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### **Open Access**

### **ORIGINAL ARTICLE**

## **Student Teachers Experiences of the Impact of Social Media on Their Professional Competencies**

Marzieh Motamedi Mohammadabadi 

1. Department of Educational Sciences, Farhangian University, Tehran, Iran. E-mail: [m.motamedi@cfu.ac.ir](mailto:m.motamedi@cfu.ac.ir)

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### **EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

#### **Interdiction:**

Teachers play one of the most important roles in the educational systems. In today's changing world, the role of the teacher has shifted from a transmitter of knowledge to a facilitator of learning to prepare students to face social changes. Teachers can play their role properly when they have professional competencies. Professional competencies are a set of knowledge, attitudes, and skills that help teachers teach effectively. In the past, the development of professional competencies was carried out through workshops, seminars, and training courses, but today it has been influenced by cyberspace and social media. Social media facilitates teachers' professional development by removing time and place constraints and can have numerous positive and negative changes in teachers' professional identities. Through these platforms, teachers can share their educational experiences, communicate with other teachers, produce and publish content, develop their

teaching skills, and use social media in teaching and learning. However, these networks also have negative effects, such as providing unreliable and unscientific information, which can weaken teachers' professional competence. The effects of social media are of particular importance for student teachers. As a young segment of society, student teachers are very receptive to social media, and since they don't have a fixed professional identity, they are more affected by these platforms and their thought and behavioral patterns change. Therefore, the present study was conducted based on the experiences of student teachers to examine the role of social media in professional competence to present a narrative of its opportunities and challenges.

### **Method:**

The present research used a qualitative approach and the phenomenological method. For this, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 student teachers from Farhangian University in Isfahan, who were chosen by purposive and convenience sampling. The criteria to enter the study were finishing the internship period and having experience of teaching in schools. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes and was conducted in person by prior arrangement. The sampling continued until the information reached saturation. The data were analyzed by using the Colaizzi method. In the first step after finishing each interview, the audio file was listened to several times and the participant's words were written down completely. In the next step important phrases were taken from the text and used as the first codes. Then, the found concepts were grouped, and categories were made. Finally, the main themes came out from combining the categories. To make sure of the trust in the findings, member check was used. so that the participants could confirm the results. Additionally, to ensure the validity of the analyses performed, peer review was used and an agreement of 82% was obtained, indicating consistency between the analyses.

### **Findings:**

The obtained results from the interviews showed that social media have positive and negative effects on different aspects of professional competencies of student teachers. These platforms affect their knowledge, skill, and attitude. In terms of knowledge, social media enable fast and easy access to updated sources, direct connection with experts of the field, and access to special content, cause the growth of subject, pedagogical and psychological knowledge of student teachers. However, encountering incorrect, unscientific and superficial content in social media can weaken the deep understanding of preservice teachers and lead to surface-level learning and undermine their scientific foundation. In the skill domain, these platforms help the growth of research skills, digital literacy, and communication skills. But too much dependency on ready patterns and popular contents in social media causes imitation, weakens creative and critical thinking of student teachers. Also, it reduces face-to-face interpersonal skills and hurts self-management skills like time and content management. in the attitudinal dimension, social media can help preservice teachers build self-efficacy and a sense of professional belonging by providing positive feedback. It also facilitates continuous learning. However, due to comparisons in this space, student teachers' self-confidence decreases, and because it presents an unrealistic image of the teaching profession, their teaching identity is weakened, and due to the lack of clear professional boundaries, the risk of professional ethical violations increases.

### **Conclusion:**

Given the complex impact of social media on professional competencies of student teachers, it is essential to approach them with a critical and reflective perspective. The harms of these platforms should be identified and controlled, and these opportunities should be used to improve the quality of education. It is suggested these platforms be used in the education of preservice teachers in various courses at Farhabgian University. also, by holding educational workshops student teachers should be taught how to use social media consciously so that they can recognize reliable source, analyze and criticize virtual content, regulate their emotion in virtual environment, and adhere to the principles of professional ethics. It is necessary for a specialized social media to be created by the university cyberspace so that preservice teachers can strengthen their professional and pedagogical knowledge without worrying about the credibility and authenticity of the content. In addition, a set of ethical and monitoring policies should be developed for student teachers' use this cyberspace.

#### **Data Availability Statement**

Data available on request from the authors.

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#### **Ethical considerations**

Not applicable.

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#### **Conflict of interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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