

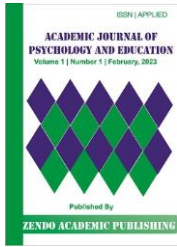
EXPLORING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES

Mücahit AYDOĞMUŞ, Edip TUT, Yıldırım KARADAĞ

Faculty of Education, Ondokuz Mayıs University, Samsun, Türkiye

Abstract: This qualitative study aimed to investigate teachers' perceptions and experiences of using social media for educational purposes. Adopting a phenomenological approach, six teachers from primary and secondary schools were selected using criterion and snowball sampling methods. Data were analyzed using content analysis. The findings indicated that teachers use social media for both personal and professional development and consider it a valuable resource for educational content. Social media also helps overcome resource limitations and has a positive impact on student engagement. The study provides practical examples of how social media can be effectively used for educational purposes, making it useful for teachers, students, and other stakeholders in education. This research categorizes teachers' experiences, highlighting their use of social media for educational purposes. Overall, the study sheds light on the educational value of social media and its potential for enhancing teaching and learning practices in the 21st century.

Keywords: social media, educational purposes, teachers, qualitative research, content analysis, professional development, student engagement



1. Introduction

Social media has become an integral part of our lives, and its impact can be felt over all aspects of society. With various features, hundreds of social networking sites are available, each with different technological qualities, leading to their widespread use. The most frequently used and popular social media platforms today include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Dailymotion, Flickr, Photo Bucket, LinkedIn, Blogger.com, and WordPress. According to the We Are Social (2020a) report, 49% (3.8 billion) of the world's population has used some form of social media platform, while in Turkey, the use of social media is above the world average, reaching 64% of the total population of the country.

Considering the age range of those using social media around the world and in Turkey, it is observed that it is particularly more prevalent among the youth. The United Kingdom Office of Communications' (2020) report on social media usage showed that 51% of children aged 4 used various social media tools, while the rates for ages between 8-11, and 12-15 were found to be 64%, 74%, and 89%, respectively. The increase in the use of social media with each passing day among young people and relatively easy access to such platforms has turned social media into a holistic force in the lives of young people.

However, the use of social media is not limited to personal or recreational purposes, as it has also found its way into the educational sector. Many educators have realized the potential of social media to enhance teaching and learning practices and to engage students in various educational activities. The use of social media has the potential to overcome resource limitations and support teaching and learning processes.

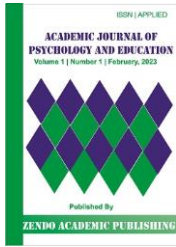
Thus, it is crucial to examine the concept of social media, which is so important in the lives of younger generations, according to its educational value. In this context, this study aims to investigate the meanings teachers attach to social media and their experiences regarding the use of it for educational purposes. The study will adopt a qualitative research design and phenomenological approach. By exploring teachers' perceptions and experiences of using social media for educational purposes, the study aims to provide insights into the potential of social media for enhancing teaching and learning practices.

Specifically, the study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are teachers' perceptions of social media for educational purposes?
2. How do teachers use social media for educational purposes?
3. What are the benefits of using social media for educational purposes?
4. How does the use of social media for educational purposes impact student engagement and learning outcomes?

1.1. Theoretical Framework

Individuals utilise technological products that are updated constantly to meet their needs to relay information and communicate (Maden, 2018). In particular, the change in web 2.0 technology has offered individuals different alternatives on this issue. The Web 2.0 technology, which saw a transition from inert web platforms to more dynamic platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and WhatsApp (Moodley, 2019), and information systems such as a smartphone, can support knowledge sharing and collaboration opportunities (Cheng & Chen, 2018). The high tendency of students to use social media tools provides a unique opportunity to create an information society (Pollara & Zhu, 2011). At this point, social media should not be considered

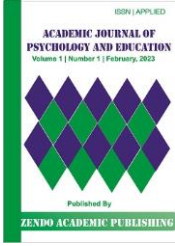


as just an entertainment tool (Akbaş-Çoşar, 2019). As technological advancements have compelled changes in teacher profile and role, as well as teaching methods (Gorgoretti, 2019), the use of social media can be regarded as a relatively new but potentially significant phenomenon for twenty-first century K-12 education and teacher training (Greenhow & Askari, 2017). The use of social media for educational purposes enables teachers to connect with students, share knowledge and experiences, and improve their skills (Mardiana, 2016). Social media is easy to use, is in a continuous state of development, has an extremely broad reach, and has a seemingly unlimited capacity to improve itself thanks to new software innovation. Furthermore, social media can help students with their career development journeys (Wessels & Diale, 2017), create critical thinking and discussion environments outside of the classroom, encourage students to interact with one another, and facilitate active learning, cooperation, academic motivation, lesson interest, and participation (Abe & Jordan, 2013). It falls on teachers to ensure that students effectively benefit from the educational content available on social media. Since teachers are the initiators, developers, and practitioners of education, they should be able to follow technological developments and increase their professional competencies. Indeed, the literature emphasized that experience was important for the effective use of social media tools for class-based activities (Joosten, 2012; Mayfield, 2010; Poore, 2016), as teachers could not be expected to present information to their students when they were not fully acquainted with the technology at hand (Kaleta & Joosten, 2007).

1.2. Existing Literature

There are several instances in the literature that present the synthesis of research with the use of social media in education. For example, Dennen et al. (2020) examined 224 studies on the use of social media in their research and stated that almost half of these studies focused on the use of social media as a learning-teaching tool. Similar to Van Den Beemt, Thurlings and Willems (2020), they evinced that most of these studies covered high school and university levels, and those on the use of social media for educational purposes at the primary and secondary levels were in the minority. Manca (2020) revealed that most of the studies on the educational use of social media were related to language teaching, and there were relatively few studies on educational technologies (8.7%) and teacher education (4.3%). The research on social media highlighted the benefits of social media in the learning process, but most of these focused on student views (Stathopoulou, Siamagka & Christodoulides, 2019).

It is possible to state that studies examining teachers' opinions, attitudes, perceptions, and experiences towards social media are relatively limited. Some of these studies show that social media can be used by teachers to follow new developments and communicate with their colleagues (Akkaya & Kanadlı, 2019), to follow courserelated resources (Çelik & Elbasan, 2018), and these kinds of uses may contribute to lessons positively (Korkmaz, Ünal & Güven, 2017). Mart and Campbell-Barr (2020) found that the use of social media supported professional development opportunities in the early teaching years. Similar to the aims of our research, there were also studies examining teachers' experiences regarding social media use (Okumuş, 2019; Van Bommel, Randahl, Lijekvist & Ruthven, 2020). Thus, these studies focused only on the experiences of teachers of mathematics, Swedish, and history teachers.



1.3. The Purpose of the Study

It can be thought that the use of social media for educational purposes by teachers working at different branches or grade levels may differ. This approach reveals the need for a more holistic presentation of the educational experiences of teachers from different branches. Accordingly, most of the educational features of social media are still waiting to be discovered in the relevant literature, and studies in this area remain limited (Barrot, 2018; Bharucha, 2018). Thus, this study aims to fill a gap in the field as it is a qualitative study that reveals the meanings teachers in different branches of primary and secondary education put on social media and their experiences with educational social media. In addition, this study focuses on teachers' experiences and shows how the educational use of social media progresses in practice. The results will contribute to international literature and guide teachers and other stakeholders in education on how social media can be used for educational purposes. The research questions were created based on the deficiencies in the literature and are specified as follows:

- i. What does social media mean for teachers?
- ii. How do teachers use social media for educational purposes?

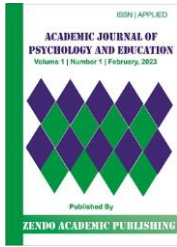
2. Methodology

2.1. Research Model

We endeavoured to analyse the phenomenon “the use of social media for educational purposes” in-depth and attempted to explain the use of social media for educational purposes based on teachers' experiences. Based on this, we considered the phenomenological method, one of the qualitative research methods, to be appropriate for this study, which examined the meanings teachers attributed to social media and their experiences with using social media for education. This approach describes how individuals experience certain phenomena in a methodological, rigorous, and in-depth manner (Patton, 2014). The aim of the phenomenological research approach, which focuses on the cases we are aware of but do not have an in-depth understanding of, is to reveal the meanings attributed to these experiences (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). Handling these experiences in their natural context is critical in phenomenological research (Silverman, 2018).

2.2. Participants

Data sources in research using the phenomenological research approach are individuals or groups that experience and reflect the focused phenomenon (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç-Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz & Demirel, 2016; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). It can be appropriate to use snowball or criterion sampling methods in such studies (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). In this study, we used the mentioned two-step sampling method. In the first stage, we included the teachers who directly experienced the specified phenomenon and specified “using social media for educational purposes” as the criterion. Accordingly, we first contacted one teacher who meets this criterion. In the second stage, we adopted the snowball sampling method to expand the participant group and asked the teachers contacted to refer us to other teachers of different branches using social media for educational purposes to ensure a diversity of data. In the end, the participant group consisted of six teachers from different branches [Mathematics (MT), Social Studies (SST), Sciences (ST), English Language (ELT), Turkish Language (TLT), and Primary School Teaching (PST)] who were working in the province of Samsun in Turkey during the 2019-2020 academic year. We determined that having a range of teachers covering



different educational branches was crucial for the efficacy of the study. The branches other than primary school teaching are the relevant courses in both primary and secondary schools, and these courses have a more concentrated place in the weekly course schedule compared to other courses. These courses can also be defined as basic courses in primary and secondary schools in Turkey. Table 1 provides descriptive information about the participants:

Table 1. *Descriptive Details of the Participants*

Participants	Branch	Gender	Years Experience	of District
MT	Mathematics	Male	17	Urban
SST	Social Studies	Male	10	Rural
ST	Sciences	Female	15	Urban
ELT	English Language	Male	12	Rural
TLT	Turkish Language	Female	20	Urban
PST	Primary School Teaching	Female	17	Urban

2.3. Data Collection Tools and Procedures

The phenomenological interview is the primary data collection tool used in order to achieve the underlying meaning of an experience (Merriam, 2015). In such research, in-depth interviews should be conducted with individuals who directly experience the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2014). We collected the data through face-to-face interviews with teachers who used social media for educational purposes. Before the data collection tool was developed, we held conversations about the use of social media for educational purposes with two teachers who met the criteria of the participant group. Based on these interviews and the studies in the literature, an interview form was developed on the basis of the semi-structured interview technique. While developing the interview form, questions prepared separately by the three researchers were brought together where the questions were discussed and amendments were made. Some changes were made to the interview form in line with the opinions of two different researchers not involved in the study, and a pre-interview was held with a teacher not part of the participatory group to check the understandability of the interview form.

According to Miles and Huberman's (2016) suggestion, long-term interaction with teachers is taken as a basis to ensure cooperation. We did not collect the data during the first interviews; the first interviews were carried out in order to become acquainted with the teachers and provide preliminary information. In subsequent interviews, teachers were observed to be more comfortable with the researcher collecting data, and thus, the data collection process was initiated. In the third meeting, we asked them if there was anything they wanted to add, and if so, those points were added. Thus, we collected the data from each participant as a result of three interviews. We finalized the data obtained with the confirmation of the data by the participants.

2.4. Data Analysis

The data of the study was analyzed by using the content analysis method. When analysing phenomenological research, the five-step analysis method consisting of determining important expressions, grouping common expressions, theming the sets of meanings, and creating and combining structural and textual descriptions is

most frequently used (Moustakas, 1994). Creswell (2013) states that the first of these stages should be the description of the researcher's own experiences. This study adopted the content analysis method following the phenomenological analysis steps proposed by Moustakas (1994), and the whole process was described in detail in the method section based on Creswell's (2013) recommendation. At the first stage, the data was analysed separately by three researchers, and important expressions were identified. After a consensus was reached on the points considered important, we grouped common statements and combined them with similar groupings under the same themes. Consequently, we created structural and textural descriptions, combined them, and completed the analysis phase. We held meetings with two experts where we shared the data obtained and explained the method followed in the study in detail and received their feedback. We explained the process thoroughly, noted their opinions and received their confirmation for consistency.

2.5. Ethical

In this study, all rules stated to be followed within the scope of the “Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive” were followed.

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Date of Ethics Evaluation Decision: October 25, 2019 Issue Number of Ethics Assessment Document:

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3. Findings

As a result of data analysis, the findings were presented under themes and categories. The schematic representation of the themes and categories is given in Figure 1:

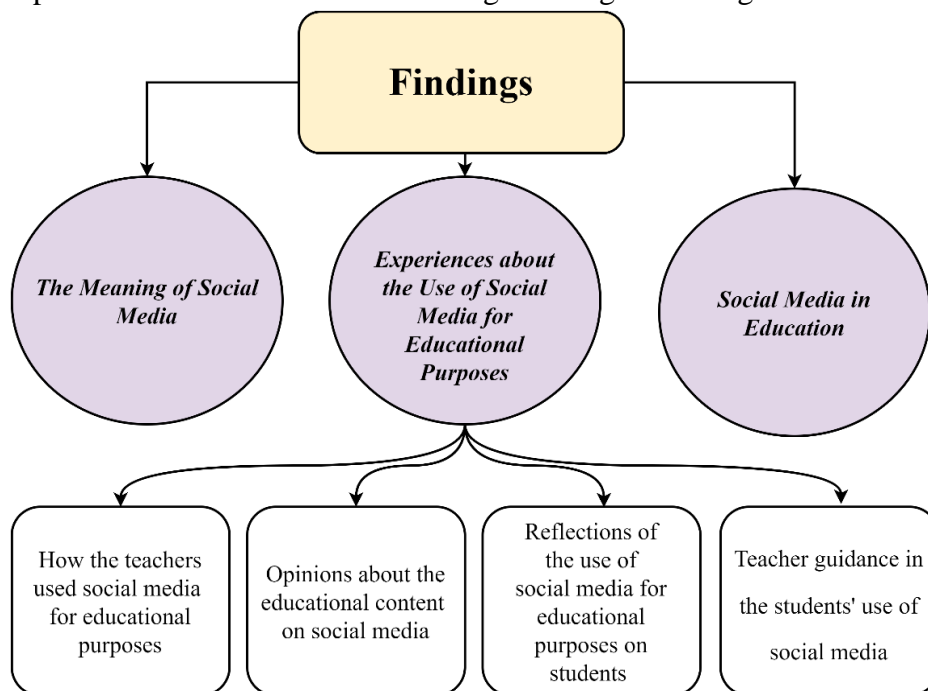
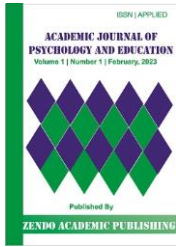


Figure 1: The Schematic Representation of the Findings



3.1. The Meaning of Social Media

It is evident that the meanings the participants attached to social media were mostly formed according to their intended use. The study illustrates that teachers generally attribute meaning to social media as a tool for communication and receiving information. For instance, SST stated, *“Social media is a medium for me to communicate with my friends. I use it to follow friends and talk to them...”* and ST revealed, *“I see social media as a means of communication. For example, we have social media groups such as Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, and we use them for communication.”* This means that the teachers interpret social media as a communication tool. TLT stated, *“Social media can fulfill strange tasks. That's why the meaning it expresses can also change. Now we get all kinds of news from social media. I have 17 Facebook groups. In the past, we would receive a letter and sign it. We would be notified in this manner. Now they are sent through WhatsApp...”* This indicates that social media is perceived as a tool for receiving information. On the other hand, PST disclosed that *“Social media is a platform that does the job in many different subjects. I use it in daily life for communication, entertainment, shopping, interaction with people, and passing the time.”* Here, social media is considered as a platform where they could follow developments regarding their interests.

3.2. Social Media in Education

Regarding the use of social media for educational purposes, the participants interpreted it as a tool which provided opportunities to participate in national or international projects in line with their department; an environment that can be used to enhance their personal and professional development levels and provide cooperation; and a platform to support education. Some of the statements of the participants in this regard were as follows:

ELT: There are national projects in which children participate actively. Social media (Twitter and Facebook) allows us to be aware of and participate in them. These tools also support teaching. I download videos I deem appropriate for the course from YouTube. If there is a movie, I send animation movies from movie sites through WhatsApp and Facebook. I have Facebook groups where teachers share materials, etc.

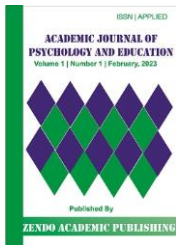
MT: Social media is a tool that can be used for educational purposes. Thus, we can help each other. There are Facebook groups, sharing platforms for math teachers. Instagram has now started. I am a member of five WhatsApp groups. Questions and solutions are also shared there.

3.3. Experiences about the Use of Social Media for Educational Purposes

Under this theme, we categorized and presented how teachers' experiences using social media for educational purposes occurred; how they evaluated content on social media; and the reflections of social media content on their students.

3.3.1. How the teachers used social media for educational purposes

This study revealed that teachers used social media for various purposes and in different ways in and out of the classroom. Self-improvement; lesson preparation; gaining the attention of students when introducing the lesson; concretizing the topic during the lesson; reinforcing learning outside the lesson; student follow-up; and assessment and evaluation were some of the ways in which teachers used social media for educational purposes. The Statement of ST in this regard was as follows:



ST: We study extinct animals such as mammoths, moas, dinosaurs, and other varieties. There are very nice videos and visuals about these on Facebook and YouTube. I want the kids to see them. I mean, I use social media to galvanize their understanding of the topics in the curriculum.

Additionally, the teachers also used social media in order to overcome the deficiencies in Education Information Network (EIN) content; be kept informed about projects taking place in their educational departments; communicate with other teachers of the same branch or participate in the same project; exchange professional experience through the organization of online meetings and discussions, attend webinars and online courses; inform parents; and for international cooperation. Some of the teachers' expressions on the usage of social media for educational purposes were as follows:

ELT: Teachers attend online meetings (via Facebook Messenger); there are online courses and discussions. For example, we can take a video or picture of a situation in the classroom and inform the parents. I share the activities and works created by my teacher friends on blogs or Facebook (via WhatsApp) with the students.

PST: I use it to access materials. For example, a teacher designed and uploaded some materials (to Facebook and Instagram). From there, I ask how to do it, and they describe it or send the files they have.

Participants generally tended to consume and share content on social media. Only SST produced content for educational purposes and shared it on social media. The testimonies of the SST were congruent with this finding by stating that they shared the concept maps and semantic feature analysis charts they created with students and colleagues via Facebook.

3.3.2. Opinions about the educational content on social media

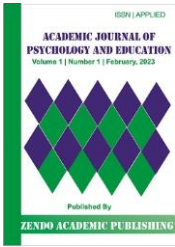
The participants stated that the educational content on social media was sufficient, beneficial, and useful. TLT's statement: *"For once, we rejoice when we cannot find certain content on EIN but on YouTube. I often find the content enough..."* and ST's *"I like YouTube very much in this regard. YouTube is very fruitful in regards to my department."* supported these findings. Moreover, some emphasized the insufficiency of school resources and stated that the content on social media was more diverse and of higher quality with the following statements:

MT: I have used Facebook groups for years. Our coursebooks are not satisfactory, I use questions or acquisition tests shared on social media (Facebook and Blogs). There are tests sent by the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE). We also use them. Yet, these are satisfactory to some extent, but afterwards, not enough for the child. That's why we overcome the deficiencies we see in the books by using these platforms.

PST: I control and use the content I access on social media, and I find it mostly reliable. I can find videos or images with higher resolution compared to the resources provided by the school.

Besides, I can access posts in Facebook groups suitable for children's development levels.

Nevertheless, some of the participants stated that the content on social media was not always reliable and should be examined by teachers or experts before being included in lesson plans. For instance, the ELT raised the following point: *"I'm not using anything I don't know, as there may be unreliable or harmful content on*



social media as well as useful ones. I consider the content on social media sufficient, but it should be examined carefully." It could be said that these statements were based on the fact that some of the content on social media considered to have educational dimensions was not suitable for the age and development levels of the children or not prepared by experts. Furthermore, the fact that such content can be shared without being subjected to expert evaluation could be considered another factor behind such participant opinions. At this point, our teachers should confirm the information on social media from several sources before transferring the content on to students.

3.3.3. Reflections of the use of social media for educational purposes on students

It could be said that the experiences of the participants regarding the effects of using social media for educational purposes were generally positive. They stated that the educational use of social media increased the interest, attention, and motivation of students towards the lesson as they enjoyed a more entertaining classroom environment, and consequently, their academic success increased. Some of the statements of the participants were as follows:

SST: It increases students' academic success when I use it for educational purposes. In the last five minutes, we listen to music (on Youtube). It is good for the kids. Their motivation increases as it attracts their attention...

PST: I think it positively influences students. They like games, materials, experiments, and activities very much. These also provide cognitive and affective improvement. I think it also contributed to their academic achievement. An experiment I found on social media (YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram) makes many things that are difficult to understand easy.

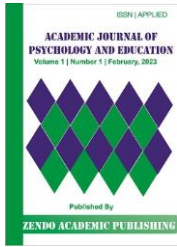
Furthermore, they expressed an increase in memory skills since social media supports students' learning in various ways. They also stated that it helped students relax in courses with intense curricula as a departure from classical teaching methods, and that students were able to approach events from different perspectives. Besides, the lecture videos and lesson materials of other teachers on social media enabled students to learn the subjects more effectively. Some statements expressing positive experiences regarding the use of social media for educational purposes were as follows:

ST: There are some channels I follow on YouTube. I recommend the videos of the teachers I like there to the students. Thus, students find the opportunity to listen to the same topics from different teachers.

MT: We have students preparing for high school. I can find questions for students from different sources on social media (Facebook). Questions prepared with different perspectives can be influential in preparation for the exams. Solving different types of questions broadens students' horizons.

3.3.4. Teacher guidance in the students' use of social media

Based on their experiences, teachers encouraged students to use certain social media channels, restricted the use of social media or supervised and directed them through parental guidance. We observed that some participants chose to direct students to the lesson's supportive channels on social media. Some of the statements of the participants were as follows:



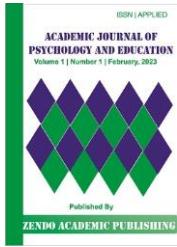
ELT: I recommend listening to and watching English without subtitles. I choose from the social media channels I use and then transfer them to the students; I do not give the social media channels directly.

PST: For my students who are interested in science, I recommend social media (YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram) channels where they can find educational and entertaining experiments. For those who are interested in Turkish and books, I direct them to places where they can find beautiful fairy tales. Some are interested in music. For example, I recommend channels (YouTube) where they can find children's songs.

The study showed that the participants assumed parental guidance duties so that the students would not be affected by any inappropriate content on social media or lose time on irrelevant. The teachers stated that they sent the access URLs of the content or channels they found useful to parents. A potential lack of students' skills and competence to make decisions about useful or harmful content might have led teachers to do this. For example, the SST statement emphasized this point: *"I upload the worksheets I obtain from social media to EIN. I ensure students use it from there. By doing so, students are prevented from accessing harmful content and I can monitor how many have done the tasks."* However, it is noteworthy that some teachers prohibited the use of social media without family supervision as they considered students unable to use it consciously on their own. TLT stated the following regarding the matter: *"I prohibited playing games on social media on weekdays in a message I sent to the parents yesterday. As long as parents allow at the weekend, I let them play after the homework is done."*

4. Conclusion and Discussion

The first result of this study revealed that the meaning teachers placed on social media evolved in accordance to their purpose of use. Thus, teachers mostly made sense of social media as a communication tool, a tool for receiving information, and a platform where they could follow developments related to their interests. Curro and Ainsworth (2018) affirm that social media is an important tool that could be used for pedagogical purposes for a successful communication process. However, we found that, despite frequently using social media, the teachers participating in this study did not consider it primarily as an educational tool and did not attribute meaning to social media in this sense. In other words, social media was used primarily for communication, not educational purposes, even by teachers who used social media habitually. Social media was not originally an instructional technology tool that was produced for educational purposes, but over time, uploading educational content added an educational value to these tools. For this reason, it is expected that teachers attribute meaning to social media based on their experiences in daily life rather than using them for educational purposes. According to the research results of studies by Al-Harbi (2019) and Mansour (2015), teachers used social media for personal purposes rather than teaching activities. The studies in the literature showed that, rather than for educational purposes, social media was generally used for reasons such as selfexpression; personal enjoyment and passing the time; following current agendas; conducting research; communication; sharing photos and videos; shopping; socializing; playing games; making friends and exchanging information (Acun, Yücel, Belenkuyu & Keleş, 2017; Baz, 2018; Park & Kaye, 2019; Salzman, 2019; Tejedor, Carniel-



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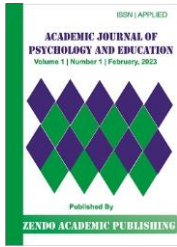
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Bugs & Laque, 2019; Van Erkel & Van Aelst, 2020). Therefore, it is possible to state that the way, for how long, and for what purpose social media is used shapes the meaning attributed to the concept of social media. The second result of this research showed that teachers used social media in education as a tool to participate in various projects, seminars, and trainings; as an environment used to increase personal and professional development, and as an intermediary tool to support educational activities. Although social networks are not designed primarily for the personal development of teachers, they have the potential to informally organize personal improvement and enhance professional qualities (Van Bommel et al., 2020). Consistent with Van Bommel et al. (2020), there are also research results in the literature showing that social media increases the professional development of teachers (Mart & Campbell-Barr, 2020; Mercieca & Kelly, 2018; Van Den Beemt et al., 2020). Based on this, it is possible to say that teachers frequently used social media for personal (communication, etc.) and professional (technology integration into the traditional educational environment, increasing student-teacher interaction, activating students, etc.) purposes (Kilis, Rapp & Gülbahar, 2014). The literature showed that social media was mostly used by teachers for the purposes of sharing educational content with other teachers, making announcements, and sharing information and materials about the lessons (Feyzioğlu, 2016). In contrast, Fewkes and McCabe (2012) reported that teachers were not able to integrate Facebook, one of the leading social networks, into teaching activities. Based on all these, it can be said that the participants are aware of how to use social media tools, whose primary purpose is not education, in order to contribute to their personal development and use them in this direction when necessary. These expressions of teachers have a feature that can guide other teachers who want to use social media for educational purposes. The third result showed that teachers used social media for different educational purposes. Teachers used social media for various reasons, such as obtaining information to contribute to their professional development; preparing lessons; informing parents; grabbing the attention of students while introducing a course; emphasizing course content; extra-curricular reinforcement; extra-curricular student monitoring; and assessment and evaluation. Moreover, this study showed that teachers used social media as an alternative resource to cover the lack of content and material in EBN and resource books. According to the literature review by Chugh, Grose, and Macht (2020), most of the studies showed that teachers used social media for learning and teaching purposes. The study by Okumuş (2019) reveals that teachers used social media before the lesson (preparing the lesson, informing and drawing attention), during the lesson (visualization, enrichment, exhibition, sharing and discussion), and after the lesson (repetition, reinforcement, homework, evaluation and feedback). Stathopoulou et al. (2019) stated that social media was an auxiliary element in both teaching and evaluation. Teachers' experiences show us that social media can be used effectively in and out of the classroom and can be an effective tool in eliminating educational deficiencies. In addition, it has been revealed that these tools can be useful in terms of providing teacher-parent communication and cooperation, as well as monitoring and supporting students outside the classroom.

This study showed that teachers used social media in a variety of ways to access the educational materials needed in an effort to make their lessons more dynamic, exciting, and engaging. The research also confirms that the use of social media makes a positive contribution to the professional development of teachers. Prestridge (2019) categorized teachers' professional use of social media under four different titles:

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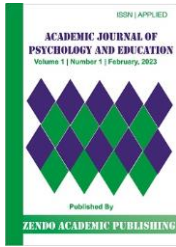
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infoconsumer, info-networker, self-seeking contributor, and vocationalist. Info-consumers tend to find and retrieve information, ideas, and resources from social media tools. Information-networkers refer to people who share the information, ideas, and resources they find from social media tools with other colleagues. Selfseeking contributors share their self-produced information, ideas and curriculum materials, are self-sufficient, and contribute to content on social media. Vocationalists, on the other hand, are present on social media for professional learning to build their profession. The vocationalist, who is both human and content-oriented, contributes to the growing world of knowledge as a member of a learning community, has a wide network and reflects on his or her communities by introducing new topics and ideas. According to this classification, the participants exhibited mostly info-consumer and info-networker characteristics. It is striking that only one had self-seeking contributory characteristics. Furthermore, none reflected the characteristics of a vocationalist. When attempting to explain the reasons behind the tendency of the majority of the participants to consume content on social media, factors such as the ease of accessing ready-made information and the demands of the curriculum must be considered. It can also be said that teachers have this kind of tendency as it is easier to consume the content than to create and share it. Furthermore, this situation can be explained by the fact that they lack the technological expertise to create and share educational content on social media, or that they do not have the time to do so.

Yet another result showed that the educational content available on social media was sufficient, useful and practical. Furthermore, this study showed that some found the content on social media (high-definition videos and visuals, etc.) of higher quality and more reliable than the resources provided by the school. It is possible to suggest that social media environments, which offer rich content for teachers and students, can truly contribute to educational processes through their conscious and controlled use. In order to implement such intentional educational activities, teachers need at least basic knowledge about the typical and emerging threats (Tomczyk & Potyrala, 2021). The participants were also cautious about using the educational content obtained from social media and stated that parents should play an active role in checking and supervising social media content accessed by students outside of school. According to Silius, Kailanto, and Tervakari (2011), the adequacy, quality, and reliability of educational content in social media environments mostly depend on the groups subscribed to or the people followed on social media platforms. Since the participants freely chose the channels or people to follow in the social media tools they used (YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter) and used the content after filtering, they may have found such content sufficient, useful, beneficial, of high quality, and reliable.

Another result showed that the use of social media by teachers for educational purposes positively affected students. These positive effects can be listed as the following: motivational; enjoyable lessons; developing a positive attitude and increasing interest; maintaining attention; and fostering academic success. Moreover, social media embodies learning through reinforcement, increases retention and makes the lesson more enjoyable, allowing students to relax. The studies available in the literature confirmed that the use of social media in education increased students' interest and participation in the lessons (Kara, Çubukçuoğlu, & Elçi, 2020), stimulated interaction among students (Gikas & Grant, 2013; Haşiloğlu, Çalhan & Ustaoglu, 2020), facilitated active participation in the classroom by increasing inner motivation (Cole, Brynn-Hibbert & Kehoe,



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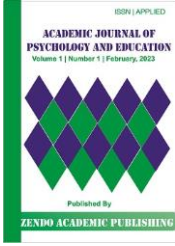
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2013), improved motivation, high-level thinking and digital literacy skills (Callaghan & Bower, 2012), and supported learning (Stathopoulou et al., 2019). Additionally, studies in the literature proved that social network-supported teaching activities were influential on students' academic achievement (Akgündüz, 2013; Clarke & Nelson, 2012; Ekici & Kıyıcı, 2012; Kelleci-Öztürk & Tetik, 2015; Wang, 2013). We can explain the generally positive results in the literature by the students' already prevalent familiarity with social media. The teachers' professional use of social media can generally be expressed as professional development, collaboration with other users or field experts, resource research, and sharing ideas (lesson plans, course materials, forms and templates, etc.) (Hunter & Hall, 2018; Prestridge, 2019). Other usages such as entertainment and passing the time, following current agendas, communication, sharing personal photos and videos, shopping, socializing, making friends, personal development, etc. can be expressed as personal use (Acun et al., 2017; Park & Kaye, 2019; Tejedor et al., 2019; Van Erkel & Van Aelst, 2020). Accordingly, it was observed that the scope of the participants' personal use of social media included following friends, communication (messaging, sharing videos or photos, video chat), daily news access, entertainment, shopping, interaction with other people, and personal development. As for professional use, they used it for participating in various projects, seminars and trainings, enhancing professional development, supporting educational activities (preparing lessons, creating content, attracting students' attention, concretizing knowledge, creating assessment and evaluation instruments), following-up and reinforcing topics covered in lessons for students out-of-school, informing parents and scanning and sharing resources. Based on this, there is a big difference between teachers' personal and professional social media use. This difference manifested itself in other studies in the literature as well. For example, Fox and Bird (2017), Hunter and Hall (2018), and Owen, Fox and Bird (2016) found that teachers' orientation towards using social media was for personal rather than professional use. On the contrary, Purcell-Buchanan and Friedrich (2013) found that teachers used social media professionally to find lesson plans, forms and templates, and information about educational content. Our study is consistent with Owen et al. (2016) in that it showed that teachers mostly perceived social media as a tool intended for personal use. The main reason for this could be the lack of training and guidance on the professional use of social media in pre-service and in-service training.

Based on the results of this study, it can be stated that social media should be used effectively both in and out of school due to its beneficial opportunities for education. This is because, according to Orlanda-Ventayen and Ventayen (2017), social media is an alternative teaching method and teachers view the use of educational social media positively. Therefore, teachers should increase their experience in using social media to improve the quality of education while enjoying the opportunity to contribute to their personal and professional development through it. Social media applications offer opportunities for teachers to share materials online with students, conduct and follow assignments and projects, and create a continuous educational environment independent of time and space. Furthermore, due to the COVID-19 global pandemic and its effects on traditional educational structures, the efforts of nations who have adapted their educational activities through distance education have made the use of communication technologies and social media in education a vital endeavour.

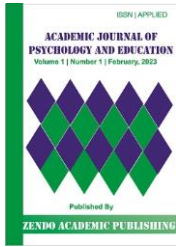


5. Recommendations

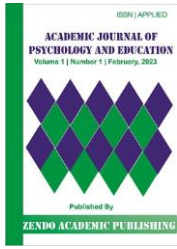
Based on the findings of this study, we suggest carrying out research that deals with the subject of technological integration with education through a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods. In regards to the application of social media-based classroom activities, we propose training courses for this purpose be made available for teachers, school administrators, students, and parents. Such courses would lead to more awareness and a more conscious use of social media. On top of this, we feel that Higher Education institutions that train prospective teachers ought to devote mandatory units or modules centered on social media and its role as both a pedagogical tool and a possible hindrance to learning. This will in turn produce teachers who are better equipped to adapt to the technological changes and challenges of the twenty-first century. Finally, teachers are advised to be constantly kept up to date with studies and developments concerning social media and its association with education.

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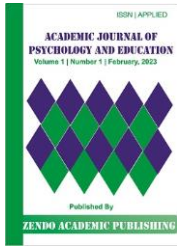
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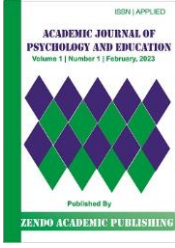
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