



Relationship Between Social Media and Political-Social Events: A Research from the Perspective of University Students

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Keywords

The Internet, Social Media, Political-Social Events, University Students.

Abstract

Communication is one of the important conditions for the existence of individuals and societies. "Social media" is essential for bringing together the masses and increasing the interaction between them. Today, the intensity of the use of social media increased significantly. Social media plays an important role in the daily life of individuals in Turkey, where the amount of young population is quite large.

By examining the current literature, it can be seen that field researches regarding the relationship between social media and political-social events are not sufficient. For this reason, it is required to carry out field researches on this topic and to analyse and evaluate it sociologically. Accordingly, the aim of acquiring such data in this study is extremely important. Through this study, it has been tried to help to fill the gap of sociological evaluation, which has been considered as a deficiency in the current literature.

In this study, it has been aimed to evaluate the relationship between social media and political-social events by the viewpoint of university students and the topic is limited to the Adnan Menderes University (Aydın/TURKEY). The method of questionnaire was used in the research and the questions, which were prepared in accordance with the purpose, were replied by 400 university students. In this context, data pertaining to the relationship between social media and political-social events has been tried to obtain from the perspective of university students with quantitative research.

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1. Introduction

Communication is one of the important conditions of existence of both individuals and society. Mass communications means which change and develop day by day via technological innovations also affect social and cultural structure. Nowadays, especially use of social media leads both individual and social results.

Social media has its own importance as it unites societies and increases interaction between them. Frequency of use of social media has greatly increased recently and furthermore it became important part of youngsters daily life.

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When current literature is observed, it is seen that there are not enough field researches on *relationship between social media and political-social events*. For this reason, it is necessary to carry out field researches, analyze sociologically and evaluate these points.

In this study, aiming to gather information on this issue is extremely important. With this study, it is aimed to make up the lack of sociological evaluation on the current literature.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1. Social Events

Social issues resulting from relations among people on certain place and date are called “social events”. Social events happen as a result of people living in a community.

For an event to be classified as “social” it has to be “general”. Apart from this, reason for a social event is yet again another social event (Erkal et al., 1997: 253-254).

2.2. Social Media

With technological developments, increasing day by day, social media is an inevitable part of our life.

Social media means interactions devices which people created themselves, change information and comment each others (Canöz, 2016: 427).

“Social network” is defined as medias in which users express their feelings and ideas with symbols that are used as means of mimic and gesture to interact with each other (Yegen, 2013: 120-121).

“Social media” on the other hand includes online devices and web sites which are used by users to share their information, ideas and points of interest with each other. Social media is a terms which covers and unites the terms of technology, photographs, videos and audio files (Özel, 2011: 12).

Social network sites (Facebook, LinkedIn etc.), open source projects (Wikipedia, Ekşi Sözlük etc.), blogs (WordPress, Blogger etc.), microblogs (Twitter, Tumblr etc.), content groups (YouTube, Flickr etc.), media sharing web sites and online communities are all means of devices which create social media.

2.3. Youth

Youth which is an important phase of human life has a vital importance in today's world of communication. This vital importance is a result of youth being seen as a symbol of change, development not only in media but in all phases. Youth, both symbolizes rapid change and is seen as a symbol of rapid change in electronic and visual media (Akbulut, 2012: 275).

According to UNESCO's definition of youth, youth is a period in which necessary qualifications for adult age in terms of financial acquisitions and responsibilities are acquired. According to this definition, youth has not certain age boundaries but it is a life period with its own social, financial, psychological and political

characteristics. However, if to create a flexible limit for this period, UNESCO accepts the ages between 16-25 to define youth (Kocadaş et al., 2010: 39-40).

To Bayhan (2013: 136) “university youth” is leaders to be part of society who has it’s own culture, who research, question and as a result gain a scientific identification and who are the final stage of formal education. However, this group is the one which is most effected from social and cultural changes and the one to adopt these changes as fast as possible.

3. Research Methodology

In this research, “*relationship between social media and political-social events*” is aimed to be evaluated in the eyes of university students and topic is limited to Adnan Menderes University (Aydın-TURKEY). This research is designed as descriptive field research.

This field research is carried out on Medicine Faculty, Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Communication, Engineering Faculty, Education Faculty and Faculty of Arts and Sciences at central campus of Adnan Menderes University between 09-29 January 2017.

“Simple random sampling” technique is used in choosing the sampling method. Number of students on which this study applied is 8163. On this situation, with \pm %5 sampling fault rate, approximately sampling universe of 370 students is enough. (target group between 5000-10000) (Baş, 2008: 41). Dispersion of sampling students is done parallel to number of students in each faculty.

Questionnaire technique is used in this study and questions prepared to serve to the aim of study is directed to 400 university students.

Here, it is aimed to gather info about “*relationship between social media and political-social events*” through university students. Information gathered from participants with face to face method is analyzed with SPSS statistics.

Apart from this, information gathered according to result of the survey, served as both in classical table form which include dispersion and frequency.

4. Research Findings and Discussion

4.1. “Information related to general characteristics and preferences of survey participators”

Sampling universe created as quantitative research means consists of 400 participators. Gender dispersion of sampling universe is 49.3% male and 50.7% female.

Age dispersion of sampling universe is as this: 16-17 age is 2.8% , 18-23 age is 89.2% and 24+ age is 8%.

Participators faculty dispersion is as below: 15% Medicine Faculty, 8.8% Faculty of Economics, 6.2% Communication Faculty, 12.5% Engineering Faculty, 25% Education Faculty and 32.5% Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

Findings about knowledge of computer usage is as below: don't know 0%, know a little 14.7%, know 44.5%, know well 31.3% and advanced user 9.5%. Pc ownership rate is as below : I have a pc 65.5%, I don't have a pc 34.5%.

Table 1. Internet Usage

Internet usage frequency	Frequency	(%) Rate
Never	-	-
1-5 hours a month	5	1.3
1-5 hours a week	22	5.5
1-3 hours a day	132	33.0
More than 3 hours a day	241	60.2
TOTAL	400	100

Internet using frequency of participators is as below: never 0%, 1-5 hours a month 1.3%, 1-5 hours a week 5.5%, 1-3 hours a day 33% and more than 3 hours a day is 60.2%. These findings reveal that internet usage rate is very high. This usage rate results many effects.

Table 2. Social Media Usage

Social media usage frequency	Frequency	(%) Rate
Never	-	-
1-5 hours a month	17	4.3
1-5 hours a week	39	9.8
1-3 hours a day	159	39.7
More than 3 hours a day	185	46.2
TOTAL	400	100

Social media using frequency of participators is a below: never 0%, 1-5 hours a month 4.3%, 1-5 hours a week 9.8%, 1-3 hours a day 39.7% and more than 3 hours a day is 46.2%. These findings reveal that social media usage rate is very high. This usage rate results many effects.

According to findings of the research, it is seen that mobile phone is the mostly used device to access social media. Pc (laptop and desktop) and tablet pc follow the mobile phone in usage frequency.

Apart from this mostly used social media is detected as YouTube. Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Wikipedia and Whatsapp follow YouTube in usage frequency.

According to statistics of TUIK (Turkish Statistical Institute), carried out in January 2017, YouTube is the most frequent used social media in Turkey and Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Whatsapp follow it respectively (www.dijitalajanslar.com, 2017: 2).

Results of this research and TUIK's research deeply resemble each other but in this research, participators were only university students and results show not the preferences of general but only the preferences of youngsters. For example, Wikipedia was selected as one of the most frequent used social media in this research.

Table3. What Social Media is Most Useful for

What is your most important to use social media?	Frequency	(%) Rate
Education/Getting information	92	23.0
Communication	100	25.0
Leisure Activity	171	42.7
Politics	25	6.3
Trade	12	3.0
TOTAL	400	100

Participants use social media most as leisure time activity (42.7%). After that communication (25%), education (23%), politics (6.3%) and trade (3%) come respectively.

Table 4. The Tool You Use Most Often For Getting News

What is your most frequently used tool to get information?	Frequency	(%) Rate
Social media - (Internet journalism)	299	74.7
Television	72	18.0
Newspaper-Magazine	29	7.3
TOTAL	400	100

It is seen that 74.7% of participants use social media to access news. After that TV (18%) and newspaper and magazine (7.3%) come respectively.

4.2. "Information related to participants approach and perception about social media's effect on political and social events"

Table 5. Social Media Has Made Life a Mobile/Electronic Life

Social Media has made life "mobile/electronic life"	Frequency	(%) Rate
Definitely Disagree	11	2.8
Disagree	13	3.3
Indecisive	15	3.8
Agree	206	51.5
Definitely Agree	155	38.6
TOTAL	400	100

Findings reveal that social media has made life a total mobile and electronic life. Only 6.1% of participants disagree this statement.

This result reveals how important the social media is today. Therefore it can be argued that social media which is used extensively will have many effects on political-social events.

Table 6. Social Media Has an Important Contribution to Accessing Information

Social media has an important contribution to accessing information	Frequency	(%) Rate
Definitely Disagree	12	3.0
Disagree	15	3.8
Indecisive	44	11.0
Agree	228	57.0
Definitely Agree	101	25.2
TOTAL	400	100

Research findings state that social media has a vital role in accessing the information. Only 6.8% of the participants do not think so.

This is a remarkable finding. Hence it can be argued that social media is a significant contributor to the information-gathering process, may also have an effect on political-social events.

Table 7. Social Media is Effective in Creating a Public Opinion and Agenda

“Social media” is effective in creating a public opinion and agenda	Frequency	(%) Rate
Definitely Disagree	8	2.0
Disagree	13	3.3
Indecisive	37	9.2
Agree	190	47.5
Definitely Agree	152	38.0
TOTAL	400	100

Findings reveal that social media is extremely effective in creating a public opinion and agenda. Only 5.3% of participators think opposite.

Today it is very important to create public opinion and agenda. So social media has a very considerable position nowadays. It can be said that social media is so influential in public opinion and agenda, also it has a significant role on political-social events.

Table 8. I Feel Free to Share My Ideas and Thoughts on Social Media

I feel free to share my ideas and thoughts on social media	Frequency	(%) Rate
Definitely Disagree	51	12.8
Disagree	99	24.6
Indecisive	104	26.0
Agree	117	29.3
Definitely Agree	29	7.3
TOTAL	400	100

According to these findings, rate of those who feel free to share their ideas on social media is 36.6%. However rate of the ones who think the other way is 37.4%. Rate of indecisive’s are 26%.

According to these results, it is seen that there is not a dominant tendency. Moreover paradoxically, these findings also indicate that “frequently used social media” is not secure. It is quite striking that the social media which is so effective today, is not safe. This is a necessary issue to be discussed.

Table 9. I Participate the Activities on Social Media as much as I can

I participate the activities on social media as much as I can	Frequency	(%) Rate
Definitely Disagree	42	10.5
Disagree	183	45.7
Indecisive	100	25.0
Agree	64	16.0
Definitely Agree	11	2.8
TOTAL	400	100

According to these findings, rate of those who participate the activities as much as they can is 18.8% however rate of those who think the other way is 56.2%. Indecisives remain at 25%.

Looking the information of the study, it is clearly seen that social media is growing its importance day by day however rate of those who participate social media activities is very low and this issue stands out as an eye catching point.

Table 10. Use of Social Media Helps ‘Democratization’

Use of social media helps “democratization”	Frequency	(%) Rate
Definitely Disagree	36	9.0
Disagree	98	24.5
Indecisive	160	40.0
Agree	87	21.7
Definitely Agree	19	4.8
TOTAL	400	100

In these findings it is seen that rate of those who think that social media has effect on democratization is 26.5%. Rate of those who think opposite is 33.5%. Indecisives cover 40% of participators.

Looking to this result, it can be said that general tendency is towards ‘indecisives’. Another interesting point is that rate of those who think that social media helps democratization only remained at 26.5%.

Table 11. Spreading of Social Media Usage Contributes ‘Political Participation’

Spreading of social media usage contributes “political participation”	Frequency	(%) Rate
Definitely Disagree	14	3.5
Disagree	45	11.3
Indecisive	114	28.4
Agree	193	48.3
Definitely Agree	34	8.5
TOTAL	400	100

Related to these findings, it is seen that rate of those who agree that spreading of social media usage helps political participation is 56.8% however rate of those who think opposite is 14.8%. Indecisive’s rate is 28.4%.

According to these information, it can be suggested that spreading of social media usage may have contribution on political participation. Thus social media can also contribute to the reduction of apolitical atmosphere.

Table 12. ‘Public Policies’ can be Effected Through Social Media

“Public policies” can be effected through social media	Frequency	(%) Rate
Definitely Disagree	9	2.3
Disagree	25	6.3
Indecisive	89	22.1
Agree	236	59.0
Definitely Agree	41	10.3
TOTAL	400	100

Research findings reveal that through social media one can effect public policies. Only 8.6% of the participators do not think so.

It is a remarkable finding that social media has emerged as a significant factor affecting public policies. In addition, it is very important that social media has a potential to influence public policies.

Table 13. Governments can Restrict Internet Access If Necessary

Governments can restrict internet access if necessary	Frequency	(%) Rate
Definitely Disagree	132	33.0
Disagree	72	18.0
Indecisive	55	13.7
Agree	103	25.8
Definitely Agree	38	9.5
TOTAL	400	100

According to findings, participators do not welcome governments authorization to restrict to access the internet however 35.3% of participators support this situation.

This point is very interesting. Because some participants (35.3%) have shown a tendency to sacrifice their freedom, citizenship rights. Whereas the use of mass media is one of the most fundamental rights of citizens.

Table 14. To me, 'Social Media is Reliable'

To me, "social media is reliable"	Frequency	(%) Rate
Definitely Disagree	57	14.2
Disagree	128	32.0
Indecisive	168	42.0
Agree	42	10.5
Definitely Agree	5	1.3
TOTAL	400	100

Apart from this it is seen that social media reliability is quite low; only 11.8% of participators trust social media. 46.2% of participators find social media unreliable while 42% of participators are indecisive.

Social media has been used quite often, but paradoxically it is not trusted. Therefore low confidence in social media can also affect the relationship between political-social events and social media. According to findings, it is obvious that measures should be taken to increase confidence in social media.

Table 15. The Effects of Social Media on Political and Social Events

How social media effects on political-social events?	Frequency	(%) Rate
It helps to learn about political-social events and eases to become organized.	43	10.5
Social media became a media of disinformation. Hence it leads societies to be organized in a wrong way.	31	7.8
Social media causes outcome of political-social events.	27	6.8
Social media manipulates political-social events.	35	8.8
Nowadays, through social media, people can easily be reached and be organized fast in comparison to past.	51	12.6
Through social media people can be organized and people can also be manipulated.	57	14.3
News which do not take place in traditional media and press; take place in social media and organize people.	30	7.5
It helps to create collective consensus and public opinion.	32	8.0
It helps to increase sensitivity and awareness about political-social events.	22	5.5
It causes an increase in social polarization.	23	5.8
It helps evaluation of political-social events in many different perspectives.	17	4.3
It helps ideas to be shared and discussed freely.	19	4.8
It has no affect.	13	3.3
TOTAL	400	100

This question in survey is an open ended question. By asking how social media affects political-social events, it is aimed to determine the situation and gather original information.

According to these findings, it is seen that social media has many effects on political-social events. To give an example on this, according to research findings, social media both organizes and manipulates society.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

When current literature is analyzed, it is seen that there are not enough field researches about social media's effect on political-social events.

Nowadays social media using rate has greatly increased furthermore it has become a vital part of youngsters life. Findings of this research clearly support this situation.

Social media usage leads individual and social results. Looking in this frame, it is necessary to evaluate relation between social media and political-social events. In this study it is aimed to contribute literature by getting information about relation of social media and political-social events from university students who cover a considerable part of youngsters.

There is a rapid change in our age; and this change is also valid in information technologies and their effects. Those who are effected from social and cultural changes most, and those who adapt these changes are university youth (Bayhan; 2013: 136).

As a result of these research findings, social media affects political-social events in many perspectives. For example, while social media eases being organized, it can also manipulate political-social events and can become a media of disinformation.

Findings reveal that social media is extremely effective in creating an agenda or public opinion. Apart from this, according to research information, rate of those who think that spreading of social media usage increases political participation is 56.8%, however rate of those who think opposite way is 14.8%. Indecisives cover 28.4%. According to findings, it can be said that spreading of social media usage has an effect of political participation.

Another point is that while trust to social media is very low, it is still a vital part of our daily life.

Furthermore, it is seen that there is a general opinion that through social media, public policies can be effected.

According to findings, only 3.3% of participators think that social media has no effect on political-social events.

Upon all these findings, it can be inferred that social media has an effect on political-social events. These effects can be classified into two rough parts, harmful effects and useful effects. For this reason, necessary precautions should be held to make all these effects useful.

If social media mostly used to manipulate society, this will have a negative impact of society. Hence, users must be careful about evaluating information on social media.

So, activities must be increased to increase “media literacy” rate of society. As well as this, updated legal sanctions against manipulation and disinformation will help to decrease the negative effects.

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