

Views of Administrators on the Use of Social Media Networks and Tools in School Management Processes

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Abstract: This study explores school administrators' perspectives regarding integrating social media networks and tools into school management processes, assessing their impact on decision-making, planning, coordination, communication, and evaluation. The research was conducted through a phenomenological design and involved 29 administrators from various schools in Kars City, selected via maximum diversity sampling. Data was collected using a custom "Administrator Interview Form on the Use of Social Media Networks and Tools in School Management Processes" and analyzed through content and descriptive analysis methods. Findings revealed that administrators heavily utilize social media personally and institutionally, citing benefits like enhanced communication efficiency, speed, security, resource sharing, manageability, and guidance effectiveness. While social media aids decision-making, planning, communication, and coordination, administrators noted limitations and advantages in these processes. They acknowledged social media's influence on decision dissemination but highlighted its underutilization in evaluation and recognizing its potential for positive contributions. Recommendations include enhancing administrators' proficiency in leveraging social media for effective school management and their awareness of its implications.


1 INTRODUCTION


Social media enables individuals and organizations to express themselves and communicate with others by creating profiles. This evolution has impacted various aspects of daily life, from personal to professional spheres, facilitating two-way communication and the rapid transfer of information (Urhan et al., 2023; Korkmaz & Ünal, 2019).


As defined by Kaplan (2010), social media networks are dynamic platforms that rapidly disseminate vast amounts of information to millions of devices worldwide. These platforms provide an accessible and cost-effective means for publishing, sharing, and connecting with others (Prykhodkina & Makhynia, 2020). Various social media platforms,

including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Weibo, Flickr, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube, Vimeo, WordPress, and Blogger, offer diverse ways for users to engage (Daly, 2019). Social media is widely utilized by students, teachers, administrators, and parents as a primary information source (Şahin & Üstüner, 2018). School administrators harness social media for educational decision-making, communication with teachers and students, sharing teachers' achievements and projects, and educating parents about its benefits (Harb & Al-Zou'bi, 2022). Their usage patterns typically include information/research, entertainment, recognition, and personal development. Educational leaders must lead comprehensive technological integration to equip individuals with the skills needed for the knowledge-based economy of the

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21st century (McLeod & Richardson, 2011). Administrators also utilize social media to bolster their institutional image, enhance community relations, and engage with stakeholders (Yusuf et al., 2020). Accessing quality information on social media influences perception, comprehension, decision-making, and actions in personal and professional domains, fostering active engagement among users as creators, disseminators, and consumers of information and knowledge (Daly, 2019).

Social media networks and tools empower school staff to engage in decision-making processes and regularly highlight their accomplishments to stakeholders. They serve as potent instruments for schools to actively shape their public image and establish a positive brand identity. Stakeholders can conveniently access general and specific school information through various tools such as frequent blog posts, regular tweets, interactive social networking platforms, and consistent podcasts and online videos, all at minimal cost. This enhanced communication fosters a stronger brand image (Cox & McLeod, 2014). Social media tools provide effective channels for school leaders to address crucial matters among staff or stakeholders and build consensus before making final decisions. Additionally, they enable leaders to articulate a vision for academic success, inspire academic staff, and extend support through direct communication with parents and the community (Yusuf et al., 2020). In a study by Korkmaz and Ünal (2019), administrators and teachers expressed that establishing a two-way dialogue between teachers and students/parents within the school through new communication technologies could enhance the education network.

Social media is widely utilized by various educational stakeholders, including students, educators, academic staff, and school administrators. Recognizing its significance, educators emphasize exploring its educational applications to keep pace with advancing technologies (Özmen et al., 2011). School principals who overlook social media risk missing out on a powerful communication tool (Harb & Al-Zou'bi, 2022). Establishing a robust social media strategy for school administrators is essential for effective content management and transparent communication (Yusuf et al., 2020). Studies emphasize the importance of conscious social media usage skills for school administrators (Bayram, 2017). Social media enables administrators to engage with stakeholders, but proper management is crucial to avoid chaotic situations. Given its role in expediting workflow and crisis communication,

practical social media training for administrators is imperative (Urhan et al., 2023).

The rapid evolution of social media prompts various perspectives on its integration. While existing literature often focuses on students or teachers, administrators, as vital stakeholders, receive less attention (Šliogerienė et al., 2014). Administrators must possess the knowledge and skills to utilize social media effectively in schools. Assessing their effective use of social media lies primarily in school management processes, encompassing decision-making and other stages. In the digital age, administrators' proficiency in using social media directly influences school management.

This research aims to elucidate school administrators' views regarding using social media networks and tools in school management processes. Within this framework, the aim is to determine, based on administrators' experiences, how social media influences decision-making, planning, coordination, communication, and evaluation processes in schools' management processes. In this context, the two research questions are:

1. What are school administrators' perceptions, challenges, and opportunities regarding using social media?
2. How does integrating social media networks and tools into school management processes affect the decision-making processes of school administrators?

2 METHOD

2.1 Research Model

This research is a qualitative study conducted to describe the use of social media networks and tools in school management processes. The study was carried out with a phenomenological design. Phenomenology is a qualitative research type that examines the nature of human events related to using social media networks and tools in school management processes. It focuses on the events individuals directly experience in real-world contexts (Yin, 2011). In phenomenological research, the focus is on how individuals make sense of their experiences using social media networks and tools, attempting to identify common characteristics of these experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

2.2 Study Group

The study group consists of 29 school administrators serving in schools in the centre of Kars province. These participants were determined using a maximum variation sampling technique. This sampling aims to bring together differences arising from heterogeneity to create a typical pattern and to explore standard dimensions or fundamental experiences related to the subject (Patton, 2002; Creswell & Poth, 2018). A maximum variation sample consists of cases intentionally selected to be as dissimilar from each other as possible.

The study group includes 11 principals, two vice principals, and 16 assistant principals. Age distribution analysis revealed that 4 participants are aged 25-30, 2 are aged 31-35, 2 are aged 36-40, 8 are aged 41-45, 8 are aged 46-50, and 5 are aged 50 and above. Additionally, 9 participants rated the socioeconomic level of their school as "low," 15 as "medium," and five as "high."

2.3 The Data Collection Instrument

The research utilized the "Administrator Interview Form Regarding the Use of Social Media Networks and Tools in School Management Processes," developed by the researcher. Initially, a literature review on social media use in education was conducted, followed by an examination of administrators' research on social media use. Ten semi-structured questions were planned based on these reviews, covering school management processes. The draft form was reviewed by four academics specializing in educational management and qualitative research, resulting in the removal of two questions, the addition of two new questions, and the revision of three questions. The finalized draft, including basic personal information questions, underwent a pilot interview with two administrators. Adjustments were made based on the pilot study, resulting in the final version of the interview form. An example of a semi-structured interview question is provided below:

"How do administrators utilize social media networks and tools in decision-making?"

2.4 Data Collection

Data collection occurred in October 2023, during the first semester of the academic year 2023-2024. Administrators were given the choice of audio, video, or written interviews but preferred the written format. They were contacted by phone, briefed on the

interview, and scheduled based on availability. Interviews were recorded with consent and later transcribed for accuracy. Participant files were renamed and coded (Y1-Y29) to ensure confidentiality.

2.5 Data Analysis

The study data were analyzed using MAXQDA software. In this research, qualitative data were thematized through content analysis. The fundamental process in content analysis involves organizing similar data into specific concepts and themes and interpreting them in a way the reader can understand. In this context, interviews with school administrators regarding their views on social media and tools were first segmented into codes, and then similar codes were grouped under common themes. The opinions of administrators were presented with frequency distribution under specific themes. Participant quotations were included in the findings to interpret the meaning of the obtained themes (Patton, 2002).

As part of the validity and reliability assessments of the research, efforts were made to ensure credibility, transferability, and consistency, as emphasized by Merriam (2009).

3 FINDINGS

Under this heading, the views and experiences of school administrators obtained through qualitative data analysis techniques relevant to the research objective are presented.

Table 1: Social Media Networks and Tools Most Used by School Administrators.

Social Media Platform	f
Whatsapp	19
Instagram	13
Twitter	12
Facebook	10
Telegram	1

As seen in Table 1, school administrators primarily use "WhatsApp" among social media tools, followed by Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and Telegram, respectively.

Table 2: Management of School Social Media Accounts.

Social Media Platforms	f	Managed by Whom	f
Website	19	Administration	18
Instagram	13	IT Teachers	2
Twitter	12	Teachers	1
Whatsapp	10		
Facebook	1		
None	4		

As shown in Table 2, in the schools included in the research, school administrators primarily use "Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Facebook" as social media platforms. While school websites are utilized for communication and information in 10 schools, four schools do not use social media accounts. Although school administrators mostly manage school social media accounts, IT teachers and other teachers occasionally manage them. Most school administrators need to have training related to the use of social media (f=25).

3.1 Contribution of Social Media to the School

Table 3: Contribution of Social Media to the school.

Contribution	f
Effective in promotion and attracting attention	7
A necessity of the digital age	2
Facilitates communication between school, parents, and students	2
Information dissemination	2
Meets evolving and changing needs	2
More harmful than beneficial	2
Contribute to advertising and promotion	2

According to Table 3, school administrators utilize social media for various management purposes, including promotion, communication facilitation, information dissemination, and meeting evolving needs. While some acknowledge its positive impact, others express concerns about its potential drawbacks. Participants emphasize social media's effectiveness in promotion and communication, noting its importance in reaching wider audiences and adapting to the digital age. However, they also raise concerns about negative impacts, cautioning against misuse and its potential to disrupt social structures. For instance, one administrator states, "I believe its contribution is significant... having an effective social media page for the school will yield successful results. (Y2) " Another participant finds "social media useful for showcasing school activities" (Y4).

Despite acknowledging social media's positive role in enhancing knowledge and skills, participants warn against its misuse, which could lead to time wastage and disruption of social structures. Additionally, they highlight the potential risks of encountering positive and negative opinions from broader audiences, particularly regarding "thoughtless comments" undermining intended promotion(Y5).

3.2 State of Adequate Knowledge of Social Media Networks and Tools

Table 4: State of Adequate Knowledge about Social Media Networks and Tools.

Contribution	f
Insufficient in-service training	3
Disliking the use of social media	2
Lack of developed interest sensitivity	2
Being merely a user	2
Limited time available	2
Absence of legality and ethics	2
Belief in insufficient societal awareness of the topic	2

According to Table 4, one-third of the interview school administrators consider themselves "knowledgeable" about social media, while two-thirds do not. Reasons cited for the lack of knowledge include insufficient training, personal preference against social media, limited interest, time constraints, and ethical concerns. Some administrators attribute their knowledge deficiency to inadequate training and personal disinterest in social media. One administrator mentions, "Yes, I consider the lack of knowledge and experience about using social media networks as a deficiency... However, I gained sufficient knowledge and experience about using social media networks in school or daily life. (Y8)" Others emphasize using social media to promote the school's brand and values to a broader audience. One administrator states, "We aim to share our school's brand, mission, values, and philosophy and reach a wider audience. (Y12)" Additionally, some administrators prioritize legal and ethical considerations in social media usage, ensuring privacy and obtaining consent before sharing student or staff information. One administrator mentions, "I try to comply with legal and ethical issues, ensuring privacy... I do not publish the visuals and information of any of my students or staff members without obtaining explicit consent. (Y14)"

3.3 Use of Social Media Networks and Tools in Decision-Making Processes

Table 5: Use of social media networks and tools in decision-making processes.

Usage Status	f
Using	9
Not Using	11
We conducted a social media survey to give teachers a say in an application to our school.	2
We consulted and decided on a meeting day for teachers to use these tools.	2

As shown in Table 5, about half of the school administrators utilize social media networks and tools in their decision-making processes. They have employed methods such as conducting surveys via social media to involve teachers in decisions regarding school applications. *"We had surveyed social media to give teachers a say in an application to be made at our school. (Y17)"* This indicates a participatory approach to decision-making. Some administrators are cautious about personal sharing on social media platforms, focusing instead on deriving mutual benefits from shared content. *"I prefer not to share, but I look for mutual benefit in other people's shares. (Y18)"* Moreover, administrators use social media as a resource for decision-making, drawing insights from the practices of other schools. *"I have partially made decisions by looking at the work of other schools on social media... For example, I had requested that an event shared by a school during celebrations be discussed with our teachers. (Y20)"* This highlights the role of social media in inspiring and informing decisions by adapting successful strategies from other schools.

3.4 Publishing Decisions on Social Media

Table 6: Publishing Decisions on Social Media.

Statement	f
Desiring the Spread of Decisions	2
I do not share on social media	2
Concerns about the Publication of Decisions	2
Standing Behind Decisions and Recognizing Positive Effects	2

The statements in Table 6 indicate that participants express desires for the spread of decisions on social media, reluctance to share, concerns about the publication of decisions, and emphasis on standing behind decisions and acknowledging their positive effects. These different attitudes among participants reflect various aspects of decision dissemination

through social media. A group of participants expressed their reluctance to share on social media. *"I prefer not to share; I look for mutual benefit in others' sharing." (Y11)*. Some participants, on the other hand, found it appropriate for decisions to be disseminated through social media. *"We use the process of sharing decisions with stakeholders. For instance, we also announce upcoming trial exams to students and parents through social media." (Y17)*

3.5 The Impact of Social Media Networks and Tools on the Planning Process

Table 7: The impact of social media networks and tools on the planning process.

Expression	f
Utilizing Social Media for School Management	9
Does not affect	10
Flexibility and Convenience in Administrative Work	2
Impact of Sharing on Parents, Students, and Administration	2

Table 7 reveals that approximately half of the school administrators believe social media usage impacts school management plans. Administrators view social media as a planning tool, considering accurate and reliable information for favourable decisions. *"Social media can be used as an effective tool for schools to share content, interact, learn about current situations, and communicate between schools." (Y13)*. These statements emphasize the positive impacts of integrating social media into school management practices, highlighting benefits such as improved communication, greater accessibility, and increased efficiency in administrative tasks. *"You do not necessarily have to be present at the school to do administrative work. (Y9)"*

3.6 Use of Social Media Tools in School Planning

Table 8: Use of social media tools in school planning.

Positive impact	f
Fast and reliable communication	5
Accelerates communication and decision-making	4
We used it because it appeals to a large audience	2
We used social media, networks, and tools in our school.	3
Yes, the school's corporate accounts provide information about the school and contribute to the school's advertisement.	3

Table 8: Use of social media tools in school planning (cont.).

It is essential because many who follow the school follow social media.	2
Negative impact	f
For legal reasons.	2
It is not wrong to create a perception through social media.	1

Table 8 indicates that social media usage in school management affects the planning process positively and negatively. Administrators generally believe that social media networks and tools positively influence school planning. Some reasons include more accessible access to *"announcements and appealing to a larger audience"*. (Y12) Some participants reported positive impacts, stating, *"Yes, we used social media, networks, and tools for our school, (Y10)"* reflecting active utilization for school purposes, enhancing communication and engagement. However, some participants cited negative impacts, such as refraining from social media use due to legal concerns, indicated by statements like *"No, for legal reasons. (Y7)"* Additionally, concerns about manipulating perceptions through social media raise ethical considerations, as reflected in the statement, *"I do not think it is wrong to create perception through social media. (Y9)."*

3.7 The Impact of Social Media Networks and Tools on in-School Communication

Table 9: The impact of social media networks and tools on in-school communication.

In-school communication	f
Perfect for more efficient and instant communication	3
I think it speeds things up	2
I can get feedback on this."	2
I can reach the announcements more efficiently."	2
Relations are not breaking	2
Socialization	2
It offers a significant opportunity, especially in reaching and communicating with higher authorities	2

As seen in Table 9, school administrators find social media networks and tools functional in in-school communication as *"one-to-one for more efficient and instant communication"* (Y17), *"it speeds up the work"*, *"I can get feedback about it"* (Y8), *"it is effective, I can reach announcements more easily"*,

"relationships are not broken" and *"socialization"* (Y15). These expressions indicate that social media speeds up communication, provides easier access to announcements, facilitates receiving feedback, and helps strengthen relationships. Additionally, some statements highlight that social media enables collaboration and enhances interaction.

3.8 Communication Outside School

Table 10: Communication outside school.

Communication outside school	f
Does not affect	17
Impacts	8
We hear about the agenda	3
Events can be organized simultaneously with civil society organizations."	2

In Table 10, school administrators said social media tools will not only impact communication within the school. However, some noted effects like staying informed about current events and coordinating activities with external groups. *"Social media allows us to see the thoughts, ideas and activities of these groups, but it does not affect any communication."* (Y1). *"Sometimes when we like their posts, it has a negative impact. But we try not to go beyond ethical principles."* (Y3)

4 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, aimed at exploring school administrators' views on using social media networks and tools in school management, it was found that "WhatsApp" was the most preferred platform, followed by "Instagram," "Twitter," "Facebook," and "Telegram" respectively. However, it is worth noting that "WhatsApp" is primarily a messaging app, not a social media platform. This suggests that administrators may need more social media categorization and usage.

School administrators preferred "Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Facebook" as their primary institutional social media accounts. Notably, WhatsApp was mentioned among corporate social media accounts. In Turkey, the most used social media tools in 2022 were YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and Twitter, respectively (Digital 2022: Global Overview Report). This suggests that administrators may perceive platforms like YouTube and TikTok as less suitable for educational institutions. In a study in Lebanon, administrators

preferred Facebook, Skype/Google, and YouTube among 33 listed social media sites (Harb & Al-Zou'bi, 2022), similar to trends observed in Turkey. However, differences were noted in Skype/Google and YouTube use between Lebanese and Turkish administrators. In another study, only two primary schools had YouTube accounts, while platforms like Instagram and Facebook were widely used (Köseoğlu & Aydın, 2022). Texas school principals primarily preferred YouTube, followed by Pinterest, and one-third mentioned observing student blogs (Powers & Green, 2016). In Ekiti State, secondary school principals found social media highly effective, with WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube commonly used for information dissemination (Olowo et al., 2020). Administrators utilize social media extensively in schools' personal and organizational contexts.

School administrators recognize the multifaceted contributions of social media networks and tools to school management processes. They highlight the effectiveness of these platforms in promotion, information gathering, and facilitating communication among stakeholders. Some administrators, however, express concerns about the negative impacts of social media tools. In a study by Çetinkaya (2019), all school principals utilized WhatsApp for communication, emphasizing benefits such as overcoming communication barriers and efficient resource sharing. Despite these benefits, one-third of administrators in this study reported being "informed" about social media networks and tools, while two-thirds indicated they were "not informed". The majority lacked formal training in social media usage, attributing their lack of knowledge to insufficient training opportunities, personal preferences, and legal/ethical concerns.

School administrators primarily manage schools' social media accounts, with minimal involvement from IT teachers and other educators. Research by Köseoğlu and Aydın (2022) reveals that those overseeing public primary school social media accounts often lack expertise and receive minimal training in managing these platforms. Şahin and Üstüner (2018) note that school principals are moderately familiar with media education and using social networks in their management practices. Integrating social media into school management correlates positively with principals' familiarity with media education, benefiting all stakeholders. Köseoğlu and Aydın (2022) further highlight that school social media accounts are typically managed by principals, vice principals, or teachers, sometimes

leading to post control and account security challenges.

Approximately half of the school administrators use social media networks and tools in decision-making processes, emphasizing the importance of involving teachers in decision-making and acknowledging the impact of publishing decisions on social media. Advances in technology, especially during the pandemic, underscore the necessity of practical technology usage among school administrators (Cox & McLeod, 2014). Social media tools are perceived as valuable aids in school management planning, providing access to a broad audience, facilitating fast and reliable communication, and enhancing transparency. While some administrators' express concerns about legal implications and the potential for misperceptions through social media, others highlight its efficiency in enhancing in-school communication, speeding up work processes, and fostering relationships (Olowo et al., 2020).

A study from Israel stressed the need to balance parental involvement in school management and social media communication to avoid disrupting cooperation within the school community. While social media tools benefit administrative communication, they also pose challenges. Some teachers find administrative communication outside school hours acceptable, while others see it as disruptive. Concerns about data reliability and potential misuse, as well as addiction to social media leading to communication breakdowns and psychological issues, were highlighted (Ferster, 2020; Çetintürk & Balyer, 2021).

Research indicates that using social media tools in school managerial communication offers convenience and speed. Baruah (2012) highlights how social media provides simple and cost-effective communication, organizing, and information dissemination methods. Similarly, Billington and Billington (2012) note the demand for social media tools for business communication and announcements. Conversely, Akıncı-Vural and Bat (2010) argue that social media encourages participant communication. However, using social media tools in schools has positive and negative outcomes. Çetintürk and Balyer (2021) found that using social media tools in school administrative communication reduces face-to-face interaction, leading to communication errors and disruptions between school administration and teachers. While teachers appreciate the speed and convenience of administrative communication via social media, some

express concerns about communication errors and disruptions caused by its use.

In conclusion, school administrators' perceptions of social media usage indicate that these platforms are effective communication tools and can offer various opportunities in school management processes. However, some challenges are associated with social media usage, particularly concerning security, privacy, and time management, which can raise significant concerns. How does integrating social media networks and tools into school management processes affect the decision-making processes of school administrators? Integrating social media networks and tools into school management processes can positively influence the decision-making processes of school administrators. This integration can enhance decision-making by enabling faster communication, information sharing, and participant interaction. However, it should be noted that this integration may also face specific challenges, especially regarding data security, ethics, and accuracy. Future studies should further investigate the impacts of social media on school administrators, its role in education, and best practices.

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