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## A Qualitative Study on the Role of Teacher Candidates' Social Media Use in Education

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**Abstract.** This study aims to examine the ways in which pre-service teachers use social media platforms and the role of this use in education. The research is a qualitative research conducted with a total of 23 teacher candidates, 14 female and 9 male, who are continuing their education at Afyon Kocatepe University Faculty of Education in the 2023-2024 fall semester. In the study, data were collected using an interview technique based on a semi-structured interview form. The evaluation was made using content analysis. The findings obtained from the research are as follows: It was seen that teacher candidates prefer Youtube the most, one of the social media platforms and used social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter and Tiktok as well as this social media platform. When the prospective teachers were examined in terms of their frequency of use of social media platforms, it was found that they used social media for 6-8 hours. It was found that prospective teachers used social media mostly in exams and homework for resource purposes. It has been determined that teacher candidates believe that unrest will emerge in their lives when they stay away from social media platforms one day. In addition, the results of the teacher candidates sharing on social media in order to inform more within the scope of education. When the advantages and disadvantages of social media platforms within the scope of education are examined, it is concluded that they consider social media platforms as advantageous in terms of easy accessibility in their daily lives and education.

**Keywords.** Teacher candidate, social media, education.

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When the conditions for accessing information are examined in the time period we live in, it is seen that the fastest and easiest way is provided through internet networks. The rapidly growing and developing internet connects millions of computers, people and social groups (Sağar, 2023, p.181; Sağar & Özçelik, 2023, p.25). The internet, which is used in many areas of our lives, has recently taken its place among the indispensable parts of our lives with its use as "Social Media" (Waqar & Shaheen, 2025, p.29). This important development has paved the way for the creation of many sharing sites as people use social media intensively and spend time on social media, and has enabled the rapid development of social media use around the world.

Social media is defined as relatively cheap and widely accessible electronic tools that have functions such as communicating and interacting, expressing ideas and comments, sharing and discussing, publishing and accessing information (Siddiqui & Singh, 2016, p.71; Griffiths, Kuss & Demetrovics 2017, p.119; Sağar, 2021, p.1). In other words, it is defined as communities created via the internet to carry out activities such as sharing thoughts, interacting for entertainment purposes, communicating with friends and family and searching for new information depending on a common purpose (Jensen, 2025, p.1-3). In addition to providing the opportunity for large masses to communicate and interact with each other, it also allows people to come together with other people by creating their own space and to share materials such as photos, videos and news digitally in a digital environment (Sağar, 2021, p. 2; 2022, p.179). In addition, it offers its users services such as e-mail, instant messaging, chat, video, blog, file sharing, photo sharing, and creates an environment where people can make new friends, communicate by forming groups, and share about themselves and their thoughts. Being available for free or for a very small fee, it provides great convenience to its users by allowing them to make their own decisions about whether the information they share will remain private or not, by offering special accessibility and privacy settings (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p.211; Lampe, Ellison, & Steinfield, 2007, p.435; Yavanoğlu, Sağiroğlu, Çolak, 2012, p.15). The social media areas that enable these conveniences were listed by Dawley (2009, p.110) as social sites such as Facebook and Twitter; photo sharing sites such as Flickr, PhotoBucket; wikis such as Wetpaint, PBWiki; video sharing sites such as YouTube; content tagging sites such as MERLOT, SLoogg; professional networking sites such as LinkedIn, Xing; blogs such as Blogger.com, Wordpress; SL is grouped as virtual words such as Active Worlds, There, Whyville, Club Penguin, HiPiHi. Each of these social media opportunities, which are important, has made the serious use of social media (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) extremely inevitable and popular with the widespread access to the internet and the increase in revolutionary technological

developments (Rundgren, 2025, p.9; Sarmurzin, Baktybayev, Kenzhebayeva, Amanova, & Tulepbergenova, 2025, p.1-8). In addition to many areas such as communication, entertainment, communicating and interacting, shopping, business, expressing, sharing and discussing ideas and comments, publishing, it is also suitable for use in information provision and educational activities (Sağar, 2021, p.1, 2022, p.179; Sağar & Özçelik, 2022a, p. 493; 2022b, p. 129). Considering the change and development of the century, it is remarkable that social media also seriously affects education. As a matter of fact, the use of social media in the education sector and especially in higher education has become an important priority for students to access course content and interact with their peers and professionals (Ansari & Khan, 2020, p.2). In this context, social media is also important for teacher candidates, who are the future teachers in higher education.

Education is defined as “the process of deliberately creating desired changes in an individual’s behavior and through their own experiences” (Ertürk, 1973). In this process, it is aimed to support education with different alternative tools in order to make it more qualified. Social media can be one of these tools. Accessing social media tools is not as difficult as it used to be. Students have many opportunities to access new technology and social media platforms, and they also have positive attitudes towards using technology (Farwell & Waters, 2010, p.398). In addition, advantages such as appealing to all age groups, being free and easy to access, and offering a flexible learning environment to individuals make social media platforms important for education (Jones et al., 2010, p.776). As a matter of fact, the use of social media in educational environments is expected to increase efficiency in education (Köseoğlu, 2018, p.45; Köseoğlu & Mercan 2016, p.259; Toğay, Akdur, Yetişken, & Bilici, 2013, p. 944; Yaylak & İnan, 2018, p.2).

Social media, which contributes to the lives of individuals in different areas, has become an important priority especially in the field of education and especially in universities. Indeed, students can reach information quickly and easily by communicating through social media. This situation provides them with the opportunity to ask questions and receive feedback outside of class. Updates, new materials, announcements and resources related to education can be shared more quickly via social media. Social media platforms offer students the opportunity to do group work and learn from each other. Online groups and forums allow students to share their thoughts and work on common projects. In addition, social media can offer students the opportunity to share content that attracts and motivates them. It can help students interact with people around the world and gain information. Moreover, social media offers students the opportunity to learn at their own pace and allows them to access videos and educational content whenever they want. At this point, it is

thought that social media has an important function in education for university students and especially for teacher candidates who are the future teachers in higher education. When the literature is examined, the limited number of studies that examine social media in education and especially in terms of teacher candidates shows that in-depth research is needed in this field. It is expected that social media, which has taken its place among the indispensable parts of life and has an effect in many areas, will also play an active role in the educational lives of teacher candidates. Therefore, the purpose of this study was determined as determining the opinions of teacher candidates about the role of social media use in education. Based on this purpose, the following research questions were sought.

1. Which social media platform do teacher candidates use the most?
2. How many hours do teacher candidates use social media platforms during the day?
3. For what purposes do teacher candidates use social media in their educational life?
4. If teacher candidates are asked not to use social media for a day, what changes will happen in their daily lives and educational life?
5. What kind of posts do teacher candidates feel the need to make about education on social media?
6. How do teacher candidates evaluate social media platforms in terms of their advantages and disadvantages within the scope of education?

## **Method**

### **Research Model**

This study is based on the qualitative research method. This research method is characterized as a method in which qualitative research processes are followed to reveal events naturally in a realistic process. Qualitative research begins with the use of a method that includes examining research problems together with the interpretative method of the meanings of social problems. In this type of research, deductive and inductive data are analyzed in themes by showing sensitivity to people and space (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2013; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013, p.45). In this study, the "phenomenological" design, one of the qualitative research designs, was used. The focus of the phenomenological understanding is the points that we are aware of but do not have a detailed understanding. Phenomenology provides a suitable research ground for studies that aim to examine phenomena that are not completely unfamiliar and at the same time do not fully understand (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013, p.78).

## Study Group

In this study conducted with teacher candidates studying at the Faculty of Education of Afyon Kocatepe University, 23 teacher candidates were determined as the study group of this study with the “Criteria Sampling” method, one of the purposeful sampling methods. In criterion sampling, situations that meet a series of predetermined criteria are examined and criteria can also be created by the researcher (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013, p.140). The criteria in this study were determined as “being a teacher candidate studying at the Faculty of Education and being an active user on social media platforms”.

When the gender of the teacher candidates participating in the study is examined, 14 of the participants are female and 9 are male. The average age of the participants in the study is 20.52. There are 9 first-year students, 6 second-year students, 4 third-year students and 4 fourth-year students. The study group consisted of 4 classroom teacher candidates, 3 special education teacher candidates, 4 social studies teacher candidates, 3 mathematics teacher candidates, 3 science teacher candidates, 3 preschool teacher candidates, and 3 Turkish teacher candidates, totaling 23 teacher candidates, 14 female and 9 male, who were continuing their education at Afyon Kocatepe University Faculty of Education in the fall semester of 2023-2024. The identities of the participants were kept confidential in accordance with ethical rules.

## Process

The research data were collected using a semi-structured interview method. With this interview method, the researcher explores the relevant topic together with the person he/she is interviewing. If the researcher has important points regarding the research topic and research problem, he/she can expand the scope of the research question and make an in-depth examination (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013, p.147-176). In addition, the advantages of this data collection method include obtaining specific information from all participants in the research, being flexible, having an interview guide covering the interview questions and not having predetermined expressions (Merriam, 2013). During the preparation of the semi-structured interview questions organized within the scope of the research, expert opinions were sought and a preliminary interview was conducted with two prospective teachers. In this context, deficiencies were completed, errors were corrected and the form was given its final form. In order to ensure that the research participants were comfortable during the interview, an appointment was made and interviews were conducted at the specified place and time. The interviews lasted approximately 55-60 minutes. In addition, it was

emphasized that it was necessary to record the interview in full without any deficiencies and that this recording would not be used anywhere outside the research and that it was based on confidentiality. The audio recordings taken in the research were written verbatim into a Word document and made suitable for analysis.

## **Data Analysis**

Content analysis was used in the data analysis process. The interview transcripts were carefully read by the researcher and separated into units of meaning. Similar expressions were then grouped together to create open codes. Codes were grouped into categories based on their common characteristics, and themes were derived from these categories. To increase the reliability of the coding process, codes were analyzed separately by at least two independent researchers, and the findings were compared. In cases where consensus was not reached, consensus was reached through discussion. This process was conducted to ensure inter-rater reliability and increase the objectivity of the analysis. The resulting themes were presented with direct statements from the participants, thus strengthening the validity and reliability of the findings.

## **Results**

### **Social Media Platforms Most Used by Teacher Candidates**

Table 1 shows which social media platforms each teacher candidate uses in response to the question "Which social media platforms do you use the most?"

Table 1.

*Social Media Platforms Most Used by Teacher Candidates*

<b>Categories (Themes)</b>	<b>Statements made within the scope of the interview</b>
YouTube	<p>“The social media platform I use the most is YouTube. The reason I use it more than other social media platforms is that the content I want is planned according to my personal tastes and presented to me systematically, I can listen to music, and I don’t see anything else except the channels I subscribe to” (4. Male, 21)</p> <p>“I use the YouTube platform the most. It is a satisfactory platform both for the content produced and for the broadcasting of television content. In addition, it provides an advantageous feature in many ways, as it preserves not only current content but also content published years ago and allows access to this content like a kind of archive.” (6. Male, 21)</p> <p>“The social media application I spend the most time on is YouTube. I usually use it when I cannot find enough arguments in some courses. Sometimes I like to visit channels that interest me, such as history and</p>

	philosophy.” (5. Male, 18)
Instagram	<p>“I use Instagram more during the day. Because every time I open Instagram, there are many different posts, I like it very much, so I use Instagram more” (1. Woman, 19)</p> <p>“I like Instagram more, I use it. There are fun reels videos. I love watching them. I can shoot reels videos myself, I like it very much (2. Woman, 19)</p> <p>“The social media platform I use the most is Instagram. I think the reason I spend more time on this platform is because most of my friends play an active role on this platform. Because thanks to this platform, we communicate with each other by sending fun, informative posts and stories on many different topics” (10. Woman, 20)</p>
WhatsApp	“I find the WhatsApp platform more useful. Because I can do almost all of my work from there. That's why I use the WhatsApp platform the most.” (Female 4, 19)
Twitter	“I use Twitter more. The reason I use it more is because I can learn everything about the agenda from there. It is also the first place I look to see different people's different ideas, no matter what topic I am wondering about.” (1. Male, 19)
Tik tok	<p>“I use Tik Tok the most. Because there are fun videos. I can't understand how time flies” (3. Male, 19)</p> <p>“I use Tik Tok the most. I really like the videos there. That's why I use Tik Tok the most” (14. Female, 21)</p>

The social media platforms most used by teacher candidates, as indicated in Table 1, are discussed under five categories (themes), namely YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter and Tik Tok, respectively. When the social media platforms they use most are examined, it is stated that the YouTube category (theme) is frequently included.

### **Frequency of Use of Social Media Platforms by Teacher Candidates**

Table 2 shows the frequency of each teacher candidate's use of social media platforms in response to the question "How many hours a day do you use social media platforms?"

Table 2.

*Frequencies of Use of Social Media Platforms*

Categories (Themes)	Statements made within the scope of the interview
4-5 hours	<p>“I usually spend 4-5 hours on social media platforms on my days off” (5. Male, 18)</p> <p>“I use social media platforms for about 4-5 hours. This usage time can sometimes change depending on the applications I use, but I generally spend 4-5 hours on social media platforms” (1. Male, 19)</p> <p>“It takes 4 or 5 hours during the day. I usually look at WhatsApp and Instagram after waking up and then look at other social media platforms. I definitely spend 4-5 hours this way every day” (3. Female, 21)</p>
5-6 hours	<p>“I have to look at my phone every day because I receive a notification. Also, since social media platforms are indispensable in my life, I spend an average of 5 to 6 hours on these platforms every day” (1. Woman, 19)</p> <p>“The time I use social media platforms may vary according to my needs during the day, but if we were to calculate a certain rate, it varies between 5 and 6 hours” (5. Woman, 19)</p>
6-8 hours	<p>“I spend about 6-8 hours on social media applications during the day. This time limit can change depending on my interactions with people that day and the priorities I have to do” (4. Male, 21)</p> <p>I use it for 6-8 hours in total. However, this time can change from day to day. “The reason for this can also vary. For example, some days my classes are busy and I can’t spare time. Or I don’t want to use social media that day. This causes the time to decrease; on other days, for example, a topic on the agenda interests me a lot and I find myself researching it all day. This means the time to extend. When I look at my phone data, I use social media for 6-8 hours at most” (10. Female, 20)</p>

The frequency of use of social media platforms by teacher candidates, as indicated in Table 2, is discussed under three categories (themes): 4-5 hours, 5-6 hours and 6-8 hours. When the frequency of use of social media platforms by teacher candidates is examined, it is stated that the category (theme) named 6-8 hours is frequently included.



## Purposes of Teacher Candidates' Use of Social Media Platforms in Their Educational Life

Table 3 shows the purposes for which each teacher candidate uses social media in their education life in response to the question "For what purposes do you use social media in your educational life?"

Table 3.

### *Purposes of Using Social Media in Education*

Categories (Themes)	Statements made within the scope of the interview
Improve yourself	<p>"I generally use social media platforms in my education to improve myself in the field of language. The reason I use social media is that there are many platforms where we can learn languages. I can access these platforms through social media" (1. Female, 19)</p> <p>"I follow publications with educational and informative content. I watch videos and publications in areas such as general culture, history, art. "I can reach teachers in various fields through social media and find answers to the questions I am curious about. This contributes to my development" (Male 6, 21)</p>
To be informed about current developments	<p>"I use social media to follow the agenda and current developments. I can learn about current events from social media. Sometimes the exam system can change in our education life, there can be new developments, I can easily follow these on social media platforms anyway, most current developments are given on social media platforms because they are more accessible" (2. Male, 19)</p>
Use for resource purposes	<p>"For me, YouTube has been the platform that has benefited me the most so far. I spent most of my day there while preparing for the university exam. The videos there have contributed a lot to me. I also found answers to all my questions regarding guidance and transitioning to university. I find it very useful in terms of education. I also follow very useful pages on Instagram" (3. Woman, 21)</p> <p>"I use social media in my education regarding my online courses and any research topic in a course. The reason for this is that I can access resources very quickly and social media platforms provide the opportunity to find multiple resources" (10. Woman, 20)</p>

The purposes of teacher candidates' use of social media in their educational lives, as indicated in Table 3, are discussed under three categories (themes): self-improvement, being informed about current developments, and using as a resource. When the purposes of teacher candidates' use of social media are examined, it is stated that the category (theme) called using as a resource is frequently included.

### **Teacher Candidates Not Using Social Media for a Day**

In response to the question “What would be the difference in your daily life and education if you were asked not to use social media platforms for one day?”, the changes in the daily life and education life of each teacher candidate when they did not use social media platforms for one day are given in Table 4.

Table 4.

#### *Teacher Candidates Not Using Social Media One Day*

<b>Categories (Themes)</b>	<b>Statements made within the scope of the interview</b>
Life is getting harder	<p>“I think my daily life would be difficult if I were asked not to use social media one day. Because I use social media platforms to communicate with people, my life would be disrupted. I would also have difficulties in my education. The reason for this is that I use social media when doing research and studying because there is a variety of social media platforms” (4.Male, 21)</p> <p>“Daily life would be difficult. Because we do our communication, information and education-related work on social media platforms, so not having it would make my life difficult” (5.Male, 18)</p>
Don't be restless	<p>“I would definitely feel restless in my daily life. I had tried it a few times but I started using it again every time. Since I am busy with social media for 4-5 hours a day, if it was out of my life for even a day, I would get dizzy and feel bad” (3rd Woman, 21)</p> <p>“If I experienced such a situation, I would have difficulty accessing the information I needed. I use social media at every opportunity, whether it is a little or a lot. When I need to send homework, I can easily send it from social media. These are opportunities for us, being deprived of these opportunities would make me restless” (12th Woman, 23)</p>

Feeling incomplete	<p>“Frankly, even the thought of this does not sound very pleasant. Because we now see social media as an inseparable part of our lives. We look at it all the time, get help from it and distract ourselves with it. Similarly, it would leave a big gap in my educational life. I would feel incomplete. Since social media makes our lives easier, its absence would leave me with big gaps” (Woman 5, 19)</p> <p>“It would definitely be difficult for me to stay away from social media for a day because I am completely addicted. I would want to use it for at least 30 minutes in my daily life. Not being able to do even that would make me feel incomplete. Also, I use it very often, not only for entertainment purposes, but also in my education. That’s why I would have a hard time.” (7th Male, 20)</p>
Turning to other activities	<p>“There is no such thing as necessarily using social media platforms. I would focus on activities such as reading books and listening to music. I would learn more permanently by directing my interest to other activities because social media platforms can distract me from my education” (Female 2, 20)</p> <p>“Actually, staying away can have positive things for me. I tried this once. I saw that my life would get organized and my academic success would increase when I stayed away from social media platforms, especially during exam periods. It would be the same for me. I would study better” (Female 1, 19)</p>

In Table 4, the effects of not using social media on daily basis for teacher candidates on their daily lives and education were obtained under four categories (themes): life becomes difficult, restlessness, feeling incomplete and turning to other activities. When the effects of not using social media on daily basis for teacher candidates on their daily lives and education are examined, it is stated that the category (theme) called restlessness is frequently included.

### **In Which Situations Do Teacher Candidates Share Education-Related Information on Social Media?**

Table 5 shows what each teacher candidate shared about education on social media in response to the question "What do you feel the need to share about education on social media?"

Table 5.

*In Which Situations Do Teacher Candidates Share Education-Related Posts on Social Media?*

Categories (Themes)	Statements made within the scope of the interview
Raising awareness	<p>“I feel the need to share content about education that will develop society, create awareness in society and ensure its progress” (1. Male, 19)</p> <p>“In the field of education, especially in my own field, there are hundreds of children who are tortured, ignored, wrongly educated by their families or not even sent to school. I feel the need to share things that will create awareness about this issue” (3. Female, 21)</p>
Current developments	<p>“If there is any current development about education on social media, I share it” (3. Male, 19)</p>
To inform	<p>“Before I share, I try to share content that I have read about education, that I have been impressed by, that will make people’s work easier and that will inform them” (4. Male, 21)</p> <p>“When I share about education, sometimes some people can misunderstand. That’s why I share in forums where ideas are welcomed with tolerance in order to inform” (5. Male, 18)</p> <p>“Based on my own experiences, I share a course note for an exam or to recommend the teachers I follow” (6. Female, 20)</p> <p>“I usually share notes on social media about education. “I share the course notes and motivational posts that I find interesting, either directly from my own account or by sending them to my friends.” (Female 8, 23)</p>

In Table 5, the situations in which teacher candidates feel the need to share about education on social media are obtained under three categories (themes): creating awareness, important events such as current developments, and informing. When examining the situations in which teacher candidates feel the need to share about education on social media, it is stated that the category (theme) called informing is frequently included.

### **Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Media Platforms in Education**

The opinions of each teacher candidate regarding the advantages and disadvantages of social media platforms in education, in response to the question "What might be the advantages and disadvantages of social media platforms in education?", are given in

Table 6.

*Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Media Platforms in Education*

Categories (Themes)	Statements made within the scope of the interview
Easy accessibility	“I think social media platforms have more advantages. Because we can reach anything we want with a click from almost anywhere. There is internet connection in most places and now we can easily access the content we want. For example, I am working on a language, that is, I am learning a second language. I do not have to study from books at home, I can access social media platforms wherever and whenever I want to learn the language” (1. Female, 19)
	“They have more advantages within the scope of education. First of all, we can access more than one source and information more quickly and easily. For us, this prevents loss of time. In addition, it has a service like a tutoring center, especially thanks to the YouTube platform, we can easily and free of charge reach the teachers we want without going to a tutoring center” (1. Male, 19)
Information pollution	<p>“Of course, there are advantages in terms of education. We can easily obtain information, but sometimes everyone shares something on social media platforms. There can be missing information and incorrect information. I think it creates information pollution. Sometimes, the fact that a piece of information I read is false can make me suspicious about other information.” (4. Female, 19)</p> <p>“As an advantage, we can easily access information, but there is excessive information pollution, so people’s ideas can be easily manipulated. Because sometimes people can believe the source of information on social media without researching or questioning it. This can cause the spread of incorrect information.” (5. Male, 18)</p>
Benefiting	“In fact, if it is used within the scope of education, social media provides more advantages. Because it is impossible to remain static in education, there are innovations and changes every day. Using social media platforms to be informed about these will be of great benefit to both students and teachers” (3. Female, 21)

The advantages and disadvantages of social media platforms in the education of teacher candidates, as indicated in Table 6, were obtained under three categories (themes) as easy accessibility, information pollution and benefit. When the advantages and disadvantages of social media platforms in the education of teacher candidates are examined, it is stated that the category (theme) called easy accessibility is frequently included in the advantageous scope.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

In today's world, social media has become one of the most widespread forms of communication at both individual and societal levels; it has also become one of the most popular platforms on the internet. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the role of teacher candidates' use of social media platforms in education. The findings indicated that teacher candidates utilize various platforms such as YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter, with YouTube being particularly prominent among these. This finding is consistent with the research conducted by Tkacova et al. (2022). The study revealed that students use YouTube most effectively in their learning activities. Similarly, the study conducted by Köse and Elçi (2021,p.258) also shows that YouTube is the leading social media choice among individuals. Similarly, studies conducted by Toğay et al. (2013, p.1000) and Fevzioğlu (2016, p.72-82) also concluded that YouTube is the most preferred social media platform in education. A review of the literature indicates that lecture videos facilitate understanding of topics, attract students' attention, and are preferred due to the visual nature of the content (Alp & Kaleci, 2018, p.57; Karaçorlu & Bulut Özek, 2024, p.81; Seçme & Coşkun, 2024, p.34). Furthermore, Maziriri et al. (2020) and Moghavvemi et al. (2018, p.37) concluded that YouTube provides positive benefits in educational processes. The results of all these studies are consistent with the results of the current study. When the results obtained within the scope of the research are evaluated as a whole, YouTube's various opportunities such as online course content, educational videos, and digital courses, its capacity to provide audiovisual materials, flexible access opportunities, and user-friendly interface allow it to be considered an effective resource for meeting the academic needs of preservice teachers. All these features can be interpreted as explaining the reasons for YouTube's primary preference in the educational process.

When the frequency of social media use among prospective teachers was examined within the scope of the research, it was determined that prospective teachers spend approximately 6 to 8 hours daily on social media platforms. This result is consistent with the data obtained in the studies conducted by Bolat (2018, p.147) and Karaboğa (2018, p.912), revealing that prospective teachers spend a significant amount of time in digital environments. A review of studies in the literature reveals studies similar to our research findings (Koçak & Traş, 2021, p.1618; Zıvıdır & Karakul, 2023, p.1054; Bayramoğlu & Gültekin, 2023, p.27). Considered within this framework, it can be said that the high duration of social media use reflects prospective teachers' addiction to digital platforms and their tendency to acquire information from these platforms.

The study concluded that the purposes for which social media is used in education include self-improvement, staying informed about current developments, and using it as a resource for exams and assignments, and that the most common theme among these is "using it as a resource." A review of the literature also reveals that the purposes for which social media is used in a study by Yuen and Yuen (2008, p.1408) include sharing course-related resources and creating study groups, which are similar to the findings of this study. Furthermore, the results of Ashafa (2022, p.227), who examined the role of social media in students' academic success in school, support the findings that social media platforms are beneficial and that online books and other materials are used for learning purposes. Xue and Churchill (2022, p.918), in their study examining the educational benefits of mobile social media for language teaching and learning, found that social media is used for resource access and sharing. This finding is also consistent with the results of this study. According to the results of another study conducted by Nacak, Bağlama and Demir (2020, p.1), prospective teachers generally found YouTube to be a suitable educational material for different courses and that YouTube ensures permanence by reinforcing learning, which is similar to the results of this research. Furthermore, the results of this research also revealed that teacher candidates use social media platforms for various purposes, such as self-improvement, staying informed about current developments, and using them as resources for exams and assignments. Therefore, it appears that teacher candidates incorporate social media platforms into their educational experiences as resources. In this context, it can be argued that there are many reasons why teacher candidates use these platforms as resources in their education.

A theme was identified as being uneasy about changes in daily life and education that occur when social media platforms are not used daily. This theme is thought to align with the diagnostic criteria for internet addiction (Beard and Wolf, 2001, p.377; Griffiths, 1996, p.32; Ko, et al., 2005, p.728; Shapira, et al., 2003, p.207; Shaw and Black, 2008, p.353; Suler, 1999, p.385; Tao, et al., 2010, p.556; Young, 1996, p.237). Considering that Griffiths (2000, p.413, 2005, p.191, 2012, p.518, 2013, p.1-2) considers social media addiction a type of internet addiction, it can be argued that addiction may develop in individuals as the duration of social media platform use increases. Furthermore, the characteristics attributed to individuals exhibiting social media addiction mentioned in Griffiths' (2005, p.191) study withdrawal, which involves negative emotions experienced when not sharing on social media platforms, and conflict, which involves individuals spending excessive time on these platforms and experiencing problems in daily life are consistent with the participants' theme of feeling uneasy when away from social media platforms in daily life

as a result of this study. In this context, teacher candidates' exhibiting characteristics such as withdrawal and conflict when away from social media may pose a risk.

Another finding in this study is that prospective teachers share content on social media for purposes such as raising awareness, current developments, and informing within the context of education. Among these, it was determined that prospective teachers mostly share for the purpose of "informing." The results of this study are similar to the findings of Hung and Yuen (2010, p.703), in their study on the educational use of social networking technology in higher education, which found that individuals found information sharing on social media engaging and facilitating learning. Furthermore, another study by Akçay Bekiroğlu and Şahin (2022, p.691) found that students used social media platforms for informational/educational purposes, which is consistent with the results of this study. Therefore, in this context, it can be said that social media platforms play an educational role in informing individuals.

Another result of the study found that preservice teachers mostly found social media platforms advantageous in terms of easy accessibility within the educational context. Furthermore, a smaller majority of preservice teachers also found social media disadvantageous in terms of creating disinformation within the educational context. Preservice teachers viewed social media platforms as tools that are constantly available, easy to access, and support communication processes. This suggests that social media possesses pedagogical values that enhance knowledge sharing, collaboration, and student engagement within the educational context (Bolat, 2018, p.147; Kamarudin et al., 2023, p.211; Perez et al., 2023, p. 11921). Young (2004, p.402) defines easy accessibility factors as free and unlimited internet access, inadequate time management, freedom from parental supervision, online friendships, the absence of legal restrictions for accessing and exiting the internet, the absence of censorship in online activities, and the opportunity the internet offers to easily become popular with less effort. Therefore, such factors not only facilitate access to social media platforms via the internet but also contribute to the preference for social media online. Furthermore, this research supports the conclusion that social media provides usability and ease of use in an academic context, as reported by Sánchez, Cortijo, and Javed (2014, p.138). While social media has become an important tool in education by providing rapid access and sharing of information, it can also lead to the rapid spread of unverified content. Studies have shown that individuals struggle to critically evaluate the information they encounter on social media, leading to disinformation. It has been noted that users, in particular, tend to disseminate visual and headline-driven content without sufficient questioning, which can have misleading effects in educational



settings (Urakami, Kim, & Seaborn, 2022, p.1). On the other hand, a study by Ali and Qazi (2021, p.1) demonstrates that basic media literacy approaches are insufficient in combating disinformation, while more specialized and targeted interventions are effective. In the Turkish literature, research based on analyses by teyit.org reveals that the spread of misinformation on social media has increased, especially during the COVID-19 period, and that this content can also impact educational processes (Erkan & Ayhan, 2018, p.202). While prospective teachers find social media useful due to its ease of access, they also approach it cautiously due to the risk of disinformation. This situation highlights the need for critical digital literacy alongside the educational potential of social media.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the research findings, it can be argued that teacher preparation programs need to be updated. In this context, it is recommended that "Social Media Literacy" courses be added to teacher candidates' programs to enable them to use digital media consciously and for pedagogical purposes. Such a course will contribute to candidates' more effective and controlled use of social media for educational purposes. Guidance services can be provided to teacher candidates on the balanced use of social media for academic productivity and time management. Seminars or workshops organized in this context can support candidates' more conscious use of digital media. Future studies can utilize different qualitative methods to increase data diversity. Furthermore, studies targeting different age and professional groups, without limiting themselves to teacher candidates, can be conducted. Finally, mixed-design studies that combine quantitative and qualitative methods can provide a more holistic approach to the topic. Similarly, comparative studies can be conducted at different universities.

### **Limitations**

This study has several limitations. First, because the data was collected using a group interview, there is a possibility that participants may have influenced each other. The results of the study are based solely on the statements of the preservice teachers and the questions posed within the scope of the study. Therefore, the results are limited by the participant profile and questions. Furthermore, the study included a total of 23 participants, limiting the representativeness of the sample. Finally, the study was conducted only with preservice teachers studying at the Faculty of Education at Afyon Kocatepe University, which limits the generalizability of the results to teacher candidates from different universities or disciplines.

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It has been reported by the authors that there is no conflict of interest.

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## Ethical Standards

The authors have carried out the research within the framework of the Helsinki Declaration.

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