such as psychological anxiety, anger, racism, resentment, sadness, pain, insults, psychological abuse, being unwanted, sadness, powerlessness inability to respond to abuse, injustice, hatred, disenfranchisement, envy for citizenship, nostalgia, desire to die, slander, lack of conscience, dissatisfaction, distress, oppression, prejudice, stigma, psychological exhaustion, disappointment, hurt, hatred, and racism. Being a refugee from the same country and failing to defend the other refugees who are insulted on social media is another reason to be stressed, according to some participants.

The misrepresentation of truth and the generalization of false information, slander, lies, and abuse to all refugees is another reason that annoys the participants; some negative individuals' behaviors and mistakes are generalized which provokes public opinion against all refugees. The participants stated that they get angry when they read or see abuse on social media, which is constant abuse, causing others to hate them, losing sympathy towards them. In addition, it provokes to ask to stop helping them and get rid of them by sending them all back to Syria by creating a prevalence of the opinion about repatriating the Syrian refugees. Moreover, the participants feel angry because there is a focus on some

negative behaviors and mistakes in a provocative manner to the public opinion that is later employed politically against all refugees which is unfair according to some participants. Some participants in the first category made statements that negative images of Syrian refugees were spread on some social media accounts and that those images were served as if all Syrians were the same as the participant in Extract 29 describes it.

5.3. The Defense or Response Mechanisms of the Participants to Bad Comments or Representation against the Syrian Refugees in Social Media

According to the data gathered and analyzed, there are defense or response mechanisms of the participants against the abuse of the Syrian refugees they face through social media. The participants were divided into main categories depending on their mechanisms as Figure 2 shows.

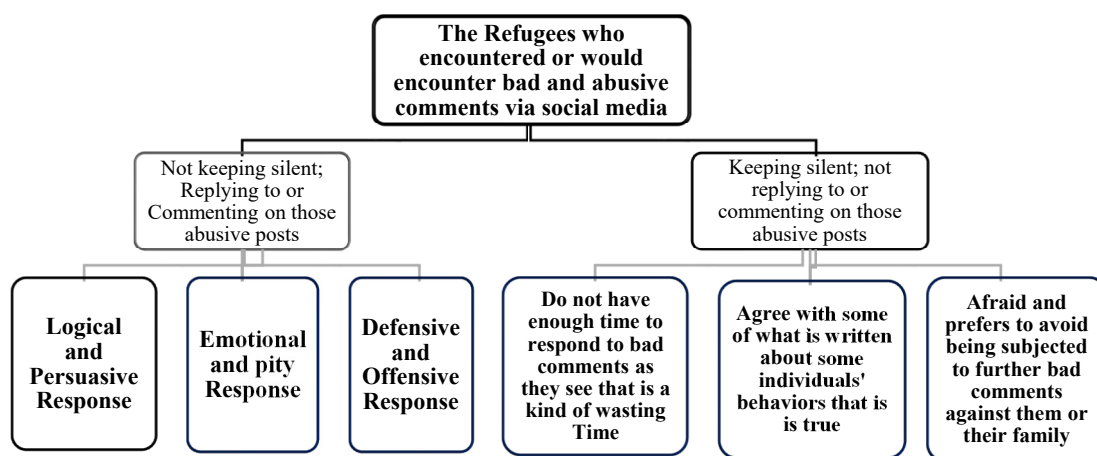


Figure 2. The defense mechanisms of the participants against the hate speech towards them on social media.

(1) The First Category was the participants who said that they will reply and defend the abuse or bad comments, or they would respond if they encountered it. Table 6 shows that they were the lowest percentage of respondents in both samples: 14.5% of the sample in Jordan and 23.1% of the sample in Turkey. There were also participants in the focus group discussions who said that they reply or comment if they encounter abusive posts, news, comments, or images on social media accounts that contain abusive or insulting words against the Syrian refugees. As some participants explained that they defend and stand with the abused refugees since they are people from the same country (Extract 3). This category was also divided into three groups according to the mechanisms they follow in their response and defense:

(A) The first group is those who rely on a logical and a persuasive approach; where they try to clarify and explain to the audience more details and facts about the subject or the topic is discussed, trying to clarify facts, as the participants in Extracts 12 and 13 said that they try to present a reasonable and persuasive argument. They stated that they try to respond calmly with awareness and in a balanced way to negative comments about the Syrian refugees. They said that, while doing this, their motivation is to show that the Syrian refugees are good people and they do not intend to harm anyone. The perspective expressed in Extract 14 also supports this approach. Those participants see that responding with reliable information, using facts proves that Syrian refugees are not the direct cause of all the problems that occur in the host countries. Explaining the situation of Syrian refugees helps the audience to understand the truth about the economic situation or other problems mentioned in the news or comments on social media accounts or pages as it is understood of in Extract 15.

(B) The second group considers an emotional approach. They follow an emotional response or comment thinking that could stop the audience of the host countries from writing negative things or sending xenophobic messages against Syrian refugees by reminding the public that they are people of the same religion and should share the same concern. One participant said that he tries in his reply to make people feel their pain and put themselves in their place by explaining that the Syrian refugees will not offend them, adding that they came because of the war and then will return. In addition, he said that refugees are their brothers and guests whom they should respect since the asylum was forced on them by certain circumstances, as expressed in Extract 16. Moreover, this group focused on the morality of Islam and the ethics of tolerance in dealing with all people even those of different races and religions. They think that talking about the morality of Prophet Mohammad PBUH or making a religious interpretation such as simple prayer could be sufficient for those who attack Syrian refugees through offensive posts or comments on social media. They make comments such as *“Allah forgives you”, “Allah is exalted, the Almighty is great”, and “Allah is Sufficient for us! Most Excellent is He in whom we trust”!*

(C) The third group indicated that they would respond defensively and even aggressively. By responding in this way, they think that they would prevent those who write negative comments from making more comments and writing negatively against Syrians. They convey to those who write negatively that they must respect them as they work hard and earn their livelihood. Moreover, they defend the Syrian refugees with comments and posts, whatever their situation, as the participants in Extracts 17 and 18 said.

(2) The Second Category included the participants who prefer to remain silent and not respond or comment if they encounter negative comments. They represented 85.5% of the sample of Jordan and 76.9% of the sample of Turkey. Depending on their reasons explained in the questionnaire and during the focus group discussion, those participants were divided into the following groups explaining why they prefer to keep silent:

(A) The first group 38.0% of the sample of Jordan and 36.6% of the sample of Turkey said that they do not have enough time to respond to such comments. The participants in the focus group discussion explained that they think that answering will not work, it is a waste of time, and will not provide a benefit and a positive result because nobody cares about it. As participants in Extracts 19 and 20 pointed out, they do not want to waste their time replying to posts and getting into nonsense discussions on social media accounts. They feel that it is not necessary to respond to these comments and, like the participant in Extract 21, send a report of the negative posts and later they are deleted.

Some of them hold the view that engaging in social media conversations is childish. Debate and contention could make matters more problematic, as stated in Extract 22. As in a previous question in the questionnaire in Table 5 that 13.2% of the sample from Jordan and 11.2% of the sample from Turkey said they do not reply because they do not care about it. Those participants see that they should not care for bad posts or comments on social media because just small ignorant groups or ideologically politically motivated individuals to attack them because most people are either neutral or sympathetic with the Syrian refugees (Extract 30). The abuse published on social media is not important according to some participants (Extract 31) because it can be changed when the Syrian refugees work hard, and others see them successful in society. Knowing that some people have a habit to abuse the Syrian refugees on social media was a reason for some participants to not being angry, because there are bad and good people in life as well, and everyone expresses his/her views and opinions, as the participants in Extract 32 and Extract 33 think. Some follow certain ideological agendas or political parties on social media and feel that is a reason enough to not get angry, because each side wants to promote its ideas and reflects its vision or policy, regardless of whether the refugees have done something wrong or not, as the participants think in Extracts 34, 35, and 36. Moreover, social media posts or news often lack accuracy and are open to all people to comment and write was also another reason to make the participants do not care for what is negatively written about the Syrian refugees in host countries (Extract 37).

(B) The second group consists of the participants who do not respond or defend in some contexts because they agree with some of what is written, especially when they feel that was a reaction to the wrong behavior of some refugees, as explained by the participant in Extract 23. They see that the wrong actions of some Syrian refugees were the cause of distorting the whole image of all Syrian refugees. They believe that some Syrian refugees were the reason for spoiling and deforming the image of all Syrian refugees, because they acted badly and stupidly or provoke Turks, which made their image get worse. The irresponsible reaction or behavior of some Syrian refugees who do not take into account the result of the general feeling towards Syrian refugees is the reason why this bad image is reflected in the media and social media in Turkish society for example as some of them explained. Another reason is that some refugees violate the traditions of the host country (e.g., Turkey) clearly in front of the citizens. At the same time, the bad image caused by the Syrian refugees themselves was influenced by their sudden arrival without prior knowledge about the customs and habits of the host country and without respecting the differences between the cultures and traditions of the two countries. The participants said that the person who does this and goes around acting stupidly for fame puts all Syrian refugees in a bad situation, which contributes that all Syrian refugees are the same, which generates feelings of anger and hatred towards them.

(C) The third group Those who do not respond because they are in fear of being ostracized and being attacked morally or facing further abuse and negative reaction, provoking, and raising more problems. They think it is not their country and they are afraid of people expelling them and their families as participants in Extracts 24, 25, 26, and 27 said. As shown in Table 6, 47.5% of the sample from Jordan and 40.3% of the sample from Turkey said that they do not respond to avoid being subjected to bad comments about themselves, their family, or other Syrian refugees in general. According to Noelle-Neumann [61], the silence of this group who are afraid to comment or respond is consistent with the spiral of silence theory, which states that the society or a social group may break off, disregard, or prohibit individuals due to the opinions of the minority. This stipulates that people are afraid of isolation that, subsequently, leads to remaining quiet rather than voicing opinions or suppositions. Media is a critical factor that affects both the overwhelming thought and people's discernment of what the prevailing thought is.

The basis of the Spiral of Silence theory depends on the fact that people live in societies and interact with public opinion by means of their constituents and constituents so that individuals permeate the societies in which they live to form their opinions according to public opinion. In this way, public opinion is affected by the ideas conveyed by the media, and as a result, a unified public opinion is formed. Those who oppose this approach or opinion take a stand of silence to avoid abuse or isolation by the majority group. People believe that having a contrary opinion and expressing it even on social media would lead them to social isolation. They prevent their personal views and opinions in discussions and prefer to show silence because they oppose the trend or opinion adopted by the majority. The silence here is an expression of denial and rejection rather than acceptance.

It is understood through the theoretical frame why the participants in the last group prefer to hide their opinions, views, and preferences once they fall within a minority group. When those refugees encounter aggressive comments, see a large number of citizens badly comment, and agree with the majority, they prefer to keep silent and to not be attacked by the majority when their opinion does not fit the public opinion, which is against the refugees. Then, the silence increased when the minority becomes more silent, and the majority becomes more vocal. The theory explains how public opinion is formed in our fast-changing media environment. Although Web 2.0 provides more platforms and possibilities to express opinions that are not compliant with a popular opinion, it plays a huge role in telling us what the dominant opinion is as Figure 3 shows.

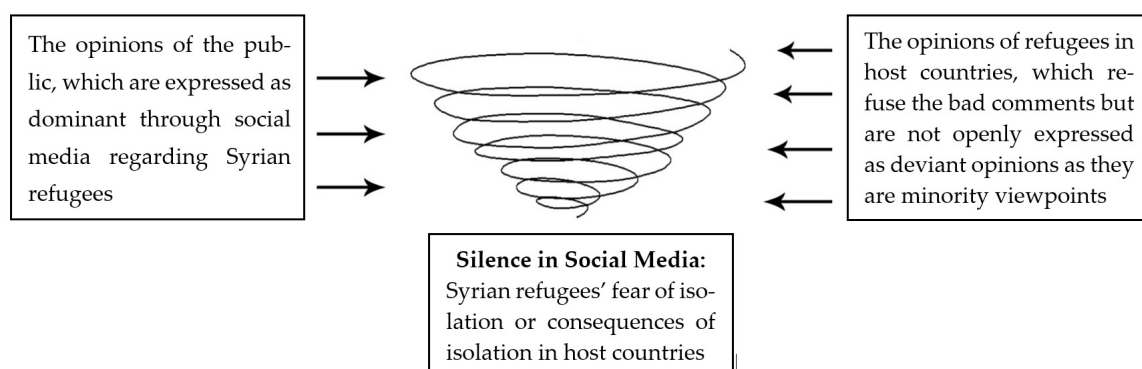


Figure 3. Spiral of silence among the participants on social media, stimulated from the main model of Noelle-Neumann (Source= Noelle-Neumann, 1993).

6. Conclusions

Xenophobia against refugees exists via social media. It manifests itself through quantifying the refugees, portraying them as helpless victims, and associating them with insecurity and economic problems.

Despite the host countries complying with some laws that are supposed to restrict media xenophobia, these laws seem to be ineffective as there is a lack of control for abuse on social media, which allows for an increase in the anti-refugee sentiments and growth of hate speech against refugees. On the other hand, gatekeepers have a role in promoting negative representation by approving xenophobic speech transmission without filtering or applying ethical control.

Social media induces xenophobia in the locals through publishing negativity about the Syrian refugees, in addition to the emphasis on the problems they cause such as overpopulation, increased competition in the job market, large costs of the refugee policies, and the distress they bring to the locals. Now that the problem has been defined, it seems to be important to discuss the measures that can be used to solve this problem.

The Syrian refugees feel that the hostile use of social media and the negative representation harm their image and lead to creating hatred towards them. There are reinforcing causes of that xenophobic speech by otherization and demonization of them via social media by continuous publishing of the negative representation as well as publishing fake news.

The Syrian refugees see that their images are represented negatively via social media and are framed through the media with certain frameworks within specific goals. This representation could lead to compassion fatigue and the formation of "hatred and xenophobia" by describing them as the cause of all the negative consequences in the host countries. Publishing negative representation also affects the public by creating a sense of hatred towards the refugees and leads to a change in the public's feelings from empathy to hatred towards refugees.

Syrian refugees follow different defense mechanisms towards the hate speech against them in social media. The first category of refugees do accept keeping silent and they prefer to reply using logical, emotional, or defensive and offensive ways to bad comments against Syrian refugees in general. The other category prefer to keep silent and not reply claiming that they either do not have time to reply or agree that some individual behaviors of some refugees were the reason for that reaction of citizens, or they are afraid of being subjected to more bad comments against them. Consequently, the media's view of the majority opinion reduces the opposite opinion. The media acts as the common purveyor of hegemony. Syrian refugees, who do not give their contrary opinions only to avoid being isolated, seem to be traitors even to avoid being insulted by a superior group. When refugees believe public opinion is against them, they will thus be unwilling or fear to speak and defend themselves and they prefer to keep silent.

Funding: This research received no external funding. This study is a part of a comprehensive study that was done on the topic of the effects of social media on the Syrian refugees living in Jordan and Turkey, depending on personal expenses of the author and without receiving any financial support from any supporting bodies.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent and voluntary participation were obtained, and the participants' privacy and anonymity were protected.

Data Availability Statement: The data of this study are not publicly available due to privacy and ethical concerns.

Acknowledgments: The author thanks all Syrian refugees who participated in the study.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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