

TEACHERS' INSTAGRAM EXPERIENCE:



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İçindekiler

Introduction	5
Problem Statement	6
Purpose.....	9
Research Questions	9
Digital Literacy and Teachers' Use of Technology	9
The Impact of Social Media on Professional Development	10
Negative Effects of Social Media and Distraction	10
Teachers' Use of Instagram	11
Method	12
Study Group.....	12
Data Collection Tool.....	14
Data Analysis	15
Validity	16
Reliability	16
The Role of the Researcher	17
Findings.....	18
Theme 1: Instagram Usage Habits and Trends	19
Usage Duration and Awareness	20
Active Areas and Interaction Surfaces	21
Forms and Reasons for Sharing.....	23

Theme 2: The Function of Instagram.....	24
Personal Development and Psychological Support.....	25
Access to Information and Learning.....	26
Social Interaction and Communication.....	27
Theme 3: Instagram's Reflections on the Profession	28
Positive Impacts	29
Negative Reflections	30
Theme 4: Professional Teacher Network	31
Use as an Educational Resource.....	32
Interaction Among Colleagues	33
Discussion and Conclusion	34
Instagram Usage Habits and Trends	34
The Function of Instagram.....	35
The Reflections of Instagram on the Profession	36
Professional Learning Network.....	36
Recommendations	38

Introduction¹

Rapidly developing technology, which has become part of every moment of our lives, not only makes our daily lives easier, but also transforms our social lives through social media, reshaping our habits, ways of sharing, and methods of communication. The amount of data, the speed of flow, and the increase in speed services are growing uncontrollably (Xia, 2025). Social media has evolved beyond being merely a communication tool to become one of the fundamental elements shaping individuals' daily life practices. These digital platforms, where users can create and publish content, play an effective role in the transformation of social relationships thanks to the interaction opportunities offered by the internet (Oyman, 2016). This culture of sharing, which has completely changed social interaction, permeates our entire social life, paving the way for individuals to redefine their daily lives, feelings of belonging, and social roles. People use these platforms not only to obtain information and conduct research, but also to satisfy their interests and needs, such as producing content, being visible, following shared lives, and finding support for their own ideas. People use social media as a way to cope with loneliness and exclusion (Hall, 2025). Consequently, it has been found that active use of social media has positive outcomes, such as a decrease in anxiety and depression and an increase in social connectedness (Guo & Sheibana, 2025). In a globalizing world, developments in the technological field have led to a significant increase in both communication tools and the number of users (Demir, 2021). Social media has become one of the areas where information is produced most and fastest, with the power to manage public policies in every field where it exists, from the individual to society, and from society

¹ This study was presented as an abstract Paker at the 12th International Congress on Headteacher Education and Innovative Sciences on November 23-24, 2025.

to every international medium, at a pace far exceeding the predicted data over the last decade (Avşar, 2022).

Social media offers both teachers and students opportunities to access various resources and interact (Aslan, 2024). Teachers also actively use social media platforms to support their personal and professional development. Research also shows that teachers and students are encouraged to actively use social networks (Gül & Diken, 2018). Instagram is one of the most popular of these platforms (Biçici, 2018). However, while there are studies on the purposes of use of platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest among educators, the number of studies on Instagram, which ranks fifth in global popularity, is quite limited (Carpenter, Morrison, Craft et al., 2020). Furthermore, very little is known about how teachers have approached this application in terms of collaboration to date (Richter, Carpenter, Meyer et al., 2022). As a visual and interaction-focused platform, Instagram provides a space where teachers interact with various content in both individual and professional contexts. However, as mentioned, teachers' Instagram usage habits, usage times, the purposes for which they use the platform, and the effects of this usage on their professional or personal lives have not been sufficiently researched. Yet, it is clear from both their own statements and the teacher sharing and interaction pages within the application that teachers actively use the application both personally and professionally. The lack of research in this area creates an academic obstacle to identifying teachers' Instagram experiences and their positive and negative aspects, and to guiding them in a correct and systematic manner. This study aims to provide in-depth information by understanding the dynamics of teachers' Instagram use through qualitative research methods.

Problem Statement

Advancing and accelerating technology, along with the rapid digitalization it brings, has made its impact on individuals and

society more apparent, and this impact permeates every area of an individual's daily life due to the influence of a globalizing world. Today, reasons for using social media include communicating online, staying informed about current developments and social issues, sharing one's identity and interests with others, being able to follow other people's content, meeting new people, satisfying online entertainment needs, organizing on digital platforms, and participating in social movements (Aktan, 2018). Social media, used for purposes such as establishing online communication, creating a new social environment and interacting within it, staying informed about current news and developments, sharing individual tastes and interests or following shared content, and participating in social mobility, is becoming increasingly prevalent in the lives of individuals of all ages. With its popular use, social media has become a multifaceted digital medium that affects not only interpersonal communication but also social structures, international cultural interactions, literature, public policies, education systems, and even the economic order (Avcı & Topçu, 2021). In this regard, social media affects every area, from individuals' lifestyles to their perspectives, from social developments to civic awareness, and it is predicted that this impact will continue to grow.

Among digital platforms that are deeply integrated into daily life, Instagram stands out for its visual-focused sharing capabilities, its structure that enables strong user interaction, and its simple interface; it provides individuals with significant flexibility in creating and distributing content. As a content sharing application, Instagram is frequently used not only for personal use but also for professional sharing, raising social awareness, and producing educational content (Bulut & Doğan, 2017). In this respect, Instagram is considered not only a tool for entertainment and sharing but also a tool for professional development, exchange of ideas, and access to information. The rapid proliferation of social media tools

has enabled societies and communities to interact and stay informed about each other (Şahin, 2017). Educators who train students competing in the global arena must also be aware of and even follow this rapid data circulation. When considering teachers in particular, the use of social media is noteworthy from different perspectives. Teachers can use social media for purposes such as sharing educational materials, supporting communication with students and parents, providing professional development, accessing content on different educational approaches, and communicating with colleagues. Instagram's visual and dynamic structure encourages teachers to produce creative content, while also allowing them to interact more effectively with their social circles. However, topics such as teachers' Instagram usage habits, how often they use the platform and for what type of content, and the effects of this usage on their professional and personal lives have not yet been sufficiently studied (Carpenter et al., 2020). Teachers can take on active roles on social media for both personal and professional purposes; interacting with their students, parents, and colleagues, accessing different educational materials, following current educational approaches, and sharing their own experiences. According to the views expressed by parents and school staff, teachers' effective communication skills and informative approach cause them to express positive opinions (Hatipoğlu & Kavas, 2016). Instagram's simple structure and visual-based interaction model have transformed the platform from being merely a medium for entertainment for teachers into an area where professional experiences are shared and learning is supported. In addition to the positive effects of Instagram use on teachers (e.g., professional inspiration, solidarity, sharing), potential negative effects such as time management issues, distraction, and burnout are also important considerations.

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to reveal and examine teachers' experiences with Instagram usage.

In line with this objective, the following questions were addressed:

Research Questions

1. What are the purposes for which teachers use Instagram?
2. What is the average time teachers spend on Instagram?
3. How does the average time teachers spend on Instagram affect them?
4. What types of content do teachers interact with most?
5. How does Instagram usage affect teachers' profession?
6. How do teachers evaluate Instagram?

Digital Literacy and Teachers' Use of Technology

Digital literacy is a term that goes beyond the ability to use technological devices and master their software and operating systems (Karabacak & Sezgin, 2019). In our era, technology and the associated digitalization touch every aspect of our daily lives, from the individual to the social and societal. It has become essential for every individual exposed to this digitalization to use the technological devices they encounter, the social media and digital platforms they use, in a way that enables them to develop their digital literacy skills, ensuring a healthy and safe technological experience for themselves and other users. Digital literacy means using internet-connected devices to obtain purposeful information, analyze it with understanding, produce and share new information and data, and determine the accuracy and reliability of information (Gülay Ogelman, Demirci & Güngör, 2021). Teachers' ability to use digital platforms can affect their adaptation to educational technologies and

their professional development. It is argued that teachers' active use of digital platforms can increase their pedagogical skills (Atmaca, 2016). Educators are among the individuals who need to use social media safely and efficiently, both for their own personal use and for professional purposes to contribute to themselves, their students, and their classrooms.

The Impact of Social Media on Professional Development

Teachers' use of social media can contribute to their professional development. We can observe this through the educational content sharing pages, event sharing, and platforms for teacher solidarity and exchange of ideas that we frequently see on social media. Studies on teachers' use of social media, reveal that these platforms are used effectively not only for social purposes but also for sharing professional knowledge and development (Öztürk, Öztürk & Özen, 2016). Platforms such as Instagram allow teachers to gain new ideas from their colleagues, share teaching materials, and participate in pedagogical discussions. However, the impact of social media on teachers may not always be positive. The need to share only the good and beautiful things on social media, creating a positive perception, can sometimes lead people to feel inadequate. Consequently, social media is known to interact with loneliness (Wu, Feng & BZhang, 2024). However, there are very few academic studies in this field (Carpenter et al., 2020). This is an academic obstacle to the systematic and efficient examination and guidance of teachers' experiences with social media, particularly Instagram. Studies in this field are expected to make this experience more efficient.

Negative Effects of Social Media and Distraction

The role of social media in the increasing rates of perfectionism over the past decade has reached a critical level (Vanhoffen, Gonzalez, Schreurs et al., 2025). The uncontrolled and

inappropriate use of social media can lead to attention problems and decreased professional productivity, especially for teachers. Alongside the negative effects of social media, such as the perception and expectation of perfectionism, feelings of inadequacy, and individual and social comparison, there are also positive effects, such as gaining a sense of belonging, reducing professional loneliness, and being able to exchange ideas with colleagues. The inability to limit the time spent on social media platforms can cause negative effects such as time management difficulties, concentration problems, and mental fatigue in individuals. In this regard, the research aims to reveal the effects of teachers' use of Instagram on their personal and professional lives and to evaluate potential negative effects.

Teachers' Use of Instagram

With the integration of social media platforms into educational processes today, teachers are increasingly using these applications in an educational and skillful manner. Teachers share various educational content through these platforms, interact with their colleagues, and create a social learning network by sharing their positive and negative professional experiences. Many educators use social media to share their educational experiences, exchange ideas about education, and find inspiration (Aslan & Sirojiddinova, 2025). In addition, Instagram is used as an effective tool for teachers not only for content sharing but also in the process of building a digital identity. Teachers who actively and professionally use the platform blend their digital identities with their professional identities, becoming "influencer" teachers in practice. This phenomenon is known to both benefit teachers in the field of education and expose them to risks (Karabatak, Karadağ, Alper, Batur & Bahçivan, 2024). For example, ideally presented content and success stories can lead to comparisons and feelings of burnout among teachers. Therefore, the use of Instagram by teachers is too

complex and professionally oriented to be explained solely by individual preferences.

Method

In conducting the research, the phenomenological approach, a qualitative design that deeply examines the meanings of individuals' experiences, was adopted. Introduced to the literature in the early 1960s through health research, the qualitative research method has continued to develop and gain popularity to this day (Cohen & Crabtree, 2008). Qualitative research aims to look at events through the eyes of individuals and create a description from their perspective. Qualitative research aims to obtain in-depth information about how individuals perceive their experiences, how they assign meaning to these experiences, and how they interpret them; in this respect, it focuses on subjective experiences rather than objective data. The qualitative research method, which aims to collect data from the participants of the study, analyze this data, and develop a comprehensive overview of the subject, is a descriptive study. The value and quality of the research results will increase as a result of the application and enhancement of validity and reliability strategies in these studies (Golafshani, 2003). In this context, the frequency and purposes for which teachers use Instagram, the types of content they show interest in on the platform, and the effects of this use on their professional development, social relationships, and psychological state have been examined. Conducted using a qualitative approach, this research aims to discover the meanings participants attach to Instagram use based on their own life realities and to contribute to the literature by constructing a framework based on these meanings.

Study Group

The study group consists of 21 teachers from different school levels (preschool, primary, and secondary education) working in

public schools in Hatay province during the 2024-2025 academic year. The diversity in the participant profile allows for the examination of teachers' attitudes and habits regarding Instagram use in different professional and institutional contexts. In determining the participants, the purposive sampling method, commonly used in qualitative research, was preferred. The purposive sampling method is based on selecting individuals who have the knowledge, expertise, and experience that will serve the purpose of the research. Working with individuals selected in accordance with predetermined criteria in a way that best serves the research directly affects the quality of the data obtained (Baltacı, 2018). These criteria include teachers actively using Instagram and voluntarily agreeing to participate in the research. This sampling method, which identifies information-rich participants by using limited resources in the most efficient way, also aims to achieve data saturation (Yağar & Dökme, 2018). With this comprehensive structure, the working group was formed to serve the purpose of the research, and the aim was to obtain comprehensive, multidimensional, and in-depth data on teachers' Instagram usage habits. Since participants were informed in the informed consent form that their information would be kept confidential in accordance with ethical principles, they will be referred to in the report by code names K1, K2, K3, etc., rather than their real names. The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Study Group

Demographic Characteristics	Groups	f
Gender	Female	12
	Male	9
	Total	21
Education	Bachelor's Degree	17
	Master's Degree	4
	Total	21
School Type	Preschool	4
	Elementary	4
	Middle School	7
	High School	6
	Total	21

When examining the demographic characteristics of the participants, it can be said that the majority of the study group consisted of female, college-educated teachers working at the middle school level. This demographic structure allows the findings regarding teachers' digital media usage habits and professional interactions to be interpreted across various educational levels and demographic groups.

Data Collection Tool

Data were collected using a semi-structured interview form. This data collection method is one of the most frequently used techniques in qualitative research because it allows participants to explain their experiences in greater depth. In order for participants to express their views clearly, it is necessary for the researcher to both carefully manage the process and provide a comfortable and reassuring interview atmosphere. The interview form was designed to gain a comprehensive understanding of teachers' use of Instagram. In this context, the open-ended questions in the form focused on why and how often teachers use Instagram, the types of content they are interested in, and the platform's impact on their professional and personal lives. Pilot interviews were conducted to obtain feedback on the clarity, comprehensibility, and purposefulness of the

questions, and the form was finalized based on the results of these interviews. Participants were asked questions such as "For what purposes do you use Instagram the most? How much time do you spend on Instagram on a daily basis?"

The interviews were conducted face-to-face according to the participants' preferences; the conversations were recorded and later transcribed in detail. This allowed for the systematic and consistent analysis of the data obtained.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from participants with specified demographic information was analyzed using content analysis, one of the qualitative research analysis techniques. First, the data collected via audio recording was transcribed into digital text, and then the data obtained from the interviews was analyzed and pre-coded. The codes were then grouped according to their similarities and relationships to arrive at categories. Based on these categories and themes, the themes were named using the inductive method. During the analysis process, direct quotations from the participants' statements were included, thus enabling a multifaceted examination and explanation of teachers' perceptions, attitudes, motivations, and experiences regarding their use of Instagram. Thus, teachers' ways of using Instagram, a social media platform, and the reflections of this use on their professional lives and personal experiences were evaluated with a meaning-centered approach. Different strategies were used to increase the validity and reliability of the research. First, the interview form was created with expert input. Participants' statements were included as they were during the interviews. The data analyzed was shared again with some participants, and the accuracy of the comments was confirmed. Participant checking has been recommended by Lincoln and Guba, especially to increase reliability (Tutar, 2022). Long-term interaction, another factor that increases reliability and validity in qualitative research (Başkale,

2016), was another consideration during the research. The research process was reported in detail, taking into account the criteria of transferability and auditability.

Validity

Ensuring validity and reliability in qualitative research is one of the fundamental elements that determine the quality of the study (Yağar & Dökme, 2018). Validity is accepted when the study results can be generalized to conditions with similar characteristics (Suri, 2011). Various methods were applied in this study to ensure internal validity. First, the semi-structured interview form, which was the data collection tool, was created with expert input, and the necessary adjustments were made based on expert feedback. This ensured that the interview questions served the purpose of the study and produced meaningful data. To increase the validity of the data obtained from the semi-structured interview prepared in collaboration with the expert, the participants' statements were directly quoted without any interpretation. Conveying participants' views without distorting their context is important in order to prevent shifts in meaning and to reflect the depth of the data. In addition, the findings obtained during the analysis process were shared with some participants, and it was confirmed whether the data was understood correctly and as they had expressed it, in line with their views. This is referred to as the member checking method and is accepted as an element that supports validity in qualitative research (Tutar, 2022).

Reliability

Reliability is ensured by the measurement tool (semi-structured interview form) yielding the same or similar results during multiple measurements (Yağar & Dökme, 2018). To ensure the reliability of the research, the data collection and analysis process was conducted in a systematic and transparent manner. These processes, which yielded similar results, establish the reliability of

the research (Golafshani, 2003). First, the interviews were recorded with audio recording devices, and then these recordings were transcribed into text on a computer in a digital environment. The coding and analysis process was carried out meticulously and in detail, and the process was conducted by shaping the codes, categories, and themes obtained in a manner consistent with the research questions. At the end of this process, participants were provided with confirmation regarding the analysis of the data (Kim, Yamada, Heo & Han, 2014). During the data interpretation process, opinions were sought from different researchers, taking into account the principle of inter-researcher reliability. Furthermore, in line with the principle of long-term interaction, sufficient communication was established with participants during the data collection process, aiming to obtain data that conveyed meaningful and in-depth information rather than superficial statements.

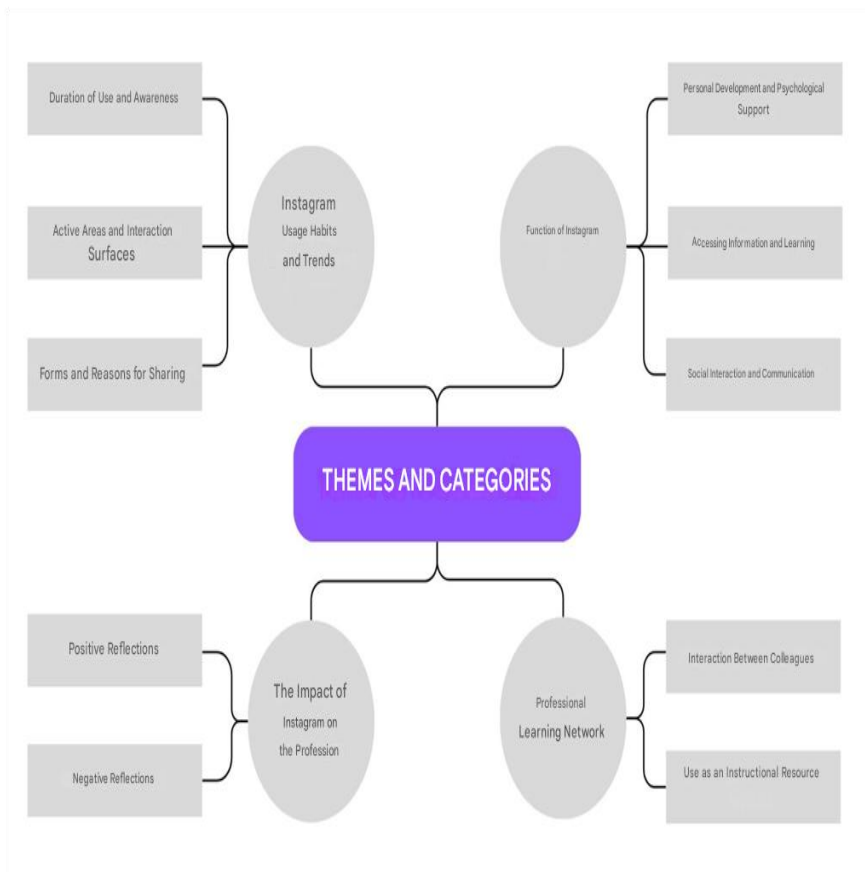
The Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher's role is to access and reveal the feelings, ideas, and thoughts of the participants (Sutton & Austin, 2015). During the interview process, the researcher provided a safe communication environment for the participants, allowing them to freely express their thoughts. In particular, the researcher tried to avoid including personal judgments in the analysis process. Furthermore, the researcher has incorporated the professional and academic knowledge acquired throughout the process into the analysis process in a controlled manner; importance has been placed on not directing participants and on non-judgmental transmission. Thanks to this approach, the aim has been to achieve reliable and interpretable results based on facts, without distorting the meaning of the data.

Findings

Teachers' experiences, habits, and perceptions regarding Instagram use were examined in a multidimensional manner. The findings are presented under four main themes: “Instagram Usage Habits and Trends,” “The Function of Instagram,” “The Reflections of Instagram on the Profession,” and “Professional Learning Network.” Each theme is indicated as a finding heading.

Figure 1. Themes and Categories



Theme 1: Instagram Usage Habits and Trends

This theme reveals how teachers use the Instagram platform, how often they use it, and for what purposes. This theme is called “Instagram Usage Habits and Trends” because the interviews revealed in detail how often teachers use the Instagram platform, their habits, and the underlying purposes and trends of this usage. It is named this way because the place Instagram occupies in teachers' personal and professional lives, the purposes for which they use the platform, and the types of content they use have been shaped by both individual preferences and professional expectations, and thus the name of the theme comprehensively reflects its meaning. The interviews revealed that the vast majority of teachers regularly use Instagram for both personal and professional purposes. Teachers stated that they actively use the platform not only to enjoy their free time, follow current events, or encounter content related to daily life, but also to contribute to their professional development, gain ideas for different activities, find inspiration for material design, and interact with other colleagues.

Table 2. Instagram Usage Habits and Trends Theme, Categories, and Codes

Theme	Category	Codes
Instagram Usage Habits and Trends	Usage Duration and Awareness	1 hour, 1.5 hours, 2 hours, 4 hours, 45 minutes, half an hour, free time management, time limitation, conscious usage.
	Active Areas and Interaction Surfaces	Stories, Reels tab, Saved, Explore section, bookmarking, quick feed.
	Sharing Formats and Reasons	School events, photo albums, nature landscapes, idea exchange, memory collection, inspirational, memories.

Teachers show similarities in their use of tabs within the Instagram application; in particular, stories, the reels tab, the explore tab, and the saved items area are frequently preferred. The save feature is frequently used by teachers to create a digital archive, categorize

content, and store ideas for use in class. This shows that Instagram is not only a social media app but also a digital pool of inspiration and content.

Usage Duration and Awareness

Teachers' duration of Instagram use varies. While some teachers state that they have been actively using the platform for approximately 8-10 years, others mention that they have been using it for 2-3 years. In addition, there are teachers who have had an Instagram account for a long time but started using their accounts actively and professionally after starting their careers. This difference shows that there has been a transformation, or even development, in teachers' approach to using Instagram over time. Teachers' statements on this subject are as follows:

"I have been using Instagram for about 8 years. I consciously set aside time for professional sharing and content that inspires me."
(K1)

"I started using Instagram more regularly and purposefully in the last 2 years. I find useful ideas, especially for classroom applications." (K3)

"It's been over 6 years. At first, I only used it for personal purposes, but as I saw teacher accounts over time, I created my own education corner." (K15)

"All my accounts are very old, but my active usage time varies. For example, I've been on Instagram for nearly 10 years, but my active usage began when I was assigned to a new position and moved away from my family." (K8)

In terms of daily usage time, the vast majority of teachers stated that they spent between 1 and 2 hours on the Instagram app. However, it was also stated that this time could be longer on some days. While some teachers feel compelled to limit their time and do so, others spend only their free time on Instagram and are satisfied with the time spent because it corresponds to a short period.

“I spend an average of 1 hour a day, but when the content interests me, this time can extend without me realizing it.” (K7)

“I set a specific time limit for myself. Otherwise, hours pass without me realizing it, which leads to inefficient use of my time.” (K10)

“One hour a day, but this is with me limiting myself.” (K5)

“On average, I spend about an hour a day, but it can be a bit more during busy periods. I usually check it while having my morning coffee or before going to bed at night.” (K13)

“I'd say it's close to 1 hour total. I definitely check it during breakfast and after the kids go to bed in the evening. Sometimes I think I'll just check for five minutes, but it ends up being twenty minutes.” (K15)

Based on the teachers' statements, it is understood that Instagram usage times vary depending on individual differences; however, this time generally ranges from 1 to 2 hours per day. Despite having been on the platform for many years, it is seen that they have developed a more conscious and purposeful usage habit, especially after starting their professional lives. This situation shows that teachers have begun to evaluate digital platforms not only as a means of personal interaction and entertainment, but also as a resource that can be utilized for professional development and classroom applications. The number of teachers who consciously try to limit their daily usage time is also noteworthy; this reveals that digital awareness and the search for digital balance are important elements reflected in their professional lives. In short, Instagram is positioned as a conscious digital tool for teachers on both an individual and professional level.

Active Areas and Interaction Surfaces

This theme covers the tabs teachers use most on Instagram and the forms of interaction in these areas. Some tabs that stand out among the many features offered by the platform reveal a usage

profile shaped by teachers' professional and personal interests. Discussions revealed that teachers predominantly use the "stories," "reels," "explore," and especially the "saved" tabs actively. These areas have become highly functional for teachers because they offer users not only content consumption but also content management, classification, and reuse opportunities. The "save" feature, in particular, is considered a digital archive or inspiration folder for teachers searching for content for professional purposes. This usage pattern shows that teachers embrace the platform not only as passive viewers but also as conscious content curators.

“I created a personal folder. I immediately save ideas that inspire me or activities I can implement with my students.” (K5)

“Definitely the Explore section. Because I come across interesting educational content there. Sometimes I watch Reels videos—I like the fast flow, but Explore is always more appealing.” (K13)

“I use the save feature a lot. I save videos I like to use later.” (K4)

“The content I save the most is activity suggestions, classroom arrangements, material ideas... I've organized them into folders and revisit them from time to time.” (K12)

“The saved section is like a folder for me. I collect everything there: games, activities, presentation suggestions, parent meeting ideas... Reels can also be very creative sometimes, especially regarding classroom interaction and applications.” (K20)

Based on teachers' accounts, specific tabs on Instagram meet both their personal and professional needs. The save feature, in particular, stands out as an effective space where content is systematically categorized and stored for later use. Through stories and posts, teachers interact with colleagues and share their experiences. This situation shows that teachers' use of Instagram is not merely a pastime; it also serves deeper purposes such as

professional productivity, motivation, and innovation tracking. Therefore, the active spaces and interaction surfaces offered by the platform have become important tools that shape teachers' professional presence in the digital world.

Forms and Reasons for Sharing

The majority of teachers stated that when sharing content on Instagram, they prefer to share their professional activities, classroom practices, nature photos, or snapshots from daily life. The main reasons for this include preserving memories, interacting, giving ideas to other teachers, and providing motivation. In addition, some teachers mentioned that they interact with parents via Instagram.

“I usually share moments from the activities we do in class. I especially like to share the children's handicrafts, classroom decorations, or celebrations of special days.” (K2)

“I shared the performance we did on April 23rd and received very positive feedback. Things like this are motivating. The reason I share is both to reach parents and to exchange ideas with my colleagues.” (K12)

“Sometimes sharing the children's handmade products increases their motivation.” (K15)

“I like sharing productive and creative things like posters and bulletin board ideas. Because I can inspire others or get similar ideas. Also, the children's work makes me proud.” (K19)

This theme shows that teachers' use of Instagram encompasses many aspects, such as personal boundaries, the search for professional benefits, and digital interaction. Teachers see Instagram not only as a social platform but also as a professional learning space.

Theme 2: The Function of Instagram

This theme reveals how teachers embrace Instagram not only as a social activity but also as a multifaceted tool that supports their personal development and professional practice. This theme is named “The Function of Instagram” because the finding that teachers' use of Instagram provides personal and professional benefits on two fundamental levels stands out clearly in the interview data. Teachers stated that they strategically use Instagram both as a tool for personal interest, entertainment, and emotional relief, and for accessing professional knowledge, sharing pedagogical insights, networking with colleagues, and providing support. The theme name highlights both of these functions simultaneously, reflecting that teachers embrace Instagram not only as a social platform but also as a comprehensive source of development. Teachers' views show that Instagram is not merely a tool for entertainment or passing time, especially for teachers, but also serves powerful functions in terms of emotional support, access to information, and professional interaction.

Table 3. *Instagram's Function Theme, Categories, and Codes*

Theme	Category	Codes
Instagram's Function	Personal Development and Psychological Support	Clearing your mind, taking a break, breathing, distracting yourself, boosting your morale, relieving stress, reducing feelings of loneliness, professional loneliness.
	Access to Information and Learning	Staying up-to-date, learning new things, gaining knowledge, digital materials, course content, material ideas.
	Social Interaction and Communication	Interacting, communicating, connecting with your social circle, sharing, sharing common feelings, professional social ties.

Personal Development and Psychological Support

A large majority of teachers stated that the Instagram platform serves an important function in terms of escaping the stress of daily life, relaxing, and increasing internal motivation. Teachers expressed that inspirational content, positive messages, and artistic/creative posts on contribute to their personal development. This shows that they view Instagram use as a means of emotional regulation. Teachers stated that they sometimes turn to this platform when they feel lonely, tired, or in the midst of a busy work schedule to take a short mental break. Thus, Instagram functions not only as an application for sharing visual content but also as a medium that provides psychological support.

“I use it for professional inspiration, sharing, and a little morale. It feels great to be visible and to benefit others in this way.” (K1)

“Of course, there’s also the fun side of the job; sometimes I follow funny pages or food recommendations to escape the stress of the day.” (K2)

“I use social media for both personal and professional purposes. Sometimes I can say that social media is just the thing for finding morale or inspiration.” (K4)

“I use it for professional development, student motivation, and to be part of the teacher community. As I share, I see other teachers commenting, and there's interaction. This reduces my feeling of professional loneliness.” (K15)

“Sometimes even a sincere sentence written by a teacher makes me think, ‘Yes, I'm not alone.’ This profession is a labor of love, and everything that nourishes that love is valuable to me.” (K21)

Teachers’ statements reveal that Instagram is used not only as a platform for acquiring and sharing information but also as an important support tool that meets teachers' emotional and

psychological needs. Teachers seeking to cope with factors such as a busy work schedule, professional loneliness, and feelings of burnout have stated that Instagram helps them renew their motivation, boost their morale, and feel better about themselves. Inspirational content, positive sharing, the transfer of similar experiences, and interaction between colleagues support teachers' individual awareness and search for inner balance.

Access to Information and Learning

Teachers have stated that they can easily access current information, teaching methods, materials, and activity examples via Instagram. This platform functions as a learning network where creative ideas related to education are quickly shared and disseminated. Teachers have mentioned that, especially by following teacher-focused accounts, it is possible to access different classroom practices, activity examples, and teaching techniques. Furthermore, the save feature allows teachers to archive content that inspires them for later use, making this learning process sustainable. In this respect, Instagram goes beyond individual knowledge acquisition and also serves as an informal learning environment.

“Thanks to Instagram, I was able to offer my students a more enjoyable and enriched learning environment. For example, last winter I saw the idea of an 'Emotional Play Corner' on Instagram and immediately implemented it in my classroom.” (K1)

“I think it has nourished me professionally. I feel more creative, and I can offer my students a more colorful environment.” (K2)

“It has become a platform for connecting and sharing with my students. I also started some creative projects based on examples I saw on Instagram.” (K3)

“I feel like it clears my mind and helps me relax during these busy times.” (K11)

“I use it to connect with my students, foster professional development, and find inspiration. It gives me the courage to try different approaches.” (K13)

Social Interaction and Communication

Instagram's interaction-based structure contributes to the establishment of direct or indirect social bonds among teachers. Many teachers stated that even if they do not communicate directly with their colleagues, they can benefit from their experiences and exchange ideas through comments and messages. This process reduces teachers' feelings of loneliness and strengthens their sense of professional belonging. At the same time, it offers the opportunity to connect with individuals experiencing similar difficulties and to come together around shared values and approaches. Thus, Instagram becomes both an individual and professional socialization space for teachers.

“First and foremost, you don't feel alone. It's wonderful to see other teachers who are experiencing the same problems, doing similar things, and feeling the same excitement.” (K6)

“Collaborating with colleagues has become easier. We organized some projects via Instagram. Once, we came up with the idea of a joint poetry book with teachers from different schools (K7).”

“Seeing new ideas and encountering different perspectives adds a lot to me. I usually approach this content with the intention of getting inspired.” (K11)

“I use it for professional development, student motivation, and to be part of the teacher community. As I share, I see other teachers commenting, and there is interaction. This also reduces my feeling of professional isolation.” (K18)

Theme 3: Instagram's Reflections on the Profession

This theme covers the direct or indirect effects of teachers' use of Instagram on their professional lives. This theme is called "The Impact of Instagram on Professional Life" because the content comprehensively reveals how teachers' use of Instagram is reflected in their professional practices, either directly or indirectly. Teachers' statements show that the platform has evolved beyond being merely a tool for social interaction or information sharing, becoming a professional resource that influences teachers' classroom practices, material use, and pedagogical approaches. Based on teachers' views, it is understood that Instagram has gone beyond being just a social media tool for teachers and is increasingly being used as a professional medium. Thanks to the platform's high volume of visual content, easily accessible information sources, and active sharing by teacher communities, it is seen to hold significant potential for developing teachers' pedagogical approaches and classroom practices. The majority of teachers stated that the ideas they gained through Instagram were directly reflected in their lessons, that they discovered various teaching materials, and that their motivation increased. It has been stated that concrete content, such as activity examples, classroom organization ideas, and practices aimed at increasing student motivation, contributes to daily teaching practices. On the other hand, some teachers have also mentioned that this intense flow of content and constant sharing can lead to various negative feelings over time. In particular, the 'perception of perfection' and constant pressure to produce content that dominates the platform can cause feelings of inadequacy, burnout, and loss of motivation in some teachers. The visibility and like-focused interaction established through sharing can also lead teachers to evaluate their professional performance according to Instagram standards.

Table 4. Instagram's Reflections on the Profession Theme, Categories, and Codes

Theme	Category	Codes
Reflections of Instagram on the Profession	Positive Impacts	Inspiring content, sample projects, creative ideas, different techniques reflected in lessons, student motivation, creative applications.
	Negative Impacts	Comparison, feelings of inadequacy, time loss, distraction, anatomical issues, exhaustion, constant pressure to stay up-to-date.

Positive Impacts

The majority of teachers stated that the posts they accessed via Instagram added a new perspective to their profession and made the teaching process more dynamic and creative. It has been stated that content such as activity ideas, classroom application examples, and teacher motivation posts contribute to the adoption of methods that better appeal to the new generation of students. The visual intensity of the platform allows ideas to be grasped more quickly and become applicable, leading teachers to view it as a "source of professional inspiration." Furthermore, the content shared by teachers on Instagram has been found to be both motivating and exemplary for other teachers. These posts have played a supportive role in helping teachers develop themselves, try different methods, and increase their professional confidence.

"I get ideas and it's inspiring. It motivates me to think, I can do something like this too." (K1)

"Seeing that another teacher has experienced something similar to what I experienced at school on Instagram makes me feel less alone and emotionally stronger." (K6)

"I use it for professional development. I follow many teachers, and the methods and classroom practices they share give me ideas. I also feel it's like a space for solidarity among teachers." (K12)

“I would say professional development and social networking. I follow the accounts of classroom teachers like myself and get ideas. Sometimes there are also uplifting posts. Seeing them feels good.” (K15)

“Thanks to Instagram, I can communicate better with my students. Because I can observe what's popular in their world and what they're interested in.” (K17)

Negative Reflections

However, some teachers stated that using Instagram had some negative effects on their professional lives. In particular, it was noted that the “perception of perfection” on the platform caused feelings of inadequacy in some teachers. The visibility of colleagues who constantly share creative and effective content has triggered a tendency to compare themselves among some teachers; it has been emphasized that this situation can negatively affect professional motivation. The pressure created by the feeling of “Everyone is doing so much, why can't I keep up?” can lead to burnout and decreased professional satisfaction over time. Another negative reflection is related to time management. Teachers pointed out the distracting nature of Instagram; they stated that uncontrolled Instagram screen time, especially during a busy work schedule, could negatively affect their productivity. This situation can make it difficult for teachers to use both their personal time and their preparation time outside of class efficiently.

“It can have negative effects from time to time. Some of my colleagues use social media very professionally, which sometimes makes me feel inadequate.” (K5)

“I especially notice that when I spend too much time on it, I end up feeling tired instead of rested.” (K11)

“Frankly, I sometimes feel the urge to compare myself to others. There have been times when I've asked myself why I'm not

that creative. When I don't pay attention to time management, I feel like my time is being stolen.” (K14)

“Sometimes comparing yourself can be exhausting. Constantly seeing great classes and creative activities can eventually make you feel like you’re not good enough.” (K17)

Theme 4: Professional Teacher Network

This theme covers the support networks teachers create through interactions with their colleagues on Instagram and the learning communities they develop through these networks. This theme is called the “Professional Teacher Network” because the professional relationships, supportive relationships, and forms of interaction teachers establish on Instagram were clearly prominent in the interviews. The connections teachers establish with colleagues working in different cities and institutions go beyond simply sharing content; they also involve mutual learning, exchanging ideas, and providing motivation. Findings from the interviews reveal that Instagram offers teachers a space for collaborative production, sharing, and professional interaction beyond individual use. Participating teachers stated that they were able to connect with colleagues from different cities or institutions via Instagram, thereby gaining access not only to the limited pedagogical practices within their own schools or circles, but also to a wider pool of teaching practices. It was noted that, in addition to accessing various materials, methods, and strategies through the accounts they follow, they also have the opportunity to exchange information through comments and messages made under these posts. In short, Instagram is not just a platform for teachers to consume content, but also serves as a dynamic learning and sharing network where active participation, mutual interaction, learning, and professional solidarity are supported.

Table 5. Professional Learning Network Theme, Categories, and Codes

Theme	Category	Codes
Professional Learning Network	Interaction Among Colleagues	Exchange of ideas, collaboration, sharing common feelings, sense of community among teachers, interaction, social contact
	Use as an Educational Resource	Making lessons fun, material design, activity suggestions, discovery of methods and techniques, recording educational videos and content

Use as an Educational Resource

This theme focuses on how teachers use Instagram as an educational resource tool. Teachers' emphasized that the platform is quite functional in terms of accessing lesson materials, activity examples, and creative applications. Many teachers stated that they adapt activity ideas they encounter while browsing Instagram to their lessons. It has been stated that most of these ideas are added to the "saved" section and stored for later use in the classroom. Some teachers have stated that by sharing their own content, they make their knowledge and experience visible, thereby inspiring others and increasing their professional visibility.

"On the other hand, as a preschool teacher, I research professional content, new activities, classroom decoration ideas, drama activities, and such. I follow many preschool teachers' accounts on Instagram in particular." (K1)

"Education-related content, teacher motivation, classroom activity visuals... I like commenting on and liking this type of content. Some posts make me think, 'I can do that too,' and this increases my productivity." (K4)

"My field is a language-focused department, and I often need to supplement materials. Instagram helps me find materials related to my profession in this regard." (K10)

"I also get the courage to try different methods in class from Instagram. My colleagues sometimes ask me for ideas too." (K18)

In summary, Instagram is not just a social media platform for teachers; it also serves as a practical, accessible, and constantly updated teaching resource. Thanks to the abundance and variety of visual materials and the ways users organize content (e.g., saving, foldering), teachers have the opportunity to enrich their pedagogical repertoire.

Interaction Among Colleagues

This theme involves the use of Instagram as a digital network that facilitates mutual knowledge sharing and interaction among teachers. The vast majority of teachers stated that the platform not only allows for content consumption but also creates bonds among colleagues through content production and sharing. Instagram has become a digital community for teachers to share knowledge, experiences, and feelings.

“I use it to improve myself, gain creative ideas, and interact with my colleagues. I especially follow teacher sharing groups. This gives me an indirect connection with teachers from all over Turkey.” (K5)

“I get not only content but also motivation. Sometimes what my colleagues write and feel makes me feel good too. Seeing that there are people experiencing the same problems is comforting.” (K6)

“As I share, I see teachers commenting and interacting. This also reduces professional loneliness.” (K16)

Instagram has become a space where teachers feel they are not alone; at the same time, it strengthens the sense of professional solidarity. Teachers reported that they sometimes collaborate with their colleagues, implement similar activities simultaneously in different schools, or improve their practices through the exchange of ideas. In conclusion, Instagram provides an environment for teachers not only to share information but also to form strong social bonds based on emotions, motivation, and solidarity. In this sense, it

functions as a digital “colleague room,” facilitating teachers to learn from each other, produce together, and come together around shared values.

Discussion and Conclusion

This research was conducted to gain an in-depth understanding of teachers' Instagram usage habits, the impact of this usage on their personal and professional lives, and which features of Instagram they use and how they use them. Based on the findings, it was observed that Instagram has evolved beyond being merely a social sharing platform to become a multifaceted source of learning, interaction, and motivation for teachers. Teachers stated that they access content in this digital environment that contributes to both their personal and professional development; at the same time, they noted that their professional isolation has decreased through the interactions they establish with their colleagues. However, it was also noted that some teachers sometimes feel inadequate due to comparisons arising from Instagram's reflection of the good and the beautiful.

Instagram Usage Habits and Trends

The vast majority of teachers stated that they actively use this platform for both personal and professional purposes. Research also shows that users frequently share selfies, travel and landscape photos, food, and trips on the app (Romero-Rodríguez, Rodríguez-Jiménez, Ramos Navas-Parejo et al., 2020). Although Instagram usage time varies among individuals, it mostly ranges between 1 and 2 hours per day. In some cases, this time can be consciously shortened by the user and can vary depending on the purpose of use. However, a study conducted in 2018 found that this time averaged 3 hours per day (Karmila, Aritonang & Sudaryati, 2020). This variation is expected to differ according to country, education level, occupation, and personal interests. It has also been observed that

personal loneliness directs individuals to Instagram and that this time increases in relation to loneliness (Sarman & Tuncay 2023). In particular, tabs such as “saved,” “stories,” “explore,” and “reels” stand out as the areas where teachers spend the most time and interact the most. The save feature is used by teachers almost like a filing tool. In conclusion, while it was found that the time spent on the app varies according to personal interests, personal perception of loneliness, education level, and professional field, it was also found that the screen time of the teachers in the study ranged from 1 to 2 hours. This finding is consistent with the findings and results of previous studies.

The Function of Instagram

It has been observed that teachers use Instagram for both personal and professional purposes. As the fifth most widely used platform in the world (Statista, 2020), Instagram is also highly popular among educators. From a personal perspective, teachers have stated that they use this platform to escape the stress of the day, clear their minds, and gain positive emotions through uplifting content. In this context, Instagram is considered a platform that supports personal development and contributes to psychological well-being. Professionally, Instagram enables teachers to enhance their knowledge and skills regarding classroom activities, materials, and presentations, and to engage in digital interaction with other teachers. Teachers who stated that they use the application professionally have also expressed in other studies the importance of looking at the posts and ideas of other educators and that they participate in collaboration and exchange of ideas by joining communities created by educators (Carpenter et al., 2020). However, some teachers have pointed out that the platform can sometimes cause distraction, lack of planning during content consumption, and psychological stress. It is also known that the increase in unconscious time spent on Instagram correlates with technology addiction (Savcı

& Aysan, 2017). This shows that Instagram use requires conscious use as much as it has benefits, and studies and research support this result.

The Reflections of Instagram on the Profession

The reflections of Instagram on the teaching profession have been clearly stated in teachers' opinions, both in positive and negative terms. A growing number of studies reveal that social media triggers feelings of envy in people, which can have harmful effects on users (Meier & Schäfer, 2018). On the positive side, teachers stated that thanks to Instagram, they discovered different teaching techniques and practices and implemented them in their own classrooms. Again, studies show that social media facilitates interaction in terms of positive emotions and commitment (Casaló, Flavián & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2020). On the other hand, some teachers have stated that the platform creates pressure to produce content, that it makes them feel the need to share it professionally, and that it can sometimes cause feelings of inadequacy. This finding reveals that digital platforms can have psychological effects on individuals. This means that the application can have both positive (discovering new techniques and activities, establishing interaction) and negative (feelings of inadequacy, jealousy, and pressure to produce). It shows the importance of being aware that this platform is a social sharing application and can reflect real life to a certain extent, in order to minimize these reflections or use them to one's advantage.

Professional Learning Network

One of the most striking findings of the research is that Instagram has created a professional solidarity and learning network among teachers. Although the number of studies specifically conducted on the Instagram platform is quite low, studies on solidarity and interaction via social media also support this finding. Indeed, during periods of intense use of online networks

(such as pandemics and natural disasters), people come together through social media platforms with a sense of solidarity (Carlsen, Toubol & Brinker, 2021). This solidarity and interaction, enhanced by technological tools, even plays a role in activism movements (Stewart & Schultze, 2019). Studies indicate that professional groups, especially support groups, engage in concrete support and cooperation activities among themselves (Sackitey, Sachdev & Parker, 2025). Teachers have stated that they can interact with teachers working in different cities and conditions via Instagram, support each other by sharing their common experiences, and thus feel that they are not alone. This digital interaction via Instagram contributes to reducing feelings of professional loneliness. In addition, teachers have stated that they inspire others by sharing their own experiences and are motivated by similar posts. While following all this solidarity and positive processes, it is important for the effectiveness of the application not to neglect conscious use in order to utilize the positive and negative effects mentioned in the previous paragraph to our advantage. Research has reached the common conclusion that social media, and Instagram in particular, is used as a network of interaction and solidarity among professional groups.

The analysis revealed that Instagram, a social media platform actively used by teachers, has various positive and negative reflections on professional life. Although some negative effects such as difficulty in time management, feelings of inadequacy, and jealousy resulting from comparison were mentioned, it was observed that teachers were aware of these negatives and adopted conscious use. In this context, it is understood that Instagram functions not only as a social media tool but also as an inspiring medium that reduces teachers' feelings of professional isolation, increases interaction among colleagues, and enables the sharing of material and activity content. The findings reveal that teachers embrace Instagram as a

platform that supports their professional development, provides them with creative ideas, and creates space for collaboration-based sharing. In conclusion, it can be said that Instagram offers important pedagogical, motivational, and social opportunities for teachers and, when used consciously, serves as a digital resource that enriches their professional lives.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, it is clear that the Instagram platform contributes to teachers' professional and personal development. However, in order for this contribution to continue free from the aforementioned drawbacks, planned steps need to be taken in various areas.

Digital Literacy and Awareness Training Should Be Developed: Digital literacy skills are critical for teachers to be able to analyze the content they encounter on social media more healthily, question its accuracy, and act consciously in the digital environment. Again, not only personal use, but problems have also arisen due to teachers' lack of mastery of offline education during the COVID-19 process. For this reason, educators need to receive digital literacy training for both personal and professional benefit. These trainings should be included not only in in-service training but also in the undergraduate programs of teacher training faculties.

Time Management: Every development that makes opportunities accessible today gives us more free time in our daily lives. According to 2018 data, the time spent on Instagram, the 6th most used application in Turkey, exceeds 2 hours per day. The analysis of the data revealed that teachers sometimes encounter factors such as distraction and burnout on Instagram. Therefore, guidance services should be provided to help teachers set healthy boundaries when interacting with digital tools. This will enable teachers to use Instagram in a beneficial, sustainable, and healthy way.

Sharing Culture Should Be Supported: The research found that some teachers feel competitive pressure on Instagram platforms. This can lead to a loss of motivation and feelings of inadequacy among teachers. Therefore, while encouraging a culture of sharing on Instagram, the emphasis should be on collaboration rather than competition, and collective support mechanisms should be created among teacher content creators.

Professional Sharing Platforms and Teacher Communities Should Be Encouraged: Research findings show that professional interactions conducted via Instagram reduce teachers' feelings of loneliness and increase their sense of belonging. To ensure the sustainability of these positive effects, digital communities where teachers working in different fields and levels can come together should be encouraged.

Social media platforms can be a powerful tool for both the personal and professional development of teachers when properly guided and used consciously. However, for this potential to be fully realized, institutional support, educational policies, digital awareness, and teachers' own self-regulation skills must be addressed together.

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