Knowing Me, Knowing You: Teachers' Perceptions of Communication with their Students on Facebook

# Details

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## Sample

180 teachers from Israeli public secondary schools countrywide participated in this study, aged 21 to 68 (M=46.6, SD=10.8), 138 female (77%) and 42 male (23%).

## Implications For Policy Makers About

Stepping up awareness and empowerment

# Abstract

Aim/Purpose: The purpose of the current study is to explore positive and negative aspects of teacher-teacher communication via Facebook, as perceived by teachers in secondary education.

Background: Teacher-student relationship is key to teachers’ wellness and professional development and may contribute to positive classroom environment. In recent years, as social networking sites (e.g., Facebook) became popular, these connections have extended to such platforms. However, most studies of the use of social networking sites in the school context are pedagogically-driven, and research on the ways teacher-student relationship is facilitated by these platforms is meager.

Methodology: We utilized a qualitative approach, analyzing responses to open-ended questions about this topic by middle- and high-school teachers’ all across Israel (N=180). We used both top-down and bottom-up analyses.

Contribution: This study contributes to the growing literature about the overall impact of using social networking sites on the educational milieu. Specifically, it contributes by shedding light on teachers’ perspectives of that phenomenon. Insights from this study are important for educators and education policy makers.

Findings: Overall, teachers who were connected to their students de facto, as well as teachers who expressed a wish to be connected to their students, acknowledged the advantages of befriending their students on Facebook, in terms of both teacher- and student benefits. Teachers’ overall viewpoint on the negative aspects of Facebook-connections with students is multifaceted. As such, our findings highlight the complexity of using social networking sites by teachers.

Recommendations for Practitioners: We recommend that educators who wish to extend the relationship with their student to online platforms do so wisely, taking advantage of the benefits of using these platforms, and being aware of (and cautious about) potential draw-backs. We encourage educators to learn more about the potential uses of social networking sites and instant messaging services, and then to examine whether these uses may fit their educational agenda. We recommend that education policymakers make evidence-based decisions regarding the use of social networking sites by teachers and encourage school communities to discuss these issues together.

Recommendation for Researchers: As technology develops rapidly, we recommend that researchers examine the topics raised in the current research with regards to other platforms, in order to better understand the technological aspects that may affect students’ perceptions of the use of social networking sites and instant messaging services to communicate with their students. The issues studied here should also be studied in different cultural contexts. We recommend broadening the research and making results available to policymakers when making decisions regarding social media in educational contexts.

Impact on Society: Understanding teachers’ perspectives of their relationship with their students in today’s digital, networked world gives us a better understanding of the changing role of teachers; hence, it may assist in planning teacher training and professional development, with the ultimate goal of realizing a better educational system.

Future Research: Future studies should focus on other social networking sites and instant messaging services, as well as on other countries and cultures.

# Outcome

It was found that teachers who were connected to their students de facto, as well as teachers
who expressed a wish to be connected to their students, acknowledged the advantages of befriending
their students on Facebook, in terms of teacher as well as student benefits (Forkosh-Baruch Hershkovitz, 2019). In terms of students’ benefits, SNS-mediated communication allows accessibility beyond boundaries to their teachers. In that sense, this communication might be considered out-of-class communication. despite SNS serving as a platform for promoting closeness, the teachers who would like to connect to their students but are not connected de facto mostly see the efficiency aspects in using these platforms. teachers’ overall viewpoint on the negative aspects of Facebook connections with students is multifaceted. This complexity is reflected in our data by at least two points. First, the richness of negative aspects of Facebook-mediated communication recognized by teachers. Second, the fact that some of these aspects were also considered by our research population as positive. Specifically, three themes were mentioned both as concerns (while asked about negative aspects) as well as benefits (when asked about positive aspects): exposure to information, paradigm shift of student-teacher relationship, and boundaries. As evident in our study, higher levels of positive attitudes towards teacher-student Face-book-mediated communication were
demonstrated prior to the establishment of the online connection, compared to reports by teachers who were communicating de facto with their students via Facebook