

Pre-service teachers' perceptions about Facebook usage

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the students' perceptions about the usage of Facebook. The participants were 153 students from faculty of education. The students used Facebook for three semesters in order to share their opinions about their classes. The data has been collected by open-ended interview questions. Content analysis approach was used for data analysis. According to the results, students used Facebook intensely and regularly. Facebook was seen as a quick and efficient way of communication when used for educational purposes. Students perceived Facebook as a valuable tool for their lives. This study suggests that Facebook is especially efficient tool when starting a communication and doing group work in educational contexts.

Keywords: Facebook, class knowledge sharing, social network sites, opinions of teacher candidates, qualitative analysis

INTRODUCTION

Starting with Six.Degrees.com in 1997, and followed by Friendster, LinkedIn, MySpace, Last.fm, Flickr, and YouTube, social network sites attracted a large amount of individuals while the number of registered users peaked in a short period of time with Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Social networking services (SNSs) like Facebook, Twitter, Plurk, etc. have also changed the way people communicate and exchange information dramatically (Hughes, Rowe, Batey, & Lee, 2012). Many studies have demonstrated that Facebook usage is quite common among teenagers, adults, and students (e.g. Duggan & Brenner, 2013; Deng & Tavares, 2013; Cheung, Chiu, & Lee, 2011; Boyd, 2010; Selwyn, 2009; Hargittai, 2007; Stutzman, 2006). Facebook allows users to share texts, pictures, videos, etc. to each other with ease (Lin, Hou, Wang, & Chang, 2013). Boyd and Ellison (2007) have defined social network sites as web-based services which allow users to create -profiles with adjustable levels of visibility, connect users as friends when accepted by both parties, and let users to view each other's profiles to the extent that they are allowed. Similarly, according to Bartlett-Bragg (2006) SNSs are web-based environments that augment group interaction, collaboration, social connection, and information exchange. Ease of use, being able to share, analyze, and update information about daily life, establishing spontaneous relationships, enabling interaction and

communication of informal knowledge are among the reasons for rapid adoption and growth of social network sites (Ajjan & Hartshorne, 2008; Mejias, 2005). Facebook is widely used in daily life and affects peoples' lives directly. For this reason, the dimensions related to education are researched. This study examines the perceptions of prospective teachers on Facebook. Their views are considered to be significant when the pupils that pre-service teachers will teach in the future are taken into account.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Facebook

The social network site the most in-demand, Facebook, allows members to share photos, send messages, chat, tag each other on photos, write on each other's walls, join or form groups to share ideas, and play games (Mazman & Usluel, 2010; Lockyer & Patterson, 2008). The largest proportion of Facebook users are formed by 18-25 year-old university students (Duggan & Brenner, 2013; Bumgarner, 2007). Students view Facebook as a part of their lives that can be accessed easily (Deng & Tavares, 2013). Traxler (2007) has reported that students check Facebook accounts more frequently than their email addresses, and responded quicker to Facebook messages. Kalin (2012) has stated that the way students use technology should be understood before investigating the effects or benefits of it. Through investigating the current

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usage and identifying the positive and negative sides, it could be possible to support the positive effects and to take precautions about the negative effects.

Facebook usage

There are many diverse findings in the literature about Facebook usage of students. Students use Facebook the most as social network site (Smith & Caruso, 2010) and spend an average of 1 hour 40 minutes per day browsing the website (Junco & Cotten, 2012). Similarly, Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe (2011) have also reported an average of 80 to 100 minutes per day for students using Facebook. In their study, Junco and Cotton (2012) reported that students sent texts, talked on cell phones, used Facebook, and used online searches, even when they were not assigned to do so. In relation to the time spent using Facebook, students can either use it for an extended period of time (i. e. when having a conversation) or with short intervals of check-ins and check-outs. These short intervals of Facebook usage are aimed at checking friends' updates/posts, or following the likes and comments of own posts. According to Junco (2012), the time spent on Facebook is not necessarily related to the amount of time an account is checked. Madge, Meek, Wellens, and Hooley (2009) have defined socializing as the main reason of usage whereas Cheung, Chiu and Lee (2011) highlighted the importance of the ability to communicate rapidly with friends and social presence in their study.

Facebook usage in Education

Huang, Lin, and Huang (2011) have found a positive relationship between students' online activities and learning outcomes. According to the study, only a small proportion of the students believe that Facebook can contribute to their education lives. A controversial result is acquired in a study from Kirschner and Karpinski (2010). According to the study, 73.8 % of the students think Facebook would contribute to their educational lives positively. Jacobsen and Forste (2011), in their study with a sample of 1026 students, reported an average of 52 minutes per day spent on social network sites for students. In the study, social and academic outcomes of media usage were examined. It was found that media usage was

negatively related with academic achievement, and positively related with face-to-face social interaction. According to Madge, Meek, Wellens, and Hooley (2009), 53 % of the students supported the usage of Facebook for formal teaching or learning purposes. Hewitt and Forte (2006) stated that forming an interaction via Facebook effect the perceptions of students about their instructors positively and they were comfortable in communicating this way.

By 2010, Facebook allowed users to create closed groups and members of those groups to interact synchronously or asynchronously within these groups (Meishar-Tal, Kurtz & Pieterse, 2012). With those closed groups, only the people allowed can become members and share posts within the members. With the closed groups feature, Facebook has also gained a similarity to mail/discussion groups. Schroeder and Greenbowe (2009) have investigated impact of Facebook as a communication and discussion group. In addition to face-to-face learning environment, it is discovered that the created groups encourage students to communicate and participate in class. But having a group in their habituated environment relieve them from extra work and allow them to access everything they need from a single source.

Students' Facebook usage behaviors/habits and Facebook usage for learning purposes have been studied comprehensively. The results revealed that they use social network sites, Facebook in particular, extensively. It is important to propound the students' motivations and opinions of usage to make use of Facebook in learning processes or to take necessary precautions. In addition to the studies, general opinions, class knowledge sharing, communication and real world reflection, and belongingness are also worth investigation. To cover these topics, the current study was made. The aim of the study is to investigate the students' perceptions on Facebook usage for general and academic purposes. In that manner, the sub-questions of the study are structured as follows:

1. What are the perceptions of students about Facebook social network site in general?
2. How do the students consider Facebook in the dimension of class knowledge sharing?
3. How do the students consider Facebook in terms of a communication tool and reflections to real world?

4. To what extent does Facebook effect the students' belongingness to the class?

METHOD

Research Design

A qualitative design approach was used to present the current situation. In this qualitative study, it is aimed to assess pre-service teachers' perceptions about the usage of Facebook for educational purposes.

Participants

The sample consists of 153 students studying in Adnan Menderes University, Faculty of Education. The data collection was implemented when the students were in their 4th semester (2013 - 2014 Spring) of their education. Starting from their first semesters, the students created and actively used Facebook groups to make sharings about classes and the department in which they are studying. The selection criterion for students was using Facebook for educational purposes. The current sample consisted of 40 students from Department of Science Teacher Education, 73 students from Department of Guidance and Psychological Counseling, and 40 students from Department of Social Studies Education. Students who did not use Facebook or did not give informed consents were excluded from the study.

Data collection

A form of open ended interview questions was used to collect the data. The questions were presented to experts after reviewing the literature to control the validity and a pilot study was run. The pilot study was administered to 30 students from the same grade and similar characteristics to our original sample. The interview form is presented in Appendix A.

Data analysis

Content analysis was used to investigate the data obtained from the study. The data collected by the

forms provided to pre-service teachers were transferred to computer environment. The results obtained from the answers were examined by two field experts and the codes/themes were determined. The data was organized and analyzed by electronic spreadsheets. The participants were provided code numbers ranging from 1 to153 and abbreviations used for departments are "sci" for Science Teacher Education, "soc" for Social Studies Education, and "gui" for Guidance and Psychological Counseling.

FINDINGS

General opinions

The question of "What does Facebook mean to you?" was asked in order to obtain the students' perceptions on Facebook. The answers revealed that students use Facebook substantially to communicate (%22.8) and to share (%19.1). Another important finding points that %13.6 of the current sample use Facebook as spare time activity while another %13 use it for entertainment purpose. Moreover, the least frequent responds were making new friends (%3.7) and playing games (%3.7). The overall findings for this question are presented on Table 1.

Examples for the answers to the question of "What does Facebook mean to you?":

"I find it useful for communication. It avails as we know our friends better." (185, soc)

"In fact I use it frequently, I mean it is an important part of my life but I don't feel the absence of it but I follow the posts like video etc. frequently" (74, gui)

"I am an active user as it allows me to communicate easily with people that I love and miss for some time. It is not that necessary but I like to use it." (68, gui)

"In situations like reflecting our mood, I find Facebook useful." (137, sci)

Table 1. What does Facebook mean to you?

| | Science | | Social sciences | | Guidance and counseling | | Total | |
|-----------------------|---------|------|-----------------|------|-------------------------|------|-------|------|
| | f | % | F | % | f | % | f | % |
| Communication tool | 10 | 25.6 | 9 | 20.9 | 18 | 22.5 | 37 | 22.8 |
| Sharing | 6 | 15.4 | 12 | 27.9 | 13 | 16.3 | 31 | 19.1 |
| Spare time activity | 4 | 10.3 | 1 | 2.3 | 17 | 21.3 | 22 | 13.6 |
| Entertainment | 4 | 10.3 | 5 | 11.6 | 12 | 15 | 21 | 13 |
| Doesn't mean anything | 8 | 20.5 | 5 | 11.6 | 6 | 7.5 | 19 | 11.7 |
| Following news/agenda | 2 | 5.1 | 5 | 11.6 | 5 | 6.3 | 12 | 7.4 |
| Chat | 1 | 2.6 | 2 | 4.7 | 5 | 6.3 | 8 | 4.9 |
| Making new friends | 1 | 2.6 | 3 | 7 | 2 | 2.5 | 6 | 3.7 |
| Game | 3 | 7.7 | 1 | 2.3 | 2 | 2.5 | 6 | 3.7 |
| | 39 | 100 | 42 | 100 | 88 | 100 | 169 | 100 |

“Facebook, in fact, causes people to share a lot of information about themselves and reveals their private lives. It has both good and bad aspects.” (163, soc)

“It is a normal communication tool for me. It allows me to follow the news and contact with my friends.” (83, gui)

“For me, Facebook is a website that I view my friends' photos, watch a few videos, and play games.” (160, soc)

“Doesn't mean a lot. It is important for communication among large groups. But it makes individuals waste time needlessly.” (87, gui)

“A tool for spare time, also causes addiction, and arouses interest.” (86, gui)

“It used to be a good setting to spent time and to have a chat with friends but I have closed it by now. Facebook is an artificial environment that pushes people to unhappiness in the long term.” (69, gui)

“I can see what my friends are doing, I can chat, I can share posts. I would feel incomplete without Facebook.” (70, gui)

“It is a time thief for me. It is so redundant but I can't spend time without checking in.” (40, gui)

“An environment that friends get informed about each other, individuals share posts about themselves. I think it is a must.” (94, gui)

“Waste of time. I also use it but I engage in groups about the department to follow the current cases, in general. Otherwise, the relationships don't seem to be sincere in there. People that doesn't say 'hi' in real life make such comments...” (44, gui)

“It's like the part by the home. Everyone is there.” (111, gui)

Class information sharing

The first question used to assess the students' perceptions about class information sharing was “How does Facebook help you when sharing information about classes with your friends?” According to the answers to this question, students use Facebook for sharing information (%27.8) and communicating related to classes (%23.7) when they want to use it for academic purposes. Other important purposes for Facebook usage are: sending files (%13), sharing information about the exams (%13) and sharing class notes (%12.4). The overall findings for this question are presented on Table 2.

Table 2. “How does Facebook help you when sharing information about classes with your friends?”

| | Science | | Social Sciences | | Guidance and counseling | | Total | |
|-----------------------------------|---------|------|-----------------|------|-------------------------|------|-------|------|
| | f | % | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| Share knowledge | 10 | 25.6 | 12 | 28.6 | 25 | 28.4 | 47 | 27.8 |
| Communicate about classes | 8 | 20.5 | 11 | 26.2 | 21 | 23.9 | 40 | 23.7 |
| Share files | 6 | 15.4 | 7 | 16.7 | 9 | 10.2 | 22 | 13 |
| Share information about exams | 1 | 2.6 | 2 | 4.8 | 19 | 21.6 | 22 | 13 |
| Share class notes | 9 | 23.1 | 5 | 11.9 | 7 | 8 | 21 | 12.4 |
| Share photos | 3 | 7.7 | 2 | 4.8 | 3 | 3.4 | 8 | 4.7 |
| Share information about homeworks | 0 | 0 | 3 | 7.1 | 3 | 3.4 | 6 | 3.6 |
| Share videos | 2 | 5.1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1.1 | 3 | 1.8 |
| | 39 | 100 | 42 | 100 | 88 | 100 | 169 | 100 |

Examples for the answers to the question of “How does Facebook help you when sharing knowledge about classes with your friends?”:

“We can even say that it replaced SMS. It became quite helpful and useful after internet usage opportunities.” (98, gui)

“Sometimes I see sharings about education, at exams, or KPSS (Public Personnel Selection Examination). And I tell what it is to them as well. Sometimes they are about career and the conditions of accession, registration and deadline dates of the occasions are shared. I follow.” (78, gui)

“At a Facebook page created to a class or a department, class notes or information about the classes are shared. Thus, accessing these knowledge speeds up. Class notes are also not shared in any other places if they shared on Facebook. It can be obtained from Facebook, compulsorily.” (87, gui)

“From time to time, topic sharings at a class group at Facebook or we share something about classes

with each other. Quite fast sharings can be made in that manner. It is easy to use.” (68, gui)

“Notes, questions that our teachers have asked in previous years are shared at our class’s Facebook page before exams. It helps to be informed about those. I think it is helpful with my studies to access my friends quickly.” (50, gui)

“It becomes quite helpful. Because the things that teachers send or forgot to say can be accessed quickly.” (71, gui)

To assess the students’ trust in the information shared on Facebook, they were asked “Do you need to verify the information that you get via Facebook about classes from your friends?” According to the answers obtained, it was concluded that a majority of the students verify the information by asking their friends (%62.4). A considerable amount of students (%29.3), on the other hand, reported that they do not need such a verification. The overall findings for this question are presented on Table 3.

Table 3. Do you need to verify the information that you get via Facebook about classes from your friends?

| | Science | | Social sciences | | Guidance and counseling | | Total | |
|--|---------|------|-----------------|------|-------------------------|------|-------|------|
| | f | % | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| Yes | 26 | 59.1 | 29 | 61.7 | 58 | 64.4 | 113 | 62.4 |
| No | 18 | 40.9 | 13 | 27.7 | 22 | 24.4 | 53 | 29.3 |
| Sometimes | 0 | 0 | 4 | 8.5 | 5 | 5.6 | 9 | 5 |
| Depending on the source of the information | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2.1 | 5 | 5.6 | 6 | 3.3 |
| | 44 | 100 | 47 | 100 | 90 | 100 | 181 | 100 |

Examples for the answers to the question of “Do you need to verify the information that you get via Facebook about classes from your friends?”:

“It happens from time to time but it depends on the person sharing the information. In the end, it could be someone who has no relation with the class.” (56, gui)

“No I do not need as I trust my friends.” (41, gui)

“If it is a person spreading the information that I trust, I believe in the correctness of the information, I don’t need to verify. If the source of the information is someone that I’m not intimate with or I don’t trust in his/her words, I try to contact with my close friends or lecturers.” (180, soc)

“I don’t need to verify in general. But I need to talk over it. The reason is, there could be a missing information.” (87, gui)

“In fact, it is not a need but I need to talk about it face-to-face anyways. But it is not because I don’t believe in its accuracy.” (51, gui)

“I don’t need it too much. The comments below the posts provide a verifying effect anyway.” (86, gui)

“I need to verify if it is an information to doubt on its accuracy. Besides that, as Facebook is an artificial setting, it would be good to verify information in general.” (94, gui)

“I need because everyone can write something he/she wants. I ask to my friends if there is something as such to confirm and not to be mistaken.” (64, gui)

In order to examine how the students consider Facebook as a class sharing website, they were asked to fill in the blank question which was “Facebook as a class sharing website _____.” According to the answers, it was concluded that a majority of the students find Facebook helpful and useful (%49.6), while a considerable number of students consider it as partially helpful. The overall findings for this question are presented on Table 4.

Table 4. Facebook as a class sharing website

| | Science | | Social sciences | | Guidance and counseling | | Total | |
|-------------------|---------|-----|-----------------|------|-------------------------|------|-------|------|
| | f | % | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| Helpful/Useful | 10 | 40 | 13 | 50 | 37 | 52.9 | 60 | 49.6 |
| Partially helpful | 6 | 24 | 8 | 30.8 | 14 | 20 | 28 | 23.1 |
| Not necessary | 8 | 32 | 1 | 3.8 | 10 | 14.3 | 19 | 15.7 |
| Inadequate | 1 | 4 | 4 | 15.4 | 9 | 12.9 | 14 | 11.6 |
| | 25 | 100 | 26 | 100 | 70 | 100 | 121 | 100 |

Examples for the answers to the question of “Facebook as a class sharing website”:

“Works most of the time, but it may not be consistent invariably.” (175, soc)

“It is not a really necessary website. We can perform this process by forming a group from WhatsApp.” (143, sci)

“Not that useful, in my opinion because everyone has different words to say.” (160, soc)

“A website that is used the most, the easiest to use, actualizes the communication the easiest.” (122, sci)”

“It is a quite helpful social network when used efficient.” (64, gui)

“It is useful but information pollution can also be inevitable. It should be used cautiously.” (44, gui)

Communication and real world reflections

Communication feature of Facebook and the students’ perceptions on Facebook’ communication abilities were discussed in this topic. The students in the sample have made new friendships in their classes as they started their college education lives. The first question under this topic was designated as “Did the Facebook setting contributed to your socializing process with your friends?” to identify the initiation of communication. According to the answers, a majority of the students (%55.7) think that Facebook setting had a positive effect in terms of socializing with their friends. Another substantially important result points that it is efficient in strengthening preexisting friendships instead of socializing with new friends (%12.1). The overall findings for this question are presented on Table 5.

Table 5. Did the Facebook setting contribute to your socializing process with your friends?

| | Science | | Social sciences | | Guidance and counseling | | Total | |
|--------------------------------------|---------|------|-----------------|------|-------------------------|-----|-------|------|
| | f | % | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| Effectuated positively | 21 | 55.3 | 12 | 44.4 | 45 | 60 | 78 | 55.7 |
| Did not effect | 9 | 23.7 | 7 | 25.9 | 18 | 24 | 34 | 24.3 |
| Strengthened Preexisting friendships | 7 | 18.4 | 3 | 11.1 | 7 | 9.3 | 17 | 12.1 |
| Partially | 1 | 2.6 | 5 | 18.5 | 5 | 6.7 | 11 | 7.9 |
| | 38 | 100 | 27 | 100 | 75 | 100 | 140 | 100 |

Examples for the answers to the question of “Did the Facebook setting contributed to your socializing process with your friends?”:

“We are messaging with friends as we used to call to see each other in person.” (157, soc)

“It is efficient in finding my old friends, useful in communicating with others.”(173, soc)

“I can find opportunity to get to know people that I don’t know in normal setting (I have just started to learn about) with the videos or posts they share on Facebook. We can talk on the visuals (photo, video)

or news that we have common interest about to improve our friendships.” (180, soc)

“...not like face-to-face dialogs but I chat with my friends that I can’t see.” (117, sci)

“It allows to know beforehand, easier to establish communication.”

“It eases conversations with our friends. But this remains limited only to Facebook. It is not efficient in daily life. It is very good to keep in touch with old friends.” (81, gui)

“It is quite important to meet with people, in terms of initiation of relationship and improving friendships in social networks while it is hard to say “Hello” in real life.” (64, gui)

“People don’t communicate the way they do before, even the meetings occur via Facebook but I don’t think that intimate friendships can be established over Facebook.” (44, gui)

“It’s only the cyber world, I mean virtual stays virtual. The same is not reflected to outside.

Everyone is a hero on Facebook, at outside no one takes on responsibility.” (188, soc)

“We ensured the handshake.” (155, soc)

When the answers for the question of “Are there situations where a person, who remains passive in face-to-face occasions, becomes more active than expected in Facebook setting?” were examined, it was observed that many students became more active in virtual settings (75 %). The overall findings for this question are presented on Table 6.

Table 6. Are there situations where a person, who remains passive in face-to-face occasions, becomes more active than expected in Facebook setting?

| | Science | | Social sciences | | Guidance and counseling | | Total | |
|-------------------|---------|------|-----------------|------|-------------------------|------|-------|-----|
| | f | % | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| Yes, There are | 19 | 63.3 | 24 | 70.6 | 53 | 82.8 | 96 | 75 |
| No, There are not | 11 | 36.7 | 10 | 29.4 | 11 | 17.2 | 32 | 25 |
| | 30 | 100 | 34 | 100 | 64 | 100 | 128 | 100 |

Examples for the answers to the question of “Are there situations where a person, who remains passive in face-to-face occasions, becomes more active than expected in Facebook setting?”:

“I also think that there is such a situation. Because Face is a virtual environment. There are profiles created with others’ photos, information, or fake names. The users of these accounts do things they can’t do in real world, under these accounts.” (194, soc)

“Yes, because one can’t express himself/herself face-to-face. May speak without thinking. One has chance to think in virtual settings.” (126, sci)

“Yes, me for instance. My written expression has always been better than my verbal expression. Moreover, it is very easy to think and correct in the virtual world. The possibility to bloop while talking is weak.” (180, soc)

“There are. For they express themselves better or be their very selves.” (193, soc)

“Yes. We saw that the silent friends are more crazy and are more fun when we see their posts.” (134, sci)

“Someone whom voice we hear rarely likes comments on my posts, talks over them as he/she likes them on Facebook.” (143, sci)

“There would be. Because we are more relaxed here as we don’t see the stares of the other person.” (93, gui)

“Yes there are. There are people who never talks but likes every post others share.” (50, gui)

“Eye contact with somebody or physical contact scares people sometimes. People find opportunity to express themselves better on Facebook. So that in a desire to stay where he/she is more active.” (64, gui)

“There are many. An antisocial individual is alone in front of the computer and his/her self-confidence is on the limit. Writes easier ... but the situation is different in person.” (153, sci)

The question of “Are the occasions on Facebook reflected on face-to-face relationships?” was

directed at the students in relation to reflections of experiences in Facebook setting on real life. According to the answers, the results obtained as the occasions reflected as extensions of real life (%65.3). Moreover, according to the analysis results, the reflected occasions were positive with

an incidence rate of %10.9 whereas they were negative with an incidence rate of %5. It can be claimed that the percentage is %81.2 if the answers of positively and negatively reflected were included. The overall findings for this question were presented on Table 7.

Table 7. Are the occasions on Facebook reflected on face-to-face relationships?

| | Science | | Social sciences | | Guidance and counseling | | Total | |
|----------------------|---------|------|-----------------|------|-------------------------|------|-------|------|
| | f | % | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| Reflected | 15 | 65.2 | 15 | 62.5 | 36 | 66.7 | 66 | 65.3 |
| Not reflected | 4 | 17.4 | 3 | 12.5 | 12 | 22.2 | 19 | 18.8 |
| Reflected positively | 2 | 8.7 | 4 | 16.7 | 5 | 9.3 | 11 | 10.9 |
| Reflected negatively | 2 | 8.7 | 2 | 8.3 | 1 | 1.9 | 5 | 5 |
| | 23 | 100 | 24 | 100 | 54 | 100 | 101 | 100 |

Examples for the answers to the question of “Are the occasions on Facebook reflected on face-to-face relationships?”:

“It is not a that sincere behavior when people who I am not intimate with do likes on my posts.” (84, gui)

“I think it can be reflected either positive or negative. People relax more as they talk and friendships can improve as writing is easier most of the time. However posts, group memberships may cause a prejudice. I think this is the negative effect.” (68, gui)

“Some people can cause conflicts as they get effected too much from these occasions.” (83, gui)

“Negative, people misunderstand each other with words or writings. Gesture, mimics it is needed to see each other in person.” (124, sci)

“The topics shared on Facebook in a comfortable setting, when we confront with them the next day, feel like there are more things to talk about.” (134, sci)

“Intimacy increases on Face. It contributes positively to face-to-face interactions.” (49, gui)

“It is reflected negatively, the relationships come to a point of ending in situations like photo or other posts are not liked. Other way is positive.” (193, soc)

“Of course negative no he/she didn’t like my photo, no the other commented badly. Hey, why we ruin our social lives for a silly social network site.” (153, fen)”

“Reflected badly. Prejudices can be created. Before knowing or the other way around sometimes effects positively.” (164, soc)

“It becomes like an extension of communication process.” (89, gui)

Under the topic of communication, the question of “Did you experience a negative event with your classmates on Facebook setting? If you did, how that was reflected on your face-to-face relationship?” was directed to the students. When the answers were investigated, it was observed that a great majority of the students (%75.9) did not experience a negative event with their friends on Facebook setting. %1.3 of the students reported that they would stop talking in case that they experience a negative event. The overall findings for this question are presented on Table 8.

Table 8. Did you experience a negative event with your classmates on Facebook setting? If you did, how that was reflected on your face-to-face relationship?

| | Science | | Social sciences | | Guidance and counseling | | Total | |
|---|---------|------|-----------------|------|-------------------------|------|-------|------|
| | f | % | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| No | 5 | 12.2 | 11 | 63.4 | 61 | 80.3 | 120 | 75.9 |
| Yes | 33 | 80.5 | 26 | 26.8 | 8 | 10.5 | 24 | 15.2 |
| Yes, our relationship with person is also destroyed | 1 | 2.4 | 4 | 9.8 | 4 | 5.3 | 9 | 5.7 |
| Yes, we resolved it | 2 | 4.9 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1.3 | 3 | 1.9 |
| No, I would stop talking if that happens | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2.6 | 2 | 1.3 |
| | 38 | 100 | 41 | 100 | 76 | 100 | 158 | 100 |

Examples for the answers to the question of “Did you experience a negative event with your classmates on Facebook setting? If you did, how that was reflected on your face-to-face relationship?”:

“Yes, it happened. We were on the opposing views about a video I have shared. He/she unfriended me because of that video. We have never talked again, and we are not too.” (192, soc)

“It happened. He/she was distant in face-to-face communication and there are occasions with devil-may-care attitudes and that I can’t find old sincerity.” (165, soc)

“If I see some posts he/she shared on virtual environment that are contradictory to me. I would

try to be as refined as I can with that person.” (177, soc)

“Yes it happened. He/she shared politics. I commented on that, we argued in comments, we don’t talk to each other now.” (167, soc)

“It can happen. We can resolve it in person.” (128, sci)

Belongingness

The question of “Does Facebook affect your belongingness to your class?” was asked to the students in order to assess Facebook’s effects on their belonging feelings to their class. The analysis of the answers revealed that considerable amount of the students (%53.6) think that Facebook did not affected their belongingness feelings (Table 9).

Table 9. Does Facebook affect your belongingness to your class?

| | Science | | Social sciences | | Guidance and counseling | | Total | |
|------------------|---------|------|-----------------|------|-------------------------|------|-------|------|
| | f | % | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| It did | 13 | 61.9 | 16 | 55.2 | 30 | 50 | 59 | 53.6 |
| It did not | 7 | 33.3 | 13 | 44.8 | 25 | 41.7 | 45 | 40.9 |
| It partially did | 1 | 4.8 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 8.3 | 6 | 5.5 |
| | 21 | 100 | 29 | 100 | 60 | 100 | 110 | 100 |

Examples for the answers to the question of “Does Facebook affect your belongingness to your class?”:

“It helped me to join groups easier through increasing my self-respect.” (91, gui)

"Group photos are quite efficient in that manner, in my opinion. I think that people having hard times being accepted are more likely to share group photos." (46, gui)

"We get to increase the places we keep the warmth in the class as we are together outside of the school as well." (180, soc)

"I am more intimate with my friends as I talk them on Facebook." (149, sci)

"In accordance with my posts, I feel that people's attitudes toward me are positive." (186, soc)

"I feel that I belong to and accepted by that class at Facebook." (49, gui)

"It affects. If the others are members of Facebook groups and using it actively, I need to use it as well to not get excluded." (88, gui)

"Did not affect too much, just to share something, dallying relaxes a little bit. It is more fun to do these with my classmates." (52, gui)

"I don't think it establishes belongingness as it is not face-to-face like it is in class." (156, soc)

"I can feel myself belonging to the class without Facebook too." (175, soc)

"I don't think Facebook has any contribution in this. My belongingness is already high but it would be the same without Facebook." (74, gui)

RESULTS

According to the results, students use Facebook regularly and intensively which is similar to previous studies (e.g. Junco & Cotten, 2012; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2011; Smith & Caruso, 2010). It is observed that students use Facebook mostly for communication and sharing. Especially, the Facebook environment has a characteristic of entertainment and spare time activity in the eyes of the students. It is also mentioned that they are affected in an addictive level while using it in a manner of communication and spare time activity. According to Junco and Cotton (2012), students spend 90 minute on Facebook per day on average. This intensity should be brought under control.

This intensity of usage may be taken advantage of, while considering the dimension of education. In the manner of supporting their learning environment and communicating quickly, Facebook may be favored. Another study with similar results was made by Traxler (2007). Students stated that they prefer Facebook setting since it is faster and more efficient than e-mail groups. Moreover, according to Traxler (2007), students use Facebook and check the new messages and comments as if they are assign to.

It is effective in students' choice for Facebook setting that being a "useful" and a "free" environment as a communication tool. Contrarily, students harshly criticize Facebook with the words of addictive, time thief, insincere environment, and waste of time. It is one of the significant results that students cannot abandon using Facebook despite knowing the negative circumstance. In this sense, some of the students interpret the Facebook as the part of their own life. Dimensions of easy access and feeling as a part of their life correspond to Deng and Tavares' study results (2013).

According to another result, students stated that they are in this environment due to their other friends being also in Facebook environment. This situation can be interpreted as a necessity for the acceptance of individual in society. However, it would be appropriate to investigate causes, outcomes, and effects. Harmless social pressure may cause negative outcomes like cyberbullying.

In terms of class knowledge sharing, Facebook environment is preferred for; information sharing, communicating about the classes, exam and file sharing. The most commonly mentioned topic is the rapidness and effectiveness of Facebook in terms of communication. When these aspects are considered, Facebook is efficient in sharing class materials and communicating. Orientation and adaptation period are needed when a different web based environment is used. Prescott, Wilson and Becket (2013) have found that, in a university environment, Facebook supports informal rather than formal learning. The opinions of students in the current study are in the similar fashion to this finding. It was found that students perceive that Facebook is not sufficient as a formal learning environment.

Another question presented to the students is about the reliability of the knowledge they find in

Facebook settings. According to the answers, majority of the students trust in the information they get whereas the rest do not trust at all or interpret it depending on the source of the information. The students are able to control the accuracy of the information from the comments below the posts.

During the course of the research, the group is not intervened from outer sources, the individuals communicated within the group about the lessons and the classes. It is worthwhile to investigate if it is trustable when an authorized academician would join the group to share post. Because, the students consider Facebook as an untrustworthy spare time/entertainment setting. This perspective influences the way they evaluate the information they obtain from the environment as well. Especially the source of the information is distinctive.

Almost half of the students find Facebook beneficial as a class sharing website but the rest find it as not useful or partially useful. They believe that students' Facebook environment should be used carefully. This result shows that they have the awareness about the need of using Facebook environment at students safely. However, the extent to which this awareness can be transferred to behavior can be examined in an experimental study.

According to another striking result, alternative communication tools like WhatsApp reduce the needs of students to Facebook. In students' words, Facebook replaced SMSs. WhatsApp, on the other hand, is a candidate to replace Facebook. When the situations considered which only the communicative features are used, other sharing networks are becoming tough opponents.

Facebook was influential as the students start their college lives and in the course of meeting their friends. According to some opinions, the ability to gather information about other individuals accelerates this process. A contrary opinion states that the virtual environment is not sincere, the experiences stay in there.

The answers to the question about the individuals staying passive in face-to-face situations becoming more active in Facebook environment revealed that Facebook provides freedom and comfort to the

individuals. In other words, students can exhibit quite a contrary Facebook profile to their real setting opinions. For the individuals lacking face-to-face communication skills, Facebook allows them to exhibit themselves better. Though, it is worthwhile to examine the way this situation effects the individual's deficit in face-to-face communication skills. A-sociality in an individual may increase to a level to cause bigger problems with intensive usage of social networks.

Virtual environments allow physically distant individuals to continue communicating. According to research results, the communications in both the virtual and face-to-face settings are seen as continuations of each other by individuals. The experiences in the virtual environments can effect daily interactions negatively from time to time. These negative effects may be due to ordinary situations such as liking/not liking, commenting on a post. Students may cut off communication with each other after these negative incidents stemming from the ordinary situations. However, it is observed that most of the students do not experience any negative experiences with their friends over Facebook, in general.

A little more than half of the students reported that Facebook did not affect their sense of belonging to the class. The rest, on the other hand, thinks that there is an affect or there is a partial affect. Activities like taking a group picture and having a common sharing area contribute positively to the sense of belongingness. The student sees himself/herself as a part of the group through those situations. Individuals believing face-to-face communication to be more efficient reported that Facebook does not contribute in that manner. In the beginning of the university life, Facebook had a positive impact in the course of students getting to know each other better. Especially, for crowded classes and departments, these kinds of technologies have an important effect.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The results of the study show that students use Facebook social network site intensely and regularly. When using Facebook coordinately with educational objects, it is observed that Facebook is a quick and efficient way of communication. However, it is needed to examine and take

precautions for addictive negative effects. Students take virtual environments like Facebook or, in other words, social network sites seriously and see them as an extent of their real lives. Moreover, Facebook can be seen as efficient among social network sites in terms of starting communication and belonging a group. The study discusses the views of prospective teachers on the use of Facebook with the dimension of “general Facebook use”, “class information sharing”, “communication tool and reflections to real world” and “belongingness to the class”. The views of prospective teachers on Facebook and its application on the education can be examined with different dimensions. Especially, how the use of Facebook affects the behaviors of prospective teachers and its use on educational purposes should be the topics of the following researches.

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APPENDIX A: Data Collection Form

General Opinions

1. What does Facebook mean to you?

Class Information Sharing

2. How does Facebook help you when sharing knowledge about classes with your friends?
3. Do you need to verify the information that you get via Facebook about classes from your friends? (If you need to verify, please explain the reason)
4. Facebook as a class sharing website _____. (Please complete the sentence with your own word(s).)

Communication and Real World Reflections

5. Did the Facebook setting contributed to your socializing process with your friends?
6. Are there situations where a person, who remains passive in face-to-face occasions, becomes more active than expected in Facebook setting? (If there is, please explain these occasions)
7. Are the occasions on Facebook reflected on face-to-face relationships?
8. Did you experience a negative event with your classmates on Facebook setting? If you did, how that was reflected on your face-to-face relationship?

Belongingness to the Class

9. Does Facebook affect your belongingness to your class? (Definitions of Belongingness: Belonging to and accepted by a group. Feeling oneself as a part of it.)