



An Analysis of YouTube Videos about Teachers

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Abstract

The way people perceive teachers is closely linked to the way teachers are represented through interactions that take place in-person, as well as interactions that take place online. Even though teachers' use of YouTube videos as part of instruction has been examined in literature, there is no research regarding how teachers are represented on YouTube. The aim of this study is to evaluate YouTube videos concerning teachers in terms of how teachers are portrayed. By adapting a similar methodology to Rittberg, Dissanayake, and Katz (2015), the keyword "teacher" is searched on the YouTube search engine (www.youtube.com) and the first 60 videos (3 pages) were analyzed. The list of the videos and the basic information of each video (such as the video name, URL, search rank, date uploaded, total viewership, likes, and dislikes) was recorded. Each video's content, cover image, and title were independently coded by two reviewers as either negative, neutral, or positive in relation to the following question: "In what manner is the teacher (or the concept of teacher) portrayed in this video?" The results of this study clearly show that most of the videos examined portray the teacher in a negative manner. Furthermore, among the videos that portrayed the teachers negatively, a considerable amount represented teachers in a sexual manner. The results were discussed in light of the theory of Internet Information Gatekeepers (Laidlaw, 2010) and the theory of social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). Based on the findings of this study, following suggestion was made; Teacher education departments in the higher education institutions should pay close attention to prepare future teachers effectively so that the teachers are equipped with the knowledge to address adverse teacher image abundant on the Internet. Such programs should also emphasize the critical thinking, as it is pivotal in establishing media literacy.

Keywords: perception of teachers, YouTube, the Theory of Internet Information Gatekeepers, the Theory of Social Construction of Reality

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Öğretmenlerle İlgili YouTube Videolarının Analizi

Öz

İnsanların öğretmenleri nasıl algıladıkları, onların birebir, yüz yüze etkileşimlerinin yanı sıra internetteki etkileşimleri ile de ilişkilidir. Literatürde öğretmenlerin verdikleri eğitimin bir parçası olarak YouTube’u kullanmaları incelenmiş olmasına rağmen, öğretmenlerin YouTube’ta nasıl temsil edildiklerine yönelik bir çalışma bulunmamaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, öğretmenlerle ilgili YouTube videolarında öğretmenlerin nasıl sunulduğunu incelemektir. Rittberg, Dissanayake ve Katz’ın 2015 yılında yayımlanan çalışmasının metoduna benzer bir metod kullanılarak, YouTube (www.youtube.com) arama motoruna “öğretmen” kelimesi yazılarak elde edilen ilk üç sonuç sayfasındaki 60 video incelenmiştir. Arama sonucunda elde edilen videolarla ilgili şu bilgiler kaydedilmiştir: video adı, URL, arama sıralaması, videonun yüklenme tarihi, izlenim sayısı, beğenilme ve beğenilmeme sayısı. Videoların her biri “Bu videoda öğretmen ya da öğretmen kavramı nasıl sunulmuş? (olumsuz, tarafsız ya da olumlu) sorusu bağlamında iki bağımsız kodlayıcı tarafından kodlanmıştır. Sonuçlar incelenen videoların çoğunda öğretmenlerin olumsuz bir şekilde sunulduğunu açıkça ortaya koymuştur. Hatta, öğretmenleri olumsuz bir şekilde sunan videoların önemli bir kısmının öğretmenleri müstehcen sunduğu tespit edilmiştir. Elde edilen sonuçlar İnternet Bilgi Eşik Bekçileri teorisi (Laidlaw, 2010) ve Gerçekliğin Sosyal İnşası teorisi (Berger & Luckmann, 1991) ışığında tartışılmıştır. Çalışmanın sonuçlarına bağlı olarak şu tavsiyede bulunulmuştur: Yüksek eğitim kurumlarındaki öğretmen eğitimi programları gelecek nesil öğretmenleri yetiştirirken internette bolca rastlanan olumsuz öğretmen imajına yönelik hazırlıklı olmaya özen göstermelidirler. Ayrıca bu programlar medya okuryazarlığının oluşturulmasında çok önemli bir yere sahip olan eleştirel düşünceye ağırlık vermelidir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: öğretmen algısı, YouTube, İnternet Bilgi Eşik Bekçileri teorisi, Gerçekliğin Sosyal İnşası teorisi

Introduction

The invention of the World Wide Web has drastically impacted the way we live. It affects all domains of human life, including education and the teaching profession. One of the most prevalent media sources used in schools today is YouTube. YouTube is a video-sharing platform which hosts free video content uploaded by users across the globe. Currently, YouTube has over a billion users. These videos posted on the YouTube website generate billions of views every single day. YouTube has become so extensively popular that it now reaches more 18-34 and 18-49 year-olds compared to any cable channel in the U.S. (YouTube, 2016). As the largest and most popular video sharing website in the world, YouTube houses many different forms of videos ranging from professionally-made, to amateur. The videos on this site makeup a very diverse mixture of subject matter spanning from educational content to content intended for entertainment purposes. Because modern education is encouraged to be innovative (see Snyder & Burke, 2008), the use of YouTube is perceived as an innovative practice that keeps students' attention alive while also making the learning experience indelible (Clifton & Mann, 2011).

The use of YouTube videos both in and out of the classroom has many benefits, such as making instruction more engaging and reducing the time spent in class for instruction. One of the reasons for the popularity of YouTube videos for educational purposes is that such videos are in alignment with the domains of Bloom's taxonomy, as stated by May, Wedgeworth, and Bigham (2013). Bloom's taxonomy can be examined in three main domains: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. The educational videos address the cognitive domain through the application of the specific knowledge covered by the videos. Along with the introduction of the content, videos enable students to raise questions about the values or the behaviors represented in the content through the evaluative examination of the content. Thus, they address the affective domain of Bloom's taxonomy. This could be apparent when students' state that they remember the video itself because of the way it made them feel, while not remembering the specific course content. YouTube videos could also be used to show how particular psychomotor activity is executed (May, Wedgeworth, & Bigham, 2013). By addressing the three main domains of Bloom's taxonomy, YouTube videos can hold significant educational value.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this current research study was based on the theory of social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1991), and the theory of Internet Information Gatekeepers (Laidlaw, 2010).

Despite its popularity in the general public and teaching profession, the way the website ranks videos is a mystery, as there is no official explanation for how YouTube ranks the videos. Is it the number of views, keyword relevance, video rating, or a combination of these factors? The nature of the algorithm (or any other calculation on the decision used to rank any given video) is not clear for the outside users. Because of this vague and classified element, the YouTube website acts like an

Internet gatekeeper with secrecy. According to Internet Information Gatekeepers theory, by controlling the flow of information, the discussion and involvement in societies are shaped and controlled by the Internet gatekeepers. While some information is selected for distribution, other is eliminated. By doing so, the Internet gatekeepers could have the role of facilitating discussions on social issues, which can then shape the perception of others as they decide what is to be distributed (selection) and what is not to be distributed (inhabitation) (Laidlaw, 2010). Namely, by the control of the flow of information, the Internet gatekeepers take role in shaping the democratic discourse (Laidlaw, 2010). According to Laidlaw (2010), such gatekeepers have two main roles: “one outward-looking shaping behaviour or perceptions and the other inward-looking by inhibiting behaviour or access. Recognising such dual purposes transfers well to the Internet environment, where gatekeepers have the capacity to act both as facilitators of and impediments to democratic discourse” (Laidlaw, 2010, p. 265).

The perception of any group in any given society is closely linked with how this particular group is represented in the media. Any social concept is not shaped in isolation, but through social interactions. How people perceive teachers is closely linked to the way teachers are represented through interactions that take place in-person, as well as interactions that take place online. In this study, another theory could be useful to shape the framework of this research and help us better understand the process of shaping a social concept: The theory of social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). According to this theory, individuals generate reality based on past collective interactions. In this current research study, such interactions refer to virtual interactions – videos of interactions involving educators. The way individuals perceive teachers in our society is closely linked to the way those individuals treat teachers. Therefore, perception of any social group is a very important factor, as perceptions will often feed the potential actions. Considering the term “teacher”, as a concept shaped by virtual social interactions, the magnitude of the responsibility of Internet platforms such as YouTube becomes more apparent.

Even though teachers’ use of YouTube videos as part of instruction has been examined in literature (i.e., O’Connor, 2010; Tamim, 2013), there is no research regarding how teachers are represented on YouTube. It would be interesting to see how the teachers themselves, as one of the main users of YouTube, are portrayed on YouTube. Therefore, researching and analyzing the way teachers are portrayed on videos hosted by YouTube becomes critically important. If the students were asked by teachers to search on YouTube for information, what would they find about teachers on YouTube? Could the findings have an impact on the learning based on the way the videos shape the concept of teachers and their role in relation to students?

The current content analysis examines the coverage of teachers on YouTube. The objectives of this study are to provide a qualitative analysis of videos on teachers and to discuss the significance of fairly representing teachers on online platforms such as YouTube.

Method

By adapting a similar methodology to Rittberg, Dissanayake and Katz (2015), the keyword “teacher” is searched on the YouTube search engine (www.youtube.com) and the first 60 videos (3 pages) were analyzed separately by the author and a second coder. The list of the videos and the basic information of each video (such as the video name, URL, search rank, date uploaded, total viewership, likes, and dislikes) was recorded between 8:00 AM-10:00 EST on Monday, November 30, 2015. Using the search term “teacher”, the first 60 videos on YouTube were analyzed. Each video’s content, cover image, and title were independently coded by two reviewers as either negative, neutral, or positive in relation to the following question: “In what manner is the teacher (or the concept of teacher) portrayed in this video?” In the case of a discrepancy between raters, a third rater evaluated the video. Only English or partially English videos were reviewed.

Results

Using the search term “teacher” in the search engine resulted in about 8,780,000 videos. The first 60 videos (3 pages) on YouTube were analyzed. Initial analysis showed that one video was repeated in the search result; therefore, the repeated video was excluded from the analysis, resulting in 59 videos to be analyzed. These videos were analyzed separately in terms of content, title, and the cover image of each video by the author and a second coder. The initial inter-rater reliability between the coders was determined by computing Cohen’s kappa coefficient (Cohen, 1960), for three categories; the content, the cover image, and the title of the videos. While percentage agreement does not disregard potential chance agreement, kappa makes adjustments for the potential agreement between raters that could occur by chance (Yoder & Symons, 2010). Cohen’s kappa between the coders was found to be 0.90 for the content of the videos, 0.86 for the video cover images, and 0.97 for the title of the videos. After discussing the initial results, a complete agreement was reached between the raters, and therefore, the result of re-computation of Cohen’s kappa was 1.

In terms of the content of the videos, 66.1% percent of the videos were coded as negative, 16.9% neutral and 16.9% positive. As for the cover image of the videos, 52.5% of the videos were coded as negative, 35.6% neutral, and 11.9% positive. The results also showed that 57.6% of the titles of the videos were coded as negative, 30.5% neutral, and 11.9% positive (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).

Figure 1

Nature of the Examined YouTube Videos on Teachers in terms of their Content, Cover Image, and Title

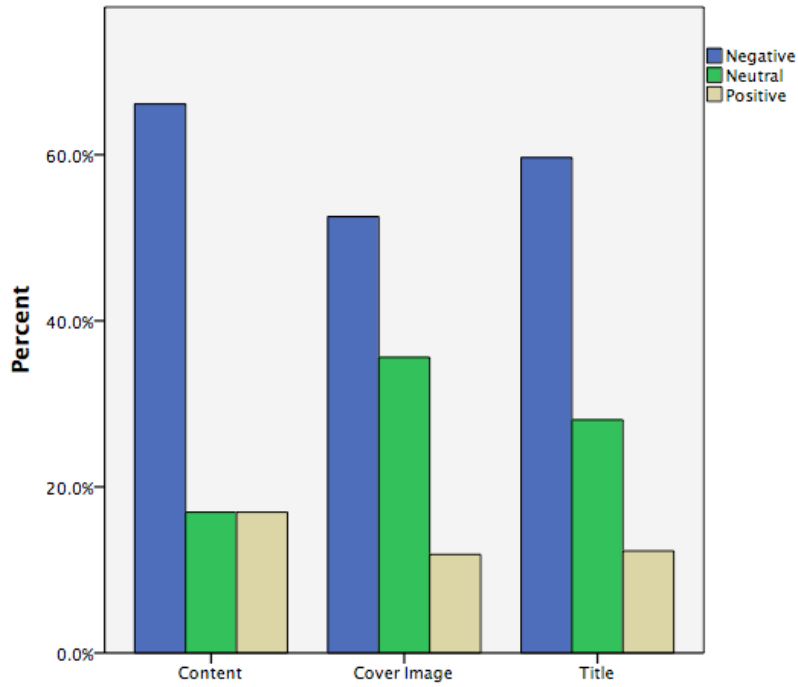
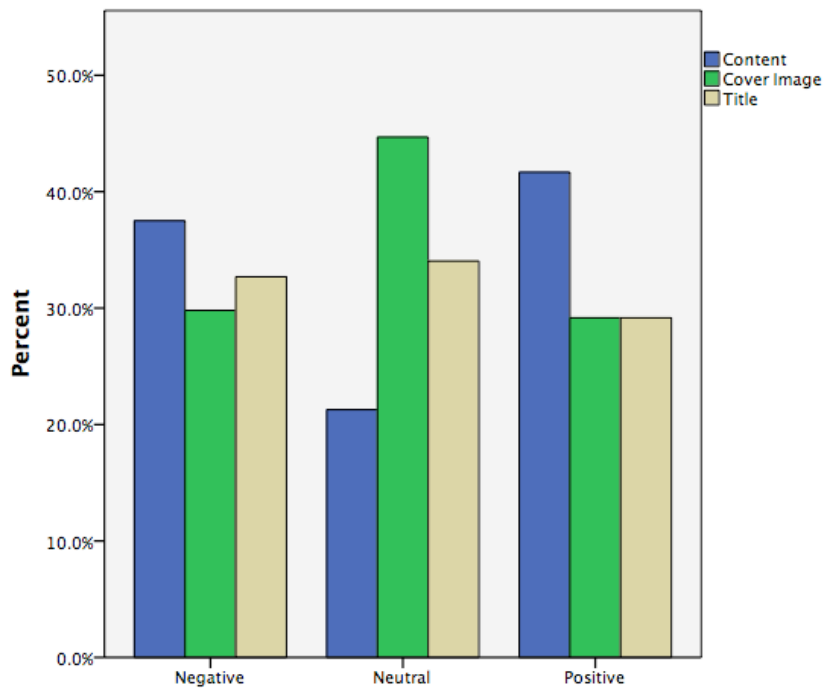


Figure 2

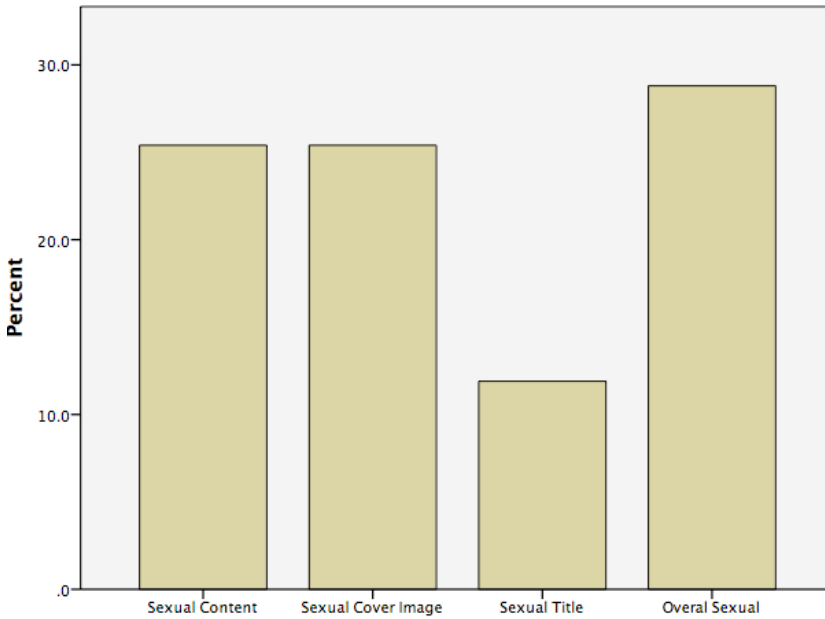
Breakdown of the YouTube videos on Teachers and their Coding



Twenty-five percent of the video content, 11.9% of the video titles (such as “Porn teacher,” “Sexing teacher ‘asked me to send naked pics’”), and 25.4% of the cover image of the videos contained sexuality. Altogether, 28.8% of the videos had sexuality in their content, title, and/or their cover image (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

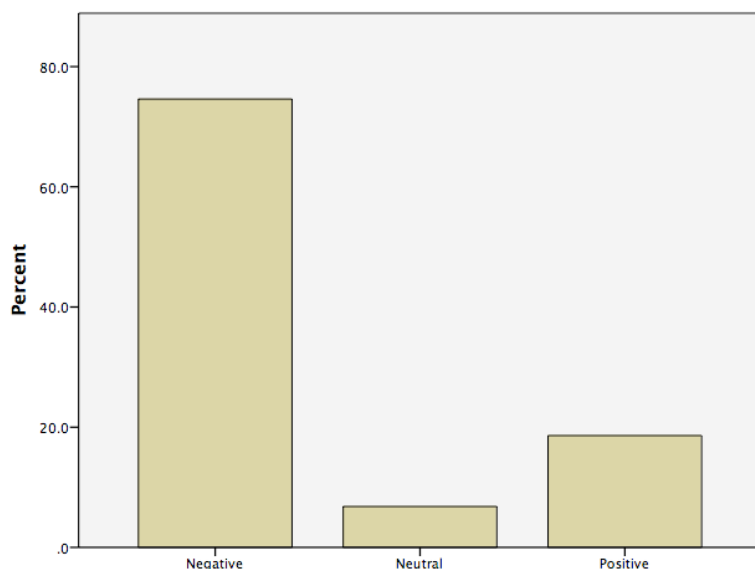
Sexuality elements of the examined YouTube videos on Teachers



Overall, 74.6% of the videos were coded as negative, 6.8% neutral, and 18.6% positive in terms of content, title, or cover image of the videos. In the overall coding process for each individual video, a video was automatically coded negative if it was coded negative in at least one of the three categories (content, image, or title). If the videos were coded as neutral, it meant that the videos were coded as neutral in all three of the categories. The videos were coded as positive if all three categories of the video were coded positive, or if there was any positive and neutral combination with no negative coding (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Overall Nature of the Examined YouTube videos on Teachers



Among the top 10 most liked videos, 9 were overall negative, 1 was overall positive, and 3 were also overall sexual. In terms of the top 10 most-viewed videos, 8 were overall negative, 2 were positive, and 7 of them were also overall sexual.

Discussion

The results of this study clearly show that most of the videos examined portray the teacher in a negative manner. Furthermore, among the videos that portrayed the teachers negatively, a considerable amount represented teachers in a sexual manner. The teaching profession continues to be faced with such negativity in today's society. Adding more negativity to the profession by portraying teachers on YouTube negatively makes the issue even more problematic.

I argue that YouTube's practices fit well with the framework laid out by the theory of Internet Information Gatekeepers (Laidlaw, 2010). First, I would like to address the issue of controlling the flow of information. YouTube has a larger audience and is freely available to any individual with access to the Internet. Therefore, YouTube has the potential to have a large influence on public discourse. YouTube controls the flow of information by selecting what information to make public. In this case, control is exercised by selecting which videos to show up in the search result and on what rank they will appear, and eliminating (removing the video) or reducing the chance of some of the other videos (pushing the rank of the video down). Online platforms like YouTube are both facilitators and inhibitors of democratic discourse. The concept of democratic discourse is rooted in the idea that diverse opinions (in this case, videos with diverse opinions) should have a fair chance of coverage on the democratic platforms (in this case, YouTube). By

providing a fair coverage of teachers, online platforms such as YouTube can facilitate current democratic discussions about teachers. Similarly, if the videos that portray teachers in a positive or non-negative manner appear at the very low rank in the search results due to the complex and vague calculations and/or other factors determining the ranking formula, such video sharing sites may inhibit the democratic discussions.

Via elimination of certain videos approaching the concept of teacher in a way that is not sensational, the Internet video platforms play a significant role in shaping people's perception of the social concepts such as teachers.

I also argue that practices employed by YouTube fit well with the theory of social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). By eliminating (or lowering the possibility of the being watch) certain videos, thus funneling the viewers to videos that are biased or simply distort or exaggerate the reality about teachers, YouTube takes part in the process of shaping the reality of teachers in our society. Namely, YouTube plays a significant role in the shaping of what people think of teachers, thus, the social construction of the concept of teachers.

If a naïve person, as in someone knowing nothing about the teaching profession or teachers, were to conduct a search on teachers, the videos he or she would discover would be very disturbing in terms of the nature and role of educators. This person would be inclined to think that what goes on in schools is largely a sexual matter, and that teachers are sexual predators.

The values of any society are vulnerable if they are not protected. Putting pressure on social media about representing teachers in a fair way is an action taken towards the protection of society's values. If no action is taken, the teaching profession, as noble as it is, faces a real threat of being represented as a profession tainted with sexuality and negativity in the eyes of the society.

As much as it is pivotal to apply pressure to social media outlets about the fair representation of teachers, it is equally important to educate the public (especially the students) on critical literacy. Removing all of the misrepresentations from the Internet is not viable, thus, promoting critical literacy skills is pivotal. Such promotion of critical thinking focusing specifically on the Internet should be executed by providing concrete examples so that the awareness on the biased practices employed by the social media outlets could be increased. Teacher education departments in the higher education institutions should pay close attention to prepare future teachers effectively so that the teachers are equipped with the knowledge to address adverse teacher image abundant on the Internet.

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