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## **Social Media in the Academic Life of International Students in Turkey: A Survey Study**

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### **Abstract**

As social media becomes the ideal space of sharing information in a simple and convenient way, it continues to attract numerous scholarly studies. This paper investigates the peculiarity of social media in the academic life of international students in Turkey, with an aim of ascertaining the social media tools used by international students. Secondly is to scrutinize the academic purposes of social media usage among international students in Turkey. The third objective is to determine the academic benefits attained by international students in the usage of social media. This study was inclined in the Uses and Gratification theory, the researcher considered a randomly selected sample of international students in Istanbul City. Due to the nature of this study both qualitative and quantitative approaches were applied. Thus semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were used to get data on a randomly selected sample. Observantly, social media platforms found vital in the academic life of international students included; YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter. In the same way, findings indicates that international students frequently use social media for more than twice a week to interact with their course mates as an encouragement for studying outside classroom. Remarkably, international students benefit from social media as they use You Tube to watch educational video clips on lectures delivered from other universities to widen on their understanding on a particular subject. Equally, Facebook and Whatsapp were purposely for instant messaging, sharing academic information about study topics with classmates and professors, arranging study groups and asking for help with studies. This paper correspondingly concludes that despite the potentiality of the social media in the academic sphere, it cannot go unnoticed that international students use it for other benefits especially for creating new friendship in and outside Turkey, sharing ideas and information plus communicating to their families and friends in their home countries about social and current affairs.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Academic life, International Students, Turkey



## **1. Introduction**

Technology has changed the way people interact and has brought about the emergence of an open social platform such as social media that allows the inhabitants of this planet earth to connect with each other easily. Boateng and Amankwaa (2016) notes Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus, and Flickr, are being used in learning for the purpose of convenient communication with other students and potentially with others outside the class such as students of the same topic and subject experts (Boateng & Amankwaa, 2016:2).

Social media is rapidly changing the communication setting of today's social world and its development is significantly influencing the academic life of students. As Salvation and Adzharuddin (2014) observed, social media has become the most dynamic application which enables students not only to socialize with friends and also interact with lecturers. The growing popularity of the sites is further influenced by the free access for whomever that desire to interact with friends and lecturers with a view to generating collective knowledge (Salvation and Adzharuddin 2014:1).

Consistently, social media permit and favor the publication and sharing of information; self-learning; teamwork; communication, both between students and between pupil-teacher; feedback; access to other sources of information that support or even facilitate constructivist learning and collaborative learning; and contact with experts, (Gómez and Pedro, 2012: 2). Social media technologies also, have been growing significantly to support users to gain access to valuable knowledge through different resources. As highlighted by (Aghae, 2010), the appearance of social media is groundbreaking; yet there may be confusion as what exactly is included in this term and how it may differ from other similar and related concepts. There is a diversity of technologies used as effective tools to support students' academic life (Aghae, 2010:16). Although some of the technologies are apparently distinguished as social media, such as Wikipedia, YouTube, Facebook, and some virtual environments, there is no systematic way to differ and categorize applications. Therefore, in this paper social media is implied to online technologies used by learners, which are important and supportive to students' academic life; namely You Tube, Facebook, Whatsapp, Tweeter, Google Plus, Wikipedia, LinkedIn and Skype.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Social media have attracted considerable attention among teens and young adults who tend to connect and share common interest (Salvation & Adzharuddin, 2014:1). More so, with the explosive growth in the number and use of social media in everyday communication method for individuals and organizations, there has also been a corresponding increase of its incorporation in teaching and learning in higher institution (Boateng & Amankwaa, 2016:2). Although there have been numerous researches such as (Gómez, Sergio and Pedro 2012, Aghae 2010) were conducted in different countries on understanding how much, why and how students use social media and despite its popularity, very little data and quite a few articles exist on this subject of social media in the academic life of an international student in Turkey.

Meanwhile, with the rapid internationalization of higher education, Turkey is a center of attraction for international students from all over the world. In addition to thousands of international students who come to study in Turkey on their own every year, nearly five thousand (5000) international students annually come to Turkey to get either undergraduate



or graduate education within the scope of Türkiye Scholarships, (Daily Sabah, 2015). Therefore, given the increasing number of international students in Turkey and with the current technological advancements especially popularity of social media, this study sets out that an understanding of social media in the academic life of an international student would be of great relevance to students, researchers, student's affairs practitioners and all the various bodies that comes to play when talking of social media and academic life in Turkey. In view of above, this study aimed at; - Ascertaining the social media tools used by international students in Turkey. - Scrutinizing the academic purposes of social media usage among international students in Turkey. - Determining the academic benefits attained by international students in using of social media.

## **2.1 Research Questions**

The main research question of the study was “does social media impact on international students' academic life in Turkey?” To answer this question, the following questions were further considered: Which social media tools are used by international students? What are the purposes of social media usage among international students in Turkey? And what academic benefits are attained by international students in using of social media?

## **3. Literature Review**

This review considered previous related research, covering studies conducted on core issues to this study namely; Social media, Usage of Social Media in the Academia and finally the International Students' Academic Life in Turkey.

Primarily, social media have been defined as “an online community of Internet users who want to communicate with other users about areas of mutual interest”. Examples of social media include: Twitter, Friendster, MySpace, Facebook and many others. (Helou and Ab.Rahim, 2014:2). Whereas Aghae (2010) observed that in educational learning, social media is a web-based system that supports interactions between learners and instructors as well as learners and learners. Since people are challenged to interact with each other on virtual environments, online interaction is a significant way of communication (Aghae, 2010:16). In academia therefore, there should be a variety of available resources to help learners in bootstrapping their way to higher-level cognitive structures.

Correspondingly, Kaplan and Haenlein, (2012) referred to social media, as “a group of Internet-based applications that are built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content”. As it is much broader than simply collaborative projects such as Wikipedia that includes blogs and micro-blogs (e.g. Twitter), content communities (e.g. YouTube), social networking sites (e.g. Facebook) and virtual social worlds e.g. Second Life (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2012:101). Despite the diversity in the definitions of social media and the multiplicity of social media sites accessed and used by the public for different purposes, this paper focused much on social media perceived to be used by international students for academic purposes. These include Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google Plus, Wikipedia, Twitter, Instant Messaging, MSN, Skype, E-Mail and WhatsApp, as earlier mentioned in the introduction.

On the other hand, social media have recently grown significantly in academia, since learners have the possibility of continuous learning besides saving time and other costs. Aghae, (2010) observed that there are many ways that social media supports academic life, like



interactions and communications among students. These social interactions, supported by new technologies as the main key, have consequently led to increased learners' interest in collaborative and cooperative learning (Aghaee, 2010:17). Therefore, basing on Aghaee, this paper presumes that by using social media, learners are enabled to communicate with others and engage in educational learning, especially through learner-content, learner-instructor, and learner-learner interactions.

Furthermore, Helou and Ab.Rahim (2014) in their study on the Influence of Social Networking Sites on Students' Academic Performance in Malaysia, found that most of the students engaged in the use of social media for socializing activities rather than for academic purposes. Inversely, most of the students felt that social media have a positive impact on their academic performance, as it could be used for various academic activities such as communicating with the faculty and university authorities, communicating with lecturers and supervisors, discussing academic topics with classmates and chatting with friends on topics of educational interest (Helou and Ab.Rahim, 2014:8). Similarly, Hall and Sivakumaran (2014) reported that Social media can be used as a connection point to family and friends while the students are away from home. Student's involvement in activities like making friends on social media should be seen as students having access to relevant information that can be channeled towards improving the students' academic performance (Hall and Sivakumaran, 2014:1).

Alike, Gómez and Pedro (2012) found in their study about academic Use of Social Networks among University Students reported that students displayed a positive attitude to using social networks with educational purposes. Although among the principal reasons for study use occupied third place; the majority of students (59.9%) believed it is positive to create subject groups in one of the social networks; and 39.8% would replace the virtual campus as an educational platform with the social networks (Gómez and Pedro 2012:6). It is worth noting that these positive attitude trends stood out in their study, where the students did not display a negative attitude towards the educational use of the social networks. Whereas, Saw *et al.*, (2012) in their study on Social Media for International Students in Australia, they found that the students' motivations for using social media sites among the most common reasons for both international and domestic students were social activities like chatting with friends, keeping up with friends' activities and staying in touch with family. But 60% indicated that they used Facebook for sharing information and over 50% for finding out information. The most popular social media sites were Facebook, YouTube and Twitter for finding information. Yet there were some variations in usage between students from different countries. (Saw, Wendy, Donaghey, and McDonald 2012:18)

Outstandingly, Hall and Sivakumaran (2014) found that international students in the United States were using social media in a variety of ways to help them adjust to living in a foreign country during their study abroad experience. Facebook, YouTube and Twitter were some of the ways international students were learning about study abroad programs. Whereas they used social media such as Facebook, email, Twitter and Instagram to stay in touch with family and friends back home. They also used these sites to make friends in their host country. This helped them learn common slang/phrases and provided them a convenient way to communicate with friends in their host country (Hall and Sivakumaran 2014:4). Likewise, Lin *et al.* (2011) conducted a study focusing primarily on the outcomes of Facebook use during international students' study in the USA. The researchers found that Facebook usage contributed to students' ability to participate socially and culturally in their new surroundings.



Those students who interacted with their U.S. friends on Facebook were better socially adjusted and of the international students surveyed, 46% indicated Facebook as their primary account. (Lin, Wei, Mijung and LaRose, 2011:16). Ultimately, Saw *et al.* (2012) found that Australian students used social media for academic purposes such as sharing information about study topics, arranging study groups, asking for help with studies among other. Remarkably, Facebook at 91% and YouTube at 27% were the only two sites that over 10% of respondents indicated they used for some educational purpose. Students' frequently used YouTube to find information for educational purposes (Saw *et al.* 2012:8).

Therefore, based on the aforementioned aspects it is evident that social media have undoubtedly become an integral part of the everyday life of the today's generation. As many previous studies like (Lin *et al.* 2011; Saw *et al.*, 2012; Hall and Sivakumaran 2014) confirmed that in addition to social activities, international and domestic students are connecting via social media for a wide range of academic purposes including group work and sharing and gathering information, as some students use social media to validate ideas and make decisions too. In the same line its paramount for this paper to comment that social media have created a new social dimension where individual students can increase their social awareness by keeping in touch with old friends, making new friends, dispensing new data or products and gathering information in other aspects of everyday life. This helps students become more knowledgeable, which is very beneficial for students' academic life.

Although the definition of "international student" varies in each country in accordance to their own national education system, in Australia for example, international students are defined as those studying onshore only with visa subclasses 570 to 575, excluding students undertaking study while in possession of other temporary visas. Whereas in Japan, international students are defined as foreign nationals who study at any Japanese university, graduate school, junior college, college of technology, professional training college or university preparatory course on a 'college student' visa, as defined by the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International\\_student](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_student), 2016). Nonetheless, according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) an international student is a mobile student who has left his or her country, or territory of origin, and moved to another country or territory with the singular objective of studying (<http://wenr.wes.org>, 2016). Therefore, in this paper, the term international students is limited to the above definition in that international students considered in this study are those who crossed borders and came to Turkey for the specific purpose of studying.

Evidently, once a barometer of university internationalization, the presence of international students is now a core part of the student body for the world's leading universities. The global population of students, who move to another country to study continues to rise, reached almost 5 million in 2014. Internationalization is of growing significance worldwide, with economic, political and social changes driving an increasingly global knowledge economy. Internationalization within universities continues to develop apace as institutions move from equating international strategy with international student recruitment to developing mature internationalization agendas that incorporate recruitment, research collaborations, and capacity-building. (University of Oxford, 2015:5)

On the same note, with the rapid internationalization of higher education in Turkey, Turkish universities are becoming an increasingly popular destination for students from around the globe. According to the 'International Student Research Project' report prepared by the Development Research Center, Turkey wants to attract 1.5 percent of all students from around





the world who want to study overseas (Daily Sabah, 2015). Furthermore, the number of international students has increased rapidly in Turkey over the last years. It is seen that the number of international students which was 21,000 in 2011, reached to 36,000 in 2012, 55,000 at the end of 2013 and 80,000 at the end of 2014. This number is predicted to reach 250,000 as an objective for 2023. (<http://www.internationalstudentsymposium.com>, 2016)

Accordingly, the growth of international students has been matched by the expansion of higher education in Turkey, where 50 public universities and 36 private foundation universities were established between 2006 and 2011, bringing the total number to 165. Accordingly, 80 percent of international students in Turkey attend state universities, while 20 percent of them enrolled in foundation (private) universities in the 2013-2014 academic years. Furthermore, 60 percent of all international students in Turkey attend universities in Istanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Konya and Erzurum. (<http://www.dailysabah.com>, 2016).

Complementarily, in Turkey as in many countries throughout the world, social conditions and social relations have significantly influenced universities and academic life. The concept academic life is used to describe things that relate to the work done in schools, colleges, and universities, especially work which involves studying and reasoning rather than practical or technical skills (Tural, 2007:1). While abroad, international students often feel disconnected from their home country and they may also choose not to stay in contact with friends and professional contacts made during their foreign study experience. Therefore, social media may be a method of addressing some of these issues. In this case, social media can be utilized by international students to support their relationships and connections before, during and after their study abroad (Hall and Sivakumaran, 20014:1). Essentially, Pfeiffer (2001) observed that many international students go through considerable stress due to the demands associated with the change to new environment. Change and transition are stressful because a person can experience a loss of control over the new environment. The new environment will have new properties and the student needs to adapt to the new places, faces, and routines (Pfeiffer, 2001:11).

From the theoretical perspective, David (2002) remarks that uses and gratification theory is a popular technique used in understanding user motivation for media use, access and understanding of their attitude towards a particular media. The uses and gratifications approach to communication studies examines what people do with the media. (David, 2002:71). Quan-Haase and Young (2010) stressed that one of the more successful theoretical frameworks from which to examine questions of “how” and “why” individuals use media to satisfy particular needs has been the uses and gratifications theory. (Quan-Haase, and Young, 2010:2). Uses and gratifications theory assumes; that people select and use communication source and messages to satisfy felt needs or desires. Media use is a mean to satisfy wants or interests such as seeking information to reduce uncertainty or to solve personal dilemmas. Social and psychological factors mediate communication behavior. (David, 2002:71).

Concisely, the above reviewed literature is of importance to the current study because scholars like (Aghae 2010; Saw *et al*, 2012; Gómez and Pedro 2012) among others revealed pertinent issues including Social media, Usage of Social Media in the Academia and finally the International Students’ Academic Life, which were basically the focus of this study. Nonetheless, a gap in the literature was seen as no particular study had focused on social media in the academic life of the international students in Turkey, hence authenticating the relevance of the current study. Finally, although uses and gratification theory was originally developed to examine traditional media such as newspapers and television, this study applied



this framework to social media due to the study objective of exploring how and why social media is used in the academic life of international students, which is in line with the assumptions of uses and gratification theory.

#### **4. Methodology**

In this study the researcher employed a triangulation methodological design that combined quantitative and qualitative techniques. However, the weight of the quantitative part was greater, as the essential method in this study was a descriptive survey research in that the researcher sought to extrapolate the results to the surveyed population as a whole. But in the practical part of this study, a qualitative approach was employed using a semi-structured interview among 20 selected international students of Marmara University, Goztepe Campus. Qualitative approach was used as it was appropriate to collect data in a natural setting rather than a contrived situation. In this manner, a face-to-face interview between the researcher and randomly selected participants was employed to avoid human bias whenever possible and the researcher in this study was able to discover detailed information about social media in the academic life of international students through in-depth interviews.

Moreover, in order to extract quantitative information, a questionnaire was designed for data collection. Since a questionnaire has the ability to collect a large amount of information in a reasonably quick space of time, the questionnaire was drafted. All the questions except for one were closed. Likert-type, five-point self-applied scales were employed. The face and content validity of the instrument were ensured. The questions explored the frequency with which the social media are used for different academic related activities. In addition to these, the questionnaire obtained other socio-demographic data about the respondents. Still, due to slow responses, data was collected from November 2015 to February 2016. The data obtained through the survey generated a database that was analyzed with the statistical packages.

In line with Roger and Dominick (2011) who noted that researchers often use samples of 50, 75, or 100 subjects per group, or cell, such as adults 18–24 years old (Roger and Dominick 2011: 103), the target population for this study comprised of all international students in Istanbul City, Turkey. The population size was set at over 5,000 students, according to the figures provided by the latest statistics available. ([www.kalkinma.gov.tr](http://www.kalkinma.gov.tr), 2016). This study employed simple random sampling strategy to select the sample. In this regard, an online survey was conducted targeting the international students in Istanbul Metropolitan City. Survey invitations were sent out through emails; Facebook and Whatsapp plat forms both individual and groups forums of international students in Istanbul. According to the response of the survey, 101 international students from 25 countries studying in 13 Universities in Istanbul City responded to the survey. Data collected was later analyzed and the results are reported in the consequent subsections. Notably, one limitation with this methodology is due to time constraint the sample size in this study was small, which may inhibit the possibility of generalizing the findings to the entire population of the international students' body in Turkey, hence need for further studies to generalize patterns and trends.

#### **5. Results**

This study majorly aimed at ascertaining the social media tools used by international students in Turkey. The study also focused at scrutinizing the academic purposes of social media usage



among international students in Turkey. Similarly it Determined the academic benefits attained by international students in using of social media.

### **5.1 Demographics Data of the Participants**

The 101 participants in this study were of 25 nationalities studying in 13 Universities in Istanbul City, Turkey as reflected in the appendices. Of these 67.3% were male whereas 32.7 were female. As reflected in table 1, the majority of the respondents were under the age group of 18-25 years who constituted 57.4%, followed by those between 26-35 tallying to 41.6% respectively. Likewise, the academic levels of the respondents varied as for undergraduate composed of 48.5%, followed by Master with 30.7% and lastly Doctorate who made up 20.8% respectively. As per discipline of study in a broader perspective, 32% as the majorities were under Social and Administrative Sciences, 31% were under Arts and Humanities, followed by 21% under Science, 11% engineering and lastly 5% were under Agriculture specialty.

**Table 1.** Showing the Demographic Data of the Participants

<b>VARIABLES</b>	<b>ITEM</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>(%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	67	67.3
	Female	33	32.7
<b>Age Group</b>	18 – 25	58	57.4
	26-35	42	41.6
	36 & Above	1	1%
<b>Academic Level of Study</b>	Undergraduate	49	48.5
	Masters	31	30.7
	Doctorate	21	20.8
	Others	0	0
<b>Field of Study</b>	Sciences	21	21
	Arts & Humanities	31	31
	Engineering & Technology	11	11
	Social & Admin Sciences	33	32
	Agriculture	5	5

Source: Primary data, 2016

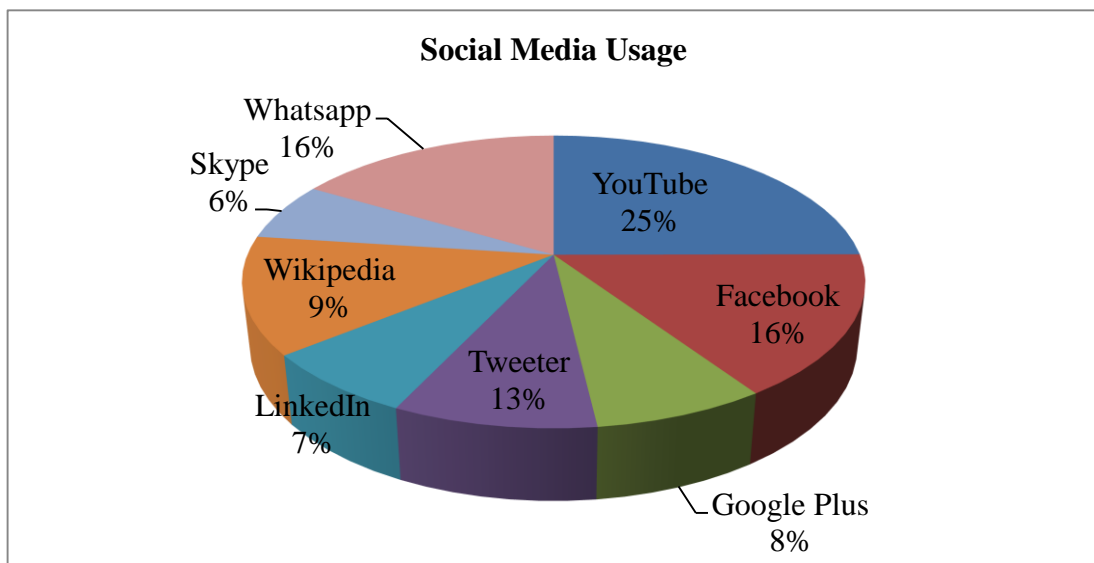
### **5.2 Social Media Used by International Students**

Being the major objective of ascertaining the social media tools used by international students in Turkey, the study ascertained that multiple social media platforms are used by international students although their usage vary depending on the medium being used as indicate pie chat 1. These findings comparably, are in line with David (2002) assertion on the uses and gratification theory that that people select and use communication source and messages to



satisfy felt needs or desires (David, 2002:71). In other words no single social media platform was relied on instead multiplicity of them are being used by international students.

In this way, the current study revealed that 25% as the majority of the international students who participated in the study use YouTube as a social media platform to watch educational video-clips. Additionally, 16% of the respondents were equally found to be using both Facebook and whatsapp platforms for academic purposes of sharing educative information with their classmates and professors. Furthermore, findings indicates that the least used social media platforms by international students included Tweeter with a score on 13%, Wikipedia 9%, Google Plus 8%, LinkedIn 7% and lastly skype with 6% respectively. Consequently, these outcomes seems divergent to Lin et al. (2011) findings in the USA who found that out of the international students surveyed, 46% of students indicated Facebook was their primary social media.



**Figure 1.** Showing the Social Media Used by International Students

**Source: Primary data, 2016**

### 5.3 Social Media Usage in Academia

As another objective of the study was to scrutinize the academic purposes of social media usage among international students in Turkey, the study revealed the regularity in using social media to interact with classmates to study and work on class assignments outside of the classroom. As well as their frequency in using it while interacting with Professors to study and work on class assignments outside of the classroom. (Likert scale of 1 Never to 5 More than Twice a Week).

Findings as indicated that majority of the students represented by 68.2% of the respondents use social media for more than twice a week to interact with classmates to study and also work on class assignments outside of the classroom. In as far as their interaction with Professors to study and work on class assignments outside of the classroom, the study exposed that majority of the students represented by 44%, used it more than twice a week. However, basing on these outcomes it is evident that students use social media among



themselves and with their professors for academic purposes including course works and sharing of information.

Curiously, these findings are supported by other previous research in the same venture of social media usage in academia. For instance, Gómez and Pedro (2012) found in their study about academic Use of Social Networks among University Students that students displayed a positive attitude to using social networks with educational purposes. As among the principal reasons for study use, the majority of students (59.9%) believed it is positive to create subject groups in one of the social networks. This vividly authenticates the current study on international students in Turkey.

Furthermore, interview analysis yielded that international students use YouTube as a social media tool for watching educative videos for lectures done at other universities to widen on their understanding of a particular topic. Some observed that “sometimes it is a little bit difficult to understand a professor during the lecture”. So they alternatively use YouTube platform to learn things that they didn’t understand during the lecture as they find social media both educative and entertaining by watching interesting videos. Additionally, another academic purpose was personal discovery and getting in-depth knowledge on issues taught in class when they are at their residences and in the absence of their professors. Sometimes sharing information with fellow classmates on homework motivated international students to use social media especially, Facebook and Whatsapp respectively.

#### **5.4 Academic Benefits of Using Social Media**

Consistently in determining the academic benefits attained by international students in using of social media, as the final objective of this study, findings concluded that 42.6% of the respondents agreed and 28.6% strongly agreed with the assertion that social media enables them to interact with their professors and with their classmate. This however implies that international student benefits in using social media by full filling their need for interaction with their professors and classmates who are crucial in their academic life.

Equally, 45.5% of the respondents agreed and 29.7 strongly agreed that they benefit from social media through full filling their information need thus enabling them to get ideas on new subjects from group forums like Facebook, Whatsapp and other groups. Curiously, 43.6% of the respondents agreed that the benefits they get from using social media were sharing of their research findings with their classmates. This benefit is in line with the academic use of social media likewise 41.6% observed that they benefit from social media as it enables them contact peers and discuss relevant issues and enhance collaborative learning. Meanwhile, 39.6% agreed that they benefited from social media as they use it for classroom announcements to fellow students and discussion of academic issues, hence making the platform useful in their academic life in Turkey. These findings are reflected in table 2, below. (Likert scale of (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree).

Comparatively, like other researchers’ findings namely, Hall and Sivakumaran (2014) who found that international students in the United States were using social media in a variety of ways to help them adjust to living in a foreign country during their study abroad experience. Through the semi structured interviews, this current study too found that other than academic benefits, international students use social media for other non-academic benefits. For instance, this study found that some international students use social media purposely for sharing ideas with friends and communicating to family and friends about social and current



issues. This was important to them too as it helped them to decrease stress after exhausting academic works hence strengthened them academically.

**Table 2.** Showing Academic Benefits of Using Social Media (S.M)

No	Opinion	S. Disagree (%)	Dis agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	S. Agree (%)
1	S.M enables me to interact with my professors & peers	4	10.9	13.9	42.6	28.6
2	S.M enables me to get ideas on new subjects from forums.	6.9	7.9	9.9	45.5	29.7
3	S.M platform enables publish and share my research findings	7.9	5	9.9	43.6	33.7
4	S.M enables me discuss relevant issues and enhance my learning	3	5.9	9.9	41.6	39.6
5	S.M enhances announcements and updates to fellow students	10.9	4	8.9	39.6	36.6

**Source: Primary data, 2016**

## 6. Discussions and Conclusions

Basing on the findings of the study, its worthy noting that social media has deeply engrossed in the academic life of international students in Turkey. International students served as a special group for this study because they encounter cultural differences, academic challenges, and psychological and social adjustments. Conversely, this study indicates that international students are using social media in a variety of ways to help them achieve their academic endeavors, YouTube, Facebook, Whatsapp and Twitter are some of the social media platforms through which international students gain vast information through watching video and interactions with peers and professors.

Comparably, as Saw et al., (2012) in their study on Social Media for International Students in Australia, found that social media was being used for both academic and non-academic activities, this study too reached same conclusion. For instance findings shows that majority of the students represented by 68% of the respondents use social media more than twice a week to interact with classmates to study and also work on class assignments outside classroom environment. This is also in line reviewed research conducted by Aghaee, (2010) who observed that there were many ways that social media supports academic life, interactions and communications among students. Using social media, learners are enabled to communicate with others engaged in educational learning, through learner-content, learner-instructor, and learner-learner interactions.

Notably, findings further indicated that the different social media plat forms were used differently by international students depending on their applications. For instance results shows that respondents very often used YouTube to watch educational video-clips compared to other plat form. Also seen as the perceived benefit was that they used You Tube to watch lectures for other universities to access new ideas and broaden their understandings on different subjects. In the same line, respondent affirmed their usage of Facebook and



Whatsapp for instant messaging, academic update and announcements. These findings also concedes those of Saw et al., (2012) who found that Australian students used the most popular social media sites of Facebook, YouTube and Twitter for finding information. Ultimately, they also used social media for academic purposes such as sharing information about study topics, arranging study groups, asking for help with studies among other.

Outstandingly, Helou and Ab.Rahim (2014) in their study on the Influence of Social Networking Sites on Students' Academic Performance in Malaysia, found that most of the students engage in the use of social media for socializing activities rather than for academic purposes. The current study found that some international students used social media outside their academic life. For instance, besides the academic use of social media, International students in Turkey use social media such as Facebook, whatsapp, and Twitter to stay in touch with family and friends back home. They also use these sites to make friends within Turkey. This helps them learn common phrases and provides them a convenient way to communicate with friends in the Turkey. Nevertheless, this was important to them too as it helped them to decrease stress after exhausting academic works hence strengthened them academically.

Consequently upon the findings, it can be resolved that social media although in the past it was merely a social network of creating and chatting with friends, Social Media have a number of affordances that can make them useful in teaching and learning environments as it can support pedagogical approaches of active learning; social learning and student publication, by providing environments and technologies that promote these interactions. Students can use social media technology as a powerful networking for knowledge sharing among international students in Turkey.

Based on the findings of this study, universities and other academic institutions could take advantage of the popularity and positive impact of social media to formally incorporate their use in the teaching and learning process. Conversely, despite the potentiality of the social media in the academic sphere, it cannot go unnoticed that students use it for other benefits a trend that must be reversed to maximize educational use of the amount of time they spend on the social media. This leads us to the idea that lecturers and professors have an important role to play in fostering the students' academic use and participation on the social media. From the lecture room, the lecturer can motivate students' interest in using social media for academia and guide them, especially in practical disciplines like in sciences if there is practical aspects students can be guided what site to watch from You Tube as a demonstrative platform.

As a conclusion, social media is slowly being accepted as one of the facilitating tools to help lecturers conduct their class more effective and interactive. Nevertheless, to be able to manipulate the full potential of this platform, awareness on how to operationalize the platform and control the risk of using this platform needs to be provided. Hands on training need to be conducted to educate the majority adopters of lecturers who are interested to use the platform for teaching purposes.



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### **APPENDIX I– LIST OF UNIVERSITIES FOR THE PARTICIPANTS**

29 Mayıs University; Bahçesehir University; Fatih Sultan Mehmet University; Bogaziçi University; Galatasaray University; Istanbul Technical University; Istanbul University; Marmara University; Medeniyet University; Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University; Bilimleri (Health Sciences) University; Yildiz Technical University; Ticaret (Commerce) University.

### **APPENDIX II- LIST OF COUNTRIES FOR THE PARTICIPANTS**

Bangladesh; Chad; Egypt; Ethiopia; Gambia; Georgia; Ghana; Indonesia; Iran; Jordan; Kazakhstan; Kenya; Kosovo; Malaysia; Mali; Mongolia; Pakistan; Palestine; Somalia; Sudan; Syria; Tanzania; Tunisia; Uganda; Uzbekistan.