Social capital in high-schools: teacher-student relationships within an online social network and their association with in-class interactions and learning

# Details

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## Sample

The participants were 10 high-school students, aged 15–18, (4 boys and 6 girls), from three different
public high schools in central Israel. All students were of average socioeconomic status, who frequently
use technology for social and learning purposes and are Facebook “friends” with at least one of their teachers

## Implications For Educators About

School networking

# Abstract

With technological development, social networking has become a powerful resource for building relationships, improving collaboration and facilitating learning processes. However, while the majority of
educational research on this topic has focused mainly on university students’ use of social media, less is known about the potential of social media to enhance social capital and to facilitate learning among
adolescents. Thus, the current study examines (1) the nature of relationships between high-school students and their teachers on an online social network and their impact on (2) classroom atmosphere and
(3) learning processes. To this end, a Grounded Theory approach was adopted to analyze semi-structured interviews with ten youth aged 15– 18 and their teachers and with retrospective follow-up observations of
actual online teacher-student interactions. The findings showed that interactions on social media strengthened relationships, improved classroom atmosphere, increased active participation in learning
activities, and encouraged collaboration and peer support. However, the findings also shed light why some teachers might avoid communication with students via social networking, although it is imperative to increase their presence in social media for the prevention of online "flaming" behaviors.

# Outcome

In the current study (Kasperski Blau, 2020) was found that both students and teachers described two major benefits of social media as a platform for (a) creating and maintaining bridging and bonding social capital, and (b) enhancing learning through interpersonal interaction in terms of the Social-Constructivist Theory. The teachers who participated in this study described the enthusiasm that the students demonstrated in relation to creating a class group on Facebook: “it was the fastest thing they ever did in
relation to school”. From the teacher’s point of view, this enthusiasm seemed to reflect the students’
desire for a sense of group belonging and connection to their peers. In the same vein, the students
described how the social network helped them to get acquainted with each other more rapidly at the
beginning of the school year. In the case of students in regional schools who come from a variety of
places, social networking helped them to maintain relationships with remote friends after school. Overall, the students were interested in knowing their teachers more deeply and feeling closer to
them. Such connections were established mostly by creating a closed class group that the teacher
manages, while in other cases, students and teachers were directly connected as Facebook
“friends”. The findings indicated that shy students, whose voices are usually not heard in the classroom, prefer the use of the social network rather than face-to-face communication, to communicate with classmates and teachers. Students reported that there are those who never spoke in the classroom,
but were able to sound their “voices” on Facebook. Teachers and students raised several reasons why educators might avoid communication with students via social networking. these included
privacy-related concerns, such as the disclosure of personal information, as well as the willingness to
separate their work from their personal lives and maintain a distance between themselves and their
students. Moreover, some of the students perceived teachers who do not use social media as more
conservative and less familiar with technology.