

## Social Media and its Potential Impacts on Multicultural Education in Turkey

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to learn the perceptions of social media users regarding multicultural education in Turkey. With this goal in mind, a short film was created that summarized the issue of multicultural education, which was shared via social media. After viewing the film, the views of the participants who had expressed comments concerning multicultural education were taken for evaluation, and 95.65% of participants harbored positive perceptions about multicultural education. Furthermore, the collected data were analyzed employing a thematic analytical method. The themes found were: alienation, social justice and equality, empathy and tolerance and cultural diversity and difference. On examining the results, it emerged that participants thought that, because multicultural education, discrimination, injustice and alienation would disappear and increased empathy, tolerance and justice would emerge.

**Keywords:** multiculturalism, multicultural education, diversity, tolerance, social media, Turkey

### INTRODUCTION

As technology progresses, the information and knowledge that are needed likewise increase daily. The gap in knowledge that was previously closed with the help of books and encyclopedias has been reduced over the last thirty years with the aid of the Internet (Karaman & Kurtoglu, 2009; Hoffmann, 2017). The Internet constitutes a virtual world in which the concept of distance is removed leading to an increase in the need for knowledge as technology itself advances undeterred. The Internet, that was launched for public service using Web 1.0 technology and allowed people to access information in quickly, has been superseded by Web 2.0 and 3.0 systems that have made the Internet even more user-friendly (Hossain & Aydin, 2011). Because these developments, people have stopped being merely passive recipients of information and have instead become active participants in the sharing of knowledge. Through the emergence of social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram and Hi5, people have been able to exchange ideas, share multimedia items such as photographs and videos, express ideas about texts and objects (products) and socialize on a wide scale. One service that social media offers to its users is the opportunity to communicate with one another in a way divorced from traditional prejudices (Hossain & Aydin, 2011).

Over the course of the last fifty years, one of the most popular areas of research has been that of multicultural education that has as its aim the objective to increase social relationships between people of different territories and locations to ensure that they can live together in peace and tranquility (Gunay, 2015; Hossain & Aydin 2011). The way that social media has allowed people of various cultures to embark on a process of sharing seems to represent the essence of the target of multicultural education. The results of research conducted in Turkey, demonstrate that knowledge regarding multicultural education currently is insufficient (Aydin, 2013a; Faltis, 2014; Gunay et al., 2015) For this reason, the aim of this research study is to inform its readers regarding what multicultural education constitutes and how it might be applied, and, as an extension, to discover the perceptions of social media users regarding multicultural education. With this aim in mind, a short film was uploaded to social media addresses and shared via Facebook, Twitter, and the film was about 2.45 minutes long and was in the Turkish language with including pictures, artifacts, and words related multicultural education, such as equity, social justice, tolerance,

#### Contribution of this paper to the literature

- This paper explores the perceptions of social media users regarding multicultural education in Turkey.
- This study points out that multicultural education helps to raise students as individuals able to adapt to the requirements of the new information society
- This study stresses that participants obtain access to greater amounts of knowledge regarding their own culture and other cultures, allowing them to gain a better understanding of diverse aspects of other cultures from all over the world.
- This study indicates that multicultural education deems itself respectful towards differences and supports cultural diversity through social media.

empathy, and pluralism etc.. Within the context of this research, an attempt was made to answer the following question: “What are the perceptions of social media users towards multicultural education?”

### The Internet and Web Technologies

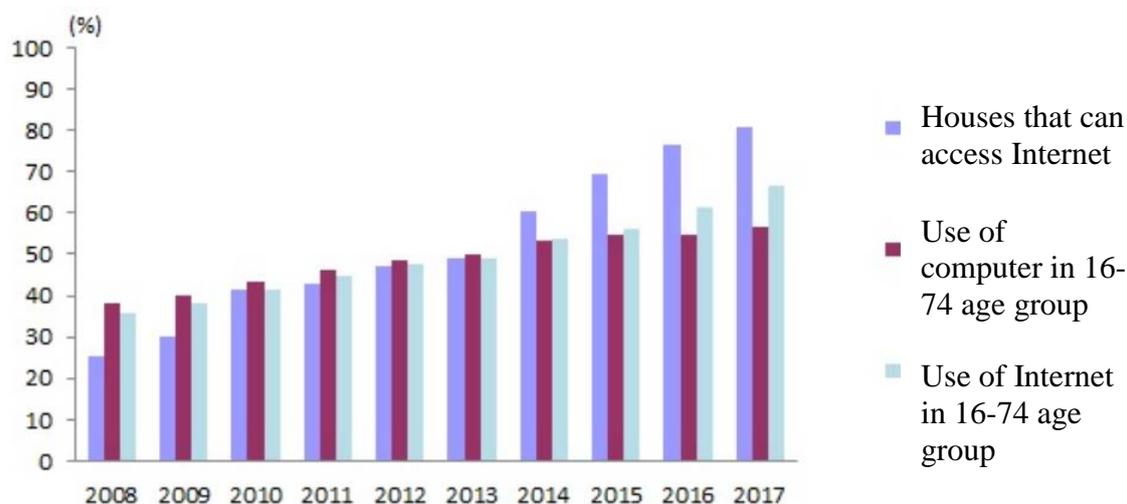
Since the beginning of human existence, a deep-rooted curiosity towards knowledge has persisted, a factor that has propelled humanity from primitive times to today’s information age. The term “the information age” that was frequently employed at the start of the 21st century, evolved along with the astonishing pace of development of communication technologies and has been transformed into coined phrases of “the information-communication age” or “the informatics age”. The influence of the transformations in Internet technologies and mobile devices has had a profound influence on the development of these terms.

By the 2000s with the easy operability of social media, the Internet had begun to affect the lives of individuals from every field of life (Vural & Bat, 2010). The social media adventure began because of the development of Web 1.0 technology, which grew from ARPANET, and advanced via Web 2.0 technology. Quick and easy access to the Internet through personal computers and portable mobile devices, combined with the interactive properties that have come about because of recently developed Web 2.0 technologies have rendered the Internet simpler to access than ever before and has also ensured cooperation and interaction between people within this newly-created “virtual world” (Hossain & Aydin 2011).

The term Web 2.0 was first employed by Tim O’ Reilly (O’Reilly, 2005). In O’ Reilly’s view (2005), Web 2.0 is a web platform that renders benefits for both software writers and users. This technology comprises content created by users both on an individual and shared basis. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Hi5 and Wiki are just some of these shared platforms. According to Karaman et al. (2008), Web 2.0 is a virtual space in which users can produce and change Web content. In this space, users can create their own contact addresses and share photographs pictures, documents and videos using a web-based interface.

Web 3.0, moreover, comprises applications that have increased the number of personal web experiences of those users, most of whom previously used Web 1.0 technologies (Sabbagh et al., 2011). The basic aim of Web 3.0, which has been described as “the semantic web,” is to allow users to access information in a very short period by requiring less data entry. For instance, current sharing sites offer suggestions or opportunities to label photographs of people who attach these to content through the use of face recognition systems. Research and development incorporating 3.0 is progressing at a great speed. In tandem with these developments, a large increase in people using the Internet and Internet-related social media has been observed.

**Figure 1** features the number of Internet and computer users in Turkey in percentage terms (TUIK, 2017).



**Figure 1.** Internet and Computer Use in Percentage Terms (In Turkey)

As can be seen from **Figure 1**, Turkey has witnessed a constant increase in Internet use since 2008. In a parallel development to Internet use, young people in Turkey use the Internet most frequently as a tool to establish communication (Oguz, 2012). According to another study, Turkey currently occupies second place in the world rankings regarding the use of social media platforms (Dijital Ajanslar, 2017).

Social media is a human means of communication that allows people to meet in a shared environment and discuss a range of matters irrespective of limitations of time and space. Through the medium of social media, individuals can give comments regarding their present location and share photographs, objects and thoughts. Furthermore, they can establish communication with friends, relatives, teachers and other people with whom they have not made contact for an extended period and with whom relationships may have broken off due to assorted reasons.

According to Kirshenbaum (2004), social media is also a platform that influences societal behaviour. For example, social media as a source of free news transmission had an effect in mobilizing thousands of people during the notorious *Taksim Gezi Park* demonstrations. People who were unable to receive information via established television stations were able to obtain immediate information by way of social media via Twitter (Bozkurt, 2013). Board Member of the Information Technology, Levent Karadag, referred to the fact that, during the demonstrations, people had established contact with one another via mobile devices and, in such a way, were able to organize and mobilize themselves within an abbreviated period (Bozkurt, 2013).

As the use of mobile telephones has spread, people have been able to access the Internet using mobile devices and can easily keep themselves informed about world events. Furthermore, through social media, they can catch up with the events happening on the world stage, and, in the same way, they can follow events in real time and are able simultaneously to elicit the views of experts and obtain public opinion on a variety of pressing issues.

## Multicultural Education

Multicultural education is a type of education that emerged in the United States and has enabled education systems in several countries to have successful outcomes (Banks, 2008; Bennett, 2011). The success of this educational philosophy lies in the way it encourages the cognitive and moral development of all peoples, strives to increase creativity, emphasizes how the same problems can be solved by employing different points of view, aims to reduce prejudices by ensuring communication between individuals, promotes the renewal of society through an emphasis on the richness of its different cultures and helps develop a view of the world that is sophisticated in its outlook (Ameny-Dixon, 2004; Aydin, 2012; Damgaci, 2013). The multicultural education that emerged in the 1960's is actually a type of education that reflects cultural plurality and social equality as part of a societal structure (Gunay, 2014; Sleeter & Grant, 1987). However, multicultural education does not merely comprise subjects such as democracy and human rights or citizenship education, but is an overriding principle that encompasses concepts such as justice, equality, democracy, empathy and tolerance (Damgaci, 2016; Gay, 2004; Houdyshellm, 2017; Lafer & Aydin, 2012; Lafer, 2014; Toraman et al., 2015; Tarman & Acun, 2010).

Bullivant (1979), at the time when multicultural education first emerged, argued that this was a field that ought to be supported in future. In Bullivant's view, three basic principles or assumptions are present in a multicultural society (Verma et al., 1994). The first assumption is that learning is realized and educational success is increased

when children learn definitions of their own ethnicity and about their ethnic identity. The second assumption is related to the first, in that as a child learns about his own culture and traditions, this learning leads to the possibility of achieving equality in opportunities in education. The third assumption is focused only on minority and immigrant groups; namely, that because of recognizing the existence of different cultures, a decrease is produced in prejudice towards and distinctions regarding others (Bullivant, 1979; Huang et al., 2017).

If an evaluation were made of the level that present-day multicultural education has reached in the context of these assumptions, the observation would be that many countries have realized these principles and others have even surpassed expectations (Aydin, 2013b). In addition to the assumptions listed above, when the principles of multicultural education are specified in a clear and scientific way, qualitative success can be achieved.

Bennet sets out these principles as follows:

1. A theory of cultural plurality;
2. The adoption of ideals of social justice and the ending of divisive constructs such as racism and sexism;
3. The acceptance of culture as an element of the teaching and learning process; and
4. The raising of academic levels and provision of equality in education.

As a response to the proven success of multicultural education on the world stage, Turkey has moved slowly towards acceptance of this philosophy. With respect to research studies conducted internationally, the number of studies in Turkey remains insufficient; however, in recent years an increase has occurred in studies in this field in this country (Demir, 2012; Gunay & Aydin, 2015).

Despite these studies, most people including teachers, students, and academicians have insufficient knowledge with regard this type of education. Damgaci and Aydin's (2013) study focusing on teaching staff and academics employed at education faculties in Turkey established that several staff members, even among this very elite group of the population, had never heard of the concept *multiculturalism*. As a result of their research study, it emerged that academics held a range of opinions. These ranged from those who did not support this type of education as they were not fully aware of the precise meaning of the concept to others who did not support it because of the possibility that it could wreak havoc in society in the event of mistaken implementation of the philosophy. A third group also existed that supported the concept unreservedly.

For this reason, the first aim of this research study is to explain to those from every section of society exactly what multicultural education is and how it is implemented. Another aim of this research is to learn participants' perceptions regarding multicultural education. It is widely accepted that social media is a platform that academicians, students, and parents share and one that incorporates people of all ages (or as is said in Turkish from 7 to 70 years old) (Gulbahar et al., 2013; Kolcak, 2015). For this reason, the view is widely held is that social media offer a realm of easily-accessible opportunities when used to achieve educational objectives (Gulbahar et al., 2013).

### **Multicultural Education and Technology**

As McLuhan and Fiore (2001) has stated, the world is transforming into a "global village" (Kopish, 2016). In Bucher's view (2000), people's lives are changing because of these technological developments in such a way that their lifestyles are becoming increasingly similar (Aydin & Damgaci, 2017; Kiliç et al. 2016). People living in different regions of the world can speak to one another via the Internet and are able to share the details and events of their daily lives (in the same virtual meeting place). This has brought about a situation in which people's daily experiences of life resemble those of others situated in a distant location. Even if it might be said that differences persist in terms of ethnic origin, race, gender or social class, people have been "allowed to be exposed to" the same life experiences (Bucher, 2000; Corona et al, 2017).

Multicultural education helps in the acquisition of reading, writing and mathematical skills through interaction with the world of technology that has pervaded our lives (Banks, 2008; Kaya, 2015). One may speak of a mutual interaction process that is occurring between education and technology. Multicultural education, in the way that it allows people to adapt to the world of technology, may be seen advantageous in the sense it offers an opportunity both for the spread of information technology and for the diversity of that education (Bucher, 2000). In contrast, an absence of the principles of multicultural education may lead to an encouragement of prejudicial attitudes regarding students with foreign characteristics or of different backgrounds and, by extension, a centralized conveyance of knowledge in which the necessary social and technological skills needed by society are not acquired (Tomlinson, 2012). Furthermore, in Damgaci's view (2013), multicultural education helps to raise students as individuals able to adapt to the requirements of the new information society.

## Multicultural Education and Social Media

Electronic communication means the flow of knowledge and information or the spread of information technology (Bucher, 2000). In recent years, the Internet has become ever more multicultural in nature. This is because software has been designed that is appropriate for use in the medium for a multitude of world languages (Alanay & Aydin, 2016; Ozfidan & Burlaw, 2016). In this respect, electronic communication is used in an effective manner within the field of education. Teachers can facilitate communication with students using web pages and social media accounts, and, in such a way, students can establish contact and interact with their classmates and teachers in reduced periods of time. Moreover, through sharing sites and platforms that constitute an essential element of social media communication, students and teachers can share learning materials and “content” that they have created (essays, assignments, and projects) that are extremely conducive to study and therefore participate in an exchange of knowledge and information (Tarman, 2016). In addition, students may discuss lesson content via social media.

Because social media accounts may be visited and accessed from all over the world, students may undertake lessons from distinct locations, following and observing students and teachers from other areas and regions of their country and the wider world as they do so. This situation is directly related to multicultural education. This is because multicultural education encourages students to discover other cultures, to recognize and understand them and to destroy prejudices (Parekh, 2000). Through using social media, students can recognize other cultures and may notice the existence of different viewpoints about the same subject (Hossain & Aydin, 2011; Mauch & Tarman, 2016). In this context, the central focus of this research study has been defined as “the perceptions of social media users with regard to multicultural education.”

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

A qualitative research model was employed in this study in which research was conducted using comments expressed via social media regarding a short film prepared on the theme of multicultural education. According to Glesne (2012), the characteristics that distinguish a qualitative research study may be placed in two main categories. The first of these categories is the study’s philosophical aim and encompasses the data collection of the study and the technical methods used for it including the sampling and analysis stages as well as the main aims and assumptions of the study (Cresswell, 2012; Kaya & Aydin, 2016). The researcher, with a view to understanding the logic and meaning of events, is forced to relate and connect events with his own experiences. The second category of a qualitative research study comprises the methodology, analysis and presentation of results (Chapman & MacLean, 1990).

### Participants

The population of the research study was 304 people who watched a short film entitled *Multicultural Education* who were contacted via Facebook and Twitter addresses. A short film of 2.45 minutes in Turkish was about the understanding of diversity, multiculturalism, multicultural education, peace, social justice, heritages, races, ethnic groups, cultures, religions, stereotypes about other cultures, human rights, and democracy which teaching student’s cultural competency is critical for competing and succeeding in our diverse democracy. The sample group of the research study was the 23 individuals (10 females and 13 males) who watched the film and submitted comments, the participants included teachers, academics, and students. The comments of all those who submitted them were evaluated as variation and diversity was necessary for the study. For this reason, the sampling method employed in the study was a maximum diversity sampling type, a type of purposeful sampling. The aim of this decision was to create a compact, small sample group size while maximizing the number of individuals who could be used within the sample group (Yildirim & Simsek, 2013).

### Data Sources and Processing

Within the context of the study, a short film entitled *Multicultural Education* was created and uploaded to www.izlesene.com and shared via a variety of Facebook and Twitter accounts. An explanatory text was prepared concerning the film, and, after viewers watched the film, they were asked to submit short written comments regarding multicultural education. Within the film, several photographs were included with the following captions:

1. Multicultural education is an education of tolerance
2. Multicultural education supports diversity
3. Multicultural education embraces differences

4. Multicultural education guarantees the right to education in one's mother tongue
5. Multicultural education increases dialogue between different cultures.
6. Multicultural education is an education of values.
7. Multicultural education ensures equality of opportunity in education.
8. Multicultural education ensures equality, democracy and justice
9. Multicultural education necessitates the creation of empathy
10. Multicultural education rejects prejudice and segregation
11. Multicultural education raises academic successes.
12. Multicultural society sets the individual free

After the researchers specified these captions, feedback was elicited from experts in a related field of research. The captions were defined with respect to the descriptions, goals and targets of multicultural education.

After a one-week period, the comments submitted by viewers were collected and analyzed using NVivo 10 software. By focusing on the themes and topic headings that emerged because of the analysis, the researchers attempted to define the perceptions of the participants regarding multicultural education.

The researchers took care to conduct a literature review and, in so doing, obtained correct and detailed information and insights regarding the topic. These findings were borne in mind throughout the application stage of the research study. The researchers also attempted to comprehend the facts and concepts of the study in an objective manner, removed from the prejudice and independent of personal inclinations on the topic (Cresswell, 2012).

For this reason, before posting, the film was shown first to two teaching staff members of the Educational Program and Teaching Programs at Yıldız Technical University and, at a later stage, to eight doctoral students who were following the Multicultural Education course, as well as two specialists from the Computer Studies Teaching Department. At this stage, the viewers were asked to submit their criticisms regarding each frame of the film and regarding the captions used. As a result of this process, the background music and certain background images and captions were changed. Furthermore, the short film was shown to three different volunteer groups at weekly intervals, and certain alterations were made to the film as a result.

The views of experts in the field were elicited regarding the visuals about their validity/suitability for the purposes of the topic of the study, and the researchers conducting the study checked the movie regarding its comprehensibility and operability. Once these stages were concluded, the final version of the short film was uploaded to social media sites. The short film was watched, and detailed reports were composed concerning the content of the film and the reliability of the results of the study. The comments of the film regarding the reliability of the data collected were checked by two other people apart from the researchers themselves.

One criteria that must be kept in mind to ensure the validity of a study is that of description. Detailed description, or to use another more precise term "rich thick description" is defined as the collection and the reporting of detailed descriptive data (Creswell & Miller, 2000) to conduct a detailed description, within the context of this study:

1. The research process was described in detail;
2. The information was processed with care;
3. The stages of the data collection and analysis were described in detail; and
4. There was an attempt to remain impartial within the description process.

Another criterion that must be kept in mind is that of the reliability of the study. In accordance with this criterion, the various research data must remain constant, and the checking of the data must be undertaken by individuals other than the researchers themselves. For this reason, and with a view to maximizing the validity of the study, throughout the course of the research, the opinions of experts in the field were elicited and data were checked and confirmed by individuals other than the principal researchers of the study.

For the purposes of collecting the data for this study, permission was requested from the Institute of Social Sciences Institute at Yıldız Technical University. As the first part of the data collection process of the research study, a 2.45-minute film was produced and was uploaded to the [www.izlesene.com](http://www.izlesene.com) address on spring 2014 and, on the same date, shared researchers' via Facebook and Twitter accounts. Comments on the film were accepted and collected for evaluation up to 2 March 2014, and comments submitted after that date were not accepted. Throughout the course of the study the three researchers' did not establish any kind of communication with those individuals who had submitted comments and did not provide any additional information about the film. The researchers conducted the study in a wholly detached and impartial fashion.

## Data Analysis

Within the context of this research, the collected data were entered using the NVivo 10.0 software version and the themes and topic headings that emerged because of the analysis conducted were taken for evaluation. Furthermore, a content data-analysis method, known as the categorical analysis method, was used for the purposes of processing the data, and the most prominent topic headings/themes were defined. The main aim of content analysis is to arrive at concepts and pieces of knowledge or information that may explain data (Yildirim & Simsek, 2013). To conduct content analysis, all data must be grouped into concepts for ease of understanding and then arranged according to these concepts. In the final stage, these concepts are grouped under themes or topic headings. These themes must be homogenous, objective, holistic, and appropriate to the aims of the study and comprehensible to the participants (Yildirim & Simsek, 2013).

In content analysis studies, thematic or categorical analysis expresses the division of data into units of understandable knowledge and then those pieces or units of knowledge are grouped according to specified criteria. In this research,

1. After entering the data on an individual basis into the NVivo 10.00 software, themes were derived.
2. In addition to the outcomes engineered by the NVivo 10.00 software, researchers read the collected data, and explanatory, distinctive and meaningful theme headings were defined. These themes were defined considering the description, components, goals, aims and the content of multiculturalism within the context of the study.
3. The specified themes and topic headings were presented to experts in the field, whose feedback was elicited regarding the appearance and scope of the validity of the data collection and the creation of theme/topic headings.
4. In the light of the feedback submitted by experts in the field, the themes were reviewed, and the final versions of the theme headings were created.

The themes defined were then expressed in table form. The comments of every participant were then considered and grouped under the thematic headings and the findings derived were highlighted.

## LIMITATIONS

The number of participants featured in the study was limited by the number of people who were reached via the accounts opened by the researchers. In addition, although the film was watched by a total of 304 people, only 23 viewers (10 female and 13 male) actually submitted comments. This situation may be interpreted as an indication that some of the users were reluctant to take part in the study.

## FINDINGS

The aim of this study was to discover the perceptions of the users of social media, a means of communication that has become increasing popular in recent years, with regard to multicultural education. By the end of the time allowed by the research study of the 304 people who had watched the film, 23 recipients (10 females, 13 males) had shared their thoughts on the topic.

In this section, space is allocated for a discussion of the general findings of the study. Following from this, a discussion of the themes that emerged is included and the quotations are given from the answers provided by participants. At the end of the comments offered by each recipient, the number of the participant and a letter indicating the gender of the recipient is given. In such a codification system, "M" stands for a male participant, while "F" indicates a female. The data collected were analyzed using content and thematic analysis methods, and the themes that emerged were defined.

### Theme One: Alienation

Alienation, can be defined either as a process of personalization in which we do not feel as though we are not spiritually or physically present or as the exclusion or ostracization of an individual from a different culture or background (Kaya & Aydin, 2014). While two of the participants of this study used this term directly, several other participants expressed this concept in the following ways: regarding someone with hatred, exclusion because of one's mother tongue, belittling someone because he/she comes from a different village or expressing it in terms of a singular way of looking at things.

These comments included the following: One participant (11, F) stressed that multicultural education would bring an end to alienation, stating "I dream of a school environment in which no-one feels alienation because the clothes she wears, the books he chooses to read or the (political) ideology that he adopts." She (11, F) went on to

add that “people do not experience alienation merely because their culture, but are even shunned due to the ideas they adopt. For this reason, a school atmosphere is necessary in which egoism and prejudice are pushed to the sidelines and the school becomes a real social environment.”

Participants (10 females and 13 males) defended the view that, when confronted with the social structure of Turkey both on an individual and collective level, a general feeling of alienation can be observed, and, to tackle this unfortunate situation, multicultural education must be included within the wider educational context of the country.

### Theme Two: Social Justice and Equality

In the data that was subjected to analysis, the word justice was used 8 times, and the word equality 6 times. One of the aims of multicultural education is to ensure equal opportunities within education (Banks, 2008). For numerous reasons, ostracized, disparaged belittled or alienated citizens may obtain a share of justice through education-based projects, and equality may be realized among people. A male participant expressed this opinion using the following words:

*In this country, there is always a contradiction between what should be and what things are in reality. For the development of democracy and justice, we have to answer the question as to “what should happen?” Because we know that the road(s) to hell is paved with good intentions. In this film, the ideas that were expressed were wonderful statements of intent. While we express our good intentions as regards our country as one that must be free and equal, and it might be better, in my opinion, if we also gave ideas as to what type of societal support should be given (to teachers and students) and concretely, what types of multicultural projects should be created.*

Another male participant, with reference to this issue, articulated the view that teachers could establish justice in schools. He said:

*Let us consider a class in which there are three Muslim students and the other students belong to other faiths. The teacher, by saying that today is Friday and we have postponed our class for one hour to allow them to attend Friday prayers, will experience an increase in loyalty and love towards the teacher, the school and even the whole country on the part of the Muslim students. If this special dispensation is also allowed towards other groups on their special days, there will be an increase in respect and tolerance. However, if there is special dispensation only towards a single group, then an atmosphere of tension will be created among the other groups. A system which ensures justice and balance, will by extension necessitate respect towards the individual person, and in this way more effective and fruitful results will be achieved.*

Among the thoughts of participants on this issue were that multicultural education is an area that needs to be given attention and focus because it endeavors to reform education to bring about justice through considering students equally without giving preferential treatment because of differences in their religion, language, race, gender age or social class thus allowing them to take advantage of educational opportunities in an egalitarian manner.

### Theme Three. Empathy and Tolerance

In the research study, the word empathy was used 4 times and the word tolerance 6 times. Empathy is the ability to put oneself into the mind of another and to be able to understand the other person’s feelings, desires and thoughts without directly experiencing them (TDK, 2017). In Turkish, the word *hosgoru* as well as the borrowed word *tolerance* are used to convey the meaning, the latter generally signifying to face all experiences with understanding. The participants generally used these two Turkish words for the concept of tolerance, interchangeably. One participant explained what multicultural education was in detail, listing its main aims:

*Multicultural education is an understanding of education that endeavors to remove the inequality and justice between individuals, aims to prevent many problems, most significantly ethnic problems, and assists students in acquiring important attitudes and behaviors such as empathy, tolerance, respect and personal differences (6, M).*

Furthermore, one participant put forward the view that the concepts empathy and tolerance were directly related stating that “multicultural education, develops not a feeling of myself but one of ourselves” (3, M). Another participant, stressing that multicultural education had many positive sides, emphasized that the creation of

empathy was an extremely important development in any society. In his words “if multicultural education simply increases empathy, that will be enough for me” (5, M).

The attempts to help students understand one another, also influence academic success in a positive manner. One participant expressed this situation as follows:

*Multicultural education offers a holistic approach that considers not merely the child’s mental development, but also his physical and psychological development. Through the incorporation of concepts such as tolerance that have come to the forefront of education in the West in recent years, children are provided with a vision of the world that is simultaneously local and universal. Children feel an affinity both to their own cultures, while also being provided with the opportunity of acquiring ideas about (all) other nations (4, F).*

One participant saw empathy as a factor that combined respect and tolerance and that the increase of respect towards differences brought about through multicultural society was the result of people’s development of an understanding of tolerance towards one another (8, M). Another participant, a member of the teaching faculty, likened people to a piece of traditional Turkish art, the *Ebru* or *marbling* painting, which is a collection of apparently indecipherable splashes and spots. She felt that, only through multicultural education, can a perception of the differences be arrived at in that “painting” and, by so doing, will our respect and tolerance of another increase (9, F).

#### **Theme Four: Cultural Diversity and Difference**

Throughout the course of the study the words different, difference and awareness were used a total of 30 times. The terms diversity and cultural diversity were employed a total of 9 times. For this reason, the most prominent theme in the research study was that of “Cultural Diversity and Difference”. A reflection of this theme may be observed among the student profiles at schools. The fact that students from various cultures come together to receive an education in Turkish schools may lead to a variety of cultural problems. The people who can help to bring about solutions to cultural problems in the classroom environment are undoubtedly the teachers. For this reason, a teacher must possess multicultural educational skills. One participant interpreted the situation as follows:

*The fact that there is cultural diversity in Turkish schools is an inescapable fact.... However, it is difficult to say that much attention is paid to multiculturalism either with regard to the design of teacher training programs or the recruitment and assignment processes of teachers. The education and upbringing of well-informed and well-rounded generations is only possible through teachers of great quality. In this regard, the teachers must be equipped with the skills to face the difficulties inherent in multicultural and multilingual classes, and the teacher’s acquisition of these qualities is an educational problem of vital importance. The teacher training programs currently in existence in Turkey and the structure of education faculties, are far from being able to equip teachers with these skills. For his reason, we are in great need of far-reaching reform in education (10, M).*

Regarding the issue of the multicultural skills of teachers, one participant felt that, in his view, many teachers in Turkey lacked such skills, and many teachers who described themselves as multicultural teachers did not possess such skills overall. He posted the question, “can you show me a teacher who truly accepts (his) students of different faiths, colors, denominations, ethnic backgrounds, races, genders or sexual preferences?” (9, M).

Those participants who submitted comments within the context of the headings of cultural diversity, expressed their belief that the aim of multicultural education was not to remove or destroy cultural diversity, but rather to let that diversity exist freely and prosper. This is because multiculturalism attaches importance to the creation of a political and social atmosphere in which cultural diversity will be recognized and in which these cultures will be able to live freely and grow (Aydin, 2013b).

With respect to the attitudes of the participants regarding multicultural education, including the acceptance of one’s own reality or being and the right to an education in one’s mother tongue is possible within the theme of diversity. To gain respect for the differences of others, arriving at an understanding of the differences present within oneself is necessary. One participant, moreover in his descriptions about multiculturalism found below, regarded diversity as a value that forms the essence of multiculturalism.

*In my opinion, multiculturalism is a prism, which aims by reiterating the diversity found in human nature through various channels, to reflect the diversity of life in all its stages. In such a way when you look at yourself from different viewpoints you see various reflections of yourself. In a similar fashion, multicultural society tries get people to take out a mirror to look at one another so as to extract the essence of life. It teaches us to look at one another through other people’s prisms. It reminds us that the*

*special and delicious aspect of a bowl of fruit is always found in its diversity. And by doing so, it invokes the sensitivity of a mother who is careful to share the meatballs that she has cooked, by placing them equally on the plates of all her children.). In such a way, it serves to create an ideal society, one in which one sees different things when looking in the same place and who discovers new tastes and flavors when eating the same dish (23, M).*

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In recent years, studies have been conducted regarding how and in what way the Internet and social media are used as an educational tool and in what subject areas these tools are being employed. For example, in compilation studies carried out by Karaman et al. (2008), an attempt was made to highlight the transformational potential brought about by Web 2.0 applications with respect to their use in education. A year-over-year increase in the number of empirical studies regarding Web 2.0 applications can be found in the ERIC database, with most of these studies appearing at an undergraduate degree level.

As regards the subject areas of this research, the three most general areas of focus have been first, Education using Social Media; second, Language Education; and third, Social Media's Role in Rendering Learning Effective. Many studies have also been published in which the findings concluded that social media helps in the acquisition of group work skills.

In a study regarding the use of social media in education conducted by Kilis et al. (2014) that focused on educators in higher education in Turkey and Germany, an attempt was made to highlight the cultural differences between the two countries. The study, which was conducted with the participation of 22 educators (10 German, 12 Turkish), found that an awareness of the need to use social media as an educational tool exists, but a low level of consciousness as to how this could be realized was present. Educators stressed how they had experienced difficulties in using technological tools to bring about a harmonized integration of education and social media. The Turkish participants argued that this problem emanated from an inadequate infrastructure and a lack of resources to help teachers. The educators in both countries in general complained about the lack of a plan or strategies to combine social media and education.

One study that aimed to measure the effectiveness of the influential and widespread social network Facebook regarding education was that conducted by Isman and Albayrak (2014) together with students at Sakarya University. Isman and Albayrak created a Facebook group for the non-elective Management of Information Technology course attended by all students in the faculty in which documents related with the lesson were shared with students through the file sharing properties of this social media application. They found that the Facebook group was beneficial in terms of its usability, contributions to group work, follow-up on announcements, and accessing more and more people (Koseoglu et al., 2017).

Smart phones, because of applications that allow instant messaging, are becoming an important social media platform. According to Bulun et al. (2004) mobile phone based-education incorporates many advantages from the point of view of effective learning including: ensuring lifelong learning, learning without effort, learning only when required, and learning that is independent of time and location. For instance, a person with a mobile device in his or her hand may instantly obtain information about recent events elsewhere in the world. Furthermore, due to applications such as Instagram, people can share photographs instantly, talk to friends at long distances, and even do business with others. Moreover, thanks to platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, users may create and share short films, and opinions and comments of viewers may be elicited. The result of this study was to demonstrate that people did not show much demand for educationally themed short films. Even if they were curious about such films and watched them, they did not tend to write comments.

A substantial number of studies have been published regarding social media and the use of the Internet as an educational tool. A clear distinction between the studies mentioned and this study was present in that this current research lacked a clear authoritative figure. For example, if this film had been presented to students by an academic authority within the context of a prescribed lesson, the likelihood is that the film would have reached a larger number of participants and commentators.

Multicultural education is a constructive suggestion for a solution to countries that house numerous cultures within their territories and suffer from problems emanating from the nature of communication between these cultures at a domestic level (Kaya & Aydin, 2014). Numerous countries with a multicultural make-up, have managed to arrive at solutions to internal problems because multicultural education.

Studies conducted concerning multicultural education in Turkey have demonstrated that the perceptions of Turkish citizens towards multicultural education are largely positive (Damgaci & Aydin, 2013). This current study, with a sample group in which 95.65% of the participants held positive perceptions of multicultural education, may be included among those studies in which the recipients had positive attitudes towards multicultural education. For this reason, the space allocated to multicultural education within the context of existing educational programs

of the Turkish Ministry of Education should be expanded considering the results of these studies, and education programs need to be reformed from top to bottom to bring them into line with the philosophy of multicultural education.

Moreover, Hossain and Aydin (2011) in their research, in which they argued that Web 2.0 offers a cooperative model for multicultural education, put forward the view that social media because these properties that allow for openness, cooperation and interaction, create a virtual environment in which students from different backgrounds can come together. As a result, students obtain access to greater amounts of knowledge regarding their own culture and other cultures, allowing them to gain a better understanding of diverse aspects of other cultures from all over the world. Social media is growing in importance daily because of its positive qualities that encourage integration and active, not passive, learning. For that reason, to realize the successful application of social media in a multicultural educational setting, studies must be conducted by the National Ministry of Education and academicians in Turkey regarding the development of a plan, program, strategy and teaching/learning materials.

Education, is a phenomenon that may develop and change according to transformations in the cultural environment. (Karatas, 2015). Presently, cultures largely influence one another because of expanding social media and Internet use. In this regard, if educational systems take into consideration cultural transformations, they can adapt themselves to the requirements of the communication age.

Within the context of this study that had as its principle aim to discover the perceptions of social media users regarding multicultural education, the comments of 23 people (10 females and 13 males) were elicited about a short film prepared specifically for the aims of the research study. Twenty-two of the participants held positive perceptions regarding multicultural education while one participant expressed the view that the claims of the film that "multicultural education ensured equality and justice" were contentious. This participant was asked to submit examples regarding this viewpoint. On examination, the male participant mentioned above did not hold sufficient knowledge regarding what multicultural education constituted.

As a result of the analysis that was conducted on the data collected, four principle themes emerged. These were as follows: 1) alienation, 2) social justice and equality, 3) empathy and tolerance and 4) cultural diversity and difference. Alienation can be defined as the positive perception towards the characteristics of individuals belonging to one's own particular social group, while simultaneously harboring negative perceptions about the language, religion, skin color, culture or habits of another group (Karaduman, 2010). The concept of alienation can be considered as encompassing feelings such as hate, belittlement, ostracization and monism (a shared way of looking at experiences). Within the context of this study the participants employed the above terms with regard to the theme of alienation and stressed the fact that multicultural education could serve as a structure with which one could confront alienation.

Another theme that emerged was that of social justice that was considered together with the topic of equality of opportunity in education under the wider theme of equality. In education the concepts of social justice and multicultural education are demonstrated to have a similar effect in ensuring equality of opportunity for students from different cultures (Banks, 2008; Damgaci & Aydin, 2014). According to the findings of the current study, the participants argued that it was essential that students benefit from education on an equal basis so as to prevent feelings of alienation.

Tolerance means respect towards people who are different from us, as well as respect for the opinions that they hold and the feelings that they experience (Kepenekci, 2004). Empathy and tolerance are intertwined concepts, with empathy involving a heightened understanding of others. With regard to the theme of empathy and tolerance, participants stressed the importance of teachers behaving in a tolerant fashion towards their students and the need for teachers to create an environment in which students could behave in a tolerant manner towards one another. In addition, participants emphasized the fact that multicultural education would help all those involved in education to become tolerant, developing the ability to establish empathy for others.

Cultural diversity and difference were the most prominent themes that emerged from the research study. Multicultural education deems itself respectful towards differences and supports cultural diversity (Banks, 2008; Kaya & Aydin, 2014). While most participants in the study agreed with this opinion, they were incapable of distinguishing between multiculturalism and multicultural education; however, most articulated that multicultural education was not opposed to diversity but rather supported the existence of diversity. This research study, which attempted to find an answer to the question of what the perceptions of social media users were about multicultural education, determined that, when an evaluation was conducted taking into consideration the number of participants who issued comments, 95.65% of those participants held opinions that were positive regarding multicultural education.

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