

A Research on the Use of Social Media Networks by Teacher Candidates

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Abstract

Social media networks are the most important product of the development of computer and communication technologies that affect social life. Social media networks have become a driving force in social and cultural development, while providing social contact for people. This force has improved its sphere of influence over societies in many fields such as health, defense, banking, commerce, marketing and entertainment, especially in education, which sometimes have no relationship with each other. This study is a qualitative educational research based on content analysis of teacher candidates' research on using social media networks. The study's population is composed of 552 teacher candidates who are reached with the help of social media networks. A data collection tool developed by the researcher in order to collect data was used in the research. A personal information section containing information on the participants and their use of social media networks was used in the first part of the data collection tool while a form consisting of 7 semi-structured questions was used in the second part. Data were analyzed by using descriptive analysis and content analysis for the data obtained from data collection tool. Given the findings of the study, it is concluded that more than half of teacher candidates participating in the research use social media networks more than once every day; more than half of these candidates use social media networks for 2 to 4 hours a day; they mostly use mobile instant messaging tools; the most popular social media networks teacher candidates are Instagram and Facebook; they mostly use social media networks in order to communicate with their friends; they attribute different meanings to social media networks and they regard social media tools as a pedagogical value.

Keywords: teacher candidates, teacher training, social media networks

1. Introduction

Technology refers to the whole of the products that result from the application of the knowledge produced by the person to the object given on to life. Social media networks have become an important social element in daily life as a product of computer and communication technologies. Although the history of social media networks does not date back a long time, it is one of the basic tools used for sharing knowledge and ideas today.

Social media and social media networks are a space for versatile and technological communication and interaction (Kılıç, Kırılı and Esen, 2017) where people and the masses can interact with each other, which can create an environment for the socialization of individuals as well as providing quick feedback for all the content created. McLoughlin and Lee (2007) describe social media in effective use as pedagogical tools which are appropriate for the discovery and sharing of collaborative information. Online technologies that people use in order to communicate interactively with each other are defined as social media. Social media networks have become a driving force in social and cultural development, while providing social contact for people. This force has improved its sphere of influence over societies in many fields such as health, defense, banking, commerce, marketing and entertainment, especially in education, which sometimes have no relationship with each other.

At this point, the Internet has enabled the society to take advantage of communication technologies by providing different dimensions to face-to-face communication (Castell, 2012). Especially at the beginning of 2000s, inconceivable development of Internet and smart phone technologies based on the Internet have reshaped and changed the forms of information access, information sharing and even information creation as well as communication styles among the individuals (Aydın, 2016). This affects how people acquire and share information,

engage in business associations and communicate with each other (Donelan, 2016). Moreover; individuals who use social media networks get out of being passive, learn by doing, interact with other individuals, have an access to knowledge without any time or space limitation and maintain their education process throughout their lives (Işıktaş, 2016). This improvement in the individual has led to the emergence of a new generation of learners on social media networks. Main living and sharing spaces have turned into a virtual but unlimited platforms for this generation which cannot manage without social media networks.

Social media and social media networks are the most important factors of the effective communication which all people have with each other, regardless of the concept of time and space. New advertising, sharing and thinking platforms have also been created as a result of the social media age. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter are frequently used on social media age with regard to the fact that target groups are very large in terms of age and geographical location (Kahraman & Aytac, 2014). The use of social media networks by the students of all ages and the fact that they occupy a large space in their daily lives have also led the educators be interested in this area. Learning environments structured by virtual reality have risen to the point which represents that education is now at the peak of technology.

People come together for collaboration and learning on social media networks where access is facilitated and requests are directed. However; social media networks offer opportunities to establish new relationships with the colleagues in different organizations although they are generally based on friendship, kinship, interests and events. An unrestricted learning environment is also provided for the individuals involved in these networks where their social experiences are constantly maintained (Özmen, Aküzüm, Sünkür & Baysal, 2011; Tektaş, 2014; Işıktaş, 2016). Furthermore social media networks also provide opportunities to support the learning process of the students by enriching the learning and teaching processes with such materials as texts, videos, sounds, etc. as well as supporting the teacher in teaching and evaluation processes (Lepi, 2012; Onyebuchi, 2009; Pollara, & Zhu, 2011). However; in many studies which were carried out by considering their negative aspects in social terms, it has been determined that the use of internet and social media networks may lead to some consequences such as isolation of the individual from the society, feelings of loneliness and depression (Wu & Cheng 2007; Yang & Tung 2007; Demir, 2016). For this reason, it is required to explore the effects of social media networks, in both educational and social terms, and to inform the individuals about these issues.

It is seen that many researches on social media networks aim at determining what the individuals' objectives and habits are for the use of social media networks, how these objectives and habits vary in different cultures, how social network adoption level reflects on its usage and what kind of a relationship it has with such variables as academic achievement, motivation and interaction (Matney & Borland, 2009; Hytten, 2010; Aydin, 2016). However; there has been no study on the use of social media networks by teacher candidates in the literature. Therefore, it is important to investigate the use of social media networks by teachers who play an important role in the society's development due to the current and increasing effect of social media networks on many social institutions which create society.

1.1 Aim of the Research

The aim of this study is to investigate the use of social media networks by teacher candidates. In the context of this main objective, the following questions were sought for answers:

1. How often do teacher candidates use social media networks?
2. Which social media networks do teacher candidates use?
3. For what purpose do teacher candidates use social media tools?
4. What do social media networks mean for teacher candidates?
5. What is the pedagogic value of social media networks for teacher candidates?
6. Which educational topics do teacher candidates follow or share on social media networks?
7. According to prospective teachers, how should social media networks be used in education?

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Model

This study is a qualitative educational research based on content analysis of teacher candidates' research on using social media networks. Also; among the qualitative research patterns, phenomenology pattern is used in the research. Phenomenology studies aim at identifying and interpreting the individual perceptions or perspectives of the participants on a particular subject (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). In this research, aim of determining the use of social media networks of teacher candidates and their attitudes towards these networks led to the preference of

phenomenology pattern.

2.2. Participants

The study's population is composed of 552 teacher candidates who are reached with the help of social media networks. These students have been selected through purposeful sampling. The data on the population are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Research's Population

Department	Male	Female	%	Total
Primary School Teaching	57	76	24,09	133
Art Teaching	25	45	12,68	70
English Teaching	32	43	13,58	75
Turkish Teaching	40	51	16,49	91
Social Sciences Teaching	45	40	15,39	85
Science Teaching	27	34	11,06	61
Mentally Retarded Teaching	18	19	6,71	37
Total	244	308	100	552

A total of 552 teacher candidates from seven different branches participated in the study in accordance with Table 1. It is observed that the highest number of teacher candidates is in the department of Mentally Retarded Teaching while the lowest number of teacher candidates is in the primary school teaching. 308 of teacher candidates participating in the study are female (55,80%) while 244 of them are male (44,20%).

2.3. Data Collection Tool and Analysis of Data

Qualitative findings are composed of three different types of data collection: (1) in-depth, open-ended interviews; (2) direct observation and (3) written documents (Creswel, 2013). A form consisting of semi-structured questions was used in order to collect data in this study. A personal information section containing information on the participants and their use of social media networks was used in the first part of the data collection tool while a form consisting of 7 semi-structured questions was used in the second part. Literature review was conducted to write semi-structured questions used as data collection tools and then, question writing was performed. 5 questions which were chosen to be used were sent to 4 specialists who had also studies in that field and their opinions were taken. These specialists are composed of 1 assistant professor in educational sciences, 2 assistant professors in computer education and technologies department and one assistant professor in Turkish education. Agreement percentage was calculated by considering the answers from the specialists who were asked for their expert opinions in that form. Agreement Percentage was calculated as 0.84 for the first question, 0.81 for the second question, 0.80 for the third question, 0.80 for the fourth question and 0.82 for the fifth question by using the formula "Agreement Percentage = Consensus / (Consensus) + (Divergence) x100" (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Given these data, it is regarded that the reliability of the study has been achieved as the agreement percentage has increased to over 70% (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013).

Content analysis methods used in qualitative researches have been used in order to collect data gathered by means of data collection tools. Data analysis in qualitative research has three basic stages. The collected data is prepared and organized in the first step. The encoded data is minimized to themes and codes in the second stage. Tables and the analysis of the data minimized to themes and codes are presented with various figures, discussions and interpretations in the last section (Güler, Halıcıoğlu and Taşğın, 2013). Thus, findings and results are achieved during in consideration of the data obtained in the study.

Social media networks and instant messaging systems used on mobile devices were used for delivering the form created for data collection purposes to teacher candidates. Some links about data collection tool were sent to Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Google + and Whatsapp accounts of the students by contacting with student representatives, student and class groups. The data collection process, which began in June 2017, lasted approximately five months, and the process of sorting and analyzing data was carried out with the assumption that the required data size was reached. In the later stage, the process of writing the findings and results was started.

3. Findings

The findings of the sub-objectives which were created in the context of investigating the use of social media networks by teacher candidates, which is the main aim of the research, are given in order.

3.1 Findings about the Frequency of Teacher Candidates' Use of Social Media Networks

Table 2. Frequency of Teacher Candidates' Use of Social Media Networks

	Frequency	Male	Female	Total	%
1	More than once a day	177	201	378	68,47
2	Once a day	39	43	82	14,85
3	More than once a week	16	14	30	5,43
4	Once a week	5	7	12	2,17
5	Several times a month	12	8	20	3,62

In accordance with Table 2, 68.47% of teacher candidates participating in the study use social media networks "more than once a day". In this frequency, the number of females ($f = 201$) is higher than that of males ($f = 177$). However, it is seen in other frequencies of use that teacher candidates generally use social media networks more than once. Only 3.62% ($f = 20$) of the teacher candidates participating in the research use social media networks "several times a month". In addition to this frequency of use, teacher candidates' durations of use of social media networks are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Teacher Candidates' Durations of Use of Social Media Networks

	Duration of Use	Male	Female	Total	%
1	Less than 1 hour	18	17	35	6,34
2	1-2 hours	23	24	47	8,51
3	2-3 hours	61	69	130	23,55
4	3-4 hours	95	111	206	37,31
5	4-5 hours	42	44	86	15,57
6	5 hours and more	23	25	48	8,69

Table 3 shows how long the teacher candidates participating in the research use social media networks on average per day. 37.31% ($f = 206$) of the teacher candidates participating in the research use social media networks for "3-4 hours" a day. The second highest percentage, which is close to this duration, is "2-3 hours" a day which is the duration when 23.55% ($f = 130$) of the teacher candidates use social media networks. 48 teacher candidates (8,69%) use social media networks for "5 hours and more" ranking in the maximum period of use. 35 teacher candidates use social networks for "less than 1 hour" which is the shortest period of use.

3.2 Findings about Social Media Networks Used by Teacher Candidates

Information on the social media networks used by the teacher candidates participating in the survey are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Social Media Networks Used by Teacher Candidates

	Social Media Networks	Male	Female	Total	%
1	Facebook	197	285	492	89,13
2	Instagram	181	263	444	80,43
3	Twitter	103	110	213	38,58
4	Google +	128	180	308	55,79
5	Mobile instant messaging tools	204	296	500	90,57
6	LinkedIn	70	82	152	27,53
7	Youtube	63	80	143	25,90
8	Badoo	32	51	83	15,03
9	Foursquare	28	33	61	11,05
10	Tumblr	14	19	33	5,97
11	Yahoo! 360	5	4	9	1,63
12	Other	11	17	28	5,07

When Table 4 is examined, it is seen that teacher candidates use a wide variety of social media networks. Teacher candidates mostly use "mobile instant messaging tools" among social media networks. The proportion of teacher candidates using these tools is 90.57%. The proportion of teacher candidates who use Facebook is 89.13% which is close to the that of teacher candidates who use "mobile instant messaging tools". 80.43% of teacher candidates use "Instagram" and this social media network is the third popular social media network among teachers. Teacher candidates participating in the survey appear to be the members of more than one social media network or profile.

3.3 Findings about Teacher Candidates' Purposes of Using Social Media Networks

It is seen that teacher candidates use multiple and different social media tools. The findings about these teacher candidates' purposes of using social media networks are given in Table 5.

Table 5. Teacher Candidates' Purposes of Using Social Media Networks

	Purposes	Male	Female	Total	%
1	Communicating with friends	223	295	518	93,84
2	Chatting	201	290	491	88,94
3	Creating/editing a profile	194	281	475	86,05
4	Spending time	176	263	457	82,78
5	Getting information about a subject	154	233	387	70,10
6	Having access to course contents	180	205	385	69,74
7	Following blogs or groups	155	198	353	63,94
8	Achieving professional development	137	166	303	54,89
9	Sharing photos or content	120	170	290	52,53
10	Playing games	190	103	293	53,07
11	Following social activities	101	144	245	44,38
12	Other	29	41	70	12,68

When Table 5 is examined, it is seen that teacher candidates prefer to use social media networks for different purposes. Teacher candidates use social media networks mostly for "communicating with friends" (93.84%). "Chatting" is in the second place (88.94%) while "creating / editing a profile" is in the third place (86.05%). Teacher candidates seem to have the purpose of using social media networks in educational dimension by "getting information about a subject" (70,10%), "having access to course contents" (69,74%) and "achieving professional development" (54,89%).

3.4 Findings about the Meaning of Social Media Networks for Teacher Candidates

Findings about the meaning of social media networks for teacher candidates are given in Table 6.

Table 6. Social Media Networks in Terms of Teacher Candidates

		Male	Female	Total	%
1	Friendship	221	286	507	91,85
2	Chat	203	214	417	75,54
3	Education	185	208	393	71,19
4	Sharing	180	200	380	68,84
5	Learning	155	184	339	61,41
6	Sharing photos	130	172	302	54,71
7	Following	121	156	277	50,18
8	Game	96	61	157	28,44
9	Spending time	77	83	160	28,98
10	Preparing homework	54	61	115	20,83
11	Socializing	42	50	92	16,66
12	Course material	38	44	82	14,85
13	Shopping	35	101	136	24,63
14	Fashion	24	87	111	20,10
15	Other	8	3	11	1,99

In accordance with the information in Table 6, teacher candidates attribute different meanings to social media networks. According to teacher candidates, social media mostly (% 91.85) means "friendship". As a natural consequence of this situation, "chat" (75.54%) is the second meaning which is attributed to social media networks. According to teacher candidates, social media networks are regarded as "education" (71.19%) and "learning", as a product of educational process, is also substantially attributed to social media networks (61.41%). However, "preparing homework" (20.83%) and "course material" can also be attributed by teachers (14.85%) in terms of pedagogic purposes.

3.5 Findings about Pedagogic Value of Social Media Networks for Teacher Candidates

Findings about pedagogic value of social media networks for teacher candidates are given in Table 7.

Table 7. Pedagogic Value of Social Media Networks for Teacher Candidates

	Pedagogic value of social media networks	Male	Female	Total	%
1	Doing homework	105	178	283	51,26
2	Educational chat	100	152	252	46,65
3	Preparing for the exams	96	143	239	43,29
4	Solving the questions	92	157	239	43,29
5	Making researches	80	104	184	33,33
6	Having access to course contents	75	92	167	30,25
7	Reinforcing the subjects	68	90	158	28,62
8	Educational discussions	43	46	89	16,12
9	Acquiring skills and experiences	31	20	51	9,24
10	Other	7	14	21	3,80

The answers of the teacher candidates about the pedagogic value of social media networks have brought the dimensions given in Table 7. According to teacher candidates, the most important pedagogic value of social media networks is "doing homework" (51,26%). "Educational chat" (46,65%) is the second pedagogic value while "preparing for the exams" (43,29%) and "solving the questions" (43,29%) are the third pedagogic values. It is seen that teacher candidates have multiple expressions about the pedagogic value of social media networks.

3.6 Findings about Teacher Candidates' Following or Sharing Educational Topics on Social Media Networks

Findings about teacher candidates' following or sharing educational topics on social media networks are given in Table 8.

Table 8. Teacher Candidates' Following Educational Topics on Social Media Networks

	Educational topics	Male	Female	Total	%
1	I follow educational topics.	204	283	487	88,22
2	I don't follow educational topics.	40	25	65	11,77
3	I share educational topics.	113	247	360	65,21
4	I don't share educational topics.	131	61	192	34,78

When Table 8 is examined, it is seen that 88.22% of teacher candidates follow educational topics on social media networks. 65,21% of teacher candidates both follow and share educational topics on social media networks. 11.77% of teacher candidates do not follow educational topics on social media networks while 34.78% of them do not share any educational topics on these networks. Findings about the contents shared by teacher candidates on social media networks are given in Table 9.

Given Table 9, it is seen that teacher candidates mostly share "informative pictures" (44,20%) in educational dimension on social media networks. "Educational words" (30.5%) are the second, and "Books" (20.10%) are the third content which can be regarded as educational posts. Very few of teacher candidates (3.26%) were found to share "educational researches".

Table 9. Educational Content Shared by Teacher Candidates

	Content of share	Male	Female	Total	%
1	Informative pictures	93	151	244	44,20
2	Educational words	80	87	167	30,25
3	Books	48	63	111	20,10
4	Course notes	33	41	74	13,40
5	Questions	18	15	33	5,97
6	Educational researches	9	9	18	3,26
7	Educational organizations	4	2	6	1,08

3.7 Findings about the Educational Use of Social Media Networks with Respect to Teacher Candidates

Findings about the educational use of social media networks with respect to teacher candidates are given in Table 10.

Table 10. Educational Use of Social Media Networks with Respect to Teacher Candidates

	Use	Male	Female	Total	%
1	Following the experts	149	170	319	57,78
2	Educational conversations	104	145	249	45,10
3	Watching videos	101	132	234	42,39
4	Online course participation	97	137	214	42,39
5	Making researches	76	79	155	28,07
6	Following the shared posts	65	73	138	25,00
7	Searching for course contents	51	60	111	20,10
8	Reinforcing the subjects	32	44	76	13,76
9	Creating discussion groups in educational topics	23	31	54	9,78
10	Playing educational games	27	20	47	8,51
11	Practicing	24	21	45	8,15

When Table 10 is examined, it is seen that "following the experts" is distinguished (57,78%) among the opinions of teacher candidates on educational use of social media networks. "Educational conversations" (45,10%) is in the second place while "watching videos" and "online course participation" (equally 42,39%) are in the third place. In addition to this; social media networks can also be used as the following for educational purposes: "making researches"(28.07%), "following the shared posts" (25%), "searching for course contents" (20.10%), "reinforcing the subjects" (13,76%), "creating discussion groups in educational topics" (9,78%), "playing educational games" (8,51%) and "practicing" (8,15%).

4. Conclusion and Discussion

It is determined that more than half of teacher candidates participating in the survey use social media networks "more than once a day". Also more than half of these teacher candidates use social media networks between 2 to 4 hours a day. It is inevitable that these long durations will affect teacher candidates negatively.

It is determined that teacher candidates mostly use "mobile instant messaging tools" among social media networks. In addition to this, Facebook and Instagram are also popular social media networks among teacher candidates. This popularity has similar aspects with the findings of the study carried out by Otrar and Argın (2014) and Işıktaş (2016). Furthermore teacher candidates participating in the survey appear to be the members of more than one social media network or profile. It shows the interest on social media networks that Aydın (2016) comments on grabbing all the attention to social media as well as pointing out the need for drawing a new conceptual framework for the changing and transforming style of communication.

Teacher candidates use social media networks mostly for "communicating with friends". It is also concluded that chatting and creating / editing profiles are also important purposes of using social media for teacher candidates. In a variety of studies which were carried in order to identify the purposes of social media use, participants expressed that they mostly use social networks to maintain social relationships, share personal information, share similar interests, thoughts and needs with the others, and maintain their existing friendships. (Stutzman, 2006, Lockyer & Patterson,

2008, Grant, 2008, Aydin, 2016). This case in the related researches is similar to the situation which is determined regarding teacher candidates.

Teacher candidates attribute different meanings to social media networks. According to them, social media mostly means friendship. According to teacher candidates, social media networks are regarded as "education" (71.19%) and "learning", as a product of educational process, is also substantially attributed to social media networks (61.41%). Also, "preparing homework" and "regarding them as a course material" also show that they attribute different meanings to social media networks. When literature is examined, it is seen that students substantially interact with materials in their educational use of social networks, especially in ways that support formal learning processes (Milosevic et al., 2015; Sanchez, Cortijo, & Javed, 2014). However, Kio & Negreiros (2013) also underline that social interaction has both direct and indirect influences on informal learning processes carried out in social networks.

Teacher candidates regard the most important educational value of social media networks as "doing homework". Educational chatting, preparing for exams and solving questions also constitute educational values of social media for teacher candidates.

88.92% of teacher candidates using social media networks follow educational topics on social media networks. 65,21% of teacher candidates both follow and share educational topics on social media networks. 11.77% of teacher candidates do not follow educational topics on social media networks while 34.78% of them do not share any educational topics on these networks.

It is found out that teacher candidates sharing posts mostly share "informative pictures" on social media networks in pedagogic dimension. "Educational words" are the second, and "books" are the third content which can be regarded as educational posts. It is determined that very few of teacher candidates share "educational researches". This can be interpreted as that they do not follow new researches in the field of education.

It is concluded that teacher candidates have multiple suggestions regarding the use of social media networks in education. According to teacher candidates, social media networks can be used in education for:

- ✓ Following the experts,
- ✓ Educational conversations,
- ✓ Watching videos,
- ✓ Online course participation,
- ✓ Making researches,
- ✓ Following the shared posts,
- ✓ Searching for course contents,
- ✓ Reinforcing the subjects,
- ✓ Creating discussion groups in educational topics and
- ✓ Practicing.

5. Recommendations

It is required to develop the idea that social media networks can be used as an educational tool by teachers and teacher candidates as the educators of the future. It is necessary to enable them to use social media networks effectively in education and training processes through various training activities to be provided to them.

By receiving the required training, teachers and teacher candidates can transform the use of social media networks, which students use every day and spend a lot of time on, into an opportunity by enabling their effective use in education. Teachers, however, must make their students aware of the risks that may be encountered in social media networks and the precautions that can be taken.

It should be noted that social media networks may have a positive effect on improving learning performance in education, but it should also be pointed out that teachers and teacher candidates should be careful about the use of social media as well as the students who may display negative behaviors and examples. In this period when technology is developing and spreading rapidly, teachers has the most important duty for preventing negative results in the development of the society and conformance with the innovations. In order to be able to prevent this case, trainings about the conscious use of social media networks must be included in teacher training programs.

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Annex 1. Data Collection Tool

Mr./Mrs. Teacher Candidate,

This study analyzes the use of social media networks by teachers who play an important role in the society's development due to the current and increasing effect of social media networks on many social institutions which create society. Identities of the participants will not be disclosed; and data will be used in a scientific research.

Thank you for your interest and participation in the research.

Do You Use Social Media Networks?

Yes () Go on with the research.

No () End up with the research

Gender:

Department:

Your frequency of using social media networks:	
1	More than once a day (<input type="checkbox"/>)
2	Once a day (<input type="checkbox"/>)
3	More than once a week (<input type="checkbox"/>)
4	Once a week (<input type="checkbox"/>)
5	Several times a month (<input type="checkbox"/>)

Your duration of using social media networks:	
1	Less than 1 hour (<input type="checkbox"/>)
2	1-2 hours (<input type="checkbox"/>)
3	2-3 hours (<input type="checkbox"/>)
4	3-4 hours (<input type="checkbox"/>)
5	4-5 hours (<input type="checkbox"/>)
6	5 hours and more (<input type="checkbox"/>)

Questions

- Which social media networks do you use?
- For which purposes do you use social media networks?
- What do social media networks mean for you?
- What is pedagogic value of social media networks?
- Do you share educational posts on social media networks?

Yes ()

No ()

- Which educational topics do you follow or share?
- How should social media networks be used in education?